

GERMAN IDENTITY TRANSFORMED

1. *Is Germany a Special Case?*

German identity problems are usually viewed as a special case. I do not think it is necessary to argue this point with any elaboration. It is argued that the Germans' obsessions about identity reached a peak of mental aberration in the Second World War, when in a fit of total national insanity they set about mass murdering most of Europe on the grounds of arbitrary and invented grades of approved and disapproved races, drawn from a misunderstanding of physical anthropology. The sources of the identity problem have been subjected to a great deal of analysis, but remain obscure.¹ Before I go on to look at how true it is that German identity poses special problems, let me briefly mention a recent example of the extent to which the attitudes drawn from the Second World War have permeated our consciousness.

I enjoy science fiction, and last summer I watched a film on TV, made in America by a consortium of apparently largely Mafia money, which concerned the invasion of the earth from outer space. The invaders were lizards from another solar system. They were lizards who were able to make themselves look like people by wearing a synthetic human skin, but underneath they were reptiles. Some clever people observed this from the beginning, but were disbelieved. The lizards seemed friendly, and quickly acquired what were called collaborators, drawn from the ambitious and weak elements in society. Lizards played on conservative instincts, such as a desire for law and order.

¹ Cf. Lewis Namier's argument in *Vanished Supremacies*, London: Hamish Hamilton 1958, pp. 34-5.

However, it turned out that lizard policy aims were not what they seemed. The lizards intended to steal all the Earth's water, and also steal the people, in order to eat them. They started doing this bit by bit, so that the full implications of their actions went unobserved. Eventually an Irish freedom-fighter started a guerrilla movement, and broadcast to the nations, calling to them to rise up against the lizards 'because they were fascists'. 'These fascist lizards are taking over the earth, and nobody cared,' he shouted. The fascist lizards now began to wear jackboots, black uniforms, and strange jagged, silvery emblems on their lapels, somewhat similar to a swastika, and gradually I realised that before my eyes a re-write of the American media-industry view of the Second World War was in progress. Perhaps I should emphasise that the film was not exclusivist or racist in its attitude to the fascist lizards. Although lizards were killed in large numbers by the Resistance, there were good lizards as well as bad lizards, and it turned out that it was even possible to produce lizard-human crosses, who, like Vietnamese orphans, were silent and appealing and cute, with strange intuitive gifts and an absolute loyalty to the human race. The good lizards hated being lizards, and realised they were bad and fascist lizards. Despite their reptilian skin, they could be re-educated, and change their diet to hamburgers, instead of people.

That example probably encapsulates more clearly than could a mass of historiography the gut feeling about Germans, Germans versus the others, and German identity problems. A distinction *is* commonly drawn between German exclusivity and other supposedly more malleable identities. But is this distinction valid? What does national and group identity mean to *non*-Germans, and is there any purpose in examining the question comparatively?

Here are some textual examples of attempts to locate identity. The purpose is to show that exclusivist methods of identification often taken to be uniquely German are not in fact so but exist in all countries and cultures. The following quotations have been 'Germanised':

'The German question is not a social question,...it is a national question;...we are one folk, one folk....'²

'Our blood has sunk into one common earth.... May this warm blood, this soldiers' blood, the most precious in Germany, be the new seed for brotherhood under our feet.'³

² T. Herzl, *Der Judenstaat*, Vienna: R. Loewit 1896, p.13 [my translation].

³ Marshal Piłsudski, quoted in A. Polonsky, *The Little Dictators*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul 1975, p. 37.

'A bloody, arrogant power rose out of the race, uttering it, mastering it.'⁴

'As Christians, we live by this German heritage, the German Millennium, this German Christianity of ours. Such is the law of reality.'⁵

'He [an escaped murderer]'s gone to Hell, along with the rest of the Jewish race'.

This last remark was made in a cops and robbers series, *Cagney and Lacey*, and referred to a dead murderer, a German. It sounds quite exclusivist if you keep saying it.

Of course, these are only a few examples, but the point is that I made no effort at all to find them, or organise a search for non-German, non-fascist identity statements which contain the exclusivity generally associated with German racialism. I suppose that when Hindus murder Sikhs in revenge for the assassination of Mrs Gandhi, they don't stop to try to convert them to Hinduism first. Cagney, or perhaps Lacey, did not say, 'Oh dear, if only the German beast had been exposed to the American way of life a little longer.' Franz Fanon clearly feels that not only are whites a hopeless case, through nature not nurture, but that their evil possesses a Manichean capacity to infiltrate decent non-whites. Distinctions between exclusivist and assimilatory conceptions of identity, then, are not as clear as has been argued. What is clear is that supposedly objective observers of human societies seem to have knee-jerk reactions to identity statements which depend not on the fact of the identity statement, but on the position the relevant, the observed group holds in terms of majority or minority power; for example, a recent conference held in Oxford at Ruskin College included a series of lectures on nationalism and identity. In these seminars, a strikingly different attitude was used to look at black nationalist feelings in Britain, and British nationalism over the century. The first, a minority, or reactive identity, was good, the second, seen as an expression of untrammelled majority power, was presented as unequivocally bad.

