

Subject: "Downfall" i.e. Der Untergang - the German movie played on 5th Ave and Burrard in Vancouver.

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"Der Untergang" i.e. "Downfall", shown in a movie theatre in Vancouver, is the true account of the last days of Adolf Hitler in his Berlin Bunker in April, 1945.

Unlike countless Hollywood and even British versions before, the recent German production is not only acted out by Germans looking German and appearing in authentic German uniforms but is also spoken in German with English subtitles. The movie, depicting the final days in the titanic struggle between Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union which, to quote Winston Churchill, is a poignant reminder that it was the Soviet Army which tore the guts out of the German Army in WW II, costing the Red Army 300,000 casualties in the Battle of Berlin alone.

The question as to why a cultured nation like Germany allowed itself to be led into the moral abyss of Nazism, cause and, at the same time endure unprecedented suffering for almost 6 long war years has been the subject of a thousand books, stories and a hundred thousand interpretations. But there is one which historians, psychologists, social analysts, political commentary and the writers of standard corporate paid newspaper columns have virtually avoided. It is the nature of fascism itself.

But it is precisely the analysis of this historical, economic and social phenomena which is necessary to fully comprehend what happened in the Third Reich. Failure to do so may well lead to history repeating itself, albeit not necessarily based on an exact replica of the erstwhile Nazi model. Nazism may have been uniquely German but Fascism, the bitch who gave birth to it, is not. The popular, cheap, mass corporate version frequently depicts this phenomena as being caused by a maniac, frustrated would be artist and Jew hater by the name of Adolf Hitler, who climbed onto a podium one day uttering banal racist platitudes and, in turn, was followed by millions of Germans who were equally frustrated. This popular version will not do very much to help future generations, including Jews, to prevent similar debacles.

German fascism may have been clothed in blatant racism but as long as the corporate controlled press insists that it was directed against Jews alone, more or less, the lesson will be lost. For the sake of historical accuracy Jews were neither the first nor the only ones suffering under the Nazi heel. Communists, Socialists, Trade unionists etc, had to be liquidated first. And this was not possible without the acquiescence of the Liberals of the day who stood idly by in the hope of saving their own skins.

A truly scientific analysis of Fascism cannot be serious unless it deals with its inherent socio economic class component. Fascism is first and foremost the unbridled dictatorship of finance capital. This is indeed its scientific definition. It is the product of capitalism gone extreme - a society where the human body itself has become an expendable commodity in the brutal pursuit of corporate super profits. While the people of Europe bled, Nazi controlled corporations prospered on an unprecedented scale. People of all races were delivered to the Krupp and Thiessen factories to meet the production targets of the German military industrial complex.

Nazism was the German variety of capitalism bereft of all pretences. In that scenario democratic checks, balances and all human values have long been discarded. Nazi ideology, the faithful servant of the military - industrial complex, insures that corporate balance sheets remain

eminently black. Nazism, is thus the social superstructure and the ultimate stage of a moribund social order where humanity itself has been discarded. It is, as Mephisto, when asked in Marlow's Faust, where hell is inferring that there is such a special place, replies, it is any place where God is not.

This is the lesson of World War II and it is the lesson to be learned. Otherwise Nazism will surely raise its head again. The capitalist soil where unbridled corporate greed is bending and subverting the democratic and social fabric, the danger of total control of the state is ever present. Fascism is not a phenomena which springs into action without warning, without prior social and economic agonies. But widespread corruption and the undermining of democratic institutions leading to widespread cynicism and apathy, coupled with economic hardship, can go a long way to guarantee its ultimate triumph. And this notwithstanding the attempts by its controlled press that the danger to democracy will come from the "Left", the traditional whipping boy of the lunatic "Right", a scared middle class and liberal run alongs.

As for the movie and the character - it is an accurate depiction of a man tossed into self delusions of impending victory and reality all within the span of a few minutes, while the country around him is descending into hell facing "Den Untergang". It is the coming face to face with the evil which Hitler himself helped create, albeit not without help from those who profiteered from this venture and dreamt of even bigger slices of the world, thanks to their leader, who had not only cleansed Germany of Communists, Socialists, Jews, bothersome Catholics, protestants and progressive intellectuals, while the liberals by and large stood by, but also millions of other undesirables.

As for the depiction of Hitler portrayed by Bruno Ganz - those who have seen Hitler first hand will recognise a reasonable similarity albeit that Ganz might have profited by taking elocution lessons. Ganze's Swiss Dialect intonation is apparent. On the other hand "Der Untergang" (Downfall) is a movie anybody who seeks protection from historical surprises should see.

Yours truly,
Ernie Crist



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