Spiritual Revolution and Magic: Speculation and Political Action in National Socialism

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It might cause surprise to find the term "magic" being used in connection with National Socialism. If I am not mistaken, this term embraces a wide scale of meanings in the English language which range from sorcery or witchcraft, from mysterious and seemingly inexplicable, even supernatural powers, to the mere skill of producing baffling effects or illusions. Hence it is not only possible to speak of the magic charms of a sorcerer, or the magic powers of demons, but also of the magic of love and even of the magic tricks of an illusionist. Because of all these possible connotations, it happens only too easily that associations lead into wrong directions when the term "magic" is applied to National Socialism. It is the same case with the German language. When I first interpreted certain characteristics of National Socialism as "magical," I was frequently misunderstood as attempting to "demonize" National Socialism, to say nothing of the role I presumably had assigned to Hitler. The image of Hitler as a "demon" was indeed cherished by some German historians in the 'fifties and 'sixties, for it allowed them to refrain from a rational analysis of the man, the reason for his success and the monstrous deeds of his regime. Of course my concept of magic has nothing to do with this kind of demonology or other seemingly inexplicable occult powers. It is, on the contrary, indispensable for an adequate theoretical analysis.

Before I try to give an account of what "magic" means in relation to National Socialism, I want to deal with another problem which is of importance in this context. In recent years, considerable attention has been paid to the question of whether or not National Socialism was a revolutionary movement and whether or not it inaugurated a revolution in 1933. In my opinion, this question is related to the interpretation of National Socialism as a "magical" phenomenon. I hope to provide a better approach to this interpretation, which is still irritating for many, by going into the problem of revolution first.

In the epilogue to my book Magie und Manipulation I ventured the thesis that National Socialism tried to alter social reality not by means of a revolution, but through magic. This certainly was a rather pointed statement which sounded strange to many ears. That National Socialism was not a revolutionary movement and that in 1933 no revolution took place was nevertheless a widely accepted opinion, and it still is today. If one judges the incidents of 1933 and 1934 by the paradigm of a typical modern revolution like the Russian one, as I did then myself, one has indeed to register a different degree of political and social transformation. As to the ideology and the impetus of the movement, Camus established that National Socialists were very different from the "classical revolutionaries," because "instead of divinizing reason they chose to divinize irrationalism," and because, despite their endeavor to build up a world empire, "they lacked the ambition of universality which is rooted in the belief that reason will gain the victory." (The autonomous and instrumental reason is meant in this case and not reason in the classical or Christian sense.) And quite recently the foremost expert on Fascism, Renzo De Felice, has contended that Fascism, to be sure, was a revolutionary movement which to a certain extent stood in the tradition of 1789, which had a concept of progress and was "determined to change society and the individual
person to a degree never before attempted nor
realized," but that in contrast National
Socialism was not revolutionary at all but tra
ditional, regressive, mystical.4

It is in fact De Felice's new interpretation of
Fascism as well as some recent English and
American studies on National Socialism (in
particular those of J. P. Stern and George L.
Mosse5) that have helped me to clarify and
differentiate my own evaluation of National
Socialism. I still take the view that elements of
magical speculation and action were inherent
in National Socialism, but I have now reached
the conclusion that these elements also had a
revolutionary character. It is true that Hitler's
seizure of power in 1933 was not a revolution in
the same sense as the one of October 1917, that
National Socialism was not a revolutionary
movement according to the standard set up by
Camus, and that there may even be fundamen
tal differences between National Socialism and
Fascism, which would bring the latter closer to
progressivist movements; but all of these
characterizations do not exhaust the definition
of the word "revolution."

National Socialism usually is not accepted
as a revolutionary movement because the term
“revolution” is reserved, as for instance by
Camus and De Felice, for ideologies and politi
cal movements in the tradition of the En
lightenment and the French Revolution: prog
ressivism, positivism, communism, anar
chism. National Socialism, on the other hand,
is placed in the tradition of nationalistic and
racist ideologies whose sources are found in
German Romanticism and the Nationalism of
the Napoleonic era. Numerous scholars have
investigated this tradition;6 they all put empha
sis on its irrationalism, racist nationalism and
antimodernism in contrast to the rationalism,
universalism and belief in progress of “true”
revolutionary movements, and therefore clas
sify it as reactionary and regressive. But such
studies do not sufficiently penetrate the screen
of symbols like Volk, Volksgeist, Volks
gemeinschaft, Rasse and Blut; they do not see
clearly what processes of consciousness took
place behind the established symbols and,
above all, what effect these phenomena of con
sciousness had on attitudes and actions. What
happened in this development from Fichte via
Arndt, Lagarde, and Langbehn to Hitler (to
mention only a few representative names) was,
in a word, the breakthrough of a “spiritual
revolution” to magic action whose characteris
tics were revolutionary indeed.

