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# Confessions of a European Intellectual

BY

FRANZ SCHOENBERNER

THE MACMILLAN COMPANY · NEW YORK

1946

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*First Printing.*

PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

# Preface

SETTING OUT TO write what my American friends with their charming and somewhat contagious enthusiasm insist on calling my autobiography, I am not yielding to an irresistible inner urge to speak about myself. I passed beyond this adolescent tendency thirty years ago, when I was twenty. I have missed the chance to write, as a talented author ten years younger than I has done, my first autobiography at twenty-three and a second one at forty, thus establishing a sort of regular habit. I have missed the chance to be an author at all because I was born unmistakably an editor and a critic—which I have been for the greater part of my life.

This profession or vocation presupposes an intellectual and psychological attitude exactly opposed to that of the author. It presupposes a certain inner detachment from oneself, a more outspoken interest in reading than in writing; the tendency to listen, to observe and to understand rather than to express oneself.

The editor possesses indirect productivity in getting other people to write, in stimulating and developing the talents of others rather than his own. His attitude is that of the critic—who, to quote Paul Valéry, must understand the work of art better than the artist himself does. It is quite obvious that the creative process of the artist would be destroyed by a clear intellectual analysis of its unconscious and subconscious elements. If you know and understand too precisely how the work of art is produced, you become unable to produce it; the centipede, when asked with which foot he started to walk, became paralyzed.

In his unselfish, almost religious devotion to the idea of esthetic perfection, the editor and critic may try to reach the total self-abnegation of the saint. But we know that this seemingly altruistic attitude is an expression not always of humility but rather of sublime pride and of a spiritual will to power.

It is true that throughout my editorial career, especially in *Jugend* and *Simplicissimus,* it was my passion to discover young artists, to guide and help them along on their artistic and even material way. But I always remembered the instructive story of a young psychiatrist coming to the old Freud and telling about his irresistible passion for helping everybody. The old wise Freud nodded his head with friendly appreciation and said: "I thought as much, you are a sadist." This young doctor some years later was divorced because he indulged in the bad habit of pulling his wife by her hair through their apartment. I never went to such extremes. My victims responded in general in the most rewarding manner. One of them, the best discovery I ever made, an artist of European reputation, proved his friendship for me many years later by rescuing me from Europe. He, no less than my American friends, is responsible for my coming to this country and writing this book.

I myself enjoy a feeling of irresponsible vacation, free as I am of all pretensions or obligations to literary perfection while writing in a language I did not even speak two years ago. I know, an editor and critic commits always a sort of spiritual suicide by trying to return to the lost paradise of spontaneous productivity, by writing a book himself instead of stating what is right or wrong with other people's books. But I appreciate the underlying humor of the situation. At any rate it would not be gracious to resist the gentle and relentless pressure of my American friends who so generously paved my way here in the New World. Perhaps they are right in their assumption that an account of my experiences could be of some interest to the American public. Europe and European culture seem to be doomed or at least threatened with a long eclipse before being resurrected from ruin to a new and deeply changed life, and a "good European" of fifty years, especially if he happens to be of German nationality, has perhaps a sort of obligation to bear witness to the past. What counts is not my own personal past but the fact that by inclination and profession I was connected for two decades with a cultural, especially a literary and artistic world that, open to all European influences, proved to be German precisely by being European.

For these reasons I abandon the safe vantage point of the spectator which I have occupied throughout my life, to become the simple

narrator of what I have observed, experienced and witnessed while being a critical and for some years even satirical commentator of my times. All I shall try to do is to carry on an informal and lively, though somewhat monologuistic, conversation with my friends—an occupation which I always preferred at heart to the self-centered isolation of writing.

FRANZ SCHOENBERNER

June 13, 1943

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# CONFESSIONS OF A EUROPEAN INTELLECTUAL

## CHAPTER I

# The Last Days of My Life—As Editor of Simplicissimus

LET US BEGIN with the end, if not of my life, at least of my public life as a German editor. It was by chance or providence that these two terms did not coincide. Some sort of end is probably the given starting point for any sort of autobiography. The real story of a life can be told only in its last moment when the whole pattern, definitely completed, is no longer open to new interpretations and implications. We never know exactly what role we are acting or what sort of play, a comedy or a tragedy. But in most lives, as in all good drama, there is a strange mixture of both. That certainly was true of my farewell appearance on the stage of *Simplicissimus*, the famous German weekly.

It was a stage all right, and of respectable dimensions. My editorial office resembled in size that of Mussolini in the Palazzo Venezia. And my writing table, an enormous double desk, was even larger than Mussolini's, to accommodate the galley proofs and the drawings I had to handle, whereas Mussolini could sign his most infamous documents and even a death warrant on ordinary letter paper. But despite office and desk I never had the slightest chance or inclination to play a dictatorial role. In my position as chief editor of a paper, the owners of which were the six main contributors, perhaps the six best cartoonists of Europe, I was hardly more than a highly constitutional prime minister. It is not easy to conduct an orchestra of virtuosi, especially of elderly virtuosi. The only way it could be done was by thinking exclusively of the job itself, which, after all, was for me not a job but a task, a cause of more than personal importance.

Fortunately, I am by nature neither personally ambitious nor touchy, but blessed with the mild compulsory neurosis of a born perfectionist. So I followed with an objective passion the line which seemed to me the right one for a paper with the great tradition of liberal opposition,

a tradition carried on since 1896—with some lamentable interruptions between 1914 and 1918. I was so sure of my being right that nothing could stop me; neither the commercial scruples of our advertising and circulation departments nor the prudent hesitations of some of the collaborating proprietors. Independent of all commercial or political allegiances, *Simplicissimus* was free to fight the good fight against the most dangerous enemy of mankind—human stupidity—wherever this hydra raised one of its ugly heads.

Upon telling that to the managing editor of a Boston paper, I was asked the anxious question if there was no sound businessman to tell us what to print. The Boston editor seemed horrified by my answer that in our case it was the editorial department which told the businessmen what to do. Incredulous, he inquired again: "But how could you know what lines to follow?" My answer stunned him: "You will laugh," I said; "we had convictions."

He would have had me interned if I had told him that our attacks against the initiator of Fascism, Mussolini, were not abandoned despite the fact that with the suppression of *Simplicissimus* in Italy came a serious loss of circulation and, for the collaborators, the renunciation of trips to that country.

Hitler, personifying and at the same time abusively exploiting all the malignant forces of human stupidity, became from the start our Public Enemy Number One, a God-sent enemy, rather a helpless prey for satirists and polemists. Entirely bare of any sense of humor, he never shied away from the crudest ridiculousness. If ridicule kills, as the old proverb goes, the whole attitude of the Nazis was simply suicidal. We should have known that this, like almost any proverb, was wrong, especially for Germany—as illustrated by the long and healthy (for mankind most unhealthy) life of William II, whom "Simpl" had bravely ridiculed for more than twenty years. We shall never forget this lesson: a man can be irresistibly funny and at the same time extremely dangerous. Satirists are characterized by their naïvely fundamentalist faith in reason as a sort of invincible moral principle and by their highly developed sense for the comicality of the absurd. Laughing Saint Georges, armed only with a pointed pen, they bravely and constantly slay the monstrous dragon of absurdity which unfortunately refuses to know it is slain—up to the degree of

slaying back. Their noble misconception of incommensurable forces is the secret of their courage. So much has to be said in order to understand that *Simplicissimus* did not disarm when Hitler by a clever trick of the professional cheater Franz von Papen became Chancellor on January 30, 1933. Besides, the political developments were marching much faster than our printing press. Preparing each issue in an editorial conference two weeks in advance, we never could foresee exactly how great a risk we would have to take on the day of publication. Afterward we were sometimes ourselves bewildered at the degree of our audacity.

I shall never forget our last editorial conference, shortly after the burning of the Reichstag, when the originally preserved appearance of legality under a cabinet headed but not really ruled by Hitler had already been replaced in many German states by open Nazi terror. Munich, the birthplace of Nazism, seemed still to resist. Clerical Bavarian ministers defied courageously all pretension of a so-called Nazi revolution in Bavaria and all interference in Bavarian prerogatives. They thus became, ironically enough, our allies of the last hour, after having been the target of our satirical attacks for many years. They were now our last best hope for survival; and this idea was the only cheer I had to offer to the rather gloomy assembly in my office.

Sipping the good strong coffee we used to serve at our conferences, most of my colleagues seemed to be thinking of Socrates' poisoned cup without assuming his heroic attitude. The only one to preserve his philosophical equilibrium was my old friend Thomas Theodor Heine, the founder (together with the publisher, Albert Langen) of *Simplicissimus*. For thirty-seven years he had nursed his brain child. It was he who discarded Langen and entrusted the paper to the ownership of the six main contributors, who more or less graciously acknowledged his leadership. Week after week he had contributed not only his masterly cartoons, a documentary record of the German petty bourgeoisie not less valuable for future historians than Hogarth's designs, but had provided his intellectually less productive collaborators with an abundance of ideas for their cartoons. None of them for thirty-seven years had ever had an idea of his own—with the single exception of Karl Arnold who, nearly twenty years younger than Heine, had some-

times excellent, sometimes absolutely silly ideas; but with the capricious self-conceit of an undiscriminating, purely intuitive mind, he could not tolerate any kind of advice on, or criticism of, his flashes. During all the years of my editorship he remained in his tent like an angry Achilles (with many more than one Achilles' heel), refusing to attend our editorial meetings, and conferred with me only over the telephone.

As to the four others, they were used to accept, after some hesitation, one of the two or three topics which Heine and I in a special conference before the meeting had selected for each of them.

Wilhelm Schulz and Eduard Thöny, both of them some years older than Heine, were in their physical and professional decline, but when suddenly awakening from their usual somnolence they offered a horrified resistance against any more controversial topics for their cartoons. The Norwegian Olaf Gulbransson, a man of highly refined artistic culture though looking and behaving like a caveman and hiding the slyness of a penny-pinching peasant behind the mask of naïve simplicity, was in general less difficult—at least as long as no imminent risk was involved. Erich Schilling, the youngest of the company (though older than I), was without any doubt much more intelligent than the three others. A very handsome man and an artist of great ability, he had, nevertheless, an almost morbid touchiness, due to the fact that he limped. Up to the last weeks he had in general supported the aggressive policy followed by Heine and myself, but now he too began to get cold feet.

A genuine lame messenger, he reported many stories about the Nazis' attacks against their political opponents. I tried my best to minimize the danger, but our discussion centered more and more around the only question: What shall we do when here too the Nazis take over? Heine, being the son of a Jewish father and an English mother, was more endangered than any of us. A man of sixty-six, he had the most to lose, the work of his life and a wonderful home on the Ammersee near Munich. But without the slightest hesitation he quietly gave his opinion: "One simply has to go into exile—pauper fashion."

He did not conceal his sarcastic amusement about the panic of his old friends. And Schilling was intelligent enough to understand. He flared up. But finally we made him accept our proposal for the front-

page cartoon of the next number. Heine and I would have liked to become more articulate in denouncing the Reichstag fire as a clumsy Nazi trick. However, we had to compromise. Schilling would draw the burning Reichstag only with the ambiguous caption: "Will a new phoenix arise from this fire?"

Thöny, Schulz and Gulbransson for weeks had flatly refused to handle the hot potato of domestic politics, discovering suddenly the importance of foreign policy and other even more harmless topics. Probably they now found comfort in thinking of their personal friendship with the architect Troost, the builder of the Brown House in Munich, whose name, when written with one *o*, meant "consolation." A year before they had tried to bring Heine and me in contact with this useful man who, as they pretended, was far from being a Nazi and had accepted the big orders only for commercial reasons, Hitler being a customer like any other. But we stubbornly had refused to accept his friendly invitations.

When we left the conference late in the evening, Heine and I had the feeling of the famous story book captains standing on the bridge of a sinking ship, abandoned by the mutinous crew. But we abstained from any comment.

In more than three years of close collaboration Heine and I, despite the difference of age, had become real friends. Like many hypersensitive and vulnerable people, he wore in self-defense the armor of cold reserve and stinging sarcasm. His biting, drastic wit, infallibly hitting the weak spot, infuriated every inflated, not entirely genuine person. But he was a most reliable friend when once he had given his confidence and his esteem. Parting that evening with a last joke, we shook hands, perhaps more warmly than usual, but without any air of "condolence."

An acute sense of the comical side of life is a good antidote against panic. But it sometimes works like a narcotic, because one usually forgets that a situation can be at the same time highly humorous and terribly dangerous. Heine and I could not decide to take quite seriously a man so ridiculous as Hitler and a thing so ludicrous as Nazism, not even when the news from Berlin and some other parts of Germany began to look more and more lugubrious. Bavaria, we thought, with

her old stubborn particularistic animosity against all that came from Berlin, would be the last bulwark of simple normal common sense against the rising flood of mass hysteria and mass terror engulfing one after the other the German states.

I had an amusing confirmation of this idea when an anonymous telephone call came through to me. A peremptory voice asked me to withdraw immediately our current issue from the newsstands because it represented an offense against the Government of the Reich.

The cartoon was one of Arnold's good ideas, showing the German "Michel," a lock through his mouth, kneeling before a bolted ballot box, in the background an enormous Nazi flag held by two winged amoretti, one in Nazi uniform, the other in that of the Prussian police. The caption quoted the first sentences of the constitution: "Germany is a Republic. All power derives from the people. The colors of the Reich are black, red, and gold."

I could not help laughing, imagining the effect of this cartoon upon my unknown interlocutor.

I cut his fulminating tirade short by hanging up. "One of these crazy Nazi dogs who bark but will not bite as long as the Bavarian police are around," I told myself and continued dictating my letters. Five minutes later came another call, the solemn and typically Bavarian voice of a man introducing himself as "Ministerialrat [Councilor] X.," from the Bavarian Ministry of Culture.

"Herr Chefredakteur," he said, "Mr. Editor-in-Chief, I just overheard a young colleague here in our office calling you and asking you to withdraw your last number from the newsstands. That man is a notorious Nazi, and he even used illegally the office telephone for a private call. Don't let yourself be intimidated by such vain threats. I wanted to assure you of the protection of the legal Bavarian government. We all highly appreciate your position and have the highest esteem for your paper."

I acknowledged with some amusement his compliments, certainly the first ones *Simplicissimus* had ever received from a clerical government official, and assured him that I was entirely unimpressed by Nazi threats. And indeed, as long as a Bavarian Ministry Councilor was shocked by the fact that some minor official had illegally used the

service telephone, the so-called Nazi revolution could not have much chance in Bavaria.

The next morning at the ungodly hour of eight o'clock, a telephone call from my secretary woke me up. What was she saying? Our offices had been raided by Nazi storm troopers during the night, the desks were rifled, our files and papers scattered through all the rooms or thrown out of the windows? Theoretically I had envisaged such an event, but I had never really believed it. Well, these hoodlums evidently meant business. But we would show them. As calmly as I could I told her: "Call the police. Leave all things as they are. I shall be there in a few minutes."

A hurricane or an earthquake can do a lot of damage, but it never has such a pitiful and disgusting aspect as the work of men possessed of a vicious and systematic mania of destruction. It makes you ashamed of the whole human species. With idiotic thoroughness every drawer in every desk was broken, every card file turned over. While inspecting the battlefield I waded through manuscripts, correspondence and torn copies of *Simplicissimus.*

In the drawer for stamps and petty cash, which had not been robbed, we found a scrap of paper with the words "We are no thieves," in a childish illiterate handwriting. Unfortunately the temptation had got the better (or the worse) of them when in another desk they had found a much larger sum, which they appropriated without leaving a receipt or any other qualifying statement, such as, "We are not stealing but only requisitioning this for the party funds." Some bottles of Rhine wine, the gift of an admiring reader, and a few smaller personal belongings had also disappeared. But except for the broken drawers, the furniture was not seriously damaged. There must have been some very specific restricting orders concerning the degree of damage to inflict. True, the enormous plaster statue of a red bulldog, our symbolic totem animal, was painfully and conscientiously smashed to pieces. But, surprisingly enough, a large portfolio with drawings—containing originals of Gulbransson, Thöny and others—was not even touched, though it lay open on a table.

I should have been more surprised (but actually was not) when, ten minutes later, Eduard Thöny, who lived out of town in his house

on the Ammersee, turned up in the office, full of righteous indignation which, in a strange way, seemed directed not so much against the Nazi vandals as against me and the absent Heine. He showed a sort of somber satisfaction, and his whole attitude was one of "I told you so."

Always inclined to excuse all human shortcomings as stupidity rather than real wickedness, I did not suspect then, though I am pretty sure now, that this whole Nazi raid was part of a cleverly staged intrigue directed against myself and probably conceived in a confidential family meeting of the Thönys, the Gulbranssons and the Troosts. I began to understand when, two hours later, my old friend Heine—not without visible embarrassment—told me that behind my back an emergency conference of the six collaborating proprietors had been arranged, which I was not supposed to attend.

"Well," I said, "you can tell our friendly enemies that I'm perfectly willing to resign rather than make 'Simpl' a Nazi paper. As to my new three-year contract, I shall release you for a payment of seven thousand marks—just enough to start a new career in Switzerland."

Not less embarrassed than Heine, divided between two loyalties, seemed the police officials we had summoned to substantiate the facts of housebreaking and burglary committed in our office. The legal Bavarian government bound to our protection was still in existence, but tomorrow perhaps there would be a new, more powerful government, composed of Nazis. Indeed a hard conflict of professional conscience for a simple policeman, trembling for his job and the support of his family. I did not torture the poor creatures by quoting Pascal: "Law without might is anarchy, might without law is tyranny." The practical implication of this philosophical insight was quite obvious to them, only they wouldn't have used such a complicated vocabulary.

The old joke that in Munich even the end of the world would take place a week later than elsewhere proved to be literally true. And more: this end-of-the-world came not, as in Berlin, with a dramatic *coup de théatre* but as a gradual disintegration, a crumbling away. Even Nazism had to make haste slowly in Bavaria. The transition from law without might to might without law was marked only by the announcement that next morning was to be read in the papers and on official posters. General von Epp, a good Bavarian but a better

Nazi, had been instituted as "Reichsstatthalter" in Bavaria. The brave policemen had been right. The Bavarian Government with all its legality had vanished in blue smoke, including my special friend from the Ministry of Culture.

It was an excellent idea to entrust to Ritter von Epp the task of bringing Bavaria into step with the Nazi regime. There could be no better record than his. A born Bavarian himself, he had been in 1914 commander of the famous Bavarian regiment List, the first contingent of which, composed of young volunteers, had been almost entirely wiped out by enemy fire at the moment when they disembarked from the cattle trucks that brought them to the front. This pitiful massacre of the innocents, caused by a military blunder, had been remodeled to become a great military deed and had made Colonel Epp a sort of popular hero. Receiving the highest Bavarian decoration, the Maximilian order, he had been knighted and had become Ritter von Epp. Shortly after the war he had "saved" Munich a first time by marching in with his Free Corps and shooting thousands of Bavarian workers, when in April of 1919 some young intellectuals staged a sort of leftist operetta putsch after a young officer, a Count Arco, had murdered Kurt Eisner, the Prime Minister of the republican Bavarian Government. Now again the bogey of a threatened communist uprising gave the pretext for investing the professional savior of Munich with extraordinary powers.

During the first days of Epp's regime, relatively few actions of open violence—easily excused as excesses of irresponsible individuals or even of anti-Nazi agents provocateurs—happened in Munich. Some better known leftist leaders were arrested or taken into "preventive custody," to use the official euphemism, under fantastic accusations of which, without any doubt, they would quickly be cleared very soon in every court of law. Only the fact that there was no longer any court of law or any sort of legal safeguard was overlooked. In the secrecy of prisons and Nazi headquarters dozens, and very soon hundreds of innocent victims were tortured and murdered without the cumbersome fussiness of legal procedure. But the exterior picture of Munich was hardly disturbed.

Standing before the official posters with the big headline "For the restoration of law and order," the good population of Munich was

slightly bewildered. The obvious question: "But hadn't we law and order before," asked by an especially naïve reader, was in everybody's mind. And even more astute observers had the feeling that the whole thing wasn't quite serious. Very soon the old conservative elements in Hitler's cabinet would gain the upper hand. Probably there would be a diplomatic démarche by the French and English ambassadors and these Nazi fools would be forced to return to reason, to legality and normalcy.

Without believing in all the wild rumors going around, I nevertheless thought it wise to take some precautions. I appeared in my demolished office only briefly and at irregular hours, having established a sort of provisional office in the furnished room of a young assistant, and conferring with collaborators and printing house only over his telephone. I wanted to give the imprimatur at least to the next issue, while awaiting the final financial arrangement ending my contract. Perhaps then I would take a little vacation in Switzerland until the situation in Germany had become more stabilized. But every new day, with new arrests and new rumors, made this optimistic view appear less and less justified. Worried friends—surprisingly enough I still had friends—warned me not to sleep at home and not to appear in the streets, where more and more Brownshirts were marching around.

I followed their advice and decided at least to explore the possibilities of a sudden departure. Complicated plans were drafted and rejected. When forced to leave my hideout—the studio of a friend—in order to go to an important appointment, usually arranged in an old cemetery, the most isolated place in the neighborhood, I tried to change my appearance by wearing the old windbreaker of a friend. It was much too large for me, but it slightly resembled the popular Nazi attire. I was a bit disappointed with this disguise when my young assistant told me one day that my favorite tobacconist at the corner had asked him in naïve astonishment: "Why is Mr. Schoenberner wearing such an odd overcoat?"

In the event of an unexpected visit to my studio, I had explored the possibility of making my getaway over the roofs. But all these preparations seemed to me rather a joke, and not to be taken quite seriously. Waiting from one day to another for the owners of *Simplicissimus* (none of whom had been molested) to accept the proposed

arrangement, I probably would have missed my last chance of escape if I had not received a decisive impulse.

The man who saved my life without knowing it was Stefan Lorrant, the chief editor of the strictly non-political *Muenchner Illustrierte Zeitung*. By accident we never had met personally (I first met him ten years later at a cocktail party in New York), but when it became known that he—a Hungarian by nationality—had been arrested, together with the whole staff of the great publishing house Knorr & Hirth, I told myself that it was time to go.

The Nazi terror in Munich was mitigated by a typically Bavarian muddle. Through some error they probably had forgotten to put my name on their list; or they had been at first too busy arresting their personal enemies, who automatically became now enemies of the state and "communists." It was a singular opportunity for a good storm-trooper to get rid of his creditors or of his rivals, not only in politics, but in business or even in love affairs.

Strangely enough, I had no personal enemies among the Nazi crowd despite the fact that, as everybody knew, I was responsible for the biting jokes on their godly Führer and all his believers, published almost every week for more than three years in "Simpl." Perhaps they silently acknowledged the traditional privilege of *Simplicissimus* to ridicule the most important persons in public life, and felt even flattered by this sort of negative publicity, because it confirmed their importance to the European reading public. And after all, we were not playing the real game, we were not the instrument of a party or pressure group but only bystanders, outsiders, satirical observers—and so not really serious enemies. However there was the danger that the "Simpl" people would find it much easier and more economical to get rid of my contract by throwing me to the Nazi wolves.

A few days later, when the war of extermination against every trace of democratic opposition became more orderly and systematic, even in Bavaria, I hardly would have escaped the friendly attention of the Nazis. But things being as they were, it seemed possible for me to go by an early train to a little station on Lake Constance from where I could reach the Swiss border on foot. My friend and collaborator Ellie Nérac, the daughter of a French father and a Bavarian mother, had decided to go with me. She had given up her promising

career on the stage in order to become a brilliant writer, contributing pointed short stories and satirical vignettes to *Simplicissimus* and other well known magazines. Though politically less exposed than I, she was sure to get into trouble, because her temperament would not have allowed her to witness scenes of violence and injustice without giving the most energetic expression to her deeply rooted feeling for decency and equity.

We naturally prepared our departure in strict secrecy. The only friend I wanted to see before leaving was old Heine. I met him in his studio where, for nearly thirty years, he had stayed when he was in town. The only precaution he had taken was to discard the little plate with his name at the door bell. He was glad to see me, and laughed heartily about my unusual attire. In vain I tried to convince him that he, like myself, should leave Germany, at least for a while. But he could not make up his mind to see the real danger of his situation. His contempt for the stupidity of the whole Nazi business was so complete that he refused to consider it anything more than a bad joke, a silly farce. He knew of course, that at any moment some Brownshirts might turn up in his studio; but with smiling complacency he assured me that the whole thing was not serious. In a few days normal conditions would be restored, and he would go on publishing "Simpl" as before.

Saying good-bye, we did not realize what this good-bye was to mean. In some weeks perhaps we would meet again, here in Munich, as Heine thought, or, as I hoped, in a foreign country. Many months later a letter from him, written in Prague, reached me in southern France, a letter telling all about his escape from Munich. In his complete unconcern he had gone to the next editorial meeting in our office. It seems that shortly after his arrival Gulbransson or Thöny, his good old comrades of thirty-seven years, got busy on the telephone, and that half an hour later three Brownshirts appeared asking for Mr. Heine. They didn't bother to show an order of arrest but made it clear enough that they meant business. After some friendly parleying they finally decided to let Heine alone if he signed a solemn declaration to desist in future from all activity in "Simpl." Heine very calmly answered: "When threatened with arrest, I shall of course sign any

kind of paper," and put his signature under the document which ended his work of thirty-seven years. It was a narrow escape and that time Heine understood the warning. The same day he took the train for Berlin where it was easier for him to disappear, living in a little boarding house under another name. He finally succeeded in crossing the Czech border with a false passport, and found refuge with friends in Brno (Brünn). Having lost everything, his house, his money, the work of his life, he had at the age of sixty-six to start from scratch. But he was not seriously disturbed. He managed to build up a modest livelihood by contributing to some Czech papers. The letters he wrote to me during the following years are among my most cherished papers.

In those long and hard years of trial he never lost his superior puckish humor, his intellectual fineness and his astonishing artistic mastery. When, after the Munich sell-out of Czechoslovakia, he thought it necessary to seek another asylum, his first idea was to join us in southern France, and we did all we could to get a visa for him. But, in the meantime, some influential friends in Oslo succeeded in arranging his emigration to Norway, where the chances for him seemed much better than in France. The last letter I received from Oslo was dated three days before the German invasion of Norway. For many years all my efforts to get information about him were in vain. Only here in New York I finally heard that, with his typical unconcern, he had missed the last chance to leave Oslo, the evening before the invasion. When, a few days later, he was visited by the Gestapo early in the morning, he quietly explained that he must first finish his breakfast. Surprisingly enough, the Nazis, somehow impressed by the perfect poise of the old man, waited for him before taking him to the headquarters; and, instead of being interned in a concentration camp, he was set free with the warning never again to publish a cartoon. A rumor had it that finally he had succeeded in escaping to Sweden and had there published a novel. But it was not until the spring of 1945 that I received his first letter from Stockholm confirming these reports. His letters, his recent cartoons, his fascinating book are ample proof that this great old man has not changed since we said good-bye twelve years ago in Munich.

After all the innumerable hair-raising stories of adventurous escape from Nazi Germany, it seems hardly worth while to relate how my

friend and I succeeded in crossing the Swiss border on March 20, 1933. The only reason for doing so is that the absolute lack of dramatic tension in this, as in every decisive moment of my life, seems to me typical and significant of the whole pattern of my existence. It is as if a certain inborn inner detachment from concrete reality somehow isolates one and makes him invulnerable to the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune. The bad intentions of fate—and even of persons —are often disarmed, simply by being ignored.

Sitting in the train which was to take us to the little place on Lake Constance, my friend and I felt very confident. Having left Munich without being apprehended, I played with the idea that it would be more comfortable to cross the border on the train. Both of us had still-valid passports, and one did not need a visa for Switzerland. But, after all, there was the risk that an order of arrest was waiting for me at any border station. So we spent the night in a lovely little old hotel where everybody, from the innkeeper down to the waiter and the other guests, spoke quite frankly about the foolish comedy staged by the local Nazis. "We let them hoist their swastika flag on the town hall, but we don't care," said the waiter, shrugging his shoulders with an indulgent smile. "Here in Baden they won't have much chance. We have always been good democrats."

Next morning, after an excellent breakfast, we paid our bills and left our suitcases behind with the order to forward them. Carrying only knapsacks with the most indispensable belongings, we set out for a hike, pretending not to know where we would stay for the next night.

We took the bus to the penultimate stop before the border. From there, a friend in Munich had told us, a little path led through the woods and up over the hills to an old castle on Swiss territory. The only difficulty was to find that little path, as his description was necessarily vague. Fortunately we had some chocolate with us, which we fed to all the peasant children we met on the road until, with the help of our little guides, we had found the path. It was highly improbable that the Nazis had thought of watching this small back door to liberty. They did so only two weeks later. But at any rate: having with us no more money than the legal amount of two hundred marks per person, we could always pretend to be harmless vacationists hiking

in the woods without a special goal, though the day, gray and rainy, seemed not very well chosen for such a pleasure trip.

I can't say that we felt particularly excited. After the underlying indistinct tension of the last ten days in Munich, spent almost entirely in a closed room, the simple fact of having taken a final decision and of enjoying some physical exercise in the open seemed a sort of relief. Walking through the thick of the forest, always careful not to lose the path, we soon were involved in an animated conversation without any bearing on our actual problems; we almost forgot that we were not on a simple promenade. The only people we met after two hours' walk were a group of lumbermen working in the woods. We cheerfully greeted them and made sure of the way. They seemed somewhat surprised at the appearance of two tourists so early in the year, and one of the men asked in a friendly way: "Are you going to Switzerland?"

"Oh no," we said. "We are just taking a little excursion to the castle," and on we went. According to our friend's description, the castle could not be much farther. But we couldn't discover any trace of the building, supposed to be situated on a hill high above the big road. However, we did not feel alarmed. A few miles more or less did not matter. We were not tired. Quietly we continued to follow the narrow path meandering through the brushwood. Suddenly I almost stumbled against what looked to me like a rock barring the way. It was an old wall, partly in ruins, and turning around its corner I saw what it was: the back wall of a building. There it was, our castle of liberty. We were in Switzerland. We had escaped. We were free. Perhaps free to starve, if it came to the worst. But at least we would not die in a Nazi dungeon. An enormous weight, the pressure of which we had not avowed to each other and not even to ourselves, seemed suddenly removed. We felt as though we were floating through the air, defying the force of gravity.

In such elated mood we crossed the threshold of a new existence, trusting our stars while risking the leap in the dark.

## CHAPTER II

# A Minister's Son Discovers the Dangerous Force of Thinking

I KNOW VERY well why I hesitated so long before I embarked on this expedition into a past that leads one farther and farther backward. I am tempted to give the picture of this new existence which I entered on March 20, 1933, when, without knowing exactly at what moment and place, I crossed the unmarked, more or less arbitrary line separating Switzerland from Germany. But that inevitably obliges me to give some account of a previous existence which began in October, 1919, when, a demobilized lieutenant, I entered upon my literary career in Munich. And that again was preceded by the experience of my military career, starting in November, 1914.

But a man of twenty-two is already formed and determined, in his character and in his destiny, by the many decisive influences and experiences, beginning with his first cry. Yet even the newborn baby has already his pre-existence, the heritage of his family. Having heard about Abbé Mendel who, himself childless, was not worried by discovering the laws of heredity, you know perfectly well that you cannot stop with father and mother. You cannot really write the history of an individual without writing a family chronicle, which in turn is prevented from going back to Adam and Eve and so becoming a history of mankind by nothing but the benevolent limitations of human memory. And all that covers only the one half of human character, that which derives from heredity. As for the other half, that of education, you would have to tell about every person who from the first day of your life exercised some influence on you, not to speak of all the authors whose ideas, transmitted to us since the dawn of human history, may have become, for you, more decisive than any living person.

But I have not the intention of raising panic in myself and in my

readers by the logical definition of an absolute and practically impossible perfection. In order to achieve anything, you are to rely on a certain irrational instinct of activity, strong enough not to be paralyzed by the marvelous and dangerous force of purely abstract analytical thinking that in its last consequence would dissolve yourself and the world.

This digression is not, as it might appear, a kind of philosophical draft evasion with the purpose of sneaking away from the difficult task of autobiographical writing. On the contrary, I am just in the middle of it, in the very center of my most real existence. It began when, at thirteen or fourteen years of age, I discovered for myself the wonderful art of logical thinking, the new world of abstract ideas. My intellectual enthusiasm almost killed me when, a juvenile Oedipus, I dared to face the Sphinx that seemed determined to crash me into the abyss if I did not find the answers to its insoluble riddles. I never found all the answers, but I was not crashed. I did not jump into the abyss, as I sometimes was tempted to do. I simply lived on, standing on the small cliff where we all stand, swaying sometimes but never entirely losing my balance. Perhaps this is the only silent answer to be expected by even the most presumptuous and exalting sphinx.

My case had been especially critical because I had indulged in the intoxication of thinking before having outgrown the purely narcissistic attitude of childhood. Thinking had become for me another expression of the infantile possessive instinct. Brandishing the dangerous scalpel of intellectual analysis like a new toy sword, I threw myself upon the most innocent victims—the first of whom was myself.

I tried to follow the Greek maxim γνῶθι σ'αὐτόν—know yourself. Good advice, indeed. But I became suspicious when many years later I found it as the superscription over a skeleton on an early Christian mosaic in the Museum of the Thermes in Rome. This morbid ascetic illustration of knowledge of oneself misinterprets both Antiquity and Christianity, but it is an excellent warning against the excesses of self-analysis and purely abstract thinking. The human consequences of this unnatural tendency are mostly disastrous. You are likely to get lost in yourself, in a labyrinth of desperate nihilism.

If you are lucky, you some day break free. But tragically enough, many good spirits, sometimes even brilliant writers and thinkers,

can never overcome that juvenile attitude. They never become mature adults; that is, achieve a certain harmony within themselves and with the world.

What saved me was perhaps the fact that, in my early childhood, I once seriously disturbed my stomach by eating too much hot chocolate pudding. Probably there were too many bitter almonds in it, and the minimum of cyanide was enough to irritate my sensitive though healthy brain to the degree of producing a sort of spasm. In the course of that short attack I experienced a strange psycho-physical phenomenon, the reminiscence of which was never entirely lost. As I found later, it must have been something similar to what Dostoevski describes as the first phase of his epileptic attacks. In fact, it cannot be described at all in words. It was a sensation of light and enlightenment, the flashlike vision of an absolute, perfect harmony where deepest insight and understanding become a visual illumination. For one short moment you see yourself and the infinite complexity of the universe with the all-seeing eye of God when he looked at everything he had made and "behold it was very good."

Only once in my life have I had this revelation of an indescribable harmony and perfection. Though half forgotten for many years and never again renewed—not even by the most delectable chocolate pudding—this spiritual experience, hidden in the depths of my subconsciousness, may have had a deep and salutary influence upon my whole life. Perhaps besides the two elements of inheritance and education, a really complete autobiography should also include a short survey of all the daily menus. It is not pure coincidence that all great religions, especially systems trying to develop higher spiritual faculties like the Yoga, include the most particular dietetic as well as ethical prescriptions.

However that may be, I certainly was far from any sort of harmony when, at thirteen years of age, I started on the intellectual warpath with the cruel determination of a wild Indian. In fact, my offensive was a sort of self-defense. I grew up in the difficult position of an only child—among two brothers and four sisters, all of them four to seventeen years older than I. My sisters, unmarried and all but one school teachers, quite naturally tried to exercise their peda-

gogical talents upon me, the youngest one—who furiously refused to be a child. As to my brothers, one, ten years older than I, was at that time already minister in a little rural church; the other one, eight years older than I, was just completing his medical studies in Munich. I actually was the only man in the family. My father, a pastor and superintendent in Berlin, had died when I was five years old. I remembered him only as a man of about sixty with a gray beard, like old Kaiser Franz Joseph; a man of extraordinary vitality and not less extraordinary gentleness. Probably his natural kindness was accentuated by a special weakness for me, his youngest and last child, born by a mother aged forty-two, who in the twenty-five years of their marriage had given birth to eleven children and buried four of them in their early years.

My mother was the only one against whom I never had to defend myself, perhaps for the good reason that she never tried to educate me by any other pedagogical methods than the great irresistible force of her love. It was such a perfect and unconditional love that until her last years—she lived to be over ninety—she managed to understand and to sanction whatever I was thinking or doing or writing, even when my acts and ideas were in strictest contradiction to her own world of religion. She lived, safely sheltered in her faith, through a long and often tragic life; a true child of God, though by nature a highly temperamental child, passionate in love as well as in her antipathies. Her unlimited, never failing confidence in the positive side of my character was the most effective moral pressure ever exercised upon me. Only a pathological monster would not at least have tried to justify this deep magnanimity by doing his best to avoid a too cruel disappointment. If and when I have become a half-way decent person, it is thanks to my mother's generous illusions about me. She even succeeded in curing me from the bursts of blind fury which, at the slightest provocation, made me rave in a real frenzy, ended only by physical exhaustion. I had been convinced by her impressive argument that, growing up without learning to control myself, I was very likely some day to kill somebody in my really murderous rage. So, instead of throwing all kinds of physical objects at my opponents, I learned to handle the weapon of logical argument and debate, against which my sisters were hardly able to defend themselves. Whatever they said

or did, I persecuted them with the war cry "That is illogical," applying the rigorous yardstick of rationality even to every practical action, including household and kitchen. I quite certainly must have been a pest.

My intellectual regime of terror would have been impossible in any other atmosphere than that of the German intellectual middle class, with its unlimited respect for spiritual and intellectual values. It was a real caste composed first of ministers and professors of university, college and high school, and secondly of medical doctors or lawyers, briefly of the members of "free academical professions." That meant professions presupposing four to five years of university studies after nine years of so-called "Humanistisches Gymnasium," preceded of course by three years in an elementary school. All other institutions of higher education without Greek and Latin but with more emphasis upon modern languages, physics, chemistry and mathematics were only for the lesser breed, for people who wanted to go into a so-called "practical profession" like engineering and so on. The very word "practical" was a sentence of condemnation. It had nothing to do with "Geisteswissenschaften," the spiritual sciences, like philosophy, theology and philology. An engineer was something between a businessman and a factory worker. And to be a businessman, no matter how rich, was bad enough, especially if you were a shopkeeper.

I shall never forget the day when a cousin of my mother's, a very rich man, the owner of one of the oldest jewelry shops in Berlin, dared to ask my mother if, having two sons in the university, she wouldn't consider letting me learn a more practical profession; he would be glad to take me into his business. My mother jumped to her feet as if slapped in the face. Her wonderful violet-colored eyes became almost black, and with the icy contemptuous indignation of an offended queen she replied: "No, thank you, Paul, my sons" (the "my" heavily underlined) "go to the university following their own inclinations, regardless of what it may cost."

The point was that poor old cousin Paul had four sons none of whom had ever been able or willing to graduate even from a "Gymnasium" before entering their father's business. From their sixteenth year on they had stood behind the counter, selling diamond rings and

such stuff to rich and presumably vulgar customers, waiting on them with servile politeness.

I still see poor old uncle Paul leaving the room like a beaten dog, though under normal conditions, with his funny little goatee, his bony face and jerking gestures, he was the nearest thing to a he-goat I have ever met.

Another friend of our family, a country parson, felt disgraced for life because his only son had gone into the banking business, where soon he had made more money than his father had ever seen. But the old man never got over this family disaster. The absolute disregard for, and even contempt of, purely material values was not a pose. It was the natural result, the logical consequence, the very essence of what we may call German humanism, combining the spiritual, anti-material tendencies of Christianity and Antiquity. These people were indeed what they used to call themselves: a "Geistesaristokratie," a spiritual aristocracy, ranking in their own opinion high above even the aristocracy of birth (the "Geburtsadel"), not to speak of the "Geldadel," the aristocracy of money, an expression used only as a name of derision and never accepted by those concerned.

A great scholar, a great scientist would have been ashamed of being or becoming rich. Money, in these circles, was considered as something almost indecent, never to be mentioned; and in case it had to be given or accepted, it was at least hidden in an envelope.

It was obligatory to "have no money," but this did not mean want or misery. On the contrary, the modest security of a certain family fortune belonged to the tacitly admitted suppositions, though, of course, only the interest was to be used. And this interest, only from absolutely safe state obligations or first-class mortgages, was never to be high enough to allow any sort of luxury. But my mother, coming as she did from a rather wealthy family, had all through her married life two trustworthy maid servants, one of them a good cook. I'm not quite sure if my little mother ever cooked so much as an egg. Even when, after the death of my father, we were reduced to one maid, my second sister, Dora, then a girl of seventeen, took over the household.

Our mother, having been throughout her life exclusively an exemplary mother and a wonderfully active companion for my father in

his multiple work, did only such lighter housework as dusting and a lot of mending for the whole family. A large part of her time was always devoted to reading and writing. Up to her eighty-fifth year at least she carried on a large correspondence with friends and relatives, especially with those of her children who were no longer at home. She filled pages and pages with her wonderful neat tiny handwriting and her large-minded vivid comments about all sorts of people or events that had moved her heart or her brain.

There never was anything of a narrow pietistic atmosphere in our home. Religion was a natural part of living, and the ethical standards of Christianity were not discussed, because they were simply accepted as self-evident, as a practical rule of behavior, though of course, everybody knew he often fell short of perfection.

It was by one such act of applied religion that one day my father introduced into our house a person who was to become for all of us a kind of second mother. When first taken into our family she was dangerously ill, in fact on the verge of total insanity. She came from an old but impoverished aristocratic family of Prussian officers and civil servants. Her father was a degenerate drunkard. As a young girl she had been confirmed by my father and since then had belonged to his congregation. She had managed to become a school teacher, and despite the fact that her face was disfigured by a much too large nose, she had become engaged to a young aristocrat who, for one reason or another, shot himself some weeks before the date set for the wedding. Some days later she had what you may call an accident. Her father, asking her for money to buy liquor and enraged by her refusal, seriously injured her spine by a stroke of his cane. She fell ill, suffering from frightful hallucinations. Whenever she entered a dark room, she saw the bloody corpse of her fiancé lying on the floor as she had found him in his room. And even worse: suffering the most intolerable pains, she began to fancy that a beast was digging its sharp claws into her injured vertebrae and the back of her head. Sometimes, this animal was looking over her shoulder, showing her own face.

Her condition became so serious that she had to be admitted to the great municipal hospital of Berlin, an institute called Charité but far from being imbued with the spirit of Christian charity. The poorer

patients were used for the object lessons of university professors eager to produce for the benefit of their students the most interesting cases. And what could be more interesting than a patient suffering from such extraordinary hallucinations! So, her attacks, not always coinciding with the hours of the lessons, were often rather provoked than cured.

My father with his keen interest in medical science had beside his manifold other duties accepted the place of Protestant minister in the Charité. He was deeply shocked to see how his pupil, misused as a sort of guinea pig, came nearer and nearer to falling into incurable insanity. There was not the slightest doubt of what a Christian must do in this case. He had to take her into his house, regardless of the fact that there were already four children between one and seven years old and a fifth one to be expected in a few months. I doubt if it ever entered his mind what a burden he was imposing on my mother. She herself quite certainly did not in the least think of it. She identified herself so perfectly with my father that unquestioningly she accepted such decisions as her own.

The staff at the Charité had not easily yielded to his pressure, perhaps partly because they were sorry to lose such an interesting case. They declined every responsibility for taking a probably incurably insane person who could become violent and dangerous any day, into a family with small children. But it was difficult to resist my father if and when he had set his mind to do something that he felt to be his duty as a Christian. Very soon Ena—as the children called her in abbreviation of her first name, Helene—was sitting at the family table trying to eat her meals. But it often was difficult to eat, while she saw mice running all over her plate. She put down the fork and looked at my father.

"Vaterchen," she whispered, using the same allocution as the children, "Vaterchen, there they are again." And he quietly answered: "No, Ena, be sure there is nothing, you can believe me. You know I wouldn't lie to you." And so unlimited was her faith in him and in what he represented that she refused the evidence of her own eyes and forced herself to eat, regardless of the "mice."

The so-called occupational treatment of mental cases is the last cry of modern psychiatry. And of course, in a minister's large family there were occupations enough and of all sorts, even with two maids

in the house. Often Ena suffered so terribly of sick headache that for days she lay in a darkened room. But as soon as she could get up, she helped with the children, nursing the smaller ones, especially the new-born baby, my eldest brother, or teaching the older girls who already went to school.

Throughout her long life she never, not even for an hour, was free from pain, headaches at least. But in the middle of a turbulent family life Ena succeeded not only in recovering from her mental illness, but in developing a degree of higher spiritual health and absolute detachment usually attributed to the saints. She was a very protestant and perhaps a typically Prussian aristocratic saint. Her perfect self-control was not without a certain sublime pride. She never alluded to the fact that by birth, though having only a simple "von" before her name, she belonged to the old "Uradel," the original nobility, but I suppose she was acutely conscious of her caste, if only in the sense of higher obligation. With the astonishing memory for genealogy so typical of aristocrats, she sometimes casually remarked when hearing the name of some count or baron: "A quite young title. They were not knighted until the eighteenth century." She never mentioned that her own ancestors had fought in the first crusades. But she evidently felt not less annoyed by persons calling themselves aristocrats because two hundred years ago one of their forefathers had sold his pretty wife to a little prince, than by people calling themselves Christians because they had been baptized as little babies.

When I was about twelve years old, she left our house in order to become a sort of educational assistant to a Berlin minister especially interested in young people's work. For hundreds of modern city girls working in shops, offices or factories, this old aristocratic lady became the most trusted friend and counselor. The traditional title of such young girls' associations was "Christlicher Jungfrauenverein," meaning something like Association of Christian Virgins. But when it turned out that many of her girls, married or sometimes not married, became mothers, needing help and advice more than ever before, she quietly decided to drop this pompous and ridiculous name and to call it simply a young women's association.

Her religion was absolutely free of conventional moral prejudice. Whatever a girl in trouble had to tell her, she never would rebuff

her nor show moral indignation. Sometimes, of course, she was deeply troubled by what her deep human insight recognized as the complex moral and social problems of modern life. Once—she must have been seventy-five at that time—when I happened to be in Berlin for a few days, she wanted to consult me about an especially complicated case: the relation of one of her girls with an unhappily married man who, for one reason or another, could not get his divorce. She, of course, could not approve, but to my surprise she said, nodding her head which more and more resembled the head of a wise and kind old marabou: "However, I must say that humanly and intellectually that girl has much improved since she has been living with this man."

By that time she was nearly paralyzed by a most painful arthritis, and no longer able to make innumerable house calls as she had done for twenty years. But her little apartment in a foundation for old aristocratic ladies became a place of pilgrimage for some generations of girls who had become mothers of other girls, all of them needing the sympathy, the understanding, the advice of this great old maid, who had never lived but for others; who had always given but rarely accepted help.

Illustrated by such examples, the basic idea of an élite, distinguished not by any sort of material privileges but exclusively by its higher intellectual and moral standards, was impressed on me as the only valid code of conduct. To a certain extent this concept was the natural result of Christian and humanistic education. Young and rebellious rationalists, questioning every kind of religious dogma or secular authority with our critical intellect, we never lost the deep belief in what we called "human decency," "menschlicher Anstand." It was an understatement meaning "Vornehmheit" nobility, based upon the absolute preponderance of spiritual as against material values. This, and this alone, was the real criterion which distinguished the intelligentsia and every sort of human aristocracy from the vulgar masses.

The only element that was entirely missing in this conception was that of Christian humility and social responsibility. It all summed up to an immense spiritual pride, compared with which every other sort of caste arrogance could appear as relatively harmless. We knew that even the deepest thought did not offer a really satisfactory solution

for the great mystery of life and the world. The naïve materialism of Haeckel's "Riddle of the World" made us laugh. His "original cell" was not less a myth than the Genesis, a mere hypothesis, undemonstrable, acceptable only by an act of faith. Faust's desperate cry: "Ich seh' dass wir nichts wissen können, das will mir schier das Herz verbrennen" (I see that we can't know anything and that burns my heart) was a real expression of our own feeling. And even Faust's "bläuliche Phiole," the bluish cup, with the deadly poison, was always in our mind. Voluntary death seemed the only issue of escape from the deep despair of our "Weltschmerz" (world pain), that typical European disease born out of English, French and German romanticism. We still were children of the early nineteenth century, and in our spiritual atmosphere was still something of Byron and Baudelaire, tempered by Heine's melancholy wit. Many highly talented young thinkers and artists had succumbed to this disease, dying prematurely by their own act. What restrained most of us was probably largely an inborn vitality of which we would have been deeply ashamed if we ever had admitted to ourselves such a vulgar trait.

In my individual case it was—as I told myself—the idea that I could not do that to my mother; I had not the right to destroy another life by destroying mine. I had the painful duty to live on, suffering in silence, and myself deeply impressed by the tragic nobility of my attitude. Besides that, there was the difficult question of "dying in beauty." When one of my schoolmates really shot himself, and his poor mother during my visit of condolence showed me his blood-stained coat, the physical and psychical impression was so great that when I got home I immediately fell ill with a high fever and had to stay in bed for several days.

This over-sensitiveness was a curse, we felt, like the curse of thinking, adding to the insupportability of life; but at the same time it was a distinguished and distinguishing sign of belonging to a selected circle of exceptional human beings, a high-bred race with more developed brains and finer nerves, superior to the primitive healthy robustness of the average human animal. Normalcy seemed the most despicable condition. We heartily enjoyed and carefully cultivated an intellectual and physical refinement which bordered upon and often was tangent to the sphere of the pathological. By the way, the literary

self-exploitation of one's own neurotic tendencies is a well known artistic trick, recurrent again and again in world literature, and always gaining credit for a certain startling originality. Indefatigable readers, we were irresistibly attracted by Beaudelaire's demonism, by Oscar Wilde's haughty estheticism, by Edgar Allan Poe's metaphysic despair, by Dostoevski's maladive psychology or by the morbid charm of Danish poets like Jens Jacobsen and Herman Bang. It was the hopeless atmosphere of the "fin de siècle" prolonged into the first years of the new century.

But in saying "we," I am alluding not so much to the majority of my generation as to a certain type represented by more or less isolated individuals. Among my classmates for example—fortunately for my class and for myself—I was the only specimen of that kind, which was as it had to be. The suffering of the singular individual in the midst of an inferior surrounding world was among the obligatory essentials of such a role. The only trouble was that my surrounding world, including family and school, proved, unfortunately for myself, only too willing to recognize my singularity and to grant me a sort of exceptional position.

The only really congenial friend whom I felt indeed to be my equal lived in Potsdam. Coming from a well known family of scholars and ministers, he shared with me not only the traditional caste arrogance, but also my special interests in literature and art and, last but not least, my philosophical despair of life and the world. His probably was the more scientific mind. He would have liked to study Sanskrit. But the sudden death of his father, combined with the fact that his older brother was to become a painter and his younger one a musician, made it necessary for him to change his plans and choose the more practical study of medical science. As a medical doctor he would be able to earn the money needed for the support of his mother—and perhaps of his brothers, since the practical chances for a painter and a musician seemed rather doubtful.

I too had resigned myself to the prospect of becoming a medical doctor if I should succeed in carrying on the heavy load of life for so many years. With all my complete disregard for the material world, I could not have the slightest illusion as to the practical impossibility

of establishing myself as a writer, though I felt sure that writing was my real vocation. Writing considered as a profession was a euphemism for starving, and that—tired of life though I was—seemed to me indeed one of the most ignoble forms of suicide. God knows that my friend and I, in our endless confidential discussions, had considered every possible form of ending one's life, including the inhalation of cyanide vapors. This method, according to the authority of my brother who was just about to finish his medical studies in Munich, was the most instantaneous, surest, and least disfiguring sort of death. But we had agreed that the only really dignified procedure would be to dissolve even the body in non-existence by pure force of thinking. Actually, in spite of being a terribly bad mathematician, I had invented a method of making this idea graphic and demonstrable with the help of a coordinate system.

Presumably Schopenhauer's philosophy, translating the Buddhist idea of redemption in Nirvana by mortifying the blind will to life, had something to do with this concept. It turned out, however, that this ingenious system simply didn't work. There seemed to be in us more of irrational force to live than we had expected. For one thing, there was that purely irrational delight in the chivalrous arts of fighting and riding. One of my schoolmates, the son of a medical doctor, came almost every day to see me. After having finished the preparation of our lessons for the next day, we used to exercise for hours with two old sabres according to the rules valid for the so-called fighting student-associations. Since the protective helmets were rather expensive, we had decided to do without. The result was that one day my friend cut my eyelid, miraculously enough, without injuring my eye, an experience which for a while put a damper on our passion for this sport.

Horseback riding was less dangerous but more expensive. Fortunately, another of our classmates was the son of an officer serving in the mounted artillery. Despite our prejudice against officers, this boy was admitted to our inner circle. (The general saying among the academic clan was: "If my son is too stupid to go to a university, he will have to become an officer." But the artillery, presupposing at least some knowledge of mathematics, was considered a sort of intellectual elite among the military caste. And it was to their credit that, for

example, a hundred years before, the artillery officers of Spandau had been among the first admirers of Schopenhauer.)

We, of course, did not believe in the army and hoped to escape the necessity of undergoing the degrading slavery of military service. But we gladly accepted the opportunity of receiving, for a relatively small compensation, private lessons in horseback riding under the guidance of a real army sergeant. In exchange for our tips he treated us with all the respect due to members of the upper classes as long as they were not in uniform. We thus enjoyed all the advantages of a scrupulously thorough system of training without suffering its humiliating brutality. After having finished our course we were free to choose among the excellent horses of the battery; we were permitted to maneuver, without any supervision, on the enormous drill ground, arranging flat or hurdle races as we pleased.

It seems to me that the educational value of horseback riding can hardly be overrated. It is the only sport which presupposes a physical as well as a mental equilibrium. You have to relax in the saddle as in a rocking chair, following, without any sort of tenseness or stiffness, the movements of your horse, but at the same time you must be prepared for immediate automatic reflexes of muscles and nerves. You are simply forced to a gentlemanly attitude of indolent restraint and composure. Any sort of nervousness, temper or violence shows itself as a fault in the exaggerated reaction of your horse. You make a superior physical force submit to your will, in voluntary obedience, by your superior intelligence and by the almost artistic technique of using reins, spurs and the pressure of your legs. Your effort has to be invisible, hidden under an attitude of casual elegance. Every exaggerated gesture looks awkward and ridiculous. If and whenever you lose face, you are lost; for as soon as your horse feels the slightest sign of your lacking decision or courage, it will play you all sorts of tricks and laugh at you in open contempt. You cannot control your horse without controlling yourself. But at the same time you are enjoying the most perfect sensation of almost superhuman freedom and independence. Racing over the ground, flying over wall, trench, and hurdle, your cheek sometimes touching the horse's neck, you feel—like the centaurs, the quadruped half-gods of Greek mythology—the deep intoxicating ecstasy of pure vitality.

For me it was the most potent antidote against the feeling of frustation and inner despair which overshadowed my last years in the Gymnasium. Struggling with the ultimate problems of life and driven by an impatient, insatiable thirst for all the sources of highly philosophical or artistic insight, it seemed to me a terrible waste of time to impress upon my memory a lot of dead factual knowledge. All this stuff, I felt sure, was not of any other use than to be forgotten as soon as I had passed the narrow gate of the "Abiturium" that opened the road to the freedom of academic study.

## CHAPTER III

# Lessons for Life

AMONG MY TEACHERS were only a few who could stand the rigid test of my youthful criticism measuring human or intellectual values against the highest standard of absolute perfection. Their dullness, narrowness, and shabbiness were an inexhaustible source of sardonic amusement. If during their lectures I was not absorbed in reading some great work of world literature behind the back of a classmate instructed not to move, I would make a careful record of every grotesque slip or misstatement uttered by one of the professors, most of whom were indeed quite outworn and somewhat senile. To fight those deceptive tyrants with all sorts of stratagems seemed legitimate warfare. I organized my classmates in a complicated system of mutual aid by prompting and signaling, and defended their causes against the authority of the professors with a great show of forensic oratory and shrewdness. I felt myself in the splendid role of a *tribunus plebis* in the best tradition of the Gracchi, the Roman noblemen embracing the cause of the common people and fighting for justice and liberty. Looking back I am amazed by the good-natured leniency (and also the lack of pedagogic insight) shown by my teachers, who not only tolerated but partly encouraged my pretensions. One of them, our so-called "ordinarius"—the professor having the main responsibility and judicial authority for one class—never passed sentence without previously appealing to me:

"Schoenberner, *advocatus diaboli*, stand up and deliver your speech for the defense." He was highly amused and often indeed influenced by my eloquent advocacy and diplomatic ability to make even the most objectionable acts appear in a more favorable light by putting the blame not upon the offender but upon the accusing professor, or by interpreting the whole thing as a simple unfortunate misunderstanding. But worse, he stimulated my superiority complex even in

other ways. So, for example, I was exempted from the dry spade-work of preparing the literal translation of Roman lyrics we were reading in his lessons. It was sufficient for me to produce sometimes a versified German recast of one of Catullus's love songs to Lesbia, or whatever I chose, in order to reap the double advantage of a good mark and of public applause. It was generally accepted that, though not in the least interested or talented in mathematics, my outstanding achievements in Greek, Latin and German composition were compensation enough to assure my advancement from class to class.

I would have become the most insufferable sort of star but for the wholesome influence of two of my professors who, by their intellectual and human superiority, commanded my respect and my admiration. One of them was old Mahlow, who taught us Greek and German drama. Enormously tall and lean, with endless arms and legs which always seemed a bit out of joint, he had the bald head and red knobby nose of a clown. He deliberately seemed to underline this grotesque appearance by slightly exaggerated gestures accompanying his often caustic remarks. He once forever cured me of my inclination to pathetic oratory. Called to deliver from the pulpit a carefully prepared lecture about Goethe and Schiller, I began, very sure of myself, with the solemn phrase: "Schiller and Goethe, both of these names . . ." Here I was interrupted. Mahlow, with his favorite gesture of noisily clapping and rubbing his bony hands, said dryly and sardonically: "Now go on and say 'prince of poets'" ("Nun sagen Sie bloss noch 'Dichterfürsten'").

It almost took my breath. I angrily protested against the suspicion of ever having used such cliché in my manuscript. But I henceforth anxiously avoided every sort of bombastic style and developed a healthy distrust of pomposity in whatever form.

Old Mahlow was an excellent educator. He made no secret of the fact that he considered me one of his most promising students. But that meant that he asked of me much more than of anybody else. I suppose he really loved me like a father, and our relationship was more personal than is usual between a professor and a student.

He lived in the world of Greek and German classicism and was able to interpret its artistic values, not merely its grammatical, for-

malistic details. But what I admired and loved most in him was his human independence. He did not hesitate to ridicule, in most obvious allusions, the pedantic method in which, for example, the Dean of our "Gymnasium" treated Homer as a pretext for demonstrating Greek grammar. And once, in a somewhat complicated case, where my word stood against that of a certain professor, he quietly made a statement before the class implying that he believed me to be right, as indeed I was. Such an act of gallantry and uncompromising justice is an unforgettable experience for a half-grown boy.

The other professor, to whom I owe not only my early interest in the French language and literature but a deeper insight into the invincible force of pure human kindness, was a strange counterpart to Mahlow. His exceptionally short, somewhat plump figure and his name Cohn recalled unfortunately to everybody the popular (and frankly idiotic) song "Haven't you seen little Cohn?" His dark face with its sharply curved nose, bushy eyebrows and black, somewhat Mephistophelian goatee added to the whimsicality of his appearance. He seemed the predestined victim for the thoughtless cruelty of a class which did not enjoy the reputation of exemplary behavior. But from the first moment when, with quiet dignity, he entered the classroom, he established his never challenged authority. He treated us entirely as adults, with the exquisitely perfect politeness of a gentleman speaking to gentlemen.

He never raised his voice in rebuke, but he showed such a painful, incredulous astonishment when confronted with any sort of irregularity or unfairness that even the toughest young rowdy could not help feeling ashamed of himself. Besides, after some half-hearted attempts, everybody simply abandoned the effort to cheat him, because nothing escaped his sharp eyes and ears. For example, he immediately seemed to sense it when anyone tried to conceal a dictionary under the desk. Cohn never made the slightest move to surprise the offender and to seize the *corpus delicti*. He only frowned and shook his head, more embarrassed than disapproving, visibly annoyed by the necessity of interference, and said with mild reproach in his gentle voice: "But no, Müller, that is unfair." And Müller, blushing up to his ears, would feel like a detected card sharper in a first-rate club and certainly would never try again.

Like Orpheus with his lyre, Cohn tamed the young wild animals of our class by the faultless harmony of a kindness that, as we felt instinctively, was far from being weakness or laxity. His kindness was an immeasurable strength, emanating from sheer human superiority. The crystalline purity of his mind had something imposing, sometimes almost oppressing, despite his slightly comical appearance, despite the rather shy, polite reserve of his attitude.

I don't know whether he was what you would call a religious man, a true Christian or a devout Jew. But I hardly ever saw a man who lived with such natural ease in the sphere of ethical absoluteness—in the presence of God. It seems that even the fires of Hitler's hell could not touch him.

In 1933 he had, of course, to resign and give up the wonderful progressive project which he had built up. Some years after I left, he had organized regular summer courses for the higher classes near Berlin on an island in the midst of the lovely Tegeler See. The boys had helped to construct the barracks and had in the course of time created for themselves a real paradise where, liberated from the depressing atmosphere of our old prisonlike school building, they held their classes in the open and learned their lessons, inspired by Professor Cohn and free nature, much better than ever before.

I heard about all this much later, during my exile in France when through a strange coincidence our relationship, interrupted for almost twenty-five years, was renewed by an exchange of letters. He sent me a touchingly modest printed account of the success of his experiment, which for Berlin seemed daring and almost revolutionary, whereas in America it has been long since a commonplace.

Between the lines I could read with what furious resistance this humane and really humanistic idea of his had been met by the "old school ties," until with his unfailing and adamantine kindness he had succeeded in realizing his dreams. I still had time to write him a letter of thanks, to tell how I had always cherished his memory, not knowing why (by one of these inexplicable sins of omission) I had neglected to keep in touch with him. Some weeks later, my youngest sister, who had become his admiring friend, wrote me that he had fallen ill. A very old man, wise and kind up to the last moment, he died in Berlin shortly before the war. He died in peace, free from fear and from hate.

The graduation from a "humanistic" but not always humane "Gymnasium," the so-called "Abiturium," remains for many Germans throughout their lives a recurrent nightmare from which they awake covered with cold sweat, trembling in an agony of despair.

For me, thanks to the friendly collusion of my professors, it was more of a comedy—the more so as the government representative, the "Provinzialschulrat," who sometimes himself could intervene with the examination, just this time did not attend the ceremony. It was thus more of a family affair.

Perhaps never again shall I have such an intoxicating feeling of freedom as in the moment when our little dean solemnly announced that all but one of us had passed the examination. The Promised Land of academic study lay open before me. I would be free to occupy myself for the next years exclusively with those subjects which were really the vital air of my life: Literature, Art, Philosophy.

The idea that one could study such absolutely impractical sciences and yet have a certain chance to make a living of it had occurred to me first when, some months before, I had made the acquaintance of a student who, four years older than I, was about to take his doctor's degree in modern German literature. He was working in the seminary of the famous professor Erich Schmidt who, by a stroke of good luck, had discovered the original version of Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister* and was therefore considered as the first authority in the field of more modern German literature. "Modern" in this context meant of course not contemporary literature but rather the period of the Baroque, Classicism and Romanticism in contrast to the old German literature beginning with the Gothic and centering around the so-called Middle High German literature of the Middle Ages, the field of study which was the monopoly of Erich Schmidt's friend and rival, Professor Gustav Roethe.

The study of modern literature, even in this restricted sense, seemed to a man like Roethe an absolutely unscientific and rather frivolous occupation. Worst of all: Erich Schmidt had written a Goethe biography which had become a literary success because readable and not overloaded with purely philological detail. That was reason enough to consider Erich Schmidt as a sort of popular *bel esprit*, endangering

the dignity of real science which must deal exclusively with the past, a past separated at least by a distance of four hundred years from the disturbing sphere of present-day life.

Erich Schmidt was not even ashamed of the fact that many of his students, instead of serving throughout their lives Science with a capital S, had become critics, journalists, writers or even literary advisers for great publishing houses. And this was the sort of career which my new friend had in mind since he too could not afford to pass ten or fifteen years without a real income as a "Privatdozent" before becoming a regular professor.

I never had thought of such possibilities, which now appeared to me immediately as the real fulfillment of my dreams. My mother, when informed of my change of mind, had no objections. The profession of a medical doctor seemed, of course, more secure; but as long as it was not entirely incompatible with the material necessity of making a living, she heartily agreed to every study which really responded to my deepest interest and inclination. "I want you to be happy in your professional life," she said; and that was that. My plans for the future were all settled. I would take my doctorate upon the basis of a study of a contemporary artist, and so my thesis would have some chance of being published as a book. Then, I would pass two or three years in foreign countries studying in Paris, London and Rome. Simultaneously I would do some writing for newspapers and reviews, and build up a sort of literary reputation that would enable me to find a good position in a great publishing house or in the press. University study meant to me, indeed, the attainment of a sort of universal education and knowledge, not in the purely analytical sense of scientific research, but in the sense of a great spiritual synthesis able to give a new meaning to life.

Necessarily I was to be disappointed by the dry reality of university courses which, with rare exceptions, did not measure up to my high-pitched aspirations and expectations.

Even the famous Professor Erich Schmidt proved to be less dangerously modern than I had credited him with being. Not without some slight shudder I learned that the topic proposed by him for a doctor's dissertation was "The use of the comma by Lessing." And in his seminar on Heine, my favorite poet, we had to discuss for two

hours the grave question whether a parodistic poem of the schoolboy Heine—not better nor worse than I had done myself—should be called an epos or an epopee.

I myself became occupied for six months with the important task of investigating the relations between Heine and Wilhelm Müller, a second-rate celebrity of his time. The point was to find out which verse Heine had borrowed from Müller and which one Müller from Heine, supposing that both of them had not drawn from the inexhaustible source of German folk song collected under the title "Aus des Knaben Wunderhorn."

I began to do this sort of really scientific spade-work, with the desperate determination of a young man who has to show to himself and to others that, after all, he is capable of doing this kind of philological puzzle game as well as anybody else. I produced indeed a voluminous paper full of new findings which the professor highly appreciated. He could use this and other material collected by the seminar for the Heine book he intended to write. Perhaps he would have been gracious enough to acknowledge my startling discoveries in a marginal note, an opening for a promising academic future. But unfortunately he died very soon after—though probably not in consequence of reading my paper.

The surviving Roethe gave at Professor Schmidt's grave an eloquent funeral oration, not without mentioning the fact that, of course, the special field of his dear friend Schmidt had not been in the strictest sense a scientific one. His death was indeed "a grave loss for the University," because he had been at least one of the most decorative among his colleagues. Next to Gerhart Hauptmann, he was the best representative of successful Goethe-imitation. His profile, which during all his lectures he carefully turned toward his audience, an audience largely adorned by women, recalled indeed vaguely a cheaper edition of a mustached Goethe.

In order to give a certain impression of this resemblance I have to mention a minor artist, Karl Bauer, who, specializing in the mass fabrication of Goethe portraits, had become so dominated by Goethe that any of his portraits, dedicated to whatever celebrity of the German past, acquired automatically a certain Goethe-like resemblance. Once,

for a centenary celebration, he published a colorful head of the old Feldmarschall Blücher, the popular hero of the Wars of Liberation, and—lo and behold!—it was the most striking portrait of Erich Schmidt.

By the way, this sort of Goethe similarity is a form of German hereditary illness. Every superior writer or professor has had the unfortunate ambition to look like Goethe, or at least to feel and pose as Goethe. Some have perished of this malady, as for example Gerhart Hauptmann, who *as a poet* died some decades ago. It was by pure mistake that, surviving himself, he continued writing. He finally even disgraced his empty Goethe mask by acclaiming the Führer with the Hitler salute. But let us forget this *danse macabre* of German literature.

