

**Birkbeck ePrints: an open access repository of the
research output of Birkbeck College**

<http://eprints.bbk.ac.uk>

Pick, D.

'In pursuit of the Nazi mind?' the deployment of
psychoanalysis in the allied struggle against
Germany

Psychoanalysis and History – 11(2), pp. 137-157
(2009)

This is an exact copy of an article published in *Psychoanalysis and History*,
(ISSN: 1460-8235) made available here with kind permission of: © 2009
Edinburgh University Press. All rights reserved.

All articles available through Birkbeck ePrints are protected by intellectual
property law, including copyright law. Any use made of the contents should
comply with the relevant law.

Citation for this version:

Pick, D.

'In pursuit of the Nazi mind?' the deployment of psychoanalysis in the allied
struggle against Germany

London: *Birkbeck ePrints*. Available at: <http://eprints.bbk.ac.uk/2789>

Citation for publisher's version:

Pick, D.

'In pursuit of the Nazi mind?' the deployment of psychoanalysis in the allied
struggle against Germany

Psychoanalysis and History – 11(2), pp. 137-157 (2009)

<http://eprints.bbk.ac.uk>

Contact Birkbeck ePrints at lib-eprints@bbk.ac.uk

Articles

'IN PURSUIT OF THE NAZI MIND?' THE DEPLOYMENT OF PSYCHOANALYSIS IN THE ALLIED STRUGGLE AGAINST GERMANY

Daniel Pick, London, UK

I

This paper focuses on the history of the encounter between psychoanalysis and Fascism, and especially on investigations of the Nazi leadership during the Second World War.¹ It serves here to provide one significant historical context for the other contributions to the special issue, which focus more specifically upon contemporary problems. Its final section offers an example of wartime discussion, drawn from observations of Rudolf Hess, deputy Führer of the Nazi Party. Hess fell into the hands of the British authorities in 1941. He was soon perceived to be mentally ill and his treatment was written up by his doctors (Rees *et al.* 1947). They sought to make sense of his private, even unconscious, system of beliefs, and to analyse the subliminal attractions of Hitler. This was an inquiry based, to some degree, on clinical contact rather than, as in a number of other studies (not least those of Hitler himself), distant speculations upon a Nazi's 'internal world'.

There are various ways to date Fascism, but I have in mind here the period from 1919 to 1946 – that is, from the rise of the organized movement in Italy to the conclusion of the main Nuremberg Trial. The 1920s and 1930s also

1. This account was presented in abbreviated form at the Conference on Psychoanalysis, Fascism and Fundamentalism organized by the Freud Museum in November 2008. Full references to sources referred to here will be given in my forthcoming book *In Pursuit of the Nazi Mind* (Oxford University Press).

DANIEL PICK is professor of history at Birkbeck, University of London. He is an editor of *History Workshop Journal* and an associate member of the British Psychoanalytical Society. His publications include: *Faces of Degeneration. A European Disorder, c.1848–c.1918* (Cambridge University Press, 1989); *War Machine: The Rationalisation of Slaughter in the Modern Age* (Yale University Press, 1993); *Svengali's Web: The Alien Enchanter in Modern Culture* (Yale University Press, 2000); and *Rome or Death: The Obsessions of General Garibaldi* (Cape, 2005). He is the co-editor (with Lyndal Roper) of *Dreams and History: The Interpretation of Dreams from Ancient Greece to Modern Psychoanalysis* (Routledge, 2004). Address for correspondence: School of History, Classics and Archaeology, Birkbeck, University of London, Malet Street, London WC1E 7HX. [d.pick@bbk.ac.uk]

of course marked the last period of Freud's work as well as the first of Melanie Klein's. How did psychoanalysis contribute to or reflect modern understanding of the catastrophe of interwar politics? How did it seek to combat the dire developments in Germany? The answer, judging by a *Guardian* review of George Makari's history of psychoanalysis, *Revolution in Mind* (Makari 2008), appears to be not at all:

But this is what finally seems so troubling in the history of psychoanalysis. Bound up with the confining of significance to an interior world, with a dismissal of facts and insouciance as to what really happened, is a fatal neglect of reality. Members of the psychoanalytic confraternity who suggested utilising Freud's theories in the political realm ... were shouted down. We get every possible permutation of theory, interminable shifts of emphasis and twiddling with minutiae. Yet during the squabbles and quibbles, Germany was suppurating. Missing the real crisis, these doctors and intellectuals (most of them Jewish) were fiddling with themselves and their silly theories while Rome was beginning to burn. (O'Grady 2008, p. 7)

This characterization is certainly a gross over-simplification, indeed in many respects a travesty. The present paper suggests some of the diverse ways that psychoanalysis was actively deployed in an attempt to combat the Nazi threat and argues that a more nuanced history of the relationship is required. That would entail reading more closely what was actually produced, and thereby to rescue what were in fact strikingly different psychoanalytical endeavours from later caricatured accounts. Some analysts, no doubt, were slow to see the extent of the danger, politically myopic, or worse, but psychoanalysis also pitched itself in a variety of ways directly against Fascism. The book burnings conducted at the beginning of the Third Reich exemplified Nazi antipathy towards psychoanalysis, and indeed towards any meaningful psychotherapeutic ethos. Freud's work was of course in very good company on the fires in Berlin. To emphasize Nazi hatred for psychoanalysis is not to deny the discomfiting history of 'fellow travelling', by some practitioners, nor to disregard the development of the notorious Göring Institute in Berlin, nor still Freud's slowness to break off relations during the 1930s with those who continued to practise in Germany under the Nazis.²

The relationship of Jung and his early followers to developments in the Third Reich is another complex story that has been considered in various recent studies, notably by Andrew Samuels (1992a, 1992b) and Sonu

2. The perversion of psychoanalysis in the Third Reich led to considerable trouble after 1945 when the IPA had to decide what to do with the dubious remnants of a once thriving Society. This is well covered in a number of recent studies, notably Cocks (1985). The dilemma is fascinatingly illustrated in the British psychoanalyst, John Rickman's reports for the IPA and the British Society, published in a valuable collection by Pearl King (2003). Martin Dehli (2009) also throws light on this vexed post-war history.

