The Step Out of Line

Kurt Eggers

Kurt Eggers

The Step Out of Line

TRADITION

1Y41

2nd edition

All rights reserved / American copyright 1YZY bg Volkschaft'Derlag G.m.b.H., Dortmund / printed in Germang / printed by WLZ/Rote Erde, Dortmund / cover and binding by Oswald Weise

Man is a rope knotted between animal and superman - a rope over an abyss.

Nietzsche

To the memory of my parents

The dream of my virtue still moves me today, and I still see its shapes and colors in this hour:

It was a spring day, I dreamed, the sun was warming and shining over the pines of my home in the Mark Brandenburg, and the birds were singing their first, enticing song. Along the meadow path by the stream went the happy and joyful crowd of my friends. They followed a tall, blond boy who seemed to be dancing under a secret compulsion. For he moved his feet in a rhythm that was not determined by any music. His hands clapped a beat that must have come from the depths of his heart. For his lips remained half open and did not move. The train came closer and was soon so close that I could have called any of my friends by name. I saw Ehrhard Strehlow, Günther 2lwe, Frih Wenhlafs, Walter Huhn, Karl Gräh and Willi Wittstock. Littg Seifert was also there, as well as Hertha Fleischer and my sister Grete. Oa the dancing boy turned to me and looked at me with questioning, astonished eyes.

I was very frightened when I realized that this boy was me. I wanted to shout at him because I was ashamed that I was dancing in front of my friends like that.

I could not utter a word, and so I had to watch the procession pass me by, following the young dancer. My friends followed him for a long way, until the path was lost behind a grove of trees. -

I lay awake for a long time, afraid to my eyes. Perhaps I thought the figures of my friends might still be within reach. And with them, the dancer! It was weeks before I was able to

dared to play and frolic with them carefree. Only very gradually did the gap of the dream close.

A secret trepidation gripped me again and again. take part in my companions' tilt games and preferred to wander alone through the sandy fields, accompanied only by the wolf pih Flock, whom I loved very much.

Today I have to smile when I think of how much his dream impressed me. And I'm sure it no small part in keeping me away from all the fun and frolics early on. But perhaps it's not right just to smile about it. For it is now thirty years since I dreamt this dream, which I cannot forget!

After a long time, I came back to my homeland to look for the places of my carefree childhood and to track down the old dreams there.

I'm lying under an old, lonely birch tree, my arms folded under my head, squinting up at the sky. The wafer-thin white clouds seem to flutter like veils in the bright sunlight. The sweet scent of dandelions is almost too heavy.

Thirty rides?

Perhaps one should not return to the places of memory. The dream has brighter colors than reality. Today, the trees seem smaller to me, and the houses are not as lively and personal. Fa, even the bumblebees aren't as big as they used to be.

Over there, a horse is walking in front of the harrow. I don't even know its name. Fa, I don't know the farmer either.

A shaggy dog roams past.

I realize that I am lonelier than I was back then. Because Flock was with me then

About two years after I was born, my parents left Berlin and moved to a village in the Mark Brandenburg between Friedrichshagen and Rüdersdorf. It was called Schöneiche. It was a fiddled-up manor that mostly sold its plots of land to civil servants and employees who were not afraid to spend several hours a day on the smoky and bumpy suburban train - to and from work - just to give themselves and their families a life away from the hustle and bustle of the big city.

This Schöneiche has long the home of my childhood longings.

There certainly weren't many houses there when my parents moved out with me and Grete. I know that the forest began just outside our door. Later, Berlin sent more and more roots into our forest, so that houses sprouted in large numbers and paths cut up the forest.

There were no rich people in Schöneiche. Civil servants didn't have much money, and the rich preferred to move to the posh west. Apart from the civil servants' country houses - they made a point of living in "villas" - there were a few very modest craftsmen's houses. That was all. Wealthy farmers lived in Kleinschönebeck. The rest of the Schöneiche estate was surrounded by only a few day laborers' cottages.

I remember well that my parents were usually looked at with less than friendly eyes. Grete and I also had to suffer from the fact that we were the "children of the rulers". However, we noticed this less through our friends than through our parents. At that time, social democracy was gaining ground and my father belonged to an "upper class". Whenever one of the petty elections for the local council or even the district council was just around the corner, stones would occasionally fly into our windows, sometimes even threateningly close to our heads. I didn't it much thought. After all, a real boy has so many fights that he doesn't spend much time asking why.

The world of my love was not very big. On the throne of this world reigned my mother, whom I loved so naturally that I wanted to marry her at all costs, and at critical moments, when I was jealous of my father, I used to have her say yes to me. While

hile my love for my father and Grete was very changeable, my love for my grandmother was unwavering. My feelings for Flock and my numerous stuffed animals, Teddg, the polar bear, Miesemausekahe and the rabbit were also beyond any fluctuation. Every now and then Littg, the daughter of our washerwoman, was allowed to enter my world. However, she never long due to the numerous and violent incidents that happened to her there.

My earliest memory revolves around an old, weather-beaten birch tree, to which I would often trip with Flock and Teddg to wring myself out when some great sorrow gnawed at my little heart. Flock had a long, comforting tongue, which he used to run lovingly over my hands when he saw me sad. And Teddg's fur willingly absorbed all the hot tears.

The ancient oak tree, which not only gave Schöneiche its name but also its local center, often drew me to it because numerous little liches frolicked in its massive branches. Then there was a mill tetch for which I had a deep love. But it was scary to me because, to my mother's assurances, it was supposed to be the home of Aquarius. And this water sprite is known to be the sworn enemy of little boys!

The world of my life was much bigger, but as a real boy I measured it against the world of my love and therefore didn't take it very seriously. However, I won't hide the fact that the chimney sweep who came to visit from time to time brought me considerable peace of mind, as he more than once serious steps to take me into the chimney sweep apprenticeship as a rascal who was too naughty for the good children's country. For a long time, I thought the world ended behind Schöneich Forest. There I saw the sun set in the evening and I knew for sure that it would emerge from the mill pond in the morning.

The moon had lost my respect when I once raced him and he fell behind after just a few jumps.

I lived in this world until that dream drove me to break out of its confines.

It was not easy for me to say goodbye. I had to go to the birch tree a good three times to gather my strength. Then I finally made up my mind.

I secretly pulled an old baby carriage out of the hutch, carefully placed Teddg, the polar bear, the mouse-cheek and the rabbit in it, unchained Flock and left my parents' house with a pounding heart. I met Littg on the country road and had no qualms about taking her by the hand and whisking her away.

We soon came to the meadow path and I only had to go straight ahead to get to the forest. Littg was a little reluctant, as she was afraid of the forest.

The sun was burning very hot from the sky. Flock let his red tongue hang down and Littg began to silently. I didn't feel well, but I forced myself to be brave.

We soon came to the forest, whose coolness was almost more eerie than its darkness. I comforted myself with the thought that I would soon reach the deep hole into which the sun sank in the evening, and I tugged Littg very firmly by the arm behind me.

My feet began to ache, and more than once I had to fight down the temptation to turn back or stop for a rest. Finally the forest thinned out. I breathed a sigh of relief and hoped that I was now at the end of the world. But what lay beyond the forest was only the end of my world!

There was no abyss to be seen. No great mystery was revealed. Nothing appeared that could have been called supernatural or worthy of attention. A wide field spread out before me. Farmers were working there and houses gleamed like stars.

I suddenly realized that Schöneiche was not the world, and that there were people beyond the forest who knew the sun and the moon, the stars and trees and animals.

But where was the end of the world?

I shed hot tears that hour when I realized how small I was, and I refused to be comforted when Flock kept poking his nose into my hand.

Father Thieke, who often worked with us with his wife, found me when I was wandering around the edge of the forest with Littg and Flock and didn't want to go home. He tried in vain to comfort me by telling me about the wide world, about Russia and Paris, about the Chinese and the blacks in Mohrenland. He never got there himself, Father Thieke!

A few months later, he saved my life. At Christmas 1909 I was given a toboggan which, to my sorrow, I was unable to use because, despite my very urgent prayers as a child, neither the good Lord nor Mother Hulda thought to let snow fall from the sky. But in January it got colder, so the village children were already sledding on the mill pond.

My mother had strictly forbidden Grete and me to go there. The Aquarius was very treacherous!

I'm sure we would have stayed at home too if Hertha Fleischer 't been up to her neck in water one morning. Our Amalie, the nanny, had described the misfortune to us with bright colors in all the grey colors.

in most gruesome detail. Grete and I looked at each other sympathetically after this report, which ended with the admonition never to go near the mill pond, took each other by the hand and walked the shortest way to the pond.

Hertha Fleischer had probably been lying in her warm bed for hours when we, surrounded by the village children, stood at the edge of the mill pond and stared grippedly into the waterhole that had almost become little Hertha's grave. As I had no real idea of the depth of the millpond, I picked up a thin stick that was lying forlornly on the elf and poked around in the waterhole.

I don't know whether I received an insidious push or whether I lost my balance as a result of leaning over the burr; in short, the ice-cold water suddenly crashed over my head. I resurfaced a moment later, clinging to the fragile edge of the ice. felt myself being pulled under the ice as if by an unsteady hand, and I tried with all my might to push my feet down. The village children ran away in horror, and Grete, obviously saddened, stood a few meters away on the safe ground and seemed to follow with some interest how I would out of the water again. I became very sad when I thought of my mother. She had expressly forbidden me to to the mill pond. I also had to of Hertha Fleischer. Now I knew how she must have felt in the water and how cold and runny the mill pond was.

Strangely enough, it didn't occur to me to scream, I just felt the tears running hot down my cold cheeks. The screaming of the village children must attracted the attention of old Bater Thieke. For suddenly I saw him coming out of the ugly gray workhouse, in front of which I had always felt something like I afraid they would rush out and run towards me.

"Hold on tight, Bubi,^ he shouted incessantly.

I was a little annoyed that he called me Bubi, because I had to fight through many fights because of this unsolicited nickname. At last Bater Thieke was with me, threw himself on the ground, reached out his hand to me and pulled me towards him with a violent jerk that hurt me very much.

In no time at all I was surrounded by the village children, who reverently touched my wet coat. Grete also approached hesitantly and tearfully discovered that my new bobble hat was missing. If Father Thieke hadn't held me back, I would probably have gone back to the hole in the ice to look for the bobble hat. Because I was afraid of being scolded for losing this Christmas present.

The first few steps were horrible. Squeaking ice water splashed out of the shoes and the socks quickly became covered in a layer of ice that hurt with every movement.

So I was very glad that Father Thieke me on his left arm and with his right spread an old potato sack over me, which a woman from the Arbetterhaus had brought.

I was led home in a huge procession, which was reinforced by the children of the whole neighborhood. Grete ran a few steps ahead, screaming and crying, so that I became angry because I was afraid Mother might notice everything and then punish me severely.

To my not insignificant surprise, my mother welcomed me with tears, tender words and kisses. Father Thieke was handed a large, blank coin and I was carried into the nursery, rubbed down thoroughly and then put to bed between countless hot-water bottles. Instead of the feared beatings, I received a whole bag of honey sweets, which, along with lard sandwiches, were the most delicious treat for me.

When I was allowed to leave the bed again after a few days, it turned out that my freedom been very restricted. A newly appointed English governess, Miss Maud, did not let me out of her sight and knew how to this guarding bearable by giving me chocolate and sweets. Among the village youth, however, I was held in high esteem, which even outshone the fame of Hertha Fleischer. Hertha had been pulled out of the water by Ehrhard Strehlow and Fritz Wenhlaff without much ado. But Bater Thieke had saved me, for which he a commendation that was even printed in the Niederbarnimer Anzeiger!

2) I became very fond of Maud because she could never really threaten me due to her rather comical language and preferred to buy my obedience with numerous gifts of love.

There was only one thing we never agreed on: I walking through the farmers' stables in borrowed clogs, stroking cows and horses and then inviting myself to the farmers' wives for milk and lard sandwiches. Miss Maud, on the other hand, loved the finer things, high heels, silk dresses, tea and cookies and walks in our well-kept garden, at best as far as the forest. We couldn't agree even when she already spoke fluent German and I had developed my childish language into a gibberish that only the two of us could understand by picking up lots of English words. However, I had an undisguised respect for her because, although Grete often her to, she never played with dolls but obvious pleasure in successfully at the target with my children's pistol. Miss Maud stayed with us until the outbreak of the war, and when she left she assured me with great emotion that it was a great privilege to wage war against beautiful Germany.

When I was five years old, I really wanted to become a baker, because our village baker drove through the villages with a mold wagon, sold fresh bread, which tasted so incredibly good with lard, pancakes, crumble slices and slices of six, welcome everywhere because he added a fresh roll to every loaf, and finally saw a large piece of the far every day, because after all, he visited eight villages every day. It is understandable that I was very proud when he gave me permission to accompany him on his round trip every Wednesday. Then I was allowed to hold the reins, carry bread into the houses, operate the big wagon bell and even sit on the white horse Moritz when the wagon stopped for a long time.

Moritz had many black patches in his coat where the drawbar rubbed, and his mane and tail were bald and shaggy, but his disposition was kind and honest. He gladly my shooing away the flies and combing his mane with the little comb I borrowed from Bater's bedside table for this purpose. He didn't mind that I looked him in the strange big eyes distorted my image.

Wednesday became a day of celebration for me, which I looked forward to and for which I had myself thoroughly washed and combed. And the baker was also looking forward to seeing me because, at his kind persuasion, I used to reduce my bather's cigar supply by a few particularly handsome cigars with body ties.

This general joy lasted for several months until my father found out the reason for the baker's kindness and put an end to the Wednesday trips.

60 it came about that I became more attached to my friend Ehrhard Strehlow, who, because his father was a master painter, brought a lot of variety into my life.

was able to bring. Soon there was not a house or fence in Schöneiche, Kleinschönebeck or Fichtenau that did not bear the signs of our beautification stn.

We never thought anything bad about it were therefore very indignant when the old retired police constable Krüger wrote a respectful but nonetheless indignant letter to my file. This letter earned me serious reproaches, a few cat heads and Father Thieke a rescue order.

I quietly envied my friend Ehrhard for his father, who didn't seem to care much about the upbringing of his many children. Ehrhard was never in a sulk, always had time, was allowed to wear clogs and use swear words that I would be frowned upon. Ehrhard always had things with him that were inaccessible to me, such as matches, pocket knives, string, nails and colored pencils. Over time, I came to have a tremendous respect for the master painter Strehlow, who allowed his Ehrhard everything by forbidding him nothing, so that I gave up wanting to become a master baker and instead decided to dedicate myself to the honorable and liberal craft of painting.

I have Ehrhard Strehlow to thank for many a skill. He taught me how to catch cockchafers and, if necessary, to use a stone to free them from the narrow housing of the few lanterns that were set up on Friedrichshagener Chaussee. Ehrhard also knew how to sing frogs and newts out of Modrach's small marshy pond. He knew all the mushrooms and was not only able distinguish the poisonous ones from the noble ones, but also to out the ones that could be eaten raw. He knew all the hidden places in the forest where blueberries grew in abundance.

We spent many a wonderful day like that. Only when Ehrhard tried to tempt me to take out birds' nests like him.

our friendship was ruptured. I loved the birds very much and would rather have chopped off a finger than harm the little animals.

Particular highlights during this sunny time were the rides in our goat team, which father had bought from the imperial court administration, not without proud feelings. Hansl, the goat, was characterized by two features which at least caused the astonishment of all Schöneich and Klein Schönebeck residents. The first was that Hansl had an extremely stubborn character, so that when the rides were to take place, the farmhands from the whole area had to be summoned. There was then an exciting fight, in which Hansi, with his considerable horns, threw many a farmer's tongue onto the sand in a high arc. The drawbar also often broke in two. But when Hansi, overpowered and harnessed, pulled the flower-decorated cart, there were only voices of admiration everywhere.

The second quality that Hansi famous in the wider area was his unsurpassable stench, which even made Father Thieke say that he only got involved with such a skunk for Bubi's sake. I must confess, however, that Hansi's stench contributed significantly to my general respect for him. An odorless Hansi would not have made the same convincing impression on me.

And when we, Grete and I, and sometimes Lhrhard too, with Hansi through the birch grove between Schöneiche and Fichtenau, I certainly wouldn't trade places with the little prince or princess who might have ridden in that car before me. When I pulled on the lead, Hansi stood. If I jerked once, he turned left, if I jerked twice, he obediently went to the right. And when I whipped him with the little bow whip between

flicked his horns, he made a few not-so-dangerous forward saws.

2On a Sunday morning, we were filmed. It was one of those films that are popular at all tents and that know how to conjure up the lives of rich people in bright colors, in which we were allowed to participate. Mother was well aware of the great honor bestowed her children and dressed us in the beautiful Tyrolean clothes she brought back from Merano the year before. Ehrhard already put on his white sailor's suit when he learned from Father Thieke that his participation in the film was not intended. That dealt a heavy blow to our friendship.

We were later allowed to watch this movie in the Friedrichshagen cinema. I don't remember what the movie was called or why our appearance was necessary. I only know that at the end of the movie, a beautiful young lady went into our mill pond and waved kindly to her obviously astonished master, who was desperately running back and forth along the pond, before she disappeared. I was very sad about this and came to respect the mill pond even more.

My friendship with Ehrhard Strehlow soon fell completely because Ehrhard had seduced me into my first conscious and serious sin.

At the center of this fall from grace was the old baby carriage that once accompanied me on my escape to the longed-for end of the world. In the meantime, the baby carriage had been called to a new duty: it served Father Thieke to carry away the excellent manure that Hansi delivered for the strawberries. I can't remember what we didn't need the pram for, we had so much to do: Tracking down hedgehogs, collecting pine bark for wooden boats, plucking grass for the rabbits? Oa we needed a cart.

Near the old oak tree we met the Lumpenmah, a distant relative of Father Thieke. The Lumpenmah was a popular figure among the poorer population because he paid a few copper pennies for the most impossible things, even for the old issues of our Allgemeine Zeitung. He didn't have the slightest interest in us "rich people", hardly ever giving us a greeting. At the most, he came to our yard once, grumbling, to rummage around on his own initiative and let valuables disappear into the unfathomably deep sack.

Ehrhard greeted me in a friendly manner and I also bowed politely. The ragman had already passed us when Ehrhard, probably thinking that in this case we should at least try to make a deal, called out to him wait.

The Lumpenmah turned around disgruntled.

"Do you have anything to sell at home, Ehrhard?"'

Ehrhard didn't quite know what to say and stepped sheepishly from one foot to the other.

-What are you calling after me for, brat!" growled Lumpenmah.

Then Ehrhard gave me a push and whispered that I should sell the baby carriage!

The imposition was so unexpected and seemed so outrageous that my heart was pounding in my throat. I just shook my head convulsively and would have liked to run away with the threatened wagon if my knees hadn't been trembling so much. The Lumpenmah was still standing there, apparently waiting for an explanation.

Ehrhard was overcome with fear. He stuttered helplessly and his arms around. Then the Lumpenmah tapped his forehead meaningfully and walked on. Ehrhard was on the verge of weeping and thought he had mortally offended the Lumpenmah.

And he knew what it meant to have him as an enemy! There were no more copper pennies! And then goodbye! Sweets

and cake crumbs and all the beautiful things that a little manure can buy for a few pennies from the big world and its pleasures.

"Bubi wants to sell his car!" he finally shouted.

With a jerk, the ragman stopped, took a few steps closer and examined the wagon closely.

For the first time in my life, I felt cold sweat on my forehead, and I didn't dare to put up a wall.

What do you want for the cart?" the ragamuffin asked lurkingly.

I shrugged my shoulders in despair.

"I'll give you a six.

Hot tears slowly trickled down my cheeks and I would have been glad of candles if the earth had opened up beneath me. The Lumpenmah seemed to regard my indulgence as a sign of dissatisfaction with his offer.

Well, Bubi, that's all the old box is worth, but because you're such a fine boy, you should have a penny!

As I only howled even more pathetically instead of answering, the ragamuffin gave up, pressed a penny into my angsty hand, loaded the baby carriage onto his vehicle and left.

I stood there in a daze, bright green and red circles dancing in front of my eyes, and the penny burned like fire in my hand. Ehrhard scratched his head in embarrassment. He didn't seem quite right about .

You didn't have to sell, Bubi.

This betrayal almost broke my heart, I cried and sobbed in bewilderment and would have loved to run away.

A penny is a nice piece of money,' Lhrhard tried to console me. My tears flowed more and more violently, and the penny burned so terribly that I buried it in the loose sand under the oak tree in front of Ehrhard and rolled a large stone over it.

Ehrhard looked on uncomprehendingly, but felt so much camaraderie that he accompanied me home.

To make matters worse, I ran into my father's arms, who asked me the reason for my grief. I tore myself away, rushed into the house, ran as fast as I could up the stairs to my room, undressed with trembling hands, lay down in bed and pulled the covers over my head. I was ashamed myself.

A short time later, my father and mother came in and sat down by my bed. Mother carefully pulled back the covers.

What about you, boy?"

It took almost an hour for my parents to " out" what crime their boy had committed.

Father just shook his head and said: "The beautiful car, Father Thieke could have used it so well."

That hurt me more than the spanking I had expectedwhich would certainly have been a liberating and just compensation.

Mother looked at me reproachfully.

"And where is the sinner's penny?"

I stammered and told him how he had burned in my hand and where he was buried.

We'll get the penny," Mother said, "and then you'll buy Grete sweets for it, but you won't a single one!"

Relieved, I got up and got dressed.

The tears flowed more sparingly, and as we, father, mother, Grete and I, made our way to the old oak tree, my heart felt light again.

The stone was already there and I recognized it immediately. With just a few grips, I had also scratched open the small hole. But the penny was gone!

I rummaged around the floor. Grete also took part in the search, because she was really looking forward to being able to eat sweets all by herself for a penny. The

Groschen did not appear. I got an agonizing fear that my parents would doubt the truth of my confession and began to indiscriminately dig up all the stones under the oak tree.

Suddenly Ehrhard emerged and so close that we could all clearly see him sucking and chewing. I could only point at him with my hand. I couldn't get a word out of my mouth because of my excitement and angry disappointment. It was obvious that Ehrhard had gone behind my back to get the penny and buy himself some sweets!

Such abysmal meanness was too much. I picked up the first best stone to throw at Ehrhard. But he jumped into the nearby bushes, screaming with a great cry.

I looked down in shame and promised myself that I would never be in such an embarrassing situation again. But Ehrhard was finished for me.

The case of the sinner's penny was not only often discussed in my family circle and recalled to me on certain occasions when I was to be given a stern moral sermon, but was also used by our extended family and numerous acquaintances to our own children and grandchildren a heartfelt lecture with a raised finger.

The sinfulness of it was so engraved in my soul that even years later, whenever I heard something about sin at school or even at university, I had to think back to that shameful hour.

I must confess, however, that over time a tremendous resentment built up in my heart, which occasionally vented itself against the tormentors of my soul. I began to hate the raised forefingers and the mocking, pitying smiles.

On Sundays, a cousin from Berlin who I found particularly obnoxious came to visit us in the country to show off his Quintan dignity and white sailor suit. For him, the peasants, among whom he counted me, seemed to be created exclusively to admiringly acknowledge the all-round superiority of the city kids. However, referring to his suit, he refused to climb the trees with us in a race or crawl around under the horses' bellies in the stables. Instead, with an insultingly condescending smile, he told us about the cars and trains of Berlin, which seemed wondrous and dangerous to us. I would certainly have forgiven him for his superior manner if he hadn't started to talk about the pranks of the city kids at the end, expressing subtle contempt for my sinful misdemeanor.

During these conversations, which were completely dominated by my cousin, we came to the farm of the farmer Gräh. My cousin in no way impressed by the dignity of the stately farm, illuminated by Sunday purity, but scornfully turned up his nose at everything he did not know. And since he was completely unfamiliar with country life, he couldn't stop sniffing, so that he passed by everything that would give a real country gentleman pleasure with a disgustingly haughty expression. He had no love for either the little piglets or the foals, and he even seemed to be very afraid of the calves' big eyes. Only a large, bare barrel wagon found mercy before his eyes.

He stopped and looked at him .

"It's a beer truck," he , proud of his knowledge. I nodded, while my friends had to stop themselves from blurting out loud.

-Fa, there's malt beer in it/

My cousin's eyes lit up with desire.

-I like drinking malt beer so much/

I quickly thought of the many mental pinpricks my spiteful cousin had given me, and took great to make my voice sound ordinary and matter-of-fact.

"Just turn on the tap and hold your hand under. The people here are not at all stingy if you take some malt beer/

I can't hide the fact that my heart shook with joy when my cousin ran as fast as he could to the barrel wagon and tampered with the big brass tap.

And then it was already done!

The stinking slurry shot over him in a wide stream, covering his floral-wet sailor suit with a quick-drying, disgusting layer and thoroughly fertilizing the man who was almost frozen with shock.

Nor will I conceal the fact that, despite the blows and reproaches of my parents, who were unable to calm either my cousin or my outraged relatives, I did not the slightest remorse. Indeed, I was heartily proud of the unqualified praise I received from the entire village youth, who saw in me the avenger of the country's honor for the Berliners' bravery.

I was just a little surprised at how resentful my relatives were and how little sense of fun they had, because they never came back to Schöneiche since that day.

2On my fifth birthday, I was given an Indian outfit with all the ingredients to make a boy's heart happy. Oa wasn't missing the headdress or the feather tail that reached almost to my heels. A scalping knife, bow and tomahawk were also provided, as well as a tent and shield.

I found some pencils on my mother's dressing table, which I used to create very convincing circles and stains on my hair.

When I managed capture a zop from my grandmother's bedside table, which was apparently not needed at the time, I was elected chief by the united youth of Schöneich and Klelnschönebeck, that is, only by the boys between five and ten years of age. In less than a week, I had assembled a solid warrior tribe of almost twenty loyal and belligerent Indians, armed with beanstalks that I took from my father's garden.

In the nearby woods, we practiced throwing stones and archery. As a war cry we chose the cry of the peacock, which can be heard particularly far away and is also relatively easy to learn. The language of our tribe was a variation of the Grbsen language widely spoken by young people.

When we left the Schöneicher Jagügrünüe after a fortnight, we were a force to be reckoned with, longing for the hour proving ourselves. In my tent we held a council of war over a peace pipe. I took the peace pipe, along with the accompanying smoking herb, from my father's boroughs, who wore a trimmed moustache after his stay in England and smoked incessantly from a short pipe.

Our council of war was very short, and I believe that the reason for our quick decisions not only the harmony of our souls, but also the peace pipewhich we took turns smoking with disdainfully clenched teeth, but which did us no good. We decided to fleece the FIchtenau and Rahnsdorf tribes with Krleg.

Our first appearance had a powerful effect. No serious resistance was offered to us anywhere, so that on our first move we advanced as far as the endless shores of Lake Nlüggel. However, the foreign tribes recovered surprisingly well

The next war campaigns led to fierce and not always bloodless battles, in which not only the dogs of our Oorsers took part, but sometimes also uncomprehending and agitated mothers. Later, because of the fierce resistance, we had to limit ourselves to never raiding a particular village more than once. However, the constant change of our military campaigns had the advantage that the countryside as far as Erkner and Kalk- berge opened up to us.

Flock had been my faithful companion since the first campaign, his terrible howls and growls saved me from taken prisoner more than once. Unfortunately, however, in a fierce battle near Münchehofe he could not prevent me from hit on the forehead with a stone, which robbed me of my senses for a while and left me with a profusely bleeding wound.

The Münchehofer tribe then left the battlefield in a hurry. When regained consciousness, I felt very weak and often vomited. My tribe's return home was by no means a happy one. Even Flock, who usually jumped ahead yapping cheerfully, followed sadly behind me.

I had to lie in bed for a long time and the doctor gave me horrible tasting green medicine. I had many confused dreams at that time and my parents were very worried when they came to my bedside. When I was finally allowed to get up again, my Indian games were over. My equipment had supposedly been given to a poor, good boy in Berlin.

At Christmas, my sister Grete was given a satchel, the usual slate blackboard with sponge and a wooden pencil case. This meant that she would start school next Easter. I was struck by the thought

It was unbearable to have to remain stupid while Grete grew wiser from day to . I saw an outrageous lack of consideration in putting a girl so obviously above a fertilizer.

Between the ages of four and five, I many fundamental power struggles with my sister. It was all about who was in charge of the games, who was allowed to count off, in short, who had to set the tone. In the course of these battles, many a tear had been shed and many a tuft of hair had to the floor. Now and again there had even been some not inconsiderable bruises. As the younger one, I had had to fight hard for my right next to my sister. And now the satchel suddenly lay under the Christmas tree as an irrefutable sign of my sister's dignity and precedence! The whole celebration was spoiled for me. My eyes kept wandering from the soldiers and horses, who had so confidently taken up position in one corner, to the satchel, the sign of my humiliation. Grete suddenly seemed to have grown half a meter. Every inch of her proclaimed her complete superiority, and the horse carried her so high that she could easily have served as the top of a Christmas tree. After a long inner struggle, I decided not to give in or even submit quietly. On the contrary, I began to cry and sob with all my might and to demand a satchel for the sake of justice.

My parents' comforting advice that I was still too young to school, but that the school bag I had longed for would be under Christmas tree the following year, did nothing to convince me. On the contrary, my inadequacy was even officially certified. And when Grete, with an indescribably haughty expression, her satchel on her back, walked through the

Welhnachtszlmmer, I shouted unrestrainedly for my rights.

My father achieved many things in his life. He even Schöneiche a railroad. In the interests of peace at home, he had no choice but to on numerous trips to obtain permission me to start school early.

My persistent shouting gradually led me to my goal. The first step towards victory was the purchase of a satchel and a breakfast bag. I set them up under the Christmas tree in triumph, and my proudest joy was the realization that Grete's superiority had noticeably .

After countless letters, personal consultations and playing high and mighty relationships, my parents' determined struggle succeeded in getting my trial enrollment approved.

The usually long weeks between Reufahr and Easter flew by. I spent hours sneaking around the Schön- eich village school to take a look inside the classroom. I modestly and politely asked older pupils for information about the lessons and was astonished to discover that the pupils' opinions about the meaning of school and the value of the teacher differed widely. Most of them rejected school outright.

I sometimes had difficult thoughts, but decided not to let any doubts that arose be noticed at home. Especially not to give my sister the opportunity turn up her nose.

I had my hair cut very short for the first day of school. I softened my blond boyish curls with water. The pencils were nicely sharpened in the box and the blackboard shone in the cleanest blackness. Mother took us both

and led us to school on a sunny morning.

Mr. Wenhlaff, the teacher, bowed deeply to my mother and took us over. Grete went to the left side with the girls and I went to the right side with the boys. Oa's heart was beating in my throat, but I made up my mind to be very calm.

My neighbor was Walter Virkholz, the son of the gardener in Schöneich. A red-haired, freckled brat whose nose was constantly dripping. Walter Birkholz had always been my enemy. We had fought often and bitterly. But today we decided to friends.

Oa's classroom was very big and didn't smell good. Schän- eiche only had a one-grade elementary school. The older pupils had the day off, so we dominated the field. I examined the room reverently. Half of the windows were made of opaque white glass. This gave the room a sober and matter-of-fact feel, which was by no means unpleasant. The long, bright yellow cane that lay across the catheter looked much more exciting and showed that justice prevailed here very emphatically if necessary. On the walls hung maps and strange pictures of clouds and flying people, which, as it would later turn out during religious instruction, were angels and figures from biblical history.

My hands were wet and trembling with excitement as I took out the board and pencil to start learning immediately. I was very disappointed when Mr. Wenhlaff didn't even think about teaching us to read and write, but was obviously intent on entertaining us. First he wrote down our names and made a joke for every question he asked us, which we laughed at dutifully, but very cautiously. Then he handed out

Sweets of a kind that I to death, but nevertheless put in my mouth with words of thanks.

After half an hour, we were led into the courtyard, displayed in a circle and made to perform singing games.

I learned two of these games. One was that we had to sing:

Ting, Tang,
Tekerlein,
Who is at my door?
A beautiful little lily said to me: First stone, second stone, third stone must be with me. One, two, three!

At three, one was knocked off and had to step behind the questioner. I learned the game, but didn't understand why it was played.

I liked the other game much better. It had the name "Hans, you stink!" This game was all about lousing and catching.

After an hour we were relieved for today.

I was very disappointed not to have learned more, but I didn't let my inner sadness show. I went home willingly by my mother's hand with Grete, who kept raving about how nice the school was and how nice Mr. Wenhlaff was.

Our time at school in Schöneich was very varied because the different year groups taught in the same classroom and, if we only opened our ears properly, we youngsters could get an idea of the wealth of material that awaited us in the years to come. Learning wasn't very strenuous because the curriculum didn't much other than writing and spelling.

As I very soon saw school as a puzzle game, I learned by playing and was immensely proud when I very quickly outshone Grete in learning.

I was no longer a boy, but a schoolboy. This feeling gave me a new sense of the environment.

Mr. Wenhlass was a beekeeper and a rather successful gardener. So it happened that at certain times lessons were canceled, Mr. Wenhlaff took care of his bees and we pupils had to look after his garden. In the mushroom season or when the berries were traveling, we went into the woods with the whole school to get a visual lesson on the growth of nature in our homeland. Mr. Wenhlaff gave the mushrooms and berries collected on such occasions to his mother who, as he was not married, kept house for him. Mother Wenhlaff seemed to have a great need for cranberries in particular, because when they were ripe, our hours of observation in the forest multiplied.

These hours were very dear to me, because I was strangely drawn to the life of the animals in the forest. watched woodpeckers and squirrels, rabbits and foxes, saw deer and stags and often sat on the shore of a small forest lake and watched the animals in the water. Later, when I grammar school in Berlin, I sometimes laughed to myself when I saw how eagerly the boys there studied botany and zoology and ended up mixing everything up. To a boy growing up in the countryside, nature reveals itself in all its facets without a textbook.

Over time, I learned to read and write and used the latter art in particular? to write my name on as many walls as possible in Schöneiche, Klein- schönebeck and Fichtenau with teacher Wentzlaff's chalk. Even some trees bear the proud initial letters of my name eternity, i.e. until the day they are cut down.

I got on reasonably well with my schoolmates. Above all, the attacks on me as the "master child" became less frequent when the others realized that even a master child, like any other, has to learn first, personally, without a nanny. Perhaps the fact I very quickly learned the colloquial language of the village children contributed to the general reconciliation, a language that unfortunately had little pleasant effect on the minds of my parents and relatives due to its rich imagery clear coarseness. As a result, the arguments with my family were of such a fundamental nature that I to speak in two languages from then on, in the language of the oor when I was my friends and companions, and in the elevated language of the family when I crossed the threshold of my father's house. This bilingualism proved to be a clever means of navigating through the dangers of wildness as well as those of equally embarrassing refinement.

Since I'm good at climbing trees, catching pigs and throwing butter sticks - the art of throwing a stone onto the water in such a way that it makes several long jumps before sinking
- soon achieve a certain level of mastery, my reputation among my classmates grew. Only Mr. Wenhlaff was at times, as he had been a little proud of me as the child of a lord. He had more than enough peasant tales! He was all the more surprised when, on his first visit to our house, he discovered that I had mastered the manners of a boy from a good family. I never forgot that he never said a word to my parents about my bilingualism.

Mr. Wenhlasf was a handsome, middle-aged blond man who, as a bachelor, was very often the center of our girls' conversations. Schöneiche never had but-

flllß of marriage candidates, so Mr. Wenhlasf was very spoiled. We always knew which courtly girl had crocheted his tie. I also believe that Mr. Wenhlafs seldom needed to buy sausage and ham; whatever food he needed was brought to his house during the day by the farmers' sons or their older sisters in the evening. As he was a very respectable person, I decided to become a teacher later, when it was convenient, all the more because I enjoyed learning more and more the deeper I delved into the pictorial secrets of the primer. With true enthusiasm I learned the short poems of

"Rab, Rab,
Why don't you give me a bone too?" and
"What kind of beggar is that, he's wearing a black and white skirt."

Since the hatchet had long since been buried and my tribe had converted to more peaceful activities, I kept suggesting playing school when we were looking for games to play without school. The fact that I insisted on having to be Mr. Wenhlaff on these occasions is all the more understandable as I knew the entire primer by heart, as far as we had gone through it so far. The game usually ended very badly when, in order to eradicate stupidity, I had to reach for the stick. This is where the game and reality diverged. The orphans had too little imagination to let me beat them up as they thought they deserved.

The guest performance of a cinematographic theater, which gave the honor of a performance in the restaurant "Zum Eiskeller" in the autumn of 1911, was a tremendous experience for Schöneiche, Fichtenau and Kletnschönebeck. Quite apart the fact that hardly any of the inhabitants knew how to pronounce the title of this company, because the word cinema

we didn't know, we were told wonderful things about this new art that had emerged in Berlin. Punctually at six o'clock in the afternoon one Sunday, we stood in front of the door of the "Eiskeller" with an educational penny in our hands and waited excitedly for admission, which was to begin at seven o'clock. Owing to the solemnity of the moment, the peasants came in their warrior's frock coats or evening dresses. I was wearing my new blue sailor suit, and Grete proudly wore her good white dress with perforated embroidery.

At seven o'clock sharp, we sat on the garden chairs in the pub, all of which had a numbered ticket today.

The performance was sold out and could therefore begin reasonably punctually. Lin, a dignified older gentleman in a gray swallowtail, gave a very well-educated lecture with lots of foreign words that we didn't understand, using very anointed language. Then the movie was supposed to start. Unfortunately, it was shown upside down, so that the pictures were upside down. While the movie was changed, the gentleman gave a lecture on the countless dangers of cinematography, which made a strong impression on us.

Finally, with the audience in breathless suspense, a somewhat indistinct and blurred tape was shown, showing the ascent of several balloons in Bitterfeld. The people on the were all moving at an incredible speed. But we assumed that the people in Bitterseld must be different from those in Schöneiche. Oa's second illustrated book was obviously meant to be cheerful, because a large family traveling was constantly getting lost, so that the father decided to put his many children and the agitated mother-in-law on a thick rope. How this attempt turned out remained an eternal mystery, because shortly before the end, the film and the projection apparatus burst into bright flames.

For weeks, we hardly talked anything other than cinematography and the dangers associated with it.

My adventurous uncle Otfrid also visited me during the time of the first movie.

Uncle Otfrid would bring something of the mysterious shimmer of distant worlds and dangers into our home. When father sometimes spent quiet evenings talking about the journeys and experiences of his sung years, he also spoke of the quite impossible ideas, plans and resolutions that had repeatedly driven Uncle Otfrid out of the steady flow of an almost tranquil and secure life and into new ventures. I then listened with my mouth open in amazement and yearned to run away one day like Uncle Otfrid. Out into the world, which may hold dangers, but also so many beauties. I just didn't quite know how I approach an acting troupe and run away with them, like Uncle Otfrid, who had run away from his family at the age of sixteen and joined a traveling stage.

Line Wanderbühne must have something really powerful, I thought. Because I saw pictures in our family album that depicted Uncle Otfrid as a knight and an officer, a sailor and a farmer. It must been something special to be able to portray other people at will and wander from town to town, all over the world.

A shiver of delight trickled down my spine when I heard that Uncle Otfrid had recently married an oame from the theater world, the likes of which you don't often come across. Oie Oame, my aunt by marriage, as I proudly discovered, had six fingers on each hand

and six toes on each foot. Whether she had any other advantages or charms was beyond my knowledge, but having twelve fingers seemed to me to be very considerable, for good or ill. You couldn't have enough fingers for mental arithmetic, but a slap in the face from a six-fingered hand must have been particularly painful.

I didn't quite understand why my mother always up her nose when this aunt was mentioned and only spoke of her as a "person". One Sunday afternoon, a lumbering hackney carriage pulled up in front of our house. First a hunting dog jumped out, then a gentleman climbed out and helped a lady to get out.

Like the Blth, I jumped out of the house even before my bater had recognized the arrivals.

It had to be Uncle Otfrid!

A man with checked trousers, a dark brown velvet sack, a large gray floppy hat and a flowing black tie could only be an artist, as he was often enough depicted in my books.

The lady was obviously very distinguished. She wore a hat so large that you could hardly see her face. Long colorful feathers bobbed on her back from this outrageous hat, and her tight dress ended in a train that up the sand in front of our house. I tried to take a quick look at her hands, but the gentleman asked me in a very benevolent voice if I was little Kurt Lggers.

I nodded eagerly and expectantly.

"Well, then let me know quickly that Uncle Otfrid has come with Aunt Paula!"

I didn't get a chance to carry out this delivery because Bater had already arrived.

The two men slapped each other on the shoulder with booming laughter, shouted some words I didn't recognize and

They were so happy that they completely forgot about Aunt Paula, who in the meantime was trying to put the hunting dog, who was about to start a fight with Flock, on a lead.

Now Mother came too, followed on foot by Grete, in whom curiosity was tinged with a certain shyness.

Mother no longer said "person" but "Paula" and was very cordial.

At lunch, which was very late today because we had to re-cook for the visit, I finally realized that Aunt Paula actually had twelve fingers. But that was only noticeable if you counted. Perhaps the many rings she wore on every finger except her thumbs contributed to this.

Uncle Otfrid told jokes and jokes about Africa, India and Australia, Lhina and America, so that I quickly went to the globe to visit all the countries and continents.

I was a little annoyed when my father began to tease Uncle Otfrid and doubt on his reports. Strangely enough, he didn't take offense at this doubt, but only said that what he was saying today could be safely included in the trips of the next few years.

All the animals I had once seen in Berlin Zoo had met him alive in the wilderness. I looked up in at Uncle Otfrid when he told me how he had killed and skinned a lion that already knocked over Aunt Paula with a bare knife. My forehead was covered in sweat and I could have listened to these wonderful stories until the evening. Unfortunately, Bater laughed louder and louder the greater the heroic deeds Uncle Otfrid told us about. In the meantime, Aunt Paula had gone into the garden with Mother and Grete. The hunting dog, of whose courage and cold-bloodedness Uncle Otfrid had told many a story

had been locked in the stable by our Marie because he started tearing up the carpet.

Father now became more serious and asked his uncle what he intended to do and how much money he needed, but he couldn't make much cash.

Uncle Otsrid was very generous. He didn't actually want money, he just wanted to give a big movie show and show films from a Tlerfange expedition he had made to Romania. After some back and forth, father offered to rent the movie theater in Friedrichshagen for him, place advertisements in the Niederbarnimer Anzeiger and pay for any losses.

Uncle Otfrid seemed to be very pleased with this, because he hugged father loudly and enthusiastically and promised to give him a share in the next films so that father would quickly and effortlessly become a millionaire. To my astonishment, my father rejected this prospect. But in return he put a gold coin in his uncle's hand.

Now Uncle Otfrid was in a great hurry, called Aunt Paula and had the hunting dog handed over to him.

Grete and I were allowed to join them in the autodrofchke and ride along to Nahnsdorf station.

At the station, I asked my uncle and aunt very warmly to take me with them into the wide world, I wanted to do everything I could to earn their satisfaction. Grete began to cry quietly to herself, she was obviously not in the mood for adventures. I gave her a hearty shove, because I thought she would spoil my prospects of being taken away by her fear.

Uncle Otfrid stroked his blond goatee with amusement, took us by the hand, led us to a vending machine, pulled out a small packet of roasted almonds that I didn't want to eat, waved to us again and then drove on into the world.

Somewhat ashamed, we made our way home.

Mother was very annoyed that Father had offered to put on the movie for Uncle Otfrid. She feared a scandal similar to the one that arisen a few years earlier in Leipzig, when Uncle Otfrid had appeared on the Meffe with a traveling stage and now advertised sensational one-off performances with posters bearing his illustrious name. There must have been a lot of trouble in Leipzig at the time, because a high-ranking officer of the same name, who was related to Uncle Otfrid, demanded in vain that the company be removed or closed down and finally had no choice but to hire a handful of dark lads, who whistled and raved until the traveling stage tore down its tents.

Perhaps mother feared something similar for Friedrichshagen. Father tried to talk her out of her concerns, and we children cried and begged her not to spoil what was sure to be a wonderful movie.

Over the next few days, advertising posters, whose lively texts had been written by my father, were displayed on trees and fences. Half-page advertisements appeared in the Niederbarnimer Anzeiger, referring to the sensational research film and the lecture by the courageous world traveler. Tickets available for one mark in bookshops, cigar stores and at Eggers in Schöneiche.

I was very proud when I was allowed to hand Mr. Wenhlass a free ticket with a polite order. The immature, but also the somewhat more mature youth between Lake Müggel and the Kalkberge openly envied me for having such a famous uncle.

Unfortunately, ticket sales were so low that my father had to decide to give away free tickets the day before. I visited all the farmers in the immediate and wider area and actually managed to give away a dozen tickets.

When the big day, or rather the big evening, arrived, we children were dressed in our best clothes. Father put on his tailcoat, brushed the Zglinder to a mirror finish with his own hands and helped Mother complete her wardrobe. Mother had made herself particularly beautiful. The long train coat had been altered by the dressmaker and a few heron feathers had sewn into it to give it a rich polish. Mother had had her hair styled by the hairdresser into wide rolling waves.

At seven o'clock in the evening, the big yellow lagdwagen, which the farmer Anterlauff had lent us, drove up. Wilhelm Anterlauff, the eldest son, who had served in the dragoons, sat stiffly on the buck, the bow whip in his white-gloved paws.

The movie theater in the Bürgerfälen was festively lit. Large palm trees and laurel trees stood at the entrance, and a thick red carpet, which the mayor had provided from the town hall stock, led into the vestibule.

The trip to Friedrichshagen seemed to me to be the most wonderful of my life, and I was secretly angry with my mother, who let out a quiet, anxious sigh.

The numerous well-fed dignitaries from Friedrichshagen, Schöneiche, Fichtenau, Rahnsdorf, Grähwalde, Kalkberge and Woltersdorf were already gathered here. Mr. Wenhlaff was also there. And the owner of the Niederbarnimer Anzeiger even came in person to read the press report.

Father greeted the dignitaries with a noble composure, spoke a few words about the successful life and work of the explorer to date and first had the gentlemen served a sharp horse rider's drink, which was generally met with approving murmurs. A short time later, Uncle Otfrid drove up with Aunt Paula, this time without the hunting dog, in a bright green new car.

No exotic prince could treated with greater respect than Uncle Otfrid. The mayor of Friedrichshagen stammered something about high honor and made a scratchy foot that made me laugh, which in turn earned me a chastising look from Bater.

Uncle Otfrid waved away all other welcoming speeches with a noble wave of his hand, spoke a few warm words about the need for the population be enthusiastic about research and then, followed by Bater and the dignitaries, went into the hall. The festively dressed visitors rose to their feet in honor of Uncle Otsrid and sat down only when he stood on the stage to give an introductory speech.

This lecture captivated me immensely and seemed even more adventurous than those stories in Schöneiche. So I didn't understand why Bater kept his forehead with his handkerchief and occasionally glancing anxiously at the crowd. Mother didn't seem to particularly impressed by this lecture either, but tapped her foot excitedly. Some gentlemen were reckless enough to bump into each other and laugh quite loudly from time to time. Nevertheless, the crowd clapped like mad when Uncle Otsrid had finished and, after a very deep and very noble-looking bow, left the stage.

When it got dark, Uncle Otfrid stood up again to explain the films. The first movie showed the daily routine of a pair of storks, how they searched for food in a meadow and a pond, how they built their nest and how they brooded. Some of the pictures were so unclear that you 't recognize anything, but the uncle explained what was originally supposed to be in the picture in question. Unfortunately, these were the particularly attractive parts.

This film was not particularly warmly received, and in the darkness there were even voices claiming that such images could be seen in Kleinschönebeck on

the farmer Huhn's farm much better and cheaper. Uncle Otfrid admitted that there still a number of storks in Germany and began to explain the next movie. It showed a hare hunt in Romania and was very short. Then Uncle Otfrid had the room lit up and explained to the strangely laughing audience that the third film, the actual main film, which contained completely new research results, had gone moldy due to the difference in temperature, and so unfortunately the screening had to be considered prematurely over. With his speech, it had lasted a little less than half an hour.

I was very startled when I realized that mother was crying. But as the crowd laughed louder and louder, I didn't understand why Mother had to cry and laughed particularly loudly to take her mind off it. Father's handkerchief couldn't be removed from his forehead. Shortly afterwards, in a corner, he seemed to be having a very agitated conversation with Uncle Otfrid, because he also started waving his hands around wildly. I only saw father pull out his wallet and press a few bills into his uncle's right hand, then mother pulled us out of the hall and led us to the car. Father came back a few minutes later with his head red and ordered Wilhelm Unterläufst to drive home as quickly as possible. Not a word was spoken on the way home.

Months later, Dad's head would turn red if any of his friends or relatives talked about movie screenings or explorers.

A wonderfully colorful picture of Kaiser Wilhelm II in his uniform hung in the classroom of the Schöneich school. We didn't have a picture of the emperor at home, only a picture of Bismarck, and father said that no other picture should hang next to Bismarck. That seemed to be true, because we didn't have a picture of Bismarck at school.

January 27 was the emperor's birthday. Mr. Wenhlaff placed the picture of the emperor on the catheder so that we could memorize the emperor's face step by step. The proud moustache, the high collar, the many strings and the crooked helmet made a particularly strong impression on me.

We had to learn a poem that was very difficult and long.
Then we sang a short and easy song that went:

"The emperor is a dear man, he
lives in Berlin,
And if it weren't so far from here, I'go there today/

Berlin wasn't actually that far away, but the schoolchildren in Kalkberge must have sung this song too, and they had already traveled quite a distance to Berlin.

Mr. Wenhlaff gave a speech in which he spoke of love and devotion, of war and peace. At the end we shouted hurrah three times and then sang the song "Heil dir im Siegerkranz", which we had learned by heart. Afterwards, school was canceled. Black and white flags were flying everywhere.

Unfortunately, after the ceremony there was a midnight snack. Mr. Wenhlaff, festively dressed, accompanied a whole swarm of his pupils to the old oak tree and told episodes from his service in the happiest mood and about the great manoeuvre during which he had seen the emperor at close range.
What the emperor ride in?" We
thought hard.

"In a golden carriage drawn by many white horses," Grete said reverently.
Mr. Wenhlaff shook his head reprovingly.

"That was probably the case in the Middle Ages, Gretchen, but it's different today."

Grete hung her head a little sadly. An emperor without a golden carriage, as it appeared as an attribute of the emperor in even the smallest fairy tale, didn't seem worth much to her.

Walter Birkholz raised his finger.

"The emperor climbed in the Aeroplan."

"No, in the airship," Karl Gräh outbid him. Mr.

Wenhlaff wrung his hands.

"What kind of ideas do you have about the emperor!"

He was already beginning to give us a lecture on the manner of promotion befitting an emperor when Agnes Köster her finger.

"The emperor feeds in the automobile."

A gleam crossed Mr. Wenhlaff's face.

"Very good, Agnes. How you know?" Agnes

curtseyed sheepishly.

"My father always imitates the horn."

Teacher Wenhlaff placed his hand on Agnes' head as if in blessing.

"Very nice, Agnes. Our dear emperor has a fine horn, doesn't he? Tatü - Tata!"

Agnes looked innocently at Mr. Wenhlaff and shook her head.

"Father didn't say that. Father always says: For our money!"

Mr. Wenhlaff withdrew his hand as quickly as if Agnes Kops had turned into a red-hot briquette.

Ritsch-ratsch, he slapped Agnes Köster in the ear.

"You can give it back to your father, the damn social democrat!"

Agnes ran away crying. We were all very frightened and understood neither Mr. Wenhlaff's excuse nor what a Social Democrat was. But surely it must have something terrible. Perhaps he was stealing wood from the forest.

A few days later, Mr. Wentzlaff asked if we also went to church diligently every Sunday. I had to say no and very ashamed because I was the only one who stood in front of the class as a godless person. I only knew that father had once had a very serious quarrel with the priest. At that time I wasn't housebroken enough to go to church. And after the row with the , I wasn't sent to church at all.

Mr. Wenhlafs looked at me disapprovingly. He knew about the row between my father and the priest - after all, what could remain hidden in such a small plague like Schöneiche? Nevertheless, he felt it was his duty to stop me going to church. I had to listen to the terrifying poem about the child who didn't want to go to church and was therefore caught up by the bell and buried, and was warned that from now on I was to seen in the house of the Lord. My parents said neither yes nor no, and so the next Sunday I took a seat in the pew whose backrest read in ornate letters: "Before servants and followers".

At first I didn't dislike the village church because of its strange pictures and figures. Even the music that Mr. Wenhlaff on the organ did not offend me. The only thing that struck me as strange was the priest's costume and the way he spoke, and I couldn't quite figure out what the grown-ups were actually doing in church. When Mr. Wentzlasf walked through the rows of pews with a bell bag, which he held in front of all the churchgoers until they had put a coin in it, I began to seriously doubt the value and meaning of the church and its customs. I was glad when I finally stood in the sun again and hurried home. Father smiled a little when I told him my impressions and said that I should just wait a little longer and then I could make up my own mind.

Later, Mr. Wenhlaff never exhorted me to go to church again. I'm sure it was connected to a visit Father paid to him. After this visit, I had violin lessons with Mr. Wenhlaff once a week. I was soon able to play a few songs that easy to pick up on my Oreiviertel violin, which Grandma gave me.

The melodies of "Oer Mai ist gekommen" and "O Strasbourg, o Strasbourg" were particularly easy to pick up. I robbed my father of his last joy in music with these songs.

In the fall, we took all the students from Schöneiche to Berlin for the big parade on Tempelhofer Feld. It was a great day. Many thousands of men, women and children stood on the field. We carried black, white and red flags in our hands and shouted "Hurray!" until we were hoarse, although apart from the
"people" was not yet visible.

At last the endless columns of infantry, cavalry and artillery approached. A wonderfully colorful picture!

Mr. Wenhlaff knew how to explain the uniform of one of these regiments. If it was not easy to distinguish between hussars, dragoons and cuirassiers, it seemed almost impossible to between a guard and a line regiment. Mr. Wenhlaff was a master in the military field, and we admired him unreservedly. When a zeppelin airship appeared, our jubilation was boundless.

At the end of the parade, the emperor drove past us in his car with a tatü-tata. Agnes Köster's head turned red and she turned away.

I noticed that the emperor unfortunately didn't look as colorful as in the picture of the Schöneich classroom. Nevertheless, I waved, I was too hoarse to shout.

Later we saw many an airship over Schönetche/ the Schütte-Lanz, the Parseval and the zeppelin that crashed and burned soon afterwards.

We also saw planes from time to time, especially a Rumpler pigeon often appeared in the Schöneich sky.

School was no longer a playtime. Mr. Wenhlaff never gave me a sweet again. The slate disappeared and I had to learn to use pen and ink instead of a stylus.

As soon as I was able to read my primer to some extent, began to browse through my picture books on my own, learn rhymes and, above all, expand my knowledge of Grimm's fairy tales. The games now took a back seat.

My schoolmates sometimes teased me because I so fond of reading. But there was nothing better for me than stand on my knees under the old birch tree with my storybook, reading and dreaming. The wide world seemed to me to be full of unknown and enticing adventures, and sometimes I believed that trees and animals were only enchanted, that they could not speak, and I searched for the magic word to redeem them.

Flock let his long red tongue hang out and patiently when I read him a fairy tale or told him something about the secrets of the world. I knew from him that he understood everything and just couldn't speak. I would have liked to redeem him and once even gave him a kiss on his black, wet snout when I read that the king's daughter had redeemed the toad with a kiss.

One evening I found a hedgehog curled up with its spines spread out at the edge of the forest. Although his spines very painful, I took him into my care and carried him to Haufe. In the cellar he was given a nice bed of brushwood and hay, and soon he was so familiar that he came clattering up at a shout, stood up and offered the

sniffed towards the milk bowl. Unfortunately, he didn't catch any mice, as he had previously gone for the less strenuous robbery of cakes and sausages. It took many a struggle and many more tears to get permission to keep the hedgehog in the house. My stuffed animals had already on the floor for many months, displaced by the living animals that had made their way into my world.

Flock, the faithful companion, was closest to my heart. Next in the order of love was the hedgehog. The big gray cat Pussi, who regularly had some adorable kittens in the camp in spring and autumn and fed them until Father Thieke gave the little ones away in the country, had third place. Mika the rabbit, who had an indescribably soft yellow fur with a ttnten-colored spot, and Mokroß the guinea pig fought for fourth place. Mokroß was named after the man who had sold it to us, and besides, there are few suitable rams for guinea pigs. The other pigeons, billy goats, parrots and tortoises had to fight for their place in my heart from time to time. I didn't know to do with the animals that I couldn't take to the birch tree because otherwise they would have seized the first best opportunity to escape.