The moral categorisation of big-small groups is not a new problem. In *The Napoleon of Notting Hill*, the ex-President of Nicaragua is found wandering through Hyde Park, stabbing himself on a rose bush in order to add red to the yellow of his robes, and mark Nicaragua's national colours. The civilised, Western hero expostulates with him:

⁴ W. B. Yeats, 'Blood of the Moon', *Selected Poetry*, London: Macmillan 1962, p. 145.

⁵ The Pope in Cracow, quoted in N. Davis, *God's Playground*, Oxford: Clarendon Press 1981, Vol. 1, p. xviii.

'We moderns believe in a great cosmopolitan civilisation, one that shall include all the talents of the absorbed peoples' - to which the ex-president of Nicaragua replies, 'How will you know how to catch a wild horse?' 'I never catch a wild horse,' replies our hero with dignity. 'Precisely, that is what I complain of in your cosmopolitanism.... Something went from the world when Nicaragua was civilised'.⁶

Many anthropologists would agree with the fictional ex-President. But Chesterton's hero goes on to say crushingly, 'The superstition of big nationalities is bad, but the superstition of small nationalities is worse. The superstition of reverencing our own country is bad, but the superstition of reverencing other people's countries is worse.' Chesterton concludes that nationalities, whether large or small, but preferably small, are vital to humanity's existence. But see how the whirligig of time's revenge has altered the implications of this argument.

Régis Debray writes that 'Like language, the nation is an invariable which cuts across modes of production.' His rationale here is biological, that the 'laws regulating the survival of the human species' fight *death*, including *entropy*, which is chaos and disorder in its form as time, also as 'spatial disintegration, the disaggregation of a community....'

The two anti-death processes set by the human species are, he suggests, first a fixed point of origin (or Ark), the mythical zero point, and second a sacred space. Debray disputes any connection between this desire and economic and/or social change, and makes the need for a fixed and formal spatial identity unit a human constant.

'Take the foundation of Rome. I choose Rome for its importance, and because it may have been Roman universalism which, along with the Judaeo-Christian tradition, has *contaminated* Marxism with certain universalist concepts.... *Enclosure* [i.e., spatial enclosure] is the foundation of a state...it stems disorder, it stems entropy.'⁷

Debray resists a comparison with conservatives or neo-conservatives. He argues that there is something deeply materialistic about the concept of the 'viable group', that it is 'a left-wing concept, but not ultra-left.... It is anti-voluntarist, anti-idealist, anti-intellectual...and populist' (or *völkisch*).

Can this analysis be applied to Germany? Is there some

⁶ G. K. Chesterton, *The Napoleon of Notting Hill*, London: The Bodley Head 1904, pp. 39-41, 42-3.

⁷ Régis Debray, 'Marxism and the National Question', *The New Left Review*, No. 105 (1977), pp. 26-9; emphasis added.

special need to avoid disorder, to protect space? Certainly, German identity ideas have an *anti*-establishment element. Establishments are usually anti-nationalist. Debray's analysis avoids the problem of conflict. Does identity have to conflict in order to exist? Does the assertion 'I am an I' have to be countered or followed by the assertion 'He is not an I', or even 'He is not a he' in order to make identity real? What is the role of tradition and the past? How and why do identity markers change? The process of looking - yearning - for identity seems different from the quality of *having* one. I will argue here that the two activities - looking for identity and having an identity - have frequently been confused, when they should rather have been opposed. The conservative sociologist David Levy describes what it is to have an identity.

My place...is a bounded space, however objectively insignificant, arising in and contributing to, the history of my native group. This in turn emerged in the wider history of a human species....I know myself and my place together, for to know who I am is to understand the bounds of the space I am called upon to fill.... I myself am formed at the point of intersection between the objective processes of natural and cultural history which precede and accompany my life, and a personal experience.⁸

But when Nietzsche argues that past identities should be rejected, that they interfere with potential creativity, that one must learn to know one's true self, and that this true self is always being born anew, like Venus, he is describing a different kind of process - the looking, not the having. For him the having is an obstacle, because what you have will not, by definition, be authentic.⁹

The lack of firm or continuous boundaries means that Germans have never equated identity with physical, territorial qualities, and this has always been a major conceptual stumbling-block for British and American writers. To take one example, Professor Margaret Gowing writes indignantly of the atom bomb programme in 1939-40 that the British contribution is ignored; the British contribution she defines as that made in fact by an émigré German scientist, Rudolf Peierls, who had arrived in Britain some months before. He had become British - I do not mean this in a technical sense (though no doubt that too), but rather that he was perceived as British because he had acquired

⁸ D. J. Levy, 'The Politics of the Self', *Salisbury Review*, No. 6 (1983), p. 10.