Shamdasani (2003). Jung's followers divided on this issue during the 1930s, but his own political equivocations, amounting to tacit support for Nazism at one stage, were to be modified and even reversed later on. Nonetheless, a number of statements by him, not least his account of 'Jewish psychology' in 'The state of psychotherapy today' (Jung 1934), reveal plainly enough the toxic anti-Semitic strain in his thought. Needless to say, recognition of Jung's uncomfortable, even sinister, political accommodation at that time is not to discount other aspects of his thought and influence, nor to ignore important shifts in his position.

Several historical inquiries have sought to use psychoanalysis (or sometimes even psychiatry) to understand the origins or consequences of the German political crisis. But the majority of recent major historical works on Fascism and Nazism (I won't review the distinction between those two terms carefully here, although I am in the main talking of the German development) have viewed Freudian approaches as marginal, or even antithetical, to proper historical inquiry. The reasons for this view would merit more scrutiny than I can provide in this brief introduction, but suffice to say that, particularly after its emergence in the USA in the 1950s, 'psychohistory' acquired a bad reputation for sweeping generalizations, 'wild analysis' and reductionism.

In noting the undoubted sins of commission or omission in some of that literature (and indeed in some of Freud's own controversial historical forays), there is a risk that we may neglect the fact that psychological theories of one kind or another suffused the 'primary' literature surrounding Fascism, not just a later, 'secondary' literature. Whether or not we now approve of applied psychoanalysis in history, anti-Fascist commentaries in the interwar and immediate post-war period were significantly shaped by ideas about what people are like, derived from psychoanalysis, and are thus part of the cultural and intellectual history at stake. Moreover, when historians hark back to the Freudian investigations of Nazism, there has been a tendency to conflate very different approaches.

II

Recall the quotation: 'Missing the real crisis, these doctors and intellectuals (most of them Jewish) were fiddling with themselves and their silly theories while Rome was beginning to burn' (O'Grady 2008, p. 7). In defence of this one might, conceivably, point to psychoanalytic work that remained focused remorselessly upon abstract theoretical concerns, or exclusively with the internal politics of the institution itself. But the charge here seems deeper and broader – that psychoanalysis had nothing much to say or contribute to the struggle against Nazism, indeed that it was narcissistically self-absorbed and failed to attend to the massive crisis unfolding in Europe.

Let us leave aside the dubious rhetorical purpose of the parenthesis within that quotation and the jibe about the quality of the work ('silly theories'). In response to the main criticism ('missing the real crisis'), one might need first to give some thought to those practitioners who did take up Freud's or Klein's concepts, or those of other key psychoanalytical thinkers, in interpreting group psychology in general or Fascist mass politics in particular, during the period of the movement's inception and catastrophic development. The resulting psychoanalytic work, as mentioned, was varied in format and in theoretical orientation. There were publications on war, militarism, ultra-nationalism and reports for government agencies, international bodies, the army or intelligence services. Others developed innovative new screening and interviewing techniques. The war witnessed a number of experimental approaches to the treatment of what was known as 'war neurosis' – that is, the psychiatric casualties of the conflict, and here again psychoanalytic thought played an important part.

Any inventory of this type would need to include the work of Reich, Anna Freud, Menninger, Bion, Glover, Rickman, Jones, Money-Kyrle, Fromm, Bowlby, Erikson, Simmel, Langer, Bettelheim, Jacobson, Alexander, Kris. The list could easily be much enlarged but even that assortment of names is enough to suggest the scale of interventions, of one kind or another, made directly in response to the crisis. We might debate the quality of each of these contributions, but suffice to say that there was a shared endeavour to understand both the psycho-social conditions in which the extreme right flourished and the unconscious factors that made Fascism attractive to so many. Close reading of clinical material itself in and around the war, including notably Melanie Klein's, reveals how heavily it was shadowed by the horrors taking place in the outside world. This is richly illustrated in some of her published case material as well as in the references to Hitler, to bombing, to war, in case notes contained in the unpublished Klein archives now housed at the Wellcome Trust. There were also a variety of concepts – think, for instance, of Anna Freud's (1937) 'identification with the aggressor' – that quickly came to seem relevant to the study of Fascism even if not directly prompted by it. Psychoanalysis had much to say about the seductions of Fascist ideology as well as (perhaps from our point of view more tendentially) the psychopathology of individual Nazi leaders.

By the interwar period, there were several different Freudian accounts of the mind. Some interpreters (such as the aforementioned, increasingly dissident and troubled figure of Reich) had drawn on Marx as well as early Freud – for example, *The Three Essays*, "'Civilized" sexual morality and modern nervous illness'; others relied most substantially upon work that had been published in the first phase of organized Fascism itself: notably *Beyond The Pleasure Principle*, *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*, *The Ego and the Id* (crucially the paper where Freud most fully presented the concept of the 'superego'). *The Ego and the Id* was in fact published in the

year after Mussolini's March on Rome, and in the same year as Hitler's failed putsch in Munich which had led to his imprisonment for the best part of the following year, 1924. In prison, Hitler wrote (with assistance from Hess and others) *Mein Kampf*, his own tendentious *Bildungsroman*, a story of supposed psychological 'awakening' and true revelation. Freud's post-1918 works had their clinical and theoretical rationale but, as has often been remarked, they also had an immediate political purchase on contemporary mass politics and the demagogic role of Fascist leaders. This anticipation of the spiral into Fascism in Freud's 'Group Psychology' paper is brilliantly described in a later important contribution to the psycho-political literature, Adorno's 'Freudian theory and the pattern of Fascist propaganda' (Adorno 1951).

