



JAN 23 1986



CHARLOTTE BERADT left Germany in 1940, went to England and then to the United States. She now lives in New York City, where she writes and contributes material for European radio. Bruno Bettelheim is director of the Sonia Shankman Orthogenic School at the University of Chicago; his most recent book is *The Empty Fortress*.

*Charlotte Beradt*

*The Third Reich of Dreams*

Translated from the German

by Adriane Gottwald

With an Essay by Bruno Bettelheim

Chicago    Quadrangle Books

THE THIRD REICH OF DREAMS. Copyright © 1966 by Nymphenburger Verlagshandlung GmbH, Munich. First published 1966 as *Das Dritte Reich des Traums*. English translation copyright © 1968 by Quadrangle Books, Inc. All rights reserved, including the right to reproduce this book or portions thereof in any form. For information, address the publisher at 12 East Delaware Place, Chicago 60611. Manufactured in the United States of America.

Library of Congress Catalog Card Number: 68-10832

# Contents

1. The Third Reich of Dreams:	
How It Began	3
2. Private Lives Remodeled:	
"Life Without Walls"	19
3. Bureaucratic Fairy Tales:	
"Nothing Gives Me Pleasure Anymore"	35
4. The Everyday World by Night:	
"So That I'll Not Even Understand Myself"	43
5. The Non-Hero:	
"And Say Not a Word"	55
6. The Chorus:	
"There's Not a Thing One Can Do"	65
7. When Doctrines Come Alive:	
The Dark in the Reich of the Blond	77
8. Those Who Act:	
"You've Just Got to Want To"	93
9. Disguised Wishes:	
"Destination <i>Heil Hitler</i> "	109
10. Undisguised Wishes:	
"This One We Want"	121
11. And the Dreams of Jews:	
"I Make Room for Trash If Need Be"	131
An Essay	
by Bruno Bettelheim	149
INDEX	171

# *The Third Reich of Dreams*

# Chapter 1

## The Third Reich of Dreams: How It Began

*In a dream, in a vision of the night,  
when deep sleep falleth upon men,  
in slumberings upon the bed;  
Then he openeth the ears of men . . .  
Job*

*The only person in Germany who still leads  
a private life is the person who sleeps.  
Robert Ley, NS-Reichsorganisationsleiter*

Three days after Hitler seized power in Germany, a certain Herr S., a man of about sixty and the owner of a middle-sized factory, dreamt he had been crushed, even though no one had actually laid a hand on him. In one short dream he described more precisely and with greater subtlety than he ever could have while awake a phenomenon which political scientists, sociologists, and medical experts were later to define as the nature and effects on man of totalitarian rule. Here is his dream:

"Goebbels was visiting my factory. He had all the workers line up in two rows facing each other. I had to stand in the middle and raise my arm in the Nazi salute. It took me half an hour to get my arm up, inch by inch. Goebbels showed neither approval nor disapproval as he watched my struggle, as if it were a play. When I finally managed to get my arm up, he said just five words—'I don't want your salute'—then turned and went to the door. There I stood in my own factory, arm raised, pilloried right in the midst of my own people. I was only able to keep from collapsing by staring at his clubfoot as he limped out. And so I stood until I woke up."

Herr S. was upright and self-confident, an almost despotic individual. His factory, where he had employed many an old fellow Social Democrat for as long as twenty years, meant everything to him. His



dream-experience amounted to sheer psychological torture, which is how I spontaneously termed it when he related it to me some weeks after it had occurred in 1933. Today, with our greater perspective, we can see in these clear, uncannily sharp images how all the pressures brought to bear on the individual by the totalitarian regime produced alienation, isolation, loss of identity, and dislocation—terms which by now have become almost commonplace, or subject to considerable mythmaking. In his dream, Herr S. is forced to humiliate and debase himself in the factory with which he identifies, and in front of the employees who represent his lifelong political convictions, yet to whom his attitude is paternalistic—and what he values above all in himself is his ability to command respect. This sweeps him off his self-made foundations, destroys his sense of identity, and leaves him disoriented. He feels alienated not only from all that is real in his life but also from his own character, which has lost its authenticity.

The psycho-political phenomena this man envisioned in his dream were drawn directly from life—a few days of his own life in the course of an actual political development, Hitler's seizure of power. So accurately drawn was his dream that it even embodies both types of alienation: alienation from one's environment as well as from oneself, which often are

equated or confused with one another. And he arrives at a clear conclusion: that his public humiliation while attempting to toe the line amounts to nothing more than initiation rites into the totalitarian scheme, a political stratagem, a coldly cynical trial devised by the state to break its subjects' will. Because his downfall is both ignominious and altogether senseless, this dream may serve as the parable *par excellence* on how submissive subjects of totalitarian rule were produced. When in the end he stands there, powerless to lower his arm and only able to stay on his feet by staring at Goebbels' clubfoot in petty revenge, his ego has been demolished systematically and with the most modern of means, quite like an antiquated building that must give way to a new order. Although saddening, what happens here is no tragedy, nor does it lack elements of farce. It should not be viewed as a matter of personal fate but rather as a typical incident in the process of transformation Herr S. is being made to undergo. He has not even become a non-hero, only a non-person.

This dream haunted the manufacturer and recurred again and again, each time with new humiliating details. "The effort of lifting my arm was so great that sweat poured down my face like tears, as if I were crying in front of Goebbels." And another time: "I looked to my workers for a sign of comfort, but

their faces showed absolute emptiness, not even scorn or contempt." On one occasion his dream imagery was devastatingly clear and almost vulgar: while struggling to lift his arm, his back—his backbone—breaks.

One should not conclude that Herr S. had become a broken man as a result of his dream, or conversely, that because he already was a broken man he dreamt this way. Although he suffered under these political conditions, he remained a free and relatively courageous man, and for a long time encountered no difficulties at his factory. But the dream did make a deep impression on him—it had left its mark, as he expressed it. Despite its frequent recurrence it should not be viewed as a retreat into the pathological world of monomania, but instead as indicative of the atmosphere of coercion developing around him. The nature and effects of this coercion unfolded logically in the dream, even though its author was only vaguely aware of them. When he told me about it once when we were discussing politics, he became visibly upset, his face reddened, and his voice trembled.

The noted theologian Paul Tillich, who experienced such dreams for months after he left Germany in 1933, was also aware of their effects and related that he "awoke with the feeling that our existence

was being changed. In my conscious time I felt that we could escape the worst, but my subconscious knew better." \*

The manufacturer's dream—shall we entitle it "The Upraised Arm" or "On Remaking Man"?—this dream appeared to have been produced in the very same workshop where the totalitarian regime constructed the mechanism which made it function. It had occurred to me from time to time that a record should be kept of such dreams, a thought that now became a plan. They might one day serve as evidence when the time came to pass judgment on National Socialism as a historical phenomenon, for they seemed to reveal a great deal about people's deepest feelings and reactions as they became part of the mechanism of totalitarianism. When a person sits down to keep a diary, this is a deliberate act, and he remolds, clarifies, or obscures his reactions. But while seeming to record seismographically the slightest effects of political events on the psyche, these dreams—these diaries of the night—were conceived independently of their authors' conscious will. They were, so to speak, dictated to them by dictatorship. Dream imagery might thus help to describe the structure of a reality that was just on the verge of becoming a nightmare.

\* Tillich's obituary, *New York Times*, December 23, 1965.

And so I set out to collect the dreams the Nazi regime had generated. It was not an altogether easy task, for people were often afraid to confide their dreams. Half a dozen times I came across a virtually identical experience: "I dreamt it was forbidden to dream, but I did anyway." I asked people with whom I normally came in contact about their dreams. Enthusiastic "yes men" or people who drew some advantage from the regime were not readily accessible to me, though their inner reactions would not have been of great value to the project in any case. I asked a dressmaker, neighbor, aunt, milkman, friend—generally without revealing my purpose, for I wanted the most candid and unaffected responses possible.

If someone was reluctant, he often became more communicative after hearing the manufacturer's dream, which I used as bait. A number recalled a similar dream-experience, a political dream that had left a deep impression and had been clearly understood. Others were more naive and failed to grasp the full significance of their dreams. A person's intelligence and education naturally influenced how well he could understand and express his dreams. But regardless of whether it was a young girl or an old man, plain workingmen or the highly educated, regardless of how expressive or retentive these persons were, their dreams brought out hitherto unformu-

lated aspects of the relationship between the individual and the totalitarian regime, such as the systematic destruction of a man's personality described in the manufacturer's dream.

It goes without saying that, when retold, some of these dream images were touched up by their authors, whether consciously or unconsciously. Experience has shown that much depends on *when* a dream is written down: its documentary value is greatest if it is recorded immediately, as was the case with some of my examples. If it is written down only later, or merely told from memory, more conscious notions creep into its formulation. (It is of course interesting to discover how much this conscious mind "knew" and to what extent it injected material from real life.) These political dreams were particularly intensive, uncomplicated, and unerratic; moreover, they were clearly determinate, with elements composed in a generally coherent, anecdotal, and even dramatic fashion, making them easy to remember. And they were indeed remembered despite the general tendency to forget dreams, particularly the more disturbing ones. So well, in fact, that when retold any number were prefaced with the words, "I shall never forget this . . ."; and indeed later, after I had begun to publish material on the subject, I received information on a few such apparently unforgettable dreams

that had occurred ten and twenty years previously, which I shall identify as they appear.

I continued to gather material until 1939, when I was compelled to leave Germany. It is interesting to note that dreams dating from 1933 differed little from those of later years. My most revealing examples stem from the very beginning of the Nazi period, when the regime was still treading lightly.

A number of friends who knew of the project helped me gather material. The most important single contribution was made by a doctor who had a large practice and could query his patients unobtrusively. Altogether, the dreams of more than three hundred persons were obtained. On the basis of widespread experience, one can safely assume that a great number of people were plagued by very similar dreams during the Third Reich.

I tried my best to camouflage the notes I kept on these dreams. When writing them down or copying someone else's notes, I would call the party "family," an arrest "grippe"; Hitler, Goering, and Goebbels became "Uncle Hans," "Uncle Gustav," and "Uncle Gerhard" respectively, although I hardly expected this flimsy disguise to hold up if worse came to worst. I hid these odd-sounding "family anecdotes" in the bindings of books which were scattered through my large private library. Later I sent them as letters to

various addresses in countries abroad, where they were kept until I myself had to leave Germany.

During the war a magazine published a selection from my material under the title, "Dreams Under Dictatorship." At that time circumstances prevented me from evaluating all the material.

Today I am happy I did not compile and evaluate my material until after a large body of historical facts, documents, and firsthand reports had become available, with scholarly research and judgments based on these sources. They have aided me in my attempt to use a new means, that of dream documentation, to show the direct effect of totalitarian rule on its subjects through their psychological reactions and typical behavior patterns.

I have deliberately omitted all dreams involving violence or any physical expression of fear, even the most extreme cases. I came across numerous examples which began like this one: "I awoke bathed in sweat. As had happened many nights before, I had been shot at, martyred, and scalped—had run for my life with blood streaming and teeth knocked out, Storm Troopers constantly on my heels." Even among those who went along with the regime there must have been quite a few who had this type of dream from time to time. But except for their frequency, such dreams were nothing new. "Sleep no more!



Macbeth does murder sleep"—this is the effect tyrants and the rule of force have always had, but it is not what concerns us here. Throughout all time, people have experienced terrifying dreams, dreams not only touched off by some external crisis of a personal nature or originating in the inner tensions of singularly sensitive persons, but brought about by situations that threaten people collectively. Let us take one very common such situation—war. There are records of anxiety-dreams from many wars. But because men and the way they express their anxieties do not change greatly, it is often difficult to determine which war produced which dream, except that recent wars have given rise to dreams that feature modern weapons to the same extreme degree as these weapons have affected the population as a whole. The man who conceives the horrors of war in an image of frozen prisoners hanging over a rod while a starving populace comes running with knives to carve out choice chunks of flesh for its dinner, could just as well have been living during the Thirty Years' War, if the setting were not a railway yard in Berlin and the time World War I.

Yet there can be no doubt about what events and which era underlie the highly varied dreams I collected between 1933 and 1939. Their origin in time and place is explicit: they could only have sprung

from man's paradoxical existence under a twentieth-century totalitarian regime, and most of them nowhere but under the Hitler dictatorship in Germany.

Since it has become difficult in our day to discuss dreams without touching on the various dream theories, a few words of explanation are in order at this point. The dreams we are concerned with were not produced by conflicts arising in their authors' private realm, and certainly not by some past conflict that had left a psychological wound. Instead they arose from conflicts into which these people had been driven by a public realm in which half-truths, vague notions, and a combination of fact, rumor, and conjecture had produced a general feeling of uncertainty and unrest. These dreams may deal with disturbed human relations, but it was the environment that had disturbed them. This "bond of union between dreams and the waking state," these "transparent pseudo-dreams" (to quote Jean Paul), stemmed directly from the political atmosphere in which these people lived—a fertile soil for such dreams. They are almost conscious dreams. Their background is clearly visible, and what lies on their surface lies also at their root. There is no façade to conceal associations, and no outside person need provide the link between dream image and reality—this the dreamer himself does.

Dreams of this nature also employ imagery, but it is an imagery whose symbols need no interpretation and whose allegories need no explanation; at best, one may decipher its code. These dreams adopt forms and guises which are no more complicated than the ones used in caricature or political satire, and the masks they assume are just as transparent as those worn at carnivals.

Such dream metaphors ring true because their authors have been made more sensitive by their fear and loathing; consequently they detect otherwise barely discernible symptoms in the multitude of daily events—symptoms they neither charitably play down nor transcend in their dreams. These dreams are indeed reminiscent of mosaics—often surrealistic ones—whose single pieces had, as it were, been chipped from the reality that was the Third Reich. This justifies interpreting them as contributions to the psychology of totalitarianism, and permits one to apply them to the concrete situation they illuminate, leaving aside whatever psychological aspects bearing on the individual they may contain. (As is well known, experts on dream analysis—Bettelheim, for one—were astonished to discover how little applicable their theories were when brought up against the most extreme conditions a totalitarian state can create, the concentration camp.)

Set against a background of disintegrating values and an environment whose very fabric was becoming warped, these dreams are permeated by a reality whose quality is unreal—a combination of thought and conjecture in which rational details are brought into fantastic juxtapositions and thereby made more, rather than less, coherent; where ambiguities appear in a context that nonetheless remains explicable, and latent as well as unknown and menacing forces are all made a part of everyday life. That this sounds like an observation on modern art in all its forms is not surprising, considering the role dreams and even nightmares have come to play in the art and literature of this century.

It is remarkable how closely the means employed in these dreams to describe life under the Third Reich coincide with the techniques contemporary German writers use to convey a dark past that eludes them when they approach it in a realistic fashion. In the dreams recorded in these pages, the line between the comic and the tragic often becomes blurred as their authors struggle to express the inexpressible. They describe phenomena typical of the period in the form of parables, parodies, and paradoxes. And situation is heaped on situation in a succession of snapshot images from which an echo of daily life reverberates with frightening loudness or with equally

frightening softness, emerging radically simplified but also radically exaggerated.

Regardless of how, in their "slumberings upon the bed," these dreamers follow the thread they have seen winding through the labyrinth of political reality and which threatens to strangle them, their power of imagination ranges far. The Nazi official who maintained that people could lead a private life only in their sleep certainly underestimated the power of the Third Reich. Our dream authors, the soon to be totally subjected whose dreams are recorded here, saw it all with greater clarity, "in a dream, a vision of the night."

## Chapter 2

### Private Lives Remodeled:

### “Life Without Walls”

*I will show you fear in a handful of dust.*

*T. S. Eliot*

*Totalitarian rule becomes truly total the moment it closes  
the iron vice of terror on its subjects' private social lives,  
and it never fails to boast of this achievement.*

*Hannah Arendt*

The regulations, laws, and ordinances that act to prescribe both the actions and reactions of people living under totalitarian rule are the most conspicuous of its realities and thus the first to penetrate the dreams of its subjects. Its gigantic bureaucratic machinery is eminently suitable as a grotesquely macabre dream motif.

In 1934, after having lived one year under the Third Reich, a forty-five-year-old doctor had the following dream:

"It was about nine o'clock in the evening. My consultations were over, and I was just stretching out on the couch to relax with a book on Matthias Grönewald, when suddenly the walls of my room and then my apartment disappeared. I looked around and discovered to my horror that as far as the eye could see no apartment had walls any more. Then I heard a loudspeaker boom, 'According to the decree of the 17th of this month on the Abolition of Walls . . .'"

So disturbed was the doctor by his dream that he wrote it down of his own accord the next morning (and subsequently dreamt he was being accused of writing down dreams). After having given it some thought, he found what had provoked it, a cause that proved very revealing. As in other cases, the minor incident, the personally relevant factor, shows how Nazi totalitarianism functioned—a detailed pat-

tern which was already discernible in the dream context itself.

"The block warden had come around to ask why I had not hung a flag at my window. I calmed him down and poured him a glass of brandy, thinking all the while, 'Not in *my* four walls. . . .' I have never read a book on Grünewald and don't even possess one, but as often happens, I apparently took his altarpainting in Isenheim as a symbol for all that is purely German. Though all the elements and remarks in my dream are political in nature, I am not at all politically inclined."

This dream imagery so well illustrates the predicament any individual who resists collectivization must face that "Life Without Walls" would be an appropriate title not only for this chapter but also for a scholarly study or a novel about life under totalitarian rule.

Not only did the sleeping doctor clearly recognize the *condition humaine* under totalitarian rule; he also found in another dream that the only real escape from "Life Without Walls" was not what people later called "Inner Emigration" but rather total withdrawal from the public realm: "Now that no home is private any more, I'm living at the bottom of the sea."

The author of the following dream was a culti-



vated, pampered, liberal-minded woman of some thirty years, with no profession. The dream occurred as early as 1933 and, like the doctor's dream, contains an existential statement on life in a totalitarian state.