Jürgen Gebhardt has shown that in the
decades before and after 1800 thinkers like
Hegel, the Schlegel brothers, Schelling,
Fichte and others developed the concept of a
“spiritual revolution” (Revolution des Geistes),
following the tradition of Christian-gnostic
speculations on self-redemption and in reac
tion against the French Revolution.7 This spir
itual substitute for a political revolution was
meant to lead beyond political emancipation to
complete human self-realization in the sense of
a world-immanent “redemption.” It culmi
nated in the “revolutionary desire to actualize
the Kingdom of God.”8 This program aimed
inward, towards revolutionizing conscious
ness, and after the political revolution of
1848/49 had failed, this retreat into inward
ness (Innerlichkeit) grew even stronger. But the
revolutionary impulse was nevertheless main
tained. It became manifest when, towards the
end of the nineteenth century and under the
impact of a crisis which affected the German
society as a whole but in particular the tradi
tional intellectual class (Bildungs
bürgerturn), these programs of self-redemption
were not only radicalized and, indeed, vul
garized as well, but also turned into programs
of social action by all sorts of reformist and
“third way” movements which have been
rightly gathered under the term “revolt of the
intellectuals” (Gebildeten-Revolte).9

It was also during this time that the most
radical part of the Gebildeten-Revolte laid the
ideological foundations of National Socialism.
This is well known, but the terms “conserva
tive,” “reactionary” or “regressive” which are
usually employed to characterize this move
ment fall short of catching its essence. The
Gebildeten-Revolte had little in common with
classic conservatism and its idea of a Christian
and patriarchal order of society. It is true that
this movement’s protest against modern civilizi
zation showed regressive traits; the protest was
indeed a reaction against industrialization and
its negative consequences for the traditional Bildungsbürgertum. But in the Third Reich, anti-modernism, though still a major ideological feature, did not have a very great effect, and certainly did not bring Germany's social order back to pre-modern times. A much stronger motive for the radicalization of the spiritual revolution was the experience of social disintegration and, in its context, the decline of the political influence and social status of the Bildungsbürgertum. Hence models of a new social order were developed. The symbol Volksgemeinschaft, understood as a "new community," expressed the striving towards a fundamental structural change of society; the symbols "race" and "new man" gave voice to the aspiration for a transformation of human nature. Both of these aspirations might well be called "revolutionary," to say the least.

De Felice accounts for the revolutionary character of Fascism by referring to its attempt to create a new type of human being, and he contends that National Socialism did not develop such an idea. This thesis is, in my opinion, not correct. Speculations about the "new man" can be traced from racist ideologies of the Wilhelminian era well into the Third Reich. Collotti has already pointed out this oversight in his critique of De Felice's book. But Collotti's objection, namely that it could be easily proved that the theme of the "new man" is "in its core a conservative mystification," is of course, totally wrong. This symbol can be found in all progressivist, rationalist and other movements of the kind, from the Enlightenment up to Chinese communism. It should become obvious here that, despite all of the differences, there is a common trait of revolutionary ambition and probably also a common source for this state of mind. As to the difference between Fascism and National Socialism, I am of the opinion that it lies not in the revolutionary stimulus, but rather in the fact that the revolutionary traits of the latter underwent stronger ruptures and transformations, so that the outcome on the plane of politics and events looked quite different.

I have said that the ideological basis of National Socialism had already been established during the Wilhelminian era. After World War I this ideology was, if anything, further sharpened. Something else changed fundamentally because of the war and its effects. De Felice states that Fascism is not conceivable without the First World War, and the same is true for National Socialism. In World War I the German adherents of the "spiritual revolution" had still hoped the war would bring, in the manner of an apocalyptic event, the desired transformation of man and society. (I might mention in passing that the favorite symbol for the war was "last judgment" (Weltgericht).) When this transformation did not come, and when after the lost war the situation looked even worse than before, only one way seemed left for those not willing to adjust to reality. Something had to be done, and the impulse was given for magical action.

