

THE GERMAN QUESTION

WILHELM RÖPKE

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“The German question is the most sombre,
the most complicated, the most com-
prehensive problem of all recent history.”

Constantin Frantz (1866)

THE GERMAN QUESTION

by

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PREFACE TO THE ENGLISH EDITION

A YEAR has now passed since the overthrow and the complete occupation of Germany. What progress has been made in this critical year in the solution of the German problem? A dispassionate answer with justice to all sides can only be that the progress made has been utterly disappointing. A year ago Germany was a molten mass ready for pouring into the right moulds. The moment for this was missed; the metal has cooled and toughened. A year ago, when this book was written, it was possible to indicate the paths to a real solution of the German problem and to have confidence in their practicability. Today it must be confessed that at critical points the exact opposite has been done of what should have been done, and that an opportunity has been let slip which all eternity cannot bring back. Warnings have gone unheard, appeals have fallen on deaf ears. Few people in the world venture to speak out on this subject, and yet everyone knows its extreme gravity, and knows it so well that everywhere a feeling of hopelessness and desperation is spreading. This feeling is understandable, and yet it must be most strenuously combated, lest we should resign ourselves to the doom that threatens. Thus we are bound to speak openly of errors, neither in denunciation nor in exculpation, but in the effort to make clear what should be done better in the years to come.

After the failure of every attempt to bring down the Nazi regime in time, and to establish contact during the war between the German opposition to the regime and the Allies, any solution of the German question was bound to be a desperate enterprise; this was at all times obvious. It was known that the victors would have to take over the government of a country left by its rulers in a state of material, political, and moral ruin. This was realized, and it was realized what it involved. Perhaps the vast mortgage of the ruined cities, of the chaos of the displaced persons, of the passions inevitably aroused by Germany's criminal masters, crushing though it looked, was still underestimated. But on top of all this there came further encumbrances of any constructive German policy, errors which did more than all else to make the situation desperate. It was anticipated that

the four Powers would share out the occupation of Germany, but not that they would demarcate their zones so arbitrarily and shut them off from each other with such crippling effect on German economy, or that things would happen in the Russian Zone which would destroy the basis of the German food supply and would fill West Germany with millions of uprooted refugees.

This vast mortgaging faced the victors, who were not out simply to trample on the vanquished, with a most difficult and thankless task. In spite of this, astonishing results have been achieved in some directions; all the more credit is due for them. But it was in the very nature of so unique a task that serious errors should be almost unavoidable. This applies particularly to the ticklish problem of denazification, the handling of which has been complained of as too irresolute in some places and too harsh in others. Inevitably in the vast number of borderline cases the necessary schematism produced hardships and robbed reconstruction of competent man-power. Many cases could be quoted of bitter injustice persisted in in spite of all representations. The psychological results of these are scarcely taken seriously enough, and a remedy would be greatly facilitated if relations of confidence were established between the occupying authorities and the genuine and proved anti-Nazis, whether Christian, Socialist, Liberal, or Democrat. The thesis of undifferentiated guilt of all Germans, Nazi and anti-Nazi alike, deserves to have been posthumously invented by Dr. Goebbels. It has been desperately depressing for all anti-Nazis, and it has led to a penal instead of a re-educative treatment of all Germany. Only so can measures be understood which give the impression that it has been considered of no importance to have regard to their possible reactions among Germans. When all the inhabitants of a whole district of a great city are compelled at a moment's notice to clear out in order to make way for families of officers of the occupying armies, what else are they likely to become but convinced Nazis, Communists, or anarchists?

As was to be expected, in the Russian Zone a terrorist system has been established that is little different in essence from the past National Socialist system; its political "life" is indistinguishable from that of Nazism. Confining ourselves to West Germany, it is clear that if it is not to be subjected virtually to chronic famine or else to become a permanent burden on international charity, it must be given economic

unification and quick aid to its industries for the intensification of agriculture through the provision of fertilizers (i.e., products of the chemical industry) and machines, and for the assurance of the import of additional foodstuffs and fodder by the export of manufactures, coal, and steel. This is plain to every clear-headed person in the world. And yet the Russians and a still powerful American group have conspired to block this path of elementary common sense by the resolutions of the Control Council aiming at the de-industrialization of Germany. It would be difficult to criticize this policy more sharply than has been done in the *Economist*, the *Manchester Guardian*, and the *Times*. It is conjuring up a catastrophe that will give Europe a demonstration of the extent to which its own health is dependent on the healthy state of German industry.

As regards the coal of the Ruhr this is plain to all, whatever they may think in other respects of Germany and the Germans. But the Ruhr coal production cannot be increased unless the iron and steel industry is able to supply its machinery and tools, unless the miners are properly fed, and unless to this end agriculture is supplied with fertilizers and machines and industry in general is enabled to pay with its products for the necessary additional foodstuffs and raw materials from abroad. So one thing dovetails into another, and it does not show much sense if anyone imagines that the Ruhr coal which Europe needs can be delivered by a Germany condemned in general to hunger, poverty, and unemployment. Those who want Ruhr coal must want also the manifold and comprehensive conditions on which its production depends.

But if Ruhr coal matters, so also, and no less, does the combination of measures that can only drive even the Germans of good will into a crippling despair—a combination that would deserve admiration if the purpose was to instil into the Germans the temper of the most vicious chained dog and forcibly to turn them into old or new Nihilists. Even enlightened anti-Nazis are beginning to ask themselves sadly whether all has not been in vain, and whether there is any sense in working for a future for their children, while the Nazis scornfully ask them whether they still place faith in the wartime propaganda that declared that the Allies were not out to destroy Germany. A terrible number of Germans see no alternative to emigration, anywhere and under any conditions. As one of them

wrote to me, "A sound factory that cannot produce because it is forbidden to, creates more bad blood than a whole lot of bombed cities." There are many who declare that he is right.

The solution of the German problem as a whole depends on the solution of the further problem of Russia's attitude to the world and of her relations with the Anglo-Saxon Powers. At present the practical question, and one that is growing steadily graver, is whether West Germany at least can be saved for Europe, thus, probably, saving Europe herself. If one described this situation with such brutal candour twelve months ago there were many shakings of the head, and only a few weeks ago the *Times Literary Supplement*, in the course of an otherwise approving review of the Zurich edition of this book, charged me with going too far in attributing to the Russians the intention of acting independently in Germany. Today all but the Communists probably agree that the main thing is to preserve West Germany from relapsing into nationalism and National Socialism, without handing it over to the Communist variety of totalitarianism.

Both dangers have certain principal causes in common, namely perplexity, disappointment, and hopelessness. Thus a successful battle with these causes will diminish both dangers and contribute toward giving the upper hand to the more rational of the Germans. A most disturbing question is, indeed, whether the disappointing way many Germans have reacted to their country's ignominious downfall, and their growing political obduracy, does not point to incapacity for political and moral regeneration. On the other hand, we do not know how many Germans would have remained deaf to all reason if the past policy of the victors had been different. That experiment was not made, and this, properly understood, gives some ground for hope. For if the right policy had been followed and the situation had then been just as bad, it would indeed have been hopeless.

That the experiment of a less faulty policy for Germany was not made when all was in its favour, means certainly that the first round has been lost; but only the first round. Nothing can bring back this first year, in which the soul of the Germans could most easily have been formed; but it was clear all the time that a true inner recovery could only be expected from a long process in which the Germans became familiarized with radically different forms, conceptions, and

aims, of political life. This is indeed a task for which the modern Jacobinism is particularly ill-equipped. Whatever may be the general situation in regard to the dogmas and the institutions of mass-democracy, they are as unsuitable as could be for Germany. If the ideals of the *république une et indivisible*, of mechanized democracy with its mass parties and of the *peuple vertueux*, are applied here there will be bitter disappointments to come. We are even in agreement with Edmond Vermeil's view that Germany's ill-fortune consists largely in the fact that for generations it has been attempted to make her into a "nation" by main force. It should now at last be realized that in this matter the Germans are as untalented as could be, and that consequently a democratic rebuilding of Germany can only proceed stage by stage from the bottom upwards, the Germans being given autonomy, indeed, as soon as possible at the lowest levels, the aim being a genuine federation of the resuscitated states. If this political programme is united with a reasonable economic and social one, the main lines of which are indicated above, there will at last be placed before the West Germans an objective they can pursue, and one that will preserve them from being caught by a new mass-ideology of a nationalistic and communistic character. If then the lessons of past administrative mistakes are learnt, the important step will have been taken on which depends the effectiveness of all criticism and all recommendations: the conditions will have been created that will enable the anti-Nazis, on whom everything depends, joyfully and hopefully and without bitterness to take over the responsibility for a new phase in German history and to restore their country to Europe.

WILHELM RÖPKE

Geneva, May, 1946

INTRODUCTION

BY PROFESSOR F. A. HAYEK

PROFESSOR RÖPKE should need no formal introduction to the English public if it were not for the intellectual isolation of the several parts of Europe during the last six years. Long known to his professional colleagues in all countries as an economist of unusual brilliance and versatility, he has become known on the Continent in recent years far beyond these circles as one of the outstanding leaders of liberal thought. In a series of three books which have attracted the widest attention, not only in Switzerland where they first appeared, but wherever Swiss books could penetrate, and which have exercised a considerable underground influence even in the countries then still under German occupation, he has given a fascinating outline of a possible better world of free men. No less an authority than Benedetto Croce greeted the first of these books as "certainly one of the most important books which have yet appeared on the political and economic problems of our time." It should not be long before this trilogy which has made Professor Röpke's name familiar in most countries of the Continent will be available to English readers.

The present, however, is a later work by Professor Röpke on the even more urgent problem of Germany, and it is right that it should appear in an English translation with as little delay as possible. Although now long resident in Switzerland, Professor Röpke is himself a German by birth; and as the public has some ground for feeling a little weary of books by Germans on Germany, a few words may be permitted to explain why his views on the subject seem to possess a title to attention which few others can claim. His wisdom is not born of hindsight. Professor Röpke can claim to have seen and fought from within Germany the evil that was coming at a time when most of the foreign observers, who are now so ready sweepingly to condemn all Germans, preferred to be blind and to close their ears to the warnings that came from within Germany. He has rightly felt that to justify what he has to say he ought himself to give the reader an outline of his career; and though in the autobiographical sketch contained in the book he says much less than he might say to establish

his credentials, I need to add no more than that in the twenty years during which I have known the author I have never known him express opinions which are not consistent with his present views. While his convictions have grown and developed, he is not a new convert to the views he defends and he has, as few men have, earned the right to speak as he does. This is true even where he has bitter words to say about the past policy of the Western powers and some of the conflicting and confused views which appear to inspire the present policy towards Germany.

Perhaps I should add to this a caution to the reader that, more courageous and honest than politic, Professor Röpke has placed at the front of his book that part of his argument which will be least popular in this country. A correct diagnosis of the condition of Germany is however the first prerequisite of a consistent and successful policy, and few will deny that at the moment there is more danger that the assets may be overlooked on which such a policy will have to build than that the liability side of the account is forgotten. Not many who know Germany, I think, will find the complete picture which the book gives either unduly favourable or out of perspective. There is much, however, in Professor Röpke's account of the growth of the Nazi evil which will satisfy neither those who regard it as a recent growth, nor those who believe that it was always inherent in the German character. It is Professor Röpke's contention that the seeds which have borne the horrible fruits were sown by Bismarck and his contemporaries. In this he seems to me to be fully borne out by much other evidence, and particularly by Mr. E. Eyck's monumental new biography of Bismarck.

So interesting is Professor Röpke's discussion of the growth of the views which produced Hitler that there is some risk that the reader may forget that it is intended merely to provide the justification for the recommendations of policy to which the last part of the book is devoted. Their most important part is a plea that the victors should not regard Bismarck's creation of a highly centralised Germany as an irreversible fact, and that, if Germany is ever to fit as a peaceful member into the European family of nations, it will be necessary partly to undo Bismarck's work and to reconstruct Germany with a decentralised and truly federal structure. It is a remarkable testimony to the hold which the ideas of Bismarck's generation have since

gained on all the rest of the world, and, it seems, particularly on what are supposed to be "progressive" views, that a German Liberal should thus have to plead against the tendency of the victors to perpetuate Bismarck's work, and to point out that Germany must cease to be the large unit centrally organised for a common purpose which Bismarck made her, if she is not again to be a danger to European peace.

Personally, I am fully convinced that Professor Röpke is right in this, and that it is of the utmost importance that even at this late hour the lesson which he drives home should be fully learnt. A centralised Germany will always continue the spirit of Berlin with all it has stood for during the past eighty years; yet at the moment it would seem as if the Allies were preparing a new and even greater centralisation of power ultimately to be handed over to the Germans. Decentralisation need neither mean a Germany partitioned by the victors, which in the course of time would almost certainly produce a new wave of virulent nationalism, nor a Germany condemned to lasting poverty; it would, on the contrary, make it easier to give the Germans a chance to regain economic standards which in a centrally-organised Germany would appear as a threat to her neighbours. Instead of building up a central German administration, the Allies should tell the Germans that whatever central administration Germany is to possess will remain indefinitely under Allied control, and that their only but certain path to independence is through developing representative governments in the individual German states, which will be freed from Allied control as they succeed in establishing stable democratic institutions. This process would have to be gradual, with the Allies retaining in the end no more control over the individual state than corresponds to the minimum powers of a federal government.

To be successful such a policy would need to be supplemented by the enforcement of complete free trade, external and internal, for all these German states. This not only would be necessary to prevent those deleterious economic effects which the opponents of decentralisation fear, but it would also constitute the most effective economic control, which would make it impossible for Germany to become again dangerous without preventing her from regaining prosperity. Under free trade Germany could never achieve that degree of industrial and agricultural self-sufficiency on which her economic war-potential rested; she would be driven to a high degree of specialisation

in the fields where she could make the greatest contribution to the prosperity of the world, and at the same time become dependent for her own prosperity on the continued exchange with other countries. There would, in fact, be hardly any other economic controls required, while this one essential control is also the only kind of control which could not be secretly evaded.

Professor Röpke touches on these possibilities only briefly towards the end of his book, and he rightly calls them the boldest and most revolutionary steps which could be taken in our time. The suggestion has been singled out here not only because it throws into strong light the opportunities which are open to us if we are only willing to use them, but in order that it is considered as seriously as it deserves. It is so startling at first that the reader may be inclined to dismiss it as entirely impractical. There is, in fact, no reason other than this unfamiliarity why it should not be put into practice.

F. A. HAYEK

P R E F A C E

It is only too understandable that the seed of hatred the Germans have sown under their National Socialist leadership should now shoot up, though it must be clear to anyone who thinks of the future that the world cannot indefinitely continue in the present state of passionate feeling. Once our initial anger has abated we shall be driven, if ever the fatal process is to be ended, to ask ourselves quietly however it could happen that in a great civilized nation all the forces of evil should be let loose, and what now is the just and sensible way of treating the Germans. The answer to this question, with justice to its highly complicated character, and to the need for laying bare the historical and psychological roots of National Socialism, no longer brooks of delay.

The question to which we have thus to find an answer is more than a mere question of National Socialism. It is the German Question, with which generations have been concerned in the past, and which has now faced the world in its latest and acutest form in the rise and the collapse of National Socialism. It is the enigma that the great nation in the centre of Europe has more and more become since Bismarck.

It is not likely that anyone will be prepared to boast of the possession of a completely satisfactory answer, and quite certainly nobody is entitled to claim sole possession of the *true* answer. The German question has many aspects, of which one will be seen more clearly by some and another by others with, in each case, quite possibly, vagueness in regard to other aspects or a complete misconception of them. Everyone should be ready to amplify or correct his views, and every honest and informed contribution deserves to be welcomed.

Much depends upon the distance from which the German problem is considered, and I think there is an optimum distance, not too little and not too great. Closest to the problem is the German living among his fellow-countrymen. If he is capable at all of forming any sort of objective judgment, there are many things he will know better than the rest of us, and he will be able to correct not a few misjudgments; but he is not far enough away to be able, with the best of goodwill, himself to gain a comprehensive view of the whole problem of his

nation. "He who only knows his own country," said Lichtenberg, "does not really know even that."

The maximum distance, of course, is that of the foreigner. He has a sharp eye for some things the German misses, and he is able to consider the problem with the outsider's freedom from much that obscures or distorts the closer view; but he has to purchase this advantage with the disadvantage of the lack of a particularly important source of illumination—self-questioning. Between these two points of view, not too close and not too far, stands the man who has lived long enough as a German among Germans to enjoy the German's advantages, and long enough abroad to be able to enjoy the advantages of the foreign observer. He must, of course, take care to avoid two sources of error—that of the sentimental advocate, filled with nostalgia for the fields and woods of his youth, the advocate of men to whom he has become a stranger; and that of the renegade who tries to conceal his origin by wild outbursts of hatred. I have done my best, but I am myself well aware how little that is. I have tried to follow the example of the physician who examines a patient with scientific impartiality, whether he finds him attractive or not. Let us not forget that the patient at present in question has been suffering from a highly infectious disease.

WILHELM RÖPKE

Geneva, May 31st, 1945

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THE TRAGEDY OF A GREAT NATION

THE dictum placed as a motto in front of this book came in 1866 from the pen of a far-seeing and unbending opponent of Bismarck. In that same fateful year of German and European history, Ludwig Bamberger, the eminent German Liberal and economist, wrote to his friend von Stauffenberg, after a fresh meeting with his old comrade of the revolution of 1848, Carl Schurz, who later became a Senator and Home Secretary of the United States: "I have greatly enjoyed meeting Schurz. That is what we could become if we were not stuck in a dog-kennel."¹ Almost eighty years later, Roosevelt, President of the country to which Carl Schurz, like so many others of the best Germans, had rendered inestimable service after 1848, spoke of the Germans as the "tragic nation."

No one, indeed, who studies the thousand years of the Germans' history from Otto I down to Adolf Hitler, and who in our day has witnessed their physical, political, and moral suicide, can resist the feeling of being present at a tragedy such as the history of the world has never before seen, a true tragedy in which guilt and destiny have been interlinked. Other nations have known good and evil fortune, but when in all their political history have the Germans experienced genuine and lasting success in anything? Temperament, geographical situation, and historical inheritance have set difficulties enough in their path, but on top of that, all conceivable circumstances seem to have conspired again and again, whenever the Germans seemed at last to be reaching sound and stable conditions, to wreck the prospect at the very moment of approaching realization—be it the tragic cancer of the larynx that struck down Frederick III in 1888, or the fateful reconstruction of the President's palace in the summer of 1932. That building operation brought Hindenburg to East Prussia, and so directly under the influence of the junkers then menaced by the "Osthilfe" scandal. Thus it prepared the way for his acceptance of Hitler.

What strength, what inspiration has proceeded from that central country of our continent in those thousand years! What talent, what honest and indeed desperate endeavour to gain the mastery over fate!

¹Erich Eyck, *Bismarck* (Allen & Unwin)

And again and again the Germans' effort has been fruitless—so much so that the whole history of Germany until 1866 (the year in which Germany ceased to exist, making way for a Greater Prussia) may be described as simply a history of frustration. Nowhere is it more natural than on Swiss soil to note how close together lie here the two opposite examples of a federalization that succeeded and one that failed throughout a thousand years—Switzerland and Germany, two countries bearing much the same relation to each other as two animals subjected to biological experiment, one of them receiving a particular vitamin and the other not.² An obvious question, however, is whether there is not a danger that the ultimate consequences of the German fiasco might have very undesirable repercussions on the success of any tolerably sound political, economic, social, and spiritual structure in other countries. What that implies will be considered later.

Let us hold on to the fact that the Germans, who today have become *odium generis humani*, are a people with whom fate has played a more evil game than with any other—fate and their own failure. What is worst of all is that this unique history—above all in its last and most fateful hundred years—has left deep traces in the German character that have made the Germans one of the most complex and problematic and, in the end, one of the best-hated of all nations. Thus, on top of all their other troubles, they have to bear the dislike of the rest of the world, which still further worsens their situation. In this, as in so many other things, they strikingly resemble another tragic nation of world history, the Jews; this has been noted again and again by acute observers, and is probably the final cause of the quite peculiar relation between Germans and Jews, which departs from normal to fall now into hatred and now into liking.³

²For the source of the structure of the Swiss State, see now William E. Rappard, *Cinq siècles de sécurité collective* (1291-1798), Geneva and Paris, 1945.

³Since we have touched on the exceedingly complicated relationship between Germans and Jews, we may also recall that again and again during the first world war there were attempts in the Allied countries to account for Germany's unattractive traits as due not only to a "Prussification," but also to a "Judification." Max Scheler, in his interesting book on the origin of anti-Germanism (*Die Ursachen des Deutschenhasse*, Leipzig, 1917, p. 114) was also driven to deal with that charge. Cf. now Karl Thieme, *Das Schicksal der Deutschen, ein Versuch seiner geschichtlichen Erklärung*, Basle, 1945, p. 35. We may quote Goethe as the greatest precursor of the view expressed in the text. He remarked to Riemer that "the antipathy of peoples against the Jewish type of humanity, an antipathy in which esteem increases distaste, is really to be compared only with another—that against the Germans, whose destined role and whose inward and outward situation among peoples reveal the most astonishing kinship with those of the Jews. He did not want, he said, to enlarge on the subject, but, he said, he confessed that at times he was overcome by a breath-taking fear that one day the united world hatred against the other salt of the earth, Germanism, would be liberated in a historic uprising."

There is no intention here of making an urgent appeal for sympathy, still less of making any absurd attempt to alter in the least the world's judgment concerning the unspeakable ideas and ideologies that carried Germany into the deepest abyss of her history and at the same time brought infinite misery upon all Europe. What we are concerned with, however, is one of the leading countries of the West, a country that has given mankind some of its greatest minds, an industrious and reliable nation, talented and endowed with not a few virtues, a nation whose culture is rooted in the same soil as that of the other European nations, whose language is one of our own languages, and of whose nationals we esteem many and love some. At the same time, we are concerned with a nation whose name, once standing so high, is today linked with atrocities that have turned a Breughel vision of Hell into appalling reality.

How in the world has this nation come to such an end? We wrote of "suicide," and even in the case of the German nation, in spite of the terrible things it had to suffer, it is to be hoped that the term will remain no more than a metaphor; but how can this nation regain health and find the way back to its true self and to community with the West? What should be our own attitude, the attitude of the world outside Germany, to this nation after its terrible fall, what should be the attitude of those who but a little while ago trembled in face of its leaders and who were compelled, in infinite rage, to submit and to witness the submission of others to the worst things the mind of man can conceive? These are the questions to which we have to find a satisfactory answer, difficult as the task may be. They are questions that torment us so that we could say with Heinrich Heine:

Denk' ich an Deutschland in der Nacht,
Dann bin ich um den Schlaf gebracht—

"If in the night I think of Germany, I am robbed of my sleep."

This German problem can scarcely be exceeded either in difficulty or in importance by any other problem of our day. Whether we will or no, the future of Europe depends on our succeeding at last after this war in attaining what three past generations have failed to attain, the peaceful reintegration of Germany in Europe, and with it the protection of Europe against Germany and of Germany against herself. We know that with a sick Germany in her midst Europe is doomed to final ruin, and nobody can ignore the fact that Europe cannot do without Germany if she is to maintain her place in the world.

The study, however, of the German problem, conceived in a broad historical and sociological sense, is scarcely less revealing in another respect. Not until we have grasped the fateful development of Germany since 1866 do we reach a full understanding of many symptoms of decay in the social, economic, and intellectual life of the West. Not until then is the full significance realised of the dangerous currents that are due, almost everywhere, either directly to German influence or to conditions similar to the German conditions. The investigation of the German problem means the study of the social and cultural crisis of the West in the special case of a nation that has fallen a victim to it in an almost unique way, and has become one of the worst sources of infection of the rest of the world. It means the setting up of a warning beacon for all; but our situation would be indeed desperate if we were to do this without any hope—hope for Germany as well as for the rest of the world.

PART I

THE THIRD REICH AND
ITS END

For despotically ruled States there is no
salvation except in downfall.

FRIEDRICH SCHILLER, "*Ueber Völker-
wanderung, Kreuzzüge und Mittelalter*"

CHAPTER I

THE GERMANS AND NATIONAL SOCIALISM

THE WORLD'S SHARE OF RESPONSIBILITY

WITH horror and disgust, contempt and indignation, all that can still be called the civilized world turned away from that regime which had arisen out of the deepest mire of the human soul and, with its mixture of sentimentality and utter brutality, of lying and cool calculation, had set up the most loathsome tyranny of all times. To what extent are the Germans as a whole responsible for it? Or was National Socialism simply the quintessence of all the evil and menacing elements that had slumbered through all time in the German people?

That is the first question we must ask ourselves. But here we enter a field so overgrown with passions, suspicions, and misunderstandings that the author has no alternative but to begin with a few personal details. He was himself born in Germany, in Hanover, and he declares that the National Socialists became the object of the great and inextinguishable hatred of his life. Fifteen years ago he went to war, so to speak, against them, and from then on he waged that war at the risk of life and health and livelihood. They have destroyed his mother country, dishonoured her, dragged her through the mire, and covered her with the slime of their lies, and they have brought the whole of our Western civilization to such a pass that we do not yet know whether it will recover. When all was lost they continued, with an iron grip on the throat of the German nation, senselessly to pursue the war in order to prolong their own wretched lives for a few weeks or months, thus adding infinitely to the destruction and chaos. They slaughtered millions like cattle, and robbed other millions of those they most loved. Their stupidity was only exceeded by their malice, their loquacity by their ignorance, their swaggering by their secret fear. And to this day there is no visible end to the evil they have wrought since they opened the gates of the world for the spirit of evil, and gave free rein to the destructive forces of nihilism and totalitarianism.

And all this could be clearly foreseen long before Nazism began to unmask to the world—so far as anyone took the trouble to pay attention to the words and deeds of the Nazis, and so far as anyone had sufficient moral sense to react to them with the disgust of a civilized being. Those who had ears to hear and eyes to see could not but know what they had to expect from these persons with their greed for power. They had but to look at the men's faces, plainly marked with obstinate stupidity, they had but to hear their speeches and read their writings and note their deeds, which even before 1933 had reduced to terror a nation already rendered helpless. Nazism was a mixture of the ebullient feelings and the uncontrolled energies of boy scouts with cynicism, opportunism, brutality, mendacity, with hatred, envy, ambition, faithlessness, and intrigue, and with lewd sexuality. It was a barbarism, the barbarism not of immaturity but of rottenness, a barbarism the more repulsive since it was deliberate, studied, and pseudo-scientifically formulated. It was a hysterical orgy of decadent irresponsible intellectuals, who whipped up the masses with their phrases and turned their heads with their distortions of a language that had once been that of Lessing, Goethe, and Schopenhauer.

Amid all this there was a great deal of what may fairly be called honest idealism, among followers whose heads had been turned but not their hearts. These followers were certainly difficult to understand, but there was some excuse for them so long as the behaviour of the Nazis was calculated to deceive the innocent. Then came the moment after which no excuse was possible any longer. The last opportunity for these straying souls to find the way back to civilization came in August, 1932. In that month Storm Troopers were on trial in Potempa, in Upper Silesia, for the bestial murder of political opponents. When they were sentenced to death, Hitler shamelessly sent them a telegram of sympathy and encouragement. This act of his aroused a wave of indignation in Germany, and any who after that remained in a party led by such a man, or later felt no compunction in making him Chancellor of the Reich, pronounced their own condemnation. At the least there should be no place for them in the future in the public life of their nation.

For foreign opinion there was still some excuse for a time. The foreigner had the means of learning all the things that must be familiar

to every German; but as a rule, at least until the commencement of the Third Reich, the foreigner had not the shock of direct observation. The foreigner was still less likely than the German to take the trouble to read Hitler's *Mein Kampf*, a propaganda document that was revealing alike in its contents and its illiteracy. If the foreigner had no knowledge of German, he had the opportunity of reading the book in a French or English translation, from which he could almost acquire the illusion that it was a literary product to be taken seriously, and not a mass of cheap and uncouth journalese.

But when the Nazis had wormed their way into power, and had begun to make use of their power in the manner every open-eyed observer was bound to expect, the time was quickly past for any toleration of them to be justifiable even abroad. It was well known abroad after a few weeks or months what powers of evil were at work, with the concentration camps filling and violence and illegality and falsity piled high. And now imagine the agony which we who had left our country in disgust, knowing all that must come, had to endure through six long years, finding that the world did not stir, did not *want* to know anything about us. We émigrés were received abroad with sympathy, but as political advisers we were suspect. Our motives were respected, but we were given to understand that as émigrés we simply did not count, even where we were not openly set down as agitators and warmongers. At so late a stage as in October, 1938, when the policy of appeasement had reached its nadir after the shameful sacrifice of Czechoslovakia, I was treated by an American colleague as a poor half-wit when I declared that Czechoslovakia was lost and, moreover, that Europe was heading for disaster.

As a professor at Marburg University, realizing the threatening peril, I had used every opportunity between 1930 and 1933 to combat National Socialism in speech and writing, and my freely-expressed convictions had already made me unpopular enough. At the birth of the Third Reich I took a further step that procured me the honour of being placed on one of Hitler's first lists of dismissed University professors. At the end of February, 1933—early in the unforgettable day on which the Reichstag building was fired by the Nazis—I had spoken at the grave of a dead colleague. I had quoted the famous phrase from Voltaire's *Candide*, "mais il faut cultiver notre jardin,"

and had praised my colleague as a gardener by nature in the broadest sense, and concluded: "And as a gardener of that sort he was probably no longer suited to the present time—the present that is proceeding to turn the garden of civilization into fallow land and to allow it to revert to the primeval jungle."

It did indeed call for no exceptional clarity of vision to recognize Nazism as a frightful barbarian invasion of the laboriously hedged garden of civilization. But why was there general blindness to this in Germany, as later in the rest of the world, and why, in both cases, were men's eyes opened only when it was too late, when Germany had suffered the catastrophe of tyranny, and the world the catastrophe of war? The main reason lay in the *weakening of the moral reflexes*. That was what prevented so many people, faced with a barbarism which in the preceding generation would have made its perpetrators utterly impossible in the civilized world, from taking up the only proper attitude of flaming and uncompromising indignation, and nipping the evil in the bud. People were blind because they were determined to be blind. But that determination in face of unprecedented barbarism proved the serious weakening of the moral sense, of which the world had already given a first sign in the case of Fascist Italy when men praised the punctuality of the trains and the improvement of tourist travel, but forgot what that regime meant for the Italians.

Thus the failure to recognize the true features of Nazism was in the last resort a moral failure, which men sought to cover up with all sorts of theories by way of excuse, euphemism, or even justification, and with stale witticisms. *But this is a responsibility the world must share in full with the Germans*. There was certainly a good deal in this National Socialism that was anything but edifying, and certainly its victims deserved sympathy and assistance. But, on the other hand, had not Germany been given order and discipline? Were not the *Autobahnen*, the motor roads, perfect? Was not the economic and social policy of the Third Reich a thoroughly interesting experiment, perhaps worth emulating? Was it really so monstrous for the Third Reich to repudiate the limitations on its armaments (they could not be maintained for ever), to claim full sovereignty over the Rhineland, to work for reunion with the Germans of Austria and perhaps even of the Sudetens, and to treat Danzig more and more openly as a

German city under its rule? And was it not, moreover, performing the service of holding off from the West something still worse—Bolshevism? And that financial wizard, Schacht, who cheated the foreign creditors with grinning cynicism, was he not really a genial fellow? Was it not possible, by using discretion and plenty of bribery and flattery, to do excellent deals with these new men? And was it not even possible for a Socialist to learn a lot from this regime? As for its unattractive sides, would it not be enough to express indignation, or to joke about them, instead of being led into the awkward course, so incompatible with a pacifist programme, of putting up resolute diplomatic and military resistance? Thousands, indeed millions of people outside Germany must admit that these bitter questions strike home.

One of these questions of ours had reference to the fact that one ground for coming to terms with Nazism was the idea that it was an efficient bulwark against Bolshevism, or at least was, in comparison with Bolshevism, the lesser evil. In this belief there was all too ready acceptance of the Nazi propaganda claim that the coup d'état of 1933 saved Germany from a Communist revolution. That theory was indeed one of the trump cards played by National Socialism against unfavourable world opinion—we know with what success. At the outset and for a long time very few realised that this was no more than casting out devils through Beelzebub, and that the differences between the Red collectivism and the Brown totalitarianism could not remove from the world the essential similarity of their principles of structure.

But since these two chief varieties of collectivism—National Socialism and Communism—were rivals who very naturally fought bitterly against each other and who, as tricksters who saw through each other's methods, had every reason to be afraid of each other, neither of them missed any opportunity of turning the free opinion of the world in its favour and against the other. Each denounced the other as the thing that in truth each of them was—a tyranny. Each claimed to be what in truth neither of them was—a guardian of democracy. In fact, their ideal aim was attained if every opponent of Fascism or Nazism was branded as a Communist and every opponent of Communism as a Fascist.

It is unfortunate for the world that the two rival forms of collectivism seem largely to have attained this aim. In doing so, however,

they created a confusion that facilitated the game of both. Thus they involuntarily worked into each other's hands. It was, in fact, in this way that Nazism improved its position with a considerable section of the free opinion of the world, which without Communism would have been inaccessible to its approaches, while at the same time Communism succeeded in winning over another section of the free opinion of the world which, but for Nazism, would have shown more reserve and better judgment. It remains a serious fault that the world should have allowed itself to have been so led astray in its judgment and its moral susceptibilities by this playing-off of Communism against National Socialism. How grave is this fault and how ready our times show themselves to submit to this mental and emotional confusion is shown by the fact that today we see the same unsureness and denseness in regard to Communism. Nobody who actively defends Communism or even finds excuses for it has any right to be indignant with the German people for its seduction by the Brown collectivism, and a world that today shows the same attitude to Communism that it showed in the past to National Socialism, an attitude of palliation and of appeasement, if not of actual encouragement, proves to us that it is in a moral and mental condition that might have made it an accomplice in Nazism.

This play between Fascism (National Socialism) and Communism was facilitated by a certain interpretation of National Socialism. We refer to the idea that National Socialism, like Fascism, was fundamentally simply a spurious and insincere collectivism, with the aid of which "capitalism" was trying to maintain its position in a last desperate struggle against genuine collectivism, without troubling too much about the methods of government or the ideologies to be worked off on the masses who were to be fooled. Such a theory was well adapted to make the fundamental opponents of collectivism more ready to come to terms with National Socialism, if it did not actually throw them into its arms, while winning the allegiance of the others for "true" collectivism. One side was persuaded in this way to see in National Socialism an ally in the struggle against collectivism, and the other to see in collectivism an ally against Nazism. One side thus became partisans or promoters of Nazism and the other of Communism.

We may feel the latter to be less unattractive than the former, but

this does not prevent the two sides from both being wrong, because the interpretation of Nazism from which both proceed is untenable. It is an altogether primitive sociological principle, although, unfortunately, propagated by Marxism, that a government is simply the executive organ of the "ruling class." "The class that in truth rules politically is the class of the rulers, with their religious, philosophic, or moral ideas, whatever these may be,"¹ but not a group that stands for any sort of common economic interests. It is cheap romanticism to suppose that the leaders of a State are marionettes, dancing at the end of wires pulled by the "capitalists." The idea is completely untenable, even though there are actually "capitalists" who themselves entertain it. In Germany itself it was mainly "capitalists" who were so stupid as cynically to promote Hitler's rise to power, and later one of them, when the National Socialism he had supported had driven him into emigration, was actually simple enough to publish a book describing the wretched part he had played, instead of keeping a shamed silence. All these "capitalists" were driven long ago to the painful conclusion that Nazism was an entirely genuine collectivism, and was determined to rule by its own uncontrolled power. Thus those Socialists who still adhered to the theory that National Socialism was a last desperate struggle of "monopoly capitalism" and was a pseudo-collectivism, made the same mistake in their theories which the "capitalists" of the type of Fritz Thyssen had made earlier in practice. Now that that idea has been proved in practice by the "capitalists" to be a fatal error, it should be considered as disposed of also in the theories of the Socialists. Needless to say, in the case of the Socialists it was no more than a mistaken idea, but in the case of those "capitalists" it was at the same time a grave and inexcusable moral lapse. The Socialists have our entire sympathy, but they must allow us to tell them that they were mistaken.

Thus intellectual confusion and moral obtuseness united to clear away the obstacles in the path of the Nazis—obstacles which otherwise would soon have made an end of their dominance. We who knew what Nazism meant had assumed in those critical years after the coup d'état of 1933 that the conclusions we had drawn must force themselves upon the whole world. We took it for granted that at the very outset the Third Reich must come to grief through the resistance

¹Benedetto Croce, *Orientamenti*, 2nd edit., Milan, 1934, p. 44

of the outer world, after the internal resistance had proved inadequate. We imagined the world's reactions and power of decision to be still more or less normal, so that we could not believe that the Nazi regime would last long. We thought the object lesson the Nazis had given in Germany would be sufficient to open the eyes of the rest of the world; the failure in Germany would increase the resolution abroad; since the battle had been lost in Germany, in the international field the determination not to lose it could not, we thought, but increase accordingly.

It had been impossible for us to make any mistake in our estimate of National Socialism; but unfortunately we were entirely mistaken in our estimate of the world outside Germany. We had not expected such inertia, indecision, and lack of unity. Indeed, time after time, from 1933 to this day the points were set wrongly with such incredibly mistaken instinct that disaster rushed upon us all like an express train. Thus we had the depressing spectacle of the representatives of foreign countries willingly shaking hands with murderers, liars, Reichstag-burners, torturers, blackmailers, sexual perverts, and such fry, hurrying to attend Nazi festivals, and taking pains to make it seem that these figures from the dregs of society were entitled to consideration. The German efforts to increase the tourist traffic fell on fruitful soil; bodies like the International Chamber of Commerce held their congresses in Germany, and not a few foreigners' arms were held out in the Fascist greeting; while scarcely a soul was tactless enough to inquire about concentration camps, "People's Courts," or nocturnal outrages. Men strove to discover every possible "good side" of Nazism, regardless of the fact that such a regime could not exist at all without some "good sides." How few foreign intellectuals were able to summon up the modicum of courage needed to refuse to go on contributing to German periodicals which were closed to anti-Nazi Germans! Was there one among them who, invited in the most flattering terms to attend one of the many scientific congresses held in Germany actually after 1933, had the courage to make use of his unique opportunity, envied by his German colleagues, of speaking freely and plainly and tearing apart the web of propaganda that was spun on these occasions? How many, on the contrary, submitted to flattering and lionizing; and how many books were published abroad

in praise of National Socialism—books whose authors must be wishing today that they had never been written.

The courting of world favour by the Third Reich was shamefully successful, and here again there was merely a repetition of what we had already witnessed in the case of Italian Fascism. It was the time when an anti-Nazi German could ask himself bitterly whether one of the marks of a totalitarian State was not the advantage attaching to the possession of a foreign passport. It was discovered how well and how cheaply the foreigner could live in Germany, and with what exquisite courtesy he was then treated; and people became willing victims of the noisy propaganda carried on by the regime over all sorts of "achievements" which were by no means absent in democratic countries but about which no fuss was made there. Is it forgotten how at that very time the Olympic Games were transferred to Germany, giving the Nazis a unique opportunity of increasing their prestige among Germans and abroad, while in the country around, the Terror was raging and arms were being secretly forged against the youth of all countries—the very youth who were streaming at that time into Berlin? And will anyone claim now to have been the innocent victim of shameless deception because he could not have known what scoundrels these Nazis were? It would have been plain enough if there had not been a moral obliquity that closed men's eyes to the crimes of the regime, already amply evidenced. Men simply did not want to know, because it was inconvenient knowledge. So there was recruited in all countries the "*intellectual Foreign Legion*" of Nazism.

It was particularly fatal that *this spiritual and moral capitulation of the world to the Third Reich* affected the policy of all governments, though it was of vital importance to them, had they realized it, to unite with the anti-Nazi Germans against the enormous peril of Nazism, and though they would have been perfectly well able, by acting in time, to make an absolute end of it. We had to witness the responsible statesmen simply letting slip every opportunity of nipping the Third Reich in the bud. They could probably have done this with success by the simple and bloodless process of allowing the Nazis to "stew in their own juice," entirely ostracizing them diplomatically, mobilizing world opinion against them, and reducing all relations with the Third Reich to the absolute minimum.

Not only did they do nothing, not only did they idly permit themselves to be outstripped militarily in a few years—particularly in the extremely important air arm—but the United Kingdom, for instance, actually concluded a naval agreement with the Berlin Government; this agreement included the recognition of German rearmament in defiance of the Versailles Treaty, and could not fail to encourage the Nazis to proceed energetically along that path. During the first years of the regime it would have been child's play to make an end of the monstrous thing, and in all probability even in 1936 the simple mobilization of France would have sufficed to turn the treaty-breaking reoccupation of the Rhineland from a triumph into an annihilating political defeat of Hitler. When in 1938 Austria was violated, nobody stirred, and when in the autumn of that same year the same game of extortion and menace was played against Czechoslovakia, in the Munich capitulation world policy in regard to the Third Reich descended to the uttermost extreme of weakness. During the whole period countless Germans had set their last desperate hopes on a firm attitude on the part of the Great Powers, but again and again they had to witness the triumph of their hated tyrants over a spineless world. Finally, Russia, too, made concessions to Hitler in the Molotov-Ribbentrop agreement, enabling Hitler at last to let loose war and, with the support of Russian deliveries, to carry it on successfully for a considerable time. The dismal picture is completed by the sudden chorus of praise from the Communists of all countries of the coalition of Nazism and Communism against the "imperialist and capitalist world."

If we consider all this soberly and with scientific objectivity, we can no longer doubt that *the world-wide catastrophe of today is the gigantic price the world has to pay for its deafness to all the warning signals that prophesied with ever-increasing shrillness from 1930 to 1939 the Hell the Satanic forces of National Socialism were to let loose, first against Germany herself and then against the rest of the world. The horrors of the war just ended correspond exactly with those which the world permitted Germany to suffer, while it actually maintained normal relations with the Nazis and organized with them international festivals and congresses.*

None are so deaf as those who are determined not to hear. The universal passivity in regard to the Third Reich was indeed the result of the paralysis produced by a spiritual and moral poisoning, and of

the determination to ignore the writing on the wall in order to postpone the day of reckoning and to purchase a few years of peace and comfort, at the price of a most terrible final catastrophe. For this catastrophe the Germans have to bear the main responsibility; nevertheless, all nations have reason to beat their breasts, to confess, and to repent.

Today it seems almost incredible that the world should have been able for so long to harbour the illusion that the Nazis might treat foreign countries better than they treated their own people; its doing so is inexcusable. Today, however, it should be clear to everybody that Nazism began its march of conquest in Germany itself, that the Germans were the first victims of that barbarian invasion, which poured over them from below, that they were the first to be overwhelmed by terrorism and by mass-hypnosis, and that all that the occupied countries had later to endure was suffered first by the Germans themselves, including the worst fate of all, that of being impressed or seduced into becoming tools of further conquest and oppression. Germany was a sailing vessel, the worst elements of whose crew had banded together to overpower the rest, to set their own ringleader in place of the senile captain, and then to hoist amid shouts their blood-red flag with its spider-like sign of criminality and to set out on their buccaneering cruise. In the fashion of the old pirates they then proceeded to impress the crews of captured ships in their service and to make them their accomplices. The first victims of these abominable proceedings was Austria, the country with which the Nazis began their process of horizontal conquest after they had completed the vertical conquest of Germany; and also the country from which the ringleader had come with his empty "blarney."

To sum up—the leading Nazis are so far outside all human moral law that we should do them undue honour if we were to apply to them the moral standard of guilt. But we are bound to speak of guilt (which implies the conceptions of repentance, expiation, and rebirth) in the case of all those who, in their mental blindness and moral bewilderment, by their action or inaction left the way clear for those caricatures of humanity, instead of stopping them in time. This, however, is guilt which the world has to share with the Germans.

NAZISM AS TOTALITARIANISM

It would be a misjudgment of the German problem if we were pharisaically to ignore the share of guilt that has to be borne by the world outside Germany; and this guilt is at the same time an offence against that section of the German people which stood out against Nazism. The world will not want to have applied to it Goethe's lines:

Ihr lasst die Armen schuldig werden,
Dann überlasst ihr sie der Pein—

“Ye leave the poor souls guilt to incur, Then send them on to suffer torture.” But it would also be an error to see in Nazism nothing more than the sudden madness of a single nation in the midst of an entirely healthy world, and to forget that it was the special German form of a tendency that was of an international character. The Third Reich was the German form of the social and administrative system that we know as totalitarianism; and just as that system is not the mark of a nation but of a period, it came into existence in Germany owing to conditions which can be shown to have existed throughout the civilized world. For reasons peculiar to Germany, she succumbed to germs of disease from which other countries were not free, but against which they were able to set greater powers of resistance. The disease obtained an exceptional hold over Germany because in that country national characteristics, international infection, and the exceptional circumstances of the time made up a particularly dangerous combination. The world could not have had so appalling a degree of complicity in German totalitarianism and its career if it had not already been itself infected.

Some years ago the great French historian and sociologist Elie Halévy coined the phrase “era of tyrannies,”² which has since become famous. But long before this it had become clear that those state systems, of which the first had made its appearance in Russia in 1917 and which then appeared in several other countries in a great variety of forms, have essential traits common to all of them, later comprehended under the name “totalitarianism.” Whether in Bolshevism, Fascism, or Nazism, we meet continually with the forcible and ruthless usurpation of the power of the State by a minority drawn from the masses, resting on their support, flattering

²E. Halévy, *L'ère des Tyrannies*, Paris, 1938. The thesis of the book had been propounded by him as early as 1936.

them and threatening them at the same time; a minority led by a "charismatic leader" (Max Weber) and brazenly identifying itself with the State. It is a tyranny that does away with all the guarantees of the constitutional State, constituting as the only party the minority that has created it, furnishing that party with far-reaching judicial and administrative functions, and permitting within the whole life of the nation no groups, no activities, no opinions, no associations or religions, no publications, no educational institutions, no business transactions, that are not dependent on the will of the Government.

This total autocracy, in tune with the worst instincts of the masses, acknowledges no other limits than those of expediency in the choice of the means by which it attains power and keeps itself in power. Having been lifted up on the waves of a mass movement, and being entirely dependent on that movement, it devotes all its energy, its inventiveness, and its technique of propaganda, to currying favour with the masses. Concentration camps, whose inmates are subjected for an indefinite period to inhuman treatment; secret police, torture chambers, people's courts of "justice," and the most elaborate system of espionage, penetrating even into the family and setting the very children against their parents; frenzied self-advertisement, and continual whipping up of the population by more and more massive stimulants and by the continual announcement of new aims of the "national community" by means of noisy monopolistic propaganda; the utmost mental and economic isolation from the outer world; public "enlightenment," refined to a diabolical science, and reaping its harvest in almost unanimous plebiscites; the cult of an imposed ideology, the cynical perversion of traditional institutions, values, and terms, the deification of the "charismatic" leader, on whose infallibility no shadow of doubt is permitted to be cast, and the directing of popular ill-will against one new group after another of "enemies of the people," "malignants," and "saboteurs"—these are the principal methods of this new tyranny. Whenever it has come into power it has ruled by means of the masses and within the masses by means of their worst elements, and against the educated élites, giving careful thought at all times, in every word uttered and every step taken, to the reaction of the masses. Thus it is a form of rule that gives expression to the rising of the masses against the élite of which the

Spanish philosopher Ortega y Gasset has written in his book, *The Revolt of the Masses*.