The only thing missing to complete my happiness was a fox, which I desperately wanted after learning from my school reading book that foxes, caught young enough, could become quite pleasant, though not particularly fragrant, pets.

Now, as far as the stench was concerned, Haust, the billy goat, had really hardened me up. My father, to whom I made the request to get a fox, firmly rejected such a request, pointing out that the chickens, pigeons, ducks and geese would then be endangered. Mother claimed that she could not stand the smell of foxes for the life of her.

and Grete lamented tearfully that, next to the wolf, a fox was the most terrible of all monsters.

I was about to give up further attempts, when Grandmother smilingly pointed out me that were certainly plenty of foxes in the nearby woods, and that it must be easy for me, who had caught a wild hedgehog with my own hands, to outwit a fox.

2I would have loved to give grandmother a hearty kiss for this advice if I hadn't become more reserved with my caresses in the last tent. I was content to smile gratefully at her and was overjoyed when my father also said that the solution Grandma had suggested was excellent.

The next day I had already learned from my school reading book and a conversation dictionary that foxes live in underground burrows, which usually have several exits. The best way to catch foxes, I now knew, was to smoke them out.

The next steps towards achieving my goal followed in quick succession. I agreed with Fritze Giebel, Walter Huhn and Günther Awe to go fox hunting in the forest between Schön- eiche and Rahnsdorf, with the aim of one for each of us if possible. If only one was caught in total, we promised to swap foxes every four weeks

In the afternoon, shortly after coffee, we set off. We took a spade, matches, a can of kerosene on Günther Awe's advice, several beanstalks, which we had decorated with long nails in case there a scuffle with the fox family, five large sacks, bindings and a handcart.

We wandered around in the dense forest for a good hour until we discovered a deep and long hole, which we unanimously decided was a fox den. I dug into the depths with great enthusiasm, but without unearthing anything more than the usual light sand and a few dried up pellets, which were not unknown to me Mika the rabbit. Fritze Giebel, however, swore he for sure that these were fox pellets.

After I come to the realization that I dug enough, Günther Arve crouched down on the ground, peered expertly into the hole and then stuck a leg in, only to discover immediately that a fox had snatched him in the shoe. As we discovered no more holes in the surrounding area, we honestly convinced ourselves that we were dealing with a single-hole foxhole and set about collecting and piling up dry netting, pine needles and so-called "Kienäppel". With a solemn expression, Günther 2lwe emptied his kerosene can over it, and I the liberty of pouring the whole thing over it.

to light it yourself.

The flame burned beautifully and we took great pleasure the huge fire because we were convinced that the foxes could not escape us.

Fritze Giebel and Walter Huhn held up the biggest sack, I stood ready with an axe in my hand, while Günther 2lwe swung a nailed beanstalk to smash the first attacking fox at the moment of danger.

Unfortunately, no fox broke through the fire, although Günther Awe excitedly assured us several times that he had clearly heard it yuieken. We had to find some more brushwood and thicker rotten branches. Quite a while passed and I was beginning to lose heart, but as the creator of the idea of catching foxes, I didn't want to make a fool of myself.

It was a wonderful picture, the high, crackling fire, the sagdeifrtgen Fritze Giebel and Walter Huhn, the brave Günther 2lwe! And I myself, with my warlike axe, may also have been a proud sight.

Suddenly we heard loud shouting and swearing behind us. We almost froze with fright when we realized that the Schöneich fire department was approaching, followed by many of the inhabitants we knew, who were very excited. Günther Awe, and we resented this very much, threw away the beanstalk and ran howling deeper into the forest. The rest of us allowed ourselves to be caught without resistance and, our great astonishment and even greater indignation, were beaten up by the excited people.

We really hadn't intended to a forest fire and saw ourselves cheated of our safe hunting prey in the meanest way.

Oer Niederbarnimer Anzeiger published an instructive article about this forest fire and mentioned us by name. Rarely have I seen Bater so angry. The blows hurt me less than his insistence that my disgraceful deeds gradually put him on the begging staff. Mother was very sad about me and sighed that Bater would never forgive me for the forest fire. I began to bear a silent grudge against Grandmother, for she suddenly refused to believe that she had been the instigator of this animal-catching expedition into the forest!

The more the bad experiences I had with the consequences of my thirst for research accumulated, the more my reputation grew in the united youth of Schön- eich and the neighboring villages. Even older boys were no longer too proud address me or even talk to me at length. Mr. Wenhlaff, however, was very concerned about my development from a lonely child of the lords to the leader of the boys and promised my

parents to keep a watchful eye on me from then on. However, this mainly meant that I had to visit him three times a week in the afternoon to his garden.

At times I was very sad that I was beginning to cause my parents grief and after every sermon I received, I earnestly resolved to lead a better life from then on. Heaven only knows why my resolutions were shattered like clouds in the wind.

I had already attended the Schöneich school for two years when my father thought I was now old and strong enough to take the hardships of a daily journey from Nahnsdorf to Friedrtchshagen to attend the Realggmnasium. As Grete was due to go to Friedrichshagen grammar school at the same time, the difficulties of the long walk through the forest, the train journey and the equally long walk from Friedshagen station to school seemed half as bad.

One day Grete and I were dismissed by Mr. Wenhlaff with kind words, were given a very good report card in which even my conduct was as very good, hands with Mr. Wenhlaff and all my classmates and went to Friedrichshagen for the entrance examination. During the whole train ride, the thought went through my head that I was now facing a completely new phase in my life, that now was the beginning of a serious life and that from now on I would not be allowed to commit any more pranks.

At the station in Friedrichshagen I shook Grete's hopefully, strolled leisurely along Friedrichsiraße, as I had a whole hour to spare, looked carefully at all the shop windows with their sometimes very tempting treasures, looked with great respect at the movie theater where Uncle Otfrid

I ate my breakfast on a bench with a huge appetite and unfortunately ended up being a long time late for the entrance exam.

Contrite and indecisive, I stood in front of the closed portal and was very grateful when the principal, a good acquaintance of my father's, finally came and asked in amazement about my desire. Then he took me by the hand and led me into a classroom where a fine, elderly gentleman with golden glasses and a very impressive bald head was conducting the entrance examination.

Reading, writing and mental arithmetic were subjects in which I was not so easily taken by surprise, but written arithmetic was much more difficult for me because, especially when multiplying, the position of the numbers was different from what was practiced in Schöneiche.

were short breaks between the individual exam subjects. As I no longer had any breakfast, I used the free time to take a good look at the classroom. It seemed very elegant to me. So different from Schöneiche. In the grammar school there were folding seats, beautiful black polished benches, clean walls, bright pictures of landscapes and military leaders. And how elegant the toilets were! There were even doors in front of the individual small cells!

After two hours, the exam results were announced. I was now allowed to wear a black velvet cap with gold stripes and was promoted to the first pre-school class, the Septima. My heart beat faster with pride at being allowed to belong to such a fine school. With trembling hands, I the thaler that mother had given me in case I was exempted, and ran as fast as I could to a hat store to buy myself a hat befitting my status. I threw the sailor's cap I had been wearing for so long into a hallway.

Grete was already at the station. 2 I could tell from the glow on her face that the entrance examination had not disappointed her either. Moved, we hugged each other and talked about how beautiful our schools were.

However, my pride as a Ggmnasiast was very quickly dampened. My parents Arthur and Paul were to blame for this, as their wild pranks had done our family name a great disservice. "Are you a brother of the two Eggers?" I was told on the third day. And the first week had not yet passed when everyone was already predicting that my school days would be terrible and without praise. I was to fight bravely to the last, but I couldn't find an answer to the question of why I should suffer for the deeds of my parents. Certainly, I had to admit that they had done a great job. Mother had even had to wash a light load of buckshot out of Arthur's backside once. And there was hardly a village on the whole of the great Müggelsee where the name Eggers didn't make people tremble. But what did I have to do with it? Arthur and Paul had long since gone to one of the countless presses in one of the many small towns that were virtually competing to relieve rich fathers of the worries about their sons and thus also the superfluous thalers.

It did not escape my notice that almost all the teachers eyed me with suspicion and regarded my mistakes as rebellion, insolence and insolence. Before my place on the school bench had become quite warm, my name, so much disregarded in this school, had already adorned the class register several times, and I soon had to learn that the dungeon was a very honorable institution among schoolmates, but extremely boring for the person affected by it. The parents often shook their heads and didn't seem to want to believe that their son was suffering innocently.

A strong sense of defiance gradually awoke in me. If they wanted to label me a bad boy, then they should have a reason for punishing me! I found out how the lessons be very thoroughly disrupted by cockchafers, moles and butterflies. Nor did I fail to notice that carbide in the spittoon could produce considerable fumes. And since I preferred to bite my lips rather than shout at the top of voice when I was being beaten by angry teachers, I was seen here and there as a hopeless and obdurate range. My classmates, however, looked up to me like slaves to a rebellious leader and willingly placed themselves under my leadership. The notoriously well-behaved children, however, probably admonished and warned by their parents, gave me a wide berth.

When I entered the sixth form, I was already the undisputed hero of the class, superior to everyone else in terms of strength and agility, and I wasn't the worst at learning either. was even the best in Latin. Only, unfortunately, the pranks! I have to admit that I was attracted by the danger of the cheeky activities. It was nice to throw a snowball at the stiff, black, dignified hat of a dreaded teacher or to force a rubber plug into the pivot point of the door so that the professor flew backwards out into the corridor when he leaned against the door he thought was closed. The battles we fought with the higher classes were also beautiful and exciting. I gathered a few satellites around me and on adventures with them in the afternoons. We fished in windless and hidden corners of the Müggelsee, made forays through the vast forests, drove to the farmers in distant villages after begging bicycles from our parents, collected plants and feathers, bathed in remote streams and ponds and led our very proud and wonderful Fungen life. Old Shatterhand and the leather stocking, Sigismund Rüstig, Robinson and Onnen Btsser were the heroes of our

A world that we brought to colorful life not only in our imagination.

Only once was I seriously in danger of losing this world and with it my friends and companions. That was when Käthchen into my life. Käthchen, a little older than me, was Grete's classmate, a long-skirted, somewhat pale blonde girl, the daughter of a master butcher in Frledrichshagen.

I was originally completely indifferent to Käthchen. We boys looked down with pity on the girls who played with dolls, cooked pebbles and played "married". The "pussing" that was so popular from quarta upwards seemed extremely unmanly and silly to us. We only laughed when we saw the slightly older teenagers strolling around the spa gardens in the afternoon with their "flames", obviously self-conscious. I didn't when I realized that Käthchen was me amiable glances and then blushing. I also threw away the letter that Grete brought me from Käthchen without reading it. It was only when Käthchen's brother Erich, a hopeful tertian, invited me to come to the butcher's shop that I became more approachable. meat salad and warm sausages tasted too good.

I often accepted invitations and was quietly ashamed of the scornful reproaches from my friends, who went on forays into our inexhaustible world without me. Yes, I beat the living daylights out of one of my dearest friends when he wouldn't stop teasing me about Käthchen. I could have slapped myself in the face! Because I was honest enough to admit to myself that Käthchen was beginning to make an impression on me. I found myself pensively writing her name on my blotting paper. At last I plucked up my courage, pulled myself together and asked her, stammering, if we wanted to go to the spa gardens together. Käthchen breathed a partly bashful, partly triumphant yes. The afternoon dawned.

Rarely have I brushed my nails and combed my with such vigor as I did back then. I was so far out of depth that I asked our old fat Marie to give me some of her violet perfume, which overcame all other smells and vapors.

Half an hour before the appointed time, I was already standing at the entrance to the spa gardens, red to the roots. I felt my cheeks burning and my heart beating faster than even the most dangerous pranks and adventures. The Quartans, Tertians, Seconds and Primans laughed when they saw me standing there waiting.

"What are you doing here, Eggers?"

I would have loved to run away. But what would Käthchen have thought of me then?

Over there, my former friends walked past. I'm sure they wanted to take a trip into the unattached world of boys, where there was no need to blush. They bumped into each other, whispered and pointed their fingers at me. It was exasperating. Tears suddenly welled up in my eyes. Tears of shame.

I started to get annoyed with Käthchen. If only she would come soon. She arrived right on time, on the dot, and was surprised to find me angry. She silently unwrapped the sandwiches she had brought in her bag. I ate them hastily, silently and defiantly. We strolled through the park in a depressed mood. Every distant laugh from my older classmates was like a pinprick. I could feel Käthchen looking at me from the side every now and then. Carefully, she slipped her hand into my crossed hands.

"Whats wrong?"

I shrugged my shoulders in silence. What could I say to her? I was sick as a dog. I wonder what my comrades were doing? I felt indescribably silly and contemptible.

Käthchen had led me to a bench. We sat there with throbbing hearts, neither of us saying a word. I attentively as the ants dragged pine needles into a hole. How I would have loved to be among them without Käthchen.

I winced. She had leaned her head against my shoulder. The touch made me uncomfortable. Strange that there were people who could find that beautiful.

Käthchen obviously thought my silence was shyness. She began to giggle uproariously. How silly she suddenly seemed to me, and how much I despised her! I was still thinking about quickest and most inconspicuous way to get away when Käthchen suddenly wrapped her arms around my neck and gave me a kiss on the lips. Disgust choked me. The kiss burned like a corrosive poison. I felt violated, insulted in my honor.

With a sharp jerk, I pushed Käthchen away from me and ran off as fast as my feet would carry me, somewhere where I was alone with myself. I lay in a meadow for a long time, my head buried in the hay. My thoughts told themselves. I wondered if Käthchen would tell me something about the terrible thing that had happened. And what would my comrades have to say about it? Wouldn't they despise and loathe me completely? Carefully, as dusk , I crept home and cleaned my face with a cloth, sponge and brush, as if I were washing off bad luck.

The next day I joined my comrades and silently shook hands with them all. Not a word was about Käthchen. After an errant flight into the hostile world, I had home. The lakes and streams, ponds, meadows, fields and forests seemed more beautiful and powerful to me than ever before. With true fervor, I led my friends on new adventurous rambles. I had so much to catch up on!

I was only careful not to walk past Käthchen's house.

In the late summer of 1913, my father took me aside one day.

"Do you fancy some flying displays?"

Instead of an answer, I cheered brightly. I knew zeppelins, they had flown over Berlin enough times. I could tell the parseval from the Schütte-Lanz at first glance. But what all the proud and massive airships compared to the small aeroplanes that everyone was talking about with strange excitement! Time and again one of the dashing airmen crashed fatally, but the gaps were always filled by young daredevils. I had seen with my own eyes how a young lad in the pittberge near Wll- helmshagen brought his self-made glider a few meters above the ground. And then there were the motorized planes. When one of them made his breakneck aerial loops near the grammar school, there was no stopping him, no order in the classes, and everyone rushed to the windows, even the most worthy professor.

Father nodded good-naturedly.

"I got tickets through the captain/

Thousands and thousands of people had come to Johannistal. Horse-drawn vehicles and clattering cars up dust for miles along the access roads. Soldiers cordoned off the entrances and the actual airfield. The moustachioed policemen in their thick uniforms and nickel-plated pickel hoods were sweating profusely on duty, not allowing them even the slightest respite.

A very special attraction had been announced: pegout, the famous French aerobatic pilot, had confirmed his appearance! He had been pictured weeks before in the newspapers and magazines with his little plane, pegout! I asked my father to buy me one of the picture cards that were sold with the White Printed Barges name on the front. I carefully stored the card in

my botanizing drum, which I carried with me on all my larger undertakings.

My patience was put to a hard test, pegout was late because he had to fight with adverse winds.

I hardly noticed the masses of free balloons taking off. I was gripped by a fever of anticipation. Finally, finally it seemed to be time. Soldiers spread out cloths to mark the most favorable landing site. Very high up, as small as an I-dot in a reading book, the pegout plane appeared. The tricolor rose from a huge flagpole. The French national anthem resounded loudly, almost drowned out by the enthusiastic shouts of the crowd. Light as a seagull, pegout's plane flew in, made a few circles around the square and then landed in the immediate vicinity of our stand.

A whole line of gentlemen in uniforms or tails greeted the Frenchman, who greeted everyone in a lively manner, shook hands with the gentlemen standing around him rather indiscriminately and climbed back into the plane in a hurry. After just a few seconds, the plane nimbly detached itself from the ground, cut a hair's breadth over the roofs of the hangars and then climbed steeply into the air. I followed the plane with my mouth agape. What the Busch circus with its lions and leopards, fine sword swallowers and tightrope walkers, what was the cinema with its great and hasty adventures against this man who knew how to master his plane better than the most skillful rider knows his horse!

The ladies screamed and held their hands in front of their faces when pegout suddenly pulled the plane up vertically and let it roll over, once, twice, three times in a row! Then he even flew a long way on his back with his head down! Even my bater found the sight too much. He mumbled something that sounded like -unheard", -playing with death".

After about ten minutes, pegout landed safely back in front of our stand. A huge laurel wreath,

decorated with the colors of the German and French nations, was hung around his neck so that the little Frenchman almost disappeared under the green abundance.

The sounds of the Marseillaise were still ringing out, and pegout was still doing a lap of honor around the square when, unannounced and therefore initially perceived as disruptive, a lumbering German plane pushed its way out of an aircraft hangar. A numbered pigeon

A cry went up through the rows of spectators as the pigeon lifted off the ground with a roaring engine and spiraled into the air, staggering like a drunkard. Truly, the German aviator was more than foolhardy! Was he mad at the end? Very slowly, the plane lay on its back, it looked as if it would crash and smash in an instant, then it climbed steeply into the air and repeated, slowly doggedly and precisely, all the tricks of the Frenchman, four times, five times, pulled breakneck loops and touched down a few meters next to the French plane.

The setting sun cast a bright red glow over the field, and the German flag, which had replaced the French flag on the mast, fluttered heavily and powerfully. It became very quiet on the field, and the Deutschlandlied sounded more solemn and sublime than a chorale in church.

The captain next to us was thoughtfully cleaning his monocle.

"I believe that in a war the airmen will be superior to the airmen/

This saying stuck in my mind, because it seemed enormous to me that a small airplane should be stronger than a large airship.

pegout's name was on everyone's lips at the time, but no fuss was made of the brave Rumplertaube's deeds. Even the captain couldn't tell me what the German pilot was actually called.

Walther Niemann from Fichtenau now came to see me every day and had me tell him all the details of the day's flying. Eventually he took me into his confidence. "I'm building myself a glider

I looked up at Walther Viemann in disbelief.

"A real one that you can sit in?" Niemann nodded.

"Two should even be able to sit in it."

Four months later, Walther Niemann lay almost hopelessly in hospital in Niederschöneweide. The small airplane had been far too fragile. It had crashed into a granite block on its first take-off attempt. In the Pittberge, just where I had recently seen a young lad fly!

I was now taken along to parades and smaller maneuvers more often; my father had noticed that I really enjoyed soldiers and everything that went with them, cannons, wagons and horses. Once, when I came home from school, a company of infantry guards marched past. I marched alongside the company as far as Karlshorst that day, happy that I was allowed to carry a soldier's rifle.

I played Sedan with my lead soldiers, building a large battlefield with mountains and valleys on the large playing field next to our house, just like I saw in the pictures of the 1870/71 war. Our English girl didn't like this activity, she often complained to my mother about it and tried to persuade me to read fairy tale books. The German boys were terrible, she once said in despair, there was a Hun in every one of them, who only needed a horse and a rifle to run roughshod over the deplorable world. Oh, the boys in England were more sensible, they played soccer and did sports instead of fantasizing.

to conjure up blood and fire. Shortly after Christmas, the miss suddenly and very excitedly packed her bags. She had to go home immediately, war was just around the corner

Father laughed.

"I think you're seeing ghosts/ The

miss shook her head, crying.

"Gin Engländer doesn't believe in ghosts, he just knows more than other people because he observes and directs the whole world/

Father was very angry at the time and hardly wanted to shake the miss's hand when he said goodbye.

At Easter 1914 we received a greeting from England, then we heard nothing more from the Miss.

This Easter was particularly beautiful. Spring had arrived early so that we could look for eggs under the flowering hedges and bushes. Grete and I had good school reports, I had even come third in my class. The year promised to be a good one. Perhaps it would us another sea voyage. On the second day of Easter, our two cousins Bruno and Fritz came to stay with us. Bruno, previously a lieutenant in the 112th Infantry Regiment in Mühlhausen, had just switched to military aviation, a move that caused most of his relatives to be astonished and me to be brightly enthusiastic. Fritz had also originally wanted to become an officer and had already been marked for Mühlhausen as an ensign. But a young girl, Vera, had changed his mind. After all, this incident was of such peculiar charm to me that it stood out among the many exciting cases that occurred in my extensive family - there were eight living siblings in mother's house, four in father's, and that makes a considerable number of cousins and cousins. Fritz had met Vera, who was the same age, at the ice rink in Rahnsdorf when he was in secondary school and had fallen seriously in love with her,

Despite his parents' reproaches, he secretly became engaged to Vera. Since Vera had no wealth and his uncle could not provide his sons with anything other than a good education, the two lovers and secretly engaged couple would have had to wait many years before Fritz, as an older lieutenant, could have thought of setting up his own household. After much toing and froing, Fritz decided to study theology. It was quicker to become a pastor than a first lieutenant! He was currently studying Greek, Latin and Hebrew, as he had just his Abitur at the Oberrealschule. Grete, as a budding backfish, raved about this romance novel that was unfolding before her eyes. The very idea of choosing between uniform and gown was reprehensible to me.

Nevertheless, I thought it was brave of Vera that she decided not to wait at home until the newly minted pastor was at the door with the bouquet, but to take up a profession herself, namely that of a teacher. I was extremely proud at heart when I thought of Käthchen. God knows, I hadn't let her determine me. I wonder if she would have tried to turn me into a butcher? -

The summer was very hot. I had sent with Grete to Lüneburg Heath, to a small village called Barum near Beizen. Father's brother had been the vicar there until a few years ago. The congregation was still very attached to him because he was a so-called
He was a "liberal" pastor, one who did not bore the peasants with moral sermons, but stood with both feet on the ground himself, saw the dear God of the Bible with very German eyes and accordingly did not even think of the stubborn, domineering and proud Lower Saxon peasants into humble worshippers.

We were warmly welcomed by the farmers, allowed to roam around the stables and barns, accompany the farmhands and maids to work in the fields, herd sheep, watch the beekeepers, ride horses and oxen, and in the evenings, when

When the young boys and girls gathered under the ancient chestnut tree in front of the palace, we had to them about Berlin. Whether we had ever seen the Emperor, whether his right arm was really crippled or whether it was just the Social Democrats telling us, whether there was a lot of gold at the palace and what kind of clothes the Empress was wearing.

I had no qualms about giving an exhaustive answer to every question, even if I had to concoct such an answer from imagination and exaggeration. Grete, too, happily seized the opportunity to feast her eyes on the exuberance of the court maids and almost extravagant details of the precious jewelry, velvet and silk of the empress and her ladies-in-waiting. Yes, she almost acted as if we were the emperor's daily guests. It was certainly only thanks to the reputation of our pastoral uncle that our words were .

The old baron sometimes had us into the castle in the afternoon for coffee and cake. With a reverent shudder, I crossed the plank bridge led over a wide moat separating the castle from the outside world. Old stories of knights came to mind, tales of tournaments and dungeons. Each time I was almost a little disappointed not to have seen a ghost or at least heard the rustling of chains. There was nothing about the old baron's appearance that reminded me of a ghost either. I could remember Ritter. Rather, I had to think of the old drunk Schmidt from Kleinschönebeck, who also had such a puffy, bluish shimmering face and such misshapen rases. But Grete made me laugh, she curtsied to the ground.

We had to talk about zeppelins and airplanes, that was the Baron's favorite thing to hear. He didn't think much of the Berliners. Berlin and Potsdam were the hotbeds of all Prussian nastiness, he once growled, and then he ranted against Bismarck, who had driven out the old, noble Guelph dynasty.

and the whole of Hanover. I became afraid of the Baron and firmly believed that not everything was in order in his head. How could anyone have the idea of rushing the Prussians and scolding Bismarck? I made up my mind to go outside the castle that evening and play the song I particularly on my harmonica:

I am a Prussian, do you know my colors . . .

And then I had to do another one, an all-Prussian one, which would certainly annoy the old Prussian bastard:

What are the trumpets blowing, hussars out...
A wonderful song, there was always the rhyme at the end:
Juchheirassassa, and the Prussians are here.
The Prussians are brave and shout hurray...

I emphatically pushed the plate of cake away, even though the cherry cake with whipped cream was very tempting. I must have made an angry face, because the baron suddenly paused in his rant, made an embarrassed face and growled that we innocent children could not help it that we had been turned into Prussians, and after all, our father was also a Hanoverian, and our grandfather, as he knew our uncle, the pastor, had even harmed the Prussians when they occupied Göttingen by throwing uniforms, weapons and bales of cloth out of the window of the barracks.

I didn't like my grandfather's heroic deed at all, and I only replied that we had a big picture of Bismarck at home and that my mother was from East Prussia, where there were no Hanoverians. The old man became very sad and shook his head several times. It was a bad sign that young people were getting used to today's conditions so quickly and had no reverence for the past. He had already had to experience this himself with the old youth, who

had become completely Prussian since the new teacher had moved in. He then turned to me and asked if I had never heard of the blind King George of Hanover.

I shook my head and was snappy, saying that a king should not be blind, that could never happen in Prussia.

I didn't go outside the castle in the evening. Somehow I felt sorry for the sad old man who loved a blind king. But when we were to be brought back, I went with Grete to the heath to the old shepherd who knew such wondrous stories and could knit stockings. Once I asked him very carefully about the blind King George. The shepherd made an annoying gesture with his hand and thoughtfully squirted the juice away in a high arc.

-My little manure, believe me, I'm an old kid, I know how to laugh, and I'll tell you one thing, the big one eats the little one so that the big one gets even bigger. Oat is the laughter in dignity, and everything else is rubbish. You have to pay attention to your eyes."

We gained a great respect for the shepherd's wisdom, which he pronounced so boldly, as if there was nothing more natural in the world than a Blsmarck taking land and crown from a blind, weak king. We quickly forgot the king over the barrows that the sunge teacher showed us, and over the wonderful honeycomb that the beekeepers gave us, we also forgot that there was cherry cake and whipped cream in the castle.

My teacher was very serious for a while and told me that it was not impossible that a great war would break out. My heart was beating fast, for I could not anything more beautiful than a war with many assaults and battles and finally a great victory in which the enemy kings and kings were captured. Dear Grete, I was annoyed because she felt sorry for the wounded and thought the war was terrible.

The Austrian heir to the throne, Archduke Franz Ferdinand, and his wife had been murdered in Sarajevo, and the Serbian government's guilt was beyond doubt, the teacher reported.

I looked at him in amazement and didn't understand why this could cause a major war. I had already learned at school that Serbia was a small country and Austria-Hungary a big one. And that a large country destroys a small country in war, I knew even without the shepherd's wisdom.

The teacher just smiled in response to my interjection.

"There, boy, if the world were that simple! But when a little one is sent ahead to start a fight, there's always at least one big one in the background to intervene. Thats called politics, but you don't know anything about it yet. When you're older, you'll realize that it'very dangerous to be a German and to live in a time when Germany isn't lying powerless on the ground, but is strong, stronger than its neighbours/

In the small whitewashed classroom hung a picture of the rulers of the Triple Alliance of Germany, Austria, Hungary and Italy. Below it a map from an atlas, showing the countries and kingdoms of Europe.

"Look/ said the teacher and moved his hand from north to south, "the whole triad is so small together and so " - he made a large circle with his hand

- "so great are the countries that are hostile to us."

A few days later, when we met him outside at the old hunting lodge by the reed pond, he was very confident again.

"There won't be a war, children. I think everyone is afraid to start. And Germany has no intention of going to war. Why we? We have everything we need."

We went home at the end of July. Everywhere in the fields the harvest was in full swing and we never tired of telling our parents about all glories of the Lüneburg Heath, about the baron, shepherd and the teacher. And what was really going on in the world?
Bater was very serious.

"Since Btsmarck left, the whole of German politics has gone mad. Russia should have remained our friend, then no power in the world would have dared to approach us. But you see, Russia is against us, and things are bad there/

Mother sighed and didn't want to hear about the war. Yes, she in a particular hurry to make preparations for the sea voyage. I was given an Oreimast sailing boat, Grete a lace parasol with an ivory crutch. We quickly forgot all the talk of war and looked forward to the betting sea, the seagulls, the beach chair and the castle.

Father Thieke had received a mighty scolding from Mother and was not allowed to seen by us for a whole week because he would not stop prophesying a great world conflagration and painting it in the bloodiest colors down to the smallest details, so that our girls not stop howling.

In the middle of the final preparations for the trip, a flash of lightning came out of the sky, which had just become clear again. Father came, I will never forget it, it was the 3rd. It was the third of July and, quite contrary to his custom, he returned from Berlin in the early afternoon and was more excited than I had ever seen him before.

"Germany has issued a disarmament ultimatum to Russia.
The Russians are already the march against us." Mother cried out and slapped her hands over her face.
"For God's sake, the war. What is to become of us?"

Father comforted her and said that if a war was inevitable, it could only last half a journey at most, compared to that of t870/7t.

?t

I was outraged and found it unworthy to be afraid of war.
Mother smiled through her tears.

"Ou talk well, my boy, you won't feel much of the war/

Oas gave me a deep stab in the heart. It only really dawned on me that I was fa too young to go to war. I hesitantly said that it was best to wait a few more years for the war.
Bater patted me on the shoulder with a laugh.

"Boy, if the NItimatum doesn't make an impression on the armorers, then you just bring up your reasons, they'll make sense to them/

Early in the morning of August 1st, we set off for Berlin, rejoicing. Father was of the opinion that we children would to witness what would certainly be a historically significant day in the next few hours. Because on August I, the ultimatum given to the Russians expired.

There was a huge rush at Rahnsdorf station. Anyone who could spare the time today moved to Berlin. Oer railroad crossing was secured by guards. I recognized the carpenter Nagel, who wore an oristing over his shoulder and a white bandage on his right arm. An assassination attempt was supposed to have been carried out somewhere. That's why the oldest bridges and railroad crossings were now guarded. Roadblocks were erected at important crossings, consisting of wagons loaded with cobblestones, harrows with their tips upwards, tree trunks and every conceivable object.

Bater bought a newspaper at almost every station where our train stopped. In bold letters, there was always just one question on the first page: War or peace?

The men and women crowded into the train compartments were in an excited mood. Astes laughed, shouted and sang in confusion. Mother's eyes were shining too

while Grete frightened by the unfamiliar noise. I couldn't get enough of the images that presented themselves at every crossroads. When a soldier came into view, a huge cheer went up to meet him.

In our compartment sat Agnes Rösters Bater, the social democrat. Today he didn't look past Bater, but greeted him confidently.

"Well, it start, Mr. Eggers?"

Bater shrugged his shoulders. "Hopefully not. But if there's no other way, then the others shouldn't enjoy us/

Röster became very agitated. "If the French working class does not prevent this war, into which Germany is being innocently driven, I will no longer believe in the honesty of the International. Then I will be the first to go into the field voluntarily/

Bater offered Röster one of the good cigars. "This realization comes a little late, but hopefully not too late/

Röster lit his cigar awkwardly and embarrassed. "served with the pioneers in Berlin, in Röpenicker Straße, Mr. Eggers. The brothers over there should be careful, we know our trade/

Röster became the hero of the compartment. We all hung on his every word and couldn't hear enough about how to lay mines and drive tunnels. Bater gladly offered up a second cigar. The time flew by. When we got off at Börse station, it was only just after eight o'clock, but the streets and squares near the castle were packed with people. Groups crowded next to groups, lively, sometimes shouting, news was discussed, rumors were passed on, reports were blown up. In between, level-headed men emerged again, urging people to take advantage. But it was those who were listened to the most, the most popular were the political pundits who claimed and described the most improbable things. Back and forth

Again, particularly loud shouters were arrested and dragged away. Spies and enemy agents were detected everywhere. Gradually we pushed our way through the crowds and scrambled to the monument to Frederick the Great on Unter den Linden. The students stood in the front garden of the university and sang their defiant
"Boys out".

It must have been around nine o'clock when suddenly the cry ran through the ranks: "The emperor is coming!"

Loud cheers and hurrahs rang out from the Brandenburg Gate. I pushed my to the threshold and was lucky: the Kaiser was driving just a few meters away from me. I shouted my hurrah as loud as I could and waved my peeler. The emperor seemed to have given me a very forced smile and his waving to the right and left was spasmodic and automatic. As soon as the emperor had disappeared from our sight, the crowds began to move and stream towards the castle. We let ourselves drift with the broad stream and were only afraid of being torn apart. Mother did not find it easy to walk, for at that time the Oamen carried the so-called "Hobble skirts", that is, skirts that went down to the ankles and were very tight at the bottom, so that it was impossible to walk quickly and the women could only take very small steps. Mother's hat, a large wagon-wheel hat with huge and precious feather ornaments, was also in danger of being dented and destroyed. We reached the small garden of the palace on the Spree, where the Kaiser and Bethmann-Hollweg were walking up and down, apparently in a very excited moodThey didn't seem to hear our enthusiastic cheers and the constant "Heil dir im Siegerkranz".

Father pointed across with his hand. "The fate of Europe will be decided in these hours." And he whispered quietly to Mother so that none of the bystanders would hear: "I don't like Oer Bethmann."

I liked everything about that morning, the glorious sun, the excited people, the songs and shouts, the Emperor and his Chancellor, I thought it was wonderful to be in Berlin at such an important time and to be able to see and hear them.

We only stood in the garden for a few minutes, then we were pushed away by the crowds pressing after us. We saw the detached castle guard marching away. When the marching band
"Wacht am Rhein" played, the enthusiasm knew no bounds. All it would have taken was for someone in the crowd to give the order to march, and I think we would all have marched to the Rhine without a second thought?

Around noon, extra sheets were distributed again. This time they brought the news that the well-known pro-German French socialist leader Daures had been shot in a Parisian street. This had happened at about the same time as we were cheering the Kaiser on Unter den Linden.

It was difficult get a place for lunch in a restaurant today. Even the small pubs were overcrowded. We had no choice but to a few rolls and cakes in a small bakery in Mohrenstraße. We were also afraid to leave the vicinity of the castle for longer tents, perhaps we would have missed a decisive moment.

In the afternoon, the crowds on Unter den Linden especially in the Lustgarten became life-threatening. We were lucky and able to hire a motorized cab. Its roof and seats made excellent standing room. The approach to the palace became increasingly busy. Generals came and went, princes and princesses drove up. Even the crown prince came with his family.

It had still not been announced whether we already in a state of war. So it happened that the tension became almost unbearable and was discharged, albeit inadequately, in shouts and songs

searched. In the end we were all so hoarse that we could hardly communicate with words. Finally, it was just six o'clock in the afternoon, officers and guards announced that Emperor had ordered mobilization.

Mother had tears in her eyes again and leaned heavily on Father. I suddenly became very sad and seriously considered how I could make it possible to go to war. I was the best gymnast in the class and could take fourteen-year-olds if necessary, so why should I be too weak for a rifle? I would have loved to run after the first field gray soldiers who showed up at the castle. But how could I from the top of the car through the throng of people? I was ashamed that I was so sung.

War had been declared on Russia because Russia had not answered the German ultimatum.

Over in the cathedral was the first war service! We could clearly hear the songs echoing over. Mother whispered: 'My poor brothers and sisters in East Prussia!

They lived near the Russian border, between Lgck and Goldap! When voices were raised among us that the Russians had already invaded East Prussia, murdering and scorching, Mother sobbed out loud.

We were still standing when the sun had long since set. Soldiers' songs were sung, "O Strasbourg" and "Morgenrot" and all the other songs.

The Emperor stepped onto the balcony of the palace and greeted us. A word from the Emperor filled our hearts.

It said: 'I don't know any parties anymore, I only know Germans!

We later printed this saying on postcards, framed it and hung it in the hallway of our house.

When we went to stay with relatives late at night, we learned that the French had occupied some of the Vosges passes without declaring war and that they were already firing in the west. Berlin was covered in a flood of flags.

August 2 was a Sunday. It had been announced a field service was to be held at the Bismarck Monument in front of the Reichstag. Father, who normally didn't go to church at all, took me with him to this big roll call. Mother and Grete stayed with the relatives. We couldn't understand a word of the speech because we were too far away in the Tiergarten, but we experienced the uniquely serious and solemn atmosphere.

On Monday we returned to Schöneiche in the morning. On the way we learned that in the meantime Belgium had also joined the side of Germany's enemies. German troops had already marched into Luxembourg on Sunday. The news came thick and fast. Germany put an end to the untenable situation that had developed on the French border declaring war on France without the nations officially at war. Our train was often pushed onto a siding because troop transports were heading east and west. The soldiers had written slogans on almost every carriage door.

"Every snow soot, every push a Frenchman/

And then the countless cannons and wagons, horses and equipment! In Schöneiche, during the days of our absence, there were large

Changes have occurred. Teacher Wenhlaff was already

in uniform and took his leave to join the Guards Infantry in Potsdam. His eyes lit up and he kept telling his father how much fun it would be for him to be able to properly fight the French, because his regiment would certainly go to France.

Ehrhard Strehlow's brother joined the Alans and was sent to Russia. And in Fichtenau, the young Strecker was ordered to join his regiment, the Deutschmeister, in Austria, as Strecker's father had immigrated from Upper Austria as a lumberjack only a few years previously. Köster also came to say goodbye. His pioneer regiment was already in the Vosges.

There was an unusual rush at the registry office in Schöneich Castle. Leuenberg, the old registrar, was beating his hands over head! Emergency weddings were made possible by decree. The first person to get married quickly, just an hour before his train left, was young Strecker. His bride lived in Kleinschönebeck and was heartbroken that she didn't even time to get a wreath and veil. Alan Strehlow also used this special opportunity to get his way. His bride, a rich farmer's daughter from near Kalkberge, was overjoyed that her parents' years of resistance to the marriage had now overrun, as it were, by an Alan attack. Eight young couples were married in a hurry, and father did not fail to give a small gift to each of the young people who came to our house to introduce themselves and say goodbye at the same time. With only a few exceptions, the new wives went to work in the munitions factories. Later, women were also as letter carriers and streetcar conductors in Schöneiche.

Mother took over the management of the Vaterländischer Frauenverein, which had been offered to her so many times before, and was the first to ensure that the senseless purchases, the hoarding of all possible and impossible foodstuffs and clothing, were stopped.

hardening objects. An old retired teacher from Fichtenau had even bought herself a pair of heavy silk umbrellas in her headlessness. Father wrote a refreshing little essay about this nonsense in the Riederbaruim newspaper. Grete was taken along by her mother to the knitting nights and sewing evenings of the women's club and was indescribably proud to be doing military service, so to speak.

England and Serbia declared war on Germany.

I had torn a map of Europe out of my atlas and it to the wall of my room with thumbtacks. Over timeI struggled to get enough different colored paper to make the little flags I used to mark out the fronts.

Father had volunteered on the third day of mobilization and had been conditionally accepted into the 3rd Guards Regiment. As a young man he had not been allowed to serve because of a heart defect, and when he had returned from England a few years later, healthy and strong, the military authorities had no longer wanted . As a result, although he was taller and stronger than the average soldier, he had never carried a weapon.

It pained me deeply that my father was not already out in the field writing such wonderful field postcards like the fathers of my friends. Nor did I have the slightest understanding for the consolation that mother wanted to give me by saying that it was a nice feeling to know that father was not in danger. I waited day after day for the familiar blue and gray letter that would bring the call-up.

Father came back from Berlin that evening with a large pack of newspapers. I marked out with flags all the places where battles had taken place and which had fallen into German or enemy hands. And when particularly clear descriptions of individual battles were published, I sometimes set up a whole battlefield with my tin soldiers.

We were very upset when mother's eldest brother' family suddenly arrived in Schöneiche and the aunt tearfully reported that Uncle Leo was missing. He had to leave the farm in the face of the advancing Russians and had stayed behind with the inspector, armed with hunting rifles. Those were bad days for all of us! The aunt told us again and again about the terrible attacks that the Cossacks in particular had committed, about murders, looting and all kinds of outrages. The uncertainty lasted for two weeks, then finally a letter from Uncle Leo arrived in Schöneiche. Uncle Leo had actually managed to escape from the Russians at the last moment and, after an adventurous escape through the middle of the Russian detachments, had our troops. The inspector had been shot by the Russians as a spy.

When the grammar school reopened, major changes had taken place. All the sixth formers had graduated from high school and were already recruited into various branches of the armed forces. Of the teachers, the reserve officers were also with their units. All the old professors had stayed behind, and some old retired ones had been hired as assistant teachers. There were suddenly also female teachers, much to our displeasure. We did, however, enjoy the fact that several classes were combined during numerous, less important lessons. We could play pranks to our heart's content!

One of our favorite teachers had come back to the Ggmnastum in his lieutenant's uniform and gave a farewell speech in the auditorium in front of the whole school, which moved us all very much. He assumed that in 1912 the Russian Grand Duke Nikolai Nikolasevich had already said to the French Ottomans: "Goodbye in Berlin", and then developed the intentions of the world, the Bismarck

to throw down and dismember the empire that had been founded. Our hearts beat faster when he called out at the end: "Boys, remember that the weapons must not rest until Germany is victorious. Living in a defeated Germany is worse than a convict in a galley. And if this war should last fifty years, make sure that later on your sons take over your guns/ Until now we had only ever heard that this war would be over very quickly.

Ten days later, this teacher was killed in action near Stallu- pönen. The seriousness of the war became more and more noticeable. In Schöneiche, too, young war widows were soon to be seen. When teacher Wentzlaff fell, we all mourned his death.

In the Friedrichshagener Ggmnaflum, some of the older underclassmen took the emergency Abitur. I always had to fight back tears when they came to school soon after their exams in their new field gray uniforms to say goodbye.

The letters and postcards that the relatives of us boys sent from the field were read out loud during the breaks, and an often not entirely bloodless argument arose about whose father, brother, uncle or better was the greater hero. Among my relatives who fought at sea, in the air, in Europe and in Africa, I was often several lengths ahead in this race.

A strange, very attractive man had come to our grammar school to teach German: the poet Bruno Wille. Our religion teacher, whom we held in very low esteem because of his preference for model boys and nerds, had previously made some disparaging remarks about Bruno Wille and had made a few comments the effect that it was dangerous to allow such godless people and enemies of the church, such raving idiots and do-gooders, to touch the innocent souls of schoolchildren. We loved Bruno Wille because the religion teacher obviously hated him. And when he came into our class for the first time

When he stepped up, called each of us, wrote down our names and home addresses, said a few friendly words to each of us, we could have smashed ourselves to pieces for him. We were given unique German lessons. Sometimes Bruno Wille took the whole class up one of the Müggel mountains, explained how the mountains and lakes were formed, pointed out the large boulders, the granite blocks that were once carried here by the glaciers thousands and thousands of years ago, searched with us for stone axes and scrapers that the Germanic tribes once used and then told us about times long gone when people were good without knowing a church and without having been redeemed by Jesus Christ. We didn't everything we heard, but we felt that a completely different spirit, a freer, braver one, was speaking to us. We 't have dreamed of annoying this teacher with any kind of prank, but we did our best to please him. I have rarely learned poems by Ahland and Schiller with such zeal as I did then. And in my essays I tried to write as freely and naturally as Bruno Wille advised us. In every Aeligion lesson we were interrogated exactly what we had done in the lesson. Then we were given psalms to memorize "as an antidote".

I particularly liked the poem "Hoch klingt das Lied vom braven Mann", and even more the explanations about humanity that Bruno Wille gave. The essay I had to write on this poem was presented to the principal as a special award. It was the first time that I felt real pride about a good piece of school work.

In gym class, we practiced almost exclusively marching and singing soldiers' songs. Our gym teacher was an older man who was enthusiastic about the war but unfit for the field, who explained to our joyful enthusiasm that war games were much healthier for body and soul than gymnastics. My schoolwork became better and better. Later I was

Second in the class. In first place sat, immobile, a nerd, a pale, floppy boy whom we all disliked. His name was Schlesinger and he was of the Mosaic faith, as he said.

We were often given time off school because the victories of the German troops were celebrated. The news of the bold storming of the fortress of Liège by the brave General Ludendorff caused the greatest rejoicing. We bought postcards with his picture and put them up in our classes. The flags didn't come down from the masts for days.

A teacher wrote a poem about every victory, which was published in the Niederbarnimer newspaper and which we had to learn by heart. Bruno Wille just smiled mischievously when he heard us recite the poems and said: "It's nice how he imagines a war. There was a lot of talk of the Kaiser, of heroic death, of the fatherland, and very often we shouted hurrah. We didn't like the author very much. He also looked too funny with his fine short bow legs, bald head, pince-nez and bright red nose. His first name was Gustaf with an f.

There were not only poems by him, there was also one about him. Only a short one, but we thought it was more beautiful than the ones by him.

> "Gustaf's neefe shines from afar like an omnibus lantern/

A boy wrote this poem in chalk on "Gustafs"' house and was therefore removed from school.

When Ludendorff and Hindenburg won the victory at Tannenberg at the end of Angust, a big school celebration was held. Gustaf had written a song for it, which we had to catch. The rhyme was called von Hindenburg:

> "Held the trumps in his fist and forced them into the swamps/

"They" were the nuts.

Köster, the Social Democrat, was also killed in the Battle of Tannenberg. His pioneer regiment had been sent from the Vosges to East Prussia shortly beforehand.

Mother resigned from the chairmanship of the Vaterländischer Frauenverein and took over the management of a department for the support of East Prussian refugees. Her office was located at the police headquarters in Berlin.

At times our house in Schöneiche was filled to the rafters with refugees who reported ever more gruesome details of the Russians' rampage.

Now Bater was also conscripted, not to the Guards, as we were first told, but to the Twenties in Wittenberg. The lady of the house, who looked after us very well, let me have my way. So was able to carry out pranks and heroic deeds unhindered. I became the captain of all the warlike youth between Kleinschönebeck and Rahnsdorf. My appearance also quite warlike. I had given an old hunting rifle. I proudly wore a soldier's coat that had been tailored for me from an old officer's coat. On my shoulders shone the yellow epaulettes of the Hundred Twelve, who had suffered such heavy losses in the Battle of Mühlhausen. A soldier's fatigues completed the picture.

We exciting war games in the large forests, where the experience I gained in gymnastics came in very handy.

When I visited the war hospital in Wilhelmshagen with my class one afternoon and saw a large trench with shelters, tunnels and trenches, I thought it would be appropriate to introduce positional warfare in Schöneiche as well.

We dug a trench at the edge of a forest, right next to the path, and it with branches, creating a shelter with all the accessories that a trench must have. We even built a latrine and barbed wire.

of course, we also drew. Unfortunately, I got the idea of creating a so-called wolf pit, a deep hole in which the enemy would be trapped.

The pit had a diameter of over two meters and a depth of almost four meters. The groundwater was over fifty centimeters high! We thought for a long time about driving scythes and pointed stakes into the sides and bottom of the pit, as the regulations actually demanded, but then decided against it because it was too difficult to get the scythes in particular. We laid thin branches over the pit and roofing felt on top, which we took from the supplies of a roofer in Fichtenau. But the roofing felt was sand. Then we sprinkled pine needles and moss on top, so that no uninitiated person could have even thought a pit had been built here. We were indescribably proud of our work and only regretted that we could not make it available to the army command. We carried the ladder back to the Schulte bakery as inconspicuously as we had picked it up, where all the fire department's equipment was stored in the yard. That night, as always in those weeks, I dreamed of the war and of the heroic deeds I had performed as a young lieutenant at the head of my company. When I got up in the morning, Marie told me in great excitement that she had heard it calling from the edge of the forest several times during the night. It had been terrifying, like a haunting.

I felt a chill down my spine.

"From the edge of the forest, Marie?"

Marie nodded hastily. "There, where you damned louts made the trench."

I ran what I could to the ditch. My knees were trembling and my heart was almost in my throat.

In fact, it screaming! Very low and desperate. And where we had so carefully laid the roofing felt and scattered the needles, a dark hole yawned eerily.

I mustered up all my courage, but my voice was hoarse.

"Is there someone in the pit?"

As if from a tomb, a hollow sound emerged.

Get me out!"

I was at the pit in a flash. Oh, dear me! It the old retired police constable Krüger, who had an abysmal hatred for me ever since I started driving, because I played him so many stretches. Him of all people! And what did he look like? His eyes were rimmed, his suit covered with a thick crust of sand, his hair in a mess. Poor Krüger, I felt sorry for him from the bottom of my heart. And how his teeth chattered! Surely the groundwater was cold.

I looked for a thick branch and handed it to the old man. With a lot of effort, I managed to pull it up. But not a word of thanks escaped his lips. He staggered away with difficulty, without me a glance. What an ungrateful man, I thought to myself. I was also the most relieved when he reported me to the principal and claimed that he had sat in the wet hole for eight hours and the tear for all time. If I had known that Krüger was going to report me, he could have safely squatted in the water for another eight hours. Not much came out of the interrogation, I was the only one who had been ticked off and couldn't tell on my friends and comrades. So I was detained for three hours and given strict orders to fill in the trench and pit and not to fight any more trench warfare.

I didn't get a chance to do that either, because at Uncle Oskar's suggestion, my mother gave me permission to join the "Vlau- weiß-blau" joint company in Friedrichshagen. Uncle Oskar was a battalion commander in the West and fully understood my talent as a soldier. In the Fugendkompanie I got a nice uniform and with it a certain martial seriousness that no longer allowed me to catch old men in pits.

Every afternoon we went into the forest to collect mushrooms and acorns, and later beechnuts, nuts and leaves. Everything was urgently by the army administration. Nettles were also collected, initially as fodder, especially for young geese, later also for human food and clothing, chestnuts, old linen, rags, iron. Soon there was nothing left that was not collected. At school there were prizes for collecting gold. We prided ourselves on getting at least an honorary diploma and a nice paper wallet. The gift packages that each class delivered piled up into mountains. Cigars, liqueur, stockings, tobacco, pipes, sausages, packed everything we could get our hands on in love gift packages and handed them in. Sometimes that caused a lot of trouble.

Everyone in the class was given the address of a field soldier. We were proud to have our own warrior who we were allowed to look after. We begged all the old aunts for him. I even secretly took half a ham from Farmer Grätzen's supplies for him. And how proud I was of the nice, cheerful Oankpost cards. Until one day my last parcel came back with the inscription:
"Addressee fallen".

The mourning for the many fallen was so great and general that there was hardly any individual mourning. The Knoth family in Fichtenau had lost three sons by September 1914, and yet none of us ever saw our mother cry. Even Agnes Köster never once had red eyes. The mourning for the fallen was accompanied by pride in the dead.

Almost every week, the name of a fallen soldier was painted on the wall in the foyer of the grammar school.

The first prisoners arrived, mostly well-fed, younger people. Only the Russians were occasionally older.

men can be seen. In the early days, the French still wore their familiar red pants, later they had blue-grey uniforms. The prisoners were used for forestry work and later also for agricultural .

Almost every week was now devoted to a particular collection theme. Sometimes we collected gold, then copper kettles, then brass doors. Or we were a tin and collected for some important donation, for military hospitals or for the first war cripples.

I met Käthchen by chance when I into the houses in my uniform and collected brass oven doors. She was very pale and shy. When she saw me, she cried to herself. At first I wanted to pass quickly, but then I felt so sorry for her that I spoke to her.

With twitching lips, she reported that both her father's legs had been torn off by a grenade during a storm attack and that he was now in Mainz, where he was dying. Her mother had gone there but was not allowed to see her father.

Two days later I read in the Niederbarnimer Zeitung that Private Pfeil had died after being seriously wounded. The butcher's shop was sold and the Pfeils moved away. I never saw Käthchen again.

The first K-bread, Krtegsbrot, was on sale in Schöneiche. It was gin bread that was stretched with all kinds of substitutes. Later, even swedes were used, so that the bread had a wide, slippery and usually foul-smelling edge. It was considered a point of honor to eat only K-bread. After weeks, however, there was nothing else but K-bread. It was similar with soap. I only washed myself with K-soap, which consisted largely of clay. To stretch the soap, there were soap protectors, small metal plates that were supposed to prevent too much of the soap surface from dissolving in the water.

Food became very scarce because all supplies had to be handed over to the army administration. But the farmers in Kleinschönebeck gave me everything I was hungry for couldn't get at home.

The hoarders, who roamed the country and chewed up that wasn't nailed down, were hunted down. After all, the hoarders were only to blame for the ever-growing queues of people in front of the stores and the discontent that arose here and there. At the train stations, police officers sometimes took action and confiscated conspicuously large bags and sacks.

In Schönetche, a beautiful forest restaurant with a large, shady garden was turned into a military hospital. Many an afternoon I sat with the wounded, brought them fruit and refreshments and listened to their stories. What they told me about the war was often very different from what you in the books. Some of them had not been wounded in an assault, but somewhere on the road during the march, from a grenade that had hit suddenly before the soldiers could throw themselves down. Others had been shot while sneaking up on the enemy, and still others had come under heavy shellfire without an enemy. They all wished that the war end soon. They often caught new soldier songs that I didn't know yet. I took one or two of them who had been shot in the arm or slightly wounded in the leg to my father's house or took them to the farmers where they were fed. If there were prisoners of war nearby, the wounded would talk to them. Among the Russian prisoners there were some who could make beautiful carvings or small works of art from kneaded bread, which they gave to the wounded.

With the Fugendkompanie, we carried out several exercises, far beyond Kalkberge, almost as far as Strausberg. Once we had

We even had a night exercise. I proudly wrote all this to my father, who replied that I was obviously further along in my training than he was, because at best he would only get as far as Piestrih near Wittenberg, where there was a very large prison camp. Uncle Oskar sent me an arrow he had found. I was particularly happy about this and showed it to my comrades, who envied me for it. We collected all the war memorabilia we could get hold of. One had a shell splinter, the other Russian or French cartridges, the third even a helmet that had previously been worn by an enemy.

We used to read the little penny dreadfuls by Jürgen Peters, the ship's boy, or the New Leatherstocking, perhaps even the infallible detective Pinker- ton, we literally devoured the little booklets describing the heroic deeds of German soldiers at sea, on land and in the air. However, the wounded only laughed contemptuously when I tried to give them such a booklet and said that the writer should first put in the trenches.

At the end of September, a wounded non-commissioned officer who had witnessed the retreat on the Marne came to Schöneiche. He couldn't talk about it without tears of rage running down his face. -We were already in front of Paris and could almost spit in the soup of the pack over there. We marched for weeks and weeks, nothing but marching, just to bring the war to a quick end in Paris. And stormed again and again, express marches, assaults, assaults, express marches. But we managed, albeit with sore feet and sometimes staggering. We walked because we won. And in the middle of the storm we were pulled back because someone at the back of the stage had gone mad. Maybe he was even more dangerous than a madman, I don't know. Then it was all over, the storm, the victory, the faith. And it was all for nothing. Notice

the names Moltke and Hentsch, they have us on their conscience at the Marne!'"

That was almost the only thing the sergeant said for weeks, and some of his comrades thought he was mentally ill.

In the meantime, Japan had the ranks of Germany's enemies. Before he left for Wittenberg, Father had hoped that the Japanese would march against Russia. The map of Europe that hung in my room was no longer enough. I had already canceled the colony of Togo at the end of August; it had surrendered to the enemy. Things were also bad with the Austrian army; I had had to withdraw the flags as far as the Carpathians.

In the German lessons we were also allowed to mark out the maps with Bruno Wille, my class probably the most about the theaters of war of all the classes in the school. The songs
"Gustafs" became rarer, but he wrote poems to all the military leaders whose picture was in the newspaper and sent them the poems. When he received a friendly letter of thanks, he was very proud and had it neatly framed and circulated in all classes. We took great pains to scratch the frame and smear the glass.

Mother suddenly became very ill. The strenuous work in Berlin, the constant worries and excitement and the daily journeys had completely worn her out. Bater went on leave. I embarrassed that Bater was still not an officer and was not in the field. I had followed the war reports about his regiment with a burning heart. Bater shrugged his shoulders. "I don't think I'll to the front at all, my heart won't hold out." Bater was forty-three years old at the time, and no one would have known that he had a serious heart condition. Mother smiled happily when she heard that Bater probably stay at home and was almost angry with me because I would have preferred Bater to at the front.

We started war stamps at school.