⁹ F. Nietzsche, 'On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life', in *Untimely Meditations* (transl. R. J. Hollingdale), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1983, pp. 84-7.

a territorial, linguistic and Establishment connection; he was on British soil, and being on British soil was equated with Britishness. Ernst von Salomon, on the other hand, writing from a similar social background, stresses that his biological identity is different from his territorial one. One parent was born in St Petersburg, one in Britain; he was born in Kiel; but he is a Prussian, of Prussian parentage and Prussian culture, despite non-Prussian birthplaces.¹⁰

If the boundaries of your physical space do not continue, then what else does? Language, culture and kinship can all be identified as a continuous 'identity pool'; through these, you learn your identity as a code, a collection of symbols. But the codes can become as it were polluted through a lack of real continuity. Language can be learned by anyone, and a majority group thus loses control of 'its' language, and its code of identity. It can be doubly despoiled, because minority groups are permitted to retain their own language as a strong symbol of identity, while 'infiltrating' the majority group, which then is left with a weak symbol.

2. *The German Empire: 1871-1918*

The very complexity of German ethnic relationships, religious differences, seems to have emphasised the need to have means of identification. The upper classes, like the Prussian Junkers, were less interested in kin identification, but used caste as a marker instead. One might argue that all upper classes are more caste-conscious than kin-oriented: this is Debray's point.

The late 19th century saw a shift away from Darwinian theory to vitalist, Lamarckian elements; culture became catching, especially when it could damage: it pollutes, as well as creates. The eugenic theories of this period were utopian, and involved communitarian ideas; a small identity group within the large, new successful Reich which gave the same identity to everyone - but an imperial; not a national one. German jurists such as Savigny and Gierke evolve a 'theory of groups'; they study the problem of giving a legal soul to corporate, urban and national groups. Nietzsche writes on 'the danger of perishing through history', the misleading nature of the false identity code.

They [the Greeks] learned to *organise the chaos...*
 thinking back to their real needs.... Each one of
 us must organise the chaos within him by thinking back
 to his real needs.¹¹

¹⁰ Professor M. Gowing, in an unpublished note (in the Library Archive of the History Faculty, Oxford) on the British Atom Bomb Project; and E. v. Salomon, *Die Fragebogen*, Hamburg: Rowohlt 1951, pp. 46-7.

¹¹ Nietzsche, *op. cit.*, pp. 122-3.

How did people think back to their 'real needs' during the Wilhelmine Empire? I have looked at groups who consciously worried about their identity as Germans. Therefore groups whose ideology consciously excluded the search for identity - the Social Democrats, for example, or the German Marxists - do not appear in my categories. The groups are divided into two kinds, yearning and alienated. This means that I see reactions to the existing formal identity as breaking down into two kinds: those who yearn for an identity within, and those who look for an identity without. There are other possible sub-divisions - notably that of age-groups - but that would require a more schematic treatment.

Yearning groups between 1871-1918 would include those non-incorporated German-speaking nationalities excluded from the *Kleindeutschland* of 1871, assimilated and semi-assimilated German Jews enthusiastic about the Wilhelminian social and political power structure, and also the new *Mittelstand* (white-collar workers, middle management, entrepreneurial businessmen, civil servants, teachers) - all pro-expansion and empire. Roger Chickering's study of the Pan-German League shows that nearly all of its leaders were born abroad, lived abroad for a long period, married non-German wives or were educated abroad, or some combination of these factors.¹²

Alienated groups include assimilated and semi-assimilated German Jews, conscious of impassable barriers to acceptance and full assimilation, cultural nationalists, dissatisfied with the new, plutocratic, vulgar Reich (this group includes conservatives, Catholic landowners and the old army), the old *Mittelstand* (particularist, often Catholic, artisans and small shopkeepers opposed to Prussia and the centralised state), utopian eugenicists, communards, social reformers (these groups often connected by education and marriage), temperance activists, vegetarians.

The yearning and the alienation cross-connect. Yearning is close to alienation. If your yearning is rejected, you feel alienated. Thus, a substantial proportion of interest-groups and classes in the Reich felt dissatisfied, but in different ways. The empire was held together by mutual dissatisfaction. Everyone was searching for a mutual code, and the significant shift to vitalist philosophies that takes place in the 1890s may reflect this search.

One example of the omnipresent worry about a viable code, with the right inclusions and exclusions, can be found in the works of Thomas Mann, whose great virtue, apart from literary ones, is that he is the mirror of all the banalities and clichés of his age, or ages. Mann's writings about human relationships express a disturbing insecurity; he portrays an early kind of anti-hero. His heroes are always yearning after the 'other',

¹² R. Chickering, *We Men Who Feel Most German: the Pan German League, 1886-1914*, London: Allen & Unwin 1984, pp. 105, 302.

sometimes transcendental, sometimes not, always embodied in a person whose physical attributes are also 'other'. The blonde Castorp yearns for an untrammelled, feckless, 'bad Russian' carelessness, in the form of a slant-eyed Russian woman. His will has been sabotaged by an early love for an utterly 'other' slant-eyed Russian boy. Other works show the yearning of the small, dark, earth-bound for the blonde, carefree, healthy, callous; and from 1910 on, an age axis enters. A three-year old girl falls in love with a young man; an ageing musician with a fourteen-year old boy; a fifty-year old woman with a twenty-five year old youth. All the several loves in *Doctor Faustus* end in death or suicide; the yearning is never achievable, and it is implied that it never can be. The existence of the other is always a threat; a threat to the sense of identity of the lover, because it involves a sense of incompleteness and inadequacy, and a threat because completion would mean destruction.

