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It was not only the Kammergericht that I had to bid adieu to in those days. "Adieu" had become the motto of the day—a radical leave-taking of everything, without exception. The world I had lived in dissolved and disappeared. Every day another piece vanished quietly, without ado. Every day one looked around and something else had gone and left no trace. I have never since had such a strange experience. It was as if the ground on which one stood was continually trickling away from under one's feet, or rather as if the air one breathed was steadily, inexorably being sucked away.

What was happening openly and clearly in public was almost the least of it. Yes, political parties disappeared or were dissolved; first those of the left, then also those of the right; I had not been a member of any of them. The men who had been the focus of attention, whose books one had read, whose speeches we had discussed, disappeared into exile or the concentration camps; occasionally one heard that one or another had "committed suicide while being arrested" or been "shot

while attempting to escape." At some point in the summer the newspapers carried a list of thirty or forty names of famous scientists or writers; they had been proscribed, declared to be traitors to the people and deprived of their citizenship.

More unnerving was the disappearance of a number of quite harmless people, who had in one way or another been part of daily life. The radio announcer whose voice one had heard every day, who had almost become an old acquaintance, had been sent to a concentration camp, and woe betide you if you mentioned his name. The familiar actors and actresses who had been a feature of our lives disappeared from one day to the next. Charming Miss Carola Neher was suddenly a traitor to the people; brilliant young Hans Otto, who had been the rising star of the previous season, lay crumpled in the yard of an SS barracks—yes, Hans Otto, whose name had been on everyone's lips, who had been talked about at every soiree, had been hailed as the "new Matkowski" that the German stage had so long been waiting for. He had "thrown himself out of a fourth-floor window in a moment when the guards had been distracted," they said. A famous cartoonist, whose harmless drawings had brought laughter to the whole of Berlin every week, committed suicide, as did the master of ceremonies of a well-known cabaret. Others just vanished. One did not know whether they were dead, incarcerated, or had gone abroad—they were just missing.

The symbolic burning of the books in April had been an affair of the press, but the disappearance of books from the bookshops and libraries was uncanny. Contemporary German literature, whatever its merits, had simply been erased. Books

of the last season that one had not bought by April became unobtainable. A few authors, tolerated for some unknown reason, remained like individual ninepins in the wreckage. Otherwise you could get only the classics—and a dreadful, embarrassingly bad literature of blood and soil, which suddenly sprang up. Readers—always a minority in Germany, and as they were daily told, an unimportant one at that—were deprived of their world overnight. Further, since they had quickly learned that those who were robbed might also be punished, they felt intimidated and pushed their copies of Heinrich Mann and Feuchtwanger into the back rows of their bookshelves; and if they dared to talk about the newest Joseph Roth or Jakob Wassermann they put their heads together and whispered like conspirators.

Many journals and newspapers disappeared from the kiosks—but what happened to those that continued in circulation was much more disturbing. You could not quite recognize them anymore. In a way a newspaper is like an old acquaintance: you instinctively know how it will react to certain events, what it will say about them and how it will express its views. If it suddenly says the opposite of what it said yesterday, denies its own past, distorting its features, you cannot avoid feeling that you are in a madhouse. That happened. Old-established democratic broadsheets such as the *Berliner Tageblatt* or the *Vossische Zeitung* changed into Nazi organs from one day to the next. In their customary, measured, educated style they said exactly the same things that were spewed out by the *Angriff* or the *Völkischer Beobachter*, newspapers that had always supported the Nazis. Later, one became accustomed to this and picked up occasional hints by reading between the lines of

the articles on the arts pages. The political pages always kept strictly to the party line.

