

FREEDOM  
IN  
STRUGGLE



RUDOLF PECHTEL

# *Freedom in Struggle*

BEING THE NINTH SERIES OF LECTURES UNDER THE  
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RUDOLF PECHEL



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## FOREWORD

THE PURPOSE of the Chancellor Dunning Trust, established at Queen's University in 1948, is "to promote understanding and appreciation of the supreme importance of the dignity, freedom and responsibility of the individual person in human society." It is laid down in the conditions of the Trust that the Trustees of the University shall every three years determine the means by which the purposes of the Trust shall be pursued. For the present the method selected has been an annual series of lectures given at the University during the academic session. The pattern established has been three formal lectures accompanied by a considerable number of informal talks and discussions with students and staff.

In January 1957 a series of three lectures, *Freedom in Struggle*, was given by Dr. Rudolf Pechel, the distinguished publisher of *Deutsche Rundschau*.

Earlier lectures had as their chief background the history and problems of freedom in countries with Anglo-Saxon traditions. Dr. Pechel's lectures are concerned with the struggle for freedom in Nazi and Soviet Germany, in circumstances in which freedom has not "slowly broadened down from precedent to precedent."

They gained great interest and reality from the fact that Dr. Pechel himself had been an active participant in the struggle, using his journal both as weapon and camouflage. He and his wife spent the later years of the war in con-

centration camps. He spoke, therefore, with great authority and sincerity of matters beyond our experience but of vital concern to us.

It is a pleasure to know that these lectures are now available in this form to a wider audience.

W. A. MACKINTOSH  
*Vice-Chancellor and Principal*

*Queen's University at Kingston,  
June 20, 1957.*



## PREFACE

IT WAS with a feeling of having been singularly honoured that I accepted the invitation to deliver the Chancellor Dunning Trust Lectures for 1957 at Queen's University. I am sincerely grateful to the Trustees of this old and famous institution, and especially to its Principal, Dr. W. A. Mackintosh, for giving me the opportunity, in a country I was to visit for the first time, to speak of the German Resistance against Hitler, to celebrate the memory of friends who were executed, and to point out the historical continuity of the struggle for freedom in the past with the revolutionary events in contemporary Poland, Hungary, and the Soviet Zone of Germany.

I was deeply moved by the contact with professors and students of Queen's University, a contact which has provided me with new insights and with the warm feeling of common humanity. The atmosphere of true freedom and genuine fellowship reminded me of that which prevailed in German universities *before* the advent of the Third Reich.

I owe to my invitation to Queen's the great pleasure of becoming acquainted with parts of that vast, mighty and beautiful country, Canada. And with profound gratitude I have brought back to Germany the confident assurance that free men of all nations shall always find the way to one another's hearts.

RUDOLF PECHEL

Stuttgart,  
29th May, 1957

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# I

## FREEDOM, PATRIOTISM, RESISTANCE

IN EARLIER lectures of the Chancellor Dunning Trust Series, the idea of freedom has been discussed and defined in its philosophical and theoretical aspects by eminent scholars, and it may well be that the last word has been said on it. I therefore chose as my topic not the nature of freedom itself, but the threats to freedom, the struggle for it, and the right and duty to fight its oppressors.

I should like to start with an assumption: in the final analysis, nobody knows the value of freedom unless he has had the experience of losing it. In constitutional states, freedom is a matter of course which most people take for granted. It is there like the air God gave us to breathe, and we accept it without thought, like all those things that seem to be guaranteed by technical progress: water begins to flow whenever we turn a tap and the light goes on whenever we flick a switch. But imagine that there were suddenly no air to breathe and that switch and tap were to fail; then we should be compelled to take thought about this unheard-of situation, we should be forced to worry about things we have always taken for granted, and we should arrive at unexpected results. For under certain circumstances, all matters of course become problematical and it becomes necessary to fight for them.

There is one situation in which we cease to take freedom for granted—a situation of immense psychological significance: when for the first time a door without a door-knob closes behind you and you are shut in a cell dimly lit by a



remnant of daylight streaking in through a small barred window, you are suddenly called upon to take stock of yourself and the world. Then you understand that freedom is a possession that has to be fought for.

The title of these lectures is *Freedom in Struggle*, and I shall talk at some length about the German Resistance Movement. The connection between these two topics will become clear in due course. I should explain at the outset, however, that I am not concerned with resistance to a properly constituted executive. Such resistance is considered a crime in most countries, including that of Germany, and offenders are sentenced to prison. If the sentence is to be valid, however, it must be pronounced by the court of a constitutional state, and the official to whom resistance was offered must have been engaged in the execution of his lawful duty. In special cases of active resistance, the police are even allowed to use their weapons.

This statute of the law was grossly abused by the Nazis. Under its cover, many persons were killed "on escape." After the murder of Dr. Edgar Jung, one of my best friends, on June 30, 1934, Hitler himself declared to his Vice-Chancellor, von Papen, in blatant contradiction to the actual facts, that Dr. Jung had been shot because he had offered active resistance to a high-ranking SS-official. But it is neither resistance to a constituted executive nor the abuse of the penalties the law provides against such resistance that I wish to discuss. In speaking of resistance, I shall consider it as a form of the struggle for freedom.

Let me begin by quoting a few examples in history and poetry which treat of the fight for freedom against a tyranny that in the disguise of legality denies and violates the law.

When we were still at school, our young hearts beat with excitement when we heard of the exploits and the death of Harmodius and Aristogiton of Athens, who, in 514 BC,



rose against Hippias and Hipparchus, the sons of the tyrant Pisistratus. The assassination they planned was foiled, and they were executed. After their liberation from tyranny, the people of Athens erected statues in honour of these fighters for freedom.

In Greece, the kings were originally regarded as altruistic servants of the state, but soon the tyrant appeared as the selfish ruler who uses violence and trickery to gain power, which he abuses by crimes of every kind. In the earliest times, the Greeks submitted to everything that was imposed on them, for they felt they were merely the tools of divine powers. Before long, however, the belief in self-government and self-responsibility began to grow in their hearts, and the fight for freedom began.

One of the most moving examples of the struggle against tyranny fought on the purely human scale is Sophocles' *Antigone*. As is well-known, the great Greek tragedian took the subject of the Oedipus-tale from one of the most tragic Greek myths. By an inexorable fate, Oedipus unknowingly becomes the murderer of his father and the husband of his own mother. They have two sons, Polynices and Eteocles, and two daughters, Antigone and Ismene. When the horrible secrets of parricide and incest are revealed, Jocasta, the mother, commits suicide, and Oedipus gouges out his eyes. He is expelled from Thebes, and his two sons quarrel over the succession to the throne. Polynices leaves the city; he finds allies who take the field as the "Seven against Thebes." The ensuing war is to be decided by single combat between the two hostile brothers, and both are killed. The new ruler of Thebes, the tyrant Creon, commands that Eteocles, who has been killed in defending his city, be buried with high honours, while Polynices, who has fought against his city, is to remain unburied. Such an edict must have seemed cruel and barbaric to any Greek. Antigone, who rebels against it, is one of the most moving

figures of world literature, and Sophocles makes her speak the humane words:

Not to hate but to love my fellow-men am I born.

In obedience to a higher law, she defies the tyrant's command that her brother remain unburied. When Creon asks why she has disobeyed him, she replies:

It was not Zeus who issued this decree. I do not consider your command to be so powerful that the unwritten eternal laws of the gods should give way before you, a mortal man.

These unwritten laws Antigone obeys have always been the guiding stars for the actions of truly free men. As the commandments of the gods were beyond any human statute for the Greeks, so are the commandments of God for us.

When we heard about Marcus Junius Brutus and his fellow-conspirators, who in 44 BC murdered Julius Caesar—who had done so much for Rome—we were thrown into doubt. We had to decide whether this murder was justified or not; for Caesar had not yet accepted the crown. But the conspirators loved freedom, and their hearts were troubled when it seemed to them that the freedom of Rome was in danger. We were faced by a conflict of conscience—the problematic question of resistance by *all* means, even by that of tyrannicide. Brutus may have felt that his very name was an obligation; for another Brutus, Lucius Julius, had participated in the expulsion of the tyrant Tarquinius Superbus in 510 BC, and thus had helped to found the Republic.

An especially significant example of the revolt against a lawful ruler in more recent times is the fight of the Netherlands against King Philip of Spain. Nearly the whole nation took part in the resistance, especially the "Gueux," that is to say, the "Beggars." The Dutch members of resistance took this nickname as a name of honour and pride. The song o



Wilhelmus of Nassovia, which was to become the Dutch national anthem, contains the words: "Before God and all His might I will confess that I have despised the king; for I obeyed the Lord, the highest Majesty, for the sake of justice." Here a true patriot justifies his having offered resistance to his lawful king, on the grounds that he had to obey the King of Kings, the Almighty.