"In place of the street signs which had been abolished, posters had been set up on every corner, proclaiming in white letters on a black background the twenty words people were not allowed to say. The first was 'Lord'—to be on the safe side I must have dreamt it in English. I don't recall the following words and possibly didn't even dream them, but the last one was 'I.' "

As she finished, she exclaimed, "In the old days one would have called that a vision."

Vision does indeed mean seeing, and what this dream author saw so clearly in those radical restrictions on freedom of expression, whose first commandment stated, "Thou shalt not utter the name of the Lord," and whose last forbids any mention of "I," was just that vacuum, the void between lack of God and lack of identity, which twentieth-century totalitarian regimes have exploited. A parable is the vehicle used here to lay bare basic features of the dialectical relationship that exists between the individual and the dictatorship. Then, there are such embellishing details as the poster which was substi-

tuted for the prohibited street signs, whose removal signifies man's sense of indirection as he is being made over into a sheer function. And by the very simple device of picturing the foreign, English word "Lord" on the poster in place of the familiar German word, the dream author simultaneously manages to make all that is high and noble appear prohibited as well.

This woman, who, as she laughingly admitted, was quite "I-" or self-centered, experienced a whole series of such dreams between April and September 1933. Although concerned with the same basic theme, they were all quite different and not simply variations of the same dream, as was the case with the manufacturer. In real life quite an ordinary person, in her dreams she proved herself the equal of Heraclitus' Sibyl, whose "voice reached out through the millenia." In the course of only a few months, this twentieth-century dream-Sibyl saw far into the Nazi millennium, sensing trends, recognizing correlations, shedding light on the obscure, and all the while moving to and fro between the easily exposed realities of everyday life and all that lay undisclosed beneath their surface. With extremely skillful use of tragedy as well as farce, and realistic as well as surrealistic elements, she in effect unconsciously extracted the essence of a development which was

bound to lead to a national catastrophe as well as to the destruction of her own personal world. Time has proved the validity of her dream characters and sequences, her details and nuances.

Not long after this dream about God and Self, she had a second one which dealt with Man and the Devil.

"I was sitting in a box at the opera, dressed in a new gown, and with my hair beautifully done. It was a huge opera house with many, many tiers, and I was enjoying considerable admiration. They were presenting my favorite opera, *The Magic Flute*. When it came to the line, 'That is the devil certainly,' a squad of policemen came stomping in and marched directly up to me. A machine had registered the fact that I had thought of Hitler on hearing the word 'devil.' I imploringly searched the festive crowd for some sign of help, but they all just sat there staring straight ahead, silent and expressionless, not one showing even pity. The old gentleman in an adjoining box looked kind and distinguished, but when I tried to catch his eye he spat at me."

Like the manufacturer, this woman was aware of the political use of public humiliation. Among the many themes that run through this dream, "environment" is one of the more prominent. This abstract concept is quite ingeniously expressed in the image

of the opera house with its many curved tiers, filled with fellow human beings who do nothing but sit there, staring straight ahead, "silent and expressionless," when someone in their midst is in trouble. The picture is accentuated by the behavior of a man who, to judge by his appearance, would have seemed the last to subject this vain and elegant young woman to such an indignity. (The lack of concern on the part of their fellow men which both she and the manufacturer noted was also reflected in two dreams a prominent German intellectual experienced in 1940, which appear in his published diaries. In these dreams he sees his friends standing about with the same "impassive expression" on their faces. As this shows, quite dissimilar individuals employed the same image to express a not easily discernible phenomenon: the stifling atmosphere of total indifference which constant pressures create.)

When asked whether she could describe the thought-control machine, this woman replied, "Yes, it was electric, a maze of wires." The machine symbolizes the ever-present dangers caused by outside control exerted over man's thoughts and actions, automatism in the sequence of events. Moreover, it was envisioned long before the dream author could have known about remote-control electronic devices

or electric shock as a means of torture, and a full fifteen years before Orwell's 1984 appeared with its vision of an all-pervasive Big Brother.

Her third dream occurred after she had been deeply disturbed by the news of book burnings and particularly by radio reports in which the words "truckloads" and "bonfires" were repeatedly used.

"I knew that all books were being collected and burned. Not wanting to part with the old pencil-marked copy of *Don Carlos* I had had ever since schooldays, I hid it under the maid's bed. But when the Storm Troopers came to take away the books, they marched, feet stomping, straight to the maid's room [the stomping feet and direct, unswerving approach are images that appeared in her previous dream, and we will come across them in other dreams as well].\* They pulled the book out from under the bed and threw it on the truck that was to take it to the bonfire.

"At that point I discovered that I had only hidden an atlas and not my *Don Carlos*—and still I stood by with a guilty feeling and let them take it away."

As she finished her account, she spontaneously added, "I had read in some foreign newspaper that during a performance of *Don Carlos* applause had

\* Author's comments within dream texts appear in brackets.

broken out at the line, 'O give us freedom of thought,' or did I only dream that, too?"

This dream goes a step further than the previous one in characterizing the new type of man being created by the totalitarian regime. The author includes herself in her criticism of her environment and recognizes typical elements in her own behavior: she means to hide Schiller and not some forbidden book under the bed, but fear and caution lead her to hide the atlas instead—a book that does not even contain words. And still she stands there, for all her innocence, plagued by guilt.

Her next dream showed even more explicitly how fallacious it was to imagine that under the new system one could keep one's counsel and still have a clear conscience. It is complex and less graphic than her previous dreams, harder to understand, but she understood it nevertheless.

"I dreamt that the milkman, gasman, news vendor, baker, and plumber were standing around me in a circle, holding out their bills. I felt quite calm until I noticed the chimney sweep among them. (Because of his black outfit and the two S's [in the word *Schornsteinfeger*], 'chimney sweep' was the term our family used for the SS). They stood in a circle around me, like in the children's game, *Schwarze Köchin*, holding out their bills with arms uplifted in

the familiar gesture, chanting, 'Your guilt cannot be doubted!' " \*

This woman knew precisely what had provoked her dream. Just the day before, her tailor's son had appeared in the uniform of a Storm Trooper to collect the money owed his father for work just completed. Before Hitler, however, it had been the custom to wait a proper interval and then send the bill through the mails. When she demanded an explanation, the embarrassed young man replied that it had no special significance—he only happened to be in the neighborhood and only happened to be wearing his uniform. "That's ridiculous," she had retorted, but had paid nevertheless. Under such circumstances, ordinary incidents that on the surface might appear trivial were not so at all. This one the dream author used to demonstrate in detail how the newly established block warden system functioned: the intrusions sanctioned by the party uniform; the many private accounts that were settled at the same time; and the individual's gradual encirclement by the nobodies who lived around him.

The dream-chorus, "Your guilt cannot be doubted," casts the dream author in the role of the typical accused in a totalitarian system, whose guilt is as-

\* TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: "*Die Schuld* (debt or guilt) *kann nicht bezweifelt werden.*"

sumed from the very beginning. It also signifies her own guilt in having yielded to the slight pressure she termed ridiculous and which the man in uniform dismissed as accidental.

Like the *Don Carlos* dream before it, this example very subtly illustrates the first small compromise, the first minor sin of omission marking the beginning of a gradual process by which man's will was to become weakened to the point of total atrophy. It deals with barely recognizable injustices and normal behavior under quite ordinary conditions, which was to produce the "guilt of the guiltless"—a state of mind that, despite all efforts, remains difficult to explain.

It might be added that the phrase "Your guilt cannot be doubted" is almost identical to a line in Kafka's "In the Penal Colony," where the officer says, "Guilt is never to be doubted."

This woman's dreams, filled with Orwellian devices and Kafkaesque insights, repeatedly dealt with the new environmental conditions in terms of particular situations, without action. In some she pictures her neighbors sitting around her in a "large circle," their faces "expressionless," and she feels "imprisoned" or "lost." Another was purely impressionistic, containing no images, only words which she immediately recorded. It was New Year's Eve,



1933, after the traditional pouring of molten lead.

"Am going to bury myself in lead. Tongue is already leaden, locked in lead. Fear will go away when I'm all covered with lead. Will lie immobile, shot full of lead. When they come, I'll say 'The leaden cannot rise up.' Oh! They want to throw me in the water because I'm so leaden . . ."

At this point her dream broke off—an ordinary anxiety dream, perhaps, but also an unusually poetic one whose horrors need no further explanation to be felt. She herself pointed out one element that had been taken from reality, rhyme fragments from the "Horst Wessel Song," and added that for some months she had indeed felt leaden and fearful. But although otherwise perceptive, she failed to recognize the deeper significance of the phrase, "The leaden cannot rise up."

At any rate, her wish to hide, to become buried in lead, corresponds to the doctor's wish to seek refuge at the bottom of the sea, both dreams expressing complete withdrawal from the public realm.

The profusion of prohibitive regulations drove a woman of quite different background and age, an elderly mathematics teacher, to the following dream, which occurred in the early autumn of 1933.

"It was forbidden under penalty of death to write down anything concerned with mathematics. I took

refuge in a night club (never in my life have I set foot in such a place). Drunks staggered around, the waitresses were half naked, and the music was deafening. I took a piece of tissue paper out of my pocketbook and proceeded to write down a couple of equations in invisible ink, and was frightened to death."

When asked to comment on her dream, she replied simply, "It is impossible to forbid what they're forbidding here!" How true. In all its simplicity this absurd ban on writing down an ordinary equation shows all such prohibitions for what they are. And what details this unimaginative and conservative schoolteacher brought forth from her memory's secret recesses! She seeks out an obscure place where no one would expect to find her, and, like a professional spy, works with special ink and paper one can swallow, just in order to maintain her rights to set down equations and, in effect, safeguard her own profession from destruction. One could say, in fact, that her behavior represents an attempt to keep politics from robbing her very existence of its meaning, for this dream does indeed dramatize anew and from a different angle how man was being threatened by alienation from his environment. It should also be noted that it features one of the very few, cautious

attempts at resistance I was able to find in any dream produced by a representative of the middle class.

It is easy to reconstruct the actual circumstances that gave rise to this handful of dream-fables on "Life Without Walls," as recalled by a doctor, an attractive young woman, and an elderly school-teacher. Each individual fable, moreover, relates to an abstraction—the young woman's series about a menacing environment illustrates, for example, the destruction of "the plurality of men" and their feeling of "abandonment in the public realm" which Hannah Arendt characterizes as the basic features of life under totalitarian rule.

## Chapter 3

### Bureaucratic Fairy Tales:

“Nothing Gives Me Pleasure Anymore”

*Up till now a few things still had to be set by hand,  
but from this moment it works all by itself.*

*Franz Kafka*

*Ah, what an age it is  
when to speak of trees  
is almost a crime.*

*Bertolt Brecht*

His crime consisted of saying, "Nothing gives me pleasure anymore." It took place in the Germany of 1934—in a dream. Its author, a man of about forty and a legal expert employed in municipal administration, recalled it in the following words:

"It was about eight o'clock in the evening. As usual at that time of the day, I was talking on the telephone with my brother, my only friend and confidant. [This appraisal of the brother's relationship was a true one.] After having taken the precaution of praising Hitler's policies and life in the National Community, I said, 'Nothing gives me pleasure anymore.' [In fact, he had said this on the telephone earlier in the evening.]

"In the middle of the night the telephone rang. A dull voice [corresponding to the expressionless faces we have encountered in previous dreams] said merely, 'This is the Monitoring Office.' I knew immediately that my crime lay in what I had said about not finding pleasure in anything, and I found myself arguing my case, begging and pleading that this one time I be forgiven—please just don't report anything this one time, don't pass it on, please just forget it. The voice remained absolutely silent and then hung up without a word, leaving me in agonizing uncertainty."

Even after having humiliated himself like the

manufacturer, this official is left with the same feeling of uncertainty and insecurity—undoubtedly one of the weapons of systematic terrorization. He is placed in the Kafkaesque situation of being somehow accused, a sword of Damocles suspended above him. Only it was no Goebbels who had hung it there, no identifiable person, but some government agency represented by an impersonal voice. If man's pure enjoyment of life consists of taking pleasure in things, then "taking pleasure in nothing" may symbolize man's dehumanization in an ideology-bound, dictated world.

"Ah, what an age it is when to speak of trees is almost a crime."

In this dream, as in these lines Brecht wrote while in exile during the same period, existing conditions are compressed and reduced to one of those exaggerated images that shed light on an absurd reality. Not so perceptive, this official saw only that his dream was set in the framework of his job. "I dream bureaucratic fairy tales [*Greuelmärchen*]," he explained, using the official designation for rumors that leak out. This "Monitoring Office" was only one of many such agencies he invented in his dreams, but it and the impressive-sounding "Training Center for the Wall-Installation of Listening Devices" were now the only ones he remembered. One can see that the

products of his imagination were truly surrealistic, for they reflected a higher degree of reality, what André Breton has called "absolute reality." In his dreams he also produced regulations, ordinances, and societies whose very names or wordings give insight into the conditions of life at the time. But with the exception of an "Ordinance Prohibiting Fraternization with Aliens" and the splendidly formulated "Regulation Prohibiting Residual Bourgeois Tendencies Among Municipal Employees," he had forgotten all of these as well.

On the other hand, he did recall that he had envisioned them on banners and posters, or in newspaper headlines. Sometimes, when his dream impressions were not visualized, he simply heard them—in one instance "called out by a rasping voice as if in a barracks-yard." This he mentioned only in passing.

To find mass communications emerging to play a role in these dreams seemed in itself significant. Propaganda occupies a separate sphere in the totalitarian world, and the Hitler regime was the first of its kind to manipulate public opinion by making full use of these technical accomplices, in the same way it made full use of its functionaries. Propaganda as well as functionaries had acquired an autonomous quality in this official's dreams, becoming true appa-

ritions of a new order; one time they materialized as phenomena, another time they appeared as a shouting voice from above.

As this research progressed, it became evident that the instruments of propaganda, and not just propaganda itself, were having just the deep effect they were intended to have. These loudspeakers, banners, posters, and in fact all media the Nazi information monopoly could bring to bear were not only to reappear as one element among others, as we shall see in the most diverse dreams, but would also emerge as a major theme with such frequency and uniformity that they will not be discussed individually. Two examples, however: a man who happened to be very sensitive to noise would dream his radio was blaring over and over, "In the name of the *Führer*, in the name of the *Führer* . . ." This generally occurred after days when Hitler's speeches were to be heard resounding from loudspeakers everywhere—in houses, offices, restaurants, and on every street corner. And a girl dreamt she saw the slogan, "Public Interest Comes Before Self-interest," printed in endless repetition on a fluttering banner, which illustrates in the simplest terms what a profound psychological effect the mere repetition of slogans can have.

Others imagined familiar slogans and catchwords in an altered or grossly distorted form, in polemical



or satirical exaggeration. During a campaign against *Meckerer und Miesmacher* (grumblers and pessimists), one man dreamt a crowd was chanting its opposition to *Muckerer und Duckerer* (those who knuckle under); another time he dreamt the slogan *Gegen Kritikaster und Päderaster* (down with fault-finders and pederasts, both subjects of campaigns) was splashed across the front page of the *Völkischer Beobachter*. "Is that supposed to be irony, or is it mild counter-propaganda?" was the question he asked himself. The poster that appeared in one housewife's dream, *Wasserleitung tropft—Winterhilfe eintopft*, evidently criticizes the methods employed to obtain money in the Winter Relief campaign, during which families were required to substitute a stew for the customary Sunday roast and turn the savings over to the authorities. In a style reminiscent of modern nonsense verse, there is sense in this absurdity, as in those other wordplays with all their ambiguity and incongruous assonance.

But these details are less important than the fact that all forms of propaganda to which these people were exposed by day were absorbed into their dreams and re-emerged as dream motifs in their own right, there to fulfill a function not unlike Huxley's sleep-teaching device which, installed beneath the pillow, transmitted the prescribed line.

## Chapter 4

### The Everyday World by Night:

"So That I'll Not Even Understand Myself"

*For there is nothing covered that shall not be revealed;  
neither hid that shall not be known. Therefore  
whatsoever ye have spoken in darkness shall be heard  
in the light; and that which ye have spoken in the ear  
in closets shall be proclaimed upon the housetops.*

*Luke*

*There was of course no way of knowing whether you were  
being watched at any given moment. . . . It was even  
conceivable that they watched everybody all the time. . . .  
You had to live—did live, from habit that became  
instinct—in the assumption that every sound you made  
was overheard, and, except in darkness, every move  
scrutinized.*

*George Orwell*

The instruments used in manipulating the human mind, from headlines to radio, in short propaganda of all sorts, emerged in dreams to pursue the intended subjects of totalitarian rule, just as they were pursued through countless dreams by Storm Troopers, the instrument of physical terrorization. (Because it is such an obvious dream topic, dreams of physical terrorization will not be dealt with here, although many people continue to experience them.) When, however, a middle-aged housewife dreams that the Dutch oven in her living room is acting as a medium of terrorization, this is clearly terrorization of a different nature.

"A Storm Trooper was standing by the large, old-fashioned, blue-tiled Dutch oven that stands in the corner of our living room, where we always sit and talk in the evening. He opened the oven door and it began to talk in a harsh and penetrating voice [again the Voice, reminiscent of the one heard over the loudspeaker during the day]. It repeated every joke we had told and every word we had said against the government. I thought, 'Good Lord, what's it going to tell next—all my little snide remarks about Goebbels?' But at that moment I realized that one sentence more or less would make no difference—simply everything we have ever thought or said among ourselves is known. At the same time, I re-

membered how I had always scoffed at the idea that there might be built-in microphones, and still didn't really believe it. Even when the Storm Trooper bound my hands with our dog's leash and was about to take me away, I still thought he was joking and even remarked, 'You can't be serious—that just can't be!' ” [This same type of incredulous reaction to incredible occurrences was found in all concentration camps—this almost schizophrenic disjunction between man as observer and man as sufferer.]