Oer winter came very early this year. Snow was already falling at the beginning of November. On November 10, my birthday, I built as many snowmen with my comrades as there were enemy countries against us in the war. Each snowman was given the initial letters of the country he represented, then we started a continuous fire with snowballs. The snowman who lost his head first was symbolically the first enemy to be defeated. To our roaring cheers, the snowman England lost his head first. So England had to lose the battle first! This fitted in well with our calculations, for shortly beforehand the brave Count Spee had been victorious in the naval battle of Coronet, and the Turks had also our side. We only learned in the evening that the heroic cruiser Emden had just been destroyed near the Cocos Islands on November 9, and by then our joy of victory was so great that it could not be significantly impaired by this general message of grief.

Only old Thieke, who attended my birthday as usual, scratched thoughtfully behind his ear and said: ^Where Russia is against us/ Father Thieke had to leave the party early after this remark.

I had received so many soldiers, cannons and war books for my birthday that I was able to set up and conduct even major battles, such as the capture of Antwerp or the Battle of the Aesir.

The first snow barrel came so unexpectedly that there was not enough manpower in Friedrichshagen to remove the masses of snow. First the youth company, then all the schools were called in to shovel. What a joy! Frledrichshagen has never looked so clean!

The coal was getting scarce. We soon that we were running out in class, and when a large number of

When one of the pupils became ill, it was decided to have two schools in one building, one in the morning and the other in the afternoon. As the grammar school with its many classrooms needed a lot of coal, we were quickly moved out and into the elementary school. However, we got a bit confused with the lessons.

The class went to the movies once a week, whenever there were new reports from the field. There were only movies to watch that were about the war. We couldn't watch enough of them, and there wasnt a type of weapon or troop that we couldn't immediately recognize by their helmets and weapons.

In the first half of December, the flags were at half-mast, as Count Spee and his squadron had perished in the naval battle of the Falklands Islands. A former pupil of Friedrichshagen grammar school was also among the fallen. The song of the good comrade was sung very often, whenever the death certificate of a former pupil came. The ceremonies in the assembly hall, which used to be just religious devotions, took on a special consecration as a result.

Father wrote in mid-December that he wouldn't be able to take a vacation for Christmas, so we should come to him in Wittenberg.

Mother found the journey very difficult, but she drove happily. Grete and I were feverish with anticipation.

We arrived in Wittenberg on December 20. The early snow was long gone and a thin, cold rain trickled down steadily and incessantly. The streets were very dirty and the hotel, where we finally found after a long and fruitless search, was not friendly either. Every room was occupied by soldiers or their families. After we had recovered a little from the journey, we drank coffee and arranged get to the barracks at about six o'clock in the afternoon. Father had written that it would be useless to come earlier as the service took so long.

At the entrance to the old castle barracks, we were in for a pleasant surprise: the guard was a cigar dealer from Fichtenau, who was just as happy as we were to see familiar faces from home here in Wittenberg. looked at the smoky guardroom, the rifles, the helmets, the men playing cards and smoking, while my mother gave the guard the necessary explanations about the purpose of our visit. A soldier led us across the wide barracks yard, along endless corridors to the room where father's corporal's quarters were located. We heard commands outside the door. Mother didn't want to enter the room at first: "I think it's still duty". The soldier smiled mischievously: -You should have ready ten minutes ago. Just go in confidently, dear lady, then the service will stop."

With that, he opened the door and the visit to the sergeant.

I could hardly close my mouth in amazement. They were practicing rifle grips, eight soldiers were standing there with their rifles in their hands. One looked like the other. Where was father now? All eight wore the little round blue cap, and all eight wore the same dark blue, slightly greasy uniform with brass buttons and red lapels. Only the sergeant wore field gray.

After a brief command, the soldiers were allowed to leave. I was still looking around for my father. Was he really among the eight soldiers who hurrying to put their rifles on the shelves along one wall of the room?

The sergeant greeted Mother amiably and watched me as I was still looking, almost desperately, for my father. -Well, my boy, you don't recognize your own father anymore, do you?"

I shook my head sheepishly.

The sergeant nodded to me in a friendly manner: -Well, wait a minute, you'll have your father in a minute/ Then he called out in a cutting voice:

-Gggers, Origin/

Indeed, now a soldier broke free from the tangle, the rifle still in his hand, rushed to the sergeant, slammed his heels together, put his left hand on the seam of his pants, while his right hand aligned the rifle so that the barrel pointed into the armpit and the butt formed a line with the tip of the shoe: "Mr. sergeant?"

I cheered. Fa, it was my father! He completely different from when he was on vacation in Schöneiche. Even the fact that he wasn't wearing field gray made him look different, and the scab completely changed his appearance. Above all, however, he had trimmed his neat imperial moustache and now wore a small English moustache. His face had narrowed, and father now seemed much slimmer and therefore even taller.

The sergeant walked out laughing.

The next moment Grete was clinging to Father's neck, while I walked around my father in amazement and looked at him from all sides. Mother, beaming happily, leaned against Father, who was obviously not particularly pleased with the greeting. The other soldiers joking around and seemed to be having a lot of fun with the sight.

Father cut the greeting short by introducing us to his comrades and throwing in a few jokes himself. I had taken father's rifle in my hand and was as proud as if it were my own. Father showed me the place on the shelf I could put it. Then I didn't rest until I had inspected everything, father's bed, which was almost under the ceiling at a lofty height, father's cupboard, which was filled to bursting point with items of uniform, food and linen, the helmet standing on the cupboard, father's stool, the sidearm, the cartridge pouches.

I couldn't get enough of it and would have traded all the joys of my youth for permission stay in the barracks.

I was secretly amazed at how out of touch my otherwise so serious and brittle father was and how he, who was not usually too generous with kindnesses, was even somewhat subservient to the sergeant.

Father wanted us to leave the barracks and meet in a hotel lobby in the evening. But I kept asking until I got permission to stay in the barracks for dinner. Mother left with Grete very soon. The soldiers took me seriously insofar as they allowed me to fetch a food bowl and receive the food, sausages and sauerkraut. I never liked eating sauerkraut, but the soldiers' sauerkraut tasted better than any of my favorite foods. I was given a German tea to drink, which smelled of blackberries and tasted of peppermint. I would certainly have spurned this tea in Schöneiche, but in Wittenberg I drank two large pots. Then I had two slices of the dark brown commissary bread and smeared them with artificial honey, which I had never before.

When the soldiers saw this, they teased my father. ^Na, Eggers, your son enjoys being a soldier more than you do/ What a change! My father, who otherwise hardly called anyone by their first name, was on first-name terms with all the soldiers in his parlor!

After supper, my father wiped the table and swept the room with a huge broom. But I had to laugh at the sight, because Bater wasn't very good at it.

Finally, around eight o'clock, Father put on his field gray uniform and left the barracks with me. Mother and Grete were already waiting for us. The hotel lobby was full of officers, whom Father greeted in a very military manner. Whenever a superior officer passed by, father jumped up and stood motionless.

I hurried to copy him every time and received friendly looks and waves from the officers.

We had hardly been in the hotel lobby for half an hour when Bater paid and took us to a restaurant where no officers frequented. 2 The next morning I was allowed to go sightseeing in Wittenberg with Grete while Mother went Christmas shopping.

We went to the museum, where many memorabilia of Martin Luther were kept. We were particularly struck by the countless rings belonging to Mrs. Käthe Luther. You could buy one of these silver rings for just three marks. Grete promptly asked for a Käthe Luther ring for Christmas. Mother, however, refused to fulfill this wish because Mrs. Luther could not possibly have worn so many rings, that would be obvious fraud. Near the station, we came across a funeral procession with lots of soldiers and a few civilians. We joined the procession and learned at the cemetery that a soldier buried who had tried to save a child from the Elbe, which was flowing at high tide. In his sermon, the priest said how unfortunate it was that this soldier was not allowed to die a hero's death. After the pastor, a captain spoke in visible excitement, explaining that this soldier would also have died a hero's death, because the soldier's main task was to save the lives of other people of his nation, and if he lost his life in such a task, he would die a hero's death.

The captain's excitement to the funeral cortege, and it looked as if the priest was about to say something to the captain, but he waved him off vigorously, so that the funeral passed without incident.

We heard later that the borough had caused quite a stir at the grave. In the afternoon Bater took us to Piestrih. We were allowed to look at the prisoners walking back and forth behind the barbed wire.

Father then showed us the large nitrogen plant where nitrogen was extracted from the air. A year later, the newspaper reported the whole plant had blown up! Father was able to report that it had been an act of sabotage.

2lm Christmas Eve, we were allowed to come to the large canteen in the barracks at seven o'clock. Soldiers had decorated the room beautifully with fir branches and candles. There was a huge Christmas tree on a podium. Each soldier had a colorful plate with three apples, five cigars and a handful of gingerbread his place, plus the gifts of love that the regiment had received and which were carefully divided up that each soldier received at least one gift. Those most in need received whole sets of underwear. For father, a pair of woolen wrist warmers had fallen off, with a small note with the crest of a girl from Holstein still attached. That same evening, Father wrote a postcard there and we were allowed to see our names on it.

The wives and families of the soldiers were personally given a bar of chocolate by the company commander. Father's captain talked to us for a long time, asking about details of Schöneiche and the school, and how we liked it here. I immediately blurted out a request to stay here. The captain patted me on the shoulder with a laugh and said that if the war lasted much longer, I should feel free to turn to him when my year came around, he could certainly use me. Then he became more serious, that is, if he was still alive!

The candles spread a dull, yellow light and the smell of twigs drifted through the room. Three soldiers, among them a well-known cellist, played Handel's Largo, and it became so quiet in the room that only the soft crackling and snapping of the branches scorched by the candles could be heard. A non-commissioned officer, an actor by profession, spoke

The poem "War Christmas", written a private who was a writer, was read. Then a major spoke some serious and solemn words about the seriousness and greatness of that time.

We were allowed to stay until eleven o'clock, sing Christmas carols and eat gingerbread.

On Boxing Day we drove to Haufe. Father had been allowed to take us to the train station and consoled Mother when we left saying that there would certainly be peace next Christmas.

At home, we celebrated Christmas once again. I was given a pair of shoes with thick wooden soles, the kind you could buy as a substitute for leather. The soles were also studded with iron plates, so the shoes 't exactly light, and they also caused a lot of clatter, especially on stone steps. I was generally envied at school because of these shoes.

Each claw was given a large wooden disk on which a figure, such as a lion or an iron cross, drawn. The task now was to nail iron, silver or gold-plated nails to this disk until the figure was completely filled with nails. The price of a nail varied between ten pfennigs and one mark. After all, it took about five hundred nails to fill the disk, and a fun competition began in the school to see which class would finish first. A large monument was erected on the market square in Friedrichshagen, a huge fist holding up a sword. Black and silver-plated nails were used for the fist and gold-plated nails for the sword. We students sold the nails to all our relatives and acquaintances. Twice a week and on Sundays there were nail lessons, when people flocked in crowds to hammer in the nail themselves and give proof of their sense of togetherness.

In Berlin, not far from the Victory Column, a large Hindenburg figure was erected and released for nailing. Tin-

time we went to Berlin with Bruno Wille to hammer in a nail each.

January would bring a lot of cold. After a day's thaw, a severe frost had come, so that the surface of the deep snow had frozen to ice. In the forest, branches and whole trees broke to the ground under the excessive weight. It was only with great difficulty and very slowly that we were able to work our way to the train, but the train also got stuck so often that we at school almost two hours late. The deer had it the worst. The deer tore their legs bloody on the icy snow and were so weak from hunger that they could almost be caught by hand. Hares and rabbits hobbled lumberingly up to the houses. The youth company was deployed to build feeding troughs for the game. We even fetched potato peelings, bread crusts and kitchen waste from the houses to help the animals.

In Schonetche, all the water pipes were frozen and we had great difficulty getting water from the well. Most of the tradesmen had long since moved in, and there was hardly any lead or tin for soldering. If Father Thieke hadn't been there, things would have been bad for us. Mother moaned that the house was too much of a burden for her, that it was already the best, that we were selling it and moving to Berlin. The prospect of coming to Berlin was quite tempting for Grete and me. There was so much to see in Berlin now, the Kaiser and the soldiers, what was Friedrichshagen or even Schöneiche compared to that!

Father wrote from Wtttenberg that he was against selling, because if the war lasted any longer, food would also become scarcer. But then Schöneiche with the garden and the proximity of the farmers would be of immeasurable value.

The cold lasted for almost a month, and the youth company breathed a sigh of relief when the thaw finally came abruptly; many of us had become frostbitten.

tvo

My clogs proved to be an excellent shoe against the cold and wet, I didn't catch a single cold.

In February, the great winter battle in Masuria was fought and the Russians were finally driven out of East Prussia. On this occasion, we had a school celebration in which once again
"Gustafs"' song of the trumps and swamps came to honor. I had to recite the well-known poem:

> With man and horse and chariot the Lord has smitten them.

The poem was originally addressed to Napoleon, but Bruno Wille that it fitted very well and was more beautiful than the poetic omissions of some teachers.

Aer spring arrived very hesitantly. It rained a lot and it didn't want to get warm. Many pupils fell ill in the bad weather and it became apparent for the first time that the consequences of the worsening diet were not absent. The resistance to illnesses became less. We foreigners had to have two pairs of socks and slippers ready at school so that we change when entering and leaving the school.

When Bater got Nrlaub over Easter, we were shocked by his appearance. He had become very thin and his eyes had deep rims. Father was now training recruits, but his heart condition had become so bad that he had to lie in bed several times a day.

Mother went to the farmers herself prepare hearty meals for father. But the farmers hardly anything, at most a few eggs.

Uncle Oskar came to visit for two days. His battalion had suffered heavy losses in the battles for Ppern and was now at rest, waiting to be replenished. As battalion commander, he had been awarded the Iron Cross First Class for the great achievements of fine troops. A whole after

At lunchtime, he gave me a gift to the flags, which were no longer in the right position due to the constant changes at the front. Then he the last position of his battalion for me, with trenches, dug-outs, bars and dressing stations.

"The war will go on for a long time, my tongue," he said in between, "we missed our luck at the Marne, and the English are better soldiers than thought. Although they play soccer behind the front and can't perform a decent parade march." The French are mood soldiers, he explained another time, it all depends on whether someone can inspire and convince them. The same Frenchman was a hero today and a coward tomorrow, just like his leader. I told him about "Gustaf" and brought out some poems that I had cut out of the newspaper and stuck in my scrapbook. Uncle Oskar became angry: "These patriots gone wild! As if they were doing us a favor by portraying our enemies as rags, runaways and scaredy-cats! If that were the case, we'd have to be nice soldiers not to herd them in front of us."

I decided to report my uncle's opinion to Bruno Wille. I also took Uncle Oskar to see the wounded in the military hospital in Schöneich. On the evening of the second day he received a dispatch him to his battalion. A new battle had begun at Ppern.

My cousin Bruno came over for a moment. He only had one day to visit his parents. The airmen were constantly busy in the west. Bruno recounted many details of air battles, of his first flight over Paris, of the crown prince and individual army commanders with whom he was a guest. In the course of the first year of the war, he had often distinguished himself, worn numerous medals and was often mentioned in army reports.

At the end of the war, Italy declared war on Austria-Hungary.

A wave of indignation swept through Germany. If they hadn't already taken down, the obituaries were removed everywhere.

In the summer, father was transferred to the Berlin General Command and was given permission to live in Schöneiche. Now he was able to take care of the community again, where the agitation of some immigrant social democrats had caused a lot of unrest. Above all, some sunge women, who earned a lot of money in Köpenlck and Adlershof by turning grenades, stood out by scolding and ranting. On more than one occasion, they pickled mother, whose character they obviously didn't like, in the street.

Victory celebrations at school became less frequent, but the names on the memorial plaque became more frequent. And more and more often, black armbands became visible as a sign of mourning. The wild exuberance only broke through occasionally in our games. Most of us were also too tired to play. Some of us had to use every free hour with our mothers or siblings to collect wood or pick berries in the forest. Food had become very scarce.

With wistful glances, we would sometimes sneak past the jam stores where we had been able to buy such delicious broken sweets for five pfennigs just a year ago. The pastry shops long since stopped selling whipped cream. When Karl Gräh once generously slipped me a slice of ham to copy out my Latin translation, I was happy.

The youth company was now often deployed against forest fires. The fires became so frequent that the district administrator offered a reward finding the cause and pointed out that enemy agents might be at work. It was usually not easy to get the fires under control because the

Pine forests provided rich food for the fire. Above we had to try to shovel a wide embankment in the direction of the wind in front of the fire. It was a job that we sung lads were hardly up to. I often got nosebleeds from overexertion.

That year, we were all sent larger estates in the Mark to bring in the harvest. We were housed in reapers' barracks and treated like soldiers. We were woken up at four o'clock in the morning, had coffee half an hour later and then went out into the fields. At lunchtime, a field kitchen would bring us thick peas or beans with bacon, and only in the evening, when the sun had already set, did we return to our quarters. As I was one of the youngest, I was able to choose the easiest and nicest jobs, so today I drove behind the harvest cart with the famine rake and stood in the shed the next day to stow the sheaves properly. We liked life with its regularity, work and healthy food so much that we would have liked to live there longer. But the summer vacation was only extended by a fortnight. In the fall we were deployed to salvage the potato harvest. Digging potatoes was very difficult for us, and every evening we had such stiff backs that we could only stand up with great difficulty and pain. When it started to rain, our mood was not particularly cheerful, but we our teeth to show that we could be soldiers too. A few mama's boys who howled until they were sent back met with our deepest contempt.

At grammar school we young soldiers had to undergo a fast-track course to fill in the gaps in our education. It was understandable that we felt like special people, and we took it for granted that the teachers treated us with a certain respect.

When I was allowed to take a hundredweight of potatoes with me to Kaufe, I felt happier with my first self-earned wage than I had in my life. I also never failed to sure that my potatoes were available at the table so that I could emphatically out to my relatives that they were my guests.

Father noted with satisfaction that I was becoming more self-confident and said that the war a very educational effect in some respects. Mother, on the other hand, didn't quite agree with me going my own way so early. Sometimes she complained with tears in her eyes that I was hardly home for an afternoon.

But where was I supposed to find the time? There was so much to collect, so much auxiliary service to do, that there was hardly any opportunity for boys' play. I also felt more like a soldier than a boy, and I felt sorry for my playmates from before, who didn't serve in the youth company but frolicked around without duty or work. I felt superior to them, and sometimes I despised them when I found out that they had been punished for some prank that I would have laughed about yesterday.

Uncle Otfrid now wrote war book after war book with the same business acumen with which he used to sell fine films. I read them with enthusiasm, although the love stories in them disturbed me considerably. Sometimes, however, I where my uncle got his knowledge from, because he wasn't at the front, he wasn't a soldier at all. One day, Bruno Wille found a book like this in my house: "How did you get this book?"

I stood up proudly: "My uncle wrote that!"

Bruno Wille leaned close to my ear: "I wouldn't say that out loud."

I u de red to the roots of my hair and then didn't touch his book for a long time.

Christmas was celebrated very quietly. The presents were not nearly as numerous and precious as usual. The fat goose we ate on the first holiday was the best present for everyone. We just couldn't really stomach it because we were no longer used to eating fat. The gingerbread tasted rancid because the ingredients were substitutes. Only apples and nuts were available in abundance, as always.

In February, the German attack on Berdun began, which would lead to the storming of Fort Oouaumont on the 25th. In honor of this heroic deed, a school celebration was in the poorly heated assembly hall, which we attended in our winter coats. At the end of this ceremony, we sang the song of the good comrade for the first time instead of the usual "Heil dir im Siegerkranz". From then on, we sang it at all hero celebrations.

The school celebrations became more and more serious and shorter, thanks primarily to Bruno Wille. He was also one suggested that the names of the fallen Friedrichshagen grammar school pupils be read out once a month.

In May, Bater was negotiating seriously with a buyer who made the decisive condition that the house had to be vacated by the summer. Only then did I realize what it would mean to no longer live in Schöneiche, to have to part from my friends and comrades, from the people, animals, forests and lakes. The buyer was a war invalid who had lost an eye and had been paid a considerable sum by the state. Bater's friends advised against selling, saying that we would at least have a little more to live on in Schöneiche than in Berlin, and that there was no way of knowing how things turn out.

Grete cheered, one of our girls was from Berlin and had told her so much about cinemas, pastry shops, theaters and

Dance lessons tells that she believed Berlin was only built for play, joy and dance.

2lm t. The sale was finalized at the notary's office on June. It was just on the day of the mighty naval battle off the Skagerrak. I myself hoisted the naval flag on the large flagpole in front of our house and thought with a heavy heart that it was now the final time.

We were supposed to leave the house on the first of August. After a long search, father found a nice, large apartment in Wilmersdorf, Ahlandstraße, on the corner of Lauenburger Straße. He had chosen the apartment so that I only had to walk a few minutes to the grammar school and Grete not much longer to the school, and the connections to all parts of the city were equally good.

One day my father asked me if I thought about giving my rabbits away.

Tears fell from my eyes. Give away my rabbits? I was so proud to discover one in every litter that had a dark blue spot in its yellow-grey fur and looked as if it had been doused with ink. Father put his hand my shoulder:sensible, boy, you can't take the animals into the city apartment, they would all be thoroughly examined.

I suddenly became afraid of the city and believed that I would have to die where my animals died. I suddenly hated Berlin because it was taking my animals away from me. Who would look after my rabbits? Who would give them food? I couldn't rely on Strehlow, Fritz Giebel would even torture them. I decided to give them to Father Thieke, who would at least feed them properly. But would he not slaughter them one day?

In those days, I came across a book that described cadet life. Becoming a cadet now seemed to me a welcome liberation from all my worries and fears. I could remain a soldier, but I had to leave the youth company.

and, above all, I would find comrades there who were certainly better than the high school students in Berlin, of whom I had not had a good impression so far, as far as my cousins who occasionally came to Schöneiche were concerned.

Mother shook her head when I carefully told her my plans: "Pein, my boy, I don't want to give you away, who knows how much longer I have to live, and no one on earth can take better care of you than your mother/

I didn't want to be looked after at all, I wanted to find an Ersah for Schöneiche, maybe even something better.

Dad was completely dismissive: "First you'll do your A-levels, then you can become an officer if you still want to. But I'd rather you went to university. You would have the best opportunity later in Berlin/

I didn't even think about the A-levels or about studying later, after all I was able to pass my A-levels at the Hcmptkadettenanstalt in Lichterfelde, how could I have become anything other than an officer?

His father was adamant: "You'll learn more academically at grammar school than at the cadet school/

I realized that I wouldn't be able to do anything with my father, so I began to beg and plead with my mother until she actually persuaded to write to the administration of the cadet corps behind my father's back and get the cadet school in Zu plön to agree to accept me on October 1, 19t 6.

My heart became firm in pride and joy. Cadet? You could lose Schöneiche and your comrades and animals for that?

When I saw an officer, I no longer just felt reverence for him, he seemed more like an older comrade.

In the dugendkompanie I was regarded with awe and amazement.

"d, when you become a cadet, you're already something of a soldier!"

Father found out about the plot the day before the move. There was a domestic like never before. Mother tearfully begged me to fulfill this wish saying that it was only good for me to come into military training so early.

I knew how difficult it was for mother to speak for me like that and I was grateful to her from the bottom of my heart. I stammered pleas myself. In vain!

Father stuck to his no and finally forbade himself to say a word about the plan, saying that he was done with it once and for all.

With an unspeakable feeling of mental despair and inner emptiness, I crept into my room and cried my pain into the pillows. I could have died, life seemed so pointless to me.

Early in the morning, before the removal vans had even arrived, the forester was due to come and shoot Flock, the faithful Spitz. Father had realized that it would be cruel to give the old dog, who had known only one duty to us all his life, into strange hands, and he also thought it impossible to take him town. So Flock alfo had to be shot. As much as I tried to realize that death was the greater mercy for Flock, the death sentence seemed terrible to me. Was it not murder? And wasn't it closely connected with the downfall, the destruction of the Schöneich world?

Late in the evening, I had sneaked into the yard to Flock's hut with red eyes. The faithful fellow had crept towards me, astonished and a little tired, wagging his tail to put his wet black nose in my hand. I felt that he was almost lost when I put my arms around his

neck and pressed his shaggy head firmly against my face. Why was Flock howling like that? Did he feel it was time for a divorce?

And now the forester was there! I felt so miserable that I would have liked to ask him to shoot me too. I heard his voice, heard how he spoke to Flock, released him from the chain, went with him to the oak, I heard how Flock suddenly gave a strange howl. Then the shot was fired!

I ran out as fast as my feet would carry me. Oa lay Flock, just a few steps from the oak tree. His body was still warm and twitched a few times. Almost out of my mind, I threw myself over him, stroked him, called out words of endearment and let my tears trickle into his fine fur.

Flock, Flock!

I picked up my fine head. Her eyes were no longer shiny.

The forester ran his hand good-naturedly over my hair: "Leave it, boy, Flock is dead now, and that's better than if he were to languish in grief for a few more months. Believe me, if he could have talked, he would have asked for his own death/

Slowly I straightened up, a thought occurred to me: "my cat dead too, I don't want Strehlows to have them!"

I had had the cat for four years, an old woman from Fichtenau had given it to me as a present. At night, the animal slept at the foot of my bed, let me give her milk alone, dragged the mice she caught to me and let me stroke her before she ate them. The cat wasn't supposed to come to strangers either.

The forester swayed his head thoughtfully: "Will your father allow that?"

I just nodded because I was fighting tears again.

Oabei I ashamed to appear so soft and would have

I could have slapped myself out of anger at myself for not being able to cope with the tears.

"Then get your cat," said the forester at last.

After some searching, I found her in the cellar, she came running happily and rubbed against my leg, purring. I picked her up with trembling hands and carried her out. The forester had the rifle in his hand and gave me a signal. I then placed the cat on a branch of the oak tree and took a few steps back.

After the shot, the animal fell, rolling over, near Flock, dragged itself up to him and then died.

I would have loved to get all my animals, the hedgehog, the guinea pig, the rabbits. May my whole world go to hell! And in the end the forester would have had to shoot me over all my dear animals. But he had long since gone when I finally looked up.

I then dug a deep hole under the oak tree, covered it completely with flowers and twigs and carefully placed Flock and the cat in it. I piled stones on top of the mound.

When the removal vans arrived, all our friends and some of our enemies had gathered to see us go. We were all very emotional, and Grete sobbed incessantly. Father gave a short speech, although he didn't want to hold the proper farewell ceremony for another three days.

When we finally walked to the train, I didn't look back. I was afraid I wouldn't be able to bear the sight. I would have been if the whole estate had gone up in flames.

At Friedrichshagen station we came across the furniture vans of our successor.

Father had also become very quiet and thoughtful. We had lived in Schöneiche for almost ten years and every tree had grown close to his heart.

The first night in Berlin was terrible. The hotel rooms we stayed in until the move was completed faced the street, and outside there were electric trains, vehicles with and without motors, wheels screeching, and a humming and buzzing in the air as if millions of bee colonies had swarmed out.

I couldn't find any sleep. I had to think Flock and the cat and all the earth it covered. It seemed pointless not to be allowed to live in Schöneiche any more and I was afraid of having to get up. Where should I go? Berlin was strange and big, and I was afraid I would never be able to find my way around. There was something merciless about the ears of corn beating from the towers far and near.

The parents also seemed to have slept badly, they were very withdrawn at breakfast. We were glad to finally be able to leave the hotel. In the apartment, the packers were already putting things away. Marie had the plan for the individual rooms in her hand and was directing the movers by shouting, albeit not in a very friendly way, because she was afraid that the polished things might get too scuffed by carelessness. I began to look at the world with somewhat friendlier eyes. The furniture was a piece of home, and my room in particular was bright and spacious. When I looked down onto the street, I felt dizzy. Our apartment was on the fourth floor, and even the streetcars seemed tiny, toy-like. Grete's room all pink. Oa's showpiece was a dressing table in polished lacquer. Grete could hardly part with it. With its massive leather furniture, Oa's master bedroom looked much more elegant than in Schönetche because the huge balcony room was not overshadowed by trees as it was there. Mother's drawing room also looked very different. Oa's dining room was the typical so-called Berlin room, twelve

meters long and six meters wide. The only window in this room, albeit a very wide one, was in a corner, so that the whole room was bathed in dim light during the day. All the rooms, even the bedrooms and guest rooms, had parquet flooring. The endlessly long corridors gave the apartment a very spacious feel. There was no central heating. After much deliberation, father had decided to only take an apartment with stove heating, because he had learned that the central heating systems in many Berlin apartments had not been sufficiently supplied with coal last winter, and it seemed easier him to be able to procure coal for at least two or three rooms if necessary.

The hot water supply made a deep impression on Grete and me, so that we could hardly get out of the bathtub in the morning and evening during the first week.

After a few days I had become so to the apartment that although I still mourned Flock, my comrades and my lost homeland, I also found a certain comfort in observing the people hurrying past, the many vehicles and the constant smaller and larger events on the street

Dad had been given a week's leave and showed us the beautiful side of Berlin. We wandered through the Tiergarten, through the Brandenburg Gate to the palace, visited the arsenal, whose guns and uniforms I marveled at with awe, the Museum of Oceanography, the Zoological Garden and the Aquarium, the galleries and the Old Museum. The impressions were so numerous that sank into bed in the evening dead tired and hardly had time to think about Schöneiche and be sad.

We were allowed to to the movies with Marie, and one evening my mother even took me to the Royal Opera. There was La Traviata. The only thing I couldn't understand was why the audience

and how it was possible for a woman to die singing on stage. I liked the Busch Circus with its trained lions and elephants and its droll jokers much better.

I couldn't do much with the Grunewald, the Schöneich woods with their abundance of game, mushrooms and berries were incomparably more beautiful. And the fact that you weren't even allowed to walk on the grass in Prussia Park was unworthy and ridiculous. Worst of all, however, I felt that I was no longer allowed to eat fruit in the garden to my heart's content. had to buy every pound in the store. And then you lucky if there was any fruit to buy at all.

The hunger blockade against Germany had begun two months ago, and although there had not anything to eat in Schönetche for a long time, in Berlin food was already extremely scarce, and you had to be prepared to get an egg, a few potatoes or even a loaf of bread from some snooty trader after closing time for an extortionate sum. Most food was only sold in exchange for cards. For clothing you needed a ration card. "On the other hand, you could get anything you wanted in the surreptitious trade for fantasy prices. Many traders took advantage of this and quickly became very rich. The population was extremely dissatisfied with these conditions. I myself sometimes had to queue for hours if I wanted to buy half a pound of sugar or some margarine. The janitor of our house, a social democrat who openly about it being time to make a revolution, was a particularly bighearted one. Bater had once told him properly and earned his fanatical hatred as a result. Above all, this man's son-in-law was dangerous, a locksmith who

was now serving as a sailor on a ship of the line. When he came on leave, the janitor's apartment was filled with light-shy figures. Father had dutifully reported him several times without success. One of the janitor's daughters, the very one whose husband was the sailor, worked in a munitions factory in Berlin and boasted that she had played a leading role in the munitions workers' strike that had broken out in Berlin in June. As not much had become known about this strike in public, Bater did not take the rhetoric very seriously, but was outraged that in times of war no ruthless action was taken against the agitators, rabble-rousers and refuseniks.

The haggard women, who stood outside the stores hour after hour, even in the pouring rain, were easily roused by agitators and grumbled about the long war, the misery and the absence of the men. Mother came home dejected one day: "I don't know how this is going to end, the mood is so dreadfully bleak. Why doesn't the government do anything to keep the population in line?

War prayers had been set up in most of Berlin's churches. Mutier had gone to the Oom and the Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church a few times, but had returned disappointed. She particularly disliked the fashionable priest Konrad, to whom the so-called educated circles flocked in droves, because his whole manner seemed vain and pathetic to her.

The visits to our numerous, mostly very wealthy Berlin relatives were taken care of in the first few days. I had gotten a reasonably nice suit tailored from an old hunting suit of father's, and for my clogs, which were not good enough for Berlin, mother had bought me a wardrobe for a moderate price at a clothing collection point, which would deliver it on presentation of the ration coupon and against delivery of worn-out items of clothing,

I bought a pair of very large shoes, which I liked except for the unfamiliar patent leather caps. To complete my suit I had been given a new student's trousers so that I didn't have to be ashamed in front of my relatives. Father, as a soldier, was the only one of us who had no clothing problems. Nobody took offense at the fact that his uniform looked rather shabby. Mother couldn't get a push for a new dress anywhere, although she went to a lot of stores. But she helped herself by having her dresses and costumes altered again and again. Our relatives welcomed us very warmly, but they all regretted that we had left Schöneiche. But they were not very hopeful about the war situation. Italy's entry into the world war was just around the corner. An uncle who, as general director and main founder of the German potash company, not only had excellent connections in the economy, but also had knowledge of political processes and backgrounds that few people in Germany could boast. And it was from him that Father often spoke when some patriots got carried away and claimed that we were so strong that we could push any enemy to the wall we wanted to. The saying was: "One should not overestimate England as a friend and not underestimate her as an enemy." The fact that many circles in Germany not only underestimated England, but even pityingly regarded her as an unwarlike huckster nation, filled Uncle with great concern: "England is a great puppeteer and can make so many puppets dance that unpleasant people are easily crushed/ He said this with as matter-of-fact a calm as he could possibly make any economic observation. Only when Uncle touched on the fact that Germany's enemies were sending colonial troops to the European theaters of war could he break out of his noble calm.

Oas is the greatest crime of this century! Whoever takes the royal crown from the white race and degrades the white man to the comrade of the black man is tearing down the dams that are to protect Europe tomorrow against the flood of colored peoples/

I looked up to this uncle with great admiration. Not only was he a broad-shouldered blond giant, whose noble face, with its trimmed full beard, had something very serious and stately about it, but I was particularly attracted by the fact that he owed his tremendous rise the German economy exclusively to his great ability, his iron diligence and his impeccable and straightforward character. As the son of a mid-level civil servant, he did have the slightest influential connections, had neither the money to study nor to become an officer, and yet he had already become one of the leading men in the German economy at a relatively young age. His two brothers also held respected positions, one was the director of a Berlin bank known as a distinguished and respectable bank, the other had gone to England as a professor of German studies a few years before the war, had been naturalized over there and had nevertheless been interned immediately after the outbreak of war under the ridiculous pretext that he was suspected of "espionage".

The visits from relatives were not always pleasant, and many families were filled with grief and sorrow.

The school holidays were coming to an end in a few days and I walked past the gloomy red building in Pfalzburger Straße a few times, the Bismarckggmnasium, where my father, himself a convinced humanist, had enrolled me.

What would the new comrades be like? And what would the teachers be like?

How friendly the Friedrichshagen Ggmnastum had looked with its fine large windows and bright walls.

I arrived at my classroom on the day I started school feeling less than cheerful. It was disgusting how they looked at me curiously, how they questioned me and acted very superior. "So, you from your provincial penne?"

I put on my snootiest face and acted as if I was toweringly superior to everyone and everything. I watched my new classmates through half-closed eyes. Most of them looked starved and wore a lot of tattered and patched clothes. I knew that it would be easy for me to show off my fists, which knew how to grab. Who of the thirty guys there could be my friend? I found two, at most three, who seemed worthy of friendship. At least they gave the impression that they hadn't fallen on their heads. I winked at them and was pleased that they nodded their heads casually but not unfriendly.

Oer class sponge passed very close to my nose and splashed against the freshly painted wall, leaving a large stain. I jumped the sponge, picked it up and threw it right in the face of the amiable sender, a red-haired, freckled boy.

Clap! Oas sat!

A wild commotion broke out. Rulers, pencil cases and exercise books whizzed through the air. A general brawl broke . Oer Rothaarige threw herself at me, shrieking with the desire to fight, and landed in the paper box the next moment. This performance won me the hearts of Eberhard and Hans. The three of us with the attackers, lying on the ground at one point, only to get back on top again. The redhead stumbled into the spittoon and was eliminated from further combat. The globe fell off the cupboard with a considerable crash and received a sizable dent.

I was satisfied. Thank God, they didn't seem to be mama's boys here either. It was nice that Eberhard and Hans stood by me, they were the ones I had liked at first sight.

Clank!

It was a window pane that had not withstood the impact of a spring box.

The foal rose to a frenetic roar.

Unfortunately, attracted by the commotion and driven by his professional zeal, a gentleman rushed in, at the sight of whom I had to myself back from screaming out loud. He too funny too, the professor! A larger-than-life head was sitting on his medium-sized, spindly body, which had turned bright red. A few white-blonde curls curled around his head, most of which was completely devoid of hair growth. On his bulbous nose was a pince-nez, set rather crookedly, one glass of which had a black cord running to the vest. His very long neck was tucked into a rubber collar, the height of which somewhat dignified. The professor was dressed in a frock coat that had certainly seen better days, as it shabby and somewhat stained, and was already shimmering green in many places. The striped trousers were baggy at the knees and frayed at the shoes. And the shoes, in turn, were a chapter in themselves: so-called spree barges, worn out, misshapen, the toe bent upwards at almost a right angle.

Now the good professor was standing at the classroom door. A little helpless, all the more comical, very dignified and therefore all the more ridiculous. -Would you like to be quiet?" His gaze fell on the smashed window, saw the overturned wastepaper basket, spied the traces of the leaking spittoon. The class followed the short-sighted man's excited peering and discovering with impudent grins. Half-loud shouts, far from respectful, could be heard.

The professor slapped his hands together once, twice, three times. Then he shook his peculiar head pensively and compassionately: -For heaven's sake. For heaven's sake... Your poor fathers, your poor fathers/

But overwhelmed by the comedy of the moment, I called over to Eberhard as the professor left the class: -What kind of scarecrow is that;"

Eberhard didn't get a chance to answer me. Contrary to my expectations, the "scarecrow" had heard my exclamation, tripped towards me with short steps and - clap, clap - gave me a few rough slaps in the face before tripping away again just as quickly.

Speechless, I stared at the door through which the agitated man had disappeared and only noticed the slogan written above it in elegantly curved letters:

Ansern entrance bless God?

^)he settling in to the new circumstances took up all my senses for the next time. Eberhard and Hans became my friends, and I kept up a good camaraderie with most of my classmates.

As I was superior to everyone else in terms of physical strength, my position in the Klaffe was well established. My relationship with the teachers, on the other hand, was not entirely clear. In Friedrichshagen they knew my parents and knew how to treat me and the other pupils personally. In Berlin, the relationship between teachers and pupils was much more superficial, cooler, and the influence of the school was limited to the few lessons. In Friedrichshagen, the school also dominated our own lives, we couldn't hide from it. We were supposed to be formed there, in Berlin they limited themselves to teaching us. In Friedrichshagen they judged the whole person, Berlin only asked about school performance. In Friedrichshagen, we were told off according to grades if we were caught playing a prank, but then the case was closed and dismissed. In Berlin, we were reprimanded in the class register and then the teacher put us on his secret blacklist.

In Friedrichshagen, we were able to give an unpopular teacher a rough lecture and then happily and cheerfully spend an hour in detention together. In Berlin the idea was to offend a teacher in his most sensitive spot and not get caught.

I had plenty of opportunity to make comparisons in the first few weeks. The Frtedrichshagener Ggmnastum not only came off well, no, it was almost made even better by memory.

transfigured. Even Gustaf with an f was given a halo around his forehead. And wasn't he really a fine man compared to the "scarecrow"?

In Friedrichshagen we had beautiful, almost soldier-like celebrations, in Berlin we had to start and end the week with the long school devotions.

When I entered the auditorium of the Blsmarckggmnasium for the first time, I was surprised by the numerous murals depicting individual turning points in German history. During the religious speeches, I had enough time to take in these depictions. The stained glass windows were also a reminder of Germany's great past. In Frtedrichshagen, the auditorium was kept very sober and there was hardly a picture or object that could have distracted me.

The assembly hall became the scene of my first serious clash with the school authorities.

I don't know what it was, I couldn't feel at home at the Berlin grammar school. From the very first day, I remained an outsider in terms of school discipline. Even in the form and deed of the "scarecrow", God had not blessed my entrance, quite contrary to the pious wish above the door. I had not found a Bruno Wille among the teachers. Some liked me, but the majority saw me as a rebel, an outrageous person, in short, someone who simply didn't want to be good.

Perhaps this was because the "scarecrow" had described my behavior with great exaggeration, or perhaps it was because the conduct grade on my Friedrichshagen leaving certificate was "Good". In Berlin, it was good manners to have "very good". I, on the other hand, would have pathetic myself to receive a "Sehr gut" in behavior, because this rating was the prerogative of all model boys, nerds, apron children and wimps.

In short, in Berlin I was regarded from the outset as a gang leader who could only be confronted with implacable severity. I accepted this odium with a certain pride and no longer felt obliged to the favor of any prejudiced teachers.

One Monday I had disagreement with my friend Eberhard in the assembly hall before the start of devotions, which settled in the usual way among boys by a boxing match. Hans took the pleasure of tripping up, so that after a well-aimed blow from Eberhard I stumbled and rolled under a bench. That didn't happen without a lot of noise and commotion. Unfortunately, I didn't get a chance to crawl out from under the bench because the teachers sitting in the front row were already getting restless and trying to the cause of the noise. So I hid as best I could and stayed under the bench during the lecture. Unfortunately for me, the principal had the song "Aus tiefer Not schrei ich zu dir" (From deep distress I cry out to you) sung. In my situation, this song seemed extremely fitting, so I sang along with all my might. My physical strength was certainly sufficient, but there had only ever been one opinion about my singing, which was expressed in my report card with a simple "completely inadequate". So it came about that more and more glances from the front row went to where I let my song rise from the depths. As soon as the song had finished, my religion teacher stood up, walked with dignity the row of benches where my class was sitting, grabbed hold and pulled me out to the cheers of the whole school. Then he looked me sadly and reproachfully, took me by the arm, led me to the exit door, gave me a gentle push so that I staggered into the corridor and whispered to me that I should leave as quickly as possible. I listened to part of the sermon from outside and then went into the schoolyard. As punishment for my behavior, I was given a

I was arrested for the first hour, and since the position of bellows pedal at the organ had become vacant by chance as a result of repeated absences and the associated departure of the excellent Tertianer from the school, I was banished to the pedal box next to the organ. Oh, I was supposed to play the every Monday and Saturday! A terrible thought! And when the religion teacher mockingly advised me to learn the chorale "Now let us go and tread" very carefully, I thought of revenge and ways to free myself from this shameful box.

One Saturday evening I had an epiphany. The first Lhoral had already faded. I had kicked so hard that my bellows almost burst. Sweat was pouring from my every pore. The devotees had become a little restless because I was trying to look over the edge of the box as I pedaled. Oy effort was crowned with success, and my beaming face appeared at short intervals next to the organ. Since my friendly expression did not fit in with the penitential hymn, the melody of which I was helping to create through my pedaling, it was perceived as disturbing.

Now I was sitting on my armchair after lunch, studying the names, curses, jokes and caricatures that my predecessors had carved into the walls with pencils or knives over the years, and brooding. My pocket knife! The first letters of my name were quickly carved into the wood. For , at least as long as the school would last, my defiant K. E. would now stand on the wall, a spur to imitation for future generations of treaders. I still held the knife in my right hand, undecided as to what I should do now. The oily voice of the mathematics professor sounded from outside as he made the unusual effort of interpreting a psalm. Oa my eye fell on the leather bellows. And the misfortune had already happened. With just a few cuts, I had made a few small but sufficient holes

conjured into it. Satisfied, I sat down on my modest little seat and waited for what was to come. They came very quickly.

The familiar soft bell sounded. "I dutifully began my work: left foot, left bellows, right foot, right bellows. But instead of the jubilant organ tones, muffled, ghastly discordant sounds now burst forth, only to be drowned out the next moment by the uproarious cries of delight from the whole school. I cannot say that I felt well. But I was given no time to come to terms with my feelings. With a jerk, the door to my room was pulled open, and in front of me stood the principal, flushed with anger and seized with genuine disgust.

"Ra wait, you brat!" That's all he could get out.

It didn't help me much that my class celebrated me and honored me like a band of robbers honors their victorious captain. This time I was given two hours' detention and I was banned from taking part in school devotions for all time.

My father was very unhappy about this bad start to school and was not at all convinced by my suggestion that I was ultimately quite innocent of these entanglements.

I soon grew fond of Berlin grammar school. I began to wander the streets with Eberhard and Hans and go on expeditions. The first thing I looked for was the house Gutzkowstraße in Schöneberg, where I born. My parents had often told me that there were still cornfields right next to the house. Large stone boxes towered high above, and the street itself, once elegant and well-kept, made a neglected impression. My parents often spoken of their beautiful home in Rummer drei. Hetzt found the house cold and repulsive.

Father shook his head indifferently when I told him about my discovery: ^Berlin is growing very fast and has no tradition, nor is it reverent. What is beautiful and modern today may be outdated tomorrow. The beautiful and dangerous thing about Berlin is that it always lives in the moment."

Ach soon found out that the charm of Berlin life lay almost exclusively in its adventurous side. Otherwise the city was cold and impersonal. Oa's adventures, however, came in many different forms. Even when the three of us, who had become an inseparable cloverleaf, went into the huge department stores to take the elevator, almost every shopping stall our curiosity. We had fun choosing the most impossible trinkets, having the receipts handed to us and then disappearing never to be seen again. The thought of how annoyed the mostly Jewish managers would be filled us with a pleasant sense of schadenfreude. In a department store on Potsdamer Platz, however, I once fell for it the manager of a relatively quiet department, where I had chosen a plaster head of Goethe, kindly but firmly escorted me to the counter and made sure that I had really paid the mark. The annoyance of being caught and having to endure the ridicule of Eberhard and Hans hurt me more than the loss of the mark, which was my entire pocket money.

Mother had admitted to a clinic in Augsburger Straße because of her stomach ulcers, which were becoming more and more malignant with the bad and indigestible Estonian food. I was only allowed to visit her twice a week because she was to be kept away from all excitement, even joyful excitement. At home, mother was represented by an elderly housekeeper who the futile effort of trying to get me to a

to raise a model boy. Sometimes my stay in my father's household became a torture for me, and on top of that the lady of the house, who usually came home from general command overworked and tired, would litter my father with complaints about my pranks and insolence. Most of the time she exaggerated so much that my father often beside himself with rage. During such clashes, I repeatedly begged my father to let me the cadet corps, but he still insisted that I should not.

My school performance dropped considerably. I failed completely in mathematics in particular, although the red-haired and bow-legged professor, who had the crude nickname "the toilet brush" due to his shaggy appearance, was not entirely to blame. This teacher was not satisfied until he could see me under some pretext in the punishment area directly in front of the catheter, only then did he begin his extremely monotonous lessons. I thought back to Friedrichshagen with nostalgia, when I had a "good" grade in math. In Latin and German, however, I maintained my place in the sun, those the subjects in which I was almost never inattentive or made pranks. Somehow, I felt very strongly, the teachers were partly to blame for the pranks that were played on them. Teachers whom I respected - always those with whom I felt understanding, comradeship and justice - I treated with all the deference I was capable of. The teacher, who gave very lively French lessons, even became a fatherly friend to me, who did much to ensure that my position in the grammar school was not completely shaken. Even "Töti", who came to class every Monday with a hearty smell of alcohol - it was said that he regularly took a nip with his lodge brothers from Saturday night to Monday morning - took me into his shoes from time to time against the attacks of the "toilet brush". Even the otherwise quiet and pensive

"Crooked Emil", whose intellectual life around Seneca and Cicero, was one of my patrons.

Because I was a good gymnast and, above all, one of the most versatile athletes at the grammar school, I had good days as a gymnastics instructor and rink leader with the gymnastics teacher, who was literally shot through with bullets from an enemy machine gun in France right at the beginning of the war and only regained the use of his limbs thanks to his iron will.

Inwardly, however, I had become so estranged from school that I often discussed with Hans and Eberhard how we could begin to escape the constraints that seemed increasingly unbearable. At first we saw no other way to freedom than to organize our afternoons as we saw fit. Our forays became more and more extensive. We knew the Krögel and all the remote corners of Old Berlin, we had discovered Tegel and Pankow and knew our way around all the museums. I was always drawn to the Altes Museum, especially the Egyptian section, whose mummies and huge statues fascinated me. I borrowed all the books about Egypt, its history, its people and its art from the school library.

I would have been quite happy if Eberhard and Hans had left me a little more to myself, but it had become too much a matter of course that we were looking for adventures together, and going his way would have been tantamount to breaking up the friendship.

One day, Hans us to climb over the roofs of Augustastrasse. It wasn't as dangerous as it seemed at first. We found a ladder on the ground, put it up to the roof hatch and in no time at all we were on the flat, tarmac-covered roof. Oa's dizziness quickly passed, and we were pleased to discover that was easy to walk from roof to roof across the entire house.

We could walk around the square between Auguslastraße, Berliner Straße, Nhlandstraße and Wilhelmsaue. We looked down into the abysses of the Höse, shouted cheerful words to the housewives who were working in the kitchens, so that they dropped their cooking spoons in fright and implored us to leave the roofs if we didn't want to fall off and smash to pieces the next moment. It made us feel exceptionally good to walk at such a dangerous height; surely even tightrope walkers could not be prouder of their lonely height, which ordinary mortals can only look up to with a shudder.

I was in despair about myself. The afternoons became very long at times. Now I began to occupy myself with the maps and war reports again. It took a lot of effort to reposition the flags, the theaters of war had shifted everywhere.

Müller's health had worsened and the mood in the house was depressed. I had many quarrels with Grete, which were made much worse by the fact that the housekeeper always took a stand against me and gave my father one-sided reports.

At least that resulted in something good. Father thought about where he could put me, because he thought it was absolutely desirable that I should kept under strict supervision.

In my distress, I poured my heart out to my mother. Where should I go if not to the cadet corps? Or was my father going to put me in one of the not exactly well-livered country education homes, where I was to live alongside mentally retarded or somehow cracked sung people until I finished school? The thought of it was so horrible that it brought tears to my eyes. Mother reassured me: "I'll make sure that everything goes well, son/

And it went well!

The next time I visited her, I was delighted to learn that if my performance at school was above average again, I could serve on a student ship.

I could hardly contain my joy.

-What kind of school ship?"

Mother smiled. -I've only just found out about it and spoke to father about it on the phone. I'll more tomorrow."

Aa's school ship would bring a change to my previous life. Pranks, cheekiness, rascality, everything boyish was overcome by the deep seriousness of the new duty.

Mother had long since realized that I was addicted to the war and that it must be pointless to tie me to the family or even to school when my heart was looking for another home. She knew that father would never have moved by pride to change his once emphatically expressed opinion. So the cadet corps was out of the question once and for all. It didn't seem easy to find another opportunity for me. By chance, mother found out from one of the doctors treating her, whose son was serving on the training ship, about the existence of a training ship student association whose founder, Commander Schmitt, maintained two training ships, one in Berlin and one in Swinemünde. Oer Schulschiffschülerverein was under imperial protectorate, the training officers were by the naval authorities. Oer spirit was Prussian serious, the service very strict.

Oer Kommandant had founded the Schulschisfschülerverein out of nothing, without orders, without authority one fine day, long before the outbreak of the war, had to reap much scorn and ridicule and hostility, had to make many personal sacrifices - even the construction of the first abbey building

in Berlin - had to from pillar to post to get the necessary permits. When the masts of the properly rigged brig finally rose - the Berlin ship was on dry land, the cutters and dinghies were on the Wannsee - and the smoke of the first salute shots rose so high that the windows of the surrounding area rattled, the voices of the mockers became quieter. And when even the detachments of the sungen Schulschiff marched through the streets of Berlin under arms, led by the dashing marching band, the ice was broken. The citizens were proud when their sons were allowed to wear the uniform of the school ships and suddenly considered it an honor to be able to provide funds for the further construction of ships. Commander Schmitt selected the applicants very carefully. Only those who seemed to offer a certain guarantee of becoming a capable naval officer within a few years had a chance of being accepted. The service would then entail so many stress tests of all kinds that a thorough and ruthless second selection was made.

It was not long before the authorities, who had initially been hesitant, perhaps even doubtful, about the creation of this private naval cadet corps, their blessing. Princes and high-ranking officers visited the ship, inspected the service and their admiring appreciation. Even leading foreigners, who were in charge of youth education in their countries, arrived to make studies and suggestions home with them. The commander's medal buckle grew wider and wider. The commander himself remained the old, modest idealist who wanted nothing for himself but everything for the cause. One day the emperor arrived, solemnly received by gun salutes, the detachments stood with their rifles presented, the game was stirred, the boatswain's whistles trilled, the commander's bright voice of command rang out. The Emperor commanded

He was thoroughly instructed, had himself taught sailing and gunnery, gave commands himself during infantry duty and repeatedly nodded in surprise at his adjutants and the commander.

From this day onwards, the Schulschiffschülerverein was under imperial protectorate. The ships were allowed to fly the flag of the navy, the training personnel were available, and the student skippers were allowed to wear uniforms that were identical to those of the navy. The only difference was a black and white bandage on the left upper arm. The officers wore oegees instead of daggers, and the insignia of the Deutsche Schulschiffs-Schülerverelnigung (OSSV) was attached to their fatigues. I confess that my knees trembled a little and my heart almost jumped out of my throat when I climbed up the starboard companionway early one Sunday morning and reported to the boatswain's mate on watch.

"The commander is in his mess. Wait a moment/ A young school skipper, who was busy cleaning up some puddles of water with a large swabber, was sent below deck and returned after a few seconds to report to the watch commander that the Herr Kommandant was ready to receive Mr. Eggers. I felt myself turning red at being called a gentleman. But I didn't have time to think about it, because at a hint the school skipper went ahead, looked around to see if I was following and disappeared into the wide hatch, through which a narrow and steep staircase to the officers' and commander's messes.

Now I stood before the master of the ship, a stocky, toned, white-haired man with open, honest , over which lay a glimmer of kindness and philanthropy.

He scrutinized me with his large, clear, steel-blue eyes, which peered to the bottom of my soul.

seemed to be not dissatisfied and only said briefly and brightly: -Stir!"

Only now did I realize that I had involuntarily adopted a tight posture, as I had been drilled in the youth company. -Do you feel called to a naval officer one day?"

I stammered that my dearest wish was to become a soldier. The commander's eyes looked stern. -I can't stand it when a sung man is embarrassed. Cheer up and speak freely." I gave myself a jolt. -Yes, Herr Kommandant."

-Your father has written to me that you are brave officers in the Hütten family. I hope that you will prove yourself worthy of them."

In response, I slammed my heels together.

-How are you doing at school?"

-Very good, Herr Kommandant."

I could see from the trembling of his moustache spikes that the commander must be cowering.

-It is a great honor to be a trainee skipper. I consider it my foremost duty to the fleet with only the best new recruits. Their performance at school must also be outstanding. Mediocre is not good enough, you can't succeed in life with that. Do you understand?"

I clicked my heels together again. -Yes, Herr Kommandant."

-I want to try it with you. You will receive forms in the office, which I will ask your father to fill in and sign. You will also receive a ration coupon, on which the school ship supplier in Kommandantenstraße will deliver a uniform to you. Next Saturday, please report on board at two o'clock in the afternoon to receive weapons and equipment. Report to me for muster at two thirty in the afternoon. At two thirty-five o'clock in the afternoon you will leave for sailing. And now",

he took my hand and squeezed it so hard that I wanted to open my hut, "you'll make a good school skipper."

I wanted to a word of thanks or a vow, but the commander had already pressed the bell button and an orderly appeared. "Take the young man to the office!"

On the dot of two twenty-nine in the afternoon the next Saturday I stood in front of the commandant's monkey. The uniform fitted like a glove. I had a few difficulties with the blue woolen sailor's shirt, though; it wasn't easy fasten it properly. Oen knot had been tied for me by a chief mate, and the small white ribbon, which is supposed to connect the collar to the knot and has to be tied very correctly over the knot, had been tied by a mate. The supplier had attached Oa's toil ribbon to the toil as instructed. Oa's paddock was tight enough, and the side gun didn't show the slightest spot. I knocked hard on the door and stepped into the mess hall at the clear "Come in". "Sailor Gggers reporting for duty as ordered."

The commander scrutinized me from all sides, pulled my troubles a little deeper into my face, checked the belt, the ribbon and knot and then took a step back.

"Hiddekk!"

"Hiddekk, Herr Kommandant!"

"Do you know what this greeting means?"

"It's the abbreviation of: The main thing is that the English get a slap on the wrist, Herr Kommandant."

The commander shook my hand. "Report to Herr Leutnant Hansen!"

Lieutenant Hansen, a very young, long-shot guy who was expecting to be drafted into the navy any day, assigned me to the first division and handed me over to Boatswain's Mate Strübing, who was to be responsible for my recruit training.

At two thirty-five sharp, Lieutenant Hansen was able to report to the commander that the crew had fully .