3. 1920 to 1933

The events of the immediate post-war era are sufficiently well known. Germany ceased to be an empire, and became a nation. But what kind of nation should she be?

A variety of new identities were put forward. Prussian Socialists located Germanness in Prussia, which led in one case to the 'Red' Count von Schulenberg claiming that 'without a *Beamten*, or bureaucrat, class, the German people as a Race is unthinkable, not to think of its present dangerous situation.'¹³ The early 1920s saw what Golo Mann thinks is the most extreme outbreak of antisemitism in Germany, worse than in the Nazi period, and worse than in the Depression.¹⁴ It saw the growth of the *Inflationsheilige* - among whom one writer has placed Hitler - the Messianic movements, who look to a transcendental 'other' for identity; to India, to the Aryan past, to occult religions, to pre-Roman Germany, to sun-worship, to communes.¹⁵ Theosophist racial theories were anti-national and spiritualist; Aryans and Semites were descended from the Lemurian race of Atlantis, each characterised by special gifts. Neo-conservatives like Möller van der Bruck look to the German idealist tradition to be

¹³ Quoted in H. Mommsen, 'Fritz-Dietlof von Schulenburg und die preussische Tradition', *Vierteljahrshäfte für Zeitgeschichte*, Vol. XXXII (1984), p. 224 [my translation].

¹⁴ Quoted in G. Field, *Houston Stewart Chamberlain: Evangelist of Race*, New York: Columbia University Press 1981, p. 408.

¹⁵ U. Linse, *Barfüßige Propheten*, Berlin: Siedler 1983, p. 38.

fulfilled in a future 'Third Reich'.

Yearning groups between 1919 and 1933 seem not to exist. Alienated groups include those who call for a new nobility, either from the sound peasantry, or from a German-Jewish fusion, or from a cleaned-up Junker class, those with simple revisionist and colonial ambitions, Messiahs and Messianic followers, those who look to a Russo-German detente (Prussian Socialists and Catholic Conservatives) or who look to a new *Zollverein* between Germany and the new Baltic nations (see Jung below). Those who are seeking an 'other' - pro-India, Eastern Aryans, sun-worshippers, communards, Theosophists, linked by an interest in occultism to the Nordacists, who want to create a new Nordic race - look only to Northern Germans. Many *Auslanddeutsche* belong to this group, as do regionalist and particularist movements.

One of the fundamental arguments of the 1920s was the ideal nature of Germany's political structure - empire or nation? This should be stressed, because to see German thinking at this time only in terms of racial coding is to miss many of the points. Edgar Jung, for example, author and lawyer prominent in neo-conservative circles, wrote,

It was obvious that the dethronement of the nation ideal and its replacement by the imperial idea would meet opposition.... But it is clear that in the Baltic states there is a condition of hooligan nationalism which must collapse.... This intellectual sterility is exactly what makes for the greatest hopes in German policy towards the East. German cultural superiority will throw these splintered peoples back into our arms.¹⁶

Along with the political and economic problems, a sense of cultural violation obtrudes surprisingly often, as when Rilke writes,

Even for our grandparents, a house, a well, a familiar tower, their very dress, their cloak, was infinitely more, infinitely more intimate; almost everything a receptacle in which they both found and enlarged a store of humanness....¹⁷

Now there are intruding, from America, empty, indifferent things, sham things, dummies of life. A house etc. as the Americans understand it, has nothing in common with the house into which the hope and thoughtfulness of our

¹⁶ Letter to R. Walther Darré, in Darré papers, Goslar City Archives, West Germany, file no. 84a, 11.5. 1928.

¹⁷ Quoted by J. Leishman, his Introduction to *Rilke: New Poems*, London: Hogarth Press 1979, p. 17.

forefathers had entered. The animated, experienced things that share our lives are running out, and cannot be replaced. *We are perhaps the last to have known such things.*¹⁸

Or, the cultural code has been violated by a cheating substitution of non-like for like. Democratic lizards had taken over Germany. One anti-lizard reaction was the revival of the Nordacist movement in Germany, a variation of the pan-Celticism of the German romantics. Of course, the search for 'roots' in the 19th century was not confined to Germany. Many European peoples were developing a self-conscious identity. The discovery of ancient graves complete with bodies helped to inspire an interest in physical anthropology. French authors re-wrote history as the interplay of racial and tribal forces.

