

sociates, above all Goering and Goebbels, to remain members of the church. He too would remain a member of the Catholic Church, he said, although he had no real attachment to it. And in fact he remained in the church until his suicide.

Hitler had been much impressed by a scrap of history he had learned from a delegation of distinguished Arabs. When the Mohammedans attempted to penetrate beyond France into Central Europe during the eighth century, his visitors had told him, they had been driven back at the Battle of Tours. Had the Arabs won this battle, the world would be Mohammedan today. For theirs was a religion that believed in spreading the faith by the sword and subjugating all nations to that faith. The Germanic peoples would have become heirs to that religion. Such a creed was perfectly suited to the Germanic temperament. Hitler said that the conquering Arabs, because of their racial inferiority, would in the long run have been unable to contend with the harsher climate and conditions of the country. They could not have kept down the more vigorous natives, so that ultimately not Arabs but Islamized Germans could have stood at the head of this Mohammedan Empire.

Hitler usually concluded this historical speculation by remarking: "You see, it's been our misfortune to have the wrong religion. Why didn't we have the religion of the Japanese, who regard sacrifice for the Fatherland as the highest good? The Mohammedan religion too would have been much more compatible to us than Christianity. Why did it have to be Christianity with its meekness and flabbiness?" It is remarkable that even before the war he sometimes went on: "Today the Siberians, the White Russians, and the people of the steppes live extremely healthy lives. For that reason they are better equipped for development and in the long run biologically superior to the Germans." This was an idea he was destined to repeat in far more drastic tones during the last months of the war.

Rosenberg sold his seven-hundred page *Myth of the Twentieth Century* in editions of hundreds of thousands. The public regarded the book as the standard text for party ideology, but Hitler in those teatime conversations bluntly called it "stuff nobody can understand," written by "a narrow-minded Baltic German who thinks in horribly complicated terms." He expressed wonderment that such a book could ever have attained such sales: "A relapse into medieval notions!" I wondered if such private remarks were carried back to Rosenberg.

Hitler believed that the culture of the Greeks had reached the peak of perfection in every field. Their view of life, he said, as expressed in their architecture, had been "fresh and healthy." One day a photograph of a beautiful woman swimmer stirred him to enthusiastic reflections: "What splendid bodies you can see today. It is only in our century that young people have once again approached Hellenistic ideals through sports.