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instance from the Catalan point of view, described with great insight these labours to create a new Spain :—

"Their rising song begins to be heard over the shut land. It is not heroic song : it is after all the assertion of a race of traders. It is not thunderous. What thunders is the Castilian silence. And the heroic is the Spanish sleep. And the enduring is the Spanish drama of which the Catalans, even in their apartness, must be part. Spain has a dawning will to break from the unity which its will created : her atoms, anarchic but pregnant, stir to be loosed and to begin again. Despite its denial, Catalonia shares in this unborn Spain. Once the resistance of the Catalans helped to rouse Aragon and Castile with greater energy and clearer mind : helped to create Spain. Now this same resistance of the Catalans, even if it disrupts, may serve to create Spain again." *

And Penelope, let us hope, will at last be able to complete her web.

J. M. BATISTA I ROCA.

* *Virgin Spain* (Cape, 1926), p. 259.

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Hearnshaw

A THIRTEENTH-CENTURY HITLER

THE question has been a good deal discussed lately whether the appalling barbarities recently perpetrated by the Germans throughout conquered Europe are manifestations of the native German character, or are the results of evil influences instilled into an innocent and harmless German nation in comparatively modern times by the Prussians, or even in the present day by Hitler and his Nazi fellow-criminals. Lord Vansittart, in his vigorous pamphlet entitled *Black Record*, has strenuously and effectively argued for the view that the recent German atrocities are no new thing in German history, but that similar foul deeds of cruelty and treachery have marked the German at war in all ages of his history.

It has lately been my duty to make a somewhat exhaustive study of the life and times of the Emperor Frederick II who ruled Germany, Italy, and Sicily from A.D. 1212 to 1250. I confess that I began my study with no thought of Hitler in my mind ; for at first sight no two men could appear to be farther apart or more different from one another. For Frederick II, who was described by his contemporary Matthew Paris as *Stupor Mundi*, the Wonder of the World, was a man of the highest intellectual culture and a man of immense power of mind. Professor E. A. Freeman, indeed, says of him :

"It is probable that there never lived a human being endowed with greater natural gifts, or whose natural gifts were, according to the means afforded him by his age, more sedulously cultivated, than this last emperor of the House of Swabia."

He was a remarkable linguist, speaking six languages and understanding nine. He was conversant with the learning of the Latins, the Greeks, and the Arabs. He was a profound student of theology and philosophy. Above all, he was a man of insatiable curiosity, a great questioner, an eager debater, a pioneer of applied science. His book on the *Art of Hunting with Birds*, remained a standard authority on hawking and falconry for many generations ; it embodies the results of a long process of expert observation and research. Some of his scientific experiments, however, suggest the Hitler touch. For instance, in order to determine whether digestion were the better aided by labour or by repose, he gave two men a generous repast, then set one to work and the other to rest, and at the close of what he considered the appropriate period

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had them both cut open so that the contents of their stomachs could be examined. Again, in order that he might discover what is the natural and original language of the human race he collected a number of new-born infants and arranged that they should be reared in conditions of absolute silence; they were not to hear the sound of a human voice. Unfortunately for the result of this experiment, all the infants died.

Frederick, moreover, was not only an intellectual giant, he was also great as an administrator, a diplomatist, a lawyer. His government of the southern part of his vast dominion, the kingdom of Sicily, where he had been born and where his authority was most firmly established, was, in particular, remarkable for its novelty and its efficiency. He superseded the old chaotic feudal régime of bishops and nobles, establishing in its place a highly centralised administration of state-officials. He completely subdued the Church to the service of the State, appointing and dismissing bishops at his will. He instituted a secret police system which kept him informed of all intrigues against the government, and he suppressed the first symptoms of revolt with merciless severity. He abolished the old feudal levies of troops, and entrusted the defence of the kingdom to bands of Saracens whom he kept in permanent camps at Lucera and Nocera; these Mohammedan forces he also used freely in his conflicts with the neighbouring Papal States, for they were impervious to the terrors of excommunication and interdict. Here, too, he established a close economic policy, controlling all industry and commerce for public purposes, extorting immense sums of money from monopolies and custom duties, excluding foreigners from his ports. Strange to say, he also was possessed of the idea of racial purity and he forbade the marriage of his Sicilian subjects with foreigners:

"When the men of Sicily ally themselves with the daughters of foreigners the purity of the race becomes besmirched, while evil and sensual weakness increases, the purity of the people is contaminated by the speech and by the habits of the others, and the seed of the stranger defiles the hearth of our faithful subjects."