I became more and more doubtful about the science I was supposed to acquire. The History of Literature as well as of Art evidently could not be an exact science like mathematics or physics. It worked with all sorts of more or less arbitrary evaluations and psychological interpretations which were far from being exact. One can of course prove and explain anything and its precise contrary with psychological arguments, as we knew from the famous scene of Dostoevski where the examining magistrate "proves" first why Raskolnikoff must be the murderer, and then why he must be innocent.

There was for example the famous story of the two angels on a tomb by Verocchio. One of them was known to be the first work of Michelangelo, but which was the one? A whole library of books had been written about this question, by the most famous historians of art. The votes were nicely divided fifty-fifty. When the professor in his course showed us young green students the two angels in excellent photographs, I made my guess—and was surprised to hear I was right. Just some months before, as the professor explained, a new document had been discovered, settling the question. I did not dare to question the authority of this new document, but what if this contemporary himself had made a mistake?

And so, what about all this solemn business of science in art when even the most learned scholars could not be sure whether a sculpture was done by Verocchio or by Michelangelo? It then occurred to me for the first time that, the chances being always fifty-fifty, you can be right or wrong on such a question at every level of knowledge.

The only difference is in the amount of argument you are adding before coming to your right or wrong conclusion. In fact, your thesis is probably always a foregone conclusion arising out of a certain intuitive impression which may be the right or the wrong one. Then it depends only upon the different degree of knowledge you can dispose of in order to "prove" your thesis—which may indeed be your error.

There was the famous dispute about the wax bust of the flower goddess Flora supposed to be the work of Leonardo da Vinci. Wilhelm Bode, director of the Kaiser Friedrich Museum in Berlin, the highest authority on Renaissance art, had paid a million marks for what afterward proved to be a falsification made in the 18th century by a forger in London who had used his old nanking breeches to fill out the inner cavity of the bust.

Bode, of course, stuck to his guns and explained that the man in London had only made some restorations and that the bust was surely an original of Leonardo. He spent the rest of his life refuting the arguments of his scientific rivals, and died prematurely exhausted by a dispute wherein his whole scientific fame and honor were at stake.

There was the other story about the manuscripts of Georg Büchner, the young revolutionary dramatist who died in Zürich in 1837 as a political refugee of twenty-three years, after having written some masterpieces like "Danton's Death" and the soldier drama "Woyzek." Many generations of Germanists had studied and edited his work with the usual philological care, but it took more than seven decades before one of them had the enlightened idea of looking at the original manuscripts. To the general surprise it turned out that the first editor of Büchner had not even read correctly the title of "Wozzek" which really was "Woyzek," not to speak of innumerable other errors, arbitrary misinterpretations or interpolations, and even mistaken arrangements of the scenes. That was the exactitude of Science with a capital S. But even when there could be no doubt as to the accuracy of documents, figures, biographical dates and so on, I never could convince myself that all this detail—as for example knowing exactly where Goethe had made a mistake in his own biography—was of any importance for the spiritual and artistic interpretation of Goethe's work. The indecent curiosity of the Goethe philologists as to whether or not

Goethe had slept with Friderike Brion, Charlotte von Stein and so on seemed to me slightly disgusting as well as boring.

I admired the tenacious passion with which some of my friends concentrated upon this kind of scientific crossword puzzle, acquiring in due time the reputation of being serious scholars and experts in some special section of research. But I had the distinct feeling that all that had nothing to do with the spiritual world of art and literature, of beauty and higher perception, the realm of the idea which according to Plato was the only reality behind the dubious reality of apparition.

## CHAPTER IV

# Discovery of Lou Andreas-Salomé, the Friend of Nietzsche, Rilke and Freud

WHEN ONE OF my co-students invited me to spend some days with him and his family in Göttingen, I was struck by the recollection that in this little university town lived a cousin of my mother, Lou Andreas-Salomé, who to a certain extent personified the real synthesis of the artistic and intellectual worlds. She was a sort of celebrity because, as a young girl, she had played an important role in Nietzsche's life. She was also a close friend to Rainer Maria Rilke, the great modern poet. She had been and still was personally connected with every one of the more important figures in European art and science, with men like Max Reinhardt, Gerhart Hauptmann, Maximilian Harden, Richard Wagner, Leo Tolstoy, Constantin Brunner, Sigmund Freud and many others. She lived in a world quite distant from the manse where I was born, and despite the fact that her mother and my mother's mother were sisters, we had been without contact for nearly twenty years. I decided to revive this highly interesting relationship by a letter announcing my coming to Göttingen and asking permission to see her.

It is not family loyalty that impels me to write about this remarkable person, who, like so many women writers, was much more remarkable as a person than as an author, though she had written some good novels, many brilliant essays, and excellent books about Nietzsche and Rilke. Here in America, even those who know her name in the context of Nietzsche's biography have evidently not bothered to look up her own biographical dates in any little German "Konversationslexikon." A recent Nietzsche book by an American university professor for example speaks of "Mademoiselle Lou Salomé, a young and very intelligent Jewish girl, Russian, or rather Finnish, by nationality."

Even Nazi "scientists" were familiar with the fact that this "Jewish girl" was the daughter of a Russian General who, the descendant of

an old aristocratic Huguenot family, had been General Inspector of the Russian army under three Czars. Her mother was German, a daughter of the director of the Prussian "Thaler Bank" (a sort of State Bank). She was born, like my mother, in St. Petersburg. That means, she was neither Jewish nor Finnish but rather German and French, though indeed Russian "by nationality."

She was sitting at the "window toward Europe" which Peter the Great had built, but the window was not open and the atmosphere in the aristocratic German colony of St. Petersburg to which her family belonged was very much the indoor air of a nicely warmed but tightly closed-in drawing room.

It was the first sign of real human genius that she succeeded in breaking out of this atmosphere not by smashing the window and running away, but by the quiet force of her will. At fifteen years she was so sure of what she wanted—to study in a university and acquire the same intellectual training as her five older brothers—that she finally convinced her unusually understanding parents of the necessity of letting her go to "Europe." And Europe meant, true to Peter the Great's tradition, in the first instance Holland.

With the help of their Protestant minister in St. Petersburg, her parents made arrangements with a minister in Holland who was to prepare this unusual girl for the university; though the only university which at this time regularly accepted girl students was Zürich in Switzerland. Lou has told in one of her novels the tragic story of her first great love for this man, perhaps the only man she ever loved with heart and soul and spirit. He responded passionately to her love, but he—fifteen years older than his pupil—could not decide to break free from his unhappy marriage and from conventional moral standards. He sacrificed his own happiness and hers, destroying perhaps forever the delicate balance between her emotional and her spiritual life. I doubt if ever afterward a man, as man and lover, could mean very much to her beyond the limits of an ardent intellectual friendship, like that with Paul Rée, for example.

It was through Paul Rée that she met his friend Nietzsche, who immediately fell in love with her and wanted to marry her. Their first encounter is typical of the whole situation: Nietzsche, the romantic

and pedantic professor, asking her in a solemn tone "From what star do you come?" And she naïvely and simply answering, "I came from Holland."

She was attracted by Nietzsche's philosophical ideas, but she found him to be a rather queer if not repelling person. With the infallible instinct of her genuinely human and womanly nature she scented behind the pretentious attitude of the great "revaluator of all values" the small person, the eternal minister's son of Naumburg revolting against small-town conventions, but never entirely freed from them. There was, for instance, the little story about Nietzsche and Rée staying at the same hotel in Luzern when visiting Malvida von Meysenbug. Nietzsche became interested in a pretty Italian dancer, but did not dare to receive her visits in the hotel without making sure that this arrangement could be covered up by the name of his friend, Paul Rée—who after all, as Nietzsche explained, was only a man of the world; his reputation could not be endangered by such an escapade.

But the great philosopher Nietzsche had to be more careful in his private life. He did not want to spoil his promising career as a destroyer of traditional moral values by what for bourgeois hypocrisy was a shocking offense. It was all very nice to praise the marvelous amoralism of Cesare Borgia, who between two murders used to sleep with his sister Lucrezia. But an Italian dancer asking in the hotel for Professor Nietzsche—impossible! She had far better ask for Dr. Rée. Otherwise what would Naumburg say? The moral code of Naumburg was personified by his sister Elisabeth, who later was to become the creator and shrewd administrator of the Nietzsche Archive in Weimar and of the popular Nietzsche legend.

Lou felt terribly uncomfortable with Naumburg; but all the same, she was probably flattered by the ardent attention of two philosophers. Nietzsche and Rée did not mind having their pictures taken as a team pulling the little carriage in which, graciously smiling, young Lou was sitting with a little whip in her hand. The whole thing was a joke, and Lou was discreet enough to hide it away; though it was of course the most significant and revealing illustration of Nietzsche's word about "not forgetting the whip, when you are going to women." Perhaps he never forgot the whip, the little whip in the hand of a highly attractive and highly intelligent girl who, far from marrying him,

made fun of him occasionally and definitely refused to play the role of the admiring disciple, sitting in awe at the great master's feet.

Later on, when the whole friendship *à trois* had blown up in a sort of European family scandal with Nietzsche challenging his friend Rée to a duel, in a furious but probably never mailed letter, he bitterly complained about Lou's "lack of respect."

Throughout the nearly ninety years of her life, his sister Elisabeth conducted a kind of guerrilla warfare against Lou Salomé. Serious scholars in Germany and Switzerland bombarded each other with articles and books concerning the whole affair. But Lou herself had the good taste never to answer with a single line all the furious and partly ludicrous accusations. She never used in her defense the letters of his hand or a document like this little photo, at the very sight of which Elisabeth Förster-Nietzsche probably would have succumbed to a premature stroke.

Lou was nearly seventy and I a close friend, almost a son to her, when she showed me the picture. Probably it will now have disappeared forever, since the Nazis got hold of all her invaluable literary papers, including many never-published letters from Nietzsche, a never-published book of poetry by Rilke and a large correspondence with Tolstoy, Wagner, Freud, Hauptmann, Reinhardt and almost every more important figure of her time.

Lou had written one of the first objective and scholarly books about Nietzsche's philosophy, but she never took part in all the different discussions in respect to Nietzsche's private life, especially concerning the nature of his illness. The medical record does not leave any doubt that his insanity was caused by what is called "paresis" due to a syphilitic infection acquired in his youth. Elisabeth Förster-Nietzsche, of course, could never admit this fact. The physical chastity and "purity" of her brother "Fritz"—beyond good and evil as he had proclaimed himself to be—belonged to the very essence of her Nietzsche legend, created according to her own image and for the use of serious-minded high-school juniors of every age. Her line of defense was like that of the woman who was asked to give back a borrowed pot and who declared that (1) she never borrowed a pot, (2) the pot was already

broken when borrowed, and (3) the pot had been given back long since.

Accordingly, Elisabeth declared there could not be a question of any syphilis infection because (1) her brother was chaste like a saint and had never been interested in women, (2) the only woman in his life, though of course unworthy of him, was Lou Salomé, and, strictly confidentially, (3) if there was anything wrong with Fritz's health it was all Lou's fault.

It may appear rather superfluous to warm up here the old gossip of the European intelligentsia of sixty years ago, but sister Elisabeth's Nietzsche legend, despite the courageous attempts at debunking carried on by men like Bernoulli, Overbeck, Podach, has proved to be not only persistent but indeed fatal for Nietzsche himself. Thanks to the pious and conscientious efforts of his sister, he became posthumously a Nazi philosopher, and his work was disgraced by serving as Hitler's birthday present to his friend Mussolini. Significantly enough, this gift reached Mussolini only after his fall, on his confinement in Gran Sasso. I hope he had time to contemplate the danger of taking too literally the romantic immoralism of a highly contradictory poet rather than philosopher, before he faced as a trembling coward the firing squad of Italian partisans. The danger of becoming slightly ridiculous is a special risk of immoralism.

Every great thinker or great writer, except the immoralist, has the right to say: "Be guided by my words, not by my deeds." The popular confusion of the man and his work is nothing but a dangerous mistake. It is quite another thing to formulate, to know about an idea, than to live and incarnate an idea.

The greatest educators of mankind, Buddha, Socrates, Christ, have never written a single line, they have inspired by their pure being their Platos or their St. Pauls to become the literary interpreters and missionaries of their great teaching; that is, of their great life itself. It is enough if a man has the revelation of a great ethical truth and is able to express this truth in his work. It is, in general, too much to ask that he himself in his personal life should live up to his own ideal. This tragic and sometimes tragi-comic discrepancy between the

man and his work is probably due to the inherent contradictions of human nature. The great work of art or of thought is mostly an expression not of the artist's or the philosopher's own being but, on the contrary, of his so-called "super-ego," the ideal vision of what he wants to be, what he feels he ought to be. His conception of this ideal is perfect just because he himself is so imperfect in the reality of his everyday life. Out of this inner tension originates the creative impulse for his work. It is the same with every prophet who struggles against God's command to preach his message, because he knows that the message is so incommensurably greater than the messenger.

Of this dilemma the Catholic Church found a solution which has always seemed to me a masterpiece not only of tactical ingenuity but of deepest psychological insight: the *character indelebilis* of the priesthood. The priest may be a criminal, guilty of every deadly sin, but the sacred character of his ordination is indelible. Saying the mass, preaching the evangel of Christ, breaking the Host, he is the representative of God, able to give absolution. The Catholic Church has succeeded in making this highly abstract idea so self-evident to the simplest of its members that a primitive old Bavarian peasant wife can say what I heard one saying: "Our priest is a real heel except for his sacred ordination."

This conception reveals a deep human wisdom. Indeed, it is better that an ethical absolute—that God—should be somehow represented by a man having taken holy orders though perhaps not always obeying them, than that these orders should not be proclaimed and represented by any human symbol.

Who, after all, are we to criticize the messenger bringing the divine message (of his art or of his thought) for a certain disorder in his appearance, for his seamy cloth or his dusty feet, instead of listening to his message? Even God did not expect his messengers to be equal to their message, to His message. He rarely chose angels, but mostly imperfect human beings, to serve as his prophets. When Moses brought down the Tables of the Law from Mount Sinai and saw his people dancing around the Golden Calf, he could not even control himself, and in his wrath he smashed the Holy Tables. He had to climb back the long and hard path to the summit where God was waiting for him. And the Almighty, without a word of blame, gave to his irascible,

table-crushing servant simply and quietly a second set of tables which He in His omniscience had already prepared. He sent this violent, irreverent Moses down again to teach the Law of God to a people, idolatrous and stubborn, but chosen to spread this law over all the world.

People are people. They may fall into idolatry. And prophets may be violent. Perhaps otherwise they could not be prophets. The role of the prophet is similar to that of the art critic, who is not supposed to create art but to know about art, to be the bearer of definite standards, the guardian of an esthetic law of perfection. Exactly so, the essential task of the prophet is to know and to make known the ethical law of perfection. The dignity and validity of his mission as well as of his message remain intact whether or not he is perfect himself. His very imperfection is redeemed and glorified by his self-denying courage as a witness of eternal truth—even though he must witness against himself, perhaps even accuse and condemn himself.

The prophet, unable to live up to the ethical law revealed to him and proclaimed by him, remains in fact a tragic figure—so long as he does not try to hide behind hypocrisy. But a prophet of immoralism pretending to smash with his philosophical hammer the moral foundations of humanity becomes irretrievably ridiculous when, trembling for his "spotless" reputation, he anxiously tries to comply and even to compromise, at his friend's expense, with the *petit bourgeois* conventions of all the Naumburgs all over the world.

That a clear-eyed and terribly clear-sighted young girl, by nature utterly free of all conventions and always entirely her own sovereign self, could look at him with the innocent smile of the child in Andersen's tale who discovered that the king was without clothes—what a deadly blow to Zarathustra's sickly pride.

His genius stimulated by his illness was able to create Zarathustra, a superhuman picture of himself, the gigantic projection of, the overcompensation for, everything that was denied him in reality. He could convince himself and an increasing number of admiring disciples that he was the greatest philosopher of all times, wiser than Socrates and stronger than Christ. But he could not force a young girl to confuse the magnificent creation of his philosophical dreams with the physical appearance of an awkward German professor, half blind, poor, and

poor in health, tortured by headaches and by illusions of grandeur, possessed by—more than possessing—the genius for destruction which was destined to destroy himself.

Perhaps I had better write Lou's biography rather than my own. What a marvelous *motiv,* the strange life of this extraordinary woman, not "emancipated" like many of her contemporaries but really free by nature. Not a bluestocking, but endowed with a brilliantly logical mind which even in the highest spiritual sphere was animated by a truly womanly passion. This abstract passion became deceptive and dangerous just because it was expressed with this absolute naturalness and innocent candor which up to her last years was the basic element of her charm. Who could believe that the passion of an attractive woman could be directed toward the work but not the worker? As in Nietzsche's case, this dangerous error created again and again misunderstandings, ending in conflicts and accusations which she faced with naïve surprise, unconscious as a child of any sort of guilt. Unwillingly and unwittingly she became a sort of intellectual "femme fatale" for certain brilliant European minds.

Shortly after her friend Paul Rée had died in a mysterious accident in the Alps she had agreed to marry a promising young scholar whom she did not love but whom she heartily liked as a friend. The Orientalist Andreas, of half-Javanese extraction, had literally extorted her "yes" on the point of a dagger directed against his own heart. But he promised to respect her personal liberty. The young couple lived at first in a suburb of Berlin, where a whole circle of young artists was busy creating a strictly literary revolution.

After Gerhart Hauptmann's first nights, usually ending in a theater scandal, Lou always had the place of honor at the side of the young dramatic genius. He was terribly afraid of her intelligence and deeply stunned when Lou, who had to review his pieces in the *Freie Bühne* explained to him the deeper meaning of his work.

"I know you take me for a simpleton," he used to say.

Perhaps he was right and perhaps she was right, too, notwithstanding the fact that the young Hauptmann was a real poet. But he certainly was not an intelligent poet—which explains his rapid decline to the point where he finally became a Nazi.

It was at this time that a boy of sixteen, René Maria Rilke, came first to Lou's house. She was later to give him the name Rainer, and he ultimately adopted even her handwriting. Out of the adolescent's enthusiastic devotion grew a wonderfully deep relationship ending only with Rilke's death. His "Tales of God" are the result of a voyage which under Lou's guidance introduced him to Russia and to Tolstoy.

Tolstoy, far over seventy, had at that time just discovered that art was immoral. He published nothing but dry moralistic tracts, while secretly writing one of his most powerful short novels, "Chadchi Murat." Taking a walk with his guests through the woods, he severely scolded the young poet Rilke for making verses and for traveling about the world with another man's wife. But in the middle of his philippic, he suddenly stopped, struck by the blue beauty of some forget-me-nots growing near a little brook. And with the violent gesture of a beast of prey the old man bent down, grasping with his hand a whole bunch of flowers and inhaling their fragrance with such passionate delight that it seemed as if he wanted to devour them. Then, suddenly sobered and embarrassed, he let them fall to the ground and continued his moralizing admonitions.

It is a pity that Lou, so keen an observer, has not preserved the treasures of such memories in a book about Tolstoy. But at least she has given us one of the deepest interpretations of Rilke, written and published after his death.

Yet probably more important than anything she could have published would be her diaries, which she kept throughout her life. This life, even in her later years, never ceased to be a most unusual and independent one, despite the fact that in great part at least it was spent in a little university town.

For many months every year she lived in Paris, Berlin, Vienna, Munich or wherever she was driven by her insatiable thirst for new adventures and explorations of the mind. But for the rest of the time she stayed with her husband in Göttingen, where Professor Andreas, the most extraordinary "Ordinarius," had been called to occupy a famous chair for Oriental languages. This chair literally stood on his writing desk, for he had decided to give his courses, which were attended by only a small number of students, not in the University

but in his studio and at a time most convenient to him: after 10 or 11 P.M., following his lunch hour, which was so because his day began late in the afternoon.

His lectures, of course, were not lectures at all but informal group discussions with a selected number of enthusiastic disciples who, having come to Göttingen for Professor Andreas' sake alone, did not mind adapting their own convenience to his strange Oriental habits. Unconscious of time, he was used to continue these scientific "bull sessions" for three or four hours, ending up with tea and sandwiches—which also represented the professor's evening meal, served around 2 A.M. Then he began his own work, and went to bed at seven or eight in the morning when Lou, rising very early, was about to take her breakfast.

Like the sun and the moon, they were both visible together for short hours of transition only, and even then in two strictly divided parts of the house, he occupying the first, she the second floor. She lived there, as she used to say, like the Pope in the Vatican, in a sort of voluntary seclusion.

The whole household—which means the night-household of the professor—was in the hands of an old maid servant who in the course of years had become so indispensable that Lou could not think of dismissing her, though there were and had been reasons enough for doing so. Rather than to interfere with the autocratic but, for the professor at least, benevolent dictatorship of Mary, as the old maid was called, Lou had barricaded herself into her upper floor, taking care of her own rooms and even preparing her own meals in order to be entirely independent of Mary, who was supposed never to enter this forbidden territory. Lou's only companion in this strange hermitage was a fox terrier which she loved and spoiled like a child.

She definitely had refused to take part in any way in the social life of Göttingen. She never made or received social calls, and she discouraged inopportune visitors with utter disregard of all conventional forms. It was a rare exception—I did not know how rare—that she allowed a visitor to come into her house. And had it not been that from the first moment a spontaneous relationship of mutual sympathy and understanding had originated between us, I am sure she would have rid herself of me after the first hour, no matter whether I was her cousin or not.

But from this first meeting in 1912 up to the moment when more than twenty years later I had to leave Germany, our friendship, a real kinship, grew closer and closer. Whenever she came to Berlin or later to Munich, often living in my house, she never failed to introduce me to all the innumerable celebrities who belonged to her circle of friends.

Not without a certain embarrassment I remember that one day Lou imposed on Rainer Maria Rilke the hardship of having me read one of my first literary products, a short (of course more or less autobiographical) novelette influenced by the complicated ironical style of Thomas Mann's early period.

By an especially bad chance I missed the opportunity to meet Freud, with whom she had been closely connected since his first publications in regard to what he had called Psychoanalysis. She became one of his first disciples, and was one of the very few people who were authorized by Freud himself to practice his new therapeutic method. It has to be emphasized that Freud, fully aware of the dangers involved, was extremely careful in giving this authorization, although he could not hinder the misuse of his name and system by innumerable charlatans or irresponsible half-cured neurotics who eagerly capitalized upon his growing fame.

Between Freud and Lou developed one of those rare friendships that, based upon an intellectual as well as deeply human relationship, are secure from all emotional disturbances. When Freud called her "the Sunday in psychoanalysis," he admirably expressed his appreciation of the special element of womanly and artistic intuition which she was able to contribute to his work and his life. It was the work of a most honest rationalist strictly devoted to the intellectual integrity of his scientific thought. It was the ascetic life of a passionate, indefatigable seeker after truth. And since truth seemed to unveil itself as tragic truth, the triumph of wisdom was overshadowed by deep melancholy. He knew, as once he wrote to Lou, that all he could do was "to transform neurotic misery into common misfortune."

With all his necessary limitations—every great achievement needs a one-sided genius—Sigmund Freud belongs to the great heroic figures who in fearless disregard of taboos and conventions have discovered and explored large new territories of this *terra incognita,* the

human soul. He much more than Nietzsche deserves to be called a liberator. In seeking "the truth that sets us free," he had become free himself, free from personal vanity and petty ambition. The sober, crystalline clarity of his style, the best didactic prose ever written in German, compares more than favorably with Nietzsche's hectic and often artificial brilliance. He was what Nietzsche never succeeded in being: not only a free spirit, but a free man, genuine and "essential" in the sense of the old German mystic's imperative: "Man, be essential."

## CHAPTER V

# The Imperial Bull in the Academic China Shop

FOR A YOUNG student, dissatisfied with himself and with what university professors called "spiritual science," the contact with Lou, and thus indirectly with Freud, opened up a new range of thought. I had always suspected that Goethe was right in saying, "The proper study of man is man." That involved a higher synthesis of art and science, a spiritual world of human universalism with which the universities had in common nothing more than the name. All the treasures of knowledge accumulated by patient scientific research did not really sum up to a deeper insight into, or a higher idea of, mankind and world. But disappointed as I was, I never would have thought of abandoning the privilege of my academic civil right. Being a university student meant indeed being a citizen of the so-called "republic of science." This was the only republican institution allowed to exist in the framework of the half-feudal monarchy. I was the more proud of being a so-called "academic citizen" because this title of "citizen," with its revolutionary implications, was, despite all constitutional rights, seldom used in Germany. The German was in general rather a "subject."

In Germany at the beginning of the century the situation was similar to that in Russia, in so far as the whole intelligentsia was quite naturally in open opposition to the regime and all it stood for. In Russia, under the heavy pressure of real autocracy, at least part of the younger intelligentsia became active revolutionaries. But in Germany this liberal opposition did not find its expression in any sort of political organization. It remained purely abstract, and so could be tolerated by the powers-that-be without any real danger to them. German liberalism had been beaten, politically and even at arms, in the revolution of 1848. And the opposition of the liberal intelligentsia to Bismarck had been a losing battle, much more so than the struggle of the working class organized in the socialist party.

The last best hope of German liberalism had been the Crown Prince Frederick, who, married to an English princess, was a liberal himself, the declared opponent and antagonist of Bismarck. But when he finally came to the throne in 1888, Frederick was a dying man, suffering from a cancer of the throat. After a phantom rule of ninety days he was succeeded by William II, a neurotic megalomaniac, whom both his parents as well as Bismarck himself considered to be a real danger to Germany. William II combined indeed all the worst traits of Prussian militarism and feudalism with the bad manners, the execrable taste and the ostentatious vulgarity of the newly rich. His insatiable thirst for showy uniforms, parades and state visits was ridiculous enough, but even worse was his romanticism, his mystical idea of being Kaiser "by the grace of God" and therefore superior in wisdom and insight to any other mortal person. His pretensions to a sort of personal autocratic regime were purely anachronistic, and absolutely incompatible with a parliamentary constitution which even conservative Bismarck did not dream of ignoring.

Ironically enough, old Chancellor Bismarck in his more or less personal conflict with the young Kaiser became the favorite of the same liberal opposition which had opposed him and was now opposing the Kaiser. Commenting on Bismarck's disgrace, for example, *Simplicissimus* published a cartoon saying: "The old oak has fallen, but the new shoot is so nicely green." In his retirement old Bismarck, wearing no longer his traditional cuirassier's uniform but the broad-brimmed hat of the democrats of 1848, played with demagogic variations the upright man of the people, the victim of imperial arrogance, the defender of civic rights. But he was too old to revive the political influence of liberalism which he had fought as long as he was in power. By becoming in his old days a sort of popular hero among the liberal middle class (there were even such things as Bismarck herrings) he only made more evident the confusion, the political bankruptcy of German liberalism and its total lack of political instinct or initiative.

The so-called national-liberal party in the Reichstag was more national than liberal. The intellectual middle class which in 1848 had stood together with the workers on the barricades had more and more

retired from the struggle for political freedom into the "higher realm" of spiritual freedom. Making a virtue out of a weakness, the German intelligentsia had escaped into the ivory tower, looking down with affected indifference on the vulgar sphere of politics, including the official regime. For every intelligent observer, even for high dignitaries of his own court, the Kaiser was a ridiculous figure, a sort of overgrown *enfant terrible,* insisting on playing the soldier with the expensive and dangerous toy of an enormous army. The excellent cartoons of *Simplicissimus* made him really a laughing stock, but very few people realized the danger behind all this comicality. After all, there seemed no reason for alarm, since the Kaiser and his regime rarely tried to interfere directly with the reserved sphere of intellectual and cultural life.

The universities, state institutions as they were, had become the last refuge of real liberalism with its spirit of more or less open protest and opposition. So great a scholar as Professor Virchow, a light of medical science, made no bones about his anti-militarism. He could allow himself to say that he didn't like to have the medical students of the so-called Pepinière (a half-military institution for future army doctors) come to his lessons in their uniforms, or, as he frankly put it, "in their monkey jackets." When forced under pressure to apologize for this offence, he finally did it by declaring in his next lesson: "It seems I made a mistake which I was asked to correct. What I called monkey jackets is, I was told, not a monkey jacket but the king's uniform." Especially, the so-called "extraordinary" professors and "Privatdozenten" who did not receive a government salary with a right to a pension, but only a certain percentage of the fees of their students, felt not in the least obliged to cultivate the cautious discretion imposed upon genuine government officials. The brilliant and in every sense "extraordinary" professor Georg Simmel, for example, teaching philosophy from 11 o'clock to 1 o'clock two days a week in a lecture room facing on the street Unter den Linden, always abruptly stopped even in the midst of a masterly and highly complicated phrase, as soon as the first sound of military music accompanying the relieving of the guard at the imperial castle met his ear. He stood motionless at his pulpit in an attitude of arrogant disgust and stoical suffering

until the barbaric noise had faded away. Then, as if awakened from the spell of a nightmare, he continued his sentence exactly at the point where he had been interrupted.

This attitude of haughty and silent protest was to a certain extent typical and symbolic of the strange dualism of Germany. The cultural and the political spheres, the spiritual and the secular powers, the realm of the idea and that of reality, were traditionally divided. The dangerous tendency to abstractions in total disregard of concrete life was rooted in the Christian dualism of soul and body, of heaven and earth, of the eternal and the temporal. It was enforced by Lutheran Protestantism with its willingness to "give unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's" and with its conviction that secular power, bad as it was in itself, nevertheless had divine sanction. The whole tragic history of Germany with all the defeated attempts to gain political freedom, from the peasant war to the revolution of 1848, seemed to confirm that there was no other freedom than the freedom of the idea—which no tyrant could destroy. The less satisfactory the external political and social conditions, the more attractive became the escape into the lofty sphere of "pure religion," "pure philosophy," "pure science," "pure art." The freedom of this realm seemed almost unlimited; at least, as long as there was no pretension of direct interference with the sphere of concrete reality, which entirely belonged to the authority of the state.

Even in social life these two worlds did not mix. A higher government official in a university town which at the same time was a garrison town, had to give at least three or four separate official dinner parties: one for the university professors and other members of the free academic professions, including the ministers; one for the officers; one for the prominent business men and, if necessary, one for the other higher government officials.

These so-called "Höhere Beamte" had studied law; they were academicians all right; but directly serving the administration, they were almost as dependent upon the government and their official superiors as the officers in the army. This hybrid character made them at the worst socially acceptable in academic as well as military circles. But in the academicians' regard they remained representatives of a dis-

liked regime, and for the officers they belonged to the lower species of "civilians," they were "Bürohengste" (office horses) who, in their quality of officers of the reserve, had only at maneuvers the right to wear the uniform. In fact, even the university professors were government officials of a sort, but they belonged to the "republic of science," as the university called itself, because it had its own administration formed after Roman pattern with a senate and freely elected representatives of the faculties.

This fiction of academic freedom was jealously preserved. The assignment of a professor was a faculty prerogative, though subject to confirmation or veto by the government. No policeman had the right to enter the building of the University or to arrest a student if not especially summoned by the Dean.

At exceptional occasions like the centenary of the Berlin University in 1910, however, the existence of the state personified in the entirely unacademic figure of the Kaiser could not possibly be ignored. The result of such an encounter was of course somewhat embarrassing. I remember the solemn celebration in the wonderful "Aula" of the old University built in the noble style of sober classicism and now used only as a library. The first rows were filled with the members of our faculties, professors of theology, philosophy, medical science and law, in their vari-colored gowns. The representatives of the different student associations in their slightly ridiculous theatrical costumes and with their standards decorating the platform were perhaps the only ones in that assembly to be considered as "pillars of the throne and altar."

The so-called "Couleur Student" and his prototype the "Corps Student" (belonging to one of the especially swank associations called "Corps," adherence to which was indispensable for future government officials), has been internationally advertised and sentimentalized by the play "Alt Heidelberg," called now "The Student Prince." But the "couleur student" represented a relatively small and more or less reactionary minority among the German students. Devoted to, and disfigured by, his main occupation, that of regimental drinking and fighting, he belonged, together with the military caste, the Junker, the big industrialist and the subaltern nationalistic bourgeois, to the standard types caricatured by cartoons in *Simplicissimus* and some

other progressive papers. The majority of the audience certainly belonged to the "other Germany" rooted in the cultural traditions of humanism and cosmopolitanism.

This "real Germany" of art, music, literature, philosophy and science was real indeed, but had no contact with political or social reality. Most of us, probably, had never since our early childhood made any effort to see the Kaiser parading through the streets at the head of his troops after the maneuvers or at other occasions. The less you saw of him, the better. It would have been preferable to ignore or to forget the embarrassing fact of his existence at all, had it not been for his picture in the papers and for the caricatures in *Simplicissimus*. It was a real shock to see him so closely followed by a large retinue in glamorous uniforms, he himself, of course, the most glamorous of all, wearing the golden cuirass and in his hand the golden eagle helmet of the regiment "garde de corps." Greeted by the terrific noise of a trombone choir, he walked through the middle passage with the stiff pomposity of a ham actor playing a king. Just in this surrounding he looked awfully out of place. To a more mature observer the terrific constraint and affectation of his attitude, indicating the convulsive effort of a crippled neurotic to overcompensate for his insecurity, would have appeared pitiful rather than ridiculous and disgusting. But our only reaction was that in reality he looked even worse than his caricatures. His pointed mustache, his withered left arm disguised in the martial gesture of the fist on the hip, simply made us sick.

He was supposed to attend the ceremony as a guest of honor only. The great address of the distinguished historian Dietrich Schaefer was to have been the climax, and Schaefer did his best to reconcile the demand of scholarly superiority with that of a certain patriotic inspiration suitable to the occasion, especially in the presence of the Kaiser. He very ably linked Prussia's political resurrection in the first war of liberation in 1813 with her spiritual rebirth symbolized by the founding of the Berlin University in 1810, in a time of national humiliation and misery. But evidently the Kaiser did not feel quite satisfied with this academic approach. Suddenly, to the horrified surprise of the audience, upsetting the whole program, he rose and marched to the platform, taking his place behind the pulpit which the professor had hardly left. As everybody knew, the Kaiser had an unfortunate passion for impro-

vised speeches. During his summer trips on his yacht he used to preach every Sunday to the crew and his defenseless guests, but nobody had expected him to give a Sunday School sermon here before an academic audience including the most famous scholars of Germany.

His style and his diction were those of a provincial army sergeant addressing his recruits on the drill ground. He strongly recommended the fear of God, for him more or less identical with loyalty to the Kaiser invested by God. And he did his best to make God alone, not the University, responsible for what he called "Prussia's glorious resurrection in 1813 after the total collapse of 1806." "Was that the work of man?" he bellowed. "No, that was the work of God." He seemed so startled by his discovery that he pounded the pulpit like a beer hall politician. The servile newspaper reports the next day put it this way: "At these words His Majesty hit the pulpit with his white gloved fist." The audience felt a bit ashamed of itself and of the Kaiser, who after all was the German Kaiser, but everybody tried to console himself with the idea that in all probability that was for the next hundred years the last time that such an intruder could trouble the austere academic atmosphere of the university.

Unfortunately it was overlooked that in the meantime he was very well able to trouble the political atmosphere of the whole world, a fact that, after all, would have some repercussions even in an academic world existing in a vacuum.

## CHAPTER VI

# "Schwabing"—A Bavarian Greenwich Village—and War

Probably I would never have thought of leaving Berlin if my friend Wilfried had not urged me to go with him to Munich, where his sister Cornelia, only a year older than he, studied photography. It was, of course, a very tempting idea to become really independent. My brother Reinhardt, now a doctor, had studied for several semesters in Munich and had heartily enjoyed the free and easy life in this metropolis of art and beer on an income of about 200 marks per month. But on the other hand I would not be able to live in the cultivated atmosphere of a well ordered home, in a room furnished and arranged according to my own taste. I would have to take my meals in not too expensive restaurants, and balance my expenses with my income. I would have to think of money and to work out my own budget, an idea which seemed distasteful and embarrassing to me, especially with regard to the necessaries, not only the luxuries of life. In Berlin I always could fall back upon the family treasure, controlled nominally by my mother but actually by my favorite sister Dora.

What finally decided my choice was the great attraction of living not so much in Munich as in Schwabing; and Schwabing was not merely a special section, like Greenwich Village, for example; it was, even more than Greenwich Village, a state of mind, a way of life. Schwabing was a sort of Bavarian Montmartre, a sort of "preserve" where writers and artists lived together according to their own strange code, wearing their own strange costumes and enjoying an almost unlimited freedom, if not from want, certainly of speech and expression. They had even freedom "from religion." This latter point was the most surprising, as Munich was a strongly Catholic and even clerical city ("Munich" means originally "monk"), the capital of a predominantly agricultural state ruled by a Catholic dynasty. But this

dynasty, the house of Wittelsbach, had, in contrast to the house of Hohenzollern, a true cultural tradition and, fortunately enough, even a touch of hereditary insanity; an insanity which expressed itself not, as in the case of William II, in the form of military obsession, but in that of artistic ambition.

King Ludwig I, whose reign began in 1825, had been an art collector and a poet, though a bad one. He had surrounded himself with poets, artists and works of art, good ones as well as bad ones. He had beautified his capital by large streets, museums and monuments in the style of a frosty but noble classicism. He had been a magnanimous friend of the arts and of beautiful women. One of them, the Spanish dancer Lola Montez (whose photograph I found even in Virginia City, Nevada), had been his official mistress and had cost him his throne. Though the deeper reason for the good-natured revolution which forced him to abdicate in 1848 was the fact that—partly perhaps for the sake of the expensive Lola Montez—he had raised the price of beer, violating the most sacred rights of his people, who considered beer as the first support of life, the very essence of daily bread in liquid form.

His succe Maximilian II had preserved the cultural and political traditions c the Wittelsbachs which linked Bavaria much closer with Austria and even with France than with Prussia. Under the young King Ludwig II Bavaria had fought and lost, with Austria, the short war of 1866 against Prussia. But Bismarck's astute statesmanship had succeeded in overcoming Bavaria's deeply rooted enmity and in making possible her participation in the war of 1870, the so-called Franco-Prussian, but actually Franco-German war, out of which evolved at Versailles in 1871 the German Kaiser Reich. Ludwig II of Bavaria had been paid in cash by Bismarck for offering the crown of the German Kaiser to the old Prussian King William I. What made things easier was the fact that Ludwig II of Bavaria not only was insane but needed money badly for the expression of his insanity, especially his architectural mania. Ludwig II is a wonderful example of the fact that the main task of a king is to occupy the imagination of his people, to be a symbol, to become a myth. He looked and behaved exactly like a king in the fairy tales. He was enormously tall,

an ideal of manly beauty in the sentimental-romantic style of his time. And in addition he had the great advantage that his mental derangement gave him the melancholic air of a suffering genius. The more he busied himself with ruining the state finances by building castles at enormous expense of money and bad taste, the more enthusiastic became the brave Bavarian peasants. Even the fact that he became the protector of Wagner and helped him to realize the great project of the "Festspielhaus" in Bayreuth could not undermine his popularity.

After twenty-two years at least his ministers, prompted by his orders to have them all beheaded, finally noticed that he was simply insane and had to be interned. But when he was drowned (together with his doctor) in an attempt to escape by swimming from an island in the Starnbergersee, Ludwig II immediately became a romantic legend which still lives on in the simple hearts of his people. His brother Otto, the next to the throne, was long since insane to a degree which, with the best will in the world, could not be interpreted as the expression of a romantic royal genius. Otto was a poor moron, but he was the legitimate king and the old prince Luitpold had to govern as a regent in his name.

The next king, Ludwig III, the son of the prince regent, came to the throne shortly after my arrival in Munich. He too was an old man, resembling his father so much in every respect that few people noticed the change. Both of them were abnormally normal, prosaic and really interested only in their dairy farms. They were not the main stem of the Wittelsbachs but a branch, without any pretension to genius or insanity. But they did their best to keep alive Munich's reputation as a "Kunststadt"—a center of art and music.

In Bavaria, an atmosphere of liberalism and democratic feeling prevailed despite the rather reactionary clericalism of the ruling circles. The authority of the church had never been so seriously challenged in Bavaria as in North Germany. Feeling secure, the powers that be could indulgently endure the existence of a vocal but in fact powerless liberal opposition. In general the church observed an attitude of wise and realistic tolerance toward the arrogance of human intellect as well as toward the weakness of the flesh. So Bavaria remained free from the rigid puritanism with its moralistic hypocrisy which produces in

many Protestant, especially Anglo-Saxon countries such a large number of neurotics and a corresponding number of psychoanalysts.

Munich, though one of the four largest cities of Germany, resembled an oversized village. The organic connection between town and country was never entirely disrupted. The real burgher of Munich spoke the same dialect and lived more or less the same life as the peasant who, even in my day, could be seen driving his cow through the streets of the capital to the slaughter house. But on the other hand, Munich was one of the most international of cities, situated on the crossroad to Italy, attracting travelers and especially artists from all over the world. In the artistic circles to which I was introduced by my friend and his sister it was a rare exception to meet a real Bavarian —and for a Prussian, recognizable as such by his language, it was still preferable not to meet real Bavarians.

To Bavarian ears there was something irritating in the very intonation, the sharp and fast rhythm of northern language; and language is, of course, always the exact expression of the corresponding mentality. The biting and sarcastic wit, the quickness of intellectual perception and of riposte, so characteristic of Berlin, was quite different from the slow and somewhat cumbrous Bavarian humor; a humor which conceals itself purposely behind an air of pretended naïveté and simplicity. The arrogant "Saupreiss" (pig of a Prussian) with his superiority complex and his provoking efficiency was the standard topic of popular jokes in which the Bavarian inferiority complex found a certain compensation.

On the other hand, the influx of travelers from the north who enthusiastically enjoyed the beautiful Bavarian scenery and the beautiful naturalness of the Bavarians was a real blessing to the hardworking and penny-pinching mountaineers. During the summer and even in winter time they could rent their spare rooms to these vacationists at high prices. Many small Bavarian villages had become famous summer resorts and centers of winter sports. Oberammergau, with its Passion Play, had even become an international attraction—with the usual effect of corrupting the supposedly virtuous and genuine peasants to an astonishing degree.

Joseph Lang, playing the Christ, could scarcely protect himself

from the more or less pious devotion of American or English Marys and Magdalens. It was in pure self-defense that he had to double the rent for the rooms in his house as compared to the price charged by minor characters like his disciples and apostles. Judas alone probably had a hard time to rent his rooms at all, even at a bargain price. Paradoxically enough, it was not he who became a traitor, but the very good looking St. John who could not resist the temptation of a rich American widow and eloped with her to the New World (if not to a new Heaven).

Whereas the Bavarian peasants craftily commercialized their naturalness, the international bohème of Schwabing cultivated consciously and conscientiously in art and life an idea of refinement to the point of regarding the natural as a sign of primitiveness, a lower form of animal life.

In fact the artist was the only human species which counted at all. And, conveniently enough, you could be an artist without really producing a work of art; you could, as Oscar Wilde said, simply "make your life a work of art." You had only to be "artistic," which usually summed up to being artificial. The convention of being unconventional was strictly observed in habit, habitude and habitation. The old-fashioned artist's uniform—velvet jacket, lavalière and velvet beret—was abandoned, or survived only in some isolated remnants of the past. But everyone, especially the more or less attractive women gracing this strange company, tried hard to dress in a strictly personal way in order to visualize a mostly pretended originality.

The same was true of the arrangement of the studio where, whether painter or not, one had to live. The disdain of conventional furniture combined with the chronic lack of money resulted sometimes in an absolute absence of furniture. I still remember the evening when, just arrived in Munich, I first visited, with my friend Wilfried, the studio of his sister Cornelia. It was an enormous empty room—a studio, of course. In one corner was a shaky sort of frame made from unfinished boards supporting an old mattress and some pillows covered with colorful but cheap material. The only other furniture was two half-broken chairs standing somehow lost in the middle of the room. A large wicker basket—the popular ersatz for a trunk—a gas burner and a good-sized photographic apparatus on its tripod completed the

scene. But the walls were partly decorated with some exotic shawls, photographs, colorful sketches and drawings, brought together in a sporadic attempt to make this empty room look like a human habitation.

Nobody but a genuine Schwabinger would have suspected that, whatever the appearance, this room was a sort of "salon." Here a large circle of literary and artistic friends of both sexes or even somewhat indefinite sex used to meet long into the night, consuming large quantities of tea out of a conglomeration of cups and glasses and producing an even more astonishing quantity of esthetic, literary or quasi-philosophical talk. Painters described in colorful words the wonderful paintings they had conceived, but which would probably never materialize on canvas. Everybody intended to write a book, which never would get beyond the promising first chapter. Everybody was everybody's admiring public. It was a sort of mutual aid and insurance society where everybody issued and accepted large amounts of uncovered currency.

My friend and I, trained to analyze ourselves and others, were bad-mannered enough to call this circle "Cornelia's Zoo" and to puncture with occasional sarcastic remarks the most glittering soap bubbles of self-delusion. Cornelia, herself very intelligent, didn't mind. But working as a team we must have been unbearable, a sort of continuous pain in the neck for everybody not willing or able to live up to our rigorous standards. One of Cornelia's friends, a young student of German literature, felt especially irritated because our irreverent criticism did not even spare the great master Stefan George, to whose circle he belonged.

The cult of the poet Stefan George was a sort of esoteric artistic religion, the holy scriptures of which were the poems and essays of the "Master." George, influenced by French symbolism, translating Mallarmé, Baudelaire and Dante, indulged in an aristocratic mysticism. He celebrated and incarnated the myth of the great prophetic genius and his initiated elite, dwelling in their secluded sphere high above the despicable vulgar masses.

We were intellectual snobs ourselves, but the priestly solemnity of the "Georgiasts," as we used to call them, provoked our sense of humor—especially the pathetic adoration of Maximin, the master's

prematurely departed young friend. The worship of this boy, whose perfect physique was venerated as the "embodiment of the deity" or the "deification of the body" and so on, was to our hopelessly normal temperament a source of ironical delight. We had no moral prejudices against what we regarded as an erotic variety, but we felt annoyed and amused by the pretentious ostentation of this cult with its "holier than you" attitude in reverse, its affected disaffection against normalcy, and its insistence on confusing a slight psycho-physical anomaly with spiritual distinction.

We moved more freely in the less exclusive but more colorful circles which used to meet in the Pension Fuehrmann, the Café Stefany or the Cabaret Simplicissimus—which still featured the red bulldog of the famous weekly, though it was no longer frequented by its artists. The "Simpl" people had become too successful, too famous and too married for this bohemian atmosphere. But the hostess, Kati Kobus, was unchanged, resisting the devastations of time and enjoying her traditional role as protectress of art and young artists. The walls were covered with sketches and paintings gratefully dedicated by generations of promising artists, some of whom had indeed found their way to fame and money. So, it was perhaps not a bad speculation for Kati Kobus to accept these gifts in return for unpaid bills which in some cases quietly accumulated from month to month. Around the long table reserved for this sort of habitual customers you could meet the most extraordinary and most international company: Americans, Russians, Italians, Austrians, Hungarians, Rumanians—people from every part of the world except Bavaria—mingled freely under the pretext of being artists.

An almost unlimited confidence in their own and other people's artistic and material potentialities gave to this strangely unbalanced crowd a dreamlike carelessness and lightheartedness even in the midst of the most precarious circumstances. I liked to share this atmosphere of unreality, at least as an occasional guest—or if possible, as host. My relatively luxurious room, by careful rearrangement of the furniture and by addition of modern woodcuts and exotic prints, had assumed a more personal character. It looked almost like a studio.

I had persuaded my landlady, an eccentric Russian widow with a

pretty daughter of eighteen, to cook and to serve my main meals at home. The price she charged, corresponding to my budget, was hardly higher than that of the large popular beer houses, which I detested because of their bad cooking, their bad air and the noisy vulgarity of the customers. Since my evening meals were supplemented by large food packets with ham, sausages and so on sent from home, I could offer my hospitality to an inner circle of friends even toward the end of the month when, with all cash resources exhausted, we were glad to fall back on my provisions. In a necessarily smaller way than Kati Kobus, I did my best to become a patron of fine arts, discriminating connoisseur, a man of culture who perhaps one day would surprise the world by his literary achievements.

I had made up my mind that my real vocation was to become a sort of Maecenas rather than an artist. The only trouble was that this profession presupposed the spending of large sums of money without providing any chance to earn it. Of course I knew some cases where men of high culture and sophistication made their own living by helping and teaching some rich but unimaginative persons how to spend their money; but I knew I lacked the talent for such a parasitic existence. The tragic fact was that, in some way or other, I would have to find a position adequate to my intellectual capacities and my general education, when, after some years more of manifold but hardly specialized studies, my share of the family fortune set aside for this purpose would have been exhausted.

In order to become a publisher or an editor without having the money to found your own publishing house or your own review, you had first to make a name for yourself in the world of letters. That could be done either by the slow cumulative process of writing essays and articles which, if you had a chance, would be published in good papers; or by one new and original idea which, with one stroke, would establish your literary reputation. Out of a funny mixture of intellectual arrogance, despair and a certain journalistic instinct I conceived a plan: I would capitalize on my dissatisfaction, my disappointment in the university system, connected by name only with the idea of universalism and preparing for certain examinations but not for a higher form of life in the sense of real humanism.

These thoughts in themselves were, of course, not entirely new, nor entirely my own. But nobody had ever documented the devastating consequences of these developments by questioning those most concerned, the students of the so-called spiritual sciences, the humanities. In Munich alone more than three thousand students professed to belong to this intellectual elite. I would address to every one of them—and, of course, to all the members of the faculty—a personal letter, a sort of manifesto, carefully explaining, in the most erudite philosophical terms, my deep concern and grievances. I would ask every one to express his own agreement or dissent in a personal answer. I still remember the introduction to this immortal document: "These sentences shall speak of spirituality, not as a matter of class distinction or standing, but as the immanent potentiality of every single individual"—and so it went on in a style so highly abstract, overworked and complicated that, in comparison, Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* seemed a sort of escape literature.

The point was that I not only really enjoyed this chance to indulge in high talk, but I did it with my tongue in my cheek and with the mental reservation that very few of my three thousand victims would be able to comment intelligently on this cryptogram of philosophical polemicism. The less satisfactory the response would be—the better. Because, of course, my diabolic idea was to get statistical proof of the deplorable intellectual level of our universities and their students of "spiritual science." Every great newspaper or serious review would be interested in such an experiment. And if this attack should really end my university career, it was sure to give me an excellent start in the career of higher journalism for which I felt myself equipped.

I am still amazed and almost ashamed to think that my little mother, with her unlimited confidence in me, agreed, without hesitation, to foot the bill for this astonishing enterprise; for the printing and mailing of three thousand copies of a long letter expressing and justifying my lack of interest in what the University had to offer me. Despite long and careful preparations, the final act of addressing and mailing my message through a mailing office took more time than I had expected, and we had to hurry to get it out before the official closing of the semester. We had thought it would be good timing to send it out so that everybody could devote a part of the summer vaca-

tion to meditating over my profound ideas. But it proved to be bad timing indeed, because it was the summer of 1914.

Happily absorbed by our private campaign, we hardly had taken notice of the fact that, somewhere in the Balkans, an Austrian Archduke had been murdered by Serbian patriots. When the first echoes of my shot in the blue began to arrive, the resonance of the shots of Sarajevo had become so loud and ominous in every part of Europe that, even in Schwabing, it could not be ignored. My clever little plan for a statistical proof of human stupidity was suddenly out of date.

For my friend and me it was a matter of self-esteem not to succumb to the general war psychosis; we had always proudly declared that we had no interest in politics—and now politics had caught up with us. Politics was no longer, as we had thought of it, the despicable business of stupid and ambitious little men playing sordid little tricks on each other and delivering public speeches in an execrable style. Now suddenly, as Napoleon had said to Goethe, "politics was destiny." It showed the terrible features of a Medusa which turned into stone whoever dared to look in her face. And in a feeling of fatalism as hard as a stone, we decided to accept destiny. We always had been against war, of course, almost as much as against sacrificing the princess to the dragon; wars and dragons were mythological monsters incongruous in our age of reason, of defective reason, true enough, but of reason all the same. When ventilating this purely abstract topic. "war," in a conversation with Lou some months before, I had proudly declared that in case of war every decent and intelligent man would have to go to Switzerland and wait until the quarrel between some irresponsible kings or kaisers was over. But now it seemed not as simple as all that. Europe had become a madhouse. Perhaps this whole catastrophe was caused by a kind of automatic self-inflammation of the human stupidity at which we had smiled and sneered without knowing it was a dangerous explosive, able to wreck the world.

But what can you do in the midst of an earthquake, simply run away? Impossible—there are some people for whom you feel responsible. There has been for some months a strangely fragile and fascinating girl in your life whom you want to protect against madmen of whatever nationality. You are pretty sure that the Kaiser and his min-

isters are stupid and irresponsible, but what about the other Czars and Kings and Presidents? They are of the same stuff, to be sure. There are some heroic individuals trying to stem the tide. Jaurès, he is murdered by a chauvinistic hoodlum. Liebknecht protests against the war, he might as well protest against the deluge. He is immediately arrested. The only thing you can do is to keep your head; to use your cool reason; to observe, to measure like a seismologist with your instruments of precision the shocks of the earthquake that any moment may engulf yourself. Now is the moment to prove your intellectual superiority. You are witnessing one of the greatest world catastrophes; you have to be a good witness; you cannot miss this unique human experience; you must prove to yourself who you really are when faced with all the horrors of death and destruction.

The only reservation I wanted to make was that, if possible, I should not entirely lose my caste when putting on the uniform. It seemed unthinkable to suffer the humiliating brutality of military discipline as a simple private. I had to become an officer as soon as possible. And in the cavalry, of course. I wanted at least a box seat for attending the destruction of the world.

The best way was to enlist as a so-called "Fahnenjunker" in the regular army, where after some weeks of basic training you could be sure of promotion. My figure predestined me to the so-called light cavalry. But it turned out that the regiment of the Chevaulegers (Bavarian dragoons) in Regensburg where I presented myself already had a long waiting list. I left my name without much hope of being accepted before I was drafted, but at least I did not want to spoil my chance by volunteering in a simple infantry regiment. When after some months of uneasy suspense I received the order to report on November 29, in the "Erste Train Ersatzabteilung" in Munich, I felt seriously insulted. The Transportation Division was definitely not fashionable and even not a fighting unit.

It seemed a deliberate affront to my pride; and so it was with somber misgivings that I entered the dark and dirty barracks, called Max II Kaserne.

## CHAPTER VII

# From Barracks to Hospital, and Back Again

OSCAR WILDE when entering Reading Gaol can hardly have felt more despair and revulsion than I upon initiation into the dismal sphere of the barracks. I felt deprived of the most valuable good, which I had cherished above all: my personality, my individuality, my liberty. Disguised in a dirty and ill-fitting uniform, I was herded together with a crowd of men who in their very looks, their smell, their language offended all my senses. And worse, some of these people, recognizable by a button or a gold braid on their collar, had even the right to treat you like a slave, to give you orders and to shout at you as much as they wanted in a language which you had never heard before and which you simply did not understand.

The Bavarian dialect at its best is indeed a language of its own, picturesque, with an undisguised preference for the crude and the vulgar. For example, a hardly translatable expression or rather invitation referring to the fundamental part of the body is used not only as an insult but also as an expression of friendliness, of pleasant as well as unpleasant surprise. It can mean "hallo" or "gosh" or "O boy" or "by golly"; it can mean almost anything, according to situation and intonation. It needs some study and experience to know that even a strongly deprecatory word like "graffel" (junk) with which our sergeant referred to my elegant travel bag is not intended to offend you, but is only part of a highly informal mode of expression. The sergeant who was the master of our group was indeed not vicious or brutal at all. In civil life he had a nice little country inn near Munich. Looking over the list of our names and dates, he was really startled to discover a "foreigner" among his men. "Where is the Berlinian?" he asked, as if expecting a sort of anomaly, like a calf with two heads, or at least a strange human species like the Aztec or the Eskimo sometimes exhibited at country fairs. He was evidently disappointed to see that, look-

ing a bit frail and unhappy, I didn't live up in any way to his colorful conception of a Prussian or even a Berlinian.

There were of course among our group of fifty some four or five individuals of better education who, though native Bavarians, could understand and almost speak my high German. They belonged like me to the so-called "one-year volunteers" who in peacetime, thanks to a certain degree of higher education corresponding roughly to the graduation from high school, had the privilege of serving in the army only one instead of two or three years. They had the additional chance to become officers of the reserve. From the start such class distinction made these "volunteers" very unpopular among their comrades. But they were especially disliked by the non-commissioned officers, who, even after thirty years of service, could never hope to ascend to the godlike rank of an officer—which in theory at least was attainable by every young boy of the higher classes. In practice a sergeant, and especially a staff sergeant, could do a lot to interrupt the career of a volunteer by all sorts of military chicanery, which was to be mitigated only by substantial gifts designed to appease the resentment of these temporarily powerful lesser gods. This class character of the army was not much changed even by the war.

When, the first evening of our military life, our group gathered in its quarters, we five volunteers were sitting at the long sticky table in the circle of a single electric light. Around us in the darker parts of the room, shy and uncomfortable as ourselves, the common people sat on their cots. It was like a small group of white explorers stranded among some natives with strange customs and hardly comprehensible reactions. One of us, a student of a Catholic seminary, tried to bridge the gap; addressing an elder agricultural worker who looked especially lost, he asked in dialect, with the friendly superiority of the future priest: "Hi, Hiasl, have a beer?" It sounded as if he were speaking to a dog, and the answer was hardly more articulate than bow-wow. But "Hiasl," with astonishing dexterity, caught the little coin thrown through the air, and immediately got up to buy in the canteen one of those big steins of beer which continuously used to circulate among the natives like the calumet among an Indian tribe.

I soon learned that "Hi, Hiasl, have a beer" was a sort of magic

formula with which at every occasion you could buy sympathy, respect or a helping hand. "Hiasl" was a sort of collective name of the Bavarian natives, used regardless of the individual name in the same sense as every dachshund was called "Waldl."

I was deeply disgusted with the general and natural acceptance of these class relations by both sides; because after all, without knowing or understanding the people in the least, I was theoretically all for the people and against class distinctions based merely on money. From a purely spiritual point of view I despised the stupidity of the so-called "higher classes" almost more than the innocent ignorance of the "lower classes," including workers, peasants, and more generally all people not graduated at least from a Humanistischen Gymnasium.

What made my first contact with the people especially difficult was the fact that one of their strange habits seemed to be that of stealing as much of your personal belongings as possible. You couldn't turn your back when making the unsuccessful attempt to wash yourself on the dirty washstands without discovering that your soap or perhaps your toothbrush had disappeared. You even had to keep a watchful eye on every single piece of your equipment, otherwise you would discover just in the critical minute before the roll call that your cap, or your belt, or your riding boots had vanished out of the picture. This continuous nervous strain, combined with the shock of being pushed around the whole day and shouted at without the possibility of talking back, was enough to create a state of utter physical exhaustion. I was glad when finally we were ordered to bed, though the very view of the cots with their dirty blue-and-white-checked sheets gave me a feeling of nausea. I carefully spread a sort of sleeping bag made of white sheets over the lumpy straw mattress, being careful not to touch the blankets.

In the bed beside me lay a cattleman who, to judge from his smell, had never taken a bath in the thirty years of his life and whose frequent gas attacks made the already unbreathable air of the room still more foul. I wondered if I really would survive the next six weeks which I had to pass here before perhaps getting permission to pass the nights in my own room. Before falling asleep I listened a while in bewilderment to the primitive obscenities which, only half understood

by me, were exchanged under enormous bursts of laughter as a sort of good night. When in the middle of the night, as it seemed to me, I was abruptly startled from my slumber by a glaring light and the shouting of a coarse voice "Get up," I definitely felt like a damned soul awakening in hell.

It was five o'clock. We had fifteen minutes to make a hurried toilet, to gulp out of an unspeakable sort of brass kettle, called mess kit, an even more unspeakable brown liquid distributed in the corridor before the kitchen as coffee, and off we went over the dark and windy drilling ground to the stables. Everyone had to clean out two or three horse stalls, to make a new bed and to curry the horses, a very familiar job for most of the others but for me a humiliating torture.

Some years before, when taking my military riding lessons in the barracks of the "Garde Feld Artillerie" in Berlin, I had seen military stables, but the stall had been clean, the horses were wonderfully groomed, and while waiting for my horse to be saddled I had strolled in my impeccable riding clothes through the carefully swept central passage, chatting in a friendly manner with the master sergeant, who treated me with the respectful consideration of a waiter looking for his tip. It is amazing how different a horse looks if seen from above, from the saddle, or from below, when you are standing between his legs, yourself up to the ankles in manure, half asphyxiated by the stench, and trying to remove the crust of dried dung from his belly. The change of perspective seemed to me very symbolic of the whole change in my life. But I tried to do my best, since I did not want to make a fool of myself. With stoical resolution I decided to adapt myself as quickly as possible to this inevitable inferno.

While executing all day long senseless and vexing orders shouted in a tone and dialect I had never heard before, it took all my self-control not to lose my temper, not to flare up in one of my famous excesses of blind rage. What angered me most was the alternation of mad hurry and stupid waste of time, so characteristic of military training. The slogan: Three quarters of his life the soldier stands around in vain ("Dreiviertel seines Lebens steht der Soldat vergebens"), was certainly true of the Bavarian army of 1914.

A bad cold with which I had entered my military life grew worse and worse while, standing for hours without coats in the cold December weather, we were drilled in the art of giving military salute. I had mastered it after the first fifteen minutes, and succeeded soon in learning the names of the officers. But most of my comrades, though far superior to me in cleaning the stables, met here almost invincible problems. Trembling from cold and desperate boredom, I had to undergo for hours without end these lessons based upon the principle that "repetition is the most important means of education." Coughing and sneezing, I went mechanically through the routine of the day in a foggy and feverish atmosphere of semi-consciousness. I did not even try the awful mixture of meat, vegetables and potatoes dumped by dirty cooks into the dirty mess kits of the men forming a long line before the kitchen door.

As a volunteer I had the privilege of eating in the canteen of the non-commissioned officers, at my own cost of course, a meal not too well cooked but at least served on plates and dishes by a rather good-looking girl. The distribution of my meal tickets among my comrades made me almost popular. By the way, I was hardly able to eat much, but at least in the evening I could sit here in relative privacy at a table covered with an approximately clean tablecloth and while drinking some tea with rum, scribble in my little notebook the devastating and hateful impressions of the day.

When a few mornings later I felt so dizzy that I could hardly stand, I reported ill. The doctor, slightly impressed, because I had lost my voice, did not limit himself to one of the two usual prescriptions: castor oil or aspirin given without any examination. He had my temperature taken, and decided I had to go to bed in the infirmary. A husky private, answering the magic formula "Have a beer," carried my luggage up to the sickroom, and I succeeded in spreading my linen sleeping bag over the sheets which here in the infirmary were even more soiled and sticky than in our quarters. I felt at the end of my physical and psychic energy. The smell in the little room was almost unbearable. Next to my bed sat an elderly yokel who had succumbed under the mental strain of distinguishing between right and left. He only shook his head with an expression of utter bewilderment and

repeated monotonously every minute, "Nu machst 'n Punkt" ("Now stop it—now stop it"). One of the other patients was deeply absorbed in the occupation of picking his teeth with the large seven-inch knife which serves Bavarian peasants as a sort of universal instrument. Three others lying in bed played a card game, accompanied by endlessly repeated jesting words.

I decided that, in order to keep from having a complete breakdown, I would have to abstract myself from these surroundings, which were likely to drive me mad in half an hour. My fever was high, and I felt terribly feeble, but I succeeded in fetching from my coat the little notebook and the pocket edition of Schopenhauer's *Parerga and Paralipomena* which I always carried around with me like a Bible. I was resolved to prove that, no matter under what conditions, a spiritual man can preserve his superiority. With a desperate effort of will power I began to concentrate on my reading and writing until indeed I was no longer aware of noises or smells, entirely isolated in an abstract world of ideas like a medium in a trance. I hardly dared to interrupt this protecting enchantment in order to ask the man with the knife to bring me from the canteen some tea, eggs, or fruit. He was glad to take over this profitable business of replacing a non-existent attendant, and did his best to understand my whispered dispositions. To make sure, he repeated them, translated into his dialect, shouting as loudly as possible, as if to make up for my failing voice.

I knew enough about Freud to understand that my illness was to a large extent due to psychological reasons, to the desperate revolt of my whole being against my surrounding world. But I knew too that I was dangerously ill. This was more than a cold, to be sure, and it needed other treatment than so many aspirins per day. I needed especially another milieu if I were to be cured. I was not sure how long my psychic energy would stand the frantic effort of self-isolation through writing and reading without interruption, despite steadily growing fever. Army doctors don't like to have people die in the infirmary. According to regulations, that has to be done in the military hospital. And so one morning the sanitary sergeant gave me the order to go over to the garrison hospital at eight A.M.

The problem of how I would manage to get on my feet and to

transport my luggage was entirely left to me, but I solved it. The man with the knife helped me to get into my uniform, and he found another man who was willing to carry my luggage. Slightly swaying, I left the infirmary with a last look at my companions, all of them still absorbed in the same occupation as three days before. I stopped first in the barber shop of the barracks in order to have a shave. Staring into the mirror, I hardly recognized myself; I looked exactly like the death mask of Frederick the Great, and the unusually considerate behavior of the barber seemed to prove that he too had the feeling of giving me my last shave.

I knew that the garrison hospital, not far away from the barracks, was if possible worse than the infirmary. In the enormous rooms with a hundred or two hundred beds I could not succeed in preserving my artificial isolation, and besides that, I had the best reason to question the medical skill of army doctors. The only hope for survival was treatment in a private hospital. Fortunately, the young doctor who had to make the first tests was one of the medical students who, their studies not yet finished, had been commissioned in the army as auxiliary doctors. Sitting on a bench, I waited until all the others were disposed of, and when it was my turn I tried to appeal to his better self, not to the commissioned officer but to the fellow student. In whispers I explained to him that I simply had to have private treatment and that I hardly would survive my reception in the garrison hospital. He showed some understanding, but the only thing he could do for me was to transfer me to another military hospital under the direction of a civil doctor.

I thought he would send me by ambulance, but he simply gave me the necessary papers and told me that I could go now, which, in my condition, was more easily said than done. At least he had no objection to my calling a taxi, which after a drive of twenty minutes deposited me in the new hospital, a hospital mainly for wounded men, as it turned out. But here at any rate the whole atmosphere seemed more humane. The nurses were Catholic sisters. I got a hot bath, a clean bed, had some good food, in short was treated as a human being rather than as a simple private. The doctor came in the afternoon, but, hurrying through the rooms, he had no time for a real examination. So I spent the evening in composing a long and impressive letter

to him, explaining my status and the necessity of private treatment. Surprisingly enough the next morning he showed some friendly understanding; he let me have a small room shared only by one other patient, and after a more thorough examination he declared he would try to have me transferred to the great and modern municipal hospital, where at my own cost I certainly could take a private room and would be treated by one of the best specialists.

"In fact," he said with a somewhat embarrassed smile, "I couldn't very well take care of such a special case as yours, here." I understood when the next day I was given my papers, where in large letters the diagnosis was given: "TB suspicion." I was of course familiar enough with medical terms to understand. Tuberculosis, perhaps one of these violent cases which, especially in youth, leave no hope at all. With a sort of somber satisfaction I saw myself already dying as the victim of military stupidity. The fact that this time an ambulance was ordered for me confirmed my impression that the doctor took me already as half dead. Waiting in the reception room of the municipal hospital, I heard the Catholic sister calling over the house telephone: "It has to be a single room. It is TB suspicion." So at least the absolute privacy for which I longed would be secured.