In Wannsee we were assigned to the cutters. As the youngest, I was assigned to the commander's dinghy.

A fresh breeze had come up so that the nimble little boat was leaning considerably to one side. I knew that the commander was keeping a close eye on me when he jibed, so I didn't let on that I wasn't feeling well at times. The heavy cutters crossed behind us. Towards evening we docked in Kladow, where sandwiches spread with real plum jam and tea were already waiting for us.

After dinner we were allowed to stroll through the village streets for half an hour, then we had a lesson with the commandant.

First of all, we started the song "Stolz weht die Flagge Schwarz-Weiß-Rot", then the commander spoke of Italy's declaration of war on Germany and the associated changes in the naval war in the Mediterranean, of Romania's entry into the war against Germany, of England's will to destroy and finally of the change in the German Supreme Army Command, that Hindenburg and Ludendorff had now taken over command.

The commander was so lively and that we all sat quiet as mice on our chairs so that not a word was lost. After the lesson we were allowed to stay up for a while to sing songs and chat. At ten o'clock we had to lie down on the straw sacks that were spread out in the hall of an inn.

In whispers, I talked to my new comrades for a while. We all agreed that the commander, the old man, as he was commonly called, was a

excellent guy, the like of which has never been seen before in the world.

The others had been asleep for a long time when I was still lying awake with hot cheeks, looking at my new, unfamiliar surroundings, my uniform, my comrades, in the glow of the moon, which poured its full light through the open window. I was so happy that I dared not go to sleep for fear I might have dreamed what I saw with my waking eyes.

Hard weeks of service followed, during which I was trained as a sailor. I had to learn splits and knots, the classes of warships, the rank of naval officers and non-commissioned officers, the many insignia, plus lessons in reading nautical charts, road law at sea, drill at the guns, infantry duty. Sometimes I thought it would too much, and I was ashamed of my older comrades who could already use Morse code and wave, who knew the compass and the basics of ravtgling, who talked about glasses instead of time and could shred signal flags. They had good reason to look forward to the day they joined the navy, they knew everything! They even knew to use a sextant.

When I was ordered to go on board, I worked with the feudel and swabber so that my pants got stiff from the dirty water and my hands cracked from the unaccustomed work. My locker was clean and my rifle had no rust stains, I was often enough conspicuous and had to board over the tops as punishment. Sometimes I gritted my teeth and to suppress my tears. But I wanted to persevere, I just couldn't give up.

At school I worked with a defiant diligence. I knew that the class teacher was going to tell me if my school performance was slipping.

The commander had to be informed immediately of any damage to a training ship, and then a suspension was imposed until performance improved. Suspension was considered a disgrace. The commander often gave us a good talking to. "A naval officer has to know more than an average person, because he always comes abroad, and people look at his attitude, his education, everything about him and in him. And how you find him is how you judge Germany. Not at all by that!

Eberhard and Hans laughed at me at first and said mockingly that it was over with me now, that I had happily joined the nerds after all. I listened to this quietly for a while, then during a break I gave them a good scolding. From then on, they cut me off and only teased me occasionally in class.

I quickly came to see school as a service that I had to perform as quickly and flawlessly as my service on the ship. The teachers smiled a little at my sometimes grim seriousness, but didn't mind me working. After all, I came third in my class at the next school report.

Mother had been discharged from the clinic, very miserable and unfortunately by no means cured, and now saw to it that the house dragon regiment was removed. After a violent scene, in which I stood by Mother and within a hair's breadth of assaulting the lady of the house, she had to leave the house. Her successor was an elderly deaf-faced superintendent's daughter, who was only a nuisance from time to time when she sang hymns in her shrill voice, especially on Sundays. Otherwise she did her duty quietly and tolerantly, rarely contradicted me and at most assured me now and then, when I was naughty towards her, with a sad look, that she would pray for my salvation. She wanted to move me, but she only succeeded in doing so on very rare occasions when I had an exceptionally troubled conscience.

Father was visibly pleased with me. There were no complaints from school. On the contrary, my essays and foreign language work received good marks. I hadn't received any detentions since joining the school ship. It would have seemed unworthy of me to receive "civil punishments". Mother was a little about me because she feared I might not be up to the effort. In fact, I sank into bed dog-tired that and had become so thin that every one of my ribs was clearly visible. It also often happened that I fell asleep at the breakfast table or suddenly got a nosebleed without any external cause.

More and more often, we school skippers were to collect old suits, used lines and all kinds of garbage. However, our training service was not allowed to suffer as a result.

In the past, a march was held every second or third month at best, preceded by the marching band, but now we marched every two weeks to raise the spirits of the population. Things looked bad in many places in Berlin. Food had generally become scarce, and the common hardship could have been borne more easily if the injustices had not become more blatant and obvious. More and more men turned up who one would have expected be lying somewhere in the trenches. They looked as well-fed as if they had come from a cure. they were seen, the starving and destitute people turned indignantly to look at them. They were crooks, racketeers, sneak traders, shirkers, creatures who made money every day the war lasted, who filtered money out of blood. They were to blame for the fact that the agitators, who went among the people again and again and contributed to the fact that the war fatigue continued to grow.

The slogan spread that the war was dividing the people into two classes, one bleeding, the other earning!

In the few luxury restaurants and gourmet eateries that Berlin still had, the pushers bragged and thus contributed significantly to the dissatisfaction of the hungry, who sometimes liked to be told that one could clearly see that only the stupid were at the front, that in war it was like in the movies: the best seats were in the back.

One day, a flyer turned up in our training ship. Lieutenant Hansen laughingly read out the content, which described the soldiers as the cattle of greedy capitalism. The commandant happened to join us and became very serious. "Such disgraceful newspapers can only be distributed because our people have been told far too little why they have to fight, suffer and endure. We have already gone to war with half an excuse/

Then he took the leaflet and kept it as a document of shame. Lieutenant Hansen was ordered to go through German history with us over the next few weeks. The commandant taught us about the history of the Center and Social Democracy.

For the first time, seder was given a copy of the anti-Semitic magazine "Hammer" with the instruction to read the contents carefully. At certain intervals, excerpts from the books "The False God" and "Anti-Semitic Catechism" by Theodor Fritsch were read aloud. The commandant gave personal explanations. We should know which powers were in the world, then we would also better understand the background to this war.

In the fall, a relative came on leave. He had taken part in the fighting in Romania and reported with great emotion about the many German villages and settlements they had come across during the advance. Hardly any of the German soldiers would have beforehand that they would come to Volksbrüder and be received as liberators.

become. - Another relative came from the bloody battles around Verdun. He railed at General von Falkenhagn, who had got bogged down in the senseless idea of taking Verdun at all costs. The German army had almost bled itself to death and it was high time Hindenburg and Ludendorff took over from Falkenhagn. His battalion had been completely shot up. "Everything is too weak here in Germany," he said again and again, "megalomaniacs and ignorant wimps rule at home, and they want to dictate to the army with their paltry policies. The front is made nervous by the parliamentarians. There is no of a united will anywhere, and now we are supposed to win this war. France has suffered more than we have, things are ten times worse over there than they are here, even if the people there don't have to starve. But the French are not so undignified as to flaunt their misery and dissatisfaction as openly as they do in Germany." The experiences of his leave him so much that he returned to the front prematurely after just a few days.

On October 21, the Austrian Prime Minister Count Stürgkh was murdered by the Jewish Marxist leader Friedrich Adler. Oer Kommandant was extremely excited when he told us the news.

"Believe me, the Jews are pushing with all their might for the world domination they have been dreaming of since their Moses started the nonsense at Sinai. This world war is to lead them to their goal. I fear that the murder of Stürgkh is only the prelude to the mass murder of all those who block their path to their goal."

A few days later, in the schoolyard, I heard a Jewish senior student take the murderer Adler to task as an idealistic champion against the oppressors. In a blind rage, I threw myself at him and punched him until the Jew staggered off, bleeding from the nose.

The commander often spoke with great concern about the development of conditions in Austria. There were too many opposing forces and peoples at work, and the clergy were playing an obscure game. Among the Austrian peoples there were already some who no longer wanted to fight, some who did not want the victory of the German and Austrian masses at all, but rather hoped for the victory of the enemy in order to realize their own goals.

The commander was the incorruptible warner and admonisher for us, we looked up to him with unshakeable faith and would have roasted ourselves for him if it mattered.

He often looked at political events with different eyes than the reports in the newspapers. I know that we looked at each other in astonishment when he scolded and railed about the proclamation of the Kingdom of Poland on November 5, which caused bright jubilation and admiration in the press for the statesmanship of Chancellor Bethmann-Hollweg and the farsightedness of the Governor General of Warsaw, von Beseler. "Bethmann is a complete idiot who should be court-martialed, and Beseler had better not develop any political ambition, he is too stupid for that. Don't people realize that we are hardly in a position to a decent peace with Russia? How can we see such a stake in our own flesh!"

Lieutenant Hansen dared to interject: "We'll get a lot of troops free, Herr Kommandant, and the Poles will certainly numerous volunteer regiments at our disposal out of gratitude."

The commander obviously forced himself to calm down. He raised his moustache a few times with his right hand, a sign of his inner excitement. Then he patted Hansen firmly on the shoulder. "The good Lord

keep your childlike faith, young man, I don't want to destroy it, but I must tell you one thing: in politics there is no gratitude, and only very occasionally something like loyalty. And if you look closer, it is always the German who has been more loyal than clever. But if someone is so nailed up that he wants to build his politics on the gratitude of the recipient, it is better for him and his companions that he shoots himself in the foot before the one on whose gratitude he relied takes care of it." With that, he walked quickly into his mess hall.

2 On November 10, I celebrated my birthday with my classmates. Despite her painful illness, mother had baked me a rather large potato cake, which I dragged on board with great precautions with the help of my comrade Wehell, whose father had just received the ?onr le merite. The comrades had obtained a book about the German navy in the last thirty years, which they presented to me with witty words. With my eagerness to learn, perhaps I could still track down some decommissioned classes to pass them on to posterity in my memory!

My grandmother had given me a magnificent ship's piano. It was inaugurated by my comrade von Bülow, who was particularly fond of playing the songs that our maids used to sing in the early evening hours. The galley donated real tea with a very small dash of Num.

What I was most about on my birthday, however, I kept to myself: I had a little older and the prospect of to war one day became one degree more likely.

I had already caught up with my older comrades in training, I no longer had to be ashamed when a command a change of target during gunnery, I now how to throw a gun carriage around and how to operate the aiming device to report the gun ready to fire in a few seconds. It was a proud feeling when the eight hatches were opened during gunnery and four tubes appeared on the starboard and port sides. The iron muzzle shells were pierced in the middle to hold the cartridges for firing the salute. It was always a festive day for us when salute shooting was ordered. Then we particularly warlike and dangerous with our ship. There were warriors, grey with powder, who couldn't quite suppress a smile at the sight of us, but when they saw us soaring up the masts and watched us standing at dizzying heights in the swaying yards, they gave us a friendly nod of approval. We were beside ourselves when one of our former comrades came to Arlaub and told us about our service on the A-boats, minesweepers, cruisers and ships of the line. In the end we would regularly make a mess of a race and were indescribably proud when, as was to be expected, we were faster than the rough warriors, who had lost much of their agility. In the naval battle off the Skagerrak, one of our comrades, a midshipman, had been seriously wounded in the chin by shrapnel on a cruiser. Oa's face had become crooked as a result, the stripes were a bloody red from his chin to his temple. The ensign seemed to be the epitome of male beauty. We looked to him with great awe and reverence when he told us of the great battle, the hours of terror and the seconds of horror in which the wounded man seems to die and has to summon up all his strength.

to die decently, reported. Many of the old "school" skippers were already resting on the bottom of the sea, but their names kept shining in the stories of those who once practiced, laughed and played with them on our ship, and who now became more serious when they thought of the fallen, to whom they too might soon join. The toil ribbons hung on a board in the officers' mess, commemorating the dead who had once sailed against the enemy on their fast ships.

Sometimes, when sat on the benches in the evening after work and sang old sea shanties, we talked about how wonderful it would be if we all to set sail together under the command of the old man for a privateer war, perhaps in the Indian Ocean, if we were have wild adventures that the world would have to take note of with amazement and trembling, and then finally, after a great sea battle between many enemy ships, to rest on the ocean floor for all eternity.

When one of the old sea dogs who served in front of the enemy heard this, he just laughed good-naturedly and said that we would soon realize that things a bit different in reality. But we didn't let him take away our dreams. We also knew that the commandant liked it when we longed to go to war. Whenever necessary, he would put the older ones, who came to Nrlaub with all sorts of worries and questions, in their place so that they would go back on the ships with their eyes wide open.

Cutter rowing was carried out well into November. Two men operated one oar. In the beginning, my hands couldn't grip the thick shaft, and I suffered from blisters that made the palms of my hands sore until a callus gradually formed that could withstand all the strain.

2 On November 21, we flew the battle flag at half-mast, the old Emperor Franz Joseph of Austria had died. In the past, jokes and anecdotes were often told about his unworldliness, which stemmed from the many sufferings he had to endure and, of course, from his more than biblical age. For example, as Lieutenant Hansen reported, he was said to have sighed during the storming of Liège that he would not be spared anything? It was said that he no longer really knew which borders the German Reich actually had after its many changes.

But now that the Emperor was dead, everyone felt that his passing endangered the Austro-Hungarian monarchy. In his calm and matter-of-fact manner, Oer Kommandant spoke of the importance of the almost mythical old man, who by his very existence, even if he was not in the least able to to develop, had held together the divergent forces of Austria-Hungary. He also did not conceal his reservations about his successor, Emperor Charles, and even more so his wife, Zita of Bourbon. "Lonrad von Höhendorf had the same support for the old Emperor Franz Joseph as Bis- marck had for the old Emperor Wilhelm. Nnd Lonrad is the only guarantor for a German policy of the Habsburgs/

The commander broke off with a wave of his hand, as if he had already said too much. A short time later, when Lonrad von Höhendorf was actually sent into the desert, we had to back to that day when the commander spoke to us. We all knew that many of the regiments in the Danube Monarchy were in a bad way, that only the German-blooded ones were reliable alongside a few Hungarians.

Nnhell was noticeably in lust that winter. Somehow we were all depressed and tried to overcome the unpleasant mood with particularly belligerent phrases.

The news dropped like a bombshell that Bethmann-Hollweg had made a peace offer to the Entente. We stood around bewildered. Was Germany already finished? The first thought I could think almost froze me in my tracks: look, I'll never be able to be a soldier again!

Most of my comrades probably felt the same way that hour. Stunned, empty-eyed, we gazed into an unknown horror. Surely peace could only be made when someone was defeated? And anyone who spoke of peace while still fighting must be very weak?

At the flag parade, the commander spoke only one sentence in a harsh, angry voice: "Woe to him who his sword before the last stroke. Means flag and pennant!"

We could see from his eyes and the conspicuous redness of his face that the peace offer was emotionally difficult for him. In the streets of Berlin, just at Christmas time, there were groups openly calling for peace and threatening to go on strike. During an all-out march, we were mobbed. On one corner stood a bunch of noisy men and women. As we passed by with the sound of music, a guy jumped forward, he looked like one of the many deserters who were trotting around Berlin, and spat in front of the commander. All we could see was the commander leaping forward, raising his fist and striking. The guy staggered back and was caught by his comrades. That day, we were ordered to report this harassment and try to have the agitators arrested.

The hunger demonstrations became more frequent every day. Every now and you could even see red flags, but these were quickly confiscated by the police.

The winter was very cold and there was only a small amount of coal. At home we could barely heat one room. I had to carry the coal in the ice and snow on a

We drove a two-wheeled cart from a goods shed just outside Berlin. And when these coals were used up, we helped ourselves pressing bales of paper, which we had previously moistened, into thick lumps, drying them and then putting them in the oven. However, we couldn't generate much heat that way. The room was full of smoke that made our eyes water. The flu, which came in terrible epidemics, killed many people. Schools remained closed for weeks. Fortunately, we didn't have many victims on the school ship because we were hardened by our strenuous outdoor work.

In the middle of the Christmas preparations, mother became seriously ill again. She had been for hours in the snow outside a grocery store for half a pound of sugar and suddenly fainted. She was taken to a doctor who ordered her immediate transfer to a hospital. There it was discovered that she was again suffering from stomach bleeding and ulcers. The lack of food and the hard-to-digest bread were to blame for her collapse.

A sad Christmas was approaching. The family news was also depressing: a cousin had fallen, one was in French captivity, an uncle was seriously wounded.

On the school ship, we celebrated the festival on the first day of Christmas. We had decorated the mess rooms with fir trees and a Christmas tree was lit in front of the galley. We had tea and ship's biscuits, which tasted very good when softened. We sang our carols, delighted the commander with a model of our ship that we had made ourselves and, after a speech in which the commander spoke of the duty to believe in the light, we were given Einhart's history book as a gift.

After the party, I got a terrible hemorrhage from my nose. The paramedics tried their luck with absorbent cotton to stop the bleeding. To no avail, the blood continued to gush. In the hospital

I was driven home in a car. The doctor, who I found sitting at my bedside when I to, diagnosed severe flu but couldn't admit me to any hospital as all the beds were full and beds had already set up in the corridors.

I had to stay at anchor for weeks and was only rarely allowed to receive visitors from my school shipmates and school friends. Once the commander came and told me briefly, as if it was of little concern to him, that the Entente had rejected the German government's peace offer.

Through my feverish dreams I heard the shots and the ringing of the bells that welcomed the 1917 journey.

When I got up again for the first time at the end of Fanuar, my body was so weak that I could only move with difficulty on a stick. My hands were yellow and wrinkled, and my fingers so scrawny and weak that I could barely grasp a pen. I put on my uniform, but was so shocked when I saw my reflection that I changed my clothes. But even my school uniform made me shiver. My first stop was the hospital, where Mother was still staying. She was very frightened by my appearance and wanted to send me immediately to relatives in Pomerania. I refused to leave Berlin because I thought it was more important to resume my duties on the ship as soon as possible. I went to my mother's sickbed to see the commander, who immediately had some cocoa boiled up for me, which an old school sailor had sent him after a privateer voyage. He just shook his head when I asked him when I could come back on duty. I didn't stay long at the school. I was told what had been covered in the last month and then walked very slowly and ponderously to Haufe.

The shipmates reported that it had once been a great day of joy when, after a long time, they had fired a salute again and the commander's eyes were as wide as ever. It had been the hour when Germany had finally opened the unrestricted Ll-boat war.

I had to think of my cousin, who had so often cursed the fact that an N-boat commander could only ever achieve a third of what was possible, because he had to take into account the alleged neutrality of ships that had no business in the war zone and yet only carried counter-attacks. England would have to be blockaded in exactly the same way as the Entente intended to starve us out. It was a disgrace that our government was too weak to use the German sword with all its sharpness!

We eagerly followed the weekly reports on the gross register tons sunk by German N-boats. We were able to calculate that people on the other side of the Channel also having to tighten their belts and were starving with all the more perseverance. Wehell was skeptical. "Is there still much point?" Oer hunger was something cursed, worse than an illness, we had all learned to feel that. With a real illness, there was at least the pain-relieving and numbing fever. But hunger was experienced in full consciousness. We hated those who starved our people and wished them all evil.

Anyone who had a small piece of garden land planted potatoes, and even in the tiny front gardens of Berlin's West, where noble flowers and precious shrubs once stood, one could see potato plants, which, however, had lushly because of the few rays of sunlight that fell in these corners. On the balconies, eager citizens planted tomatoes, which rarely ripened. Rabbits were in kitchens, and from musty cellars

The grunting of pigs and the bleating of goatskept by anxious people as a last resort before starvation, could be heard.

My father had refused to keep animals and slaughter "black". After all, it wasn't worth much. what could you feed the animals with when all the waste processed in the kitchen and we had long been used to eating what used to be thrown to the cattle as waste? How grateful we were when we were given a handful of unpurified sugar, the famous horse sugar, so that we no longer had the bland taste of sweetener in acorn coffee and food. We often couldn't cut the bread any more. It fell apart when you tried to push the knife into it. Our housekeeper was good at making an all-purpose paste from the flour, margarinesuet and lard - we only ever had a few grams it - which could be eaten warm as a kind of dumpling. When cold, it was used as a spread. Grete was quite proud the fact that she had learned to bake fried potatoes without a tent. She poured some grounds from our acorn coffee into the pan and threw in potato slices, which didn't taste bad at all. My stomach gradually became so hardened that I could have eaten sole leather as beefsteak, if only there had been sole leather. The school ship supplied me with a leather sole of a pressed mass of tar and scraps of cloth. These replacement soles lasted about a fortnight and to a certain extent did not let any moisture through. With the help of newspaper and some straw, I managed to avoid getting my feet wet and cold too often.

I could never get used to horse meat, which you could buy in tins from time to . I disliked the sweet taste. Kahenfletsch was supposed to taste better, there were people who seriously claimed that it was a delicacy, almost like

as tender as rabbit meat. To my knowledge, I never ate cat meat. But we all knew that the sausage we were given contained some things that we would not have seen alive in the fur. We were suspicious of the well-known fact that dogs and cats roaming free never returned, even when we offered them rewards. We consoled ourselves with the fact that the trapped French were even said to have eaten rats during the siege of Paris.

The commander advised us to keep heads held high and show confidence wherever we noticed war weariness, headiness and grumbling.

Things were not looking good either. It had long been no secret that Turkey was experiencing the most serious internal upheavals. The "Holy War", which was supposed to unite all Muslim peoples against England, had not materialized. The Turkish front was crumbling more and more, and by early spring Turkey's situation was as good as hopeless. Germany sent troop units to all theaters of war. When I put flags on my map, I got a picture of astonishing proportions.

The first news of an incipient revolution came from Russia. We heard the news with great joy, as we hoped that peace would then be made in the East and the troops could all fight in the West. Surely we would then be able to deal with the French and English!

In mid-March, a revolution really did break out in St Petersburg. Tsar Nicholas abdicated. But peace was not made. In the west, the strategic retreat of the German army from the Somme to the Siegfried position began. It was hoped that this would provide a more favorable position for defense and a better concentration of forces. The agitation and dissatisfaction at home took on ever more violent forms, so that, as the government under Bethmann waited in silence, some men set about organizing a
to found a "Fatherland Party", which would primarily serve the people by demonstrating great

goals should instill new enthusiasm. In addition to Kapp and Tirpih and a number of leading personalities, the commander had also signed the proclamation. Bater had joined the party immediately and had actively for it among his relatives and acquaintances. It was not able to achieve any significance. On the contrary, it stirred up a lot of dust, because so many heretics pointed their fingers at it and claimed that we now finally knew that this terrible war was being waged for the imperialist ideas of a small group of men.

Recognizing the goals of the Baterland Party caused the commander great psychological distress. He no longer saw any way of inspiring new enthusiasm at home. The propaganda marches that we school sailors had to carry out for the Fatherland Party were generally met with derision and scorn, so that we were soon withdrawn.

There were many rumors about the mood and conditions in Osterrelch-Nngarn. However, exact details were not known. It seemed as if Emperor Karl and, above all, Empress Zita were engaged in shady dealings.

The relationship between the United States and Germany had still not been finally clarified. In consideration of the United States alone, the announcement of the intensified N-boat war had been repeatedly postponed for years, despite the stormy insistence of all responsible military circles. The German government had shown for America, whose German-blooded population numbering in the millions exerted no perceptible pressure on the government, even when public opinion on the other side of the ocean was becoming increasingly hostile to Germany.

Even as we celebrated the dashing American voyage of the merchant N-boat "Deutschland" on the training ship, the commander was seriously worried about how long the United States would remain neutral, at least outwardly. Oie

The American press made no secret of the fact that it did not want Germany to win.

"We'd have to borrow so much money the guys over there that they 't even think of wanting us to leave. Then their money would also to hell," Wehell once said confidently. The commander shook his head thoughtfully: "If it were only money interests behind it, it would probably be so. But take a look at the banking houses over there, which ultimately have to decide on war and peace, and you might the light of day."

When, in May 1915, a German N-boat sent the English pasta steamer Lusitania to the bottom of the sea, carrying not only passengers, including a handful of North Americans, but also ammunition in violation of international law, it came within a hair's breadth of declaring war. The whole world, which had let us starve to death with a clear conscience, cried out and cursed us, with the result that the N-boat war was considerably curtailed at Bethmann's request.

Germany had its good will to keep the peace for its own sake. Over there, however, a religious idea was bred that America had to punish godless Germany in the name of divine providence.

Our old First Officer Wellenberg, who had sailed all the seas and for whom was no longer any mystery in heaven or on earth, told us in a finely detailed manner, using rare but unforgettable examples, how the Anglo-Saxons, who tended towards Methodism, and thus also their offshoots, the North Americans, were obsessed with ideas of world popularization, which were cleverly linked to God and his alleged interests. It was not for nothing that the English called themselves the lost and lost last tribe

Israel, and nowhere would the sects be as crazy as in North America. On this occasion, Wellenberg used to berate the Christian missions of all shades in the strongest terms. They were to blame for the fact that the manhood of the white man was increasingly going to hell, and the thrice-cursed word that all races were equal before God was the most dangerous poison with which the white race destroying itself. However, this attitude in no way the good Wellenberg from going to church often. His commandant occasionally teased him about it. Then Wellenberg would just hunch his shoulders and say with equanimity that when the organ was playing, he could think back so beautifully to the rarest adventures and events of his life as a sailor, and besides, he loved to sing for his life, and the chorales all had such a beautiful, simple melody.

In short, Wellenberg was really in his element when it came to North America. On February 4, the United States had broken off diplomatic relations with Germany and at the same time called on the other neutrals to do the same. Germany was to be ostracized and ostracized. Oer Kommandant never really wanted to believe that America would seriously go to war. He thought the Americans were far too sober and cautious. Above all, he could not imagine that the athletic American would be able to get into the not at all athletic character of positional warfare and material combat. In addition, hardly any large troop units could be landed.

America was the only point on which Wellenberg dared to contradict the commander. But he did so with all his fervor.

When Wilson actually declared war on April 5, Wellenberg walked past Oeck with such dignity and stature that he looked like an old Jewish prophet who once been proven right.

However, when America began to confiscate German private property and forced other states to follow its example, and a whole series of previously neutral states joined the ranks of Germany's enemies under the pressure of American money, the commander stopped teasing his first officer about America. In May, on the occasion of Ludendorff's short stay in Berlin, we were paraded in front of his hotel. We knew that he was the true mastermind of German warfare and revered him with sincere admiration. We were all the more proud when the commander, who was allowed to report to the general, told us that our fresh and firm impression had the general a confident gleam in his eye.

In the middle of May, five schoolchildren were suddenly signed out by their parents. They stood around with embarrassed faces as they had to hand in their fatigues and uniforms. The reason they gave for leaving was that their parents no longer them to become naval officers, nor did their parents like the fact that the commander had campaigned for the Baterland Party and stood up for the Krleg Party at every opportunity.

We didn't know what to say to that. When Bülow, in a sudden surge, gave the longest of the newly baked civilians a resounding slap in the face and remarked that he should pass it on to his esteemed Mr. Bater, we joined in, so that the five of them publicly received the Holy Ghost as a farewell.

The only striking thing was that from the summer onwards we had no more new recruits on deck. The mood of the widest circles of the population was below zero because the opinion had arisen that peace could have been achieved long ago if only the German Supreme Army Command had wanted it. The enemies were ready for peace.

One night, posters warning of spies and saboteurs were pasted over with small flyers in entire streets:

Equal pay, equal food, the war would be long forgotten.

The leaflet propaganda of the anti-state circles became so active that notes with treasonous content were even found in the bries boxes. Even we school sailors were handed leaflets from time to time.

We had political lessons twice a week.

Grete told me that some teachers at her school openly expressed their sympathy with the Social Democrats. The teachers at my grammar school refrained from making any political comments. A professor who taught Greek and history in the upper classes had been drafted into the Reichstag as a Democrat deputy and had been suspended from teaching. As this particular professor was extremely unpopular due to his unreliable and moody character, no one mourned him.

Töti said sarcastically: "He's going to keep on bickering until he's completely broken up his party.

Domestic political events came thick and fast. Significantly, the red agitators in the German

The German High Seas Fleet, which had been living without a fight for many months, was able to gain entry. There were rumors of arrests and shootings. We felt dishonored by the mutinies, because for many people, being a sailor meant unreliable. We used to see our black, white and red armbands as a restriction on our uniform, but today we were grateful that this made us fundamentally different from the unreliable.

There was doom in the air. We sensed it clearly, and the mood was depressed and sad. Any new news of unrest, discontent or rebellion was doubly hard for us. Stronger than before on the fronts

The enemy was to feel the German fist once again. Those of us who were already fit for war were recruited. The commandant made sure that everyone who reached the lowest age limit volunteered on their birthday if possible.

The volunteers didn't always have it easy, they were often labeled as "war extenders" by the clerks at the registration offices.
I was greeted as a "brave warrior". My hope of being allowed to go to war sank lower every day. My commander sometimes comforted me by referring to the work that lay ahead once peace had been concluded. "The colonies are out of . There's still a lot of tidying up to do. Great changes will take place in the East. Wherever we look, tasks us. LInd where there is something serious to do in politics, there must also be soldiers/

None of us thought of a glorious peace any more. But we all confidently hoped for an outcome that would leave Germany in honor.

One day the commandant told him, with every gesture of disgust, that representatives of Social Democracy in Germany had gone to a peace congress of the International in Stockholm, but that, significantly, representatives of Social Democracy in the Entente had not crossed the borders of their countries. "I sometimes have the impression that there men in the government itself who are committing these terrible mistakes on a higher directive/

We looked at each other in horror at such outbursts and didn't dare tell anyone about them. Our commander had deep pits around his eyes and mouth during those months. We rarely saw him laugh. His eyes had their sparkle.

Bethmann-Hollweg resigned on July 12. The constant battle he waged against the Supreme Army Command, which demanded tighter political leadership of the people and a stronger

The call for the homeland to be called upon for defense work had ended with the soldiers' walkway, but it was too late. Colonel Bauer, who was seen as the chancellor's assassin, was celebrated by all military circles. Wellenberg was beside excitement: "It's good that the old grandpa is finally gone. He should have been told to go to hell in 1914 when he proclaimed that he was going to renounce his claim to Belgium, this traitor to his country out of stupidity."

Father was worried about who would succeed him. Gin Soldat was out of the question, because the Social Democrats would immediately go into opposition, and we hadn't seen anything good from the politicians so far. Rumor had it that an old centrist, Count Hertling, was coming. The commander shook his head:

"Oas is sa impossible? Oer Mann fought against the founding of the Reich from the very beginning. He was one of Blsmarck's fiercest opponents, and in the Kulturkampf he was at the forefront of the Oldmontites."

A few days later, the newspapers reported that "Count Hertling" had declined the chancellorship, citing his age. Or. Michaelis had become Chancellor. A ministerial director whom nobody knew. "There are twelve of these people to a dozen," said the commander.

The details that had led to Bethmann's resignation began to leak out. Wellenberg cleared his throat contemptuously:

"It served the man right that he was crushed. He was too wimpy for us, too reactionary for the Reds. He was not fish, not meat. What can you do with people like that!"

Oer "Vorwärts", the paper of the Social Democrats in Germany, painted the situation in Germany in the gloomiest colors. Oer Fude Stampfer, the spiritual father of this newspaper, raised his finger and warned against continuing to educate the youth in a soldierly spirit. One could see where such a

attitude, namely to war, to bloodshed. In those days, we were regularly sent the "Vorwärts" to the training ship and did not let the opportunity to get an idea of the Reds' rummaging go by unused.

A completely different world opened up. There was no longer any of a will to national resistance, nothing in the lines about the duty to persevere. There was only talk of the interests of the party, of claims, demands, reservations and objections, of the rights and positions of the Klaffe.

God knows, enemy espionage had it easy, it only needed to read newspapers like the "Vorwärts" to get a picture of Germany's inner turmoil or to learn indiscretions on pending political issues. Uninstinctive to the demands of war, this newspaper every opportunity to pick up on any discrepancies in the relationship between the Supreme Army Command and the political leadership. When the young Emperor Charles of Austria, not least under the influence of his French wife Zita, who made no secret of her Germanophilia, Lonrad von Hoehendorff to the front and made the militarily insignificant General von Arz Chief of the General Staff, one could clearly sense the triumph of this newspaper over the removal of the "militarist". And when Count Lzernin, who sought peace with the Entente at all costs, even at the expense of all-German interests, became Austria's foreign minister, the "Vorwärts" wanted to portray Emperor Karl's behavior as exemplary. The evidence that mysterious strings were being spun between Vienna and Paris ever more tangible. Oa's feeling of insecurity with regard to Austria's attitude, situation and will grew.

And now it had exploded in April. What had smouldered beneath the surface for so long now into bright flames: betrayal!

Count Lzernin, the cold executor of Habsburg policy, had found a dangerous and ambitious fellow believer among the countless venal creatures who were weaving their intrigues far behind the battlefields, the Roman Erzberger, who had already caused incalculable damage to the empire through his tactless, supposedly Christian and humane approach to the colonial question. Lzernin handed Erzberger a memorandum on the Austrian peace efforts and discussed the situation, intentions and steps in detail, as they corresponded to thoughts, beliefs and feelings.

Erzberger was the right man to make policy with this memorandum in his Roman-culture-fighting way!

In no time at all, the center, the Reds and thus also Germany's enemies knew exactly what was going on behind the scenes to initiate the great drama. While on the fronts the German troops were making desperate advances to create breathing space and give the government new opportunities for an honorable peace, while in the east the Russian troops were presenting the Kerensky government with a new offensive, the foundations of the Reich were being undermined according to a clever, cold plan. And Erzberger was one of the leaders of the black moles.

Lzernin's memorandum tipped the scales. Many heavy weights were already resting on the bowl that held the counterweight to the empire: the weights of dissatisfaction with the allegedly cruel A-Voot war, which was nothing more than the last attempt to loosen the enemy's fist from the throat through counter-pressure, the weight of indignation at the war aims of the Fatherland Party, which only wanted to give the people a new emotional boost,

the weight of anger at new taxes and customs duties, which were only intended to raise funds for the war effort, the weight of envy and resentment against the Supreme Army Command, which did not want to deprive anyone or any party of the right to live, which only wanted to carry out the concentration of the will to resist. And many other factors were added, the agitation of the Blacks and Reds, hatred of Bismarck's legacy, religious and ideological reservations, offended personal vanity. But the Reich, with its demands of duty, loyalty and honor, was still able counterbalance this. Then Erzberger placed the memorandum of Lzernin, the Habsburg representative, on the scales so that it sank deeply to the detriment of the Reich and its existence.

The discontented believed themselves to be victors. Their attacks became more and more excessive, their activities more and more treacherous. Hindenburg and Ludendorff were to go. The Reich was to dismember itself. The enemy was considered more trustworthy than the brother of his own people. At this moment, Colonel Bauer advanced. It was the hour of the resignation of the weak, weak-willed but pious Chancellor Bethmann-Hollweg.

In a low voice, as if he were talking to himself, the commander had spoken of the danger to the Reich, and we Fungen sat frozen in horror and disgust on the benches of our crew mess and tried to grasp the meaning of this terrible sentence.

The commander ran his trembling hand over his fine, furrowed brow: "Germany is a wonderful idea, but the reality of this idea is often of a shameful meanness/

He walked with heavy steps towards his mess hall and turned around once more as he stood at the door: "I wish I were twenty years younger, to go down somewhere in the seas before the enemy in honor/

20. Füll was the last fateful advance of Grz- berger in the Reichstag. Since then, the enemy had every reason to hope for the downfall of the German Reich. The front line, already betrayed, became increasingly lonely as doggedly held out in the bullet-ridden trenches and bled to death.

And while the Reichstag forced through the peace resolution, almost at the same hour brave German regiments threw the Kerensky offensive to the ground, scattered the Russian troops to the winds and carried the flags further into infinite space.

On August 2, the Pope gave a speech to the Church, which, as was to be expected, had no effect. In Germany, the Jesuit order, which Bismarck had summarily swept out of the country, was re-admitted. The first Jesuit branch was founded ten minutes away from the training ship. It named after the Jesuit shed a whole sea of German blood during the Counter-Reformation, Lanisius, whose name means dog!

2?In the middle of August, the commander sent for me.

"You look miserable, Eggers/

I clicked my heels together: "I feel completely found out, Herr Kommandant/

"That can't be right, Lggers. You pull yourself together on duty, but I've noticed that you're completely exhausted afterwards. I was told by your grammar school that you are often listless. What's the matter with you?

My blood rushed to my head. Should I admit that I often hungry and that the rutabagas didn't agree with me, that I had to vomit after major exertions? Should I admit that I couldn't sleep at night when I thought about the situation in Germany and the words that the commandant occasionally about the terrible conditions?

I remained silent.

"You need to go to the country for a few weeks to regain your strength. You'll be on vacation from tomorrow!"

Mother wrote to a mill owner near the town of Schivelbein in Pomerania, the answer came by return of post that I could come if I wanted to do farm work. -

Oer train was overcrowded. Arlauber, market women, hoarders and workers crowded into the fourth-class compartment. I sat on my little suitcase and listened to the conversations. Almost all of them revolved around the tiresome war, hunger, the war profiteersinjustice and the imminent peace. The atmosphere was tense. At most, a soldier once made a crude joke with one of the women who were quick to screech.

My sailor's uniform was often the cause of little jibes.

"Do you still want to to war?"

I nodded seriously. Gin, a fat market woman who had obviously never felt hungry, waved her fists front of my nose.

"That such a thing still exists? Such louts should be killed right away!"

An Arlauber smiled good-naturedly: "Let him be. He'll get his too!" Then he gave me a slice of his commissary bread: "Eat it, you can blow sa your cheeks."

I took the bread with a smile on my face and finished it. 2I didn't take part in the conversations, I kept thinking about the commandant.

Damn it, sa, things were bad for Germany.

I was glad to arrive in Schivelbein after several stops and several stops. Oer Mühlenbesiher had come to the railroad himself. He was a gentle, friendly man, and you could see that the war could go on for another twenty years because of him. The two long-legged foxes pulling the light lagdwagen were also well-fed and had shiny coats. I sat next to the coachman and took the lead from his hand. It had been a long time since I had last driven a carriage.

There was still a lot of grain in the fields. The miller made an annoyed gesture: -More straw than fruit, we hardly have any artificial fertilizer, and then there is no labour. We also very rarely get prisoners/

The mill was about an hour's wagon ride Schivelbein. You would have thought nobody knew there was a war going on, the countryside was so beautiful and peaceful. The few people working in the fields looked up and waved. Oer miller knew seden, called him by name and exchanged a few words about milling, grain or deliveries.

The mill appeared behind a bump. The sound of rushing water could be heard from afar.

-I actually have a motorized mill/, said the miller, "but a year ago I switched it back to water, it's cheaper/

I put the lead on and let the horses go at a walk.

Was this country beautiful? Dark forests stretched into the distance, and gentle hills kept the fields corn, potatoes and turnips from appearing monotonous.

Oie mill lay in the midst of wide beech trees by a large pond. I turned to the miller.

"You have it good here!"

Oer nodded indifferently: "That's what everyone who comes here says. But you're more comfortable in the city, and you experience much more."

I thought of the half-starved people in the city who would gladly give up all comforts if only they could eat their fill.

The mill was a hive of activity. Wagons drove up, farmers negotiated, farmhands hauled sacks. A few traders loitered around and, as soon as our cart stopped, bombarded the miller with hasty questions and offers. One of them, obviously a Jew, had his wallet out and held a few banknotes in front of the miller's nose. It annoyed me that the miller was putting up with the traders, because I knew that the war economy covered all agricultural . So they must have been so-called wild traders who wanted to do illicit business.

A young lad, about my age, took my suitcase from the car and beckoned me follow. I climbed up a dark, steep staircase and entered a musty-smelling attic room.

"We're both sleeping up here," said the guy and put my suitcase in a corner. I looked around, but all I could see was a narrow, very dirty, red-checkered bed. Oer lad laughed: "We sleep together, we're not as fine as you in Berlin, we each have our own bed."

"What's your name?" I asked hesitantly and looked at the guy, who looked pretty dirty to me.

"Karl," he said and held his hand out to me, which I slapped hard. Karl helped me unpack my few belongings and couldn't help but be amazed. "Man, you're a fine carrion, you even have a nightgown. And I suppose that's a toothbrush?"

I nodded with very mixed feelings. "Don't you have any?" Karl shook his head in amazement: "What ?" I couldn't a wash bowl anywhere. Karl guessed what I was thinking.
"You have to wash yourself at the pump."

I took off my blue uniform, hung it on a nail and took my drill kit out of the suitcase. Karl pumped water and I washed myself in the courtyard in front of a maid who out of the kitchen window with a grin.

"Oas is Alwine," said Karl, "she sleeps in the room next to us."

An hour later we had dinner. We sat around the large table in the spacious kitchen, the unmarried miller, his brother, his wife, two servants, Alwine, Karl and me. First, a huge bowl of fried potatoes was placed on the table. Heavens, did smell like bacon? The potatoes were so fat they made my palate sticky.

Then there was bread, butter, ham and sausage. I could hardly believe my eyes. Was there really still such a thing? In the middle of the war?

The miller laughed as I scraped some butter onto the dark rye bread. "Alwine, make him some Pomeranian bread!"

Alwine giggled and made me a ham sandwich with the thinnest part of the bread.

I hadn't finished eating when I had a sudden feeling of nausea. I was out the door in a flash and vomited up all my food.

Karl stood behind me leaning against the door and laughed derisively: "Ou are fa a strange fellow." They also laughed at me at the table when I returned, somewhat embarrassed, and carefully drank a glass of milk. Only the woman looked at me sympathetically: "Ou are sa half starved, boy, that you can't take any more fat. Wait a minute, I'll make you a proper scrambled egg without bacon, you can eat it without worrying."

The others got up and went about their work in the mill, on the farm and in the stables. Oie wife stayed in the kitchen and made me a scrambled egg. "Turn to me confidently if you want anything/

I looked at her gratefully and hesitantly ate what she put in front of me. My stomach was still rebelling. But it was fine now, I didn't need to rush out the door again.

"Take off your good shoes when you go into the stable," said the woman, "there are slippers in the corner at the back."

In the cowshed, Alwine and Karl were feeding cows. The calves also wanted their usual bran drink. I did my best to behave so skillfully that I wasn't laughed at while I was working. I already knew most of the moves from Schönetche, even if I had forgotten a lot. At least I was proud that I knew how to throw the runners into the slicer and turn them through, as I quickly realized that two cows get a box of runners. Then there were two forks full of green fodder, that wasn't hard to keep either. The pigs got steamed potatoes with bran. I had to mash the fluffy, beautiful white, floury potatoes in a large vat. Alwine poured bran over them from a sack.

Those beautiful potatoes? If only we had them in Berlin!

As dusk fell, we all sat on the long bench outside the front door. Oer Müller gave his instructions for the next day. Karl and Alwine were to drive in, the farmhands were to take freight to Schivelbein, and I was assigned to help my brother in the mill. Oer miller's brother eyed me suspiciously.

"Can you actually carry sacks?" I just
nodded.

Oer Müller looked at his brother meaningfully. "Rm eleven Ahr, the Mendel is coming tonight. How many sacks have you in the chamber?"

Oer rubbed his hands together with a grin. "Eight this time. Oas gives a decent deal!"

One of the farmhands stood up, put his hands deep in his pockets and looked the miller cheekily in the face. "And what's it for us? After all, we're sticking our necks out too."

The miller had an ugly laugh as he slapped the farmhand on the shoulder: "You'll each get a thaler, and on Saturday 'll be a crate of beer. You can also hold out your hand when the Mendel comes."

I had an unpleasant taste in my mouth, yikes, so the miller was also one of the pushers?

Oer miller's brother must have noticed what was going on inside me. He elbowed me good-naturedly in the ribs and laughed harmlessly: "We all do a few little side deals here, and nobody can catch us that easily."

Oer Müller got up and went into the house: "You have to wait for the right time, who knows how long it will last!"

Pig, I just thought.

Karl took his harmonica out of his trouser pocket, blew off the dust and played a few of the hits that were in vogue at the time. "Komm in meine Liebes- laube" and "Puppchen, du bist mein Augenstern". Alwine knew all the hits and sang them in a screeching voice, which she herself apparently found very beautiful and melodic.

The farmhands soon took their leave, they wanted to visit their girls in the neighborhood. The miller's brother and his wife went to bed.

In the end, only Alwine, Karl and I were still sitting on the bench. The bats were fluttering very low, you could have them with your hand. There must have been a little owl sitting nearby, its call sounded so frightening that Alwine moved close to me and grabbed my hand. It made me uncomfortable and I did my to keep quiet. Otherwise I would have been disgusted by the maid's intimacy.

A nightingale began to chirp and the rising wind rustled in the tall trees. This evening in the rural seclusion seemed unreal to me, even somehow untrue. There couldn't be war and peace at the same time, it seemed to me.

Karl began to play again. When his stock of hits was exhausted, he began to the folk songs. One after the other.

Alwine was no longer singing. She was in an emotional mood, so it seemed more appropriate for her to hum. And this humming didn't even sound that bad.

She suddenly stopped and looked me wide-eyed. "You're still so young, isn't it hard for you to be a soldier?"

I smiled superiorly, no, our service was exhausting, but so beautiful that we didn't want to be anything other than school skippers.

"Surely you have a bride in Berlin?"

I shook my head and blushed. Just as well it was dark enough.

Alwine moved a little closer. "You'll about sixteen. I'm only a little over seventeen myself."

I was very proud. Hell, I I was sixteen tooLie Alwine! If I was only sixteen, it crossed my mind. I could have been a war volunteer somewhere by the time I was sixteen. There was nothing wrong with being longer than the average young lad.

Karl lowered his harmonica and pointed to the window, through the shutters of which light was streaming. "Now the miller is sitting over his account book and about new business. Id like to have the money he's put together."

Then he stood up, yawning. "Come on now. We've got to be out just after four tomorrow."

Alwine also up. "I just want to have a quick look at Bianka, she must be calving these days." She nudged me: "Come with me, you must shine for me."

would have preferred it if fle challenged Karl. But he quickly disappeared. Somewhat reluctantly, I took the stable lantern that Alwine had lit and followed her into the cowshed. The warm smell hit me was by no means unpleasant. The cows gawked and mooed. There was nothing strange about Bianka.

Alwine walked close to me and arranged it so that we kept touching each other. I flinched at times.

Suddenly she pressed herself against me, giggling. "Why don't you give me a kiss, you sailor!"

I shook her off and ran into the chamber as fast as I could.

Karl grumbled grumpily: "I don't know what Alwine wants, it's not Bianka's turn for another eight days."

Before I went to sleep, I heard Alwine banging on the wall.

Just put on a pair of pants, that's enough!" said Karl as he woke me up. I was out of bed in a flash. Alwine was already working the kitchen. The servants came out of their room yawning and grumbling.

As if I had always done this work, I stood at the slicing machine and turned the runners. One box, a second, a third. For almost an hour. Alwine came and watered the calves. She mooed when she saw me and threw her head back. I liked her better this way than yesterday with her pushiness.

I laughed at fle and threw a barnacle at her.

"päh," Alwine said, offended, "you're a handsome sailor?"

When the beast was finally fed, I stood at the pump with Karl. First he washed himself while I pumped with all my might, then we swapped roles. It was refreshing to dip my upper body in the ice-cold water.

wash! I had malt coffee, bread and bacon for breakfast. I couldn't eat the bacon because it was too fatty for me. Instead, Alwine threw me a piece of sausage with a forgiving smile.

The miller was wearing his good suit: "I have to go to Stettin on business today, I probably won't be back until tomorrow evening/

Karl nudged me with his foot and grinned meaningfully.

The miller's brother crowed behind his ear: "Just don't even let yourself get caught/

Then my work in the mill began. I was supposed to load the filled hundredweight sacks of flour onto the handcart and line them up against the wall. The miller's brother showed me how to do it.

"It's quite simple. Lift a little, then push the trolley down, pull the bag over and then continue/

It really looked very simple. But when I got to grips with it myself, I realized that I didn't have enough strength. I was sure that, in addition to my strength, I also needed to be able to turn the sacks properly. The miller's brother looked at me angrily. "I thought such a sung cadet had strength like a bear/

I exerted myself so hard that sweat broke out of my pores. I finally managed three or four bags, but then I had to look out of the stairs because everything suddenly started to spin in front of my eyes. Blood ran from my nose in thick drops.

The miller's brother got scared: "For God's sake, the lad is all yellow in the face/

When I had regained my strength, I wanted to start my work again, but the miller's brother told me to leave.

"Swap with Karl. No one has yet overexerted themselves when driving in/

As I left, he looked after me disapprovingly. "Such a long rascal, and he can't even carry a hundredweight/

Alwine was genuinely pleased when I arrived. She seemed to have come to terms with the fact that I had nothing left for love. We joked and laughed and were pleased that the work was going wellOnce I piled up the sheaves and she grabbed the load squarely, and the next time I was enthroned high up and made a real effort not to grab sa crookedly. We also took turns unloading and in the barn compartment.

At lunch, the woman looked at me with satisfaction. "He's already got some color/ I laughed happily and helped myself. I had green beans with mutton, not overcooked, so I didn't have to worry.

In the evening I sank into bed dead tired. I had proved that I could work, even if the sacks of flour were too heavy for me. And I was even allowed to feed the cows completely on my own, that's how much Alwine trusted me.

After a fortnight, I felt so strong that I would have liked to do my work in the mill . My cheeks full and my hands were hard from calluses. During a cat fight I jumped Karl so badly that he cried out loudly and begged for mercy. Alwine laughed at me. I was able to eat vast quantities of food without sick. Even the whipped cream that was served with a real crumble cake one Sunday was good for me. And I was allowed to as much fruit as I could. I also got on well, or at least reasonably well, with all the people at the mill, even if I occasionally clashed with the farmhands, who boasted that they were social democrats and belonged to the Schivelbein section. The miller was disgusting to me, I now knew that he moved flour, semolina and pearl barley and food of all kinds. couple of times he came back from Stettin with cloth, real soap, chocolate and real coffee beans and threw himself on his chest as if it were a heroic deed to engage in shuffling. And he would his mouth when a poor

A guy or a poor woman from the city knocked on öle's door and begged be given a few eggs, a bag of flour or a small sack of potatoes for good money. We'd all have to cut back, he'd scold us, the fatherland needed every pound, and he'd be liable to prosecution if he let go of even a grain, besides, he didn't have the slightest bit to spare himself!

Wehell wrote me a card saying that we were leaving for an exercise in September. He had heard the old man talking about it in the officers' mess. Probably Swinemünde!

At lunch, I said across the table that I was going back to Berlin tomorrow.

Oer Müller jumped up. "That's not happening now. First comes the potato harvest, which is particularly important/

I remained calm. "We're going to do an abortion/

I saw the miller's angry veins swelling on his forehead. "That could suit you. Eating your way out of here, doing easy work and then running away again when things get more difficult. What kind of exercise is it that such young brats do? Nothing like playing around/

I got up silently and went into my room. There took my blue uniform off the nail, stroked it with trembling hands, took the brush out of the suitcase and began to clean the dust and cobwebs from my clothes.

Karl came up and grinned gleefully. "Blimey, the miller's probably in a rage! Ou might as well leave today then/

I shrugged my shoulders with equanimity: "That's no bad luck either/ Alwine howled as she came up. "Why don't you stay a few Weeks/

I shook my head and grabbed my few .

Then I walked through the bars again, stroking

Bianka and her calf, gave the foals carrots and even said goodbye to the grunting pigs

At coffee time, all the millers were in the kitchen. I went up to the miller, slapped my poop together and asked if I really had to leave today or if I could stay until tomorrow morning. The train leaves tomorrow morning at nine o'clock.

Oer Müller threw another tantrum. "Get off my farm, you ungrateful lout!"

I remembered that the miller had given me nothing. I had worked as hard as I could. I shook with the servants, the wife, Karl and Alwine. The miller roared once more:
"Get out, you carrion!"

My face flushed with anger and I could only one word: "Sucker!"

The miller looked at me with his mouth agape. He didn't say another word, just pointed towards the door.

As I left the yard, Alwine and the woman ran after me. The woman pressed a parcel into my hand. "Here's something for the next few days."

Alwine accompanied me up to the hills, from where was such a beautiful view of the mill.

It was a long way to Schivelbein, and the dust was thick on my white uniform. I whistled happily to myself and looked forward to seeing my parents, Grete, the commandant, my comrades and school friends.

The farmers in the fields waved back in a friendly manner, even the prisoners, who were deployed here and there in small groups harvesting potatoes, raised their hands.

I got to the station towards evening. Maybe there was still a train at night. I could be lucky and be taken on a freight train for a change. The man behind the counter shook his head in annoyance.

The next passenger train to Berlin leaves tomorrow morning at nine o'clock, and that's that! However, I could still take a train to Stettin, but no further. From there, there wouldn't be a train to Berlin until the morning.

I scraped my money together, bought a fourth-class ticket and strolled through Schivelbein to pass the time. There wasn't much to see in the small town. There was a castle, but I'd seen nicer ones, and the Rega, the little river, 't impress me as a school skipper.

The lanterns soon went out. Apparentlypeople here went to bed very early, because the windows also went dark after a short time. The few people who came out of the small pubs a little later to head for bed looked me a little suspiciously.

I was gradually getting tired. After some searching, I found a bench in a secluded area not far from a tennis court. A newspaper lay neatly folded on the bench. I silently thanked the forgetful reader, because I knew from hearsay that newsprint has almost the same advantages as a woolen blanket.

Tomorrow evening I would be fine in Berlin, I kept thinking.

On the platform in Schivelbein, a hulking gendarme stalked around, examining the passengers and, above all, their luggage. Every now and then he stopped a man or woman and had their suitcase opened. A baggage inspector!

Oie wife had packed me a sausage, a large piece of ham, a lump of butter, a few eggs and a bag of flour. In the morning, when I had breakfast, I discovered the treasures. I had devoured the beautiful sausage sandwiches with great appetite, and now I was looking forward to seeing my parents' faces. What eyes they would make at these delicacies!

I positioned myself in the waiting room so that I could watch the gendarme outside while he couldn't see me. If only he wanted to sort! But the gendarme didn't even think about it.

The clock went to nine. By golly, the train had to arrive at that moment!

I took my suitcase, walked through the barrier and ran straight into the gendarme's arms.

"Come here!"

I pretended not to hear or see him.

"Hey, you there! You should come here! Can't you hear me?"

I stopped and looked around offended, "Are you crying me?"

The gendarme twirled his moustache grimly. "What have you got in that Kofser?"

I made an innocent face. "What am I supposed to have in the Kosfer?"

The train was just rolling in, so if I was lucky I could get away! The gendarme gave the stationmaster a wave, which meant that the train would have to wait until Mr. gendarme would give permission to drive off.

"Go on, turn it off!"

"You can that I have to take the train!"

"Open up!" shouted the gendarme.

I put the suitcase in of him. "Then just make the effort yourself!"

A few moments later, with a cry of triumph, he had discovered the forbidden treasures. He pulled out everything the woman had given me. The butter, the ham, the Wehs, the greed. I was annoyed that I hadn't at least eaten the sausage or ham for breakfast. Curious, some gloating, the travelers surrounded the group.

A vacationer who was on his way to the front intervened. "Why don't you let the young fellow have a few snacks? You're almost bursting out of your uniform yourself, and you're not getting your belly from the butter marks alone!" The people laughed.

The gendarme overheard the soldier's gin toss. "The food has been confiscated. Where did you get them?"

I was gripped by an unbridled rage. "I got them healthy, just outside your door!"

Oer soldier patted me on the shoulder. "Get in the car! I'll be fine with that fellow!" Then he walked threateningly the gendarme.

"Now you're satisfied that you've stolen the poor little guy's little bit of food, aren't you? You wouldn't dare touch a pusher, would you? Bullying people is easier than lying in the trenches, Oicker? And now you want the young lad's name to him a hard time, don't you? Go away, or I'll forget myself!"

The gendarme staggered back a few steps and gasped for air.

"Drive off!" shouted the soldier, and the man with the red toil obediently raised his cane.

In the compartment, the soldier was still agitated. "Oas was once again the right picture of home. They're a dirty bunch. You didn't want to eat that stuff on your own, did you?'

I shook my head and said my mother had been ill for so long and that she could have used the eggs, butter and flour so well.

"Well, don't worry," comforted the soldier, "one day the war will come to an end, and then the stage stallions will all get one in the mouth, and the shivel- beiner two. I come Polztn, that's not too far, I'll the man there!"

The trip was very inspiring. Oer soldier had seen the fighting at the Wgtschaetebogen and talked a lot about Flanders, the landscape and the people.