To some extent, the editorial staff had been replaced; but frequently this straightforward explanation was not accurate. For instance, there was an intellectual journal called *Die Tat* (Action), whose content lived up to its name. In the final years before 1933 it had been widely read. It was edited by a group of intelligent, radical young people. With a certain elegance they indulged in the long historical view of the changing times. It was, of course, far too distinguished, cultured, and profound to support any particular political party—least of all the Nazis. As late as February its editorials brushed them off as an obviously ephemeral phenomenon. Its editor in chief had gone too far. He lost his job and only just managed to save his neck (today he is allowed to write light novels). The rest of the editorial staff remained in post, but as a matter of course became Nazis without the least detriment to their elegant style and historical perspective—they had always been Nazis, naturally; indeed better, more genuinely and more profoundly so than the Nazis themselves. It was wonderful to behold: the paper had the same typography, the same name—but without batting an eyelid it had become a thoroughgoing, smart Nazi organ. Was it a sudden conversion or just cynicism? Or had Messrs. Fried, Eschmann, Wirsing,* etc. always been Nazis at heart? Probably they did not know themselves. Anyway, I soon abandoned the question. I was nauseated

*Editors of *Die Tat*.

and wearied, and contented myself with taking leave of one more newspaper.

In any event, these leave-takings were not the most painful—taking leave of all the manifestations and elements that make up the atmosphere of an era was harder. They are difficult to describe but should not be underestimated, as they can make life very somber. It is unpleasant enough when the air over a whole country loses all its freshness and perfume and becomes choking and poisonous. But to a certain extent one can exclude this outside air, shut one's windows tightly, and withdraw into the four walls of one's private life. One can seal oneself off, put flowers in one's room, and close one's eyes and hold one's nose when one goes out. The temptation to do this was great, even for me—and many others gave in to it. Thank God, my attempt to seal myself off failed from the outset. I could not shut the windows. There were leave-takings after leave-takings waiting for me in my most private life.

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*All the same, the temptation to seal oneself off was a suffi-*ciently important aspect of the period for me to devote some space to it. It has its part to play in the psychopathological process that has unfolded in the cases of millions of Germans since 1933. After all, to a normal onlooker most Germans today exhibit the symptoms of lunacy or at the very least severe hysteria. If you want to understand how this came about, you have to take the trouble to place yourself in the peculiar position in which non-Nazi Germans—and that was still the majority—found themselves in 1933, and try to understand the bizarre, perverse conflicts they faced.

The plight of non-Nazi Germans in the summer of 1933 was certainly one of the most difficult a person can find himself in: a condition in which one is hopelessly, utterly overwhelmed, accompanied by the shock of having been caught completely off balance. We were in the Nazis' hands for good or ill. All lines of defense had fallen, any collective resistance had become impossible. Individual resistance was only a form of suicide.

We were pursued into the farthest corners of our private lives; in all areas of life there was rout, panic, and flight. No one could tell where it would end. At the same time we were called upon, not to surrender, but to renege. Just a little pact with the devil—and you were no longer one of the captured quarry. Instead you were one of the victorious hunters.

That was the simplest and crudest temptation. Many succumbed to it. Later they often found that the price to be paid was higher than they had thought and that they were no match for the real Nazis. There are many thousands of them today in Germany, Nazis with a bad conscience. People who wear their Nazi badges like Macbeth wore his royal robes, who, in for a penny, in for a pound, now find their consciences shouldering one burden after another, who search in vain for a way out, drink and take sleeping pills, no longer dare to think, and do not know whether they should rather pray for the end of the Nazi era—their own era!—or dread it. When that end comes they will certainly not admit to having been the culprits. In the meantime, however, they are the nightmare of the world. It is impossible to assess what these people might still be capable of in their moral and psychological derangement. Their history has yet to be written.

Our predicament in 1933 held many other temptations apart from this, the crudest; each was a source of madness and mental sickness for those who yielded. The devil has many nets, crude ones for crude souls, finer ones for finer souls.

If you refused to become a Nazi you found yourself in a fiendish situation: it was one of complete and unalleviated hopelessness; you were daily subjected to insults and humiliations, forced to watch unendurable scenes, had nowhere to turn

to mitigate your anguish. Such a situation carries its own temptations: apparent remedies that hide the barb of the devil.