When one reads about such reveries by the Nazi fireside, it is necessary to bear in mind that this particular example dates from 1933. What are viewed today as political facts of life, even as everyday occurrences, were in those days not even plausible in a work of fiction. Today we are well acquainted with Orwell's image of an omnipresent Big Brother, and we are familiar with those various listening and surveillance devices that have emerged in this second half of the twentieth century and serve other than political purposes in their use against a "defenseless society." And we also know that man in this "defenseless society" can find his prototype among those who lived under dictatorship. Neither the housewife nor the official who dreamt of a "Training Center for the Wall-Installation of Listening Devices" knew anything about these subsequent

revelations—and yet they *did* “know,” just as the regime intended they should. In the darkness of night they reproduced in distortion all they had experienced in that sinister daytime world.

The housewife recognized the cause of her dream—a particularly revealing one in this instance—and brought it up of her own accord. “While at the dentist’s the day before, we were talking about rumors, and in spite of all my skepticism I caught myself staring at his machine, wondering whether there wasn’t some sort of listening device attached.”

Here we see a person in the process of being fashioned by a very elusive and even today not fully understood form of terrorization, a terrorization that consisted not of any constant surveillance over millions of people but rather of the sheer uncertainty about how complete this surveillance was. Although our housewife did not actually believe there were built-in microphones, she did catch herself thinking during the day that it just might be possible after all, and that very night dreamt that “*simply everything we have ever thought or said among ourselves is known.*” What dream could better suit the purposes of a totalitarian regime? The Third Reich was not able to install such devices in the homes of every single person, but it could certainly profit from the fear it had implanted in the hearts of all those

people who then began to terrorize themselves, turning themselves unawares into voluntary participants in this systematic terrorization in that they imagined it to be more systematic than it actually was. In its own way, the "Dream of the Talking Oven" demonstrates how insecure the fine line between victim and victimizer can become. In any case, it shows what boundless possibilities exist for manipulating man.

For another housewife it was not a cozy oven, that storybook idyll, but a bedside lamp that turned traitor. Instead of giving light, it brought to light all she had said in bed:

"It was speaking in a rasping tone, like officers do. My first thought was to simply turn off the lamp and stay there in the safety of darkness. But then I told myself that wouldn't help, so I dashed over to see my girl friend, who had a dream book, and looked up 'lamp'—lamp signified only 'serious illness.' For a moment I felt very relieved until it dawned on me that to be on the safe side people were using the word illness for arrest, and I felt desperate again, at the mercy of that incessantly rasping voice, even though no one was there to arrest me."

A greengrocer had exactly the same type of dream about a cushion he placed over the telephone when the family gathered in the evening for a cozy chat, a precaution everybody took in those days. The at-

mosphere of coziness became one of terror: the cushion—a sentimental keepsake cross-stitched by his mother and ordinarily kept in his easy chair, his domestic throne—began to talk. It testified against him and went on and on, repeating family conversations ranging from the price of vegetables and the midday meal to the comment “Old Pot-belly [Goering] is getting fatter by the day.” And all the while this little man was no more able to believe what was happening to him than was the housewife, sitting by her oven.

I received quite a few reports about similar dreams involving household objects—about a mirror, a desk, a desk clock, an Easter egg. In each of these cases, all that remained in recollection was the fact that the object concerned would denounce people. The frequency of such dreams may have increased as people became more and more aware of the methods the regime employed. But the housewife and the greengrocer who dreamt of Big Brother’s listening ear, not his striking arm, and who certainly censored, tyrannized, and terrorized themselves by day as well as by night—otherwise they could hardly have invented these new household tyrants—illustrate not only some of the imperceptible techniques used to force millions of housewives and greengrocers into silence but also the shadowy

forms their acquiescence took. These examples show how, in their blind fear of the hunter, such people would assume his role and hunt themselves—how they inadvertently helped set and spring the traps into which they were meant to fall.

The following singularly grotesque example of this type of dream was dreamt by a young girl and reached my hands only recently.

“I dreamt I awoke in the middle of the night to discover that the two cherubs that hang over my bed were no longer looking upwards but were instead staring down at me. I was so frightened that I crawled under the bed.”

This girl is sure that these cherubs—apparently a common reproduction of the putti in Raphael’s *Sistine Madonna* and obviously hung there as guardians of her sleep—are in fact watching her, not over her, and she crawls beneath her bed as if she had learned by reading Orwell that there is no way of knowing whether one is being watched at any given moment.

Just another turn of the screw and all the precautionary measures taken by day—the veils and guises used as camouflage (and also employed in modern art)—as well as all the grotesque private laws people obeyed in order to be a jump ahead of real or imagined public laws, would begin to take on an independent role in dreams.



The author of the following dream was a girl in her mid-twenties, an excellent bibliographer.

"I dreamt I wanted to call on an acquaintance of mine whose name, shall we say, was Miss Small, but on my way I discovered I had forgotten her exact address. I went into a phone booth to look it up, but I looked up an entirely different name to be on the safe side—let's say it was 'Big.' " And this girl, whose occupation it was to look things up, added spontaneously, "But that was really senseless."

This is quite literally deranged, for the purpose of the action is defeated by the action itself. And yet for all the derangement, what a striking dream this is, what a lack of absurdity for its own sake! Another example in a single sentence:

"I was telling a forbidden joke, but as a precaution was telling it wrong so that it didn't make sense anymore."

The man who dreamt this also dreamt he sent deaf and blind people out to see and hear things that were forbidden; in this way he could always prove they had actually seen and heard nothing. But he had forgotten all the details of this obvious dream-farce.

The most pointed example of this type of dream was provided by a woman, a milliner by trade, who experienced it in the summer of 1933:

"I dreamt I was talking in my sleep and to be on the safe side was speaking Russian (which I don't know, and anyway I never talk in my sleep) *so I'd not even understand myself* and so no one else could understand me in case I said anything about the government, for that, of course, is not permitted and must be reported."

This woman was certainly not familiar with the biblical passage, "Let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech," or with the fact that during the Inquisition a man came under attack for having "uttered heresy in his dreams." But this dream did become reality—in Auschwitz, where the impossible was indeed made possible. A woman prisoner who had been put to work there as a secretary approached another woman who shared her sleeping quarters and fearfully asked her if she had been talking in her sleep about the things she experienced during the day. "You see," she added, "we were threatened not to say a word or even let our faces betray a thing of what we learned in the political section." (Testimony at the Auschwitz Trial, reported in *Die Welt*.)

During the same period, a young man had this dream:

"I dreamt that I no longer dream about anything but rectangles, triangles, and octagons, all of which somehow look like Christmas cookies—you see, it was forbidden to dream."

Here is a person who decides to avoid risk altogether by dreaming nothing but abstract forms.

Chapter 5  
The Non-Hero:  
"And Say Not a Word"

*I'm not unjust, but I am not courageous.  
They pointed out their world to me today,  
I saw the hand that pointed: it was bloody . . .  
Bertolt Brecht*

In Grillparzer's play, *A Dream Is Life*, the hero is warned in a dream not to assume any burden of guilt. The era that gave rise to the dreams recorded in these pages has also given us an engaging example of how a man allowed a dream to affect his real life. The artist George Grosz once dreamt a friend was urging him to flee to America. Grosz took the advice and later maintained that a higher power had wanted to save him from annihilation.

When, however, a figure emerges to perform not as the passive sufferer but in an active role on the stage of that absurd world of dreams whose eerie sequences, sets, and props we have seen constructed, this figure is neither tractable nor likable.

We have already come across this figure among the supporting cast. But now, because we need categories in order to gain an overall view, we shall establish a new category—that of the hero who in his dream-play not only deals with the milieu the regime has created around him, willy-nilly, or with all he is subjected to, but who also continues to develop his own role and plays it out *ad absurdum*, until by his own doing he has finally become depersonalized. He despises and curses himself, and rubs salt in his own wounds. Above all, he ridicules himself, radically deleting so much from his own portrayal that what remains is no more than a joke.

He also tries to construct alibis, to establish a paradoxical innocence while unraveling in his dreams the meaning of his real situation. Rather than hide reality from himself in obscure symbols, he places it in that false light which overemphasizes both the horrible and the absurd. Whoever has not yet learned from modern literature what it means to be a negative, absurd, comically macabre hero, a non-hero who commits neither deeds nor misdeeds, only non-deeds—he can discover it here, at one of the sources. More important in this context is the fact that here we find expressed in uncomplicated terms highly complex reactions and motivations, stemming from man's conscience which knows more than it will acknowledge by day.

In the dreams that follow, the world of the Third Reich speaks from the wings while in the foreground stands man who, to paraphrase Brecht, is not unjust though not courageous either—man who had been confronted with that world and its absolute claim on him, even on his conscience.

A thirty-eight-year-old construction worker dreamt in 1935:

"Am at the post office, standing at a window at the head of a long line of people. The clerk refuses to sell me stamps because no one who is against the system may buy stamps. An Englishman comes up.

Instead of going to the end of the line, he comes right to the front, before me, and tells the man at the window what I ought to say but don't dare: 'It's simply amazing the way people are treated in this country. I shall certainly report about it in England.' "

When asked what he thought about this dream, the man said he was making himself seem ridiculous (he naturally meant no allusion to Dostoevsky's "Dream of a Ridiculous Man"). In one variation or another, he had had this dream practically every night—or so he thought—and was continually adding new details to the absurd situation to make it seem even more absurd. In one version, only members of a party organization may buy stamps, while in another supporters of the regime are the only persons even allowed to write letters. Whatever the situation, it always turns out that some other person, generally a foreigner, comes forward and speaks his mind to the official in Nazi uniform. Sometimes the representative of authority is simply "the man at the ticket office" at a motion picture theater, soccer game, or wherever entry is barred to persons without proper identification. In every case the dreamer sees himself at the head of a "long line of people," directly confronting the representative of authority, as if it were up to him to speak out. He was par-

ticularly distressed to find women among those who would speak out in his place; when the weaker sex proved stronger than he, the burly pipefitter, his caricature became even more grotesque.

This dream sequence at the post office could easily be drawn as a political cartoon: a long line of mouthless people standing at a window, and behind it the oversized mouth with its uniform cap and collar insignia. The pipefitter had recognized and satirized the role the individual played in the new everyday world of the Third Reich so perceptively that his dream could be presented equally well on the stage of a political cabaret. The guises he creates, each in reality a brutal exposure, point up basic issues; and he uses an image of a mute line formed at every window of public life to show that the conditions necessary for the exercise of conscience simply did not exist there. Furthermore, the ban on buying stamps or even writing letters, consequently on human communication, gives us yet another vivid allegory on the destruction of pluralism in the totalitarian state.

A thirty-six-year-old office worker, who at one time had belonged to the *Reichsbanner* (organized to defend the Weimar Republic against its internal enemies), recalled numerous dreams parodying him-



self in a fashion quite reminiscent of those very revealing jokes and expressions popular at the time.

"I dreamt I had seated myself ceremoniously at my desk, having finally decided to submit a formal complaint about prevailing conditions. I put a perfectly blank piece of paper in an envelope, proud to have made my complaint but at the same time feeling deeply ashamed of myself.

"Another time I dreamt I was calling the police department to lodge a complaint—and found *I could say not a word.*"

When a person finally does decide to act, only to find he has exhausted his strength in deciding and is unable to go through with it, what a telling picture this gives us of the general reluctance to speak out and of how man's will atrophied under constant compromising.

On another occasion this office worker had the following dream:

"Goering himself came to inspect my office and gave me a satisfied nod. This unfortunately pleased me enormously, even though I was thinking what a fat swine he is."

Our hero only succeeds in increasing his humiliation by thinking about Goering's funny figure while feeling ashamed to be enjoying his praise, a dream

device the manufacturer also used when he dreamt he could only stay on his feet by concentrating on Goebbels' clubfoot.

This is not the only case of a dream-hero who is both pleased and ashamed by his actions—a man of two minds, the one accepting and the other rejecting the world around him. Our next dream describes very precisely the complicated and complex feelings of just such an individual, the inevitable product of circumstances, who is torn between affirmation and rejection. Dreamt by a forty-five-year-old eye doctor, it occurred in 1934.

“Storm Troopers were putting up barbed wire at all hospital windows. I had sworn I wouldn't stand for having them bring their barbed wire into my ward. But I did put up with it after all, and I stood by like a caricature of a doctor while they took out the window panes and turned a ward into a concentration camp—but I lost my job anyway. I was called back, however, to treat Hitler because I was the only man in the world who could. I was ashamed of myself for feeling proud, and so I began to cry.”

The doctor awoke in the middle of the night, spent and exhausted as people often are when they have been crying in their sleep. On thinking it over, he recalled the incident that had given rise to the dream—a cause that once again is very revealing of the

general situation: that day, one of his assistants had appeared for work at the clinic wearing a Storm Trooper's uniform, but although the doctor was indignant, he had not protested. Then he fell asleep again and dreamt:

"I was in a concentration camp, but the prisoners were being very well treated—there were dinner parties and theatrical performances. I was thinking how exaggerated the reports about life in concentration camps really were, until I happened to look at myself in a mirror and saw I was wearing the uniform of a camp doctor and had on special high boots that sparkled like diamonds. I leaned up against the barbed wire and began once again to cry."

This doctor used the word caricature to describe his dream-self as it struggled to reconcile the irreconcilable—and a caricature it is, drawn with merciless accuracy by his own unconscious mind. In his first dream he recognizes the dangers implicit in remaining silent: that there is indeed a connection between doing nothing and wrongdoing. In his second dream it's all untrue, everything has become a party to the forces he despises. Although what he sees reflected in the mirror is not the image he would like to have of himself, the boots do sparkle seductively. In both dreams he places himself in a category he does not actually want to be in, and feels both shame and

pride as he simultaneously fulfills his desire to belong (a theme we shall deal with at length in subsequent chapters).

Commenting on the barbed wire which figures so prominently in both dreams, the doctor recalled that in his first dream he had struggled painfully with the word; instead of *Stacheldraht*, it had come out as *Krachelstaat*, then *Drachelstaat*, both nonsense words. But despite all Joycean transpositions and distortions, he did not come up with *Drachensaat*, or "dragon seed," the word he felt he was seeking to symbolize what dangers barbed wire and broken glass could hold for the visually handicapped.

It was not until several years later, in 1938, that the story about Storm Troopers and broken glass became reality. One episode during the infamous *Kristallnacht* seemed to have been drawn directly from the eye doctor's dream. While systematically smashing the windows of all Jewish businesses, Storm Troopers attacked a small shop in a western district of Berlin. They dragged its blind proprietor out of bed and forced him to walk barefoot across the broken glass. Once again we see that these dreams did indeed remain within the realm of possibility—or, rather, of the impossible that was fast becoming reality.

## Chapter 6

### The Chorus:

"There's Not a Thing One Can Do"

*I saw the murderers and I saw the victims.  
It was just courage, not compassion, that I lacked. . . .  
Bertolt Brecht*

*Ah yes, but that is not the real fear. The real fear is  
fear of what lies beneath the surface of things, and this  
fear will not be dispelled.  
Franz Kafka*

The doctor who struggled in his sleep with the dragon Barbed Wire had not been driven to such dreams by anything he had actually done, but rather by what to his great distress he had failed to do. Nor had the thirty-two-year-old secretary G. *done* anything, and yet she became the victim of very real and specific circumstances. The product of a mixed marriage, she had lived alone with her dear Jewish mother ever since the death of her father, a Christian. During the winter of 1936, at a time when conditions were steadily worsening as a result of the race laws enacted the year before, she experienced a series of brief and highly diverse dreams, all concerned with the desire to get rid of or dissociate herself from her mother. The law had not only decreed her a half-breed; it had also succeeded in instilling mixed feelings in her about the one person to whom she was really devoted and whom she was bound and determined never to abandon. Although shocked by her feelings, she did not deny them and even brought up the matter with her doctor once when she had gone to see him about an illness.

Her first dream: "I was traveling to the mountains with my mother. She remarked that we'd all have to live in the mountains before long [mass deportations were at that time still inconceivable]. Despising

her and at the same time hating myself, I replied, 'You will, but I certainly won't.' "

Her second dream: "I was sitting with my mother in a restaurant beneath a sign that read, 'Parasites Keep Out.' I wanted to do something to make her happy, but all the while she was sitting there drinking her cocoa I was suffering tremendously, and I hated her." [This was before signs stating "Jews Unwelcome" were to appear in restaurants. Yet her subjective situation made this dream author so clearly aware of the problem of so-called "objective enemies" and social "undesirables" that she was even able to anticipate details of the subsequent campaign against them.]

Her third dream: "I had to flee with my mother. We ran like crazy. When she couldn't run any more, I lifted her onto my back and continued to run. I suffered dreadfully as I struggled with the burden. After a long time I realized that I was struggling with a corpse. I was filled with a terrible sense of relief."

Her fourth dream: "I dreamt I had a child by an Aryan whose mother wanted to take the child away from me because I was not pure-blooded Aryan. 'Now that my mother is dead,' I screamed, 'not a one of you can hold a thing against me any more.' "

In view of the truly schismatic quality of existence

under totalitarian rule, into which political conditions had plunged this dream author, it would not be enough in this context (although some may find it tempting) to attribute these dreams simply to some repressed hatred of her mother or a death-wish that was only seeking a timely outlet. That would amount to what Karl Jaspers has termed the "existential nonsense of dream interpretation," or the "tendency to degrade the human being." Whether seen from a political or the purely human point of view, these four dreams provide new insight into a situation that has already been illuminated from other angles. They show the psychological extremes to which one can be driven by outside encroachments on one's innermost sphere, and how man can react in his very depths when the powers that be make it too difficult for him to love his neighbor, even the one dearest to him.

And then there is the twenty-one-year-old student who actually did do something; who in 1935 broke off relations with her fiancé, a Jewish lawyer, because of the pressures created by the racial laws and brought to bear by her family. Her dream reads like the transcript of a trial between Conscience and Knowledge. She wrote it down of her own accord the very night it occurred so that she would remember it in all its details and thus not make it easy for herself.



"A classroom, very, very large, like an auditorium. I was sitting on the left end of the very last row—the school director in front on a dais, higher than the rest, looking partly like my old school director and partly like Hitler—in fact, he was called Dictater. We were having our lesson on race.

