

Nietzsche And Nazism

"From Nietzsche Down to Hitler," by
M. P. Nicolas. Translated from the
French by E. G. Erhlin. (William Hodge
and Co., London).

WITH the recent publication of the
Nazi faith by Herr Mandel must
necessarily come a revival of interest
in the philosophy of Nietzsche, if in-
deed we can credit Nietzsche with any-
thing in the way of a systematic philo-
sophy.

Herren Hitler, Rosenberg and Mandel
unite in doing homage to the thinker
whom they imagine to be their much-
needed champion in the world of in-
tellectual culture. Here M. Nicolas,
who is a French disciple of Nietzsche,
shows that any such attitude is more
imaginative than logical. Herr Hitler's
choice of a patron saint for Nazism
seems to have been grievously mis-
placed. The spectacle of Herr Mandel
reading texts from Nietzsche to the
adherents of the New Faith would ap-
parently have filled the Master with
disgust; M. Nicolas regards it as
nothing less than a blasphemous dese-
cration. The first of the prepositions
in the title is thus meant to carry the
significance of the book.

M. Nicolas contends that the doc-
trines of Nietzsche were, in their very
nature, incapable of providing the
mass-appeal required to buttress the
intellectual failure of Nazism. They
were "not for the people, but for com-
panions." Nietzsche tells the masses
that they are despicable, unfit to gov-
ern and even unfit to understand the
purposes of their "super-men" rulers.
The only function of the masses, ac-
cording to Nietzsche, is to toil at the
business of supplying the material
needs of society, so that the "super-
men" may occupy themselves exclu-
sively with the things of the mind.
This teaching, whether true or false,
would obviously not be the sort of
teaching to rally the people to the sup-
port of the Hitler regime.

Nietzsche does not offer the people
the sadistic joys of Jew-baiting, nor
does he incite to hatred of the French,
nor does he preach warfare as the ap-
pointed means of extending the terri-
tories of the chosen race. His concern
was for intellectual probity, not for anti-
Semitism or militarism. Nor would he
have shared Herr Hitler's interest in
colonial acquisition. Nietzsche disliked
his own race: he preferred Frenchmen
and Russians to Germans. The only
Jews he disliked were those who, like
Ezra in the Old Testament, regarded
their race as the chosen people and
intermarriage with other races as con-
tamination. Herr Hitler substitutes
the exaltation of race and nation for
that cultural progress which was all
that Nietzsche cared about.

The truth is, says M. Nicolas, that
Nazism has no intelligible philosophi-
cal basis whatever. The fact that
Communism could boast a philosophy
made it necessary for the Nazis to in-
vent one. Hitlerism does not spring
from Nietzsche: all that has occurred
is that a perverted version of
Nietzschianism has been appended to
Nazism.