JEWS PROBLEM IN MEIN KAMPF AND ITS TREATMENT IN FATHERLAND BY ROBERT HARRIS

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Abstract

Fatherland is an alternative history novel by Robert Harris depicting a world where Adolf Hitler has won World War II, published in 1992. The very idea of Hitler winning the war makes the setting of the novel and that of the world a dystopian reality. The present paper studies the depiction of Jews in Mein Kampf and Hitler’s anti-Semitic attitude, blaming the community, among other reasons, for the fall of Germany and German people in World War I and the solution of the problem of Jewish issue he offered in his autobiography. The paper compares Hitler’s contemptuous stand in his autobiography to the fictional treatment in the novel Fatherland. The paper elaborately discusses how Hitler succeeded in making his people anti-Semitic without feeling guilt or any negative emotion and how much success he might have achieved had he won the war as the novel reveals.

Keywords: Dystopia, Nationalism, Jewish Problem, Propaganda, Holocaust, Territorial Expansion

INTRODUCTION

Adolf Hitler rooted the idea of National Socialism along with anti-Semitism. Whether it were diseases in the post-World War I Germany or the fall of economy and social condition of the people of Germany, Hitler accused the Jewish population living in then Germany the core of all these problems. In Mein Kampf, Hitler writes about how Jews, according to him, are “parasites” and prey “upon the honest portion of mankind” (146). After World War I, German people, especially youth, were directionless and the rising uncertainty gave Hitler the impetus to inject his ideology into the people and to convince them that they were a comparatively superior race who were brought down by Jews, the parasites. In order to make his arguments stronger, Hitler connected every cultural, traditional and religious aspect that Jewish people with a global propaganda to take over other nations. Undermining the history of Jewish sacrifice in the War, Hitler succeeded in his pursuit of making the German people anti-Semitic.

Hitler did not limit his narration of anti-Semitism to the social, economic and racial components. He proposed to deal with “the Jewish problem” with ruthless extermination (59). He believed that there was no option other than “the hard-and-fast ‘Either-Or’” (191). In the novel Fatherland, with ambiguity of order from Hitler, the execution of Jewish problem was done, not only to eradicate Jews from Germany, but from the face of entire Europe, possibly around eleven million of them. Harris’ protagonist Xavier March, who investigates the murder of a party official Josef Buhler, comes to know about how the Jewish question is dealt with by Third Reich, which the present world knows as the Holocaust. Hitler winning the WWII would have made such fiction a reality and the present world would have known Jews an extinct cultural species since he writes in his autobiography that the “first objective will not be to build up the idea of the People’s State but rather to wipe out the Jewish State which is now in Existence” (410).

THE JEWISH PROBLEM:

The Jewish State has never been delimited in space. It has been spread all over the world, without any frontiers whatsoever, and has always been constituted from the membership of one race exclusively. That is why the Jews have always formed a State within the State. One of the most ingenious tricks ever devised has been that of salling the Jewish ship-of-state under the flag of Religion and thus securing that tolerance which Aryans are always ready to grant to different religious faiths. But the Mosaic Law is really nothing else than the doctrine of the preservation of the Jewish race. Therefore this Law takes in all spheres of sociological, political and economic science which have a bearing on the main end in view (Hitler 146-147).

Hitler’s aim was to link every fall in social, political and economic condition of Germany to the Jewish population residing in Germany post-World War I. To reign under the flag of National Socialism, it was
important to ridicule the notions of democracy as well. Hitler understood the psychology of the mass very well. He was well-versed in History too. Such a background gave Hitler the necessary weapons to create the atmosphere of anti-Semitism. Hence, the first pre-requisite is to maintain that every nation is "a racial organism, and not an economic organization" (Hitler 147). A nation being a world power is directly proportional to the racial homogeneity it contains. The implied idea is therefore that all communities other than Aryans are parasites, a burden. Hitler claimed that Jews were the parasites plaguing Germany. They had taken over every aspect of German nation, from administration to economy. Government offices, various trades, War companies and nation’s defense were taken over by the Jews. The reason of defeat in the War was thus "the result of internal decay, cowardice, want of character, and... a retribution for such things" (Hitler 211). As Hitler claimed, the defeat Germany faced was because of the Jewish people. According to Hitler, the Jews have lied about being "a religious community" (213). They are the only people in the world who have declared themselves “chosen’ people”, for self-preservation (Hitler 272). As Hitler states, Jews have stolen others’ cultural achievements and have declared them as their own. They are the thieves of art and culture. "Thus the Jews have at all times lived in States that have belonged to other races and within the organization of those States he has formed a State of his own, which is, however, hidden behind the mask of a ‘religious community’" (Hitler 276). Under the umbrella of religion, Jews hail themselves as holy people. And this self-declaration makes them look ideal and harmless community. But, even the religious ideas of Jewry are either copied or stolen because of the inferior consciousness of Jews, their lack of idealism. Hence the religious surface is a set of guidelines to maintain Jewish blood pure and also to avail Jews to interact with rest of the world. The Jewish idea of religion is therefore alien to Aryan mind. Hitler states that even when God "found it necessary He drove those enemies of the human race out of the Temple of God; because then, as always, they used religion as a means of achieving their commercial interests" (278).

