

*Phantom empires*

In Europe in the mid-1930s, a selective memory of the imperial past shaped new mass ideologies as well as the ideas of much smaller social groups. Many Europeans, one could say, not only suffered the ‘phantom pains’ of imperial decline. They also tried to reassemble elements of knowledge from the historical past of Europe to build up the faces of future empires. In the final two chapters, I reconstruct how the ideas of the mostly liberal fraction of the European elites, which I discussed earlier in this book, related to both trends.

Chapter 6 focuses on the emergence of a racial memory of empire. Looking at the rise of Nazi ideology through the lens of social history foregrounds the importance of common forms of imperial memory, which facilitated the social recognition of newcomers such as Nazi ideologue Alfred Rosenberg. Rome is introduced as the capital of a transnational neo-imperial sensibility, and Munich is a site where the ideologues of National Socialism first gained prominence. The chapter is concerned with the question of how elements of aristocratic identity, such as the idea of pedigree, became absorbed in Nazi ideology.

In 1944, the Nazi propaganda journal *Signal* produced a mental map of Europe [Fig. 24]. On this map, we can see an abstract genealogical tree superimposed over a map of Europe. Its central lineage leads from ancient Greece to a generic Aryan European family in the present. Two side lineages, with notable influences from Jewish culture and Orthodoxy, point to the United States and the Soviet Union, respectively. In reconstructing the social relationships between the Nazis and the representatives of the old Germanic nobility in the 1930s, I want to establish the difference between the racial and the familial use of pedigree in Nazi ideology and in the genealogical practice of Habsburg and Baltic nobility.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Joseph Deniker, *The Races of Man: an Outline of Anthropology and Ethnography* (New York: Charles Scribner, 1913).

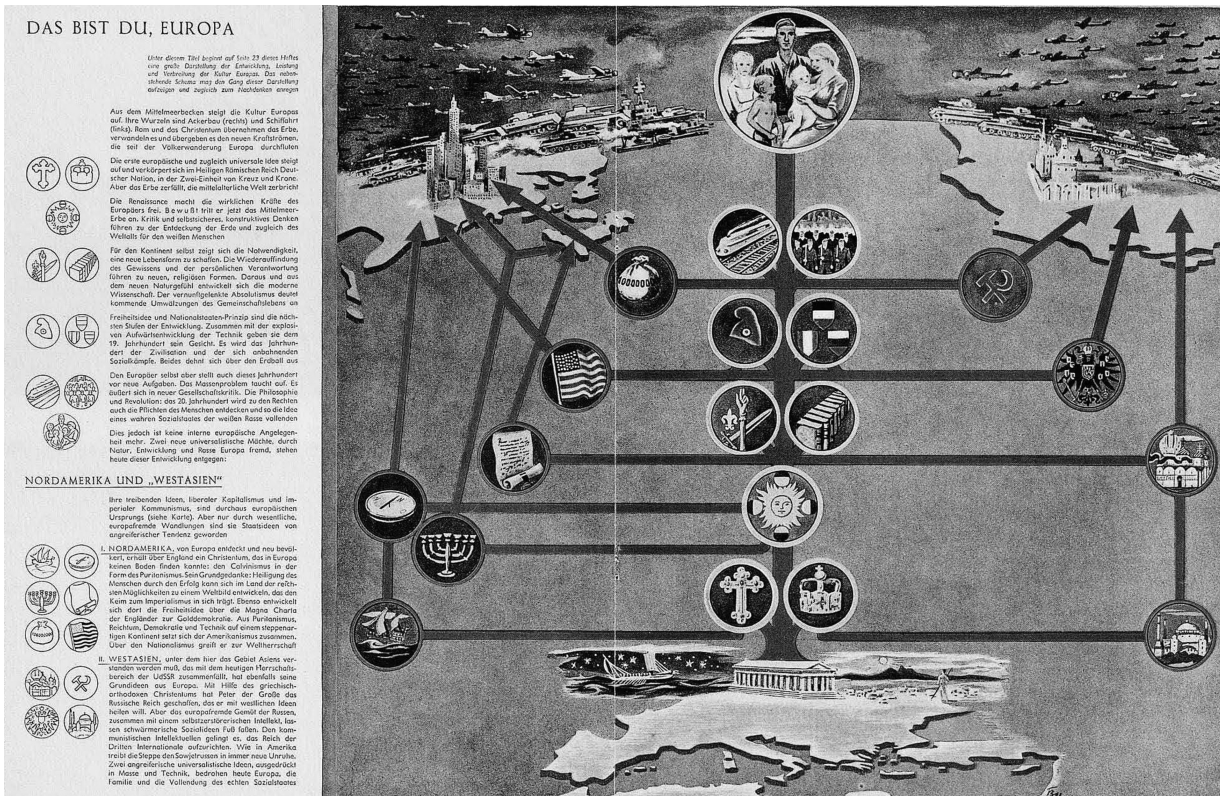


Figure 24 ‘Map of Europe’s Cultural and Historical Development’, in M. Claus (ed.) *Signal*, 11, 1944. From Facsimile *Querschnitte durch Zeitungen und Zeitschriften*, 14 (Munich, Bern, Vienna: Scherz, 1969)

Chapter 7 looks at a very different nostalgia for empire, which was characteristic of a small transnational elite community whose cultural centres were Paris and London. At the centre of this configuration was the Bloomsbury group. Its members associated imperial sensibility with a kind of multiculturalism, which they believed was threatened not only by the rise of fascism but also by narrow-minded nationalism elsewhere in Europe. In the chapter, I hope to recover the extent to which some of the German cosmopolitans discussed earlier in the book had influenced the nature of imperial memory in these circles.