ÄHehell had been right. Oer commander scheduled a fall exercise in Swinemünde. ÄThe schools gave extended vacations.

We set off from the school ship with the sound of music in bright sunshine. Our route took us along Bismarckallee over the Knie, along Charlottenburger Chaussee over the Großer Stern, past Bellevue station, over Lehrter Bahnhof, through Invalidenstraße to Stettiner Bahnhof.

Every now and then someone would wave over to us, an old man or a young girl.

We probably all had one thought, how nice it would be to go to the great war. The autumn sun was warm, but not hot, and we enjoyed marching so much that we were almost walking in paradise.

We were allocated a carriage, which was attached to the scheduled train. We immediately made ourselves at home in the compartment, unpacked the sandwiches and handed out the treats we had been given from home. It wasn't much, just a few macaroons made from Haser flake dough, a handful of home-made sweets and some Schifss zwiezwiebäcke. And yet we were as happy and proud as warriors approaching their first battle. My accordion had to be a lot.

When we arrived in Swinemünde, we were all hoarse. I don't think there was a reasonably well-known song that we didn't sing several times. Unfortunately for us, we were not accommodated on the ship we were all curious about, but in a small guesthouse, four men to a room. Oa the iron ones

beds on our feet, we couldn't resist the temptation to perform a dashing gun drill first. It made such a considerable noise that the housewife begged to protect the ceilings and walls.

We used the half hour until dinner to our hair carefully and brush ourselves off - because it had already announced that we would be allowed to go to the beach for an hour after dinner. The large smoked flounder, which everyone sanded on their plates, us all to cheer. The tea was also better than we usually got on the Berlin ship.

There was something strangely poignant about the gray-green sea in the evening atmosphere. Only a few seagulls were still fluttering, and at the far end of the horizon were the plumes of smoke from the coastal watch steamers.

A few beach chairs were still standing around all alone. The few people who still had the opportunity, money and time spend at the seaside had long since home. Kammrath, who always had his head full of pranks, suggested that we investigate whether a beach chair could also swim. We discovered that it could indeed. Chief Seaman Korckhaus used his Greek school knowledge to shout "Thalatta" loudly and pathetically a few times. When he had thus secured our attention, he undressed awkwardly and jumped into the master, only to hurry out a few minutes later, shivering and freezing. Boatswain Strübing and helmsman Lubke were sitting in a beach chair enjoying the view of the sea, not suspecting anything bad. We crept up too close and knocked over the beach chair. Jesus Christ, the men shouted! Today, however, we didn't care a jot about their orders and raving, we just sat on top of it with our souls content and had fun pouring the fine sea sand through the weave of the basket.

Was the first evening on the beach nice? reluctantly obeyed the trill that ordered us to our quarters.

The next morning, we were whistled out of bed at the crack of dawn. Tea and plum jam sandwiches were quickly tucked away in the always hungry stomach, then it was time to start. This time the inspection was particularly thorough. Never before had the fit of the bundles, the fatigues, ties and collars been so much scrutinized.

Then the commander came, the front, called us his "Hiddekk" and exhorted us to be on our toes, because today the big competition with the Swinemünde crew would be launched.

Our eyes lit up with the joy of battle, and we could hardly wait until the marching band started playing and we were allowed to march to our sister shtetff.

Just as we saw the masts appear, the gun salute cracked.

Oer commander turned to us: "So, pull yourselves together!"

A beautiful ship? - we , not entirely without a feeling of envy. Much bigger than ours. Not a sailing ship, but a gunboat with small armored turrets. The welcome signals fluttered on the masts. The crew stood in parade formation at the stern.

Once we were on board, we couldn't stop being amazed. Donnerwetter sa, the crew could already do something. The signal guests waved so that it was difficult to read their signals, and the drill of the tank turrets was excellent.

The biggest impression, however, was made on us by the Swinemünde school banners: "S. M. S. Pomerania!"

After the sinking of the brave Swinemünde "Pomerania" received permission to use this name.

2Im afternoon it was our turn to demonstrate our skills in combat. The guns were more modern than ours, so aiming and loading them was much easier. And because we had already been properly drilled in Berlin by Wellenberg, who rarely put his stopwatch, it was not particularly difficult for us to beat the Swinemünder. We found that we were all taller and wore better uniforms, and so we felt like the elite of the school skippers, as we were treated with the utmost courtesy as guests.

We had dinner together with the Swinoujscians on board. Afterwards, we were ordered to have a comradely get-together. The Swinoujscians had rehearsed a number of sea shanties that we were unfamiliar with and also knew how to tell very vivid stories. Almost every family here had a family member on a navy ship. At the end we played the game that is popular wherever soldiers get together "Schinkenkloppen", in which we came out on top with our mostly remarkable glove act.

The next afternoon, the two crews had a cutter race. The Swinemünder beat us almost by the length of the boat. We had a mishap that could easily have ended badly. Sailor Riedel, a somewhat and weak lad who was no at rowing, had been ordered to stay at the bow jump onto the jetty, the goal of the race, and tie up the cutter at the command "Bow!".

Lubke stood at the helm of the cutter and shouted "pull - ausl pull - aus?" with a thick end on the wood. We put our backs into it, but had to watch as the Swinemünder passed us. A hundred meters from the finish, the battle was already clearly decided. About twenty meters from the jetty

came the usual command "Hold water!". We braced ourselves against the oars and stopped the cutter from moving. After the command "Oars up!" we approached the jetty at a slow speed.

We were about five meters away from him when the command "Bug!" sounded. Riedel stood up, obediently took the line in his hand, looked around again as if to make sure he hadn't heard wrong, and jumped off. Jumping five meters from a standing start is a feat that even the best sportsman will not achieve so easily. Riedel was neither a sportsman nor even gifted at gymnastics, he was just blindly obedient. That's why he jumped off. We sat there transfixed, holding our straps up convulsively and staring in horror at the spot where Riedel had silently sunk. Lubke was the first to come to his senses. "Riedel is an unbelievable tear-jerker," was all he said, then he jumped into the water with a mighty yowl, dived two or three times and finally brought the motionless Riedel to the surface.

Riedel seemed to have fainted from fright, because on land he quickly regained consciousness, looked us with astonished eyes, until he probably realized how rarely stupid he had been. At least something must suddenly embarrassed him, for with a jerk he got up, shook off the water so that we jumped to one side, took his dripping effort from the ground and ran off, leaving a broad trail of water behind him, He heeded neither the commandant's order to hold him back nor our partly gleeful, partly relieved howls, and ran until he reached the inn, where he took off his wet uniform, dropped into bed, pulled the blanket over his ears and fell asleep. That's how we found him when we entered his room soon afterwards to let him conquer any germs that might have penetrated him with a stiff grog on the commandant's orders. Riedel was the hero of the

Day. Lr took it with a certain grandeur that we were all heartily grateful to him that he had not departed from this life.

The cold bath hadn't any of his wonderful catfish either. Only one other caught the flu, the long-limbed, pale Korckhaus, who had cheekily ventured into the water on the evening of our arrival.

It was on a Sunday morning when the commandant had ordered me to go to church, the first time I had ever been to church as a soldier.

The two crews spread out over the seldom of the nave, which was almost full due to the unexpected rush. The few members of the congregation sat huddled together in a corner and looked at us with mixed feelings. Wehell had voluntarily taken on the task of distributing the hymn books lying at the entrance and carried out his duties in the way that teachers tend to do when they have to hand out booklets. So he threw the books to sedem with varying degrees of skill. Oas gave a relatively rare hello in the church. The commander cleared his throat in annoyance but then he had to laugh at Wehell's zeal, who did not allow himself to be influenced in the slightest in the exercise of his office.

We sang the opening chorale with great fervor because we all knew it from school:

> To you, to you Jehovah, I will sing, for where is there such a God as you?

After the liturgy, we dutifully stood up and responded to the priest's words:

> Oer Lord be with you!

with the kindly meant counter-challenge: And with

> your spirit!

Now there was a sudden stop at the end of the bench, I looked around and saw Korckhaus swaying like a reed in the wind. The poor fellow's face was pale as wax. Before

When someone was still able to support him, he fell over forwards with a bright cry.

Those standing nearest jumped up and tried to help the unconscious man. The priest stood helplessly at his altar and waited until Korckhaus had been taken out. This not without considerable noise.

The clergyman had been so upset by the incident that he seemed to be stuck in his sermon several times, and his confusion grew even greater when the door suddenly opened and Korckhaus re-entered relatively cheerfully and took his old seat.

After church, our comrade was immediately taken to hospital. In the afternoon, we Berlin school skippers were allowed to on a trip to a small fishing village with a motor pinasse. There we indulged in malt coffee and Napfkuchen, and finally, on a tour of the village, we discovered an old, extensive apple tree in a shady garden surrounded by a rotten fence.

Oer fence collapsed from a kick that Riedel, who had become remarkably brave as a result of his adventure, gave it. Oa the path to the apples was no longer open, we entered the garden without much hesitation. Riedel climbed up the tree and shook the branches so that we had trouble keeping the blessing in our pockets and our toils. It was part of Riedel's style, however, that the owner had to come and threaten angrily! We retreated laughing in perfect order. Riedel was in too much of a hurry and caught his trousers on an inconspicuous branch, whereupon - ritsch-ratsch - a long tear exposed Riedel's bare backside.

The days in Swinemünde passed too quickly. Sailing, rowing, splitting and knotting, drill and theoretical lessons made up the not very strenuous service in colorful alternation. We quickly made friends with our comrades from the "Pommern" and spent many an off-duty evening with them.

her hospitable parents. One afternoon we were taken to a remote corner of the harbor to inspect some Russian mines that had been fished up. It was a very strange feeling to see these buoy-sized otters, which were capable of sending an entire ship and its crew to the bottom of the sea.

A fireworks operator explained to us how to discharge them. We watched the demonstrations from a respectful distance and were happy to learn about the physical and technical details of the ground mines and floating mines, as well as the subtle differences between contact mines and observation mines. We were happy to believe him when he told us that the minesweepers all on a so-called "suicide mission".

Lubke spat thoughtfully into the sand: -Cursed too, that's a thankless post. Danger without any glory! I'd rather an honest N-boat death somewhere in the canal or in the Biskaga, at least you can see the enemy and fight back!"

Oer Feuerwerker looked at him chastisingly: -The sailor is always in danger, and his fame cannot be measured by any one-off deeds, such as can be accomplished on land or in the . Oer minesweeper has the same fame as the Ll-boat man. Just don't let your stupid opinions get out in front of sailors, my boy, or you'll be in !"
Lubke stepped back in shame.

A few days later, we drove across the lagoon to Szczecin. A special surprise awaited us here. Our commander had given us permission to visit an Ll-boat half-flotilla. With beating hearts, we followed the very young lieutenant, who proudly showed us the individual compartments and explained the numerous facilities. It all sounded so simple, what he told us about the flooding, the periscope, the torpedo. But when we thought that so easily

an escapement could send a boat to the bottom of the sea, then we got hot and cold.

We looked in awe at the sailors, who handled the compartments as naturally and cold-bloodedly as if they were on a harmless Alster motorboat. Wouldn't this very N-boat we were looking at be lost in just a few weeks?

It was heavy and stuffy in the small box, and the cramped conditions weighed heavily on our hearts. We were glad to finally breathe the fresh air in the harbor again.

We marched thoughtfully to the train that was to take us back to Berlin. It was true, the sailor was always in danger. But the demands on courage and self-control became ever greater, the more the technical inventions of war forced the warrior to forego open battle and to track down the enemy unseen and alone. Certainly, dying alone and helpless at sea was more common than dying on land, and it was certainly crueler to perish unwounded on the high seas than to bleed to death from a bullet.

We felt the full weight of the profession to which we had committed ourselves. During the voyage, Lubke raved about the beauty of life as a privateer, which a privateer war would bring with it.

-The best thing is a small cruiser or at least an auxiliary cruiser. Imagine what that means, lying in wait, capturing, looting, landing in enemy harbors, destroying installations, sinking ships/

Riedel looked at him doubtfully: "And finally be sunk yourself/ Wehest laughed maliciously. "Well, you've already seen what it looks like underwater/

Strübing stretched out his long legs and lolled. "The only real thing is the N-boat. Children of men, it's one thing to race through the sea like a shark and then to pounce on the enemy, pulling them down one by one and tearing them apart. The N-boat man himself becomes a predatory fish/

The commandant again gave us an overview of the political events in Berlin. The crossing of the Oüna had been forced, Riga had been occupied. Wellenberg had a serene gleam in his eye: -If we recapture the entire Baltic Sea, we will have won for all eternity. The countries up there are all German. I know every harbor up there, every major city. It's like coming to Wismar or Lübeck/

We looked at the map with burning eyes. Jesus, how great and powerful Germany could have been if only it had had the strength to defend its heritage. Cursed religious battles that made Germans fight against their brothers instead of against the enemy at the command of foreign powers! Cursed battles of faith that made the Germans look suspiciously at the confession of their blood brother instead of looking at the wide world and the near power of the empire.

We loved reading Einhalt's story and the accounts of the glory of the Hanseatic League, the tales of the Vikings, their voyages, adventures, victories and downfalls.

It was quite something to be a German! And we boys were determined, when the war came for us, to fight for it, to be able to take up the mantle and raise Germany to greatness again.

Difficult hours came, in which we suspected that the race to victory could probably not be won by our army. The battles in Flanders cost a lot of blood, more blood than the weakened army was able to shed. And the mood of the population on the streets became ever more bitter, ever more hostile. The marauders appeared openly and were rarely confronted by the police. We young school sailors were now mobbed almost daily. Hysterical women spat in front of us when we greeted an officer.

Oa it didn't help much that we clenched our teeth. Oa's tears of anger were so cursedly loose that we were ashamed of them. Hell, too, why was the day so sern that called us to arms on a ship!

In the east, Ludendorff struck: the Baltic islands of Osel, Moon and Oagoe were taken abruptly, and it became clear that the Russian army no longer had any inner strength after the revolution had killed its soul. Oa's road to Petersburg was srei. Oa came the news that Russia become a Soviet republic in a new, terribly bloody revolution. Lenin was the name of the Red Tsar, and next to him stood a Jew, Trohki?

While the patriotic citizens in Germany cheered and thought that the war had been won at the last moment, the commander shook his head: "We should never have driven Russia so far into misery. How are we to achieve a real, lasting peace now?

Chancellor Michaelis had resigned. Then came that Catholic enemy of Bismarck, Count Hertling, the professor of a little German philosophy, and became chancellor. In those days, when the ever-satisfied were lulled by a renewed sense of security, the commander seemed almost disturbed. We boys were sometimes glad not to see him, because the sight of him made us sad. Things must have been bad for Germany, internally and externally, worse than public opinion knew.

The twelfth Battle of the Isonzo ended with a brilliant victory for the German and Austrian troops, who then advanced as far as the lower Piave.

In the west, the great battle of Lambrai, which had begun with a stormy victory run by the English and an even more unstoppable breakout drive by the tanks, had gradually run out of steam due to the will to resist of the Prussian core troops.

troops, who had recovered very quickly from the dismay, came to a halt.

2 On December 15, an armistice was signed with the Soviet Republic at the Oberost headquarters in Brest-Litovsk.

German troops were hurriedly thrown from the east to the west. To the west, on whose shores the American troops had just landed. With burning hearts we stood at the railroad tracks and let the transport trains pass us by. Rarely did one of the soldiers who had been thrown into the last decisive battles wave a weary greeting to us. Their joy had long since frozen over.

The people of Berlin were tired and desperate. Shivering with cold, they crept through the streets in their thin, shabby clothes, trying to get hold of a morsel here and there, which was given away without tickets. The mood sank even lower when it gradually became known that the Russians were making every possible subterfuge to thwart an early peace treaty. And then it became known that once again the government and the Supreme Army Command could not agree on the terms.

The gullible are hoping for a Christmas truce.
This hope was quickly buried.

It didn't look good in the world after Christmas, not even in nature. The weather in the city was dreadfully cold and wet. Weather that made you ill, especially mentally ill. I had a suffocating feeling of having to sit with my parents around the half-cold stove heated with stinking wet peat and nothing to give myself. There was no Christmas tree this year. The few fir branches looked bare and unfriendly. We tried to make jokes, but they quickly froze. Then we talked about the old days. "Do you remember? Christmas? We had carp in the evening, and on the first holiday

There was a goose on the table for lunch and big fat apples in its belly. And there were nuts and gingerbread and apples and marzipan. And the twinkling lights and all the presents!"

When we felt how sad we were becoming, we talked about the Christmas of coming peace. Everything should as beautiful as before. No, it had to be much, much nicer. Because then we would have gotten to know the hardship and could rejoice much more deeply in the peace we had regained!

I closed my eyes and dreamed of times to come when, as a young naval officer, I would be celebrating Christmas with my sailors somewhere far away.

At the request of the nuts, the compliant German government invited all belligerent states to take part in the peace negotiations in Brest-Litovsk. It was to be a peace without victors and vanquished, which would be negotiated there from January 4, 1918.

On January 1st, we fired our usual New Year's salute, carried out the flag parade and heard the commander's slogan.

She was tougher and more determined than ever.

"We Germans have become lonely because we are to die. But if we have to die, we also want to take our enemies with us to the grave. Use the time you live to prepare for the decision. That is the soldier's only wisdom. Let the coming year stand before this realization!"

We took up our duties with tenacious determination. Our nautical duties were now limited, but the commander personally us to the issues of world history. We now learned about the causes of the rise and fall of the ancient states. Athens and Sparta,

Rome and Bgzanz came alive again. Hannibal and Caesar, Lycurgus, Salon, Alexander and Oschlngis-Hhan, Frederick the Great and Napoleon taught us the secret of the seer's will that overcomes all resistance.

It was during these winter months that we grew into a community of young people with warm hearts and a lively desire for knowledge. I wasn't the only one who was estranged from my family, who were barely able to detach their thoughts from the worries and hardships of the day. We hardly felt it. Nor did we suffer from the fact that we were regarded as outsiders and loners in our family and school. Only when a teacher friend of my family once said mockingly in my presence that these were all puberty symptoms that would disappear with time did I shout out my contempt, my indignation, even my disgust at a time that was anxious instead of tough. My father was extremely embarrassed by the performance formally asked the teacher to apologize. I was sent to my room until I had dried out. "If you don't show a different character soon, I will deregister you from the school ship/

I looked my father firmly in the eye. "In the same hour I will leave your house/

Then I went to my room and felt painfully that a chasm had opened up between me and my family, a chasm that I didn't know if it ever close again.

I realized that the training ship had become my home.

Mass strikes began in January. The streets echoed with curses against the army command, above all against Ludendorff, against the army, against the "war extenders", by which was meant all men at the front and at home who did not throw down their rifles

and wanted to make peace at any price. Blood was shed when the revolting masses refused to be sent home. The word revolution echoed through the streets and was whispered in the houses. It was almost good form to be a little red-faced. In those difficult days, the commander suddenly asked during roll call who was prepared to defend the state arms if the need of the hour required it. He was visibly moved when the entire crew took a step forward, right down to the youngest of us.

How terrible it was to have to watch how, just when the decisive battles were being fought, people who had been incited were stabbing the state in the back. On whose behalf were they doing such vital work? Did they even know who they were working for?

We believed we had the right take up arms against traitors and shoot them in the name of a bleeding and struggling nation. We learned how to use the hand grenade and were given live ammunition.

Our commander did not hesitate for a moment to lead us, who were almost all still children, into the fire if the moment demanded it. And we young lads glowed with pride and enthusiasm at being allowed to help the country. The cadets in Lichterfelde and Potsdam were our allies, and we met up with some of them from time to time. With alert senses, we listened to all the rumors of clashes, strikes and preparations for revolution.

There were many whispers. Emperor Charles of Austria was said to be a traitor. The Austrian peoples wanted to secede, it was said. In fact, the Czechs had mutinied a long time ago and defected to the Russians. On January 8, President Wilson proclaimed his fourteen points as a program of peace.

"Ludendorf should be made dictator/ rumbled the commander, "then the decomposing toxins would finally be removed from the German body/

In February, peace was concluded with the Ukraine. Once again, the German army advanced in the east. Oer success was that peace was concluded with Soviet Russia in Brest-Litovsk on March 3 without further negotiations. Many colors were added to the new map. Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Finland and Nkraine left the Russian body politic.

Two days later, a preliminary peace was concluded with Romania, and the final peace treaty was signed on May 7.

And yet there was no peace in the East, still no peace. For the famine in Germany and Austria had become so great that further territory had to be occupied for food reasons. In addition, the Soviet Russians did not care in the least about the peace agreement, but did they liked. And they liked to do what was detrimental to Germany and its plans. Oa burning question was Finland, which had become an independent state. A state from which Germany had promised itself a great deal - a German prince was already prepared to accept the crown offered to him in this essentially Germanic country.

But the Soviets had no intention of leaving the country. Frederick Charles of Hesse, the new Finnish king, was unable to take office because the Reds had occupied Helsinki, the capital, by the end of January. Finnish General Mannerheim's shoe corps was too weak to throw the enemy, and even the Prussian Jäger Battalion 27, which consisted of Finnish volunteers, was not enough to master the situation, even though this battalion went into battle with Prussian bravery.

Sweden denied the Finns the help they had asked for. Oa it was again Germany that had to help at the last minute.

Admiral Meurer and his ships advanced as far as Helsinki, and Count von der Golh's expeditionary corps finally captured the capital in mid-April together with the Finnish shoe corps. Almost at the same time, Colonel von Brandenstein's German division captured the town of Lahti.

In May, Finland was reported as liberated. But much precious German blood had been shed and irretrievable time had wasted. The training ship also suffered two casualties off Helsinki.

There was still no peace in the east! There were still forty divisions missing for the decisive battle in the west.

The situation was obvious and confused. The early fire of peace had died out and the darkness of death lay over Germany. And the night was all the deeper because only a few souls were still able to shine with faith in their duty.

Blow after blow, the hammer blows of fate thundered down. We Fungen struggled to comprehend the speed with which events were unfolding.

Wellenberg once expressed how we : "It's like being in a typhoon. The heavy waves break over the ship, we cling to beams, masts and ropes and don't know whether well be swept under in the next moment. We hope that the sun will break through the clouds again at the last moment and calm the raging sea.

This typhoon had already lasted too long and our nerves could hardly take the strain. If only we could finally be deployed. But the waiting, the eternal waiting!

The mood of the people on the street fluctuated between exaggerated hope and dull apathy. There were some who thought that even the most horrible death was still better than this slow dying. There

had already reached the point where officers were being harassed on the street. And the behavior of the pushers wrapped in heavy furs became bolder and more shameless. If you had a lot of money, you could buy anything. But only those who acquired it dishonestly had a lot of money. For the dishonest, there were thousands of surreptitious ways, for the honest there was only one straight path, the path of duty and renunciation.

We had learned that it was still possible to cook a quite reasonable soup from potato and turnip waste and were happy to do without acorn coffee in the morning and blackberry tea in the evening. Instead, we had soup in the morning, at lunchtime, in the afternoon and in the evening, alternating between bread, turnips and, on particularly festive occasions, potatoes. We were young and resilient enough to gradually get used to this diet and even be grateful for the small changes. Only the elderly, who could no longer get used to the Krtegs diet, suffered badly. Countless strong. The strong, as well as the infants, for whom there was hardly any milk and semolina, had to die.

Rur when the flu across the country in big waves, we were susceptible, then almost every second person was in bed, and some died because they didn't get enough food to make up for the loss of strength.

When the flu finally infected the trenches, it incapacitated entire regiments and tore down whole lines of defense. And that had a worse effect in the West than a lost battle. Ever stronger detachments of rested American regiments, ever larger piles of unspent colonial troops charging against the bled-out, weakened, much too thinly manned German positions. And the enemy's will to destroy Germany was concentrated in one hand. Marshal Fach had been appointed supreme commander of the Entente armies on April 20.

The German Supreme Army Command decided to travel once again from the entire line in the west. They knew that the German soldier was still by far the bravest soldier in the world in the attack. The German army had around two hundred and thirty divisions in total, and around one hundred and ninety were now in the west. There were no more Ersah from home, at least none who were fit for war. And we very young ones who longed to go out were still too weak to be sent into the barrage. At best, we were enough to be led through the machine gun fire.

The only chance of success that the Supreme Army Command saw lay in the surprising deployment of the storm troops, because war material had become scarce, very scarce and bad. The strikes of the munitions workers, completely dominated by the Red International, did the rest to make the material even scarcer, and the sabotage was already taking on such forms that no material was considered reliable any more.

One of our older shipmates, who had been wounded as a lieutenant in the naval artillery in Flanders, told us about these devastating consequences of secret treason. The commander had listened to the report with clenched fists. "Why doesn't our wimpy government create a law that anyone against the wall who endangers the fighting troops physically or mentally with sabotage or even just with bad-mouthing? If we perish, these honorable gentlemen with their eternally spotless vests of guilt will be our gravediggers, babbling in an unctuous voice about God's will and the inescapable destiny of fate/

Oer sunge Leutnant looked at his shot arm. "Out here, nobody wanted to the word 'homeland' or even 'government' anymore, or they had to spit it out/

On March 21, the first major attack had begun. The German regiments ran forward with fierce fury, to victory and death. They succeeded in surprising the

Enemy positions were torn apart. There were dangerous mutinies in the French ranks. Paris seemed lost. Then came the moment when Marshal Fach took over the supreme command and ended the chaos.

And this a stop to the German advance, a stop made of material and people.

And again the German front rose up and stormed forward. No longer very swift-footed, but instead marching tenaciously. The battle began on April 9. There was fierce hand-to-hand fighting, bayonet attacks, moments in which the butt cracked down on helmets and brains. Portuguese regiments scattered, English and French were thrown back. German troops fought, who had a ram throughout the world: Guards, Alpine Corps, Bavarian Storm Corps. And succeeded in winning, doggedly conquering kilometer after kilometer, so that Paris was again shaken by shivers of fever. But the French government was strong, strong above all in its hatred of Germany. It hoped for the final hour, which would belong to it, because it had the strongest hatred in its heart and thus the stronger faith. She waited for the hour of internal dissolution, if not of Germany, then at least of her allies. The Pittsburg Agreement had already been concluded in May, in which Czecho-Slovakia experienced the hour of its birth through Masargk and Benesch under the blessing of the Entente, although it was not immediately allowed to see the light of day. But the state existed, it lived through treason in the heart of Austria and was just waiting to become a living reality in the hour of the old empire's death. Empress Zita's representatives had been negotiating in Paris for a long time, and the Habsburg Charles no longer thought German, but had become so pious that he could only move Roman ideas in his soul. But they demanded the death of Germany. The corpse poison Habsburg poisoned the body of the army.

The brave German Lonrad von Höhendors had to leave, as did Count Lzernin, who had not yet been sufficiently repentant and was succeeded by the dark man Count Burian.

But in the West it was a matter of life and death? A million rested, supple Americans stood on the soil of France at the end of June, waiting for the final hour, for midnight. And one hour before midnight, Austria-Hungary had died at the hands of the Habsburgs! 2lm Isonzo lay the ruins of the brave German parts of the Austrian army.

Like lead in the fire, the German assault troops in the west melted away. The assault battalions still had an average of five hundred men.

The third German blow was struck on May 27, the fourth on July 15. It was a leap into death. On July 18, Foch a counterattack. Slowly, the hollowed-out German front buckled under this terrible blow. All was not yet lost, however, when a strong hand in Germany the tide, when a powerful idea once again inflamed the almost burnt-out hearts to bright enthusiasm, when a man like Ludendorff was given all power in the field and at home. But home and government did not recognize the greatness of the moment.

In those fateful weeks, a distant relative who had been caught by the enemy's iron in Palestine came to visit.

He reported strange things about the successes of an English agent, Lawrence, who had succeeded in leading the Arabs into war against the Turks, their brothers in faith, despite the proclamation of a holy war of all Mohammedans. Jerusalem was taken from the Turks, Damascus was conquered. Turkey slowly bled to death. Even the Bulgarians could no longer hold out and abandoned their positions. For them, the war was over. The few German divisions

could not hold the immense fronts. They bravely stood strong at their lonely, advanced post.

The final hour was .

To its own astonishment, France saw that victory was almost assured. It gratefully appointed Fach as Marshal of France. He laid down only one commandment, one supreme law of warfare: to smash the German army in ever new advances.

For a long time now, only the real warriors, the taciturn, unpathetic bearers of a duty that knows neither thanks nor hope, been fighting in the remains of the shot-up trenches, in muddy funnels, in completely inadequate bunkers. Starved, exhausted, ragged, they threw themselves again and again against the superiority of the rested enemy, clinging to a piece of blood-soaked ground to the last, working until the barrels of the machine guns glowed, throwing hand grenades doggedly and waiting again until the next attack came - or death.

The loud enthusiasm had long since given way to imperious defiance, the attitude that only a warrior can muster who has found himself in the face of horror and destruction, in those hours when it would be easy to be a coward unseen.

Again and again, the enemy's short, violent advances had been repulsed with little loss of terrain, nor were the tactical retreats to be equated with lost battles. Until the south of August, when for the first time a very large loss of terrain was suffered in a short period of time and also proved for the first time that the Red agitation had not spread its corrosive seeds in vain at home. Some units openly mutinied and threatened the volunteers who threw themselves into the breach.

During those weeks in August we were trained in infantry to such an extent that, at least in theory, the commandments of fire discipline became second nature to us. We reckoned that if the enemy really did reach the German front

the war would be carried far into the homeland. Perhaps it would then also become necessary to shoot at the Reds.

Every now and then one of us his black and white armband torn off. Wehell had once been insulted by an agitated woman and then spat on. And Riede! had been grabbed and beaten by two guys. There were hardly ever any police around.

I would have preferred it if we had been taken from our parents' home and school and barracked either in Berlin or Swtnemünde. The cadets were much better off than us at that time.

Our nerves could barely withstand the constant tension. We were overstimulated. Even on the smallest of occasions, we bumped each other and called each other names. And a thaw was quickly found when the friction became more serious. At grammar school, I was soon regarded as a real bully, a brute who was obviously just looking for opportunities to beat up his classmates. After a long time, I was punished at school again. I my detention hours with a grudge. I waited for the moment of the big explosion, then I would also take revenge on the teachers who tormented me without understanding. The indifference, the glee with which some of my schoolmates spoke of the imminent end of the war, of Germany's demise, irritated me beyond words; hardly anyone still felt like doing any work for school. Most of them spent the afternoons, and soon the mornings too, wandering around the town, picking up snippets of conversation, waiting for the opportune moment when a market stall somewhere was knocked over and looted. They were always up to their necks in gossip and terrible news, sometimes bringing home a loaf of bread, sometimes a lump of margarine. You could say that the mood was well below freezing. There was almost no authority anywhere. Least of all

at school. The teachers were perplexed when they received Indian howls at the start of lessons. I used to this as a prank in which I enthusiastically took part, but I saw it as one of the signs of the general disintegration that the commandant so often spoke of. At home, I now kept a very low profile and made every effort to avoid any clashes. I hoped that this would be the best way to do duty at the moment of decision. My parents had never given me permission fight. That's why I wanted to spare them any shocks and upsets beforehand.

On August 14, the Kaiser had summoned the Crown Council to Spa, the seat of the Grand Headquarters. The Emperor had himself reported and proved helpless in the face of the demands of the army, which was still vouching for an honest peace, and which Ludendorff in particular put forward unwaveringly. Oer Reichskanzler Hertling was too much the pious Catholic old man devoted to his habits to realize how much depended in this hour on the will to resist to the last, the will from which alone a decent peace can be concluded.

Oas a result of the Crown Council, the government instructed to bring about peace negotiations with the enemy at a suitable time, naturally as soon as possible. If necessary, the mediation of Holland was to requested.

After these discussions, the Emperor received the Austrian monarch and his chancellor Burian, who notoriously demanded peace at any price.

It had not been possible to rouse at least the governments of Germany and Austria to a single brave act of rebellion against the impending disaster.

The enemy's will to annihilate did not stand up to the last hour, which Llemenceau had so much hoped for.

All-German defiance. Llemenceau hated Germany abysmally, and he made no secret of his hatred; he wanted to destroy the Germans, to exterminate them, to wipe them off the face of the earth, and it out that a passionate hatred is indeed capable of great deeds. It harmed the governments in Germany and Austria that they did not also have men who could hate the enemy of their country. To the death.

Nothing decisive happened that made the day shine.

At the end of August, the badly wounded army had to fall back again. But the enemy had so exhausted itself in its rapid advances that it too was only able to move very slowly.

Since the German government had obviously lost heart, as it did not want to pull itself together to at least rouse the homeland, which had been spared devastation up to that point, to resistance, the allies had also very quickly lost heart. In mid-September the Bulgarian front broke apart completely, and at the end of September Bulgaria concluded an armistice with the Entente, followed by the peace treaty on October 3, which swept the Tsar away from Bulgaria.

Angarn and Turkey lay unprotected, each day could bring the unhindered invasion of enemy troops. And again it was German regiments, taken from the west, that were thrown into the breach. Now it was only a matter of time before Turkey sank to its knees.

Emperor Charles of Austria had promised not to any peace steps without Germany, but every day would bring new rumors of partly secret, partly open efforts that to a special peace for Austria. In those days we told each other the sad political joke: "Why is Austria better off than us?" "Because Austria has a better ally?"

But the German government dithered, it did nothing. Hertling remained silent. He didn't even seem to notice what was actually being played out. In fact, it seemed as if he didn't even want to notice. His complete apathy was so annoying even to his political friends from the Center that they felt compelled to grumble against him, if not very loudly, at least audibly.

We were feverish with impatience. Would the German government do nothing? Wouldn't they at least send in a few regiments to keep order, clean up the streets, get the deserters and informers out of the bars? We told the police about pubs in the north and east of Berlin where the criminals had set up headquarters. Nothing happened. We had found that regular counseling centers for deserters had been set up in the waiting rooms of long-distance train stations and passed on reports about this. And again, nothing happened. Now and then a bourgeois newspaper dared to criticize the government and the chancellor very timidly and point out that there was a suspicious rustling in the woodwork. Nowhere was there any sign that measures were being taken to resist the disaster. It is true that at the beginning of September the State Secretary of the Foreign Office had gone to Vienna to see for himself on the spot that the old Austria was about to disintegrate into many parts, and it is true that the Emperor of Austria had assured Herr von Hinhe that he would never betray his allegiance to Germany, although a speedy peace was the only way to save his empire, but no one really believed in the Habsburg's loyalty any longer. And when, in mid-September, that emperor humbly asked for peace behind Germany's back, when he betrayed the millions of fallen soldiers and the millions of those who were still doing their heavy duty out of loyalty, only out of loyalty, it was not so much a feeling of sadness that fell on Germany.

but rather a feeling of supreme disgust at so much meanness and baseness.

We had just finished our navigation lesson when the news came to us. Wellenberg had come out in a rage and told us the news in dry words that shook with irrepressible anger.

Without a word, Strübing stepped in front of the picture of Emperor Charles, which displayed next to the picture of the German Emperor in place of the old Emperor Franz Joseph, tore it off the nail and hurled it against a cupboard, shattering it into a hundred pieces.

Wellenberg slapped Strübing sympathetically on the shoulder and walked out.

"Oer Dank Habsburgs," said Lubke, spitting over to the shards.

"Now we have to march to Vienna and get this fellow out."

Before the end of the day, the commander had us line up again and gave us a short lecture on the disastrous role played by the House of Habsburg in the history of the German unification movement. "The internal German side of the betrayal is indeed shocking, but the foreign policy consequences are incalculable." He concluded with these words. The first consequences we felt were countless leaflets that were distributed in public. These appeals were framed in black and red and gold, calling for peace at any price and, above all, calling Ludendorff the most vicious names. "Peace-freedom-bread" was the recurring slogan on almost all the leaflets. And from the streets, frightened women spoke that it was madness for the German troops to continue bleeding when the Austrians were already going home. There were nasty scenes at the railroad stations when troops were being loaded for the front. Women attacked non-commissioned officers, even officers, and screamed,

scolded them and tried to beat them. Wearing red flowers became fashionable in certain circles. Demonstrations and marches were the order of the day, and they could no longer be dispersed without bloodshed. Hunger marches place in front of the town hall and in the Lustgarten.

Ole Lage had become untenable. 2lm SO. September, Hertling presented the Emperor in Spa with his request for release. Negotiations to bring about an armistice were to be immediately. This was clear. The only thing that was unclear was the path that should be taken to achieve this without shaking the final trust. There were sharp differences of opinion between the Supreme Army Command and the government, whose position was represented by State Secretary von Hinhe. Hertling played a pitiful role, the role of the helpless man who cannot look danger in the eye. For him, everything was "not so bad". And Hertling preferred to leave just at the moment when armistice negotiations, which could not be held up by government crises, parliamentary votes or postponements, were to be initiated.

We had believed that a dictatorship, or at least a very veiled form of dictatorship, would come after Hertling's departure and were guessing at various men in the army and the government. The appointment of Ludendorff or Hindenburg seemed the most likely. Very soon, however, the rumor leaked out that the Kaiser did not want a dictatorship, but had rather called for an expansion of the government base to the left. The commander shook his head in disbelief. -That is political suicide!"

Count Rädern declined to Chancellor of the Reich. After some back and forth, Prince Max von Baden took over the post. That was on October 2. In the meantime, the parties in the Reichstag were almost fighting over the posts and postings. Negotiations and delays, postponements, promises and bribes began, so that the Supreme Army Command

became impatient. For outside, the enemy was constantly pushing forward in new thrusts order to get the law of action completely in his hands and thus the opportunity to come up with conditions instead of negotiations.

In Germany, however, names and numbers were buzzing around as if it were a random election. Grzberger, Trimborn, Gröber, Scheidemann, Bauer, Hausmann?

They were happy to have positions, and parties behind them were beaming with pride at having caught a favorable moment to successfully claim power.

In Spa, the Supreme Army Command waited for decisions that the Berlin government, in its stupidity, greed and mendacity, did not want to make because it lacked the courage be "unpopular".

In Spa, the proud declaration had been made that the German army was in a position to protect the homeland until the spring of 1919, albeit at the greatest sacrifice. In Berlin, however, the parliament had already lost the last remnants of a sense of honor, a sense of duty, a sense of responsibility to the nation, and blathered on about peace at any price. Hindenburg and Ludendorff did not believe in a general collapse. In Berlin, however, this collapse was already an established fact. It seemed as if the Reds and Blacks did not want the will to resist to be aroused at all. Groups of all kinds of bribed or stubborn, fantastic or dangerous "friends of peace" gathered in front of the Reichstag to demonstrate against any further resistance. And the representatives of the Soviet Russian government did their bit with a lively propaganda campaign to stir up opposition to any further warfare and it as widely as possible.

We often went to that house on Unter den Linden and watched the people going in and out. At the same time

we noticed that there were a lot of Jews among them. However, Oskar Lohn, a Jew and Social Democratic member of the Reichstag, was also employed in the Soviet Russian embassy as the syndic and right-hand man of the Sovetsuden Josfe. As a resultJews from the East in particular flocked to the embassy to the kind of secretive business and deals that had always made a lot of money in turbulent times.

In the first days of October, the Soviet-Russian embassy was almost eerily busy. And from the satisfied, self-satisfied grins of the Jews who hurriedly the building, it was clear that business was good, frighteningly good.

From Spa, however, Ludendorff urged the government to recognize the seriousness and greatness of the hour by forming a national united front. In the early hours of October 4, the Reich Chancellor Prince Max von Baden sent the German government's note to the President of the United States via the Swiss government, in which Germany declared its willingness to enter into peace negotiations on the basis of Wilson's points and, above all, requested the immediate conclusion of an armistice.

Those fabulous fourteen points that Wilson had spoken of especially in his last speech on September 27, were already regarded as a kind of panacea to the frightened citizens of Germany now resorted. How often did we now hear the words:
"Wilson will make everything right . .. We just have to have faith . . . The Americans mean so well with us ... They are true Christians over there ...

The commander became furious when the talk turned to the fourteen points. "There are still more than enough idiots in Germany who trust some infamous foreigner, if only he can roll his eyes and preach unctuously, more than a German commander,

who calls things by the right name. I generally distrust every foreigner, especially when they are at war with us/

In conversations, we often heard people standing in groups on the streets and talking excitedly, expressing the view that we should not under any circumstances irritate our enemies. It would best if we made a sacrifice to them so that they would see our good will.

Wehell once asked harmlessly what such a sacrifice should of. Then a woman started bawling: -The Hindenburg and the Ludendorff, these mass murderers, should be tied up and sent over there, then peace will come immediately/

As we walked on sadly, Wehell whispered grimly: -They would sell their own children for a penny. When the order to shoot finally comes, I won't feel sorry for any of the people I hit/

So we all felt like Wehell. If only the order would finally come! But the order didn't come. We waited and waited, and our hearts tightened because we were worried.

A whole nation waited and listened into the night, hoping that a new star, the star of eternal peace, would rise from America.

It was almost considered a sign of criminal stupidity to go to the front, and the number of deserters grew from hour to . However, the enemy did not think of sparing the lives of their soldiers in the last hour, but instead let them advance even more relentlessly against the German front, pushing forward again and again until they were completely worn down. Slowly, step by step, mostly in exemplary order, our troops withdrew to the next interception positions and received the gradually advancing enemy with well-directed, furious bursts of fire. The enemy was also only able to advance with difficulty, his attacks became weaker and more sluggish. He also began to look more and more longingly towards America. Marshal Fach

but sent his soldiers into the fire again and again. What did he, who wanted to destroy Germany, care about the peace of justice that Wilson had talked about?

In Austria, Emperor Charles had promised his people autonomy in a proclamation in mid-October. However, he was not the man or the character to the final hour with dignity. Nor did he know how to prevent the Hungarian troops from leaving their positions at the very moment when the Italians, supported by the British and Americans, launched their decisive attack. This led to an undeserved victory.

At last the first echo from America came into the terrible tension of waiting. So dishonest and brutal that the honor-loving parts of the German people were shaken with disgust. But the honor-loving parts were very much in the minority, they were regarded by the public as war prolongers, as bloodhounds or, as we fertilize, as romantic dreamers and fantastic idealists whose enthusiasm for war had to be dampened as quickly as possible with a few volleys of bullets.

When he the note to Wilson, Prince Max von Baden had spoken a few cheap phrases about the final battle to the death that would have to be fought if necessary. But when Wilson tauntingly set humiliating conditions, he was one of the first to bow humbly to accept the blow.

Before any negotiations take place, Wilson demanded, the occupied territories and Alsace-Lorraine had to be evacuated!

A freeze, a horror went through Germany. What would happen if the promised negotiations came to nothing? what if there no real negotiations at all?

Wilson, who and promised the peace of justice and the immediate disarmament of Germany, said nothing about this. His justice

Humiliation, renunciation. Even before a word of peace had been spoken, Germany was to break its sword and hand itself over its armored enemies.

Could there even be peace between a disarmed man and a cruel powerful man?

We had new hope because we believed that the government and the people as a whole would rise up against the desecration of the warrior's honor and put up the last fierce resistance. And Wilson, the Freemason, had devised yet another humiliation. He asked whether the German Chancellor was only speaking for the powers that had so far waged the war? Wilson thus implied that he knew and recognized other powers in Germany.

Which powers were they? Certainly not those who defended Germany's honor. Rather, it was an appeal to the professional traitors to the country, to the mentally cramped do-gooders. An appeal that did not fail to have an effect on the circles of the inferior to whom it was addressed. It didn't take long before it could be heard everywhere that nothing could help but to bite the bullet and accept the conditions. After all, the Americans were not the enemies of our people, but at most of the government, and above all of the Supreme Army Command, which had not the slightest regard for the attitudes of the nations at war with us.

By the time of the government's reply to Wilson on October 12, the attitude of the inferior had already triumphed. The language of the government was gentle, without pride, it was obliging and amiable, without honor, it was consenting, without defiance. The occupied territories would be evacuated, Alsace-Lorraine as well, and the Chancellor would have the right to be not only in the ranks of the government, but also of the

German people, as the government relied on the large majority of the Reichstag.

Wilson had obviously only wanted to find out how many kicks the German government would put up with and how much strain the honor of the people's representation could bear. He must have been pleasantly surprised!

The voices in Germany calling for a strong arm, for the concentration of the will to resist, were few and far between. Anyone who spoke publicly of the duty to defend German honor was laughed at. He could still be glad not to be stoned to death.

On October 14, Wilson again sent a Red to Germany. He became even clearer. Now he could demand that the German people first get rid of the power that hitherto determined the fate of the ration. This meant nothing other than that Germany should first make a revolution before it was allowed to enter into peace negotiations!

This is what Wilson's peace of justice looked like! The first demand was disarmament, the second was revolution!

However, Wilson was able to make peace with what was still Germany, and his peace would certainly be praised as just by those who were used to kissing the hands of their tormentors.

Again and again people appeared in Germany who lifted Wilson to the skies and demanded that people put their trust in him because he was a true philanthropist, a real Christian and a selfless man. It was considered disturbing that people like Hindenburg and Ludendorsf were still allowed to go about their business. Leaflets demanded that the two finally disappear to make way for a better time.

Belief in the WLIsonian world solution spread through Germany like a disease, only far more dangerous than the flu.

Ludendorfs saw the unheard-of danger and went to Berlin, attended a cabinet meeting on October 17, demanded an honorable, clear German response and hoped that the view that all was by no means lost if only the will overcame the mental paralysis would have prevailed.

Three days later, the government replied to Wilson. Again an answer without horns and claws, without sword and armor. The German government was truly a dolk government and believed confidently that Wilson would never expect it to do anything dishonorable.

And again three days later, Wilson's third reply arrived. Line Privatantwott, so to speak, because Wilson was still setting conditions, the fulfillment of which was to be the prerequisite for the actual negotiations. For until then he had not even thought of submitting the German government's position to his allies? A far-improving private citizen thus assumed the role of a world judge, became the pope of an alleged world conscience, which, like religion wants to be the voice of God, pretended to be the organ of higher, true justice. And whoever stepped before the throne of the new pope had to relinquish all his own will, all his own honor, in order to be a vessel of the grace to be expected.

too fine.

This is how Wilson sat enthroned on the papal throne of eternal justice, autocratic, sinless, omniscient and infallible. This is how he wanted to be seen and believed by the world, and this is how the obedient, frightened, confused German world saw him and believed him. So she came to his throne, sacrificing the last thing, honor, in order to acquire the citizenship of a new, better, just world with this sacrifice.

The third of Wilson's oracles brutally stated that if the King of Prussia, in his office, were to continue military operations, he would have to

rulers and monarchical autocrats remained at their posts/ no peace negotiations would remain unopened, that the demand for surrender would be made. Wilson made little effort to disguise these draconian demands and deliberate betrayals of honor with the usual diplomatic phrases. The world-destroying, nation-destroying, Masonic "justice" showed its true in disguise. It no longer needed to show any consideration, as the news it received from Germany clearly stated that the German soul was already so poisoned that the body would hardly put up any resistance worth mentioning.

The commander's face had pale during these weeks, his eyes were deeply rimmed. You could see that he hardly slept at all. The soldiers had buried the hope of being able to conclude an honest peace through Wilson. They had very soon realized that the fourteen points so often mentioned were nothing more than bait to catch the gullible, the cowards and the oummen.

Thus Hlndenburg and Ludendorff, when they drove indignantly to Berlin the next day to save what could still be saved, could justifiably point to the army and declare that it would fight the world in any case.

And with the army, we knew, there would also be a number of determined volunteers home. The commander told us that he had reported to Ludendorff that the militarily trained youth were available and were waiting for the order to deploy.

The tides of hatred raged against Ludendorff, no name was so reviled. He was seen as a disturber of the peace who was foolish enough to prefer to go down in honor rather than continue to live like a slave in humiliating bondage.

The imprecations against him would be accompanied by cheers from the streets of Berlin for Liebknecht, for Scheidemann, for Erzberger, for all the men and powers who have made peace possible.

at any price. Arm in arm with the Social Democrats, the priestly representatives of the Center advocated submission, against the will to fight on. From the same pulpits from which war sermons had preached months ago, unctuous speeches were now sounding about the necessity of an immediate peace treaty, about the Christian duty to have confidence in the powers of Wilson's peace idea. Particularly influential and knowledgeable priests even proclaimed the justice of God's judgment, which now stood over the world to punish the guilty.

The Ludwlgskirche in Wilmersdorf became a source of this proclamation, and we could see people streaming in there on Sundays whose outward appearance nothing like that of a church, as is usually the case with the faithful.

The Kaiser received Hindenburg and Ludendorff in Berlin and assured by them that fight would have to continue at all costs. On 2S. October we marched to the palace to pay homage to the generals. Many curious people had gathered to learn about the state of the negotiations. Some of them waved good-naturedly at us. Most of them turned their backs on us.

We knew that grave decisions made in those hours. But we could not have guessed that Ludendorff was a lonely battle for German honor, a battle in which Hindenburg, Admiral Scheer and a few military leaders stood by him, but in which he was quite alone in his realization of the abysmal danger, and in which he also had to fight almost alone through the furious arguments with the completely unsoldierly and wimpishly malicious Vice-Chancellor von Pager, who stood in for Prince Max von Baden, who was ill.

So lonely was the German commander that after the hours-long battle he had to exclaim in shock that

Germany was now lost. The Kaiser was too helpless to stand in front of his generals or even his entire nation. He preferred to wait and see how the oinge developed. He therefore did not even think of fending off the poisoned arrows that were fired against his commander from cowardly ambushes.

Ludendorff felt compelled to ask the Kaiser for his dismissal for reasons of honor. Immediately after the battle with Vager, he wrote his request and only held it back at Hindenburg's request in order to go to Chancellor Max von Baden again, together with the Field Marshal, and demand clarification. The Chancellor was not too ill to receive visits that he liked. But when Hindenburg and Ludendorff reported to him, he turned them away. Max von Baden no longer wanted German resistance. Inwardly, he had already sided with the incipient revolt. Men like Pager, Erzberger, Scheidemann and Bauer were closer to his heart, which had just been loyal to the Kaiser, than the great, loyal, brave military leaders. And the Kaiser? He was weak enough to want to wait and see on whose side the fickle luck would now be. Lr sent for Hindenburg and Ludendorff again. In the meantime, Max von Baden had written to demand Ludendorff's dismissal, had put a gun to the Kaiser's chest, so to speak, and threatened that he himself would leave if the unwavering, incorruptible Ludendorff, whom he hated, was not packing. But Hindenburg should stay, the Chancellor demanded. He cowardly allowed himself to be disowned by the generals knocking on his door, too pathetic to look these men in the eye and speak his mind to their faces.

Shortly before Ludendorff appeared before the Kaiser, accompanied by his fine superior Hindenburg, he learned that the baton had already been broken over him, that the Kaiser would certainly his back on him. And indeed the Kaiser was furious,

because he did not see in Ludendorff the man who wanted to save Germany, who wanted to save the imperial throne and who alone could save it, but only the general who caused trouble, who conjured up the spectre of a government crisis at this dangerous moment.

Ludendorf did not mince his when he stood before the Kaiser. He did not conceal the grave misgivings he harbored about a government that was emphatically separating itself from the army command out of fear of the rise of the population monkeys. For the last time, he raised his warning voice and pointed out the danger of the progressive Bolshevization of Germany.

The Kaiser tried to defend the government. At least there were differences of opinion, in the course of which Ludendorff asked for and received his resignation. Hindenburg unequivocally sided with the man with whom he had borne the heavy burden of warfare and asked that he be dismissed together with Ludendorff. The Kaiser rejected the request. Hindenburg remained, albeit with a heavy heart.

When Ludendorff left, he predicted that Germany would no longer have an emperor in two .

Prince Max von Baden and the circles to which he was obedient had triumphed, the only man who could have carried out the resistance to the last was eliminated. Now the situation could and must take its course.

The fall of Ludendorff was greeted with a veritable howl of triumph from the red masts. The hour of revolt near.

In military circles, the news had a shattering effect. It was recognized that the Kaiser had placed himself in the hands of his inner-German enemies.

State Secretary Scheidemann in public and demanded the Kaiser's abdication.

He had been able to prepare this day in peace with his Social Democratic Party. Purposefully, paid for by the

Enemies of the German nation, led by the gravediggers of freedom, the red agents, with the help of the Spartacus League and the Independent Social Democrats, had been able to make preparations for the general strike and the founding of the Workers' and Soldiers' Councils and thus the formation of a red army. Oas Haus der Sowjetrussen Unter den Linden supplied everything: agents, plans and, above all, money, money and more money.

We trembled with shame when we received the horror story.

The commander shook his head: "Giri man like Gröner should see a Ludendorff! Why doesn't the Kaiser choose a better way to commit suicide?"

One day after Ludendorff's dismissal, which was greeted with the exclamation "Thank God" by the cabinet of Prince Mar von Baden, which called itself "without sedes inner right - Krlegskabinett", the German government capitulated to Wilson. The note of October 27 humbly underlined the fact that profound changes had taken place and were still taking place in German constitutional life.

A few hours after this note was sent, the news arrived that Emperor Charles of Austria had asked Wilson for a separate peace!

In the meantime, the Emperor had returned to the Grand Headquarters in Spa, where he signed the constitutional amendments. Large crowds gathering in front of the Reichstag building. Agents incited the groups of people, who listened to them eagerly, to revolution. Shouts of praise for the republic were raised, curses against the emperor were heard. Whenever one of the well-known parliamentarians, Lrzberger, Bauer, Schetdemann, became visible, the crowd went wild with enthusiasm. A leaflet was distributed.

in which the name of the Jew Stampfer, the main editor of the "Vorwärts", was printed in bold letters:

"Germany should - that is our will as socialists - take down its war flag forever without having brought it home victorious."

Special honors were given to some of the sailors who walked around without fatigue ribbons and cockades. It was said there had been mutinies from individual ships in Wilhelmshaven because the fleet was to be sacrificed by the ambitious admirals in a major attack on England.

Now these sailors here had certainly deserted their ships and were roaming around Berlin without a policeman the courage to intervene. It often happened that a woman or a guy wanted to press a red cockade into our hands: "When it starts!".

More terrible news came one after the other.

In the first days of November, Austria-Hungary submitted unconditionally. The Italian troops marched forward without encountering the slightest resistance and were already in threatening proximity to the border with Belgium. Gradually, the German troops in the west were withdrawn in order to avoid the danger of being surrounded.

Things looked bad in Kiel. The third squadron mutinied, took action against its officers, and the first red flags were already rising from the masts. The garrison refused to obey and joined the sailors in their rebellion. Machine guns rattled in the streets of the city. OThe first dead of the fratricidal struggle lay in their blood. Note Workers took over the dictatorship in the factories. There was a general strike. Divisions were recruited among the mutineers to march to Berlin. The government was completely at a loss, hoping without justification to quell the uprising peacefully through negotiations 218

and sent the Social Democrat Noske to Kiel with special powers.

She did not dare to see reliable troops marching immediately and to quell the revolt with several volleys. Even before Noske could begin any negotiations, the uprising had spread to Hamburg, Kiel and Lübeck.

In the meantime, crates upon crates with mysterious contents were brought to that house on Unter den Linden. The German secret service had repeatedly drawn to the obvious activities of the Reds, and more than once the military authorities had asked for these impossible conditions to be stopped. In vain, the government did not want to 'irritate' the Soviet Russians and preferred to watch the poison of Bolshevik propaganda being spread among the people. Finally, the secret service sent some 'railroad workers' to unload the mysterious goods, and a crate fell into a shaft, burst apart and spilled out anti-state propaganda material. Although the Jewish ambassador Hoffe and his henchmen had to Germany immediately on November 5, the poison had already its corrosive effect. Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg, Oskar Lohn, Hoffe's right-hand man, and Oittmann, Ledebour, Haase and Barth remained in the country. They had been set free by Max von Baden, insofar as they had previously arrested at the insistence of the army command, and were celebrated as heroes by the mutineers. The activist circles of the Marxist organizations had already been armed through Barth's mediation. Parts of the government were openly in league with the mutineers, and the role of the chancellor was more than ambiguous. To him, the abdication of the Emperor seemed be the panacea; he closed his eyes to the reality of the already successful revolt, which could only be suppressed by the rapid intervention of a few reliable regiments, whether out of stupidity or ill will.

We entered into negotiations with the cadets in Lichterfelde and Potsdam. Every hour could bring the order for our deployment. By the end of October we had already set up a permanent courier service and were thus kept constantly about the rapid progress of the Bolshevization of Germany. We no longer crossed the street individually. The older ones of us already had handguns and egg hand grenades. The war flag still flew on our ship, even though groups of women and men passed by threateningly every day.

