

MODERN MUSIC

MINNA LEDERMAN, Editor

INSIDE GERMANY

*FUGITIVUS

NOTHING surprises me more about Americans than their fixed but not quite realistic image of life under the Third Reich. Since my arrival here many have asked me about music in Germany today. Many more, however, seem to know all the answers. In sum-total their knowledge is of course correct. German art is now only a pale shadow of its former greatness. Yet the living, day-to-day process by which it has been depressed to its present level is but vaguely comprehended. Outside the Reich an idea prevails that all activities are regulated by legal mandate. This is, to some extent, misleading. "Kultur," for example, which is an obsession of the Nazi rulers, is molded less by outright law than by indirect pressure. The results are, for that reason, far more devastating.

Let me speak from experience, for I have been through the wringer. Before 1933 I was a concert pianist, an opera conductor and a director of symphony orchestras in various lesser cities of Germany. At twenty-six I had just moved to Berlin, when Hitler came to power. A "pure Aryan," with no political connections, and no affiliation with any cultural camp, I was permitted like sixty-five million others, to remain in Germany and face the precarious future. I have carried on all my musical trades, but under this regime success without politics brings no definite assurance of peace. Sometimes it makes powerful enemies. I have been in favor and out, and my right to work as an artist has been several times withdrawn and re-instated. During the last

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six months, when my privileges were finally suppressed, I have even been reduced to "Schwarzarbeit," that form of bootleg, illegal labor which exists in Germany to an extent unsuspected by foreigners. With the aid of friendly publishers I have arranged scores farmed out to me at midnight, and so kept myself alive until at last I could make my way to America.

During these six years I have seen many a casual music tourist leave Germany convinced that business goes on as usual. And why not? Concert halls and opera houses are filled with apparently enthusiastic young audiences. Festivals are lavishly presented, even though the international public is absent. New works are continuously commissioned and premieres are mounted with pomp and circumstance.

To musicians, however, and even, I think, to a large section of the German public, the reverse of the picture is deplorably visible. Six years are hardly long enough to grow substitutes for conductors like Fritz Busch, Erich Kleiber, Otto Klemperer, Bruno Walter, Hermann Scherchen, régisseurs like Karl Ebert, Herbert Graf, and Leopold Sachse, singers like Richard Tauber, Emmanuel List, Alexander Kipnis, Lotte Lehmann, pianists like Arthur Schnabel, violinists and cellists like Bronislaw Huberman and Emanuel Feuermann, composers like Paul Hindemith, Arnold Schönberg, Ernst Krenek, Kurt Weill, Ernst Toch—to mention only a few of the voluntary and involuntary exiles. The Jewish exclusion—one of the basic legal restrictions of cultural life—has not only deprived us of many of these celebrities, but it has lowered general orchestral standards throughout Germany, taking a specially heavy toll of cellists and violinists. It has, besides, swept the field almost bare of composers in the light opera and popular field. Critical scholarship has also received a great set-back with the departure of men like Alfred Einstein, Curt Sachs, and Ludwig Landshoff.

HERR GOEBBELS AND THE REICHSKULTURKAMMER

Still there remains a basic musical residue, for the tradition of centuries cannot be dissipated overnight. The musical instinct of the German people, the creative spirit of its subjugated artists, would rise, I am convinced, to repair the painful damage, fill

in the gaps, and, however gradually, restore the level, were it not for that peculiar invention of the Third Reich—its Kulturpolitik.

In the system of Kulturpolitik, the famous Reichskulturkammer is, of course, the controlling element. No one in free America can picture the exact scope of this institution. In Germany today an artist is ineligible to work anywhere without a membership card in one of its many departments. This is not granted of course without an affidavit establishing the "Aryanism" of all four grandparents. But political heresy, indicated by a record of Freemasonry or even of "Bible research" may also be a disqualification. Once acquired, the precious certificate can be summarily withdrawn; it is held only during "good behavior."