"Standing next to Dictater, but on a lower level and facing the class as a specimen, was Paul—that's how my friend was called. Dictater took his pointer and traced the contours of Paul's face as if it were a map. When he asked which of the specimen's features were particularly inferior, not I but an old and nondescript man sitting next to me answered, 'But the *Herr Doktor* is, after all, quite a decent person.' (The typical expression of condolence often given the likes of us by well-meaning people.) A murmur of agreement went through the class. Dictater's face grew sarcastic and he said (what a fine imitation of a schoolmaster's caustic irony I dreamt here!), 'Aha, just a short while ago this presumably decent *Herr Doktor* expressed to me his displeasure about an eventual *Anschluss* of Austria.'

"I realized that I had to act if I wanted to save Paul, whose deathly pale, pathetic face I still saw up there by Dictater's, only on a lower level. I jumped up and ran down the aisle toward the front, so that I was standing in the middle of the class. I cried out,

'I don't ordinarily say anything (the typical and familiar preface to the slightest contradictory remark—and why did I say it at this particular moment?), but that is not true, simply not true!'

"I was expecting an even more emphatic murmur of agreement than before, but among the rows of students there was only icy silence, just mute, expressionless faces. Dictater's expression was coldly sarcastic. I ventured a few steps toward his dais and cried, 'Everyone, every single one has told me in private that Paul has been treated unfairly and is a very decent person.' And I added without meaning to, for I didn't really want to say anything critical, '*Your* class—they're not all heroes either.'

"A thoughtful, almost compassionate expression crossed Dictater's face up there, but only briefly, and then it turned cold again. Paul's situation and mine as well were dangerous—I was fully aware of that, seeing Dictater's sneering face up there, with Paul's deathly pale face beneath him and the silent class in the background.

"At that point a blue light appeared at the window behind that deathly pale, pathetic face. It slowly spread in through the window toward him, enveloping him, spread over Dictater and his class until it reached me, enveloping me as well. The silence in the class was broken. 'A miracle,' they murmured,

'it's a miracle,' and it was almost a growl. Dictater seemed very unsure of himself.

"For a moment, even I thought it was a miracle.

"Then my girl friend Eva hissed in my ear, '*There's not a thing one can do*—it'll only last a minute and then the light will go right out again. That's only the funny woman signaling that the coffee's ready.' (In reality, the maid had turned on the light behind the glass doors to my room, awakening me.)"

What does this mean, this unsparing self-criticism on the part of a person who, when awake, knew that the state had not only poisoned her surroundings but had also ruined her private life, driving her to a specific act? When the sleeping student sets the action of her dream in a gigantic school auditorium, this is no dream façade—the curriculum actually did include race instruction with living "specimens" for demonstration purposes. Like other dream authors, this girl gave the public its rightful place in her dream as she acted out her own painful story. Combining both resolution and irresolution, and shame with other inner reactions, this tale contains all previously observed ingredients that go to make up the non-hero type—and more. Although she tries to act, she seems to be bent on showing all she fails to be and do: she prefaces her resistance with the words, "I don't ordinarily say anything, but . . ."; the man

sitting next to her, although "old and nondescript," has more courage than she has, and she lets him speak out in her stead, something we have seen in previous dreams, just as we have come across those "mute and expressionless" crowds before. Into her dream is woven authority's momentary retreat in the face of resistance, as well as that symbol of self-deception, the hazy blue light which the girl likes to believe is there until the chorus leader breaks in with the age-old argument, "*There's not a thing one can do.*"

During the same period, this student had another dream in which she goes beyond her "I don't ordinarily say anything, but . . .," and instinctively uses the very same arguments her opponents use.

"My friend had decided to ask his clerk to return to work in his office in spite of the race laws. We drove out to where he lived in the country. I dreamt this in color—the pine trees were quite grey, and even Paul's little car, actually black, appeared a dirty grey color. I waited in the car while Paul walked up to the house where his clerk lived. His mother was sitting out in front with two other women. I expected her to put on her polite, obsequious smile (as she really did once when we happened to drive past on an outing). Instead, she immediately began to rant and rave, and it looked as if she and the other

women were going to hit Paul. I wanted to jump out of the car and protect him, to prevent the worst from happening, but instead I found myself shouting about the mitigating factor the Nazis had included in their race laws: 'He went to fight in the war at eighteen—his father died of a wound received in battle—all his brothers were in the war,' while we slowly made our escape. An immensely humiliating scene, almost impossible to erase from memory."

For several months thereafter she dreamt the following dream repeatedly:

"My friend was being attacked, and I didn't help him. They carried him away on a stretcher, and he had the same 'deathly pale, pathetic expression on his face' he had had during the race lesson. But his body was a skeleton, except for a gory piece of flesh still clinging to his neck.

"For consolation, at one point I told myself that this was only propaganda, only an anti-Hitler poster from earlier days." [Such an anti-Hitler poster showing a skeleton was actually used in 1932.]

This girl's dreams are a good example of the process of inversion which was at work in the field of propaganda. We have already seen evidence of this in the doctor's dream, when he imagines that theatrical performances and dinner parties were being held in concentration camps. "To prevent the worst from

happening," the girl begins by using her enemies' argument, and then winds up telling herself that atrocities are only counter-propaganda. We all know that this propaganda, bound as it was by neither legal nor moral principles, was capable of almost anything. It could produce the events it fed on. As suggested here, it could also worm its way deep into the innermost spheres of the people to whom it was directed, there to subtly obliterate the distinction between propagandist and his victim, turning suggestion into autosuggestion.

## Chapter 7

### When Doctrines Come Alive:

### The Dark in the Reich of the Blond

*It no longer matters whether blue eyes, blond hair, and a six-foot stature truly guarantee superior human qualities. What does matter is that one can use this means as any other to organize people to the point . . . where no one has the opportunity any more to consider whether this distinction is meaningful or not. . . . This apparently minor, in reality decisive operation of taking ideological views seriously . . .*

*Hannah Arendt*

*A Nordic soul, a Nordic mind, and Nordic traits of character can only be found in a Nordic body.*

*Heinrich Himmler*

When in the imaginary Reich of Dreams we have been discussing, dreams are provoked not by the practices the Third Reich employed but by the total fictions—the “theories”—on which this Reich was founded; nor by anything as concrete as terrorism, proscriptive regulations, or legal paragraphs but rather by fantastic doctrines, the whole dream thus motivated becomes a parable on the schizophrenic nature of totalitarian reality. When the theory of the superiority of the blond race comes at night to seek out victims among dark-haired individuals or persons who possess some physical trait that deviates from the state-approved norm, this does more than prove the efficacy of simple repetition; it provides a metaphor for all that is illusory, fictitious, and synthetic in the totalitarian reality. (So far as I can see, literature on the subject has overlooked this comically macabre theme, genuine black humor.)

A twenty-two-year-old girl, whose delicately formed, almost Semitic nose dominated her face, apparently believed everyone would think her Jewish. Her dreams became filled with noses and identity papers.

“I went to the Bureau of Verification of Aryan Descent [which did not exist under this name, and she had nothing to do with any such office] and presented a certificate attesting to my grandmother’s



descent, which I had obtained after months of running around. The official looked just like a marble statue and was sitting behind a low stone wall. He reached over the wall, took my paper, tore it to bits, and threw the pieces into an oven that was built into the wall. And he remarked [condescendingly, using the familiar form of address, *Du*], 'Think you're still pure Aryan now?' "

In this dream the gateway to the law is guarded not by Kafka's "inherently friendly" gatekeeper but by a veritable marble statue of an official who sits behind a wall of stone with a built-in furnace and has only contempt for anyone who lacks the right kind of grandmother.

In this period before the race laws had been put into effect—laws she had no reason to fear, as we have pointed out—this girl went on to experience a number of long, epic dreams with the themes of noses and identity papers, embellishing them with a great range of ingenious and even realistic details. As in many modern stories, the only unreal aspect of her dream-tales is their point of departure.

Another dream about identity papers:

"A peaceful family outing. Mother and I had brought along some cake and the folder containing our genealogy. Suddenly a shout: they're coming. Everyone in the garden restaurant there on the Havel

River knew who 'they' were and what our crime was. Run, run, run. I looked about for a hiding place high up. Perhaps up the trees? Atop a cupboard in the restaurant? All at once I found myself lying at the bottom of a pile of corpses with no idea how it got there—at least I had a good hiding place. Pure bliss under my pile of bodies, clutching my papers in their folder."

She added that she had been very strongly affected by a description she had recently read of the great pile of bodies left in the wake of the Mahdi Rising at Khartoum. One cannot help but be struck by the parallel to the mass exterminations that were to come, the "final solution" ten years later, when people who lacked the right papers actually did lie hidden beneath piles of bodies.

She wrote down the following dream about big noses right after it occurred:

"On the Baltic Sea, on a ship that is swimming with the current, but where it goes nobody knows [note her use of two common expressions in their literal sense]. Am carrying a large folder containing my papers wherever I go, because after all, I've got to prove I'm not Jewish despite my nose. All of a sudden my papers are gone. I cry out, That's the most important, the very most important thing I've got. While screaming I realize they've taken them

away from me—the men who run the ship have deliberately taken them. I begin to search for them, though secretly and unobtrusively.

"Someone whispers, 'There's no point in doing that—you simply can't' [said on almost any occasion during the day, this 'one can't' cropped up repeatedly in dreams as well]. Suddenly I see my dog, but only his shadowy form, not alive. So they've taken him, too—all that remained of the old days when I could relax and enjoy life [once again, dictatorship robs its subjects of all *joie de vivre*]. Great outburst of tears: fourteen years I've had him, for fourteen years I've cared for him [an analogy to Hitler's speeches about fourteen ignominious years]. Again someone tries to calm me down, whispering that I should keep still and for heaven's sake not attract attention.

"At this point I awoke with a start, but fell asleep again and went on dreaming: The atmosphere on the ship is becoming more and more sinister. I'm afraid to sit down anywhere, and with every step I take I ask myself: Are they against me? Are they scrutinizing me?

"I find myself alone with a handsome officer—blond, so he belongs to the right sort of people. He comes up to me, looking embarrassed. I ask him about the disappearance of my papers, and he becomes even more embarrassed. I discover I'm to be

shot. I beg him to let me escape. He: Out of the question. Desperately I begin to flirt, to kiss him. He: What a shame, such red lips. Suddenly I realize I'm on a Danish ship. We agree I should swim back to the German shore. So I want to return in spite of everything.

"I jump into the water, hide in one of the wooden sheds that are standing all about in the water, watch various groups of Hitler Youth hike by, and think how much I would like to join them.

"On land. Am greatly relieved at the sight of German customs uniforms. Saved. Then I notice that my whole family is being brought ashore. My mother—Grandmother and Aunt, too. But Uncle, I ask, where is Uncle? 'They've shot him—they've shot all *nose-suspects*. They're only taking non-suspects over to the other shore.' I begin to cry, calling 'Uncle!' At that moment I see the father of one of my childhood friends reading a farewell letter from his son—his son had a large nose.

"Meanwhile, more and more non-suspects and their belongings are being brought ashore. My clothes, too. Not my papers and not my dog. Right, I think—after all, I'm one of those who've been shot. And even while still dreaming it occurred to me that I ought to make a note of this dream."

This dream could well be entitled, "On a Futile

Attempt to Swim with the Current.” With the usual motifs of anxiety and flight, it contains a wealth of expressed and concealed desires, such as the feeling of being torn between two groups and the wish to belong, to move along with the Nazi movement—all themes we shall come across again in the dreams of people who did not just imagine they were being singled out to be thrown overboard or shot.

I was initially inclined to view this girl’s nose complex, though a tangible product of racism, as an isolated case—and this would have been interesting in itself—until I received a whole series of dreams on the same theme from another source. Their author was quite a different type: a very pretty nineteen-year-old girl whose hair, eyes, and particularly her complexion nonetheless deviated sharply from the blond ideal. The girl who lacked the state-approved hair coloring did not have such horrifying dreams as did the girl with the “unapproved” nose. Hers were short sketches which cumulatively could be entitled, “The Dark in the Reich of the Blond,” and all of them deal with the so-called “inferiority of the dark race.” Interestingly enough, all the dreams I received on this subject had been experienced by women, and mainly younger women, who were perhaps more sensitive than men to any objections to their appearance.

The first fragment from the dark-haired girl's dreams:

"I went into a shop. I looked at the very blond and blue-eyed salesgirl, too frightened to say a word. Then I felt relieved to notice that she at least had dark eyebrows, and I found the courage to say I would like a pair of stockings."

Her second dream fragment:

"At a gathering made up exclusively of blond, blue-eyed people, a two-year-old child who couldn't talk yet opened its mouth and told me, 'The likes of you don't belong here at all.'"

What a strange impact indeed the ideology of racism, whipped up by intimidation and propaganda, had made on the mind of our young dream author. She creates a whole new everyday world, a blond world populated by a baby-beast and a salesgirl whose black eyebrows make her appear less bestial, a quite satiric version of Nietzsche's *blonde Bestie*. It is as if she realized that the only way to counter insanely funny yet deadly ideas is by showing them to be even more insane, even funnier (in the same way today's black comedy points up the insanely funny effect of the bomb).

The dark-haired girl's third dream is an elaboration on the theme of the Nazi-sanctified superiority

of the blond race and on the equally sanctified superiority of the group over the individual:

"I dreamt I was at a sporting event. The spectators were divided into two sides, on the one the blond, blue-eyed people and on the other the dark ones, the foreigners [once again the foreigners emerge as the only opposition]. The two sides began calling each other names, scuffling and fighting. The dark group closed ranks and marched away. I marched along at a distance, though still in step [so at last she succeeds in falling in step], thinking that as awful as I find them, I'll use them like an umbrella, for protection—am simply between two stools and don't belong anywhere."

She does want to belong, however, and as a result most of her dreams are about groups. Here is her fourth:

"On a table were lying two passports which I dearly wanted so that I could get out and away from it all. I took them but after an inner struggle put them back again, thinking that I mustn't do anything that might reflect on my group, since all dark people are punished if one of them does anything forbidden." [As prisoners later reported, collective punishment was to become one of the more frequently employed methods of coercion in concentration camps.]

In her fifth and last dream, this girl's desire to

bear the fate of being dark collectively and not alone seeks a grotesque outlet in a means of expression characteristic of the totalitarian milieu: the *Sprechchor*, people speaking in chorus.

"I dreamt I was no longer able to speak except in chorus with my group."

As we go on, the reader may find the ever recurrent "blond and blue-eyed" imagery trying, but monotonous repetition cannot be avoided in this case. The "Dark" had a great wealth of stereotyped dreams involving conflicts with all that is blond—the result of a mythical quality being attributed to a particular type and unscrupulously propagated, although not grounded in law or imposed upon society by terrorism. The deviant—the enemy by nature—does conform and actually feels "racially inferior." The tyranny of the dominant world-view produces self-tyrannization among its victims, as we have already observed in the cases of the denunciatory oven and cushion.

Another girl who from early childhood had been accustomed to hear her hair described as "raven-black," dreamt:

"Sunday in Tiergarten Park. Blond people out strolling everywhere. I overheard someone say to his companion, 'Emma is having trouble with her tenants. They steal like ———.' I was mortified,



knowing he would say, 'like the raven-blacks,' and then he said it."

Her second dream:

"Fritz, black hair and eyes, was fighting with a blond boy. Even though I knew it was ridiculous—he couldn't win—and even though I knew I felt sorry for him, I watched with pleasure and delight. At least he had tried to defend the dark ones. In the end he was dead. I have this dream often, with slight variations."

Her third dream:

"A blond girl, practically a child, came up to me on the street and asked if I wanted to go out with her that evening. I gave this nice youngster a close look, without saying a word. Had she dyed her hair? Doesn't she have any 'racial pride'? What does she really mean—what's her aim? What's in the back of her mind when she comes up and speaks to a dark-haired person?

"The blond girl answered my unspoken question: 'I ought to be able to go out with someone just because I like her.'"

Aside from that noteworthy soliloquy, this dream is surprising in that the young dream author "knows" that the criterion of the non-conformist is his individual and non-conforming taste; and she allows herself to be told by a younger person that liking a

person is sufficient reason for associating with her. When asked what she thought about her dream, her reply proved equally surprising: "I've lost a great deal of self-confidence." And so she even "knew" that what is basically at issue here is her "self."

Yet another very dark-haired girl dreamt of a school where all brunettes formed a single group, the Disreputables. She must have been aware of the fact that her complex had originated in school, where it had been impressed upon her that she was a member of the Dinaric, or southeast European Slavic race, and she had deeply envied her "first-class" blond schoolmates. This is her dream:

"Bit by bit, the blond students were making everything forbidden to us Dinarics. To begin with, we weren't allowed to sit next to them. Then we couldn't go out for recess with them. The worst part was that it didn't come from above, from the teachers, but from our blond schoolmates, many of whom wore badges saying 'Non-Dinaric.' Finally it happened: We were huddled together over a spirit burner during recess, cooking rice and stewed fruit because we weren't allowed to go out for lunch. The cleaning women, who were nicer than our schoolmates, were spreading the rumor that the worst was about to come. They didn't say exactly what, but apparently the blond students were about to bump us off. Then

an official list appeared, giving the names of all Disreputables in every grade. It also announced the reason for the action: we had dared write a letter to the others, the reputable blonds, about a book we had loaned them and wanted returned. But that wasn't the real reason—our real crime lay in the fact that we, the dark-haired students, had dared write the blonds at all. Then came a stampede and they threw stones at me."

This dream, "On the Group of Disreputables," brings to light certain fundamental techniques of totalitarian rule. Although political scientists have only been able to reconstruct this complicated edifice after all the facts of Nazi totalitarianism were assembled, this girl was able to sense what it was all about because her hair-coloring and complexion had set her apart from the group that had been decreed biologically superior.

Others, too, were haunted by similar ideas of group or tribal guilt—people who had other, more concrete reasons for feeling as if they belonged in a particular category or were classified as "exponents" of a particular line.