When half an hour later I lay in a good immaculate bed, all alone in a large and nicely furnished room, I felt really cheered by the idea that I would at least spend my last days in a cultivated atmosphere and die with all modern conveniences. At any rate I had succeeded in fighting my way out of the filthy nightmare of the infirmary—thanks only to an extreme effort of my tenacious will and my intelligence. Now, since this tension was no longer needed, I was overcome by a feeling of comfortable weakness. When the doctor in his white gown entered my room, politely introducing himself and treating me with a consideration usually reserved for "first class," I was almost touched to tears. In some well rounded though almost inaudible phrases I informed him that I knew the diagnosis, and asked him on his word of honor not to lie to me but to reveal the truth about the decisive bacteriological test which was to be taken. I assured him that I was not afraid to die but wanted, on the contrary, to live my last days fully conscious of my fate, in order to put my affairs in order and to write

some farewell letters. I knew exactly how a philosopher had to die, and I wanted to follow the best examples.

The doctor of course promised—probably with his tongue in his cheek—to tell me the truth, but he assured me that even a real tuberculosis was far from being incurable. My condition was not dangerous at all, and so on. I smiled when, despite these reassuring words, he reappeared an hour later with his chief, Professor Kerschensteiner, who for half an hour examined me with the greatest care. With smiling superiority I asked him not to fool me, but to tell me the truth. Kerschensteiner, dropping his professional joviality, said with the hearty tone of a fatherly friend: "Don't worry, my dear fellow. I shall tell you. The only thing I can say now is that you have a bad catarrh affecting the points of both lungs. But I don't believe it is tuberculosis; we shall see. The first thing is to bring your fever down, and you must try to eat something, you are rather feeble." With his drooping right shoulder and his neglected mustache he looked a bit like a village teacher, but seeing his eyes shining with the kindness and intelligence of a great scholar, you felt immediately an unlimited confidence in his medical skill and in his character.

For the first days he and the other doctor visited me every two or three hours, even after having brought the good news that the bacteriological test was negative. What they really feared was, as I learned later, that I might develop a pneumonia, the prognosis of which would have been ominous for one in my condition. But, carefully nursed with all sorts of inhalations and other medications, I surprised my doctors and myself by an almost unbelievably quick recovery. Released from a terrible psychological tension, from a desperate inner resistance and revulsion against an unacceptable condition of life, my natural vitality easily prevailed. After five days the fever had disappeared, my voice began to come back, and I felt strong enough to begin a short novel which with sardonic humor expressed my bitter resentment against the military institution which through pure stupidity had almost killed me.

It was the reaction not only against my own experiences but also against the whole distorted patriotism and noisy nationalism displayed

in every paper and magazine which came into my hands. Deeply disgusted with all this bunk, I was inclined to regard even the very real and poignant tragedy of human suffering on every battlefield with the ice-cold irony of a man who feels himself to be the only normal person among a bunch of drunkards and idiots. The hero of my story —an intellectual snob of course, portrayed with some self-humor— died by pure mistake a hero's death, unable to protest in his last clear moment against the grotesque comedy of being decorated by his general for a courageous and even decisive deed which had been performed by his horse rather than himself. The intolerable precious irony of style and story would probably make me blush today, but evidently a certain kind of stubborn and really inhuman intellectualism is not to be cured even by the experience of having verged upon the realm of shades. In contrast to Orpheus, I certainly did not look back when after three weeks, dismissed from the hospital and honorably discharged from the army, I finally emerged from the underworld of the barracks where I had exchanged my uniform for civilian clothes.

As far as I was concerned, the war was over. I had done my duty and almost sacrificed my life, or at least my health, on the altar of military stupidity. Now I could go back with good conscience to my own upper world of intellectual life where—again in contrast to the myth—my Eurydice was waiting for me.

She had grown up in an atmosphere which, socially and intellectually, suited perfectly my snobbishness. She was the spoiled darling of a rather fashionable boarding house run by her mother, a banker's widow, without money or any commercial talents. Entirely occupied with kitchen and household, she left the social obligations to her daughter who, of delicate health but endowed with charm and a vivid undisciplined intelligence, lived the strangely unreal life of a society girl without the background of real economic security. She shared the multiple interests of all the guests. A young Siamese prince introduced her to the art and philosophy of the Far East. Russian intellectuals, escaped from the revolution in 1905, discussed with her Dostoevsky and Tolstoy. A young philosopher talked psychoanalysis with her. Painters, writers, actors found in her a responsive audience when they explained their artistic problems.

Her mind, never systematically trained, was full of the strangest,

often contradictory, ideas picked up at random and passed on in her conversation with a vivacity which seemed the expression of a highly original and colorful personality. It was not only my snobbishness which made her attractive to me, but also my strange, perhaps inherited, educational instinct. I scented the marvelous possibilities of a latent artist who needed only freedom and fine understanding to develop her genius in some form or other. For the first time in my life I became more interested in another person than in myself. Emerging from my narcissistic isolation, I saw in her the perfect companion of my life who, sharing my spiritual adventures, would develop her own personality in a sphere of superior freedom and mutual stimulation.

Her mother had sold her boarding house at the beginning of the war, but was willing to let me have a furnished room in her new small apartment. Free from military obligations, I needed an appropriate atmosphere in which I could write, in the form of a thesis, a literary masterpiece. It would be the first critical study of Thomas and Heinrich Mann, the two great modern writers whom I most appreciated. I had accumulated a lot of interesting material, analyzing, true to the best philological traditions, the characteristics of their different periods and different styles. I had studied the literary influences apparent in their works, their psychology, their philosophy and so on. I was sure that, free from the usual scientific pedantry, written in the highly differentiated style of a modern literary essayist, my unusual dissertation would be published in book form. And so I would establish at once my literary reputation. But again the jealous deity of war frustrated my literary ambitions.

Two weeks after being discharged for reasons of health, I had to take a new examination, and the draft board found me sufficiently recovered for another try. After making sure that my father had died not of tuberculosis but of a stroke, the doctor indifferently assigned me to the "Ersatzreserve Infanterie." A sudden impulse, entirely alien to my rather passive nature, made me revolt against the idea of becoming a foot-soldier. With my hands pressed against my non-existent trousers and clicking my bare heels, I turned to the high-ranking army doctor who attended the routine business of examinations only as a

bored observer. Standing at attention and almost parodying the snappy military tone of the perfect soldier, I expressed the wish to be assigned to the cavalry on the ground of my previous military training in horseback riding. The "General Oberarzt," a perfect imitation of old Emperor Franz Joseph, nodded approvingly and asked to what troop I had been originally assigned. "Very well then, Ersatzreserve Train." And so, exactly three months after having left, forever as I thought, the barracks of the Max II Kaserne, I was again at the old place and even in the same squadron, with the same corporal.

It was as if a ghost had returned to the scene of his suffering; wherever I went I was greeted with a half-incredulous smile and with what sounded to me like an expression of disappointment: "What, you are back? We heard you had died in the hospital." I resented the old belief that a man, erroneously pronounced dead, has an especially good chance for a long and healthy life. I didn't want to be healthy. In vain I hoped that a return of my illness would deliver me from the military evil. But I seemed somehow to have acquired a sort of immunity even against the psychological hardships I had to face. Reluctantly I began to adjust myself to the inevitable. With stoical resignation I suffered the endless boredom of military training interrupted only by the lighter hours when, during the riding lessons, I could impress my superiors and my comrades with my equestrian skill. The only consolation was the free hours of the evening when, having drowned the smell of the stables in streams of eau de cologne, I could put on my custom-made uniform and enjoy the delightful company of the young Eve who symbolized for me the lost paradise of esthetic and intellectual culture.

I almost felt relieved when, after only eight weeks, my group was assigned to the staff of a mobile unit, the newly organized Alpenkorps. In haste I completed my equipment with all sorts of gadgets invented to give a certain comfort to a fashionable Alpinist. My personal outfit included not only my favorite French soap and English powder but also a smooth lined suède vest, a pair of custom-made riding boots of elk leather, a small down pillow in water-resistant case, and of course silk shirts and underwear, supposed to be the best protection against vermin. Like the young volunteer in the artillery who, in order to extract a large check from his father, pretended he

had to buy his own cannon, I bought for my personal protection a lovely small Browning, easily carried in a vest pocket and much nicer than our clumsy service automatic.

Now finally the dull garrison service would be ended and, well equipped, I would face the strange and sensational adventure of war, a cool observer of myself and my surrounding world. I would have a good vantage point, since I was to be the driver of an enormous landau reserved for the paymasters who, by the way, never entrusted their lives to my undeveloped driving skill. The landau, however—a bit anachronistic even in 1915—made me think of the landau in which Goethe traveled to the battlefield of Valmy, in order to speak the historical words: "Here and from now on begins a new epoch of world history, and you can say you have been present."

## CHAPTER VIII

# My War Without Shooting

AGAIN, AS WITH the story of my escape from Germany, my war experience is noteworthy only for the one fact that it was no war experience at all. I succeeded in being for almost three years in the field without firing a single shot, without seeing a single corpse or even a seriously wounded man. That does not mean that I always was in what we called the "Etappe," far from the shooting. I was in the danger zone all right, but mostly about ten miles behind the trenches. However, there was ample opportunity for being killed. For months, while staying in a little village in northern France, between Cambrai and Saint Quentin, we were bombed every night, but as long as I was there nothing serious happened, and when something happened I was not there. It was as if the war which I tried to ignore as far as possible responded by ignoring me. For the greatest part of the time, though in uniform, I was able to continue a sort of private life in my own separate world. But the conflict between these two worlds was indeed warfare enough for me, endangering my life sometimes more than bombs or bullets.

The sergeant major of the staff of the Alpenkorps quartered in the old Tyrolese town of Brixen was a more formidable enemy for me than all the Allied armies combined. Probably a born paranoiac, he had been in civil life a prison warden, and he did his best to transform the dirty Austrian artillery barracks where we were quartered into a penitentiary. Roaring and cursing, he invaded the dormitories at every hour of the night, in order to make sure that nobody had slipped away, and he made the days into a nightmare by a sort of garrison service exhaustingly useless and dull. He hated even the Bavarian "volunteers," and I, of course, the Prussian, the student, the townsman, was for him what the red rag is for the bull.

I would have been absolutely lost had not another wagon driver, much older than I and with the military experience of three years' regular service in the army, agreed for a small compensation to function as my orderly and my guardian angel. He was a cooper and vintner of Würzburg who in his youth had seen a great deal of the world, browsing around for many years as a traveling artisan, used to and experienced in all methods of self-help. Handling wine, not, like most Bavarians, merely beer, he was cultured and intelligent enough to appreciate the better education and the more civilized forms of life, which in our situation were in fact not advantages but a formidable handicap and a source of increased suffering. I suppose he really enjoyed our familiarity even beyond the material profit, and I certainly felt grateful to him.

This prison life was enlightened only by the rare hours when I could steal away to a lonesome place and take refuge in a book of poetry or philosophy. Schopenhauer's manly pessimism seemed to me especially fortifying, but I don't know how long I could have stood these hardships, had not just at the right moment an attack of furunculosis (boils) saved me. The laziness of the staff doctor played an important role in this little miracle of salvation. Just the day when I reported sick, he did not feel like coming to the infirmary in our barracks and I, being the only patient, had to go to the lovely old hotel "Elephant" where he had his quarters, and to wait in the corridor until he deigned to receive me. He was no older than I and belonged, like myself, to the academic caste, but thanks to his medical studies he had entered the officers' caste, whereas I as a buck private had lost mine. Such proselytes of the reserve were much more conscious of their new dignity than a regular army officer. He hardly looked at the twenty-two boils which adorned my legs. "Two days' light service only," he declared tartly. I had to explain to him that I couldn't ride horseback and that my bandages had to be changed. "No riding," he noted on my sick label. As for the bandages, it seemed to him not worth while to come to the infirmary. "You go to the garrison hospital and have yourself bandaged."

The doctor in the hospital happened to be a real doctor and a real man. He looked startled when I explained to him that I had come only for a new dressing. "Does your doctor think you can be cured

like that?" said he. "You must stay here and have a real treatment." Not belonging to my formation, he really had no right to make such a decision. There was a grave conflict of authorities. But he was higher in rank than our doctor, and so after some cursing and roaring our sergeant major—though hating the idea of letting me out of his clutches—gave me the necessary papers for reception in the hospital. The doctor there decided after two days that I should be evacuated to a German hospital in Biberach, a lovely little Swabian town where, treated by a good civilian doctor for some weeks, I could recover physically and mentally before going back to my formation in Munich. The sergeant major there was still the same, and he saw to it that six weeks later I was again assigned to a mobile unit. He "meant evil against me, but God meant it for good."

This new period of my military life was one of the most agreeable. In fact, the whole day belonged to me, and I—as always in my life—did not really belong to my surrounding world. With my twelve men and twenty-two horses I was detached from my Train regiment to a pioneer company constructing the light military railways for the Siegfried position. But railways were not my business. I was a Train sergeant and responsible only for my men, my horses and wagons assigned to the different construction sites according to the orders which I received from the commanding pioneer captain every evening in his office at 7 P.M. When at 5 in the morning I had superintended the departure of my seven wagons I was free to do as I pleased, if I had not to accompany one of the wagons myself for a more important mission. Besides that, I had of course the pleasant duty of moving the riding horses, my own and those of the six officers, who rarely had any use for horses and rather a timid respect for them.

Having not the slightest knowledge of riding, they were forced to rely on my good will to introduce them to this mysterious art. Like the cowboys I almost lost the habit of walking, since even for the shortest distance I had only to have another horse saddled by my orderly. But even after three or four hours of horseback riding there was ample time for reading and writing, or for a good long talk with the doctor of our company.

He was not a real army doctor but a civilian doctor without any

military training, disguised in a uniform and given the rank of lieutenant. He was an unusually intelligent man, the son of a famous neurologist, but (perhaps for this reason) he suffered from nervous tics, which made his appearance as unmilitary as possible. The peak of his officer's cap was usually turned toward one ear instead of being centered to his nose. But to make up for that, his sidearm, suspended on a belt, much too loose, hung like a pendulum between his legs. Lost in his thoughts he used to go around a bit like a sleep walker; sometimes he would salute—in his special version of military salute—although no one was around. But unfailingly he would pass by a general without even noticing that there was somebody to be saluted. He was one of those Jewish intellectuals who in earlier times would have passed their days in studying the Talmud, secluded from life and out of the world, protected only by their very defenselessness and kindheartedness.

My aunt, Lou Andreas-Salomé, used to send me Freud's latest publications and the psychoanalytic review *Imago,* which I used to swap with the doctor against all sorts of French and German literature. Our captain did not like this sort of familiarity between a sergeant and a doctor, who after all belonged with the officers. It seemed to him a violation of military discipline, and he was the more eager to preserve the distance between commissioned and non-commissioned officers, since in civil life he was the station master in a little town, a so-called "subaltern official" without a university education; whereas the doctor and I belonged to the academic clan. In fact, he was not entirely wrong in his suspicion that the doctor's attitude toward me tended to undermine the disciplinary foundations of the army.

I remember a health inspection with the whole company standing at attention for the appearance of the doctor who, seeing me with the other non-commissioned officers lined up before the ranks, immediately came up to me with outstretched hand like a man glad to meet a good friend among strangers. "How do you do, Mr. Schoenberner," said he; "have you seen that highly interesting article in the last *Imago* about the possibilities of psychoanalytic treatment even in cases of dementia praecox?" I tried in vain to make him understand that he had better postpone our conversation. He had simply forgotten why

he was there and that we were not alone. It was the sanitary sergeant who by his presence of mind saved the situation. After having listened for some minutes in embarrassed astonishment to our utterly incomprehensible exchange, he organized the carousel of the health inspection on his own responsibility; otherwise the company would have waited for the doctor God knows how long. There were a lot more highly interesting articles in *Imago* which had to be discussed.

In the midst of a long and complicated sentence the doctor suddenly remembered his duty and jumped with a vague gesture on the next pioneer who happened to pass by. But this husky peasant boy, while buttoning up his trousers, reported firmly and respectfully that he had already passed the check-up, whereupon the doctor with an excusing smile turned back to me and to psychoanalysis. I certainly felt relieved when finally the sanitary sergeant with a snappy salute informed the doctor that the inspection was over.

This strange and idyllic sort of private warfare was roughly changed when our captain and the doctor were assigned to another formation and our company was moved to Lorraine. The new commander, a certified engineer, was the son of a country innkeeper in the Algäu Alps. The Algäu has one of the most gorgeous landscapes of Bavaria, but its natives are proverbial for their primitive rudeness, which even according to the rural Bavarian standards appears as worse than boorish. With him it was really hate at first sight, the hate of the peasant for the townsman, of the Bavarian for the Prussian, of the Catholic for the Protestant, of the technical student for the university man. But most of all it was the hate of the primitive brute for the over-civilized intellectual whose coolly contemptuous disdain unconsciously showed through the camouflage of an impeccable military correctness. He belonged to the well known type of hysterical sadists who, intoxicated by military omnipotence, constantly indulge in wild excesses of rage as long as they can enjoy this pleasure with impunity.

I desperately tried to isolate myself in my spiritual world, reading and writing every free minute. I had no longer anybody to speak with, except the Lorraine peasant people, for whom I served as interpreter in their correspondence with their sons in the army. The contact with these simple people who, although living in considerable filth, had the

sophisticated politeness and the urbane manners inherited from French civilization, was for me the only release, since even my own horse by arbitrary order of the captain had been taken away from me to another detachment where nobody used it.

Under these conditions I developed a very positive persecution complex. I knew beforehand that every evening at seven when I had to report to the captain's office for the orders of the next day, I would be received with a torrent of abusive language. For at least twenty minutes he would shout at me, pretending that my horses were in bad shape, that last night he had found the guard in the stable sleeping and so on. Significantly enough he did nothing to enforce military discipline upon my twelve men who, mostly older Bavarian peasants without more than six weeks of military training, did their best to make things more difficult for me. One of them, a ruffian with a criminal record for violence, once threatened me with his knife. According to military law that was a crime to be punished with at least five years of hard labor. But I so utterly detested this system that I could never bring myself to the point of using it for my own benefit.

The daily scene in the captain's office was of course a sort of silent duel, silent especially on my side. He had no real pretext against me. Only when he could drive me to the point where I would lose my temper would he have a chance to make use of his disciplinary power. I was determined not to give him this chance.

Finally, however, I came to the end of my endurance. Even my daily study of Schopenhauer could not entirely restore my balance. I began to be obsessed by the fixed idea that I had to shoot this man. Between his office and my quarters was a large vegetable garden closed in by high walls. A small elevated path led from the door on my side to the other door on his side; and every time I had to cross this garden, I had the hallucination that here on this spot I would wait for him with my service automatic. I would encounter him as if in a duel and, being a good marksman, simply shoot him down. I knew that this idea was insane, and decided I had better make an application for removal before something irreparable happened, though probably he would simply refuse to pass on my application, in order to show his omnipotence.

For this possibility, too, I had my plans. I would report sick to the doctor, indicating that I was no longer able to perform my service since I was suffering from the compulsive idea of shooting the captain. I could then be interned for some time in an asylum, but at least I would be rid of my tormentor. And even should the doctor refuse this strange report, I always had the final possibility of firing a shot at the captain, missing him purposely, but creating at least a case which made it impossible for him to obstruct my removal. That meant court martial, but having previously reported sick, I would have discharged my responsibility. I could not be sentenced to hard labor but only be interned in an asylum. I knew what that "only" meant, but anything seemed better than enduring any longer this torture of nerves and perhaps finally committing a real murder.

One evening—it was on my twenty-fifth birthday—I presented my application to the captain exactly according to regulations. The only reason for my request that I could mention was the fact that, though I had been almost three years in the service, I did not have in this company any possibility of promotion. In an unusually mellow mood he accepted the paper, thinking it was an application for the furlough to which I was entitled. But after reading the first lines, he immediately burst into blind fury. The paper, thrown in my face, fluttered on the ground. After having shouted insults at the top of his voice, he turned contemptuously away from me. But I would rather have died than pick up this sheet and disappear as he expected me to do.

I knew the regulations, I knew he was obliged to accept my application and to pass it on if I insisted, and I had made up my mind to insist—at any price. Whenever he turned his back or paused a moment in his shouting in order to take breath, I said with the same perfect correctness, standing at impeccable attention: "I must respectfully request, sir, that you pass on my application." It was the fiercest struggle I have ever lived through in my life. He, foaming in hysterical rage but consciously trying to provoke me to an offense against military regulations, to a word or gesture giving him a pretext for using his disciplinary power. I, controlling my rebellious nerves with a desperate determination not to fall into his trap, not to be caught unprotected.

So we went on for nearly half an hour. The clerks in the office,

interested spectators of this unusual show, expected him at any moment to knock me down when, jumping to his feet, he stood breast to breast with me. I almost hoped he would do so, because then he was done; then, having the clerks for witness, I could address an official complaint to his superior and then *he* would go to court martial. I stared into his bloodshot eyes like an animal trainer, without moving a muscle, trying to make my face and my voice bare of any expression and repeating monotonously from time to time my official formula: "I must respectfully request, sir, that you pass on my application." Suddenly he again jumped to his feet like mad and, grabbing the paper from the floor where it had lain all this time, he threw it violently on his desk. "Well," he roared, "I shall pass on your application with a qualification you can imagine. Clear out of here. Go to hell, you damned fool."

I clicked my heels, made the correct turn and left the office, deadly exhausted but triumphant. I knew that the next six weeks before my new assignment came through—the worst possible assignment to be sure—would be pure hell. But whatever the captain could do, he was beaten in our game and he knew it. How well he knew it, I learned an hour later when one of the office clerks told me that the captain had sent off my application the same evening with the most glorious qualification, recommending me for an officer's training course in Munich.

I never have seen such an absolute turn-about. From that moment on the man was entirely changed, at least in his behavior toward me. He addressed me only in the most polite and almost respectful manner as "Mr. Schoenberner" instead of "Sergeant," asking for my opinion in the suavest tone before giving an order for my department, and always accepting my proposals. When my assignment to Munich arrived he took leave of me as if from a dear old friend, shaking my hand vigorously, almost moved to tears. This sudden reverse of attitude had for me something slightly disgusting. I simply despised him and suspected that, being basically a coward, he somehow had scented the danger of driving a man to his ultimate limit. But perhaps, like many primitive brutes, he really had been touched by the sudden revelation of an immaterial force, unknown and therefore somewhat mysterious if not malignant to him.

Perhaps, as I come to think of him now, he was the simple harmless superstitious savage and I the vicious witch doctor mercilessly exploiting my secret magic, a power superior in the spiritual, but hardly in the moral sense. It was a sort of black magic because it was without human charity or forgiveness, nourished only by stone-hard pride and icy contempt.

## CHAPTER IX

# Revolution, with Great Oratory and Little Gunfire

I WAS A strange officer candidate indeed. I had no military ambition at all. In fact I was a born anti-militarist. To become an officer meant to me exclusively to regain my lost caste of gentleman. Knowing all the time that I was merely playing a part, I played it as well as possible.

It seemed ironical that the first theoretical subject offered to me in three years was the Manual of Military Service. But I succeeded in mastering the difficult problems as to where the commanding officer had to stand in a special formation, and similar questions, with the impersonal interest devoted by many people to crossword puzzles. It was a sort of mechanical mental exercise, requiring good memory and logical thinking—and so essentially not too different from the sort of scientific puzzles proposed to me in Erich Schmidt's seminary.

Never had I so much the feeling of being far removed from the reality of war as during these first nine months of the year 1918. The only thing which really interested me was the public debate upon the possibility of negotiated peace, a debate which had become more and more acute during 1917. Of course I was for a negotiated peace, and tried to support this idea by writing articles which proved to be too outspoken for publication. I not only did not believe in a German victory, but, from the beginning, I had told my friends that after a military victory Germany would become uninhabitable for men like me and that in this case I would emigrate to Switzerland. The only hope of a new Europe seemed to me a peace without victors or victims, with all the different nationalisms and militarisms utterly discredited and with the war itself unmasked as a most stupid and costly anachronism. Then perhaps the triumph of reason could inaugurate the new era of the United States of Europe or even of the world.

I had heard the dispirited, bitter and defeatist remarks of the men coming from or going to the front. And I knew, of course, that on the home front people were starving. I saw that what was likely to come was not so much a revolution, but rather a simple breakdown if this criminal nonsense of war were not stopped in time. But on the other hand I was doubtful about the political agitation of left-wing socialists calling for strikes, in order to end the war by ending German resistance. I had no more confidence in victorious French chauvinists or English jingoes than in German nationalists and militarists.

When the gambler Ludendorff, after having staked everything, up to the last moment, on total victory, suddenly lost his nerve and asked for an armistice within twenty-four hours, the civil government not less than the German people was taken by surprise.

The revolution was, of course, not the famous "stab in the back" of a victorious army, as the nationalistic legend afterward dared to proclaim. On the contrary, the sudden breakdown of the military leadership released automatically the reaction of resentment, disappointment and despair which found its expression in a so-called revolution.

Exactly ten days before the outbreak of this revolution I had become an officer, after having gone through the usual routine of written, oral and practical examinations. I had been assigned to a column of supply wagons under the command of a cavalry captain who in civil life had been a democratic deputy of the Reichstag. Waiting for our marching orders, we had busy days completing our equipment. The last afternoon before our departure I had spent hours on the barrack grounds checking the contents of our wagons, since despite all precautions thefts of provisions had occurred. It was November 7. There had been rumors of a mutiny of sailors in Kiel. In Munich a mass meeting had been called where some radical politicians and intellectuals had led a demonstration for peace. But evidently nothing serious had happened. The only steps taken by the military authorities were to confine the troops to their quarters and to reinforce the guard at the entrance to the barracks. The opinion of the officers in the mess hall, including the old commanding general, a veteran of 1870, was that nothing could happen, since even the Ministry of War had not given any special orders.

My friend and I had decided to spend our last evening at a concert. Returning to my apartment rather late, I had no time to change to civilian clothes as I usually did. On my way downstairs, in full military apparel, I was stopped by an excited neighbor just coming back from the town: "You can't go out in uniform," she told me breathlessly. "The revolution has started, they are lynching the officers in the streets."

The idea seemed ludicrous, but she was so insistent that I finally gave in. Too lazy to change completely, I slipped a topcoat over my uniform and, changing my officer's cap for a felt hat, I started out, to reconnoiter. The streets were quiet; no trolleys and no taxis. Evidently something was wrong. Maybe there was some disturbance in the center of the town. But I felt too tired to make the long trip on foot. Walking a few blocks in the direction of the barracks and the military storehouses, I listened in vain for the noise of shooting or for the threatening uproar of large masses—that thunder of one collective voice as I had heard it once ten years before from thousands of strikers assembled in a large square in Berlin. The only indication of disorder was the appearance of some dubious individuals, some soldiers, some civilians, carrying on their shoulders heavy packages or boxes, taken from a military supply depot.

"Plunderers," I thought with deep disgust; "somehow the mob has gotten hold of army stores." If that really meant revolution, it certainly was not the right kind, in the heroic style of the great French Revolution inspired by the noble humanism of French philosophers. The more modern type of revolution, as the Bolshevist coup in Russia, though achieved by two intellectuals, Lenin and Trotzky, did not fit into my pattern of thought. I did not believe in the dictatorship of the proletariat. But even if following the Russian example, what happened here was nothing but a bad imitation. This Bavarian Revolution definitely disappointed me. The sovereign people stealing out of its own pockets because there was no policeman around—— Deeply disgusted, I went to bed. Probably there was no revolution at all, but just a little riot.

Anatole France said that a general usually learns about his victory or defeat from the morning papers. That certainly was true for me,

though I was only one of the most recent lieutenants of the Royal Bavarian army. I read in the morning papers that the king and the army had been defeated by an almost unarmed revolution, without even having lifted a finger in their defense. Not a shot had been fired. Not a man had been killed. At the first push the whole old system had collapsed like the walls of Jericho. It had not even needed trumpets, but only the voice of a new Joshua called Kurt Eisner. I hardly knew his name. He belonged to the small circle of socialist and pacifist intellectuals who during the war at certain intervals were imprisoned and released without anyone paying much attention to them. Now, over night, Eisner was the new Prime Minister of the republican government in Bavaria. It seemed that after the mass meeting the day before, the masses, composed of workers and revolting soldiers, had simply overrun the town, unopposed. They had crowded around all the different barracks, easily overpowering the small detachments on guard, joining with the soldiers inside, taking over the arms and ammunition without any difficulty and simply driving out the officers who had not fled before.

The situation is best characterized by the fact that, as later stated in court, the Bavarian Minister of War, when informed of the outbreak of the revolution, spoke the historic words: "My God, revolution! And I am still in uniform!" The ruling powers, conscious of their own culpability and incapacity, had simply announced their bankruptcy. They had run away like defaulting bankers trying to hide from the wrath of their defrauded customers. The political vacuum they left was filled up by a revolutionary government which with the help of Socialist Party officials tried to organize the chaos.

I decided that, monarchy or republic, I was still responsible for the public property of my column on the barrack ground. And, by the way, it would be interesting to know what had become of my personal property, the luggage placed in one of the wagons. In the same mixed apparel of the night before, I left my house in the early morning. The first thing I saw was an elderly poet who, calling himself an anarchist, had sat every evening for years in the Café Stefany, absorbed in a chess game. Not even during the war had he been considered dangerous enough to be arrested. Now he walked through the streets, a

large red band around the sleeve of his shabby overcoat, accompanied by his well-known sweetheart, a baby-faced girl, twenty years younger and a foot taller than he. Escorting them were two soldiers, also with red arm bands and with their guns hanging from their shoulders in a manner more picturesque than military. I found this first aspect of the revolution so comical that it seemed to me rather a sort of a carnivalesque joke than a historical event of the first order.

The streets were full of people, most of them simple gazers, curious to see how a revolution looks. Some trucks loaded with armed Red soldiers provided the only unusual sight. The trolleys were running, and when I had to change at the Stiegelmeier Platz, I suddenly ran into the young lieutenant who yesterday had been assigned to the barracks guard. He was in mufti, and asked with astonishment where I was going. "To the barracks," I said. "After all, I must look after my column." He shrugged his shoulders: "No use. The barracks are in the hands of the revolutionaries. You will only be arrested—and your column is plundered anyway. The faithful old sergeant in charge was the first to get hold of a barrel of brandy; he fell at his post of duty, dead drunk." "And what about the captain and you?" I asked. "Oh," he said, a bit embarrassed, "I fought my way out of the crowd and got away. What could we do? The captain took a beating, it seems, but he too is safely at home now. We can't do anything but follow his example."

And so I did. For three days I wandered around not quite knowing what I was: a soldier, or a civilian; an officer of the new republican army, or a prospective victim of revolutionary revenge directed against the whole caste to which after all I belonged. At any rate I didn't feel free to return to civil life as long as my professional service as an officer might be needed by the new republican government—the competence of which, not only in military matters, seemed doubtful to me after all I had seen.

Of course, the first proclamations posted on the walls showed the good literary style to be expected from writers and intellectuals. In addition to Kurt Eisner, a lot of literati had suddenly discovered their love for the people and seemed eager to play an active role on the political stage, arm in arm with proletarians whose very existence they had hardly noticed before. One of them, a rather successful writer

and lady-killer, finding himself too elegantly dressed to speak at a revolutionary meeting, wired to his family the categoric S O S "Send immediately oldest overcoat"—whereupon he sat down to prepare a pathetic speech about love of mankind.

In Berlin, to judge from the newspapers, the revolution was not quite so harmless as in Munich. But in fact the only officer who fell in defense of the imperial flag was not an aristocrat but a Captain Lehmann. The imperial regime had broken down throughout the whole Reich, not less suddenly than in Munich, a colossus with feet of clay. The Kaiser had fled to Holland, Ludendorff to Sweden. And a good old socialist wheel horse, the harness maker Ebert, utterly unknown outside his party, with some other socialists had formed a provisional government. Afraid of their own courage and absolutely unprepared for their new role, they felt their first task to be that of fighting the more radical groups. To restore "law and order," they needed the help of the old army generals who, of course, in unselfish patriotism agreed to save the fatherland from chaos even under socialist leadership.

As for myself, I was too much of an intellectual snob to share the uncritical enthusiasm with which a large part of the intelligentsia greeted a revolution that was victorious only because of military defeat. The Russian example seemed to prove that such a revolution leads to a peace of Brest-Litovsk. I believed in democracy. If the humanistic ethos of the American President Wilson was to be trusted, it did not seem impossible that a new democratic Germany, freed from a fraudulent ruling class, might take up again the interrupted tradition of 1848 and find her place in a great world democracy as the most progressive of all republics. But this change would have to be achieved by the overwhelming consent of the people through the vote of a national assembly, not by the terror of a violent minority. In fact, there seemed to be no real danger of violence. True, there was street fighting in Berlin, where a group of radical socialists calling themselves the Spartacus Group tried to gain power. But here in Munich an idealistic humanitarian, a man of letters like Eisner, proclaimed his pride in a revolution without bloodshed.

Instead of being arrested, I received, the third day after the revolution, a written order signed by the old commanding general, and delivered by an orderly whose military correctness seemed to deny the revolution: "Lieutenant Schoenberner will attend tomorrow at 10 A.M. the officers' meeting in the mess hall of the Max II Kaserne." Only two words added in brackets "In Civil" (in civilian clothes) alluded to a somewhat changed situation.

I shall never forget the pitiful appearance of this assembly. All these men, who in their uniforms had looked approximately like officers, looked now in their civilian costumes like unemployed office clerks, and it turned out that even mentally they had adapted themselves with surprising alacrity to the standards and tactics of the victorious working class. Recovered from the first shock and seeing that the revolution did not threaten their lives, they immediately had recourse to the proletarian weapon of the strike.

The representative of the revolutionary soldiers' committee called "Soldatenrat" (in analogy to the Russian word "Soviet") was one of the coffee cooks. His name was Sauer. He had been sentenced to prison, some months before, because he had the bad habit of selling the coffee intended for the enlisted men. Now, liberated from the military prison by the revolution, he easily had assumed the position of a political martyr, a victim of military persecution who, by his sufferings, had qualified as a revolutionary leader. Accompanied by two other delegates he appeared in our meeting in order to announce that, according to an order of the new Minister of War, the officers were to wind up their business of demobilization under the supervision of the soldiers' committee and were to deliver their arms. He evidently enjoyed his mission. With a large brief case under his arm, he behaved with the cool and distant dignity of a benevolent despot announcing his decisions to a somewhat refractory but helpless parliament. The slight nod of the head with which at his departure he greeted our utterly bewildered old general, a poor old man in an ill-fitting and outmoded black suit, was a masterpiece of friendly impudence.

The first man to speak, after we were left alone, was the chief of an army hospital, a former deputy of the Bavarian parliament and in

civil life a well known orthopedist. He proposed that we send a deputation to the Ministry of War with an ultimatum announcing an immediate strike of the officers, including the medical officers, if their authority and the military power of command were not restored.

Everybody realized that the threat of leaving all the wounded in the hospitals without medical care would provide a much stronger pressure than the more remote possibility of a planless demobilization. The gloomy atmosphere of the meeting visibly brightened. Suddenly conscious of their bargaining power and scenting the chance for a successful blackmail, some higher officers, majors of the reserve, immediately proposed to present some other substantial demands: First of all, the continuation of the officers' pay for the duration of their military service; and secondly, a military pension after discharge from the army for the officers of the reserve as well who in fact had not the slightest legal claim of this kind.

The Minister of War, a harmless Socialist Party official and factory worker, was too impressed by his new power to use it. Instead of answering this ultimatum with another ultimatum threatening immediate execution of every officer who ignored his orders, he immediately capitulated; he promised everything—probably with the mental reservation that his promises would not be kept anyhow. He saved the face of the revolution by stipulating that the written orders of the commanding officers and the demobilization papers of the enlisted men must be countersigned by the representative of the "Soldatenrat." The officers were entitled to keep their arms, but they would have to get a special certificate, signed by the "Soldatenrat."

The next day military life in the barracks began again in an almost unchanged form. Especially the officers seemed unchanged. I hardly believed my ears when, the first day after our "restoration," our major's young aide-de-camp appeared in our office with the request that some boxes of meat rations, saved by our clerks from the plunder, should be turned over to the office of the major, who, by the way, in civil life was a well-to-do lawyer. Rebuked by our captain, the young man reappeared twice with the same request, until finally our captain almost threw him out with the words: "Tell Major X. that nobody will get these boxes except perhaps the men who have saved them." I felt deeply shamed to witness these disgraceful scenes in the

presence of our clerks and of my orderly, who had saved even my personal luggage without being bound by the allegedly higher code of the officer.

Perhaps because I had proved a certain talent for getting along with difficult cases, I was assigned to run the reception office through which every man had to pass before being directed to the office of his own squadron. I had ten clerks sitting behind long tables; but it was inevitable that the men streaming in from the street, tired, some of them deserters, nervous and impatient to get home as they were, had to wait for some time in the crowded room before they could be taken care of.

I was prepared for some rough and tumble scenes. My disciplinary power was, of course, more or less fictitious; but during the more than three months I was in charge of this delicate business I had no serious difficulty. I made not the slightest attempt at revolutionary fraternization, but just by playing as correctly as possible my role as officer I succeeded in convincing everybody that even in the most revolutionary army there must be a certain discipline, and there must be officers to give the necessary orders.

I was surprised and secretly annoyed to see how easily the appeal to reason, to duty and discipline got the better of revolutionary impulses. They were too reasonable, too disciplined, too well trained in an abstract conception of law and duty. The long habit of political subservience under more or less absolute little sovereigns and the military education following the Prussian tradition had been bad enough. But in a deeper sense, Kant's moral absolutism and Luther's authoritarian Protestantism had contributed to the strange German dualism which separated the religious and intellectual sphere from that of political and social reality. The Germans had become accustomed to live and to act by abstractions rather than by natural impulses. That made, and still makes them, a constructive element—model citizens and even model officers—in foreign countries. On the other hand, unfortunately, it also makes them terribly efficient and obedient instruments of destruction when misused by an irresponsible authority which, devilish as it may be, is "from God."

They had been misled into fighting a war which they believed

to be a war of defense against a world of aggressors; a war which would bring a new and better Germany. And after fifty-two months of unspeakable sacrifices, they found themselves betrayed by political and military leaders, faced with total defeat. Now, confused and bewildered, they tried to find their way to a German democracy, a German republic. They did not want to follow the Russian example, they did not want bloody excesses and massacres; they wanted law and order, a new law and order to be sure; they wanted an orderly and dignified revolution under a new leadership. But where were the leaders?

There were, first of all, the radical intellectuals like Kurt Eisner and Gustav Landauer, who, together with their young followers from the small socialist student group, played a leading role in Munich. It has become fashionable, especially among intellectuals, to deride intellectuals as unrealistic dreamers and more or less ridiculous idealists, and to celebrate the men of action acting without ideas or principles and certainly free from moral scruples. But the fact is, the men who have most deeply changed the course of history by revolutionary thought and action have always been in a certain sense intellectuals. This certainly is true of the great French Revolution as well as of the American or the Russian Revolution.

Perhaps men like Eisner and Landauer, who were assassinated before being able to show their full stature, had theoretically the same chance to become great political leaders as Lenin and Trotzky. Lenin would have lived only in the memory of some historians as a poor unsuccessful crackpot if one of the attempts on his life had succeeded before the historical days of October, 1917. I am not sure that Eisner and Landauer had Lenin's solid basis of theoretical studies in politics and economics. Both of them, however, were impressive figures in the style of Old Testament prophets. Their oratory was full of a deep and passionate ethical pathos, drawn from the religious genius of their race. To hear them speak before crowded mass meetings impressed even a skeptical mind like mine with their personal integrity and the purity of their intentions. No doubt these two elderly men with their long hair and their long beards believed in their mission, believed in their political and social ideals with unconditional religious fervor. They were not ambitious politicians but ardent moralists prepared to

die for the salvation of mankind. Unfortunately they had never learned to handle the intricacies of government policies, and they had no trained helpers. They were forced to rely upon the dubious support of minor officials who did their routine business in the ministerial offices, resolved to stay at their desks and to continue in their old line of thought and of work no matter who occupied the ministers' desks.

On the other hand, the leadership of political professionals, like Socialist Party members or union officials, was even more dubious. These men had grown up as small bourgeois in the faithful performance of their party duties, sure that, according to the Holy Scriptures of Marx, the victory of the proletariat was inevitable in the slow process of historical evolution. They were utterly unprepared to take over the responsibility of government in one of the most critical moments of German history. Ebert, the head of the socialist government in Berlin, had declared quite candidly that he hated the idea of social revolution "like hell." He saw his first duty to be the fight against the radical groups which, not sharing his belief in the evolutionary process of socialism, wanted to imitate the Bolshevist example. But even these fierce revolutionaries were far from being Russians. They were Germans all right—even in the midst of bloody street fighting.

A lot of comical and heartbreaking stories circulated as illustrations of this fact. In Berlin during the street fighting around the Schloss, the masses hurrying for cover under machine-gun fire dutifully avoided taking the short cut over the lawn. At the risk of being killed in the detour, they scurried around the little gates which symbolized a sort of eleventh commandment: "Das Betreten des Rasens ist verboten," a phrase meaning much more and proving much more effective than the simple English formula "Keep off."

It was true that the sailors occupying the Imperial Palace in Berlin had carefully spread layers of newspaper—probably of the revolutionary newspaper the *Red Flag*—under the machine guns they mounted at the windows in order not to scratch the wonderful inlaid floor. Determined fighters, they were willing to shed their blood for the revolution, but if possible without causing damage save to their own lives.

On the top of the famous "Brandenburger Tor," dominating the street "Unter den Linden," were machine guns whose fire made traffic

through the Friedrichstrasse impossible. There was a terrible jam and so, by mutual agreement between the White and Red street fighters, at regular intervals, marked by flag signals, the civil war was stopped briefly every half hour so that the traffic through the Friedrichstrasse could proceed as usual.

In the first days of revolution in Berlin the main telegraph office had been occupied by the elite of the Red troops, some sailors from Kiel. They were armed to the teeth, their pockets loaded with hand grenades, and were resolved to defend this important nerve center to the last man. The operators had decided to stay at their posts. Everything worked well. The only difficulty was the question of food. There were, of course, some cases with so-called iron rations stored in the building for such an eventuality. But according to regulations these cases could not be opened without a written order of the government. With growling stomachs, the wild revolutionaries sitting beside their machine guns pondered this difficult problem. They finally decided to send a deputation to the Reichstag, the seat of Ebert's provisional government. Braving the hail of bullets in the streets, the deputation finally arrived in the Reichstag. They could not get through to Ebert, but they waylaid Wolfgang Heine, a well known lawyer and socialist parliamentarian, who had assumed the office of Minister of Justice. When in the midst of the turmoil he finally understood what they wanted, he told them that, of course, they should go ahead and open the cases.

But returning, by miracle without injury, these three men were seriously reprimanded by their comrades. Where was the written order of the government? It couldn't be helped, another deputation must go to the Reichstag. Again they pushed through to Wolfgang Heine, who, baffled by this rigid sense of legality, decided to save the situation personally.

In a government car he hurried to the telegraph office and, introducing himself as the new Minister of Justice, he gave the solemn assurance that the cases could and should be opened. But, though almost fainting from hunger, the soldiers of the revolution were not so easily convinced. Anyone could claim to be a minister and, by the way, it was not the Minister of Justice who was competent in this matter, but the Postal Minister or the head of the government himself.

And the order must be given in writing. In vain Heine exhausted his forensic eloquence against an adamant legalistic attitude; finally, crestfallen, accompanied by the delegates, he returned to the Reichstag. Somehow he managed to have a formal order typed on official paper, and to find Ebert himself. "You must sign that," he told him, "or our men in the main telegraph office will die from hunger sitting on the cases of iron rations."

The delegates, finally in possession of the precious document, were lucky enough to reach the telegraph office alive. They were received with enthusiasm when they displayed the paper. Now finally after hours of waiting the soldiers of the revolution had the legal right to open the cases and to eat. The last doubts as to the legality of Ebert's position as head of a provisional government were silently swallowed with the first bites of cold meat and hardtack. Strengthened by this first meal of the day, everyone went back to his duty; the operators to their telephones, the sailors to their battle stations, where, in peace with their consciences, they would fight and die, if needed, for the victory of their revolution.

My military duties were limited to the morning hours. During the afternoon another officer was in charge of my office. The military clan had promptly learned the strategy of class war and tried to stretch the work in this manner in order to have as many officers as long as possible on the payroll. So I had time enough to attend innumerable meetings of innumerable political groups which, like mushrooms, had sprung up out of the humus of the revolution. Such a group was for example the "Association of Democratic and Social Academicians" which immediately attracted my attention. Here I could be sure of meeting only the right people, people with university education, people who were democratic and social, but by no means simple Social-Democrats. We had very interesting discussions. The great sociologist Max Weber and other lights of science often spoke to us. We felt ourselves to be an intellectual storm troop of the revolution while nicely remaining in our caste and without spoiling our hands with the dirty business of real politics.

When some of my literary friends decided to found a new review—almost everybody founded a new review in those hectic days—I made

my first acquaintance with the editorial business. Our review was very modern and very radical in every respect, in art, literature and politics. It bore the modest name: *The Way*. The poems, in the newest expressionistic fashion, were a sort of puzzle for the non-initiated reader. The woodcuts adorning the paper were so modern that sometimes we ourselves had to be careful not to place the mats upside down. My contribution to the first number interpreted "The Way"—to go in fellowship—as symbol of the new era in contrast to the racetrack of the old era, with cooperation on one hand, competition on the other. It was written in a sort of telegraphic style, omitting the articles and non-essential words, a style which, invented by Carl Sternheim, had become the *dernier cri* of modern writing.

The review had more editors than subscribers, and did not survive the fifth number. I had resigned even before that, disappointed by the fact that even the editors of a paper supposed to fight for the highest ideals of human brotherhood and world peace were evidently unable to get along with each other. I did not know how typical this experience was; but later I had ample opportunity for even more startling discoveries. I found out for example that socialist papers traditionally underpaid their collaborators (if they paid at all), and that the editors of progressive magazines trying to improve human relations in politics and economics often ignored the most elementary rules of professional ethics when dealing with their literary contributors. This sort of professional disease, what the French call *déformation professionelle,* seems international—to judge from my experiences in three different countries. But what is true for the prophets is true here also: the value and validity of the ethical principles expressed in such papers is not in the least impaired by the contradicting personal behavior of the responsible editors. Evidently the danger of a certain kind of schizophrenia, of a split personality, increases with the higher development of the intellect. "Why intellectuals are treasonable" was the topic of one of my first articles written in English and published in an American review. The study of the intellectual is an especially interesting aspect of Natural History, and I shall never tire of it.

## CHAPTER X

# Revolutionary Intellectuals—and Others

ONE OF MY most revealing experiences was with the so-called "Councils of Intellectual Workers" during the first weeks of the revolution in Munich. The first session was held in the large and elegant salon of a Baron von Bernus, who had acquired his title and his money by adoption only, but played better than a born aristocrat the role of a cultured nobleman. He had published some books of amateurish verse, was interested in spiritualism and in contact with the whole literary world of Munich which now filled his salon.

The speakers of the evening were a poet and a professor of philosophy. The poet was Paul Ernst, an old, bearded man, looking a bit like the fairy-tale figure of Ruebezahl. For thirty years he had written novels and historical dramas glorifying the German past in a somewhat mystical and definitely boring style which the small number of his readers believed to be the true expression of the German soul. Nobody had ever thought of playing his historical dramas, and only a very few people, probably suffering from insomnia, had ever succeeded in reading his books without falling asleep after the first pages. But, by sheer force of persistency, he had acquired an honorable reputation as a serious though unsuccessful author. (His real success began much later when the Nazis had exiled all the better German writers.)

Ernst's speaking proved to be not more effective than his writing. His lugubrious voice sounded as if suffocated by the thick beard which covered most of his face. As far as I could make out, he painted a somewhat apocalyptic picture of the immediate future. He predicted chaos, bloodshed, pestilence, hunger and what not when the beaten army, deprived of its leaders, should spread over the country. He limited himself to this rather gloomy prophetic vision, which lost some of its horror by the monotony of his recital. But he did not give the slightest hint as to what he wanted to do about it. The audience

politely applauded, but seemed a bit frightened by these terrible prospects.

Thanks to my daily contact with the beaten army, I saw rather the opposite danger. The armies at the front would return in perfect order, led by their generals, and would be misused by the forces of counter-revolution.

The next speaker was Professor von Aster, whose courses on Kant I had attended during my first semester in Munich. Thanks to a tic, he could not speak without a broad smile turning up the corners of his mouth. Before finding that out I had wondered why the rather dry stuff of Kant's Theory of Perception aroused in him such a continuous irresistible hilarity, as if he were telling funny stories. But the harder he tried to be serious, the more he gave the impression of a man almost bursting with suppressed laughter. Coming after Paul Ernst's somber and hardly audible funeral oration, his smiling speech, though not in the least optimistic, had a rather reassuring effect. Things couldn't be as bad as he said, as long as the speaker himself kept smiling. It is astonishing how words like "defeat," "national collapse" and "starvation" can sound almost harmless if pronounced with a cheerful grin.

As everyone expected, the two speakers and the host of the assembly, Baron von Bernus, were elected or rather nominated to serve as presidents. This "Rat Geistiger Arbeiter" (Council of Intellectual Workers) was formed to represent the intellectuals as a sort of "workers" not less essential than the factory workers, since the Russian formula "Workers, Peasants and Soldiers" did not offer any other category to provide for intellectuals. The later much-used slogan, "The Workers of the Head and of the Fist," was coined in this assembly. Many of those present seemed resolved to grow calluses on their foreheads corresponding to the workers' calloused fists.

The discussion was a long sequence of more or less unrelated personal or general declarations, getting nowhere. The total absence of parliamentary training shared by the three leaders and their public alike, made an orderly procedure almost impossible. It turned out that among those two hundred highly educated and in general intelligent persons there was nobody who knew exactly how to take a vote.

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The election of the other members of the working committee offered even more difficulties and it became obvious that nobody was really familiar with the technicalities of democratic expression, though everybody spoke in the most enthusiastic tone about Democracy. It is one of the great advantages of American education that every boy or girl learns, in elementary school, at least the basic rules of democratic technique. These forms are in themselves only forms, and sometimes empty shells, if not filled with the spirit of democracy; but even the best spirit of democracy needs a form through which to express itself correctly and efficiently.

Despite all the handicaps, the assembly would probably have come to a sort of practical result, if a newcomer had not suddenly asked for the floor. He was the Munich correspondent of the democratic *Berliner Tageblatt,* a fat little man with a big red face who looked exactly like a bullfrog. He evidently had come from a late and animated dinner in his favorite place, the Odeon Bar, where, even in this winter of 1918, well paying customers could still find edible food and drinkable wine. Fired by alcohol and revolutionary enthusiasm, the Bullfrog plunged into a long and violent tirade denouncing the enterprise of Paul Ernst, von Aster and Baron Bernus as a reactionary machination. He announced that another "Political Council of Intellectual Workers" had already been founded, under the leadership of Heinrich Mann. He evidently felt himself to be a new Danton, but his oratory was punctuated and somewhat spoiled by a violent hiccup which, giving evidence of a good meal, made the inevitable "specter of starvation" even more unreal than in von Aster's smiling speech. He launched a sarcastic attack against certain literati who had accepted the Order of the Red Eagle for their war poems and were now waving the Red Flag of the revolution.

As if to dispel any doubt as to the identity of the offender referred to, a good but gloomy-looking man, the second-rate poet Will Vesper (later one of Mr. Goebbels' employees) insisted upon answering this personal attack. Yes, he confessed, he had written war poems and he had accepted the Order of the Red Eagle, but only because he felt it the duty of a poet to console and to strengthen his people in times of trial. And if allowed to do so, he would continue now to serve the German people with his poetic gift, expressing the new ideas and new

ideals of a new time, even without any hope of other decorations than the encouraging applause of his readers—the number of whom, by the way, "had increased from book to book."

Will Vesper's lame riposte seemed only to underline the necessity of a clearer cleavage between the late proselytes of democracy and those who, like Heinrich Mann, had taken an open and uncompromising stand against the war and against the imperial regime, as long as such an attitude involved some personal risks. When the Bullfrog, evidently near the bursting point, rose to a final appeal that all the truly liberal—whoops!—intellectuals assemble around the great figure—whoops!—of Heinrich Mann, the great majority of the assembly had made their choice. No doubt, Heinrich Mann was a more representative leader than Paul Ernst, von Aster and von Bernus. The fate of their brain child, born only some hours earlier, was already sealed. As a matter of pure form and good manners the assembly adjourned until the next week. But it was obvious that nobody would attend this next session, except perhaps the three presidents and a handful of their closest friends. Paul Ernst's "Rat Geistiger Arbeiter" (Council of Intellectual Workers) was dead; long live Heinrich Mann's "Politischer Rat Geistiger Arbeiter."

Unfortunately it turned out that this Political Council did not understand much more of politics than the other one. The first official meeting was held in the art salon of Caspari, who, formerly an officer in my own escadron, had now returned to his business. Heinrich Mann gave an address of high literary perfection. Some other well known writers followed with speeches evidently written for future publication and expressing the noblest feelings for Liberty, Equality and Fraternity; for the great traditions of 1848 and for a new democratic German republic in a new democratic Europe. I am sure that these addresses still make good reading. They were perhaps almost as good as the speeches of the first German parliament in the church of St. Paul in Frankfurt where, during the revolution of 1848, Germany's intellectual élite had met—until they were expelled by some Prussian grenadiers. But the real test of political speeches is not so much that they make good reading, but that they make history, good history if possible.

The speeches in the Political Council of Intellectual Workers cer-

tainly made no history at all, either good or bad. The only practical step taken was the election of two or three delegates to represent this group in the national assembly which was to ratify, in the near future, the new republican constitution. It was astonishing to see how much political ambition was displayed on this occasion, even by the most unpolitical people. But the real struggle for power between the revolutionary forces and the reactionaries, who very soon had reformed their cadres, was fought without the active participation of the organized "intellectual workers." However, they attended conscientiously the innumerable mass meetings where usually also a delegate of the "Political Council of Intellectual Workers," or the "Democratic and Social Academicians" or of another group of intellectuals spoke to a more or less bored but indulgent populace.

It was in one of these meetings that I heard the first appeal for a National Socialism, without knowing how fateful this new term would become for the whole world and for me personally. The speaker was a typical Schwabinger, a journalist called Michalski, whose career had been somewhat fantastic even for the standards of Schwabing. Full of brilliant ideas but absolutely irresponsible, he had developed a special talent for fascinating rich and uncritical people and for talking them into financing his adventurous projects. He had founded new papers and reviews, always starting in the greatest style and always ending in spectacular bankruptcy. In the last twenty years he had lost more money—other people's money of course—than even the most successful journalist is able to earn. He had been put under guardianship; but this fact, far from being a handicap, proved to be an asset, because now he could sign anything without having to fear a lawsuit. In the intervals between his brilliant interludes of prosperity, he was the nightmare of his numerous acquaintances whom he blackmailed mercilessly with the continuous threat of committing suicide.

During the revolution Michalski evidently had found a new financial backer. In the meeting where I met him he sat in a box next to me in company with some elegant women. He looked unusually well dressed, and even impressive, with his large head and the ravaged face of a cynical philosopher. Probably he had been paid to start a new political movement, or perhaps he had interested some wealthy people in an idea of his own invention. At any rate, taking the floor,

he developed with remarkable eloquence the principles of a new socialism which was to be national, not international like the old Marxian socialism. But his speech fell flat; nobody had any sympathy for the word "national" which, in no matter what context, seemed too discredited by the connotation of nationalism, imperialism, and militarism, the three deadly sins of a rejected past. The audience finally hissed, and he left the stage a beaten man.

The formula "National Socialism" was taken over, probably even without a nominal fee, by a group of seven crackpots; one day in their cheap beer hall they met the eighth one, a certain Adolf Hitler. I am glad to save for posterity the name of an unsung genius ignored by the historians of the Third Reich.

A bit disappointed by the political activity of intellectual groups, I attended some meetings of the only political party which, at least in its name and program, seemed to follow the tradition of 1848: the German Democratic Party. Its younger members especially professed a sort of progressive liberalism which seemed to me more adequate than the rigid working-class dogmatism of the Socialist Party, where a member of the educated middle class was always regarded with suspicion. But I was somewhat disturbed by the fact that among the leaders of this Democratic Party were two wealthy business men of Munich called Rindskopf and Kalbskopf (Oxhead and Calfshead). *Nomen est omen,* I thought after having attended a conference where both of them had developed their political ideas.

If it seemed to me more and more difficult to take the revolution quite seriously, there could be no doubt as to the seriousness of the counter-revolution. When on February 21, 1919, a young officer, a Count Arco Valley, murdered the Prime Minister Kurt Eisner, I had the dreadful feeling that this first political murder foreshadowed an era of violence and civil war in which the idealistic revolutionary humanism of men like Eisner would be crushed again and again between the two opposite terrorisms of an imitated Russian Bolshevism and of a native German (Prussian as well as Bavarian) reaction.

Some days after I had ceased to be an officer, on April 7, 1919, a putsch of some radical groups, inspired by the Russian example, proclaimed the so-called "Räterepublic Bavaria," which from the begin-

ning was limited to Munich. I knew most of the leading personalities as customers of the Simplicissimus or the Café Stefany where the intellectual and artistic bohème used to gather. But perchance I had never met Ernst Toller, a young socialist student of good family who was now commander in chief of a Red Army hastily recruited from the ranks of socialist factory workers and demobilized soldiers. The place of Commander of the Transportation Division, still vacant, was offered to me, since I had been a lieutenant of the "Train." But I definitely refused to associate myself with what appeared to me from the start as a sort of carnivalesque stunt transposed into the dangerous sphere of civil war. I did not even collaborate with the new staff of editors who had taken over the very bourgeois newspaper *Muenchener Neueste Nachrichten,* transforming it over night into a mouthpiece of revolutionary doctrines. The first page was now usually adorned with a more or less symbolic woodcut, the work of a talented young artist eager to express in simple stylized figures his boundless admiration for the working class. He was a bit disappointed to hear that in the Rat of the People's Commissars an honest old revolutionary, a factory worker, had bitterly complained about the "caricatures of the workers" published nowadays by the *Muenchener Neueste.* Why was this damned bourgeois paper allowed to ridicule the working class while all the power was in the hands of the sovereign people? Such slight misunderstandings between the victorious proletarians and their intellectual leaders were typical of the somewhat incoherent composition of the government. How a serious, highly cultured man of almost fifty, like Gustav Landauer, could accept the role of Minister of Culture in this operetta cabinet seemed to me incomprehensible.

It was obvious that this senseless adventure was doomed, despite the marvelous telegrams of congratulation which came from Moscow and were read to the people from a balcony. The overthrown Bavarian government, headed by the socialist Hoffmann, had fled to Bamberg. The Bavarian peasants, pious Catholics, were strongly opposed to Bolshevist doctrines. Munich, the only stronghold of the Räterepublic, was cut off from every communication with the outside world, practically a beleaguered city. Even the great majority of the population of Munich, including the more moderate socialist workers, was strongly opposed to this political gamble. The guns, however—what remained

of them—were in the hands of the radicals who, without any bloodshed, had seized the power but seemed at a loss to know how to use it. They did not go beyond some feeble imitations of the Russian pattern. The restaurants and cafés were closed, with the exception of the Café Stefany, which seemed to be considered a second legal residence of the revolutionary government. But the wealthy bourgeoisie of Munich was not seriously molested. Sometimes a Red patrol would turn up to search for weapons or for hoarded food in an especially luxurious villa. But these Bavarian Bolshevists were much more good-natured than their Russian models. In the villa of Professor Erich Marks, the well known biographer of Bismarck, they wanted to see the pantry, which was far from being well supplied. One of the Red soldiers turned, a bit embarrassed, to the "Frau Professor," asking: "That's all that you have?" On her affirmative answer he shook his head with an expression of compassionate regret. "Listen, Frau Professor," said he, confidentially, "I can give you an address where you can get some things—eggs and butter and bacon."

True, some too well stocked wine cellars were "requisitioned." But, given the fact that there was practically no power in Munich to prevent a wholesale slaughter and plunder of the whole bourgeois class, one can only marvel at these harmless Bavarian Bolshevists with their inborn respect for private property which they tried to abolish—in theory.

Despite the so-called "Red Terror in Munich," which made good headlines for the papers all over Germany, life went on almost as usual. The potential dangers became real only in the imagination of newspaper correspondents. Our friend the Bullfrog, for example, did not dare to leave his comfortable apartment, but he managed to send to his paper, regularly, colorful eyewitness stories about the Red Terror. It was not so easy, of course, to smuggle these precious documents out of Munich, but he always succeeded in finding a messenger willing to brave the dangers of such an expedition, a fact which in itself was a striking though negative illustration of the efficiency of the Red Terror.

Most of the leading members of the Political Council of Intellectual Workers had found it preferable to leave Munich, and nothing at all was heard of the different other organizations supposed to defend

democratic principles. The colorful caps of the reactionary student associations had vanished out of the picture as if by magic. Only a small group of younger members of the Democratic Party—a sort of "Young Turks"—met clandestinely in the elegant apartment of a university professor on certain days and at certain hours when the housemaid, closely connected with the radicals, had her day off. We swapped our information and discussed possible plans. We tried to lower our voices, and sometimes directed a furtive glance toward the windows when we heard that somebody, suspected of counter-revolutionary activity, had been arrested. In fact most of the political prisoners were released after a few days, thanks to their personal connections with influential members of the government who, being writers or artists, had friends in many different circles .

Besides, the Red police was not too efficient. One of our acquaintances, a medical doctor, himself opened the door to the Red army men charged with his arrest. They asked if the doctor was at home. "No," he answered, with remarkable presence of mind, "the doctor is not here, but I am expecting him in half an hour; if you will be back at that time, you certainly will meet him." Politely thanking him for the information, the three men went to the pub to have a beer, while the doctor packed his suitcase and quietly went to the station to take the next train to his country place.

The only one among our group to recommend active resistance was a young Baron von Puttkammer, who, just because he was sincerely liberal and democratic, wanted to fight against the Red dictatorship. Whenever he began to speak, I raised my hand to notify the chairman that I wanted to speak next. I then refuted his arguments by explaining that an alliance with reactionary groups, such as he proposed, was much more dangerous for democracy than this so-called dictatorship here, which was bound to collapse anyway in a few weeks. Sometimes Puttkammer crossed the lines in order to get to Bamberg, where the legal Bavarian government was recruiting an army composed of so-called "Free Corps" under the command of reactionary officers, bent on "liberating Munich." One day, coming back from such an excursion, he told with a certain hesitation about his conversation with one of the commanding officers of the Free Corps. The prospective liberator of Munich had told him bluntly: "When we have

taken Munich, then you have to store your democratic principles for a while." Puttkammer was honest enough to give this confirmation to my conception, and was not offended by my taking advantage of it. Despite our political, or rather tactical, disagreements, we liked each other personally.

On his own responsibility and against my ardent advice, he had made contacts with a counter-revolutionary group in Munich, called Thule Gesellschaft, which, as he hinted, planned an armed putsch in order to overthrow the Raeterepublic. When some days later nine leading members of the Thule Gesellschaft were arrested by the Red police, Puttkammer felt free to tell us more about this conspiracy. They had planned to kidnap and to "dispose of" the whole Red government by calling for them with the wrong cars after a performance of *Wilhelm Tell* to be given as an official festival within a few days. Somehow the plan had leaked out; the intention of a murderous attempt could probably be proved by the seized documents; and so even under the most benevolent Red Terror the chances looked bad for the conspirators. Among those arrested was the secretary of the society, a Countess Westarp, related to the deputy of the pre-war Reichstag, Count Westarp, a well known reactionary and leader of the Conservative Party.

I had the somber foreboding that the grotesque farce of the Räterepublic could at any moment turn into bloody tragedy. This child's play was acted on powder barrels and with real arms in many irresponsible hands. If in the midst of this revolutionary idyll, this harmless parody of the Russian October Revolution, the first shot was fired—no matter from which side—an unpredictable catastrophe might result. The situation grew tense, and even the harmless meetings of our small group were loaded with dramatic suspense. Once, late in the evening, when we met in the office of a lawyer just across the street from police headquarters, a sudden ringing of the bell brought our discussion to an abrupt stop. Everyone held his breath. There was no escape from this room on the fourth floor. For a moment even our host seemed paralyzed, then cautiously, without the slightest noise, he tiptoed to the entrance door and peered through the keyhole. It was only a member of our own group who was late. Everybody began to speak at the

same time with a slightly forced vivacity, and our host had to caution us that voices could be heard across the street.

In my strange position, with friends in the two opposed camps, I tried my best to appeal to reason and to prevent violence. Especially I urged my radical friends to end the dangerous joke of their political adventure as soon as possible by negotiations with the legal government in Bamberg before the White Troops got their chance to "liberate" Munich. In fact, during these last days of April, Ernst Toller, the Commander in Chief of the Red army, who, mounted on a Napoleonic white horse, conscientiously inspected the defense positions around Munich, had finally made up his mind that the game was up. The well armed White troops had encircled Munich and stood ready for the final assault. Ernst Toller tried to negotiate the capitulation of Munich. He promised to surrender, to disarm and to disband his Red army without any resistance, if no reprisals were taken. But it was too late. The military on the other side wanted their victory; and what their victory meant became obvious when, after one of the first clashes, some Red stretcher bearers were made prisoners and promptly executed by the White troops. This news spread like wildfire through the ranks of the Red army, arousing desperate hate and blind fury; especially the proletarian members of the government immediately cried for revenge. Landauer, Toller and others tried their best to prevent senseless outrages. Like the magician's apprentice, they were helpless against the elementary forces they had conjured up. They were unable to hinder the police commissar, a violent young sailor, from giving, without any consultation, the order to shoot immediately the nine most dangerous political prisoners, the conspirators of the Thule Gesellschaft. In the general confusion and purely by a mistake a tenth one was executed with them, a harmless old retired professor who had been arrested for tearing down a poster with a government proclamation. This was the so-called "Murder of the Hostages"—who were not hostages at all but potential political murderers, caught at their own game and knowing the rules of the game. But it gave the signal for the unspeakable massacre of thousands of innocent workers by the White troops who, inflamed by the wildest reports of Red atrocities,

within a few hours transformed the peaceful streets of Munich into a battlefield of civil war.

It was an exact repetition of the days of the Commune in Paris in 1871 where the three hundred victims of the revolution were avenged by General Gallifet by the execution of thirty thousand. There was no organized fighting; the Red army had ceased to exist. The leaders, unable to prevent the masses from making a hopeless armed resistance, had fled or gone into hiding. But in the factory section of Giesing and in many houses throughout the city desperate little groups of Red workers, armed with rifles, machine guns and hand grenades, made a last-ditch stand. They fought to the bitter end with the deadly courage of men who are willing to sell their lives at the highest price. Out of the windows and from the roofs, isolated snipers shot on the White troops who, in some sections, were forced to take house by house. Better armed and trained than the Reds, and led by professional officers and supported by mortars and light artillery, the White troops incurred only light losses. But they became more and more hysterical, incited by the example of their officers. Every young lieutenant felt entitled to stage a kind of court-martial and to execute whatever prisoners had been taken, not only those caught with arms in their hands, but every one whom a revengeful neighbor denounced as a "Red." Some harmless chimney sweeps, who in Munich used to carry small red flags to indicate their presence in a house, were immediately shot for their impudent display of a revolutionary symbol. It took some time before some Bavarians, more familiar with the customs of the land, could correct this error.

The Free Corps, recruited by some popular colonels and captains of the old army, came from many different parts of Germany. The most bloodthirsty proclamation posted on the walls came, by the way, not from a Prussian, but from a Württembergian formation. The headline in big black letters on red paper read: "An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth." And so it went on in a perfectly hysterical outburst of hate and revenge against the "Red murderers." It could have been written by Hitler himself; but he was at that time—as in the war—behind the battlefront, occupied with the menial task of denouncing comrades suspected of having sympathized with the Reds.

