

(March 6th, 1939)

Germany as a National Socialist Totalitarian State

By DR. ERNEST W. MEYER

DR. MEYER:—Mr. Chairman, Gentlemen, I want to express to you first my feeling of deep gratitude for having been permitted to come to this city and to address today's splendid gathering of the Canadian Club of Toronto. At the same time I fully realize that it might be that amongst you are many of German descent, whose family decades ago, or more recently came from Germany and who still cherish a feeling of devotion to the land of their ancestors. To these I want to say: "Do not interpret, please, anything I am going to say to you as directed against Germany, my own country. I like it just as much as Hitler does and I want to make it plain that National Socialism and Germany are not the same thing, though very frequently you hear just to the contrary."

Only a few weeks ago there came back from a visit to Germany a very fine Citizen of America, Dr. Rufus Jones, of Philadelphia, and he reported that all the claims made by Hitler and Goebbels are disproved by the vast majority of the German people, and just on my way up to Toronto I read in the Toronto Globe a dispatch from London quoting from the London Times in which Sir Phillip Gibbs stated just exactly the same thing: that millions in Germany feel very differently from the way the present day master of Germany and his henchmen feel about the anti semitic outburst in their country. A few months ago a most deplorable murder happened in Paris, and the victim was a young German diplomat. You all know what happened to the Jews as the result of that murder, and you all know that Goebbels declared that the wave of persecution was the

spontaneous reaction of the German people. But I want to say that seldom has the honor and dignity of Germany been dragged into the dust as it has by this man, for up to now we have never been a nation that would demand mass vengeance for the act of one man.

Millions in Germany feel the same way that I do, but as they are not permitted to show their feelings we shall never be able to hear them give expression to them. You must realize that National Socialism has raised up in them a spirit of hypocrisy and insincerity for which they are not to be blamed, for the penalties are very heavy. Seldom has the German nation as a whole been in such grave danger as it is today. Hitler claims that he represents a real democracy. Now you know better than I what true democracy means. Of course it cannot mean that only the will of the majority shall prevail. It must mean that though the will of the majority does prevail, at the same time the will of the minority is cultivated and cared for. No democracy can be called a democracy without that cultivation of the minorities, particularly the political minorities, for they in their turn may become majorities. But no political minority is permitted in this present day shadow democracy of Germany. Nobody is permitted to say anything against the policies of National socialism. Certainly we have elections in Germany, but these are only fake votes, and the ballots are counted by the party officials. And for this reason a man cannot vote that because he does not like the policies and cannot vote against them he will stay at home and not vote at all. They are not permitted even to do that.

A few months ago the catholic Bishop of Rotenburg stayed away from the polls in order to show his disagreement with Hitler's policy, and next day his bishopric was stolen from him. He had to leave and not go back. He has not gone back to the present day. This is our freedom. This is the system which ruins the best mental qualities, the system which above all is designed to create hypocrisy, insincerity and coercion.

Some like to say of Hitler that he has brought about the unity of the German nation, but there is a great difference between voluntary unity and enforced uniformity. The

first is needed in times of distress, but the second is never needed and never welcome.

The basic foundations of Germany are being destroyed by this strangulation of the law which is going on. We are told that we still have law. Certainly if you buy a loaf of bread and neglect to pay you can be sued and made to do so. But that is not the Law we speak of when we speak about Law. That Law is the political law for which generations have fought and struggled, but it no longer exists for Germany for her leader has proclaimed: "I am the supreme law of the nation."

Just before he came into power this is what happened:

Some of his National Socialist followers had killed, murdered a political opponent. As at that time we had independence of our courts those National Socialists were condemned to death because of the murder. At that time Hitler sent a telegram to the Chancellor asking for clemency and at the same time he sent another telegram to these men in which he said: "Your deed will always be admired. You are one with us and your deed will never be forgotten." It is not the principle of law, it is the old evil principle that the end justifies the means. It is a principle whose logic result means that any act to advance the party is a moral act, and that any act committed in and for the National Socialist Party is right, and in consequence that the leader can never be wrong.

That means an end of law and of the independence of our courts, for a crime is no longer a crime if it is committed in the interests of the party.