Still keeping in mind the reviewer's claim above, note the dire personal circumstances and consequences of the Third Reich for Freud's followers as well as for the Freud family. The situation after the *Anschluss* – Anna's meeting with the Gestapo, the final, very late departure from Vienna to Paris and London, the murder of Freud's sisters in the camps, which occurred after his own death in London – are covered in several important extant studies. Many of the most influential analysts who developed Freud's ideas, on both sides of the Atlantic after 1945, had been directly affected by Hitler's rise to power: whether, for instance, as refugees from Europe, therapists of Holocaust victims, army officers and/or contributors to wartime intelligence. A number of psychoanalysts contributed to denazification projects in post-war Germany as well as to international organizations seeking to entrench democracy after the fall of the Third Reich. To continue biographically for a moment longer, we should not forget that some psychoanalysts endured direct persecution, in some cases death, under the Nazis, amongst whom Karl Landauer, founder of the Frankfurt Institute of Psychoanalysis who died at Bergen-Belsen. Numerous others were uprooted and forced to flee. These processes of upheaval and persecution were registered in many ways in the post-war literature.

Less well considered to date have been the various adaptations of psychoanalysis to a wider 'political science' of national cultural formations in the 1930s and beyond. We could usefully compare psychoanalytic endeavours here with visions of Fascism and militarism provided by cultural anthropologists, for instance, Margaret Mead, Ruth Benedict and Geoffrey Gorer. It would also be instructive to compare Freudian writings on the German question with the analysis of the Third Reich and the proposals for denazification made by sociologists such as Talcott Parsons. There are clearly links: Parsons, for instance, made significant use of the idea of the superego (Gerhardt 1993). The views of psychoanalysts were frequently canvassed by official agencies (surely far more than today) and clinicians thus rubbed shoulders with anthropologists, sociologists, economists and political scientists in thinking about how to avoid German *revanchism* at a

number of wartime and post-war conferences, or within inter-disciplinary research projects for international organizations, such as UNESCO. The latter organized a long-running study of the tensions that militated against international understanding and amongst its contributors were Henry Dicks, Anna Freud and Erich Fromm. As 'denazification' projects gave way to a new 'Cold War' rhetoric in the late 1940s and the 1950s, some of these psycho-cultural inquiries continued in a new guise: totalitarianism rather than Fascism at the core of the investigation.

Another area where psychoanalytical thought, broadly defined, was politically engaged can be gleaned from the observational studies of the Nazis conducted at the Nuremberg trials, in prisoner of war camps and later in the German prison system (Dicks 1972). The clinical depictions produced at the end of the war had on many occasions afforded the first detailed 'characterological' accounts of the defeated leadership, a kind of 'oral history' of what Churchill had once called 'the Hitler gang', a plethora of psychological portraits written at close quarters. In some cases these were the only accounts that we have, as the subjects committed suicide or were executed. These were not necessarily directly psychoanalytic works, but the memoirs of Gilbert (1948), Goldensohn (2004) and others certainly reveal intriguing connections to Freudian thought and practice. If some of the medical and psychological assessments were structured or disguised 'interrogations', on other occasions the invitation and purpose were more free-floating, with the interviewer endeavouring to remain in a kind of 'abstinent' role whilst inviting the interviewees to say whatever came into their heads, without selection.

Alongside the work on perpetrators as well as psychoanalytic papers focusing upon their descendants (or, in the case of Mitscherlich and Mitscherlich [1975], the putative inability of a whole society to mourn), there are also of course many important reflections upon first, second, even third generation members of families who were persecuted by the Nazis. Of course there is a crucial distinction: to become a 'perpetrator' is to move from the idea or the fantasy to the act, and this places the subject, irrevocably, in a different position to that of the victim. Yet psychoanalysis has demonstrated again and again the psychic complexity of the place of 'Nazi' or 'Jew', the mobility of a 'Fascist state of mind' and of the defences against recognizing them; in short the many possible unconscious identifications and interactions that may occur in the face of unbearable suffering, guilt or responsibility.

III

The psychology of Fascism produced in the 1940s was not of course necessarily written through a Freudian lens, as we will see shortly in the case of Hess. Before the Nuremberg trials were under way, some consideration

was given to a request that the defendants be shot in the chest rather than in the head in order for subsequent brain autopsies to be undertaken. In the end of course the chosen method of execution was hanging, as the firing squad, it was thought, might be seen as a more honourable mode of killing. But the request to conduct an inquiry into the brain is telling: as though the answer to Nazism might yet lie in some organic lesion or abnormality. One might link this request to the continuing cultural fascination with the fate of Hitler's skull and bones (enduring rumours that the remains were gathered up in Berlin and later analysed in a Moscow laboratory) to say nothing of the sustained psychiatric and wider cultural interest in the significance of physiognomy and heredity. Psychoanalysis, in other words, ran up against, or sometimes became blurred with other, more positivistic or biologicistic approaches, or a kind of popular folklore about the Nazis.

To complement works such as Rosenbaum's (1998) *Explaining Hitler* (which tracks diverse portraits produced in historiography and high culture) or Kershaw's (1987) *The Hitler Myth* (which maps the myriad theories, fantasies and folklore surrounding the leader in and beyond his lifetime), it would be interesting to consider further the range of Nazi 'types' that emerged in wartime and post-war popular representations. Cinematic depictions from the 1940s, for instance, of hidden Nazi infiltrators might be compared and contrasted with psychoanalytic accounts of repressed 'Fascistic' propensities. Consider, for instance, Orson Welles's memorable characterization of an unrepentant Nazi lodged in an American village in *The Stranger* (1946). Edward G. Robinson, who, in this film, plays an investigator from the Allied Control Commission, retorts at one point that it would take a psychiatrist to understand the German catastrophe. Hitchcock's film *Lifeboat* (1944) examines a kind of Nazi psychopathy but then troubles its viewers' identification, or at least comfortable moral position, by showing the vicious and murderous feelings latent, and then explicit, in some of the Americans cast adrift on the sea with the German villain. Think also here of the secret Nazi cells depicted in two other Hitchcock films, *Saboteur* (1942) and *Notorious* (1946). In the latter, at least, the most ruthless feelings are by no means confined exclusively to the obvious, demarcated villains.

