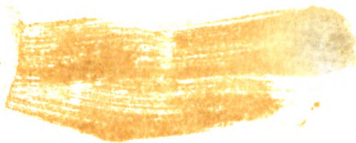


THE THIRD REICH ON BROADWAY: THE PORTRAYAL  
OF THE NAZI CHARACTER ON BROADWAY BY AMERICAN  
PLAYWRIGHTS FROM 1933 TO 1970

Dissertation for the Degree of Ph. D.  
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## ABSTRACT

### THE THIRD REICH ON BROADWAY: THE PORTRAYAL OF THE NAZI CHARACTER ON BROADWAY BY AMERICAN PLAYWRIGHTS FROM 1933 TO 1970

By

William Boleslaus Sakalauskas

The purpose of this study is to determine (1) how the Nazi was characterized within given periods which reflected the changing relationship of society and theatre to Nazism, (2) how the beliefs and actions of the stage Nazis compare with the views of notable scholars regarding the Nazis era, and (3) whether there are patterns or developments in the portrayals. Chapter II (Historical Background: Nazi Ideology) provides a basis for evaluating the Nazi traits in the portrayals.

Nazi characters appeared in thirty plays, which are divided into four historical periods. The portrayals in the first period, 1933-September, 1939, were intended as a warning against Nazism. The six plays of the period included Judgment Day and Till the Day I Die. The characterizations were more knowledgeable and varied than critical reaction would indicate. They were mostly villains, but included members of the Nazi leadership, students, teachers, judges, a part-Jewish officer, as well as stereotyped storm troopers.



All of the Nazis were on their own territory and all the plays contained Nazi violence directed against Jewish and Communist victims.

The second period, September, 1939-December, 1941, was marked by an intense division between isolationists and interventionists. The Nazis were less menacing. Nearly all were officials and diplomats who tended to be quite intellectual and prone to express their ideology; they were villains by thought rather than by deed. Most of the Nazis were portrayed in vulnerable situations, and the violence in those plays was directed against them. In this period, the Nazis expressed little anti-Communism, a lessened anti-Semitism, and their opponents now included heroic Americans, American Jews, and converted Nazis. The five plays in the period included Margin for Error, Flight to the West, and There Shall Be No Night.

There were nine plays in the third period, December, 1941-May, 1945. Most of the portrayals were Nazi occupation troops opposed by heroic Allies, as in The Moon Is Down. However, there were also heroic American opponents. Nearly all of the portrayals were generalized villains and were the least defined Nazis of any period; they were simply a war-time enemy. Few of the plays contained on-stage violence. The period did contain the most commercially successful of all Nazi portrayals, the twelve-year-old Nazi in Tomorrow the World.

The postwar period covers twenty-five years, is the least cohesive, and contains no patterns. Attitudes toward Nazis ranged

from hatred to indifference, and the portrayals ranged from comical (Happy Birthday, Wanda June) to the most brutal of villains (The Wall). There are ten plays in the period, including Stalag 17 and Incident at Vichy.

Substantially all of the traits of Nazism were used in the various portrayals from 1933 to 1970. However, there were few attempts to create high levels of characterization. Nazis were principal characters in five plays, supporting characters in fourteen, and subsidiary in the remaining eight. With few exceptions, the portrayals were unsuccessful. Audiences of the 1930's were preoccupied with the depression, and the businessman served as the villain for the problems of the country. The second period (1939-1941) contained "safer" Nazis and the plays were more successful. In the next period, Americans viewed the war as a grim business matter to be finished with little fanfare. And the postwar period did not appreciably alter the lack of receptivity to Nazis in drama.

A major obstacle to successful characterizations of Nazis was the belief that Nazism was monolithic. In reality, Nazis behaved differently in Nordic countries (Norway) compared to Slavic countries (Poland and Russia). Critics and audiences wanted an unattainable stereotype who would capture the essence of Nazism. The portrayals were rejected as untruthful, too brutal, too nice, too serious, and too funny. There was some outright opposition to any portrayal of Nazis, and a number of critics praised some anti-Nazi plays for excluding Nazi characters.

William Boleslaus Sakalauskas

There has been an increase in the intellectual and emotional knowledge about Nazism through scholarly research and such events as the war crimes trials. Recent writing tends to eschew generalized moral and cultural philosophizing and the view that Nazism was an aberration caused by a few misguided men. Instead, it stresses the ideological basis of the mass crimes and the normalcy of the participants. European dramatists have used such knowledge to delve into various aspects of Nazism and will probably continue doing so. American audiences are conditioned to accept Nazis as villains, serious or comical, and American playwrights are more likely to create multi-faceted villains who are the cause of current problems and not philosophical abstractions about the past.

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CHARACTER ON BROADWAY BY AMERICAN PLAYWRIGHTS  
FROM 1933 TO 1970

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William Boleslaus Sakalauskas

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1975

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this study is to relate the history of the Nazi character as portrayed by American dramatists on Broadway from 1933 to 1970.

The study will deal with the following:

1. How is the Nazi characterized within given time periods which reflected the changing relationship of society and theatre to Nazism.
2. How do the beliefs and actions of the Nazi characters compare with the views of notable scholars regarding the Nazi era?
3. Are there patterns or developments within the periods in the characterization and function of the Nazi character?

#### Justification

The involvement of the United States in World War II and the effect of that war has been one of the major historical interests of this century. The pre-war political and domestic reactions to the developing war, the eventual involvement in the war, the war years and post-war effects are the subject of a considerable body of literature and are still being evaluated. It is generally accepted that "World War II radically altered the

character of American society and challenged its most durable values" and that "Pearl Harbor marked more than the passing of a decade; it signified the end of an old era and the beginning of a new."<sup>1</sup> The history of that war includes a time span preceding the actual hostilities. A. J. P. Taylor in The Origins of the Second World War says that it was "a war which had been implicit since the moment when the first war ended."<sup>2</sup>

That "implicit" war became increasingly important in the United States during the thirties, more often than not expressed as an aversion to war through pacifism and isolationism. If there was one thing Americans seemed to agree about, it was that if Europe was to start another war, America would definitely stay out. This attitude was expressed by political groups as diverse as the communists and the Liberty League.<sup>3</sup> Robert Sherwood said that World War II was "the first war in American history in which disillusionment preceded the firing of the first shot."<sup>4</sup> Paradoxically, when the war was finally fought, it was fought with more unanimity than any previous one.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Richard Polenberg, War and Society: The United States, 1941-1945 (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1972), p. 4.

<sup>2</sup>A. J. P. Taylor, The Origins of the Second World War (New York: Atheneum, 1964), p. 278.

<sup>3</sup>Samuel Eliot Morrison, The Oxford History of the American People (New York: Oxford University Press, 1965), p. 988.

<sup>4</sup>Robert Sherwood, Roosevelt and Hopkins: An Intimate History, rev. ed. (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1950), p. 438.

<sup>5</sup>Merle Curti, The Growth of American Thought, 3rd ed. (New York: Harper and Row, Publishers), p. 732.

The significance of the war to the United States is regarded as more philosophical than physical. There were over 400,000 American servicemen killed.<sup>6</sup> While these deaths were not minimal to the families involved, the number is minimal compared to the losses of the other major powers. Civilians suffered only minor hardships and, in fact, improved their standard of living because of war production. The cost of the war was about 350 billion dollars (ten times the amount of World War One) which was taken in economic stride.<sup>7</sup> In The American Mind, Henry Steele Commager said it was clear even during the war years how the war affected the economy and society, but "how they affected the American character has yet to be determined."<sup>8</sup>

The post-war effects covered all aspects of American life and America had become a part of a very different world. "Man has perfected his weaponry until its indiscriminate use can destroy his world. This is the first inescapable legacy of the Second World War."<sup>9</sup>

The relationship of the war to the New York professional theatre has generally been confined to the war years, if not entirely eliminated in historical surveys by reference to the theatre between

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<sup>6</sup>Martha Byrd Hoyle, A World in Flames: A History of World War II (New York: Atheneum, 1970), p. 324.

<sup>7</sup>Morrison, The Oxford History of the American People, p. 1010.

<sup>8</sup>Henry Steele Commager, The American Mind: An Interpretation of American Thought and Character Since the 1880's (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1950, pp. 430-431.

<sup>9</sup>Hoyle, The World in Falmes, p. 320.

the wars and then to the post-war theatre. Glen Hughes' statement about the effect of the war succinctly states the usual observations:

The effect of the war on Broadway was to raise fantastically the cost of production, and, correlatively, prices of admission; to create box-office pressure in the case of hit-plays which resulted in a shocking wave of ticket speculation; and to further the recent tendency toward excessively long runs.<sup>10</sup>

Hughes' interpretation of the effects of the war is in keeping with usual division of Broadway history into the decades of the twenties, thirties, forties, etc., and the stress on a dominant aspect of each period.

Trends and influences other than the dominant ones do exist and they interact and overlap. As John Gassner noted, the serious theatre of the thirties had been labelled "leftist" when it included "such strongly anti-communist authors as the late Maxwell Anderson."<sup>11</sup> He also noted the label "leftism" was not used pejoratively as in the 1950's but in a "vaguely complimentary sense."

Dealing with the same period, Emory Lewis felt that historians divided the twenties and thirties too sharply:

Both were decades of revolt. . . . Though the two decades differed in tone and texture, they were intimately related in their profound sense of dissatisfaction with yesterday's rules and conventions. They were more akin to each other than to the succeeding decades of gloom and retreat, of atomic threats and counterthreats, of witch-hunts and cold-war hot lines.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup>Glenn Hughes, A History of the American Theatre, 1700-1950 (New York: Samuel French, 1950), p. 448.

<sup>11</sup>John Gassner, Dramatic Soundings: Evaluations and Retractions Culled from 30 Years of Dramatic Criticism (New York: Crown Publishers, 1968), p. 449.

<sup>12</sup>Emory Lewis, Stages: The Fifty-Year Childhood of the American Theatre (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1969), p. 45.

His statement reflects the general historian's view of World War II as a major point of change in America.

Similarly, the relationship of the Broadway theatre to the war, both preceding and following the hostilities, has been alluded to directly and indirectly in various studies. Dissertations on the era include studies on the anti-war plays between the two wars,<sup>13</sup> the relationship of public opinion to war plays from 1931 to 1941<sup>14</sup> and the attitudes of American soldiers toward war as revealed in American drama from 1940 to 1960.<sup>15</sup> Brockett notes a legacy of the war to theatre; he attributes the post-war influence of existentialism on theatre specifically to the horror of World War II and the Nuremberg war crimes trials.<sup>16</sup>

This study deals with one aspect of the relationship of the Broadway theatre to the war--the portrayal of the Nazi character. The study was limited to Nazis rather than all the enemies of World War II for practical reasons. There are very few portrayals of the Japanese or Italians as World War II enemies in American drama. The United States entered the war as a result of conflict with

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<sup>13</sup>Martha Weisman, "Study of Anti-War Plays Produced in the New York Professional Theatre from World War I to World War II" (Ed.D. dissertation, Columbia University, 1967).

<sup>14</sup>Robert Carter Hailey, "Broadway on War" (Ph.D. dissertation, Case Western Reserve University, 1968).

<sup>15</sup>Alvin Samuel Kaufman, "Attitudes and Adjustments of the Soldier towards War and the Military as Revealed in the American Drama, 1940-1960" (Ph.D. dissertation, Stanford University, 1965).

<sup>16</sup>Oscar G. Brockett and Robert R. Findlay, Century of Innovation: A History of European and American Theatre and Drama Since 1970 (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1973), pp. 584-590.

Japan. However, the nation (except for the West Coast) was pre-occupied with European politics before the war. William Manchester in The Glory and the Dream noted that the names from the European theatre of war were "a familiar echo from school days," but few Americans had heard of Ioribaiwa or knew the difference between New Britain, New Caledonia, New Guinea, New Ireland and the New Hebrides. What they knew came from "B" movies.<sup>17</sup> Later, the lack of Japanese actors may also have been a contributing factor, since it caused problems for Hollywood when such movies became popular.<sup>18</sup> The focus on Nazism in the New York area (discussed in Chapter II) would explain the lack of interest in the Italians as an Axis power. In contrast, American playwrights were portraying the Nazi character long before the actual war with Germany."

The plays on Nazism and fascism performed a function of the utmost significance to the American of the nineteen thirties. They made a reluctant nation aware there was a demonic force loose in the world and impressed upon audiences that this satanic power was not content to remain overseas but would eventually extend its tentacles to all lands.<sup>19</sup>

Some of these plays introduced the Nazi character to the American theatre.

The portrayal of the Nazi was to continue, paralleling the societal relationship to the war: the recognition and response to

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<sup>17</sup>William Manchester, The Glory and the Dream, 2 vols. (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1974), 1:325-326.

<sup>18</sup>Manny Farber, "Movies in Wartime," New Republic, 3 January 1944, pp. 16-20.

<sup>19</sup>Caspar H. Nannes, Politics in the American Drama (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1960), p. 150.

the impending war, the fighting of the war, and post-war reflections. The Nazi character appeared in nearly thirty plays written by American playwrights and produced on Broadway between 1933 and 1970. This study is the first history of that character in American plays.

### Definition of Terms

The term history is intended in its general meaning as a branch of knowledge which records and explains past events and specifically as "a systematic written account of events, particularly those affecting a nation, institution, science, or art, usually connected with a philosophical explanation of their causes."<sup>20</sup>

Characters will be considered Nazi characters if they are called Nazi by the playwright or if they are used by the playwright to express Nazism. The latter can include such characters as the Gestapo, SS and German soldiers. Characters will also be considered Nazis if they call themselves Nazis, express a belief in Nazism (not merely fascism) or, in the case of metaphorical characters, are generally assumed to be Nazis by the critics. The concept of Nazi ideology is central to this study and is the subject of Chapter II.

American playwrights are those who are listed as American in encyclopedias and by theatre historians and critics.

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<sup>20</sup> Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary, 2nd ed. (1956), s.v. "History."



The criteria for Broadway plays are those listed as such in the Burns Mantle Best Plays series and include productions by non-commercial groups.

#### Limitations

1. Only portrayals of Nazis by American playwrights are included. There may be instances of adaptations of novels and foreign works. However, no production presented as a work by a foreign playwright is included.
2. The criterion for the selection of the plays is a stage character that can be defined as Nazi. The artistic merit of the plays will vary greatly and may be noted, but a critical evaluation of the plays is not a consideration of this study.
3. The attention and emphasis given to the Nazi characters will vary with the importance of the character in the play, the importance of the playwright, critical responses and commercial successes.
4. In evaluating contemporary reactions to the Nazi characters and the plays, reviews are stressed rather than criticism in magazines and journals.

#### Method

The Nazi characters covered in this study are discussed in the context of four periods: 1933 to August, 1939; September, 1939, to November, 1941; December, 1941, to May, 1945; and the post-war period. These divisions are based on distinct periods in the relationship of the war to society and to the theatre.

The first period covers the time from the first play with a Nazi character to the generally accepted date of the start of World War II, September, 1939. Germany invaded Poland on September 1, and Britain and France declared war against Germany on September 3. On September 5, President Roosevelt, proclaiming the neutrality of his country, said, "This nation will remain a neutral nation, but I cannot ask that every American will remain neutral as well."<sup>21</sup> On September 17, Brooks Atkinson wrote a column in the New York Times titled "Stage in Wartime," in which he discussed the possible effects of the war on the theatre. This was the period of the short-of-war policies of aid and lend-lease to the allies. The United States was involved but not fighting. This period is distinct enough to require a separate chapter.

The other two periods are self-evident--wartime and the post-war period.

The discussion of the characterization of the Nazis will include the values of the character and the function of the character. There are problems in isolating characters and character traits. J. L. Styan in Elements of the Drama views character as being the author's product which emerges from the play rather than raw material put into the play. He says character "has an infinity of subtle uses, but they all serve in orchestration of the play as a whole. . . ." He warns against taking "a misplaced interest in a

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<sup>21</sup> Saul Friedlander, Prelude to Downfall: Hitler and the United States, 1939-1941, trans. Aline B. and Alexander Werth (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1967), p. 35.

fictional character for its own sake and out of context."<sup>22</sup> Discussion of characters in this study assumes such observations reflect the play rather than define the substance of the play.

There are four ways of gaining information about a character: by what other characters say about him; by what he says about himself; by what he does, and by his appearance.<sup>23</sup> These observations will be used to determine the character's values and function with the methods suggested by Frank McMullan in The Directorial Image and Hubert Heffner in Modern Theatre Practice.

McMullan views character as the center circle of a series of concentric circles creating a circle of dialogue, plot, theme, and the mood of the play. He notes that the force of character is powerful, complex and extensive and requires simplification of approach. He divides the approach to character into the "group character values" which influence the "overall structure, kind of play, and style of play" and "the individual character values and their relationship to the actor."<sup>24</sup> Both are of concern here.

The group character values include who the character is, character categories (principal, supporting and subsidiary), protagonist and antagonist, and dimensionality. McMullan says the character categories (degree of importance) can be determined

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<sup>22</sup>J. L. Styan, The Elements of Drama (Cambridge, England: University Press, 1963), p. 163.

<sup>23</sup>H. D. Albright, William P. Halstead, and Lee Mitchell, Principles of Art, 2nd ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1968), p. 33.

<sup>24</sup>Frank McMullan, The Directorial Image: The Play and the Director (Hamden, Connecticut: Shoe String Press, 1962).

by the amount of dialogue, his contribution to plot and theme, and the amount of time on stage. The distinctions are as follows:

The principal characters consist of those whose conflicts directly force an outcome and resolution of the central problem of the play. They create the main line of action; the supporting characters, the contributing but minor lines of action. The subsidiary characters are usually a part of the environment and atmosphere.<sup>25</sup>

This procedure also determines the central character, or protagonist, and the antagonist.

The individual character values include, first, identification and recognition traits--who the character is. For this study, he must be a Nazi and that also implies values. Second, the character's objectives and units of objectives. Third, the character's sources of opposition. Fourth, the tonality of the character--his emotional effect on the audience. Fifth, the dimensionality and growth of the character. Last, the character's contribution to the theme.<sup>26</sup>

The dimensionality of the characters will also rely on criteria of differentiation given by Heffner. Character traits may be arranged in a hierarchical order as follows:

1. Biological traits
2. Physical traits
3. Bent, disposition, attitude
4. Traits of feeling, emotion, desire
5. Traits of characteristics of thinking
6. Decisions.

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<sup>25</sup>Ibid., p. 92.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid.

Heffner says a character can be made believable with an essential trait from one level only, such as a policeman's uniform (second level). He illustrates the third level with Iago and with such type characters as pedagogues and misers. The fourth level is basic to chief roles in dramatic action. The fifth level, deliberation, represents a high level of characterization and is of two kinds--expedient deliberation to attain a desire or objective (ordinarily found in comedy) and ethical deliberation which causes the character to become serious. Deliberation leads to choice. "Choosing or not choosing for a reason is the highest level of characterization."<sup>27</sup>

The values of the characters and their functions in the plays will be analyzed with appropriate elements from McMullan and Heffner. It is expected that few or none of the Nazi characters will be protagonists. Most will be antagonists and many may fall into the type category of villain. The label villain requires some discussion.

In The Villain as Hero in Elizabethan Tragedy, Dr. Clarence Boyer opposes the Aristotelian view that a villain could not be a protagonist because he would arouse neither fear nor pity. He says the ordinary conception of a villain is a "bad man who, from hatred or for personal advantage, uses unjust means to block the hero's

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<sup>27</sup>Hubert C. Heffner, Samuel Selden, and Hunton D. Sellman, Modern Theatre Practice: A Handbook of Play Production, 4th ed. (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1959), pp. 86-88.

purpose,"<sup>28</sup> and that that definition usually applies only to comedy. He defines a villain as "a man who, for a selfish end, wilfully and deliberately violates standards or morality sanctioned by the audience or ordinary reader."<sup>29</sup> This definition allows the villain to have any degree of importance in a play, including the role of protagonist.

In a study of American villain types, Orrin E. Klapp noted that there are two broad classes of villainous roles. The first are those who are overt, flagrant and highly visible, and the second type are underhanded, treacherous, subtle and usually need to be detected or time must pass before they are revealed. In order of importance to Americans, the overt villain types were desperadoes or outlaws, oppressors or bullies, authoritarians, rebels, flouters, trouble makers, claimants of undue privilege, intruders, suspicious isolates, monsters, rogues and renegades. The low visibility villain types were listed as underhanded traitors, deceivers, sneak-attackers, chisellers or parasites, shirkers and corrupters.<sup>30</sup>

In a later book, Klapp added other dimensions to his discussion of villains: the kind of threat posed; social position; and the seriousness of the attitude toward the villain.<sup>31</sup> He lists

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<sup>28</sup>Clarence Valentine Boyer, The Villain as Hero in Elizabethan Tragedy (New York: Russell and Russell, 1964).

<sup>29</sup>Ibid., p. 8.

<sup>30</sup>Orrin E. Klapp, "American Villain Types," American Sociological Review, 21 (June, 1956), 337-340.

<sup>31</sup>Orrin E. Klapp, Heroes, Villains, and Fools (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1962), pp. 50-67.

five main kinds of villains and some of the examples include Nazis. First are those who violate order and status and include desperadoes and rebels. Second are usurpers and abusers of power or authority. These include oppressors such as Hitler. Third are villainous strangers and they include intruders, suspicious isolates and monsters. Examples of monsters include Himmler, Goebbels and Ilse Koch. Fourth are traitors and sneaks and these include collaborators such as Quisling. The fifth kind of villains are social undesirables. Klapp says that villains generally lack the redeeming traits of heroes, have opposite traits, and are a threat to the groups served by the heroes.<sup>32</sup> In contrast, the hero types include winners (champions), splendid performers, heroes of social acceptability, independent spirits, and servants of admirable groups.<sup>33</sup>

A similar view of the hero is given by Dixon Wecter in The American Hero, and his historical view of the hero is of particular interest to this study. Wecter divides heroes in history into three groups: first, the kings and would-be kings; second, the cult of the middle class and self-made man; and, third, the idealization of the little man. He places American heroes into the second group and applies the third description to the Fascist and Communist heroes.<sup>34</sup> Discussing the Fascist hero, he says,

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<sup>32</sup>Ibid.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid., pp. 27-28.

<sup>34</sup>Dixon Wecter, The Hero in America: A Chronicle of Hero-Worship (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1941), p. 482.

Although he is only a Little Man, the lamps of publicity project him upon the map of the world as a great shadowy giant. The poorest citizen of . . . the Reich rejoices to think that this magnified image of himself is awesome and terrifying to other nations.<sup>35</sup>

In this study, it is possible that a character identified as a villain may have a heroic self-perception or see himself as an extension of genuine heroism.

The preceding concepts of characterization, villainy and heroism will be used to evaluate the character's values and function in the play.

### Procedure

Chapter II will contain an in-depth analysis of Nazi ideology to provide a background and basis for a discussion of the Nazi characters.

Each chapter dealing with a period will be introduced with an overview of the period to provide the response of society and the theatre to the war and to Nazism at that time. The plays will be handled chronologically. Comments about the seasons, whether or not they contain plays, will be made when necessary to clarify historical context. Each of these chapters will be reviewed for indications of a pattern or development in the portrayal of the Nazi character.

Each play will be handled in a similar manner whenever possible and appropriate.

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<sup>35</sup>Ibid., p. 7.



1. Title, playwright, and date of production.
2. Background information if helpful.
3. Synopsis.
4. Discussion of Nazi characters from most important to least important. If a character's philosophy is sufficiently delineated, it will be compared with the various interpretations of Nazism discussed in Chapter II.
5. Critics' reactions to the plays will be surveyed with particular attention given to observations about the Nazi characters.
6. Success of production, later productions, and influences, if any.

Plays for which scripts were not available are discussed on the basis of information in the Best Plays series, reviews and criticism. In each case a footnote indicates the lack of a script and the sources used.

The final chapter will review and discuss the development and patterns of the Nazi character, draw conclusions based on the findings, and provide implications for further study.

Appendix A includes a list of all the plays with Nazis and the number of performances each ran on Broadway. Appendix B contains the 1920 program of the Nazi Party to provide the self-proclaimed basis of the Nazi Party. Appendix C contains a brief discussion of three plays which dealt with American fascism and are peripheral to the main study.

### Sources

A compilation of all plays produced on Broadway and containing Nazi characters was made from an examination of the Best Plays series. All plays which could conceivably have Nazi characters were investigated.

The Theatre Collection of the New York Public Library, New York City, was the primary source of scripts and other information. Other facilities used were the Library of Congress, Washington, D.C., and various libraries through the Inter-Library Loan system. Scripts were also obtained through the Drama Book Shop of New York City.

The background preparation for the study included an investigation into various sources to determine the general relationship and effect of World War II to the New York theatre. An in-depth background of the pre-war period was necessary to provide the reaction of the New York theatre and the public to the development of Nazism. The Readers' Guide to Periodical Literature and the New York Times Index were checked from 1930 to 1970 for all articles connecting the New York theatre to World War II, and those articles were surveyed. The front page and "Legitimate" section of Variety Magazine from 1930 to 1945 were examined to gain a perspective on the reaction of the commercial theatre to the developing war and the war itself. The New York Times was examined from 1930 to 1941 to observe the pre-war public response to the coming war and Nazism and to check the Drama section for such reactions. The New York Times was stressed as a source because of its location and its

reputation as a record of the New York Theatre.<sup>36</sup> The index of the Theatre Collection of the New York Public Library was also checked for all references to World War II in American theatre history books and periodicals.

A general knowledge of World War II was obtained from several general histories such as The World at War by Mark Arnold-Forster and The Origins of World War II by A. J. P. Taylor. The tenor of American society in these periods was gained from general books such as The Growth of American Thought by Merle Curti and The Power and the Glory by William Manchester. Specific periods were filled in by such studies as The Age of the Great Depression by Dixon Wecter and War and Society, The United States, 1941-1945 by Richard Polenberg.

In order to evaluate the Nazi character, it was necessary to study the rise of Nazism and Nazi ideology. Robert G. L. Waite's Hitler and Nazi Germany provided the first overview and the seven-page bibliography provided a guide to important studies and various views of Nazism. The annotated bibliographies in Dietrich Orlow's two-volume The History of the Nazi Party, 1933-1945 were also of great help. Whenever possible, Nazi writings, documents, and speeches in secondary sources were used to illustrate points. One book of particular significance is Anatomy of the SS

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<sup>36</sup> Jack Alton Hensley, "The New York Times Drama Section as Record of the American Theatre, 1920-1950" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Wisconsin, 1966).

State by Helmut Krausnick, Hans Buchheim, Martin Broszat, and Hans-Adolph Jacobsen.<sup>37</sup> The publisher's note states:

On 20 December 1963, after five years of preliminary investigation, the trial of twenty-two former members of the staff of Auschwitz concentration camp opened in Frankfurt. It was the first large-scale case of its kind tried by the Germans before a German judge and jury. Anatomy of the SS State brings together four depositions by members of the Institut für Zeitgeschichte which were made to the court before the first witness was called. They were intended as expert historical statements on the organization and functions of the SS.<sup>38</sup>

In the analysis of Nazi characters, all specific characterizations such as the portrayal of a juvenile Nazi (Tomorrow the World) or the Nazis in Norway (The Moon Is Down) were investigated in studies pertaining to the subject--studies pertaining to Nazi youth and education and studies about the Nazi occupation of Norway.

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<sup>37</sup> Helmut Krausnick, Hans Buchheim, Martin Broszat, and Hans-Adolph Jacobsen, Anatomy of the SS State, trans. Richard Barry, Marian Jackson, Dorothy Long (New York: Walker and Company, 1968).

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., publisher's note.

## CHAPTER II

### HISTORICAL BACKGROUND: NAZI IDEOLOGY

The concept of "Nazism" is a difficult one to define due to the fact that while scholars are in some agreement on the development and political structure of the Nazi Party, there is little agreement as to its roots.<sup>1</sup> Most studies of Nazism begin by raising the question of how the moment could arise and then explain the elusive nature of the subject.

Dietrich Orlow in The History of the Nazi Party: 1933-1945 begins by saying:

There is no agreement . . . on one of the fundamental characteristics of a totalitarian party: the ingredients and indeed the very existence of a Nazi ideology are a matter of considerable dispute. Some authors have taken the position that the Nazi ideology consisted of an all-encompassing political pseudo-religion.<sup>2</sup>

The problem of definition is also raised directly by Martin Broszat:

One could rightfully speak of Nazi ideology as a catchall, a conglomeration, a hodgepodge of ideas. To approach Nazi ideology with the usual measuring devices of intellectual history is therefore possible only with the greatest reservation.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Karl Dietrich Bracher, The German Dictatorship: The Origins, Structure, and Effects of National Socialism, trans. Jean Steinberg (New York: Praeger Publisher, 1971), p. 3.

<sup>2</sup>Dietrich Orlow, The History of the Nazi Party: 1933-1945 (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburg Press, 1973), p. 5.

<sup>3</sup>Martin Broszat, German National Socialism, 1919-1945, trans. Kurt Rosenbaum and Inge Pauli Boehm (Santa Barbara, California: Clio Press, 1960), p. 32.

Another major problem of definition is that the expressed beliefs of the Nazi Party were altered to fit political requirements as needed. Ideology was used as an organizational tool and was never meant to mean the same thing to everyone.

The investigator resembles Peer Gynt peeling his onion; as each layer comes off, the inner face represents another ideological aspect and the outer face, which is the propaganda, also acquires another look.<sup>4</sup>

This section is intended to provide the necessary background for the discussion of the Nazi characters in the following chapters. For that purpose, it will focus, as much as possible, only on those factors of Nazism which can illuminate the portrayal of Nazi characters.

The foreword to Anatomy of the SS State provides a helpful guideline to investigating Nazism. It says that there are two predominant views of the Third Reich. The first view sums it up with the word Auschwitz and does not go beyond the stark fact that it happened. The question of how and why it occurred is answered with "generalized moral and cultural philosophising" and leaves out the intellectual and political background. The second view sees the events as the crimes of "a misguided body of men who had no place in the main stream of German history of the period." Both views lack insight and "fail to see the connection between the form of political tyranny adopted and the mass crime called for by its ideology."<sup>5</sup> This study attempts to relate that connection.

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<sup>4</sup>Robert Cecil, The Myth of the Master Race: Alfred Rosenberg and Nazi Ideology (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1972), p. 64.

<sup>5</sup>Krausnick, et al., Anatomy of the SS State, p. xiii.

The terms "National Socialism" and "NSDAP" will be used interchangeably with the Nazi Party. The Nazi Party was called Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei (The National Socialist German Workers' Party) which was abbreviated NSDAP. The term "Nazi" was a German contraction for the name of the party.

Nazism is generally viewed as a form of twentieth-century fascism. H. R. Trevor-Roper says fascism began in 1922-23 with the March on Rome by Mussolini and was followed next year with the abortive Munich putsch by Hitler in Germany and it ended as an international movement in 1945 with the deaths of Mussolini and Hitler. Fascism, like Nazism, is also an elusive concept. In contrast, although Communism has heresies and deviations, unlike fascism, it does have a single intellectual source with a proclaimed dogma. Fascism has no agreed-upon prophets. "Its origins are plural, divergent, imprecise."<sup>6</sup>

In Three Faces of Fascism, Ernst Nolte stresses that while fascism cannot be viewed simply as anti-communism, it would be inaccurate to define it without that basic criterion. He defines it as follows:

Fascism is anti-Marxism which seeks to destroy the enemy by the evolvment of a radically opposed and yet related ideology and by the use of almost identical and yet typically modified methods, always, however, within the unyielding framework of national self-assertion and autonomy.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup>H. R. Trevor-Roper, "The Phenomenon of Fascism" in European Fascism, ed. S. J. Woolf (New York: Vintage Books, 1969), pp. 18-38.

<sup>7</sup>Ernst Nolte, Three Faces of Fascism, trans. Leila Vennewitz (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1966), pp. 20-21.

This implies that there is no fascism without Marxism. Later, Nolte ways that fascism can be viewed as a "conservative revolution" or "a counter-revolution on the soil of revolution."<sup>8</sup> When Nolte applies his definition of fascism to National Socialism, he starts with "The Background: The Race Doctrine." He is referring to a branch of European thought which had developed about 1890 and was an anthropological view of history.<sup>9</sup> The importance of racialism in Nazi ideology is stressed in nearly all of the studies on Nazism encountered.

Racialism is best understood in context of another concept in the intellectual background of Germany preceding Nazism. That concept is Volkisch. A clear definition of Volkisch and its extension into Nazism is given by Peter Merkl:

Volkisch is derived from Volk, meaning people. The word has the same origins as the English 'folk' and shares its overtones of an egalitarian populism and a highly integrated, homogeneous, ethnic community. 'Volkisch' is used to describe the German extreme rightist movements and radical splinter groups whose most significant characteristic was their opposition to the Western tradition--often to capitalism--, to the democratic and republican ideas of the Weimar Republic, and especially to any foreign policy which meant German adjustment to the consequences of defeat in World War I or to international conciliation in general. They emphasized anti-Semitism and anti-Catholicism. They say the differences of man are more significant than their common ties. They promoted the concepts of 'race' and 'blood,' the superiority of the Germanic people over the Slavs and other neighboring ethnic elements. They represented an opposition to the Enlightenment and the West European heritage of the French Revolution.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup>Ibid., p. 466.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., p. 277.

<sup>10</sup>Peter Merkl, Introduction to German National Socialism, 1919-1945 by Martin Broszat, trans. Kurt Rosenbaum and Inge Pauli Boehm (Santa Barbara, California: Clio Press, 1960), pp. 2-3.



This definition also indicates the intertwined nature of the concepts of Volkisch, race, nationalism and anti-Semitism.

An extended history of Volkisch thought is given by George L. Moose in The Crisis of German Ideology: Intellectual Origins of the Third Reich.<sup>11</sup> He notes that Volkisch thought was opposed to progress and modernization and offered romanticism as an alternative to the modern world. "It also made belonging to something larger than oneself a positive virtue indispensable to personal salvation."<sup>12</sup> He traces its philosophic roots to Kant but notes that two sciences which developed in the nineteenth century led to its objectification. Those sciences were anthropology and philology.

Cranial measurements developed by anthropologists provided a criterion for Aryanism. Philology provided a belief that the Germans and the English had common forbearers in India and had developed self-reliance and independence as a result of migration. Elements of Indian philosophy such as karma (rebirth) entered into Volkisch thought.<sup>13</sup> These beliefs are not without significance. Heinrich Himmler was convinced he was the reincarnation of Henry the Fowler and Hitler was passionately occupied with the writings of nature mystics.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>11</sup>George L. Mosse, The Crisis of German Ideology: Intellectual Origins of the Third Reich (New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1964).

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., p. 17.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., pp. 88-90.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., p. 306.

Mosse says that two factors characterized the thrust of Volkisch thought into the twentieth century. First, Volkisch thought rapidly assimilated racial ideas which were systematized into pseudo-science, and, second, there was a heightened urgency to put Volkisch thought into practice.<sup>15</sup>

The word Volk has another important aspect. The Nazi Party was a hybrid of popular will and authoritative fiat. It consisted of mutually exclusive attributes. The Third Reich belonged to Prusso-German history and also to the century of the common man. The paradox was resolved by the word Volk which "denoted both 'the people' in the radical democratic sense and 'the folk' in the racial sense."<sup>16</sup> The Nazi Party professed a belief in the German folk soul or Volkisch and was fond of using the term. The term is as elusive as "folkish" or "folk soul" are in English. The term did have "strongly socialist and vaguely authoritarian learnings."<sup>17</sup>

The Nazi Party proclaimed a twenty-five point program in 1920 (see Appendix B) which contained many elements of Volkisch thought, including racialism, anti-Semitism, socialistic ideas and authoritarian ideas.<sup>18</sup> Volkisch and Nazi ideology were identical

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<sup>15</sup>Ibid., p. 52.

<sup>16</sup>Richard Grunberger, The 12-Year Reich: A Social History of Nazi Germany, 1933-1945 (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1971), p. 18.

<sup>17</sup>Joachim Remak, ed., The Nazi Years: A Documentary History (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1969), p. 27.

<sup>18</sup>"Program of the National Socialist German Workers' Party" in The Nazi Years, ed.: Joachim Remak.

if one understands by ideology a composite of intellectual attitudes. Hitler expressed this when he wrote in Mein Kampf: "The basic ideas of the National Socialism movement are volkisch, and the volkisch ideas are National Socialist."<sup>19</sup>

Two writers who are mentioned in most studies of Nazism are Count Joseph Arthur de Gobineau and Houston Stewart Chamberlain. Gobineau was a French diplomat and man of letters. He wrote a four-volume work published in Paris in 1853 and 1855 called an Essay on the Inequality of the Human Races. He wrote them as a result of his contact with the Germans from whom he derived his theories. To Gobineau, the key to all history and civilization was race. The best race was the Aryan race and the purest example of Aryanism were the Germans.<sup>20</sup>

Chamberlain was a member of the Gobineau Society in Germany. He was the son of an English admiral and the son-in-law of Richard Wagner. At the turn of the century, he wrote Foundations of the Nineteenth Century in which he set forth his racial ideas. Chamberlain argued that there were two pure races, the Germans and the Jews. He condemned anti-Semitism, but slipped into it as he discussed Jews. His chapter on Jews formed a good deal of the philosophical basis for Nazi anti-Semitism. Chamberlain argued that Christ was an Aryan and felt the way of salvation was with the Teutons. By World War I,

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<sup>19</sup>Adolph Hitler, quoted by Martin Broszat, German National Socialism, 1919-1945, p. 43.

<sup>20</sup>William Shirer, The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich: A History of Nazi Germany, 2 vols. (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1960), 1:104-105.

his book had sold 100,000 copies and by 1938, in its 24th edition, had sold over a quarter million copies. He was an ardent supporter of Hitler and a member of the Nazi Party. He died in 1927, before his dreams for Hitler were realized.<sup>21</sup> Chamberlain also had a profound influence on the chief theoretician of the Nazi Party, Alfred Rosenberg.<sup>22</sup>

Bracher calls the ideas of Gobineau and Chamberlain a "quasi-religious cultural philosophy with markedly conservative Christian overtones." In referring to their writings and the writings of Lagarde and Langbehn, he says:

Even as theories, these books and brochures were weapons in the hands of demagogues, and, after World War I, their effect in Germany and Austria was quite different from that of the rest of Europe.<sup>23</sup>

Bracher believes the reason these ideas, which were present in all of Europe, spread to all aspects of German intellectual, social, and political life and took such a detrimental form was due to: "the special political and social history of the German states in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, which left Germany with weaker powers of resistance than other countries."<sup>24</sup> These ideologies were pushed into a vacuum following the catastrophe of World War I and they became the motivating force of a militant political movement.

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<sup>21</sup>Ibid., 1:104-109.

<sup>22</sup>Robert Cecil, The Myth of the Master Race, pp. 12-14.

<sup>23</sup>Bracher, The German Dictatorship, p. 16.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., p. 17.

Anti-Semitism received some setbacks before World War I but it did not wane or decline. A Volkisch anti-Semitism was fostered by militant sects. One of them was the Germanic Order founded in 1913 in Munich. It was reorganized in 1918 as the Thule Society and "became the godfather of the Hitler party and put a permanent stamp on the early phase of the movement."<sup>25</sup>

The impact of World War I on the lives of millions of Germans was one of the essential conditions for the rise of the Nazi Party and Hitler.<sup>26</sup> In the wake of military defeat and a revolutionary climate, there arose a number of sectarian "anti" movements. These groups were rooted in Volkisch nationalism and were anti-Semitic, anti-Western, and anti-Slav. One of these groups was the Deutsch Arbeiter Partei (German Workers' Party) which Hitler encountered in 1919.<sup>27</sup> By 1920, Hitler had become one of the party's best propaganda speakers. At a February 24, 1920, meeting in Munich, Hitler announced a twenty-five point program (referred to earlier) and a change of the party's name to the National Socialist German Workers' Party (HSDAP).<sup>28</sup>

The Nazi Party, like others, was generally anti-capitalist, nationalist and anti-Semitic. The twenty-five points contained unquestionably socialistic demands. The Germans were searching

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<sup>25</sup>Ibid., p. 45.

<sup>26</sup>Alan Bullock, Hitler, A Study in Tyranny, rev. ed. (New York: Harper and Row, 1962), p. 54.

<sup>27</sup>Bracher, The German Dictatorship, p. 50.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid., p. 84.

for a "third way," "a specifically German socialism somewhere between the communism exemplified by Russian Bolshevism and the capitalism of the victorious Western powers. . . ."29

The desire for a "third way" made the economic depression a fortuitous factor in Hitler's rise to power. Since his release from prison in 1924, Hitler had continually predicted disaster for Germany at the same time that the country was consolidating itself. "It was the depression which tipped the scales against the Republic and . . . shifted the weight of advantage to Hitler's side."30

Ultimately, the economic views and other views of the party were reshaped into the beliefs and aims of Hitler. "What Hitler did with [the economic] program was to de-emphasize its socialist party--not to the point of driving away the dispossessed, but to that of not antagonizing the potential middle-class sympathizer."31

There is a wide variety of opinion about the reasons for the success of Nazism. While the degree of German culpability is not an issue here, those opinions are of general importance to this study. One of the popularized views is that given by William Shirer who saw Nazism as "a logical continuation of German History."32 Shirer's viewpoint has been criticized both as superficial33 and

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<sup>29</sup>Broszat, German National Socialism, p. 71.

<sup>30</sup>Bullock, Hitler, A Study in Tyranny, p. 151.

<sup>31</sup>Remak, ed., The Nazi Years, p. 31.

<sup>32</sup>Shirer, The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich, p. 90.

<sup>33</sup>Bracher, The German Dictatorship, p. 3.

unbalanced.<sup>34</sup> Taken to its extreme, the position can lead to attributing characteristics to Germans and succumbing to Hitler's ideas of race. There is also a degree of irony in viewing Nazism as a one-way road from Luther to Hitler, since the Nazis themselves emphasized real and imaginary national characteristics. Friends and foes alike express similar attitudes:

Both wish to demonstrate that Germany's national history contained the seeds of Hitlerism and that great names in German philosophy, religion and culture were forerunners of the Nazi era.<sup>35</sup>

Gerhard Ritter takes a view completely opposite that of Shirer. Ritter stresses the European nature of fascism and views Nazism as a European phenomenon.<sup>36</sup> Ritter's position has also been criticized. A. J. Nicholls says it can imply that "Nazism is the product of urbanization and democracy . . ." and Hitler's success a result of "a proletarian mass eager for social revolution."<sup>37</sup> Alan Bullock in Hitler, A Study in Tyranny states the problem of these two opposing views and offers a middle position:

The view has often been expressed that Hitler could only have come to power in Germany, and it is true--without falling into the same error of racialism as the Nazis--that there were

<sup>34</sup>Klaus Epstein, "Shirer's Argument Challenged" in Hitler and Nazi Germany, ed. Robert G. L. Waite (Hinsdale, Illinois: The Dryden Press, 1965), p. 40.

<sup>35</sup>A. J. Nicholls, "Germany" in European Fascism, ed. S. J. Woolf (New York: Random House, 1968), p. 61.

<sup>36</sup>Gerhard Ritter, "The European Context" in The Nazi Revolution: Hitler's Dictatorship and the German Nation, ed. John L. Snell, revised by Allan Mitchell (Lexington, Mass: D. C. Heath and Company, 1973), pp. 22-34.

<sup>37</sup>Nicholls, "Germany," p. 62.

certain features of German historical development, quite apart from the effects of the Defeat and the Depression, which favoured the rise of such a movement.

This is not to accuse the Germans of Original Sin, or to ignore the other sides of German life which were only grossly caricatured by the Nazis. But Nazism was not some terrible accident which fell upon the German people out of a blue sky. It was rooted in their history, and while it is true that a majority of the German people never voted for Hitler, it is also true that thirteen millions did. Both facts need to be remembered.<sup>38</sup>

There are other views and explanations for the success of Nazism which stress sociological and psychological causes. Those which are pertinent will be referred to later.

Hitler is central to any study of Nazi Germany. "Never in modern history has one man's personality so completely dominated and controlled a society."<sup>39</sup> It is true that the history of National Socialism cannot be divorced from the life of Hitler. However, in discussing Hitler, it should also be understood that National Socialism was "more than the gigantic mistake of misguided fellows, the product solely of the demonic powers of one individual."<sup>40</sup> Hitler's political rise required necessary political and intellectual currents. This study is not concerned with the details of his political rise, but rather with his ideas and beliefs.

By the end of World War I, Hitler's ideas and prejudices were fixed and were to change little during his life. In Mein Kampf, Hitler said of his days in Vienna:

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<sup>38</sup>Bullock, Hitler, A Study in Tyranny, p. 807.

<sup>39</sup>Robert G. L. Waite, ed., Introduction to Hitler and Nazi Germany, p. 2.

<sup>40</sup>Bracher, The German Dictatorship, p. 57.



In this period, there took shape within me a world picture and a philosophy which became the granite foundation of all my acts. In addition to what I then created, I have had to learn little; and I have had to alter nothing.<sup>41</sup>

Hitler put his ideas into his famous book Mein Kampf (My Struggle) following the unsuccessful putsch in 1923. The purpose of the book was to establish himself as the founder and builder of the Nazi Party. The two volumes did that and also made him rich even before he came to power.<sup>42</sup> The book is unsystematized, seldom logical, disconnected, and has no movement or development. Nonetheless, it contained what Hitler believed.<sup>43</sup>

Mein Kampf had in it all the elements of National Socialist ideology. The book expressed Hitler's ideas from his youth to his death. "Nationalism, anti-Bolshevism, and anti-Semitism, linked by a Darwinistic theory of struggle, formed the pillars of his world view and shaped his utterances from the very first to the last."<sup>44</sup>

Alan Bullock and others also place the basis of Hitler's political beliefs in a crude Darwinism.<sup>45</sup> Bullock says this belief

<sup>41</sup>Adolph Hitler, Mein Kampf, trans. Ralph Manheim (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1943), p. 22.

<sup>42</sup>Konrad Heiden, Introduction to Mein Kampf, trans. Ralph Manheim, pp. xv-xxi.

<sup>43</sup>Ralph Manheim, Translator's Note to Mein Kampf, pp. xi-xii.

<sup>44</sup>Joachim Fest, Hitler, trans. Richard and Clara Wilson (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., 1973), p. 206.

<sup>45</sup>Alan Bullock, "The Theory of Nazism: Hitler's Basic Ideas" in Hitler and Nazi Germany, pp. 59-64.

underlies three fundamental principles Hitler expressed in Mein Kampf: the concept of struggle, purity of blood, and the ingenuity of the individual. The concept of struggle creates achievements and raised man above the animal world. The corollary is that such values as pacifism, Christian virtues create weakness and cowardice. The concept of purity of blood is the racial one discussed earlier. This concept provided the justification for the right of the Germans (Aryans) to ride rough-shod over inferior people and for an elite to rule over the Germans. The last concept (ingenuity of the individual) asserted the idea of inequality and the leadership principle (Fuhrerprinzip). The Fuhrer was a mystical conception understood as "an incarnation of the unity of the Volk." These concepts were interrelated and they were encompassed in one larger idea--the Jew. "Hitler's anti-Semitism is the main idea which embraces the whole span of his thought."<sup>46</sup>

All the major studies encountered express the thought that anti-Semitism was the core of Hitler's ideology. Although the National Socialist Party had embraced socialist ideology, Hitler was not a socialist.<sup>47</sup> He was not interested in social and economic reform. He had spent fifteen years attaining power and he was determined "not to endanger it with far reaching social experiments."<sup>48</sup> Hitler considered a general concern for the people to

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<sup>46</sup>Ibid., p. 64.

<sup>47</sup>Nolte, Three Faces of Fascism, p. 364.

<sup>48</sup>Orlow, The History of the Nazi Party, p. 17.

be a socialist concept. The revolution was not for the masses but only for the racially superior leaders:

Their rule and victory over the Jews and other 'inferiors'-- the true volkisch-racist revolution--remained the only genuine kernel of Hitler's ideology, regardless of the proclamations of National Socialist doctrine and propoganda; almost everything else was utilitarian, Machiavellian power politics.<sup>49</sup>

Several points need to be made about the central role of anti-Semitism in Nazism. In the final stage of the Weimar Republic, the Jews became the embodiment of every ill besetting state and society, including capitalism, anarchism, communism, and such social problems as lesbian and homosexual magazines, smoking among women and the incidence of abortion.<sup>50</sup> The Jew was central to Volkisch ideology and no other minority in Germany would have served the role of scapegoat for all the ills of society.<sup>51</sup>

Hitler was clear about the specific role of the Jews in the racialism he espoused in Mein Kampf: "Without the clearest knowledge of the racial problem and hence of the Jewish problem there will never be a resurrection of the German nation."<sup>52</sup> As early as May, 1923, Hitler had publicly said that the Jews were not human; they were "the image of the devil" and the "racial tuberculosis of the nation."<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>49</sup>Bracher, The German Dictatorship, p.

<sup>50</sup>Grunberger, The 12-Year Reich, p. 15.

<sup>51</sup>Mosse, The Crisis in German Ideology, p. 243.

<sup>52</sup>Hitler, Mein Kampf, p. 339.

<sup>53</sup>Fest, Hitler, p. 212.

The fanatic and irrational nature of Nazi anti-Semitism can be observed by the fact that the death camps were operating up to the end of the war during a time when there were pressing military needs for such things as precious freight space and armament workers.<sup>54</sup> The extermination of the Jews has been referred to as an outgrowth of the "biologicistic insanity of Nazi ideology. . . ."<sup>55</sup> The importance of this factor in presenting Nazi ideology cannot be overemphasized:

Racial thought and its consequences are fundamental to the whole cultural drive of the Third Reich. Once this has been understood, everything else will follow.<sup>56</sup>

"Concentration camp crimes and mass murder of Jews were essential features of National Socialist tyranny."<sup>57</sup> Understanding the nature of that racialism is not simple. Franz Neumann in Behemoth: The Structure and Practice of National Socialism 1933-1944 says that since the Jew was not considered human in totalitarianism, the anti-Semitism is "magic beyond discussion." He contrasts that sort of anti-Semitism with several types of non-totalitarian anti-Semitism which he says present remnants of rationality and can be analyzed.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>54</sup>Nolte, Three Faces of Fascism, pp. 399-400.

<sup>55</sup>Bracher, The German Dictatorship, p. 430.

<sup>56</sup>George L. Mosse, Nazi Culture: Intellectual, Cultural and Social Life in the Third Reich, trans. Salvator Attanasio (New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1966), p. 60.

<sup>57</sup>Krausnick, et al., Anatomy of the SS State, p. xiii.

<sup>58</sup>Franz Neumann, Behemoth: The Structure and Practice of National Socialism: 1933-1944 (New York: Harper and Row, 1944), pp. 121-123.

Some sort of clarification of Nazi anti-Semitism is necessary and a helpful explanation is given by Dietrich Orlow. Orlow views the nature of political myths such as racism as being different in a totalitarian state. He says these myths are totalizing and reflexive. All past, present and future events are divided into two parts, each with a moral value. "We" are morally good, "they" are morally evil. In Nazism, Aryan-Germans become totally good and the Jews totally evil. This belief controls all actions of the individual who accepts it. If the myth is internalized, it provides an answer to all questions and substitutes a mythical reality for an objective reality. "Adolph Hitler both believed the myth and identified himself with it."<sup>59</sup>

While anti-Semitism served as the core of racialism, it should be noted that fear and hatred of the Slavs was also strong in Nazism, as attested by the fact that the Nazi regime exterminated as many civilian Slavs as Jews.<sup>60</sup>

Joachim Fest quotes Hitler as having said, "Gods and Beasts, that is what our world is made of" and says this statement is "probably the most succinct possible summary of the essence of National Socialism, behind all ideological and tactical masks."<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>59</sup>Orlow, The History of the Nazi Party, pp. 3-4.

<sup>60</sup>Peter Phillips, The Tragedy of Nazi Germany (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1969), p. 109.

<sup>61</sup>Joachim Fest, The Face of the Third Reich: Portraits of Nazi Leadership, trans. Michael Bullock (New York: Random House, 1970), pp. 291-292.

The discussion of Hitler's ideology is not meant to imply that every Nazi would have an identical ideology. However, as the quintessential Nazi, his ideology provides the basic model. His attitudes and ideas included opposition to tolerance, cosmopolitanism, democracy, Marxism,<sup>62</sup> equality and peace; a belief in authoritarian forms of government, an intolerant nationalism, inequality of the races and the virtues of war.<sup>63</sup> All of these concepts, however, are subordinate to anti-Semitism. "Whatever psychological interpretations of his life experiences may indicate, Hitler's hatred of the Jews made up the most constant factor in all his willful political life."<sup>64</sup> Nonetheless, the psychological explanations can be useful in comparing Nazi portrayals to the model.

Erich Fromm finds the key to Hitler in *Mein Kampf*.<sup>65</sup> Fromm sees Hitler as having an authoritarian character structure and uses this as the main source for analyzing the psychology of Nazism. He says the authoritative character has the "simultaneous presence of sadistic and masochistic drives." Hitler saw the German people as always innocent and the enemies as "sadistic brutes." At the same time, he saw Germany as lacking necessary "brutal power." The typical sado-masochistic love for the powerful and hatred for

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<sup>62</sup>Bracher, The German Dictatorship, p. 63.

<sup>63</sup>Bullock, Hitler: A Study in Tyranny, p. 56.

<sup>64</sup>Broszat, German National Socialism, p. 51.

<sup>65</sup>Erich Fromm, "Hitler's Personality: The Basis of His Appeal" in Hitler and Nazi Germany, ed. Robert G. L. Waite, pp. 25-28.

**the** powerless explains much of the political actions of Hitler and **hi**s followers. The masochistic side of the character stresses the **wor**thlessness of the individual and the need to submit to the power **of** a leader or an elite. Fromm sees Hitler's ideology as more or **l**ess identical with the ideology of the Nazi Party:

This ideology results from his personality which, with its inferiority feeling, hatred against life, asceticism, and envy of those who enjoy life, is the soil of sado-masochistic strivings; it was addressed to people who, on account of their similar character structure, felt attracted and excited by these teachings and became ardent followers of the man who expressed what they felt.<sup>66</sup>

**F**romm concludes that Nazi ideology enabled the authoritarian charac-  
**ter** to be able to submit completely to someone above and have total  
**p**ower over someone beneath him.