The struggle of the Dutch people for liberation from the Spanish domination was also celebrated by Goethe in his drama, *Egmont*. In the dialogue between Egmont and the representative of King Philip, the cruel commander Alba, Egmont utters the following sentences, which strike to the very heart of the problem of resistance:

And these despotic alterations, these unlimited interferences of the supreme power, are they not signs that *one* man dares to do what thousands should not do? He wants to free himself alone in order to satisfy his every wish and to carry out his every thought. And if he is a good and wise king and we fully trust him, can he answer for his successors, and assure us that none of them would rule ruthlessly and mercilessly? And who would save us from despotism when he sends his ministers and servants who, without knowledge of the country and its needs, govern at will, encountering no resistance and feeling free of any responsibility?

Further glorifications of the fight for freedom of the Dutch Gueux are to be found in the grand tale *Die schwarze Galeere* (*The Black Galley*) by the German poet Wilhelm Raabe, and in Charles de Coster's great novel *Tyll Ulenspiegel*, one of the pearls of world literature and a classic document of the struggle for freedom of a whole people.

Schiller's play *Wilhelm Tell* is well known throughout the world. It describes the fight of the free Swiss people against the governor Gessler, who tried by cruel measures to maintain the Hapsburg reign over the Swiss cantons. Let me quote a few lines of this play, formulating for all time the right of man to fight for freedom against violence.



There is a limit to the despot's power!  
When the oppress'd for justice looks in vain,  
When his sore burden may be borne no longer,  
With fearless heart he makes appeal to Heaven  
And thence brings down his everlasting rights,  
Which there abide, inalienably his,  
And indestructible as are the stars.

It is significant for Hitler's tyranny that Schiller's play was removed from the curriculum of the German schools and was not allowed to be performed on the stage.

You will have noticed that the last examples I adduced fit into the pattern of nationalism. They date from the era during which the Western European peoples obtained their democratic unity. The Germans observed and admired this great development. But they lagged far behind the rest of Western Europe. When they built up their national state, their procedure did not resemble the fight for freedom of the Swiss, Dutch and French people, and it did not lead to comparable results. Therefore German literature lacks any great poem about Germany's own political freedom. Even the war against Napoleon I, which is often celebrated as the German War of Independence, did not lead to the writing of any such poem. Heinrich Heine, whose whole life was a fight for freedom and a remonstrance against oppression, writes about this war as follows:

We would have suffered even Napoleon patiently. But our princes, while hoping to be delivered from him by God's help, at the same time entertained the idea that the concentrated forces of their peoples might also contribute most effectively towards this end. . . . They commanded patriotism, and we became patriots; for we do everything our princes command. But this patriotism is not to be understood as the emotion which is given this name in France. The Frenchman's patriotism is something that warms his heart, so that it expands and embraces with its love not only his next of kin but the whole of France, the whole land of civilization. The German's patriotism, however, makes his heart

contract and shrink like leather in the cold, so that he hates all that is foreign and no longer wants to be a citizen of the world or a European, but only a narrow-minded German. Now we saw the "idealistic" insolence that was brought into a system by Herr Jahn. And there began the shabby, clumsy, unclean opposition to the attitude of mind which is the most glorious and sacred thing Germany has ever created—the opposition to the humanity, the general fraternization of men, the cosmopolitanism to which our great men of letters, Lessing, Herder, Schiller, Goethe, Jean Paul, and all truly civilized Germans have always paid homage.

But none of the German intellectuals, not even Heine, has formulated the moral duty of resistance against false patriotism so strikingly as did a prominent Englishman taking for an example a famous Frenchman: Duff Cooper in his biography of Talleyrand.

As Cooper says, it is one of the greatest defects of autocracy or unlimited monarchy as a form of government that there is no room for lawful opposition. The individual citizen who is honestly convinced that his country suffers and will continue to suffer on account of its bad political leadership is faced with a painful choice: either he must passively look on at the decline of his country, or, if he is to prevent this evil, he must take steps which are considered by his enemies to be high treason. Open opposition is insurrection or breaking the peace, secret opposition becomes high treason; but there are conditions under which such treason becomes a patriotic duty. Talleyrand, the foreign minister of Napoleon I, said to Czar Alexander: "High treason is only a matter of timing."

We Germans who fought against Hitler were not inclined to content ourselves with Talleyrand's cynical definition (though this is not to deny that he was a good Frenchman and European.) We went further and adopted the principle of another great Frenchman, Montesquieu, who said:



Si je savais quelque chose utile à ma patrie et qui fût préjudiciable à l'Europe, ou bien qui fût utile à l'Europe et préjudiciable au genre humain, je la regarderais comme un crime.

You all know about the resistance offered in World War II by the peoples of the countries invaded by Hitler's armies—France, the Netherlands, Belgium, Poland, Denmark, Norway and Yugoslavia. Their heroic fight was rightly admired and supported by the whole free world. About the German resistance against Hitler and National Socialism, nobody wanted to know anything. But "resistance" is a collective term for groups, deeds and convictions of individuals which were directed against National Socialism *everywhere*, in Germany as well as in the occupied countries. In Germany, resistance assumed a wide variety of forms. The least perceptible form was to protect and hide jeopardized persons, especially Jews. The hardest form was the assault. By the side of the gradually organized Resistance Movement, the Christian churches, Protestant as well as Catholic, stood at an exposed place. The Resistance Movement itself naturally had to work in silence and secrecy. Among the Protestants, resistance was promoted by the so-called Confessing Church. For the Catholic church, the encyclical "Flagranti cura" directed the general trend of resistance, the prominent representatives of which were the cardinals Graf Galen, Faulhaber and Graf Preysing.

Right from the beginning, the question was asked whether Hitler's assassination could be justified. This question became more and more urgent as the appalling crimes of the Nazis multiplied. The attitude of the churches was not quite unambiguous. It was held widely that an individual who was personally assailed could exercise his right of self-defence and kill the assailing tyrant; but it had not been decided clearly either by ethics or theology whether tyrannicide in the interest of general welfare



was justified. The killing of a usurper in defence of a legal government is generally considered to be within the law. Tyrannicide in the interest of general welfare, on the other hand, is considered lawful only under certain conditions, which will be discussed later on; but even in antiquity there were men—the so-called monarchomachs—who held that the assassination of *any* tyrant was justified in principle.

For citizens of a state the legal order of which has never been overthrown by a dictatorship, the problems arising from such a calamity are not easy to grasp. While Hitler was in power, I found in discussions with French and English friends that they simply failed to understand that a legal government could be a criminal one, and that they therefore also failed to understand the conflicts of conscience we had to face. But there was an oath of allegiance, sworn by soldiers and civil servants, from the observance of which no authority but their own conscience could release them. The right and the duty to resist therefore became the subject of passionate discussion in Germany.

As is well known, the right of resistance against one's own government was established in the revolutionary French constitution of 1793: "When the government violates the right of the people," it is there laid down, "insurrection is for the people, and every portion thereof, the most sacred of rights and the most indispensable of duties." If the state offends against the human dignity of the citizens, be it by the enactment of a law or by administrative action or decree, the measure of state or administration in question is null and void, for it is incompatible with justice and has no claim to compliance. Anyone who violates the freedom or the dignity of the citizens infringes the law, whoever he may be. According to St. Augustine, orders given by such a person are like those of a robber chief. And if the man who

receives the oath of allegiance from others is the first traitor of his people, this oath is null and void.

May I quote a saying of the great Swiss philanthropist Pestalozzi:

Fatherland! The first, most essential high treason that would be possible in thy midst would be to deprive thy citizens of their rights by administrative and therefore *apparently* legal and *apparently* constitutional measures. But, Fatherland, now less than ever wilt thou suffer violence to rule constitutionally over justice in any part of thy domains.

Where tyranny prevails, disloyalty towards the state becomes loyalty towards the people; for rebellion against tyrants is obedience to God. This is the lesson of history. It is also the outcome of the long discussion of these questions in postwar Germany, in the course of which principles were evolved that will stand the test of time.

The Supreme Judge of the German Federal Republic has expressed the same opinion as prominent representatives of the Catholic and the Protestant Church. Basing his decision on the knowledge of the grave infringements of the law committed by the National Socialist regime, the president of the Federal Court, Dr. Weinkauff, rendered the following opinion:

The right of resistance against law-breaking rulers has been recognized almost universally and at all times in Western jurisdiction, including that of Germany.