The Social Democrats now demanded the resignation of the Emperor and the abdication of the throne by the Crown Prince within three days.

Wilson sent his fourth note. Now he had Germany so defenseless, so completely paralyzed, that he could already speak of reparation by Germany for the war damage and restrictions with regard to the freedom of the seas. For the rest, however, he announced that Marshal Foch would receive the accredited representatives of the German government to dictate the terms of the armistice.

The government humbly accepted this blow as well. Erz- berger, who had said a week earlier that a good peace could still be achieved despite a rotten armistice, found himself with his largely like-minded entourage at the
November 7 at the headquarters in Lompiegne.

The enemy knew that he could expect Germany to accept even the laziest armistice. Lrzberger had not come to negotiate, but to receive a dictate.

The red wave now poured unstoppably over the empire. In Munich it swept away the Bavarian king, in Brunswick the duke, in Saxony-Weimar-Lisenach the grand duke. In most of the large industrial cities, power was lost.

into the hands of the workers' and soldiers' councils. The red flag replaced the German flag.

But the emperor was still wrestling with his chancellor, the army was still struggling with its duty above the turmoil of the homeland. Gröner took the view, in keeping with the stage, that it would be impossible to restore order with the help of the army. The majority of the officers knew that too much time had been wasted in negotiations with people and groups with whom it was not possible to negotiate, but only to act against them. Even Hindenburg, shocked, had to pronounce a "Zuspät".

Now it became clear how much Ludendorff was missing, how irreplaceable his decisiveness was.

The generals were at a loss and looked to the emperor. The emperor was at a loss and looked at his generals.

In the meantime, Max von Baden played his pathetic role to the end.

A few days earlier, when the avalanche had long been rolling and could no longer be stopped, he had asked the Emperor for his dismissal, but had had to remain in his post. He still believed that he could put everything right by sacrificing the emperor and allowed events to drift.

While shots were already out in the streets of Berlin, prisoners were being freed and important buildings were being occupied, Max von Baden was still negotiating the form of the German Emperor's resignation. The Kaiser had finally decided to abdicate but remain King of Prussia. Behind his back, the Chancellor had issued a statement that abruptly swept away the last resistance, the last oamm against the red tide: the Emperor and King had decided to abdicate the throne. The Imperial Chancellor would remain in office until the questions connected with the abdication of the Emperor, the renunciation of the throne by the Crown Prince of the German Empire and Prussia and the establishment of the regency had been settled. He intended to.

to propose to the regent the appointment of the deputy Ebert as Reich Chancellor! This false declaration was the false passport that proclaimed the revolt a revolution.

Max von Baden, together with his brothers from Freemasonry, his cronies from the Center and his comrades from Social Democracy, had given the German Empire the final villainous blow on the edge of the abyss.

The Emperor, however, was unable to evade this thrust by a determined act of superior and rousing will and to lead the counterattack. The government blew itself up to complete the chaos. It placed the management in the hands of the chairman of the Social Democratic Party, comrade Fritz Ebert.

In no time at all, even the guard formations in Berlin were engulfed by the revolt. There was no one willing to jump into the breach. Oer Kommandant saw that the hour had passed when the armed youth could be seen. After a short gunfight there would only have been the hopeless downfall of the weak detachments. We were ordered not to leave the training ship and only to fire if we were attacked, but then to the last cartridge.

Some demonstrators passed by with red flags and banners, threatening to shoot us up, but no one entered the square. They we were too harmless, too dangerous.

Some of our co-conspirators, the cadets, had managed to fight their way into the castle. They are also said to have fired a few shots. They couldn't change anything. We were ashamed and hardly dared to speak to each other because we felt at a loss for words. We thought that our place should be in the castle.

Oer commander shook his head. "I'm not thinking of sacrificing just one more of you, where even the

Emperor is inactive. If he gives the clear order to resist, I will lead you to the castle at the same hour. Then I give you my word of honor/

We obeyed. But we didn't want to understand our commander. Rather, we believed that he had also become weak and only later were we able to ask him for forgiveness.

"Remember the traitors," said the commander on the evening of November 9th, as we, feverish with anticipation, held our rifles in our hands and listened to the shots outside, "they are Freemasons, Jews and clerics!" Scheidemann, however, had shouted to the blind masses from the steps of the Reichstag that afternoon: "The German people have won all along the line!"

To celebrate the victory, officers were initially hunted down at the birth of the German Republic. Cockades were kicked into the dirt, epaulettes torn off and medals stolen.

But the emperor had the Dutch border at the same time!

Lr wanted to avoid bloodshed, he had said. A short, bloody civil war still seemed better than a defenseless renunciation. We saw the red hordes and the unleashed masses of Hausen in Berlin and thought that it would not be so hopeless to disperse them with gunfire.

November 10th was a Sunday. My birthday. A beautiful autumnal day. This time there was no candle in my place. My father was stunned and hardly said a word, and my mother also forgot to congratulate me. There was a newspaper in the letterbox with screaming ^headlines celebrating the Republic. "Die Rote Fahne." That was the name of the "Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger", which my father read. The Reds had taken over the Scherl building and seized the newspaper for themselves.

Shouts and cheers rang out from the street. I put on my uniform with special care, smoothed out the black and white armband and reassured my mother, who wouldn't let me go to the school ship today because she was afraid the mob might pounce on me.

As I stood on the road, trucks were driving past, driven by the Naumburg hunters who had gone over to the mutineers. They were all splendid figures whose weapons and uniforms were in exemplary condition. One of them called out to me good-naturedly that I should take a ride, a sailor's uniform would fit in well.

A group of excited people stood on the corner and admired a Revolutton soldier who wanted to prove his free spirit by hanging his rifle over his shoulder with the muzzle pointing downwards. Instead of cockades, he wore a red rag around his dirty field coat. He had turned up the collar of his coat, and a cigar of astonishing dimensions protruded from his mouth. He wore a bandolier around his neck and there were four hand grenades in his belt. He eyed me hostilely. -Take off your cockade, man! off your bandage. You must have been asleep? We don't have any more Wilhelm, we're a real republic!"

The crowd foaled. An old slovenly woman spat at my feet. "Ou bloody carrion!"

A couple of guys came at me. I felt like away. But then my pride won out. No, running away was cowardly and I wanted to see if they could do what they wanted to me!

I clenched my teeth and pretended not to be afraid at all.

An old soldier, who was standing by with his hands deep in his coat pockets, said good-naturedly: "Let him go he's still so young that he doesn't know what's going on. We don't wage war on children!"

I was very glad to have escaped unscathed. Not all my comrades got off so lightly. Lubke's cockade and fatigue ribbon had been torn off and he hadn't even put on his armband. Riedel was bleeding from his nose and Wehell's uniform had almost been torn off his body.

There was a flag parade on 9 Ahr. Just as the commander was about to

^Heisst Flag und Wimpel", two cars with armed mutineers drove past, not soldiers, but civilians, who could be seen from a distance that they had been behind Swedish curtains not so ago. The cars stopped as we unconcernedly hoisted the battle flag. Threats and curses from the street. The mutineers were preparing to storm our ship.

Wellenberg suddenly called out in his bright command voice:

^To the guns!"

The hatches flew open with a bang. With the grip we had practiced so often, we pushed the guns forward.

We all knew that the going could be tough. The anger of the mob was great and its cruelty well known

I couldn't help but laugh. We couldn't shoot at all? If they knew that over there?

The commander's eyes narrowed. He held his Browning with the safety off in his right hand; Wellenberg had also drawn his revolver.

Through the hatches we peered out onto the street. The mutineers were obviously in . A sailor waved a red flag back and forth, and an older soldier, didn't look particularly military with his black spiked beard, shouted that we shouldn't be stupid and hold our bones out for the reaction. We'd better come out and join in!

A dead silence fell between those outside and us. As if we had been ordered to do so, we moved to the

They turned to the commanders and didn't take their eyes off him. He stood there with his legs apart, his chest rising and falling hastily. His mouth was half open and there was a reddish gleam in his eyes.

We no longer had a sense of the time we had spent standing and waiting in silence. Was it seconds, minutes?

We only suspected that something powerful, something dangerous might be happening.

It crossed my mind that I had actually imagined the danger to be quite different, more lively, louder, more open, perhaps also somehow more decent, more honest, at least not so lurking, not so paralyzingly silent.

Suddenly the mutineers started to move. The man with the spiked beard threatened us again with the butt of his rifle and shouted a few words that we didn't understand. Then the cars started moving. We heard the bright, shrill squealing of their signals gradually fade away.

The tension eased. Some cleared their throats, almost embarrassed, others mumbled slurred words or made a frantic effort whistle. Andre again laughed forcedly.

The commander awkwardly put the Browning in his pocket. Clear and bright, as always, came his command: "Fall in for the Flag parade!"

With heavy, tired steps we walked up on deck as if we had been working all day. As we stood in the division line-up, we gave ourselves a jolt, pressed our chests out, pushed our knees through, tucked our chins in, just as if we were waiting for the emperor's visit.

The commander didn't say much. "You will hardly be able to appreciate, my sung comrades, what it means when we now lower the flag for the last time. It is your duty to take down the desecrated German battle flag.

to honor again one day. Don't forget your duty for a single day!"

Solemnly measured, he put his hand to the effort. "Bring down the flag and pennant!"

The drum roll rolled, the boatswain's whistle trilled. The flag was slowly lowered.

The commander's eyes fixed on the mast, and when the flag almost touched the deck, he turned away with a sighing movement.

I felt ashamed as I felt the tears running my face. I hardly why I was so miserable. I was certainly moved by the suffering the commander was carrying. As I looked furtively at my comrades, I realized
I realized that they were also trying to hide traces of emotion.

The commander slowly walked down the rows. He looked everyone in the eye in silence, squeezing their hands as if he wanted to swear them in once more on the day the school ship association ceased to exist.

A hearse was driven along the road. Only a few casualties followed. The commander pointed across. "The dead man has it good, he doesn't need live in shame!"

Wellenberg cleared his throat. It was the first time we had ever heard him contradict the commander in our presence. He put two fingers to the effort, and while his mouth quivered suspiciously, he tried to speak as flippantly as possible. "He who dies seeing is a shirker!"

The commander looked him for a moment, and in
His face showed sadness, regret and a tiny bit of hope. "That's right, sa, that's right!"

We had to our few belongings out of the lockers and tie them into a bundle. In the officers' mess we were given our passports. "Dismissed in accordance with regulations. Reason: disbandment. Berlin, November 10, l9tS."

On Wellenberg's orders we took off our cockades and armbands. The fatigue bands had to be reversed.

Wehell accompanied me. We didn't speak a word. My throat tight and I avoided everyone on the street I was disgusted. I was probably also afraid that someone would ask me if it was all over now.

My mother ran her hand over my forehead. "You're still so young. The whole world is open to you/

I tore myself away and myself in my room.

The world should be open to me? The world? Didn't it just end an hour ago?

I burrowed my head deep into my bed so that no one would hear my sobs.

The maid knocked and called for lunch. I hurriedly cooled my eyes and my hot temples. I didn't want anyone to know how I felt. My place at the table was surrounded by ivy and a few fir branches, and a small cyclamen stood in the middle of the table. Oh yes, today was my birthday. Mother had found a rabbit somewhere, and it was now served as a festive roast. There even applesauce. I barely managed to choke down a few bites. Bater looked at me disapprovingly and shook his head.

It was a cramped atmosphere. Mother said lightly that better times would surely come soon, that at least there would be enough food, coal and clothes again.

Bater drummed his fingers nervously on the tifch. "It probably won't happen that quickly/

Grete joined in the conversation. She had heard many interesting things from the maid. "And then the people at the emperor's palace are said to have a large borscht, a whole bathtub full of lard, many tons of butter, and eggs and cheese!"

Father laughed good-naturedly: -The emperor also had a large household/

Suddenly I realized all the terrible, incomprehensible things again. The Kaiser was safe in Holland! And because he had fled, we no longer had a training ship or a commander!

I must have sighed unconsciously, because now they all looked at me with pity, father, mother, Grete.

Father wanted to change my mind. -There's a big rally in front of the Reichstag today, do you want to come with me?"

I nodded hastily. Grete also begged to be taken away.

The dry leaves in the zoo rustled under our feet. The sun played on the yellow-red leaves, and the wide park was very empty and deserted. We saw people near the Great Star. They were all hurrying towards the Reichstag building. Rarely had I seen such a large crowd of people, at most in the days of the outbreak of war. But what an abysmal difference between then and now! Back then, the waves of enthusiasm were roaring, songs were rising and people were gripped by a joyful excitement.

One looked suspiciously at the other, and the anxiety that ran through the masses was agonizing, frightening.

Trains of demonstrators were still approaching, but their songs sounded dry and shrill. And the red and black-red-gold flags hung languidly from the shafts. The signs carried by the people there had proud inscriptions such as "Freedom", "Peace" and "Bread". But no one cheered the message.

We pushed our way through the walls of curious onlookers and reached the Bismarck Monument. From there we had a

We had a very good view of the steps of the Reichstag building, whose doors and windows were hung with the new flags. We saw a little man onto the roof of a rented car and waving his hat. He spoke a few sentences that we didn't understand. Then a few people shouted: "Hail to the Republic!" The bystanders argued about whether it was Scheidemann, Ebert or Liebknecht was the one who had just spoken.

Suddenly a car drove up from the Bandenburger Tor at high . A few shots were fired, then a machine gun started hammering away. Like a ghost, the image of the mass march disappeared. People ran screaming into the Tiergarten to seek shelter from the bullets, which none of us could hear whistling.

Bater scornfully stated that surely the Reds had only fired blanks to instill fear in the citizens and make them compliant for the event.

It looked terrible on the square in front of the Reichstag. A few women and old people who knocked down by the flood of refugees were struggling to get up. We helped them as best we could. Flags and signs lay trampled and torn in the dust.

A sung lad, certainly not much older than me, ran past us to where the shots had been fired. In his right hand, at a respectful distance from his body, he held a stick grenade.

When he saw us, he grinned contemptuously. "Don't let anyone say a blue bean up your ass, you stupid citizens."

Bater raised his fist threateningly: "Lausejunge!"

The lad stopped for a moment, puzzled, and seemed to be thinking about how he should take revenge for the insult.

An indomitable rage rose up inside me. I had jumped at the guy's throat with one look, pulled him to the ground and worked him over with both fists. My blood dripped brightly his eyes. He bit at my

hands. Now I was able to grab the guy by the temple hair. With all my might I knocked his hops out of the stones in the road.

I heard Grete screaming, women shrieking. Father pulled me up. "Do you want to become a murderer

I felt as if I was looking through a gauzy red veil. With my hobnailed shoes, I stepped out of the boy, who was moaning and rolling on the floor. His red armband lay torn beside him. And his hand grenade.

I gradually became calmer. Father tugged my arm. "Come on, look, otherwise we're lost!"

I hurriedly took out the hand grenade and the armband. Then I followed my father, who was with Grete along a small side path into the zoo.

I didn't hear a word of reproach when I caught up with them. I only noticed that Father was very pale and that Grete was crying quietly and looking at me shyly from time to time.

I had to throw the hand grenade into the Landwehr Canal. I put the red armband in my pocket. In memory of the lv. November.

From morning to night, I now roamed the streets of Berlin. Sometimes I stood in Wilhelmstrasse, then again at the Reichstag building or in front of the War Ministry to see the new men who now ruled Germany, to catch up on a bit of news.

News of the armistice negotiations leaked out very sparsely. You had to be lucky and meet one of the people's representatives or one of the few officers who hurried into the government buildings with black, red and gold armbands on their arms. Then swarms of curious and anxious people would quickly form, asking questions and begging for information. And when one of those asked threw down a sah,

Perhaps just to get rid of the annoying beggar, then excited, curious, hopeful and desperate rushed in from all sides to catch some of the news. Now women also came to inquire when the soldiers would finally return and whether there was no more shooting out there.

Any further sacrifice now seemed pointless. One of my relatives, an airman from Sung, was killed by a direct hit from a shell in the air on the morning of November 9th. His plane was torn to pieces and there was no trace of him. His mother received the news on November 10, after she had just come out of the Oom to the heavens that her son had now been happily spared.

A strangely inconsistent and eerie atmosphere lay over Berlin. Some staggered from party to party, from celebration to celebration, while others wandered the streets in despair, not knowing to turn in their distress. Soldiers stood impassively on the corners. They didn't know what to do with this time. Many of them loitered in the cheap pubs, sitting gloomily in front of them. Meanwhile, the mutineers and deserters had made themselves at home in the castle and were stealing like hubs. Oa's business as a fence flourished, and it became better and more rewarding when the first goods transports of the stage arrived. Oa was no longer there to protect the supplies. Whole wagonloads were moved, and the horses too. If you were a rag and had money, you could be a rich man in weeks, sa, days. In the wine taverns, the champagne flowed in streams. Poor, starving, haggard girls were easy prey for the braggarts. The unfortunate threw themselves away for a good supper. For a ragged necklace, for a shabby fur collar, for a fleeting hour of what they called happiness, they sold themselves. There was a catchphrase going around that there was so much to make up for. And this went beyond all decency, beyond all

Ehrlichkett. The Ostjnüen streamed across the borders in dense droves. The area around the Silesian station was one big ghetto. Oa they walked around, these jackals, in dirty, frayed caftans, the greasy high felt hat on their heads, crawling humbly, whimpering for a little hip, sheepishly stroking their broad curly whiskers. And after a few days they were no longer humble at all, they were already cheeky and demanding. Oa they no longer lived in a small, buggy room at Schlesischer Bahnhof, they had already moved to Eharlottenburg in Krumme Straße, and there they sat in dense packs in the cafés around a cup or a glass of the cheapest. They would sit there for hours, mumbling, gesticulating, giving the women and girls cheeky looks, smearing numbers all over their mamorti cups. In Münzstrasse on Alexanderplah, in Weinmeisterstrasse, in all the dark alleys of Berlin, they stood in the hallways and offered rings, ears of gold, suits, bicycles. Everything that had just been stolen in Berlin. And the police were powerless, too weak to get to grips with this criminality. But perhaps those responsible were also too cowardly. There were times when an official from the police station would shrug his shoulders and advise a victim of theft to go on a search himself and buy his property back from some Jew as cheaply as possible.

The more unbearable the situation became, the more longingly the eyes of those who feared chaos in Germany looked to Lrzberger. It was only known that he had gone to the armistice negotiations without influential officers so as not to irritate the French. And word had already spread that he had come within a hair's breadth of death when his car skidded off the bend.

But that was almost all that was known. Otherwise, people only speculated. But the more hours and days passed before certainty came, the lower the hopes sank, the

But the frenzy with which people sought to numb themselves also grew.

In the meantime, Marshal Fach had received the German delegation in his saloon car in the forest of Lompiegne. He had not considered them worthy of being invited to his headquarters. The enemy had pointed out with icy scorn that the Germans had nothing more to do here than accept the terms. And the conditions were by no means such as to justify celebrations of victory and rejoicing. Belgium, northern France and Alsace-Lorraine were to be evacuated within two weeks, and ten days later the German troops had to be behind the Rhine. The enemy demanded the right to commandeer the bridgeheads at Koblenz, Mainz and Cologne. In the east, the Germans were to withdraw to behind 1914 borders. The peace with Russia and Romania was declared null and void. All submarines were to be delivered immediately, along with six of the latest armored cruisers, ten ships of the line, eight cruisers, five hundred torpedo boats, five thousand guns, thirty thousand machine guns, three thousand mine launchers and two thousand aircraft. And so it went on: demand after ! But the blockade was to remain in place!

Coldly and with brutal contempt, Fach gave the Germans a reprieve seventy-two hours. Otherwise the guns would roar anew, the machine guns would hammer again, the gas grenades would burst. On November 11, at 11 o'clock in the morning, the deadline expired!

Mr. Erzberger was not the man to negotiate with a subject. Only a German soldier could have a word of honor and duty here. He could best see for himself what Erzberger was regarded as and how he was treated when he expressed the wish to go to Mass on November 10, which he, as a man of the center and an obedient son of his all-moving Catholic Church, was obliged to attend.

was urgently needed. The French sleeping car attendant turned out to be the prison warden, who politely but firmly refused the request, which was, however, also very strange, saying that it should have been made a day earlier!

Oer enemy did not think of giving up one iota of his conditions. The English threatened to seize Heligoland. Indeed, it seemed as if they wanted to push Germany into the abyss for good and secretly hoped that the German government would have enough honor in its body to reject these conditions indignantly.

Lrzberger did not even a grand gesture as he humbly signed the terms, which were nothing more than kicks and slaps, under Foch's insulting mockery. The truce was concluded for thirty-six days. Then there were to be new rapes, new taunts, new vulgarities! Germany had to the captured enemies back home. But when the Germans who were languishing behind the barbed wire in the distance see their country again was written in the stars.

The government had broken the sword and thus lost its honor. Oa's people, however, had to bitterly experience that those who lose honor stagger to their doom. And a tumult began, as wild and desperate as hardly any people in history had ever experienced. The last vestiges of decency burst before the rising tide of greed. The lecherous, cowardly Jews set the tone. Their caftan had given way to the lutawag, and their heads were covered by the "melon", the Jewish helmet. Only a bluish-black shimmer on their chins and thick cheeks reminded us of the ritual beard they used to wear so proudly. Nightclubs grew out of the asphalt next to nightclubs, gambling dens were set up in dirty backyards, in poorly painted cellar holes, and anyone who had managed to get hold of a few banknotes spent them with the nude dancers who were

The "art" of the "art" was shown for a lot of money in private apartments that were bugged. Between the horny pushers and the elegantly dressed criminals, there was sometimes a hardened man whose face still the distress and shock of the battle. He sought the great oblivion in the frenzy until, disgusted by the depravity, disgusted by the dignity, he rushed out into the cold, rainy night. Suicides became more numerous than ever before. The desperate were fished out of Berlin's canals and lakes, the ropes with which the hopeless strangled their lives were untied from the window crosses, the bloody, mutilated bodies of the helpless were found next to the railroad tracks, the emaciated corpses of the starving were in cold, desolate garrets.

But the silent accusation of the suicides was not heard. The frenzy of the greedy passed over their graves. Theaters arose in which the most disgusting scenes were played out in front of sadists and perverts.

Germany had almost become a nation of suicides, and almost all of them seemed to be looking for their own way to commit suicide. Only a few paid attention to the horrific political news that filled the columns of the newspapers. Most of them were indifferent to the waves of disaster. Perhaps they seriously believed in the tale of God's judgment on Germany, which proclaimed from the pulpits as terribly threatening and humiliating news. The soldiers on border patrol did their duty verbally and defiantly and laughed contemptuously at the puny republican soldiers who made half a deal with the red criminals. Fritz Gbert, who had long since transformed himself from a workers' leader into a democratic philistine, shared the all-important German deadly Haffenden Jews Hugo Haase into power.

Oer eight-hour day was celebrated as a great victory of the working class over the bourgeoisie. Every class-conscious maid the meetings of the Reds and rose up against the "rule". After eight hours of work, the cook left the pots because she owned the street and called for a demonstration.

The march of the tired, exhausted troops seemed endless. Trains no longer ran, and if there really was one left, it had to take in the sick. The Reds didn't care. The entry of the army was sad, and the soldiers hardly looked at the languidly fluttering flags, hardly noticed that garlands had been woven for them here and there. The few at home who had not sold their honor were ashamed of the bent figures of the soldiers, and the Reds were only in an anxious hurry to quickly take the weapons from the troops and turn warriors into unemployed civilians.

The name Hindenburg was mentioned once again. The old man did his utmost to lead the disgraced army home in reasonably cohesive formations. General Gröner had willingly placed himself at the disposal of Fritz Ebert and his fine assistants. The Reds and Pinks could breathe a sigh of relief, the army would remain safe, and the few officers who had remained hard and firm would be dealt with!

^Christmas was just around the .

The festival of love?

The fresh mounds of graves piled up in immense rows, and the number of those who were starving and freezing to death grew and grew.

If you wanted a Christmas tree, you had to take an axe and take the dangerously overcrowded borough trains out to Woltersdorf or Wildpark and chop down a trunk somewhere. There were no candles. But they weren't that important after all.

We decorated our tree, which I had fetched from the outskirts of Potsdam, with some absorbent cotton. At the train station (Lharlottenburg) I had to put up a fight when a drunk guy tried to snatch the small, very bare spruce from me.

Now we were sitting around the tree, hardly daring to look at each other. Mother had first sat at the piano and played the first few bars of a Christmas carol, but then she her hands. God knows, it was no time to let soft or even cheerful moods arise. Bater had taken off his gray skirt a long time ago and returned to his post at the big bank. He hardly recognized his departments, almost all new faces, and almost all Jewish! The returnees found it difficult to assert themselves. They had stayed away from commercial life and thinking for too long. And the Jewish

"Colleagues", who now found them, heaven and hell to prevent the old soldier from getting justice. So it came to pass that Bater was seriously worried about his and our future.

had all the more serious worries as there were hardly any ways for honest people to raise the money needed for a larger household.

Ever larger crowds gathered in the streets of Berlin, incited Moscow's agents to go on strike, to loot, to wage civil war. During the Christmas period in particular, countless stores were looted, not only grocery stores, but especially jewelry stores. The Spartacists openly armed themselves and mockingly threatened to Berlin ablaze in the near future.

Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg traveled from one mass meeting to the next, announcing the imminent arrival of the longed-for day that usher in the dictatorship of the proletariat to the roaring cheers of the ravenous masses. The black, red and gold flags quickly gave way to red flags bearing the hammer and sickle. One name was mentioned again and again: Radek! He was preceded by the reputation of being a ruthless, bloodhound. Radek, so the Spartacists told each other in their pubs, would carry out the annexation of Germany to the Soviet Union, Liebknecht and Rosa would only be the pioneers for him.

Bon Radek was also supposed to have started the campaign to abolish the Christmas tree, indeed, not to Christmas at all. Here and there, windows behind which a Christmas tree was visible had already smashed. In the ranks of the hunger demonstrators who marched in front of the town halls, imprecations and threats were shouted that were intended frighten the already frightened citizens into despair. What was significant, however, was that not a hair of the increasingly insolent and ruthless duden was harmed, not a single Jewish store was looted. It said that Radek had strictly forbidden it. But no one seemed to think anything of it.

when dirty Yiddish mumbling finks spat in front of men who looked like officers or harassed German women in the meanest way.

No, the time was not right to celebrate a merry Christmas.

My mood was very depressed. There had been serious clashes at the grammar school. We had had to form a student council. I had been elected as a representative for the middle classes, but the chairman of the whole student council was a Jew called Rothstein. At the first general assembly, to which all pupils from Quinta to Oberprima had been invited, the Oberprimaner Nothstein had given a speech that was full of insults against the army, the Osfiziere and all German sentiment in general. I had stood up against this and been threatened by Rothstein that I and all counter-revolutionary elements would be with quickly. There was a great noise, the numerous Jews applauded Rothstein, my friends whistled. I myself had jumped up to the lectern and asked Rothstein to apologize immediately. He had waved it off with a sneer. "I'll take the matter up with the authorities/

I felt the blood rush to my head. jumped at Rothstein with one look and struck him blindly.

The first student assembly came to an inglorious end. I was given an hour's detention as a "disturber of the peace" and an urgent warning to come to terms with the facts. I was also told that they were by no means satisfied with my academic performance and that my behavior was becoming more rebellious by the day.

Gritting my teeth, I had accepted that part. It was that my performance, my interest in school in general, was waning. I skipped lessons too often, but it wasn't a sudden laziness.

but my tendency to walk the streets and observe. It was certainly true that I became rebellious. We had been given an assessor for Greek, Or. Levg, an elegantly dressed, perfumed Jew who used the Odgssee to make fun of warriors and heroes. It made me feel good to give him honest answers and to turn my classmates against him. My record became very bad. Not a day went by that I wasn't seen at school without my name being entered in the class register for some offense against the school rules.

I didn't want to be a model student. I wanted to be seen as a mutineer and a rebel. When Or. Levg's over-snapping voice when he disgusted me, I felt an honest satisfaction.

At the beginning of the Christmas vacations, his father received a letter from the school management. "It seems very questionable whether your son will achieve the class target under the circumstances described!"

Dad had taken me into his room and tried to put my head on straight. "Come to your senses. Once you've done your A-levels, you can start doing whatever you want. That's the key to life!"

I shook my head defiantly. I didn't want to accept reason in the sense of the school and my father. After all, Oas meant nothing more than that I had to bow down and say yes and amen. But my pride and, as I believed, my duty forbade me to do so, because my like-minded comrades saw me as their spokesman and trusted me. I could not betray this trust.

Father became angry. "If you don't want to listen, you'll just have to feel. If you stay in at Easter, I'll take you out of school and put you into a business apprenticeship, then you can see what the world is really like."

The thought didn't seem so terrible to me. -Please sign me up from the sailing school shit of the shipping company Visier. I've read that they're going to stop sailing in the summer/

Bater was speechless. -Ou want...?" I nodded emphatically. -What am I supposed to do here? Maybe wait until they me out of school?" Hell, it wasn't a proper Christmas either.

The meagre tree without lights annoyed me. I was unhappy with myself, with my father, mother, Grete, with school, with Germany, with the whole world. And with the good Lord even so, because he really existed, as he at school, then he must surely be very hostile to Germany.

On Boxing Day I visited the commander. Lr looked older and more grim. Oa's smile, which came into his eyes when I entered, very quickly gave way to an expression of abysmal hatred when he spoke of those in power and the conditions.

His daughter, a very delicate, very sensitive woman, would bring tea and some honey cookies. He became almost cheerful for a moment. - Help yourself, Eggers, you won't get a decent honey cake like the one my daughter bakes a second time in Germany."
She left the room with a grateful look on her face.

Oer Kommandant lit a thick black Brasil and puffed excitedly. He walked up and down with long strides and left me the cookie, which actually tasted excellent.

Then he suddenly stood in front of me and looked at me piercingly. -All sorts of things are being prepared."

I nodded, -ffawohl, Herr Kommandant. Radek is preparing for civil war."

The commander shook his head. His voice became quieter, more agitated. "That too. But one more thing. Oer is growing. Do you think we're going to put up with everything the Reds do to us?"

I jumped up. "Herr Kommandant! Counter-revolution?"

"We're not that far yet. First of all, it's about defensive measures."

Unconsciously, I had grabbed the commander's arm. "When does it start? Can I be there?"

"I'll let you know, Gggers. Perhaps you can join me as an orderly."

I . But a wave from the commander silenced me. "Not a word, Gggers!"

I clicked my heels together. "You can count on it!"

Oie daughter poked her head in the door. "Father, I've finished the Christmas tree again!"

Oer Kommandant put his arm on my shoulder. "Come , Gggers. We want to talk about life and your future!"

I was surrounded by a wonderful atmosphere. The candles glowed so brightly and intimately, the fir branches crackled and it smelled of Christmas. Oie daughter sat down at the piano and played Christmas carols, German, dreamy Christmas songs. Wine's heart overflowed with joy.

Heavens, how beautiful life was. And there should be a fight!

The gym at my grammar school had been requisitioned for a returnee company. There were weapons and ammunition, uniforms and equipment in one corner.

I made friends with a young corporal. His name was Walter Hebel and he was from Erfurt. My parents that Hebel could stay in our house.

16

*

got. Out of gratitude, he allowed me to choose a good rifle. He himself got me five hundred rounds of ammunition. In a few days my room resembled a small gun store. I had hand grenades, a sidearm with a saw, a tunic that was much too big and embroidered many times, breeches, boots, a new steel helmet, a coat that reached down to my toes, a belt, haversack, canteen, gas mask, knapsack. Nothing was missing. I even had plenty of bandage packs.

News came from the east, the horror of which drowned out even the concerns about Germany's internal security. Polish volunteers had gone on the attack against the remnants of the German troops. On 2S. December, the city of Poznan fell into their hands. Piece by piece, German land was torn away from the homeland.

Elections to the National Assembly in Weimar were announced for January 19, 1919.

The German people were shaken by ever new shivers of fever. Parties rose up and campaigned. My parents had joined the Oeutschnationale Volkspartei, which, under the leadership of Hergt, promised to restore state of honor security. I had joined the O.N.I., the German National Youth League, which, although it had nothing to do with the party in terms of politics, nevertheless undertook lively election propaganda for it. Thousands of us threw notes on the streets, in letterboxes, in stores, we put up hundreds of posters.

When it became known that the enemy was demanding the Emperor's extradition so that he could be in a public court as a war criminal, my whole family became members of the "Association for the Protection of the Life and Personal Safety of Kaiser Wilhelm II/".

At the instigation of the commandant, I had joined the "Deutscher Schutz- uud Trutz bunt", which had clear anti-Jewish tendencies. I proudly wore the

Swastika. At times I had to smile when I looked at the many membership cards I carried in my wallet, but it was a pleasure to live, even in this degenerate Germany, when the resistance finally began.

The time had come at the beginning of January. The commander had made himself available to the Guards Cavalry Rifle Division and kept his word. I was allowed to become his orderly. It took quite struggle before I was given permission to stay with him. The division ^didn't want any children in its ranks". But in the end no one had any objections when the commander assured that I would not be actively involved in the fighting. I secretly hoped that I would still be able to catch an opportunity to go forward.

Old front-line soldiers from all kinds of professions fought in the division. The spirit was excellent. Almost all comrades breathed a sigh of relief at being able to take up arms again after the chaotic bewilderment. The parade march became a confession, the grips tightened, the posture became taut: those who were soldiers were so out of protest, and those who took up arms today did so in the holy defiance of the rebel. The Reds had entrenched themselves in the center of Berlin, they had entrenched themselves in the newspaper district, they were sitting in the police headquarters, they had barricaded the streets around Alexanderplah, they were massed in battalions at Schlesischer Bahnhof, they fortified their quarters in Adlershof and Köpenick.

Berlin resembled an army camp right up to its wider perimeter. The Reinhard Free Corps was deployed, the Ehrhardt Brigade stood ready, the Oöberitz and Wünsdorf Free Corps raised their weapons.

And if you had asked just one of the soldiers whether he was fighting for the Republic, he would have spat out contemptuously.

Republic? Oas was Lbert, that was Schetdemann, and after all, the canailleurs Haase and Liebknecht, Rosa Luxemburg and Radek were also children of the Republic! By golly no! Nobody risked their lives for the Republic, even if the Freikorps were formed to secure the Republic's existence against Spartacus.

It was against the Reds, against the pacifists, against the deserters and traitors of 1918 - period! And once they had been swept away, it could go on. Then they all had turn! Why not Fritze Ebert too?

Roske was also a Red, one of those we despised. But he was considered one degree better than Ebert and the others. If only because he his ramming under the exclamations directed at the soldiers. It wasn't long before the Reds hated Roske as if he were an officer. He seemed more dangerous to them than a man like Gröner. And anyone who carried a rifle without a red cockade on their cap was quickly labeled a "Noskehund".

Rns was indifferent to this insult. We marched.

It was not easy to get to Potsdam. We had to reckon with Spartacus watching the access roads. Oer Kommandant hired a hansom cab and stowed our weapons under the seats himself. Oer driver was an old soldier and helped with a grim laugh. "I hope you get this mess sorted out soon! Oas is sa no more life?" Oer commander nodded. "We'manage all right!"

We drove carefully via Lharlottenburg to Spandau. In Spandau, we saw a lot of red servants! Stores were looted here and there. A red guard made sure that only larger stores and above all no Jewish stores were taken. To give the robbery a warlike air, every now and one of the Reds would shoot into the air. We got away unmolested, and when Spandau was behind

The commander, breathing a sigh of relief, put the Browning in his pocket. "It's not exactly uplifting to be beaten to death in the street."

Our driver had been listening. But he looked over his shoulder at us with a grin. -We wouldn't have made it that easy for the Reds. I've got a Parabellum with me." He pointed to a box at his side, from which the butt of this weapon protruded.

But we drove through Kladow and Gatow on a bumpy road to Potsdam. Black, white and red flags flew from some of the houses. I'm sure people thought there was going to be an uprising and the emperor would come back. Strangely, the soldiers hardly spoke of the Emperor and there weren't many who keen to see him again. Monarchy? Yes, that's what we wanted. If only to an end to this accursed republic. Rur, we didn't really know who should become emperor. The crown prince was not very highly regarded, and we didn't really know what to do with the other Hohenzollern princes. But perhaps these questions would settle themselves once the Reds had been swept away. At least we didn't want to worry our heads and hearts about it.

Shootings had been flaring up at the Berlin castle for days. The sailors there, the Spartacists, didn't put up much of a fight. They also showed less fear than we had expected. The number of dead increased, and often enough people fell who had perhaps never touched a gun in their lives. Women, children and old people were among those shot. But wild shootings flared up everywhere, and it impossible to always say why. When the tension became unbearable, they pulled the trigger. Oas calmed them down and kept the curious, who were not to be trusted, at bay. Line was a cursed affair, if you thought about it properly. A few shots drove them into the house entrances, indiscriminately harmless, curious and red. And after

After the useless shooting, they were all out on the street again, the Reds in the midst of the others. The Spartacists had well-hidden machine-gun nests on the roofs, and when such a house was searched after a short fire, it was impossible to the Red marksmen among the harmless and frightened. And because you couldn't shoot them all, standing there pressed against the wall in the stairwells, you had to let them all go for better or worse. Only those who looked suspicious or turned their eyes away in fear could at best be shot in the back.

We had set up in the tents, not far from the Reichstag. Nnd waited for the order. The Reds didn't really know what to do either. They had the power, they had the masses, they had weapons. But both parties felt insecure, endangered. Almost hopeless, because no orders came. We let the Red parades march up and disperse again. The masses were harmless, they ran around at the first shot. Only determined shock troops could be dangerous. But they had entrenched themselves in the buildings and were waiting. Between us and the Reds, however, everyday life was going on, with people going to work in the factories and banks, in the workshops and offices. Oer everyday life had very quickly become accustomed to the fact that the decision had still not been made. We heard that Liebknecht was now back on top. Radek had faded into the background. Perhaps the name Liebknecht had a slightly better ring to it among the proletarians, a more German one.

There were a lot of rumours these days, and it sounded as if our situation was being demonized. In Hamburg, in Munich, in the industrial area and in Saxony, the Reds were supposed to be masters of the situation. There was talk of a huge Red Army whose formation now complete.

The power of the proletariat was felt less through bullets than through a far more dangerous weapon: the strike. In the neighborhoods where there were strikes, where there was no gas, no master, no electricity, chaos and horror soon reigned, that state of affairs which brought the bourgeoisie to its knees in a very short time. Our first concern was therefore to prevent the outbreak of strikes or to end them through increased pressure. Another concern was to keep the railroad lines free. The Reds tried to increase the chaos by starving Berlin.

All wheels stand still when your strong arm wills it/ A thousand times we have heard this proletarian song, and a thousand times we have cursed those who would abuse the mighty and wonderful power of labor and the worker for destruction.

When the masts of the Reds with their songs, their teeth, their banners, their shouts passed us by, we sometimes talked about the fact that the masterminds Liebknecht, Rosa Luxemburg, Haase, Radek, Scheidemann and what they were all called should be shot.

Often had to we insults: "bloodhounds", "capitalist servants", "workers' murderers". In the end, we stopped listening. Were we capitalist servants? We didn't know who was putting up the money to pay us. Noske certainly provided the means, because he occasionally showed up with the troops, but without being particularly noticed, at most he was met with a condescendingly curious look.

Were we bloodhounds? We loved the rifles, that's true. And it was an almost tingling feeling of pleasure to push the cartridge frame into the chamber of the rifle, load it and shoot. But none of us will ever have felt that it fun to shoot at German workers. Because we felt warlike, we took pleasure in the

Weapons. 2None of us enjoyed killing. When I saw Anter den Linden, the first man to be shot, threw up. And for weeks I had to a choking abelkelt when I thought of him. We were soldiers and refused to argue about the difference between a warrior and a murderer.

And what reason would we have had to murder workers? Most of us were workers and craftsmen or had fathers and brothers who were workers and craftsmen. It's madness to believe that we were enemies of the workers. Yes, we hated the workers' seducers to the death. And we also killed some of them! The mood on both sides became more and more irritable from day to day. Our anger grew when we that comrades who had fallen into the hands of the Reds had been cruelly tortured and mutilated. The guns fired very early, we no longer waited until the Reds were ten steps away from us. Anyone who didn't stand at "Halt! Stop!" was shot. Perhaps cruel! But better than lying on the ground bleeding the next moment.

After I had into great danger several times due to my experience and probably also due to my adventure-seeking recklessness, I was no longer allowed to leave the commander's side. Grumbling, I gave my word of honor not to take part in any more reconnaissance without express orders. I knew that the commander serious, that he would have sent me home without mercy.

The soldiers gradually began to become dissatisfied when they still hadn't received an order. They didn't want to be insulted and spat at again every hour. The government did not know what do. At one point, it didn't want the proletarians before the election
"irritate", but then she was afraid whether an election could be held at all under these circumstances. In the end, however, fear prevailed,

that the Spartacist workers' and soldiers' councils, known as the A. and S. Councils for short, would gain too much power. So Noske issued some very soft orders that peace and security should be restored. As far as possible, of course, avoiding any bloodshed. The cleansing of Berlin happened abruptly. Oa's newspaper district was taken in a few hours. Only the police headquarters and Alexanderplah were fought over for longer. When the minesweepers crashed in the streets, when the mines tore up entire houses, the Spartacist spook was quickly put to rest. The mob and the Jews clamored about the alleged cruelty the Freikorps. What were they not accusing the soldiers of! We had to laugh heartily when we heard that the castle and stables been shot at with gas grenades! After the fighting, the townspeople came out of the cellars and shuddered at the devastation. The palace balcony, where the Emperor had often stood, hung shot to pieces, the large windows were completely smashed, a large portal column lay in the middle of the palace square, the stables were on fire. It looked terrible! And then the police headquarters! There hardly a single roof tile left. Pieces of explosives were scattered all over the neighborhood. In Münzstraße and Grenaüierstraße, smoke-blackened ruins of houses stared up into the winter sky.

And we were to bear the blame for the disaster! We were proud enough not to say a word in defense. Only that one or two of us once punched one of the shouters in the mouth when it got too much for him.

And when, around January 15, 1919, some soldiers scouted out Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg's hiding place in a small side street off Fehrbelliner Platz in Wilmersdorf and summarily killed Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg, even sentimental citizens wrung their hands in horror at such cruelty.

These citizens could not understand why the two had to die. No German court would have dared to convict them at that time, and the government would never have thought of arresting them and rendering them harmless. It was all right, sa, it was even bitterly necessary that a few irregulars should voluntarily bear the guilt. Neither Hussar Runge nor Lieutenant Vogel took any pleasure in killing two people who did not put up a fight. And even the soldier witnesses to this deed had seen more beautiful and friendlier images than the end of two political criminals. Liebknecht was "shot fleeing" in the Tiergarten. The bullets hit him in the back. Rosa Luxemburg was thrown into the Landwehr Canal in Tiergarten being maltreated in the cab and losing her senses. Her body was only found days later.

And yet none of the men who killed these criminals were murderers. They were accused of having acted without a mission. But they had a mission, a more sacred one than can be on paper, the mission of their hearts. They knew that Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg had countless thousands of German soldiers on their consciences when they incited the munitions workers' strike during the war. They knew that the victims of the civil war, which had only just come to a temporary end, were a burden on their debt account. So those who wiped them out of existence were not executioners, but executors of a secret order of honor and duty.

The horror of seeing the downfall of their two adored leaders paralyzed the determination of the Spartacists, and the fear of meeting the same end made the hearts of the Jewish agitators even more cowardly. Certainly, it was not tactful in those days when, marching through the streets, jeeringly sang
"There's a body floating in the Landwehr Canal",

but we were soldiers and had no reason to spare the feelings of those who would have killed us even more cruelly if they had been our masters.

The waves of excitement were so high that hardly anyone noticed that the armistice was extended in Trier on January 16, 1919. The entire German merchant fleet had to be surrendered as the purchase price.

Ole's election to the National Assembly actually took place on January 19. Many had no longer reckoned with the possibility.

There would certainly have been an uprising in Weimar if the reliable Freikorps Maercker had not been sent there.

It was not without a certain humor that the Republic, with inner reluctance, repeatedly had to call in the Freikorps for protection, although it mistrusted them abysmally. And it is tragicomic that the Freikorps, who would have preferred to massacre every one of the Reds, actually protected the young republic almost from the hour of its birth in a very magnanimous soldierly discipline and thus kept it alive at all.

But the red fire in Germany had not yet been extinguished; it was smouldering beneath the surface everywhere, crackling and cracking in the woodwork. And while the hostile world hoped that the Reich would finally be buried under its ruins, it set about dismembering Germany with ever greater impudence.

I returned to my parents' house on January 22, 1919. My mother had become ill with excitement over my absence. The postcard in which I had said that I was fine had not been able to calm her down. My father reproached me bitterly, because my behavior would make me responsible for my mother's death. I was very sorry that mother was suffering so much, but

but I would have rushed back to arms every day. At school, to my astonishment, I wasn't thrown out of boron. The reason for this was certainly that the election had turned out very favorably for the bourgeois parties, after all they had a total of 236 seats, while the Reds had only managed to get iSS.

Oer Oberprimaner Rothstein avoided me, and there were no more student assemblies. Or. Leng avoided any political innuendo in his lessons, and one day a Jew in my class asked me shyly whether it was true that I was carrying a loaded pistol in my pocket. I nodded seriously. "A hand grenade too, Lohn. Do you want to it?" Lohn shook his head in horror and ran off.

Everywhere on the walls and fences were now emblazoned with large posters advertising joining the Freikorps. There was fighting in the east! Deep in the Baltic, German divisions were fighting with the Bolsheviks, Polish irregulars were still worrying the bleeding German border.

On January 24, Hindenburg moved his headquarters to Kolberg. It almost seemed as the war would break out anew, at least in the east.

With hot eyes and a burning heart, I read the newspaper reports of the fighting and reddening of the German troops. More than once I had made up my mind to run away and enlist some Free Corps. Again and again I had given up the decision because my father reminded me every morning of the word I had given him at my mother's bedside to stay at school for the time being. The commandant who had visited my parents didn't want to hear about my escape plan either. "Your time will come, Eggers. Believe me, it will be years before things bearable in Germany again. Until then, there will still be many fighters you'll be called ."

That was no consolation for me. Once I had secretly gone to the Reinhard Freikorps recruitment office. I was sent home with friendly but unambiguous words. My ID from the Berlin battles was rejected. "Berlin was child's play. Its different outside. Oa such young people collapse after eight days/

Offended and sad, I crept into my room. The commander's intercession was missing.

The peace conference had been in Paris and Versailles since January 18, 1919. Germany had not been invited to the negotiations. Instead, Wilson had appeared in person to himself of the fine work being done. But a thousand delegates were present, and none of them loved Germany. There were also seventy special experts and plenipotentiaries from all over the world, and even among them there was no sign of a friend of the bleeding German nation. Germany seemed to have other worries than about its future and its honor. The republic wanted to have a proper ramen first. And the wage earners of the November state first demanded a legal confirmation of their new Offices and dignities.

Column after column, the newspapers were filled with reflections and glorifications, with speculations and prophecies about all the events and plans of Weimar. The attacks that were being prepared in Paris and Versailles faded into the background. Surely the world's masterminds were only too happy to do so.

On February 6, the National Assembly in Weimar. No worthy and honorable society had gathered there, nor had they there with the intention of acting with manly determination; they content to negotiate from the outset.

That was less ungrateful, less stressful and earned less enmity. At the same hour that the enemies of the Germans, Llemenceau, Llogd George and Wilson, were discussing in abysmal hatred in Paris in what form and by what means they should erase Germany from the book of history, the God-blessed papist and traitor Erzberger was sitting in a cozy wine tavern in Weimar and wrote the profound saying in the guest book:

First do your thing, then drink and laugh!

Llemenceau was not laughing at the time, nor was he drinking. He pondered the end of the Germans and got into a scuffle with Llogd George because the Englishman could not rush fanatically enough. And everything that foolish and dishonorable men of German nationality had said against Germany out of stupidity or treachery was eagerly dragged in by the executioners and in the balance against the Reich. There they marched up, the witnesses for the prosecution: the chancellor Bethmann-Hollweg next to the duden Rathenau, the Marxist Scheidemann next to the duden Ballin, the democratic Prince Max von Baden next to the duden Haase, the Marxist Lbert next to the God-fearing Fesuit servant Erzberger.

In Weimar, however, they and their brothers drank and laughed in the spirit. The spirit of Bethmann, the cowardly spirit of servility, compliance and renunciation stood above all the days and revenge. Ole meanness of Rathenau, who, as he himself had said, succeeded at the last moment in throwing all the blame on Ludendorff, the treachery of this sage of Zion, who had said that world history would lose its meaning if the German Kaiser entered as victor, had the National Assembly its blessing.

The brothers in the spirit of a Ballln knew that a golden age, one of unrestrained, unrestricted service, would follow the hour when a people gone astray would be given their honor.

And the dark men from the Anterworld, who had given birth to an arch- berger, could rub their hands with satisfaction, for when the sun of loyalty and bravery lost its glow, the hour had come for the eternal trans-lamp of hypocrisy to spread its dim light. They felt quite comfortable in their own skin, the men of Weimar.

Honest soldiers watched over their safety and vouched with their honor that they were allowed to drink and laugh in peace. Armored cars and cannons, machine guns and barbed wire entanglements ensured that Spartacus did not an end to the joy.

the iron faces of the warriors, who had learned to overcome fear in hours filled with horror, crept the new representatives of the people, puny men who had avoided death and praised the doctrine of enjoyment at any price as a wise new gospel.

There was enmity between the soldiers and the excited philistines, who felt it was incredibly important to give the German people a constitution. The soldiers did not regard the busybodies as worthy of a salute, they stood gunpoint and hoped for a better Germany, the first fighters for which came together in the Freikorps.

They took little interest in the fact that on February ll. February Fritz Ebert was elected President of the Reich. They didn't even to ask who, among the countless civilians, this man actually was. And if they really knew him, they didn't know whether to laugh or be disgusted, so unmanly, so petty-bourgeois, so unspeakably unsoldierly, unrevolutionary and comical did the little man seem to them.

feisty man with the spikey beard and the inevitable bowler hat. Because of them, one of the many busy fat Jews swarming around Weimar could have become president. They didn't take the republic seriously enough and didn't trust it to live long enough for them to think about it for long. The man of the day was the Jew Pruss, who had drafted and glued together the deretnssahung of the republic, as they openly called the first proposals for the constitution. In pompous speeches they praised human rights, democracy, humanity, the rising golden age of beauty and dignity, and yet the whole mendacious magic would have evaporated in the next hour if the soldiers had gone home and left Weimar to the chaos of the Spartacists. The umbrellas of the people's representatives would have been bent by the first storm.

There they sat, proudly calling themselves the rightful government of the German people, the seven Reds of the Social Democrats, the three greedy gold seekers of the Democrats and the three Blacks of the holy and godly center, to whom the Vatican's fountain of grace was shining. They sat there and were quite embarrassed because they didn't know what do with all this beautiful new dignity.

The only decent person among this illustrious assembly of rarities and criminals was Count Brockdorff-Ranhau, a quiet, enigmatic man who prepared to take a last, very risky gamble for German freedom. The freedom that was hardly worth a penny after the atheistic Reds had entered into an alliance with the God-obsessed Blacks and the circumcised sahwehörigen world corrupters, an alliance praised by the world conscience and blessed by the governor of the dear God.

The busyness of the government was so great that questions of freedom and honor had to take a back seat. First came the trade for rights, for seats, for prestige.

And earning money was so important that the voice of duty, which spoke of service, was drowned out by the market cries of the merchants. And the noise was so deafening that people failed to hear Austria knocking at the gate of the German state and asking to be let into the German Reich.

"Please do not disturb" was written at the entrance to the Weimar conference room, and so thoughts calling for the abolition of the small states in favor of a large German state were not allowed to enter. There were enough parties and parliaments, why should the government burden itself with responsibility? Responsibility could dangerous, and those who bore responsibility could one be called to account. But that was not at all what these pacifists wanted.

The golden age of irresponsibility was . On February 6, on the very day that the illustrious Rational Assembly convened, the scoundrel Helmut von Verlach, this flower of all pacifists, this stronghold of all popular love of humanity, betrayed the province of Posen to the Poles, who were not at all pacifist and in no way burdened with ideals of humanity and plans for world happiness. The more Germany became a republic, the faster it to a pittance. The new black, red and gold flag hung limply from the floor hatches. But none of the battalions that tacitly about this republic carried its flag. No real soldier who marched into new dangers for more than a well-measured salary would be so strangely dirty to this one. followed by a bunting.

The conferences of Germany's enemies were incredibly precise in their will to destroy.

In the streets of Berlin and Hamburg, Munich and Dortmund, the mob roared his new hit song

"I am not a ffud, I am not a Christian, I am a Spartacist", but in Paris and Versailles, in London, in Reugork, they spoke with reverence of retribution, of revenge, of reparation, and if they prayed to a god there at all, it was the God of Destruction who spoke through the mouths of his priests. These priests, led by Llemenceau and Llogd George, were fanatical in their zeal, tireless in their interpretation of the holy words of the great prophet of the new God of Destruction: the prophet Wilson. It is true that this prophet, like all the prophets of history without exception, had allegedly and initially had other intentions, more worthy, more beautiful, more noble intentions than the priests later interpreted, misrepresented, distorted and falsified. But even this prophet, like all these unmanly, babbling prophets of world history, quickly bowed to the zeal of his priests. A sacred message of fourteen points had been proclaimed by the prophet Wilson to the awestruck world, and a vast Bible of commentaries was produced by the word of his priests. It took almost two thousand priestly conferences to produce this Bible.

knows, work was done in Paris and Versailles?

The tricolor rattled triumphantly on the towers.

Week after week passed in inaction and renunciation. The government of the German people had a lot to do with administering itself.

The groups loitering harmlessly on the corners just a few days ago, content to sing mocking songs like

> "O Christmas tree, O Christmas tree, the
> Emperor has hit the sack. Auguste has to
> peel potatoes, the crown prince has to
> grenades"

had meanwhile migrated by night and fog to southern Germany and the industrial area. The Red Army was growing!

The dictatorship of the proletariat was just around the corner.

The Reds knew that the Freikorps were heading east, so they hoped to have an easy game inside Germany. They did not prevent any transport train to the east from leaving. But they lay in wait for every soldier they met in German towns.

The government had no time to worry about it. They knew that the hated and slandered German soldiers would be there again at the right time.

She ruled in her own way, that is, she bowed to the East and the West and, completely unsolicited, constantly affirmed her good will, her innocence and her willingness to say yes if necessary in the interests of the peace of others.

The few men hearts remained firm were shocked by the unworthy and all-German goings-on. They pondered doggedly how a change could be brought about, if necessary by the harshest means. Ethnic clubs and national associations, almost romantic conspiratorial societies and radical secret organizations were formed. But it was always only individuals who stood out with their energy. There no large, determined national renewal movement, and certainly no party that dared to take up the cause unconditional national overthrow. There were only members of the government and a small, harmless bourgeois opposition, which at most threatened with a raised index finger if the betrayal became too brazen. The real decisive battle was being prepared from a different field of tension. On the one side stood Spartacus, determined to fight for the dictatorship of the proletariat on the barricades. And on the other side stood the German warriors, still reeling, not yet clenched into an unheard-of explosive charge of will, but scattered into countless groups and small groups.

The final decision lay between Bolshevik chaos and the new military order. Oas only the activists of these two camps knew. The philistines of all parties at the mercy of Weimar had no idea of this secret, growing reality. In their lack of instinct, they considered themselves very progressive, very educated, very humane and turned away in indignation when the activists from the camp of the military order also went on the attack. They thought it was crude, indelicate, barbaric!

The ever-increasing waves of anti-Semitism, which occasionally became very violent when the Jews became too intrusive, worried the unsuspecting citizens almost more than the Jews, who were well aware of why hostility towards the Jews was growing. On 2t. February Count Arco shot the Jew Lisner in Munich!

In the German Shoe and Defense League we celebrated this act as a spontaneous expression of the German will to resist. Nor did we the accusation of being partisans of this femicide, but were proud that a man of our attitude and our ideas had carried out the sentence. The philistines hastened to declare that they condemned such an act, which could only have been born of the overheated imagination of politically immature outsiders. Although they had not exactly drunk brotherhood with the living Eisner, the dead Jew was at least venerable to them "as the martyr of his idea".