A schoolgirl whose father had once been a communist, had the following model dream:

"I receive the same comment on all my report

cards and on all the class work I do: 'Very good, but unsatisfactory because subversive.'<sup>8</sup>

This old nightmare about school and examinations (in the case of the schoolgirl, it was a direct reflection of her own situation) appears to have occurred in many variations among adults. I received a number of such reports, such as: "I am not promoting you because you belong to the Church," or ". . . because you are ideologically intolerable." Or, posted on a university notice board—and this, again, is almost parody: "So-and-so has failed because he is an enemy of the people." Once again we see how slogans, posters, and the notices that were posted in factories and offices penetrated into dreams.

## Chapter 8

### Those Who Act:

“You’ve Just Got to Want To”

*Whether a person was able to bear up under the psychological strain of concentration camp life . . . depended almost entirely on his strength of character or whether he was guided by religious, political, or humanitarian concepts.*

*Eugen Kogon*

*They are driven on only by their master's hollow words, not by their souls! Protect your possessions!*

*Goethe*

The dream-group that was vaguely designated the "Disreputables" in the preceding chapter takes on more precise definition as the "Suspects" in another student's dream. His dream-group was not an altogether imaginary one, for his own brother had been arrested and he himself had experienced a number of difficulties as a result. This is his dream:

"There was a ball going on on all floors of a large building, but the people in our group, the Suspects—degenerate artists and performers, one-time socialists, and relatives of concentration camp inmates—were sitting in a small attic room, dressed in ordinary clothes, and were poking fun at the people arriving downstairs in their evening clothes and uniforms. I sneaked downstairs and overheard someone say that the whole house was charged with tension and, as a result, fire had broken out on the stairs to the attic. 'The Suspects have to be saved!' I yelled into the bedlam. But they only shrugged, 'Why shouldn't the Suspects go up in flames?' "

What this student failed to recognize is that his image of a group of "Suspects" clearly depicts one of the basic features of totalitarian rule: the condition in which, for whatever reason, every person is a potential suspect, lumping artists and the relatives of internees together in a single category. The student did add, however, "We Suspects weren't hiding in

the cellar—we were sitting at the top, above the ruling class in their uniforms and evening clothes.”

After his brother's arrest this student experienced considerable strain. So: “I dreamt it was forbidden to show nervousness, yet I did.” Nevertheless, the very thought of his brother gave him a sense of pride and a certain fortitude. Indeed, far from behaving absurdly in his dream, he takes action and attempts to rescue his group.

This same type of pride is evidenced in a dream by another man, about whose age and social position I have no information.

“I suddenly found myself in the middle of a detachment of Storm Troopers, dressed in a *Rotfront* uniform.\* I thought to myself, I really ought to be scared to death, but I wasn't, even when they tore off my uniform and began to beat me up.”

This bears a close similarity to the dream of a middle-class housewife:

“Every night I kept trying to rip the swastika off the Nazi flag, all the while feeling happy and proud of myself, but in the morning it was always sewn on tightly again.”

This dream was based on an incident which occurred in Berlin's central police department the day after Hitler came to power. A group of working-

\* *Roter Frontkämpferbund*, a communist veterans' organization.

class women were waiting in the hallways for news of their arrested husbands, and every time someone came by bearing the Nazi flag (a black swastika on a red field) they yelled, "Just you wait—we're going to rip that off and it'll be red again." The dream author had not been present herself but had heard about it from someone who was. The women's audacity and determination there in the lion's den had made such an impression on her that by night she became a modern-day Penelope, undoing threads not for merely personal but for political ends.

An older woman, a seamstress, was so strongly influenced by Jehovah's Witnesses that during fittings she would unabashedly talk on and on about how she would not pledge allegiance to any regime and rejected organizations on principle. Her resolute attitude also carried over into her dreams, as this account shows:

"I kept having fainting spells on the corner of *Kaufhaus des Westens* [a major department store at one of Berlin's busiest intersections]. Not a single passer-by would help me up, not a one even gave me a second glance. . . . Half-consciously I struggled to figure out how people knew they had to leave me lying there and didn't dare come to the aid of a believer like me who had fallen down. A person they leave lying there, but they had picked up the letter



I'd been carrying—that I noticed when I managed to stagger to my feet without anybody helping to steady me. Then I was completely relieved to notice that the person nearest to me was a lame woman in a wheelchair, selling newspapers, and she couldn't have come to my aid in any case."

Here we have a person who is suspect because she is a believer, a human being people are forced to leave lying there while at the same time they are concerned that *things* be kept in proper order; our dream author knows that such love of order is itself suspect and exonerates a fellow human being because she is just as paralyzed as she herself lying helpless on the ground. These images, created by a person who was not in conflict with herself or her conscience, are altogether convincing in their purity and clarity.

The stronger an individual's moral fiber and political backbone, the less absurd and more positive were his dreams. I have records of a few dreams experienced by men and women who offered active resistance, and they took positive action even in their dreams. Their dreams stand in sharp contrast to those whose authors had lost their ability to act even while sleeping.

The following dream was experienced in 1934 by a woman whose husband, a member of the under-

ground, had been able to escape from Germany after his activities had been discovered.

"He returned, dressed as a soldier—of course, I'm always dreaming he's back and in danger. I told him, 'It won't work because you don't know the ropes.' I ran to a barracks in hopes of stealing a service manual for him, and considered sewing sergeant's stripes on his uniform so that ordinary soldiers would have to salute him first and he wouldn't get caught giving the wrong salute, for then they'd ask for identification and would see that his papers were false. He only laughed at my warnings, but the very first time he saluted somebody, he did it wrong. I saw how he put his hand to his cap in a completely wrong fashion, but the man he was saluting only stopped and looked around in amazement.

"Later I heard that the inevitable had happened—he'd been caught. I asked around until I found the place where he was supposed to be. A huge basement room, already completely empty. But a group of people who were also looking for someone [what a splendid new group—"people who are looking for someone"] were living nearby in the open, on rows of double-seated desks, and they were talking of nothing but how terrible it was supposed to be. When I mentioned that it didn't look so bad from the outside, they led me to a small door, actually a

sealed vent in the wall, round as the lid of a barrel, and on it were the words: 'capacity 7.7 cm<sup>2</sup>, temperature 167°F.' I kicked in the lid.

"Another time I dreamt I was being forced to list all known inhuman punishments. I made them up in my dream [at that time, people still knew fairly little about the details of atrocities]. Then I got even by screaming, 'All enemies have to die!' "

The resistance fighter's wife takes revenge, she kicks in doors, steals things from barracks—in short, she resists and is neither a non-hero nor a non-person. Fear is no longer the basis of inaction.

The following action-packed dream is the longest I encountered and comes from a twenty-nine-year-old woman who was part of a group which produced and distributed an illegal newspaper. She wrote it down immediately after it occurred, taking pains to disguise her account because she knew that it could prove incriminating. It dates from 1934 and shows the effects of her well-justified fear, with each blow followed by a counter-blow.

"In my hallway I found five small piles of little handbills, ten to a pile and only five words on them, stuck through the slot in the door. I don't recall the five words, but they very cleverly managed to tell a whole story: someone had given something away,

two people had already died as a result, and more would have to die.

"At first I was quite calm and thought the whole thing was the sort of advertisement that goes to every house. Then I thought it over: the handbill was only three or four centimeters large, and not printed. No, it was not even run off on a mimeograph machine like our newspaper [she prepared the stencils for this paper, and once while she was at work on it the Gestapo happened to come to the house. This enormous scare had given rise to her dream]. The handbills had been printed with a child's printing set, therefore intended for a very few persons, probably as a warning to a small group. Suddenly there weren't five small piles any more, only a single one. All at once it dawned on me that I wasn't safe anymore—I was the one they were meant to warn.

"My dream had various acts like a play. After I had very reluctantly realized that it had to do with me, Act Two opened with my attempts to save myself. I set about it quite logically. To begin with, I wanted to secure the safety latch but couldn't because all the screws were loose. Then I realized it was high time to escape. I peeked through the window—I could see figures patrolling down below.

"So I had to crawl out over our balcony, which

I had camouflaged by painting the geraniums brown, though I thought to myself as I climbed out that they only looked like autumn, not like Nazi. My father came up from the back of the apartment and called out, 'You can't do that—that's foolish.' Went on climbing without giving him the satisfaction of a single reply. Foolish? What does he know about it? (He of course knew nothing about my underground activities.) I climbed effortlessly from balcony to balcony, and in spite of the urgency I tipped over a couple of Nazi flags that stood rolled up on one of the balconies.

"I landed right in the middle of the tables at a sidewalk café located on the ground floor of our apartment house. I ran inside, into vast rooms decorated with pictures of Hitler, one of which I knocked down as I tore past. What now? The patrols would arrive any minute.

"At this point Act Three of my dream began. I saw two men huddled together in conversation. My mind worked fast. The two whispering men must have something important to discuss. Went closer, caught how one of them said, 'Got to protest transaction' (using the word transaction as a cover). The other man whispered back, 'Can't be done.' I squeezed between them, laid a hand on each one's shoulder, and cried out, 'We're old opponents of the

party, so we've got to protest!' I had two reasons for doing this: first of all, I wanted to throw the patrols off my track, and second, I figured that when I yelled and ran, the two men would have to join me and run along for the good of our cause.

"Part Four. And they really did come running with me, half provoked into it and half compromised. I wasn't alone any more. We ran through the vast rooms, pictures of Hitler right and left, running in step with all our might, quite spontaneously. 'We're old opponents of the party, so we've got to protest.' And then simply, 'We've got to protest!'

"People began to look up, at first only a few, then more, and many faces showed approval. But not a one joined us. Through hallways, then some more rooms, pictures of Hitler everywhere, running and crying out, 'We've got to protest!' Completely intent on what we were doing, with all our strength, for we knew that once we got going we had to gather up more to run with us or the game would be up. And so we went on yelling and running, running in step and crying out, 'We've got to protest,' dozens, it must have been a hundred times.

"Then I awoke totally exhausted and still had to go on chanting a few times, 'We've got to protest.' Even during the day I felt the urge to repeat it now and then."

In spite of her desperate plight, this woman's dreams are not altogether dismal. Here is another:

"We were typing stencils. We were discovered. We had to get away. I wanted to take along some money but didn't have a penny. I made off the way I was, someone chasing me—he looked like a dogcatcher. I suppose to reassure myself I took all my pursuers for dogcatchers.

"Up and down streets—finally I came to a small harbor and was taken on board a boat. Peace, rowing, wonderful. My friends who worked with me on the stencils were with me in the boat. One of them said, 'Either we stay in the harbor or we've got to get across the sea to China and then come back disguised as Chinese.'

"Besides the speaker there were three others in the boat, and all were in favor of taking the chance. We all rowed. All of a sudden we were stopped by another rowboat. Again the people with the caps, the dogcatchers—they dragged us into their boat. The man who had spoken before whispered to me, 'We've got to get hold of weapons.' He reached out and took two knives and a fork from a plate that was in our boat—a kitchen knife, jagged, bits of the blade missing, and a silver knife. They were passed out, and I got the silver one. He plunged his kitchen knife into the back of one of the dogcatchers. I fol-

lowed suit—awful it was, right through his sport shirt. My friend said, 'Sorry.' I said it didn't matter whether I stood back and watched, or helped. The man slumped over.

"The next one—this time I helped as if it were a matter of course. This way we took care of all of them, one right after the other. In the end there was only one left over, the man at the rudder. And he said, 'Now that they're all gone, I can admit I only went along with it because I had to. I want to go with you across the water—take me along to China.' He looked so sincere, so frightened—he with the cap—that we believed him."

Today we know this type well—the man at the rudder who only went along with it because he "had" to. His surprising appearance in this context shows how clearly the dream author perceived even that aspect of the situation.

This woman had a third dream which once again is brimful of action, realistic non-resignation, and the barely distorted shadows her day had cast.

"I had crossed the Riesengebirge border to Czechoslovakia on foot and had been walking only half an hour when all of a sudden, I no longer knew which way I had come, how I had got there—I only knew there were poplar trees there that resembled gallows.

"Suddenly Prague. Two of my friends, Hilde and



Walter, were also there. They didn't know the way back, either. I boasted a little that I had come across at Krummhübel-Geiergucke ten days before with a lot of material in my rucksack, and had done it over the Koppe three weeks before. In any case, none of us knew the way, and yet we had just taken it.

"A man with a cap appeared and took the other two away. He told me he'd call me in later. I began to straighten up my pocketbook and think out what I was going to say.

"I was called in, had to wait until they finished with a market woman—also present was a flirtatious stenotypist. The market woman had said something wrong, but they were letting her go without taking her name. I lashed out, 'I've known that girl ever since childhood—we went to school together. . . .' The man with the cap grinned. . . . 'That won't do you any good—there was an SS man hiding behind the balcony (the one with the geraniums at my apartment), and he heard everything.' I overcame my shock and quickly replied, 'In that case, since you know all about me, I can surely go.' And they let me go.

"I awoke feeling contented, then fell asleep again and dreamt I was back in Prague.

"In a music hall—I wondered all of a sudden how I was going to get back. I didn't know the way by

foot, so I would have to take a train, and that meant I needed a passport. Then someone came through the music hall carrying five or six passports which he was distributing to people whose names he called out. I snatched one away from him as he came by. Then a chase—I made it. When I opened the passport, however, I discovered it belonged to a twenty-nine-year-old Estonian woman—that would do, but it was covered with markings indicating that she was politically incriminated. While still leafing through it, I found myself standing before a customs official on a train, and with a smile I handed him my passport to be stamped. I told myself, *You've just got to want to*, and although he raised an eyebrow, I got by."

"We've got to protest"—"You've just got to want to"—"I got by"—this is quite a contrast to the "What can one possibly do" that we have come across in so very many dreams and in so many different versions. That the conclusions implicit in the dreams contained in this chapter are neither accidental nor the product of speculation is shown by a dream which was experienced by Sophie Scholl, the well-known student condemned to death for resistance. It occurred the night before her execution in 1943. Sitting on her cot, she gave her cellmate the following account:

"It was a sunny day, and I was carrying a little

child dressed in a long, white gown to be baptized. The path to the church led up a steep hill. But I was holding the child safely and securely in my arms. All of a sudden I found myself at the brink of a crevasse.\* I had just enough time to set the child down on the other side before I plunged into the abyss."

Attempting to explain the meaning of this simple dream, she told her cellmate, "The child represents our idea, which will triumph in spite of all obstacles. We are allowed to be its trailblazers, but we must die for it before it is realized." †

In its transcendence and bright symbolism, this dream can compare with heroes' dreams in classical dramas about classical decisions of conscience.

The dream authors who belong to this last category stand well apart from those in other categories: they neither parody nor degrade themselves, and though they may not transcend this life, they do not distort it. We can give them credit for having dreamt as they did because the mirror of their conscience cast their reflection undistorted.

\* The steep hill and the precipice are symbols also found in other famous dreams. Well-known examples stem from Madame Julien during the French Revolution, and from Bismarck.

† Inge Scholl, *Die Weisse Rose*.

## Chapter 9

### Disguised Wishes:

"Destination *Heil Hitler*"

*I watched these men go to and fro, always the same faces, the same movements, often it seemed to me there was only the same man. So this man or these men walked about unimpeded. . . .*

*And so I learned things, gentlemen. Ah, one learns when one has to; one learns when one needs a way out; one learns at all costs. One stands over oneself with a whip; one flays oneself at the slightest opposition.*

*Franz Kafka*

Plutarch records that Marsyas dreamt he killed the tyrant Dionysius, who, upon hearing of the dream, slew Marsyas.

I encountered only one case of dream tyrannicide:

"I often dream I am flying over Nuremberg, lasso Hitler, pull him right out of the party congress, and drop him in the English Channel. Sometimes I fly on to England and tell the government—now and then Churchill himself—what has happened to Hitler and that I was the one who did it."

The man who dreamt this very modern tyrannicide and began it by kidnapping the tyrant right out from under the noses of his henchmen and massed supporters, was a journalist in his mid-thirties who had emigrated to Prague. There, of course, he was in freedom and thus perhaps able to dream more freely. This certainly does not imply that no one in Germany dared dream of killing Hitler. But although the dreams I collected were otherwise thematically consistent enough to allow one to assess what was typical in the situations they described, the one dream I encountered in which an attempt on Hitler's life is made, occurred outside Germany. Under totalitarian rule, the wishes people typically sought to fulfill in their dreams were of a quite different nature and very understandably centered on joining the ranks and being part of things.

We have seen how dreams prompted by fear and anxiety—dreams that may be summed up in the shrugging remark, "There's not a thing you can do, nothing will help now"—throw a sharp light on people's psychological reaction to what is known as *Gleichschaltung*.<sup>\*</sup> But in the case of disguised wish-dreams (and we are concerned here again with individuals who were slowly adjusting to the circumstances, not with enthusiastic supporters of the regime), the characteristic vacillation provides insight into a process which has proven so very difficult to reconstruct: the process by which the psychological bases for *Gleichschaltung* were being laid within the not altogether unwilling subject, even as it was being imposed upon him from without.

I have a record of five such dreams. Although the situations they describe are as dissimilar as one could possibly imagine, their endings and basic psychological pattern are identical.

The first was experienced by a man in his thirties who wrote it down the very night it occurred:

"On Sundays I was supposed to collect money for the Nazis at [Berlin's] Zoo railway station. I said to myself, What the heck, I won't be bothered, so I

<sup>\*</sup> The process of political and social reorganization aimed at achieving and maintaining Nazi control over every aspect of life in Germany.

brought along a pillow and blanket—no collection box—and took it easy.

"An hour went by and Hitler appeared. He was wearing high patent-leather boots like an animal trainer, and a pair of wrinkled but very conspicuous purple satin trousers like a circus clown.

"He went over to a group of children and bent over them with artificial, exaggerated gestures. Then he put on quite a different attitude, a stern one, as he turned to a group of older boys and girls. Then he turned to a group of old maids, the *Kaffeeklatsch* type, and was all coquettish. (Here I apparently wanted to show how he handles the various groups in the *Volksgemeinschaft*, always with well-calculated gestures.)