Much still remains to be investigated about the intellectual and cultural ramifications of wartime psychoanalytic work. How, I wonder, were the various forms of psychoanalytically-influenced profilings of Hitler and other Nazis (for instance, those that had been commissioned by the Office of Strategic Services during World War II) related to the later, much more extensive forms of profiling of foreign leaders undertaken routinely by organizations such as the CIA? How were the famous pioneering 'group therapy' approaches of Rickman and Bion, amongst others, in the treatment of British soldiers, related to the near contemporaneous 'screening' studies designed to expose the unconscious attitudes of those Germans seeking

rehabilitation and employment after 1945? There are indications that the analytic attitude of Bion in relation to the group in the 'Northfield experiments' was also carried over into the approaches of some analysts working for the Allies after the war. There are interesting comments by Roger Money-Kyrle and Henry Dicks, amongst others, about this, albeit short-lived, applied psychoanalytic work for the Allied Control Commission in occupied Germany. This style of project, which reprised the question of the subject's slavish capitulation to a 'sadistic superego', foreshadowed the landmark study of *The Authoritarian Personality* by Adorno *et al.* (1950). The latter combined a substantial empirical dimension (surveys, questionnaires, interviews) with political and psychoanalytic theories. Famously, it provided an elaborate 'scale' of Fascist propensities.

The ideas of these wartime clinicians on denazification and the psychosocial dynamics of 'blind obedience' keyed in with Bion's developing ideas about 'basic assumption groups' and 'work groups', or, to put it another way, with Klein's conceptualizations of the paranoid-schizoid position and the depressive position. They also foreshadowed the famous experiments of the Yale University psychologist, Stanley Milgram, originally performed in 1963, published in 1964 and then in book form in 1974 in *Obedience to Authority* (Fermlaglich 2006). Strikingly the American doctor and psychoanalyst with a senior position in the US denazification/screening programme in occupied Germany, David Levy, had sought to meet Dicks (of whom more in a moment) and Bion as he passed through London on his way to Germany just after the end of the war.³

IV

Before finally turning to Hess and his doctors, I want to recall an earlier representation to be found in Riefenstahl's notorious film, *The Triumph of the Will* [*Triumph des Willens*, 1935]. Hess was shown as he introduced Hitler at the 1934 Nuremberg party meeting. He was demonstrably the 'warm up man' and served in this sequence of the film to embody the role of the adoring underling. I excerpt below the relevant section of the film script, bearing in mind that the images too, obviously unavailable here, unlike at the conference at which this paper was first given, are central to the overall effect. In this particular scene a close angle shot shows Hess in uniform, approaching the speaker's podium in a large, packed hall. There is an expectant atmosphere, the vast audience pictured awaiting this

3. Levy's fascinating papers, in which requests for these meetings are contained, are available at the Oskar Diethelm Library at Cornell's Medical College in New York. For Levy's correspondence on denazification, see boxes 34 and 35. On his planned London visit, see, for instance, his letter dated 5 September 1945.

keynote opening address. Hess begins with a homage to the dead war leader, Hindenburg. As he reveres him, the film cuts to the audience, as well as to shots of approving foreign dignitaries ('esteemed representatives' from Imperial Japan, Fascist Italy and Fascist Spain). The editing juxtaposes Hess with images of German men, women, a child, showing us their close and attentive focus, as though the work of representation here was both to describe and to elicit in the cinema-viewer a kind of rapture.

Hess begins: 'I am opening this, our Sixth Party Congress, in respectful remembrance of Field Marshal, and President of the Reich... Von Hindenburg, who has passed into eternity. We remember the Field Marshal as the first soldier of the Great War, and, thus, also remember our fallen comrades.' Shots of Hess are interspersed with standards and banners of the Nazi Party, and with the image of a soldier, bearing the swastika. It is worth setting out the scripted dialogue as Hess paves the way for Hitler's own, climactic speech:

Shots of Hitler, seated.

Shot of audience surrounding Hitler.

Shot back at Hess:

HESS

... My Führer, ...

Shot back at Hitler seated.

Shots of Nazi banners, flags and NSDAP standards held by SA men in Audience.

HESS

(off camera)

... around you are gathered the flags and standards of National Socialism. ...

Back at Hess again, at podium: closer angle, though.

HESS

... Only when their cloth...

NSDAP Party standards, flags and banners again.

HESS

(off camera)

... will have decayed, will humanity looking back, be able to comprehend what you,...

Shot at Hitler's profile again.

HESS

(off camera)

... my Führer, mean to Germany...

(applause)

LONG SHOT: audience in massed hall, then:

Hess back at podium, smiling at enthusiasm of audience.

Hitler seated near podium again.

HESS

(off camera)

... You are Germany, when you act, the nation acts, when you judge, the people judge!...

(applause, O.C.)

Hitler's expression is one of the utmost appreciation; then:

Back at Hess:

HESS

... Our gratitude is the pledge to stand by you, through good days
and bad...

Shots of Göring, Bormann, etc.

HESS

(off camera)

... come whatever may!...

(applause on audio)

View of massed attendance in hall; then:

Back to Hess at podium.

HESS

... Thanks to your leadership, Germany will achieve her aim to
become the homeland—...

(applause)

An elderly woman is seen expressing her approval to Hess's remarks
during the speech; then:

HESS

(off camera)

... the homeland for all Germans in the world. ...

(applause)

Hitler pictured seated near podium again.

HESS

(off camera)

... You have been the guarantor of victory ...

Back at Hess again:

HESS

... you are for us the guarantor of peace! Adolf Hitler!

Nazi cheers of 'heil' over soundtrack as ...