The right of resistance against a ruler who commits grave injustices which threaten state and nation in their totality and make the legal order itself questionable requires a legal vindication that takes the special nature of these facts into account.

The right of resistance against a ruler who breaks the law, commits crimes and leads his people into disaster is legally based on the following considerations: no ruler, no human legislator has complete power over the law. For there is a fundamental and prior order of things which holds independently of human and national legislation and which prevails over ruler and people alike.



This order, which transcends mere legality, commands us to respect those institutions of social life that are divine creations, especially the church, the family and the nation. When a ruler interferes with the liberty of the church and its pronouncements, when he strives to alienate children from their parents, when he degrades marriage into a stud, when he satanically surrenders individuals or whole groups to cold, planned extermination because of their race, their nationality or their creed, when he enslaves or destroys foreign nations, when he drives people from their country like cattle, then he acts contrary to the law in the highest degree.

The wrongs committed by the National-Socialist regime were such as to transcend purely legal considerations. They represent an invasion of satanic forces into the realm of government, and consequently everyone was called upon and summoned to offer active resistance.

But if a person is to rebel against his government and to offer resistance while remaining within the law, he must have clear and certain knowledge both of the fact that and the reasons why the government he opposes acts contrary to law and duty; he must be certain that the government does so to such an extent that active resistance against it is required and indispensable; and he must be able to judge to what extent such resistance is indispensable.<sup>1</sup>

Dr. Weinkauff then turns to the military resistance group whose attempt to assassinate Hitler failed on July 20, 1944. This group really was in the position to appraise and judge the situation, and it possessed special knowledge that enabled it to assess the nature and the probable result of the war both when it was planned and when it was actually waged. Its appraisal of the situation has since been vindicated beyond all doubt by the tragic events that ensued. By virtue of its composition, moreover, the military resistance group could hope to benefit the whole of the nation by its actions with as great a degree of confidence as can reasonably be asked for in so extreme a situation. In basing its plans for the *coup d'état* on leading personalities of

<sup>1</sup>Die Vollmacht des Gewissens (Hermann Rinn Verlag, Munich, 1956), p. 146 ff.



the Wehrmacht, it aimed to attack the regime at the only point where it still seemed vulnerable. There was a real possibility of success, and there were enough men in the group who combined experience in government and military affairs with purity of heart and who might have restored law and order. They could hope to retain control of the situation after the *coup d'état* and to turn Germany from its path of destruction. But they found themselves in the tragic conflict that the legally superior aim—the liberation of the people, the state, and indeed of the whole world from their corruptors—could be achieved only by the simultaneous sacrifice of innocent people. But can any action be ultimately justified if it involves the destruction of the innocent as well as the guilty? This is an extremely difficult question, which shows up the limitations of human law. But however it may be answered, even if the answer is that the action may be justified as a whole on the grounds that there is a right of resistance in extreme situations which transcends legal considerations, it remains indisputable that there was a conflict which could not be resolved by legal means, but only by the grace of God and of man.

These are the conclusions reached by Dr. Weinkauff, quoted from the collection of essays *Die Vollmacht des Gewissens*. In the same publication, the Jesuit Father Max Pribilla investigates the position of men bound by an oath of allegiance in the light of Catholic moral theology. He distinguishes between "passive" and "active" resistance. As regards passive resistance, there are no serious differences of opinion among Christians. The conditions for active resistance laid down by Father Pribilla are that all peaceful means for restoring law and order must have been exhausted and that the revolt must have a reasonable chance of success. The right of active resistance, he continues, has been discussed for thousands of years, and this discussion has not yet reached its conclusion; but a great and prevailing tradition

affirms this right in cases of extreme national emergency. For it seems senseless that the people should be sacrificed to the whims of a criminal despot. When the ruler himself has broken his allegiance to the people, the oath of allegiance ceases to be valid.<sup>2</sup>

The Protestant point of view is presented by the Professor of Theology, Walter Künneth.<sup>3</sup> According to him, the oath does not limit, but on the contrary increases personal responsibility. He claims that persons who wish to engage in active resistance must hold responsible positions and that not every individual has the right to resist. His second condition for offering active resistance is that the person in question must have competent insight into the situation—an insight according to which the situation is such as to bring the right of self-defence into operation. His third condition is that the acts of resistance must be feasible. According to Künneth, then, the leaders of a rebellion must have surveyed the situation in its totality and must have considered all eventualities. Persons engaging in acts of resistance must be able to guarantee, to the best of their knowledge and belief, the institution of a better order. If they are unable to do so, they should keep their hands off. If we believe, for example, that we could start a counter-revolution in the East, and the plan were not conscientiously thought out, the resulting chaos and bloodshed would be far worse than the present situation, which is bad enough. Half measures or faulty measures are likely to increase injustice and chaos in such critical situations.

Finally, Künneth examines the question whether ethical possibility implies ethical justification. In his opinion, it does not. The ethical possibility is given in free responsible decision, in the execution of action.

<sup>2</sup>*Die Vollmacht des Gewissens, ed. cit.*, p. 159 ff.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 164 ff.

His concluding words are:

All political action is in the last analysis ethically ambiguous, questionable and tied up with guilt, but it has to be performed in responsible decision. The encounter between the Christian church and the leading men of politics and public affairs is therefore not only necessary but salutary.

For he thinks that the political leaders in particular, who go about their hard political tasks soberly and as a matter of course, need what the Christian church preaches and what we call, in the language of the Bible, the "remission of sins." And indeed, the remission of sins seems to be the final ethical and religious answer to the moral problems of resistance.



## II

### THE GERMAN OPPOSITION TO HITLER

DEMOCRACY, like all human institutions, has its defects and weak points and is far from perfection. But among all possible kinds of government, democracy—as history demonstrates—is still the best.

Freedom of the individual means the assurance of legal protection, freedom of speech and press, and freedom of conscience and religious creed. It is the freedom of personal action based on respect for the individual. But this freedom is obviously and inalienably restricted to this extent, that one's own action must never interfere with the freedom of the community and of one's neighbours. Thus it is based on conscience and a sense of responsibility. The essence of democracy—in America as well as in Europe—resides in the fact that the most diverse political views and religious creeds are tolerated side by side without any coercion. Such freedom is the most distinctive criterion of democracy and is guaranteed also in those free countries which neither claim to be nor are Christian states.

The direct opposite of democracy is dictatorship. From antiquity to the present day, tyranny has almost invariably followed the same path. The only difference is that the forms of terror and violence it employs have kept pace with technical progress. The ferocious animals in the arenas of Roman emperors have been replaced by the gas chamber, crucifixion by deadly injections administered by a physician, and the simple noose by the butcher's hook; tortures have now been accompanied by drugs to weaken mental resistance.

To justify their actions, the tyrants of today rely on clichés they have inherited from their predecessors. They claim to be only the executive power of the people: the people always and only want what is good, and everything that is to the benefit of the people is right and just. Such a theory was put forward by Robespierre for instance. But he was at least honestly convinced of the truth of his theory and tried to press the people into the Procrustean bed of "public virtue." He had no belief in, and no conception of, the dynamics of organic development, and he knew nothing of the real character of the people. Denying that man was the only criterion of policy, he destroyed the foundations of any genuine politics, that is to say, respect for the life and personal dignity of the individual. Thus the paradise he wanted to achieve for the French people became a dungeon without light, at the door of which the guillotine was waiting. The parallel with the fate of Germany is evident, the only difference being that Hitler and his henchmen misused the people's welfare from the very beginning as a mendacious pretext for furthering their own personal interest.

Historians of totalitarianism make it clear that there exists a common pattern of mass-seduction in both communist and fascist systems. Analyzing "twentieth-century absolutism," Jules Monnerot writes:

Multiplicity and competition give place to unity and monopoly, and this is hailed as a triumph for the "will of the masses." The proof, or rather the emotional demonstration, is given in monster parades and processions and meetings. The conscious will of the leader and his staff is represented as the unconscious will of the masses.

Hitler claimed to supply a better and profounder interpretation than universal suffrage of the people's will, and he also claimed to *be* the people's answer; he was unified with the Party in a state of "participation," and the Party was united with the people; so he himself, through the Party, was in a state of "participation" with the people. In this way democracy becomes a physical



state; and this was the original idea behind the confused and tenuous Hitlerian theory of "Race." The Führer is the embodied consciousness of the Race, and therefore also its conscience. He is the incarnation of the community's fate, and in his personal existence, which from being obscure has become spectacular, he "plays" (in both senses of the word) the destiny of the people in the arena of history.<sup>1</sup>

Friedrich Meinecke, the late nestor of German historiography, said in his book *The German Disaster*, which is a most important contribution to the analysis of the present German situation:

German history is rich in difficult riddles and unfortunate turns. But for our comprehension the riddle that confronts us today and the catastrophe through which we are now living surpasses all previous occurrences of a similar kind. . . . The subtler reasons why what is said today can be only fragmentary lie in the spiritual and intellectual shocks to which all contemporaries and witnesses of this frightful period have been subjected—not only those immediately stricken but also those throughout the world who were merely looking on. These shocks inevitably clouded every judgement, no matter how hard one might try to see things clearly and objectively.<sup>2</sup>

Here, Friedrich Meinecke raises a problem which torments all of us and to which we have not yet found a satisfactory answer. The heart of the problem is to explain the specific German way to totalitarianism.

