

# HITLER AND WAGNERISM

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To the average person the name Wagner means nothing more than the name of a German composer and writer of operas. However, that name means to the German people almost as much as the name of Hitler. Wagner's music is so impressive that it has lived through the past century and has come to be one of the most outstanding influences on modern Europe. It has been said that whoever expects to understand National Socialist Germany must know Wagner. Adolph Hitler has often told his friends and the whole National Socialist regime, which finds its foundation in the Germanic myths, that Germany would be impossible without Wagner and all he represents. In that sense the whole present war resolves itself into a super Wagnerian opera turned into grim reality.

Wagner was a romanticist who has now been taken over by political realists. He was the first artist who strove to combine art, science, and life, music, poetry, grammar, philosophy, sociology, and politics. He implanted German myths far more successfully in the subconscious German mind than all the German philosophers and historians.

Hitler himself has been a personal devotee of Wagner all his life. He witnessed "Lohengrin" when he was a small child, and has had a deep interest for Wagnerian operas ever since. He reads Wagner's

scores as a pastime and notices any slight changes in the performances.

Today the people scarcely realize that the internal economic and political structure of Nazi Germany is almost entirely the result of the twentieth century interpretation of Wagner's theories. More powerful, however, than any political or economic ideas of National Socialism are its deeper emotional and mythological elements which raised it far above a purely political organization. These elements came from Wagner, from whom other details have been taken, such as "heil" of the Hitler salute, the National Socialist slogan, "Germany Awake," and many of their celebrations. When Hitler came into power, he raised Bayreuth, a little Bavarian town, to the position of which Wagner had always dreamed. Bayreuth and Wagner's festivals are in charge of an English born woman, Winifred Wagner, widow of Wagner's son, Siegfried.

In America, people class operas as a luxury, but in Germany they hold a place similar to our motion pictures. There is an opera house in nearly every Germany town. The people witness Wagner's operas from childhood throughout their lives; therefore, his ideas are thoroughly implanted in their minds. As long as the German people are compelled to witness Wagner's works, they will not realize that Hitler's ideas are merely interpretations of the originally harmless librettos.