"I began to feel uncomfortable under my blanket and grew afraid he would come over to me as a representative of the *group of those who pretend to sleep* and would notice that I had no collection box. Meanwhile I was imagining what sort of heroic answer I'd have ready—something like: I may have to be here, but I do know about the concentration camps and I am against them.

"Hitler continued his rounds. I was amazed that the others weren't afraid of him; one even kept his cigarette in his mouth while talking with him, and many were smiling!

"I'd completed my stint, so I picked up my pillow and blanket and went down the main stairway in the station. At the bottom I looked up. Hitler was standing at the top and was concluding his appearance with a song from the [imaginary] opera, *Magika* (so many people called what he did 'magical'), making extremely theatrical gestures which were designed only to impress the people.

"Everybody applauded—he bowed and then went tearing down the stairs. Once again I noticed his purple circus trousers (that day I had read that purple is the English color for mourning, so I not only saw him as a clown but also associated him with death and mourning).

"I looked around for his famous bodyguards and saw he was accompanied only by a non-uniformed chauffeur. He went to the cloakroom just like anyone else and waited patiently until it was his turn and the attendant gave him his coat. . . . I thought, maybe he's not so bad after all. . . . Maybe I needn't take the trouble to oppose him.

"All at once I realized that instead of pillow and blanket, I was carrying a collection box."

This sounds just like a case history of conformity. The dream author depicts approval as a process and describes the particular psychological state of the person who is to be influenced as well as the way the



influence is exerted, as if he—Wagner and homunculus in one—were holding the very retort in which he is being made a Nazi fellow traveler. The stages of this development are dreamt in sequence, like separate frames of a comic strip. The dreamer sees straight through Hitler as well as his methods and each of his gestures, portraying him as a clown, even a murderous one. "Didn't our parents see that he looked like a clown?" This is the question the post-war generation in Germany has asked again and again.

Our dream author recognizes Hitler's magical or pseudomagical appeal. He also sees him as an animal trainer—the manipulator *par excellence*—and still the act comes off successfully; after a while, he begins to feel that things are not half as bad as they had seemed, and that perhaps he needn't take the trouble to oppose Hitler (precisely the same "*bittere Mühen*" born of bravery of which Brecht has written). He is describing not only how one comes to accept conditions as they are but also the state of mind in which such acceptance grows. This consists of a readiness to be deceived and a tendency to construct alibis for oneself; once one has been conditioned long enough by the right combination of pressure and propaganda, he has become so receptive and malleable that all will to resist disappears. (The

resistance of dogs conditioned by Pavlov's method breaks down at a certain point; so does the human body when the right amount of poison is administered; Orwell's hero also reached the point where he looked at a picture of Big Brother with tears of gratitude in his eyes.) That is one, the physiological side of the coin. Yet our dream author, a hero who is basically neither good nor bad, suggests the other side as well: the effects of a political system which in the end leaves open but one direction in which he can move—the one toward the "movement."

Such a situation in which "participation" lies simply in the nature of things was also cleverly embodied in a dream experienced by a student at a commercial college, a twenty-one-year-old girl. Her dream dates from 1934, and although less elaborate than the one about the collection box, it has the same effect:

"Celebrations were going on for 'National Unity Day' [which actually was observed, although under a different name; it is quite revealing that she chose this name in her dream]. Long rows of people were sitting at long tables in the dining car of a train that was traveling along. I was sitting by myself at a small table. They were singing a political song that sounded so funny that I had to laugh. Moved to another table, but still had to laugh. There was nothing

to do but stand up—I wanted to go out, but then I thought if I sang along maybe it wouldn't seem so funny—so I sang, too."

Or another example dreamt in the same year, not by a girl but by an older man. It is so amazingly similar to the previous dream that it underlines the automatic quality of the process:

"It was in a motion picture theater on Nollendorfplatz [Berlin], but it looked more like an assembly hall. Newsreel. Goering appeared in a brown leather jerkin, shooting a crossbow, which made me laugh out loud (all this had actually taken place that evening, but nothing had happened to me).

"All of a sudden I was standing there next to him, wearing the same kind of jerkin and carrying the same kind of crossbow—how I got there I don't know—and he made me his personal archer."

A middle-aged housewife had essentially the same dream in 1936. It contains details so realistic they give the dream a diary-like quality:

"I was visiting some good friends in a small town somewhere in Brandenburg. That evening there was a party in my honor. The next morning, as we were having breakfast together in a very warm and friendly atmosphere, talking about the previous evening, a neighbor woman walked in and came right out and said, 'Your party last night was too big and

too long.' (Someone who had heard this remark in a small town had reported it to me verbatim, which is probably why I dreamt the whole thing.) 'And on top of everything else there were people there who don't say *Heil*. . . .' I burst out, 'That wouldn't have mattered.' Whereupon my friend said, 'Oh, quite to the contrary—that would have been altogether inconceivable!' When the neighbor woman had gone, my friend gave me an awful upbraiding—she had completely forgotten all she had said ten minutes before when she was assuring me of her friendship and affection, and she forced me to leave immediately, before anyone discovered the truth about me. She literally threw me out onto the street, without even telling me when the bus ran (there was no train). I stood helplessly at the bus stop and couldn't understand what was going on—couldn't figure out how she could make such a quick transition from one attitude to another.

"The bus finally came and was full. I got on and, facing the passengers who were all staring at me in silence, I called out loudly, '*Heil Hitler*.' "

Let us summarize what we have seen happening in these three dreams. One person tries to laugh about it all, but when it becomes evident that she is riding on a train that is heading in one very particular direction, she stops laughing and starts singing along

with the others. Or: the brown leather jerkin is no longer funny when you wear it yourself. Or: a person is ostracized for not saying *Heil*, and even while still failing to comprehend how a person could change her attitude so quickly, she climbs onto the bus whose destination is *Heil Hitler*.

All this throws light on the fact that people who in the beginning thought the whole show—songs, brown uniforms, and upraised arms—was so funny and then came to applaud it, had to see the whole tragedy of the Third Reich unfold all the way to its bitter end before they could once again reject it in all honesty.

One man succeeded in capturing in a single sentence how imperceptible and undramatic this transition from suggestion to autosuggestion actually was:

"I dreamt I was saying, 'I don't *have* to always say *no* anymore.' "

Amid all the "musts" of life under totalitarian rule, this almost touching magic formula, "don't have to," demonstrates once again what effort it costs to be against a state where freedom is a burden and bondage comes as a relief.

The dream of yet another man shows the process of falling into step from a more uncomplicated angle, the material one:

"I went into a shoe repair shop. I said, 'The soles

on my last pair of shoes are worn out.' 'Don't you know,' replied the shoemaker, who was holding a brand new pair of shoes, 'that only Storm Troopers can get new shoes?' 'I'd heard about that,' I said, 'but I can't believe it.' 'I can put you into a detachment made up only of people who otherwise don't have shoe soles,' he said in a very friendly tone, 'and when you join up, you get two pairs of soles right off.' And he added in an even friendlier tone, 'And I'll give you, let's see—three pairs right now because *you're* a man we need.'

"I ran away, but while running my tattered soles fell off."

This dream was passed on to me by a shoemaker who had heard it at the time from a customer who said his brother-in-law had dreamt it, and then added, "Before six months were out, he had become a Storm Trooper."

Chapter 10  
Undisguised Wishes:  
"This One We Want"

*I could never have achieved what I have done had I been stubbornly set on clinging to my origins, to the remembrances of my youth. In fact, to give up being stubborn was the supreme commandment I laid upon myself. . . .*

*I am supposed to have made uncommonly little noise, as I was later informed, from which the conclusion was drawn that I would either soon die or if I managed to survive the first critical period would be very amenable to training. I did survive this period.*  
Franz Kafka

Dreams in which the wish to belong and take part is expressed straightforwardly and with childlike candor, not unfolded gradually in anecdotes, are surely very like the daydreams that tens, even hundreds of thousands of people must have had when the going became too rough along the path of resistance and, dropping their opposition, they fell in step.

Dreams in this category tend to follow a pattern, a far less ingenious one than we have seen in other categories. Not just one or two, but dozens of almost identical dreams were reported by people who differed widely in age and social status. What was a secondary theme in previous dreams becomes the central one here, with people dreaming they are the friend or advisor of Hitler, Goering, or Goebbels. Not satirical distortion but infantile exaggeration is what characterizes these dreams—"I was Hitler's right-hand man and was feeling very contented." (Such dreams, a wish summed up in one simple sentence, are typical of children, who have yet to experience the complexity of adult wishing.)

But some were more complicated, as we see in the following example dreamt by a twenty-six-year-old transport worker:

"I was marching in a column of Storm Troopers, but wasn't in uniform. They wanted to beat me up.



Along came Hitler and said, 'Let him be—*this one we want.*' "

Or another example, this time dreamt by a sixty-year-old man:

"I was standing at the curb, watching a group of Hitler Youth march by. All at once they surrounded me and shouted all together, 'You be our troop leader.' "

While there is certainly no question about the role women played in supporting the Third Reich, the type of wish-dream dreamt by women bears out all that has been suspected and maintained in this regard. I am giving half a dozen examples of dreams that contain overt erotic elements; although they are monotonous and repetitious, the reader should be patient, for they demonstrate the typical aspects of the process. (The connection between power and the erotic is, of course, nothing new—power certainly does contain a strong erotic element. But in this case its effect was felt from the very beginning in the pro-Hitler voting patterns of women. This was clearly a well-calculated effect. "We've got to have a bachelor to get the women"—this was established even before Hitler became *Führer*, and he stuck by the rule until just before his death.)

An elderly woman who insisted she was "against Hitler and all that is erotic," related:

"I often dream of Hitler or Goering. He wants to do something with me, and instead of saying that, after all, I'm a respectable woman, I tell him, 'But I'm not a Nazi'—and that makes him like me all the more."

A thirty-three-year-old housemaid dreamt:

"I was at a movie, a very large and very dark theater. I was afraid—actually wasn't supposed to be there—only party members were allowed to go to the movies. Hitler came in, and I got even more frightened. But he not only let me stay—he even sat down next to me and put his arm around me."

A young salesgirl:

"Goering wanted to feel me up at the movies. I told him, 'But I'm not even in the party.' He said, 'So what?' "

Another salesgirl:

"At a concert. Hitler came through the front rows, shaking hands with everyone. I thought frantically—can I give him my hand? Don't I have to tell him I'm against him? Meanwhile he'd come up and placed both his hands on mine [a typical *Führer* gesture, denoting particular intensity of feeling, which she must have seen often in photographs]. He left them there until I woke up."

A housewife:

"On my way home from shopping I noticed there

was going to be street dancing like on Bastille Day in France, because it was a holiday to commemorate the Reichstag Fire. Bonfires were blazing everywhere [what a splendid bit of parody!]  
—squares had been roped off, and couples were ducking under the ropes like boxers. . . . I found that disgusting. All of a sudden someone with strong hands grabbed me from behind and pulled me through the ropes onto the dance area. As we began to dance I discovered it was Hitler, and I liked it very much.”

The obvious situation undoubtedly figured just as frequently but was not reported; nor did I ask about it, as I did not feel it would serve my purposes. What matters here is not the detail but the basic situation: the *Führer* as literal seducer, as an object of sexual desire. This overlapping of the erotic and the political was most clearly described in a dream experienced by another housewife:

“Many people dressed all in Nazi-brown were sitting crowded together at long tables that had been set up on the Kurfürstendamm [a main boulevard in Berlin]. I was curious, so I sat down, too, though at a distance from the others—at the end of an empty, solitary table [an image very similar to that of the woman in the dining car]. Then Hitler appeared, dressed in evening clothes to please people and carrying large bundles of leaflets which he dis-

tributed hastily and carelessly, tossing one bundle at the end of each table, and the people sitting there passed them on down the line. It looked as if I wouldn't get any, but suddenly he made a complete departure from the way he had been doing it and carefully placed one bundle in front of me.

"With one hand he gave me a single leaflet, while with the other he began caressing me, starting with my hair and then on down my back."

The right hand knows precisely what the left is doing: the one distributes propaganda while the other caresses. There can be no neater description of Hitler's influence on a large sector of Germany's female population.

Even more characteristic are the wish-dreams of people whose wishes were unfulfillable due to insurmountable external, not internal, obstacles—people whose problem was not some "wrong" political outlook but rather perhaps a "wrong" grandmother; in short, people whose objective situation was such that they could fulfill their wishes only in their sleep.

A girl whose grandmother was Jewish had the following dream in 1935, just after the race laws had turned her overnight into a "quarter non-Aryan."

"At Bad Gastein [a spa] Hitler was leading me down a great outdoor flight of stairs which could be seen from far off—all the while carrying on an

animated conversation with me. There was a throng of people below, and a band was playing, and I was proud and happy at the thought that everybody could see that despite Grandmother Recha it didn't bother our *Führer* at all to be seen in public with me."

In the same period, a forty-five-year-old woman, who was half Jewish, dreamt:

"I was on a boat with Hitler. The first thing I said to him was, 'Actually I shouldn't be here at all. You see, I have some Jewish blood.' He seemed very nice, didn't look at all like usual—his face round, pleasant, benevolent.

"I whispered in his ear, 'You could have become really great if you had managed things like Mussolini does, without this silly business with the Jews. It's quite true that some of them are really foul, but they're certainly not all criminals—one really can't say that.' Hitler listened patiently and quite sympathetically.

"All at once I found myself in a room in another part of the ship with lots of black-uniformed SS men. They were nudging each other, pointing to me, and saying in a tone of highest respect, 'Look, that's the lady who told the boss what's what.' "

So much for the dream of the half-Jewish woman (who, incidentally, told her tenant about it of her

own accord and with apparent satisfaction). It gives us an opportunity to witness at close hand how even people who by definition did not qualify for *Gleichschaltung* nevertheless desired to submit to it. This woman, whose father was Jewish, here has only "some Jewish blood," is also against Jews in general, addresses Hitler as *Du*, tells him how he could become "really great," and is shown "highest respect" by the SS—all this in one short dream.

Seldom, apparently, did straightforward wish-fulfillment of this type figure in the dreams experienced by full-blooded Jews. Not that they did not have the wish to belong and conform; had they had the chance, they would naturally have behaved like any other group in German society. It was simply that the conditions under which they lived were such that not even a dream could ameliorate them—a further indication of how accurately these dreams reflected reality. The mother of a fifteen-year-old Jewish boy told me how he had dreamt he was marching with a group of Hitler Youth; at first he stood "on the curb, burning with envy," and then suddenly found himself "right in their midst."

The wish-dream of a Jewish doctor sets quite a different accent. He dreamt: "I cured Hitler . . . the only one in the Reich who was able to" (like

the anti-Nazi eye doctor in a previous chapter). Yet this was only a secondary theme; his central one goes as follows:

" 'How much do you want for curing me?' asked Hitler. 'No money,' I told him, whereupon a tall, blond young man in Hitler's entourage snapped, 'What! you crooked Jew—no money?' But Hitler said in a commanding tone, 'Of course, no money. Our Jews are not like that.' "

The doctor had this dream in variations. In one instance he told his insulter, "You wouldn't dare say that if I were English or American instead of German." Another time he begged Hitler to reinstate him as a German.

Apart from such wishes which, as we have said, apparently figured only infrequently in the dreams of Jews, their dreams—although just as much motivated by anxiety and horror as the dreams of others—nevertheless constitute a separate category, just as the Jews themselves were a separate category under the Nazi regime. For from the very beginning they were the focus of direct, not indirect, terrorization.

For this reason, I have decided to deal with the dreams of Jews in a separate, final chapter.

## Chapter 11

### And the Dreams of Jews:

“I Make Room for Trash If Need Be”

*It is, of course, impossible to drive out all lice and all Jews in a single year—that will have to come about in the course of time.*

*Dr. Hans Frank*

*The Untermensch is the mere suggestion of a human being, having humanoid facial characteristics, yet intellectually and spiritually inferior to animals. . . . There is a terrible chaos of wild and unrestrained passions within this person: a nameless urge to destroy, the most primitive cravings and undisguised baseness.*  
*Proclamation of the Reichsführer SS*



One can determine from the dreams themselves when and where they occurred—this we have already pointed out. In the case of the three dreams at the beginning of this chapter, the dreamers' identity is also clearly evident: they could only have been dreamt by assimilated Jews living in Nazi Germany. All three were lawyers, and their attitudes, appearance, and behavior showed them to be completely assimilated—men who also were too old to break with established patterns. Their dreams deal with the familiar problems of disorientation, depersonalization, and loss of the sense of identity and continuity, but to an extreme that reflects the degree to which these problems were actually present.

The first lawyer was in his early fifties. Like the others, he lived in Berlin and enjoyed considerable professional standing. His record of active service in World War I had enabled him to continue practicing law for a time in spite of the race laws. His dream dates from 1935:

"I had gone to a concert and had a reserved seat, or at least I thought I had one. However, it turned out that my ticket was only an advertisement, and someone else was sitting in my seat. Many other people were in the same situation. With heads bowed, we all slowly left the concert hall by the

center aisle, while the orchestra began playing, "We have no abiding home here." \*

In his mid-fifties, the second lawyer had the following dream after veterans' privileges had been withdrawn and he was no longer permitted to practice law:

"I went to the Ministry of Justice, dressed in my best (just as I had actually done thirty years before, after having passed my assessor's examination, which was the custom). The Minister was sitting, surrounded by SS guards, at a huge desk (just like the one seen on photographs of Hitler) and was wearing a cross between a black uniform and a lawyer's robe (this dream must have been caused by the fact that I had been forced to throw away my lawyer's robe the day before).