After this short historical survey, we now turn to a more systematic analysis of National Socialist magic and its revolutionary character. The structure of the way magic operates can be described as follows: (1) Magic begins with the belief that reality can be dominated if one finds the key to its mystery, the proper spell, or, to put it in more theoretical language, if reality can be constructed in such a way that it forms a coherent totality that can be explained from one starting point. Therefore, Freud defined the "omnipotence of thoughts" as the principle of magic. (2) Since reality resists being subjugated to such a mental construct, great efforts are necessary to manipulate and control consciousness so that disturbing elements can either be adjusted to the construct or kept outside. One can also describe these activities, as Robert Jay Lifton does, as "internal or psychological manipulations," through which the attempt is made, "to achieve control over one's external environment." (3) In consequence of the belief, to use Frazer's words, "that the control which they [i.e. men] have, or seem to have, over their thoughts, permits them to exercise a corresponding control over things," action is taken in such a way that reality is made to seem as if it were in accord with the image one has conceived of it.

This formal description of magical procedure has to be completed with a description of its content. I subscribe to Eric Voegelin's defi-
nition of magic as "the expansion of the will to power from the realm of phenomena to that of substance or the attempt to operate in the realm of substance pragmatically as if it were the realm of phenomena." How does this content of magical manipulation manifest itself in National Socialism? My analysis will follow the steps of the description of magical procedure I have outlined above.

The one point from which the magic mind constructs its image of reality is "blood," conceived as the substantial basis of the Volk, on which the "new community" of the Volksgemeinschaft has to be built up. In the course of the nineteenth century the symbol of "blood" had more and more replaced Volksgeist, which had been a central symbol of the original "spiritual revolution." After World War I had destroyed everything which had been looked upon as manifestation of the Volksgeist (the power and the glory of the Reich, the supremacy of German Kultur etc.), this substitution was finally completed. Hans Zöberlein, a leading National Socialist writer and a party official of high rank, summarized in his novel, Der Befehl des Gewissens, his feelings of the chaotic years after the war with the words: "the best and only thing we have left is Blood." Human nature, its "substance" in the philosophical sense of the word, which is founded upon the tension towards the divine ground of reality beyond the realm of phenomena, is reduced to a phenomenal sector of reality; although the attempt is made to ascribe to this pseudo-substance the unchangeable quality of real substance. As Hitler himself expressed it; "Classes vanish, classes alter themselves, the destinies of men undergo changes, but something remains and must remain: The Volk as such, as the substance of flesh and blood." "Good and pure blood" becomes the sumnum bonum, "the best and only thing we have left," of the phenomenal world; its antithesis, the antirace of the Jews, is conceived as the sumnum malum and accordingly as an equally unchangeable substance. One of the most important propaganda films of the Third Reich had the title The Eternal Jew. The magic mind gathers everything that is against him and that opposes his image of reality into the idea of the "one and only enemy." This strategy led to the well-known obsession that there was, in Rosenberg's words, "a central operating plan of world Jewry," a "world conspiracy" between Jewish Bolshevism (the red international) and Jewish capitalism (the golden international).

The psychic effort required to bring and keep reality under control expresses itself in Hitler's permanent emphasis on his "absolute will," his "constant" or "never-changing will." Hardly any other word appears so often in his speeches and in his book Mein Kampf. Hitler's accentuation of the "will" is usually attributed to the influence of Schopenhauer and Nietzsche, but if such influences did exist, they were certainly watered down and vulgarized. It is unlikely that Hitler knew more than a few catch-words like the "will to power" through his own readings. The catch-words came in handy, however, to express his belief that a hard struggle was necessary to control consciousness so that a new image of reality could be constructed and in order to stress that he was the first and foremost to summon up the strength required to carry out this struggle:

From among the host of millions of men, who as individuals more or less clearly and definitely sense these truths or even grasp them, one man must step forward in order with apodictic force to form granite principles from the wavering world of the imaginings of the broad masses and to take up the struggle for the sole correctness of those principles, until from the shifting waves of a free world of ideas there rises up a brazen cliff of a united commitment in faith and will alike.

The "will," as Hitler sees it, is the psychic power with which the magical consciousness is trying to construct and force through its image of reality, and it has therefore magical character itself. It is not to be compared with the will in the classical sense. I want to elucidate this problem by some further comments.