The historical development that led to Hitler's rise to power is still very little known. But there is already a growing tendency in Germany to blame non-German powers for the disaster of the past, and even to ascribe it to a quite mystical phenomenon, the so-called "sickness of Western

<sup>1</sup>Jules Monnerot, *Sociology of Communism*, trl. Jane Degras and Richard Rees (London [1953]), p. 233.

<sup>2</sup>Friedrich Meinecke, *The German Disaster. Reflections and Recollections*, trl. Sidney B. Fay (Cambridge, Mass. [1950]), p. xi f.



civilization." There is a large measure of truth in the statement of Professor Hans Kohn of New York, who writes:

If German historians should refuse to face squarely the question of German responsibility for Hitlerism and to guide the people towards its recognition, little hope exists for a new Germany in a new relationship to Europe and the world.<sup>3</sup>

Nevertheless a certain agreement has been reached by the most reliable German historians facing the Bismarck-problem, the end of the Weimar Republic, and the new German imperialism up to 1945.

Professor Schnabel of Munich says:

Bismarck considered that the territorial compactness and the independence of modern great states, which recognize legal order among themselves only in the shape of alternating alliances, constituted not merely a valuable, but in fact a final achievement of civilization. In order to safeguard and to extend this system of state power he promoted the welfare of the people, though wholly in the spirit of the old statecraft, and was convinced that only a power state could guarantee happiness and prosperity. Since the situation in which he found himself demanded his active intervention, he was not squeamish in the choice of his means and did not seek farther afield after new, better ways. He took for granted the state world in which he lived, and believed that Prussia was called upon to achieve something valuable in this system. He considered a compact state organism in the heart of Europe to be a higher form of life than a federation of states carried to another stage of development. There were many esteemed thinkers who, though they had their doubts, still sought to justify the statesman and encourage him in his course. Powerful intellectual currents of the time assisted in this change. They led further and further away from the conceptions of law and Christianity. But the statesman did not wholly realize what an alliance he was accepting. The life work which he built was certainly not profoundly thought out, but one would do injustice to its master if one were to forget that the spiritual life in his time had in general lost all direction, that numerous and contradictory

<sup>3</sup>Hans Kohn ed., *German History—Some New German Views*, trl. Herbert H. Rowen (London, 1954), p. 15.

standpoints were represented with scholarship of equal breadth and with equal impressiveness, and that it was extremely difficult for the statesman to reach a position of fixity and validity. The creator of the Second German Empire remained entirely gripped by the contradictions of his age. He made shift with the old means and the old purposes. These had never before led to enduring order; now the passions were all aroused as well. Bismarck took part in this release from control.<sup>4</sup>

Bismarck did become the first statesman of his time, and the Second German Empire grew up to become the first hegemonic power in Europe. But none of these achievements could serve to foster a spirit of freedom within Germany. The institutions of democracy developed very slowly. The civilian habit of thought was discouraged and the great heritage of Schiller, Beethoven, Heine, Goethe, Kant and Hegel was no longer recognized as a call to the realization of political freedom.

The close connection between freedom and law was often misunderstood. It became usual to laugh at international responsibilities so long as the Reich was in possession of power, but to cry about the perfidy of other nations if one's own wrongdoing had led to defeat. Professor Dehio of Marburg is right in pointing out that German politics during the first half of our century were devoid of a single idea that could have won other nations to our side. In his most interesting book about Germany and the epoch of the World Wars, he explains:

Say what you will, the expansion of the Prussian system had resulted in driving a wider cleavage between might and spirit in the rejuvenated German nation than existed in other peoples. Thus our imperialists fell into perplexity as to how to find spiritual support for the expansion of German power. They tried to find help in the period of our spiritual flowering, when the life of the individual was glorified. It was declared to be our proper mission

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 92.



to protect the nation in its many-sided individuality against Anglo-Saxon uniformity and Russian bureaucracy. But during the First World War we visibly began to move along the Napoleonic path. The other nations, of course, thereupon automatically ceased to believe that we had such a mission. The attempt to justify hegemonic expansion by means of these ideals, which developed out of the struggle *against* Napoleon, gave rise to an inner contradiction.<sup>5</sup>

The inner contradiction of which Dehio speaks was the driving force in 1932, when the general assault upon the republic began. It was the Rightist opposition, not the Nazis only, which directed the attack. The last trustworthy Reichskanzler, Heinrich Brüning, was at first able to beat the foe. But the President of the Republic, Marshal von Hindenburg, failed to live up to his position. He was a rather narrow-minded fossil of the Second Empire, a man who in 1916 still thought in terms of the great tradition of the Prussian kingdom and not in terms of the Empire he served. How could he have safeguarded the Republic in this terrible crisis? When, shortly after Hindenburg's re-election in 1932, Brüning's Minister of the Interior and of Defence, General Groener, banned Hitler's storm-troopers, Hindenburg was told by General von Schleicher that Groener no longer held the confidence of the republican Reichswehr. This was obviously blackmail and against the constitutional order. As Professor Buchheim explains:

Of course, it was in no wise the function of the army in a democratic state to refuse its confidence to a responsible minister. In Schleicher's declaration lay a reversion to Ludendorff's methods and hence the decision of militarism to take over power in Germany again. It was Hindenburg's constitutional duty to dismiss Schleicher at once. But it was not Schleicher he dismissed, but Groener.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>5</sup>Ludwig Dehio, *Deutschland und die Weltpolitik im 20. Jahrhundert* (Munich, 1955), p. 20. Cf. Hans Kohn, *op. cit.*, p. 122 f.

<sup>6</sup>Hans Kohn, *op. cit.*, p. 63.



A few weeks later, Brüning fell as well. The new Chancellor, von Papen, was the man in whom the reactionary circles placed their confidence. His first action was to dissolve, on July 20, 1932, the still existing government of the Weimar coalition in Prussia.

For the next twelve years, from July 20, 1932 to the very same date in 1944, the German Resistance struggled for freedom, freedom for the individual, for the nation and for mankind.

The people of the countries invaded and occupied by Hitler's armies had a clear and unequivocal stand: they fought the enemy of their countries. All the great emotional values of mankind—patriotism, love of freedom, of justice and humanity—supported and intensified the sense of duty which impelled them to oppose the invader. There were no conflicts of conscience, no religious scruples. The Resistance in Germany was in a more tragic position: it was in conflict with a strong national tradition. I should like to characterize this movement with the heroic words Churchill spoke when he took over the government of his country in its darkest hour: blood, sweat and tears. The members of the German Resistance found understanding for their aims neither amongst their own people, who were misled and intoxicated by the successes of the Hitler regime, nor among the free nations.

When the Western powers came to know about the Resistance in Germany, they thought that there was no hope that this movement could win the struggle against Hitler and abolish the pernicious system he had imposed. Almost no one ever asked himself *why* the German Resistance had started to fight. But if this question had been asked, it would have become obvious that the aims for which the German Resistance fought were exactly the same for which the free world took up arms against the brown totalitarianism. It was because of this failure to understand the moral

strength of German Resistance that the Allies abstained from even trying a "Badoglio-solution" after the Italian example, though the German Resistance would have been willing to co-operate. Today we know that such a step would have avoided immense losses of lives and property.

Resistance grew from all parts and all classes of the people: workers and their leaders, the middle class, the intelligentsia, the aristocracy, soldiers and officers, women and young people of every social stratum. The specific situation of resistance under totalitarian terror prevented these larger and smaller groups from integrating their efforts. They fought separately, but they were united in the prisons of the Gestapo, in the concentration camps and on the scaffolds.

We must try to understand the misconceptions about German Resistance, which have contributed so much to the tragic failure of this movement.

Many a lie that originated in the time of National Socialism is still alive and contributes to these misconceptions. Above all, there is the wicked illusion, engendered by the Nazi propaganda slogans, that Hitler was the symbol of a united Germany: "Ein Volk, ein Reich, ein Führer." If this were true, the verdict of condemnation would rest squarely on the whole German people. The truth is that Hitler never did represent Germany. This must now be shown.