... Hitler congratulates Hess by shaking his hand; Julius Streicher, Gauleiter of Upper Franconia stands in background smiling.⁴

Here the scene dissolves out. This piece of cinema raises a host of questions in its own right – how it works as propaganda, fostering the fervour, despite all Riefenstahl's later protestations to be simply making a documentary. The film presents us with Hess's own enactment of and commentary upon the need for obedience and idealization. This depiction has many resonances for a psychoanalytic account of Fascism. We may want to consider here in Hess's speech the imagined community and the implied 'other' at stake, as well as the cult of the dead that shadows his performance. What are we to make of the latent erotized tie, or again the curious evocation of the rotting cloth – it refers evidently to Nazi ritual, to the flags and so forth that are cut into the scene, but also unwittingly perhaps to the possibility of a day when this parade of purity will itself be reduced to putrefaction? Hess had risen with Hitler; he lived dutifully, perhaps more dutifully than any other, in his shadow. But I refer to this film material now by way of introducing the Hess who, a few years later, mysteriously took flight for Britain.

When Hess unexpectedly parachuted from his plane, to land near Glasgow in 1941, consciously intent upon a one-man peace-mission, he became both a prisoner and patient. He was cast as patient because of his manifest peculiarities and numerous 'complaints', physical and

4. Material taken from script available from: <http://www.geocities.com/emruf4/triumph.html/>

emotional, as well as the requirement to observe him very closely, following his apparent, attempted suicide not long after his captivity began. The conclusion was reached in short that he was in a state of mental disorder, although how far this constituted a serious psychiatric condition was much debated. Either way he was deemed suitable for close medico-psychiatric observation. As noted earlier, the Hess case is particularly interesting as, unlike so many more speculative reports of the time, there was a 'here and now' aspect to the work.

Hess came to Britain with a complex back-story. Speculation about his mental state had existed in Nazi circles before the war—some rumours had circulated about his sexuality, or lack of sexual drive, as also about his hypochondria, preoccupation with fringe doctors and occult ideas. None of Hess's 'peculiarities' were unique, of course, but the ensemble of characteristics made him something of a talking-point. In 1941, some commentators on both the German and British sides would come to regard Hess as having psychotic features (even if for juridical purposes he was, at the end of the day, declared fit to stand trial at Nuremberg). It suited Hitler to use 'mental illness' as an explanation for Hess's flight although again there were differing opinions about how best to present the motives for his departure.

In the early months of Hess's captivity, medical, legal, diplomatic and Intelligence considerations vied for attention. Anxious letters passed between various government ministries and questions were raised in Parliament. Some feared that, should he be declared mad, propaganda advantages might be lost and/or that there might even be calls for his repatriation to Nazi Germany. Others anticipated the possibility that Hess might use 'the insanity plea' in a future trial. In dealing with their patient, British army doctors, such as John Rawlings Rees (medical director of the Tavistock Clinic) and Henry Dicks, thus faced competing agendas and pressures. Due to his family circumstances, Dicks had grown up with fluency in German (as well as Russian). He was able to converse with Hess the most directly. In the to and fro of these sometimes fraught and difficult interactions, Dicks and his colleagues sought to gain a better understanding of the Nazi's 'inner world'. They were not just in search of forensic and diplomatic information (Why had he come? What had he done? Who lay behind his peace mission?) but were also engaged in what they hoped would be a scientific psychological inquiry of wider political and moral interest—an inquiry into Nazi loyalties, fears, desires and fantasies.

The language of the ensuing reports was a strange brew, in parts sounding like a psychoanalytic report, in others like an older Victorian treatise on degeneracy. The case study, when eventually published in 1947, under the editorship of Rees, was said to serve as a political warning for future generations. To study such men, we are told in the preface to the casebook (Rees *et al.* 1947), is important, since the action of a small cabal can

unleash catastrophic consequences. There is no space to explore here in any detail the extended encounters that took place between the patient and the doctors, most notably Dicks; suffice to say that, in the face of Hess's claims of amnesia and an array of bizarre symptoms, grievances, and complaints, the clinicians had a bizarre and sometimes torrid time. Mostly they seem to have kept their cool and tried to make some sense of their charge, endeavouring, of course never wholly successfully, to regard him as though he were but an ordinary patient.

From first arrival and throughout his captivity Hess's own reports and claims vied with those of his captors. Hess himself was extremely anxious about his state despite a sometimes insouciant display. On arrival, his pockets were found to be stuffed with homeopathic and nature cure medicines. He was carrying an elixir (apparently for gall bladder troubles) that had been passed to him by Dr Sven Hedin, the Swedish explorer and Nazi sympathizer, who had obtained it from a Tibetan Lamasery. Hess was also carrying a collection of vitamin preparations, glucose and sedatives.

Despite Hess's complaints of ill-treatment and his chronic fears of poisoning and assassination, his guards were not slow to point out the vast discrepancy between the rather benign treatment he was receiving and that meted out by the Nazis to their victims. But Hess was unrepentant. Although suspicious of his interrogators, Hess retained at least one good object, a confidant (whose identity shifted) whom he regarded as kind and trustworthy, amidst a sea of odious officers, whom he often believed to be in a state of hypnosis themselves. The hypnosis was brought on by the Jews. This differentiation amongst his captors, which of course may also have owed a good deal to British interrogation tactics ('good cop/bad cop') was also sometimes interpreted by them at the time as a kind of splitting of his 'objects' into absolute good and evil. The disavowal and projection of all badness into the object was read, in this period, in the light of Freud, but perhaps also obliquely of Klein, whose work had proved so influential in British psychoanalytical circles in and beyond the 1920s. The whole affair was cast in the report as both deadly serious and yet somewhat absurd, even surreal. This persisted from the moment of Hess's arrival through to the Nuremberg trial, where he sat, apparently nonchalantly, reading a novel, in a fog of supposed amnesia, ignoring procedures, smiling mysteriously, then suddenly announcing, to the consternation of his lawyers, that he had recovered his memory after all.