It is just this week that a man has been in a concentration camp for one year. You have all heard of him. He is Niemoller. He was charged with treason and disloyalty against his country. The courts exonerated him, but he was sentenced to seven months honorary confinement because he had made a few church collections without permission from Hitler's government. But as he had already been held in custody eight months awaiting his trial the court at the same time ordered his release. A few hours later he was rearrested, not on the orders of the courts, but on the orders of the secret police and sent to a concentration camp. He has been there ever since.

This is the end of justice in my country, and in my opinion no man should be allowed to speak of justice when he is himself the personification of injustice. It is our whole civilization that is on the way down when the acts of the National Socialists are not called crime any more. This is true both with regard to internal policy and with regard to law and jurisprudence.

And now let us look into the sphere of Science and Education. In no country can science be completely free and independent. Everywhere different influences are at work. Sometimes these influences are moral, sometimes political and sometimes religious. And wherever these different influences are at work the results will be different. But however the achievements differ they can be compared with each other, and out of that comparison comes something that can be described as the result of a free and independent science.

But in Germany it is different.

In the first place doctrines are handed over to the professors, and later the professors have to assemble facts which will fit those doctrines, and seem to prove them. A university professor might like to say that in the long run national socialism or some other form of dictatorship might not prove to be too successful. But do you believe that any professor who might voice such views and opinions would be allowed to continue teaching for even a few weeks, let alone months or years? No. He would be removed instantly from his chair, and would be very fortunate if that were all that happened to him.

The same is true with regard to general public education. What is perhaps the greatest element in any achievement of progress in education so far as the youngest of our children are concerned? It is the development of what might be called creative doubt. Out of the questioning to which it gives rise, out of the constant asking about the situation as it is there comes progress.

But our children in Germany today have no such opportunities, for the leader knows everything. He knows how to solve all problems, and there is no need for anything more. This is destruction. This can but ruin all the best qualities of the German Nation.

Hitler, very frequently, is called the saviour of our art. There are some who disagree. Now it is very true that soon after the war our art was in a very nervous situation, and that the products of our artists were not always very welcome. Indeed for some time they had difficulty in keeping themselves alive. But all this was changed long before Hitler came into power, and he admitted it at the party congress of 1935. Later he claimed that he had initiated a new and much more beautiful art. Albrecht Durer, a very famous painter indeed, said: "But what beauty is I do not know." But Hitler, Goebbels and Goering they know it exactly. They know just what is good and bad as far as internal politics, law, science and the arts are concerned.

Many people still believe that Hitler has solved our unemployment situation. Again this is a gross distortion of facts as they exist. We have today an army of a million men. The United States, from which I have come here, has a population nearly twice as great as ours. If she maintained an army of two million she would be much closer to the solution of her unemployment problem than she is at present. But it would be a solution that was in no way a productive and constructive solution of the unemployment problem. Our whole country is nothing but a war machine, and that state of affairs can never be good.

Besides, it is not true that when Hitler came into power we were on the verge of a breakdown. Admitted that the average figure of unemployment from 1920 to 1930 was a million and a quarter, but out of this number a very large part today would have been absorbed by the increase in international trade and other constructive measures, if international trade had not been throttled by the fear engendered by the policies of the dictators. To give up liberty of action and thought and all other sound elements essential to the health of a nation for the sake of giving work to half a million unemployed is too high a price to pay.

Today on the German Government pay-roll there are 300,000 men, and hundreds of thousands of men are in labor camps. This is not constructive either. This cannot be good, nor can it be an example to other countries either.

Frequently one hears that National Socialism has saved Germany from communism, but in reality just the opposite

is true. Never have we been closer to communism in Germany than we are today. And this is true also with regard to the economic situation. Hitler has smashed the Unions. They are smashed in Russia also. There is no strike in Germany—there is no strike in Russia. There is no unemployment in Russia—there is none in Germany. There is no Law in Russia, neither is there in Germany. There is no freedom of worship in Germany—there is no freedom of Worship in Russia. There is no free science in either country. We have fixity of wages in Germany, and we have it in Russia. No employer is permitted to enlarge his factory or expand his business without the consent of the government. He is not permitted to import anything without the consent of the Government, neither can he export. He has become primarily a government employee. Suppose he has had a government contract and has finished and delivered the work. He is paid by cheque, but before he can cash it he has to wait permission of the government to present it for payment.

