

STEPPING STONES

A German Biography

Hansjörg Gareis

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Library of Congress Number:		2001117803
ISBN #:	Hardcover	1-4010-2213-8
	Softcover	1-4010-2214-6

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A Word of Appreciation

This book would not have been written had it not been for a great number of people, their friendship, encouragement and various ways of generous help. I want to thank them all. I hope that when they read this they know that they are meant, even if I do not name them individually.

My sincere gratitude goes to Jarvis Harriman who edited the entire manuscript in his well known professional way, helping me patiently with my poor grammar and limited vocabulary. My son Klaus-Martin has been of invaluable help on the technical side of producing the book. More than all others, I want to thank Ruth for her unending loving sufferance, for so many weeks and months, of a husband silent at meals while he wrestled with the wording of a particular phrase, not responsive to any other subject.

For all, no thanks can be enough.

1. Island Life

“Attention!” commanded the teacher; a hundred pairs of heels clicked as one, and the new red flag with the white circle and the black swastika in it was slowly hoisted on the pole in the center of the school court. As it rose, fluttering in the icy eastern wind, all eyes were fixed on the emblem that would become in a future not far away the very symbol for evil in the world. It was a blessing we did not know. The headmaster put a small silver tuning pipe to his lips giving the pitch for the flag hymn, and the clear boys’ sopranos sang it out:

We are the young folk
Free and ready for the storm
Hold your flags up higher, friends and comrades!
Our time draws near, the time of the young soldiers.
And there, before us, with storm-torn banners,
Our nation’s heroes show us the way,
And high above, the hero fathers-
Germany, fatherland, we’re coming now.

It was one of those late October days when everything seemed miserable and gray. All the boys of Bismarck school were assembled in the drab yard for the usual morning roll call which started at 8 am on the dot. They formed three sides of a square, each class in a group, lined up by height, the tallest boys in each section on the right. The teacher called out the surnames in

alphabetical order, class by class, and the high pitched voices of the boys responded, "Present!".

As always—that seemed to be my fate—I was the smallest in my class and thus was placed at the far left in my row. By now I was used to the strange morning routine. It had been introduced some time ago by order of the Führer himself, so that we should think, at the beginning of every day, of our fatherland. But on this particular morning, it had been really cold and I was shivering, like everybody else, in my short pants and knee-length socks. My brother Claus and I had been pestering our mother to allow us to wear shorts even in deepest winter. After all, both of us had become members of our respective youth organizations: Claus, four years older than I, in the Hitler Youth, and I, just 8 years old in 1938, in the Young Folk. Our nation-wide motto was, "Cherish what makes us tough". So, shorts it had to be.

Much had happened since, almost two years earlier, that man Adolf Hitler had taken over the government in Germany from Field Marshall von Hindenburg. Not that I was interested in such things. But, obvious even to me, my father, when he came home from work in the evening, sometimes withdrew with my mother into his study, where they conversed in low tones. Annemie, our older sister, Claus and I only knew that they were not to be disturbed then, strictly not, and minded our own little childish business.

My father had recently been promoted Army Major and transferred to far away East Prussia. For the family that meant the beginning of an adventure when we moved to the small provincial town of Allenstein, where the Infantry Battalion which my father now commanded was stationed.

For me, the little boy, those three years we lived at Allenstein were like an unending happy dream. If, later in life, I ever felt homesick for a place, it was for the indescribable beauty of this former German province. Later, I got to know most parts of my country, many of which are lovely and attractive in their own particular way. None of them, however, has touched my soul so

deeply, nowhere else have I felt so much “at home” as in East Prussia. I have always longed to be back there, although I cannot really say why. Maybe it was only because at eight or nine years of age, one begins to live consciously, one discovers the beauty of nature—forests and fields, trees and flowers, birds and deer—all of which were there in lush abundance. Maybe the atmosphere of our small town, its environment and its inhabitants corresponded so much to my emotional make-up at that time.

East Prussia had always been a poor country, and very sparsely populated. During the 18th century, the Black Plague had terribly decimated the already small number of people living there. Many backward villages had been left deserted and vast areas had not been farmed anymore. It remained that way until the Prussian King Frederick the Great, around the year 1732, sent more than 15,000 German-speaking Protestants into the empty lands, mostly farmers and artisans, to resettle and to lay the foundations for an economy. Prussia had then claimed the province as part of the nation-state. It had been named East Prussia. Ever since, however, the Poles maintained that this had been, originally, Polish heartland. For centuries to come, it was the object of unending conflicts between Poland and Germany.

In 1918, the Treaty of Versailles had decreed, among many other harsh measures, that defeated Germany had to cede to Poland huge areas on both sides of the Weichsel river, including Danzig and the Baltic Sea port *Gotenhafen*. In this way, East Prussia had become an island, an exclave, cut off completely from the rest of the German Reich.

When in 1934 our family traveled from Berlin to Allenstein, the train was stopped at *Schneidemühl*, the border station, and was kept there for long hours. Each train compartment was searched thoroughly by Polish border police. Then the doors were closed and sealed from the outside. While the train moved slowly through Polish territory, it was strictly forbidden for all passengers to leave the train or to take photographs. I can still see the stony face of my father as the lovely scenery passed by. These wide

fields had been tilled for generations by Germans, these glorious forests had been tended by Germans. The injustice of it all caused deep-set bitterness.

The Victor Powers after World War I had even proposed at Versailles that all of East Prussia, as well as, further south, the Silesia province, should be "returned" once and for all to Poland and that, at the western border of the Reich, the Saar Land should fall to France. However, the concession had been made that the population of all three provinces should take a vote on whether to stay with the Reich or not. On July 11, 1920, an average of 94% of the East Prussian voting populace had decided to remain German. In Allenstein it had even been 96%.

The loyalty of East Prussians became proverbial. They were praised as the kind of patriots the country needed to come to its feet again. And well they knew that only firm union with the Reich could provide a future for them. After all, this was the eastern-most outpost of German civilization, a bridgehead in backward, barbaric territory. It was front-line country, especially since the eerie threat of Russian Bolshevik imperialism was ever growing. That is what we were told at school. We did not understand what it all meant. We only used "You Bolshevik" as an insulting swear-word.

We three children had wrinkled our noses on arrival in Allenstein. Annemarie, the oldest, whom we called Annemie, had just turned 13, Claus was 11. Seeing the modest red-brick railway station at the end of the village, Annemie said, "Why, this is just like Russia".

Not that she had been to Russia. But our father had fought there during the first World War, and he had reported about the endless loneliness, the terrible poverty of the people, the lack of civilization he had seen there.

"They don't even have a porter here", Annemie muttered. "And no taxis! How on earth are we going to have all our luggage moved?" She always worried.

There were more horse-drawn carriages than motor-cars to be seen on the cobblestone streets. Only in the center of town, around the pretty town-hall, were some gas-lamps on wrought-iron poles which were lit by hand at dusk. All the other roads, including the one we were living in, were pitch dark at night. I hated to be sent on errands in the evenings and I always ran when I had to go out. On the other hand, Allenstein was one of three towns in East Prussia boastfully owning a street-car. It was just one line, from the railway-station to the other end of town. It went very slowly, the driver constantly stepping with his foot on the clanking bell. One could hear the carriage approaching for miles when it screeched around a bend.

Back in the Reich, where we had lived before, we had been much more advanced, I thought. My father had told me why this was so. "It is all because of this cursed *Treaty of Shame* concocted at Versailles", he had said. "They called it a peace treaty. But neither has it brought peace, nor was it a treaty, because we Germans were not allowed to even participate in the talks. It was a Diktat, in truth, by the French who wanted to take revenge because we had beaten their armies in the War. They wanted to destroy our country and to make sure that we would forever remain small and insignificant. The French are our enemies, and we must always despise them."

My father believed that France had demanded the severest punishment of Germany. The cost of the entire war had amounted to some 700 billion Marks, and we were to pay for it all in reparations. We were to lose our overseas colonies and to "give away" almost one third of the country's territory to France, to Denmark, to Poland, to Russia, to Czechoslovakia. But, worst of all, the victorious powers had declared at Versailles that they had found Germany *alone* guilty of causing the War. "It is just not true", my father maintained angrily. "They have stolen our dignity and they have made us outcasts in Europe. That we can never forget."

Early in 1923, the French, out of the blue, had sent troops into the Ruhr industrial area of Germany. They had said that the Germans "purposely" had not delivered enough coal and steel, and now France was going to enforce getting what was her due. The feeble government in Berlin had, of course, protested against this grossly arbitrary measure. The Chancellor had called for passive resistance on the part of all the miners and steel-workers. All over the Ruhr, the coal and steel companies had closed down. The result had been catastrophe, increased by the world-wide financial crisis at the same time. Inflation had begun to gallop. In October 1923, a stamp for an ordinary letter at the post-office had cost 120 billion Marks. There had seemed to be no end to the suffering, and the future—was there any future at all?

Then, the U.S.A. had stepped in. Charles Dawes had told the French in Paris that "Business, not Politics" would have to have priority in future. Together with the new British Prime Minister, Ramsay Macdonald, he had been able to reduce German reparation payments to a bearable amount. Still, the French had been reluctant and had not withdrawn their troops from the Ruhr until two years later. But the ball had been set in motion. Even though Germany had been accepted as a member of the League of Nations, it was small consolation. The sting of defeat and humiliation had smarted on.

Very few people in Germany had taken much notice, therefore, when an unknown politician called Adolf Hitler had proclaimed the program of his National-Socialist German Workers Party, the NSDAP. The number of existing political parties was already immense and confusing, and, above all, this Hitler was an Austrian, a foreigner, so what good could he do? He had, unsuccessfully, tried a putsch in Munich, and had been put in prison until the end of 1924. The NSDAP had even been banned by the Government.

When Hitler came out of prison, he had really started to work and to stir up people, uncannily increasing the number of

his followers. At the 1930 national elections, his party gained 107 seats in Parliament. How had he done it? It had been a terrible shock to the political establishment. What made Germans run after that man like the Pied Piper? Was there something in our particular character that this “uncultured” wizard could play on?

Of course, at the time nobody asked questions like these. There was no reason to ask them. At the beginning of his campaign, an open letter by Hitler had been published in which he had called for “a spiritual, moral and ethical regeneration of our people”. Nobody could disagree with that.

The “Führer”, as he wanted to be called by his supporters, had attacked the government and coined for it the phrase *Erfüllungspolitik*, meaning the policy of unconditional fulfillment of the reparations and disarmament clauses of the Versailles Treaty. It became a slogan for millions of Germans who were struggling for survival and longing for an end of the general sense of injustice being done to them. Indeed, the policy of Reich Chancellor Brüning had been, at the time, to first restore German economy to profitability and then, from a position of strength, to demand revision of the *Treaty of Shame*. The Führer, on the other hand, had seen “restoring equality of Germans with all other nations” as the *conditio sine qua non*, as the priority aim for all national policy. For masses of people, this alternative had irresistible appeal.

An event sticks out as one of the earliest memories of my life, long before I went to school. Annemie, Claus and I had a small room together where we played and slept. It had one window looking out on the street two stories below. As usual, we had been sent to bed at seven—we did not even try to protest anymore. Total discipline was expected from us, Prussian discipline. Late that night we had been awakened by loud and strange noises from down below. In our long, identical white night-shirts we had rushed to the window, standing there with our noses flattened to the glass, shivering with excitement and fear. A gang of wild looking men was marching by,

shouting and roaring. They held up burning pitch torches and some of them were shooting in the air with guns. And they all wore brown shirts.

It was the day of Hitler's first political victory. With his amazing sense for dramatic affects, he had ordered torch parades for that night in all German towns. What we children had seen were the first SA-men, the Storm Troopers of the NSDAP, the uniformed advance guard of the movement. Until then regarded as rather obscure extremists, they had now become politically respectable. From then on, I remember seeing more and more men wearing brown shirts and black breeches, or the badge with the swastika, marking them as party members. From flagpoles and from house windows, we became used to seeing an increasing number of swastika flags in between the old black-white-red Reich colors.



My parents, engaged to be married, 1917



Annemie, Claus and Hansjörg, Rostock 1931

My father never had much time for us. He loved his family beyond everything else, surely, but he did not succeed in showing or talking about his feelings. He was a soldier and he had not learned any other profession. Actually, he had first put on a military uniform at the tender age of 14. His father, our grandfather, a Protestant parson, a giant of a man with a thundering bass voice, ever short of money, had applied for his youngest son for a place at the Prussian Cadet Institution where the officer cadres for the Kaiser's Reich Army were trained. The Cadets had a school routine much like the civilian schools. But beyond that, they were trained in Spartan modesty, discipline of body and spirit, and total loyalty to the fatherland.

In 1914, he had marched, a young lieutenant and platoon commander, with his troops to France. From the start of the War, they had been engaged in heavy battle, with many casualties on both sides. Along the entire front-line, the units had dug out trenches from where they had launched their attacks, accompanied by cries of *Hurrah*. In October, my father's regiment had tried to cross the Aisne river near Vailly. In the course of the ensuing fierce battle, he had been wounded four times. He was lying between the trenches, bleeding profusely from his head after a grazing shot and unable to move. The shooting had continued. A medical orderly had called from the German side, "Lieutenant, I am coming to help", and had crept towards him. The man had started to dress my father's wound when he was shot through the head, dying instantly. A second medic had followed out, and met the same fate, his body touching my father's, who by this time was unconscious.

Due to the island position of East Prussia, and because none of our relatives and family friends had any money to spare for much traveling, we did not have many visitors in Allenstein. When my Uncle Max came and stayed for a weekend with us one summer it was an event we kept talking about for years to come. He was not a real uncle, in fact he was no relative of ours at all, but one of eight godparents my father and mother had chosen on the event of my baptism.

Uncle Max was one of my heroes. He and my father had been friends since their time together at the Oranienburg Cadet Corps. He had been trained as an Air Force pilot and, during World War I, had flown the famous bi-wings in Freiherr von Richthofen's group. He was shot down twice but each time had managed to come out of his plane unhurt and in friendly territory. He had been highly decorated for his dare-devil valor. At the time of his visit to Allenstein he was training young pilots—clandestinely, because the Versailles Treaty did not allow Germany an Air Force and the training had to be in civilian aircraft.

That weekend he had joined us for the regular Sunday service in the garrison church where the padre had remembered the millions of soldiers who had been killed in the war, particularly asking us to honor the French, the British and the Russian losses and not only our own. It was very unusual and I remember that for me it was quite a new thought. It had never crossed my mind that our enemies had perhaps suffered just as much as we. Obviously the grown-ups had also been struck by the sermon because there was not much talking on our walk home.

A question had formed in my mind and it went round and round in my head until I could not contain it any longer and burst out, "Did you kill any French or British, Uncle Max?"

"Don't be impertinent", chipped in my mother, before he was able to reply. "You are far too small to ask such questions."

"No, no", he said, "let him ask. After all, he and Claus one day will wear a uniform themselves. They should be interested in what that involves."

He sported the kind of small beard later to become known as a Clark-Gable moustache, and he was stroking it now with his fingertips before he went on:

"I was in quite a number of aerial battles, mainly against British pilots. They were extremely skilled and very brave. Of course, once you are in such action you have to shoot, try to shoot first and from a favorable position. It's either you or the other fellow. Sometimes the others were luckier, but a few Tommys I have downed. What happened to those pilots I don't know. So I can't really say if I have killed any of them."

By now we three children were all eyes and ears. Claus even plucked up enough courage to ask, "Were you then afraid? I know I would have been."

"Of course I was scared, each time when I climbed into the cockpit. But not when we were in the air, there was no time then to be afraid. I only remember that quite often I looked down where those poor guys like your father were dug into their trenches

not able to move forward or backward. Up there, we had a much better time."

He paused. "Did your father ever tell you about those trench-war times, when he was almost killed? No? You know, Martin, you should tell your kids. They have a right to know."

Uncle Max had to coax him some more, but then, slowly and hesitantly, my father began, "It was when we had been ordered to cross the Aisne river . . ."

That afternoon, when we sat comfortably in our old-fashioned easy-chairs, was the only time ever that he related to us the story about those two men who gave their lives trying to help him. He had known them well and he had later to inform their families. He said that when he had woken up in a field hospital from his unconsciousness and when he began to realize what had happened he could not face it for a long time. It had been like a heavy load of guilt on his conscience.

He said to Uncle Max, "They were ordinary men, not reckless nor particularly brave, and yet they did not hesitate for a moment to risk everything for someone else. What is it in war that makes ordinary men ready to sacrifice their lives for others?"

"Most of us would have done the same, I know you would have," answered my father's friend, "and that is not any special German feature either. I am sure that what we praise as heroism is just as common in any other nation at war."

"Agreed," mused my father, "but there must be a lesson to learn from that: what could be, in times of peace, a motivating force strong enough to release and make available for the common good those innate virtues of personal courage, of brotherly love, of selflessness? I hate war, all of us hate war, we never want to be in one again. But I am afraid that we might not be able to hold the peace if we do not learn this lesson. Then all the sacrifices will have been in vain."

During that first, lost war my father had also fought in Russia, in Yugoslavia, in Galicia, and again in France. From the first day on, he had started writing a diary—a habit he kept up until 1945.

It makes fearful reading although—or maybe because—only bare facts are reported, very rarely an opinion, even less a feeling about what has been going through heart and mind. Thousands of pencil-written diary sheets my mother had been able to save through the hell she was to experience in years to come. I can draw on them now, writing about events that had happened before my own conscious participation. What was he living for? As a young man my father wrote:

My comrades and I were trained to become examples for the men who would be entrusted to us—examples in simplicity, uprightness, truthfulness, a high sense of duty and responsibility, obedience, punctuality and, above all comradeship. The spirit of comradeship determined our lives. It worked from the top downwards, and vice versa. Its reality was proved at times when any man on his own would have had no chance to survive. It was not just empty words. For all of us, it made the military “service” the most fulfilling way to live.

The officers of the “100,000-Man-Army”, as the forces had been called after the breakdown of the Kaiser-Reich, had been selected for their spirit of patriotism as much as for their military experience. Most of them had been thoroughly apolitical. A law had been passed banning any kind of political activism inside the Army, even forbidding soldiers to be party members or to take part in political gatherings. This way, one had hoped to strengthen the *esprit de corps* and to protect it from outside influences. No wonder, therefore, that the German Army became almost ghettoized, and that, in it, a feeling of elitism developed. In the social order of importance, army officers felt they were on top, outranked only, perhaps, by the clergy.



Captain Gareis (with drawn sword), his Guard of Honor Company presenting arms, with Reich President v.Hindenburg (center), Chancellor Brüning and Admiral Raeder. Berlin 1931

My father's battalion in Allenstein was garrisoned in brick-built barracks outside town. I very soon felt at home there amongst the soldiers. I loved watching their drill on the parade ground and I tried to participate in their different sorts of sport competitions. The battalion's soccer team played in the top East Prussian league. Their goal keeper, a PFC by the name of Glowka, enjoyed national fame. They were a simple, good-natured bunch and, generally, quite satisfied with being in the army and with the ordered life it guaranteed them. Their pay was ridiculously low. But the larger part of their age-group in the country was still unemployed at that time. Sometimes, when I hung around in the barracks waiting for my father, one of the men would take me secretly to the canteen and treat me to a *Bärenfang*, a sweet honey-schnapps. Did I feel grown-up!

It was a small world we lived in. At home, we did not own a radio and I doubt that any of us read a daily newspaper. At no time during my childhood did we, as far as I remember, talk politics. An unwritten family law ruled that decent German people

never discussed in public questions concerning money, religion or sex. We kids had no idea whether we were, moneywise, better off than our neighbors. Certainly, we had less pocket-money at our disposal than most of our friends and we had to write accounts for every Pfennig we spent. But we figured that it had to be like that in a soldier's family. It was just as normal as the accepted attendance at Sunday church service. Both my parents were sincere Lutherans. They insisted on all of us walking regularly the long way to the large garrison church, always filled with the men of the battalion.

On an August morning in 1935, right after roll-call and hymn-singing, we were all ordered to assemble in our Bismarck School hall. The school director himself addressed us solemnly, saying that we all must mourn one of the great men of our time. Field Marshal Paul von Hindenburg had died. Ever since the General, at the beginning of World War I, had been able to defeat the mighty Russian Narew Army, he had been glorified as a national hero, especially by the people of East Prussia, because the victorious battle had been fought at Tannenberg, a village not far away from our Allenstein. Hindenburg had almost been forced by the German people into politics. He had been elected German President first in 1929, and again, standing for the office against Adolf Hitler, in 1932. The majority of our people had trusted him almost blindly. "The old man knows what is good and right for us", everybody said, even when he had obviously become senile, unable to oversee the consequences of his actions and, on January 30 in 1933 had appointed Hitler Chancellor of the German Reich.

Now, not three years after this fateful development, the old man had gone to his forefathers. Our school director had even put on a black suit for the occasion of breaking the news to us. He announced that, by order from Berlin, every school class in East Prussia would have to make an excursion to Tannenberg, where an enormous, menacing monument had been erected in

memory of the great victory. The Nazis, grateful for Hindenburg's act in turning over to Hitler all political power, and also rightly assessing the general spirit in the nation, had organized in Tannenberg a colossal funeral service, with all the pomp and pageantry they could muster. Even when our school class did travel, a few weeks later, to pay our respects to the hero, the monument, eight squat towers standing in a circle, was still emblazoned with red swastika flags and banners.

As if the Government in Berlin had been reminded of the Reich's eastern provinces by the event, great efforts were made during the following months to make up for past neglect. East Prussia's island position had made her limp far behind economically, also socially, but particularly in regard to the extent of the penetration of national-socialist propaganda. Now, streams of tourists were directed more and more to the Baltic seaside health-resorts, some road and railway building programs were set in motion and much fuss was made about the famous horse-breeding stud-farm at Trakehnen, way up in the north of the province.

The Führer had made one of his earliest followers, Joseph Goebbels, *Reich Minister for Folk Enlightenment and Propaganda*. Goebbels, a tiny, thin man with a crippled leg, turned out to be an intellectually brilliant protagonist of Nazi ideas. He was the outstanding brain of the movement, clever, ruthless, and totally dedicated to Hitler. Nobody else, not even the Führer himself, was able to so rouse the masses as "little clump foot", when he masterfully played on the Germans' feelings of pride and patriotism, or making them believe in their excellence of workmanship and industriousness.

In an incredibly short time Goebbels had succeeded in *Gleichschaltung*, bringing press and radio into line with the new Reich propaganda. From then on, it became almost impossible for Germans to get hold of news from outside the country. The Party Organ *Völkische Beobachter* was printed and distributed in enormous editions and read, due to its boisterous, boring and

boasting contents, by very few. But there were other ways of indoctrination.

The state took over the direction of the big film studios like Ufa in Berlin-Babelsberg, and pretty soon the most prominent and popular German-speaking actors produced well done but clearly tendentious films. Most of them praised Germans as being best and first in all things. Like the biographical bit on Professor Virchow, who had discovered the bacillus that causes Tuberculosis; or *Riding for Germany* with Willy Birgel, the story of a steeplechase rider winning prizes for the fatherland because of his unblemished character; or, the first movie I ever saw in a cinema, *No answer from FPI*, in which the super-courageous hero was a German engineer. These films transported us into a wonderful and peaceful world where we, defeated and humiliated Germans, counted for something, equal if not superior to all other countries.

To me it appeared as if something new and unprecedented happened all the time. It was exciting. Our school was re-named. "Bismarck", we were told, "was a great German, but he belongs to the past." For us, a new age had begun, teacher said, and therefore we were privileged to be members of *Horst-Wessel-School* from now on. Wessel had been one of the "martyrs" who had lost his life for the movement, and had composed a hymn-song named after him. Our country was the first and only with two anthems. At every possible occasion we first sang the *Deutschlandlied* with its beautiful and solemn melody, and immediately following, one tone lower, we fell into the aggressive marching tune and pathetic words of, "Up with our flag, close tight our ranks, SA is marching!" In every class-room loudspeakers were installed, so that all of us could listen to the frequent speeches of the Führer or Goebbels. That was terribly boring, of course, and we boys tried to imitate the hoarse, bellowing staccato voice and the strange outlandish accent of *Adolf*, careful that neither teacher nor parent would overhear us doing it.

Two things, however, I really liked: My Young Folk uniform, and the many new songs we learned. Every Wednesday afternoon

we met, all dressed up, with our respective *Jungzug*, as the smallest units of the organization were called. "All the other boys have it", I had repeated obstinately to my mother, until she bought me all the necessary accessories for my garb: the broad leather belt with the shiny silver buckle on which was written, "Our Honor is Loyalty"; the black scarf tied round the neck and held together with a brown leather knot sort of a thing; and a shoulder-belt to complete the outfit.

The idea of the countrywide organized groups was to compete with, and to be better than, other units. Uniforms had to be immaculate; performance of military commands smart and in perfect unison; knowledge of the "basic facts" of the movement complete; sports results tops. One always had to be aware of some *Fähnleinführer*, or even the *Bannführer* unexpectedly turning up for an inspection of his "troops". Then there would be either a commendation or a challenge to do even better in future. It all stimulated our ambition and our pride. And it was done in the same way all over the nation, an entire generation participating. Everywhere we were marching through the streets singing our songs, and surely we would rouse even the last sleepy citizen. German boys and girls had to be "fast as a gray-hound, tough as leather, and hard as Krupp steel".

It must have been sometime in 1935 that Reich Youth Führer Baldur von Schirach went a step further: Whenever possible, regular youth meetings were to be held Sunday mornings. There was a heated discussion with my mother when the first scout game was fixed at precisely the hour when we were supposed to go to church service. I won the argument. It was so much more fun to march out into the woods in groups of Reds and Blues and getting engaged in mass wrestling fights, trying to take away from the "enemy" as many color bands as possible, than to sit in a pew and pray. None of the people I knew had any premonition whatsoever of the determined strategic planning of our leaders that was behind many of the new things which began to influence our lives.

It would be wrong, however, to say that people were, on a larger scale, forced into something that they did not want—certainly not at the time when our family lived in Allenstein, and certainly not in East Prussia. On the contrary, we felt more secure in regard to the future. We were content, things were going well with our country. If my father had any qualms about the new holders of power in Berlin and their extraordinary way of using it, he did not talk about it to us. We often had guests for meals at home, mostly officers and their wives, and the conversation at table—in which we children were not allowed to participate—turned around military affairs or, sometimes, society gossip.

All my life I have kept vivid memories of long summer evenings when we gathered around our Steinway grand piano and my mother sang, accompanying herself, Loewe ballads or Schubert lieder. She had a nice, warm voice and she played quite well. My father could also play the piano, only by ear, because he never learned to read notes. But the times when he had leisure to sit down and play were rare. There was always some maneuver or a course he had to take part in. Office work and the training of new recruits, the pursuit of duty, were of overruling importance to him.

* * *

It was the period when I got to know my brother Claus. In other words, I became interested in what he was doing. He was quite a different character, introverted, never excited, apparently always dreaming. As a child, as soon as he was able to hold a pencil, he had started drawing ships on every scrap of paper he could get hold of. They were always war-ships, heavily armed with mighty triple-guns and canons. Ships have been his first passion in life. When he was old enough to read, his birthday or Christmas list of things he wished to have was regularly topped with the latest edition of the *Weyher*, the official compendium of all known war-ships in the world, including data on their speed, armor, fighting power, number of crew—as far as these were not kept

secret. Claus learned all these facts by heart. Had there been quiz programs at that time, I am sure he would have won prizes with his detailed knowledge. He was born with the never-questioned certainty that one day he would be a naval officer, which he did, preferably an admiral, which he did not.

We had our fights as brothers have them. He was four years older and much bigger than I. It was frustrating to be beaten every time and to end up lying under him. But in our street gang fights he was my trump card. He would just have to appear and be there. That was enough. He had very light blue eyes, so light that they would come out on black and white photographs as white spots. I tried to copy his habits, hoping that he might accept me more as an equal. But he would just suffer me patiently when I stood beside his desk, admiringly watching him when he worked with compasses and ruler at his other hobby: He had begun to draw, on squared paper, a map of an imaginary town, with streets and open places, lots of parks and green spaces, little lakes and waterways, railway and subway stations. More and more sheets of paper he would glue to the original one, cut out parts with a razor blade and put in corrections. "The Map" finally became so big that no table was large enough to spread it out fully. It occupied him for years.

Claus was not a good *Hitlerjunge*, nor was Annemie an enthusiastic member of BdM, the Union of German Girls. Both of them had their uniform, of course, and on First-of-May-Parades or Führer's Birthday they felt obliged to participate in the assemblies. After all, our father was a high ranking officer in the small town and a certain patriotic attitude was expected from his children. But my brother and sister did not feel at ease in the company of all the "ordinary" boys and girls. These kids were not really *up to our class*, they originated from a different society strata. The more the Nazis tried to level down the class structure in Germany the less the formerly privileged groups were ready to relinquish their status. It was not a question of material wealth but one of pride, one might say of a certain snobbism.



All in uniform, Allenstein 1934

Like many others, Annemie had found a way to compensate for her lack of fancy for BdM activities. A number of semi-official organizations and clubs had been formed with a loyal party front, but little indoctrination inside. To be active in these groups was generally reason enough to be left alone by eager proselytizers. My sister had joined the local *Club for Small-Bore Air-Rifle Shooting*. Funnily, their competitions were not regarded as sports but rather as an important contribution for national defense-participation. Annemie was a good shot, in many different ways.

I remember her coming home from school one day telling the family over lunch the story about her “shot” at her most hated teacher. For some reason or other, her place in class was in the front row. The unfortunate teacher, addressing the girls, would always stand right in front of her, almost touching my sister. That alone would not have been so disturbing. But the man had a “wet articulation”, he spat while speaking, wetting Annemie’s hair. Her fury had mounted, so much so that on this particular day she had opened an umbrella while teacher was holding forth. I forgot if she was punished for her insolence. It certainly did not help to better her relation with the gentleman.

Harmless events like these were high-lights for us in East Prussia, much more important to us than the national upheavals happening at the same time, as we realized only years later. Like probably most other children of my age I read the fantastic stories about the American red Indians, written by a man who had never been at the places he wrote about. These tales, more than anything else, formed for us the picture of that far away country. I was even more captured by the heroic epics about our ancient forbears, the *Teutonics* or Germanics, like Armin the Prince, who had stood up to the mighty Roman Empire.

At school we were encouraged to study such hero sagas. We had to write essays about our historic roots, about our *Erbmasse*, our genetic make-up, and about the great personality each had chosen for himself to emulate in his life. There was no such subject as geography taught at the time. We learned *Heimatkunde* or knowledge of our native country instead. The English language does not have a word for the German term *Heimat*, at least not one that would be able to express the vast meaning it has to us, or rather still had for our generation. It was a sacred thing, next only to Divine Providence, a motivating force. It was worth laying down one’s life to defend *Heimat*. We belonged to it and it belonged to us.

Weekend outings with my father were rare but glorious occasions. We would board what looked like a little toy train

with square carriages, eight seat compartments and wooden benches, drawn by a puffing and wheezing steam engine. Our destination might be either the endless heath country with its moors and peculiar fauna and flora, or one of the great stately pine forests where wild boars and elks roamed, to rest at one of the 3,000 lonely, silent lakes. Regularly, we would return home with bags full of all sorts of berries or mushrooms—oh, East Prussia's ceps and chanterelles and mousserons, those tiny brown things with their unmistakable fragrance, and the thrill of finding them, being able to distinguish good ones and poisonous ones. It all added up to a composition of beloved sights, sounds and smells, of *Heimat* as we understood it.

Summer holidays were spent at Cranz, at the famous Amber Coast of the Baltic Sea. At that time one could still find even larger pieces of the fossilized resin, with embedded insects, by just walking up and down the sandy beaches. The coast line there changes from steep towering cliffs to many miles of long sandbars and ever wind-shifted dunes. We would build our sandcastles and swim, or walk to the bird-watching station of Rossitten, where my father would point out and name the many different kinds of migrating or indigenous birds. He knew them all. I have never forgotten what he taught us. My growing love of nature originates from that period.

* * *

In March 1935 Hitler had decreed compulsory military service in Germany. He simply disregarded the respective conditions of the Versailles Treaty, which had allowed us, until then, only a professional Army strictly limited to 100,000 soldiers. In all of East Prussia there was a sigh of relief because the deep-set fear of a new attack from the East was ever present. Also, the existing units had been poorly equipped and would not have been able to put up any serious resistance. The mere increase in numbers of soldiers under arms made people feel a bit more safe. For the

officers it brought the satisfaction of an upgrading and rehabilitation of their status. It was a happy time for my father and his comrades although, with the training program for the new recruits, they were inundated with work.

Sometime in the summer of that year, the Führer made his first visiting tour to the Eastern provinces, making a point of inspecting every military garrison. Allenstein was buzzing with excitement. The whole place was cleaned up and hundreds of flag poles were erected along the routes his car cavalcade would take. On a large field just outside town, a platform had been built from where *Adolf* and his uniformed staff watched my father's battalion march past, showing how well they had learned to goose-step. The unit's music corps were there riding horses and I was amazed especially by the man with the two big kettledrums and how he steered his mare with his feet. Of course we were all there in our brown garbs, standing at attention most of the time, a rather tiring affair.

So, now we had seen the *beloved Führer* in person, although only from a distance. It had not really been very impressive. The enormous peak of his stiff brown cap had shaded his face, and the way he had lifted his right arm bent at an angle had made him appear to be bored all the time. After all the circus around his visit we somehow had expected more, especially since he did not make a public speech. But I had been really proud of my father when he headed his troops, sitting on his parade horse and presenting his drawn sword, while the music played the *Reitermarsch*. I thought he was just wonderful and, indeed, my friends were jealous.

It was very late that day when he came home. Hitler had wanted to talk with my father and four other troop commanders and they, just the six of them, met in the battalion's officers' mess for several hours. Years later, my father wrote about this meeting:

Since Hitler talked all that time almost without interruption, I was able to watch him closely.

His outward appearance and his manners did not leave any impressions with me. It was his face, his eyes and his expression that fascinated. He appeared to be a fanatic, possessed by something unpredictable, something that was lending him a powerful dynamic. When he spoke in a more lively manner about a meaningful subject, one felt that not *he* spoke but *it* spoke out of him, *It* was pouring out of him, an eerie demonic power. Its sparks and currents made him react like a sensitive apparatus. He did not dominate this inner force, it dominated him. His face could suddenly change to a grimace. There was nothing noble and uplifting in the man. But he was able to capture even strong characters, carrying them away with his personality. I had to resist this force with all my strength. It filled me with apprehension and anxiety. I clung to the fact that everything he said during the entire conversation had been about his vision of a strong country living in peace, respected by her neighbors. If he could lead us there, all his sinister and fear-inspiring sides could be accepted.

Across our street, in another large apartment-building, lived an army captain and his family with whom we were good friends. My parents valued the captain as a "decent soldier", and that was their supreme compliment for a person. His name was Schmundt. I do not know whether it started with Hitler's visit to our town, but Schmundt later became one of the Führer's closest associates and, in the end, served as his personal Army Aid de Camp, soon overtaking my father in military rank. In years to come, during the war, Schmundt and my father would meet several times. On one of these occasions, he was to confess in private that he had

not been able to stand up to the dominating influence of this Hitler. He had been turned around, "changed" by the dictator.

Obviously, Hitler himself had been impressed by the people he had met and the landscape he had seen in East Prussia. Not long after his tour, he ordered a large military headquarters to be built in an inaccessible area deep in the Rominten heath. It would later become famous by the name *Wolfschanze*. At the same time, our figure-head Chancellor, Reich Marshall Goering, known to us as *Hermann the Fat*, annexed East Prussia's forests for his hunting feasts. The Nazis had come, seen and conquered; the gap to the island had been bridged.

* * *

In 1936, as if to demonstrate the world's recognition of the Regime, the Olympic Summer Games were held in Berlin. Our county wallowed in glory and boastfulness. All the nations, so it seemed to us, came to see what we were achieving with our discipline and dedication to Hitler's cause. To us it was much more than just an international sports competition. The bombastic organization and the top performances of the athletes served an ideological end only: to prove that Germans were better than the rest.

My father took us children to the capital and we were able to watch some of the sports events. When, at the opening ceremony, the large group of the French participants marched into the brand new stadium with their right hands stretched up in the Hitler salute, it was a triumph for us. That gesture helped a great deal to smother many misgivings and doubts that may have been there among Germans at the time although Hitler's political program had been acclaimed with 99 percent of the votes at the preceding Reichstag elections in March. But now European statesmen seemed to stand in line to declare their admiration for the Führer and for the extraordinary speed with which the new nation rose from the ashes of the old.

I was in a state of ecstasy during our days in Berlin. We all stayed in my grandmother's and my aunt's flats in the center of town. What an enormously big city it was! Claus and I could have spent days just riding in the fast subway-trains going from one end of the line to the other, or in the fascinating double-decker buses looking down on the busy traffic. The whole capital seemed to celebrate with flags fluttering everywhere and shop-windows brimful with things boasting to be "Made in Germany".

When we entered the Olympic Stadium built in the powerful and frightening style of architecture Hitler had introduced, I was awe-struck by the mass of excited people. We were swept away in an all-encompassing unison as if directed by some invisible and yet overpowering orchestra director. The cheers going up after an excellent performance of a German athlete gave me thrills of pride to be one of this nation.

After each awards ceremony we watched the gold-medalists being escorted by uniformed officials up to the VIP stand to be congratulated by the Führer himself. What we did not see, however, and found out only thirty years later, was the shameful scene Jesse Owens, the outstanding American sportsman, had to go through then. He was the first man ever to jump beyond the eight meter mark, he won three Gold Medals and two world records in Berlin, a prince among athletes. When Owens was marched up through the ranks of the stadium like the other champions before him, he suddenly saw himself confronted with a massive group of SS-men blocking his way. Hitler, meanwhile, had slipped away—he obviously wanted to avoid the humiliation of having to honor someone of "inferior"—black—race. It was so blatant. But indoctrination had already penetrated our thinking so deeply that we would have found all sorts of excuses had we been told about the behavior of our leader.

* * *

Immediately after the end of the Games which had been so successful and boosting the self-esteem of our people and the Nazi movement in particular, another *Reichsparteitag* was celebrated in Nuremberg. These party conventions were organized as the largest mass meetings of the time, with hundreds of thousands marching to the vast deployment area that had been created for the purpose. Like at the Berlin Olympics, participants of these conventions experienced the strange sensation of mass-hysteria and only few realized that this was a calculated part of Joseph Goebbels' ideological strategy. The theme of that year's *Parteitag* was strictly anti-Bolshevist, quite openly stirring up indignation against Russia. We were told that the Soviets were threatening our freedom and independence, and that we must make a big effort to arm the nation in order to be able to defend ourselves. A four-year plan was proclaimed with the aim of a powerful economic development to speed up the capacity for military armament.

Our family soon felt the consequences of this enticement. My father was transferred to Munich where he was to head one of the three main units of the Military Academy. He was promoted to colonel at the same time. It was a challenge—not only to him as he was becoming a slightly bigger wheel in the military apparatus with different responsibilities, but also for my mother who was catapulted from provincial small-town Allenstein into the sophisticated society set-up of a large city.

* * *

Wilhelms-Gymnasium was the most famous high-school in the State of Bavaria. I hated it from the first moment I took sight of the ancient somber building. The high-ceilinged corridors echoed every step, multiplying the ever droning noise. In the entire College hovered the stale smell of old linoleum wax and of

generations of pupils, boys between the age of ten and eighteen. Class-rooms were furnished with wooden two-seat benches with sloping tops smothered with ink-spots and carvings. I had been told that many famous Germans—authors, scientists, composers, generals—had sat in these old benches before us and that it was a privilege to occupy them. That was small consolation.

We had moved to Munich, capital of Bavaria, in the middle of term. Claus and I felt thrown into another, hostile world. I had trailed my brother on our first school-day, seeking protection. But as soon as we entered the premises he cut me dead. It would have lowered his status to be caught playing nanny to a small boy. I was on my own. Someone showed me to my class-room. The noise was deafening. None of the yelling boys noticed me as I stood beside the door with my school-bag, frightened and shy.

The bells shrilled through the house announcing the begin of classes. On the dot the teacher came in and the cacophony died down abruptly. The boys stood at attention beside their seats.

“Good morning”, he said.

“Good morning, Herr Professor,” shouted the class.

Bavarian high-school teachers insisted to be addressed as *Herr Professor* although only a handful of them were entitled to that degree. Bavarians were different. They wanted to be different. In everything, we soon found out.

“Roll-call,” commanded the teacher.

“Armbrüster”

“Present”

“Blettner”

“Present”

“Bögl”

“Present”

It went on and on. I still know the names list by heart, sixty years later. Only when the last boy, Zerbe, had answered, did the Herr Professor notice me waiting by the door. He was small and

round and had no neck to support his cannon-ball head. He did not walk, he bounced. All his movements were quick and erratic. He spoke, even during German language lessons, a heavy Bavarian idiom I found hard to understand.

"Come here to me!" he told me. "Name?"

"Hansjörg Gareis".

He pulled out a snuff-box from his pocket, extracted with thumb and index finger a large pinch and sniffed it up in both nostrils, lifting up his frame with a deep inhalation and holding his breath for a moment, and then sneezed noisily. He used a large handkerchief full of colorful printed Alpine flowers to blow his nose, adding another black stain on the cloth. The boys watched it all in awed silence.

"So this is Gareis," the professor announced to the class. Another difference of the Bavarians: everybody called everybody else by the family name and not, as in the rest of the country, by the Christian name.

"Gareis is new. He comes from Prussia. That means I will have to watch him closely. Gareis, you will sit here," he said pointing to the first bench immediately by the teacher's place. To the boy sitting in the other seat he added, "You, if you want to, can move to the last bench." The fellow did not want a Prussian as his neighbor, happily grabbed his books and took off.

* * *

For historical reasons, Bavarians held every German from north of the Main River as Prussian. "Pig-Prussians" they called us. During the 19th century struggles for the union of German speaking kingdoms and dukedoms, Prussia had waged war against Austria, Bavaria and several of the smaller states in order to gain dominance. The Bavarian king had only grudgingly accepted Bismarck's courting for an all-German union, and ever since then there had been a strained relationship, comparable perhaps to the one between Northerners and Southerners in America. But when

it came to the Franko-German War 1870-71, Bavarians had rallied to the cause of Germany, and after the victory over Napoleon III, became part of the newly founded German Reich with the Prussian Wilhelm I as its Kaiser.

Adolf Hitler, being Austrian by birth, had a certain appeal to the Bavarian people since the two states were neighbors and the two spoken dialects are akin to each other. It had perhaps not been accidental that he had staged in Munich his attempt to putsch against the German Reich and the Bavarian State Government on November 9 in 1923. He had failed, of course, but his first Nazi followers had been Bavarians.

At the time when our family arrived in Munich the city had gained the honorary title "Capital of the Movement". In movement the place was indeed. Colossal buildings rose up everywhere, a subway was dug underneath the civic center, the opera and ten theatres had overcrowded performances.

It was difficult to find contact with our respective class-mates. The school system in East Prussia had been quite different and we were teased constantly because we could not speak the dialect. I had to find some field where I would be able to excel. My father suggested some school subject like history or, if that would be too difficult, music. But I decided it would be sports. I would be able to combine having fun with my purpose to become somewhat respected. It was a wise decision because sports not only ranked high in Nazi school curricula, but good athletic results soon brought me some recognition in my *Jungzug*, my unit in the Hitler Youth. At the annual track and field athletics competitions that were organized nation-wide by the Nazi youth organizations and in which practically all German boys and girls participated, I was able to achieve top ranking points.

My father had found for us a comfortable—but far too expensive—apartment in Bogenhausen, the most noble residential area of Munich. It was situated quite close to Prinzregentenstraße, one of the city's broad and splendid avenues built by the Bavarian

kings with many representative buildings on both sides. Prinzregentenstraße ended in a fine square which was flanked by the beautiful baroque facade of a renowned theatre. It was at this square, in a rather unassuming apartment building, where Adolf Hitler stayed whenever he was in Munich. It was the area of town that the members of my Hitler Jugend unit were drawn from.

"This is an order!", said our Jungzugführer. He was 14 and a person to be respected with his colorful ribbons and badges on his uniform. "This is an absolute order. Every single member will be present at our *Sonderdienst* this coming Friday. I will accept no excuse, neither stomach-ache nor aunt's visits."

Sonderdienst was a special meeting over and above the regular Wednesday afternoon assemblies.

"Do you know what will happen on Friday?", he asked, looking around. "You!", he pointed to a stubby little boy called Arnold.

Arnold jumped to his feet, stood at attention, arms straight down, the tips of his middle fingers pressed to the seams of his black shorts: "Yes, Jungzugführer. Our Führer will come to Munich, and the following day will be his birthday."

"Right. So it is clear what is expected from us. We will meet on Friday 1 p.m. sharp, then march in step over to our Führer's house and man the guard of honor. It should be obvious to everyone that our group must be there in full strength."

Now this posed a serious problem. That Friday, the 19th of April, was Claus' birthday and my mother had made a big point that she was not going to accept any excuses either, that I must be present that afternoon to help with the party. It was a real dilemma. I debated in my mind whose reactions I feared more. Finally I stretched my arm up.

"Yes, what is it?"

"Well, it's my brother's 16th birthday on Friday . . ."

"Didn't you hear? No excuses!"

"But my parents said that I have an obligation to my family."

The Jungzugführer raised his voice so that everybody cringed, "Your parents are out of date. Don't they know that we have only one loyalty and that is to our Führer? Perhaps your parents are reactionaries. We have a way to deal with reactionaries, you know. You better stop listening to them, they cannot tell you anymore what to do. Youth must be led by youth!"

The last was one of those phrases that belonged to the basic vocabulary of indoctrination. It could not be argued, it was an undisputed creed. And the boy was so self-assured, his eyes flashed with conviction. I had a bad conscience that I had even raised the issue. Obviously, the Führer's anniversary was much more important than my brother's.

We were all there, one o'clock sharp and, as ordered, marched in step over to Prinzregentenplatz. "*Heute hört uns Deutschland und morgen die ganze Welt,*" we were singing, none of us thinking about the meaning of the words, "Today it is Germany, tomorrow the whole world will listen to us". We took up our position by the entrance of the apartment building and waited. We were not allowed to talk to each other, nor to step out of rank and relieve ourselves around the corner of the house. We waited.

I had seen Hitler several times from a distance—in Allenstein on parade-day, but more often now when he was driving by in his usual car procession. He preferred using an open-top Mercedes with ample room in the back so that he could stand up and enjoy people's jubilation he craved for. Today was different however. Although we were instructed to stand still like ramrods when he would walk the few steps from the car to his house, there would be a chance, if only for a brief moment, to see him from quite close. So we waited.

It must have been almost three hours. We had sent a lookout a bit further down the avenue to give us a sign when the cars would come closer. The boy suddenly waved his arms frantically, our Jungzugführer shouted, "*Stillgestanden!*" and we froze to statues like Lot's wife. The cheers could be heard coming closer and getting louder. A crowd of curious passers-by had collected

around our unit and when they began their "*Heil, Heil, Heil!*" we knew he had arrived.

Our unit leader walked up to the car, smartly stood at attention and we heard him make his report, "My Führer, Jungzug Bogenhausen formed up at your service!" There was a pause and we did not dare to move our eyes to see what was happening. Then I realized that Hitler did not just hurry past us but took his time to look at each one of our group. I caught my breath when he stepped to the boy next to me. There he was with his famous moustache, with his beaked brown hat, just as he looked from millions of pictures to be seen in every office, and the men of his entourage behind him grinned broadly. Then he came up to me. He inclined his head and locked eyes with mine with a searching look that made me freeze. He stuck out his hand and shook mine for a moment with a firm grip, and then moved to the next. No word was spoken during the entire procedure.

I do not know what I felt. I certainly was not attracted to that man, nor did I feel any kind of admiration for him. But the fact was that the most famous man of the world as far as we knew it had shaken my hand. That certainly was the greatest event in the twelve years of my young life. My father had often told me about the time when he was my age and they had lived in Berlin, "When we saw the Kaiser ride by on horse-back, we would take off our caps and our hearts would beat." Now I could understand what he meant.

My brother's party was still in full swing when I came home. I found my mother busy in the kitchen.

"He shook my hand!", I burst out.

"Who—he?" she asked, working on without much interest.

"The Führer! He shook my hand. It's exciting."

"So?", was all she replied. And then, "You can clear away those dishes, I washed them all alone because I had no-one to help." She was in a huff. I knew I could not talk with her now. In fact, I could not talk with anyone about my elation for fear to make

myself ridiculous. My father would be late coming home, and I had to get up early next day. I went to bed right after supper.

At six next morning, in the bathroom, I realized that I had not washed the hand the Führer had shaken, and I took care not to get it wet now either, although I laughed loud and a bit sheepishly into the mirror. Probably I got it all mixed up in my memory, but I think I managed to keep that hand unwashed for a couple of days, and to keep the whole thing a secret, a private triumph.

The Führer's Birthday celebration was, apart from November 9th (the day marking Hitler's attempt to putsch in Munich in 1923), the greatest annual occasion for the Capital of the Movement. Schools and offices were closed on that day so that everybody could take part in the mass assembly on the large square of Königlicher Platz. Hitler, who claimed to be an architect, had chosen this place as a site for some of the first of his pompous orgy of building. Large museums on two opposing sides of the square and, at its southern flank, two shrines or temples built in antique Greek style with flames burning day and night in honor of the early Nazi "martyrs" hinted at the megalomania in the dictator's character. He insisted on checking every detail of work in "his" buildings. The result was a sterile ugliness, and the people of Munich watched it all shaking their heads.

Each one of the dozens of Nazi organizations assembled all their members dressed up in gala on that day in different parts of the town. Everything had been planned for months, and each group wanted to show off with their precision and discipline. Like from the points of a star we then marched in long columns towards its center until the huge open square was packed with people. It was the same procedure every year, come sunshine or hail, and every year the long rows, three abreast, had to stand for hours until pain crept up from feet and hips into every bone. For us children the colossal show provided a game as we counted the number of people fainting and being carried away on stretchers. We made bets that, like last year, most "casualties" would be produced by the brown-shirted SA units because they included

so many older pot-bellied men who looked so ridiculous in their tight-fitting uniforms. Loud-speakers were bawling out march-music, and from time to time a master of ceremonies informed the waiting masses about the progress of the Führer's cavalcade through town.

Then they finally arrived, the entire Party leadership: Goering in his fantastic fairy-uniform, limping Joseph Goebbels, Baldur von Schirach, Himmler, all the men with their resounding titles—and not a single woman among them. Hitler, like Stalin and so many other dictators, did not suffer women in his closest entourage. As they climbed up the many steps leading to a stand that was built in front of Lenbach Gallery, the cheers rose up from the crowd. “*Heil, Heil, Heil!*” we all shouted and roared until our throats were sore. It was not an ordered cheering as later historians have suggested, but much more the overpowering sensation of being part of something big, an emotional phenomenon that was not directed by reason.

Of course, once the long-winding addresses of loyalty to the “beloved Führer” began and droned on for hours, the enthusiasm faded away rapidly. We kids could not understand any of it and I doubt that many of the older people followed the demagogic speeches. They only cheered again after a particularly catchy or well-known phrase like, “*Führer befehl, wir folgen dir!*”—“Give us your orders, Führer, we will obey!”

* * *

About this time my father jotted down in his diary notes about some very unpleasant conversations he had with Hitler Youth leaders. Obviously, the incident at the occasion of my brother's birthday had been reported higher up, because the *Bannführer* and his second in command came to our house and demanded to see my father. They did not dare to confront him in his office at the Academy.

“The arrogance of these teenagers,” my father wrote, “their high-handed smugness was absolutely disgusting. They accused

me, and the Army officers in general, of a lack of all-out patriotism, and of trying to keep our children away from the 'mighty rise of youth into a new age'. They were both good-looking young men, as fresh and healthy as parents could wish their children to be. But they were so fantastically obsessed by their one-sided views, and they put them forward with such self-satisfied insolence, that I was deeply disturbed."

He talked to Claus and me about his misgivings.

"What do you both think of switching to the MHJ, the Navy Hitler Youth? I know the *führer* of their Munich branch. He is an ex-Navy officer and I think I could manage to have you both enrolled in his group."

"I would love that." Claus was quite enthusiastic. All he could think of and talk about anyway was his determination to join the Navy. "The MHJ meet regularly at Starnberger See where they have their own yacht harbor. That would be fun."

"But none of my friends are in the MHJ," I protested. "My Jungzugführer will not like it, he won't let me go."

"You will find new friends. Apart from that, Claus and you would be in the same unit. And you need not talk yourself to your group leader. We can write a letter."

For Claus the matter was settled. I was not yet convinced. "We do not have the right uniforms for the MHJ. We cannot go in our brown outfits to their meetings. We would have to have navy-blue things."

"I will talk to your mother about that," my father calmed me down. "We will see what we can do."

That was the end of the discussion. I was too small then to be able to realize the life-saving effect my father's suggestion had for my brother and me. Our new unit turned out to be one of the few in the nation's huge youth organizations where Nazi indoctrination could be kept down to a minimum. Members were prepared for a Navy career, and only very few were drawn for service in the SS. Claus and I enjoyed, from then on, a comparatively carefree time, learning how to sail, some basic

knowledge of navigation, and useful things like how to make splices and knots.

Running battles like these must have taken place in most German families. But the visible progress in the nation's economy, the dramatic drop in the number of unemployed, and, last not least, astounding results of Hitler's foreign policy dwarfed almost all opposition. People who have grown up in freedom cannot, even if they seriously try, really imagine what the absence of freedom means to a nation and to individuals. The absolute domination of all media of opinion-making which the Party had achieved by that time made it possible for them to shape our thinking as they wished.

* * *

On March 13 in 1938 the *Anschluss* of Austria to the German Reich was proclaimed. It was celebrated as a demonstration of Hitler's peaceful intentions and of his genius as a statesman. All school children were marched into the cinemas to see for themselves the news-reels showing the jubilation of the Austrian people. *Heim ins Reich*, "Austria has come home to the Reich", titled the newspapers. Of course we heard nothing about the brutal pressure the Regime had exercised on the Austrian Government who had fought a desperate struggle against growing Nazi influence. All we were allowed to understand was the overwhelming acclaim of what seemed to be the entire population. Indeed, not a shot had been fired, no blood was shed, and there was a great number of Austrians and people in the other neighboring countries who were attracted to, even enthusiastic about, Nazi ideas. All rumors about the threat of a possible war were silenced after this event. Hitler had reached the peak of his popularity.

An open letter that Winston Churchill had written to the Führer was published widely. Our Professor in Wilhelms-Gymnasium read it to us during history lesson. The British leader

said he would "pray to God to send us a man of your strength of mind and spirit" if his country would ever have to face a national tragedy such as the Germans did in 1918.

My father had been selected to serve as chief arbitrator for a big maneuver in the Hamburg area when he received a telegram ordering him back to Munich immediately. He confessed to his diary:

"I had to report to General von Leeb. I first thought that I misunderstood him when he told me I had been chosen for a special and secret mission, because the operation would mean a sudden military blitz-invasion of Czechoslovakia. I was to take command of a newly formed task force including an Infantry Regiment, a Tank Squadron, two Artillery Groups, sappers and an Intelligence Squad. The units would meet north of Linz and we would march to Budweis in Czechoslovakia in order to open the border for larger German forces ready to enter the country. The General told me this was an action of great importance. If it succeeded it would mean for me extraordinary advance in military rank. He joked, 'This is a *Pour-le-Merite order*', meaning it deserved the highest decoration possible.

"I was deeply shocked. In the middle of peace, I was suddenly confronted with the order to start a war-like action the necessity of which nobody could accept and that had not been foreseeable at all. No hint from any official side had been given, no preparation whatsoever had been made in the Military Academy for such a move. I was caught completely unaware. It was a top secret mission, so I could not talk about it with

my family nor with my comrades. I had only a few hours to pack and set off to Linz very troubled and full of doubts.

"The mission was called off shortly before it was to commence.

"We older army officers were greatly relieved when we re-assembled in Munich. All of us had experienced what war really means. And we all saluted the peaceful solution which, as we believed, the daring and diplomatic cunning of Hitler had accomplished. The exultation of the Sudeten Germans sounded from the loudspeakers and radio-sets with genuine enthusiasm. Germany had thus incorporated the Sudeten Land in the Reich, again without bloodshed and without war."

Preceding this *coup* both the French and the British had urged Czech President Benes to grant autonomy to the areas where the majority of the population was German speaking due to the fact that they had been incorporated into the Czechoslovakian Republic only recently by the Versailles Treaty. But Benes was unable to accept this, afraid of a future of subordination of the non-German part of the people in the region. Still, British Prime Minister Chamberlain came to meet Hitler in Bad Godesberg and brought his government's full support for the Führer's policy of peace. A week after this, in September 1938, the Munich Agreement was signed by Chamberlain, Daladier of France, Mussolini of Italy, and Hitler, settling the re-integration of two and a half million Germans and of the Sudeten Land into the Reich.

The Right Hon. Sir Neville Henderson was British Ambassador in Berlin from 1937 to 1939. His memoirs about this period he called, "Failure of a Mission". At that time, Henderson must have been one of the best informed men in the world as far as the inside situation in Germany was concerned. While the mighty propaganda apparatus which allowed not the

slightest deviation from the Party Line succeeded to hammer into German brains that Providence had bestowed our country with the gift of the Führer, the British Ambassador knew that a turning point had been reached. He wrote:

After Munich, Germany stood at the cross-roads, one finger-post pointing towards Adventure, the other towards Normality.

To the ordinary observer every argument of common sense seemed, in Germany's own interests, to indicate that the latter would be not only the happiest for his people, but also the most prudent course for Hitler himself to follow. Leaving the desires of the mass of the German people out of account, even Hitler himself, after this great but exhausting success during the past six years, should have been yearning for a period of tranquil existence, during which he would be able not only to consolidate the unity which he had accomplished, but also give scope to his much advertised and already partially commenced artistic and constructive plans for beautification of Greater Germany.

If Hitler had pursued a fair and honest and constructive policy thereafter in Central and Eastern Europe, Great Britain was prepared to be disinterested and helpful.

If only! If only Great Britain and France had taken a firm stand in Munich, when they had a chance to do so, to tell Hitler, "Enough!" Yet not only the German people, an entire generation of statesmen who themselves have made eminent history, seemed to be lulled by the diabolic master deceiver. Many observers believe, and they are able to support it with overwhelming documentation, that at the time of the Munich Conference, the combined military and economic strength of Great Britain and

France alone would have been a threat big enough to stop Hitler from further adventure. German industry was only beginning their massive war-production, and the number of men under arms was just a fraction of that which the other two countries could muster. But too many people wanted to believe in the continuation of peace. In many European lands strong factions of pacifists put pressure on their governments to try to settle all differences via negotiations. Too few—Germans and non-Germans—had realized that it takes very tough arguments to convince ideologically beset dictators.

The man the German Army would have favored as their Commander in Chief was General Beck. My father and his comrades were puzzled and sad when the General, out of the blue, took his leave, because the reasons for his resignation were not revealed. Today it is known that, at the time of the annexation of Austria and the occupation of the Sudeten Land, Beck had written three memoranda to Hitler in which he strongly denounced the Führer's "War Policy". General von Brauchitsch, Hitler's champion for the position of CinC, was asked by Beck to countersign the memoranda but refused to do so. After that, the General retired. Other leading officers like General Freiherr von Fritsch and Field Marshal Blomberg were sacked for dubious reasons put forward by the Party. As a result, a number of Staff officers planned, as was found out only years later, a putsch to overthrow the Regime in September 1938. It never came to pass like so many other attempts that were to follow. For the majority of our people all those who tried to oppose the country's "rise to glory" were traitors. The tragedy took its course.

* * *

My bench neighbor in school was Armbrüster whose name came first in the daily roll-call. He was not a friend of mine. He smelled. His father was an SA official in the Munich town administration, and that fact in itself was reason enough for me to avoid a closer

friendship. On the morning of November 10 in 1938, Armbrüster whispered in my ear, "I must talk to you during the break". He seemed to shiver with excitement.

"I was up all night, did not sleep at all," he began after dragging me to a corner of the school yard where we could not be overheard. "There was a big fire quite close to our house."

"You mean an apartment house or something?" I wanted to know.

"No, no. The Jewish Synagogue burned down."

"Did the Fire Brigade not come?"

"Yes, it was there. But they did not let it come near the fire. They wanted to let it burn down completely."

"But that is terrible," I protested, "who were *they*?" There was something badly wrong. That must be the reason why he was so secretive about it all. "Nobody could want to stop the Fire Brigade from putting out a fire in the middle of town!"

Armbrüster was uncomfortable: "I don't know who they are. I guess it was the same group who put fire to the synagogue in the first place, perhaps SS or Gestapo people. They must have orders from Berlin."

"Were people in the building?" I asked him.

"No. It would have been only Jews anyway. But I know for sure that none of them were inside. Because some of us went in when it was already in flames. You should have seen all the gold and treasures they have collected. They must be terribly rich."

The boy was pathetically proud of his heroic action. I had to admit that I would have been far too afraid to enter someone else's property, especially when it was on fire. But I did not want him to know. I said, "I don't believe you. You did not go in yourself."

"Of course I did!" Looking left and right if someone was watching, he pulled out a small leather box and opened it. In it was a collection of precious stones. He told me that he and a gang of youths had robbed the synagogue of everything they

thought to be valuable, while outside uniformed rogues made sure that the old building would be totally destroyed.

The break was over. I was unable to give attention to the following lessons. Queer thoughts went through my mind. Armbrüster had said that if people were hurt in the flames it would have been only Jews. *Only Jews!* There had been Jewish boys in our class, in Allenstein and here in Munich as well. The only thing different about them was that, whenever we separated for Catholic and Protestant religious instruction, they had a free hour, and we were jealous. Apart from that we had played with them like with everybody else. But then, I suddenly remembered, all of them had, one after the other, disappeared in the course of time. We had not taken notice, at least I had not, but now there was no Jewish boy with us anymore. *Only Jews!*

"But the people who laid the fire—they are criminals," I thought. "They must be punished. I must ask father about that."

After school that day I did not go home straight away. I was really disturbed. I walked to the city center and came on to a frightening scene. Some of the most beautiful shops had their windows smashed and crude six-pointed stars smeared on their doors. The entrances were guarded by black SS and brown SA armed men who let no-one pass in or out. There were large groups of dangerous and brutal looking toughs roaming the streets who kept shouting, "*Juda verreck!*"; "Juda must perish!" Some police were there, too, but they seemed to just look on. I ran home in terror.

The previous night became known as *Reichskristallnacht*. It had been organized nation-wide by Joseph Goebbels as a kind of declaration of open war against all things Jewish. Hostilities and incriminations had been there for some time, of course, but one had not dreamed that the Regime would go as far as this brutal and abominable action of all-out destruction.

My father was beside himself with anger. They had a meeting with all officers of the Military Academy to discuss the events. It was reported that in other German cities there had been similar acts of violence to those in Munich. The outrage was unanimous.

But no general resistance was formed, no public outcry was heard. Not in the published opinion, of course, but also not in the universities, nor in the churches—not powerful enough to halt the evil—and certainly not in the army. Ever since then, it has been impossible for the outside world to understand why we Germans as a civilized people did not rise as one strong body in those late November days in 1938, when it was obvious to all that our country moved on a terribly wrong track.

I have come to believe that it was in the period immediately following *Kristallnacht* that we, the German people, all of us, have become guilty. Later, when the crime grew to its unprecedented magnitude, during the last years of the war, we were far too enmeshed in the steel web of dictatorship. Then there was no way out. It was in the autumn of 1938 that we missed our historic chance to show human greatness.