The will in the classical and Christian tradition is always and only the will ordered by reason. Cicero defined the will (voluntas) as the desire controlled by reason and set it clearly apart from concupiscence (libido) or
unrestrained desire (*cupiditas effrenata*), "as to be found with every fool (*stultus*)". This distinction (which was reiterated by Thomas Aquinas) leads to the first conclusion that the effort with which an irrational speculation is designed and pursued is in the proper sense no will at all, but nevertheless a strong existential power able to cause effects. It follows secondly that the person who exercises this kind of concupiscence is a fool (*stultus*) in the philosophical sense, for his choice of ends is not determined by reason. This does not mean, however, that at the same time the ends cannot be pursued with a high degree of practical intelligence. Furthermore, one is led to the question of means with which the uncontrolled "will" pursues its ends. Kant's analysis of the human will implies the answer to this question. It is relevant for an analysis of Hitler's "will," as J. P. Stern pointed out in his book on Hitler.

Kant has shown that the human will is a disposition of the mind which, if adequate to reality, includes the consideration and choice of means appropriate or necessary for achieving the end that the will is directed to: "He who wills an end, wills also (to the extent that reason has a decisive influence upon his actions) those indispensably necessary means that are in his power." But if reason, which ought to be understood here again in the classical sense of the word, if reason, as in the magic mind, has no decisive influence, then the "will" is imagined as an absolute power that is sufficient in itself, *i.e.*, it is believed that through the pure act of volition effects can be produced in external reality. When, for instance, Hitler in 1943 discussed with his generals the difficulty of transporting the division Hermann Göring from Sicily over to the mainland, in order to be prepared for the expected Allied invasion, he declared categorically: "It's not the ferries that are decisive. What is decisive is the will."22

To say that the magic mind separates itself from the means which in fact are necessary to attain its end does not mean of course that the magic mind believes that something can be achieved in external reality without using the tools of external reality. Even the magician in "primitive" societies uses, in addition to his magic fertility rites, pragmatic means of irrigation and fertilization. But what is essential is his belief that these means work only because of the power of his magical operation. Similarly, to return to the example just mentioned, Hitler of course did not think that a division could be transported over the sea by a pure act of volition, but what he did think was that if the "will" was strong enough *some* means would be found; *i.e.*, external reality would yield to the power of the mind.

The example shows the paramount role that is attributed to the manipulating power of consciousness, but it should not lead to the assumption that the matter rests there. On the contrary, along with his operations of mind, the modern "magician" also acts pragmatically. We have reached the point where the chief characteristic of National Socialist magic can be summed up in its conception of magical activity. This point might again cause some misunderstanding.

I want to stress once more that I do not intend to reduce the entire historical phenomenon of National Socialism to the person of Hitler and to blame all its deeds on him, by making him, instead of a "demon," the great "magician." When I use the term "magic" I mean something different from "demonism," and I hope that this distinction becomes clear in the course of my analysis of magic as a phenomenon of consciousness and the mode of action that it inspired. As to Hitler himself, it is obvious that he was not the only one with a magic mind. I quoted some other leading National Socialists above and could have added dozens more. And the story of Hitler's success shows that at least a considerable number of his followers were of a similar mind. What did distinguish Hitler from other leading National Socialists, to be sure, was his unrestrained concupiscence, his "absolute will."

Secondly, I do not contend of course that all actions of National Socialists or Hitler himself, not to mention those of the government of the Third Reich, can be interpreted as magical actions. What I intend to describe with the concept of magic is the driving impulse of a mode of consciousness and its working in *some* kinds of actions. Just because magic action is pragmatic action, clear distinctions cannot al-

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ways be made. Actions can, however, be described as magical if they are undertaken in such a way that reality is made to conform to the inadequate image one has conceived of it and, with regard to the essence of the action, if one attempts to operate upon human nature as if it were a pragmatically manageable phenomenon. I want to demonstrate this concept in the realm of man and society. It is in this realm, also, that one can illustrate the revolutionary character of National Socialist magic, its debt to the “spiritual revolution” and its ultimate fulfillment.

First of all, I would like to recall some historical facts. Although the seizure of power by the National Socialists was no revolution in the sense of the French or Russian Revolution, German society underwent a process of considerable change between 1933 and 1945. Ralf Dahrendorf and David Schoenbaum were the first, to my knowledge, to point out that this process of change amounted to a “social revolution” whose content was “modernity.”

