

to be the second great artistic transformation of the terrible Nazi past, a Doktor Faustus in celluloid. What was once a *Reich* of frenzied dreams he has transposed into film, encoding it in fairy-tales and riddles, knights-in-armor and nightmares. For those who still have the noise of that era ringing in their ears, the film's seven hours are, so to speak, a catharsis. As one German reviewer wrote, "Something deep in us all was the target of an uncanny job of demolition..."

The Aschaffenburg authorities (by undertaking to pay half the film-copying costs) had persuaded Syberberg to confine the premiere to an invited audience. Blond, blue-eyed, sporting a shirt with Byronic collar, he made himself available for an evening-long discussion, showing endless forbearance in the face of his critics' protests, some of them very sharp indeed. He had to take all sorts of accusations: that he was a man of the German right wing, that he was actually promoting a revival of Teutonic nationalist dreams, that he was guilty of an affront to rational thought, that he represented a kind of fascist aesthetics. Respectful though they tried to be, the scholars were not sparing with criticism. But the historians' *Beckmesserei* appeared to make as little impression on Syberberg's film as they might have on Shakespeare's royal dramas.

What distinguishes Syberberg's work of art from, say, Joachim Fest's Hitler film documen-

tary? It concentrates on the *moral* aspect throughout; it revolves not around Hitler but around crime, the murder of Jews—and circles around us, haunted by guilt unto the third and fourth generation. "*Wir, zwischen Jesus und Hitler*" are the words at one point. In one of the most breathtaking scenes Himmler, talking to his *masseur*, is tormented by pictures of his black-shirted minions of murder. The scene also included quotations from original documents and statements by eye-witnesses. Were these trivial "details"? How could Syberberg eliminate the horror of it all? how can one "reconstruct Auschwitz"?

One of the charges against him he accepted without a murmur: that his film was "esoteric", that it was designed for people "who read books, go to the theatre, listen to records." He appears not to be concerned with the others—with, say, the youthful 50% of Germans who are in school and university. For him Hitler is a subject for intellectuals, since the workers have now been immunised by "never having it so good. . . ." Yet in the midst of the racket outside the *Hofgarten* cinema (sub-machine guns, TV cameras) stood a totally unimportant character, bushy-bearded in leather jacket and little Bavarian hat, and I overheard his conversation: "If I was to say something about Hitler I'd say this: if there was an election now, then 50% would vote for him . . . ."

## Snail Thrush

You fell from heaven.  
A spotted waistcoat,  
long legs,  
bright eyes.

Your knock was stony.  
You broke, entered,  
scooped,  
ate me whole.

Chips of my armour  
strew the concrete;  
light as your next  
footfall.

Geoffrey Holloway

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## DISCUSSION

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# Can Europe Really be Defended?

By Helmut Sonnenfeldt



GEORGE QUESTER (ENCOUNTER, September) paints a relatively rosy picture of the prospects for Western defence in Central Europe. Briefly, he believes that non-nuclear technologies now becoming increasingly available for anti-tank and anti-aircraft weapons can go a long way in nullifying (or at least offsetting) the Warsaw Pact build-up of recent years in armoured vehicles, aircraft and manpower. Quester's underlying argument is that it is basically desirable to strengthen the defensive side of military capabilities, and that the new technologies have this general effect. When the defence "dominates", the result (he feels) is to make all-out conventional attack, and hence War, less likely. Limited Soviet land-grabs would still be a danger and, at least pending introduction of more local militia-like forces, will be most effectively deterred by the political and economic costs that would ensue. But even these contingencies would become less likely as deterrence of a large invasion becomes more effective. Quester concludes, *inter alia*, that the "Neutron Bomb" could well be made redundant by the new anti-tank warfare technologies, thus avoiding deployment of a system which might blur the distinction between nuclear and conventional weapons. Generally, if the opportunities for non-nuclear defence, and hence deterrence, are fully explored, the threat of nuclear escalation could decline considerably in importance, and numerical com-

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parisons of NATO and Warsaw Pact forces may become less frightening and less significant.

The Quester thesis is not new, but he has presented one of the more sustained arguments to appear in public print for a more optimistic view of the emerging military balance in Europe. His general case for strengthening security by strengthening the Defence (rather than the Offence) is, I believe, sound. It may be recalled in this regard that, whatever the complexities that have appeared in the meantime, the original Western approach to the MBFR negotiations in the 1970s was to devise proposals which, if implemented, would reduce the likelihood of surprise and reduce the effectiveness of offensive as against defensive military capabilities.

Quester recognises that the distinction between Offence and Defence is not necessarily clear-cut, although, in my view, he does not deal with the problem in adequate depth. Thus, the side suffering aggression (i.e. NATO), may nevertheless become the attacker when *counter*-attacks are launched against advancing or exposed enemy forces, and efforts are made to retake lost territory. One needs to examine more fully how new technologies, on both sides, would affect this stage of the battle. Quester tends to minimise or even beg the issue by arguing that such contingencies may not arise at all because the original attack can be more easily blunted by use of new anti-tank missiles and precision-guided munitions and so may be precluded from occurring in the first place.

Quester also notes the effectiveness of new surface-to-air missiles against aircraft. There should have been more analysis of the impact on the effectiveness of aircraft of new types of air-to-surface missiles and of other means of penetration. He also pays little or no attention to problems of command and control in contemporary and future conventional warfare in Europe.

IN GENERAL, HIS ANALYSIS gives greatest weight to the introduction of new technologies in NATO forces and attempts no net assessment of the evolving impact of such technologies on the forces of both sides. (As I write these comments, the US press reports experiments with laser beams against anti-tank missiles.)

I raise these matters not because I have a fundamental quarrel with the case for a strong, modern, non-nuclear defence in Europe. On the contrary, I welcome the extent to which the introduction of new technologies and other actions being undertaken to improve NATO forces and their readiness are increasing the chances of effective initial defence. I raise them because I would like to see Quester's case made even more convincing, and because discussions