The pogrom was quickly forgotten or suppressed. It was explained away as a rather unfortunate episode. Life became normal again. Most people had their jobs and went after their careers like anywhere else in the world. At the family table we talked about ordinary things such as our school marks—Annemie's were mostly good, Claus' average, and mine bad, very bad, except in Sports, Music, Drawing and Religious Instruction. We discussed the first—and only—car we ever owned as a family. My father had bought it second hand for 100 Reichsmark. It was a square, wine-red vehicle which devoured gasoline. When we approached a slightly steeper hill with it, the family had to get out of the car and push. But we loved *Robert le Diable* dearly and only regretted that the chances for joy-riding were so rare. My father just could not afford the time.

* * *

My mother had two sisters. One of them had married a Navy officer who later became Admiral with the submarines. The other's husband was a farmer, a tenant of a large State-Farm in

one of the most fertile agricultural parts of the country. There we spent our most memorable holidays.

The estate, including a village of some thirty small houses, belonged to the State, but my uncle managed it as if it was his property. For us children, the wide fields were *his* fields, and the men and women who worked on them *his* people. The farm house was quite a large building with more than twenty rooms including a big ball-room and such useful places as billiard-room, flower-room and all sorts of other chambers which we thought to be absolutely luxurious and grand. The house opened in the back to a huge lawn on which sheep grazed and, in the distance, a soggy pond with carp in it and ducks and a rowing boat on it. A paradise for swimming, hiking, horse-back riding, fox and hare shooting—everything our young hearts could desire.

My uncle and aunt had four daughters, my cousins, of my age and younger. They and the kids from the village were my playmates, because both Annemie and Claus would already take their meals with the grown-ups while we children were served separately at the “cats-table”. I liked this arrangement since it allowed us to escape the constant stern surveillance of our elders. Especially in the mornings, we had the breakfast table with all the delicious home-made bread and jam and fresh butter all for ourselves.

It was harvest time, and it promised to be a rich crop of wheat and rye. An easy atmosphere of satisfaction made everybody look forward to the last carts, piled high up with sheaf, to be drawn by sturdy horses to the thrashing barn. My cousins and I were chattering and giggling away at our morning meal when, unexpectedly and suddenly, my uncle came in to get a mid-morning snack. He was a quiet and comfortable man, normally. But this morning, September 1 in 1939, he barked at us on the top of his voice, “Stop your baby-babbling, at once!”

And then he said the words that instantly altered the course of the lives of millions round the globe. As abruptly as they pushed us children from innocent happiness into fear and confusion, so the meaning of these few words shattered the hopes and plans of every family in our country and beyond.

“We are at war!”

What would that entail? would we be involved? would my father have to go to Poland where our troops were advancing since early that day? “We are at war!” I could not imagine how it would be. We had all read the legends of the Great War of 1914-1918. Then, there had been something like patriotic enthusiasm when the first troop transport trains rolled, flag-bedecked, towards France. It was not like that now. The inflaming propaganda that sounded from the radio-sets created only a spirit of worry and depression. Had a glimpse into the future been permitted, it would have been despair.

2. At War

A summer night in 1940 saw the first serious bombing of Munich. For many weeks before, we had not one full night's sleep. Generally, around midnight, the sirens began to howl, threatening and frightening. I was never to get used to the sound. There was something unrelenting to it. One of the sirens was situated on the roof of the nearest academy building. In summer it roared through the open window right into my room and it always kicked me out of bed. We all had our survival kits packed ready to be grabbed, and rushed down to the basement. Until that day, however, it had always been false alarm. Although my mother regularly protested, I had, after a while, most nights climbed to the roof of our three-story house—it felt much better there than in the claustrophobic confinement of the coal cellar.

But this time I had just put my head out of the skylight, when all at once hundreds of flak cannons, small ones and big ones, began to bang and bellow, and I could hear the deep hum of approaching planes, many planes. I almost flew down the stairs and plunged down on the wooden bench beside my mother, trying to hide my shivering fright. Then hell broke loose and everybody grabbed his or her neighbor's arm trying to find comfort. The rising whine of falling bombs and the deafening blasts all round made us think at first that our house had been hit. The ground shook, dust trickled from the low ceiling and the lonely bare bulb hanging from a wire for light began to flicker, and then went out completely. A candle was lit. Good old-

fashioned candle-stick! So much more reliable these days than electricity.

We soon learned that the high-explosive bombs one could hear coming down for several seconds, although sounding fear-inspiring, were of no immediate danger, because they would drop some distance away. Those falling closer would only produce a short violent hiss, immediately followed by the detonation. The long octagonal incendiary sticks which were dropped in masses one could not hear at all coming down. They were made to penetrate the roofs and to start fires inside the buildings. But if they were discovered soon enough, one could throw them out with a shovel. Terrible were what our propaganda apparatus called "phosphorous bombs". Their petrol-benzole contents splashed on impact and, combined with the oxygen of the air, ignited intense fires that could hardly be extinguished.

When the all-clear sounded we all stumbled out into the open to find the entire sky red from burning fires, so bright one could have read a newspaper. There was no visible destruction, though, in our immediate vicinity. I remember standing there in the court yard with my mother, arms clasped around each other, not speaking, just watching, for a long while. Of the family, there had been just the two of us that night. Annemie was away, in her "year of duty", working on a farm somewhere in central Germany. Claus had been promoted to navy ensign some while ago and went through another training course. And my father was in Bohemia, re-shaping his troops after the end of the campaign in France.

There was no more sleep that night. Early in the morning I took my bike and pedaled to the center of town. It was a sunny day, but the sun could not penetrate the thick, heavy smoke that hovered like a London fog over the entire city. The reek of burning houses was overpowering—all my life I could not get that smell out of my system anymore. Many roads were blocked with rubble. The first hours after a big earth quake must be like that. Fire police and ambulances with their horns going full blast

constantly rushed through the streets like in a disturbed ant heap. I saw bleeding people being carried out of ruins; there may have been dead ones among them. Familiar buildings were not there anymore, they were just gone, leaving piles of stones and a maze of steel and wire in their places. One could look into the bedrooms and kitchens in houses where the whole front had come down. There were pictures on the walls, furniture in their places. Strange to think that people had their homes, their comfort, their seclusion there just a few hours ago, and now it was all laid open, as in a museum, for all to peep into.

Since we had moved to our house on the campus of the Military Academy, most of my pals lived on the other side of Munich, in Bogenhausen, where we had stayed before. I made my way there, my mind confused, my feelings numbed. I had to talk with someone. My best friend, with whom I had trained track running only the day before, lived in a strictly residential area. His family was quite wealthy. They owned a beautiful villa surrounded by a well kept flower garden. I was regarded there as another son, always welcome to share a meal or spend a night with them. Coming closer, I realized that the area had suffered especially hard from the raid. My friend's house had had a direct hit. It had vanished; not one wall was left standing while the flower beds around it seemed unharmed and peaceful.

"Most of the family have survived," a neighbor told me. She was clearing away with a brush the broken glass from her windows. She seemed to be the only living person around. I was glad she talked to me. I did not want to look at the dead pile that had been a place of life and laughter.

"What about Manfred?" I asked her, and noticed that she half turned away at the mention of my friend's name. She busied herself with her broom.

I repeated, "What about Manfred?"

The neighbor looked at me hard, "Manfred is dead! He did not feel so well last night and stayed in his room upstairs when the raid came. They have found no trace of him. The others left

in the morning to stay with their relatives in the country. All they took with them was their survival kits."

It flashed through my mind that I had discussed with my friend yesterday to spend the night with them. "But it cannot be," I stammered. "I was here last evening! Had I remained here it would have been the end of my life."

"Well, you were lucky," said the neighbor. She wanted to end the conversation and go on with her work. "You better go home now."

"But we are only boys!" I could not comprehend it, I was so bewildered. "We are just 14! We have not really lived yet!"

The lady slowly shook her head and walked away, leaving me standing there.

Little did we know that the horrors of that summer night were just a relatively harmless overture to what we would have to live through in the years to come. But it was astounding how people took catastrophe in their stride. When I came home with my bike my mother scolded me for not having gone to school as would have been my duty. Did I have no sense of discipline at all? And indeed, business, administration, the factories, schools, continued as normal with almost no interruption. The rubble from the main streets was cleared away quickly, often neatly stacked on the road side. Repair teams had fixed the overhead cables of trams where they had been broken, and soon the town hummed with traffic like before. People did not complain about losing loved ones and often all they had owned. On the contrary: there was a strange sense of having joined the battle, alongside our front-line soldiers, a determination not to be beaten. Munich had become part of the Home Front.

I had built a little detector radio with some copper coils and a stiff wire whose tip had to be scratched over the irregular surface of a crystal. Earphones that squeezed ones head completed the apparatus. If you were lucky you could hear some music from the closest wireless station, and in the evenings, I would strain to

listen to the news. A large map of Europe covered one wall of my room. Every day I would move colored pins marking the advance of the front lines in the different theaters. My father's pencil-written diary arrived each fortnight or so and I would lap up every word when my mother read it to us. My father jotted down the events of each day, simply reporting and hardly ever using emotional language. Although never intended, in the course of the campaigns his notes became an epic story of the untold hardships of the ordinary infantry soldier, of courage, human endurance, of loyalty and comradeship. For me, these men were heroes defending our common fatherland.

A letter arrived from Claus from somewhere on the French Atlantic coast. I was quite excited because he was not allowed to disclose the name of the town where he was stationed and therefore used all sorts of deviations to let us know where he was. Top secret. Everything regarding the war and the forces was secret. The Ministry of Propaganda had issued posters which appeared all over the country, showing just a sinister black shape of a person, obviously a criminal, and the words, "Shh—the enemy is listening in!". *The Enemy*—who was that if one had to be careful about what to say, even at home? Probably, the term comprised not only "The Bolsheviks", who were supposed to be our allies, but who were always mentioned in one breath with "The Jewish Capital" of whom we knew for certain that, whoever that was, they were out to destroy Germany; the enemy was not only the British, French and Americans, who for reasons I could not comprehend had decided not to rally at our side and in our cause to defeat once and for all the deadly tidal wave of Communism. Obviously, the enemy was also right in our midst, it was all the critics of the Führer and of what he was achieving for our country. In my eyes, people like that were just not patriots. They would listen in secret to the BBC radio news—a strictly forbidden criminal act—and they would believe the British rather than our leaders. Of course, they had to be silenced.

Claus wrote that the war would soon be over. The effect of both the German bombers destroying the British arms industry, and of the tightening blockade of the Island through our navy, particularly our submarines, would leave the English no other choice but to give up. And once the British were defeated, we would be able to concentrate all our efforts on the other fronts. Claus talked about his plans of what he would do after the war, the countries he would visit, the books he would read, the concerts he would listen to. I began to glow with envy for him since he was old enough to do a man's job, for his smart navy uniform, for the adventure of being trained for submarine service. Why had I not been born four years earlier! The war would be finished before I could join. But anyway, war or peace: I was going to be a navy man. In spite of my father's creed that the only true soldiers were the infantry.

* * *

While I am hacking this into my typewriter, more than half a century after the events, I am looking at a photo on my desk in front of me. It was taken in the back yard of our dark-red brick house in *Schwere-Artillerie-Straße* in Munich, around Christmas time in 1941. The picture shows our family of five and our beloved long-hair dachshund *Purzel*. We were lucky then not to know that it was the last time ever that we were all together. In the photo, only my mother gives an impression of complete happiness. In a way, she carried the heaviest burden of us all, having to fear for her loved ones day after day, month after month, year after year. For her, it must have been heaven to have all her men at home. My father in the picture looks small, all too thin and worn out, and Claus almost lost in his ensign uniform—as if he had not grown into it. Annemie, with *Purzel* in her arms, still a teenager, seems to have a good time. And I look like the small boy I was, with my broad Hitler Youth leather belt with the silver buckle saying “Our Honor is Loyalty”.



Last family picture, Munich 1941

We just enjoyed those days, endlessly singing our many, many old Christmas hymns. We did not talk about “serious matters”—my parents may have between themselves, but not to us kids. Before he left, my father gave me a copy of one of the last lectures he had given to his officer candidates, “National-Socialism and the Army”. I studied and kept this document as one of my most precious possessions for a long time. Unfortunately, it got lost later. Still, the content has remained clearly in my memory; in fact, it has influenced my own thinking more than anything else. “National-Political Instruction” was the only subject the commanders of military academies had to teach in person. For all the other, military subjects, written instructions existed clearly outlining the curriculum. But the ideological doctrine of Nazism was so vague and confused that it could never be described in understandable textbooks. On the other hand, political instruction was strictly forbidden inside the army. Lessons therefore were a balance act and teachers had to make up their own philosophical structure.

In preparation for this lecture, my father had asked each one of the 200 officer candidates in his group to write down the one thought or phrase uppermost on their minds at the time. To his surprise, for two thirds of the young men the question of the relationship of the armed forces to Christianity was the most important one. Second were the misgivings of many about the growing strength and influence of armed SS-Troops besides the regular army. Hitler had, after the proclamation of compulsory military service in 1935, ordered the creation of this Black Guard, a party organization, for "special tasks inside the Reich which would not collide with those of the army". From the beginning, however, the *Waffen-SS* became a serious rival, by far better equipped with the most modern arms, superior training facilities and a constant, hypocritical, derisive attitude towards the old-fashioned conventional soldiers. Their members were the "elite" of the Hitler Youth, most of them trained in the new *Ordensburgen* or *Napola*, exclusive colleges. *Waffen-SS* were under the direct command of Heinrich Himmler, a sinister personality not much given to public appearances, but later turning out to be the devil incarnate, the monster, for all times symbolizing the evil of Nazism, the prototype of the heartless, cold-blooded mass-murderer.

For many of the German youth at that time it was still the dream to be part of that elite. It was mine, anyway. They were always portrayed as shining examples of young patriots ready to lay down their lives for Führer and Reich, tall, strong, blond and blue-eyed, the warriors of the nation. Yes, I wanted to be part of that blood-brothers order. It was only many years later that I realized it had been a blessed fate not to have been asked to join the *Waffen-SS*. Many others were not so fortunate and later committed indescribable crimes, obeying orders from other obedience-machines. Had I been in their place, I know that I would not have had the strength to disobey. I had to live with the fact that I belong to the vast majority of human beings who, facing a crowd of hooligans manhandling or killing a fellow

human being, would rather turn away than risk one's own life.- Of course, my father would have never permitted my joining any of the more violent Nazi organizations, and his position as high-ranking military officer would have enabled him, during the first years of the war, to stop any such attempt.

Studying his lecture in 1941, I began, also, to have a different attitude toward Nazi institutions. Not that my father developed any anti-tendencies—that would have been too dangerous and it would have been contrary to his own convictions at the time. But he talked to those young men passionately about the need of a Christian faith at the core of any army. In his religious faith the oath they had all sworn was of the utmost importance, and the allegiance to serve and defend the fatherland the supreme order. He even quoted Hitler, a Catholic (on paper) till his ignominious end, who ever so often talked about his faith in "Providence". Anyone, according to my father, who tried to diminish, ridicule or even attack this all-important Christian belief could not, at the same time, be a true German patriot.

* * *

In June 1941, Germany declared war on Russia. Nobody knew of the theoretical "war-game" which Hitler had played a long time before that date, with a closely selected group of loyalists and some generals. It was called "Barbarossa Case", we heard later. While to the world at large the Führer boasted truthfulness to contracts and loyalty to allies, in his mind the attack on the mighty Soviet Union had long been decided. His lust for power was by far greater than his capacity for reason. He could not bear the idea of the existence of a mightier God than himself. But all we, the people, knew was from the headlines in the papers about the ungodly Stalin, with whom we had a treaty of non-aggression, now playing false! We read about Bolshevik massing of troops and plans to invade Poland in order to use that poor and beaten country as a huge deployment area for the fatal attack on

Germany. Dreadful visions of another Ghengis Khan, of another age of red Huns dominating Europe were painted in inflammatory speeches by Joseph Goebbels and others. We had no alternative but to believe it.

We entered into a dramatically different dimension of the war. My father, now Major General, soon wrote about fabulous victories and unheard-of forward movements, of the superiority of our new arms and weapons. But he also wrote about painful losses in his own ranks, caused mostly not in open battle but by the Soviet tactic of partisan warfare and by ruthless polit-comissars who forced masses of unarmed Kulaks at gun-point to attack the German lines, wave after wave dying like flies. They were supposed to take the guns from killed Germans and then advance again. But our men were invincible, I thought. Soon those *Untermenschen* would all be thrown beyond the Ural mountains, and one day the entire world would be grateful for the sacrificial fight of our soldiers.

In the following winter Annemie went for a skiing holiday in the Alps, and she returned home somehow different. I could not figure out why she gave that impression. She had softened in her attitude to me, I thought. She seemed to live in another sphere, with a soft smile in her face, and she showed much less of that benevolent sufferance toward her six-years-younger little brother which I had come to dislike thoroughly. What was it? She would not give away anything, not to me anyway. Perhaps she talked with mother. It bothered me that the two obviously shared some knowledge about things I was not included in. Women! I did not have the experience yet of how somebody looked and behaved when in love. So that thought never crossed my mind.

The secret was lifted when one day Hans-Joachim appeared at our house. Annemie had often brought men home—her partners in dancing-classes and quite a number of officer candidates from the academy. They all had been harmless flirts. This one was different. It was “serious”. He came in his navy

captain's uniform and his presence filled our flat in a way I had not experienced before. He was tall and strong and he looked simply smashing. He owned a natural courteousness and good manners, a balm to my mother, and he gave me the feeling of being taken seriously as a real person. He laughed a lot, and he laughed with his eyes. Many of his predecessors had more or less accepted my being around just as one of those bothering extras that come with getting to know a girl. Hansjochen, as we were allowed to call him, was very different. I took to him the moment I set my eyes on him. I had not known Annemie had it in her to attract such a man. I wanted to become like him.

Strange that the impressions of the few days Hansjochen stayed with us on his first visit should have been of such immense importance to me, so much more important than the multitude of world events happening around us at the same time. Now, almost a life-time later, details from Hansjochen's looks, his views on life, the stirrings of my imagination for my own future which he aroused, all this is vividly present in my memory. Not realizing it then, I needed my father badly. But he was unreachable, endless miles away. To my letters to him I committed nothing of what went on in my mind and heart. Those letters were full of phrases meaning to be encouraging and uplifting, about the Final Victory and God Damn our Enemies. It must have been heart-rending to my father to be out of touch with the real me. Hansjochen, on the other hand, became my confidant, or so I imagined.

Of course, there were no men older than myself left at home. There were only the Nazi officials who ran the administration, but we had hardly any real touch with them, and socially none whatsoever. All our acquaintances, the male ones in particular, were away in the war. To my mind comes only one grown-up, apart from Hansjochen, whom I trusted: the pastor who gave us religious instruction preparing us for Confirmation which for German Lutherans is always celebrated as the feast of a person becoming accepted as a member of the Church. He was an

interesting personality. He had been a high-ranking Hitler Youth leader until, for reasons he did not talk about, he had left the Party to follow his calling to become a parson. He was a military padre, in officers rank, one of the thousands like him who served in the armed forces. He knew our language and he knew the problems and questions of a youth for whom the extremity of Hitler's Germany was normality. There was simply no alternative for us. We had no access to comparison with other nations or cultures. If, at that time, I had any faith in an Almighty God, it must have been laid there by that pastor. He was the only male guest in our home on my big day. All the others were ladies—the wives of my father's fellow officers at the Academy. They had collected money among them and gave me, as their present, of all things a German version of Shakespeare's works. The bible text the parson had chosen for my life as a Christian was, "Blessed are the pure of heart for they will see God".

In spite of daily attacks by British planes on our larger cities, one could still travel in Germany at that time. Of course, timetables were not reliable any more and trains were unbelievably crowded. Most times one could enter compartments only through the windows after heaving and pushing in all the baggage. On the engines and on many of the wagons it was painted in large white letters, "Wheels must turn for Victory". While traveling, trains often stopped for longer periods because rails were being repaired, or stations had just been bombed, or because stationary objects would less often be targets for low flying fighter planes. All this did not excite people anymore. My mother and I had a subscription for concerts played in the big Odeon, the Munich Concert Hall, directed by some of our best-known conductors. It happened several times that in the middle of some symphony the sirens sounded and a thousand people, and the orchestra, moved silently and disciplined, as if rehearsed, into a nearby bunker. And after the all-clear, the concert would continue.

I loved those concerts—Bach, Beethoven, Brahms and Bruckner, my favorite “Four B”—and the atmosphere of so many people finding joy and comfort and getting lost in sound, forgetting all hardships for a few hours. To help my small budget of pocket money, I also regularly went to the stately Opera House, acting as one of many extras in mass-scenes. I got to know many big operas that way from back-stage. We were not allowed to say anything on stage apart from producing the famous murmur. But we were beautifully dressed up with ancient helmets and halberds or slouch hats and shepherd’s crooks. When no children were to appear in the crowd, I had long beards pasted to my chin to hide my callow face. It was just great, and I was paid one Reichsmark for every night. Munich, the *Capital of the Movement*, of course had to allow for the Führer’s musical taste and therefore felt obliged to produce at least one Wagner opera every year. I did not appreciate those very much, they were too pompous and enormous for my liking.

* * *

“We are advancing towards Moscow”, my father wrote in his diary. “We have orders, early to-morrow morning to attempt to cross the Nara river. The last days have been a constant enormous stress on officers and men, and the numbers in the division have been painfully diminished. Visiting each one of the advanced positions which I try to do every day, I was able to see through my binoculars the hazy shades of the Moscow sky-line on the horizon. But we will have to pause. After marching for several thousand kilometers, constantly fighting, the boots of the men are used up and there is no replacement in sight. The mud period has begun. For tanks and armored cars there is hardly any movement possible. We are stuck. Field Marshal von Kluge came to my command post at Uspenskoje in order to inspect the fighting force and the morale of the division. I told him in clear terms—it took me half an hour—about the condition of the

men and the equipment, the lack of officers and battle-experienced soldiers. I told him that I saw no chance whatever to carry forward any attack. The division must be taken out from the front-line for recuperation. Kluge agreed. Thus encouraged, I wrote down my report and sent it to General Schmundt to be passed on to Hitler so that he might get a picture of the reality at the central front-line. I doubt, though, that it will get through to him."

The report did not reach the Führer, like countless others. On Christmas-Day, the middle section of the German front in Russia had—for the first time—to retreat in a massive way. On that very day, organizing the withdrawal of his division, my father drove through the village of Tarutino. He stood before the monument on the village square marking the battle of Tarutino in 1812 when Napoleon's mighty army had suffered its final defeat. Then, like in 1941, a terrible winter had broken the strength of a so-far-invincible army. Then, as now, the men had not been equipped for what Stalin called his strongest ally, "Marshal Winter". Deep snow made every movement a colossal effort, and thousands froze to death. It was the hour of the winter-hard, cold-resistant, tough and durable Russian *Kulak* with his life-time experience of surviving icy snow-storms and temperatures of 40 and more degrees below zero. At home in Germany, millions of mothers and sisters and aunts were feverishly knitting socks and gloves and woolen underwear—but all the tons of material did not reach the far away front-line anymore. The fortune of war had turned against us even if we did not realize it yet.

When in the following February, at the mighty Ugra river, the Soviet advance was stopped and our armies were able to re-establish a solid line of resistance, my mother and I read between the lines of my father's letters the first serious doubt in the soundness of the strategic concept of the Supreme Command. My father and the other senior front-line officers, *front-swine* they were called, knew that something must be terribly wrong "up there". Could it be that *Gröfaz* (from *größter Feldherr aller*

Zeiten, - greatest strategist of all times) after all was *not* the military genius which the great victories all over Europe and in Africa, on land, on sea and in the air, suggested? Was it still justified that an entire nation put their complete trust and faith in one single person? Rumors about his irrational and autocratic behavior we heard more and more. Who, for instance, was responsible for the orders to hold out to the last living man in advanced and vulnerable positions, orders that consequently led almost to the annihilation of many divisions, that caused the senseless loss of so much blood? Again, as often before, the only answer to such nagging doubts that troop-commanders were able to find was that they, submerged in local battles and without knowledge of the situation in other sections of far-away war theaters, could not have an overall picture of the general strategic concept.

But there was really no time to think and nourish misgivings, not for the fighting soldiers nor for us at the home-front. If you are in the middle of a boxing match you don't pause to ponder about your own lack of battle preparation or about the qualities of your trainer. At school, we competed with each other telling stories about the heroic deeds of our fathers and brothers and what we would do ourselves once we were old enough to join in the fight. Hansjochen had been out in the ocean for the first time as submarine commander. He came on leave and we all celebrated his engagement with Annemie. I was full of questions how it had been and how many tons of enemy ships they had drowned. But he had changed and was short of words. They had been through attacks with depth charges, an experience which affected the nervous systems of submariners for the rest of their lives. Many went round the bend and others had to be given psychiatric treatment. Hansjochen had lost some of his lovable care-freeness. But during the few days he was with us he became even more than before a second brother to me.

Due to the circumstances, their engagement time was very short. The Führer and the regime encouraged young couples to marry early and to produce as many children as possible. New

blood for the fatherland. There were a great many long-distance marriages when men could not get home-leave for the celebration. My father, as troop-commander, had to conduct many such ceremonies while, at the same time at home, the brides went through a similar ritual and became officially wed. It was weird, but in countless cases children were not born out of wed-lock this way, even if they never got to know their fathers who were killed in action before they had a chance to see their offspring. Women with four children and more were decorated with the *Mothers Cross*, and quite a few wore it like a war medal when they sat in the front-row of party functions. It was a general fad to show off with ones patriotic merits by wearing some kind of uniform with all sorts of chevrons and stripes and colorful insignia of rank, or badges and medals. I boasted with some of those myself.

Luckily, Hansjochen was able to attend his own wedding to my sister in Munich. It must have been a marvelous occasion with "peace-like" food and even enough alcoholic beverages, many guests and music and dances, after a moving service in the garrison church. My own memory of it is blurred because I had come down with one of my frequent inflammations of the middle ear. My eardrums must look like a crater-field from all the piercing and bursting. I was so much in pain that day I had to withdraw to my room after church and hide my head under the pillows. We had no aspirins or other pain-killers, and even doctors were so rare one could not expect a visit unless one was dying. The only thing I remember is that, late at night when the party was almost over, my new brother-in-law came into my room and sat down on my bed, put his head into his hands, wept, and kept sobbing, "Everything is so dreadfully sad!" Of course, he was in a state of total inebriation, and next morning proclaimed that it had been the most wonderful day in his life. Annemie was radiant, more beautiful than ever.

A week before the wedding, news had come of my father's promotion to Lieutenant General and commander of the 98th

Infantry Division. His troop's valor had been mentioned in the radio bulletins of the Army Supreme Command, and I was no end proud. Before the war, all army generals and members of the diplomatic corps and cabinet ministers had to be addressed as *Excellency*. The Nazis had abolished this custom, but in my letter of congratulation to my father, I started with *Excellency* and told him how proud I was and promised that in my life I would hold up the traditions he had brought me up in. We had come to style our letters, all letters, in the knowledge of the fact that they were all opened and censored by the almighty control apparatus the Nazis had installed, and that more often than not whole passages were blackened out, even in private messages.

Claus had sent a number of films to be developed. He had taken the risk of taking pictures of his own submarine. It passed control unnoticed, and I was fascinated to see it. He was a lieutenant now and second in command on his ship. Dated September 8, he wrote that he and his crew were eagerly expecting their first action in the Atlantic. I still have the letter. It is heavily smudged as if someone had walked over it with wet boots. It is written in the funny navy slang, consciously using misspellings and idiotic idioms, boisterous, so one can feel almost physically his relief now, finally, to start doing the real job.



Claus as Navy Lieutenant

Three weeks later my mother received a telegram by special delivery from Navy Supreme Command, telling her in two terse sentences that my brother's submarine was missing and that it had to be assumed that he and his comrades had died the "hero's death for Führer, Volk and Fatherland". When I came home from school, I found my mother in our living-room, sitting rigidly in the old dark leather easy-chair. She gave me the telegram but otherwise did not move, just stared into the distance with a faraway look in her pale face. She had no words and no tears, but she kept herself upright, not slumping. I could not fathom what I read. I was simply unable to comprehend what it meant to have

lost my brother and, for my parents, their older son. My soul was empty and the one thing I noticed was my mother suffering so terribly while I was unable to give her any consolation. Claus had been only 19. For days we all walked on tip-toe in the house. My mother, when the finality began to sink in, showed an astounding composure. Never before had I loved her so much. But I could not talk to her about it, and hated myself for it.

* * *

There was no time for mourning. The bombing attacks became more and more frequent. Especially since the Americans had entered the war, the raids came in broad day-light now and not only under the cover of darkness. The winter was very, very hard with so little heating fuel available and so many homeless people forced to live in draughty basements and crowded camps. All of this was dwarfed, however, by the news of the catastrophe of Stalingrad. 284,000 German soldiers, the entire 6th Army, had been encircled in the completely devastated city. Hitler had given strictest orders to General Paulus to hold Stalingrad, a city of ruins, "to the last man". No appeals, even threats, from the military leadership, would move the Führer in his apparent madness. He was willing to sacrifice the blood of a quarter million men for his "strategic concept" to bind as many Russian forces as possible to this one place, hoping thus to relieve the other parts of the eastern front. In November, Stalin announced to the world that "146,000 German bodies had been collected and burned." The survivors started their death-march to the POW, prisoner-of-war camps in Siberia. Only a fraction of the once proud army was to reach home after many more years. It took months before the details of this blow became known. The official Nazi propaganda would not admit defeat, not even this one. Nobody could foresee the consequences of this development. The regime now had to draw on all the reserves. We were told that we must all be unshakable, like the Führer, in our belief in the final victory. All the sacrifices

would not be in vain. Our engineers were working hard on new "miracle weapons" so powerful that they would finish our enemies in no time.

All through the winter months rumors had it at school that soon we boys would have our chance to prove our patriotism. Nobody knew anything for certain but that only added to our growing excitement. Then, in January 1943, all over Germany a proclamation by the Führer was published in all high schools that on February 15th the classes of 16 years old (like many others I was still 15) would be drafted as "auxiliary" troops to the flak batteries situated around the larger towns, in order to play our part in the defense of the country. Our school hall shook from the shouts of jubilation after the bulletin was read. What an adventure. We were issued real air-force uniforms including parade outfits and long gray-blue winter overcoats with real military leather belts round it—all the works. To distinguish us from the regular soldiers, our uniforms had a small triangle on the left arm with the letters "LH" on it, for *Luftwaffen-Helfer*. Of course we joked from the beginning that in truth the letters stood for Last Hope, that we were the last reserve contingent of the nation.

We were all ready in our new outfits and with our cardboard boxes long before the buses came to take us out to the barracks in the flat marsh country north of Munich. On the way, the jabber and singing was so loud you could not understand your own words. But the battery commander, a young captain, had us sober in no time. He took our group of fifteen boys round the emplacement where we would be trained during the coming weeks. I was awed by the size of the six 8.8 cm canons, although they were not the really big 10.5 cm ones which some others of our grade were to handle. Each canon was enclosed with a man-high protection wall which contained the ammunition bunkers.

At a little distance was the radar position-finding equipment, also hid behind a big wall. We were to have our meals from field-kitchens called *Goulash Canons*. It was the

real thing alright. That night none of us slept much in the wooden one-floor barracks.



Luftwaffen-Helfer, Munich 1943

Next morning we were marched in step to a nearby public restaurant where we would have our school lessons. Our math teacher was there, an old, round Bavarian with a heavy dialect. To start with he ordered a liter stein of beer for each one of us, and then continued lessons as usual. It was all rather unreal. In the afternoon, training began. We were divided up for the various jobs: those good in mathematics went to the radar station; *Pongo*, the biggest and strongest of our group, was to be “K 1”, first

gunner, whose task was to take the heavy shells and push them into the barrel until the breech-block clicked shut—a back-breaking job; the rest of us were to sit on small stools on the gun-carriage. Each had in front of him a dial with two pointers, one of which would indicate the direction of the gun barrel, and the other moved according to the data coming from the radar, and then, winding cranks, we had to bring and keep the two pointers in line. I was “K 3”, responsible for the angle of elevation. At first, it was a game, it was fun. Several hours later it was not so funny anymore. At each gun were, apart from one regular flak soldier and us boys, only one or two Russian POW’s who were forced to do the heavy work of providing new ammunition from the bunkers.

Fortunately, we had only a number of false alarms at first, and no shot had to be fired. Our jobs had not become routine, we were not a team yet, all our actions were uncoordinated. The big raid came much too soon. The increased alert was given at half past midnight. Soon we heard the familiar drone of many planes at a great height, the sky was suddenly lit up by marking “windows” which we called *Christmas Trees*, and by many searchlights, and then, all at once, the pointers on our dials became alive. We all knew: this is it. We frantically moved our cranks and as soon as the two pointers looked as one we shouted “K 3 ready!”, “K 2 ready!”, and somebody yelled “Fire!”. The whole gun seemed to explode, the blast deafened our ears, the barrel spat out the empty brass shell, making it clatter on the concrete floor. I was frightened to death. Our two poor Russians threw themselves down shrieking at the top of their voices and refused to carry on until the gun commander drew his pistol and fired some shots next to their heads. It was havoc.

The attack lasted only less than half an hour, but it seemed to us like an eternity. Our bodies were shaking, our heads drawn deep between the shoulders; we were trying to do our jobs as we had learned them, waiting for the next blast. For the first time we experienced the infernal scenario of a big air-raid with all our

senses, and not passively and powerless in some cellar. We could see the sky alive with flashing search-lights, sometimes a bundle of them concentrating on one plane that had been found; we could hear the rattle of smaller and the bellowing of bigger guns and the muffled detonations of the bombs; we could smell the acrid smoke of gun-powder; we could feel the decompression waves of nearer exploding air-mines. When it was all over there was sudden silence, but the sky over the city had turned into an ever brightening red. Had our house been hit this time? Were my mother, my sister, my friends alive or were they buried under tons of rubble? I suddenly—for the first time in my life—felt a livid hatred against those anonymous pilots up there. I was not able to control that feeling. And, like the others, I was utterly exhausted.

Next day, school continued as normal. But algebra and trigonometry, Schiller's poems and Caesar's War in Gallia did not fit into our lives anymore. Something had happened to us kids. The war had caught up with us. We thought we were now battle-seasoned soldiers who would boast with our deeds, but in fact we were still just fear-filled small boys. During the night, with my ears still ringing with the echoes of battle, I had been arguing with myself: I was deeply ashamed to be such a coward. All the legends of manly courage and cold-blooded reasoning in the midst of deadly dangers which the heroes we all praised seemed to own and which, in my dreams, I had decorated myself with—there was none of it in me. I was afraid that all my comrades must have noticed my fright. I, the son of a general, a sissy. I thought of my father, of his unassuming gentleness, of his small and erect frame which had endured hardships beyond description. How did he do it? So many men under his command had told us that they saw in him their great example for all soldierly virtues. Was it that he first thought of others and only last of himself? I remembered what he had often said: *mehr sein als scheinen!*—you must strive to become a greater person than can be seen from the outside.

Our captain sent us out into the surrounding country-side. We had to look for mini-explosives camouflaged as fountains or children's toys. The Ministry of Propaganda had declared that the fiendish British had thrown such things mixed with their bombs as another means to terrorize the population. Of course we did not find any. It was just one more mean trick of propaganda to kindle hatred. While out in the field, my name was called out over the loud-speaker. I reported to the quartermaster and there was Annemie. She had walked the 15 or so kilometers because no train nor bus was functioning. She was very pregnant and at the end of her strength, and she still had the way back before her. She told me that many of the academy buildings had been hit this time—the lovely swimming hall, and three of the four main blocks of buildings were quite destroyed, and also the animal quarters of the nearby Circus Krone. Annemie said that the moaning cries of hurt elephants and lions could still be heard when she left in the morning. Our mother was safe. I stopped my question in mid-sentence: I wanted to ask if there was any news from Claus. There would be no more news from him, never.

We got used to the extraordinary, even to our own feelings of fear and panic. I closed myself against the pain and suffering around me. We went through some direct machine-gun attacks from low flying planes, and I watched some of my comrades getting wounded. Nothing seemed to be whole and sound anymore. Even when we were told that probably we had hit an enemy plane and downed it, it did not create any exhilaration. Still, I wanted to prove my worth better than it was possible in this flak battery. I wrote a letter to the navy draft office. There was a law that barred the last surviving son in a family from compulsory draft to military service. So I lied in my application to be accepted for a volunteer career as a navy officer, saying that it was the expressed wish of my father, the general, that I would be exempted from the law. He was far away in Russia, so he could not prove me wrong. I had an almost immediate reply and

was ordered to appear, on May 15, before the drafting board in Stralsund for a three-day "psycho-technical test". I failed miserably in most fields of general school knowledge but came out tops in all sports tests. The board members were inclined to accept me. But the report from the medical doctors was devastating. They found me not only retarded in my physical development but also "totally under-nourished". I was told to get some good food and to steel my body. What a cynical suggestion!

The doctors also diagnosed that I must have my nasal septum operated on. Otherwise the navy would not have me. The only surgeon available was a learned veterinary doctor. He gave me quite a short shrift. I was put in an ordinary chair and two nurses with all their strength held my head back. An anaesthetic was not felt necessary. Then the doctor got to work in my nose with a hammer and a chisel. Once in a while he held an extracted splinter of cartilage triumphantly before my eyes. When he was finished he told me I could rest for five minutes and then go home.

Medical and sanitary conditions were bad in our barracks. A case of typhoid resulted in our entire platoon being put under quarantine in an isolation ward. I fell seriously ill with what they called "bloody dysentery". One night I had to run about forty times. After that I was transported to a military hospital in Garmisch-Partenkirchen in the Bavarian Alps. On arrival there, I weighed 54 kilos. The four weeks I had to stay there were for me the most wonderful experience of all the war years. The food was absolutely delicious and always enough, and the beautiful scenery around us, the peaceful atmosphere, made me realize that life on earth, after all, was worth living.

Antje was born to Annemie in April. In the middle of a world deteriorating to dust and rubble and lives being brutally extinguished like candles, it was a miracle to watch this tiny little healthy and rosy new life come into existence. I thought Antje was the most exquisite and lovely creature on earth, and I was allowed to watch her being fed, to bathe her and to put her diapers

on. It was like sun rays breaking into our flat out of black thunder clouds, an unexpected gift, a healing balm for the sore heart of my mother. The baby justified every sacrifice, every possible effort to protect her.

* * *

With great relief we read that my father had—finally—been ordered to collect the rest of his division and lead his men out of the heat of retreating battles of the middle section of the front in Russia. They were put on trains and were transported south for six days and nights, to the Crimea peninsula in the Black Sea. German troops had advanced far into the Caucasian mountains to the east of the Black Sea, aiming for the huge oil-fields around Tiflis. The drama of Stalingrad had, after the Soviet victory there, freed a number of Russian armies to strengthen their Southern front, and those fresh contingents had driven back our forces until we held only a bridge-head on the Taman peninsula on the Asian border of the Straits of Kertsch. My father's division was taken to that bridge-head to replace other units there that had been almost wiped out. They were able to hold the outpost for many weeks, but it cost the lives of several hundred men. Then the order came to retreat to the Crimea proper.

The only German division between two Romanian units, they were to defend the Eastern coast-line on a length of 110 kilometers against fresh and well equipped Soviet troops outnumbering them by ten to one. Behind them there was no more defense line. A Russian break-through would have created another Stalingrad on the peninsula. There was practically no air-support, and hardly any supplies of ammunition and food reached them. They were isolated.

When the storm of the invasion broke loose, on October 3, and enemy forces landed on several points of the coast, my father knew that it was not a question of courage or the will to defend anymore, that the lines could not be held much longer. He

reported to General Jänicke, Commanding General of the Crimea, and directly to Hitler's head quarters, that it was a matter of a few days only before the strength of resistance of the bled out contingents would be broken unless fresh replacements were brought to the front immediately. He could as well have talked to a brick wall.

The Russians had total air-superiority and were therefore able to direct their artillery barrage and air attacks with deadly precision. Prisoners disclosed that the enemy forces were commanded by the famous Marshal Timoshenko and that he had at his disposal ten fresh divisions dedicated to re-capture the Crimea. They landed simultaneously at three different places, at one location with sixty ships. The defense line, one man every sixty meters, had no chance to prevent the building of strong bridge-heads. And yet, countless rolling attacks were stopped.

The diary reads:

November 9. During the past three weeks the Division has lost 91 officers, 469 NCOs and 3.419 enlisted men. At hill 175 the Soviets attacked with a strength of twenty to every German soldier. Continuous artillery barrage for 216 hours. But the main defense line was held.

November 11. Three enemy divisions have started a full scale attack. I report to General A. that three of my companies have been reduced to fifteen men each. We must have artillery and air support. He tells me that Hitler himself has issued the order to hold the Crimea by all means.

December 24. Only bad weather saved us from more attacks today. A complete ban on leave for the entire peninsula has been issued. For weeks the men had almost no sleep. We have been abandoned. Christmas—the Feast of Peace. We are so far away from peace. Not Christianity

has failed. But Christians have proved to be unable to live up to their creed.

January 11. Report to GHQ: The toll of irreplaceable lives must be stopped at once. The troops' suffering is going beyond the human capacity of enduring. General A. answers that the lines must be held. I doubt that my reports are passed on "higher up". Even if they are, on the way from one staff to the next, the urgency of the message seems to get lost and with it the grasp of the reality of the situation.

January 17. General A. calls me on the phone. The line is bad. Interfering sounds make the conversation difficult.

"I order you to attack hill 115,5 at day-break and re-capture it," he says.

"The situation has not improved since my report yesterday. The men do not have the strength nor the possibility any more for any kind of forward attack. I urge you with all my conviction to withdraw the attack order, and to consider the fatal consequences of a failure."

"I cannot withdraw the order, it is a *Führerbefehl* coming straight from Hitler. It must be followed."

"With all respect: as the commanding officer, I alone am in a position to comprehend the situation. The limit of our staying-power has already been passed. In this condition of the troops I cannot justify an order to attack. I beg you to withdraw the order."

"No. The order must be executed."

There was a pause when only the crackling in the telephone line could be heard.

Then I said, "Will you please entrust another

officer with your order, Sir. I cannot square with my conscience any further pointless bloodshed.”

“Is this your last word?”

“Yes, Sir.”

January 18. At 2.30 a.m. General A. calls again. Our earlier conversation is repeated. Then he says, “I must accuse you of cowardice in the face of the enemy. Your attitude suggests that you intend desertion. Are you aware of the consequences?”

It was as if the *Führer* himself was on the other end of the line, who had tried many times to blackmail military commanders with such unbridled accusations into blind obedience.

At 3.15 a.m. General A. rings me another time. The dialogue cannot be completed because I collapse into deep unconsciousness, the receiver in my hand.

My father knew the consequences of his action. Disobedience in an army at war is like a death sentence. It was his life or the lives of thousands of his men. He was not the only troop commander to take this risk. We knew of many who had been court-martialled and shot. Their offense was called “Cowardice”.

30 years after this event, at a conference, the man sitting next to me asked me if I knew a general with my name and, hearing that I was that officer’s son, he said, “I was the telephone operator at your father’s headquarters on the Crimea and, apart from the ADC, the only one present at those telephone conversations. Of all my many experiences in five war years, this was the strongest; it altered my philosophy of life. We all admired your father for his attitude in this conflict of conscience. He has remained to be a model for my life.”

Early next morning, General Reinhardt was flown in to take over the command from my father. The attack order was executed

and failed totally as had to be expected. The losses were terrible. Orderly retreat was no longer possible, it became "run and save your skin if you can". The entire Crimea was lost as a result. My father's division ceased to exist.

He had been ordered to fly to *Wolfschanze* in East Prussia, Hitler's fortified HQ. There he reiterated to the assembled leading officers his conviction that the received order had been against every strategic reason and that his conscience had not permitted him to obey.

Why he was not tried and sentenced before a military court there and then we have never found out. It may have been thanks to an intervention by General Schmundt, his comrade from Allenstein times. My father was transferred to the so-called *Führer-Reserve*, sent home to Munich and had to be treated in hospital. He received two letters. One, from Schmundt, said, "The Führer has decided to give you another chance to prove your physical and mental fitness as a troop commander, after your recuperation." In the other letter, General Allmendinger told him that he had, at General Headquarters, testified to my father's qualification for the position of a commanding general.

He had even been decorated with the Knight's Cross while still in the middle of the Crimean campaign. When we, belatedly, congratulated him for the medal, it was painful for him because it marked the end of the troops he had commanded. He felt guilty. At the beginning of the war, the regime had created a whole series of additional orders for the traditional Iron Cross: There was the Knight's Cross, the Oak Leaves, the Crossed Swords, and the *Knight's Cross of the Order of the Iron Cross with Oak Leaves, Crossed Swords and Brilliants*. Next, we joked, would be the electrical lighting of it all.

* * *

It took a great deal of courage and trust in God for my mother and me to travel, for a Christmas visit, right through the war-

torn country, from the Southern to the Northern border, from Munich to the Baltic Sea military port of Gotenhafen. Annemie had moved there with little Antje because Hansjochen was training submarine officers in this city which had been in Polish territory between the two great wars. I do not remember how many days and nights we spent in hopelessly crowded and yet bitterly cold trains, most of the time standing up, with no chance to reach a toilet. The destruction of the cities we passed was unbelievable. Passengers would murmur under their breath, "the swine!", not addressing their curses to anyone in particular—their object might have been "the enemy" or, just as well, the regime. But they would never come out with what they really felt. One could be certain that there were spies or Gestapo agents in the crowd. We all remained strangers to each other, even after days of close companionship.

We reached Gotenhafen station in the small hours of the night in total darkness. There was nobody to pick us up. In no time the ugly station buildings were deserted, people had just vanished, and we were alone on the platform, not knowing our bearings in a strange town. Outside, a snow-storm was going with the flakes blown almost horizontally in our faces. We felt like unwanted aliens in a hostile ghost-city when we heaved our baggage through empty and pitch-dark streets in the general direction of the harbor. It seemed hours before we found the address and were able to ring the family out of sleep.

Hansjochen immediately pulled his daughter out of her cot, "You must admit that she is the most beautiful baby you have ever seen. Isn't she adorably lovely?"

He decided to take me, against all rules, with him on a three days run in the Baltic Sea on one of the submarines. The ships had to go through a routine for de-magnetisation to protect them against Russian magnetic mines. Hansjochen found me one of the treasured blue-gray leather navy jackets, a pair of trousers that grew wider and wider towards the feet, and a knitted woolen cap. I rehearsed what I thought was the right sailor's swagger, and

at 5 a.m. one morning we approached the heavily protected war harbor where, with my heart thumping, I saluted the guards "correctly but casually" and passed unchallenged. Once on board I was immediately sent below deck, and then I had a chance to see it all—the greasy "eels", the torpedoes, the gauges and gadgets for maneuvering, the cramped quarters of the men, a technical wonder world. Everybody was patient to answer my questions. It was obvious that the crew loved *Der Alte*, their captain, who would do things like this. I was allowed to climb up to the conning tower and learned how to spit down-wind in the right direction, and then we dived to a hundred feet, the electric engines humming low and steady, and I thought it was just glorious. If there had been any doubt left in my mind about joining the navy, it vanished now without leaving a trace.

A few months later, Hansjochen was transferred again to the Atlantic Coast. Annemie had returned to Munich when, during a beautiful warm spring time, my brother-in-law came for a few days leave before taking his ship into action again.

"Let's have none of this sentimental public good-bye-show today," he said when it was time to leave. "We will say *Auf Wiedersehen* here, and," he turned to me, "why don't you come along with me to the station?"

Annemie made a face, but her husband was not to be contradicted and would not allow any fuss. So everybody put up a brave smile and a strained kind of cheerfulness. As far as I was concerned, I could have wished nothing more than to walk next to my adored brother-in-law through the streets of Munich. Everybody, especially the young girls, would turn around and look after him, and some of the glory of it all would fall on me.

"I wanted you to accompany me," he said, "because I must tell you something I cannot talk to your sister about."

"You mean something between man and man?" I wondered, hoping he would let me in on some amorous adventure or such like.

"You can see it that way, if you want to. Promise you will not tell Annemie?"

"Not a word!" I said, getting more and more excited.

Hansjochen returned the snappy salute of a group of soldiers we were passing and continued in a matter-of-fact way, "I know that I will not come back from this operational tour."

I thought I had misunderstood him: "What do you mean, not come back?"

He said, "The enemy have developed a new kind of radar, and we have no means to protect ourselves against attacks from the air. The crude fact is that 80 percent of our subs going out these days do not return. I am not going to see you all again."

Just like that. I wanted to flood him with encouraging things, that one must be positive, expect the best and not the worst. But I could not bring out a word. He was so sure in his conviction. It was clear that he did not speak out of a passing mood—he *knew*.

And he was right. Some time later, Annemie got the news that the submarine's last message had been that enemy planes were coming from "out of the sun" attacking them. Annemie was a war-widow at 24. Antje was not a year old.

* * *

In the spring of 1944 the war was still going with undiminished, fierce strength. I was still working hard on getting my body into shape and had not given up hope to "see action". Our flak service I did not consider as the "real thing". I took part in a pre-military sailing training at one of the lovely Bavarian lakes, a camp which was organized by my Navy Hitler Youth unit. I was no end proud when my parents visited me there and when my comrades watched me walking beside the general—he in gray with the bright red double stripes on his trousers and golden epaulettes, and me in navy blue with the round hat and long ribbons fluttering in the wind. He was to take off for a new task in Dalmatia, on the

Adriatic coast of Yugoslavia. There, the enemy would be Tito's communist forces. My father was as serious and indrawn as I had never seen him before. Something he did not talk about was eating him up from the inside. I am afraid I was no help to him with my easy language and my jokes.

A letter arrived from Navy Supreme Command telling me I had been accepted as navy officer candidate. I was to report for my recruit training on June 1. In Stralsund. In my brain from then on there was no room for any other thought. I was 16 and, like most others, I had not completed my school schedule. The German educational system is comprised of four years elementary school, and then eight years high school, at the end of which one has to pass *Abitur*, a final examination to prove one's maturity. *Abitur* was and remains to be the precondition for entering university or a professional career. During the war, boys were granted a *Notabitur* without any tests, a document testifying "maturity" for military service.

There was none of the usual celebration. The day after I had been given my papers I said good-bye to my mother who was loath to let her last man go to war. But you had to know her well to be able to discover any outward sign. "Be careful", she kept saying and "take along your woolen underwear." She knew I was not the manly grown-up I pretended to be.

A great number of air-raids again forced the trains north to take enormous detours. But these also brought two welcome interruptions on my journey, in Dresden and in Berlin. I had been in Dresden before, but this time I had leisure to take in the unique beauty of the "German Florence on the Elbe River", where some of the ablest architects and builders in the course of several centuries had given their art to create a jewel not to be compared with any other town. Dresden was known to be the safest place in Germany. People told me when I marveled at the absence of any destruction, that the Führer had a secret agreement with the British to safeguard the treasures of the city for posterity. We, in turn, would not attack Oxford for the same reason. Dresden

would not be bombed. It was crowded with children sent there from the more dangerous cities. Most of the flak batteries originally posted around town had been withdrawn and taken to places where they were urgently needed.

Nine months later Dresden would be no more. The attack on 19 February 1945 would become the final triumph of British Air Marshal Sir Arthur Harris who, together with military scientists in England, had brought to perfection the creation of fire-storms. The right mix of high explosives bombs that would destroy electricity supplies and water mains, and incendiaries creating more fires than could be extinguished, had been tried out and perfected in places like Hamburg, Königsberg, Darmstadt, Brunswick or Heilbronn. By February 1945, Bomber Command was able to forecast the average number of casualties per ton of bombs dropped and the percentage of destroyed built-up areas. The tornado of flames in Dresden would reach an unprecedented force, making a huge bonfire of the entire central ancient city. Unfortunately, on the day preceding the blitz, the wave of flooding in refugees from the advancing Soviet troops would reach its absolute peak, doubling the number of the 600,000 residents. Most of these homeless people would seek refuge in the huge Central Park. But two hours after Dresden was ablaze, the second wave of attack would come, this time executed by American bomber and fighter air-craft. The latter, finding no resistance, would be able to fly low and shoot with machine-guns, cannons and rockets in the crowds in Central Park and along the banks of Elbe River, assuming, so it was explained later, that they were regular troops. In fourteen hours a treasure of civilization would be wiped out, about 130,000 people killed—more than later in either Tokyo, Hiroshima or Nagasaki.

It is one of God's greatest gifts to man that he cannot foresee the future. When I, on my trip to Stralsund, had watched the Dresdeners leisurely strolling up and down the busy shopping streets and by the baroque and renaissance castle, the famous *Zwinger* and the Opera House and the many churches, I sat down

and wrote a post-card to my mother, "It is so beautiful here, this is what the world must look like in peace time."



Dresden, 1945

On our way to Berlin we were told that we would have to spend the night in the capital. An outgoing train to the North was not to be expected before noon next day. There was ample time to see my grandmother, my father's mother who, like her sister, Aunt Betty, and her brother, the former general, Uncle Hans, had her flat in the heart of the great city. She was our beloved "Little Oma". My mother's mother, "Big Oma", was a full foot taller. Little Oma was a tiny and delicate person, but she owned a huge and outpouring heart. When I was a small boy I especially loved her laugh which was different from all other people's I knew—it had such a silvery ring to it. She knew and taught us all the old German *Volkslieder* and all verses of the Christmas hymns, and fairy tales. Being the widow of a country parson who had left her hardly any money at all and a state pension not worth talking about, Little Oma had to live extremely modestly. But she would never complain. "Child", she said, "there are numberless people far poorer than I." She told me the only

thing really bothering her was the lack of soap and the breakdown of the water supply after another raid. She hated not to be able to keep herself clean and proper.

I was probably the last one of the family to see her and Aunt Betty. The destruction of Berlin by then was so great that the city government had decided to evacuate all the old people soon afterwards. It was a compulsory evacuation. I am sure that Little Oma would have patiently endured all manner of hardships if she had been allowed to remain in her flat. They were transported to the city of Dessau and all three of them, Little Oma, Aunt Betty and Uncle Hans, found refuge in the house of a distant cousin. Only long after the end of the war we discovered the rest of the story. Dessau was blitzed soon after their arrival. All three old people were dug up and dragged out from the burning house by fire fighters and, after an odyssey through mass quarters and basement lodgings, separated from each other; they were dumped in obscure public old peoples asylums. Those in charge of the institutions were unable to acquire enough food for the inmates nor, later, any heating fuel. One after the other, our beloved ones literally starved and froze to death; their bodies were cremated without a funeral service.

* * *

A long caravan of silently moving people stumbled on the rails leading out of the station to the local train waiting a mile or so outside, the steam engine puffing and hissing and emitting bulging clouds of black, sooty smoke. No looks were cast on what was left, on both sides, of the Reich Capital, so intent everybody was to find a space in one of the wagons. I discovered, walking right in front of me, a good friend from the sailing camp, and it was for both of us a marvelous relief to be able to spend the rest of our journey with someone friendly. Walter was also heading for the navy recruiting barracks and so were a great number of other boyish looking young men on the train. In Stralsund we all had

to take a ferry because our barracks were situated on Dänholm Island. From Kaiser's times, the buildings and parade grounds on the island had served to train generations of officer candidates and to drill the fear of God and of their platoon commanders into them. Because of the pressures of war, the normal six months of basic recruit training had been reduced to three months.

It was an impossible task for the officers to make us undernourished, skinny and bony early-grownups fit for the demands of navy service in times of cruel warfare, and to teach us all we had to know about maintaining and using weapons, Morse and signal codes, elementary principles of navigation, survival techniques, and hundred other things. They would accept no nonsense and we all were soon at the end of our strength. Some broke down completely and had to be sent home.

But it was not the physical stress I remember. After we were handed our guns and steel helmets and uniforms, we had the chance to take part in a service in the magnificent Jakobi Church in town, wearing our new navy blue for the first time. Almost all of us were there, from my room of ten every single one. The preacher wanted to prepare us for the next day for the ceremony of being sworn in. He told us that this was no juvenile scout-boy adventure but a deadly serious affair. It was the privilege of young men in all nations to offer their lives for the defense of their country. Next morning, when the entire crew stood at attention in an open square on the parade ground, I spoke the words of the oath with fervor and the voices of the comrades next to me were loud and clear. I was struck when we talked in our room during the following days about the predominant conviction of the need for the Church and of a personal faith in God. All these young men felt an unbroken allegiance to our country. All were convinced about the justification of the war we were in and that we would win it in the end. Critics were ostracized.

Every Sunday I met with Walter in the canteen and we were handed our ration of Schnapps—Aquavit—a water-clear affair called *White Death*, and we would talk and talk and talk. Later

we had our first shore leave and went to Stralsund to find the address of a distant relative of mine which my parents had given me. At the door of the house we were received by a gray and haggard looking elderly woman who never looked in our eyes. She was sort of furtive in her manners and said she had coffee for us, *Ersatz* coffee of course. Would we come in and meet her husband. On the clothe rack in the corridor we saw a black hat with the silver scull of the SS on it. Coming into the living room we found my relative standing in the middle of the room. He clicked his black booted heels, stretched out his right arm in front of him and shouted, "Heil Hitler". It was the time when, by order of the Führer, the armed forces had to abandon the traditional military salute: Sharp angled arm and finger tips touching the forehead. Instead, soldiers were to use the Hitler salute. When we saw the man there with his black uniform and the swastika armband and the shiny long SS boots, Walter and I looked at each other, smartly and as one greeted him with the traditional salute, said Halloo and stepped forward to shake the man's hand. It was the first and only time I met and talked with an SS man, and I hated him from first moment. He was an able bodied man—why was he sitting at home and not out with all the others defending our country? Why had we to be afraid, even with a relative, that every word we said might be reported to the Gestapo? The afternoon went by in a rotten and hostile atmosphere. Both Walter and I were confused about what to think of it.

Two other events broke up the dreary routine of drill, boring lessons and—much more welcome—sports competitions. One week in July, we had to help with the summer harvest and were divided up to many Mecklenburg farms. During that week the news spread like bush-fire that a handful of military officers had attempted to assassinate the Führer. The farmer with whom three of us stayed was furious. He cursed the whole gang of generals and admirals, and he would hang them all. "And you kids, don't you march in their foot-steps. They are all traitors." I did not

dare to disclose my father's rank to the man. I believe that an overwhelming majority of ordinary Germans felt the way that farmer did, even in the middle of 1944. My father noted in his diary after talking with other officers in Dalmatia, that front-line fighters were appalled about the attempt to murder Hitler. They could not understand what had motivated those men. Even if, for reasons unknown to them, there had been the necessity to eliminate the Nazi leadership in order to bring the war to an end—why had they, the top ranking military, not been included in the plans? Without the armed forces behind them, so my father argued, a successful assassination would have led to catastrophe.

My mother wrote that she and Annemie had stored most of our furniture and belongings in the basement of the Munich house and that they had moved to a flat in an officers casino building in some town in the South which had been offered to them after living conditions had deteriorated. They had been just in time. Shortly after they had departed the heaviest air-raid of the entire war had struck Munich, and this time our house had been hit and it had burned down to the ground level. Most of our things were gone.

Then Stralsund had an attack. We were driven into the middle of the burning ancient city. We helped to carry charred and roasted bodies to the streets and to heave bleeding women and children out of escape outlets and to thrash with carpets at licking flames. Corpses were put on wheel barrows and pushed to hastily dug mass graves, some chlorine chalk spread between the layers. A fish monger had put up a table in front of her totally destroyed shop and on it were all her stock of smoked herrings and eels which she cheerfully handed out, encouraging us helpers. It was all unreal, like in a stage play. We did our work, but—without a conscious act of will—we had shut out from our hearts any feeling of pain and misery.

After a three day maneuver with long marches in heavy new boots, both my feet had "broken in". It was so painful that I was unable to walk and had to move creeping on all four. I was taken

to the sick-bay. A medic fingering my toes diagnosed that I had broken my metatarsus bones *or* I had an inflammation of the sinews in my feet *or* I was ill with something quite unknown to him. He could not help me at all. Later, in hospital, the doctor told me that I had developed very ordinary flat feet from the strain of marching, and that I would not be able to walk for some weeks. I simply refused to believe him. If he was right it would mean that I would have to repeat the damned recruit course and that I would not go with all the others on board a war-ship. It would be the end of my only aim in life at that time. I fell in deep desperation and wept for days. Little did I know that but a handful of my crew of officer candidates going into war service then would come home as survivors. Of those who went with my friend Walter on one of the big cruisers only three were left.

* * *

Slowly and very hesitantly the ministry of propaganda had to admit that our forces were retreating on all fronts, even our allies the Japanese were loosing, although news from the far Eastern end of the *Axis* was very scarce. No more Wagnerian fanfares were heard in the radio announcing another victory. Field Marshal Erwin Rommel and his famous desert forces had capitulated long since in North Africa. Allied combined forces had occupied Rome, and the Italian fascist brothers—never very popular in Germany—seemed to be at their end. Most threatening however was the apparently irresistible forward thrust of the feared and hated Red Army. They had been able to retake Finland and most of the Baltic states, Romania and Bulgaria, and they had advanced as far as Poland. And then we heard that Americans and British had come over the English Channel with an invasion force into French Normandy, with a military effort unknown in history. The whole world seemed to have banded together in the one common goal to crush us Germans, like an enormous octopus with countless tentacles.

Since Hitler had decided that it was no longer of interest to occupy the Balkan countries—that was the official version anyway—my father and his staff were taken out from Yugoslavia and, while spending a couple of days with my mother, he received the telegraphic message of his promotion to Commanding General and that he was to take over the XXXVI Tank Corps. In Poland. Immediately. I did not know any of this until much later. My mother may have written about it. But more and more letters got lost on the way or were simply held back by the intelligence organizations.

My father reported to his new superior, General Schörner, better known as *The Slaughterer*. Without so much as a greeting, Schörner accosted my father, “The first thing I want you to do is to take General Fries (who was until then commanding the tank corps) under arrest, put him into jail, immediately, and then start a counter attack against the Russians right away.” Obviously Fries had, similar to my father in the Crimea, refused that order. As soon as he had first impressions of the serious situation in his section, my father telephoned the *Slaughterer* reporting that counter attacks were an absolute impossibility and that he proposed an “orderly retreat” to the area around Danzig. Hitler and his gang had by then retreated to their bunker in Berlin, from where he continued, like on a chess board, to move around on his maps armies that did not exist outside his confused brain.

Somehow I got through my second training course in Stralsund. On January 15, 1945, I was, together with five other navy cadets, transferred to Stettin, the town where I was born, to join the crew of *Torpedo Boat T 3*. I had made it! Finally! I was on board a warship. It hardly mattered that the ship was not afloat. It was high up in a dry dock being repaired after colliding with a Russian submarine in the Baltic Sea. Nevertheless, I fell in love with her at first sight. She was beautifully built and, when her full bulk loomed over you in the dock, she looked very large and

strong. The crew consisted of 120 officers and sailors. We six were taken in the care of a petty officer, an old hand, who told us that he hated both *intellectuals* and ranking officers. We greenhorns all had *Abitur* and therefore to his mind belonged to the intelligentsia and, even more abominable, we attempted to become career officers.

From the first day on we were included in sentry duty, preferably in the "dog's watch" after midnight. I was posted one night at the open end of the dock, just a foot above the water stretching out into obscure darkness. It was very cold and lonely, and I was terrified in case some enemy would come out of nowhere attacking our ship. After marching back and forth the available space of some twenty yards for two hours I was so tired that I leaned against the wall and rested the butt of my gun on some piece of wood.