Hence as a precaution against "degeneracy of race" and "racial confusion in the kingdom" he forbade mixed marriages.

In these regulations, rigidly enforced by means of severe penalties, one sees many similarities to the Hitlerite régime. There is no doubt that Frederick aimed at establishing a totalitarian state—a state supreme over all persons and all causes—and that he crushed with remorseless rigour all who

opposed his sovereign will. It is, however, in his personal conduct and in his utterances that his likeness to Hitler is most evident.

(1) *His Hostility to the Church.* The most formidable opponent of Frederick's totalitarianism was the Catholic Church, then at the height of its prestige and power under great Popes such as Gregory IX and Innocent IV. The Church could not surrender her rights to control the appointment of bishops, the trials of clerics accused of crimes, the levy of money and men from ecclesiastical estates. Hence, finally, war to the knife broke out between Papacy and Empire. Referring to the papal party in 1245 Frederick, in an authentic anticipation of Hitler, said:

"We shall pursue after them with greater zeal and fury; we shall more mightily display our power to compass their destruction; we shall wield the sword of vengeance more cruelly against them . . . and the hate that consumes us will be slaked only by their annihilation."

The words "hate" and "annihilation" have the true Hitlerite ring. Moreover, Frederick's deeds matched his words. When, for example, in 1241, Gregory IX summoned a council to Rome to deal with the matters at issue between himself and the emperor, Frederick lay in wait for the delegates from England, France, and Spain who were on their way by sea from Genoa to Civita Vecchia, captured over a hundred of them—including three cardinals, three archbishops, six bishops and the abbots of Cluny, Citeaux, and Clairvaux—and shut the more important of them in Apulian "concentration camps" where all suffered incredible hardships, and where several died. The blow, no doubt, also hastened the death of the Pope, which occurred three months later. Under Innocent IV the struggle attained new heights of ferocity; but it ended in the favour of the Church when in December, 1250, Frederick suddenly died. With his death the whole edifice of his dictatorship crashed in inevitable ruins.

(2) *His Cruelty.* One of the most loathsome and horrible features of the Nazi dictatorship is the merciless cruelty with which it crushes all opposition, or suspected opposition, to its sovereign will. The same abominable feature marked the behaviour of Frederick. Milman, who admired many aspects of Frederick's rule, nevertheless is constrained to say that "there was a depth of cruelty in the heart of Frederick towards revolted subjects which made him look on the atrocities of his allies, Eccelin da Romano and the Salinguerras, but as legitimate means to quell insolent and stubborn rebellion."

Similarly Kantorowicz, in his recent masterly *Life of Frederick II*, which is distinctly sympathetic with its subject, has to confess that "his treatment of prisoners was ruthless. In his manifestos he boasted, for instance, that he had had three hundred Mantuans hanged along the banks of the Po, or, again, that he had prevented the defection of Reggio by publicly beheading a hundred revolutionaries. Before the end, the word 'mercy' had been deleted from his vocabulary." And the examples of Frederick's treatment of revolted towns amply bears out this judgment of Kantorowicz. For instance, "Altavilla was taken by storm and razed to the ground, and everyone related even remotely to the conspirators was blinded and burned alive." Again, on the capture of the citadel of Capaccio, the leaders "were blinded with red-hot irons that they might not see their lord, and mutilated in noses, hands, and legs, and thus were brought before their ruthless judge," under whose order "some were dragged to death by horses over stony ground, others burned alive; others were hanged, the rest sewn up in leather sacks and thrown into the sea." The Germans, in fact, whom Frederick brought into Italy were the proper precursors of the late mediæval "Great Company" of Werner Urslingen who took as their motto, engraved on their breastplates, the words "Enemy of Pity, of Mercy, and of God." The people upon whom Frederick's fiercest fury was vented were his quondam friends and agents whom he suspected of plotting against him—and towards the end of his career his suspicions were widespread. Thus throughout the greater part of his reign his most intimate and faithful minister had been the brilliant and able Peter della Vigna. He had been to Frederick all, and more than all, that Röhm was to Hitler seven centuries later. For he was not a mere brutal bully but a scholar and a statesman. Yet when he fell under Frederick's suspicion—precisely why we do not know—all his long services counted for nothing. As was customary with Frederick's victims, he was cruelly blinded, and was being brought to suffer the more extreme penalties that his master was wont to inflict when he, to escape the awful agonies that were being prepared for him, dashed his own brains out.

