

WHAT would the Nazis do to civilisation in these islands and in the Empire if they won? I want to answer this question from the point of view of a writer.

I don't suggest that conditions over here are perfect. During the present century the writer, and the artist generally, have worked under growing disabilities; the law of libel hits them unfairly, so does the dramatic censorship. And since last September things have got worse, owing to regulations necessary for the Defence of the Realm; publishers and printers are frightened of handling anything which may be thought disloyal, with the result that much original work and valuable comment is being stifled. This cannot be helped; a war is on; it's no use whining. But it's as well to remember that as soon as the war is won people who care about civilisation in England will have to begin another war, for the restoration and extension of cultural freedom.

But although cultural conditions are not perfect in this country (and it would be cant to pretend that they are) they are paradise compared with the conditions in Germany, and heaven compared with the conditions which Germany would impose on us if she beat us.

Would Share Poland's Fate

You may say, "Oh, but this is just guessing. How do you know? No doubt the Nazis would impose appalling peace terms on us if they won, but why should they interfere with our culture?" My answer to that is, "I do know, because I have the record of what they have done to other countries, particularly to Czechoslovakia and to Poland." Destruction of national culture is part of their programme of conquest. In Czechoslovakia, for instance, they have barred opera by Smetana, the great Czech composer, and the plays of Capek. They have revised school books, falsified Czech history, forbidden the singing of Czech national songs and subsidised German educational institutions for which the Czechs have to pay. In Poland the fate of culture has been still more tragic since Poland is a conquered country; their conduct in Poland, rather than their conduct in Czechoslovakia, is the model which the Nazis would follow if they got over here. Listen, for instance, how they have treated the University of Cracow — and then put for "Cracow," "Oxford" or "Cambridge," or any other University which you know—Melbourne, Toronto, Johannesburg, Aligarh. Last November 170 professors and teachers in Cracow were summoned by the chief of the Gestapo to the hall of the University and placed under arrest on the grounds that they were continuing their work without Nazi permission. They were sent straight off to concentration camps in Germany, where 16 of them died, and their places were filled by Nazi nominees.

IF GERMANY WON

What Would She Do To Britain?

By E. M. FORSTER

Pointing out that in Germany and in German-occupied countries all cultural activities are entirely subordinated to the State, E. M. Forster in "London Calling" expounds what the Germans would do to Britain and her national heritage of culture if they won.

I know Cracow. I have, or rather had, friends in the University there, of whom I can get no news. They have welcomed me to their charming little flat overlooking the green boulevards: they have shown me their noble city with its great Catholic churches and its marvellous fortress. Owing to their kindness and hospitality, it has happened that Cracow has become for me a symbol of Nazi bullying on the Continent, and I can hardly see its name without trembling with rage. I mention it now — that lost and lovely place, because one needs to visualise in these terrible times. It doesn't convey much if I say "The Nazis would recognise and re-staff our educational system." It does convey something if I say, "They would treat Oxford as they have treated Cracow." They are stamping out culture everywhere in Poland, so far as they can. They consider it their mission to do so, on the ground that the Poles are naturally inferior to Germans. "A Pole is a Pole," writes a Nazi journalist, "and any attempt at familiarity must be rebuffed."

So now for England. Let us consider more closely the effect of a Nazi victory upon our civilisation.

The Joy of Baiting Englishmen

Our press, our publishing and printing trades, our universities and the rest of our educational system would be instantly controlled. So would theatres, cinemas, and the wireless. The British Government (assuming that one remained) would be held responsible for their conduct, and have to punish them if they did anything which annoyed Berlin. There would be complete remodelling. In these respects the methods adopted in Czechoslovakia and Poland would be followed, and with the maximum of brutality; the joy of baiting Englishmen in England would be intoxicating. Germanisation would probably not be attempted. But the Gestapo and the rest of the occupying force would, of course, import such Nazi culture as was necessary for their spiritual sustenance, and we should have to pay for German libraries and German schools into which as members of an inferior



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race we should not be allowed to go.

