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The victory of Hitler?

Jacques Ellul

June 23, 1945

At a time when Germany and Nazism are crushed, at a time when the victory of the allied armies is finally established, a question remains asked of us by Hitler's final two agendas, hardly a month before his ruin, where he affirmed his certainty of victory. Everyone laughed at this at the moment, while it was evident that nothing more would be able to save Germany and we thought: your people are whipped, this is madness. Everyone has forgotten this today because the matter is settled. And yet, mustn't we be wary of this attitude in the face of this man's assertions? When since 1938 he was threatening, we were saying "blackmail." When, in January 1940, he said that in July he would be in Paris, we were saying "rodomontade." When, in 1938, he had spoken of invading Romania and the Ukraine, who took him seriously? And yet, if we had really taken Mein Kampf seriously, if we had really wanted to see in it a plan of action and not, as we usually think is the case with our politicians, an electoral program which we never implement, perhaps we would have taken some precautions. Because everything Hitler did was announced by Mein Kampf: the goals, the methods and the results. He was not able to carry it to the end, but he didn't lack the will. Everything he said, he did. Can we take these agendas

lightly that, while he knew very well that his armies were defeated, he was still affirming his victory?

We notice first that he was not concerned, in his agendas, in an obvious way, with a victory of the current Germany, nor with a military victory. He was concerned with the victory of Nazism and the victory of the eternal Germany, that is to say, if we understand well, with a political victory. And this is not the first time that the defeated comes to defeat its conqueror politically. Thus the armies of the Revolution and of the Empire were, at the end of the day, defeated, but they had carried into all of Europe the idea of the Republic and the sentiment of freedom of which no one could stop the triumphant march to the 19th century.

But what do we see today?

First Hitler proclaimed total war; what is more, total massacre. And we know the rules of his war... Everyone must be aligned with him – and make the war total, that is to say the war of extermination of civilian populations (we've been quite successful with this!) and the unlimited use of all the forces and resources of the nations for the purpose of war. We couldn't do otherwise in order to conquer. Obviously. But is it so certain that one can defeat evil with evil? What is in any case undeniable, is that by leading us to the necessity of massacring civilian populations, Hitler prodigiously engaged us in the way of evil. It is not certain that we can leave it so quickly. And, in the projects of reorganization of the current world, to see the way in which we dispose of minorities, in which we make provisions for the transfer of populations, etc, we might wonder whether the influence with regard to the contempt for human life (in spite of beautiful declarations on human life!) were not deeper than it would be believed.

In addition, the total mobilization had parallel consequences. Not only the fact that the mobilized forces accomplish a task for which they are not made, but above all, the fact that the State is crowned with absolute power.

mind. Hitler only brought to a climax what already was. But he spread this virus and made it grow rapidly.

What then can we say? Do we fold before this driven world in which fate devastates us? Of course not.

But this seems clear, that there is no point to using political or technological means to curb this movement. Before this tide that destroys all spiritual value and man himself by forging his golden chains, he can only draw up men who, because they will be it fully, will not let themselves be absorbed by this civilization, to bow down to this slavery. But how can men in their weakness and sin resist and protect their own destiny in tomorrow's hive of activity?

In the face of this tide that destroys all spiritual value and man himself, he can only draw up the Man. "Here is the Man." The Man Jesus Christ who alone smashes the fate of the world, who alone shuts the mouth of Moloch, who alone will tomorrow make men free from the servitude that the world prepares for us today.

Of course! We weren't able to do otherwise. But it is quite remarkable to note that even here we had to follow in Hitler's footsteps. To carry out the total mobilization of the nation, the entire State must have in its hands all the financial, economic, and vital resilience, and place at the head all the technicians who become first in the nation. Suppression of freedom, suppression of equality, suppression of the provision of goods, suppression of culture in its own right, suppression of things and soon of people of no use to national defense. The State takes everything, the State uses everything by means of technicians. What is this if not dictatorship? It is however what England as well as the United States set up... not to speak of Russia. Absolutism of the State. Primacy of the technicians. We are undoubtedly unaware of the anti-Jewish myth, but are we aware of the anti-Nazi myth or the anti-Communist myth? Undoubtedly we are unaware of the myth of race, but are we unaware of the myth of freedom? Because one can speak of myth when in all discourse it is only a question of freedom while it is practically removed everywhere.