Historical research and personal memory confirm the fact that already Hitler's rise—the very fear lest he might gain control—led whole classes of people into opposition. The fatal danger inherent in National Socialism for the German people as well as for the whole world was perceived by many Germans much earlier than by the rest of the world. Even many years after Hitler had come to power, high-ranking foreign statesmen still came to Germany to pay



homage to the so-called "Führer," and thus fatally contributed to his prestige and power.

The German Resistance against Hitler's regime was not a matter of small circles, and above all not a matter of disappointed and neglected ambitions. It was not a matter of personal emotions but the insurrection of conscience.

In each of the countries invaded by Hitler there was an admirable resistance movement; but the German enemies of Hitler considered their country also as an occupied territory.

The German Resistance was the oldest of these movements.

The concentration camps were first set up for Germans. Until the beginning of the war, about one million Germans were imprisoned there. Many were released again, but at the time war broke out, 300,000 Germans were still in concentration camps. It was only when Hitler unleashed his fury against Germany's neighbours that foreigners fell victim to the same terrible fate.

The well-known writer of military history, Wheeler-Bennet, in his book *The Nemesis of Power*, has given a very detailed description of the role of the military class in the German Resistance. But excellent as this book may be as a whole, grave objections have to be made against its treatment of this movement. Wheeler-Bennet approaches the problem with preconceived ideas which he attempts to prove, rather than arriving at conclusions from the facts of the case. Men like the generals Beck and von Hammerstein-Equord, Admiral Canaris and Major-General Oster did not work for Hitler's fall in order to save a military tradition. Their actions were determined by a true decision of conscience in accordance with eternal maxims of justice and freedom. The same holds of Field-Marshal Erwin von Witzleben, Colonel Henning von Tresckow, the generals



Friedrich Olbricht, Paul von Hase, Friedrich von Rabenau and many other officers.

I do not want to mention more names because the list of those unforgotten and honest men is very long. Their death is a terrible and irrecoverable loss for Germany. And not only this group, but also many other personages, both men and women, have been surrendered to the executioner.

In contrast to Wheeler-Bennet's playing down the motives of these men, friends of mine in France were deeply impressed by the fact that it was precisely the members of the military and feudal classes who were among the most active confessors of resistance, something unprecedented in German history.

If Hitler really had stood for Germany, as Nazi propaganda assumed, why were so many Germans slaughtered? From 1933 to 1945, the bloodstained Nazi criminal courts sent 12,500 Germans to the scaffold, not to mention the innumerable victims of martial law, estimated at seven to eight thousand during the last four months in 1945 alone. These horrible facts have remained more or less unknown outside Germany. But the sacrifice of our brothers can never be forgotten.

Before going into the details of the history of the German Resistance, it may be well to deal with two questions my readers may ask themselves. First, how was it possible that an active resistance movement could come into being at a time when no free expression of opinion was possible in Germany and when an elaborately organized secret police was ready to quench in blood every spark of independent thought; and secondly, what gives me the right to discuss German Resistance at all?

1. Resistance to Hitler had begun long before he had become the supreme power in Germany. There were circles which had considered the possibility of the National

Socialists grasping the reins of state, had realized that resistance might have to be organized under conditions of terror, and had made plans to cope with this situation. The strategy of resistance was carefully examined, unsuitable methods were rejected, and tactics evolved that would enable the operations of the Resistance Movement, for some time at least, to escape detection by the secret police. For example, a "slave language," to use Lenin's term, was used in public meetings and publications, and an unobtrusive secret code was employed to inform one's friends about one's true thoughts and intentions. When making appointments by letter or over the telephone, a constantly changing code was used: thus, Friday at 3 p.m. might mean Saturday at 5 p.m., and a large number of different names might all refer to the same meeting place. New members of the Resistance were chosen with the utmost caution, as one could never be sure whether an applicant would stand the decisive test, torture by the Gestapo. For this reason, it was necessary to tell many people of unobjectionable political character that their only contribution to the Resistance could and should consist in keeping alive and in maintaining their personal influence on their environment. Others were kept on the fringes of the movement and assigned the easier and less dangerous tasks. As a result of these precautions, only relatively small groups were available for the most central activities of resistance, but these groups had the spiritual support of a large community. The separate groups and circles were linked by only a few intermediaries. Thus there was no personal contact either among the separate groups or among the members of the individual groups except through these intermediaries, each of whom in turn knew only one single person in the other group. In this respect, the organization of the Resistance Movement resembled that of the Rosicrucians. If they were cross-examined by the secret police, all members of the Resistance



were told to stick always to the verge of truth, but never to tell the whole truth.

2. As to the second question, I had been personally acquainted with many subsequent members of the Resistance long before 1933. After Hitler's rise to power, I was able to take advantage of my position as the editor of the periodical *Deutsche Rundschau* to provide the movement with an inconspicuous meeting place. In order to deceive the Gestapo, who examined my correspondence and listened in on my telephone conversations, I camouflaged my visitors by systematically referring to them as potential contributors to the periodical. Whenever a member of the Resistance had called on me, I sent him a letter confirming that he had offered me an article about something or other and suggesting that in view of the difficulties of his subject further personal calls would be necessary. This subterfuge turned out to be most valuable when some of my friends and acquaintances were subsequently examined by the Gestapo. When they replied to questions about their relations with me that they had offered me this or that article for the *Deutsche Rundschau*, the very persons who had gone through their correspondence in search of evidence against them found themselves in the position of having to confirm their alibi.

My relation to Dr. Carl Goerdeler was especially close. He really was a contributor to the *Deutsche Rundschau*, and I myself as well as my periodical were entirely at his disposal. I also had personal contact with two social-democratic leaders in the Resistance, Hermann Maass and Wilhelm Leuschner. Men like General Beck and General von Hammerstein-Equord, Field Marshal von Witzleben, his adjutant Graf Schwerin and Colonel Siegfried Wagner of the Ministry of War bestowed their confidence on me. This was a very great honour and a fact I am still proud of. After my arrest, Admiral Canaris, the head of the German

counter-intelligence, tried to help me by listing my name among his co-operators so that my various trips to England in 1939 should look like harmless voyages undertaken on his instructions.

I was closely connected with almost all the leading members of the Resistance who were intended to form the new government after the success of the revolt. Consequently I learned about the plans for the revolt and was able to give advice and support as far as I was asked. In February, 1942, von Hammerstein-Equord, Beck and Goerdeler, having first carefully camouflaged the trip with all kinds of apparently innocuous orders, sent me to Paris to see Field Marshal von Witzleben. According to the plans of the Resistance at that time, von Witzleben with his reliable tank divisions in France should wheel and return to Germany to arrest Hitler. I brought the message to von Witzleben that everything was ready in Berlin and that the declaration to be read to the German people after Hitler's arrest had been drawn up.

Shortly after my return in April, 1942, I was arrested by the Gestapo. On this occasion, something happened which is very typical of the methods of secret police. The above-mentioned declaration, which I had to edit, was accidentally lying on top of my desk when the secret police were searching my apartment. The policemen rummaged in all boxes, chests, wardrobes and clothes and completely emptied out the desk, but they failed to notice the declaration lying on top among other papers. They simply did not see it, as the police in totalitarian states, obsessed by their desire to ferret out the concealed, quite often miss the more important and more interesting facts on the surface.

For reasons other than my arrest, the plans for 1942 were not carried out. Instead, the Resistance intensified its preparations for the now historic attempt on Hitler's life, carried out on July 20, 1944. At this late stage of the war,



our only means of overthrowing the government lay in killing Hitler.

The 20th of July, 1944, saw the darkest hour of modern German history, but also the vindication of her national honour. Colonel Claus Schenk Graf von Stauffenberg, Chief of Staff of the German Home Army, tragically had to act two parts. At that time, Hitler was living in his headquarters in East Prussia, protected from the "love of his people" by three zones of barbed wire. Stauffenberg, a highly qualified officer, had to deliver his routine reports at headquarters and was the only person in the Resistance who had access to the well-protected "Führer" through all gates and personal checks. He was, however, not only assigned the task of assassinating Hitler, but also had to take charge of military operations at the Ministry of War on Bendlerstrasse, Berlin. Together with the First Lieutenant von Haefen, Stauffenberg flew to the Führer's headquarters in East Prussia, the so-called Wolfsschanze. During a staff-meeting where he was supposed to make a report, Stauffenberg placed the bomb and set the fuse. Then, pretending to have to make an urgent telephone call to Berlin, he went out of the room where the meeting took place. Contrary to usual practice, the conference was held in the so-called tea-pavilion instead of the concrete shelter. Stauffenberg remained nearby to wait for the bomb to explode. But as the tea-pavilion was a very light wooden structure, the air pressure of the explosion merely crushed the walls and threw most of the participants in the conference outside, where they lay around apparently dead or dying.