Rebellion Might Mean Death

What about our literature?

The fate of individual writers would be hard. Those of any eminence would probably be interned and shot. This, however painful to themselves would not, it is true, be a great blow to literature, for by the time writers have become eminent they have usually done their best work. What would matter, what would be disastrous, is the intimidation of our

young writers—men and women in their twenties and thirties who have not yet had the chance to express themselves. The invaders would take good care to frighten or cajole them. Forbidden to criticise their conquerors, forbidden to recall the past glories of their country, or to indulge that free movement of the mind which is necessary to the creative art, they would be confined to trivialities, or to spreading their masters' opinions. A bureau would be established, and licences to create or to comment would be issued, as in Germany by Dr. Goebbels, and withdrawn if independence were shown. Rebelliousness might mean death. I don't think this is a fancy picture. It is only what is happening in Europe, and why should we get special terms? And I am not accusing our enemies of any general hatred of culture. The Germans don't hate culture, but they are doomed to oppose it because it is mixed up with thought and action, because it is mixed up with the individual; just as it is their doom to oppose science and religion.

The Nazis and Shakespeare

The other week, I mentioned the famous burning of the books which took place in Germany; would they try to burn English books, too? I don't think so. It would mean too big a blaze. We should probably be left with our existing libraries, and allowed to read our classics in such spare time as we possessed. I do think though, that a different interpretation of English literature would be attempted in our schools. They would put it to our young people that our best

writers were Nazis at heart, and so try to warp their minds. It's interesting, in this connection, to read what Nazi critics have been saying lately about Shakespeare and Carlyle. They haven't got a bad case over Carlyle—I'm afraid the old chap had something of the Nazi about him: he despised individualism and liberty, and worshipped the dictator-hero. However, Carlyle also said "Thought is stronger than artillery-parks," and this side of him the Nazis don't mention. The case of Shakespeare is more complicated. The Germans have, for several generations, invested so heavily in Shakespeare that they dare not, even under the present regime, sell out; and they are a bit worried because we like Shakespeare, too—we even maintain that he was an Englishman. So they have had to make him into "the special case of a poet who is not affected by a war with England," and they brandish him at us for our castigation and to our shame. You may think this foolish, and so it is, but it shows their mentality; it shows how they twist things and how they would twist our minds through our own national literature if they got into the country.

Violence Has Never Worked

I think we have got to go on with this hideous fight, I can't see how we are to make terms with Hitler, much as I long for peace. For one thing, he never keeps his word; for another, he tolerates no way of looking at life except his own way. A peace which was the result of a Nazi victory would surely not differ much from a Nazi war. Germans would no longer be killed, but they would go on killing others until no one survived to criticise them. In the end, they might achieve world domination, and institute a culture. But what sort of culture would it be? What would they have to work with? For you cannot go on destroying lives and living processes without destroying your own life. If you continue to be greedy and dense, if you make power, and not understanding, your aim, as a French friend of mine puts it, you erect "a pyramid of appetites on a foundation of stupidity" you kill the impulse to create. Creation is disinterested. Creation means passionate understanding. Creation lies at the heart of civilisation, like fire in the heart of the earth. Around it are gathered its cooler allies, criticism, the calm use of the intellect, informing the mass and moulding it into shape. The intellect is not everything—the Nazis are quite right there. But no one can insult the intellect as they do, without becoming sterile and cruel.

In this difficult day when so many of us are afraid (anyhow, I am afraid, not jittery), in this day when so many brave plans have gone wrong and so many devices have jammed, it is a comfort to remember that violence has so far never worked. Even when it seems to conquer, it fails in the long run. This failure may be due to the Divine Will. It can also be ascribed to the strange nature of Man, who refuses to live by bread alone, and is the only animal who has attempted to understand his surroundings. The Nazi madness has misinterpreted Man's nature, and is trying to make him and his work the slave of the State.