Among the newly-aware groups were the Scandinavian countries of Northern Europe. Nordic has become a word associated almost exclusively with Nazi propaganda, but originally the word simply meant Northern, and was used to describe the 'tribes' of Northern Europe, with the rest partitioned between Eastern, Western and Southern. Nordic was not coterminous with Aryan, Indo-European or Germanic. Houston Stewart Chamberlain used the word 'Germanic' to describe the Northern Europeans, but this term included a wide range of 'non-Nordic' peoples, such as Slavs. 'Aryan' originally referred to the inhabitants of the Iranian plains, and was still used in this way in the 1920s.

A feeling for the Nordic, for Northernness, existed in England, too, perhaps as a counter-balancing national ethic to the expropriation of the natural, the rooted and the spontaneous carried out by Celtophiles. Morris, Tolkien, C. S. Lewis, all looked to the North for spiritual and literary inspiration.

...this was no Celtic or sylvan or terrestrial twilight.... Pure Northernness engulfed me: a vision of huge, clear spaces hanging above the Atlantic in the endless twilight of Northern summer, remoteness, severity ...the same world as Baldur and sunward-sailing cranes, cold, spacious, pale.¹⁹

In 1922 a book called *Racial Handbook of the German People* was published by Hans Günther, later to be Professor of Racial Anthropology at Jena, and became a best-seller. It differed from earlier popular works on race and culture in its deliberate-

¹⁸ Quoted and discussed in M. Heidegger, 'What are Poets For?', in *Poetry, Language, Thought* (transl. A. Hofstadter), New York: Harper Colophon Books 1975, p. 113 (emphasis in original). In Leishman's edition of Rilke this passage has been omitted.

¹⁹ C. S. Lewis, *Surprised by Joy*, London: Geoffrey Bles 1955, pp. 74, 76.

ly scientific attitude and analytical vein. The late 19th-century *völkisch* writers had written more on art, culture, civilisations and spirit than on quantitative physical distinctions between groups. They were inspired by the tradition of German Idealism, which was still to be found in the writings of Spengler and Moeller. Günther worked from recent developments in physical anthropology and eugenics to argue that mankind was divided into races which differed in physical structure and mental character. The highest type was the Nordic: comprising Scandinavia, North Germany, Holland, Britain and the United States (the latter still seen as a potentially Anglo-Saxon country; Lenz, co-author of a text-book on biology, had called on the USA to lead a 'blonde international' after the First World War). The Nordic movement of the 1920s was first a pan-national and cultural one. It searched for ancient Northern myths and sagas. It emphasised, especially in Denmark and Germany, the rural nature of the Nordics - in fact, the peasant adult education movement originated in Denmark. The Nordics were seen as racially and culturally threatened, surrounded by non-Nordic groups, split between nations, without exclusive territory or unity, and with a declining birth-rate. Further, because of their rural nature they were especially threatened by urbanisation and technology.²⁰

Scandinavia was the ideal nation for the Nordicists. Günther married a Swedish woman, and lived in Sweden for some years. Scandinavian writers were popular. Knut Hamsun and Selma Lagerlöf depicted a stern, hard-working, but deeply satisfying peasant society. The peasant was strong, inarticulate but superior. In Scandinavia, where there was only a small Jewish community, there was little antisemitism in the Nordic movement. Instead, animosity was directed to the petty bourgeois townsman and bureaucrat as the enemy of the peasant. The published writings of the German Nordicists also contain little antisemitism, but it emerges from their private correspondence that they identified the Jew as the Nordic movement's enemy.

The eugenic interest among Nordicists was the preservation of what was seen as a dying group. It was a defensive concept, and phrases like Supermen or Master Race are hard to find in Nordicist writing (I have not found them at all so far, but they could exist somewhere in the literature). Günther defined the Jews as a nation, not as a race or as a religion, dispersed worldwide, but on the way to becoming a 'race' through 'seclusion and in-breeding'. His later writings showed that Nordicism was still confusing different kinds of codes in its search for identity. Linguistic and racial codes were mingled, as were determinants of

²⁰ See Hans-J. Lutzhöft, *Der nordische Gedanke in Deutschland, 1920-40*, Stuttgart: Ernst Klett 1971, and chapter 2 of my forthcoming book, *Blood and Soil: R. Walther Darré and Hitler's Green Party*, Oxford: Kensal Press (October 1985).

character.

But the racialism inherent both in the web of rural values and in pan-Nordicism was hard to reconcile with nation-state boundaries; peasant intra-racialism was smaller-scale, while Nordic racialists envisaged a Northern European 'Green' union, stretching from Holland to Finland. This became unacceptable to the Nazi Party, which was committed to restoring German power and territory to, as a minimum, its pre-First-World-War position. Not only were Monists and Social Darwinist societies closed down in 1935, but a variety of racialist and antisemitic extremists, including chiromantor Issberner-Haldane, and Lanz von Liebenfels, were banned between 1934 and 1938.²¹ When a group was started in 1939 to study Northern customs and report on eugenic ideas it was done in conditions of semi-secrecy, and as a gesture of defiance.²² Ideas of union with the Scandinavian states were dropped as impractical and irrelevant as foreign policy aims in 1933.