This is destructive and is truly ruining the best interests of the German nation. This is true also for the reason that National Socialism and Christianity are incompatible with each other. The basic principles of Christianity are the principles of life and tolerance. These are considered weakening principles by the National Socialists—weakening to the strength of character of the nation.

But what has National Socialism to offer in place of the Cross of Christ? Sacraments of blood and soil, the old heathen beliefs. It is claimed that the men who preach these doctrines are just private citizens, but the man who is the leader of this campaign is Alfred Rosenberg, editor of Hitler's official paper. He is a very close friend of Hitler, and charged by him with the task of the cultural education of the whole National Socialist Party.

And in addition another leading National Socialist, Bulow von Scherer, entrusted with the education of the young generation has stated that he wants to lead the whole of Germany into Rosenberg's camp. And Hitler has never voiced any disapproval of the activities of either of them.

No, the principles of love and tolerance have been outlawed by the National Socialists, and this seems to be true,

not only in Berlin but in all parts of Germany where the Epistles of Saint Paul have been forbidden to be read in the Christian churches. Filled with the intense nationalism as are the National socialists, they have called Christianity a foreign ideology in the hope that this will turn the German people away from it. But the result has been if anything to strengthen the Church, for the Catholics and protestants are no longer uninterested in each other, not caring what happens to a different sect. They have realized that they must resist together, or fall together. So it is that out of this incompatibility of Christianity and National Socialism the churches have united for conflict.

On the other hand it is said that the conflict has developed from the activities of the "Political Clergy"—whatever that might mean. This man Niemoller, of whom I have spoken to you has been an adherent of the Party. He has voted for the National Socialists in 1924 and 1933. He was no radical. Rather he is a reactionary, but he had made up his mind to render unto Caesar only the things that were Caesar's, and a few months after Hitler came into power he wrote that whatever anti-semitism might be forced on Germany, Christianity regarded the Jew as a brother, and that the Christian injunction "Love thy Neighbor" still stood for him. Later on he wrote, "Seldom in human history has persecution been so gross, or so far reaching in its deepest effects. It is all the more dangerous as it is connected with so much cunning and falsehood."

And now let me examine the sphere of Foreign Policy. Don't you think that all Germans should be extremely happy in the thought that Germany's power has been increased so tremendously? I remember the year 1918 when France's power was overwhelming in consequence of broken promises connected with the Treaty of Versailles, which was not merely a neglect of the ideas of President Wilson, but a distortion of those ideas. But France was unable to achieve a Hegemony in Europe after all. Now we have an attempt by Germany to achieve a hegemony in Europe, but there can be no solution to Europe's problems that is based on the idea of a hegemony, for it will always lead into new struggles, and will finally ruin what is left of European civilization.

There is moreover the moral aspect of the problem. This is still more important for it is an attempt to control Europe not only physically but Spiritually, and does that not remind us of the Bible question: "What shall it profit a man if he should gain the whole world and lose his own soul?"

It is not true, as the National Socialists would have us believe, that under another system Germany was not able to make any progress. Bruening was able to settle the reparations problem. Stresmann was able to enter the Rhineland when the French occupation came to an end long before it was due according to the clauses of the treaty of Versailles. Considerable progress had been achieved or Hitler would not have been able to march into the Rhineland when he did, but that progress was achieved without ruining all ideas of international law; without starting a new armament race; without forcing all the energies of the different nations into an evil contest from which no good can ever come.

There is a terrible situation in Europe today. The outlook is black, and I am sometimes afraid that in spite of all we hear and know we do not realize actually what is at stake. We cannot stand aside and imagine that the totalitarian ideology of Germany is solely the business of Germany. In my opinion it is not possible to have about 450 millions of people in Germany, Italy, Russia and Japan with their systems of dictatorship reaching out into parts of America and South America without realizing that it is something that affects the whole world.

It is a problem for World civilization, and that is true for another reason. Our civilization has been built on the pillars of love, tolerance and Christianity, and those pillars are being threatened by the ideologies of National Socialism and Fascism, which know no love or tolerance. We look for them in vain in their philosophies, and when we cannot find them we must realize that our whole civilization is at stake today.

Let us hope that the ideals and principles in which we believe will prevail. What is more let us help them to prevail by our personal efforts, and even at the cost of personal sacrifice.