

## No Peace With Hitler's Generals

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**I**T is a popular theory with many alleged realists that, while we cannot negotiate a peace with Hitler, we can negotiate a peace with the German generals. It is pointed out that the German military authorities disagreed with Hitler about the invasion of Russia; that, at the critical moment, they will be glad to get rid of him and of his party; that, with the generals, it will be possible to negotiate an earlier and a more reasonable peace; and that the prestige of the military caste may be used as the principle of continuity between the old order and the new order that is to be established in Germany by the United Nations.

This doctrine appeals particularly to those who localize the responsibility for this war in the Nazi party, and who see Adolf Hitler as the specific villain of the play. But, while they have grasped the immediate factor in the situation, they have failed to take note of the long-run factor. This long-run factor is the tradition of a feudal, military caste which has dominated the German mores for a good many centuries. Fascism, indeed, is certainly not reactionary capitalism, but is simply the resurgence of feudalism, with the benefit of nationalism and of modern technology. It is this feudal, military tradition in Germany, as in Japan, which we have chiefly to destroy.

The point here is one which Americans may not grasp very readily. We cannot grasp it for the simple reason that never in our history—and we are unique among the great nations of the earth in this respect—have we been significantly under the control of a military autocracy, or given primary prestige to the ideals and aspirations of a military caste.

It is true that we have, in this country, a military profession. The members of this profession are honored by us as are the members of any other

profession—medicine, law, teaching, journalism, or the ministry; and, in war-time, the members of this profession receive especial honor. Moreover, as long as national defense is an urgent necessity, it is of the utmost importance that this profession should develop its own traditions which, as in the case of MacArthur, are passed down from father to son, so as to perfect in a second, or a third, generation what is only initiated in the first. But a military profession in a democracy is not the same as a military caste in an autocracy. A military caste arrogates supreme prestige to itself, and grants only secondary honors to members of other professions. It usurps the functions of government; exploits industry to its own ends; and may even mould the humanities and the arts and the sciences to its own pattern. It is a Moloch that devours all.

It was, then, a principal error of the Allies in the First World War, that they neglected to inflict unequivocal military defeat upon Germany. It is true that they defeated the German nation and the German people; but they did not defeat the German armies on the field of battle. At the conclusion of the war—except for a brief threat to East Prussia—Germany knew nothing of what it meant to have its own territories ravaged by the foe, its cities and villages destroyed by shot and shell, and its civilian population exploited by a ruthless conqueror. And its armies still stood in the field—the field of foreign, and hitherto vanquished countries. This made it possible for Hitler to argue that it was the Jews and the communists who betrayed Germany from within, while Germany's military might was demonstrably invincible. Indeed, it is the case, both with Japan and with Germany, that, for many long years, their armed forces have remained unbeaten, and so have gathered about themselves an aura of absolute infallibility.

We cannot, therefore, consider for one moment the idea of making terms with Hitler's generals. On the contrary, it must be a prime aim of the United Nations to defeat, to discredit, and to disgrace the military castes of Germany and of Japan. This requires, first of all—what is already being done—that the horrors and realities of war be brought home to the civilian populations of those countries, so that they can no long cherish the illusion that these sufferings are something which they may inflict upon others, but which can never be inflicted upon them. It requires also an unequivocal military defeat of the Axis powers on the field of battle, so that there may be a clear demonstration that the soldiers of the democracies can out-manoeuvre and out-fight the soldiers of the fascist nations. And, finally, it calls for the systematic disintegration of

the military mores of Germany and of Japan by whatever agencies are charged with the problem of re-educating those countries for their place in a more law-abiding world. Failure to do these things, and to do them thoroughly, means a failure to carry out to completion what is specifically the purpose of the war rather than the purpose of the peace after the war.

Let no one say that it cannot be done; that the military ideal cannot be destroyed by military means; that, in this case, we cannot fight fire with fire. Napoleon Bonaparte and the French people are an instance when it was done. Even though there is a great monument to Napoleon in France, those who know the French people know that there are great numbers of them who execrate the memory of the Corsican, as that of a man whose imperial ambitions and military strategies brought to his people nothing but suffering, and disgrace, and ruin. I do not say that the battle of Waterloo was a sufficient cause for the disappearance of French ambitions for hegemony in Europe. But that battle was one of the necessary conditions to such an effect, and an indispensable preliminary to any educational task that might be undertaken by a democratic tradition to wean the people away from the adulation of the military ideal.

Consequently, if our realism about this war is as genuine as it should be, we shall see that we have to do for Germany and for Japan what one hundred years ago was done for France; and, perhaps, to do it more thoroughly, and with a more intelligent and constructive post-war program than was used before. In any case, let us toy no longer with thoughts of an earlier and more reasonable peace to be negotiated with the German generals. For this is toying with treachery to the very purposes of the war. The only offer we have to make to the military castes of Germany and of Japan is the offer of unequivocal defeat on the field of battle. Let them, also, if possible, bear the obloquy of signing the initial terms of the armistice which signalizes that defeat. And, if we are seeking for any principle of continuity to serve as a stabilizing link between the old culture that has been in the conquered countries and the new culture that is to be, that link will have to be found in whatever liberal, Christian, and democratic elements belong to their heritage, but not in a military caste whose prestige it is our prime aim to destroy.