One temptation, often favored by older people, was withdrawal into an illusion: preferably the illusion of superiority. Those that surrendered to this clung to the amateurish, dilettantish aspects that Nazi politics undoubtedly exhibited at first. Every day they tried to convince themselves and others that this could not continue for long, and maintained an attitude of amused criticism. They spared themselves the perception of the fiendishness of Nazism by concentrating on its childishness, and misrepresented their position of complete, powerless subjugation as that of superior, unconcerned onlookers. They found it both comforting and reassuring to be able to quote a new joke or a new article about the Nazis from the London *Times*. They were people who predicted the imminent end of the regime, at first with calm certainty, later, as the months went by, with ever more desperate self-deception. The worst came for them when the Nazi Party visibly consolidated itself and had its first successes: they had no weapons to cope with these.

In the years that followed, this group was the target of a psychologically clever bombardment with boastful statistics. They formed the majority of the late converts to Nazism in the years from 1935 to 1938. Once their strenuously maintained pose of superiority had been rendered untenable, great numbers of these people yielded. Once the successes they had always declared to be impossible became reality, they conceded defeat. "But he has achieved what no one else achieved!" "Yes, that's just the trouble." "Oh, you just love paradoxes, don't you." (A conversation from 1938.)

A few of them still hold the banner high. Even after all their defeats they still prophesy the inevitable collapse of the regime every month, or at least once a year. Their stand has a certain magnificence, you have to admit, but also a certain eccentricity. The funny thing is that one day, after they have stood fast through all their cruel disappointments, they will be proved right. I can already see them strutting around after the defeat of the Nazis and telling everybody that they had predicted it all along. By then, however, they will have become tragicomic figures. There is a way of being right that is shameful and lends its opponent undeserved glory. Think of Louis XVIII.

The second danger was embitterment—masochistically surrendering oneself to hate, suffering, and unrelieved pessimism. This is perhaps the most natural reaction to defeat for the Germans. In their darkest hours (in private or in public life) every German has to fight against this temptation: to give up completely once and for all; to let the world go to the devil with a wan indifference bordering on compliance; to commit sullen, angry suicide.

I 'gin to be weary of the sun
And wish th' estate o'th'world were now undone.*

It looks very heroic: all consolation is utterly rejected—but the sufferer fails to see that this is itself the most poisonous,

Macbeth, Act 5, scene v.

dangerous, vicious form of consolation. The perverse indulgence in self-sacrifice, a Wagnerian lust for death and destruction—that is the most complete consolation for a defeated man who cannot find the strength and courage to face defeat and bear it. I make bold to prophesy that this will be the basic stance of Germany after it has lost the Nazi war—the wild, headstrong wailing of a child taking the loss of its doll for the end of the world. (There was already a lot of this in the German reaction to the defeat of 1918.) In 1933, little of the inner feelings of the defeated majority was reflected in public attitudes because officially no one had been defeated. Officially there was only celebration, things getting better, "liberation," "deliverance," salvation, intoxicating unity. Suffering had to be kept quiet. Yet embitterment was a typical reaction of the defeated after 1933. I encountered it so often myself that I am convinced the number of those affected in this way must run into millions.

It is difficult to assess the external consequences of such an internal attitude. Occasionally it leads to suicide. Much more commonly, however, people adapt to living with clenched teeth, in a manner of speaking. Unfortunately, they form the majority of the representatives of a visible "opposition" in Germany. So it is no wonder that the opposition has never developed any goals, methods, plans, or expectations. Most of its members spend their time bemoaning the atrocities. The dreadful things that are happening have become essential to their spiritual well-being. Their only remaining dark pleasure is to luxuriate in the description of gruesome deeds, and it is impossible to have a conversation with them on any other

topic. Indeed, it has gone so far that many of them would feel that something was missing if they did not have atrocities to talk about, and with some of them despair has almost become cozy. Still, it is a way of "living dangerously": it makes one bilious, and can lead to serious illness and even madness. There is also a narrow side alley that leads from here to Nazidom: if it makes no difference anyway and everything is lost, then why not be bitterly, angrily cynical and join the devils oneself? Why not take part, secretly cackling with scorn? That attitude is not unheard of.

There is a third temptation I need to mention. It is the one I had to fight against myself, and again I was certainly not the only one. Its starting point is the recognition of the danger of succumbing to the previous temptation. You do not want to let yourself be morally corrupted by hate and suffering, you want to remain good-natured, peaceful, amiable, and "nice." But how to avoid hate and suffering if you are daily bombarded with things that cause them? You must ignore everything, look away, block your ears, seal yourself off. That leads to a hardening through softness and finally also to a form of madness: the loss of a sense of reality.