Thus, Jews have been accused by Hitler of using religion not only to maintain racial purity but also a means to gain commercial strength. Jews, according to Hitler, acquire the language of the State they live in and slowly take over the charge in government and control over the people. Jews came up with the ideology of Marxism because they first created the condition of deprivation in proletariat and when they saw that they could not control such large force, they came up with the idea of workers’ rights and powers. "While on the one hand he organized capitalistic methods of exploitation to their ultimate degree of efficiency, he curried favour with the victims of his policy and his power and in a short while became the leader of their struggle against himself" (Hitler 289). But such outcries, as Hitler says, were not against the international capitalism but against the national economic structure. Destruction of national economic structure would give way to the establishment of International Stock Exchange. Hitler says that the main aim behind doctrines such as Marxism is "to gather and consolidate a body of followers who will act under his commands as an armed weapon in the economic war for the destruction of national economic independence" (292-293). The division of Marxist power, namely the political uprising and the trades union movement, in reality create inviolable unity. While on external, such division seems acting in favour of better social structure and economic growth for the bourgeoisie, the object lies in destruction of both. According to Hitler, the intermixing of racial stock leads a nation to demise and destruction. Jews, as Hitler suggests, systematically conducted adulteration of Aryan blood. Hitler claims that the Jews encouraged prostitution indirectly due to which the major cities of the nation had large number of people with syphilis and the number was growing. Hitler proclaims that Jews had the propaganda of weakening the racial stock by means of prostitution “...for all the Jewish daughters of the department store proprietors are looked upon as eligible mates to co-operate in propagating His Lordship’s stock. And the stock certainly looks it. All this leads to absolute degeneration” (226). The mass-infection of venereal disease was a planned one and to fight against such diseases was to fight against prostitution, prejudice, current fashion, mass opinion and rotten customs. Hence the State must bear the responsibility of maintaining racial stock pure and destroy anything that stands against such determination. "He (Jew) occasionally bestowed one of his female members on an influential Christian; but the racial stock of his male descendants was always preserved unmixed fundamentally. He poisons the blood of others but preserves his own blood unadulterated..." (Hitler 286).

The idea of democracy, according to Hitler, is an aid for Jews to take over the State. Hitler hates democracy for the reason that he considers the majority of public of a nation ignorant and unaware of their own well-being. Public opinion can be easily directed in favour by using the propaganda through Press. Jews, according to Hitler, owned the major houses of Press, which he called the Marxist Press. "Their sole task is to break the atmosphere of anti-Semitism and directed the German people to the crime against humanity without any sense of guilt and responsibility. In Fatherland, Hitler’s autobiography is read as Bible of Aryan and German race. And the way in which Hitler envisioned the
extermination of Jewish people was achieved collectively by him through the persistent brainwashing through Press, Media and cult-of-personality tactics which Hitler claimed he learnt from the enemies of the State, Jews.

THE FINAL SOLUTION:

At the beginning of the War, or even during the War, if twelve or fifteen thousand of these Jews who were corrupting the nation had been forced to submit to poison-gas, just as hundreds of thousands of our best German workers from every social stratum and from every trade and calling had to face it in the field, then the millions of sacrifices made at the front would not have been in vain...No matter what form of resistance was decided upon, the first prerequisite for taking action was the elimination of the Marxist poison from the body of the nation...A really National Government ought then to have welcomed disorder and unrest if this turmoil would afford an opportunity of finally settling with the Marxists, who are the mortal enemies of our people (Hitler 606).

Adolf Hitler had pre-decided his treatment with the Jewish problem he had professed the German nation was facing in his autobiography in 1926 itself. And there is no doubt that he succeeded in eliminating around six million Jews from the face of Earth. In Fatherland, after winning World War II, Hitler, in the Third Reich, acquires Poland, Luxembourg, Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Greece, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, thus reducing the number of nations in Europe to twelve, excluding the Third Reich. The Third Reich is a super power in the fictional world of Fatherland. He does not stop after the acquisition of nations only, but exterminates possibly around eleven million European Jews in the novel.