Douglas Kelley, the prison psychiatrist during the Nazi  
**w**ar trials, views Hitler as a compulsive fanatic.<sup>67</sup> He calls  
**a**ttention to Hitler's marked fear of death, disease, dirt, and  
**h**orses; his dislike for meat and tobacco; a compulsion for extreme  
**c**leanliness; and very strict and rigid daily routines. Kelley  
**c**lassifies him as a "psycho-neurotic of the obsessive and hysterical  
**t**ype." He had symptoms of hysteria and paranoid or persecution  
**p**atterns, including outbursts of anger, hysterical paralysis of  
**t**he left side and marked suspicions.

In simple terms, Hitler was an abnormal and a mentally ill individual, though his deviations were not of a nature which in the average individual would arouse the serious concern of others.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>66</sup>Ibid., p. 27.

<sup>67</sup>Douglas Kelley, "Hitler: A Compulsive Fanatic" in Hitler and Nazi Germany, ed. Robert G. L. Waite, pp. 21-24.

<sup>68</sup>Ibid., p. 24.

Walter C. Langer, who did the wartime report on Hitler, attributed sexual perversion to Hitler and said this caused the defense mechanism commonly called projection to become paramount in his life. Hitler's own personal problems, conflicts, everything he hated in himself was projected to the Jew.<sup>69</sup> Robert G. L. Waite also emphasizes Hitler's projection and says it was a direct consequence of his personal feelings of guilt and self-hatred caused by incestuous feelings, masochistic sexual perversion and a fear of having Jewish blood.<sup>70</sup>

Zevedei Barbu sees the rise of Nazism as a product of a social psychological malaise.<sup>71</sup> Barbu concerns himself with the psychological condition of the German people. The Nazis were recruited from a cross section of Germans and he believes they lived in a unique condition of stress and insecurity. The stress was caused by a strong communist movement, the international scene in relationship to Germany, and separatist movements in Bavaria. Stress can cause a lost frame of reference in the individual and the group, and the Nazis offered quick relief from the stressful situation. The core of the part consisted of "socially non-descript People." They included demobilized soldiers and the unemployed. All of them had one common trait; they could all be called declassés,

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<sup>69</sup>Walter C. Langer, The Mind of Adolph Hitler: The Secret Wartime Report (New York: Basic Books, 1972), p. 183.

<sup>70</sup>Robert G. L. Waite, "Guilt Feelings and Perverted Sexuality" in The Nazi Revolution, pp. 78-92.

<sup>71</sup>Zevedei Barbu, "The Product of Social-Psychological Malaise" in Hitler and Nazi Germany, pp. 52-58.



"people who had failed completely or partly to integrate themselves with one of the institutionalized forms of society." (This observation is similar to one of the villain types discussed in Chapter I -) These people can be described as sociopathic personalities who are liable to political delinquency. They solved their problems by excessive integration--a desire for a movement which would give them everything they lacked as individuals.

These explanations and observations for Hitler's behavior and the appearance of Nazism will be referred to when applicable to particular portrayals of Nazis.

Hitler's real interest was not with theoretical ideology, but with the success of the party, its organization and activity. His fanaticism and total concentration were applied to questions about "effectiveness, timeliness, psychological calculations, tactics, organization and propaganda."<sup>72</sup> The organizational structure of the Nazi Party can provide further understanding of Nazi characters, especially when they are described as Storm troopers, SS or Gestapo.

The SA (Sturmabteilung) or Storm Troopers were the oldest Paramilitary unit of the Nazi Party. They were founded August 3, 1921, as the "Sports Division" after Hitler took control of the Party.<sup>73</sup> The SA was a private army and its function was to protect Nazi meetings, to break up the meetings of opponents and to terrorize

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<sup>72</sup>Broszat, German National Socialism, p. 53.

<sup>73</sup>Fest, Hitler, p. 147.

opponents. These brown-shirted storm troopers formed the core of Hitler's support. The SA formed one-half of the party; the other half was the P.O., the Political Organization.<sup>74</sup> The SA was led by Captain Ernst Roehm, and from the start Hitler and Roehm were at odds. Hitler wanted the SA subordinate to the Party and Roehm wanted it independent.<sup>75</sup> Roehm resigned in 1925 and went to Bolivia. The SA consisted of 70,000 men by 1930. Hitler recalled Roehm and the SA grew to two and a half million.

The SA was used by Hitler to further his belief in the propaganda value of brutality and terror. It had consisted of many former soldiers, thugs and riff-raff. At the start of the depression, the SA attracted a great many of the unemployed and the socially declassés. From January 30, 1933, when Hitler was appointed Chancellor, the SA was freed from all previous restrictions to "hunt, torture and murder."<sup>76</sup> The conflict between Roehm and Hitler grew. Hitler wanted the SA to remain a purely terrorist organization. Roehm wanted a revolutionary conquest of the state. Hitler sought the support of bankers and industrialists to gain control of the regular German army. Roehm had only contempt for bankers and industrialists and wanted to swallow up the German army and do away with the "stiff-necked general staff."<sup>77</sup> The conflict

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<sup>74</sup>Fest, The Face of the Third Reich, pp. 137-144.

<sup>75</sup>Hans Buchheim, "The SS--Instrument of Domination," trans. Richard Barry, in Anatomy of the SS State, p. 140.

<sup>76</sup>Fest, The Face of the Third Reich, pp. 137-144.

<sup>77</sup>Edward Crankshaw, Gestapo: Instrument of Tyranny (New York: Viking Press, 1956), p. 19.

was resolved by Hitler in the summer of 1934 with the famous "Night of the Long Knives." Hitler, with the aid of the SS and Gestapo, used the pretext of conspiracies in the SA to purge the leadership.<sup>78</sup> The account of the number murdered, including Roehm, varies from 71 to over a thousand.<sup>79</sup> The SA was finished and never played a major role again.

Hitler also had an Assault Squad (Stosstrupps Hitler) which was later replaced by the SS (Schutzstaffel) or Protection Echelon replaced the former Hitler Assault Squad (Stosstrupps Hitler). The uniform was black, the cap had a death's-head badge, and the swastika arm band had a black border.<sup>80</sup> The SS remained relatively insignificant until 1929 when, numbering about 200 men, Hitler appointed its third leader, a mild-mannered chicken farmer named Heinrich Himmler.<sup>81</sup> Himmler expanded the SS to 50,000 men by 1933. The SS was part of the SA, but after it carried out the executions of Roehm and the SA leadership in 1934, it was made independent of the SA.<sup>82</sup>

In 1929, Himmler had inspected SS recruits for racial traits and accepted only those over five feet seven inches.<sup>83</sup> In

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<sup>78</sup>Ibid., pp. 76-87.

<sup>79</sup>Jacques Delarue, The Gestapo: A History of Horror, trans. Mervyn Savill (New York: Dell Publishing Company, 1964), p. 117.

<sup>80</sup>Buchheim, "The SS," p. 141.

<sup>81</sup>Shirer, The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich, 1:121.

<sup>82</sup>Fest, The Face of the Third Reich, pp. 116-117.

<sup>83</sup>Nolte, Three Faces of Fascism, p. 390.

January, 1932, Himmler instituted the "Marriage Certificate" for prospective brides of the SS to be awarded solely on the basis of racial health and heredity.<sup>84</sup> The SS was to be more than a mere association of men: it was to be a community of genealogically high-grade families." Hitler used the SS to take over and control the entire German police system and Germany became the SS state." Himmler named five "pillars" of the SS: the general SS who were the top leaders; the special duty unit involved in the activities of the police; the death's head units who formed the guards for the concentration camps; the security service for intelligence purposes; and the department of race and settlement. All these "pillars" served one single objective, the "restoring to health" (Gesundung) and safeguarding of "blood." "The SS was therefore simply the most complete organization concretization of Hitler's doctrine."<sup>85</sup>

The SS had no strict ideological training. The SS man subscribed to the "Führer Principle" and "racial purity," but the real force and solidifying factor in the SS was a certain mentality. The SS man learned that:

His basic attitude must be that of a fighter fighting for fighting's sake; he must be 'hard'--not only insured to but impervious to all human emotions; he should be contemptuous

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<sup>84</sup>In fact few applicants were turned down but few also satisfied every requirement. Jeremy Noakes and Geoffrey Pridham, eds., Documents on Nazism, 1919-1945 (New York: Viking Press, 1974), pp. 181-212.

<sup>85</sup>Nolte, Three Faces of Fascism, pp. 391-392.

of 'inferior beings' and arrogant towards all who did not belong to the Order; he must show comradeship and 'comeraderie'; the word 'impossible' does not exist.

**Much** of this was common to other Nazis, but the peculiarity of the **SS** was the intensity with which this mentality was cultivated and **how** consistently the mentality was translated into action.<sup>86</sup> Loyalty **was** considered the specific virtue of the SS. The SS motto was : "**Loyalty** is mine honour."<sup>87</sup>

The early SS military division known as the SS-Verfügungstruppe **was** known after January, 1940, as the Waffen-SS. There were fully **mil**itarized combat formations. "The Waffen-SS men, selected for **the**ir toughness and fanaticism, were undismayed by defeat."<sup>88</sup>

The difference between the SA and the SS is significant. **The** SA under Roehm had practiced "emotional terrorism" with spon-  
**tane**ous acts of violence and the use of political and criminal  
**techn**iques. This was changed to a "central bureaucracy systemati-  
**cal**ly employing terrorism as an institution." Himmler created a  
**new** man of violence "concerned with the dispassionate extermination  
**of** real or possible opponents, not with the release of sadistic  
**imp**ulses."<sup>89</sup> There had been violence against those the Nazis  
**oppo**sed long before Hitler became Chancellor. However, these were  
**not** official government actions. The first legal move against the

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<sup>86</sup>Barry, Hans Buchheim, "Command and Compliance," trans. Richard  
Anatomy of the SS State, pp. 320-321.

<sup>87</sup>Ibid., p. 366.

<sup>88</sup>State, Elizabeth Wiskemann, Introduction to Anatomy of the SS  
p. xi.

<sup>89</sup>Fest, The Face of the Third Reich, p. 118.

Jews was taken December 23, 1932, five weeks before Hitler came to power. It was a guideline preventing Jews from changing their names.<sup>90</sup>

The Reichstige fire occurred February 27, 1933. Hitler was given emergency powers and a reign of terror was started against opponents. The SA established concentration camps, mostly around Berlin.<sup>91</sup> These were not desolate, barbed wire fortresses, but improvised prisons such as warehouses and cellars where the SA took tens of thousands of political prisoners and interrogated them, often under torture.<sup>92</sup> One of the more famous ones in the middle of Berlin was called the Columbia House.<sup>93</sup> Every arrest began with a severe beating. Torture and murder were common; the police reported with regularity that a victim had been shot while trying to escape and victims were thrown from windows and reported as suicides.<sup>94</sup>

Mass arrest began February 28, 1933, and the first provisional concentration camps were opened to relieve overcrowded prisons. A camp was opened by the SS on March 20, 1933, in an old

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<sup>90</sup>Raul Hilberg, The Destruction of the European Jews (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1967), pp. 14-15.

<sup>91</sup>Broszat, German National Socialism, pp. 141-142.

<sup>92</sup>Otto Freidrich, Before the Deluge: A Portrait of Berlin in the 1920's (New York: Harper and Row, 1972), p. 388.

<sup>93</sup>A. J. Ryder, Twentieth Century Germany: From Bismark to Brandt (New York: Columbia University Press, 1973), p. 304.

<sup>94</sup>Konrad Heiden, Der Fuhrer: Hitler's Rise to Power, trans. Ralph Manheim (New York: Howard Fertig, 1944).

powder factory in Dachau. Maltreatment and killings in the prisons and concentration camps were everyday affairs.<sup>95</sup> Wilhelm Frick, Minister of the Interior, declared on March 8, 1933, that 100,000 enemies of the regime had been arrested.<sup>96</sup> The expansion of the SS before the war into an organization of total power rested strongly on the concentration camps and Jewish persecution.<sup>97</sup> Martin Broszat sums up their significance:

The fact that the concentration camps were retained after 1933-4 without objective necessity signified an intentional prolongation of the state of emergency, and it was not accidental that after the outbreak of war they assumed gigantic dimensions. For even in internal affairs war was the element most characteristic of the National Socialist leadership: it was the great state of emergency which enabled it to carry through totalitarian control.<sup>98</sup>

The concentration camps became the nucleus of the future SS state. The model was Dachau. The SA had been arbitrary in its brutality; the SS institutionalized the terror. The penalty for spreading atrocity stories about the camps was death.<sup>99</sup> The number murdered in the first nine months of the Hitler regime has been estimated at five hundred to six hundred.<sup>100</sup> It is pertinent to this study that the first moves against the Jews were not against Jews in general, but against the Jewish intelligentsia.<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>95</sup>Bracher, The German Dictatorship, p. 358.

<sup>96</sup>A. J. Ryder, Twentieth Century Germany, p. 304.

<sup>97</sup>Bracher, The German Dictatorship, p. 357.

<sup>98</sup>Broszat, quoted in Bracher, The German Dictatorship,  
p. 357.

<sup>99</sup>Bracher, The German Dictatorship, p. 358.

<sup>100</sup>Fest, The Face of the Third Reich, p. 145.

<sup>101</sup>Freidrich, Before the Deluge, p. 385.

The origin of the Gestapo (Geheime Staatspolizei) or Secret State Police is quite complex and impossible to detail in this study. It developed in Prussia when Goring became head of the Ministry of the Interior in January, 1930, and established a Secret State Police headquarters. By March, 1934, the Gestapo was independent of the Prussian State Administration. At the same time, a separate Gestapo was created in Bavaria by Himmler and Reinhard Heydrich. In the winter of 1933-34 Himmler became the head of the Gestapo (under Goring) in nearly all of Germany. More important is the way the Gestapo functioned. It operated "according to special rules and principles" and not on "regularly legalized rules." It operated as an instrument of the Fuhrer's authority and required no legitimization in law. Its orders and affairs were not subject to the courts. The Gestapo could quote its own principles to "suspend any legally based regulation which might stand in its way."<sup>102</sup> The Gestapo was recognized as a superior office independent of other Reich offices and empowered to give orders to those offices and to use their facilities to carry out its tasks.<sup>103</sup>

The SA, and SS, and the Gestapo were important institutions in Nazism. The relationship between these institutions and the Germans in general to the ideology of Nazism is described in the concluding comments of Martin Broszat's book German National Socialism: 1919-1945.

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<sup>102</sup>Buchheim, "The SS," pp. 145-156.

<sup>103</sup>Norman Rich, Hitler's War Aims: Ideology, The Nazi State, and the Course of Expansion (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1973), p. 46.



National Socialist ideology and propaganda succeeded in convincing the public that Nazi resentments and phobias represented the sound instincts of the people, and that its unreasoning mob psychology was genuine volkisch. The Hitler state succeeded in characterizing the state of unreflecting intoxication, the renunciation of individual judgment and individual will as the highest form of sacrifice and of selflessness of a "people's community." The basis for this thinking was a willingness for self-effacement, for complete devotion to an imagined historic greatness and future potential, worth the sacrifice of individual self-interest as well as of any sense of responsibility.

National Socialism was the expression of totalitarianism which drew on the pathology of a modern mass society in which the individual had lost his ties and values and all sense of direction. National Socialism in Germany became the sinister embodiment of a dynamic nihilism devoid of ideological commitment.<sup>104</sup>

It is of import to note who was considered a Nazi during the period under discussion. In Mein Kampf, Hitler divided the Nazi movement into supporters and members:

A supporter of a movement is one who declares himself to be in agreement with its aims, a member is one who fights for them. . . . Being a supporter requires only a passive recognition of an idea, while membership requires active advocacy and defense. . . . Being a supporter is rooted only in understanding.<sup>105</sup>

Raul Hilberg in The Destruction of the European Jews gives a similar criterion for a Nazi during the time Hitler was actually in power: "Everyone was presumed to be, and was accepted as, a Nazi unless by his conduct he indicated otherwise."<sup>106</sup> Hilberg also refers to a study of anti-Nazis which can provide inferences about Nazi characters. The study found that anti-Nazis had travelled more

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<sup>104</sup> Broszat, German National Socialism, p. 89.

<sup>105</sup> Hitler, Mein Kampf, p. 581.

<sup>106</sup> Hilberg, The Destruction of the European Jews, p. 47.

and were better read than anti-Semitic Nazis; they had more affection from their parents and were less disciplined; and their liberal outlook began in their teens.<sup>107</sup>

As the Nazi characters are discussed in the following chapters, an attempt is made to trace elements of ideology, psychological attitudes and behavior which can be related to the discussion of Nazism and Nazi ideology in this chapter.

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<sup>107</sup> Ibid., pp. 674-675.

## CHAPTER III

### THE PORTRAYAL OF NAZIS NOVEMBER, 1933 - SEPTEMBER, 1939

#### Introduction

The economic Depression is usually considered the significant feature of the 1930's in the United States. While the nation was certainly preoccupied with the Depression in the early part of the decade, it was not, of course, the sole concern of the nation and it was not the major interest throughout the decade. The other concern of the decade was war, and it grew steadily until it became more important than economic problems. Gallup polls in the period show "keeping out of the war" as the third most important problem facing the nation in 1935, the second in 1937, and the first in 1939.<sup>1</sup> The New York theatre underwent the same transition during the period, but there was an earlier sensitivity to the menace of Nazism.

The avoidance of war, isolationism, and pacifism were a legacy of World War I:

It turned out not to be a war to end all wars but a war which brought on total war. And as the average person could find

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<sup>1</sup>New York Times, 3 December 1939.

no inner sanction for this contrived strife, he was faced with an increasing inner war.<sup>2</sup>

The American people became suspicious that the American declaration of war in 1917 had been a result of chicanery and placed the blame on the arms industry or "merchants of death."<sup>3</sup> What has been described as ". . . one of the most dramatic and drastic volte-face in all American History"<sup>4</sup>--the acceptance of an international outlook--did not occur overnight. It was the result of a period of education and conversion.

During the thirties, there were politicians, intellectuals, and artists, who were not isolationist and raised the spector of a growing and dangerous totalitarianism. It was not private knowledge. Knowledge about the rise of fascism and, specifically, Nazism was available early in the decade. In October, 1930, a first-page headline in the New York Times read "Fascists Threaten War to Free Reich if 'Legality' Fails."<sup>5</sup> It went on to refer to the demand of the "Hitleries" [sic.] which included the abrogation of the Versailles Treaty, restoration of military training, and the elimination of Jews from German life. By 1932, American intellectual and cultural life was being enriched by the expulsion of

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<sup>2</sup>Harry Slochower, No Voice Is Wholly Lost: Writers and Thinkers in War and Peace (London: Dennis Dobson, Limited, 1946), p. 13.

<sup>3</sup>Peter Calvocoressi and Guy Wint, Total War: The Story of World War II (New York: Pantheon Books, 1970), p. 186.

<sup>4</sup>Robert E. Spiller, et al., eds., Literary History of the United States: History, 3rd ed., rev. (New York: Macmillan Company, 1963), p. 1261.

<sup>5</sup>New York Times, 18 October 1930.

gifted scientists and literary men from Germany and Italy. Some of these refugees became the faculty of the University in Exile founded in 1932 by Alvin Johnson.<sup>6</sup>

Nonetheless, even the appointment of Hitler as Reich Chancellor (January, 1933) did not distract most westerners from the Depression. However, there were exceptions:

There were . . . two groups that viewed events in Germany circumspectly: world Jewry and the overseas community. In the United States, especially the large and influential Jewish population and the even greater number of Americans of German extraction were wary.

From the beginning of the Nazi regime, the leaders of the American Jewish community exhibited great concern for their coreligionists in Germany.<sup>7</sup>

Information about the Nazis was particularly significant to the New York area. "National Socialism . . . commanded public attention throughout the New Deal era, especially in the Northeast, which was attuned to European affairs and had a large Jewish population."<sup>8</sup>

The New York theatre also showed an early cognizance of Nazism. The Germans had eliminated Jews from the stage and the Actor's Equity Council denounced the ban:

The discrimination against the Jewish actors was characterized as an attempt to destroy them bodily and spiritually and as calculated to stifle the freedom of dramatic art.<sup>9</sup>

Although anti-German and anti-Nazi feeling was not widespread in the United States in 1933, the Germans launched a

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<sup>6</sup>Curti, The Growth of American Thought, p. 727.

<sup>7</sup>Sander A. Diamond, The Nazi Movement in the United States: 1924-1941 (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1974), p. 38.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., pp. 22-23.

<sup>9</sup>New York Times, 25 July 1933, p. 17.

propaganda campaign in America to improve the image of National Socialism. Nonetheless, by the end of 1933, many large metropolitan newspapers pictured Hitler as a "contemptible demagogue, the leader of a world-wide Nazi conspiracy bent on dominating the world."<sup>10</sup>

Not all reaction to National Socialism was negative. As early as 1928 a newspaper sympathetic to the Nazi Party was published in Yorkville, New York.<sup>11</sup> By the middle of the decade, clashes between Bundists and Jewish war veterans in Yorkville, St. Louis, and Chicago became front-page stories.<sup>12</sup> The most famous spokesman of Nazi ideology in the United States was Father Coughlin. He called the New Deal the "Jew Deal" and attacked Mayor LaGuardia of New York for having criticized Hitler.<sup>13</sup> He shouted at a Bronx rally in 1937, "When we get through with the Jews in America, they'll think the treatment in Germany was nothing."<sup>14</sup> The publisher William Randolph Hearst said of Hitler that he would "accomplish a measure of good not only for his own people but for all humanity."<sup>15</sup>

By 1934, Nazi propaganda in the United States was noted in a report to Congress.

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<sup>10</sup>Diamond, The Nazi Movement in the U.S., pp. 109, 125.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., p. 87.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., p. 39.

<sup>13</sup>Manchester, The Glory and the Dream, 1:132.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., 1:213.

<sup>15</sup>Lloyd Morris, Postscript to Yesterday: America: The Last Fifty Years (New York: Random House, 1947), p. 243.

The anti-Semitism of the Hitler brand is different from everything that has gone before. Its anti-Semitism is based on an exploded racial theory, and no matter what an individual may do to separate himself from his racial background it will be of no avail to him.<sup>16</sup>

Rabbi J. Max Weiss of the American Jewish Committee said in 1934 after the slaying of the leader of the Catholic Action Party in Germany that Americans "had gained the impression that only Jews and Communists had been killed and tortured" and he expressed the belief that the issue would become more important.<sup>17</sup> The issue did become prominent. Toward the end of the decade, Hitler was on the cover of Time Magazine as "Man of the Year" in 1938.

The Time Magazine cover (2 January 1939) pictured Hitler seated at a huge organ "playing his hymn of hate in a desecrated cathedral while victims dangle on a St. Catherine's wheel and the Nazi hierarchy looks on." The cover was drawn by Rudolph Charles von Ripper, a Catholic refugee from Germany. The cover story noted that Hitler rants against Communism and the Jews and equates democracy with Communism. There is a reference to the 700,000 Jews in Germany as having been "tortured physically, robbed of homes and properties, deprived of a chance to earn a living" and being "chased off the streets." Presciently, the article ended saying Hitler "may make 1939 a year to be remembered."<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>16</sup>New York Times, 21 January 1934.

<sup>17</sup>New York Times, 5 July 1934.

<sup>18</sup>"Man of the Year," Time Magazine, 2 January 1939, pp. 11-

The Time cover story on Hitler barely followed the infamous Crystal Night (Night of the Broken Glass) in Germany. Crystal Night occurred in November, 1939, when the Germans lashed out violently at the Jews because of the assassination of the German third secretary in Paris.<sup>19</sup> It was a significant turning point in attitudes toward the Nazis. The German Ambassador to Washington reported home that "The outcry comes not only from Jews, but in equal strength from all camps and classes, including the German-American camp."<sup>20</sup> In New York a meeting was called by the left-wing Theatre Arts Committee and over 600 persons of the theatre profession met to protest the wave of terror in Germany.<sup>21</sup> Nonetheless, Americans still opposed massive Jewish immigration to the United States. Intellectuals, including such writers as Eugene O'Neill, John Steinbeck, Pearl Buck, Clifford Odets, and Thornton Wilder, called attention to the immorality of the attitude and noted that America was horrified thirty-five years earlier at the Pogrom in Tsarist Russia:

God have pity on us if we have become so insensitive to human suffering that we are incapable of protesting today against the pogroms in Nazi Germany.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>19</sup>In twenty-four hours 200 synagogues were wrecked, 20,000 Jews arrested, and seventy Jews, already in Buchenwald, were killed. Mark Arnold-Forster, The World at War (New York: Stein and Day, 1973), p. 253.

<sup>20</sup>Ambassador Hans Heinrich Dieckhoff, quoted by Rita Thalmann and Emmanuel Feinermann, Crystal Night: 9-10 November, 1938, trans. Gilles Cremonesi (New York: Coward, McCann and Geoghegan, Inc., 1974), p. 159.

<sup>21</sup>New York Times, 18 November 1935, p. 5.

<sup>22</sup>Thalmann and Feinermann, Crystal Night, p. 161.



The shift toward a concern about fascism did not occur uniformly and smoothly. As early as January, 1934, Harvard students heckled a German consul and were ejected by police,<sup>23</sup> but in 1936 Harvard, Yale, Columbia and Stanford participated in the 550th anniversary of Heidelberg. There were apologies for the latter event partly explained "in terms of the confusion regarding the nature and significance of the totalitarian onslaught."<sup>24</sup>

The New York theatre reflected a somewhat parallel cognizance of the rise of Nazism. The moral revolution which followed World War I combined with the influence of Freud, and dramatists attacked patriotism and hundred-percent Americanism, expressed liberalizing morals, and espoused pacifism.<sup>25</sup> These changes were first noticeable in the 1932-33 season and not immediately following World War I or the crash of 1929.<sup>26</sup>

The change was toward social dramas<sup>27</sup> which at first dealt with the issues of the depression from a left-wing viewpoint and veered toward a concern about fascism following organization of

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<sup>23</sup>New York Times, 8 January 1934.

<sup>24</sup>Curti, The Growth of American Thought, p. 728.

<sup>25</sup>Edmond M. Gagey, Revolution in American Drama (New York: Columbia University Press, 1947), pp. 121-122.

<sup>26</sup>Gerald Rabkin, Drama and Commitment: Politics in the American Theatre of the Thirties (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1964), pp. 28-31.

<sup>27</sup>It should be noted that the bulk of drama on Broadway did not vary before or after this period. The reference is to drama which survived longer or received most critical attention.

the Popular Front by the Comintern in Moscow, August, 1935.<sup>28</sup> John Gassner describes the concerns of serious dramatists during the decade as follows:

A great fear of social acedia, or evading or having evaded one's social responsibilities, pervaded the world of the artist and the intellectual as the Depression grew deeper and the fortunes of fascism in Italy, Spain, and Germany rose higher.<sup>29</sup>

The early response of the dramatists to the rise of fascism was a deepened pacifism. In 1936 in a postscript to Idiot's Delight, Robert Sherwood called for a defeat of fascism by a refusal to imitate them and said fascism should be met with "calmness, courage, and ridicule."<sup>30</sup> The historian Samuel Morrison said of the period, "Never since Jefferson's time had America . . . been in so pacifist a mood as in 1933-39."<sup>31</sup>

There was no single context for the portrayal of Nazis in this period. Rather, it was a period of growing cognizance of Nazism but with a shifting of complex and sometimes inconsistent attitudes.<sup>32</sup> The salient issue at the beginning of the decade was

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<sup>28</sup>Malcolm Goldstein, The Political Stage (New York: Oxford University Press, 1974), p. 154.

<sup>29</sup>John Gassner, "Politics and Theatre," Foreword to Drama Was a Weapon: The Left-Wing Theatre in New York, 1920-1941 by Morgan Y. Himelstein (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1963), p. xi.

<sup>30</sup>Edith J. R. Isaacs, Theatre Arts Monthly, January 1939, p. 39.

<sup>31</sup>Morrison, The Oxford History, p. 988.

<sup>32</sup>"Thus while a Gallup poll in October, 1938, found a majority approving Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain's settlement at Munich despite still greater agreement that Hitler's claims were unjust, another sampling in January, 1939, reported barely

the Depression, and that was reflected in the theatre. It is significant, however, that from 1933 on the chief international subject for dramatists and other writers was anti-fascism.<sup>33</sup>

There were six plays with distinctly Nazi characters produced in this period. The most important plays were Judgment Day by Elmer Rice and Till the Day I Die by Clifford Odets, and they are given the most attention. Birthright by Richard Maibaum is given considerable attention because it is the first American play with Nazi characters. Two foreign plays produced at the time of Birthright are discussed because the critics were writing about all three at once. Foreign plays with Nazi characters are mentioned in chronological order with relevant comments in order to place the plays of the study in a clearer context. There was an interlude of nearly five years between Till the Day I Die and the next play, Waltz in Goose Step. Because of important events during that hiatus, a brief section titled "1935-1939" is included to clarify the latter part of the period. Three plays of this period portrayed fascism in the United States--It Can't Happen Here, American Landscape, and The American Way. While the characters do not fit the criteria for this study, the plays were considered relevant. They are referred

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more than two out of five still hopeful that the United States could stay out of another world conflict." Dixon Wecter, The Age of the Great Depression, 1929-1941 (New York: Macmillan Company, 1948), p. 308.

<sup>33</sup>Sam Smiley, The Drama of Attack: Didactic Plays of the American Depression (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1972), p. 32.

to in the text, and a fuller explanation of the plays is included in the Appendix.

### Birthright

One foreign play with Nazi characters preceded Birthright on Broadway. It was an adaptation of a German play titled Kultur by Theodore Weachter and it opened September 26, 1933. A professor-surgeon is dismissed because of having Jewish ancestry. The new anti-Semitic Chancellor of the country is injured in an automobile accident and insists the surgeon operate on him. A blood transfusion is required, the donor turns out to be Jewish, and the blood changes the chancellor, causing him to mutter in his sleep such words as "liberty," "fraternity," and "tolerance."<sup>34</sup> The play was not well received and ran only ten performances. The nature of the adverse criticism was varied. The New York Sun reviewer said "the play descends to the lower level of cheap Broadway farce comedy, which was a poor way to treat a tragic theme" and that the "presentation is whitewashed in order to manufacture a Broadway comedy."<sup>35</sup> But another critic derided the play, saying it was "scant excuse for turning the stage into a soapbox."<sup>36</sup> Several critics said they had been expecting plays about the Hitler regime. Edith J. R. Isaacs commented in Theatre Arts:

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<sup>34</sup>Review in New York World-Telegram, 27 September 1933.

<sup>35</sup>Stephen Rathbun, New York Sun, 27 September 1933.

<sup>36</sup>Howard Barnes, New York Herald Tribune, 27 September, 1933.

The great trouble with a play like Kultur is that by the banality of its approach to a subject of immediate interest it makes the next approach to that subject in the theatre more difficult.<sup>37</sup>

Birthright<sup>38</sup> by Richard Maibaum<sup>39</sup> opened November 21, 1933, two months after Kultur. Maibaum, himself a Jew of German extraction, is said to have based his play on events related to him by a young Jewish refugee whom he met in London. Many of the events in the play had happened to the man's family. Maibaum purportedly interviewed some forty other members of the refugee colony in London and derived his drama from these interviews.<sup>40</sup>

A large Jewish family headed by Kakob Eisner is persecuted during the rise to power by the Nazis. The family includes a German soldier, a doctor, a professor, and a business man and their children. One of the children, Willi, is a college student who is a Communist sympathizer. His sister, Clara, is engaged to Friedrich Lowenburg, a gentleman and a "fine, German type." Friedrich's close friend is Kurt Strasser, a university instructor active in the Nazi party. In the course of the play, the professor loses his university position, the doctor loses his practice, the army officer (in spite

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<sup>37</sup>Edith J. R. Isaacs, "Broadway in Review," Theatre Arts Monthly, November 1933, p. 840.

<sup>38</sup>Richard Maibaum, Birthright (New York: Samuel French, 1934).

<sup>39</sup>Maibaum later wrote for the screen and his credits include The Great Gatsby ('49), Dr. No ('62), From Russia with Love ('63), Goldfinger ('64), and Thunderball ('65). Leslie Halliwell, The Filmgoer's Companion, 3rd ed. (New York: Hill and Wang, 1970), p. 633.

<sup>40</sup>Maibaum, Birthright, p. 93.

of having been baptized and abandoning Judaism) loses his commission. The play centers around Clara and Willi. Willi is arrested for treasonous activities, he shoots a storm trooper (Kurt) and later is executed. Throughout, there is the romantic relationship between Clara and Friedrich, who also becomes a storm trooper.

Friedrich and Kurt are Nazis but they are very different. Friedrich's family is renowned but has been down and out since World War I. Clara talks about his excellent character and calls him "fine, strong and clear-headed." He indicates that his upbringing was cut and dried with everything geared to making him a good citizen, and he contrasts his family with the warmth he sees in Clara's family. He expresses opposition to anti-Semitism. He says that Hitler may save Germany and adds "I hope to God he will. When I listen to him I almost think he can! But I can't agree with him about Judah. I can see too clearly how he's using a popular hatred to gain converts." He is also apologetic for Kurt's anti-semitic outbursts. He does reveal a dislike for communists and defines one as "a man who has nothing and wants to share it with you."

The first act takes place in January, 1933. Act two takes place in March after Hitler has become Chancellor. Friedrich appears now in an official storm trooper's uniform. He is "stiff and constrained." He says he is running a risk to be at the Eisner's home, that he believes in a united front to save Germany and that his personal feelings are of no account. He has come to warn the Eisners of a warrant for Willi's arrest and tells them to get Willi out of

the country. He is concerned that Clara will hate him and explains his attitude about the Nazi party:

I couldn't do otherwise, Clara. God help me, I couldn't. . . . It's only a common banner to rally under--a means to forge a unified machine. That's what we need--you'll see. The wrongs we are doing will be justified by the end, and the end is--the end is--<sup>41</sup>

He doesn't know what the end will be, but he still loves Clara and claims nothing will be changed in their relationship. He considers her his wife, but insists "I must do my part."

Clara receives a letter from Friedrich saying that he is working to save Willi. The Eisners by this time have been imprisoned and abused because of Willi. Willi has been executed when Friedrich returns. He is remorseful and ashamed and explains, "You see we were desperate--we're trying to find our souls again--millions of us. . . ." He adds they were "insane with a leader" and hopes he can be forgiven. To Clara's accusation "You are Germany," he answers, "Yes--I see--I am." Friedrich is characterized in a sympathetic light as an idealistic young man whose belief in Nazism is a result of misguided efforts for Germany. He is torn between two goals, Clara and Germany, and appears somewhat heroic when he accepts personal risks to aid the Eisners.

Since Friedrich is a student, there is some credence to the idea that he might be engaged to a Jewish girl in spite of the problems that entailed. His acceptance of the Nazi party is also credible in the play in light of the unwillingness of the part of

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<sup>41</sup>Ibid., p. 62.

Jewish characters in the play to see Nazism as a threat to them.

Jakob, patriarch of the family, tells Friedrich he need not apologize for his friend, Kurt. Jakob says,

Apologize? What for? These things come up--I've been through them before and always they blow over--and the world goes on.  
..."

Kurt is a university instructor described as "A typical German university man, scars on his cheeks, blond, rather heavily set, red faced." Jacob Fest in The Faces of the Third Reich devotes a chapter to the strong support given to the blatantly anti-intellectual Nazis by professors and other intellectuals. In 1931, the Nazis had twice as much support in universities as in the country as a whole.<sup>42</sup>

Kurt is described by Friedrich as having no sense of humor. He is immediately revealed to be anti-Semitic. Kurt interrupts a toast to Clara by toasting the "Vaterland." He says Friedrich is making a mistake in planing to marry Clara: "Friedrich, are you blind.! Can't you see what they're doing to us?" He says Friedrich is making a dangerous move and might as well commit suicide.

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<sup>42</sup>In discussing what he feels is the susceptibility of intellectuals in modern society to totalitarian solutions, Fest described the situation in Germany: "Thereby National Socialism laid bare phenomena of which the movement was in turn only a symptom: the most consistent expression in the field of political groupings of a multiplicity of pseudo-religious longings. . . . These motivations in turn were permeated by the longing of the intellectual, isolated in his world of letters, for solidarity with the masses, for a share in their unthinking vitality and closeness to nature, but also in their force and historical effectiveness as expressed in the myth of national community." Fest, The Faces of the Third Reich, p. 25.



Kurt expresses his reasons for being a Nazi. He mentions **that** he had three uncles killed in the war and that the chancellor **has** given back Germany its self-respect and dignity and has made **it** a nation again. He states a position on ideology very similar **to** Hitler's observations on the subject. In an argument with Willi **co**ncerning constructive ideas, Kurt says the Nazis have no program. **He** replies to the charge that the Nazis promise everything: "We're **no**t restricting ourselves. We are men of action, not theorists. **We** shall meet the problems as they arise."

Kurt expresses a belief in Fuhrerprinzip and volkisch **th**ought when he points out a window toward a parade: "You see that **ma**n out there? That's Germany--the Germany you've never been part **of**--the Germany that was dead!" He also states that the German army **wa**s not defeated in the war but was "knifed in the back by pacifists **and** socialists and professors--by Jews!" Kurt expresses anti-Semitism but it is not carried to the extreme of a totalizing and **reflexive** myth.

When Kurt leaves immediately after his statement about Jews, Hugo Eisner, the army captain, says he agrees completely with Kurt. And Jakob, the head of the family, blames Willi as much as Kurt, saying "it is natural to be suspicious of people who are different from ourselves." He adds that Kurt loves his country very much.

Before Kurt appears again, Friedrich makes a comment about him, suggesting elements of an authoritarian character structure.

He tells Clara, "You wouldn't recognize him, Clara--he's insane. There's nothing he stops at. They give him all the dirty jobs and he glories in it--!"

When six storm troopers come to the Eisner home to arrest Willi, they are followed in a few moments by four more including Kurt. Kurt is menacing. He orders everyone to be silent, orders the books in the home destroyed, and pushes Joseph, the protesting aged great-uncle. A melee ensues in which the household servant is struck with a revolver. Kurt yells "Stop!" and tries to intervene when Willi attempts to shoot a trooper. Kurt steps in the line of fire and is killed. His final action keeps him from seeming as unrestrained and insane as Friedrich had described him.

Maibaum uses several methods to keep Kurt from appearing as a villain. The violence in the play is depicted openly only by the storm troopers accompanying Kurt. It is also attributed to other Nazis by the Eisners. Willi tells of seeing an acquaintance have his scalp ripped off and his face stomped until it was unrecognizable. The other Eisners tell about their five days in prison and the abuses they underwent. In addition, Hugo is extremely hostile to Leopold, who runs the family business. He accuses him of running "a blood and sweat factory" and of having become "rich and fat while others starved." These mitigating factors tend to keep Kurt from appearing as a villain.

The effort to keep the Nazis in the play, Kurt and Friedrich, from appearing as villains was noted by the critics.

John Mason Brown felt that Maibaum was a propagandist but was fairer than most:

He lets us understand the desperate hope that the Brown Shirts have invested in their leader at the same time that he exposes the barbarous cruelties to which his Jewish family is subjected.<sup>43</sup>

Another critic noted that not all the Jews in the play are "noble martyrs" and not all the Germans are "ravening huns."<sup>44</sup> And a third noted that the play did not stoop to being an attack on Hitler but was "straight forward enough to speak on both sides."<sup>45</sup> Nor did the drama follow "the Communist line that Hitler was an agent of the capitalists and that he persecuted only the working class."<sup>46</sup>

Maibaum appears to have tried to be historically accurate about events in the play. It is carefully structured around the significant date of Hitler's appointment as chancellor. The Brown Shirts are quoted in the play as singing a song with the lyrics "When Jewish blood drips from the knife, then we'll be all right." It is comparable to an SA song quoted in another source: "First must Jewish blood be shed, only then will we be free."<sup>47</sup> There was an ironic aspect to the portrayal of the Jews in the play. Several of the critics observed that the cast appeared Gentile,

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<sup>43</sup>John Mason Brown, New York Evening Post, 22 November 1933.

<sup>44</sup>Richard Lockridge, New York Sun, 22 November 1933.

<sup>45</sup>John Anderson, New York Evening Journal, 22 November, 1933.

<sup>46</sup>Himelstein, Drama Was a Weapon, p. 190.

<sup>47</sup>Calvocoressi and Wint, Total War, p. 21.

and John Mason Brown commented "It almost seemed as if Hitler had a hand in the casting."<sup>48</sup>

One critic expressed open hostility to the production of Brithright. Robert Garland of the New York World-Telegram said the producers of the play were not going "to drag me into a Nazi argument, either pro or con." He said of Maibaum, "And, if you ask me, he's looking for trouble crying 'Hitler! Hitler!' and then running away." He condemned the play for its propaganda and then, repeating that he would not be dragged into an argument, he wrote:

Wouldn't it be deplorable if I should forget myself and insist that the Eisners brought it on themselves. The Eisners and the rest of them. It certainly would be deplorable and I'm glad I caught myself in time.<sup>49</sup>

Birthright was even less successful than Kultur and ran only 7 performances.

Another foreign play with Nazi characters appeared in the 1933-34 season. It was The Shatter'd Lamp by Leslie Reade, an English dramatist. It opened March 21, 1934, and ran thirty-seven performances. Like Kultur, it also concerned the misfortunes of a professor's family under the Nazis. The professor's wife is discovered to have Jewish blood. There are tragic consequences for the family--the wife commits suicide, the professor is shot, and the son's fiancée deserts him.

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<sup>48</sup>Brown, New York Evening Post, 22 November 1933.

<sup>49</sup>Robert Garland, New York World-Telegram, 22 November 1933.

The critics referred to Kultur and Birthright in discussing The Shatter'd Lamp and they noted the general similarity of the stories. Aside from the dramatic merit, the content of the plays disturbed the critics. Burns Mantle suggested dramas about the Nazis should use ridicule: "I would not laugh at Nazism, but laughter in the theatre is a much more effective weapon than the forces of melodrama."<sup>50</sup> Robert Garland, who was hostile to Birthright, felt that the situation in Germany was probably no different from the United States before and after the Civil War. He said that turmoil had developed a nation which is "the least race-conscious civilization has so far known" and added that The Shatter'd Lamp would lead to race consciousness and intolerance.<sup>51</sup> Arthur Pollock was sympathetic to the play but wished the next such play "would avoid all mention of the plight of the German Jews." He said the playwrights would probably be unwilling to make the victims Socialists or Communists but he did wish they would depict the victims as "simple, honest, intelligent Germans."<sup>52</sup> Variety condemned all three of the plays for their unfairness to the German side.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>50</sup>Burns Mantle, New York Daily News, 22 March 1934.

<sup>51</sup>Robert Garland, New York World-Telegram, 22 March 1934.

<sup>52</sup>Arthur Pollock, Brooklyn Daily Eagle, 22 March 1934.

<sup>53</sup>Variety, 22 March 1934.

Judgement Day

Judgement Day<sup>54</sup> by Elmer Rice, was produced September 12, 1934. The play was a dramatization of the Reichstag Fire trial that had been held in Leipzig in March, 1934.<sup>55</sup> Rice set the play in "a capitol city of a country in Southeastern Europe." Rice stated later in his autobiography, Minority Report, that he did not want to "present a mere documentary transcription" and had "changed the trial's locale to an unspecified Balkan country and made the plot turn on the attempted assassination of a fascist leader."<sup>56</sup> However, the play was clearly understood to be a dramatization of the Nazi trial.

Several of the characters in the play were patterned after real people. Rice described them as

. . . Goering, [the trial's] prime mover; Hitler, who appeared briefly in a crucial scene, Marinus van der Lubbe, the psychotic young Dutchman employed by Goering to set the fire; and Georgi Dimitrov, the Bulgarian Communist whose bold resourcefulness had done much to discredit the proceedings. All the other characters were fictitious.<sup>57</sup>

The portrayal of these personages requires some clarification.

The character Rakovski represents Goering. His title, The Minister of Culture and Enlightenment, would suggest Goebbels.

Also, Rice wrote that in 1932 he had heard Goebbels speak on two

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<sup>54</sup>Elmer Rice, Seven Plays by Elmer Rice (New York: Viking Press, 1950).

<sup>55</sup>Shirer, Rise and Fall of the Third Reich, p. 269.

<sup>56</sup>Elmer Rice, Minority Report: An Autobiography (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1963), p. 334.

<sup>57</sup>Ibid., p. 334.

occasions and Hitler on one.<sup>58</sup> Whatever influence this may have had, the character Rakovski is generally accepted as a portrayal of Goering.<sup>59</sup>

Marinus van der Lubbe's guilt or innocence remains a question to this day, but Rice did take the view that Goering had employed him and that view is explicit in the play. The fortuitous timing of the fire seemed nearly proof at the time that the Nazis had set it up.<sup>60</sup> That view is still held by Shirer and others. However, Fritz Tobias argued in The Reichstag Fire that that was a myth and Lubbe had in fact set the fire without help from anyone.<sup>61</sup>

Dimitrov had been portrayed in an earlier agitprop playlet called Dimitrov by Elia Kazan and Art Smith. That play also contained Goering and Hitler as characters and it used the device of audience response.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>58</sup>Ibid., pp. 288, 323.

<sup>59</sup>Joseph Mersand, "Two Decades of Biographical Plays," American Drama Since 1930 (Port Washington, New York: Kennikot Press, Inc., 1949), p. 93.

<sup>60</sup>Arthur Garfield Hayes, "The Burning of the German Reichstag," Nation, 22 November 1933, pp. 586-589.

<sup>61</sup>Fritz Tobias, The Reichstag Fire, trans. Arnold J. Pomerans (New York: Putnam, 1964).

<sup>62</sup>According to Jay Williams in Stage Left (p. 141) a discussion of the possibility of another play like Dimitrov in Harold Clurman's playwriting class in Boston led to the acceptance of an idea of Clifford Odets which evolved into Waiting for Lefty. (Clurman does not refer to this event or to Dimitrov in The Ferment Years.) Lefty was a critical success off-Broadway and when it was moved to Broadway, Odets wrote a companion piece for it, an anti-Nazi play called Till the Day I Die, which is the next play discussed in this study. Williams, Stage Left, pp. 139-149; Rabkin, Drama and Commitment, pp. 172-177; Himelstein, Drama Was a Weapon, pp. 26-27.

Judgment Day concerns George Khitov, Lydia, Kuman, and Kurt Schneider, who are on trial for seeking the overthrow of the "National government." George and Lydia are leaders of the "People's party." Kurt Schneider is a drug addict who is used by the government to frame a case against George and Lydia. The play covers three days of the trial in three acts.

There is a large cast in the play and all loyal members of the "National government" can be construed as Nazis. However, only a few of these characters are delineated to any extent. The clearest portrayals are two of the five judges who constitute members of the High Court of Justice: General Michael Rakovski (Goering), The Minister of Culture and Enlightenment; and Grigori Visnic (Hitler), The Minister-President.

In Rice's play, the three judges who are the antagonists to the defendants are Dr. Panayot Tsankov, Colonel Jon Sturdza, and Professor Paul Lurusi. Both Tsankov and Sturdza are portrayed as authoritarian and oppressive villains. Although they are judges, they threaten law and order as it would be perceived by the audience as well as violate the audience's standards of morality and justice. Reviewers referred to these characters as villains and one noted that the audience "hissed the villains" and "cheered the hero and heroine."<sup>63</sup>

Tsankov also reveals the clearest expression of Nazi thoughts. Conrad Noli is an American lawyer and brother of the

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<sup>63</sup>Arthur Pollock, Brooklyn Daily Eagle, 13 September 1934.



defendant Lydia. Tsankov says to him, "See that you do not forget that we have the good fortune to be living in a totalitarian state, under the inspired guidance of our glorious leader, Grigori Vesnic." He later derides the "sentimentalities of democracy."

Although the play takes place in a courtroom, both physical violence and brutality occur. Lydia's husband, Alexander, has been arrested earlier. During the trial their fourteen-year-old daughter, Sonia, is called as a witness. The girl pleads for her father and Tsankov falsely tells her, "Silence! Your father is already dead." During the trial a guard surreptitiously passes a paper to a witness and refuses to explain his action. Tsankov yells, "Make him talk! Beat him! Twist his arms!" and the guards obey him.

Judge Sturdza has few lines, but he also abuses the defendants and is consistently in agreement with Tsankov. Judge Mursui considers the blatantly faulty evidence against the defendants as leaving much to be desired, but he rationalizes his verdict of guilty by accepting Tsankov's arguments about the necessity of a "Moral point of view." Murusi says that a political and moral point of view are similar:

Well, after all, . . . it is very much the same thing. When all is said and done, we must admit that the highest morality is the welfare of the state. If we consider all the circumstances, we must come to the conclusion that the moral guilt of the defendants has been established. On their own admission, they desire the overthrow of the National Government. They are self-confessed members of the People's party--<sup>64</sup>

Judge Vlora points out that membership is not punishable by death and Tsankov responds, "It will be."

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<sup>64</sup>Rice, Seven Plays, p. 354.

While Judge Vlora is portrayed as quite fair throughout the trial, he is the presiding judge and does not oppose the regime. At the end of the trial, he accepts the idea that testimony by Vesnic (Hitler) would override the evidence: "It would scarcely be possible to question the word of the Leader himself." Only one of the judges the aged Count Leonid Slatarski, remains opposed to the procedures throughout the trial, and it is he who assassinates Visnic at the end and then commits suicide.

Rakovski (Goering) appears in the second act as a witness. He is totally dictatorial and there is not even a modicum of courtroom procedure during his presence. When the attorney for Schneider (van der Lubbe) offers an opinion, Rakovski says, "Have I asked for your opinion? Speak when you are spoken to." He is openly threatening to Schneider--"Hold up your head or we'll find a way to make you hold it up." He tells the American attorney, "Keep your mouth closed or we'll close it for you." And he orders Khitov (Dimitrov) to be taken to his cell telling him, "Your hour is near. And remember that if the court does not know how to deal with you, I shall know how!"

Near the end of the play, Rakovski intimidates the judges. He says that even if the evidence is not adequate, the judges must reach a verdict of guilty. Murusi and Sturdza are obsequious to Rakovski. Slatarski says he will vote for acquittal and Rakovski tells him his action will be regarded as treason. Slatarski questions the new national honor and Rakovski replies:

We are not living among the romantic sentimentalities of the nineteenth century, Count Slatarski. We have put aside all these decadent philosophies of liberalism and Christian ethics. We have swept away the weak-kneed and womanish doctrines of democracy and have rediscovered our strength and our unity.<sup>65</sup>

In this one speech, Rakovski expresses several concepts of Nazi ideology. Rakovski's villainy as well as the other villainous portrayals in the play are emphasized by the heroic portrayals of Judge Slatarski and Khitov.

Vesnic (Hitler) appears only briefly near the end of the play. His character is not delineated, but he does have time to express some beliefs. He tells Judge Vlora that Vlora has only one duty--to the National government and that he permits no deviation from that duty. He complains about being dragged to the court for corroboration of prosecution witnesses and says:

I must warn you, gentlemen, that if our courts do not know how to deal with their country's enemies, the government will be compelled to find more effective means of procuring justice. There is no place in our state for weakness and wavering. . . .<sup>66</sup>

In a few moments he is assassinated by Slatarski. His appearance is very brief, but his statements do accurately reflect Hitler's beliefs. He is described by one of his followers as "having revived the national spirit and unified the nation" and by one of his opponents as "blunt" and "brutal."

None of the characters in the play is revealed in depth. Robert Hogan noted in The Independence of Elmer Rice that "The

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<sup>65</sup>Ibid., p. 360.

<sup>66</sup>Ibid.

plot of Judgment Day demanded scope and that is what Rice gave it."<sup>67</sup> Nonetheless, the views of Tsankov and Rakovski are sufficiently expressed to identify them as Nazis and not just totalitarian villains.

Rice used other elements in the play to add to the portrayal of Nazism. The national emblem of a crossed sword and battle-ax symbolized the swastika and was used prominently on the set as well as on armbands.<sup>68</sup> There are some brief references to racial concepts (the superiority of the Slavic race), and the major plot element, the suppression of the (the Communist Party). However, there is no substitute for the Jews as a scapegoat race. Also, the presence of a cross on the set, the green uniforms, the Slavic names, and the fact that the drug-addicted Kurt Schneider is a German all tend to distract from the presentation of the National party characters as Nazis.

Rice did not present the Reichstag trial as it really occurred. Those at the real trial included the members of the supreme court, van der Lubbe, Dimitrov and Goering. The other characters and the appearance of Hitler were fictionalized. And, in the real trial, the court acquitted three of the four defendants. Nevertheless, the courtroom procedures, dialogue and many of the plot elements were accurate reflections of the real trial.

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<sup>67</sup>Robert Hogan, The Independence of Elmer Rice (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1965), p. 73.

<sup>68</sup>Photos, White Studios, Inc., Theatre Collection, New York Public Library at Lincoln Center.

Arthur Garfield Hayes, a lawyer and a friend of Rice's, wrote about the trial in November, 1933<sup>69</sup> Hayes had been present at the trial, along with other foreign attorneys, and there are numerous observations in his comments on the trial which occur in Rice's play. He reported that the court prevented any criticism of prosecution witnesses and that Dimitrov was often barred from the court because he insisted on asking questions. He said that van der Lubbe had to be lifted from his chair, was expressionless, absolutely pensive, and sat with his head almost on his knees. His description of the prosecution witnesses' inconsistent testimony is also in the play. Rice said that he had "packed the play with tense situations and highly colored incidents" and, being afraid that he might have overdone it, sent the script to his friend Hayes. Rice said that Hayes complimented him on "capturing the atmosphere of a European courtroom and said that, if anything, I had understated the extravagance of the actual proceedings."<sup>70</sup>

Judgment Day received mixed reviews. It was praised by one critic for not being propagandistic,<sup>71</sup> but others rejected it as propaganda.<sup>72</sup> Edith J. R. Isaacs praised the play and noted that "A second night audience, usually the coldest known to the theatre, stood and cheered when Judgment Day was done" and she

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<sup>69</sup>Hayes, "The Burning of the German Reichstag," pp. 586-589.

<sup>70</sup>Rice, Minority Report, p. 335.

<sup>71</sup>Arthur Pollock, Brooklyn Daily News, 13 September 1934.