Of course, the mate had chosen that very moment to creep on me from behind on tip-toes. He shouted on top of his voice, triumphantly, "I caught you! You slept while on guard! This is high treason! I'll see to it that you will be court-martialed, you little louse!"

I had to march into the captain's cabin with my steel helmet put on and my gun shouldered, and expected at least three days in the brig. The captain, whom I met personally then for the first time, was not inclined to punish us youngsters that hard. However, our petty officer was ordered to "drill him to collapse". He loved doing just that. He had me run in full gear, made me hold out the gun horizontally in front of me on outstretched arms, "down you go!" and "up and run!" He knew all the tricks. Nature has provided me with a head so small that in the entire navy no steel helmet could be found to fit. While running and jumping the gizmo would constantly come down in front of my face blinding me. Finally, I dropped down, exhausted into unconsciousness, and my comrades carried me to my cot.

Regarding it on a map, the Baltic Sea is really not much more than a big lake. But just try it out on a small vessel like ours. As soon as the last land-mark disappeared on our first trip and there was only water to be seen on all sides, we felt like being on an ocean, it could have been any ocean. The only difference is, perhaps, in the size of the waves. On the Atlantic or the Pacific you can have these huge water mountains as high as a house heaving even the biggest ships up and up and then rushing down in abysses. On the Baltic, waves are much smaller and shorter, and they come, as cross waves, from all sides. Ships will not only pitch in their longitudinal axis but, at the same time, roll from one side to the other. It is much more uncomfortable. But we soon found out that we six youngsters did not get sea-sick at all while almost all the officers were regularly violently ill, which gave us a kind of moral advantage. Still, it took us a while to grow our "sea-legs" and to be able to carry bowls of hot soup or cocoa over the slippery deck without shedding a drop.

"T3" had a triple set of torpedoes amidships, a 10.5 cm all-purpose canon aft and a smaller flak gun on the bow deck. It was so cold on our first trip that every few hours some of us had to get out to the bow with hammers and clear the gun from a thick ice crust, getting very wet from the splashing surf in the process. The six cadets were trained as gunners on the big canon and, apart from that, were included in the battle routine of eight hours look-out guard on the bridge, eight hours gunner-training, cleaning the decks and washing-up pots and pans, and eight hours—supposedly—watch below. "Free time", however, was filled with desperately trying to get your things dry and repaired, cleaning your small-arms, and hundreds of other things so that there never was enough time for sleep. And yet—I loved it all. The spirit on board was like I had always dreamed it would be. There was a rough language all right, but there was also the kind of fellowship needed in the confinement of a ship if you don't want to be swamped. I had special permission from the captain to take my small accordion with me and was asked to play on

requests from the crew on the ship's radio circuit, all the popular songs about *Heimat*, about brown-haired sweet girls at home and the same stars looking down on them as we saw them at sea. At one time the concert was interrupted by an air-raid alert, and we were able to chase away three Russian planes shooting like mad. But for several weeks we heard no outside news and did not know what was going on. I did not mind. For me, life on the ship offered all I wanted.

Our second trip's destination was the small harbor town of Libau in Latvia, where the Soviets had not come yet. In the roads there were some forty vessels, some of them large hospital ships, waiting to be loaded. Their cargo would be people: refugees trying to flee from the Russians, about one hundred thousand of them. The ships would be able to take just a fraction of the multitude and bring them across the Baltic Sea to Denmark. From the distance, we could only suspect the terrible scenes of people trying to scramble on the smaller crafts, trampling others to death in panic, families getting separated from each other. Climbing to the top of our mast one could see on the far horizon more and more coming towards the town: Many were pushing the rest of their belongings on a cart or were leading a cow or a goat. They would have to leave it all behind and even then for most of them there was no chance to get away. When the passenger and cargo ships were full and the pressure still mounted the military authorities decided that the war ships accompanying the convoy would also have to take their share of refugees.

Our crew was ordered to leave their quarters and then these stricken folks, mostly elderly farmers and their wives and children, climbed up on rope ladders and then were immediately shoved below decks like in a slave ship. There must have been several hundred of them, and conditions down under were soon unbearable; it began to stink out of every hole. However, the big convoy started out to sea in the early morning and we did not dare to look back to the desperates left behind. A cruiser, several boats from our T-Flotilla and a number of smaller motor torpedo

boats tried to protect the rest of the ships against expected attacks from the Russians.

The raid came in the early evening when we were slowly moving off the Danzig Bay. Normally, they would pick out the big vessels first. This time their subs started with the warships. Against the evening sky we saw one of our sister ships explode into a mighty fire ball and sink in less than a minute. I do not think that any survivors were picked up.

It was still very cold. I had been on my way to the bridge to take over the watch from my comrade when I was stopped by the explosion on the other ship. I asked him if he would hold on a minute so that I could go aft to get another sweater. The moment I had pulled the warm wool over my head, a torpedo hit our ship directly under the bridge. The explosion made the boat heave up like a very big wave would, and then there was a moment of total silence. The big mast came crushing down burying everything under it in the debris of the super structure. When the ship settled, the bow was under water, but the water-tight compartments held and kept her afloat. A sound like a primal scream came from down below, and then they were all streaming on deck, in panic and terror. The torpedo had hit the main ammunition hold and the detonation had started a fire which in turn made more grenades explode and send fiery tails into the night sky. I saw a young nurse in her uniform who was blinded by the heavy diesel oil splashing all over, her arms stretched out as she tried to calm the screaming people around her. I remember being absolutely peaceful myself, not afraid at all. We all had life-jackets that could be blown up with compressed air, but I thought to save that for a real emergency and blew up the jacket by mouth.

Then some of the smaller ships came alongside and took our people. But many, senselessly, jumped over board and were crushed between the sides or drowned in the ice cold water. Shrieking heads came out from some bulk-heads too small to let their bodies pass. We thought that the ship could be saved and decided that seven of the crew would stay on board. Some of us

were able to dig out our captain. A piece of the mast had fallen across his abdomen, and he still lived. But he later died, just as everyone else had been killed who had been on the bridge, including my comrade who had given his life to save mine. When the seven of us were alone, waiting for a tug, I went down to our quarters trying to find my accordion. Somebody suddenly shouted from above, "Jupp"—for some reason I was called so in the navy, "Come up quick, she is going down!" By sheer fortune, one little speed boat was still alongside, and I was able, as the last one, to jump on it. We were some fifty yards away when, with a mighty sucking sound, *T 3* lifted her tail end high up into the air, the lights in the aft cabins still burning, and leaving behind a big whirlpool, she took only moments to shoot down into her grave. We watched it in silence, took off our caps, and I was not the only one who wept.

All survivors were taken to the nearest port, to Gotenhafen, where, not so long ago, I had visited Annemie and her family with my mother. Coming in, our life boat had to navigate carefully around the wrecks of many ships that were sunk blocking the entrance to the harbor. I noticed a huge one that had been the pride of the Nazi organization *Kraft durch Freude*—"Strength from Joy", which had been transformed into a hospital ship. I did not recognize the city any more. It looked like one enormous dump heap full of smoking debris and litter and was crowded with refugees running around in rags. The Soviets had bombed the place massively and were now shooting into it with long range artillery.

Of the six cadets from our boat three had survived. Somehow we found each other. "Let's get out of this hell." We walked out of the town. Nobody stopped us. We came to a small deserted suburban village which consisted of just one street. From the trees standing on both sides dangled the strung-up corpses of some men and women, each with a poster on their chest saying, "I am a traitor" or "I am a deserter".

We came to the marshland around the Weichsel river delta and we found some more from our crew. A lonely horse was grazing there. One of the boys shot him dead with a pistol, and another one, a professional butcher, carved him up. We made a fire and fried us some big steaks. When the shelling came closer we all ran for cover towards town. The Russians now used *Stalin Organs*, rockets fired in rapid succession which produced a terrifying whine and howl before impact. The psychological effect they caused was much greater than the actual damage they produced. We found a very large basement with a low ceiling, completely dark and already full of people. The only bit of light came in through an open door frame. Everybody was silent, not in a mood to talk. One could smell fear in the air.

During a pause in the shelling, a shadow darkened the light in the entrance and a voice called out, "Is here a navy cadet Gareis?" When no answer came, the man repeated, "I am looking for a navy cadet Gareis." Only then I realized that he meant me.

I pushed my way through the tightly packed crowd and reported to the caller who turned out to be an infantry officer. "Cadet Gareis present, Sir."

"Thank God I have found you. We heard in the news that your boat had been sunk. I am ADC to your father. He has his head-quarters in Zoppot, not very far from here. He does not know I am looking for you. Do you want to come along with me and see your father?"

Of course I wanted to. We went in his open jeep along the coastal road that I remembered well from peace times when we spent our summer holidays in Zoppot. At the entrance to the undestroyed familiar pier which reached far out into the bay, I saw my father standing there with a group of officers. It could not be true! He did not recognize me. I must have looked like a ghost, a very dirty ghost, not having washed nor shaved for weeks, and was dressed in a conglomeration of warm things that did not have much resemblance to a navy uniform anymore.

We had three days together, only gradually realizing the miracle that it was. My father explained the situation to me. Several army corps had been herded together by the advancing Russians into a small area around Danzig. There was no way out. A number of armored German vehicles had run out of fuel and made one last attack rolling down a hill towards the enclosing enemy. The crews had shot away their last ammunition, destroyed their tanks and cars and then had given themselves up. It was *götterdämmerung*. My father asked me if I wanted to remain with his staff. But I begged to be allowed to join my gang again, and he let me go. I did not believe that I would see my father again.



My father as General, 1945

Back in Gotenhafen a spirited senior officer had managed to bring some order to the chaos. The survivors from our boat had

been collected and we were transported to the tip of a long stretched peninsula called Hela, across the Danzig Bay. There we found a picturesque but deserted fishing village with a pretty little harbor. Divided up in groups of five or six, we were to man the small fishing vessels that were rolling softly at their moorings. Since all our officers had been killed, an army captain was put in our command. He called our outfit "Hela Harbor Protection Flotilla". Each crew got one Hungarian-made gun and a handful of cartridges and then we had to go out patrolling the coast line or to watch it in shifts from the tall light house. Before we had left *Gotenhafen*, we had plundered the wreck of the hospital ship and had found tons of good food including rarities like chocolate bars and tinned meat. I was made ship's cook. We actually lacked nothing. The world and the war had forgotten us, so it appeared.

One day we had seen across the water Danzig and Zoppot going up in flames. It was a ghastly spectacle. I thought of my father there, and of the multitude of people dying with the towns. Years later I was told that on the day preceding the inferno an order from the Führer had reached the encircled troops saying that one of the armies was to leave the town to be transported to the "central front". The lot fell on my father and his troops. They left with the last outgoing ship, leaving behind all the others for a future in Siberia or, much more merciful, in the ruins of another ancient German city.

* * *

It must have been on one of the first days of May, a warm and sunny spring day with no cloud on the sky, when I was walking on the Hela harbor quay towards our boat. Only little ripples of waves burbled against the wooden planks, it was so peaceful that it might have been Sunday after church service. It was so much more surprising when we heard a plane approaching—it had to be a Russian one, because the German air force had ceased to

exist. The plane flew low and rather slow and right on towards the harbor. Dead on top of us he dropped a "Christmas Tree" and we knew what that meant. Everybody rushed for cover. I dropped into the space between our boat and the jetty wall, standing on a small ledge above the water level so that I could just look out and see what was happening. And then they came: A full wing of planes flying in precise formation—completely out of proportion in regard to the size of the object of their attack. I could clearly see the bomb bays of the planes open and the many harmless looking things trundle out and down towards us.

I know it was only moments before the world around exploded. But I had made up my mind that this was the end of my life. I found myself praying to a God whom I had banned from my heart, "Lord, if I live through this, I know that You have a plan for the rest of my life. If not, please take me as I am."

Inside fractions of seconds the peaceful place was turned into furious hell. Exploding bombs caused high fountains rising up and flood waves which crashed the small vessels against the basin walls. Direct hits ripped some of them to smithereens, and from the little village of Hela came the sound of buildings falling to pieces. Having done their work, the planes turned, still flying in orderly V-lines, and then again, as I had experienced it before, there was a time of deadly silence.

Into the stillness broke a first cry of "Help!" and then the moaning of many wounded comrades. I clambered up the wall, surprised to be alive and unharmed and that there were others who lived. Our captain came running to the quay waving wildly with his pistol. He had obviously gone off his rocker, madly trying to stop us from tending to our wounded, and ordering "his flotilla" to run out of harbor immediately. Next day the man had disappeared. Perhaps one of our group had shot him. We did not feel the need anymore to obey anyone's orders.

One radio set in Hela was still functioning. On 8th May, 1945 we heard the grave voice of Admiral Dönitz saying that Adolf Hitler was dead, "fighting against Bolshevism to his last

breath”, and that the war was over. Germany had surrendered unconditionally. D-Day. It did not impress us very much. We could not believe that it was all over for us. The fear of being taken prisoners by the Russians blocked all other thoughts. We saw the Danzig Bay filling like magic with many ships of all sorts. Three of our fishing vessels were still afloat and seaworthy. Taking along some refugees who had appeared out of nowhere, we soon went out with chugging engines to join the gathering convoy that would try to escape the Russians.

A storm came up during the first night of our journey. At first, we kept touch with the rest, blinking with lamps. But then our motor went dead and we were alone in a wild sea. Our “machinist” was not able to repair the engine. We found a dirty and oily piece of sail and hoisted it on the little mast. I was the only one who knew how to sail a ship. So I was made “captain”. Our civilians all hung over the deck-rail, terribly sick and retching because their stomachs held nothing to bring up anymore. We steered in the general direction West and hoped for the best. Somebody suggested that we needed something to drink—after all the war was over and that called for celebrating. We opened up the ship’s little gyro-compass because we knew that the needle in it floated on 98 percent pure alcohol. This we took out, heated it a little and added some water and jam to it to make it palatable. We could not wait for it to cool down, and drank the stuff when it was still lukewarm.

The result was awful. It was methyl alcohol. Many people have gone blind after drinking it, and many have died. We were all totally drunk, some of us getting deliriously happy. They told me later that I became quite sad, like Hansjochen on the day he was married. I did not remember anything. Suddenly someone shouted, “Man over board!” It was one of our sailors. We sobered up in no time. I turned the wheel as fast as I could, yelled “Tack!”, and slowly the ship turned in a large circle, reaching the man, who wore his bulky seaman’s boots, just in time before he drowned.

We lost our sense of time, not knowing where we were going. On the fourth or the fifth day, it was, "Land ahead!". I hoped that it might be the southern coast of Sweden. When we came closer, turning around a tongue of land, we saw a German landing vessel coming out at high speed. They hailed us with a loud-speaker, "Go away, this is the island of Bornholm, the Russians have landed on the other side." We were able to negotiate with them that they would take over our refugees, and then tow us away. After a few miles the tow-line broke, but now we knew the direction. Two more days, and we reached the bay of Kiel where we knew for certain that the British were. We had got away from the horror of a Soviet labor-camp in Siberia.

Meanwhile, my father and his corps had been engaged in retreating battles which caused again heavy losses. The German troops, knowing that the war was lost, had only one more aim that kept them fighting: to keep the Russians from conquering more German territory. They did not know about the agreement between Stalin and Roosevelt that Soviet and American forces were to meet along a clearly defined demarcation line through the middle of Germany that would mark, in future, the border of their "spheres of interest". They did not know anything about the conference of Yalta where the Big Three, expecting the final victory over Germany, had already divided up the European continent along the lines dictated by the Soviet dictator. They only knew that Allied forces were advancing towards Germany from the West, and they knew that an occupation by "civilized Western" armies would be the smaller of two evils.

On reconnaissance in an open Jeep, my father was taken prisoner by an American advance unit. He asked to be brought to the general in command of the area and with that officer he was able to negotiate that, on his word of honor, inside 48 hours he would lead his entire corps behind the American lines where they would lay down their arms and surrender. General Eisenhower, abiding by the Allied governments' agreement, had

strictly forbidden such actions. It was a risk for the American officer whom my father had met. But it saved the lives of thousands of German soldiers. Heaven will have to reward him for his attitude because we never were able to find out his name to do it ourselves.

Montgomery, Commander in Chief of the British forces, had, on 4th May, received the unconditional surrender of the German troops operating in Denmark, Holland and in the North-Western part of Germany. "Monty" was held in high esteem by all of us. Being in charge of a great number of German POWs he had enormous problems on his shoulders. He asked for two German generals to serve as liaison officers. General Kinkel and my father were chosen to join Monty's staff, and he asked them to tour all POW camps under British charge regularly and to report directly to him "bluntly" about the conditions they would find. While on this task, my father looked for me in every single camp. He could have looked for a needle in a haystack just as well.

In the large roads outside Kiel harbor there were so many ships that one could not see from one end of the bay to the other. We sailed close to the shore and anchored in calling distance of another trawler. We were told that British troops were posted all around and that we were not permitted to go on land. That was bad news because we were running short of drinking water. During the following night, some drunken sailor on one of the ships shot a tracer bullet into the air, and suddenly, from all over, thousands of navy men did the same, creating a fire-works as I have never seen it again. The whole bay reverberated from the cheers and the singing that went up from the defeated armada. The British must have thought that the Krauts were starting the war all over again. We watched hectic movements on the shore lines, guns brought in position and search-lights darting their beams in every direction. But none of us wanted fighting any more. It was just one big out-cry of relief.

It was shouted from ship to ship that we must all go ashore and pass over to the British the weapons we still had. We threw them all into the water instead. War-ships were sunk in the bay by their crews. On land, the discipline that had been drilled into our bodies made us line up in rows of three without being ordered to do so, and we began to march in step toward town, the column becoming longer and longer until it grew to a lindworm snaking its way through the streets of Kiel. We were made to march the whole day without a pause and without food nor drink. Toward evening we were herded into a large fenced-in open field, our feet, unused to long marches, full of sores and blisters. Like many others, I had carried a big kitbag with precious warm clothing. When we left next morning the wide field was littered with all the left-behinds we were not able to carry any more. Finally, we reached a small coastal village called Strande where our camp would be. There were many thousands of us.

It was for the British a massive problem to organize and supervise these huge camps, let alone to try and find some food because they had little themselves. For the first few days there was nothing to eat. We collected nettles and grass and boiled it over little camp fires, and we went wading in the sea to find mussels and little fish. Soon there was nothing to be found anymore. At night, we crowded together in the few available barns like sardines in a tin. We were so beaten that we did not brush away the rats anymore who would run across our bodies and faces. Lice and bugs became such a plague that we went into the salty water, cleaned ourselves with sand and shaved off all our body hair. And then, all at once, the morale of the prisoners broke to pieces. Suddenly everybody was everybody else's enemy, ready to kill for a crust of bread. All differences in rank were gone, the law of the jungle ruled. Officers turned out to be swine while men who had been termed "bad soldiers" became examples of helpfulness.

For me, the experience of German soldiers, even officers, behaving worse than animals was absolutely devastating, much

more so than the realization that as a nation we had suffered the greatest defeat in our history. It crushed every ideal I had clung to like a life-belt until that moment. With all my heart I had believed in the spirit of comradeship which I thought had made us better soldiers than others. It was all crumbled, it was a sham. Was everything else we had believed in also wrong? For the first time in years there was now time to think and ponder.

* * *

Not long ago, on our torpedo boat, we had joked, "Comrades, enjoy the war because peace will be terrible". We had not known how true that was to come. It was in the camp in Strande where for me the war ended and with it the country and the world as I had known it. I did not dare to look to the future. I could not discover anything that it could hold in store.

3. Aftermath

The only thing that mattered was the present moment. Every last bit of energy that was left in body and mind was invested in the unending struggle for survival. If it served to stay alive you would lie, you would steal, you would cheat, you would grab. You would not plan any next move, your mind would not work that way anymore. Just react to whatever you were confronted with next. Life was reduced to basics like finding something eatable, or a better place to sleep, or avoiding to be hurt—any more pain afflicted on you by another human being would be unbearable. In the camp milling about with men who all looked alike with their shorn heads and their haggard faces, there was but one general urge: get out of this madhouse and get home!

Only a few men stuck out like lighthouses from the crowd. I was ordered to appear at the camp commander's barrack for interrogation. In the office I was surprised to find a good looking German naval officer dressed in a clean uniform from which all insignia of rank had been neatly taken off. He introduced himself, and his name was familiar to me as a good friend of my brother. He served as interpreter for the interrogating British captain and he did his job quietly, efficiently and straight.

The Englishman was reading in the questionnaire I had filled out like all other prisoners. The camp jargon called the questionnaire *Das Handtuch*, the towel, because its pages unfolded to an extraordinary length. There were 134 items to be answered,

questions 40 to 98 asking about membership in Nazi organizations many of which I had never heard about.

"Sit down," said the Captain when he looked up. He seemed to be weary.

"In item 101," he came straight to the point, "you are asked to list names and addresses of all relatives who have held office, rank or post of authority in any of the organizations mentioned in numbers 40 to 98. The only name you give is that of your father being member of the General Staff. That cannot be all. Are you aware that there will be harsh punishment for not saying the full truth?"

I was startled. The SS man my friend Walter and I had visited in Stralsund flashed through my mind. But then, I did not even remember that man's name, and he really was a very distant relative. "It is all there is, to my knowledge."

"I think you lie," said the Englishman. He was obviously out for something quite different. "Let's talk about your father. Is he still alive?"

"I don't know."

"When did you see him last?"

"That was last February, in Danzig, by chance."

"Is your father a Nazi?", he asked. "Of course he is. Every member of the German General Staff, every military officer has sworn allegiance to Hitler. That makes them part of National Socialism."

I did not know what to say. To the Captain it seemed logical, but for me it was a new line of thought. All soldiers, not only German soldiers as far as I knew, had sworn an oath. I had. But that alone did not make us believers or adherents of Nazi ideas. Or did it?

"What about the rest of your family?", the interrogator asked.

When I had gone through the *Handtuch* I had debated if I should mention my mother's membership in one of the women's organizations. She had done social work, helping refugees and bombed-out people, and served in hospitals. Surely that could

not be incriminating. I became defensive: "Our family are no Nazis. None of us have been in the Party."

"I do not believe you," he said. "With the rank your father has you all must have had special training and positions in Nazi organizations. You are not saying the truth, you are holding back things. Do you have any brothers and sisters? What about them?"

I said, "My brother was a Navy Lieutenant, and my sister's husband was a submarine commander. They both were killed in action, and I am proud of them. They held no Party functions. They were just patriots."

At that, the Captain looked straight at me, screwed up his eyes and said softly, almost under his breath, "I am sorry for them." The interpreter did not have to translate that. After a while he continued, "If you were the last surviving son in your family you would have been exempted from military service. Why did you join the Navy then?"

The Captain made clear that in his mind this attitude was proof for my support of Hitler and the Nazi creed.

"Because I thought this was my patriotic duty," was all I was able to answer.

My brother's friend had seen my name on the list of prisoners—that fact in itself was close to a miracle—and he made sure that I was one of the first among thousands to get my certificate of discharge. On July 10, an RAF FL/LT T.E. Carter signed under the oval rubber stamp stating that I had sworn before him not to have been a leading Nazi, and that I had read in his presence the "Instructions to Personnel on Discharge in Control Form D.I". Those of us to be dismissed had to stand, stark naked, under a DDT shower, while our underwear, socks, a pair of trousers and a shirt were de-loused separately. Disinfected clothing, a tin spoon and a fork was all that was left to us. Everything else was taken away. The only thing in my pockets was the discharge certificate and another piece of paper saying that "Navy man Gareis is legally entitled to receive military pay as from July 1, 1945". The paper had the old Reich eagle on it with the Swastika etched

out. It was useless—I never received the money due to me and if I had, I could not have bought anything for it.

Many of those on discharge were in tears. The only home address they had was situated in the East where the Russians were occupying the country. Terrible rumors had it that the Red Army was out of control, looting everything that could be taken, raping females of any age, torturing German soldiers or deporting them to slave labor camps in Siberia. Bad luck, but I had no compassion for them nor for anyone else. I had survived the war, now I was going to survive for peace, for my own personal peace. The last mail I had from my mother was some eight months old and from it I knew that she was last living in the small Bavarian village Lenggries, where the family had been given shelter after being evacuated from destroyed Munich. Lenggries was about 650 miles away from where I was now and I had absolutely no idea how to get there short of walking all the way, when I came out of the POW camp gate into freedom. Freedom?

There was no public transport available. Private cars and trucks were confiscated without exception and there would have been no fuel for them anyway. Our lives had so far been caged in such a rigid framework of organization where in every sphere strict rules were followed, rules of order and obedience, that it was very confusing to find no authority anymore, nobody to tell you what to do next. There were no papers, no radio news except broadcasts from the Military Government, to explain to you what was happening. You just had to follow your instinct. A group of us found our way to a cargo rail station near Kiel where a freight train was loaded with coke, under surveillance of British Military Police. Nobody knew the destination of the coal. "South", was all we were told.

It was a long train with a steam engine both in front and at the end. The coke was covered with thick, filthy tarpaulins. Nobody stopped us when we climbed on top of the carriages once they finally started to move. There were masses of home going men. At night we loosened the canvas covering, crept

underneath and shifted some of the angular pieces of coal so that lying on them became just bearable. Soon we all looked like chimney sweeps at the end of a working day. Who cared. Nobody dared to leave the train for fear of loosing this only means of transport. We rather went without food and drink. It took us more than a week to roll from Kiel to Munich.

On one of the first evenings when the train stopped somewhere for the night, I noticed another one pulling up next to us in the same position where it had been the night before. It transported American GIs. There they were, "the enemy". The Germans stared at them uneasy and silent. The Americans appeared to be terribly self-assured, not hostile, but just aloof. One of the passengers on my carriage had somehow saved his accordion. I borrowed it from him and began to play some tunes like "Lilly Marleen", and then the only English tune I knew, "It's a long way to Tipperary". At that, the U.S. boys grinned and one of them reached behind him and threw me a tin of sweetened coffee cream. I had never before tasted such delicacy and downed it in one long gulp. My stomach, not treated with any food for many days, rebelled violently. But the milk sustained me for the rest of the journey. The first personal confrontation with the victors had been not bad at all.

Two miles out of Munich Main Station we were chased off our train by armed guards who were to watch the precious load. In the distance I could see the roof-less hulk of the big station building. I was quite weak. When I started walking my knees buckled and I could just manage to stumble forward slowly on the rough stones between the rails. Only a hundred more yards, I told myself, then you must rest. Everybody else seemed to be better off than I and soon I was limping on alone. Only fifty more yards.

There was a small railroad crossing hut that seemed to be undestroyed. I pushed open the door and found an old man sitting there at a little table. He had not shaved for a long time and his face was hidden behind a grizzly, gray beard. He was

dressed in the dark-blue rail-men's uniform with the round peaked cap, and he looked very old and tired. We stared in each others' eyes and neither of us said a word. He had his breakfast in front of him, a radish and a bottle of beer. After a while, he pushed both to my side of the table, still not saying anything. I ate and drank, not hastily but slowly, cherishing the first real food since I did not remember how long. The old rail-man watched me in silence. When I had finished I saluted him.

Then he said, "May God keep you, son". I knew he meant it.

There was a tiny local milk-train going from Munich to Lenggries. In the village I found the town hall and was amazed to see some Germans trying to start administrative work. They even knew my parent's old address. But they told me that American occupation forces had moved into the military buildings where my mother and sister had stayed. Our flat had become their headquarters. They had taken what furniture they could use and the rest was given free for plundering. A large bonfire had been kindled in the yard, and from it my mother and sister had been able to save my father's diary, our family pictures and some documents—as much as they could carry. Then they had moved, the village people told me, to Tegernsee, beyond the mountains, some forty miles away. However, they did not know any forwarding address.

The human body has more reserves of energy than can be described if there is a will and an aim to mobilize that strength. I do not remember how I managed to march those endless miles over steep mountain passes and through wide pine forests. But the beauty of unharmed nature, of little streams with glass-clear, pure water, and of a warm summer sun sending rays of light through the tall trees were feeding their mysterious energy in my bones and kept me going. And then, coming over the last ridge, there was the glorious lake below, nesting like a perfect blue pearl in its green shell, a picture beckoning harmony and serenity. Down in the village, the first person I asked for the way flung her arms around my neck embracing me and fell into soundless

sobbing. She was a close family friend, her husband a general like my father, her son killed in the war like my brother. She of course knew where my mother could be found.

It was an old villa that had belonged to a former cabinet minister. It stood back a bit from the lake-shore behind a big, softly sloping front garden where people had planted vegetables replacing the original flowers. A circular drive meant for horse carriages led up from the road to the three-story building. The garden was separated from the street by a high fence made of wooden planks. The two-winged gate, wide enough to allow cars to pass, was locked. There were a number of bell buttons, and one of them had our name on it. Later, my mother told me that on her way down to unlock the gate the only thing she had seen was my navy boots peeping underneath the door, and then she knew it had to be me. She had had no news from me for many months, she even had not heard that our ship had been sunk. No letters from my father either. In fact, we had to wait until the following November for the first Red Cross card saying that he was alive. But my mother had never given up hope and all the waiting did not matter that moment when we all were in each others' arms—Annemie and little Antje were there too. I had never been at the place before. But my family was there and I was home.

* * *

Like a Marathon Runner giving all that is in him for the single aim of reaching the goal I had gone on and on for this precious arriving. But now body and mind refused to function any longer. I was seriously ill with jaundice and bad stomach troubles that left their traces for the rest of my life. I was all skin and bones, and for days I was not conscious of what was going on around me. But I was in a real bed with clean linen and in waking moments there was the familiar face of one of my loved ones. Later I was able to take hot baths and shave with soap, even if it was ersatz

soap, and warm water—heavenly things I had almost forgotten since we had taken off for our first trip in the Baltic Sea.

“Where have you been?”, I asked my mother when she had been away for almost an entire day.

“Oh, just visiting”, she said.

“But whom? You were out so long, did you have a meal with someone?”.

She did not answer. Her hair has become all gray, I thought. When have I last seen her? In my mind I went back over these last months—prison camp, the flight from the Russians, the bombing attack in Hela, the refugees plight in Latvia and the drowning of our torpedo boat, recruit training in Stralsund. Yes, before leaving for the Navy, just a year ago, we had last been together. What a year! We had gone through more extraordinary experiences during these twelve months than many people in their entire lives. I realized how much it all showed on my mother. She looked so thin and fragile.

“Where have you been?”, I insisted.

“I tried to find something to eat,” she said.

“Can’t you just go and buy something in the shops? We must have enough coupons now that I came back. Or don’t we have enough money?”

My mother smiled, slowly shaking her head in disbelief about my ignorance. She told me how she had gone, like many times before, with a little hand cart, from one farm in the neighborhood to the next, trying to get some potatoes and a few carrots for “her soldier who had come home”. I had not realized that she and Annemie were constantly on the move to find food—they had to be because shops were empty. Each of us were entitled to buy for our coupons so and so many ounces of meat and bread and fat, ridiculous amounts that were meant to provide a person with just enough calories to stay alive. But you could not eat the coupons. They were worthless if there was no meat, or if the available milk was blue and thin like water, or if you could buy just a little ersatz egg powder instead of the real thing. So the two

women found the most ingenious, if tiring, ways to get enough food for the stomachs of growing little Antje and an insatiable young man. And they cut down even more in their own rations. People in Germany had learned what it meant to go hungry.

Actually, we were quite well off in our Bavarian village compared with people in the ruined and crowded cities. The Tegernsee valley had not seen any military action during the war. Rottach-Egern, one of the four villages placed on each side around the lake, had been a quiet resort for the wealthy. The lake and the valley were commonly known as *Lago di Bonzo* because here all the Nazi big-wigs, in their brown uniforms resembling Buddhist monks—Bonzes—, had built their pompous villas. At its Southern tip, where we lived, the lake had a picturesque small bay, almost round in shape, the shores at the entrance coming close together and leaving only a small passage for ships to come through. There was a ferry across the straits in a wooden, flat boat rowed by an old Bavarian with an enormous black beard and wearing the typical greasy leather shorts and a Tyrolean hat with a big tuft of chamois hair. His name was Sepp and he was an institution. To hail him one had to ring a cow-bell placed at the landing stage on either side. Sepp's boat was vital because for Germans there was no other transport and the distance around the bay was quite long.

I had to learn to walk and to use my senses again, to take in the surrounding world with small, groping steps. The strength in my limbs came back only slowly when I was stumbling around in the garden or a few paces along the lake shore. Meeting the members of the other four families who lived in our villa and the people in the neighboring houses took my mind away from feeling so utterly lost in a life different from anything I had experienced before. Almost all of these new acquaintances had, like us, lost their homes and most of their earthly possessions, and there was no family that had not one or more of their number killed in the war. It gave us a sense of community, a community of the defeated, although we realized only very hesitantly the

magnitude and the totality of our defeat. If anything, it was the peace and the sheer beauty of the environment, of God's creation, that nourished our courage. If lake and mountains, flowers and forests could not be destroyed by either man or war, then not everything was lost.

When I went to the village for the first time I almost turned around and fled home. There were far more uniformed U.S. soldiers on the streets than German civilians. Jeeps and army trucks were speeding around and people had to jump aside if they did not want to be hurt. The men laughed and talked loud in a language I could not understand except constant shouts of "Halloo Fräulein" at the sight of any woman on the road. These were the forces that had beaten *Großdeutschland*? I could not believe it. They seemed to have no discipline at all, they saluted each other, even their superiors, only casually if at all, they appeared to be unable to walk by foot, and in the open Jeeps they had their feet up on the dash board, leaning back in their seats and chewing gum. They all looked terribly healthy, well-fed and happy, they had ironed creases even in their shirts. I thought they were warehouse-soldiers who would not have lasted a week in our German discipline and drill. We had known hardly anything about America and Americans. The experience of meeting these first representatives of that unknown country was disappointing.

The U.S. Military Government had declared the Tegernsee Valley to be army recreation area. Groups of soldiers from the occupation forces alternated for their vacations so that there was a constant coming and going. In Rottach-Egern there was only one larger hotel at the time which was situated right next to our back garden. It could not hold enough guests, and so the authorities had confiscated most of the private houses and mansions in the area in order to put up GIs in need of recreation. The owners, if they were still around, were moved in the basements and outhouses even if just one or two army-men at the time stayed in the properties.

To prepare the soldiers for their stay in our country they were given small brown booklets, "Pocket Guide to Germany", with the sub-title, "How to Handle the Natives". It stressed as its main theme, "There must be no fraternization with the enemy. This is definite! They must never be taken into your confidence." And it said, "These people are not our friends. The German people had all read Hitler's *Mein Kampf* and still they voted him into power. They cannot come back into the civilized fold by merely sticking out their hands and saying 'I'm sorry'. Be careful. Don't take chances."

Of course we did not know about these orders. As we saw it, the victors were snubbing us, stressing all the time their superiority in all things and trying to put us in our place. The only communication with the occupation forces were the announcements of the Military Government on the notice boards. There we were told, in English and German, that a curfew had been instituted by which every German national had to be indoors from 8 p.m. until 7 a.m. Trespassers would be jailed; or that there would be MP check-points on all outgoing roads where we would have to show whatever papers we had; or that, by the grace of the military commander, town-hall would be open for civilians at such and such a time and that the administration would be serviced by hand-picked trustworthy men and women. One of those, we knew, had gained the authorities' trust by betraying some Nazi activist to the U.S. forces. But the people at town-hall had no power of decision at all. "You want to have a pass to go to Munich? You'll have to apply at U.S. Headquarters." In fact we were detained. The laws of war still ruled and would continue to do so for many years.

The lady living upstairs burst into our room without knocking, an unheard of behavior. Something out of the ordinary must have upset her: "A new announcement is up on the notice board," she cried. "The *Amis* say they will start a program to *re-educate* Nazi Germany!" She spat out the *re-educate* with such

indignation and contempt that it was abundantly clear how she felt about it.

"What do you mean, *Nazi Germany*, that does not mean us," I retorted, "we are no Nazis, are we? And who are *they* to want to re-educate us? They are not half as civilized as we! Just look at them, they do not know the simplest rules of behavior, they don't even know how to eat properly with knife and fork, they have no *culture!*" I was shouting by now, working myself up.

"But they have won the war," the lady said. "They can do everything they want. Perhaps we must all go to school again now and those pretty soldiers in the village will teach us how they think we must live in future. Like the British have taught people in their colonies."

We were quite upset, all of us, and did not realize the blatant self-righteousness we were building up.

"It is true, you know," I said, "The Americans are quite uncultured. Or do you know of a single American poet, or composer, or educationalist comparable to ours? They are wealthy, that is their only asset, and therefore they were able to produce superior military arms, that is all. But that does not make them better human beings who could teach us anything."

From the open window came the sound of saxophone music. The military authorities had placed huge loud-speakers at strategic points around the lake that were blasting out the American Forces Network broadcasting program all day long, "Gonna take a sentimental journey", and "Chattanooga Choo-Choo". Was that the superior culture we were going to be educated in?

One day the door bell rang, and when I went down to the road to open the gate I was shocked to see a uniformed U.S. sergeant who wanted to know if this was "the house of Mrs. Annemarie". Had my sister done anything illegal, was she going to be arrested? What would we do with little Antje if her mother would be taken away from her? It turned out that the man just wanted to pay a friendly visit to Annemie, thus disobeying the

anti-fraternization rule. After all, she was a very attractive young woman, a true member of what Americans called the *Fraulein-Wunder*. The sergeant had fallen for her on first sight. He was a tall, fat giant of a man and he was as good-natured as a little child. He came many times. He used to sit very upright on our sofa, legs spread far apart, his beefy paws resting on his knees, and he goggled Annemie in a love-sick but kind way. Their relationship was quite platonic. Conversation was awkward because none of us knew much English and he had no German at all. He showed us pictures of his family, a cute tiny lady and three kids just as fat as their daddy. I felt my hostile attitude towards Americans in general ebbing a little. The man really cared for us, each time bringing food from his ration, delicious things we had never tasted before.

Annemie was our source of news. She was very active and met with all sorts of people. There were still no newspapers, no German radio, the mail service broken down almost completely, and we had no chance to travel. All the news we had was from mouth to ear. Annemie frequently went deep into the surrounding mountain forests where a great number of German soldiers lived in hiding, afraid to be imprisoned if they gave themselves up. She brought civilian clothing to them, and food if she was able to get any, and served as an errand messenger. She took great risks in doing all this, but from the bits and pieces of news she brought home we were able slowly to get a picture of what had happened since the bombing and shooting had ended. It was a gruesome picture, getting darker and darker as more details were added to it.

* * *

On July 16, just a few days after I was discharged from prison camp, the *Big Three*, Truman, Stalin and Churchill, had met in the Prussian castle Cecilienhof in Potsdam near Berlin for a conference that marked both the end of World War II and the beginning of another war, later called the Cold War. They decided

about the suffering fate of millions of people round the world. We knew about Stalin, of course, we thought we knew him better than anyone else. The Nazi propaganda had made it abundantly clear that he was world enemy number one. We had also often heard about fat cigar-smoking Winston Churchill, to us a pathetic figure, master of big words, but abused by our regime like no other person alive. About Harry S. Truman we only knew that he had succeeded Roosevelt as President of the United States. When Roosevelt had died, hope was nurtured for a while in Germany that the man after him might ease down the U.S. war effort as far as Europe was concerned, and that America would concentrate on Japan, our ally in the Far East. We knew better now.

Bit by bit it became clear that Stalin had bullied the other two big nations into accepting almost all his dictates. It had started already in November 1943, when the *Big Three*—then including Roosevelt—had met in Teheran and had decided to pull together both during the war and afterwards. Stalin had come up with a thought-through strategy to divide up the world among themselves in spheres of interest. In Teheran the Russian dictator first suggested the division of Germany along the lines of the later Iron Curtain. Roosevelt had originally endorsed the infamous *Morgenthau Plan* which his Treasury Secretary had thought up, a cynical attempt to cut up Germany into small fragments and reform it from an industrial country to a weak, subordinate rural entity with agriculture as its main occupation. But due to strong opposition from former Foreign Secretary H.L. Stimson and Cordell Hull, who was Foreign Secretary until 1944, and other influential men, the President withdrew his signature to the plan and it never played a role in the discussions.

At their next meeting in February 1945, in Yalta on the Crimea peninsula, President Roosevelt was already a very sick man, severely weakened by the strain of war-time traveling, and it must be doubted that he was still able to see through the consequences of giving in to Stalin's demands. He was a great believer in the

value of treaties and he wanted Stalin to accept him as a personal friend, so much so that he did not heed the warnings of the British Prime Minister. Winston Churchill had the strongest misgivings about any alliance other than the military co-operation (with the one purpose of defeating Germany and Japan) with the Russian bear.

At the time of the Yalta Conference, Stalin was in a very strong position with the Red Army already occupying large parts of German soil while the American and British armies were just fighting to cross the Western borders of the country. Decisively more important, though, was the fact that Stalin was by far the best informed of the three statesmen, and he had a strategy for the entire world while his opponents were at best concerned with the interests of the nations they represented.

It was decided that Germany would be divided into four Zones of Occupation, a Russian, a British, a U.S. and a French one. About Poland, Stalin got all he demanded. The country was ruthlessly cut up, for the fourth time within two centuries, and had to cede to the Soviet Union almost half of her territory including large hunks of Ukraine and White Russia. In compensation, Poland would get from Germany the Southern half of East Prussia, all of West Prussia and the industrial province Silesia. It was agreed that the new Polish borders would be subject to a peace treaty after the end of the war. The fact that this colonial-style poker game about land and borders would involve the fate of eight or ten million people, both Poles and Germans, did not seem to play an important role in the negotiations.

At Potsdam, after the unconditional surrender of Germany, when all the previous deliberations were to be confirmed, Stalin had, disregarding the Yalta agreements, already created irreversible *faits accomplis*: He had encouraged millions of Poles who were forced to leave their homes to follow in the wake of the advancing Red Army and to occupy German territory. The displaced people would, so to say, step into beds still warm from their former owners who had fled from the terror of the Russians. Together

with his armies Stalin had sent a group of Communist-trained civilians to Warsaw who had immediately formed a new Soviet-type Polish government.

We did not know the details of what was decided about our future—of course not. But we were to feel the crushing results very soon. At first only a few people arrived in Bavaria and in our village Rottach-Egern, some families and a dozen or so individuals who were all put up by their relatives or friends. They were the advance group of what would become the biggest migration the world had seen since the historic *völkerwanderung*. Nobody was able to foresee the gigantic problems this tidal wave was going to create, not only for those immediately affected—the refugees, the displaced have-nots, the expellees and expropriated people, millions and millions of them—but also for the four Military Governments who were, in the absence of any German authority, responsible for avoiding mass starvation and unemployment, a threatening apocalypse and a possible resulting civil war.

During the winter months a growing number of trucks arrived in Rottach-Egern filled with refugees. The Military Government had ruled that every town and village must take up, in proportion to the number of its inhabitants, their share of refugees. They were divided up to the smallest hamlets and the most isolated farms, often they were dumped there without warning. They were a terrible sight at their final stage of odysseys that had lasted for many months and that had started in places as far away as Hungary or the Baltic countries or Russia. Their arrival caused growing unrest among the locals, and then anger, and then outright revolt. These people owned nothing anymore and the only thing they brought with them was the tragedy of a wrong and lost cause. They asked for the solidarity of their countrymen who had suffered much less and at least still had their homes, but more often than not all they got was hostility and more humiliation.

We met a lady and her two sons aged 5 and 8, who had been among the earlier arrivals. They had been given a room in a hay

barn just outside the village. The farm belonged to some distant relatives and it had been the only address they knew in the West. One day the three of them had simply been there asking for help. None of us will ever forget the story that lady told us in the presence of her little boys. She was a lady in the true sense of the word, of a Silesian landowner family of nobility. Although marked by great hardships, she showed no bitterness. She talked in a matter-of-fact way in an even, low voice, giving no signs of emotion on her drawn but still beautiful face. I was very impressed by her attitude.

The lady and her family had refused, on their farm, to obey the SS evacuation order when the gunfire from the approaching front-line could already be heard.

“My father said that we were going to stay. He said that we had done nothing wrong, and none of us was a member of the Nazi party. The Russians, when they came, would have no reason to treat us badly. He was an old man and he had always scoffed at Nazi propoganda as a thing coming straight from hell.”

When the first Red Army soldiers had arrived at their castle the whole family was assembled at the front entrance to welcome the victors with food and beds.

They were rudely pushed aside. The Russians streamed into every room of the large house and carried out everything movable. “In the kitchen and the bathrooms they screwed off the taps from the walls because they also wanted to have running water at home. They tore the chandeliers from the ceilings and the wallpaper from the walls and the toilet bowls from the sockets.”

Then the lady’s father and her two boys were forced to watch her being raped for the first time. “I soon stopped counting how often I was raped, by many ordinary soldiers and officers alike, sometimes they took turns.”

Her father and all other older men from the staff were then marched away, “and that was the last we have seen or heard from any of them.” Her husband, serving as reserve officer, had been killed earlier in the war.

They were then driven out from their home like cattle, all of them, from the neighboring estates as well. In the whole province hardly any German was left. They were not allowed to take any valuables with them.

“But,” she said, “we were grateful to be alive. Coming through a village we saw the corpse of a lady we had known. Our guardians made a point of it that we all saw her. She was quite naked and nailed to a barn door. It was quite obvious what had happened to her before she died. My own little baby daughter we buried on the way coming here. My milk had dried up and there was just not enough to eat to go round for all of us.”

Despite all the efforts of my mother and sister to find nourishing food beyond the sorry stuff the shops would offer, my physical strength did not come back, not fast enough for my taste. Even worse was the impossibility of finding any job in the village. Some people hung around all the time near the Americans hoping to be sent on an errand or something and to be rewarded with a bar of chocolate or a piece of white bread. Rumor had it that young women were offering their bodies for the same purpose. What a shameful business! We got all worked up about the girls who showed off publicly being driven around by soldiers in their Jeeps, even with black ones! But in our heart of hearts we were probably jealous—was it not better to cast away one’s burden of pride than to starve?

Annemie, bless her connections, knew a former infantry officer who was now managing the farm of a certain Baron von der Tann, some 30 miles away in the foothills. Arrangements were made for me to work there as an auxiliary farm-hand. The Baron governed his estate in feudal style. He and his family, including two grown-up sons, were the Lordships who had never done—and would, hopefully, never do in future—a stroke of work with their own hands, and we six or eight helpers were treated as their personal property. We received no wages but were paid for our labor in kind with lodging and food. None of us minded the

arrangement. The satisfaction of being allowed to do something worthwhile was like an unexpected gift. We felt like chosen people.

On *Steinberghof*, that was the name of the farm, they grew cattle famous for their rich milk from lush mountain meadows, and they bred *Haflinger* horses, a sturdy pony-like breed with qualities comparable to mules. Although, at first, I had not enough strength to manage the tough ten-hour working day, I had the feeling of having been moved straight into heaven, and the good food of farm-made bread and cheese soon worked wonders. We had our bunks in an ancient building that must have been built for slave workers, with low wooden ceilings and doors you had to bow to come through, and minute, blind windows. Five men and three women lived there, door to door, and we had our meals there too, and our own kitchen. We would all sit around a table scrubbed quite white, a smoke-blackened iron pot in the center, no plates, and everybody would spoon out soup or potatoes from the big bowl in the middle. Generally, we were too tired to talk much, but rarely before had I been so much at peace and satisfied.

There was not much machinery on the farm, a tractor for which there was no fuel, and an ancient electrically powered threshing machine in the barn from times when more rye and wheat was grown. The two dozen black-and-white cows had to be milked by hand. I failed miserably in my efforts to squeeze out more than a few drops from their udders. But I was good in washing the beasts tails and in cleaning the stable, carting out the dung on the enormous, deliciously smelling heap, and I loved to go out at five in the morning when the dew was still on the meadows and mow with a scythe the day's fodder of clover.

In autumn I would lead one of the farm's three big working bulls into the steep mountain woods where we had felled trees. The bulls had a yoke fastened to their foreheads, and with their strength of five horses they were able to pull up the hills even the largest trunks and then roll them up on waiting trucks. Later I

was allowed to look after the *Haflinger* foals, a wild bunch, and soon my body was full of bruises from their kicking.

Crowning my farm career was caring for the Baron's pride: a gorgeous *Haflinger* stallion to whom the farmers and stable-owners from far and wide brought their mares to be covered. I helped teaching the proud animal to be led by the reins and then was promoted to the bosses' coach-man. We would go out visiting his fellow noblemen in the area with a two-seat buggy and, when the first snow covered the land, with a sleigh. It was an experience like in a fairy tale gliding through the glistening, untouched countryside hearing no other sound but the trotting stud's jingle-bells. The only flaw in the story was that while the Baron had his schnapps in the neighbors' warm houses I had to wait outside for hours freezing stiff.

Farm animals do not know week-ends or holidays. Working hours on Sundays were the same as during the week. But every other Saturday I was free to walk the 30 miles to Rottach-Egern, provided I would be back on the farm before Sunday midnight. Since the curfew began at eight p.m., I had to find secret by-passes so as to avoid the MP-check-points, but that was not very difficult. On each trip I was able to bring a rucksack full of food to the family, I got more than I needed on the farm. It was a blessing for us all.

For almost a year now German soldiers had no pay, and state officials no salaries. No state existed to pay them. Everywhere in the country the majority of people had to live off their savings if they had any. Most of the refugees did not have even that. Outside the industrial areas and also in the cities that were more than half destroyed, jobs were critically scarce, and of course there existed no functioning welfare organizations or relief funds. In Rottach-Egern one could watch decent looking fellow countrymen going through the American waste bins, sometimes coming out with hunks of bread as white as we had never seen it before. I remember the day when I first swallowed down my moral inhibitions and

picked up a stub from a *Chesterfield* or *Lucky Strike* and turned my own cigarette from the crumbs.

My mother had not cried for a long time, at least I had not seen her doing it, until that particular day in late November. A letter had been in the mail, which in itself was a rare thing to happen in those days, from an aunt who lived somewhere in the British Zone of Occupation. In the envelope was a Red Cross postcard, a so-called *Sign-of-Life Card*, on which my father had written, printing each letter individually, "I am alive and safe in POW camp in England". Prisoners were allowed to send three such cards, but only the one addressed to my aunt had reached the addressee. Seeing his unmistakable handwriting, my mother broke down in uncontrollable sobbing. Anxieties had mounted in her month after month and she had never let them come out. Our family friend, the lady who had first greeted me when I came to Rottach-Egern, had news only a few days earlier that her husband, the general, had died in a labor camp in Siberia. She suffered, of course, and we all tried to console her. But she told us that she was grateful for the certainty. Waiting in uncertainty is so much harder to bear than knowledge of the truth, however painful that truth may be. Fear of catastrophe, of death, or sickness, or loss of material wealth can affect a person much more harshly than the catastrophe itself. For my mother, her sense of duty, her idea of the image of a perfect soldier's wife had made it impossible to talk about her fears. Now, when she knew my father was alive the anticlimax came and she admitted that she had been at the end of her strength.

I had been the last of the family to see my father during those memorable days when we met in Zoppot after the Soviet Army had taken East Prussia and were pressing forward in the direction of Berlin. What he went through during the time following the German breakdown, the turmoil that went on in his soul, was shared by many Germans who had been in positions of responsibility. Fighting a desperate war had for all of us taken every last fiber of our lives and had left no pause to ponder. Now,

suddenly, for millions in camps or idling around for lack of any occupation, there was ample time to take stock, facing our country in ruins, our *Heimat* lost, our future hopeless, yet much more terrible than all this: our *Weltanschauung*, everything we had believed in, shattered. It was judgment time. Many could not face it. In my father's camp in England one after the other senior officer committed suicide. He tried to put on paper an honest account of his military life, and of the ethos of the German soldier as he had seen it. It was as if he was answering to God Almighty Himself. About the first weeks after being captured by American troops, he wrote:

On the 8th of May, the day of Germany's final and unconditional surrender, an English Captain took me in a Jeep from Lüneburg, where about 20 other generals and I had been herded together in a small and dirty factory shack under inhuman conditions, to Field Marshal Montgomery's HQ somewhere in the heather country. General Kinzel received me and told me that the two of us were to act as German Liaison Officers. Monty wanted to have another general besides Kinzel who had been officially delegated for the task by the German Supreme Command. Kinzel then had to leave for another job and I was left on my own with the 12 officers who served as my staff. For the following six weeks I was given a job that made me feel to be of some little value to my miserably broken down, deadly beaten and starving people.

During that period I was given information which could not have been more disturbing and depressing. I felt like Robinson Crusoe returning to the world after years of solitary island life and hearing about things unbelievable. Kinzel had

hinted certain things to me, but he had, due to his position in the central general staff, access to knowledge that had been kept secret to those of us serving at the front lines throughout the war. Therefore the disclosures made by several officers of Montgomery's staff were for me far more devastating, especially what the chief of staff colonel Ewart told me. I believed it could not be the truth. It was simply not comprehensible. Now, when I am writing this there can be—unfortunately—no doubt about it anymore that the charges against the crimes of Hitler and his henchmen which the colonel had brought forward only in a general way, were fully justified.

We were about 20 German officers, former officers I must say, who on my orders went around the entire area occupied by the British army. I was given my own orders directly from Montgomery when I first reported to him: He wanted me to inform him regularly about the true situation in the large camps where the soldiers were interned, but also in the towns and villages among the civilian population. He wanted to know especially about the general mood, the food and health situation, and about the effectiveness of measures to cope with the flood of German soldiers streaming back from Denmark.

Visiting the provisional mayors in Hamburg, Lübeck, Schwerin and dozens of other cities, and meeting with the commanders of all the camps that had been hastily installed under the open sky, I was able to put together a quite complete picture and to send written reports of a very critical nature to Montgomery. I related about the

impossible situations created by Russians and Poles who had been set free and let loose; about the nonsensical refusal to provide any arms for the auxiliary German police; about the prevention of any initiative coming from Germans towards re-organization of the administration or reconstruction of the basic means of transportation; about deploring shortcomings in some of the camps and in Hamburg city; about the barbaric, inhuman, Asiatic plundering, murdering and raping I had seen beyond the Line of Demarcation in the Soviet sector of occupation. Montgomery let me know through Colonel Ewart that he agreed with my critical way of reporting.

The teamwork with the British officers at HQ, especially with those few who knew some German, was free, open and businesslike. That was so until news was spread about the liberation of concentration camps by U.S. troops and the unbelievable horrors they had discovered. From that day on communication between the British and us was broken off abruptly. The English could not and did not want to accept that we soldiers had not known about these horrible torturing and murders. The only exception was a captain Rockcliffe who kept touch until the end of my work.

The following description of the beginning of my father's imprisonment is a tragic tale. Prisoners of war around the world will be able to tell similar stories. Nobody can expect to be treated gentleman-like when captured by a war enemy. My father talks about hardships while being shifted from one camp to the next, about pin pricks from individual guardians, about being kept in

solitary confinement for no apparent reason or in overcrowded mass quarters. But he does not complain about these things that had to be expected. It was the confrontation with what the British, and obviously the world, thought and felt about him and his comrades which plunged him into despair.

At the day of his arrival in "White House" camp not far from London where hundreds of high ranking officers had been collected, Field Marshal Busch had died. He had been my father's immediate superior during the last actions of the war. They had known each other for many years and there had been a relationship between them marked by mutual respect, almost personal friendship. The funeral was arranged at Aldershot and my father was permitted together with seven other generals to participate. "For us and for the two accompanying British officers it was a shameful affair. No German word was allowed at the grave. Field Marshal von Rundstedt was denied to say a few last sentences to his old comrade."

They were moved to four different places in Great Britain in the course of half a year. In each one of these stations they were instructed about more disclosures of things the mind would refuse to grasp. "Painful step by painful step we came closer to the truth about Hitler and his Regime, about what had been done and what had been kept secret to most of us. Each one of us individually now had the chance to deal in heart and mind with mountains of problems, accusations, guilt, the loss of faith and honor and decency. It was a struggle that called for more courage of one's convictions than even the war had claimed."

Those must have been lonely battles the elite of German soldiers had to fight through because they did not discuss them openly. When it comes to the core of one's beliefs, to the basic motives directing the course of one's life, it is difficult to analyze them honestly, but much more so to lay them open to others. In his personal diary my father noted:

A man who has sworn the soldier's oath, a man

for whom obedience is the very cornerstone of his calling and for the entirety of his actions, will be tied to his allegiance in every possible situation except in death and in one other: when he is ordered to commit a crime. About this, Dietrich Bonhöffer, who was murdered by the Nazis in April 1945, said this:

In our long history we Germans had to learn about both the need and the strength of obedience. In submitting to our summons every personal wish and thought we found the very meaning and the greatness of our lives. We looked "up" to the superior authorities not in slavish fear but in that free trust which accepted in order a profession, and in the profession a calling. A portion of justified mistrust against one's own heart results in the willingness to trust the order from "above" rather than one's own whims, justified mistrust against one's own heart. Who would want to deny the Germans that in obedience, in loyalty to their calling, they have again and again accomplished the utmost of courage and offering their lives. The German tries to maintain his freedom—and where else in the world has there been more talk about freedom, from Luther to the philosophy of idealism—by searching to be free from self-will in the service of the whole. Calling and freedom were to him two sides of the same thing. But with this he failed to recognize the world. He had not appreciated that his preparedness for submission, for offering his life in the pursuit of service, could be misused—toward evil.

Yet if this misuse happened, then following our profession became doubtful in itself, then all ethical standards would founder. Then it would become

clear that one fundamental recognition was still missing amongst Germans, namely the necessity of free and responsible action directed even against calling and order.

We Germans are beginning only now (when it is too late) to discover the meaning of responsibility in freedom. It is based on a God who is calling for the daring action of unfettered faith and who offers forgiveness and consolation to those who fall in sin because of it.

In other words, if a German soldier—general, officer, or enlisted man—was ordered to commit a crime it would have been his duty before God and his own conscience not to carry out the order, thereby taking upon himself every possible consequence of his disobedience.

Field Marshal Montgomery talked to the prisoners in Portsmouth on the theme, "Nation and the Armed Forces". He said, "First, the nation is of eminent importance. Second, the Army is the necessary arm of the nation. Third, the soldier's duty is to obey, not questioning any order which the army, i.e. the nation, gives him."

And Thomas Carlyle, the renowned historian and author wrote, "If a man becomes a soldier he belongs, soul and body, to his commanding officer. It is not up to him to decide if the cause he is going to war for is good or bad. His enemies are chosen for him, not by him. His duty is to obey, not to ask."

This had been our creed, it had indeed been the creed of the armies in all the civilized nations everywhere. The realization that we Germans have been cheated, misused, that in our name unheard of crimes have been committed, is cruel, terribly cruel. Perhaps it can never be atoned.

From the victors we hear that a new phrase, *collective guilt*, has been coined for the German people. It means that the world holds responsible as criminals all of us because we are German

nationals, and because we *allowed* all these terrible things to happen. It means that we will have to expiate collectively. I cannot accept this. To my mind it is a defamation of our people.

Any thought of a collective responsibility came up only in retrospect, in judging events and actions which happened mainly in the later years of the war and which were discovered by material laid open only some time later. Can our entire nation, millions of soldiers, can we all really be guilty of atrocities which became known only after the unconditional surrender? In my opinion, three factors must be considered:

1. The power of state propaganda dominating every means of communication, in combination with terror executed by Party and Gestapo in order to form public opinion and the thinking of the masses.
2. The tendency of human nature to act "in good faith" even if it is thus deceived and misled.
3. The spirit of utter desperation of the German people, at the front lines and at home, caused by the obvious determination of the enemy to totally and finally annihilate our country as demonstrated by the methodical destruction of our cities and the civilian population.

Considering all this, it is my firm conviction that the overwhelming mass of the German people has in truth been subjected to deception, misleading, terror including *Sippenhaft* (punishment of all family members for crimes committed by one member), imprisonment, shooting and hanging, to desperation in fear of the destruction and loss of their homeland. It has acted to the bitter end in good faith, it has fought, suffered and sacrificed. By human standards the majority of our people are free from guilt. In fact, they have shown true greatness.

If now human judgment from other nations wants to accuse our people of their shortcomings, then those judges arrogantly

adopt the attitude of infallibility while they and their people might be subject to such shortcomings themselves.

On this bitter note my father ended his daily diary. However, the process of his thinking, of going to the bottom of his own conscience had only just begun. It went on for many of the following years. In his heart of hearts he knew about his own personal guilt and that this, before the Almighty, was all that really mattered. But he was not able yet to find a way out of the labyrinth of his bitterness and disappointment. The attempt to exonerate the German people from guilt did not satisfy him at all. Deep down it was clear to him that this was only a half truth if even that. At the same time, his determination grew not to accept human judgment, especially not from "the enemy", and to bow to the divine judge only.

This kind of spirit was predominant in our country. As a result of the London Agreement of the Allied Control Commission, the Nuremberg International Military Tribunal started its work in October 1945. The tribunal was a novelty in the history of mankind and, to this day, it has remained unique. Based on the assumption that Germany as a whole was guilty and must be tried accordingly, the victor powers endowed themselves with the mandate to draw up the constitution of the court and to act both as prosecutor and judge. Within two or three months new principles and definitions for "war crime" and "crime against humanity" were hastily added to established international law, new sentences for such crimes were invented. Neither the General Peace Resolution of The Hague nor the International Court of Justice that had been instituted by the League of Nations knew of sanctions against "genocide" or other crimes the Germans had committed. Such definitions were introduced to international law only three years later, in 1948, by resolution of the United Nations.

The trial against 24 top Nazi leaders lasted for almost a year. During that period we saw first tentative signs of a return to

“normality” in our day-to-day life. In Rottach-Egern, the first public cinema was permitted to show old films that had passed censorship of the Military Government. News reels reported regularly about the progress of the Nuremberg Tribunal. I remember being terribly disturbed and upset when I saw a Soviet general among the judges. It had become clear to most of us that those who had led us to disaster must be punished for their deeds. But with my understanding of justice, I could not believe at all that a representative of the communist terror regime was in a legal or moral position to sit in judgment on our leaders.

This opinion was shared by many, not only in Germany. George Kennan, the outstanding historian, wrote, “Including a Soviet judge in the Court . . . made a farce of the trial. This procedure left but one conclusion: That such crimes were understandable and forgivable when committed by one government under such and such circumstances, but that they were unforgivable, unjust and to be punished by the death sentence when committed by another government under different circumstances.”

The victor is always right. We know now that the intention of the Allied Powers was laudable when they defined for the world German national-socialist fascism to be a crime, and when they undertook to punish the chief Nazi actors with the aim to create a new basis for democratic thinking and living in Germany. But nobody could assume that a trial like this would create in our people a sense of guilt nor a preparedness for remorse or, even less, repentance. The contrary was the case. Everybody in the country declared to have been from the beginning and always against Nazism. Suddenly one could not find a single person who would admit that he had been prepared to follow Adolf Hitler “to the end”. A friend of mine who served with British Intelligence in Germany during that time and who talked—speaking our language perfectly—with hundreds of Germans told me later that one might have come to the conclusion that the *Führer* had been the only real Nazi.



In November 1945 my father had been transferred to a large camp for generals, admirals and senior staff officers in Northern Germany. It was situated in the British Zone of Occupation. With the greatest of difficulties, first my mother and then I succeeded to get an *Interzonenpass*, a document allowing us to cross the border to another Zone, and to visit him one at a time. Prisoners were allowed to meet one visitor a week. I was shaken by the change in my father. He was a different person from the one I had known. He had become a loner, mistrusting even many of his life-long comrades in the camp. He seemed to be a hermit in the crowd, walked with his head bowed, and there were lines in his face which had not been there before. And yet, he yearned for love and understanding from his family. I was somewhat overwhelmed by the intensity with which he reached out with his heart for my trust.