The Reichskulturkammer has several important divisions: the Reichspresse for writers, journalists and publishers; the Filmkammer for all movie workers; the Kammer für die Bildenden Künste—sculptors, painters, architects, decorators; the Theaterkammer and the Musikkammer. This formidable edifice is headed by Dr. Joseph Goebbels, Minister of Propaganda and Enlightenment. I have seen occasional references in America to the so-called erudition and cultivation of Dr. Goebbels but cannot imagine on what they are based. Musically he is an illiterate.

In his Propaganda Ministry Dr. Goebbels has a board known as the "Beratende Referenten," who are supposed to furnish expert opinion for the Kulturkammer. There are three such directors for music—Heinz Drewes, Erich Roeder, and Herr Ludwig (the last named not very important). Drewes, a mediocre director, began his career in the early twenties as coach and assistant to the well known Gustav Brecher in Leipzig and later was conductor of the little theatre at Altenburg. Today he passes on all appointments of important directors and opera conductors. A man of intense likes and dislikes he will not hesitate to represent a victim of his hate as a political suspect to Goebbels. Dr. Roeder supervises the general selection of operas and new compositions; his recommendations are usually accepted as final. Roeder was formerly critic on several small provincial papers. Now he writes on *Der Angriff*, Goebbels' own news organ. Favor or disfavor as expressed in his reviews serves warning to directors throughout the Reich as to the standing of the composer in ques-

tion. Like Drewes, Roeder is also of an irascible, vindictive temperament; when aroused he will go to extraordinary lengths to track down an artist's "doubtful" political past. A letter from either of these personages to any theatre or concert society indicating that Mr. X is not entirely "dependable" will effectively deprive that artist of some important opportunity.

Also at their service is the party organization. A composer or performer, ostensibly persona grata with the Propaganda Ministry and the Kulturkammer, may by a quiet hint from "above" prove unacceptable to the provincial Gauleiter. The Gauleiter is the purely political leader of his province, but he controls all the theatres in his domain and can forbid productions and appearances on any trumped-up charge. The example of one sets a standard for all. As no Nazi official wants to be outdone in zeal soon all the Gauleiter will combine to bring to an early close the career of a work or an artist, in the face of apparent sanction from Berlin.

The Reichsmusikkammer, the administrative unit, is directly at the mercy of Dr. Goebbels. Its president, Peter Raabe was once conductor at the little Aachen Stadttheater. His title is important, but he exists only to carry out the desires of Goebbels. Typical of his duties was the execution of Goebbels' request to liquidate, as circumspcctly as possible, all "Aryan" composers who had contracted "non-Aryan" marriages. Outside of Germany it is not generally understood, I believe, that the famous Nüremburg racial laws are applied strictly according to blood heritage. Until 1937 disqualification for *marriage* with Jews was not definitely imposed in the cultural professions except in the press division, where it was put into effect back in 1933. Even today, these restrictions are not incorporated into basic law; a number of famous artists so handicapped are still permitted to function. The case of Hindemith, whose music is banned on "cultural" grounds, has not indeed been improved by his half-Jewish wife. But Franz Lehár, one of the Reich's musical heroes has only just begun to feel the pinch; his "misalliance" had been conveniently ignored until now. The weeding-out process has been intensively carried on for more than two years. It took Herr Raabe six months, from the end of 1936 to May 1937, to

painstakingly dig out of the musical scene most of the compromised singers, composers, writers, and scholars.

One more official deserves mention, the Präsidialrat of the Reichsmusikkammer, Heinz Emil Ihler, who concerns himself with the fluctuating destinies of thousands of orchestra men, cabaret, cafe and music hall performers. Ihler was originally a bank clerk who stepped into the musical world during the period of the silent films, when he became a movie pianist in the Berlin Ufa theatre. His present post is a reward for faithful party work begun long before 1933.

