

Friedrich Nietzsche's evil legacy falsified

by Mark Burdman

Forgotten Fatherland: The Search for Elisabeth Nietzsche

by Ben Macintyre

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Were London *Times* columnist Ben Macintyre to have restricted himself to a travelogue-adventure, describing his attempts to visit the "Nueva Germania" colony in Paraguay established in the last century by Elisabeth Foerster-Nietzsche and her husband Bernhard Foerster, *Forgotten Fatherland* might have been enjoyable. Macintyre can be a talented writer, who sometimes exhibits a sense of irony and capacity for using metaphor effectively.

However, Macintyre has chosen to use the occasion of his exposé of his evil villain Elisabeth Nietzsche to engage in an obsessive defense of her brother, the philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche, who is the victim/hero of his story. By doing this, Macintyre has engaged in a fraud every bit as noxious and damaging as the one that he accuses sister Elisabeth of having committed vis-à-vis her brother.

In sum, Macintyre's point is that Elisabeth, in her obsession for self-aggrandizement and in pursuit of political-ideological aims, massively distorted Friedrich's ideas, both during his 1890s incapacitation due to insanity (caused, so most reliable accounts go, by his having contracted syphilis), and in the 35 years following his death in 1900. It was Elisabeth, Macintyre contends, who, with singleminded determination, created a mythology of her brother as a passionate anti-Semite and German nationalist, and thereby enabled him to be coopted by the Nazis as a hero of the German *Volk*.

The "real Friedrich Nietzsche," according to Macintyre, may have been violent and cruel in his writings at some points, but was actually an inspirational writer. Immediately in his introduction, Macintyre waxes eloquent in this vein, in Madison Avenue-type lingo: "Our own world is more anomic even than his was, our need for Nietzschean individuality still more pressing. It is as easy to disagree with Nietzsche as it is hard to dislike him, in spite or because of his cussedness. He is feisty and irritating and fiercely challenging, permanently either moving the goal posts or trying to brain you with them. Some of his thoughts are mistaken, but he has views on everything; all are worth hearing, none is boring and some are surely right." Evidently identifying himself as a "Nietzschean individualist," Macintyre then describes carrying Nietzsche's books in his backpack during his exploratory voyage to Paraguay.

All of this effulgence for Nietzsche is ideological garbage of a dangerous sort. Macintyre constructs his case by combining undeniable facts with the kinds of fraud that one would associate with a *poseur* whose historical and philosophical competence is near-zero. The book could be summarily dismissed, did it not correspond to a trend of popularizing and, where necessary, rehabilitating Nietzsche, to make him a kind of guru for the 1990s, and were it not for the fact that the book is being cited favorably, including in Israel, to rehabilitate the "anti-Nazi" Friedrich Nietzsche who can be liked by Jews (or at least those of a certain existentialist political persuasion).

This is all the more problematic, since 1994 will be the 150th anniversary year of his birth. The March 16 issue of *Süddeutsche Zeitung* reports that a marble bust of Nietzsche is being erected in Weimar, the city where he died, as part of a post-Communist rehabilitation of him, after years when the Communists maintained a taboo on Nietzsche because of the Nazis' worship of him. A major symposium is planned

for the city, on the theme, "Jewish Nietzscheanism since 1988," according to the daily.

Nietzsche and the Jews

Sometimes, Macintyre's attempts to defend "poor Friedrich" against the evil Foerstes are hilarious, a kind of comic relief that only a certain type of ideologically motivated British writer can provide. What is one to make of this comment? Friedrich Nietzsche "believed Foerster's vegetarianism would make him gloomy and depressed, in contrast to the British taste for roast beef which had made them such effective colonists." Were the British colonizers, and/or Friedrich Nietzsche, cannibals?

When he is not being ridiculous, Macintyre is being tricky. He is so intent on singling out Elisabeth as the culprit, that he simply ignores, in a willfully careless and incompetent way, evidence that he himself presents, evidence which might lead to a different conclusion than the one he desires to communicate. Hence, a reader can almost be dizzied by the amount of names that Macintyre provides, of individuals, many of them Scandinavians, who patronized and popularized Nietzsche, in some cases already in the 1880s before Elisabeth got to him, in other cases later. Perhaps the most unusual of these is the "Swedish banker Ernest Thiel," who was to become "the economic mainstay of the Nietzsche cult. . . . In addition to being exceedingly wealthy, a dedicated Nietzschean and skilled translator of Nietzsche's works, Thiel was an Orthodox Jew." Strangely enough, from 1905-35, that is inclusively into the period when Nietzsche was being idolized by Hitler and other top-level Nazis, Thiel "gave hundreds of thousands of marks." Why? Who is this strange Swedish banker and Orthodox Jew?

Macintyre gives not a clue, not about Thiel nor about several other central individuals. Obviously, if it were systematically explained who and what these individuals were, it would shatter the construct that it was the evil Elisabeth who was virtually single-handedly responsible for popularizing brother Friedrich, and would point to a *general trend* of Gnostic existentialist thought over the last quarter of the 19th century, in which Friedrich Nietzsche played a seminal part.

This points to a bigger problem, which centers on Macintyre's treatment of Nietzsche and the Jews. He is obsessively committed to demonstrating that Nietzsche was not a racist anti-Semite, for which demonstration he has been praised by the *Jerusalem Post* and other nominally Jewish publications that want to promote Nietzschean ideas. Yet at one point in *Forbidden Fatherland*, Macintyre writes: Nietzsche "criticized Judaism, certainly, but with the same criteria that he used to attack Christianity; the Jews, he said, were responsible for bringing Christianity, 'the lie of millennia,' into being in the first place. That was not racism. . . ."