The more we gained knowledge of these new totalitarian systems of mass-rule, the more we realized not only their similarity of structure, but also the fact that we had to do with a type of dominance that had been known in earlier epochs. We discovered that what the ancients called "tyrannis," or "cheirokratia," what Sulla or the tyrants of the Italian Renaissance had practised, and what finally alarmed the world in the French Revolution and under Napoleon, had surprisingly many similarities with modern totalitarianism, although this latter had elements with which they cannot be compared, and although it possessed means of domination unknown in past ages. Benjamin Constant wrote in his book *De l'Esprit de Conquête et de l'Usurpation* (Hanover 1814)³ of the experience of the French Revolution and of Napoleon. Scarcely a page of the classic analysis of totalitarianism in that book can be read without coming to deep truths about the totalitarianism of today. Very often one has only to change the names to apply what is said in this book of 130 years ago to the case of Germany, insulting though it would be to the personality of Napoleon to compare it with that of Hitler.

Just as so much else was repeated, so the experience has been renewed in our day that tyranny, as an illegitimate, usurped form of rule, has no constitutional title of any sort, and consequently regards it as the ultimate purpose of its activities, underlying every word and every action, to find a substitute to make good its lack of a constitutional title and to bolster up the declining popularity of its regime. Hence the necessity for compulsory uniformity of opinion and for ruthless enforcement of the will of the State; hence also the agitated courting of the masses and the hunt after new and more and more spectacular momentary successes, the anxious glances to make sure that the masses and foreign observers are pleased, the lack of the calm a legitimate government can permit itself, the morbid sensitivity to praise or blame, the inferiority complex that betrays itself unmistakably beneath the blatant self-assertiveness, and the concern of every tyranny to counter its illegitimacy and its ephemeral quality with monumental buildings. Hence also the fear of simple ordinariness

³Now republished in an excellent German translation by Hans Zbinden under the title "Ueber die Gewalt," Berne 1942.

and the constant invention of new occasions for whipping up the excitement of the population, to prevent the calm that permits clear thought; the launching of slogan after slogan, to "pith" the skulls of the people, so that they can be reduced in the end to accepting praise today of what was damned yesterday. Society is thus turned into a whipping-top that can only be kept in equilibrium by rapid turning—by "dynamism," to use one of those mouthing-phrases in the invention of which Fascism and Nazism were so fertile.

All these peculiarities of the structure of modern tyranny, whose ugliest and extremest form was Nazism, are marked by the *entire dissolution of the values and standards* without which our society, or any other, cannot exist in the long run: a pernicious anaemia of morality, a cynical unconcern in the choice of means, which in the absence of firm principles become ends in themselves; a nihilistic lack of principle, and, in a word, what may be described literally as Satanism and Nihilism. Everything rots away, and finally there remains only one fixed aim of the tyranny, to which all moral principles, all promises, treaties, guarantees, and ideologies are ruthlessly sacrificed—the naked lust for domination, for the preservation of the continually threatened power, a power held on to for no other purpose than the continued enjoyment of all its fruits. The immorality of such a regime needs no arguing. There is thus scarcely a villainy that is not to be expected from such a regime. All the ideals and emotions blatantly appealed to—social justice, national community, peace, religion, family life, welfare of the masses, claims in the international field, the return to simpler and more natural forms of life, and so forth—prove as a rule to be nothing more than crudely-painted interchangeable boards for the staging of mass propaganda. The leaders blow hot and cold; they shriek with indignation at the treatment of German minorities, or they may shamefully sacrifice minorities really ill-treated, such as the South Tyrolese. The tyrant becomes the most unscrupulous of all publicity agents, only asking himself: How will it work? How will it help to bolster me up?

In Nazism the complete unscrupulousness in the choice of serviceable-looking slogans and the truly reckless speculation on human stupidity reached perhaps its zenith in the invention of the gigantic farce of the propaganda for "European solidarity against Bolshevism." After ruining Europe by their crimes and at the same time

openly challenging Soviet Russia, nothing better occurred to the Nazis than to paraphrase the old Wilhelmian slogan, "Peoples of Europe, guard your holiest possessions!" This they did (1) after inciting the Japanese against the Europeans in the Far East; (2) after it had become clear that a Hitlerite Europe was simply not worth saving; (3) after all Europe had realized that it was brazen impudence for the Nazis to rage against Bolshevism; and (4) after all Europe had come to ask who would save it from the grip of Nazism. And when these barbarians talked of three thousand years of European civilization being at stake, the only possible answer was roars of laughter. "The saviour of Europe," Jacob Burckhardt said long ago, "is pre-eminently the man who saves her from the danger of a political, religious, and social Procrusteanism that threatens her specific character, namely the manifold wealth of her intellect."⁴

Such a regime, the expression of complete Nihilism and Satanism, can be imposed only on a nation that has already suffered the extreme of inner disintegration; but certainly no man can become and remain for any length of time the leader of such a system unless he is a Satanist and Nihilist through and through. It is inevitable that such a regime should be an entirely intolerable member of the family of nations and should end sooner or later in a war of conquest. It may fairly be said of it that Imperialism begins at home. After reducing its own people to subjection, it will of necessity carry imperialism abroad, in order to remain true to its own principle and practise abroad the looting begun at home, and in order to forestall the results of the justified suspicion among its neighbours; in order, too, to provide a diversion for internal criticism and discontent, to intoxicate its people with the poison of nationalism and imperialism, and to meet the need for spectacular successes after a certain satiation has been reached at home.

Each of the essential traits of tyranny here mentioned does indeed include the urge to war. A regime that has not the slightest respect for the freedom and the rights of the individual will have no greater respect for the freedom and the rights of other nations. If a State applies at home, with complete amorality, every expedient for the acquisition and maintenance of domination, it cannot be expected that it should apply other means abroad, or that it should moderate

⁴Jacob Burckhardt, *Historische Fragmente*, new impression, Basle, 1942, p. 144.

its lust for power in foreign relations and set limits to it when it sees a prospect of expansion. That such a State should respect international commitments can only be expected by those who have no understanding of its structure. It is clear, too, that a regime that owes its existence to mass enthusiasm, and has constantly to rekindle that enthusiasm, is forced by inescapable laws of psychology to stir up nationalism to a white heat; it can no more dispense with that expedient than it can omit to weld the nation together by resort to the well-tried means of national hatred and war. Such a State will be driven along the same path by the necessity of making good its lack of legitimacy; it must pursue one colossal enterprise after another, in order to impress the people. Thus it is driven to resort to a stimulant that shares with all other stimulants the property of being effective only so long as the dose is continually increased. And once it has been encouraged to pursue this path by slight initial successes, it can no longer retrace its steps without heading for disaster. And finally the socialistic and autarkic economy that is inseparable from the nature of this totalitarian tyranny cannot but let loose tendencies that powerfully drive the tyranny along the path of extreme nationalism, conquest, and war, since it is an economy based essentially upon expenditure, waste of substance, and ruinous exploitation, and so must be continually on the search for fresh fields to strip bare.

As a rule it takes a considerable time for a tyranny to plunge the world around it into the inevitable war; but this is not due to any peaceful spirit in the tyranny, but to the long-suffering and the weakness of the other countries. They put away from their minds until the last moment the idea that war is inevitable, and hope to avoid it by means of the concessions which the totalitarian State extorts from them, exploiting their love of peace. Tragically, however, it is these very concessions that in the end make war inevitable; step by step they tempt the tyrant along a path from which he himself would no longer be able to retreat even if his successes had not gone to his head. *By abandoning position after position, the peaceful countries gradually manoeuvre themselves into a situation in which they can no longer under any circumstances avoid war with the totalitarian mischief-maker if they are not to give way all along the line. But they enter the war under conditions which they themselves, through the concessions already*

made and through the demoralizing effect of their "policy of appeasement," have made as unfavourable as could be.

It took Europe twelve years to bring Napoleon to his knees, after he had been permitted through weakness, short-sightedness, and disunity to grow great. It took just the same twelve long years—and what years!—for the world to deal with Hitler, and in those years, without intending it, it did everything to make the ultimate war once more as obstinate, as frightful, and as destructive as it possibly could be. The parallel is too striking—in spite of differences so disgraceful for Hitler—for us not to read with entire agreement what Benjamin Constant wrote in 1814:

"It is probable that the same disposition of the moderns that leads them to prefer peace to war would at the outset give great advantages to the people forced by its government to become an aggressor. Nations absorbed in the enjoyment of their possessions would be slow to resist: they would abandon a portion of their rights in order to preserve the rest; they would hope to save their repose by the compromise of their liberty. By a very strange combination, the more peaceful the general spirit, the more would the State that entered into war against that spirit gain easy successes at the outset."⁵ And a few pages further on we come to a passage that might have been written in our own day:

"The force a people needs in order to hold all the rest in subjection is a privilege which today, more than ever, cannot endure. A nation that claimed such dominance would place itself in a position more perilous than that of the weakest community. It would become the object of universal horror. The opinions of all, the aspirations of all, the hatred of all, would menace it, and sooner or later this hatred, these opinions, and these aspirations, would close in upon it.

"There would be without doubt in this fury, against a whole people, an element of injustice. Never is a whole people guilty of the excesses which its leader makes it commit. It is this leader who leads it astray, or, yet more frequently, does not seduce it but constrains it.

"But the nations that become the victims of its deplorable obedience would be unable to give it credit for concealed feelings which its conduct belies. They blame the instruments for the crime of the hand that directs them."⁶

⁵Benjamin Constant, *op. cit.*, p. 39 of the fourth edition (Paris, 1814).

⁶Benjamin Constant, *op. cit.*, p. 58.

The Napoleonic wars can only be compared with Hitler's with the utmost caution, since Napoleon's relation to Hitler is that of a genuine dignitary of history to a disreputable gangster. But there is nothing to prevent us from taking from the history of the nineteenth century another example that reveals the part played in international life by an insane tyrant, showing very plainly that the case of Hitler is by no means unique. We refer to the abominable tyrant of Paraguay from 1862 to 1870, Francisco Solano Lopez, who like Hitler was obsessed by the insane idea of giving his continent a "New Order," and who became involved in a war with all his neighbours; he was a precursor on a small scale of the authors of Germany's tragedy today.⁷ This man, too, imagined that his will was all that was needed to stand the world on its head, and he, too, was completely blind to the true strength of the opposition he aroused. Relying on his armed force, he embarked on a policy that brought great initial successes, for the reasons stated by Constant, but ultimately, when his imperilled neighbours united against him, plunged his regime and his country into the abyss. "His intellectual arrogance"—so the *Deutsche Rundschau* boldly wrote in April, 1941—"growing more and more upon him, clouded his view of the superior moral and economic forces of the neighbour countries. He allowed himself to be elevated more and more by his entourage to the status of a demigod: flattering speeches and the incense of continual adoration intoxicated him, with his natural tendency to exaggerate his own qualities, so that he could no longer see the world as it really was. But his very successes were his undoing. They made the peril of this 'total' State seem so overpowering that Argentina and Brazil forgot their long-standing feud and united in a close alliance against this upstart military power." So came, in the end, the inevitable catastrophe. "For the guilt one man had incurred in his madness, the whole nation must now suffer! *Plectuntur Achivi.*" The article concludes:

"Thus a curse lies to this day upon the name of Lopez, the gloomy tyrant. Finding himself forced into continual retreat, he resorted to more and more senseless measures. But the more his mania developed

⁷We follow the account given by Ernst Samhaber in the *Deutsche Rundschau* of April, 1941; and we cannot omit to pay tribute to the courage shown by the writer of the article, and by the publisher of that review, with its long and distinguished record, in allowing the article to appear. If anyone asks how the German intellect made a stand against National Socialism, one answer must be to point to the *Deutsche Rundschau*.

the more justification he found for his suspicions; for so much the more eagerly persons with a sense of responsibility sought means of sparing the nation from the worst and achieving an honourable peace. With the frightful means of the semi-mediaeval criminal law of his time, Lopez frustrated all these efforts. The Paraguayan nation was forced to pursue its Calvary to the bitter end."

We thus see that Nazism is no fabulous monster, no dragon found only in the primeval forests of Germania. It belongs to a species not too difficult to define, which in the nomenclature of sociology bears the name of "totalitarianism." It is certainly a particularly abominable specimen, which under peculiar circumstances was able to grow to saurian dimensions, but which for all that can be classified without difficulty as belonging with every essential characteristic to the species.

But here again it must not be forgotten that in the intellectual procreation of this monster the world outside Germany most certainly played a part. If National Socialism is essentially a particular form of totalitarianism, the story of its *intellectual birth* must to that extent be also that of *totalitarianism*. It is a specially complicated story, and this is not the place for its detailed narration. But the very circumstance that German totalitarianism was preceded by the Russian and Italian forms shows to how great an extent Nazism took over and worked out with German thoroughness ideas that were by no means of German origin. It would be wearisome to compile the names that mark the various stages passed through by the ideology of the totalitarian State.⁸ But if we merely mention the chief writers, such as the Frenchman Georges Sorel (who by their own acknowledgment strongly influenced both Lenin and Mussolini) and the Italian Pareto, and if we add how deeply the theorists and practitioners alike, both of Russian Bolshevism and of Italian Fascism, influenced the German National Socialists, we have made it easy to see that the outer world worked just as ardently on the building of

⁸A comprehensive history of the ideas of totalitarianism has yet to be written. Cf., at present, Hans Barth, "Ueber den totalen Staat und seine ideologischen Voraussetzungen," in *Fluten und Dämme, der philosophische Gedanke in der Politik*, Zurich, 1943, pp. 203-242. Not to be lost sight of is the important share of Socialism in the genesis of totalitarianism: Marx foreshadowed it in his "dictatorship of the proletariat." For this intellectual line of descent see E. Halévy, *L'ère des Tyrannies*, Paris, 1938; F. A. Hayek, *The Road to Serfdom*, Routledge, London, 1944.

the intellectual foundations of the Third Reich as did Germany herself.

Even the *racial mania* which seems to be an exclusive domain of German totalitarianism, was presented to the Germans by foreigners—particularly by the French writer Gobineau, who himself simply elaborated an idea that dates back to the eighteenth century. The racial delusion may be described as a cross between those foreign germs and the specifically German ethical romanticism which will occupy us later.⁹ While these and other precursors of the Nazi racial doctrine have nothing in common with the appalling delusionary character of that doctrine, the fact remains that that is the abyss into which we are inevitably plunged in the end, if we once pursue the mistaken path of the biologism of which Darwin and his school laid the foundations. The Nazi racial doctrine is the final putrid product of the decay of an intellectual process by which in the course of the Nineteenth Century man was degraded, with the zeal of a misunderstood science, to a subject of zoology and stud farming; but in this process all the principal countries of the West took part. The death chambers of Auschwitz and Maidanek are the final gruesome result of certain scientific ideas having ultimately found their way in the course of a century to the morally and mentally lowest levels of humanity, to a group which then, through a social catastrophe of inconceivable dimensions, became the rulers of a great people.

That National Socialism is the expression of an international contemporary spirit rather than that of the spirit of a nation is, finally, also shown by the fact that similar tendencies are to be found in the contemporary literature of all countries, and, at least for a time, were not without influence. Whether we recall *The Coming American Fascism*, by an American, Lawrence Dennis, or *The Managerial Revolution*, by another American, James Burnham, or the tirades of Colonel Lindbergh and his wife about the “wave of the future” and all sorts of other things, we continually find, more or less disguised by perfumes, the miasma that has poisoned Germany. Everywhere are the “totalitarians in our midst” of whom F. A. Hayek, in his book *The Road to Serfdom*, has given from the English scene a ruthless

⁹Among the important representatives of the racial doctrine is the Austrian L. Gumplowicz (*Der Rassenkampf*, Innsbruck, 1883), who exerted considerable influence. It is a tragic irony that he was a Jew. But all he did was to establish the existence of the racial struggle, not to promote it.

analysis, not sparing representatives of totalitarianism on the Left. It is the painful duty of the honest observer to mention the names of Jewish writers who, like Emil Ludwig or Paul Einzig, have loudly praised Italian Fascism, thus laying themselves open to the suspicion that they were kept from a similar admiration of Nazism only by its anti-Semitism.¹⁰

THE PECULIAR FEATURES OF NAZISM

National Socialism undoubtedly belongs to the genus of totalitarianism and is to that extent akin to Russian Communism and Italian Fascism. On the other hand, it no less clearly shows many peculiar features that give it a unique character, just as in the other cases of totalitarianism. These features are, indeed, so striking that the untrained eye has difficulty in seeing beneath them the true character of Nazism as a totalitarian regime. At the least, it seems as if Nazism can be compared only with Italian Fascism, and not with Russian Communism, although we know now that the appearance is wholly deceptive, as in all three cases we have to do with the ideology and the reality of the totalitarian termite State and with the collectivism characteristic of it. Yet it is obvious that Nazism and Fascism form, relatively to Bolshevism, a sharply defined subsection, for which, of course, the term "Fascism" has gained currency.

If we are at least to make shift to give some answer to the difficult question what the structure of Nazism has in common with that of Fascism, in contradistinction with Bolshevism, we must emphasize various points.¹¹ In both cases the totalitarian rule followed a coup d'état which was clothed as far as could be in legal forms and only gradually revealed its revolutionary aims. Both Fascism and Nazism set out to establish themselves in an extraordinarily complex society and actually with the aid of decidedly anti-revolutionary elements; consequently they found themselves compelled to proceed step by step, with a maximum of indefiniteness in their programmes, a maximum of mutually incompatible promises, and an appeal to every sentiment that seemed to influence opinion. This explains the total absence of any clear doctrine such as that of the Communists, and its replacement by a rhetorical propaganda that pulled out every stop of

¹⁰Cf. also F. A. Hayek, *op. cit.*, pp. 230 *sqq.*

¹¹In this I am able still to rely on a study I published in 1935—"Fascist Economics," *Economica*, February, 1935.

passion and emotion. Since neither Fascism nor Nazism wanted, like Bolshevism, to make a clean sweep of the existing social order, or could do so—both, on the contrary, were compelled at first to leave the traditional class divisions intact—there resulted a necessity for continual compromises, especially in economic policy, which were capable of disguising for a considerable time the collectivist character of the aims pursued. Many measures adopted were simply façades, behind which was either nothing at all or the precise opposite of what they represented. This applies, above all, to the treatment of private property. Just as in Russia the church was openly persecuted, but in the Third Reich it was as far as possible disintegrated from within, so in Russia private property in the means of production was openly abolished, but in the Third Reich it was reduced, by continual restrictions of the rights and functions of the owner, to an empty shell, while for propagandist purposes the shell was allowed to continue to exist. Thus in the two cases the forms of abolition of private property were different but their results were essentially the same.

Fascists and National Socialists made the utmost use of romantic slogans announcing a return to simpler and earlier ways of living and forms of society. But it must have been clear from the outset that these totalitarian regimes, which could only end in economic and social collectivism, could have no genuine intention of continuing to promote a true peasantry and an independent middle class if they were not to stultify themselves. As a matter of fact, the National Socialist agrarian policy was carried out by urban intellectuals who were worlds away from the realities of peasant life. They worked under a man who came from Argentina, and who had clearly read too much of the writings of Hermann Löns, a very influential writer on the German countryside, whom the Nazis found to their dismay, after solemnly interring his remains, to have been of Jewish descent.

The less it was possible to offer the masses in the way of tangible improvements in their situation, the stronger was the urge to arouse *nationalism*, making use of the national sentiment which alike in Italy and in Germany had made an important contribution to the growth of the Fascist movement. To make capital in this way out of external affairs was the more essential since the cramped conditions, in both countries, in comparison with Russia set clear limits to the employment in home affairs of the energies unleashed. Fascism and Nazism

had the same need as Bolshevism for "enemies of the people" as targets for the masses, but, at first, in accordance with their special character, described above, they respected the existing class differences and had to content themselves with the persecution of defenceless minorities—the freemasons, the Liberals, the Marxists, the pacifists, and in Germany the Jews. Only gradually did each regime grow more radical in this respect, as it became able to establish itself in place of the forces, at first threatening, of the untouched elements of power in the State—army and navy, police, universities, landowners, industrialists, and churches. This growing radicalization was bound steadily to diminish the differences between Fascism and Nazism on one side and Bolshevism on the other, especially since Bolshevism came more and more to adopt "Fascist" traits, largely because the Russian social order, at first subjected to extreme simplification, underwent differentiation through the building up of a new social hierarchy and because the power of mass emotions, especially of nationalism, was rediscovered.

Within the general group of totalitarian States, we have sought to outline the common nature of Nazism and Fascism; it remains to determine the elements peculiar to Nazism. We come here to the essence of the matter—the special nature alike of German conditions, the German national character, and German history.

To begin with there is the general fact that Nazism, even in the points in which it resembles Fascism, differs from it through an exaggeration, a coarsening, and a logical consistency which we may certainly regard as an expression of German pedantry, "thoroughness," and lack of moderation. All the things that down in the south were amateurish or had an operatic quality were put through in Germany with the grimmest seriousness and carried to the bitter end. Reservations and modifications permitted in Italy were rejected in Germany. The naïveté of the south became self-consciousness and cheap sentimentality in Germany. At the same time everything was regarded in a light that was much more "romantic," in a bad and morbid sense. In Italy *Blut und Boden*, "blood and soil," at least meant Virgil, Augustus, and the Renaissance; in Germany they meant primeval forests and heathen barbarism. It is in consonance with this that it remained for Nazism, in the race mania for which "anti-Semitism" is much too weak a term, to sink to the lowest animal level

of group hatred, and to be led by it into a savage policy with which even the history of Italian Fascism has nothing to compare. There was no room in the north for even a temporary compromise with the Christian churches, and so the German Nazi was bound to appear to the average Fascist as just a barbarian Goth, a subject alike for fear and contempt, in spite of the unscrupulousness common to both types. In addition to this, Nazism unquestionably had from the outset a much more definite mass character than Fascism and was much more deeply rooted in the actual proletariat. It had set itself from the first to win over the mass of manual and office workers, and it cannot be denied that Nazism was largely successful in this aim, especially among the younger generation, which lacked the liberal traditions of the old trade unions. It is not sufficiently realized today that it was on these proletarianized and traditionless masses that Nazism mainly depended; it was these that it exerted itself to flatter, and they responded only too readily to its courtship: Nazism gave them a sense of status that raised their self-importance to arrogance; it showed them a consideration which it would have been suicidal for an employer to expect. In comparison with these classes, not inconsiderable sections of the upper middle class showed a much better attitude.

There is a final point of the utmost importance. Nazism and Fascism had an aggressive nationalism in common, in contrast with Russian Communism, but in this respect again Nazism far outran Fascism, for the following reasons. To begin with, Germany was so much wealthier and more powerful than Italy that the temptation to conquest was bound to be correspondingly greater. Secondly, Nazi militarism and imperialism had the benefit of a tradition, that of Greater Prussia, which Italy lacked. Thirdly, and this perhaps is the most important of all, Nazism was distinguished not only from Communism but also from Fascism by the repulsive conceit that proclaimed the Germans to be a chosen people, a master race—a doctrine that carried the race mania into international politics.

THE RELENTLESS MACHINERY OF TOTALITARIANISM

A totalitarianism of this sort, with all the special characteristics of that form of rule and also the peculiarities of its own that we have described—such was National Socialism. As in all totalitarian countries, it overwhelmed people and Government by a coup d'état

devilishly staged, a coup in which all the resources of cunning and violence were regarded as legitimate; and just as it had not come into power through a revolutionary popular movement, it could not be removed by that means. Once it had established itself, it could only be overthrown by the same means, the coup d'état, that had brought it into power, or by intervention from abroad. As everywhere where totalitarianism had conquered the State, the German nation as a whole was condemned to impotent submission to tyranny, and must not only allow itself to be ordered about and exploited and directed in its every movement, but also to be demoralized and corrupted, until at last the fatal optical illusion was produced that the German nation could be identified with Nazism.

As fate would have it, only those can fully understand the path the German nation has trod since 1933 who have had actual experience of the sociology of totalitarianism, whereas today nations are called to decide about Germany for the very reason that they resolutely rejected totalitarianism and would have nothing to do with it. Those nations have no knowledge, all of us outside Germany have no knowledge, of what it meant to live for twelve terrible years under such a regime, and the imagination cannot take the place of that absent knowledge. But perhaps we shall not appeal to those nations in vain if we suggest that we all must avoid any sort of pharisaism and constantly bear in mind that, for the very reason that we have been spared that tragic experience, we are bound to reserve judgment and to permit ourselves to be instructed at every possible opportunity. We can all learn from the intelligent and noble German woman who wrote to me after the outbreak of this war that she had always been of the same mind with me and hoped to continue so, but that after long years of experience she realized that she could not know how she would be affected by the war propaganda and the completely one-sided information. Should she in the future become untrue to her past views, I must remember in her favour that she had to live under conditions that made her quite irresponsible. That she nevertheless bravely stood her ground, proves her greatness of intellect and character, but not any mistakenness in her remarks.

The all-important thing we must always keep in mind is the incontrovertible fact that *the National Socialists did not come into power by the clear will of a majority of the German nation, but by the disreputable*

backstairs method of the coup d'état. At the beginning of the Third Reich the majority of the German nation was opposed to Nazism, and the importance of this fundamental fact is in no way diminished because, by the iron logic of totalitarianism, the nation that had become its victim suffered on top of all else immeasurable injury to its soul and was brought down to the acceptance of its own servitude. And was the development very different in Italy or in the Communistic countries? Have the Poles, the Roumanians, the Latvians, or the Yugoslavs, all, or even a majority of them, become Communists, simply because the ruthless machinery of totalitarianism has descended upon them? And is even the case of Russia so unambiguous that we may identify the Russians with Communism, or more precisely with Stalinism? Is not the answer obvious?

Nobody is entitled to forget that the Nazis never gained a majority vote from the Germans in a free election. On the contrary, we must bear in mind that even the Reichstag election of March, 1933, held already under terrorism, and falsified into the bargain, brought the Nazis no more than some 43 per cent. of the total vote. We must keep in mind also what unimaginable devilries—beginning with the burning of the Reichstag—they had to commit in order to break the resistance of so many Germans, and what an utterly criminal system of the most brutal violence and the most subtle deceptions they had to invent and perfect in order to maintain themselves in power.

After the Nazis had come into power, it became more and more an irrelevance to estimate how many Germans supported Hitler. The only datum of any value would have been the number of émigrés and inmates of concentration camps; and even this would have been of value only so far as concerned those who were persecuted on account of their political conviction and, therefore, as the result of their own courageous stand, and not those other victims who could not help being Jews. That the number of political émigrés, especially at first, was relatively small, is not a fact in favour of the Germans, although it must not be forgotten that the tightening up of the immigration legislation of almost all countries placed much greater obstacles in the way of German emigrants than earlier in the way of the Russians or even of the Italians. As for the attitude of the remaining Germans, the honest answer was at all times that we had no knowledge of it and no means of ascertaining it.

What it *was* possible to know, however, was this one fact, over and over again: so soon as a totalitarian regime of this sort is installed, it acquires a dominance over its population that makes it impossible to continue to apply normal human standards. Its subjects are reduced to a state of existence that makes them in a high degree morally irresponsible; but it is precisely then that allowance must be made for the fact that these conditions were imposed against their will. Thereafter, the slightest attempt at resistance is all the more to their credit. No totalitarian regime has profited by these conditions for the control and corruption of the people with more devilish calculation than the Nazi regime. Who that has not experienced it can realize what it meant to live under the continual pressure of an inconceivable terror and in an atmosphere in which a man could no longer trust his neighbour or his friend or his own child? There are people who say that the Germans ought to have made a more courageous stand against Nazism and its atrocities, and we fully share this opinion. But ought we not, in order to be quite just, also to bear in mind that diabolical hostage system of the Nazis, which threatened the family of every rebel with a cruel death? How far was a man entitled to show courage at the expense of his wife and children?

Who, again, can judge the way the soul of man reacts to an unceasing flow of subtle monopolist propaganda, shutting out all other information? It may be admitted that the German, for reasons we shall consider later, is particularly easily influenced and particularly lacking in judgment in all political questions; but we do not know how the experiment would have worked out with any other nation that was unable, like the occupied countries of Europe, to draw strength from resistance, from the patriotic revolt against the impudent pretensions of an alien conqueror speaking another language. The whipping-up of the German's patriotism, on the contrary, bound him all the more strongly to his own tyrannical Government. The case of Austria comes fairly close to an experiment of this sort, but who will claim that the Austrians behaved much better than the Bavarians, the Rhinelanders, or the Hanoverians?

Today the world is filled with horror and unbounded indignation in face of the evidence of the conditions of terror which the Nazis left behind them in the Golgothas of their *concentration camps*. All too many people are inclined to judge the German nation only the more

harshly on this score, contending that the Germans had tolerated these crimes. We ask those who argue thus: Is it not more logical to see in these conditions the incontrovertible proof of the terror under which the Germans lived day and night through twelve years? If Englishmen or Americans retort that they are sure they would not have tolerated anything so disgraceful under similar conditions, they should thank the merciful fate that saved them from being enabled to give practical evidence of what they are so sure about. In Germany, too, there was a time when, in face of the barbarisms of Italian Fascism, people declared with the utmost conviction that "such a thing would be impossible among us." Is it fair to make the Germans pay for the fact that their critics have had no personal experience of what it means to be helplessly delivered over to this crippling horror, the creation of which is one of the principal secrets of totalitarianism?

The world is deeply to blame for having for so long taken all too little notice of the atrocities Nazism committed against the Germans themselves. Now, faced with the whole grisly truth, are we to blame the German nation alone for remaining inactive, after the rest of us had allowed it to be brought into a situation in which those who moved a finger inescapably took the road that led to Buchenwald and the other Golgothas? Are not these concentration camps, indeed, the most moving evidence that even under the most frightful terror there were still plenty of Germans who did resist? It is understandable that in the first flaming indignation the world allowed itself to be carried away into illogical inferences, but we cannot believe that it can long shut its ears to the voice of impartial justice. It will then, perhaps, at least silently, ask itself what may have been going on in the last ten years in the concentration camps and labour camps of Siberia and of the Russian tundra, and come to the conclusion that a diabolical system of terror is everywhere one of the means of totalitarian domination.

Other things contribute to such a nation sinking ever deeper into the morass of a totalitarian State, bravely though individuals may resist it. In a State whose slimy tentacles reach everywhere, what may be called "spiritual emigration" is especially difficult. It is a daily and hourly struggle, in which the strongest may ultimately be crippled, especially when nervous exhaustion and physical under-nourishment and continual mental over-excitement are added. Everyday life with

its petty cares goes on, and, as the example of the occupied countries shows, it is almost impossible for those who do not simply withdraw into the Maquis to avoid manifold relations with the despots, relations which at first seem entirely neutral but in the long run prove to be so many threads that entangle the individual in responsibility for the despotism. Dulled feelings and gradual familiarization also play their part; and finally it was one of the devilish methods of the Nazis to compel as many people as possible to fulfil this or that function in the machine, and so to corrupt them.

There was a peculiar *mechanism of spiritual reaction* that played its part in the case of all those who entered into any compromise, however seemingly innocent, with the regime. There were, unfortunately, thousands in Germany, diplomats, journalists, industrial leaders, professors, judges, and other members of the directing classes, who, without being National Socialists, were unable to summon up the resolution to break with Nazism, even where this involved no particular risk. Their anxiety to continue to play a part in the world, and their fear of the drabness of existence without function or status, overcame the promptings of indignation at the satanic character of the regime; and probably there were countless people, particularly in Germany, who clung to a specifically German conception of "duty" which at bottom was simply a euphemism for lack of pluck. One could draw up a long list of all the theories with which one person and another tried to conceal what in truth was simply anxiety to be "in the swim." They told themselves and others that if they remained at their post they could "prevent worse things," that they must not let themselves be "frozen out," that "hanging on" demanded greater sacrifices than resigning, that "one must not leave the Fatherland in the lurch at this difficult time," and made all sorts of similar excuses—where the kind fate of some conflict with the racial laws did not take the decision out of their hands. But anyone who had once given his little finger very soon felt himself compelled to be silent where his conscience would have told him to speak, to do nothing where, as an honest person he should have acted, to descend to lying and hypocrisy or to do something that made him an accomplice. Then there remained only three alternatives; it was still possible to make the decision to break with the regime; or every fresh day would inevitably bring fresh cause for self-contempt; or the effort must be made

to persuade oneself that in one's judgment of National Socialism one must, after all, have been a little mistaken. For the first alternative many people no longer had the courage, and the second would have been against human nature. Thus there remained only the third course: men began to talk of "the good sides of the regime that do after all exist," of the possibility of gradual normalization, or of the supposed necessity of helping the "decent" Nazis against the worse ones. Nothing could have suited Nazism better.

All this shows perfectly clearly that the Germans became accomplices in the Third Reich, although at first the majority of them had no desire for it; but this is very far from meaning that Nazism is in harmony with the German soul. As we know, it is of no use to try to base that allegation on the fact that the Germans never made a successful attempt to bring down the regime and that all the hopes set on a German revolution during the war ended in disappointment. Even this latter fact does not by any means mean that there were not at least attempts that failed, and it is only now that we are slowly learning the truth about the resistance actually offered to the most powerful system of dominance known to history—from such witnesses as still remain alive. In any case, it was clear in advance that anyone who expected the ending of Nazism by a popular revolution showed his complete inability to realize the true structure of such a totalitarian system. Not one of these systems has so far been overthrown in this way, for reasons we know already; and where, as in Fascist Italy, the spell was broken, it was not through a revolution but through a coup d'état, which was enormously facilitated there by the fact that, unlike Russia and Germany, Italy still possessed the monarchy as the last remaining source of the legitimate, pre-revolutionary authority of the State. Even under these exceptionally favourable circumstances the coup d'état in Italy was carried through only after the complete disintegration of the army and in face of a disastrous defeat.

In Germany, too, *the totalitarian regime could only be brought down by a coup d'état or by foreign intervention.* We are not entitled, therefore, to ask why the Germans did not throw off the Nazi yoke. What we have to ask is why those who were in a position to do so did not bring down Nazism by a coup d'état when that was still possible. The only group, however, that had the power to do this was the Generals,

representing the Prussian tradition, and their following. That no serious attempt was made in time and carried out in full force from that quarter is indeed the indelible historic default for which the group of Generals and the classes at their back are to blame. Their guilt in this respect makes it necessary to do away once for all with the influence of that group, an influence which throughout the last hundred years has been so fatal for Germany herself and for Europe; but this is not guilt that can be charged against the Germans as a whole.

Sages and social philosophers of all times have declared that the worst harm a tyranny can do to a nation is to drag it down morally, and all examples in history confirm the rule. The process of *continuing demoralization and corruption* has been given an unexcelled description, once more by Benjamin Constant, in dealing with the experiences of the Napoleonic period. The whole relevant section of his book, *De l'esprit de conquête et de l'usurpation* (Part I, chapter viii, pages 28-32) deserves to be quoted here in full, because every sentence fits the case of the German nation and describes its inner collapse, after falling victim to Nazism, better than we can do. Above all, we may let Constant speak for us in describing the influence upon the German people of the world war wickedly started by the Nazis:

"Although abandoning itself to its gigantesque projects, the government would not dare to say to its nation: Let us march to the conquest of the World. The nation would reply to it with a unanimous voice: We do not want to conquer the World.

"But it would speak of national independence, of national honour, of the rounding off of the frontiers, of commercial interests, of precautions dictated by prudence; of all sorts of things—for, inexhaustible is the vocabulary of hypocrisy and injustice.

"It would speak of national independence, as if the independence of a nation was compromised because other nations are independent.

"It would speak of national honour, as if national honour was wounded because other nations uphold their honour.

"It would allege the necessity of the rounding off of the frontiers, as if this doctrine, once admitted, did not banish from the earth all repose and all equity. For it is always outwards that a government wants to round off its frontiers . . .

"This government would invoke the interests of commerce, as if

it was serving commerce to depopulate a country of the flower of its youth, tearing away the most necessary hands from agriculture, from manufactures, from industry, to raise blood-drenched barriers between itself and other peoples.

“Under the pretext of precautions dictated by prudence, this government would attack its most peaceful neighbours, its humblest allies, attributing hostile projects to them, and affecting to forestall aggression meditated by them. If the unfortunate objects of its calumnies were easily subjugated, it would boast of having been too quick for them: if they had the time and the force to offer resistance, You see, it would exclaim, they wanted war, because they are defending themselves . . .

“Subjects who suspect their masters of duplicity and perfidy, are trained in perfidy and duplicity: he who hears the leader who governs him called a great politician, because every line that he publishes is an imposture, wishes to be a great politician in his turn, in a less exalted sphere; truth seems to him foolishness; fraud, cleverness. In the past he lied only for profit: he will lie in future for profit and for self-respect. He will have the conceit of the impostor; and if the contagion extends to an essentially imitative people, and a people among whom everyone is afraid to be thought a dupe, will it be long before private morality is engulfed in the shipwreck of public morality?”

We should like to say to the Germans: Do you not see yourselves in this picture? Did you not permit yourselves all too readily to be deceived as to the true causes and the real aims of this war? Were you not already sunk so low that you took pride in the successful overpowering of Denmark, Norway, Holland, Belgium, and other peaceful and kindly nations, and regarded the heroic resistance they then put up as mere obstinacy? Did not all of you, whether Nazis or not, allow yourselves to be carried away by the intoxication of victory when your armies overran France? Did you not permit yourselves so to stray in heart and mind that you supported your criminal leaders when they fell upon Czechoslovakia? Did you not hear with dull indifference, even perhaps with satisfaction, the news of the first fiendish bombardments of Warsaw, Rotterdam, and Belgrade, of London and Coventry? You profess now that you were never supporters of the Nazi regime. Could you, if you had honestly asked yourselves, have given this assurance when Europe seemed to

be falling into the laps of your masters, and would you be giving it now if the whole adventure had not come to grief? Let each of you hold deep communion with himself, and give account honestly and unreservedly to himself as if he stood before Almighty God. If you have to admit that you cannot answer our questions with a candid Yes, then admit your guilt. Nazism would have gained final and complete mastery over you were you to fail to admit the immense guilt you have incurred and the bitter need to expiate it and so to purge yourselves of it.

But we should also have to say to the other nations: The guilt of the Germans is different to that of the National Socialists; it is the guilt of the seduced, not of the seducers, the degradation of the violated, not the infamy of the violators. It shows that a people on whom tyranny has worked its own corruption of soul had integrity enough to be capable of corruption, and may still have integrity enough left to be able to rid itself of the corrupting poison if it is not simply damned in common with its seducers. They knew only too well that there is no greater means of corruption than a successful war, which adds to all the other bonds with which a tyranny shackles its people the strongest bond of all, that of common peril from without and the ignition of the patriotic and warlike passions that peril arouses.

It will also be rather unimaginative to ask why there were no mass mutinies of German troops or risings of German workers. Everyone who has served in an army knows that it is not a simple matter to mutiny, and that efficient command can make it almost impossible. Must we still further point out that the Austrian troops fought everywhere with distinction for the Third Reich, to say nothing of the contingents of all sorts of nationalities who fought many a hard battle against the Allies in Italy and France? And finally we may ask, why did the millions of slave-workers brought into Germany from other countries keep quiet, though they surely had reason enough to rise against their masters?

It would be fatal if the Germans made up their minds that their guilt had been the work of an inescapable destiny, and so missed the way to liberation from their guilt through repentance and regeneration. But it would be just as lamentable if the rest of the world failed to realize that under a totalitarian regime it is possible to share the

responsibility for the regime without bearing the same responsibility as its leaders, and if the world were so to miss the way to understanding helpfulness and Christian compassion.

THE ATROCITIES

But how can we get over the appalling fact that the Germans, wherever they carried their conquests, committed the most horrible crimes and hair-raising cruelties, that the German name is associated with the cold-blooded extermination of millions, with the infliction of indescribable tortures, with unfeeling destruction of irreplaceable values, and with causing infinite mental torment? All those of us who learned with boundless indignation and the deepest horror of these crimes know how near we were to wishing for that execrable country the fate of Sodom and Gomorrah. And yet the National Socialists would have attained one of the aims they were probably pursuing with their atrocities if we allowed ourselves to be carried away by our anger into identifying Germany with Nazism. This is the very point at which our sense of justice is subjected to its hardest test and must not fail us.

This sense of justice demands from us the recognition of the fact that what was done in Germany's name was not done by the Germans as such, any more than all the crimes that were committed earlier in time of peace against the Germans themselves.¹² How can it be forgotten in this connexion that we have to do with a totalitarian regime, and not only that but a regime at war and accordingly able to carry totalitarianism to the last extreme, a regime able to keep its people almost entirely ignorant of anything it did not want them to know, and one which, even if the people had been informed,

¹²See, among other sources, the British White Book, No. 2 (1939), on the proved crimes committed by Nazis against Germans. Those there recorded are but a tiny sample from the vast flood of the atrocities committed in Germany since 1933. Probably the full truth will never be learnt, since too many of the witnesses have themselves become victims of the same terror machine. According to one of the pamphlets published by the German trade union secretariat in Great Britain (*The Other Germany, Facts and Figures*), in the first three years of Nazi rule sentences totalling some 600,000 years of imprisonment were pronounced against "enemies of the State." The number of persons condemned to death by the end of 1938 was estimated at 12,000, and in April, 1939, according to the same source, there were 302,562 political prisoners in Germany, while the registers of the Gestapo contained the names of some two millions of political suspects. The number of persons herded together and tortured in the concentration camps is as yet beyond all possibility of estimating, and the things that happened in Germany during the war must have been one long chain of horrors. Only with the discoveries at Belsen and the rest did the veil begin to be lifted. Unfortunately, the world only too easily forgets that these Golgothas were originally set up for the martyring of *Germans*.

would have ruthlessly suppressed all expression of opinion? As a rule it was Nazi special troops or agents of the Gestapo that carried out the sanguinary orders of the leaders, and often the worst of all were not strictly Germans. At the head of the German terrorist regime in the unfortunate Netherlands was an Austrian, of even more undoubted nationality than Hitler, and Vlassov's Cossacks competed with units of the S.S. and the Gestapo in mercilessness. Would anyone set down for all time as crimes of the Italian people Graziani's massacre of Arabs in Libya, the abominable conduct of the war in Abyssinia, or the Good Friday attack on Albania?

It was Nazism that showed its true features, not the German nation, in the atrocities.¹³ These features could long ago have been recognised if sufficient attention had been paid to the earlier activities of Nazism in Germany. What else but the blackest criminality could have been expected, for instance, from the Dr. Best who excited German opinion long before the Third Reich with his so-called "Boxheim documents"? It might even fairly be asked whether the Italian historian, Guglielmo Ferrero, was not right when, after the massacre of June 30th, 1934, he wrote that the savagery of the Nazis, exceeding all that had gone before, might be due to the exceptional resistance they had to overcome in Germany.

But even if we speak of Nazi and not of German atrocities, the question forces itself upon us how it happened that Germany could produce so many men of the lowest type as instruments of Nazism. This question, too, needs careful attention. It would be difficult, and in conflict with an impartial examination of German history, to claim that the German is by nature cruel, treacherous, or otherwise loathsome, and even the recollection of the horrors of Louvain and Dinant of the war of 1914 must not lead us astray. There certainly is a German character, formed by history and environment, and we shall have occasion to discuss it at length, and certainly this character has many dark sides, among which one is struck by a certain methodical vehemence. But nobody who is trying to form an objective judgment can rest content with the theory that the Germans are a race of murderers, thieves, torturers, and bestial bullies.

¹³The same conclusion forces itself upon us in all other cases. Thus, C. Burnell Olds writes in the American *Foreign Affairs* that the Japanese people must not be held responsible for the cruelties of the Japanese militarists, and he writes in warm appreciation of the attractive sides of the character of the Japanese people and of Japanese culture.

If we probe to the bottom of the question, we shall probably come up against the following general truth: Every society, however civilized and Phaeacian it may seem to us, conceals in its depths a sewer of subhuman types, which must be kept firmly closed like the fisherman's bottle in the "Arabian Nights." In other words, the powers of evil lurk everywhere, awaiting their chance from some earthquake or conflagration, revolution or war. Bore into these depths and it will be seen how masses of the dregs of humanity are hurled into the air. Ask the French with their bloodthirsty militia of the Laval regime, the Norwegians with their "hirden," the Dutch, the Croats, the Hungarians, or the Austrians, and let not the Englishman or American be too sure that "it can't happen here!" Instead, let them be glad that they have been spared that experience so far. And we will not be so tactless as to ask how things are in Russia.

The upheaval of society by totalitarianism must of necessity bring the worst elements to the top.¹⁴ That is a general law, which has only been confirmed by Nazism and is of universal application all over the world. Wherever anything resembling the Nazi upheaval has happened (as in Russia, in Italy, or elsewhere), the biggest blackguards have regularly set the tone, dragging the honour of their country through the mire. Thus what happened in Germany was simply that such men as the execrable von Papen and his backers, who can never do adequate penance for their stupidity and perversity, opened up the sewers of the German community, a process which some of them, by unpardonable stupidity, even mistook for the fresh-water supply.

That is the actual kernel of what happened. Let us repeat, however, a sad truth already mentioned, by adding that twelve years of such a regime have carried the germs of corruption deep into the German soul, and above all have played havoc that will only be made good with difficulty in the souls of the particularly easily influenced German youth. It is unfortunately probable that thousands upon thousands of Germans have been incurably perverted. All that can be done will be to make it impossible for them to do any harm.

¹⁴Cf. the special chapter X of the book by F. A. Hayek already mentioned, *The Road to Serfdom*.

CHAPTER II

THE GERMAN RESPONSIBILITY

GENERAL AND GROUP RESPONSIBILITY

So far we have been at pains to practise the difficult virtue of justice, and to prove the untenability of the theory that at bottom Nazism is nothing else than the hated Germany, of which it is impossible to be too suspicious. We have shown that Nazism was essentially of the general type of totalitarianism, though in one of its worst forms ; but it was not Teutonism. We have represented to the world outside Germany its great share of responsibility, and have uttered a warning against any pharisaical condescension toward the German people, not least in order to prevent the outer world from falling victim to the same poison of national arrogance, collective hatred, and summary collective justice, and to remind it, with the example of Germany before its eyes, of the external truth of the Bible saying (Prov. xiv, 34), "Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people." We have given reason to conclude that the difference between the average German and the men of other nations is in truth not so great, and that Nazism corresponded at least as much to the general spirit of our day as to the special German conditions. We have emphatically urged that the Germans must be regarded at least as much as victims deserving of commiseration or persons seduced against their will as creators of the nameless evil that in their name and with their aid was spread over the world. Thus we have made our own the apt formula of a Frenchman, *Les Boches ont vaincu les Allemands*.

But because we are concerned for justice, we have kept clear of any attempt, which in this case would be specially repulsive, at special pleading, and have spoken of deep guilt that demands expiation where no other term would have been in place. The time has now come to lay full emphasis on this German guilt and to discuss it in itself and in its context. We shall have further to show emphatically that we owe it not least to the Germans themselves to do this, since their only remaining hope lies in the recognition of their guilt, in repentance, and in rebirth.

Important as it is to recall that the Nazis came into power neither

through an irresistible popular movement nor through a free majority vote but by the backstairs method of the coup d'état, it is, on the other hand, an unfortunate fact that even before they came into power a large part of the German people had ranged themselves in support of the Nazis, while the rest of the nation had been gravely weakened in its power of moral and intellectual resistance. Anyone who witnessed the final triumph of the Nazis in Germany will never forget how it all began.