For my 20th birthday he wrote a long letter from camp. I still have it and regard it as one of my most treasured possessions. He implored me to accept him as my best friend, talked about the deepest things in his life, and closed with Polonius' words to his departing son Laertes in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, "And these few precepts in thy memory look thou character: Give thy thoughts no tongue, nor any unproportion'd thought his act . . . give every man thy ear, but few thy voice: Take each man's censure, but reserve thy judgment . . . This above all: to thine own self be true, and it must follow, as the night the day, thou canst not then be false to any man." But I was in a state of turmoil myself and did not respond in a way he had hoped.

My father then was ordered to appear as a witness before the Nuremberg Court. He was cross-examined about atrocities from Germans in Yugoslavia at the time when he commanded a division operating in the Dalmatia coastal area. He was able to prove beyond doubt that, at least in the part of the Balkan he had access to, the only barbarian and criminal acts were committed

by Yugoslavs among themselves—Chetniks, Ustashniks, Croats, all fighting as partisans against each other, united only in their hatred against Tito's communist brigades.

It was not the accusations and the questioning but the atmosphere my father found himself in that again pushed him down in desperation. He was put in solitary confinement in a cell guarded by a Jewish Pole who had suffered in a German KZ, a concentration camp. For this warden, naturally and understandably, a person wearing the uniform of a German general was *a priori* a villain. He took away my father's belt and suspenders and treated him with insults and hateful contempt.

When the 24 top Nazis had been tried—12 of them sentenced to death—the Court continued its work in the fortress of Landsberg until 1950. The only difference was that now it was not an international jury anymore, but only Americans acting as prosecutors and judges. At the same time local Denazification Courts were established in the three Western Zones in order to deal with the Nazi movement at grass roots. Every German over 18 was to be categorized in one of five levels of Nazi involvement. The efficiency of these courts left much to be desired. Their German members were selected and named by the Military Government, and so it happened quite frequently that they were themselves more involved in Nazi activities than those they had to judge. The story went round about a man who left a Munich tram carriage: "That one was a Nazi", someone remarks, and none of the other passengers dares to sit on the empty seat. "No problem", says a uniformed GI and sweeps with his behind a few times over the place. "It's OK, now, denazified!"

The local court responsible for the Tegernsee valley was in the nearby small town Miesbach. I do not know if the same thing happened elsewhere as well, but the Miesbach council forced all the defendants in the area to assemble in a cinema and look at a film that had been made on Auschwitz Concentration Camp. It was meant to prepare us for our own trials. The facts and

figures given and the pictures shown were far more horrible than any of the rumors we had heard until then. They verified that hell had come down to earth, to our country, and those acting as devils were Germans. At the end, we filed out of the cinema in total silence. We could not look in each others' eyes anymore.

That day I dissociated myself from that "other Germany", from those wild beasts who had been able to do such things. I decided that I had nothing to do with them, that I had been far too young to have been part of it all. In fact I did not know anybody personally who had been an active part of it. Any doubts that would come up were pushed aside. I was not guilty, I had not been a Nazi. Life, or more precisely, my life, had to go on. We did not talk about the recent past, not even among friends. But to fortify our position, we developed a strange hunger for news about atrocities committed by *others*. The idea that only we Germans were so bad was simply unbearable. The numb feeling lasted in us that we were now the most hated nation on earth, and that the world had united in the effort to make us suffer. Rather than conviction of sin, a spirit of utter self-pity began to take hold of us.

* * *

Suffer we did. The winter of 1946/47 became the hardest in post-war history. Most of all the millions of expellees and expropriated people, and the growing wave of homecoming POWs who were collected in huge camps or returned to the ruins of their homes—they all paid the most for what had been done in their name. In most towns far more than half of civilian housing was destroyed or damaged beyond repair. There was hardly any heating fuel. Food supplies and medical service had dropped to a level causing great anxiety. I remember times when we looked forward all day for the evening because then we would put fire to the small cast-iron stove in the corner of our room and heat it up with the rationed pieces of wood for a while. Like

everybody else we had built a flue for the smoke going out through a hole in the window so we would not suffocate. It was the time when *Trümmerfrauen* in Berlin and other cities became famous—the women who worked to clear away the rubble, brick by brick. Tuberculosis spread like fire and there were far too few hospital beds available.

An incredible thing happened then. Perhaps the thousands of letters American soldiers like Annemie's sergeant had sent home describing the situation in the lands they were occupying had played their part. One day a heavy, square parcel was delivered to our family. It had the large letters CARE printed on it but otherwise no sender. Why we had been chosen to be receivers of it remained a mystery; we had not done anything to deserve it. Writing about the moment of opening that wonder box still now, half a century later, brings tears to my eyes. Many tins and boxes came out, all of them the same olive-brown color, with strange but delicious and nourishing food. Tinned corned-beef and butter, real coffee and sugar—it was like Christmas, Easter and birthday all happening at the same time. We felt like Alice in a dream-like wonderland. To think that anybody in this world should care enough, perhaps somebody to whom our people had done great harm, to simply help us at a time of real need, was overwhelming.

I never read any statistics about it, but we heard later that about 16 million CARE parcels were sent to European disaster areas, mostly to former "enemy" countries. The organization was formed by 26 different American social and relief groups who collected gifts from countless private persons and companies and then bought those standardized parcels. No-one who received one of them will ever forget it. Perhaps it is not possible to measure in facts and figures how much this action helped to alleviate hunger on a large scale or how many people were saved from starvation. But much more than that, the spontaneous willingness of the war victors to aid the defeated after a cruel war built bridges of humanity which in future became of imminent importance.

It must be said that of the four powers occupying Germany, only the U.S.A. were in an economic position to carry through such a campaign. Neither the European nor the Asian war had taken place on American soil. In France, Great Britain, and especially in Russia, on the other hand, Germany had caused enormous destruction and suffering, and consequently created a need for immediate revenge in those countries. In Potsdam, the Big Three had agreed that occupied Germany should be legally regarded as one country. But failing to arrive at a united policy about vital subjects like war reparations and the political development of future Germany, authority was given to the four Military Governments to deal with these questions individually at their own liking. Naturally, national interests became dominant for each one of them. It seemed to us that the Four had only one thing in common: not to let Germans take into their own hands the political, economic and social reconstruction.

It was a peculiar, light-less time, a period somehow taken out of the sequence of the evolution of history. Apart from decrees by the Military Government there were no functioning legal institutions and we had no permitted political parties, or independent newspapers of our own that might have given direction to our thinking. The nation was non-existent anymore. We lived in a time in between. For the older Germans who had grown up in a country that had, perhaps, been loved by nobody but respected by many, it was hard to bear to be so out of power to do anything constructive, not to be able to contribute even first steps to regain any decency. During the regime most of us had forgotten the meaning of free initiative or we had never learned it. Public morale which we used to be so proud of disintegrated even more now. In the towns, the black market became for many the foundation for their existence. Our money was worthless, American cigarettes became the actual currency. "One Lucky Strike for a pound of flour."

* * *

What was I to do with my life? I really had no idea, nor had my mother and my father whom I asked for guidance. The only intention I ever had was to follow, like my father, the military officer's career. That was out now, definitely out. The Allied let us know in no uncertain terms, again and again, that no German army would ever again be allowed to threaten her neighbors and the world. Other interests I had not. The Third Reich, meant to last for a thousand years, had existed just twelve, but these had been all I had so far experienced. Now what? Many of my age group had the vague idea of "university", of studying any given subject at any college, and then go on from there; something would evolve. We heard rumors that in Tübingen the ancient University had already re-opened for a limited number of students. But! Tübingen was in the French Zone of Occupation and therefore out of reach for us, like in a foreign country. Moreover, precondition for any further study was a qualified *Abitur*. The graduation certificate we had been given during the war without examinations was invalid. The Nazis had found us old and mature enough to give our lives in the war, but now we were not mature enough for peace. We would have to go to High School once more.

Sängerschlösschen was the proud name of a neat castelette situated in the foothills above Tegernsee village. It was painted ochre and boasted with some balconies and bay windows, and with a number of ill-assorted turrets and chimneys. Its twenty or so rooms were empty—the former owners had disappeared like so many others. The Military Government in Munich had agreed that the little castle should be used, as a temporary measure, to be the home of the first official *Oberschule* in the area which would be qualified to hold valid final *Abitur* examinations. So far so good. But there was no German education authority yet. Every step to found a new school had to come from private initiative, and had to pass scrutiny of the suspicious local American administration.

Teachers had to be found who had already been de-nazified and shown no brown color in their curriculum vitae. They would also have to be prepared to work for almost no pay—the small available funds would be used to furnish class rooms and a rudimentary administration set-up. Syllabi of most teaching subjects were found to be brimful of open or hidden Nazi doctrine and had to be “cleansed”. A committee of volunteers worked with devotion on this task for many months. What a job a future ministry for education would have—if we would ever be allowed to have a real government of our own. It was pioneering work as far as the underlying democratic philosophy of life was concerned. We realized very soon that we would have a long, long way to go.

It was like a bit of returned “normality” when about thirty boys and girls from the villages around the lake walked up the steep road leading to *Sängerschlässchen* for our first day as members of the new *Abitur* form. I should have said “young men” and girls, because our female colleagues all had visited their schools without much interruption while we men had served for two or three years as soldiers, definitely marked by the experience and also matured.

The previous day we had participated, together with the kids of the lower grades, in the opening ceremony with a lot of flowers and music and speeches by people we did not know. The new director had addressed the crowd, and some obviously very moved teachers, who nevertheless had not been able to impress the pupils much about the importance of the occasion. Some U.S. officers had been there too, in flawless uniforms with bands of colorful medals, smiling benignly with the air of accomplished benefactors. A string quartet had offered a Haydn sonata, but the lovely tunes had often been drowned out by the loudspeakers down in the village blaring out some Benny Goodman rhythm.

We felt really awkward, not yet knowing each other and seeking some security in the crowd. That is why we had met at the railway station. We wanted to walk up together to the castle that did not look at all like an ordinary school. Everything was

different. What would be expected from us and how should we react? I realized that so far I had gone to school because that was the rule, because the system and also my parents expected it from me. I had learned for no other reason but to pass the next exam. But now? The whole set-up seemed to be turned around: I had *volunteered* to attend classes. I expected something from the teachers now. I knew that I needed more knowledge if I wanted to make something of my life. If this was so, what should be our attitude to those from whom we wanted to learn? Should we play tricks on them like we used to in the old days? Would they try to re-establish the old authority-obedience relationship? There were so many questions.

A fellow called Lulu passed around American cigarettes, the real thing, and we smoked reverently. The German stuff one could buy for coupons we called "Embankment Crop" because it contained no tobacco but just straw and hay and would rough up one's lungs. Lulu also possessed chewing-gum, that symbol of the American way of life, and he was the only one of us men wearing trousers not made of the drab military uniform material ingeniously transformed by our mothers into all sorts of "civilian cuts". He had even adopted that particular air of casualness in his manners which for us was typical for the GI, and his hair was crew-cut "U.S.-style". I observed with silent envy that all the girls' attentions were concentrated on Lulu. Had he seen the signs of the time and the rest of us not? And what about Vera who, unlike all the other girls, had daringly painted her face with a garish red lip-stick. That was an unheard of thing. I thought it was obscene. That sort of make-up was only to be had from the occupants who to my mind were still our adversaries. Had this girl really "degraded" herself that low?

It was not just the first day of school. Everything was beginning anew, every aspect of life, even a new calendar, so it seemed. This was not the year 1946 AD, it was for us the year two A.H., after Hitler. We had to learn from scratch, which did not seem to be so bad at all as far as Mathematics, or Latin, or

Chemistry was concerned. I had forgotten everything I may have known earlier. But we had to change basic things like our handwriting. We all had learned to write *Sütterlin* style, particular German letters with lots of stiff straight and pointed lines. But *Sütterlin* was linked with the German past, and that past was evil, and therefore we had to adopt Latin letters in our handwriting.

Day-to-day German language had to be “purified”. Countless phrases and words had been defiled by Nazi use and misuse. They had to be banned from our vocabulary. It was obvious that the word *Führer* could never be used again in its original meaning of a person giving leadership. It was more difficult to accept that terms like *Vaterland*, *Ehre*, *Treue* would be suspect in our new land—the German people had no fatherland, no honor, no loyalty anymore, not in the sense these terms had in pre-Nazi times. Now they were all tinted brownish. If you talked about *Heimat*, that epitome of former German patriotic feeling, you might be regarded as a revisionist who wished to restore pre-war national boundaries including such provinces as our beloved East Prussia or Silesia, or the Saarland which now belonged to France. The victors of the war had decided in Potsdam that these parts where Germans had settled and lived for many centuries would not be *Heimat* for them anymore. Those were tough toads to swallow. The Nazi past was hard to eradicate. The process which then began is continuing to this very day.

Still, it was a beginning. We were all wonderfully young and we found the most unexpected ways to have fun and enjoy life as it came. We paired up with the girls, and till about mid-term our individual girl-friends coached us for school exams. Later, when we had caught up, we took over and coached our ladies. Evi lived two houses up the road from ours. She and I developed a rather fervent, intimate friendship—for me the first time ever. Until then females had been a non-entity for me, apart from my mother and sister, but they did not count.

Evi and I would meet in the early morning, holler for Sepp to row us over the straits, and then walk on to school together. In winter, when the lake was frozen, there would be an ancient, rattling bus powered with wood-gas. Instead of with money the fare was paid with a piece of fire-wood to feed the enormous fuming and stinking oven in the back of the bus. Gasoline-driven vehicles for passenger transport did not exist. During holidays, my friend Horst and I went out every day at sunrise to the mountain valleys and worked as lumber-jacks felling trees and hauling them downwards. We earned a few Pfennigs and were allowed to take some of the cut wood home for winter stock. My mother would give me two or three boiled potatoes and a carrot—that was the food for the day.

As a sign of good-will the American authorities gave permission for the opening of a dancing school in Tegernsee. The entire *Abitur* class attended the first course. The only café where a German band was allowed to play and where we could practice our new-found arts was at the other end of the lake, so that each dancing trip on borrowed bicycles became an adventure because of the eight o'clock curfew and the necessity to avoid the ever present MP checkpoints. But darkness was our ally and, also, the guards had slackened in their watchfulness.

Bordering the back yard of our villa was a lawn belonging to the hotel where the local military HQ resided. That piece of ground was used as a dump for out of service Jeeps and trucks. It was guarded round the clock. Horst and I had reconnoitered the situation: perhaps there might be some remainder of gasoline left in the wrecked cars? One night we crept under cover of pitch darkness, armed with a couple of cans and a length of garden hose, toward the trucks, our hearts thumping so loud that we thought everybody must hear it. One after the other we opened the tanks, sucked out what gas was left and filled almost forty liters in our cans. We got away unnoticed and stored the loot in the basement of our house. It was worth gold! But the odors were soon wafting through the whole building and my mother

forced us to get rid of the stuff. It was exchanged for a pile of packs of cigarettes, and with those we were able to deal in precious material for clothing, and some good food.

* * *

“Never bow to any man, you must promise me that”, insisted my father as we walked through the compound of a large POW camp.

He had been transferred again, this time to Garmisch-Partenkirchen in the U.S. Zone. It was much easier for us to visit him there. It was the largest camp he had been in so far. Many of the well-known military figures were there with him. He pointed out to me some of the great men of the war, celebrated war heroes, who looked like Christmas trees with the decoration taken off in their uniforms carefully bared of all the medals and glitter. There was the number one air-force ace, Galland, who had downed some 150 Allied planes and had, at 25, become the youngest General in history. And there were others, until recently examples of heroism and now not to be distinguished from the mass of prisoners.

“To my mind they behave dishonorably”, my father said, “they are appeasing the U.S. occupiers and they degrade our German honor. You must promise me never to do that! We will bow to the Almighty only”.

I had come by train, stopping over for some hours in Munich. The city that had been our home for eight years had depressed me again. I had hardly found my way to our house on the grounds of the military academy. The center of town was unrecognizable. The twin-towered *Frauenkirche*, the powerful landmark of Munich, was burned out, the government buildings, the beautiful shopping areas—everything was gone, and the empty hulks of formerly stately rows of houses had made a threatening impression on me. And yet, the place had been crowded with people. A railway-man had told me that every third person living in Munich was now a refugee.

"But where do they all live?" I wondered.

He did not know. "They do not live here, they just exist", he said.

A stiff, cold wind was whistling between the barracks. The surrounding Alp mountains were already covered with fresh snow. I did not own an overcoat, so my father had given me one of his two knee-long uniform coats. We talked for several hours, interrupting our walk only once or twice to warm up in his room. He had saved from his rations some *real* coffee, some *real* cream, and some cookies the like of which I had not tasted for years.

He poured out his care for me. But he was bitter, so deeply bitter. He told me about his time in Nuremberg: "Who are they to sit in judgment over us? They are not better than we. The British showed us pictures of London and Coventry, they accused us to have started the bomber terror on civilians. That may be true. And it is also a fact that we have started the terrible war. But they have made a system of total annihilation of every single one of our big cities, concentrating on the housing areas. Isn't that also a criminal kind of warfare? So, where is the difference?"

It went on and on. He was much better informed than we in secluded Rottach-Egern. Many of the prisoners had their families in the British and French Zones, some even in Russian occupied East Germany. They had fresh news all the time. I was told that Stalin at the Potsdam Conference had demanded that all German heavy industry as far as it had remained after the war and as far as it had contributed in any way to the war effort, was to be dismantled. They had started to take down big factories like Krupp and IG Farben, and to ship entire plants to Russia. East Germany had already a Communist government. They had instituted a land reform, disowning every farmer with more than one hundred acres of land and declaring them all without exception to have been Nazi criminals. All the land and all the factories would now be owned "by the people", and everybody in East Germany had

“volunteered to work as hard as they could to restore for the wrongs they had inflicted on their liberator, the great Soviet Union”.

My father cried, “Has the world forgotten all about Stalin’s regime of terror?”

I must have grown more and more silent as he went on. I really did not want to hear about American atomic bombs on Japanese cities and about atrocities against German POWs in France and about mass killings of expellees in Poland and Czechoslovakia. All this was “big politics” to me. I had never been interested in those. I found myself longing to go home and have my peace, to be with my friends and make the best of the situation we were in. We could do nothing to alter it anyway. Historians have called us the “Count-me-out Generation”. That is precisely what we all felt. “Look at what happened to those who have taken responsibility in the past”, we said, and I might have added, “nobody will force me to go through what my father is experiencing”.

He had started a stubborn mini-war of his own against the military authority by writing out endless forms with many copies, demanding back “property stolen by U.S. Occupation Forces” from our Lenggries flat. To a certain extent he was successful. One piece of furniture missing was a beautiful old grandfather clock, standing about six foot high, hand carved, and with a deep bell striking the hours. It had been a gift to my grandfather from his flock for a life-time service as their parson. Shortly after I returned from my visit to the camp, my mother was summoned out to the street by four heavily armed and steel-helmeted MPs. They showed her a number of photos, “This is a grandfather clock as seen from the left side. Can you swear that this is your property?”. She had to lift three fingers and state under oath that it was indeed our clock. The procedure was repeated three times, “as seen from the top, or from the front . . .” We were told that one American officer had felt it right to have a big wooden box made for the ancient piece and to ship it home as a war trophy. It had been secured in Bremen harbor just before it was loaded on

a steamer destined for the U.S.A. While I am putting this down on paper I can hear the reassuring sound of the old clock, every half hour, and I am full of gratitude.

* * *

That same winter President Truman sent Herbert Hoover, one of his predecessors, to Europe on a fact-finding mission. He was asked to give an unvarnished report about the economic situation of the European countries with particular regard to food, housing and clothing. Hoover took his task very seriously. His report was published in the spring of 1947. It resulted in the turning point of post-war history as far as Europe was concerned. It said that the food situation in Italy, France, Great Britain and the Benelux countries had almost reached pre-war standards again. In Germany, on the other hand, it was causing extreme concern. Hoover called for immediate measures of aid: "We urgently need the recovery of Europe, not only for economic reasons, but as a primary condition for peace . . . There is only one way to recovery: Production . . . European economic strength cannot be restored without German recovery as part of this economic strength."

The Hoover Report stated that Germany because of the provinces ceded to Poland and France, had lost 25 percent of her food production, 30 percent of her coal mining capacity, and 20 percent of her consumer goods production. Compared with 68 million population in 1936, the number had grown to 71 million through the influx of displaced people. It was an illusion, it said, to believe Germany could be relegated to a merely rural state. "For that purpose one would have to exterminate or remove 25 million Germans." If it was not the aim to let Germany starve to death, she would become a heavy burden on the Allied nations' taxpayers if the present policy (of dismantling large parts of her industry) would be pursued. "It is possible to continue to keep Germany in chains, but as a result all of Europe will be reduced to rags."

Twenty years after this event Konrad Adenauer wrote in his autobiography, "I want to thank President Hoover for the great deed of humanity he accomplished with his report on the situation of defeated and outlawed Germany. He deserves my and the German people's lasting gratitude and highest admiration. It must have been the first time in the history of the last centuries that the spirit of humanity has so inspired a victorious nation, that the vanquisher wanted to help the vanquished to rise out of misery in such a grand manner."

Even if the creation of ERP, the European Recovery Plan, was motivated to a certain extent by American political and economic self-interest—for us, the recipients in Western Europe it marked indeed a historic turning point. Marshall Aid, as it was to be called, became the ignition spark for our recovery. For us Germans it was even more than that: The American people gave us the gift of their confidence in spite of the past.

Of course it took some time before first impacts of the action would be felt. However, into the atmosphere of resignation and desperation in our country the first sun-beams of hope were entering. We could dare to think that we would have a future again.

Unfortunately my father and many of his comrades were not able to share in this spirit of hopeful expectation. The U.S. Forces Historical Division had asked the former ranking officers collected in Garmisch-Partenkirchen Camp to write down their strategic and tactical experiences of war against the Soviets. It was to help them in their effort to put together an authentic historiography and also, they said, it should serve as a kind of recognition of the "mutual spiritual and political values of the West". In truth, I think, the United States regarded with growing apprehension the hegemonic striving of their former ally, Stalin's Soviet Union. There might even be war again.

My father refused any sort of co-operation with the Americans. On my next visit to the camp he told me his reason: "They—the enemy—have taken away from me everything I had: My mother, my son, my son-in-law, my house, my belongings,

my *Heimat*, my honor. My knowledge about Russia and the Russians is about the last thing I “possess”. I am not going to give away to the victors this last treasure.” Poor father, I pitied him in his plight, but I was completely unable to console him in any way.

Germans are said to be thorough in whatever they do. Many of the imprisoned generals complied with their guardians’ wishes and began to write, thoroughly and extensively. They had not even finished their first chapters when my father, from whom no contribution could be expected, was released into freedom.

He was among the first to come home. We celebrated, of course, but for none of us his home-coming was a change for the better. The two small rooms we shared became too crowded. I had to work for my *Abitur* examinations and had no time for my father which deeply disappointed him. Besides, he was difficult to be with. He was gloomy and so hopeless. Annemie left with little Antje to be with her in-law family far up North. We missed their happy and easy disposition. What should a man do who had learned a profession that was of no use anymore? A man whose life spirit had been broken, whose services, so it seemed, were unwanted? Our time of sorrow continued, both for us as a family and as a nation. We could not yet discover a passage leading out of the abyss.

4. Road from Ruin

Most of our family's forbears from my father's side had been Huguenots. They had come to Berlin after Louis XIV, Catholic King of France during the 17th century, had waged a cruel war on the French Protestants that caused hundreds of thousands of the Protestant Huguenots to flee the country. The Prussian Elector had given refuge with very favorable conditions to 20,000 of them. That had been a risky but wise move—risky because the Prussians with it gained the eternal enmity of the French, and wise because the refugees became the most loyal citizens of their new homeland, and because they brought French culture, their highly advanced artisanship and new crafts to Prussia, thus contributing greatly to her growing stand in the concert of European states. In Berlin, some time later, a third of the population was of French origin, and among educated people and in the court of the first Prussian king, French became the preferred language.

My father had always been very proud of this heritage. He had drawn a big family tree and he used to point out to us children, when we were smaller, all the French sounding names of our forefathers. One of them had been the closest personal friend and Secretary of State to King Frederick the Great, others had been famous generals or prominent gold-smiths. All of them, as far as we knew, had been staunch Protestants and loyal Prussians.

At the time when my father had come home from prison camp and I had finished with my *Abitur*, the U.S. Military

Government had agreed to the first German newspapers to appear, most of them weeklies. They had to be "licensed", meaning that everything printed had to mirror American views. Still, it helped to be better informed about what was going on in the world, and how four foreign nations were trying to govern what was left of Germany. We did not have the money to subscribe to one of the papers, but more fortunate neighbors were passing around back issues.

One day big banner headlines told us that the Allied Control Commission of Germany had decreed that "the State of Prussia has been abolished". Just like that, Prussia, like Bavaria, Saxony and the other provinces had been independent kingdoms or dukedoms before they formed the Union of the German Reich. The Kaiser had at the same time been King of Prussia. Hitler had then replaced the State Minister Presidents with Nazi *Gauleiter* and reduced the States to mere administrative units. Now, in the new Germany, however the political structure would develop, there was to be no Prussia anymore, that was the will of the victors.

For my father it was a blow that almost drove him crazy. "They cannot do that! Nobody can dissolve a nation, just as you cannot forbid a religious creed by law." For him, this was not just a political act intended to root out what appeared to the world to be the breeding ground of German militarism and imperialism. My father was a Prussian by birth, by conviction, by confession and by faith. Everything he had cherished in his life had been built on Prussian tradition. Now he felt that the world tried to cut away his very roots.

My mother hated her men's arguing. Our financial resources were dwindling away fast and we had been forced to look for some work we could do at home. The three of us would sit around a table in our small living-room and produce hundreds of color samples of nail varnish on little pieces of cardboard for some new cosmetic company, or we would water-color engraving prints of Munich city scenes which later would be shaped to

lamp screens. For a while these things sold quite well and we were able to earn enough to sustain an extremely modest livelihood. But it was pathetic to see the general who had all his life carried large responsibilities diligently trying to put precise blobs of nail varnish on sample cards. And then we would argue about issues that meant so much to him and so little to me.

"But Vati", I would say, "think for just a moment what would have happened if we had won the war. Most certainly we would have abolished royalty in countries like Great Britain or Norway or Holland, we would have colonized all the European nations and made them all serve German interests."

He would flare at me, heatedly, "How dare you say such a thing! Our people are not like that. All the decent Germans would have smashed the Nazi criminals once we had defeated our enemies, and we would have our Kaiser back and we would have peace in Europe."

In the end, one of us would just walk out, mainly for the sake of my mother who suffered, unable to mediate in such futile discussions.

A wall rose up between us. I wanted out and to live my own life, forget about traditions and codes of behavior and, above all, the past which had been wasted and hell anyway. I spent more and more time away from home with my pals and with my girlfriend and began to pull all the strings I could uncover. "Use your vitamin B", was the current slogan. "B" stood for *Beziehungen*, connections. If you had useful connections with important people you could make prosperous arrangements. Without them, nothing seemed to go.

Some of my classmates planned to apply for admission as students at several Technical Universities at different places in the U.S. and British Zones. Perhaps I should do likewise. To be accepted in one of these engineering colleges, one had to do a year of advance practical training in industry. Once again, my sister Annemie proved to be my best "Vitamin B". One of her friends was director of the AEG (General Electric) plant in Kiel.

Annemie had bewitched the man with her charm and wrote me that I had been granted an apprenticeship for electrical engineering. She would even be able to put me up in the rooms she occupied with Antje.

Everybody traveled hitch-hiking in Germany at that time, and the entire country seemed to be on the road. Only two years before, coming from prison camp, I had made the same trip from the other direction. What a transformation had taken place in that short period! We had not noticed it in Tegernsee Valley because the area would develop only when tourism increased, and that was not possible as long as it was Recreation Area reserved for the Occupation Force. But as we rode through towns and villages I was stunned about the progress made. There seemed to be scaffoldings everywhere; large gaping places had been created where all the rubble had been cleared away. The landscapes around towns had been adorned with *Monte Scherbelinos*, ruin-hills. Black smoke came out of most of the industry stacks. Everybody was busy. The roads were full of trucks and harvesting was going on on farms and fields like in peace time.

The big ship yards in Kiel where many of our war ships had been built were idle, of course. Germany was not allowed to build ships anymore. According to the Potsdam Agreement, most of what was left of both war and merchant fleet had been taken away as part of reparations. But an amazing number of other factories and companies had started work again, admittedly under most primitive conditions. Of the formerly substantial AEG compound, one large hall was left with all four walls standing and a roof on top. All workable machinery from the other shops had been collected there and as soon as electric current was available production of motors started again.

What struck me most walking through the city was to see the number of Germans driving private cars, some of them huge American road-cruisers. They were black marketers and scrap dealers who had made a fortune in no time. No wonder, when you saw the mountains of steel and scrap iron sorted out from

the ruins. The steel works in the Ruhr, on the other hand, were short of iron ore and would take all the scrap they could get. Black market dealers were scorned and everybody was outraged about their despicable doings. But secretly, I think, most of us were just plain jealous of them for having found a way out of the awful general poverty, even if their morals were rotten.

Life with Annemie and Antje was great. The road they lived on led straight down to the bay to a point not far away from the place where we had left our fishing vessel after the odyssey at war's end. Of the twenty or so houses on the street, only four were still partly habitable. The stair-case to Annemie's two first-floor rooms lay open to the sky because the outside walls had come down from an exploding bomb. Family life took place in the one living room where, at nights, Annemie slept on a couch and I on a horsehair-stuffed mattress on the floor. Antje had her cot in the narrow kitchen, the other room, where we also washed, cold water only of course, in the sink. Food, clothing and fuel were still strictly rationed. To this day I do not know how my sister managed to keep and feed us. Her many admirers brought along rare delicacies on their frequent visits. That must have helped. One of these gentlemen seemed to have struck up a particularly close relationship with her. When he came to visit, with my innate sensibility I unobtrusively left them alone and went to the cinema.

At the AEG company I was given a full-fledged tool-maker training by a veteran master-craftsman called Herr Perschke. All through the war he had served as a machinist in the Navy. He was a member of the Communist Party and hated all capitalists. Herr Perschke wanted me and the other four apprentices to come to their party meetings on Saturday evenings. He was a decent man who, like many of his comrades, believed with heart and soul in the Gospel according to Karl Marx.

"We will soon have a revolution in this country", he told us. "There is no other way. You better be in on it from the start".

"That sounds exactly like what Hitler and Goebbels always said," retorted one of the apprentices. He was two years older than the rest of us. We regarded him as a kind of group leader. "Why do you think Karl Marx' ideas are any better? Surely, Stalin had as many people killed in Russia as Hitler. So where is your famous paradise of the workers?"

Herr Perschke could not be shaken. He said, "That was necessary in the historical process against the reactionary Tsarist regime. We are in a different situation now. Communism is setting an example for the entire world to see in the Soviet Zone, in East Germany. There you can watch how it should be done, how a new country is built up from scratch, a country where the people rule."

He told us about the Land Reform whereby all the farm land in East Germany had been taken away from the former owners and divided up to the people. The same thing happened with every industrial plant.

He said, "This way we will operate here in West Germany too. In fact in all of Europe, you will see. Then, you all will not be slaves of the Capitalists anymore. It is the only road leading to social justice. Once the people rule, they cannot and will not exploit the people anymore, and everybody will be equal and free."

I went to only one of their meetings in a smoke-filled, crowded pub where gallons of beer were consumed and speeches were made about the hard lot of the workers under British occupation. It did not interest me much.

The British concept of military government was quite different from that of the other three zones. In Munich and especially in Tegernsee, uniformed soldiers and military vehicles were prominent, all the time impressing the Germans with the fact that theirs was an occupied country under foreign rule. The British Army was much less obvious. They stayed in their barracks and their offices were strictly off limits for Germans. They also had, like the Americans, a rigid law of non-fraternization, but

the ordinary British soldier had no need to be reminded to stay away from the people he had been fighting so bitterly. Social contacts like Annemie had with her sergeant in Rottach-Egern were quite unthinkable in Kiel.

* * *

In December, 1947, the Foreign Ministers of the four countries occupying Germany had met in London, and their meeting had ended in total disagreement. Molotow had walked out from the conference angry and irreconcilable. George Marshall had voiced the conviction that they, the four powers, had been responsible for partitioning up Germany which turned out to be hindering the political and economic development, and that only they, the Allied, were in a position now to end the dangerous fragmentation to the advantage of all concerned. The Russians would have none of that. They insisted on what had been agreed to earlier in Yalta and Potsdam: full political and economic power over the pieces of Germany allotted to the war victors. After the London conference it was definite and final that our country, bone of contention between East and West, would be permanently divided, a battle ground for incompatible social systems. We could do nothing but to look on.

The point of no return had been reached much earlier, only nobody seems to have recognized the fact. The Soviets had been the first to allow political parties and the institution of trade unions in their zone, and had appointed German Communists and Socialists on all lower levels of administration. Stalin had been determined from the beginning not to let loose this pawn in his hands. East Germany was to play a key part in his strategy of conquest. The Western powers, especially Britain and France, had no such far-reaching plans. They were preoccupied with enormous problems at home and they were not united among themselves. They feared, also, a come-back of the powers of evil if the Germans were permitted too soon to take their fate in

their own hands. Under these circumstances, the best they could do was to try to realize their own democratic systems and lines of policy in their areas of occupation.

All these events have been recorded by historians and the outstanding statesmen of the period. And yet, reading the great works of Churchill, Adenauer, de Gaulle and so many others, can give to the student of a later generation only a mere factual account, each colored by individual points of view. It is hard if not impossible to describe the actual spirit of the time almost half a century ago, when nobody could foresee what is common knowledge today. I am amazed myself when I recall with how little we were content, how limited was our expectation of what life might have to offer, how naively unsuspecting most of us were of future demands. As for myself, I was satisfied to be away from the gloomy atmosphere at home, to be earning my own money, and not to live out of my parents' pockets anymore. To top it all, I had news that I would be admitted as a student at the Stuttgart Technical College, and that I would be able to complete my apprenticeship at the AEG plant of that city.

On the very day when Herr Perschke handed me my certificate, reluctantly uttering some mild words of praise, my sister married again. The gentleman whose visits had helped me to so many agreeable evenings in the movies, had won Annemie's heart and was welcomed to the family gladly and joyously. The wedding was a memorable occasion. Annemie and Hendrik, my new brother-in-law, had invited a host of relatives and friends from all four zones of Germany and asked each of them to bring "coupons for 50 gram meat, 150 gram bread, 20 gram fat and 30 gram sugar". For a couple of days we all, even the older ones, forgot our problems and tribulations, showed off with our best dresses and suits, and enjoyed the re-union with people we had not seen for a long time.

* * *

Stuttgart is a city with half a million inhabitants, in the southern part of Germany. It is snugly fitted into a basin, almost completely surrounded by a line of hills many of which are covered with vineyards. It is a charming place, and even heavy war devastation had not been able to destroy its loveliness.

It was spring-time when I arrived there, full of expectations and hungry for adventure. A class-mate from the *Sängerschlösschen* put me up in the tiny room he had rented. It was immediately under the steeply inclined roof and had just enough space for one bed and a small table. My friend and I shared the one "bed" which actually was just a steel frame with a mattress on it that stood on four bricks. It was so narrow that at night we could turn to the other side only on agreement and at the same time. Our most precious piece of furniture was a tiny electric hot-plate whose coiled wire snake glowed bright red when turned on. Toilet and a minute cold-water basin were one floor down.

At the AEG firm I earned six Reichsmarks per week. One Dollar fetched 4,20 Marks at the time. It was far too little to live on. My parents sent me, whenever they could afford it, fifty Marks or a cake, but even with that we were permanently hungry. As by magnetic force we were drawn to Schloßplatz at the center of town where the black market took place. It was a wide, open square with a fountain in the middle of decorated flower beds. On its one side it opened to what had once been the magnificent baroque town castle of the kings of Württemberg, completely burned out during the war, leaving only the facade with many empty window holes through which shrubs and trees had begun to grow. Facing the castle on the other side of the square, elevated on a long line of steps, a row of columns stretched like fingers to the sky reminding one of remnants of an ancient Greek acropolis, with the arcades and massive buildings they had once supported all gone. For the black-market activities the large open space was ideal because the frequent raids by American MP and German police were unable to surprise the thousands of dealers who would

quickly turn into harmless passers-by as soon as uniforms appeared on the scene.

My friend and I traded in all sorts of small valuables for eatable things. But neither of us had the knack for big dealing. I had no qualms about doing something illegal or immoral, but I hated the idea of being imprisoned. Fear of being caught was stronger than the rumblings of my stomach. A general sense of being afraid spread like an evil cloud through town, not only because of stricter law-enforcement, but because of the rising brutality of numberless street gangs who would stop at nothing in their robbing and looting. After sunset nobody was safe on the roads anymore. The reality of this was impressed on me in a drastic way.

Like most of the other working people fortunate enough to have a regular job I was at AEG company ten hours a day six days a week. In autumn and winter it was already dark when we left the firm and made for home. In those days, the Stuttgart vineyards came down almost to the Central Station. I had found a secret path that led quite steeply up through the high-grown vines, coming out at the top close to the house where my friend and I were lodging. One day, when I had just begun my climb, I heard behind me the noise of several people who were obviously pursuing me. I began to run for my life, and the invisible gang behind me encouraged each other shouting, "just a bit faster and we'll have him." I was quite a good sportsman, and fear gave me some additional strength, so I thought they were not gaining on me although I was panting hard and my lungs hurt. On the top, the vineyard was bounded by a high rising stone wall that supported the road going up-hill. My hopes to escape were rising when I came closer to that wall and to the stone steps I knew were there leading out into the open. But then I saw the shapes of two more men above me leaning over the railings who threw bricks at me; perhaps they were part of the same gang. If they had caught me I am sure they would have hurt or even killed me.

I do not remember how I managed finally to reach safety, but I was luckier than many others in that strange period of time.

We were far away yet from the age of instant world-wide information and of a democratic system of law and order. But on 20 June 1948, the country was rocked into a new stage with immediate, drastic effects on the lives of every individual. The three Military Governments in West Germany instituted a currency reform which devaluated the Reichsmark as we had known it until then, by ten to one of the new Deutsche Mark. Bank accounts were reduced to 6,5 percent of their former value. Each German living in the Western Zones received, as a start, forty of the D-Marks which had been printed and coined in secret, and a few days later another twenty. From one day to the next, the old money became worthless, for rich and poor, for the mighty and for the humble citizen.

Shop keepers must have worked through that night, because we could not trust our eyes when, on the following morning, we promenaded along Königstraße and saw literally every shop-window filled to bursting with all the goods one could dream of, from shoe laces to sausages, from razor blades to flashy radio sets. Until yesterday, whenever you asked for any of these rare articles, the stereotyped answer had been, "We do not have that". I cramped my fist around the crackling new bills in my pocket, tempted to just enter and find out if it was real or just a vision that would fade away when you reached for it. But most of us left it at flattening our noses at the windows and holding on to our cash. We did not know how things would develop and could not yet believe that our wages would really be paid in the new currency. In front of one of the big shops a huge crowd had gathered: the first television set we had ever seen was on display. Of course there was no network yet and the first program was to come only a year later. But the events of that week had created the impression that in many ways we had reached a turning point.

The Soviets were hopping mad about the Currency Reform, and they accused the three Western Allies of breaking the Potsdam

agreements. But earlier that year, our neighbors on the other side of the Rhine, Holland and Belgium, had supported the vital need to reconstruct German economic strength if the rest of Europe were to get on its feet again. When their foreign ministers had met in London with their colleagues from U.S.A., Great Britain and France, they all had agreed that this was a question of survival. If the Soviet Union would not join in this effort, the West would have to go it alone, although the price of losing East Germany would be terribly high. Once again, we, the Germans, were not consulted. We had to watch with painful amazement at how the first great battle of the Cold War was waged in our land.

Three days after the new D-Mark was introduced in the West, Stalin had issued the "East Mark" in his Zone including Berlin. What happened then is a matter of history. The commanders of the three Western sectors of Berlin had vetoed "East Money" in their part of the capital, and the Communists countered by closing all roads leading into Berlin. No train, no ship, no truck could pass the blockade. It made an island of the city and prisoners of millions of Berliners. It would be only a question of days, or weeks at longest, before the people would suffer.

The United States started with their Air Force, later aided by the British RAF, the Big Air Lift. For thirteen months their "Raisin-Bombers" landed every few minutes on the Berlin airports with food, coal and medicine, altogether one and a half million tons of provisions. It was the greatest ever support program, and we and the world held our breath watching the battle waged by the giants. The first great test of the Truman Doctrine was won in the end by America and, it must be added, by the spirit of the people in Berlin.

A resounding victory had been won for democracy—but at what cost! Completely powerless, we had to recognize how our country was split in two. The border between the artificially created two Germanys became impenetrable. Almost every German family had relatives living in the other part and none of us could choose on which side of the Curtain we wanted to live.

By this time, about ten million Germans had been forced to leave their homelands, most of them from what was now Poland and from Czechoslovakia. Half a million had died in the process, and the rest had to settle wherever they landed—either in what was to become a Communist dictatorship or, perhaps the luckier lot, on the Western side. In both countries there would be much talk about democracy, but the underlying ideas were as different as day is from night. The nation that had caused the world to suffer like no other in our century was no longer. Now, the heirs, guilty or innocent, were punished by history.

* * *

The Stuttgart Opera House had been saved as by miracle from heavier destruction during the war. While the “Small House” next to it, where operettas and theatrical plays used to be performed, had been severely damaged and remained shut down, the actual opera building appeared, from the outside, almost untouched. It meant much more to us than a visible remnant of former glory. It represented a link to a time in history when not all things German had been evil and despicable. A year earlier, modest programs had been started, not lavish operas but mostly concerts and plays with small casts. I had often been tempted to go, but regular admission fees had been too extravagant for my small purse.

It was a big event, therefore, when in October 1948, I received an invitation to attend a special premiere performance in the Opera House. With the help of a colleague at AEG, I had recently moved to Korntal, a small village in the outskirts of Stuttgart, where I had found a room of my own which I could afford and, more important, a number of friends of my own age. One of those produced a ticket for me and announced it would not cost me anything. Naturally, I accepted with enthusiasm although I did not know at all what to expect, except the title, “The Good Road”, and that the performance would be in English. That was

strange, but perhaps it was part of a cultural program for the American Forces and they accepted a few chosen Germans to attend. My friend did not know or rather he did not choose to tell me. He owned a motor-bike and took me to town.

That evening became the most important road mark of my life. A huge crowd of people was waiting outside the semi-circle of the front entrance. Everybody was seized by excited expectation because the magnificent building was lit up by floodlights, a sight we remembered from long-ago peace time. The U.S. Army occupied a smaller hall adjacent to the main auditorium of the Opera from where the saxophone doodle of a dance band could be heard above the noise of the animated crowd who seemed to be all Germans—many more than seats were available inside. There was standing room only for us. Somebody pointed up to the royal box in the dress circle, "Look, there is the Minister President, I understand he has invited these people to come to Stuttgart."

Waiting for the curtain to go up, some people knew that we were not going to see a play or a concert as we knew it but a "revue", whatever that was. On the announcing posters it said that the ensemble consisted of 250 people from twenty different nations. We watched as those with the better seats were handed ear-phones—IBM instruments that worked wireless, a technical wonder, allowing some 200 spectators to listen to a German translation during the performance. My own school English proved to be completely useless. I understood hardly a word of what was said or sung from stage, and it was the same with most people in the audience.

Other things impressed us. I did not know what to admire more: the smooth transition from one scene to the next, the ingenious effects of stage lighting, the catchy and modern tunes—everything was of a professional perfection that we had not experienced before. We had known such musical films as the Nazis had permitted with colorful décor and lavish costumes which propelled us into a glitter world of fantasy and fairy tale,

outside all reality. But this was quite different and new. Even without understanding the words, everybody felt that these people were committed to something, that they were throwing across the foot lights a kind of enthusiasm which very soon created a bond, a “we-feeling” between them and the audience, an atmosphere of belonging together.



The Good Road, 1948

During the performance more and more uniformed GIs were drawn in from their dance hall. A young guy with the typical crew cut stood next to me, listening intently. He was kneading his cap with both hands to a formless shape, tears were streaming down his face, and from time to time he moaned, “Oh, my God!” In the final scene there was a sloping platform that broadened toward the front of stage. It filled with more and more marching people dressed in many different national costumes, young ones and old ones, different colors of skin, and they all joined in the rousing theme song of “The Good Road” which—that much we all had understood—we could walk

together in future. There was a thundering applause in the end and no-one could remain in his seat. The curtain was left open and the entire crew came down into the audience. It was all very, very unusual. Soon one could see many small groups talking intensely. Nobody wanted to leave.

My mind was full of questions. Who were these people, and why of all places had they chosen destroyed Germany for their tour? Did they belong to some international humanitarian club that could be joined? I was struck by the seemingly carefree and natural way with which they moved and talked. Never before had I seen people so much personifying my idea of "being free" and yet purposeful. I could not explain it, but there was a longing in me to be part of all this.

I climbed up on stage and approached a young man in blue overalls. He stuck out his hand saying, "Hello, I'm Bill, I come from America". He fortunately knew some German as I found myself too fuddled and unable to put forward any intelligent sentence in English. We must have talked for more than an hour, and it was for me the strangest, most challenging, uncomfortable, and yet enlightening conversation.

Whatever *something* it was that had led each one of the milling crowd into the Opera House, that had led me at this hour to this very place, the *something* had uncovered an approach to my inner person like nothing else before. It was not so much the words the young American said to me, it was the fact that he was there, directed by the same mysterious something, at the moment when the experience of the last two hours had opened up my heart for some fundamental new truths to enter, that made this meeting so special. He was there and almost from the first moment we were no strangers anymore.

Bill explained that he and his friends and thousands more in many countries were determined to help build a new and peaceful world. "And we need the Germans to do it, we need you!", he said poking his finger at my chest. "If we want things to be different the only realistic place to begin is with change in our

own life". It made sense. "Each man can choose whether he wants to remain part of the disease in his country or to become part of the cure."

Bill did not sound "pious" at all when he talked about God. When he had decided to travel on the "Good Road", he said, he very soon realized that he could not do it on his own strength. "But God has helped me, every day anew. When you try it—if you believe in Him or not—you will find out that God is your best friend." What an astounding idea. It sounded so matter of fact, so different from the mystifying approach I had disliked in religious meetings I had attended.

The following two days I played hooky and did not go to work. I wanted to be with these people as much as I could, I wanted to know more. I was told that they would meet early next morning in the office of the Ministry for Economic Affairs. I found them in a large dark hall where all the chairs had been arranged in a circle. When I came in, some fifty people sat there in silence and everybody was busy scribbling in notebooks they had on their laps. What on earth was this all about? "Never be conspicuous" had been the first commandment in the Army. So I sat down and aped the others as if it was a life-long habit of mine to converse with other people by writing letters to them.

But then things became very practical. Someone said at the end of this period of silence, "What do we have?", and they then talked about meals for the 250 foreign guests, about questions of hospitality and transport, about available tickets for two more performances of the revue and who else in town should be visited and invited. I said I was willing to help, was immediately given little jobs and errands, and was busy till late in the night.

On the fourth day a big crowd waved good-by to the cast as they departed in their gorgeous Swiss buses for their next engagement in Freudenstadt. My friend from Korntal saddled his motor-bike and we accompanied the cavalcade on its way until our engine failed and we sadly had to watch our new-found friends disappear around a bend in the Black Forest hills.

Over the following weeks I was amazed to find out that many of my acquaintances in Stuttgart, even in our small village of Korntal, in fact all over Germany, knew and had known for a long time all about the "Good Road". It was part of an organization called Moral Re-Armament (MRA), that was operating on every continent in the world. In Germany, it was better known, from pre-war times, as the Oxford Group. Shortly before the war, the Gestapo, probably on personal initiative of Heinrich Himmler, had denounced the *Group Movement* as opposed and dangerous to the Nazi ideology and to the German Reich. The adherents were persecuted. The Group was banned. But clandestinely they had been able to keep in contact with their friends abroad.

Dr. Frank Buchman, an American, had founded the movement as early as 1908 following a personal Christian conversion. He had been able to convince others of the need for individuals to live uncompromisingly according to Christian principles. At first there had been a few, later many friends, dedicated in the same way. In the course of many years they conducted missionary campaigns and mass-meetings in the U.S.A., in European countries, but also as far away as China and South Africa. In the thirties, when military armament everywhere, especially in Germany, had increased the threat of war, Buchman, who was then spending some time in the German Black Forest, had the thought that "the next great movement in the world will be a moral and spiritual re-armament." He felt that, basically, the crisis of mankind was of a moral nature and that we would have to return to simple moral truths such as honesty, purity, unselfishness and love if the crisis should be overcome.

As MRA the movement had entered into a new dimension both in its far-reaching aims and its outreach. Buchman and his friends were no unworldly idealists. They knew from personal experience about the weakness of human nature, but also about the reality and possibility of drastic change. They confronted each individual with a moral choice; either to seek in earnest for the plan God might have for one's life, or to submit to materialism

in all its blatant or hidden forms. William Penn was quoted with, "Men must choose to be governed by God or they will condemn themselves to be ruled by tyrants." We Germans had experienced the consequences of making the wrong choice.

Towards the end of the war, in 1944, when Great Britain was under greatest pressure, the English journalist Peter Howard had published a book called *Ideas Have Legs*. Howard was one of Buchman's closest and at the same time most eloquent associates. In his book he made a point which, at that time in history, was extraordinary and almost prophetic: the actual confrontation in the world is not the war of arms we are fighting, but the war of ideas that will continue long after the war of arms is ended. Once the guns are silenced, Howard carried on, German Hitlerism, Italian Fascism *and* Russian Communism will have to be confronted with a better and convincing idea carried forward with passion and fighting spirit, an idea for freedom and democracy.

Immediately after the war, this line of thought was taken up by some of Buchman's friends in Switzerland. Having been spared, because of that country's neutrality, from the destruction and, to a large extent, from the suffering of the war, they came to the conviction that they must make a special contribution towards a new world order. They decided to put at MRA's disposal a large conference center where more than a thousand people could meet every year, free from national, ethnic, religious or class barriers. The Swiss, especially three couples who gave most of their fortunes toward this end, and similar sacrifices made by thousands of others, bought an enormously ornate castle-like hotel complex, situated in the mountain village of Caux-sur-Montreux high above the Lake of Geneva. The place had been used as a refugee camp and was sadly run down. Volunteers serving uncountable hours of work and a great amount of gifts of materials and furniture had helped to transform *Mountain House* into an ideally suited conference center.

In July 1946, Caux was ready for the first conference. When Buchman, accompanied by many of his American and British

friends arrived, he was greeted enthusiastically by several hundreds in the spacious entrance hall, by men and women who had not been able to meet for many years. His first words—so it is told—were, “Where are the Germans? You will never rebuild Europe without the Germans.” He knew, of course, that it was almost impossible at that time for any German to leave the country. The Military Government would grant no visa for traveling abroad, no foreign currency was available and, above all, we were despised by every one of our neighbors, so why should any of them welcome Nazis in their country. Buchman, however, was convinced that all obstacles could be overcome.

The U.S. Secretary of State, Marshall, and the Secretary of War, Patterson, were then informed about MRA's hopes to make it possible for selected Germans to go to Caux for training new leadership in democracy. It says a lot about the statesmanship of these politicians that they immediately grasped the point: besides and above economic aid, Germany needed help in establishing a new leadership on her difficult road to democracy. The breakdown of our ideals and values had left behind a vacuum in hearts and minds that made us wide open for destructive ideas and for anarchy. Yes, there were many individuals and the Churches, and a number of established and newly formed political parties trying to create fresh direction. But desperately needed was a strategic concept for the kind of leadership able to create trust and the chance of a national atonement.

Even with the backing of American and British politicians and military leaders, enormous obstacles had to be cleared away before, in the summer of 1947, some 150 carefully screened Germans were allowed to take part in an international assembly at Caux. They were the first civilian group permitted to travel abroad. Many of them were later to be in the forefront of shaping the new democratic Germany. In the following year, about 400 were able to go to Switzerland, among them a number of Land (State) cabinet ministers who in turn had asked Frank Buchman to make every possible effort to take the cast of “The Good

Road" into our country. So it was that masses of Germans like myself were given a chance to enter into a dialogue with the outside world, with people who came to us with no pointed fingers, without blame, seeing in Germans not outcasts but fellow human beings who were needed to pursue a common objective. And that is how I had found myself in the Stuttgart Opera House.

* * *

My hosts in Korntal were two sisters, one of whom was the widow of an officer who had been murdered by the Nazis after the failed attempt to assassinate Hitler. She had been left with three charming little children and no income at all from the state, thus forced to use all her physical and moral strength to carry her family through. Seeing her small, almost fragile figure nobody would have guessed that she owned an outstanding will-power, a spirited temper and a somewhat obstinate mind of her own. Her younger sister, on the other hand, from outward appearance quite the opposite, tall and strong in stature, was no less outspoken and often diametrically opposed to the rest of the world. It was amusing to listen to their heated arguing because it was obvious, at the same time, that they loved each other dearly. They were refugees from Silesia province which was now lost to Poland. Their mother, a Mrs. von Cramon, also lived in Korntal. She had been one of the first and most stalwart supporters in Germany of the Oxford Group. A fearless person, she had tried with great personal risks to convince some of the top Nazis of "the better way" of the Group, even suggesting a personal encounter between Buchman and Himmler. She had failed in these efforts and, because of her activities, had been several times close to being arrested by the Gestapo.

I was attracted to these folks and to their friends for their positive, uncomplicated ways. They wanted to change things rather than complain about them. They were interested in other people. Amazingly, they were interested also in *me*. Nobody had ever

been concerned about the way I lived my life. I wanted to be one of them and of that greater purpose which had fascinated me when I saw the show in Stuttgart. They suggested, however, that if I was serious about it, there were practical steps I could take.

Compared with other fellow human beings I had always considered myself quite a decent chap, in fact better than most. I could easily detect the need of change in most people I knew and in practically all I did not know. The exceptional times of war and the resulting absence of law and order had driven us to disregard the pangs and pricks of conscience. Looking around, it appeared to me that people who threw all moral scruples overboard were more successful and better off in life. However, my new friends insisted that it was pointless to wait for others to begin with the big clean-up needed in our country.

"Let's *assume* for a moment that you are right," I said to our Korntal group when we met one Saturday evening. "Where do you think I must change?"

They all laughed. "None of us can tell you that. You will have to find out yourself. But it is easy. Why don't you take unhurried time and draw up on paper a kind of balance sheet, putting on the debit side the picture God has of your life, and on the credit side the actual facts as they are when you are absolutely honest about yourself."

"You may think that is easy," I retorted. "But an experiment like that is no joke, no sir! I would feel absolutely stupid facing a white sheet of paper and then list up all the dark and murky spots on my character, and the unsavory details about my morally incorrect conduct."

"It is worth a try," they said, "unless you know of a better way."

Perhaps I tried it only because I knew that my friends would certainly ask at our next meeting, "now, have you already . . . ?" It was an extended session I had with myself. Afterwards, I did not feel any better or in any way "changed". It was like rummaging through an old chest of drawers, discovering in dusty corners

things long ago repressed from memory like a book that was no longer borrowed but stolen. This first self-assessment was sobering but I had expected from it much more of a mysterious transformation of my character. Bothering me was only the fact that some items on my "balance sheet" were marked, "put it right".

The master instructor for apprentices at AEG was a friendly and yet highly respected man, responsible for about thirty trainees. He was a member of the newly formed factory works-council. While most of the other members of that body made no secret about their political affiliation which was by a majority Communist, he always held back with his own inclinations. Nobody quite knew where he stood. We only knew he demanded the strictest discipline of the young men under his command. We all dreaded to be called to the small office he had in the wooden shack hidden behind one of the factory buildings.

So it was not without trepidation when I stood outside his cubicle not having made an appointment. With me I had a bag full of tools and other company equipment which I had, bit by bit, taken home with me. "Everybody does it", I used to convince myself, and, "the big company does not feel such small losses." There were spot checks at the works exit every day, so one always went with the risk of discovery. But that was nothing compared to the panic I felt now. I tried to muster all my courage—in vain, and I was about to turn and beat it when suddenly some unknown force made me knock at the door and enter. I had prepared a fine speech about conscience and honesty and God's plan and so on, but all I was able to mumble was, "I stole this from the company and want to bring it back." The master stared at me just as confused and as much at a loss for words as I. He finally said that he would have to report this to the works council. That was all.

When I came out of the office I was floating on a pink cloud and an organ concerto was thundering in my head. So high were my spirits, so full of excitement that during lunch break I burst

out the whole story to my astounded colleagues. Their reactions reached from, "You must have gone off your rocker" to, "I have a whole trunk full of company stuff at home." Next day, one of the boys told me in secret that he had followed my example and returned his loot, and in the following weeks there were a couple of other fellows who did the same thing. Our instructor asked what kind of an epidemic this was. We met every day, encouraged each other and, quite naturally, began to discuss issues beyond our immediate environment like acute shortcomings in the works security system and the company at large and what could be done about it.

There was no canteen, so we met for our breaks in the spacious hall where the high-voltage test stand for newly built transformers was situated. The actual test area was fenced in and it was, of course, strictly forbidden to enter it except for ongoing trial runs. With the usual couldn't-care-less attitude we did not think much about such prohibitions. Nobody protested therefore when one of our gang went in to the stand and started to show off and play with the high voltage equipment. Unfortunately, someone had forgotten that day to cut off the current. With a mighty flash the boy had a stroke that killed him instantly in front of our eyes. It was a terrible shock. We knew that we should have stopped him.

Some of us who had been meeting regularly decided spontaneously to visit the unfortunate young man's parents to tell them what happened and to beg them not to blame the manager in charge. We, their son's comrades, were responsible for allowing him to meet his death.

An act like this had been unthinkable for me only a few weeks earlier. Without intending it, suddenly things became important for me which so far I had looked at with indifference. I became interested in people around me. There was one fellow apprentice, for instance, an odd person and a cynic who was known for his dirty language and for his keeping apart. I had the thought to walk up to him and tell him to his face that I disliked him thoroughly but that I much rather would be his friend. He was

speechless, at first. Later, he bubbled out his life's story—a sad but not really unusual story. There was not enough time over lunch, so he continued next day.

Now with this boy we all experienced a transformation taking place, visible and tangible. The wall between him and the rest of us came down as by magic. He became “normal”, was able to laugh and enjoy life. It sounds strange, but for me this person's change was like a revelation. I had contributed nothing to it all, except being prepared to listen to him. Obviously, forces outside ourselves had been at work. The lesson for me was that you cannot really listen to another person unless you feel something for him, unless you care for him. Or, saying it differently: for the quality of relations between people, the ability to listen to each other is more important than to offer advice however true and wise it may be.

We stepped on new ground every day. One of the suggestions MRA people made was to take time every day, preferably early in the morning, for reflection and to write down the thoughts coming to one's mind. So Rosi, the younger of my hosts and I made it a habit to meet at sunrise in the kitchen, read a passage from the Bible, scribble busily in our notebooks and then tell each other what we had written. To complete the session, we would share in a cigarette and Rosi would go back to bed and I hurried to the station to catch the early morning train. We considered this procedure to be very edifying and the normal thing to do. Until two MRA full-time workers came for a visit. They were horrified when they found out because, they told Rosi, it was not compatible with the idea of complete purity of body and mind if a young woman and a young man would confess to each other the deepest and most intimate subjects in their lives unless, of course, they were married to each other. This was not quite understandable to me. I thought that for the pure in mind all things are pure. But then, we accepted the obviously superior wisdom of the two experienced ladies, and from then on I met with some like-minded young men for morning sessions.

In the wake of the performances of the "Good Road", in several German towns, aided by several of the cast who remained in the country, experimenting groups like ours in the Stuttgart area sprouted like mushrooms. The ground was fertile in a most extraordinary way for ideas of reconciliation and the possibility of a new start, both individually and nationally. The empty space left by shattered ideals literally sucked in to our hearts and minds new philosophies and ways of life. For the multitudes asking and looking and searching, however, there were not many choices offered. The role of the churches under the Nazi regime had been a shameful one from which neither Catholics nor Protestants had yet recovered enough to be able to institute a spiritual authority for many. Political parties, only recently permitted to be formed, would take much more time to give direction to our thinking. There were the Communists, of course, active from the first hour. But their image was loaded with the knowledge of the brutality of Soviet dictatorship. It was perfect timing, therefore, when we were introduced to an idea that might help us get on our feet again.

With all the meetings, assemblies and get-togethers we soon had no free time anymore. Every weekend, every hour out of working was occupied. A particularly effective team centered around a family by the name of Helmes who lived in a town near Stuttgart. They frequently invited interested guests to their home in the top floor of the large building which served as headquarters of one of the great building societies in Germany, of which father Helmes had been a founder. The family asked me to attend one of their meetings and to tell the guests about my recent experiences. When my turn came I launched into the story with gusto, but after a few sentences my brain was suddenly blank, I began to stutter and then fell completely silent, so embarrassed that I wanted to creep under the carpet. At this point one of the sons, Fromund, came up beside me and briskly continued where I had failed, "What Hansjörg meant to say was

of course . . ." This Samaritan act became the foundation for a life-long friendship.

At another, larger, gathering with an audience of several hundred people I was again asked to speak and flatly refused. We were sitting on the stage behind a closed curtain preparing with the different speakers who would make up the meeting. Someone took me to a peep-hole in the curtain and said, "Look at the people in the front row, one by one, and take your time. Now, each one of them, you can be sure, longs to have in his own life the kind of thing you have begun to find. Do you really want to withhold that from them?" Strangely enough, the apprehension of crowds that had always stifled me facing a new class in school or a military unit—it fell away like shackles. From that moment on I have never been shy again to address an audience.

Many of us had such liberating experiences again and again. There are epidemic diseases, and apparently there is some equivalent for positive incidents with a contagious effect. Without doing much towards it the spirit that had caught us spread like flowers in a desert after sudden rain. I found myself talking to complete strangers in the train, on the street, in the factory. People flocked to our meetings and the number of acquaintances and friends grew by the day.

Naturally, the response was not only one of approval. Even in that early stage when the movement was not yet institutionalized and took momentum almost naturally, many regarded us at the heart of it as affected, sectarian, overdoing it and "un-German". That was due not only to the moral challenge to begin with yourself if you want to do something constructive. The MRA movement had grown in the Anglo-American language area, and its main stronghold was based on the understanding of piety found in American Lutheranism and also Methodism. There was no such wide-spread equivalent of this in Germany. Lacking our own terms and theological experiences, we naively took over all the new things and brushed aside the reactions from influential conservative Protestant and Catholic circles.

The nation that was not yet again a nation began to look for the causes of the catastrophe we had barely survived. Everything that remotely smacked of Nazism was violently persecuted and the search for “brown” elements took on the image of a regular witch hunt. The term *Aufrüstung* in the German translation of moral re-armament was in its meaning so entirely occupied with the military efforts and the terrible war we had started that the affix *moral* was simply overlooked by many. For us young people it was comprehensible to call for a rousing, all-embracing idea for freedom strong enough to stand against the materialistic spirit of the age, an *ideology for democracy*. We believed that the realization of God’s Kingdom on earth might be just a question of time if only enough people were prepared to submit every detail of their lives under the control of the Almighty. We failed to understand, however, that—especially for the older generation—the term *ideology*, used in excess by Hitler and Goebbels, was bound to cause immediate associations with the dictatorship of evil.