Nazi practice during the 1930s was, in fact, inconsistent with their theories. The Polish minority living within Germany was largely left alone; in fact, many Polish farmers were made into honorary German farmers, which did not please them, especially as they were then unable to sell their land (this was due to a tactical understanding with Poland from 1934). But the Churches, Freemasons, and other German groups were labelled as 'other' and ejected into outer darkness. Everything culturally foreign was rejected; but loyal ethnic Germans were called back to the homeland.

A list of groups under the Third Reich, phase one (peace-time) would look something like this: yearning groups include Germans who had belonged to the Wilhelminian Empire, now excluded by the Versailles Treaties, ethnic Germans ('next year in Schleswig-Holstein'), an apparent majority of Germans within Germany's borders who identified Hitler, if not the Nazi Party, with Germany's continued existence and future expansion, nationalist social reformers, such as Weimar administrators concerned with public health and eugenics, classes gaining from meritocratic elitism - foremen, NCOs, Majors.

The alienated groups are fairly obvious. They would include Polish Jews living within German borders, and later German Jews, many partly Jewish German citizens, but not all, the distinctions being at first sight random, but said by some to be based on *usefulness* to the new Germany.²³ It includes groups hard to

²¹ See E. Howe, *Astrology in the Third Reich*, Wellingborough: Aquarian Press 1984, p. 111.

²² See Darré papers, Federal Archives, Coblenz, file no. 94II/1d.

²³ See, for example, W. Struve, in *Elites Against Democracy*, Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press 1973, pp. 421, 423-5.

incorporate into a secular, exclusivist, rationalist Reich: the Churches, Freemasons, Anthroposophists, Theosophists, including racial eugenicists (see above) and particularist Nordic fringe groups suspect for having supra-German sympathies. The racial and Nordic groups, however, find a haven and power base in the later SS. Neo-conservative intellectuals and National Bolsheviks, yearning for the purity of the revolution, reject the world of the machine, of technocracy.

The list of alienated groups is incomplete, because I have excluded those who are concerned for values other than the identity value, such as, again, socialists, communists and liberal humanists. It may be noted here that 'transcendentalist' groups do not yearn towards the Third Reich, despite their alienation from Weimar Germany.

4. *Third Reich II: 1939-45*

The internal dynamism of the Third Reich seemed to have led inexorably to empire, for reasons which are still the subject of vigorous dispute. This imperial drive entailed a 'from above' power structure, with in its turn an essentially elitist, but non-racialist *social* base, which was to cross national and racial boundaries in search of allies and ability. This contradiction had been seen in pre-First-World-War imperialists, for example Rathenau. 'His often quoted phrases lamenting the fate of the blonde Nordic gave way to an increasingly vague, inconsistent, and when he dealt with imperialism, peripheral racialism.'²⁴ In this, Rathenau resembles both Rhodes and Mosley.

Empire was to mean a strong central government, playing off some ethnic and national groups against others within it. It meant accepting a cross-current of foreign influence, of exogenous cultural inputs. Foreign agricultural labourers were imported, for example, while German peasants were recruited for death on the Russian front. In practice, racial selection, and the breeding of an elite, was subordinated to the more pressing need to preserve and extend Germany's power base. This subordination of theory to practice was characteristic of the Third Reich, and not only under the exigencies of war; it was observable throughout its governmental practice. One writer observes that even within the SS, supposedly the heart of the racial selection process, the practice of mass co-optation of outside bodies meant that racial selection became secondary to the creation of an 'open yet authoritarian elite', except at the lower levels, where racial selection was used to weed out the politically committed after 1933.

Much of the anti-Polish feeling felt by German administrators during the war stemmed from their first reactions to a more primitive, backward and socially more divisive agrarian structure.

²⁴ Ibid., pp. 158-9.

Reports back to Berlin from agricultural advisers commented on the decline, after 1918, in food production levels in former German areas. Others criticised the lack of infrastructure - roads, electrification, schools. The local Polish peasants were despised more than pitied. 'Everything is primitive, poverty-stricken and filthy.... I was told that people actually lived in holes in the ground round here. I saw poverty-stricken villages...unplastered houses, reed thatched roofs...farmhouses without solid floors or even plaster,' wrote one administrator in his diary.²⁵

The new population of the Incorporated Areas was to be 50-50 German-Polish, with land held 60-40 by Germans to Poles. But the reality was more complex. Integrated Germans were found in Poland, often estate factors and managers, who had inter-married with Poles over generations. Families were split in complex loyalties. Many of these ethnic Germans were seen as having 'gone native', including some well-born landowners. Unfriendliness towards returning ethnic Germans was normal. Even local tennis clubs were split by non-Polish German versus Polish German enmities. Local Nazi Party welfare workers also found their sense of nationalist propriety offended when they heard, for example, Polish maids singing German nationalist songs in a *Reichsdeutsche* household. For some Germans it was a relief to get away to Bulgaria, where there were ethnic German colonies: 'One may very truly say,' as one Wehrmacht officer put it, 'that Bulgaria is the Prussia of the Balkans.'²⁶