What is this supposed to mean? Is it all right to abhor Judaism philosophically and seek its destruction, while "liking" Jews from a racial standpoint? Is it all right to hate

Christianity, as Macintyre frequently and openly acknowledges Nietzsche did? Even if one were to concede (which it is not our intent to do here) Macintyre's point that Nietzsche abhorred *racially* motivated attacks on Jews, Nietzsche's bitter *philosophical* dislike of Mosaic Judaism and Christianity, fully acknowledged by Macintyre, places Nietzsche precisely on the same plane as Hitler and his circle. Competent researchers have documented that Hitler's *main* animus against Judaism, even more virulent than his hate-filled biological-racial obsessions about Jews, came from his hatred of the entire Judeo-Christian philosophical tradition. Hitler and the Nazis were pagan cultists, Satanists in fact, who shared Nietzsche's fetishes about the emergence of "the Anti-Christ" who would destroy Christianity and everything it stands for. In the longer run, Hitler sought the extirpation of Christianity, on the road to rebuilding the Roman Empire modelled on that of Emperor Tiberius who ordered the crucifixion of Jesus Christ.

So, objectively, Macintyre has proven that Nietzsche was a philosophical forebear of the Nazis. But by phrasing and shaping things the way he does, he makes Nietzsche "kosher" in the eyes of those Israelis and supporters of groups like the Anti-Defamation League, who are philosophically fascists, but only disagree with the anti-Semitic racial obsessions of the Nazis.

Friedrich Nietzsche, eugenics, and genocide

This ties into another problem: how Macintyre, wittingly or unwittingly, covers up the tracks that show Nietzsche's direct influence on some of the more evil trends of this century, including in the Anglo-American realm.

Consider the following track of misinformation:

Macintyre contends, in several locations, that Adolf Hitler never read Nietzsche and hardly referred to him, but was only induced to praise Nietzsche by the opportunistic calculation that this would help the Nazi movement. The fact is, Hitler, like many other soldiers who fought for Germany in World War I, read Nietzsche's *Thus Spake Zarathustra* in the trenches.

While Macintyre ignores that fact, he does admit that *Thus Spake Zarathustra* was favored reading for German soldiers in World War I. But by some weird process, he doesn't blame the content of the book for the negative effects he suggests this may have had, but blames Elisabeth Nietzsche for having run a public relations campaign that led to the book's mass dissemination as a handbook of militarism and imperialism. By a sleight-of-hand, he never manages to answer the question: If the book itself wasn't atrocious, what was wrong with having it mass disseminated? To compound the problem, he then writes: "Elisabeth's propagandizing had its effect abroad as well as in Germany; when the first translation of Nietzsche appeared in England, newspaper placards told book-buyers to 'read the devil in order to fight him better.'"

Here, Macintyre has simply concocted a historical fabrication. In her well-documented book, *Eugenics, Human Genetics and Human Failings: The Eugenics Society, Its Sources and Its Critics in Britain*, Pauline Mazumdar shows that *Zarathustra* was published in English already in 1896, long before World War I (see *EIR*, Dec. 11, 1992, p. 52). This is not a minor point: Mazumdar's contention is that Nietzsche was an inspiration behind the creation, in Britain, of the Eugenics Society, and of the racist, social Darwinist eugenics movement more generally, around the beginning of the 20th century. According to Mazumdar, Nietzsche was already influencing British eugenicists by the 1890s and early 1900s. This was long before the nefarious Elisabeth could possibly have influenced the Britons. To accept Mazumdar's account is to accept the correct view that *Nietzsche himself*, with or without nefarious sister, was a profound influence on movements like eugenics.

That point is amply reinforced by Oxford professor John Carey's fascinating 1992 book, *The Intellectuals and the Masses*, which documents that Nietzsche was a prime influence among those British turn-of-the-century literati such as D.H. Lawrence, who openly espoused policies of extermination and enslavement of the masses of human beings. Carey, whose book is soon to be reviewed in *EIR*, correctly cites Nietzsche as a key intellectual forebear of today's "deconstructionist" movement on college campuses.

That point allows us to summarize the case: It was Nietzsche himself who was the evil. That is not of simply academic significance today. Several of the main trends of Gnostic thinking today, whether it be "deconstructionism" and the New Age "political correctness" that it has spawned in the United States, or the recent resurgence of the late Ayn Rand's "objectivism," owe a great deal to Friedrich Nietzsche.

Elisabeth Nietzsche may have been as evilly motivated as Macintyre depicts her, and undoubtedly expedited Friedrich Nietzsche's idolization by the Nazis, but if that were all there was, the latter would have ceased to be a problem when the Nazis were smashed in World War II. If the only problem were her distortions of Nietzsche in order to make him a hero of the Nazis, then why is Nietzsche today, 50 years after the Nazis, a hero among every proto-fascist, existentialist, nihilist movement around?

Cogent observers, alarmed by the predominant cultural trends of a 20th century that has seen two world wars and horrible episodes of inhumanity, have dubbed this "the century of Nietzsche." That point is well taken. One of this reviewer's colleagues expressed the same idea from a different standpoint, in response to a report on Macintyre's thesis: "There's an easy way to know how bad Nietzsche himself was, with or without his sister's distortions. Just read him."

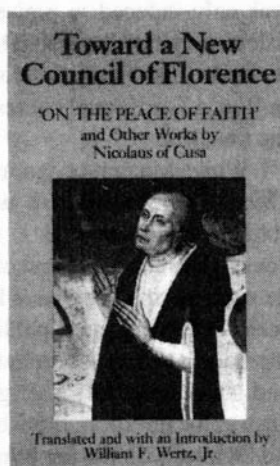
And the London *Times*'s Ben Macintyre is very much part of the problem, rather than part of the solution.

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