<sup>72</sup>Ibee, Variety, 18 September 1934; Robert Garland, New York World-Telegram, 13 September 1934.

noted that "The real heroes of this cast, however, theatrically speaking are the villains. . . ." <sup>73</sup> John Anderson said Rice damaged his play by "unconsciously making his people such horrendous monsters that they seem, not sinister at all, but merely funny." <sup>74</sup> And Brooks Atkinson took Rice to task for "not being a temperate writer." <sup>75</sup> This remark particularly incensed Rice and he replied to Atkinson in an article in the New York Times ten days later. While disavowing comparison with great plays, he said, "it seems to my uncritical mind that temperance is scarcely a quality which dominates the great masterpieces of the theatre." He rejected a theatre "restricted to triviality, frivolity, and artificiality" and he concluded by saying:

I believe there is a place in the theatre for passion. . . .  
I cannot discuss fascism with a polite smile or a tolerant  
laugh, nor depict brutal oppression with a twinkle in my eye.  
The cheers of the audiences who are coming to see 'Judgment Day'  
convince me that they are delighted and thrilled to hear a  
fighting subject discussed in fighting terms. <sup>76</sup>

Rice was still upset over the negative criticism of the play when he wrote his autobiography years later. He indicated he was most confused by a comment from Burns Mantle:

It matters little that Mr. Rice can prove he has not overstated his case of Hitler. The audience still does not believe it

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<sup>73</sup> Edith J. R. Isaacs, "Broadway in Review," Theatre Arts, November 1934, pp. 814-815.

<sup>74</sup> John Anderson, New York Evening Journal, 17 September 1934.

<sup>75</sup> Brooks Atkinson, New York Times, 13 September 1934.

<sup>76</sup> Elmer Rice, New York Times, 23 September 1934, sec. 10, pp. 1, 3.

possible for so vicious and brazen a travesty of justice to have taken place in any civilized state.<sup>77</sup>

As Mantle had noted, the play did not in fact overstate the case. Joachim Fest said in The Faces of the Third Reich that "Hitler could see nothing in the law or the institutions of justice but instruments for combating political foes."<sup>78</sup> Departure from legal norms had begun in Germany on March 21, 1933, with the institutionalization of "political custody." Official reports listed 27,000 prisoners by July, 1933.<sup>79</sup> The Reichstag defendants were prosecuted on the basis of ex post facto regulations. As in the play, most judges were intimidated, but some attempted to maintain justice.<sup>80</sup> The Enabling Act of March 24, 1933, had allowed laws to deviate from the constitution. By the time Rice's play appeared, the Nazi Party was the sole political party in Germany (July 14, 1933) and, by law, Hitler had become Fuhrer and Chancellor, taking over the office of President (August 1, 1934).<sup>81</sup>

As to the nature of Goering at the time, Fest said:

His speeches at that time, with their positively delirious profession of faith in violence, afford a graphic view of his convictions and measures, as for example, when he declares: "My measures will not be enfeebled by any legalistic hesitations. My measures will not be enfeebled by any bureaucracy.

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<sup>77</sup>Mantle, quoted in Rice, Minority Report, p. 338.

<sup>78</sup>Fest, Faces of the Third Reich, p. 212.

<sup>79</sup>Bracher, The German Dictatorship, p. 358.

<sup>80</sup>Ibid., p. 363.

<sup>81</sup>Remak, The Nazi Years, p. 54.

Here I have not to exercise justices, here I have only to destroy and exterminate, nothing else!"<sup>82</sup>

Fest also said that "unrestrained outbursts" were typical of the style of the Nazi movement and that "frenzied raging, with a total loss of self-control, was considered masculine."<sup>83</sup> Goering has been described in his appearance at the trial as "shouting," "ranting," "gesturing wildly,"<sup>84</sup> and as being "nearly out of his mind and foaming at the mouth."<sup>85</sup> Goering's views on law had actually been published in the United States at the beginning of 1934 in the Hearst newspapers. Goering wrote:

We deprive the enemies of the people of legal defense. . . . We National Socialists wittingly oppose false gentleness and false humanitarianism. . . . We do not recognize the fallacious quibbles of lawyers or the monkey tricks of judicial subtleties.<sup>86</sup>

On the basis of knowledge available at the time, the play could not be faulted for portraying an erroneous impression of Goering, van der Lubbe, or the judicial process at the Leipzig trial.

Still, the idea persists that the play did exaggerate. Sam Smiley in The Drama of Attack published in 1972 said that "Rice contrived the court rules, procedures, and controlling characters so that they would best permit illustration of the thought."<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>82</sup>Fest, Faces of the Third Reich, pp. 76-77.

<sup>83</sup>Ibid., p. 77.

<sup>84</sup>Hans Bernd Gisevius, To the Bitter End, trans. Richard and Clara Winston (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1947), p. 32.

<sup>85</sup>Jacques Delarue, The Gestapo: A History of Horror, trans. Mervyn Savill (New York: Dell Publishing Company, 1964), p. 63.

<sup>86</sup>Ibid., pp. 58-59.

<sup>87</sup>Smiley, Drama of Attack, p. 155.



Judgment Day was not a success on Broadway, it ran only 47 performances, but it was a success later in its 1937 London production. The London magazine Theatre World had a special photo supplement of the play. The text described it as "one of the most exciting, and certainly the best acted for many years" and said the reception of the play was "tumultuous."<sup>88</sup> The Lord Chamberlain had at first refused to license the play because it might offend Germany. Production of the play was prevented in Holland and France, and local Nazis had closed a brief run of the play in Norway.<sup>89</sup>

In 1938, the Federal Theatre wanted to produce Judgment Day on the west coast but it was cancelled by WPA officials. Hallie Flanagan relates in Arena that Mr. David Niles, head of the WPA told her that the cancellation was not censorship but merely a matter of "selection." The play was postponed but opened later with no repercussions.<sup>90</sup>

In The Independence of Elmer Rice, Robert Hogan discussed the lack of success of Judgment Day in New York. He said the criticism against the play was "that it was unreal, exaggerated and frenetically propagandistic" and observes that this was in a time when Americans did not want to face the threat of war.<sup>91</sup> He believes the only valid change against the play is that the final scene was

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<sup>88</sup>Theatre World, September 1937, pp. 117-128.

<sup>89</sup>Elmer Rice, The Living Theatre (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1959), p. 280.

<sup>90</sup>Hallie Flanagan, Arena: The History of the Federal Theatre (New York: Benjamin Blom, 1965).

<sup>91</sup>Hogan, Independence of Elmer Rice, p. 71.

not well done but notes that the English critics thought the ending was "strong and effective."

Rice's portrayal of Nazis was accurate and informed, but may well have appeared exaggerated at the time. This was understandable. While the Depression was probably foremost in most people's minds, even those with an interest in Nazism might have been misled. William Shirer described his problem in understanding Nazism at the time:

I myself was to experience how easily one is taken in by a lying and censored press in a totalitarian state. . . . It was surprising and sometimes consternating to find that notwithstanding the opportunities I had to learn the facts and despite one's inherent distrust of what one learned from Nazi sources, a steady diet over the years of falsification and distortions made a certain impression on one's mind and often misled it.<sup>92</sup>

In the year Judgment Day was produced, "Secretary of State Cordell Hull pored over cables from Berlin and announced that 'Mistreatment of Jews in Germany may be considered virtually terminated.'"<sup>93</sup>

#### Till the Day I Die

Till the Day I Die<sup>94</sup> by Clifford Odets was a one-act play produced with Waiting for Lefty March 26, 1935. Waiting for Lefty had already become a hit off-Broadway and Odets wrote Till The Day I Die as a companion piece.<sup>95</sup> Harold Clurman said in The Fervent

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<sup>92</sup>Shirer, Rise and Fall, pp. 247-248.

<sup>93</sup>Manchester, The Glory and the Dream, 1:115.

<sup>94</sup>Clifford Odets, Six Plays of Clifford Odets (New York: Modern Library, Random House, 1963).

<sup>95</sup>See footnote, p. 23.

Years that Odets completed the play in less than a week.<sup>96</sup> The actors in the play included Elia Kazan, Lee J. Cobb, and Lee Strassberg, who was billed Lee Martin.<sup>97</sup>

The play is often said to be based on a "letter" in an early 1935 issue of New Masses. However, Gerald Weales in Clifford Odets: Playwright points out that the "letter" was actually a short story in letter form. The story was an excerpt from Those Who Are Stronger by F. C. Weiskopf. From this, Odets got details of the methods the Nazis were using to break down their opponents. The method, used in the play, was to make the prisoner appear as a traitor to his friends by having him accompany the Nazis on raids and providing new clothes to make him appear an informer.<sup>98</sup>

Weales also notes that Odets owed even more to a chapter from a book called Fatherland by Karl Billinger (Paul W. Massing) which had also been printed in New Masses (January 1, 1935). The chapter was titled "In the Nazis Torture House" and contained detailed descriptions of SA guards' activities and brutal games which Odets used in the play.<sup>99</sup>

Three scenes in Till the Day I Die are set in the Columbia Brown House in Berlin. In March, 1933, concentration camps had

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<sup>96</sup>Harold Clurman, The Fervent Years: The Story of the Group Theatre and the Thirties (New York: Hill and Wang, 1957), p. 143.

<sup>97</sup>Helen Deutsch, New York Herald Tribune, 28 April 1935.

<sup>98</sup>Gerald Weales, Clifford Odets: Playwright (New York: Pegasus, 1971), p. 85.

<sup>99</sup>Ibid.

been set up around Berlin and private prisons or "bunkers" within the city became "hellish torture chambers." "The SS Columbia prison, the worst of these torture chambers," was also established.<sup>100</sup> Odets indicates his characters are SA, storm troopers and their officers, rather than SS. In the month Odets' play opened, two prisoners were shot in the Columbia house, allegedly for resisting.<sup>101</sup>

The central characters of Till the Day I Die are members of the Communist underground. Ernst Taussig is taken prisoner, tortured, and made to appear a traitor to his friends. He is a broken man at the end of the play, and in order to clear his name and protect the cause, he commits suicide. The story is told in seven scenes.

There are sixteen characters who can be considered Nazis, but most of them are minor--storm troopers and detectives. Two of the Nazi characters are supporting roles, Major Duhring and Captain Schlegel.<sup>102</sup>

Major Duhring appears in only one scene, but he is central to the plot. He is described as "a tired, civilized man." Before Duhring appears, Detective Popper says of him, "He's soft as butter but he knows how to make them talk." Ernst is brought into Duhring's

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<sup>100</sup>Martin Broszat, "The Concentration Camps, 1933-45," trans. Marian Jackson, in Anatomy of the SS State, p. 408.

<sup>101</sup>Ibid., p. 435.

<sup>102</sup>This character is listed as Captain Schmuckler in the typescript of the play, Theatre Collection, New York Public Library.

office for questioning and Ernst discovers that Duhring is an old leftist friend. Ernst asks Duhring what happened to his social ideals.

Duhring

Why I am in Nazi uniform happens to be unimportant. A realistic necessity. I am married into one of the finest of old German families, Nordic from year one. The work I do for the National Socialists harms no foe of the Nazi state. In fact, I am inclined to believe that if the truth was known my work may often be interpreted as a positive hindrance. (Laughs, and then adds soberly.) Not for publication. Perhaps, I don't care. . . . That's nearer the truth. I will not deny the justness of the scorn in your eyes. This may cost me my head . . . I'm not sure I care. I want to warn you. . . . They'll get what they want out of you. Trust me to--

Ernst (bitterly)

A man tortured by his conscience?

Duhring

Call it what you will. Here they use--<sup>103</sup>

They are interrupted by the arrival of Schlegel and Duhring's wife. When those two leave, Duhring tells Ernst that Schlegel suspects him of leniency to prisoners and of his lineage.

Duhring then tells Ernst what they will do to destroy him. He says they will release him, follow him, pick him up and beat him, nurse him back to health, repeat the process several times and, finally, make him appear as a traitor to the underground. Schlegel returns and threatens to expose Duhring's Jewish ancestry. They argue and in a scuffle Duhring shoots and kills Schlegel. He says to Ernst, "I'm so slimed over with rottenness. . . . 'Red Front' I can't say to you. . . . But 'United Front'--I can say

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<sup>103</sup>Odets, Six Plays, p. 130.

that." In every capitalist country in the world this day let them work for the united front."<sup>104</sup> He tells Ernst to have his hand fixed, gives him cigarettes and says, "Say I am not despised. Please say it!" He adds that he is a dying man since he has destroyed files of Ernst's comrades and has killed Schlegel. When Ernst leaves, he removes his arm band, tears the German flag off the wall, puts the muzzle of the gun in his mouth and pulls the trigger with the blackout.

While the portrayal of an SA officer as a leftist and a part Jew may have seemed far-fetched, it was quite possible. The rules of the state regarding Jews were applied to bureaucrats first, but its application to the military was delayed:

It was foreseeable that a great many would be dismissed, for most of the families of the German nobility could count Jewish ancestors in their coat of arms.<sup>105</sup>

The Third Reich did not come up with a definition of the term "Jew" until November 14, 1935. It was a complex law which required three grandparents "who are fully Jewish by race" or two such grandparents and practice of the Jewish faith or marriage to a Jew.<sup>106</sup>

In regard to Duhring's politics, shortly after Hitler became chancellor, at least a third of the SA consisted of the old parties of the left:

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<sup>104</sup>Ibid., p. 135.

<sup>105</sup>Delarue, The Gestapo, p. 131.

<sup>106</sup>Raul Hilberg, ed., Documents of Destruction: Germany and Jewry 1933-1945 (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1971), pp. 18-21.

It is well known that in June and July 1933 there were some SA units which were almost entirely Communist. The popular phrase for them was 'Beefsteak Nazis'--brown on the outside, Red inside. These noble fellows were by no means any gentler with folk of their own kind. They were even worse.<sup>107</sup>

Also, Ernst Roehm, the head of the SA, spoke to the foreign press April 18, 1934, and said, "The revolution which we made is not a national revolution but a National Socialist one. We wish to stress the last word, Socialist."<sup>108</sup> The portrayal of Duhring as a Nazi was not typical, but it was valid.

Captain Schlegel appears in two brief scenes, and he reveals characteristics which were attributable to the SA and its leader, Ernst Roehm. Schlegel is the major antagonist to Ernst Taussig. Odets describes him as "a man like Goering." Schlegel is arrogant and contemptuous of the subordinates, particularly Detective Popper. The obsequious Popper is a clownish fall-guy for Schlegel's outbursts. Schlegel is coolly sadistic. As he discusses Ernst's ability as a violinist, he smashes his fingers with a rifle butt. His sadism is impulsive; he expresses fear at having injured Ernst against orders. At one point, he holds Ernst's jaw and describes his features as being "Non-Nordic." He also reveals a compulsion for cleanliness by wiping his hands everytime he touches Ernst. At the end of his first scene, Schlegel is left with his homosexual lover, a storm trooper named Adolph. Schlegel talks about his loneliness, nervousness, fear of being discovered, and he attributes his inability to interrogate well to his femininity. The

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<sup>107</sup>Gisevius, To the Bitter End, p. 105.

<sup>108</sup>Delarue, The Gestapo, p. 132.

scene ends with his concern about the fear gripping the country:

"My God! What's the world coming to? Where's it going? My God!"

The brief scene reveals Schlegel as anti-Semitic, having elements of an authoritarian character, and suffering from stress. The scene has a considerable amount of humor. Schlegel and Adolf are almost ludicrous as they reveal their relationship. Adolf laughs at the way Popper has clumsily bowed and backed out of the room, and Schlegel says,

Schlegel

I have seen you in a few peculiar positions at times. In fact it might be much better for both of us if you weren't so graceful with those expressive hands of yours. Flitting about here like a soulful antelope.

Adolf

You've got me, Eric.

Schlegel

Hitler is lonely, too. So is God.<sup>109</sup>

Schlegel is a sadistic villain who is also a deviant in society. Although it may have served a dramatic purpose to ridicule Nazi brown shirts by suggesting or directly implying homosexuality and sadism, it was based on fact.<sup>110</sup>

The other Nazis in the play are minor characters. Some are portrayed as nearly clowns and others are brutal villains. Detective

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<sup>109</sup>Odets, Six Plays, p. 119.

<sup>110</sup>[Roehm's] name really came before the public the first time when his homosexual inclinations became generally known. And, in fact, the SA under his leadership became a veritable nest of homosexuality. . . . Because he stood behind his SA men even in its vilest excesses, he was widely feared as the commander-in-chief of a gang of "Desperadoes." Gisevius, To the Bitter End, p. 108.



Popper and two orderlies appear in scene two. Popper is an ineffective little tyrant to his subordinates and a bowing and whining fool to his superiors. The orderlies are bumpkins in a vaudeville kind of routine.

Popper

Take the typewriter.

Orderly 2

Me?

Popper

You.

Orderly 2

Yes sir. Where should I take it?

Popper

What's the matter with you? To type, to type.<sup>111</sup>

The scene later includes Schlegel smashing Ernst's fingers.

Scene three takes place in a storm troopers barracks. The scene opens and closes with two orderlies named Weiner and Peltz who argue politics. Weiner tends toward Socialism and Peltz toward the "practical side." Within the scene there occur a series of brutal acts by the storm troopers against five prisoners, including Ernst. The troopers hit and kick old prisoners, spit mouths full of beer at them and hit and kick a young boy. Two of them finally play a game to see if they can knock out prisoners with one blow. The character named "Trooper 3" is called "professor" and he intervenes when the troopers are abusing the young prisoner. He is described as "sorry" for the boy. It is the only element of humanity in the scene. The portrayal of these troopers coincides

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<sup>111</sup>Odets, Six Plays, pp. 114-115.

with a description of a storm trooper's belief that his reputation depended "on the strength of arm with which he conducted a prisoner's 'education.'"<sup>112</sup>

Scene four opens with a humorous exchange between two orderlies named Edsel and Martin. Martin's makeup was made to look like one of the three little pigs which had appeared in the Disney movie the year before.<sup>113</sup> The two orderlies discuss the political situation and Edsel questions the government's viewpoints. They begin to read Communist propaganda leaflets on Duhring's desk. They are increasingly curious and frightened and when Duhring comes in, Edsel is forced to quickly chew and swallow the leaflet he is holding.

Nearly all the Nazis in Till the Day I Die are villains without any redeeming qualities. However, their opponents are Communist and cannot be considered as socially acceptable heroes. Brooks Atkinson complained at the time that "If you want to register a protest against Nazi policy, Mr. Odets requires that you join the Communist brethren."<sup>114</sup> Edith J. R. Isaacs praised the play and said it was "so far ahead of anything else that Odets has done, in every detail that concerns playwrighting, that it escapes comparison with them." She also cautioned that "If you do not like

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<sup>112</sup>Gisevius, To the Bitter End, p. 104.

<sup>113</sup>Helen Deutsch, New York Herald Tribune, 28 April 1935.

<sup>114</sup>Brooks Atkinson, New York Times, 27 March 1937.

the philosophy of communism, you will not like the theme or story of Till the Day I Die."<sup>115</sup>

The heroes are Marxist heroes and do represent an idealization of the little man projected to the world. Ernst wants to die rather than betray the party and he says, "The day is coming and I'll be in the final result. That right can't be denied me. In that dizzy dazzling structure some part of me is built." In Drama and Commitment, Gerald Rabkin notes the specific nature of the heroes in Till the Day I Die:

Unlike the traditional heroes of Marxist literature, whose deaths serve as the catalysts for the awakening of others, Ernst believes that he is the phoenix that will rise from the ashes of his necessary death. Thus the play ends, not with the conversion of the previously uncommitted but with the affirmation by the committed that their existence is contained in the collective of which they are a part.<sup>116</sup>

The humorous Nazis in the play did not seem to lessen the effect of the brutality of the other Nazis. However, that view has been voiced. A letter to the New York Times at the time said in part, "In the next war we will see that the German youths have been well trained and are not the imbeciles [Odet's] play pictures them as being."<sup>117</sup> In retrospect, Gerald Weales said of the humor:

. . . the ineffectuality implicit in the comic figures lessens the Nazis as opponents; and the caricaturing technique, used

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<sup>115</sup>Edith J. R. Isaacs, "Broadway in Review," Theatre Arts Monthly, May 1935, pp. 328-331.

<sup>116</sup>Rabkin, Drama and Commitment, p. 178.

<sup>117</sup>T. A. Sheerin, New York Times, 7 April 1935, sec. 9, p. 2.

in conjunction with these comic figures infects all the others, turning them into grotesques as well.<sup>118</sup>

However, the critics indicated no such reaction at the time. In addition to Edith J. R. Isaacs, the most praising critic was Richard Watts, Jr., who said,

In "Till," Mr. Odets has captured--for the first time on any stage, so far as I know--a dramatic mood that presents convincingly the feeling of terror and suspicion and neurotic cruelty that characterizes its subject.<sup>119</sup>

John Mason Brown used "Grand Guignol" to describe the hand-smashing scene and said the play "has more tension than any of the anti-Nazi scripts yet produced in our theatre," and he found the brutal scenes "unforgettable in their bludgeoning strength."<sup>120</sup>

There were reservations about the play as a whole, but "most of the critics felt that the play demonstrates skill and that the characterizations were acute and the handling of the scenes competent."<sup>121</sup> The play was explicitly Communist in its philosophy since it suggested that the individual is not as important as the Party.<sup>122</sup> Till the Day I Die was more successful than the previous portrayals of Nazis and ran 136 performances.

<sup>118</sup>Weales, Clifford Odets, p. 89.

<sup>119</sup>Richard Watts, Jr., New York Herald Tribune, 31 March 1935.

<sup>120</sup>John Mason Brown, New York Evening Post, 27 March 1935.

<sup>121</sup>Shuman, Clifford Odets, p. 69.

<sup>122</sup>Rabkin, Drama and Commitment, p. 177; Weales, Clifford Odets, p. 107.

Till the Day I Die created controversy when produced outside New York: The play was banned in Chicago,<sup>123</sup> Philadelphia,<sup>124</sup> and Sidney, Australia.<sup>125</sup> Will Geer (then William Ghere) staged "Till" at the Hollywood Playhouse. He was taken for a ride by three men described as Germans, severely beaten and hospitalized.<sup>126</sup>

In The Best Plays of 1934-35, Burns Mantle took note of the two American plays in that season with Nazi characters. He said that Judgment Day "suffered from an excess of passionate hatred for the Hitler inquisition."<sup>127</sup> He noted that Waiting for Lefty and Till the Day I Die "proved tensely dramatic exhibits and drew a considerable audience outside the natural response of liberal organizations."<sup>128</sup>

#### 1935-1939

In Till the Day I Die, Major Duhring issued a call for a United Front, and it became reality less than six months after the play opened. The declaration by the Comintern in Moscow,

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<sup>123</sup>Unidentified newspaper clipping, Theatre Collection, New York Public Library.

<sup>124</sup>New York World-Telegram, 10 April 1935.

<sup>125</sup>Variety, 26 August 1936.

<sup>126</sup>Variety, 29 May 1935.

<sup>127</sup>Burns Mantle, ed., The Best Plays of 1934-35 and the Yearbook of the Drama in America (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1935), p. 6.

<sup>128</sup>Ibid., p. 16.

August 1935, had an effect on the far-left theatre in the United States. Malcolm Goldstein in The Political Stage explains.

The very phrase "Popular Front" could be read as a repudiation of the old revolutionary idea of class against class. The new dispensation called for an alliance of liberal-to-left elements in all social and economic classes in a stand against fascism. . . . Clearly enough, a confluence of liberal and leftist sentiments had occurred.<sup>129</sup>

The New Theatre League announced a new program in 1935 "dedicated to the struggle against war, fascism and censorship."<sup>130</sup> The "struggle against war" had existed for some time. The Congress against War was founded in 1933 and became the Communist supported League against War and Fascism.<sup>131</sup> Pacifism had also been around since the twenties, but it reached an official position in 1935 when Congress passed the first of a series of neutrality acts.<sup>132</sup> Nor was it pacifists alone who were against war:

In 1935 most Americans rejected the international ideal. "Entanglements" meant war and all its accompaniments--propaganda, profiteers, repudiated debts, internal conflicts, loss of civil liberties, general confusion. Americans had learned this lesson all too well, taught by the "exposures" which followed the First World War. Pacifists, reformers engrossed in home problems, liberals of the New Republic stripe, Russophiles . . . and Fascist groups all joined with the unthinking head-in-the-sand minority who wanted simply to play safe.<sup>133</sup>

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<sup>129</sup>Malcolm Goldstein, The Political Stage (New York: Oxford University Press, 1974), p. 151.

<sup>130</sup>Himelstein, Drama Was a Weapon, p. 33.

<sup>131</sup>Wecter, The Age of the Great Depression, p. 306.

<sup>132</sup>Ibid., p. 305.

<sup>133</sup>Spiller, Literary History of the U.S., pp. 1260-61.

The pronounced desire for non-involvement had an effect on information concerning Nazism. Dixon Wecter explained in The Age of the Great Depression:

Few Americans felt anything but disgust at Hitler's overt persecution of the Jews, but a not inconsiderable minority thoughtlessly parroted Nazi talk.

Despite growth of anti-Semitism, gullibility to foreign propaganda attracted more notice than ever before, stemming largely from the lurid tales about mutilated Belgian children and crucified Canadian soldiers spread during the First World War by Britain, France and America's own Creel committees. Writings of "revisionist" historians like Harry Elmer Barnes and, at a higher level of scholarship, Sidney B. Fary, buttressed by best sellers like Walter Millis's Road to War (1935) sought . . . to explode the "myth" of German war guilt in 1914. . . .

. . . . .  
Before the menace of Hitler became irrefutable, many liberals in the United States . . . tended to admire "misunderstood" Germany.<sup>134</sup>

There was also a timidity on the part of radio to deal with the world crisis. Alexander Wollcott was taken off "The Town Crier" for making rude remarks about Hitler and Mussolini. And Dupont's "Cavalcade of America" eliminated all such issues as "war and peace, the class struggle and religion."<sup>135</sup> All aspects of American society gave indication that isolationism was at its peak between 1935 and 1939.<sup>136</sup>

During this time, the American theatre also reflected the mass opposition to war and foreign entanglements in such plays as Idiot's Delight, Bury and Dead, and Johnny Johnson.

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<sup>134</sup>Wecter, Age of the Great Depression, p. 303.

<sup>135</sup>Ibid., p. 230.

<sup>136</sup>Jeanette Nichols, Twentieth Century United States (New York: D. Appleton-Century Company, 1943), p. 369.

Between Till the Day I Die (March 26, 1935) and the next portrayal of a Nazi by an American dramatist, there were four other plays of interest. Races by the Austrian dramatist Ferdinand Bruchner was produced in the same season as Till the Day I Die. It had been produced by the Theatre Guild in Philadelphia in March 1934, but was described as "too partisan and too diffuse for its Guild subscribers."<sup>137</sup> Races was presented in New York May 10, 1935, by the Forum Theatre amateurs in Heckcher Auditorium and was poorly received. The same quality in the play drew opposite reactions. Burns Mantle said it showed "more intelligent restraint than most anti-Nazi plays"<sup>138</sup> but Variety commented that it "didn't get sufficiently heated up."<sup>139</sup>

A dramatization of Sinclair Lewis' novel It Can't Happen Here was produced by the Federal Theatre Project October 27, 1936. The play dramatized the threat of fascism in the United States.<sup>140</sup>

The 1936-37 season also saw the production of a play with Nazi characters by the German dramatist Friedrich Wolf. Professor Mamlock opened April 13, 1937, and ran 74 performances. The play, also a Federal Theatre Project, dealt with the tribulations of a very pro-German, anti-Communist Jewish professor and his family.

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<sup>137</sup>Burns Mantle, New York Daily News, 13 May 1935.

<sup>138</sup>Ibid.

<sup>139</sup>Review of Philadelphia performance, Variety, 27 March 1935.

<sup>140</sup>Relevant comments about It Can't Happen Here and other plays dealing with American fascists can be found in Appendix C.



Burns Mantle felt it was the best of the anti-Nazi plays to date, but most of the critics did not agree.<sup>141</sup>

Orson Welles and John Houseman produced Shakespeare's Julius Caesar at the Mercury Theatre November 11, 1937. It was subtitled The Death of a Dictator and was done in modern dress using brown shirts and fascist salutes--a reference to contemporary fascist Italy. It ran for 153 performances.<sup>142</sup>

### Pins and Needles

Although Pins and Needles was a revue and not a play, it is included in this study because it was enormously successful and contained a sketch with a humorous portrayal of Hitler. Pins and Needles had been produced by the Labor Stage on weekends in September, 1937. It was successful and started a regular run at the Labor Stage Theatre November 27, 1937.<sup>143</sup> The Best Plays of 1937-38 credits the revue to Arthur Arent, Marc Blitzstein, Emanuel

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<sup>141</sup>Burns Mantle, New York Daily News, 14 April 1937.

<sup>142</sup>Himelstein, Drama was a Weapon, p. 118. The play had actually been done in the same manner earlier by the Federal Theatre project in Delaware and was scheduled for a project production in New York. However, John Houseman and Orson Welles left the project and opened the play as a Mercury production. Hallie Flanagan lamented in Arena that "It was one of the distinguishing characteristics of Federal Theatre that things started on its stages ended somewhere else." Flanagan, Arena, pp. 257-260.

<sup>143</sup>Morgan Himelstein says Pins and Needles played "to capacity audiences at Labor Stage until June 26, 1939, when it was transferred to the larger Windsor Theatre for a year's run on Broadway." (Drama Was a Weapon, p. 78.) However, the play is listed with Broadway productions in The Best Plays of 1937-38 and not in the separate Off Broadway section. Also, Burns Mantle wrote in that volume that the Labor Stage "broke into Broadway company . . ." with the production of Pins and Needles (Best Plays of 1937-38, pp. 4, 395).

Eisenberg, Charles Friedman and David Gregory with music and lyrics by Harold J. Rome. The Best Plays of 1938-39 lists Harold Rome, Arthur Arent, Charles Friedman, David Gregory, John La Touche, and Joseph Schrank with music and lyrics by Harold Rome. The revue grew out of material written by Rome for a resort in upstate New York called Green Mansions.<sup>144</sup>

The 1937 version contained nineteen numbers and the seventeenth was titled "Four Little Angels of Peace." The sketch was a burlesque on Eden, Mussolini, a Japanese general, and Hitler.<sup>145</sup> It was the most political of the hits in the show and "provided a jaded view of the pacifist claims of foreign rightist leaders."<sup>146</sup> Eden and England were viewed as imperialist.

Pins and Needles changed as it went along to meet the changing political situation. After the Munich pact September, 1938, Chamberlain replaced Eden. The U.S.S.R.-German non-aggression pact of August, 1939, angered Louis Schaffer, who was in charge of the Labor Stage and he began altering the revue to "a pacifist but clearly anti-Stalinist tone." When Hitler invaded Poland in September, 1939, Chamberlain was dropped, leaving three angels. In November, 1939, Chamberlain and a fifth angel, Joseph Stalin, joined the other three as "The Five Little Angels of Peace."<sup>147</sup>

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<sup>144</sup>Goldstein, The Political Stage, p. 207.

<sup>145</sup>Himelstein, Drama Was a Weapon, pp. 76-80.

<sup>146</sup>Goldstein, The Political Stage, p. 208.

<sup>147</sup>Ibid.

Pins and Needles was extremely successful and had been performed 1108 times in New York City when it closed June 22, 1940. Since Pins and Needles was a topical and changing revue, its successful run is not used in this study as the record run for the portrayal of a Nazi.

The 1937-38 season also included Save Me the Waltz by Katharine Dayton, which opened on February 28, 1938. The play is worth noting because of the negative reaction to its romantic treatment of a dictatorship. The play concerned the problems of a European dictator. It ends happily with the dictator's winning the favor of the people and the hand of a noble young lady. One reviewer saw the actor's portrayal of the dictator "as good a performance as that of Adolph Hitler himself, although he did make him, in a sense a sincere man, a patriotic man and one for whom . . . one could arouse some pity."<sup>148</sup> Most, however, did not interpret it as a portrayal of Nazism but saw it as Graustarkian<sup>149</sup> with the message that "the world may yet be made safe for democracy and kings by cupid and a good time. . . ."<sup>150</sup> Another saw the play "as effective as throwing a bouquet of violets at steel-rimmed

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<sup>148</sup>Sidney B. Whipple, New York World-Telegram, 1 March 1938.

<sup>149</sup>Graustark, a 1901 novel by George Barr McCutcheon, was an enormously popular melodrama subtitled The Story of a Love Behind the Throne and was set in the "highly colorful kingdom of Graustark." It was followed by Beverly of Graustark (1904) and The Prince of Graustark (1914). (William Rose Benet, ed., The Reader's Encyclopedia, 2nd ed. (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, N.D.).

<sup>150</sup>Arthur Pollock, Brooklyn Daily Eagle, 1 March 1938.

storm troopers."<sup>151</sup> The critics' reactions may be interpreted as a desire for a harsh, unflattering portrayal of dictators.

### Waltz in Goose Step

The next portrayal of Nazis was in Waltz in Goose Step produced November 1, 1938. Waltz in Goose Step was written by Oliver H. P. Garrett who was described in Variety as "an ex-New York newspaperman now a Hollywood scenarist."<sup>152</sup> The premise of the play was based on the Roehm purge of 1934. The play takes place just after the purge when August, the Leader, is flying home with his Minister of Defense, Count Gottfried von Laidi, and Schmutzi, the Minister of Propaganda. The pilot, Joseph Straub, is part Jewish but pro-Nazi. He is angry that the leaders have killed those he considered the best men in the party and plans a one-man rebellion to crash the plane and kill the leaders. He is talked out of it by Von Laidi. The other two acts deal with August's suspicions about Von Laidi. Von Laidi starts a counter-revolution but is exposed and given the choice of suicide or being killed.<sup>153</sup>

Other than the fact of the Roehm purge, the events in the play are fictional. The critics did view the characters as portrayals of Nazis. August, the Leader, was, of course, Hitler. Garret described him as follows:

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<sup>151</sup>John Anderson, New York Journal-American, 1 March 1938.

<sup>152</sup>Variety, 9 November 1938.

<sup>153</sup>Oliver H. P. Garret, Waltz in Goose Step, Typescript, Theatre Collection, New York Public Library.

He uses two contrasting manners of speech: one for private use, stacato, clipped of every extraneous word; the other for public consumption, verbose, hysterical, demagogic. On occasion, his oratorical manner creeps into his private usage, when he is inspired by a particularly trite idea. He has the aggressive, confident air common in men of small stature. He is a physical coward, shrewd but unimaginative.<sup>154</sup>

August derides the Socialism of those who were purged. He says if he adopted Socialism, half the world would line up against him, including London, Paris, and New York. In planning what will be told to the nation about the purge of men who stood for social reform, he says to Von Laidi, "Tell 'em traitors. Plotting civil war. Endangering peace of the country--thousands innocent lives." The answer approximates what Hitler said in a speech to the Reichstag just after the Roehm purge.<sup>155</sup>

In the course of the play, August expresses anti-Semitism and a strong belief in "strength" and "ruthless force." His specific views may not have been grasped since he was played as "a shouting, frothing at the mouth megalomaniac" with the actor screaming at the top of his lungs and mouthing the speeches."<sup>156</sup> Nonetheless, one critic observed that "It is a performance that might have been regarded as extreme, if all America had not listened in on a surprisingly similar voice from abroad several weeks ago."<sup>157</sup>

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<sup>154</sup>Ibid., unpagged preface.

<sup>155</sup>Shirer, Rise and Fall, p. 226.

<sup>156</sup>Sidney B. Whipple, New York World-Telegram, 2 November 1938.

<sup>157</sup>Richard Watts, Jr., New York Herald Tribune, 2 November 1938.

This was a reference to the September 12, 1938, address by Hitler at the Nazi rally in Nuremberg. William Manchester described the perception of that speech:

Millions of Americans, hearing Hitler for the first time over shortwave, were shaken by the depth of his hatred; on his lips the Teutonic language sounded cruel, dripping with venom. Those fluent in German--Franklin Roosevelt was one--could take it straight.<sup>158</sup>

While the portrayal of Hitler was not rejected unanimously, there was a problem in portraying him accurately. Brooks Atkinson noted the problem and said the portrayal "may be in the Hitler tradition of rabble rousing, although it is still too theatrical for the stage."<sup>159</sup>

Count Von Laidi, whose name was obviously intentionally suggestive, was the central character in the play after the first act. He was described by Garrett as "Slim, well preserved and elegant. He has a scar, like that of a saber, on one cheek, which he caresses frequently with his fingertips. He is physically timid, but morally without fear." One critic said Von Laidi was a "sardonic, cultured, piano playing homosexual, full of guile and shrewdness yet unable in the end to withstand the coils of terror and conspiracy that are winding about him."<sup>160</sup>

The Variety reviewer saw Von Laidi as "a thinly disguised prototype of Putzi Hanfstaengel [sic]."<sup>161</sup> Walter Winchell also

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<sup>158</sup>Manchester, The Glory and the Dream, 1:218.

<sup>159</sup>Brooks Atkinson, New York Times, 2 November 1938.

<sup>160</sup>Richard Watts, Jr., New York Herald Tribune, 2 November 1938.

<sup>161</sup>Variety, 9 November 1938.

mentioned the similarity.<sup>162</sup> Ernst (Putzi) Hanfstaengl was a young Harvard graduate whose mother was an American and whose wealthy and cultured family had helped the Nazi party. Hanfstaengl met Hitler in the early twenties and they became close friends.<sup>163</sup> Konrad Heiden said of Hanfstaengl:

. . . another often present was Ernst Hanfstaengl, . . . who had likewise reappeared in 1930, and, with his excellent English and effervescent manner, was used by Hitler as spokesman for the foreign press. When Hanfstaengl wanted to cheer his leader, he sat down at the piano and played his so-called 'musical portraits,' and Hitler nearly laughed himself to death when Hanfstaengl hammered out a portrait of the pompous and corpulent Göring, or played soft runs to portray Himmler moving noiselessly across the carpet.<sup>164</sup>

The observation of a prototype does seem accurate, but the similarity of the two ends there, since Hanfstaengl was never an official in the Reich.

Von Laidi does not openly express any tenets of Nazism. He reveals his lack of any belief when he says that ideals are only "a covering for men's desires, like a priest's cassock, lending them a holy look." He also explains how he got the scar on his cheek: "Under ether. While I was a student, I discovered that the world insists not so much upon conformity as upon the appearance of it."<sup>165</sup> Von Laidi is cynical about August and finally plots his overthrow, but his motivation is the fear that he may be purged.

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<sup>162</sup>Walter Winchell, Daily Mirror (New York), 2 November 1938.

<sup>163</sup>Shirer, Rise and Fall, pp. 46-47.

<sup>164</sup>Heiden, Der Fuhrer, p. 438.

<sup>165</sup>Garrett, Waltz in Goose Step, scene 1, p. 7.

One of the two typescripts of the play (Theatre Collection NYPL) lists a character called "Bogey, Minister of Propaganda," obviously meant to portray Goebbels.<sup>166</sup> The name was apparently too contentious even for New York and was changed to "Schmutzi" for the opening. Schmutzi is a "fanatical violent bundle of frustrations with his most intense hatred reserved for his intellectual superiors which affords him with plenty of scope." Some of the critics saw him as a composite of Goebbels and Goering.

One other character in the play was noted as based on a real life figure. The character Tessie Konstantin, the Leader's girlfriend, was described as "a thinly disguised Leni Riefenstahl, ex-actress now head of Germany's film industry."<sup>167</sup> The similarity was superficial, but Leni Riefenstahl had been a close friend of Hitler's.<sup>168</sup>

None of the characters in the play is heroic or stands out in contrast to the rest. The pilot briefly questions the regime in Act One, but is fully assimilated after that. The play is a story of intrigue among villains. Two critics compared Garrett's play to the writing of E. Phillips Oppenheim, an English novelist who published more than 110 novels dealing with international

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<sup>166</sup> Ibid., unpagged preface.

<sup>167</sup> Variety, 9 November 1938.

<sup>168</sup> Fest, Hitler, p. 322, and Horst Von Maltitz, The Evolution of Hitler's Germany (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1973), p. 349.



intrigue and the world of diplomacy,<sup>169</sup> and the involved plot would indicate it was an apt comparison.

While the critics assumed that Waltz in Goose Step was a portrayal of Nazis, the playwright insisted that was not his intention. Garrett wrote that recent events in Europe had made many more Americans aware that fascism may become a problem in the United States. He said he wanted to use "entertainment" to make "as many Americans as possible come to see Fascism as it really is and as a living reality which may affect their own lives." He explained his purpose as follows:

I have made much of it fictional as to time and characters, in order, if possible, to make it evident that it is with fascism generally I am dealing--not with its peculiar manifestations in a particular nation.<sup>170</sup>

He also mentioned having heard progressively more "unconscious fascist talk" and the "damning of a whole race because of economic conditions." He ended the article, "In any case, pardon my neck. . . ." The critics unanimously accepted his neck and rejected the play. The play ran seven performances and closed just two days before the Kristallnacht pogrom against the Jews throughout Germany.

There were two other foreign plays with Nazi characters in November 1938. Glorious Morning by the English playwright Norman Macowan was enjoying an extended run in London when it opened in New York November 26, 1938, and closed after nine performances. It

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<sup>169</sup>Stanley J. Kunitz and Howard Haycraft, eds., Twentieth Century Authors: A Biographical Dictionary of Modern Literature (New York: H. W. Wilson Company, 1942), p. 1052.

<sup>170</sup>Oliver H. P. Garrett, "Why Write an Anti-Nazi Play," New York Times, 30 October 1938, sec. 9, p. 3.

concerned the repression of religion in a mythical country called Zagnia. The totalitarian characters in this play were not exclusively Nazis. Several critics noted that the play was referring to both fascist and communist dictatorships and to Russia as well as to Germany. On November 29, 1938, Lorelei by the French dramatist Jacque Deval opened and ran seven performances. It was about a world-famous scientist, winner of the Nobel prize, who is in voluntary exile from Germany and is proclaimed a traitor to the Nazis. He returns to Germany and faces certain martyrdom.

Closely following Waltz in Goose Step, Glorious Morning and Lorelei were several more plays dealing directly and indirectly with totalitarianism. Burns Mantle saw them as a trend:

It takes theatre a year, and sometimes two or three years, to turn around and set about the business of developing a trend. The trend this last season, insofar as one appeared, was largely patriotic. . . . Not only was Robert Sherwood's Abe Lincoln in Illinois the most outstanding success, but it had as Broadway companions at one time or another Maxwell Anderson's Knickerbocker Holiday, Elmer Rice's American Landscape, and the George Kaufman-Moss Hart The American Way. All these plays . . . can be traced . . . to the political discussions that have arisen within the last few years. . . . These discussions have made our dramatists nation conscious, if not race conscious.<sup>171</sup>

The quote is used to indicate that while these three plays were warnings about fascism, they were viewed as pro-democracy rather than anti-fascist. Knickerbocker Holiday, a musical comedy, commented on totalitarianism versus democracy in the setting of early New York history. The other two plays had minor pro-Nazi American characters. American Landscape by Elmer Rice opened December 3,

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<sup>171</sup>Burns Mantle, Best Plays of 1938-39 (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1939), p. v.

1938, and ran 43 performances. The American Way by George Kaufman and Moss Hart opened January 21, 1939, and ran 244 performances. A brief discussion of these two plays can be found in Appendix C along with a discussion of Sinclair Lewis' It Can't Happen Here, which also dealt with American fascists.

One other play of the 1938-39 season treated the Nazi problem symbolically. Irwin Shaw's The Gentle People opened January 5, 1939. Shaw labelled it "a Brooklyn fable" and "a fairy tale with a moral."<sup>172</sup> Two old men are tormented by a gangster who has the corrupt law on his side. The old men take the law into their own hands and kill the gangster. The nearly total call to pacifism was weakening; The Gentle People, written by the author of Bury the Dead, was a call to action.

#### The Brown Danube

The final portrayal of Nazis in this period was an unsuccessful production called The Brown Danube<sup>173</sup> by Burnet Hershey produced May 17, 1939. Hershey had been a foreign correspondent and a New York newspaperman.<sup>174</sup> Before opening in New York, the play had "an extensive career on the road"<sup>175</sup> including Pittsburgh. It angered Nazis in Pittsburgh--a brick was thrown through the

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<sup>172</sup>Gagey, Revolution in American Drama, p. 134.

<sup>173</sup>Script not available to the writer. Synopsis and comments from Best Plays and reviews.

<sup>174</sup>Arthur Pollock, Brooklyn Daily Eagle, 18 May 1939.

<sup>175</sup>Brooks Atkinson, New York Times, 18 May 1939.

Nixon theatre lobby door and the word "Judge" was scrawled across the building.<sup>176</sup>

The Brown Danube is about an aristocratic, Catholic family headed by Prince Otto von Torheim. They are on a train attempting to flee Austria in March, 1938, just after the German invasion. They are stopped at the Swiss border and sent back on orders of the chief Nazi in Vienna, Ernst Hammaka (played by Dean Jagger). Hammaka had been born a servant on the Torheim estate and had a longing for Torheim's daughter, Erika. He arrests Erika's brother. To save her brother from a concentration camp, Erika agrees to give up her fiance Stefan (who is also a Nazi) and marry Hammaka. Erika's sly old grandfather convinces Hammaka that his mother was a Jewess and blackmails him into releasing the family.

Hammaka was the main Nazi in the play, and Dean Jagger's performance of the role was noted by most of the critics. Hammaka was described as a "villain"<sup>177</sup> and "a wholly unsympathetic character."<sup>178</sup> The character had very few lines<sup>179</sup> and little opportunity to express specific Nazi traits. Most of the critics found Dean Jagger too "open-faced and everlikeable" to be an effective villain.

Another Nazi mentioned by several critics was Mr. Mueller, a humorous and officious bureaucrat charged with measuring heads

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<sup>176</sup>Unidentified newspaper clipping, New York Public Library Theatre Collection.

<sup>177</sup>Arthur Pollock, Brooklyn Daily Eagle, 18 May 1939.

<sup>178</sup>Sidney B. Whipple, New York World-Telegram, 18 May 1939.

<sup>179</sup>Pollock, Brooklyn Daily Eagle.

to determine whether a person was Aryan. One character demands to know whether she is Jewish or Japanese. Mueller says the Japanese are allies of Germany and, therefore, Japanese Aryans.<sup>180</sup> The Nazis were in fact interested in racial measurements but had great difficulty in reaching any conclusions other than what were desirable Nordic features.<sup>181</sup>

Stefan, the boyfriend of Erika, is also a Nazi. Richard Watts, Jr. described him as "that curious contradiction, an upright and amiable Nazi."<sup>182</sup> Other Nazis in the play included a storm trooper and inspectors.

The criticism of the play would indicate that the Nazi characters were not developed in the play but merely used to provide a villainous background for a love story. One critic noted the violence in the play and complained:

Beatings and typhus and assaults by ruffians on a gentle priest are grimmer matters, suitable for darker tales. They make it hard to feel properly disturbed about Erika's love life, which seems to be after all the author's chief concern.<sup>183</sup>

The mixing of the romantic melodrama and Nazism disturbed the critics. Richard Watts, Jr. said the play "is completely incompetent to handle even a lesser topic than the current German barbarism" and added "somehow I doubt that it is the essence of the tragedy

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<sup>180</sup>Variety, 24 May 1939.

<sup>181</sup>Robert Cecil, The Myth of the Master Race: Alfred Rosenberg and Nazi Ideology (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1972), pp. 198-199.

<sup>182</sup>Richard Watts, Jr., New York Herald Tribune, 18 May 1939.

<sup>183</sup>Richard Lockridge, New York Sun, 18 May 1939.

of Nazi oppression."<sup>184</sup> John Mason Brown said "Austria's tragedy is something beyond Jack-and-Jill romances . . . and certainly too great to be reduced to the tawdriest of melodramatic fustian."<sup>185</sup> John Anderson noted disparagingly that the play was "Laid in some mythical Graustark or Ruritania. . . ."<sup>186</sup> The same complaint had been made against Save Me the Waltz in 1938 for its light treatment of totalitarianism.

The critics also commented on the use of Nazism in drama. John Anderson said "The Nazi theme demands either profound tragedy or scorching mockery."<sup>187</sup> Sidney B. Whipple felt the dramatists "should wait another twenty years, at least, before they try to capture and impound the truth about Nazism within the confines of a single play."<sup>188</sup> And Brooks Atkinson felt that anti-Nazi plays could not work because "they are reduced to provide the obvious and attesting to what we have all learned from reading the newspapers. . . ." Atkinson also said there had to be some free will in a play but that "once a Nazi uniform appears on the stage, we know how things stand and expect the worst."<sup>189</sup>

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<sup>184</sup>Richard Watts, Jr., New York Herald Tribune, 18 May 1939.

<sup>185</sup>John Mason Brown, New York Post, 18 May 1939.

<sup>186</sup>John Anderson, New York Journal-American, 18 May 1939.

<sup>187</sup>Ibid.

<sup>188</sup>Sidney B. Whipple, New York World-Telegram, 18 May 1939.

<sup>189</sup>Brooks Atkinson, New York Times, 18 May 1939.

The audience cheered and applauded several minutes at the final curtain on the opening night of The Brown Danube,<sup>190</sup> but the play ran only 21 performances.

After the first three plays with Nazi characters were produced in 1933-34, Burns Mantle wrote "playwrights and players will have to quit trying to cry or to shame Hitlerism out of countenance and begin ridiculing its leaders even as they expose its cause."<sup>191</sup> At the close of this period, the only Nazi on Broadway was Hitler in Pins and Needles. He was reduced to a humorous bit part, but he was acceptable.

### Conclusion

The portrayals of Nazi characters from 1933 to September 1939 were more varied than the critics reactions would indicate. The Nazi characters included portrayals of the Nazi leadership (Judgment Day, Waltz in Goose Step), a student and a teacher (Birthright), judges (Judgment Day), a woman and a part Jewish man (Till the Day I Die), as well as the stereotyped storm troopers.

The portrayals of the Nazis in this period were knowledgeable and informed. The characters usually had characteristics which were specifically Nazi in nature rather than generally fascist or totalitarian. The major traits used to portray Nazis in this period were strong anti-Semitism and anti-Communism. Volkish thoughts and Nazi party beliefs included adherence to socialism, racialism, the

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<sup>190</sup>Robert Coleman, New York Daily Mirror, 19 May 1939.

<sup>191</sup>Burns Mantle, New York Daily News, 22 March 1934.

superiority of Germans, and anger at Germany's defeat in World War I. Reflections of Hitler's thoughts included the Darwinistic concept of struggle, the idea of inequality (Fuhrerprinzip), the virtue of war, the need for action over theory, and an opposition to democracy, Marxism and peace. There was partial portrayal of Fromm's thesis of the authoritarian character with sadistic and masochistic drives. And, finally, a few indications of Barbu's thesis of Nazis being declass   and under stress. While the anti-Semitism was frequently portrayed, no character was sufficiently developed to describe the anti-Semitism as a totalizing and reflexive myth.

While most of the Nazis can be considered as villains, some, as in Birthright and Till the Day I Die, were given either mitigating circumstances or explanations for their adherence to Nazism. The villains were always overt oppressors and bullies who were authoritarian, threats to law and order, and, often, deviants. It should be noted that the villains' opponents were mostly Jews and Communists and could not fully be described as American heroes--champions, splendid performers, socially acceptable, middle-class, self-made men. They were mostly idealizations of the little-man (fascist and communist heroes).

All the plays in this period contained Nazi violence.<sup>192</sup> Another similarity was that they all took place on the Nazis' own territory; the totally vulnerable Eisner home in Germany in

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<sup>192</sup>Two of the three plays about American fascism, American Landscape and It Can't Happen Here, also contained violence. There was no violence in The American Way.



Birthright, the courtroom in Judgment Day, the SA barracks and offices in Till the Day I Die, the German setting of Waltz in Goose Step.<sup>193</sup>

The settings of these plays, then, made the opponents of the Nazis extremely vulnerable.

Critics writing during the time seemed disturbed and apologetic for their rejection of anti-Nazi plays and felt constrained to offer explanations. Burns Mantle said in 1934:

It is easy to believe almost anything of Hitlerism, but not the German people--it isn't any easier now than it was in the early days of the war to credit all the stories of atrocities that come hurtling across the ocean.<sup>194</sup>

He was referring to the false reports of atrocities by Germans in World War I mentioned earlier.<sup>195</sup>

In discussing Waltz in Goose Step, Arthur Pollock said "Possibly these leaders, being nearly incredible in reality, . . . rob plays of all semblance of reality. Maybe the things they do are so revolting that audiences, being escapists, just don't like to think about them."<sup>196</sup> Brooks Atkinson offered the following explanation:

It is easy to sit in an orchestra chair and say "no" to every Nazi play that raises a curtain. It is much harder to discover the reason why. Doubtless we are too close to the events, too familiar with the details of expansion by inhuman force.

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<sup>193</sup>Two of the plays about American fascism also had the fascists on their own grounds. Only the minor Bundist agent in The American Way was off his territory.

<sup>194</sup>Burns Mantle, New York Daily News, 1 April 1934.

<sup>195</sup>See p. 50, quote from Wector, Age of the Great Depression.

<sup>196</sup>Arthur Pollock, Brooklyn Daily Eagle, 2 November 1938.

But it is also true that the problem has gone beyond the personal relations of the leaders and their technique and methods. It involves not one party and one nation, but the world; it is a vast problem of political or social significance that goes to the heart of the enlightened way of living.<sup>197</sup>

And still another view of that play was voiced by Variety which said "its greatest negative factor is its failure to capture sympathy from pro and anti-Nazis alike."<sup>198</sup> Variety had also voiced the unfairness charge earlier in the period. Besides the one suggestion that the portrayals may not have been fair, the reasons suggested for the unacceptability of accurate renditions of Nazism were (1) overcoming false World War I propaganda, (2) not wanting to think about revolting problems, and (3) being too close to the events.

Some further insight into the rejection of the plays is found in remarks by Frank Hurburt O'Hara in 1939.

All in all, the word propaganda is not in happy repute with the American people today. . . . Some of our distrust of the term . . . stems from too many experiences of having uncovered the hokum behind alleged facts. . . . What we want is unbiased truth. Objectivity is the passion of current idealism. . . . And so we rebel at the very notion of anyone's picking out the facts we ought to have.<sup>199</sup>

A desire for objectivity was combined with the incredibility of the topic. Joseph Mersand, Ph.D., said that when dramatists writing in the 1930's about Nazi Germany were criticized for being too melodramatic, they replied that they were reporting the facts. Mersand commented, "In truth, the story of Nazi Germany is so

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<sup>197</sup>Brooks Atkinson, New York Times, 2 November 1938.

<sup>198</sup>Variety, 9 November 1939.

<sup>199</sup>Frank Hurburt O'Hara, Today in American Drama (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1939), p. 237.

horrifying that on stage it is unbelievable."<sup>200</sup> Furthermore, accurate portrayals of a Nazi asserting masculinity by ranting and screaming could create a comedic impression.