Among the characteristics of this modernization, the most important, according to Dahrendorf and Schoenbaum, was a highly increased social mobility. The penetration of the whole of society and all its institutions by the National Socialist party and its numerous organizations, as well as the raising of a huge army, gave hundreds of thousands the unprecedented opportunity to improve, or at least to change, their status and profession, regardless of their former social background. Added to this vertical mobility was the increased horizontal mobility, ensured, among other institutions and organizations, particularly by the labor conscription (Reichsarbeitsdienst) and again by the army, which transferred people from one end of the country to the other. Although many National Socialist ideologists, and sometimes Hitler himself, subscribed verbally to values and ideals of a traditional social order, the importance and influences of many traditional social conditions and institutions, like the clearly separated classes, the independence of local and regional authorities, the churches and, last but not least, the family, were in fact diminished or neutralized by new organizations and institutions. As soon as Hitler had secured his power in 1934, he got rid of his conservative allies, and at about the same time, he reined in as well the “backward-freaks” (“Rückwärter”) of the völkisch groups in his movement. It was not by mere accident that Rosenberg, the spokesman of the völkisch groups, even though he was allowed to maintain his belief that he was the party’s chief ideologist, never achieved any real political influence.

There is no doubt that Hitler himself thoroughly despised the “sclerotic old order” and did not care much about “tradition.” When he declared his determination to build up a classless society of equal Volksgenossen, he meant it seriously to the extent that he attempted to permeate the whole society with his “will,” to destroy all independent loyalties and influences, even private ones, and to organize society under the sole authority of the party so that it became manageable for his political purposes. The social changes thus set in motion, partly resulted, no doubt, from the necessity to seize, maintain and extend power, and may have sometimes developed their own momentum beyond intention and control, but partly they were results of deliberate pragmatic actions of the magic mind.

Ideologically society was conceived as the “new community,” as the classless Volksgemeinschaft in total equality, equal because of the common substance of blood. One kind of magic action in the realm of phenomena, corresponding with this belief, was the ritual actualization of that concept in the National Socialist cult. Scores of holidays, festivals and ceremonies were developed during the Third Reich, designed to commemorate Hitler’s putsch of 1923 or his seizure of power in 1933, to celebrate events in the course of the year like Hitler’s birthday, the first of May, solstice, harvest-festival, and even Christmas, in a National Socialist way, and finally to replace Christian ceremonies in private life, such as baptisms, weddings and funerals, by National Socialist ceremonies. This cult was meant to permeate the mind, in public as in private life, with the new image of reality, to actualize this image again and again through ritual visualization, and to enable the participants in these ceremonies to believe that the image was real.

One can show here that the National Socialist cult was not a dictatorial measure of the lone
magician Hitler, but that it responded to the psychic needs of many people of an equal mind. As early as 1928 Hans Johst, a famous National Socialist writer and later president of the Reichsschrifttumskammer, had expressed his desire for a new cult through which the soul could experience "in the community of equally minded, equally feeling, equally believing people the dream of salvation as displayed and envisioned truth." After 1933, the most impressive self-celebration of the "new community," as longed for by Johst, was the annual Party Congress in Nuremberg. At its main event, the nocturnal "hour of consecration" (Weihestunde) of the party functionaries, 240,000 people were massed together in the Zeppelin Stadium, underneath Speer's "dome of light," surrounded by tens of thousands of illuminated red swastika flags on the walls, and interspersed with 25,000 red and golden glittering standards which, all having been consecrated by Hitler's "blood banner" of 1923, symbolized total devotion as well as the unifying substance of the blood. What is essential is that in these ceremonies people underwent the psychic and bodily experience that they were in fact all equal, formed one great community, the Volksgemeinschaft, and that they were left with this consciousness. Against this experience the inequalities that remained in everyday life seemed to be secondary.

But in addition, everyday life became penetrated and organized in such a way as to mobilize and equalize society under the rule of the party. There was hardly a way to extricate one's self from this effect. If one were not a member of the party or of one of its numerous organizations, from the SA down to the Association of National Socialist Women (NS-Frauenschaft), one probably was a member of the Association of Civil Servants (Beamtenbund) or the Association of Labor Unions (Deutsche Arbeitsfront), both dominated by the party. If one did not participate in the cultural activities of the National Socialist Kulturgemeinde, one perhaps spent leisure time or vacation in one of the countless programs of the recreational organization Kraft durch Freude, and on top of that one was permanently inundated by all sorts of activities, like the compulsory weekly Stew Day or the incessant collections of metal, paper or money. Above all, action was taken in a field in which a revolutionary structural change of society can be produced most effectively: in the field of education.