But, we will say, it's only for a time, it was needed for the war, in peace we will return to freedom. Undoubtedly during a few times after the war, it is possible that in a certain favored countries one finds a certain freedom, but let us be assured that it will be of short duration. After 1918, we also claimed that the measures of war were going to disappear... We have the same measures... Moreover, two things are retained; first the few economic plans of which we are able to have knowledge (the Beveridge plan, the Full Employment plan, the American financial plan) show abundantly that the influence of the State on economic life is an established fact and that we are aiming ourselves toward worldwide economic dictatorship. Then a historical law: the experiment of history shows us that all the State claims as power, it never loses. The most interesting experiment is perhaps that of our French Revolution, which began in '89 in the name of freedom from absolutism, and arriving in '91, still in the name of freedom, to Jacobin absolutism. Thus, we can

expect tomorrow the establishment of disguised dictatorships in all the countries of the world, the necessity into which Hitler will have driven us. Of course, we can react, we can fight, but who thinks of doing it on this plan?

And this is Hitler's second victory. We speak much of democracy and freedom. But no one wants to live them anymore. We adopted the habit that the State does everything, and as soon as something goes badly, we hold the State responsible for it. What is there to say except that we demand that the State take charge entirely of the life of the nation? True freedom, who cares about that? A limitation of the State's rights seems like madness. The workers are the first to demand a dictatorship. The main thing is to know who will make this dictatorship. And the movement in favor of economic and political freedom is hardly sustained except in America, and there only by the "capitalists" who desire to free themselves from the guardianship of the State.

The totality of people, in France as in the United States, will to the contrary stop at nothing to accept a dictatorial government and the economy of the State. The general officialization is nearly an accomplished fact or is fulfilled each day and the disinterestedness of the populace regarding political quarrels, which is undeniable, is a grave sign of that mentality which, there is no doubting it, is "pre-fascist."

Of course we can try to react. But in the name of what? Freedom made the whole of France to quiver as long as it was the freedom of the Boche. Now freedom loses all its meaning. Freedom with regard to the State? No one bothers with that. And as to this great broken down resilience, the possibility remains for us to appeal to "spiritual values" to make the people work. Ah yes...like Hitler...like Hitler who found the amazing formula of putting the spiritual in the service of the material, of having the spiritual means to realize material ends.

A doctrine of man, of the world, a religion for achieving military and economic power. Little by little, we are also going down

this road. We demand mysticism, whatever that is, provided that this mysticism serves the powers, a mysticism which will gain the support of all French hearts, who will make them act with enthusiasm, leaders to the sacrifice in exaltation. Above all we demand this mysticism. Above all we demand that this dictatorship, which we accept implicitly, be totalitarian, that is to say it seizes the whole man, body, spirit, heart, to put it in the service of the nation in an absolute way. The offensive to which we are attending for special training is central to the idea that the Church learn to place the Church before the Nation. This is the symptom of that totalitarianism which grows slowly, insidiously, the sacrifice which prepares man for the Moloch State.

Whoever says that I exaggerate doesn't see the reality under the tinsel of the discourse. If we only compare the economic, political, social, and administrative life of 1935 to that of 1945 we will see the huge accomplishments in ten years. Yet if we think that to react would suppose that we react against the invasion of the State, against the directed economy, against the police, against the social assistance, we see that we would draw up the totality of the nation against ourselves, because we react against things considered to be good, things of which no one today can say how we could do away with them!

The victory of Hitler, not according to the forms, but at bottom. It is not the same dictatorship, the same mysticism, the same totalitarianism, but it is a dictatorship, a mysticism, a totalitarianism of which we are preparing the bed with enthusiasm (since we are paying for the military defeat of Hitler) and which we would not have if it had not happened. And more than the massacres, here is the satanic work of which he will have been the agent in the world.

The agent only because he has invented nothing. There is a long tradition that prepared this crisis and the names of Machiavelli, Richlieu, of Bismarck, come to mind, and the example of the States which since 1918 already live this dictatorship comes to