

NAZISM AS AN OCCULT RELIGION

The occult side of the Nazism has been the object of recent studies. It is considered to be a sensitive subject and therefore it is easy to get into conclusions full of contradictions and methodological mistakes. The author that depicted, for the first time, in a scientific manner, the cultural roots of the esoteric Nazism is Nicholas Goodrick-Clarke, scholar at Cambridge University. His masterpiece,¹ well known all over the academic world and popular in libraries at the same time, has become the starting point of the historical researches that followed.

The occult knowledge, belonging to minorities and gnostic sects at the beginning, was enriched by Manichaeism and by the *Hermetica* texts (Greek texts written between the third and the fourth century after Christ) and only at the end of the XVIII century it conquered a wider part of the population. It represented, especially in United Kingdom and United States, the reaction to the crisis of the positivism ideals and the esoteric answer has to be ascribed in a time that saw an increasing interest in medieval elements and the birth of romance. The esotericist Madame Helena Petrovna Blavatsky, founder of the “Theosophical Society”, renewed the occult world by introducing oriental and Tibetan symbolism. The ariosophistes, after her arrival in Tibet, got in touch with two mahatmas in the Himalayan Mountains that initiated her to a long cognitive journey. The purpose was to spread this elevated science to the élites of the Western society as humanity could be saved from the menace of the evil only by trusting a higher knowledge. This elitism can be found also in the theory of Blavatsky that describes the seven phases of the human race. During the first four levels there was as gradual detachment of the human being from God, and only from the fifth grade on it would be possible to aspire to the divine again. At the present time, the population is living in the midst of a great change, between the fourth and the fifth phase, but only the group of the *Untermenschen* could ascend to God and start a new era. Each cycle was linked to a symbol and the last one, the most perfect, was the swastika. The occultism of the Blavatsky took hold in the cultural field of nationalist political programs in Germany, but the real connection between Hitler and the theosophy was created only by Guido von List and Lanz von Liebenfels. They both added some *völkisch* and racial elements to the Aryan theories of Blavatsky. They identified the common cause of the social problems (such as wars, economic difficulties and political crisis) in the mingling of races. This mingling of races was the result of a conspiracy made by a group with antigermanic interests that wanted to destroy the high and pure society ruled by the occult science. The aim of the

¹ N. GOODRICK-CLARKE, *Le radici occulte del nazismo*, Sugarco edizioni, Milano, 1985.

two authors was, therefore, to substitute the modern world, corrupted and decayed, with a new pan Germanic empire, ruled by the social order.

List, scholar of the Germanic world and especially runes, had never been able to realize his political goals and to create the élite so called *Armanenschaft*, but his unfinished project was fulfilled during the Third Reich. Liebenfels, author that saw in Jesus Christ the appearance of an Aryan divinity, had a fundamental role in the education of the young Hitler, as he was the editor of *Ostara*, the favorite magazine of the future *Führer*.

If the three ariosophistes mentioned below never participated directly to the ideology of the NSDAP, it is surprising how much the occult Wiligut was important for a great quantity of the spiritual aspects of the SS. Wiligut was defined the Rasputin of Himmler, as the collaboration between the two was so important. Himmler, whose interest in theosophy started when he was a teenager, met Wiligut in the summer of 1933 and the combination of a scholar in ancient traditions and a powerful leader created the occult ideals of the SS.² Karl Maria Wiligut's main thesis was about the religious customs and military army of the ancient Germans, focusing on the irministe faith (that believed in the Germanic divinity Krist, later on taken by the Christians). In present times, Wiligut saw a conspiracy of Jewish together with the Catholic Church, which had as a main goal to hide the true Germanic religion.

On the other hand, Heinrich Himmler was the most ambiguous leader of the NSDAP. His mind was able to project rational and detailed plans but his soul reflected his passion for legends and sentimentalism. In the same person there were romantic impulses for esoteric erudition and a serious attitude to order, precision and loyalty. This created a project of a future ruled by his "black knights", the SS, that combined a high education and initiation to the characteristics of the Aryan race. But in order to achieve the knowledge for the perfect society, there was the urgent need of studies of the past, of the Germanic roots. In 1931, Himmler obtained the means to start building the ideological base of the SS and in 1935 he founded in collaboration of Walther Darré (Minister of Agriculture) and Hermann Wirth the *Ahnenerbe*. The *Ahnenerbe* was a scientific association that had to research the Germanic roots and the characteristics of the Nordic and Indo-Germanic race with a scientific methodology. The main goal was to build later on a new set of theories that had to be transmitted to the population. The association was divided in fifty departments and obtained some surprising and amazing results, either some extreme racial hypothesis.