Why concentrate on Poles and ethnic Germans at this point? Because of the ambiguity inherent in the 're-Germanisation' programme, allegedly the heart of Nazi ideology. Already, as Koehl has commented, 'the best of the Nazis' had to show their racial superiority 'if not wholly by external hallmarks, at least by behaviour, bearing and attitude.'²⁷ He describes recruitment of labourers and soldiers as 'a winnowing process involving service or...a test which might eventually make them assimilable.... There were police units who were Ukrainian, Russian, Lithuanian.' Himmler appears to have seized upon the opportunities offered in 1938, and Gross suggests that the Nazi

²⁵ A. Hohenstein, *Wartheländische Tagebuch aus den Jahren 1941-2*, Stuttgart: Institute of Contemporary History 1961, pp. 53, 72.

²⁶ See A. C. Bramwell, 'National Socialist Agrarian Theory and Practice', Oxford University: D. Phil. Thesis 1982, chapter 6; and an unsigned report dated 1940 by a serving Wehrmacht officer on his part in and experience of *Volksdeutsche* resettlement, in the author's possession.

²⁷ R. L. Koehl, *The Black Corps*, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press 1984, p. 215.

creed was incapable of coping with the concept of empire, that both Nazi racialism and its emphasis on institutionalised 'personalism' was incompatible with the creation of a real 'New Order'.²⁸ Himmler, almost alone among many other Nazis, was capable of thinking in imperial terms; he represented National Socialism's (perhaps inevitable) transformation into the full fascist state - imperialist and anti-nationalist; elitist rather than populist; seeking the efficient, planned and rootless European super-state. And by 1944 more than half the Waffen SS were non-German.

In pursuit of this super-state, Himmler discovered that racial purity could - had to - be subordinated to a supra-racial and supra-national categorisation that magically enabled a vast source of manpower to become available. By relabelling, people could be drawn into the system and ranked on a scale of Germanism. But the concept now lost racial and national meaning, and became a means of grading usable human material - it acquired 'an achievement dimension'.²⁹ The *Volksliste* became a sifting procedure to procure potential citizens of the New Order: loyal, healthy, and possessed of five fingers on each hand.³⁰

Ethnically German Polish Counts of impeccably Aryan lineage were refused 'Germanness' because of their immorality. Germanness now meant not being an anti-social part-time smuggler, but being diligent. It meant paying your bills, not jilting pretty Jewish actresses you seduce in Vienna, and paying your gambling debts.³¹ The physical aspect became confined to what was *usable*. Germanisation now revolved around the concept of merit, of earning and deserving Germanness. Your usefulness to the German Imperium would be investigated before the length of your ear-lobes. Leaving aside the multi-ethnic nature of the Waffen SS, with its Crimean Tartar, Indian and Russian divisions, why were the Ukrainians in Poland treated more favourably than Poles? Surely, because as political allies they were more useful. They were lower down the racial tree. Slovaks were not really more Germanic than Czechs, Croats than Serbs: but they were given autonomy because they were potential allies. Being un-German included being socially backward, having lice, having

²⁸ J. Gross, *Polish Society Under German Occupation*, Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press 1979, pp. 35-41.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 196.

³⁰ *Ibid.*; Struve, *op.cit.*, pp. 423-5; R. L. Koehl, *RKFDV: German Resettlement and Population Policy, 1939-1945*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press 1957, p. 80.

³¹ See 'Germanisation' files in Federal Archives, Coblenz, such as, for this example, file no. R49/46.

no glass in your windows, and no trunk roads. The test was political reliability, and also individual capabilities. Power, social control and technocratic efficiency were the aims.

Listing groups who were attracted or repulsed by the war-time Third Reich is difficult because of the changing frontiers and loyalties. But yearning groups could be said to include definitely non-German but acceptable equals and partners: Japanese, Sikhs, Brahmins, Tartars, all ethnic Germans, German speakers, including German-Americans, multiple non-German European states and groups, according to strategic value and political allegiance, 'Germanisable'; fit, healthy, bright, virtuous, punctual, hard-working, honest.

Alienated groups include all Jews (except for a handful of German part-Jews who could be of use, such as Field-Marshal Milch), nationalist Slavs, usually middle and upper-middle-class, and the non-Germanisable: partly a self-selecting category, partly 'anti-social', playboys, etc.

5. *Germany 1970 on*

For decades the German legal system failed to accept the formal partition of Germany, or the loss of territory to Poland and Russia after Potsdam. In the 1950s, nationalist feelings took the form either of neo-Nazi groups located largely in refugee communities, or of the desire to break from Yalta, and seek a neutralised, united Germany. In recent years, a new German national consciousness has arisen, located in the intellectual left. They are the new National Revolutionaries. 'I used to call myself Marxist, Socialist, an anti-fascist, and it was very easy to dodge the German question. Today I don't see how we can talk about returning to our roots without recognising our own nationality,' writes Peter Brandt, son of Willy Brandt. Syberberg talks of the need to 'find the German soul'. One radical right journal, *Mut*, is also strongly pacifist and pro the ecological movement. *Aufbruch* is far left, but wants the re-unification of all German territories. A left-wing sociologist, Henning Eichberg, writes in *The Left and the National Question*, that the problem of nationhood is a problem not of national interest but of national identity.