Meeting with skepticism or hostility could not shake our new-found convictions. On the contrary: our elders in the movement told us that in all eras of history persecution for the sake of one’s faith had always been the fire in which prophets were forged. One of the items on my moral “balance sheet” had been to let my parents know about some of the shades in the character of their son, and to keep them informed continuously about the transformations in my life. Their responses were sour and negative. My revelations irked them so much that they replied with individual letters. Mother referred to a passage in which I had confessed my shame about an extended chain of lies told them in regard to my girl-friend Evi. My beloved mother wrote that to her mind, with such “sins of youth” it was without exception the female partner that was to blame. She had burned my letter and asked me never to mention the topic again.

My father told me about the proved family tradition never to talk about “such things”, but to deal with them in one’s own

conscience and in the seclusion of one's private chamber. Apart from that, he failed to understand how his son, the last remaining bearer of a proud name could betray his people and flippantly fraternize with the enemy as if nothing had happened. Until then, my parents had been the only people I referred to in my life, from whom I had taken council. Now they felt that I was slipping away from them, out of reach of their care, under the influence of strangers and their ideas. It was only decades later when we had a son of our own that I began to guess the worry and pain this process of estrangement must have caused in them. At the time, with all my enthusiasm, I did not have the vocabulary to express the deeper motives in me, nor the kind of affection necessary to empathize with the people closest to me.

In the POW camp in England, an officer who had served in my father's staff had told him when they parted, "Whenever you are in need let me know." My father had remembered this while he was doing little jobs in Rottach-Egern, bogged down from the absence of any future prospects. It had turned out that this comrade owned a worsted spinning mill that had started to produce again, and that he was able to offer my father a job.

The factory was situated in Lennep, a village on the fringe of the Ruhr industrial area, once the home of Wilhelm Roentgen, discoverer of X-rays. Lennep was an idyllic little place in hilly country, with narrow, crooked lanes and lovely half-timbered houses in the ancient center. My parents found two rooms in an old stately manor house belonging to a former "Ruhr-Baron", now out of work. The enormously high ceilings of their rooms were richly stuccoed, reminding one of former splendor of the wealthy, but there was no running water nor coal for the central heating. When I visited my parents during the first winter they spent in Lennep, I woke up in the morning to find the water in the porcelain wash basin covered with a thick layer of ice.

It was office work my father had to learn. His company had its own health insurance scheme which he was supposed to

manage. He was given a cubicle of an office with no windows nor natural light, furnished with a desk, two chairs, a filing cabinet and masses of paper forms. It took him twenty minutes to walk to his office. Work started at seven in the morning and ended at five in the afternoon. Coming home he was regularly exhausted—not from the toughness of work, but from the daily realization that any teen-age apprentice would have mastered the matter to be administrated much faster than he was able to. It was so humiliating that all his life's experience of commanding an army and having to face decisions that would affect the lives of thousands, all his knowledge from thirty years of soldiering were of no use anymore. It had all, so it seemed to him, been in vain. To top this anticlimax came the disagreement with his son's behavior. Both my mother and my father had not much to laugh at. They were over fifty now, grateful for a regular if meager income, but more and more withdrawing into a snail-shell of loneliness that had a bitter taste to it.

* * *

Meanwhile I got to know more people in a week than I had in all my life before—interesting people not only from my age-group, but personalities who had taken responsibility at zero hour, right at the end of the war. They came to our meetings, often initiated them, and actions and programs would be discussed to help solving urgent problems. There were some lawyers and doctors, a few university professors and, above all, political leaders from different parties. Some of them had been among those privileged Germans allowed to attend the conferences in Caux, others had known Frank Buchman in earlier years. For many of these men and women the importance and opportunity the movement offered lay not so much in personal conversion—that too, because one cannot pass on to others what one does not possess. But beyond that they saw the unique chance to lay the ground work for a new democratic country if it was possible that people in

every part of society would accept the same high ethical standards of behavior.

New vistas were opened to me and my friends. The excitement of finding a new purpose, of learning to walk upright again, of watching people around us change their ways, it all became part of a larger concept. I began to read newspapers and to follow intently the difficult negotiations with the Military Governments, trying to grasp the magnitude of the task of building up every aspect of a new nation from the beginning. We did not know then if or when we would be allowed a national German government of our own beyond the existing State Legislatures with their strictly limited powers; we did not know how long it would take to rebuild our cities and industries—that might take longer than a generation; we did not know if there ever would be a time when Germany was accepted again as an equal among our European neighbors. But it was clear to us, beyond all doubt, that this tremendous work must be entrusted only to men and women firmly rooted in our Christian heritage. They would need the massive support of the people, of ordinary citizens. In that framework all of us were given a chance to *do* something worthwhile and constructive for our country. This could be, this must be the Good Road our friends from all over the world had been talking about.

Several hundred convinced and active MRA people took part in a get-together over Easter lasting for five days. They did not mind the rather primitive set-up in barracks once used by the army, now so run down that they might have barely met the comfort standards of a modest youth hostel. But never before had the place hosted such an amazingly assorted group of different people.

A dozen of them were having lunch together and kept on talking for hours afterward. There was a professor from the Stuttgart College of Agriculture, a Japanese couple of one of the three top industrial families of that country, two girls who had just arrived the previous day after defecting from East Germany,

a young Norwegian and a distinguished lady from Holland, the father of my motor-bike friend who had been one of the founders of the Christian Democratic Party in Wurttemberg, and a few others more.

The Norwegian had all our attention when he told us why he was in Germany. He considered this to be a part of God's plan for his life. He had joined, as a student of 19, the resistance movement against the Nazi occupation of his country and, when he had been betrayed to the SS by a compatriot, was arrested together with many others and put into the dreaded Grini concentration camp. He told us about the temptations he went through when his interrogator had offered him immediate freedom and privileges if he would spy and work for the Germans like his countryman Quisling. Alternatively he would be shot. As he lay awake in turmoil in his solitary confinement he had hated that SS officer for having the power to put him up to such a choice. But then he had experienced the reality of God's power flooding into him, a strength so much greater than his own. "I heard clearly in my soul that He was calling me by my name. When my choice was made that I would rather die than become an informer for the Gestapo, I knew that only now was I a really free person."

While others in Grini camp were executed he had been spared. Soon after the liberation some of the surviving men of the resistance were called up, as part of their national service, to guard German prisoners of war in Akershus fortress in Oslo. Among them, they recognized their torturers from Grini. They had their chance now to take revenge, and treated the Germans badly. Until one day our Norwegian friend realized that he behaved not really different from those they all accused. He told the former camp commander that he had forgiven him and that, as far as he was concerned, he would not speak up in court against the SS officer.

The young Scandinavian talked in German and I loved the sing-song of his accent. His dramatic story had a block-busting effect on the barricades many of us had built around our hearts.

But it was the animated and yet unassuming way he spoke that made his listeners open up. When he told us about being called by his name, the memory came like a flood to my mind: I saw myself again in the peaceful little harbor of Hela, saw again the bombs hurtling towards us out of the sky, heard myself again saying the promise, "Lord, if you let me come out of this alive, I know that you have a life task in store for me." Beyond any doubt—this was it. I was going to try to put other people first, to build bridges between adversaries, to play my part as best as I could in creating a world free from hate, fear and greed. A naïve, youthful dream it was, a *fata morgana* perhaps. Yet just as the skipper in a heavy storm-torn sea will go from strength to strength if he can keep alive the vision of the safe harbor in quiet waters somewhere, so the growing belief in a divine master plan would give direction to us as how to live our lives and what should be our aims.

"There is no easy way around it. We Germans must first of all face the depth of our guilt, humbly ask God's forgiveness, and then courageously go on from there." The politician in our group was speaking now. Paul Bausch was an old warrior, a member of the Reichstag in Berlin until Hitler had taken over, and had now been working on the committee formulating the first post-war state constitution for Württemberg. His conception of Christianity was not one of going around in sackcloth and ashes, but one of constant all-out battle against the forces of evil.

"If we want it, God will make a gift to us: The grace of rebirth," he said. That would be our unique chance in history. He told us about the statement of the German Lutheran Church Council known as *The Confession of Guilt*: "Immeasurable suffering has been caused by our people. In the name of our church we now confess that we may have resisted the abhorrent spirit imminent in the Nazi regime of terror, but we accuse ourselves to not have professed our faith more courageously; to

not have prayed more fervently; to not have believed more joyously; to not have loved more burningly."

That was a beginning. But it must not be a resting place. In these meetings we heard for the first time how the outside world saw our country and the most recent past. We had been so preoccupied with our own suffering, the tremendous sacrifices and our own terrible luck that it came like a shock to hear how much torment we had brought to all our neighbors. None of it could be undone. For all future it would remain a blemish in our history never to be forgotten. And yet we were given this chance of the *grace of rebirth*. It was like a life-belt thrown to a drowning nation. Countless ordinary men and women all over the country like myself were reaching out for it, testing it, trying it out. Many of those who were beginning to take leadership in industry, education and politics, albeit yet restricted by the Military Governments, were in the forefront of those accepting the idea that any change for the better must begin with the individual. The stories about tangible results of this attitude were astounding. The term "team work" became one of the first foreign words accepted in our language apart from "OK" or "chewing gum". The philosophy of "Not *who* is right but *what* is right" became an instrument of conflict resolution in management-labor problems or between opposing political fractions.

Still, the obstacles to scale before telling progress could be achieved were looming up terribly high. Nazi dictatorship had succeeded in destroying in Germans most of the drive for personal initiative, the enterprising spirit, the pioneering and pace-setting qualities—all essential elements for a working democracy. West Germany was still partitioned into three zones of occupation and therefore practically unable to develop a national strategy dealing with mass unemployment, millions of have-nothing refugees, a stragglng industry torn by raging class-war and a strike-hungry labor leadership. No person alive could have dreamt, planned or even hoped for the evolution of the following five years when a new nation rose like a Phoenix from the ashes. It

was to be an unprecedented development with so many different factors contributing to the process that it is difficult to describe. Yet it became a fact and we were all part of it.

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An atmosphere of awakening marked the opening ceremony for the first semester at the Stuttgart College for Technology and Engineering. The largest available hall in town could not hold the number of students and staff, state officials and guests so that many of us had to sit on the floor and in the aisles. We remembered our fathers' stories about the glory of their student days in old traditional universities where ceremonial saber dueling and clandestine meetings in fraternities of different colors with unending discussions and enormous beer consumption had apparently been much more important than learning. This was going to be very, very different. The professors in their black robes were all old and properly denazified men, and we students looked a poor and haggard lot, eager and earnest. The only building left where lectures could be held was a 19th century five story house where the different lessons would run for 14 hours continuously every day. Even so—the available rooms were too small. Loudspeakers had to be installed in the huge stairwell where we would sit packed together on the creaking wooden steps.

Following the opening ceremony each student was handed a document stating that he, in very few cases she, was accepted as an academic citizen of the university. It said, "The student has solemnly promised the Dean to abide by the academic laws, to pay respect and honor to the teachers, to go about his studies with diligence and earnestness, and to live a moral life worthy of the university." Those were the times! A College an ethical institution where the privilege of being taught higher knowledge had to be met with real moral obligations on the side of the students. I think most of us took this very seriously. As for myself,

the “solemn promise” and the “moral life” it called for corresponded with my emotional state at the time. The new democratic constitution of the College involved the election of a student body representation. As I wanted contact with as many as possible of my fellow students I stood as a candidate and was promptly elected semester spokesman. I guess there were no other candidates. The count-me-out attitude of our generation still prevailed.

Apart from getting one of the restricted number of College places it was, in 1949, chiefly an economic problem to study at a university. Normally, students had to earn money parallel to courses to be able to meet the cost of living, college fees and, most difficult of all, books and literature accompanying curricula. Nothing unusual, therefore, that I continued working in shifts at AEG, nor that we all had 18 hours working days and little sleep. But even with spending hardly any money at all what I earned was not enough. Soon I would have to give up my studies for lack of funds. Then I had a letter from an industrialist in Wuppertal. At some earlier meeting in the Ruhr he and I had several talks touching on some delicate subjects. The man wrote that our conversation had helped him and he had the thought that he should show his gratitude by sending me a monthly check for the duration of my studies. It was precisely the sum I needed.

Papers and examinations were tough from the very beginning—for me anyway. In spite of good *Abitur* grades, I felt that higher mathematics were made only for a brilliant genius to understand and not for normal human beings like myself. Mainly due to the selfless and patient prompting of a friend, a member of our small student “team” of people interested in MRA, was I able to just pass the first tests. I could not help thinking, though, that I was not really meant to become an electrical engineer. Had there been a German army—it would have been no question for me to be in it. The situation being as it was that was an absurd

idea, of course. So it remained more a sense of duty than inclination that I continued.

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Out of the blue, in the middle of term, about eight young men and women from Stuttgart area got an invitation to attend the conference in Caux. It came as a complete surprise because until then for obvious reasons only Germans in key positions had been chosen for such a privilege. None of us had an idea what or who was responsible for the invitation, but it was real—my name, correctly spelled, was printed on the document. Applying for and getting a visa in a “provisional travel document” was a steep chase: there was no German State yet, no such thing as a German citizen or passport. The word Caux, however, worked like an Open Sesame! I forget how we found the money to pay for the rail trip to the Swiss border—that much we had to fund ourselves. For the rest of the fare and for our stay in Caux we would be guests of MRA, so the invitation said. Preparations had to be made very fast with hectic activity so that we were much too excited to think about the adventure before us when we met early one beautiful summer morning in an otherwise empty train compartment.

German trains were allowed only to go as far as Basle Badischer Bahnhof, on our side of the border. There everybody had to get out and carry bags and parcels through a kind of no-mans land to the Swiss station. We were ushered to a special counter, produced our travel documents and the invitation and, wonders would never cease from then on, were each handed an envelope containing a return ticket Basle-Caux, some pocket money in Swiss Francs and a letter welcoming us to Switzerland. Who would welcome Germans to their country? Who would care enough for us unknown youngsters to make a gift of money in the knowledge that we legally could not get any foreign currency? Fifty years later, when the Berlin Wall had come down, every

citizen of the crumbled German Democratic Republic crossing the border to West Germany for the first time was given a present of fifty D-Mark. They may have felt something like we did in 1949, although it was such a different situation.

None of us will ever forget that journey through Switzerland. The contrast to our ruined, miserable and destitute country was so overwhelming that our exuberant little group was silenced. This was a totally different world where everything appeared new, undestroyed, bright and well-ordered. We passed through charming villages with vividly painted houses, many new cars on beautifully paved roads, and not a single uniformed occupant. Above all, the striking well-being of the Swiss people. They looked healthy and satisfied and they moved about so unhurriedly. Although our girls wore their best summer frocks and I my prize-possession, a Bavarian lederhosen, we suddenly became aware that we stuck out like a bunch of black sheep in an otherwise white flock. We somehow did not belong, outcasts in spite of the warm welcome at the border. Before the train reaches Lausanne there is a spot, after negotiating a long stretched bend, when all at once a breathtaking vista opens up—the entire Lake of Geneva lies before you and across it the massif of the French Alps builds up to the magnificent peak of Mount Blanc, Europe's highest mountain. It was almost too much for us to take in these glories as the train moved slowly down on hair-pin bends through the vineyards covering the hills around the lake.

Geneva lies at the western end of the half-moon shaped lake, and at the eastern tip is Montreux, a small but busy city marked by a number of posh, old-fashioned palace-like hotels. When we stepped off the train there we were able to see high above us, perched on a ridge, Mountain House, our destination. So close to the place we had heard so much about, we confessed to each other some apprehension. We knew that certain severe customs would be expected from conference participants and that each of us might be confronted with far-reaching personal decisions which might in future infringe our freedom to do as we pleased.

“Let’s wait a bit before we go on”, I said to one of the girls from Stuttgart. We decided to first have a swim in the lake which turned out to be the most wonderful bath I had in my life. We took our time, reverently smoking our last pack of cigarettes before we, still very hesitantly, boarded the small rack-railway that would take us up the last 3,000 feet. For myself, I knew that my last line of resistance had been broken, that I would go with all I had on the road MRA was showing us.



Caux Conference Center

During its original period as a luxury hotel, there had been in Mountain House—Caux Palace it was called then—more staff and salaried employees than guests. Now, there were no bell-boys in the lovely reception hall, nor waiters in the dining-rooms, nor chamber-maids cleaning up guest apartments. In fact, no management or organization structure was visible and yet everything seemed to run smoothly and like clock-work. There must have been a thousand people there from all over the world. Nobody told one what do but everyone was busy. On our first day, when I wandered aimlessly and forlorn through the long corridors of the enormous building I saw in the distance the tall figure of my friend Fromund from Leonberg as he briskly strode toward some obviously important meeting or something.

I ran after him, "Hello Fromund, so you are here too. Marvelous! Listen, I want to *help*, what must I do?"

He looked at me without so much as a smile, "I cannot tell you. You must seek guidance."

He turned and left me standing there, gaping and utterly confused. This was preposterous. He expected me to ask the Good Lord about such profane things as whether I should carry bags or wash dishes or whatever. Absurd, I thought, almost blasphemous. God was competent only for lofty and great issues. Or was He, really?

There were usually two daily full sessions of the conference, in the morning and in the afternoon, and a show or a play in the evening, performed in Mountain House's own theater. My memory of the content of those first meetings in Caux is blurred if anything. But I was completely fascinated by the international chorus entering the speakers platform in between the addresses of delegates and singing songs in many different languages. They were such a united body of young men and women and they radiated a conviction they had in common with their shining faces and the perfect harmony of their singing. Now there was something I wanted to be part of. It became my greatest ambition. I went to a rehearsal, was allowed to take part, eagerly learned the lyrics and my tenor singing part, overjoyed and enthused. After my first appearance, a very tall and slim American who had impressed me earlier because of his piercing eyes, came up to me and said, "Now, Hans (all Americans call me Hans, pronounced "hands", because the second part of my name, Jörg, sounds to them too much like "jerk") there was a hole where you stood in the chorus. No conviction about what you sang came over. I wonder why that is so?"

Like any other norm, moral standards of behavior must be absolute in order to be true guide posts for every situation in life. The point was not to become or to be a "better" person compared with others, or try to live a saintly life for the sake of your own



Caux Chorus

soul entering heaven one day. If there really existed a divine master plan for this our world, the point was to make a permanent endeavor to become a better tool to be used for the realization of that plan. Yes, of course, “men must be governed by God . . .”, or else we, in fact I, would again be abused by other people. But the dictatorship of God’s spirit, once fully accepted, would make us free and independent from the domination of man over man. This should be, this must be the lesson we Germans, and not only we, had to learn from the disaster we had lived through.

During the last plenary session at Caux, a dozen young men from U.S.A., Britain, Canada, Australia—all of us war-veterans who only a few years earlier had gone to war against each other—mounted the rostrum and spoke about our pledge to unitedly use our strength and energy to help build a peaceful world under God’s command. Most of all this meant to me to be on an equal footing with these new friends although I represented that despised country. Among these people we Germans were not in the center of things, but we were needed like everybody else.

All of us had made our plans so we would be back home for the 14th of August. It was election day, the first democratic post-

war elections for a West German parliament. A year earlier, after long and tiring negotiations, the three Military Governments had finally agreed for a Parliamentary Council to be formed with the aim to work out a constitution for the new nation. Understandably, the Allied were loath to let go of some of their victor's powers and prepare to entrust Germans with the beginnings of sovereignty. More than that, they failed to unite on a conception of what future political Germany should look like.

The Americans suggested a U.S.-type federation of all West German states, the build-up of democracy from bottom to top and national elections as early as possible. In Britain, there was a Labor government at the time with its program of nationalization of industry. To their mind, this policy should be adopted in Germany as well. They preferred a decentralized Union of States, no national elections for the time being, and a very slow progress of turning over national authority to Germans. In France, the Communists had become the strongest party after recent elections and their influence was strong even though they did not form the government. With their deep-rooted mistrust against all things German the French tried to stop all contacts between Germans of their Zone and those in the other two. There were powerful voices in Paris who favored Stalin's concept of an all-German state including East Germany under Communist rule, and the internationalization of the Ruhr industry.

The threat of this latter idea became the really decisive factor. The expansion of Soviet power since the end of the war had been breathtaking. Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Bulgaria, the attempt to take over Greece, and then China, Korea, Indochina—there seemed to be no end of it. Stalin had openly proclaimed to the world that Germany was the stepping stone for the Communist conquest of the rest of Europe. And it was not just an empty phrase. It forced the western democracies into new alliances of which the public often knew only strange acronyms like GATT, OEEC, MSA, NATO, or whatnot. Fear and

uneasiness which our western neighbors still held and would continue to hold for decades to come, were suppressed by the necessity to include our country and our people in the developing western block.

According to the directions of the military authorities, the political parties chose 65 men—as far as I remember there were no women in the council—to work out a democratic constitution. They did a good job as the following fifty years have shown. A formal peace treaty was not in sight, in fact there never was to be one. For all Germans the thought was intolerable that our country would be forever divided. What the council after fierce discussions put forward for authorization was, therefore, not an all-German constitution but a “Provisional Basic Law”. It was accepted, however, and proclaimed with a great ceremonial act in May 1949. It is still valid today

The ensuing election campaign was for us younger ones the first ever and it became an experience like entering an unknown jungle. Apart from the Communists who seemed to receive money via dubious channels originating in Moscow, the political parties trying to gain the favor of the voting population had little funds for their campaigning. Also, there had been not much time for them to work out clear-cut national programs comprehensible to the masses. From the many divers arguments two fundamental opposing philosophies emerged in the end, centering around a few outstanding personalities. It can be said that the first post-war democratic election in West Germany was one of ideas and individuals.

On the one hand there were the Socialists, the party with the longest tradition, who were able to continue where they had been cruelly stopped by Adolf Hitler who had sent many of their best to the concentration camps. Like Kurt Schumacher who rose to be the uncontested leader of the re-founded Social Democratic Party, the SPD. Schumacher had spent ten years in different concentration camps which left him a physical wreck having lost a leg and an arm. He was in permanent physical pain. In his

spirit, however, he was a volcano and driven by a fiery passion. He was fiercely anti-Communist although his socialist ideas, like his party's, were firmly grounded in Marxism. Schumacher stood for the national unity of Germany as a whole, based on a state-directed market economy and socialization of the basic industries. His dream was the possibility of a particularly German-shaped kind of Socialism with equal chances for all, not tied to either of the two ideological blocks.

The other philosophy grew out of a realistic assessment of the post-war situation in the world and the place of divided Germany in it. The liberation from Nazi terror and dictatorship, and the resulting freedom, could be maintained only by way of a firm alignment with the western democracies. Our country would have to prove trustworthiness as a loyal partner to former enemies. Protagonist of this idea and as undisputed its leader as Schumacher in the SPD, was Konrad Adenauer, head of the CDU, the Christian Democratic Union. Only two years earlier, the British had removed Adenauer from his post as Lord Mayor of Cologne and banned him from all further political activities because, as they said, they found him "politically incompetent". Adenauer was a practicing Catholic and believed that Christian principles were the only reliable basis for true democracy. His fundamental conviction was that the individual as created by God owns a unique and irreplaceable dignity. All politics must be subordinated to this principle. On this philosophy the Social Market Economy was proclaimed on which the fabulous rise of our future economy was founded.

In Korntal, my paternal friend Paul Bausch had decided to run for Parliament. During the months before I went to Caux, my friends and I had actively taken part in his campaign traveling to far-away places in his constituency, preparing local gatherings, handing out leaflets from door to door and participating in discussions. When Bausch was elected with a handsome majority we felt this was just as much our own victory. We knew he would

represent our beliefs in the new Parliament, the Bundestag, as best as he could.

* * *

Caught up in all these great events which set the course irrevocably for all of us, I was suddenly gripped by a sense of insecurity, even disillusionment. All the new discoveries and experiences had altered my course of thinking. And yet, the hectic activities of the passed months had, so it seemed to me, been erratic and without real depth as far as my own individual fate was concerned. I was 24 and I did not really know what to do with the rest of my life. I did believe that there was a divine plan for me but so far it had not become clear what it might be in terms of a career. Worst of it was that I felt unable to talk to anyone about these doubts because they were not more than a general depressing sentiment.

During the summer of that year Mrs. von Cramon had started a series of Bible studies in Korntal. She was partly paralyzed and had to sit in a wheel-chair while a number of us gathered around her. A master in relating biblical stories to present-day life, she was able to make them come alive to us young folk who had grown up as heathens. I cannot say whether from these revelations I experienced what is called a Christian conversion. I only know that a certainty grew in my heart that Christ had died on the cross for me, that He had redeemed me. It was not a logical conclusion that could be explained in words, but I knew that I could never explain it away either. Whatever happened, I could always come back to this fact like to a strong anchor. Its reliability would never change.

The son of Paul Bausch, my motor-bike friend, and a few others from our group had begun their study of theology. The question if I should change the subject of my study and enter a theological seminary became an issue of great importance. Would that not be the best way to pass on to others the gift of a Christian faith, in the framework of the Lutheran Church? Serving as a

clergyman would provide the security of an institution and of an esteemed profession. But I could not come to a decision.

Among the Germans in Caux at the time when I was there had been two Lutheran bishops. One of them had been Bishop of Mecklenburg in the thirties when our family had lived in the province capital Schwerin. The bishop's house had been just across the street from ours and our two families became more than neighbors. As a result of the *Kirchenkampf*, the Nazi's increasing persecution of Christian officials regarded as trouble-makers, Bishop Rendtorff had been demoted and shoved into some obscure parish in the country. We had lost touch. Now he was rector of Kiel University and a nation-wide respected theologian. I wrote a letter to him and explained the unsolved questions about what to do in future, and asked for his advice. He replied immediately. What the Bishop told me mirrored the spiritual confusion of that time. Reading it today, it has lost nothing of its relevance:

You asked for my advice concerning the possibility of studying theology. I will gladly give you my advice, but it cannot be more than that. The real decision will have to be between you and God.

I urgently advise you *against* entering a study of theology with the aim of becoming a pastor.

It is one of our greatest needs today that, on the one hand, everywhere many Christian ministers preach about faith, biblically well-founded and in the true spirit of reformation, but on the other hand, in a world totally estranged from Christian beliefs, we have lost the knowledge about the *meaning* of our faith in the real world, that is in the work-shop or in the laboratory, behind the counter or in parliament,

in the children's-room or in College—in one word there where our actual life is.

Preaching the Christian message is and will always be of vital importance. But it will be of no avail without the testimony of "laymen" who are firmly rooted in professional life. Blessed be every layman who finds a faith and then remains at his place in the world among his brothers and sisters!

The Church has to find new answers to the questions raised in this modern age, in married life, in the home, in school, in the nation, in the world. These answers will not be found at the writing desk, even if a Bible lies on it. To find them it will take men and women living both in the faith and in the world. To my mind, it is the greatest service which MRA is offering that it forms and sends out to the world such people.

In your case, a study of theology could be a form of desertion. It is difficult to live as a Christian in our world, even in a monastery. The Church badly needs good pastors. But you should become a theologian only if you know definitely that there is no other way for you. Otherwise, if you walk away from the path you found in Caux, you will run the risk to become a traitor to your friends and colleagues.

I have never regretted following the advice of this farsighted man of the Church. He clarified for me the real significance of the movement for that moment in history. Its appeal to me and to Germans in general was not in its doctrine, because there was no such thing. But it offered to anybody looking for it the chance to go into immediate constructive action on a course of personal and national reconciliation. It was not the institutionalized strength

of an organization but the contagious effectiveness of individuals who simply lived in accordance with their deepest beliefs.

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A century ago, Karl Marx had published the "Communist Manifesto". It had ushered in a new phase in world history. Its basic conception of the class struggle with the final goal of a classless society had attracted not only millions of ordinary people everywhere but also some of the great minds of our age. In the course of time, Marxism had developed, like no other idea on the globe, the—meanwhile classic—features of a powerful ideology: a philosophy explaining history and its logical future evolution; a passion able to motivate people on a large scale; a strategy to use the generated passion of people to the end of realizing fundamental ideological aims. A hundred years after the Great Revolution, Communists from round the world were trained by the thousands in Moscow's academies for the final stage of ideological conquest. Those trainees were making inroads to be felt in practically every country.

Not until the outbreak of the Cold War did the need for comparable strategies become obvious for the capitalist world. Holding on to industrial-age philosophies like the balance of power or to the belief of the original superiority of western-style democracies alone would not be enough to maintain their freedom. Outside of the Communist realm however, no other institution but MRA claimed to be able to provide the nucleus of an answering ideology. It was only natural therefore that in summer 1949, the "College of the Good Road" was founded in Caux, starting with a kind of all-round training of some 350 young men and women from 25 countries. It was the first such attempt, and the College as such did not survive over an extended period. Long enough, however, to increase the number of MRA full-time workers considerably.

The invitation to participate as a student in the Caux college reached me shortly after my correspondence with Bishop Rendtorff. There was no doubt in my mind and I accepted right away, admittedly also because it was reason enough to interrupt if not terminate an unloved course of study. Had I known then that I would be “on the road” with MRA for the following 19 years without any other profession—would I have decided the same way? I have been asked that question often in later years, and I have asked it myself. The answer has always been, yes. Given the same set of circumstances that prevailed four years after the war, I would come to the same conclusion again today. The lives of the young generation of that time were not yet determined by mere career thinking or the compulsion to make money as fast as possible. It was quite out of the question to make long-term future plans. We had to take our chances as they came. The “College of the Good Road” was like a godsend to me, the opportunity for a *studium generale* to widen my horizon. Precisely this it provided for me and many others in a way no other university in the world could have done.

The only thing bothering my conscience was the deteriorating relationship with my family. Our correspondence had become very one-sided. I was so self concerned that I regarded their arguments and objections as old-fashioned and out of date. My parents, on the other hand, felt rejected and thought that I had willfully withdrawn my love and care for them. When they heard that I had taken one years leave from my Stuttgart college, my father let me know through my mother that he would not write to me any longer because, “I have no son anymore: One was killed in the war, the other was taken away from me by foreigners.” It almost broke my mother’s heart not to be able to mediate.

Lectures at Caux were for me absolutely fascinating. Many of them were held at seven-thirty in the morning, and students were expected to have had an hours “quiet time” even before that early hour so as to be prepared to meet the challenge of each new

day. We were kept quite busy. Lecture themes reached from "Basic Forces in European History" or "The Philosophy of Marxism" to "The Answer to Class Struggle". We heard African and Asian leaders speak about problems facing their countries. We would be urged to read such authors as Toynbee or Aldous Huxley and to draw our own conclusions for the present time from their thoughts. The role of the media, of the arts, music and theater in the advancement of ideas played an important part. Both the student body and the lecturers were a true internationale, providing the opportunity to learn from each other.

I remember being deeply impressed one day with the address of a prominent Frenchman. George Villiers was the President of the French National Association of Employers. He had attended the summer conference at Caux, on his way to talks with the leaders of industry in Germany—negotiations that became, as was to be seen later, the starting point for the evolving economic partnership between the two countries. Villiers talked about a conversation during one luncheon with his neighbor at table. It was Franz Boeckler, a union leader who some time later became the first chairman of the newly founded German Federation of Trade Unions. Boeckler said to him that the two of them should be enemies for two reasons. First, because he was German and Villiers French, and second, because he represented labor and the Frenchman the employers. "There is one more reason", had been the reply: Villiers had been condemned to death, as a political prisoner of the Gestapo, and had seen most of his comrades being executed. "But all this is in the past", he told the German. "My one desire is now to stretch out the hand of friendship."

Encounters like these found their significance when regarded in context with later events that no-one could foresee at the time. History does not evolve simply like in a game of chess where one move by one side can determine the rest of the game. Too many factors contribute to any evolution. But in the unique atmosphere of constructive goodwill prevailing at Caux in that moment of time, countless interhuman relations were lifted onto a higher,

positive level, from animosity to understanding, from outright hatred to mutual forgiveness. We students heard about such events day after day, experienced them ourselves. Soon I felt that we were privileged to partake in the making of history. Like many others I entered this adventure with a completely open mind.

The formation of character is an intricate business. I believe that during the period I am talking about many of the long-term associates of Frank Buchman went at the task of training a new crop of Christian revolutionaries with great earnestness and with the best will. To provide better proctoring, trainees were placed in groups of fifteen or twenty young people from different countries and a variety of social backgrounds, each with a married couple in charge to look after their spiritual and moral needs. Since I was among the later arrivals at the College, there was no more married couple available for my group, and we were put under the tutelage of several older spinsters and bachelors.

The person responsible for me was an Englishman who took it upon himself to shape some presentable human being from the raw material I brought into the deal, not without making abundantly clear to me that he considered the material very raw indeed.

To this day I think of this man with gratitude and affection. He was for me the epitome of the English Gentleman, and I guess this rare brand of human being was to him the ultimate ideal a man should look up to. He had a carefully cut short mustache, a fast receding crown of hair and wore, because of extreme short-sightedness, thick glasses through which, unnaturally enlarged, looked a pair of shrewd eyes able to see under one's skin and to detect slightest insecurities or deviations from the path of truth. Before he had joined the Oxford Group, he had worked with the British travel agency Thomas Cook, so he knew the world and behaved and dressed in a sophisticated manner. I think I have never seen him wearing any other than his dark, needle-striped, double-breasted suit and a strictly conservative tie. He liked to be introduced as "senior businessman"

and he was considered to be an expert fund-raiser for the movement.

The first thing I had to learn was that MRA's absolute moral standards meant not only that a person must not lie, steal, fornicate, murder, nor live a totally selfish life. It meant that in every detail of day-to-day affairs a standard of perfection must be aspired to—the way in which you cleaned your body or decorated a table for a meal, the language you chose and the faultlessness in writing a letter. The young men chauffeuring Buchman's car had to learn to shift gears so smoothly that it caused not the slightest nod of their passenger's head—and Buchman was an old gentleman. I had to master the art of polishing shoes to a flawless gloss and I had to go through my suitcase and throw out every piece not "up to standard". My beloved lederhosen had to be delivered to the costume team responsible for props and décor in the theater. As I was singing in the chorus, I got my first-ever tailor-made suit, dark blue and *trés chic*, matching those of the other tenors and basses. The art had to be learned of folding a snow-white handkerchief in such a way that a precise triangle would show from the breast pocket, not too much and not too little.

Later my spiritual adviser would take me along to visit businessmen and managers so that I might learn "how to talk with such people". On condition that I would keep silent and not say a word. He himself would listen intently on such interviews, throwing in the occasional, "how clever of you", or, "so much truth in what you say", and come out in the end, bowing forward close to the man's face, with something like, "I wondered whether you, being such a patriot, would like to participate in this work we are doing by giving . . .", and he would suggest an incredibly large sum of money.

The old truth that no man can lead others who has not learned in life also to accept a subordinate role came home to me being with this gentleman. I have thanked him for it all my life. He spoke German quite well, but he insisted in me translating for

him every word, and he corrected me mercilessly. This was important because the comparatively small number of German speaking full-time workers all had to serve as conference interpreters and in countless person-to-person conversations. Applying absolute standards, this meant, apart from accurate sentence-by-sentence translation, also to pass on as much as possible of the speaker's conviction and mood.

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We had worked hard at Caux preparing for campaigns in several countries to start early in 1950. A task force of 150 was to move into the industrial centers in West Germany again, continuing from the previous year's tour with showings of "The Forgotten Factor". The play, advertised as an "Industrial Drama", had been translated into German. The realistic relevance of its plot to the actual situation in European countries marked by class-war, extended strikes and outright bitterness and hatred, had already made remarkable impact. The premiere performance of the German cast in Essen, heart of the Ruhr, had been introduced by the city's Lord Mayor Heinemann (who later became President of the Federal Republic) and Minister President Karl Arnold who had been in Caux together with a number of his cabinet. For this year's campaign, Arnold's government had voted a generous sum of money to help meet the considerable cost.

Traveling and working with a cast of 150 in a land still suffering severely from war devastation and a slow-going economy was a heroic attempt. I admired the foreigners who were willing to share in the dire needs of our people, month after month, many of them for years. Almost everywhere, we stayed in private homes, often in unheated rooms already crowded with too many family and additional refugees. None of us received any regular pay. We lived "on faith and prayer". It became almost normal not to have a penny in the pocket and not to know how to pay for the next meal. But then we would meet someone who would invite us

for dinner or to stay with him and sleep on a sofa in the kitchen. After play performances it was generally late at night before we came back to our hosts and often the entire family stayed up to welcome their guest, eager to talk and ask questions how to start and participate themselves. To my mind, countless personal conversations during that amazing period were perhaps the most meaningful and significant features of this work, more than mass-meetings and spectacular public events. They were stimulus for individuals making costly decisions or a new beginning, and they created ties of friendship that would last for a life time.

I remember staying in an extremely modest factory worker's two-room flat, sharing a settee with Stan. He was a few years older than I, a red-haired, quiet and taciturn Australian. Stan told me about his war-time RAF service as a bomber pilot when they had hunted German submarines in the Atlantic. I shared with him how both my brother Claus and my brother-in-law had been killed from such attacks. We compared times. It could have been Stan who dropped one of the fatal bombs. During that night we prayed together and committed to God whatever we felt. Our host worked the morning shift, so we had breakfast with him very early and told him about our nightly experience. It moved him deeply. In the evening, after a crowded performance of "The Forgotten Factor", Stan and I spoke to the audience trying to demonstrate the reality and practicability of conflict resolution as it was offered in the idea of the play.

My job, apart from singing in the international chorus at many public occasions, was with the back-stage crew responsible for scene construction, lighting and sound. Also in that team was Max, an electrician from Paris, a Jew who, during the war, had lost almost all members of his family in German concentration camps. With us worked Alex, the son of the Danish Foreign Minister. There were the two daughters of an English Lord, war veterans from America, and so many others. Like Johnny from Czechoslovakia, also of Jewish background, who had to flee from Nazi occupation of his country, joined the U.S. forces and later

lost a leg in combat action. The mere fact that all of them had chosen to be in our country in this crucial time, that they worked joyously, untiringly and with a genuine love for our people, all this was a powerful message in itself. The effect it had cannot be calculated and, even less, be properly evaluated. As Chancellor Adenauer later wrote in a message to Frank Buchman, MRA worked "invisible but effective" on all levels of society, nationally and internationally, for reconciliation.

It was not surprising therefore when many of the outstanding personalities of that first post-war period got involved with our work in some way or another. Farsighted people accepted the necessity of a spiritual renaissance, of a new morale, if the enormous problems facing mankind were to be solved. They appreciated the grass-root efforts made and said so openly, even though some of them hesitated to allow the moral challenge to come too close to their own lives. In many parts of Europe, especially perhaps in West Germany, a noticeable change of the general spirit took place, away from apathy, frustration and bitterness towards a more hopeful, confident outlook and a greater individual participation in public and economic life.

Of course, national and international agreements provided the main incentive for this. The Marshall Aid Program showed the first visible results. The building industry was booming, new companies were founded and found ample room in the vast open rubble-cleared spaces. In March 1950, the German Government was able for the first time in eleven years to lift enforced food and fuel rationing. The Adenauer Administration claimed more and more political autonomy in return for proven trustworthiness. But both, the economical and political upsurge, and the new positive engagement of the people at large were needed and mutually dependent on each other.

By summer 1950 it had become almost fashionable for German leaders to travel to Caux. It was still one of the few if not the only place outside our national borders where we could "meet the world". Newspaper and radio people came in great

numbers in order to get the "real news" while, at the other end of the lake, in Geneva, the International Labor Organization and other international institutions would sit in endless meetings that produced little progress. Large delegations including top-level managers and workers representatives were sent by their companies to get to know the Spirit of Caux. As they could not pay for their stay with Swiss money, the German Coal Board sent tons of coal instead. That made sense, because the Ruhr mining industry was the focal point of Communist activities in Germany, and already many of the best trained, active Communist Party members had turned in their party membership booklets after having met a superior ideology providing a basis on which the social problems in the world could actually be solved instead of leading ultimately to atomic war. Similar developments in Great Britain, France and Italy were beginning to give headaches to the ideologists in the Kremlin.

* * *

With all the concentration on economic recovery, two gigantic problem groups in our country caused growing concern: the ten million *Heimatlose*, homeless people, and almost as many soldiers still in the process of returning home from prison camps. Both were unorganized, amorphous groups with no voice to speak for them, unable to claim their rights, and both were outsiders to German society. The refugees were widely regarded as unwelcome intruders. While in most other countries homecoming soldiers were welcomed as heroes, they were criminalized in Germany as the backbone of the Nazi Reich. In years to come, the world would praise the economic miracle of our new state; to my mind, the peaceful integration into the democratic process of millions of outcasts has been the real historic achievement.

In recognition of its supreme importance, Chancellor Adenauer had included in his cabinet a Ministry for Expellees. The name implies the underlying problem. It was not a ministry

for refugees, for people who voluntarily came to the country of their choice, but one for displaced persons who had lost their *Heimat* and, indeed, their human rights. The first Minister for Expellees was Dr Hans Lukaschek, himself an expellee. I met him when he visited Caux. He was a man weighed down by the burden of his office. He had an unprecedented task. None of the European colleagues he was able to talk with in Switzerland could give him any practical advise.

And yet, Dr Lukaschek said later that in the unique atmosphere of the international gathering he had received what he called "the key thought" for his further political work. He had heard Dr Buchman say that there is enough in the world for everybody's need, but not for everybody's greed. If this was true then the masses of refugees need not necessarily be the biggest problem the nation was facing—they could in fact become the greatest asset in the process of reconstruction. Penniless and homeless, they brought with them an abundant will to work. If it were possible to make them all feel needed and wanted, they could play a vital part. It was a great thought. But the important thing was to implement it on a large scale.

One of the first important laws the Adenauer government passed was called *Lastenausgleich*. It imposed a capital levy on all German corporate and private property and income, with no time limit, for the benefit of those who had property losses caused by the war. It actually was an act of establishing solidarity between the haves and the have-nots. Capital was freed for thousands of newly founded companies and small factories. Starting from scratch, they were all provided with the most modern machines and means of production. It was a period of pioneering. The large majority of the dispatriated from the former Eastern provinces and from Czechoslovakia were workers and farmers—as my parents would have said, "the lower classes". Until the Nazi era, only very few low class people had managed to send their sons, even less their daughters, to university or any other form of higher education. Now, the entire mix of our society was shaken

up and the incoming new blood worked like a fertilizer. In the new evolving social structure the elite no longer depended on class background but on *Leistung*, on outstanding individual work performance.

With the other large group, the professional soldiers and also the former civil servants, the problems were much more subtle. Their leading representatives had been dealt with at the Nuremberg Trials. But what should be done with the multitude of Nazi party cadre and fellow-travelers on whom Hitler's power had been built? The denazification courts had merely scratched the surface of those mountains of guilt and blame weighing upon the nation. How should all this be punished and, even more difficult, who amongst us Germans would be in a position to act as judge?

In 1950, a million prisoners of war were still held back in camps, mainly in France and Russia. The flood of homecoming soldiers had ebbed, but a silent flow would continue for many more years. Most of them found their former homes in ruins. They shared that fate with everybody else. But they had been away from their families for five, eight, ten years, often without news from each other. They were strangers to their children and countless wives had, in the absence of their husbands, sought comfort and protection with other men. It has been estimated that during five years of Military Government, half a million children were born to German women from soldiers of the occupation forces.

At that time the Bundestag—the German Parliament—and with it the nation, was torn in two parts by a violent discussion about pension rights of former professional soldiers and state officials, war veterans and war invalids. There were those who maintained that the new state had neither legal nor moral obligations to pay money to anyone who had worn a Nazi uniform no matter whether it had been gray, blue, brown or black. There were the others who claimed that all living Germans including those in East Germany were part of the same nation,

that our history was indivisible, that it would be impossible for some to wall themselves off from bearing the burden of our common responsibility. A struggle for the very soul of our people began that involved every single family. We were in search of new identity. We are still seeking today! United we were only in one fundamental resolve: Never again! Everything must be done so that never again would a war be started from German soil. It seemed logical, therefore, that in future ours would be a nation without an army. President Heuss told American journalists that he, and with him the vast majority of our people, were opposed to any form of "re-militarization" of Germany.

* * *

At Caux, in 1950, another "World Conference for the Moral Re-Armament of the Nations" was launched. There for the first time I rebelled against my friends. I had entered the inner circle of those who made the decisions about how the assembly was run. Nobody had asked me to do so. But I felt terribly important attending all the planning and strategy sessions, even the early morning ones in Frank Buchman's bedroom. I always tried to be first in the room so that I could sit on the floor at the end of the bed and out of sight of the old gentleman, lest he might ask me, "Well, general's son, what do you think?" Newly arriving delegations and VIPs would be discussed, what should be the content of plenary sessions and how questions raised from particular guests should be answered. The chorus played an important role. We learned to sing many national anthems to welcome groups from far-away countries and all the time special songs were produced to illustrate some poignant message.

One day a number of dock-workers from the British Clyde shipbuilding industry was announced. At the chorus rehearsal sheets with the music of a song were handed out which had been written during the war aiming to boost the patriotic spirit of the shipyard workers. The refrain was, "It's the Clyde-built ships that

win the war". When I read these words I got up and declared that I was unable to sing them. It was just not right! Praising the British war ships meant at the same time to condemn our Navy that I had served in and in which my brother and brother-in-law had been killed. This was applying two different sets of standards and I was not going to take sides against my own. Ursula, a girl from Hamburg (who was later to marry my friend Fromund) and I left the rehearsal in protest. The rest of the chorus did nothing to stop us.



Chorus Line

Hours later, Ursula and I were summoned to Dr. Buchman's room. We expected harsh accusations about still being Nazis at heart and so forth. Nothing of the sort happened. Frank, as he was called by everybody, heard us out and then suggested that we listen to God together. I forgot what thoughts were shared. Of course, we two ruefully accepted that we had behaved foolishly, that we must "change" on the spot and do everything to make the British workers feel welcome. But Frank said something else. He suggested that my parents should be specially invited to attend

a September session on the theme, "The Role of the Armed Forces in the Age of Ideologies". One did not argue with him. In all the years of knowing him I heard at no time anybody contradict him. But I had severe doubts that my parents would accept an invitation. So far they had declined any such attempt. Beyond that—it would create an impossible open conflict situation when Allied army leaders would be compelled to meet their former German adversaries. The time was not yet ripe for such confrontation, I thought.

Still, I wrote to my mother and father and pleaded with them that here in Caux they would be able like at no other place in the world to voice all their feelings and fears, that they would find only open ears and hearts. No answer came from them. I had known it would not work. My sister Annemie had told me that our parents had been able for the first time to visit our relatives in Sweden. My father's only sister had married a Swedish pastor and had born him five children, my cousins. They were our best loved relatives. Naturally, my parents would prefer to spend their summer holidays with them rather than being drawn into a mass of strangers and a cataclysm of feelings.

The news, "the Germans are coming and your parents are among them", was a complete surprise. Unknown to me, Peter, another German full-time worker of my age, had been sent with a large American car to Lennep and advised not to come back without them. Already in the car waited General Hossbach and his wife—how could my parents refuse to join them and come along? My father told me later that he only agreed because he was determined to get me "down from your mountain".

It never failed to deeply move our compatriots when they saw, above the driveway at the main entrance of Mountain House, the German flag hoisted among those of many other nations. It is normal today. But at that time we knew of no other place where it would be thus demonstrated that we were accepted as equals. Inside, in the lovely entrance hall, our chorus was lined

up. We had no German anthem then, so a hymn-like song had been composed, "Deutschland, land loved by God." When I saw my parents and the other Army men and their wives come in I was so excited and caught up in emotion that my voice failed me. But all the others sang fervently. Then somebody spoke a few words of welcome and the newcomers were led to their rooms. They had been given all the best apartments on the fourth floor, each with a balcony from where one had the most breathtaking view of the Lake of Geneva.

For the first plenary session next morning the large assembly hall was packed to capacity. An unusual tension had gripped everybody, it was almost tangible. From my place with the chorus behind the speakers platform, facing the audience, I could see the frozen, suspicious faces of the Germans. They sat together in a tight group as if they wanted to protect each other. On the rostrum were a French ex-general, one of the great figures during the war, a Swedish and a Swiss general, and one or two others. I guess many of us prayed that someone would find the right words to break down the invisible wall. But it was not until the last speaker that it happened. Rear Admiral Owen (Bill) Phillips of the Royal Navy mounted the podium. He was a jolly, heavy-set man with a round face and a booming bass voice. He wore big horn-rimmed glasses, and a navy-blue blazer with a colorful crest—he could have been nothing but a retired British navy man. He spoke simply and to the point with a clear, manly voice. He addressed the Germans who were present in the audience.

Bill Phillips went back to the years between the two great wars when Germany suffered from the plight of the Versailles Treaty and its consequences. "We British watched your predicament from our island, and we remained aloof, self-righteous and indifferent. I have always felt deeply ashamed about this attitude, and I am convinced that our lack of human greatness has contributed to create the causes for yet another war. We must stand to our part of the blame." The Admiral said he wanted to take this first chance of meeting responsible Germans to ask them

to accept his sincere apologies for his own and his country's failures. Stepping down from the platform, he walked up to my parents and the others and shook hands with them. It was a genuine gesture. We all knew he meant what he said.

Hours later, I looked for my father and mother and found that they had silently retreated to their rooms, unable to talk to anybody. They both embraced me, a show of affection my father had always avoided. During the following days I watched with wonder the transformation taking place in them. The reason for their coming—to get me down from the mountain—was never again mentioned; no, now they were able to understand what kept all of us so involved. Their bitterness melted away like ice under the sun, and that made free the way to clear their own conscience. It was natural for General Hossbach and my father to speak to the assembly, in the name of their comrades, about their resolve to use what strength they had to work for a Germany the world could trust and respect again. A door had been pushed open to a road that allowed those who chose to travel on it to deal with the past instead of repressing it.

5. Land of the Free

The RCA telegram from Washington DC caused a minor sensation when it was delivered by a messenger on a bicycle to number 9, Poststrasse, in the quiet Ruhr village of Lennep. Never before had a radiogram straight from the capital of the western world passed across the counters of the little post office. It enhanced the feeling of importance of the handful of officials so much that the mere fact of another first-ever event could be read in the local paper the following day. A reporter had tried to find out something about the content of the message and who was this obviously notable elderly couple with contacts in the U.S.A. But the recipients did not let out anything—they were far too overwhelmed themselves from what the cable said. It was to revolutionize their lives.

Dated 1 May 1951, the longish telegram was addressed to General and Mrs. Martin Gareis, and it was signed by the Chairmen of both Senate and House Foreign Affairs Committees, Senator Conally and Representative John Kee, and by Senator Alexander Wiley and Representatives J.P. Richards and C.A. Eaton. It read:

As members of the Foreign Relations and Foreign Affairs Committee of the United States Senate and House of Representatives, we wish to add our support to the invitation extended you to attend the World Assembly for the Moral

Re-Armament of the nations at Mackinac Island, Michigan, June 1 to 12, and to the welcome already issued by our Michigan colleagues in Congress.

Your presence in the United States, together with other distinguished leaders from Europe and Asia, can do much to focus the attention of the American people at this time on the positive steps that can be taken everywhere to answer the ideological threat of world Communism. We need such a demonstration of united strength in the field of inspired moral leadership, without which our common military, political, and economic efforts to save the free world will certainly be less effective.

We are impressed with the practical evidence of what such active moral leadership has accomplished to establish democracy as a working force in danger areas that affect the future of your country and ours. We recognize the opportunity this assembly offers to proclaim to the world an inspired experience of democracy based on moral standards and the guidance of God which is the greatest bulwark of freedom.

We look forward to welcoming you on the occasion of your visit.

It was quite a mouth-full. For my mother and father it was stunning in many ways. Coming from top-level political leaders in the U.S.A., the message highlighted the tremendous shift taking place in world events. Five years after the war, the danger to the peace of mankind, so it appeared, did not come from Germany any longer, but from world Communism. Our country, at least its western half, had become an established member of the block of democracies, not yet fully accepted by our neighbors, but

definitely on its way out of that pit of despicability. Above all, however, my parents knew that they were needed for something again.

Since their return, a year ago, from Caux, their lives had been filled with a new purpose. They had opened their home to the host of friends they had found and, whenever possible, the three of us together went to attend meetings all over the country. We shared with each other a harmony we had not known before. For me, it was a miracle to watch their joy in having found what my father called "the right road". They felt at home with all those foreigners and became sought-after spokesmen.

It was, for instance, but one of countless small mosaic stones that were beginning to form the picture of a new Europe, when my father was asked, with some other Germans, to attend a large assembly in Lille, the industrial center in Northern France. Driving there in a car through countryside where he had fought in two world wars, he recognized the area so well that, when the driver lost his way, the general was able to guide him with unerring certainty. Although this time, the Germans came on invitation, among the French people the memories of millions of war casualties, of atrocities and humiliations afflicted on them were much alive and smarting.

Only a few months before, French Foreign Minister Robert Schuman had caused a sensation with his suggestion of merging the European coal and steel industries—including those of West Germany—while at the same time the overwhelming majority of the French people refused any kind of rapprochement with their hated neighbor country.

When my father was introduced as a war-time Tank Corps Commander, the audience was stunned. He reported about the change of heart he had experienced which enabled him to accept his personal responsibility for the wrongs done by his country. He begged the French to forgive him if they could, and to believe him in his determination to work for a new kind of Germany they would be able to trust. The warm hearted response to what

he said was, in his own words, one of the most overwhelming experiences he ever had.

Thus strengthened, my parents had written to Frank Buchman saying that they were prepared, as their part towards a national atonement, to be of service to the movement wherever they might be needed. Their idea was that they could be useful, for instance, by managing one of the action and administration centers in southern Germany which were planned at the time. Buchman's immediate reply went far beyond their expectations. He wrote from California, "I believe as soon as you can manage it, you should be free for the work of Moral Re-Armament. If you can make arrangements, we would welcome you and your son at the Assembly at Mackinac Island in June, and I would like you to stay on in this country after the Assembly is concluded if that should be possible." As if to confirm that this was not just a friendly encouragement, the RCA telegram from Washington had arrived.

They had to face an extremely difficult decision. For us younger people it was much easier to give up the idea of a professional career and of material security for an indefinite length of time. Critical folk called us irresponsible—it was abhorrently opposed to every tradition to make a living out of gifts and sacrifices from other people, and to sponge on society without doing a "decent" kind of job. My mother and father were both over sixty by now. They had no savings. The question of a state pension was still furiously discussed in Parliament with no positive outcome in sight. To go traveling, even for a few months, would mean to give up the security of my father's job and to close down their home because they would not be able to afford paying rent when away. Then there was the reaction of many of their friends and our relatives who were not as open-minded to the movement. And my mother had "nothing to wear", and no money to buy anything suitable. We had a lengthy family caucus in Lennep considering it all. I admired their courage when they both decided to make the plunge in faith.

The officials responsible for granting immigration visa at the U.S. consulates in Germany could not understand the world anymore. A charter plane for a hundred conference delegates from Austria, Switzerland and Germany had been booked. Among the Germans were some politicians officially representing the national and two state governments. There was no big problem getting clearance for them. But then, a number of coal miners applied for entry to the U.S.A. who openly confessed to having been for twenty or thirty years active and leading members of the Communist Party. At that time America was at war again in Korea, a war against Communism. In the States, Senator McCarthy fought his fierce battle against every possible Moscow-directed influence, and immigration restrictions against Communists and their fellow-travelers were the strictest ever. And now this.

Telegrams went to and fro across the Atlantic between Bonn and Washington. This Nazi General had the impudence to ask for a multiple entry visa. The Senators and Congressmen inviting him obviously did not know what they were doing. The atmosphere in the Consulates was frosty, at one point almost hostile. On the other hand, we were among the first to get the newly issued green hard-cover passports of the Federal Republic. The German administration mills ground terribly slow. The entire delegation was already assembled at Duesseldorf airport waiting to board the plane when a breathless messenger arrived bringing the last missing travel documents. Until then the suspense had risen to an almost unbearable pitch.

Few of us had ever been on a long-distance flight before. Most planes were still four-engine propeller-driven and could not cross the ocean in one jump. We had re-fuel stopovers in Shannon/Ireland and Gander/Newfoundland. My mother grabbed my arm praying loud each time the plane took off or landed. In mid-air, during its last lap one of the engines broke down and stopped. In spite of the comforting words of the pilot we were frightened stiff.

The New World received a worn-out pale-faced lot when we came down in New York after twenty hours of traveling. Then

we were all crowded together in the large hall where the immigration procedure took place. One by one we were called up over echoing loud-speakers. The strange names were pronounced in an incredible way so that we often did not know who was meant. Interrogations took half an hour each—obviously the officers did not trust the verdicts of their colleagues at the Consulates any more than those had trusted State Department. Although we had landed early in the morning, it was about lunch-time when we were taken to Manhattan in a fleet of super buses.

If it had been stepping into paradise when we first entered peaceful Switzerland, it felt now like having been thrown into Dante's Inferno. There seemed to be millions of over-size cars on eight-lane highways, crossing each other on two or three levels. Everything was big, enormous, fast and frightening. We marveled at the drivers finding their way between huge bill boards praising the most extraordinary wares and services: "Why live miserably when we can bury you for fifteen dollars?"

MRA friends had arranged a buffet lunch for the whole crowd in the spacious city apartment of a well-to-do businessman, overwhelming in their generosity. I remember eating only several plates full of heavenly ice-cream and getting sick right away. The reception committee must have forgotten the time-lag we were suffering from and the fact that none of us had had a wink of sleep for two days. The whole afternoon program with more receptions and sight-seeing had to be canceled—we would have slept standing up. So we were taken to our hotels, to rooms way up, I thought it was the hundredth floor, looking down on Central Park with buildings all round that were scraping the sky.

* * *

Mackinac Island is situated at the heart of the Great Lakes, in the straits where Lakes Huron and Michigan join. At that time the magnificent bridge across the straits joining the U.S.A. with

Canada had not yet been built. We were taken in small planes to Mackinaw City and then by ferry to the island. To our joy, the pilot had made a circle around Niagara Falls en route. Mackinac is a wonderful spot in the true sense of the word. As the City Council expressed it in a welcome resolution, "History has been made here, where in earlier days pioneers came by canoe to seek the treasure of the furs and forests, where the Indians believed the Great Spirit dwelt, where French, British and American soldiers found a fortress and a stronghold." Even today, all transport is by horse-drawn vehicle, guaranteeing a unique peaceful atmosphere.

In this ideal setting MRA owned a training center which, however, proved far too small for a conference with some 1,600 guests. The island's largest place, Grand Hotel, had been hired for the purpose, which provided enough rooms for all the overseas delegates. The long stretched front of the hotel has 34 graceful columns forming an endless kind of verandah. At the main entrance a modest plaque points out, "The longest porch in the world", and, in brackets and smaller letters, "Believe it or not!"



Grand Hotel Mackinac Island

For us Europeans, this was the first general impression we got from the land of unlimited opportunities: To be of any interest, something had to be the longest or the smallest, the first or the last, the biggest or the tiniest of its kind in the world. The breathtaking sight of the spacious hotel reception hall with its pink wall-to-wall velvet carpet, the liveried Negro attendants with masses of gold-braided epaulettes on their uniforms waiting on us during meals, the posh rooms each with its own bathroom—everything aroused in us the feeling of dwelling in the richest country on earth and that all Americans must be millionaires. Undiluted Capitalism. It must have cost vast sums of money. And yet, not for one moment did anybody even hint that any of us were to give any material contribution. Buchman's credo that only the best is good enough expressed itself in an atmosphere of boundless generosity.

The conference centered mainly around some of the great U.S. airlines, because earlier on, a three-year-long industrial feud in National Airlines had been settled after sapping the economic strength of the company. The agreement that had been reached had been credited mainly to the change in attitude between the feuding parties. National, United, and Pan American Airlines alone sent more than three hundred of their managers, union officials and clerks to Mackinac. Most of them came with their wives. It was said that the work of MRA-trained people had saved the aviation industry, and the country as a whole, millions of dollars. No wonder, therefore, that they were now ready to spend some money on further training.

The other feature of the assembly was the celebration of Frank Buchman's birthday. The reading of messages from all over the world took an entire day. It gave you the feeling of being in the heart of an international community with no boundaries. Everybody was friendly and forthcoming, even—or perhaps especially—with the large Japanese delegation who represented Prime Minister Yoshida, with our German group and, in addition, with colorful personalities from Africa and Asia.



Gareis family welcomed by Dr. Buchman
Mackinac 1951

We met hundreds of people—not just being introduced or shaking hands, but getting into meaningful conversations. During the four months my parents stayed in America, I translated for them at almost every meal and at countless speaking engagements. We were all, in different degrees, swept along by the predominant spirit at the conference engulfing us as the days were filled to the brim with more or less profound experiences. While it lasted, most of us did not think about the fact that it was an island atmosphere, apart from the outside world, which provided the participants, even critics and cynics, with the impression of the existence of an ideal society of harmony and peace—even if it would possibly fade away rapidly when we would depart.

After twenty years of strict isolation, for many of the German delegates the frank discussions with people from so many different countries were sometimes shockingly revealing. Underneath the general impression of bonhomie and neighborliness we often felt we were regarded as creatures from another star. Germany was

equated with Nazism, and Nazism stood for many as one enormous incomprehensible myth, as a phenomenon whereby in a mysterious way the evils of mankind had been concentrated in one particular people.

"Tell me, because I really want to know and understand: how could it all happen?"; asked a textile businessman from the American mid-west, a tall and distinguished looking gentleman. We were sitting in one of the hotel's comfortable conference rooms around a table: my parents, a German textile manager from Hamburg and his wife, a coal-miner from the Ruhr who had been responsible for training and propaganda in the Communist Party in his area, and a journalist from Alabama who had been several times in Germany after the war and now considered himself to be an "expert" in European affairs.

"What we read in our magazines," said the textile man, "is the argument that it must have been some unknown deformity in the German genes which produced monsters able to think out technical contraptions for mass murder and advanced means of torture. Would you agree that it is some ungodly streak in your race? It must be so because we all in the rest of the world are utterly convinced that 'it' could not happen anywhere else, certainly not here in America."

I was translating for our group and saw my father wince and look at the other Germans in disbelief. Only our miner friend seemed to be unperturbed. He was in his element. He said, "I am a German myself, but I was persecuted by the Nazis for my beliefs. You, Sir, and obviously big America in general, have not understood a thing about what went on in Germany nor, for that matter, in the Soviet Union, just as you do not comprehend the nature of the Cold War."

He went on to say that to his mind many of the contemporary western statesmen believed that the evolution of the Nazi regime had been something entirely specific to the German people, a kind of Germanic disease caused by the historic

roots of their particular brand of militarism and imperialism. If the germ carriers could be destroyed, the sick body would heal.

So when the Beast, and its far-eastern counterpart Japan, had been killed the nations rejoiced and fifty of them had signed the Charter of the United Nations, convinced that the great sacrifices of the world-wide war would not have been in vain. Surely now an era of peace and prosperity would evolve out of this united body of nations whose strength was twofold: A common morality of those who had defeated evil as epitomized by the Nazis and their satellites, and the unparalleled power of the American atom bomb.

But now, such a short time later, there was deadlock again. Almost suddenly, the western world found their hopes for permanent peace shattered, confronted with the hostility of an ever growing Communist block who would never accept the philosophy of Capitalism as a basis of a future One World, nor would it be threatened by the Big Bomb because it had developed their own. During that summer of 1951, the U.S.A. found themselves forced to send their soldiers into war again, a war that was not their own.

* * *

For my parents the question of guilt, of national and personal culpability, became central. It was heatedly discussed among the delegation. Obviously, the assumption of a particularly evil German character was ridiculous, and the suggestion of collective guilt of all members of one iniquitous race preposterous. But the Alabama journalist had told our little group, "It must be crucifying for you Germans to live with these unspeakable crimes on your conscience." How should we, how should each one of us individually deal with this? The world was not interested whether any one of us had personally committed atrocities or not. The world held us all responsible, as debtors for a capital that had been squandered. The world would not tolerate us trying to si-

lently repress our most recent past, nor any attempt on the part of any one of us to declare himself free from blame.