Years before, in Britain, one could be forgiven for thinking that the bizarre atmosphere (a mix of cat and mouse games, old-style gentility, subterfuge, curious gestures?) had invaded the officers guarding Hess as well as Hess himself. What is one to make of the occasional offers of dinner and wine in the officers' mess? Or the country walks and picnics that were occasionally arranged on his behalf in the Welsh hills? Some locals, spotting the German out and about, would incredulously report this to their friends

and neighbours, adding further layers to the gathering folklore surrounding the case. The curious undertones of tension and of barely suppressed mirth ran all the way back to the night on which Churchill was briefed about Hess's arrival: the Prime Minister had refused to interrupt a screening of a Marx Brothers comedy before meeting the informant who had come as a matter of the highest priority to meet him. When news of the picnics, walks and other perks seeped out, it led to critical mutterings in the press. In one joke, which did the rounds in some circles in Germany, Churchill was said to have asked Hess: 'So you're the madman, are you?' 'Oh no,' Hess replied, 'only his deputy' (Kershaw 1998, p. 375).

Hess contributed to Rees's published inquiry, despite his obstructionism, even writing a preface for the book. Despite his much debated 'amnesia', his record had always been far from blank. He was a sometimes difficult and sometimes very willing participant. He was given IQ and other tests, asked about his family history and medical records. As the battery of psychological tests unfolded, it was clear that a different kind of clinical observation was also going on—more psychoanalytic in orientation—in which his way of relating to these tests and to his captors as well as to the memory of his family and colleagues back home was monitored. The psychological testing was thus shadowed by a more self-reflective and complex style of quasi-psychoanalytic reporting.

Hess was asked to undertake the Rorschach ink-blot test. He was observed as he underwent it; ditto with the truth drugs that were applied by Dicks (and from which at another level the authorities gleaned very little). Like 'truth serum', which was also applied to Hess, Rorschach tests had been an innovation of the 1920s. The interpreters construed his responses to the blots as indicative of aggressive and violent impulses, tinged with hysteria, but above all found his impoverished associations symptomatic of his 'flat', lifeless quality, his 'vitiating instinctive life' and his psychopathic tendencies. In this inquiry, conducted over several years, a wealth of information emerged not least through the records of his grievances about his maltreatment and his way of relaying those grievances. Observations were made of the hidden world he constructed (for instance, secreting messages around his rooms and under the bed). Behind the scenes, the doctors speculated about the nature of what they called Hess's 'neurotic alibi', and they sought to understand the intricate relationship between his 'inferiority complex', grandiosity, paranoia and hypochondria.

Some faint echo of the 'play technique' that Klein had developed in her psychoanalytic work with young children in the 1920s can perhaps be identified in the wartime observations of Hess's games. Various hypotheses were reached about the symbolic significance of the Nazi's attitudes to his guards, the messages he sent, the letters he wrote and designs he drew. When Hess produced architectural plans for the ideal house of the future, his watchers suspected a manic attempt at reparation. Hess meanwhile

claimed to feel no guilt or responsibility; he said he remembered nothing, and anyway attributed 'bad' actions inside Nazi Germany to the sinister hypnosis of gentiles by Jews.

In another section, a few pages later, the report suggests the physicians were indeed conspicuously interested in meanings and in the symbol-filled internal world of Hess, not just in his body and face or his biological history. Here the language sounds more congruent with psychoanalytic, clinical studies of the time, for instance, exploring the unconscious symbolic meanings of play. Thus Hess was found to be 'something of a gadgeteer, who would delight in fantasies of hidden knobs working concealed wirelasses, sliding doors and tricks of illumination' (Rees *et al.* 1947, p. 36).

The authors were interested in the meanings of this play and suggested these would 'not elude the psychopathologist'. Although they did not fully spell out what they thought might be going on inside him, they wondered if: 'This fantasy of his own inviolable home in which he could entertain and shape life exactly as he wanted it was perhaps his best moral support during this phase of his captivity' (Rees *et al.* 1947, p. 36). He created what Dicks *et al.* called a 'dream house', and it was suggested that this was a very egocentric project in which his study and the public reception rooms played a much greater part than his wife's bedroom or his son's nursery. He gave the impression constantly that, though a model family man, he was not in fact greatly interested in his wife as a sexual partner or a love object. If he was caught up in a narcissistic, withdrawn world of his own, this came to be understood in part as an endeavour to find shelter from a host of persecutory threats, including an intolerable storm of persecutory guilt (Rees *et al.* 1947, p. 36).

At the centre of much of the psychoanalytical style of investigation of the Nazi personality was, as mentioned, the superego, that crucial concept formulated by Freud soon after World War I, to describe an unconscious agency of the mind that watches, more or less critically, judgmentally and fantastically, over the ego. Perhaps our familiarity with this language now blunts awareness of just how dramatically innovative a concept the superego had appeared when first elaborated. What marked out Freud's notion of the superego from previous philosophical accounts of 'conscience' was the emphasis on the unconscious dimension: we can feel guilty without knowing it. Moreover, the violent and cruel force of the superego was often seen to be greater than the external prohibitions and demands coming from outside. The subject could be faced, say, by an unpropitious (parental) environment further exacerbated by the unconscious, aggressive drives that coloured that environment and then, in turn, came to be introjected. In a 1926 essay on the superego, Ernest Jones noted how sadistic and persecutory even ordinary (outwardly directed) morality often is. He suggested that in the formation of the super-ego we can see how this turns around upon the subject with all the force of our sadism (Jones 1926).

A number of clinicians in the 1920s and the 1930s observed cases in which the superego operates with vicious severity towards the ego. In obsessional neurosis it inflicts endless self-torment. In melancholia, it fosters 'a pure culture of the death instinct'. The concept of the superego proliferated in many creative ways in Freud's own thought and beyond, notably in the work of Klein. She proposed a different time-line from the one that Freud had set out, pushing an account of the superego much earlier in the life of the infant. Initially Klein had sought to correlate her account with Freud's, but by the 1930s, she was increasingly linking up her own ideas of the superego to Freud's earlier work on the death instinct. In an illuminating article, Edna O'Shaughnessy (1999) describes Klein's picture of a pathological superego that stood apart and was unmodified by the normal processes of growth: in short, an ego-destructive superego. This was a theme taken up by a number of other psychoanalysts after the war such as Wilfred Bion and Herbert Rosenfeld.