No historian will ever know the exact number of victims executed

without a trial or after only a fake trial. It seems that three thousand Russian war prisoners, still in a camp near Dachau and enrolled in the Red army, probably without knowing exactly what it was all about, were shot as dangerous Bolshevists. Gustav Landauer, who the first day had been found and arrested by White troops, was literally trampled and clubbed to death in the prison of Stadelheim. Ernst Toller escaped this fate only because he was found in his hiding place, in the studio of the painter Reichl, almost a week after the first wave of uncontrolled terror was over. He was turned over to the legal courts and sentenced to five years' imprisonment only, rather than to death, as were the Russian Levine and some other radical leaders. But he never entirely recovered from this experience. His tragic suicide in 1939 was still the consequence of this terrible shock.

One incident of particularly macabre irony, a real massacre of the innocents, illustrates best the pathological atmosphere of Munich during these first days of White Terror, a terror so much more real than the Red one. In the basement of a house on the Carolinen Platz a "Katholischer Junglingsverein" (a sort of Catholic Y.M.C.A.) was holding peacefully its usual evening meeting, when suddenly a drunken Free Corps sergeant burst into the room. A meeting of young men in a basement couldn't be anything but a Communist conspiracy. And so the drunken defender of law and order, remembering that attack is the best defense, threw a hand grenade into the room and finished off the survivors with his automatic. The twenty or thirty victims of his little mistake were hastily buried, and the murderer himself was never molested.

The nightmare of these days surpassed my worst expectations. I had not known how right I had been in foreseeing and foretelling a catastrophe. I didn't want to be right to such a terrible extent. What was the use of reason and clear judgment when reason proved powerless and you had to witness, as a helpless observer, in the No-Man's-Land between the fronts, the murderous outbursts of human folly, the explosion of primitive and irrational instincts beyond any control of conscience or intellect?

When on the first of May I saw the White troops parading through the "Siegestor," I knew that German democracy was dead. There they

marched on in perfect order—the uniformed army of reaction. They had lost the war, but at least they had won their victory in the civil war. Having massacred some thousands of proletarians, they could proudly enter a conquered city through a "Siegestor," hailed and saluted as saviors by the small bourgeoisie.

I felt sick with disgust, sick of the arrogant officers, sick of the servile bourgeois, sick of revolution and counter-revolution, of politics in general and of gigantic human stupidity in particular. I wanted to escape from this sordid reality into the higher sphere of ideas, into the realm of art and literature, where I would be free to build my own world. Enclosed in my Ark, I would try to survive the deluge which seemed ahead. Only I would have to think of some provisions. The family fortune had been lost in the war. My last pay as an officer was almost spent. I would have to make some commercial use of my talents and my knowledge, both of which were somehow difficult to define. A man of twenty-six years, four of them spent in the war, I had acquired a general intellectual culture, but no specific abilities. I had neither money nor inclination to go back to the University for a formal conclusion of my studies with a doctor's degree. By the way, everybody was a doctor; it was a sort of first name in Germany, without any practical implication, especially for the publishing business, which still was my dream. The only difficulty was to convince a publisher that he really needed me, my discriminating taste, my critical gift, my literary and artistic judgment and, most of all, my genuine passion for the world of books —the only world to which I really belonged.

By an unpredictable stroke of fate it was a fashionable adventurer who offered me my first chance. His newly founded publishing house was only a sideline of his multiple and highly complicated business enterprises; but there was an air of fascinating grandeur about everything he touched.

## CHAPTER XI

# Adventures in the Publishing Business

I HAD SEEN the impressive "Almanac" published in the spring of 1919 announcing the extremely ambitious program of the—let us say—Musa Press, a new publishing enterprise which, evidently having almost unlimited funds at its disposal, seemed determined to outstrip in quantity and quality all its most famous competitors. One of the most sensational items was a complete edition of Nietzsche, an *édition de luxe* in thirty volumes. Other authors on the list in more or less complete editions of from four to twenty-four volumes were Anatole France, Maupassant, Chekhov, Dostoevsky ("Diary of a Writer"); Dickens, Chesterton, and the never before translated Russian Lyesskoff, a contemporary of Tolstoy and Dostoevsky, and their equal in rank. Among the authors represented by at least one of their books were names like André Gide, Maurice de Guérin, Remy de Gourmont, Pushkin, Tolstoy and others.

Even in the list of four or five different collections of smaller, partly illustrated books, which were simultaneously announced, translations prevailed. The German reading public, cut off by the war from access to foreign literature, eagerly longed for translations.

To be world-minded, European and cosmopolitan is the best tradition of the spiritual Germany. It asserts itself by the fact that the greatest German poets and writers, beginning with Luther, the founding father of the literary German language, continuing through Goethe, Schiller, Herder, Schlegel, Tieck, up to Rainer Maria Rilke, Stefan George and Heinrich Mann have been at the same time translators.

After the unnatural quarantine of almost five years, the German public was deathly tired of a literary nationalism which, like political nationalism, takes such exaggerated forms in Germany just because it is not in the least genuine but purely artificial and in truth deeply un-German. The political revolution, with its enthusiastic affirmation

of international and supranational ideas and ideals, gave an almost explosive force to this literary tendency. It seemed an excellent idea for a publisher to capitalize upon this general trend. The typically German idea of "Weltliteratur"—world literature—disregarding the frontiers of language, had never been more timely than in 1919. Here certainly I would be the right man in the right place.

My connection with this fabulous enterprise was arranged by Lou Andreas-Salomé. One of her friends, Mrs. Emmy von H., the daughter of a great insurance man of Munich and the wife of one of the wealthiest and in a literary sense most cultivated men of the Russo-German colony of St. Petersburg, had been to a certain extent responsible for the creation of this new publishing house. She had arranged the first meeting between the business wizard Max W. and the literary wizard Johannes von G., who were to become the founders of the Musa Press. Both were friends of her husband, Henry von H., who at the moment had disappeared in the turmoil of the Russian Revolution. Both of them —without knowing each other—had largely profited from his generous trustfulness (not less characteristic of Henry than of Emmy von H.). Both were charming but unscrupulous adventurers of a certain genius, each in a special field. The stories of their lives, as I could piece them together from rumors and gossip picked up in the course of time, would provide wonderful themes for picaresque novels, but I must limit myself here to a bare outline.

It seems that Max W. came from a well-to-do family of the Bavarian upper middle class. As a young lieutenant in a swank cavalry regiment, he had become involved in an affair of note jobbing. He was dishonorably discharged from the army and decided, following an old tradition, to go to America—but not as a dishwasher. He succeeded in convincing his friend, Henry von H., that the oil boom in the United States offered marvelous opportunities, and Henry von H. was glad to oblige poor Max, the innocent victim of a military mistake, by financing him in his attempt to strike oil. Max W., after having staged a dramatic elopement with the daughter of a banker in the hope of subsequent reconciliation, embarked for the New World. When after two years he turned up again in the Old World without fortune and without oil, Henry von H. was deeply moved by such

obstinate hard luck. What after all is money among friends and gentlemen? Don't mention it, just forget it. The only really important question was to find an adequate new position for Max W., the ex-officer and ex-oil speculator. Emmy von H. finally mobilized her father, the great and respectable insurance man who, thanks to his influence, succeeded in finding a job for Max as director in a small and run-down motor factory.

It really didn't matter that Max W. had no idea what a motor was. He would have to use his social talents for promoting sales which seemed so hopeless that he got a contract promising a certain percentage not from the profits as usual, but from the turnover. The whole business seemed anyway headed for bankruptcy. But instead of bankruptcy came the war. The shaky little factory suddenly became part of an essential war industry, and Max W. did not have to worry about the turnover. But in fact he did worry; he did his best to increase the turnover and therewith his income to almost fantastic heights, quite regardless of the productive capacity of the factory. When, with the armistice, this wonderful boom suddenly collapsed, it turned out that the orders accepted by Max W. could not be filled by the factory until some years after doomsday. But at any rate, Max W. had pocketed his percentage from the turnover.

One evening, as the story goes, three serious gentlemen of the supervisory board appeared in Max W.'s elegant apartment. They told him bluntly that they wanted to cancel immediately his contract, which was still valid for two years.

"How much do you demand for never putting foot again in the factory?" they asked him.

Max W., cool as a fish, answered, "A million."

The three serious gentlemen were a bit stunned, but they thought it was the lesser evil.

"You shall have your million," they decided. "But don't ever show up in the office again."

That was how Max W. had become a millionaire. To be sure, it was not the same as being a millionaire before the war. But inflation had not yet really started. Officially, a mark was still a mark, and a million was a million, a nice capital for an enterprising business man like Max W.

The first thing he did was to buy for 100,000 marks the patent rights in a marvelous new invention, called a check register. It was a little apparatus, not bigger than a large cigarette case, combining a checkbook with an automatic calculating machine. The amount of the check deposit was indicated by figures which could be regulated only by the bank itself. Every check issued subtracted itself automatically from the original figure, which made it impossible to give uncovered checks and meant an enormous simplification of the whole proceeding. The only trouble was to guarantee that the mechanism was foolproof and that the figures of the check deposits, regulated by the bank, could under no circumstances be manipulated by a clever depositor.

But these were minor, purely technical sorrows. The essential thing for Max W. was to have in hand a striking idea which would enable him to draw from great investors all over the world any amount of money he wanted for the development of this promising invention. And where was the shrewd financier or the suspicious banker who would not have yielded to Max W.'s irresistible force of persuasion when with the quiet unflinching self-assurance of a man who deceives himself first, he made a rough estimate of the millions and millions of profit just around the corner. He readily had made his own the ancient wisdom that, in order to get rich, you must appear to be rich. The style of his life was worthy of a multi-millionaire. It was most convincing, at least for such a trustful person as Emmy von H., who never thought of bluffing. So, when one day the other friend of her husband, the writer and poet Johannes von G., told her about his magnificent project for a publishing house and about his absolute lack of money, her first thought was to send him to Max W., who was so immensely rich he could do almost anything.

Johannes von G., too, already had at this time a somewhat stormy career behind him. It seems that he was born in Riga, the son of a policeman, and had acquired the "von" before his name only after crossing the Russian border. It was said that this crossing had become necessary not so much for political reasons, as was generally assumed, but because the promising young man, early attracted by literature and the arts, had committed a little theft in a provincial museum. In Munich he had become connected as a sort of literary director with

a great publishing house, where his literary talents and his knowledge of German, Russian and French literature were highly appreciated. But the whole thing was spoiled by his unfortunate habit of giving large advances to non-existent collaborators with whom he entirely identified himself. In parting from his post, Johannes von G. managed to take with him his wonderful literary projects and even some valuable contracts, among others that of the new Nietzsche edition—enough to found a new publishing house himself, provided he could find the money. And that was where Max W. came in. Following Emmy von H.'s suggestion, he invited Mr. von G. for a weekend at his magnificent villa in the country some miles from Munich.

The place had belonged to a Russian Ambassador and was kept up by Max W. in a truly ambassadorial style. Here lived his wife and his children with a large corps of servants, including his personal valet de chambre, a French lady's maid for his wife, nurses, governesses and even a special maid for the daily toilet of three little Pekinese. The whole thing was calculated to impress more important visitors than Mr. von G.—and, in contrast to most of the newly rich, the so-called war profiteers, Max W. in his whole attitude up to every nuance of his manners never belied his good breeding. He was the most thoughtful and devoted husband and father—over the weekend. This arrangement left him unlimited freedom for the rest of the week, passed in his elegant city apartment in the company of many jolly and mostly feminine friends.

The would-be publisher was received by his host with the exquisite politeness of a perfect man of the world, who never would think of talking business in the family circle. Mr. von G. had to wait for his cue until after the impressive dinner, when the coffee and liqueurs were served for the two gentlemen in the sumptuous library. Offering his golden cigarette case, Max W. asked in the most casual way: "*A propos,* I hear you wanted to tell me about a publishing house or something."

Mr. von G. immediately seized the opportunity and indulged in a colorful outline of his project. Suffering from a certain delusion of grandeur and being a highly imaginative person, he did not have to force his enthusiasm. He only felt a bit surprised when after the first twenty minutes of his oratory, his attentive listener interrupted him

with the polite remark, "Very interesting, indeed, but perhaps you could explain to me what this thing, a publishing house, really is."

During the next half hour the prospective publisher did a lot of explaining; he produced a brief case stuffed with plans and memoranda; he developed his ideas about the partnership between commercial and literary talents, between economic and spiritual values, justifying an equal status and a fifty-fifty distribution of profits between the two partners. Max W. nodded a friendly agreement and finally asked the simple question: "How much, roughly, would it cost, such a publishing house?"

Johannes von G., taken aback by the directness, felt torn between the two fears of asking too much or asking too little. He took a deep breath and said firmly, "In the first year 300,000, in the second year 200,000."

Max W. nodded again, "Well, we can do it. May I help you to some chartreuse?"

That was, according to the most reliable sources, the true story of the historic meeting of two congenial spirits out of which the Musa Press was born.

It was what gynecologists call a precipitated birth. And perhaps the two spirits were too congenial. As far as Max W. was concerned, the whole affair was not more than a fashionable hobby, intended to give him some social luster by the association with writers and artists. He never had cared for literature and never intended to, but being the proprietor of a great publishing house would give to his other business enterprises an air of respectability and cultural refinement which was an asset even from a purely practical viewpoint. He left his publishing partner a free hand in all the more literary transactions. And Johannes von G. threw himself into this enterprise headlong with the enthusiastic rapture of a man who, having won in the lottery, loses all sense of proportion. His surprisingly easy success, the unchecked disposition of considerable sums of money, turned his head. The first months passed in feverish activity. He bought a lot of books and publishing rights from other publishers, prepared the famous almanac, engaged a lot of people for the staff, and made contracts with all his friends—and a new publisher has a lot of friends. The contracts were

very generous, and usually included the rights for books written, unwritten and to be written for some years after the author's death. He even tried to persuade Rainer Maria Rilke to leave his old publisher and to come in, with his complete works, to the Musa Press.

Feeling himself rather as a poet than as a publisher, he addressed his letter to Rilke with the words, "Dear brother in Apollo," which indeed was slightly out of place, since his own whole poetic work consisted of a small brochure of mediocre verses and a novel telling the story of a Saint, which afterward was attacked as a plagiarism. It took some time for Rilke to recover sufficiently from the shock to send him some lines of icy refusal. But von G. was too busy with all his other enjoyable projects to mind seriously such a little set-back.

Everything went well. The offices of the Musa Press occupied the whole first floor of a wonderful old house in one of the most fashionable streets of Munich, facing the English Garden. The house belonged, of course, to Max W. himself, and he had his private apartment on the second floor as well as the offices furnished and decorated by one of the most expensive dealers in antique furniture. In the courtyard beside the garage for his large car, he had installed a laboratory for an expert mechanic, one of the best trained watchmakers from the Schwarzwald (the Black Forest), who was commissioned to improve the mechanism of the famous check register. But in the large front office, Mr. von G. reigned like a king behind an enormous mahogany desk, dictating letters, receiving the visits of writers and artists, conferring with the technical expert responsible for the production about the details of printing, and—last but not least—signing slips for the bookkeeper for payments to authors and artists.

Unfortunately, here again his vivid imagination played him a nasty trick. When, after the first few months, it suddenly turned out that at least some of the collaborators to whom the great publisher had paid liberal advances could with the best will not be identified otherwise than as doubles of Mr. von G. himself, such phenomena of split personality left even the seasoned Max W. a bit flabbergasted. In righteous indignation Max W. immediately turned his partner out of the office, canceled his contract and gave to the assembled staff a little explanatory speech beginning with the memorable words: "At this desk sat lie personified." Thus spoke Max W., the paladin of truth

and henceforth the only proprietor of a large publishing business of which he knew less than nothing.

He avoided occupying the courts with this affair of embezzlement, not only because he was a gentleman and because it seemed hopeless anyway to try to recover the money, but for another very good reason. Mr. von G. knew a bit too much about Max W.'s little secrets in private as well as in business life. And you can not well count on the discretion of a man whom you turn over to the courts.

There were still some people in the office who had some acquaintance with the book trade, but Max W. had become a bit suspicious about literary people. He wanted to have someone trustworthy in the office—a man in his confidence without a too vivid imagination so far as cash advances were concerned. This seemed to Emmy von H. the psychological moment to advance my name. When much later I learned about the somewhat complicated background of my appointment, I marveled at Emmy von H.'s and Max W.'s moral courage after the rather disappointing experience with her initial good offices. It would have been quite comprehensible for Max W. to develop a certain phobia against Emmy von H.'s literary friends. But I have often noticed that evidently I have a certain way of inspiring confidence, especially with people of somewhat dubious morality—maybe because I have a weakness for charming rascals, who generally respond to this feeling by behaving toward me like perfect gentlemen. But of course when I first visited Max W. in his office, I was far from suspecting this reason for our mutual sympathy.

He was one of the best looking and best dressed men I have ever seen; not very tall, but slim and supple like a racehorse. His small head with the large nose, the narrow dark eyes, the smooth black hair and the tanned skin made him look a little like an American Indian. And this impression was intensified by the free and easy grace of his gestures, by his whole attitude of natural poise and quiet self-confidence. He looked like a propaganda poster for the new type of daring and successful conquistadores of business, born out of the fertile imagination of an advertising agency. I could not expect to be offered a large position. After all, my acquaintance with the publishing business was almost as distant as his, though I knew a bit

more about literature. But at least the salary he proposed was one on which I could live. He left to the technical director the details of what I was supposed to do, since he himself had only a vague notion of the whole business. But it seemed that there were manuscripts to read and—well, you will see for yourself. He felt sure at any rate that my collaboration would be valuable to the Musa Press.

The technical director, an elderly, learned bookseller, supervising especially the sale and the advertising, was probably not very sure what he should do with me, and left me pretty much to myself for the first weeks. Endowed with a quick apprehension and a certain sense of direction, I soon got a general view of the whole complicated mechanism needed to plan, to produce, and, most difficult of all, to sell a book.

The young man who supervised the printing and the binding had, oddly enough, no professional training at all. He was a young composer, a Baron von Westermann, one of the many Baltic barons who, driven from their estates by the Russian Revolution and scattered all over the world, proved their astonishing versatility and adaptability. Highly cultured and intelligent, familiar with the world of books and of literature, he had easily acquired the knowledge of technical details and technical terms needed for his correspondence with the printing and binding firms. Westermann would have preferred to compose symphonies but in the meantime he composed books in order to earn a living for himself and his old mother who had escaped from Russia with him. It was not long before he was called to the Broadcast in Munich, where he supervised the musical program. Before he went, however, he had transmitted to me most of the inside story of the Musa Press and a good deal of his know-how.

But the man with whom I had to work in the first place was what in Germany is called the "lector," which means somewhat more than a reader. It is the man supposed to read and to edit the manuscripts, to carry on the correspondence with the authors, to negotiate the contracts and so on. In our case, the "lector" was hardly supposed to do all these things, since he used to appear in the office only once or twice a week, bringing back, with some critical comments, the manuscripts he had read, taking the newly arrived ones with him, and disappearing

again as fast as possible. He was a very elegant and very handsome young man, deeply interested in literature and convinced that he was a literary genius himself. Of a rather modest origin, he had married a rich girl from a patrician family of Hamburg, the sister of a literary friend, who had encouraged both his marriage and his literary ambitions. Being an upstart, lacking even the famous "Abiturium," he secretly suffered from an inferiority complex which expressed itself in a rather arrogant attitude.

He indeed possessed artistic talent, which many years later proved to be that for sculpture. But at this time, in order to maintain his standing with his wife and her rather disapproving family, he had staked his all upon a literary success which was slow to come. He worked with a sort of frantic effort and neglected everything else for his literary work. Advised to help this young man with his files and his manuscripts in the office, I soon found out that the whole department was in pretty bad shape. Manuscripts were mislaid, important letters had never been answered and had somehow disappeared between the pages of another manuscript, and so on.

Not in the least impressed by his haughty manners—after all I had seen literary snobs before—I once told him firmly but amicably what I thought of this mess. Such purely objective statements worked usually in the most satisfactory way in my personal contacts—at least when delivered orally, with a friendly and encouraging smile. Whereas the same words written in a letter were likely to have the unintentional effect of a bomb shell, as I learned from some surprising experiences. We should have—for letters as for music—signs for the delivery like piano, forte, andante and so on. It is indeed the tone which makes the music.

In the case of my new colleague, this tone of real friendliness proved convincing enough to win me his respect, his confidence, and even his friendship. He felt relieved by the discovery that with me he could be his simple and rather uncertain self without having to play the exacting role of pretended superiority. Instead of bluffing, he could put his cards on the table, convinced that I knew them anyway, and would not take advantage of this knowledge. Some months later, he gave me the most striking proof of his confidence by asking my advice as to whether or not he should resign his position in order

to concentrate on his writing. Notwithstanding the fact that my motives could easily be questioned, I told him frankly what I believed to be true: that evidently he had no real talent and no real inclination for the publishing business, and that the more analytical attitude of a publisher, a critic or an editor was indeed hardly compatible with the productive task of creative writing, which he had in mind. He resigned, and never regretted his decision, despite the fact that as a writer he turned out to be a failure. We remained good friends for many years.

Strangely enough, exactly the same situation occurred, later, in respect to another colleague in my editorial career. These freely given signs of confidence in my impartiality, even in cases where a kind of personal competition was involved, are among the most valuable experiences of my life. The supposedly indispensable factor of competition produces morally and humanly less gratifying phenomena. Actually I never was a competitor but always a collaborator, and consequently I was usually treated as such. At any rate, I never had to fight intrigues in my professional life, perhaps simply because I did not assume or even notice their existence.

My passion for logic and objective thinking made it easy for me to become familiar with the legalistic intricacies of contracts between publisher and author. During the first year I had more opportunity than I wanted for developing and exercising this special talent, since it became necessary to untangle the almost Gordian knots of innumerable and often purely chimerical contracts concluded by the imaginative Mr. von G. My experiences in these endless negotiations enabled me later to formulate contracts myself where indeed nothing was left to chance. I was especially cautious when dealing with people who, totally devoid of any commercial sense, and therefore always suspecting diabolic tricks, are much more difficult to handle than the shrewdest businessman. These victims of a sort of mania of persecution are a real ordeal for an honest publisher. But thanks to my psychological and psychiatric studies, I often succeeded even in such desperate cases.

I remember with special delight a long lawsuit brought against our firm by a well known translator from the Russian—Karl N. He was a highly intelligent though somewhat confused old gentleman

inspired by the loftiest moral and social ideals. Living in a suburb of Munich and forced to strict economy, he used to combine his regular evening lectures in an institute for popular education with his business appointments in town, in consequence of which he used to appear in our office in the morning wearing his slightly greenish dinner jacket.

He, like the great majority of the German people, had never succeeded in understanding the disturbing phenomenon of inflation. Inflation in 1920 had not yet reached the feverish tempo of later years, but it had become accentuated enough to force a doubling or trebling of retail prices even for books.

It was easy enough to prove that according to the dollar or the gold mark, this measure did not constitute a real raising of the original price but only a very incomplete adaptation to the changed value of the mark. But our old friend had a fundamentalist faith in the dogma that a mark is a mark. Besides, even Mr. Helferich, the director of the Reichsbank, himself had proclaimed this pious creed—though with his tongue in his cheek. For him, ignoring the inflation and staging a sort of fraudulent bankruptcy was a patriotic act, intended to sabotage reparations and to "save" Germany's Big Industrialists. Mr. Stinnes was only the most successful profiteer of this organized robbery resulting in an almost total confiscation of all smaller fortunes and so in the annihilation of the educated middle class. But even many serious businessmen naïvely enjoyed at least in the first phase of inflation the marvelous nominal profits in marks, which in fact were only losses and more and more diminished their substance.

So the old Karn N. was really excusable in demanding that, having paid in advance for the whole edition his royalties based upon the original retail price, we should now double or triple this advance according to the raised retail price. I tried to explain to him that the royalties were paid in a mark of much higher value in proportion to the original price of the book, while our seemingly higher price did not even entirely cover the real depreciation of the mark. I talked to the winds. The old gentleman belligerently buttoned up his dinner jacket and announced that he would seek a court decision.

In the course of this suit I noticed again how difficult it is to explain even to your own lawyer a case which lies a bit outside his usual routine. Deeply convinced that a layman doesn't understand anything,

the lawyer usually follows a certain pattern set up once and forever in his mind, regardless of whether or not your special case fits in this scheme. I had carefully prepared a long statement of five or six typewritten pages for our lawyer in order to explain the rather complicated details of our case. But when we received the written opinion of the first court, it turned out to our astonishment that evidently neither our lawyer, nor his opponent, nor the judge had understood what it was all about. We appealed to a higher court, and when this court decided to try first the negotiation of an amicable arrangement directly between the two parties under the chairmanship of a higher judge, I was asked to represent our firm, together with our lawyer.

I did not like the idea, because I knew old Karl N. socially as a friend of Lou Andreas-Salomé, but, as it seemed, I was the only one to understand the whole case. While waiting in the corridor of the courthouse, I greeted the old gentleman in a friendly manner and told him that I was sorry to appear as his opponent. "But," I said, "we both, you and I, believe in real justice; the whole dispute is only a matter of different interpretation of facts."

That was a good opening, and soon our conversation changed to more literary topics. When finally we were called before the judge, we both regretted having to interrupt a very interesting discussion about Dostoevski.

Had we been alone with the judge, we would have come very easily to terms, but the lawyers, of course, wanted to show that they were worth their money and behaved rather aggressively. In a critical moment, when our lawyer used the classic trick of stuffing his papers into his briefcase, declaring that under these circumstances we would break up the negotiations, I quietly pulled him down onto his chair, from which he had jumped up, and made a new appeal to reason. Since I was the only one who, after two hours of heated debate, was not heated and not tired, I succeeded in putting through a reasonable settlement. We made some small concessions in the form of a modest payment without abandoning the principles of our position that further adaptation of the selling prices to the growing inflation should not entitle the author to new demands. Since I had succeeded in eliminating from his mind the suspicion against my personal motives, old Karl N. was enabled to understand the conclusiveness of my arguments.

The trouble with lawyers is that nobody believes in their objectivity, and even when they defend the right cause with the right arguments, they are always suspected of playing tricks—a suspicion which sometimes is not entirely unjustified. I really enjoyed these little legalistic contests as I would a quiz game, because their outcome proved to me again and again that the capacity for clear and logical thinking, combined with honest objectivity and impartiality, is much more efficient than all sorts of professional tricks and bluffs. My strong faith in reason and rationality, the naïve conviction that with logical arguments you can do almost anything, even forcing your opponent to accept a simple truth, gave me what many years later a clergyman in North Dakota called "a basically missionary attitude." Even the most tenacious fool could not really irritate me as long as I saw the chance of helping him by a conversion to my gospel truth of reason. This was definitely progress, compared with the intellectual snobbishness of my youth. But I knew my Freud well enough to suspect that even this benevolent tolerance, this friendly sympathy and helpfulness toward mankind in general, this zeal to enlighten the heathen was far from being humble Christian charity.

One of the great advantages of my new profession was that I learned how to read. Editing a manuscript and preparing it for the printer, correcting the proofs again and again, I read every one of our books at least four or five times, and with painstaking accuracy. It has to be a pretty good book to stand this test. A mediocre book becomes detestable at the second reading. And your critical judgment upon a manuscript becomes singularly sharpened by the idea that, recommending it for publication, you probably will have to read it four times more.

In a better organized publishing house my activities would have been divided between two or three persons, but the singular conditions in the Musa Press favored a certain universalism. By force of circumstances, I became a sort of general handyman, since our staff, according to Max W.'s changing fortunes, was subjected to certain fluctuations, shrinking or expanding like a soap bubble.

Ambitious sons of business friends, or rich young men suspected of being willing to invest some money in the publishing business,

were graciously invited to join our staff—at least as unpaid assistants. So Ödön von Horvath, who later was to become a successful playwright, learned, under my guidance, the secrets of how to treat authors. An Austrian Count, a former diplomat who was at heart a poet, bought, with a share in the enterprise, the honor of working in our literary department and the hope of having his verses printed. The younger brother of the "Miracle" poet Karl Vollmoeller once proposed his partnership with the intention of converting the Musa Press into a publishing house as Catholic as he himself had become a year before. The negotiations miscarried, though not in consequence of religious scruples.

For the position of technical director Max W. always tried to find a man who looked as solid and respectable as possible in order to strengthen his credit with printers, binders, and paper manufacturers. I say "always" because this problem presented itself during the first two years at least three times, since it seemed difficult to find a man of this type who was also able to adapt himself to the rather unusual business methods of Max W. The first one whom I had known soon decided to make himself independent by buying a bookstore. The second one looked, indeed, as if he were taken from the German classic of business life, Gustav Freytag's "Soll und Haben" (Debit and Credit). He was the honest businessman personified. With his short gray whiskers in the style of Kaiser Franz Joseph, with his outmoded cutaway encompassing a big tummy adorned by a large watch chain, he presented the most reassuring counterpart to Max W.'s rather disquieting elegance. It was a perfect stage effect, which Max W. enjoyed with a certain artistic as well as practical satisfaction. It was the classical combination of the brilliant young chief and the faithful old executive serving the firm for generations (though in our case the whole firm was only one year old).

As I immediately anticipated when first hearing the unctuous voice of this overplayed personification of loyalty, he turned out to be an entirely unreliable and incompetent person. Fortunately, he could be replaced by an assistant he had brought with him. Mr. G., a man about fifty, came from an excellent old Württemberg family. In Württemberg his brother had been Minister of Justice, but Mr. G. had limited himself to the more modest profession of the book trade,

because of a deeply rooted inferiority complex which was not entirely unjustified. He was not unintelligent, but he was terribly slow of perception and decision. When he became nervous, which happened every moment, he could not find the right words—for which he then substituted "something." It was not easy to guess what he wanted to say, when sometimes a whole sentence was composed of something, something, something. But he really knew his business and was a most conscientious worker, morally and professionally reliable. He only needed to be incessantly prodded and reassured and cheered up by a more vital and active personality in order to overcome his neurotic inhibitions and his tendency to gloomy self-complaints.

As things stood, a not unimportant part of my duties was to give pep talks to poor old G., who had developed the habit of confessing to me all his professional and even part of his personal sorrows. Like a drug addict, he became more and more dependent upon these moral hypodermics and less and less able to make a decision without having thrashed it out with me. Naïvely enjoying my "good influence" and my own youthful energy, I did not realize that this sort of well meaning psychotherapy was sure to aggravate rather than to cure his complexes.

As for me, I learned a lot from this close association with a man of long practical experience. I learned that in order to produce a book, you have to write letters which, if printed, would fill another book. I learned how to restrict by an almost mathematical precision of expression the unlimited possibilities of stupid misunderstandings; how to speed up and to activate the tempo of production; how to choose the right paper, the right type, the right size and the right binding, as well as the right jacket for every book. I learned the whole highly exciting, creative process through which, in a combination of pedantic exactitude and artistic sensitivity, the little miracle of a perfect book materializes. My esthetic sense and my passionate love for books were here not less useful than my Prussian perfectionism and my training in philological accuracy.

As always in times of inflation, when people try to invest their money in more or less real values—not subjected to sudden depreciation—the interest in artistic values also began to increase. In the book

trade there was a boom of *éditions de luxe,* printed on precious paper in limited numbered editions, often adorned with signed engravings, woodcuts or lithographs and bound by hand in the most expensive materials by famous binders. People who never before had owned a book now became collectors of such rare editions, considered rightly or wrongly as good investments. And, on the other hand, many publishers and even little booksellers who had not the slightest idea of the technical finesse requisite for a real *édition de luxe,* began to produce small, special printings which were easy to sell at almost any price.

This, of course, was my special dish and, in addition to my editorial activities, I indulged in the wonderful hobby of producing precious books, masterpieces of technical and artistic refinement. In Germany this sort of luxury is called "Bibliophilie" but with me it was almost a bibliomania, a sort of thoroughly enjoyable vice. Things done with such a real passion are always well done. It was small wonder that with a staff of enthusiastic and cultivated "amateurs" or "dilettantes" in the real sense of the words—people in love with and delighted by their work—our publishing house soon won a high reputation for the literary and technical quality of its books. Even our advertising, written and designed mostly by myself, had a certain note of distinction. The announcement of our Anatole France Edition, for example, was a long and highly literary essay of seven pages with only one page left for pure publicity. The special notices sent with our books to the reviewers were so carefully worded that, to my surprise, I found my sentences repeated verbatim in many reviews, appearing in the great press and often signed with very distinguished names. I was annoyed only if, in an attempt at originality, a reviewer had upset the harmonious balance of a complicated sentence structure. Never again will I have such a wide circulation for my writings.

I doubt if, from a purely commercial viewpoint, a more popular form of advertising would not have been preferable, but my style fitted exactly the class of literature we had to announce, and nobody interfered with my high ambitions. During my whole professional life I have been fortunate enough to be allowed to do the work I liked and to do it as I pleased. I never had to accept any other method of working than that of perfectly free collaboration between equals or

any other criterion of superiority than that of skill and knowledge. Regardless of whether or not I was nominally the chief, this good and free atmosphere was never missing. I never had and never was a "boss," the most ugly product of economic servitude.

My sovereign disregard for the hard commercial facts of the publishing business could never be seriously challenged since, from the beginning, I had dissociated myself entirely from the selling department and from all purely financial problems. The annoying details of the day-by-day business remained the undisputed domain of the men in our selling department, and, in the last resort, of poor old G.

He miraculously succeeded in keeping up our commercial reputation despite Max W.'s slightly unorthodox business usage. But he had a hard time. A timid soul, without any self-confidence, narrowly moralistic and over-conscientious, he was at the same time horrified and fascinated by Max W.'s unscrupulous brilliancy and insolent daring. Old G. loved, admired and hated in Max W. the excess of all the qualities the total lack of which was the tragedy of his own life. Every day he worked himself up to a state of righteous indignation, swearing that he would resign his post, that he would force a showdown with Max W., who never kept his financial engagements and so on. But when he finally succeeded in getting at least Max W.'s well trained secretary over the telephone, he couldn't help speaking in a sweet and halting voice, as if asking for an audience with the Pope. It was not easy to get Max W. for a disagreeable conference and, though his private apartment was only one flight up, he managed to remain invisible for days when he knew that there were some financial problems brewing in the office.

I remember one Friday evening when there was not enough cash for the outgoing mail and we of the staff had to pitch in some marks for stamps. On the next day, a bill of exchange was due which could not be extended; if protested, it meant bankruptcy for the Musa Press. Max W., of course, was not to be found. He had some conferences in town, his secretary said, and he would be leaving for his country house over the week-end as usual. And, indeed, about five P.M. his splendid car with the chauffeur in livery was waiting in the court. Old G. and the bookkeeper in their despair decided to form an ambush

and to surprise the reluctant Max W. at the foot of the staircase. They did not have to wait very long. But Max W., more charming than ever, dismissed them with a friendly wave of his hand. "Awfully sorry, gentlemen, I kept you waiting, but I am in a terrible hurry. I can not spare a minute." And out he goes to his waiting car, followed by the little deputation. "But the bill of exchange tomorrow, Mr. W.," stammers G. "We will talk it over on Monday," answers Max W., with a condescending smile. "On Monday the Musa Press will be in bankruptcy," cries the bookkeeper. "I am sure you will know how to handle this little bottleneck," says Max W., closing the conversation and the door of his car with a polite little nod of the head. And his limousine, with a discreet signal of the horn, starts rolling over the sidewalk into the street, leaving behind two flabbergasted petitioners with their papers in hand.

I don't know exactly how G. managed to avoid the worst; I suppose he paid the bill out of his own pocket. On Monday Max W. was back and had evidently decided to go out of his way to appear voluntarily in our offices. He was in higher spirits and more confident than ever. Offering his golden cigarette case, he told us that he intended to buy for himself the adjoining house—a real bargain, a bit more than a million. He could then move out of here, allowing us to expand our offices to the second floor. "I know you are too crowded here, and with the extension of our business, we will need more people for our staff, and accordingly more room." He spoke so convincingly that I am sure he himself believed in this wonderful project.

Even for a skeptical mind like mine it was difficult to resist this almost hypnotic positiveness. The whole thing was sure and settled and, listening to him, you began almost to doubt if it was true that three days before we had collected the money for stamps. Had he perhaps actually had gambler's luck, a daring speculation yielding an enormous profit over night? Had he gotten new capital for his check register? The most fantastic seemed most probable as long as Max W. was talking millions with the untroubled assurance of the great financiér. When he left, we looked at each other as if awaking from a pleasant dream to drab reality. I felt like applauding. It was the most perfect and most astonishing performance I had ever seen, especially given the heavy odds of a public only too familiar with the magician

himself and his rather black magic. But the charm worked—like a charm.

Probably Max W., like every artist, felt technical difficulties to be an inspiring challenge. Otherwise another performance, given without any necessity, is hardly comprehensible. As I said before, he liked company and used to spend his evenings in the most fashionable night club with a large crowd of friends, who, at closing time, were often invited to continue their festivity in his apartment. Being a bit hasty with women, he had on one such occasion locked himself up in his bedroom with a pretty girl. Her escort, friend, husband, fiancé or whatever, didn't like this idea and went haywire. Inflamed by alcohol and armed with a heavy paperweight, the jealous and rather husky gentleman first broke the door and then almost broke Max W.'s head, before the other guests could rescue their genial host. The morning after, the story had already traveled to the first floor and we were slightly surprised when, around noon, Mr. W.'s secretary asked politely over the telephone if Mr. G. and the accountant would please come up for a little conference. Max W. received the two gentlemen, sitting behind his desk, his head bloody but unbowed. He smiled through his bandages as graciously as possible, and, with a half comforting, half apologetic gesture of his bandaged hand, he said casually, "Nothing serious, gentlemen, only a little accident with my car." He did not go so far as to explain the evidence of the demolished door, he simply ignored it with such aplomb that nobody dared to look in its direction. There was nothing really urgent to talk over. He could as well have waited until at least the door, if not his head, was repaired. But evidently—in order to prove to himself and to others that his self-confidence was not to be shaken by temporary defeat, he felt impelled to this display of gratuitous impudence.

Strangely enough, I was so used to seeing and hearing old G. worry that I did not feel obliged to worry myself, though my own future was, to a certain extent, connected with that of the Musa Press. I felt sure—and it proved to be true—that somehow old G. would succeed in balancing the income and the expenses of our firm. In fact, only small debts are really dangerous. On a larger scale debts are credit, and if your credit is very large your creditors themselves can't

afford to drive you to bankruptcy, where only a small percentage of their claim could be recovered. I knew another great publishing house in Munich which had grown to enormous dimensions only because its enterprising proprietor had found out that the easiest way of placating impatient affiliated entrepreneurs was to give them new and larger orders. When it came to the worst, the printers, binders or paper manufacturers would get a share in the enterprise. The very bulk of a large boat keeps it afloat, even in a stormy sea, where a small boat is easily sunk. And it was astonishing how large our boat had become within two years.

The megalomania of the imaginative Mr. Johannes von G. had once for all determined the bold outline of the whole enterprise. We had of course dropped many items of his original program, but many other projects, once started by him, seemed worth while to be continued, especially, for example, this Nietzsche edition, limited to 1,500 numbered copies, and almost fully subscribed for all thirty volumes after the first volume had proved the excellence of our production.

## CHAPTER XII

# Strange Nietzsche Apostles

NIETZSCHE AT THAT time had not yet been discovered by the Nazis. He was the "good European," as he had called himself, the prophet denouncing the dangers of William II's militaristic Second Reich, which now looks like a pretty harmless prefiguration of Hitler's Third Reich. He was the merciless critic of this sort of Germanism for which the French have found the word "*Bochisme*." He had been the first to recognize, with the hateful perspicacity of disappointed love, the deeper meaning of the "case Wagner." And last, but not least, he had spurned in words of utmost disdain the attempts of anti-Semites to exploit his philosophy for their own sake, even when such offers came from his sister's husband Förster.

It is the irony of fate that Elisabeth Förster-Nietzsche, surviving her husband and her brother for many decades, succeeded in creating a Nietzsche who more and more became an amalgamated Förster-Nietzsche, until finally he could be taken over and annexed by the Nazis as their philosophical forerunner. It is typical that their spiritual not less than their political annexations were generally accepted without any objection by the civilized world. I have spoken before, in connection with Lou Andreas-Salomé, about the literary feud against the "Nietzsche Archive" in Weimar where old Elisabeth, helped by two nephews, administered and guarded, like a dragon, the treasure of Nietzsche's manuscripts. It was an open secret that the professional Nietzsche sister, unrestrained by scientific or philological integrity, had doctored Nietzsche's original texts for publication, whenever his words seemed in too striking contradiction to her own conception of what her brother "Fritz" as she called him ought to be. She had codified her official Nietzsche legend in a great biography and in many other books, adapting from time to time the interpretation of his multiform philosophy to the special demands of the day.

Hearing about the new Nietzsche edition months before my personal contact with the Musa Press, I had once, in a conversation with Emmy von H., mentioned the fact that it would be advisable to have the text of the new edition printed from the original manuscripts under the supervision of a reliable man of science, instead of simply reprinting the older edition. With this casual remark I had unknowingly opened a brilliant career to a young man who was predestined to play among the colorful cast of our staff a leading though involuntarily comical role. For years I never tired of enjoying and even partly supporting his performances, highly amused by the spectacular genesis of a philosophical reputation and a social career starting out from pure fake.

Dr. Friedrich W. came from a partly Jewish middle class family, whose modest fortune had been wiped out by war and inflation. Some years older than I, he had managed to take his doctor's degree in natural science during the war, since because of an affection of his lungs he had been exempted from military service. He would have needed some years more of study and a special state examination for the dubious chance of gaining, after years of waiting, a small teaching position. He decided to make his fortune in an easier way. Probably helped by his elder brother, who, as a fashionable architect in Berlin, made a lot of money, he started his social career in Munich with two well tailored suits and an impressive fur coat inherited from a wealthy uncle.

Almost six feet tall and well padded by his tailor, he was a decorative figure of the gentleman-scholar type. His regular features, his somewhat too curly blond hair, his long nose and protruding chin gave him the interesting profile of a ram turned intellectual. The large shell-rimmed glasses, at that time the indispensable mark of the fashionable intelligentsia, underlined this favorable impression and, at the same time, magnified his eyes—which, small and watery blue, recalled, strangely enough, those of a gander. To complete the Nietzschean ideal of physical and spiritual vigor, his complexion showed the healthiest tan which a careful make-up is able to produce. His exterior, as well as what we may call his philosophy of life, was the direct result of his limited, but intensive reading.

Besides the technical literature needed for his studies of natural

science, he intimately knew only two authors: Nietzsche and Casanova. When once an intelligent woman jokingly compared him with Lucien de Rubempré, the hero of Balzac's "Illusions Perdues," he hastily read this voluminous novel. He felt naïvely flattered and inspired by what he believed to be a success story; whereas the romantic moralist Balzac pictures the tragedy of a young social climber who, helped by chance and women, gains the world—in this case the newspaper world—and loses his soul. There was Nietzsche's superman (now, thanks to a certain inherent justice, degraded to the puerile hero of a comic strip); then the irresistible Italian adventurer filling volumes in his old age with the report of his erotic conquests, and finally Balzac's imaginative picture of a "great world" ruled by social ambition and intrigue. Three fascinating examples; especially for a young man of delicate health and even more delicate social position, without money and without great physical or intellectual capacities, but obsessed with the idea of making his way as what the French call "a soldier of fortune."

In Munich Friedrich W. made the acquaintance of a Jewish banker with two pretty daughters. He did not pretend to have commercial talents, but, on the contrary, he played the scholar and talked about Nietzsche to the father, to the mother and to the two girls. All of them felt highly flattered by the friendship of a distinguished young scholar who at the same time proved to be a man of the world, escorting the daughters not only to lectures but also to fashion shows; and representing in their salon among businessmen and other bankers an element of higher culture and spiritual aristocracy. It looked as if this serious and brilliant young man intended to marry one of the girls, though it was not quite clear which one. He evidently was restrained only by the fact that he himself seemed not to have enough money. A rich banker can afford a son-in-law without money but sure of a great scientific career. The first thing to do was to find a good position for him.

The banker happened to be Max W.'s banker, and when Max W. once casually remarked that Emmy von H. had told him that somebody had told her the Musa Press needed a scientific expert for the new Nietzsche edition, Friedrich W.'s career was settled. Max W. was soon convinced that the young man was the greatest Nietzsche authority—and probably the prospective son-in-law of the banker. It

is wise to oblige your banker and to have him connected by some family ties with an enterprise needing large credit. So Friedrich W. became the editor of the new Nietzsche edition, and even a sort of literary director of the Musa Press.

'It was relatively easy to impress businessmen with his being a philosopher and to impress real men of letters with his being a man of practical talent for organization—a great publisher and man of affairs, though actually he was neither the one nor the other. He was not really intelligent, but he was clever enough to know that, with people like me and some other literati connected with our staff, it would be impossible to keep up pretensions which he knew himself unable to fulfill. From the first moment I had not left him in doubt that I saw through the whole situation. Feeling that I was without personal ambition and not given to intrigue, he had decided to disarm me by appealing to my sporting sense. He knew that he would be dependent on me in every matter where pure bluff would not do. He found me terribly useful and easy to exploit, so long as I agreed to be exploited simply for the fun of it. So he decided to treat me quite frankly as a good friend and almost as an accomplice, without concealing his own weaknesses. He even tried to smile when a witty colleague of mine and I amused ourselves by making fun of him.

Friedrich W. was willing to pay any price so long as he needed me, and so long as he felt sure that in my amused tolerance I would not openly interfere with his ambitions. He was of course the right man to ingratiate himself with the old Elisabeth Förster-Niezsche and to win the confidence of her nephews who, together with Friedrich W. himself, were appointed to the editorial staff for the new Nietzsche edition. The original idea of a really critical edition was of course rather frustrated by this alliance, but, on the other hand, the support of the Nietzsche Archive enabled him to become the founder and president of a Nietzsche Society, formed after the pattern of the well known Goethe Society.

'It was obvious that such an organization closely connected with our publishing house might enhance our reputation, and so I did my best to promote this plan. I left it to Friedrich W. to make the personal contacts with a number of outstanding personalities of the scien-

tific and literary world, who were to be asked to lend their names as members of the advisory board of the new Society. Nobody knew Friedrich W.'s name, but he told every one of the prominent men that the others had accepted the honor of becoming the figureheads of the Nietzsche Society, which really was rather his private Society. And besides that, his connection with the Nietzsche Archive and his official position as editor of the new Nietzsche Edition and as a sort of director in a great new publishing house inspired quite naturally a certain confidence. Everybody assumed that it was purely accidental that the name and fame of this important young man had not yet reached his ear.

The first announcement of the Nietzsche Society was a really impressive document. I had succeeded in formulating the rather vague ideas of the founder in a highly literary style, and had done my best to have this manifesto printed on excellent paper with typographical perfection. Indeed, nobody needed to be ashamed to see his illustrious name connected with such a noble enterprise. The members of the society up to a certain date would have the special privilege of becoming subscribers to the Nietzsche Edition and to other smaller publications to be produced by the Society itself. One of them was, for example, a reprint of a lecture which Friedrich W. succeeded in giving before different audiences—not without having submitted his first draft to me for careful editing and rewriting.

Functioning behind the scenes in the additional role of secretary of the Nietzsche Society, I felt a deep satisfaction in helping to make this vehicle of personal ambition into a real instrument of those international and supranational tendencies which soon after the war seemed to prepare and to confirm, at least in the cultural and intellectual spheres of all the different countries, the spiritual unity of Nietzsche's "good Europeans." Remaining high above the ugly banalities of political quarrels, the European intelligentsia was to shape the better future of the world. It was, of course, regrettable that, in our special case, these lofty ideals were represented by an ambitious faker. But evidently—according to a mysterious and ironical law of nature—even the best ideas could not be promoted without this type of man who, trying to make use of an idea for his personal interest, would in the

long run, thanks to Hegel's "ruse of the idea," serve the good cause in spite of himself.

It was a sort of personal triumph for me when Friedrich W., as president of the Niezsche Society, was invited to the "Entretiens de Pontigny," a sort of private international meeting organized by some outstanding French intellectuals for the purpose of serving European understanding. I jokingly called him "l'entretenu de Pontigny," alluding to the French expression "femme entretenue," kept woman. But, after all, this invitation was a real success. Besides he spoke little French, and only a few of the French intellectuals understood German. Embarrassing gaps in his intellectual armor could always be explained by the difficulty of language.

I was much too absorbed in my various practical and intellectual tasks to notice that, in Germany at least, the whole educated middle class, and especially the so-called intelligentsia, was being more and more economically and even morally destroyed by the rising flood of inflation. A revaluation of all values much more drastic than that announced by Nietzsche had begun to take place. I had only to look around in the Musa Press to become aware of its devastating consequences. But probably my inborn sense for comicality prevented me from understanding the deeper and rather tragic meaning of what seemed to me an amusing comedy.

I personally had been educated from my early childhood not to believe in, or to respect money, and it was no shock for me to discover that my old conviction of the purely fictitious value of money now proved to be literally true. To a whole class of smaller businessmen, however—in fact to the whole lower middle class—it seemed a sort of blasphemous desecration when the brown thousand-mark bills, once the largest mark bill available, and consequently regarded with awe, became small change, just sufficient for a bus fare; or when a little later the same bills, changed with a red rubber stamp, were supposed to represent 10,000 or 100,000 or 1,000,000,000 marks without ever amounting to much more than a bus fare. With the belief in the validity of the brown thousand-mark bills which, according to the reassuring but no longer valid note, could be "any time exchanged for

gold in the Reichsbank," with the belief in this venerated symbol of wealth and security, the whole moral world order of the little bourgeois had broken down.

The sentimental piety which small people especially preserved for the original, carefully etched brown bank notes is illustrated by the pathetic fact that among the dozen or so parties formed in the German Republic very soon one sprang up under the name "Party for the revaluation of the brown thousand-mark notes." There was quite a group of people who carefully collected these long since worthless bills in the almost mystical hope that one day they would be restored to their original value. The brown thousand-mark bill was the symbol of a seemingly prehistoric golden age where the moral and the monetary world order had been stable and secure.

To sell something for money, with an enormous nominal profit, meant an actual loss, whereas to accumulate debts and to pay them back as late as possible was the only really profitable and sound business. If everybody had understood these simple facts, the fantastic process of inflation would have been practically impossible. The circulation of unstable paper money would have stopped, and the whole economy would have been reduced to a barter system which, in the latest and most acute stage of inflation, began actually to replace the exchange of money. But it was years before the general public began to realize what it was all about, and before wages and prices began to be regulated according to the gold standard or the value of a foreign currency, preferably the dollar. At this moment only, in 1923, when nobody was any longer able to profit by inflation, Hjalmar Schacht was finally permitted to stabilize the mark, a miracle which anyone could have achieved years before, provided the Reichsbank and more important big business had wanted to do so.

In the meantime, it was only a small minority which, having understood the rules of the game, played it to their profit at the cost of general disaster. To a certain and widely varying degree even those most devoid of commercial talents participated, not only in the losses, but sometimes also in the profits. The smaller family fortunes invested in the safest securities, such as state bonds or mortgages, melted away like snow. But, on the other hand, friends of mine, finding among

all sorts of rubbish in the attic the old, partly golden denture of their long since deceased grandmother, lived from this windfall for many weeks in a fashionable hotel. No wonder, since in 1921 two people could easily live a whole month on what was the equivalent of 7.50 gold marks, less than $2. People disposing of foreign currency were fantastically rich. And the speculation in foreign bills, officially prohibited, became almost a parlor game.

It was a golden time for adventurers like Max W., but it seemed that even he was not able to keep step in this danse macabre of the millions and the milliards. While in Berlin or Vienna, some unknown little bank clerks over night emerged as fabulous nabobs, his fortunes appeared to be subjected to sudden changes. Sometimes it happened that his car, his furniture and even his personal wardrobe were seized by an impatient creditor. Whereupon Max W. immediately ordered half a dozen new suits from the most expensive tailor. The interior decorator immediately protested against the seizure of the furniture, which had not been paid for in the first place and, after a day or two, Max W. even managed to have his car back for the traditional week-end trip to his country house. Such minor catastrophes, due to bad timing, were always soon straightened out and did not have direct repercussions on the affairs of the Musa Press handled by the reliable, though more and more despairing, old Mr. G. Somehow, during the fall of 1921, however, Max W. began to develop rather disquieting interest in the stocks of his publishing house. It happened that, coming home from his night club, he suddenly called the private number of a well known publisher in Munich in order to sell him over the telephone some "Complete Works" published by the Musa Press. The following day by a casual remark of Max W.'s or by a call from the other publisher, we learned to our surprise that over night our Chekhov edition for example had been dumped at a loss without the executives even being consulted.

I don't know whether it was the selling of the Chekhov or the Maupassant edition which was the last straw for us. At any rate, we finally decided things could not go on like this. If Max W. was to sell out the Musa Press piecemeal at bargain prices, there would finally

be nothing left of the whole enterprise and we would be unable to find anyone to take it over in toto which, after all, was our only hope of saving our jobs and those of a large staff. By the way, we had a certain responsibility toward our authors, some of whom had contracts making it illegal for us to sell their books to another publishing house without their consent. Max W., of course, had not the slightest notion of such details and would not care anyway.

We decided that he must be taught manners and that we had to act immediately, despite the fact that old G. on this very day was on a business trip. But he had always been the first to complain and to threaten reprisals. He certainly would assent to our action, consisting of a stern letter addressed to Max W. and signed by all the executives and responsible staff members. The letter asked Max W.'s promise to refrain in the future from such arbitrary transactions as the selling out of valuable parts of the publishing house without consultation with the executives. We declared that, without this assurance, we felt unable to continue our work. We sent a copy to G., urging him to associate himself immediately with our protest.

It seemed obvious that Max W. would be forced to give in because he could not even hope to avoid bankruptcy or to sell his publishing house in time without the help and advice of an experienced staff. And, on the other hand, as things were going at this moment, the protest strike of the whole personnel would be a danger signal to the creditors. But we had forgotten that Max W. was a gambler. He played the strong man and sent every one of us a registered letter canceling our contracts because of the strike. If old G. had taken a firm stand with us, as we had expected, it would have been easy to call this bluff. Unfortunately, Max W. got hold of G. before we could, and using pressure persuaded him to become a strike breaker. G. was not really a traitor, but only a victim of his own weakness and his inborn subalternity. His moral principles simply melted away under Max W.'s irresistible charm. G. himself felt badly enough about this whole situation, which he knew was untenable, because he could not run the whole show alone. He tried to explain to us and to himself that his action was dictated exclusively by the hope of serving our interests by helping Max W. to sell the whole enterprise before going into bankruptcy.

There were some weeks of a strange interregnum, during which G. and we were very busy trying to sell the Musa Press. In fact, we outsiders were better informed than G., especially about contracts and publishing rights—which were my special domain. In order to coordinate our different negotiations and to exchange information we used to hold council every morning in Friedrich W.'s studio. We learned later that he in the meantime had tried behind our backs to negotiate a separate peace with the enemy in a tearful and unsuccessful interview with Max W.

We had decided that, despite our justified indignation at G.'s treason, it was preferable not to sabotage his efforts and to give him all the information for which he desperately asked. In exchange he kept us posted about what was going on in the deserted publishing house and about the progress of his own negotiations. It was a sort of friendly competition, the only question being whether he or we would succeed in finding a buyer before the whole thing collapsed. All of us were in a hurry, especially I. The bookkeeper and the head of the selling department had very soon preferred to take other jobs instead of waiting for the rebirth of the Musa Press. But I had made up my mind not to abandon so easily a ship which I felt sure needed only some repairs in the next port and a more reliable owner in order to continue her successful voyage over the somewhat stormy sea of the literary trade. I had business meetings with financiers and publishers from morning to night, not to speak of the difficult task of solving my personal financial problems. I had not the denture of a deceased grandmother to sell. But, for example, a little bit of platinum from a fumigating lamp acquired in my elegant student days was enough to keep me afloat for several weeks.

Also, I was involved in a very promising project of producing an *édition de luxe* for a French publishing house, called—ominously enough—*La Sirène*. The French or originally Rumanian poet Tristan Tzara and the Swiss Dadaist Paul Arp, both somehow connected with *La Sirène*, had the idea of reprinting the very singular work of a very singular French poet, Isidore Ducasse, who around 1870, had published under the romantic name of Comte de Lautréamont "Les Chants de Maldoror." It was the work of a paranoiac genius known only to a handful of connoisseurs, and ranking indeed with Arthur Rimbaud's

"Saison en Enfer" as one of the most striking examples of "expressionistic" literature, which had just become the latest fashion.

The idea was to produce a small limited edition in Germany, thanks to inflation, for an insignificant fraction of the price for which it could be sold in France. The French publishing house organizing the sale would share the receipts in French francs with the German publisher, who was to oversee and to finance the production. I had found among my friends two groups willing to invest money in a speculation which promised an enormous profit. I as technical adviser was to have a considerable share in it. It looked as if by producing one single *édition de luxe* I would get rich over night.

Everything went well. I prepared a careful contract and bought a sufficient stock of excellent paper at a reasonable price. As soon as Tristan Tzara who, in the meantime, had returned to Paris, sent back the contract signed by *La Sirène,* we would give the book to the printer. But, strangely enough, we never heard from Tristan Tzara again. Telegrams and registered letters remained unanswered. *La Sirène* suddenly stopped singing, and the whole project disappeared like a mirage in blue air. But perhaps it was our good luck, because some months later, by accident, I read the short notice that *La Sirène* had gone into bankruptcy. The paper we had bought was not yet spoiled by print and consequently was easily sold, even with a large margin of profit of which I had my share. Though not a fortune, it was enough to compensate me for the time I had spent in preparation of an exciting project and in thoroughly enjoyable illusions. Besides, I had gotten used to long and complicated negotiations which first looked very hopeful and finally exploded like soap bubbles.

## CHAPTER XIII

# More About Musa Press and Great Literature

AT LEAST THREE or four times I had the Musa Press almost sold, but only almost. And I certainly felt relieved when hearing from old G. that a big new publishing house in Vienna, founded by an Austrian war-and-inflation profiteer, Richard Kola, and accordingly called Rikola Verlag, had shown interest in buying the Musa Press. The banker Kola too was a sort of Max W.—only more successful and a bit more reliable. The people in charge of his publishing house were anything but professionals. They had started by publishing dozens of mediocre books by authors—or in most cases rather ordinary journalists who, thanks to their more or less influential positions in the "great press" of Vienna, seemed an asset to the new enterprise. But the literary, and even the technical, quality of the whole production was so deplorable that the Rikola Verlag could really hope to bolster its prestige by acquiring, as a sort of German branch, a publishing house of such indisputable literary reputation as the Musa Press.

The two men sent to Munich for this purpose were the General Director of Rikola Verlag, a simple businessman without any experience in the book trade, and a former little bookseller named Staudt who, by some stroke of good luck, had become a director in Richard Kola's book factory. They had not even bothered to inform themselves about the financial situation of the Musa Press—which at this moment was more than precarious. Old G. considered their offer a sort of miracle from heaven, the last chance of salvation for the Musa Press just on the edge of the abyss. He suffered agonies when, during the negotiations, Max W., with his usual impressive self-confidence, remained adamant as to the price upon which he and G. had agreed. After some bargaining, the margin between Max W.'s price and the offer of the Rikola Verlag was a mere trifle of 100,000 marks. It made no difference at all, especially not for Max W., who knew that within

three days he would have to go into bankruptcy and lose his last penny. But Max W. ignored the desperate signals of the almost fainting G. and played, the perfect gambler, his final bluff as in a poker party. Closing with a little click the famous golden cigarette case just retrieved from the pawnshop, he said with icy politeness, "Well, gentlemen, I shall not keep you any longer. I am not forced to sell. If you can't agree with my price—sorry, but I can't change it." Before old G. had time to succumb to a stroke, the two gentlemen from Rikola Verlag had given in. Max W., without showing his triumph, graciously invited his victims to dinner in the most expensive restaurant in Munich. But old G. excused himself; he had to go home and lie down with ice compresses on his head.

I am not quite sure of Max W.'s further career. But it seems that, until he died some years ago, he succeeded in getting plenty of money for the improvement of his famous check register, which, without ever functioning, had proved its usefulness—at least for Max W. himself. His short and brilliant career as a publisher remained only a strange interlude in his eventful life.

When I returned to my office in the Musa Press, I realized immediately that it would be my principal task to defend the noble traditions and the high literary prestige of our publishing house from being spoiled by the bad manners and the bad taste of the parvenus who had saved us. It was important to insist as much as possible upon the independent existence of our firm and to avoid any sort of too visible or too close connection with the name of Rikola Verlag. It was bad enough that we had to tolerate in our office the presence of Director Staudt, who, delegated by Richard Kola, at first showed some pretension of playing the master. But he soon gave me the opportunity to put him in his place by a well prepared demonstration of his ignorance. He had never had a higher education and was of less than average intelligence. In one of our first conferences he expressed the understandable wish to be informed about the somewhat complicated copyrights of our Anatole France edition; whereupon, with diabolic pleasure, I embarked upon a long lecture going into every detail and giving, in order to complete his confusion, the different titles partly in German, partly in French.

It was obvious that after the first half hour his head began to whirl. He did not know what it was all about, but he felt obliged to put in some questions which, of course entirely beside the point, I answered with a cool and patient politeness which froze all that was left of his mental capacities. Instead of boldly confessing that he never had read a single book of Anatole France and did not understand a word of French, he desperately tried to save his face. I almost felt sorry for him and a bit ashamed of myself for taking such a cruel advantage of his helplessness. But I knew that from the start and once and for all, I must establish a certain authority, a safeguard against arrogant and incompetent interference with the work I wanted to continue on the same level as before. When, after two hours of this wisely administered grilling, I left my victim in a state of moral and intellectual dissolution, I felt sure that in the future we would get along without any serious friction and that the Musa Press would not lose its literary rank. In fact, the new director treated me henceforth with a sort of cautious and almost shy respect. He definitely avoided asking unnecessary questions or trespassing in any way on what I considered and wished to preserve as my personal domain, my "sphere of influence," to use the language of power politics.

The display of intellectual as well as of physical superiority without provocation is of course equally unfair. It is permissible and even advisable only in self-defense or in defense of a cause against a certain type of stubborn, aggressive and pretentious stupidity.

It was entirely appropriate that the topic of this demonstration should be Anatole France, who had never tired of studying the phenomenon of human stupidity, the most outrageous form of original sin. Long before becoming involved in publishing the first complete German edition of Anatole France, I had felt drawn to this last great humanist by what seemed to me a certain affinity, a sort of spiritual kinship. His ironical skepticism, his esthetic hedonism, were an artistic and intellectual delight to me. The perfectly balanced harmony of his style, rooted in the Greco-Roman tradition of French culture, seemed to express the unobtrusive wisdom and refined elegance, the serenity and distinction of a spiritual man who was, at the same time, a true aristocrat, a noble man—with all the deeper implications of this word.

His passionate doubt had led him up to the edge of nihilism, to the abyss of intellectual despair, but he had saved himself. He had not succumbed to the torpidity of bitter cynicism; his attitude toward life and mankind had remained human and humane. He knew all the triumphs and tragedies of abstract reason and the melancholy of deepest insight into human nature. But his irony was mitigated by kindness, and his contempt by compassion. And not compassion alone.

He could not tolerate open injustice—individual or social injustice —without being aroused to the fighting passion of a born defender of human right. He had asked himself again and again the question of Pontius Pilate "What is truth?" But never as a cowardly excuse like the Roman proconsul protesting "I am innocent of the blood of this righteous man; see ye to it." Even when the violated human right was represented not by a Messiah but by a little Jewish army captain called Dreyfus, he felt the call of conscience. Unhesitatingly he joined the fight, heralded by the powerful "J'accuse" of his literary rival, Émile Zola, whom as a person and an artist he strongly disliked. A man of 54, a master of letters, he stepped down from the superior calmness of his ivory tower into the tumultuous arena of political mass meetings. In an atmosphere of latent civil war it needed physical as well as moral and intellectual courage to do so. How much courage, we may conclude from his own "Histoire Contemporaine" which, written between 1897 and 1901, was in itself a courageous deed, because it was indeed contemporary history.

And it seemed contemporary history for us in Germany when we began to publish the first translation. The analogies between the weak French Republic of 1897 and the weak German Republic of 1921 needed hardly to be emphasized—as I did not fail to do in my articles and even in my publicity. The dark cobwebs of political and private intrigues; the conspiracies of royalists and church hierarchs under the very eyes of the government; the fanatic anti-Semitism and noisy patriotism of what he called "trublions" and what we began to call "Nazis"; a republican police using their rubber clubs against republican demonstrations. We recognized every single trait.

In his marvelous travesty on French history, "The Penguin Island," he has retold the Dreyfus case in the chapter "The case of the 80,000 hay bundles," a masterpiece of satirical art, with pointed caricatures of

all the protagonists including himself and his companions in arms—Zola, Clémenceau, Jaurès and all the others.

One year before the First World War he published "La Révolte des Anges," full of prophetic visions and deepest insights into the problemâtical nature of victory in war or revolution, if it is not a victory in the spirit. But when in 1914 the war became reality, he could not remain like Romain Rolland "Au dessus de la mêlée" (above the struggle). Temporarily he succumbs to the general war psychosis. He writes violently nationalistic war manifestos under the title "Ce que disent nos morts" (What our dead are saying) but he is soon disenchanted. And after the war, in the glory of fame and old age, he has the moral courage to confess openly that he "regrets these articles as the most shameful deed of his life."

It was a sort of international demonstration for world peace when in 1921 he was honored by the Nobel Prize, or rather the Nobel Prize by him. We German intellectuals understood it in this sense and certainly I with my enthusiastic love for France, for Anatole France and for all the great ideas implemented in the name of France: enlightenment, liberty and Europeanism. And Anatole France himself seemed to give a new confirmation to this meaning. At an almost Biblical age he vigorously opposed the misuse of power among nations and among classes. He pleaded for peace, real and total peace, political and social peace. His last public speech at the banquet celebrating his eightieth birthday was nothing else than these few words, "Let us make peace." He knew that even in 1923 there was no peace, but only latent war. This wise old skeptic, by the very integrity of his intellectualism, had become a moral authority. He deserved the title of honor which once he bestowed upon Zola. He had himself become "the conscience of the world."

I would have been delighted to give him on his eightieth birthday, as the representative of his German publisher, our official and my personal homage. But a trip to Paris was at this time an expensive and difficult enterprise, so I had to limit myself to a long telegram which, after some serious reflection, I decided to phrase in German, because for a German publishing house this seemed a matter of national dignity; yet my style for the occasion had become as French as one can be in the German language.

Things worked smoothly in the Musa Press since, thanks to Mr. Kola, we did not have to worry continuously about money. Dr. Friedrich W. had succeeded in gaining for himself and the Nietzsche Society a sort of semi-independence. But I of course continued to survey the publications which, with modest pride, he used to exhibit as his personal work, at least when I was not around. Despite a certain amount of "mental cruelty" to which he was subjected from my side, he did not want a separation, since to a certain extent his success was dependent on me, as far as real work was concerned.

In his social career Friedrich W. did pretty well all by himself. He had become the friend and sort of fiancé of a somewhat eccentric, widowed Baltic baroness. A bit older than he, living with her half-grown daughter and a 70-year-old mother, the baroness introduced him in her salon to the so-called "highest society," including even such distinguished persons as the papal nuncio Monsignor Pacelli, who was to become Pius XII, and the philosophical best-seller writer Oswald Spengler. The baroness had lost her own fortune in Russia and was financially dependent upon her rich, despotic and capricious old mother, who ran the whole family. The daughter had not the slightest chance of growing up from a spoiled child into a really responsible person. Throughout her life she had been extravagant and thoughtlessly wasteful, obliged to make at regular intervals—first to her mother, then to her husband and now again to her mother—the tearful confession of accumulated debts when her dressmakers and modistes no longer gave her credit.