Frederick's appalling cruelties, however, were undoubtedly one of the prime causes of his final overthrow. For the peoples who clung to their freedom realised that they had nothing to hope for by surrendering to him: he showed no mercy to the vanquished. Therefore they held out to the end and so finally defeated him. Thus when in the battle of Cortenuova (1237) he had utterly crushed the forces of the Lombard League, and had

demanding the unconditional surrender of all the towns composing it, Milan, Brescia and others declined to yield except on terms which Frederick declined to concede. Milan replied: "We fear your cruelty, for we know it by experience. We had rather die under our shields by sword or spear than by treachery, starvation, and fire." On this reply Allshorn comments: "Frederick would have been well advised to refrain from driving the rebels to desperation; but he remembered all the sins of Milan against his house and hardened his heart." Brescia, too, resolved to fight to the last. Says Allshorn again: "Its citizens, hoping for no mercy if they surrendered to their implacable lord, resolved to die gloriously in the defence of their homes rather than submit meekly to ignominious and fearful punishment." Frederick accordingly laid siege to the town in August, 1258, and, since the season was getting late, he carried it on with extreme ferocity: "captured Brescians were bound to the emperor's moving towers to await the storm of arrows, stones, and fire-balls with which they were assailed." These barbarities, however, rather stirred the Brescians to further resistance than damped their zeal, and in the end they were successful in their resistance. The approach of winter, shortage of food, urgent calls elsewhere, compelled Frederick to abandon the siege. His prestige, the legend of his invincibility, received a blow from which it never recovered. Does not a spirit akin to that which inspired the Brescians and the Milanese to their successful resistance to the tyrant to-day fill the breasts of the Russians, the British, and the other peoples menaced by Hitler's horrible despotism? Better the worst that Hitler and his myrmidons can do in war than the humiliation and suffering that they inflict upon the unhappy victims who submit to come under their "protection" in subjugation.

(3) *His Perfidy*. M. Henri Pirenne says of Frederick II: "Lying, cruelty, and perjury were his favourite weapons," and he adds, "He has been called the first modern man to ascend the throne, but that is not true unless we understand by a modern man 'the pure despot who will stop for nothing in the search for power.'" Pirenne's main illustrations of Frederick's perfidy relate to his dealings with the Papacy. In particular, in order to persuade Pope Honorius III to crown him as emperor, did he make promises which he had no intention of fulfilling and which, as a matter of fact, he did not fulfil. Says Pirenne: "In order to obtain this [the imperial crown] from the Pope he lavished his promises with a liberality that was all the greater inasmuch as he was resolved to honour none of them." His persistent breach of his solemn

engagements explains much of the apparently excessive harshness of the treatment bestowed upon him by Gregory IX and Innocent IV. It was not only, however, towards the Papacy that he displayed his unscrupulous disregard of his pledges. In 1232 he secured the surrender of some revolted Sicilian towns by a promise of pardon. The sequel is thus recorded by Kantorowicz: "The ringleaders whom he captured—having promised them immunity—were hanged or burned as heretic rebels."