The three of us were asked one day to address the Assembly. For my father and mother it was like a trial, but they were both ready to publicly reveal some of the issues deepest in their hearts. They expressed their gratitude to Frank Buchman for his efforts to make us welcome again in the family of nations, and to men like Admiral Phillips whose action had opened for them and many others the chance to actively participate in an atonement. It cost my father dearly to talk about his shame about his country's and his people's deeds. At the end, they were both pale-faced and shaking.

As we stood together in the milling crowd after the session was closed, a younger American dressed with a loud tie, whom we had not met before, came up behind my father, forcefully banged him on the back and, as he walked on, called over his shoulder, "Well done, general. Carry on with the good work!" He could have hit my father in the face—the effect would not have been any stronger. Obviously he meant well and did not know any better way to show his appreciation.

When I saw my parents again later in the evening, my mother said, "We want to leave and go home with the others on the charter plane. We cannot stay on in this country. People just do not realize what we are going through. Your father felt terribly humiliated when no-one thanked him for what he said, only that awful *Ami* hitting him in the back."

I thought for a moment. "What did you expect," I asked them.

"I don't know what I expected," answered my father. "But I find it intolerable that we Germans seem to be the only ones who have to ask the others to forgive us. We are not the only ones who have done wrongs to others. It does not work this way."

We were walking along the shore line of the island. It was a lovely summer evening with only a light breeze coming in from the lake, causing the same rustling sound in the trees that we had loved so in East Prussia. That seemed to have been in another

life. But the sounds and sights of nature again had their soothing effect. We calmed down.

"Of course we do not know what your words caused in those who listened," I said. "Remember how deeply you were stirred in Caux, and that it took you quite a while to be able to respond."

"There is something in that."

"What is more," I went on, "If I say sorry to someone for something I have done, and if I say it just for the reason to coax him to admit his own faults, then that is not the right motive, it seems to me. Like making a gift to someone and expecting something in return is not really a gift, it is a deal."

For a while we walked in silence. Then my mother said softly, "The Good Lord put us on this track through these people. They have done so much for us and for our country. We have an obligation to carry on. We must learn from our mistakes and try to pass on what we have learned."

My parents had become close friends with a Protestant bishop who was a member of the Swedish delegation. With him they had a long conversation. I never knew what they talked about. But obviously, they had made their peace with God. They accepted their part of the blame as far as they could see it, mainly the lack of enough courage and care, and their unconditional need to be forgiven.

Peter Howard told them that with the reality of their experience they could play an important part in the U.S.A.—not only in gradually removing traditional anti-German sentiments with origins reaching back long before the Hitler era. Moreover, he said, the moral defeatism that enabled Hitler to come to power in the first place, was just as rampant at present in the western democracies as it had been in the Germany and Europe of the thirties. Our common task was to fight materialism in all its forms, the militant materialism of Communism just as much as the subtle but not less dangerous selfishness of the Capitalist world.

For me, these issues did not carry much weight, at least not at the time. For one thing, the movement wanted to be regarded as non-political and tried not to take sides in national and

international conflicts, or to formulate programs including practical suggestions for the solving of acute problems. Although in our publications massive achievements on every continent were claimed, questions like the rapprochement between France and Germany, or the national restitution of our country, were never part of the action program. Whatever did happen on that scale was the result of individual action on the part of involved people, rather than that of planned movement action. What my parents and, I am certain, to different degrees most of the other participants, went through on Mackinac Island was very much their own personal affair.

* * *

Most of the younger full-time workers like myself were fully occupied with details of the organization and running of the conference while it lasted. I had been accepted as a member of the "Mackinac Singers", a quite accomplished international chorus, and I had also been invited to join the cast of a newly created musical play called "Jotham Valley". The plot of this play was about the feud over water-rights between two brothers managing neighboring ranches. Blind self-righteousness on the part of the older brother who has the law on his side, drives the younger one to more and more drinking and moral breakdown thus threatening to ruin the economy of the entire valley. A change of heart in the drunkard brother and his saying sorry results in avoiding serious trouble. It is a story of American day-to-day life that was unusually effective because of its simplicity and its emphasis on some very American sentiments and sense of patriotism.

Chorus, cast and back-stage crew worked closely together over a longer period and became a close-knit unit. I thoroughly enjoyed the company of these young men and women, most of them of my own age, and the spirit of comradeship prevailing among us. We were all committed to the same ideals, if for

different reasons and motives, and honestly tried to live up to them. It was for me the happiest and most satisfying period of all my years working full-time with the movement. I will never forget the moments when we removed the make-up after a performance, or rode in a bus to the next engagement, and when somebody would hum a melody and we all fell in to the tune, harmonizing. I cannot explain it, but I was always overcome with a sense of belonging and happiness.

Today it is easy to be derisive about our idealism, to call it naive and unworldly. At the time, everything seemed so clear and simple, so near at hand. It was intoxicating to be able to add something constructive to the living flow of events, to partake in the organic build-up of a philosophy which, if it proved to be right and valid, would give meaning to everything one thought and did. It should be possible, we believed, to find solutions far beyond the day-to-day problems leading out of the terrible deadlock between the world's great powers.

Schopenhauer, the German philosopher, was convinced that the character of man is unchangeable. He wrote, "The nature of man will remain the same all through his life. The outer frame, the circumstances of life, the sum of his knowledge and his opinions, all that might change. But underneath it, like the crab in his shell, will remain the identical, actual individual, unchangeable and unmistakable, always the same." We were out to prove Schopenhauer wrong.

And we were given chances like few other people in those years. While at the same time several groups were active in some of the world's danger areas, we criss-crossed the United States by car, train, Greyhound and plane; we stayed in humble worker's homes and palaces of luxury; we spoke in colleges and industrial plants, in churches and union locals; we showed our plays and films to large audiences. We met America, the vast lands, the multitude of her people originating from everywhere, but also

the magnitude of the problems facing a country thrown into a position of world leadership.

In June 1951, after the end of the Mackinac Conference, most of the European delegates flew to Washington before going home. Attending a Congress session in the Capitol, a speaker pointed out our group sitting in the gallery and explained what we were representing. Later, we had a Senate reception in the famous MacArthur Hearing Room. Some of the delegates, including my father, were asked to address the Senators who had invited us to the country. We did not see President Truman during this time. But to be heard in America's centers of power, and to be treated with respect and interest by men who wielded that power, was heartening.

Two days later, in New York, a few of us were to speak at a luncheon given by the Bankers Club in Wall Street. A number of top bankers, the epitome of Capitalism, listened fascinated to some veritable Communists and to a retired general of Hitler's army. The Ruhr miners told them how brutal persecution and concentration camp torture had not been able to shake their beliefs. They had been convinced of the historic necessity for the final triumph of the ideas of Marx and Lenin and for the ultimate realization of true social justice in the world under the leadership of the workers. Only when they became aware, in their own lives, of the discrepancies between the claims of their ideas and the way they actually lived, were they willing to test the possibility of a better way.

"We are now neither anti-Capitalist nor anti-Communist, but we are out for radical change on all sides," they told the bankers. "Because class-war, carried forward to its logical conclusion in our modern age, must end in atomic war." They talked about the challenge it had been to meet people, even full-fledged Capitalists, who not only professed but lived up to their ideals. It had forced them to rethink their philosophy of life.

"Some of our comrades accuse us of having turned soft on the class enemy when we suggested that hatred of and blaming

the other side does not solve our problems. But don't you believe that! It is far more revolutionary to fight against one's own moral weaknesses, and to love the other fellow so that he can grow in spirit, than to live for myself only and to hell with the rest. Capitalists will have to learn to put people before profits. Then and only then, might they be able to win over Communists. The democracies can possibly win the wars in Indochina and elsewhere because of superior arms and greater resources. But they will be able to win the people of the world only when they are ready to care enough for all and to share enough with all."

* * *

In September that year we were all gathered in San Francisco for the occasion of the conclusion of the Peace Treaty with Japan. The leaders and foreign ministers of 48 nations were there to sign it—the two Germanys not among them, of course, because neither of them was accepted yet as a sovereign nation. Like our country, Japan had lived until then under martial law, with the occupying U.S. forces ruling until, so the official interpretation went, "all military, plutocratic and authoritarian forces will be smashed and the process of education for democracy will be completed." Japan was to lose most of her former empire and was barred from all re-arming. They had their war-crime trials like we had them in Nuremberg. But beyond that, far more humiliating and devastating than all other measures, the victor powers forced the Japanese Emperor to step down from his traditional powers. In 1946, under tremendous pressure, the Tenno had declared that he was no longer to be worshipped as of divine origin. For many Japanese the event was like an ultimate blow, perhaps comparable only to a forced abdication of the Pope from the succession of St. Peter.

For the Soviet Union, however, the sum of the Peace Treaty measures was not enough. They refused to sign it. The state of war between Moscow and Tokyo was ended only in 1956.

During the weeks preceding and following the Peace Treaty Conference, daily showings of *Jotham Valley* were presented in San Francisco's Curran Theater, and they were sold out most days. A great number of the overseas delegates came to see it, and many of them asked for talks with Dr. Buchman. In later years, in the Middle East and Africa, I was privileged to meet several statesmen who had never forgotten these interviews and referred to them with gratitude and respect. It was disclosed to us that Robert Schuman, then Foreign Minister of France, on meeting Buchman at that time, had voiced his conviction that he, the MRA leader and his associates, had made peace with Japan long before it was signed at San Francisco.

Of all the statesmen assembled in California, I believe Robert Schuman's came closest to a saintly life. In fact, many Catholics today hope for his beatification in retrospect. He once told some of our friends that more than anything else he longed for the tranquil life in a monastery. He became a politician not so much by choice but by calling to be a peace-maker. A devout Christian, humble and modest, he believed in the direction God can and wants to give to the individual man. In his foreword to the French edition of a collection of Frank Buchman's speeches, he wrote, "Democracy and the freedom of democracy will stand or fall with the quality of living of those who speak in her name." The plan for a European Coal and Steel Community that was named after Schuman was actually not conceived by him but by a group of French experts around Jean Monnet. But it was the Foreign Minister's human greatness that he immediately grasped the plan's capacity for reconciliation and put it forward to Chancellor Adenauer at a time when all diplomatic efforts had come to a dead-end.

At a dinner party given by the City and County of San Francisco in honor of the delegates to the Japanese Peace Treaty Conference, my father was introduced to Robert Schuman and used the chance to thank the Frenchman, in the name of all German compatriots, for his efforts to reconcile our two nations.

It would always be remembered. Schuman replied, "I think we have progressed on a good road."

The Peace Conference made the headlines not for very long. Cease-fire talks had begun in Korea which were to be continued for two further years, while the French encountered ever more fierce battles in Vietnam. Senator Joseph McCarthy's crusade created in America an atmosphere of almost unconditional anti-Communism. Although President Truman had denounced the Senator as a "saboteur of U.S. foreign policy", the exposure of super-spies like Alger Hiss, Klaus Fuchs, or the Rosenbergs, and the defection of British diplomats Burgess and MacLean, seemed to underline the necessity of the witch hunt. The Communists had, more obvious than their other strategies, tried to infiltrate key positions of the powerful Labor Unions CIO and AFL, and they were not scrupulous in the means they used. They played on the long-standing rift of rivalry between the two huge organizations. Agitation and unrest in the American steel industry began which were to erupt, a few months later, into the most devastating strikes in the history of the country. And to top it all, the century-old suppression of the American Negro and the racial segregation commenced to lead to the frightening convulsions of later years.

The proverbial ordinary American of the early fifties appeared not so terribly concerned with all these upheavals. The longer I stayed in the New World the more I admired the American Way of Life. Wherever we came, we experienced an almost limitless generosity as people opened their homes with natural hospitality. I envied them for their ability to be proud of their nation and of their history while such sentiments were denied to us Germans forever. All of humanity seemed to come to this country, from all corners of the world, and they all became loyal patriots and American citizens. The unalienable Rights of Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness, as stated in the Declaration of Independence of 1776, were, so it appeared to me, firmly

established. Each time when we attended one of the great football games or other mass occasions, it tore up my heart to watch all these people, when the National Anthem was played, stand up as one and place the hand over the heart. The land of the brave and the home of the free.

One day, my parents and I stood at the New York Embankment facing the Statue of Liberty and regarded the memorial with the thousands of names of Americans who had lost their lives in the war. "People in this country do not realize how privileged and fortunate they are," said my father. "For them it is a birth-right to honor their heroes. We Germans are not allowed to mourn our dead."

I thought that was a rather profound remark. I did not realize it until much later, and I guess the outside world never comprehended the significance of the fact, that most Germans, eager to prove that they never had been and certainly were not any longer Nazis, forcefully refused to deal, even less come to terms with, our recent past. *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* is not only one of those tape-worm words so loved in our language. It also signifies a trauma pursuing us to this very day. In every Western country I visited one would find that even the smallest villages reserved a place of honor for their war memorials, often decorated with the national colors, fresh wreaths and flowers. In Germany most efforts to this end have been successfully prevented. The likelihood that among those to be remembered had also been SS and other criminals contaminated the mass of innocents so much that we denied each other first the right and then the capacity to mourn. Such things leave indelible marks on a people.

We were given an article by Marguerite Higgins titled "German Generals" which had appeared in the *Los Angeles Times*. The well known journalist had interviewed a number of formerly top ranking officers in Germany about the growing apprehension of another war, this time launched by the Soviets in Europe. Higgins wrote, "American soldiers who know they will bear the brunt of any immediate Red attack in Europe are paying

increasingly frequent visits these days to the veterans of the German campaign against Russia. They are the only group who have experienced total war against modern Russia." She had talked, among others, with ex-Col. Gen. Franz Halder, Hitler's chief of staff during the German conquest of France and also during the German attack of June, 1941, against the Soviet Union. My father knew the general. They had been in the same POW camp. The article reminded him of his own refusal to cooperate with the U.S. Historical Division when asked to pass on valuable war experiences. In the meantime, his sentiments and his thinking had been transformed. He was not only willing to talk, but he felt it was of the utmost necessity for the free world to understand and never underestimate the driving power behind Communism.

One of the few American hosts able to accommodate all three of us at the same time had his house in Washington, near Arlington. Colonel S. and his charming lively wife became good friends of my mother and father. We admired the spaciousness and graciousness of their household. Mother was fascinated with all the electrical equipment in the kitchen—for us a washing-machine was at that time still an object of wild dreams. But here, she experienced for the first time the blessings of an apparatus especially for washing dishes. That was the ultimate luxury.

Mr. and Mrs. S. were not really wealthy. But their bungalow-style house was, in our eyes, very large. There were three cars in two garages. The massive oak furniture had an expensive look to it. But there was no trace of boastfulness or *nouveau-riche* mannerism to be felt. All the affluence was used in a practical, functional and efficient way to make life more comfortable and enjoyable. Conversations with the Colonel turned around general things like our impressions of America. But we always felt that politeness restrained him from more searching questions. So we were not surprised when he invited a number of his fellow officers and their wives for a Saturday evening in order, as he said, "to come down to brass tacks".

My father expected that the army men wanted to talk about the subject Marguerite Higgins had written about, and he had prepared a lot of notes on his experiences in Russia. But when, after a gorgeous buffet dinner, the ladies had retired to another room, the officers immediately launched into a different theme that they were quite concerned about. They wanted to know why there was such strong reaction in West Germany against the idea of a new German Army as part of NATO. These men, like my father, were professional soldiers and no politicians. One of them had fought in France and Germany in 1945, and he assured us of his high esteem for the valor and bravery of the German soldier. But, like most other Americans, they were not very well informed about the world situation outside their country except, perhaps, about developments in Korea. Many of the things we told them that evening were new to them.

"To be candid, and I hope you don't mind if I am," said one of the officers, "we understand that your government in Bonn is very hesitant to put up a German military contingent for NATO in our joint effort to defend the world against Communism. Now, isn't that a show of gross ingratitude? After all, our boys liberated you from Nazi dictatorship, we send you Marshall Aid to put you on your feet again, we have thousands of men stationed in your country. And now you don't want to help defend your own land!"

Neither my father nor I have ever been good partners in a discussion. Both of us lacked the necessary quickwittedness and, moreover, Germans in general had yet to learn that to talk out issues at hand is a vital precondition for a living democracy. Nor did it help the flow of conversation that everything said had to be translated, sentence by sentence, and that my vocabulary was still very restricted. We were glad, therefore, to have a number of issues of *Frankfurter Allgemeine*, Germany's leading paper, and were able to refer to some recent articles and commentaries. So we knew that less than a year earlier, the Foreign Ministers of France, Great Britain and the U.S.A. had agreed in New York

that in the foreseeable future there was to be no re-militarization of West Germany. Only the war in Korea and the aggressive attitude of Moscow—they had stationed twenty-two divisions of the Red Army in East Germany and had recruited a massive force of well-armed *Peoples Police*—made the policy in the West swing around by 180 degrees.

Now, suddenly, the young government in Bonn was under pressure from all sides.

My father said, "Let me tell you first of all that since I came to this country I had to completely change my opinion of America and Americans. The years of one-sided indoctrination and the lies we were told about you have created among us enormous barriers of prejudice. I admit that I came full of bias. The many people we have been privileged to meet here, their generosity and their marked sense of freedom and justice, and also the experience of established democracy, have convinced me that I must use all my energy, when I return home, to take down the existing walls of mistrust."

There was an appreciative murmur among the officers. "May I suggest, however," he continued, "that bias exists not only on our side. One cannot help noticing this, for instance, in almost all the films shown in your cinemas—they are predominantly about the war and depict, without exception, the Japanese as little murdering sadists, and German officers as pompous SS beasts who act big, wear a monocle, play Mozart, but are basically fools without human feelings. I know you gentlemen do not see it this way, but if this kind of material is offered to the soldier serving in the Occupation Force in Germany or at war in the Far East, it does not really help to strengthen alliances."

The Colonel agreed, "We must work on that. But you have not answered our question. Aren't the Germans a fighting people with a much longer military tradition than we have in this country? Why should you now be against having your own soldiers?"

"I can give you a dozen reasons," said my father. "The most important one is, that the decision to have an army can only be made by a sovereign nation and a free people. We have neither sovereignty nor freedom." He had difficulty to remain calm now.

"But West Germany is a Republic now with a freely elected parliament and government, and Chancellor Adenauer appears to be a very able statesman."

"In actual fact, however, the Allies continue to maintain the state of war against Germany. The *Trading with the Enemy Act* is still in force. Only last week, President Truman declared that he is not willing to discuss the question of a peace treaty with our country. Basically, the policy of occupation has not been altered. Six years after the end of the war, East Germany is governed from Moscow, and the real government of West Germany still resides on the Petersberg where the High Commissioners sit, on the other side of the Rhine, 900 feet above the Bundestag. As long as this situation lasts, German soldiers would be mere mercenaries of foreign powers."

We talked at length about other factors like the psychological effect the Nuremberg Trial and the American re-education program had, especially on the younger generation. The barriers against a participation in any kind of responsibility were much more in our souls than in our common sense. Also to be considered was the still catastrophic economic and financial situation in our country, where forty percent of the federal budget went into paying for the cost of occupation. During 1950, West Germany's GNP per capita had been about \$409 as against \$1,713 in the U.S.A. No other nation on the globe had been so destroyed as Germany and had, accordingly, to finance such immense means for reconstruction. And then there was the fear that in a new war in Europe, West German soldiers would be forced to fight against East Germans.

"So what do you suggest must be done?" our host finally asked. "We all seem to agree that to maintain our freedom and the freedom in the world, we will have to muster all our combined

forces. West Germany has decided to side with the West. There is a price to pay for that."

My father replied, "It will be our first and foremost task to convince our own people and the world that Germany today is an entirely different country from the Germany of the past. We are cured from any dictatorial and hegemonic endeavors. On the other hand, the distinction between victors and vanquished, between first rate and second rate partners, must be overcome. I believe that our deep desire to regain respect in the eyes of the world is the main reason for so many of our leaders to embrace Moral Re-Armament and what it stands for with the enthusiasm of a drowning man clasping a life-belt. I believe that these ideas must become the *Weltanschauung*, the philosophy of life, of all free people. It may be a long process of education in our country, but I am certain that in the end we Germans will be able to play our part and share in the responsibility of keeping the peace in the world."

Conversations like these were not regarded very favorably by some of the leaders of the movement. A few of the inner circle around Frank Buchman, people who had been with him from the very beginning, felt that there was only one possible and acceptable way for the advancement of our work and that was the personal conversion of individuals. Those of us dedicated to bring about that change should leave what followed from it in the life of nations to God Almighty. We were not to get active ourselves in politics, in industry, in the professions.

When I reported about our evening with the Army officers, one of these men, a noble character who had left behind him all earthly possessions and whom I greatly respected, asked me, "Did any of the folk you talked to make a moral decision to be different from now on?"

"I don't know", was all I could answer.

"Surely you agree then," he argued, "if nobody changed all your talk last night was of no avail. Our job is to change people. When men change, nations change. That is the secret."

Of course, the great majority of those who set the pace at that time, including, so I believe, Dr. Buchman himself, had visions that went far beyond such limitations. They would encourage people everywhere to get involved in their own realm, to dare taking initiative and to try out new conceptions. They had no doubt that an Almighty God had more than one way leading to His rule on earth.

* * *

My mother and father did not have an altogether easy time in America. It was no holiday for any of us, and none of us wanted it to be a holiday. But my parents had until then only experienced the atmosphere of the great international conferences of Caux and Mackinac where, extraordinary and unique though these assemblies were, they had felt part of the crowd of interested newcomers who outnumbered the organizing staff by far. To be traveling with "professionals" only was an entirely different life altogether.

Frank Buchman had invited them to be part of his team and he had, so it appeared to them, welcomed and accepted them as they were. To some of his associates, however, this was a privilege that had to be earned. Nobody could be part of the founder's elite group and thus represent the image of the movement unless he proved to have taken certain steps much like those I had gone through back in Korntal. Measuring up one's life to the absolute moral standards, confession of recognized sins, habitually taking time at every possible occasion to listen to the inner voice and writing down the thoughts that came to mind—acts like these were more and more institutionalized and became the hallmark of the movement.

Years later, when she was able to talk about it with a smile, my mother told me how, at the time, two married couples, old hands from Oxford-Group times and firm in the faith, had taken it upon themselves to guide my parents through this phase of

initiation, sometimes together, at other occasions individually. For days my father and mother had searched their conscience for instances which might be regarded as moral failures or sins of commission or omission. But all they came up with did not really satisfy their spiritual advisers. In fact, as long as they lived, my parents were never regarded as fully committed to the cause although they saw themselves as absolutely loyal supporters and carriers of the message and during the following years participated in many smaller or larger actions.

After six months on the move in the U.S.A., they were physically exhausted and asked Dr. Buchman to be allowed to fly home for a rest to which he readily agreed. It was in Miami, Florida, where another conference for and with the great airlines took place. A wonderful, heartwarming good-bye party was arranged for them, with a hilarious touch added to it because of my father's first attempt to make a speech in English. When he wanted to tell the crowd that my mother was quite an independent personality of her own, he said, "Now I give you a backview over the life of my very selfstanding woman." The German language has only one word, *Frau*, which stands for both "wife" and "female person". Never before had my father drawn such roaring applause.

He also used the occasion to report about letters he had written to two of the men who had been asked by the Government in Bonn to work out the conditions for a future German army, generals Adolf Heusinger and Dr. Hans Speidel. It must be clear from the very beginning, he had written to his former colleagues, that never again can a German army be allowed to become a state inside the state. His experience in the U.S. had convinced him that democracies can only be defended by democrats. Dominant theme of all German efforts should be the reconciliation with her neighbors, and our leitmotiv the ethical and moral values we had in common with the civilized world.

It was the beginning of a long-standing correspondence. Gen. Heusinger, who had been Hitler's Operations Chief, and Gen. Speidel, called by the British press "one of Rommel's henchmen",

were put in charge, in November 1955, of the first nucleus of a hundred soldiers. Speidel, another ten years later, became Commander of NATO ground forces in Europe. When, in 1956, the first thousand volunteers moved into their barracks, they were *citizens in uniform*, and their officers were trained in the newly developed philosophy of *Internal Leadership*. Even the most reserved and restrained observers outside the Federal Republic had to admit by that time, sometimes grudgingly, that there was a chance even for German military men to mend their Nazi ways.

At the time of their departure there was an article in one of the Miami papers that called our family “ambassadors of a new Germany”.

The following days, weeks and months were filled with almost unbroken activities. We moved back to California, trying among other things to enlist students of the great universities like Berkeley, UCLA and USC. People continued to come in throngs to showings of *Jotham Valley*. In order to demonstrate that the cast were not professional actors but ordinary men and women from various backgrounds, some of us used to step forward at the end of the play to say a few words to the audience. Each time I would be introduced as “the only German cowboy in *Jotham Valley*”. This quite frequently resulted in my being invited to peoples’ homes and all sorts of parties of people who wanted to know more about our work. There was hardly an evening when we were not visiting.

Generally, such meetings would be carefully prepared as to who should speak and which points should be emphasized. I do not remember the reasons why on this particular day I was told who our hosts would be only when we were already sitting in a car driving to a San Francisco suburb. It was a shock that took my breath away. Had I known beforehand that the members of a Jewish community were expecting us I would probably have refused to go. We were six young men in a station wagon, and we were briefed that the Rabbi of the community had been asked

to invite us for a discussion with his flock about the applicability for Jews of MRA ideas. My friends who arranged the party thought it was a good idea to take along a German, especially because they had heard that some of the Jews came originally from Germany.

The large room in a separate house next to the local Synagogue was full with men only, about forty or fifty of them. My mind had been crowded with conflicting thoughts ever since I heard whom we were going to meet. Had these people personally suffered from the Nazis? Had they perhaps survived concentration camp? How would they receive me? Would they be hostile—they had every reason in the world to be. What could I say to these Jews? This was different from all situations I had been in before. My friends who had come with me would be able to talk with them and behave as usual, as with any other group of Americans. But I was *German*, I was stigmatized. Terror crept up in my body and I felt all my limbs become stiff from a general, nameless kind of anxiety. I was quite unable to deal with this and wished to be far away from it all.

We were seated, facing the audience, on a slightly raised platform with a lectern-like desk on it. The Rabbi opened the meeting telling us that there had been a heated controversy among the community before-hand both about the usefulness of having a bunch of Christians on strictly Jewish territory, and especially about the question whether it could be expected from the members to welcome a German. He said that they had finally decided in good American democratic tradition to hear us out and then have a discussion. As I regarded them sitting there in rows I was greatly relieved that they looked like very normal human beings. There were no black caftans and long beards and curls dangling from the temples like it had been my image of Jews. These people were dressed like anybody else.

I tried to concentrate on what to say when my friends, one after the other, had their turn, and I was unable to listen to them. It was as if two different persons were arguing in my mind. One said, "Tell them you had no part in all the murdering and

torturing, you were too young, you want to dissociate yourself from the bad people. Ask them to forget the past, how else can future generations live with the unspeakable on their conscience.”

And the other person would say, “The past must never be forgotten or else it will happen again. It is part of you and you are part of it. And you cannot beg these men to give your people absolution because that is not in their power to do. It is up to God alone. Nothing can undo what has happened.”

“Perfect love casts out all fear,” I jotted down in my notebook and, “If you want to you can open your heart and simply love them, each one of them. Have no fear and be honest. Tell them what you are going through and what you decided to do with your life.”

When the Rabbi introduced me I was calm. He said that I had been a member of the Hitler Youth and later served in the German Navy; that my parents had also been in America taking part in our campaign, and that my father had commanded a Tank Corps in the war. One could feel almost physically how a stone-wall was built up in the room. But I was not afraid anymore.

Only a few clapped when I sat down again and the applause died down quickly. Nobody wanted to ask any questions. There was no discussion. The Rabbi closed the meeting and thanked us for coming. He said, what the young German had told them had made them thoughtful. He obviously made an effort to keep down any emotion and to remain impartial. The usual animated conversation following such gatherings did not develop this time. We seemed not to have reached the hearts of our audience. It was sad.

As we filed out from the hall a man stood in my way. He was about fifty, an unobtrusive kind of a person whom one would not have noticed in a crowd. When I stopped, he hesitated for a moment and then, as if he had made up his mind, stretched out his hand and gripped mine. We stood there, hands locked, for quite a while. Then he said, in German, “In 1939, I swore an

holy oath never again to defile my mouth with your language. I have been wrong."

"Don't answer," he went on. "I have listened carefully to what you said. Would you give me the pleasure of coming to my home and meet my family and have a meal with us?" He would first have to ask his wife if she agreed, and then give me a call and make a date.

He kept his word and a few days later picked me up in his car. His wife and son stood at the entrance of their house to receive me. She was an outgoing, happy lady with the gift to make one feel at home right away. Their son had his Bar Mizwah celebration recently and proudly showed me some of the gifts which relatives and friends had brought. The parents told me that he had been just a small baby when they had been forced to flee from their German home. They were grateful that the boy knew nothing about the terrible circumstances into which he was born and that he was able to grow up in freedom. Before the meal, my host prayed in Hebrew. I felt that God was present and blessed this moment.

Later, I had the chance to meet many more Jews. Some became friends, others did not. One old distinguished gentleman who had to be pushed in a wheel-chair for the rest of his life after the torture he had gone through in Nazi Germany, said after we had been introduced, "I'm so old now, I might forget what was done to me and to my people. But I cannot forgive, I am simply unable to forgive." And yet, as we got to know each other a little more, one could find no trace of hatred or bitterness in him. So often, the un-forgetting, violent antagonism is kept up much more in people who have not really suffered personally.

For myself, the evening with the Jewish family in San Francisco is a priceless treasure that nobody can take away from me. It was the gift to realize that God can direct the hearts of men, the knowledge that reconciliation is possible even between the hardest adversaries.

6. Allah'u Akbar

The Al-Misr Airline flight to Cairo, Egypt, had reached cruising level in a cloudless sky over the Mediterranean. Minutes before, in Athens, it had taken on board a few more passengers filling the aircraft to capacity, and now the silhouette of the ancient Greek Acropolis was disappearing fast in the haze of a hot early summer day. I tried hard to control my excitement and appear to be the cool, seasoned traveler lest people around me might notice that I was shivering in anticipation of the unknown before me. I was going to enter the Orient, the Arab countries, the realm of Islam, and I felt totally unprepared.

My mind was going wild as images from childhood memory cropped up like *Arabian Nights*, *Harun al Rashid*, *Sheherezade*, and *Sindbad*. Camel caravans in endless sand deserts, Bedouin warriors and mysteriously veiled women mixed with figures of more recent days like Rommel the Desert Fox, or Lawrence of Arabia. But the kaleidoscope of pictures would have little in common with the reality I was being dumped into.

It was Spring in 1954. I was to complete an advance group of five men about to operate in the Middle East countries with Cairo as a base. Senior member of the team was George, a British ex-General who had served with the famous Gurkhas in India and was now, with his wife and two sons, working full-time with MRA. Harry was an American with the experience of several years as a missionary in countries around the Persian Gulf. His fluency in Arabic proved to be a vital asset. Then there was Gérard,

a French Count who, as a young war-time officer had been decorated with the Cross of the Legion of Honor. As a result of an accident he was partially paralyzed so that he had to harness an extraordinary amount of energy to be able to cope with the strain of the months ahead. Last but not least was Francis, an Englishman who mastered—unusual for a Britisher—many languages including Persian after working for an extended period in Iran.

All four of them were at the airport to receive me, but hours passed before we could shake hands. The terminal was situated several miles East of the capital in the flat desert, and served at the same time as a military garrison. Buildings and the airfield were swarming with fierce looking armed soldiers all brandishing their guns at random. I thought that the U.S. Immigration officers in New York had been thorough, but that was harmless compared to the ridiculous procedure the Egyptians subjected us to. Every last item contained in our baggage was taken out, fingered and turned around several times; a group of officials were carefully studying the triangular rubber stamp in my passport with the incomprehensible Arab signs and figures that permitted entry into a country apparently in a state of emergency—a sensation that was strengthened when we finally drove along kilometers of barbed wire fences protecting the entire airfield.

As soon as we entered the outskirts of the vast city, however, we were engulfed in an indescribable chaos of deafening noises, penetrating smells and hopelessly crowded streets and alleys. At that time, in 1954, there were still heavily loaded camels to be seen strutting along Cairo's main avenues as they haughtily lifted their noses high above the heavy traffic of ancient buses, all kinds of carts and cars, donkeys and masses of scurrying people—mobile street vendors of water and colorful lemonades flaunting the excellence of their wares. Their main means of navigation were horns and sirens and bells, shouting and yelling. One soon got so used to the constant bedlam that, as a pedestrian, one would turn around startled at a momentary lull in the noise.

We drove to the Semiramis Hotel where, for the time being, we were accommodated and allowed to use the facilities of a planning office and reception rooms. Good old Semiramis! It was situated on the southern bank of the Nile, quite close to Kasr el Nil, the only big bridge crossing the mighty river at that time. The hotel had been built during the cotton boom, at the height of British colonial dominance, mainly for the comfort and benefit of Englishmen and a few other tolerated Europeans. From every niche and corner the large building still breathed that unmistakable Empire-fragrance, stubbornly hanging on to the image of past and long forgotten glory. As their contribution, the management had granted us a considerable discount on all prices, very generous. It meant however, that we had employees' rooms under the roof, facing the drab and ugly courtyard way down below. Every morning at four a.m. we were wakened by the eeh-aah shrieking of countless donkeys waiting in the yard for their working day. On the ridges of nearby houses sat vultures, body by body, letting out their hoarse cries before they greedily struck downwards for the masses of garbage littering the ground.

The hotel personnel were mostly Sudanese who could be recognized by their darker skin and two or three parallel decorative scars on their cheeks. Along with their liveries they still wore the old-fashioned red fez with the black tassel which was generally already scorned at as a symbol of centuries of Turkish-Ottoman domination. In the dining room and the reception hall one felt transported into the atmosphere of a London gentleman's club with conversations in low, almost whispered tones and a blasé attitude to everybody and everything outside the club membership.

When one stepped outside the hotel's confines, the contrast to Egyptian reality was remarkable. This was a country in the middle of total upheaval reaching far beyond the political changes into the very soul of the people. A year earlier, a military Junta had forced the incompetent and corrupt King Farouk to abdicate the throne, thus ending the constitutional monarchy which, so the official version of the Junta read, had been a creation of the

British Protectorate Power. The young officers had chosen General Mohammed Neguib as their leader who had proclaimed, in 1953, the Republic of Egypt. At the time when we arrived in Cairo, a hitherto unknown thirty-six-year old officer, Gamal Abd an-Nasir, stepped into history when he outmaneuvered General Neguib and made himself the undisputed spearhead of the revolution. He was to become one of the outstanding figures of what was to be called Panarabic Nationalism. Nasser, as he became known, had published in 1952 his "Philosophy of the Revolution". It opened with the sentence, "In the evolving drama of the Arab Nation the role of leading hero is roaming around and has yet to be cast." Nasser left no doubt who was going to play this part.

Egypt, in modern times by far the largest of the Arab countries, has a recorded history of more than four thousand years. Because of its strategic position at a point where Europe, Asia and Africa meet it has always been a melting pot of contrasting cultures and philosophies. Wherever you look you can see evidences of the earliest stages of human civilization mixing with twentieth century influences. Oriental traditions are kept alive against the onslaught of European materialism. Cairo is both metropolis and cosmopolis. Quite near here, in the fertile delta of the Nile, Pharaohs had built their first capitals like Babylon and Memphis, as early as 3,000 BC.

There was little sleep for us in those days. One morning I woke up feeling lost, utterly confused from the mass of disturbing impressions. What on earth was I doing in this strange land? We had been out from morning till night-fall seeing the sights, dwarfed by the monumental size of the walls of the ancient Citadel and by the colossal and yet graceful Pyramids, overwhelmed by the treasures from Tut Ench Amoun's grave collected in the Cairo National Museum. It had been hot and so humid that shirts and underwear did not dry overnight. My stomach had reacted violently to the unaccustomed food. I felt tired, hopeless and exhausted. The five of us had agreed that our task was to attempt

to inform as many as possible of the Arab leaders about the MRA program. But how should we go about such a job? It was like facing an enormous ball of wool and trying to find loose ends to unravel it.

My friends tried to lift me out of the pit into which I had allowed myself to fall. But they had to admit that they, too, had no idea as to how we should operate. Harry suggested that we should trust God to lead us step by step and that we should hold each other to our faith and commitment. In the course of twenty years of traveling I have been, like most of us, many times in such situations when one has to admit and accept the fact that there is so little that can be done on one's own strength. But the experience we have in common of being part of a band of friends who would care enough to stand by each other no matter what happened resulted in an amazing fellowship which I have found unparalleled in any other group of people I know. A bond was created that held through the years even when life has led us on different paths.

* * *

Without our doing, our little group was entering a truly astounding chain of events. But before that I had to learn an important lesson. Instrumental for it was a young Egyptian whose name I remember to be Abdel Aziz. He was a film-projection operator in one of the numerous down-town cinemas. His working hours began after sunset when the evening breeze brought some relief from the brooding daytime heat, and masses of people enjoyed seeing films—their favorite pastime. In order to place the two projection machines at the right angle in this theater, a hole had been broken into the outside wall of the building some twelve feet above the ground. Like a cave in the middle of a rock face the small room hung in the air. It was accessible only from the outside by way of some steep and narrow concrete steps

plastered to the wall. Abdel Aziz not only worked there, he lived there. He was an orphan and had no other home.

He was a tall, lanky boy who always looked hungry. Like most other ordinary men he wore the long, striped, nightgown-like shirt going down to the feet. It was the only garment he owned. But he had a job and therefore, like the one-eyed among the blind, he was a chief among his friends none of whom seemed to have work. They were really poor. Obviously, they all did not expect much more in life and were almost happily content with what it offered.

These youngsters around Abdel Aziz were all devout Moslems. I went to see them quite frequently and through them was introduced to the always impressive spectacle of their common prayers. Five times a day—dawn, mid-day, mid-afternoon, sunset and night-fall—work in the factory and debating in Parliament is interrupted, traffic in the streets slows down, and the faithful Moslems gather in self-arranged rows, turn their faces toward Mecca, and recite their prescribed prayer, performing in unison the same bodily postures and genuflection. Millions of Moslems all over the world are united in this ritual and in the choice of precisely the same Arabic words of prayer whatever their mother-tongue may be.

Abdel Aziz knew enough English so that we could understand each other. He and his cronies were of course curious about what we foreigners were doing in their country. There was much appreciative laughter when I told them about my stolen tools, and when we discovered that, in many respects, our human nature was really the same, that our conscience pricked each of us because of very similar little sins and misdoing.

Five or six of us sat one evening on the concrete steps. Our friend had just put another reel in his projecting machine, and the bantering and leg-pulling went on as before. I felt that this was not getting us anywhere. Somehow these boys were not reacting in the way I thought they should. I must have said something to the effect that they really ought to start putting

things right in their lives and do something worthwhile for their country instead of going on with their good-for-nothing ways. Whatever it was, it must have hurt Abdel Aziz's pride because all of a sudden he turned on me with an edge in his voice, "You know, you are a typical Nazi, nothing else."

I was stunned. "What makes you say such a terrible thing?" I asked him. "This is the worst you can say to anyone."

He replied, "Well, as I see it, the Nazis like all the other Imperialists and Communists, they always think they know what is best for other people and try to push it down their throats. In Egypt, we have lived for ages under the domination of foreigners—Turks, French, British and all the rest. We know what it is like when dictators pronounce that all is for our own good and in truth they use us for their own interests."

Bull's eye! Instantly I knew he was right. I had indeed felt rather superior to these young Arabs, having seen so much more of the world than they, being part of a powerful movement that was pointing the right way for all men everywhere and, most of all, being a Christian and therefore endowed with the only true faith promising redemption to man. I was reminded of my own reaction against the way the American Re-Education Program had been forced on post-war Germany, and of the attitude of "effortless benevolent superiority" which imperialists of all shades are being accused of. It was all in me and I knew I had to acknowledge the fact.

Later, Abdel Aziz told us that the episode of the European Christian admitting his arrogance and being wrong had meant much more to him and his friends than listening to the interesting stories of the great changes taking place in distant lands.

In future years, when I was privileged to work in many parts of Africa, Latin America and Europe, the need arose frequently to re-assess my own motives for doing what I did. A new country or a new set of circumstances should be entered on the basis of appreciation and not one of comparison.

* * *

Francis and Harry had compiled long lists with the names of all Arabs who had ever taken part in our assemblies or had other contacts with our people. Contacts reached back as far as the thirties when Buchman had held so-called house-parties in Gizeh Hotel at the foot of the Cheops Pyramid. Ever since then some members of the former political establishment, by now distinguished elderly gentlemen, considered themselves to be supporters of the movement. They often maintained such colorful titles as Pasha, but the time had passed when they were able or willing to exert influence in public or social affairs.

There were others, however, who were disturbed by the frightening escalation of the Cold War and by the aspect of the Third World countries becoming more and more play-things at the mercy of the two super powers. They were army officers, professors, businessmen or state officials who had been abroad and regarded Moral Re-Armament in a much larger concept, as a possible agent in overcoming internal and external strife.

Chief among these men was Dr. Abdel Khalek Hassouna, for a short period Foreign Minister of Egypt, and long-term Secretary General of the Arab League. He had been in Caux, and it was at his request that our group came to his country. We saw him several times at the Foreign Office and were then invited to come to his beautiful home to meet his family. I took special delight in this event when I discovered that Mr. and Mrs. Hassouna had employed, many years ago, a German nanny for their children so that they had learned to speak my language as well as Arabic. In most other conversations I could not really take part because the educated Egyptians spoke only French apart from their own tongue and I was unable to follow what was said unless one of my colleagues cared to do a running translation.

Dr. Hassouna went to work and arranged for us to get in touch with a number of key personalities. One day word came from the Foreign Office that His Eminence the Rector Magnificus

of al-Azhar University and Sheik of al-Azhar Mosque, Sheik Abdur-Rahman Tag, had agreed to receive us at the university's Auditorium Maximum. Al-Azhar, founded around the year 970 during the first great westward drive of Moslem expansion, is the foremost purely Islamic place of teaching in the world. Accordingly, the Sheik al-Azhar is considered to be the supreme spiritual authority for the hundreds of millions of Sunni Moslems. The entire curriculum of the college is based on the Koran, the Holy Book of Islam.

It took me a long time to grasp the significance of this invitation. Not only was it, at that time, unusual for the Sheik to officially receive Christians in his institution no matter whether they represented their church or not. In fact, so we were told, nothing comparable had happened for quite a while. Also, the international political development was causing widespread undifferentiated mistrust in the Middle East against America and Europe. Newspaper articles carried violent attacks against Great Britain in particular as it had to fight retreating battles on many fronts during that transition period from Empire to Commonwealth—British interests in the Persian oil industry were being crushed; the Mau-Mau movement in Kenya caused great concern; in Egypt Col. Nasser demanded 100,000 British troops to withdraw from their control of the Suez Canal. Mighty France, meanwhile, whose armies were under siege in Dien Bien Phu, was harshly criticized for its imperialist policy in Indochina and Africa. And the U.S.A., of course, was only good as long as it sent enough Dollars and again Dollars.

Even when I re-read the reports we sent to our families and friends about the one-hour reception in al-Azhar, my memory cannot bring back a clear picture of it. It seems to me that it was almost chilly inside the thousand-year-old walls, and that the large auditorium with the inclining rows of seats lay in semi-dark since only little sunlight penetrated. The hall was filled with noiseless students, one could more sense than hear or see them. Sheik Abdur Rahman Tag was an older patriarch with a

magnificent full white beard. He wore an artfully wound turban on his head, moved only slowly with hardly any gesture, and spoke with such a low voice one had to strain to hear him.

George, the General, translated by Harry, told the Rector about Dr. Buchman's conviction that the mighty Islamic belt ringing the earth from Morocco to Indonesia must play its unique role as a bulwark against the deadly materialism that was dividing mankind. We in the West needed all the aid we could get in this struggle.

The Sheik's reply was a prepared statement, a full lecture on Islamic doctrine on God, man, the state, industry, war and peace, but also on social structure, capitalism and communism and ideologies in general. At the end he said, "Egypt in general and al-Azhar in particular welcome any activity that works for the spread of good character and sound morals. I repeat to our visitors my great pleasure at their visit, reaffirming my profound delight that they are calling men to this ideology, an ideology that works for the spread of the principles of peace, love and sound morals among all men without distinction between individuals or between nationalities. The ideology they are working for is the essence of what Islam calls for and the true interpretation of its main points."

Next day Egypt's two main papers, *El Goumbouria*—the official government organ—and *Al Misry*, carried the full text of the address with four column headlines. We had it printed in small brochures both in Arabic and English. It served as a perfect door-opener for all our future activities in the Muslim world. The pronouncements of the Sheik al-Azhar were dogma.

The impact was felt almost immediately as we went, two days later, to the Embassies of Iran and Saudi-Arabia. The Iranian officials, waving all restrictions, granted us visas free of charge. One of them said, "What a joy to be able to issue a visa for Englishmen. We never saw, after the war, Frenchmen and Germans travel and work together until you came. You must give us the pleasure and come to our country as soon as you can."

The Saudi Ambassador was astounded. He told us that, some time ago, his King had issued a decree for all Christian missionaries to leave Saudi-Arabia saying, "Go back to your own countries and preach Christianity there where there is need for it." And now the same ruler had invited us to be his guests in Riyadh, the capital. A royal plane would pick us up in Cairo and bring us first to the Red Sea harbor of Jeddah. Through his Ambassador the King let us know that meeting Frank Buchman in San Francisco at the time of the Japanese Peace Treaty Conference had impressed and moved him and he had not forgotten.

King Saud Ibn Abdul Aziz had followed, in 1953, his father Abdul Aziz Ibn Saud who had been one of the most remarkable personalities of our century. His life story reads like one of the Arabian Tales. As a young man of twenty he had, with only a handful of his tribesmen, re-conquered the heavily armed and walled-in town of Riyadh, in a lightening surprise attack under the cover of darkness. His family, one of the most powerful ruling clans in the heart of the Arabian Peninsula, had been expelled from their palaces and lands by rival tribes who were supported by the Osman Sultan. For eleven years, the older Saud's father, his wife and children, had suffered from humiliating circumstances in their exile in Kuwait. Until, in 1902, young Abdul Aziz, who would rather die than continue to live in shame, had made his coup.

In 1952, Ibn Saud as he was known later, had celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of his reign. A rare feat in any part of the world, it was absolutely unique in Islamic countries. During that half century when Ibn Saud built up his kingdom, twenty-four other Muslim rulers had lost their throne: Six of them were murdered, nine others de-throned by foreign powers, and the rest had to abdicate forced by their own people or armies. Ibn Saud had been a Bedouin warrior but also a wise leader who found his strength in strict compliance with the rules laid down in the Koran. He was "Keeper of the Holy Places" of Mecca and Medina. When, after World War II, along the eastern coast line

of Arabia, the world's largest oil deposits were exploited he began his rise to be one of the wealthiest men on earth.

With the oil came of necessity the influx of Western experts and engineers. And yet, Saudi-Arabia still had, like the ancient land of Sheba, the aura of the wild unknown, hidden behind endless deserts, hostile towards infidels as all non-Muslims were called. That was still so when Ibn Saud died and Saud Ibn Abdul Aziz was made the new King. Unlike his legendary father who had only once in his life left his country for a state visit in Egypt, the new monarch had already traveled widely. He was the oldest surviving of forty-five brothers (it is unknown how many sisters they had) and, as heir-apparent, experienced in government affairs.

* * *

On this journey we were joined by a sixth member, the Egyptian ex-Army General Hussein Farrag, who was now president of a Cairo trading company. He was a faithful friend, enthusiastic about the purpose of our mission. Farrag enjoyed for this venture the official blessing of the Revolutionary Council who, so it appeared, wanted to demonstrate their good-will toward their oil-rich neighbor. Our new companion intended to combine the trip with his obligation as a Moslem: his first pilgrimage to Mecca. He proved to be an ideal guide and teacher for the *terra incognita* we were about to enter.

The Saudis had informed us that we would be flown to Djeddah where we were to expect the special plane that would pick us up "straight away". We had arrived, however, in a land where time meant nothing. "Straight away" turned out to be two full weeks which offered enough time to Hussein Farrag to prepare for and perform his sacred pilgrim rituals.

We were all put up in the Djeddah Gardens Hotel, at that time the most prestigious in town. There would have been no other available rooms for us as Djeddah was the assembly point for hundreds of thousands of Mecca pilgrims at the peak of one

of the two annual holy periods. They came by plane, ship, bus, donkey and on foot, throngs and individuals arriving every day from all corners of the globe. The most extraordinary mix of humanity camped at every free space, milled body to body through the narrow bazaars and filled the air with a babel of languages.

Mixing with the crowds, we could not discover any police or army—they were not needed in this heartland of Islam where the strict rules of the Koran were still the law. Nobody, even when starving, would have attempted to steal from the open-air shops in the bazaar. There were brutal penalties for the few perpetrators when they were caught. Our royal escorts offered to take us to a public punishment where a thief was to have his right hand cut off with a sword. But we declined to take part.

The King's secretary, Abdullah Bil-Kheir, had provided us with two big snow white chauffeured cars so that we could explore the surrounding area. They took us out of town and we walked on foot into the desert, soon meeting some of the genuine Saudis, tough and wary looking Bedouins amidst their camel and goat herds, who turned out to be very hospitable and asked us to their tents for a tiny cup of sweet tea.

Another time we were driven in the direction of Mecca to the point where the Holy Area began. Huge signs warned, in many different languages, all non-Moslems to stop here. No infidel was allowed to enter the sanctuaries. Until 1954, when we were there, no more than fifteen recorded non-Moslems had been into Mecca and come out alive. I am sure that, had we walked on that day, we would have been lynched by the fanatic masses.

Every evening when the sun was setting beyond the Red Sea and temperatures became bearable, we had ourselves taken out to the endless sandy shoreline to have a bath. The water was so salty that even handicapped Gérard was able to enjoy a bit of swimming. Regularly at this time rich Djeddah families would come out to the beach in their posh automobiles, and there one could observe the Arab ladies as they opened their black veils

facing the sea in order to catch the last fading sun rays. Otherwise one would notice these women only occasionally when they hurried, small black shapes, to the shops or when they peered through the elaborate wooden grills of their harem windows and all one could see were their black eyes.

Meanwhile, Hussein Farrag allowed us to take part in his preparations. In the early morning he would read to us from the Koran and interpret the revelations of Mohammed. He explained the meaning of ritual prayers and ablutions to cleanse body and soul. He took off his clothing and put on the customary pilgrim dress: one white, seamless piece of undyed cloth wound around the body in traditional ways, and simple sandals. Farrag told us about the five pillars of Islam, the religious duties of every Moslem: the profession of faith summed up in the formula *La ilaha illa-llah*, There is no God but Allah; the five prescribed daily prayers; almsgiving the amount of which is laid down in the Koran; the keeping of *ramadhan*, the month of fasting; and finally, the pilgrimage to Mecca, at least once in the lifetime of a faithful.

An amazing period of learning it was for us when our friend revealed the very depth of his faith. Sharing with each other the things that meant most to us was by no means a threat to identity, much more it was a completion of spiritual identity resulting in greater humility. All of us discovered far more we had in common than what might divide us.

We accompanied Farrag in the midst of a huge crowd, uniformly dressed and incessantly singing prayers, an army of pilgrims. We walked up to the point where we had to turn back, awed by the force these people represented.

The day after Farrag returned, deeply stirred by his experience and not very talkative, a messenger arrived telling us that the royal plane was waiting for us at the airport. There were hardly any other passengers. The flight, including a stop-over at the desert village of Taif, took four hours over rugged mountain ranges, parched, hostile, without any signs of life.

Riyadh is a natural oasis in the center of a high, level plateau. When approached from the air, lush green outlines emerge miraculously abrupt and sudden from the surrounding stone desert. The fertility comes mainly from artesian wells which have allowed human habitation there since ages past. Some years earlier the Saudi capital had been not much more than a large, haphazard collection of huts and mud buildings around the widespread walled-in palace city. Now, after the sudden immeasurable oil wealth, a super modern city began to explode out of nowhere with already 200,000 inhabitants.

Sheik Abdullah Bil Kheir waited for us in the scorching sun on the airport tarmac with two white, custom-built Daimler 600's and had us whisked over to the reception lounge although it was only a few steps away. We were served coffee in tiny cups without handles. Servants lifted elaborately engraved brass pitchers with long, pointed beaks above their heads and poured a jet of the hot liquid precisely into the small cups. They would refill rapidly until you shook it to make clear you did not wish any more. The King's secretary welcomed us in the name of his Sovereign and briefed us about the program he had worked out. It made our heads spin.

On the way to the guest house within the palace city walls, the sheik pointed out some of the ongoing building projects. The whole place as far as one could see was one enormous construction site. One of the social programs the new King had initiated was to settle a large number of migrant Bedouins in urban conditions, which did not meet with much enthusiasm on their part. We were told that many of these desert clansmen brought their camels into the new concrete houses and lit their camp fires in the living rooms. It was a Sisyphean task to raise a people living in medieval circumstances into a modern age. It would take more than money to achieve it.

The palace city covers a very large area. It has to be big considering that the forty or so brothers of the King all had to have their own palaces, and the number of growing-up princes

was increasing. Brown mud walls rising up to twenty feet encircled the entire town, interrupted only by massive, squat watch towers. All the fortifications and most of the imposing buildings inside had been erected by the ancient Saudi warriors and remained unchanged ever since. The interior, however, was totally modernized.

Gérard and I shared an apartment the size of a minor dancing hall. It was completely laid out with several layers of precious Persian rugs and lavishly furnished. We noticed the latest model of a Blaupunkt radio set. There was a big bathroom with a lot of marble and all golden fittings. In the hall, in front of each of our rooms, huge African slaves were posted as guards. They had scimitars and daggers sticking in bulging sashes wound around their waists. Sheik Abdulla assured us that these men would be ready to die to protect us. I asked Gérard to pinch me hard to make sure I was not dreaming.

At some point the court tailor came in to fit us for an *abba*, a full Arab dress with gold embroidered braiding, cashmere *kaffiyah*, a scarf for a headgear, and all the trimmings. The father of the present King had not permitted anyone to come under his eyes unless dressed in Arab style. We were given to understand, however, that we would be allowed to wear our European suits and the "modest" gift was just to make us feel welcome. On top of each parcel with the dress was a gold-plated wristwatch with a green dial, green being the color of the Prophet.

King Saud received us in the afternoon audience. We were brought into a spacious L-shaped hall the walls of which were lined with a hundred or so light blue easy chairs that made a woosh-sound when you sank into their depth. In this room the King met with state guests and petitioners from his own people alike. The higher one's assumed rank the closer to the Monarch one was seated. We were given places right next to our host. The far ends of the line of chairs were crowded.

When we marched in everybody rose and His Majesty greeted each of us shaking hands. Back in Cairo, we had Frank Buchman's

message to the King translated into classical Arabic and written by a renowned calligrapher onto a choice piece of parchment. We knew, of course, that Islamic tradition and the Koran do not allow any representational expression of art like the portrayal of humans or any other creatures. In fact, through the centuries, the only trend in art besides religious architecture that has been developed to supreme completion in Islamic culture has been calligraphy and the unique flow of rhetoric language.

Our two Generals read the message, first in English and then in Arabic. It spoke of the vision that under the King's reign the moral and ethical strength inherent in Islam would play its full part to bring unity and accord to the nations in East and West. Each of us then had a chance to say a few words, translated by Sheik Abdullah who was kneeling in front of his King. At occasions like these, Gérard and I would talk about the growing rapprochement between our two countries and the evaluation of men like Robert Schuman and Konrad Adenauer of the ideas we were propagating. King Saud then asked us to convey his gratitude to Dr. Buchman and to assure him that the thoughts expressed in the message met with his own conviction. He wanted to do everything in his power to live up to this great task. He said that his and his government's engagement in the projected fast industrial and economic development could only succeed if at all times the highest traditional moral and spiritual values would guide them.

We met him again later, with other state guests, when we took part in the royal *mejlis* in another, completely azure painted hall with mighty crystal chandeliers. At this occasion the latest world news was read out loud for all to hear, and we had the chance to meet some of the Princes and visiting politicians from other Arab countries, contacts that would be valuable in future events.

These were well-informed people, wide awake to the power struggle going on. The Saudi Monarchy, so it seemed, with all the bizarre and strange aspects it offered, broke with century old

traditions when it opened the visor for non-Oriental and non-Islamic influences. Western-style democracies would still regard the ruling system as stone age feudalism. But King Saud had, in the short time of his office, made first tentative steps toward reform by instituting a government. Even so, most members of his cabinet were his own step-brothers.

That day in Riyadh was crowned with a magnificent eight-course dinner when servants brought in large silver platters with mountains of rice and, on top of it, whole roasted sheep complete with hooves and heads with goggling dead eyes. Our Arab neighbors at table tore out for us choice chunks of meat with their bare hands and we all ate without knives and forks, with the fingers of the right hand only—the left hand was regarded as unclean.

* * *

On our way back to Cairo we had two more days in Djeddah which were used to pay respects to our accredited Ambassadors. "Can you tell me who is sponsoring you?" asked the German Chargé d'Affairs. "Is it the U.S. State Department? Bonn had no intelligence on your visit, and yet, the program laid out for you was one for top-ranking diplomats. How do you do it?"

Our post-boxes at the Semiramis Hotel were bulging with mail collected during our absence. At that time, about twenty groups like ours, most of them larger, were working in some of the world's hotspots, and all of them produced news letters just as we did. There was also a telegram from Teheran asking us again to come to Iran as soon as convenient, and there were interesting openings from Jordan and Bahrein. We would have to go on traveling right away with practically no time to rest or prepare. Air traffic to Teheran from the West went mostly via Baghdad in those days. We decided to fly to Iraq and try to make arrangements for a reception at the Royal Court at a later time there, and then continue to the neighboring country of Iran whenever we got seats on the regular flight.



Approaching the flat country of ancient Mesopotamia we realized that the lands between Euphrates and Tigris had been stricken by catastrophe. Extraordinary torrential rains in the Kurdistan Mountains in the North, the headwater region for both great rivers, had made all their sources swell up at the same time, causing a dreadful flood further downstream. Baghdad appeared to be an island in a muddy brown ocean that stretched to the horizon. Half a million people from the surrounding areas had fled from the waters into the already crowded capital, and the entire population was feverishly working to build up a last line of defense to safeguard the town while the water level was still rising. We drove in a car on the only road leading out to the South toward Kuwait and the Persian Gulf, and came to the point where the highway dipped into the ocean. One could observe the dirty water, noiseless and threatening, eat up more and more dry land while driving all sorts of snakes and desert animals in front of it. It was not a good time to visit in Baghdad.

However, there was in Iraq a stalwart ally and friend, Dr. Fadhil Jamali, who, at the time of the great flood, was Prime Minister of his country. In his earlier position of Director of Foreign Affairs, he had been a member of the preparatory committee and a signatory of the United Nations Charter at San Francisco in 1945. While in the States he had met Dr. Buchman and some of his associates, seen one of the MRA plays and conducted a number of searching conversations. It all had made, as he told us, a lasting impression on his mind and spirit because it showed him that "violence is no way; the road to just and lasting peace lies in forgiveness and in the admission of mistakes, both in families and in politics." Like few other political leaders in this century, Dr. Jamali has made this philosophy the guiding principle of his public and private life. He was to play a constructive and bridge-building role both in UN policy and the evolution of non-aligned nations.

Amidst pressing duties at this period of crisis, Fadhil Jamali found the time to arrange for us to meet some members of his cabinet and the directors of the two major Baghdad colleges. The five of us must have been an exotic sight as we hurried from one appointment to the next through the anxious crowd. It was an unwritten law of our work that we must never give the impression of being tourists on a sight-seeing tour. So we always moved around in our dark summer suits and hats, and we dared not take cameras with us, which I regret to this day because we were unable to document the unique experiences we had. We were out on the streets even in the early afternoon when "normal" and reasonable people in these lands stayed indoors because of the unbearable heat, leaving only "mad dogs and Englishmen" to work during siesta hours.

* * *

Everybody warned us about the unstable and dangerous situation in Iran. Following the enforced nationalization of the Persian oil industry in the Gulf, Britain had enforced a blockade causing a severe economic crisis. Negotiations about the fate of the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company were still going on. Shah Reza Khan, the father of the present Emperor, had tried to modernize the country but had been forced to abdicate during World War II when Russian and British troops had occupied Persia. The heir to the throne, Mohammed Reza Pahlevi, Western educated, had opened Iran massively to Western influences, capital and know-how. A powerful upper class, the so-called Thousand Families, had amassed fabulous wealth and introduced growing secularization, and with that went corruption and the fanatic enmity of the traditional Islamic leadership. At the same time, the ambitious nationalist Prime Minister Mohammed Mossadegh had successfully worked for a restriction of the Shah's constitutional rights and to make him unpopular, until the loyalist Army had removed the politician from office in 1953.

For us, the picture was not so clear at all, at least not for me. We had been swamped with so many new observations for weeks now that I felt my mind could not grasp any more. On the plane going to Teheran I confessed to Gérard that I was out of my depth and afraid to be of no use to my friends and to our cause. I had no training for this kind of work. My only relief was that I had met, at last year's Caux assembly, some of the Iranians who were expecting us. Their familiar faces would help the hope that we were entering friendly territory.

The cable we had sent to our contact at the Teheran Foreign Ministry arrived there only a day later than we did. There was no-one at the airport to receive us. We packed our luggage and ourselves in two age-old taxis and were soon shaken up on the bumpy roads, and freezing. The Iranian capital is situated quite high up at the foot of the Fujiyama-like Mount Damarvand, in the East, and the Elburs Mountains in the North, with peaks rising up to 18,000 feet. Coming from the tropical temperatures in Baghdad, the cold hit us hard. The only hotel we were able to find in town was a fifth-class Khan by the name of La Bonbonnière which boasted pre-used bedclothes, broken toilets, bugs, permanent noise and numbing odors. Of course, even then, Teheran had hotels meeting international standards, but we had hardly any cash and no idea if our hosts would be willing to pay our bills.

They were horrified when they found out where and how we had spent a sleepless night. They rushed us over to very decent prepared quarters and showed us an office flat they had rented for the time of our stay. Professor Abol Fazl Hazeghi was in charge of making the arrangements. There was even a Senator who had been appointed Executive Chairman for MRA Affairs. A typed-out two-week program was ready for us with so many items on it that it would have taken two months to go through all of them. The following days were probably the fullest in all my life.

It started off with a two hour press conference covering the whole history of the movement, recent events on all continents, the evaluation of our work by known personalities, and each of

our personal backgrounds. I suffered with poor Francis who had to do all the translation—which he carried through with admirable eloquence and precision. At the end he was near exhaustion although this had been just the beginning of the action program. Next day the reports in the papers almost dwarfed the real headline news like the oil-crisis negotiations or the ongoing nation-wide preparations for the thousand-year anniversary celebrations of Ibn Sina (Avicenna) the great Persian philosopher and eminent medical authority of his age. The fuss made about our small delegation seemed completely out of proportion.

Teheran in 1954 was a sprawling giant of a city with almost 1.5 million inhabitants, a stronghold of the Islamic Shi'a sect. On Iran's State Shield the lion holds in his paw the Zulfaqar, the sword of Ali, son-in-law of the Prophet Mohammed, whose descendants, Shi'as, believe, are the only legitimate successors of the Caliphate, as opposed to the vast majority of Moslems, the Sunni, who see their leaders in the line of the first Caliphs who were chosen by general consensus. Most Iranians we met made clear to us that they had their faith in common with all the other Islamic countries, but that in their view, the Arabs were an inferior race and not the true believers. These differences are as old as Islam itself. They have erupted violently in modern days. At the time, fifty years ago as I write, World Communism tried to use the rift between religious groups and denominations for its expansionist purposes. At their recent Party Convention, the Soviets had declared that in their strategy Iran was for the Middle East and Asia what West Germany was for Europe.