Under the impression that the bomb had produced its intended effect, Stauffenberg and his aide-de-camp left headquarters unhampered by controls and flew back to Berlin, where the military resistance group was already assembled in the Ministry of War. Stauffenberg announced Hitler's death. General Olbricht and Colonel Merz von

Quirnheim, his Chief of Staff, had meanwhile given the order "Valkyrie" to all military commands. "Valkyrie" was the code name for the operations to be made in case of internal revolts, operations which had been planned with great care and thoroughness by the General Staff. But General Fromm, the Commander-in-Chief of the Home Army, who had hesitated for a long time as to whether he should take part in the revolt or not, finally refused to give his consent to operation "Valkyrie," after he had an urgent telephone conversation with General Headquarters and had been told by Keitel that Hitler was still alive. Thereupon Olbricht, Merz von Quirnheim and Graf Stauffenberg arrested Fromm, and General Hoepfner took his place. The military authorities took over the executive power. Operation "Valkyrie" started. The government buildings and the quarters of the Gestapo were encircled by the guard-unit. Reliable troops, among them a tank battalion, were approaching Berlin. The proposed new head of the state, General Beck, had also arrived at the War Ministry. The first orders signed by the new Commander-in-Chief of the whole Wehrmacht, Field Marshal von Witzleben, were transmitted by teleprinter to all Commanders-in-Chief at the front line, in the occupied countries and in Germany. At Paris and in other cities, the revolt ran according to schedule. The events in Paris, where the SS and the Gestapo were disarmed and arrested without any difficulties, show that it would not have come to a civil war if the attempt on Hitler's life had been successful.

But at 6.30 p.m., the national wireless system announced on behalf of Goebbels that Hitler had survived the attempt on his life. Unfortunately, the plan to blow up the communication centre in the "Wolfsschanze" had not been realized, so that Hitler and Keitel could get in touch with the outside, and doubts arose in the War Ministry and some



of the other headquarters. General Beck ordered that the operation should take place nevertheless. This order could still have led to success, but there was so much uncertainty by now that it was not observed.

At 7.30 p.m., von Witzleben appeared in the Ministry of War, but left at 8.15 p.m. because he no longer believed that the *coup d'état* would be successful. Meanwhile Goebbels, who should have been arrested by the Berlin guard-regiment, convinced its commander, Major Remer, by means of a personal telephone conversation with Hitler that the latter was still alive. Now Remer, an entirely inferior person, turned against the members of the revolt, though originally he had been willing to carry out their orders. He was quite dominated by his NSFO (political commissar), who was a fanatic Nazi and who had persuaded him to get in touch with Goebbels. The troops approaching and entering Berlin were given counter-orders by Himmler and returned to their quarters.

In the War Ministry, a few Nazi officers turned against Olbricht and thus enabled General Fromm to arrest the leaders of the movement. A court martial summoned by Fromm passed death sentences on General Olbricht, Colonel Merz von Quirnheim, Graf Stauffenberg and First Lieutenant von Haefthen. The execution took place in the yard of the Ministry. General Beck committed suicide.

One of the best members of the Resistance, Colonel von Tresckow, Chief of Staff of an army group in Russia, foretold the reactions to the attempt on Hitler's life when, after the failure of the *coup d'état*, he sought his death on the battlefield:

Now the whole world will attack and insult us. But now as ever it is my adamant conviction that we were right. I believe Hitler to be not only the arch-enemy of Germany but also the

arch-enemy of the world. When after a few hours I shall stand before the Throne of Judgement to account for my actions and omissions I believe I can justify with good conscience all I did in my fight against Hitler.

Hitler was raging. He appointed Himmler Commander-in-Chief of the Home Army. During the night, Hitler delivered a mendacious address over all available radio stations.

After the failure of July 20th, an unprecedented wave of terror spread over Germany. This terror did not shrink from making whole families liable to arrest for the actions of one of their members (the so-called Sippenhaft) or from defiling the bodies of the officers who had been shot.

Hitler had ordered that the corpses of these officers be exhumed and photographed. The trial before the People's Court and even the executions were filmed. There was a veritable orgy of vile revengefulness. Once again Jacob Burckhardt's word came true: there is a vast stock of scoundrels in every people. Goering even proposed to have the ashes of the executed scattered on the Berlin sewage grounds, so that the holy German earth should not be soiled by the remains of traitors!

Goebbels tried to surpass his lord and master and did not shrink from any blasphemy. High-ranking German officers prostituted themselves by acting as judges of Hitler's so-called "military court of honour." They expelled their comrades from the army and delivered them up to the bloodstained people's court. The chairman of this "court of honour" was Field Marshal von Rundstedt; the assessors were Keitel, Guderian and the Generals Schroth, Specht, Kriebel, Burgdorf and Meisel. On Hitler's order the last two later on induced Rommel to commit suicide.

In his radio address, Hitler spoke of a "small clique of ambitious officers." But very soon he had to realize that to



eliminate this "small clique" a special department of the secret police with a staff of 400 members led by SD-officer Leo Lange had to be set up. This shows most convincingly how deeply the spirit of resistance had penetrated into all groups of the German people. Leo Lange was a bestial creature who liked to torture the imprisoned resistance fighters personally. I was in his hands too. Today this same Lange performs the same functions for the security police in East Germany, who have welcomed him as an expert murderer.

Freisler, the president of the people's court, was ordered by Hitler to take care that none of the defendants had a real opportunity to speak, so that nobody in the trials could voice anti-Nazi views. Freisler fulfilled this order by his well-known technique of shouting down the defendants. The procedure was to be "hard and swift as lightning."

Hitler's bloodthirstiness was unquenchable. He said: "I want to see them hang like slaughtered cattle." Thus the trials before the people's court became a disgusting farce, and the death sentences were executed in a barbarous and brutal manner. In this way our people lost its best men in its gravest hour.

They could have saved our people. This is made evident by the plans for the composition and the programme of the provisional government. The proposed members of the new cabinet were: Chancellor, Dr. Carl Goerdeler; Vice-Chancellor, Wilhelm Leuschner; Secretary of the Chancery, Peter Graf York von Wartenburg; Minister of Home Affairs, Julius Leber; Secretary for Home Affairs, Fritz Graf von der Schulenburg; Minister of Economy, Dr. Paul Lejeune-Jung; Minister of Justice, Dr. Joseph Wirmer; Minister of Cultural Affairs, Eugen Bolz or Dr. Johannes Popitz or Adolf Reichwein; Minister of Finance, Dr. Ewald Loeser; Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ulrich von Hassel or Werner Graf von der Schulenburg; Minister of War, General Friedrich

Olbricht; Secretary in the Ministry of War, Claus Schenk Graf von Stauffenberg; Minister of Labour, Bernhard Letterhaus; Minister of Transportation, Dr. Raabe or Matthäus Hermann.

All political groups from the Right to the Social Democrats would have been represented in this government.

But the revolt of our élite was in vain. It is up to us Germans to guard their inheritance.



### III

## FROM RESISTANCE AGAINST HITLER TO THE STRUGGLE FOR FREEDOM OF TODAY

IN ALL totalitarian countries, there is a busy host of agents and informers who are the despised but pampered tools of the government: to quote Burckhardt's saying again, there is a vast number of scoundrels in every nation. These agents must not be confused with their counterparts in earlier police states. As Hannah Arendt puts it in *The Origins of Totalitarianism*:

The task of the totalitarian police is not to discover crimes, but to be on hand when the government decides to arrest a certain category of the population. Their chief political distinction is that they alone are in the confidence of the highest authority and know which political line will be enforced. This does not apply only to matters of high policy, such as the liquidation of a whole class or ethnic group (only the cadres of the GPU knew the actual goal of the Soviet government in the early thirties and only the SS formations knew that the Jews were to be exterminated in the early forties). The point about everyday life under totalitarian conditions is that only the agents of the NKVD in an industrial enterprise are informed of what Moscow wants when it orders, for instance, a speed-up in the fabrication of pipes—whether it simply wants more pipes, or to ruin the director of the factory, or to liquidate the whole management, or to abolish this particular factory, or, finally, to have this order repeated all over the nation so that a new purge can begin.

One of the reasons for the duplication of secret services whose agents are unknown to each other is that total domination needs the most extreme flexibility: to use our example, Moscow may not yet know, when it gives its order for pipes, whether it wants pipes—which are always needed—or a purge. Multiplication of secret

services makes last-minute changes possible, so that one branch may be preparing to bestow the Order of Lenin on the director of the factory while another makes arrangements for his arrest. The efficiency of the police consists in the fact that such contradictory assignments can be prepared simultaneously.

