

so perhaps there is something in the charge if we could only look at ourselves honestly.

R. P. WALSH

DYING WE LIVE: The Final Messages and Records of some Germans who defied Hitler. Edited by H. Gollwitzer, K. Kuhn, R. Schneider. Translated by R. C. Kuhn. (The Harvill Press; 16s.)

All sorts of men and women they were, who died at the hands of Hitler's henchmen: cabin-boys, noblemen, priests, journalists, and soldiers—people of all ages and drawn from every social class. Some believed with Dietrich Bonhoeffer that Hitler was evil incarnate and felt it to be their responsibility as Christians to destroy his malignant power. Others, like the twenty-two-year-old girl whose last letters are quoted in this volume, knew not what they were dying for, yet could write: 'I harbour no ill-will, rather I go on loving mankind to the very end, all men, all!' One thing is common to all the jottings, smuggled scraps of paper and letters that form this incredible collection of last messages: these men and women accepted death—their spirits not only unshaken, but confident and exhilarated. One of the priests wrote on the day of his execution: 'The name of the Lord be praised. Today I have been condemned to death.' With only one or two exceptions, these are the thoughts of intensely Christian beings, who knew that whatever the Nazis might do with their bodies, their souls could not be touched, for they belonged to God. 'Look at the Gestapo', a Danish cabin-boy wrote from prison, 'realize how far beneath you they are, and it will dawn upon you that the utmost that these creatures can achieve is to give you a few bruises and some aching muscles.'

Though this collection of letters has clearly not been compiled with any political message in view, one cannot help noticing how strong the purely ethical basis of much of the German opposition to Hitler was. Here was an Idealism which on the one hand made the resistance of so many people intensely moving in its practical futility, yet on the other points to one of the chief factors in the failure of any successful anti-Nazi movement in Germany. This 'other-worldliness' which in some cases amounted to spiritual egocentricity shines through many of the letters. It is best summed up in the words of the above-mentioned girl, who left a resistance group with the proud explanation: 'I am not a political being. There is only one thing I want to be, and that is a human being.' Yet some of them, Monsignor Lichtenberg, Pastor Bonhoeffer and others, realized that it is impossible to be a human being unless one accepts the responsibility for the fate of other human beings under certain circumstances. In this belief, Bonhoeffer wrote his testament, that of a true Christian: 'When a madman is tearing

through the streets in a car, I can as a pastor who happens to be on the scene do more than merely console, or bury those who have been run over. I must jump in front of the car, and stop it.'

But if all died gladly, and only some did so because they had openly opposed Hitler, almost all understood why their very existence was a danger to the Fuehrer. It was, as Count Moltke wrote, the struggle of a few men who believed that the morality and freedom in the Christian tradition could not be swept away by some new-fangled, racial 'morality' and a totalitarian system called Nazism. Freisler, the Judge of the men of the 20th June, recognized this in his famous interchange with Moltke, the man condemned for thinking alone. 'Herr Graf', he said, 'we Nazis and Christianity resemble each other in one respect, and one respect only. Both of us claim the whole man. From whom do you take your orders, Herr Graf, from the Fuehrer, or from God?' For all the men and women whose last writings are collected here, there was only one possible answer.

This collection should be read by all, and especially by those of us who feign despair at the 'European Malaise' in what cynical and godless people often call a cynical and godless age. The freedom and happiness attained by people in the knowledge of certain death, their ability to feel joy at the sight of an autumn cloud, at a half-remembered snatch of a Beethoven tune, or the discovery of a laurel leaf floating in the prison soup, and above all, their absolute lack of bitterness, is intensely moving. None of all the letters is more so than the swan-song of Kim, the cabin-boy, as he tells his beloved ones not to grieve for one moment . . . 'my person will soon be forgotten, but the thought, the life, the inspiration that filled me will live on. You will meet them everywhere, in the trees at spring time, in people who cross your path, in a loving little smile.' Though they had to die, their spiritual inheritance, their faith in the ultimate power of the good in life, lived on. Not one of them ever doubted it.

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**MAZZINI.** By Gaetano Salvemini. (Jonathan Cape; 18s.)

**MAZZINI AND THE SECRET SOCIETIES.** By E. E. Y. Hales. (Eyre and Spottiswoode; 30s.)

Giuseppe Mazzini, the great protagonist of the Italian people's historic struggle for independence, unity and regeneration, was indeed a noble soul, the word taken in its slightly pathetic Victorian sense, but he was not, in any meaning of the term, a great thinker. All through his life, emotion was the master of his intellect. What he had to say was the outpouring of an overflowing heart, not the product of a calm and controlled mind. In the great slogan which he fashioned