What did the lukewarm people know of the danger that threatened Germany through this fanatical Jew, what did they know in their stupidity of the villainy that this knower of Israel had already committed against Germany. They did not know and did not want to know that Lisner was one of the fathers of Spartacism, that he had been one of the worst agitators during the great munitions workers' strike in 1918, which cost the lives of countless German soldiers. They no longer that Eisner, barely

that on November 8, 1918, he had swung out to become Bavarian Minister President, had made the enemy an offer for a special peace that would completely dismember and destroy Germany, and that he had not shied away from falsifying legation reports on the reasons for the outbreak of war just to accuse Germany of war guilt and, under the appearance of a man of honor, to achieve the separation of Bavaria and, if possible, other southern German states from the wicked, murderous Prussia. The philistines closed their eyes to the fact that Eisner had already established a Bavarian legation in Berne and had no other man there than the evil traitor Förster. Nor did they want to see that the Bavarian envoy in Berlin was an evil Jew. They were so humane, so enlightened, so depraved that they considered the greatest right to be natural and understandable.

When Count Arco fired, he aimed his weapon in the name of the reviled and disgraced, the betrayed and deceived real Germany against one of the representatives of Israel, whose God has demanded and still demands the conquest of all nations under his throne.

At the time, we distributed leaflets and small flyers to inform people about the true background to the Munich crime. It was very amusing to see how the citizens quickly crumpled up the sheets and sorted them, as if they were afraid of being associated with Count Arco in an incriminating and not harmless way.

The victims of our ranks, the ranks of the soldier activists, were increasing every day, except that the cowardly public hardly noticed. They bled to death in the alleys of the big cities, the officers and volunteers, told, trampled, mutilated. But nobody spoke of it.

Spartacus went on the attack. There were serious riots in Berlin in March and much blood was shed in the civil war.

Once again, old people, women and children lay among the victims. For days and nights the machine guns barked, the hand grenades barked in the streets. Now the soldiers more determined than months ago, the fronts had become clearer. There was no more mercy. Anyone who was approached with a weapon in their hand was put up against the wall. Even the Reds didn't let anyone live to hear them sing. We could not forgive them for torturing and mutilating their prisoners. Every night we made surprise forays into the eastern and northern suburbs of Berlin, blew apart Red detachments, tried to capture and eliminate known Bolshevik leaders, confiscated weapons and ammunition and were already over the hill by the time the Reds received support. Berlin was free in a short time. In other German cities, the Bolshevik reign of terror lasted longer. In Munich on
April 7, the soviet dictatorship was proclaimed. The hordes of Jews murdered innocent men and women who belonged to small ethnic groups and circles. A few lunatics, a handful of criminals, horribly oppressed the stunned population. They looted, plundered and burned until hardly a store, hardly a rich country house was left intact. The social-democratic government ran away head over heels and waited until the much-maligned and reviled soldiers liberated the country. It took barely a month for the Red uprising to be suppressed here too. Freikorps Lpp and some formations of the young Reichswehr did a thorough job. In the industrial area and in the large cities, the fighting lasted longer, but nowhere where the soldiers carried the law of order could chaos prevail, not even where only small detachments of soldiers faced a large superior force. Oa but the soldiers silently did their hard duty, since they did not claim any rights and also

As the soldiers demanded no pay, the government influence and even certain prestige in the eyes of the citizens. For it was not said that the soldiers had restored order, but it was generally claimed that the government's cold-bloodedness and determination had prevented the worst and saved Germany ruin.

And the moves with which the government tried to shake off the soldiers before they became dangerous were cunning, unscrupulous and by no means unsuccessful. And again, many warriors went to the Baltic States, disgusted by the ingratitude and betrayal, hoping to find a new home, a decent earth or an honest death up there in the East. But they found death sooner and more surely than the other.

2After the short, sometimes quite dangerous adventures of the March battles, I had returned to school in time to that I had reached the class target after all, despite the school management's great misgivings. My parents forgave me for going another adventure, mainly because this time the commandant had personally himself the task of convincing them that it was not criminal recklessness but an honest love of the people that drove me to flee again and again.

Father shook his head. He no longer really believed in the people's inner resistance because he had to see and experience too many vile and mean things every day. He also wanted to spare me the disappointment and disgusting disillusionment. He had only one desire, to harmonize himself with the world in a reasonably bearable way and to live his work. The fact that I danced out of line hurt him deeply because he believed that in the long run I would have to block any possibility of advancement and ultimately suffer a breakdown.

The future of Germany sad enough again. At the beginning of May, the representatives of the German government had traveled to France to conduct what they believed to be the final negotiations on peace. They were kept waiting in a rude, insulting manner. For days! While at home a people stared anxiously across the borders, still holding a faint hope in their hearts that at the last moment many things would be different, better. One of the commissioners, the only real man among them, Count Brockdorff-Ranhau, was prepared for the worst. He knew the abysmal depth of the French desire for revenge, he knew the hypocrisy of Wilson, he knew the cold, calculating cunning of England, and he also knew the bottomless cowardice of his government, whose foreign minister he had become out of a deep inner loyalty to responsibility.

Finally, on May 7, the double doors of Bersailles Castle opened to the Germans. The old hater Llemenceau the opportunity to the German delegation. A speech filled with mockery, derision and insults. The enemies of Germany listened with smiles, Wilson sat in his seat smiling and did not miss a word of the speech.

Brockdorff-Ranhau stood upright. His face was iron-controlled. He did not take his eyes off the cruel spokesman of the enemy.

When the thick book of horrors of the peace dictate was handed over, Brockdorff gave his speech. Passionate, short, clear, threatening, German!

As a soldier throws himself before his shattered flag, so he threw himself before the honor of the mortally wounded German nation. Against the cold gaze of his enemies, he raised his voice against all dishonor, all disenfranchisement, all slavery, all rape. He denounced the Versailles murder of the future of an entire nation that had never and

never to blame for the outbreak of the world war. His voice became piercing when he spoke of the fourteen Wilsonian points that a people of good faith had trusted.

Wilson, still smiling, closed his eyes and remained silent. The enemies were silent, the so often praised and appointed world powers were silent. Germany was given 14 days to respond to the most comprehensive and sophisticated peace treaty in world history.

An unheard-of imposition! But Vrockdorff's tenacity and determination were just as unheard of when he set about the gigantic task of unraveling and identifying the infinitely subtle, devilishly clever and mean network of dictation.

So this was the justice for which Wilson, the great Freemason, fought! This was the peace of freedom and dignity for which soldiers had abandoned their flag, turned their officers away and broken their oath!

So that was the world, and that was Europe! The new Europe that was to be built on the rubble of the world war. The new Europe of human dignity, of goodness, of mercy!

What hopes dreamy hearts had pinned on this new world, on the new Europe! Enthusiasts proclaimed the human kingdom without borders, without soldiers, without races, without enmity. Wise men and wise women were to be the true and just rulers who would eradicate all injustice and that the sun of justice did not lose its glow. The Schledshöse were to be appointed to settle every dispute with moderation and composure. An eternal Sunday was to shine over the world, a Sunday of peace and bliss. Pacifists and prayer warriors of all shades saw their great hour coming, the hour when heaven would descend to earth and people would be saved.

into angels. And next to the enthusiasts stood the emissaries of Moscow, fully joining in the overwhelming speeches of their esteemed predecessors and grinningly pointing to Russia, where paradise had already taken shape, and speaking of Lenin, the lord of paradise and the true king of honor and earth. And a high-ranking Protestant clergyman did the rest: he wrote a flaming appeal in one of the worst Jewish newspapers and gave it the title "Blessed are the pacifists!"

Astonished by so much foolishness, unworldliness, cunning and disloyalty, the soldiers shook their heads and clutched the rifle tighter in their hands. They thought with disgust that not five years had passed since the weapons swept by those who cursed them today.

And while at home fools praised peace for peace's sake, Brockdorff-Rantzau worked day and night to give the people an insight into the abyss of peace without honor.

When the first news of the plans that had been secretly drawn up in Versailles reached Germany, a cry of horror went up through the tortured empire. A line of paralyzing trepidation settled on the hearts of the gullible, who had just listened to the soporific whispers of the peace choruses.

So this is what the longed-for peace looked like in reality?

The world's fortunate had dropped the mask and showed their face, the face of the most brutal exploiters and slave owners ready for any murder. Moscow's messengers mockingly assured us that there was now only one way out, the Lhaos of Bolshevism.

The first greetings from the "new" world, the righteous Europe, came one after the other: Germany is to blame for the war! Germany must pay! Germany must cede Llsass-Lorraine to France, give Eupen-Malmedg to Belgium.

Oas Hultschiner Ländchen is lost, the neutral territory of Moresnet, Posen, West Prussia, the corridor, parts of Pomerania and Upper Silesia! Germany is mutilated in all its limbs. Memel, Oanzig, North Schleswig, the Saar region are to be taken away from its sovereignty? Almost seventy-one thousand square kilometers with around six and a half million German people are being lost! Germany is not worthy of continuing to be a colonial power, which is why the exemplarily administered colonies are being taken away and turned into mandates! The enemy wants countless billions of money, Germany is to tribute for generations to come! The Rhine, the Elbe, the Memel, the Oonau are to be "internationalized", that is, they are no longer to be German rivers! And all of Germany's existing international treaties should be null and void, Germany should cease to be called a great power! Everywhere on the borders, however, where valuable ores, coal and potash lie in the ground, the enemy sees itself firmly established, and what it does not want to take by force, it hopes to gain with the help of its mercenaries, the separatists and insurgents.

Peace on earth?

Germany must send its soldiers home, it can keep a whole hundred thousand men! General conscription no longer corresponds to the new pacifist thinking, so let's get rid it! Germany must no longer have aircraft suitable for war, tanks, combat gas, heavy artillery, everything that a powerful army needs to be taken seriously. And the stocks from the war should destroyed immediately, all machines that are suitable for producing war material must disappear. The fortresses, especially those in the west, should be razed. And to ensure that thorough work is carried out, inter-allied military commissions are to monitoring services!

Justice on earth?

The world has been divided into the class of the victors and that of the vanquished. The victors have all rights, the vanquished none. The victors have all the honor, the vanquished are slaves. The victors only have a very personal and understandable duty not to beat the slave to death, because it is well known that a dead slave can no longer work.

Repair on earth?

Germany is no longer even allowed to defend itself against brazen attacks. It is not allowed to hold an A-boat, not allowed to expand an airborne device. The borders should remain open to the greedy enemy, a constant temptation to every young state growing up. Germany should learn fear and thus blind obedience, which knows neither duty, nor honor, nor loyalty. Germany is allowed to keep fifteen thousand sailors and a handful of ships. Twelve years service for crews, twenty-five years for officers. The powers at Versailles were very clever: the number of soldiers discharged before the end of the twelve years was limited to five per hundred. They wanted to prevent young men from serving voluntarily for a shorter time and thus forming a reserve army. Oh, they know where the cursed Germans are dangerous" They must educated in pacifism, the boys must no longer see soldiers, no cannons, no fortresses" - yes, they are even forbidden to become soldiers.

Courtesy on earth?

Germany is to pay the cost of the foreign affirmations on German soil" And not only that: Germany is to make good all the damage caused by the iron of the shells, regardless of whether the shells were fired by the Germans or their enemies. Germany must build up villages and towns on the other side of the border, deliver horses and cows, sheep and pigs, coal and ore, wood, dyes, benzene, works of art, captured field signs and valuable booty to the enemy.

become. German patents are to be handed over to the foreign economy? The "new" world proves once again that it has a good nose for economic advantages.

Cleanliness on earth?

The hunger blockade still exists! Prisoners of war are still being held back in enemy territory! All German assets abroad are confiscated. The enemy reserves the right to determine Germany's final tribute at a later date. First, Germany has to pay: the round sum of forty billion immediately, twenty billion after one year, forty billion again after five years. And for five years Germany is to build two hundred thousand tons of shipping for the enemy every year.

Never has the world seen a crueler, never a more destructive peace than this dictate which sprang from the brains of men who proclaimed the new justice on earth.

For five years, Germany is to supply the enemy with five hundred and forty million tons of coal every year. But the enemies also demand the trading right of most-favored-nation treatment, which means that they may import from Germany whatever their hearts desire without having to pay a single penny of duty!

Honor on earth?

Good heavens, never in the millennia of world history had so much wickedness been compiled as in the pages of the Book of the Dictate of Versailles! But one thing had clear: the men of Versailles did not come from somewhere. They were emissaries of dark powers who must have been racking their brains for many years about how to gradually bleed Germany to death. The plan to destroy the German nation was too subtle and far too thorough for all its details to be worked out in a few weeks,

could have worked out at the Versailles Peace Conference. And those who had come together in Versailles recognized each other by their looks and even more by their handshakes. But the nations in whose name the delegates came, negotiated and dictated, had little idea of the hatred that was sown there, otherwise they would have been frightened and angry and sent the Anongmen's henchmen into the desert. The victorious peoples basked in the vain glory of being masters of the world and having immeasurable wealth at their disposal. The chicken in the pot was no longer good enough, they demanded the goose in the pan! Germany was the world's big wallet, all you had to do was to faucet into it! It was so nice to be rich! And it wouldn't have taken much for every Frenchman to demand a German slave and every Englishwoman a German slave. One only had to give orders, the stupid German would obey!

But in Germany they clenched their fists, pressed their teeth into their lips, oiled their old shot-out rifles. -They" were the eternal soldiers who found no peace, who could not find their way back into the dishonorable, servile everyday life of the bourgeoisie!

For the first time, marches were held that no longer displayed red flags; for the first time, students, young workers, old soldiers, schoolchildren and citizens marched through the streets of Berlin and all major German cities in unmistakable rows, singing German songs, songs of struggle and defiance. And the signs and banners spoke a different language to the one we had become accustomed to in the last campaign. There was once again talk of Germany, of freedom and above all of honor! The poison of Versailles seemed to gather all the defenses in the body of the German people once again. Huge gatherings in the open air

united people of all political persuasions to protest against the bloodsucking oppression rising from the West.

Oer Raine Brockdorff-Ranhau almost became the program of an incipient national resistance against the despotism of the "new" world. From time to time, supporters of the Soviet idea spoke of the Versailles danger in public meetings and their alliance for the fight against oppression. It was an initially captivating idea: from Moscow to Berlin, a single front against the imperialist and capitalist West! Surely all insidious attacks had to be crushed on such a front? As beautiful as the prospect was, a closer look revealed a dangerous snag. Moscow naturally wanted to take the in this battle against the West. But that meant nothing other than that Germany should first become Bolshevik! But we had already experienced what that really meant in the street battles with Spartacus! We knew that we had to be very careful not to let Moscow suddenly control of the situation. Overnight, Radek had discovered a national cubbyhole in his Bolshevik heart, which he was happy to rent out to Germany in return for appropriate ties.

First of all, however, we were glad that almost all sections of the people were filled with the will to defend themselves against Versailles. We were out and about day and night, putting up posters, handing out leaflets, chanting, selling brochures for the Shoe and Chest Union, attending meetings and taking part in parades. The rally at the Busch circus was particularly impressive. Military music almost brought the suddenly patriotic citizens back to their feet. Somewhat rash merchants were already selling black and white paper flags and postcards with the image of Kaiser Wilhelm. There was an unheard-of tension in

of desire, but no one really imagined what the discharge would be like. A new revolution, this time with nationalist overtones? Abdication of the Weimar government? Invasion by the enemy? War?

Scheiöemann, the Prime Minister and Chancellor of the government, which had been considerably upset by the unexpected wave of national reflection and indignation, launched into a melodious speech. Philipp the Fair, as this vain man was called, who looked like the eternal tailor from the German fairy tale book, stood there in a wonderful pose, his goatee bristling with excitement as he uttered the unusually manly words that the hand that signed such a shameful treaty must wither! A fine, a noble word in those days, which had an abundance of fine words and no store good deeds! It became customary to become intoxicated with proud words, which did not cost much and yet still made an impression here and there.

On another occasion, the no less upright word "Rur over my dead body* was later spoken. But even this corpse is still alive today, if it hasn't died, as the fairy tale says.

The withered hand at least made some impression, and the most daring optimists seriously believed that the Weimar government would courageously enter the final decisive battle.

The soldiers were somewhat suspicious of such statements. When it became known that the Versailles powers demanded the delivery of the flags captured during the war, a group of determined young men set off, went to the arsenal, stormed in, snatched the flags intended for delivery and burned them in front of the cheering crowds. By chance, I had put posters against Versailles on certain buildings.

Unter den Linden and Friedrichstrasse, I witnessed this courageous act and sang with the men and women the song "O Deutschland hoch in Ehren . .

Even in the grammar school, something like a spirit of resistance stirred during those weeks. The student council didn't meet, I made sure of that, and Rothstein didn't show up for a few days. But some younger teachers, veterans of the war, remembered that there were duties and ideas that were binding beyond the so-called civic duty of rest. They did not confine themselves to stammering a few patriotic words in the usual devotions, but went out of their way to point out the fate of Germany in their lessons, whether it was in Greek, Latin or German, whether it a geography lesson, a history lesson or a history of literature lesson, and to refer from the generally held life lessons of humanism to the duty to fight for freedom in this time. I have rarely spent such wonderful hours at grammar school as I did back then, when our eyes would light up when one teacher or another hobbled up to his desk, dressed in regalia, contemptuously pushed the textbooks to one side and taught us about real life with shining eyes. Now the historical figures became more vivid, and the battle for Troy and the Roman generals' campaigns into Germania were brought very close to our own time.

Unfortunately, the school inspectorate didn't like this teaching at all, the teachers were told off, and gradually the lessons became indifferent, empty and cursedly irrelevant, bypassing life. It was rare for a teacher to utter a clear German word later, most of them were afraid of being thrown into the misery of the street.

It was in a hall in Berlin, in a large concert hall, when, in a meeting against Versailles, a pastor

gave a speech. I liked the priest, he was tall, four-legged, wore the Iron First and had a rough commanding voice. Before he spoke, the song "Wir treten zum Beten" was sung. I wasn't the only one who was astonished when the pastor said with a defensive gesture that one shouldn't the idea that the Lord would set someone free without the person concerned himself grasping for freedom, that prayer was only an accompanying circumstance to the deed. As a Protestant pastor, he was by no means afraid to preach unquenchable hatred against the enemy! I learned that this pastor belonged to the German Church and that disciplinary proceedings were against him with the aim of removing him from office. The pastor was followed by a cute, excited little man who spoke German when he meant German and went from the hundredth to the thousandth. We looked at each other struggled to hold back our laughter. Oas was another one of those guys who liked to hear himself talk and 't care what he was talking about. The man next to me, an often wounded shock troop leader whom I had met in the Schuh- und Trutzbund, grinned happily to himself and shouted "Bravo! Da ospo!" Oa's little man was visibly upset and looked down at us disapprovingly - we were sitting in the front row. After another "Bravo! Da ospo!" he interrupted his speech, took a deep breath and hurled at us contemptuously:
"Shame on you for saying something like that. It's called wacker in German!"
I was so excited that I shouted "Bravo" as loud as I could. Oas gave the little man the rest, he just shook his head and went away saddened by the laughter of the assembly.
Oer shock troop leader slapped me hard on the shoulder. "Oas was fine. I've known this bad boy for some time now, he's been ynatching wherever he gets the chance. He lives somewhere out near Oranienburg, bet

People who have made a plant-based diet their worldview and think that the salvation of mankind will come through cauliflower. Vain people who don't know whether they shouldn't be looking towards Moscow after all and whose stupid behavior the national idea ridiculous!'"

All sorts of circles were raised at the time. It was worth going to the meetings. If anyone had stood up and spoken in favor of accepting the Versailles Dictate, they would have been torn to pieces. Rarely had the disappointed people been so united in anger against the overconfident enemy, despite their internal differences; rarely had they been so willing to the heaviest sacrifices out of a last remnant of honor. In smaller meetings, former officers pointed out that the French people felt no inclination to carry out an occupation of Germany. Although the French army was currently much more capable of fighting than the remnants of our army, which had been mutilated by its own government, if we were to allow a Franco-Turkish war to take place, the French soldier would no longer feel any desire to perpetuate the war. We would just have to keep our nerve and face the chaos with composure. For us young lads, that was a tempting, adventurous idea! Teusel, too, blowing up bridges, stirring up humps. It wasn't up to us, we were ready!

The commander made a contemptuous gesture when I told him about this possibility with shining eyes. ^I respect your faith, Eggers, but I also know the underworld, which has risen to power. If it really comes to resistance, the government will wait until the vanguard of soldiers has been driven away, and then it will on its knees again and impose even worse, even more dishonorable conditions itself!'"

The disillusionment was so great that I didn't go to the commander for a few weeks. Somehow I felt at ease

ashamed, sa even dishonored. Perhaps I also hated to be able to bid him a triumphant farewell one day soon. On the day they said "Volunteers forward! Volunteers to the front!"

Oer day did not come!

But a rumor spread among the people. At first very hesitant, tentative, cautious. Then bolder, more threatening, more brutal. The government, it was said, would give in to pressure from its enemies.

We young volunteers were rigid. Were we not also pressure on the government? The government was caught between two oppressive poles. So it had to take the enemy more seriously than us?

Gin disgusting, a humiliating consciousness!

At that time, for the first time, the plan to shoot the men responsible for this government was openly voiced in our small nationalist circles. To shoot them all. I don't know who first into words the idea that had been on our minds for days. There was something icy about the reality of the thought that made us silent at first. But then we nodded. Yes, it had to be. Traitors should die!

I could no longer sleep on the avengers. I thought about my young life. My schoolmates were all still playing the games of their age, carefree and quite uninvolved, at least at heart. Ach had somehow been thrown off course. By the school ship, by the commander, by the first bullets I heard whistling. Somehow I had been deprived of my playful youth, cheated, as my bourgeois relatives said. I was not sorry that I had very soon exchanged the toy of childhood for the weapon of youth. Certainly not, I was proud of it, even if my heart sometimes throbbed at the danger I felt lurking in my path.

But now, when the word shooting stood before my soul, I was afraid, and I felt with fear that I was still very young,

that I was sa still a child, that my hand would have to cite if I pointed a gun at a person. But I couldn't go back, I didn't want to go back, I would have been too ashamed of my weakness.

I only silently hoped that would not have to take swift action until the turmoil within me had given way to a clear, soldierly hardness. And I experienced all the deep pain of a sung heart that awakens from the rapturous dream and realizes that the reality of life is sword and iron, and that the dream with its numbness is nothing but a pious lie that wraps itself around man's eyes like a blindfold so that he does not see the glaring light of truth. This first visual stagger between dream and reality contains all the dangers of disillusionment, of disgust. More than once I seriously entertained the idea of withdrawing from the adventure in time to see myself on the bench of those waiting. But then the proud defiance of not giving up on a venture I had begun until it was finished, regardless of whether I won or lost. During those weeks, I often walked around the Grunewald for hours, restless, without a destination. Perhaps I was hoping for some decisive encounter, perhaps for signs and wonders. Who knows. Sometimes I surprised myself with tears running down my cheeks. Then I could have slapped myself in the face with anger.

The more days went by, the quieter and lonelier the streets became. The opinion quickly spread that, in the end, there was no point to it all and that it was still better to live in deprivation than not at all. The Red newspapers threw out a word like a fishhook. Oa's word was Realpolitik. And it meant nothing other than wanting to live at any price. One magazine in particular shredded its somewhat disreputable honor

This new realpolitik was praised as the panacea for the sick times and as the true modern world view. This Zeitschrist was called "The Future", and its soul was the smooth-talking, all-water, scheming Jew Witkowski, who had the equally sonorous and inconspicuous name of Maximilian Karden. In the salons of the educated, it was good manners to read "The Future" and at least discuss its content. Nobody wanted to know that Witkowski, who had initially clung to the Chancellor's coat tails after the fall of Bismarck in order to obtain the necessary material for his gossip and the spicy political backstage game, had just been branded by Bismarck himself in the clearest possible terms and now stood before the world as a dishonorable scoundrel. Now Witkowski was no longer quoting Bismarck either, he was referring loudly and insistently to his cunning racial comrade Rathenau.

Karden was hated in our circles as the worst and at the same time most dangerous smear merchant. We considered him to be as harmful as the leaders of Spartacus in his impact, which was particularly noticeable in the intellectual circles of Germany's enemies, who repeatedly and emphatically invoked him on the question of responsibility for the outbreak of the war.

Wherever we looked, we saw enemies, cowards and traitors. And when we looked around for companions in adventure, for comrades in determined action, in danger, we realized that we were alone. Alone with the honest weapon.

We had come together in small groups, completely by chance. We had no one to advise us but our defiance.

I had joined a troop that a former captain had gathered when it was necessary to prevent a meeting of the German Shoe and Chest Federation in front of an Abersall

to protect the Spartacists. As the weeks went by, we were five men who went into action when the captain called. He called us at the most impossible hours, but only when there was a need for men somewhere in Potsdam, Adlershof, Spandau, Friedrichshagen or Köpenick. As a result of my youth, I was quite spoiled and pampered by the much older men, one of whom was a sergeant, two non-commissioned officers and two volunteers without rank, and because I was not clumsy when it came to spying on something inconspicuously, I very soon got the nickname "hunting dog".

My commander didn't like the fact that I was going to the swearing circle. He must have feared that, as a result of my experience, I would one day fall into one of the many traps set for us by the security organs of the Weimar government and perhaps lose the last bit of ground beneath my feet. At times, I myself had the dizzying feeling that I was walking a tightrope over an abyss and had ventured too far onto a deceptive sheet of ice. In addition to my pride, however, I also felt that peculiar tingling sensation that danger awakens in the senses of a daring adventurer. I did not understand everything, by means everything, that they discussed there in terms of undertakings against this or that personality of the Weimar state or public life, I only understood that we had to create the impression everywhere that avengers were at work. The assignments I received were very simple at first. I had to paint swastikas with wash-proof paint on public buildings, on the doors of the houses of influential Jews. Later I had to get letters or make observations. Gradually I came to realize that the whole of Berlin, and probably the Reich as well, was infiltrated by very fine tunnels and channels of conspiracy, only that

there was no head of the conspiracy. There were many groups and factions at work, and not all of them knew each other. Hardly anyone what was to come later. They were all united in their demand to change the unworthy situation. Sometimes I had to grit my teeth to keep from falling asleep at school. It was desired that I should the grammar school as regularly as possible, the captain thought that I could then hardly arouse suspicion. With my young double life, I seemed pretty interesting at the time.

What the soldiers in Germany feared came true. The government fell! All the fine phrases about the hand condemned to wither, about the preservation of German honor, about the sanctity of freedom evaporated like fog in the sun. The first to break out of the front of the general resistance was the Jew Hugo Haase, who openly declared at a joint rally of the National Assembly and the government that it would be pointless to rebel against Versailles and that state-preserving prudence, i.e. realpolitik, demanded the immediate signing of the treaty.

If the conspirators had worked as they had planned, Haase would have lost his life that very night. I was disappointed that nothing happened and looked excitedly in the newspaper every morning for the news of his death.

It was not until October of that year that Haase was shot down and died soon afterwards. However, the man who turned the gun on him was not our political circles, but a revolutionary Marxist worker.

My faith in the inescapable judgment of the secret avengers began to waver. The commandant tried to console me by pointing out how little the German cared for political assassination. I countered that Count Arco was certainly a man of honor.

In the afternoon I went to the Wilmersdorf cemetery and seriously contemplated suicide. A few days later, the commandant, to whom I complained of my distress and mental despair, gave me a good talking to. -You're just a boy, Lggers, a real enthusiast who wants to reach for a pistol at the first disillusionment of his dream. A man can't be shaken by anything, on the contrary, he becomes more defiant and reckless with every disappointment. You have to force fate, but you can't avoid it! Become a man!'"

The gravediggers of Germany now becoming increasingly visible. Rathenau proclaimed that there was no absolute unacceptability at all.

The peace terms were handed over on June 16, and Germany was given a five-day reprieve.

The enemy troops were ready to march, they wanted to advance on June 21.

German warriors drove inconspicuously to the west on their own initiative. Was that the reason why no bullets had yet been cast for Haase and Rathenau?

Nm The gallows period was extended by two days.

The fearful ran around screaming hysterically and proclaiming the imminent end of the world, which could be averted so easily with the little word yes. The traitors went about their work coldly and calculatingly. Erzberger was back the agenda to complete his work.

And he succeeded masterfully! The Center and the Social Democrats held a test vote, and lo and behold, a majority was suddenly in favor of acceptance! The pious and the cowardly had formed an alliance, the saints and the scoundrels determined the downfall of the German Reich!

But even for Erzberger, the ball had not yet been cast.

On June 21, the first government of Weimar resigned as a sham and made way for a second government born of the same spirit.

On the same day, however, news came to Germany that shone like a ray of sunshine in the cloudy darkness: in the bay of Scapa Flow, under the command of Admiral von Reuter, German sailors sank the warships that the enemy had ordered to be surrendered before the eyes of the English! With their battle flags flying, the proud, undefeated ships sank to the bottom of the open sea that harbors so many brave men. German sailors washed clean the honor of the German navy, which covered with the stain of mutiny. And while the deadly shots of the English cracked, Germans who had recovered the language of honor sang their war songs.

The evening I heard the news, I took out one of the old, tattered war flags that had once flown on the mast of our school ship, drew a swastika in ink in one corner and let this flag flutter out of my window.

The population did not take much notice of what Scapa Flow had done. It was seen as a heroic but ultimately useless gesture, nothing more. Newspapers such as the "Zukunft" reprovingly pointed out that it would be wrong to irritate former enemies with such thoughtless pranks. Surely Germany would now have pay for the sunk shits with gold. The eternally sensible citizens were not ashamed to nod devoutly.

On 21 ffuni, the National Assembly adopted the peace dictate by 237 votes to 138. Five votes abstained in noble, republican restraint and awaited the omens that were to come.

The National Assembly only timidly attempted to oppose the demand that Germany should be presented to the whole world and the

history would be solely responsible for the war. The great hater Llemenceau only cast a threatening glance at Germany, and the government also signed this ingenious meanness.

Insulted, insulted, insulted, the courageous Brockdorff-Ranhau left Versailles with his fighters. The representatives of the second Weimar government crawled dog-like and obediently to their knees.

On June 28, 1919, the year of disaster, Hermann Müller, the stooge of the Social Democrats, and Bell, the emissary of the godly center, signed the Bersailles Dictate.

3In the days following the signing, the commander invited the captain and the five of us to his house at my request.

Not much was said. Some kind of pressure weighed on us all. It was as if one was ashamed in front of the other that he was still alive. At parting, the commandant said thoughtfully: "I can see more and more clearly the big deer over Germany, over the world. Jews like Rathenau, Freemasons like Wilson, dark men like Lrzberger are the ones who hold the rope in their hands that binds freedom/

The highly educated in Germany, however, laughed superiorly and approvingly when "Oie Zukunft" gloatingly remarked that some fools under the swastika were now talking about three internationals, the black, the red and the gold, and made it easy for themselves to point to the clergy, the Freemasons and the Jews as the scapegoats. These fools had only forgotten one group, namely the cyclists! This Jewish joke gave its narrator in the salons the gloriole of the free cosmopolitan who had long since outgrown the childhood diseases of völkisch thinking and outlived nationalism. And very soon

the boarders of Judaism, who have the funny saying

> From the Baltic Sea to the borders of Switzerland, you can recognize the cattle by the swastika!

The Talmudic wisdom that a living dog should still be worth more than a dead lion was quickly recognized as a modern principle of life by some bourgeois circles. The Talmudic wisdom that a living dog should still be worth more than a dead lion was readily accepted as a modern principle of life by some bourgeois circles, who quickly realized that one can lead a very pleasant and enjoyable existence even without honour.

On y. July the peace dictate was "ratified" and three days later the hunger blockade against Germany was finally lifted!

But the enemy was still holding back the German prisoners of war.

^^)he life in Germany became more even. Hardly anyone was still publicly upset about the huge entitlement.

In the windows of some picture stores, maudlin pictures of Kaiser Wilhelm with anti-Christians such as "Berlassen" appeared,
"Lonely", "Far from home", "Longing for the fatherland". Next to them hung postcards with patriotic content, edged in black and white and red. Older people would occasionally stop in front of these picture stores and secretly wipe away a few tears. But when some street urchin sang the song that was very popular on the streets at the time
"Who did they steal the crown from?" sang the melancholy ones, then they got away. After the brief days of general resistance to Versailles, the rule of the streets was once again completely in the hands of the Reds. Oer citizen considered it unworthy to engage in violent confrontations. He would rather suffered right and shame than budge a finger's breadth from his position of supposed dignity, which obliged him to exercise noble restraint.

Ole Reds knew this and behaved accordingly. In the east and north of Berlin it got to the point where someone was mobbed and beaten because of his better suit. Thefts and robberies were carried out in broad daylight. And if a bandit was actually caught, the so-called street was sure to take his side, even attacking the police officers and preventing his arrest. The circles of the national revolution became smaller, but also more determined, the more the bourgeoisie withdrew into the national and colorless parties in order to achieve a harmless, but time-representative, victory by voting.

bendm and the remains of a German sense of responsibility. This bourgeoisie hardly took any notice when the Holy Father in Rome congratulated the powers of Versailles on this true peace of justice. That I knew what a power Rome was, I owed to the instructions of the commandant. Otherwise, one hardly felt anything of Catholicism in Berlin. On the contrary, we were used to hearing at the Reformation celebrations that Luther's deeds had defeated Rome once and for all, especially in the north of the German Empire. We had then experienced that after the lifting of Bismarck's ban on the Fesuits, the first Jesuit monastery was, significantly, founded as Lanisiusgmna- sium and Lanlsiuskapelle in the west of Berlin and that more and more monastic branches appeared around Berlin, so that it very soon became clear how these foundations and branches were based on a clever, strategically excellent plan. had to lie.

Every now and then, Catholic nuns and priests appeared on the streets, an unusual sight that the more than harmless citizens viewed with interest. Significantly, the Reds, who usually even disturbed funerals in Protestant churchyards if they thought of teasing a person wearing a gown, did nothing against these messengers from another world whom no one had called. Those among the salon bourgeoisie who could hear the grass growing even considered that it would only be beneficial in the long run if the messengers of the Roman Church were to get to work properly. And the optimists in the bourgeois national parties seriously counted the Centre among the people-preserving groups because some Centre program contained a paragraph that spoke of throne and altar.

The first of the five of us was a Catholic, a non-commissioned officer whose family from the Rhineland. This officer came one evening to a nationalist meeting in Schramm's Festsäle in Wilmersdorf, to which we had to provide security. In the last tent, the raids on the book tables became more frequent, so we had to be out almost all evening. After the visitors had gradually left, the sergeant took the book by Theodor Fritfch, "The False God", which was very popular in our circles, in his hand and leafed through thoughtfully. Then he removed it from the table. "I the church today?" We didn't say a word in amazement. It seemed sacrilegious to us to leave the church. It was very common for one or the other to fun of the church and the pastors and, when the opportunity arose, to recite a Bible verse with pathos, but in the end we saw our Protestant church as a strong bulwark against the Reds. I myself was at the age when the sunge Protestant German is confirmed. Only the freethinkers the church, who, as we knew, were without exception red. The Unterosfizier laughed angrily. "Oa, you stand there and marvel! You're Protestant, you don't go to church at all and you don't even know what's in the Bible. The Catholic Church is more consistent. It takes the spirit of the Bible seriously and also forces Catholics to take Christian doctrine seriously. You in northern Germany can't understand what that means. You rail against the Pope because he welcomed the Treaty of Versailles. But you hardly realize what the Pope wants. Or if you do it, you don't know what to do with your knowledge."

Oer Buchverkäuser wanted to appease. "That doesn't mean you have to leave the church. On the contrary, we need to penetrate the church and make sure that it is in harmony with

is filled with a better spirit!" Oer sergeant tapped his forehead. "Man, you talk like you know how, try persuading an old tomcat to feed on plants. And get to know Catholicism first before you spout such nonsense that the church can be filled with a different spirit. The Church is the Pope, and the Pope is the Church. Oa there is only one will."

Oer bookseller shook his head in disbelief. "Well, maybe with the Catholics!"

Oer Unteroffizier became angry. "Himmeldonnerwetter yes, the Protestant church is a harmless entity that doesn't take itself seriously. Or do you go to church on Sundays?"

"Not exactly," the bookseller admitted, "but I don't want to give up the Protestant church completely, otherwise only Catholicism would inherit."

The sergeant turned to leave. "If I were you, I'd read the books I'm selling first. If you don't get serious in all areas, you won't reach a decision in any of them."

It took quite a while for me to overcome my secret horror of the sergeant. He was the first person in my circle of acquaintances separate from the church and I saw this step as something of a sin. At our meetings, the sergeant now often read passages from Nietzsche. I understood very little of it and could only gather that it contained very sharp remarks against the whole of Christianity.

The religion teacher at my grammar school only taught religion as a minor subject, his main subject was German. I asked questions a few times, he looked at me in astonishment and then said with a smile that we shouldn't take the Bible too seriously under any circumstances, that there was an evangelical freedom that allowed us to a blind eye now and then. Such answers were of little use to me, and with mixed feelings

I thought that I would be ^blessed at the age of sixteen.

There were many new things at the grammar school. After the blockade was lifted, gifts of love came over from America, and so-called Quaker meals were held in all of Berlin's schools. The Quaker sect in America suddenly considered it their Christian duty to help the half-starved children. Suddenly there were cocoa soups and mondamine meals. The school doctors had to examine every pupil and the degree of malnutrition. I was already over the age for which Quaker food was generally provided, but the result of my examination was extremely unfavorable, I was very nervous and very malnourished, so that the school doctor wanted to put me on the list as an exception. There was a commotion in the school when I explained that I did not attach any importance to the food and did not want from the Americans, whom no one would have forced to go to war against us and contribute to our . My refusal became known, and even Sextans suddenly took great pleasure in refusing to accept the food. As time went on, a small bogcott movement spread and I was questioned and warned several times as the author.

The warnings left me cold, I felt I was in the right and would have preferred to continue eating the wartime swedes day in, day out rather than this new food. My parents didn't approve of my behavior at all, they me of harming myself. Of my comrades, only the non-commissioned officer who had left the church, whom we
now called the heathen, in my opinion. "Ou are quite right, you shouldn't let your enemy give you anything. If the Quakers had been serious about their Christian love, they would have been able to storm against Wilson in the war/
¡'"

The others were of the opinion that you should do everything you can to harm your enemy.

My grammar school grown considerably. A Berlin grammar school had disbanded and sent a large number of its pupils to us. Among the newcomers, two brothers whose names were well-known in Germany stood out. They were the sons of the founder of the German People's Party, Gustav Stresemann. The German People's Party was known as an organ of industry, and there were many rumors about its numerous connections and backgrounds. The Stresemann brothers were very reserved; it was obvious that they had been told at home not to allow themselves to be questioned.

Oer Hauptmann advised me to ask the boys about their mother. A few days later, I engaged the two new schoolmates in conversation during the break and asked them where their mother came from. They both told me that it was none of my business. "Is your mother a Christian?" I asked.

The older of the two nodded hastily. "Of course?"

I didn't let up. "What's her maiden name?" They both looked at me suspiciously. The younger one got angry. "Why are you even asking? We're not asking about your mother either."

Oer grabbed his brother's arm. "Come on, let's go?" Oann gave me a poisonous look. "We don't even know what our mother's name used to be. Today her name is Mrs. Stresemann, is that enough for you?"

From that day on, the Stresemann brothers avoided me and embarrassingly avoided talking to me. Mrs. Stresemann was Jewish, a well-grown, almost petite Jewish woman. When she came to any school events in the grammar school and, in addition to her long

sons, it was hard to believe that she was actually the mother. Gustav Stresemann also often came to the grammar school. He was a tall, handsome man who didn't look like a politician at all. You could tell by looking at him that he had grown up in a Berlin inn, and I wasn't surprised when I heard later that he had written a fine doctoral thesis on the bottled beer wholesale trade. Oie Stresemanno was treated very courteously by most of the teachers at school, which showed us how highly Stresemann regarded. The older one was musical, and he was singled out for special attention at the school concert. Later, his first musical work, a symphony, was even performed at the Berlin State Opera. Oer's work was completely insignificant, I listened to it. But the name Stresemann was powerful and opened many a door. Oer Jew Leo Blech conducted?

My position at school became more difficult from day to day. I was now called Gggers, the Jew-killer, and was bullied to the best of my ability by the Mischen and democratic teachers. Even the teachers who meant well by me had a hard time me in line. Nevertheless, I stood my ground in class
- I had become the third and kept this place until one day I had to leave the school - I certainly didn't have the generosity of the teachers' conference to thank.

It turned out that I had a certain talent for ancient languages, history and German, in mathematics I characterized by a catastrophic lack of knowledge. In the subjects I was gifted in, I didn't write any work below "good", most of them were censored with "very good". In mathematics, only the third congruence theorem really made sense to me, because it states very clearly that triangles are congruent if their three sides are congruent. But even this fact seemed extremely irrelevant to me. So I was considered to be one-sidedly gifted, but to a degree,

that the complete failure in math 't carry much weight. Otherwise I probably wouldn't have come third either. After all, there were thirty to forty pupils in the middle classes. It was obvious that I couldn't spare any time for schoolwork. The only time I had to work was the few minutes before breakfast and before the school bell rang. Apart from that, I soon realized that you could achieve a lot with a reasonable amount of attention and good will.

My conduct report fluctuated between the grades "Not without blame" and "Commendable". I was considered rebellious and difficult to fit in with the school rules. The few teachers who had a better opinion of me saw me as a young person political hardship had caused to think for himself at an early age and predicted a very early, violent death for me. Since the revolution, my father had exchanged a considerable amount of correspondence with school authorities and all sorts of government departments about me. My school records didn't get any better when the police authorities regularly to the principal about any clashes in which I was involved. The principal these reports on "upstairs", to the responsible city school board and the provincial school board, to be on the safe side just in case. Sometimes the thought of constantly worrying the worthy school board members gave me no small pleasure. Perhaps I would not have become so rebellious if the school business had not been so shy of the issues of life and the nation. My parents certainly didn't have it easy with me; I caused them many a sleepless night. My mother in particular was often very sad that I preferred the excitement of battle to family life. She sometimes asked me to finish school first, to get older, so that I could still go into battle. For my hint that the fight was especially important today.

I was so important and that I shouldn't wait, she, as a real mother, had no understanding. My relatives did the rest to make my parents' hearts heavy. They painted brightly colored pictures of my imminent downfall, that I would run straight into an abyss and inevitably die on the highway. The childless aunts in particular kept inventing new variations on this exciting and almost inexhaustible theme. As I showed no inclination to listen to these sermons on morality, but instead tried my best to lick the sting with phrases that were not exactly carefully selected for auntie ears, I was also regarded as a stubborn, cheeky lout in my relatives' circles.

I hadn't had a piano lesson for a long time, I didn't attend the birthday coffees of my numerous cousins, I didn't ask about the well-being of my uncles and aunts.

I was quietly happy to have some peace and quiet from all these relatives. In my few quiet hours, usually in the early afternoon, I read books that I hadn't borrowed from the school library. The commandant had given me most of them as gifts, they were books about the Jewish question, religion and economics. I didn't understand most of the economics, it was mainly works by Sombart. But I was fascinated by books on history and geography. And the recently published book "Treue* by Werner Jansen, a novel about the Nibelungs, a particularly strong impression.

Because I didn't allow myself to be driven out of my world by any consideration, I also the stigma of being an early eccentric. I left the ONI, the German Youth Association, because it seemed too silly to me. Later, I never rejoined any of the organizations of the mostly romantically enthusiastic canine youth. Perhaps I felt too much like a young soldier.

The tasks that my circle of comrades now set themselves were no longer solely of a conspiratorial nature. Under the influence of the commandant, who increasingly took charge of our circle and almost imperceptibly and unintentionally became our spiritual leader, we turned our attention to events that caused offense and were in urgent need of remedy. In Berlin's small theaters, vulgar erotic plays were performed in front of an equally vulgar audience, consisting largely of Auden. The "Intime Theater" near the Nollendorfplahe stood out in particular. One evening we bought the very expensive tickets and sat down in the middle of the stalls. As soon as the curtain went up, half-naked girls and men in their underpants appeared and talked in jokes, of which I didn't understand. I was still too young to understand that there were people enjoyed such filth. In the center of the stage stood a large four-poster bed, in which the couples took turns lying down. Perhaps fifteen minutes had passed when the captain gave the signal. At the same moment we set off the firecrackers and threw the stink bombs that we had carefully concealed in our pockets. There was indescribable excitement. The girls on stage shrieked and left the bed and the scene in a hurry with their cavaliers. The curtain closed, the lights came on, the audience screamed in horror and pushed their way to the exits. We were able to escape unrecognized in the crowd. In the Berlin newspapers there were hair-raising reports and, just as the newspapers were set up, they wrote of a cheeky attack by ethnic hooligans or of a protest rally by indignant bourgeois circles. We laughed at both types of reporting and repeated the disturbance several more times until we were finally caught. First the police took us to a police station nearby. They locked us in a room there. Around midnight

We were loaded into a collection van containing whores, pimps and gamblers who had been captured from the Nazis and taken to the police headquarters at Aleranderplah. The trip there was extremely interesting because we were able to observe how the prisoners tried to throw away incriminating material and communicate with each other about the statements made during interrogation. The officer in charge of the investigation treated us relatively decently once he had established that we were not exactly part of Berlin's underworld. Only the fact that we were ethnic Germans didn't suit him at all. He took away our membership cards and gave us a stern warning to keep our hands off private politics in future. Otherwise we could end up in a very bad way. In the morning we were dismissed.

However, before we were able to visit the "Intimate Theater" again, it voluntarily closed its doors. Word had gotten around among the audience that it not entirely safe to attend the performances. We were each given a sixty-mark fine for "gross mischief". However, this "gross nonsense" earned me the "Consilium sbenväi", as I was said to have seriously disturbed the school's discipline with my outmoded views and actions. My parents were furious and would have preferred to hand me over to an educational institution if they had not feared that I would then go my own way. Despite the advice to leave the school, I stayed there because I was stubborn enough to wait to be thrown out for good.

A schoolmate told me that there was a guy in the public houses in the West who approached young people and offered them money for some nasty thing. Oer guy had the nickname "Willi with the silver eyes". Oer Hauptmann nodded grimly when I him about it.
"These lads are getting bolder by the day, and our dear state doesn't even think about doing anything.

against this plague. It's good manners to feel sorry for 'these poor men who have lost their instincts'. Well, maybe we can do something about these urges/ Shortly afterwards we were handed artillery whips and made a nazza against this kind of men on our own initiative. Since we didn't have an exact description of the man "Willi", we initially thought it would be difficult to find him. But very soon turned out that there was far more than one "Willi". My comrades beat the lads to a pulp on the spot, and I myself had been ordered to stay away from any fights and only strike if one of the lads was to get trouble from the people, who were always very helpful in such cases.

One afternoon, the Jew Magnus Hirschfeld, who had made himself an eloquent advocate for homosexuals and ran his own "research institute" in the Tiergarten, also received a terrible beating when he went to his apartment.

We had to laugh heartily when we our hands on the -Zukunft" and read that ethnic terror gangs were making Berlin unsafe? We few men, of whom I generally did not take part in clashes, had been promoted to "gangs"?

That was when we first came into contact with "Knüppelkunze". He published "Das Deutsche Wochenblatt", an anti-Semitic magazine that was extremely crude but equally successful in its educational work. Oer newspaper stand in Tauenhienstraße in West Berlin was constantly besieged by groups arguing passionately about the justification anti-Semitism. And just as a few Jews and Jew-baiters were shouting for the Knüppelkunze to appear, a medium-sized, stocky man stepped forward, brandishing a coarse cane and shouting so loudly that he could hear the

Street noise drowned out: "I'm Knüppelkunze, what do you want from me?"' We pressed closer and hoped see a big fight. But it didn't come to that because the heroes gave chase. Knüppelkunze invited us to to his meeting at the Diktoriagarten restaurant in Wilhelmsaue one of the next evenings. We got to know a circle of anti-Semites there. One of them was the owner of a small print shop, who put together a wonderful mixture of printing ink and oil for our forays. Soon all the synagogues and Masonic temples were emblazoned with bright black swastikas that could not be removed even with chemical agents.

Oer circle around Knüppelkunze consisted in part of men had received their first anti-Semitic teachings from Stärker, Count Pückler, Ahlwardt and Eugen Oühring and in part made a very ossified impression. All of them were simple-minded people, teachers, craftsmen, small employees and tradesmen, who the anti-Semitism as a matter for the regulars' table. Nevertheless, we managed meet for the first time the following Sunday for a joint "walk" on Tauenhienstraße. In the course of time, this developed into a regular anti-Semitic rally, to which German-conscious circles from all parts of the city flocked. When every now and then a Jew who stood in the way with a cheeky grin was pushed aside a little roughly, the overly shouted indignantly about our "Radau anti-Semitism" and admonished us to refrain from such means and rather fight with "spiritual weapons". That sounded very educated and certainly made a deep impression on many circles, who now thought they were fighting with spiritual weapons when they were doing nothing at all! But we had neither blown up the "Intimate Theater" nor driven out the numerous "Willis" with spiritual masses. We thought that criminals in general

We had made the experience that the very criminals we were persecuting were just waiting to be taken seriously, i.e. to be found worthy of intellectual debate. They were prepared for this eventuality with thousands of excuses, counter-accusations, theories and evidence. And we ourselves acted far too much out of a feeling of indignation against the depraved to be able to consider the depraved equal to our ideas through a discussion with intellectual weapons. We were proud to strike precisely where every word meant a waste of time. We did not believe in the human right of a scoundrel, a reprobate, a criminal, a pervert. The "intelligence", which forgives everything because it "understands" everything, was not at all on our side, which was only based on sound instinct. And it was precisely this that the "intelligence" heretized as barbaric. Well, so we were barbarians and one fine summer evening we smashed the notorious Kleist-Kasino on Wittenbergplah, the disgusting meeting place of Berlin's homosexual calf world, to smithereens. We achieved nothing with "intellectual" weapons. Berlin's "intelligentsia" had already watched the first comosexual film "Anders als die andern" (Different from the Others), which was shown in the Oswald-Lichtspiele near the Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church, with obvious emotion.

In late summer, I went to the countryside, to our farmers near Schöneiche, and helped with the harvest. There were few workers back then because agriculture paid poorly. And yet the hay had to be turned and brought in, the grain stacks were waiting to be brought into the barns. The potato harvest was just around the corner. I thought I had rarely had such a good vacation. That must have been the reason,

that was taken seriously as a worker, that I was assigned exactly as the farmhands, and that the farmers were amazed at how quickly I had grown from a little boy to a young in the last few years.

And then it was a proud feeling to earn your own bread without having to say thank you.

I gradually overcame the effects of hunger during the last years of the war. I had always been long and tall, but I was getting broader and stronger. I could take on an eighteen-year-old in a pinch.

And I still hadn't been confirmed. I had deliberately missed the last appointment. The idea of going to confirmation class and learning Bible verses, hymns and the catechism seemed absurd to me. I was a soldier after all! What would my comrades say? Should I perhaps them to my confirmation? Like a heathen? What could I have been confirmed for? What did we young lads believe in church doctrine? We gave every church a wide berth!

I had serious clashes at home. Bater firmly demanded that I be confirmed. For him, it was the end of childhood. In fact, that was the common perception of confirmation. If you caught a green boy smoking, you asked him if he was confirmed. If he answered in the affirmative, nothing happened to him. If he answered in the negative, he was allowed to be slapped. Those who were confirmed were allowed to wear long pants and a felt hat and were even allowed to go to Schramm's dance floor.

But what a strange idea for a young Protestant boy from a middle-class home in northern Germany not to want to be confirmed!

Sister Grete also showed no particular desire to pledge eternal loyalty to the church. She was already a young

Oame, looked good, dressed elegantly and beamed with happiness when she was courted by young men. We were by no means always unanimous in our views, but we did agree that it would be best to do without confirmation and the gifts associated with it. Our parents showed no understanding for our objections, not least because our strict Lutheran grandparents had already asked several times in astonishment what was actually on in Berlin, whether the church had even been abolished!

Grete gave in first. The "better" bourgeois daughters were confirmed in the Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church, and those who wanted to do the rest attended the confirmation class of Pastor Konrad, who was extremely popular in the wealthy and reactionary circles of Berlin. I knew that many baptized Jews belonged to the Konrad circle and preferred, if at all, to go to the parish priest Kögel, who was responsible for our district of Ahlandstraße. When school started in Kerbst, I reported there. Pastor Kögel, fine Bater, was the well-known senior court preacher who had married the Kaifer, a tree-length, bearded and humorous man who only laughed good-naturedly when I told him my concerns. He loved the puns. "I believe that most confirmands have no faith. But confirmation is a custom, that's why you need it for life!"

I pointed to my swastika. "How does that square with the Bible, Father?"

Oer patted mix roughly on the shoulder. "I can't stand Jews either, and after all, I'm a Protestant and not a rabbi!"

The first confirmation lesson passed with quite a lot of hullabaloo. In general, this whole institution was not taken very seriously, most people saw it as an opportunity to play merry pranks in addition to the compulsory schooling. The threat of being expelled from confirmation at worst

Nobody took the threat of being locked out seriously because nobody had really been locked out yet. The lessons were held in the parish hall, which had the advantage that I could leave school half an hour earlier than usual in order to be on time. In addition, as a confirmand I no longer had to attend the usual religious education classes. The confirmation lessons with Pastor Kögel were neither particularly boring nor particularly stimulating, they were a mixture of entertainment and instruction. As often as I had the opportunity, I asked somewhat embarrassing questions about this and that process within Judaism and thus took the lessons off the usual track. I gave him credit for not chasing me out of the parish hall. When I realized that I couldn't learn too much from him, I played truant as often as I . And Pastor Kögel didn't seem to be too angry about it. Older confirmands were blessed on request after only six months of lessons. I also had this wish, which Pastor Kögel had no objection to fulfilling.

Grete was quite pleased with her confirmation class. It flattered her vanity to sit next to aristocratic young ladies and rich, albeit not particularly blonde, bankers' daughters who were driven to class by car.

At Easter time in 1920, however, there was a setback for both of us: I couldn't be confirmed because I was unavailable and couldn't be found anywhere. In the meantime I had once again become a soldier for a short time.

Grete had taken part in the confirmation ceremony, but suddenly refused to go to communion the following Sunday because she suddenly felt an insurmountable fear of this sacrament. I only found out about this incident I returned home from Oöberitz one morning, dead tired.

Oa Grete had not taken communion, the only one of the hundreds of confirmands who had placed themselves in the hands of Pastor Konrad, and did not communion later either, she did not know whether she was even considered confirmed.

I myself had completely forgotten that I was to be confirmed in the stormy events that suddenly engulfed Germany like a fever. I hadn't deliberately gone behind the church!

n January 1920, things had once again begun to crackle eerily in the woodwork of the German Reich. Chancellor Bauer, like that famous bird, buried his head in the sand so as not to see anything and therefore not to have to do anything. In the long run, however, even the most harmless citizen could not fail to notice that many things were being prepared in the background of politics. The secret Red Army had temporarily laid down its arms almost a year ago, but without the slightest of giving up the struggle for power. Men of the stature of Max Hoelz, the born robber and Schinderhannesse, made a sport of worrying the "rich". For them, the proletarian uprising was not a matter of great political considerations or even knowledge, but solely of their adventurous hearts. Because they were unimaginative and without any spiritual support, they were concerned with destruction, with chaos. Oie "Zukunft" and its kindred spirits compared us more than once in their dull quips with those almost romantically foolhardy proletarian adventurers, only to conclude that there wasn't really that much difference between us and them! Certainly, we were somehow impressed by the daring fellows. Hoelz, who appeared today in Saxony, tomorrow in Bagern, the day after tomorrow in the industrial area

and his cheeky pranks, so that even the aggrieved citizens didn't always know whether they shouldn't smile through their tears, had something of a medieval lansquenet about him, which didn't exactly offend a soldier's heart. But what chasms opened up between our soldierly idea of freedom and the communist utopias! We knew that it was not bravery or personal courage that made a soldier, but only the idea of freedom to which he was committed. Bravery was a natural requirement that belonged to the realization of the idea. After all, even a murderer could be personally brave. But that did not entitle him to our respect.