For simplicity's sake, let me talk about my own experiences, not forgetting that my case should be multiplied a hundred thousand or a millionfold.

I have no talent for hate. I have always been convinced that involving oneself too deeply in polemics and arguments with incorrigible opponents, hating the despicable too much, destroys something in oneself—something that is worth preserving and is difficult to rebuild. My natural gesture of rejection is to turn away, not to go on the attack.

I also have a strong sense of the honor one does an opponent by deigning to hate him, and I felt that the Nazis in particular were not worthy of this honor. I did not want to be on such close terms with them as to hate them. The worst affront I suffered from them was not their intrusive demands for me to join in—those were beneath thinking or getting upset about—but the fact that, by being impossible to ignore, they daily caused me to feel hate and disgust, feelings that are so much against my nature.

Could I not find an attitude that avoided being forced to feel anything, even hate or disgust? Could I not develop a serene, imperturbable disdain, "taking one look and then moving on"? What if it cost me half, or if need be all, my external life?

At just this time I read a dangerous, alluringly ambiguous sentence of Stendhal's. He wrote it as a coda after the restoration of 1814, an event that he felt to be a "descent into the quagmire," just as I viewed the events of 1933. There was only one thing, he wrote, still worth the toil and trouble, namely "to hold oneself holy and pure." Holy and pure! That meant not only steering clear of all participation, but also of all devastation through pain, and any distortion through hate—in short, from any reaction at all, even that caused by rejection. Turn away—retreat into the smallest corner if you have to, if you can only keep it free of the polluted air, so that you can save undamaged the only thing worth saving, namely (to use the good old theological word) your soul.

I still think that there is some justification for this attitude; and I do not repudiate it. However, simply ignoring everything and retreating into an ivory tower, the way I imagined it then,

was not the right thing to do. I thank God that my attempt to do so failed quickly and thoroughly. Some of my acquaintances' attempts did not fail so quickly, and they had to pay a high price to learn that one can sometimes save the peace of one's soul only by sacrificing and relinquishing it.

In contrast to the first two ways of evading the Nazis, this third way did find a kind of public expression in Germany in the following years. Literary idylls suddenly sprang up and flourished everywhere. In the outside world, even in literary circles, it has gone unnoticed that, as never before, so many recollections of childhood, family novels, books on the countryside, nature poems, so many delicate and tender little baubles were written in Germany in the years 1934–38. Apart from open Nazi propaganda literature, almost everything that was published in Germany belongs to this genre. In the last two years it has declined somewhat, apparently because the effort required to achieve the necessary harmlessness has become too great. Up until then it was uncanny. A whole literature of cowbells and daisies, full of children's summer-holiday happiness, first love and fairy tales, baked apples and Christmas trees, a literature of obtrusive intimacy and timelessness, manufactured as if by arrangement in the midst of marching, concentration camps, armaments factories, and the public displays of *Der Stürmer*.* If you had to read quantities of these books, as I did, you gradually felt that in all their quiet tenderness they were screaming at you, between the lines, "Don't you see how time-

*A viciously sadistic, pornographic, anti-Semitic propaganda paper, on display in bright red glass cases throughout Nazi Germany.

less and intimate we are? Don't you see how nothing can disturb us? Don't you see how unaffected we are? See it please, please, we beg you."

I knew some of the writers personally. For each of them, very nearly, the moment has since come when it became impossible to go on; some event that could not be blocked out by earplugs; maybe the arrest of a close acquaintance or something like that. No childhood reminiscences can shield one from that. There were some serious breakdowns. They are sad stories. I will tell one or the other when the time comes.

Those were the conflicts the Germans faced in the summer of 1933. They represented a choice among different forms of spiritual death. People who have lived in normal times may well feel that they are being shown a madhouse, or perhaps a psychopathological laboratory. However, there is no avoiding the fact that that is the way it was, and I cannot change it. Incidentally, these were still relatively innocuous times. It gets much worse.