LOCAL CONTROL—THE CITY MUSIKKOMMISSAR

These figures operating from Berlin represent the centralized control of the present regime. The former rich and varied musical life of cities like Leipzig, Düsseldorf, Frankfurt, Darmstadt, Breslau, Magdeburg, Oldenburg, each noted for its distinctive concert and operatic productions, was due to a broad and liberal local autonomy in all matters of art. But the revolutionary ideas of National Socialism discourage the free development of regional genius and foster instead the most rigid uniformity.

All the far-flung theatres and concert halls of the Reich are now brought into the Kultur net-work through the agency of the "Städtische Musikbeauftragte." There is no way exactly to describe this functionary since Germany had never seen anything like him before. The only parallel term, I think, is Local Commissar of Music. Every city and every tiny town with a hall where music may be heard, has such an official.

He is of course the furthestmost outpost of Berlin. But in other respects he is also a petty, local czar, who passes on all lists of artists and all works to be produced, and whose decisions need not conform to the practice of any other city. A famous singer from the leading German opera houses may thus be refused a guest appearance in an obscure village.

What are the qualifications of these commissars? In the first rank, of course, stand faithful Party members. From these, it might be assumed, a selection would be made solely of musicians, but that is true only in the larger cities, where conductors and music teachers have been chosen. In the many smaller towns,

music deputies may come from every conceivable profession and trade; some are known to have been cigar dealers, bank clerks, customs officials and carpenters.

By such dilution of Germany's cultural stock, the general provincial level has been gradually debased. The course of music is regulated from day to day not only by a system regimented and centralized in the capital, but by the whims of an extraordinary number of petty bureaucrats who, insecure in their knowledge of art, are all the more headstrong and rash in the exercise of power. Their decisions may gradually weaken the decrees even of the Reichskulturkammer; any underground campaign, pursued long enough, will eventually eliminate a recognized artist from professional life.

THE FATE OF COMPOSERS

Let me tell the story of one Richard Mohaupt, a young German composer whose case I know in detail. Mohaupt first came to important notice in 1935 with the broadcast of a commissioned work. Its success brought an immediate order for a second piece, which in turn led to a third. The broadcast date was already set when a musician, long a Party follower, informed the Reichsrundfunkgesellschaft (the department which controls all radio stations) that the composer was married to a "non-Aryan." At that time such a tie was not a recognized handicap. Nevertheless, an unofficial communiqué, dispatched to all stations (without the composer's knowledge) effectively put an end to further radio performances.

Meanwhile, however, a new ballet by Mohaupt had been accepted for production at the Hamburg Opera. Discreet inquiry revealed that an official of the Reichskulturkammer in Berlin disapproved. Immediately thereafter the theatre of another city gave up its option. Nevertheless the ballet was presented at, of all places, the 1936 Olympic Festival, before an international audience in the German Opera House of Berlin. Since it was a definite success, the Reichsmusikkammer conveniently reversed itself and the ballet was soon produced in almost every large theatre in Germany. The smaller stages however and the radio continued to boycott Mohaupt.

In May 1937, in accordance with Goebbels' new regulation, "Aryans" with "non-Aryan" ties were excluded from participation in musical activities and deprived of their membership cards. This time however, the Dresden Opera House intervened for Mohaupt in order to produce his new opera, and he was readmitted to the Reichsmusikkammer. After the premiere, twenty opera houses applied for permission to stage it. Now however the tide had definitely turned. The composer's latest success was the signal for a number of musicians to rise against him. Pressure brought on the Gauleiter of Saxony led him to forbid further productions at Dresden. Simultaneously a slander campaign was begun in the press; Mohaupt's music emerged overnight as "Kultur bolshevism." Only a few weeks after the Dresden opening Herr Goebbels forbade all further performances of the composer's works and cancelled his membership.

Mohaupt had meanwhile contracted to do the score of a film and when he attempted to finish it a fine of several thousand marks was imposed. Then, just as he was preparing to make a tour abroad as soloist with his new piano concerto, the criminal police cancelled his passport. On the restoration of that vital document he left Germany.