The portrayal of the Nazis in this period had been generally unsuccessful. Broadway success is not an indication of dramatic quality, and, conversely, the lack of commercial success of the anti-Nazi plays cannot be assumed to be a result of a lack of quality. Moreover, most of the plays had extreme reactions from the critics and an admission that the content was disturbing. Without attributing dramatic quality to the plays, it seems reasonable to suggest that to some degree the reception of the plays was similar to Robert Hogan's retrospective explanation for the failure of Judgment Day:

The unavoidable conclusion is that the play's Broadway failure had little to do with its innate merit and much to do with the imperception of the critics and the temper of the times.<sup>201</sup>

Certainly, the temper of the times was a basic pre-occupation with the depression and a desire to stay out of war.

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<sup>200</sup>Mersand, American Drama Since 1930, p. 81.

<sup>201</sup>Hogan, Elmer Rice, p. 72.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE PORTRAYAL OF NAZIS SEPTEMBER, 1939 - December, 1941

The Munich treaty and Czechoslovakian crisis in 1938 had considerably awakened America to the existence of Nazism. Nonetheless, isolationism was far from dead, and, in fact, reached a new pitch before America's entry into the war. The world situation was not easy to grasp. With the August, 1939, Soviet-Nazi non-aggression pact, the European alignments had undergone several changes.<sup>1</sup>

World War II began in September, 1939; Germany invaded Poland on September 1 and England and France declared war on Germany September 3. Observers of the New York theatre began to discuss theatre in terms of what had happened in World War I and began to speculate and make observations on the possible impact of World War II. Harold Taubman in The Making of the American Theatre said:

From the day that Hitler's panzer division stormed into Poland and his bombers splintered a beleaguered Warsaw into rubble while a brave radio station defiantly, but hopelessly broadcast a proudly Polish Chopin Polonaise, war conditioned the American theatre. Although the United States was not involved in

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<sup>1</sup>The alignments had been:

1. Germany, France and England against Soviet Union;
2. Germany against France, England and Soviet Union;
3. Germany and Soviet Union against France and England.

And the third alliance was to change back to number two within this period. Slochower, No Voice Is Wholly Lost, p. 14.

fighting until the attack on Pearl Harbor, its mind was on it constantly.<sup>2</sup>

The reaction to the beginning of the war, however, was a deepening of the division over possible involvement in the war, and this occurred both in society at large and in the theatre.

Relations between the United States and Germany were not good. Hitler had been attacking the United States and particularly President Roosevelt. In a speech on November 10, 1938, he "declared that the United States was a conglomeration of races with less than half being Anglo-Saxon and the rest composed of Negroes, Jews, Mongolians and other inferior races."<sup>3</sup> In April, 1939, Roosevelt warned the Axis about further acts of aggression and Hitler called him a "madman" and an "imbecile."<sup>4</sup> However, "The leaders of the Reich were convinced that, despite Roosevelt's attitude toward Germany, America would not intervene in a war such as they envisaged."<sup>5</sup>

When Poland was invaded, the atmosphere changed. From the first day of the war, the Germans stopped their attacks on Roosevelt and ordered their papers to treat all questions concerning the United States with caution. The intent was to prevent any difficulties for the isolationists in the United States.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>Harold Taubman, The Making of the American Theatre (New York: Coward McCann, Inc., 1965), p. 248.

<sup>3</sup>Saul Friedländer, Prelude to Downfall: Hitler and the United States, 1939-1941, trans. Aline B. and Alexander Werth (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1967), p. 10.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., pp. 12, 13.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 15.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., pp. 41-42.

The New German policy, while imposing severe restrictions on criticism of the American government, did not prevent Germany from continuing to circulate all kinds of propaganda periodicals and pamphlets within America itself.<sup>7</sup>

The immediate response to the war was avoidance. The American Press coined the phrase "The Phoney War" and it became adopted on both sides of the Atlantic. The phrase was meant to imply that the war was spurious because no great battles were being fought between the Franco-British and German forces.<sup>8</sup> The war, however, "was real, horrifying and bitter for the Poles, the Estonians, the Lithuanians, the Latvians, the Finns, the Danes, and the Norwegians."<sup>9</sup> All of these nations had suffered invasion or defeat in the winter and spring of 1939-40.

The reaction of theatre audiences was also to avoid the issue. Brock Pemberton reported at the time:

The immediate reaction was in sharp contrast to that in 1914. Then the World War paralyzed the American theatre for several months; in September, 1939, the shock resulting from the beginning of hostilities lasted scarcely more than a week. . . . Immediately playhouses were packed and even weaker shows prospered with the result that September and October were exciting months.

There were several contributing factors besides the war to this upswing. Escape from the harrowing drama in Poland described over the ether waves was one.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 52.

<sup>8</sup>B. H. Liddell Hart, History of the Second World War (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1971), p. 33.

<sup>9</sup>Mark Arnold-Forster, The World at War (New York: Stein and Day, 1973), p. 30.

<sup>10</sup>Brock Pemberton, "The Year 1939 on the Stage," New York Times, 31 December 1939, sec. 9, p. 1.

But the response to the war situation and its political implications by members of the theatre profession was pronounced.

The Soviet-Nazi non-aggression pact of August, 1939, was interpreted in the United States as "a serious defeat for the democracies . . . ,"<sup>11</sup> by all except for the far-left and the Russophiles. Just before the pact was signed "three hundred intellectuals and artists sign a statement denouncing the fantastic falsehood that the USSR and totalitarian states are basically alike."<sup>12</sup> Among those who signed were Clifford Odets, Dashiell Hammet, S. J. Perelman, and James Thurber. Following the pact, the leftists turned extremely isolationist. They were to find themselves in severe conflict with members of the theatre profession who were interventionists.

In November, 1939, Russia invaded Finland and the theatre profession responded with benefit performances for the Finnish Relief Fund. There had already been benefits for the British Relief Fund. Tallulah Bankhead was in The Little Foxes and claimed the producer and Lillian Hellman had refused to allow a benefit for Finland. Lillian Hellman contended that such relief would give impetus to a war spirit in the country. She said that she "would like to make sure that our charitable aid does not mask a pro-war movement in the United States."<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup>Friedländer, Prelude to Downfall, p. 33.

<sup>12</sup>Stefan Kanfer, A Journal of the Plague Years (New York: Atheneum, 1973), p. 31.

<sup>13</sup>New York Times, 21 January 1940, p. 27.

Another number was added to the revue Pins and Needles in November, 1939. It was called "Stay Out, Sammy" and in it a mother cautions her son to stay out of a street brawl. It was clearly a plea for isolationism.<sup>14</sup> Isolationist activities in the theatre continued well into the period. In June, 1940, the Theatre Arts Committee picketed There Shall Be No Night for inciting war.<sup>15</sup>

While isolationists in the theatre were visible and included some important names, most people in the profession were interventionist.

No one . . . took the fate of Britain--the land of Shakespeare and Shaw--more to heart than the American theatre. It was virtually impossible for anyone . . . on Broadway to avoid being either in or at a benefit for Britain.<sup>16</sup>

Of the five plays with Nazis in this period, three were clearly interventionist and were written by such respected playwrights as Robert Sherwood (There Shall Be No Night), Elmer Rice (Flight to the West), and Maxwell Anderson (Candle in the Wind). The other two plays (Clare Boothe's Margin for Error and Norman Krasna's The Man with Blond Hair) were anti-Nazi, if not

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<sup>14</sup>Goldstein, The Political Stage, p. 212.

<sup>15</sup>Variety, 5 June 1940, p. 42. In 1940, the committee also produced a publication called "The Actors Present War" which, among other things, complained about anti-Nazi films and called on actors to join "all those forces working to keep America out of the war, of helping to swell the great voice of the American people in saying: 'The Yanks Are Not Coming.'" Richard Hood, The Actors Present War (New York: Theatre Arts Committee and Hollywood League for Democratic Action, 1940), p. 50.

<sup>16</sup>Geoffrey Perrett, Days of Sadness, Years of Triumph: The American People 1939-1945 (New York: Coward, McCann and Geoghegan, Inc., 1973), p. 64.



interventionist, and neither was perceived by the critics as a plea for isolationism.

In 1940, the nation's attention was on the presidential election, but not off Germany entirely. Concern over the war intensified. In June, William Allen White, an interventionist, set up a "Committee to Defend America by Aiding the Allies" and the isolationists formed the "America First Committee."<sup>17</sup> The America Firsters had 60,000 members, the prestige of its chief propagandist Charles Lindbergh, the money of Henry Ford and others, and the respectability of John Foster Dulles and Joseph P. Kennedy. The Committee to Defend America enlisted writer Elizabeth Morrow Cutter (Lindbergh's mother-in-law) and members of the intellectual community led by Robert Sherwood. That year Hitler invaded Norway, Holland, Luxembourg and France. A New York Herald Tribune editorial called for a declaration of war. It was written by Walter Millis, author of the 1935 isolationist best seller The Road to War.<sup>18</sup> In September Americans were seeing pictures of the bombing of London. Public reaction to a draft law went from fifty-fifty on June 1 to 71% in favor after the London blitz.<sup>19</sup> The America Firsters became strident. Lindbergh warned the American Jews to "shut up--or else." Senator Key Pittman suggested the British give up England and move

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<sup>17</sup>Friedländer, Prelude to Downfall, p. 99.

<sup>18</sup>Perrett, Days of Sadness, Years of Triumph, p. 27.

<sup>19</sup>Manchester, The Glory and The Dream, 1:270-271.

to Canada. Joseph P. Kennedy said the idea that Britain was fighting for democracy was "bunk."<sup>20</sup>

Roosevelt's election in 1940 led to the beginning of a de facto war against Germany. The American people committed themselves to Britain with the passage of the Lend-Lease bill March 11, 1941. In September the United States Navy began operating under wartime conditions.<sup>21</sup> Events moved rapidly after that. When Germany attacked Russia in June, 1941, Lend Lease was extended to the Russians.<sup>22</sup>

In August, 1941, Fortune magazine devoted a 175-page issue to the U.S. war effort. A Fortune survey found the American citizen "believes Hitler means to conquer the world; is willing to risk war to help Britain win;" and would accept taxes, reduce gasoline consumption, and even accept military training one day a week. But the citizen was described as a "reluctant interventionist who wants to turn to an isolationist after the war. . . ."<sup>23</sup>

There were two events in the period which help to clarify attitudes about the portrayal of enemy characters in this period. Archibald MacLeish wrote an article in Nation called "The Irresponsibles" in which he raised the question:

Why did the scholars and the writers of our generation in this country, witnesses as they were to the destruction of

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<sup>20</sup>Ibid., 1:267.

<sup>21</sup>Hoyle, The World in Flames, pp. 67-69.

<sup>22</sup>Morrison, The Oxford History, p. 999.

<sup>23</sup>Review of August 1941 Fortune, Time Magazine, 18 August 1941, pp. 27-32.

writing and of scholarship in great areas of Europe and to the exile and the imprisonment and murder of men whose crime was scholarship . . . fail to oppose those forces while they could--while there was still time and still place to oppose them with arms of scholarship and writing?<sup>24</sup>

He said that scholars and writers had failed to recognize the specific nature of the crisis of their time. He said we had wars, murder, inquisition, torture, and suppression before and observed,

But in the past these things have been done, however hypocritically, in the name of truth, in the name of humanity--even in the name of God. . . . What is new is a cynical brutality which considers moral self-justification unnecessary and therefore--and this is perhaps its worst indecency--dispenses even with the filthy garment of the hypocrite. To use brutality and force . . . in the name of force alone, is to destroy the self-respect and therefore the dignity of individual life, without which the existence of art or learning is inconceivable.<sup>25</sup>

MacLeish turned to the nature of scholars and writers. He felt that modern scholars were "irresponsible" in their "purity" and that writers were responsible only to "the truth of feeling." He said that the painter's devotion to the thing observed was "naked of judgment, stripped of causes and effects." He concluded that the writer who uses an artist as a model "sees the world as a god sees it--without morality, without care, without judgment."<sup>26</sup>

Both writers and scholars freed themselves of the subjective passions, the emotional preconceptions which color conviction and judgment. . . . They emerged free, pure, and single into the antiseptic air of objectivity. And by that sublimation of the mind they prepared the mind's disaster.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>24</sup>Archibald MacLeish, "The Irresponsibles," Nation, 18 May 1940, p. 608.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., pp. 619-620.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid., pp. 621-622.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid., pp. 622-623.

It was noted at the end of the last period that Frank Hurburt O'Hara saw society in general as desiring only objective and unemotional opinions. The writers, according to MacLeish's attack, were filling that need.

Brooks Atkinson responded to MacLeish's charges. He said, "That is a hard accusation to make, especially against the theatre, which never before has been so earnestly concerned with matters of current importance." He said many playwrights had been speaking to the point for years:

Certainly no one can say that the theatre has not understood from the beginning the meaning of Hitlerism, nor that it has neglected to defend the democratic culture of the West.<sup>28</sup>

He offered as examples Judgment Day, Till the Day I Die, Lorelie, The Brown Danube, Waltz in Goose Step, and Margin for Error. He wondered, again, why the plays of persecution of the Jews had not succeeded and added "But no one can say that the theatre, pursuing beauty with artistic detachment has not understood the infamy of the Nazi assault upon the spirit of man."<sup>29</sup> While Atkinson defended the playwrights, he did not question his own and his fellow critics' rejection of the subject matter of Nazism through the thirties.

The other event which illustrates the temper of the period was the attack on Hollywood for being too anti-Nazi. Stefan Kanfer related the circumstances:

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<sup>28</sup>Brooks Atkinson, "Where the Theatre Stands," New York Times, 9 June 1940, sec. 9, p. 1.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid.

In 1941 only the naive or deluded doubted that war was imminent. But, on the right, several Senators still stood on the beach, commanding the ocean to roll back. It was useless, they decided, to attack the president. Instead, they would embarrass his administration by exposing the vicious war-mongering movies that the New Deal had secretly sponsored in California. With the lunatic timing characteristic of the pre-war isolationists, Senator Burton K. Wheeler of Idaho chose September, 1941 for his probe of Hollywood.<sup>30</sup>

Among the charges was one that the movies were controlled by the "foreign-born." It was obvious this meant Jewish. The "foreign-born" engaged Wendell Wilkie as counsel and he called the hearings a kangaroo court. Among the films the committee presented as evidence of subversion were The Great Dictator, Sergeant York, and That Hamilton Woman, in which Admiral Nelson pleads to the King of Naples for aid against Napoleon (pro-British propaganda).

An article in Christian Century did say, "Anti-Nazi melodramas, rather honest and restrained at first, have become more and more bitter in their denunciation, with the Nazis painted as such monsters they become almost caricatures." The article charged that the propaganda was reaching a hundred million people a week and was in the hands of "groups interested in involving the U.S. in war."<sup>31</sup> However, Norman Cousins expressed the opinion that Hollywood had been forced into a hero's role at the point of a gun.

Up until comparatively recently, Hollywood lived for years in that most Utopian of all worlds, a snow white paradise whose inhabitants, apparently, were miraculously oblivious to the facts of life as they related to intercourse among nations.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>30</sup>Kanfer, A Journal of the Plague Years, p. 20.

<sup>31</sup>M. Frakes, Christian Century, 24 September 1941, pp. 1172-1173.

<sup>32</sup>Norman Cousins, Theatre Arts, October 1941.

Cousins said Hollywood was actually late in catching up with the rest of the country in its distaste of Nazism, and he wondered why the industry should be investigated for now supporting the policy of the United States. The magazine, Nation, editorialized that the hearings were held to "soften up" the American people into believing that Nazism was no danger to the country and to show "that the Nazi menace was a figment of the Jewish imagination."<sup>33</sup>

By the end of this period, the interventionists' concern to have Nazism recognized and the isolationists' desire to avoid it had made the portrayal of Nazis a national issue.

#### Margin for Error

The first play with Nazis in this period was highly successful. It was Clare Boothe's Margin for Error,<sup>34</sup> which was completed just before the war began,<sup>35</sup> was accepted for production, and opened November 3, 1939. Clare Boothe had been a successful magazine editor and novelist and was married to Henry R. Luce, editor of Time, Life and Fortune. She had two earlier hit plays, The Women in the 1936-37 season and Kiss the Boys Good-Bye in 1938-39. She had astounded critics and admirers of the latter play, a comedy, by calling it "a political allegory about Fascism in America."<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>33</sup>Nation, 20 September 1941, p. 241.

<sup>34</sup>Clare Boothe, Margin for Error (New York: Random House, 1940).

<sup>35</sup>Nammes, Politics and the American Drama, p. 135.

<sup>36</sup>Clare Boothe quoted in Burns Mantle, The Best Plays of 1938-39 (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1939), p. 257.

Margin for Error was the first commercially successful anti-Nazi play and ran 264 performances. The plot was basically simple. A despicable German Consul named Karl Baumer (played by Otto L. Preminger) is hated by six people, each with enough motive to kill him, and he is killed--three times--with prison, a knife, and a gun. The motives of the suspects reveal the character of the Consul.

Baron Max von Alvenstor is the Consul's secretary. The Consul has learned that Max's grandmother is Jewish and is using the knowledge to blackmail Max into covering up the Consul's misappropriation of embassy funds.

The Consul's wife, Sophie, is in love with an American journalist named Thomas Denny, who has been successfully attacking the Consul in his column. Sophie has been giving Denny information. The Consul threatens Sophie's father in Czechoslovakia and threatens to send her back to Germany as a traitor if she does not convince Denny to abandon his attacks.

Thomas Denny, the journalist in love with Sophie, is willing to kill the Consul for the threats he is making to her.

Dr. Jennings is one of the Consul's many innocent victims who has been bilked of money in the hopes of getting relatives out of a concentration camp. Dr. Jennings learns his daughter has died in childbirth in the camp and that his son-in-law is in a mental hospital, hopelessly insane.

Otto B. Horst, the American Bund leader, has been fingered by Berlin to be liquidated as a martyr because he is ineffectual

and bumbling. He suggests he would rather make a Consul a martyr.

And, finally, one of the policemen sent by the Mayor to guard the Consul is American Jew named Moe Finkelstein. The Consul has threatened to have Moe falsely charged with dereliction of duty and have him lose his job.

The Consul is found dead at the end of act one and act two is a murder mystery unravelling the puzzle of his death. The Consul is discovered by turns to have been shot by Dr. Jennings after he was stabbed by his wife. But he was already dead, accidentally poisoned with cyanide which he had put in a drink intended for Max. The Consul had planted a vial of the poison on Max and had intended Max's death to look like suicide.

Consul Karl Baumer is described as "the type of German who make caricaturists' lives easy, and pro-German propaganda difficult." He has a shaved head, a deceptive "expression of gentle and bovine torpor." "A born sycophant, he is thoroughly unrelentingly arrogant to his dependents." He is something of a sadist and a glutton.<sup>37</sup> The catalogue of his deeds is quite lengthy. He is a thief, an embezzler, a blackmailer, double crosser, traitor, and a would-be murderer. "By making him a particularly vicious Nazi agent, the massacre becomes more than bearable and a good time can be had by all."<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>37</sup>Boothe, Margin for Error, p. 24.

<sup>38</sup>Richard Watts, Jr., New York Herald-Tribune, 4 November 1939.



Clare Boothe did attribute several specific Nazi characteristics to the "caricature" Consul. His anti-Semitism is extremely pronounced. Max says it is "rather an obsession" with the Consul. The Consul is very upset at the Mayor's joke of assigning Jews to protect him.<sup>39</sup> In anger at Officer Finkelstein's remarks about Hitler, he says, "You parasite! You lousy, illiterate, poverty-stricken spawn of the Ghetto!" Later in the play he refers to "President Rosenfeld," a reference to Roosevelt's being Jewish, which was believed by many people in the 1930's.<sup>40</sup> The Consul also expresses extreme adoration of Hitler. In addition, he makes brief references to his dislike for democracy and peace. He also reveals that he was only a "common chemist" before "Hitler called me" and he is touchy about his background. The Consul is the villain of the piece and has no element of audience sympathy.

The Consul's hero opponent is Officer Moe Finkelstein. In an introduction to the play, Clare Boothe's husband, Henry Luce, said that it was in Moe that she had succeeded in making a credible spokesman as a rebuttal to National Socialism. "For the character of Moe Finkelstein is the best advertisement for Democracy since Sherwood's Lincoln."<sup>41</sup> Moe (played by Sam Levine) is a wise-cracking,

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<sup>39</sup>According to Goldstein, The Political Stage, p. 409, Mayor LaGuardia had assigned Jewish policemen to guard the German consulate in New York in 1938.

<sup>40</sup>Morrison, The Oxford History, p. 971, says the common yarn was "that F. D. R. was the descendant of a German Jew named Rosenveltdt whom Peter Stuyvesant had exiled to Hyde Park because he engaged in seditious activities in New Amsterdam."

<sup>41</sup>Henry Luce, Introduction to Margin for Error, p. xvi.

enthusiastic, cop who loves his life and adores his Jewish mother. While he knows little of ideology, he tells the Consul that his having to guard the Consul is a cockeyed thing that could only happen in a Democracy.

Yeah. Ain't it swell? I mean--this is the kind of a country where you gotta defend the other guy's life and liberty with your own life, even though you know he ain't feeling so sweet toward your person.<sup>42</sup>

Luce also said that Clare Boothe had failed to make a good hero opponent in Thomas Denny who is just an American who will never die because he never lived--"a fine, good-looking, lump of stale dough which, when squeezed by the author, produced mechanical sound effects."

While Moe may have been a credible opponent hero to place against a Nazi, the villain Nazi in the play was too generalized to effectively delineate Nazism. Richard Lockridge felt that the play was "not at bottom really an anti-Nazi play." He explained, "Consul Baumer is a stage villain in Nazi clothing; his major rascalities are personal, not political."<sup>43</sup>

The consul's secretary, Baron Max von Alvenstor, is also a Nazi. He was described as "a nice fellow, a German of the spiritual stamp who sincerely believes that the Treaty of Versailles is the one great crime in history." He believes in the Kultur of Germany rather than guns, but would use the guns. He is blond, blue-eyed, well-bred and speaks faultless English learned at Oxford.

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<sup>42</sup>Boothe, Margin for Error, p. 50.

<sup>43</sup>Richard Lockridge, New York Sun, 4 November 1939.

Max says he is a Nazi, and at one point the Consul makes him discuss how he, Max, had killed an old Jew on Kristallnacht. He says he was glad, but Sophie says his face looks like he hates himself. Max answers, "Well, damn it, nobody's glad to live in a world where he's got to kill other human beings--!" When Max leaves, Sophie says of Max, "I don't believe in his heart he's a real Nazi" and the Consul agrees.

When the Consul suggests that Max may have Jewish blood, Max denies it and expresses his love for Germany and for Hitler. He is devastated at first when he finds out he is one-quarter Jewish. Later, he says he is "no longer a Nazi--not even a German." He questions Moe about what it is like to be a Jew. He tells Sophie that he is going back to Germany, even if it means death and says, "If I were not what I am, I'd like to be an American." Max is a self-proclaimed Nazi who, because of the Consul's actions and the revelation of his Jewishness, becomes a sympathetic non-Nazi character. Variety said that it fell to the character of Max "To say by implication, a good word or two for the better elements of Germany, the sincerely patriotic, the proud rebels against Versailles [sic]." <sup>44</sup>

The third Nazi in the play is Otto B. Horst, the head of the American Bund and self-proclaimed American Fuhrer. He is a "fat, forty-year-old ex-elocution teacher, with a pasty intramural complexion" who wears a tight uniform to hide his pudginess.

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<sup>44</sup>Variety, 8 November 1939.

"Horst is ruthless, but timid, he is without a shred of humor, and is generally dour, unless drunk with his own verbosity." He thinks he's cunning, which makes him the target of others. Horst is a satirical presentation of Fritz Kuhn, who was the head of the German American Bund.

Horst is a comical character whose main concern is the state of the Bund. "I've got to do something to get my picture in the papers! Short of fan dancers or murder, nothing seems to astonish the American public." He expresses Nazi views about Jews, Communists, peace and war, but it is always done in a humorous context. He says a hundred and sixty-three people came to hear him speak and that there were thousands in the street. The Consul asks if they were trying to get in and he replies, "No. Waiting for me to come out." He complains that the people he hired to throw things at him were dispersed by the police. "I tell you, in America the protection of discontented minorities amounts to a political monopoly--" A critic described him as

A mixture of fool, pervert and vaudeville caricature [who] lacks the thick-necked, half-sincere, half-unconscionable, bigotry that would make such a bund leader seem believable. Otto B. Horst is such a complete ass as authoress Boothe has overdrawn him that plausibility is lost.<sup>45</sup>

Plausibility was not necessary to make Horst a clown for a play intended as an entertaining melodrama. When the German Embassy in Washington complained about the tryout of the play there, Clare Boothe replied "The play was not intended as a compliment to

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<sup>45</sup>Ibid.

the Nazis, but neither was it supposed to be a blast . . . the political setting is simply the background for a murder mystery."<sup>46</sup> The program stated "No actual person, living or dead, is depicted or intended to be depicted in the play."

Several critics felt it was the best anti-Nazi play that had been written and that the satire was on target and effective. "Miss Boothe threatens the entire ideology of the Reich government as something which, when the world's sense of humor is at last restored, will be laughed to death."<sup>47</sup> Burns Mantle found it the first acceptable anti-Nazi play.<sup>48</sup>

In an article titled "Notes on the Theatre During War" written in early 1941, Ernst Schwarzert discussed the problem of writing on the current world situation and praised Robert Sherwood's And There Shall Be No Night for its realistic approach. He then stated:

In "Margin for Error," Clare Boothe succeeded by the opposite method. There can be no doubt about the fervor of her attitude toward the theme of our time. But she subordinated it to the requirements of a farcical thriller. She transformed the reality of our world into the playful, self-sustained, irreality of farce so thoroughly that even the word "Hitler" took on a Chaplinesque meaning. In spite of its newspaper reality, the plot was intrinsically theatrical. . . .<sup>49</sup>

The success of Margin for Error in handling the important theme depended on portraying a Nazi villain, as John Mason Brown phrased

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<sup>46</sup>Nannes, Politics in the American Drama, p. 135.

<sup>47</sup>Sidney B. Whipple, New York World-Telegram, 4 November 1939.

<sup>48</sup>Burns Mantle, New York Daily News, 4 November 1939.

<sup>49</sup>Ernst Schwarzert, New York Times, 11 May 1941, sec. 9, p. 1.

it, that is so "attractive dramatically one hates to have him killed."<sup>50</sup>

### There Shall Be No Night

The next Nazi character appeared in Robert Sherwood's There Shall Be No Night, which concerned the Russian invasion of Finland November 30, 1939. The Russians outnumbered the Finns three to one, but they were dealt surprisingly devastating initial losses. They profited by initial mistakes, renewed their assault in February, 1940, and the Finns capitulated March 12.<sup>51</sup> Sherwood wrote the play in two months,<sup>52</sup> and it opened April 29, 1940.

In a preface to the play in 1941, Sherwood discussed the accusations that he, having long identified himself as a pacifist, had now become a war monger. He said that There Shall Be No Night was not a denial of his earlier, successful pacifistic play Idiot's Delight, but was, rather, a sequel.<sup>53</sup> He described his experiences in World War I that had led to his deep pacifism. He said the outbreak of war had put him in "a frenzy of uncertainty." He described his dilemma:

Being myself so confused, I couldn't speak up with any positive conviction. I was terrified of identifying myself as a "War-monger." But my mind was settled principally by two events: The first was a speech in October by Charles Lindbergh, which

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<sup>50</sup>John Mason Brown, New York Post, 4 November 1939.

<sup>51</sup>Hoyle, A World in Flames, pp. 27-28.

<sup>52</sup>Goldstein, The Political Stage, p. 351.

<sup>53</sup>Robert E. Sherwood, There Shall Be No Night (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1941), p. ix.

proved that Hitlerism was already powerfully and persuasively represented in our midst; the second was the Soviet invasion of Finland.<sup>54</sup>

Sherwood said he had viewed the Soviet Union as a "force for world peace" and as the "mightiest opponent of fascism" and the pact with Germany as a shrewd game. With the attack on Finland "the last scales of illusion fell." "I knew that this was merely part of Hitler's game of world revolution. . . ." Sherwood was shocked that the United States did not aid Finland. He said he decided to raise his voice "in protest against the hysterical escapism, which dominated American thinking and . . . pointed our foreign policy toward suicidal isolationism."<sup>55</sup> Sherwood had originally titled the play Revelation.<sup>56</sup>

There Shall Be No Night tells the story of an eminent Finnish scientist, Dr. Kaarlo Valkonen, winner of a Nobel Prize, who is married to an American woman. He does not believe Russia will attack, but believes even if they did, it would be stupid and reckless to resist. Russia does attack, his son goes to fight, the war closes in on him, and he justifies a decision to join his countrymen in the war.

Sherwood uses a German Consul General, Dr. Ziemssen, as a spokesman for beliefs inimical to Dr. Valkonen. Ziemssen is "a mild, scholarly, correct German of thirty-five or forty." Ziemssen

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<sup>54</sup>Ibid., p. xxvii.

<sup>55</sup>Ibid., p. xxviii.

<sup>56</sup>Goldstein, The Political Stage, p. 351.

is introduced in Scene One. Dr. Valkonen has made an impassioned broadcast to America decrying a dictatorship, obviously Germany, which is "under the leadership of a megalomaniac who belongs in a psychopathic ward rather than a chancellery." In the broadcast, Valkonen makes a plea for pacifism as the correct response. Ziemssen tells him Berlin heard the speech and found it "highly entertaining."

In Scene Three, Ziemssen asks Valkonen if he believes the Communists are Finland's enemies. Valkonen says he thinks so.

Ziemssen

The Russians think so, too, but they are wrong. We are your enemies, Herr Doktor. This Finnish incident is one little item in our vast scheme. We make good use of our esteemed allies of the Soviet Union. All the little communist cells, in labor movements, youth movements, in all nations--they are now working for us, although they may not know it. Communism is a good laxative to loosen the constricted bowels of democracy. When it has served that purpose, it will disappear down the sewer of excrement that must be purged.<sup>57</sup>

Ziemssen, with unusual candor, tells Valkonen what has happened in Poland. He says Poland will not rise again because it is dead as a result of a process of annihilation.

Ziemssen

. . . It is a studied technique and it was not invented in Moscow. You will find the blueprints for it, not in Das Kapital, but in Mein Kampf. . . It involved, first, liquidation of thought--political, religious, economic, intellectual. Among the masses--the difficult ones are killed--the weaklings are allowed to die of starvation--the strong ones are enslaved.

Kaarlo

You are an anthropologist--a man of learning, Dr. Ziemssen. Do you approve of this technique?

Ziemssen

Naturally, I regret the necessity for it. But I admit the necessity. And so must you, Dr. Valkonen. Remember that every

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<sup>57</sup>Sherwood, There Shall Be No Night, p. 86.



great state of the past in its stages of construction has required slavery. Today, the greatest world state is in the process of formation. There is a great need for slave labor. And--these Finns and Scandinavians would be useful. Is that brutal--ruthless? Yes. But I am now talking to a scientist, not a snivelling sentimentalist. Vivisection has been called brutal, ruthless--but it is necessary for the survival of man. So it is necessary that inferior races be considered merely animals. . . .<sup>58</sup>

Kaarlo asks how Ziemssen can prove racial inferiority when he knows it is a lie. Ziemssen says that, of course, it's a lie biologically, "But we can prove it by the very simple expediency of asserting our own superiority. . . ." He says if Valkonen stays and resists destiny, he will die.

Kaarlo

I appreciate your motives in warning me, Dr. Ziemssen. And I understand that all you have told me is confidential.

Ziemssen

You are an innocent, my friend! Nothing that I have said is confidential. You may repeat it all. And you will not be believed. There is the proof of our superiority--that our objectives are so vast that our pigmy-minded enemies simply have not the capacity to believe them. They are eager to accept the big lies we give them, because they cannot comprehend the big truth. And the big truth is this: For the first time since the whole surface of the earth became known, one dynamic race is on the march to occupy that surface and rule it!<sup>59</sup>

Ziemssen also says the United States is secure because it has shown great intelligence in not interfering in European affairs.

Thus, in a play attacking Russia's invasion of Finland, the antagonist is a Nazi. Ziemssen's speeches are a distillation of the Volksisch concepts of race, blood, Germanic superiority, and

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<sup>58</sup>Ibid., pp. 87-88.

<sup>59</sup>Ibid., p. 89.

the inferiority of other people. There is a clear expression of Hitler's concept of Darwinism and the necessity for struggle. While Ziemssen represents a quintessence of many Nazi beliefs, he makes no specific reference to Jews. There is, however, a reference by another character about having old friends in Germany who live in terror because they have Jewish blood.

Ziemssen talks about the desire to use Scandinavians as slaves. This does not jibe with the racial theories of the Third Reich. The terms "Aryan" and "Nordic" were used to refer to the superior race, and it did not refer exclusively to Germans. A 1935 textbook states, "It was Nordic energy and boldness that were responsible for the powers and prestige enjoyed by small nations such as the Netherlands and Sweden."<sup>60</sup> The racial views expressed by Ziemssen were improbable as Nazi views, but they did suit Sherwood's purpose of broadening the scope of Nazi malice to include the characters in his play.

Insofar as speech is behavior, Ziemssen's words constitute a verbal violence which assaults the presumed standards of the audience. Ziemssen leaves in Scene Three of the seven-scene play so he is presented in contrast primarily to Dr. Kaarlo Valkonen and his family. Valkonen and his American wife are certainly socially acceptable opponents, but their heroism occurs after Ziemssen is gone. There is another factor which tends to diminish Ziemssen as a villain. His speeches are quite outrageous, but,

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<sup>60</sup>Moose, Nazi Culture, p. 79.

except for a mild questioning by Valkonen, no one attacks him for his views. He is verbally villainous, but without opposition.

Sherwood injected another opinion about the Nazis into the play. He has characters refer to the Russian drive on the Mannerheim Line as being led by German officers. There is no evidence for it, and it is highly improbable. The Russians had attempted, in the first place, to negotiate a readjustment of territory with Finland to hinder a possible attack by the Germans against Leningrad.<sup>61</sup> "The Finns had ties with Germany as well as with the Western Allies, and for a time it looked as though both might intervene on her [Finland's] behalf."<sup>62</sup> Richard Watts, Jr., had questioned Sherwood's contention in his review of the play.<sup>63</sup> Sherwood's sympathy with Finland was shared by most people in the West. Finland was seen as a fresh victim of aggression and its resistance aroused much sympathy. As noted in the beginning of this chapter, the play drew criticism from the temporarily rabid isolationist far-left Russophiles.

There Shall Be No Night received the Pulitzer Prize for the 1940-41 season. The play ran 115 performances and had a return engagement of 66 performances, for a total of 181. It had starred the Lunts, and after its Broadway run, the Lunts toured the play to forty-two cities and in 1943 took the play to England. Brooks Atkinson observed in late 1941, "By an ironic twist of fate Finland

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<sup>61</sup>Hart, History of the Second World War, pp. 43-44.

<sup>62</sup>Hoyle, A World in Flames, p. 28.

<sup>63</sup>Richard Watts, New York Herald-Tribune, 30 April 1940.

is no longer on the side of the angels, and her demoniac enemy of 1939 and 1940 is now fighting the evil tyrant who is trying to crack our world."<sup>64</sup> He felt the play still had "inner truth" and that it was still vital. Edmond M. Gagey commented in Revolution in American Drama:

Before long [There Shall Be No Night] became dated, however, in one of the intricate political turnabouts in Europe which saw Finland fighting on the side of Nazi Germany. The play's general message still held true, as Sherwood pointed out, but the American public began to wonder whether Russia might not have had good reason for its Finnish policies.<sup>65</sup>

When the Lunts took the play to England in 1943, the markedly changed war alignments caused a change in the script--the locale was changed to Greece and Italy was the aggressor nation.<sup>66</sup>

#### Flight to the West

The next characterization of a Nazi occurred in the 1940-41 season in Flight to the West by Elmer Rice.<sup>67</sup> The play opened December 30, 1940. A transatlantic flying boat bound from Lisbon to New York has passengers that include refugees from Nazism, Americans fleeing the war, an American businessman returning from meetings with Hitler and Goering, an American woman journalist and two Nazis, a diplomat and a spy. Since the spy is posing as a Russian, only the diplomat is portrayed as a Nazi.

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<sup>64</sup>Brooks Atkinson, New York Times, 5 October 1941.

<sup>65</sup>Gagey, Revolution in American Drama, p. 136.

<sup>66</sup>Goldstein, The Political Stage, p. 352.

<sup>67</sup>Elmer Rice, Flight to the West (New York: Coward-McCann, Inc., 1941).

The German diplomat is Dr. Herman Walther, "stout, bald, clean-shaven, in his middle fifties." Walther is a major concern of the other passengers. Some are refugees who have suffered severely because of the Nazis, and the others include Americans who take issue with Walther's opinions.

Walther's first confrontation is with Louise Frayne, an American journalist. He tells her that Germany's present task is the pacification of Europe. He says it is unfortunate that that can only be done by force. "But, after all, force is the fundamental law of nature. In the struggle for existence, the strong must conquer the weak." He reveals a belief in Darwinism as expressed by Hitler.

The discussion is joined by an American oilman, Colonel Archibald Gage, who has met Hitler, Mussolini, and Franco and finds they are all "just folks--like you and me." When the subject of Jews comes up, Walther says, "These are matters of biological theory, not of the hatred of individuals."

Charles Ingraham, a liberal writer, asks if the Germany he knew as a youth is the one that "lends itself to pogroms and the mutilation of children?" Walther says the present situation is the same as in 1914; "a conspiracy of the plutocracies to imprison us in our narrow borders until we die for want of air." He then interprets his fighting against the Belgians in World War I:

We had no quarrel with the Belgians--then or now. But we were fighting for our existence, and they shut their gates and turned against us. They were the aggressors, not we. You have spoken of Louvain. My battery stood before Louvain,

and each time I gave the order to fire, I prayed that the beautiful library would be spared. And when, at last, we entered the city and I saw the building in ruins, my eyes filled with tears. Why didn't they let us through? What did they gain by resisting? What--<sup>68</sup>

This is the first clear expression of Fromm's thesis<sup>69</sup> about the authoritarian Nazi who, like Hitler, saw the German people as always innocent and the enemies as sadistic brutes.

One of the passengers recalls having seen the Russian before, and through a series of radio cables it is revealed that he is a Nazi agent who is undoubtedly being run by Walther. The plane is taken to Bermuda in order to have the British able to make an arrest. When Walther makes a speech inveighing against Britain and the United States, one of the refugees tries to shoot him. Charles Nathan, the American Jew, steps in between and is wounded. The refugee is Marie, a Belgian woman whose mother and son were killed by a German bomb. The same bomb blinded her husband and maimed her twelve-year-old daughter. They are all on the plane including her tiny baby, who was born at the roadside as they were fleeing the Germans. It is the action by Charles Nathan which provides a detailed debate revealing more of Walther's beliefs.

Walther is asked if he feels any gratitude for Charles' action. He replies in part,

I am a scientist and a realist. You are a sentimentalist and a romantic. I speak for a young, vigorous, and determined

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<sup>68</sup>Ibid., p. 62.

<sup>69</sup>See Chapter II, pp. 21-22.

race . . . which rejects the whining beatitudes and the weak slave morality of your dying Jewish-Christian culture.<sup>70</sup>

His statement is the first clear condemnation of Christianity by a Nazi character. The entire concern about Nathan's actions is to Walther "one more example of the mental debilitation that results from exposure to liberalism and democracy." He says there is nothing admirable in risking one's life to save an enemy. "Such an action seems to me quite atavistic, or perhaps I should say devolutionary--a form of biological retrogression. The healthy organism is concerned first with survival and second with domination."

Walther then says that Nathan's mind had not been trained to function logically, but instead had been warped by the "corrosive philosophy of liberalism and the insidious poisons of Jewish mysticism." Walther leaves and it is then that Rice has another character delineate Nazi ideology. Charles Ingraham, who has been confused by world events, says that Walther has restored his faith and sense of values because he knows Walther will lose in the end.

Hope

Well, that I don't understand at all. How could talking to Walther make you believe in anything but the certainty of universal destruction.

Ingraham

No! That's what I've learned on this plane--that it's not their way of life that will win in the end, but ours. I see clearly now something that I only sensed before. It's just this: that rationality carried to its ruthless logical extreme becomes madness, because man is a living and growing organism and not a machine, and in all the important things of life, a sane man is irrational. Do you see what I mean?

Hope

Yes. Yes, I think I do! You mean what Charles did--!

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<sup>70</sup>Ibid., p. 146.

Ingraham

Yes, exactly. An impulsive act that goes beyond reason and self-interest. That's how sane people live--illogically, instinctively, intuitively. Thinking with their feelings, rather than with their minds. Reaching out to each other, trusting each other. That means flexibility, and in flexibility there's strength and the potentiality of growth. But the other thing is rigid and in the end there's no strength and no growth in that--only brittleness and sterility. That's the issue: rational madness against irrational sanity. It sounds paradoxical but it's true. And, in the long run, madness will lose; because madness is a disease and sanity is health and, if disease wins, it means the end of the world and no healthy man can believe in that.<sup>71</sup>

The idea that the Nazis emphasized rationality and opposed instinct was noted and accepted by several of the critics. None seemed aware that it was an erroneous impression. George L. Mosse in his introduction to Nazi Culture stated:

Activism was important. After all, the Nazis conceived of their party as a "movement." This and the irrational foundations of their world view represented strong opposition to intellectualism. Hitler summarized his own viewpoint in 1938: "What we suffer from today is an excess of education. Nothing is appreciated except knowledge. . . . What we require is instinct and will." "Instinct" meant the love of Volk and race which came from a realm beyond empirical knowledge, from the soul.<sup>72</sup>

Joachim Fest also quotes an early writer for the Nazis as having said, "The renewal of the German reality must come not from the head but the heart, not from doctrines but from visions and instincts."<sup>73</sup> Fest described the victory of Hitler as "ushering in a new era that would bring to an end the rule of reason and restore life to its primordial rights."<sup>74</sup> Hitler himself was clear

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<sup>71</sup>Ibid., pp. 149-150.

<sup>72</sup>Mosse, Nazi Culture, pp. xxvii-xxviii.

<sup>73</sup>Fest, Faces of the Third Reich, p. 252.

<sup>74</sup>Ibid., p. 252.



on the matter in Mein Kampf. He wanted scientific schooling to be last in educational priorities<sup>75</sup> and he stressed the need for general education over specialized knowledge.<sup>76</sup>

It is of considerable import that Ingraham, Rice's spokesman for democracy, who makes a plea for instinct and irrationality, sounds more like a spokesman for the Nazis. The fact that the critics accepted Rice's view of Nazism would indicate that his notion was, if not a commonly held belief, certainly one that seemed plausible.

As the villain of the melodrama, Walther is portrayed as formidable and strong. He defends and retains his views throughout the events of the play. He is generally disliked by all the other passengers, but he retains his superior demeanor. Atkinson said he was a man to be taken seriously and that "his superiority is no cheap vanity, but the expression of a driving conviction about the role his race will play in the world of tomorrow."<sup>77</sup>

Walther is opposed by extremely sympathetic characters, especially the refugee family which has suffered because of the Nazis. Marie's decision to shoot Walther can be viewed as heroic as well as Charles Nathan's stepping into the line of fire. Generally, however, the characters are not heroic but they are acceptable

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<sup>75</sup>Hitler, Mein Kampf, p. 408.

<sup>76</sup>Ibid., p. 423.

<sup>77</sup>Brooks Atkinson, New York Times, 19 January 1941, sec. 9, p. 1.

and admirable in contrast to Walther. The opponents include Americans and Jews.

Flight to the West was not a big success. It ran 136 performances. Brooks Atkinson thought it was "the most absorbing American drama of the season."<sup>78</sup> However, Louis Kronenberg complained that the play "tries to achieve the swift force and sure punch of a speech or an editorial while using the long-winded and discussive form of a symposium."<sup>79</sup> A few weeks later, Atkinson addressed himself to those who complained Rice had said nothing new.

No other American drama of the season has so frankly come out of the ordeal of today. And to me it will not be dull as long as the homes and families are annihilated from the air, as long as the Nazis oppose democracy with the inhuman fanaticism of their creed and as long as comfortable people talk of coming to terms with Hitler.<sup>80</sup>

It should be noted that one of the most successful of anti-Nazi dramas (without Nazis) was produced three months after Rice's play. Lillian Hellman's Watch on the Rhine opened April 1, 1941, and ran for 378 performances. It won the Drama Critic's Circle Award for the 1940-41 season. The play had no Nazi characters but dealt with the effects of Nazism on an anti-Nazi German. The villain was not even a pro-Hitlerite, but a penniless, despicable black-mailing Rumanian count. Two aspects of the play indicate the degree of isolationist sentiment among audiences.

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<sup>78</sup>Brooks Atkinson, New York Times, 31 December 1940.

<sup>79</sup>Louis Kronenberg, PM, 31 December 1940.

<sup>80</sup>Atkinson, New York Times, 19 January 1941.

First, Watch on the Rhine was produced before Germany attacked Russia, and the play came the closest to pleasing the Communist press which was vehemently isolationist. The Daily Workers' critic, Ralph Warner, wrote:

Emphasis is wholly upon the revolutionary way out for the German people; and in the presentation of Kurt, Miss Hellman definitely rejects anti-German sentiment and does a service to the real understanding of the nature of the German people. She does not mention jingoism or war as a possible means of destroying Hitlerism.<sup>81</sup>

Second, there are no adverse portrayals of Germans in the play. The villain is Rumanian. Charlotte Hughes wrote about the play in the New York Times and said so many people told her "that they are deeply pleased at seeing a decent, honest German . . . on the stage, after a long string of thick necked, pig-headed stage and movie Germans." She then quoted Lillian Hellman: "One thing I tried to say in 'Watch on the Rhine,' is that I have a love for the German people."<sup>82</sup>

#### Candle in the Wind

The next play with Nazi characters in this period was Candle in the Wind by Maxwell Anderson.<sup>83</sup> The play, a joint production of the Theatre Guild and Playwrights' Company, starred Helen Hayes and opened October 22, 1941. The play takes place

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<sup>81</sup>Ralph Warner, Daily Worker (New York), 4 April 1941.

<sup>82</sup>Charlotte Hughes, "Women Playmakers," New York Times, 4 May 1941, sec. 7, p. 10.

<sup>83</sup>Maxwell Anderson, Candle in the Wind (Washington, D.C.: Anderson House, 1941).

between June, 1940, after the fall of Paris, to September, 1941. The heroine, an American actress, has fallen in love with a French journalist. When he is imprisoned by the Nazis, the actress spends a year trying to get him out. All of her plots prove to be subtle methods of extortion worked out by the Nazis. She finally does effect his escape, but, at the end, is herself a hostage.

There are two important Nazis in the play--Colonel Erfurt and Lieutenant Schoen, who run the concentration camp near Paris where Madelaine Guest's lover is a prisoner. The first scene takes place in the gardens behind the palace at Versailles. Raoul has been through "miracles" and has found his way to Paris to find Madeline. He is arrested by the Nazis who are correct and polite.

The second scene is in the camp, and there is an immediate revelation of Nazi brutality. Colonel Erfurt and Lieutenant Schoen are talking to Corporal Behrens, who is reporting for duty. Behrens' specialty, in which he has been trained, is "punishment." He answers questions. Men are punished "Because they are condemned by the state, and the state makes no errors." What would he do if the state made an error? "It is impossible. . . . In any conflict . . . the state is right and the individual is wrong." What if God says otherwise. "It is impossible, sir. There is no God except the state, and the state carries out the Fuhrer's will." And, finally, Schoen asks what if Behrens is right and Schoen is wrong. "It is impossible, sir, because the state has set you above me in authority." The brief scene establishes Behrens as completely integrated into the Nazi system of authority.

The explicit denial of God, alluded to in Flight to the West, was still a rather new attribution to the Nazis. The Nazis had not directly tried to destroy Christianity. "Nazis' opposition to Christianity took the form of elevating its own world view into a matter of direct religious expression." The Nazis were careful to keep traditional forms intact. "The attempt to fill the traditional framework with their own content meant bending Christianity itself into conformity with Nazi ideology and culture."<sup>84</sup>

The Nazi ideology in the play is revealed mainly in the scenes between Madeline and the officers who run the concentration camp. In Act One, Erfurt tells Madeline that "Here it seems to you that the lunatics are in charge and those who are normal are restrained." He tells her it is the usual reaction because she has stepped from one world to another"--from the old world to the new. You have stepped from freedom and chivalry and legend, into science, reality and control." Erfurt's emphasis on science, reality and control in Nazism is similar to the stress on logic and rationality in Nazism found in Elmer Rice's Flight to the West. As pointed out in the discussion of that play, the stress was actually on instinct, emotional reality, visions and knowledge of the soul.<sup>85</sup> Even renowned scientists who were Nazis deprecated the value of science and praised spiritual knowledge.<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>84</sup>Mosse, Nazi Culture, p. 235.

<sup>85</sup>See pp. 32-33.

<sup>86</sup>In 1936, Philipp Lenard, a 1905 Nobel Prize winner and supporter of Hitler, occupied the chair of theoretical physics at

Erfurt also places legend in Madeline's world. This, too, was not an accurate reflection of Nazi ideology.

Building myths and heroes was an integral part of the Nazi cultural drive. . . . The flight from reason became a search for myths and heroes to believe in, and National Socialism was only too glad to provide both in full measure.<sup>87</sup>

Anderson seemed to attribute to Nazism assumptions similar to those expressed by Elmer Rice in Flight to the West.

Erfurt elaborates some of his thoughts to Madeline, by commenting on Shakespeare:

When I read Shakespeare nowadays, I come to the reluctant conclusion that he is essentially alien to us. He makes, for instance--Edmund the villain in *Lear*. And what is Edmund? A Machiavellian, a clever young fellow with no illusions, and only those scruples proper to a sensible young man. But Shakespeare makes him the villain of the piece, and kills him off in miserable fashion. No, Shakespeare's got the whole moral system upside down. In real life the strong and ruthless win, and the weak suffer. And that's how it should be, or must be.<sup>88</sup>

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the University of Heidelberg. He wrote on the subject "Materialism: A Delusion" and said in part:

The peculiar tendency to recognize only matter and not spirit must be mentioned here since it is an outgrowth of natural science.

. . . . .

In recent times, the successes of technology have produced a special form of arrogant delusion with respect to matter. . . . "Man has slowly become the master of nature." Such utterances on the part of spiritually impoverished "grand technicians" acquired a great influence because of the impressive display their new techniques and inventions made possible. . . . In the face of this development, the spiritual sciences . . . have utterly failed. Philipp Lenard, "The Limits of Science," quoted by Mosse, Nazi Culture, pp. 197, 205.

<sup>87</sup>Ibid., p. 96.

<sup>88</sup>Anderson, Candle in the Wind, p. 74.

Erfurts' discussion of Shakespeare was very credible for a German at the time. He was the most popular playwright in Germany in the summer of 1940 and tickets to Shakespeare's plays had to be bought weeks in advance.<sup>89</sup>

The act closes shortly after the comments on Shakespeare. Raoul tells Madeline, "Even though we should lose, we have won! They know what they are and no words can cover it!" Erfurt is left alone and comments on the indefatigable optimism of Raoul and Madeline--"And yet something perishes with them when they are exterminated. A kind of decadent beauty one hates to lose."

Lieutenant Schoen is sent to deceive Madeline once again about freeing Raoul. He admits he was sent by Erfurt. Madeline believes he is her best hope because of the tears in his eyes. "Yes, but I have seen tears in Erfurt's eyes when a man lay dying. And he let the man die. You must not depend on tears." In Act Three, Schoen does aid Raoul in a genuine escape.

Raoul escapes, but Madeline is captured. Erfurt says she will speak because no human will "can hold out against us." Madeline says she has heard that lovers are a problem to them, "that the beaters are inclined to throw down their whips when a woman in love is brought before them." Erfurt tells her his power is absolute. "My fear is that I must use it. I beg of you, do not make me use it." Madeline says neither his power nor Germany's is

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<sup>89</sup>"The Berlin Theatre Has a Boom," New York Times, 7 July 1940, sec. 9, p. 1.

absolute. "A cold wind of hatred blows at you from every corner of the earth! You have felt that wind before, and you know what it means. It means that you will lose."

Erfurt appears to be a Gestapo or SS officer. He is the villain, but a rather sophisticated villain compared to the earlier portrayals of villains such as storm troopers. He is the first clear example of a Nazi portraying institutionalized terror--he is not impulsive, he is correct, dispassionate, and efficient about his business. Nearly every critic commented on the effectiveness of the portrayal of Erfurt by John Wengraf.

Lieutenant Schoen is a Nazi who changes during the play. His Nazism is not delineated other than that he helps run the camp. There is some foreshadowing of change when he tells a guard he does not want to hear a description of how the guard tortured a prisoner. He aids in harassing Madeline, but finally tells her that he has watched her and Raoul for a year and feels sorry for them and will help them. When he effects the escape, Madeline asks him why he is trembling.

Schoen

Is it so easy to break with all you've ever known? To thrust your neck under the axe? I have seen too many executions. But I have come to the end of this quarrel with myself. This quarrel over whether it is better to be what you are and die for it, or to be what they would have you, and live. Perhaps I have found a sort of courage.

Madeline

Where will you go?

Schoen

You must not worry about me, I have my own private war to fight. But, however it goes, not everything is lost. For



I am a soldier against what I hate, and it's good to fight alone. Good-bye and thank you.<sup>90</sup>

Schoen's conversion is complete but the quarrel with himself is not dramatized.

Brooks Atkinson said of the brutality of the prison management that "Mr. Anderson has occasion to reveal the moral baseness of the whole Nazi system and the closely integrated evil of Nazi philosophy and methods."<sup>91</sup> Atkinson was very close to the observation that Nazi ideology is expressed in action.