² G. GALLI, *La svastica e le streghe: intervista sul Terzo Reich, la magia e le culture rimosse dall'Occidente*,

Weisthor maintained an influent role within the *Ahnenerbe*, and he dedicated his studies to Germanic cults and ancient memories. For instance he offered a new meaning to the runes, ancient Germanic symbols and object of numerous analysis of the *Ahnenerbe*. In this case, the runes represent something more than a simple alphabet and they assume the semblances of a bridge that leads to a new dimension, where a complete knowledge of the Universe is possible. The Universe is conceived as the union of immutability and mutability where some rules allow the stability. In order to understand these rules, the runes become the mirrors of the comprehension. Each member of the SS was educated to the meaning of the runes that were also reproduced in many ways. For instance the *Teiwaz*, rune of war, strength and sacrifice, was stitched to the jacket of the Schools of SS. The *Toten* rune, symbol of death, substituted the cross in the death certificates. If inverted, it becomes the image of life, the *Man*, used in the birth papers and in the sleeves of the military uniforms of the SS *Ahnenerbe*. The SS had two runes called *Sieg* as a symbol, whose translation was victory, success and wellbeing. The *Hagal*, is considered the mother of the runes, that closes in front of the exterior world in order to protect his power inside (like a mother that protects his child) was reproduced during the weddings SS. Finally, the swastika symbolizes the gift of life, either donated, either received. It is also the image of the cosmic soul and the God's principle. It is the last grade to the light of the spirit and represents the real illuminated population: the Aryan race.

The three runes (*Sieg*, *Hagal* and *Swastica*) were etched in the *Totenkopfring*, the death head ring of the SS. The ring meant loyalty toward the Fuhrer, obedience to the superiors, to duty and help for their colleagues. Every SS received it as a gift by Himmler, and at the death of the soldier it had to be returned to the SS.

Nazism was able to start building a new religion due to all of these symbols that accompanied the theories. There were also rituals, adopted by the families of the SS that were encouraged by Himmler and by the *Ahnenerbe* (even if avoiding a direct conflict with the Church). There were celebrations of each period of the Germanic year, starting from the *Jule Fest*, where the sun was invoked during the darkest month, December. Then, during spring, there were open air parties organized all over the country in order to get into a deeper touch with the nature and with the rural habits. May was also the ideal month to have a wedding, officiated by an SS lieutenant with a special ritual and following some strict racial rules. In summer times, the light was celebrated with the *Sommersonnewande*, when big public manifestations saw the fire as main protagonist. At the end of the year, there was the month destined to the commemoration of the dead, without excessive sadness because it was believed that each death corresponded to a new life. Moreover, the days of

the week and the months of the year were changed into new names, referred to the Nordic mythology.

While talking about the new religion conceived by the NSDAP and especially by the SS, it is very important to mention the theory of the Black Sun. It is historically believed that the assumptions concerning this matter started only after the Second World War but, in truth, there are proofs of the existence of that theory during the Third Reich. The researches about the *Sol Invictus* were part of a hidden project known only by few (Himmler, Rahn, Wiligut, Rüdiger, Hauer, Rössler and Schauburger). The Black Sun symbolizes esoterically a god deceived and forgotten. Lots of examples of this divinity are provided by all the mythologies.³ Starting from the Greek mythologies, Cronus has to be mentioned: he used to be the King of Gods and after the loss with his son Zeus, fell asleep at Fortunate Isle, waiting to take revenge over his son. Apollo could represent a version of the *Sol Invictus*, as he suffered from the destruction of his city Troy and was depicted by the SS Rahn like the angel Lucifer, fallen from the sky (as described in the Apocalypse of John the Evangelist). The other mythology that illustrates a divinity corresponding to the Black Sun is the Egyptian god Atum. Atum, at the beginning of the Universe, was the Father of the Gods of the Ancient Reign. With the passing of time, he progressively became the image of the night, of the underground world and was replaced by the cult of Ra. There was a significant effort of reintroducing the veneration of Atum and it was made by the pharaoh Akhenaton 1500 years later. The pharaoh tried to create the faith in an only god, by uniting Atum with Ra but he failed as his son Tutankhamon was forced to only venerate Ra by the priests. This monotheist cult arrived, for the SS *Ahnenerbe*, from the Northern Europe and only later on the Jewish and the Christians adopted it. The theory of the Black Sun reflected the possibility for the NSDAP of rewriting history and the SS were willing to start archeological researches in Egypt but were stopped by the English and American governments.

In order to conclude all the religious aspects present in the totalitarian Third Reich, it should be stressed that all the symbols described so far were reunited in the Wewelsburg Castle. The SS *Schule Haus Wewelsburg* was elected as the perfect castle that corresponded to an ancient prophecy individuated by Wiligut. The ariosophistes found out this Germanic oracle describing the final battle that would have seen the army of the West against the army of the East, with the winning of the Germans. This battle had to take place, according to the Wiligut's interpretation, in the region of Westphalia and Himmler, as soon as he was acquainted of the prophecy, started to look for the bastion symbol of the future war. He found Wewelsburg and, after some inspections with a group of

³ M. ZAGNI, *La svastica e la runa: cultura e esoterismo nella SS Ahnenerbe*, Mursia, Milano 2011.

archeologists, Himmler decided to buy it and restore it with a special concern to the symbols. The two most important rooms were the Chamber of the Generals and the Crypt. The first was circular and had a huge mosaic of a Black Sun at the center of the floor. That sun with twelve rays (that corresponded to the twelve columns of the room) was the image of the pure German soul. On the other hand, the crypt represented the chamber dedicated to the prayers for the SS dead and contained twelve funeral urns that had to be filled with the ashes of the SS. A huge flame had to burn day and night as an effect of the continuity of the order and of the mission of the Aryan race.

All in all, the SS world, composed by ancient rituals and symbols, created an illusion and the members believed that they could be the protagonists of the new era that was very close and that necessarily had to overcome. Their belief led to the conviction of owning an immense knowledge that embraced all the sciences. What they found at the end was only a massive disillusion and the conclusion that a political religion, even if it had roots in a distant past, was not possible.

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