While all the most famous present-generation composers have now been drawn out of the country, a number of lesser known men still remain. Such for example as Boris Blächer, Hans Brehme, Hans Dransmann, Werner Egk, Ottmar Gerster, Karl Höller, Gerhard Maass, Karl Orff, Ernst Pepping, Max Trapp, Georg Vollerthun, Karl Vollmer, Rudolf Wagner-Regeny. Some of them were too young to have made their reputation before Hitler. Others now live in seclusion in the provinces, remote from active musical life. And no one who knows the German scene will deny that even among the Nazi adherents there are a few talented men. All without exception are, of course, "pure Aryans." But there can be other disqualifications—political, cultural and personal—which single out victims for unofficial boycotts.

MUSIC "CRITICISM"—HOW IT WORKS

Among those who have learned to howl with the wolves and lend their services to the building of the Kultur front, the best

known is perhaps Wagner-Regeny, who has acquired an international reputation through a tremendous publicity drive by the Reich. Before Hitler, Wagner-Regeny was a not very celebrated composer whose work was seldom performed outside of the country. If his eclectic style has any tendency it is a rather anemic neo-classicism. In 1935 his opera *Der Günstling* was introduced at Dresden and hailed as a national triumph. It is a compound of choruses and arias in the Handelian manner with a nice admixture of Kurt Weill. Since then he has benefitted by a series of important commissions and an unctuous press campaign. But it was not until he wrote a brand new *Midsummer-Night* to replace Mendelssohn's score that Wagner-Regeny became a national hero. This work despite official support, was a sensational failure. He remains nevertheless the Reichskulturkammer's favorite "young composer."

The press of course has neither freedom of expression nor opinion. But since the fall of 1937 when Goebbels challenged the critical function itself, denying the right of anyone to be more than an art "observer," the practice of criticism as such has altogether died out. Just what shall be "observed" is clearly indicated at weekly press conferences. For example, when certain "observers" proved too enthusiastic about Furtwängler's recent performance of Bartok's *Music for Strings, Percussion and Celesta*, they were cautioned to hold future praises strictly in check. It was considered unnecessary to point out that Bartok had openly expressed his dislike of Fascism. The critics, to use a courtesy term, are now reduced to the most miserable subterfuges. The more sophisticated resort to a symbolic language, studded with the stock phrases, "profoundly lyrical," "deep folk pathos," which properly convey the degree of neo-romanticism in the current musical product to the more learned among the public who now read between the lines.

"VERBOTEN" AND "UNERWÜNSCHT"

It is vital to the new Kulturpolitik that the present "front" appear always to be the spontaneous expression of the national will. For this reason restrictions are enforced with the least public

emphasis. Even the official list of composers and performers banned throughout Germany, is not publicly available. Symphony societies, theatres, publishers, are advised of these names by circular letters. Those banned, that is strictly *verboten*, are chiefly Jews; but since 1937 most artists who have "non-Aryan" ties have been added. Certain "Aryan" followers of Schönberg are also included—Berg, Webern and Krenek. (Krenek on several grounds, but chiefly for *Jonny Spielt Auf*—Kulturbolshevism of the deepest dye, glorifying both Negroes and jazz.)

On the other hand, there is a list of "undesirables" which is made known by word of mouth, or by letters in specific cases. This method of exclusion can be very effective. Paul Hindemith, for instance is such an "undesirable" and he has had no performance since the beginning of 1934. His music however is still published and widely sold.

Such direct and indirect restrictions are also imposed on foreign composers. Stravinsky has a curious place in modern Germany. Early attempts to prove him a Jew having failed, some of his works are now tolerated, for example, *Oiseau de feu*, *Baiser de la Fée* and *Pulcinella*. But *Sacre du Printemps* is "undesirable" and all his later music. Bartok is rarely heard, and only on the insistence of a man with Furtwängler's prestige. Ravel has a dubious position; rumors of "non-Aryan" descent constantly recur, but *Bolero* and *La Valse* are popular enough to silence all clamor.