Brutality in the play is imputed to the Nazis by reaction rather than portrayal. A French couple, the Fleurys, have been allowed to see their son. She collapses and is carried out. "What they have seen within has broken them down to speechless, whining animals." In Act Two, there is further discussion between two "punishers" which suggests unspeakable tortures. Behrens and Schultz have taken a cigarette break because Schultz has gotten "a little sick" doing his work. Richard Watts, Jr., commented on the portrayal of Nazism in the play:

It is often said that the theme of Nazi fury is so overwhelming that it makes playwriting particularly difficult and forbidding these days. What might be noted, though, is that this same topic can just as well be of greater help to a dramatist than his play deserves. The terror of the Gestapo and the concentration camp is so great that the mere placing upon the stage of some fierce, guttural actors, with swastikas on their sleeves, lifting their palms in Nazi salute and threatening to destroy decadent democracy, can achieve a certain irresistible dramatic power, no matter how routine the writing of the accompanying

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<sup>90</sup>Anderson, Candle in the Wind, pp. 103-104.

<sup>91</sup>Brooks Atkinson, New York Times, 23 October 1941.

drama may be. This is pretty much what happens in "Candle in the Wind."<sup>92</sup>

Erfurt's portrayal was set against the most possibly acceptable opponents. The heroine is a courageous American actress risking her safety for love. Her journalist-soldier lover is the epitome of valor, but is shallowly developed. These two completely meet the definition of hero opponents--champions, splendid performers, socially acceptable, and servants of an admirable group. They are middle class and fully acceptable American heroes. However, the play was highly romanticized and its main attraction was the highly praised acting of Helen Hayes. John Anderson of the New York Journal-American said that in choosing these two heroes, Anderson "brought the issues clearly into focus" but "the trouble is that they are clear, even obvious, but not dramatically exciting."<sup>93</sup>

Two observations by critics should be noted. The Variety critic said that although the play was propaganda, "it should surely meet with popular approval, as atrocities of Hitler's fanatics appear increasingly in the public press."<sup>94</sup> Ralph Warner, the Daily Worker critic, who had been so pleased with Watch on the Rhine because "it did not mention jingoism or war as a possible means of destroying Hitlerism," found Candle in the Wind "a

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<sup>92</sup>Richard Watts, Jr., New York Herald-Tribune, 23 October 1941.

<sup>93</sup>John Anderson, New York Journal-American, 23 October 1941.

<sup>94</sup>Variety, 29 October 1941.

forthright declaration of America's determination to face the Nazi danger, to fight it and to end its threat to world freedom."<sup>95</sup>

Hitler had attacked Russia June 22, 1941, and interventionism was now de rigueur for the Communists and Russophiles. They were not the only ones to change. Mable Driscoll Bailey points out in Maxwell Anderson that in the last speech of the play Madeline said the conflict is a "war between men and beasts." "It is the Armageddon battle which only two years before [in Key Largo] Mr. Anderson had declared to be impossible."<sup>96</sup>

Candle in the Wind had a rather limited run of only 95 performances on Broadway. However, Helen Hayes, who had been highly praised, toured with the show and it garnered huge grosses on the road.<sup>97</sup>

#### The Man with Blond Hair

The last play in this period was the poorly received The Man with Blond Hair<sup>98</sup> by Norman Krasna, which opened November 4, 1941. Krasna had written a moderately successful play called Small Miracle and then went to Hollywood and achieved considerable success as an author-director-producer. In The Man with Blond Hair,

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<sup>95</sup>Ralph Warner, Daily Worker, 25 October 1941.

<sup>96</sup>Mabel Driscoll Bailey, Maxwell Anderson: The Playwright as Prophet (New York: Abelard-Schuman, 1957), p. 118.

<sup>97</sup>Marguerite and Howard Cullman, "Malnutrition of the Box Office," New York Times, 7 June 1942, sec. 8, p. 2.

<sup>98</sup>Norman Krasna, The Man with Blond Hair, typescript, Theatre Collection, New York Public Library.

two German aviators, Rudolph<sup>99</sup> and Sturner, have escaped from a prison camp in Canada. They are picked up by the New York police. They are arrogant and one of the station cops gets his friends to kidnap the Nazis in order to beat them up and worse. One of them escapes and is hidden by a young girl, Ruth Hoffman, who lives with her very typical, old-fashioned Jewish mother. Ruth passes Rudolph off as a refugee teacher from Germany. He spends two days with the Hoffmans, playing rummy with the mother, listening to the radio, and eating Jewish strudel. When he discovers that the police were willing to shoot an American to keep his cohort from being assassinated, he is completely converted to democracy and freedom.

Rudolph is the main Nazi in the play. He is an SS-man who is humorously naive about the United States. He believes the telephone is tapped, that a Western Union boy in uniform must have some rank, and that a radio commentator critical of the country must be broadcasting from a secret station. In his two-day stay at the Hoffman's, he reveals some of his beliefs. He frequently snaps to attention and says "Heil Hitler!" He finds democracy unworkable and believes free speech which affects the state is a danger. He claims that humanitarian democracies are trying to strangle Germany. He says, "The Third Reich is an outcast country to be crushed by the world, and it is our purpose to see that the

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<sup>99</sup>Rudolph is called Carl in the script of the play. "Rudolph" is used in this discussion to be consistent with reviews of the play.

world is crushed first!" He also says, "the state, and the capitalists, they have such a plot!"<sup>100</sup>

Rudolph reveals several Nazi beliefs in his conversations with Ruth, but he is not developed as an SS-man. His anti-Semitism is minimized, he is opposed to the United States and capitalism, and his belief in power and war is strongly expressed. At the end of the play, Rudolph is impressed that a federal agent has shot and killed an American who was about to shoot Sturner, the other Nazi in the play. Rudolph refuses to aid Sturner in an escape attempt and then thwarts his escape by revealing that Sturner's "gun" is a piece of pipe. The play ends as Rudolph addresses Sturner:

Rudolph

There's a limit my friend. It's not true we can't be saved.  
It'll be hard, but don't give up! Don't give us up! In  
God's name--help us!

At the beginning, Rudolph is a villain by definition, but his villainy is undercut first by Ruth Hoffman's acceptance of him and then by his total conversion. His adherence to Nazism seems fully predicated on a misunderstanding of the United States.

Sturner, the other Nazi, is portrayed only briefly. When he discovers that Rudolph is being cared for by Jews, he says it must be a plot to poison him and leaves. He is a total believer and is not phased by the fact that a law officer has shot an American to save his life. At the end when Mama Hoffman is yelling

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<sup>100</sup>Krasna, The Man with Blond Hair, act 2, p. 24.

at him to get out of her house, he orders Rudolph to hit her. His brief portrayal is villainous but not developed as a Nazi.

The opposition to the Nazis is provided by a group of men who have kidnapped the Nazis so, as one of them says, "We can give them the God-damndest beating they ever had."<sup>101</sup> The men have various reasons for their anger. The father of one is a policeman who was roughed up by the Nazis when they escaped from police custody. Another is a Pole whose grandfather was bayoneted by Nazis. As a group, they act like hoodlums willing to take any extra-legal actions. By implication, the opposition to Nazis is made as broad based as possible. In discussing the possibility of killing the Nazis, one of the men says,

When did a Nazi ever worry about murder when he killed a Jew--or a Pole--or a Catholic--or a Protestant minister--or a nun--or people in hospitals--or even other Germans!<sup>102</sup>

The critics praised Rex William's portrayal of Rudolph. Brooks Atkinson of the New York Times said, "Rex William's laconical and sullen Nazi [Rudolph] gives the performance a solid underpinning,"<sup>103</sup> and another said "Mr. Williams looks like a German army recruiting poster and behaves with stolid simplicity, square-jawed sternness, and a good deal of charm."<sup>104</sup> However, the portrayal of Sturner by Bernard Lenrow was not accepted as convincing.

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<sup>101</sup>Ibid., act 1, scene 1, p. 13.

<sup>102</sup>Ibid., act 1, scene 1, p. 28.

<sup>103</sup>Brooks Atkinson, New York Times, 5 November 1941.

<sup>104</sup>J.D.B., Christian Science Monitor, 5 November 1941.

The critics felt he lacked "the officer caste the lines suggested"<sup>105</sup> and looked and acted "too much like Mephistopheles."<sup>106</sup>

The play was very poorly received and ran only seven performances. It was generally criticized for being unbelievable and undeveloped. Louis Kronenberger said it was "a farrago of incompetence, tastelessness and absurdity. . . ."<sup>107</sup> John Anderson of the New York Journal-American said of the play that "in dialogue and situation it sounds more like 'The Rover Boys Play Hitler' or 'Fun on the Fire Escape.'" Anderson called the conclusion "claptrap" and said "The Nazi is just this side of sprouting little pink wings, and I half expected an orchestra to break into 'Hearts and flowers.'"<sup>108</sup> Another critic also found the closing speech (quoted above) "positively embarrassing."<sup>109</sup>

Several critics mentioned Maxwell Anderson's Candle in the Wind in their discussion of The Man with Blond Hair because both contained the conversation of a Nazi. John Anderson said "Mr. Krasna's idea is fathered by the wishful thinking that if a nice little Nazi ape-boy could be brought face to face with American democracy, he would see his mistake and abandon his wicked ways."<sup>110</sup> Similarly, John Mason Brown said "Their recent playwrights wishful thinking on

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<sup>105</sup>George Freedley, New York Morning-Telegraph, 6 November 1941.

<sup>106</sup>Kelcey Allen, Women's Wear Daily, 5 November 1941.

<sup>107</sup>Louis Kronenberger, PM, 5 November 1941.

<sup>108</sup>John Anderson, New York Journal-American, 5 November 1941.

<sup>109</sup>Wilella Waldorf, New York Post, 5 November 1941.

<sup>110</sup>John Anderson, New York Journal-American, 5 November 1941.

the subject of Hitler can only be described as alarming." He derided the idea that information would convert Nazis and felt Krasna's play was "as silly a bit of bluebirdism as has yet been offered as a challenge to the Swastika."<sup>111</sup>

### Conclusion

The playwrights seem to have heeded the critics and provided a rather different Nazi after the start of World War II (September, 1939). There was a difference in the type of Nazi portrayed and a different pattern in the place of action.

Most of the plays in this period had Nazi characters who were officials or diplomats. The characters included the consulate officials in Margin for Error, Dr. Ziemssen in There Shall Be No Night, and Dr. Walther in Flight to the West. These Nazis tended to be quite intellectual and prone to express their ideology and defend it. This was also true of the officers in Candle in the Wind. Only the Nazis in The Man with Blond Hair did not fit this pattern.

The portrayals in this period were, like those of the first period, knowledgeable and informed. With the exception of the Consul in Margin for Error, who was a somewhat generalized villain, the portrayals were specifically Nazi in nature. However, there was a shift in their beliefs. The Nazis continued to reveal a belief in anti-Semitism, German superiority, racialism, the necessity for struggle and the survival of the fittest. However, there

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<sup>111</sup> John Mason Brosn, New York World-Telegram, 5 November 1941.



was little anti-Communism expressed, the anti-Semitism was less pronounced, and there was a marked increase in the Nazis' opposition to other ethnic groups, Christianity, liberalism, and democracy. There was also the erroneous attribution to the Nazis of a strong belief in science, logic and rationality discussed in Flight to the West and Candle in the Wind.<sup>112</sup> Also new was the conversion of Nazis to anti-Nazis which occurred in Margin for Error, Candle in the Wind, and The Man with Blond Hair. In regard to the conversion in Candle in the Wind, John Gassner said

. . . Anderson placed his reliance upon some residue of human feeling which not even years of National Socialist conditioning would eradicate from the soul of Hitler's goose-steppers. It was a consoling philosophy from a distance, even if it was of no avail to millions of less securely remote Europeans.<sup>113</sup>

Most of the Nazis in this period could be described as villains. However, their villainy was portrayed more by thought than deed. As a whole, they are in marked contrast to the many outwardly crude and brutal Nazis of the earlier period. There are two related patterns in the plays which explain the relative docility of the Nazis in this period. First, with the exception of Candle in the Wind, all the Nazis were portrayed off their territory and in vulnerable circumstances. Thus, secondly, there is no violence committed against victims by the Nazis. (The aviators in The Man

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<sup>112</sup>This view was also being expressed in film. In Invisible Agent (1942), a Nazi (played by Cedric Hardwicke) vaunts the superiority of "German logic" and says "There's no place in our New Order for sentimentalists." Lingeman, Don't You Know There's a War On? p. 235.

<sup>113</sup>John Gassner, ed., Best Plays of the Modern American Theatre, 2nd series (New York: Crown Publishers, 1974), p. xix.

with Blond Hair fight with their captors.) Also, the brutality against victims in Candle in the Wind was totally offstage. Whatever violence was in the plays was directed toward the Nazis as in Margin for Error and Flight to the West.

The opponents of the Nazis also changed in this period. The opponents included Americans, American Jews, and Nazis who became anti-Nazi. They were generally much more heroic and more acceptable as American heroes.

Joseph Wood Krutch wrote about Candle in the Wind near the end of this period and commented on anti-war plays in general. He said the fact that audiences were flocking to them showed that people were taking World War II much more seriously than they took World War I. He said it was total war which people were thinking about all the time and that "Nothing can be said or done without reference to the one monstrous and overwhelming fact."<sup>114</sup>

Krutch did not believe good contemporary war plays could be written, but he said they had been a "good deal better than one had much reason to hope." He explained what he felt was the playwright's difficulty in portraying Nazism and the limitations of the audiences in these perceptions of it:

Mr. Anderson is also as successful as anyone else has been in trying to expose the chill horror of the Nazi philosophy, but I should hesitate to say that he has, any more than the others, actually made it any clearer or any more terrible; and like all the rest he depends, not wholly in vain, upon what we know from other sources to lend his sheer melodrama a substantiality and a significance neither of which it would

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<sup>114</sup> Joseph Wood Krutch, Nation, 20 September 1941, p. 241.

have if we did not bring into the theatre with us information and convictions gained elsewhere.<sup>115</sup>

The problem seemed to be how to present to the audience its most pressing concern when it had such a meager conception of it. While Krutch's observation would seem to apply to any play dealing with a foreign or strange topic, it does explain why audiences began to be more receptive to the presentations of Nazism. The playwright could rely on a much greater degree of shared knowledge and emotional response to the subject.

Ernst Schwarzert observed at the time that the portrayal of Nazism had a built-in, unavoidable shortcoming:

The problem is how to establish a play, which has to be a self-contained world, inside the three walls of the stage while the wide world with which it deals is being blown to bits by a hurricane outside. One will understand more easily what I mean when one remembers what happens to these plays whenever the name "Hitler" is mentioned. In this moment the play is no longer a world of its own; the absolute reality of our time breaks through the walls, soars over the stage, sweeps over the footlights and chills the audience with emotions strange to the play. Any word will have this effect--"concentration camp," "anti-fascism," "passport," etc., if it is taken from the dictionary of our political reality. In those moments the play stops, the public's mind wanders. Precious minutes are needed before the intimate contract between audience and play can be re-established. One remains uncomfortably conscious of the hurricane.<sup>116</sup>

While the problems of portraying the Nazi characters did not vanish in the next period, the objections of the isolationists certainly did.

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<sup>115</sup>Ibid.

<sup>116</sup>Ernst Schwarzert, "Notes on the Theatre During War," p. 1.

CHAPTER V

THE PORTRAYAL OF NAZIS DECEMBER,  
1941 - MAY, 1945

In the summer of 1941, eighty-five per cent of Americans believed they would be involved in a European war, and shortly before Pearl Harbor two-thirds of the country predicted that a war with Japan would occur shortly.<sup>1</sup> Although the war was expected, the country, including isolationists, reacted with shock and anger at the Pearl Harbor attack. The isolationists had been as virulently anti-Japanese as the liberal interventionists.<sup>2</sup>

The isolationists did not have to decide whether to support a two-front war including Germany. On December 11, Hitler addressed the Reichstag. He said Roosevelt had failed in his New Deal because the Jews around him with their "full diabolical meanness of Jewry" had diverted attention from domestic policy to foreign policy.<sup>3</sup> At 2:30 p.m., Germany declared war on the United States. Under the Tripartite Pact of 1940, Germany did not have to aid Japan unless Japan was attacked. "Germany, therefore, was not bound to join

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<sup>1</sup>Richard R. Lingeman, Don't You Know There's a War On? The American Home Front, 1941-1945 (New York: Paperback Library, 1972), p. 17.

<sup>2</sup>Perrett, Days of Sadness, Years of Triumph, p. 190.

<sup>3</sup>Shirer, Rise and Fall, 2:899-900.

Japan in the war against America."<sup>4</sup> Hitler's advisors begged him not to involve the United States in Europe but he wanted vengeance against America's assistance to the allies.<sup>5</sup>

The effect on theatre was immediate. The Admiral Had a Wife, a spoof on the Navy set in Pearl Harbor, was scheduled to open December 10 but was withdrawn permanently.<sup>6</sup> The Lunts were on tour with There Shall Be No Night and it was closed, according to Robert Sherwood and associates, so that

. . . no possibility of a misunderstanding of motives be permitted to exist under the present wartime situation that finds the Soviet Union our ally, and a stalwart one, and Finland fighting on the Nazi side.<sup>7</sup>

"December of 1941 and January of 1942 were in some respects two of the darkest months in all American history."<sup>8</sup> Japan had knocked out half the battleship fleet and was overrunning the Phillipines; German submarines were wreaking havoc in the Atlantic and the German army was threatening to capture Moscow. "The country was fused as it had never been before in living memory."<sup>9</sup> Few Americans thought the war was unjust and most viewed it as "a conflict between the forces of light and darkness." Radicals, especially Communists, who had been the harshest critics of war,

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<sup>4</sup>Noakes and Pridham, Documents on Nazism, p. 601.

<sup>5</sup>Manchester, The Glory and the Dream, 1:316.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., 1:287, and New York Times, 11 December 1941, p. 38.

<sup>7</sup>Variety, 17 December 1941, p. 59.

<sup>8</sup>Spiller, Literary History of the U.S., p. 1262.

<sup>9</sup>Perrett, Days of Sadness, Years of Triumph, p. 215.

became ardent supporters of the war, opposed strikes against war production, supported the suppression of war critics, and, along with the American Legion, supported universal military training.<sup>10</sup> However, there was no immediate war-like mood. Brock Pemberton said in late December, 1941, that plays about war suffered the most following Pearl Harbor.<sup>11</sup>

The public environment for the presentation of Nazis was no longer confused; the Germans were an official enemy. Anti-German attitudes were pronounced. Immediately after Pearl Harbor, Americans were asked if the country contained aliens secretly loyal to foreign governments and 82% said Germans were while only 29% included Italian and 24% the Japanese.<sup>12</sup> And in February, 1942, the response to whether Germany or Japan presented the greater danger was: Germany 47.5%, Japan 10.2% and Equal 32.3%.<sup>13</sup> The Germans clearly outdistanced the Japanese.<sup>14</sup> With these attitudes prevailing, one might have expected many portrayals of totally villainous Nazi characters. However, there were several mitigating factors: the playwrights' previous concern with social protest, the problem with Nazism as a topic, the attitude of

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<sup>10</sup>Polenberg, War and Society, p. 38.

<sup>11</sup>Brock Pemberton, New York Times, 28 December 1941, sec. 9, p. 1.

<sup>12</sup>Perrett, Days of Sadness, Years of Triumph, p. 217.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., p. 221.

<sup>14</sup>The incongruity of these attitudes with the internment of Japanese-Americans is discussed by Perrett, Days of Sadness, Years of Triumph, Chapter XVIII, pp. 216-230.

liberals toward the war, official calls for restraint, optimism about victory and a lack of knowledge about the enemy. These factors will be explained briefly before turning to the first play of the period.

John Gassner pointed out that after Pearl Harbor "The younger playwrights could only choose between a status quo they found unacceptable and a world dominated by Hitler's and Hirohito's master-races." He said they were forced to make a choice they didn't want to make and could not even oppose the status quo without the risk of aiding the enemy. Their forte was social protest and it could not be written. Gassner said the theatre was "on terra incognita . . . being pacifistic and anti-heroic by temperament and conviction."<sup>15</sup> In March, 1942, John Gassner observed the specific problem of dealing with Nazism in drama:

That the serious dramas lack much significance is probably the consequence of a state of mind that finds nothing new to add to current issues, accepts them without any deep understanding, and thrills to no vision. They are the products of a psychological stalemate. Nothing is profoundly or clearly seen or questioned, so that anti-Nazi sentiment sounds commonplace, the attitude to the war seems tritely sentimental, and the attempt to criticize the status quo becomes confusedly oblique.<sup>16</sup>

Liberals had been the major opposition to Hitler for years and the major advocates of war against Fascism.

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<sup>15</sup>John Gassner, "The Years of Crisis," Introduction to John Gassner, ed., Best Plays of the Modern American Theatre: Second Series (New York: Crown Publishers, 1947), p. x.

<sup>16</sup>John Gassner, "Stalemate in Theatre," Current History, March 1942, p. 66.

But once the war began, they shrank from seeming to be warmongers. They had been embarrassed by the Nazi-Soviet Pact. . . . They also felt guilty about their part in the great war hysteria. Having painted themselves into a corner, they now clung to Objectivity with the desperation of the damned.<sup>17</sup>

An example of this attitude occurred right after Pearl Harbor when Bosley Crowther called for restraint in war films. He said the people should be "safeguarded against hysteria" and asked that the "entertainment pictures hold their fire--that they do not endeavor to add fuel to already roaring flames. . . ."<sup>18</sup>

The official directives calling for restraint in the portrayal of the enemy were directed at films but they do help clarify the milieu in which the theatre operated. The Office of War Information acquired the Bureau of Motion Pictures and issued a manual for motion pictures. War content films were put into six categories including one called The Enemy (his nature).<sup>19</sup> The Bureau suggested script changes such as

Don't make blanket condemnation of all Germans and all Japanese as this country does not regard the German and Japanese people as our enemies, only their leaders.<sup>20</sup>

In general, the various media directed hatred for the enemy toward leaders rather than the people. Hitler and Mussolini were despised rather than Germans or Italians. (Attitudes toward the Japanese

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<sup>17</sup>Perrett, Days of Sadness, Years of Triumph, p. 92.

<sup>18</sup>Bosley Crowther, New York Times, 14 December 1941, sec. 9, p. 7.

<sup>19</sup>Lingeman, Don't You Know There's a War On?, p. 22.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., p. 225.



were more racist.)<sup>21</sup> Whether or not Broadway producers and playwrights knew of official directives regarding films, they probably would have noted attitudes portrayed by the media.

Following official wishes, the first war movies stayed away from emphasizing the evils of the enemy and concentrated on the glories of America's allies.<sup>22</sup> The first play with Nazis in this period also followed that pattern. The play was John Steinbeck's The Moon Is Down, which extolled the virtues of the Norwegians. The play's favorable treatment of Nazis created a controversy that developed "into all-out warfare on the literary front."<sup>23</sup> The first batch of war films included Mrs. Miniver (England), Song of Russia, Paris Underground, Hangmen Also Die (Czechoslovakia),<sup>24</sup> Chetniks (Yugoslavia), and The Moon Is Down (Norway).<sup>25</sup> The vehement controversy over the play-novelette The Moon Is Down had no effect on its appeal to Hollywood. 20th Century-Fox paid a modern-day record price of \$300,000.00 for the film rights.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>21</sup>Polenberg, War and Society, p. 135.

<sup>22</sup>The Office of Censorship denied export licenses to "Pictures that would discredit the war effort of any of the allies." Lingeman, Don't You Know There's a War On?, p. 233.

<sup>23</sup>New Republic, 18 May 1942, p. 657.

<sup>24</sup>Co-authored by Bertolt Brecht according to Lingeman in Don't You Know There's A War On?, p. 407.

<sup>25</sup>Paul Rotha, The Film Till Now: A Survey of World Cinema (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1960).

<sup>26</sup>Variety, 12 May 1943.

There were eight other plays with Nazis in this period and they were all produced after 1942 in an atmosphere of attitudes which increasingly assumed victory over Germany and the Axis powers.

At the beginning of the year [1942], the Axis was winning the war on every front. At the end, it was losing on every front. The key battles of the Coral Sea, Midway, Guadalcanal, El Alamein, North Africa, and Stalingrad had been fought and won.<sup>27</sup>

By the end of the year, Washington turned its mind "to setting the terms of enemy surrender."<sup>28</sup> The assumption of victory was widespread. In April, 1943, Variety had a first page story titled "Mapping Global Show Biz: Lush Era Seen When War Ends."<sup>29</sup> The context for the portrayal of Nazis was not, however, fully hospitable and consistent.

The European Theatre of Operations had little crusading spirit. There were no stirring songs as in World War I.<sup>30</sup> There was only a "grim determination to defeat the enemy," it was a just cause, and the nation fought with a "deadpan face."<sup>31</sup> There was a degree of guilt caused by the war boom. Corporate profits in 1943 exceeded those of 1929. The war was a "Depression dream

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<sup>27</sup>Henry H. Adams, Capt., USNR, 1942: The Year That Doomed the Axis (New York: Warner Paperback Library, 1973), p. 477.

<sup>28</sup>Perrett, Days of Sadness, Years of Triumph, p. 270.

<sup>29</sup>Variety, 7 April 1943, p. 1.

<sup>30</sup>Lingeman, Don't You Know There's a War On, offers reasons for the lack of stirring songs. He said World War I was a marching war and songs were written in both 2/4 (march) and 6/8 (dance) tempo. Also, "the new breed of soldier was rather embarrassed by old-fashioned patriotism, and he tuned out flamboyant expressions of it. . . ." p. 258.

<sup>31</sup>Manchester, The Glory and the Dream, 1:345.



come true" for tens of millions of Americans.<sup>32</sup> In the fall of 1944, Rosamind Gilder commented in Theatre Arts on war plays.

She said,

It seems to be Broadway's opinion that it is safer to joke about the war than to take it seriously, and in this opinion those involved in the war, as well as those profiting by it, seem to concur.<sup>33</sup>

She commented on the success of Franz Werfel's Jacobowsky and the Colonel "which had been adapted by S. N. Behrman. In the play the menacing Gestapo officer is a "rosy-faced pig with a lisp."<sup>34</sup>

Americans viewed the Nazis as the enemy of the American fighting man and America's Allies and had little knowledge or concern for the specific ideology of Nazism, particularly in regard to Jews.

In mid-1943 only half the population thought that the death camp "rumors" were true. At the end of 1944 this portion had risen to 76 per cent, but few anticipated that the death toll would be greater than "thousands."<sup>35</sup>

Undoubtedly, skepticism was in part due to the anti-German atrocity stories of World War I. Skeptical Americans were in the company of "Jean-Paul Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir who were two of many whose ears were still affected by the backfire so they did not believe stories of the Nazi extermination of the Jews."<sup>36</sup> Ironically,

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<sup>32</sup>Ibid., pp. 353-354.

<sup>33</sup>Rosamond Gilder, "'Legitimate' Hopes," Theatre Arts, October 1944, p. 566.

<sup>34</sup>Burns Mantle, Best Plays of 1943-44, p. 264.

<sup>35</sup>John E. Mueller, War, Presidents and Public Opinion (New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 1973), p. 65.

<sup>36</sup>Brooks Atkinson, Broadway (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1970), p. 423.

American anti-Semitism actually grew during the war. "Public opinion polls indicated that anti-Semitism--as measured by a belief that Jews were greedy, overprivileged, and trying to get ahead at one's own expense--increased during the war." The Jews were charged with avoiding the draft and avoiding combat. There were ugly anti-Semitic incidents in the eastern part of the United States.<sup>37</sup> During the war a poem called "America's Fighting Jew" was widely circulated. The import of the poem was that the Jews had started the war for their own profit and that, further, they were evading the draft and letting Christians do all the fighting.<sup>38</sup>

The most important plays in this period are The Moon Is Down with its startlingly different portrayal of Nazis and Tomorrow the World, which holds the record as the most commercially successful portrayal of a Nazi. Considerable attention is given to the last play in the period, Common Ground, because of its portrayal of an American traitor who is a virulent Nazi. There was a play by Maxwell Anderson in this period and another by Lillian Hellman, but the Nazi characters in them were very minor. It should be noted that there was a substantially different group of reviewers in this period. By the end of 1942, only 50% of the preceeding season's first string critics were on the job. Several became war correspondents (Brooks Atkinson), went to work for the

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<sup>37</sup>Polenberg, War and Society, pp. 137-138.

<sup>38</sup>Lingeman, Don't You Know There's a War On?, p. 405.

government (Richard Watts, Jr.), or went into the service (John Mason Brown).<sup>39</sup>

### The Moon Is Down

The first portrayal of Nazis after the United States entry into the war was in John Steinbeck's The Moon Is Down,<sup>40</sup> which was first published as a novel March, 1942. Burns Mantle wrote it had "caused as startling an explosion of superlatives in book review circles as any work of the year," and that it had already gone through innumerable printings when it opened on Broadway April 7, 1942.<sup>41</sup> According to Peter Lisca in The Wide World of John Steinbeck, Steinbeck wrote the book as a result of conversations with Colonel William J. Donovan of the Office of Strategic Services on ways to aid resistance movements in Nazi-occupied countries.<sup>42</sup>

Despite its short run on Broadway (71 performances) the play is particularly significant to this study because of the intense controversy over the portrayal of the Nazis. The attention given to this play will focus on that controversy.

Despite Steinbeck's attempt to make the play universal by not specifying the locale of the play and making the uniforms of

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<sup>39</sup>Variety, 25 November 1942.

<sup>40</sup>John Steinbeck, The Moon Is Down (Binghamton, New York: Dramatists Play Service, Inc., Vail-Ballou Press, Inc., 1942).

<sup>41</sup>Burns Mantle, The Best Plays of 1941-42 (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1942), p. 72.

<sup>42</sup>Peter Lisca, The Wide World of John Steinbeck (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1958), p. 186.

the invaders in the play not identifiable with any nation, all the reviewers accepted the play as a dramatization of Nazis in a Norwegian mining town. And even those who supported the play viewed it in that light.

The Moon Is Down takes place in a small mining town. Seven of the eight scenes take place in the drawing room of the Mayor Orden's house. The Nazis have taken over the town with the aid of a local pro-Nazi, fifth columnist, George Corell. The Nazis, headed by Colonel Lanser, establish their headquarters in the Mayor's house.

The story concerns the efforts of Colonel Lanser to get the cooperation of the mayor and townspeople to continue operating the coal mine. In taking the town, the Nazis killed six young men of the town. The Nazis insist they want as little friction as possible and want the Norwegians to keep their mayor and government. A young man balks at working, is ordered to work, and kills a Nazi Captain with a pick. The mayor refuses to preside over the trial, but the young man is tried by the Nazis, sentenced to death, and executed. Immediately after he is shot, a shot crashes through the window and wounds one of the Nazis.

Two months later, relationships between the Nazis and townspeople have reached bottom. Sabotage is occurring and the Nazis have resorted to keeping the men in the mines and threatening to starve their children if they do not work. One of the young Nazis, Lieutenant Tonder, wants to go home and cannot stand not

being able to relate to the people. He begins to disintegrate and voices treasonous thoughts. He is laughing and says,

Conquest after conquest! Deeper and deeper into molasses.  
Maybe the Leader's crazy. Flies conquer the fly-paper.  
Flies capture two hundred miles of new fly-paper. [His  
laughter is hysterical now.]<sup>43</sup>

Tonder then attempts to establish a relationship with the widow of the executed man and is killed by her.

The allies begin dropping small parachutes with dynamite and the people begin using it for sabotage; the Nazis intensify their campaign against the people by shooting hostages. Finally, Colonel Lanser uses the Mayor and his old friend Dr. Winter as hostages against further sabotage. The Mayor hopes the sabotage would continue whether or not he requested the people to stop. He recites Socrates' denunciation which he had known as a student. An explosion is heard. The Mayor "turns and walks slowly toward the door as another explosion is heard, this time closer." One soldier leads the way and others follow as the Mayor walks out to his execution.

Colonel Lanser (played by Otto Kruger) dominates the action of the play. Peter Lisca said that the difficulty with Lanser in the novel was the same as with the other characters. "After reading the first description of him, one knows as much about him as one does at the end of the book."<sup>44</sup> The descriptions in the play script are also extensive, but do not have the inherent adverse effect

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<sup>43</sup> Steinbeck, The Moon Is Down, p. 68.

<sup>44</sup> Lisca, Wide World of John Steinbeck, p. 193.



they would in the novel. In the play, Steinbeck described Lanser as follows:

COLONEL LANSER, among them all, knows what war really is. He had been in Belgium and France twenty years before, and he tries not to think what he knows: that war is hatred and treachery, the muddling of incompetent generals, torture and killing and sick tiredness, until at last it is over and nothing has changed except for new weariness and new hatred. LANSER is a soldier; given orders to carry out, he will carry them out. And he will try to put aside his own sick memories of war.<sup>45</sup>

Lanser is very polite to the Mayor and other townspeople. He requests permission to use the Mayor's house. The Mayor's cook, Annie, throws boiling water on German soldiers. Lanser tells the Mayor he must discipline her. Annie is brought in.

Soldier

Shall I arrest this woman, sir?

Lanser

Was anyone hurt?

Soldier

Yes, sir, scalded, and one man bitten. We are holding her down, sir.

Lanser

[Helplessly, leans against desk.] Oh! Release her and go outside.

The soldier leaves and closes the door.

Lanser

I could lock her up. I could have her shot.

Mayor

Then we'd have no cook.

Lanser

Our instructions are to get along with your people. I'm very tired, sir. I must have some sleep. Please cooperate with us for the good of all.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>45</sup>Steinbeck, The Moon Is Down, pp. 23-24.

<sup>46</sup>Ibid., p. 19.

Lanser expresses over and over again his desire to get along with the Norwegians. When resistance has increased and the young officers begin having mental problems, he says that the young men were told "they were braver and brighter than other young men" and they are shocked to find out it isn't true. He orders his men not to shoot unless there are overt acts. He is forced to order reprisals:

Lanser

You know who they are. Take the leaders. Shoot the leaders. Take hostages. Shoot the hostages. Take more hostages. Shoot them. (His voice has risen and now it sinks almost to a whisper.) And the hatred growing. And the hurt between us deeper and deeper.<sup>47</sup>

Lanser offers a description of himself in a discussion with the local traitor, George Corell.

Lanser

This war should be for the very young. They would have the proper spirit, but unfortunately they are not able to move guns and men about. I suffer from civilization. That means I can know one thing and do another. I know I have failed-- I knew we would before we started. The thing the leader wanted to do cannot be done.<sup>48</sup>

But Lanser adds that he will not break the rules and that he will "help tear and burn the world." Throughout, he refers to the fact that he will carry out his orders.

The other Nazis in the play, except for one, are drawn in a similar light. Major Hunter is a mining engineer, a man of figures and a formula, and if there had been no war, "no one would have thought of making a soldier of him." Captain Bentick is a

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<sup>47</sup>Ibid., p. 89.

<sup>48</sup>Ibid., p. 93.

family man who is "A lover of dogs and pink children and Christmas." Lieutenant Prackle is "an undergraduate . . . a snotnose," who is "a devil with women" and, if he were an American, would view the war as a football game. Prackle does hate degenerate art and has destroyed several canvasses. Lieutenant Tonder is "a dark and bitter poet, who dreams of the perfect ideal love of elevated young men for poor girls." Tonder broods on death and "he has his dying words ready to speak." Captain Loft is the only truly military man. He has no unmilitary moments and believes a soldier is the highest development of animal life. All of these characters behave basically as they are described in the playwright's notes.

Only two of the Nazis, Captain Loft and the local traitor, George Corell, express any specific Nazi thoughts, and those are brief. Corell makes a reference to how rotten and inefficient democracy is. Loft talks about conquering the world, the need to cut off weakness, and refers to weakness as being treason.

The strongest descriptions of brutality in the play are reminiscences by Colonel Lanser about World War One.

Lanser

. . . I remember a little old woman in Brussels. Sweet face, white hair. . . . Delicate old hands. She used to sing our songs to us in a quivering voice. She always knew where to find a cigarette or a virgin. We didn't know her son had been executed. When we finally shot her, she had killed twelve men with a long black hat-pin.

Corell

But you shot her.

Lanser

Of course we shot her!

Corell

And the murders stopped?

Lanser

No . . . the murders didn't stop. And when we finally retreated, the people cut off the stragglers. They burned some. And they gouged the eyes from some. And some they even crucified.<sup>49</sup>

There are no brutalities equivalent to these attributed to the Nazis in the play or to other Nazis.

The only Nazi who can be considered a villain is George Corell, the local Nazi who falls into the category of an under-handed traitor. Corell is used to make Lanser seem more moderate and reasonable. Lanser tells his officers that hostages must be taken and shot to stop sabotage, but he questions the efficacy of shooting hostages. Corell says they should not have sent a man like Lanser to Norway. Corell proceeds to go over Lanser's head and gets orders to have the Mayor and, then, Dr. Winter shot if necessary. When the orders come, Lanser says he will follow them but adds, "I don't like you, Corell. I am licking my wounds surely. And--I'm giving you wounds to lick." After everyone else leaves, Corell slowly seats himself in Lanser's chair.<sup>50</sup> Corell both promulgates and approves the deaths of the brave Mayor and his friend.

The main opponents of the Nazis are Mayor Orden and his friend, Dr. Winter, who are acceptable middle-class heroes.

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<sup>49</sup>Ibid., p. 36. Lanser's reference to the crucifixion of Germans is a reversal of the canard spread by World War I allies that the Germans were crucifying Canadian soldiers. See Chapter III, p. 50.

<sup>50</sup>Ibid., pp. 89-93.

Steinbeck described the mayor in part as "a fine-looking man of about sixty-five" who is "a little too common and too simple for the official morning coat he wears." His wife watches him "as the lady shower of a prize dog watches her entry at a dog show." Dr. Winter is "Bearded, simple and benign." They are admirable in their decision to die rather than submit to the Nazis demands, but they are quite colorless in comparison to the Nazis.

The play was favorably reviewed by George Freedley and Brooks Atkinson. Freedley referred to the characterization of the Nazis and said Steinbeck "paints the Nazis naturally, and not without sympathy for the humanity they must suppress in order to live up to the demoniac preaching of their leader."<sup>51</sup> Atkinson said that it would be "a long time before German commanders share the misgivings of Colonel Lanser." Then he added, "But perhaps Mr. Steinbeck is right even in this characterization."<sup>52</sup>

Most of the reviewers did not agree with Freedley and Atkinson. Louis Kronenberger stated that "His Nazis behave as no Nazi conquerors have been known to behave." He also commented that while the Nazis might "swiftly crack up in the face of defeat, there are simply no grounds for believing that they go rapidly to pieces in the face of victory."<sup>53</sup> Richard Watts, Jr., felt Steinbeck had gone overboard in his fair treatment of Nazis and the "essential

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<sup>51</sup>George Freedley, New York Morning Telegraph, 9 April 1942.

<sup>52</sup>Brooks Atkinson, New York Times, 8 April 1942.

<sup>53</sup>Louis Kronenberger, PM, 8 April 1942.

boyish ingenuousness about them is to be questioned not as bad propaganda but as unsound drama and a wild lapse from the truth."<sup>54</sup>

Burns Mantle raised two other points about the portrayals. First, he said

I would hesitate to contend that there are no idealists at heart hiding their philosophies under Nazi helmets and shouting their orders in disguised animal growlings.

But I find it difficult to believe that they would have so completely fooled the Hitlers and Himmlers and Goerings on their way up to the higher command.<sup>55</sup>

Second, he said that if Steinbeck's Nazi officer class was true, "then the popular belief in stories of Nazi brutality, and the deliberate and sustained cruelties of Nazi invasions of the occupied countries, must have been grossly exaggerated."<sup>56</sup> Richard Lockridge also found the invaders "more sinned against than sinning."<sup>57</sup>

At the same time The Moon Is Down opened and was playing on Broadway, the controversy concerning the novel was occurring. The literary war was precipitated by James Thurber in the New Republic. "If these are German officers, if they are anything else but American actors, I will eat the manuscript of your next play." He said these "pussycats" could be routed by merely shouting "Boo!" He ended by saying "I keep wondering what the people of Poland would make of it all."<sup>58</sup> Thurber's attack started an argument that spilled over into other publications. Thurber answered a

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<sup>54</sup>Richard Watts, Jr., New York Herald Tribune, 8 April 1942.

<sup>55</sup>Burns Mantle, New York News, 8 April 1942.

<sup>56</sup>Burns Mantle, The Best Plays of 1941-42, p. 72.

<sup>57</sup>Richard Lockridge, New York Sun, 8 April 1942.

<sup>58</sup>James Thurber, New Republic, 16 March 1942, p. 370.

complaint in the New Republic that his review was a slap in the face of decent people who were moved by the book by saying, "I am sorry about that slap in the face, I didn't realize my hand was open."<sup>59</sup> The same issue had a letter from a Pole who had lived under Nazi rule and sided with Thurber, saying the officers were unrealistically portrayed as "the Führer's helpless and at times unwilling tools. . . ."

On April 20, Newsweek gave a run down of the argument over the portrayal of the Nazis,<sup>60</sup> and in May the New Republic had an editorial on the subject.<sup>61</sup> The editorial dubbed the anti-Steinbeck forces led by Clifton Fadiman as the Blue forces and the pro-Steinbeck forces led by John Chamberlain as the Green army because its opponents felt Steinbeck's "Moon" was made of green cheese. The New Republic said it was all right to depict some Nazis as Steinbeck did, but wrong not to depict any Nazis as "essentially hateful."

Later, writers discussed the controversy by raising essentially the same question--did Steinbeck give a fair portrayal of Nazis? Peter Lisca said, "However otherwise typed, Colonel Lanser and his officers do avoid being prototypes of the brutal Nazi monomaniacs so often depicted in novels and motion pictures about the war."<sup>62</sup> Lisca also quoted the following passage from

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<sup>59</sup>James Thurber, New Republic, 30 March 1942, p. 431.

<sup>60</sup>Newsweek, 20 April 1942, pp. 72-73.

<sup>61</sup>New Republic, 18 May 1942, p. 657.

<sup>62</sup>Lisca, The Wide World of John Steinbeck, p. 195.

Harry Slochower's No Voice Is Wholly Lost as offering the most articulate perceptions of the controversy:

What Steinbeck seems to be saying is that a change of the capital-situation [Berlin to Oslo] makes possible at least a partial readjustment of their distorted humanity. To deny this is to invite as an alternative the necessity of exterminating all Germans or all deluded Nazi followers. Steinbeck's hope seems to lie in the people's aroused awareness that their capital is unrepresentative.<sup>63</sup>

Another writer criticized Steinbeck's portrayals of Nazis not for attempting to reveal the humanity of the Nazis, but for attributing false humanity to them--"These men do not ring true; they are like sentimental Americans" and "no German occupation officer acted or thought like Lanser."<sup>64</sup>

The critics then and now seem to have overlooked another possibility. The writer of this study was unable to find any reference to the seemingly obvious possibility that the Nazis behaved differently in Norway than in other countries--that their racial policies might have excluded the Norwegians from the treatment accorded the Poles and other Slavic countries as well as Jews. The response to the play at the time of its production gives a strong indication that the critics and the public at large did not understand the fundamentally racist character of Nazism. The issue was seen simply as a question of whether Steinbeck gave a fair portrayal of Nazis rather than a fair portrayal of Nazis in Norway. That it was not comprehended at the time might be

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<sup>63</sup>Slochower, No Voice Is Wholly Lost, p. 247.

<sup>64</sup>Joseph Fontenrose, John Steinbeck: An Introduction and Interpretation (New York: Barnes and Noble, Inc., 1963), p. 99.



attributed to a lack of knowledge and to wartime nationalistic concerns of the critics; that it is not noted in contemporary criticism of Steinbeck reveals a narrow concern for text without regard for reality and historical fact.

Historians are generally agreed the German occupation of Norway was to assure Norway's neutrality which was threatened by Britain and France. Norman Rich said in Hitler's War Aims that the Norwegians were Nordic and the Nazi government was influenced by ideological considerations. Hitler's secret directives for the invasion of Norway and Denmark differed strikingly from those for the invasion of Poland and other Slavic nations.<sup>65</sup> Rich said the Germans wanted to persuade the Norwegians to become a member of the Greater Germanic Reich. He continued:

Because of the Norwegian's undeniable status as a Germanic people, the Germans had been dismayed by the necessity of having had to fight them at all. "This development was much regretted by the Reich from its National Socialist racial-political view," the official Nazi journal on German occupation policies stated. "For the German Volk sees in the Norwegian Volk a Volk of the same race and the same blood." It was Germany's political goal "to achieve the closest possible friendly relationship with Norway."<sup>66</sup>

The invasion of Norway came as a "paralyzing shock." The heritage of the people and generations of condemnation of war and its instruments required a rapid adjustment. However, to the amazement of the Germans, there were two months of hard fighting and resistance.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>65</sup>Rich, Hitler's War Aims, 2:107.

<sup>66</sup>Ibid., 2:137.

<sup>67</sup>Haldvan Koht and Sigmund Skard, The Voice of Norway (New York: AMS Press, Inc., 1967), pp. 285-286.

German soldiers seemed genuinely surprised that their "protection" was not welcome, and German authorities hoped and wished for "cooperation"--in other words, submission--on the part of the people.<sup>68</sup>

The nation was conquered, but the opposition to Nazism continued with the Underground.<sup>69</sup> The Germans began to be less inclined to view the Norwegians as brethren and began measures of repression. The Nasjonal Samling (N.S.), headed by the pro-Nazi Vidkun Quisling, was the only political party tolerated, but it achieved a total of membership of only 43,000 or about 5% of the electorate.<sup>70</sup> The Germans achieved whatever compliance they could "by a continually growing use of imprisonment, torture, executions, concentration camps [in Norway] and in Germany, and a general policy of crafty, brutal terror."<sup>71</sup>

This brief summation of the Nazi occupation of Norway indicates that Steinbeck's portrayal of the Nazis vis-a-vis non-Jewish Norwegians immediately following the invasion was reasonably accurate. It should be noted that the book became very popular with resistance groups in Europe. A representative of the Royal

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<sup>68</sup>Karen Larsen, A History of Norway (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1965), p. 546.

<sup>69</sup>Richard Petrow in The Bitter Years gives an unflattering view of the resistance. He says that "At no time, even when the tide of battle turned sharply against Germany, did the majority of the . . . Norwegians come out in active opposition to the Germans." He also said, had Germany won, Norway could have asked for favorable consideration because of governmental accommodation of the Germans, pp. 366, 367.

<sup>70</sup>T. K. Derry, A History of Modern Norway, 1814-1972 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973), p. 391.

<sup>71</sup>Larsen, A History of Norway, p. 550.

Norwegian Delegation in New York had some reservations about the portrayals of Nazis, but the King of Norway decorated Steinbeck for his book.<sup>72</sup>

Twelve years after the play was produced, Steinbeck said:

I had written of Germans as men, not supermen, and this was considered a very weak attitude to take. I couldn't make much sense out of this, and it seems absurd now that we know the Germans were men, and thus fallible, even defeatable.<sup>73</sup>

It is ironic that Steinbeck himself was unaware of the difference between Nazis in Norway and Nazis in eastern Slavic countries.

The controversy over the portrayal of Nazis in The Moon Is Down was a moot discussion. Both sides were right; The Moon Is Down offered a reasonable portrayal of Nazis in Norway in April, 1942, but it was not a valid generalization of occupational Nazi forces. The point is clarified by Joachim Remak in The Nazi Years in his discussion of occupation practices:

The Nazi-occupied western areas--France, the Lowlands, Denmark and Norway--suffered too. Any signs of resistance, in particular, resulted in very brutal Nazi reprisals. But compared to what was happening in the East, theirs still was a bearable occupation. The major atrocities were reserved for the East, for the Slavs.<sup>74</sup>

The ideological racial basis for occupational behavior is clear in Nazi documents. For example, in 1942 the SS issued a concentration camp order that "greasy Polish and Lithuanian priests"

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<sup>72</sup>Lisca, The Wide World of John Steinbeck, p. 187.

<sup>73</sup>Steinbeck quoted in Lisca, The Wide World, p. 195.

<sup>74</sup>Remak, The Nazi Years, pp. 122-123.

could be used for "any sort of labor" while "German, Dutch, Norwegian, etc. clergymen" were to be "employed in the herb gardens only."<sup>75</sup>

As noted earlier, The Moon Is Down was made into a film. Hermine Rich Isaacs commented about the film in Theatre Arts. She said The Moon Is Down had tried nothing new and lacked imagination to make it "vital and interesting." But she did praise the portrayal of the Nazis as

Credible human beings, invested with intelligence as well as sheer brute strength and subject to the fallibility of mortals. They have a three-dimensional quality that stands out in bold relief against the usual run of Nazi villain, Hollywood style, and they are no less formidable because they are more real.<sup>76</sup>

Like the other critics, she had not differentiated between Nazis in various countries. Her comments also imply that the public was accepting (in film) a standardized Nazi villain.

There were three plays in the 1942-43 season with Nazis which were off-Broadway or foreign but should be noted because all three concerned the Russians and were part of the Broadway and Hollywood goal of portraying the glories of America's allies. Winter Soldiers, written by an American dramatist, Daniel Lewis James, was presented by Irwin Piscator at the Studio Theatre of New York School of Social Research on November 29, 1942. It received favorable reviews but ran only 25 performances. The other two plays were by Russian dramatists. A translation of The

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<sup>75</sup>Ibid., p. 125.

<sup>76</sup>Hermine Rich Isaacs, "Beauty and the Beast of Berlin," Theatre Arts, May 1943, pp. 283-290.

Russian People by Konstantin Simonov opened December 29, 1942, and ran 39 performances. And a play called Counterattack, based on a Russian play by Ilya Vershinin and Mikhail Ruderman was presented February 3, 1943, and ran 85 performances.

### The Barber Had Two Sons

The next play with Nazis was produced nearly a year after The Moon Is Down and after the Axis powers had begun to lose the war. The play, which opened February 1, 1943, was The Barber Had Two Sons<sup>77</sup> by Thomas Duggan and James Hogan. Duggan was an actor and Hogan a screen director; they had opened their play successfully on the west coast.<sup>78</sup>

Like The Moon Is Down, The Barber Had Two Sons also concerned the invasion of Norway by the Nazis. Mrs. Mathieson (played by Blanche Yurka) is the barber and she has two sons. Johann is an ambitious, promising, and weak artist who is not concerned with the Nazi invasion. Chris is a courageous seaman who works in the Underground to oust the Nazis. Both sons fall in love with an enticing young school teacher, Karen Borson, who is a boarder in their home. She tries to entice Johann to run away and be a traitor and, finally, she is revealed as a Quisling character. At the end, the mother turns in her artist son to the Nazis (who are looking for Chris) and then she shoots the girl.

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<sup>77</sup>Script not available to the writer. Synopsis and comments from Best Plays and reviews.

<sup>78</sup>Ward Morehouse, New York Sun, 2 February 1943.

The play was very melodramatic and filled with considerable action and violence:

A German spy is choked to death on the stage in the first act; an unsuspecting Gestapo Chief has his throat slit in a barber's chair as the second act curtain descends; a female Quisling is washed out by Miss Yurka in the third act; and, off-stage, throughout the play the Nazi invaders are decimated in gratifying numbers and in gruesome ways. Several hundred German troops aboard ship, off-stage, are blown to hellangone through a plot you watch hatched by the Norwegian patriots.<sup>79</sup>

The Nazi who sits in the barber chair at the end of Act Two is seated and prepared for a shave by Lars Tugar, whose wife has been raped and driven mad by the Nazis. One reviewer said, "The audience roared with laughter and began to look around for beer and pretzels."<sup>80</sup>

Several of the critics made observations about the portrayal of the Nazis. They give a singular impression of the Nazis being overt villains without particular Nazi traits.

The Germans in this play are hateful enough, but are just ordinary dumb-clucks, mechanically and stupidly obeying orders.<sup>81</sup>

. . . The Barber Had Two Sons . . . makes hating Nazis a real pleasure.<sup>82</sup>

They are brutal and beastly in the accepted stage manner.<sup>83</sup>

However, the Variety critic said "The cruelty of the German soldiers upon the citizenry is displayed, but it's hardly the brutality that

<sup>79</sup>Burton Roscoe, New York World-Telegram, 2 February 1943.

<sup>80</sup>Wilella Waldorf, New York Evening Post, 2 February 1943.

<sup>81</sup>Burton Rascoe, New York World-Telegram, 2 February 1943.

<sup>82</sup>George Freedley, New York Morning Telegraph, 3 February 1943.

<sup>83</sup>Burns Mantle, New York News, 2 February 1943.

is associated with Nazi stormtroopers [sic]."<sup>84</sup> This observation might have indicated a comparison to past portrayals or to current knowledge about stormtroopers' activities. The references above that the portrayals were given "in the accepted stage manner" might also have indicated a disparity between accepted stereotypical behavior on stage as contrasted with, perhaps, different public knowledge of Nazi behavior. The implication seems to be that the Nazis were not portrayed as extreme villains.

The people of the town were apparently quite heroic. John Anderson described them as "brave and unflinching."<sup>85</sup> Howard Barnes noted that opponents of Nazism took on a nearly automatic status of heroism. He said that

The mere account of Civilian courage in the face of Nazi aggression and brutality carries tremendous weight, in whatever medium it is set forth.<sup>86</sup>

It should be noted that the townspeople did include two unsympathetic characters, the artist son and the girl.

George Freedley gave the play a favorable review but said one would have to see the play in haste "because I suspect that mine may be a minority report. . . ."<sup>87</sup> He was correct because the play ran only 24 performances, and most of the critics were inclined to the view that Duggan and Hogan had turned out

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<sup>84</sup>Variety, 3 February 1943.

<sup>85</sup>John Anderson, New York Journal-American, 2 February 1943.

<sup>86</sup>Howard Barnes, New York Herald Tribune, 3 February 1943.

<sup>87</sup>George Freedley, New York Morning-Telegraph, 3 February 1943.

. . . a blood and thunder melodrama gory enough to suit the most violent murder addicts, besides mixing in a heavy dose of mother love, patriotism, brute force, love making and comic relief via the village drunkard.<sup>88</sup>

### Tomorrow the World

Tomorrow the World<sup>89</sup> by James Gow and Arnaud d'Usseau was the most commercially successful of all the plays covered in this study. It opened April 14, 1943, and ran 500 performances. Gow and d'Usseau were refugees from Hollywood. Gow had been a reporter before heading for Hollywood in 1931, where he co-authored One Night of Love and became in demand for scenarios involving operatic matters. d'Usseau had been a set dresser first and then reached success as a screen writer with One Crowded Night. They were privates in the service working out east for the Office of War Information when they collaborated on Tomorrow the World.<sup>90</sup> The title of the play is taken from a Hitler Youth song which includes the line "Today Germany is ours: and tomorrow the world."<sup>91</sup>

Tomorrow the World concerns Emil Bruckner, a twelve-year-old German who is an orphan and has come to live with his mother's brother in the midwest. In the household are his Uncle, Professor

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<sup>88</sup>Wilella Waldorf, New York Evening Post, 2 February 1943.