It is not what we have that defines our nationhood, but what we are...nationalism is not out of date. It emerges when we confront our own alienation, part of the process by which a people becomes a subject of history, against dynasties, consortiums and bureaucracies.

The Greens see national identity as struggling under an alien American cultural colonisation. They think the Americans are the lizards. Rudolf Bahro, an ex-East German and ex-member of the Green executive, talks of the need to move towards Asiatic religions, to 'decompose' society and return to small, autarkic

communities.

German history does not just stretch from 1848 to 1945; it is one and the same cultural tradition, which was there during the great peasants' war, and, as a disposition, under Hitler.³²

When I began to categorise groups for this period, I found that, as under Weimar, nobody seemed to be yearning to belong to the post-war German nation. Alienated groups included old-type nationalists (NPD), refugee groups, militarist groups, anti-American groups with regionalist sympathies, the Greens, anti-materialist, some national revolutionaries, using slogans like 'Vodka Cola', pro-'other', transcendentalist religions (e.g. Hinduism, Anthroposophy), anti-USA, neo-Nazi but non-German racialists, who are pan-European, anti-USA and neutralist. Many of these alienated groups have a yearning flavour: like our Weimar seekers, they are looking for something to yearn towards.

There is one further oddity involved in this process of change from empire to nation, to empire, to nation again. While it seems that today's German National Revolutionaries, or equivalent to National Bolsheviks, take the 'soft', yearning for the 'other', line (where is the German soul, not just, we want it back), there are those writers who are inspired by the lizard image of German identity. One work, published by a Californian underground press in 1966, describes the destruction of the USA by a joint East and West German task force, of precisely three people. It doesn't take long to push the rotten corpse of America into a self-destruct mode. They then return to a South American country, where the natives are herded into sexually segregated camps (so that they can't breed, and will die out) and made to work to plant trees along the Amazon, restore the ecological balance of the country, destroyed by an unholy alliance between corrupt native politicians and American interests. The writer was obviously inspired by the Nuremberg Trials descriptions of the SS-run concentration camps, but thought they were a really good thing. He discards Germanness in terms of physical location, or politics.³³

Another pro-old Nazi movement, of a different kind, seems to be alive and well and living in India.³⁴ Certainly, an ecologically based, highly coloured, religious Nazi ideology has

³² Interview with Rudolf Bahro, 'Socialism, Ecology and Utopia', *History Workshop*, Vol. XVI (1983), p. 98.

³³ F. Thomson, *The Chosen One*, n.p.: California International Award Press 1966.

³⁴ See for example S. Devi, *Pilgrimage*, Calcutta: Savitri Devi Mukherjee 1958.

transplanted well among Brahmins in India and our anonymous South American author. It doesn't seem to have left the same kind of mark in Germany today, where they have gone back to yearning, not doing.

Professor Gordon Craig's recent history of Germany began with an analogy between the new Wilhelmine Empire and Fortinbras' takeover of Denmark after Hamlet's death. His analogy was inspired by a German poem of 1844 which equated Hamlet with those Germans who championed the cause of 'political freedom', lost, along with democracy, in the new Reich. Professor Craig goes on to attribute the failure of the Weimar Republic to the fact that German officers 'put their epaulettes back on again so quickly after 1918' and, more strikingly, to the fact that 'the public buildings were not burned down, *along with the bureaucrats who inhabited them.*'³⁵

Professor Craig may be seen as a classical democratic lizard. He likes democracy, freedom and humanism, and dislikes tough-mindedness, brute force and realism. But he wants to burn down buildings and their inhabitants. The trouble is that idealism, loyalty, yearning and alienation do not fall into simple categories. I offer another, more sympathetic look at Fortinbras, and his farewell to Hamlet:

Adieu prince I have tasks a sewer project
and a decree on prostitutes and beggars.
I must also elaborate a better system of prisons
since as you justly said Denmark is a prison.
I go to my affairs. This night is born
A star named Hamlet. We shall never meet
What I shall leave will not be worth a tragedy.

It is not for us to greet each other or bid farewell we
live on archipelagos.
And that water these words what can they do what can they
do prince.³⁶

But then, Poles are realists. But that is another story.

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³⁵ G. Craig, *Germany, 1866-1945*, Oxford: Clarendon Press 1981, pp. 1, 306 (emphasis added).

³⁶ Zbigniew Herbert, 'Elegy of Fortinbras' (transl. Czesław Miłosz), in C. Tomlinson, *The Oxford Book of Verse in English Translation*, Oxford: Oxford University Press 1983, p. 510 (my punctuation).