"I told the Minister, 'I charge that the ground is being pulled out from under me.' The guards grabbed me and threw me to the floor. Lying there, I said, 'I even kiss the ground on which you throw me.' "

The third lawyer was older yet, around sixty, and had always considered a person's dignity and repute as matters of great importance. His dream also dates from 1935 and carries the indictment made in the

\* Brahms: *Deutsches Requiem*.

previous dream, that frightfully grotesque *J'accuse*, to its logical conclusion:

"Two benches were standing side by side in Tiergarten Park, one painted the usual green and the other yellow [in those days, Jews were permitted to sit only on specially painted yellow benches]. There was a trash can between them. I sat down on the trash can and hung a sign around my neck like the ones blind beggars sometimes wear—also like those the government makes 'race violators' wear. It read, '*I Make Room for Trash If Need Be.*' "

These three dreams describe, each in its own way, how the foundations upon which a long life had rested were destroyed. (This was also described in the mathematics teacher's dream given earlier in this book, in which it was forbidden under penalty of death to write down anything having to do with mathematics.) But these dreams were such direct outgrowths of the life their authors were actually forced to lead that they totally lack the surrealist element. As is often the case with tragedy, the first two border on *Kitsch*, or what we might call sentimental pathos. As to the third, long before Beckett's characters in *Endgame* were placed in trash cans, our dream author puts himself on a trash can and is even prepared to make room for trash in this, the "endgame" of his own existence.

The dreams of these three assimilated Jews are self-explanatory. Rather than add a superfluous commentary, one could say a few words about their subsequent fate. I have no information about the second, the man who kisses even the German ground upon which he is thrown. Although no longer young, the first managed to resettle in England after having lost his "abiding home." The third also succeeded in escaping abroad, but he died there a broken man, ever prepared to "make room for trash."

In 1934 a very German-looking young Jewish woman, who as a child had been baptized, dreamt, as it were, the theory behind the dreams of those who were being rudely awakened from what turned out to be the dream of assimilation. Her dramatic dream rhetoric clearly shows how people felt when they were being literally organized right out of the society to which they had never doubted they belonged. By pointing out details of those bloodless dramas that foreshadowed the bloody one to come, this dream conveys such feelings better than we can today. This is the woman's dream:

"I was in Switzerland, strolling with two blond naval officers. A large and very ugly Jewish woman slumped to the ground in front of a shop window. Her husband rushed to her side and asked, 'Rosa, what's the matter?'

"It wasn't until they passed us, holding onto each other tightly, that one could see how very Jewish and ugly they were. I felt my companions cringe with disgust, but they didn't say anything. I did, however, blurting out, 'I think they're absolutely awful, too—I just can't stand the look in their eyes. But you've forced me, literally beat me into being one of them. I'm still not one of them, though. But what about you? What do I have in common with the likes of you? You who look like me, for I look like them; like you—what has that got to do with me? Except that I might go to bed with one of you. . . .' At this point I awoke and immediately wrote down every word of my outburst." [An outburst that needs neither comment nor interpretation. But it is interesting to note that she took care to place even her inner turmoil in a foreign setting.]

It is true, as we have seen, that from the very beginning people from all walks of life and in all their fear and anxiety were able, dreaming, to recognize the aims and principles of totalitarianism and foresee their consequences, so that their dreams ring prophetic in retrospect. Still, the sensitivity of Jewish people particularly was so heightened by the acute threat under which they lived, that their dream imagery is marked by a clairvoyance that is almost naturalistic.

A thirty-five-year-old housewife had the following dream in 1935:

"While out for a walk we heard a rumor in the streets that people should keep away from their apartments because something terrible was going to happen. We stood across the street and looked longingly up at our apartment where the blinds were drawn as if no one lived there.

"We went to my mother-in-law's apartment, the last place left to go—up the stairs, but we discovered strange people living there now—could it be the wrong building?

"We went up the stairs in the building next door, but it, too, was the wrong one—a hotel. We came out by another door and tried to find our way back, but now we couldn't even find the street any more.

"All at once we thought we'd found the house we so badly needed, but it was only the same hotel that had confused us once before. After we'd gone through this unnerving run-around for the third time, the woman who owned the hotel told us, 'It won't do you any good even if you do find that apartment. This is what's going to happen. . . .' And in the manner of Christ's curse on Ahasuerus [the legendary Wandering Jew], she pronounced:

'There comes a law:

They shall dwell nowhere.

Their lot shall be  
To wander ever through the streets.'

"Then she changed her tone and, as if she were reading out some proclamation, droned: 'In conjunction with said law, everything previously permitted is now forbidden, to wit: entering shops and stores, employing craftsmen . . .' Right in the middle of this horrifying scene something trivial occurred to me—now how was I to have my new suit made up?

"We left the hotel and went out *forever* into the dismal rain."

Although she herself was not Jewish, this woman's husband was, and so she was bound up with the fate of the whole group. In her dream she anticipates by several years what was later to happen step by step, beginning with the petty matters that made life difficult up to that roaming from one place to another that was the lot of those who went into hiding during the "final solution." She even reproduces that mixture of pathos and bureaucratic phraseology that frequently marked Nazi pronouncements, a linguistic reflection of their basic character.

In a dream that occurred in 1935, a lawyer gives a different twist to the old curse on the Wandering Jew, when his wanderings carry him into the "last country on earth where Jews are still tolerated."

"That is what the country was called—it had no other name—and it lay at the end of the world. My wife, my blind old mother, and I were trudging stealthily through ice and snow—one had to cross through Lapland, and Lapland didn't let people through. But suddenly it was all behind us, and in front of us we saw the 'last country where Jews are still tolerated,' shimmering green in the sun.

"A smiling customs official, who looked as rosy as a little marzipan pig, bowed politely and asked, 'May I help you, sir?' 'I am Dr. B,' and I showed him my passport. 'You're a Jew!' he screamed, and he threw my passport back onto the ice of Lapland."

Once again one is reminded of Brecht who wrote:

"While running from my countrymen  
I see one small door still open  
There, way up in Lapland  
Toward the Arctic Ocean."

In his dream the Jew chances on the same image the fleeing poet used, yet he carries it one step further: even the one small door is shut to him. And he envisions ostracism on a worldwide scale even while still experiencing a new form of it every day in his native land.

Occurring in times that were difficult enough in



themselves, these dreams anticipate both the great and the small difficulties to come. Although in those days many Jews' dreams were full of the problems of where to go and what to do, we shall deal with these only briefly, for the details they contain are difficult to understand today and have only limited bearing on what concerns us here, and also because, horrifying as they were, they unavoidably appear pale by contrast to the horrors that later actually occurred. These people had the most fantastic dream-experiences with passports, documents, and visas. They are not permitted to cross borders or go ashore, or the ship they are on sails aimlessly through the ocean. And when they do reach their destination, they are unwanted guests of strangers, are afraid to join them at the table, sleep eight persons to a room and live by taking in laundry or whatever, are frightened of dark walls and bleak courtyards, hear a German melody and are ashamed to feel moved, or mispronounce everything and are ridiculed. And so they never do recover their lost identity. These dreams describe in astonishing detail the type of person who was forced to emigrate when no longer young, forever possessed by a homesickness which is expressed in an inability to grasp the new and a rejection of all that is unfamiliar—a state of mind many emigrés never did overcome even after they

arrived safely abroad—another of the bloodless tragedies that occurred because of the Third Reich.

We find an example of this in the following dream, whose author finds that a profusion of special regulations, restrictions, and discriminatory measures are following her across the Atlantic. It was dreamt in 1936 by a housewife in her early thirties who was living in Berlin at the time.

"After traveling a long while, I arrived in New York. But one could only stay there if one climbed the face of a skyscraper. Only those who had been baptized were exempt, and people's comment about them was, 'The little Nazis are very nice and reliable.' So they made distinctions here, too.

"I never knew which way to go and was always taking the wrong turn. My poor husband, I thought—this is exactly the way he always imagined it would be.

"All at once I found myself on a narrow, hilly road. Watches, necklaces, and bracelets were lying right and left in the snow. I would have loved to have taken something, but didn't dare, thinking it was surely left there by the 'Office for Testing the Honesty of Aliens,' and maybe they'd expel me if I took something. Or was I simply in an altogether forbidden place and would be expelled anyway?

"I wasn't able to find the entrance to the language school and didn't know where I should sit. I was the only one standing while all the others sat in their proper places. I didn't have the book all the others were reading and didn't even know its title. When I was standing at the entrance to the school, my first impression was that it looked old and ugly—back home schools were much nicer. [This "back home" was such a typical expression among emigrés that in many countries they were called the *chez nous* people.]

"Then we were asked to give our age. 'Does one have to?' I asked the teacher. 'Yes, one does,' she replied. I said, 'Back home no one *has* to do anything.'

"I stared out of the window while I cried—saw a landscape that was reminiscent of home and was beginning to feel somewhat comforted when the teacher said, 'Not only do the little Nazis look decent—they're the only decent people among you.' "

In addition to these dreams concerned with anxiety about the future, we find another theme emerging in many variations: anxiety about losing one's mother tongue.

One man's fear was expressed in the eerie dream-setting of a Trappist monastery "somewhere in the

world," in whose "old and gloomy stone-walled halls and cells all the people who wouldn't ever be able to speak again anyway had taken refuge."

Another man becomes lost in the desert, finds water one can drink only if one recites something in the "desert language," but refuses, saying, "I'd rather die of thirst than speak the foreign desert language."

Yet another man dreamt he was supposed to translate something into French in order to enter Morocco, but he refuses, too, saying, "It's not worth it, because wherever you go you can't stay anyway." And he begins to sing, "Oh valleys wide, oh mountains . . ."

German songs and poems figure frequently in the dreams of homesickness experienced by people who were still living in their alienated homeland. A twenty-seven-year-old woman dreamt she was singing,

"Now Olly's got it good

She's landed in Hollywood. . . .

[the first line of a tune popular before Hitler]

There you'd find your peace. . . .

At last stillness would fall. . . .

[two lines from a well-known *Lied*]

It'll all come again someday. . . ."

[a line from a popular tune]

A forty-year-old bank employee who had lost his job because he was a Jew dreamt while still living in Berlin that he had emigrated, was doing well in his new country, again had a job in a bank, was getting ahead, and could afford his first vacation trip to the mountains. This dream dates from 1936.

"I went mountain-climbing with a guide [*Führer*]. And then, on the highest peak, it happened—the guide threw off his cape and hood and stood before me in the full uniform of a Storm Trooper."

The earlier part of the dream, where in contrast to other dream authors he dreams he regains his sense of identity, serves only to heighten the anti-climax; although he meets with success in his new circumstances, the forces that had brought him to ruin, and which he fails to recognize soon enough in their new disguise, nevertheless accompany him—and suddenly he sees them laid bare, appearing before him on the mountain peak in the form of a mountaineer-*Führer*.

Just as many of the dreams we have discussed resemble one another, this anxiety-dream dreamt by a Jew in the year 1936 tallies very closely with our next example, which dates from the winter of 1960. Its author, a German woman, was but a child when the other dreams in these pages occurred.

"I noticed a pile of letters lying in the vestibule

of the apartment house where I live. They were addressed to me and almost all had been opened. One of them—the envelope and letter were lying separately—was still moist and limp from the steam. I wondered why today's censors didn't use more scientific methods, and I began complaining to the doorman who was standing nearby.

"There was another man standing next to him, a small and thin and inconspicuous man with carefully parted hair who was wearing a black suit of some sort. He said, Yes, that was quite right, he had come on account of this business with the letters. That seemed all right, and I told him I was glad and was just about to explain what had happened.

"He stopped me: 'Show me your identification papers.' I said, 'But really, everyone in this building knows me—I've lived here for years, and the doorman. . . .' But he demanded, 'Your papers!'

"And then he straightened up, growing taller and taller, and his suit was no longer just any black suit but *the* black suit, with insignia that gleamed and sparkled.

"Oh no, I told him—he hadn't any right to ask me for my papers unless he showed me his authorization. After all, I was the one who had cause for complaint. 'And I'm a free citizen.'

"He slapped me back and forth across the face

and repeated: 'Your papers!' And I said, no, no—and then he said, 'It doesn't matter anyway. We know you and what you are,' and he slapped me again. And he grabbed my wrists and bound them with the elevator chain.

"And I said softly and sadly, more to myself than aloud, 'And I had hoped I would have been able to recognize your kind immediately when you returned. It's my own fault I wasn't able to.'

"Then I began to scream, clinging like any normal human being to the desperate hope that someone would come and help me when I scream. But I *knew* that now no one could ever come, never again."

This dream author, as we have said, belongs to a generation that is not bound up with the past and the Third Reich through either fear or guilt. Her fear is concerned with the present (this dream occurred only a few hours after she had heard a disquieting political speech), and she considers it morally irresponsible to fail to recognize phenomena in the public sphere that threaten one's freedom as a citizen—to fail to recognize them before, like the little man in black, they loom large. This is the lesson of her fable.

This is also the lesson contained in all these fables that were dreamt during the Third Reich. Like all fables, they contain not only a lesson but a

warning, the warning that totalitarian tendencies must be recognized before they become overt—before the guise is dropped as in the dream about the mountaineer-*Führer*, before people no longer may speak the word “I” and must guard their tongue so that not even they understand what they say, and before we begin to actually live the “Life Without Walls.”



An Essay by  
Bruno Bettelheim

*Met thought I heard a voice cry, "Sleep no more!  
Macbeth does murder sleep!" . . .  
Sleep that knits up the ravell'd sleeve of care . . .*

It is a shocking experience, reading this volume of dreams, to see how effectively the Third Reich murdered sleep by destroying the ability to restore our emotional strength through dreams. Beyond physical rest, sleep is refreshing to us because in our dreams we can feel and do those things we dare not attempt in reality. The person who suffers from too much outside control during the day can in dreams control others and restore an emotional balance, at least in his fantasy life. But many subjects of the Third Reich did not dare to do this. Even in their dreams they told themselves, "I must not dare to act on my wishes." Anxiety forced them to kill off their own dreams before they could gain the emotional relief that, in fantasy, at least, we can do as we wish. Thus the regime was successful in forcing even its enemies to dream the kinds of dreams it wanted them to dream: those warning the dreamer that resistance was impossible, that safety lay only in compliance.

These warnings are best illustrated by dreams that reveal the wish or the fantasy of objecting, yet show that even in fantasy one is much too afraid. Typical is the dream of the man who writes a letter of protest about existing conditions, but instead of mailing it he puts an empty piece of paper in the envelope, without a single word on it.

Thus has tyranny robbed men of their sleep and pursued them even in their dreams, long before and long after Macbeth. But since "we are such stuff as dreams are made on," our dreams tell indeed what stuff we are, particularly, as Freud showed, since they tell so much about us that we wish to hide—even from ourselves. Dreams tell what our real feelings are, whether we like it or not. They reflect those fears and desires we wish consciously not to know about, or dare not. They embody, in fleeting images, some of our deepest feelings and most primitive reactions. How important, then, to learn from our dreams what our feelings are when we are forced to submit to extraordinary conditions; the more so when these are not due to natural disasters but are conditions of control which result from human decisions and actions, and therefore should be subject to human counter-action, including our own. The specter of the Third Reich still haunts the dreams of many who once had to live with it. What was it like when this was not a matter of the past but the very presence of daily life?

Recently, sleep and dream research has shown that our brain never ceases to function. What we remember as "dreams" really consists of two very

different mental phenomena. In sleep, our thinking goes on pretty much as it does during the day, except that no action follows from it. Not so while we dream. Then, not our conscious thoughts but unconscious motives and pressures assert themselves, though our censorship denies them full recognition. This it does by distorting them through a variety of mechanisms such as displacement, condensation, changes in emphasis, and so forth. In this way we are prevented from realizing what, for one reason or another, we do not wish to be aware of. After awakening we remember both, as dreams: what was simple continuation of thoughts in the brain during waking hours, and that other set of thoughts which are normally repressed but come forward in dreams.

To know, from what we recall, whether it was simply the continuation in sleep of thoughts we may also have had during waking hours, or whether a true dream, we must rely on whether distortions were present. It is the bizarre, often illogical or "dreamlike" character of our thoughts while we dream that tells us that here the censorship was at work; that here repressed material was pushing for recognition. The bizarre quality results from the distortions the censorship imposes. They change the latent dream thought into the manifest dream content, which is all we remember.

This book contains both: a continuation of waking thoughts in sleep, and true dreams. The first tell us what thoughts were also present in the dreamer's waking life; the other about an inner life the dreamer was neither aware of, nor wished to be. The second group of memories is more interesting, because they tell what went on in the dreamer's mind unbeknownst to him, perhaps because of his life in a totalitarian state.

Unfortunately, the author, who also collected these dreams, could record only the manifest content, that is, what the dreamer spontaneously remembered, what his conscious mind was willing to accept and ready to let others know. But behind such manifest content are the latent dream thoughts, or one might better say images, which appear in what is remembered only through heavy disguise. Latent thought is accessible only through free associations or other forms of dream interpretation. The manifest dream permits no certainty about it. We can make certain guesses as to what it may have been, but without the free associations of the dreamer they remain largely just that: educated guesswork.

Nevertheless, it is clear that a dominant characteristic of the dreams reported here was anxiety. The overwhelming impression is of the dreamer's anxiety, his helplessness, and the near absence of any

wish to fight back. To grasp fully what this means, we must compare these dreams with ones that occur normally when a person is subject to a superior power in his life. Such dreams are typically true of the small child, because his life is so largely controlled by and dependent on others: his parents, his teachers, adult society, and their demands.

But the normal child—as opposed to the child who also suffers, when awake, from crippling, pathological anxieties—dreams both: he has anxiety dreams because of his dependence, which he represses during waking hours; in these dreams he is helpless against giants or witches or tigers. But just as often he has opposite dreams in which he is powerfully in command. Or he is cleverly defeating those he sees as oppressors. And these thoughts and wishes, too, are repressed during waking hours. What is thus shocking in this book is the preponderance of dreams of persecution and the relative absence of those in which the dreamer conquers all.

It is the imbalance between dreams of helplessness and grandeur—which are the normal exaggerations of extremes as they characterize the workings of the unconscious—which illustrates the success of the Nazi regime. Destroyed here is the healthy balance between submission and self-assertion. The Third Reich invades and controls even the deepest,

the most private recesses of our mind, until finally, even in the unconscious, only submission remains.