<sup>89</sup>James Gow and Arnaud d'Usseau "Tomorrow the World," in Best Plays of the Modern American Theatre, ed. John Gassner.

<sup>90</sup>Gassner, Best Plays of the Modern American Theatre, p. 598.

<sup>91</sup>Ilse McKee, Tomorrow the World (London: J. M. Dent and Sons, Ltd., 1960), title page.



Frame, his ten-year-old daughter Patricia, his sister Jessie, and his Jewish teacher friend whom he intends to marry. Emil arrives wearing his Nazi uniform under his regular clothes. He reveals the uniform and announces that he is a Nazi. He is recalcitrant in his beliefs, and in the course of the play he attempts to prevent the marriage and plays off one household member against the other. Frame is doing secret government work at his university, and Emil attempts to steal the key to Frame's office. In the course of the play, Emil lies, steals, and fights.

Leona, the Jewish teacher, tolerates Emil's behavior and tries to convince Frame to change Emil by love and patience. Eventually, however, she herself slaps Emil--the first child she has ever struck--and says she now believes Emil should be given corporal punishment. Frame now believes they should continue to try to reform Emil. When ten-year-old Patsie catches Emil trying to steal his uncle's keys, she refuses to promise not to tell. Emil then tries to kill her by smashing her with a heavy bookend. When Frame learns the truth, he literally tries to strangle Emil and is stopped by Leona. Patsie's generosity in giving Emil a watch, her willingness to forgive his attack on her, and the influence of others produce a change in Emil. At the end, he breaks down and his Nazi armor is also broken.

The validity of Emil's Nazism will be discussed by delineating it first, examining the critical responses, and then comparing him with the educational process in the Third Reich.

Much of Emil's behavior and dialogue express Nazism. He complains about having had to sit next to "a big fat Jew" on the flight to the midwest, and he is contemptuous of Leona because she is a Jew. The war news is also a result of the "Jewish Capitalist newspapers." Leona accuses him of writing graffiti on the sidewalk, and he responds, "It's a lie! A Jewish lie! . . . A Jewish lie from a Jewish whore!" Emil's father, Karl Buckner, was a Nobel Prize winner in 1933. He opposed the Nazis and was tortured and executed in a concentration camp. Emil, however, believes he was a traitor to the Third Reich--he had, with Jewish Bolsheviks, helped defeat Germany in World War One, had helped weaken Germany and caused inflation and Communism. He believes his father committed suicide. At the end of Act One, he takes his dagger and slashes the painting of his father, which hangs in a position of honor over the mantle.

Emil is given to saluting and to saying "Heil Hitler!" He is asked why he has only one suit if the Fuhrer is so providing, and he answers that such things are a result of the Treaty of Versailles. He says he will always be a German and gives his opinion of America:

America is a cesspool. To be an American is to be a member of a mongrel race. The American blood stream is a mixture of the scum of the earth.<sup>92</sup>

When he is informed that his uncle will marry a Jew, he says "Then it is true. Such marriages are still permitted in America."

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<sup>92</sup>James Gow and Arnaud d'Usseau, "Tomorrow the World," in Best Plays of the Modern American Theatre, ed. John Gassner, p. 612.

Emil attempts to enlist the German-American maid, Freida, to work to defeat the enemy. And later he attempts to enlist the aid of a German-American university janitor in stealing secrets from his uncle's office. His dedication to the Reich is total. Germany forgot her destiny, but the Fuhrer has given back courage and will show the way. He will not change. He says, "You can beat me. You can torture me. I am prepared for the most horrible experiences." He wants to serve as a spy regardless of the consequences. He tells his uncle that "If there is necessity, I will die for Der Führer." Frame asks him if he wants to die, and he says "It is my duty." Later he says that "Death is the highest honor."

In terms of expressed ideology, Emil Bruckner was the most complete Nazi to appear on the stage up to that time. One critic said "The Nazi has never been pictured so graphically on the American stage."<sup>93</sup> And another commented more specifically that the "horrible little beast" was "the very embodiment of the clever, shrewd, self-righteous cruelty, cold bloodedness and treachery we associate with Nazism." He added that "all the German propaganda cliches are there."<sup>94</sup>

There is nothing in Emil's behavior or dialogue, even telescoped in the play, that seems exaggerated in light of the evidence concerning education under Nazism. A brief overview of

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<sup>93</sup> Arthur Pollock, Brooklyn Daily Eagle, 15 April 1943.

<sup>94</sup> Burton Rascoe, New York World-Telegram, 15 April 1943.

the probable education of a twelve-year-old in the Third Reich and a comment on Emil's specific deeds and words will help to explain the accuracy of the portrayal of Emil. There are four major aspects of Emil's character to be noted: (1) His anti-Semitism, (2) His knowledge of Bolsheviks, Communists, Inflation, Versailles, etc., (3) His contempt for America, and (4) His immersion in the Fuhrer Prinzip and his willingness to suffer and die for Hitler.

In Education for Death,<sup>95</sup> Gregor Ziemer noted that ideological education began in pre-school nurseries run by the NSV (National Socialist Welfare Organization). He visited one in which little boys barely able to talk were being drilled in a song. The second stanza was:

We believe in our Fuehrer,  
We live for our Fuehrer,  
We die for our Fuehrer,  
Until heroes we are.

The teacher told Ziemer that the children became thoroughly acquainted with the Fuhrer Prinzip and looked upon Hitler as a superman who could save Germany from her enemies. He observed pre-schoolers being taught to click their heels.<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>95</sup>Gregor Ziemer, Education for Death: The Making of the Nazi (New York: Oxford University Press, 1943). This book was first printed in October, 1941, and was into its fifth printing in January, 1943. Ziemer had been the president of the American Colony School in Berlin. Curiosity about Nazi education led him to seek and obtain permission to visit and observe Nazi education from pre-school children to the university. The writer used Ziemer's book as the primary source for evaluating the characterization of Emil. The book was also made into a film titled Hitler's Children.

<sup>96</sup>Zierner, Education for Death, pp. 49-50.

From the age of six to ten, the boys were placed in the Pimpf, the Little Fellow. This organization clothed him in a uniform with a swastika armband and gave him a Leistungsbuch, an efficiency record book in which every detail of his school, home and Party activities were recorded. "Every accomplishment and every mistake was registered, signed and countersigned by officials." All the energies of the six to ten-year-old were devoted to being promoted to the Jungvolk. Ziemer relates that in the Pimpf, the boys were inculcated endlessly with the desire to become soldiers. They were taught about Nazi heroes, the doctrine of race purity, and about the struggle existing in nature so they would learn to become aggressors rather than victims. Ziemer attended a class in which the teacher launched a devastating diatribe against the United States. The teacher said the United States was sinking lower and lower because of racial impurity and that Americans had a corrupt, low type of government, called a democracy, which was run by rich Jews.<sup>97</sup>

At the age of ten, the Pimpf was eligible to take a test to enter the Jungvolk. After he had passed all tests in athletics, camping, and Nazified history,<sup>98</sup> he attended an initiation ceremony and took a solemn oath:

In the presence of this bloodflag, which represents our Fuehrer,  
I swear to devote all my energies and my strength to the savior

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<sup>97</sup>Ibid., pp. 55-70. Ziemer's views on Nazi education are corroborated in Mosse's Nazi Culture, Chapter 8, "The Key: Education of Youth," pp. 263-318.

<sup>98</sup>Shirer, Rise and Fall, p. 253.

of our country, Adolf Hitler. I am willing and able to give up my life for him, so help me God. One people, one Nation, one Fuehrer.<sup>99</sup>

Ziemer makes direct references to the boys' being taught about the Treaty of Versailles, "the Jewish swine," and Communists.<sup>100</sup>

In regard to self-sacrifice, Ziemer said, "In Nazi Germany the ideal of self-sacrifice, of dying for Hitler, has taken on proportions that to an outsider would seem sadistic perversion." He added, "And for those who oppose Hitler deep hatred is aroused in the hearts of German youth."<sup>101</sup> The emotional intensity of the self-sacrifice is illustrated by an oath taken by Jungvolk: "I consecrate my life to Hitler; I am ready to sacrifice my life for Hitler; I am ready to die for Hitler, the savior, the Fuehrer."<sup>102</sup> Melita Maschmann in Account Rendered: A Dossier on my Former Self discussed the battalion of six hundred German boys aged fifteen and sixteen who defended a bridge in Berlin in April, 1945, and suffered severe casualties. She said

. . . I know what went on in those boys' hearts. They had sung countless times: "Germany, look, on us, we dedicate our death to thee, as the least we can give. When death comes to our ranks we will become the great seed."<sup>103</sup>

When Emil says he is ashamed of his father, he explains his anger also:

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<sup>99</sup>Ziemer, Education for Death, p. 59.

<sup>100</sup>Ibid., pp. 103-121.

<sup>101</sup>Ibid., p. 108.

<sup>102</sup>Ibid., p. 121.

<sup>103</sup>Maschmann, Account Rendered, pp. 157-158.

Because of my father, they would never permit me to be trusted. I excelled in all endeavor, yet they would not make me Captain of my troop, because my name was Bruckner. I did everything I could. I informed the Gestapo about the mother of my best friend, though it pained me greatly, and I lost my friend.<sup>104</sup>

The speech sounds truly exaggerated until it is placed alongside the following account by Ziemer:

How seriously the Pimpf takes his rank I realized when I talked with Hermann P., a broken-hearted German father whose boy had been refused permission to attend the graduation exercises of his troop. His Liestungsbuch showed excellent marks; he had fulfilled all the rigid requirements. But he had been told quite openly that he could not be promoted because his father was not as good a Nazi as he should be!<sup>105</sup>

This meant he could never become Jungvolk, Hitler Youth, S.A., nor expect any sort of advancement. The father told Ziemer his son had tried to commit suicide. Emil's account becomes understatement by comparison.

The question arises as to why such a fully villainous young Nazi was found acceptable by the critics and audiences when other harsh portrayals of Nazis were deprecated as stereotyped Nazis. The critics had an explanation.

All of the critics praised the performance of Emil by Skippy Homeir. Howard Barnes stated, "It is one of the finest child performances you will ever see."<sup>106</sup> However, there was an implication in their praise of Homeir's performance. Barnes said, "Perhaps the pint-size Nazis are all as diabolically cunning as

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<sup>104</sup>Gow and d'Usseau, "Tomorrow the World," pp. 613-614.

<sup>105</sup>Ziemer, Education for Death, p. 75.

<sup>106</sup>Howard Barnes, New York Herald Tribune, 15 April 1943.

the goose-stepping gossoon who parades across the stage . . . but it is a bit hard to believe." And Barnes added that the credibility came from Homeir's performance. Burton Rascoe explained it:

There is still another way in which this play is extraordinary: it carries its own answer to any possible charge that it is altogether too incredible that a boy 12 years old could learn all the Nazi cliches which pass for thinking and use them all so patly in the circumstances in which the youngster in the play finds himself: that he could so cleverly maintain his fantastic delusion. The answer is that Skippy Homeir performs a more difficult feat than that: . . . he completely sustains the illusion of the audience that he actually is the pitiable monster he portrays.<sup>107</sup>

The credibility of Emil Bruckner may have resulted from Homier's performance, but it was a valid, informed, and unexaggerated portrayal of a twelve-year-old Nazi.

One other minor character in the play is a pro-Nazi American. Fred Miller is the university janitor who tries to get Frame's key ostensibly to be able to clean the secret office. Emil offers to help Miller get the key but is rebuffed by him. When Emil runs away after attempting to kill Pat, he is returned by Miller. Frieda, the maid, has already revealed that she believes Miller was a Bundist. When Miller and Emil return, Frame tells Miller he believes he is a Nazi sympathizer and that he will let the FBI handle the matter. Miller responds by ridiculing books and "educated fools." He says nothing can be proved and in an outburst says,

Just because I'm a janitor you think you can wipe your feet on me! Always being polite to you! Always cleaning up your messes! Well, some day we'll see who are the janitors. This war isn't over yet!<sup>108</sup>

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<sup>107</sup>Burton Rascoe, New York World-Telegram, 16 April 1943.

<sup>108</sup>Gow and d'Usseau, Tomorrow the World, p. 635.



It is a clear delineation of the declass  type of individual portrayed in the earlier plays as the type who joined the SA.

The emotional response to Emil and Miller and the nature of their opponents was clearly stated by George Freedley:

This is a wartime melodrama that says precisely those truths about our German enemies which it pleases to hear. Americans are revealed as foolish, sentimental, friendly, irreverant and nice until they are outraged and then their steel interior is exposed.<sup>109</sup>

Freedley's remarks about the Americans in the play are very like a description of the way the media portrayed the American GI-- courageous, antimilitaristic, essentially kind at heart, devoted to principle, but a killer in combat.<sup>110</sup>

The assumption after 1942 of an allied victory (referred to in the introduction to this chapter) was also reflected in the reviews for Tomorrow the World. John Anderson said Tomorrow the World had raised the problem of what the allies would have to do with the twelve million "mentally distorted children" when the war was over.<sup>111</sup> And Lewis Nichols said in the New York Times that "the Messrs. Gow and d'Usseau apparently have been wondering about post-war planning too. . . ."<sup>112</sup>

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<sup>109</sup>George Freedley, New York Morning Telegraph, 16 April 1943.

<sup>110</sup>Polenberg, War and Society, p. 124.

<sup>111</sup>John Anderson, New York Journal-American, 15 April 1943.

<sup>112</sup>Lewis Nichols, New York Times, 15 April 1943.

Land of Fame

The next play by an American dramatist with Nazi characters was Land of Fame<sup>113</sup> by Albert and Mary Bein, based on a story by Charles Paver and Albert Bein. The play opened September 21, 1943, and ran for six performances. The locale of the play is Greece. A Greek lieutenant colonel has become a guerilla in the fight against the Nazis who have conquered and are occupying Greece. In the course of the play, he gives himself up to the Nazis in order to save a small village from reprisals. In captivity he meets a tormented, intellectual member of the Gestapo who tells him how to cut the German supply lines. In the end the Germans are all dead or hostages and the villagers are safe in the hills.

The critics noted the similarity between Land of Fame and The Moon Is Down, and one called it "almost a parody."<sup>114</sup> The Nazis again have to learn the lesson of the flypaper, and in this play the audience actually sees "some of the foul dramatic fiends dramatically shot."<sup>115</sup> One critic found the "play . . . so shallow and stagy and amateurish a representation of the deep and continuing agony of Europe . . ." that she "had to leave after the first act."<sup>116</sup>

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<sup>113</sup>Script not available to the writer. Synopsis of play and comments from Best Plays and reviews.

<sup>114</sup>Woolcott Gibbs, The New Yorker, 2 October 1943, p. 38.

<sup>115</sup>Stark Young, The New Republic, 4 October 1943, p. 458.

<sup>116</sup>Margaret Marshall, Nation, 2 October 1943, p. 388.

The Nazi character who received the most attention of the critics was the one "who sickens at the Nazi theories in action."<sup>117</sup> Woolcott Gibbs in The New Yorker gave the most extensive comments on the Nazis in the play. He said:

finally, the behavior of the Germans, hemmed in by people who clearly don't like them much, is even more absurd than it was when the Steinbeck invaders began to realize they were getting on their victim's nerves. The Bein's most spectacular creation . . . is the renegade Nazi, an archeologist unhappily drafted into the Gestapo, and his fate is a peculiar and embarrassing one. For nine of the ten scenes, he desperately tries to attract a little attention by insulting Hitler and the Reich, but none of his fellow-officers seems to give a damn until he starts quoting Byron. Then they shoot him down like a dog. Even as a form of literary criticism, it seems drastic. The natives on the other hand remain generally calm. When the German colonel nervously threatens to exterminate the whole adult population of Talom, the heroine, an earnest girl, just looks at him sharply. "Why, that would be a terrible injustice," she says, and, not liking her attitude, they hustle her away to the officers' brothel.<sup>118</sup>

The characterizations of the Nazis seems to have been generally villainous with the exception of the one Gestapo man. The opponents of the villains are heroic allies.

Lewis Nichols raised the question as to why certain war plays, including Land of Fame, were folding:

The difficulty with a play such as "Land of Fame" and "The Moon Is Down," "Counterattack," "The Russian People" and others which were similar--is that they must compete with the newspapers and the radio.

. . . . .

This is also true of plays about the underground movements in Nazi-conquered countries and of plays about the guerilla fighters behind the lines. The newspapers have told their story well, and imagination, in fitting a character to each

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<sup>117</sup>Young, New Republic, 4 October 1943, p. 458.

<sup>118</sup>Woolcott Gibbs, New Yorker, 2 October 1943, p. 38.

unknown name, has set up a cast of players and a sequence of incidents that no play, in two hours on the stage could touch.<sup>119</sup>

### Storm Operation

There was a very brief appearance of a Nazi in Maxwell Anderson's Storm Operation<sup>120</sup> which opened January 11, 1944. The play was a dramatization of the American troops fighting in North Africa, and Anderson had gone there with the permission of the Army to get background material. Anderson had received the suggestion for the title, which was the code name for the invasion, from General Eisenhower.<sup>121</sup>

Storm Operation has only one subsidiary character who is a Nazi--a German prisoner of war named Corporal Hermann Geist. Geist gives only his name and rank. However, he is arrogant and tells his captors they were "fools to venture into the Mediterranean . . . for now we have the west coast and you will never get out." He also tells them they are filled with propaganda and are not educated. "When those who lead are military idiots, not much can be expected of the schwine [sic] who follow."<sup>122</sup> Geist was little more than a walk-on character, but he did reveal an adherence to Nazism. The character's only function, however, was to provide

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<sup>119</sup>Lewis Nichols, "Notes on the War Plays," New York Times, 3 October 1943, sec. 2, p. 1.

<sup>120</sup>Maxwell Anderson, Storm Operation (Washington, D.C.: Anderson House, 1944).

<sup>121</sup>Lewis Nichols, New York Times, 12 January 1944.

<sup>122</sup>Anderson, Storm Operation, p. 104.

background for the scene. There was no mention of the character by the critics.

Although Burns Mantle included the play as one of the best of 1943-44, it received a cool reception from the critics and ran only 23 performances. Most critics contrasted it with Anderson's The Eve of St. Mark, produced the previous season. The severest criticism came from Louis Kronenberger, who said "Storm Operation is not only an extremely bad play; it is also a staggeringly dull one."<sup>123</sup> Burton Rasco praised the drama particularly because "the soldiers talk and act like soldiers and not like pantywaists. . . ."<sup>124</sup>

#### Thank You, Svoboda

The next play with Nazi characters was Thank You, Svoboda by H. S. Kraft,<sup>125</sup> which was based on John Pen's novel You Can't Do That to Svoboda. The play opened March 1, 1944. Svoboda (played by Sam Jaffe) is a simple-minded Czechoslovakian railway porter. His manner of speech is very childlike. He explains his fear of drafts, "My mohmmy [sic] die from draft. If you keep doors and windows closed, you never sick. I never sick once."<sup>126</sup> He encounters difficulties when the Nazis take over his village. The soldiers loot the village and try to divert the attention of their

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<sup>123</sup>Louis Kronenberger, PM, 12 January 1944.

<sup>124</sup>Burton Rascoe, New York World-Telegram, 12 January 1944.

<sup>125</sup>H. S. Kraft, Thank You, Svoboda, typescript, Theatre Collection, New York Public Library.

<sup>126</sup>Ibid., Act 3, p. 2.

superiors from the looting by claiming someone had attempted to blow up a bridge. They interrogate an old retired Czech colonel and he dies. In the meantime, Svoboda's junk-dealer sweetheart, Mary, has given him a watch. A German soldier smashes it and Svoboda trounces him. He then signs with an "X" what he believes to be a complaint, but is, instead, a confession to having attempted to blow up the bridge.

Svoboda is sent to a concentration camp where he fairs very well. He comes out in a couple of months with new clothes and money he earned working for other prisoners. Svoboda's experiences in the prison camp are truly incredible. It seems unlikely he would possess the guile to survive in a concentration camp, let alone prosper in one. He explains to Mary that it was bad for the other "fellers" but he is used to it--"Poor feller and whip--they old friends."

Svoboda is released from the camp and discovers that the Germans have confiscated his savings account to pay for his prison time; he is angered and really does blow up the bridge. At least one critic noted the similarity of the story of Jaroslav Hasek's The Good Soldier Schweik.<sup>127</sup>

The first Nazi portrayed is Private Recht, who smashes Svoboda's watch. After Svoboda slams him against a wall, punches his nose, twists his arm, and steps on his rifle, Reicht jumps up and runs out. In the Second Act, two storm troopers arrive.

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<sup>127</sup>Burton Rascoe, New York World-Telegram, 2 March 1944.

Private Schmatz is described as aggressive and dominant and Private Langheld is weak "almost to the cry baby type of gangster."

Corporal Bauer is the Nazi who has tortured the old colonel to death. He is also the one who dupes Svoboda into signing a confession. Bauer is in on the looting, and Sgt. Kurtz speaks to him.

Kurtz

Don't stall. Plunder, Corporal, is the business of the state, not the individual. Remember that. Now what about it?

Bauer

It's in a bag in my room.

Kurtz

I like your frankness. Good. I expect a reasonable share of the proceeds. I am no pig, Corporal.<sup>128</sup>

The Nazis are not strongly delineated and their venality overrides their ideological beliefs. One critic did find the German soldiers "rather good because they are quietly, believably played and not the usual caricatures."<sup>129</sup> However, most of the critics saw them as "routine caricatures of German greed and deceit."<sup>130</sup> The Nazis are generalized villains and their brutality is referred to rather than shown. In spite of the torture death off-stage, they are not serious villains. It is true they are opposed by heroic allies--the Czechoslovakians. However, the overall impression is that they are bumbling incompetents. One critic said,

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<sup>128</sup>Kraft, Thank You, Svoboda, Act 2, scene 3, p. 28.

<sup>129</sup>John Chapman, New York Daily News, 2 March 1944.

<sup>130</sup>Willella Waldorf, New York Post, 2 March 1944.

Stage Nazis always carry a certain menace, but we've had more sinister groups than those that come to pillage this unnamed . . . town. Dim-witted Svoboda is more than a match for the lot of them. . . .<sup>131</sup>

And another noted, "Moronic menials don't go around manhandling invading German troops and live to laugh it off in cozy concentration camps."<sup>132</sup> Thank You, Svoboda was poorly received and closed after six performances.

### The Searching Wind

There was a brief portrayal of a German diplomat in Lillian Hellman's successful The Searching Wind<sup>133</sup> which opened April 12, 1944. The play covered a time span from 1922 to 1944 and related the story of three generations of a distinguished American family set in the context of world events. The cast included Dennis King as Alexander Hazen, an American Ambassador, Cornelia Otis Skinner as his wife, and Montgomery Clift as their son.

The second act begins with a flashback scene set in a cafe in Berlin in 1923 in which a riot against Jews is being conducted outdoors by members of the Friekorps.<sup>134</sup> However, there are no Nazis in the scene.

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<sup>131</sup>Ward Morehouse, New York Sun, 2 March 1944.

<sup>132</sup>Robert Garland, New York Journal-American, 2 March 1944.

<sup>133</sup>Lillian Hellman: The Collected Plays (Boston: Little Brown and Company, 1972).

<sup>134</sup>"Free corps--armed bands, principally composed of ex-servicemen excluded from the Reichswehr by the limiting terms of the Versailles Treaty, that sprang up throughout Germany after the war." Fest, The Faces of the Third Reich, p. 20n.



The next scene in the play, also a flashback, takes place in the Hotel Meurice, Paris, in September 1938, just preceding the Munich agreement. A German diplomat, Count Max von Stammer comes to see the American Ambassador, Alex Hazen. Von Stammer's purpose in calling on Hazen is to try to persuade him to urge Washington not to interfere with the European situation: "we would like to know that your government will not bring pressure on England or France to make war with us."

In his brief appearance, von Stammer refers to several topics concerning Nazism and the Nazis' political position. He makes a humorous reply to Hazen's comment that there are social vogues--homosexuals one year, Nazis the next. He says, "And one year they combine both." He tells Hazen that Hitler wants the Sudetenland and insists that those who oppose his wish are the ones who threaten war. He says, unofficially, that if given cooperation, Germany might "rid Europe of the menace of Russia." He makes a reference to the importance of childhood and comments that he has read Freud, "the Jewish Viennese psychiatric physician." The remark is intended to show he is cosmopolitan. He makes a clear statement about his own desires as he leaves:

Peace may come this year, but war will come another. Naturally, I speak this afternoon as if I thought it wise to be on the side of my country. But I do not always think that. And I do not much care. In two months I buy a house in Switzerland. And a briefcase. I have had a career of sorts and I might like to write about it.<sup>135</sup>

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<sup>135</sup>Hellman, The Collected Plays, p. 311.

The character is very minor and the Nazism portrayed is perfunctory for a diplomat. There is the added implication that even those beliefs may not be sincere. The critics commented on the excellent portrayal of von Stammer:

Arnold Korff gives a marvelous performance as a Nazi diplomat at the time Germany was going its way unchecked, and this scene which he plays with the American Ambassador who is about to report indecisively to his country, is one of the play's strongest.<sup>136</sup>

The brief portrayal was different from past portrayals of Nazi officials both in the context of time and place and in the competency of the official. Von Stammer was a wily diplomat rather than an ideologically rigid one.

The play was quite well received in a season which was described as "funny, beautiful, cheap, melodious, dirty" and "fifth-rate" but without worthwhile "sober thought or thought on current events. . . ."<sup>137</sup> However, most critics made the reservation that it was not as good as Miss Hellman's previous work. The play was the second most successful of this period (after Tomorrow the World) and ran 318 performances.

#### The Day Will Come

There was a portrayal of Hitler on Broadway in the fall of 1944. The Day Will Come<sup>138</sup> by Leo Birinski opened September 7,

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<sup>136</sup>Ward Morehouse, New York Sun, 13 April 1944.

<sup>137</sup>John Chapman, New York News, 13 April 1944.

<sup>138</sup>Script not available to the writer. Synopsis of play and comments from Best Plays and reviews.

1944. Birinski was a European dramatist who had been in Hollywood since 1927.<sup>139</sup> A press release heralded the play as the first time Hitler had appeared on the living stage. This was not quite accurate, since portrayals of Hitler had occurred in Dimitrov (off-Broadway) and Pins and Needles, in addition to the representations of Hitler in Judgment Day and Waltz in Goosestep.

The Day Will Come takes place in a Russian village which is evacuated and burned, leaving only Arrum Dovid, the Jewish patriarch. Dovid has survived many pogroms and regards the invasion as an interruption of his observance of the Sabbath. He is not disturbed when his home is used as the German's headquarters. The generals consider Hitler "a nincompoop and a superstitious fool and don't care who knows it."<sup>140</sup> Intrigued by Dovid, they decide to pass him off as the Wandering Jew and use him to try to dissuade Hitler from his mad attempt to take Moscow in the winter. They arrange for the two to confront each other, but Hitler is angered and orders Dovid shot. However, the bullets do not kill Dovid and he goes away while Hitler cowers in terror.

There was no indication in the reviews that the generals and Hitler reflected specific Nazi traits. One critic said, "The portraits of most of the Germans are orthodox; they click their heels--and stab one another in the back."<sup>141</sup> Another noted that

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<sup>139</sup>The Day Will Come, clipping, Theatre Collection, New York Public Library.

<sup>140</sup>Wilella Waldorf, New York Post, 8 September 1944.

<sup>141</sup>Lewis Nichols, New York Times, 8 September 1944.

"Mr. Birinski wants to keep things light, so the play is a comedy a good part of the way, in spite of the war and Hitler. . . ."142

When the Jew and Hitler meet, they engage in dialectical arguments in which the Jew says that,

. . . Hitler is the great benefactor of the Jews because his insane slaughter of defenseless members of the race has "liberated the Jews from the idea of their Jewishness" and has united them with all the rest of humane mankind in a determination to wipe Hitlerism and the Germanic idea of racial superiority from the face of the earth.143

Critics' responses to Brandon Peters' characterization of Hitler varied, but most were complimentary or suggested it was a difficult and thankless job. Ward Morehouse said:

Brandon Peters plays Hitler straight and rather gets away with a difficult job. He looks the part of the Fuehrer and pictures him as a violent and bombastic egomaniac. Also, as a creature of fright and terror.144

And George Freedley said that while he found Peters "too masculine for Hitler" he is "positively uncanny in the way he catches the illness, softness, demonical fury and hysteria of the German."145

Burton Rascoe gave an analysis of the difficulty of portraying Hitler:

Hitler is a madman's caricature of a man in his own person. Therefore, any attempt by an actor to characterize or caricature him on the stage is bound to seem inept, amateurish,

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<sup>142</sup>Arthur Pollock, Brooklyn Eagle, 8 September 1944.

<sup>143</sup>Burton Rascoe, New York World-Telegram, 8 September 1944.

<sup>144</sup>Ward Morehouse, New York Sun, 8 September 1944.

<sup>145</sup>George Freedley, New York Morning Telegraph, 9 September 1944.

and a poor likeness--the mustache but nothing else, none of the paranoic essence of that human monstrosity.

Brandon Peters did as well as he could in the thankless role, but he was licked from the start. You simply can't believe that any actor on the stage is Hitler.<sup>146</sup>

At least two of the critics found the play confusing, describing it as "a mixture of realistic drama, farce, and allegory"<sup>147</sup> and "a stage jigsaw puzzle put together all wrong."<sup>148</sup> One review said the play was "several cuts above most of the new plays . . . and a good deal better than the great majority that have dealt with Hitler and his brood."<sup>149</sup> However, the majority were inclined to the view that the play was "a belated act of noble faith and sentiment rather than a meritorious drama, or indeed an acceptable piece of theatrics."<sup>150</sup> The Day Will Come closed after 20 performances.

#### Common Ground

The last play in the war period with Nazi characters was Common Ground<sup>151</sup> by Edward Chodorov, which opened April 25, 1945, shortly before the German High Command surrendered (May 7), A U.S.O. unit of entertainers crash in a plane near Naples before the Allies

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<sup>146</sup>Burton Rascoe, New York World-Telegram, 8 September 1944.

<sup>147</sup>Wilella Waldorf, New York Post, 8 September 1944.

<sup>148</sup>Howard Barnes, New York Herald Tribune, 8 September 1944.

<sup>149</sup>Arthur Pollock, Brooklyn Eagle, 8 September 1944.

<sup>150</sup>Burton Rascoe, New York World-Telegram, 8 September 1944.

<sup>151</sup>Edward Chodorov, Common Ground (New York: Samuel French, 1946).

had gotten there. They fall into the hands of a Nazi, Colonel Hofer, who offers all but one of them the choice of entertaining Nazis with anti-American propaganda or being shot. The exception is Buzz Bernard, an American Jew, who will be sent to a concentration camp in any case. The entertainers all happen to have foreign-born parents--German, Italian, and Irish. They debate the merits of the case and decide they would rather die as patriots than live as traitors.

There are two Nazis in the play, Colonel Hofer and an American journalist named Ted Williamson. Hofer is a rather standard Nazi, but Williamson is quite unusual. Williamson is a thirty-five-year old American newspaperman who has gone over to the Nazis. He is portrayed as rabidly anti-Semitic and racist. As he meets the troupe, he addresses Buzz, whom he had known before:

(Softly) It's nice having you here, Jew-boy! I don't know any kike in show business I'd rather see--You didn't have much time for me that night in Chicago. . . . (Buzz is motionless, looking at him.) But we've got lots of time now. . . . Buzz Bernard! Get funny now, you lousy kike! (He is shouting.) Somebody cut your tongue out? . . . I've been having dreams about this! Oh, we're going to have lots of fun--you and me! Lots of fun!<sup>152</sup>

Williamson reveals that he was in Cairo December 7, 1941, and took the first plane to Berlin and has been making radio broadcasts for the Nazis ever since. He refers to the Italians as "wops." He inquires about his "Jew-pal, Darryl Zanuck" and complains the Jews are never at the front. He tells Nick, "You're a real American, aren't you? And I'm a Nazi." Then he launches

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<sup>152</sup>Chodorov, Common Ground, pp. 26-27.

into a tirade against America. He says "Adolph" made a mistake fighting in Europe. He should have started in America--"We're just lousy with all kinds of animals that look different, smell different--and hate each other at the bottom."

Williamson returns briefly in one other scene. He is drunk, grinning, and ranting.

. . . You're a Wop! You're a Mick! You're a Dutchman! I'm an American! You're a nigger! You're a spic, you're a spink, you stink--! . . . Lousy Jew-dealers, giving our dough to the lousy frogs, and the Finns and the Poles--and the lousy Reds! . . . Look out for the Communists! Look out for the lousy unions! . . . We the Christians! Christians only! Buy Gentile! Think Gentile! Niggers and Jews keep out! Look out for the Catholics! . . . The good old free press--that'll kill any soneofabitch [sic] who really tries to stop it! Kill any soneofabitch who thinks he's Abe Lincoln. . . .<sup>153</sup>

His catalog of hatreds nearly covers the spectrum of Nazism.

Although he is not a developed character, Williamson's racial tirades come close to the concept of racism becoming a totalizing and reflexive myth.<sup>154</sup> Williamson seems to have internalized the racism to the point where it provides answers to all questions and substitutes a mythical reality for an objective reality. Williamson is a full-blown villain, a bully and a traitor.

Paul McGrath received some praise for his acting of Ted Williamson. However, the critics were generally negative about the character. One said Williamson was an "utterly unbelievable character . . . who delivers a tirade against America that is only a paraphrase of Hitler's paranoid utterances in 'Mein Kampf.'"<sup>155</sup>

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<sup>153</sup>Ibid., p. 61.

<sup>154</sup>See view of Dietrich Orlow, Chapter II, p. 20.

<sup>155</sup>Burton Rascoe, New York World-Telegram, 26 April 1945.

Colonel Hofer has two brief appearances. In the first he orders the troupe to perform under very trying circumstances. He is arrogant and abusive. One of the entertainers, Alan, says "No, thank you" to an offer of champagne. Hofer replies, "Yes, do. Here!" and he flings the champagne into his face. In the next scene, the troupe is performing for him, and he offers them a chance to tour for the Axis armies and disseminate propaganda. He asks if there are any questions, and Alan speaks.

Alan  
Doesn't the fact that we're American citizens and carry  
identification from the army--

Hofer  
Identification? Yes? Your Army! We identify you!--  
Garbage-can Americans! Traitor German! Traitor Italian!  
Traitor Irishwoman!--and Jew!--Any more questions?<sup>156</sup>

Because of the plot of the play, Hofer's anti-Americanism is more pronounced than in the other Nazis, but other than that he is not developed as a Nazi.

The critics had mixed responses to Colonel Hofer.<sup>157</sup> One saw Hofer as a "suave, champagne-drinking, cold-blooded German colonel."<sup>158</sup> Another saw him as "a caricature . . . who drank champagne and sneered. . . ."<sup>159</sup>

The opponents of the Nazis are very acceptable heroes. They represent a cross-section of American immigrants, second

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<sup>156</sup>Chodorov, Common Ground, p. 46.

<sup>157</sup>Colonel Hofer was played by Peter von Zerneck, who had previously appeared as a Nazi in Land of Fame, September 21, 1943.

<sup>158</sup>John Chapman, New York News, 26 April 1945.

<sup>159</sup>Richard P. Cooks, Wall Street Journal, 26 April 1945.





generation, and they are given the opportunity to decide to die. However, in an article in Commentary, Louis Kronenberger noted that Buzz Bernard, the Jew in the play, was not exemplary. He "has a good deal about him of the show-off and the wise-cracker" and is the type that more genteel Jews "are given to blush over." In addition, Buzz is not given a chance to make a moral decision but is immediately condemned to a concentration camp.<sup>160</sup>

Common Ground was poorly received by the critics and ran only 61 performances. The common criticism was that it was "too undramatic, too long-winded"<sup>161</sup> and "too soap boxy."<sup>162</sup>

There are two aspects to the play concerning audience response and audience knowledge which should be noted. First, Louis Kronenberger, in the article cited above, described the character Ted Williamson as a psychopathic Jew-hater. He said Williamson's remarks felt like a kick in the belly for Jews in the audience. And he commented that "Broadway rarely goes in for such body blows, which is why its social theatre lags so far behind even the newspaper in its ability to rouse or even to reveal."<sup>163</sup> Second, when Chodorov's play opened, a degree of audience innocence concerning Nazism had vanished. In the play, Buzz, the American Jew, says,

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<sup>160</sup>Louis Kronenberger, "The Decline of the Theatre," Commentary, November 1945, p. 48.

<sup>161</sup>Louis Kronenberger, PM (New York), 26 April 1945.

<sup>162</sup>Robert Coleman, New York Daily Mirror, 26 April 1945.

<sup>163</sup>Kronenberger, "The Decline of the Theatre," p. 48.

. . . when I was having lunch with that fellow, the English correspondent who saw the death camp in Poland--where the Germans took the shoes off the children, and stacked them up neatly, according to size, before they--One camp, he said--a million and a half people--<sup>164</sup>

The audience did not have to accept Buzz's word, since the nation was already seeing "Newsreels with their pictures of corpses piled high in Belsen concentration camp. . . ." <sup>163</sup> The newsreels of the brutalities "served to bring into focus the Hitler era which had finally been expunged." <sup>166</sup>

### Conclusion

This period produced a third distinct group of Nazis on the stage--occupation troops. In the preceding period, occupation troops were portrayed in only one play--Candle in the Wind. If the foreign plays on Broadway with Nazis were included, occupation troops would be the overwhelming impression of Nazi portrayals. Still, five of the nine plays written by Americans were set in occupied countries and portrayed Germans occupation troops: The Moon Is Down (Norway), The Barber Had Two Sons (Norway), Land of Fame (Greece), Thank you, Svoboda, (Czechoslovakia) and The Day Will Come (Russia). The rest of the portrayals included a young Nazi boy, an American Nazi, a diplomat, and a prisoner of war. A new type of Nazi appeared in this period--the collaborator. There were two such portrayals--George Corell in The Moon Is Down and Ted Williamson in Common Ground.

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<sup>164</sup>Chodorov, Common Ground, pp. 67-68.

<sup>165</sup>Lingeman, Don't You Know There's a War On?, p. 434.

<sup>166</sup>Bosley Crowther, "For the Offensive," New York Times, 3 June 1945, sec. 2, p. 1.



There was very little delineation of the Nazis in this period. The two exceptions were Common Ground and Tomorrow the World. Ted Williamson (Common Ground) revealed a strong racism and the only totalizing and reflexive anti-Semitism portrayed up to that time. Emil Bruckner (Tomorrow the World) revealed nearly the entire gamut of Nazi ideology and was the most completely delineated Nazi in the period.

Most of the plays contained Nazis who were villains. The clear exception is the diplomat in The Searching Wind. The villainous portrayals were very generalized and contained few specifically Nazi traits. In the preceding period several Nazis were converted away from Nazism. This period contained two such conversions--Emil Bruckner in Tomorrow the World and the Gestapo officer in Land of Fame who is repulsed by Nazi theories and killed by his fellow officers.

For the most part, the plays in this period, like those in the last, continued to avoid the depiction of violence. The major exception was The Barber Had Two Sons, which showed Nazis killed on stage.

The Nazis were on their own territory in only one of the plays, Common Ground, where the Colonel and American Nazi are an Axis territory (Italy). Since most of the Nazis were occupiers, they were on contested ground and vulnerable to varying degrees. The rest of the Nazis were off their own territory.



The opponents of the Nazis were mainly heroic Allies, but there were Americans opposing the Nazis in Tomorrow the World, Common Ground, and Storm Operation.

Most of the plays with Nazis in this period were unsuccessful. Taken as a whole, they were considerably less successful than those in the preceding period, which had included more plays by major playwrights. The Searching Wind was successful but concerned appeasement rather than Nazism. The major exception was Tomorrow the World.

It would have been difficult to predict the successful presentation of the twelve-year-old Nazi in Tomorrow the World. However, in retrospect the appeal seems clearer. The play opened when the Axis had begun to lose the war. In Tomorrow the World, Nazism is literally cut down to size and, further, placed in enemy territory. Regardless of Emil's viciousness, he doesn't stand a chance. Further, he is not defeated by force, but is converted (like several Nazis in the preceding period). The play seemed to fit the "tone" of the war. Robert Sherwood was Director of the Overseas Division of the Office of War Information. In January, 1943, he sent out a long-range directive which said, in part:

Our principal duty is to convince the people of the world of the overwhelming power and incontestable good faith of the U.S.A. . . . We are a peace-loving people. We do not start fights, but we have a habit of finishing them. We don't like to be pushed around and we do not want to push anybody else around; what is more, we don't like anyone else to be pushed around by a bully.<sup>167</sup>

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<sup>167</sup>Robert Sherwood quoted in an article by Jack Hammersmith, "The U.S. Office of War Information (OWI) and the Polish Question, 1943-1945," The Polish Review, 19 (1974), pp. 67-76.

The statement is very like a generalized comment on the plot of Tomorrow the World.

During America's involvement in World War II, the Nazi on Broadway, except for one little boy, was not particularly engaging. Most of the other Nazis in this period were generalized villains; they were the wartime enemy of the United States and her allies and not a menace that needed to be clarified.



## CHAPTER VI

### THE PORTRAYAL OF NAZIS MAY, 1945 - DECEMBER, 1970

The postwar period is the least cohesive and most deverse period in this study in terms of American attitudes toward Nazis. This period contains ten plays spread over twenty-five years, and the attitudes toward the Nazis in that time ranged from hatred to indifference.

World War II has been called, from the American viewpoint, "the perfect war." It was accepted as "a just and necessary act." It was also a "perfect war" because the civilian population was not harmed."<sup>1</sup> The war became increasingly justified as Nazi concentration camps fell into Allied hands. American passions against Germany and Japan were so stirred up in the final year of war that American officials reflected them. Tom Connally, Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, referred to the "two savage and brutal enemies" and said it was "the duty of civilization to crush these monsters."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Perrett, Days of Sadness, Years of Triumph, p. 441.

<sup>2</sup>Lisle A. Rose, Dubious Victory: The United States and The End of World War II (Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1973), p. 59.



Germany surrendered May 7, 1945, and President Truman applauded "the abject surrender of the Nazi barbarians."<sup>3</sup> In the same month, Joseph Pulitzer, editor of the St. Louis Post-Dispatch, addressed the Society for the Prevention of World War III and "urged the shooting of 1,500,000 Nazis." Representative Dewey Short demanded mass executions of the SS men and the OKW (High Command of the Armed Forces).<sup>4</sup> Alfred Grosser said in Germany in Our Time,

It was common ground that the chief Nazi leaders should be punished; but, after that, the victors took different views of what constituted the essence of Nazism and, therefore, of how best to eradicate it.<sup>5</sup>

Grosser said the British viewed Nazism as a disease in the body politic and saw a need to eradicate the germs. The French saw Hitler as a direct development from Bismarck and saw a need to destroy Prussian-German unity. The Americans were split between the British and French positions, and the Russians considered Nazism to be a result of Germany's social structure and, above all, the distribution of economic power.

American attitudes toward the enemy changed after World War II. Hatred mellowed, but not immediately. In the last year of the war, some ten to fifteen per cent of Americans said the Germans and Japanese populations should be exterminated.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Hilberg, Destruction of the European Jews, p. 691.

<sup>5</sup>Alfred Grosser, Germany in Our Time: A Political History of the Postwar Years (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1971), p. 36.

<sup>6</sup>Mueller, War, Presidents and Public Opinion, p. 173.

The atomic bombing of Japan met with strong approval. In September, 1945, only 5% of Americans felt the atomic bomb should not have been used, and 23% felt as many atomic bombs as possible should have been quickly used before Japan could surrender.<sup>7</sup>

A poll was taken in 1943 and again in March, 1946, which asked whether, if the enemy were starving after the war (or at the present time), they should be sold food, given food, or allowed to starve. A substantial minority preferred to see them starve. Attitudes were less harsh in 1946 than in 1943 on the starvation column, but the mellowing was small. The attitude toward Japan was harsher in 1943, but attitudes were substantially more similar in 1946, probably due to the revelations about the German death camps.<sup>8</sup>

The Nuremberg trials were held from November, 1945, to October, 1946. Few opposed the trials. Robert Hutchins was almost alone among prominent liberals in asking for justice and mercy.<sup>9</sup> Three of the plays in this period were produced by the end of 1946: The Assassin, The French Touch, and Temper the Wind.

The world situation changed rapidly and attention was diverted from past enemies. One diversion was the atomic age, which began on a New Mexico desert July 16, 1945, and the whole structure of international politics had become obsolescent on August 6, 1945, with the dropping of the first atomic bomb at Hiroshima. Total

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<sup>7</sup>Mueller, War, Presidents and Public Opinion, p. 172.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., p. 173.

<sup>9</sup>Perrett, Days of Sadness, Years of Triumph, p. 421.

world war had abolished itself as a practical instrument of policy.<sup>10</sup> Another diversion was a new enemy. The Soviet Union had been admired as an ally, but the suspicion of Communism had not diminished during the war. "Now that Fascism had been toppled, Communism slipped easily into its place in the popular mind as the menace to the world."<sup>11</sup> The atomic bomb and the Soviet Union were related topics. In Dubious Victory, Lisle A Rose said the atomic bomb created "a sudden imbalance of military power" and had also created "an almost unbridgeable chasm between East and West."<sup>12</sup>

The cold war became a real war in Korea in June, 1950. And Joseph McCarthy started his campaign against Communism in 1950. The focus of the decade was Communism. There was a successful dramatization of the horrors of Communism early in the decade. It was Sidney Kingsley's adaptation of Arthur Koestler's Darkness at Noon, which opened January 13, 1951, and ran 186 performances. There were only three plays with Nazi characters in the decade: Stalag 17, Fragile Fox, and The Hidden River. The first play treated the subject lightly, and the latter two contained very minor portrayals of Nazis.

The sixties were shaken by many events: the continuing reaction to Sputnik, launched in 1957, the civil rights movement, assassinations, a man on the moon, and, of course, the war in

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<sup>10</sup>Manchester, The Glory and the Dream, 1:697-698.

<sup>11</sup>Perrett, Days of Sadness, Years of Triumph, p. 423.

<sup>12</sup>Rose, Dubious Victory, pp. 365-368.

Vietnam. There was also a degree of renewed interest in Nazism, and at least three events contributed to it.

First, there was a Playhouse 90 television play in 1959 called Judgment at Nuremberg, written by Abby Mann.<sup>13</sup> The successful television production was made into a movie in 1961. Maximillian Schell won an Academy Award for his portrayal of a defense attorney in the film. Second, Adolph Eichman was abducted from Argentine in 1961, tried in 1961, and executed in 1962. The event received world-wide attention. Third, a spectacular war crimes trial opened December 20, 1963, in Frankfurt, West Germany, and lasted twenty months. The trial resulted in the conviction of the majority of the twenty-two defendants who had been concerned with the operation of Auschwitz.

While there was a degree of renewed interest in Nazism per se, it should be noted that there was a marked change in attitudes toward World War II enemies.

Virtually all the negative qualities attributed to the enemy peoples in a 1942 poll were selected far less frequently in the 1960's, and most of the positive qualities gained noticeably in popularity.<sup>14</sup>

Concomitant with the Cold War, a somewhat reverse pattern occurred with the Russian image. Of particular interest to this study are the following changes toward Germans:

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<sup>13</sup>In the television production, an American judge confronts a German jurist and asks "How in the name of God can you ask me to understand the extermination of men, women, and children in--?" His lips moved soundlessly on the words "gas ovens." "It had been cut at the insistence of Playhouse 90's sponsor, the American Gas Association." Manchester, The Glory and the Dream, 1:728-729.

<sup>14</sup>Mueller, War, Presidents, and Public Opinion, p. 175.

	<u>1942</u>	<u>1961</u>	<u>1966</u>
Warlike	67	20	16
Cruel	57	13	10
Treacherous	42	9	7
Arrogant	31	16	16
Brave	30	24	19

There was relatively little change throughout for the words hard-working, intelligent, progressive, and practical.<sup>15</sup>

There were four plays with Nazis written by Americans on Broadway in the 1960's. The Wall was produced in 1960. Incident at Vichy and Postmark Zero were produced in the 1964 and 1965 seasons. And the final play of the period was Happy Birthday, Wanda June, produced in 1970. In the last half of the decade there was also a considerable number of foreign plays dealing with Nazism, including The Deputy, The Condemned of Altona, The Investigation, and The Man in the Glass Booth.

Adolph Hitler had died April 30, 1945, shortly before Germany surrendered. There was something about his death which had diminished Nazism as a subject of dramatic interest. Joachim Fest said in Hitler:

Almost without transition, virtually from one moment to the next, Nazism vanished after the death of Hitler and the surrender. It was as if National Socialism had been nothing but the motion, the state of intoxication and the catastrophe it had caused. It is not accidental that in the contemporary accounts dating from the spring of 1945 certain phrases crop up repeatedly--to the effect that a "spell" had been broken, a "phantasmagoria" shattered. Such language borrowed from

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<sup>15</sup>Ibid., p. 276.

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the sphere of magic conveys the peculiarly unreal nature of the regime and the abruptness of its end.<sup>16</sup>

Nazism and Nazi characters did not vanish in the post-war period, but the subject did not entice many American playwrights.

Two plays of this period are stressed, Incident at Vichy because of Arthur Miller's importance, and Stalag 17 because of its popular success. Considerable attention is also given to The Wall because it is the only play dealing with the Warsaw ghetto and also had a moderately successful run.

### The Assassin

The first post-war play with Nazi characters was The Assassin<sup>17</sup> by Irwin Shaw<sup>18</sup> which opened October 17, 1945. The play was based on the "Darlan Affair"--the assassination of the Commander-in-Chief of the French Navy, Admiral Jean Darlan, on Christmas Eve, 1942. In 1940, Darlan had not supported de Gaulle or Britain, but was a collaborator with the pro-Nazi Vichy Government which, at that time, was, in fact, recognized by the United States. Later, Darlan played both sides and entered into a deal with Eisenhower in which Darlan agreed not to oppose the allied invasion of Africa if the French could retain their control there. The agreement caused a furor in the United States and Britain. Until the Casablanca Conference calling for unconditional Surrender of the

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<sup>16</sup>Fest, Hitler, p. 753.

<sup>17</sup>Irwin Shaw, The Assassin (New York: Random House, 1946).

<sup>18</sup>Shaw had treated Nazism symbolically much earlier in The Gentle People (1939).

Axis powers, the Darlan Affair left suspicion that the United States might enter a policy of appeasement.<sup>19</sup>

The Assassin had a complex plot. The Americans move into Africa, but the Vichy French under Darlan retain control. A young royalist, Robert De Mauny, meets an Underground group, which includes a Communist and Jews, and is impressed by them. In the meantime, a member of Darlan's staff plans his assassination and enlists De Mauny as the assassin. De Mauny is promised that a dying man will substitute for him when he is to be executed for the deed. However, he is double-crossed and is executed.

Much of the play is concerned with the opposition Underground, and the characters who can be considered Nazis are not detailed characterizations.

Admiral Marcel Vespéry (Darlan) is depicted as a pro-Nazi Frenchman willing to kill Frenchmen. He wants to lead France and save the Germans from the Russians. A general asks Vespéry whether they should execute one hundred and seventy Resistance prisoners because he is concerned about British and French opinion. Vespéry replies, "And don't bother about those jailbirds, we'll kill more than one hundred and seventy-seven Frenchmen before this is over."<sup>20</sup> Shaw's characterizations of Vespéry and those around him were well described by Robert Coleman:

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<sup>19</sup>Hoyle, A World in Flames, pp. 167, 172; Arnold-Forster, The World at War, pp. 95, 96, 111.

<sup>20</sup>Shaw, The Assassin, p. 72.

. . . Shaw paints him a thorough scoundrel, ambitious and unscrupulous, shrewd and slippery. And the officers immediately surrounding him are limned with the same colors. They are as knavish, rascally, double-crossing a lot as ever wore uniforms on stage.<sup>21</sup>

Except for his pro-German stance, however, Vespary is not strongly defined as a Nazi.

Victor Malassis is a villainous secret policeman who caught the attention of most of the critics. He beats a Jew brutally (off stage) and acts on behalf of the Vichy government, but he is not characterized specifically as a Nazi. One critic said, "Harold Huber, as a wily, scheming, treacherous plain clothes man, is the best of the co-players."<sup>22</sup> Another said the portrayal was "a masterpiece of villainy. . . ."<sup>23</sup>

There is a German officer, Colonel Von Kohl,<sup>24</sup> who appears in a scene with the pro-Vichy French generals. He gives a fascist salute and confers with Haynes, an American journalist. He wants to know if the Americans will "make a deal" if they win. Von Kohl is worried because he has "said some harsh things about America, about democracy . . ." but Haynes assures him they'll do "business" with him. Haynes tells Von Kohl to play "the old sea dog," to tell them he's now "for law and order" and that he "knew they were coming

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<sup>21</sup>Robert Coleman, New York Daily Mirror, 18 October 1945.

<sup>22</sup>Ward Morehouse, New York Sun, 18 October 1945.

<sup>23</sup>Robert Coleman, New York Daily Mirror, 18 October 1945.

<sup>24</sup>Von Kohl was played by William Malten, who had also appeared as a German salesman in Thank You, Svoboda (1944) and as Corporal Schultz in Candle in the Wind (1941).

all along."<sup>25</sup> The portrayal is brief, but it does indicate Von Kohl has little desire to die for Nazism, whatever his other unstated beliefs may be.

The heroic opposition to the pro-Nazi characters are members of the Underground and include the young royalist, a Communist, and Jews. Their leader is Andre Vauquim (played by Karl Malden), a moderate who believes in neither the Monarchists or the Communists as an answer to Nazism. Vauquim excepted, the group would probably have had mixed appeal as acceptable heroes. Vauquim himself says, "We live in a confused age, and are saved by confused heroes."<sup>26</sup>

Lewis Nichols in the New York Times said, "For his intention, that of telling a bit of recent history with its political and social ramifications, Mr. Shaw deserves full credit," but he added that it was "not a good play."<sup>27</sup> However, most of the critics felt the play had come too late to have popular appeal. One critic said, "Darlan was assassinated in 1942. A lot of war and water has flowed under the bridge since."<sup>28</sup> Louis Kronenberger also thought the play had lost "any acute timeliness." But he noted that historical perspective could offer the distinct advantage of enlarging the meaning, a challenge which he felt Shaw had not met.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>25</sup>Shaw, The Assassin, p. 42.