THE REPERTORY

The general repertory is one of nostalgic reaction. Opera houses give Wagner and Wagner and more Wagner, with Verdi, Puccini and Richard Strauss as seconds. Strauss, despite some early difficulties with Goebbels, is firmly established. All his works may be performed except *Salome*, (heard occasionally in Munich, his own home) because of its Old Testament libretto. *Die schweigsame Frau* is forbidden because the author is Stefan Zweig. *Elektra* is discouraged for "decadence."

The concert repertory swings largely again around Wagner, also Brahms, Bruckner, Beethoven, Haydn and Strauss. Mozart in the first years was to some extent boycotted because of his

Freemasonry. Now he is fully restored to popularity. A few German moderns are heard and from outside, Kodaly and Dohnanyi, but very little Stravinsky, Casella, Prokofieff. And Tchaikovsky, quite deliberately, not at all.

The obsession about Jewish librettists—there were many such—has led to some curious situations. Lehar's *Merry Widow*, one of Hitler's favorites, was barred for many years because the two authors of the book were Jews. When the Berlin German Opera House decided to stage the work in 1937, public outcry was quieted only by the intervention of Frau Magda Goebbels. Since then it has had innumerable productions, each one more costly. The piano edition of this work is sold everywhere; and on the title page under the name of the composer there is a broad white space where paper has been pasted over the names of the librettists.

Herr Julius Streicher, the notorious anti-Semite and Gauleiter of Franconia, was involved only last year in a Jewish witch-hunt that is a classic. Late in 1938 his staff learned to their amazement that he had sanctioned production of the operetta, *Schwarzwaldmädel*, a work by Leon Jessel, a composer of strictly Jewish antecedents. When these latter were called to his attention Streicher replied, "Obviously from the very sound, no Jew could have written this music. It is undoubtedly the work of an Aryan which must have fallen into the hands of Jessel who published it under his own name." Thus properly certified, the opera was merrily presented and now enjoys continuous production.

PUBLIC REACTION

How does the audience react to its regimented Kultur? The majority as everywhere and at all times is lethargic. But if people do not rebel, they do betray boredom. The government has long recognized danger from this quarter and created its counter-agent in the Kraft durch Freude, the social organization to which all members of the Labor Front must belong. Members are urged to buy cheap monthly tickets for concert and opera series. Rather than play to empty houses, producers cater to the KDF, while the composer suffers from reduced box-office receipts that lessen his royalties. The KDF has been used to bolster the Kultur

front in many ways. Last year trainloads of members poured into Salzburg to replace the vanished international audience. In 1938 tickets (once selling at \$100 a piece for Toscanini performances) were distributed free to KDF members who could prove the ownership of a dinner jacket.

Mild protests against the cultural policies of the Reich are occasionally heard from the younger generation. Curiously enough these are raised not only by non-politicals but by some Nazi groups as well. Certain of the politically active, radical, younger generation find the present musical approach too reactionary. But the extent of that movement cannot be gauged. We can only wonder at the large sale of phonograph records of just those works that are "forbidden" or "undesirable;" for example *Sacre du Printemps* and *Petrouchka*, and nearly all of Hindemith including *Mathis der Maler* whose suppression has created so much talk in Germany. There is, I should say, a fairly definite underground pro-Hindemith movement. But all such protests are of course limited.

What the future of this controlled art will be is as much a speculation as any guess about political developments in Germany. No artist who has just left that country, nor anyone who still remains, has any definite hope for the morrow. In the last six years we have seen this Kulturpolitik grow constantly more severe and far-reaching. Emigrés, voluntary and involuntary, steadily increase in number. I am certain however that those who remain are not resigned. They, too, can only wait and, like so many others, amid deep forebodings, secretly long for release, for liberation by the Fourth Reich.