In the hectic and empty life of a society woman paying with a sort of slavery for her indispensable luxury, the serious young scholar Friedrich W. represented a higher spiritual dignity, superior to the futility of her own milieu. And Friedrich W. did his best to make himself an attraction. He listened attentively to the complaints of the old mother about her extravagant daughter and to the complaints of the daughter about her tyrannical mother. He slowly and cautiously prepared, step by step, his way to a marriage based upon the largesse of the old mother. His chances seemed excellent, and once he showed to me with beaming satisfaction the blueprints for a wonderful little villa to be erectetd in an elegant suburb of Munich as the wedding present from his future mother-in-law. It was at this time that he

suddenly discovered the coat-of-arms of his family and had it nicely painted to decorate the wall in the little hall of his studio. He even had his own portrait painted by an ambitious young artist who was glad to leave him the picture as an "extended loan" without asking for any compensation. Showing the great man life-size and adorned with his uncle's sumptuous fur, this portrait in a big golden frame covered one whole wall in the studio. It seemed predestined to figure in an aristocratic gallery of ancestors. The artist had succeeded in making his model's most ambitious dreams of himself come true or, at least, visible, on about seventy square feet of canvas and oil paint. And Friedrich W. seemed not embarrassed, but rather inspired, by the continuous presence of what, with Freud, we may call his super-ego.

For me, however, it was a highly amusing spectacle when sometimes, dropping in for a moment in the early morning hours, I found him in an old overall, looking rather pale and worn without his make-up, engaged in the menial job of sweeping the floor with a shabby old broom, whereas his other and glamorous self on the wall looked down on him, as the master looks at his slave. I could not help feeling a bit sorry for this pathetic figure of a sick actor behind the scenes, haggard, coughing, exhausted by the desperate effort of playing for some hours a day the role of a lion. He was driving himself hard and his puerile social vanity was of such cruel obstinacy that, from time to time, he really collapsed and had to disappear for a few weeks in a sanatorium. But he would rather have died than give up.

He really seemed obsessed by the fixed idea of making his fortune through a rich marriage. Yet evidently the old mother of his still unofficial fiancée was not willing, during her lifetime, to part with enough capital to secure the future of the no-longer-so-young couple. Perhaps Friedrich W., while patiently waiting for the heritage, had become a bit doubtful about the chances of his fiancée and had taken the preventive measure of playing at two tables. At any rate, when after two years the old mother died, leaving her money not to her daughter but to her grandchild, he managed a brilliant turnabout and married the young girl, half his age, who evidently preferred becoming his bride to being his stepchild. Having reached majority, she could dispose of her person and of her fortune regardless of the consent of a justly surprised and disappointed mother. I can't say whether this final vic-

tory proved to be a Pyrrhic victory, because at this time I had long since lost touch with Friedrich W., with the Musa Press, and with the Nietzsche Society. The last time we met, by accident in the street, his healthy sunburnt complexion was still the same, thanks to his unchanged make-up. But he looked somehow lost in the stuffing of his well tailored suit.

However that may be, he evidently was still efficient enough to adapt his pedigree in time to Hitler's ideals of pure race. Shortly after having left Germany I heard that he had become the superintendent of the nazified broadcast in Munich. He probably helped to purify Nietzsche from all obnoxious European connotations. He helped to make Nietzsche a sort of John the Baptist for the ridiculous Nazi philosopher, Alfred Rosenberg, the author of the "Myth of the Twentieth Century," which mystified even serious scholars all over the world. I hope Friedrich W. was even present as a guest of honor—or dishonor—at the memorable occasion when old Elisabeth Förster-Nietzsche in the salon of her Archive bestowed upon the underman Hitler the symbolic gift of Nietzsche's cane, while the long since disarmed philosopher, vainly turning in his grave, was unable to use this weapon against the slanderers of his name and fame.

It is not only for my personal amusement that I have rounded up the little story of this extraordinary character whom I could watch so closely for many years. It is because this character was actually not so extraordinary, but rather, to a certain extent, typical of the moral decline of an educated middle class whose economic foundation had been totally destroyed by inflation. The wiping out of this intellectual center of resistance was one of the preconditions of Hitler's coming to power. And it is not pure coincidence that many members of this disinherited class not only easily succumbed, but even actively contributed, to Hitler's success. Men like Hess or Goebbels, Gregor and Otto Strasser and many others less well known, were such deserters of the educated middle class. More desperate and more active than Friedrich W., more politically than socially ambitious, they became relatively early believers in Nazism, or at least prophets of it. At the time of the Nietzsche Society, in the 'Twenties, however, it would have seemed inconceivable for a man like Friedrich W. to take seriously the nonsense

of an illiterate rabble rouser called Adolf Hitler who, under the more or less discreet sponsorship of reactionary army circles, began to hold mass meetings in circus tents.

I am proud to recall the fact that I knew a Nazi when I read him, even before he knew himself that he would get Nazi religion. Our director Staudt tried to smuggle into the Musa Press a friend of his, a little high-school teacher from Brunswick, who was ambitious to publish a series of geographical monographs. When Staudt, with the warmest recommendations, handed me the first manuscript, I immediately scented some danger. I almost hoped that the manuscript would not live up to my critical standards; and in this hope indeed I was not disappointed. The sloppy style and the popular superficiality of the writing reflected to an almost astonishing degree the deplorable moral and intellectual level of the author. Deeply disgusted, I wrote a really devastating review, or rather a sentence of death formulated in such definite terms that even Staudt felt it to be a condemnation without repeal. Deeply embarrassed, because he probably had made some promises, Staudt timidly tried to object, but I remained adamant, defending the illustrious names of our authors against the degrading company of an Ewald Banse. It was indeed the same Banse who fifteen years later became internationally famous or infamous as the most rabid Nazi apostle of total war. I heartily enjoyed putting Staudt to the necessity of himself somehow explaining our refusal. But I did not realize that it was my first temporary victory in the never ending and often losing battle I would have to fight against an eternal and ubiquitous type of personality and mentality which in Germany happened to be represented by Nazism.

At this time it would have appeared to me, and to all better educated people, as a perfectly ludicrous idea, a grotesque outgrowth of an abnormal imagination, to assume that Nazism as a real mass movement could ever exist. Even in 1924, when for April Fool's Day *Simplicissimus* wanted to give a culmination of incredibility and grotesquerie, Heine designed a cartoon showing Hitler as a Roman triumphator parading through the Brandenburger Tor in Berlin, followed by the Reichspräsident Ebert and other republican dignitaries in the roles of conquered slaves in chains. But even the artist himself did not realize that he was a prophet rather than a satirist.

The Nazis were only one especially picturesque and comical group among many others of similar type, gathering around a primitive demagogue like Hitler or around some adventurous former army captain like Ehrhardt or whoever succeeded in presenting himself as a new Messiah to a few thousand psychopaths and social misfits, all of them to a certain extent war victims. For a serious man of letters, it seemed preferable to disregard this transitory symptom of mental confusion and to concentrate upon the eternal spiritual values of Weltliteratur. It was astonishing to what a large extent not only our publishing house but many others had concentrated their production upon translations from the French, the English, and especially from the Russian.

Thanks to the copyright protecting the work of an author up to thirty years from the date of his death, authors like Anatole France and Chesterton were the monopoly of our publishing house, exactly as Shaw, Hamsun, Ibsen, Strindberg, Conrad, Proust, H. G. Wells, and so on were the exclusive and cherished possession of other publishers. Great classics like Stendhal, Balzac, Dickens, Thackeray, Flaubert, Zola and Maupassant appeared again and again in new editions. And as soon as the copyright protection for a great foreign author had expired, he was printed in three or four competing translations.

That was especially true of Russian literature, which had become entirely free—that is, unprotected by international copyright treaties—since the Soviet government had not bothered to renew them. The large influx of the Russian intelligentsia which, together with the aristocracy, had been driven into exile, increased in Germany the knowledge of Russian literature and the interest in it. The more important novels of Dostoevski and Tolstoy were reproduced by many publishing houses. And even Lyesskoff, who by a strange conspiracy of silence had never reached international fame, was, after being discovered by us, soon duplicated by other firms.

Lyesskoff is perhaps the only example of a great Russian author suppressed not by intolerant official censorship, but in fact by the not less intolerant anti-censorship exercised by belligerently liberal, revolutionary and anti-Czarist critics; their undisputed authority determined indeed the destiny of Russian letters and men of letters. Lyesskoff, rightly or wrongly suspected of being a political reactionary, was stead-

fastly ignored by the great reviewers. Though well aware of his artistic rank, they felt obliged to use their literary influence as a political weapon against despotism—and so they became despots themselves.

Great writers are rarely good critics, because the productive genius necessarily lacks the more neutral and universal esthetic apperception indispensable to the critic. But I certainly agree with Tolstoy in ranking Lyesskoff higher than Dostoevski—whom, by the way, he detested. When annoyed by somebody nervously pacing up and down, Tolstoy used to say: "Why are you always running back and forth like the people in Dostoevski's novels?" What makes Lyesskoff so worthy of admiration (for Tolstoy as well as for me) is his unbroken artistic vigor, drawing a legendary simplicity and plasticity from the inexhaustible source of Russian folklore. He quite naturally and spontaneously did what Tolstoy tried to do in his wonderful short stories called "Popular Tales," creating the artistic legend of the Russian peasant.

Tolstoy loved the Russian peasants and throughout his life desperately tried to become like them, simple and humble and profound in human wisdom. He even adopted their costume and—to a certain extent—their way of life. But he never could help being a "barin," a count and an artist of world fame. He, better than anyone else, knew the tragi-comical ambiguity of what looked like a masquerade and yet was much more to him. He knew his peasants as well as a Count Tolstoy in peasant cloth could know them. But Lyesskoff knew them better, because he was not a "barin," but a traveling salesman for agricultural tools and machines. For years he had gone from village to village, drinking bad vodka in ramshackle inns and dealing with, and accepted by, the innkeeper as well as the poorest customer as an equal. The peasants of his stories have not the slight odor of saintliness and the legendary stature of Tolstoy's tales. He sees them, not with a sort of romantic longing, but in their true light. There is nothing of sentimental compassion or of social and political dogmatism in his stories; there is only life, real life with all its tragedy and comedy—and there is the real Russian people, full of elementary sometimes violent forces, full of piety and cruelty, with saints and sinners, heroes and criminals, who may sometimes change their roles and yet will remain always true to nature in the highest truthfulness: that of great art. Here is the real Russia seen not from above by aristocrats of litera-

ture and even of birth, like Tolstoy, Turgenev, Pushkin, Lermontov and even Gontscharov, but the Russian people as if seen through its own eyes. Lyesskoff was a common man despite his uncommon artistic gift. He was part and parcel of the people himself, deeply integrated in its social life on his modest level. No aristocrat, he was, on the other hand, not a social outcast, a proletarian bohemian like the heavily overrated Gorky. He was not even a professional writer like the epilectic genius Dostoevski, who, with morbid perspicacity, deciphered deeper mysteries of the human soul than anyone else, but remained somehow cut off from simple reality, confined to the tormented world of his inner life.

When reading Dostoevski, I sometimes wondered how a people of Karamasovs, Raskolinkovs, Stavrogins and so on, a people of alcoholics, criminals, visionary mystics and self-analyzing intellectuals—all of them more or less hysterics or psychopaths—had ever been able to build Moscow or, at that, St. Petersburg. I finally came to the simple conclusion that Dostoevski's Russia was the purely artistic and individual creation of a sick genius who, out of his sickness, drew the almost magic power to force his vision upon his readers, until his vision became reality. It was an act of artistic alchemy in reverse, in the process of which Dostoevski had converted his nightmares into life instead of transforming life into art. He had populated Russia and even the world with figures taken from his novels.

Many of the Russian intellectuals I met in Munich during my student days and later after the war were obviously victims of this fascinating and dangerously disintegrating magic. They deeply enjoyed the chaotic complications of their personal problems, the psychological explorations in the dark continents of their own and other people's souls. They indulged in the morbid parlor game of masochistic self-analysis and never tired of humiliating confessions. My personal contact with living products of Dostoevski made me somehow suspicious of this demonic rather than daemonic genius. I could not help feeling a sort of personal antipathy toward what seemed to me an element of destruction and decomposition, an invasion of Europe by the dark demonism of Asia. Dostoevski's irrational and even antirational mysticism threatened to destroy the sacred form of European thought and to engender a chaos—though possibly a chaos pregnant

with creative potentialities. For once I agreed with Stefan George who, discussing Dostoevski, said, "That is what destroys you."

My very intimate, almost personal acquaintance with Dostoevski, and certainly my growing impatience with him, originated partly from the fact that I had to read five times the three volumes of his "Diary of a Writer." Every over-enthusiastic admirer of Dostoevski should be forced to read these more than 2,000 pages at least once. It is by no means a purely personal diary. Dostoevski chose the title "Diary" for a sort of literary and political review, written and published exclusively by himself. It constitutes a sort of personal message of a great and famous writer conscious of his far-reaching influence.

But this great man here reveals himself not only as a deplorable journalist, but also as a small and petty man. He indulges in acrimonious personal polemics; he preaches hate against the Poles, the Germans, the French, in fact against Europe in general; and on the other hand he professes the most narrow nationalism and most aggressive panslavism. An article under the significant title, "Why Constantinople Must Be Ours"—though written in time of peace—reminds the reader of the worst journalistic excesses of the First World War; not to speak of his continuous venomous attacks against everybody and everything connected with more liberal, more Western tendencies in the political and social life. His witch-hunting, his panicky fear of "nihilists" and "revolutionaries," who were not yet called "communists" or "reds," could hardly be surpassed by Mr. Goebbels—or by the way, some emulating American journalists. In this Diary speaks a reactionary zealot foaming at the mouth with hysterical fear and rage. It makes interesting though slightly disgusting reading and explains sufficiently Dostoevski's friendship with one of the most notorious hangmen of the Czarist police.

Our first translation, inspired by the blessed German mania for completeness, was of course a literary success of prestige—though certainly not a best seller. Typically enough, the German publishers at this time were generally much more interested in exhuming such half-forgotten documents of the Russian past than in the new Soviet literature. These literary by-products of an enormous political and social earthquake were the undisputed domain of one single publishing house with outspoken political tendencies. I must confess that I myself

was—and still am—a bit doubtful about a purely political literature partly produced by literary shock troops of eight or ten writers working on order for the glorification of collective farms, state factories, electrification, Tsheka or whatever has to be emphasized according to the party line.

The very few writers of real originality who, in the first heroic years of the Bolshevist revolution, actually came from the people, could evidently not develop to real maturity. When Gorky, long since an author of international reputation, overcame his original aversion to the methods of dictatorship, and agreed to return to Russia, he was celebrated as a sort of Bolshevist poet laureate, although he never could aspire to the universal moral authority which Leo Tolstoy had exercised, one single great individual, in opposition against, not backed by, a mighty and despotic state machinery. And strangely enough, despite Stalin's energetic protection and cultivation of literature and of the literary profession, Soviet Russia in twenty-seven years has not yet produced one great writer. Mediocre talents like Ilya Ehrenburg and Alexei Tolstoy—a former bourgeois intellectual and a former aristocrat, indeed a "poor relative" of the great namesake, Leo Tolstoy—became the outstanding official representatives of modern Russian literature. Having survived all purges, they were remunerated for loyal literary service by magnificent state prices and enjoyed the admiration of millions of readers in and even outside the U.S.S.R.

This little digression is only meant to explain the fact that in 1923 the discovery of an unpublished chapter of Dostoevski's novel "The Demons," appearing first in a Soviet paper, made more sensation in Germany than the whole Soviet literature. It was not my old friend Karl N. but another well known Russian translator, Eliasberg, who was lucky enough to hunt up a copy of the Moscow paper containing the first printed text. A military secret can not be handled more discreetly than our contract with Eliasberg, and no vital war production could be speeded up with more feverish haste than the printing of this little book of sixty small pages.

This literary rarity promised to be a big selling success, the more so, since it showed Dostoevski at his best—or worst. It was called "Stavrogin's Confession." As readers of "The Demons" may remem-

ber, Stavrogin is one of the principal "demons," a designation used in this novel for all sorts of revolutionary intellectuals. No wonder that what he has to confess—with painful prolixity and an abundance of psychological and biological details—is the raping of a little girl. It is a literary masterpiece of such terrible perfection that Dostoevski's publisher advised against the publication, though the Czarist censorship (in all non-political questions much more liberal than the Hayes office) would certainly not have objected. The convincing force of this confession may explain the rumor, started by one of Dostoevski's friends, that it was a real self-confession of the author. Thanks to the blessing of free competition, we produced our edition in a sort of race against another Munich publisher who, with another translator, not less secretly and not less speedily, prepared another edition. We won by a week, with the usual result that the two free competitors hardly succeeded in covering their expenses where one of them could have made a reasonable profit.

The little episode with "Stavrogin's Confession" is for me especially memorable because on this occasion I first experienced personally the strange abyss between the German intelligentsia and state authority, represented in my case by the Bavarian police. We needed the permit of the police for the display of a poster announcing a public lecture by our translator Eliasberg. He was to read parts of "Stavrogin's Confession" from our edition, which was to appear the following day in all the bookstores. Time was short, and so I went myself as early as possible to Police Headquarters the very morning when our posters should be displayed. The firm charged with this task was only waiting for my call. It was a pure formality, if no political matter was at stake. But the official I had to deal with was a rare combination of stupidity and conscientiousness. He slowly deciphered the few printed lines as if studying an inscription in hieroglyphics. "Confession," he finally said with deep distrust. "Has this something to do with religion? You know about the secret of the confessional?" I tried to explain that it was a purely literary confession. Thereupon he became interested in me personally. "Are you this Mr. Eliasberg?"—"No, that's the translator who will read." He interrupted me triumphantly: "Then are you perhaps Mr. Dostoevski or Mr. Stavrogin?"

Confused by my information that the first was a famous author, long since dead, and that the second had never lived but in the author's mind, he asked suspiciously, "Russians, aren't they? Bolshevists?"

I desperately objected. He seemed to believe me and said with a sly understanding: "I see, you are of course the Mister Musa himself." —"Almost," I said, near to collapse. "I represent the publishing house." And now he wanted to know what a publishing house was. I was astonished when after half an hour of this interrogation I was not finally arrested under the suspicion of having assaulted a minor. The man looked at me with the omniscient look of a great criminologist. "Well," he said after some minutes, "I shall submit this case to the Herr Polizeirat. You can wait here," and with these words he ceremoniously entered another room. Coming back after some time, he said with condescending affability: "You shall have your permit Mr.—eh—Dostoevski. I shall give the publicity firm the information myself." His voice on the telephone was like the voice from Mt. Sinai, "Here Polizei Präsidium. The display of the poster concerning Mr. Dostoevski, Musa, Eliasberg and Stavrogin is approved." When, near exhaustion and wiping my brow, I went out on the street, the first thing I saw was our poster. The publicity firm, instead of waiting, had quietly anticipated the official permit.

I realized that in fact the only way of complying with regulations is to elude them or at least to adapt them in some way to the simple process of life which otherwise would become paralyzed. The yawning abyss between theoretical abstraction and practical reality must any moment be bridged by a makeshift construction, an improvisation of the moment which in the long run may become a regular institution. "Only the provisional is lasting," say the French who, thanks to their absolute lack of organizational talent, have developed a real genius for improvisation; unfortunately, they sometimes rely too much upon it. Human beings acting and thinking exclusively in terms of abstract regulations, like my police official, necessarily become absolutely abstracted from reality, absolutely unhuman. This little man was living in another world, on another planet as far from mine as Mars from the Earth. There was no medium of understanding between us, though apparently we spoke the same language, a fact which only increased the possibility of mistakes. If the machinery of which he

was a part should get hold of you, it would crush you by pure misunderstanding. This was perhaps especially true of the police of Munich at this time, since its highest official was a rabid reactionary called Pöhner, who, as it later turned out, considered it his first duty to protect "patriotic" hoodlums, like the murderers of Rathenau, by providing them with money and false passports.

I did not know that at the time of my visit in his Headquarters he was deeply involved in the preparations for Hitler's first "putsch." But the whole atmosphere had made me understand the deep wisdom of the French saying: "If you are accused of having stolen the towers of Notre Dame de Paris, don't try to prove your innocence, just save yourself by running away."

## CHAPTER XIV

# Some Words About the Jewish Problem and About the Art of Translation

IT IS AN understandable mistake to think that always "Germany has been the classic land of anti-Semitism," as even so reliable and usually well informed a publication as *The New Republic* put it in a special supplement about the Jews in Europe. But it has to be said that Germany before the First World War, that is before Hitler, was one of the European countries where anti-Semitism was practically non-existent, whereas in the whole East of Europe, not only in Russia, Poland and Rumania, but even in the Austrian province of Galicia, pogroms in varying degrees of violence were a part of the usual routine of life. No wonder that many Jews from Eastern Europe tried to escape by emigrating to America or—it sounds ironical today—to Germany, where even the American institution of "restricted" hotels and so on was entirely unknown.

One of the propaganda slogans of the Nazis was that the German Republic had allowed the influx of innumerable "Ostjuden," Eastern Jews who, supposedly, became chiefly responsible for Germany's ruin. This, of course, like all the Nazi propaganda, was a silly lie. The number of Jews who immigrated from the east and became naturalized German citizens was not much greater after than before 1918; and the total Jewish population in Germany was never more than 600,000, 1 per cent of a people of more than 60,000,000.

In the "Second Reich" of William II, organized anti-Semitism did not exist, even not at a time when in Austria the mayor of Vienna, Karl Lueger, successfully organized an anti-Semitic party under the paradoxical title of "Christian Social Party." Lueger himself, by the way, was a strange sort of character. When reproached for having many Jewish friends himself (who probably belonged to the well known type of anti-Semitic Jews), Lueger would answer: "I am the one to

decide whether a man is a Jew or not." His anti-Semitism entirely lacked the racial logic which only a certain pathological reader of his propaganda leaflets, a young man called Adolf Hitler—at this time guest of a Vienna flophouse—was predestined to follow up with an inexorable and, despite all its horrors, grotesque consistency.

In Germany the only existing anti-Semitic periodical was *Der Hammer*, a monthly with a circulation limited to a few hundred readers and taken no more seriously than the little sheets put out by Jehovah's Witnesses and other odd sects. Even professional anti-Semites, men like Nietzsche's brother-in-law Förster or even Richard Wagner and his son-in-law, the Germanized Englishman Houston Stewart Chamberlain, had never succeeded in making anti-Semitism a going concern in Germany. Baptized Jews, at least, had access to every highest position in the administration and—if rich enough—even to the imperial court. Ballin, the director of the "Norddeutscher Lloyd," was an intimate friend of the Kaiser's. The Mendelssohns, Weinbergs, Erlangers, Oppenheims and of course the Rothschilds and the Bleichroeders, were knighted. And in all so-called free professions, including law, medicine and higher education, the Jewish religion was no handicap at all. The large roll of honor drawn up in defense against Nazi propaganda and proudly enumerating all the outstanding Jewish names in the realm of German art, literature and science is in itself the best proof that in pre-war Germany Jews had a fair chance to achieve prominence by their accomplishments.

Some of these names belonged to those old Jewish families who for centuries, often much longer than many families of the German aristocracy, had lived in Germany, sometimes even in the same place. In Worms, for example, in the Jewish cemetery there were gravestones going back to the Twelfth Century. But many other prominent Jews were indeed immigrants from the East. They often came from very orthodox families; they had grown up in a rigid religious tradition and had been trained in old Talmud schools, especially when by their intelligence they seemed predestined to become rabbis, the only spiritual profession open to an intelligent boy born in an East European ghetto. It is astonishing how many of these boys succeeded in breaking loose from the ghetto—geographically and spiritually—in

order to make their highly valuable contribution to the cultural life of their new homeland, be it Germany or America. It is not necessary to quote the innumerable names—or pseudonyms—of famous scientists, writers, painters, musicians, actors, stage managers, producers, and so on, who by winning international fame have confirmed this statement.

This phenomenon, however, becomes less astonishing if we realize that by a process of natural selection these emigrants were necessarily a sort of élite. Emigration in itself was a test in the sense of survival of the fittest. Only those who revolted against the rigid social pattern imposed on Eastern Jews by their own religious and social forms, as well as by the discrimination of the outer world, engaged in the great and dangerous adventure of emigration. All of them were driven by the ambition, or even by the objective necessity, to overcome by exceptional accomplishments what their surrounding world, and sometimes they themselves, considered as the stigma of Jewish birth.

It is quite natural that some of them became political and social revolutionaries. Others made use of their commercial talents, developed in a long tradition which, in Western Europe at least, for centuries had excluded the Jews from other activities, whereas in Eastern Europe there was always a large Jewish population of peasants and artisans. In a money-minded world, the easiest way to overcome prejudice and discrimination was, of course, to become rich. Money was a sort of protection and a social asset. A successful Jewish businessman could hope to buy this sort of social acceptance and respect which every insignificant gentile could take for granted.

But the Jewish people was after all one of the oldest and most cultured peoples, "the oldest aristocracy of the world," as Heinrich Heine put it. And, like the other aristocracies, including that of the Catholic Church, they were traditionally internationalists and linguists. Besides their national language, whether Russian, Polish or Rumanian, the great majority of East European Jews spoke Yiddish, a real language with its own literature. The plays and novels of Sholom Asch, for example, translated from the Yiddish, have found large audiences here in America as well as in all European countries. It is a very old language amalgamating the old German of the Twelfth Century with other partly Hebraic, partly Slavic elements. Yiddish is, in fact,

a sort of naturally developed Esperanto. But most of the Jewish intellectuals spoke several European languages, though sometimes with a strange and colorful accent, and many of them made themselves known as French, Russian, German or American authors, establishing their places in two or three literatures. Heinrich Heine, writing French and German, or Marx writing English and German, are good models for what even gentile refugees from Germany are trying to do now in America.

This fact seems to confirm the saying of a most brilliant Jewish friend of mine, the late Walter Rhode, who assured me, in 1933 in France, that, in the emigration, even the non-Jewish refugees would become Jews. And, in a certain sense, I came to understand what he meant when, after the outbreak of war in Europe, living in France, I sometimes found it difficult to introduce myself as a German, at least by birth and education, without becoming apologetic or defiant in the explanation of my strange hybrid status. The parallel goes even farther. For many centuries the Jews suffered persecution for the pseudo-religious reason that their people was guilty of Christ's passion —Easter was the traditional date for pogroms in Eastern Europe, even in the Twentieth Century. And today a man of German birth, perhaps a lifelong fighter against anti-Semitism, feels himself burdened with the blood-guiltiness which German Nazis, though helped by Russian, Polish, Latvian, and Lithuanian fascists, have brought upon their heads by the unspeakable massacre of millions of Jewish people in Europe. But it is obvious that this very un-German Nazi hate against Jews is only another expression of the Nazi hate against religion, against any sort of spiritualism, against the spirit and against reason itself, against the whole cultural heritage of Europe.

It was the religious genius of this Jewish people which had produced the Ten Commandments and the Jewish Messiah, Jesus Christ. They had a very old tradition of spiritual life. Even in the poorest Jewish families of Eastern Europe the height of ambition was to have a son or a son-in-law who, exempted from the necessity of earning his living, should spend his whole life in studying the Talmud and the Holy Scriptures. In order to survive in the middle of a hostile world, the hopelessly outnumbered, persecuted minority always develops the

only efficient weapon against physically superior force: intellectual acumen and versatility of the mind. Suffering increases the sensitiveness, not only the sensibility. Being persecuted for 2,000 years obviously creates a very distinctive state of mind, sometimes even a neurotic complex.

A wise Jew once said that without Hitler there soon would not have been any Jews in the world. We may enlarge this statement by saying that without anti-Semitism, without discrimination and persecution, the Jewish minority would have dissolved itself in the already heterogeneous mixture of surrounding populations. This state was almost reached in Italy, for example. Before Mussolini became more and more dependent upon Hitler, he had boasted openly that the "Nordic barbarism" of anti-Semitism would be impossible in Italy. The religious nationalism of Zionism is only the logical reaction to this ugliest form of nationalism called anti-Semitism. The so-called "Jewish character" has of course nothing to do with the ridiculous myth of "blood and race." But a special conditioning necessarily creates certain special psychological reactions. To be born as a Jew represents a problem in itself.

A child, experiencing from infancy a sort of discrimination, if only in the relatively harmless and civilized forms under which latent anti-Semitism expressed itself in Western Europe before the First World War, may easily become a problem child. He may become shy, insecure and diffident or—in a kind of over-compensation of an enforced inferiority complex—aggressive, pretentious and arrogant or even reckless in his self-assertion. We know how decisive the impressions of early childhood are for all the future life. The pattern set in the first ten years is the pattern of what is called character.

A child growing up in the protected atmosphere of a happy family, surrounded by love and understanding, will develop quite naturally an attitude of self-confidence and of confidence in others. I know that from my own experience as illustrated by a little story often smilingly retold by my mother. I must have been a little toddler of about three years, the youngest and a bit spoiled child of a large family, including a lot of relatives and friends. I was used at least to friendly attention. Coming one morning into my father's often crowded waiting room, I found only one man there, probably a theological student in some

trouble, who answered my smiling and polite "Good morning" with an inarticulate growl. Astonished, but not in the least discouraged, I looked at the gloomy young man and said in a rather apologetic tone, apologetic for him: "You just *can't* do better, can you?"

And even now, after fifty years, it always takes very evident demonstrations of ill will to make me believe in personal hostility toward myself. An aggression which passes unnoticed is no aggression at all. A man, entirely sure of, or entirely detached from himself and endowed with a deep understanding of his fellow men, may become as invulnerable as a saint. But, on the other hand, the early experience of persecution may lead to a certain mania of persecution. That is satirized by the wonderful and, of course, Jewish story about the man who puts his penny in the automatic distributor of chocolate; he pulls the handle, but in vain—no chocolate comes out. Enraged, he shrugs his shoulders, muttering: "Always this anti-Semitism." During my life, I have met both types, the saints and the maniacs, not only among Jews, but also among gentiles.

It is not my intention to "solve" in a few lines the so-called "Jewish problem" which, in fact, is rather a gentile's problem, exactly as the Negro problem is a white man's problem. What I had to say was inspired by my thinking of the man who first started me in the editorial career and entrusted me with the editorship of a weekly called *Auslandspost* (Foreign Mail). His name was Ephraim Frisch, and he himself was the founder and editor of the monthly, *Der Neue Merkur* (*New Mercury*), almost the only truly literary review in Germany which, independent of a publishing house, preserved the high standards of periodicals like the *London Mercury, Criterion, Dial, Nouvelle Revue Française* and so on. In his youth he had worked as a stage manager with Max Reinhardt and as a teacher in Reinhardt's small theatrical school; that was during the first years when Max Reinhardt, born like Frisch himself in the Jewish quarter of a small East European town, was still a struggling revolutionary innovator—not yet a world celebrity spoiled by too much success and too much ostentatious theatrical pomp. Since this early period Frisch was connected with my cousin Lou Andreas-Salomé and with the publisher S. Fischer (the S. discreetly covered the, for Germany, good Jewish first name

Samuel), who had the courage to publish the dangerously modern and revolutionary plays of Gerhart Hauptmann.

It may be mentioned in this context that Hauptmann, who ended by becoming a Nazi many years after having ceased to be a poet, was from the start a sort of "Jewish invention." Almost all the men who first printed or played or enthusiastically reviewed his plays (like Alfred Kerr for example) were Jews full of admiration for what they considered their artistic and psychological counterpart: a typical German poet without too much intelligence, but full of soul and "Deutsches Gemüt." They simply loved this certain blond dullness, this blue-eyed nebulous cloudiness, the hazy, misty mysticism born out of a lack of intellectual discipline. A more rational gentile rarely had a chance with Jewish editors, because they considered intelligence a rather common trait of Jewish literati.

Frisch was, indeed, an exception. He printed in his review not only my articles about Anatole France but even a long review of modern American literature appearing about this time in German translations. I still remember the somewhat highbrow title, "American Antitoxins," which was to express that the modern American writers, men like Sinclair Lewis, Upton Sinclair, Theodore Dreiser, Sherwood Anderson, and others, by their social criticism reacted against the disintegrating poison of a purely money-minded society. The whole essay was somewhat complicated but, just for this reason, it fitted perfectly with the intellectual and sometimes academic style of a review written for an élite of German and European intelligentsia.

Frisch himself was indeed a good European. With his discriminating literary taste, his critical and analytical mind, his sure instinct for artistic values, he was the born editor, an ideal mentor for young writers and artists. But he was so much the born editor and critic that he himself had lost his productivity. In all the years of his *Neue Merkur,* he very rarely contributed an article himself. When, after two or three hours in his office during the morning, he had done some little routine work, he seemed exhausted and the rest of the day he spent reading manuscripts. Though one of the wittiest conversationalists when in high spirits, he generally looked a bit melancholic and tired. His small head, with its long nose and dark eyes, reminded me of a high-bred, perhaps too high-bred, Arabian horse. He looked

a bit fragile and perhaps what he once told me was true—that in his youth, disinherited by his wealthy father because he refused to become a rabbi, he had overworked himself and had spent his force prematurely in the struggle for self-liberation.

When he saw the possibility of reviving the *Auslandspost*—a sort of German *Review of Reviews* which had been discontinued—he immediately asked me to become the editor. Originally the *Auslandspost* had been edited by an expert in politics, the brother of the late painter Franz Marc, under the more or less symbolical direction of Frisch himself. Dr. Marc was not available at this moment, but I certainly was far from being an expert in politics. I frankly told Frisch that, during the last five years, after my disappointing experiences with the German revolution, I had hardly touched a newspaper and felt in no way competent for editorial work which presupposed an intimate knowledge of all the intricacies of international policy. By the way, despite my experience as a publisher, I never had done real newspaper work. But evidently Frisch had an unlimited confidence in my unbroken energy and my capacity for all sorts of work. He answered all my objections with the assurance that, sharing the office with him, I could always rely upon his assistance if needed, and that he felt sure I would be the right man in the right place. After some hesitation, I finally agreed to try it out without entirely abandoning my work in the Musa Press, where I would spend the morning hours. This arrangement was the more advisable since the new publisher of the *Auslandspost*—again one of these new enterprising young publishers of the post-war period—had only limited means at his disposal and was forced to a certain economy, especially as far as Frisch's and my salaries were concerned.

It was, of course, a fantastic idea to treat as a half-time job the editorship of a paper which was to publish each week a selection of all the most important articles taken from all the most important papers of the world in literal, though of course abridged, translations. Every day an enormous table in my office was covered with American, English, French, Russian, Dutch, Italian, Swedish, Norwegian, Danish, Czech, Polish, Jugoslavian and even Turkish newspapers, literary reviews and other periodicals. It was a sight to raise panic even in the

stoutest soul. The punishment definitely fitted the crime of having neglected the newspapers for so many years. At least I was not supposed to do the reading of and translating from all these papers in a dozen European languages all by myself. I had a translator for every language, who was supposed to look through the whole material and make suggestions for his contribution. But I had to coordinate the material, and choose the headline news in those papers which like French, English, Dutch, Italian and Scandinavian papers I was able to decipher.

For all the Slavic languages I relied entirely upon my translator or upon Frisch. Thanks to his origin and a Russian wife, he could read several of these languages. I was surprised to find that, without ever having studied English, I soon was able to understand at least the substance of English articles, thanks to my knowledge of German, French, Latin and Greek. And the same was true, though in varying degrees, for the Italian, Dutch and Scandinavian papers. Munich had always been, and certainly was after the war, an international city; but the problem of finding reliable translators, especially for political articles, proved to be more difficult than we had thought.

I was, through my work in the Musa Press, sufficiently acquainted with the pitfalls, the hazards and dangers of literary translations which I had to edit. I did not know Russian, but at least I knew my German very well, probably better than most translators, and I tried to give their manuscripts a sort of polish which eliminated as far as possible the disturbing vestiges of a not entirely successful process of transmutation. I use the word purposely and not only as a figure of speech. A really perfect translator is an alchemist, almost a magician. He must be entirely congenial with the artist whose work he transforms, but he must possess the self-denial not "to seek his own," but only to reflect the artistic personality of the original author. He has to invent the style in which, let us say, Shakespeare would have written German —and he must not sacrifice the English character of the author and of his work. Translating at its best is, like every kind of art, an act of grace, achieving the seemingly impossible.

There are, especially in German literature, as I said before, some outstanding examples of poets turned perfect translators. We have only to think of the two translator-poets Achim von Arnim and Ludwig

Tieck, who made Shakespeare indeed a German classic—but in another sense than the silly race doctrine of the Nazis put it. A New York columnist had the bad luck to refer to this very wonderful Shakespeare translation in trying to prove that the German language is a "barbarous lingo," a "Frankenstein monster of a language"—evidently because the poor fellow had been unsuccessful in learning another language than his own. I wonder what he would think of Russian or Chinese. On the other hand, a witty friend of mine, one of the best German writers of Jewish descent, who unlike many other Jewish refugees has not ceased to love his language because he hates the Nazis, once said after having seen Paul Robeson as Othello: "Of course it is not the same to hear it in the English translation."

But I must confess that my personal experiences with ordinary translators in Germany were not too encouraging. It may easily happen that a phrase is interpreted in another sense than that of the original, however, one would think that every reader of average intelligence would be struck by the obvious absurdity of a text which seems to contradict itself. But when preparing a new printing of a novel of Anatole France, which, published years before by another good publisher, had been taken over by us, I discovered the most startling incongruities in the German text. Referring to the original I found out that the translator had, for example, confused *l'âme* with *l'amour* and made France speak of the immortality *of love,* not of *the soul.*

One psychological reason for this special mistake was obvious because the translator was a woman, a famous "Schwabingerin" and *grande amoureuse,* the talented but eccentric sister of the arch-conservative and finally famous Nazi Graf Reventlow. Another reason for the poor quality of the whole translation was an economic one. Like almost every translator, the Countess Reventlow had been so badly paid that, always short of money, she had to speed up her work in order not to starve at her typewriter. She just did not have the time to look twice at a sentence or to make sure that it made sense. And if, as the Greek proverb says, "Sometimes even Homer is asleep," she may be excused for sleepwalking through the French text. But what about the publisher, the proofreaders, the reviewers (who like to praise the quality of a translation regardless of whether they have seen or even could

read the original)? And what about the thousands of readers accepting this nonsense without any complaint?

I too could not read Russian, but at least I noticed whether or not the translated text made sense. And if I had found in one of my manuscripts as in a very popular translation of a Russian novel, a peasant pulling out of his pocket a *kid* for lunch, I would have become doubtful and would have called for the translator who, after some inquiries, would have learned that the Russian word for "kid" was also used for a special sort of roll.

By the way, all the four or five Russian translators I knew used to tell some stories, like that of the kid, about each other. And sometimes there was a disagreement even among equally expert scribes about the exegesis of a dark passage in the Scriptures because two different interpretations seemed equally acceptable. Students of Bible criticism will understand such a situation.

The best example of an impossible translation, however, was that of a book of the German poet Hans Carossa, published in 1938 by one of the best French publishing houses, Grasset. The translator was, strangely enough, a French army officer who had been attracted by the genuinely German poetry of Carossa's "War Journal." But he evidently did not even know enough German to find the right meaning of a word in the dictionary. The word "Sturm" for example can mean "storm" or "attack." And so in the middle of a very idyllic scene, where a child plays in a garden during a storm, the unfortunate translator, always thinking of war, converted the storm into an attack—which made the whole thing incomprehensible. Similarly the word "Schale" existing in the sense of "chalice" as well as of "skin" produced in the translation the strange phenomenon of an exhausted man gaining strength by the vision of a "blue skin" (instead of a blue chalice). An article of mine, appearing in a French review and enumerating some of these most amusing mistakes, put an end to the ill-started career of this would-be translator. But here again, evidently no one had noticed that the whole book, swarming with such mistakes, had become pure nonsense. Probably the French public explained the incomprehensibility with the excuse: "C'est très allemand, très nébuleux" (It's very German, very nebulous).

But another book by the same author was translated by a real French poet who had succeeded marvelously in transposing into his language the hardly translatable, very personal flavor of the German original. I had the privilege of reading the manuscript and of discussing in a vivid and amicable correspondence with this translator-poet some little mistakes which even for him were almost inevitable. I still have his letters; among the few possessions which I saved, in escaping from France. The first one is written in a wonderfully noble German, and all of them reflect the soul of a true artist, patiently striving for perfection. But before the work was completed and before the personal meeting we had planned could be realized, war came. Interned in a French camp, I lost track of him. Only a few days before writing these lines, I suddenly discovered the name of Jacques Ducour again in an American periodical reporting the trial and execution of the Vichyist Pucheu, Minister of the Interior under Petain. Jacques Ducour, who had become the editor of an underground paper, was named among the victims turned over to the Gestapo by the traitor Pucheu.

I felt that I had lost a friend. And certainly Germany, the true and real Germany, which he understood and loved so well, had lost a friend. He belonged to the circle of Romain Rolland, the author of "Jean Christophe," who also died as a virtual Nazi prisoner. But it is logical that Nazis should kill the friends of Germany, as they have killed, enslaved, imprisoned or driven into exile every representative of the real Germany.

Tragically enough—and doubly painful for me—they have corrupted even this German poet Hans Carossa, whose book Ducour was translating. I had been very close to this poet in the very beginning of his literary career, when, almost unknown, and discovered by Hugo von Hofmannsthal and Rainer Maria Rilke, he had just published his first books. I could understand why he, deeply rooted not only in the artistic tradition of Goethe, Stifter, Claudius and Mörike, but really rooted in the landscape of his native village near Passau, could not decide to leave Germany after 1933. I witnessed with increasing sorrow how, first trying to keep aloof, he slowly was forced into the Nazi ambit. The son of a country doctor, he never had entirely overcome the very German, almost religious respect of a little country boy for the gendarme representing a kind of godly authority. I tried to warn

him in my letters, but in vain. He ended up in the shame of accepting the dishonoring honor of becoming the president of an academy of Nazi poets.

It is logical that the Nazis killed our friends—even those who remained alive in a kind of phantom existence. But that is another story. This little digression is only meant to be a modest homage, a last adieu to Jacques Ducour, who died as a soldier of the living spirit, fighting the same foe whom I have fought for twenty years. The genius of understanding which made him such a perfect translator of German poetry would have made him the best interpreter for a new purified Germany which, rising one day, as we hope, out of the ashes of war and defeat, will be in bitter need of understanding friends like Jacques Ducour and Romain Rolland.

## CHAPTER XV

# Being Editor of "Auslandspost"— A Strange Business

IN MY *Auslandspost* it was not so much the problem of artistic perfection which bothered me, but rather the fact that, in order to translate correctly a political article, you have to be absolutely familiar with the political context, with the technical terms and the alphabetical abbreviations used for countries or parties and so on. If a French paper says, for example, "le président" it may mean the President of the French Republic, or of the Senate, or of the Chamber—or the Minister President; and in order to complete the confusion, every former President of the Republic and every former Minister President may for his lifetime, by pure politeness, be called "Monsieur le Président." You simply have to know who is who and what is what, a knowledge which my translators as well as I myself entirely lacked. Unfortunately, even Frisch seemed not always up to date on all these questions. The preparation of the manuscripts for the first issue seemed to me an almost superhuman task. And always I shall remember the day when I had to compose the layout.

All day I had been swamped with endless galley proofs which, like poisonous snakes, crawled all over my desk. They had to be corrected and—in a second copy—to be cut and fitted in the exact size of the page as if into a cage. For hours I struggled all alone in my office. Late in the evening, overcome with panic, I made an S O S telephone call, stuffed the snakes into my brief case and went to Frisch's private home. He received me in his usual friendly manner, refreshed my spirits with some port and encouraging words, but showed not the slightest tendency to practical cooperation; perhaps because he felt even less competent than I to cope with such technical problems. He seemed to rely confidently upon my practical experience in the

production of books, though the layout of a newspaper is, of course, quite another matter.

With the grim determination of a Roman gladiator descending into an arena full of wild beasts, I finally retired to my studio, courageously opened the swollen brief case, and went to work. I could not help but think of the famous late Roman sculpture showing Laokoön with his two sons hopelessly ensnared by the enormous serpents sent by the revengeful god Poseidon. I always had disliked the theatrical gestures of this group, though it had inspired Lessing to a great essay. But now, entangled in paper serpents which twined round my legs, strangled my arms and stuck to my hands sticky with paste, I began to understand. The expression of wild despair in Laokoön's bearded face appeared almost as an understatement or at least as sober realism. Armed only with the powerless weapon of my scissors, I desperately fought my way through a sort of nightmare which at any rate had to be ended by six in the morning. I had promised to be in the printing house with the finished layout at seven, since the paper should go to press not later than five o'clock in the afternoon. Somehow I succeeded. And I felt like a kind of St. George when, at a quarter to six in the morning, the last page seemed in shape. Wading through the corpses of slain dragons, I went to the bathroom to wash from my hands and my face a crust of sweat, paste and printer's ink. There was still time left to have some coffee before the second round in the printing room began.

Schiller has said something to the effect that ideas easily coordinate but that real things strongly collide in space. That is exactly what happens when the paper theory of the layout is transposed into the metal reality of composition. Here suddenly is too little space, and there too much. The last line of a paragraph has a strange tendency to become the first line of a column—a deadly sin in the art of composition and called, in the German jargon of the profession, by a name more drastic than the relatively harmless translation "bastard." The text has to be stretched or cut, if possible, without causing too many corrections. The page proofs have to be read again and again, since every new correction, involving the whole line, opens the way for new mistakes. And even if everything seems all right, the first copy coming from the press may prove that, in the last moment in the machine,

a line has been lost or damaged. And it needs a lot of energetic persuasion to make the foreman stop his machine.

When, at about eight in the evening, after thirty-six hours of an almost uninterrupted fight with the malice of inanimate things and of only partly animated technicians, I went home and straight to bed, I had the impression that being an editor was an unnecessarily complicated technical method of suicide. The adaptability of human nature, however, is almost unlimited. You get used to everything, even to suicide enacted at regular intervals—every week or even every day. The English expression "deadline," without analogy in German, describes admirably this somewhat macabre atmosphere. But after having survived the first years you can go on almost indefinitely and nothing more can happen to you. You even stand a fair chance of keeping clear of the padded cell, while working here in America in an office compared with which the waiting room in the Grand Central terminal on Saturday afternoon is a dream of quiet privacy.

In the *Auslandspost* I certainly had no lack of privacy, but rather too much, since all the people supposed to assist me in my task were usually absent. Not yet familiar with American offices, I perhaps did not appreciate enough the privilege of having at my disposal for the greater part of the day not only my own big office, but the whole apartment of four rooms and an unused kitchen. And certainly I did not yet understand the inestimable advantage in having no one there to interfere with my work, not even when I felt in dire need of some advice or guidance.

America prefers a loose form of organization based upon the democratic idea of check and control, with vaguely defined authority and many overlapping competencies. The inevitably resulting frictions have to be straightened out by endless meetings—the favorite American institution—which seem to be the more enjoyed the longer they last. I have the impression that most Americans of both sexes spend the greater part of their lives in meetings, the visible result of which is hardly recognizable to the outsider. But I suppose it is a continuous and symbolic protest against autocracy; the expression of the genuinely democratic feeling that everybody must have his say and that differences of opinions, instead of being decided by one man alone, must

be threshed out, until a sort of friendly agreement is reached—provisional as it may be. This is, perhaps, to a certain extent a survival of the agrarian—and small-town—democracy of early American history. Even apart from the ballyhoo of demagogic politicians, there is really something like an almost superstitious fear, a phobia of many Americans against "bureaucrats" and every sort of governmental authority. It is a certain individualistic romanticism which totally disregards the fact that a highly industrialized society needs—as industry itself has long understood—a more thorough organization and more centralized administration in order to prevent anarchy, the very opposite of freedom. The cracker barrel and the town meeting are no longer sufficient to cope with the complications of modern times. Today democracy can not survive without authority.

Throughout my life I have been a liberal and an ardent believer in freedom. But especially in the realm of my professional life I always have found that a more or less authoritarian form of organization is almost indispensable. The only point is, it has to be a real authority, a real superiority of experience, competence, knowledge, skill, consciousness or whatever; in short a morally and spiritually justified authority. And if real, it is in general tacitly acknowledged and freely accepted. He who must insist upon and enforce his authority simply doesn't have authority.

Real authority is based upon confidence, upon free consent of the majority at least; it is the opposite to dictatorship, which by definition is based upon force and coercion. That is why true authority is truly democratic and why, on the other hand, real democracy can not work without such—freely but absolutely—accepted authority. Government with the consent of the governed, but all the same real government.

Because of the individualistic character of art, any sort of artistic or literary production at least is in the last analysis a one-man proposition, even when produced by a collective effort. An orchestra needs one conductor, not a committee of six conductors. A stage production needs one stage manager who has the last word. A periodical needs one chief editor in order to have a distinctive physiognomy, created "after his image"; he has to transpose his individual idea into reality, as perfectly or near-perfectly as he is able to do it. His basic conception

may be screwy and its realization may smack of caricature, but at least it will have some personal character.

Due to my lack of experience and guidance, the first issue of the *Auslandspost* certainly fell short of my own conception of perfection. But at least I knew that the mistakes were my own mistakes and not the result of a somewhat muddled discussion, or a lame compromise. I was indeed, not only by name, the "responsible editor." This term unfortunately has long since lost its original meaning in German journalism, especially since political papers, likely to collide with the public prosecutor, used to appoint a man as a legally "responsible editor" whose only job it was to go to prison if things turned out wrongly. He was called "Sitz-Redakteur," an editor to sit in prison and who actually had not the slightest responsibility for, or influence upon, the content of the paper.

To develop the courage for taking personal, not only collective, responsibility and making his own mistakes is indeed an important element of character-training in a democracy as well. But this courage must be regulated by and based upon the ethical or religious feeling of individual responsibility toward certain absolute standards; we may say toward God and mankind. Otherwise this virtue degenerates into the abject immoralism of Fascist doctrine, which is anti-human and barbarian because it negates reason as well as religion. Even the delegated power of democratic authority would corrupt, if not qualified by this—in a deeper sense always religious—feeling of responsibility. Jefferson and Lincoln became the best personification of the democratic idea, because they were imbued with the ideas of Christianity. And in both cases this meant Protestant Christianity, which stresses—more than Catholicism and almost to the breaking point—the direct personal responsibility of every individual before God and his conscience.

Being a Prussian and a Protestant, I almost felt crushed by the heavy weight of responsibility with which I had been burdened more or less against my own will. I had accepted this appointment under the erroneous presupposition that, guided by an expert, I would have time to acquire a competence equal to my task, before having to assume exclusive responsibility for the whole journal. But now, I felt, it was impossible to let Frisch and the publisher down. Previously I had only done things which I knew how to do and therefore liked

to do. The occupation with such hobbies, intensive as it was, had never been really tiring for me, and I had reason to believe myself almost indefatigable.

But it was another thing to fight my way all alone through a jungle of technical and intellectual difficulties in the dark continent of international policy, which I had never explored before. I had always been quick to learn, but among my translators were very few from whom I could learn about the intricate problems I had to face. Most of them had rather to rely upon my precarious wisdom, which had to be picked up day by day through an almost uninterrupted study of German, French and English papers.

I often wondered how "reading the papers" could become a synonym for loafing. I lived in a state of continuous nervous tension; like Orestes chased by the Erinyes, I was haunted day and night by the idea of possible mistakes. I became oversensitive—and I still remember a wonderful early morning in spring when, hastening to my office in the Musa Press, I was moved almost to tears by the wonderful view of the English Garden, where on a little hill in the midst of lovely trees and lawns, a small white temple in classical style, the so-called Monopteros, appeared as a symbol of quiet rest and harmony, a sanctuary barred to myself. But fortunately I simply had no time—and had too much humor—to indulge in such morbid feelings of self-pity for longer than a moment. Yet actually there was something of deeper symbolical significance in this impression. Unfortunately my great natural talent for the *vita contemplativa*—or what superficial observers would call laziness—was always spoiled and frustrated by a sort of compulsory neurosis, an unhealthy conception of responsibility and perfection, a blind urge to do things for their own sake.

The only technical help I had in the *Auslandspost* were two people even less competent for their respective jobs than I for mine: a half-time secretary whom I shared with Frisch and a full-time messenger boy who, unfortunately, was a full-time idiot, too. The secretary, called Diehl, had no other professional training than that of being a professional "Schwabinger." He had been recommended to us by some mutual friends as having the one qualification of being near starvation. He was full of good will, but he had not much of a will. A former

journalist of over 40, he had more or less comfortably settled down in his black misery and evidently considered every attempt to help him as a rather disturbing interruption of his dream life. With an apathetic smile he sat at the typewriter and tried to write, in a hit-or-miss method with one finger, an occasional letter for Frisch or me. But we soon found out that it was preferable for us as well as for the recipient to write our letters by hand, though Frisch's sharp but microscopic handwriting required the use of a magnifying glass.

I used to go to my office about noon, since I spent the morning hours in the Musa Press. An hour later Frisch used to retire and, punctually at 2 o'clock, Mr. Diehl vanished from the picture. In order to increase his income I sometimes asked him to translate an article from the French or the Spanish, the two foreign languages he pretended to know. But when I asked for the manuscript the next day he usually answered with the smile of a polite sleepwaalker that unfortunately the evening before he had been unable to do the translation, since he had been invited out to dinner. But he was ready to do it now after having completed his main task, the opening of the newspaper bundles. This, by the way, gave him the advantage of using me as a dictionary, at least a French dictionary, and of asking my help when the text seemed obscure. When finally he had gone, I was unable to leave my desk, come fire or high water, since every moment an important telephone call might come which it would be a catastrophe to miss. This difficult situation, combined with a continuous nervous tension, resulted shortly in a gall-bladder attack.

But perhaps even more responsible for this affliction was my messenger boy Wilhelm. He was blind in one eye and squinted with the other, a condition which, like his obvious idiocy, I believed to be the consequence of a war injury. On Sundays he used to wear a glass eye which, not squinting, seemed to give his features an illusory touch of intelligence. He was always en route between my office and that of the printing house, bringing papers to, or picking up manuscripts from, my translators. But once started on a short errand he was usually as good as lost to the world and returned only after an absolutely unpredictable lapse of time; whereas my telephone was crowded with calls from my collaborators desperately asking for their papers or telling me that their urgently needed manuscripts must be picked up within

an hour because after this time they must leave their homes. I tried to treat Wilhelm with all the friendly indulgence due a war victim, but he seemed immune to persuasion and reprimands alike. Unfailingly smiling, he would mutter in a hardly understandable dialect some silly excuse or with disarming naïveté simply say that he had to settle some private affairs. Every Wednesday night he was supposed to come to my apartment at about ten o'clock with the last galley proofs from the printer needed for the layout, which I used to compose during the night. One night he finally appeared at midnight. When almost exploding I asked him, "Where, for God's sake, have you been so long?" he looked at me, with his squinting eye directed somewhere to the ceiling, and said with the friendliness and quietness of good conscience: "I just took a little walk through the English Garden, it was such nice weather." Only my sense of humor saved me from a stroke.

But on another occasion he really forced me almost to risk my life in order to reach my office. He had disappeared in the early morning, with the only office key available at the moment, for a little excursion, as I learned from his mother whom I desperately called. No locksmith could open the Yale lock without sawing it out of the door, an operation for which he would have needed a special permit from the police, endless formalities likely to take the rest of the day. And of course it was the day of the deadline. I had to invade my office at any price. Before the locked door I met my English translator, the only really reliable collaborator I had, and together we explored every possibility of solving this new editorial problem. Finally I had an idea. Looking up from the courtyard to my office on the fourth floor like a yearning lover, I noticed that the kitchen window of the office apartment had not been closed. If I had a rope, I could climb down from the corresponding window on the fifth floor, let myself in and unlock the door. But how to find a rope? The sport shop on the next corner was not inclined to lend one and the price asked was exorbitant, enough to upset the not too stable balance of our whole paper. But where there is a will there is a way.

Across the street men were working on a new building and there, under the scaffold, lay nicely coiled an enormous rope, big enough to carry ten people of my bantam weight and long enough for a sky-

scraper. With an almost hynotizing friendliness I asked one of the bricklayers: "Can you lend me your rope for ten minutes?" Flabbergasted, he referred me to the foreman, who was just eating his lunch in a little booth. The man stared at me with cautious attention, when I explained my need. He evidently considered me crazy, but relatively harmless. My determined attitude, however, seemed to convince him that I simply would not accept a refusal. "Okay," he said, "take the rope when you like, but bring it back." From the door of his booth he attentively watched the strange spectacle of a small man in a very correct black topcoat carrying away the heavy roll of rope.

In vain my collaborator implored me to desist from this adventure. I only asked him to help me carry the rope up to the fifth floor. I rang the bell, and before the old woman who opened the door had recovered from her astonishment, I explained with irresistible politeness and precision the necessity of climbing out of her kitchen window. In the next minute I began to take the flowerpots from the window sill, unrolled my rope, instructed my collaborator to lay it around the massive stove and to give rope gradually until he heard me call. Without ever having been an Alpinist, I fortunately knew how to fasten a rope around my body without impairing the movements of my arms. Leaning out of the window to make sure that it was the right one I saw there below, in the courtyard which suddenly seemed the bottom of a deep abyss, a group of men, my friends the bricklayers, assembled to watch the thrilling spectacle of a lunatic breaking his neck.

Even secured by a big rope, it is a strange feeling to go out of a window on the fifth floor. I knew that the only way to do it was to climb out backward. The nervousness of my friend who unceasingly tried to dissuade me from this Alpinistic expedition, forced me to a perfect calmness. As a rationalist I had decided that, given the big rope and my light weight, the danger was purely imaginary. In the next moment I was dangling like a jumping jack on the outside between the two windows. My friend began to give rope and soon I was on the window sill of the open window below. I freed myself from the rope and went to the entrance door to unlock it. At the very moment when I touched the bolt, a key from the outside turned in the lock and with a friendly smile entered my Wilhelm, his eye looking

for me in a corner of the ceiling. Following a dark impulse, he had returned from his excursion only four hours later than he was supposed to be in the office.

I didn't tell this to my friends the bricklayers when, with a tip and many thanks, I brought them back their rope. They anyhow seemed a little disappointed that the whole affair had worked so smoothly without any thrilling sensation. But I at any rate felt very proud of having proved to myself that nothing, not even Wilhelm's idiocy, could stop me when I decided to meet my deadline. Everything on this day worked like a charm, and I began to think that it would be a real improvement for our profession if, once in a while, every editor were obliged to enter his office through the window.

Perhaps it would have facilitated my work if I had decided to replace Wilhelm as well as Diehl by more efficient employees. But I never had the heart to fire a lame duck, which of course is an absolutely senseless weakness. After finding out that Wilhelm was not in the least a war victim, at any rate not a military one, I had once, in a moment of righteous indignation, proposed to hire another boy with at least half of his senses left. But Frisch looked so sad and unhappy at this suggestion that I didn't insist. I knew he was so hypersensitive that, from pure delicacy, it was almost impossible for him to return a manuscript which he could not use. He preferred not to answer at all, which, for the respective author, was of course even more disagreeable, but it saved Frisch the shock of hurting somebody's feelings. When three years later *Der Neue Merkur* was discontinued and Frisch asked me to liquidate its editorial affairs, I found some manuscripts dating back many years; in some cases the problem had in the meantime solved itself by the death of the author.

With me it was perhaps not so much a hypertrophic humaneness as a certain proud obstinacy which prevented me from replacing unsatisfactory collaborators as long as I felt able to make up for their shortcomings. After some unsuccessful experiments with people who perhaps knew some French but nothing of French policy, I finally decided to take over the French translations myself in addition to my editorial work. I wished I could have done the same with some other languages, Italian, for example. Here the translator at least knew the

foreign language because he was an Italian himself, but he did not know enough German to make his translations understandable, let alone printable.

My only relief came from the translations from the English written by a highly conscientious man who despite his deep erudition was a sort of social failure. He had had a bad start in life with an early and unhappy marriage. Prematurely burdened with responsibilities for wife and children, he had lost through war and inflation his last resources and even his self-confidence. His inner insecurity expressed itself in a bad stammer, which again made him shy away from social or even professional contacts. He barely succeeded in earning a living for himself, his wife and his two children. He had resigned himself to a half-proletarian living standard and escaped as far as possible the trite atmosphere of his shabby two-room apartment by spending the whole day in the reading room of a public library, where, an indefatigable reader, he discovered new treasures every day. But he never made the slightest effort to change his heavy gold bars into more common currency. Several dozen successful journalists, always in need of copy and rarely blessed with a new or original idea, could have lived from what this strange man buried in his memory and in old suitcases filled with notes and excerpts. One whole old trunk was filled with the study material for a history of Frederick II of Hohenstaufen, on which he had been working since his student days. Frisch and I did our best to help him; we found some books for him to translate, among others that of Luther Burbank. But there was a sort of spell about him. Nothing that he touched seemed to succeed; perhaps because he simply prevented success by discounting it *a priori*. Even good luck needs to be encouraged by a responsive attitude.

He came from an old peasant family of Westphalia; the people of this region are known to be introspective and sometimes even clairvoyant. They are reticent, a bit rough and heavy like their bread, the famous Pumpernickel. Yet they really have something of the proverbial German profoundness. The trouble with our friend was, he had so intensively and so deeply looked inward that somehow in the course of time he had lost sight of himself; and he certainly had lost touch with the outside world. His style, however, was far from the chaotic nebulous confusion which so easily pretends to be deep while

only expressing the lack of intellectual discipline and mental integrity. He wrote the clean and clear German style of a man trained in Greek and Latin in a "Humanistischen Gymnasium." With Frisch and me he soon felt more at home and could even speak without stammering.

When I saw him last, shortly before leaving Grmany, he had lost his wife, his daughter was married and his son was with a relative somewhere in Westphalia. He himself had taken to the woods and lived in a sort of log cabin on a lake, a few hours from Munich. Sometimes there was a nice girl with him who would have liked to share his life. But a born escapist, he shrank away from every true reality, which always includes responsibility. He rarely came to Munich, but I shall never forget that, in the first days after the Nazis had got hold of the city, he was among the few friends courageous enough to look me up, though our first collaboration on the *Auslandspost* dated back more than ten years.

## CHAPTER XVI

# Historical Events Are Hard to Know ⊙ More About Dostoevski and Tolstoy

THE FIRST NAZI bid for power, the famous "putsch" of 1923, did not make a very deep impression on me, perhaps because I was much too busy following the complications of world policy, compared with which a local incident of definitely farcical character seemed hardly worthy of closer attention. Since the great French, English and American press almost entirely ignored Hitler's existence, I felt justified in doing the same. You always miss, when attending them, what retrospective prophets later call a great historical event. Louis XVI recorded in his diary for July 14, 1789, the day of the storming of the Bastille, the short remark: "Nothing special."

Typically enough this, like any other putsch in Germany, was pre-announced by more or less precise and plausible rumors—which nobody took seriously. I remember my astonishment when, in the first days of November, Frisch, terrified by the bloodthirsty though still only verbal anti-Semitism of the Nazi party, decided to make a business trip to Berlin and not to return before the fateful armistice day, the date generally predicted for the expected putsch; I understood that, born in the East, he was haunted by his childhood fear of pogroms. But in 1923 the idea of pogroms in Germany seemed slightly ridiculous. Unfortunately Frisch, with his anticipated panic, was more right than for ten years he believed himself to be. It is always good to remember that every sort of judgment, and not in politics alone, may be proved entirely wrong in the short-range view of the immediate situation, and absolutely right in the longer perspective of more distant and not yet foreseeable consequences.

All the people inside and outside of Germany who for many years took Hitler as a sure bet, seemed to be wise indeed. But finally we, who from the start and for twenty years have never ceased to be his

irreconcilable enemies, though always and everywhere considered as hopeless fools, have had the last word, though certainly not the last laugh. It is a tragic and bitter satisfaction that our warning prophecies of impending catastrophes have proved to be so terribly correct. We wish we had not been so devastatingly right. We never believed in Hitler; we only may reproach ourselves for having believed too little in a potential Nazi danger, as long as it disguised itself as a farce. But who would have heard our warnings in 1923, when even in 1939 they passed unheeded? And indeed this Hitler putsch of 1923 looked even more farcical than the shortlived "Räterepublic Bavaria" of 1919.

I had of course more important things to do than to attend the meeting in the famous Bierhalle where the so-called Statthalter von Kahr was interrupted in the midst of his dry political oratory by Hitler's shot into the blue of the ceiling. I missed the wonderful spectacle of the shotgun wedding between two different sorts of double-crossing conspirators. Since then, Konrad Heiden, the perhaps too much impressed biographer of Hitler, and some other not less reliable historians have sufficiently elucidated every single phase of this political Punch and Judy show. These studies only confirmed what everybody immediately suspected and what Hitler's trial in 1924 made sufficiently clear: the close collusion and secret understanding between two competing sets of conspirators, one inside and the other outside the government.

The Statthalter Kahr and the commander of the Bavarian Reichswehr, General von Lossow, themselves wanted to overthrow the Republican Government in Berlin and to replace it by a monarchy under the Bavarian Crown Prince Ruprecht of Wittelsbach. They intended to use Hitler and his storm troopers as auxiliaries. Whereas Hitler, supported by Ludendorff, whose personal animosity toward Ruprecht was notorious, tried to force the hands of their secret allies in the government by creating a *fait accompli*. The wonderful scene when the ham actor Hitler forced Kahr and Lossow to appear with him on the stage and to introduce themselves as a new German government with Hitler presiding was only an official confirmation of an unofficially established alliance. But when, two hours later, Kahr and Lossow,

recovered from their surprise, found out that not only the commander of the Reichswehr in Berlin, General von Seekt, but also the Crown Prince Ruprecht and, last but not least, the Archbishop Faulhaber in Munich strongly disliked the whole arrangement, the two representatives of the legal authority suddenly decided to remain loyal and to turn against Hitler. They hastily mobilized their Reichswehr troops, and when in the morning Hitler's storm troopers, most of them without arms, assembled outside the city and marched toward Munich, they met the resistance of regular troops.

The bombastic proclamation signed by Hitler, Kahr and Lossow was still displayed on the walls next morning when I went to my office in the Musa Press. But I hardly took it seriously. I remembered how a similar putsch in 1920, the so-called Kapp Putsch, had immediately broken down when it met the resistance of the organized socialist workers. I only felt a bit annoyed because my usual way through the Schönfeld Strasse, along the Ministry of War, was barred by Reichswehr troops surrounding the whole building. The Ministry of War, as we later heard, was occupied by the former Reichswehr Captain Roehm, once the protector and now the most fanatic follower of Hitler, who, first refusing to capitulate, surrendered a few hours later without a single shot being fired. The only shots actually fired were the short salvo of a Reichswehr detachment barring the entrance to the Odeonsplatz. When the procession of Nazi storm troopers, led by Hitler and Ludendorff, tried to overrun what they mistakenly believed to be a token resistance, the Reichswehr troops fired, killing some men in the first ranks and wounding some others. The corporal Hitler had only injured his shoulder by throwing himself too hastily flat on the pavement. Ludendorff, with the professional courage of a general and perhaps under the delusion that he bore a charmed life, as traditional war hero, simply went on, crossed the firing line unhindered and was arrested with due respect a little later. The storm troopers, mostly young boys under twenty, dispersed in panic.

A good friend of mine who had a sort of dame's school in the vicinity told me later that her large apartment was suddenly crowded with dozens of panic-stricken young Brownshirts who fell on their knees begging to be hidden under the beds or any place out of sight.

The poor fellows felt betrayed by everyone, by their Führer as well as by the Reichswehr, which, as they had been told, would not fire on them, but would join their ranks.

All this went on about half a mile from my office. But I did not even hear the shots. If the noise really reached the Königinstrasse, it was probably drowned in the clatter of a typewriter. Around noon, going over to my other office, only five minutes away, I did not even have to make a detour. The Schönfeld Strasse was peaceful again, and I did not think much more about the whole affair. It was just another of those foolish and abortive putsches I had seen before. I only felt very pleased to think that Hitler as well as Ludendorff would have lost by this failure their last chance of causing further mischief. I still remember how amused I was to hear that Hitler himself, despite his solemn pledge, "This day will see me as head of Germany or dead," had been quietly arrested the same evening in the villa of his friend Hanfstaengl, ready for a good sleep after an eventful day.