Here again I find it necessary to speak of a personal experience. At the end of the summer vacation in August, 1930, I was in my native village, on the Lüneburg Heath. The Nazis had been feverishly at their subversive work for the impending Reichstag elections. One day my mother—whom I was never to see again after 1933—came to my study and told me with great emotion that even among our sensible peasants of Lower Saxony the Nazi activities were having really alarming success. There were very few people left with whom it was still possible to talk rationally. My mother made it clear to me that my standing as a University professor required of me that I should speak a word of warning. I was profoundly alarmed, and agreed with my mother. Accordingly, I had a leaflet printed, in which I spoke to our peasants as one of themselves, appealing to their common sense and their consciences and showing how appallingly they were being deceived. I made it perfectly clear to them what must ultimately happen if these hordes were to come into power. By now they will have realized that my darkest prophecies have been outdone. But at the time I was laughed at and abused. With that unforgettable Reichstag election, in which the Nazis became at a bound one of the strongest parties and were able, together with the Communists, who had also triumphed, to exert at once a crippling influence on Germany's political and economic life, the tragedy began.

It was indeed a sort of terrible mass epidemic, rapidly spreading and every day making fresh victims, even in quarters one had always supposed to be immune. And against this Nazi plague nothing seemed to avail, neither the appeal to common sense nor the moral appeal, while on the other hand it was furthered by every possible circumstance and chance happening, in a way that made one feel that this was indeed the march of destiny. All classes were dosed with the poison in the most effective quantity and strength in each case, and

everywhere every class was brought down, clerks and mechanics with their employers, peasants and aristocrats, professors, officers, industrialists, bankers, civil servants. The friend of yesterday turned overnight into one possessed, with whom it was no longer possible to argue, and the more the movement succeeded the more the nervous, the cynical, and the ambitious joined the genuinely convinced fanatics, the crazy, and the moral perverts, and the more the will-power of those responsible for the administration of the State was crippled. As for the later behaviour of the Germans, after the triumph of totalitarianism, we have already said all that is necessary.

All this is the responsibility of the German people as a whole, from which only a minority can with a good conscience claim to be free—a minority to which is due from us the deeper respect, the more comfortably we were installed in some safe haven abroad. Let those who have to share this general guilt never forget that it involves complicity in the most bestial atrocities that men could devise and commit, complicity in the torture and death of millions, in the devilish crimes of Oradour-sur-Glane, Vercors, Lidice, Auschwitz, Maidanek, and countless villages and towns of almost all the countries occupied by the Germans, complicity in the massacres of Warsaw, in the vandal destruction of irreplaceable libraries, and in thousands of other enormities which the pen can scarcely put down. And let no German drive the exasperation of the world to the pitch of frenzy by attempting to deny happenings of which there is documentary evidence, and of which he knows in his heart that the accounts are true, since they are entirely in consonance with the character, which he knows only too well, of Nazism.¹

But much greater still is the special *guilt of a few important groups*, who made the decisive contribution to the triumph of Nazism, and this guilt is still graver since these were persons prominent in German life who have no claim to the benefit of extenuating circumstances

¹There will certainly appear shortly in all the principal languages of the world a compilation recording all the verified crimes committed during the war in Germany's name and by Germans. This will be a fearful brand on the German name and will remain so until the Germans voluntarily and as a body make good all that can be made good. As one of many volumes of evidence, mention may be made of *Le livre noir du Vercors* (Neuenburg, 1944), the work of Swiss eye-witnesses who belong to the best of their country and with some of whom the author is personally acquainted. For the rest, people have seen from Switzerland with their own eyes German torturers at work in the French frontier village of St. Gingolph as in a frightful documentary film.

that is due at all events to the masses. Among these people are especially the following groups:

- (1) Those who took part in the decisive intrigue of January 30th, 1933—von Papen and his accomplices, the Prussian junkers threatened by the "Osthilfe" scandal, the Generals involved in the plot, and captains of industry, such as Fritz Thyssen;
- (2) the military circles that gave their support through thick and thin to Hitler as a man who was being successful and was meeting their professional wishes, so that they let slip the opportunity for a coup d'état;
- (3) the financiers who, like Schacht, placed their very ordinary talents at the service of the regime out of cynicism, ambition, or infatuation;
- (4) the members of the Reichstag who in March, 1933, passed the decree conferring absolute powers on the Government;
- (5) the civil servants and diplomats who, like Popitz, Schwerin-Krosigk, Neurath, and most of the German representatives in foreign countries, placed themselves in the service of the new masters; and
- (6) the great group of intellectuals—professors, journalists, artists, and authors. With this last group we shall have to deal at length, as its responsibility is probably the worst and the most unpardonable.

THE INTELLECTUALS

Once a movement breaks out, may God protect
us from the journalists and the professors.

ADALBERT STIFTER *in a letter*
to Gustav Heckenast (1849)

THERE is scarcely another class in Germany that failed so fatally as that of the intellectuals in general, with the exception of a large part of the clergy of both confessions. This failure was so fatal because it resulted in a crippling of the conscience of the German nation. At a later stage we shall go thoroughly into the deeper historical roots of the betrayal of their mission by the German intellectual leaders. It was, in point of fact, a long process of degeneration and perversion of which we have here to describe the final steps.

We must begin with the remark that Nazism was unthinkable

without an intellectual labour of subversion that had been carried on by whole generations of decadent writers. Nietzsche and his disciples must be named among these, and Spengler with his *Decline of the West*, and all those lesser spirits—Wilhelm Stapel, Hans Blüher, Franz Haiser, Steding, or Ernst Jünger (who, to make matters worse, was also a writer of talent)—men whose names are almost entirely unknown outside Germany, but who must not be overlooked by anyone who wants to understand how their country could plunge into the abyss of Nazism and commit not only spiritual but physical suicide.

We may ignore here the actual illiterates of the Nazi party, but we must point out the particularly great influence of groups of rather higher mental quality who, for the very reason that they spread essentially Nazi ideas in a disguised form, made an important contribution toward preparing the German middle class and the students for the Third Reich. The pattern for this sort of *perfumed Nazism* was supplied by a circle of hysterical literati who distributed every fortnight in the review *Die Tat* ("Action") an eagerly swallowed concoction in which ideas of Nietzsche, Spengler, Sombart, and others of that ilk were mixed together in the style of the youth movement.²

This so-called "Tatkreis" ("Action" group) presented in an unbearable style an extremism for which even Bolshevik Russia and Fascist Italy were too liberal. It pressed for further enslavement of personality and a further spread of authoritarian tutelage. Its strident nationalism led in economic policy to the pure insanity of autarky. In its wild irrationalism it rejected the economic and social order of the West and its whole civilization. It preached homage to the myths of the nation, the State, the masses, and power, and contempt for economic prosperity and for the principles that assure it—and all this in the tone of social prophecy, with unctuous talk of destiny and history, and with an arrogance only exceeded by its ignorance. "Long live

²At the time the present writer contributed, under the pseudonym Ulrich Unfried, a series of articles to the *Frankfurter Zeitung* (September 6th, 11th, and 13th, 1931) entitled "Die Intellektuellen und der 'Kapitalismus,'" in which he duly stigmatized the irresponsible activities of the *Tat* group. As chance would have it, the first of these articles was immediately preceded by a paragraph reporting the dismissal of the whole of the subordinate teaching staff of the Prussian secondary schools! Without this state of physical distress of the intellectual proletariat it is scarcely possible to understand the poisonous effect of such propaganda as that of the *Tat* group. All the graver was its responsibility.

barbarism," was its cry at one moment. Such was the mire in which it loved to wallow. These *Edelnazis* ("gentlemen Nazis") had at all events sense enough to know that their babbling could not face rational discussion, and accordingly, in the true Nazi style, they elevated unreason to the dignity of a supreme principle, and declared the weapon of argument to be a "liberal" toy—liberal" clearly implying for them the depth of depravity. From this dreaded weapon of argument they took refuge in physical force. The illiberal person, wrote *Die Tat* on one occasion, "either depends confidently and resolutely, but passively, on himself, or, where he has to fight actively and combatively, takes the sword. The sword is the only argument that does not fit in with the liberalist system of reason and discussion. The sword and the fist." In other words, the only reply they had left was the cudgel or the pistol. Those who did not think as these strange representatives of the intellect did must, they considered, have their mouths shut. Later, when in the Third Reich persons yet more brutal applied this principle to the *Tat* or "Action" group itself, the group recognized that mouth-shutting cannot be elevated to a principle unless one is quite sure who plays the active and who the passive part in that pastime.

These few reminiscences of that dismal time may give some idea of the atmosphere then prevalent in the leading intellectual quarters in Germany. Such were the forces that tirelessly sapped the foundations of German civilization and prepared the chaos that followed. These were the men whom we had to denounce as guilty of spiritual arson. But before the foreigner bursts out in all too righteous indignation, let us remind him that abroad there were the same groups as in Germany ready to lap up the same sort of propaganda. One of the best-known works of the *Tat* group—Ferdinand Fried's muddled book *Das Ende des Kapitalismus*—found eager and sympathizing readers in a French translation, and many were the writers in the Western countries who played the same tune. What is still more serious is that in Great Britain and elsewhere today such a book as Carr's *Conditions of Peace* should have had a remarkable reception, although it corresponds in many respects to the German pattern of the *Tat* group. Indeed, it even seems as if this book is only a particularly striking symptom of a much broader current that has been noted today in Britain by attentive observers.³

³Cf. again Hayek's book already mentioned.

Professor Carr belongs to an English University. In Germany also, and, indeed, here in Switzerland, where the university professor has always had exceptional standing, even more than elsewhere, it was from the *Universities* that most of the other intellectuals drew the disintegrating poison which they then distributed, duly packed and processed, to the mass of the people. This is not the place for drawing the portrait of the German professor who became generations ago in so many Faculties the caricature of any intellectual leader of integrity—a specialist with no political sense but any amount of self-confidence and usually a bad temper. As a rule the professor of this type was a splendid worker and often a master in his special field, but he became a pretentious idiot the moment he blundered into vital questions of the State and society. That type of professor was always ready to hold a stirrup for the Government, whether by expounding the economic basis of Bismarck's protectionism, or by supporting a sabre-rattling policy in foreign affairs or furthering the propaganda of the German Navy League, or by defending the unrestricted U-boat warfare, or finally by burning incense at the altar of Nazism. Here again we are concerned only with indicating the last stages of this betrayal of the mind and placing our finger on the almost inexpiable guilt of many German University professors in preparing people's minds for the Nazi hordes and later, when Nazism put their courage as intellectual leaders to the test, proving ready, in good faith or bad, to palliate its assaults on culture and law and morality and to swallow its absurdest theories and even sing their praises. This is a harsh accusation, but it comes in this book from one of those very professors, who in his long years in German Universities had the best of opportunities of studying the work of this type of professorial politician and noting its appalling influence on academic youth. The writer knows, too, from his own experience, the difficulty the others, the honourable type, had in holding their own in this stuffy atmosphere. The academic freedom which progressive governments were at pains to respect had indeed become here more and more a charter for irresponsibles.

It is particularly disgraceful for the German Universities that it was there that the method of the base appeal to the mob first made its way in the form of anti-Semitism, and with ever-growing success. At the end of the nineteenth century, Theodor Mommsen, in his

public controversy with the anti-Semitic Treitschke, had made a strong effort, to his great credit, to stave off the beginning of the movement, speaking for an earlier and nobler Germany; but later there was no opposition of equal weight. No observer with any but a myopic vision could deny the existence of a very grave Jewish question, and in Germany it had become more and more critical in the last generation in particular; but this is no excuse for the coarse anti-Semitism that became more and more dominant in the German Universities. I had experience myself of the length to which anti-Semitism had been carried, when I tried once to point out to my colleagues, at a general meeting of professors, the great services done by Jewry for the German language and culture in eastern and southern Europe—with the result that I found my position as Professor at Marburg University most seriously affected. Now that this anti-Semitism has worked immeasurable harm to Germany, it is to be hoped that most of the German professors will have realized where that course has landed them.

In order to give as vivid an impression as possible of the atmosphere prevalent in the German Universities in those years of the germination of National Socialism, I will speak once more of a personal experience; for it is indeed necessary to have lived in Germany at that time to be able fully to understand the origin of the Third Reich. My story goes back to the days of the so-called Kapp Putsch of 1920, the first uprising of pan-Germanism after the war: at that time the Weimar Government was still in a position to deal with the business quickly and thoroughly. I was then a student at Marburg University. In those critical days there had been formed at the University a committee of Democratic, Socialist, and Catholic students, together with leading professors of theology (Martin Rade, Rudolf Otto, Heinrich Hermelinck), to grapple with the menace arising from the reactionary students' associations, which had been secretly armed. The railwaymen, who had struck in answer to the putsch, assembled a special train for us, which took us to Kassel to see the General Officer commanding the Reichswehr. When we had represented to him how threatening the situation was in Marburg, the General gave us a reply that was typical of the attitude of army circles at the moment—that the situation had entirely changed, since a Communist rising had broken out in Thuringia, against which the

Marburg students ought to be sent in a solid body. "Red hordes are marching through the country, murdering and setting fire to everything." That was the new story. On this we students who were loyal to the Government demanded that we, too, should be armed as an independent formation—the "Volkskompagnie Marburg"—and conveyed to Thuringia. There we were witnesses of a dreadful tragedy that gave us for all time a conception of what we had to expect from those of the students who then and later set the tone. On occupying the small industrial town of Ruhla we had found the "Communists" perfectly orderly; but we learned that on the previous day the reactionary corps of students, under an ex-naval officer who belonged to a Prussian junker family, had kidnapped fifteen workmen from a neighbouring village and murdered them while under transport—"shot while attempting to escape," as the cynical formula already ran. And only a few days earlier I had been in charge of the guard in the Wartburg, where with the captain of the *Burg*, von Cranach (a descendant of Lucas Cranach, the great German painter of the time of the Reformation), I had given myself up until late at night to the magic of a great German past.

We accumulated evidence of the facts from all around, aroused German public opinion, and succeeded in getting those responsible brought before the courts. Not only, however, did the authors of the crime remain unpunished, but it was on us, and on the professors of theology I have named, that the hatred and anger of the dominant groups of professors and students in the University fell. Thereafter, anyone who had been on our side in this affair was a marked man—and not the students who had committed an abominable crime. This state of things remained unchanged down to the start of the Third Reich, and nothing better illustrates the growth of savagery out of which that Satanic regime proceeded. If today in Germany there are professors who declare that they never did anything to help criminals into power, let them recall among other things that "tragedy of Mechterstädt." We have not forgotten it.

It was here, too, at the German Universities, that in the lecture rooms, among the associations, and at every opportunity that offered, there were cultivated *a brutal nationalism, a stupid national pride, an unreasoning hatred of the victor Powers, and an inhuman contempt for international law.* It was here that a war of revenge was most energeti-

cally preached, and the way thus prepared for the triumph of Nazism. Here the young students were systematically fed on lies and trained in unreason. It was the University of Berlin that at that time placed on its war memorial the inscription *Invictis victi victuri*—"to the unconquered the conquered who will conquer"—and it was a professor of theology (Seeberg) who invented this.

Naturally the Faculties of social science provided a special opportunity for practising intellectual treachery and preparing the way for Nazism. Thus it is mainly the names of jurists and philosophers that could here be given. In Germany there were, indeed, few Faculties of law that were not filled with the spirit of obdurate anti-liberalism, anti-democratism, nationalism, and anti-Semitism, and it was this spirit that was thus carried into the life of the country by those who later became judges, administrative officials, and lawyers. It was in these Faculties that the saps were pushed forward that undermined the edifice of the Weimar Republic, weak as it was in any case. In these Faculties was forged in every possible variant the theory of the anti-liberal total State—by a Berlin professor named Smend, who invented for it the name of "sociological State," by the Bonn professor Carl Schmitt, who later played so sinister a part, by the Viennese professor Othmar Spann, and by many of less note. All these teachings fell on a soil that had been most efficiently prepared by such "muck spreaders" as Spengler's brilliant but perverse *Decline of the West*.

It can be said to the honour of the German economists that the part they played up to the start of the Third Reich was far less pernicious than that of the jurists. It may even be claimed that the great majority of them remained loyal to the spirit of social understanding and of comprehensive assessment in which that science, when it is pursued with a genuine regard for economic and social facts, gives special training. In addition to this the younger generation of German economists were seeking at that time with energy and understanding and impartiality a return to the tradition of the strict economic doctrine which had suffered eclipse under the dominance of the historical school. If there was any Faculty in which a breath of the liberal spirit was to be found, it was the Faculty of Economics, and this accounted for the emphasis with which this group of professors fought against the economic doctrines of Nazism, and especially

against the insane system of autarky. There were exceptions, some of them of the worst sort, such as Othmar Spann, already mentioned, and Werner Sombart, who had much in common with him in character and mentality. Sombart had already given evidence of his quality during the first world war in his unspeakable pamphlet *Händler und Helden* ("Traders and Heroes"); and later, in his book *Deutscher Sozialismus* (1934), he supplied a model collection of pet theories of Nazism. These writers were seconded by a bevy of lesser spirits, whose names may be permitted to fall into oblivion.

There were many grave lapses among the representatives of medicine and of the natural sciences (with the creditable exception of a few individuals and branches), and the general atmosphere of the medical Faculties often exceeded that of the legal Faculties in unintelligence. The philologists and the historians maintained the good tradition for the longest time, though here, too, there was no lack of professors whose honest work in their own field did not prevent them from making most unfortunate excursions into politics. It is true that the average historians did not renounce their devotion to the neo-Prussian tradition, and certainly in this field there were plenty of preachers of the baldest nationalism, who felt themselves to be epigoni of Treitschke. German historical science was no less indisputably influenced by the tendency to a certain naturalism that began with Ranke; we shall have more to say about this tendency, which contributed immensely to creating the general mental atmosphere in which Nazism first became possible. Finally, there was scarcely a single German historian who was able to judge with the impartiality of the universal historical outlook the development of Greater Prussia since 1866, still less the origin and course of the first world war. But it is difficult to discover any prominent historian who so directly prepared the way for Nazism as did professors of constitutional law or of political science.⁴ As for the philologists, many of them, particularly the specialists in the Romance and Anglo-Saxon languages, can only be referred to in terms of deep respect. To mention only one example, it must not be forgotten that Ernst Robert Curtius, in his book *Deutscher Geist in Gefahr* ("German Spirit in Danger"), published in 1932, courageously and energetically

⁴A good idea of the high average integrity of German historians down to 1933 is given by the *Propyläen-Weltgeschichte*. This "World History" had to be promptly rewritten in the Third Reich.

set himself against the fatal process already far advanced; while no one familiar with the subject need be reminded of the importance of Karl Vossler's work. Even in Germanic philology the strict scientific discipline which, of course, philology especially inculcates kept most of its students clear of nationalist cultural charlatanry. Here again a single name may stand for many, that of the Berlin Germanic scholar Konrad Burdach, who had the courage to tell the Germans plainly that in the Middle Ages they had had no truly national culture, and that Middle High German epic poetry was mainly an art of translation from the French.⁵

In spite of all bright spots, the general picture we have had to draw of the influence of the German professors down to the Third Reich remains dark enough, and we hope their best representatives will agree with us when we conclude that a great load of responsibility had here been incurred. But the responsibility grows to infinite dimensions when we examine the behaviour of the German professors after 1933.

The Nazis knew only too well that the German Universities were among the strongholds it was most important for them to capture if they were to gain the indispensable dominance over the German soul—a stronghold scarcely less important than the Churches. Accordingly they left no stone unturned to gain this end, and where they had no success with intimidation or brutality they tried persuasion or transparent indulgence. Here again I can speak from my own experience. In the spring of 1933 I was deprived of my post as professor at Marburg University. I was thus declared an "enemy of the people," and was also treated as one by not a few of my colleagues. To the obvious astonishment of the Nazis, I did not take the slightest step to get back into their good graces and gain re-admission to the company of *Volksgenossen*, or "national comrades." Instead of showing the obviously expected penitence, I took every opportunity of challenging the Nazis in every way I could. It was obviously as a result of this attitude that one day two S.S. men—of thorough "bruiser" type—came to see me in order to explain politely to me that after all my proper place was really with them. I could not resist the temptation in replying to them to give vent to my scorn and indignation; but the moment they had gone away crestfallen I

⁵Konrad Burdach, *Deutsche Renaissance*, 1920.

realized that I must now get across the frontier at once. But even at my first place of exile, with friends in Holland, a Nazi emissary came to see me in order to give me a flattering invitation to return home in honour.

In Italy many University professors refused to take the oath to Fascism and bravely held their ground. In Germany the number of professors who lost their posts after 1933 through being true to their convictions was exceedingly small. Most of the professors then dismissed under a so-called "Law for the Restoration of the Professional Civil Service" (which, of course, in reality undermined it) were victims of the racial legislation. It is impossible to say what they would otherwise have done; but to judge from the attitude of those Jewish professors who at first imagined themselves to be safe on account of their special standing, and who often looked down contemptuously on their dismissed colleagues, Jew or Gentile, there seems ground for a good deal of scepticism.⁶

In view of all this it is not to be wondered at that after the Nazis had tricked their way into power the representatives of learning in general behaved with what can only be described as either cowardice or cynical opportunism or mental and moral perversion. Even in those branches of knowledge which had shown themselves capable of resistance so far, there now came a collapse that for years made an end of any usefulness of the Universities as a mental and moral counterweight to the official barbarism, and it seemed as if, now that there was no longer any need for self-restraint, they were going over to the lowbrow camp with flags flying. It was a scene of prostitution that has stained the honourable history of German learning, and represents one of the worst and most fateful examples of group responsibility.

Here again justice certainly demands that we should set certain limits to our condemnation; once more we must be careful not to be too summary in our verdict. On the one hand there were cases of brave resistance, standing out all the more brightly from the poor record of the majority, cases that ended—if nothing worse happened—with the silent disappearance of not a few scholars of high repute, while those who now set the tone were brought so much the more

⁶As for the German émigrés who feel themselves to be divided from Nazism only by its anti-Semitism, see the bitter remarks in Hayek, *op. cit.*, p. 137, footnote.

into the foreground. On the other hand, the general picture was falsified, by no means to the benefit of traditional learning, by the fact that everywhere worthless fanatics, careerists, incapable private lecturers, or purely partisan "intellectuals," men who had never caught a breath of the true spirit of science, occupied the professorial chairs so ardently aspired to, gained control of the journals, wrote new approved textbooks, carried on the learned societies, and represented the German Universities in relation to the outer world. In a sense there was repeated on a small scale in the Universities what had happened to the German nation as a whole: they were driven into active or passive complicity, but they must not be judged on the same basis as those who had done the driving.

The general picture, however, was most depressing. This applies especially to the cases, unfortunately by no means few, in which former Socialists, Democrats, or Liberals not only capitulated miserably, but even gave active service in the former enemy ranks, trying to bury their past in oblivion by means of an undignified display of zeal. We cannot refrain here from mentioning these unfortunate lapses; on the other hand, the utmost respect is due to the courage of many former Democrats. Equal esteem is due to the old Alfred Weber, professor of sociology at Heidelberg (and brother of the late Max Weber), who in 1933 had the courage to haul down the swastika flag single-handed from the University building, and who remained adamant to the end. The Berlin philosopher Eduard Spranger also deserves mention here, though it has to be said that he showed weakness at the beginning of the Third Reich. According to the report of a Swiss national who was present, he had the spirit to begin a lecture on "Socrates and Plato" in the ruins of Berlin with the following words: "In the midst of this great world conflagration let our thoughts rest on those figures of old who have been shining examples down to our own time. They laid the foundations of Western culture, for the retention or rejection of which nations are struggling with one another today." He is an example of those professors who in the end made up for their complicity at the beginning of the Third Reich by courageous testimony to the insight they had gained.

In accordance with the totalitarian character of the new regime, there was scarcely a single branch of learning on which Nazism did

not try to set its stamp—there was even a “German” mathematics and a “German” physics—but, naturally, certain fields were specially imperilled. These included, above all, jurisprudence, economics, history, and certain branches of medicine. They were made instruments of the State and its ideology to such an extent that very few professors had the courage, the strength of character, and the high intellectual capacity not merely for keeping silent but actually for assuring the undeviating progress of their honest scientific labour. Among these mention should be made of the economists Walter Eucken (Freiburg), Constantin von Dietze (Freiburg), and Wilhelm Gerloff (Frankfurt). As for history, it provided striking confirmation of the dictum of Edgar Quinet: “Dans la servitude rien ne se corrompt si vite que l’histoire”⁷—nothing, if it loses its independence, is so quickly corrupted as history. It was only through a spiritual corruption of this sort that it was largely historians, archaeologists, and art critics who everywhere in the occupied countries of Europe, to the utter disgrace of learning, became mental myrmidons of the Nazis and looted archives and museums.⁸

We have described at this length the pernicious part played by the German Universities because it shows us the process of mental and moral degeneration in the quarter from which, after the Churches, the strongest resistance ought to have come. *Corruptio optimi pessima*—the German Universities not only failed to stand firm but actually were among the worst centres of infection. What, then, could be expected of the other intellectuals, especially the *judges* and the *secondary school masters*? Like academic freedom, the independence of the judges was meticulously respected by the Republican Governments, though many judges grossly abused it, especially those who had to deal with criminal or civil cases of a political character. Scarcely one of the offences that revealed the spirit of the later Nazism was adequately punished (the tragedy of Mechterstädt was only one of countless examples), and the jurisdiction in issues of a political character was to an appalling degree plain and open flouting

⁷E. Quinet, *L’esprit nouveau*, 3rd edition, Paris, 1875, p. 187. Quinet adds on the next page: “Les esprits, même philosophiques, ont de peine à se soustraire aux enseignements de la force criminelle, dès qu’elle parle avec arrogance”—“Even those with the philosophic mind escape with difficulty from the teachings of criminal force, so soon as it speaks with arrogance.”

⁸One of the worst cases is reported in the official document *The Nazi Kultur in Poland*, published by the Stationery Office in 1945 for the Polish Ministry of Information.

of the German State, which tried desperately to defend itself against this spate of Nihilism. Have the German judges, too, learnt the fearful lesson, after making their contribution to the triumph of Nazism? Have they realised that the independence of the judiciary is a constitutional asset that brooks no abuse?

The subversive work of the judges was largely carried on in the full glare of publicity. Not so the work of the schoolmasters. It is very difficult to estimate the quantity of poison administered day by day to the growing generation in the German schools. The masters' classical education had not trained them in humanity. Unfortunately, there is plenty of evidence that here, too, an evil seed was sown, despite the praiseworthy efforts of a minority of exemplary teachers.

On top of this condemnation of the German professors, judges, and schoolmasters, must we adduce the shameful examples of the apostasy of artists? The task is all the more repugnant since it would be difficult to discover any prominent German poets, painters, sculptors, actors, or musicians who showed themselves entirely inaccessible to the courtship of the regime. Why could not Gerhart Hauptmann keep silent and Furtwängler lay down his baton?

Finally, as regards the tragedy of the German *press*, we could only do it justice in a lengthy special account. Naturally the Nazi Government, like every other totalitarian system, had to bring the whole press under its control as quickly and as completely as possible, in order to assure itself of one of the principal instruments for dominating and misleading public opinion, and naturally no opposition could prevent it from following the example of Italian Fascism and appropriating the whole newspaper system by force or fraud and placing compliant editors in charge. Thus in the twinkling of an eye all the German newspapers were turned into organs of Nazism, playing the same tune shrilly or softly on their various instruments. Individual nuances were still to be observed in the first years, but these reflected the unresolved problems of control within the regime, where they were not simply intended to throw sand into the eyes of foreign observers. It was due to these conditions that, above all, the old-established and respected *Frankfurter Zeitung* was able to maintain a special character that at least was more or less civilized, and so was able to remain fairly readable to a great extent even when its opposite numbers in Berlin were already competing with the

Völkischer Beobachter. It was depressing to see how even the *Frankfurter Zeitung*, which at first had honourably tried not to be entirely untrue to its famous tradition, and which smuggled into its columns many a forceful sentence against Nazism, was slowly but steadily throttled. One would have been glad to see it come to a glorious end in 1933. But for reasons which it will only later become possible fully to disclose, it was condemned to be slowly corrupted until at last, when it no longer seemed to be of any use even in this form, it was put out of its misery. Worst of all was the fact that even in this case, the best in the German newspaper world, the editorial staff themselves took part in the corruption of their paper. It is, indeed, true that the staffs of many other newspapers did much worse. Here again, the record in Nazi Germany was probably worse than in Fascist Italy.

INTELLECTUAL RESISTANCE

All these reproaches affect the leaders of intellectual life in Germany in two ways. Against the very worst they are a charge of having paved the way for barbarism, long before its eruption in 1933, and a different charge against those who showed cowardice and stupidity after the trick that set barbarism in the saddle. We have already stated the extenuating circumstances which in justice have to be admitted. It would also be thoroughly pharisaical if the world were no longer willing to bear in mind that lack of character, the conforming spirit, and opportunism seem unfortunately to be a general characteristic of our epoch, and it was precisely the class of University professors that failed, and not only in Germany, when the need came for a courageous defence of the ultimate values and convictions of our civilization.⁹ It should also not be forgotten how quickly the intellectuals outside Germany showed themselves ready to take the keenest interest in Nazism, and how many of them were easily won over by the Nazis as paid or unpaid helpers. We have not even been spared the repulsive spectacle of some of these members of the "intellectual Foreign Legion" of Nazism turning later into thoroughly unfair denouncers of Germany.

These same demands of justice compel us further to insist on the fact that after those first fateful years of the Third Reich there came an undoubted change among the German intellectuals, which indi-

⁹Cf. W. Röpke, *Civitas humana*, Erlenbach-Zurich, 1944, pp. 191 *sqq.* (English translation shortly to be published by W. Hodge & Co., London.)

cated a continuing process of courageous reflection and self-assertion after the catastrophe had come for which generations of decadent and irresponsible writers had prepared the way. Just as the epidemic was preceded by a long period of intellectual incubation, it may very well have been precisely the German intellectuals who first came to their senses, who were the first to be filled with acute horror of the reality which some of them had foreseen in desolate dreams, and who realized the path that of necessity, when a certain philosophy was carried to the last extreme, led to Oradour-sur-Glane, to Maidanek, and to the devastation of the cities of Europe. True as it is that these intellectuals were infected for a period, shorter or longer, with Nazism, or may have sailed with the wind through lack of character, it would be wrong to suppose that they were permanently converted to Nazism and had sunk to the level of party functionaries. It may, indeed, fairly be said that, if the great majority of them ever really succumbed to the poisonous influence of Nazism, they had since for a considerable time been actively trying to get rid of it.

This was the more noteworthy since the war into which Nazism had driven Germany had naturally, as everywhere else, and as at all times, a strong integrating effect, of which we have already spoken, and placed every intellectual under the temptation to identify himself, at least "for the duration," with the regime. This was all the more to be expected since, in a tragically vicious circle, the Allied Powers in their exasperation seemed to envisage for the Germans a fate that would make them suffer for the deeds of the regime. Thus the German intellectuals must have travelled very far when many of them, in spite of their divided feelings, preferred to see their country's fall rather than the continuance of the regime. I know a German professor who, when he learned of Rudolf Hess's flight to Scotland, brought one of his last bottles of Rhine wine from his cellar, to celebrate an event that seemed to him to portend the end of the war. If anyone does not see at once what that implies, let him try to imagine a German professor doing the same thing if the German Crown Prince had flown to England in 1917. Everybody will agree that the idea is unthinkable, and this throws a strong light on the fundamental contrast between then and now. It makes, of course, no difference that my professor had mistaken the true character of Hess's escapade. And what are we to think of another good Conservative

intellectual, who had the courage to write to me during the war that there was nothing to be seen in the streets any longer but the "horrible uniforms"? Would he have written that in 1918?

All this does not in the least alter the fact that many German intellectuals have loaded themselves with an enormous responsibility. The thing that matters, however, is that probably some of them would actually contradict us if we had any idea of trying to find excuses for them. It is this that shows the moral revolution of which we shall have later to speak particularly.

Even in the worst years after Nazism sneaked into power, there was no doubt that many German intellectuals were succeeding in combining a temporary weakness towards Nazism with an astonishing general culture. They saved that general culture during the inferno, and preserved it as a precious stock that is among the few assets that remain to Germany after the war, a stock with which a new start could be made. Anyone who has watched the new publications in the German book market since 1933—apart, of course, from party literature—and the more intellectually discriminating periodicals, would have had to be blind to fail to recognize their high level. There have been real masterpieces of genuine scholarship and fine book-making among them, fat volumes like the *Handbuch der Weltliteratur* (Handbook of world literature), a masterly work of its sort, by Hans W. Eppelsheimer, who was not allowed to know anything about Thomas Mann, but did justice to Heine; or Egon von Eickstedt's comprehensive and thoroughly scientific *Rassengeschichte der Menschheit* (History of the races of mankind), published in 1937 and now in a second edition; books such as F. Schnabel's *Deutsche Geschichte im Neunzehnten Jahrhundert* (German history in the nineteenth century), of which three volumes have been issued since 1934, a book everyone will read with pleasure and profit; and finally the excellent collections of masterpieces of world literature (Kröners Taschenausgaben, Dietrichsche Sammlung, Inselbücherei, etc.). Admirable editions in Greek and German of the pre-Socratic philosophers were published, and though, indeed, none of the party officials read them and no S.S. man ever heard of them, they were eagerly bought by a wide educated public and gave evidence of a very comforting continuity of German culture. The interest in the

cultivation and spread of the cultural tradition of the ancient classics was almost greater than ever.

French literature was placed in various ways before the educated German public, with gratifying objectivity and in an unmistakable effort to present thereby all that is common to the European peoples; and the same applies to English literature. Meanwhile the cultivation of the German classics was not neglected, and it is significant that Adalbert Stifter himself, a writer as remote as could be from the spirit of the day, was published in carefully prepared editions. Even Stifter's *Lesebuch zur Förderung humaner Bildung*, published in 1854, appeared in a facsimile of the first edition, and this was not mere respect for tradition but part of a rebel programme.

To complete the picture we may mention the mass of art books, which no more betrayed the regime under which they were appearing than did the books already mentioned. Here, too, there was a clear fundamental tendency—to turn away to the heritage of the past and to pay homage to the universal scales of value. It is significant of this tendency that poets of the classic and romantic traditions continued to write, even if, like Ernst Wiechert, they had to pay for their courage with the concentration camp. That truly Christian literature continued in full course need scarcely be said. Thus the impression might be gained that under the National Socialists the German intellectuals largely remained as they had always been, with their great and, indeed, fatal weaknesses but also with their achievements and with a cultural tradition that deserves respect. It was only the very complex character of the German mind that enabled the intellectuals to preserve this tradition without openly breaking with Nazism.

In this continuity one may see at once a sort of opposition, if only passive. But it is significant and encouraging that some of the German intellectuals—the number is difficult to estimate—had for years no longer contented themselves with the mere preservation of intellectual continuity but had gone from passive to active opposition. That little is known of this, as a rule, outside Germany is due, of course, mainly to the fact that these movements of intellectual resistance could only be noiseless undercurrents, of which everyone in Germany became aware at once, but rarely anyone outside the country. It should, however, be mentioned here as of general know-

ledge that intellectual life in Germany, even before the ultimate wild excesses of the final phase of Nazism, had been so shackled that Fascist Italy had seemed in comparison almost a Paradise of freedom. No one who cared for life and liberty could dare in Germany to write for a single day with the freedom of Benedetto Croce in his review *La Critica*, Luigi Einaudi in his *Rivista di Storia Economica*, or certain authors in the *Giornale degli Economisti*.

But the thing that nevertheless was attempted in Germany until a few years ago was so astonishing that people asked themselves how it could be possible under the very nose of the Minister of Propaganda, Josef Goebbels. There is every reason for us to raise our hats with deep respect to the pluck thus evidenced. There is all the more reason for doing so since the most courageous—such men as the distinguished editor of the *Deutsche Rundschau*, Rudolf Pechel, and several of his staff, after they had long stood up openly for the fundamental principles of civilization and humanity, fell victims to the concentration camp, with the imminent danger of which they had had to reckon every day. To this *Rundschau* group belonged the ill-starred Doctor Goerdeler, who was executed, after the attempted coup d'état of July 20th, 1944, in the same brutal way as the Generals in the conspiracy. We may recall that Doctor Goerdeler lost his office as Chief Mayor of Leipzig in 1933 because he had the courage to oppose the demolition of the memorial to Mendelssohn.

When I think of all these men, and when I look through the old numbers of the *Deutsche Rundschau*, I really do not know where at any time in this war greater gallantry was shown than here, the gallantry of the individual who had not fame and honour to expect but certain destruction, and who was surrounded by no warm comradeship but only by a silent group of unknown though grateful readers. That review, of which I am here making special mention, was well known to all the intellectual leaders in Germany and felt by them to be a refreshing oasis in the desert around them—until in the end the *Rundschau*, too, was brutally silenced. It was the pattern for publications that could be read with pleasure and profit by any educated person in any country, representing the best heritage not only of German but of Western culture, and again and again astonishing us all by its extreme boldness and its expertness in the art of the subtle implication. Whoever read it could not but gain the conviction that

there was an intellectual élite of deep seriousness in Germany, rejecting with loathing all tyranny and cruelty and lawlessness, regarding war as a frightful catastrophe, searching all civilization for the eternal treasures of the mind, clinging to every German name of the past and the present that could fill it with comfort and with pride and could still be openly mentioned, drawing refreshment alike from Horace and from George Washington or Montesquieu, and fighting with profound Christian conviction against nihilism, fatalism, and the cult of force.

Such publications had developed a mastery of the art which the gunner describes as "indirect fire," selecting for their purpose entirely remote events, or perhaps Louis XIV or Napoleon. Under this remarkable type of camouflage it had been possible to publish not only protests against the persecutions of the Jews but even a very positive appreciation of Mr. Churchill—in Germany in the very midst of the Nazi war. The men of this group were true to the principle laid down by Wilhelm Raabe during the period of Prussian sabre-rattling after 1871—"It has always been a privilege of decent people in disturbed times to keep to themselves, rather than prudently shout with the crowd as rogues among rogues."

The size and importance of this group must not, of course, be overestimated. But does it really mean so little that thousands of professors, judges, schoolmasters, writers, industrialists, or land-owners belonged to that group? And can it really have been so small a group if certain books rapidly went through edition after edition, and when in the end they became unobtainable were actually copied out by hand? I may mention as a random example the collection first published in 1935 of the letters of Jacob Burckhardt, which are, indeed, among the most refreshing in recent German literature, and which must have been read if one is to realize what it means for the book to have had a big sale. I may also mention Alfred von Martin's *Nietzsche und Burckhardt*, a book that takes a clear stand against Nietzsche and for Burckhardt, and seems to have been a comfort to countless readers—or Walter Eucken's *Grundlagen der National-ökonomie*. The same may be said of the publications in belles lettres, which kept aloof from the prostituted propaganda literature and in contrast to it were distinguished by a high average level.

The main tendencies of the thought of this intellectual élite may be summarized as follows:

(1) Rejection of totalitarianism and its various characteristics (unfreedom, lawlessness, imperialism, dependence on the masses, collectivization, and dishonesty). This, of course, could not be given direct expression, but it could be revealed by the unambiguous attitude to historically or geographically remote examples and by the emphasized preference for writers who defended Christian, Liberal, democratic, individualistic, and humanist principles against the new barbarism. Plain conclusions could also be drawn from the publication of books describing the terrorist regime of the French Revolution. A high point was reached by the article already mentioned on the South American dictator Lopez. In the same issue of the *Deutsche Rundschau* (April, 1941) an idealized picture was painted of the old Germanic democracy, of which this was said: "The leader (Führer) had to bring conviction in argument and counter-argument, as the free expression of opinion was an unquestioned right of every free man . . . The king of the Germanic peoples was no god upon earth; he was subject to the freest criticism. This was in contrast to the rulers of eastern peoples, who were deified by flatterers." All these tendencies were illustrated by the fact that sympathetic attention was paid to the defeated opponents of the great despots of world history. Characteristic, for instance, was Werner Jaeger's book *Demosthenes* (1939), and similarly the rediscovery of Cato, Talleyrand, Constantin Frantz, and Madame de Staël. There were printed with grim satisfaction the Memoirs of Madame de Rémusat concerning Napoleon, from which Jacob Burckhardt had drawn, and it was not forgotten to invite attention to this passage of close interest to every German: "Thus it was a long time before we realized that every conquest merely added a new link to the chain that shackled our liberties. When we had become aware of the mania this orgy had produced, it was too late to offer resistance: the army had become the accomplice of the tyranny, and would have seen in the cry for liberation nothing but sedition." This was precisely the situation in which a German found himself.

It would be impossible fully to understand how the German intellectuals were able to venture on this course, so long as they were able to use their pens at all, if we did not bear in mind that since the beginning of the war against Russia the German people had had to suffer such terrible sacrifices that their mental attitude to war and

death had completely changed. Clemenceau once made the profound remark that the German has a most peculiar attitude to death, almost amorous, but this is certainly only true of a theory adopted by the German in a fundamental romanticism and mysticism until now ineradicable. This is certainly bad enough, and is one of the main reasons why the average modern German has thought of war and battle with so much more disturbing lightheartedness than other peoples with a healthier outlook. Yet, must not any human beings abandon this theory in face of the ghastly reality of modern massacre and bombing, exchanging it for a normal human fear of death and the normal human horror of mass murder? To that feeling Matthias Claudius gave eloquent expression in his war poem¹⁰—which has characteristically been banned in the German schools since Bismarck's day. The change had already been observable during the first world war. In 1914 the German students' regiments had gone singing to their death at Langemarck, and young men had volunteered in masses for the *frischfröhlicher Krieg*, the "brisk and merry" war; but very soon all that was changed. The volunteer became a strange figure no longer understood by the other soldiers: he was supposed to have "wanted war"—and the "brisk and merry" soldier of 1914 turned into the deeply serious, grimly determined "trench pig" who did his duty and regarded the *Heimatschuss*, the wound just bad enough to get him home, as the height of good fortune. It is scarcely too much to say that the German army in the West in 1918 consisted entirely of men who at bottom were pacifists or at all events could

¹⁰This poem by Matthias Claudius, of Hamburg (1740-1815), begins:

's ist Krieg! 's ist Krieg! O Gottes Engel wehre,
Und rede du darein!
's ist leider Krieg—und ich begehre
Nicht schuld daran zu sein!

and ends:

Was hül'f mir Kron und Land und Gold und Ehre?
Die könnten mich nicht freun!
's ist leider Krieg—und ich begehre
Nicht schuld daran zu sein!

('Tis war! 'Tis war! O angel of God, defend us,
And do thou intervene!
'Tis war, alas—and mine
Be not the guilt for it!

Crown, country, gold, and honour—would they help?
They could bring me no joy!
'Tis war, alas—and mine
Be not the guilt for it!)

have been turned into pacifists in a moment. It seems as if now, at all events among the older men, a similar change had taken place in recent years—in proportion as the Third Reich consisted more and more of the dead and their relatives. The soldiers were saying in November, 1918, that the defeat had really been a bit of luck, “as otherwise we should soon have had to stand to attention in front of every letter box,” and it has been stated that in recent years this sort of grim humour had become popular again in Germany, so far as it had not been overborne by anxiety about the peace plans of the Allies.

(2) This anxiety about the inevitable catastrophe, in which the just and the unjust would have to suffer alike, found expression in recent years not only in private conversation but again and again in print in more or less veiled form. It was plainly visible in the passage about the dictator of Paraguay already quoted. The same astonishing *Deutsche Rundschau* wrote in its issue of August, 1941: “It is a harsh law of history that every nation has to suffer for its regime, even when it was compelled to put up with it by inhuman sufferings and inconceivable terrorism.” Such allusions were to be met with again and again, perhaps with reference to Louis XIV or to Napoleon, and even a philological analysis of the *Persians* of Aeschylus provided the opportunity for them. We may assume that the fear of what was to come was bound up not only with a sense of guilt but also with some slight hope that this time the catastrophe might involve the rulers and the people in differing measure.

(3) The economic and social views of this group of intellectual leaders were difficult to grasp because, as everywhere, they were probably still very confused. We may say definitely, however, that not a few of them took less and less delight in economic planning, Socialism, and collectivism, and began to rediscover the inestimable value of the Liberal economic outlook. No thoughtful person, even among those associated with the regime, could escape the impressive object-lesson of a collectivist economic system, and even among the working-class it was reported that the question was being asked what was the actual difference between such a system and the Communist system. The masters of propaganda and of mass psychology enthroned in Moscow knew only too well why they permitted the “free committee” of Germans there to place “a free economic system” on their programme, bizarre as this must seem to anyone with know-

ledge of the facts. In this connexion mention should also be made of the great interest aroused by the courageous defence of a competitive economic system by Walter Eucken and his group, and the echo produced by my own writings—especially *Die Lehre der Wirtschaft* and *Die Gesellschaftskrisis der Gegenwart*—in spite of the extraordinary difficulties of getting hold of them in Germany.

(4) With a certain renaissance of economic liberalism was associated a tendency sharply opposed to the collectivist aims of Nazism. There was constant evidence of disgust with the colossal, with mass organization and dragooning, and a longing for a "simpler existence" (Ernst Wiechert), for decentralization, for the small groups within range of a man's vision, for security far away from mammoth concerns, great cities, and the Moloch of the State, for release from the unendurable collective existence of the termite State, for gardens, for houses instead of flats, for peace and privacy—among the workers as among other classes. All this means that the cult of the colossal began to lose popularity in the very country that had carried it, like everything else, to excess, and people who had been driven by immoderation sought to return to the golden mean. In addition to this, it became clear to every thoughtful person how mendacious and how contrary to the true nature of the peasantry the Nazi cult of the peasant had been; for the one thing of which such a totalitarian, collectivist State can least of all make use is naturally an independent peasantry rooted in the land. And perhaps nothing was more significant or more hopeful than the fact that in the midst of the inferno of the Third Reich leading intellectuals discovered, apparently for the first time, how dubious a figure is the so-called "Faustian man," of whom so much had been made, whose praises had but recently been sung by Spengler, and for whom in Germany, as also in Fascist Italy, the name of "dynamic" man had been invented. It was now suddenly found how empty and senseless is action for the mere sake of action, and Goethe's tragedy, which had lent its name to this type of man, was at last given its right interpretation: It is Satan himself with whose help, Faust, at the end of his restless life, trampled down the simple human happiness of Philemon and Baucis in order to enjoy "the blessedness of command" and to erect his colossal buildings.

In harmony with this profound revulsion of thought was the effort to return to the old and tried sources of wisdom and humanity, above

all to Christianity and the classics. This explains why the ancient Greek and Roman literature seemed to be enjoying a popularity unknown before in Germany. It is well known that since the beginning of the nineteenth century classical philology has had very great achievements to its credit in Germany and has for a long time virtually held the lead; but it had always been no more than a humanism of learned circles, with less influence on general culture in Germany than, for instance, in Britain or France. Thus there had been no attempt to make the classics accessible to a wider public in bilingual editions such as the Loeb Classical Library or the Collection Budé. It is striking that a few years ago a change came in this respect actually under Nazism. Various publishers, particularly Heimeran in Munich, had issued a number of parallel texts of the classics, and just at the beginning of the war a start had been made with a comprehensive collection of bi-lingual texts on the British and French model. But it was not only Christian and ancient literature that profited by this renaissance: Chinese philosophers, Dante, Thomas of Aquinas, and the German classics were drawn upon to satisfy the intellectual hunger of readers who had suddenly found themselves, thanks to the regime and its war, faced with the ultimate problems of mankind in the most urgent way. Not without reason was there talk of a "revivifying current" in German literature and art. The very gratifying fight against the barbarization of the German language—which had been proceeding at an appalling pace under the Nazi regime of the semi-educated masses—was also, perhaps, connected with these tendencies.