We met both the Iranian Prime Minister General Zahedi and Foreign Minister Entezam. The inroads made in their country by communist infiltration were their main concern. Zahedi was intrigued by the thought that the world needed the common denominator of a greater idea founded on moral principles, that mere anti-Communism was not enough for countries to maintain their freedom and that died-in-the-wool Communists and Capitalists could change.

The Foreign Minister told us that he had spent a number of years studying in Stuttgart and was therefore eager to know how things were going in Germany. He said, "I am a practical man. Tell me what you think I can do." We suggested, as a beginning, two things: To send representative delegations for training to Caux like the German Government was doing, and to induce His Majesty the Shah to invite a larger international team to Iran for the kind of grass-root work we had experienced in the Ruhr.

Entezam then asked us to take part, two days later, in a State Banquet given in honor of the entire Diplomatic Corps. For this occasion I wore for the first time in my life a tuxedo and black trousers which was lent to me by a friend in the German Embassy. Francis with his a bit pudgy stature got his from a fat little Senator. The French Ambassadors to all the Middle East countries were there—they had a convention in Teheran that very week. In later years I was to attend many such diplomatic receptions and I disliked them thoroughly from this first one on. They always seemed to me like a Hollywood show with everybody putting up a front of bonhomie that they did not feel at all.

The Minister of Education was a young, lively man. He told us that higher education for his country's young generation was taking place mostly abroad. Moscow granted scholarships in growing numbers so that the Iranian Government had approached universities in the U.S.A. and Europe to allow at least as many young men and women to study at Western colleges. "You know what happened?" he asked us. "Many of these students whom we hoped would bring us the know-how we so desperately need returned morally corrupted, trained Marxist and anti-Shah." While we were at his office, he called the Rector of Teheran University. Then one thing led to another. We talked to a number of the college faculty and spoke before a large group of students.

The Sufis are the mystics of Islam. Their Iranian leader has the title of Qutb. This wizened old gentleman announced at a reception he gave for us that he planned to travel to Switzerland. He hoped, as he said, to find at Caux a method how to deal with

a development that puzzled him. The Soviet Embassy in Teheran had by far the greatest number of staff among all the foreign representations. Not only were all these employees without exception Moslems but also proselytizing Marxists who mixed with all levels of Iranian society. Two of the influential mujtahedin had to be excluded from their public offices because of outspoken "red" leanings. The Qutb told us that they found many more "pink" ones among their number. Communist ideas were spreading like a disease and nobody knew how to stop it.

Abol Fazl Hazeghi was untiring in his efforts to bring us together with every VIP he could think of. Wherever we went we were accompanied by journalists and photographers with their flashbulbs. They were there, of course, when we put our names in the Shah's guest-book—that was the done thing. The Minister of Court himself gave us a chance to tour the Palace and the famous gardens surrounding it. The grandiose Palace is built of pale pink marble and crowned with a truly glorious dome covered with bright porcelain mosaic. Inside, a thousand years of Persian culture have been collected to complete one great work of art—the mirror reception hall resembling the splendor of Versailles, the Shah's personal office where walls and furniture are laid out with Shiraz mosaic, millions of tiny hexagonal pieces in different shades of brown and white. All rooms have the most precious carpets one can imagine. It appeared to me to be one of the wonders of the world.

At the end of two breathtaking weeks word came from the Palace that His Majesty the Shah-in-Shah wanted to see us. He received us in his private study where we saw the photographs of Roosevelt, Truman, Haile Selassi, King George V and young King Hussein of Jordan on the mantelpiece. We sat in easy-chairs around a table as for an informal talk. The Shah was about thirty-eight years old, he was serious, withdrawn, somewhat troubled. He spoke English and French fluently, German passably, and insisted on talking with us in our respective languages. He opened up saying that, a year earlier, he had received Dr. Buchman in

private audience and had followed MRA activities since then with great attention. "I pray to God that your work will be successful in Iran and all over the world," he said. He made us feel at ease, and in forty-five minutes covered an astonishing variety of topics.

The Shah told us that he had just issued the decree for a comprehensive land reform whereby the big landowners would be requested, without material compensation, to part with a certain percentage of their land property for the benefit of small farmers. Imperial lands would also be donated to the poorer part of the population. He said that he was well aware of the reasons for unrest in Iran and that the differences between rich and poor would have to be reconciled more and more. "Do you think that this is a step in the right direction?" he asked.

We talked about the need to make it normal in public and private life to accept high ethical values as guidelines for everything. Gérard told him that he did not find it easy to practice constant honesty and altruism, but that for him, a Parisian, to live a life of purity of mind and body was the biggest challenge. To which His Majesty answered, "I know just what you are talking about. I try it, but I do find it difficult." Our two Iranian friends who were with us kept their mouths open when they heard their revered Monarch talk like any other normal human being.

Nobody could have blamed us when we sent out to our friends everywhere reports bubbling over with amazement about the reception this country had given to our insignificant group and to the movement as a whole. The German Ambassador informed me that he had written a favorable report of our activities to Bonn urging the German government to give every possible political support to our work. It seemed that Iran was wide open to the Western Bloc, that it could be saved from Communist ideological take-over. Future events have dramatically proved how vastly we overrated our possibilities. Most human beings tend to take their own back-yard pond to be the great ocean. We were no

exception. Naturally, we had no inkling then that we had conversed with some of the very people who would, not so much later, bring about the tragic downfall of the Shah and make his land become one of our world's great headaches.

* * *

It was Easter when we returned to Baghdad. The big flood had settled and the extent of the devastation could be seen. Dr. Jamali invited us to his home in one of the nicer suburbs on the Eastern bank of the Tigris. It had survived the high water almost undamaged. I shall never forget that evening with him and his family. After a modest dinner we all sat on the terrace which extended to a lovely flower garden. The stars were so bright as I had never seen them before. Jamali owned a large record collection and we listened to some of my favorite classical music sounding through the wide open doors. What a contrast, this heavenly peace after the hectic hubbub of the foregoing days. Fadhil Jamali chatted about his dream: He would rather not be Prime Minister, but in charge of Education. Or even better, he hoped to be given a chair in some university, outside of all politics, and teach about religious philosophy and the principles of MRA. Only a week later, his cabinet was dissolved, he became Foreign Minister and was put in charge of Education in Iraq.

We met a British journalist who had lived in and reported from the Middle East for more than ten years. He said, "If anybody tells me that he can see through the intricacies of Arab ideologies and politics, he is, to my mind, either crazy or he simply does not know what he is talking about." I believe that was even an understatement. The number of ever-changing national governments, of inscrutable political or religious tainted groups, of short-lived pacts and unions in Arab lands was baffling. Most of these countries had lived for very long under foreign rule, after World War I under the mandatory power bestowed on European countries by the League of Nations, especially on France and

Great Britain. Nations like Jordan and Iraq had been artificially created, their borders drawn on the map with a ruler, disregarding long-standing regional and tribal interests.

Only two currents seemed to have any integrating, if not uniting, force: the drive for independence and freedom from the contemptuous, lecturing domination of foreigners; and, even more threatening like a devastating tornado, the outrage about the, as most Arabs considered it, arbitrary institution of the State of Israel. No doubt, in the latter, injustice had been done to the Palestinians by the international community. In the famous Balfour Declaration, which promised to the Jewish people a national home in the land of the biblical covenant, it was at the same time established that the national rights of Arabs living in Palestine would not be infringed. Two promises had been made and it proved impossible to keep them both. In 1948, the newly created state of Transjordan had been separated from Palestine, and eighty percent of the Arab population fled from Israel or were forcefully ejected and not allowed to return. An issue had been created that caused endless strife and wars, all of which the Arabs lost. The realization of defeat and inferiority, the inability to achieve union among themselves, even in times of war and catastrophe, has been—and still is—a deadly blow to Arab pride.

All these issues were heavily on the minds of our friends in Baghdad. Although a Monarchy since 1921, Iraq had been unable to achieve inner stability. Oil discoveries both in the North around Mossul, an area with a strong and obstinate minority of Kurds, and in the South near Kuwait and Basra, had not yet reached a satisfactory level of profitability. King Faisal II had been on the throne for twelve months only. Like his cousin, King Hussein of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, he had been crowned on the same day when both of them had been eighteen years old.

Dr. Jamali had requested for us an audience at the Baghdad Court which the young King graciously conceded. The Royal Palace could not stand any comparison with the counterparts in Teheran or Riyadh. No trace had been left of the incomparable

splendor that had been the Baghdad of Harun al Rashid a thousand years ago. There were none of the colorful uniformed guards or collections of artifacts which had nearly overwhelmed me in the other two places. Although plenty of armed soldiers could be seen everywhere, I felt much more at ease when we entered the audience hall.

King Feisal looked very much his young age. He was a shy, almost timid boy who glanced for approval from his uncle, the Regent Prince Abdullilah, after every word he said. He seemed relieved when he was not urged to make a political statement. All we felt right to ask was his consent for his country to be represented with a good delegation to the international conference. In the end, he was able to laugh about some harmless joke made in the conversation. It made him have all our sympathy. He had not much to laugh about in the short span of his life.

Four years later—some of us had returned to Baghdad for several visits in the meantime—Feisal and his family were murdered by Iraqi soldiers during the coup d'état of Abd al-Karim Qasim, following a massive propaganda campaign from Nasser-followers. Some of the corpses were strung with ropes to cars and pulled through the streets of the town accompanied by the jeering of fanatic crowds. Our friend Dr. Jamali was captured along with other Iraqi politicians and condemned to death (due to almost miraculous circumstances Dr. Jamali was able to escape and survive). Qasim was Prime Minister of the new Republic not for very long. An attempt to kill him was made by a group of fanatics. Especially brutal among the assassins was reported to be a young man by the name of Saddam Hussein. It was not the first time this man was involved in murder, and it was certainly not the last.

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The next leg of our journey took us to Bahrein, the oil-rich island in the Persian Gulf east of the Arabian peninsula. It is an independent Sheikdom, was for a long time the center of

profitable pearl fishing in the Gulf and now, with the Black Gold pumped up from the bowels of the earth by innumerable drilling stations, a country with one of the highest per-capita incomes in the world. The ruling Sheik Sulman bin-Khalifa, had sent his sons and nephews to Europe for their education. Six of these, including the Crown Prince Sheik Issa, had spent some time at Caux where they were treated as the royalty they were. "Meeting the world" at such an international gathering had been a unique experience for them.

All six were there on the tarmac to greet us with their long white robes fluttering in the propeller wind, very unusual, we were told, to be out in the noon sun. Sheik Issa said, "His Highness Sheik Sulman asked me to welcome you in his name in Bahrein. He begs you to accept this Island as yours. Whatever you wish will be granted." Flowery language like this is normal between Arabs and a matter of courtesy. But the way everybody during our short stay poured out generous hospitality was much more than politeness. It was like welcoming good friends.



Arab Potentates King Saud of Saudi Arabia, Sheik of Bahrain, and entourage

The program was similar to the one in Riyadh, only less ceremonial and more intimate. It allowed us to get an insight into a society run on the strict regulations of Koran tradition. Sheik Sulman was still the sole ruler of all affairs. His word was the law. He allowed us to participate in a *mejlis* to which Bahrainis from all over the island brought their complaints and quarrels. The Sheik's judgment was accepted without a murmur. On the wide spread premises of the Houses of Government and in the clan's household he allowed not even the most insignificant of Western ways.

Harry, who had lived with his wife and children on the island for several years, knew all about Sheik Sulman's resolve to keep alive the old ways and was able to instruct us on how to move and what to say in the Ruler's presence. He, and also the princes, were even more surprised than the rest of us about a first-ever event that the Sheik allowed to happen. A slide projector was mounted in the big audience hall, and everybody with any rank or position and masses of children sat cross-legged on the floor excitedly watching colored pictures like they had never beheld them before. The slides had been taken during the princes' time in Europe, especially when they were at Caux. The old gentleman realized that the investment in his sons' and nephews' education had been fruitful. When we left Bahrein he made a substantial donation to our work. I became quite friendly with one of the younger princes when we compared experiences with fathers and discovered that we had surprisingly much in common.

Only a few weeks earlier, in Riyadh, we had been introduced to Prince Abdul Majid Haider of Jordan. He had been present at the reception by King Saud, and cabled us now that we must come to Amman, as it were by Royal Command. Sheik Sulman kindly paid for our trip. We were only four now since George, the general, had to return home for another engagement.

The Kingdom of Jordan, independent since 1946 and founded out of the British-created Emirate Transjordan, is a desert

country, the majority of the population being Bedouins. The first King was Abdullah of the Hashemites, the tribe originating from the heartland of Arabs, the clan from which stemmed the Prophet Mohammed. Although head of an independent monarchy (by the grace of Great Britain), Abdullah had to accept the continued stationing of British troops in his territory. He was wise enough, however, to put an English officer in command of his own Bedouin soldiers. This brilliant military man, General J.B. Glubb who became famous as Glubb Pasha, had formed from the raw material of desert tribesmen unconditionally loyal to the King the only crack troop that Arab countries ever produced. They were known as the Arab Legion, and it was the Legion who conquered the West-Jordan and the Old Town of Jerusalem during the Arab-Israeli War of 1948-49.

Abdullah had tried to come to a peaceful settlement with Israel. With his army's achievements he was in a strong bargaining position, but he was unable to find support from his Arab brethren. On the contrary, Palestinian refugees and Pan-Arabic nationalists had kindled outright hatred against the King in his own country. When he left the Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem one day after a Friday prayer, he was murdered by a Nasserite fanatic. At his side watching it all had been his sixteen-year-old grandson Hussein who, in 1953, became the new King of Jordan. His rule was a balancing act from the very beginning.

Almost forty percent of the Jordan population were refugees from Palestine. They were herded together in large camps reminding me of those I had seen in Germany. Miserable creatures were vegetating under incredible, inhuman conditions. At first it had been just a primitive makeshift conglomeration of tents and holes dug in the desert ground, and the dream of one day soon to be able to return home had kept the refugees plodding on. Even before the flood tide of the homeless, Jordan had been the poorest of Arab countries having no oil nor any other sizable natural resources of her own. UNNRA, the United Nations Relief Organization, had to sustain the camps in the Gaza Strip, the

Jordan Valley, and also in Syria and the Lebanon. In the course of time the jobless masses became centers of constant social unrest and civil war. More dangerous still was the successful attempt to turn the status of Palestine Refugee into a sort of profession that would be passed on to the second and third generation, thus creating a permanent means to bring moral pressure on Israel and the international community.

In later years I talked to some of these professional refugees in a camp near Jericho. I told them about the millions of homeless whom Germany had to cope with after the war and how they had been integrated in the society and became a vital asset without which our national reconstruction would have been impossible. The Palestinians wanted to hear nothing of it. One of them said to me, "We would have to give up our hatred. Without hatred driving us we would lose our only means to regain our homeland."

When our group arrived in Amman, Prince Abdul Majid forbade us to go out alone without Jordan protection. Demonstrations were going on everywhere with aggressive groups holding up Nasser portraits and demanding *anschluss* with Egypt and another war on Israel. We were taken with an escort to the Prime Minister. To receive us was perhaps his last official act. The following day the Cabinet was dissolved, but the King's choice of successor to the PM caused more protest from the "progressive" Arab states. When we met Glubb Pasha in his military headquarters, he told us the Legion troops were on the alert but he himself was not much impressed by the public unrest. "We are used to it," he said, "the King can handle it."

Hussein, the Little King, has become one of the best known public figures of the last decades. I admired him from the first time I set eyes on him. He had the habit of speaking in a very low voice which might give him the appearance of being a bit on the soft side. But he owns the personal courage of a desert lion. He used to go unarmed in an open jeep to face the excited crowds who demonstrated against him and his reign. He has survived countless attempts on his life and the most vicious campaigns to

undermine his authority and destroy his morale. Many cynical stories have been written about his three successive marriages, and he has been criticized because of his alleged liberal changing of political partners and alliances. But he has stuck to his guns and remained unbent in his character.

When King Hussein granted us a first audience—some of us met him later more often—we congratulated him on the first anniversary of his ascension to the throne precisely a year ago that day. His response was warmhearted and in the fluent, cultured English he had adopted while completing his schooling at Sandhurst. He seemed mature far beyond his nineteen years and had none of the insecurity his cousin Feisal had shown in Baghdad.

Hussein appreciated the encouraging message we brought from Dr. Buchman. We talked about the lines in *al Fatihah*, the most often recited prayer of Moslems in which the faithful beseeches God, "Lead us in the right way, the way of those to whom Thou hast been gracious, against whom Thou hast not waxed wroth, and who go not astray." We said that along with many in our own ranks we prayed that God would indeed lead him step by step in the difficult tasks ahead. The King listened intently. When we shook hands in the end, we all saw tears in his eyes when he said, "I want to be one of you."

The Government provided us with a car and a driver, and we were taken to Jericho, to the Dead Sea, and up the moon-like mountains where perhaps the story of the Good Samaritan once happened, to Jerusalem. It was late afternoon when we left the car and walked up the steep slope of Gethsemane, the garden with its two thousand years old gnarled olive trees facing the Holy City. As the sun went down behind the mighty walls, the Golden Dome and the many church spires, we were quite alone and read aloud the chapter of the New Testament about that night in Gethsemane. What had been legend until then became tangible reality. These things had really happened here.

Jerusalem at that time was a divided city with a line of destroyed no-man's-land running right through the middle, and

armed soldiers posted on both sides ready to shoot. We were able to see the Old Town, walk along the Via Dolorosa and around the wide square of the Dome of the Rock. We could even glance down to the foot of the Wailing Wall where Jews, ceaselessly as in eternal pain, swayed their bodies in prayer against the stone. But we were barred at the borderline. The atmosphere was pregnant with hatred. Christians, Moslems and Jews all regarded this place as holy, they prayed to the same one God, and were yet so deeply, irreconcilably divided from each other. It made no sense. Repulsive was also the obvious rivalry between all the Christian denominations and sects to eke out "their" corners in the Holy Sepulcher or in Bethlehem, each claiming to profess the only true faith.

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Time ran out on our tour. We had been ordered to be back in Switzerland for the opening of the summer conference at Caux. On our list of countries to be visited in the hope to arrange for delegations to the Assembly were still Syria, Turkey and Lebanon, and there was still more work to do in Egypt. But we were able to make only one of these places and decided it would be Lebanon. We had the addresses of some friends in Beirut, but no idea how to reach people of influence who might be willing to take up the idea. It was to work out in a marvelous way.

I fell in love with Beirut as soon as I saw it when we approached it from the sea: the deep, lush green of densely growing pine trees on the hills going up to Mount Lebanon, the unusual red-brown of the earth, and the dark, luminous blue of the Mediterranean mixed to a just beautiful portrait. It was years before the peaceful scene became the battle ground for one of the most senseless, bloody and cruel wars in recent history. Lebanon was then still a prosperous multi-national, multi-religious and multi-ethnic country, the most developed and most westernized of the Arab nations.

Credit to this extraordinary position must be given, among other influences, to the French who had been given mandatory power over Lebanon from 1920 until 1946, when the last French occupying troops and administration officials were forced to leave and independence was granted to the new nation, separating it in the process from Syria which until then had been the motherland. The Lebanese had then created a democratic constitution which was the only of its kind in the world and worked admirably for almost a quarter century.

Although the national language was and continued to be Arabic, the government was motivated by the necessity of creating a workable basis for teamwork of a great variety of religions and ethnic groups who were, in the rest of the world, at loggerheads. Slightly more than half of the Lebanese population of three million were Christians—Maronite, Greek-Orthodox, Armenian-Orthodox, all in all eleven different denominations; forty-five percent were Moslems, again divided up in Sunni, Shi'a and a significant number of Druzes. The largest other minority were at that time Jews. The consensus found was to the benefit of all these factions and the country at large. What looked like the brain child of some highly sophisticated legal minds, a carefully worked out proportional representation on every level of government and administration, functioned as well and as long as the participating groups drew advantages from it. The law fixed that the State President must always be a Maronite Christian, the Prime Minister a Sunni Moslem, the President of Parliament a Shi'a Moslem, and so forth. For six Christian MPs there had to be five Moslems. And it worked.

We stayed in the St. George Hotel right by the busy harbor, in walking distance of the center of town where shops were bursting with goods from everywhere. Almost a quarter of all the Lebanese lived abroad, most of them in the U.S.A., where they, equipped with the proverbial Levantine business-sense, made money and contributed to their homeland's well-being. At an

obscure little tailor shop in Beirut I had the fascinating experience of getting a new summer suit in less than twenty-four hours after the first measurement had been taken. And it was ridiculously cheap at that.

It was the first place we had come to without any invitation from an official authority or an introduction to an institution at Government level. So we went to see the people on the contacts list. One of these worked as a reporter for a French language newspaper, and he took us to the office of his chief editor. After being introduced, this gentleman said, "I know all about your work. In fact, it has altered my life style and the motives of my work as a journalist." He told us that, a few years earlier, he had traveled to London for studies and had asked his British colleagues to name for him the three most important books of the season. Among those his friends had chosen was Peter Howard's, "Ideas have Legs".

"In retrospect", the man said, "I do not know whether I should be glad or sad about it, but reading that book sure cost me a lot of sleepless nights and a number of very tough resolutions, both regarding my family and my job as an editor." The results of his change of heart must have been significant because his associates had noticed something quite different in their boss and in the policy of the paper without being able to detect the reason for it. At the end of our interview he said, "Let's go to work. Who in Lebanon do you want to see, and whom are we going to meet first? I can get you in touch with everybody you can think of. No problem."

Our first appointment was with Kemal Jumblat, leader of the opposition in parliament and also head-man of the Lebanese Druzes. He was about to leave for the U.S.A. for political talks but let us know that he would receive us before take-off. The Druzes are a Moslem sect named after a renegade called Darazi who had promoted, around the year 1,000 AD, the divine origin of his Ismailite ruler Habim, a thesis which was, of course, anathema to all the rest of Mohammedan. Darazi's followers subsequently were most of the time at war with the other Moslem

sections and became known as a particularly belligerent people. The Druzes lived in the rugged, almost inaccessible Shouf Mountains south of Beirut. Kemal Jumblat asked us to meet him there, in his mountain hideout castle.

As a small boy I had read, like most German kids, almost all sixty-three volumes of Karl May's adventure books, in fact I had devoured them and taken their fantastic descriptions for bare truth although Mr. May had never been at the scenes he so vividly portrayed for generations of youngsters. We felt we knew all about the American Red Indians like Chief Winnetou of the Apaches, or the wild Kurds of the Balkan lands, or the Arabs who were epitomized in these books by a weird little Bedouin called Haji Halef Omar ben Haji Abul Abbas ibn Haji Dawoudh al Gosara. So when we drove up the steep, twisting gravel roads leading up to Jumblat's eagle's nest, I imagined that certainly after the next bend one of my childhood heroes would be there to greet us. Sure enough, suddenly two or three ferocious looking figures appeared out of nowhere and challenged our car. The driver explained that we were expected, and told us that here was the border to Druze country. We had to pass several more road blocks.

We had been warned about Jumblat's Communist leanings. In those times, anyone opposed to one's own lines of thought was easily tarred to be a Communist, a most comfortable way to exclude that person from the camp of the good. Generalizations like this are to my mind the most stupid and at the same time detestable trend I can think of. It turned out that the Druze leader had little time for Moscow's ideology. He was a highly intelligent and well-read politician who had studied both the philosophy of Marxism and the basic humanistic and Christian ideas of the Occident, and he voiced some qualms about all of them. He was quick to understand what we were out for and agreed that the need for genuine reconciliation on all levels of human society was paramount. "But to be honest", he said, "with human nature being what it is, I doubt that it can be achieved to any significant extent." It was sad that we were unable to deepen the relationship

with this remarkable man then and in future years. He, and after him his son, were to play an important role in the tragic history of the Lebanon as it evolved.

The country at that time was by far the most Western orientated of all Arab nations, due perhaps also to the influence of AUB, the American University of Beirut, where most of the present Arab leaders had studied. Although financed to a significant extent from American sources, AUB had been able to maintain its Arab core, and its standard of teaching could well stand comparison with European or American colleges. When we met some of the professors and students at the beautifully situated campus, we found them fascinated with the idea of putting together an AUB delegation for training in Switzerland, and with the suggestion to plan for a particular student conference for the Middle East lands.

* * *

"You are late," one of my team-mates said in a voice soaked with disapproval.

"Again", another one added.

The inside of my stomach churned up with defensiveness as I sat down at the breakfast table.

"What's the matter with you, are you off the ball?" they wanted to know.

I knew they were going to ask that! It was the standard question when one of us was not the radiant, all-out revolutionary person he was expected to be at every moment. To be off the ball meant that your self-willed ego had gotten in the way of the absolute moral standards, and experience taught that probably you had indulged in impurity of some kind.

"No", I said. "I'm just sour, and I don't feel well."

"Perhaps you would feel better if you thought less of yourself and more about other people. Did you, for instance, carry down Gérard's bags? You know that he can't do it himself."

"I'm sorry, Gérard", I told him. "I forgot. But I really feel unwell this morning. And I am sour because, for days now, none of you thought of translating for me during the interviews we had. How can I participate and give my best when I don't know what is going on."

The saying goes that traveling together is the best way to lose one's friends. So far, however, we had gotten on extremely well with each other. Only during the last days we all had been irritated and let out our deadly tiredness on each other. Several months of almost permanent red alert had made me move at my physical and mental limits for too long. I was burnt out and exhausted. It was similar with my friends.

We met for our last breakfast in Egypt. Some of us would return to Cairo later in autumn. At ten a.m. a taxi would come to pick us up and take us to the Alexandria harbor where we would board a ship bound for Marseilles. We did not want to fly to Switzerland. All of us needed a few days rest, and also, sea fares were cheaper than air travel.

Adding to our general fatigue had been a nightmare car-trip from Cairo to Alexandria the day before. Several miles before reaching the Half Way Inn, with nothing around us but flat desert, a ferocious sand storm had hit us. I was driving, and in seconds visibility became zero so that I had to stop the car. In no time dust filled the compartment and made us cough although the windows were closed tightly. The sound of the sand hitting the vehicle on the windward side was frightening. It had such force that it dulled the paint of the car and at points made the naked metal come through as if a sand-blasted had been at work.

I was looking forward to my first cruise. Ever since our torpedo boat went down at the end of the war I had dreamt of going to sea again on a peaceful journey. But as soon as anchors were lifted and the beautiful sight of Alexandria faded away, I developed a fever and had to lie down in the tiny cabin with the small porthole. The ship's doctor came and said, "You are certainly ill with something, but I do not know what it is. You have been

in the Tropics, so it could well be contagious. I will have to put you in quarantine and you will have to go to the hospital isolation ward as soon as we reach Marseilles. Sorry, but your friends will not be allowed to see you before the necessary laboratory tests have been made.”

That was precisely what happened. When my three friends moved on to Switzerland I was able to wave to them only from a distance. An ambulance brought me to the Tropical Department of the hospital and without any further consultation I was confined to a single room, cut off from the rest of the world. No doctor came to see me. The nurses were nice and looked after me well and efficiently. But they spoke French only and had no idea how long it would take to evaluate the many lab tests to find out if I was a deadly medical danger to mankind or not. I felt perfectly fine myself, my temperature had settled down to normal again, I had lots of sleep and good food—it would be a kind of unexpected holiday in Southern France.

As it was, the hospitalization became a landmark in my life. There was ample time to read masses of letters, news-services and papers, go through them at leisure and think about them. I was amazed to realize that in five years, ever since I left Stuttgart to join the College of the Good Road, I had not been alone on my own for more than a couple of hours or so. It made me quite uneasy and was something of a shock to find out how dependent I had become on the constant close companionship with like-minded friends. To be alone with myself made me feel very insecure. “The Team” had become the center of my being; I was part of and followed every move of the group. I had indeed ceased to live on my own initiative as an individual and was quite satisfied to be carried along by this amazing band of dedicated people. I resolved that it was time to take stock, to find out my position in life and if I was still on the right track and where I should go from here.

I began to write a diary and put down on paper every thought that happened to come to my mind, pages and pages of it. This

was nothing unusual because for all of us it had become a habit to take time for reflection every early morning and to write down our thoughts. But this diary became something different altogether. It was astonishing to become aware of the fact that, during my regular times of quiet I had consciously edited and censored my thoughts in the knowledge that everything written would later have to be read to whoever I worked with at the time. It was called "sharing guidance", because many of us believed what Frank Buchman often said, that "adequate, accurate information can come from the mind of God to the mind of man", that whenever we listened God would talk to us and guide us.

In the beginning, when all these ideas had been completely new to me and when I tried them out, it had been an overwhelming thought that the Almighty God could plant divine revelations into my soul whenever I opened it to Him. Indeed, there had been a few rare times when I had searched for guidance and simply knew for certain that a thought had entered my mind from outside the capacity of my brain, a thought which I could blindly trust to be true. Whenever this happened, I had regarded it as an unexpected and undeserved gift, something I could not earn or ask for like an answer in a telephone conversation. Buchman and many of his closest followers seemed to have different experiences, however, because for them the connection was apparently always available. If guidance would not come, they said, an un-confessed sin or a piece of self-will not yet laid down at the Cross, was blocking the flow. In the course of time I had therefore developed the habit to note in my little booklet only what I thought might impress or please my colleagues.

The realization of this truth was a shock. Was I really that much *off the ball*? My new diary filled up with critical, even heretical things which I thought I would never dare to recount to even my closest friends.

A letter had arrived, signed by seven of the men and women of the immediate surrounding of Frank Buchman, an epistle that was meant to be a powerful challenge for all fulltime-workers to

rally even closer and even more dedicated around our leader, to strive even more seriously to reach out, in our own lives, for the level of the founder's faith and commitment. The letter opened, like most of our publications in those days, with a few statements like, "The choice for mankind today is MRA or Communism", or, "There has never been a world assembly (like the one closed last week) in which the hopes and fears of nations have been changed so fundamentally and drastically. The tide of international materialism was turned last week. We stepped on to the threshold of a new age."

I almost did not trust my eyes when I read, in the diary, my own reactions to these slogans, "This boasting language, this claiming of dreamt up, unrealistic results and achievements is absolutely unbearable—this is not very different from Joseph Goebbels' *Propagandaministerium*. Our friends create a leader cult around Frank Buchman which I find almost as repulsive as the one the Nazis created around Hitler."

At another point, the letter called for an inspired democracy as the supreme, the optimal form of government on every level of society. It sounded really great. But to my mind, our own organizational set-up and our system of reaching decisions had not much in common with a lived-out democracy, let alone an inspired one, as I understood the term. Every move, every action, every wording of a letter, the content of every meal or meeting, had to be checked with the group and needed the consent of the leader. The person with the strongest personality seemed regularly to have the best guidance. In case of doubt, a question was referred to Frank Buchman and his verdict would be accepted by all as the right one—it was hardly possible to argue with someone who maintained that God told him what to say.

Our leaders wrote, "Such living, like Frank's, cuts across every scrap of impurity, ambition, competition, indulgence in moods and sulks—every bit of self-concern, personally and nationally." For five years now I had tried really hard to meet all these challenges in my life, to renounce all striving for worldly goods and success,

all longings for marriage and my own family, any indulgence in things that did not immediately serve the progress of the movement. In all these years I had not read one good book, had not entered a theatre except for an MRA performance, had heard hardly any concert of classical music. Neither Buchman nor, as far as I could make out, the men and women around him had much of an artistic disposition. So I cut these things out like all other side-interests like stamp collecting or archaeology or genealogy or sports. I found that I could not talk with people about any subject but MRA and the ideological struggle. As an individual, I pondered, I had not grown during this time. My personality, to the contrary, had shrunk when measured by *worldly* standards.

I wrote and wrote, and began to feel relieved to have expressed it all, even if only to myself. With every "negative", every critical thought flowing out after having been suppressed for so long, tension left my system and was replaced by a wonderful relaxation in my spirit and a physical sense of well-being. In the diary, the character of the entries changed, unnoticeable at first, and then more and more clearly. To be fair, I had to admit that I had been privileged before all my former school mates. I had been given an extraordinary education. My horizon had been widened beyond all expectations. Each one of the "negatives" I had reacted against could not overshadow my fundamental conviction that, with all our human weaknesses, we were trying to participate in a work of God, that the basic ideas we professed were right and needed in our time. Like countless other ordinary people, I had found a faith in a time of faithlessness, I had experienced the transformation of my parents and so many others, I had witnessed how my country had effectively been helped in a period of desperate need.

In my mail were detailed reports from my old friend Fromund about his activities with an MRA group in India and Pakistan, and similar letters from other German friends like

Frowin from Japan and Eckart from South Africa, and also from my father and mother after they had concluded an invitation tour through the Scandinavian countries. Just like we had on our trip to the Arab kings, they all reported about encouraging bridge-building events between adversaries, about people loosing their hatred and beginning to be reconciled. There could be no better way, I thought, to live as a patriot and to represent, at home and abroad, and together with all my friends from everywhere, a new type of German, indeed a new type of world citizen.

When the doctors finally came to my isolation ward in the Marseilles Hospital to tell me that I was all right, they were a bit overwhelmed when I thanked them profusely for taking so long with their verdict. They could not know that they had helped me to be alone with myself long enough to renew my promise to God to serve Him as long as and in every way He wanted me to.

In my new resolve, however, there was a subtle difference. I had remembered those dialogues with my father when he was still a prisoner of war, when he tried in darkest desperation to fight out the soldier's fundamental conflict between duty and conscience. He had told me then, "We must bow to God only, never to man." That thought had come back to my memory with powerful force. It was right and I embraced it with all my heart: My allegiance would be to God and not to a movement. My loyalty would be, when all was said and done, to Him and not to any man.

7. New Horizons

Writing about history will never come close to an exact science. There will always be bias. When I am reading now, half a century after the events reported, the diaries and memoirs of other contemporaries, I am astounded both about the completely different things others seem to remember from the same periods and places in history, and also about the different interpretations put forward for exactly the same situations. The Catholic Cardinal Bea, during the great efforts towards achieving Christian unity at the Ecumenical Council, put it this way: "There is only one Truth. But our individual knowledge of the Truth will always be limited." Bea went on to say that we must accept that part of the Truth which others see without giving up what we know to be the Truth. One of the most fundamental Christian virtues is tolerance towards other beliefs.

We did not practice much Christian tolerance, half a lifetime ago, inside our own ranks and certainly not with people who could not fully endorse our way of thinking and living. We tried to "fight for each other" and for the world at large. The tone of our publications and all kinds of pronouncements became more aggressive as the Cold War stormed towards new climaxes and the Third World became the major bone of contention between the power blocs. Our theme was, "Nations that will not think will perish."

In 1954 Peter Howard and his son Anthony had written a musical play, *The Vanishing Island*, all in witty verses, and some

of our best musicians had enriched it with some really catchy tunes. It was done in an incredibly short time and put on stage in America with the help of some of Hollywood's best choreographers and technicians. The play depicts the East-West conflict, the deadly threat of a disciplined, godless and materialistic ideology against a Free World with no conception for the future, self satisfied and egocentric, and just as materialistic.

The idea was born that *The Vanishing Island* should be the core of an "Ideological Mission" which turned out to become perhaps the largest and most expensive action in the history of MRA. Up to 250 people and several tons of equipment were transported in three U.S. Air Force planes, starting from Washington, to 30 countries mainly in Asia. Cast and stage crew of the musical contributed the bulk of the participants. The rest were "spokesmen" from all walks of life and many different countries.

The "Mission" started its tour in June 1955. It drew large crowds wherever the musical was put on stage. The plan was, after Japan, Ceylon (today Sri Lanka), India and Pakistan, also Iran, Iraq and Egypt should be visited. I had returned to Cairo, this time with a larger group, already in January. We had hired a house in Garden City, one of the nobler parts of the Egyptian capital, and began with the preparations for the "Mission's" appearances in the Arab world.

In May I was sent, together with a young American, to Baghdad to "set up" that city as we called it. My companion was a most agreeable young man, I could not have wished for a better one, but, new to this part of the world, he suffered from the heat and the strangeness engulfing him.

We stayed at the old fashioned Zia Hotel on the banks of the mighty Tigris river, a place I knew from earlier visits. The Zia Hotel has found world wide renown because Agatha Christie chose it as the scene of crime of one of her murder mysteries. The owner of the hotel, Michael Zia, was a friend. He, like most of the personnel, was an Armenian Christian. They all had biblical names. One morning, it was already hot and sticky, one of the

waiters greeted us for breakfast and said, "Sorry, no corn flakes today, Jesus is sick and he has the key".

Apart from Michael Zia we did not know many people in Baghdad. There was, of course, Dr. Fadhil Jamali, who at the time represented his country at the United Nations and was, unfortunately, abroad. The Foreign Minister, Mr. Bashayan, had let us know that Iraq would be happy to welcome the Ideological Mission in Baghdad. However, this was not an "invitation" of the kind needed as a basis for such a major operation. It was our job, therefore, to find the approval of the young King for his country to formally invite the whole traveling group. But several applications for a Royal audience failed or were blocked off by some court officials. The Foreign Minister whom we were able to talk to after a week told us not to worry, and to go through all the details with one of his secretaries. We got a car and a driver, courtesy of the Iraqi Government, and went to work.

We got to know the slow grinding mills of an oriental bureaucracy, and soon we wished we had never come to the country. Iraqi officials, at least in the middle of the 20th century, knew no official work hours and were loath to decide anything; nobody would take responsibility. We had to find acceptable quarters for 250 people for three or four nights, arrange for meals for the same number, make dates for performances of the play in Faisal Theatre, print posters, leaflets and invitations, propose texts for press releases, find means of transport for people and equipment. In the theatre an air-conditioning machine would have to be installed if we wanted to avoid massive fainting on stage because of the tremendous heat.

All these things and hundreds more were supposed to be done not by us two poor foreigners but by Iraqis, and we appealed to their patriotism and their national pride. But it was slow going and time was running away fast. In the end, however, most things seemed to fall into place and the Cabinet even let us know that part of the total estimated cost of the operation would be met, over and above the returns from the sale of tickets.

Eight days before the scheduled arrival of the three Mission planes—we had just received news of an astounding reception by the Teheran Government—we two young men were ordered to come to the Foreign Ministry. An official whom we had not met before told us that the invitation was cancelled by order from “highest circles”. The “Mission” was not allowed to come to Baghdad. We must inform those responsible immediately. The planes had no permission to enter Iraqi territory. No reasons were given. Our meek protests were to no avail. The Foreign Minister would not receive us.

It was catastrophe. Where should so many people go and what about their tons of equipment? We cabled the bad news to Peter Howard in Teheran where the entire group had just completed a triumphant reception by Shah Reza Pahlevi and his Queen Soraya. The following day, in Baghdad, we were at least able to get permission for the planes to land and for the delegates to go to their allotted rooms. But performances of *The Vanishing Island* remained strictly forbidden—until six hours before the planned first opening of the curtain.

Inside the movement it was an undisputed though unwritten law that “mistakes”, small or big aberrations from the God-inspired plan, were inevitably due to moral sin in the originator. In this case, my American friend and I were the originators. Peter Howard sent, on the very day he received our cable, four able bodied men, strong in the faith, to Baghdad to deal with the culprits. For four days and nights we were taken apart. The professional life-changers knew their job. In the famous book *Three Men in a Boat*, the three students studying a medical dictionary come to the conclusion that symptoms of every known disease could be found in their bodies, except child bed fever. For us two, the diagnosis was that we had committed practically every sin in the book. Homosexuality (of course) and other ugly impurities, lying and crass egoism, lust for recognition and reprehensible softness. We had been bribed, we were told, by having been given a government car and driver and by living in a comfortable hotel,

and thus we had been blind and deaf for what must have been a Communist intrigue against the Work of God.

So we had to atone for it all. I had to stop wearing a golden signet ring with our family crest (vanity), give away my type writer (my reports were full of selfish boastfulness), take off my tropical suit (impure pride). We had to shed all responsibilities and were immediately reduced to all kinds of lowly menial work like carrying bags and such.

* * *

What had really happened? We heard about it only many months later, mostly through hints without real proof. Naturally, an enormous undertaking like the "Mission", in the excited, explosive atmosphere between the two ideological blocs at the time, would find not only enthusiastic praise—not in the official evaluations of the countries visited, and not in the world media. In fact there was massive resistance against the actions and pronouncements of the movement, both hidden and blatantly open; not only from Communist sources but also from democratic governments and institutions who felt challenged by the revelation of painful truths about corruption and failures in their own ranks as they were expressed in our plays and books.

Regularly, a few weeks before the "Mission" arrived at another city, it seemed that negative rumors were intentionally spread: the MRA people would not pay their bills; it was said that the U.S. State Department had withdrawn permission for the group to use Air Force planes because its protagonists were spreading statements to the detriment of America's image in the world. In Cairo, newspapers maintained that the message of the movement was "imperialistic", and in Baghdad, so we were astonished to find out, two nondescript Iraqi government officials in cahoots with a junior member of the U.S. Embassy had sent a duplicated statement to all Members of Cabinet saying that *The Vanishing Island* was Communist propaganda and, especially, that its

message was “anti-monarchist”. That was a clever move, and it almost succeeded.

At the last moment, however, the Iraqi Government ordered someone to critically read the manuscript of the play, and this gentleman found out that it was actually the King in the plot who played the key part in averting the deadly danger to his vanishing island. Peter Howard was asked if he was willing to change a few words in the text which might possibly be misunderstood. This was done, the Cabinet met and decided to lift the ban and the play was performed before a capacity audience, opening exactly on time.

Even if my American friend and I had lived a saintly life—which we certainly had not—we would probably not have had suspicions any earlier. This is what I would say today from the distance of so many years. At the time, the two of us were smothered in conviction of sin, and it was clear to me that, when I met Dr. Buchman next it would be the end of my career as a full-time worker. However, a few weeks later at the opening of another conference in Caux, Frank sat in front of Mountain House in the sunshine and all the participants of the “Mission” marched past him single file. When I came up to him, my heart beating like a drum, he just grinned at me and said, “fine, fine, fine”.

Our judges from Baghdad felt that this was not enough of a punishment. I was sent, therefore, to Britain into “exile”, to find my way back, under the tutelage of trusted, Oxford-Group trained men and women, to my true calling as a Christian revolutionary. The banishment lasted for two years—and I loved every moment of it! Time was filled with meeting people between Scotland and Wales, London and Ireland, the Dockers of the Clyde, the miners in the Rhondda Valley and the industrial workers in Stoke-on-Trent.

We arranged local meetings or large assemblies, took busloads to London for people to look at one of our plays in the Westminster Theatre, or showed a film in a lonely village somewhere. We became adopted members of host families and

founded long-term friendships. What I liked best about this time was that all our activities were carried out rather unobtrusively, we were not held to prove our effectiveness as “a force”. I felt taken back to my first experiences in Stuttgart when it was just fun to care for individual people for the sake of these people.

High point of these two years in Great Britain was when my father and mother came for an extended visit. Over a longer period we had been estranged from each other. I had been away from Germany most of the time, and the old family tradition of writing home at least once a week when abroad I saw as a tiresome burden which I often failed to carry. But more than that, my parents, especially my father, felt less and less at ease with the routine of day-to-day MRA full-time life. He thought that the constant central emphasis on each other's little sins was “petty bickering” which kept us from pursuing the important national and international tasks. He was disappointed about the absence of “follow-up-work” which would deepen the experience of transformation in the lives of individuals as it had happened in him and my mother. They made their thoughts known and as a result were not asked any more to attend meetings or speak at larger events.

For me this development had been embarrassing. Our leaders asked me what was wrong with my folks and what was wrong with me that I was unable to deal with them in the right way. There must be some sin not yet atoned! The best we could do then was to agree to let my parents alone. My father had used this interval to write the diary of the 98th Infantry Division which he had built up in 1940, led through the endless stretches of Russia up to Moscow, and further, to the annihilation of the troops, to the Crimea Peninsula. The book sold extremely well. It had to be reprinted twice and, in the Central Military Archive of Germany, it equals with the works of some of the best known war-time leaders.

Our re-union in Britain was a wonderful gift to all three of us. We found a new closeness that lasted to the end of their lives.

I regard it as one of the great treasures I own. Differences of opinion remained, of course, as it is natural between members of two different generations. But a basis of complete trust in each other was created which we could always depend upon.

I began to realize that the total break in history, tradition and life-style in Germany had hit the generation of my parents at a station in life when they were too old, too shattered to start all over again. We, just 20 or a little older when the Armageddon of Hitler's "100-Year-Reich" had collapsed, had our lives before us. One could not compare. My father and mother were among the few fortunate in their age-group who, through their experience in Caux, had found a way out. We were indeed privileged.

After this, my parents were asked again to take part in a larger action. A group of Chinese college students from Taiwan had produced a very lively play called *The Dragon*. Their European tour with this production also went to the Scandinavian countries of Finland, Sweden and Norway. My mother and father had been asked to accompany them. To accept this invitation took courage for them. In 1957, twelve years after the end of World War II, West Germany had long been a full member of NATO. The term "Re-militarization"—which had a bad smell to it—had given way to "our duty to play an adequate part in the defense of the Atlantic Union"

But the wounds that Nazi terror had left with our neighbors were still not healed. They smarted on, in some countries more than in others. When a friend of my parents, General Dr. Speidel was given one of the top jobs in NATO, Commander-in-Chief NATO Land Forces in Europe, and announced his first formal visit to NATO member Norway, it caused big trouble. On the day prior to the General's arrival, *Dagbladet*, one of the national tabloid papers, came out with:

General Speidel is not welcome in Norway. Politicians and military strategists acted against the sentiments of the people in countries that

have been trampled into the mud by the iron heels of the Nazis when they appointed General Speidel to his new position. General Speidel's visit can only be regarded as an invective to the living and an insult to the dead Norwegian patriots. His hands will forever remain besmirched with the blood of Allied warriors for peace.

There was no opposition to these statements, at the time, in the Norwegian press. Perhaps they expressed what many Norwegians still felt about their German neighbors.

Not long after this, when *The Dragon* with its cast of 80 or so young Chinese toured Scandinavia and played before crowded audiences they also came to the big *Folketheatret* in Oslo. At the end of the performance a few speakers were announced, among them my father. What he had to say—asking for forgiveness for Norwegians' suffering under Nazi rule and pleading for trust in a new, democratic Germany—electrified the crowd, and they stood as one.

Next day, perhaps also as a result of an extremely positive newspaper evaluation, a number of distinguished Norwegians took my parents, along with other prominent members of the group, to the memorial at Akershus fortress where my father laid a wreath honoring the 44 Norwegian resistance fighters who had been executed there by the Gestapo in 1945. They were the first Germans to be so invited for such a sensitive national event in Norway. They told me later that of all the similar events they had experienced, this one went closest to their hearts. To be able to play an active part in harmonizing the relationship between nations so divided by deep-rooted feeling, was very important to them. It became the central motivation for what they wanted to do with the rest of their lives. They wanted, in a quiet and unobtrusive way, to be actively involved in reconciliation.



It was a turbulent period in world history. In May 1955, the Soviet Union, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, Albania and East Germany had signed the Warsaw Pact, a formidable alliance. The Kremlin had repeatedly rejected any attempt towards a non-aggression treaty with the West, or a German re-unification—unless on terms of a Communist rule. On a state visit to London that year, Khrushchev, the Soviet leader, had told the Western democracies, “You don’t like Communism, we don’t like Capitalism. There is only one way out of the dilemma: peaceful co-existence.” A treacherous suggestion, designed to lull the West in the hope that all would be well

But when, that same year, the brave Hungarians tried their revolt against Soviet dictatorship and were crushed down with the military might of Warsaw Pact countries, the West remained helpless, muted onlookers. 3,000 were killed, 100,000 fled from Hungary. For the first time we watched the terrifying pictures of ongoing war on TV. It has been perfected ever since. In America, at the same time, furious race riots flared up and held the country breathless. And the United States exploded on Bikini Atoll the first H-bomb, accelerating the arms race so that, at the end, the Power Blocs had in store a capacity of almost limitless overkill. Russia, on the other side, was first in space with their bleeping Sputnik.

On another field, the balance of world powers shifted dramatically into new realms. The UN-Charter had stipulated in its Article 73, that “nations not yet fully governing themselves must be granted the right of self-determination”. The process ending the Age of Colonialism had begun much earlier, in 1947, when what was British India became independent having been divided up into India and Pakistan. Now, with the Declaration of the United Nations, the great colonial powers like Great Britain, France, Holland, Belgium and Portugal were urged to speed up the process. The Empires tumbled.

In the decade from 1956 to 1966, in Africa alone, 35 countries gained their independence, most of them totally unprepared for the new responsibilities. In many cases, the transition happened peacefully and without the use of force. But very often, as in the French Indochina possessions, terrible and costly wars broke out because of the slowness and hesitancy in granting the freedom demanded by the people. Malaya was the last of British Asian colonies to become sovereign in 1957 after 170 years of British rule.

Only a few countries stubbornly held on to "white rule". But when, in 1960, at the peak of the inhuman Apartheid system in South Africa, British Prime Minister Harold Macmillan visited that country, he told a furious Hendrik Verwoerd, the "Father of Apartheid", "The wind of change is blowing through this continent of Africa and, whether we like it or not, this growth of national consciousness is a political fact. The great question of the century is if Africa and Asia will turn to Communism or to the West." At the time, this was a farsighted statement. Which way the new sovereign countries would turn, so it seemed, the world would turn.

Those of us closely associated with MRA during that period were, perhaps, more sensitive to the consequences for all mankind of this enormous, ongoing transition. There were larger and smaller groups of "committed" people at work in many of the crisis areas on all continents. Considering the extremely limited influence they could wield, their efforts in building bridges and filling up rifts between longstanding enemies were manifold and, in many cases, highly appreciated.

I myself was a member of such groups, for instance, in Cyprus at the time of Independence of the Island, and, later, in several countries of Southern Africa like—as they were then still called—Southern Rhodesia and Northern Rhodesia, the Congo, Rwanda and Burundi and, in 1961, in the Republic of South Africa. This latter visit was the last time that my parents and I traveled together on a larger mission. We had been invited to the Republic with a

number of German coal miners, some of them formerly for 30 years members of the Communist Party of Germany. The staggering adventures we had in these lands would fill another book, and they would be worth being reported.



Being introduced to General Mobutu, The Congo

It seems to me that Frank Buchman and his closest colleagues felt keenly that we were not making fast enough progress in our work and that, on the other hand, “the evil forces” were gaining headway. His pronouncements to his followers became more and more urgent. He would say, “Some of you have it, some don’t. You are not doing the job. I expect each one of you, without pay, to do the most difficult work in the world, it is also the most natural work. But you don’t do it.”

Another time he complained, “I suggested you ought to be in touch with ten persons in a day and help them change. But that seems to be too many. Maybe you could find room for one person. Do you think the way you live you can cure a nation? Britain’s cabinet? If you are not playing the game on that basis, you’re not doing the job. The truth is that most of you don’t

burn.” He felt that Satan’s host were pressing hard, and not only from the side of World Communism, but from the massive advance of materialism in every country and on every level.

The policy-making group around Buchman enlarged on the sense of urgency, of the choices we were facing, and implored those active in the movement:

What do we fight for? Approval or change? We need to recognize that in the democracies we are dealing with a materialism as fanatic as that of Communism. A Communist has a driving faith in the direction and inevitable outcome of the “historical process”.

The so-called free peoples have a driving faith in the power of money and the ability to meet every situation with a gadget or “know-how”.

In the early ‘60s, most of us and, I believe, millions around the globe, believed that, in spite of all the threats and fears, there was still enough moral substance in all countries to overcome, in the end, the “forces of evil”. If only enough people would unite in a heroic, tremendous moral and ethical effort.

Early in 1961 a large number of committed full-time workers were ordered, by personal invitation, to attend a conference on Mackinac Island. We were to be sworn to attempt this greatest and final effort, each one of us, men and women, old and young. None of us must hide in the security nor the anonymity of the group. We were put to the test if we were willing to give everything and surrender all to the cause. Some who were found to be holding back were sent home with a one-way ticket.

I was shocked to see Frank Buchman. He was not at all well, not just physically, but also his strength of mind seemed to be waning. His speaking was incoherent and hardly to be understood. He was propped up in his bed and seemed to be kept awake with strong medication. Nobody had told us about this. Why was his

situation kept a secret? Peter Howard had written a play called "The Dictator's Slippers" in which the death of a dictator was kept a secret by his Party because they could not agree on his succession. I did not talk to others about my apprehensions.

Only a few months later, on June 7th, 1961, Frank Buchman died. He was 83. He died in Freudenstadt in the German Black Forest where he stayed in the same hotel where, just before the break-out of World War II, he first thought of Moral and Spiritual Re-Armament to become "the next great movement in the world". I was in Bonn when the news came and immediately drove to Freudenstadt to help in the preparations for a big memorial ceremony. More than a thousand people were to take part and accommodation had to be found in the small town.

To many the death of the founder appeared to be incredible. They just could not believe that this man who had provided direction, security and fellowship for them was no longer available. They walked around in Freudenstadt dazed and numb. After the ceremony, the coffin with the mortal remains of the deceased was to be brought to his home town Allentown in Pennsylvania. I was asked to drive the car with the coffin to Stuttgart Airport, accompanying Buchman's personal physician, normally a man who could cause fear in others because of his forthrightness and no-nonsense attitude. He was unable, on the whole trip, to say a single word. He was just quietly sobbing.

There was no election process that we were aware of as to who would lead the movement from then on. But at the memorial service and even more so at a mass demonstration in Freudenstadt the following November, Peter Howard left absolutely no doubt that he would be the new leader. The papers covering the event reported about the messages of support from statesmen around the world. But the headlines were, "New MRA leader proclaims *Nun erst recht*, 'Now, forward with renewed strength'". The "world force" was, he was quoted, solidly united in their resolve to provide a positive alternative to World Communism and World Materialism.

Howard had always been the most eloquent of our spokesmen, and by far the keenest thinker. He had been, during the war, the leading political columnist for Lord Beaverbrook's British newspaper empire. Even by 1961, he had written fifteen books and seventeen plays, all produced and published in more than a dozen languages. He had traveled, with MRA, extensively on all continents. I have never again met a man with comparable untiring energy.

After Buchman's death he exploded into an action program, touring far and wide and keeping in contact with all the national groups everywhere. He encouraged us all, challenging or criticizing us unsparingly if he thought us to be not adequately engaged. He demanded to be kept up to date with every activity all the time. And he diligently answered every single report and personal letter, always precisely to the point, with no unnecessary word. He kept a host of secretaries busy, often day and night. He spoke to the greatest variety of audiences in country after country, having the newest facts and figures at his finger tips. It was as if he tried, single handed, with arms spread wide, to hold up the hurricane of world events and turn them into a positive direction. He must have expected or at least hoped that his giant example would make all of us give of our strength as unsparingly as he did.

Not everybody was in favor of Howard's type of leadership. There were those who said, "now, Frank Buchman would have done this differently". They felt that there was not enough emphasis on the Holy Spirit and too much on "political issues". Unnoticed by most of us, in many places groups were formed differentiating between "new team" and "old team". At a time when chances for real impact of the movement on the world-wide historical evolution became greater than ever before, we tended to fight our small battles with each other because we lost a clear direction of where we should go from here.

Peter Howard knew that it would take strong measures cutting deep into self-concerned structures, measures which could

result in losing many, especially older, stalwart members of the fellowship. In October 1963 he wrote a message, individually addressed to hundreds of us, challenging each of us to choose, and he made clear what, to his mind, the choices were:

We have, if we are swift and large enough to seize it, the biggest chance offered to man for centuries. There are two schools of thought at least which may be called that of the "enclavers" and that of the "freebooters". The enclavers are keen to create a fellowship in which the great truths of morality and God are held secure and where, in the midst of a planet that has turned its back upon such things, they can continue to live and induce some others to live in a way that seems best to them.

The freebooters are out, night and day, with flashing swords, determined to win back from the modern world the property of God that materialists, intellectuals, Fascists and Communists have stolen, tried to destroy and hidden. They fight, sing, crawl, run, zigzag, carving their way wherever they can. They live off the territory they move in. Establishments hate them. The hands of the powerful are against them. Millions love them. Not all understand them. They are on the rampage to create a revolution whereby God will become more authoritative to everybody than wife, husband, child, wealth, position, Mao Tse-tung, Khrushchev, or even Mr. Kennedy.

Maybe we need both enclavers and freebooters. The certain thing is that freebooters now need to shed every non-essential action from their lives, to cleave to each other with a far less glutinous and more absolute honesty, to safeguard health, strength,

time and passion, to see that every weapon put to use is of a professionalism and polish that enables them to have a better chance of advance before the gaze of an earth that is beginning to pay very serious attention to their activities. The choice is Spirit or Beast, Technology or the Kingdom of Heaven, human dictatorship or God-control.

It could have turned the tide—or could it, really? At the same time when this message reached us, we were among the 400,000 Germans cheering John F. Kennedy as he said, facing the Monster Wall in Berlin, his “*Ich bin ein Berliner*”. East Germans threw flowers over the Wall to be given to J.F.K. And in St. Paul’s Cathedral in Frankfurt, he proclaimed his vision of an Atlantic partnership in and for freedom. We believed it could happen. Only a short while earlier the threat of nuclear war over Cuba had been averted by a daring show of U.S. might. We, the Free World, were clearly advancing.

Peter Howard made clear what strategy he would follow. If the strength and power of the United States democracy was the hope for the freedom of mankind, we must concentrate all our “freebooter” efforts on America. And, because *tomorrow will be too late* and there might be not enough time left to swing the materialistic establishment into a new direction, we must be all out to win those who would shape the future: American youth. A mass conference for “Tomorrow’s America” was called at Mackinac Island and was attended by 2,400 college and high school students.

It was different from all assemblies we had until then. The young crowd was led, by all our most brilliant speakers, to an eye-opening tour d’horizon about the perspectives of mankind. They were not told, as we had often tended to do, what a great movement MRA was and what they all should do. Rather, they were asked to think about and express how they saw their own future and what, to their mind, needed to be done about it.

During the following months Howard toured the U.S.A. He spoke at 17 universities and colleges and was invited to address 53 more. He spoke to a generation that was confused about their purpose in life, uneasy about their country's Vietnam engagement and about race riots at home. They, like millions everywhere, had not yet recovered from the shock of John F. Kennedy's assassination. They were searching like children having lost their parents.

Howard and his friends—but Peter Howard more than anyone else at that time in history—made a revolutionary, mobilizing impression on Young America. They came by the thousands, from revolting campuses and rioting schools, to join the cause. They were told that they could, if they were willing, make a decisive difference. They could become so different that their own dogs would bite them when they returned home. They would, possibly, face the strongest opposition, the “heaviest kind of artillery”. But that would only mean that they were on target. They would demonstrate the kind of patriotism modern America needed.

In Europe we received reports about these events that made us think a mighty tectonic quake was rumbling and shifting things in the New World. Every day there were bulletins about young men and women joining ranks and speaking up. It was the time when violence in Watts and revolts of civil-war-like character, and demonstrations against the Vietnam war, made the papers speak of “Teenage Terror”. Young people organized “Teach-Ins” and “sit-ins”. The resounding response from Mackinac Island was, “Sing Out”. In a musical show with this title the students realized what became the legacy of Peter Howard's burning passion for American Youth.

Howard died in February, 1965 while on tour through Latin American countries. What he had initiated ended an era in the history of the movement and started a mighty new one. It also resulted in the great divide. After Buchman and Howard, there was no man or woman big enough or gifted enough to bring together the countless adherents all over the globe. Moral Re-Armament had passed its peak.



Frank Buchman House in Bonn had been for many of us the only home address we had. Situated just a stone's throw away from *Bundeshaus*, the West German Federal Parliament, it stood in a small, quiet side street. It was originally built during the prosperous 1920s and looked like a stately family mansion. It could house about 14 people. We called it "The House in Bonn". It was our national head-quarters and everything was done to enhance its status as an Embassy. The representative rooms on the ground floor were decorated with choice furniture and carpets, mostly gifts or loans from friends. Since Government cars were at that time all black, glossy Daimler limousines, our own car park were, if possible, of the same quality. When one lived in The House one was supposed to dress, move, talk, behave as it behaved high level diplomats.

I had always disliked the formal, often ceremonial atmosphere that came with all this. When we had important guests for a meal, as happened quite frequently, and sat around the large, festive table, it was a rule that there was only one conversation and that it was planned beforehand, in detail, who would say what. Of course I accepted that, to provide an example of the kind of society we were living and fighting for, and especially because we lived and worked together so closely, a high level of discipline was asked from every one of us. But I despised the kind of drilled behaviorism that made our individual personalities shrink instead of grow.

From the very beginning of my career in the movement, I had always tried, therefore, to be sent on missions away from Germany, and I had succeeded very often, more than most of my friends. Until, it must have been during autumn of 1964, I had returned to Bonn from the Lebanon in order to try and raise some funds to support our work in the Arab Lands and then go back to Beirut. But my friends did not let me go. They felt that it was time for me to do some of the more tedious kind of work

at home for a while. I had been, for some time, *Geschäftsführer*, Secretary of the national organization for MRA in Germany that had been founded to guarantee gifts and legacies to be tax deductible for the donor. It was decided that I should take on my responsibilities on this matter which included not only supervising the accounts but also various fund raising activities.

It may have been on this kind of business that I drove one day from Bonn to Basle, just across the border into Switzerland, where I met three of four others who came from different countries for a kind of strategy session. We met in the *Bahnhofsrestaurant*. I remember that it was a drab, dismal place and that the waiter was rude because each of us ordered just one cup of coffee although we sat there for at least two hours.

As usual, after we had discussed whatever the subject of the meeting was, one from the group suggested to be quiet for a moment and seek further direction. This had become a habit. I believe it was far away from Frank Buchman's experience of heeding the still small voice within us and to open the soul for guidance as a gift from the Almighty. The institutionalized routine to stop a conversation, poise pen and book, and expect, even demand, "God, I am ready, now talk" I consider to be blasphemy. My religious credo was, as Romano Guardini, the catholic philosopher, said, "I don't want a God who submits to the dimension of *my* thinking and who is formed to my image. I want the *real* God, and I know He will break up the limitations of my thinking".

At the meeting in *Bahnhofsrestaurant* in Basle my heart had not really been in the matter we discussed. I must have racked my brain for some intelligent thought to write down in my little book. But nothing would come to my mind. After a while one after the other of the little team shared what he thought and then everybody looked at me expectantly.

"I had nothing" I said and I felt my face coloring crimson.

"But you did write something, what was it?" someone said.

“Yes, but that was nothing.”

Soon after that we all departed in different directions. I got into the car and headed for the Autobahn. I had to slow down because I was almost unable to drive straight. My whole inside was up in turmoil, my head spun and my heart was beating fast. It had taken me completely by surprise: The one word that kept coming to my mind as we were sitting there in the café, again and again, had been “Ruth, Ruth, Ruth.” And now, alone on the road, it was, “Yes, Ruth is meant for you!” As if someone talked to me loud and clear.

In all the years working and traveling so closely with many girls of my own age, it was natural to develop, from time to time, more or less intensive feelings of attraction to one or the other. In fact that had happened to me quite frequently. If it did happen it was expected that one talked it over with colleagues so that they would help to find out if it was “in God’s Plan”. If it was more serious, one would write a letter to Buchman—when he was still alive—or to Howard. I had done this several times. And the greater wisdom of my friends had always made me forget my feelings again. Absolutely unthinkable, though, was to try and talk directly to the object of one’s sentiments. If anybody did, it was considered to be great sin and the person ran the risk to be permanently dismissed from the fellowship.