It is strange to think that world history might have been changed, if one of the Reichswehr soldiers had taken another—and better—aim. But it was logical enough to think that Hitler's political career was ended, that politically at least he was a dead man. German history, however, and also world history is far from being logical or even reasonable. A born rationalist has a hard time to understand it at all, until he begins to understand what were the powers behind Hitler in Germany—and in the world. And at this time I was not prepared for such deeper understanding. The tragi-comical episode of the Hitler putsch of 1923 was just a local story without any deeper significance.

The only relaxation from my editorial duties was a sort of busman's holiday: the reading of books and literary reviews, as, for example, the *Neue Merkur,* in the editing of which I occasionally lent a helping hand. Instead of being coached by Frisch, as originally supposed, I could not help but write the blurb for the next number after having witnessed for two hours the not entirely mute despair of my old friend, who seemed definitely allergic to the more commercial job of writing an advertisement. And I really felt flattered when he sometimes asked my opinion of a manuscript.

I remember one special story which I liked to tell to young writers

for their encouragement and consolation, because it proves that acceptance or refusal of a contribution is not necessarily a matter of literary quality, but often rather of some technicality or even of pure chance. The manuscript which Frisch wanted me to read was a long poem by a very young poet, one of those "promising talents" who make it difficult for the critic to predict whether or not they will fulfill their promises.

As Frisch told me, the layout of his next issue of the *Neue Merkur* was almost finished, except for one page and a half. "This poem would just fit in perfectly," said he almost imploringly. "If you think it good enough, I could close today and go to the country." So favorably predisposed, I found the poem, describing a famous painting of Breughel, had the merit of some originality, though in a less lenient mood I would perhaps have called it mannerism. "Why, after all, it is not so bad," I told Frisch. "It is perhaps not a great work of art, but it will not do any harm to the literary prestige of the *Neue Merkur.*" Frisch, encouraged by my favorable judgment, beamed like a boy who unexpectedly has a day off from school. He hastily put the manuscript in an envelope, addressed it carefully to the printing house and, at peace with his conscience, went home to pack his suitcase.

To appear in the *Neue Merkur* was a sort of letter of nobility for a young unknown poet. And thus this little accident became the starting point of an honorable and quite successful literary career. "Habent sua fata libelli." Not only books but even simple little manuscripts "have their own fate." And they have to fit not only into the space, but also into the general set-up of a periodical. If Homer had sent me his famous Nausicas canto, for *Simplicissimus,* I would have been obliged to send it back with a polite letter expressing my deepest admiration and my sincere regret that "your wonderful poem unfortunately is too long for our space and hardly fits in the general framework of our periodical."

But of course there could not be the slightest doubt or hesitation when one day Frisch—like every better editor at this time—succeeded in digging out some hitherto unpublished writing of Dostoevski's. This time the find was a number of letters to his wife written during the Pushkin festival in Moscow where Dostoevski, invited to give the

official address, experienced the triumph of his life; almost an apotheosis definitely establishing his national and international fame as the great representative of Russian literature. Not even Goethe had during his lifetime such a confirmation of immortality concentrated in one dramatic climax.

An exciting idea, to read the most personal testimony of a great man about the greatest moment, the apogee of a tormented life. And excited I was upon reading the manuscript of the translation, but in another way than I had expected. These letters confirmed to an almost devastating degree my deepest suspicion of Dostoevski's personality. They were the almost embarrassingly frank expression of a really inexcusable smallness and meanness of character. They read like the trite report of a little traveling salesman entertaining his wife with the results of a successful business trip. Dostoevski dryly registered the indescribable, typically Russian enthusiasm of an audience, swept off its feet, embracing him and each other with tears; an explosion of deep emotions which to Anglo-Saxons, used and trained to understatements, would appear as pure madness. The only one not participating in this general frenzy was evidently the man who aroused it. Of course, he feels flattered because "even Turgenev came to embrace me." And this "even" expresses the subaltern admiration as well as the deep envious hate which Dostoevski felt for the Western grand-seigneur, the "kind giant," as the Goncourts called Turgenev in their "Journals." Dostoevski does not forget to mention his wreath of laurel "almost two arshin in diameter," but he certainly does not lose his head. As he confides to his wife, he will not go to the unveiling of the Pushkin monument the next morning, but will have one of his colleagues do it, because first, standing bareheaded for several minutes, one might catch cold and secondly, who knows whether the money disbursed for the wreath would ever be reimbursed.

I purposely limit myself to these little traits which after twenty years remain unforgettable, instead of looking up the source for larger and perhaps more impressive quotations. These letters exhale the sulky atmosphere of a badly aired petit bourgeois soul; a soul foreign to all natural greatness but slain with genius as with a disease, possessed like a medium by a spirit who spoke through his mouth without changing his substance.

Strangely enough, this is exactly the impression given—entirely unintentionally—by the deeply moving memoirs of his wife. A first German translation of this book appeared about the same time, but from another Munich publishing house which specialized in Dostoevski. And this testimony given by his wife is indeed a great human document. In unswerving adoration, like a saint on her knees, she lived with him through the artificial hell of his life, without even being aware of all its tortures. She sacrificed herself so totally, without any reserve, that not even the idea of self-sacrifice ever occurred to her. She belonged to the only species of perfect saints, those who unconsciously and unknowingly are, but never think of themselves as saints, because they quite naturally never think of themselves at all.

She never had outlived the absolute devotion of the young girl who one day went to see her idol, the great genius she had admired and loved through his famous books. It was a typically Dostoevskian situation. By what psychiatrists call the "neurotic arrangement," Dostoevski always succeeded in making his life one uninterrupted sequence of nightmares, one single "season in hell." He was, so to speak, a professional in catastrophes. At this special time he had put himself in the most absurd situation by making a contract with his publisher according to which he would forfeit all the rights on all his former books if he failed to deliver the manuscript of his next novel, "The Idiot," exactly on a certain date. There were only six weeks left, and the manuscript was only half finished. In habitual despair Dostoevski alarmed all his friends and admirers, one of whom had the excellent idea that a secretary who had mastered the brand new art of shorthand writing would be the only salvation. He even knew perhaps the only girl in Moscow sufficiently trained in this new technique; and he sent her to Dostoevski.

She candidly describes her devastating impression of this first short visit in Dostoevski's miserable apartment in a run-down house, where she stumbled on the dirty staircase over some drunkards. Dostoevski himself in his total distress, half out of his mind, so cruelly disappointed the high-strung expectations of his sensitive and romantic worshipper that the shock was almost too much for the poor girl. Coming home, she refused to eat, went to bed and cried all night. Perhaps it was her night of Gethsemane, when unconsciously and in bitter tears, she

decided to give her life to a work of salvation. The next day she went to work taking Dostoevski's dictation for long hours and transcribing her notes late into the night. The orderly handwritten manuscript, though often corrected and changed, was finally finished in six weeks of frantic effort. The contract was kept. Dostoevski was—provisionally —saved.

Throughout her following married life with Dostoevski she continued to save him, with endless patience and indefatigable courage, never aware that she could not save him from himself. She tried at least to save him from his family, which used to exploit him in the most shameless way. Once, in utmost secrecy, she made the necessary financial arrangements for a long journey to Germany—and on the very day before their departure Dostoevski's nephew, a notorious ne'er-do-well, got wind of the planned escape. He forced his way into Dostoevski's studio and made a terrible scene with his uncle who, instead of putting him out, finally handed him all the traveling money. This little incident, indicating a morbid, irresponsible weakness which has nothing in common with real human kindness, would have been enough for a normal young wife, especially if combined with tearful self-accusations. But for a little saint it was only a new proof that this wonderful great man must be saved from the clutches of his family at any cost. She sold everything she possessed, including her modest jewelry, got several small advances from some publishers and editors, and finally succeeded in scraping together enough money to make the flight of the prophet possible despite himself.

Dostoevski of course felt miserable outside Russia and outside his domestic hell. He hated Europe, and felt even more in exile than in Siberia where, by the way, according to the testimony of one of his companions in misfortune, he had "strolled around like a wolf" among the other exiles—while composing his poignant "Memoirs of a Death House."

Now, finally arrived in the rather elegant international watering place Baden-Baden, where his young wife gave birth to her first baby, he became fascinated by the gaming table and in a few days lost his last penny in the casino. After dispatching to all his friends the most disgusting begging letters full of masochistic self-humiliation, he sat

down and wrote his famous novel "The Gambler"; nicely copied by his wife who, despite childbirth and financial catastrophes, never tired of serving, nursing and saving her great man, who in fact was more helpless than her baby. She tells innumerable stories like this one—how Dostoevski, traveling with her to Moscow, while changing the train, lost the unique manuscript of a novel which had to be delivered to his publisher. Returning in the middle of the night to the station she was knocked down by a rowdy, but she finally succeeded in recovering the irreplaceable manuscript. Nevertheless she only kept on asking herself how she had come to deserve the privilege of sharing the life of a genius.

To share the life of a genius is perhaps by definition an almost impossible task, because the real life of a genius is in another than in the human sphere. There is always something deeply inhuman in the personal relations of a genius. The old Goethe, especially in the icy and crystalline state of his old age, froze to death everyone who was within reach; children and children's children simply withered away under the breeze of his genius. The life of the genius is always and necessarily a tragedy. Goethe with all his Olympian harmony once spoke of the "terrible conditions under which a work of art comes into existence." But even these continuous birth pains are more or less consciously exploited for the process of artistic creation. In the last analysis there is in every artist an element of masochism and of exhibitionism. I could give innumerable quotations similar to Heine's half-coquettish confession, "Out of my great pains I make my little songs." Lou Andreas-Salomé, whose book about Rainer Maria Rilke is a deep and searching interpretation of his life and art, once said with a sigh of compassion, "What a terrible fate to be a great poet."

Certainly Tolstoy's life too was a tragedy—and sometimes almost a tragi-comedy. But, in contrast to Dostoevski, he never ceased to be a great person, great even in his shortcomings. In his case the suffering of the genius was intensified by his desperate attempt to reach perfection not only as an artist but as a Christian. His life was one uninterrupted, never entirely successful struggle against his proud and violent nature, but there is not one single trait of Dostoevski's painful pettiness.

A typical story of this kind is reported in a little book, the German

translation of which, appearing in an obscure publishing house, passed almost unnoticed. It is written by one of Tolstoy's pupils at the school in Jasnaya Polyana, who later became a taxi driver in Petersburg. He tells how one day Tolstoy in his peasant costume went with three of the little boys to Petersburg. They traveled third class and when they arrived in the capital, Tolstoy modestly waited in line to get his luggage. But the man at the window was in no hurry to serve a peasant and kept him waiting. After a while Tolstoy meekly asked again for his luggage, explaining that the little boys had never been in the city before and were so excited that he wanted to put them to bed. The official, a rough and arrogant fellow, answered the "dirty muzjik" with some words of abuse. And immediately Tolstoy, red in the face with anger, flashed back, "How do you dare? I am the Count Tolstoy." The unfortunate little official almost had a stroke. He hurried to bring the luggage and, stammering apologies, he ran after the sled carrying the peasant-count and the three real little peasant boys. Tolstoy did not look up and his face was more red than before, this time with shame. He avoided looking in the eyes of his three little pupils after giving them this object lesson in Christian humility.

True, his family life too was a sort of hell, out of which he tried to escape again and again. His wife who had married a brilliant young aristocrat and famous writer quite naturally had become somewhat neurotic, when her husband, at fifty and the father of a dozen children, suddenly decided to become a saint. She got frantic when he wanted to give away all his earthly possessions—with the typical recklessness of saints and artists who don't give a damn for what may become of their families, if they feel compelled to follow their inner vocation.

She succeeded in saving the family fortune for her children and she was even too successful in preventing Tolstoy from retiring into the solitude of a little hermitage as he, following the example of so many Russian saints, always tried to do. She stifled every such attempt at escape by an attempt at suicide, throwing herself in the little lake at Jasnaya Polyana or trying to hang herself. And so she always forced him back into a life the deep ambiguity of which he hated, because he felt it more bitterly than anyone else. And she took her petty revenge.

When Lou Andreas-Salomé was a guest at Jasnaya Polyana, the Countess, at the elegant dinner table, commented on Tolstoy's vegetarianism with the friendly words: "Yes, it's not so easy with Tolstoy eating no meat. We have today, for example, some venison, at practically no cost. But for him, of course, we must have artichokes from Nizza—it is quite expensive." And there he sat, the unfortunate prisoner in his peasant cloth, eating his despair with his artichokes.

He probably felt the more ashamed when thinking of the fact that sometimes, in spite of all his religious principles, he simply could not resist the temptation to sneak down in the middle of the night and to steal secretly a juicy piece of meat out of his own pantry.

There is a very famous painting, "Tolstoy in the Circle of his Family," which marvelously illustrates the true situation. In the circle of the lamp, the large family of mother and children sits peacefully around the table. In the foreground of the painting sits old Tolstoy, withdrawn in the darkest corner, half hidden behind the high back of his easy chair, looking down into his lap with an expression that makes you think of a dangerous wild beast caught in a trap and only waiting for the moment when, with a roar, it will break out and tear the whole family to pieces.

There was a terribly passionate, elemental force in him, for good and evil alike; a real force of nature—nothing morbid and nothing pathological. He too perhaps lived through hell and suffered as much as Dostoevski; but his hell was not artificial, it was terribly real.

Fega Frisch, Ephraim Frisch's wife, is to be thanked for the translation of another highly interesting document, Gorky's reminiscences of Tolstoy—the best book he ever wrote. There is an unforgettable picture of Tolstoy as Gorky saw him once from afar, sitting motionless under a willow tree beside a little brook and looking as malignant and dangerous as an old pagan deity who, with a single wink of his white bushy brow, might turn to stone any simple mortal approaching him. Gorky, of course, did not dare, he cautiously sneaked away. This is not exactly how we would imagine a man who throughout his life tried hard to follow the ideals of original Christianity. But Tolstoy himself, better than anybody else, knew the dark depths of his soul. He knew how far short he fell of his Christian ideal. Only he was not afraid of himself and he never despaired of himself. He tried and

failed, tried and failed again up to his last day. He unfailingly faced the truth about himself, and he often confessed his sins. But he never indulged in self-humiliation; he never lost his human dignity; he always remained quite naturally what he was: a real man and a great person.

In a certain sense, however, even his death was a sort of brilliant failure—at least in respect to the ideals of Christian forgiveness and humility. When, at the age of 82, in his last attempt at escape, he lay dying in the waiting room of a miserable little station, lost in the wide Russian plains, he steadfastly refused to see his wife who had been called by a telegram. He wanted to die in peace and permitted at his bedside only his favorite daughter, who had helped him flee. Ironically enough, the very step taken with the sincere intention of disappearing quietly in silence and solitude, made sensational headlines in the international press. The smartest journalists beleaguered the little station in order to wire all over the world the latest news about the effective last scene of a long tragedy in true Tolstoy style, created and even performed by the famous writer himself.

I think it would be worth while to publish here in America these moving human documents about the great writer whose monumental novel, "War and Peace," has long been an American best seller. Tolstoy, better than Dostoevski, gives us a key to the understanding of Russia, whose inexhaustible force in time of war astonished the world and will deeply influence the shaping of the peace. Leo Tolstoy and —as I said before—Nicolai Lyesskoff are still more representative of Russia and in a deeper sense even more revolutionary than literary Soviet officials like Alexei Tolstoy or Ilya Ehrenburg.

In my *Auslandspost,* of course, I liked to publish sketches and short stories taken from the Soviet press and giving an often astonishingly frank picture of what everyday life in the new Russia was like. Especially the short satirical vignettes of Sostshenko seemed to prove that literary self-criticism, at least at this time, was not yet necessarily considered as "counter-revolutionary." But Sostshenko has in the meantime been retired from circulation, so it seems. The regimentation became more and more strict from year to year. I remember my ironical amusement when later, in 1935, I read the highly authoritarian in-

structions given by Karl Radek to the great international Congress in Moscow. Radek was then the highest literary official of the Soviet government, and not yet unmasked as a dangerous traitor in the famous purge trials. Accordingly, he treated the assembled international writers like a class of stubborn and lazy high-school juniors who had failed to learn their lessons. The pupil André Malraux for example, one of the most brilliant young French writers, a communist himself, was severely reprimanded. His poignant novel "La Condition Humaine," relating his own experiences when fighting with the Chinese communists in Shanghai in 1927, was forbidden in Russia; it did not entirely follow the official prescriptions, but betrayed a suspicious tendency to "bourgeois individualism." Yet most of the European writers, attending this Congress at least as eye-witnesses if not as ear-witnesses, since hardly one of them understood a word of Russian, came back full of admiration for the freedom of Russian literature.

More interesting than the literary products appearing in 1923 in the Soviet press were the political and economic articles published in *Isvestia* or *Pravda*; they often surprised me, especially by their sharp-sighted criticism of international policy. Since Russia, at this time still isolated, was not yet in the position of having an official foreign policy at all, the viewpoint of Russian observers was in a certain sense more independent than that of the great European press. But, perhaps precisely for this reason, these articles were almost entirely ignored by, and hardly ever quoted in foreign papers—with the laudable exception of the *Auslandspost.*

For intelligent students of world policy, the *Auslandspost* was indeed an almost indispensable source of information, especially at a period when even a linguist could hardly afford to buy, with depreciated marks, all the different foreign newspapers. The subscription fees were certainly one of the biggest items in our small budget. Only some truly liberal journals like the English *Nation* and the *New Statesman,* or the American *Nation* and the *New Republic,* used to send us their copies in exchange. And in the same way the *Neue Merkur* got the best literary reviews, like *Nouvelle Revue Française, Dial, New Mercury, Criterion,* and so on. I still remember that sometimes I felt like Tantalus, because I could not, as I deeply wished to do, devote myself exclusively to the enviable full-time job of reading

all these literary and artistic reviews. They were, in fact, for me personally much more interesting than political editorials.

Unfortunately, the German reading public seemed to have similar feelings and tendencies. Most of the really intelligent people were not interested in politics, and on the other hand political people were in general not intelligent enough to appreciate such an incomparable source of serious information as the *Auslandspost.* Thus our circulation remained limited to a relatively small, though very faithful circle of readers; partly perhaps for the reason that the publisher was unable to spend much money for publicity. We had to operate on a shoestring. But at least, after having worked some months like a galley slave, I felt myself more and more equal to my task and began to draw some satisfaction from the results of my forced labor.

## CHAPTER XVII

# Excursion to Italy and Antiquity

AFTER MORE THAN a year of such uninterrupted effort Frisch as well as my publisher—perhaps only in a sort of enlightened self-interest—decided to prevent me from working myself prematurely to death and urged me to take some real vacation. And so in the fall of 1924 I finally accepted an often repeated invitation of an old friend, to be his guest in Taormina. He was the young man who, four years before, following my friendly advice, had resigned his position as "lector" in the Musa Press in order to become a writer. In the meantime he had become a sculptor and had settled himself in Italy, where life was more pleasant and even cheaper than in Germany. What inflation had left of his wife's interests was quite sufficient to secure a modest comfort for them.

Perhaps it would have been more reasonable to spend the three weeks for which Frisch and Diehl had volunteered to do without me, in a quiet place near Munich, instead of going to the utmost southern border of Europe. With the necessary and desirable short stops in Florence, Rome, Naples and Palermo, the journey to Taormina took almost five days, leaving not more than ten or eleven days of real rest. But having lived for more than a year and a half in continuous tension, meeting the weekly deadline like the man on the flying trapeze who must go through the routine of his *salto mortale* every evening, I felt that a sudden change to complete inactivity would be rather dangerous for me. The somewhat hectic trip through two-thirds of the European continent, with a whole series of new and deep impressions crammed into a few days, seemed better fitted to my need of a refreshing change.

It was quite an adventure for me, my first journey to Italy after all the years of war and inflation, which had made travel to foreign countries almost impossible for the average German. Here in America

I have become used to trips almost as long, to give an evening lecture somewhere in North Dakota or Nevada. But twenty years ago I had not yet lost my European scale of distances. Making use of preferential rates on the Italian trains, which, as everyone boasted, ran on time—thanks to Mussolini—I wanted to see as much as possible of Italy, perhaps even Mussolini himself, if only in order to confirm my deeply rooted antipathy toward the creator of the brand new and much advertised and admired political fashion called Fascism.

Only the most stubborn liberals, like myself, were at that time inclined to doubt whether a correct timetable was worth the exorbitant price of the enslavement of a whole people. Many outstanding Americans, including great newspapermen as well as university presidents, and almost all the political leaders of Europe, then shared the opinion of Mr. Churchill who, as late as 1941, called Mussolini a great man. The change of the vocabulary—and I hope of mind—has occurred in most of these cases rather recently.

There is a certain advantage in sticking stubbornly to your opinion. One who has succeeded in surviving the difficult and certainly strange interlude of the last twenty years will have had the belated satisfaction of knowing that the whole world, finally and almost unanimously, agrees with him. Unfortunately, there were too many—in all countries —who did not have the chance to survive, but had to die for their unpopular convictions, like Mateotti, for example.

A few months earlier I had published in my *Auslandspost* some revealing documents taken from the still extant Italian opposition press and from other neutral sources, documents which left hardly a doubt of Mussolini's large share of responsibility for the cold-blooded murder of Mateotti. In a period not yet used to political mass massacres, the Matteotti case seemed for a moment to stir up the moral conscience of the whole world, which afterward lay down to sleep for twenty years. In the late 1930's it still seemed a bit sleepy and answered, for example, the pathetic death cry of two millions of European Jews with some phrases of condolence, accompanied by the polite remark that unfortunately a series of international conferences had proved that nobody on earth would know where to put the Jews, even if they should be saved. But that is another story, an atrocity story which would

have sounded most improbable in 1924, especially to many Italian Jews, who still enjoyed the privilege of being Fascists themselves.

In the train to Florence I had made the acquaintance of a fellow traveler, a little state official of the Bavarian Ministry of Justice, as it turned out, who knew Italy pretty well from pre-war times. Almost every year he had spent his vacation in that country, which throughout the political and cultural history of Germany has exercised an almost magic attraction not only on old German emperors like Barbarossa and Frederick II of Hohenstaufen, but also on great German artists like Dürer and Goethe.

The ideals of Greco-Roman antiquity and of the Italian Renaissance had become part and parcel of German classicism, and so of German culture. The pious devotion with which my new friend spoke of his previous journeys to Italy was to a certain extent typical of the nostalgic and romantic attitude in which for more than a century many thousands of the educated German middle class had traveled through Italy with a Baedeker in one hand and Goethe's "Journey in Italy" in the other.

Without this traditional guidance, and without any knowledge of the Italian language, I should hardly have succeeded in gaining, within a few hours between two trains, a real impression of Florence, Rome or Naples if my companion, following the same route, had not proposed to join me. He understood my intention to spurn the Uffizi in order to spend the ten hours left for Florence in leisurely promenades through the town, along the Arno, and in an excursion to Fiesole. Sitting on the terrace of a small trattoria we deeply enjoyed the wonderful view of Florence and a not less wonderful Chianti before catching the night train to Rome.

And here again, arriving in the morning and leaving late the next evening, we managed, thanks to my experienced guide, really to *see* Rome—which can be done, according to the judicious saying, only in two days, in two months, or in two years. He had the address of a small "pensione," run by an elderly Swiss woman who hastened to explain that the name of her boarding house "Jungfrau" (Virgin), did not imply any other allusion than that to the Swiss mountain of this name. Resembling an old spinster, she was actually married to a young Italian, half her age, an amiable loafer whose only occupation was to

entertain the guests, especially the young female guests; whereas his wife worked her head off with the kitchen and housework. A good-looking fellow, he sported the economical black shirt and the strange hair-raising coiffure of the Fascists, who had taken to the habit of brushing their curls upward, "in order to look more terrible," as one of them put it. With good-natured vanity, he told me that, being an officer of the militia, he easily could arrange for me an interview with Mussolini, when on my return trip I would come again to Rome and, of course, the "Jungfrau."

In fact, Mussolini, anxious to have a good press and, as a former journalist, inclined to overrate this profession, was at that time easily accessible to foreign newspapermen. But at the moment I was more interested in seeing the Pantheon, the Colosseum, the Forum Romanum and all the other monuments of a great and immortal past for which the modern Romans, despite all Fascist oratory, seemed hardly to give a damn. They carelessly threw their rubbish in the excavation of the Forum Romanum and did not regard it as sacrilegious to have a rusty can or an old shoe roll over the place where Caesar had died and where Cicero had put the famous question to one of Mussolini's spiritual ancestors, the rabble rouser Catiline, as to how long he wanted to abuse the patience of the Romans. By now this patience seemed inexhaustible, and no questions were asked. But I understood that this careless and almost disrespectful attitude of the Italians toward their great past was perhaps the only way to keep alive without being crushed by the burden of historical responsibility. You simply can not live a normal human life while consciously and continuously facing on every street corner the monumental vestiges of the eternal idea of antiquity.

With a certain healthy defiance, the Romans had lived in the ruins of their eternal city, using the Colosseum as a quarry and nestling little houses in the enormous vaults of classical temples. Only an over-ambitious political vaudevillian like Mussolini could think of reviving with the theatrical gestures of excited nationalism, an empty imitation of an immortal past—a past which for centuries has ceased to be Italian in order to become the universal heritage of Western culture. By the way, this sort of political revival of antiquity was made unde

such an incompetent stage direction that in comparison the antiquity of Cecil B. de Mille's "Quo Vadis" looks true to life. An especially delightful and significant detail, for example, is the so-called "Roman salute"—which later on, with the same pretension of historical authenticity, became the "German salute" when taken over by that imitator of an imitator, Mr. Schicklgruber. In fact, the free men of Roman antiquity used to shake hands like everybody today. The outstretched arm—a gesture in which the Nazis, especially Hitler himself, never succeeded as well as the Italian Fascists with their inborn theatrical talent—was exclusively the salute of the slaves to their masters. Since there were of course a lot of German slaves in old Rome the historical right in this case is evidently rather with Schicklgruber than with Mussolini. When afterward Mussolini took over the Prussian goose-step, with the startling lack of originality that is typical of modern dictators, he went so far as to explain that the Roman legions had goose-stepped to the four corners of the Roman Empire.

And all this nonsense was accepted and taken seriously—not only in Germany and Italy. This astonishingly lack of humor again is quite typical of dictators and their admirers. If "Musso" and Schicklgruber had had the slightest sense of humor, they never would have succeeded in taking themselves seriously. One glance into the mirror or at the news reel would have been sufficient to dispel their delusions of grandeur; they immediately would have resigned, in order to become what nature had meant them to be: two small-town characters displaying sometimes their talents in the roles of Caesar or Napoleon on an amateur stage—but not on the stage of world history. It would have been preferable—especially for millions of supers who now, unfortunately in grim reality, have had to suffer and to die, only because ridicule had not killed in time two most ludicrous—and most dangerous —characters.

The words which old Thomas Theodor Heine, after the German defeat in 1918, gave as a motto to an issue of *Simplicissimus* are true for the whole world: "*If you had not refused to laugh with us, you would not have to cry with us now.*" The lack of humor—which means a lack of intelligence, of human judgment and simple common sense —is indeed in the last analysis responsible for the world catastrophe we have gone through; but this lack of humor which made it possible

for two bad clowns to assume the stature of world destroyers was of course a symptom of a deeper deficiency. It was an indication that the world had lost its intellectual as well as its moral standards, for humor presupposes reasonableness and humaneness. In its highest form it is an expression of human wisdom founded on a deep and deadly serious belief in ultimate and absolute values.

Real humor originates with good humor; that is, from a state of inner equilibrium and of physical health. The special type of Anglo-Saxon humor reflects the state of mind of free and prosperous peoples. It is surprisingly good-natured. I often marveled at the harmlessness of English or American political cartoons even in war—or at election times. Whereas a sharp satirical wit is the only arm of defense and offense—of the oppressed. It is aggressive and often bitter, sometimes even tragic, like the heartbreaking story of the Jewish prisoner shot by a Nazi for "having trembled so provocatively." No wonder that the Jewish wit is unequaled, and that in Germany's Second Reich a paper like *Simplicissimus* became a master of political satire. All the peoples living under a dictatorship, first the Russians, then the Italians and the Germans, have become terribly witty. Some of these most aggressive wits have even made the rounds of all the different dictatorships with slight adaptations to local conditions. This sort of wit is, of course, only a dubious ersatz for a more serious form of active resistance. I always felt rather depressed by the innumerable excellent anti-Nazi jokes coming from Germany through all these years.

The Italians in 1924 were not yet entirely reduced to this form of opposition. In Florence I had heard about a violent clash between Fascist militia and parts of the regular army; it occurred some days before my arrival. True, the liberal opposition had already lost its great historical chance, when after the Mateotti murder Mussolini could have been swept away by one spontaneous outburst of moral indignation, if only a real leader had organized and directed the popular will. For two days the fate of Italy had been in the balance Mussolini himself seemed to have lost his nerve and his nerves. The Blackshirts had vanished from the streets. The masses were only wait ing for the signal of a leader. There had been no signal and no leader, but only a solemn protest by liberal parliamentary leaders in the chamber, sticking conscientiously to constitutional legality instead

of appealing to the people. In their touching and suicidal belief in the abstract law, in the sacred rules of the game called democracy, they necessarily had lost while playing against political outlaws and card sharpers. Mussolini, quickly recovering from his first shock, had an easy double play: he declined in the parliament in righteous indignation to assume any responsibility for the murder, and encouraged secretly his Blackshirt gangs to bigger and better terror. The great chance of Italian liberty was lost for twenty years.

But there is no need for me to repeat the tragic tale told by great Italian writers and historians like Luigi Borghese, Ignacio Silone, Salvemini and others—all of them veterans of the originally quite small International Army fighting the "Goliath" of Fascism.

I would not have believed then that only a few years later history would repeat itself and that I would live through almost exactly the same story in Germany. But in 1932 the last socialist government in Germany, that of Prussia, removed by an anti-constitutional act of the Chancellor von Papen, appealed not to the people but to the supreme court—with the well known result. In 1924, however, we German liberals were still optimistic. True, we had seen the ugly spectacle of Hitler's trial before the Reichsgericht; but, looking on the Italian example, we had exactly as American liberals, looking on the German example, only the comforting feeling: "It can't happen here." There were in Germany besides the Nazis a lot of similar groups fighting each other in traditionally German disunity—and there was the counterweight of the trade unions and the German Socialist Party, so much stronger and better organized than the Italian socialists, who, all the same, seemed in 1924 still able to resist or at least to slow down the march of Fascism.

The Fascists were not yet undisputed masters of the situation; their impact upon the physiognomy of the people and the country was hardly recognizable, especially in the South. The Blackshirts on the trains and in the streets appeared like an alien body in Italy, like soldiers of a foreign army of occupation, reluctantly tolerated but far from feeling themselves entirely secure. The insidious process of enslavement was still in the first stage; it had not yet succeeded in destroying, by mechanically regimented imitation of supposedly ancient Roman patterns, the most genuine heritage of antiquity in Italy: the

free and easy way of life, the delightful spontaneity and expressiveness of an old and noble people. Favored by a generous sun and what we may call the physical genius of their race, the Italians in their very appearance were a delightful sight, especially for a man from the North. They had grace and natural harmony, a wonderful psychophysical equilibrium. Body and soul were not, as in Germany, a tragic antithesis, but a real synthesis, different aspects of the same unity. There was nothing of the continuous inner tension and conflict which necessarily translate themselves into badly coordinated corporal movements.

The awkward stiffness of the average German, who even in civil life, through pure embarrassment, often assumes a sort of half military attitude, is a pathetic demonstration of a continuous and often contagious pain in the neck. Even great German artists, or scientists of world fame, are rarely men of the world. They often are not of this world at all. They are so terribly conscious of their greatness that they become self-conscious. Burdened with the heavy weight of their own importance, they easily assume an attitude of somewhat wooden dignity. There was something of that even in Goethe's Olympianism, as some of his pictures prove; and a photograph of Nietzsche in uniform, taken in 1868, is another really amusing example of what I mean. It is not pure coincidence that both of them, Goethe and Nietzsche, were irresistibly attracted by the natural grace and human charm of the Italian people; this trend to the South is characteristic of Northerners in general, not only the German. It is the old story of the magnetic attraction of the opposite pole.

Sometimes it was almost embarrassing to have your *espresso* served on the terrace of a café by a waiter whose classic features recalled the profile of Alexander the Great on an old coin, whereas you had to pay your bill to a perfect replica of Antinous. It needed a certain effort of sober rationalization to overcome your hesitation and to realize that Alexander the Great and Antinous would be bitterly disappointed if by pure delicacy you should omit to tip them. By the way, their modest job seemed not to hurt their pride and they carried a tray triumphantly as if it were the captured shield of a conquered Achilles.

In Italy, antiquity seemed miraculously alive wherever you looked. I still remember how deeply moved I felt when on my first day in

Florence, the waiter in a little trattoria with an adroit gesture spilled some drops of our bottle of wine on the floor in order to remove the oil that served as a stopper. With a sudden shock of recognition I thought of Homer: there it was, the libation, the drink-offering, described innumerable times in the Odyssey, and originating probably in the same practical purpose. Human beings for immemorial times have been clever enough to pretend to bring a sacrifice when they only got rid of something they do not want. The generous donations of philanthropic millionaires, eager to avoid higher income taxes, fall under a similar rubric.

Another noble tradition of antiquity—especially dear to me, was here still preserved: the high art of *far niente,* of leisure, excluding the ignoble haste and hurry of modern man. You must have a deep insight into the essential values of life in order to feel the happiness of the great and simple gifts of life and nature. The Fascists had not yet succeeded in their hypocritical attempt to abolish poverty by driving the beggars from the streets. The more I saw of these Italian beggars enjoying in philosophical serenity, without moving, for whole days the simple fact of living, the more I understood the wisdom of the old Greeks with their deep contempt for every sort of physical work. They even regarded the artist as slightly inferior, because after all he was working with his hands. Even their language did not differentiate between the artist and the artisan. Socrates had been originally a sculptor, but he acquired social acceptability only when he had become a philosopher—or when he had given up working, an act of which, for understandable reasons, his wife, poor old Xanthippe, strongly disapproved.

I always had admired when reading Plato the culmination of really aristocratic feeling, expressed in this sentence: "Every noble young Greek will admire Phidias' statue of Zeus, but no one will wish he had made it." Their fundamental idea was a high conception not only of personal dignity but also of personal freedom. The artist was possessed—possessed by a divine genius, by a god—but at any rate possessed, and consequently not a free personality.

Creating under sweat and toil and tears, he could not belong to the aristoi, the Best, as the Greek aristocrats called themselves, in their modest way, if they did not prefer the more elaborate definition of

"kaloi k'agatoi," the Beautiful and the Good. This expression is perhaps the more adequate and significant because it defines exactly the Greek ideal of both the esthetical and the ethical perfection combined, one being impossible without the other. They knew the old wisdom of the Far East that being is more than doing. And in this sense alone, "To be or not to be" was indeed the question.

The exaggerated glorification of doing and working which with the Puritans became a religion, if not an obsession, could originate only in a climate where normally you are forced to rush around continuously in order to keep warm, and where in consequence you soon get so nervous that you are incapable of sitting still, even when you have nothing to do. Modern man and, of course, even more modern woman have become unable to enjoy themselves quietly—how could they? Trained to consider inactivity and leisure as a sin, worse than the still quite popular adultery, they get immediately a bad conscience and feel guilty when keeping quiet for more than five minutes. That is why sport of every kind has become something of a religion and is cultivated with such fanatic fervor. It gives an excuse for killing time with violent physical movements. The gymnasium of the Greek served only the purpose of keeping the body fit and in perfect beauty.

But the essential occupation of noble Greeks was a highly cultivated form of loafing. The vivid give-and-take of the conversation, the real exchange of ideas was a delight of which the Greeks never tired. Modern society has invented the game of bridge, because people have nothing to exchange but cards, not even words.

Even the Greek philosophers did not suffer from the plebeian compulsion to hoard and to save their ideas by writing them down; they carelessly squandered their treasures and left it to their disciples to pick them up and perhaps to conserve them. They themselves would have hated to waste their time, to spend the precious hours of their life with the mechanical and menial job of writing. They did not want to be bothered with technical details. What really mattered, was to *think* and to *be* wise, to transmit the gift of wisdom to those who had ears to hear. They did not care to prove by written documents for all posterity that they *had been* wise. They lived in the generous illusion that there would always be wise men, thinking the same thoughts as they did, or thoughts even more sublime. And, by the

way, in doing so, they succeeded pretty well in surviving some thousands of years, because there always were some ambitious and enthusiastic young literati around, like Xenophon or Plato, eager to "write it down." And we may be grateful that they took this trouble. But the wise men of antiquity knew that the spoken word is more than the written word because it is animated by the irreplaceable flavor of a great person. A fresh, blooming flower is more than what is left of it when pressed and dried between the pages of a herbarium. Probably the really wisest men did not and do never care to write a book. And some of them—perhaps even now living among us—may never be heard of because nobody hearing them has sense enough to write their words down so that we others may read them.

I learned much more about antiquity in the ten days I spent in Sicily than in the ten years I had spent on my Humanistischen Gymnasium, but perhaps this long preparation had been indispensable for making me able to learn. I had easily stood, despite the Mount Vesuvio, the somewhat sweetish charm of Naples without the wish to die, as the proverb would have it. But Sicily—that was like Greece, with a slight savor of Africa. It had something inhuman because super-human in the grandiosity of a landscape formed only of gray-green rocks and the deep blue Mediterranean Sea. Here Odysseus was still alive, persecuted and helped by jealous deities. Poseidon still chased his white horses against the beach, and Apollo started every day his triumphant drive with the rising sun. Even Nausikaa still came to wash her linen in the clear blue bay. There was still the Greek theater using with sovereign audacity the view of Mount Etna and the sea as the eternal prospect of the scene. It needed a Sophocles to occupy the stage without being crushed by such a setting.

## CHAPTER XVIII

# Sicily, Taormina and Connected Matters

I HAD MADE the last leg of my trip, on the boat from Naples to Messina, during the night, all alone, because my companion was headed toward Brindisi. For almost twenty-four hours I had been unable to give expression to my impressions, and so I nearly drowned my friend and his wife in a real torrent of suddenly released enthusiasm. Far from being tired by my long journey, I felt rather overexcited, and so full of life that sleeping seemed almost a sacrilege. Only when late in the evening I suddenly noticed that my genial hosts were near to dropping from their chairs from sheer exhaustion, I finally agreed, in a tender feeling of humanity, to retire. My friends at this moment probably would have preferred to have it all nicely written down in a book, for you can close a book whenever you want, especially when you get sleepy. People of too much vitality generally increase the mortality in their surrounding world, because, never correctly estimating the special privilege of a somewhat hypertrophic psychic energy, they quietly go on enjoying pleasure or work with others until to their innocent surprise somebody falls exhausted at their feet.

Perhaps every privilege too naïvely, too full-heartedly enjoyed produces some sort of blind spots. The most enlightened philosophers of antiquity never stumbled upon the idea that the proud edifice of their spiritual and artistic culture was based upon the rather dark but indispensable foundation of slavery. It was the great revolutionizing idea, the startling discovery of the new Judeo-Christian religion, that after all even slaves are human beings. Only the Jewish people in their wisdom had come to a similar conclusion some thousand years earlier and had accordingly decided to do without slaves. In spite of this they succeeded in doing some excellent writing; their scriptures after some thousand years are still the biggest best seller. If Nietzsche calls Chris-

tianity a religion of slaves he is right, but it is not a reproach. On the contrary, it was a religion, a truth to set the slaves free; though it took almost two thousand years to go through with this process of liberation. Slavery had to be abolished again and again, the last time—officially—by a certain Abraham Lincoln—and even then there was still something left to do. The slave traders from Columbus onward almost to our own times were in general very pious Christians and often pillars of their churches, but they had not the slightest qualms of conscience when making money in the trade of black, brown or even white slaves; the latter were called indentured servants and, later, factory workers.

This change of terminology of course was very important, because it proved after all a certain refinement of the social conscience—if only in the form of hypocrisy, which always means a reluctant recognition of a moral idea. Even in what ironically enough is called the Industrial Revolution of England in the early Nineteenth Century, the English industrialists would have indignantly objected to having their workers called slaves, even though there were children of six years chained to their mechanical looms and working under the whip of a merciless supervisor eighteen hours a day. There were at this time many clearsighted philosophers and writers who were not in the least disturbed by this spectacle. It simply escaped their attention. Their view of the world was clouded by a blind spot. If it comes to the worst, such blind spots can be eliminated only by an operation; and if a whole society suffers from cataract, it may become a bloody and dangerous operation. The only thing we may pray for in such a case is that this terrible operation should at least succeed in making humanity see the light, in making humanity see world and mankind itself in the right light, the light of the truth which sets us free.

The ideas and ideals of antiquity were great and true, but they became true and real only in an infinitely small section, in the highest strata of society. The Greek conception of man simply excluded the greater part of mankind. The difficulty with great ideas and ideals is always their practical interpretation. But what can we say if after twenty centuries of Christianity an "Institute for Applied Religion" seems a rather timely idea—and not only for Detroit?

The insularity, the self-centered isolation of antiquity, was in a rather ironical way reflected and illustrated in the strange little circle of international artists or half artists, who coming from all the corners of the world, celebrated here in Taormina a somewhat phantomlike cult of antiquity. In many cases this cult was concentrated on a rather special though perfectly legitimate aspect of antiquity, defined by the good Greek word *paiderastia,* to be written in English *paederasty* or *pederasty*. It literally means nothing else than love of children, or in a more distinct sense of male children, since for the Greek the "pais" or child which really mattered was the boy. This word has at least a first syllable in common with the word *pedagogy*. You really can not guide and educate children without loving them. But you can do it even by loving them with an erotic love—and in the Greek, pederasty was akin to pedagogy. It was a spiritual as well as physical relationship —quite naturally because for antiquity the original unity and oneness of body and soul was not yet disrupted by the Christian dualism with its inner conflicts and contrasts. To restore on a higher level the original balance and harmony of this state of paradisiacal innocence, becomes possible for us only by a deeper insight into the psycho-physical process, in the interdependence and interrelationship, the interactionism of what we call soul and what we call body. This insight has been increased by modern psychology, starting with Freud, as well as by modern biology and chemistry. Working from two opposite ends, like the workmen drilling a tunnel, the psychologists and the physiologists necessarily must one day meet. We have already reached the point where apparently purely physical ailments can be cured by psychotherapy and where on the other hand mental diseases can be cured by a biochemical treatment. We have come to understand that body and soul are actually only two different aspects of the same thing, of the same entity: Man.

It was the natural psycho-physical unity of antiquity which made pederasty a perfectly normal and legitimate, socially and morally accepted, form of erotic love. But this original unity once disrupted, this original innocence once lost, can not possibly be restored. Every attempt simply to imitate the gesture of antiquity is *a priori* condemned to a tragi-comical failure.

Even the word *paederasty* was replaced by the hybrid Greco-Latin composition of *homosexuality,* meaning love for the same sex.

Driven more or less underground, homesexuality belongs to the many taboos the very mention of which in good society is strictly forbidden or at least considered as highly shocking. An added reason for discussing this topic with all the necessary frankness.

In medical terms homosexuality is called inversion, meaning an inversion of sex, a term which covers only one aspect of the phenomenon, the man assuming the feminine role or the woman assuming the masculine role. This play of nature is often caused by physical conditions which we may call anomalies and which by the Greeks were symbolized in the hermaphrodite, the combination of the masculine Hermes and the feminine Aphrodite. We know many cases in which modern surgery by a relatively simple operation has transformed such half men or half women into whole men or women. But the man preserving the masculine role and the woman preserving the feminine role in the relationship even with a partner of the same sex is not really "inverted." The example of antiquity as of modern times proves that paederasty in the classical form of the love of an older man for a not yet entirely masculine boy was especially widespread in the very manly society of the Spartans and is even today especially frequent—though mostly as a substitute for the more normal male-female relationship—in every purely manly sphere.

As we know since Freud, the child before puberty—and often for some years after—is not asexual but rather bisexual, it is between the two sexes and is even normally more attracted by its own than by the opposite sex. The idolizing friendship between young girls—or between young boys for each other, the enthusiastic devotion to a favorite teacher of their own sex, has of course—at least unconsciously —an erotic undercurrent.

The real inversion is in most cases a sort of infantilism, a protracted stage of not entirely achieved puberty, a stage and state of mind which in consequence of the inevitable social complications within the framework of our moral and often hypocritical conventions is likely to degenerate into a real neurosis. For the acute esthetical sense of antiquity the ambiguous charm of a not fully developed boy

was equally—not less but not necessarily more—attractive than feminine beauty. But there was nothing of exclusiveness about it, nothing of a morbid aversion against the other sex. On the contrary, to have a wife and children was a very important social function contributing to the preservation of the state. But the married wife, as in the Orient, was limited to the sphere of the home. The only woman who really was a companion of man and took part as an equal in respect to intellectual as well as erotical education, in the social life of a manly society was the hetaira, which literally means nothing else than feminine companion. It was a highly respected and highly paid profession, the tradition of which was never entirely lost. It produced—at least up to the nineteenth century—some outstanding feminine poets, writers, artists, politicians and so on, who really had not more in common with the poor little streetwalker than the physician of a king has with the corn-cutter; both are paid for their services.

For the Greek boy on the other hand it was a disgrace if he was not attractive enough to be chosen by a riper man who was to become his guide, his teacher, his protective friend—and lover. On a more matter-of-fact basis a similar situation still existed in Taormina, for the Sicilian fisher boys. Their normal career, sanctioned by a long tradition, was to live for some years with a more or less wealthy foreigner in his villa until at nineteen or twenty they decided to marry. Whereupon as a sort of wedding gift or dowry, the furnished villa usually was turned over to them. It would have been a pity to spoil such a precious property by using it, and so most of these boys, having become men, preferred to live with their numerous families in the primitive little fisher cabins in which they had grown up. They rented the villas to some foreigners, who in their turn would perhaps show some day a particular interest in the male offspring of their landlords. There were always some nicely furnished villas for rent in Taormina and a lot of good-looking boys around. They reflected in their physical type all the different races and peoples who in the course of the centuries had passed over this island; Greeks and Romans, Normans and Arabs and slightly negroid Africans, not to forget Germans and Anglo-Saxons.

There were girls too of course, but they remained like the wives mostly invisible and were strictly taboo. For a foreigner to make love

to a Sicilian girl—if ever he got this rare chance—would have been a very unhealthy occupation, since the Sicilians are used to defending their strange and rigid code of honor with expertly handled knives or old but straight-shooting guns. The only women available were foreigners too, who in many cases on their part offered marvelous and eagerly exploited chances for the riper youth of Taormina. Gifted with the inherited talent for fishing, but unwilling to exercise this rough profession, many ambitious young men of Taormina succeeded in catching what to them always appeared as a gold fish though for more European standards it sometimes was hardly a silver fish.

But of course there were a lot of really rich people around among the foreigners and even among the native Sicilians. One of these last was the proprietor of some elegant hotels. As I was told, he, paradoxically enough, had laid the foundation of his solid fortune in the midst of the earthquake that destroyed Messina. As always during such catastrophes, of nature or of war, there had been a lot of looting and plundering. Being a modest watchmaker, he had the excellent idea of establishing a little booth among the ruins where everybody bold enough to collect jewelry from the corpses of victims could immediately sell his booty. The business was especially good in diamond rings, which our friend steadfastly refused to recognize as such. With utmost contempt he used to discard, with a little knife, the stone. "Vietre," he would say authoritatively, "glass"—and brush the stone carelessly under his table before weighing conscientiously on his little scale the gold for which he paid a certain fixed price per gram.

His customers were not experts, and were hardly willing to consult another jeweler—and besides, there was no other. So with a merely formal protest they gladly pocketed some lire in payment for the gold, and returned to their unusual business. When after a long and busy day the little booth was finally closed late in the night, the inventive watchmaker had only to sweep the floor in order to snatch up quite a neat little fortune. The money lies in the street, you have only to pick it up.

Thanks to his inventiveness, his energy and initiative, this hard-working little man telescoped into a few days the usually long and arduous way "from newsboy to millionaire." As in every Horatio Alger story, he was rewarded for his commercial genius by the admira-

tion and the respect of all those who had not been smart enough to conceive such an excellent idea. He was indeed the richest man of Taormina, and could afford simply to laugh off his own success story which, edifying as it was, had become a bit too popular. But I imagine the patriarch telling his grandchildren the story in terms quite similar to those of the imaginative and imaginary grandpa who not long ago in one of the most successful American magazines told his grandchild about the virtues of capitalism; though perhaps grandchildren are sometimes more skeptical than grandpas suppose.

It was of course a pity that the patriarch was Italian enough simply to enjoy his life as well as his success, and so to waste his marvelous talents. With a bit more serious ambition he probably would have succeeded in becoming an English Peer like the famous Basil Zaharoff, Knight of the Order of the Bath and Grande Croix de la Légion d' Honneur. Zaharoff began his career with petty thievery and ended up as a merchant of death, powerful enough to arrange his own earthquakes in the form of wars. He was clever enough to spend substantial sums to avoid having his success story given any publicity by well-intentioned and naïvely enthusiastic admirers of economic individualism (or anarchism).

Very rich men are rarely picturesque, as everybody knows from their photographs produced by ambitious camera men; and certainly Zaharoff was not when I saw him, a very old man sitting in the sun on the terrace of the Casino of Monte Carlo, which in a sudden whim he had bought, lock, stock and barrel. He did not even look the interesting scoundrel that after all he was, but rather like a sort of dignified phantom, bored with his own existence.

The "rich foreigners" of Taormina were much more colorful, perhaps because most of them were really rich only in the eyes of Sicilian fishermen, or perhaps because most of them were a bit "queer" not only in their erotic habits. Breaking free from the usual social conventions, they had become prisoners of their dreams and lived in the strangely isolated sphere of Taormina a strangely artificial life of their own. Their particular worship of antiquity had something touchingly anachronistic and involuntarily parodistic, like the terribly sweetish pictures which one of the oldest members of this little colony used to produce

for sale, in order to make a living. Originally a Prussian officer descended from an old Junker family, he one day had discovered his real vocation and had escaped to this enchanted island. He had grown a beard and had become a photographer. To his own and his fellow believers' delight, he took innumerable pictures of pretty fisher boys. Disguised in a somewhat fragmentary Greek costume or without any costume, but with little wreaths of flowers in their hair and a Pan's pipe in their hands, they were supposed to revive the feeling of antiquity. For a more objective observer this sentimental masquerade had something irresistibly comical. But of course the expression of emotions which you do not share seems always somewhat "funny." And even a couple of quite normal but too visibly enamored lovers will sometimes have for the cool observer a delightful ridiculousness.

I am, of course, far from believing in the Anglo-Saxon phobia against "being emotional." This, in the last analysis, puerile fear of every expression of emotion originates in the adolescent's deadly fear of losing his uncertain manly dignity, and it often produces eventually a real atrophy of emotional capacity. The free expression of true and strong sentiments is never sentimental, because sentimentality involves indulgence in an exaggerated expression, out of proportion to the real sentiment, while consciously enjoying just this exaggeration, like an actor enjoying his own acting. Strangely enough, a certain kind of sentimentalism and exhibitionism seems characteristic of at least a certain type of homosexual, as I could observe in Taormina.

I remember for example the really touching and amusing case of a Baltic Baron, let us say, Stamp, whom I came to meet several times through my friends. A stout little man of about sixty, he looked not in the least aristocratic. His round face with its gray mustache recalled rather the stubby physiognomy of a sea lion. He was proud of having among his ancestors the second-rate poet Kotzebue, whose spectacular plays were the big success of the German stage in Goethe's time—so much so that even the theater director Goethe had—reluctantly—to play them on the stage of the Weimar Hoftheater, where of course they made a much better box office than *Iphigenie* or *Tasso*. Baron Stamp cherished this only half legitimate family relationship to the great era of German classicism—to which Kotzebue really did not belong. One evening, sitting with us on the terrace of his villa, he

recited by heart—animated by the excellent Sicilian wine and the even more exciting moonshine silvering an enchanted landscape—long and terribly pompous poems of Kotzebue.

Among the listeners was of course also his so-called son, a rather average type of Sicilian fisher boy whom he had legally adopted and tried to educate in the best traditions of German idealism. The young man himself had of course gladly accepted the aristocratic name and the other material advantages of his new position, but he showed not the slightest desire for learning. Several tutors had tried to introduce him to the austere realm of science, classical and modern languages and all the other branches of knowledge indispensable for future university studies which the good old Baron had planned for his "son." The son quite naturally preferred to parade his fine suits on the plaza, to spend his liberal allowance with his native friends in playing for hours a game of dice, or to knock about at perilous speed in the Baron's car. A special complication was that the different tutors often proved to be themselves more interested in the physical charm than in the intellectual progress of their pupil; whereupon one day the Baron decided to sacrifice his personal well-being to his educational ideals, and to leave the delightful but dangerous climate of Taormina for the fresher but healthier atmosphere of Munich, where his son should attend a real German "Gymnasium." But the plan had not turned out too well, because the swarthy boy became a great attraction for women of every age and—worse—seemed to be attracted by them. Whereupon the Baron ruefully decided to return to Taormina, where the women were relegated to the background and remained mostly invisible.

When we met, the Baron was still heavily occupied and preoccupied by the problem how to combine his noble pedagogical ideals with a hardly educational situation. His passion for this boy included a deep feeling of fatherly responsibility, and with a typical German seriousness he cared for the intellectual and spiritual development of his son not less than for his physical health. Having entirely broken with his past, this strange old man lived entirely for this youth, whom he loved with a touchingly absolute and even unselfish love.

He had been almost fifty when one day, while still living on his old estate in Latvia, he suddenly had the revelation that no women

ever had given or could give him real happiness and that—being frank with himself—he felt much more attracted by boys than by girls. In open protest against what he felt to be a hypocritical prejudice, and defying an anticipated condemnation, he hastened to write to all his friends and neighbors a polite letter notifying them of his startling and enchanting discovery. He explained that he did not want to continue, under false pretenses, a social intercourse which he could appreciate only if, without any ambiguity, his new status was accepted and, so to speak, officially acknowledged. This original gesture of a slightly puerile fanaticism for truth had the easily foreseeable consequences of an almost complete ostracism. His neighbors would not have cared in the least about the purely personal affairs of the old Baron Stamp, but they naturally resented being annoyel by a rigid moralist trying to impose his own very special conceptions of morals upon others and forcing the issue quite unnecessarily.

This moral and intellectual obstinacy, this tendency to go to the ultimate and the absolute, seems to me a typical German trait. By following up a purely abstract idea with a murderous and often suicidal consequence, this logical and ideological passion totally disregards and so finally destroys every reality. The inability to make any compromise between theory and practice means a lack of talent for simple human living. In a somewhat humorous form, Baron Stamp's attitude illustrates a tragic fatality of the German spirit, the deepest root of its greatest achievements and its worst aberrations. And it explains the great immortal nostalgia of German art and philosophy for the natural balance, the perfect harmony of antiquity.

Strangely enough, the break with social conventions in one distinct sphere evidently had revolutionized the Baron's social conceptions in general. When, during the revolt of the long-suppressed Latvian population, the whole Baltic aristocracy left their estates in order to escape the wrath of the revolutionaries, Stamp decided to stay. He wanted to come to some understanding with the enemy, whose grievances suddenly seemed not unjustified to him. He had the courage to attend their meetings and once, when an orator charged the big land owners with shameless exploitation of their poor peasants, he suddenly rose to his feet with the protesting cry, "But I *am* ashamed."

It was one of those great scenes of confession and conversion, those crises of conscience which are so typically Russian—not only in the literary realm but even in that of political reality. He voluntarily agreed to some far-reaching social reforms as far as his own estate was concerned, and was accordingly considered as a traitor by all his aristocratic neighbors, because such a crime against the economic privileges of their class was much worse even than his offenses against moral conventions. Life became unbearable for him and, being the last of his name, he simply decided to sell his old family estate held for seven centuries by his ancestors and to move to Italy; to Taormina. The day before he left, he put a pair of oxen to a plough and, with his own hand, leveled the graves of his ancestors. Nobody understood that this sacrilegious gesture of defiance was at the same time one of proud piety. No foreigner should be obliged to give a sort of hospitality to all the old deceased Baron Stamps in the soil which once—and for seven hundred years—had been their own. It was his symbolic farewell to the past.

Perhaps it was a sort of vengeance that he later decided to give his good old name to a little Sicilian fisher boy, who was much more than a son to him. He had built himself a large villa, which, as is usual in Sicily, had grown from year to year and would never be definitely finished. Building is a lifetime occupation in these regions, because it is relatively easy to build on and with rocks. One day you decide it would be lovely to have a large terrace in front of this or that room; you have only to blast some rocks and to level the ground, and there is the terrace. When it then turns out that another room would be convenient, you close the terrace with walls, using the stones left over from the terrace. Then a new terrace is planned, and another new room, and so on; everything growing organically out of, and adapting itself to the rock.

When he showed me his house, he vividly described his future architectural plans. Pointing to some other cliffs which could be removed and transformed into rooms, he said with a sentimental undertone in his voice: "That will be for my son when he marries." As I heard later, this event occurred much earlier than the old Baron had expected. The son, helped by a brand new car which he had just been given as his own, eloped with a girl, in the classical tradition of the

Sicilian "fuga," in which the young people run away together, are married by the priest in the next village and remain hidden somewhere in the mountains until, by long and complicated negotiations through family friends, a reconcilation of the respective fathers is achieved. The father of the girl of course has to be more difficult to placate in his ire, because, theoretically, he is honor bound to take bloody vengeance on the seducer of his daughter. Or he may at least refuse to give her a dowry, which would be bad enough. But generally all these delicate questions are straightened out between the two parties involved; whereupon word is sent to the young couple that they may return. The happy ending is a highly spectacular celebration of reconciliation combined with a belated wedding feast, in which the whole population takes part.

Poor old Stamp could not help but go through all these motions, and he went so far as to receive his prodigal son, not with a relatively cheap fatted calf, but with a new and rather expensive car—since in the meantime the little rascal had sold the first one. I hope the old Baron died before his son and his numerous grandchildren had relieved him of the rest of his fortune.

It would fill a book in itself to tell about all the people I met and all the delightful stories I heard during my short stay in Taormina. The ten days passed like one—a most perfect day in a perfect setting. If I could have prolonged my vacation for three or four days, there would have been time to visit Girgenti and Syracuse. But unfortunately the two issues of the *Auslandspost* composed during my absence had been forwarded to me, and the many mistakes on every page seemed to me as many convincing reasons for not longer delaying my return; especially since I wanted to have at least thirty-six hours in Rome. For I hoped that the proprietor of the "Jungfrau" had made arrangements for me to interview Mussolini.

## CHAPTER XIX

# Rendezvous with Great Art—and Death

I SHALL NEVER forget the journey from Messina to Palermo, where the railroad sometimes follows the line of the beach so closely that, leaning back in your seat, you feel that you are on a ship. The fishing boats, with their brown or red sails, sometimes looked so near that they might sail through the window straight into your compartment. Yet all this beauty was darkened for me when not far away the picturesque lines of some volcanic isands, the islands of Lipari, appeared. The word "concentration camp" was not yet invented, but I knew that these bare islands were Mussolini's Bastille, where many Italian liberals were expiating the crime of being his opponents. It remained for the enchantment of a voyage on the boat from Palermo to Naples through a moonlit night, transforming the sea into liquid silver, to supersede this dark memory. But I decided to raise this point, if I really should meet the master of the realm.

Of course nothing was prepared, as I discovered the next day, in the early afternoon, upon my arrival in Rome. Accompanied by the amiable "padrone" of the "Jungfrau," I made an endless tour through innumerable ministerial offices. My indefatigable companion as well as most of the officials understood French at least as well as I understood Italian. And some of them even spoke a sort of French, which consisted mainly of Italian words in more or less French pronunciation, or vice versa.

It was not easy to prevent my enthusiastic guide from introducing me as "the chief editor of a Fascist journal in Munich," but I politely insisted upon the political neutrality inherent in the character of a paper which had to reflect all the different political shades of the international press. I exchanged my visiting card with a lot of unfailingly polite and cordial Fascists, among them the editor of the paper *Impero,* whose fanaticism sometimes embarrassed even Mussolini himself. I

was a little shocked to find out later that I had shaken hands with one of the gangsters who supposedly were involved in the Mateotti murder. When we finally succeeded in getting hold of one of Mussolini's secretaries, I discovered that I would have to wait two days before getting my audience. But if I wanted to take care of my next issue, I had to leave Rome on the midnight train next day. I had the feeling that one afternoon spent with Fascists was enough, so I simply dropped the project and decided to use the following day up to midnight for a last long and solitary stroll through the Eternal City, where every stone spoke much more eloquently of antiquity than Mussolini's oratory ever could.

Evidently I had no luck with interviews. In Naples too I had tried in vain to see Benedetto Croce, Mussolini's philosophical opponent, to whom a mutual friend, a university professor in Munich, had given me a letter of introduction. But Croce had been out of town. When my guide and I left the Palazzo Venezia a sudden outburst of excited voices in the crowded streets made me halt my steps. The noise grew. I saw excited groups forming and dissolving under violent gestures. "Revolution," I thought with an electrifying shock. But my guide seemed undisturbed. "The evening papers," said he with an explanatory gesture. And now, coming nearer, I suddenly could hear what I had taken for the battle cry of revolutionary passion. It was the cry of hundreds of newsboys: "*Popolo d'Italia.*"

The next day, after a leisurely breakfast in a café near the station, I had to go through the complicated operations of having my papers and my ticket stamped in half a dozen offices. It was just noon when I finished. Ahead were twelve long hours for me to spend all alone, free from every social obligation, in the absolute liberty of an anonymous stranger lost in the turbulent crowd of a large city where every step was an adventure, a journey through centuries, through millennia of an eternal past.

I had decided to avoid museums, but on crossing the Piazza Termini I suddenly found myself among the majestic ruins of the Thermae, and almost automatically I passed a small door with a little sign, "Free entrance today." Only as I faced a wonderful early Christian mosaic artfully depicting a human skeleton and bearing the Greek inscrip-

tion, "Gnothi s'auton" ("Know thyself") did I become aware that I was in the famous museum of the Thermae. It was too early for lunch, and so I decided to spend the next hour—but not more—in a careless promenade among the priceless Greek and Roman sculptures which filled every corner of the large rooms. Most of them were good old acquaintances; as plaster figures they decorated many German museums or even, in reduced size, many private homes. But the Roman sculptures at any rate looked to me, as originals, no less cold, empty and inanimate than the plaster copies. No wonder, since these Roman "originals" are themselves mostly nothing other than copies, imitations of the great Greek art of sculpture which, a century ago, was still almost unknown. The most wonderful Greek statues lay still hidden in the ground, waiting for their resurrection—which in most instances was achieved in the nineteenth century only, mostly by English or German archeologists. But the dim reflection transmitted by Roman artists was still strong enough to enlighten a whole era with the classic idea of antiquity. The famous oversized Juno, a copy of which adorned Goethe's studio, now seems hardly worth looking at, if just before, in another room, you have seen the Greek Altar of Aphrodite.

The only way to enjoy a visit to a museum without succumbing to the danger of seeing much too much is to walk around, passing by, if possible, the famous three-star celebrities, until suddenly one special work of art—not necessarily the most famous—personally and directly appeals to you, catches your attention and holds you fast. In due time you will develop an almost instinctive sense of direction which immediately leads you to the right place. Without being an archeologist I easily could single out in this accumulation of marbles the rarer Greek pieces. Other tourists, with Baedeker in hand, followed, almost running, the call of duty and accomplished with iron determination their endless round from one "must" to another, until after two or three hours of this exercise they nearly collapsed with exhaustion. But I decided not to deviate from my usual rule, according to which I never spent more than an hour in a museum or a gallery.

Before leaving I wanted to walk through the rooms on the second floor where, in glass show cases, some smaller pieces were exhibited. Carelessly I strolled along when suddenly my roving glance fell upon a fragment of a relief, a human head. "Persiano moriente [Dying

Persian], Pergamon" said the inscription. It was as if a magnetic force attracted me; and looking more intensively at this marble face of a dying man, I felt as if an enormous wave of emotion rose out of the depth of my heart. Never before had a work of art struck me so suddenly, so violently like an electric shock. And at the same second, as if by a flash of lightning momentarily illuminating the black darkness of night, I saw, I felt, I knew with the utmost clearness and certainty of a revelation that I was predestined to die this very day myself. It was the irrevocable decree of destiny, so sure and definite that I had to accept it, without feeling terror or fear, the natural reactions to a real threatening danger. But there was no threat and no danger, only the deep inner knowledge of death being near. And death was not horrible as I saw it reflected in the marble face of the dying Persian.

Death was not the skeleton which had greeted me at the entrance, with the ambiguous message of the Delphic oracle and with the symbols of early Christianity. It was the Greek god, the brother of Morpheus, the Sleeper. It was a beautiful adolescent, quietly lowering his torch. Hermes, the winged messenger of the gods, was to guide the soul to the river Lethe to drink forgetting; and Charon the old ferryman was waiting on the bank of the Styx.

All the solemn majesty of Greek mythology symbolizing the last mystery seemed to radiate from this small marble head, whose fascination held me in thrall. The wrinkle between the knitted brows is like a last trace of physical pain, of the short shock of sudden death in battle. But the expression of the face, with the closed eyes and the half-smiling lips, is illuminated by the inner light of superhuman serenity. There is a half melancholic, half mocking pride, a final superiority; the triumph of highest insight and wisest resignation. He seems to listen to the apparently closing chords of a symphony whose music he knows will continue in an eternal harmony.

Only when a guard warned me that the museum was closing did I finally turn away from the silent messenger, who had been waiting for me more than two thousand years in order to transmit his solemn message. I have never been superstitious, and never inclined to believe in omens. Yet here was no room for doubt or skeptical reasoning. It was an inner experience as real and convincing as the inner vision of

world harmony which once as a child, twenty-five years before, had originated in my feverish brain. Only this time there was no physiological reason; I was in perfect health and my mind was undisturbed; though my sensitiveness and my sensibility seemed slightly increased.

When I emerged from the cool museum into the hot sun and the colorful scenery of the Piazza Termini, I felt as if I were being resurrected from a sepulcher into the ardent reality of life. But I was only a guest in this sphere; no longer an actor playing my part on the stage, but merely a spectator enjoying the play without forgetting its unreality and ready to leave when the curtain falls. Between me and the surrounding world lay the same unbridgeable distance as between life and death. I was already on the other side, free from all human bondage, and able to appreciate with a deep feeling of detachment the magnificent setting for what would be a last scene, a climax fulfilling my deepest wish.

I shall never see Rome again with the same intensity as in those hours when I went around in the quiet suspense of a man waiting for an important rendezvous whose place and hour is not yet disclosed, but which he can not miss. For a moment I had thought of postponing my departure, of taking another train; but with an indulgent smile I had discarded the childish idea that one can postpone the hour of his death. Three or four times death had been close to me, had slightly touched me without doing harm; not only during the war, but the last time some weeks before, when on the way to my office a large tile falling from a roof had only pulled back my hat instead of crushing my skull. This time it would not miss me.