Every clear-sighted person will agree that these were very welcome undercurrents, permitting the hope that the German problem, which is at bottom a spiritual one, need not be insoluble. Now, the reader will scarcely need to be warned that account must be taken of the many reservations needed in offering this picture. He will in any case be inclined to say that what has been said here is too good to be true. The danger that he may read too much into it will thus not be so great as the danger that he will attach too little importance to it, or will simply disbelieve it. But perhaps I shall seem more entitled to belief when I myself insist that these are, of course, only tendencies, whose true importance is difficult to assess.

We must return with still more caution to a final point, the most important of all. This is the question that has occupied us again and

again, whether signs are already discoverable of the disappearance of the fatal "Prussian" complex among Germany's intellectual leaders—so far as we can speak of them at all as a definite group. Are they beginning to see that the *Realpolitik* to which they were so addicted was not only bad morals but bad policy? That the Bismarckian Reich was a disastrous mistake and that "blood and iron" produced an appalling harvest? That Bismarck's greatness lay, after all, if we look closely into it, merely in his being of sufficient calibre to master for a time the chaos he had himself created in home and foreign policy? That he founded a tradition that has ruined Germany at home and abroad? That the Reich he contrived was an artificial construction that could only be held together by intense and unceasing effort? That his annexation of Alsace-Lorraine began the era of armed peace in Europe? That an immoral policy cannot be exculpated by the favourite phrase of *Dämonie der Gewalt*, "the daemonism of force"? That after the frightful collapse of Bismarck's work the Reich must cut its coat anew?

These are some of the principal questions the German élite must ask itself today—or so much of the élite as still exists—and only if it answers Yes shall we be able to note its radical conversion. It cannot yet be confidently stated that that has happened. But one needs only to understand the language that had become necessary under the Nazi regime in Germany—like the man in the fairy tale who understood the language of the birds—to detect evidence that among the German intellectuals serious thought had been given even to this particularly delicate point. It was plain that here, too, the seed had begun to sprout beneath the soil.

Even the cult of regional art, which the Nazis had incautiously fostered at the outset, was bound to work centrifugally and to reinforce the regional consciousness at the expense of the overworked cult of unity. Even the effort, observable in recent literature, to hold up a more or less idealized Prussianism as a model for the ruined generation of today was not to be despised. Moltke or Schlieffen, for instance, was presented to the German reader in such a way as to suggest the question: Where are upright and unpretentious men like that to be found today? Interesting in this connexion was a book by the Freiburg historian Gerhard Ritter, *Machtstaat oder Utopie?* (1940), in which Machiavelli and Sir Thomas More were contrasted in a

discussion of the relation between ethics and politics.¹¹ The book is essentially a shamefaced whitewashing of Machiavellianism and of *Realpolitik*, but it is evident that the author is no longer comfortable about the matter. He makes play accordingly with the convenient excuse that there is indeed a *Dämonie der Macht* of which it would be hypocritical to deny the existence, and he brings this charge of hypocrisy against More, against Gladstone, and against British policy in general. A psychological analysis of this book creates the impression that the author is fundamentally troubled by deep scruples. As, however, he has not yet battled through to a real change of outlook, he tries to soothe himself and those who think with him by demonstrating that the others are no better, indeed are worse, since they are not as honest as the German Machiavellians. This sense of guilt—though still suppressed—is at least a welcome advance. It is still more gratifying to see that the *Deutsche Rundschau* in its review of the book defends More against the German writer.

All this was a very timid and as yet half-hearted beginning. But there were better things. Thus we noted with glad surprise that even in Conservative circles there was a sign of something that had very rarely been visible in the past—a readiness for national self-criticism. Thus we found, again in the *Deutsche Rundschau* (April, 1941), "Megalomania is one of the most dangerous diseases of a nation." The "subservience of the middle class" was mercilessly denounced, and the hard statement was made that "Every German carries a lackey's livery in his knapsack." The vices of the Germanic heroes were ruthlessly exposed, and they were not treated by any means in the style of patriotic school primers. Further, it is not without importance that the memory was revived of eminent non-Prussian statesmen of the past, whose line of thought was entirely opposed to the Prussian tradition—such statesmen, for instance, as the Württemberger Johann Moser, who in the eighteenth century won fame by his systematization of international law, or the Hanoverian Justus Möser, whose political wisdom was highly appreciated by Goethe. All these were discreet hints that there are other German countries besides Prussia, each with its own history and tradition, which gained new lustre now that the Prussian tradition was so heavily compromised. The result of them was that Nazi propaganda had to give

¹¹Cf. also the sharp criticism in K. Thieme, *Das Schicksal der Deutschen*, Basle, 1945, pp. 114 sqq.

more and more attention to combating the reawakening of regional consciousness. From these hints it was but a step to cast doubt on the desirability of great States in general and to rediscover the advantages of the small State. This again could, of course, only be done with the utmost discretion, as, for instance, in Bernhard Knauss's book, *Staat und Mensch in Hellas* (1940), which aroused great interest, or in Werner Jaeger's *Demosthenes*, already mentioned.¹² Knauss defended the particularism of the Greek city State in a way that could be applied elsewhere as well as in Greece.

These were some of the seedlings that had come into view before complete darkness fell over the Third Reich. They were only recognizable by a trained eye, and even then it was not always possible to be sure that it was not a case of optical illusion or of the sprouting of some mere weed. Moreover, there had been plenty of later events that could not fail to influence these movements of intellectual resistance. Those who a few years earlier had still been capable of strong reaction were bound since to have largely given way to hopelessness and inner collapse, of which it was difficult for the outsider to have a correct idea. When the present book was in the press in Switzerland (May, 1945), it could only be expected that the intellectual leaders, the very men on whom the last hopes for the future of Germany must rest, would under the continually increasing strain on mind and nerves and body, after twelve years of such a regime, have lost much of their resilience. In addition to this, the uncertainty as to the Allied policy with regard to Germany was bound to reduce to deep perplexity the very classes in Germany on whom the world must now depend if it does not propose simply to place this great central country of Europe for an indefinite period under alien rule, or to transfer it to some other nihilistic mass regime. Many of Germany's intellectual leaders had already fallen victim to the latest persecutions, and one after another the voices here singled out for mention were silenced, some of them for ever. Concentration

¹²In contrast to the Prussian historical tradition, represented especially by Droysen and Beloch, which had glorified the forcible "unification" of Greece by the Macedonians, with an obvious side-glance at Bismarck and Prussia, Jaeger and Knauss roundly declared that what had happened was the subjugation of Greece. This was naturally bound up with a rehabilitation of Demosthenes, on whom so much contempt had been poured in the past in Greater Prussia. In Knauss we find even this sentence, inconceivable at an earlier time, when it would have seemed to border on high treason: "Even the national State is nothing more than one political form among others."

camps and Gestapo dungeons were filled with University professors, clergy of all denominations, writers, and members of the independent professions, and nobody can say how many of them have lived to see the day of liberation. The very frightfulness experienced in France, Belgium, Holland, and everywhere else, and the concentration camps that fell into the hands of the Allies, have given everyone abroad a clear view of the machinery of violence to which the Germans themselves were the longest and most thoroughly subjected. Thus the reality is more fearful than any description could paint. So much the more necessary is it—in Europe's highest interest—to protect, to help, and to encourage the spiritual forces still surviving in Germany.

PART II

THE HISTORIC ROOTS

If no soul perishes, how could those great souls the nations, with their bright genius and their history rich in martyrs, full of heroic sacrifices, overflowing with immortality—how could these be extinguished? When one of them is in eclipse for one moment, the whole world suffers in every nation.

MICHELET, *Le Peuple*, PART 3, CH. 4

CHAPTER I
ON THE GERMAN
NATIONAL CHARACTER

THE symbol of justice is the balance. If we want to arrive at a just judgment concerning the German nation in its terrible downfall of our day, we must continually weigh against one another accusation and exculpation. In this lies both the difficulty and the danger of our task. We must be just on one side to the weighty evidence of those who place all their emphasis on the case against Germany, and on the other hand we must not shut our ears to the voice of reason and conscience, which urgently reminds us that an unqualified condemnation of the whole German people would be a grave miscarriage of historic justice. It might be all the more fatal since it would exclude any reasonable treatment of the German problem and frustrate any hope of its ultimate solution. If we incline too much to one side or the other, to prosecution or defence, every time we do so we shall run into grave danger. If we identify ourselves without any reservation with the condemnation which the world is for very intelligible reasons inclined today to pronounce, we shall be failing in the task it is our duty to perform. No less great, however, is the danger if in opposing this condemnation we overstep certain limits. It is the danger that we might strengthen the Germans in a tendency against which they have most carefully to guard, if their present disaster is not to lose for them its profoundest lesson—that of the need for thorough-going moral purification.

In this situation we must always bear in mind that we have to speak in entirely different ways to the Germans and to the rest of the world. We have to warn the world not to allow itself to be carried away in its understandable wrath to decisions and actions that would overshoot the mark and do harm that would be difficult to repair. To the Germans we say: Take care not to take too lightly your heavy responsibility, and do not imagine that it is enough to set down the Nazis as a criminal gang with which you have nothing to do. If the Germans were to fall back on the comfortable theory that the Third Reich was no more than an unfortunate incident in their history,

involving, apart from its agents, no guilt or responsibility of the German nation itself, they would not only be lulling themselves with a legend comparable with the famous legend of the "stab in the back," but would also be doing themselves the worst of wrongs. They would be barring their own way to the moral and political revolution that will alone be able to free the German nation from a grave and obstinate disease and to give added historic meaning even to the catastrophe of today.

It is to be feared that the Germans may in any case be tempted glibly to evade responsibility for Nazism by means of a "mischance legend" of this sort. So much the more irresponsible would it be if we were to offer the slightest encouragement to this idea. It cannot be helped that some of the things we have to say to the outer world might be misused by the Germans to lull their conscience. If we wish to avoid complicity in this misuse, we must emphatically warn the Germans against it.

We must do still more. We must leave not a shadow of doubt that Nazism, far from being a mere incident in German history, arose from conditions peculiar to Germany alone. It could never have come if the matters of pure chance whose existence we have no intention of denying had not found an environment that is the product of Germany's whole history. There are Hitlers everywhere, and have been at all times, but it is Germany's shame that so miserable a figure could become her leader. In order to germinate, the seed of Nazism had to find a favourable soil: it found it in the German Reich and the Germans, such as they had become in their political, spiritual, economic, and social history. The very Germans who are so ready to deny at once any connexion between Nazism and the specifically German environment, and who to that end rely on the fact that, of course, other nations too are burdened with responsibility for wrongdoing, thereby demonstrate how easily, with that mentality, they were able to fall victim, at least for a time, to the Nazi poison.

We must therefore insist with the utmost emphasis that the Third Reich is deeply rooted in German history, and that it is, indeed, the disastrous conclusion of the fateful development that began with Bismarck's brutal "unification" of Germany. But the very fact that this final outcome has been so apocalyptic gives us hope that the Germans themselves may struggle through to the recognition that

now—after the first partial payment in 1914-1919—they must pay the full price for the wrong path they have pursued since 1866. With this hope is bound up the further hope that they may now be ready for a radical change of course that will solve the German problem. This brings us to the supremely important conclusion that, true as it is that Nazism grew out of conditions peculiar to Germany, it is entirely possible to make a radical change in these conditions. We are bound to say to many Germans that their case is far graver than they imagine; but we are entitled to assure many non-Germans that the case is much more hopeful than they think. The extent of the hope depends, however, entirely on the degree to which the Germans appreciate the gravity of their case, and this is also the only hope remaining to the Germans. The time has now come for them to open their eyes and realize the course their history has taken, and also to look deep into their own souls and conscientiously to consider what they find there.

We may put it another way: The right method of serious attack on the German problem may be compared to that of the psychiatrist in approaching a clinical case. Without any preconceived notion, in the simple search for the truth, he will seek to explore the soul of the patient and its development, in order in this way to arrive at an accurate diagnosis and to apply a suitable treatment. The solution of the German problem calls, in fact, for psychotherapeutical treatment on the vastest scale the world has ever known. In this spirit we will now devote ourselves to the study of the German mind.

DIFFICULTIES

We should not be following the example of the conscientious physician if we allowed ourselves to be carried away by the anger of the moment, and over-simplified our task by just setting Nazism down as the outcome of an incorrigible German national character. Even if we were to declare all living Germans to be open or camouflaged Nazis—which we have no right whatever to do—it would be monstrous to include in this judgment all the Germans of the past and to say, "Such are the Germans today, and such they have ever been." There is a certain type of contemporary German who has become so hateful as to tempt us to include the Germans of all ages in our condemnation. The crimes of this modern German, whom we all

know and loathe, are, however, too many already for us to allow him to play a further trick on us by making the Germany of the past hateful to us, by besmirching the whole history of that great and gifted nation at the heart of Europe and reducing everything connected with it to the unspeakable level of a Hitler or a Himmler. There is further a serious danger that the very ease with which the idea of the "eternal evil genius of Germany" can be shown to be false, may obscure the real problem, that of the origin of the Prussianized type of modern German, who so easily "fell for" Nazism.

Thus we cannot under any conditions accept the vulgar theory of the "eternal German of the Gestapo." Any attempt to compile an impressive list of all the ill-deeds of German history, from the ancient Teutons down to Himmler and his minions, and of every condemnation of the Germans that has ever been pronounced, and to offer this list as evidence that Nazism revealed the German in his true and eternal form, is certainly unworthy of any serious sociologist or historian. Every educated person knows how easy it is to draw a caricature of this sort of any nation, simply by industriously making an appropriate selection of the facts of history. It would do nobody any good if the Germans tried to return the compliment.

All the more seriously must we treat the question whether and how far the national character of the Germans reveals traits that facilitated the triumph of Nazism over them. If the German seriously examines himself he will certainly be unable roundly to deny the existence of such traits. He will have to admit that without certain elements in the German character it would have been impossible for Nazism even to develop, much less gain and maintain supreme power.

It is true that we must bear in mind the great difficulties that call for solution in this connexion, difficulties implicit in any attempt at scientific treatment of so vague a concept as that of national character.¹ These difficulties are particularly formidable in the case of Germany because the German character lacks the sharp outlines and the distinct form we recognize in the French or British character. In addition to this, we have continually to bear in mind Germany's

¹The problems of the concept of national character are discussed by Sir Ernest Barker in his book *National Character and the Factors in its Formation*, third edition, London, 1939; Friedrich Hertz, "Die allgemeinen Theorien vom Nationalcharakter," *Archiv für Sozialwissenschaft*, 1925, vol. 54; A. Fouillée, *Esquisse psychologique des peuples européens*, Paris, 1903.

peculiar character as a "nation of nations," the differences of racial character being so many that we find difficulty in recognizing any national character common to all the German territories. What has the Austrian, thoroughly German though he is, in common with the modern "Reichsdeutsche," the German of the modern Reich; what has the Bavarian, the Aleman of Württemberg or of Baden, or the Rhineland, or the man of Lower Saxony, in common with the Prussian?

The truth is that the German has the greatest trouble in understanding himself—how can others be expected to understand him? The question "What is Germany?" has never ceased to occupy the Germans just as much as the other question "What is the German's fatherland?" and the two questions are both characteristic of the German's "national character."

Let us admit that the concept of "national character" is so problematic that it might almost have been created as an arena for the dilettanti and the chauvinists, and every honest man will make use of it only with the utmost reluctance. We shall find nothing to quarrel with in Schopenhauer's dictum in his *Aphorismen zur Lebensweisheit*—

"Individuality far outweighs nationality, and in any given man the former demands consideration a thousand times more than the latter. Of the national character, which has reference to the crowd, there will never be much good that can honestly be said. On the contrary, it is merely human narrowness, perversity, and baseness, making their appearance in every country in a different form, and this is called the national character. If *one* of these characteristics disgusts us we praise another, until that one disgusts us in turn. Every nation laughs at other nations, and all of them are right."

Thus in the so-called national character we shall never be able to see more than a rough average or a collective component of the individual characters of all the members of a nation; and we must not be surprised if we find little or nothing of this conception of national character present in any individual case. In the very case of the German nation, many of its greatest men seem by no means to fit the general picture formed usually of the typical German. What was there German about Leibniz, about Goethe?

And yet we know that the national character is a reality, even in the case of the German national character, which is so exceedingly diffi-

cult to define. How else could we explain the spirit of the language of a nation, common to all its nationals? It may be that G. K. Chesterton gets nearest the truth in saying that "a national soul is as undefinable as a smell, and as unmistakable."² But there is another difficulty here. We must distinguish between the character of a nation at a particular time and its apparent permanent character through the ages. The two would be identical if we had any guarantee that the national character is invariable in its essentials. But this certainly is not the case. While some traits seem to remain unchanged in the course of history, and are true constants, others may undergo fundamental changes, whether under the influence of a great historic experience or through a change in religious and intellectual conditions, or through the example of some eminent personality. Very few people keep in mind the fact that it is a great mistake to treat the national character of the European nations as a historical constant and to overlook, for example, the great change that seems to have come over the English or the French character during the nineteenth century. But in no case, probably, is this mistake so great as in that of the German nation, which, precisely in the second half of the nineteenth century, suffered under the calamitous guidance of Bismarck, under the pressure of an unexampled increase in population, and under the influence of a real revolution in its economic and social structure, a specially abrupt change in its outlook and its conditions of existence. We are convinced, indeed, that what the world understands and disapproves in general as the German national character is in the main simply a product of this very latest phase of German history.³

In fact, everyone should delve into the literature of the first half of the nineteenth century, allow himself to be influenced by the judgments expressed, not only by Germans but by foreigners, and compare the picture so gained with the type of German we find at the end of that century. Then it will be impossible to fail to note a

²G. K. Chesterton, *The Victorian Age in Literature*, p. 13.

³Among the extensive literature on the subject of the German national character, mention may be made of the following works: Reinhard Buchwald, *Die Wissenschaft vom deutschen Nationalcharakter*, Jena 1917; Bogumil Goltz, *Die Deutschen, eine ethnographische Studie*, vol. 1, Berlin, 1860; Richard Müller-Freienfels, *Psychologie des deutschen Menschen und seiner Kultur*, second edition, Munich, 1930; E. Kahler, *Der deutsche Charakter in der Geschichte Europas*, Zurich, 1937; L. Reynaud, *L'âme allemande*, Paris, 1933; J. Rivière, *L'Allemand*, Paris, 1918; F. von Hügel, *The German Soul*, London, 1916; Balbino Giuliano, *Latinità e Germanesimo*, Bologna, 1940; Eugen Diesel, *Die deutsche Wandlung, das Bild eines Volkes*, Stuttgart, 1929; Friedrich Hertz, *Nationalgeist und Politik*, vol. 1, Zurich, 1937; Max Scheler, *Die Ursachen des Deutschenhasses*, Leipzig, 1917.

really profound change in the German soul, or to fail to understand such a sober observer as Ranke when in 1832 he bore witness that the German nation was "a thoughtful, well-disposed race, with moderate needs and aspirations, attached to lawful and quiet progress, loyal to its constitution, devoted to peaceful occupations, and fearing God from the bottom of its heart."⁴ Let anyone read the *Jugenderinnerungen eines alten Mannes*, by the painter Gerhard von Kügelgen (1772-1820), and ask himself how it is that in that book one finds so likeable, so introspective and spiritual a type of German, so markedly differing from the later type. Let him allow to sink into his mind the picture of the German people drawn about the middle of the nineteenth century by the historian W. H. Riehl (and drawn without leaving out the darker side), and compare it with the protestations of love for the Germans made, certainly not in complete blindness, by the great Frenchmen of that period, Victor Hugo, Michelet, E. Quinet, and others.

Or are we to suppose that Michelet was drawing upon his imagination when in the introduction to his *Histoire Universelle* he praised "le calme, la pureté, le chaste recueillement de l'Allemagne"? And even in 1860 the German writer Bogumil Goltz wrote of the German as the universal man and added, "If there is a world economy, a divine providence, a progress of the human race, a growing humanity, there will also be a German race to the end of the world." A few decades later, and no German writer who was to be taken seriously would have ventured to attribute such qualities to the Germans. Who would not feel sympathy with the Germany of Ludwig Richter, of Moritz von Schwind, of Kügelgen, of Schubert, Schumann, Jean Paul, Stifter, Mörike, Wilhelm Raabe, and the brothers Grimm? Need we mention what eminent Swiss writers of that period—Gottfried Keller, Jacob Burckhardt, Conrad Ferdinand Meyer, thought of that earlier Germany?

Quite obviously we have here a breach in Germany's development. It is so striking that we have the impression that since Bismarck the German has lost his own soul. What has happened to him since will occupy us fully later on. In what follows here we limit ourselves to speaking with all caution of the constants of the German national character which, in spite of this latest change, may fairly be determined.

⁴L. von Ranke, *Sämtliche Werke*, vol. 49-50, p. 170.

THE "ETERNAL GERMAN"

There is a really appalling habit of talking of this "eternal German," whether in praise or blame. To the author of the *Mythus des 20. Jahrhunderts*—Alfred Rosenberg, a German Russian, as Hitler was an Austrian, Hess an Egyptian, Darré an Argentinian—"a Nordic heroic saga, a Prussian march, a composition of Bach, a sermon of Ekkehart, a Faust monologue" seemed merely "different expressions of one and the same soul." That view is as intolerable as the opposite one of those who see in the Germans only the same savage barbarians rampaging through the centuries. It is all too easy to treat the immensely difficult subject in more or less witty aphorisms, to set out isolated testimonies from widely separated centuries, and then to say: "There you have the German, arrogant, brutal, and at the same time sentimental and lachrymose, as he was even at that time."

It is very effective today to recall that as long ago as the beginning of the twelfth century a German mission seems to have behaved before the Pope at Châlons-sur-Marne in the same savage and menacing way as a Nazi trade delegation,⁵ or that in a Dutch poem of the sixteenth century the German is described as humble in misfortune but arrogant and overbearing when things are going well.⁶ In this connexion it is usual to mention the sack of Rome by Frundsberg's German-Spanish soldateska, who had got out of control (Sacco di Roma, 1527), as evidence of the eternal barbarousness of the German—forgetting that undisciplined mercenaries who for months had received no pay might be expected to behave in this way anywhere, that the Spanish troops merrily took part in the Sack of Rome, and that the looting of Constantinople by the European knights in the fourth crusade (1204) was, if possible, still more barbarous. Is it really necessary to remind such critics that the French Armagnacs or the Swedish soldiers of the Thirty Years War were a frightful pestilence, the latter so much so that "Swedes" are a byword

⁵"Magis ad terrendum quam ad ratiocinandum missi . . . cerviciosi . . . teutonico impetu frendentes," quoted in W. Kaegi, *Historische Meditationen*, Zurich, 1942, p. 16.

⁶Zoolang die mof is arm en kaal
Zoo spreekt hij een bescheiden taal.
Maar als hij komt tot grooten staat
Dan doet hij God en menschen kwaad

—poem by the Dutch poet, Jacob Cats (1577-1660). "Mof" is a Dutch nickname for the Germans. It may be added that the Germans who at that time were troubling the Dutch were probably Austrians in the service of the Habsburgs.

to this day in German popular speech? Is it still necessary just to pronounce the word "Ireland"?

If we want to avoid these dangerous paths and to keep to what is more or less demonstrable, the safest course is to proceed from the *spirit of the German language* as evidence that is constant and is accessible to scientific analysis.⁷ If we are to be polite we may talk of it, with Vinet, as a predominantly philosophic and lyrical language, in contrast with such mainly logical languages as French. To put it more plainly and in more general terms, the German language reflects the unrestrained, anarchical, soft, indefinite, romantic and non-classic, sentimental, brooding, and imprecise elements in the German—characteristics that have marked the man as unmistakably as his language.

The German language confirms the element of the florid, the Gothic, the baroque, which has struck every acute observer in the German nature, and which the German himself must admit to be characteristic of him. There is also the brooding, dreamy, introspective element, the habit of gazing into the unfathomable, that makes Dürer's etching "Melancolia" one of the most German of all works of art. There is the irrational element that, as we shall see later, continually reveals itself in the history of the German soul and is in such strong contrast to the Latin formality and clarity. In his language

"It is wonderful to see how a people has deposited the imprint of its character in the smallest details of its language; and when we reflect that the most delicate elements of the language date from an epoch of semi-barbarism, and remark further how few things, of how little value, a civilized epoch can add of this type to the work of those dark ages, we are led to questions the answer to which is not entirely to the advantage of the doctrine of perfectibility." A Vinet, *Chestomathie Française*, vol. 2, Lausanne, 1860, p. ix. Unfortunately, there is a very amateurish method of using the German language for analysing the German national character, a method against which one cannot issue too emphatic a warning. A dreadful example of it is the deduction that the German-speaking peoples—including, therefore, the Austrians and the German Swiss—must always have had a spiteful character, since they possess the word *Schadenfreude*, meaning pleasure in another's discomfiture. It is surely ridiculous to deny the universal human character of the satisfaction over somebody getting "what he deserves," and to try to build up a whole philosophy on the neat translation of a passage in Seneca's *De Beneficiis* that occurred to a German philologist (Ostermann, in 1591). It would be just as reasonable to say that only the Greeks, the Anglo-Saxons, and the Germans are familiar with home-sickness, because only they have a word of their own for that feeling—or, indeed, only the Greeks, since, of course, the Anglo-Saxon and German words are a translation from the Greek. And does not the English language actually possess a native word of its own for *Schadenfreude* in "gloating"? And could not the German-speaking peoples reply further that both English and French lack a true equivalent for the kindly German word *gönnen*? It will be seen that such amateurish theories lead along very dangerous byways, and we were sorry to see a man like Mr. Harold Nicolson pursuing these paths in the *Spectator* of June 30th, 1944. The morbid mentality of the Nazis should not be looked for in the language of Goethe.

the German seems to be untiringly occupied in pushing forward into the uttermost regions of the expressible, and when he has got as far as that he plunges into the sphere of that which can no longer be made adequately comprehensible by words, a sphere in which he occupies a unique position in the world—the sphere of lyricism, of metaphysics, and, as the ultimate stage, of music. Here there lie open for him supreme opportunities, but at the same time the gravest dangers. We may add that the formlessness of the German language permits a juxtaposition of zenith and nadir in style and expression in a way scarcely any other language does.⁸

It is astonishing how many important conclusions may be drawn from this elementary German constant. It is only a step, for instance, from formlessness and lack of co-ordination to immoderation, which has without question been characteristic of the German in all ages. He must know that he has the dangerous tendency to proceed to extremes in his thinking and acting, without law or limitation, and only too often he comes to grief in the process. He seems to possess as a hereditary defect an almost uncontrollable urge to the *fantastic* in politics (which he then, in involuntary humour, calls *Realpolitik*), in science, art, music, and in every other field. This characteristic may make its appearance in his familiar "thoroughness," in restless industry, or in towering systems of metaphysics, or in massive fugues and symphonies, but it may just as well appear also in wild frenzy, in the cult of the colossal, in intellectual extremism and radicalism. The German is always in danger of going too far, and of pursuing any thought or enterprise, whether good or, unfortunately, bad, to the uttermost conceivable conclusion. Germany is the country that has produced, in Max Stirner's *Der Einzige und sein Eigentum* (1844), the most radical and so the most ridiculous book in the world's literature; the country that kept up to the last gasp two world wars against the combined strength of almost all other nations, that carried an infla-

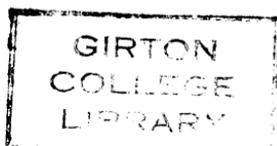
⁸Ludwig Börne, Heine's contemporary, wrote in his *Schilderungen aus Paris* (1822) the following far-fetched comment: "The French vocabulary consists entirely of silver coin; it has no copper like German, and a bad French writer never writes so badly as a bad German writer. On the other hand, French lacks the gold of the German language." Elsewhere (in *Bemerkungen über Sprache und Stil*) he says: "The French cannot have any style, because their language has one." Accordingly, the unspeakable style in which Hitler's *Mein Kampf* is written could never be adequately translated into French or English, a fact that unfortunately assisted the Nazis' first efforts to seem abroad to be almost civilized. Cf. also W. Röpke, "Die Kunst des Uebersetzens," *Neue Schweizer Rundschau*, February, 1945.

tionary process down to the complete annihilation of the currency, and finally, when it made an experiment with totalitarianism, did not rest until this had become the most total and the most repulsive tyranny of all ages.

Providence has endowed the Germans with many great gifts. If it had provided them as amply with the quality of moderation, how great a blessing to mankind, instead of a curse, their country might have become. Since, however, German history is not by any means an unbroken chain of immoderacies, but has proved again and again that the German is quite able to master his dangerous tendency, and since the recognition of one's own defects is itself the principal step toward their overcoming, we should ourselves be falling into an immoderacy of pessimism if we were not ready today to believe even here in the possibility of a profound change. The moment at which the Germans have plunged themselves by the greatest of their immoderacies into the profoundest disaster of their history should indeed give us good ground for hope.

We have mentioned the brooding element in the nature of the Germans, and from here we come to the seriousness and the *moodiness of the German*, which may grow into melancholy or evaporate into pessimistic humour. This is another cause of the German's "thoroughness," the German's pedantry, but also of the German's objectivity, the German's energy and devotion to his task. The German depreciation of form in favour of the naked reality of any matter has also one of its roots here. Thus the German frequently lacks the element of simplicity, which he finds so attractive in the Italian, whereas he himself has to reflect upon everything, to work up everything into a theory. He likes constructing theories and systems, and he is half won to any cause if it is placed before him with all the weightiness of a metaphysic or a *Weltanschauung*. Karl Marx was just as German as the mass of his followers, who swore by his fat books, and the same way to the heart of the German, through a *Weltanschauung*, was taken later by the Nazis with fateful success.

Hence the lecturing, pedagogical style of the German, and hence his habit, so amusing to other nations, of considering everything in advance down to the smallest detail, so that, for instance, he will not buy a car until he has studied a textbook of motoring. Hence the type of German who, finding two doors, one marked "Entrance to



Paradise," and the other "Entrance to Lecture on Paradise," makes for the latter. This is the soil on which, especially in Germany, the modern type of the *conscientiously laborious man* could thrive, after Protestantism had given the final and decisive impulse to that end. "I have simply to pay for being a German; it is characteristic of the Germans that they become so heavy about everything, that everything weighs so heavily upon them."⁹ So Goethe made one of his women characters speak, and every German knows how right he was. It is a moodiness, a touch of melancholy, that one finds even in a Viennese waltz with its "sunny pessimism," while at the other end of the scale we find it in the form of peevishness, of simple ill-humour, and of an absurd solemnity over trifles (over the affairs, say, of a rabbit fanciers' club)—all traits that mark the German.

This seriousness makes the German take not only life as a whole but every task, however trifling, in dead earnest. If he starts anything he is determined to go methodically about it. Thus German philology with its meticulousness, and German history with its painstaking immersion in detail, have become proverbial, like the *Reichskursbuch*, the German time-table, whose ambition it was to give faultlessly every railway connexion in every part of the world. If the German writes a scientific book, he attaches the utmost importance to making his quotations with absolute exactitude, while with British and French authors (not so much so with Americans) it seems to be almost a point of honour to get foreign names and the titles of foreign books as wrong as possible. Similarly, the average German worker or craftsman is utterly unwilling to put in scamped workmanship unless absolutely driven to it by the pace at which he is made to work or the sweated rate paid.

The German will do nothing by halves, even if the task is repugnant. This means, among other things, that he is more ready than most people to submit to the *discipline* required of him by any hierarchy or organization. This is one of the reasons why the German is so particularly easy to govern, why he will readily and intelligently take his place in any organization, and why as a rule he is an equally good and conscientious civil servant or soldier. The other reason is to be sought in his mental attitude toward the issues of public life; to

⁹—*dass sie über allem schwer werden, dass alles über ihnen schwer wird.* Goethe, *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*, Book 4. ch. 20.

this we shall come later.¹⁰ This may be a great virtue, but it may just as easily be a grave danger, and how great the danger is was shown by the readiness with which the Germans submitted to Nazi direction. It would be a good thing if they could learn that there are cases in which it is simply a duty to be disobedient and undisciplined. *Stubborn obedience and discipline have brought the Germans infinitely more misfortune than other peoples have suffered from the opposites of those qualities; without them the Germans would neither have permitted two world wars and a gigantic inflation to be carried to their ruinous end, nor have permitted so monstrous a regime as the Third Reich to come into power and to hold power for so long.* It is part of the same story that of all the forms of the proletarian movement anarchism and syndicalism were never able to gain a footing in Germany, while it was from the moderate form of Social Democracy, a system in harmony with the German character, and from the Social Democratic idea of the State with well-organized welfare and police systems and from the rigid Social Democratic party organization, that Nazism borrowed some essential characteristics.

When in his *Belagerung von Mainz 1793* Goethe admitted that he would "rather commit an injustice than put up with disorder," he certainly made his own a very German view, but it is one in which merits and faults are closely associated. In public life, too, the German loves above all to have law and order in everything, and unhappily this order is only too often merely superficial, circumstances robbing it of its moral content—justice. Everything must *seine Richtigkeit haben*, must be "as it should," with publication in the *Reichsgesetzblatt* (Official Gazette) in proper official terms, with due police order and authorizations, one leading to another with no interruption in formal legal continuity; and if everything is thus made "legal," the German's mind is only too easily set at rest, even if this legalization is applied to such enormities as the mass murder that took place under Hitler's orders on June 30th, 1934. The Nazis knew their Germans when they placed the utmost emphasis on the "legality" of the means by which

¹⁰A third cause of these soldierly qualities of the Germans is enlarged upon by K. Thieme (*op. cit.*, pp. 93 *sqq.*) in a justly severe criticism of the book *D'où vient l'Allemagne?* (Paris, 1939), by Gonzague de Reynold, a book that is a model of how not to depict the "eternal German." Apart from this, the German's military qualities present a particularly complicated problem, which can only be adequately considered in connexion with the political history of the immediate past. Only this history explains why the German has had occasion to demonstrate his readiness to "toe the line" in this particular field of military organization.

they proposed to come into power. "All in the right and proper way," as an old peasant said to my father when he told him how in his youth he had industriously poached.

This is why in Germany revolutions have been so much rarer than elsewhere, and have been so reluctantly started. Even the German revolution of 1525, in which the German peasants had every right to rid themselves by violence of a great mass of injustice and oppression, began with an attempt at amicable negotiations; and in 1848 it actually happened that the inhabitants of one of the petty German principalities humbly petitioned their prince (their *Landesvater*, "the father of their country") to grant them a revolution. During the revolutionary days of November, 1918, a menacing crowd of workers had collected in front of Dresden Castle. One of the king's aides-de-camp came out and asked them what they wanted. When he learned that they were complaining that they had no work to do, he shouted innocently, "Why, you silly asses, you ought to be glad!" There were roars of laughter at the good joke, and the crowd dispersed peacefully.

The British, too, have no love for revolutions, and they, too, place law and justice above all else; but it is a lawfulness that rests much more than in Germany on the identification of free citizens, as a matter of course, with the life of the community, whose officials are not accorded any special standing: it is not based on any sense of a duty of subordination to authorities, respect for whose majesty has become a habit. Sir Ernest Barker has pointed out that "in England we tend to make the State itself a sort of club, and to extend the methods of the club into the management of the State. In Germany, it may be said, there is a tendency to make even a club into a sort of State, and to extend the methods of the State into the management of clubs."¹¹ Anyone will understand this who has ever belonged to a German students' association, one of the most ridiculous of German institutions.

We must bear in mind that we are still concerned with identifying that part of the national character of the Germans today which seems to have also marked the Germans of past centuries—in other words, to determine the constants in the nature of the German. In so doing we must be alive to the great difficulty of distinguishing the constant

¹¹*Reflections on Government*, London, 1942, p. 290.

traits from those which may only have made their appearance in recent generations. Very often it is precisely these latter that the German ought to learn to see with the critical eye of the foreigner, in order to find the way back to his better self of the past, now that disaster has made plain to him the path along which he has allowed himself to be driven. In this connexion we must realize that many characteristics that do no honour to the German of today are degenerate or exaggerated forms of qualities which may originally have actually been virtues. It is impossible, however, to keep on indicating here the exact point at which a virtue turns into a vice.

With this repeated warning to be cautious, we will try once more to probe the *indefinite, vague, and plastic* element in the nature of the German. We find to begin with that a mind of this sort, with no fixed form or limitation, possesses and tries to combine a great wealth of potentialities. This brings us up against the well-known German characteristic of bringing everything possible under consideration and trying to comprise even opposites in a more or less forced synthesis. Hence *his inner disharmony, his often disquieting attitude toward the truth, his ability to entertain simultaneously in his mind the most heterogeneous and incompatible ideas and judgments, even if he is unable to reconcile them all with one another*, and the unrest that comes from harbouring so many souls in his breast.¹² Finally, he tries to rescue himself by making out of the illogical a higher logic and then talking of "dialectics," "dynamics," "development," "becoming," and other such things. Consequently, the German finds himself scarcely anywhere so entirely in his element as in the philosophy of history, in which, under the heading "destiny" or "development," he sets up a special account for all that is dubious. *Since, however, such a type of humanity finds no rest in his mind, since everything there is simmering, he will concentrate with all the more resolution in deciding and acting.* Thus Faust alters the opening of the Gospel according to Saint John from "In the beginning was the Word," to "In the beginning was the Deed." Does this not provide the ultimate explanation of the paradoxical element in the German that makes him seem so unintelligible

¹²In this verdict the German Müller-Freienfels (*op. cit.* p. 173), the Frenchman J. Rivière (*op. cit.* pp. 159 *sqq.*), and the Englishman F. von Hügel (*op. cit.* pp. 118 *sqq.*) entirely agree. Rivière's mordant acidity perhaps penetrates deepest when he uses the example of the philosopher Paul Natorp to show that "the German has a natural gift for effecting the synthesis of the disparate" (p. 194).

and so sinister to the foreigner? And should not the German realize that the time has come for him to set himself a law and a measure and a limit and to direct his mind to firmly established and evident points?

We have been speaking of the indefinite and inconstant element in the German mind. We may also speak of the German's *teeming emotional life*, and thus push open another door to understanding, which in turn leads to many side-doors. Instead of spending many words on this with German emotional extravagance, we will simply mention the fact that for the German, *Weihnachten* (Christmas) is a word whose whole magic is almost beyond the understanding of a non-German, and that the special symbol of this festival, the Christmas tree, has made its way throughout the world from German lands. All Germans are as one in their warm feeling for the inner radiance of this festival, however differently they may think about everything else, and when in the winter of 1918-1919 battles were raging in Berlin between the Spartacists and the Government troops, on Christmas eve the fighters went peacefully to their homes in tacit agreement that at the moment the feast of Christmas was the thing that mattered.

It will rightly be remarked that this sudden softness alongside so much that is hard and indeed brutal deserves the depreciatory epithet "sentimental" and throws into strong relief the inexplicable discord in the German nature. But are we on this account to stigmatize the gentleness, the German *Lieder*, the fine German Christmas songs, or Stifter's "Heilige Nacht," and not, on the contrary, the hardness that has probably been superposed on it only in recent generations, and are we not to hope that the German may return in this respect also to his better and, we think, his true self, instead of offering the world this repulsive spectacle of the brutal-lachrymose?

The Christmas tree comes from the forest, and here we have another word that offers a key to the German nature. We need only to pronounce it in order to indicate the German's quite specially intimate and, if you will, primitive *feeling for nature*, a feeling that harmonizes with the twilight of the highland forest. Is it not remarkable that Germany should be not only one of the most thickly-populated and most highly-industrialized but also one of the most extensively afforested countries? That here until lately—until the Nazi architects of ruin in their obsession with war penetrated to the

uttermost corner with their motorways, their aerodromes, and their concealed war factories—there was a solitude remote from the world, in primeval forests in which the black stork (*Ciconia Nigra*), the blue roller (*Coracias garrulus*), the crane, and the eagle-owl (*Strix bubo*) were to be found? That until a few decades ago there lived in the woods of the Weser highlands a real hermit who looked as if he had come out of Weber's *Freischütz* or of one of Moritz von Schwind's cartoons, and that as recently as 1917 there came to the recruiting office at Celle a young peasant from a far corner of the Lüneburg Heath who said he had heard that there was a war going on and that he had got to report? Where else was there an industrial country in which it was possible to make grander trips far from the main roads?

All this presupposes a people with a specially intimate relationship with nature and a great respect for her. We can detect that relationship and respect in German lyrical poetry, in the place of the forest in German fiction and in the German opera, in the reluctance of the German to cut down an old tree, and in the high standing of forestry in Germany. It is significant that it was a German émigré of 1848, Carl Schurz, who, as Home Secretary, took the first steps for the preservation of the American forests, and so acquired the nickname of "American Head Forester." It is also relevant in this connexion that the Germans (including here, as in so many other respects, the German-Swiss) have given the hunt a quite special character, which they express by the untranslatable word "Weidwerk," a character in which the passion for the chase as a sport is united with knightliness and the enjoyment of nature. Those who have never lain in wait for the roebuck at dawn on a June day in a hunting stand in the forest, without in the slightest regretting missing the quarry, can hardly understand what is meant by that description of hunting.

Quite certainly, too, it was for this side of German life that Heine longed on his sickbed in Paris. He gave expression in his poems as hardly any other writer has done to that elementary German feeling for nature. But it was also that same author of the *Harzreise* who in his two works, *Zur Geschichte der Religion und Philosophie in Deutschland* and *Elementargeister*, both published in 1834 and both so well worth reading, showed more clearly and more impressively than any other German the dangers of such a feeling for nature.

Certainly we must be grateful to anyone who warns us that we

cannot depart too far from nature without imperilling our spiritual health and our existence, and certainly there is a good deal that the world can learn in this respect from the Germans. But if, on the other hand, a man throws himself too impulsively on nature's breast, he forgets that civilization implies liberation from nature. He runs into the risk of falling victim to the state of mind which the eminent French philosopher Ernest Seillière (who will be of service to us later) describes as "*mysticisme naturiste*." One short step further, and he is in the realm of the primitive, the brutal, the uncivilized. *From forest to jungle is no great distance, while the symbol of civilization is not the block of tenements but the garden.* This, too, is a point at which the German is in the utmost danger from the possible exaggeration of a healthy and attractive characteristic, but here, too, the danger is at once diminished if he recognizes it and beware of it. May we not once more place hope in his knowledge of himself after the Nazis have availed themselves of this further German weakness to lead many Germans astray?

This emotional susceptibility of the German has one very evil aspect. We have remarked on an earlier page that Dürer's "Melancholy" is one of the most German compositions, and it was so regarded by no less a judge than Jules Michelet. This figure of a woman gazing into the unfathomable would better symbolize "Germania" than the armed Brünhilde, with her defiant glare, who was made, with characteristic lack of taste, to decorate the German postage stamps of the period of William II. And yet that, too, is a symbol—of the need felt by a weak and emotional nature to seek support and compensation in a *forced hardness, stolidity, and coldness*, and to assume on every possible occasion a pugnacious, formidable, resolute "he-man" pose.

Probably this is one of the reasons why in the latter part of the nineteenth century the Germans felt so drawn to Prussianism that they largely fell victim to it. Everything became "iron"—iron resolution, iron crosses, and the Iron Chancellor who created Greater Prussia. In the end "iron" no longer sufficed: people became "of steely hardness," the eyes of William II and of Hitler "flashed like steel," the "steel helmet" became a political symbol. Meanwhile, the Anglo-Saxons, with the natural man's revulsion against bombast, spoke disrespectfully of "Tin Hats"; and finally we had the "Steel

Axis" between Berlin and Rome. Now came the horrible type of person with "frozen features," represented in the pictures of German officers, government officials, and students in their corps, the person in whom everything is spasmodic and spurious, and who feels bound to maintain a permanent pose of defiant, dare-devil heroism. And how repulsive the German tongue had become in the aggressive, guttural, strident tones of these persons, and how unmanly were persons like Hitler and his cronies with their hysterical shrieking! We know how the Nazis bred this intolerable type in masses, and it was only with deep disgust at such distortions of humanity that in recent years we could look at the faces that goggled at us with such brutal stupidity. We need only to look at German faces of the past to realize how far we have travelled from the days of Dürer or even Michelet. But why should we not be able to hope that what has come into existence in so short a time might not disappear just as quickly, if the Germans wake from their torpor and find their way back to their true selves?¹³

FINAL QUESTIONS

These are a few of the answers to the question of the German national character, which presents us with so many baffling enigmas. The writer is aware how incomplete and unsatisfying are the considerations he has advanced, As for the particularly important question of the *political* side of the German mentality, he must ask the reader to wait for later remarks, as this is a point that can only be understood on the basis of the political, social, economic, and intellectual history of the German people. For the rest we will confine ourselves to a few concluding remarks.

To begin with we must frankly admit that we are far from fully comprehending all sides of the German character. Thus it is certainly of importance for the understanding of the German nature to know that, just as other peoples have their favourite illusions, among the Germans there is especially an obstinately held idea that they are innocent victims of circumstance or of other peoples. The German

¹³R. Müller-Freienfels (*op. cit.*, p. 148) well remarks that the need for compensation has also shown itself in German science, in which a counterweight to the tendency to vague speculation was sought in precision, in detail work, and in method. Perhaps we have here one of the roots of the fear, so typical of German savants, of a "light" style. Mention may also be made here of the self-imposed constraint found, for instance, in the German students' unions, in strange contrast with the academic freedom so prized.

has a very dangerous *inclination*, continually standing in the way of self-examination, *to feel that he is being persecuted and to pity himself*, instead of asking how he is himself to blame and resolving to do better. For the German as well as for the foreigner it is exceedingly important to be perfectly clear about this pet notion of the Germans. But is it a constant or a characteristic only recently acquired? It is difficult to say. And how is this fixed idea to be explained? Perhaps we shall have later to offer a not unimportant contribution to the answering of this question. Or does there find expression in the inclination to self-pity the sense of belonging to a people that seems singled out for the blows of fate, so that whenever it has tried like other peoples to achieve a strong centralized national State it has come to grief?

The inclination to self-pity is associated with the other characteristic of the German that he is so exceedingly sensitive, both as an individual and as a member of his nation. He seems to be only sparsely endowed with the precious gift of ironic introspection and of self-criticism, and he therefore lacks the fine type of humour that enables a man to laugh at himself. Any burlesque of his own history, such as the British enjoy, has so far been virtually an impossibility in Germany; on this subject the Germans are much less ready to be laughed at than the French, and when a German poet, Heinrich Heine, nevertheless dared to do it, they never forgave him.

An *over-sensitiveness* of this sort reflects an unhealthy mental tension, a *continual occupation with oneself*—the German is continually asking, "What is German?"—and the uncertainty of a man who does not know what to think of himself, and who consequently is trying all the time to find confirmation of his true nature. The German lacks at bottom the minimum of self-confidence that makes a man natural, sure of himself, cheerful, and unembarrassed, and enables him to respect other men's self-confidence. That is why he is often so lamentably lacking in the tact that makes it unnecessary to have rules; he does not know how to maintain the happy mean between cringing and arrogance and is very liable to go from one extreme to the other. He is rather afraid of the wide world, and in face of it is liable to seem provincial. Consequently, he clings all the more to his own ilk, to his professional colleagues, the fellow-members of his association, to his *Stammtisch* (the café table reserved for his

little group), to his compatriots. One must above all have observed the German colonies abroad to know how unpleasant this type easily becomes to other people. A narrow and obstinate nationalism will be abruptly exchanged for an undignified denial of one's own nature. This profound *unsureness* seems also to have characterized the Germans of past centuries. Lichtenberg asked long ago, in the eighteenth century, "Why is it that non-Germans do not care to be taken for Germans? Why, if they want a disguise, do they usually claim to be French or English?" Nobody finds it so difficult to stand by his own nation as the German. In no other country have precisely the best people so candidly declared that they regard it as a real misfortune to belong to their own nation—once more with the characteristic exception of the Jews. Goethe, who called the Germans "estimable in the individual and wretched in the generality," Schopenhauer, Hölderlin (in *Hyperion*), or Nietzsche, all have said devastating things about their own people. Lichtenberg, in the eighteenth century, actually coined the phrase: "The character of the Germans in two words—*patriam fugimus*" ("we run away from our country").