Under totalitarian, as under other regimes, the secret police has a monopoly on certain vital information. But the kind of knowledge that can be possessed only by the police has undergone an important change: it is no longer concerned with knowing what is going on in the heads of future victims (most of the time it ignores who these victims will be), and the police have become the trustees of the greatest state secrets. This automatically means a great improvement in prestige and position, even though it is accompanied by a definite loss of real power. The secret services no longer know anything that the Leader does not know better; in terms of power, they have sunk to the level of the executioner.<sup>1</sup>

Once a totalitarian system has been set up, it always develops with an inexorable logic. Soon the mere inclination to live decently and honourably according to the sacred and eternal codes of old, the mere inclination to fight against injustice, is sufficient for a person to be singled out as a "traitor" of the people and to be handed over to the hangman. Moral indifference, on the other hand, brings rich rewards, as it did in Hitler's Germany and still does in Russia. In the later stages of totalitarianism, it is no longer sufficient not to commit "political crimes"; now everybody must constantly give evidence of his devotion and unlimited faith in the "Führer" and his government if he wants to avoid the threat of arrest and death. Every individual non-Nazi was a "potential enemy" in Hitler's Germany even if he did not know it himself.

It is a further rule of such monstrous and prodigious states that the pressure increases with the growing madness of the despots, and that whole families are held responsible for the political opinion of one single member. The methods

<sup>1</sup>Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (Harcourt, Brace and Co., New York, 1951), p. 403 f.



used in this connection are the most vile and contemptible a sick brain could invent.

But alongside that array of scoundrels, there is in every people a group of men who recognize as the ultimate standard of their conduct the voice of their own conscience, that is to say, the Ten Commandments of God.

If we fail to understand the importance of these élites in the recent past, we shall not master the present, not to speak of the future. Let me therefore refer again to the German example.

The following facts have been shown to be true:

(1) There was what we may call an "automatic" resistance, the counterpart of the infamous "automatic" arrest which entails long years of imprisonment and probable death in the Soviet Union. To this automatic resistance, to begin with, all communists belonged, who, without having committed any real acts of resistance, were arrested and brought to the prisons, concentration camps or scaffolds after Hitler had seized power. In saying this, I do not wish to belittle the courageous battle those communists fought who were released from the prisons or had avoided imprisonment by going underground. Shortly before the end of the Third Reich, but too late, even something like a true comradeship with these communists developed in the Resistance Movement, based on very rational considerations. But their resistance was only automatic and came to a standstill when its promoters put the brakes on. This became obvious in 1932 during the strike of the Berlin tramway workers and again after the Hitler-Stalin Pact had been signed.

And here we come to the decisive point. The true spirit of resistance cannot be commanded by political parties. It must arise from the voice of conscience which tells us to fight against all violence, against every injustice and every

lie. Men imbued with this true spirit of resistance were to be found throughout all classes of the German people, from the workmen to the East-Elbian Junkers, civilians and soldiers alike. This fact represents the only moral vindication of the German people, as is increasingly recognized by the opinion of the non-German world.

(2) Organized German resistance against Hitler began in 1932, after the "Harzburger Front" had been constituted. The resistance was supported by the German workers, by middle class intellectuals and by sections of the aristocracy and of the officers.

It is true that some of the officers involved were mainly interested in stopping Hitler's amateurish military leadership. But this does not by any means apply to all of them. Professional motives are not sufficient to account for participation in the resistance, neither in the case of the military personnel nor that of the workers or the intelligentsia. Apart from a few opportunists, the German fighters for freedom were acting from the purest and noblest motives which can impel a human heart: love of freedom and justice, of humanity and human dignity, of moral and political decency, of world peace and of one's native country.

Whoever was impelled to offer resistance by these motives, by responsibility towards his own conscience and by respect for the Ten Commandments, will always continue to fight against every act of violence, against every injustice, against every lie and against every violation of human life and human dignity. But those who have become guilty of flagrant injustice, guilty of contempt for human life and human dignity or guilty of crimes against humanity either by active participation or by silent toleration, even if only in a single instance—those never had the true spirit of resistance and have forfeited the right to boast of being fighters for freedom and justice.



(3) When the work of resistance began, there were at first only individual groups, working side by side, but without contact with one another. After the dispersion of some of the groups, most of the remaining groups gradually merged to form one movement, whose efforts culminated in the attempt on Hitler's life on July 20, 1944.

(4) Even after the 20th of July, resistance remained active and a further plan to eliminate Hitler was prepared.

(5) If the extraordinarily difficult situation created by the political terror in Germany is taken into account, the uprising of July 20th appears amateurish neither from a military nor from a political point of view. The plans of the Resistance Movement for political reorganization of Germany after Hitler's removal were clearer, more reasonable and more democratic than those pursued by the Allies after the capitulation of Germany.

(6) Nobody in the whole world who knows the realities of the German resistance is still speaking of a collective guilt of the German people. But we acknowledge our collective responsibility.

It must not be overlooked, however, that the powers which defeated Germany in World War II had a considerable share in the responsibility for Hitler's rise to power and the events that ensued from it. The Western powers acted like the Carthaginians in their struggle with Rome: they did nothing at first, and when they began to act, it was too late. The explanation of their failure to take timely action will be found in a book of remarkable topical interest—Macchiavelli's *Discorsi sopra la prima decade di Tito Livio*:

The Carthaginians . . . were already a great power and in great esteem when the Romans were fighting the Samnites and the Tuscans, for they held the whole of Africa, held Sardinia and Sicily, and had dominion over part of Spain. This their power,

conjoined with the fact that they were remote from the confines of the Roman people, accounts for their never having thought of attacking the Romans, or of helping the Samnites and Tuscans. On the contrary, they acted as men do when things seem to be moving rapidly in another's favour, namely, came to terms with Rome, and sought her friendship. Nor was the mistake thus made at the outset realized until the Romans had conquered all the peoples that lay between them and the Carthaginians and they began to contend with each other for the dominion of Sicily and Spain. The same thing happened to the Gauls, to Philip, king of Macedon, and to Antiochus as happened to the Carthaginians. Whilst Rome was engaged with some other state, each of them thought the other state would beat Rome, and that they had time enough to protect themselves against her either by peaceful or by warlike methods.

Meanwhile the internal opposition could perish. The Carthaginians took hardly any notice of it.

Our fight against Hitler had to be waged with methods completely different from those at the disposal of the courageous fighters in the French, Dutch, Belgian and Scandinavian Maquis. We too had had the feeling, ever since 1933, that we were living in a country occupied by alien criminals, but our situation differed radically from that in the countries overrun by Hitler's armies. The whole of Germany was covered by a cobweb of agents. Spies were everywhere; they lived in the house next-door, and even in our own homes. No British or American planes came to Germany to provide us with arms and explosives, as they did to France or the Netherlands. What these planes dropped over our heads endangered our lives as much as those of the Nazis. When the blood-stained Swastika was flying over a large part of the world, we of the German Resistance shared the sufferings of the victims of Hitler's imperial and racial madness in other countries. But the world, which showed the partisans in the occupied countries so much well-deserved respect and affection,



hardly knew anything about the German Resistance; for we belonged to a nation which—much as we had striven against it—had soiled its own honour and procured its own banishment from the community of the civilized world. Professor Rothfels is right when he deplors the tendency to identify the Germans and the Nazis:

. . . After the outbreak of war, diplomats and statesmen of the Western powers began to speak and act as if no opposition to Nazism existed or had ever become known to them. Although Neville Chamberlain, in his addresses, clearly concentrated on "the German Government" as standing in the way of peace, he made no appeal to "another Germany," and in a letter of January, 1940, he said: "I am afraid that the Germans are very far from that frame of mind which will be necessary before they are prepared to listen to what we should call reason." While this may be called a defensible statement, in view of the propaganda effect which Hitler's withholding of truth, his method of opening the war on a fraudulent pretext, as well as his first victories, had in Germany, the Western statesmen soon went further. The identification of Nazis and Germans was accentuated as the area of war was extended, and became one of the main lines of official propaganda.<sup>2</sup>

I am not discussing the lack of appreciation of the German Resistance, which has prevailed for so long, in a spirit of accusation or bitterness; but I cannot help remembering the gloom and depression that descended on those circles in Germany who opposed Hitler during his rise to power and while he held it when they had to witness the recognition that was bestowed on him by the non-German world: the very will to resist and to fight for the abolition of Hitler's pernicious system was in danger of being paralyzed. Many a German who had heard rumours of the unspeakable horrors perpetrated by the Nazis said to himself that these rumours could not be true, that things could not be as bad

<sup>2</sup>Hans Rothfels, *The German Opposition to Hitler. An Appraisal.* (Hansdale, Ill., 1948), p. 132.

as all that while foreigners of rank and irreproachable reputation were coming to Germany to call on Hitler and to shake hands with him.