And so in solemn acceptance of the inevitable, I spent my last hours in bidding farewell to the world in one of its most beautiful places. Sitting in the elegant café on Monte Pincio, I saw the sun setting over Rome and again, as the evening before, took my dinner in the lovely trattoria at the Piazza di Fontana Trevi. When, crossing the Piazza di Spagna, I lingered a moment, lost in the wonderful spectacle of the curved flight of stairs over which Don Juan d'Austria had led so many sweethearts, I had not thought of the fact that this Piazza since his time had become a sort of asylum for Everyman's sweetheart; and I was a bit surprised when one of them, a lovely young girl, mis-

interpreting my hesitating steps, took my arm with a gesture of respectful familiarity. In her behavior there was nothing of the desperate self-contempt and the brutal vulgarity which disgrace her poor sisters in other countries—where the erotic innocence of antiquity has never been a living reality. I tried to make her understand that I had to leave Rome that night, and did not want any companionship. But it was not easy to free myself without being rude. In a funny mixture of French and Italian she tried to persuade me, with the friendly patience of a good governess trying to reason with a wilful little boy. Naïvely praising her physical charm, she suddenly with a graceful gesture pressed my hand against her young breast. Was it a last call of life or perhaps, on the contrary, the call of death? I did not care. Too deeply rooted was my inner aversion to this form of promiscuity. I quietly withdrew my hand and left her with a little gift of some lire.

There was still time for a last drink of deep red wine in a café of the Piazza Venezia. Sitting on the terrace, I carefully turned my back on the marble monster, the monument of King Vittorio Emmanuele, which would have spoiled the wonderful picture. Then I called a "vetturino" to take me in his little carriage to the pensione, where I would pick up my luggage before proceeding to the station.

When the coachman, with typically Italian verve, brought his horse to a rapid trot, I immediately realized that the poor animal was lame on the right forefoot. Not in vain had I been a sort of veterinary during the war. I tried to make the coachman understand that I wanted to take another vehicle and that he should take his horse home to see what the trouble was; probably the shoe had to be removed. But my Italian proved to be insufficient, and my admonitions produced only the opposite result. The coachman, every time I protested against his cruelty, whipped his horse more mercilessly into a desperate trot. The sudden starts and stops sometimes brought our carriage nearly into collision with one of the automobiles which used to rush through the narrow streets of Rome as if they were on a superhighway. I began to think that this, perhaps, was to be the end—an accident in the street. Or was it, on the contrary, that, thanks to this lame beast, I should miss my train? At any rate there was no use in interfering with fate. When we finally arrived safely at the pensione, I had no choice but to retain my vetturino, because there was no other avail-

able. And the station was not too far. Maybe I would catch my train, maybe not. It was ten minutes to midnight when after a somewhat sinister drive I paid my vetturino—whom I had secretly suspected of being an undertaker. I still had time to find an empty compartment in the train, which as I now began to understand, was meant to carry me to my last destination. It would be good to be alone and to stretch out comfortably while waiting for my dark friend to find me.

But alas!—in the last minute a throng of people, not yet used to trains running on time, suddenly filled the whole train up to the last seat. To my utmost annoyance, a very lively Italian family—father, mother and two bambinos of about two and three years—invaded my compartment with clamorous excitement and with the penetrating exhalation of garlic which to me, as it was to Goethe, has always been most odious. To make the disaster complete, four husky Bavarian auto mechanics, returning from a business trip, filled what was left of the space in the narrow second-class compartment, which on Italian railways was supposed to accommodate eight persons instead of six.

My inner composure was seriously threatened by this unexpected change of scenery. It is one thing to accept with philosophical dignity the foreboding of death—and quite another to preserve this austere detachment in the middle of disgusting smells and vulgar noises; this ordeal you should be spared at least in the last hours of your life. With their typical phobia against cool air, the Italians had insisted upon closing door and window, in order not to endanger the health of their precious bambinos, who, watched by an anxious mother, were stretched out on my bench with their dusty little shoes almost on my lap. I really like children—in their place, but here, and at this solemn moment, they seemed definitely out of place. The air in the narrow compartment soon became suffocating. I finally decided that I would stand in the empty corridor, where I could enjoy good air and complete solitude, rather than be asphyxiated—mentally and physically—on my comfortable seat in the crowded compartment.

I spent the long hours of the night leaning against a window in the corridor and staring into darkness as impenetrable as a black curtain. For some short intervals when, tired, I relaxed for a few minutes on my seat, I held a handkerchief soaked in eau de cologne like a

gas mask over my mouth and nose. By now I felt almost sure that there would be a train wreck and, with a kind of ironical interest, I studied the little case where a hatchet and a saw were neatly displayed as in a show window. In case of real emergency these purely symbolic reminders of catastrophes had to be replaced by a cutting torch. My memory reproduced some unpleasant press pictures taken by photo reporters, who by professional deformation seem to become simply mechanical accessories of their cameras. But I knew my death was not meant to be part of the endless agony of bodies half crushed or slowly burning in the wreckage of steel and wood. It would strike me like a flash. It would be the death of the dying Persian. Perhaps it would be a bullet fired by a drunken fool or a stone hurled by a thoughtless child against the brilliant target of the brightly illuminated train. These things happen; not long ago I had seen a bullet hole in a train window. I moved a bit away from the door of my compartment. Whatever was aimed at me should not hit the innocently snoring people in there—nuisance though they were.

I was the only one, in our car at least, to prefer the corridor to a comfortable seat. And I felt grateful for this gift of solitude, more indispensable to me in these hours than ever before. My ear was waiting for the malignant crash, similar to that of an exploding bomb, as I had heard it many times during the war. But there was only the regular shaking rhythm of the wheels. Once with a sudden jerk I rebounded from the window, thrown back by something thundering and luminous. "There—" I thought. But in the next split second I realized that it was only another express passing. As never before, it occurred to me that the small distance between two railway tracks is exactly the borderline between life and death. I kept on waiting—waiting for the rendezvous that had been given to me in such an unmistakeable manner.

But I waited in vain. When in the early morning in Bologna I had a chance to have some coffee on the platform before changing my compartment, I felt a bit weary from my long vigil, but not less sure that the rendezvous would be kept—though somewhat late. There was a new day already dawning over the old town that had been a Roman university almost two centuries before Christ.

The remainder of my journey was spent in a more comfortable

position. Sitting in a window corner of an often-empty compartment, I could stretch out my tired legs and, in complete rest, review the Italian landscape and the landscape of my past life. Passing through Bressanone (the former Brixen), I could even look down on the barrack ground where, nine years before, I had slaved as a driver of the Staff of the Alpenkorps. All this now seemed as far away and unreal as my whole life of not yet thirty-two years. True, there were many things which I would leave undone. But what did it matter? Death seemed so much more real than life, a state of perfect balance and equilibrium without the inner tensions of conflicting forces which, after all, characterize the process of living. Was not death the touchstone of all human values? If you can achieve within yourself a complete harmony, death never is premature. Whatever new stages of spiritual development were waiting for me, I should not be afraid of crossing the small bridge leading to the land of the Unknown.

When after twenty-four hours of this strange but uneventful journey I arrived at midnight in the Munich station where exactly at the same hour three weeks ago I had started out, I felt not yet sure that my foreboding had been only a mistake of my high-strung nerves. When my taxi, with shrieking brakes, barely avoided a collision, I felt almost disappointed. And only when the taxi driver carried my bags up the stairs to my apartment did I become convinced that the appointment had been called off. I felt a bit ashamed and, in some way, let down. When for thirty-six hours you have lived in the sphere of the eternal, it is not easy to adapt yourself to the drab reality of the temporal, to the prosaic fact that you are a newspaper editor, who tomorrow will have to meet his deadline but not his death.

Perhaps I might have tried simply to forget this somewhat ironical experience which, I realized, bore a suspicious similarity to a famous short novel by a famous German author. But in the next morning's paper I found a short telegram of the official Italian agency Stefani telling that in the night from Sunday to Monday, thanks to the vigilance of the Fascist militia, an unexploded bomb had been discovered on a main railway track near Rome, shortly after the International Express Rome-Munich, due some minutes after midnight, had passed this track. The evidently Communistic attempt against the life of a

high Fascist official using this train had been frustrated by a misfire of the ignition. A strange illustration of "Fascist vigilance," after all. But with all due skepticism toward the Fascist News Agency, I was inclined to think that perhaps there was some truth in the report—because, checking the dates, I could not doubt that it was my train to which it referred. If it was true indeed, my own experience ceased to be a morbid trickery of oversensitive nerves but belonged to the not yet explored sphere of so-called metaphysical phenomena, which perhaps one day will turn out to be not more or less mysterious than the Hertzian waves, making possible the radio and the wireless.

However that may be—growing older I came to understand the incredible pretension which made me believe twenty years ago that I was entitled to the triumphant death of this dying Persian, who at least in the marble vision of the Greek artist had lived so as to die with this immortal smile of ultimate superiority. Never again have I felt so sure of death and of myself—not even when later on there was sometimes objectively more reason to think of death. Perhaps I have become more and more aware of how much has to be accomplished before a man—a Persian or a Roman Christian—may be allowed to die with the proud expression: "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith."

## CHAPTER XX

# The Fighting Intellectuals in Germany and in France

THERE WAS INDEED many a good, though—alas!—not victorious fight to be fought for a liberal intellectual in the Germany of 1924. Officially committed to the political neutrality of a paper supposed only to reflect and to project the different opinions of the world press, I was fully aware that actually there never can be such a thing as absolute neutrality or objectivity of information. You can refrain from directly expressing your own opinion. You can try your best to give a fair picture of the different aspects of an internationally discussed problem. But, whether you know it or not, involuntarily or deliberately, the scales will be somehow loaded by your own opinion.

The good thing is that fighting for the cause of freedom, you have in general not to lie. You have not to be afraid of truth, because truth, in itself, is a revolutionary element. Not without reason was the era of "Enlightenment" that of the Great Revolution. And not without reason the forces of enslavement and reaction have always been afraid of people eager to discover and to spread the truth; of independent thinkers, of scientists and, last but not least, of all the officers of popular education—to which category belong, or should belong, ministers as well as writers and journalists.

I do not share Socrates' exaggerated optimism that the pure knowledge, the rational insight of what is right, automatically and logically produces the result of doing the right thing. This naïve superstitious belief in the force of pure reason, so typical of the eighteenth and nineteenth century, has been bitterly dissipated by the terrible explosion of irrational and destructive instincts which, twice in one generation, has threatened to destroy the whole world. But it is true that every reactionary tendency, every old abuse or old prejudice, detrimental to higher human development, can flourish only in a sphere

of ignorance, of misinformation and of primitive emotions uncontrolled by the discipline of thinking and learning.

What I tried to do in my *Auslandspost* was to re-establish a true picture of the public opinion of the world. And when, for example, nationalistic German papers limited themselves to quoting the most outrageous chauvinist tirades of French nationalistic papers—in what a French journalist had called "the international cooperation of the nationalists"—then I felt entitled to emphasize the much more sensible voices of liberal French papers. It even had been worth while to quote the dry forensic oratory of the lawyer Poincaré, who justified the seizure of the Ruhr with the arguments of a little pawnshop proprietor. The French Minister of Finance, bearing the good German name Klotz, the inventor of the wonderful slogan "Le Boche payera" (The Boche will pay), had turned out to be a crook and had disappeared in the shadow of a French house of correction. But his slogan lived on, uncorrected, in the legalistic mind of the incorruptible and inconvertible petit bourgeois Poincaré. This naïve translation of a small damage suit into the sphere of world policy, this innocent disregard of psychological and political "imponderabilities," was somehow disarming—especially at a time when a patriotically over-excited press in Germany used to picture Poincaré as a bloodthirsty sadistic anthropophagist, used to having for breakfast a German baby roasted on the bayonet of a coal-black Senegal soldier.

The use of the colonial troops in the Ruhr, by the way, was, of course, such a wonderful propaganda opportunity for Hitler and other nationalistic agitators that you almost could suspect Mr. Goebbels of having suggested this idea to Mr. Poincaré. But I have no intention of rewriting the often written story of the so-called Ruhr campaign in which the great German industrialists in selfless patriotic fervor accepted the large flow of subsidies streaming from the busy government printing press. It may be mentioned, however, that the *Auslandspost* was perhaps the only German paper to print the French reports about the executed saboteur Leo Schlageter, who in Germany assumed immediately the stature of a national hero and martyr. Whereas, according to more objective sources, he was a rather dubious figure, a venal adventurer and probably a double agent.

When finally, thanks to Stresemann's statesmanship, the senseless resistance in the Ruhr—an orgy of monetary and patriotic motives—had ceased, the problem of reparations nevertheless continued to occupy a large place in the political world and, consequently, in the columns of the *Auslandspost.* But the factual reports of the world press about this difficult topic were of course for the larger German public much less attractive than editorial tirades flaming with righteous patriotic indignation. Objective studies are in general not too popular—a phenomenon not entirely limited to the Germany of the 'Twenties.

The impartial, almost scientific approach of the *Auslandspost* to this and other political problems certainly was not likely to increase the circulation, and it was small wonder that the publisher, after having exhausted his small resources of money and of idealism, finally decided to discontinue a paper which for three years had been held in high esteem by an only too selected circle of readers. But at least I had the personal satisfaction that during the presidential campaign of 1925 ending with Hindenburg's election, I was able to express in my last issues my deep suspicions against this candidate for the highest office of the German Republic by carrying long and carefully translated commentaries from all the great European papers.

With a delighted objectivity I quoted especially the French papers, which underlined the parallelism between Hindenburg and MacMahon, the first president of the Third French Republic. Both had been defeated generals of a lost war, who, as it seems, exercise an especial attraction on the masses—and the more so the older they are. Both were monarchists called to preside over a new-born republic which everyone expected to be purely transitional. Both of them, having conspicuously failed in their own profession after a lifelong training, were trusted to succeed in a political job despite—or as it seemed because of—the fact that they had admittedly not the slightest idea of politics.

Evidently politics is the only profession in which the absence of experience and of adequate training is by popular opinion considered rather as an asset than a handicap. In medical science we have finally reached the stage where no longer every charlatan and every quack can poison his patients as he pleases. The same man who would not think of having a tooth pulled by, let us say, his barber, will gladly entrust

the political future of his country, and so his own and his children's fate, perhaps to the same barber, by electing him as his representative —if only the barber insists emphatically enough that he does not know anything about politics. People unfortunate enough to have studied political and social sciences, economics and government for many years are sure to be political flops if they are not smart enough to conceal this stigma of knowledge. Hindenburg could boast that since he had left his military school—that meant roughly for sixty years—he had never read a single book. Many successful political careers—even in other countries—have been based upon similar assertions. There seems to be a popular feeling that an ignorant man can not help being an honest man. Perhaps this idea is rooted in the old story of the fall of man. Sin came into existence when Adam and Eve ate from the tree of knowledge. This fact unfortunately can not be undone. The paradise of happy ignorance is lost for ever. Things being as they are, we have no other choice than to eat more and more of this special kind of apple, this fruit of the tree of knowledge, in order to know what is good and what evil. The original innocence cannot be restored by retrogression. The only thing we can hope for is to come again to a sort of—very limited—paradise "through the back door," as Kleist put it, after having made our way around the whole world of knowledge, eating apple after apple all the way.

It is true, of course, that pure knowledge in itself may only enrich our capacity for doing the wrong things more efficiently. But usually, from a certain point on, knowledge becomes insight—a moral or ethical insight which gives a better chance for doing right than pure ignorance. True, with a higher intellectual—and even spiritual—level, the possibility of error and sin likewise increases. Every stage of human development has its own sphere of temptation. But among the really wise men of very different cultures and very different ages there is a surprisingly unanimous consent in regard to some basic moral principles of human behavior. By age-old experience these so-called moral principles have turned out to be, at the same time, the only practical and really workable principles of human life, in the ever enlarging circles of family, tribe, nation and family of nations. Since the expulsion from paradise not knowledge, but on the contrary stupidity and ignorance are the really deadly sins of mankind; the greatest

crimes against mankind are caused not so much by bad will, as by bad brains. A certain degree of higher intellectual education inevitably becomes a higher human education. It may not prevent the fall of man, but it may help man to a certain extent to control his primitive instincts and to avoid the cheapest sorts of sin, like vulgar lust for power and for money, and the naïve urge to cheating and exploiting his fellowmen.

It was easy to foresee that a stupid and vain old man like Hindenburg, having as a general led his country into a military catastrophe, would as a Reichspräsident, unfailingly, with the stubborn senility of his seventy-eight years, repeat himself by causing a political catastrophe. The only consolation—and it was a slight one—was that after all the French Republic by a narrow escape had survived even MacMahon. Perhaps a similar providence would watch over the German Republic. Unfortunately, it did not work this way, and eight years later Hindenburg promptly betrayed Germany to Hitler. Not because he was a born traitor, but because he was a stupid old man.

We have since had the bitter satisfaction of seeing history repeat itself with another old defeated General who, though less stupid than Hindenburg, was certainly defeated in his spirit when he betrayed France to Hitler. But if even the greatest prophet in 1925 had foretold all these events of the future, he would immediately have been interned in a lunatic asylum. And indeed the whole world had to become a madhouse in order to make these improbable events come true.

No wonder that with my inexhaustible faith in reason I refused to know that I and the cause of German freedom were beaten—temporarily at least—when in 1925 Hindenburg was elected President. Like every clear-sighted man in the world, I saw the danger. But that was all the more reason to fight it. In my naïve confidence in intelligence, and even in the German intelligentsia, I hoped that German intellectuals would understand their political responsibility not less than the French intellectuals, most of whom had served the cause of freedom in every crisis, as at the time of MacMahon or at the time when another General, Boulanger, almost succeeded in becoming the military dictator of France.

When some years later a similar and perhaps even more serious

outburst of nationalistic hysteria brought the reasonable French people near to civil war over the case of Captain Dreyfus, men like Emile Zola and Anatole France had stood for justice and for freedom against the unholy alliance of the French General Staff, the high French clergy, the royalists, the anti-Semites, the nationalists and all the traditional forces of reaction. They had indeed a great tradition beginning with Voltaire who had spent years of his life for the cause of the very common man Calas who happened to be an innocent victim of a mistrial. There were Rousseau, Diderot and the Encyclopedists, Beaumarchais, author of *The Marriage of Figaro,* who had sacrificed his fortune in order to help the embattled farmers of America to fight their War of Independence. There was Victor Hugo who for twenty years in exile fought so vigorously against the dictatorship of Napoleon III, "Napoleon le Petit" as he called him, who, by the way, had been really "voted to power" by the people—whereas Hitler never was, whatever the Nazis and their counterparts on the other side, the rabid anti-Germanists, may say.

To a certain extent these memories of the past struggles for freedom through which the French intelligentsia had had to go time and again seemed a rather hopeful omen for the German Republic, threatened as it was. But unfortunately Germany had no such tradition of her own. The German intelligentsia had rarely deigned to step down from the lofty sphere of great ideas into the dusty arena of the hard and sometimes petty facts where the real political battles are fought. True, there was Georg Büchner, the young dramatic genius who in 1837 at the age of twenty-four died in exile after having inspired the revolution in Hessen with his flaming appeals. There was Heinrich Heine, the rebellious poet and political refugee. Other writers, artists and the best part of the German intelligentsia participated in the revolution of 1848. Among them was a certain young composer, Richard Wagner, who later unfortunately became an anti-Semite and a nationalist—a mistake for which he had to pay the almost too heavy penalty of becoming Hitler's favorite composer.

Thirty years later, however, the social and quasi-revolutionary tendencies of German Naturalism, inspired by Zola, had remained an artistic and literary rather than a political movement. And even in the revolution of 1918 the role of the German intelligentsia had not been

too glorious. But perhaps now in the hour of crisis we would have our Dreyfus case. The trouble was we had so many Dreyfus cases that it seemed almost impossible to make a real case of them. And our would-be Zolas had to write so many "J'accuse" that the masses, instead of being aroused, grew rather tired of this sort of literature—which unfortunately remained literature, though often good literature.

Literary and artistic periodicals with a long tradition of liberal opposition, like *Jugend* and *Simplicissimus,* had in 1914 succumbed to the general European war psychosis, from which at least the more political satirists of *Simplicissimus* had in the meantime somewhat recovered. But the *Jugend* (Youth) had become a bit old in thirty years, and showed a suspicious tendency to become a family paper of "right-thinking" people. I did not know, when in 1925 my *Auslandspost* folded up, that within a year I would be called to the difficult task of rejuvenating *Jugend.*

There was in between a strange and straining interlude when I carried three different jobs at the same time. While continuing to spend my mornings in the Musa Press, I was asked by the publisher of the late *Auslandspost* to become the editor of a literary supplement to the *Allgemeine Zeitung,* which he had just bought. It was a paper with a famous tradition; Goethe and Heine had been its collaborators. But at the present time it had degenerated to a sort of weak Munich imitation of Ullstein's *Berline Zeitung,* "B.Z.," and its proud old title accordingly had been shortened to "A.Z." The Sunday edition alone became somewhat unique by my supplement which—without any connection with the changed character of the paper—published each week with iron determination one great piece of "world literature," as if Goethe and Heine were still our main collaborators. There were only two difficulties involved: the piece had to fit in the space available, and it must not cost any royalties if humanly possible.

Since I did not want to print exclusively less known pieces of the German classic and romantic schools, wonderful as they were, I persuaded some great publishers that reprints in the "A.Z.," taken from one of their books, represented the best possible publicity. And so I was able to get without cost pieces from many modern German and foreign writers of rank. These included modern Americans like Sin-

clair Lewis, Upton Sinclair, Thornton Wilder; English writers like D. H. Lawrence, Galsworthy, or H. G. Wells; the strangely fascinating Spaniard Unamuno and of course many famous Russians, Frenchmen or Scandinavians appearing around this time in new translations. The average reader of the "A.Z." probably never understood what this strange literary supplement was all about. And I suspect the real idea of the publisher was to continue the connection with me, to keep me in a sort of cold storage, until his ambitious plan of acquiring *Jugend,* for which he really wanted me, would have materialized.

To prepare such a supplement once a week was no real work, compared with what I was used to doing as editor of the *Auslandspost,* and so I gladly accepted another position offered me one day over the telephone by my former colleague from the Musa Press, Mr. von Westermann, now Musical Director of the Munich Broadcast. It was the literary editorship of the radio journal *Süddeutscher Rundfunk.* Von Westermann was certain—and so was I—that I could do it as a part-time job without abandoning my other activities. Henceforth I spent my afternoons, and sometimes large parts of the evenings, in the effort to imbue the relatively new and, as it seemed to me, rather too popular medium, the radio, with my literary taste.

## CHAPTER XXI

# First Experiments with the Radio

RADIO AT THIS time—like the cinematograph in its early stage—seemed as yet not much more than a new toy for technically minded high-school juniors of every age to play around with. For a really mature and cultivated person it seemed a preposterous idea that, instead of reading a good book, hearing a concert, or enjoying a good conversation, he should put on a pair of cumbersome earphones and bother with a primitive and uncertain machinery—only in order to hear finally, after many vain attempts, some more or less articulate noises; sometimes a kind of music, another time a human voice sounding as if it came from the bottom of a rusty watering pot and talking, if understood at all, about chicken farming or similar important problems.

A real nuisance were those persons who in their enthusiasm went so far as to buy for a lot of money a so-called loud speaker which had the only advantage of being loud and making the earphones superfluous. Like all neophytes they fanatically insisted on converting all their friends to the new cult of the loud speaker. This instrument usually first produced for a while an infernal sequence of screaming, shrieking and squalling noises until, among the frantic spitting and howling of a jungle full of tigers and gorillas, a desperately gargling voice became audible, only to be immediately drowned by the shrill alarm of a dozen steam whistles and ship sirens. "We have Paris—or London—or what not," your genial host would exclaim, beaming with joy and proud satisfaction as if he himself had invented this new instrument of torture. Whereupon he continued busily fumbling and dialing his apparatus, announcing from time to time the name of another station which he pretended to have "got," though in general the acoustic result was more or less the same.

"Very interesting indeed," you used to murmur in polite appreciation when in the center of a typhoon a momentary calm gave you

the chance to be heard. And secretly you wondered about the perverse desire of the human mind to transform the quiet music of the spheres, the divine silence of mundane space, into the yelling roar of chaotic disharmonies, into an outburst of cosmic despair which you refused to recognize as the real voice of your time.

The local station—in our case Munich—generally succeeded in coming through in a more audible form. The music had almost the same quality as a bad phonograph, and the human voices were heard almost as well as in a long-distance call. But as far as I was concerned, I never felt tempted to listen to these voices, because what they said rarely seemed interesting to me.

From the first, broadcasting in Germany was not handled by competing private companies but was directed—like public education—by the different ministries of culture in the different states of the Reich. That was to a certain extent logical because the radio is, in principle at least, one of the most powerful means of public education. The American system of private sponsors may have many advantages, among others this one, that the censorship is at least divided among many different people and follows no particular line; so that for example, as Ilka Chase tells in her delightful "Past Imperfect," you can not use the word "lucky" when you are sponsored by "Camel" and vice versa; you can not use the word "swift" in an Armour program or the word "armour" on a Swift offering. There seems to be a lot of "muzzling of free speech" as Ilka Chase puts it, even when the muzzle is provided for by "free enterprise." It is true the listener does not have to pay for the programs—not directly at least, since the advertising costs are included in the price of the product. But on the other hand, who would not gladly pay a small tax for the privilege of being able to listen to a Beethoven symphony without the recommendation of a laxative; or to hear the often ominous news of the day without the abjectly cheerful voices which, even relating the apocalyptic horrors of wartime, would insist it was the time for Pepsi-Cola, the time to sell this or to buy that. Quite obviously everybody hates it and probably begins to hate the advertised products. But the advertising "experts" remain unshakeable.

People with more technological insight than I possess could easily

foresee that it was only a matter of time—of a short time—to eliminate the initial difficulties and imperfections. In fact, with almost every month the technical equipment became better and better, paralleling the development of the cinematograph and the auto car. It was an almost overwhelming idea that, for a very small annual fee, everybody in the remotest little corner would in future be connected directly with the cultural life of his country or even of the world, that he would be able to hear great operas and concerts; lectures by scientists, artists, writers, actors and so on—a privilege formerly limited to the population of great cities, and even there accessible only to those who could afford to pay for it.

A democratic government, sure of itself and of its own great ideas, certainly would have used this new means of communication to establish with every citizen this form of personal connection, and to create within every citizen the feeling of personal cooperation and personal responsibility, which is the real essence of democracy. The trouble was that German democracy around 1925 was far from being sure of itself. It was in a rather apologetic mood, so tactful and discreet that it hardly dared to speak of itself. With this self-effacing politeness it thought to appease and perhaps eventually to win over its enemies—a psychological error which turned out to be rather costly. It could happen for example that Captain Ehrhardt, the leader of a reactionary half-military association, after having participated in the attempt of the Kapp Putsch to overthrow the Republican Government, afterward sued the same government for his officer's pension, which had been withheld as long as he was busy with the putsch. Needless to say, he won his suit. This gesture of a slightly exaggerated generosity: to pay your presumptive murderer for his full-time work of trying to kill you, certainly exceeds even the limits of Christian love for the enemy.

It is easy to draw from such a typical case the conclusion that democracy in Germany simply did not exist. But we may remember that what happened in the small scale of German domestic policy was only the exact prefiguration of what later, on an international scale, went on under the famous name of appeasement policy. The political attitude of all the great democratic powers in the world was not a bit less suicidal than that of the Weimar Republic.

In Bavaria the situation was even more complicated than in other more northern states of Germany which, like Saxony or Prussia with their great industrial population, were naturally more progressive in politics. Bavaria was largely an agrarian state; and its peasants, as well as the greatest part of the urban population, were strongly Catholic. The really ruling "Bavarian Popular Party" was much more conservative or even reactionary than the so-called Centrum, the Catholic party in the Reich, of which officially it was a part. It was even more Bavarian than German and favored, more or less openly, the particularistic idea of a Bavarian monarchy.

Obviously the best one could hope for in the broadcasting sytem of such a government was political neutrality—which meant being "apolitical." Under the pretext that "culture" has nothing to do with "politics" and that the radio should serve equally satisfactorily its customers of all political opinions, the most vital political problems were simply excluded from the program. Since at the same time the radio tried to be "popular," it limited itself mostly to cheap entertainment with Bavarian humor and folklore, little peasant plays and so on. The more informative or instructive talks, as far as they were not devoted to poultry farming and other agricultural topics, were generally on the harmless level of a Sunday school. Only the musical program, including performances of the two great opera houses in Munich, was, partly at least, more serious and less provincial than the rest.

It was probably the example—and the competition—of other more progressive German stations which convinced the Bavarian Ministry of Culture that perhaps a slight modernization of the program would be desirable. And it was evidently this tendency which made it possible that I, a Prussian, a Protestant, and a liberal journalist, could be called into the editorial staff of the radio journal—which of course was more or less dependent upon the radio station and so, indirectly at least, upon the Bavarian Ministry of Culture.

I was of course all for popular education, but I did not really believe in being "popular" by toning down everything to the lowest level of what many clever people assumed to be "the popular taste." Popular taste and popular understanding are in general much better than film producers, radio directors or editors believe them to be. The public

is perhaps easily corrupted if constantly and consistently bombarded with trash. But if once in a while a really good picture, a really good radio idea or even a really good pulp magazine story by some strange coincidence comes through, the so-called experts witness again and again with the same incredulous astonishment these "unpopular" experiments becoming big popular successes. Nevertheless the so-called experts will not be shaken in their superstitious belief that they know "what the public wants," and with the air of cynical superiority they will repeat the last word of their wisdom: "What the public really wants is tripe—let us serve tripe."

They are the same people who indulge in the odious habit of annoying serious children with silly baby talk. I find that it is best to talk to children as if they were adults. Young people, as well as simple people, will in general prefer to have someone occasionally talk "over their heads" so that they have to be on their toes, than to have somebody talk down to them. It is not even a catastrophe if one word or another is not immediately understood in the rational sense. Children as well as simple people have an astonishing flair for what is behind the words. They will intuitively grasp the general meaning, and they will unfailingly be favorably impressed by a man who sincerely tries to express what he sincerely believes. They will not mind making a serious intellectual effort, because they will feel grateful and flattered to be treated as intelligent human beings; they will be glad to have heard something they can think about—food for thought of their own.

Having overcome the snobbish exclusiveness of my youth, I felt it to be the noble duty of a really cultured man to share his knowledge of the Great and the Beautiful with all those who were educationally less privileged. It is easy to smile at the American institution of courses in "nature appreciation" or "art appreciation," but I understood what this really democratic idea of popular education means when I read the excellent explanatory notes in exhibitions at the Metropolitan Museum of Art or when I heard in the Art Institute in Chicago a young girl of about twenty-five years, evidently an assistant of the Museum, explain modern French painting to a group of very simple and very attentive people. I heartily agree to the advertising of "Great Art" in the subway, though I would not subscribe in every single case

to this designation. And I shall never forget how deeply touched I was when once, absorbed in the sight of a portrait by Jan van Eyck, I was accosted by a little red-faced high-school Junior who trusted me to be an expert and wanted to know if this portrait was "realistic."

It is the first principle of education, especially of democratic education, that the question "information, please" has a holy right to be answered, as well and as honestly as possible. The right to ask questions makes all the difference between free human beings and slaves. There is a good deal in the old commonplace that "knowledge makes man free." At any rate, the basis of all slavery is ignorance or even the strict order "not to reason why."

Perhaps, in my democratic enthusiasm, I have sometimes been inclined to answer questions which nobody asked, or I may have been too eager to share my personal treasures with people hardly prepared to appreciate them. But I still remember with a sort of amused satisfaction that my first editorial act as literary editor of the radio journal was, to print Adalbert Stifter's great short novel "Abdias," which really belongs among the masterpieces of this not very popular Austrian disciple of Goethe. Though written almost a century ago it is very timely—now and here as well as in 1926 in Germany—because it pictures in the person of its hero, the Jew Abdias, the tragic greatness and misery of the Jewish people.

To make up for this rather heavy diet, I later published Stevenson's "Suicide Club," whose sequence of well rounded stories is especially adapted to publication in weekly installments. In general I had free hand in the literary education of my radio public. The only slight limitation was the prudishness of the Bavarian Ministry of Culture. I remember that the highly diplomatic Director of the Munich Broadcast—another Baltic Baron, by the way—was always afraid of hurting the tender feelings of some Bavarian "Ministerialrat." It was a minor catastrophe when once, in all innocence, I printed the most famous poem of old German literature, a love song of the great minstrel Walther von der Vogelweide, a contemporary of the Hohenstaufen Frederick II. Apparently, in the last seven centuries, Catholic morality had become more severe. In the thirteenth century no one had been shocked by the delightful first lines of this poem: "Unter der Linden, auf der Haiden wo unser beider Bette war" ((Under the linden tree

on the heather where we had our bed). Though the allusion to the absence of witnesses, except for a little bird "who will be discreet" (Nur ein kleines Vögelein das wird wohl verschwiegen sein) seems indeed to imply evidence of an extra-matrimonial affair.

At any rate, it was decided that these verses could not be broadcast; we must not endanger the morals of the Bavarian population. Though the notoriously uninhibited sex life of the Bavarian peasants found its expression in an astonishing percentage of children born out of wedlock and in the naïve bluntness of their popular songs the so-called "Schnadahüpferl"; this kind of limerick is actually the last remnant of real popular poetry. Especially in Upper Bavaria, up to my time, one could find in almost every little village inn the young people gathering in the evening for a sort of singing match, like the famous one on the Wartburg or at least like that of the "Meistersinger." The melody and the form of the "Schnadahüpferl" was always the same, but the—often satirical—words had to be improvised on the spot. Every one of the lads was armed with his zither—and, of course, with the traditional long knife, carried in the leg of the right boot, a universal instrument serving as table knife and toothpick, for wood carving and manicuring and, last but not least, as a weapon. And so sometimes the singing match degenerated into a bloody free-for-all, with the zither replaced by the knife. One remembers that even on the Wartburg there was some danger to life involved in the singing contest. But evidently the Bavarian Ministry of Culture had formed its concepts of the Bavarian rural population after the pattern of Ganghofer and other producers of terribly sweetish peasant novels.

In respect to radio talks which could be trusted to be heard only by more highly educated people—if at all—the limitations were less strict. Evidently literary people were considered to be hopeless cases, beyond the danger of demoralization. This wise tolerance made it possible for me to review, with a certain regularity, modern books. I had even more or less specialized upon modern English and American authors; but I hardly would have believed that my intimate knowledge of American literature would, fifteen years later, prove to be very useful in a practical way; it actually facilitated my orientation in the "New World"—which is not entirely new for an attentive reader of

Dreiser, Upton Sinclair, Sinclair Lewis, Dos Passos, Thornton Wilder, O'Neill and so on. Even when read in translation, the literature reflects more of a people and country than, for example, the movies whose high-lighted illustrations are easily misleading to the naïve observer; though highly significant for a more discriminating insight.

Nevertheless I did not feel entirely at home in this atmosphere where all sorts of limitations and precautions of higher policy seemed indispensable, not only in the purely professional sphere, but even in that of personal and public relations. In every great organization, be it governmental or private, the inner policy, the subtle internal warfare of departments, sections or single officials against each other seems a sort of inevitable epidemic, engendered by the dangerous germs of petty personal ambitions. By some stroke of good luck I have always been immune to this infection—so much so that I was hardly able to believe in this widespread illness or even to diagnose its most obvious symptoms. That mature people could waste their time and their acumen in complicated intrigues and subterraneous diplomatic maneuvers, patiently pulling this string or the other, undermining or building up this or that personal influence and so on—all that seemed to me absolutely incomprehensible and therefore unbelievable. I was inclined to relegate such stories to the realm of the popular fable, like the fixed ideas about the dangerousness of Free Masons or Jews or Jesuits and so on.

Much later, to my naïve surprise, it dawned on me that I really had disappointed my friendly sponsors by my lack of ambition. They had hoped that, thanks to my superior intelligence and professional skill, I would easily succeed in superseding and supplanting the chief editor of the radio paper. He was indeed a rather primitive fellow, but we got along finely because he never tried to interfere with my literary ambitions and always gave way when with friendly but irresistible frankness I objected to his bad artistic taste. The task of his "liquidation" was eventually accomplished in a few weeks by my successor, a really highly talented man, when, to my own relief and probably to that of my sponsors, I had abandoned this never entirely fitting position, in order to become the literary editor of *Jugend*.

## CHAPTER XXII

# "Jugend"—A New Editorial Adventure ⊙ Some Words About Artists and Philosophers

I HAD KNOWN for several months that my enterprising publisher of the *Auslandspost* and the "A.Z.," after having bought *Jugend* at a bargain price, was only waiting for the moment when the contract of the former literary editor expired, in order to entrust the position to me. I gladly accepted this call, though I understood that it implied the acceptance of an honorary rather than an especially remunerative office. I knew that the financial foundations of this amazingly expansive publishing and printing house were not entirely adequate to the imaginative and ambitious plans of its founder; though in due course, following the usual pattern, he had transformed it into a joint-stock company under his direction. His practices were perhaps sometimes a bit unusual, but toward me at least he always behaved as a perfect gentleman—within the limits of his financial capacities. He was not especially cultured himself, but he had a sincere respect for art and literature and, best of all, an unlimited confidence in my judgment in this sphere.

He really wanted me to rejuvenate the *Jugend,* because after thirty years of existence it had lost much of its original youthfulness; it had become rather elderly, a bit too respectable, bourgeois and in every sense conservative. The "modern art" of Impressionism, which in the 'Nineties had fascinated a whole school of painters, especially in Munich, had long since ceased to be "modern" and was now generally accepted. And the young artists whose daring experiments had been promoted by *Jugend* had now grown long white beards and looked rather suspiciously on the next generation, whose artistic conceptions pretended to be even more modern and revolutionary than their own. Nobody is more conservative than an old revolutionary who has not succeeded in preserving his inner youthfulness in defiance of the years.

It was in vain that this "Munich Illustrated Weekly of Art and

Life," as the somewhat pompous sub-title read, concealed in a sort of feminine coquetry the figure of its age, which other magazines displayed like a title of honor. Everybody knew it had been founded in the same year as, and in a sort of competition with, *Simplicissimus,* which in 1926 celebrated its thirtieth birthday. The founder of *Jugend,* Georg Hirth, had died in the meantime. He had been a sort of genius of the publishing business. A man full of vitality, of new ideas and of enthusiasm, who in a certain sense personified the good-natured and optimistic South German liberalism with its fundamentalist faith in progress and its slightly sentimental love of art and freedom. He had been a generous friend of writers and artists, a promoter of everything "modern" and "progressive" in art, literature and politics, and consequently always in open opposition to the "blacks," as the Catholic clericals were called by their liberal enemies. A Protestant in every sense, and a real democrat, he fought courageously against the moral hypocrisy and the narrow prudishness of the Catholic clergy, which in Bavaria had always been the strongest bulwark of political and cultural reaction. But he no less vigorously opposed the Prussian feudalism and militarism personified by the Kaiser and his reactionary clique of Junkers and Generals.

Hirth himself occasionally wrote, and nothing could be more typical than the titles of the three volumes of his miscellaneous writings: "Roads to Art," "Roads to Freedom," and "Roads to Love." Besides *Jugend* with its own publishing house, he had founded a great liberal newspaper, *Münchener Neuste Nachrichten,* and, in association with his brother-in-law, the publishing and printing house Knorr & Hirth. Through the great popular success of *Jugend* and of his newspaper, he had become very rich, and his magnificent town house in Munich as well as his country house expressed the gay exuberance of a happy extrovert indulging in a hospitality of the grand style.

After having had a half dozen children by his first wife, he got a divorce and another, younger wife who bore him half a dozen more children. But, as is often the case with people of such extraordinary vitality, it was as if he had used up for himself in advance the whole amount of it which normally was meant to be carried over to later generations. None of his children from the two marriages proved to be a real heir. After he died, they were not even able to preserve their material heritage, which had been justly divided among them by the

will of their father. The children of the first wife had inherited the newspaper *Münchener Neueste Nachrichten* and the printing house of Knorr & Hirth. But when during the inflation things became difficult, they simply sold the whole enterprise for some paper millions to a joint-stock company, without even retaining for themselves lucrative positions on the board of directors. Though rather young, they had no higher wish than to retire completely from business and to live the easy life of rich idlers. This hope of course was cruelly disappointed by the rapid progress of inflation, which in some months reduced their fortunes to small change. The only property left to them was their father's large country house, where they could accommodate enough "paying guests" to make a modest living for themselves.

The oldest son of the second wife, Otto Hirth, was a boy of twenty when after the death of his father he was called upon to administer the heritage of the second family: *Jugend* and the publishing house of Georg Hirth. With the help of the old reliable collaborators of his father, he had played the pleasant role of the young chief without shouldering too much of real responsibility, until one day in a sudden whim he decided to imitate his father's brilliant example by a new and daring exploit in the publishing business. His idea was not bad at all—though not really original. The great vogue of illustrated papers had just started in Germany, and the *Berliner Illustrierte Zeitung* of the House Ullstein had become an enormous success. Why not start a similar paper in Munich, a sort of Bavarian copy in fact, under the name of *Münchener Illustrierte Zeitung,* capitalizing on the old traditional competition and opposition between Berlin and Munich, between North and South Germany? His financial means could not of course be compared with the enormous capital of the Ullsteins, but his credit, thanks to his father's name, was excellent and the printing house of Knorr & Hirth, though no longer belonging to the family Hirth, generously volunteered to accept the large order. The publishing and printing house of the *Münchener Neueste Nachrichten* seemed financially strong enough to carry the enterprise along by allowing time payments for paper and print, until the new magazine after the first difficult period should yield the big profit which was reasonably to be expected.

Otto Hirth in youthful enthusiasm plunged headlong into the adventure. He developed a feverish activity, and gave the new venture a magnificent start, regardless of the costs and disregardful of the cautious warnings of the old and conservative executives whom he had inherited from his father. Everything began well. The young man had marvelous ideas for advertising and distribution. He was one of the first to use an airplane for speedy delivery of his paper, which from week to week increased its circulation. It became obvious that after a few months more its success would be secure.

This was, however, the well chosen moment for the shrewd businessmen of Knorr & Hirth, Inc., suddenly to cut off credit and to present to the highly surprised young Otto their substantial bill for paper and printing. In his enthusiasm he had almost forgotten that the house Knorr & Hirth no longer belonged to the family and that the new owners had no sentimental reasons for abstaining from a perfectly legal method of making a good profit by cutting somebody's throat.

The young man had no other course than to accept the generous offer of his creditors, who proposed to take over—in lieu of payment in cash—the *Münchener Illustrierte Zeitung*. He had to be grateful that instead of forcing him into bankruptcy they kindly left him *Jugend* and the stocks of books produced by the Georg Hirth Publishing House—though, unfortunately, no liquid funds to carry on his business. Forced to find a buyer at any price from one day to the next, he had sold *Jugend,* including the stock of books and a big stock of plates for four-color prints, at a bargain price; obtaining for himself only a contract as the responsible editor of *Jugend,* and for his old executive the position of business manager.

That was how my former publisher of the *Auslandspost* had become the publisher of *Jugend.*

It would have been comprehensible if Otto Hirth, after all these disappointing experiences, had developed certain misanthropic traits. But fortunately, if not a good businessman, he was a good loser. He evidently did not mind the loss of the family enterprise. With charming equanimity he accepted the fact that he was no longer the chief,

but only an employee, the editor of the magazine, *Jugend,* of which his father had been the founder and the owner. This complacent character made it easy for me to get along with him. Though nominally he was the responsible editor, it soon became clear that in fact I would have to bear the real responsibility not only for the literary part of the magazine, but also for the artistic part, which was supposed to be his domain. Quite automatically and without any conscious effort from my side, only because of my greater capacity for work and because of my greater intensity of interest in our work, more and more of the really important questions were left to my own decision.

It was not only that Hirth was several years younger than I, but he was by nature—quite independent of age—a bit lazy and playful like a boy, though not what Americans would call a playboy. His main hobby was to draw and to paint large maps of imaginary continents in the delightful style of the 17th and 18th centuries, when maps were not geographical abstracts but rather large paintings or illustrations, with nicely designed houses for the towns, with trees for the forests, and so on. He never tired of working, with exquisite taste and infinite patience, for hours and hours on these maps of his dreams, like a serious child entirely absorbed in his play. All the walls of his apartment were decorated with these maps. One day a fashionable decorator became interested in this new and original form of paper hangings, and offered a high price for such a design. Hirth immediately accepted this order, flattered by the idea that his hobby had suddenly proved to be lucrative beyond expectations. The only trouble was that, of course, for a simple mortal it takes a lot more than six days to create and to paint a whole continent. Gradually his editorial work came to seem a rather disagreeable interruption of what he more and more considered to be his real vocation. With an almost exclusive passion he devoted most of his time and energy to this work of playful creation; he was happy to live in the world of his own imagination, which under his hands grew into the form of charming images, reflecting the cheerful harmony of his gentle soul.

He highly appreciated the fact that, without making any fuss, I simply took over most of the work which he was supposed to do, so that with more or less good conscience he could limit his presence in the office to a strict minimum. In exchange he abstained from any

interference with my work, and backed every one of my decisions. We always presented a united front whenever some slight disagreement developed between the editors and the management as to the commercial advisability of the more modern line I wished to follow.

A sore spot for me was the heritage of the past, not only in the form of a large stock of expensive plates for color reproduction, most of which were terribly out of date, but also in the form of some old and not less outdated collaborators who could not possibly be discarded. They traditionally belonged to the *Jugend* of old, and some of them would have had a hard time in finding another source of income. It needed a lot of friendly diplomacy and tactical skill to handle both the collaborators and the layout so as to remove gradually into the background the inevitable vestiges of the past, in order to make room for more youthful forces.

As so often happens, the more conservative tendencies in art and literature were coupled with corresponding political tendencies. And though *Jugend* was not political to the same degree as *Simplicissimus,* I found it necessary at the start to eliminate at least some of the younger collaborators whose stout nationalistic tendencies somehow transcended their non-political contributions. Again I can't help patting myself on the back for having had the sure instinct to recognize a potential Nazi long before he had become an actual one. As Dorothy Thompson once rightly stated in an excellent article, the Nazi is a certain distinctive human type, to be found in every human society, and not only in Germany. I disliked one of these former collaborators of *Jugend* at first sight, and decided to do without him. Belonging to my generation, he could at least not claim to have acquired any traditional rights to his position on *Jugend.*

I was not surprised when, scarcely five years later, he appeared as editor of a Nazi paper. And when I left Germany in 1933, Mr. Loder had advanced to the editorship of the *Völkischer Beobachter,* the official paper of the Nazi government.

It was quite exciting for me to see how the influence of my more progressive ideas in all the different realms of art, literature and policy almost automatically pervaded—or, as others may have thought, perverted—the whole magazine and partly even my collaborators them-

selves. From one week to the next the physiognomy of *Jugend* imperceptibly changed. I tried to familiarize the readers with modern art by choosing for my reproductions chiefly those paintings of modern artists which I believed could be easily understood and by their subject matter would exercise a certain attraction even for the less educated observer. In painting his wife or sweetheart, for example, even the most rigid modernist is usually inclined to make some slight concession to the layman's esthetic conceptions of feminine beauty. And I on the other hand felt justified in making slight concessions to my public by often choosing for my cover the portraits of attractive women, though I was not yet acquainted with the institution of the "Cover Girl."

It was not always easy to find a painting that combined artistic quality with a more general appeal. I visited exhibitions and studios of talented painters in order to discover what I needed for the two four-color reproductions in each issue, not to speak of the numerous drawings, cartoons and caricatures I used to publish. In my professional zeal, and at the risk of being misinterpreted, I felt compelled to devote special attention to feminine beauties who were likely to present an attractive model for one of our younger painters. I still remember with pleasure the case of a young society lady, a truly beautiful Hungarian. She was the third or fourth wife of a Baron von H. who, more than twice her age and very wealthy, was a lover of art and women. It was not difficult to convince him that his young wife had to be portrayed by a talented painter in Berlin, in order to adorn the cover of *Jugend*; and he was gentleman enough to buy the painting. This solution made everybody happy: the Baron, the painter, myself, and last but not least the Baroness, who, perhaps enticed by this first taste of publicity, some years later appeared as a film star in Paris.

Exactly like my friend, the lector of the Musa Press, Otto Hirth came one day to ask my advice as to whether he should resign his position as an editor of *Jugend* in order to give all his time and energy to his old hobby and newly discovered business of painting imaginary continents. He had gained the impression that I could do his editorial job in addition to mine, since in fact I did it most of the time; he only wanted me to confirm his own inclination.

Again, as in the first case, I could not help telling him quite honestly that being a real editor presupposes an exclusive passion for this profession, which is hard to combine with another activity. I knew that, if it came to the worst, the income of his rather wealthy wife was sufficient for both; why should he not try to do what he really wanted to do and what seemed to offer fairly good material prospects for the future? Thanks to his good social contacts and social talents, success seemed pretty sure. With his artistic gift and his cultured taste, he would be just the man to adorn the salons of perhaps less cultured but wealthy people both by his charming person and by his charming maps. Neither he nor I had any reason to regret that I responded so frankly to his confidence in the impartiality of my judgment. As it turned out, he did very well, and I could without any restraint enjoy this repeated attestation that real cooperation eliminates every idea of competition or rivalry.

As if to prove he knew how disinterested my advice had been, the publisher of *Jugend* did not get around to the idea that since I was doing the job of two men I might be entitled to a certain increase of my relatively small salary; a "raise," by the way, which had been promised me long before. Unfortunately my old friend, the daring businessman who had founded the publishing house, was no longer director of the corporation into which it had been converted. The stockholders had objected to his business ethics, but in my case he certainly would have behaved much more like a gentleman than his very correct and almost pedantically orderly successor, who suffered from a real phobia against spending money. He was a highly educated man of real competence in literature and art, much closer to my own sphere than his predecessor. We agreed in almost everything, even in the question of my salary—at least in theory. Amusingly enough, he was in theory all for generosity and fairness in financial matters. He never denied that my claim was absolutely justified, but he tenaciously postponed as long as possible the bitter necessity of disgorging at least a part of what he saved from Otto Hirth's salary. When after some months of waiting I finally wrote him one of my objective letters, he evidently understood that my patience was exhausted, and yielded to my demand. He knew well enough that it would not be easy to find another really "respon-

sible" editor who, with only the help of two secretaries, would assume the editorial duties for both the artistic and the literary parts of a weekly like *Jugend.*

When coming to America I was impressed by the fact that here even the smallest weekly has a large staff of editors, associate editors, managing editors and so on. I am sure all of them are very busy with making work for each other and having a three-hour meeting every day. They probably "edit" and rewrite every single line of every script and then edit each other's editing. The result of this process is often that finally even the slightest trace of individual authorship is eliminated and the whole magazine looks as if it had been written by one anonymous author without any individual personality. But it is astonishing how much simpler things are if you have to do everything all by yourself and nobody is there to "help" you in your work, or to interfere with it. I tried to preserve the individual style of every author and to eliminate only actual mistakes. And if sometimes it seemed obvious to me that the writer somehow and somewhere had missed his own point, I would discuss the matter with him, personally if possible, in order to find the right solution. It was my greatest satisfaction when it turned out, as it often did, that what I suggested was exactly what the author had wanted to say, without having found the right expression. This sort of collaboration presupposes a personal relationship which can be obtained by a single editor but not by a whole editorial staff.

I had not even a reader for my manuscripts, which came in at the rate of about 600 a month. And sticking to the old-fashioned conviction that an editor ought to read his manuscripts, I had of course to use some hours of the night for this business, since my day was more than occupied with my other duties. I went so far as to answer letters from unknown authors, or even to write letters to them, in order to explain the reasons for a rejection, and to ask for other offers if I scented a real talent. Fortunately I had an excellent secretary, who took my dictation in shorthand and typed at such speed that in two hours I could dictate forty or fifty letters, which three hours later I could sign without looking at them, sure to find not the slightest mistake.

A good deal of my time was also taken by visitors, since I believed in the dogma that an editor must have time for his collaborators, regardless of how busy he may be. One afternoon of each week was reserved for an editorial meeting where with a little committee of two painters, and sometimes assisted by the publisher, I looked through innumerable paintings, drawings and caricatures which came in unsolicited every week and sometimes almost obstructed my not too large office. It was an unstated rule that when opinions were divided my vote was decisive; and I don't remember a single case when something I really wanted was not accepted.

In the literary field my editorial sovereignty was unlimited, and I jealously defended my independence against all and every one, including the bigger stockholders and the members of the board of directors. As everybody knows, such important gentlemen are likely to have an astonishing number of friends and relatives with artistic or literary ambitions. I used to receive the warmest recommendations from these quarters with such a cool politeness, promising only a careful examination of the respective manuscripts or drawings, that I soon succeeded in discouraging all attempts to influence my choice. It happened only once that a younger member of the board, handing me the script of a friend, tried to make me understand that he had assured the author of his having his contribution published in *Jugend*. But the only thing I understood was that here my editorial independence was threatened; and I immediately returned the script, with a polite letter. It was in fact a bad manuscript; but as a matter of principle, I would probably have refused it anyway, in order not to create a dangerous precedent.

I always believed in tolerance and tried to practice it—perhaps, as some of my friends insisted, not always successfully. But I always strongly differentiated between tolerance and laxity—which really means a lack of principle. You should understand and bear with any sort of human weakness, if only because of your own imperfections. But you are never allowed to compromise in a matter of principle, where certain ethical, spiritual or esthetic standards are involved.

Since in the last analysis your character determines your fate, a man of a certain character is likely to have always more or less the same

experiences in his life. And writing an autobiography, he hardly can avoid a certain repetition of typical situations.

The most interesting personalities (as Lou Andreas-Salomé after many years of psychoanalytical practice used to observe) are neurotics, hysterics and psychopaths. Just because in these cases the personality is disintegrated, life becomes an incoherent sequence of unforeseeable and contradictory actions or reactions, as in a dream. That is why many clever literati are so irresistibly attracted by the description of mental cases.

There is, however, another explanation of this phenomenon—namely, that of a certain affinity between the artist and his subject. Many artists, even great artists, belong themselves in the category of what psychiatrists call "borderline cases." They are neurotics who have the good fortune to find an outlet for their neuroses in the form and process of artistic creation. The inner tension created by their neurotic complexes becomes the driving force of artistic productivity. Maupassant, for example, succeeded in transmuting the first symptoms of his incurable mental illness into the poignant short novel "Hors-là." Strindberg got rid of his *paranoia persecutoria* by transposing it into novels. And even the young Goethe evaded the temptation of suicide by having his Werther die for him—with the result that his too successful story caused a minor epidemic of suicides in the contemporary literary world.

I remember in this context what Lou Andreas-Salomé told me about her strange experience with Rainer Maria Rilke. During their travel through Russia, when sometimes for days they could not leave the train, she had tried—very cautiously—to analyze Rilke, in the hope of relieving him of certain psychological tensions. Suddenly she became aware that his poetic genius was ineradicably rooted in what she recognized as a neurotic complex. To cure his neurosis would mean destroying the poet—and so, instead of digging deeper into the productive darkness of his subconsciousness, she carefully closed again the pit leading to a depth which could not be exposed to the light of reason and conscience without destroying the roots of his highest self, his poetic genius.

There is a kind of artistic gift which really grows out of a protracted puberty. And since *Jugend* as well as *Simplicissimus* had never

entirely lost their reputation of being open to young beginners, I had ample opportunity for studying such special cases. Many young artists came to me, as to a good friend or an older brother, to discuss their artistic and sometimes even their personal problems. It was not so much that they asked me for advice; in most cases it was enough to have me listen to them sympathetically and perhaps put in some simple words of understanding or encouragement. One of the things in my life that I am most grateful for is that sometimes I happened to learn afterward that these few simple words had been just the right ones for this special person and this special situation.

It was a cheap propaganda trick of fascism, the adulation of "Giovinezza, Giovinezza"; like the whole Fascist propaganda, it was really a bloody lie, invented by elderly bald-headed gentlemen, in order to deceive and to enslave the young. They are so easily misled and led astray! Their enthusiasm is so easily abused and misused because, not yet spoiled by exterior success, they are willing to sacrifice themselves for an idea—even for a wrong idea.

We know all about the political and economic reasons for Fascism; we should not forget the ideological reasons. In the beginning at least there were many sincere although despairing young idealists who fell for the pseudo-philosophical rubbish of the Fascist doctrine because it seemed at any rate better than nothing. What an indictment of the spiritual leadership of our time—this youth despairing of the vitality of human ideas and ideals and falling victim to the cheap "myth" of a synthetic barbarism.

This myth had been prepared by the suicidal treason of spiritual men who loathed the spirit, of intellectuals who derided the intellect and the divine gift of reason. The philosophical, literary and artistic fashion of anti-rationalism, originating in many different European cultures at approximately the same time, was a natural reaction against the naïve rationalism of the Nineteenth Century. But it undermined the very foundation of all culture, namely, the—always religious—belief in the spiritual as against the material, in "idealism" as against "realism," in that which is absolute and eternal as against the merely relative and temporal values.

This tendency was bound to end in disaster. It not only predicted but

prepared the doom of the Occidental world by releasing the blind forces of moral and intellectual anarchy.

What the wise men had to offer was a cool and bitter wisdom without faith or love or hope; it was not humane wisdom and was therefore no longer wise; but only a form of either pompous or cynical nihilism. If combined with old age, such a pseudo-philosophical attitude is especially likely to impress—and to mislead—younger or at any rate immature people.

I was, by the way, amused—and also disturbed—by the respectful reports of American journalists, who shortly after the liberation of Rome hurried to interview the old philosopher George Santayana in his retreat in a Roman convent. He received his visitors in order to tell them: "I am living in the eternal." But this "eternal" proved to be a vacuum. He pretended to be hardly aware of the war. "There has been so much killing and so much suffering in the world's history. It is always the same," he was reported to have said and, evidently bored by this sameness, "he had just been reading Racine and Dickens"—while Italian Fascists and German Nazis somewhere in the neighborhood tortured and massacred innocent hostages. But, as he assured us, he had "no feeling of either opposition or approval of Communism or Fascism." He only declared mildly, "The trouble with applying Fascism to Italy is that the people are undisciplined. They often make good Fascists from 18 to 25, but after that they become individualists again. They are not on a high enough social level to become good Fascists." Whereupon one of the American reporters, in awe of such profundity and aloofness, quoted the last word of Santayana's wisdom: "Perhaps the universe is nothing but an equilibrium of idiocies."

I have had my own experiences with interviews, and I am willing to give the philosopher the benefit of every doubt as to the correctness of the quotations. But the tone sounds terribly familiar; it is the tone of many other "wise men" whose cerebra function like clockwork, but without the living force of great human ideas. Self-sufficient and self-propelled, their thought rotates around itself, producing neither light nor warmth, but only a pale fluorescence.

Such philosophers, whom the Greeks would have called sophists, may speak with the tongue of men and of angels, but lacking love or charity are as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal.

## CHAPTER XXIII

# German Writers Resist—or Succumb to Nazi Infection

THE YOUNG MEN with whom I had to deal in the late 'Twenties were not aware of the fact that they were living in a strange interlude, the long armistice between two wars. In the typical self-centeredness of youth and of artists, they were so completely occupied with their personal problems that they would not look up from their desks or their easels. Otherwise they would have noticed that the great political and social problems of the world, which they tried to ignore, were in fact their own problems, on a larger scale; that political decisions in the whole world were decisions of life or death for every one of them; and finally that every political decision means in the last analysis a moral and intellectual decision in which every member of a free community has not only the right but the duty to take part.

Probably I myself, in my optimistic belief in reason, was not sufficiently aware of the dangers ahead. I had taken my stand all right. That is to say I had taken my stand on the side of reason and freedom and humanity, since I had begun to think; and it seemed unthinkable to me that I ever could change my almost inborn way of thinking. I was inclined to look at Nazism, militarism and nationalism, especially in their ugliest form of anti-Semitism, as types of mental illness which after all could be cured, since they originated only in a lack of logical thinking or in some psychological disorders, some neurotic complexes, which had to be analyzed. It always struck me as an abnormality if an otherwise fairly educated man seemed to succumb to what I easily recognized as hysterical nonsense. And the first natural reaction of my amused surprise was to make fun of it, because I sincerely believed that it was sufficient to debunk and to deride human stupidity in order to defeat this hydra with innumerable heads. But what we tried to laugh off were in fact the apocalyptic beasts of the abyss, only biding their

time until, emerging from their mud holes, they would spit fire and poison over the whole world.

In the meantime, they looked silly and ridiculous rather than seriously dangerous. The policy of European understanding initiated two years before, in Locarno, seemed to bear some fruits in a sort of economic normalization which opened a way for political pacification. The situation was far from being satisfactory, but even a skeptical statesman like Stresemann saw "a silver lining on the horizon." Why not use wit and satire as instruments of social and political criticism? Perhaps in this form it would be more effective than the deadly and somewhat annoying earnestness of certain isolated voices preaching in the wilderness. We heartily enjoyed our literary and artistic skirmishes. We enjoyed being liberal and progressive and witty, or even sometimes a bit frivolous. We had a very good time teasing the half-sleeping monsters of the future and giving them raps on their ugly noses. We had to prove after all that the title on our masthead had regained its original meaning, though it had to be understood that youth was rather a state of mind than a matter of years.

But I had indeed the good luck to discover some really fine young talents who, either following the long established tradition or attracted by the changed atmosphere of *Jugend,* offered me their first products. The best discovery I ever made was a young man from Nuremberg. The first short story he sent me immediately fascinated me by the originality of its language, its drastic imagination, its caustic humor and satirical verve. The lusty grotesquerie of this little piece, however, would have imposed too great a shock on my public.

It was a very large and hardly homogeneous public, with many more readers than subscribers. In every café or restaurant, in every doctor's and dentist's waiting room, and even in every barber shop you were sure to find a copy of *Jugend*—although sometimes only a back copy. A special German institution, the so-called "Lesezirkel" (reading circle), a sort of lending library for magazines, made it possible to receive every week for a relatively small fee an assortment of several journals, which after a week, for an even smaller fee, were passed on to the next subscriber; the last series of subscribers received the assortment finally four weeks late and in slightly dilapidated con-

dition, but for only a small fraction of what they would have paid for new copies of all the different magazines.

*Jugend* as well as *Simplicissimus* belonged traditionally to these "Lesezirkel" assortments, which, of course, secured for every copy some hundreds of readers; but, on the other hand, had an adverse effect on general circulation, sales and individual subscriptions.

It is difficult to find a common denominator for the average man in the street and the more serious art lover, both of whom belonged to my public. I simply relied upon my own good taste and my good conscience in estimating the border line beyond which a magazine of such popularity as *Jugend* could not go without alienating too large a percentage of its readers.

I frankly explained to the newly discovered young writer the reasons why I could not publish his first piece although personally it had delighted me. And I urged him by all means immediately to send another story; if possible, slightly less shocking. This he did, and soon I had the pleasure of printing more and more of the first literary crop produced by what I rightly had diagnosed as one of the most original and strongest talents of the younger generation. This was the beginning of my long and never changing friendship with Hermann Kesten.

I have to share the merit of this discovery with some other editors, who almost simultaneously saw the same light. New stars usually are discovered at about the same time by different astronomers, and nothing seems more silly than quarrels as to priority in such instances. Hermann Kesten certainly does not owe anything to me. If he had not been printed in *Jugend* he would have been been printed some weeks later in another paper, as for example, the *Frankfurter Zeitung,* which soon afterward published his first short novel, "Joseph in Search of Freedom." But on the other hand, I probably owe my life to him, I and some hundreds of other writers and artists. We all doubtless would have perished in the great concentration camp of Europe, where after the collapse of France we were caught as if in a mousetrap, had it not been for Hermann Kesten. Having escaped to America literally at the last minute before the catastrophe, he immediately made it his exclusive business to mobilize American help for the rescue of other anti-Fascist intellectuals of Europe, most of whom populated the different internment camps of Vichy France.

With the same marvelous tenacity and ingenuity which had made possible the single miracle of his own escape, he achieved the multiple miracle of saving some hundreds or even thousands of writers and artists who otherwise would have been lost.

Arriving in New York with little money and no English, he succeeded with the help of influential friends like Thomas Mann and Hendrik Willem van Loon, in correlating and organizing American good will and generosity so that it might find expression in the Emergency Rescue Committee, which soon opened its office in Marseilles under the direction of Varian M. Fry. This is not the right place to tell more about this great work of salvation; but since Hermann Kesten has a special talent for keeping himself, if not his plays, out of the spotlight, it is worth while to remember that for more than a year he devoted all his time and energy to what turned out to be a not very thankful job. In fact, it was not a paying job at all. On the contrary, he could have done much better by minding his own business and writing the novel for which an American publisher was waiting. His was not the Dale Carnegie method of making friends and influencing important people, because important people, especially among writers and artists, are or at any rate feel terribly important. Some of them may never forgive a man for having saved them and may repay their debt of gratitude by playing him a nasty trick.

A naïve idealist, discouraged by such experiences, would have become a misanthrope. Kesten fortunately is a skeptical and a rational idealist. He has no illusions about human nature and is always prepared for the worst. But he does not allow his psychological insight to interfere with his practical love of mankind both in general and in particular. Like all the most sardonic satirists, like Aristophanes, Cervantes, Swift, Voltaire, Heinrich Heine and others, he chooses to laugh at people's foolishness in order not to hate them for their meanness. What naïve observers sometimes call the icy cynicism and cruel sarcasm of a satirist is only the natural if somewhat desperate reaction of an especially sensitive and vulnerable heart which feels sorry for humanity.

I could not know all that, but could only suspect it, when seventeen years ago the young author first came to visit me in my office. But I was not in the least surprised to find that, in contrast to his writing,

he was far from being aggressive, but was shy and reserved. He was even smaller and thinner than I, and so terribly nervous, with a little tic sometimes contracting his face, that I felt a bit worried for him and thought he should see a doctor. I knew he belonged to a generation which, though only eight years younger than mine, was separated from us by the decisive difference that the war had coincided with the physically and psychologically most critical period of transition between their fourteenth and eighteenth years. Many of this generation never entirely recovered from this disturbance of their development, but remained unstable and susceptible to all sorts of illnesses, moral and intellectual as well as physical. No wonder that so many of them succumbed easily to the contagious disease of Nazism, which appeared as at least an antidote to the desperate nihilism and cynicism of this lost generation.

For Kesten, however, I had not to worry, as I became convinced when one year later I met him in Berlin. In the meantime, he had established by his first book a literary reputation not only in Germany but in the international literary world, and his book was translated into a dozen languages. Instead of seeing a doctor, he had got himself married to a girl who in a rare mixture of almost passive indulgence and quiet firmness, of fine literary understanding and of natural common sense, proved to be a perfect companion and a sort of regulative for his nervous, artistic temperament.

It was easy to foresee that he would grow, as an artist and as a person, from year to year and from book to book without ever being tempted by the cheap ambition to write "best sellers." Even during the years of exile, when so many writers suffered either nervous or moral breakdowns, sometimes both, his creativeness and his productivity never seemed affected by an experience which for so many others proved fatal in the figurative or even the literal sense. Commuting between France, England and Holland, he published book after book; among others two great historical novels, reflecting through the figures of Philip II of Spain and of Ferdinand and Isabella of Castile, the eternal conflict between dictatorship and the free individual, who although a victim will remain the victor.

In the strange period of the late 'Twenties, when some of my younger friends and collaborators, influenced by the latest intellectual

fashion, began to make me feel that my humanism and rationalism were somewhat out of fashion, it was a great help and consolation for me to find how perfectly Kesten shared all my basic convictions and that he, as myself, had kept his faith in humor and humanity. During the seventeen years of our friendship Kesten steadily has increased his stature and has gained weight, even physically; compared with his wise and patient human tolerance my own good intentions in this direction are falling short of perfection. When I occasionally still feel exasperated by human stupidity, his slightly amused smile makes me feel that in the meantime he not only has made up for my earlier start, but has in fact surpassed me on the long road toward true maturity. Even without saving my life Hermann Kesten would still be the best discovery of my editorial career, because of his being three rare things in one: a real artist, a real person and a real friend.

Many of my other discoveries proved in the long run disappointing in respect of both art and humanity. There was, for example, another young talent I had discovered about the same time as Kesten. His name, Erich Kästner, was similar, he was of equal age and, as I learned later, was Kesten's friend. He even seemed to live in the same world of thought, although his medium of expression was rather that of verse than that of prose. The keen aggressiveness of his satirical songs had startled and delighted me, when I first found them among my incoming manuscripts. Here too was something of the fighting spirit and the bitter drastic humor, the enthusiastic radicalism and the moral indignation which make the real satirist. The freshness and the brilliancy of his verses easily caught the ear like a popular song, but the text to this ingratiating melody was full of barbed wit and pointed irony. Heinrich Heine's great traditions of social and political polemicism in poetical form seemed here to be revived.