No, as we have already said, the German is the very opposite of simple. He is like the dancer of whom Heinrich von Kleist writes in his immortal essay *Ueber das Marionetten-Theater*: "He grew all too self-conscious, and then he lost the natural grace of his physical and psychical movements. It would not be an injustice to the Germans to call them a *neurotic people*."

But what is the reason for that? I know of no short answer. A real explanation can only be found in the pathological elements of the collective existence the Germans have led for centuries, and quite specially in the last century. We shall come to this in the chapters that follow. But we may say at once that the deepest causes of this or that trait that seems to us to be "typically German" will probably always be beyond the reach of any serious scientific analysis.

Is not the ultimate truth perhaps that the national character of a people is like an immensely complicated chemical combination of various elements, elements that are to be found everywhere, while it is simply the way they have combined that is its special feature? This would mean that the German national character consists of many elements, not one of which is peculiar to this country, and only their

specific combination produces the unique result. To this must be added the important fact that this chemical combination forming the national character continually changes in the course of history, often slowly and unnoticeably, often suddenly and violently. Some of the elements of which it consists may be good, others bad, and yet others neutral, while the whole combination may be a highly dangerous explosive material.

But that would mean that the student of Germany has the difficult task of discovering the formula for the chemical combination of the German national character. If he finds it, it may be possible by means of a re-grouping of the elements so to change the combination that the explosive may turn into a harmless and, indeed, useful material.

CHAPTER II
THE PATHOLOGY
OF GERMAN HISTORY

FALLACIES AND HALF-TRUTHS

THIS chemical combination, with which we compared the German national character in the last chapter, may, broadly, be regarded as the ultimate product of a thousand years of German history, a history that differs in important respects from that of the other great European nations. But what is the peculiarity of German history that has led to what we must once again call the German problem?

Those who know how difficult the problem is do not need to be told that there is no short answer to this question. In this case, if ever, it is true that every simple answer is wrong.

Some people say that the source of all the evil lies in the fact that Roman civilization, after many efforts to subject Germania to the empire, was forced in the end to stop short at the *limes*, the fortified frontier, and to abandon to barbarism the country east of the Rhine and the Neckar. The real culprit was thus Arminius, chief of the Cheruski, who annihilated the legions of Varus in the Teutoburger Wald in A.D. 9. This *limes* theory, as we may call it, sounds plausible and so has many adherents, even in Germany. But it is spoilt by the fact that there are other regions of Europe—Scotland, Scandinavia, Finland, Poland, Czechoslovakia, and so on—that came even less under the influence of Roman civilization and yet have a full share in the patrimony of Europe. The argument that the Scandinavian peoples were seafarers, whose contacts with Western civilization were capable of bringing them under its influence without Roman occupation, cannot save the theory, since Czechoslovakia, for instance, has no sea coast, and on the other hand there were large Germanic tribes dwelling by the sea.¹

Equally unconvincing with the *limes* theory is the similar argument about the belated penetration of Christianity into certain German

¹It should not be forgotten that, contrary to a widespread notion, the Germanic conquerors of the Roman Empire, Stilicho, Alaric, or Theodoric, regarded themselves entirely as executors of the Roman heritage.

regions—into Mecklenburg, for instance, so late as the twelfth century. To this there is the obvious objection that Scandinavia was converted to Christianity little earlier, and Finland still later.

This does not mean that these explanations of the German problem are entirely worthless. The fact that wide regions of Germany were little influenced by Roman civilization and others renounced paganism only at a late date is actually of great importance. It supplies one reason for the strong regional differences in German culture, in particular for the striking contrast between the west and south, on the one hand, and the east on the other. It has also certainly reinforced other causes of the fatal elements in the German character. But by itself it is not a sufficient explanation.

This absence of any monistic explanation may be illustrated by another very widespread theory, which attributes the origin of the German problem to a later and a highly important event in German history, the Reformation, and to the influence of *Lutheran Protestantism*. That this theory, too, contains a great truth, we shall be concerned to show later. Without any question, Lutheranism influenced the political, spiritual, and social history of Germany in a way which, after careful consideration of everything, can only be described as fateful. Unquestionably a Catholic or even a Calvinist Germany would have pursued an entirely different course, on which we should have met neither such men as Frederick II and Bismarck, nor such as Fichte, Hegel, Treitschke, and certainly no Hitler; and undoubtedly this course would have been followed by a people with less implicit faith in the State and with less political indifferentism, a more normal people. But Lutheranism itself was able to have this effect only because it was aided by the whole political, economic, and social character of Germany. That it does not alone suffice to explain the German problem is further shown by the fact that the Scandinavian countries, Finland, and the Baltic States are mainly Lutheran, and yet have not shown the same consequences as those observable in Germany. In Sweden, for instance, Lutheranism had results entirely different to those in Germany: not only because Olaus Petri, the leader of the Reformation in Sweden, was, unlike Luther, a convinced humanist, but especially because in Sweden the Lutheran Reformation had to be carried through under Gustavus Vasa with the peasants and against the nobles and against the Catholic Pretender,

Sigismund, of Poland, so that the king and the Lutheran people became leagued together—a league sealed by the Massacre of Linköping (1600), in which the leaders of the nobles were executed. In Germany, on the contrary, the princes and nobles united against the rebelling peasants, who in accordance with Luther's express recommendation were *wie tolle Hunde totgeschlagen*, "beaten to death like mad dogs." It was not simply Lutheran Protestantism that was fatal for Germany, but its association with absolutism and feudalism.

We come, finally, to much the same result when we examine the widespread tendency to find the key to the German problem in the *return to nature*, in *primitivism*, and in *romanticism*, which together form such a noticeable constant in the German nature: we have already devoted sufficient attention to these. They are certainly of great importance and, as we saw, in their typically German exaggeration, have been disastrous traits, but here again we must not ignore the awkward fact that they seem to be a heritage of all the Germanic races, and are observable both in Switzerland—we need only mention Gessner, Bodmer, or Bachofen—and in England as well as in Germany. The innate tendency to Seillière's *mysticisme naturiste* is thus not enough to explain the German problem; other circumstances have had to reinforce that tendency to enable it to develop in the manner peculiar to Germany. Thus we find again and again that all these theories suffer from the defect of singling out a fact that is not confined to Germany and one that can only lead to a satisfying general conclusion in association with other facts. In each case it is perhaps a necessary condition, but not a sufficient one, for the formation of the problematic Germany into which we are inquiring. In each case we find particular chemical elements which yield the explosive material only in a specific combination.

THE CURRENT OF GERMAN HISTORY

The question we now have to answer is something like this: How is it that the central country of Europe, fatally for itself and for Europe, again and again plays a lone hand in the intellectual and political life of this continent, fighting against the spirit of the rest, and that many Germans seem even to be proud of playing this part, as rebels against Europe? We know how complicated the question is. In order at all events to cut a way through the undergrowth we shall

do best to proceed by making the generally accepted assumption, which at bottom is entirely justified, of two currents of German history, related but different, which united in the nineteenth century—the German current and the Prussian. In doing so we must not forget that at the moment of that union one of the German territories, which had played a prominent part in the general current of German history—Austria—was forcibly ejected by Prussia and thereafter went its own way in many things. In doing so, however, this country did not lose its essentially German character, but actually preserved it in a way that may serve in many respects as a model for the rest of Germany. It should be fully conscious of this part that it played.

If we begin with the general current of German history and follow it down to the nineteenth century, we may come to three main conclusions:

1. From the Treaty of Verdun (843), in which Germany was separated from France, until the ending of Germany and her transformation into Greater Prussia (1866), a healthy, genuine, and lasting federation of the German nations, for which their own nature and the geography of Germany called, was never successfully established; nor was a unified State, with which their character was thoroughly incompatible.

2. German history starts with a situation entirely similar to that of the other peoples of the Continent; but in Germany, largely owing to the failure to establish equilibrium between the whole and its members, in the late Middle Ages and at the beginning of modern times the power was broken of those classes which everywhere else formed a counterpoise to feudalism and absolutism and which created the type of the modern society, essentially liberal and democratic—the towns and the peasantry.

3. In this feudal and absolutist land certain spiritual influences were at work, particularly the Lutheran Reformation, in a way that may be observed to this day in almost every trait of the economic, social, and spiritual structure of the predominantly Protestant Germany, forming an essential feature of the complicated chemical combination with which we have compared the German national character.

We propose to deal separately with point (3). In what follows we will summarily examine the first two points. Here it is of special

importance to make it clear that a sound federative structure, which has never been successfully achieved in Germany, presupposes equilibrium between the central power and the members, so that the central power may exercise a moderating influence upon the members and vice versa. This equilibrium is thus disturbed not only when the central power throttles the independent life of the members but also when the members overbear the central power. Germany fell victim to both of these troubles in succession—at first she suffered centuries of anarchy among her overgrown members, and later in Greater Prussia she was burdened with the caricature of a federal State governed centrally in essentials: the second trouble may be regarded as largely a reaction from the first. When in what follows we describe the weakness of the imperial central power as disastrous, we do not belie our firm conviction that federalism is the first condition of the healthy existence of a State: on the contrary, we confirm it. Anyone who glorifies the anarchy of the old German Empire—the *immane monstrum*, as Pufendorff called it in the seventeenth century—does ill service to the cause of federalism by presenting the caricature as the ideal.

Thus we consider that we have every reason to hold to a view that still seems to us, in spite of all the criticism levelled against it by historians, to come nearest to the truth. This view is that Germany, unlike France and England, did not grow steadily into an organic whole, but very soon, though starting similarly to the others, fell victim to a State crisis. While the Capet dynasty early developed into a hereditary monarchy and then, with the aid of the towns, steadily strengthened its position against the nobles, the German emperors failed lamentably in their efforts in this direction. From the beginning of the German expansion towards Italy under Otto I (950), Germany paid for her imperial dreams with an abnormal political and social development which it is not too much to say passed through its many stages to end with Hitler. "Never has a people that served what, in its day, was regarded as the supreme ideal, had to pay so heavily for doing so as the Germans had to pay in the Middle Ages with their very own—with the sacrifice of the healthy development of their State."² So writes a modern historian who has taken the trouble to

²Fr. Rörig, *Ursachen und Auswirkungen des deutschen Partikularismus*, Tübingen, 1937, p.9.

be just to those who judge the Italian policy of the German emperors from the point of view of a higher historical mission.

The consequences of this development were incalculable. While at every fresh imperial election, with the blackmail the Electors extorted from the candidates, the imperial central authority lost more and more of the little power it had at first possessed, towns and peasantry were increasingly abandoned to the despotism of princes and feudal lords, in spite of all the efforts of various emperors to protect them and to use their support in the imperial struggle against the territorial States. The much-praised "German liberties" were as a rule merely the liberty of princes and feudal lords to oppress their subjects without let or hindrance, and to place them under the heel of their growing bureaucracy. Thus in the end the empire became an indescribable chaos, in which no cultural centre could form, imperial territories being filled with never-ending feuds. With the territorial fragmentation and the weakness of the central authority went serious class divisions among the population, since neither protection nor arbitration from above was to be had.

All these consequences made themselves fully felt only from the beginning of the fifteenth century; then they came more and more into notice. Until then, especially in the *towns*, which owed their charters to the emperors, conditions of freedom, of independent enterprise, of autonomy and of cultural activity had developed, and in the powerful middle class that had formed here as in all the countries of the West there had come a counterweight against feudalism and autocracy. Names like the Hansa, the city leagues, Nuremberg, Augsburg, Cologne, the "Meistersinger," Albrecht Dürer, or Willibald Pirckheimer, and all the art treasures which those cities created and handed down to the Germans as a priceless heritage—until in the Nazi fury against the whole world they were largely destroyed—all this needs only to be mentioned in order to recall to everyone that the culture of the mediaeval cities of Germany was one of the finest flowers of European history. Through this growth of the cities Germany, at least in the West and South, had a full share in one of the principal stages in the emancipation of the West from feudalism and absolutism and in the struggle for political, intellectual, economic, and social progress. When in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries Christian Europe at last awakened out of the torpor of the

Middle Ages and, after first learning from Islam, outstripped its teacher in art and in intellectual life—in the latter, particularly in scholasticism—these new energies revealed themselves especially among the burghers of the towns, and it may fairly be said that in this respect Germany in no way lagged behind other countries.

It is the peculiar, immeasurable tragedy of Germany that in the later Middle Ages and at the beginning of modern times this flourishing city culture fell victim almost entirely to the weakness of the imperial central authority and the disproportionate strength of the territorial princes and feudal lords. "And so at all times, from the moment when the German national spirit first tried to raise its head, down to the present hour, a malevolent genius fought against us. Do not imagine that our lawgivers were not sharp-sighted enough. No, territorial sovereignty fought against commerce [that is, against the commercial system of the towns]. One of the two had to suffer defeat; and the downfall of the latter marks in history the commencement of the former." So wrote Justus Möser in the eighteenth century in his *Patriotische Phantasien*, and not a word of this verdict need be changed today. Out of this struggle between emperor, territorial princes, feudal lords, towns, and peasants, came ultimately in Germany not a healthy and liberal State system, uniting the progressive burghers with the emancipation movement among the peasants against the coveters of domination, but a weak, disjointed empire and a pitiful collection of absolutist petty principalities, privileged nobles, and humbled peasants and townsmen—the *immane monstrum* of Pufendorff. Finally, in utter exasperation, the *peasants* tried to throw off the burden of feudalism, which had become intolerable; but this German peasant revolution of 1525 was suppressed with such ruthlessness that since then the Germans seem to have been purged for all time of the taste for revolutions. It was perhaps the only genuine revolution in Germany, the first and the last; moreover, its motives were entirely legitimate. In it the German rose up for the last time before he was finally brought under the yoke of unconditional obedience to his lords and superiors.

We should bear in mind that the really fatal collapse in German history came immediately after it had attained its zenith, in the downfall of the culture of the German cities which had been the true glory of the Germans. This downfall was the more tragic in that it came

almost at the same time as the suppression of the anti-feudal peasant revolution. The combined effect of these two disasters was then confirmed and finally sealed by the political and social consequences of the *Lutheran Reformation* and by the Thirty Years War that resulted from it. The backbone of the German townsman and peasant had been so completely broken that to this day there seems no sign of any real recovery. Progress was delayed at least for a whole century, politically, socially, intellectually, and economically. There came upon the scene of history the German "subject," who had to give blind obedience to his "superior," and who acquired a reputation for servility. He was pursued by the recruiting sergeant, oppressed and exploited by his prince, his manorial lord, his squire, and firmly encased in the structure of the feudal, absolutist hierarchy. The principle of servility was further driven in by the pastor, who told him that he must not dare to grumble, since Luther, echoing the injunctions of the Apostle Paul, had said: "Let every man be subject to the authority that hath power over him." Out of the upstanding burgher of the mediaeval town came the pitifully ridiculous figure of the "*Spiessbürger*" or provincial, whom Goethe describes with kindly irony in the "Easter promenade" in *Faust*. Margrave Ludwig, of Baden, said forcibly in a letter to Emperor Joseph I (1705-1711): "To be fearful and of poor spirit is an epidemic ailment of burghers."

Again and again the portrait of this caricature of humanity has been painted, and everybody was familiar with it in countless Germans of yesterday who would have been amazed to learn that they owed the National Socialists anything else than obedience and support. We may add to this portrait the story told us and vouched for as handed down by oral tradition, of the good tailor who long ago, when the prince was paying a ceremonial visit to his town, put up on his house this inscription:

Unter deinen Flügeln
Kann ich ruhig bügeln

—"Under Thy sway I can iron away." Later, in the Third Reich, there were thousands of variations on the saying "For the employment we are permitted here, we have to thank our Führer." This is clear evidence that the type of our tailor could not yet have been extinct in Germany.

This is the Germany against which, in the eighteenth century,

Schiller launched the protests of his youthful dramas, while others sought an escape into the airy heights of the "idealist" philosophy. A man like Lessing had to lead the wretched life of a subordinate official under a dull-witted and capricious tyrant, while Winckelmann preferred to shake the dust of his homeland from his feet and to emigrate to Rome. On the other hand, a man like Goethe will never be entirely understood if we forget that he had the good fortune to grow up as the son of a rich citizen of the free imperial city of Frankfurt. There was no numerous reading public, and writers without private means were driven to live on a pension graciously conferred by a prince, or, like Lessing, on the income from a subordinate office, or else, like Schiller, to work themselves literally to death.³

Small wonder that this sort of national experience, prolonged for a thousand years, produced quite special reactions in the German people. They tended to conformity, to implicit obedience, even to servility; they lacked experience, understanding, and interest in all questions of the life of the community; they left the consideration of political issues to the authorities, who could make such decisions as they thought fit; they were almost entirely without any tradition of democratic self-government; they took dangerous *refuge in dreams of the unreal and in the world of words and of abstract ideas*, in which the German found his realm of "inner freedom" (later called "German freedom"). This flight to inwardness went hand in hand with the division of the world, so fateful for the Germans' political morality, into the political and the private sphere, with, in their view, quite different laws for the two spheres, supposed to be incompatible though co-existing. This was just what Lutheran Protestantism taught, so that the Germans felt strengthened by it in a tendency already suggested to them by their political situation.

Another form of the flight from stern political realities, and again one in which Protestantism—both Lutheran and in this case Calvinist—exerted the strongest possible influence, was the taking refuge in work of the utmost intensity and conscientiousness. Here, probably, as well as in the fundamental German tendency to take things very seriously, is one of the main roots of the German's meticulous industry and of German pedantry, of which we meet with the most curious examples

³Cf. W. H. Bruford, *Die gesellschaftlichen Grundlagen der Goethezeit*, Weimar, 1936.

just at this time, after the Thirty Years War. And certainly we may confidently assume that most of the German *eccentricities*, craziness, *hysterias*, and extremisms—dreams of world domination such as Grimmelshausen has transmitted to us actually from the time of the Thirty Years War in his novel *Simplicissimus* (Book 3, Ch. 4) ; brooding over some mystical idea of a "Reich," dreams of German unity, Fichte's *Geschlossener Handelsstaat*, Stirner's *Der Einzige und sein Eigentum*, or Ernst Jünger's *Arbeiter*—must be set down to the account of the entirely unhealthy collective existence which the German has been doomed to lead for so long.

This *unhealthy collective existence* of the Germans has had the further most unfortunate result that in Germany neither the aristocracy nor the middle class has been able to develop as a cultural element fixing the national standard, and that in these classes there has always in modern times been a bitter lack of the needed counterweights against the all-powerful State, such as we find in other countries in "public opinion" and, in the English or French sense, in "society."⁴ This lack, which was further greatly accentuated by the rift between the religious denominations, shows itself among other things in the fact that in Germany there is almost a total absence of the type of literature that we call the society novel. There was a head of the State, but no head of society in any really leading class, whether among the bourgeoisie or the nobility, which as a rule was far from adopting the proud independence of attitude toward the monarchy that might have been expected from it. One result of this was that in Germany, unlike Britain and France, the Jews had not the support of a social class with the prestige and leadership that might have been able to find for them the way to integration in the German nation. It was a tragic peculiarity of the situation of German Jews that they were

⁴It should be noted here that in Germany, especially in recent generations, there have been no reviews acting as a true forum for public opinion, such as the French *Revue des Deux Mondes*, the American *Harper's Magazine* or *Atlantic Monthly*, or the great English monthlies. In Germany those reviews which offered a living reflection of their time and were a true forum for discussion—for instance, the *Neue Rundschau*—were confined to certain circles, while the periodicals read by a wider public carefully avoided the contentious problems of the day. Among the daily newspapers, too, there was a lack of organs such as *The Times*, the *Temps*, or the *Journal des Débats*, possessing an authority that bridged over party differences. Every German swore by his habitual paper, his "*Leibblatt*," and learned of the opinion of other people only the caricature offered by this party paper. Such a paper as the *Frankfurter Zeitung* really carried weight as a rule only with an élite, while everybody else dismissed it as the *Judenblatt*, the "Jew paper."

living with a people that so resembled them, a people just as unbalanced and unsettled as themselves; instead of supporting and complementing each other, Germans and Jews increased the mutual tension between them as in a marriage in which the two partners lack strength and firmness of character. No wonder this marriage was such an unhappy one, with its alternating protestations of love and outbreaks of hate

Thus everything conspired to place the needed plastic human material in the hands of a Government that knew what it wanted, or of one or other of the ambitious despots, whether Frederick II, Bismarck, or—one has to overcome one's repugnance in bringing this name into such company—Adolf Hitler.

Nobody with any knowledge of the life of peoples and of their history need be reminded that this sketch of German history and of its consequences is much too rough not to be in need of modification at many points. To begin with, we have to bear in mind that, thanks to the very wide variety of German conditions, there are strong *regional differences* to note. Switzerland owes her separate existence to her success in warding off German and Austrian feudalism and absolutism: she released herself entirely from the German realm through the Swabian War (1499). But even leaving Switzerland aside, we may mention Alsace, which belonged to the Reich until the end of the seventeenth century, and also, in a certain sense, the Hansa towns of North Germany, which, owing to their special political situation, escaped almost entirely from the development described—so much so that even under William II an *Oberbürgermeister* of Bremen could behave with such offhand independence of spirit that thereafter the Kaiser is said to have avoided that free imperial city.

But in the rest of Germany, too, feudalism and absolutism were far from uniformly succeeding in humbling their people. Conditions were worse on the whole in Prussia, as we shall show later. But as regards the rest of Germany we must not let the *chronique scandaleuse* of the eighteenth century make us forget, amid the follies of certain *serenissimi*, the high achievements of other German territories. Hanover (then ruled by a sort of Whig aristocracy, to which the world is indebted for the founding of the University of Göttingen), Bavaria, Saxony, Weimar, Baden, and even Bückeburg, deserve mention in this connexion. Nor must we forget that in Schleswig-

Holstein, Hanover, Oldenburg, Friesland, and Westphalia a class of free and self-reliant peasants had existed from the earliest times, as described for us by Immermann in *Oberhof*, and that this class had possessed a large measure of local autonomy, a counterpart of the self-government of the imperial cities.

A thoroughly complex special case was that of *Austria*, which would require a very searching analysis.⁵ All we will point out about this country, which was a very important part of Germany so long as there was a Germany (that is to say, until 1866), is that, owing to the court atmosphere of Vienna and to the special position of the aristocracy, its sociological structure was in many respects not unlike that of France. Madame de Staël must have had reason for writing of Austria: "Here it is like a French island in the Germanic sea."⁶ Of great benefit, also, in the Austrian territories was an agrarian policy which, in strong contrast to Prussia, strengthened the position of the peasant in relation to the feudal lord,⁷ and it must also be borne in mind that in the Middle Ages Vienna was the only German capital city that served as the permanent seat of one of the great territorial princely houses.⁸ But we should fail to understand either the significance of Hitler's Austrian origin or such disastrous representatives of the pan-German warmongering spirit as Othmar Spann and many other Austrians, if we left out of account the manifold tensions and unhealthy developments in Austrian society, with anti-Semitism, the exaggerated nationalism of the Germans of the border, the utterly uncourtly bluntness of the Alpine country, and the interdenominational complications.

In addition to these important regional differences, however, attention must be called to another circumstance. We saw how the abnormal course of Germany's political and social history was bound to favour the development of a problematic type of humanity. Now it is not surprising that this history made its mark on the average German; what is astonishing is that in the eighteenth and the early

⁵The literature concerning Austria is not very extensive. Attention may be called to André Tibal, *L'Autriche, essais sur la formation d'une individualité nationale*, Paris, 1936.

⁶Letter of January 14th, 1808, to Baron de Barante (from J. de Pange, *Mme. de Staël et la découverte de l'Allemagne*, Paris, 1929, p. 80).

⁷Werner Stark, "Niedergang und Ende des landwirtschaftlichen Grossbetriebs in den böhmischen Ländern," *Jahrbücher für Nationalökonomie und Statistik*, 1937, vol. 146.

⁸Otto Brunner, "Bürgertum und Städtewesen im deutschen Mittelalter," *Das Mittelalter in Einzeldarstellungen*, Vienna, 1930, p. 155.

nineteenth century, in spite of the heavy handicap of their constitutional and social history, a large part of the Germans held out so well. There was a serious, responsible, cultured nobility, which could stand comparison with the best aristocracies of western Europe, and this class was actually far excelled by the high qualities of a middle class which even today may serve as a model for us, and which has been described for us in many contemporary works (of these Gustav Freytag's *Bilder aus der deutschen Vergangenheit* may be consulted), and in the familiar literary memorials by the German classic authors. If we seek the true pattern of one of these bourgeois of the very best sort amid the country's troubles of that time, we need only mention one name, which at the same time is that of one of the highest peaks of the German intellect—Johann Sebastian Bach.

THE CURRENT OF INTELLECTUAL EVOLUTION AND GERMAN COLLECTIVE MORALITY

Before we turn to the other current of German history, the Prussian current, it seems necessary to consider some of the principal stages in the evolution of German intellectual life. Only so shall we be able thoroughly to understand how it could happen that later in the nineteenth century the specifically Prussian current of history absorbed the general German current, and how from the combination of these two there came into existence the Greater Prussia that became a peril for Europe and a disaster for Germany. For it is not Prussia alone but this admixture that explains the tragedy. Even before Prussia took over the leadership, political ideas in Germany had evolved, under the influence of certain intellectual currents, in a direction that led to the ultimate triumph of Prussia.

The thing that interests us here in the evolution of German intellectual life is thus the influence it exerted on the formation of a definite German *collective morality* and a characteristic German *social philosophy*, a morality and a philosophy that later combined to form an essential element in the Greater Prussian mentality. What that means is well known to every foreigner who has ever come into contact with Germans, and also to every German who has gained sufficient detachment for a critical view of his fellow-countrymen.

Goethe uttered these famous words:

“I have often felt a bitter sorrow at the thought of the German

people, which is so estimable in the individual and so wretched in the generality. A comparison of the German people with other peoples arouses a painful feeling, which I try to overcome in every possible way: and in science and art I have found the wings with which one may raise oneself above it: for science and art belong to the world, and the barriers of nationality disappear before them.”⁹

This is in harmony with another remark of his:

“Germany is nothing, but every individual German is much, and yet these latter imagine just the opposite. Transplanted and dispersed like the Jews all over the world must the Germans become, in order to develop fully, and to the benefit of all nations, the store of the good that lies in them.”¹⁰

Estimable in the individual and wretched in the generality—that is the classic formulation of the observation, recorded over and over again, that the German, who seems neither better nor worse in his individual morality than the members of other nations, who shows a fairly balanced stock of virtues and failings, and who, indeed, can perhaps make himself liked by a particular warmth of friendship and hospitality, is so liable to give evidence of an appalling unreliability of judgment as soon as he finds himself faced with the ethical questions of the life of the community. Such a German is often a regularly obstreperous individualist in other fields, but in political questions he is generally so unsure of himself that he can only cover up his lack of judgment by uncritically following the biddings of the herd instinct. Then the clever man becomes a dullard, the straightforward man becomes the follower of a Macchiavellian or cynical collective morality in violent contrast with his individual conduct, and this ultimately drives him to defend boorishness and violence and unjust dealing. In these questions of collective morality he discards logic and takes refuge in specious arguments that quickly drive one to break off the discussion as a waste of time. Have we ever, indeed, been able to carry on a useful discussion with a German of this type about the violent deeds of German foreign policy since Bismarck, in the judgment of which the whole of the rest of the world is at one, about the annexation of Alsace-Lorraine, about the attack on Belgium in 1914, about the greatness of Polish civilization,

⁹Conversation with H. Luden on December 13th, 1813 (*Goethes Gespräche, Auswahl Biedermann*).

¹⁰*Ibid.*, note by F. von Müller.

about the place of justice and truth in international peace, about the necessity for moderation, for self-restraint, and for candid recognition of one's own mistakes? Who can claim to have ever pierced the armour of stupid national vanity assumed by such a German in his resourcelessness and his individual mediocrity? And is not this German type appallingly common?

Certainly this remarkable and fatal *separation of individual and collective morality*, which distinguishes the German from other nations, together with the pushing nationalism that comes from it, has only grown since Bismarck into that "Prussian complex" with which we shall have later to concern ourselves particularly. Only through this was it possible for the controlling classes in Germany to fall victim so easily to National Socialism. But we need only mention Fichte and Hegel and recall the testimony of many Germans of the past in order to show the probability that the modern "Prussian complex" is the product of a history reaching far back. It need hardly be repeated here that the abnormal collective existence that has imposed their political history on the Germans played an important part in this. In what follows we are concerned only with its roots, which are to be sought in the history of the German mind.

If we follow the evolution of the German collective morality from the Middle Ages to the moment when the current of Prussian history united with the general German current, and gave the German his last fatal impress, we shall have to watch two main streams that sometimes ran alongside each other and sometimes mingled. One is the fundamental German trait of romanticism and mysticism, the other Lutheran Protestantism. Both have occupied us several times already; now they demand joint description.

It is not by a mere chance that the nature and the political consequences of the *romantic and mystical* element in the Germans have been described with special clarity by a French philosopher—Ernest Seillière.¹¹ During the first period of the Bismarckian regime Seillière had had the opportunity, as a student in Heidelberg, of making acquaintance with German national pride, and the impression

¹¹Among the many works of this very important philosopher, who is not by any means as well known as he ought to be, mention should be made for our purposes of: *Introduction à la philosophie de l'impérialisme*, Paris, 1911; *Le Romantisme*, Paris, 1925; *Les Pangermanistes d'après-guerre*, Paris, 1924; *Morales et religions nouvelles en Allemagne, le nécromantisme au delà du Rhin*, Paris, 1927.

it made on him went far to suggest to him a philosophy of history to which we owe an interpretation of the phenomenon of romanticism in its universal character and a very valuable contribution to the understanding of the genesis of the German collective morality. Seillière showed that what we call romanticism can be traced to a mystical mentality that is among the eternal tendencies of mankind but becomes dangerous the moment it breaches the dyke of reason. A romantic mysticism of this sort may make its appearance in very different forms, which Seillière has traced and analysed in an interesting way—nature-loving (*mysticisme naturiste*), erotic (*mysticisme passionnel*), religious, aesthetic, democratic-social, or national-ethnic.

In these manifold forms the emotional exuberance of the romantic soul, which Seillière contrasts with the classical ideal of due proportion determined by reason, may influence every field of intellectual life and communicate its colour to movements which may seem remote from romanticism in the narrower sense. It may also influence directly opposite currents in political life, making its appearance in the form of democratic-social mysticism as “romanticism of the Left” or in the form of national-ethnic mysticism as “romanticism of the Right,” so that without it we should fail to understand either democratism and Socialism or Conservatism and nationalism. It may appear in one form in one country and in another form in another country, but it is far too much a basic element of the mentality to be entirely missing anywhere; as a matter of fact, Seillière was able to show that it had produced profound effects even in France, the country regarded as “classic,” particularly in the French Revolution and all the currents that prepared the way for it or proceeded from it. Undoubtedly—this, too, we have learnt especially from Seillière—the deepest root of romantic mysticism is of religious origin and is to be sought in man’s longing to be lifted above himself and united with God. Thus there prove to be close relations between romantic mysticism and certain theological currents (mediaeval mysticism, quietism, pietism, and others), but its basic religious character lies nevertheless in a more or less avowed *pantheism*, which Schleiermacher rightly called the secret religion of the Germans.

If we adopt these explanations from Seillière, we can hardly doubt that *romantic mysticism* in almost all its forms has been a *constant feature of the German mind* through the centuries—so much so that the

German may be described as the eternal romantic. It is, so to say, a motif that is always present, even if often it is no more than a soft accompaniment, but sometimes it swells to fortissimo as the dominant melody. We hear it plainly in the mediaeval mystics—Meister Eckehart, Jacob Böhme, and many others—in German humanism, in Lutheranism, in the German baroque, and in pietism. We find it even in the period which, in contrast to the true German romanticism of the late eighteenth and the early nineteenth century, we call the classic period; and here we find it so marked that historians of literature are hard put to it to make a clear distinction between the classic and the romantic. The German mind has, perhaps, most successfully liberated itself from this inclination to romanticism in Lessing and in the truly “classical” works of Goethe and Schiller, such as *Iphigenie* and *Don Carlos*. But how romantic does *Faust* seem when measured by the standards of French classicism!

It is not surprising that when, at the end of the eighteenth century, the German expressly made romanticism into a programme and a tendency that governed everything, he did so with unique gusto. Thereafter it influenced German intellectual life so strongly that at the turn of the last century a well-informed German was able to say that romanticism is “not something past and done with but an element in our midst to this day. Up to the present it has been impossible to overcome it because it has struck root too firmly in German intellectual life and possesses too much fascination for the German mind; and also because it is too closely akin to that which is best and deepest in the German mind, which has itself charmed and elevated this very romanticism out of the soul of the people.”¹²

That is enough in itself to bear out that all that, following Seillière, we have included under “romantic,” must certainly not be set down as an unhealthy deviation from a standard which it may be considered

¹²Th. Ziegler, *Die geistigen und sozialen Strömungen des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts*, 2nd edition, Berlin, 1901, pp. 56-7. If we recall that in an earlier passage we inferred specifically romantic qualities—unrestrainedness, emotionality, immoderation, etc.—from the German language, we may, indeed, say that the very language reveals the fundamental romantic trait of the Germans. It is the language of an essentially romantic people. It is so in a special degree at all times when it is under the influence of a pronouncedly romantic current, whether that of the *Sturm und Drang* movement of the eighteenth century, or the actual German romantic period of the beginning of the nineteenth, or finally the youth movement. It will also be difficult to contradict so thoughtful a writer as Fritz Strich when he says (*Deutsche Klassik und Romantik*, 2nd edition, Munich, 1924, p. 400): “Where the German spirit follows its own bent, it is a spirit of romanticism. It can realize its classic ideal only with outside aid.”

is to be found in the classic and rational. Assuming that romanticism remains under the control of the reason and does not degenerate into an irrationalism that confuses mind and feeling, it is actually a necessary counterweight to the "vagaries of rationalism,"¹³ which may become just as pernicious as excess of emotion and depreciation of reason. It is then an indispensable corrective of any unimaginative domination by reason, a valid reminder of the existence of all that is meant by history, life, organism, form, wholeness, feeling, intuition, and creative evolution—a fruitful principle of recognition of truths that are inaccessible to the analysing intelligence, and finally an opulent source of all true art and poetry, speaking straight to the heart. Thus Pascal's famous phrase, *Le coeur a ses raisons que la raison ne connaît point*, "The heart has its reasons, of which the reason knows nothing," seems to us no less true because a Cartesian would call it "romantic," and we would not have the German classics one whit less "romantic" than they are. The world would have been infinitely poorer and colder if there had been no mystics, no pietism, no Herder or Rousseau, and no "romantic school"; and the particularly rich contribution which Germany (together with Switzerland, in this respect so closely akin to her) has made in the course of centuries should not be pooh-poohed by people who admit only the linear classicism of the Latins and lump unhealthy degeneracies together with the healthy and fruitful in one general condemnation.¹⁴

We may compare romanticism with a comforting fire to which all European nations have brought logs, and if at times the fire of romanticism flickers a little doubtfully or smoulders, even then we rejoice at the manifold variety of the human spirit. Mankind can no more do without Rembrandt than Raphael, Victor Hugo than Molière, Schumann than Mozart, and not even the uncanny elements in such men of genius as E. T. A. Hoffmann or Edgar Allan Poe or de Quincey, Turner or Caspar David Friedrich, can turn us away from them.

¹³See my books *Die Gesellschaftskrisis der Gegenwart*, 4th edition, Erlenbach-Zürich 1943, pp. 81 *sqq.*; *Civitas humana*, Erlenbach-Zürich 1944 pp. 103 *sqq.*

¹⁴As an example we may mention an otherwise very instructive book by an Italian, Carlo Antoni—*La Lotta contro la Ragione*, Florence, 1942. On the other hand, we are in agreement with the judgment of romanticism pronounced by Benedetto Croce—for instance, in his *History of Europe in the Nineteenth Century* (London, *Allen & Unwin*). Although Seillière distinguishes very well between healthy and unhealthy romanticism, he has some trouble in doing justice to the former. That is one of the weaknesses of his philosophy.

But we know that this fire must be carefully tended, and we know what conflagrations have been started by stray sparks. The most fruitful may here be at the same time the most dangerous, and as we may depend in any case on the strength of the basic romantic feeling in man, and as instinct and feeling threaten at all times and among all peoples to outgrow reason, we have more ground as a rule for thankfulness to the warning voices and the sober sceptics than to the panegyrists. But no country stands more in need of warnings and scepticism than Germany, because no other country is in such danger as Germany from its fundamentally romantic, mystical, anti-intellectual disposition. It is characteristic of Germany that there the fire of romanticism is always at white heat and from time to time blazes out into wild conflagrations. In the basic romanticism of the German there lurks an immoderacy, an unbridled wildness, that has broken out five times in the last two centuries—in the *Sturm und Drang* of the eighteenth century, in the romantic movement proper, in the “young Germany” movement, in the “youth movement,” and finally in its worst and, we must hope, its last excess in National Socialism.

Many repulsive elements were combined in *National Socialism*, but anyone who wants fully to understand that movement must give it its place in this series of volcanic explosions of romanticism. It is not simply Prussianism; it is also the final degeneration of the romantic and mystical disposition of the Germans. No one who considers those earlier surges of unbridled immaturity can help feeling that in Nazism there is something of the men of the *Sturm und Drang*, of Friedrich Schlegel's *Lucinde* (1799), in which effrontery and idleness are preached to the “serious beast (*der ernsthaften Bestie*) that is man,” of *Turnvater Jahn*, “father” of gymnastics, of the *Teutschtümelei* or Germanomania of the Restoration period, of “Young Germany,” and of the circle of Young Hegelians to which the anarchist Max Stirner belonged (and in which Marx and Engels had also moved), and especially of the youth movement of the last generation. This is true although the Nazis always selected with a sure instinct the morbid and degenerate elements, and exaggerated even these. And always there is this eternal song of “youth,” making a cult and a cosmic principle of its own immaturity and inchoateness.

Particularly clear and direct was this pernicious influence of

German romanticism on the collective morality of the Germans in the case of the variety which we may call with Seillière "national-ethnic romanticism." It was especially this that shot up luxuriantly, particularly in Germany, at the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth century, after the soil had been prepared by the French Revolution and the Napoleonic invasion. From the exaltation of the German *Volkstum* or national character, of the German race, of German history and German folklore, from this ecstatic exaggeration of a healthy and fruitful idea, which in Herder had been the noble expression of humanity, there proceeded in a direct line the subsequent pan-Germanism and finally Nazism. This is the source from which Fichte and Arndt and later Treitschke, Langbehn, Richard Wagner, or Lagarde, drew intoxication, and there are few political thinkers and leaders in Germany who have not since enjoyed at least a drop of the stuff. Here begins the bad interpretation of the German nature as something primeval, unique, exclusive, to be understood only through the myth of blood and of racial history. The other interpretation of the German nature through humanity and universality, which is bound up with the great names of Herder, Lessing, Goethe, Schiller, and Humboldt, was visibly pushed into the background and after a century was only to be met with in a few isolated figures. Then the German began, with his "German way" that was to "cure the world," his *Deutschland über Alles*, and his "historic missions," to be in the eyes of the world first ridiculous and in the end tiresome.

But even the *aesthetic romanticism* has, in Germany, been anything but harmless. The vagueness and dreaminess that it cultivates, corresponding so well with the German nature already described, the somnambulist element, sallow, sombre, drawn especially to night and moon and graves—all this points to a morbid state of mind that will do no good.¹⁵ The German's romantic feeling for death, remarked by Clemenceau, probably has its origin here. Only recently the leaders of an S.S. division in Italy talked of "romantic death" to the neo-Fascists (who were but little impressed), and it is probably for the same reason that the German feels so strangely

¹⁵"The logical end of romanticism could only be the longing for death." (Fritz Strich, *op. cit.*, p. 123.) On the other hand, Eichendorff attracts us by the very fact that he freed himself from this morbid romanticism and became "the poet of the morning" (Strich).

attracted by the twilight of the gods and the downfall of the Nibelungen. Closely related to this is the inclination of the romantic to abandon himself to an inscrutable fate, sensed *pantheistically*, and to feel that there are at work dark forces of nature or history that crush man. Thus the romantic becomes an anti-humanist, a fatalist, and a determinist, and those who are familiar with the history of the German mind since that time know how immensely strong this influence has been, particularly on political thinking. It has even communicated itself to *geography*, in which Ratzel, in the true spirit of this degenerate romanticism, laid the foundations of an anthropogeography, which later showed its actual anti-humane features in the "geographical romanticism" of General Haushofer's "geopolitics," thus separating itself plainly from the "geographie humaine" of the French.¹⁶ It is well known that this doctrine of the "blind brutality" (Ratzel) with which geography is supposed to rule the destinies of nations was exaggerated to the point of hysteria by the Nazis, and it may be that this "geopolitics" is one of the most fearful poisons administered to the German, until in the end he ran amok all over Europe. Romanticism—Ratzel—Haushofer—Hitler's war—this, too, is a chain of causes, and probably one of the most fatal. The romantic intoxication from the atlas may be more disastrous than all else. And has it been noticed with what solemnity the modern German speaks the word *Raum* ("space"), how it has for him a weighty significance equalled only by his words for "destiny" and "development," or by "*Kultur*"? And especially, has the German himself noticed it, and does he now know what he has in future to guard against?

We have had several times to oppose romanticism to *humanism*. There is a healthy romantic feeling with which humanism can very fruitfully unite, as has been shown, among others, by Herder. But it is obvious, and has been pointed out by us again and again, that grave dangers lurk here, and that a pronounced and basic romanticism and mysticism is difficult to reconcile with humanism. Probably we have here one reason why, since the beginning of modern times, the Germans have on the whole had less in common than other nations with the Roman humanist ideal, incorporated in the European tradition especially by Cicero and Virgil. A people so impregnated

¹⁶Lucien Febvre, *La terre et l'évolution humaine, introduction géographique à l'histoire*, Paris, 1922, pp. 21 *sqq.*

with romanticism and mysticism as the Germans will gain access only with difficulty to that source of European culture. But in addition to this, the Lutheran Reformation loosened the ties with the humanist tradition in Germany and seriously widened the gulf between German culture and the European tradition, a gulf which in any case the German can cross only with difficulty and by means of self-education. Whatever one may think of the Reformation in other respects, it cannot be denied that it threw Germany back centuries in her relation to the humanist culture of the West. It may fairly be said that the ground lost has not been recovered to this day, and that it is only now that the German is faced with the actual task of cultivating humanism, after pursuing to the most bitter end the path of anti-humanism.

This brings us now to the consideration of the other great main stream in the history of German collective morality, *Lutheran Protestantism*. There is an ample and valuable literature on this subject, and its exponents have reached increasing agreement in all essentials, so that we may deal briefly with it—all the more since we have already touched upon this important subject several times.¹⁷

For reasons connected partly with Lutheran theology, partly with Luther's personality, and partly with Germany's political character, the Lutheran Reformation bears the principal responsibility for the fact that the German was trained to make the separation of the spheres of political and private life which we recognize as one of the most unfortunate aspects of German collective morality. In that school he has learnt that the State and policy correspond to man's evil nature and consequently follow their own brutal laws, and that therefore the moral laws that are binding for our individual behaviour are not *ipso facto* applicable to the State, and that in the face of this harsh outer world the true Christian must turn his thoughts the more devoutly inward to his own soul and its salvation.¹⁸ Thus there are

¹⁷On the effects of the Reformation on the collective morality and the political philosophy of the Germans, cf. Helmuth Plessner, *Das Schicksal deutschen Geistes im Ausgang seiner bürgerlichen Epoche*, Zurich, 1935; Georges de Lagarde, *Recherches sur l'esprit politique de la Réforme*, Paris, 1926; Fritz Kern, "Luther und das Widerstandsrecht," *Zeitschrift der Savigny-Stiftung für Rechtsgeschichte*, vol. 37, Weimar, 1916; Hugo Ball, *Die Folgen der Reformation*, Munich, 1924; F. von Hügel, *The German Soul*, London, 1916.

¹⁸What results ultimately follow from such a theology is shown especially plainly in the work of the Lutheran Friedrich Naumann, *Briefe über Religion*, 6th edition, Berlin, 1916—well criticized by von Hügel, *op. cit.*, pp. 48 *sqq.* Similar ideas are expressed in the writings of Ernst Troeltsch (especially in those published during the first world war), though far more mildly.

two realms, that of the hard outer world and that of a man's own soul. The two are entirely separate from each other, and thus demand quite different conduct; they may even be ruled by opposite moral principles without disturbing each other. In the realm of the State and of policy I may be ruthless and crafty, in the realm of the individual self I may be philanthropic, truth-loving, and pious; in the former I may submit to the tyranny of a despot, in the latter I may enjoy the freedom that in that doctrine is called "inner freedom" ("German freedom").

It is easy to see what consequences for collective morality must follow from such a doctrine. One will be that those people who separated the "inner" from the "outer" freedom, and who regarded the former alone as essential, would care little for the "outer" freedom and would thus become the obedient subjects that just suited the German princes and nobles.¹⁹ As it is put in Luther's famous hymn "Ein' feste Burg ist unser Gott,"

"Lass fahren dahin;
Sie habens kein Gewinn,
Das Reich muss uns doch bleiben"—

"Let them have their way: it avails them nought, ours still must be the Kingdom."

Thus this doctrine meant for the Germans *a school of non-resistance against the power of the State, of political indifference, of ready acceptance of the political situation at any moment, and of submission to the authorities* in all questions of public life. The result was that compensation for the restriction on political activities was found in the day's work, in family life, in the small circle of friends (*die Stillen im Lande*, the gentle souls of the countryside, as the pietists of the eighteenth century put it), and in the enrichment of the inner life. Thus the *Tüchtigkeit* of the Germans—their industry and solid worth in private life—and their political indifference are two aspects of one and the same process; thanks to Lutheranism the German *virtù* (to use Macchiavelli's word for the qualities of courage and public spirit) struck inwards.

¹⁹It is particularly interesting that this doctrine of the "inner freedom," into which the outwardly unfree being is supposed to be able to retire without hurt, found its way from the Lutheran philosopher Hegel to the Italian philosopher Benedetto Croce, leading him to the view that external unfreedom (as today under collectivism) need not affect the freedom of the human soul. (*Cf.* the criticism in my book, *Civitas humana*, pp. 91-2 of the Zurich edition.) Here, it should be noted, Luther still speaks.

It would be difficult to find a more striking testimony to this action of Lutheran Protestantism upon human valuations than the declaration made to Allied journalists by Pastor Niemöller—that famous hero of anti-Nazism—immediately after his release from a concentration camp. This man, who claims to be purely evangelical, declared that at the outset of the war, as a former commanding officer of a U-boat, he placed himself at the disposal of the submarine command, adding: "My soul belongs to God, but I must do my duty to my country, without troubling whether she is right or wrong." There then followed the declaration that his personal fight with Nazism had been a matter not of politics but of religion. In other words, if Nazism had left these pious Lutheran Christians in peace in their religious domain, they would have been in no way scandalized by its criminal policy and would have bowed faithfully to authority.