To trace the encounter between Fascism and psychoanalysis in the 20th century is in essential respects to trace the history of the application of the idea of the superego. One might also ask here about how far the idea of the superego came to be informed and enriched by the analysis of Fascism. This particular set of concerns was evident in the interaction with Hess during the war. Equally striking, the focus was, to a certain degree at least, the 'here and now'. Instead of concentrating exclusively on the individual's previous political record, interviewers sought to pick up, in gross and subtle forms, something of the unconscious attitude to authority in the present, and to gauge the demands and severity of the subject's punitive attitudes as they came to be transferred on to the current situation. Attitudes to sexuality, to anxiety, to parents and siblings, to violence and destruction, to guilt, reparation and mourning were all to be explored, but the crucial added ingredient was the analysis of the shifting responses and underlying attitudes in the interview itself.

Dicks attempted at one or two points to make certain interpretations to Hess about his own guilt and defences against guilt, for instance, in relation to his anti-Semitism. The Jews' fate, Hess insisted, was brought down upon them by their own malign psychological powers—they had literally hypnotized the Germans into maltreating them. Even when he was confronted with what occurred in concentration camps, Hess insisted the guards must have been unconsciously transfixed by the Jewish inmates to act so improperly, and were thus not responsible. It was, in Dicks's view, a question of Hess's unconscious defensive organization resisting the truth. He told Hess that his explanations were a transparent effort at 'rationalizing' and thus avoiding the unbearable guilt he felt. Hess denied this.

The case book illustrates the very uneven nature of the treatment and theory of the doctors at the time, caught, as it were, between a positivist

psychiatry and modern psychoanalysis. In one passage of the report, for instance, we find descriptions reminiscent of Victorian ‘alienism’, akin to the models of Cesare Lombroso or Henry Maudsley – the face of the criminal a direct signpost to the underlying character – that criminals looked beastly, which was to say closer to lower forms of life (much of this drawn loosely from Darwinian ideas about our animal ‘descent’). Thus Hess was portrayed as having a ‘full face [that] produced an impression of baleful strength’. His profile ‘disclosed a receding forehead, exaggerated supra-orbital ridges covered with thick bushy eyebrows, deeply sunken eyes, irregular teeth which tended to be permanently bared over the lower lip in the manner of “buck” teeth, a very weak chin and receding lower jaw.’ In short there was a normative assumption about the face, and Hess’s didn’t fit it. His ears were ‘misshapen and placed too low in relation to the height of the eyes’. His palate was said to be ‘narrow and arched’. And as the doctor summed up: ‘The whole man produced the impression of a caged great ape, and “oozed” hostility and suspicion.’ But at this point an emotion is noted: Hess produced an effect in the group, ‘an awkward tense feeling’ (Rees *et al.* 1947, pp. 28–9). Here the focus shifted from the visual to the affective, and thereby to questions about unconscious communication between and within people. They considered the way Hess sought to maintain stern and rigid boundaries between good and bad, gentile and Jew, and apparently remained as committed as ever to the Nazi system. He was seen, for all his bizarre features and idiosyncratic form of madness, as an exemplary Nazi. That is to say, he was viewed as in thrall to a cruel and merciless superego, seeking, through his political affiliation, to appease, serve and ingratiate himself with an implacable master, whilst locating all the abjection in the reviled object – the Jew.

V

A few concluding thoughts. In his history of Europe, *Dark Continent: Europe’s Twentieth Century*, Mark Mazower (1998) writes critically of the tendency to explain away Fascism, after 1945, as ‘a political pathology by which insane dictators led bewitched, hypnotized populations to their doom’ (p. xii). ‘A funeral oration’ [on a culture], he warns, is not tantamount to ‘historical analysis’. Mazower goes on: ‘The wounds of the continent cannot be dismissed as the work of a few madmen, and its traumas will not be found to lie in the mental condition of Hitler or Stalin’ (1998, p. xii). He quotes the following remark from Hannah Arendt: ‘We can no longer afford to take that which was good in the past and simply call it our heritage’. She warns against discarding ‘the bad’ and simply thinking of it as ‘a dead load which by itself time will bury in oblivion’ (1998, p. xii). Mazower then remarks: ‘National socialism, in particular, fits into the mainstream not only of German but also of European history far more comfortably than

most people care to admit' (1998, p. xii). I agree, but it seems to me that the historical task also lies in reconstructing the way in which Fascism was understood as political pathology – in short to historicize the discourse that Mazower rejects and to unearth the projects of that other time.

Moreover, in historiography, social theory and psychoanalysis, something of the same insistence on the need to integrate Nazism into accounts of what Mazower calls 'the mainstream' can all be registered. States of mind described in the critical literature on Nazism were not to be seen (so it was argued by various historians and psychoanalysts alike) as entirely alien or as confined to Germany. The fantasies and projections that we can see so flagrantly at work in the Fascist period also raise more fundamental questions about politics at large: remember Freud's own suggestion in the 'Group Psychology' paper that something quite mad may be lurking in, or be a structuring fantasy of, any organized group – an army or a church, for instance, not merely in the delusions of the rampaging 'mob'. Rather, such propensities, that Fascist strain, could be understood as potentially a part of all of us and/or of European culture and thought. The question was then, as it is now, how far there are other forces – or resources – available to counteract rather than to exploit sadism, to contain or lessen, rather than to fan the flames of, collective hatreds or mad idealizations of the avenging 'superego' figure who promises final purification and redemption from the morass. Psychoanalysis offers a rich vocabulary, perhaps partly inspired by those convulsions of history, and certainly a vocabulary that could be used to think about that history. Its concepts should not serve to 'explain away' the wounds of the continent in the 1930s and 1940s as the work of a few madmen, but rather to grasp the unconscious fantasies mobilized in the ideology and practice of Fascism.