Finally, the book shows how insidious is the system that forces the subject, in self-preservation, to wish on his own for exactly this. Despite all efforts at control by the conscious mind, or even by the unconscious censorship, what is in the unconscious mind may explode into action. Hence, under a system of terror we must purge even our unconscious mind of any desire to fight back, of any belief that such rebellion can succeed, because therein alone lies true safety. Any expression of hatred, any expression of resistance endangers one's life. Therefore we cannot feel safe until we are certain that not even the unconscious can push us toward a dangerous action or thought.

Herein, too, may lie the explanation of why Hitler was not assassinated. If the tyrant is not destroyed early enough, then his total control, once established, undermines our belief that any resistance can succeed.

It is interesting to compare these dreams of persons who are threatened but have not yet suffered real extremity, with those dreamt, for example, by prisoners in concentration camps. The concentration camp prisoner hardly ever dreamt about the dangers that stalked him, nor about persecution by the Nazis. Short of his naked existence he had no further

reason to fear what might happen to him. It had already happened. There was no longer anything to be warned about in one's dreams in order to preserve the existence one knew against the fury of the state. There was no more struggle in the unconscious between the wish to be oneself and the wish to give in to the Nazis, for most of what mattered had already been destroyed. The dreams in this book, then, are those of persons who believe there are still things to be salvaged, if even their unconscious obeys the master.

In many ways the dream selected by the author, for good reasons, to open her book typifies this inner contradiction. (To show this I shall have to go beyond the manifest content—which the author has adequately dealt with—in an effort to analyze what the latent dream thought may have been.) In his dream the owner of a factory, a man opposed to the Nazi regime, deals with a problem that also occupies his conscious mind: Shall he compromise himself and his convictions in order to retain the factory which in many ways is the core of his life? The decision is painfully difficult to make, an emotional battle. But we have reason to assume he has solved it by deciding not to give battle, to give in. Because the dream centers mainly on the painfully difficult struggle to raise his arm and give Goebbels,



who is visiting his factory, the Hitler salute. To quote the dream, it took him half an hour of tremendous effort to raise his arm. Typically for true dreams, the inner mental struggle about saluting is transformed in the dream into the physical struggle of getting his arm up to do it.

Mental struggle like this had ceased to exist for prisoners in the concentration camps. Once inside, there was no longer any pretense. No Hitler salute was expected of prisoners. While they feared the guards and the Nazis, and had to obey them, there was no chance that by pretending to love Hitler they could improve their fate. In the camps the main task was clear and obvious: to stay alive. Therefore the prisoners' dreams helped in various ways to go on with the task of staying alive. Most of their dreams were of the good times they had had or were going to have—reassuring themselves that the nightmare of the camps was not permanent. Others were dreams of escape or revenge. These, too, were dreams of reassurance that one was not helpless, that there was no point in giving in, based on the unconscious feeling that to resist, even in fantasy, would help one survive. Quite different were the dreams of those on the outside, those who still hoped that the worst could be averted by compromising. This (false) hope forced them into deep

inner struggles against themselves, against their wishes, desires, and convictions, in hopes of survival. Most of the dreams in this book belong to the early days under Hitler, when such hopes had not yet been destroyed by the total ruthlessness that belonged to a later Nazi period.

In many repetitions of his paradigmatic dream, the factory owner also dreamt that the struggle broke his spine (*brach ihm das Rueckgrat*). And *Rueckgrat* (which can be translated either as backbone or spine) in German means, just as certainly as in English: to have definite convictions. To destroy it means to be without convictions. Thus the dream tells how the factory owner's efforts to cooperate with a regime he disapproved of were what broke him as a man. He did to himself what no regime could do. This is what makes totalitarianism so devastating and so effective.

After all, had the man taken the inner position that he did not want to compromise with the Third Reich, he could have dreamt that he called his devoted workers together and with their help threw Goebbels out of the factory. Or he could have dreamt he was deprived of his factory but walked out of it proudly cheered by his workers. Had he dreamt this, there would have been no need to come to terms, to submit, to raise his arm and give the

Hitler salute, and in so doing break his spine. It is exactly because he wanted to hold on to all his previous existence that he tried to alter his personality, even if that broke him as a man. But it was also the invasion of the unconscious mind with the determination not to resist that enabled the regime to grow increasingly ruthless.

We know of the dreams of resistance fighters—for example, of those who helped the Jews in Denmark and by doing so risked their own lives. These were typically “normal” dreams: that is, dreams of anxiety (about the tortures one suffered at the hands of the SS), dreams of victory and revenge (how one defeated the SS). Hardly any of them were about forcing oneself to obey the enemy by suppressing one’s will.

I thus differ with the author, who feels that these dreams do not deal with internal conflicts but only with political realities of the moment and the dreamer’s conflicts with society. I believe instead that they have their roots in the inner conflicts evoked by social realities within the person who dreams them. That is, if in the factory owner’s dream his inner security had not rested so largely on his social position, had he been less concerned with how he looked to his employees once he was no longer absolute master in his factory, his dream

might have taken an entirely different form—and probably also his life. Instead, he dreams of being forced to obey an overwhelming power which even despises the obedience he so painfully forces on himself; this has its roots in early childhood experience and is now replayed so that the childish defeat assumes a macabre reality. Other dreams reported in this book show the forms of defying authority in the Third Reich, and how these dreams could be dreams of cunning or self-assertion.

Every dream, according to Freud, contains a wish fulfillment. In this sense the dream of the factory owner contains the wish fulfillment that he could so act—spine-breaking as it was—that he would not lose his factory, as indeed happens in his dream, because Goebbels disappears without having dispossessed him.

Perhaps I can illustrate the same underlying mechanism by means of a very different dream in the book. It is the dream in which a woman, while watching *The Magic Flute*, is caught in the act of thinking of Hitler as the devil and is arrested by the police. It suggests the warning that even to think subversive thoughts is too dangerous and must therefore be avoided.

The same lady dreams another dream in connec-

tion with the burning of books: she dreams that her edition of Schiller's *Don Carlos* is confiscated though she carefully hid it. In this case we can be sure that on a deeper level her dream has a latent content different from the manifest one, because the dreamer offers an association. She tells of reading in a foreign newspaper that during a performance of *Don Carlos*, the speech praising freedom of thought was wildly applauded. Further, it turns out in the dream that the book the SS confiscated was not *Don Carlos* but an atlas. The dreamer nevertheless feels full of guilt. Her associations permit us to infer that she was thinking of emigration to another country (shown in the atlas), but a country of freedom, such as one where *Don Carlos* could be cheered for its stand on freedom of thought.

Like a leitmotif through these dreams runs the anxious warning of the dreamer not to trust his defensive efforts because they are not good enough. Hiding *Don Carlos* will not do. Even a noncommittal atlas might give away one's thoughts of defiant emigration. Safety lies only in not even dreaming such dangerous ideas.

There is, for example, the dream of the man who, in his dream phone conversation with his brother, injects some statement of how right Hitler is and how well things are going in the Third Reich.

But it does not help; in his dream he gets a message over the telephone which announces the existence of a central office that monitors all telephone conversations. His private fear that telephones are monitored motivates him, in his dream, to speak approvingly of Hitler. But the same anxiety tells him that his cunning is not enough, warns him through his dream that he must be even more careful. Again the implication is that the only safety lies in banishing every defiant thought because the state monitors them and is not fooled by his efforts at deception.

What is interesting, as the author notes, is how many of these dreams of anxiety and persecution were dreamt in 1933, at the very beginning of the Third Reich, so that the dreamer seems to anticipate what was going to happen long before it occurred!

Now external reality, in and by itself, can explain only some of these dreams. We know, for example, that anxiety dreams of persecution, of being exposed and reviled, of being listened to on the sly or otherwise spied upon, occur with great frequency wherever people dream, certainly including the "free world." This the author recognizes and hence asks the question: What is specific in these dreams? even asks: What is prophetic about them? So while on first reading it seems striking

that so many dreams are prophetic, it is not hard to understand. It has to do with the fact that dreams go directly to the emotional core of the matter, whatever elaborate disguises this has in our everyday life. Responding in his emotions to the essence of the Nazi regime, the dreamer can easily recognize, deep down, what the system is really like.

Just as our everyday dreams reveal our own hidden and underlying motives, so these dreams disclose the Nazis' inner motives, whether or not they had gotten around to applying them yet. The fact that everything that happened was imaginable in our unconscious long before Hitler shows up clearly in the quotations—those from Kafka, for example—by which the author introduces some of her chapters. And what Kafka could imagine in his writings, the dreamer could imagine in his dreams. If Kafka or a dreamer could anticipate them, it means that certain tendencies must have been present in him, or in all of us, on which the totalitarian system could build. These tendencies present in all of us are, of course, our childhood experiences.

Thus the author speaks rightly of the warnings in dreams as being like voices from above. It is the infant who feels that every step he takes is observed by those who tower above him, that every secret thought he thinks is detected and known. The

power of the parents over the very small child resides in the child's dependence on them for sheer survival. Since they hold omnipotent power, he also believes them omniscient, able to read even his most secret thoughts. To feel this same way in adulthood means a return to an infantile constitution of the psyche.

As soon as a dictatorship arrogates to itself the paternal position, treats us all as incompetent children, and we let ourselves be put in this position, this very fact makes us regress in our unconscious to the infantile stance. Thus a middle-aged woman dreams that a tiled stove in her living room recalls everything she has voiced against the regime. This is very similar to a child's fear that the inanimate objects in a room observe and hear what he is doing and report to his parents. The same woman dreamt that in punishment for her evil thoughts she was put on a leash like a dog. This, too, derives from an early childhood experience, when the feeling of being on the leash when a parent holds us by the hand may be an everyday occurrence.

Hence this is not just a volume of dreams but one of cautionary tales. They warn us about how strong are the tendencies of the unconscious, when we are torn by anxieties, to believe in the omnipotent external power. It is this, our anxiety, on which the



success of all totalitarian systems is built. This warning is implied in such dreams as the one where a man is trying to buy postage stamps but does not get them, because no one is sold stamps who opposes the system. They are sold only to those who accept it. Only a truly free man (the dream seems to say) can say what he thinks, since an Englishman expresses what the dreamer wants to say but dares not, namely, "It is incredible how people are treated in this country."

In this dream are both the wish to speak out and the feeling that "big brother" should do it. The dreamer lets somebody else, the free Englishman, say what *he* wants to say but dares not. Here is the inner split in the person of the dreamer, who appears in two forms: as himself in his own helpless existence within the Third Reich, and as a free man, but an Englishman—that is, as the stranger he disowns in himself because he dares not oppose.

This attitude of self-defeat, even in fantasy, is further exemplified by the dream of a man who is deeply ashamed at his own pleasure because Goering seemed satisfied with his work. Both the desire for approval and the shame felt about it are expressed in the dream. And again it is the dreamer's inner conflict that so debilitates him, not reality as such.

Had he simply craved Goering's approval, or wished for none of it, he would never have felt torn apart. It is the ability of the regime to create conflicts within those whose backbone was weak to begin with, which then debilitates them till there is no inner strength left to resist.

Thus the daughter of a Jewish mother and an Aryan father has a series of dreams in which she hates her mother for the hardships brought on by the mother's Jewishness. The author rightly remarks that to see in these dreams only latent hatred for an otherwise beloved mother is far too simple an explanation. The tragic impact of the totalitarian regime is that the real hardships imposed are resented. But anxiety prevents one from directing the resentment toward its real source. Therefore it is acted out (in the dream) against the innocent but safe object: the mother. This in turn leads to the shame and guilt, the self-hatred that further debilitates the inner personality and destroys the capacity to resist what one hates, even in fantasy or dream.

Similarly, the dreams of the young Aryan woman who has a dominant nose reflect her own dissatisfaction with her outer appearance—again an inner conflict not created by the regime but extremely agitated by it. Whatever the person's Achilles' heel, whatever

his particular anxiety about himself, it becomes aggravated till it seems an inescapable weakness that will surely destroy him as a person.

In summarizing the overall impression of these dreams and in pondering their latent content, as far as one can adduce it from the manifest content, the conclusion is that the total police state succeeds because it aggravates every inner weakness and in this way saps whatever inner strength one may have to fight back.

The dreams reflecting inner anxiety about being dark-haired or dark-skinned echo the American Negro's attitude toward his own skin. It is the feeling that there is something undesirable within us that opens us to defeat by those others who see things the same way.

That those who were not so rent were also safer in this respect is shown by a series of dreams reported in the eighth chapter, all dreams in which the dreamer defies the Nazis. Such persons escaped being destroyed, even in their inner mental life, because they were able to stand up against the Third Reich, if only in their dreams. There are, of course, those other dreams in which the dreamer comes to accept the Third Reich. Among them is one of the shortest, most succinct dreams in the collection; it

consists of the single statement: "I don't *have* to always say *no* anymore."

Here we see the self-preservative wishes of the id and the ego in conflict with the superego, which demands that Hitler be rejected. Self-preservation asserts itself against the superego, insisting it is no longer necessary to always say no, to no longer be weakened by inner conflicts. Those who could at least (or particularly) in their dreams say "yes" or "no" clearly, could not be rent in their inner life by external reality. But as long as the majority has no unequivocal "yes" or an equally definite "no" to say, the risk of another Third Reich overwhelming our inner and outer life is still with us.

A much deeper and older danger abides, a darker knowledge is still missing. If all of us abhorred the Third Reich, why did it exist? Must there not have been feelings, unknown to our conscious mind, that condoned it, accepted it, willed it? Even among those who lived in fear and trembling of the Nazis, might there not have been in them somewhere, deep down, a layer of soul closely kin to that regime of terrible domination? To understand ourselves, and the possibility of Nazi terror, we must study the dreams it evoked so that we shall truly know "the stuff we are made on."

It is thus a limitation here that no dreams of ar-

dent Nazis are included, nor of that other large group of dreamers—those who delighted in the Nazi regime because it enabled them to take revenge on others they looked upon as enemies. Obviously the author was in no position to hear such dreams told, and probably not sympathetic enough to do them justice. This may well have to do with those whom the author trusted enough to approach with the request to relate their dreams, and with the nature of those willing to tell her their dreams.

But others must have existed. We know that all too many of them neither suffered under Hitler—at least not during the prewar years covered here—nor opposed him. About their dreams we learned little. In this sense we do not yet have a complete picture of the dream life under the Third Reich. But how fortunate that so valuable a segment of it is now available.

# Index

Absurdity. *See* Senselessness.

Alienation, 6-7, 32

Arendt, Hannah, 19, 33, 77

Automatism, 26

Autosuggestion, 119. *See also* Propaganda, inversion of; Terrorization.

Belong, desire to, 64, 123-130. *See also* *Gleichschaltung*; Myth.

Beckett, Samuel, 135

Bettelheim, Bruno, 16, 151-170

Bismarck, Otto von, 108 n.

Brecht, Bertolt, 35, 38, 55, 58, 65, 115, 140

Breton, André, 39

Coercion, 7

Concentration-camp prisoners, 156-158

Conformity. *See* *Gleichschaltung*.

"Defenseless society," 46

Dehumanization, 38

Depersonalization, 57, 133

Devil, 25, 161

Disorientation, 6, 133

*Don Carlos* (Schiller), 27-28, 162

Dostoevsky, Feodor, 59

*Dream Is Life, A* (Grillparzer), 57

"Dream of a Ridiculous Man" (Dostoevsky), 59

Eliot, T. S., 19

*Endgame* (Beckett), 135

Environment, 25-26, 30, 32, 33

Eroticism, 124-128

Frank, Hans, 131

Freud, Sigmund, 152, 161

*Gleichschaltung*, 112-119, 129. *See also* Belong, desire to.

God, lack of, 23-24

Goebbels, Joseph, dreams about, 5-7, 45, 62, 123, 157-158, 166-167

Goering, Hermann, dreams about, 49, 61, 117, 123, 125, 166

Goethe, Johann Wolfgang von, 93

Grillparzer, Franz, 57

Grosz, George, 57

Grünwald, Matthias, as dream symbol, 21-22

Guilt, 28-30, 162; collective, 90

Himmler, Heinrich, 77

Hitler, Adolf, dreams about, 25, 62, 102-103, 111, 113-114, 123-130, 161



Humiliation, 6-7, 25-26, 37, 58-62, 74  
Huxley, Aldous, 41

Identity, loss of, 6, 23, 133, 141  
Imagery in dreams of Third Reich, 9, 16  
"In the Penal Colony" (Kafka), 30  
Indifference, 7-8, 26, 71, 73  
Infantilism, 164-165  
"Inner Emigration," 22  
Insecurity, 38  
Isolation, 6

Jaspers, Karl, 69  
Jews, dreams of, 129-145  
Job, 3  
Julien, Madame, 108 n.

Kafka, Franz, 30, 35, 65, 80, 109, 121, 164  
Kogan, Eugen, 93  
*Kristallnacht*, 64

Language, anxiety about, 143-144  
Leadenness, 31  
Ley, Robert, 3  
Luke, St., 43

Myth, Nazi, 79-91

Nietzsche, Friedrich, 85

Non-hero, 57-64, 67-75

Orwell, George, 27, 43, 46, 50, 116

Paul, Jean, 15

Propaganda, 39-41, 45, 91, 127; inversion of, 63-64,  
74-75

Prophetic dreams, 163-164

Resistance, 33, 69-73, 95-108, 158; breakdown of,  
115-116, 167. *See also* Submission.

Resistance fighters, dreams of, 160

Schiller, Johann von, 27-28, 162

Scholl, Sophie, 107-108

Self. *See* Identity.

Self, loss of, 89

Self-deception, 72

Self-tyranny, 87. *See also* Terrorization.

Senselessness, 51-53

Submission, 155-156. *See also* Resistance, breakdown  
of.

Terrorization, 45-50. *See also* Self-tyranny.

Tillich, Paul, 7-8

Voice, disembodied, 21, 37, 39, 45, 48–49

Walls, 21–22

*Weisse Rose, Die* (Scholl), 108 n.

Wish-dreams. *See* Belong, wish to; *Gleichschaltung*.

Withdrawal, 22, 31