It is true that no observer could have failed to see that the *Bekennniskirche*, the Confessional Church, had at all times shown this rather unedifying disposition, and no one who had grasped the essential teaching of Lutheranism could expect anything else. But this U-boat clergyman might have been reminded that the phrase he made use of, "My country right or wrong," had been used as an inscription at the entrance to the ill-famed camp at Belsen. Anyone who uses this phrase in the future should be careful to add this detail.

At least as fatal, however, for the Germans as this education in *Staatsfrömmigkeit* or piety toward the State, and in political indifference, was another consequence of the distinction drawn between the public and private spheres, a consequence for which Lutheranism also bears the main responsibility. It was the education in a collective morality that denied in politics the bases of a humanist-Christian morality, in other words a *naturalistic collective morality*, which had the dangerous tendency of glorifying the national power and making it a supreme aim that sanctified the means to it. This is the seed from which can come power politics, imperialism, Macchiavellianism, and *Realpolitik*, and we know that these evil fruits ultimately ripened in Germany. But as it was always merely a question of a tendency that could mature only under special conditions, and one that had to fight against the noble counter-forces in the German soul, we can understand the struggle that went on in Germany in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries between the Christian-humanist and the

naturalistic collective morality. The latter won through only at the moment when the influence of Lutheran Protestantism united with the other influence of national-ethnic romanticism in that philosophy which was very misleadingly called "idealistic," and which found its best-known expression in Fichte and Hegel²⁰. Until then the political thinking of the average German had been entirely un-Macchiavellian, unpolitical, and cosmopolitan, but about the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth century there came a true revolution, in which *Lutheranism and romanticism were fused by the hard experience of the Napoleonic invasion*.

Looking more closely, we see that the Lutheran separation of politics from private life, combined with the absolutist regime prevalent in Germany, opened three different paths for the development of collective morality. The *first* was that of indifference to practical politics, united with a lofty idealism in the realm of political ideas. There was a withdrawal from the harsh reality of the State that simply demanded obedience, and of the power of evil in the world, into the secret realm of ideas, into the development of personality apart from the State or even against it (Wilhelm von Humboldt), and into a cosmopolitanism of an abstract type, in which it was possible to move the more freely since there was no need to take account of the conflicts of the real world. To this extent the separation had the result of confining men entirely to the "inward" and leaving the "outward" to look after itself. It may fairly be said that this is the stage in which German political thinking remained on the whole in the age of the German classics. The *second* path forced itself upon the Germans when they were rudely recalled by the French Revolution and by Napoleon to political realities that could not be ignored. Under the influence of the Lutheran tradition men were then faced with the temptation to turn the distinction between the two spheres into a distinction between the standards to be applied. That brought the ill-famed Macchiavellianism that started in Germany about the turn of the century. But at the same moment there was already visible a *third* possibility. This was offered when this dualism between

²⁰This whole process has been described especially by the German historian Friedrich Meinecke (*Die Idee der Staatsräson in der deutschen Geschichte*, 2nd edition, Munich, 1925; *Weltbürgertum und Nationalstaat*, 7th edition, Munich, 1928). For earlier history cf. also O. Woodtli, *Die Staatsräson im Roman des deutschen Barock*. Frauenfeld-Leipzig, 1943.

politics and private life was felt to be unsatisfactory, and men felt the desire to overcome it, but were too much under the influence of romanticist and organicistic²¹ thinking to be able to effect the transition to the natural humanist-Christian tradition. Instead of regarding society as proceeding from the individual, and collective from individual morality, the opposite path was taken of *bringing politics into the private sphere*, a course that was bound to end in the *total State* and in *collectivism*. Thus it was a contemporary of Fichte and Hegel, the muddle-headed romanticist Adam Müller, who advocated a State in which "private life is nothing else than national life regarded from below, and public life is in the last resort nothing but the same national life seen from above."²² It was from this Adam Müller that, a century later, the Austrian sociologist Othmar Spann drew in order to seduce a large part of the students of the German Universities into a romanticist totalitarianism and nationalism. Now that the Germans have tried these three bypaths to which the traditional doctrine of the dualism between the sphere of politics and that of the individual leads, and have realized that the first is impracticable and the other two lead to disaster, there remains to them only the *fourth* alternative of at last returning to the highroad of the European tradition and, in the spirit of Christian and humanist principles, starting, in politics as elsewhere, from the individual and his personal moral code.

What is particularly unfortunate is that the second and third lines of this political thinking are not in the least mutually exclusive. Just when they are combined, and Macchiavellianism is no longer advocated in opposition to an autonomous individual sphere but in the name of an organicist conception of society and State which attributes to the "State," the "nation," or the "people," a life of its own over and above that of the individuals, and when the last vestiges of the individualist philosophy are sacrificed, even in the private sphere, to the collectivist philosophy—precisely then we are bound to get a formulation, without any reservation whatever, of the Macchiavellian philosophy of power. What that may lead to in the end has been shown by totalitarianism. Signs of this were to be felt in the period of the Napoleonic wars and in the Restoration period, and even in

²¹Cf. Bertrand de Jouvenel, *Du Pouvoir* (Geneva, 1945), pp. 82 *sqq.*

²²Quoted from F. Meinecke, *Weltbürgertum und Nationalstaat*, p. 140.

Fichte and Hegel, though less markedly than in Adam Müller; but even then we have not traced the ultimate sources of the collectivist social philosophy (the "realistic" as against the "nominalistic" philosophy of individualism, which had dominated the Western world since the days of scholasticism). We cannot enter into this matter here. We will only emphasize that such an organicistic and collectivist outlook is closely related to romanticist thought. The Lutheran, too, will be readily receptive of this conception of the State as a super-organism: once the antithesis between the State and individuals has been introduced, it is only a step to the doctrine that individuals are simply cells in the complex of society and State. Finally, we must on no account forget that it was the French Revolution that introduced to the European peoples, and especially to the particularly susceptible Germans, the doctrine of the collective nature of the "nation."²³ The fact that it spread the idea in the name of "liberty" can surprise only those who regard a dangerous collective morality as a monopoly of "reactionaries," and who are unaware of the large number of democrats who at all times have been chauvinists and imperialists.

At that time, however, a century ago, few seem to have been farsighted enough to realize the full scope of this new *collective morality, born of pantheism, Protestantism, and romanticism*, the origination of which has to be credited mainly to Hegel and Fichte. One of those few was, once more, Heinrich Heine, who wrote in 1834 in his *Zur Geschichte der Religion und Philosophie in Deutschland* these prophetic words:

"Once the taming talisman, the Cross, breaks to pieces, there rattles out again the savagery of the old fighting men, the unreasoning berserk fury of which the Nordic poets sing and say so much. That talisman is rotten, and come the day will when it will pathetically collapse. The thought precedes the deed, as lightning thunder. The German thunder is, indeed, German, and is not very nimble, and rolls along a bit tardily; but come it will, and when once you hear its crash, as it has never yet crashed in the world's history, know ye: the German thunder has at last attained its object. At that roar the eagles will fall dead from the sky, and the lions in the farthest deserts of Africa will put their tails between their legs and creep into their

²³Cf. The excellent remarks on this in Bertrand de Jouvenel, *Du pouvoir, histoire naturelle de sa croissance*, Geneva, 1945, pp. 69 sqq.

royal dens. There will be produced in Germany a play compared with which the French Revolution may well seem no more than an innocent idyll."

It took a full hundred years for this vision of Heine's to become reality in National Socialism. In that period much had to happen to turn the Germany of humanism, cosmopolitanism, and Christian uprightness, into the other Germany that has now come to its end in a frightful explosion. Fichte's teaching of nationalism and power politics took a long time to establish itself against the better German tradition. It had to absorb many other elements—historicism, positivism, materialism, and much else—in order to develop its full corrupting power. A Treitschke was needed, and a Nietzsche, and many others. But to win over the Germans completely and to become politically effective, that philosophy required a Prussia, to turn it into battalions and into factories, and that Prussian current of history had to absorb the general German current which we have been considering in its manifold composition.

THE CURRENT OF PRUSSIAN HISTORY

Naturally Prussia, and before her Brandenburg, shared in the general German evolution whose fatal characteristics we have been considering. But in that country, which for centuries had an existence of its own outside the realm of the true German State and people, there came an evolution of its own in addition to all that it shared with the evolution of the rest of Germany. It is necessary fully to grasp this in order to understand that in spite of everything, Germany and Prussia—Weimar and Potsdam—are two different worlds. Over this individual Prussian evolution, official Prussian historiography has deliberately thrown a veil, so that to this day, outside the circle of the initiated, much too little is known about it; and without that knowledge we cannot understand the subsequent political, intellectual, economic, and social evolution of Germany in the nineteenth century, which mainly bears the Prussian stamp. Indeed, the difference between the nature of the Prussian and that of the German west of the Elbe is so marked that in most cases, to this day, it is easy to determine without asking whether a German belongs to the original Prussia or not. There is an elementary truth in the widespread view

that Prussia has been the evil genius of Germany—incorporated especially in two personalities, Frederick II²⁴ and Bismarck.

For our purposes it is sufficient if we note the following essential points:

I. The Elbe and the Saale roughly form the frontier line that divides the ancestral country of the Germans from the colonial Germany won—some of it not until the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries—from Slav tribes by conquest, extermination, and enslavement, or by peaceful settlement. This distinct dualism of evolution has had consequences lasting to this day. Without entering upon the seductive question of racial mixture and its possible consequences, we may say that this environment of the east was bound to create the type of the *colonial German*, characterized in all classes by hardness, resolution, resourcefulness, alertness, and a shrewdness in daily life that borders on unscrupulousness, and in the upper class by the habit of command, while the lower class is marked by an equally strong habit of obedience. These conquering invaders of the East became victims of the pitiless Nemesis of all imperialism, which, while subjugating others, makes the conquering race itself, if it is to maintain its position, the slave of its leaders. It was not entirely without justice that Lessing, in a letter to Nicolai, described Prussia as “the most slavish country of Europe.”

From this dualism between Germany and the eastern territory there proceeded—and this again is of critical importance—a *dualism in the agrarian system*. In *West and South* agrarian history ran much the same course as in the rest of western Europe, a minority of peasants remaining entirely free, while the rest under the manorial system (*Grundherrschaft*) had the chance of gradually rising to be free peasants: in the East, in place of this system a large part of the peasantry was driven from the land, and there developed a system of *Gutsherrschaft*, under which great farming properties were run with the aid of serfs or bondsmen. In some cases this latter system assumed forms closely resembling the system of negro plantations,²⁵ which appeared at about

²⁴On the fateful bearing on Germany of the career of Frederick II, it is possible now to consult K. Thieme, *Das Schicksal der Deutschen, ein Versuch seiner geschichtlichen Erklärung*, Basle, 1945. Cf. also O. Klopp, *Der König Friedrich II von Preussen und seine Politik*, 1867; Franz Mehring, *Die Lessing-Legende*, Stuttgart, 1893; Fr. Hertz, *Nationalgeist und Politik*, vol. I, Zurich, 1937, pp. 64 *sqq.*; P. Gaxotte, *Frédéric II*, Paris, 1938.

²⁵Cf. H. Pirenne, *History of Europe* (George Allen & Unwin).

the same time in the West Indies. In the East the agrarian system was marked by the predominance of *Rittergüter* or baronial estates and by a social system in which a class of estate-owning nobles was served, with no extensive intermediate peasant class, by the mass of the "men," that is to say, by landless and unfree farm-workers. In the West, in contrast with this, was a varied system under which peasants with farms of widely varying size and with every degree of personal or material freedom were found alongside landowners who confined themselves to small farms of their own, together with the type of the squire living on his rents, the very opposite of the skinflint, profiteering capitalist farmer.

This great difference between the position of the ground landlord west of the Elbe and the junker east of the Elbe produced a great difference in human types, which were well aware of this difference and which were led by it into mutual dislike—the type of the generous, cultivated grand seigneur of the West, and the other type of the junker, the "monocled peasant," who united the petty profit-seeking and the craftiness of the bad type of peasant with the arrogance and domineering spirit of the feudal lord. The character, indeed, of the Prussian junker—his aggressive style, his conceitedness, his lack of tact and of intuition, his grabbing at every small advantage, so painfully evident even in the private life of Bismarck²⁶ or Hindenburg, his craftiness, and the rest must be held responsible for many things that have made Prussia and the Prussianized German so hated. It is no mere chance that the liberal reforms of the decayed state of Frederick II after the collapse of 1806 were carried through by a knight of the empire from Nassau (Stein), a Hanoverian noble (Hardenberg), the son of a Hanoverian peasant (Scharnhorst), and a Saxon officer (Gneisenau), and were sabotaged by the Prussian junkers.²⁷

This circumstance, that the Elbe divides a western Germany with predominantly peasant farming from an eastern Germany of predominantly feudal large-scale farming, explains also why in the West and South the whole social system shows an equilibrium which in

²⁶The journals of L. Bamberger especially (*Bismarcks grosses Spiel*, Frankfurt am Main, 1932), provide many examples of Bismarck's petty profit-seeking and his almost naive egoism.

²⁷It was mainly owing to this sabotage that the emancipation of the peasants in Prussia turned a great part of the peasants into proletarians, from whom was then recruited the first industrial proletariat in Germany.

Hanover, Westphalia, and southern Bavaria approaches perfection, and the class differences are much less acute than in the East. Prussia, with its much thinner stratum of peasants and middle-class town-dwellers, has always been a stony soil for liberalism, individualism, and the middle-class virtues, while it offered at all times the most favourable conditions for every sort of collectivism.

2. Owing to its social history, Prussia has not only been a country with few peasants but has also become the country in which the *towns* have made least progress and the few that grew up were soonest and most ruthlessly robbed of their liberties. It is entirely characteristic of the Prussian mentality that there was a poet in Prussia, Willibald Alexis, who actually sang the praises of that enslavement of the towns by the Hohenzollerns. Thus Prussia became not only the country with fewest peasants but also the country with the smallest middle class, and thus sociologically the most "eastern" country of Germany, and the country that was reached latest and least effectively by the struggle of the West for emancipation from absolutism and feudalism.

For these and various other reasons the *Prussian State* acquired a character that has not escaped the notice of any keen-sighted observer—the character of a thoroughly artificial State, not based on any common racial history but greedily gathered together, and held together only by monarchy, bureaucracy, army, and military prestige, a highly organised and mechanized State, without a soul, ruled in the harshest and most unimaginative way. It is the State of which Mirabeau said: "La Prusse n'est pas un pays qui a une armée, c'est une armée qui a un pays,"²⁸ and Novalis: "No State has been administered more like a factory than Prussia since the death of Frederick William I."²⁹ Thus, as the model of mechanistic organization, this State has always had the sympathy of the rationalists, advocates of "scientism,"³⁰ collectivists, and organization cranks of all countries, from the French Encyclopaedists, who were the best

²⁸Quoted from O. Guerlac, *Les citations françaises*, 2nd edition, Paris, 1933, p. 231. The originator of the famous saying is there given as the Hanoverian statesman Rehberg.

²⁹Novalis, "Fragmente und Studien," *Schriften*, edited by Kluckhohn, vol. 2, p. 56. It was a leading Prussian historian (Otto Hintze, *Historische und politische Aufsätze*, vol. I, p. 32) who described the State created by Frederick II as "an artificially calculated system, a machine," adding: "When the momentum of the monarchical drive failed, the machine came to a stop."

³⁰Professor Hayek's remarkable study, "Scientism and the Study of Society," in *Economica*, August, 1942, February, 1943, and February, 1944.

of propagandists for Frederick II, down to Professor Carr and other collectivists of our day.

As we saw earlier, absolutism and feudalism were the destiny of all Germany. But while outside Prussia they were mitigated by the more complex and more organic character of society, by a certain passive *laissez faire*, by a good-natured slackness, and in not a few cases by a truly liberal spirit, in Prussia they were rationalized, mechanized, and made into a system, until the Prussian State had become a regular clockwork in which the individuals were simply cog-wheels. Here in Prussia everything had to be done on the model of the smart shouldering of arms and the parade march.

Outside Prussia absolutism and feudalism had generally been bad enough. Only too often they were unintelligent, petty, cruel, extravagant, and even contemptible; but they were scarcely ever of the Prussian daemonic consistency. The Prussian State was a machine of which it could not even be said that if it suited nobody else it was at least to the liking of the prince; it seemed, in fact to have taken charge, to be running for its own sake, and it was just this feature that was inhuman and uncanny. Here was a pure efficiency that had ceased to be simply the means to some sensible end, but instead was itself demanding the implicit obedience of which we have seen the social and intellectual origins. Hence the Prussian mania for organization, hence the much-praised thoroughness, even exceeding that of the rest of Germany; hence the mistrust of everything improvised, the hardness considered a duty and accordingly prized as a virtue, the dry prosiness, the parade of superiority to all "slacker" peoples, the humourlessness, and the fixed idea (philosophically sublimated in Kant's "Ethics") that duty³¹ demands the suppression of human feeling and that whatever a man does attains a higher worth if it is done "for its own sake." Hence the sinister type of man who, perhaps entirely normal and even good-natured as an individual, at once becomes a marionette when the call comes to perform his functions in the well-oiled collective machine—a marionette capable of turning into a devil. Hence the German slave to duty and labour, raised to a

³¹How deeply Kant's whole philosophy is rooted in the soil of his Prussian mother-country has been shown especially by Max Scheler (*Die Ursachen des Deutschenbasses*, Leipzig, 1917, pp. 190 *sqq.*). The totally different outlook of the non-Prussian is expressed by Schiller when in his essay "Über Anmut und Würde" he charges Kant with having taken thought only "für die Knechte," for the serving men, and not for "die Kinder des Hauses," the children of the house.

power that later gave the economic life of all Germany the repellent character of sterile activity and of a fever for work that lost all account of any reasonable objective. The "frozen features," the heel-clicking, the angular bowing, the convict's hair-cut ("Mongol's tuft"), the lack of natural grace—all these things, and many others, smack unquestionably of Prussia; and not a few of them were taken over by Nazism and further coarsened, with the exception of many good qualities of the Prussian and with the exception of the moral reservations that set fixed limits even to Prussian policy.

It is possible to admire this sort of efficiency and discipline, especially if it is bound up with a certain rough uprightness; but people with these characteristics will not be liked. For the very reason that they achieve military conquests so easily, they will fail the more completely to achieve moral ones. Naturally they see that they are not popular, but since they will seek the reasons anywhere but in themselves, two sorts of psychical reaction are understandable. One consists in the determined effort to prove with their characteristic thoroughness that they are in very truth likeable and superior fellows—like old Frederick William I, who shook his stick in the street at his Berliners and shouted to them that the rascals had *got* to like him. The other reaction consists in turning away resentfully, in wounded self-esteem, from the blind and evil world that cannot appreciate merit and entirely fails to understand men of capacity. The first reaction led to continual *push* and *propaganda*, which under the Nazis were carried to maniacal extremes; the second to *persecution mania* and *self-pity* capable of producing a pronounced collective defiance neurosis.

These few remarks, confined to the main essentials, show that the conception of a Prussianism distinct from the general German character is far from being mere imagination on the part of the non-Prussian and the foreigner. But this conception has its limits and must not be made into a schematic explanation of everything. To begin with, we know from what has already been said here how many traits Prussian and non-Prussian Germans have in common: in not a few cases the "Prussian" seems to us to be a mere exaggeration of the "German." In the second place, our survey of the evolution of the German mind has shown us how much that is dangerous has accumulated in the last few centuries actually in the mind of the non-

Prussian German. Thirdly, however, it is indisputable that the Prussian predominance in recent generations has had the result of Prussianizing the rest of Germany in a high degree, and not only the territories acquired through the Vienna Congress or those annexed in 1866 but all southern Germany, too—of course, in differing degrees, in inverse proportion to the power of resistance conferred by tradition, racial character, social stratification, or religious confession. Again and again it may be observed that the Prussianized German of South and West is the most insufferable type, since, with the zeal of the convert, he overdoes the Prussian element to the point of caricature. Some of the most repulsive of the Nazis (not only Hitler, but Goebbels, Himmler, and Göring, among others) were not Prussians—just as in the nineteenth century one of the philosophers of Prussianism was a Swabian (Hegel), another a Saxon (Treitschke), and a third a Bavarian Jew (Stahl).

CHAPTER III

GREATER PRUSSIA FROM BISMARCK TO HITLER

THE MEETING OF THE CURRENTS OF GERMAN AND PRUSSIAN HISTORY

IN the course of the nineteenth century the two historic currents we have been observing, the general German one and the specifically Prussian one, steadily approached each other, until in the critical years from 1864 to 1871 they united, with the Prussian predominating. In 1866 Germany ceased to exist, after a life of nearly a thousand years, and her place was taken by what can only be called a greater Prussia. It was this Greater Prussia that in the spring of 1945 came to a frightful end, an end that corresponded to its violent origin and its character.

In order to gain a secure point of departure for the considerations that follow, we must first become quite clear as to the exact significance of this transformation of Germany into Greater Prussia by the great magician *Bismarck*. This is the more necessary since all of us—inside and outside Germany, in the camp of her enemies no less than in that of her friends—are still, consciously or unconsciously, under the influence of Prussian-inspired historiography. This, thanks to the calibre of its chief representatives, but thanks also to a contemporary spirit so favourable to the Prussian ideology—the cult of the colossal, the worship of success, historical evolutionism, and the over-rating of purely material progress—has almost monopolized the forming of the general opinion. Everyone is still under its spell who speaks, even with reluctance, about the genius of *Bismarck*, and who regards the empire he created as the inevitable and unshakable product of history. This view overlooks the fact that *Bismarck*'s greatness consisted fundamentally, as today we clearly recognise, only in his ability how to master, both in home and in foreign policy, a hopelessly muddled situation of his own creation. The mastering of such a situation was a clever trick of a performer who had himself arranged conditions that added to its difficulties, but unfortunately the conditions remained, and, indeed, grew worse, while in the course of time the

juggler had to go. Thus today we see Bismarck's "greatness" as entirely relative, and we see all the more plainly the fatal work of this figure, who in the end, in his cynicism and nihilism, could do nothing but disintegrate and destroy, unlike the two really great statesmen of his time, Gladstone and Cavour. We have also to remember the parallelism between Bismarck and Frederick II, which lies not only in the similar character of their personalities and policies, but also in the fact that Frederick's State, like Bismarck's, had become a machine which only a genius could control.

When the admirers of the Bismarckian empire overlook this and fail to see the fatal weakness of Greater Prussia, they are mistaken not only about the person and the achievement of Bismarck. As a rule they know little of Germany's pre-Prussian and extra-Prussian history, so that, in their ignorance of Germany's real nature as a nation of nations, they are easily led to apply to that country the historical formula that fits the story of the other European peoples. In view of this it is not going too far to say that the history of Germany for the last two hundred years needs to be entirely re-written.

We need today to be clear in our minds at last that Germany's unification by Bismarck's "blood and iron" policy of 1866-71 was a solution by force that pushed Germany in the form of Greater Prussia along the path which inevitably led past the stages of 1914, 1933, and 1939 to the catastrophe of today, to disaster alike for Germany and for Europe. This shows the truth of what a farseeing and humane man, the great Hanoverian historian A. H. L. Heeren, wrote as long ago as 1817—that the preservation of the loose federative character of Germany was in the highest interest of Germany and of Europe, making that country a bulwark of European peace, while a centralized Germany, owing to its situation and its resources, would not long resist the temptation to strive for hegemony over Europe.¹ These were thoughts which later Constantin Frantz, a writer who was an opponent of Bismarck and who has come back into honour today, adopted and elaborated. There were thus plenty of men who were under no illusions as to what a rigidly united Germany would mean for German freedom and for the peace of Europe.

In order to arrive at a correct judgment of Prussia's "unification"

¹A. H. L. Heeren, *Historische Werke*, 1817, II, pp. 423 sqq.

of Germany, we must also remember that it was in strong contrast to that of Italy, which took place at the same time. *Italian unification* was the outcome of a popular movement, democratic and liberal in character, at the head of which the House of Savoy had the good sense to place itself. German unification took place amid contempt and suppression of the democratic movement and by means of "blood and iron," that is to say civil war, conquest, broken pledges, intimidation, flatteries, and bribery, by the ultimate hegemony of Prussia, and by the artificial whipping-up of German nationalism against France. Not all of Mazzini's dreams were fulfilled, but Cavour represented the democratic and liberal tradition, while Bismarck stood for its opposite. Italy's national flag is still that of Cavour and Garibaldi and of a monarchy whose origin is based on the assent of the Italian people, whereas there could be no question of any such assent in the case of the Hohenzollerns, and a German would be embarrassed if he has to say just what the German flag is. There is no German flag that symbolizes, in a way binding on all Germans, the unity of Germany, because there never has been a German unity, of really organic character, sanctioned by the will of the people.

Considering the German problem from another angle, we realize that the method by which Bismarck unified Germany was essentially the same as that chosen by Hitler in our day for his policy of "unifying" Europe—the method of the "blood and iron" policy of conquest and all the other evil means used. We need only recall how in 1866 Hanover or the free imperial city of Frankfurt was treated by Bismarck and his Generals, in order to see that the policy Bismarck pursued on the national plane was copied seventy years later on the international plane by Hitler. What sort of a "united" State was it, indeed, that Bismarck had brought into being by hook or by crook, not shrinking even from bribing the reluctant King Ludwig II of Bavaria with money stolen from another prince, King George V of Hanover?

In drawing these parallels between Bismarck and Hitler we have in view, of course, only the similarity in principles: the difference in degree of brutality is as great as that between the persons of Bismarck and Hitler, or that between a still civilised epoch and our own age of unashamed barbarism. This difference, together with the difference that what Bismarck united was, after all, the German people, explains

why his success was considerably more lasting than Hitler's. But we must also not forget that this success was only attained after the unparalleled cleverness—including, it is true, the cleverness in falsifying the famous Ems telegram—with which he had exploited the old grievance which the Germans had nursed against France ever since the wars of conquest of Louis XIV and of Napoleon, and which had flared up again during the nineteenth century. The very fact that Bismarck had to resort to this cynical means of arousing German nationalism against the French, shows plainly how artificial and how morally unsound were the foundations on which he built up German unity. Under that star the Reich was born, and under the same star it was bound in time to perish.

If Germany was to become a unitary State on the model of Britain, France, or Italy, there was probably no other method of making her so except this of force, for the simple reason that such a centralism was utterly opposed to the true *federative character* of the country, acquired through a thousand years of history, as a nation of nations. It is more than just an amusing hypothesis to picture all that would have happened if Queen Victoria had not unfortunately been a woman and so, under the Salic law, excluded in 1837 from succession to the throne of Hanover. It is more than probable that no Prussian statesman would then have been able to stand in the way of the forces that had worked for that loose federation of the German States for which Professor Heeren, with the vision of the true historian, had called. The immeasurable consequences of Queen Victoria's sex—Pascal's "le nez de Cléopâtre"!—cannot be undone, but even today it is not too late to proceed along the other path from that trodden after the separation of the crowns of Great Britain and Hanover and the arrival of Bismarck. It is the only path left, now that Bismarck's has led into the abyss.

The unfortunate course of events shows us now, with cruel clarity, that Bismarck's unification of Germany was a monstrous *tour de force*. It was a solution against the nature of things, and therefore no true solution. That should have been clearly recognized at the time, and there was no lack of men who had that clear vision, both within and without Germany. But scarcely anyone saw the artificial and truly revolutionary character of the Bismarckian policy sooner or more clearly than the French historian E. Lavisse, who as early as 1873

described the foundation of the empire as a revolution that had been "too rapid and factitious," and who said of it: "Carried out by force and by trickery, it has abruptly broken with the historic traditions of Germany, encouraged the daring schemes of dreamers, and proved the efficacy of well-prepared surprise attacks."² It was indeed a revolution in the true sense of the word—a violent and abrupt breach of law and of organic evolution, which at a blow destroyed the traditional Germany and put in its place another Germany which, by its very origin, had been taught to place faith in speculative adventure and in the success of "well-prepared surprise attacks."

All the means by which this Reich had to be kept alive corresponded with that violent origin, and so did the whole resulting atmosphere—the unceasing high tension of home and foreign policy, the autocratic method of government, the universal nervous strain, the growing social unrest, the stifling of democratic and liberal elements, the suppression of every marked personality in politics, the growth of Socialism and its ruthless persecution at times, the *Kulturkampf*, the use of every possible intoxicating drug, including the particularly dangerous anti-semitism; the scramble for colonies, the neurotic character of the foreign policy, particularly under the highly neuropathic William II, and the vicious circle of growing mistrust of Germany and correspondingly increasing German jumpiness and indiscretion, a vicious circle that ended in the first world war. But it was, above all, the forced character of the Reich that compelled its leaders to find a substitute to make good the lack of any natural German patriotism that could be taken for granted, an *ersatz* that made up in noisiness what it lacked in genuineness. It is scarcely an exaggeration to say that all German history from Bismarck to Hitler was one long series of shouts of "Germany awake!"—but the more hysterical these shouts became, the more they proved that there was no real and genuine echo. From beginning to end there had to be a search for "hereditary enemies," an agitation for a "place in the sun," a flaunting of the bogey of "encirclement," and the stimulation of a true persecution mania. It had been possible for Bismarck to keep more or less a cool head, but his successors grew more and more agitated until the peak of hysteria was reached under Hitler. Worst

²*Revue des deux mondes*, September 15th, 1873 (reprinted in E. Lavisse, *Etudes sur l'Allemagne impériale*, Paris, 1888, p. 160).

of all, the very soul of the Germans was seduced and the mentality developed which we may call the "Fridericus-Potsdam-Realpolitik" complex.

But had not the setting up of Prussian hegemony over Germany been, at least at the outset, an act of violence against the rest of the Germans?

Matters were not so simple as that, either in the case of the Bismarckian Reich or later in that of National Socialism. Seldom, indeed, does a conquest really succeed unless there either exists or quickly develops a certain inner preparedness of the conquered.

At this point we must remind our readers of the results to which we were led by our inquiry into Germany's mental development, and we must mention once more the names of Fichte and Hegel, who may be taken as symbolic of the social philosophy of which we spoke. Before the seed here sown could produce its crop, naturally a considerable time had to pass. Their doctrines could spread only slowly, and above all there had first to be a serious reduction of the capital of the Christian and humanist tradition in Germany. Thus we can understand that it was only in the period from 1830 to 1850 that there came a manifest change that may be noted everywhere in the German mentality.³ Realism, materialism, and the new faith in strength and power increasingly supplanted the Christian and humanist conceptions that had been dominant even in Hegel, and produced a spirit which in its beginnings—as yet relatively mild—was plainly evident in certain individuals.⁴ Without this new spirit neither List nor Marx can be understood. Indeed, even so distinguished a writer as the historian Leopold von Ranke, with his unemotionality, his treatment of States as "individualities" following their own laws, his doctrine—poison for the Germans—of the "primacy of foreign policy," and his unfortunate coquetting with the idea of the power

³Friedrich Albert Lange, in his famous *Geschichte des Materialismus* (1866), regards the year 1830 as the turning point. About that time (*Revue des deux mondes*, 1831) the French philosopher Edgar Quinet wrote: "What we now see in Germany is the ruin of the intelligence . . . that impotence of consciences, that moral void, that decadence of the true intelligence in Europe." It should be remembered, too, how at that time the representatives of "Young Germany" revolted against the dead Goethe and his humanity (Heine, W. Menzel, Börne, and others). Similarly, Jacob Burckhardt remarked that after 1830 the world degenerated. Cf. K. Löwith, *Von Hegel bis Nietzsche*, Zurich, 1941.

⁴Cf. my book *Die Gesellschaftskrisis der Gegenwart* (4th edition, Erlenbach-Zurich, 1943, p. 93), where I have dealt at length with the figure of Friedrich List from the point of view of "historic interference."

of nations, stood clearly at this turning-point from better to worse,⁵ especially after he had entered the service of the Prussian State. After this it is no longer surprising to find such a man as the historian Dahlmann, one of the "Seven of Göttingen,"⁶ declaring in the Frankfurt Assembly in St. Paul's Church in 1849: "The path of power is the only one that will satisfy the ebullient urge to freedom—for it is not only of freedom that the German is thinking, it is mainly for the power he has hitherto failed to secure that he lusts."

Let us make this process clear to ourselves in another way. When the Germans were abruptly torn out of the world of the eighteenth century by the French Revolution and by Napoleon, they learned from these events two main things—the impulse to freedom, and patriotism in the new sense of devotion to the "nation," together with conscription, the will to use force in self-defence, and the determination to pay back rogues in their own coin. As regards this last, it should never be forgotten that scarcely any other country in Europe was worse treated by Napoleon than was Prussia. Thus it was precisely the progressive groups that arrived at a mixture of liberalism and nationalism in which sometimes the one and sometimes the other predominated. In addition to this the intellectual influences which we have analysed impregnated influential groups in all the German territories with the will to union and to a German State that should be free but also strong and united. Thus in these groups, which were by no means confined to Prussia, and, indeed, were rejected by the leading Prussians as "democratic," the ideals of freedom and of the national State united, without it being possible to say whether the one or the other was the stronger. It was sincerely believed that the two ideals went together perfectly, indeed presupposed each other. How, then, did it happen that these Liberal Germans, when in the Revolution of 1848 their dream of unity in liberty dissolved into nothingness, proved ready to sacrifice liberty for unity, and so turned into the inglorious type who at the end of the century were called

⁵Werner Kaegi, "Geschichtswissenschaft und Staat in der Zeit Rankes," *Schweizer Beiträge zur Allgemeinen Geschichte*, vol. 1, pp. 168 *sqq.*; Fr. Schnabel, *Deutsche Geschichte im 19. Jahrhundert*, vol. 3, Freiburg i. Br. 1934, pp. 94 *sqq.*

⁶The *Göttinger Sieben*—the seven professors of the University of Göttingen (the brothers Grimm, Niebuhr, Dahlmann, and others) who were deprived of their chairs and expelled from Hanover in 1837 because they had refused to accept the high-handed abrogation of the Constitution by the new king, Ernest Augustus, Queen Victoria's "wicked uncle."

National Liberals? So far as intellectual influences have to be held responsible for this development, we have already given the answer. But other causes also played an important part. Even those who have no love for the materialist conception of history will have to agree in this case of the nineteenth century, the truly economic century, that economic motives bulked largely though not decisively in that development of the German middle class (to which we must certainly add for that period the working class). And it was just here that one more complication was reached in the destiny of Germany.

Now that the German middle class was aware of and beginning to make use of its economic powers, what was it bound to want most urgently of all? Undoubtedly the thing it most lacked—economic freedom, and, above all, liberation from the excise system which was becoming more and more intolerable, threatening, in view of Germany's political fragmentation, to cripple all industrial and commercial progress. It was entirely natural that in this situation men should envisage larger political units, and look contemptuously upon the petty State with its Customs exactions, that they should see a virtue in the simple extensiveness of a State's territory, and should long for a Germany made into one great Customs area by the throwing down of all internal barriers. This current of opinion most profited Prussia, as, after Austria, the most extensive of the German States; and it was reinforced by *Prussian economic policy*.

This is the place at which we must emphasize that in those first decades of the nineteenth century a part of the Prussian administration, influenced by the ideas of humanity and of liberalism, did not correspond in the least to the conceptions which, with good reason, we have generally associated with Prussia. We need only mention, in addition to the reforms of Stein and Hardenberg, the names of the brothers Wilhelm and Alexander von Humboldt, and add that the foundation at that time of Berlin University (1810), following the ideas of Wilhelm von Humboldt, provided what has justly been regarded to this day as an exemplar for all Universities of the German language. The Prussian school system, based on the ideas of Pestalozzi, also deserves honourable mention here.

To this ministerial bureaucracy, which is one of Prussia's true titles to fame and whose last representatives (e.g., Rudolph von Delbrück) date back to Bismarck's early days, belonged the men under whom,

in 1818, Prussia introduced the famous Customs tariff which, as one of virtual free trade, aroused the admiration of all Europe. As it was the first of its sort, we may fairly say that the era of international economic liberalism was introduced not by England in 1846 but by Prussia in 1818. Those Prussian officials were eager followers of Adam Smith, and it was in Prussia that his Free Trade programme was first carried into practice. That country set an example that was eagerly studied in England and brought great strength to the English Free Trade movement.

This Prussian epoch, which lasted from the Customs tariff of 1818 until Bismarck's tariff of 1879, is that in which, through the Zollverein, Prussia became the leader along the path of economic liberation. Inevitably, this rôle made her for wide circles of the middle and working classes the symbol of economic progress, and won moral victories for her—under the aegis of Adam Smith!—in quarters that were anything but Prussophile.

If now we add to this the intellectual influences considered above, we have assembled the principal elements that produced the type of German Liberal who, if not enthusiastic for Prussia, was at least ready for compromise with her. It is that type of Liberal who united liberty and unity, even under Prussian leadership—united liberalism, nationalism, and even chauvinism with one another; that type of Liberal who was ready to go to Berlin if only his railways were built and his dream of a Germany united, no matter how, was fulfilled. We see figures like Karl Mathy (whose story was convincingly told in a biography by Gustav Freytag), Hansemann, Harkort, or Friedrich List, and, on the highest plane, men like Ranke, Droysen, Dahlmann, Theodor Mommsen, or Gustav Freytag, who were followed later by such men as Max Weber, Friedrich Naumann, and Naumann's followers the German *Nationalsozialen*. Some of them were men of the very best type, who then suddenly, when we probe to the bottom of their democratic and Liberal convictions, so often prove a bitter disappointment, men who for all their culture seem to have had a bad conscience in clinging so to the old-fashioned and rather ridiculous idea of liberty, and who felt that they must find an excuse for it as the means of attaining national power and international status.

We must not overestimate the economic factor. But certainly this

more attractive Prussia not only of the Humboldts, of the *Biedermeier* style, and of Berlin romanticism, but also of the Zollverein, the Delbrücks, and the railways, contributed substantially to reconciling the non-Prussian to the idea of making a trial, as a *pis-aller*, of a union under Prussian command, and of regarding Prussia as an agent of power and progress and—the thing that mattered in those days—of “evolution”; especially as Austria was then passing through the most reactionary phase of her history. Hence the offer of the imperial crown to King Frederick William IV, who in his romantic and un-Prussian way so well suited that Prussian epoch; and hence the evident turning away from “particularism,” that is to say from a rejection of Prussia which was supposed to have become out of date. Hence, probably, also the speed with which eminent men in Hanover reconciled themselves to the annexation of 1866, among them Rudolf von Bennigsen, later the leader of the National Liberals—though it must be pointed out with no less emphasis that Windthorst, Bismarck’s great parliamentary opponent, was also a Hanoverian. We certainly must not forget that at the University of Göttingen in 1837 seven professors jeopardized their positions and their homes in order to bear witness to the right against an evil despot; but where were the other professors of Göttingen? Did they not behave as wretchedly to the dismissed professors as so many of our former colleagues did to us in 1933 when at Hitler’s instance we were dismissed for loyalty to our convictions? And how would the Seven of Göttingen themselves have behaved in 1866?

It was just the working of fate that this lucid interval of Prussia’s from 1818 to 1879 had contributed so largely to making Germany ready to accept Prussian hegemony. The one and only time when Prussia had shown such attractive qualities came, to Germany’s misfortune, to an end. It had served only to make Bismarck’s success more certain; and his success ended that Prussia and began a new epoch in which the country returned to the bad old tradition. As we have just been speaking mainly of economic policy, we may point out that our statement is applicable just as much to this, since after the Bismarckian tariff of 1879 Prussia resumed Frederick the Second’s policy of mercantilism, autarkism, and State intervention in industry. After Germany had been won by force and fraud and seduction for Greater Prussia, Bismarck was able to go on his way undisturbed,

and in economic policy also, as we shall see, this was a course that contributed extraordinarily to the Prussification of Germany, though it was the direct opposite of the former Liberal course.

THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE GERMAN INTO THE BISMARCKIAN EMPIRE

The similarity between Germany's conquest by Prussia and her later conquest by National Socialism leaps to the eye. In the years before the Third Reich Germany's power of resistance had been greatly weakened, but effective mastery over her nevertheless required Hitler's "blood and iron" policy, a coup d'état, the Reichstag fire, the Terror, and an infernal system of propaganda. We must keep this latest experience in mind if we are fully to understand the overwhelming of Germany by Bismarck's Prussia. It is true, as we saw, that Germany had developed in a way that had increasingly weakened her resistance to Prussian hegemony and was bound greatly to facilitate Bismarck's policy. But Germany and Prussia were still so wide apart that Prussia's hegemony had to be imposed on the Germans by force and fraud. For such a policy Germany was least of all prepared. As in 1933, the last critical stage of the conquest of power had to be achieved against the will of the conquered with "blood and iron," and, as we will add once more, also with craft and lying.

All we have said about Germany's internal development in no way alters the fact that until the Bismarckian empire we were still in the old and true Germany, a Germany to which in spite of everything one cannot refuse sympathy, and which would certainly have become a healthy and useful member of the European family of nations had not an evil genius appeared on the scene, as a hundred years earlier in the person of Frederick II and a hundred years later in that of Hitler.

In order to give as vivid an impression as possible of this old Germany, we will choose two voices only out of countless others. Both are taken from the year of the abortive revolution of 1848. In that year the Liberal Prussian Alexander von Humboldt wrote:

"So far as specially concerns Germany, she appears, with her many centres of culture and her lack of a political capital, to be penetrated the most thoroughly among the Germanic nations by the anti-Roman principles of decentralization, wherein she is related to

ancient Greece and modern Italy. The problem she has to solve is manifest—to fuse the two elements of culture and policy, without injuring either, instead of neglecting policy as hitherto to strive only after general culture.”⁷

After this Liberal Prussian we will let a non-Prussian speak, and we choose a pronouncement that comes to us from the solid middle class. We take one of the revolutionary newspapers of 1848—the *Allgemeine Hannoversche Zeitung* (Nienburg a.d. Weser) of May 10th, 1848—and here, in an article on “Die rechte Freiheit und das freie Recht,” which in view of its content and its admirable form would deserve to be quoted in full, we find these passages:

“What, then, is the just freedom? That is the just freedom which rests on the eternal pillars ‘Law and Order,’ which is in alliance with virtue, with justice, and with truth, which sacrifices nothing to ambition and avarice, and which respects the eternal values more than the perishable ones. May such, above all, be our political freedom. May such be also our religious freedom. May such, finally, be scientific freedom. If in this way the banner of the just freedom waves in front of us, then the victory of the free justice will have been achieved, of the free justice that recognizes no difference of status, of faith, of knowledge. Between justice and freedom there is an eternal alliance, which no one may infringe unpunished. Pernicious is the policy that for the sake of profit undermines freedom, whether it may egoistically serve the interest of the mighty, or be benevolently concerned for the welfare of peoples. Equally pernicious, however, is the policy that despises justice, even though it imagines that it finds its support in the will of the peoples. Only continual attention to this alliance between justice and freedom preserves us from the errors of Macchiavellianism as well as from those of Communism; it preserves us from the tutelage of the police systems of governments as well as from the tyranny of tumultuous popular assemblies; from the arrogance of obsolete learning as well as from the foolhardiness of immature theories.”

This is political wisdom such as could not have been better formulated by a Burke, wisdom which to this day we may take to heart—and so long ago it was formulated in a tiny German townlet.

⁷*Briefwechsel und Gespräche Alexander von Humboldts mit einem jungen Freunde*, Berlin, 1861, p. 10.

It would be cruel to draw no distinction between the new Germany, Greater Prussia, and that old Germany, which right up to the beginning of Bismarck's triumphs had stood firm against all attacks. How robust the old Germany was, we may see from the fact that it took a considerable time after the foundation of the Bismarckian empire for the older Germany to overcome its distaste, its doubts, and its discomfort. It required the overwhelming victory over France to change the antipathy that was very widely felt against Bismarck, if not into liking, at least into admiration, and the first years of the empire still produced many witnesses to the anxiety with which the best of the nation were filled. Even a man like Gustav Freytag, who had done so much to make the new regime popular, thought at first that he saw cracks in the edifice of the empire that were warnings of early collapse, and even in 1881 he declared that Germany would have to suffer a long time from the fact that for fifteen years the political strength of the nation had been personified in one man.⁸

After the great *Gründerkrise* (promotion crisis) of 1873, and in view of all the rotteness it had revealed, dissatisfaction took very drastic forms in some cases. One of the noble thinkers of the old Germany, Wilhelm Raabe, wrote in his novel *Christoph Pechlin*:

"The heroes' wounds had not yet healed, the tears of children and mothers, of wives and sweethearts and sisters had not yet dried, the grass had not grown on the graves of the fallen—but already, so soon after the dreadful war and the difficult victory, all was going very strangely in Germany. Just as after a great fire a cask of syrup bursts in a street and the mob and the youngsters start licking it up; so the moneybag had broken open, and the thalers rolled in the gutters, and only too many hands reached after them. It almost seemed as if this was the greatest gain the united Fatherland could rake up from its great achievement in world history!" And he closed his remarks with the well-known passage—"It has always been a privilege of decent people in disturbed times to keep to themselves, rather than prudently shout with the crowd as rogues among rogues."

The same feeling is expressed in Spielhagen's novel with the characteristic title *Was will das werden?* ("What is to come of it?") (1886). Spielhagen later, in 1895, expressed a very harsh but justified

⁸For these details we have relied on the admirable and generous labour of the French Germanist J. Dresch, in *Le roman social en Allemagne* (1850-1900), Paris, 1913.

judgment on Bismarck. Among other things he declared that the men of that time had failed in very many important respects to come up to the ideal he had formed of the German people. Instead of asking how anybody stood with regard to Bismarck, it must be asked how he stood in relation to Christ, that is to say to the gospel of the brotherhood of man. He believed, he said, in that gospel with all his heart, and he also believed that those who did not recognize it would sooner or later be delivered up to destruction.

A new generation had to take the place of the old, and much else had to happen in Germany, before these last scruples were entirely overcome and the old Black-Red-Gold standard of liberal humanitarianism was supplanted by the Black-White-Red of Greater Prussian realism and nationalism. But how was it that this German transformation, this Prussianization of Germany, could take place?

To make this process fully intelligible, we should have to write the intellectual history of a whole period, and to show how the German transformation proves to be a part of the great transformation of the West. It would be necessary to describe at length the using up of the cultural heritage of the past, to write at length of positivism, materialism, the dissolution of values and standards, of scientism, relativism, utilitarianism, and much else. But we must limit ourselves—as we can do with a good conscience, since we have treated of these things elsewhere—⁹ and we will therefore simply mention a few points characteristic of the German evolution.

We have to remember to begin with that the influence of an outstanding personality on a people may be of critical importance for a long time. In point of fact, Bismarck so impressed his stamp on the German and his mental make-up that it is extraordinarily difficult to efface its traces. The German with whom we have had to do since Bismarck can, indeed, be described as the “*Bismarckian German*.”