When I first met him in Berlin, after having printed some of his earlier poems, I felt immediately attracted by his natural charm. Blond, blue-eyed and handsome, carefully though not expensively dressed, he looked—what he really was—the well educated, favored son of a good, loving and beloved mother, a middle-class boy, born on Sunday, whose innate sense of and belief in human decency had been shocked and outraged by his first encounters with a rather unpleasant reality. But

still in his most violent attacks against the powers of injustice and reaction there was so much youthful grace that even those at whom he aimed his poetical arrows felt less wounded by the sharp points than delighted by the colorful feathers adorning the shafts. I was sure he could not fail to make his way. And he certainy did not fail. The books of his verses had a large circulation, but typically enough, his greatest success came from quite another line, a side-line of his writing. Having been himself a lucky child, he liked children, especially small boys half his age, who appealed to his own indestructible boyishness. A story he had written for his young friends, "Emil and the Detectives," became an international success. It was translated into many languages, and Hollywood made a picture of it which became very popular because Emil was a sort of glorified Boy Scout, definitely on the side of the angels, who preferred to play the detective instead of the gangster.

It is fair to say that all his financial and personal success with people in general and pretty girls in particular did not spoil his character. He did not become conceited or arrogant, but remained the nice and good-natured fellow he always had been. Only his satirical verve lost something of its poignancy as his personal life became more and more satisfactory. In the political as in the social field he developed a certain tendency for sidestepping the necessity of a good fight. It had been a lot of fun in the beginning of his career, and had once and for all established his reputation as a liberal, a radical, almost a revolutionary. He had not changed his opinions—but why not relax a bit and leave the fighting to others, who perhaps by nature and temperament were more fit for this kind of exercise?

When in the fateful spring of 1933 the burning of the Reichstag consumed the last remnants of civil liberty in Germany, Kästner refused to understand the flaming signal. The hour of decision found him confused, wavering and perplexed. He had the bad luck of being a so-called Aryan and of seeing no immediate danger of arrest. There was nothing to prompt his departure. And, while in Zurich, Paris and other centers of emigration where the first front against Hitler began to form, his friends expected him to turn up any day, he could not make up his mind. With more reason than I he could have hoped to be forgotten or even spared by the Nazis, who were in bitter need of

notable renegades. Perhaps I myself would have been accepted by the almighty Dr. Goebbels. The former chief editor of *Simplicissimus* as editor of the *Völkische Beobachter* would have been a nice piece of propaganda, as good as a converted Erich Kästner.

It was probably for this reason that the Nazis left him alone and did not even steal his money. However, he proved to be a disappointment for them, as for us. He stayed in Germany—but he did not go over to the enemy. In the no-man's-land between the two fronts, he took cover behind his typewriter, producing a perfectly harmless novel of innocuous humor which even the Nazis did not bother to forbid, and henceforth he limited himself to writing children's books. He was allowed almost as much liberty as a paroled prisoner—as long as he kept quiet and did not say a mumbling word against the new regime. He never found the force to break free. But it was probably not so much the money that kept him in Germany. For him exile would have been good business—a very exceptional case. Perhaps, indeed, the attachment to his old mother was stronger than his love of liberty. The only thing we knew for sure was the weakness of his heart—even in a physical sense. Giving no sign of life, he was reported dead. But it seems his heart, though no longer beating the brave aggressive rhythms of his early songs, was not too weak to keep alive his shadow in the graveyard of Germany.

Some others of the young talents who started their literary careers under the sign of *Jugend* turned out to be even more tragical cases. They suffered not from heart trouble but rather from head trouble. They proved to be muddle-headed enough to fall for the Nazi swindle —full-heartedly, in all sincerity. One of them, the young Austrian Karl H. Waggerl, had been a sort of problem child for me from the start. Near starvation and in ill health, he had buried himself and his young wife in a small village of Tyrol, where during a vacation I looked him up, since I had become seriously interested in his work and his person. Unfortunately, the times of abundance for *Jugend* were over and I could not, as Georg Hirth had done, provide a monthly allowance for young artists in need of their daily bread. But at least I could help him by my recommendations to other editors or publishers.

Waggerl succeeded in having his first novel published by the Insel Verlag, whose director, Anton Kippenberg, became his protector. But unfortunately this talented young man had become so fascinated by the work of Knut Hamsun that in all naïveté and sincerity he began to copy Hamsun's novels one after the other, instead of following his own line. I tried to warn him, not only because I did not want him to become a simple plagiarist, but especially because I saw the danger of Hamsun's influence upon this whole literary generation.

I had always felt that Hamsun was bound to become a Nazi, that he was a Nazi at heart, long before Nazism ever existed. He was a poet, without any doubt, and he was close to nature, so close in fact that he became anti-human. His mystical and somehow masochistic adoration for the great blind forces of nature playing havoc with all the futile work of human hands and human minds; his sneering contempt for the spirit, for reason, for ideas; his whole anti-humanism and anti-rationalism was bound to end in the nihilistic barbarism of Nazi doctrines. His apotheosis of the primitive man, of the peasant or of the tramp, as against the more cultivated and civilized man, especially as against the intellectual, was exactly what the Nazi literature of "Blut und Boden"—of blood and soil—made into such a bloody mud. I was not in the least surprised when Hamsun finally became a real Nazi, a literary Quisling.

He belongs among the many false prophets who led the European youth astray. And he had followers and imitators in almost every European literature, even in France, the classical land of reason, where Jean Giono, he too a real poet, succeeded in establishing himself as the French Hamsun. Needless to say, in due course Giono became a Vichyite and a Nazi.

Hamsun's attitude toward life and mankind is that of a disappointed lover whose passion has changed into hate. It is significant enough that throughout his life he wrote again and again the same story of an unhappy lover. First it always looks as if the girl in question were terribly attracted by the boy—and then, just as everyone expects them to come together, the girl suddenly walks out on him and disappears without any explanation whatever. Nobody, including the author, seems to know what it is all about.

A man who happened to know Hamsun very intimately once

gave me the key to this strange mystery which may have intrigued many other readers besides me. The young Hamsun was an especially handsome fellow. Lou Andreas-Salomé, who met him in Paris where as a young bohemian he bummed around, told me that he looked like a Greek god. There were a lot of young and pretty women who became attracted by his manly beauty. But, coming closer to him, they made the unpleasant discovery that the young Adonis suffered from athlete's foot—whereupon they suddenly cooled off and disappeared. I give this true story gratis to the radio advertisers for foot powder. They could point out that Hamsun should have done something about his athlete's foot, instead of taking vengeance for his well deserved misfortune by writing for sixty years the same hard-luck story. He consequently developed this typical attitude of embittered hatred toward mankind in general and cultured society in particular. His whole art and his whole philosophy of life were marred by the unpleasant odor of an infected foot. And this philosophy in turn infected a whole literary generation.

It may be that without this defect he never would have become a great artist. He probably would have married one of the many pretty girls who wanted him, and they would have lived happily ever after without Hamsun feeling the urge to over-compensate his shortcomings by his literary work.

There is always something basically, that is to say, humanly wrong with philosophical or artistic preachers of nihilism and defeatism. They depreciate life and the world and mankind, like the fox with the sour grapes. They are counselors of that abysmal despair which is nothing other than a sort of universal hate. And hate in every form originates in fear, in the feeling of insecurity and inferiority. You have only to look at a genius of morbid hate like Hitler or his followers in order to understand that they had ample reason for hating others—because they could not help hating themselves. You cannot expect anyone to love or even to respect his neighbor simply as a human being, if he feels disgusted with himself as a human being. A human and humane attitude toward others presupposes human self-respect. Only sub-human beings who feel themselves to be the lowest type of

person must play the superman and prove their superiority by the idiotic method of exterminating their neighbors.

I would not have greatly cared when the average type of person, even of literary person, who is merely opportunistic, tried to do in the Nazi Reich as the Nazis do. But it was a shock for me to discover that another young poet, a very pure and true poet, earning a small living as a bookseller in Hamburg, became confused enough to believe in the idealistic Nazi phrases about "Germany's awakening." I have never met K. H. Bischoff, whose first stories I published in *Jugend,* but I was in a continuous correspondence with him and tried my best to help him along even in his personal problems, one of which was to get a typewriter in order to copy his first book. I was just about to get him one in the spring of 1933, but before I had time to settle this somewhat complicated affair, I was faced with other problems and found that it had become time for me to leave Germany. In the first days of my French exile I got a heartbreaking letter from Bischoff, full of personal affection and gratitude but hopelessly mixed up in his effort to explain why he had joined the Nazi party. He wrote that he could not bear the thought of my becoming a refugee when men like me were needed for the spiritual awakening in Germany. And—I still remember this line—"What about a so-called free democracy where an author is forced to own a typewriter in order to make his work known?"

I sometimes thought that perhaps I could have saved this troubled soul by earlier taking care of the typewriter. But the case is typical of how well the Nazis, promising everything to everybody, had succeeded in making everybody happy in the belief that they would solve each one's most personal problem. I don't know whether Bischoff ever got his typewriter or if he ever published or even finished his book. Most of these sincere young idealists had soon a terrible awakening with respect to what the Nazis understood by "Germany's awakening." And many of them were killed in purges like that of June, 1934.

## CHAPTER XXIV

# More About My Collaborators⊙ D. H. Lawrence Is Shocked

THERE WERE OTHERS among my collaborators who never fell for the Nazi myth, but stayed in Germany all the same. They hoped to weather the storm, or perhaps even to establish some sort of intellectual opposition, if only in the form of passive resistance. Some of them were hampered by personal circumstances or even by the feeling that their physical and moral forces were simply not sufficient for the jump-in-the-dark of exile which most likely would mean starvation. And it was indeed more difficult for writers than for designers or painters, whose medium of expression is not bound to the limits of language. Artists like Vertes, Dugo, Dolbin, Kurt Werth and others could publish their caricatures and drawings in foreign-language papers as well as in *Jugend*. Even without being masters of the English language, many of them are now collaborating on American magazines.

. But what, for example, would my old friend August Wisbeck have done in exile? He was some years older than I, a former cavalry officer who during the war had become a major in the Turkish Army. After some excursions in the picturesque world of the early movies, he had settled down in Munich with his much-too-small pension in order to follow his real vocation, that of becoming a "Schwabinger," a bohemian of the most delightful type. He had a marvelous sense of grotesque humor and was a wonderful story-teller, especially over a bottle of wine, of which he consumed more than was good for his state of health, physical and economic. Only when driven by a bitter need for money could he bring himself to writing down his stories, which were in general promptly printed by *Jugend* or some other magazine.

Wisbeck was more than six feet tall, broad-shouldered and slim; and, as happens in Bavaria, thanks to some Roman or Italian heritage,

his dark curly hair, his black eyes and his olive complexion gave his expressive features a sort of bohemian charm. With the liveliness of his inflammable temperament, the natural elegance of his movements and of his attire, he was simply irresistible to women of any age and any social background. They indeed kept him pretty busy and he simply had not time to become a brilliant playwright of light comedy, a career for which he seemed predestined by his special talent. But he was far from being a cynical roué. On the contrary, he had preserved through all his innumerable amorous adventures the natural innocence of a child in search of a new playmate. He was much too well educated and too gentle ever to insist, when he seemed not to be wanted. Even when in a slightly intoxicated state, he would have been the most reliable and chivalrous escort for the youngest debutante, provided that she did not make love to him. His somewhat ravaged features were always illuminated by the indestructible youthfulness of an adolescent fascinated by his first love affair—which of course made him the more irresistible. No woman expected him to be faithful, but every woman felt sure that never with the slightest gesture or allusion would he do any harm to her or compromise her reputation.

He was in fact unable to behave otherwise than as a gentleman, at least toward the female sex. For men, especially for those he disliked as being stuffed shirts, he could become a bit embarrassing, when after the third or fourth bottle of wine he began to address them by shouting with an enormous voice, audible through the whole restaurant, humorous remarks whose grotesque and sometimes aggressive comicality were rarely enjoyed by their victims.

We liked each other from the start, and I was lucky enough to discover his special talent for inventing captions to the satirical drawings which, besides two full-page cartoons, were usually scattered over the pages of *Jugend*. He proved to be inexhaustible in funny ideas, and at the same time the most reliable collaborator I ever had. With the regularity of a conscientious official, he appeared in my office every week on a certain day and at a certain hour in order to talk over the three or four proposals he had worked out for every one of the four or five clichés, or color plates, prepared for the next issue. Not once in the more than six years of our collaboration did he leave me in the lurch.

No girl and no bottle could ever distract him from his professional duty as a humorist, which he took no less seriously than I. Both of us were indefatigable in polishing a fine point, carefully weighing every word and every nuance. We understood each other so well that we easily could pool our ideas in a collective and complementary effort, inspiring each other, without any sort of literary rivalry or personal competition.

Our collaboration was carried over from *Jugend* to *Simplicissimus,* and provided for him finally a sort of regular income which he badly needed. Without being actively interested in politics, he heartily detested the Nazis and all their works. I don't know how he managed to live in the atmosphere of the Third Reich. But his marvelous vitality, overtaxed for so many decades, had already begun to decline. Not long before I left, he had suffered a nervous breakdown from which he recovered slowly. He had not the slightest chance of making a living in a foreign country, and there was a son whom he dearly loved; a young boy of twenty living with his mother, who for understandable reasons had divorced after two years of marriage the too attractive August Wisbeck—but had remained on good and friendly terms with him. He did not see any other way out but to stay on, keeping aloof from the whole Nazi business. But it was too much for him. Some years later, in France, I received the news of his death. Only recently I learned how he had died. It seems that he developed a bad case of persecution complex—which perhaps was not only a mania but justified by real facts. For to the Nazis even the opposition of silence was a crime, and I doubt whether he could always keep silent. He finally had to be transferred to an asylum, the ultimate refuge of a reasonable and decent man in a world of madness. But he chose a refuge even more secure; he committed suicide.

It is strange to remember and to report that the perhaps somewhat flippant, but never too spicy jokes of my poor old friend Wisbeck happened to shock and even to frighten one of the most daring and most original authors of modern literature, the same D. H. Lawrence whom English prudishness stupidly enough branded as a pornographer.

Years before making his personal acquaintance I had become

deeply interested in his novel, *The Rainbow,* which first introduced to Germany his later completely translated work. The person who gave me the book and told me some interesting details about the author was his sister-in-law, married to the socialist economist Professor Jaffé, who during the revolution was for some time Minister of Finance.

Mrs. Jaffé as well as her sister Frieda Lawrence must have been somewhat of a headache for their father, the old Baron von Richthofen; he was still a commanding general in the old Imperial Army when Frieda, married to an English university professor, one day simply left her respectable home and her five beloved children in order to go away with a sort of literary tramp, the son of a Lancashire miner, some years younger than she and without a penny of regular income. In comparison even a socialist Minister must have appeared as a sort of minor evil. But evidently the two daughters had transformed the traditional military virtues of their old soldiers' family into the higher form of moral and civic courage. While Frieda Lawrence traveled around the world with her husband, who slowly began to reach fame and even to earn some money, Mrs. Jaffé lived in the liberal and intellectual circles of Munich. She had done some translating from the English for me when I was editor of *Auslandspost.* I had written some reviews about Lawrence, and so it was quite natural that she arranged a personal meeting when in the fall of 1927 he came to spend some weeks in her little country house in Irschenhausen in the Isar valley near Munich.

Even now after seventeen years my first impression of his strange and fascinating personality is still as fresh and lively as if it had been yesterday that we had tea together. It was the first time I had shared the afternoon of a faun, a sick faun who out of sheer friendliness had left his mysterious woods, adapting himself for some hours in manners and appearance to the usual human pattern; but one felt him likely to disappear at any moment with a light caper over the tea table and through the window, to return to the company of other goat-footed half gods waiting for him behind the next bushes.

No doubt, he was gravely ill. Tuberculosis, the miner's illness, had emaciated his tall bony body and his stooped shoulders. It looked as if his suit was much too large for him. But the pale triangular face with the large front and the little reddish goatee was illuminated by

a spiritual vitality which triumphantly denied all physical decay. The look of his eyes from deep sockets under bushy brows had the strange intensity with which an animal or some deity of nature might gaze at the curious world of human beings—half astonished and half amused, but at any rate entirely detached, separated by an unbridgeable distance, safe from any human entanglement which could endanger his unlimited inner freedom.

Only a few people whom I have met have given me this feeling of their living in a sphere of pure essentiality where everything and everyone assumes a new and higher substance. No conventional word or thought can thrive in such an atmosphere. There will be an immediate personal contact, or no approach to each other at all; a simple and direct human exchange, or a retreat into taciturnity. It was as if I had known him for many years—and I had indeed, in a certain sense, since I knew his books. But he too seemed to know me at first sight and to feel that I was not a stranger but rather a member of the great literary family to which we both belonged.

His soft, high voice carefully and a bit hesitatingly formed the German language which he had learned and sometimes used with members of his wife's family. He knew that I had some reading knowledge of English, but could not speak or understand it. He succeeded amazingly well in expressing himself in German in a very personal and even picturesque way. The German letters to his mother-in-law, for example, posthumously published by Frieda Lawrence, have a special charm. I am glad to have among his letters to me also some samples of this special Lawrence German.

We discussed extensively books and authors, but in contrast to most writers he did not speak about the circulation figures of his books or about the contracts with his publishers. He hardly seemed to know what royalties he received, and this sovereign disregard for money encouraged me to ask him if he would give me a short story for *Jugend;* though, of course, I could not compete with the big royalties which, for example, the Ullstein papers were able to offer. In general I could not afford "great names," not even German great names, who were very anxious not to sell themselves under price. But Lawrence immediately promised to look for a story which—that was the only difficulty—would be short enough for my limited space.

When I sent him some copies of *Jugend,* he answered with a letter which seems to me a real contribution to the better understanding of his art and his person. This is what he wrote: "Many thanks for the *Jugends,* which came safely yesterday. I've looked at them all the evening—but I haven't read the stories yet, only the jokes. Some of them are very good—and the whole thing is alive—but the curious sexual cynicism is a bit alarming, because it's just how the world is. But whatever will be the end of it, if there is nothing to counterbalance it? I tell you, when I've looked through ten *Jugends,* I feel thoroughly frightened."

The rest of the letter only refers to the date of our next meeting, when I wanted him to see Hans Carossa, not only the poet but also the doctor. Carossa was indeed one of the best specialists in the treatment of tuberculosis, and I had the same feeling which Lawrence expressed by writing "If a poet who is a doctor can't tell me what to do with myself, then who can?"

I was not in the least astonished by Lawrence's reaction to the harmless jokes of my friend Wisbeck, to which nobody else ever objected, not even the U. S. Postmaster General who strongly disapproves of Vargas girls. But I understood perfectly that Lawrence was in fact a puritan in reverse. What was called his "sexual obsession" was a kind of religious obsession. Sex for him was the sacred symbol of life, and any sort of humorous treatment of this topic seemed to him really blasphemous. He could celebrate the cult of Priapus with all the solemnity of a high priest. And deeply provoked by Anglo-Saxon hypocrisy in matters of sex, he could become a fanatical zealot in preaching his new gospel of sex, which was for him the gospel of salvation.

He was so terribly serious about it that sometimes, as for example in *Lady Chatterley,* his holy earnestness produces the opposite effect—of involuntary comicality. But he was as intransigent as the stoutest puritan in respect to naughty jokes, not because sex was impure and an invention of the devil, but on the contrary because it was the pure and holy and divine essence of life. It was nothing to joke at or to smile at. What he wrote to me in another letter is typical; he wrote this time in German: "Ich lese die *Jugend*—es amüsiert mich, und ich finde es ein bischen 'shocking.' Die Hauptsache ist, dass es

lebt. Ich bin selber etwas altmodisch, und kann nie Bubiköfe liebhaben. Meine Erziehung hat sicher noch ein paar Schritten zu machen." ("I am reading *Jugend*—it amuses me and I find it a bit 'shocking.' The main thing is, it is alive. I am myself a bit old-fashioned and never can like bobbed heads. My education certainly has yet to advance some steps.")

Amusingly enough, he used the same word "shocking," although in the ironical and almost accusatory sense, when later, in April, 1928, he wrote me from Florence about his "last novel," *Lady Chatterley*: "Es ist zu shocking—shocking für die Englische Verleger; also gebe ich es selber aus. Es wird jetzt gedruckt, in einer kleinen Buchdruckerei in Florenz wo kein Mensch versteht ein Wort Englisch. Das ist sehr gut, niemand kann shocked werden." ("It is too shocking—shocking for the English publishers; so I publish it myself. It is now being printed in a small printing house in Florence where nobody understands one word of English. That is very well, nobody can be shocked.")

I saw Lawrence two or three times more in the fall of 1927, and I remember especially the day when Hans Carossa went with me to Irschenhausen in order to examine Lawrence's lungs. I suppose deep in himself Lawrence knew that he was lost, but his miraculous inner vitality could never accept this idea of death. He eagerly listened to Carossa's suggestions of further treatment, but I felt that the tone of quiet confidence in Carossa's voice was somehow forced. Lawrence himself seemed rather encouraged. Without the slightest trace of weariness he continued to tell us about his farm in New Mexico, about the Indians, the horses and all sorts of animals which he seemed to know by the mysterious instinct of some inner rapport. No zoologist, I suppose, has ever known as much about animals as the poet who wrote stories like "The Fox" or "St. Mawr."

When we left finally, I asked Carossa, while walking to the station, what he really had found. He hesitated a moment before he said, "An average man with those lungs would have died long ago. But with a real artist no normal prognosis is ever sure. There are other forces involved. Maybe Lawrence can live two or even three years more. But no medical treatment can really save him."

"The poet who was a doctor" proved to be cruelly right. Lawrence

died in March of 1930, only 45 years old. I shall always bitterly regret that I missed the opportunity to see Lawrence more often. He had offered me his house, the Villa Scandicci in Florence, whenever I wanted to come; but I was tied up with my editorial work. The next year he did not return, as he had planned, to the little house in Irschenhausen, but he sometimes wrote me a few lines, asking my technical advice for reproductions of his paintings or telling me that he had finally found a story short enough for *Jugend,* the lovely little story about the dog Rixi.

D. H. Lawrence was one of the most extraordinary and fascinating personalities I have ever met, entirely free from social conventions, but also free from the personal pretensions and vanities which often disfigure the character of minor or even major artists. Writing and occasionally painting were for him not less natural expressions of himself than building an aqueduct or a stove, fencing a cattle range, milking a cow or whatever life might require. All these were only different expressions of his deep veneration for life.

He, too, belonged to the anti-rationalists, and I was deeply aware that his basic ideas were diametrically opposed to my world of thought. His last books, especially the strange and profound novel *The Plumed Serpent,* came dangerously near to that kind of "myth" which in a much cheaper edition was so eagerly exploited by the Nazi prophets. But in contrast to Hamsun and his like, Lawrence was not a nihilist and defeatist, a bitter, disappointed detractor of life and mankind. He had faith and flame, an immeasurable spiritual passion, an ardent belief in life and man and all the great forces of nature, of which he felt himself a part.

Like his father and his forebears, working underground in the coal mines of Lancashire, he had learned as an artist to drive his pits deep in the dark region of the subconscious. He easily handled the psychological instruments provided by Freud's revolutionary findings. But he did not mind using dynamite in order to remove too solid a mass of petrified prejudice and moral cant. In the literary world of London, not yet used to the Blitz or to rocket bombs, these detonations and literary eruptions first evoked, quite comprehensibly, the feelings of a minor earthquake. But perhaps the time is not so far away when

D. H. Lawrence's works, like those of the once so terribly scandalous Byron, will be included in the regular curriculum of English public schools; which would be good. Because, aside from his artistic values and his somewhat dubious philosophy, D. H. Lawrence always will remain an outstanding example of the highest moral courage, of the purest sincerity and of untrammeled inner freedom.

Gravely ill, fighting for many years a gallant but losing battle against death, he kept his work and his life free from morbidity, from any sort of unhealthy resentment. He never accepted defeat. He proved to be "fort comme la mort," strong as death—or even strong as life. He lived and he died as a real man. I shall always be grateful to the fate which brought me to know him, and proud and happy that he was among the writers of *Jugend.*

When, two days after my arrival in New York, I visited the Public Library, this Mecca of all literary people, in order to look through the files of *Jugend* and *Simplicissimus,* which I had not seen for more than eight years, I was a bit apprehensive as to whether I would still like what I had liked to publish in this almost prehistoric pre-Hitlerian time. It did not look bad to me; but it was a melancholy pleasure to thumb through the old issues and to read the names of my collaborators. It was almost like reading a casualty list. Some dead, some missing in action—or, worse, in inaction, lost in no-man's-land, and others who had gone over to the enemy.

I could still remember some difficulties I had had with this or that contribution. It was a relief when suddenly my eye fell upon a little piece by Caren—a short satirical story which happened to have its own little story, a "human interest" story indeed. It reminded me of how I first met a person who was to be a regular collaborator of mine even long after I left Germany and, as I hope, for many years to come—in short, my wife, who was sitting with me in the reading room.

I had known her name, or rather her pseudonym before, mostly from *Simplicissimus,* but also from other magazines and illustrated papers where her short stories or her satirical vignettes used to appear. I knew she had been a well known actress in Vienna and in Munich, until, two or three years before, she suddenly left the stage in order to become a writer. Caren was only the reversed spelling of her stage

name, Nérac. She had sent me some little contributions for *Jugend,* which I had gladly accepted and published; but she never had shown up in my office, because, as I later learned, she disliked such professional visits.

One day she sent me another little piece, the basic idea of which I found delightful, but—an exceptional case with this author—this time she had ventured into the field of political satire—where, as it turned out, she evidently was not entirely at home. In fact she had got badly mixed up with the names of parties and parliaments, like Reichstag and Landtag, and so on. But with some rewriting the piece would be very timely for the next issue. Sometimes it pays to be a conscientious editor. I called her up and asked her if she would come to my office to talk things over.

I hate the bad taste of husbands who compliment their wives in public, but I can't help quite objectively reporting that my first purely subjective impression was rather favorable. Humorous authors often save their humor exclusively for their writing and in their personal life are rather dull, if not melancholy. But to my agreeable surprise Caren proved to be no less amusing and attractive as a person than in her writing. Her face was almost feline, and of tawny complexion, dominated by dark amber-colored eyes sparkling with an amiable mockery which seemed to aim as much at herself as at others. The fringe of her curly auburn hair reminded me of a roguish Shetland pony, which only in the last moment had decided to become rather catlike. Zoologists may be skeptical about the existence of such hybrids, but this was my first and never changing impression.

As to her own first impression, she later answered the question of a friend who asked what kind of fellow the editor of *Jugend* really was, with the observation: "Oh, he is very nice indeed, only a bit small for an editor." Which proves that in contrast to her dashing attitude, she was (and is) in fact a rather shy person, full of a holy respect for the mighty authority of an editor-in-chief. Like the primitive artists, picturing a more important person in double size, she expected such a mental giant as an editor to be also a physical giant. Despite the fact that, even without the much advertised brand of shoes, I am "taller than she is," I evidently failed from the first moment to inspire her with the wholesome respect which, with every inch of my figure, would

have increased the distance between the editor and the collaborator. With an entirely irreverent laugh, she confessed that she had not the slightest idea of the intricacies of policy and graciously accepted my suggestions when we went over her script. In the course of the conversation I found out that her French name, her French temperament and appearance and probably even her special kind of "esprit" were a heritage from her father, born in the French Camargue near Arles. I learned also that she loved cats, evidently by a sort of congeniality; and that *Simplicissimus* paid her for stories much better than *Jugend* did.

I myself have always been fond of cats and, as I have remarked before, I always felt somehow spiritually akin to the literary and cultural France. No wonder then, that we decided to discuss our common interests more extensively outside my office. We did indeed, with the result that some years later, in March, 1933, we decided to continue our literary cooperation by emigrating together to France. I have described before, how we walked out of Nazi Germany into the precarious liberty of exile, so absorbed in lively conversation that we almost forgot about the dangers, present and future. We succeeded in carrying on this conversation with similar effect until one day, to our mutual surprise, we found ourselves married. It has to be said that in the meantime my wife has made spectacular progress in her political education, partly by object lessons and partly by reading or even typing my articles. We still love cats and we love France, which became a real part of our life. We there enjoyed for more than eight years, despite all difficulties, not only ourselves and our common work, but also the unforgettable landscape of the French Mediterranean, the charm of the real French people and finally—alas!—the dubious hospitality of French internment camps—which in June, 1941, we were happy enough to exchange for American hospitality.

But that is another story, and one that has nothing to do with my professional life as an editor in pre-Hitlerian Germany.

## CHAPTER XXV

# The Story of Simplicissimus ⊙ A Glimpse of Stresemann

LIKE ALL DECISIVE CHANGES in my life, the call to the editorship of *Simplicissimus* came by home delivery, without the slightest effort of thought or wish by me. I had known the man who came to me with the offer from the time when he was bookkeeper in the Musa Press; he had changed his office but not his appearance. With his round black eyes looking through dark-rimmed glasses, he still had the same fixed expression of quiet bewilderment which always made me think of a horned owl. It was hard to decide whether this expression meant deep meditation or simple dullness. I later discovered the real solution. He was hard of hearing, and did not want to confess it. However, he succeeded pretty well in explaining why the people of *Simplicissimus* —none of whom I knew personally—had decided to ask me to become their editor-in-chief.

My predecessor, combining with his editorial task that of an executive, had proved to be a bad businessman. He had been forced to resign some weeks before, after a violent disagreement with the proprietors, who—a very exceptional case in journalism—were at the same time the six main cartoonists of *Simplicissimus*. The second editor, originally limited to the purely literary domain, had had a nervous breakdown when he undertook to shoulder the whole editorial responsibility by himself. It was a well-known fact that I, for almost three years, had done a similar and technically even more complicated job in *Jugend,* without showing the slightest sign of having reached the breaking point; I therefore seemed sufficiently well qualified to take over the editorship of *Simplicissimus* without needing a second man. And this, of course, meant saving money, regardless of the relatively high salary proposed to me. As to my editorial capacities, the *Simplicissimus* people had closely followed my activity by following *Jugend* week

by week, and marking its process of rejuvenation. There was some sort of competitive family likeness between the two weeklies; the more so since I had tried to develop in *Jugend* the more outspoken kind of political satire which traditionally was the particular domain of *Simplicissimus*.

Except for the politically and artistically much too conservative London *Punch* there was no other satirical political weekly of similar international reputation. The cartoons of *Simplicissimus* were reprinted in the great press of the whole world—not only because of their humor but as political documents.

The chief characteristic of *Simplicissimus* was its absolute independence. It was at liberty to comment on all political and cultural events, without being tied to any political party or to any commercial interest. Some of its cartoons were remembered through many years, and even here in America I often have met people, both Europeans and Americans, who told me about some cartoon in *Simplicissimus* which had impressed them twenty or thirty years ago.

Strangely enough, *Simplicissimus* had been intended originally as a non-political, purely artistic and literary magazine. Its title and even more the somewhat complicated story of how this title was chosen, is a clear indication of almost snobbish literary intentions. Even for the German tongue the word "Simplicissimus" is difficult enough to pronounce, and I always admired the moral fortitude of Americans who insisted upon this linguistic adventure when introducing me to an audience or to their friends. (Usually the nearest approximation they reached was to say "Simplissimus.") Sometimes, slightly exhausted by the effort, they afterward would ask me what this formidable word really meant, and why it was used as the title for a weekly.

The first question was easy to answer. Ironically enough, this most difficult word is the superlative of the Latin word *simplex,* and simply means: the most simple. But in explaining the "why" of such an unpronounceable title, I always had to give a little lecture, going back to the only important classical novel of German literature during the era of the Thirty Years' War. It was written by the lansquenet Jacob von Grimmelshausen. Its title is the name of its (very unheroic) hero: Simplicius Simplicissimus.

This double emphasis upon the "simple" has here also a double meaning. The hero not only belongs socially to the "simple people," but he is also intellectually simple, naïve, almost simple-minded. This pattern has been used again and again in world literature as a convenient device. The trick is to create a person—or rather a personification—of simple and natural common sense who just for this reason runs inevitably into a lot of trouble in a world turned upside down. Hopelessly bewildered by the mental and moral contradictions of human society, he becomes a victim of injustice and hypocrisy. He makes a fool of himself, but, like the King's jester of a former time, he thereby unmasks the greater foolishness of the worldly-wise. He becomes, like Grimmelshausen's hero, a comical but also an accusatory figure, a living indictment of all that is wrong with the world.

So the name "Simplicissimus" had a definite significance as the title of a satirical weekly, though the connotations were understandable only to a highly literary public, since Grimmelshausen's novel was far from being popular. Probably neither Albert Langen nor Thomas Theodor Heine would have thought of this name except that their magazine was intended to become a sort of German counterpart to a French magazine which at that time had become a great success in Paris under the name *Gil Blas*. And Gil Blas, the title-hero of a French baroque novel by Le Sage, corresponded roughly to Grimmelshausen's "Simplicissimus."

Any sound publicity man would have foretold that a magazine with an unpronounceable and non-understandable title was doomed from the start to be a failure. Fortunately, Langen and Heine did not think of consulting a publicity expert, and in consequence *Simplicissimus* became a hit from the start. The public, of course, missed all the fine points but without ever having heard of Grimmelshausen or even of Le Sage's *Gil Blas* and the Paris weekly bearing this name, everybody enjoyed the new Munich magazine. The somewhat mysterious title (the mystery of which has probably never before been revealed in print) was shortened by the public and the newsstands to "Simpl," a word which in Bavaria especially was used very commonly in the sense of "nitwit." This popular interpretation, by a sort of short cut, came indeed pretty close to what Grimmelshausen and, almost three

centuries later, Heine and Langen had wanted to express by the more complicated superlative "Simplicissimus."

The new magazine from its inception proved a strong attraction to all young talents in the international world of art and literature. Among the contributors of the first years' issues are many names which were to become famous. Both Thomas Mann and Jacob Wassermann belonged to the editorial staff for a while. Heinrich Mann, Rainer (at that time still René) Maria Rilke, Hugo von Hofmannsthal, Arthur Schnitzler, etc., saw their first efforts published in *Simplicissimus*. And foreign authors like Guy de Maupassant, Chekhov, August Strindberg, Marcel Prévost, Knut Hamsun, appeared here in translations.

The political significance of *Simplicissimus* was rather a by-product of its artistic and literary modernism, which in the 'Nineties meant naturalism. And this naturalism, thanks to the influence of Zola and of a new school of modern painters, sounded a note of social criticism and accusation. The discovery of the proletariat, at least as a new literary and artistic topic, created among writers and artists an attitude of rebellious opposition. It was only natural for *Simplicissimus* to turn against the all-too-philistine world in general and, in particular, against the antiquated quirks of German officialdom, against the narrow caste spirit of the Junkers and of the military, in short against all the symptoms of the Wilhelmian era which the Kaiser himself perfectly personified.

When in 1898 Thomas Theodor Heine and Frank Wedekind, because of a joint contribution, were accused of Lèse majesté, *Simplicissimus* once for all established its political reputation. The trial in which both artists were sentenced to some months of internment in a fortress was the best publicity stunt a publisher could imagine. Heine, in sardonic mood, sometimes pretended that the manager of the publishing house, Albert Langen, had intentionally avoided destroying some revealing letters which, seized by the police, served as material for the public prosecutor.

It is indicative of the political atmosphere of this time that the whole German intelligentsia reacted against this judgment by a petition for pardon, addressed to the Kaiser himself and signed by the leading representatives of German art, literature and science. The special issue celebrating the fifth anniversary of the journal proudly dis-

played congratulatory messages from Emile Zola, Leo Tolstoy, Auguste Rodin, Henrik Ibsen, Björnstjerne Björnson, Georg Brandes, Eduard Grieg, Constantin Meunier, Fridtjof Nansen and other international celebrities.

For every student of German culture and history the issues of *Simplicissimus* offer an inestimably rich supply of source material. Its cartoons reflect the whole atmosphere of the time, in the same sense as Hogarth's etchings or Daumier's lithographs. The physiognomy of the reigning class in Germany, including the too ostentatious government officials, the officers and Junkers and the so-called Corps Studenten (university students belonging to privileged fraternities), is preserved here for all time in true-to-life portraits. And on the other hand, a series like Thomas Theodor Heine's "Pictures from Family Life" chronicles with affectionate malice the subservient spirit of the small bourgeoisie. Here is the German "subject," long before Heinrich Mann made him a literary figure in his splendid novel, *The Subject,* which now under another title has been reprinted in America. Just as "Babbitt" has become an American by-word, one used to speak in Germany of "*Simplicissimus* types."

What I have said about this glorious past is quite sufficient to explain why I did not hesitate a moment to accept the chance offered to me. In my special line the editorship of *Simplicissimus* was the highest promotion I could hope for in Germany, at least in respect to prestige. No editor of the so-called "great press" could enjoy an equal independence—although perhaps he might draw a higher salary.

The economical publisher of *Jugend* had preferred not to sign a long contract with me, and so I would have been legally free to change over to *Simplicissimus* after having informed him only two weeks before the first of the following month. But I did not want to leave in the lurch the publication which for three years had been my exclusive work. When he asked me whether I would consider staying with *Jugend* under a contract exactly equal to that offered by *Simplicissimus,* I smiling refused. It had been hard going to keep my collaborators in good humor despite the publisher's deep-rooted antipathy toward money spending; and it was indeed, as D. H. Lawrence once wrote me, "a lot of work to keep *Jugend* always young."

However, I decided to give the publisher a bit more time to find another editor. But on the other hand it turned out that *Simplicissimus* too needed me badly. The literary editor's nervous breakdown prevented him from doing anything. He could not even read the incoming manuscripts. When I had my first talk with Thomas Theodor Heine, who provisionally had to pitch in for the layout, he made it clear to me that he did not feel like taking any responsibility for the literary part—which, after all, was not his business.

He understood that I did not want simply to drop *Jugend,* so he asked me if I could not take over *Simplicissimus* simultaneously. It was a funny idea; but the publisher of *Jugend* could not well object, since he depended upon my good will. And thus developed the probably unique situation that for almost two months the two competing Munich weeklies were edited by the same man.

I may say it was a "running concern." I commuted by taxi from one office to the other, and instead of about 600 scripts per month, I had to read about 1,200. But at least I had the advantage that usually scripts refused by *Jugend* were sent to *Simplicissimus,* or vice versa. And, given my excellent memory for pieces I had read months before, I could always eliminate at first sight a certain number which I had seen before. It must have been a bit confusing for the authors to receive letters with my signature, once from *Jugend* and later from *Simplicissimus.*

My days and nights were pretty crowded, but I succeeded in splitting myself into two almost independent personalities and in distributing my ideas for cartoons equally in the two different editorial meetings. There was even an advantage in being able to avoid having the same topic treated in both weeklies, which otherwise would sometimes happen. Fortunately enough, the two deadlines and correspondingly the days for editorial meetings and the layout did not exactly coincide. So I could establish a definite schedule which worked perfectly, though of course it did not leave much time for sleep. It worked so well indeed that the publisher of *Jugend* did not seem too anxious to make a final decision as to my successor, and I had to warn him that under no circumstances could I continue to work as a split-personality editor longer than up to the end of the year.

It was a nice human experience for me to find that, when I finally

left *Jugend,* not only my collaborators but also the printers and the technical personnel with whom I had worked seemed really sorry to lose me. They had not always had an easy time with me. I had kept an especially close eye on the printers, who in the beginning, as usual, had often tried to cheat me with some technical excuses for this or that imperfection. But I had kept on asking "why" or "why not" until I knew every technical trick and could, if necessary, raise hell with completely expert authority, without endangering our friendly relations.

As soon as I had left, bedlam broke loose, a sort of free-for-all between the new editor, the collaborators, the technical staff and so on. The young man who achieved this negative miracle was one of my own discoveries, a highly talented fellow whose aggressive verses—a bit in the style of the early Erich Kästner—I had often printed. Though I knew he was an unreliable character, I had suggested him not as my successor but as editorial assistant of another really responsible editor. But the publisher of *Jugend* figured out that it would be more economical to have this young fellow do the job alone—which of course proved bad economy. The young man succeeded in making himself impossible in a few months and had to be fired. He later became one of the many "problem children" whom, as editor of *Simplicissimus,* I tried to save. He had taken to drinking and gradually disintegrated in the aimless life of a literary bohemian. Sometimes he still wrote for me a fresh and pointed song like the one "On Hitler's Mustache"; but mostly he came to ask for money. I was hardly surprised to hear shortly before I left Germany that he had been seen in a brown shirt.

Somehow I managed, even as double editor, to attend the annual meeting of almost all the more important magazine editors which usually was held at the end of November in Berlin. As editor of *Jugend* I always had profited from this occasion by seeing my collaborators and by making new contacts with writers or artists in whom I had become interested. The longest letter can not replace a short conversation which transforms the abstract anonymity of a signature into a living person. And without such a personal relationship even the most skilled editor remains at best a sort of technician. He can never become creative in the process of indirect productivity through others—which is the very essence of the editorial task.

Once a year I liked to see my colleagues in Berlin, most of whom, given the very indistinct character of our loose association, were attached to much more conservative magazines than *Jugend* or *Simplicissimus*: though Nazis were strictly excluded.

It was at one of these meetings, probably in 1928, that I had the opportunity of getting a personal impression of Stresemann, who at this time, as German Minister of Foreign Affairs, patiently and diligently tried to carry through his Locarno policy despite the embittered resistance of French and German nationalists. He had agreed to speak at our meeting, but, unable to be on time, he had asked our chairman by telephone to proceed with the order of the day without waiting for him. When he finally appeared, another speaker had the floor. Stresemann, with an almost anxious gesture, cautioned the president against any sort of interruption or official reception, and hastily walked around the enormous horseshoe table to take the seat reserved for him beside the president. He was so eager to get there that, taking a corner too sharply, he bumped into my chair. I was astonished to see how embarrassed and nervous he seemed, in spite of his being used to appearing at the League of Nations in Geneva before a much more impressive assembly than that of some hundred magazine editors. Evidently he had never overcome the awkward shyness of the small boy, born in a little corner pub in the proletarian section of Berlin; though, thanks to his unusual intelligence, he had reached a high social position as corporation lawyer long before entering upon his political career.

Heavy-set, with his partly bald, partly short-cropped round head deep in his shoulders and with thick wrinkles in his neck, Stresemann almost exactly personified what foreigners consider to be the "typical German"; and "typical" means in this sense always the most unlovely type, a kind of popular caricature. His strangely crude physiognomy, with the knobby nose and the small pale blue eyes, had about it something outspokenly proletarian or even vulgar. And the clumsy stiffness of his movements only emphasized the impression of a man who is painfully conscious of his unhappy appearance.

With visible relief he settled down in his chair, exchanging some whispered greetings with the president. While apparently listening to the speaker, who did his best to bring his address to an end, Stresemann probably tried to remember where he was and what this meeting

was about. After being officially introduced, he immediately began to speak, asking permission to remain seated. But now, as he spoke, safely entrenched behind a table, he was perfectly at ease. Taking as a starting point some remark of the preceding speech which he had happened to snap up, he gave us for almost an hour a brilliant account of German-Polish relations, a problem foremost in his mind after a recent personal meeting with Pildsudski. Without any notes and without the slightest hesitation, he spoke in well rounded, but not in the least heavy phrases, in the informal tone of a half confidential conversation among literary people. He had a certain right to consider himself as a literary man, since he was the author of some good books and was known to be a great student of Goethe, whom he used to quote at the slightest provocation, even in his strictly political speeches. It was understood that, speaking off the record, he would not be quoted. But knowing that among the audience were bound to be some opponents of his policy, he carefully chose every word that he said. He did not miss the opportunity to explain a little incident that had occurred during the recent session of the League of Nations, where, as some nationalistic German papers had reported, he had smiled at certain statements about the sufferings of German minorities in Poland. It was, of course, not at the statement that he had smiled, but at the little handwritten note handed him by an American journalist and presenting the naïve question as to why he did not offer East Prussia to the Poles in order to solve the problem of the Polish Corridor. He could not foresee how serious and prophetic this very question would sound seventeen years later.

His surprising ability to adapt himself immediately to the special atmosphere of an audience, and the brilliant improvisation of his speech, confirmed my earlier impression that he was indeed a rara avis: a German statesman with real political talent. It seemed believable that, starting out from a rather narrow nationalism, so typical of the small middle class, he had learned the lesson of the military defeat of 1918. He had gradually undergone an inner development, his horizon had broadened and—perhaps indeed inspired by the great anti-nationalist Goethe—he had become a European, even in his political thought. He was intelligent and realistic enough to understand that a policy of European understanding was the only possible one, for

Germany and for Europe. But, like Briand, he had a hard time in putting through his policies against the united resistance of the "International of the nationalists" including even the majority of his own party, the "Deutsche Volkpartei" (German Popular Party).

His premature death in 1929 belonged to the tragical buffetings of fate which again and again have seemed to thwart any attempt to achieve the liberalization and Europeanization of Germany. The murder of Rathenau in 1922 was another of those fateful historical accidents. But even without the interference of nationalistic gangsters, fate always appeared to be working for Germany's disaster. Kaiser Friedrich III, married to an English princess, an opponent to Bismarck, the great hope of German liberals, was a dying man when finally in 1888 he came to the throne. After a phantom reign of 90 days he was succeeded by the psychopath William II who was to lead Germany into war and defeat. There seems to be a curse upon Germany's political destiny, a terrible concatenation of guilt and fate, as in classical Greek tragedy. It is heartrending to think that in the final act of German tragedy the leading roles should be played by a bunch of clowns and criminal insanes who rather belonged to the sphere of cheap melodrama, the murder story or the base comedy.

## CHAPTER XXVI

# The Misunderstood Haushofer The Long and Losing Combat of Simplicissimus versus Hitler

AMONG THE TREASONABLE INTELLECTUALS who contributed to the stage production of the ignoble horror play of Nazism were some more or less tragi-comical characters like Oswald Spengler, Hermann von Keyserling and finally the philosophical faker Alfred Rosenberg. Paradoxically enough, none of them had ever reached such a worldwide fame as that of General Haushofer, the geopolitician whom romantic journalists, with a sort of shy respect, used to picture as the diabolical master brain directing Hitler's attempt at world conquest. Since Haushofer in his position as editor of his *Zeitschrift für Geopolitik* (Magazine for Geopolitics) regularly attended our annual editors' meeting in Berlin, it may be worth while to give a short account of my personal impression, at the risk of causing some disappointment.

This supposedly evil genius, combining the dark magical forces of the German General Staff and of German philosophy, was actually a mild-mannered, white-haired and white-mustached old gentleman, a retired Bavarian general of the friendly paternal type who had turned professor. Retired generals usually look very peaceful and have some harmless hobby. One I know of, for example, had invented a method of fixing the parti-colored dust of butterfly wings on paper, which of course was much more interesting than simply collecting butterflies. Well, Haushofer's hobby was geopolitics. In fact, it was not really his own invention, but with typical German thoroughness he had succeeded in transforming the ideas of the British scholar Mackinder into a sort of esoteric science. He had founded a special Research Institute and the magazine, *Zeitschrift für Geopolitik*, which made the new science a sort of fashionable hobby among the more politically minded circles of the German intelligentsia. He had succeeded in

gathering a number of enthusiastic disciples, one of whom, by the way, was Rudolf Hess. As in all such scientific or artistic sects, the true believers cultivated a sort of group arrogance and a special lingo. For the non-initiated it was hardly comprehensible, not only because of the many newly created technical terms but also because old Haushofer, and consequently many of his disciples, wrote such a terribly involved and cryptic style that in comparison Kant looked like a spelling book. That of course only enhanced Haushofer's reputation as a really serious scholar. But nothing is more amusing than the idea that the illiterate Hitler embarked on his career of world conquest after having studied Haushofer's highly abstract and complicated scientific theories about the "Heartland Europe," etc. Such a study would have been a full-time job for Hitler, and a lifelong one.

It may be that Rudolf Hess gave Hitler a popularized and misunderstood version of Haushofer's doctrine in order to confirm Hitler's own fantastic political concepts, taken over from the ballyhoo of Pan-Germanistic propaganda leaflets. Probably old Haushofer was more astonished than anyone else at the attempt of some illiterates to transform into practical reality what they pretended to be his theories of world conquest. Trustworthy readers of Haushofer, supposed to understand his writings, hold that Haushofer always tried to explain that Hitler's plans were doomed to failure, especially since the attack on Russia. But the intricate scientific demonstration of this thesis, couched in his usual dark style, conveyed the exactly opposite impression to the Nazis, who correspondingly showered honors on him. When finally he somehow succeeded in making himself approximately understood, he fell into disgrace, like other philosophical auxiliaries who, as for example Spengler and Keyserling, had become somewhat critical of Hitler's gospel truth.

I can't remember whether old Haushofer was accompanied to our meetings by his young man Rudolf Hess, but I doubt it; because declared Nazis were at that time hardly presentable in good society, and certainly not in our association. On the last meeting I attended, in November of 1932, a Nazi magazine which had applied for membership was blackballed with an overwhelming majority.

But certainly I must have seen Rudolf Hēss and the whole Hitler gang many times in Munich, probably in the Osteria Bavaria, Hitler's

own favorite restaurant, near the office of the *Völkischer Beobachter.* It was not far from our office, and since after our weekly editorial meeting we were wont to drop in at this popular tavern, we spent many a peaceful evening together—the *Simplicissimus* people at one table, and, diagonally across, Adolf Hitler with his cronies. All of them have gained a sort of dubious world notoriety, but at that time they did not even attract the professional eye of the cartoonists. Hitler's wishy-washy proletarian physiognomy, which according to the great Munich biologist Professor von Gruber showed all the signs of racial inferiority, was only too familiar to us. And the type of people around him had been long since a stock in trade of our cartoons. Their every move could be foretold; one did not want to spoil one's appetite by looking at them.

Leafing through editions of *Simplicissimus* from 1923 to 1933, one can follow Hitler's career step by step. And often the most grotesque exaggerations of a satirical phantasy have become reality, yes, have even been surpassed by actual facts. In the first years Hitler himself seems hardly important enough for a full-page cartoon. He appears rather in the background behind the much more impressive and, as it seemed, more dangerous figure of General Ludendorff, around whom the entire so-called "national movement" gathered at that time. Hitler had not yet any pretensions of being a "Führer," and called himself modestly only the "drummer." His beer hall demagoguery could hardly be taken seriously. The real enemies to be combated were the rabid generals and monarchists, the Junkers of East Prussia, the big industrialists and bankers, and finally the small bourgeoisie turned "national" after being robbed of its last worldly and spiritual possessions by the inflation.

The *Simplicissimus* types of pre-war times had changed but little. However, together with the old contributors, younger talents, men like George Grosz, Marcel Frischmann, Kurt Werth and others, now began to carry on the caricature of the times, in picture and word, employing more modern, more drastic means, and thus rejuvenating and intensifying the best *Simplicissimus* traditions.

All the destructive forces concentrated in Hitler, all his forerunners, abettors, messengers and accomplices were here exposed and chron-

icled. When, in August, 1925, Hitler is accorded the honor of a full page, Erich Schilling draws him in a restaurant peddling his book *Mein Kampf* from table to table—with negative success. This was hardly an exaggeration; very few people know that this famous book was far from being a best seller before the author, turned dictator, made its distribution compulsory. Even when Hitler's party could gain votes by the millions, his book was far from reaching a circulation mark of 100,000 copies. It is easy for an author to make his book a best seller by simply threatening every critical critic and everybody who refuses to buy it with concentration camp and execution.

Only when, with the beginning of the world crisis in 1929, which was felt more keenly in Germany than elsewhere, the Nazi party began again to move into the foreground of events, did *Simplicissimus* satire go to work more often on Hitler's private person. Among the more than 170 issues of *Simplicissimus* I had the honor to sign with my name, there was hardly one which did not contain a satirical attack against Hitler and the Nazis in general. But even in 1929 he remained "Adolf—the impeded dictator," as Schilling caricatured him with the caption: "I would be just as good as Mussolini, but the higher-ups won't let me." And in the same month Gulbransson showed him in burlesque Germanic costume, prancing around the great Mussolini and begging him: "Big Brother, please call me Hitlero."

The whole story of Hitler's rise to power is chronicled and illustrated in the cartoons of *Simplicissimus* from 1923 to March, 1933. They should be studied not only by historians interested in German and Nazi history, but especially by all the foreign administration officials who will have to rule defeated Germany for many years.

The later issues of *Simplicissimus*, strictly in line with Dr. Goebbels' directions, are of no avail. The old cartoonists mechanically kept on producing cartoons. But the Nazified *Simplicissimus* was a sort of living corpse, a phantom of its own former self. It was as humorous as an obituary—its own obituary—published with stubborn insistence every week anew. The real *Simplicissimus* died in March, 1933.

Up to that time *Simplicissimus* stood in the first rank of the small journalistic front determined to fight against any sort of dictatorship, be it of black, brown or red color. As a political-satirical weekly, *Simplicissimus* really was unique. *Jugend* after my departure had more and

more retired from the political arena. The old *Kladderadatsch,* once in Bismarck's time a more liberal journal, had long since become rabidly nationalistic and reactionary. And the newly founded *Brennessel* (stinging nettle) was a full-fledged Nazi paper copying *Simplicissimus* in its layout without ever succeeding in becoming a real competitor. But there were some courageous political weeklies like *Tagebuch* edited by Leopold Schwarzschild, who later in exile continued his anti-Nazi campaign with the *Neues Tagebuch* appearing in Paris; in the meantime he has published some books here in America which proved him to be not merely an anti-Nazi, but rather an anti-Germanist, following the fashionable political line of Lord Vansittart.

Much more radical than *Tagebuch* was *Weltbühne,* a journal which under the direction of its founder Siegfried Jacobson had been the first to publish the revelations of Professor E. J. Gumbel (now in New York) concerning the so-called Vehme murders, the secret executions performed by nationalist associations in connection with the so-called Black Reichswehr. After Jacobson's death the fighting tradition of this journal was kept very much alive by the pacifist and anti-militarist Curt von Ossietzki and the brilliant satirist Kurt Tucholski, who also contributed to *Simplicissimus.* Tucholski, like so many humorists, basically a rather melancholic nature, could not survive the terrible shock of the Nazi victory which satirically he had so often anticipated. He committed suicide shortly after having escaped the Nazi vengeance in March, 1933. Curt von Ossietzki was caught and slowly tortured to death in a concentration camp. He could not be saved by the award of the Nobel Peace Prize, an almost unique demonstration of international solidarity against Nazi barbarism. The good old Nazi Knut Hamsun promptly protested against this noble gesture in an ignoble article denouncing the dying martyr Ossietzki in no uncertain terms as a simple trouble-maker who had well deserved his fate. Even the stoutest Hamsun admirers could not help feeling disgusted. Hamsun was openly repudiated by his own compatriots, including writers like Sigrid Undset. Norwegian students paraded in front of his house, throwing copy after copy of his novels onto the lawn, and he was swamped by innumerable other copies addressed to him by mail.

But this is only a little digression. What I wanted to say was that, except for journals like *Simplicissimus, Weltbühne* and *Tagebuch,* the

German press, especially the "great press," represented by the so-called liberal papers of the great publishers Ullstein and Rudolf Mosse or by the *Frankfurter Zeitung*, definitely lacked any sort of fighting spirit; even in the early 'Thirties when the simple instinct of self-preservation, if not a feeling of responsibility, should have dictated an all-out offensive against the not yet insuperable forces of Nazism. This so-called democratic press was widely read by the better-educated classes, though not directly supported by a strong political party, since the "German Democratic Party" had lost more and more its political influence and its adherents. There was, however, still a great reserve of liberal and democratic forces in the German middle class which needed only some determined encouragement and guidance by a potentially powerful press. But instead this "great press," continuously attacked and challenged by the Nazi papers in the most ignominious language, tried preserving a noble attitude of impartiality and objective neutrality. The so-called democratic papers clung stubbornly to a purely suicidal conception of democratic freedom which evidently included the right of the Nazis to kill democracy and democrats. In the smaller sphere of German domestic policy instead of world policy their attitude was that of the League of Nations which used to blame, in tactfully restrained language, the naughty boy Mussolini or the naughty Japanese attacking China. It was the attitude of an old helpless governess, disapprovingly nodding her white-haired head, regretfully deploring though admitting the irreparable damages and sometimes providing an honorable funeral for the last murder the bad boys got away with.

Before accusing German democracy of its weakness and blindness, we may remember that the whole world, including the most democratic powers, for many years exactly repeated the grave mistakes of German democrats on a much larger international scale under the motto of "appeasement." The result, easily foreseeable, especially after the German catastrophe of 1933, was this time a worldwide catastrophe.

The deeper reason for this half-hearted and lukewarm attitude was of course that every dictator, whatever his criminal record, could count upon the deep sympathy of all "vested interests" in the whole world, as long as he recommended himself as a "bulwark against the Communist danger."

One of the most astonishing documents illustrating the strange

mentality of the so-called liberal press in pre-Hitlerian Germany is a book published here in America by Hermann Ullstein: "The Fall of the House of Ullstein." This publication was preceded by an article which is in many respects even more revealing. The author, reporting with disarming naïveté the most devastating facts, was evidently still far from understanding the real meaning of his confessions. One of the choicest stories told in the article is missing in the book. When in 1928—a bit late indeed—Hermann Ullstein suddenly had the feeling that "it was the duty of the Ullsteins to combat Hitler by legal and constitutional means," he was outvoted by his brothers and the other directors, with the explanation "that the house Ullstein could not afford to have opinions." And that was that.

In fact the poor Ullsteins drew from their *Berliner Illustrierte Zeitung* alone a profit of only nine million marks per annum. Why spoil this good business by opinions? In the long run, it turned out to be a bad business, because after some desperate attempts at doing business with Hitler, Göring and Goebbels, even after 1933, the five brothers Ullstein were finally robbed of their last shabby million and Hermann Ullstein had to emigrate to America without a penny. The moral of this story, never entirely grasped by the author himself, makes his book valuable reading, especially for his colleagues in other countries.

This "practical man of affairs" directing "the world's biggest publishing establishment" (to quote the blurb) describes with naïve pride the whole fatal process of converting the press from an instrument of opinions and convictions into a pure business enterprise, dominated only by a sort of mania of circulation. Paradoxically enough, this process, which in due course (to use Mr. Ullstein's own words) ended "in Hitler's Hell," is still considered as the (not so secret) "secret of success" by many "practical men of affairs" ruling some other "biggest publishing establishment"—everywhere in the world. A highly enthusiastic review of Mr. Ullstein's book in one of the leading American papers culminated in the lyrical assurance that the Ullsteins "will live on in the history of journalism as pioneers of a new age." True; the age of Hitler.

Seen from the viewpoint of the "practical man of affairs" *Simplicissimus* certainly much less than the Ullsteins could "afford to have

opinions." Our profits, far from running into the millions, began to drop almost to the zero point, because, as our advertising men plaintively reported, some great firms were afraid to advertise in a journal which so continuously and violently attacked an already powerful party like the Nazis. The recommendation to occupy ourselves with the less controversial topics of foreign rather than domestic policy found some echo even in our editorial meetings. But Heine and I with friendly firmness insisted that after all the Nazi danger was the most actual, most burning question, and that *Simplicissimus*, true to its tradition, was under obligation to take a courageous stand, at any cost. We decided to enforce substantial economies by reducing the royalties of our collaborators, including the six collaborating owners, and I agreed to having my own contractual salary cut in half. And all that only for the irresponsible luxury of having opinions.

Toward the end of 1932 it looked as if we were fighting on the winning side. The half dictatorial Chancellor von Papen, who by the way had never dared to abolish the freedom of the press and especially not the traditional freedom of *Simplicissimus,* had been replaced by General von Schleicher, supposed to be a sort of liberal—and at any rate an anti-Nazi. The Hitler party itself was evidently in decline. It had lost two million votes in the last elections, and stood on the brink of financial bankruptcy with a deficit of more than twelve million marks.

Our issue of January 22, 1933, shows Hitler standing before a fair booth as the "Wandering Drummer" shouting: "At any moment we are going to begin the Third Reich for the last time"; while Goebbels in clown costume whispers in his ear: "Say, buddy, if we don't start something pretty soon, the whole audience will leave us flat." Eight days later Hitler was Reichskanzler (Chancellor). Nevertheless, our cartoon at the moment of its appearance had been a true reflection of the situation. Everybody knows by now that this sudden turn in Hitler's fortune was a surprise coup, a machination of the professional (though basically stupid) intriguer Franz von Papen—in alliance with the banker von Schröder. He succeeded at the last minute in changing the opinion of the old senile Hindenburg, who until then had obstinately refused to entrust the despised "Bohemian corporal" with any

sort of governmental power. Papen used the very plausible and very personal argument that Chancellor von Schleicher had to be replaced by Hitler because Hitler was the only one who could prevent the unmasking of a scandal in connection with government subsidies paid to the landowners of East Prussia—a scandal in which old Hindenburg's own son was involved.

Even during the first weeks of Hitler's chancellorship, we did not abandon the battle. Hitler seemed still a prisoner of his reactionary but a bit more civilized allies—people like Hugenberg, the leader of the German National Party, or Vice-Chancellor von Papen, who had "made" Hitler. As long as the constitution was still in force, we insisted upon making use of our constitutional rights. I have told before that, even after the burning of the Reichstag, staged for the single purpose of establishing the unrestrained Nazi terror in Germany, *Simplicissimus* tried to fight back, as long as we had a fighting chance. I have told the story of our defeat in the first chapter of these confessions, and shall not repeat myself. I remember the significant story of the penitent, accusing himself so repetitiously of the sins of the flesh that his father-confessor has to warn him: "Young man, you have come here to confess, not to brag."

But perhaps in every sort of confession, even in those of St. Augustine, not to speak of Rousseau's or of Musset's "Confessions d'un enfant du siècle," there is, consciously or unconsciously, a slight amount of bragging involved; probably this amount increases, the more seriously the author takes his confessions and himself. I definitely do not. And so I may be allowed to have the bragging done quite frankly —but at least by a neutral observer.

I never would have known about him but for one of those improbable coincidences which only reality, but no fiction, can afford. One day, shortly after my arrival in New York, while waiting in the reading room at the Public Library for some issues of *Simplicissimus* I had asked for, I studied the list of the latest books which every visitor can get without any delay at one of the windows. One of the titles, Harold Picton: "Nazis and Germans" (Allen and Unwin Ltd., London, 1940), sounded interesting, and I asked for the book. It opened somewhere in the middle, and my first look caught the word *Simplicissimus* in the

first line of a long paragraph. It read: "The most astounding daring was shown by *Simplicissimus* in its issue of the twelfth of March (1933)," and after a long and detailed description of almost every single item in this issue, the English author, evidently an eye-witness of these German Ides of March, closed his chapter with the words: "The whole number was a courageous deed. . . . One gets the impression that the editor and contributors had determined on one last flash of joyous freedom. This was the last. The next number was correctly cautious and after that the paper, which had once been of worldwide renown, ceased to have significance."

I like this unrequested testimony, received by pure coincidence. And nobody will be surprised to hear that this small book seems to me one of the most trustworthy accounts of Hitler's first decisive victory, the conquest of the German people. As a source of factual information—not only about *Simplicissimus*—this deposition of an objective witness corroborates and even enlarges my own more subjective and somewhat sketchy picture of the grotesque world tragedy, the opening scenes of which I attended at the stage itself, if only as an extra, and—as always—observing rather than acting.

# Epilogue

I AM WRITING the closing pages of this loosely knit book in the same lovely old red farmhouse in the backwoods of Connecticut where three years ago, shortly after my arrival in America, I spent as a guest of charming American friends some of the happiest days of my life; and it was here that just about a year ago I wrote the first pages of what I then considered hardly more than a kind of exercise in English, an oversized private letter to my American friends who were so genuinely interested in hearing about my past. In a sort of secret alliance with my wife, they kept me going the long way through the first forty years of my life and through the 400 pages of my manuscript. They helped me in the quiz game of English prepositions and cautioned me against the tempting example of Macaulay's magnificently long phrases. They made sure that my vocabulary was not too much enriched by the use of undoubtedly good English words the existence of which I had to prove by the authority of the big Webster. I consequently tried to limit myself to the barely 60,000 words of the smaller and more popular College edition. And so the manuscript, really like a piece of knitting, grew on and on, line by line, slowly and steadily accumulating during the spare time left from my other activities. It commenced gradually to show more and more clearly a certain pattern which first had been visible only to myself, because it was simply the pattern of my own mind and life. But it never would have become readable, even in the strictly optical sense, without the magic power of a quiet and helpful good fairy who transformed my pencil writing into wonderful typewritten pages.

Sometimes it was put aside for weeks and then taken up again. It accompanied me on my lecture trips through about twenty of the United States. It was written in Pullman cars, coaches and hotel rooms, but mostly in our little apartment on Irving Place in the quiet hours of the evening or night after a long day in my office. It became a sort of hobby and habit, consuming many hours which otherwise I would have spent reading or in conversing with friends, including my wife. She for-

tunately was so absorbed in her own writing, her first English novel, that sometimes I simply had to find an outlet for my conversational mood by writing some pages of this imaginary conversation.

I sometimes wonder if it was the right thing for me to occupy myself for so long a time more or less exclusively with myself; to neglect my correspondence and partly even my friends, only in order to put on paper what I had lived and thought at a time when I was mostly too busy for writing. Sometimes I even doubt that I had the right to write while millions of young men, young enough to be my sons, were, knowingly or unknowingly, sacrificing themselves on many battlefields all over the world for the survival of the very ideas for which I, like many of my contemporaries, had tried to fight all my life—though with questionable result. Perhaps it was not entirely our fault, but we did not succeed in averting the terrible necessity that the never ending battle of ideas should have to be transformed into the murderous battle of tanks and planes and fighting men. We were powerless to prevent the liberation of Europe from tragically meaning death and destruction.

But we are not old enough and not cowardly enough to turn away from this tragedy and to take refuge in a half smiling, half sentimental "recherche du temps perdu." We are bold enough to think that our time was not entirely wasted or lost, but bore some lessons for and some seeds of the future. We know that death and destruction are not an end, but a challenge for reconstruction and life. We hope that for some years to come we still may be able to have a share in the great common task of humanizing mankind. And we dare believe that our experiences may be useful, not only as historical documents of the intellectual world of Europe before the deluge, but in some way as material for helping to build a new and more stable spiritual order, a world no longer divided against itself, but united in a humane faith.

We are not overly optimistic, we have gone through many disappointments and defeats, and we know that the battle of the spirit is never entirely won, though certainly never entirely lost. We know that the spirit of spiritual men must always be a fighting spirit. We don't expect to enter any promised land but, without pretending to the stature or the age of prophets, we may hope to see it afar and to see the next generation continuing our travel toward this goal—on the right road.

There were many things more left to say about the fifth decade of my life, spent in France and in America, as a so-called exile who never felt exiled, because a true citizen of the world is always at home, at least in his own inner world. However, it seems time to end this long soliloquy which, I hope, somehow will become a human colloquy as it was intended to be. Unhampered by my foreign accent, it may be even more easily understood than my spoken language, at least by those who understand at all the underlying seriousness of a light, conversational tone. Then indeed I would feel justified that in the most crucial year of the most decisive war, there was by some miracle peace enough for me to write. My gratitude goes to all those who helped achieve this miracle. The only thing I am a bit afraid of is that in future my best enjoyment, the good long talks with my friends, will be somehow impaired. Whenever I shall start to tell one of my favorite stories or to discuss one of my favorite ideas, they may give me a certain look which means, "You told us so before, it is all in your book." But I have to take this risk like all the other risks of my life—in past and present and future.

East Haddam, Conn.
August 15, 1944

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