<sup>26</sup>Wilella Waldorf, New York Post, 18 October 1945.

<sup>27</sup>Lewis Nichols, New York Times, 18 October 1945.

<sup>28</sup>Robert Coleman, New York Daily Mirror, 18 October 1945.

<sup>29</sup>Louis Kronenberger, PM (New York), 18 October 1945.

Some of the harshest criticism stated that Shaw had "attempted to contrive a Casablanca with political overtones" and that the "scenario sounds more like the balloons in a ten-cent movie comic book than it does, even, a movie."<sup>30</sup> Richard Watts, Jr., offered a comment on the critics' responses to The Assassin. He said the play "was by no means everything to be hoped for from such a skillful writer, but it had dignity in several fine scenes." He added:

Yet it was set upon by the reviewers as if the author had committed some outrage, one of them even making the remarkable suggestion that he had libeled the Vichyites. I don't blame Mr. Shaw for getting a bit angry in his introduction to the published version of the play.<sup>31</sup>

Although the play had been produced successfully in London, the New York production ran only 13 performances.

### The French Touch

There was another play with Nazis in the 1945-46 season. It was a comedy called The French Touch<sup>32</sup> by Joseph Fields and Jerome Chodorov, which opened December 8, 1945. A popular Parisian actor, Roublard (Ruby), and his third wife are living in his theatre under the German occupation. Felix Von Brenner, the Nazi Minister of Culture for France, wants Ruby to write and produce a propaganda play showing the French and Germans living together in harmony. Brenner's mistress, Jacqueline, is Ruby's first wife. Ruby decides

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<sup>30</sup>John Chapman, New York News, 18 October 1945.

<sup>31</sup>Richard Watts, Jr., "Postwar Broadway," American Scholar, October 1946.

<sup>32</sup>Joseph Fields and Jerome Chodorov, The French Touch (New York: Dramatists Play Service, Inc., 1973).

to do the play with a surprise patriotic ending, after which he would shoot the Commandant of Paris. All three of Ruby's wives end up in the play and create farcical rehearsal scenes. Ruby and Brenner argue over Jacqueline, Ruby recites the secret ending, and shoots Brenner. Brenner's body is hidden and the troupe prepares to open the play as they had planned. The audience is left to conjecture that Ruby will proceed to kill the Commandant of Paris.

Brenner is the only Nazi in the play who is delineated. He is described as "not the smoothly vicious Gestapo agent--worse, he is a simple, stupidly vicious German civil servant with a sentimental and romantic Nazi point of view of Paris."<sup>33</sup> However, there is little in the play that stresses Brenner's viciousness. He is usually pleasant unless opposed. He responds to several cutting remarks about himself and his mistress, Jacqueline, with such verbal responses as "How dare you!" but not with violence.

Nazi menace is indicated when Brenner tells Ruby that if he fails to cooperate, he "will be sent to the fatherland to work with his hands." A short time later Ruby and Jacqueline plot the treasonous performance. Jacqueline tells Ruby he might become a national hero.

Ruby  
Yes! There I am--a hero--kneeling in the cold, gray dawn--  
before an empty basket--then the dull thud of my head,  
filling it up.

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<sup>33</sup>Ibid., p. 10.

Jacqueline

Nonsense! They won't decapitate you--no matter how much you would like the center of the stage.

Ruby

They can't do less--not to a man of my reputation.

Jacqueline

The Nazis save those for important people. . . . No. No! You'd wind up on the outskirts of Warsaw, mixing cement.

Ruby:

Then I'll mix cement--but they won't get a play out of me!  
 . . .<sup>34</sup>

When the actors do refuse to perform, they are jailed by Brenner and they change their minds. Ruby asks Brenner what he did to them, and he says "Nothing! . . . They are perfectly fine--."

Ruby queries him further about whether they had to be thrown in jail and Brenner says, "No. But it was a nice emphatic touch."<sup>35</sup>

Later, when Ruby asks an actor what they have done to him, he says, "Take a guess, you pig!"<sup>36</sup> There is no further clarification of what happened. However, the secret persuasion does not seem menacing because while Brenner is called a Nazi, he is really a relatively mild and somewhat humorous stage villain.

John Wengraf's performance of Felix von Brenner was noted and praised by most of the critics. One critic commented "Nazi villains have become stock figures in our theatre and Wengraf's characterization is in the accepted tradition, but he reveals

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<sup>34</sup>Ibid., p. 20.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid., p. 45.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid., p. 47.





himself, as he did in Maxwell Anderson's Candle in the Wind<sup>37</sup> as an actor of skill and fluency."<sup>38</sup>

There was one other Nazi in the play, a subsidiary character named Schwartz<sup>39</sup> who was an aide to Brenner. The character had only several perfunctory lines.

The French Touch was panned by most of the critics. Several of the critics noted that the play was "altogether ambiguous"<sup>40</sup> and tried to tell "several stories."<sup>41</sup> One critic elaborated the point,

. . . the authors never seemed to make up their minds whether they were writing a comedy poking fun at the theatre and its hams, an old-fashioned French farce full of amor boulevardiers, wives and mistresses, or an anti-Nazi melodrama complete with guns and the Gestapo.<sup>42</sup>

Most of the other critics were equally negative and The French Touch closed after 33 performances.

#### Temper the Wind

The first portrayals of Nazis in a postwar setting were in Temper the Wind<sup>43</sup> by Edward Mabley and Leonard Mins. The play was

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<sup>37</sup>John Wengraf had played the Nazi Colonel Erfurt in Candle in the Wind (1941).

<sup>38</sup>Ward Morehouse, New York Sun, 10 December 1945.

<sup>39</sup>Schwartz was played by William Malten who had previously played German roles in Candle in the Wind (1941), Thank You, Svoboda (1944), and The Assassin (1945).

<sup>40</sup>Howard Barnes, New York Herald-Tribune, 10 December 1945.

<sup>41</sup>Lewis Nichols, New York Times, 10 December 1945.

<sup>42</sup>Willella Waldorf, New York Post, 10 December 1945.

<sup>43</sup>Edward Mabley and Leonard Mins, Temper the Wind, Transcript, Theatre Collection, New York Public Library.



produced December 27, 1946.<sup>44</sup> An American Lieutenant Colonel, Richard Woodruff, is the head of the occupational forces in a city in Bavaria. Woodruff had been in the same city in the 1930's when he was a young man. He had a German friend, Kurt Benckendorff, who was killed by the Nazis for opposing them. Woodruff had also befriended Kurt's sister, Elisabeth. Their father, Hugo Beneckendorff, became the chief industrialist in the city and, in the postwar setting, wants to reopen his factory under American sponsorship. He has enlisted the aid of an American businessman named Theodore Bruce, a man who would like to see Germany rearmed against Russia. Elisabeth is now married to Erich Jaeger, who is a very dedicated Nazi. Woodruff persists in attempting to denazify the town. The denazification creates conflicts. Finally, Jaeger, with the financial aid of Benckendorff, creates a riot which results in the death of an anti-Nazi German and an American soldier.

The most extreme Nazi in the play is Erich Jaeger. He is a fully committed Nazi and is active in a Nazi organization. Sophie von Gutschow, Benckendorff's sister, is talking with Jaeger. Jaeger says he doesn't like Benckendorff.

Jaeger  
Our Fuehrer was a man of principle.

Sophie  
Oh, spare me that Austrian lunatic!

Jaeger (furious)  
I shall report that statement!

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<sup>44</sup>The play had opened earlier in Newark, New Jersey, under the title Drums of Peace. Rowland Field, Newark Evening News, 28 December 1946.

Sophie

Report? To whom?<sup>45</sup>

The exchange reveals that Jaeger is living in a world of unreality. His fanatic Nazism is revealed in several other scenes.

Woodruff is discussing the reopening of Benckendorff's factory and says that part of the answer lies with Benckendorff: "Until you break with the men who've made Germany a symbol of everything abhorrent--" It is Jaeger who flies into a rage. He calle Woodruff a "Plutodemocratic swine!" and throws his drink at him. Jaeger then happens to observe Woodruff saying goodbye to his wife. He accuses her of "holding hands with the enemy" and he regrets that his two little boys have a "mother who's a collaborator." He slaps his wife for saying she wishes she could forget she's a German. And he tells her, "We cut off Olga Bruin's hair two weeks ago for what you are doing." When Jaeger agrees to create a riot for Benckendorff, he tells him, "I'm doing this, not for you, but for the cause." After the riot, when he is being detained by the Americans, he bolts through a French window. Captain Karel Palivec, a Czechoslovakian, gives chase--"A shot is heard, then, after a brief pause, two more." Palivec returns and says, "A reformed Nazi."

Jaeger is the first portrayal of a dedicated Nazi in a postwar setting. He is a villain and is typed as such by Sophie-- "He's out with those other desperadoes, I suppose, dramatizing himself." Other than his reference to the Fuehrer, Jaeger does

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<sup>45</sup>Mabley and Mins, Temper the Wind, Act 1, p. 13a.

not reveal his ideology; he functions as a Nazi villain. Brooks Atkinson said, "the fanatical and treacherous hostility of the unreconstructed Nazi" is represented "in a grim character [Jaeger] played with wiry neuroticism by Tonio Selwart."<sup>46</sup>

Hugo Benckendorff, the industrialist, appears at first not so much as a Nazi as an opportunist. When it suits his needs, he stresses the fact that the Nazis killed his son. He also enlists the aid of Jaeger, his Nazi son-in-law, to create violence, hoping it will cause Woodruff to be dismissed from his position in the town and clear the way for the re-opening of his factory. Woodruff asks Captain Palivec, the Czech officer, what he thinks of Benckendorff. Palivec says that when the German infantry surrendered they all said they were not Nazis, but that a "simple test" was used to determine the truthfulness of their claim:

We examined their cartridge belts. If they still had any bullets, we believed them. (Raises thumb.) But if they had fired them all--(Turns thumb down.) My friend, the Benckendorffs of Germany are all out of ammunition.<sup>47</sup>

In another scene, Woodruff tells Benckendorff that practically all the executives and foremen still on his payroll were members of the Party. Benckendorff says "I am not a Nazi." Jaeger replies, "No? You cheered our victories while they showed a profit on your ledger!"

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<sup>46</sup>Brooks Atkinson, New York Times, 28 December 1946. Tonio Selwart had appeared as Lt. Schoen, the Nazi who converts to an anti-Nazi, in Candle in the Wind (1941).

<sup>47</sup>Mabley and Mins, Temper the Wind, Act 2, Sec. 1, p. 13b.

Later, however, Benckendorff's sentiments are made clear. Jaeger is wounded and captured following the riot and he reveals Benckendorff's complicity in the riot. Benckendorff explains to Woodruff why he set up the riot:

You gave me no other choice. I tried to make you do the thing that would benefit Rietenberg [the city] and Germany. I failed. But sooner or later other Germans will try again-- and they will succeed. Then you will know what it is to govern us by force.<sup>48</sup>

Benckendorff reveals an element of the authoritarian Nazi character-- his victims have forced him to behave as he does.

Another Nazi in the play is Trudi, the young maid in the Benckendorff household. She has few lines, but does express Nazi sentiments. She is admonished for singing the "Horst Wessel" around the house and says she can't help it because, "It reminds me of the nice times I used to have. In the Hitler's Girls, I mean." She goes on to say that she "can't bear to think of the Fuhrer dead." She is distressed and starts to cry and says she hopes he'll come back some day.

Another character in the play, Benckendorff's sister Sophie von Gutzkow reveals sentiments which go beyond Nazism. Sophie denigrates Jaeger for being a Nazi and refers to Hitler as "that Austrian lunatic." However, she says the trouble with Hitler was that he "had no iron in him." She would out-Nazi the Nazis. She is a Prussian and wishes she could return to her home in the East as the Poles are being allowed to do. She says, "Poland is a pigsty!" She tells Woodruff that Prussia stood at the gates of

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<sup>48</sup>Ibid., Act 3, p. 2.



Europe for 700 years and protected Germany against the Slavic hordes. She says, "Now you have undone the work of centuries, made the Slavs a power. You Americans have meddled in affairs of which you know nothing." She adds, "You Americans will live to regret this war." Blanche Yurka's portrayal of Sophie was noted by the critics. "Blanche Yurka plays [Sophie] with such forcefulness that she becomes a symbol of German autocratic power."<sup>49</sup>

The heroes in this play are Lt. Col. Woodruff and an anti-Nazi German. Set in the immediate postwar period, they were very acceptable opponents to Nazism. Woodruff expresses his goal, "No German ever goes to war again--ever. That's our job." Heinrich Lindau, the anti-Nazi German, bravely addresses a meeting of the factory workers and tells them the traitors are out among them and he names the men who had been Nazis. He is killed as he is speaking. Not all the Americans were portrayed as heroic. A critic noted:

The American soldiers . . . are portrayed much as our newspapers describe them--young, lost, bored, and tired of living abroad, sitting out a job they do not understand and making no effort to acquaint themselves with the problems nor the people they are sent to help, losing the peace through blundering and blindness. . . .<sup>50</sup>

Brooks Atkinson called Temper the Wind "the most forceful and absorbing topical drama of the season,"<sup>51</sup> but the rest of the critics were lukewarm about it. Richard Watts, Jr., said it was

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<sup>49</sup>T. R., Christian Science Monitor, 8 December 1946.

<sup>50</sup>Ibid.

<sup>51</sup>Brooks Atkinson, New York Times, 28 December 1946.



"neither brilliantly dramatized nor remarkably conceived" but added "it is forthright and honest in its proud dramatic journalism."<sup>52</sup> Several critics noted the overall similarity of the play to A Bell for Adono and made comparisons to it.

The authors had included in Temper the Wind such elements as Benckendorff's factory having produced machine tools and the possibility that it might be dismantled for reparations. These plot elements and the characters' attitudes about them are plausibly developed.<sup>53</sup> Some critics found the play lacking in force and the issues not stated clearly enough. This might have been caused by an inherent problem in the subject matter. John Gimbel in The American Occupation of Germany described the U.S. role at that time:

Besides wanting to denazify, demilitarize, decartelize, democratize, and reorient Germans and Germany, Americans were also interested in seeing to their own continued security, bringing about the economic rehabilitation of Germany and Europe, and guaranteeing the continuance of free enterprise. They wanted to frustrate socialism, to forestall Communism, to spare American taxpayers' money, to counteract French plans to dismember Germany, and to contain the Soviet Union in Central Europe. All of these interests . . . assumed a vital place in American policy and practice in Germany.<sup>54</sup>

The play may also have faced another obstacle--audience indifference. In 1947, Harold Zink said in American Military Government in Germany that a large number of Americans

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<sup>52</sup>Richard Watts, Jr., New York Post, 28 December 1946.

<sup>53</sup>A thorough background of the activities of the play is provided by John Gimbel, The American Occupation of Germany: Politics and the Military, 1945-1949 (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1968, chapters 1 and 2, pp. 1-34.

<sup>54</sup>Gimbel, American Occupation of Germany, p. xiii.

. . . are so tired of war service, war regimentation, war shortages, and war excitement that they seek to forget the German problem and everything else unpleasant. . . .

The net result is that there is a wide indifference rather than alert interest in what goes on in Germany.<sup>55</sup>

Temper the Wind was the only play to portray pro-Nazi Germans in a post-war setting. Gimbel's description of that setting and Zink's comments on the subject's interest suggest the topic may not have been manageable. Temper the Wind closed after 35 performances.

### Stalag 17

It was four years after Temper the Wind before Nazis were again characterized on Broadway. They appeared in a comedy-drama called Stalag 17,<sup>56</sup> by Donald Bevan and Edmund Trzcinski, which opened May 8, 1951.<sup>57</sup> "Stalag 17" is the name given to a prisoner-of-war camp in Germany; the authors of the play had been shot down behind enemy lines and had spent two years in such a camp near Krems, Austria.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>55</sup>Harold Zink, American Military Government in Germany (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1947).

<sup>56</sup>Donald Beran and Edmund Trzcinski, Stalag 17 (New York: Dramatists Play Service, 1951).

<sup>57</sup>A Nazi storm trooper did appear in the background of a memory scene in Sidney Kingsley's dramatization of Arthur Koestler's Darkness at Noon, which opened January, 1951. However, the storm trooper was used solely to establish the locale, a museum in Liepzig, Germany. Sidney Kingsley, Darkness at Noon (New York: Samuel French, 1952), p. 21.

<sup>58</sup>John Chapman, New York Mirror, 9 May 1951.

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The plot of Stalag 17 concerned the uncovering of a German agent who is planted in a barracks with American prisoners of war. All their private conversations are almost immediately revealed to the Nazis. The situation becomes critical when Dunbar, a new arrival, boasts of having set fire to a German train while being transported to the camp. If the Germans knew of his boast and thought him guilty of it, they would send him to a concentration camp. Throughout the play, the Americans suspect Sefton, a "sullen young man dominated by an animosity toward the world in general and Price in particular." Price, who is well-educated and the executive type, is the Security man of the barracks. At the end, Price is revealed as the spy and the villain of the piece. Sefton and Dunbar attempt an escape which is accomplished by creating a diversion: Price is thrown, screaming, into the compound and is machine-gunned to death by the German guards.

While the play had several Nazis in it, the emphasis of the play was on the mystery of the spy. There is a great deal of horseplay and wise-cracking, latrine humor in the play. There are serious elements to the plot, but they are placed in a suspense-filled and, often, hilarious background.

The Nazis include the barracks guard named Corporal Schulz, an SS Captain, and two minor guards. Schulz is the most important of the Nazi characters. He is described as bustling "with efficient Teutonic good humor and cheerfulness which almost conceal his innate cruelty and arrogance." Schulz had once lived in New York and owned a luggage shop. He is on very familiar terms with the prisoners.

He enjoys bantering with them and accepts their joshing him. They constantly tell him to "Drop dead" and he returns the comment. He also frequently calls out their warning signal "Timber." There is only one scene in which he behaves as a villain. The SS Officer orders him to beat "Hoffy" with his belt to reveal where Dunbar has been hidden. Schulz complies as the scene blacks out. In the next scene he looks at the man and says "in a placating voice, 'What could I do? I am only a Corporal. It was the Captain's orders.'"<sup>59</sup>

The SS Captain appears in only one brief scene. He speaks German, but his orders are translated by Schulz. He is extremely angry and raging in his brief appearance. The prisoners have hidden Dunbar because he was found guilty of burning the train and is to be sent to a concentration camp. The SS Captain threatens to have the men bayoneted if they do not clear the barracks in two minutes. When he begins to question Hoffy, he strikes him with his riding crop. Hoffy will not reveal where Dunbar is hidden and the SS Officer says in German, "Perhaps we can refresh your memory." He then orders Schulz to beat him.

While the Nazi characters were not developed, the play did contain comments on Nazism expressed by the comments of the prisoners and the conditions in the camp. At the opening of the play, two of the prisoners says that German civilians are hanging captured airmen. Horney, a prisoner who has spent six months in solitaire in a

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<sup>59</sup>Beran and Trzcinski, Stalag 17, p. 60.

rat-filled dungeon, is speechless and expressionless and plays a piccolo from time to time. The barracks has been deprived of sick-call privileges and when Hoffy is severely beaten, he receives no treatment.

The catalogue of brutalities would seem to have created an atmosphere for menacing and credible villains, especially in contrast to the very acceptable heroes, but the response of the critics would indicate otherwise. Most of the critics praised the acting of Lothar Rewalt in the role of Schulz, but the compliments did not suggest villainy. Brooks Atkinson referred to the "fatuous German guard."<sup>60</sup> Another noted that Schulz's "proffered friendliness is transparent as glass."<sup>61</sup>

The response to the play as a whole also explains the lack of perceived villainy. Richard Watts, Jr., said the playwrights "haven't bothered with any deep or tragic psychological probing into the hearts and minds of men in war, but have confined themselves to telling a good, melodramatic story. . . ."<sup>62</sup> John Chapman described the play as "a farcical comedy about--of all places--a German prison camp. . . ."<sup>63</sup>

An article in The New Leader expressed strong disapproval of the portrayal of the camp:

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<sup>60</sup>Brooks Atkinson, New York Times, 9 May 1951.

<sup>61</sup>Otis L. Guernsey, Jr., New York Herald-Tribune, 9 May 1951.

<sup>62</sup>Richard Watts, Jr., New York Post, 9 May 1951.

<sup>63</sup>John Chapman, The Best Plays of 1950-51, p. 12.

A different pattern in the current attitude toward war divides the emotions in Stalag 17. The enemy's concentration and prisoner-of-war camps of World War II are still by-words of horror. Scarcely a man has come out of them without a story--and the marks--of torture, of an existence that dulls the sensibilities and drugs all desire and hope. Yet here is a dramatic picture of Americans in a Nazi prison camp--and it's full of riotous fun!

. . . . .

The two authors . . . should know what the life was like. They convey its filth and fever; the fun, I fancy, they discovered after they were out. . . . Stalag 17 is a play worth pondering, but emotionally it is likely to leave the audience little stirred.<sup>64</sup>

Here, again, the brutalities which occurred on the stage or are referred to by the prisoners did not make much of an impression.<sup>65</sup>

In fact, the audience was reported to have accepted the play as a comedy more than a melodrama. "They rocked the theatre's rafters with their yaks, and stung their palms applauding."<sup>66</sup> Stalag 17 was the second most popular play in this study, running 472 performances, compared to 500 performances for Tomorrow the World.

### Fragile Fox

There was a brief portrayal of two captured German soldiers in Fragile Fox<sup>67</sup> by Norman Brooks which opened October 12,

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<sup>64</sup>The New Leader, 11 June 1951.

<sup>65</sup>In equating prisoner-of-war camps and concentration camps, the New Leader article showed the same lack of discernment concerning Nazism as was shown in the response to The Moon Is Down. Also, without disregarding the brutalities, starvation, and atrocities that did occur to Americans, it is still generally true that American prisoners were treated comparatively milder than other prisoners, particularly the Russians. (Shirer, Rise and Fall, 2:954.) "almost three of the four million Russian prisoners of war had perished by February, 1942." (Rich, Hitler's War Aims, 2:342.)

<sup>66</sup>Robert Coleman, New York Mirror, 9 May 1951.

<sup>67</sup>Norman Brooks, Fragile Fox, Typescript, Theatre Collection, New York Public Library.





1954.<sup>68</sup> The play was reportedly based on an episode the author knew about.<sup>69</sup> It takes place during the Battle of the Bulge. An American company is demoralized because its commanding officer (played by Andrew Duggan) is a drunk and a coward.

In the course of the play, the Americans capture two Germans who appear very briefly in two scenes. One of the Germans is loud and short, and the other is tall and furious with the short one. Their speeches are in German, so the audience would only get the gist of the speeches through intonation or cognates. The short German speaks to the Americans "with ingratiating enthusiasm." He refers to the Americans as "freie Menchen." He tells them, "Der Hitler is ja fertig-un der krieg wird bald zu ende sein" (Hitler is all done and the war will soon be over). He continues, "ich habe einen Onkel in Milwaukee--der heist Karl Schwartz. Karl Schwartz?" The tall one orders him to shut up and threatens to kill him.<sup>70</sup>

In a later scene, one of the Americans hits the short German in the stomach "for Joseph." The short German then tells the Americans that the tank outfit in town is SS. "I don't know their unit, but they're SS sonsofbitches. Yesterday, they commanded our rations. I hope you blow their heads off."<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>68</sup>There had been an appearance of an SS trooper in a musical comedy called Shuffle Along, which opened May 8, 1952, and closed after four performances. The show was an adaptation of a successful World War I musical and the revised version used an all black cast.

<sup>69</sup>Brooks Atkinson, New York Times, 13 October 1954.

<sup>70</sup>Brooks, Fragile Fox, Act 2, Sec. 1, pp. 18-19.

<sup>71</sup>Ibid., Act 2, sec. 2, p. 28.

The two characters are subsidiary and used to provide a stereotyped enemy for background. Their contrasting appearances were undoubtedly meant to be humorous, as was the short one's obsequious cowardice and reference to his uncle in Milwaukee. The villain of the play is the American officer.

The critics did not mention the portrayals of the prisoners. The play received mixed reviews. Variety commented presciently "Familiarity of the subject-matter and the cliché-pattern of certain incidents and dialog [sic], however, militate against its Broadway chances. . . ." <sup>72</sup> Fragile Fox closed after 55 performances.

It was nearly three years before the next portrayal of a Nazi on Broadway. However, in the interim, the most successful anti-Nazi play of all time was produced--The Diary of Anne Frank, which opened in 1955 and ran 717 performances. Like the highly successful 1941 anti-Nazi play Watch on the Rhine, the play had no Nazis but dealt with the effects of Nazism. The significance of the success of both plays to the plays in this study will be discussed in the concluding chapter.

### The Hidden River

A German General appeared in a brief scene in The Hidden River <sup>73</sup> by Ruth and Augustus Goetz. The play, which opened June 23, 1957, was based on a novel by Storm Jameson. It was a split-level

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<sup>72</sup>Variety, 20 October 1954.

<sup>73</sup>Ruth and Augustus Goetz, The Hidden River (New York: Dramatists Play Service, Inc., 1957).

kind of play, partly a mystery about who informed on a Resistance fighter during World War II and partly a moral inquest into French behavior under the Nazis.

The play is set in 1950. Two brothers, Francis and Jean (Robert Preston) run the family vineyard. Their parents were killed in the war and they were reared by their uncle, Daniel (Dennis King) and his mistress, Marie (Lili Darvas). Daniel was found guilty of socializing with a German General during the war and has been in prison. Marie's son, Robert, was the head of a Resistance unit and was betrayed to the Nazis, presumably by Daniel. The real traitor is revealed to be one of the brothers, Francis. During the course of the action, Daniel is released from prison, sickly and broken. In a flashback, he converses with his old friend from Heidelberg, General Otto von Kettler.<sup>74</sup>

Kettler is revealed as a man of culture who is interested in discussing the Renaissance, Goethe, and Erasmus. Daniel requests the help of Kettler and his son is only a social secretary.

Kettler

What can he do? What can any of us do? People like Helmuth and I have no authority over the police! They're brutish, ugly men who take their commands from brutish, ugly fanatical leaders!

Daniel

They're your leaders, Otto. Why do you serve them?

Kettler

It's our country, Daniel. We have an investment of blood and history in it. Just as you have here--Helmuth and I are trying

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<sup>74</sup>Kettler was played by Tonio Selwart, who had played Nazis in Temper the Wind (1946) and Candle in the Wind (1941).

to protect our investment--no more than that. Aren't your nephews doing the same thing for yours?<sup>75</sup>

Kettler says the priest is in custody of the chief of police who is a thick-necked baker and that Daniel can forget the priest.

Daniel asks his servant, Amalie, to bring coffee. Kettler calls her a "rude old bitch." He complains that she never looks at him or bows and says, "She ought to be thrashed!" Daniel answers with revulsion, "Oh, Otto! . . . You are a Prussian general!"

Daniel starts for Kettler and the vision fades. Later, the audience learns that Kettler's son was really head of the secret police in Paris.

The scene is brief, but Kettler does express Nazi traits. He is erudite and urbane, but hypocritical about his rejection of "brutish, ugly men." He defends his support of the Nazis on the basis of Volkisch thought--blood and history. However, he adds that the Germans are as much victims of the situation as the French--the Nazis' trait of seeing themselves as the victims. At the end of the scene his comments about the maid reveal his elitism and a brutish streak. Kettler has less than a dozen speeches, but his portrayal is clearly that of a Nazi. One critic called the scene between Daniel and Kettler "the play's finest sequence."<sup>76</sup>

Francis, the brother who collaborated with the Nazis and turned in Marie's son, did so not out of pro-Nazi sympathies, but because the Nazis threatened to destroy the family estate and

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<sup>75</sup>Goetz, The Hidden River, p. 39.

<sup>76</sup>Rowland Field, Newark Evening News, 24 January 1957.

vineyards if he did not cooperate. He turned in Robert "to save what our family built, to save our way of life, the life we're used to."<sup>77</sup>

Brooks Atkinson said of the play, "the writing is skillful and the performance is superb."<sup>78</sup> However, most other critics gave the play negative reviews and it closed after 61 performances.

### The Wall

The Warsaw Ghetto was the setting for the next portrayal of Nazis. The play was Millard Lampell's The Wall,<sup>79</sup> based on John Hersey's novel of the same name. The play was produced October 11, 1960. Lampell, a screen and TV writer,<sup>80</sup> had investigated diaries and also interviewed surviving members of the Ghetto resistance in order to immerse himself in the subject. But he said it was "the files of the Nazi commandant charged with levelling the Ghetto, SS General Stroop,"<sup>81</sup> that provided the most detailed portrait of the Jewish resistance."<sup>82</sup>

The play covers the time span of 1940 to the spring of 1943 in twelve episodic scenes. The large cast included George C. Scott as Dolek Berenson, who is indifferent to events and interested

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<sup>77</sup>Goetz, Hidden River, p. 71.

<sup>78</sup>Brooks Atkinson, New York Times, 24 January 1957.

<sup>79</sup>Millard Lampell, The Wall (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1961).

<sup>80</sup>Variety, 19 October 1960.

<sup>81</sup>Condemned to death in Poland and executed in 1951. Hilberg, The Destruction of the European Jews, p. 714.

<sup>82</sup>Lampell, Introduction to The Wall, p. xiii.



only in survival but in the end fights with the resistance and sacrifices himself to allow others to escape.

There are three German Nazis in the play--a private, a sergeant, and an Obersturmführer (an SS officer with the equivalent rank of 1st Lieutenant in the U. S. Army).<sup>83</sup> The latter character will be referred to as the SS officer.<sup>84</sup> There is a fourth character named Stefan who is a Jewish policeman under Nazi jurisdiction. He is intimidated and throughout the play increases his cooperation with the Nazis to insure his own survival. Although he is an unwilling participant, he behaves as a Nazi and is included in this study. Stefan is of primary interest, but the other Nazis are discussed first to provide a background for discussing Stefan.

The official Nazis appear in several scenes in the play, but they are subsidiary characters. They are brutal and help to provide the environment of the Ghetto. The Nazis are shown acting violently. Their actions include forcing an old peddler to dance and kneeling another character, but the major effect of violence comes from offstage shootings and screams and from descriptions of Nazi brutality. One character refers to twenty women and children being machine-gunned in retaliation for an attack on a German patrol. There is also a description of a rosy-cheeked eighteen-year-old

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<sup>83</sup>Heinz Höhne, The Order of the Death's Head: The Story of Hitler's SS, trans. Richard Barry (New York: Coward-McCann, Inc., 1970), p. 652.

<sup>84</sup>The SS officer was played by Norman Horowitz, who in real life had escaped from a Nazi slave camp. Howard Taubman, New York Times, 12 October 1960.





German soldier who shoots people for no earthly reason and keeps track in a little notebook.

The longest scene with the Nazis is one in which they are checking papers and selecting people for "resettlement." A German private enters, apparently after having just shot someone (off-stage). He rumples a beggar boy's hair and gives sweets to him and other beggar children. The Germans are described as "brisk, efficient, almost bored. They are professionals with a small, annoying job to do." During the scene, the SS officer strikes a Jew with his swagger stick and the sergeant slaps a woman, but the terror comes from the selection process itself.

There is no ideology expressed by the Nazis. Their actions are those of villainous suppressors. They are contrasted with both innocent victims and, later, with defiant, heroic resisters. However, there are also cowards and collaborators among the Jews.

Stefan Mazur (played by Robert Drivas) is the son of Reb Mazur, a rabbi. He becomes a Jewish policeman and tells his girlfriend, Halinka, that he has done so because "The Germans told us we'd be able to, you know, make life a little easier. Protect our families."<sup>85</sup> He doesn't think his father will approve, but Halinka cheers him by admiring his uniform (his own suit with military belt, club and arm band).

A week later, Stefan is at a Jewish wedding in the Ghetto and tells two of his friends that he has been rounding up Jews

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<sup>85</sup>Lampell, The Wall, p. 68.

although he was promised he would not have to. Two years pass, and Stefan tells his father that he is required to bring four people to the train station each day. If he doesn't, he will have to go himself, and the Nazis have also threatened to take his girlfriend Halinka. Stefan tries to persuade his father to go to the train station, "You will be taken anyway. They'll get you one of these days. You can save me by going a few days sooner." His father leaves and Stefan is left with Symka, the wife of Berson. She has had typhoid and is a fragile invalid. Stefan picks her up and she "giggles coyly" mistaking his action for a sexual advance. He starts toward the door and she says flirtatiously, "Stefan, really you're impossible. Where are we going?" He exits with his fragile burden.<sup>86</sup> Walter Kerr said of the scene that "Few of the episodes in this harrowing gallery are potentially more chilling. . . ."<sup>87</sup>

Stefan is seen next with the Nazis in the roundup of the Jews. The Nazis have selected his father for "resettlement." Stefan's sister pleads with him to interfere, but he turns his back on his father. Moments later, he averts his eyes from his father and continues helping with the roundup.

A year later Stefan is walking with Halinka. The German private stops them. Stefan identifies himself and is told Jewish policemen are no longer exempt. He protests that he was promised safety by the SS officer, but he and Halinka are led off for "resettlement."

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<sup>86</sup>Ibid., pp. 109-110.

<sup>87</sup>Walter Kerr, New York Herald-Tribune, 12 October 1960.



Stefan claims a decent motive for beginning his aid to the Nazis but he continues cooperating for cowardly reasons. As a complete collaborator, he is a traitor and a villain. He expresses none of the ideology of Nazism but acts as a Nazi.

Stefan's character and actions are historically probable. There were about 2,500 Jüdische Ordnungsdienst or Jewish police in the Warsaw Ghetto.<sup>88</sup> Lucy Dawidowicz in The War Against the Jews, 1933-1945 said the Jewish police had been created to maintain law and order and to enforce German orders. She described their efforts:

The diligence with which the Jewish police performed their work was generated by fear and dilated into viciousness. Every policeman's family--wife, children and parents--had been exempted from deportation, but that exemption depended on slavish obedience to German authority.<sup>89</sup>

In the play, Stefan is ordered to collect four Jews each day, asks his father to go, and actually abducts a family friend. It was credible behavior:

Each Jewish policeman was told to bring seven people for deportation each day or face "resettlement" himself. Now every policeman brought whomever he could catch--friends, relatives, and even members of his immediate family.<sup>90</sup>

There were many other details of the Warsaw Ghetto which were accurately portrayed according to historical accounts.<sup>91</sup>

The critics seemed to approve the explicit and implicit violence in the play. One said, "Although there are moments that

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<sup>88</sup>Hilberg, The Destruction of the European Jews, p. 310.

<sup>89</sup>Dawidowicz, The War Against the Jews, p. 304.

<sup>90</sup>Hilberg, The Destruction of the European Jews, p. 320.

<sup>91</sup>See Dawidowicz, The War Against the Jews, pp. 205-214, 255-260, 305.

shock one by their sheer brutality, this is not violence for the sake of theatricality."<sup>92</sup> Another said the play was "a valid, graphic portrayal of the monstrous German savagery."<sup>93</sup> However, the reactions to the play were mixed. The highest praise came from Howard Taubman in the New York Times, who said "The play . . . combines shattering power with searing compassion."<sup>94</sup> Walter Kerr in the New York Herald-Tribune was the most negative. He said the play contained "the scars of truth, but it is truth that has not been made art." What Taubman referred to admiringly as "a litany" of "sorrows," Kerr described as "the practice of offering one isolated illustration of suffering after another, instead of binding us fast by a single unfolding emotional line."<sup>95</sup> It is noteworthy that three of the critics referred to The Diary of Anne Frank as a standard of judgment and to make comparisons. The Wall was moderately successful and ran for 167 performances.

Three plays which were produced before the next play in this study should be noted. The first, an off-Broadway production called Shadow of Heroes by Robert Ardrey was produced December 5, 1961, and ran 20 performances. It was set in Budapest, 1944-56, and concerned the Hungarian Rebellion but contained Gestapo characters. The second, produced November 11, 1963, was an eight-performance

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<sup>92</sup>Howard Taubman, New York Times, 12 October 1960.

<sup>93</sup>Variety, 19 October 1960.

<sup>94</sup>Howard Taubman, New York Times, 12 October 1960.

<sup>95</sup>Walter Kerr, New York Herald-Tribune, 12 October 1960.

production of Bertolt Brecht's Arturo Ui with Christopher Plummer playing the Hitler prototype head gangster. Third was Rolf Hochhuth's successful The Deputy, which was produced February 26, 1964, and ran 316 performances. It dealt with complicity in the extermination of Jews. The ways in which the play was altered for American audiences are explained in Best Plays of 1963-64.<sup>96</sup> The play was "picketed by American fascist organizations and vehemently attacked by some Roman Catholics."<sup>97</sup>

#### Incident at Vichy

Arthur Miller's Incident at Vichy<sup>98</sup> opened in repertory December 3, 1964, at the Lincoln Center. Miller had based the play on a story told by a friend. Miller's friend had a friend who was picked up by the Vichy police in 1942. He was taken to a room full of men who were awaiting questioning. A door would open and a Vichy policeman would beckon and a suspect would go in. The rumor moved down the line that it was a Gestapo operation. Finally, he was the last one. But the second to the last, a Gentile, came out of the door, gave him his pass, and whispered for him to go. He left and never saw the man again.<sup>99</sup> Miller had attended the war

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<sup>96</sup> Henry Hewes, ed., The Best Plays of 1963-64 (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1964), pp. 249-250.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid., p. 12.

<sup>98</sup> Arthur Miller, Incident at Vichy (New York: Viking Press, 1965).

<sup>99</sup> Arthur Miller, "Our Guilt for the World's Evil," New York Times, 3 January 1965, sec. 6, p. 10.

crimes trials in Frankfort the winter before the play opened. He said, "I had never seen a real live Nazi, and I was curious." Shortly after attending the trials, he completed the final draft of the play in three weeks.<sup>100</sup>

The play takes place in September, 1942, in Vichy, France. The setting is "a place of detention." Six men and a boy have been picked up off the streets by French detectives. Soon, three others are brought in. Eight of the group are Jews, one is a Gypsy, and one an Austrian Prince. They discuss whether their detention has anything to do with their being Jews. They also talk about rumors of forced labor camps. A cafe owner brings coffee to the police. The cafe owner whispers to one of the men (a former waiter in his cafe) that the suspects will not be taken to work camps but will be taken to Poland and burned in furnaces. He also tells the waiter the officials will examine their penises to see if they have been circumscized.

One by one, the men are taken into a room and only the first, Marchand, returns with a pass to leave. The play centers on two of the detained men, Leduc and Von Berg, who are the last to be examined. Von Berg receives a pass, but he sacrifices himself and gives the pass to Leduc. The other characters in the play include French detectives and police and two characters who are Nazis, a German Army Major and Professor Hoffman, a German racial anthropologist. The Major is the third principal character

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<sup>100</sup>Barbara Gelb, "Question: Am I My Brother's Keeper?" New York Times, 29 November 1964, sec. 2, p. 1.

(after Leduc and Von Berg) and was played by Hal Holbrook at Lincoln Center.

Before turning to the portrayals of the Nazis, the historical context of the play needs to be clarified to explain why the presence of the Nazis and most of the Jews would have been highly improbable in the time and place of the play.

After the fall of France in 1940, Germany occupied the northern part of France, including Paris, and Marshall Petain established the government of unoccupied France at Vichy. The Vichy government under Pierre Laval had a reasonable amount of freedom and received the support and recognition of the United States Government.<sup>101</sup> The Germans were little concerned with the internal policies of Vichy, France, "as long as order was maintained and French wealth poured into the German war machine."<sup>102</sup>

The implementation of anti-Jewish measures in France was complex. Vichy French legislation was applied to occupied as well as unoccupied territory.<sup>103</sup> French anti-semitism was culturally based and, as such, seemed lukewarm or even philo-Semitic to the Germans.<sup>104</sup> However, in 1940, the Vichy government had defined Jews in accordance with the Nuremberg principles.<sup>105</sup> Purge and

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<sup>101</sup>Hoyle, A World in Flames, pp. 50-51.

<sup>102</sup>Robert O. Paxton, Vichy France: Old Guard and New Order 1940-1944 (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1972), p. 142.

<sup>103</sup>Hilberg, Destruction of the European Jews, p. 393.

<sup>104</sup>Paxton, Vichy France, p. 183.

<sup>105</sup>Hilberg, Destruction of the European Jews, p. 393.



quote systems were set up by the French in 1940, long before the Germans applied pressure to do so.<sup>106</sup> By 1941, there were already a series of camps in unoccupied Vichy and some 20,000 stateless Jews were interned.<sup>107</sup> The Vichy policies were directed solely toward non-French Jews.

In discussing the source for Incident at Vichy, Miller referred to the "relatively milder regime of Marchall Petain" and said "The racial laws, for one thing, had not been applied by Petain."<sup>108</sup> However, as noted above, the laws had been applied to all Jews, but actions were directed solely toward non-French Jews. There were large round-ups of non-French Jews in September, 1942, the time of the play. German figures showed some 18,000 from the Occupied zone and 9,000 from the unoccupied zone. However, at that time, Petain opposed the deportation of French Jews, and Heinrich Himmler, the head of the SS, backed down.<sup>109</sup>

The Germans occupied all of France in November, 1942, following the Allied invasion of North Africa. Even total occupation did not change the Vichy attitude toward French Jews. "In July-August, 1943, Laval stubbornly refused to issue a proposed law depriving all French Jews who had become citizens since 1933

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<sup>106</sup>Paxton, Vichy France, p. 174.

<sup>107</sup>Hilberg, Destruction of the European Jews, p. 402.

<sup>108</sup>Miller, "Our Guilt for the World's Evil," p. 10.

<sup>109</sup>Hilberg, Destruction of the European Jews, p. 410.

of their citizenship so that they could be deported, in spite of German efforts to force its promulgation."<sup>110</sup>

Thus, the accounts of the Vichy regime would indicate that some of the Jews in the play who are presumably French--Marchand, Lebeau, Bayard, Monceau, and Leduc--would not have been deported as Jews in 1942. The distinction between French and non-French Jews was not made in the play.

The presence of the Nazis in the unoccupied zone is also highly improbable. The German regime was restricted to the occupied zone and the German police who were in charge of public order there numbered only 3,000 (compared to 5,000 in Holland) while the French police numbered 47,000.<sup>111</sup> Further, the Vichy French had their own administrative set-up for Jewish affairs and Theodore Dannecker, the SS officer responsible for Jewish affairs in France, "stressed the value to Germany of having French take the initiative."<sup>112</sup> Throughout the occupation, the Germans sought to make the French bear the brunt of the anti-Semitic campaign in France.<sup>113</sup> In the deportation of Jews in September, 1942, the French did all the rounding up of Jews, not only in the unoccupied zone, but even in Paris and the rest of the occupied zone. There is no indication that the SS, the army, or German civilians in any way participated in the roundup of Jews in Vichy in September, 1942.

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<sup>110</sup>Paxton, Vichy France, p. 185.

<sup>111</sup>Hilberg, Destruction of the European Jews, p. 407.

<sup>112</sup>Paxton, Vichy France, p. 177.

<sup>113</sup>Rich, Hitler's War Aims, p. 229.

Arthur Miller said that "The occasion of the play is the occupation of France. . . ." <sup>114</sup> However, Vichy was not occupied until November, 1942. The occupation of the free zone in November, 1942, put an end to the sovereignty of the Vichy government and the Gestapo "did not waste a day before making arrests as it had done in the occupied zone." <sup>115</sup> But even after that, "the continued German dependence upon the French police assured to the French Jews, both native-born and naturalized, a measure of immunity." <sup>116</sup>

Incident at Vichy is generally accepted as based on fact, but the events are anachronistic and the Nazi characters are improbable in that setting. The point is significant to comments about the Nazis. As noted in the discussion of The Moon Is Down, Nazism was not monolithic. Nazism in France was also different, and the Nazis in the play will be discussed in that light.

The German Major is described as "twenty-eight, a wan but well-built man; there is something ill about him. He walks with a slight limp. . . ." The waiter who has been serving him says, "Tell you the truth, he's really not a bad fellow. Regular army see, not one of those SS bums. Got wounded somewhere, so they stuck him back here." <sup>117</sup> The waiter adds, "He even comes at night

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<sup>114</sup>Gelb, "Question: Am I My Brother's Keeper," p. 3.

<sup>115</sup>Robert Aron, The Vichy Regime, 1940-44, trans. Humphrey Hare (London: Putnam, 1958), p. 416.

<sup>116</sup>Miller, Incident at Vichy, p. 11.

<sup>117</sup>Ibid.

sometimes, plays a beautiful piano. Gives himself French lessons out of a book. Always has a few nice words to say, too."<sup>118</sup>

In his first appearance, the Major expresses discomfort with his work. He wonders aloud why they can't just ask all the men whether or not they are Jews. The professor does ask the men and none answer. The Major then argues that circumcision is not proof of anything, since he himself is circumcised. Professor Hoffman is curt and says, "Major, you have your orders; you are in command of this operation." The Major says his assignment is a mistake and that he has "no experience with things of this kind." The Professor, "his eyes ablaze," says, "Are you refusing this assignment?" The Major registers "the threat he feels" and offers additional excuses.

Professor

But the Army is not exempt from carrying out the Racial Program. My orders come from the top. You understand me.

Major

(His resistance seems to fall)

I do, yes.

Professor

Look now, if you wish to be relieved, I can easily phone General von--

Major

No--no, that's all right. I . . . I'll be back in a few minutes.<sup>119</sup>

The Major's fear of being turned in is a commonly accepted belief about the Nazi system. However, it was not universally

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<sup>118</sup>Ibid., p. 12.

<sup>119</sup>Ibid., pp. 43-44.

true, and especially not true in France, even for the Gestapo in the occupied zone.

. . . in Paris it was easier than anywhere else in Europe for a reluctant Gestapo official to practise obstruction and ca'canny. It was known and understood in Berlin that the French required very delicate handling, involving concessions on the German side unthinkable in Eastern Europe.<sup>120</sup>

Even in the more ideologically rigid SS, the opportunities for evading orders "were both more numerous and more real than those concerned are generally prepared to admit today."<sup>121</sup> The Major's next scene is his most important one and is predicated on his being in grave peril if he disregards orders.

The Major returns high "with drink and a flow of emotion." He surprises Leduc and the young boy trying to escape and warns them against it. He adds, "this is all as inconceivable to me as it is to you." Leduc says he would believe him if the Major shot himself and some of the others. The Major says it would not matter, since they would all be replaced anyway.<sup>122</sup> His answer is one of the more sophisticated rationalizations that were used by Nazis to justify their behavior. The rationalization was that no one man could destroy the Jews, his superiors were doing worse and subordinates would be willing to take his place. The individual was a drop of water in a wave--powerless, replaceable, dispensable.<sup>123</sup>

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<sup>120</sup>Crankshaw, Gestapo: Instrument of Terror, p. 144.

<sup>121</sup>Hans Buchheim, Anatomy of the SS State, p. 373. Buchheim notes that the belief that an SS man who refused to carry out orders risked being shot out of hand or sent to a concentration camp is part of the SS legend of sternness, p. 381.

<sup>122</sup>Miller, Incident at Vichy, p. 55.

<sup>123</sup>Hilberg, Destruction of the European Jews, p. 661.

In one of the highlights of the play, the Major asks Leduc, "Why do you deserve to live more than I do?" Leduc replies that he is better because he could not do what the Major is doing. Leduc then tells the Major he would be loved if he, the Major, sacrificed himself. The Major resolves his ambivalence about his role with a nihilistic and anti-Semitic outburst:

There are no persons anymore, don't you see that? There will never be persons again. What do I care if you love me? Are you out of your mind? What am I a dog that I must be loved? You--turning to all of them--goddamned Jews! Like dogs, Jew-dogs. Look at him--indicating the Old Jew--with his paws folded. Look what happens when I yell at him. Dog! He doesn't move. Does he move? Do you see him moving? He strides to the professor and takes him by the arm. But we move, don't we? We measure your noses, don't we, Herr Professor, and we look at your cocks, we keep moving continually.<sup>124</sup>

The Major is seriously disturbed by what he believes and then turns his anger against the Jews. His speech reflects the Nazi emphasis on self-effacement and the sacrifice of individual self-interest as well as responsibility.<sup>125</sup> The Major's speech is remarkably similar to a comment made by the Nazi ideologist Alfred Rosenberg:

A human being in himself (an sich) is nothing, he is capable of personality only in so far as he is integrated, mind and soul, into an organic succession of thousands of his race.  
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The Major's speech also reflects the stress on activity in Nazism as opposed to ideology.

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<sup>124</sup>Miller, Incident at Vichy, pp. 56-57.

<sup>125</sup>Broszat, German National Socialism: 1919-1945, p. 89.

<sup>126</sup>Alfred Rosenberg quoted in Robert Cecil, The Myth of the Master Race: Alfred Rosenberg and Nazi Ideology (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1972), p. 147.

The Major then explains to Leduc why there are no persons anymore: "I have you at the end of this revolver--indicates the Professor--he has me--and somebody has somebody else."<sup>127</sup> His rationalization is akin to the most sophisticated one used by the Nazis--the Jungle theory derived from Oswald Spengler: "War is the primeval policy of all things, and . . . in the deepest sense combat and life are identical. . . ."<sup>128</sup> The use of the Major's rationalizations were an added dimension to the portrayal of Nazis.

The play ends after Leduc escapes and the Major faces Von Berg:

A look of anguish and fury is stiffening in the Major's face; he is closing his fists; they stand there, forever incomprehensible to one another, looking into each other's eyes.<sup>129</sup>

The Major is not on stage long, but there is development in his character. It was described by Edward Murray in Arthur Miller,

Dramatist:

The Major moves from a distinctly human concern that he be well-thought of through his claim that the evil is inconceivable to him, through growing guilt feelings and resultant

<sup>127</sup>Miller, Incident at Vichy, p. 57.

<sup>128</sup>Hilberg, The Destruction of the European Jews, pp. 658-662. Hilberg lists the five rationalizations in ascending order of sophistication as:

1. The doctrine of superior orders.
2. Not acting out of personal vindictiveness, simply a duty, etc.
3. One's own action not criminal, next fellow's is.
4. No man alone can destroy the Jews.
5. The Jungle theory--war is the primeval policy of all living things. Used by those who saw through all the other self-deceptions.

The Major had used the fourth rationalization earlier.

<sup>129</sup>Miller, Incident at Vichy, p. 73.

rage against his accusers, to a stance in which he denies freedom of the will and, in the process of renouncing this human faculty, cuts himself off "forever" from comprehending the purposes of a man like Berg.<sup>130</sup>

The portrayal of the Major was noted approvingly by most of the critics. One critic described the Major as "a tormented, twisted but valorous Nazi" and praised Holbrook's performance for making us "not only see but feel the furies that lie and writhe inside the Nazi officer."<sup>131</sup> Another said the Major "demonstrates how a latent individual kindness can be systematically blackened into hatred."<sup>132</sup> These comments would not indicate a stereotyped Nazi, but he was seen that way by others. Douglas Watts, who felt the play was "claptrap," noted that the "neurotic German" had a "dueling scar."<sup>133</sup> And another critic commented, "Hal Holbrook is a standard Nazi-with-no-stomach-for-this."<sup>134</sup>

The portrayal of the Major does rest heavily on the concept that his orders are a matter of life and death and, as such, is somewhat stereotyped. However, the Nazi's rationalizations for his behavior are insightful.<sup>135</sup>

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<sup>130</sup>Edward Murray, Arthur Miller, Dramatist (New York: Frederick Unger Publishing Co., 1967), pp. 170-171.

<sup>131</sup>Whitney Bolton, New York Morning Telegraph, 5 December 1964.

<sup>132</sup>Louis Chapin, Christian Science Monitor, 8 December 1964.

<sup>133</sup>Douglas Watts, New York Daily News, 4 December 1964.

<sup>134</sup>Martin Gottfried, Women's Wear Daily, 4 December 1964.

<sup>135</sup>Harold Clurman directed the play and in his "Director's Notes" he said the spine of the role of the Major was "To carry out orders." He said when the Major becomes confident he will follow orders, "He very nearly 'glories' in the fact that he shall



The other Nazi in the play is a racial anthropologist, Professor Hoffman, who has few lines and is not developed. While there were such German professors, Hoffman's presence in Vichy, like the Major's, was highly unlikely. Hoffman's function in the play is to examine the Jews for facial characteristics and to see if they are circumcised. The character Lebeau says that the police picked him up and measured his nose, and the Major repeats the idea. The probability of these activities occurring was also very low.

The Nazis had divided the population into "'Aryans,' who were people with no Jewish ancestors, and 'non-Aryans,' who were all persons . . . who had at least one Jewish parent or grandparent." The definition was "in no sense based on racial criteria. . . ." The sole criterion of the "racial laws" was the religion of the person's ancestors. "After all, the Nazis were not interested in the 'Jewish nose.' They were interested in the 'Jewish influence.'"<sup>136</sup> The Vichy government had used the same criteria for their definition of Jews as the Nazis had (the Nuremberg principles).<sup>137</sup>

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succeed in doing so." Clurman's interpretation is analogous to the lowest level of rationalization of the five levels listed by Hilberg (see page 46). However, as discussed earlier, the Major's lines do indicate the higher, more sophisticated levels of rationalization. (Harold Clurman, "Arthur Miller's Later Plays" in Arthur Miller: A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. Robert W. Corrigan (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1969), pp. 158-159.

<sup>136</sup>Hilberg, The Destruction of the European Jews, p. 45.

<sup>137</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 393.

The Nazis did attempt to identify physical appearances of "races" but succeeded only in determining desirable Nordic features-- a person could be blue-eyed and blonde and still be a Jew.<sup>138</sup> If there is a possibility that Hoffman's activities did occur, the evidence suggests, in any case, they would not have been carried out by a German.

In discussing Incident at Vichy, some critics commented on the worthiness of Nazism as a dramatic topic. Richard Watts, Jr., said "the subject of Nazi race savagery in wartime and its implications is not likely to become outdated for years." However, he added that any play dealing with the subject would be hackneyed without a new angle and that Miller did not provide a new angle.<sup>139</sup> Martin Gottfried said "it takes no great mind to point up the horror and simple illogic of the Nazi massacres" nor the "Jewish victim-syndrome" and that it was all "very holy-roller and very, very dull."<sup>140</sup>

As in earlier periods, the critics discussed the proper time for portraying an historical subject. During World War II, the critics observed that the subject of Nazism was too close at hand. However, Walter Kerr, who disliked Incident at Vichy, said the subject was too close even in 1964:

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<sup>138</sup>Von Maltitz, The Evolution of Hitler's Germany, p. 56. The Nazis had printed a pamphlet titled "The Subhuman." However, the ideology of race became very confusing and fell into total disarray. Cecil, The Myth of the Master Race, pp. 198-199.