It was incomprehensible and unpardonable that people should have been led astray by that historic crook Adolf Hitler, who under other circumstances would have become simply a work-shy common criminal, perhaps a matrimonial swindler, or would have travelled

⁹W. Röpke, *Die Gesellschaftskrisis der Gegenwart*; W. Röpke, *Civitas humana*. Cf. E. R. Curtius, *Deutscher Geist in Gefahr*, Stuttgart, 1932, pp. 86 *sqq.*, which also draws attention to the tragic fact of the immense part played by Jewish writers (beginning with Marx) in a development whose ultimate consequences produced so appalling a catastrophe for Jewry.

from fair to fair with a glib tongue and a case of anatomical curiosities. It is comprehensible and pardonable to succumb to the spell of a Frederick II or a Napoleon. It is not entirely incomprehensible and not entirely unpardonable that Bismarck's contemporaries should have found it difficult to keep free from the influence of his personality. It was Germany's misfortune that he was a Mephistopheles of parts with charm and genuine power, who in lucid moments even had the rare gift of moderation; and to this day it is not easy for us to persuade ourselves that in spite of everything he was a Mephistopheles. On top of this, there were very talented writers and orators in his service to win over the German people to his personality and his achievements and to bring them into an almost Messianic frame of mind. A Frenchman who has to be reckoned with very seriously has said, and he may have been right, that Bismarck's policy would have been impossible without men like Sybel and Freytag—and, we may add, Treitschke.¹⁰

We have also to bear in mind that while more and more non-Prussians modelled themselves on Prussian ideas, they had fallen victim to the fascination exercised always and everywhere, and quite especially in that age of materialism, by success and competence. There were, indeed, not a few foreigners who for the same reason became admirers of Bismarck and of the new empire, to say nothing of the many Austrians who were not deterred from their cult of Bismarck either by the old memory of Frederick's attack on Maria Theresa or by the new one at Königgrätz or by the obligations implicit in the high level of Austrian civilization. The worst product of that pernicious seduction was later to be Hitler.

In addition to this, these influences established themselves on the basis of a true *revolution in the structure of German society*, a revolution which in the course of the nineteenth century was carried farther in Germany than in any other country. It has not been unjustly remarked that in the half-century after the revolution of 1848 social conditions and the mental and moral foundations in Germany changed more than in the preceding ten centuries;¹¹ and the reason is to be sought primarily in the rapid industrialization and com-

¹⁰Ernest Denis, *La fondation de l'Empire Allemand*, Paris, 1906, p. 133.

¹¹E. Denis, *op. cit.*, p. 226.

mercialization and in the accompanying *urbanization*, proletarianization, and mass-formation.¹²

I have written at length concerning these morbid sociological processes, common to all countries, in my works *Die Gesellschaftskrisis der Gegenwart* and *Civitas humana*, and I will confine myself to a few points that explain why Germany was very gravely affected by those processes. We may mention first the suddenness with which she was wrested from her traditions; indeed, America offers the only examples of mushroom growth of towns and industries such as took place in Germany in the second half of the nineteenth century. Now, we mentioned earlier that the men and women who became proletarians in these towns and industrial districts had largely come from the Prussian regions in which the emancipation of the peasants had produced a rural proletariat. But after this, undoubtedly, the critical element in proletarianization and mass-formation in Germany was an *increase in population* of remarkable pace and dimensions, an increase which, however, was unique in its effects because it took place in a nation which was already making a radical breach in the continuity of its political, mental and moral, and economic evolution. If, indeed, we ask ourselves where anything remained of the Germany of Goethe, the Humboldts, and the Grimms, or of the Germany that spoke to us just now from that small-town Hanoverian newspaper of 1848, one of the various answers is that Germany was inundated by countless millions of incomers who arrived too quickly and in too great number to be culturally assimilated¹³. *Germany became the victim of a barbarian invasion from within the nation's own borders*. In addition to this, finally, Prussia, by the levelling and centralizing effect of her administration, of universal military service, of educa-

¹²Mass-formation (*Vermassung*)—the development of a mass-civilization: a sociological process by which the structure of society is dissolved into a mass of individuals whose coherence is merely mechanical or, at times, hysterical: the formation of mass society. See Röpke, *Civitas humana*.

¹³This view is expressed with some exaggeration but interestingly in: Marcel Duthéil, *La population allemande, les variations du phénomène démographique, leur influence sur la civilisation occidentale*, Paris, 1937. This writer takes no account of the fact that the German increase in population, which, indeed, is entirely comparable with the British increase, produced the far-reaching effects he mentions only in association with other factors of which we have spoken.

tion, and of the judicial system, contributed powerfully to the process of mass-formation and of Prussification.¹⁴

Finally, the Prussification of Germany was greatly furthered by the manner in which the evolution into a modern industrial State took place in Germany. We refer to the plain fact that what we may call German "capitalism" developed actually under Prussian leadership and under the dominance of Prussian economic conceptions. This German "capitalism" was not one of the Marxist pattern, but the historically unique and, we may fairly say, dismally distorted form in which the modern industrial system developed on German soil in a Greater Prussian empire—an environment that had been created by policy and not by any immutable economic law.¹⁵ In other words, Berlin became really the centre, because it was becoming increasingly the meeting-point of the threads of an economic system under which the Germans were growing rich, powerful, and numerous. Not only was it natural that the new human type in trade and industry, versatile and more and more under materialistic influences, should quickly adjust itself to the dominant power, but the new gigantic superstructure of modern German industry was built up under an economic policy largely inspired and carried out by Prussia. And this economic policy, strongly interventionist, subventionist, and monopolistic, was so contrived that the business success of the individual depended more and more on whether or not he knew the right strings to pull in Berlin.

The actual deep dividing line came in 1879, when Germany passed from Free Trade to Protection and Bismarck began, with cynical openness, to turn the whole of home politics into a struggle between "pressure groups" and to transform the old ideological parties into parties representing interests. It was the year in which the conditions

¹⁴Even before the founding of the Empire, the Munich historian W. H. Riehl wrote in his book *Die bürgerliche Gesellschaft* (6th edition, Stuttgart, 1866, p. 163): "Prussia is the German power that for two centuries represented most definitely the modern fact of political centralization, and so, without wishing it or realizing it, paved the way for the social centralization which is now growing in so daemonic a form." An early diagnosis of mass-formation and a forecast of its political consequences is to be found in Bruno Bauer, *Russland und das Germanentum*, 1853.

¹⁵Here as on many other points we find ourselves in agreement with Edmond Vermeil, *Germany's Three Reichs* (London, 1944), pp. 220 *sqq.* A really serviceable economic and social history of Germany in the nineteenth century, written with the perspectives of today, does not yet exist. Among the best available are still: Henri Lichtenberger, *L'Allemagne moderne*, Paris, 1907, and Henri Hauser, *Les méthodes allemandes d'expansion économique*, Paris, 1915.

were first created for the growth of cartels and syndicates, of the neo-German monopoly capitalism and the imperialism bound up with it. Thus that year became one of the pregnant years of modern history, in the economic sphere and far beyond it.¹⁶

Thanks to this neo-Prussian economic policy, and thanks also to the unexampled increase in population, there began now the colossal growth of industry, of transport, of the great towns, of the great stores, of the industrial districts; of the mass parties, of State care for mass welfare; of monopolies, trade union federations, and banks—and the old Germany began to disappear and to give place to a Greater Prussia drunk with success, while the influence of non-Prussian traditions and institutions grew weaker and weaker, desperately though some of them fought for existence. In this thoroughly materialistic period the temptation was almost irresistible to grow rich and participate in the so-called progress, giving up the traditional ways of thought for the new German smartness. That this was a selling of one's soul was scarcely noticed, much less felt to be any great objection.

The Prussian conception of economic life made its way, and now, in the new historic school,¹⁷ there was introduced even the economic theory which, under Schmoller's despotic leadership (he was a Swabian as Hegel had been), went out from Berlin to monopolize the Universities and to train the bureaucracy which at the beginning of the century had learnt from Adam Smith. Even the peasants of western and southern Germany, so far as they did not remain loyal to their regional or religious organizations, joined the *Bund der Landwirte* (farmers' union) and, from a short-sighted view of their interests, accepted the leadership of the Prussian landowners.

This *Greater Prussian economic system* meant not only State intervention in industry, monopolies, subsidies, and political control of economic affairs, but also hierarchical organization and centralization.

¹⁶This has been recognized with keen insight especially from the Socialist side, for instance by R. Hilferding, *Das Finanzkapital*, Vienna, 1910, and Paul Lensch, *Drei Jahre Weltrevolution*, Berlin, 1917. Cf. also my own book, *German Commercial Policy*, London, 1934, pp. 24 *sqq.*

¹⁷That school in economics which depreciated economic theory in favour of mere description of the economic institutions and their historical development (like Ashley in England). Its head was Professor Schmoller, at the University of Berlin. Its teaching was that there were really no economic laws which a benevolent government had to respect in its economic and social policy.

Berlin became the magnetic pole of German economic life; here the threads that bound together industry and politics were concentrated more and more; here the great associations had their syndics and their central offices, and no less so the trade union organizations, which in rigidity of construction were in no way behind those of the employers; here, too, the whole German credit system was soon centralized, especially after the concentration of the German banking system had progressively destroyed the valuable old tradition of the regional banks.

The disastrous consequences of this development are almost immeasurable. We have already seen that it does much to explain the Prussification of Germany since Bismarck. A further result of it was the unhealthy expansion of the *heavy industry*, both in the Rhineland and Westphalia and in Upper Silesia, on its monopolist, subsidized basis; with its strongly feudal character, it became a pillar of Prussianism and a seat of disastrous political influence, in which it shared with the Prussian junkers. Cartels and syndicates became, as it were, steps to throne and altar, and anyone who spoke disrespectfully of them showed great courage, which might cost him his social position. Such courage was rare in Germany, where monopolies, like all else, had always been accepted with the submission of dutiful subjects.

But if we probe to the very bottom we find that the world is indebted to this evolution of the Bismarckian empire not only for the prototype of *monopoly-and-proletariat capitalism*, and for the *ideal*, which since has everywhere become so seductive, of *rigidly organized industry*, but also for something quite different—*organized Socialism* as a mass movement, led by men whose only quarrel with such an economic system was that other men sat at the desks from which the commands go out, a Socialism to which men shut out from responsible leadership in political and economic life and embittered by violent class hostility gave the special character of an uncompromising mass faith. It is true that the fundamental idea and the name of Socialism come from France; but it is far too little remembered that in its modern political form it is essentially a specific product of German intellectual and social history.¹⁸

This explains not only why it was a German intellectual, Karl

¹⁸At the very outset of the Bismarckian empire, such keen observers as E. Lavisie (*Revue des deux mondes*, September 15th, 1873) and L. Bamberger (*Die Arbeiterfrage*, 1873) were in agreement on this point.

Marx, and a German manufacturer, Friedrich Engels, that founded modern Socialism, but also why to this day Germans have always taken so prominent a part in the Socialist movement in other countries. Many things have contributed to this—the intellectual effects of German philosophy; the pronounced proletarianization and mass-formation in Germany; the sharp class distinctions inherited from feudalism and absolutism, especially in Prussia; the great increase in population; the exclusion of intellectuals from participation in healthy public life; the provocative character of the Greater Prussian economic system; the lack of tradition in the new German realm; and Germany's leading position in the later intellectual currents of positivism, evolutionism, materialism, and historicism.¹⁹ Finally, there was the circumstance that, for reasons peculiar to Germany, the Social Democracy of that country became the political refuge of people who originally were radical Liberals and Democrats and would have remained so in other countries, but in Germany, after the Liberal parties had made their peace with the new Reich, had become politically homeless.²⁰ These recruits made the new Socialist doctrine their economic programme, without realizing in the slightest that it was incurably inconsistent with the Liberal and democratic *political* programme.

The tragic thing was that very few of those who became Socialists by way of protest against Greater Prussia had any inkling of the extent to which Prussianism was actually an element of Socialism, when that doctrine was freed from its democratic-liberal husk, revealing as kernel the faith in organization, in the collectivity, in the all-powerful State. How far it is possible today to go along this road if the troublesome vestiges of liberalism are shuffled off, is shown by the Social Democrats who became forerunners of Nazism, such as Paul Lensch, Johannes Plenge, or August Winnig, the former Marxist Sombart, and, equally with these, the Fascists, Nazis, and Communists of our day. In the stock on which all these are grafted are to be found not only Saint-Simon and Auguste Comte but also the

¹⁹The general philosophy according to which the key to the understanding of any institution is to study its history and to relate it to its historical setting. There are famous books on it by E. Troeltsch and F. Meinecke. Cf. also Hayek, *Scientism, etc., loc. cit.*

²⁰The best example of this is no less a man than August Bebel himself (E. Eyck, *Bismarck*, vol. 2, Erlenbach-Zurich, 1943, p. 304). Cf. also F. A. Hayek, *The Road to Serfdom*, London, 1944, pp. 124 *sqq.*; W. Röpke, *Internationale Ordnung*, Erlenbach-Zurich, 1945, pp. 12 *sqq.*

Prussian kings, Hegel, Fichte, and all the rest of the creators of the Prussian spirit and the Prussian State; and that stock is the stock of modern Socialism in all its variations.²¹

Thus we see that Germany in the form of Greater Prussia has endowed the world on top of all else with ideologies, conceptions, and institutions in which she appears to be triumphing over her conquerors, and this at a moment when she herself would perhaps like to turn away from them as the causes of her destruction. One needs, indeed, to have lived in Germany in order to scent today almost everywhere the neo-German aroma.

The great question of our time is whether it will allow its mental, political, economic, and social development to come under the influence of countries that have been pushed along this path solely by a unique pathology of their social history. These countries are Germany and Russia, both gigantic world craters that are dropping their scoriae on all countries. So far, however, as Germany is concerned, it should be clear that anyone who tried to solve the German problem with the recipe of the necessarily centralist collectivism would only be proceeding along the path which for three generations has been leading her people to destruction. It would mean trying to cure her with the poison that has been engendered in her thoroughly morbid frame in the course of her history, the main stages of which we have here passed in survey.

THE FINAL STAGES

We have not to tell here the history of Germany from Bismarck to Hitler. Our task is to seek the underlying causes that explain its tragic ultimate course. We are not concerned, therefore, with Bismarck's personality, in many respects so fascinating, but only with the seed he sowed. No matter how great a man he may—like Napoleon—have been, the results of his work were fateful, as with Napoleon. Their full dimensions can only be seen today, and only a German can fully assess them. And what applies to Bismarck applies also to all other effective forces in recent German history.

It would also be entirely to misunderstand us if the absurd and ill-judged purpose were attributed to us of representing Germany as the only black sheep in a flock of exemplary European peoples. On the

²¹*Cf.* Hayek, *op. cit.*, pp. 124 *sqq.* With the same view and in particularly interesting perspective, J. Rivière, *L'Allemand*, Paris, 1918, pp. 232-3.

contrary we must summon the courage to declare with the utmost emphasis, at the present moment when world opinion may be little inclined to accept the hard fact, that until 1914 Germany had no reason to be particularly ashamed of her record in comparison with other nations.

All peoples have reason in very truth to beat their breasts and to confess that they "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." Every nation of today—especially every Great Power—has had at some time in the past a period of ruthless power policy, England in the age of colonial domination, of imperialism, of oppression of Ireland, and of jingoism; France under Richelieu, Louis XIV, and Napoleon; the United States at the time of negro slavery and in the incessant wars against the Indians; Turkey under the Osmanli; Russia almost throughout her history—and even such exemplary countries as Holland and Sweden have to look back on the dark chapters of the early Netherlands colonial history and the Swedish great-power policy from Gustavus Adolphus to Charles XII. None of the great nations came into existence through spontaneous generation or parthenogenesis, none by any other means than war and violence and diplomatic intrigue. The very fact that until toward the end of the nineteenth century there was neither a centralized German State nor an Italy among the Great Powers proves that until then those two countries were in the main victims of European great-power politics. It would be an injustice to consider the last phases of the history of these two countries without reference to the earlier phases during which they were not hammer but anvil.

If we are to examine Germany's case with the relentless candour brought to bear in this book, let us follow the good maxim of the Gospel (Matthew vii, 5): "First cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye." The best way to serve the common cause of all of us is for each nation ruthlessly to examine its own case. But, that done, it is not only our right, but, in the service of the truth and justice at which we have aimed, actually our duty to issue a warning against any sort of pharisaism on the part of other nations, and to permit no distortion of perspectives. As there is a danger today that few other people will venture to say it, let us say it ourselves: Neither do the Germans possess all the vices and the other peoples all the virtues, nor

is it true that the Germans have been, not simply of late, but at all times, disturbers of the peace of an otherwise peaceful and respectable family of peoples. For centuries the relation between Germany and the other nations was much more the other way round. The Germans are hardly likely to forget the Thirty Years War, in which their country was trampled down as the arena of the European Powers, nor the wars of conquest of Louis XIV and the devastation of the Palatinate, nor Napoleon's invasion. In Frederick II's cynical policy of conquest we see one of the most baneful events of German and of European history, but nobody can claim that it was something unique, and the admiration its author aroused all over Europe at the time does not suggest that it was then felt everywhere to be in any way unique. And we can only repeat here that the course pursued by the Germans for the past hundred years, first in theory and later in practice—the course we have criticized so unsparingly—cannot be understood without the profound effects which the French invasion at the beginning of the nineteenth century had on Germany.

Now that with these remarks we have brought the scales of justice into equilibrium, we may say all the more frankly that since Bismarck's time the Germans have pursued a fatally wrong course, and we can follow that course down to the black day in German history when the incompetent tinter of picture postcards from Braunau am Inn, Adolf Hitler, became Chancellor of the realm founded by Bismarck. We are now also entitled to say that the Germans cannot excuse themselves by claiming that in what they have done from Bismarck to Hitler they have really only followed the example set them by other peoples. The centralized unitary State, created for power politics, was the very thing that was utterly in conflict with the nature of Germany. It had therefore, to be brought into existence with a violence corresponding to the strength of the resistance to it, a violence that made this Germany really a disturber of the peace of Europe, against which in the end the universal revulsion of peoples and the might of their governments ultimately united.

The Germans had every reason to ask themselves whether this growing feeling that was assembling all the world against them did not point to causes they must seek in themselves. They would have been able to find one of these causes in the fact that the Greater Prussian power policy, based on universal military service, which had

enforced German unity, implied a real menace to Europe. Long before Bismarck, Prussia had been the first among the powers to take conscription seriously and unceasingly to add to her military strength. Then, when through military predominance she had attained her aims in the wars of 1864 to 1870-71 and overwhelmed both the German Confederation and France, she took, in the brutal annexation of Alsace-Lorraine, a step beyond all remedy.

Greater Prussia imagined that in these provinces she could recover what Louis XIV had taken, but she forgot that in the intervening two hundred years nations had become living units aware of their unity, and that it was no longer possible to tear a limb from them without leaving an incurable wound. She did not realize that her policy had become a provocative anachronism. What other Powers had done in the past was now in truth no longer permissible to Germany—not only because it was in conflict with her nature and her situation, but also because it was opposed to the spirit of the time, a time that might with some justice have quoted Molière—

Nous vivons sous un règne et sommes dans un temps,

Où par la violence on fait mal ses affaires.

In this the Bismarckian empire set an example which the other Powers were compelled to follow, and the outcome was the “armed peace” out of the tensions of which came in the end the first world war. Germany had really been the pacemaker along the path of evil, not only because she had been the first to enter it, but also because she had become the predominant Power on the Continent, and because her acts, her gestures, and her spirit were bound to give the impression that she fully intended to make relentless use of her strength.

In those *gestures* and in that *spirit* of the new empire the Germans might, indeed, have been able to find another cause for the ever-increasing unity of the world's judgment upon their country. It would lead us too far afield to mention here the many *gestures* which were bound to startle the world, and to make clear what was inevitably read into the speeches of William II and the German attitude at the Hague peace conference, to mention these two features alone. Almost of more importance was the *spirit* that spoke in these gestures and had become more and more the spirit of the Prussianized German himself, so much so that we have to see in William II not

so much a *leader* of Germany like Bismarck as her *representative*.

We know already what spirit this was. It was the spirit of a nationalism, in which justified pride in the nation's achievements was mixed with an almost morbid conceit, a spirit to which Frederick II, Potsdam, and Bismarck seemed the most genuine symbols of German greatness, and which glorified Macchiavellianism in the guise of the *Realpolitik* by which such store was set. Under the influence of this spirit more and more Germans came to regard the Bismarckian realm as the true fulfilment of the old mystical dream of empire symbolized by the saga of the sleeping Barbarossa in the Kyffhäuser, and to regard it as the embodiment of power and fame, without troubling any more about its artificial construction or the doubtful morality of its origin. When later, as we saw, so many of the German intellectuals took up a most unheroic attitude toward National Socialism (at all events in its beginnings), with fateful consequences, this attitude was certainly determined by the nationalist and militarist programme of the Third Reich and the exceedingly clever propaganda with which it appealed to the "Fridericus-Potsdam-*Realpolitik*" complex of those elements. The repulsive farce with which the newly-elected Reichstag was opened in March, 1933, in the garrison church at Potsdam was calculated with an uncanny sureness of aim to enrol that spirit of Greater Prussia in the service of the Third Reich. It was an unsurpassable symbol of the alliance entered into by Nazism with the Bismarckian empire, its traditions, and its leading groups, an alliance that formed the bridge by which it attained power.

It could not but be plain to anyone who was not blinded by Germany's astonishing material progress under Bismarck and William II, that that spirit was a heinous aberration and a betrayal not only of the eternal values of our civilization but also of the best German traditions, which had retained their vitality far into the Bismarckian period. How long these traditions had survived may be shown by a small instance. At Christmas, 1917, the University of Göttingen sent to its students in the field a collection of sayings of the greatest scholars of its famous history, entitled "Voices from two hundred years of the Georgia Augusta University" (*Stimmen aus zwei Jahrhunderten der Georgia Augusta*). As an introduction to the collection there was an anonymous French poem on Albrecht von Haller, famed because—

D'écouter la nature il fit sa loi suprême;
 Il soumit le savoir à cette autorité;
 Il sut chez l'ennemi chérir la vérité
 Et haïr l'erreur chez lui-même—

“He made it his supreme law to listen to nature; He submitted knowledge to that authority; He knew how to cherish truth in the enemy, And to hate error in himself.” These last stirrings of a noble German soul did nothing, indeed, to disprove the general trend of the time, but only show the opportunities that had been thrown away. For more than fifty years men had had to wait with growing impatience for a true “German awakening.” The longer such hopes were disappointed, the more certain it became that Germany was heading for a catastrophe. When the catastrophe came, in August, 1914, it dragged down Germany and Europe into the abyss.

After Germany's defeat and the collapse of her political system in *November*, 1918, it seemed for a while as if the neo-German spirit had at last received the coup de grâce it needed and had given place to the “repentance and rebirth” for which the philosopher Max Scheler called at the time. When we now recall that period, we feel that there were then precious and irrevocable months in which all was ready for such a conversion of the Germans. It would lead us too far afield to explain at length why that opportunity was missed. The essential reason was that both in Germany and in the victor States there were but few far-seeing men familiar with the German problem who realized the necessity of accompanying Germany's moral revolution with a political and an economic and social one. It was not enough just to transfer the National Assembly to Weimar in order to substitute the spirit of that classic spot for the “spirit of Potsdam,” and all the fine phrases of the Weimar Constitution were doomed to remain mere words so long as two other things that would attack the root of the German problem remained undone. These two indispensable conditions were a *political* and an *economic and social* revolution, with the common purpose of making an end of the Greater Prussian Reich and of the forces that were its support, and of putting in its place a new Germany liberated from the hegemony of Prussia and from the pernicious influence of the Prussian junkers and the heavy industries. The *political* revolution would have consisted in the thrusting of Prussia back to the Elbe and the restoration of a true federation of the

autonomous States, Bavaria, Württemberg, Baden, Hesse, the Rhineland, Westphalia, Hanover, Schleswig-Holstein, Thuringia, and Saxony, that is to say in the creation of a German confederation such as would have developed after 1866 but for Prussia's policy of force. The *economic and social* revolution would have had two purposes. One would have been to carry out in the Prussian territories a radical agrarian reform breaking up the great estates and putting peasant farms in their place. The other purpose would have been to end the economic and political dominance of the heavy industries, and this would have been done best and most securely by abolishing the Customs duties on iron and steel, which would have resulted in the collapse of the cartels in the heavy industries and the reduction of the latter to economically sound dimensions.

Why nothing of the sort happened, why instead, after a few months of anxiety, Prussia, the junkers, and the heavy industries emerged actually strengthened from the general collapse, is incomprehensible. This was the beginning of all the evils that followed. It was the neglect of these steps that ultimately wrecked the Weimar Republic and produced the Third Reich. The Prussian junkers had managed to emerge unscathed from Prussia's defeat in 1806, and had even made use of the agrarian reform of Stein and Hardenberg to strengthen their own position and largely to eliminate the independent peasantry; and similarly after the defeat in 1918—which once more had been a defeat of their own policy—they succeeded in maintaining and further strengthening their privileged position. Meanwhile they had found apt pupils in the heavy industries.

As for the political revolution, it went no further than a few well-meant but ineffective articles of the new Constitution. In actual fact the centralization of Germany, directed from Berlin, was not loosened but intensified in a way of which neither Bismarck nor William II had dared to dream. The Hohenzollerns went, but the Prussian officers and government officials remained, and the Socialist Ministers of Prussia defended the hegemony of their country with all the stubbornness of their predecessors. Such movements for independence as were actively promoted in Hanover and in the Rhineland were proscribed and suppressed by every available means.

Only now, thanks to centralization in finance, in transport, in military administration, and in many other fields, did Germany

become a real unitary State, and owing to an incomprehensible confusion of minds it was in the very circles that called themselves progressive that the greatest satisfaction was felt. To complete this confusion, the Bavarians, in their struggle against the centralist unitary State and the hegemony of Prussia, a struggle serving an entirely sound end, temporarily turned their sympathies to circles in which they saw allies because those circles were opposing the progressives with a reactionary Prussianism of the worst sort. It was a true tragedy of errors that in Munich, thanks to encouragement from these reactionary circles, Nazism was able to strike its first roots—Nazism, the revolutionary movement which was later to carry Prussianism and centralism to extreme lengths. Thus Munich, whose political climate is utterly opposed to Nazi totalitarianism and collectivism, had to bear after that tragic mistake the disgrace of being described by the Nazis as "Capital of the movement," until, through the bloody suppression in 1943 of the revolt of its University against Nazism, this city earned the name of "Capital of the counter-movement."

If we seek to establish the responsibility for these incomprehensible errors and omissions, through which, after the collapse of 1918, the moral, political, and economic-social revolution was frustrated and turned into its very opposite, we shall be unable to avoid casting severe blame on the parties then dominant, and first of all on the *Social Democracy*, which was in no way mentally prepared for the task suddenly thrust upon it. The idea of the political revolution as we have defined it was naturally remote from their centralistic thinking, but even for the economic revolution they had as a whole no understanding. Influential Social Democratic leaders opposed the transformation of the great estates in Prussia into peasant holdings, because under the Marxist programme they regarded this as a "retrograde step." Finally, there emerged from the ranks of the Social Democracy men who, like Baade, the Reich Grain Commissioner (who in the past had belonged to the extreme Left), drove to the highest pitch the traditional Prussian policy of a protective tariff on grain for the benefit of the great landowners, and so actually shielded the Prussian junkers from the impact of the international economic crisis.

The Cabinets dominated by the Social Democrats in the first

critical months and years of the Republic completely failed also in the other aim of breaking the economic and political power of the heavy industries. The Marxist programme forbade them to adopt the very effective Liberal expedient of abolishing the Customs duties on iron and steel, and on the other hand they were justifiably unable to decide on complete nationalization of the heavy industries; thus they went no further than a few half-measures, which very soon proved to be mere façades behind which the industrialists were able to develop their strong position all the more undisturbed. The responsibility of the Social Democrats for all these errors and omissions was shared by the other leading parties, the Centre and the Democrats, and by a large part of the officials of the Ministries, whose influence had only grown stronger. The beneficiaries were the classes who represented the tradition of the Bismarckian empire, and the parties that defended their views and interests.

As if it was not enough that the needed political and economic-social revolution had not come, and not enough, further, that the elements which these two revolutions should have broken had actually been strengthened, the governments of the Weimar Republic, in their weakness and perplexity, now permitted the further frightful misfortune of *inflation*. This it was in reality that so radically ploughed up Germany that the seed of National Socialism could thrive. One needs to have been living in Berlin at the time, and to have studied the German financial and currency policy at close quarters, to realize how helplessly the responsible authorities faced the deluge of notes. Meanwhile the middle class lost everything and was driven into the arms of the nationalist parties, while immense wealth and power were concentrated in the hands of inflation profiteers of the stamp of Hugo Stinnes.

But this very inflation is a reminder to us that it would be unjust to remember the errors of the Germans and forget those of the victors. These, too, were immense and today incomprehensible; as they were the errors of the actual arbiters of Germany's destiny, and were made by men who were not suffering like the Germans from the perplexities of defeat and collapse, they were, indeed, the more unpardonable. We must assume today that the victors had no clear conception of the actual nature of the German problem, still less of its solution. They showed virtually no interest in a true political and socio-economic

revolution in Germany; by the fluctuations of their Reparations policy they made it difficult to pursue a reasonable financial and currency policy in Germany; they failed to offer any sort of encouragement to the new democratic Government—and then they wondered why there was no moral revolution.²² There now developed the vicious circle of a harsh policy on the part of the victors and a continual stiffening of German public opinion. When the path of reconciliation was then entered under Stresemann, it was too late. The old Prussian spirit had been strengthened, and all the belated concessions now made served only to encourage it. Many drew the despairing inference that the Germans were incurable, instead of asking themselves where they themselves had gone wrong. There is a great danger that the consequences of the errors and omissions of that time may lead to their repetition today.

We now understand why there was no moral revolution in Germany after 1918. The poison of nationalism was not got rid of, but under the influence of defeat, collapse, and economic and social upheavals, was only propagated further. The very serious readiness for a searching self-examination that existed after November, 1918, was quickly dissipated and reduced to impotence in face of the opposite determination to return all the more defiantly to the old spirit. Truth-defying claims like the legend of "the stab in the back" and the theory of the "war guilt lie," rejecting all German responsibility for the world war, soon began to have such influence on the ideas of the Germans that the nationalist parties and later National Socialism had an easy game. Very soon it was impossible for any German historian to venture any longer to express disapproval even of the unnecessary harshness of the Austrian ultimatum to Serbia, the infringement of Belgian neutrality, or the vandal destruction perpetrated by the Germans during their retreats in France. We may even suspect that none of those scholars any longer dreamed of such criticism. Thus there formed between the German historians and their foreign colleagues a barrier across which a few polite words might be shouted now and then, but no agreement was any longer possible about the crucial questions of contemporary history. While almost all other nations began to consider their power policy of the past with critical objectivity, German history became more and more

²²Cf. L. Peltier, *La Guerre de 50 ans*, Geneva, 1944.

a mythology, the questioning of whose sanctified traditions was godless blasphemy.

To those whose outlook is influenced by the materialist conception of history it is natural to regard the economic and social upheavals in Germany, and in particular the great crisis of 1929-33 with its mass unemployment, as the decisive causes of the rise of National Socialism. This doctrine is as one-sided as it is dangerous. Undoubtedly the inflation and the economic crisis played an important part in making the Germans susceptible to the bacillus of Nazism, but what was of critical importance was their mental and moral outlook. When the trade depression of 1929 reached Germany, the consequences were no more formidable than in other industrial countries, and certainly no more so than in the United States. Only when the unforgettable Reichstag elections of September, 1930, suddenly made the Nazis one of the strongest parties, and, together with the simultaneous swelling of the Communist vote, revealed the pressing danger of the extremest radicalism and nihilism, only when these two parties, the Nazis and the Communists, crippled the political machinery of the Reich and menaced the ultimate foundations of State and society and of world trade—only then did the storm of the crisis become a hurricane. Confidence was now utterly wrecked, and so everything became precarious—enterprise, foreign credits, the German currency, and the sensitive mechanism of the German credit system. Only then did the economic situation become really desperate, following the radicalization of the masses which had shaken the foundations of ordered economic life.

Thus we may fairly say that it was largely Nazism itself that so exacerbated the German economic crisis that it was easy for the Nazis to handle the victims of their hysteria, the unemployed, the uprooted intellectuals, the debt-ridden farmers, and that they also won over the hesitant when later, by the high-handed means of their rearmament policy—called the “full employment” policy—they made an end of unemployment. But that hysteria was the consequence of a malady of the German soul, the long antecedents of which we have here sketched.

CONCLUSION.

THE SOLUTION

The enemy who has merely been overthrown can rise again, but the enemy reconciled is truly overcome.
SCHILLER, *Ueber Anmut und Würde*

When civilized men fight cannibals they do not eat them.

G. K. CHESTERTON

THE THREEFOLD REVOLUTION

WE have treated of the nature of the German question to the best of our knowledge, in all conscientiousness, and at such length as the scale of this book permits. Now we have reached the point at which we may say how this question is to be solved, after the collapse of the whole political, economic, social, and mental and moral structure of Germany in a catastrophe such as world history can seldom have seen. We can be brief, as the solution follows naturally from our inquiry. We need only indicate its main lines, without giving reasons and without entering into details. The reasons have been supplied by the whole of this book, and as for the details they can easily be furnished when the time is ripe. We must issue a warning against repeating the mistake of 1919, and drafting a brand new Constitution for the Reich, without first giving deep consideration to the question of the political, economic, and moral foundations on which it must be based in order to fulfil its paper promises.

We will say at once that this is the world-historic hour in which the German question can truly and finally be settled to the satisfaction of Germany and Europe, if the insight and the energy can be summoned up to make use of the brief interval during which everything is in flux. Anything that is omitted in the months to come will remain, we fear, beyond reach for generations.

As after the first world war, the solution consists of a threefold revolution, in the moral, the political, and the economic and social field. For each of these three revolutions the time is now ripe as it has not been for generations.

We begin with the *moral revolution*, on which all else depends: the German question has at all times been essentially a mental and moral one. There is no hope for the Germans, no salvation for their civilization, and no prospect of any restoration of their position in the

world, if they do not genuinely and unreservedly take account of the hard reality—of the measure and the causes of their disaster, of the fatal mistakes they have made, of the unspeakable crimes that have been committed in their name and by their fellow-countrymen inside and outside Germany, and of the crushing responsibility that is theirs. Now is the moment for the “repentance and rebirth” of which the German philosopher Max Scheler spoke after the first world war.

We believe that many Germans are ready for this. All the evidence goes to show that—as might well be expected—they are a people still completely stunned by the blow they have suffered. As great as their physical hunger will be their hunger for the truth. Now, after twelve years of lies and propaganda, they will be not only ready but eager to listen to a full and straightforward exposition of the causes of their misfortune, and thereafter to turn over a new leaf in their history. What the Germans want to know before all else is just what it is that has happened to them. The answer to that question should be placed in their hands as quickly as possible, before they can fall once more under the influence of demagogues—as quickly as possible, and in the most effective and authoritative form. Only Germans themselves can do this, while the most elementary psychology could tell us that any condescending lectures from outside would be worse than doing nothing at all.

Everything conceivable must be done to arouse the conscience of all Germans who have not been hopelessly corrupted by the diabolical system of National Socialism, in order to help them to discover the truth and to bring them on to the path of spiritual and moral recovery. They must be wrested from the hypnosis effected by twelve years of an infernal propaganda, and they must be convincingly shown that seldom in history has the responsibility for war lain so entirely on the shoulders of a single government or been so entirely indubitable as that of the Third Reich, and that it is the responsibility for the most frightful war of all ages. The Germans must be accustomed once more to sound and nourishing mental food, and must be given books that reveal the imperishable ultimate values of our Western civilization and the Satanism of Nazism. The crimes of the regime must be placed before them so relentlessly that not even the most obdurate can deny them any longer. Doubtful as has been the value of the much too

elementary world propaganda about the concentration camps, it was undoubtedly salutary for the Germans, though, once more, the most elementary psychology forbids us to expect of them an open confession to their conquerors of their feelings of shame at the Nazi atrocities.¹

There is no need to explain again here why we may count on the Germans to be ripe for this moral revolution. What they are suffering is the complete bankruptcy of a spirit, a policy, a type of patriotism and of collective morality, which the Nazis had utilized in order to carry matters to the uttermost extreme. In blind obstinacy the wrong path was pursued to the end, until the leaders themselves saw no way out except through taking their own lives. The people, as such, will not commit suicide, but will turn back provided that they are shown a way back. The currency of the Greater Prussian collective morality has become as completely valueless as the mark did in November, 1923: there remains no alternative but to create a new spiritual currency.

This moral revolution is the more natural and inevitable since today, in contrast with November, 1918, the question of war guilt cannot but be answered quite plainly even by the most stupid or the

¹To what we have written earlier on this appalling subject (pp. 58 *seqq.*), we will add here that when Germans declare that they knew nothing of the horrors of the concentration camps, there are many explanations that make it unnecessary to jump at once to the suspicion of obduracy. 1. It is possible that they want to hide their shame from the victors. 2. It is possible that the phrase, "I know nothing about it" is the natural reaction of people who have learnt through twelve years to give evasive answers whenever they can, as the surest way of escaping from those very concentration camps. 3. It is possible that in a certain sense the Germans are right in saying that they knew nothing of these horrors. Naturally they had at all times a vague idea, and for that very reason a particularly terrifying one, of what went on in the concentration camps: it was, indeed, an essential element in the Nazi system of terrorism to spread that idea. But to know any details, and still more to talk about them, might cost a man his life.

We must add that it would be very unjust to forget that the Nazi fiends made a system of seeing to it that the members of a man's family should suffer for any resistance of his. Thus the question arose: How much courage may a man show at the expense of his wife, his children, his parents, or his brothers and sisters, whom, if he offers open resistance, he will be delivering up to the Government's executioners and torturers?

A Swiss witness, who, on the invitation of the French General de Lattre de Tassigny, made a journey through southern Germany in the summer of 1945, has told us that the French, too, had just discovered one of the horrible concentration camps, but found that the guards were largely French militiamen. On the other hand, Frenchmen who had been in the regular German prisons stated that they had been properly treated. The two facts illustrate the truth we have emphasized—one that is unfortunately too often forgotten—that it is a question of the system and the human type, not of the national spirit, and that it is such systems and such types that have to be made an end of, not the nations in which they are found. Finally, it should be said that most Germans would probably have been very glad if but a fraction of the present-day indignation about the concentration camps had been as vocal twelve years ago.

most evilly-disposed person. That is the one and only good result of Hitler's cynicism. Any attempt to talk of a new "war guilt lie" will be disposed of at once by that. Nor is it likely that a new "stab in the back" legend can find anything to feed on. The whole organisation of the German armed forces was involved in catastrophe, and the responsibility of the Generals for Hitler's rule is so heavy and so unmistakable that they are bound to follow him in downfall and damnation. It is difficult, if not impossible, this time to think of saving any vestige of the glory of Prusso-German arms for a new cult of the flag after they have served under the blood-stained banner of the Swastika.

We also mentioned the first signs of awakening and return to reason of the German intellectuals, after we had had to speak plainly of their heavy responsibility. Here is the critical and also, perhaps, the most hopeful point of the moral revolution. Once the new ideas and principles have found their way into the Universities, the schools, the newspaper staffs, the Churches, and the law courts, we shall really be able to speak of a renaissance of Germany. Thus every effort will have to be directed in the first place to furthering the gratifying beginnings of a new outlook among the German intellectuals, to ridding Universities, schools, courts, editorial staffs, and Churches of the unteachable, and to setting in their place the representatives of a new spirit. The all-important thing is to create a new intellectual élite, which will then see to the communication of the new ideas and standards to a wider public. But it will also be necessary that the men and women involved, completely exhausted in body and mind after twelve and a half years of isolation, brutalization, over-exertion, undernourishment, and nervous strain, shall be looked after and given rest and opportunity of spiritual recovery and of renewed contact with the world. Every effort and every expenditure to this end will repay itself a thousand times over. A world able to control its passions, and to listen only to the voice of reason, would probably regard it as one of the most valuable steps toward the solution of the German question to take some hundreds of German professors, clergymen, editors, and judges at once for several months to an Alpine hotel: there, amid the peaceful glories of nature, with good food and comfort, they would be able through constant touch with foreign colleagues, and through the study of the foreign books,

periodicals, and newspapers of the last ten years, to recover the mental and physical energy with which they could successfully take up their office of educators of the people. We ought not to be surprised if it should prove that the Russians were ahead of the Western world in carrying out this idea of a "spiritual and moral sanatorium" on their own lines and for their own purposes.

With the moral revolution must come Germany's *political revolution*. It can scarcely be necessary for us to say once more what this must consist of—the dissolution of the Bismarckian empire; the relegation of Prussia to the Elbe line, and the creation of a German Confederation of autonomous *Länder* (territorial States) which in turn will be ruled on the strict principle of local and regional self-government. It is a revolution that must follow the principle that the rebuilding of Germany must be effected not from above but from below, that is to say from the smallest political units of the *Gemeinde*, the *Kreis*, and the *Land*, a rebuilding that begins with the foundations and not with the roof. It is a further essential element of this revolution that the dominant influence of Prussia shall be broken and the buried tradition of the old German States resuscitated. That means that the Rhineland, Westphalia, Hanover, Hesse, Schleswig-Holstein, and the rest, must acquire the rank of independent German States or amalgamate into such States. This is the very cure that corresponds to our detailed diagnosis of the German malady. Germany must regain her character of a "nation of nations," and return to the good traditions from which, three generations ago, she departed to her undoing.

This is at the same time the course that follows with compelling logic from the situation of today.

About a year ago, in a memorandum intended for the Allied diplomats, I wrote: "The whole edifice of the Reich will collapse, and much more completely than in 1918, since the whole framework of the national economy, of the monetary and financial system, of communications and administration, which in 1918 had largely remained intact, will now fall into hopeless ruin. Again in contrast with 1918, there will this time no longer be any organized political life, no parties and programmes, no group ready and able to take over the bankrupt estate of the Third Reich, but only prostration and an immense longing for peace, for civilized life, for order and privacy,

a longing born of indescribable loathing for dragooning and propaganda, organization and centralization under command. All that is left of the authority and order and tradition of the past will be regarded as an infinite treasure—the classes representing tradition and continuity, especially the peasants; the unchallenged authority of the churches, of the local and regional notables, and perhaps of a monarch like Prince Rupert of Bavaria; the experience and the reputation of some of the former trade union leaders; and the leadership of the intellectual élite of whose latest development we have reported elsewhere.”

The memorandum went on:

“If we want a closer idea of what such a collapse of Germany really means, we must bear in mind that a cracking social edifice, like any other, will give way at the weakest point. But this weakest point is always the superimposed centre. We may therefore expect to find the whole centralized superstructure of Germany give way under the impact of military, political, and economic disaster, while the local and regional basis will remain standing. There will be no more orders from Berlin and perhaps not even the technical means of transmitting them, but in the villages, the small towns, and even the great cities and the provinces, life will go on in the most elementary forms. The smaller the political units, the better will be the prospect of the early forming once more of an ordered administration, based on the most urgent requirements and on the past traditions of self-government; of the right men, personally known for their ability and integrity, taking the administration in hand; and of no new demagogues and mystical leaders interfering with the sober task of organizing life on a local or regional basis. Here the undeniable German sense of order and discipline and decency will show itself. After the Nazi scoundrels have been dealt with and new attempts to fish in troubled waters have been suppressed, anarchy will be the least likely thing in Germany, unless we give that name to the spontaneous decentralization that will then be inevitable. This *spontaneous decentralization*, which we must expect after the downfall of Nazi Germany, will be so much the stronger since it will imply the turning away from a centre, namely Prussia, which will then be regarded everywhere west of the Elbe as the

symbol of a mentality that has lost, to put it mildly, a good deal of its authority.”

It was not difficult to be right in these forecasts. With the Third Reich, the German Reich founded by Bismarck came to its end. The third stroke is usually fatal. Germany can be reborn only if she completes the political revolution we have described: we will add a few considerations of importance as soon as we come to speak of the tasks of the victors.

Now, we said that the moral and the political revolution form a whole. If the political revolution is to be successful, it requires an accompanying moral one. The reverse is also true: the political revolution is the indispensable condition of the moral. Not only will it be an invaluable school of democracy and citizenship for the Germans, facing them with the concrete tasks of local self-administration, and preserving them in the smaller political units from the rule of the impersonal masses, but we are firmly convinced also that the Germans will find their way back to their better selves only if they are liberated from the violation which Greater Prussia and later the centralized unitary State meant for them, and return to the political structure of the period in which they showed to the world other and more likeable features. Is not the Austrian in many ways more attractive than the German of the Reich because he did not share the abnormal collective existence to which the German has been condemned from Bismarck's time? We have as yet no idea of how the Bavarian, the Württemberger, the Rhinelander, or the Hanoverian may develop when he is no longer dependent on Berlin but returns to his own tradition—in other words, when he no longer has to live in the “dog-kennel” of which, as we mentioned at the outset of this book, Ludwig Bamberger wrote in 1866. Men speak rightly of the necessity of “re-educating” the German: this political revolution is the chief means of that process, more important than any broadcasting or films, and far more so than putting to school. We advise trying the experiment; there need be no fear about the result. It will be the sort of cure that is produced by giving the ailing body the vitamins it lacks.

Now we can reply at once to the stereotyped *objection* that this political revolution runs against the current of history, that after Greater Prussia has endured for so long the tradition of the German

racés is not now strong enough—or however else the objection may be formulated. In reply to this we have three things to say:

First, it is an entirely baseless contention that there is no such thing in history as a return to things that had been mistakenly abandoned. That would mean that there are no renaissances, indeed, no return from a wrong path. It would mean, in short, that in history we must misquote Mephistopheles and say that everything that exists deserves not to be destroyed. Is a drunkard to be able to return to the principles of an earlier and better phase in his career—by renouncing alcohol—and not a whole nation? In the name of what philosophy? Surely, only in the name of a nineteenth-century philosophy of history, now largely discarded, which was under the spell of evolutionist thought.

Secondly, it is a complete mistake to suppose that the traditions of the German races have lost their appeal. All our information from Bavaria, Hanover, Westphalia, the Rhineland, and other German territories, goes to show the opposite. Fortunately, we may be assured that there is to be found everywhere in western Germany this thoroughly healthy and promising reaction against the herd-intoxication of the unitary State—"One Reich, one folk, one Führer!"—against Prussianism and against the neo-German spirit that came in with it. The former spirit is at least strong enough to be utilized by a clear-sighted and intelligent policy in order to carry out the political revolution we want.

It is almost tragic, however, that many people who have no more love than we have ourselves for the Prussian spirit regard our programme of Germany's political revolution as romantic and old-fashioned and consequently unpractical. In doing so they capitulate, no doubt involuntarily, to a mentality which Bismarck sought to spread by every possible means when he gave currency to the defamatory epithets of "enemy of the Reich" or "particularist eccentricity." Must we tell them yet again that Bismarck himself was the worst of separatists when he used armed force to expel Austria, one of the noblest members of the old Germany? So far as Germany is concerned, we must also bear in mind that the development undergone by the Austrian attitude toward the Reich can perfectly well extend to the other German States. Among the Austrians the "anti-particularists" (Socialists and those parties that represented the section of the middle class that was relatively free from bonds of creed and tradition)

longed for *Anschluss*: then they had experience of what it was really like, and today they are unanimously fighting for their independence. They are doing what should be only natural also for the Bavarians, the Rhinelanders, and the Hanoverians. By what right can it be suggested that what is permitted to one of the victims of 1866, Austria, should be denied to the other, Hanover? Why should not the Bavarians, the Rhinelanders, the Hanoverians, be just as sick of *Anschluss*—which, moreover, was imposed on them by main force—as the Austrians? Anyone who imagines that they have got used to it is mistaken. They may have been more or less indifferent at the time when the Austrians wanted the *Anschluss*, but the experience of recent years, which has converted the Austrians to a man, will also have opened the eyes of many Bavarians, Hanoverians, and Rhinelanders.

