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## FRIEDRICH NAUMANN

It is very difficult to gauge the probable attitude of God-fearing people among the Germans towards many of the doings of their government to-day. They have no means of freely expressing themselves. It is easy to understand their sense of indebtedness to the man who seems to have set them on their feet and enabled them to recover their self respect. But what, for instance, can be their feelings at the way in which the Jews have been treated? It seems to me that a valuable side-light is thrown on that and on many other matters by the study of a book which appeared about a year ago. It is the life of a man who was an outstanding figure among German politicians at the close of the War, Friedrich Naumann. He was one of the men thought of for the President's Chair when the Republican Government was set up in Weimar. His too early death in 1919 left a serious blank among his fellows. He was a man of ideas, ideas which have been appropriated by the Hitler regime, which, if he had been spared, it might have been his to carry out. But had that been so, it would have been by different methods and in a very different spirit from what has actually prevailed. Anti-Semitism to some extent, National Socialism, and a huge all-embracing central German Reich owe their conception and presentation in the first instance to him.

Naumann's life and the movements with which he was successively associated read like a romance. He was a child of a Lutheran manse, and a grandson of Ahlfeldl's, one of Germany's great preachers; and he never entirely lost touch with the faith and spirit of his boyhood. As I knew him at the University of Erlangen in 1882, he was a big, blue-eyed fair-haired Saxon of a somewhat domineering nature, but with a friendly warm heart. As a student he threw himself eagerly into the club life of the University, but not of the fighting Corps. He was a leading member of the Theologische Studenten Verein, and being intensely patriotic he was one of the founders of the Verein Deutschen Studenten. Professor Frank of

Erlangen, the leading Theologian of the school which joined issue with Albrecht Ritschl, was one of his most honoured teachers. At that time he was so impressed with Frank's doctrinal system that the Professor thought he had found in Naumann the man to carry on his tradition. Before entering the ministry, Naumann passed through a time of severe theological questioning and spiritual heart-searching. Only after considerable hesitation he accepted a pastoral charge in a country village where he acquired an intimate knowledge of the conditions of country life. At an earlier stage he had done work at the Rauhes Haus of the Innere Mission in Hamburg. There he first met Wichern, the saintly head of the organization. Wichern and Frank seem to have been the two men who had made the deepest and most profound influence on his life and thought. On the wall of his study to the last hung their portraits, and beside them hung his motto, "Those who do not fear death, it is difficult to frighten."

After four years in his charge, he resigned and joined the Innere Mission. It was through his connection with this that he was led into the political sphere, and here some of his far-reaching views that have exercised a powerful influence on others were engendered and took shape. For one thing he was for a time brought into close contact with Stöcker, the anti-Semite Court Chaplain. It is well to remember that anti-Semitism, if not of so virulent a type as Hitler's, is no novelty in Germany. Indeed I remember a striking evidence of it in Naumann himself as a student. Over a little bit of sharp practice on his part he was jokingly called a regular Jew. He took it as the grossest insult—not that his sharp practice had been challenged, but that he should have been compared to a Jew. That shows how even all those long years ago feeling about the Jews ran in Germany. And yet at that very time in the Theologische Studenten Verein a regular monthly collection was taken for Jewish Missions!

A much more significant influence and effect was the particular branch of work which was assigned to him in the Innere Mission in Frankfurt-am-Main. He was appointed to organize and take the supervision of Men's Clubs. This brought him directly into touch with active Socialism and set him to study Karl Marx with care. The result of that study and of what he saw of the conditions of those industrialists among whom

he was working as well as what he had already learnt of the conditions in agricultural communities, was that he became a Socialist. Socialism, as he found it, was organized in two groups. There were the Social Democrats, and there were the Christian Socialists. At first he joined the latter group. Soon, however, he became dissatisfied with them and equally with the other. As a result he originated a third group with a prophetic name, National Socialism. Finding that the prosecution of his Socialistic activities was hampered by his position in the Innere Mission he resigned and joined the Democratic Party. But it is right to notice that by that step was meant no abandonment of the Christian Faith or rejection of Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour. He still took his principles from Jesus Christ. As he said, "Faith lends us power for our work, but does not dictate the single formulas and paragraphs."

For many years about this time, he was a regular contributor to a weekly Christian periodical called *die Hilfe*. Indeed he was one of the proprietors. For it he wrote a continuous series of brief devotional articles for which those who knew the periodical looked as eagerly as many in Britain look forward to W. H. Elliott's broadcast on Thursday evenings. Indeed for many these were what gave *die Hilfe* value for them, and it was in them they found the Help.

Ere long Naumann entered the Reichstag where he soon earned a wide reputation as an orator. Not less potent were his pertinent and always well-informed political writings. The most significant of these appeared in the year following the outbreak of the War in 1914. Germany was still confident of bringing the War to a successful termination, and here was Naumann's book, *Mittel-Europa*. It was his programme of what should be the course of Germany's expansion at the close of the War. It was hailed with delight. It immediately had a great sale, running up to over 100,000 copies: and then it was re-published in a people's edition. What was the programme? It was a forecast of the steps to be taken for a great all-inclusive German Empire in the very heart of Europe from which it could dominate the world. Austria was to be approached and invited to enter on the score of the great contribution which she could make by reason of her wonderful aesthetic culture. Bohemia and Moravia—what we now call Czecho-Slovakia—was to be won over by the opening which

the great Empire would afford them of splendid markets for their rich mineral resources and their exceptional mechanical skill. Hungary was to be secured by the offering of full opportunity for the sale of her abundant harvests. The empire would present to the world the perfect ideal of cultural, industrial and social life. It was a splendid scheme.

The issue of the War, however, was not what Germany and Naumann with it expected in 1915. But what of his dream? Lost? It was only postponed. How do things stand to-day? Anti-Semitism? I will not blame Naumann for the horrors of present-day anti-Semitism; but with many another German it was incipiently there. National Socialism? The type which he originated has more than come to life again in dominant Nazi-ism. And what is it but another form of the Bolshevism which it so bitterly denounces? But why? What is there to choose between them. Is not their mutual enmity due to the uneasy feeling which kept a crusty old Scot from going into the Monkey House at the Zoo. "No," he said, "they are ower like oorsels." And Mittel-Europa? Isn't it in process of coming into existence? Isn't it more than half accomplished already? And one serious element which made those in high places cool in their response to the book when it appeared has gone. Hohenzollern and Hapsburg are gone. There is left the man who did it—Hitler. I wonder if he knows that after all he is only the heir to Friedrich Naumann's ideas. Would Naumann acknowledge his child?

That is the question that I am left pondering. Is it credible that all Germany has finally turned its back on Martin Luther? I cannot believe that men like Naumann who kept their faith through the throes of social strivings and the disasters of war and its sequel have all abandoned them now. Thousands of Christian men and women are standing true to God and His Christ. The German Reich has risen from its ashes with wondrous vigour and strength. Evangelical Truth in its turn will arise, shake off the fetters that bind it, and deliver the land from all that mars its fair name. The City of God remaineth.

ROBERT J. DRUMMOND.

*Edinburgh.*