<sup>139</sup>Richard Watts, Jr., New York Post, 4 December 1964.

<sup>140</sup>Martin Gottfried, Women's Wear Daily, 4 December 1964.

The matter is so recent and so serious, and we are all of us so engaged in it, that we scarcely dare acknowledge our dissatisfaction with its theatrical cloaking.<sup>141</sup>

Conversely, Douglas Watt complained that Incident at Vichy was a wartime drama and that it "might have been a smash hit had it been presented at that time."<sup>142</sup>

Incident at Vichy ran 99 performances in repertory at the Lincoln Center and was included as one of the ten best plays in The Best Plays of 1964-65.<sup>143</sup>

#### Postmark Zero

Postmark Zero<sup>144</sup> by Robert Nemiroff was produced November 1, 1965. It was based on the book Last Letters from Stalingrad by Frank Schneider and Charles Gullans and other factual material. The playbill referred to Postmark Zero as "a documentary production." The cast was headed by Vivica Lindfors, John Hefferman and Hardy Krueger, who had been in the German army as a youth.<sup>145</sup>

The book Last Letters from Stalingrad was a collection of letters to and from German soldiers at Stalingrad. The letters had been intercepted and delivered to a central consorship bureau,

<sup>141</sup>Quoted in Sheila Hoftel, Arthur Miller: The Burning Glass (New York: Citadel Press, 1965), pp. 230-231.

<sup>142</sup>Douglas Watt, New York Daily News, 4 December 1964.

<sup>143</sup>Otis L. Guernsey, Jr., ed., The Best Plays of 1964-65 (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1965).

<sup>144</sup>Robert Nemiroff, Postmark Zero, Typescript, Theatre Collection, New York Public Library.

<sup>145</sup>Richard P. Cooks, Wall Street Journal, 3 November 1965. Another cast member, Curt Lowen, had appeared as an SS Guard in Stalag 17 (1951).

signatures were removed, and the letters were submitted to intense analysis to ascertain the morale of the troops. The object was to prove to the world that the iron fighting elan of the German soldier, his faith in the Fuehrer and Fatherland could not be shaken even at Stalingrad.<sup>146</sup> Other factual material in the production included quotes from speeches and orders of Hitler, Goering and Himmler and also German and Russian documents. The production expressed the suffering, terror and hatred in the letters, incidents on the home front, and official positions.<sup>147</sup>

There is only one letter to or from each soldier, and, therefore, no continuity or development occurs in any characterization. The letters present a broad and varied picture of the soldiers. One letter affirms a strong belief in anti-Semitism:

Jews, Jews and more Jews--it is exactly as the Fuehrer wrote, twenty years ago: "Everywhere the eternal mushroom of humanity!" Yes, liebchen, even here at Stalingrad.

The writer then expresses amazement that a Russian Commander of a division is Jewish with the title "Hero of the Soviet Union" and that Russian prisoners had no shame about it.<sup>148</sup> In another letter, an officer confesses that he bears a share of the nation's guilt for its deeds. Another young officer complains bitterly to his father, a general, for believing in Germany's destiny.

There are several orders concerning the soldiers. One order says that no officer is allowed to be taken prisoner but

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<sup>146</sup>Nemiroff, Postmark Zero, Act I, p. 33.

<sup>147</sup>Ibid., Act I, p. 33.

<sup>148</sup>Ibid., Act I, p. 43.

must shoot himself. The order adds, "However, premature suicide is forbidden. Heil Hitler!"<sup>149</sup> Hitler's voice is heard,

Surrender is forbidden. Sixth Army will hold their position to the last man and the last round and by their heroic endurance make an unforgettable contribution toward the establishment of a defensive front and the salvation of-the-Western-World! Adolph Hitler.<sup>150</sup>

One reviewer commented "The voice of Hitler thunders and screeches above and around them as he insists to the end that Stalingrad is his."<sup>151</sup>

Postmark Zero presented the most direct and brutal portrayal of Nazis and Nazism to date. (It preceeded Peter Weiss' The Investigation by over a year.) A colonel reminds the Sixth Army of Field Marshall von Reichenau's order of October 10, 1941, regarding attitudes to be adopted on the eastern front:

The most important object of this campaign against the Jewish-Bolshevik system is the complete . . . extermination of the Asiatic influence in European civilization. In this connection there devolve upon the troops tasks which go beyond the confines of normal duty. . . . To provide the local population and war prisoners with food is unnecessary humanitarianism. . . . The soldier must learn to fully appreciate the necessity for the severe but just retribution that must be meted out to the sub-human species.<sup>152</sup>

Himmler is heard telling the SS that if other nations starve to death it is of no consequence. If 10,000 Russian women die digging a tank ditch, he says it matters only insofar as the

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<sup>149</sup>Ibid., Act II, p. 16.

<sup>150</sup>Ibid., Act II, p. 35.

<sup>151</sup>Whitney Bolton, New York Morning Telegraph, 3 November 1965.

<sup>152</sup>Nemiroff, Postmark Zero, Act I, p. 12.

ditch is completed for Germany. He discusses the extermination of Jews and tells the men how wonderful it is that in spite of the corpses they have seen--a hundred, five hundred, a thousand--they "have remained decent fellows."<sup>153</sup> In other instruction, Himmler orders the kidnapping of 50,000 children ages 10 to 14 for labor in Germany under the official code name "Hay Action."<sup>154</sup>

The above speeches pale in comparison to the account by a German engineer named Graebe, who was stationed in the Ukraine in 1942. Graebe described the activities of an Einsatzgruppe (the Einsatzgruppen were the first mobile killing units). Graebe described a killing pit. He said men, women and children were ordered to take off their clothes and that he saw a pile of eight hundred to a thousand pairs of shoes. He continued,

Without screaming or weeping, these people undressed, stood around in family groups, kissed each other, said farewells, and waited for the sign from the SS man who stood beside the pit with a whip in hand. During the fifteen minutes I stood near, I heard no complaint or pleas for mercy. . . . An old woman with snow-white hair was holding this one-year-old child in her arms and singing and tickling it. The child was cooing with delight. The parents were looking on with tears in their eyes. The father was holding the hand of a boy about ten years old and speaking to him softly; the boy was fighting back tears. The father pointed towards the sky, stroked the boy's head, and seemed to explain something to him. . . . I looked for the man who did the shooting. He was an SS-man who sat at the edge of the narrow end of the pit, his feet dangling into it. He had a tommy gun on his knees and was smoking a cigarette.<sup>155</sup>

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<sup>153</sup>Ibid., Act II, p. 29. Himmler's full speech can also be found in Anatomy of the SS, "Command and Compliance, Hans Buchheim, pp. 334-335.

<sup>154</sup>Ibid., Act II, p. 1.

<sup>155</sup>Ibid., Act II, p. 29. Graebe's account can also be found in Crankshaw, Gestapo, pp. 177-179.

The production ranged from such descriptions to a letter from Frau Stock thanking Maximillian for the "elegant silver" from Krakow and telling him that "Frau Bauer received a terribly handsome sable from her Klanschen, and these days especially, one must do what one can to keep up appearances. A mother, too, must carry on. Heil Hitler." The play ends:

First Voice

Santayana said it: "Those who do not remember the past are condemned to relive it."

Second

To a city on the Volga came 330,000 men.

Third

5,008 returned alive.

Fourth

Tonight you have heard from some of them.<sup>156</sup>

Postmark Zero presented the most detailed account of Nazi racial policies and atrocities of any play in the study. However, the focus was on the thoughts of the doomed German soldiers. The critics generally praised the moral intention of the play. But, Harold Taubman and others said that it was not possible to evoke sympathy for even the "contritest German" because of the "memories of the horrors and crimes the Germans visited on the Russians and all their other victims."<sup>157</sup> Walter Kerr said reading the letters "would surely be moving," and that they would be better on film soundtrack with "graphic counterpoint." He added that the theatre, even with "half-hearted use of film . . . is bound to falter as a

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<sup>156</sup> Ibid., Act II, p. 36.

<sup>157</sup> Harold Taubman, New York Times, 2 November 1965.

medium for arranging fragments with cumulative force."<sup>158</sup> Postmark Zero closed after 8 performances.

It was five years before the next portrayal of a Nazi by an American playwright. However, several foreign plays dealing with Nazism were produced in the interim. First was The Condemned of Altona by Jean-Paul Sartre, produced February 3, 1966, which dealt with the degrees of guilt felt by members of a non-Nazi German industrial family for having played along with the Nazis. It ran 46 performances in repertory at the Lincoln Center. An off-Broadway production called The World of Gunter Grass by Dennis Rosa characterized the work of the German novelist-poet Gunter Grass and commented on Hitler and his aftermath. It ran 80 performances. Next was Peter Weiss' The Investigation, produced December 31, 1966, which utilized the transcript of the 1963 war crimes trial held in Frankfurt, West Germany. It ran 103 performances. Finally, there was the successful production of Robert Shaw's The Man in the Glass Booth, which opened September 26, 1968, and ran 268 performances.

#### Happy Birthday, Wanda June

The final play in the period was Happy Birthday, Wanda June<sup>159</sup> by Kurt Vonnegut, Jr. Vonnegut was already well-known as a novelist, but this was his first attempt at a play. The play had opened off-Broadway October 7, 1970, and ran 47 performances before it was

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<sup>158</sup>Walter Kerr, New York Herald-Tribune, 2 November 1965.

<sup>159</sup>Kurt Vonnegut, Jr., Happy Birthday, Wanda June (New York: Dell Publishing Company, 1970).



closed by an Equity strike of off-Broadway productions. It reopened on Broadway December 22, 1970.

The play is a put-down of the Hemingway type of hero. Harold Ryan is a modern Ulysses who returns home after several years in the Amazon jungle to find his wife pursued by suitors and his young son harboring strange ideas. Three of the twelve scenes in the play take place in heaven. There are three ghosts in the heaven scenes: Wanda June, a little girl who was killed on her birthday by an ice cream truck; Mildred, one of Harold's ex-wives, who died of alcoholism; and Major Siegfried Von Konigswald, a Nazi who had been killed by Ryan in World War II. There is much "black humor" in the play, and the Nazi is presented in that manner. Before Von Konigswald appears, Harold Ryan has told his son how he murdered "The Beast of Yugoslavia," Von Konigswald, with piano wire.

In the first of two brief scenes, Von Konigswald has a monologue. He identifies himself as The Beast of Yugoslavia "an account of all the people I had tortured and shot--and hanged." He describes how he murdered them--"Bopping, electricity, syringes." And because a train wreck had created a surplus of oranges, they even killed one man with a syringe of orange juice. Von Konigswald comments on Ryan's claim of having killed two hundred men. "I killed a hundred times that many, I bet" and adds, "That's still peanuts, of course, compared to what that crazy Looseleaf did." (Ryan's friend Looseleaf had dropped the bomb on Nagasaki.) Von Konigswald argues that he and Ryan did it "the hard way" and that

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the record books should show that. He says Ryan killed him as revenge for the man he killed with orange juice, and comments:

If I'd lived through the war, and they tried me for war crimes and all that, I'd have to tell the court, I guess, "I was only following orders, as a good soldier should. Hitler told me to kill this guy with orange juice."<sup>160</sup>

In his next scene, Von Konigswald appears with Wanda June and Mildred. He is playing shuffleboard because everyone in heaven does, including Hitler, Einstein, Mozart, Lewis Carroll, Jack the Ripper, Walt Disney, and Jesus Christ. He jokes about the warm-up jackets in heaven and says he's going to get a pink one with a yellow streak up the back with the words, "The Harold Ryan Fan Club."<sup>161</sup>

Von Konigswald's brutal Nazi traits are not only boldly explicit, they are humorously conveyed and given the sanctity of a Christian heaven. Mass murder, torture and Hitler are all one with Einstein, Mozart and Christ. There is also satire in the SS man's name; the two syllables of Siegfried mean "victory" and "peace."

In spite of the seemingly audacious presentation of the SS man, there is a safeness to the portrayal. First, Von Konigswald's victims are neutralized as "people" and "guys" rather than Jews, Poles, or other specific ethnic groups. Second, Vonnegut's label for Von Konigswald, The Beast of Yugoslavia,

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<sup>160</sup>Ibid., pp. 76-79.

<sup>161</sup>Ibid., pp. 136-138.

is historically improbable<sup>162</sup> and does not have the connotations that other words more readily associated with Nazism do have-- Poland, Auschwitz, Dachau, etc.

In 1934, after the first few portrayals of Nazis, Burns Mantle suggested ridicule over melodrama as a better way of attacking Nazism. Vonnegut's portrayal of Von Konigswald does ridicule Nazism, but Von Konigswald himself is also funny. Thus, he is a villain, but a funny villain, and his opposition is Harold Ryan, the playwright's main target for derision. And, Von Konigswald's friends are his heavenly compatriots. The writer saw the Broadway production of the play and Von Konigswald's scenes seemed fully acceptable to the audience. One reviewer said Louis Turenne "sparks myriad titters" in the role of Von Konigswald.<sup>163</sup> Another said he could not understand "what that Nazi butcher was doing [in heaven]."<sup>164</sup>

The play received mixed reactions. Some critics found it disappointing. Clive Barnes said it was not much of a play but that it was "a decently, sometimes indecently, diverting evening."<sup>165</sup>

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<sup>162</sup>In 1941, Hitler decided to destroy Yugoslavia and split it up between Germany, Italy, Hungary, and Bulgaria. The Germans created a new country called Croatia and occupied that area. (Hilberg, The Destruction of the European Jews, pp. 453-454. Dawidowicz, The War Against the Jews, p. 390.) The SS was in Croatia and Serbia, both former parts of Yugoslavia. The brutalities in these areas, especially to the Jews, were devastating. (Dawidowicz, The War Against the Jews, pp. 341-342, Rich, Hitler's War Aims, 2:263-298.)

<sup>163</sup>Variety, 21 October 1970.

<sup>164</sup>Richard Watts, New York Post, 7 November 1970.

<sup>165</sup>Clive Barnes, New York Times, 8 October 1970.

Walter Kerr praised Vonnegut's "imaginative mind" for looking at the "insane world we inhabit" and reporting it in "unmournful numbers that none of the rest of us would ever have used." Kerr considered the play a Punch and Judy show with shortcomings but found "the thwack and the quack irresistible."<sup>166</sup> The play ran a total of 143 performances.

### Conclusion

While there was an overall pattern in the postwar period--all but one of the plays (Temper the Wind) portrayed military Nazis--the characterizations and the plays were as diverse and varied as the period itself. The Nazis ranged from buffoons (Happy Birthday, Wanda June) to documentary presentations (Postmark Zero), and there was no discernable pattern in the characters themselves. The presentation of collaborators began in the last period and continued in this period in The Assassin and The Wall. The latter play contained the most unique Nazi, the Jewish policeman.

Most of the Nazi characters, as in the preceding period, were very minor characters used primarily as background--The Assassin, Stalag 17, Fragile Fox, The Hidden River, The Wall, and Happy Birthday, Wanda June. However, even among these plays, there was considerable delineation of Nazi traits in The Hidden River (General Kittler) and The Wall (the Jewish policeman). Although it was relatively brief, the most probing portrayal in the period was the Major in Incident at Vichy. The portrayal of the Major and of the Jewish policeman in The Wall added new dimensions to the stage Nazis.

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<sup>166</sup>Walter Kerr, New York Times, 18 October 1970.

There was no pattern in the settings for the Nazi character. The military Nazi were portrayed on their own territory as in Stalag 17, in occupied territory (The Assassin, The Hidden River, The Wall, and Incident at Vichy) and in dire, hostile circumstances (Temper the Wind, Fragile Fox, and Postmark Zero).

Most of the plays contained villainous Nazis, but, again, they were more diverse than in preceeding period. The range of villains included the most brutal (The Wall, Postmark Zero), erudite and urbane (The Hidden River), ideological (The Assassin, Temper the Wind, Incident at Vichy), and comical (Stalag 17, Happy Birthday, Wanda June). Violence was implied in many of the plays but was portrayed directly in only two of the plays--Stalag 17 and The Wall. One major change in this period was that many of the Nazis' opponents were portrayed as less than admirable or completely disagreeable. This type of opposition appeared in several plays, including Temper the Wind, Fragile Fox, The Hidden River, and The Wall.

In his book Broadway, Brooks Atkinson said the 1950-1970 period was difficult to chronicle. He said, "No generalizations and no rationalizations are completely true."<sup>167</sup> It is also true of the portrayals of Nazis in that long post-war span 1945-1970. During the war, the critics had suggested many times that the treatment of Nazism would have to wait for the post-war period. However, Arthur Miller was the only notable American playwright who handled the subject. Any impression the Broadway audience had about

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<sup>167</sup> Brooks Atkinson, Broadway (New York: Macmillan Company, 1970), p. 423.

dramatized Nazis at the close of this period was probably derived from European playwrights.

## CHAPTER VII

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to relate the history of the portrayal of Nazi characters on Broadway by American playwrights from 1933 to 1970. The chapters on the various periods dealt with three questions: (1) A description and analysis of the characterizations in a context of America's cognizance of and relationship to Nazism. (2) An evaluation of the accuracy of the portrayals from historical perspective. (3) Patterns of developments in the characterizations and functions of the Nazi characters. This chapter will summarize the patterns and developments in each period with comments on the trends and shifts that occurred and observations on the degree of success the plays attained. The chapter will end with the implications for further study.

The Nazi characterizations in the first period, 1933-1939, varied from storm troopers to judges, but both the portrayals and the plays had similarities. The major traits attributed to the Nazis were anti-Semitism and anti-Communism. The hero-opponents (or victims) were, of course, Jews and Communists. The portrayals of the Nazis were quite accurate and served primarily as a warning against Nazism. Since all the Nazis were portrayed on their home territory (Germany), their opponents were particularly vulnerable



and the Nazis particularly villainous. Not surprisingly, all of the plays portrayed Nazi violence.

While the portrayals of the first period were intended as an alarm against the rise of Nazism, they were not infrequently viewed as alarmist. The characters were relatively unknown quantities to the audiences, and the playwrights were burdened with furnishing the necessary information. The plays as a whole stressed the nature of the SA, Volkisch thoughts, and the goals of National Socialism. Those elements described the story of Nazi Germany, but it seemed unbelievable on the stage. In 1940, Henry R. Luce commented on the failure of Nazi portrayals previous to that time.<sup>1</sup> (His comments are especially helpful because they deal with the nature of the villains and heroes in the plays.) Luce said that all the critics had used the same excuse that the real facts about Nazism were so terrific "that not even the most inspired make-believer could possibly achieve emotional validity."<sup>2</sup> He disagreed and said that in almost all the plays "the Nazi characters were credible" and that "Powerful individual Nazis have been got on stage. . . ." "The real difficulty" he said, "has been to get on stage a convincing rebuttal to National Socialism." He explained:

Many characters have been created who convincingly reflect an environment of Brutality, Dictatorship, Regimentation and

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<sup>1</sup>Luce was married to Clare Boothe and he wrote an introduction to her successful play, Margin for Error, in which he examined the failure of past anti-Nazi plays and the success of his wife's play. Henry R. Luce, Introduction to Margin for Error, by Clare Boothe (New York: Random House, 1940), pp. vii-xx.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. xiii.

Untruth. But few characters adequately reflect an environment of Freedom and Kindness and Justice and Truth--an environment, at the very least, of faith in the public and private virtues.<sup>3</sup>

The difficulty, then, of creating successful anti-Nazi plays "is not with the antagonist of Freedom, but with its champions." The Nazis' opponents in this period were mostly non-American Jews and Communists and, as such, were hardly empathic American heroes--champions, splendid performers, socially acceptable, and servants of admirable groups. They were, in fact, idealizations of the little-man (fascist-communist heroes). The portrayals of the Nazis in this period were accurate and valid, but the plays did not provide an acceptable dramatic context.

One other factor diverted attention from the Nazi portrayals in this period. The major concern of the country was the Depression and it required a villain who could be blamed for the major problems facing the country--the businessman. In a dissertation titled "The Characterization of the Businessman in American Drama," Elmer Rosenthal Oettinger, Jr., said of the beginning of the decade:

But the theatre was only pausing for a wind which blew remnants of the muckraker and Babbit era's distrust of the businessman into gales of new-found scorn and hate. Within two years the greedy, bumbling tycoon in the drama of the 1920's was to become the symbol of Capitalist decadence in the plays of the 1930's, the "enemy" of the people.<sup>4</sup>

The portrayals were intense; "The business entrepreneur was myopic, mindless, brutal as never before."<sup>5</sup> The businessman in the films

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<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. xiv.

<sup>4</sup>Elmer Rosenthal Oettinger, Jr., "The Characterization of the Businessman in American Drama" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of North Carolina, 1966), pp. 134-135.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 287.

of the 1930's also "became a useful villain for the comedies and dramas of social conscience. . . ." <sup>6</sup> As long as the Depression remained the social setting, the Nazis were upstaged.

The plays of the first period were not well received. However, the critics who approved the warnings about Nazism, but not the plays, went out of their way to insist they were not against such plays.

The next period, 1939-1941, was the shortest one and contained the fewest plays, but it had more notable playwrights than any other period--Clare Boothe, Robert Sherwood, Elmer Rice, and Maxwell Anderson. The period opened with Clare Boothe's successful Margin for Error. Henry R. Luce offered an explanation for the success of the play. He said the satire of the play demonstrated that "Americans were afraid of the kind of thinking where thought is fused with emotion--the only kind of thinking which leads to conclusions and actions." <sup>7</sup> Luce noted that the critics and the public preferred ridicule and satire as the only weapon to fight Nazism. However, Clare Boothe had written her play before the

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<sup>6</sup>Leslie Halliwell, The Filmgoer's Companion, 3rd ed. (New York: Hill and Wang, 1970), p. 113. There were no anti-Nazi films in the period. A Belgian anti-Nazi film was offered to New York distributors in 1933, but no one took it. (Abel Green, Show Biz, from Vaude to Video (New York: H. Holt and Company, 1951), p. 472.) An anti-Nazi Russian film of the play Professor Mamlock was shown in 1938 (New York Times, 8 November 1938). The first anti-Nazi film from Hollywood was Confessions of a Nazi Spy in 1939. (Halliwell, The Filmgoer's Companion, p. 228.)

<sup>7</sup>Luce, Introduction, p. ix.

invasion of Poland. The rest of the plays in the period were not satires, but serious treatments of the theme.

The Nazis were markedly different in the second period. Most of them were officials and diplomats. They were less brutal, more intellectual and more ideological. There was a greater stress on the main ideas of Hitler--the Darwinistic concept of struggle, racial superiority, and the Fuhrerprinzip. Nearly all were placed in settings outside Germany, often in vulnerable situations, and most were in no position to cause violence to others. Their opponents now included Americans, American Jews, and Nazis who became anti-Nazis. They were more heroic and fully acceptable as American heroes.

The plays of this period, 1939-1941, are usually considered as interventionist. What is notable is that as the United States moved steadily into an inextricable involvement in the war, the Nazis were made "safer" on the stage. They threatened their opponents with their ideology rather than with physical force. Even when they were a physical menace, it was possible to convert them by persuasion. The plays were interventionist, but they posited an ideological conflict. The heroes in these plays defeat the Nazis with words.

In Margin for Error, Moe, the Jewish policeman, effortlessly and humorously puts down the Consul's claims for Nazism and remarks against Democracy. At the end of The Man with Blond Hair, the Nazi cries out for ideological salvation. In Flight to the West, Ingraham says "it's not their way of life that will win in the end, but ours"

and he later adds, "That's the issue: rational madness against irrational sanity."<sup>8</sup> Even where the Nazis were in control, as in Candle in the Wind, Madelaine tells Colonel Erfurt, "A cold wind of hatred blows at you from every corner of the earth! You have felt that wind before and you know what it means. It means you will lose."<sup>9</sup> She has the last word in the play; "In the history of the world, there have been wars between men and beasts. And the beasts have always lost, and men have won."<sup>10</sup> In There Shall Be No Night, Dr. Valkonen does not speak of Nazis. However, he hears the sounds of war and says it is not the death rattle of civilization:

I believe it is the long deferred death rattle of the primordial beast. We have in us the power to conquer bestiality, not with our muscles and our swords, but with the power of the light that is in our minds.<sup>11</sup>

Henry R. Luce had complained that Americans did not want "thinking where thought is fused with emotion" because that kind of thinking "leads to conclusions and actions." The plays of this period did lead to conclusions--that one ideology was superior to another--but they were hardly a call to arms. It should be recalled they were written in an atmosphere of intense conflict between isolationists and interventionists. In his preface to There Shall Be No Night,

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<sup>8</sup>Rice, Flight to the West, p. 150.

<sup>9</sup>Anderson, Candle in the Wind, p. 115.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., p. 116.

<sup>11</sup>Sherwood, There Shall Be No Night, p. 153.

Robert Sherwood, in fear of his self-respect, said, "I was terrified of identifying myself as a 'Warmonger.'"

The most successful play in this period dealing with the theme of Nazism did not have Nazi characters in it. It was Lillian Hellman's Watch on the Rhine<sup>12</sup> (April 1, 1941) which received the Drama Critics' Circle Award and ran 378 performances. The play and the reactions to it provide an excellent clarification of the receptivity to Nazism in dreams during this period.

#### Watch on the Rhine

The success of and the nature of the villainy and heroism in it was discussed by Irwin Shaw in 1946. Shaw said the play succeeded because it

avoided criticism through omissions. . . . It was presented at a time when France and England were at war and we were not. Its hero was a German anti-Fascist, ready to give his life for the defeat of the Nazis. Yet . . . no mention was ever made of the fact that two great governments were at war with the German nation. The reason for that may have been that America was severely divided then into anti-war and pro-war parties and Miss Hellman did not want to split her audience up the middle by realistic frankness.<sup>13</sup>

As noted earlier,<sup>14</sup> the play had been praised by the then strongly isolationist Daily Worker, particularly because the play suggests

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<sup>12</sup>See Chapter IV, pp. 33-34.

<sup>13</sup>Shaw, Preface to The Assassin, pp. xxv-xxvi. Shaw had been bitter about the failure in New York of his play The Assassin which had been "warmly received in London." He is quoted because his use of "villainy" and "heroism" closely follow the methodology of this study. Also, critical responses corroborate his views.

<sup>14</sup>See Chapter IV, pp. 33-34.

internal revolution in Germany as the answer to Nazism. Shaw also commented that

. . . the particular nature of the hero's politics was left vague. The reason for that might be found in the fact that most of the underground opposition to Hitler originated in the German Communist Party and a Communist hero would have forfeited sympathy of the conservative New York audience.<sup>15</sup>

Shaw described the hero as being flawlessly noble, unhesitatingly brave, a perfect husband and father, forever faithful, warm and understanding, and added that Muller's "place in the audience's heart is triumphantly cemented by the possession of an equally noble and flawless wife and three noble and amusing children."<sup>16</sup> And he also observed that the Americans in the play "who were sitting by while the world burned" were "charming and redeemable, and at worst childishly thoughtless."

Shaw's obvious distaste for the play makes his comments sound exaggerated, but they accurately describe the very qualities in the play the critics liked. Muller's heroism was praised extensively and the critics did note his "loyal wife and three gallant children."<sup>17</sup> The villain in the play, the Rumanian Count, was described as a "scoundrel," "degraded," "despicable," "venal," and "unscrupulous." And one critic was pleased that the count was "not even a pro-Hitlerite."<sup>18</sup> The critics were also pleased that the

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<sup>15</sup>Shaw, Preface, p. xxvi.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid.

<sup>17</sup>Richard Watts, Jr., Review of Watch on the Rhine, New York Herald-Tribune, 2 April 1941.

word "fascism" was used throughout the play rather than "Nazism." The tone of the criticism was that it was the best anti-Nazi play because there was not "a uniform in sight or a 'Heil Hitler' salute in the entire piece."<sup>19</sup>

Brooks Atkinson said that many playwrights had tried to "create stirring drama out of the barbarism of Nazi despotism" and pointed out how inadequate the stage was for that genuine truth. He felt that "Only 'Watch on the Rhine' measured up to the terrible realities."<sup>20</sup> Louis Kronenberger also praised the play as "the real anti-Nazi play of our times."<sup>21</sup> Watch on the Rhine continued to be praised as one of the best plays inspired by the war.<sup>22</sup> The dramatic merit of Watch on the Rhine is not of import here. What is significant is the complementary nature of Irwin Shaw's negative comments and the praise of the critics. The two opposing viewpoints conjoin into the view that the most acceptable Nazism on stage at that time was the least Nazism.

Only one critic, John Anderson, had voiced something akin to Shaw's complaint about Watch on the Rhine. Anderson said, "The whole conflict of ideas in the play is, in fact, curiously out of focus, as if Miss Hellman were dealing with the subject at arm's

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<sup>19</sup>Brooklyn Citizen, 2 April 1941.

<sup>20</sup>Brooks Atkinson, New York Times, 2 March 1942, sec. 8, p. 1.

<sup>21</sup>Louis Kronenberger, PM, 2 April 1941.

<sup>22</sup>George F. Wicher, "The Twentieth Century" in The Literature of the American People, edited by Arthur Hobson Quinn (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1951).



length."<sup>23</sup> The plays with Nazis in this period did have a clear focus on the conflict of ideas--Nazi ideology versus Democratic ideals. But most of the Nazis were armed only with their ideology and the playwrights conquered them with their superior ideology. There was however another subject that was "curiously out of focus" in these plays--the war in Europe--and that subject was kept at arm's length.

The portrayals from 1941-1945 were less successful critically and commercially than those of the preceeding period.

With few exceptions, the Nazis in this period were also the least defined of any period. Most of them were Nazi occupation troops in various countries and, as perfunctory, generalized villains, served as foils to heroic allies.

There was a new Nazi introduced in this period, the collaborator, who appeared in The Moon Is Down and Common Ground. Ironically, the American collaborator in Common Ground, Ted Williamson, proved to be the most extreme racist in the study and the only character whose racism was clearly a totalizing and reflexive myth, enabling him to substitute a mythical reality for objective reality.

If most of the characterizations in the period aroused little interest, the one exception was extraordinary--a twelve-year-old vicious Nazi who attracted audiences for the 500 performances of Tomorrow the World. The play raised the problems of de-Nazification of German youth; victory over the Nazis was already an assumption.

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<sup>23</sup> John Anderson, New York Journal-American, 2 April 1941.

Emil Bruckner, the young Nazi, was the fullest characterization of a Nazi to date, but it is doubtful that that was the play's attraction. Most critics attributed the success of the play to Skippy Homeir's performance of Emil. Another factor which helped the play was the setting--it was the home of an admirable and likeable American family who have a problem--how to convert a Nazi. If Emil Bruckner was a successful villain it was due at least in part because his opposition was also successful. They were more familiar and acceptable than the heroes of the other plays in the period.

Insofar as the premise that acceptable villains require acceptable heroes is valid, the wartime portrayals of Nazis had another obstacle. George Jean Nathan wrote in the middle of the war that none of the many war plays "has had a theatrically romantic hero." There were no central figures "to warm the cockles of the romantic heart." He said that war had become steadily less "brilliant plumes and shining swords and dazzling uniforms and is increasingly resolved into machine versus machine." He said the "picturesqueness of war" had vanished and with it the "picturesqueness of heroes."<sup>24</sup> These observations coincide with the views of William Manchester and others that the war was grim and simply a business matter to be finished with little fanfare. In the 1933-1939 period the real opponents of Nazis (Jews and Communists)

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<sup>24</sup>George Jean Nathan, "Stage in War and Peace," American Mercury, July 1943, pp. 104-108.

were not very effective dramatically, and in this period, the Nazis seemed to lack opponents who could be dramatically formidable.

The postwar period, 1945-1970, was the least cohesive period, and no valid generalizations can be made about it. Most of the portrayals were military personnel but the characterizations ranged from buffoons to documentary presentations. Stalag 17 was the most commercially successful play in the period. However, Incident at Vichy was the most significant because it attempted to probe the moral level of a Nazi.

The war and its after-math did not appreciably alter the audience's receptivity to Nazism in drama. The most successful play dealing with Nazism was the award-winning Diary of Anne Frank which was produced in 1955 and ran 717 performances. Like Watch on the Rhine, it had no Nazi characters. The Diary of Anne Frank was highly praised. In a foreword to the play, Brooks Atkinson said

None of the documents or statistics related to the abominations of the Nazis is so accusing as this diary. It reminds us that the Nazis murdered not only lives but life. They murdered a radiant part of the future.<sup>25</sup>

Several years later, Walter Kerr referred to the play in a review for The Wall:

It is all there, the record as we know it, the record as we are one and all ashamed of it, the record as it was so magnificently set down once before in "The Diary of Anne Frank."<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Brooks Atkinson, Foreword to The Diary of Anne Frank by Frances Goodrich and Albert Hackett (New York: Random House, 1965), p. ix.

<sup>26</sup> Walter Kerr, New York Herald-Tribune, 12 October 1960.

"The abominations of the Nazis" and "the record as we know it" had been dramatized by the effects of Nazism, not the portrayal of it. As in the discussion of Watch on the Rhine, the merits of The Diary of Anne Frank are not at issue here. But the play, like the earlier one, suggests that the critics and audiences did not prefer direct portrayals of Nazis.

The postwar period was the most varied and eclectic one in regard to attitudes, perceptions, and knowledge about Nazism. Attitudes were shaped from perceptions as diverse as the war crimes trials to the highly popular portrayal of Nazis on the television series Hogan's Heroes. New knowledge about Nazism was developed through the period, not only through events such as the trials, but through scholarship as well. Karl Bracher, a specialist in the Hitler era, said recently, "It took us years to realize that inhuman racism was the very core of Nazi ideology and politics."<sup>27</sup>

In summing up the entire period, 1933-1970, it should be noted that substantially all of the traits of Nazism discussed in Chapter II were used in the various plays. Nazis were principal characters in Waltz in Goose Step, Margin for Error, The Moon Is Down, Tomorrow the World, and Postmark Zero. However, these plays included few attempts to create high levels of characterization. There were supporting characters in fourteen of the plays and subsidiary characters in the remaining eight.

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<sup>27</sup>Karl Bracher, Newsweek, 26 May 1975, p. 72.

Only a few of the plays of the entire study can be considered to have significance: Elmer Rice's Judgment Day was the first attempt to delineate Nazism by a noted playwright; Margin for Error was the first successful play with Nazis in it; Tomorrow the World was the most commercially successful and included a very complete expression of Nazi ideology; Stalag 17 was the most successful play of the postwar period; and Incident at Vichy was the sole attempt to delineate a Nazi by a major playwright since World War II.

The major obstacle to presenting successful Nazi characterizations throughout the study was the critics' apparent belief that Nazism was monolithic and that, therefore, there must be one characterization which would represent the essence of Nazism. The critics and the audiences seemed to want some unattainable stereotype to resolve the problem of what a stage Nazi should be. Throughout the years the portrayals had been described as untruthful, too brutal, too nice, too serious, too funny, but rarely just right. The critics rejected stereotyped brutal Nazis, but they also derided the Nazis in The Moon Is Down.

It is also apparent that Nazism presents a problem as artistic subject matter. Harry Slochower in No Voice Is Wholly Lost (1946) discussed the problems of German writers in exile. He said that upon the initial impact of Nazi terrorism, most of the writers

. . . concentrated on realistic documentation of Nazi brutality in the torture houses and concentration camps. The fascist pattern was not so much presented as assailed

or caricatured. Many shifted from "art" toward a "call to arms."<sup>28</sup>

The comment is a fairly close description of the development of the plays in this study from 1933 to 1941. Slochower then analyzed the problem of depicting Nazism beyond that time:

"Sympathy" in art must extend to the enemy as well. The adversary has to be a noble opposition if catharsis is to be effected. The dramatic tension and morality of classical literature issued from organic inclusion of the "black" elements. Now, fascism is such barbarism that, by comparison with it, oppressive systems of the past appear almost humane. The fascist scene thus places greatest strain on a writer who would meet the aesthetic requirement of lending distance to his theme, of presenting acts in their human motivation.<sup>29</sup>

The ability to handle the theme of Nazism successfully would seem, then, to depend upon sufficient knowledge of the subject, both intellectual and emotional.

In regard to intellectual knowledge, as early as 1944 Hannah Arendt, a German-American sociologist, said that the mass exterminations were manned

neither by fanatics nor by natural murderers nor by sadists. It was manned solely and exclusively by normal human being of the type of Heinrich Himmler.<sup>30</sup>

Since that time, an accumulation of data has led most scholars to stress the normalcy of the Nazi era and not view it as an aberration.

In regard to emotional knowledge, Peter Phillips, a survivor of a concentration camp, wrote recently about the tragedy

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<sup>28</sup>Slochower, No Voice Is Wholly Lost, p. 75.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid., p. 76.

<sup>30</sup>Hannah Arendt quoted in Hohne, The Order of the Death's Head, p. 382.

of Nazi Germany. He said, "It was a tragedy because German man was caught in a net which was the product partly of his external circumstances and partly of his human passions." Phillips said that Greek tragedy involved the external forces, but that in Shakespearean tragedy the passions were more important. He continued,

But still, Shakespeare's tragic hero is caught in a net; and his humanity ensnares him further in it, and brings him to his tragic culmination.

It was similar with Nazi Germany. Nazi Germany was no melodrama, no contest of gratuitous villainy with simple truth. Nazi Germany was a tragedy of humanity ensnared, a tragedy inscrutable to those who cannot understand that all Germans are human beings, whether they were Nazi or non-Nazi, Hitler or Postor Niemoller, SS or concentration camp inmate.<sup>31</sup>

Phillips' comment that Nazi Germany was "no contest of gratuitous villainy with simple truth" is a criticism of nearly all the plays dealing with Nazism and implies what such plays might be.

Artists are often thought to be more perceptive and, perhaps, more prescient than other members of society. However, it would seem that the artists have lagged behind in illuminating Nazism. It is understandable, since so little was known about Nazism before and during the war, and the research on Nazism continues unabated. Some European dramatists have delved into various aspects of Nazism. But Arthur Miller is the only notable American playwright who has touched the subject.

The writer believes that European dramatists will continue their dramatic explorations of Nazism. However, characterizations of Nazis in American drama are likely to remain about the same;

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<sup>31</sup>Phillips, The Tragedy of Nazi Germany, pp. 230-231.

the American audience is preconditioned to accept the Nazis as villains, serious or comical. Whatever complex, multi-faceted villains appear, they are more likely to be, like the businessman of the thirties, the perceived cause of current problems and not philosophical abstractions about the past.

#### Implications for Further Study

Some implications for further study are apparent. Portrayals of Nazis by foreign playwrights run through the entire period. The foreign plays failed in New York in the 1930's, were somewhat more successful during the war, and considerably more successful in the late postwar period. These interpretations of Nazis could be compared with the American portrayals.

Portrayals of the World War I German enemy could be investigated, particularly in the context of the official, vicious anti-German propaganda.

There is also, of course, the much broader consideration of the Nazi in American film, which began in 1939. The Nazi had a long life as the "bad guy" in popular movies and TV following World War II. The humorous Nazis in the successful television series Hogan's Heroes suggests the topic of the Nazi as a comical character.

Lastly, a more specific study is suggested by the critical response to The Moon Is Down. Were the critics' views of the play influenced by political or other considerations? More important, why have critics even recently viewed the play from such narrow perspective?



## APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

PLAYS WITH NAZI CHARACTERS

BY AMERICAN PLAYWRIGHTS

## APPENDIX A

### PLAYS WITH NAZI CHARACTERS BY AMERICAN PLAYWRIGHTS

FROM 1933 TO AUGUST, 1939

<u>Birthright</u> by Richard Maibaum	November 21, 1933 7 performances
<u>Judgment Day</u> by Elmer Rice	September 12, 1934 93 performances
<u>Till the Day I Die</u> by Clifford Odets	March 26, 1935 136 performances
<u>Pins and Needles</u> by Arthur Arent, Marc Blitzstein, Emmanuel Eisenberg, Charles Friedman and David Gregory with music and lyrics by Harold J. Rome	November 27, 1937 1108 performances
<u>Waltz in Goose Step</u> by Oliver H. P. Garrett	November 1, 1938 9 performances
<u>The Brown Danube</u> by Burnet Hershey	May 17, 1939 21 performances

FROM SEPTEMBER, 1939 TO NOVEMBER, 1941

<u>Margin for Error</u> by Claire Boothe	November 3, 1939 264 performances
<u>There Shall Be No Night</u> by Robert Sherwood	April 29, 1940 181 performances
<u>Flight to the West</u> by Elmer Rice	December 30, 1940 136 performances
<u>Candle in the Wind</u> by Maxwell Anderson	October 22, 1941 95 performances
<u>The Man with Blond Hair</u> by Norman Krasna	November 4, 1941 7 performances

## FROM DECEMBER, 1941 TO MAY, 1945

<u>The Moon Is Down</u> by John Steinbeck	April 7, 1942 71 performances
<u>The Barber Had Two Sons</u> by Thomas Duggan and James Hogan	February 1, 1943 24 performances
<u>Tomorrow the World</u> by James Gow and Arnold d'Usseau	April 14, 1943 500 performances
<u>Land of Fame</u> by Albert and Mary Bein based on a story by Charles Paver and Albert Bein	September 21, 1943 6 performances
<u>Storm Operation</u> by Maxwell Anderson	January 11, 1944 23 performances
<u>Thank You, Svoboda</u> by H. S. Kraft based on John Pen's novel <u>You Can't Do That to Svoboda</u>	March 1, 1944 6 performances
<u>The Searching Wind</u> by Lillian Hellman	April 12, 1944 318 performances
<u>The Day Will Come</u> by Leo Birinski	September 7, 1944 20 performances
<u>Common Ground</u> by Edward Chodorov	April 25, 1945 61 performances

## FROM MAY, 1945 TO DECEMBER, 1970

<u>The Assassin</u> by Irwin Shaw	October 17, 1945 13 performances
<u>The French Touch</u> by Joseph Fields and Jerome Chodorov	December 8, 1945 33 performances
<u>Temper the Wind</u> by Edward Mabley and Leonard Mins	December 27, 1946 35 performances
<u>Stalag 17</u> by Donald Bevan and Edmund Trzcinski	May 8, 1951 472 performances
<u>Fragile Fox</u> by Norman Brooks	October 12, 1954 55 performances

<u>The Hidden River</u> by Ruth and Augustus Goetz based on the novel by Storm Jameson	June 23, 1957 61 performances
<u>The Wall</u> by Millard Lampell based on the novel by John Hersey	October 11, 1960 167 performances
<u>Incident at Vichy</u> by Arthur Miller	December 3, 1964 99 performances
<u>Postmark Zero</u> by Robert Nemiroff	November 1, 1965 8 performances
<u>Happy Birthday, Wanda June</u> by Kurt Vonnegut, Jr.	December 22, 1970 143 performances

APPENDIX B

THE OFFICIAL PROGRAM OF THE NATIONAL SOCIALIST  
WORKERS PARTY PROCLAIMED IN 1920

## APPENDIX B

### THE OFFICIAL PROGRAM OF THE NATIONAL SOCIALIST WORKERS PARTY PROCLAIMED IN 1920<sup>1</sup>

The program of the German Workers' Party is a limited program. Its leaders have no intention, once its aims have been achieved, of establishing new ones, merely in order to insure the continued existence of the party by the artificial creations of discontent among the masses.

1. We demand, on the basis of the right of national self-determination, the union of all Germans in a Greater Germany.

2. We demand equality for the German nation among other nations, and the revocation of the peace treaties of Versailles and Saint-Germain.

3. We demand land (colonies) to feed our people and to settle our excess population.

4. Only a racial comrade can be a citizen. Only a person of German blood, irrespective of religious denomination, can be a racial comrade. No Jew, therefore, can be a racial comrade.

5. Noncitizens shall be able to live in Germany as guests only, and must be placed under alien legislation.

6. We therefore demand that every public office, no matter of what kind, and no matter whether it be national, state, or local office, be held by none but citizens.

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<sup>1</sup>from Remak, The Nazi Years, pp. 28-30.

We oppose the corrupting parliamentary custom of making party considerations, and not character and ability, the criterion for appointments to official positions.

7. We demand that the state make it its primary duty to provide a livelihood for its citizens. If it should prove impossible to feed the entire population, the members of foreign nations (noncitizens) are to be expelled from Germany.

8. Any further immigration of non-Germans is to be prevented. We demand that all non-Germans who entered Germany after August 2, 1914, be forced to leave the Reich without delay.

9. All citizens are to possess equal rights and obligations.

10. It must be the first duty of every citizen to perform mental or physical work. Individual activity must not violate the general interest, but must be exercised within the framework of the community, and for the general good.

11. The abolition of all income unearned by work and trouble.

#### BREAK THE SLAVERY OF INTEREST

12. In view of the tremendous sacrifices of life and property imposed by any war on the nation, personal gain from the war must be characterized as a crime against the nation. We therefore demand the total confiscation of all war profits.

13. We demand the nationalization of all business enterprises that have been organized into corporations (trusts).

14. We demand profit-sharing in large industrial enterprises.



15. We demand the generous development of old age insurance.

16. We demand the creation and support of a healthy middle class, and the immediate socialization of the huge department stores and their lease, at low rates, to small tradesmen. We demand that as far as national, state, or municipal purchases are concerned, the utmost consideration be shown to small tradesmen.

17. We demand a land reform suitable to our national needs, and the creation of a law for the expropriation without compensation of land for communal purposes. We demand the abolition of ground rent, and the prohibition of all speculation in land.

18. We demand a ruthless battle against those who, by their activities, injure the general good. Common criminals, usurers, profiteers, etc., are to be punished by death, regardless of faith or race.

19. We demand that Roman law, which serves a materialist world order, be replaced by German law.

20. To open the doors of higher education--and thus to leading positions--to every able and hard-working German, the state must provide for a thorough restructuring of our entire educational system. The curricula of all educational institutions are to be brought into line with the requirements of practical life. As soon as the mind begins to develop, the schools must teach civic thought (citizenship classes). We demand the education, at state expense, of particularly talented children of poor parents, regardless of the latter's class or occupation.

21. The state must see to it that national health standards are raised. It must do so by protecting mothers and children, by prohibiting child labor, by promoting physical strength through legislation providing for compulsory gymnastics and sports, and by the greatest possible support for all organizations engaged in the physical training of youth.

22. We demand the abolition of the mercenary army and the creation of a people's army.

23. We demand legal warfare against intentional political lies and their dissemination through the press. To facilitate the creation of a German press, we demand:

(a) that all editors of, and contributors to, newspapers that appear in the German language be racial comrades;

(b) that no non-German newspaper may appear without the express permission of the government. Such papers may not be printed in the German language;

(c) that non-Germans shall be forbidden by law to hold any financial share in a German newspaper, or to influence it in any way.

We demand that the penalty for violating such a law shall be the closing of the newspapers involved, and the immediate expulsion of the non-Germans involved.

Newspapers which violate the general good are to be banned. We demand legal warfare against those tendencies in art and literature which exert an undermining influence on our national life, and the suppression of cultural events which violate this demand.

24. We demand freedom for all religious denominations, provided they do not endanger the existence of the state, or violate the moral and ethical feelings of the Germanic race.

The party, as such, stands for positive Christianity, without, however, allying itself to any particular denomination. It combats the Jewish-materialistic spirit within and around us, and is convinced that a permanent recovery of our people can be achieved only from within, on the basis of

#### THE COMMON INTEREST BEFORE SELF-INTEREST

25. To implement all these points, we demand the creation of a strong central power in Germany. A central political parliament should possess unconditional authority over the entire Reich, and its organization in general.

Corporations based on estate and profession should be formed to apply the general legislation passed by that Reich in the various German states.

The leaders of the party promise to do everything that is in their power, and if need be, to risk their very lives, to translate this program into action.

Munich, February 24, 1920.

APPENDIX C

PLAYS DEALING WITH AMERICAN FASCISM

## APPENDIX C

### PLAYS DEALING WITH AMERICAN FASCISM

#### It Can't Happen Here

Sinclair Lewis' novel It Can't Happen Here was dramatized by Lewis himself and John C. Moffitt. The play was produced by the Federal Theatre Project, and it was opened simultaneously in twenty-one theatres in seventeen states on October 27, 1936.<sup>1</sup> The play, like the novel, used aspects of the Hitler regime to delineate a threat of fascism occurring in America. While the Corporative party and its henchmen *Corpos* parallel the Nazi party and its storm troopers, the lead characters are home-grown fascists. The head of the Corporative party is Berzelius (Buzz) Windrip, and his righthand man is Pastor Paul Peter Prang. "In his vulgarity and flatulence Windrip resembles Huey Long, and Pastor Paul Peter Prang, an early supporter of the *Corpos*, resembles the 'radio priest' Father Charles E. Coughlin."<sup>2</sup> The play has been viewed generally as a ". . . cautionary tale of how fascism might come to America."<sup>3</sup> The writer found only one source that viewed the

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<sup>1</sup>Flanagan, Arena, p. 115.

<sup>2</sup>Goldstein, The Political Stage, p. 271.

<sup>3</sup>Jay Williams, Stage Left (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1974), p. 228. Other writers who classify the play as anti-fascist rather than anti-Nazi include Anita Blok, The Changing World of American Drama (Boston: Little Brown and Company, 1939), p. 386; Gagey, Revolution in American Drama, p. 106; Curti, The Growth of American Thought, p. 714; Himelstein, Drama Was a Weapon, pp. 89-99; and Rabkin, Drama and Commitment, p. 106. Two of these writers also refer to Rice's Judgment Day, and both view it as an

play as ". . . an attempt to awaken the American people to the international danger of Nazism."<sup>4</sup>

Hallie Flanagan said in Arena that in keeping with Sinclair Lewis' wishes, the promotion for the play out of the Federal Theatre's Washington office gave orders that stated in part:

Also forbidden in most positive terms are any references to any foreign power, any policy of a foreign power, the personalities of any foreign power or government; any comparison between the United States and any specific foreign power, system, personality, etc. Our business is with a play of <sup>5</sup> our time and country and our job is wholly a job of theatre.

It Can't Happen Here was successful and was produced across the nation for a total of 260 weeks.<sup>6</sup>

It is significant that Sinclair Lewis had sold the novel to Hollywood, but it was not made into a movie for fear that it would offend foreign markets. The film industry viewpoint was expressed by Motion Picture Daily which stated that the film was withheld ". . . on grounds that it appeared to contain elements inimical to the public welfare." The item added that "Apparently the authorities of the Works Progress Administration entertain no such scruples as to the public weal and as far as what other nations

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attack on Nazism: Himelstein, Drama Was a Weapon, p. 192; and Rabkin, Drama and Commitment, p. 251.

<sup>4</sup>Caspar H. Nannes, Politics in the American Drama (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1960), p. 140.

<sup>5</sup>Flanagan, Arena, pp. 120-121.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 129.

think, it is probably felt that is what the State Department is for."<sup>7</sup>

### American Landscape

American Landscape by Elmer Rice was presented December 3, 1938, and ran 43 performances. Rice said it was a ". . . plea for tolerance, for freedom of the mind" and ". . . an affirmation of the American tradition of liberty and of the American Way of Life."<sup>8</sup> The play had a minor character who was an American Bundist. The story concerned Captain Frank Dale, age 75, who wants to retire and sell his shoe factory and his estate. The potential buyer of the estate is Klaus Stillgebauer, who is a representative of a German-American Bund. He is stiff and formal and "his perfect English has a markedly continental inflection." He appears only briefly but is identified as pro-Nazi. He tells the Dale family that his organization is ". . . composed of German-Americans of pure Aryan blood . . ." and that they intend to establish ". . . a camp for athletics and the cultivation of bodily forces and beauty." Later there is a description of his group as the one that preaches ". . . the diabolical doctrine of racial and religious intolerance."<sup>9</sup> The estate, of course, is not sold to Stillgebauer and his group.

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<sup>7</sup>Motion Picture Daily, 28 October 1936.

<sup>8</sup>Elmer Rice, "Apologia Pro Vita Sua, Per Elmer Rice," New York Times, 25 December 1938, sec. 9, p. 3.

<sup>9</sup>Elmer Rice, American Landscape (New York: Coward-McCann, Inc., 1939).

The American Way

The American Way by George Kaufman and Moss Hart was a panoramic spectacle with music by Oscar Levant.<sup>10</sup> It was frankly patriotic propaganda and was highly successful. It opened January 21, 1939 and ran 244 performances. The episodic play follows the life of a German immigrant, Martin Gunther, from his arrival in 1896 until his death in 1933.

Martin's grandson, Karl, is disillusioned when the depression arrives. He is twenty-one and has never held a job. Against his grandfather's wishes, Karl attends meetings of the local Brownshirts because he says, "We've got different problems now. And the same old system can't meet them any longer." Martin tells him of the evils of a dictatorship, but Karl says "they get results" and that you can't eat freedom when you're hungry. He attends an outdoor meeting to get initiated and Brown Shirts appear--"thirty, forty, a hundred." A leader speaks to them about the need for "spiritual regeneration" and the "coming struggle for the reconstruction of America." Martin interferes with the ceremony, arguing with the leader and trying to persuade Karl not to join. Martin makes an impassioned plea for democracy in America and the leader asks him if he's German. Martin says he is but it doesn't matter and he would rather see his grandson dead than at the meeting. Martin ends, "I am ashamed of that flag--that pirate flag--flies over Germany today! I am--" The leader

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<sup>10</sup>George Kaufman and Moss Hart, Six Plays by Kaufman and Hart (New York: Modern Library, 1942).



strikes him with his belt and the rest join in and rain blows unmercifully. Karl tries to intervene but is held back. The crowd recedes and his grandfather is dead. The play ends with a funeral recession for Martin with "a single voice starting 'The Star Spangled Banner'" and ending with everyone, men, women, and children joining in--"their voices mount to a fervid finish."

The portrayal of American Bundists in American Landscape and The American Way came at a time when the American Nazi movement was in sharp decline in the United States. For political purposes, the German government had severed all ties with the Bund in February 1938, although it maintained relationships with numerous other organizations for propaganda purposes. By August 1938, the leaders of the Bund knew the end of their movement was in sight. Unlike other right-wing groups who had always phrased their appeal in terms of Americanism, the Bundists had openly expressed their belief in racial exclusiveness and their acceptance of Hitler as their leader. Because of this, the German edict of 1938 did little to dispel the belief by Americans that Berlin was still behind the Bundists.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup>Diamond, The Nazi Movement in the U.S., pp. 293-296, 301, 307, 315.

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