The German Resistance fought for the rights of democracy and the rights of mankind. It has to be pointed out and stressed that these Germans, having chosen the cause of their people against the Hitler regime, were fighting at the same time for Europe—once the sanctuary of free peoples and Christian traditions—at the very time when representatives of the Western democracies, who might have felt a similar obligation to fight, publicly showered favours on the dictator and were willing to make concessions to him which they had denied true German democrats like Stresemann and Brüning. There are films recording the dance of foreign statesmen round the “brown” calf, though the British ambassador as early as 1933 shared the opinion of the German opposition that Hitler’s regime meant war.

It would have been tempting to pass over this dismal chapter of European history in silence; but there are two powerful reasons why this must not be done. For one thing, lack of understanding for the efforts of the German Resistance in the outside world had the gravest consequences: if the Western nations had shown greater confidence in the German Resistance, this would have greatly strengthened it; and with real co-operation, Hitler’s internal and external enemies could have obliterated their common foe much sooner, and much bloodshed and misery could have been avoided. For another thing, discussing the ifs and buts of the thirties is not an idle academic parlour-game: at this very moment, the West is facing a situation quite similar to that which arose twenty years ago, when Germany had ceased to belong to the free world. Until 1933, Germany was indeed a Western country, one that for centuries had played an important part in promoting Western civilization; but even in the years of the Weimar Republic, my country



had not been as sure about its relationship to the West as it is today: Germany has made great progress since 1945. But it is only a part of Germany that belongs to the West: the Eastern half of the country shares the fate that Austria alone amongst the states of Eastern Europe has been fortunate enough to escape.

We must recall for a moment that none of these countries, with the sole exception of Czechoslovakia, had shown much democratic wisdom before they were taken over by the Nazis and subsequently by the communists. Their political systems resembled, and some of them simply were, fascist dictatorships. Where fascism prevails, the people are not yet mature enough for Western democracy. Fascism is not a deterioration of parliamentarism but a substitute for it, a surrogate which evolves when democracy is unable to work because the people are not enlightened enough. In a way, fascism is a symptom of puberty which testifies to a lack of culture and education. Quite similarly, communism is a surrogate for capitalism—an economic system for underdeveloped countries which try hard to catch up with Western standards. Therefore the East European countries still have to look forward to the development which has already taken place in Western Germany. But the communist governments are working against it, they oppose the political, economic and moral necessity of this progress. And they know why. For this development is inevitable and will make the Bolshevik system superfluous.

The fact that the Bolshevik system will ultimately be swept away is not due to any achievement of ours. The humane conditions and higher living standards in the West are, to be sure, the result of a constant struggle for progress and the reward for a painful process of incessant self-criticism; but that communism and fascism alike are doomed to ultimate failure has deeper causes than such merits as the West may have. The Bolshevik system is

doomed to collapse because man is a being created to live in freedom, and cannot in the long run be prevented from fulfilling this destiny. As wild animals search for water, so man searches for the place that offers the greatest possible freedom. If that were not so, this vast and beautiful country, Canada, would never have been explored.

For the people behind the Iron Curtain, the West is the land of freedom. We who are enjoying this freedom find flaws in it and often enough it seems to us to be too narrow, too uncertain or fraught with injustices. And so it is. But that does not alter the fact that oppressed people need freedom.

This is why the fascist and communist governments keep slandering Western freedom and oppressing their victims' desire for freedom. Totalitarian propaganda may be right a hundred times when it speaks about the deplorable and insufficient state of our civilization, but it is wrong a hundred and one times because it denies freedom itself. The oppressed people feel that, and resistance begins to stir. Their resistance—and it cannot be stressed too often that the resistance of people enslaved by totalitarianism is a very real and very important fact—originates from the same conditions which produced resistance against Hitler, and the same motives are prevailing in it. But unfortunately the rest of the world, on the whole, behaves in the same way as it did towards the German *Widerstand*. Or at any rate in almost the same way. We have learned something, but we have not learned enough.

There are substantial reasons for Western hesitation in collaborating with the resistance movements behind the Iron Curtain. One of the reasons is that collaboration with the internal resistance of, say, Bulgaria, would mean a breach of international conventions on which foreign policy is based and on which we depend if we wish to remain true to Western conceptions of international relationships. For



the idea of sociable manners between states is a fundamental idea of our civilization. It is an idea we do not want to and indeed cannot give up.

On the other hand, the appeals to bring about eternal peace which Kurt von Raumer recently collected in a remarkable book<sup>3</sup> demonstrate that interference with the internal affairs of other states has not always been avoided. Thinkers of high moral standards have expressly approved contacts with the internal adversaries of war-minded governments, if peace could thereby be saved.

I do not speak for the breaking of international conventions. But with regard to the systems of oppression that bar the road to freedom, it may well be necessary for us to revise our traditional ideas of national sovereignty. The legal questions involved in such a revision must of course be left to the experts. From a practical point of view, however, it seems to me that our present system of international conventions does not comply with the needs of mankind. Every form of resistance against a totalitarian system should be supported. This support should be given not only by governments, but also, or even mainly, by individuals.

To substantiate this view, I should like to refer to three events of recent European history where this solidarity between man and fellow man was not sufficiently effective, and to point out at least one of the reasons why it could not become effective.

The three events are: the revolt in Soviet-occupied Germany on July 17, 1953, the revolt in the Polish city of Poznan, and the revolt in Hungary. All three revolts originated in actions of protest against the communist ruling clique. In all three cases, Soviet tanks re-established the so-called order. In all of these cases, the people were concerned with an improvement of their living conditions, with

<sup>3</sup>*Ewiger Friede. Friedensrufe und Friedenspläne seit der Renaissance* (Munich, 1953).

their daily bread, and at the same time with the bread of freedom. That was comprehensible to the Western world. Opposing foreign domination and raising one's voice when one is hungry are familiar actions.

But there was something not so familiar and even a little uncanny for us in the fact that these fighters for freedom were what we commonly call communists, that is to say, members of communist organizations or even of the Communist Party. This was the case in East Berlin, Poznan and Budapest. Of course these communists co-operated with other groups, but the impulse came from communist workers and students. The result was that some short-sighted politicians in the West argued in all three cases that one should "leave those Reds alone" and that their "family quarrels" were none of our business. This is a harsh attitude to take, and one which reveals a dangerous ignorance of the European situation. It is a denial of the struggle for freedom, and therefore a denial of the very foundation of our civilization.

Let me illustrate that with the most astonishing feature of resistance against totalitarian systems—the fact that an exemplary role was played in the fight against Hitler and in that against Stalin and his diadochs by youths who had never experienced freedom. That old men who have known better days should turn against dictators is easily understood. The most diverse motives may activate them, not all of them laudable. One may feel neglected in his career, another may miss this or that comfort, and a third one may dislike the party because he could never stand one of the party bosses when they were classmates at school. But how are we to account for the fact that the revolt in Hungary was sparked by students who had been six to ten years old when the Soviet regime was set up there, that in Poznan young workers were fighting who had had no education except that provided for them by the Communist



Party, and that youths who had grown up as members of his Youth Organizations or had become officers in his army sacrificed their lives in the struggle against Hitler?

As the homing pigeon finds the way to its cote, they found their way to freedom. That a pigeon is still a pigeon when it is dyed red or brown, no one will deny; but how readily do we forget his human nature when we can classify a person as a Nazi or a communist! We should be more careful. How wrong these facile classifications can be is shown by the leaflets of the White Rose, the German Resistance group that was formed at the University of Munich. The young medical students who gathered around Hans and Sophie Scholl demonstrated how overpowering the longing for freedom can become—and more than that: their political arguments hit the mark. The case they presented for the inevitability of Hitler's downfall was as lucid, as penetrating and as convincing as anything that has been written on the subject by skilled and experienced historians; yet they were youths who had grown up under National Socialism and had had no democratic political education. They had no contacts with politicians of the Resistance and were unaided by the advice of statesmen, but what they said was right and what they foretold has happened. We should keep them in mind when we consider the youth of Eastern Europe. It will help us to beware of facile political dogmas that would provide us with a specious certainty. These dogmas have no lasting value, for they disregard the essence of freedom.

*Wherever freedom is fighting against oppression, there is the West. Wherever freedom is fighting against those who despise it, the future of mankind begins—no matter who does the fighting.*