A host of further questions could also be put here as to the links between post-war psychological theories, political philosophies and social policies. I wonder how far, for example, visions of psychological fragmentation and integration or the close clinical interest in emotional 'attachment' or, again, attempts to move away from 'authoritarian' models of parenting and education, shaped, or were shaped by, the wider politics of post-war welfarism? What was the connection between endeavours, after 1945, to bring psychoanalysis to bear in the understanding of 'psychopathy' and political and philosophical debate about the psycho-social causes and consequences of Nazism? To what degree did clinical discussion of the patient's 'tolerance' – for instance, of moment by moment shifts in the capacity to make use of 'ego-dystonic' interpretations – echo or amplify contemporaneous social debates about freedom of speech or about insidious anti-democratic organizations? I cannot do more here than signal these questions and refer the reader to the illuminating discussions already published elsewhere, for instance, in Denise Riley's *War in the Nursery* (Riley 1983) and Eli Zaretsky's *Secrets of the Soul* (Zaretsky 2004).

Notwithstanding these excellent studies, much still remains to be investigated as to the influences and reverberations of 20th-century political history and contemporaneous psychological theories about 'what people are like'. But be that as it may, neither the enduring significance of the Third Reich for psychoanalysis, nor the role of Freudian thought in the wider struggle against Fascism can be underestimated.

References

- Adorno, T.W. *et al.* (1950) *The Authoritarian Personality*. New York, NY: Harper.
- Adorno, T.W. (1951) Freudian theory and the pattern of Fascist propaganda. In: P. Roazen (ed.), *Sigmund Freud*, pp. 82–102. New York, NY: da Capo, 1973.
- Cocks, G. (1985) *Psychotherapy in the Third Reich*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Dehli, M. (2009) Shaping history: Alexander Mitscherlich and German psychoanalysis after 1945. *Psychoanalysis and History* 11(1): 55–73.
- Dicks, H.V. (1972) *Licensed Mass Murder: A Socio-Psychological Study of Some SS Killers*. London: Chatto.
- Fermaglich K.L. (2006) *American Dreams and Nazi Nightmares: Early Holocaust Consciousness and Liberal America, 1957–1965*. Waltham, MA: Brandeis University Press; Hanover, NH: University Press of New England.
- Freud, A. (1937) *The Ego and the Mechanisms of Defence*. London: Hogarth, 1947.
- Gerhardt, U. (ed.) (1993) *Talcott Parsons on National Socialism*. New York, NY: Aldine de Gruyter.
- Gilbert, G. (1948) *Nuremberg Diary*. London: Eyre & Spottiswoode.
- Goldensohn, L. (2004) *The Nuremberg Interviews*. New York, NY: Knopf.
- Jones, E. (1926) The origin and structure of the super-ego. *International Journal of Psychoanalysis* 7: 303–11.
- Jung, C.G. (1934) The state of psychotherapy today. *Civilization in Transition. Collected Works*. 2nd edn. vol. 10. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1970.
- Kershaw, I. (1987) *The Hitler Myth: Image and Reality in the Third Reich*. Oxford: Clarendon.
- Kershaw, I. (1998) *Hitler: Nemesis*. London: Penguin.
- King, P. (2003) *No Ordinary Psychoanalyst: The Exceptional Contributions of John Rickman*. London: Karnac.
- Makari, G. (2008). *Revolution in Mind: The Creation of Psychoanalysis*. London: Duckworth.
- Mazower, M. (1998) *Dark Continent: Europe's Twentieth Century*. New York, NY: Knopf.
- Mitscherlich, A. & Mitscherlich, M. (1975) *The Inability to Mourn: Principles of Collective Behavior*, preface by Robert Jay Lifton. New York, NY: Grove Press.
- O'Grady, J. (2008) The law of unintended consequences: Review of George Makari, *Revolution in Mind*. *Guardian*, 1 March 2008.
- O'Shaughnessy E. (1999) Relating to the superego. *International Journal of Psychoanalysis* 80: 861–70.
- Rees, J.R. *et al.* (1947) *The Case of Rudolph Hess: A Problem in Diagnosis and Forensic Psychiatry, by the Physicians in the Services Who Have Been Concerned With Him from 1941 to 1946*. London: Heinemann.
- Riley, D. (1983) *War in the Nursery: Theories of the Child and Mother*. London: Virago.
- Rosenbaum, R. (1998) *Explaining Hitler*. New York, NY: Random House.
- Samuels, A. (1992a) National psychology, national socialism, and analytical psychology: Reflections on Jung and anti-Semitism. Part I. *Journal of Analytical Psychology* 37: 3–28.

- Samuels, A. (1992b) National psychology, national socialism, and analytical psychology: Reflections on Jung and anti-Semitism. Part II. *Journal of Analytical Psychology* 37: 127–48.
- Shamdasani, S. (2003) *Jung and the Making of Modern Psychology: The Dream of a Science*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Zaretsky, E. (2004) *Secrets of the Soul: A Social and Cultural History of Psychoanalysis*. New York, NY: Knopf.

ABSTRACT

This paper discusses how psychoanalytic ideas were brought to bear in the Allied struggle against the Third Reich and explores some of the claims that were made about this endeavour. It shows how a variety of studies of Fascist psychopathology, centred on the concept of superego, were mobilized in military intelligence, post-war planning and policy recommendations for ‘denazification’. Freud’s ideas were sometimes championed by particular army doctors and government planners; at other times they were combined with, or displaced by, competing, psychiatric and psychological forms of treatment and diverse studies of the Fascist ‘personality’. This is illustrated through a discussion of the treatment and interpretation of the deputy leader of the Nazi Party, Rudolf Hess, after his arrival in Britain in 1941.

Key words: Fascism, Rudolf Hess, superego