It is undoubtedly true that in the new German Reich—most of all in its last, National Socialist phase—there has been a good deal of migration from State to State. This has, no doubt, smoothed away some of the regional differences and contributed to the making of the appalling *Einheitsdeutscher*—the “standardized” German—who betrays himself at once by his rasping Prussian accent. It is, however, an immense exaggeration, thank Heaven, to suggest that the Germans are already so reduced to a homogeneous pulp that its component parts are no longer distinguishable. Germany’s recovery depends essentially on this *Einheitsdeutscher*—who is simply the *Bismarckdeutscher* with his dangerous mentality—giving place once more to the true type of the Bavarian, Hanoverian, Rhineland, or Württemberger. Any plan of reform that accepts the “pulp” must fail of its purpose, unless its purpose is actually to preserve the “pulp” on the ground that there is no alternative. The migration within Germany has mainly affected only the industrial centres or the great cities, especially Berlin, and even these in very different degrees, while the bulk of the population of western and southern Germany has been little affected. Munich, thank Heaven, is still Bavarian, Hamburg is still itself, Cologne is still Rhenish, and we can only congratulate ourselves if they are determined to remain so.

Thirdly, however, we must ask—Just what do you want? Do you want to retain the Greater Prussian Reich in any form? In that case you will have to take the German as he is, for he is the creature of that Reich, and the two are worthy of each other. But do you want

another and a more satisfactory type of German, a "re-educated" type? If you want this, you must want the means to it, and must adopt those with goodwill and insight and intelligence. And do you clearly realize that this programme is the only hopeful one that you can oppose to the collectivist one announced from Moscow—and now from Berlin?

But this brings us to the third revolution, *economic and social*. The purpose of the moral revolution is to shake off the spirit of the Bismarckian Reich, and that of the political revolution is to get rid of its constitutional structure: the purpose of the economic revolution must be to make a complete change in its economic and social form. Germany has to be liberated from the degeneracies of monopoly-and-proletariat capitalism, of the growth of the masses, of agrarian and industrial feudalism, of proletarianization, of concentration and over-organization, of the agglomeration of industrial power and the destruction of the individuality of labour, in short, from all the economic and social causes of the social crisis of our day, to which, as we have seen, she has fallen victim in so exceptional a degree since Bismarck. If the socio-economic malady which so ravaged Germany, and which prepared the way for Nazism, may be called pre-collectivism and collectivism, and if under Nazism it developed into an almost mortal fever, the cure can only consist in the completely opposite anti-collectivist programme I have described and defended elsewhere.² By that may be measured the insanity of the idea of proposing to bring happiness to this unfortunate country with a collectivism that is distinguishable from that of Nazism only by its colour and by the different group that would lord it over the people and treat them to its myths and slogans and its own particular mental procrusteanism.

Here we are met at once by the objection that this very regime of collectivism of the past twelve years, with its war and mass bombings and defeat, has so transformed Germany into a pulp of proletarianized masses, used to a stereotyped pattern of community life, that any but a collectivist programme would be utopian. If that means that these proletarianized masses, in their desperate state, would be particularly susceptible to a repetition of collectivist demagoguery, unhappily we

²In my books *Die Gesellschaftskrisis der Gegenwart* (4th edition, Erlenbach-Zurich, 1944), *Civitas humana* (Erlenbach-Zurich, 1944; shortly to be published in translation by W. Hodge & Co.), *Internationale Ordnung* (Erlenbach-Zurich, 1945), and *Die Lehre von der Wirtschaft* (3rd edition, Erlenbach-Zurich, 1943).

can only emphatically agree. If it means further that the victims of the bombings will long be condemned to the abnormal life of barracks and public kitchens and uprootedness, we can only bow to a lamentable fact. But if it means that at bottom these masses want nothing better in this life, then we can only shake our head.

If today one of these proletarianized Germans—one of the workmen or clerks or past members of the middle class—were asked his idea of Paradise, we may be sure that among his first aspirations would be a small house of his own with a garden and a goatshed, an undisturbed family life without training courses, mass meetings, processions, and political flag days; dignity and pleasure in his work, an independent if modest existence, harmony and concord in the family, the neighbourhood, the church, the immediate surroundings; leisure evenings on which he can read a good book, have a look at the seedlings, discuss the big and little questions of the day with his neighbours over the fence, or have a little music or potter about at home, without being upset by the broadcast bawling of some new collectivist Führer. He will be determined to do everything to bring nearer the fulfilment of this dream; he will work and save as never before; he will be happy over the most modest progress, after his experience of what real privation means, and will rather build his own cottage in the most primitive fashion than once more be boxed in a monster block of tenements. The very fact of the fearful destruction of the great German cities has made it possible and even perhaps necessary to proceed to really extensive decentralization of housing and of industries.

We are therefore of the opinion that Germany offers particularly favourable conditions for carrying out an anti-collectivist programme, for the very reason that she has pursued the collectivist path to the very end and must now return to her point of departure. Not everyone will clearly see this; many will only have a very vague feeling of what it is that they want. Such people will easily have their heads turned by the apostles of collectivism. But there are several reasons for believing that these apostles are themselves none too hopeful about the task in front of them: one is that even the "Free Germany Committee" founded and inspired by Moscow has not yet ventured to come forward with a collectivist economic programme, but has carried opportunism to the grotesque length of placing "free

initiative in trade and industry" on its programme. These people probably say to themselves, not without justice, that they are sure of the Communists in any case and may count on being understood by them if they appeal to the other classes with reassuring items of this sort in working to secure political control in Germany, on the attainment of which they will be able to do as they like—tactics thoroughly reminiscent of those of Hitler.³ But the very fact that it is considered that these other classes can be won over by anti-collectivist slogans shows us that such subtle interpreters of the mind of the people as the Communists are entirely in agreement with us that the aspirations of the Germans today run absolutely counter to the Communist aim. So much the more reason have the rest of us to realize these aspirations and really to satisfy them, instead of cheating them as was done in the past by the Nazis when they promised freedom and independence to the peasants and artisans.

We need scarcely add that this economic and social revolution forms with the moral and the political revolution a whole whose parts mutually support each other. The moral revolution will only have a really profound effect if it is accompanied not only by the political but also by the economic and social revolution that will liberate the Germans from collectivism, mass-formation, and proletarianization, as the political revolution will liberate them from Prussification, mass-democracy, and centralism.

No less intimate is the relation between the economic and social revolution and the political one. Only if the Germans are cured of regimentation and proletarianization will they really turn away for good from the narcotics of nationalism and totalitarianism, and recoil in disgust from every sort of political mass-hysteria. It must further be borne in mind that the federative character of Germany, to which the political revolution must lead, can only be associated with an economic structure that is pronouncedly anti-collectivist, just as, conversely, federalism would make collectivism impossible in Germany in the future.⁴ It is therefore only logical that the new collectivists, who think of entering in Germany into the heritage of

³The publications of the Communist "Free Germany" committee show that it is not even taking any special trouble to conceal its double game. In the very issue of its organ *Freies Deutschland* (January, 1945) in which mention is made of the main points of its programme, there are other articles in the best Communist style.

⁴The incompatibility of federalism and collectivism is shown in my book *Civitas humana* (Zurich edition, pp. 67 sqq.).

the Nazis, should be advocates of the unitary State, and should combat federalism with all the catchwords of the Greater Prussian mentality.

Finally, the close association between the moral, the political, and the economic revolution shows itself specially plainly in an important programme point which we mentioned when we were writing of the omissions of the revolution of 1918. There can no longer be any serious difference of opinion as to the necessity of making an end of the agrarian feudalism of the region east of the Elbe and of the industrial feudalism (that is, in the main, the heavy industries of the Ruhr) west of the Elbe: this is one of the strategic points for the real solution of the German question. The ending of agrarian feudalism east of the Elbe means that the Prussian system of great estates must at last give place to peasant farms and villages, not to an agrarian collectivism of the type, for instance, of the Kolkhozes, which is nothing but agrarian feudalism under another name and at best—even this is not certain—might bring a change in the occupants of the manor house. The ending of industrial feudalism west of the Elbe means today the same as in 1918—the ending of the monopoly of the heavy industries and a radical change in the economic policy (Customs, cartel law, and so on) to which the German heavy industries owed their morbidly monstrous growth and their monopoly position. Similar steps are required for the other powerful elements in German industry.⁵

THE TASK AND THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE VICTORS

The solution of the German question contained in this threefold revolution is the only one that holds out the promise of real permanence. It permits the fulfilment of all just and reasonable claims from the victors for the future security of Europe in face of Germany; and at the same time it is the solution which every German patriot with clear vision and goodwill must desire for his homeland, once he has himself recognized the nature of the German question. Germany had become a danger to her neighbours because she had become infected with a grave malady. It is therefore the common interest of victors and vanquished that she should at last be thoroughly cured.

Broadly, therefore, the victors need only desire and promote what the Germans themselves would have had to aim at if there had been

⁵Cf. My books *Die Gesellschaftskrisis der Gegenwart* (4th edition, pp. 364 sqq.) and *Civitas humana* (Zurich edition, pp. 293 sqq.).

no war and no defeat. Seldom in history can the conditions have been so favourable for a just and reasonable peace (which, so far as Germany is concerned, would have every prospect of being also a lasting peace), and for a treatment of the vanquished worthy of the civilization of the victors and of the cause on behalf of which they went to war. Broadly, the victors, if their aim is a reasonable and a just peace, that is to say a real solution of the German question, need only act in such a way as to promote the threefold revolution.

In the first place, so far as concerns the *moral revolution*, the conditions are favourable even from the point of view of the relation of the Germans to the Allies. This applies especially to the Western Allies, with regard to whom, in spite of all the propaganda of the Nazi Government, the Germans are satisfied that they intend to treat the vanquished with justice and in accordance with the principles of Western civilization, to which especially the German west of the Elbe adheres today more strongly than ever. The almost complete destruction of the German cities, which condemned hundreds of thousands to a terrible death and made just as many into beggars overnight, represents a very heavy mortgage on the future, but it is probable that it has made no substantial change in the readiness of the Germans to come to terms with the victors. It should be possible to convince the Germans that the bombing was part of the general conduct of the war into which the Nazis had forced the Allies to enter. Should the Germans have forgotten it, they will have to be reminded that they were the first to adopt this barbaric method, and that through their press they had given their enemies, who did not know that in a totalitarian State there is no public opinion, the impression that they felt nothing but satisfaction at the bombing of Warsaw, Rotterdam, London, or Coventry. The Germans, even those who were strongly anti-Nazi, must understand that the war could only be waged on the strictly territorial principle, and could thus make no distinction between just and unjust, and that to that extent the decent Germans were bound to share liability with the Nazis. So much the more strongly should the victors adhere to the view that while the war had to be waged on the territorial principle (*locus regit actum*, as the phrase runs in international private law), the peace should be concluded on the personal principle, that is to say with the strictest distinction between Nazis and the rest of the Germans.

This *distinction between the seducers and their victims* is the most important means by which the victors can promote the moral revolution; indeed, it seems to us to be the indispensable condition for it. It demands on the one hand that the whole Nazi hierarchy (all the leaders down to the *Blockwart*, all organs of the *Parteigliederungen*, all S.S. and S.A. men, all responsible Nazi journalists, and so on) shall be proceeded against with the utmost rigour; but on the other hand that the rest of the Germans shall be treated in a way that assures the victors of the collaboration without which they cannot administer Germany as civilized men, a way, moreover, that allows free play to the moral revolution in Germany. Either the problem of Germany will be solved with the Germans, or it will not be solved at all, and our principle supplies the only possibility of solution. It preserves the Germans from a nihilistic despair from which the worst would have to be feared. It opens to them the gateway to our common civilization, to which they must be won back if there is to be the slightest hope for our continent. It is the indispensable condition for the moral revolution in Germany, without which all else would be in vain.

This same principle of differentiation permits the victors to avoid the barbaric policy of summary punishment and reprisals that made the Nazis the curse of Europe. It gives them the opportunity of replying to barbarism with justice, reason, and humanity, and saves them from infection by the poison of collective hatred and national pride that brought Germany to the ground—a poison that today menaces the whole world. It is the principle so well expressed by G. K. Chesterton—“When civilized men fight cannibals they do not eat them.”

Let the leading Nazis, then, be treated with all the harshness they have so richly earned. Let them be expropriated and put into labour battalions for the rebuilding of Europe, so far as they are not to be condemned as criminals. But let the other Germans be given hope, and do not let the precious but fugitive moment pass in which the Germans will decide, according to the treatment they receive from the victors, whether to pursue the path of “repentance and rebirth,” or to turn away embittered and disappointed. Nothing would make a deeper impression on the Germans, after witnessing twelve and a half years’ triumph of injustice and summary judgment, than such a reign of equity, which would imply the restoration of civilization

and of personal responsibility. Nothing would do more to produce a new and healthy condition of public life in Germany. "There would be little use in punishing the Hitlerites for their crimes if law and justice did not rule, and if totalitarian or police governments were to take the place of the German invaders," said Mr. Churchill in his broadcast on May 13th, 1945, after the conclusion of the armistice agreement, and we may be sure that many Germans listened attentively—and with a little hope.

If the Allies proceeded differently from this, they would not merely be "eating the cannibals"—they would be playing into the hands of the Russians.

It is no longer particularly difficult to say what is the *Russians'* game. They regard the zone of Germany under their occupation as their exclusive preserve, and as is shown by the feverish activity of their German committee, their ultimate aims are far-reaching. While they are excluding the Western Allies from all influence in the territory east of the Elbe, they are obviously pursuing a policy of infiltration in western Germany, in order in the end to bring this, too, under their influence with the aid of their agents, their broadcasting, and their Communist cells, in the name of the social revolution and also in that of the maintenance of the unity of the Reich and of its Prussian traditions. Meanwhile they will permit themselves, true to the tactics of the Communists in many other countries, to carry out the social revolution in such stages and with such tactics of opportunism as seem expedient. To attain this aim they will do all they can to gain the sympathy of the German masses. They will note with satisfaction the Western Allies' hatred of Germany and the propaganda by means of which the Allies are actually promoting it; meanwhile, in spite of their own terrible sufferings at German hands, they will probably not permit themselves a policy of passion, which is always disastrous.

Nobody today⁶ has any reliable knowledge of what is going on behind the iron curtain with which the Russians have shut off their sphere east of the Elbe. They are allowing the world to know only what they want it to know—the world, and especially the western Germans. It is with this reservation that we must accept the news that in Berlin and in other cities the Russians are pursuing a reason-

⁶Spring, 1945.

able and generous policy toward the Germans. In any case they want the western Germans to see them in this light, and in any case this is the policy demanded by common sense. The more the Western Allies were to do the opposite, the more certainly would the Russians attain the aim of their policy of infiltration. All the more so since they can point out, and not without truth, that the fearful work of destroying the German towns was left mainly to their Allies, a fact that in itself gives the Russians an advantage.

From the standpoint of the victors, too, the solution of the German question by means of the threefold revolution forms a whole, whose parts condition each other. They can carry out the policy of just and humane treatment of the Germans, which favours the moral revolution, with the more assurance the more resolutely they promote at the same time the political and the economic revolution.

If the Allies adopt our conception of the essential *political revolution* it will be well not to try to force it upon the Germans, but to make a point of avoiding anything that might disturb or even cripple the forces of Germany's spontaneous political decentralization. They will find it useful to encourage the Germans with their own experience, and to give them advice in the task of building up a new political life once more in the small political units on democratic and Liberal principles. Sooner or later they will become convinced of the necessity of giving help to the industrial regions with their motley proletarian population, and to the inhabitants of the destroyed cities, as man to man. But everywhere the wisest thing will be to turn to the leading classes that represent tradition and continuity, and to the persons who enjoy natural authority, to collaborate with them—in the identification and punishment of the worst Nazis as in other matters—and to leave them as free a hand as possible in the work of reconstruction.

While in the smallest administrative districts the Allies should transfer sole responsibility as soon as possible to the Germans, they have a special task in connexion with the organization of these districts in larger units. Loose as the German federation of States may be at first, it will be necessary to set up a central authority for the temporary purpose of the fulfilment of the conditions of armistice and of peace and for the permanent task of ensuring a minimum of integration in trade and industry, currency and finance. This central

co-ordination should be reserved by the Allies to themselves alone for a reasonable period, until we may have reason to hope that the German problem has been solved within the framework of a new European order. In this way they will give the German States time to strengthen their separate life and their regional consciousness to such a degree that they will later face a federal centre in German hands with the whole weight of a re-established regional tradition.

This task of the Allies stands out still more clearly if we indicate the *two main errors* they may commit. One would be to regard the imperial unit forged by Bismarck as inviolable and as an outcome of historic evolution that cannot be unmade. It has been one of the main purposes of this book to show that that view is unjustified and dangerous. To make it the basis of a policy for Germany would not only mean letting slip for a second time after 1918 a unique opportunity for solving the German question, but would actually result in making the problem more insoluble than ever. If the victors respect German "unity," they will find themselves compelled to treat this "German lump" all the more harshly, in order to punish it and by main force to render it harmless for a long time to come. If Greater Prussia is left intact, logic will demand that it shall be held down by all sorts of measures of compulsion, territorial mutilations, a harsh occupation and strict control, and by a brutal weakening of its economic capacity. It is true that in this way peace, so far as it might be threatened by Germany, might be assured for some time—so long, in fact, as the existing alliances remain intact. But it is more than probable that the readiness of the Germans for reflection and regeneration would turn into hatred, treachery, and exasperation. The result would be the triumphant resurrection of Prussia and of a Prussianized Germany, perhaps under a Communist totalitarianism.

That would be one of the two main errors. The other would be a dismemberment of Germany with the open intention of punishing her and crippling her. Such an enforced partition of the Reich would be the surest way of hopelessly discrediting a movement that otherwise would be entirely natural and would correspond to the policy which sensible and clear-headed Germans would themselves regard as the only possible way of escape from their situation. Every German federalist would be regarded at once as a "separatist" and a traitor to the common German cause; all forces of spontaneous political

decentralization would be crippled, and the Prussian mentality would triumph once more.

The second error would be the more unpardonable since it is completely unnecessary if all that has been said in this book carries any conviction.

Thus the sensible policy would be to carry out the political decentralization and de-Prussification of Germany *with* the Germans and not *against* them. It would be granted to them as a concession, not imposed as a punishment. In this way two birds would be killed with one stone: Europe—exactly as Heeren prophesied and demanded 120 years ago (see page 152)—would be protected from Germany in a way which every clear-minded German could at the same time regard as the one real solution of the problem of his own country, and which, as a good German and a good European, he could urgently recommend to his fellow-countrymen with the profoundest conviction. Thus the aim of rendering Germany impotent for any new offensive policy would be attained without any embittering measures, while the severest punishment of all who have been directly responsible for the Third Reich and its crimes would find nothing but enthusiastic assent from every honourable German.

By a prudent and well-considered policy of this sort, carried out with psychological tact and with judicious treatment of German public opinion, it should be possible largely to harmonize the interests and feelings of victors and of Germans, at least to the extent needed for the safeguarding of Germany's moral revolution. Only then would every attempt at the "re-education of the Germans" be anything else but a labour of Sisyphus. Then, too, the last reason will be removed for a policy of mutilation of German industry, which would gravely injure not only Germany but Europe. The victors will also be able to be guided with so much the more freedom by the aims of the economic and social revolution we have described. Let us leave untouched at present the question of the extent to which Germany as a whole can and must make good the damage done in Europe by her criminal government. Only this must be said, that it would be short-sighted to demand more from the Germans than is compatible with the threefold revolution, that is to say with the solution of the German question, which must be of even more importance to Europe than the shortening of the period of reconstruction by a few years or

months. It would also be unfair for the brave opponents of Nazism, who remained in Germany as "internal emigrants," to be now further penalized with reparation claims, although they showed greater courage than not a few "external" emigrants who now might actually be receiving compensation from them. And if it is rightly intended to impose on Austria no reparation obligation or only a small one, with what justice could it be proposed to treat, say, Bavaria more severely? Was not Bavaria overrun by the Austrian Hitler in 1933 in exactly the same way as Austria in 1938, and did not the same elements offer resistance in the one case as in the other? Did not the first revolt of professors and students take place in Munich (spring, 1943), to be suppressed with bloodshed? And did not the Bavarians rise although, unlike the Austrians, no hope of special treatment was held out to them by the Allies? Is the case of the Rhineland very different? All this goes to show what caution will be needed in order to proceed with justice.

If, however, anyone should consider, in spite of all we have said, that the Germans as a whole must still be "punished" for Nazism and its crimes, we reply that it is already too late for this summary penal treatment. Anything worse than what the Germans have already endured and have still to endure could scarcely be devised. We will emphasize, however, that on the other hand the policy we have recommended does not exclude the most stringent military provisions (in particular the prohibition of the manufacture of armaments, the disbanding of the corps of officers, the razing of fortresses, and so on), nor reparations, nor ruthless suppression of any new stirring of German nationalism, nor any other necessary measures of precaution.

Now we have to meet the *objection* that our recommendations amount to inducing the victors, for the second time within a generation, to treat the Germans with an exaggerated leniency that seems even less justified today than in 1919.

This objection is based on a misunderstanding. To begin with, it is possible so to interpret the practical results of the peace treaty of Versailles that the blame for them is attributed not so much to the mildness of the provisions of the treaty as to that of their application. This, however, was largely the result of the breaking up of the alliances, which to any realistic observer should have appeared to be

almost inevitable. If at that time there was exaggerated optimism, did it not lie rather in the supposition that the diplomatic combination of 1919 could be made permanent, and that in consequence the system of military and economic control that depended on it could be effectively maintained for an indefinite time? Would it not have been better, in 1919 just as today, as farseeing Frenchmen familiar with the problem of Germany wanted, to go to the root of the problem and to make a radical change in Germany's political structure, and at the same time to encourage the democratic and liberal elements of that country by as conciliatory a policy as possible?

Of still greater importance, we think, is a second point: the policy we recommend is the most prudent for the further reason that it leaves open every possibility for the future. It is impossible to modify the two other alternative policies for Germany, which we regard as mistaken, and later to change over from one of them to our policy. But our policy offers the opportunity of passing over to any other policy if it should prove that it is we who are mistaken. The injury done by either of the first-named policies for Germany will be beyond repair. What we propose instead can, on the contrary, cause no irreparable injury. This policy has also the further advantage that it is thoroughly elastic and can at any time be adjusted to changing circumstances and to experience gained, an advantage of particular importance in the case of a problem which, like that of Germany, contains so many unknown quantities. For a long time to come the federal link between the German States would be kept as loose as possible, and if one or another State should aim at full autonomy or at association with a foreign State, perhaps nothing should be put in its way. All this is the more possible since under our proposal the central control of the federation would lie at first not in German hands at all but in the hands of the Allies. On this secure basis they could calmly watch further developments and take any necessary precautions. Should the Germans disappoint the Allies, the latter would still hold all the trumps. No one could undertake the responsibility of recommending another policy to them and advising a course that would end in their losing the peace once more. Only we must add that it is possible to lose the peace through other things besides mildness.

But now it is our duty to make clear one *last point*. This refers to

the brutal fact that a line now runs right through Germany, dividing two worlds from each other—the line that separates eastern Germany, under Russian occupation, from western Germany, under the occupation of the western Allies. Thus the Elbe has become a *limes* of the Western world, carrying with it complete segregation in the matter of moral, political, social, and economic principles. This *limes* runs farther south along the Bohemian forest and across Austria, involving for this latter country conclusions that may be similar to those which we have to draw for Germany.

How shall a solution be found for the problem of dividing Germany into occupation zones without thereby introducing at the same time zones of political influence and without making the common administration of the country impossible? At the Yalta Conference a compromise solution was envisaged under which a distinction was to be drawn between the purely military occupation by the individual Powers and central administration by an Interallied Commission. It must be said at once that this complicated plan seems scarcely practicable. The fundamental conceptions of the two groups of Allies, western and eastern, are far too different to permit of such a condominium, which is always extremely difficult and of which history has nothing but deterrent examples to show. In addition to this, the Interallied Commission is to have its headquarters in the Russian area, and one of its principal sections, the Reparation Commission, is actually to be in Moscow.

This plan seems practicable only in the most unlikely event of the western group placing themselves entirely under Russian leadership or vice versa. In practice it will prove that no clear-cut line can be drawn between the regional military occupation and the central general administration. The Allied General who "occupies" Hanover will be responsible at the same time for orderly administration and for a minimum of economic well-being in his command, and thus a certain solidarity of interests between him and the Germans under him will grow up automatically. It will be entirely natural that the Allied General will be inclined to defend these mutual regional interests in face of instructions from a central authority which, far from being that of his own country, is actually under the strong influence of an enigmatic Power alien to the West, if the demands do not actually come direct from the Reparation Commission at

Moscow. It does not seem a rash forecast that this situation west of the Elbe will strongly favour the regional autonomy we want. At the same time it will create a certain community of political, economic, and intellectual life in this part of Germany, which has always looked to the West rather than to the East. This community would correspond to that which binds together the Western Allies in spite of their avoidable and unavoidable rivalries.

In the foregoing pages we have spoken in general terms of a federation of all autonomous German States, but we must now take account for the present of the harsh reality of the *limes*. We come then to the conclusion that under the existing circumstances the federal reorganisation of Germany must for the present be confined to the German territory west of the Elbe, a *West German Confederation* being created with the Western Allies at its head. This plan would fit into the proposal of an "Atlantic Community" made recently by Walter Lippmann in his book "*U.S. War Aims*." It is indeed to be hoped that this federal West Germany, which would now be entirely separated from Prussia until the clarification of the Russian problem, and which forms the largest and most important part of Germany, would soon be admitted into the "Atlantic Community," if this association of States, based on community of traditions, on geographical situation, and on political and economic interests, can be brought into existence in spite of the strong communistic currents in western Europe. We think the West German Confederation would prove a worthy and a valuable member after it had returned to the course which in 1866 it was compelled to abandon. It would form at present the most eastern section of the "Atlantic Community."

All these proposals that give the impression of *hard realism*. But it is a realism that *serves the highest ideals of Western civilization* and marks, we fear, perhaps the only way it can still be preserved.

Within this narrower political and moral framework the solution must also be considered of the problem of Germany's economic revolution. The character of our West German Confederation would take away from the Allies the last motive for mutilating the German economic potential and so doing a thing which, we repeat, would unquestionably run counter to their interests, and which would certainly not be done by the Russians if they were in the place of the Allies. If the Western Allies assure to themselves for a considerable

time the control of the Confederation and exercise it with consideration for the Germans, they will have made sure of all the supervision they can want. By this central control the whole economic life of West Germany, and in particular currency, credit, communications, and finance, would be co-ordinated to the extent desired.

If, however, it is insisted that political, intellectual, and economic interconnexion shall be maintained between eastern Germany under the Russians and western Germany under the western Powers while we have to deal with a totalitarian Russia, and if the "Reich" is still considered as a unit for which constitutional plans can be forged, this will mean either a failure to grasp the realities or a deliberate intention to promote the Russians' policy of extending their influence step by step throughout Germany. The more insistence there is upon Germany's "unity," the more generously opportunities will be offered for the Russian policy of infiltration and the more points of friction will be created between the two worlds, whose entanglement on German soil would be one of the greatest perils for peace. Far from favouring the "third world war" that is today the bogey of the Western world, the clear cut advocated between the two worlds would very greatly reduce that peril.

Thus the solution of the German question is a stage along the road to the mastery of the greater though remoter world problems which today, after Germany's collapse, are coming into view. We firmly believe that an opportunity unique in all history is offered of settling the German question. But we should be lacking in candour if we failed to add with emphasis that the success of such a policy depends upon one supreme condition—that it is guided by cool reason that takes account of the future, and not by the passions of the moment. We know how infinitely difficult that is, but we regard it as our duty at this moment to draw attention to the pregnancy of the decisions with which the world is faced. We will close with the remark that the hand held out to us by History today will not be extended long. We must grasp it quickly.

EPILOGUE

December, 1945

THE preceding final chapter, written in the spring of 1945, dealt with questions of the actual moment and the future, and was thus particularly exposed to the risk of being overtaken by the onrush of events. At that time it was only possible to attempt a cautious forecast of what would happen after Germany's collapse and her occupation by the victors, and to offer urgent advice to avoid particular errors. That future has quickly become the present. It seemed best, however, to make no change in what had been written, and to leave it to the reader himself as far as possible to note any divergence of subsequent developments from this earlier forecast and the advice based on it.

It is betraying no secret to say that none of the victor Powers has yet been able to give a clear statement of any solution of the German problem, still less to put it into effect. All the Powers, with the exception of the Russians, seem at last to agree that the hastily drawn-up Potsdam decisions are by now in the utmost need of revision, although the plans which the Western Allies seek to put in their place are still vague and unsatisfying. Indeed, it is doubtful whether it is yet possible to speak of actual plans: we seem to be still in the stage of hesitant groping after a new solution. Is it desired to set up a German unitary State on the model of the Weimar Constitution, or a truly federal State; and how is it proposed to create either in face of the fact that the Russian Zone has been pushed so far west as the Werra? Is it proposed to allow Germany to continue as a mainly industrial country, or is it intended to go on weakening German industry by dismantling equipment or carrying it away?

There seemed to be reason to think that the Anglo-Saxon countries were in favour of a restoration of the centralized structure of the Reich, while the French advocated Germany's conversion into a federal State. There are increasing signs, however, that it is no longer possible to identify either of these solutions with either of these two groups. From the Anglo-Saxon camp come voices urging the necessity for a federative Germany, while the French seem more and more determined on a purely separatist solution for the regions that primarily interest them—thus throwing away a unique opportunity,

in their freedom from commitment to the Potsdam decisions and with their superior knowledge of the nature of the German problem, of pointing out the commonsense course to the other Allies and to the Germans.

The commonsense course is that which promises a real escape from the dilemma with which the problem faces us. On the one hand, Germany must be so transformed politically, economically, and mentally that she ceases to be a danger to Europe; on the other hand, this transformation must be so effected that it has the agreement of the majority of the Germans, or that at all events that agreement can be secured without difficulty. Failing this, the poison of an aggressive German nationalism will accumulate again. Is there an escape from this dilemma? I have long been firmly convinced that there is. Whichever of the Allied Powers ascertains and advocates this means of escape would easily bring conviction to the other Allies and to the Germans.

The solution of the problem of the *political transformation* of Germany is to be found neither in the maintenance of the past centralistic, Greater Prussian structure of the Reich, nor in the other extreme of the dismemberment of the German State through separatism or particularism, but in a third process—the constitution of a genuine German *confederation*. The first extreme—Greater Prussian centralism—would be an abandonment of the radical transformation of Germany which is essential in the interests alike of Germany and of the rest of the world, and today could not even count on the assent of considerable elements of the German people; it can only be worked for by those who, either as nationalists or as collectivist revolutionaries, want to retain Greater Prussia. As the whole of eastern Germany, which, with its capital and its traditions, would retain the leadership in such a unitary State, is now in the hands of a Power that would naturally favour a collectivist revolution, this extreme, as matters now stand, would almost automatically lead to an easternization of western Germany, which certainly neither the Western Allies nor the majority of the Germans want. The other extreme—now pushed into the foreground by the French Government—of a separatist or particularist dismemberment of the Reich, is just as impossible a way out of the dilemma, since it proposes to render Germany harmless through means which cannot expect the assent either of the Germans or of

most other countries, if only because of its economic consequences.

That the intermediate solution between these two extremes lies in the constitution of a genuine German confederation, is so obvious that there is no need to demonstrate the fact at length here; what is surprising is that none of the Powers concerned has plainly stated this as the aim of its policy for Germany. It would have to be accomplished step by step, by giving each of the German territorial States an autonomous character, with a clear reference to its historic tradition and an appeal to regional patriotism; the Allies meanwhile jointly administering central affairs until they have definite knowledge that Germany's political, economic, and mental transformation has been achieved.

The first thing needed for this purpose is that the Prussian provinces west of the Elbe (Hanover, Schleswig-Holstein, Westphalia, Hesse, and the Rhineland) should be given without delay the opportunity of seceding from Prussia and gaining the autonomous character of the States of southern Germany (Bavaria, Württemberg, Baden, and Hesse-Darmstadt). Since this primary and principal step falls within the sphere of responsibility of the Anglo-Saxon Powers, it should also be a means of winning over the French to a common policy for Germany among the Western Allies on the basis of going seriously to work to establish the German federal State, and of thus overcoming the deadlock in the present negotiations between these two groups.

Such a policy would require, it is true, that the Western Allies should either agree on a joint occupation or so delimit their zones as no longer to cut across historic territorial boundaries. If the latter solution is decided on, it would be necessary for the various zones to be administered on uniform lines by the various Powers and for the unification of the zones to be assured in regard to economic affairs and to communications.

Such is the way out of the dilemma; moreover, by this means, all secure their due. The Anglo-Saxons obtain the degree of German unification which they want for economic and political reasons; the French obtain security, which would be offered far more truly, more permanently, and more harmoniously by this federative transformation of Germany, with the Allies holding all the trumps for an indefinite period, than by a separatist policy, which would threaten the

French with growing isolation both from their allies and from the Germans. And the Germans themselves will have the comforting feeling that it is intended to lead them towards a really constructive solution with which they themselves can only be in full agreement.

The true difficulty in this policy lies, as everyone will agree, not in the Russian occupation of the territories east of the Elbe, which was expected, but in the unexpected extension of the Russian Zone to the Werra, the Harz, and the Fichtel Mountains. Must we put up for the present with this east-west line of demarcation, accept the undeniable fact that it marks off two completely different systems of civilization, and so declare that any joint administration of the two halves of the Reich is a dangerous Utopia? Or shall we aim at that very thing, so as not to cut off every possibility of arriving after all at a *modus vivendi* with the Russians?

If it is agreed that a common administration of all Germany is possible in the long run only through the predominance of one or the other of the two systems of civilization—and who would deny it?—the question arises whether the West has the better prospect of “westernizing” the East, or the East of “easternizing” the West. Anyone who thinks the former is the likelier will be in favour of a joint administration by the Western Allies and the Russians, and will already have in mind the constitution of a confederation embracing all Germany. But anyone who holds the opposite view will logically come to the conclusion that for the present the only practicable policy is the constitution of a confederation confined to the autonomous West German territories. For the time being, in order to leave the way open for all future possibilities, this confederation should perhaps be given only a provisional, *de facto* character, dispensing with a formal proclamation; and it should simply provide for a co-ordination of the western territories by the Western Allies, leaving open the question of a later adhesion of the territories east of the demarcation line—Prussia (which might perhaps now be re-christened Brandenburg), Mecklenburg, Thuringia, the province of Saxony with Anhalt, and the territorial State of Saxony.

If, however, we come to this conclusion that as yet a federation is possible only in the regions occupied by the Western Allies, this means that at least in that part of Germany there must be carried out without delay the unification that will make it into a solid economic

unit and will end the intolerable existing fragmentation, which is hindering any sort of reconstruction and is, indeed, menacing the very existence of the country. If for the time being the idea of the economic and transport unification of all Germany is abandoned, any further delay in the unification of the regions occupied by the Western Allies is so much the more unpardonable. As for relations with the regions occupied by the Russians, these will have to be confined to providing by means of barter agreements for such economic requirements as are essential, in order to mitigate the partitioning of Germany so far as is possible in face of political facts that are beyond changing. Since the eastern part of Germany is just as keenly interested in this as the western, it should be possible to assume that with a measure of good will there will be no obstacle in the way of such barter agreements.

In the economic field the German dilemma takes the specific form of the need for so weakening the German industrial potential that it will cease to be a danger to the world, while at the same time this must be done in such a way that it will be compatible with the sense of justice of the victors and of the Germans and shall leave Germany viable. As Mr. James W. Riddleberger, Chief of the Division of Central European Affairs, stated on November 25th, 1945, in an address at the University of Kansas, which counts among the clearest and best considered statements of this sort, "The Allied purpose is not to dislocate or to injure European economy, but to strike an even balance between the necessity for making Germany powerless for war while compensating the victims of German aggression, and such restoration of German economy as will assure the satisfaction of legitimate needs by German exports. *Germany must neither be a menace nor a burden to her neighbours.*" But how can Germany be made "neither a menace nor a burden to her neighbours?"

When the question is put in that way it becomes clear at once that one of the possibilities considered, and unfortunately given prominence up to now, must be dismissed as entirely out of the question—the economic disarmament of Germany by means of purely mechanical—we were tempted to say unintelligent—*destruction of industries*. This cannot but provoke German resentment, and if it were really to achieve its end for a period it would have to be carried to the length of literally converting Germany into a hopelessly overpeopled

agricultural country; for the borderline between industries of importance for war and other industries is today more undiscoverable than ever. It is obvious that in doing this the interests of the whole Continent would be most seriously injured.

In comparison with this pseudo-solution of the problem, the *French proposal* to detach the Rhenish-Westphalian industrial region from Germany offers certain advantages, since it would permit the German industries to be left intact, while the economic disarmament of Germany would be secured by bringing the remainder of Germany's economic system into entire dependence on international trade. Before, however, it could become possible to make this plan seem worth discussing, a guarantee would be needed against this industrial region remaining, in spite of its formal detachment from Germany, an integral part of the German economic system. It is difficult to visualize such a guarantee, and still more difficult to interpret explanations hitherto offered as providing it. The plan appears to be entirely unacceptable if we recall the considerations here advanced concerning the political conditions on which the solution of the German problem depends. Separatism has to be rejected for political reasons; and there are equally strong reasons for advising against it on economic grounds.

It is, indeed, impossible to separate the political from the economic side of the German problem. A child cannot be deprived for all time of knives and scissors because it may do damage with them; the time has to come when it must be trained in adult habits. Once Germany has been restored by a radical political and intellectual conversion to the state of a normal nation, there will be no need to deprive her permanently of knives and scissors simply because these peaceful instruments are capable of being used as weapons. What is needed is an indirect economic disarmament that will lead farther than the direct process; but this requires all the more radical political and intellectual conversion. Until this has been achieved, under our plan the Allies must hold all the threads in their hands, and during this period they will also be able to take all further measures of security needed for protection against any possible surprise.

But that, quite rightly, will not be considered enough; and in fact there is a very simple method, and a specifically economic one, of achieving the economic disarmament of Germany. We have just seen

a tempting aspect of the French plan in the idea that it would drive Germany in the direction of peacefulness by increasing her international economic dependence. This does indeed seem the right path. But why produce that dependence in so mechanical and political a way, one burdened with all the problems of politics? Is there not an organic, specifically economic, and eminently peaceful way of arriving at the same goal, and one, therefore, on which the Anglo-Saxon governments should be able to agree at once with the French?

This way may be found by the application of a principle that in the world of today surpasses every other in boldness and novelty, a principle more revolutionary than all socializations, all economic controls, and all Beveridge Plans put together—the principle of absolute and even, if necessary, one-sided *Free Trade*. We should urgently recommend in all seriousness—in agreement, incidentally, with Professor F. A. Hayek (*The Saturday Review of Literature*, June 23rd, 1945)—to impose on Germany virtually nothing more than a single measure of economic compulsion, namely entire freedom of economic intercourse with foreign countries, and to bring this German Free Trade into effect the moment the settlement of the most urgent currency and financial issues permits. It need scarcely be added that for the present this German free trade area could not, for obvious reasons, include the territory occupied by the Russians.

There are a number of other details which ought to be carefully considered. One of these would be the necessity of protecting this free trade Germany against discriminatory import restrictions of a prohibitive nature. To this end we suggest that all countries should grant to Germany unconditional most-favoured-nation treatment, and that a special body of the United Nations should act as an international authority exercising supervision and arbitrating in the event of conflicts of opinion arising.

We are probably safe in assuming that today the majority of people the world over will tremble at the daring of such an idea, since they have been brought up to believe in the economic blessings of Protection and see in Free Trade the road to a country's inescapable ruin. To these people we need only say that here they have a unique opportunity of testing the truth of their dogma by actual experiment on a nation that has already been the victim of worse experiments and would not dream for a moment of exchanging this organic method

of economic disarmament, with its appeal to their energy and their inventive faculties, for the destructive method of industrial dismantling or the political smashing of economic ties. Should the protectionists, however, be right, and should Free Trade severely impair Germany's economic system, there will be those who find comfort in that consequence because it is just what they want, while other people will have to remind themselves that the result could not have been any worse if the other methods of economic disarmament had been continued.

The minority, however, who do not adhere to the present-day world religion of economic nationalism, will have other expectations. Undoubtedly a territory's transition to Free Trade in the present-day world of triumphant protectionism will compel the Germans to bring into play exceptional resourcefulness, adaptability, and abstinence; but in comparison with what they have to go through today that will be easy to bear. People who pass their lives in cellars or wander aimlessly along the highroads will be the last to be frightened by the prospect of having to change their occupation or place of work, of having to work with tireless energy, of having to seek the most careful adaptation to the requirements of foreign markets, and of living for a time on short commons, in order to pave the way to economic recovery that is promised by Free Trade and the integration in international commerce which it implies. Once the fetters are removed at home and abroad, they will not make a great song over sacrifices of which they see the sense.

Undoubtedly there will also be some opposition abroad to an experiment in a direction so uncongenial to protectionists, and the objection might grow with the success of the experiment. But there might be a corresponding growth in its attractiveness. And should not such an experiment be particularly attractive to the United States, whose Government is advocating the restoration of freedom of trade in the world market?

This policy of Free Trade will inflict a mortal blow in Germany on the very principle that had always underlain the aggressive German monopoly capitalism, with its overgrown heavy industries, from the time of Bismarck's tariff of 1879—the principle of protectionism. The heavy industries, with which, of course, economic disarmament has first to concern itself, would automatically, from rational

economic considerations, and therefore for the good of Germany and of the world, be reduced to the dimensions which today are being aimed at through pure destruction. West Germany would be brought into entire dependence on international trade, and, in contrast to the impossible Potsdam decisions, would be converted not into a poverty-stricken self-supplying agricultural country but into a region uniting an intensive, highly developed agriculture, dependent on imports of feeding-stuffs, with a highly specialized industry depending on exports. It would become a sort of enlarged Belgium, and with its extreme dependence on foreign trade it would have to abandon any idea of building up an "autarkic" war industry.

This would be the constructive solution of the problem of economic disarmament, instead of the destructive one—a solution by means not of the isolation and impoverishment of Germany but of a prosperity that stands or falls with the interweaving of German industry with international trade. The productivity of West Germany—without which neither the Germans, who without it must starve or depend on international charity, nor the rest of Europe can dispense—would be preserved from further senseless destruction. It would be interesting to observe the results which this revolutionary experiment in Liberalism would have on the collectivist world of the East, and, indeed, on the collectivists of the whole world. It is clear, finally, to everyone familiar with the circumstances that the problem of the German cartels, to which the Americans especially attach full importance, would of itself be solved, since cartels presuppose a protectionist system.

Once more let us say that this plan should be able to count on the special sympathy of the Americans, who would secure under it the opportunity of regaining much of the moral terrain which they seem to have lost in the parts of Germany they occupy. But should we not be concerned above all with the consideration that it would be particularly appropriate for a nation that had become so deeply involved in the sin of nationalism to make, with Free Trade, this beginning in the stemming of nationalism? That Germany should thus be given the opportunity of expiating her guilt by setting an example in the uttermost renunciation of nationalism?

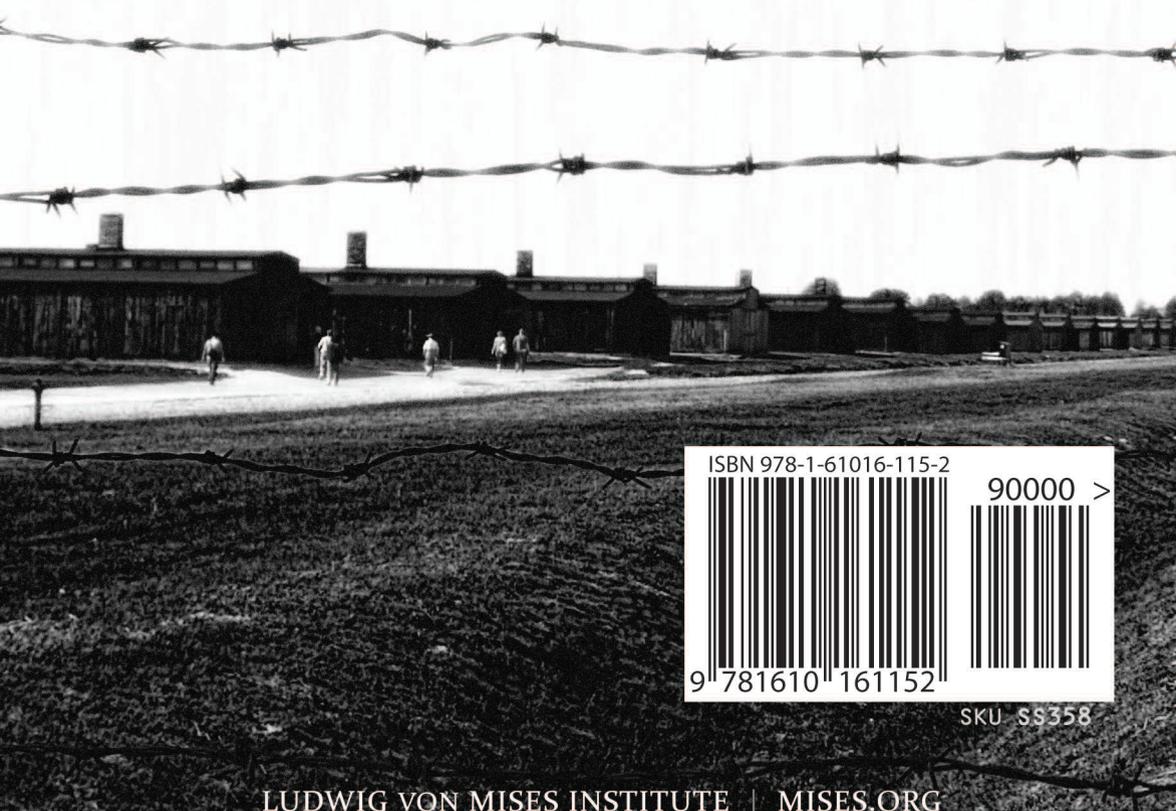
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ALL THESE PECULIARITIES OF THE STRUCTURE OF MODERN TYRANNY, WHOSE UGLIEST AND EXTREMEST FORM WAS NAZISM, ARE MARKED BY THE ENTIRE DISSOLUTION OF THE VALUES AND STANDARDS WITHOUT WHICH OUR SOCIETY, OR ANY OTHER, CANNOT EXIST IN THE LONG RUN: A PERNICIOUS ANAEMIA OF MORALITY, A CYNICAL UNCONCERN IN THE CHOICE OF MEANS, WHICH IN THE ABSENCE OF FIRM PRINCIPLES BECOME ENDS IN THEMSELVES; A NIHILISTIC LACK OF PRINCIPLE, AND, IN A WORD, WHAT MAY BE DESCRIBED LITERALLY AS SATANISM AND NIHILISM. EVERYTHING ROTTS AWAY, AND FINALLY THERE REMAINS ONLY ONE FIXED AIM OF THE TYRANNY, TO WHICH ALL MORAL PRINCIPLES, ALL PROMISES, TREATIES, GUARANTEES, AND IDEOLOGIES ARE RUTHLESSLY SACRIFICED—THE NAKED LUST FOR DOMINATION, FOR THE PRESERVATION OF THE CONTINUALLY THREATENED POWER, A POWER HELD ON TO FOR NO OTHER PURPOSE THAN THE CONTINUED ENJOYMENT OF ALL ITS FRUITS. THE IMMORALITY OF SUCH A REGIME NEEDS NO ARGUING.



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