But this time it was very different. Until that moment I had not taken particular interest in this young lady. I knew she was Swiss, an excellent secretary. She also lived at The House in Bonn, one of five or six ladies at that time. She was a quiet person, warm hearted and she had a ready, infectious laugh—but that was as far as my knowledge of Ruth went. And yet, not for one single moment did I have the slightest doubt about it: she and I were meant to be a pair. Great surprise: All my friends agreed with me, without exception. I wrote to Peter Howard, but his secretary replied from Peru that he had taken ill and could not write himself. In fact, he died within a couple of days.

I had to wait and be patient for almost six months while I saw and watched Ruth every day and could not talk to her about

matters of the heart. It was almost unbearable and, I often thought, unnatural. Then, one sunny Sunday morning in June, I had written a note to her, asking if she would meet me, down by the Rhine at the corner of *Bundeshaus*, and go with me for a walk. And, exactly on time, she came in her best summer dress, radiant. I had a Volkswagen at my disposal and we drove to *Venusberg*, to the hills above Bonn, and then had a long hike with many vistas of the Rhine far down in the valley. When I told Ruth that I loved her, she said that she had been in love with me for four years or longer. And I never noticed!

We married four months later at Ruth's hometown, Wädenswil, by the Lake of Zurich. Like Alice, we entered new realms of a Wonderland. It was not just that a married couple had a different status in the hierarchy of the movement, far above the single men and, far higher again, above the single women. One was lifted, without one's doing, into an upper class where one had to accept new responsibilities.



Wedding, 22 October 1965

Far more exciting and fulfilling however, was the chance to share with someone everything in life, the most banal as well as the deepest, and to do so because it was something one wanted and not a duty to meet the rules of a revolutionary set-up. There was another person that one could blindly trust, that would build you up when you were down, that would listen when you needed to talk. Neither of us had a bank account or any earthly possession apart from our suitcases and the clothing we needed, yes, and apart from a number of wedding gifts which were stored away until a time when we would be able to use them. We promised each other to be prepared to live that way if and as long as we were both convinced that this was in God's Master Plan.

* * *

While we were celebrating our wedding with our families, young people from all over the United States, but also from Asia, Africa, Latin America and Europe, came to Mackinac Island for what turned out to be the largest youth demonstration in the Free World in 1965. The reports about what these young men and women had to say and what they set in motion had all of us soon in excited anticipation. The last time we had experienced such a ground swell of response had been in the immediate post-war years. We were to be totally engulfed and involved in the waves that soon swept over the Atlantic.

The first foretaste came when six of the "New Americans" arrived for a blitz tour through European countries—white, black and one Indian among them. They showed great self confidence, discipline and purposefulness. They were asked to participate in the celebrations for the 90th birthday of ex-Chancellor Konrad Adenauer in Bonn's Beethovenhalle. The old gentleman kept the long queue of well-wishers waiting because he wanted to talk with the American boys and girls. He had sent a message to the Mackinac Festival urging the young generation meeting there to help the great U.S.A. to think not only about South East Asia,

and not to forget the importance of Europe in the battle to safeguard peace and freedom. The Chancellor beamed when the young people told him that they represented the large majority of their generation who stood for patriotism and not pacifism, moral re-armament and not-disarmament. They thanked Adenauer for his untiring efforts for Freedom. "We know that freedom is not free of charge. It must be won anew every day."

It was not just an exchange of pleasantries. The Europeans were troubled. German-American relations were at their lowest point in many years. General de Gaulle of France had just taken his country out from the military part of NATO. The American student revolts and general unrest because of Vietnam were threatening to sweep over to Europe. Before this background, the new German Government under Chancellor Erhard decided to invite the cast of *Sing-Out 66* to tour Germany and Berlin.

When the invitation became public we felt that every effort should be made for other European countries to act on the same level and use this unique chance to a maximum effect. The leaders of the national MRA groups from France, Britain, the Netherlands, the Scandinavian countries and Switzerland were asked to meet in Bonn to plan how we should best advance. We were about 40 men—I don't remember a woman taking part in the deliberations.

We did not succeed in finding consensus on a united strategy. On the contrary: the long smoldering dissent broke into open fire, not only about the question of how to deal with the Sing-Out invitation, but about fundamental issues of our future work. British and Swiss friends in particular felt strongly that the new mass movement lacked depth and would not lead people to a truly life-changing experience. They feared, also, an American nationalistic influence taking over the movement. And after all, this whole development had not been checked with them; they complained that they had not been asked.

It was shocking to listen to the heat of the arguments from both sides and to realize that none of us had the human greatness

to prevent MRA from breaking apart permanently. Most of us Germans were convinced that, with the extraordinary echo of Sing-Out among young people everywhere, we were definitely on the side of Peter Howard's "freebooters". All those who would not join us on this side would have to stay behind.

* * *

The German Government paid for the travel expenses of the cast of 150, and the hurricane, as we experienced it, stormed through the country. We were swept with it and into hectic activity that soon went far beyond our strength. After each performance in a new town, crowds of young people applied to be included in a German Sing-Out. We had neither the staff trained or prepared for such a sudden mass organization, nor the necessary means. And yet, somehow we were able to cope. The German National Coal Board offered the use of their "youth village" in the Ruhr. Soon, the parents of a hundred and more students had agreed for their sons and daughters to spend a year with *Sing-Out Deutschland*, a show that was written and produced in an incredibly short time. A traveling school was founded, teachers volunteered. The kids developed an amazing zest and discipline, attending to school classes and, at the same time, to endless hours of rehearsing for a perfect show.

For us, the staff, it was an exacting time. We did not mind long working hours, often all night. We visited companies asking them to provide show costumes, shoes, musical instruments or just money to sustain a larger group than we ever had before. It was the kind of work we were used to.

But with the new development came subtle changes into our life as a team. For instance, in America the position and title of a "Director of MRA" had been created. Like everything else, like the whole Sing-Out program, so also the "Director" was initiated in Germany too. Of course this was meant to give the movement an official character, to get away from the image of an amorphous

body without a clear organizational structure. But the result was also that the leadership was no longer with those who were spiritually best equipped but with those who held the position. Ruth and I started to feel more and more organized, pushed around and made to do things that did not grow in our own conviction. We got the impression that the pace of events was so fast that we could not follow. A conflict of loyalties began.

Both of us suffered from a growing tension we were living in. We developed health problems. The doctor told me that without an immediate change of my life style I had to expect with certainty a heart attack. A friend of ours, a gynecologist, explained to Ruth after an examination that, if ever we wanted to have a child, she would have to undergo a complicated operation the outcome of which would have a positive chance of only 50 to 50. The operation, if we wanted it, would have to be soon—she was then 38. We had no idea, either, where the money for it would come from.

At some point, Ruth and I were so exhausted that, from a brief skiing holiday in the Swiss mountains, we wrote a letter to our friends in Bonn saying that we needed a time out from whole-time activities in order to recuperate both physically and mentally. The answer from those in charge was a clear and unconditional no. We were needed more than ever before, they said. In a world of happenings and New Morality, of talk-outs and pot, long-haired men and mini-skirted girls, of losing ground against world Communism and materialist immorality, we were not allowed to desert the one bulwark of the Free World. Above all, it had been decided just then that *Sing-Out Deutschland* was to go on tour to Brazil. For this venture all the trained staff available would be needed. We agreed on condition that, on returning to Germany after six or eight months, we would definitely take our time out.

So we went on this trip more with a sense of duty than commitment. When we arrived in Brazil, however, we were glad we went. The young Germans won the hearts of people in Rio and Sao Paulo, in Petropolis and Brasilia, huge audiences, by

storm. We were so proud of them as they simply swept away preconceived ideas that not much good would ever come from Germans. With typical Latin enthusiasm exploding, groups of teenage Brazilians joined their German friends on the stage, even after the first opening performance. Just a few weeks later the first songs were written in Portuguese and produced by local groups who called their version of the show *Viva a Gente*. A national cast was formed, a school created, equipment given. Ruth and I visited countless parents who entrusted their children to the Brazilian MRA organization and those of us who accompanied the young Germans.



Casts of "Viva a Gente", Brazil

With these young people and their families we developed a closeness and friendship we had never dared to hope for. So much so that, when *Sing-Out Deutschland* returned home after a three months campaign, Ruth and I and a few others decided to stay on to help *Viva a Gente* to become a full fledged show and to train the cast in singing to large audiences, and in expressing their

ideas in such a way that it would be contagious. They needed to learn to open their eyes to the problems facing their country and the world and to think out for themselves what the answers could be. They wanted training in how to behave with host parents, how to organize public relations, how to prepare a new town and how to find sponsors. The immediate aim for all their learning and training was a *World Sing-Out Festival* scheduled to begin on August 1st in New York.

The festival in Fort Slocum, a deserted former garrison for 5,000 U.S. soldiers situated on an island in the East River delta, became for us and a great number of the "older" full-time MRA workers the most difficult experience we had to cope with. For several thousands of the younger generation it was one great festival in the true sense of the word. They lived the realization of a dream all young folk all over the world have in common: the longing to live together in peace and harmony, with a uniting purpose that could lift all men above the bars of class and color and nationality.

There were three U.S. casts of *Up With People* as it was called now, our Germans with an enlarged *Sing Out Deutschland*, *Springbok Stampede* and *Harambee Africa* from South Africa and Kenya, *Get Going Guyana* and *Sing-Out Korea* and a Japanese *Let's Go 66*. The young *Gauchos* from Brazil were welcomed with great jubilation.

When we arrived at the island on the ferry, there were ushers on the dock who led the Brazilians to their quarters. We, the accompanying staff, were told that we would now be relieved from our responsibility for the kids, we were no longer in charge. Younger men and women trained with Sing-Out would take over.

We stayed in former officer quarters that had been empty for years and which we first had to clean, whitewash and equip with basic furniture found in a depot. We shared a small house with a number of our senior friends from Europe. Everything seemed to be well organized, from mass calisthenics in the early morning to colorful shows in the evenings, outings with one or more of

the shows to New York City or Washington DC. But at the preparation meetings where plans for the running of the Conference were discussed, we were not admitted. "If you are not a member of a cast, this meeting is not for you". We were not needed anymore.

Talking with some of the young Americans, I was surprised to understand that they were convinced *Up With People* was a brand new original idea, the idea of the century. They were not really interested in our MRA experiences that had led, we thought, to their new venture. They said quite openly that, apparently, we had not been so very successful with our work after all, considering the chaos in the world which we left for their generation to deal with. How arrogant, how precocious, how belittling they were, I thought. But then—was it not true? Was it not the privilege of every generation to question the *Weltbild* of their elders? True, we had tried our best; yet, seen with the eyes of these young ones who boldly stepped into new-found responsibilities, they might well think that they had not much to build on.

Another realization which was difficult to accept at Fort Slocum: since the appearance of *Sing Out 66*, we in Germany had done nothing but try to imitate the American original, both the actual show and the methods of their organization, and also, more serious, the very purpose and outlook of the movement. Obviously, we lacked leadership, men with charisma and vision. I, personally, had no grounds whatsoever to criticize this. In this sense, I knew, I had always been a fellow traveler, not more. Those who ran the Festival at Fort Slocum could well do without us. As a matter of fact, we heard of plans to have in the future only one international *Up With People* organization centered in the United States and run, world-wide, from there. That meant, logically, that all the other groups, including *Viva a Gente* and *Sing Out Deutschland*, could not be maintained as independent entities, at least not in the long run. We all were no longer included in the strategy and decision process.

* * *

It was the beginning of the end of MRA as we had known it. Hundreds of us who had pledged “lives, fortunes and sacred honor” to it for twenty, thirty, forty years were at a loss now. We did not have a chance to talk with those now in charge about future steps. We went to our respective homes, at the end of the Festival, without so much as a final handshake. Perhaps this was just Ruth and my view of things at the time. Perhaps we felt this way more than others because deep inside we knew already then and there that God Almighty had other things in store for us, quite different things.

8. Professions

There are sounds and sights, smells and tastes one will never forget. Like, for me, the taste of sweet chestnuts fresh and hot from the vendor's roasting fire; or the smell of burning houses during the blitz; or the image of *Alpspitze*, a beautiful peak in the Bavarian Alps, turning bright red at sunrise; or the thud of a door falling shut.

It was a particular sound of a particular door that marked our entry into a new life. On January 31st in 1968, Ruth and I had carried what little possessions we had two floors up in a new house in a Hamburg suburb, thus occupying the first ever home of our own. Events during the preceding weeks and months had escalated conflicting feelings to such a height that, when the house door fell closed behind us that day, we flew into each others arms, tears running, completely exhausted but ridiculously happy.

We had been led to this moment step by step through a chain of events, each one in itself appearing to us as a miracle. In the days following our return to Bonn from Fort Slocum each of us individually developed the sure conviction that the next chapter in our lives would take us out of the world that had shaped the totality of our being for the last twenty years. We did not know how. We were certain only that we would have to dare to plunge into the unknown even if it meant separation from all our friends and the sudden loss of all security. Most of our friends were uncertain of their own future at the time, and about what

would be the fate of what for all of us had been the indestructible "Work of God".

However, there were a great deal of pressing jobs to do. We worked day and many nights attending to problems with the young men and women of *Sing Out Deutschland*, their school, fund raising, touring plans for theatre plays we had running at the same time with professional actors, and a great number of other activities. There was no time for deeper-going conversation or discussions of what was disparagingly called "personal matters".

Completely unexpected, a friend gave us some money to be used only for the operation Ruth needed. The gynecologist we had consulted agreed to carry out the complicated surgery and told us that, impressed about the work we were doing, he would charge no fee for his efforts. We would only have to pay for time spent in the hospital. The operation, precondition for Ruth to have children, was successful. From rehabilitation holidays in Switzerland I wrote to our friends in Bonn that, for the time being, we felt it right not to take up our full-time work with MRA again.

It was not an easy step to take, not as easy as it might seem today, like simply changing from one job to another. It was more like breaking a religious vow or deserting an army at war, a legion you were bound to with your oath. At least this was the way I used to judge those who had "run away" from the job in former years. How would we be able to cope with being called traitors by our best and closest comrades?

This time nobody seriously tried to hold us back. Most of them made it clear, however, that they did not agree with us. My friend Fromund, and Ursula, his wife, told us how sad they were and how unhappy to be left with an even greater load of responsibility. They were, on the other hand, the only ones who would not see our leaving as marking the end of our friendship.

* * *

How should we go on from here? I had not learned any job that I could earn money with. I had ended my college studies after two years, without a degree. I was 41 years old now, and we lived at a time of total youth idolization. In the churches, jazz concerts were organized in the hope to get more young people to attend services. *Außerparlamentarische Opposition*—APO, or non-parliament opposition, began to seriously influence and dominate political life. The generation later to be called the 68ers brought university and college life almost to a standstill—they wanted to eradicate “the cobwebs of a thousand years” and distrusted anyone older than 30. Student groups protesting against a Berlin visit of Shah Reza Pahlevi of Iran ended in violent and bloody street fighting with the police. For a novice over 40 these were not the best conditions for entering any job.

During the past two decades I had learned to follow world events closely, but only from the perspective of a movement active on a global scale trying to influence the course of events. We, the professional activists of the movement, were not immediately affected in our individual lives by “outside” occurrences. Those of us working full-time had, long ago, abandoned our normal existence. We believed that only in this way could we be the vanguard, the shining example to the hundred thousands of the movement’s followers. We believed that Karl Marx was wrong when he said that man is shaped by his environment. No, we proclaimed, man, guided by God will shape his environment.

* * *

Ruth’s brother in Wädenswil took us in for a few days. He managed his own small company producing high precision tools. We talked at length about some of the rudimentary constraints an ordinary person would face in his environment, about requested levels of work performance and all sorts of big and smaller difficulties

making up “normal living”, things that had not really penetrated the protective coat of our team life. We would have to start from scratch and learn to walk on our own feet.

I had two thoughts: to try and find a job, any job, in industry; and to make a list of men in industry I knew and whose advise I should ask. There were about ten names in my book, and I started off visiting one by one. The first one I saw wished me well but could not really help me at all.

For the following day I had a date at 8.30 a.m. in Schorndorf, a small town near Stuttgart, with the managing director of a firm I had visited several times before. When I was ushered into his office he got up, came around his desk, shook my hand and said, “Oh, yes, Hansjörg, it is really no surprise to see you. I had expected your visit when I heard that you left full-time work. I have a job for you. If you want to, you can start work by the 1st of February.” It was then January 4th.

I did not know what to say. “How did you know?”, I finally managed to mumble.

“Well, as you know, we MRA people have our own grape vine. I and my brother constantly look for employees who can help us manage our company on the basis of the principles we learned at Caux.”

“What would I have to do?”, I asked.

He took me to the opposite wall of his large office and pointed to a number of mirrored cabinets mounted there. “These are our newest products, bathroom cabinets. You will introduce them on the market in the North of Germany. I have prepared a draft for a contract of employment. You would work on your own as our sales representative, based in Hamburg.”

It was all quite overwhelming. My timid objections that I had never done anything like it in my life were brushed away lightly with, “Oh, but you’ll quickly learn.” He used the local dialect expression *gschwind*, meaning swiftly, easily. It was, I would find out, one of his favorite words.

Everything happened then with surprising pace, and every new step appeared consistent. There it was again: this indescribable knowledge of being carried forward on a path which I could trust to be the right one. I was dismissed to talk things over with Ruth, and two weeks later we were back in Schorndorf where the contract was signed.

I went to Hamburg and found, almost at once, a flat just ready for immediate occupation. Three weeks after our first talk in Schorndorf I was given a company car, a station wagon, and was able to load the only pieces of furniture we had—a small round table and four chairs, a gift from my parents—and the boxes with our wedding gifts, pick up Ruth in Frankfurt where she had waited with friends, and arrive in Hamburg in *our* home. It was January 31st. And then the door fell shut making the plop sound we would never forget.

We had 150 D-Marks, that was all the money we owned. But my new company had advanced me a month's salary. We were able, the very day we arrived, to buy beds and a cheap wardrobe in a store near by. Early next morning I drove to meet a colleague who was sales representative in the neighboring district. My instruction was to go with him visiting his customers so that he could show me the ropes and teach me the slogans to convince everybody that our products were the best. After five days of coaching I was sent out to hit the road on my own.

It must have been the third or the fourth day away from the new home that Ruth told me on the phone, stammering with glee, an amazing story. A man had called her saying he was the head of the largest company in Germany producing cosmetics. His name was on my list of industrialists I had planned to ask for advise. He said to Ruth, "I heard you and your husband were making a new start here in town, so I wondered if you could use some old furniture stored in the basement of my house. Someone in the family had to move abroad and give up his house. You can pick out from the stuff whatever you want."

When we went to see, that weekend, we discovered that it was no “stuff” at all, but antique, valuable and tasteful pieces of furniture including a huge baroque cupboard, settee and easy chairs, several tables and chairs, even some framed oil paintings—everything needed to make a comfortable household. It was more than we could place in our three rooms. Our friend organized a company van to have everything transported to our house. Suddenly we were rich.

Within that month of February, Ruth found a part-time job as a correspondent in English and French with an American company situated so close to our house that she was able to walk to work. We were both under way. Our ideals, our often professed set of values, would now be tried and tested by “worldly” standards and conditions. We had left behind only the professional manifestation of the movement but not its *Weltanschauung* which had formed us to the depth of our being. In fact, both Ruth and I have, since then, always maintained that the twenty years in this unique fellowship have been a time of greatness in our lives. We would not want to have missed any of it.

The most satisfying experience of our new beginning in Hamburg was the sensation of liberation. We were free of the ever-present control we tried to have over each other. *We wanted* to make the best of each day, we were no longer tied to a set of rules and regulations. I will not forget the satisfaction of being free to learn again. At the Hamburg Management Institute I registered for evening seminars on Business Management and General Economics, on Labor Legislation and strange themes like Cybernetics and Controls Systems—just out of curiosity and the fun to increase my knowledge. Whenever we were free we went to the theatre or a museum, best of all to a concert of classical music. And, joy of joys, we were able to read good literature; we had developed a hunger for good reading. We felt almost physically how facets of our personality unfolded that had so long been covered up in the interest of the cause.



My job was to sell bathroom cabinets and accessories to wholesale dealers for bathroom equipment. They had their offices and showrooms in three state capitals and 23 towns and villages. They had to be visited regularly. Until our company produced these things, a large French industrial enterprise was the only one on the market with comparable items. I was the first representative of our firm in this area. The French competitor had had their top sales manager there for the last five years. So I was not very successful. In the monthly turnover statistics my name regularly appeared at the bottom of the list.

When traveling with my colleague, I had noticed that he as a rule bribed his customers, with alcohol or dinner invitations or little gifts. The buyers expected it, and they made it blatantly clear to me: no gift, no sale. I told them it was not compatible with my principles. Only a few respected that.

Late in Spring the doctors found that Ruth was expecting a baby. We had not dared to hope anymore—she was 40. Of course, parents in that situation all over the world are convinced that something unique is happening to them. I certainly was stunned with amazement and joy. We were to be a family! There could be no other two people anywhere as blessed and in such happy suspense. But for Ruth it was, physically, a tough and anxious time. She had to stop work and be hospitalized weeks before the birth.

Our baby boy was born, after a long and dangerous operation, on November 20th, 1968, a day before Ruth's birthday. We called him Klaus-Martin, after my brother and my father. Ruth had to be in intensive care for some more days, so I saw our son earlier than she. He was shown to me through a window from the delivery room. I asked the nurse if they had made a mistake. That could not be our boy. I thought he was not beautiful at all, all shriveled up and red and yelling. But then, when I was allowed to see his mother and he was brought in we were both convinced that never had there been a child more lovely and lovable than

ours. We were so proud and grateful. We were comparatively old parents. We would have to enjoy the gifts of life faster and more intensively than younger people. Which we have done.

The arrival of Klaus-Martin brought us into a new situation. I had asked my directors if they would entrust me with another job where I could serve the company more effectively. It was obvious that I was not born to be a good salesman, although it had been a perfect entry into business life. My request was granted. I was made Personal Assistant to the Chief Executive. In December, in time for Christmas, we moved to Buhlbronn, a charming village near Schorndorf, not suspecting that we would live in this vicinity longer than in any other place before.

* * *

Der Chef as we called the owner director, now my immediate boss, was a gifted manager, speaker, teacher and many other things. His father and that old gentleman's two brothers had been the founders of the company. One of them had been a wizard engineer constantly coming up with new inventions, with a growing number of patents to his name. Another one, a learned mechanic, knew how to use his brother's brainchildren so as to fabricate useful things with them. And the third, the *Chef's* father, had been the businessman who had the wisdom to turn over the reigns of the fast growing business to his older son early enough in life as to allow the younger generation to introduce modern ways of engineering and business management.

The founder was still there when we came to Schorndorf. Every morning at 8 a.m. on the dot he would arrive in his office and half an hour later he made his round through the work shops and offices, having a chat with some of the workers, and then, perhaps, meet with one of the sons to pass on what he had observed.

One day I was present when he talked with his oldest: "I understand that you have applied for a credit-line from the bank. Now, boy, there is an iron-clad rule you must understand if you

want to be successful: you must only spend money that you have earned, that is your own. Never, never fall into the trap of making debts, of borrowing money from anyone—family, friends or, worst of all, banks.”

“Dad, you are too old to understand this,” said the son. “Money we get from the bank means capital we can work with, not debts. It may be called outside capital, but it is just as good as equity capital.”

The old man just wagged his head but did not say anything, and walked out. Then *Der Chef* told me that post-war economy in West Germany was able to produce the famous economic miracle only on the basis of a new risky credit system. Most German companies belonged to the banks to a degree which would be completely unthinkable in, for instance, Great Britain at the time.

During that first year in Schorndorf I had to learn more and faster than ever before in my life. One great quality of my boss was that he had an almost boundless trust in people he worked with. We discussed at length how best to implement “MRA principles” in the company. As one step in that direction he asked me to draw up a kind of constitution, a charter of fundamental principles to underlie all our future activities. It should be worded in such a way that it could be used as preamble to all contracts of employment, which employer and employee would, with their signature, pledge to abide by. He said, “Naturally it would be useless to just put together some noncommittal niceties like let’s all be real honest and pure and unselfish and loving, let’s all be nice to each other. In this constitution the company management must state that our foremost aim is not maximum profit but maximum chance for each individual to develop his or her best qualities and character.”

We wanted to create an atmosphere where everybody would be and feel free to speak up and say his mind, if necessary to criticize his superior. We put up substantial rewards for practicable suggestions for improvement of work performance. It was all rather idealistic. But it had immense appeal to most employees.

The challenge for me was that many of the ideals I believed in had to be translated, like into another language, into the reality of life in society.

These attempts were not confined to our company, not at all. It was a trend of the time. Responsible managers everywhere realized that class war of the industrial age was a fast-running-out model with no future—even though many trade union leaders would try to cling to it as the only ideological concept they knew for their task. But there were capitalist bosses who accepted that the most important capital in a democratic economy and industry was the people working in it.

The economy in our country was booming. Millions of *Gastarbeiter*, foreign workers from less fortunate countries, were pouring into West Germany and were welcome. Our war-time adversaries were looking with envy to us. British and Dutch newspapers asked in wonder, "Who, actually, lost the War?" Most of our European neighbors to the West were not unhappy when our hopes slowly dwindled that one day we would be re-united with our brothers and sisters in the eastern part of our country.

We had a Social Democrat as Chancellor, Willy Brandt. He introduced his *Ostpolitik*. He believed that Moscow and World Communism were so strengthened by having forced mighty U.S.A. to her knees in Vietnam that they would never give up their prize possession, the East German Democratic Republic. It seemed a historic fact that there would always be two Germanys. Our government maintained that everything must be done to keep the peace between the two. Willy Brandt was decorated with the Nobel Peace Prize. The London Times headlined, "101 year-old Bismarck Reich has come to an end—No one is sorry".

Looking back to this period, now already 30 years ago, one might think that we were too well off to really worry. 400,000 youngsters at the Woodstock Festival—they did not worry about the world. They just reacted against the Vietnam folly. Even the debacle of Watergate did not make us stop in our tracks, not enough to really think what was wrong in our world.

At home, in Schorndorf, my boss kept me busy. He told me, "To lead my company better than I do so far, I need steering instruments. I must know before it is too late which of our products is profitable and which not; in which department could we do with less workers, and where is there a shortage of manpower". We had about 800 employees at the time. *Der Chef* said, "I want you to organize a system providing me on one sheet of paper, at the end of every month, with all the vital figures. I want to be able to see the trends—sales of all product groups, total cost of every department, financial and capital development." The firm had grown so fast that nobody had thought about the need of such steering instruments. And there were no computers available then.

To work out this system I had to get familiar with every part of the company—a perfect chance to learn about the intricacies of an industrial organism. In each compartment one person was appointed to deliver the actual figures to me, two days before the end of the month. It worked quite well, although it had to be constantly updated.

The company expanded. New technologies and brand-new articles were introduced. We planned to build two new factories, one in the North, on the fringe of the Ruhr area, and one near the border to Czechoslovakia—an underdeveloped area where labor was cheap. My boss said to me, "You will be responsible for financing the project in the North. For that region there should be funds available from ERP, the European Recovery Plan, formerly Marshal Aid, and you must find out how we can meet the conditions for grants of so and so many million."

I will always be grateful for challenges like these which *Der Chef* put up to me while I served as his assistant. It was a constant stretch, often far beyond what I thought my capacities were. But he had this trust, not only in me, that things could be done if one had the will to do them.

Sometime in 1970 I was made Deputy Director of Personnel and, when the position became free in January 1972, Director of Personnel, Administration and Legal Matters. This went with

becoming a member of the Company Board of Directors. My budget responsibility for the following ten years was for one third of the total company turnover. It was the perfect job for me, I thought, because finally now I could use to the full whatever people-oriented training I had. In the course of my term in this position the company expanded from 800 to 1,600 employees but also, due to many years of recession in the German economy, had to be reduced again by 500 men and women.

With the new job came, increasingly, committee work like in the Employers Association, or at frequent negotiations on Tariff and Pay Agreements, or arbitrating conflicts concerning the National Health Insurance Scheme which in Germany is compulsory for all employees, financed by both employers and employees on an equal basis.

It was hard work. The time "on the road" with the movement seemed to have been in another life. In that other life we had always considered ourselves to be hard workers not to be outdone by people in the "normal" world. Now I was not so sure about this anymore. Often I reached limits. We had been trained to be radically honest to ourselves about ourselves, and to accept weaknesses and limitations, if necessary to admit them to people concerned. To admit a mistake or lack of knowledge, for instance, to one's opposite number from the Trade Unions, always had surprising results and they were never really negative.

During all this time we had followed what happened to all our many old friends, to MRA and to Up With People. At first, in Hamburg, the flow of news we had been used to had come to a complete standstill. All contacts were severed. But a very welcome compensation for the withdrawal of friendship was the newly developing closeness to our families. Ruth and I had, like many others working with MRA, shut out members of our families from our lives—except our parents—assuming they were not relevant to the cause. They were often regarded as "unchanged" and therefore un-supportive to the movement. My sister Annemie, for instance, had found my attitude rebuffing. Only

now, after years of abstinence did I recover what I had missed all this time. We saw each other frequently and for the first time I got to know her later-born children. It was a relief to all of us when the coldness disappeared from our relationship. It was similar with Ruth's family.

My mother and father, of course, had been the first to visit us and write in our new guest-book in Hamburg. They were, if possible, even more proud than we of Klaus-Martin, their first—and only—grandson who bore our family name. It had been my father's greatest longing that the family would not die out with me. Since he was no longer active in the movement and after his books had been written and published, he had taken up an occupation again which he had started as a young man: genealogy. He wanted to know all about our roots. To find out more about our ancestors gave him deep satisfaction. As he once said to me, "When you one day will take an interest in this kind of research you will find out that not all was bad in German history." He was right.

* * *

When my father died in February 1976, a life ended which had brought him to extremes of hellish pains and heavenly elation. It sounds melodramatic, I know. But I believe it to be true. He said that it had been the greatest gift of his life to have been able to make his peace with the past and to contribute to making amends and build new bridges. During his last years my mother had to nurse him because his mental capacities had slowly left him. He was buried in Rottach-Egern in the midst of his beloved Bavarian mountains. The German Army General Staff had sent a guard of honor, and a soldier played on a trumpet the tune of the last comrade, *Ich hatt' einen Kameraden*. A unit of the Bavarian Home Guard in their picturesque traditional uniforms fired a volley over his grave. The testimonies of former military officers and new friends alike all paid tribute to a great man and patriot.

My mother lived to be 92 years old, her span covering almost the entire 20th century. In her one can observe the astounding transformation of the role of women in human society, a

metamorphosis still going on. In terms of the time in which man has evolved, this role change is happening at a revolutionary pace, but for us, living through it, it seems a slow development. My mother grew up in the religious belief that for a woman to live a life that would please God was to serve others and to strive for selflessness. To be married to a soldier whose occupation took him out to war and even in peace-time away from home more often than not, called for an amount of self-denial that would nowadays, only half a life-time later, appear unnatural, unthinkable, to most women. For the generation of my parents it still was the way God had appointed. Never have I heard my mother complain. She was content with the way it was. She was the perfect companion to my father.



My mother at 70

Annemie had, already as a child, rebelled against both the dominating attitude of men as she saw it and the submissive

service life expected from her even as a young girl. She likes to tell the story that took place when we lived in Allenstein, before the war. We had dinner guests one day. After dessert had been served my mother said to Claus and me, "Be good boys now, take the plates out and do the dishes." At which my father got angry—so Annemie relates—and said in front of the embarrassed guests, "As long as there is a girl in my house the boys will not do the dishes." It is a small incident, of course. But it is significant that, if it really happened this way, I had completely forgotten about it. It had never entered my mind that it might be something out of order in my father's attitude, out of the unchangeable way the world was.

The world is no longer that way. The evolution of womanhood into a radically different role in society has advanced a long way, that is a fact. In the long run even the Catholic Church, and even African and Asian traditionalism will have to accept and adapt to it. It goes with the spread and growing dominance of Democracy as the best form of community life mankind has developed so far.

I believe that it has been one of the severest shortcomings in the ideology of MRA that we neglected, even suppressed, the constructive impetus women could have contributed to the leadership of our work, adding more heart-power and intuition for what is good and right to the often cold, sometimes ruthless domination of the masculine mind. I for one realized only far too late the arrogant, cruel way most of us men, starting with the founder, had treated even the most loyal and dedicated of our girls and women. It has, I am sure, added to the rapid decline of the movement's significance.

When our little family moved to Schorndorf in the late sixties, friends started to visit us again. At first just a few, but then a growing flow of people came. It has never ceased to this day. Ruth and I, on the other hand, were able to travel again, inside Germany but also in many other countries, always trying to revive

old links and friendships. In some cases, irritations, differences of opinion and past bad feelings had to be healed. Most of our old companions were generous in forgiving and willing to admit their own shortcomings. It has become a network of men and women I find unparalleled anywhere else.

We were able to follow closely, if not immediately involved anymore, the difficult, often agonizing drifting apart of the different factions of the movement. They moved away from each other like trains rolling on fixed rails. Our friends in Bonn had, for a while, tried, centering on the enthusiastic crowd of *Sing Out Deutschland*, to build up a European Center for Education with an integrated high-school accepted nation-wide. Important sponsors were found. But those who contributed funds demanded to have their say in the formation and content of the action program. Soon it became clear that it would be impossible to maintain the basic principles on which it all had begun. There was not enough trained and able leadership available, and not enough means to build an independent non-profit organization. There were similar developments in other European countries.

At the end it meant that the Sing-Out program in Germany had to be closed down. Some time later the *Haus in Bonn* and all other property was sold. Half of the proceeds went into a modest pension fund for those who had served the movement in Germany with their full time. The other half was transferred to the American Up With People Incorporation to support European participants. The program reaching out from the U.S.A. into all continents boomed and grew into a large enterprise. But in Germany and elsewhere, all our friends were asked—many after twenty and more years of voluntary service—to find jobs on their own.

A great number of supporters and followers, people who had, year after year, sacrificed money and time for the work, could not agree with this turn of events. They tended to side with those who tried to hold up what was regarded as the true

heritage of Frank Buchman's ideas. They all deserved great respect for their faithfulness and tenacity with which they, over the years, reached out to find their own new roles. At the continued summer conferences in Caux and other centers people still found new vision and perspective for their lives. Great efforts were made in reconciliation work.

Did we in those years observe the end of the cause so many had contributed so much to and which, on the other hand, had given so much to a host of people everywhere? It is an undisputed fact that extraordinary events took place in individuals and in the life of nations through men and women influenced by Buchman's work. It is also true that many of us failed to live up to the ideals we professed. Many grave mistakes were made.

We cannot fathom God's mind. Perhaps the Almighty's hand steered us through pains and disappointments to the end of an organization which in its later years had more and more relied on human strength than divine inspiration. Perhaps this was a necessary development.

I am in no position to judge. But it is my firm belief that a loving God has more ways than one to take His people to salvation. During the later decades of the 20th century however one might have lost hope that peace in the world could be found and maintained. When in 1978 the Polish Cardinal Wojtyla became Pope John Paul II, there came a wave of great expectation that he might be instrumental in finding a road leading out of at least the threatening Armageddon of the Cold War.

Only half a year after the pope's accession the man called Ayatollah Khomeini returned triumphantly from his exile to Teheran and started to transform Iran into "God's State", and his frenzied believers seemed to follow him unconditionally, persecuting and killing "immoral" people, prostitutes, homosexuals and, eventually going into Holy War. At the same time the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan. Peace was far away.

There was a recession at that period of time in Germany. It started in the building industry and, with a time lag, affected all other parts of the economy. After a long stretch of growth our company was in the red for two consecutive years and alarm bells were sounded. I had to start laying off and then giving notice to employees.

During the previous successful years I had earned good money. Ruth and I decided to build a house of our own so as to provide a home for our son. It could only be done if our income would continue to enable us paying off substantial mortgages and bank debts. I asked *Der Chef* and his brother if my position in the company would be safe in the foreseeable future. Both men asserted that as long as they were in charge of the firm I would continue to be their Director of Personnel. It was, they said, a sound basis on which I could build our house. And so it was done. By the end of 1980 we moved to the house in Auerhahnstraße 6 in Schorndorf.

The following year became the most critical in the history of our company. One of the newly built factories had to be sold. In the course of a few months I had to reduce our work force from 1,600 to 600. Most of these men and women became unemployed, a great number after having worked all their life in the same company. The army of jobless people in Germany grew beyond the two million mark. Most of those who had to be given notice in our three factories, I had to talk to in person and individually. It was a terrible job. The company's supervising board declared a state of emergency and ordered an action program for safeguarding the firm's survival to be drawn up. I was made a member of the program committee.

It was clear: if the company was reduced to half its original size, the curtailing must be applied to all levels, including the Board of Directors. I had to accept that a planned total number of 500 employees did not justify any longer the position of a full-time Director of Personnel. After 15 years, my job with the company was terminated at the end of September 1983. I was

almost 60 then and considered by my colleagues in personnel work an old man, an unemployed old man and no longer useful. We had a load of debts on our shoulders that would be with us far into the next millennium. Unemployment benefits granted for the first two years would be enough for our upkeep as a family but not for much else.

I studied job advertisements all over the country and wrote dozens of carefully prepared applications. But as soon as the date of my birth was mentioned the doors closed with a bang in every single case.

The unemployed were stigmatized in our society. Ever since the "economic miracle" in post-war years, when we had a shortage of workers and sent our agents to neighboring countries to find laborers willing to come and work in West Germany, anybody who was fired from a good job had a bad smell to him of being asocial or lazy or guilty of something illegal. Although the situation had changed completely since we had a growing host of jobless, people still were embarrassed to talk about somebody unemployed in their own family.

In my case it has been not so much the loss of a position with a certain standing nor the sudden uncertainty about our future which affected me, but much more the deep human disappointment about the way it all happened. There had been growing disagreements in the company about what crisis management was all about and how the motivating philosophy which we had worked out together should be kept alive. It had ended in an estrangement from the man I owed so much. Sadly enough it even led to an alienation between our families which took a long and painful time to heal.

On the other hand, Ruth and I never had any real worries about how we would get along. We had learned over the years to live on very little. And we just knew in our hearts that we could blindly trust God's guiding hand. At the right moment, doors would open that had not been visible before.

We had a council of war as a family to find out what each could contribute. We considered selling the house but agreed that we must do everything possible to keep it. Klaus-Martin, now a high-school boy of 15, decided to stop tennis or judo lessons or whatever sports activities he had which cost money. Ruth looked for and quickly found a job in a nearby village in her old profession as foreign language correspondent. She had met her new boss and his wife at a porcelain painting class where all three of them compared their works of art.

* * *

As a member of state committees working on tariffs and wages, I had met a great number of managers and company owners from the whole of Southern Germany. Some of them encouraged me to offer my services as a free-lance adviser in the field of personnel problems and labor legislation. Our employers' association supported me. Some clients began to hire my services, for instance as head-hunter for management positions, or for drawing up compensation settlements in case of mass redundancies. Labor legislation in Germany was the fastest growing section of our legal system. New regulations came into effect all the time. It took an expert to see through them. With this kind of work we got on quite well for about two years.

As an adviser I had to be on the road again most of the time. It often took visits to about twenty or thirty different companies before getting another commission. Driving a car for hundreds of miles almost every day became very tiring. Apart from that, I had come to thoroughly dislike the necessity of constantly advertising myself and to point out my superior qualities and experiences. While, in fact, there was little to brag about. What it really took was a certain amount of chutzpah.

Sometime in 1985 I was given another chance. I had applied for a personnel job in an institution that looked after mentally

disabled people. In Germany it is tradition for the two big Christian Churches, Catholic and Protestant, to take on the largest part of all social works and social activities in our society. The organizations for “worldly works of charity” are called *Caritas* for the Catholic and *Diakonisches Werk* for the Protestant Church. *Diakonisches Werk* alone runs 29,000 institutions such as hospitals, kindergartens, asylums for homeless, workshops and homes for disabled people. They employ as many as 400,000 people. All these activities are financed by Church taxes—compulsory for every member of an established Church—and by the greater part of the income of State directed sweepstakes and lotteries.

One of the largest such institution of *Diakonisches Werk* in *Baden-Württemberg*, the State where we lived, is *Anstalt Stetten*, an institution looking after 1,000 or so mentally and multiple disabled or retarded people of all ages. *Anstalt Stetten* had advertised for someone to help in their big office of administration. I was granted an interview with the commercial director, and was surprised about the size of the undertaking. We saw some of the school classes, the work-shops, the intensive care centers and the living quarters. There were classes for music and painting therapies, horse-riding and swimming courses. What impressed me most of all was the loving dedication and commitment of those who dealt directly with the patients.

It became clear in the course of the conversation that the open job was not the thing for me. “I have something else in mind for which perhaps you might be just the ideal person,” the director told me. He explained that recently large legacies had been given to the institution. The management had come to the conviction that they must add to the traditional purpose of caring for disabled people another, new social function: doing something for the explosively growing number of long-term unemployed. That was a new idea, not only for the Board of Directors. They had nobody among the 1,000 or more employees who had any relevant knowledge or experience. He said, “Would you consider looking into this idea and put together some practical suggestions,

let's say in three months?" We decided to meet again the following week. He would get the agreement from the other directors, and I must say yes or no.

What a wonderful chance. To do something really creative, something for people who needed help, something where I could use what I had learned—also in regard to the amount of business management knowledge which such an effort needed. The contract of employment included the use of an office and a telephone. And the guarantee of adequate starting capital (as a loan) in case a realizable concept was found. Also, the institution was in a position to make available factory rooms in a newly acquired site of a furniture producer that had gone bankrupt.

At first there was a lot of research work to be done. To whom applied the term "long-term unemployed", and how many of these were registered in the vicinity? Were there any state subsidies available, and what were the legal problems involved? Did any models exist for such an undertaking? A plan of action had to be developed, a realistic finance plan for the first three years, and a probable return-on-investment projection.

The plan was based on the idea that it was better to pay wages for work done rather than pay unemployment benefits for no work. The law said that any employer giving a job to someone unemployed for a period of more than two consecutive years would be granted a government subsidy up to 80% of the wages paid. Since I myself had been out of a regular job for more than 24 months I qualified for this regulation. The question was: why did not more companies and organizations employ great numbers of jobless and get the benefit of a lot of government money? The answer was very simple: the psychological effect of being a society cast-out after a long jobless time is turning many people into social problem cases. A normal, profit-orientated firm has neither the time nor the trained personnel to deal effectively with so many individual cases.

I planned to start a workshop with the single purpose of giving jobs to long-term jobless. Normally, to start a producing firm, one would determine what should be produced and then go and find the qualified people to do it. My approach had to be the other way round: a great number of people with very different or close to no qualifications were available. Work that they were able to do had to be found.

Getting in touch with almost every industrial company in the neighborhood I found that many of them were eager to give out parts of their production to sub-contractors, especially when it was unprofitable or too expensive to be produced by their own work force. Or if it was simply dirty work disliked by well-paid spoiled workers.

The State government authorities were surprisingly forthcoming. After studying the three-years plan I had submitted along with the application for contributions, they offered, as from the realization of the project, the maximum subsidies allowed for by the law. Subsidies were granted, they wrote, because of the sound argumentation of the planning and the strict adherence to all legal regulations.

In the whole of Western Germany including West-Berlin there existed at the time under the roof of the church organization eight more work-shops operating on this or a similar basis. They all called themselves *Neue Arbeit* or "New Job". So, September 1st, 1985, *Neue Arbeit Waiblingen GmbH*, had its official opening with the first six unemployed who were eager to do any kind of work offered to them. I had found a master mechanic, also out of work for some time because of his age, who would oversee the operating of the machines and instruct the workers wherever needed.

Naturally, we were unable to pay regular wages. This was a company operating in the framework of the Church. My own salary and that of my master mechanic amounted to hardly a third of what we had before. But no-one complained. In fact, never before had I been in an industrial set-up with a group as

keen to work and as content with the circumstances offered to them.

Soon we had twenty, then thirty and forty men and women working in a large variety of jobs. Each one had problems, each one was a case of his own. There were alcoholics; men with debts they would never in their life-time be able to pay back; there were those with nasty diseases or disfigurements. The one thing they had in common was that they had forgotten to work regular hours—eight hours every day—and to be in a group with others, to live as a part of a team.

Apart from doing the administration, buying machines, acquiring new clients and orders, delivering finished products and all sorts of other things, I spent more time acting as a kind of psychiatrist. Ever so often one had to find out the digs of someone who had not turned up for work, get him out of bed and drive him to the firm. Many had to be convinced that they were needed, that they had the ability to learn things they had never done before.

One day I was called to the shop and found a young woman bleeding from an open wound on her hand after hurting herself on the machine she was working. She had not been long with us, I think she had personnel number 31. I picked up the first-aid kit and wanted to dress her hand.

“No”, she said, “I want to do it myself.”

“Come on, don’t be stupid,” I said, “you can’t do this with one hand.”

“No!”, she came back quite forcefully, “don’t touch me. I must do this alone.”

So we watched in silence. When she wanted to return to her place I asked her to come to my office. “Now tell me what is wrong. Obviously there is something the matter with you. What is it?” I wanted to know.

I had been impressed to see that every day she was accompanied to the factory door by her friend, a nice looking

young man, also unemployed but not yet qualifying for a job with us. He was also there every evening waiting for her.

She started to cry. "If I tell you I will loose this job too. It had been my last hope. Nobody else wants me." After a while she confessed that she was suffering from AIDS.

I told her that of course she would keep her job, and that we were grateful for her courage to keep us from touching her when she was bleeding. After this she turned up faithfully every day for a few more weeks. And then she did not come anymore. We heard that she had died.

After one year we were doing quite well. We received orders from many smaller companies, but also from some of the big ones like Daimler Benz, Siemens and Bosch. One firm manufacturing metal letter boxes had put one of their entire assembly lines in our plant including a ten-foot-high enormous sheet-metal press. And they were, almost all of them, happy with the quality we produced.

The most satisfying result was, however, the fact that 40% of the men and women we had taken on had, after a while, found a regular job in other companies or had been placed in a client firm. In the course of the following years this percentage grew. People began to find their feet again and were able to recover a place in society. It was the most satisfying phase of my professional career. We had delegations come to study the obviously successful niche in the market *Neue Arbeit* had found.

With a number of colleagues we founded a national association to be able to compare notes on a larger scale and also to tackle legal problems and settle arguments with the trade unions and communal social authorities. We did not attempt to alleviate the huge problem of general unemployment. Answers to that could be found only by the Government and in accord with the rapidly changing international situation. We did, however, concentrate our efforts only on those who were unable to find, on their own strength, a fair place in a labor market hostile to

them. At present, when this is written, several hundred workshops, factories and institutions employing thousands of formerly stranded people have joined as members of the national association in Germany which we had started as a tiny nucleus.

In this country women can retire and apply for a State pension when they are 60. The obligatory pensionable age is, for men and women alike, 65. Ruth had been 60 in 1988. We decided then to try to retire both at the same time, or at least close to each other. We were extremely lucky again.

Towards the end of 1988 a man came to my office looking for a job. He was a textile engineer who had managed his own spinning mill for all his grown-up life. He had to close down the small factory when the big industrial combines left no room anymore for small businesses like his. When he came to me he had been out of a regular job for long enough to qualify as a "long-termer". He was willing and able to work as my deputy for half a year with the intention of taking over the company by the end of September 1989. He promised to continue with the project in the same spirit it had been started. He did not disappoint me. On the contrary: he was able to enlarge the firm considerably.

Ruth had retired at the end of June that year. I continued working on an honorary basis running a newly founded Church association that was helping to start new *Neue Arbeit* shops. It was organized in such a way that I could choose how much time to spend with it. Both of our job careers did not come to a halt abruptly, but ended gradually. We had looked forward to this—there was so much we wanted to do for which so far there had never been time.

Klaus-Martin was in a job of his own, making good progress. In 1998 he married a girl from Schorndorf, Steffi, who became a beloved daughter to us. They both entered a career as management consultants.



Klaus-Martin and his wife Steffi

* * *

At that time when Ruth and I retired from our respective jobs nobody could have foreseen the world-shaking events we were soon going to experience along with the rest of mankind. The most exciting and decisive period of “our” 20th century was just about to begin and we were fortunate enough to live in it.

Germans from East or West could not assume or even hope that everybody else would share, approve or understand the symphony of overwhelming feelings engulfing us all on October 9th, 1989, when the Berlin Wall was opened up and began to tumble. For a moment the eyes of the entire world were focussed on the city that had for forty years been the symbol of the Cold War.

Although there had been signals, events pointing to something big going on, the news that the Brandenburg Gate was open for people from East and West to pass unchallenged was so overwhelming because nobody had really thought it possible.

All through the past years endless West-East discussions on nuclear arms reductions between the Super Powers made only

slow if any progress, and world division seemed to grow deeper. President Reagan spoke as late as 1983 of the Soviet Union as "The Evil Empire", and even the Pope and his council of Bishops declared that, "under the present conditions nuclear deterrent can be morally acceptable." The U.S.A. proposed a Star War while all over Western Europe hundreds of thousands demonstrated against plans to base new Cruise Missiles in their countries.

In 1985 Michail Gorbachev followed Chernenko in supreme power of the Soviet Union. The world listened intently when he introduced *perestroika* and *glasnost*—whatever it was, it was something new raising tiny sprouts of hope that the confrontation might become less aggressive. Hopes grew when, shortly afterwards, he made suggestions for bilateral cuts in the nuclear arsenals. But even Gorbachev said to German President von Weizsäcker in 1987, "The division of Germany is a fact now, and it will be so in the future." His conviction was strengthened when two separate German delegations went to the Olympic Games in Seoul in 1988.

In our country we were more and more resigned to accept this course of history. Many saw it as punishment for crimes committed. In debates in Parliament Conservatives would plead their *ceterum censeo* quoting the preamble of our Constitution where it states, "The German people are called to bring into being the unity and freedom of Germany on the basis of free self-determination." But it was obvious that for most politicians it was no more than ideological lip-service, at least in regard to a realistic possibility of re-unification in the foreseeable future.

Quite another thing was the ongoing destabilization of the Communist World. During 1988 it became known that Soviet Bloc countries such as Lithuania, Estonia, Georgia and others had publicly demanded to be given their sovereignty, until then an unheard-of rebelliousness. Gorbachev had, mainly for economic reasons, cut military expenditure by 10 percent and, more important, withdrawn Soviet troops from Afghanistan, admitting defeat after one million casualties and six million

refugees. The Free World regarded this as a definite move towards peace. When the Soviet leader came to West Germany in June 1989, he was hailed by huge crowds in Bonn as a peace-maker with shouts of "Gor-by, Gor-by".

Then everything began to happen at the same time. Shortly after the ban was lifted on the Polish Solidarity Movement, it won 99 of 100 seats in the new Senate and one third of the seats in Parliament in the first democratic elections in 60 years. Thousands of East Germans used their holidays in Czechoslovakia and Hungary to escape into the West. Hungary, in a unilateral move, accepted 20,000 of them in August and then officially opened their border for another 60,000 in September. Revolution began in East Germany as, in Leipzig and Dresden, regular "Monday Demonstrations" drew such crowds to the streets that even massive police forces could not constrain them anymore.

But even then we could not believe that we were witnessing the greatest upheaval of the 20th Century. The people, millions of them, challenged "people's rule" that had been, from the beginning, dictatorial rule. On October 18th Erich Honecker, for 18 years East Germany's leader, was ousted by his own Communist Party which was unable to resist any longer the demands of the people for freedom. At the same time the Hungarians declared the birth of a new Republic. In Prague, police beat up and detained hundreds at the biggest protest rally for 20 years, but it was to be the last attempt to stop the revolutionary tide.

And then The Wall opened. From then on we could hardly get away from the TV screens. Incredible, unforgettable scenes could be seen as complete strangers embraced, wept, mounted and trampled and danced on that ugly monster of a wall until it was so full it could hold no more. The West Berlin Mayor said, "The Germans are the happiest people in the world today." We had messages and phone calls from everywhere congratulating us for this unexpected gift. Neighbors, friends, everybody seemed to hop into car, plane or railway to go and see for themselves, to touch this thing that had been and was no longer the Iron Curtain.

The wave rolled on into Czechoslovakia, to Bulgaria, Romania. On the 3rd of December Michail Gorbachev and George Bush met on board a ship near Malta and declared "The End of the Cold War". How fervently we all wanted to believe that a new age had begun.

The actual talks on the conditions of German re-unification took six months. Considering the handicaps that was an extremely short time—many today say that the results were rushed and therefore inadequate. As far as support from the rest of the world was concerned, the only whole-hearted assistance came from U.S. President George Bush. All European neighbors, East and West likewise, were hesitant if not hostile to the idea of our country growing again to almost its former size. Old fears came alive again. Britain's Mrs. Thatcher and French President Mitterand protested openly and warned of a new, powerful Germany using its superior economic and political strength again to force her neighbors into a "Bismarckian" kind of Europe dominated by forever power-hungry Germans.

If any of this caused wariness abroad, it could not overshadow the boundless joy we all felt. I remember that I refused to believe anybody in the Free World could envy us this gift of re-uniting with our brothers and sisters we had been artificially separated from for so long. We thought that just like at the final defeat of Nazism everybody everywhere would rejoice again at the breakdown of the Iron Curtain. Now the age of peace and harmony for all mankind had been ushered in. It had been the first-ever peaceful and successful revolution on German soil. And it had been the ordinary people who forced a despised dictatorship to withdraw into oblivion. It was simply glorious. It was indeed the end of an era. But none of us, none of us we knew, realized the enormous amount of basic change which the beginning of a new era would demand from us.

As soon as it was possible Ruth and I went on an extensive tour through what then, in March 1990, was still the GDR, the German Democratic Republic. We wanted to see for ourselves,

to talk to people, to celebrate the "Communion of all Germans". And, to be honest, I wanted just for nostalgic reasons to find again the places, the houses where I had lived as a child. The sensation of freely traveling in a previously Communist land was overwhelming. What we saw, heard and smelled was so terrifying that after the four weeks our trip lasted, we could not have endured one more day. The extent to which East Germany had been run down went far beyond our worst expectations.

The wealth of agriculture in Germany had always been in the variety of crop growing and cattle farming. In post-war East Germany all farmers had to place their land in large estates of at least 2,500 acres each, that produced monocultural goods of only corn, or only wheat, or only sugar beets. Small farm villages typical of these landscapes had been bulldozed to make room for larger fields. When Ruth and I traveled there in 1990—we have been back there and many East European countries every year since—we could not discover cattle grazing the fields. We found that the Regime had created centralized cow cities and pig cities, fencing in up to 100,000 animals each. The animal manure was collected in large lakes which resulted in a polluted environment where no green would grow for miles around.

The extent of bankruptcy after forty years of the so-called Workers' and Farmers' Paradise went beyond imagination. More and more horrifying facts came into the open all the time. There was practically no town or village in the former GDR having an adequate sewage system. While the housing areas taken over from Nazi times were in many cases left to decay into ruins, the Regime had crowded people into uniform new satellite cities constructed with prefabricated crude concrete blocks with no infrastructure, allowing almost no communication between inhabitants.

All fields of production had been heavily overstaffed. A farm managed in West Germany by three or four people had to provide work in East Germany for some 300, of whom by nature of the system 30 had to be bureaucrats and Party officials. Although

fertilizer and anti-pesticides were used in abundance, state-farms produced less than 60% of West Germany's average crops.

Because of this no unemployment compensation program existed. Unemployment was not permitted. In order to sustain a family, 83% of East German women were obliged to work full-time. Babies reaching an age of four months were put in State kindergartens, so-called baby-crèches, and mothers left the upbringing and the education of their kids to the State. Science and research, education, the medical service, the Arts, every aspect of society life functioned State directed. The State enforced obedience through the 200,000 strong STASI, the ever present Secret Political Police. For a citizen of the GDR to become an attorney, a lawyer, a school headmaster or chief of a medical clinic, an engineer or an officer of the People's Army, that citizen had to be a member of the SED, the all-powerful State Party, and have given proof of abiding by the party-line. Corruption and blackmail were abundant.

That was the state of affairs after re-unification. The spirit of triumph and jubilation died down almost as fast as it had sprung up. Overnight, two different worlds were confronted with each other within the borders of one country. The Wall was down. The people in East Germany had voted for freedom. That was a victory. But today, I think, we are farther away from being one nation with one identity than we were at the beginning. There are no precedents for the task we have to shoulder, no text-books for policies to be followed for re-unification.

A 16-year-old East German girl gave me her school history book. Reading it was like regarding history from another planet. For these school children the history of Germany started with the so-called liberation through the Soviet Army in 1945. There was hardly any reference to the earlier stages of the evolution of our nation or, indeed, of the ideals of Western civilization. Communist Germany at the day of its creation had been declared

to be anti-fascist and therefore free from blame for anything that happened in pre-communist periods.

At the end of summer holidays of that year 1990, new history text books written in West Germany were issued to all schools in the East. Teachers were asked, out of the blue and with hardly any assistance, to teach pupils an entirely different way of thinking, a different set of values for what, in future, was to be good and what evil. A year later, when Israel and the United Nations asked Germany for stronger participation in the Gulf War, the younger generation in the East were confronted for the first time in their lives with the fact that it had been their grandfathers and grandmothers as well as those of West Germans who had participated in or permitted to happen the Holocaust, and that the world was holding them responsible as Germans.

Monetary Union between East and West Germany was introduced at the time when the GUS, the Soviet Bloc of States, separated. It meant that all exports had to be paid for in hard currency. East German heavy industry lost overnight almost all its foreign markets. We saw fleets of newly built ships anchoring in the Baltic Sea shipyards and harbors. They had been ordered by the Soviet Union, providing work for five more years. But Russia was suddenly unable to pay the bills. Shipyards and major parts of industry had to be closed down. We had areas in East Germany with unemployment rates of 40% and more. Sixteen million people had to be included in the West German social benefit, unemployment compensation and pension systems without having contributed until then their share of the financial burden. Those who still had work were demanding equal pay for equal labor although the productivity rate in the East amounted then to just about a quarter of the rate of West German industry.

In the *Neue Länder*, the New States, the entire network of road and rail traffic had to be renewed, the communications system built up from scratch. All this costs vast sums of money. The amounts transferred from West to East after the introduction of Monetary Union have each year surpassed many times the sum

total of the cost of the entire Marshall Aid for the whole of Europe. ERP—Marshall Aid—loans to Germany amounted to a total of \$13 billion (about 88 billion in today's Dollars). During the first decade after re-unification, an *annual* transfer from West to East of more than \$50 billion has taken place, and this will have to continue on this level for at least another ten years.

Of course the West German economy has been one of the most prosperous in the world. If the spirit of solidarity can be maintained, we can and we will create in the eastern part of our country what Chancellor Kohl termed his vision of *Blühende Landschaften*, flourishing lands.

We dare not fail. If the dream of one world in peace and freedom is to be fulfilled, the experiment of West- and East-Germany uniting must not fail. Conditions for success are nowhere else in former East Bloc countries as promising as in Germany. The most difficult stumbling blocs, however, are not economic, important as they are.

The cornerstone of the ethos of Western Democracies has been the unanimous condemnation of the Soviet Communist system. It was our set of values versus theirs, and our set, naturally, was the right one. This knowledge provided us with certainty, security, comfort. But what now? Wherever one looks, the formerly monolithic bloc of Communist countries is dividing up into smaller and smaller national entities. For their *raison d'être* of being independent, they seem to look at the past rather than at the tested systems of Democracy and Free Market. Ethnic, racial, in some parts religious and tribal conflicts that had been buried since pre-communist times, are breaking out in furious power struggles. The United Nations, conceived for a world in which maybe one crisis area at a time had to be dealt with, has now accepted defeat, unable to deal with only a few of all the numerous crises happening at the same time.

The breakdown of Communism has found Western civilization unprepared. The well-known Polish political scientist and writer Zbigniew Brzezinski said in his book "The Grand

Failure" (1989), "No Communist regime in history has peacefully crossed the border line between totalitarianism and freedom", and, he continued, none will do so in future. Jeanne Kirkpatrick went as far as to say that a totalitarian regime is by its very nature unable to change.

The people of Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, the GDR and even Russia have proved those analysts to be wrong. Whatever changes happened, they were created from inside, from the people. It was only natural that the West believed the end of Communism was at the same time the triumph of democracy, freedom and market economy. The American thinker Francis Fukuyama euphorically called it a "world historic apotheosis", the true end of history. He is wrong. It is, of course, not the end of history we have reached. History is turning to a new direction.

What surprised us most of all was meeting people in East Germany who were not so eager at all to embrace Western Democracy as demonstrated by our way of life. Many have wept when the Wall came down, many had in good faith given their all towards the vision of their own kind of Socialism. They were grateful, yes, for the new found freedom, to be able to speak their minds and to travel where they wanted. But they think back longingly to the time when everything was done for them by the State, when the Party decided what job you got, how much you earned and where you lived. Capitalism, they say, does not provide any of this for the individual, one has to fight for every step in life. For them, our Capitalism was not the answer to their idea of Socialism. We find that one cannot introduce Democracy, a new political or economical order, by law or by Government decision.

This may be new to America and to the rest of the formerly Western World. The new situation in the global theatre calls for a new role as well in the one world power left. It would be tragic if America, or the European countries, would at this stage of history retreat to national and domestic themes. Nationalism is a creature with two faces. To be able to live in a community with

its own history, language, culture, sometimes religion, can be satisfying and fulfilling. And to pass on common values to future generations can be an aim with great capacity for emancipation if, and only if, at the same time, the people of this community are willing to respect similar aspirations of other communities and nations.

But nationalism, even if it is called patriotism, can also become intolerant, aggressive, hegemonic and authoritarian, if it is not prepared to grant to others what it demands for itself. Unfortunately, this latter version seems to be at the root of most of the conflicts we see in our time.

It is obvious that Communism was never the only problem in the world. The Cold War only overshadowed the intrinsic significance of other problems. The end of the Cold War brought these other problems into focus, for their own importance, even while sprouting forth new problems under the coercive power of the Imperial State that was the Soviet Union. Add to this the widely recognized moral and spiritual decline in all parts of Western civilization or, as *Newsweek Magazine* once described it, "the profound lack of virtue", and it becomes obvious that mankind is in deep need for new vision. Maybe we need to learn to dream again. The American Dream dates back to the founding fathers. In fact, that dream is not only American; it is still the basis of life of free men everywhere. History is made by the hopes and dreams of millions of people around the world.

I firmly believe that we must not leave the solving of these baffling questions to politicians alone. The strength of Democracy is in the validity of its underlying principles and, equally, in the measure of active participation in living out these values on the part of the majority of Democrats. Former President Bush asked the Germans for a "Partnership in Leadership" and his successor Bill Clinton, when he walked with Chancellor Kohl through the Brandenburg Gate in Berlin, asked us to take on a larger share in carrying the load of responsibility. He made this plea not to our political leaders but to us, the people. We must respond.

It might well be that just because we as a people went astray in such a terrible way and, consequently, had to suffer so much, we are obliged now to take a significant share in regaining the eternal truths which are the foundation of peace for mankind. Alexander Solshenitsin spoke about the "capacity for suffering" as a precondition for the kind of leadership the world needs. If that is true, there is hope in our time when suffering is so abundant.

With all this in mind, I for one, am optimistic. I believe in the capacity for greatness in ordinary men and women. We will realize that in the end it is not the laws we pass but the lives we live that will make the difference. I believe the future can be different. And I am grateful to be allowed to live in this fascinating age when history is moving at such a racing pace.



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