"The Jews had all been evacuated to the east during the war. Everyone knew that. What had happened to them since was not a question anyone asked in public – or in private either, if they had any sense..." (Harris 38). Xavier March's investigation of an unknown dead body reported by Hermann Jost leads March to the corruption which has happened within the Party during and after the War. And the private investigation conducted by March reveals to him the sinister handling of the Jewish problem of which he, willingly or unwillingly, is a part just like every other citizen of the Third Reich. Though the post-War generation after the War knows no authority other Hitler and the Nazi Party, the persistent propaganda against Jews being the parasites and hatred against the community is still prevalent in the Third Reich.

Hitler very well knew in reality the burden of guilt. "Sense of guilt... paralyses every effort at making a serious and firm decision to act... When the individual is no longer burdened with his own consciousness of blame in this regard, then and only then will he have that inner tranquility and outer force to cut off drastically and ruthlessly all the parasite growth and root out the weeds” (Hitler 39). While the Nazi soldiers were aware of the targeted mass extermination they were performing, they felt no sense of guilt or shame. The reason of such insensibility lies in the propaganda and the control of the Party over the mind of the People – consciously and unconsciously.

Josef Buhler's murder investigation leads March to the documents that are hidden from the public to maintain Party's credibility. History aside, the very thought of the crowded trains, over-filled with Jews who were starved, suffering from diseases breaks March's soul. As a catalyst, American journalist reveals to him the crimes committed by Germans against the Jews – "But they hadn’t just vanished. It was as if they'd never existed" (Harris 212). The investigation leads March to the involvement of three ministries namely Foreign, Interior and General Government. Revisiting the official documents, March comes to know about the final solution to the Jewish problem to be dealt with priority, as is ordered by Hitler after the War.

Robert Harris, in Author's Note, has mentioned that while some documents are quoted from the originals, he has created the rest on the basis of facts. According to the documents, Heydrich mentions that the Jews have been evacuated to the east through rail transportation. But the dilemma of the solution persists in its way of execution. "Shooting was to be regarded as an inadequate solution for various reasons...the method had been observed to have a deleterious effect upon our men.... three methods had been undertaken recently” (Harris 320). Around one thousand Jews are shot in Riga, some have been given special treatment with gas lorries, and some have been experimented at the “Auschwitz camp... Using Zyklon B” (Harris 321). The system of execution, therefore, of the solution to the Jewish question is automatic. The weak are killed in the gas chambers, the strong and healthy work there to run the concentration camps, thus making the process more economic and self-running.

Weidemann: four such gas chamber/crematorium installations in camp. Total capacity of each: 2,000 bodies per day = 8,000 overall. Operated by Jewish labour, changed every 2-3 months. The operation thus self-supporting; the secret self-sealing. Biggest security headache – stink from chimneys & flames at night, visible over many kilometres, especially to troop trains heading east on main line (Harris 326).

With this, the Economic Administration has ordered the utilization hair to be cut from all the human bodies in concentration camps. "Human hair will be processed for industrial felt and spun into thread. Female hair which
has been cut and combed out will be used as thread to make socks for U-boat crews and felt stockings for the railways” (Harris 327).
The investigation of the death of Josef Buhler reveals to March that the Party officials like Globus are trying to hide the corruption and therefore the recent deaths of some of the Party officials, Buhler, Stuckart and Luther, are actually murders. The execution of solution to the Jewish question is probably from “the Head of State” as there is lack of proper order (Harris 361). Hitler does not want to be involved in such an act because, as Krebs says, if Germany had lost the war, Heydrich and Himmler “could be tried as war criminals, and if Germany won it, they might be one day be made the scapegoats for the greatest act of mass murder in history” (Harris 361).

CONCLUSION

Adolf Hitler left no stone unturned in his determination to extinguish the Jewish race. The history is self-evident in this matter. In his autobiography, Hitler presented Jews as germs who must be killed to make the Aryan race and Germany a world power. The particles of the corruption in the Party, the concentration camp building, the extermination of Jews, the ambiguous order by Hitler to deal with the Jewish problem settle down perhaps to only one and one motif, Hitler’s creation of an enemy who would seem as the one robbing the Germans of their rights. There is no doubt that Hitler’s autobiography was yet another form of propaganda to attract the German people towards the idea of National Socialism.
Robert Harris’ Fatherland depicts the envisioned Third Reich by Hitler, under his reign, with great precision. The execution of Jewish problem, the documents used to form the narrative, the horror and shame March feels when he comes to know about the concentration camps and their formation, and above all the new Reich and its functioning make the novel an alternate historical novel with a profound touch of a dystopia.

WORKS CITED


REFERENCES