(4) *His Treatment of Heretics.* It seems strange that a free-thinker such as Frederick was, a man whose intimate conversations were interlarded with the grossest blasphemies, a man who in private ridiculed the sanctities of religion, should have been a persecutor. Yet such he was. As Pirenne says: "He promulgated against heretics laws whose cruelty was never equalled until the reign of Charles V." He persecuted, however, for purely political reasons. Like Henry VIII in 16th-century England, so he in the 13th-century Germany, Italy, and Sicily wished to secure the support of the national clergy in his struggle with the cosmopolitan papacy. Moreover, he regarded religion as a necessary bond of union in the state; hence, while he did not interfere with the freedom of either Saracens or Jews, he insisted on the most rigid conformity from all his European subjects. To him heresy was a form of treason and he found in practice that the cities which headed the resistance to his autocracy were as a rule hotbeds of Catharistic and other virulent and anti-social aberrations from orthodox Catholicism. So he extirpated dissent from the national church with fire and sword in all his dominions.

(5) *His Murder of Hostages.* Not only persons guilty of heresy, but also wholly innocent hostages were victims of Frederick's fury. As Kantorowicz says: "His Apulian fortresses and dungeons were full of hostages from almost all Italian towns, on whom he could wreak his vengeance." Among these hostages was Pietro Tiepolo, son of the Doge of Venice, and he was one of those who suffered death at Frederick's hands—a senseless crime that converted the great republic of the Adriatic into an implacable and deadly enemy of the ruthless emperor. Does Hitler think that his massacres of hostages in Czechoslovakia, Poland, France, and elsewhere will or can be either forgotten or forgiven?

(6) *His Claim to be Above the Law.* Frederick, like Hitler, claimed to be above the law. As Kantorowicz puts it: "Frederick had struck a new note and had passed into a supernatural world in which no law was valid save his own need." Again: "He recognised no law, divine or human,

save his own advantage and his own caprice." His associates, too, resembled Hitler's: "These comrades of Frederick II—in particular Ecelino da Romano and his brother Alberigo, Guido of Sessa, and Hubert Pallavicini—were large-scale criminals, men who made mock alike of the bliss of heaven and the pains of hell." Like Hitler, moreover, he was an adept at securing his ends without actually using violence. Until 1230, Kantorowicz tells us, "Frederick had always succeeded in conquering without weapons; all the great successes that had raised him to these heights had been won by peaceful means, at most by a threatening gesture." When he *did* strike, however, his method was the sudden blitz: "The characteristic of the new life was speed, its watchword, *non sit quiescendum, continue sit agendum.*" Not only in his actions but also in his general attitude in a remarkable manner he anticipated Hitler. For just as a superstitious Hitler-cult has dominated modern Germany, so did a similar Emperor-cult take possession of the mediæval Reich. Frederick regarded himself as more than human, as a true object of worship. His ministers, superseding the papal bishops, were to be the jurists headed by Peter della Vigna, to whom he seriously addressed the words "Thou art Peter and upon this rock I will build my Church." Emile Gebhart quotes the words of the contemporary popular prophets: "There will be henceforth but one only God, that is to say one Monarch. Woe to the clergy! If they fall, a New Order is ready to take their place." Frederick's "New Order," however, like Hitler's to-day, was unattractive to people who valued spiritual religion, or decent morality, or personal freedom. To such people Frederick appeared as a veritable anti-Christ, or as a devil incarnate. Cardinal Rainer, one of his leading opponents, spoke of him as "this prince of tyranny, this overthrower of the Church's faith and worship, this destroyer of precept, this master of cruelty, this transformer of the times, this confounder of the earth, this scourge of the universe."

Much more might be said, for the literature of Frederick "Stupor Mundi" is immense; but enough has probably been collected in the above sketch to show that the leading characteristics of Nazidom are not novelties in the German character, not evil elements superimposed upon a mild and innocent, if docile and submissive, German nation, but ingrained features which displayed themselves as prominently in 13th-century Frederick and his associates as they do to-day in Hitler, Goering, and Goebbels.

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