The National Socialist cult was also supposed to "form and create the New German man," but more important than ritual realization and affirmation, though these were certainly of high psychological significance, were of course the technical and organizational activities in education itself. In one of his talks with Hermann Rauschnigg, Hitler explained to which end he wanted to educate youth and disclosed in the process how his magic mind had reduced the nature of man to something phenomenal:

I want a violent, haughty, dauntless, cruel youth . . . . The free and glorious beast of prey must gleam again through their eyes. Strong and beautiful I want my youth. I shall have them trained in all bodily exercises. I want an athletic youth. This is the first and the most important. Thus I shall eradicate the thousands of years of human domestication. Thus I have the pure, noble material of nature at hand. Thus I can create the New. I don't want intellectual education. Thereby I would corrupt the youth through knowledge . . . [From this youth] springs up the man who is measure and center of the world, the creative man, the god-man.

In 1938 Hitler made known in a public speech what kind of action had been taken and was further to be taken in order to achieve that aim. This speech revealed not only the magic essence of actions through which human nature was operated upon pragmatically as if it were something phenomenal, in accordance with the reduced image of the magic mind, but it also showed the revolutionary and quite "modern" character of the new education, which tended to cover the entire life of each member of society:

This youth certainly doesn't learn anything else than to think German and to act German, and when these boys at the age of ten come into our organization and get and feel
fresh air for the first time in their lives, then they come four years later from the Jungvolk into the Hitler Youth, and there we keep them again for four years. And then we are even less willing than before to return them into the hands of our old begetters of classes, but take them then immediately into the party, into the Arbeitsfront, into the SA, or into the SS, into the NSKK and so on. And when they are there for two years or one and a half years and shouldn’t have yet become real National Socialists, then they go into the Arbeidsdienst and get drilled there again for six or seven months, all with one symbol, the German spade. And, after six or seven months, whatever should here or there still remain of class-consciousness or pride of place, then that is taken over for further treatment by the army for two years, and when they come back after two, three, or four years, then we take them again immediately, so that by no means they have a relapse, into the SA, SS, and so on, and not one of them will be free again for his entire life. 28

Just to round off the variety of magic actions, I want to point to some others through which an attempt was made to create the “new man” and the “new society” in the realm of phenomena, or to defend them against the “one and only enemy”: political measures “to protect race and state,” such as the means to increase the birth rate of “valuable blood” on the one hand, and physical extermination of the Jews and other “worthless life” on the other, medical experiments in order to study the differing modes of behavior and reaction of different races, plans of breeding human beings like cattle.

Magic action is pragmatic action in external reality. As such it can, though directed by a consciousness that comes short of grasping the substance of reality, indeed become successful as long as the means of external reality are at hand. If there is no longer the case, the magic character of consciousness is fully disclosed. The rational will, which combines consideration of ends as well as means, not to mention the necessity that means are governed by the rationality of the ends, will give up the pursuit of an end when the means are no longer there, or when they become inadequate. When towards the end of the war Hitler did not have tanks, airplanes and soldiers any longer, his “absolute will” was not diminished. He resorted to inadequate means like drawing up the “people in arms” (Volkssturm), or he plainly refused to concern himself with the question of means. And when the pressure of reality became so overwhelming that he could not evade it, he still stuck to the magic vision of reality, only its content got reversed: The German Volk had proved “to be the weaker one,” he told Speer, “and the future will belong solely to the stronger eastern race (Ostvolk),” and consequently only one kind of action seemed to be left: “It is not necessary to take into consideration the basis which the people will need to continue a most primitive existence. On the contrary, it will be better to destroy these things, to destroy ourselves.” 29

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*The still existing confusion surrounding the terms “National Socialism” and “Fascism” leads me to emphasize that my article deals with National Socialism, not with Fascism, and that, when I mention Fascism, I mean Italian Fascism. Recent studies, especially those of Renato De Felice (Le interpretazioni del fascismo, 2nd edition, Bari, 1970; Intervista sul fascismo, Roma—Bari, 1975; and his biography Mussolini, so far four volumes, Turin, 1965 soqu.), have shown that the differences between National Socialism and Fascism are greater than their similarities, so that it seems questionable to include both historical phenomena, let alone a host of others, under the term “Fascism”. The question is of course of great interest if the ideological and political movements of Fascism and National Socialism can be viewed as a coherent epochal phenomenon of the first half of our century. But this question gets obscured by inadequate terminology, especially if the term “Fascism” is used as a theoretical concept, such as in all kinds of “Theories of Fascism.” In what follows I cannot go into this matter in detail. What I want to stress here is that I use the terms “National Socialism” and “Fascism” as language symbols that belong to the historical reality of the movements which produced them for purposes of self-interpretation, and that as such they do not explain anything theoretically. *Klaus Vondung, *Magie