It was significant that the Jewish papers were sympathetic to every murderer and were almost out to that a noble heart still beat in a fine breast. Towards us, those circles showed only hatred and scorn. We knew that Rathenau, who worked closely with Harden-Witkowski and gave him instructions as to where and how he make his advances, was an enemy of all soldiers and preferred Bolshevik chaos to soldierly rule. That is why we were not surprised when we learned that Jewish, purely capitalist circles had provided Spartacus with considerable funds wipe out the nests of soldiery arming the Red Army as extensively as possible in the proletarian uprising. Again and again we came across the name Rathenau in our observations of the incipient Lhaos. We suspected that this Jew was far more dangerous than most bourgeois circles could believe. In the bourgeoisie, Rathenau was sometimes not only esteemed, but even revered as the epitome of the "noble" Jew. At best, people regretted that this "noble man" had been born a Jew by chance. Even well-known men from the patriotic camp were proud to count themselves among Rathenau's circle of friends and hemmed and hawed.

not to sing the praises of this Jew! Rathenau was everywhere with his influence where chaos was to be promoted. He supported socialists, plutocrats, stock-market scofflaws, Spartacists, pacifists, noble communists, sectarians, absurd philosophers, mentally and emotionally depraved do-gooders. And above all, being pervert himself, he took up the cause of homosexuals, whose advocate he became.
Rathenau had to die!

He also belonged to those circles that wanted to give in to the enemy's demand that German officers, almost nine hundred in number, be handed over as war criminals in order to "spare the German people further difficulties".

It was a matter of self-preservation that the soldiers in Germany emerged from their isolation and formed small fighting groups, otherwise they would have been killed one by one over time. The government called the annihilation of the German people a "policy of salvation". And the gravediggers, from Erzberger to Ebert, from Scheidemann to Nathenau, proudly called themselves "fulfillment politicians".

We did not want to submit. And out of this initially emotional resistance grew an ever clearer will to freedom and the realization that only through military action could the worst be averted. Oa's questions about the reasons for the attack turned us into political fanatics.

At that time, a new verse of the Deutschlandlied was sung for the first time:

Germany, Germany above all! And now
even more so in the Anglück.
Only happiness can show whether love is true and genuine.
And so it shall continue from
generation to generation:
Germany, Germany above all! And in
happiness now more than ever!

We dreamed of one day forestalling the proletarian chaos with a military uprising. But we still knew nothing of the day and hour.

But we saw with open eyes that the chaos was getting closer and closer. Germany was to be completely enslaved economically. It was that the enemy was to receive the entire coal supply and millions of tons of new coal every month. We had no real idea of the extent of such slavery, we were not merchants at all. We just didn't want German goods to be stolen without resistance.

On 1Z. March, to our own great surprise, an attempt at an uprising was made by the bourgeois side. The East Prussian Director General Kapp, the Berlin Neichswehr General von Lüttwih and the leader of the naval brigade Ehrhardt were the heads of this "Kapp Putsch". For some time, Oer Kommandant had formed a detachment equipped with all the weapons necessary for close combat within the framework of the bourgeois residents' militias that been established throughout the empire. They were mostly sunge, bold soldiers, machine-gunners, flamethrowers and shock troops. The five of us were together again. I myself was allowed to be the commandant's orderly.

Exciting days and nights followed. On March 13, black, white and red posters were suddenly plastered on walls and houses, proclaiming the Nationalists' takeover. Lin airplanes dropped calls demanding confidence in the new government. Elections were promised soon. The government fled without a fight, first to Oresden, then to Stuttgart, and called on the workers to go on general strike.

The Berlin workers were just as surprised by the putsch as we were and initially waited to see how the

things. In Vogtland, the Red Army under Mar Hoelz immediately took up the fight, singeing and looting and committing unbelievable terror. In the industrial area, in Saxony and in Hamburg, there were also immediate battles with the Reds. Since the putsch had not been prepared in any way, the few soldiers soon found themselves in considerable difficulties, above all because the majority of the population behaved "loyal to the government", which meant that they put their hands in their laps and attentively to see which side the scales would tilt to, in order to jump to that side at the decisive moment and thus prevent the much loved
to gain a "connection".

Our first accommodation was the "Zahnwohl" factory in Babelsberger Straße in Wilmersdorf. We placed our bundles of straw next to the large, open vats of fragrant pale red gruel and waited until the department was roughly complete. That might been around 3 o'clock in the afternoon. Of the fifty men in the detachment, only two were missing and, as turned out later, they had the marine brigade. The commander was proud of the fact that such a large number of men had voluntarily followed the order and divided the division into squads. We had a heavy machine gun, two light machine guns, four machine pistols, a grenade launcher, a flamethrower and sufficient hand grenades and ammunition.

We had cordoned off Babelsberger Strasse with barbed wire and positioned the heavy machine gun so that it dominated the street towards both Schöneberger Stadtpark and Berliner Strasse. The citizens took the long-dusty black-and-white-red flags out of the junk room and behaved extremely benevolently. From all sides they brought us gifts of love, roasts, wine, cigars, books. The operetta diva Lilg Flohr, who was not particularly famous at the time

SOS

The man, who was very successful in his usual, very unambiguous reviews, even took liberty of asking us personally about our well-being. We waved our thanks away. The heathen remarked disdainfully that the citizens would certainly not treat us much differently if we were Reds.

Not much happened in the first revenge. A few communists tried to raid important facilities on their own. After a few shots, they ran away. Post offices, gas works, electricity stations, telegraph offices, food depots and waterworks in the west were secured by simple guards. The next morning, Spartacist elements gathered in Berliner Strasse, on the corner of Rhlandstrasse. When they took on a threatening character, the guards at the main post office in Rhlandstraße opened a short, deterrent machine-gun fire, which was not intended to hit anyone and did not hit anyone. It was only when one of the volunteers threw a hand grenade that an accident occurred. Just as the grenade fell on the street, which had become completely deserted, a woman ran out of a house to put a letter in the post box. She did not hear the warning shouts. The next moment she was lying on the ground screaming. The hand grenade had completely shattered her left leg. We secured the large food depot in the Wilhelmsaue with barbed wire.

When the inquiries revealed that there would probably be no serious riots in Wilmersdorf, as the Reds had gathered their main force in the eastern boroughs of Berlin, the commander was able to free our division for other tasks.

An armored car kept the streets quiet and ensured the safety of the emergency technical assistance team, which did an excellent job in the vital factories that were on strike and played a large part in ensuring that the consequences of the general strike not too cruel.

2 On the evening of March 14, we were called together. The commander reported what he knew about Kapp, whom he knew from the Fatherland Party. Around midnight we were ordered to march. The large white swastikas shone from our steel helmets, which from then on distinguished us from the local army.

For the first time, we sang the Baltic Song, which was to accompany us on our trains for German freedom in the future:

Come on, give me your hands, let's
stand firm together. Even if we have
been betrayed, our spirit must not
perish". Swastika on the steel helmet,
black and white red ribbon,
Sturmabteilung Westen is what we
are called.

The original rhyme was Oie Brigade Ehrhardt Werden wir genannt.
But it became customary for each Freikorps, each Sturmabteilung with its own name, to join in the song, which in time became the marching song of all combat units. Every step of our forty-eight men boomed through the night, and the empty streets gave a powerful echo.

Big, fearful Berlin lay there as if deserted. Not a lamp was lit and the apartments were darkened. Not a window was open. The old call of the street fight - "Street free" "Windows closed!"
no longer needed to be heard. It still echoed in the frightened ears of the obedient citizens the previous year!

Left, right! We had a jolly good time banging our nailed boots emphatically on the asphalt. Let the citizens and the Reds think so,

A whole battalion was marching up. I had heard that there had been shooting in the east of Berlin. Where would we be deployed? The commander just shook his head when I cautiously asked about the destination of our march.

2lm Potsdamer Platz we turned into Leipziger Straße. So we did! We were heading east!

The sound of locomotives could be heard from Potsdam station, indicating that troops were being transported, as passenger traffic was suspended due to the general strike.

Leipziger Strasse was teeming with soldiers who had densely occupied the entire government quarter. Spanish horsemen and sandbags were lined up along the embankment so that if street fighting broke out, the district could be barricaded in no time at all. The columns we encountered flew the Marlne flag. We greeted each other with crude jokes, which were met with shrieks from the many women who had quickly overcome their fear and were now trying to make friends with the soldiers.

Oa's newspaper district was heavily fortified. Here, too, there was a lot of hustle and bustle. we approached Alexanderplah, the streets were empty and deserted again. There didn't seem to be too many soldiers in Berlin after all.

A few shots rang out from the side streets. We didn't pay much attention. Patrols were probably carrying out house searches somewhere. Oer Alexanderplah looked almost comical. There were two guns the Berolina. Soldiers were bivouacking and having fun feeding the fire with Social Democratic newspapers. A field kitchen steamed seductively. The commander was understanding. We were each allowed to fill up our canteens with hot coffee. It was very cold and stormy, and the March wind blew mercilessly through the litewka. The

the least. Oer coffee made us boisterous. We sang our mocking song to our comrades from Aleranderplah as a farewell song

Hail to thee in the Lkapesu vlague, belly in the
hero's tailcoat, hail president!
A red bathing brush And that's you have, Heil Fritze
Ebert to you, Heil President!

We were still laughing and joking when we turned into Landsberger Allee. Oh dear God, sa, what could Fritze Ebert be doing? His nice job was over now. Over and out! And all the handsome men, the Jews and priests around him, they had to go home too. Would Kapp make it? We didn't doubt it and didn't worry about it either. We had guns, and that was enough for the time being. It was high time the spook had gone. How we had laughed when we received the postcard with the beautiful picture of Ebert and his friends in bathing suits. All heroic figures with bow legs and fat chests! We had sent, given away and sold hundreds of the cards. Oas was now over! Would the emperor come back? The Reds claimed he would and drove people wild with this slogan. Kapp denied that he had any intention of re-establishing the monarchy. Oa's people were to determine their form of government in a new election. After all, what else was there but a republic and a monarchy? At most, there was a military dictatorship. The only question was how deal with the general strike. We marched without stepping and threw our thoughts at each other like colorful balls. Between a few jokes came a few serious questions, then we laughed again at some silliness.

It's no different with a marching troop.

In the midst of our laughter, there was a sudden burst of gunfire. We scattered without waiting for a command, pressed against the walls of houses and gutters and cautiously raised our heads to spot a target. The windows were dark, mostly covered with the typical green Berlin roller blinds. But from the roofs behind the chimneys flickered the bright glow of the muzzle flashes.

Bloody mess! Nobody had expected the shooting to start so close behind the Alexanderplah. We weren't in Köpenick or Adlershof yet!

The commander stood in a hallway and held the binoculars in front of his eyes. "Apparently it's just a few guys up there!

We sealed off the block of houses, got onto the roofs from the floor of a corner house and proceeded in two sections, one on the left, the other on the right, groping our way forward. It was a devilish thing. The chimneys, firewalls and skylights provided excellent cover for the Reds, but we could be seen very well. A few meters to our left and right, the chasms of the shafts yawned. If we could at least have seen the enemy, the atmosphere wouldn't have been so heart-stoppingly scary. But as it was, we suddenly saw the familiar muzzle blast a few meters away, heard the bang, the whipping of the bullet, all in one go, which lasted a fraction of a second, and then it was eerily quiet again. From the streets, our comrades shouted unintelligible words and pointed their rifles in the direction, which was not unknown to us either. We helped ourselves by firing blindly in the direction from which the enemy shot was coming. The heath had fun throwing the hand grenades into the narrow shafts. It was an unholy spectacle, but it had a pleasantly calming effect on our nerves.

This oach hike lasted a good half hour. However, we were unable to capture any of the enemy, and we probably didn't wound anyone either. We didn't suffer any casualties on our side either, but of course we didn't count a few scratches from flying stone splinters. We were glad to meet the other section at about the middle of the block and find that they had fared almost as well as we had. Only one of our comrades had slightly shot in the upper right arm. The Reds had most probably escaped through one of the many hatches onto the ground and from there either into the apartments of some comrades or across the courtyards into a safe hiding place. Let the detachments carry out house searches after us. We had no time for that. We had to march on.

Lin a few more times we received fire from red Oach cows. We limited ourselves to taking cover and returning fire as best could. If a window during the shooting, we shot in without warning. Sometimes we almost had to laugh when some outraged citizen shouted threateningly at us or when a nagging woman emptied her full chamber pot over us.

God knows, we weren't popular in Berlin, and you really couldn't call this putsch a popular uprising! How was this adventure supposed to end?

The cold, wet dawn did nothing to lift our spirits.

We stopped at Schlestschen station. We were to be deployed here. After a long search, we found a frighteningly small detachment consisting mostly of officers who were urgently waiting for reinforcements. The welcome was very warm. We learned that there was a particularly dangerous gap here at Schlestsche Bahnhof because the Reds kept trying to possession of the exit gate to the east, which was very important for Berlin. Last day

a real street battle had already broken out, in which the notes, as attackers familiar with the area, would certainly have the upper hand if they had proceeded a little more prudence and vigor.

Several machine gun nests had been very cleverly installed in the station, manned exclusively Ofsians. We occupied as many streets as was strategically necessary without fragmenting our division too much. The street corners were secured by Spanish horsemen, and at particularly important points we built sandbag barricades that we could use as machine-gun nests if necessary. Almost without exception, the inhabitants of this quarter were red to the and made no secret of their hatred of us. The inhabitants of Koppenstrasse in particular, where the commandant had moved his headquarters, were ranting like sparrows and using expressions that forced even our oldest warriors to be honestly astonished. If we had really been as bloodthirsty as we involuntary putschists were said to be, there would have been terrible bloodbaths. But as it was, we confined ourselves to shaking our heads or, at worst, shaking our fists. The posters we put up everywhere that anyone who appeared on the street after dark without authorization ran the risk of being shot without being called. To the threat a little more emphatic, we painted horrific skulls over the posters with lacquer paint.

As we aware of the attitude of the population, we did not expect our threats to be very successful from the outset. The best thing would have been if we had simply cleared the important streets of the population. But where should we leave the countless families? Nor we preemptively shoot the men who seemed suspicious to us. So we were left with

We had no choice but to settle in as best we and be on our guard.

We searched particularly scary houses. An unpleasant task, because it was much more difficult to fend off the slavering hatred of the women than the open rebellion of the men. Even the toughest of us wouldn't have been able to push the butt into the side of one of these foul-mouthed, fanatical women if she at the front door crowing, spitting, biting and blocking our entrance. We were all the more ashamed of the bruises and scratches we received.

We were presented with disgusting images of filth and squalor and witnessed indescribable scenes of utter squalor. And yet we had to rummage through cupboards and beds, kitchens and chambers. We hardly ever found anything. The Reds were clever enough not to hide the weapons in the apartments. And it would have taken weeks of exhausting work to search every nook and cranny in cellars, on floors, in ovens, fireplaces and drainpipes.

We had to put up with the young guys, whose noses showed that they were just waiting to shoot us in the back at the next opportunity, grinning and burying their hands in their pockets as they watched our hopeless struggle. If we ever got hold of a Spartacist diatribe, they cynically asked us to read it at our leisure, perhaps then we would refrain from murdering workers on behalf of the capitalists. We were as stunned by such talk as the Reds were when we tried to explain to them that they were doing nothing more than trying to kill the last German soldier on behalf of the Jews. When we left these places of greatest misery shaking our heads, we knew that the proletarians were also shaking their heads behind us.

tions. It seemed impossible to establish an understanding between our soldierly world and the proletarian world. Perhaps much greater upheavals would have to befall Germany before the Germans could come together. We knew that we were not reactionaries. We wanted to march forward and not look back. Not a single German soldier died voluntarily for yesterday. For the future, we were ready to die every hour. The swastika we wore on our steel helmets was supposed to be the symbol for tomorrow, for freedom, not for the oppression and exploitation of the workers who belonged to the same German people as we did. We felt that we were executors of the soldierly will of men like Ludendorff and Colonel Bauer, whom we admired with all our hearts. We didn't know Kapp, and we were indifferent to him next to the military leaders. But should we perhaps start hopeless disputes about this with the hostile inhabitants during the house searches?

The news that leaked to us from the Reich about the development of the Kapp enterprise was disturbing. In Hamburg, the putschists were said to have been cruelly massacred by the Reds, and the Reichswehr, it was said, had stood by at gunpoint. In central Germany, the robber chief Max Hoelz was said to be firmly in control, and in western Germany things looked almost hopeless.

We could see from the more numerous and daring attacks that the Reds believed that victory was near. The fighting became fiercer and more ferocious. Soon we had the first dead and wounded. A patrol had been pushed back and surrounded, not at all clear of the Koppenstrasse. Before we could advance into one of the dark side streets in response to the shots and screams, the six men had taken by surprise and literally trampled underfoot. We fired a few sharp shots close over the heads of the crowd, which was behaving like animals, planted the

We opened our side arms and drove the roaring mob in front of us until we found the bodies of our comrades disfigured into bloody lumps. From that moment on we more ruthless. Any gathering of people was forbidden; no more than three were allowed to stand together on the street. So we fired sharply even if there were only four questionable figures loitering on a corner. In Adlershof, an officer's company that had agreed to negotiate with the Reds and had been promised free withdrawal had been massacred down to the last man. Pools of blood from stabbed German soldiers stood in front of the town hall in Köpenick. In Friedrichshagen, the volunteers had suffered heavy losses.

We were determined to sell our lives as dearly as possible. A great relief for us was an armored car that arrived one morning and stayed with us. We were now able to go on forays into neighborhoods that had previously been inaccessible to us due to their distance and where the Reds had set up barricades and machine gun nests. The dashing sunge lieutenant, who drove the armored car with two non-commissioned officers, destroyed the obstacles with an almost sporting zeal.

We confiscated a truck and a few barrels of benzene. mounted a light machine gun between two sandbags on the porch above the driver's seat and reinforced the side walls with sandbags. This enabled us to make further and further advances under the shoes of the armored car. Divisions fighting in Lichtenberg, Rummelsburg, Niederschöneweide and Treptow were supported by us, and we even drove into red Rüdersdorf.

The black, white and red flags had long since disappeared from the town houses. The population no longer believed in the victory of the putschists. It was rare to see a staid elderly

Lord destroyed us amicably. We felt the rejection of those who had become , we sensed how unpleasant and annoying we were to them. Food became increasingly scarce. Hundreds of women stood with buckets in their hands to pump water from one of the few wells, many hundreds of them queued in front of grocery stores. And we were to blame!

We had resigned ourselves to the fact that we were fighting a losing battle. We could have crumbled away in broad daylight without being harmed, as they say in Berlin, but we were proud enough to hold out even when we saw divisions retreating and disbanding in other threatened areas of Berlin. We had stocked up on ammunition to such an that we could have held out for another three weeks.

Our situation was becoming more threatened by the day. If we hadn't had the armored car, we would have simply been crushed by the dense ring of Reds. So we were able to force our way out. It also had an invigorating effect on our mood that, despite being surrounded, we were allowed to determine the law of action and did not have to wait for the day our destiny would be fulfilled.

On March 17, the Kapp Putsch just as surprisingly as it had begun.

2 On March 18, early in the morning, we left. Red and black-red-gold flags fluttered from almost every window in the area around Schlest station. The population threw everything they could spare at us: Pots, , crockery, dishes, even furnishings! Oer commandant ordered in a particularly loud voice "Load and

secure!", so that the exuberant men and women, who flocked from all sides in a flash, flinched back in shock.

Oa's heart was overweight and our heads were pounding as we marched through Berlin. Where should we go next? What should we do now? We would rather have the greatest shootout, the most daring battle than this cursed atmosphere and the agonizing questions to which no one could give us an answer. Oer Aleranderplah and the streets around it looked great again, there must have been quite a riot! The Ebert government's appeals were already stuck to the walls. Proud words of love and loyalty and forgiveness. We spat them out contemptuously. Hopefully it would work better next time, gentlemen! Just not such an ill-considered putsch again, prepare everything in peace and quiet and then grab it fast and hard so that you had all the boys firmly in your hands, Ebert, Noske, Scheidemann and all the Red leaders as well. Oa then nobody would be talking about a general strike any more. And if Max Hoelz was still haunting the streets, then the revered Reichswehr, which was so neutral, could hunt him down a bit, and the police, who couldn't quite figure out how red they actually were, could help them with that, the closer we got to the Linden, the stronger our gallows humor broke through. All talked about was the next putsch and how everything would be once Germany was ours! Damn it again!

As we marched past Wilhelmstraße, we couldn't resist the temptation to quickly and noisily sing the beautiful mocking song

"All hail the Lkspeau olaque"

to sing. We knew that Ebert was not yet back in Berlin, but the many informers who must have been lurking around here were eager to tell him about our merry outrage.

And then we sang the rhyme that we attach to all marching leathers: ^d who,

> And who,
> And who is blame?
> there, that's the evil Hudenrepublik,
> Fie, Hudenrepublik, fie, Hudenrepublik, And it's her fault!'"

Funny how the good citizens turned away in shame!
Yes, sa, the coup was lost! We were already leaving, you gentlemen! Near the Brandenburg Gate we came across the Reichswehr. Their leader saluted our commander with emphatic respect. He casually placed two fingers on his helmet.
We sang the song with which the Reds had so often welcomed us:

> "... Street clear, windows closed, down from the balcony. Noske moves along the street,
> And all with guns,
> Oh God, I'm so scared!"

knows, we were not on good terms with the Reichswehr. We felt abandoned, betrayed and sold out by them. We would loved to start a little shootout with them.
Oer Heide half turned around and shook his head, astonished by the realization: "Strange, we shoot each other with the Reds, we rub shoulders with the Reichswehr. What do we actually find?" The captain smiled: "We're political soldiers, man. It's about time you realized that!"
Oer Heide nodded believingly: "Political soldiers, yes, that's the right word. Yesterday it was impossible to combine both politics and soldiering!"

At Fort Hahneberg near Spandau we laid down our weapons and waited until we were to go to Haufe. The discharge went smoothly. The Reichswehr behaved politely and tactfully. They did nothing to us. The assurance that the putsch soldiers would go out without punishment was kept. On one occasion a delegation from the Inter-Allied Control Commission, or snooping commission for short, came near us, but preferred to turn back when they noticed our threatening attitude. We were determined to wring the necks of the French and English if we get hold of them.

I pulled out my pocket diary and realized that I was supposed to have been confirmed the day before. There was such a roar of laughter that the fort shook to its foundations.

We used the days and nights in Fort Hahneberg to continue the conversation we had started on our return march near the Brandenburg Gate. Quite a few of us later said that these days were more important for our political development than all the Kapp coups.

Torn, very tired and very famished, I returned to my parents' house.

The Deutscher Schuh- und Truhbund had expanded considerably in the meantime and was now called the Oeutschvölkischer Schuh- und Truhbund.

We wore a small dark blue cornflower on a silver background with a silver swastika in the middle as a badge and felt extremely dangerous to the state. The Kapp Putsch showed that, after temporary consternation, the nationalist movement had become more revolutionary.

After long battles, Max Hoelz and his cronies were to the winds. Conditions were more stable again, as the citizen said. And the Jewish newspapers

did their part to spread the opinion among the people that the government had won a tremendous victory over the putschists of all shades.

We let her believe that and prepared to hit her harder the next time.

The Reichswehr continued to fight for many weeks in all parts of Germany, supported by the police and some volunteer units, until calm was restored. Many hundreds of German men fell on both sides, except that one ringleader of the Reds was captured. It almost always happened that the Red divisions, in which a large number of old field soldiers fought, put up a brave fight, sometimes even to the last man. The wire-pullers ducked out at the last minute and did not have to listen to the gasps of the dying. Nor they need to catch the last desperate look of the dying.

"All wheels stand still,
If your strong arm wants it!"

he terrible destructive turmoil that this verse glorifies ate away at the fabric of the empire like a mighty conflagration. The government itself had roused the fire, had stoked it, had blown it on until the flames flickered and blazed brightly. But now, as the first beams came crashing down, it ordered the soldiers of the young Reichswehr, whose best young men stood with their hearts on the side of the rebelling Freikorps, to march forward. And not a single man from the cowardly government witnessed the brave deaths of the Reichswehr soldiers and policemen.

It became unbelievably difficult to get the dormant wheels turning again. It cost money, promises, concessions and blood, irreplaceably valuable German blood!

The enemy relentlessly seized the opportunity and sent his best ally, the cowardice of the German government, gag and bind Germany ever more tightly. In San Remo and Boulogne, the extent to which Germany had to be solvent was dictated. The limit that was set there was the line between ultimate weakness and death, which was to make consciousness and thus any emotion, any longing for freedom, impossible.

Germany had to undertake to pay the unheard-of sum of 269 gold billions within 42 years. Oas meant nothing other than that an entire German dynasty was condemned to slavery and serfdom.

The Social Democrat Bauer was replaced in the chancellorship by the Social Democrat Müller. But after exactly three months, Müller had to give way to the centrist Fehrenbach. What did not change, however, was the cowardice of the government, whose spirit had been inoculated in Weimar by pacifism, by a soft-kneed, humble compliance, and which neither wanted to nor could get rid of this spirit. In Spa, the government signed the treaty that obliged Germany to deliver two million tons of the best coal every month.

What use was it that the German National politician Helfferich, who proved to have a clearer view after the war than during the war itself, made the most serious accusations against Erzberger until this lumpen Römling finally brought an action for libel, only to have it certified in the trial that he had used his government post to his own personal advantage. In addition, Erzberger was also convicted of tax evasion.

A huge wave of indignation arose and Erzberger was swept away. But the sgstem of the government did not change in slightest. Insiders even calculated the day on which Erzberger would be back, radiant and well

would emerge as cheerfully as ever from what was surely by now a very well-furnished hiding place to take up lucrative new posts and offices, now that the grass had grown over his misdeeds, namely the grass of the indifference of the bourgeoisie.

Lrzberger had disappeared for a while, nothing more. There was no moral death in Germany, otherwise the entire government would have decayed long ago.

Lrzberger was on "vacation", certainly in the Black Forest, which he loved very much. But the other politicians of the Weimar Republic were all still in office. They were looking to France, trembling with fear, to carry out the orders that came from there without delay.

And over France shone the sun of mercy of Pope Benedict XV, who at the time, when the manner of death for Germany was so cunningly chosen in Versailles, had written the significant saints to Mr. Amette, Cardinal Archbishop of Parts:

> May God's grace pour out from France over the whole world. May divine love ennoble and complete what human wisdom began at the Ver- sailles Conference?

Things were still seething and fermenting in the Ruhr area. There were no soldiers there, because the Versailles Dictate had demilitarized this zone too. And the sun of divine mercy emanating from France shone on the righteous and the unrighteous, with the unrighteous receiving a few particularly warming rays as a reward, as they had played their part in the punishment and thus the downfall of Germany as an instrument of providence. This had such an effect on everyday life that France did not even think about putting an end to the increasingly dangerous Bolshevik chaos that the Red Army was creating in western Germany. On the contrary, France rejoiced at every weakening Germany received. The great haters were still alive and well

with zeal to ensure that none of the wounds closed. Perhaps the enemy also hoped that the particularly valuable raw material areas, in which the red flame of rebellion was burning, would fall away in the event of Germany's complete downfall.

Those were difficult hours of waiting, when German soldiers stood at the borders, which were never the borders of Germany, but wanted to be nothing other than lines of destruction, when they stood at gunpoint and looked over German land, whose population was writhing in pain and had to endure the terror of the Bolsheviks without hope. And when the government finally had no choice to give the Reichswehr its marching orders at the beginning of April, France quickly occupied German cities, Frankfurt, Hanau and Homburg, in retaliation. And this occupation in turn had the consequence that the entire German economic policy was thrown ?

The people sank deeper and deeper into misery and despair, but the government boasted that its pacifism was the beginning of a new era of beauty and human dignity. But the poorest of the poor, who believed that their dog's life, their starvation, had no meaning and resorted to the last resort of the desperate, suicide, were buried inconspicuously in cardboard coffins that were neither beautiful nor dignified.

No, it was no longer a pleasure to live in Germany. And anyone who didn't soon learn to master life under the harsh dictates of duty sooner or later sink into the mud of meanness or the flood of hopelessness.

Many officers went into the service of foreign countries. They were with honors in Persia, China, Brazil and Chile. Everywhere in the world where ambitious governments or adventurous politicians needed determined men to realize sometimes very selfish plans, there were Germans fought for their lost fatherland in the courageous deeds of an honest soldier

life and sometimes found them. In Germany it was difficult, almost impossible, to live and assert oneself as a decent person. It was no longer character and achievement that determined a person's path to success, but the connections he had to have at his disposal. The representative of good relations was the bonze, whose only talent was adaptability, whose only achievement was not to be inconvenient to anyone due to his complete lack of character. The respectable learned to renounce advantages in favor inner loyalty, of character, and to become frugal to the point of poverty. Bonze and being rich merged into one concept. The respectable man was not afraid to serve the bigwig as a waiter or to sweep the garbage in front of the bigwig's door as a garbage collector. There was hardly a serving Bern in which abdicated officers and proud, in the opinion of the bonzes too proud, arrogant men did not earn their meagre living. They had only a contemptuous smile on their lips when they saw the dishonest pomp of the bigwigs and were proud of their honest poverty. They wore the shabbiest suit with dignity because their hearts had become firm.

They had become citizens of the secret empire that dwells only in the hearts of the free, and they hoped with all the passion of their souls that the day would come when the secret empire would once again be the fatherland, the homeland of all Germans.

- The bigwigs envied the respectable for their bearing, their dignity, their composure, and sought to buy all these values with money. They offered hundreds of thousands for a title of nobility, they paid thousands for instruction in the dignified behavior that is more difficult to learn than an exotic language. But the decent people poured scorn and derision on the bigwigs, the racketeers, the racketeers. They despised the whole government of the bigwigs, who tried to clothe their lack of character in the amiable catchword of fulfillment politics.

One of our young comrades, who had volunteered in 1918, earned the Silver Wounded Badge and the Iron Cross First Class, who later fought in the Baltic States and for the Kapp Company, had one day walked off in deep despair and into the hands of the recruiters of the Foreign Legion. We crossed his name out of our hearts and gave our word of honor that we would rather die in Asia or in the desert than become a foreign legionnaire in France's service. But as long as we were not driven out of Germany, we wanted to stand faithfully by our secret flag. And we always saw this flag in our minds when we decided to continue the wretched journey to German freedom.

Our lives became more underground, tougher, harder, more dangerous.

The snooping commissions of the Entente were severely disrupted in their work, which was nothing other than sometimes not even veiled espionage activity right down to the smallest private sector. Weapons were bought up. Shifts that were supposed to take entire trainloads of important weapons and equipment abroad, especially to Poland and the Czech Republic, were stopped. The pistol was sometimes used in these operations, and more often brass knuckles, whips and clubs.

Connections to all kinds of activist circles were excluded. Monarchists, nationalists, fanatics, fantasists, putschists, all those who expressed the intention of overthrowing the bigwigs were subjected to a test in order to deny them the most reliable men. We could not make promises, we had no programs to present, we whispered what our hearts spoke and rejoiced when one of hundreds us.

We had long since stopped confining ourselves to the shoe of Völkisch meetings. Soon there was no longer a meeting of the Notes and the Democrats at which we did not prevent the Jewish speakers from speaking. Over time we developed a certain technique of distributing individual hecklers throughout the hall and initially testing how strong the will of the assembly to defend itself. If we realized that the opponents had also organized hall protection, we sent reinforcements to the hecklers so that they could not be overwhelmed individually. Then we made sure that the tumult became so great that the participants in the meeting fled as quickly as possible, leaving their speaker alone on a wide plan. Some of these rabble-rousers received such a beating that they lost the desire to appear in public meetings for a long time. This blowing up of assemblies became a welcome opportunity for us to unload all the resentment we harbored against the Weimar state and its dignitaries. We felt we were the avengers, the agents of the secret nation, without even saying a word about it. We just looked each other in the eye and hands as we marched off on a new adventure.

It was not always easy to evade the police, who always protected the meetings, especially when a member of the Reichstag or even a minister was speaking. It often happened that one or other of us was caught by a police officer at the entrance to the hall because of his suspicious appearance and arrested after a brief exchange of words. Especially when a fight had broken out,

the police tried to the ringleaders. Then they quickly occupied the stations when we were "working" in Adlershof, Spandau or Köpenlck and investigated anyone who tried to get through the railroad barrier. Sometimes we had to walk many kilometers to get to another village station. Once we had no choice but to walk from Oranienburg to Berlin because the police were watching all the stations.

We owed our name to a joke. One Sunday evening we went to Mahlsdorf to blow up a meeting of the Independent Social Democrats. There were twenty of and we weren't exactly dressed to the nines. Old military pants, wraparound leggings, a tattered military coat, a battered, soft hat, a rough stick - that was our outfit. In his pocket he had his favorite weapon, a pistol, a manslayer, an oolk knife, brass knuckles or some kind of knuckle-duster he had made himself. We took the suburban train. Oer Heide could play the harmonica beautifully, and we sang the old songs of love and battle. At the Börse station, a bourgeois citizen got into the compartment, greeted us politely and listened to our singing with obvious pleasure. After a short time, he nodded in understanding. "Yes, sa, I can see you are migratory birds/ Oer Heide forgot his game in amazement, stared at the citizen in bewilderment and finally tapped his forehead with the profound words: "One of us must have a bird!" Oer Bürger got the train at the Schle- sischer Bahnhof to our hearty laughter, slammed the door shut, waited until the train left again and then called out "Boor!" after us. Oer Hauptmann smiled to himself: "Oer Mann is not so wrong. We are hikers, albeit not romantic ones." Oa was the origin of our name "Oentschvölkische Wanderer".

We later also acquired a badge. It looked similar to the very reduced Lour Ie mvrits and bore the Femrunen symbols in gold on a blue enameled background. It was forbidden to wear the badge openly.

When a master baker joined us, we no longer had to meet in small basement pubs, but were now in the enviable position of having a proper deretn room where we couldn't be spied on.

The bakery was located in Herderstraße, very close to the Steinplahe in Lharlottenburg.

Ole young wife of the master, a pretty, never-worried East Prussian, took care of us in a self-sacrificing way. She took great pleasure in our wild goings-on and even sat down herself at the piano, which was considerably out of tune, to make us sing our cheeky Landsknecht songs. We rarely had to pay our bill, the bakery was doing well and the rich customers turned a blind eye if the rolls were a little smaller. I had plenty of time on my hands as a second and was there every afternoon to take messages and orders for the evening. Most of us had chosen jobs that didn't take up much of our time only fed our husbands very meagrely. But since everyone used the free tent only as preparation for the big moment of the decisive adventure, the profession played a very minor role. Only two of us had the somewhat more serious and regular occupation of bank clerk. The others sold newspapers, brokered apartments, carried suitcases, were insurance agents, working students, temporary waiters, employees of credit agencies and detective agencies, traded shoes today, thermometers tomorrow and knew only one sacred concernnot to miss the right moment. There was nothing decisive in politics that we didn't hear about in good time and sooner than the newspapers.

had a customer. One of us had an acquaintance who had done him the favor of introducing him to the house of a Social Democratic member of parliament, the other had an affair with the maid of an influential factory owner's family, the third sold newspapers in the government district and kept his eyes and ears open. Oer Hauptmann in turn had numerous relationships with leading activists throughout the Reich.

Line, there was a unique camaraderie in Herderstraße. We stuck together through thick and thin. When the commander visited us once, he commented approvingly that this was the right shelter.

And we were proud of our shelter, which over time we furnished to our taste. Oa's piano remained in its place, but everything else that reminded us of bourgeois life flew out. Instead of the small marble tables with the fragile gold-bronze chairs, we took a large white-rubbed wooden table and sturdy oak chairs. Everyone would bring something to embellish the room that their heart was set on. Now there were faded photos from the Great War, from the Baltic States, shell splinters, French and English steel helmets, unexploded ordnance, regimental insignia from American and Australian formations, naval cap ribbons on the wide wall boards. Even the old rickety, greasy Sosa had to way. One of us, who had learned the carpentry trade before the war, built a wide camp on which three men could rest if necessary. It often happened that one or other of us had to spend the night in the dugout. Oa's camp was upholstered with blankets and boxes when we 't using it as a bed and was the showpiece that was duly admired by occasional visitors. Oer Hauptmann traveled around the country a lot, he didn't tell us everything he did outside. He didn't want to burden us unnecessarily, because the political police saw us

on the fingers already. We had done the rest and entered ourselves in the club register. But Oa's police headquarters was always suspicious because we were mentioned too often in the minutes. Oer Heide had become a constable and was excellent at always turning up at the right moment and also warning us when the police station responsible, which was housed in Zoologischer Garten station, received any orders concerning us. However, the glory only lasted a few weeks before the constable was caught and quietly released into the fresh air. All we knew was that the captain had set up arms depots and held meetings with national revolutionary circles preparation for an armed uprising. A few times he traveled to Bagern, which occupied a special position in the Reich because the population there was generally nationalist. Over time, Munich became the stronghold of the nationalist resistance. From Bagern, however, obscure monarchist circles also put out feelers to northern Germany. We once had a serious clash with some officers who had come to Berlin accompanied by two cowardly Catholic priests to make contact with the circles of the national resistance. They rounded up all the activists they could find. We were all burning with curiosity as to what the Bagers had to tell us. But all that came out were a few cautious phrases about throne and altar, about saving the monarchy at all costs and about the importance of the Catholic Church for Germany. We looked at each other suspiciously, because we knew exactly what role the Center played as the representative of the Catholic Church. Our first timid objections were dismissed with the reference to the completely different situation in the rest of the Reich. The Bagrian People's Party was something different from the Center!

We spoke a little more excitedly about the Pope and the role of Mr. Erzberger, against whom, as far as we know, no bishop had ever taken action. We were then reprimanded by the gentlemen from Bagern for our unbridled language. We now wanted to know who would actually become emperor in Germany. We did not believe in the possibility of a return of Wilhelm II. Nor did we have the slightest desire to reclaim a throne for him that he had left so quickly and without a fight. We considered the crown prince to be more talented, even considerably more talented than his father, without seriously thinking of paying homage to him as Kaiser Wilhelm III. We were now instructed that a Hohenzollern out of the question and that we should rather fight for the Wittelsbach Rupprecht. We were hostile to this program, and the meeting, which had been so carefully organized, ended with a very unpleasant scolding, because we could not help but greet the gentlemen, who looked so distinguished and spoke so neatly, with the song

"Who did they steal the crown from^. We couldn't say how we had come to sing this song, which was far from our minds. Perhaps, as simple-minded soldier activists, we didn't know how to help ourselves against the eel-smoothness of the strange gentlemen other than through emphasized boorishness.

After the meeting we went to our dugout with some new comrades and realized that the rifle was still the most decent weapon, and that we had to be very careful not to let ourselves be harnessed to a wagon in order to help something completely different to what we ourselves wanted.

In the fall and winter, we hiked into the forests outside Berlin and made sure that our shooting skills didn't a setback. We got to know more than one decent forester who let us sleep in his hayloft.

who fed us and had no objection to us stowing larger and smaller boxes, the contents of which were none of his business. We could have found friendly understanding from the farmers, but it didn't seem advisable to go into the villages, because we were afraid that we might get lost there much more quickly and be betrayed by unreliable elements. And many an evening we sat in the dugout and read newspapers, magazines, speeches by parliamentarians, commentaries on the peace dictate, anything that might interest us. We felt again and again how little we actually knew about the background to world history and real politics. That's why we were grateful that the commandant not only came to see us frequently himself, but also sent us men who had important things to say. Young private lecturers, old staff officers and economists spent an evening in the dugout and, on top of that, felt obliged to us when we sang them our songs after hours of study.

Oer master baker was quite strange at times. We tell when he was getting restless, making confused speeches and making threats. Then it wasn't long before he went out into his bakery and said a series of pistol shots into the ceiling. But his store was the home of a Jew, and we laughed when we heard the shouts of fear, but somehow we still felt uneasy afterwards when the master baker stepped back into the dugout and sat down with us as if nothing had happened. We knew from his wife that he had been badly buried in the field and had already been to the sanatorium several times.

One day, a glimmer of distant happiness that seemed unreal to us came into the dugout. We knew that one of our comrades, a constable, had a great love of he rarely spoke and whom none of us had ever . Since our

As the conversations rarely revolved around women and, above all, there was no talking, no attempt was made to lift the veil on this secret. Once we sang the wistful song:

> "In the fieldyuartier of hard stone, I stretch my weary limbs/

The piano and harmonica did their bit to make the mood of this song even more harrowing, even more maudlin. Oer Wachtmeister, a slender young man with an open child's face, wiped his eyes with his hand and sighed. Oer Hauptmann slapped him roughly on the shoulder: "Man, are you in trouble? Shall we sing another song?"

The constable smiled wistfully. "No, it's not sorrow. But I do have a bride, and I want to marry fle, but I'm afraid fle won't understand all this, and then I don't know how to share my heart."

We remained silent, shocked. It had never to us before that one of us might leave our circle for any reason. Surely most of us had girlfriends. None of us were married. Only one was divorced. We were getting ready for the big decisive battle, and nobody thought much about girls. Only the constable, he had a real bride and didn't know if he could share a fine heart. I was so young that I couldn't understand that there could be anything stronger than the duty of the secret flag. But as my comrades did not reproach the constable, as I expected, but were very quiet and serious, it must be something very great to have a real bride. The captain looked the constable in the eye with a smile. Then he put his hands on his shoulders. "Why don't you bring your bride here, fle belongs to us through you."

The master baker's wife was almost overflowing with emotion. "Good of you to bring your bride, I want her to have a good time with us. What?"

We happily agreed. Fa, we wanted to be good and kind to her, because we all liked the little constable with all our hearts.

At first the constable made a somewhat incredulous face, he must have been expecting boron throws or ridicule, then he shook hands with each of .

"I'll get her right away. She lives nearby."

A few minutes later she timidly entered. The constable had to take her by the hand and drag her into the dugout.

ere she stood, the little Flemish girl. A petite, blonde, beautiful girl who followed the constable to Germany. Her German had a very distinctive sound as she said a shy "Guten Abend".

It was a touching story with the little Fleming. Her Baker had been killed in action in the Belgian army and her brother was missing. She had never known her mother, she had died before the birth of her first daughter. I had to keep looking at her because, as she shyly looked around the dugout and hesitantly the questions, she seemed like an apparition from a fairy tale. When she my hand, she smiled.

"You're so young!" Oie comrades told her, happily exaggerating all the adventures I had already had.

Oie little Fleming! I would have gone into any danger for her, I adored her with a shy intimacy and was proud that I was appointed her brother. Later we could hardly do without her in our row. She decorated our table with fir branches and knew how to make even the shelter feel homely. She was a brave comrade who knew how to help us out of trouble during the house searches that were now carried out more and more frequently.

She took orders and letters and was known the police as a sales clerk in the bakery. She her living in a daytime café near the Wittenbergplahe. It was hard to make her understand that we couldn't use her on our hikes. She was offended that we didn't trust her to do so much. But Oer Hauptmann had categorically refused. Later, when we set up a dummy company under the captain's name in order to make larger arms purchases, she worked with great skill as an accountant in this company.

Christmas 1920! I had seen through that there was a party at home at 7 o'clock in the evening, because shortly after 8 o'clock the party was over. The little Flämin had decorated the banquet with candles, tinsel and big red hearts. Everyone got a big plate of gingerbread, nuts and apples. At my request, father had given me a box of cigars, a hundred cigarettes and a bottle of rum, and mother filled my pockets with , genuine East Prussian marzipan.

Now we were sitting under the tree, the candles burning, the grog steaming, and we were not at all ashamed to sing the song of the Christmas tree.

The constable sat next to his bride, the master baker next to his wife, and we let our thoughts wander to a distant realm that we wanted to conquer in order to find home.

The captain looked after the smoke from the cigar. "When we've won the last battle, we'll have to march somewhere to the east. Between forests and lakes, and he would have to have his farm, his wife and his children. But at Christmas we'd have to come together in one place and celebrate our silent feast of longing/

After a while, during which we sank thoughtfully in front of us, he cleared his throat. "I mean, if we're still alive then/

At the beginning of 1921, I buried myself in my school books and encapsulated myself in the Greek and Latin world for a while. In the summer and fall I had done practically nothing for school, and despite all my efforts and attention, this was reflected in an unpleasant way on my Christmas report card. Tutoring was for stupid people? I would have been ashamed of myself if I had my teacher with such a request.

There was a tacit agreement between the teachers who were well-disposed towards me and myself that I would give myself a good shake at the last moment. The teachers knew me well enough that I hadn't exactly fallen on my head and could learn. They were therefore decent enough not to inundate my already troubled father with letters of complaint. The other teachers, who were not well-disposed towards me, had long since given up on me and apparently just waiting read about my arrest in the newspaper so that they could then say with a proudly swollen chest that they had always known what a dangerous fellow Eggers was. The principal looked at me with obvious displeasure. He preferred it if I played truant, at least then I wouldn't cause any mischief! My classmates were happy when I was there for a long time. I then had to tell them about my experiences outside during the breaks. Only the Jews weren't very happy that the "Jew-killer" was back. I myself had become completely indifferent to the school, I had no inner relationship with it at all.

I studied my quota in order to reach the class target and only enjoyed the classical language subjects and history. This was partly due to the teachers, who knew how to the subject matter more lively, vivid and relevant to the times. Oen German lessons were taught by a tropical crammer who chopped up the classics in order to extract a rather stupid essay topic. Schiller in particular was

I was disgusted in this way for years. There wasn't one of my classmates who didn't hate Tell with all their soul as a particularly fertile generator of quotations suitable for catching. I was completely disgusted by the patriotic rallies, which we had long since learned to despise as ridiculous gestures. It was a long time before I way back to that wonderful German revolutionary Schiller.

In math, I gave up the race completely. To my own great surprise, I got a four in a class test because I had managed to one of five problems, namely the calculation of a bullet curve. I was interested in the problem, so I solved it after a few attempts. The other problems seemed pointless to me. This particular class assignment particularly bad, and the math professor opened his mouth to give me a speech that was supposed to honor me: -I don't know why the work could be so bad. The tasks were so easy. The only proof that the work really wasn't difficult is that Eggers, who God knows has no idea about mathematics, even got an even four this time." If I hadn't been so indifferent to school, I would have been very proud. This math professor, who the successor to the man who persecuted me as an unmathematical person with an almost perverse hatred, had excellent human qualities. He even forgave me for my hereditary dislike of mathematics because he liked the fact that I made no secret of my ignorance and did not even try to get a better grade by copying or cheating. When I was able to answer a question on my own, he acknowledged it with a benevolent smile. Otherwise, however, he avoided asking me questions to save himself the trouble and me the astonished shaking of my head.

I went to Pastor Kögel one afternoon. I had to clarify the question of my confirmation. To my great surprise, was very graciously disinvited. Line, one of his strikingly pretty daughters, brought me a cup of tea. His son, who was not exactly endowed with physical advantages, was introduced to me as a fellow confirmand. Pastor Kögel laughed a few times in amazement when I told him some of my experiences from my wanderings and assured me that he would definitely confirm me if I kept the day this time. He dispelled my concerns, which I openly expressed about my lack of faith in church matters, pointing out that hardly any of the confirmands seriously had what is called faith. Confirmation, as he put it, was supposed to impart a certain amount of learning material that would form the basis for a personal belief, a world view, later in life.

I also told him about my comrade, the heathen. Pastor Kögel replied that he was quite prepared to to him and knew that he would certainly get on very well with him.

The confirmation was to take place at the end of March t92t. I promised to come if at all possible and went to work relieved and with good feelings for Pastor Kögel.

This time, too, it would have been a hair's breadth away from my blessing. I reached my "class goal", as they in school language. I was given a very decent report card. Mathematics, as always, not good enough. The promotion, as pleasing as it was in itself, didn't excite me very much. Something quite different, unheard-of news, moved my heart. Our captain had returned from a , visibly nervous, and had us meet in the dugout that very night.

are coming. "All the signs are that things are about to get going again in Upper Silesia. Perhaps even before the big vote. In any case, there will be a tougher fight than during the first two uprisings/

I couldn't suppress a cheer, but immediately received a sympathetic shout. "You've got it good, you young hound. You still see the adventure in every fight because you've never experienced a real battle before/

Nevertheless, I was feverish with excitement. For God's sake, if only things could really get going now, I was old enough! Until the early hours of the morning, I listened to my comrades about the uprisings in August 1919 and 1920. Poland was a rising, young and therefore ruthless state. It wanted to extend its western border in order to possession of the all-important coal mines and as much of Silesia as possible. The fact that this threatened Germany' life in the most serious way need not have impressed Poland. Only the strong are allowed to make history. But Germany had become weak, so it had to resign itself to the fact that the strong cut straps from the skin of the weak. Despite all the fine theories of the pacifists, the tactics of world politics did not change in the slightest. The vote in Upper Silesia was scheduled for March 20. Now this contested piece of land, this land under the cross, was to decide before the eyes of the world whether it wanted to be German or Polish. The world didn't really care. Oie did not even know where Upper Silesia was, even the educated statesmen of powerful nations had no idea. At best, the world saw how emphatically Germany was asserting its rights. An unheard-of excitement took hold of even the citizens who had become so frighteningly calm. Upper Silesia was German, had always been German and had to remain German forever.

A wave of enthusiasm swept over Germany and carried away even the indifferent. No one should dare to with Germany. Even the otherwise reserved bourgeois papers spoke of the duty to defend national honor and pointed out that the Polish state owed its life to Germany alone, not only at its foundation, but especially at the time when Poland in dire straits due to the Soviet Russian armies. At that time, Germany would only have had to make a brief attack and nothing would have been left of Poland.

Yes, if!

Polish propaganda took no notice of what happened yesterday. Is there any sense of gratitude and obligation in the power politics of nations when it comes to important national interests?

Oer daredevil korfantg, the former German member of the Reichstag, didn't give a damn what the Germans or even what the world said. His fatherland was Poland, and Poland wanted to live!

And Korfantg was already the man to express a people's will to live. The insurgent detachments that he called together, to whom he gave instructions, to whom he burned great goals into their souls, were not softened by any pacifist ideas. On the contrary, they consisted of uncomplicated, nationally proud lads, many of whom had learned the trade of arms in the German army. And the insurgents had also learned something else in the years of their struggle, namely that not only does the world belong to the brave, but that the loudest shouter is also the most likely to be heard! The Korfantg people had raised such a clamor that the world seriously believed that Upper Silesia had to be a core Polish country and begin about ten kilometers from Warsaw, so that it would be a villainy of the Germans to deny their ethnic

to withhold this land from Poles struggling for honor. The Polish money and the Polish press were by no means unskillful, and Upper Silesia was in fact permeated by a dense network of informers and provocateurs.

Part of the population of Upper Silesia speaks -wasser- polnlsch", a not uninteresting, very hard dialect, understandably interspersed with Polish fragments, but which is anything but a variety of the Polish language or a Polish dialect. The Korfantg people were by no means unaware of this, but these people were nonetheless quickly declared to be Stockpolen, who absolutely had to be redeemed. In reality, the proportion of Polish migrant workers working on estates and underground was negligible, and it was precisely these workers who felt particularly at home in Germany, just as much as their compatriots in the coal mines of the Westphalian industrial region or the Saarland.

The German workers did not want to be caught by the Poles' promise to much higher wages in the event of the annexation of Upper Silesia; they responded to the terror of the insurgents with blows from their fists.

A very small part of the population, not exactly the brightest and most racially valuable, allowed themselves to be told that turning away from heretical Prussia to Catholic mother Poland was a work pleasing to God, and wavered between duty and religion.

The Inter-Allied Commission had made sure that the Germans did not have too many weapons in the country. It was too happy to look through its fingers at the insurgents. The German police had been replaced after the last uprising, which they had summarily suppressed within a week. In their place came the hermaphroditic Apo, the voting police, which consisted of half Poles and half Germans. It was hoped that, in addition to the German policemen, who were probably quite indifferent to politics

fanatical Poles to have, at the decisive moment, not a distinctly Polish instrument, then at least not a force that could bring itself fight for the real right and thus for the German identity of the Upper Silesians.

The others, it was hoped, would be taken care of by the Korfantgleute, the Sokoln, the Insurgents and the battle-hardened parts of the Haller army.

The German government had nothing to oppose Corfantg and his agents. Wherever an insurgent coup d'état was forestalled, German soldiers, German Freikorps leaders and German rebels acted on their own . At first it was a battle in the dark that took place before March 20th, a battle that cost many a dead and many a missing person. Oer Hauptmann certainly believed that would be fierce fighting. He knew that even the most brilliant German victory could not dissuade Korfantg from his plans. In the long years of their longing for freedom, the Polish patriots had learned what it meant to fight for the achievement of a goal. They calmly watched the German preparations for the vote and armed their volunteers for the decisive weeks after the vote!

Some of my comrades immediately went to Silesia to get used to the air*. My captain ordered me to wait. Grumbling, I complied. The evenings in the dugout became very long. Rur when short letters or postcards arrived from the captain, we were gripped by an unheard-of excitement. It was not always easy to understand the content disguised in indifferent words. But this much we could make out, that the insurgents were making preparations with all vigor. The Inter-Allied Commission sympathized with them and supported them wherever it could. Some of the Germans who worked there on their own initiative fell into the clutches of the

In some filthy prison, he was given ample opportunity to reflect on the fact that law without power is even less than a piece of paper. Official Germany, however, was already enjoying the foretaste of the coming referendum. Flags were handed out, railroad stations, locomotives and carriages were decorated, towns and villages competed to their German sentiments in banners and appeals. The vote from
March 20 brought the Germans a huge victory with 707,000 votes, the Poles were severely beaten with their 479,000 votes.

But while the German government was organizing great celebrations throughout the empire, Korfantg was preparing for an armed invasion.

The German government did not want to see anything of his preparations and dung. Only the soldiers stood on their lonely watch.

2lm 2l. I was confirmed in the Auenkirche in Wilmersdorf on March 2, according to the custom of the Protestant church. My father did not attend the . He did not approve of all church matters. Only mother was there. And the heath.

At the confirmation exam, which was more a custom for the sake of the Christian community than an exam you could fail, there was a small incident when I objected to the praise of the earthly and heavenly Jerusalem. Pastor Kögel smiled and ignored it. He didn't want to spoil the celebration in the end. In the sacristy I explained to him once again that I was not able to believe in the bodily presence of Jesus Christ in Holy Communion and therefore preferred to do without the sacrament. Pastor Kögel

slapped me reassuringly on the shoulder. "Calvin also had his own opinion about it, and besides, I don't think other confirmands worry about it either. But for me, confirmation includes communion, no one has ever died from it!"'

When I replied that this custom should finally be stopped, the priest shrugged his shoulders and said that it was not in his power.

On the morning of March 2t. I got up early on the morning of March 2nd, put on my new dark blue suit, put the hymn book that my church-loyal grandparents from Gättingen had sent me in my pocket and went out without letting my parents see me. I walked thoughtfully to the nearby fen and let a few questions run through my mind. For example, whether I shouldn't take up a profession now, because for most young people, confirmation meant a new phase in their lives. Would I even last the few years I graduated from high school?

When the bells started ringing, I went to the church. I met the heathen a few hundred meters in front of it. Ex gave me a friendly handshake. "Take care, Lggers!"

Mother waved to me from a distance. Then I joined the ranks of the other confirmands to enter the festively decorated church, led by the vicar. The confirmation was extremely solemn. I didn't understand much of the sermon because my thoughts were elsewhere, with my comrades and the battles of the future. Oa's communion passed very quickly because the large number of confirmands forced the pastor to spend as little time as possible with each one. The wafer stuck to the roof of my mouth and caused a gagging sensation that only got better when I took a sip from the chalice. The thought that people believed they were real flesh and blood at communion made me uneasy.

I was still confused when I was handed the confirmation certificate in the sacristy at the end of the ceremony and the priest congratulated me with the words: "Well, in reality, everything is half as bad!"

2lm afternoon some relatives appeared and brought the usual gifts, books, mostly of edifying content, ties in colors that I didn't protect, snacks, cigarettes.

2lm evening I sat in the Nnterstand and had long conversations with the heathen, who gave me a beautiful edition of the Edda. The little Flemish girl had given me a kiss on the forehead on entering, which completely confused me, all the so when the constable smiled and threatened me with his finger. Oer Bäckermeister told me some funny stories from his apprenticeship, which he was put into as a little confirmation pup. "We were still real children at our confirmation, you're already a young Wann. Oa don't you know what an uplifting feeling it is to be allowed to smoke a cigarette in public for the first time without getting a few slaps in the face. And how proud we were that we had the right be addressed. But cadets like you don't understand that at all, they're already so old that on the day of their confirmation they use wise remarks that we old lansquenets no longer understand."

Then he held out a packet to me: "Here, Wensch, at least smoke a confirmation cigarette, I won't hit you either."

With the laughter I could now see, I forgot all my tormenting thoughts. After all, there was no point in getting my head hot.

Oie little Flämin had another surprise for us. From a long, narrow roll she wound a green, large, square setd cloth. We jumped for joy. "Oh, that's a flag!"

It was actually a flag. Our flag! Oer Hauptmann had once glimpsed it on a pack of cigarettes.

drawn. Lind had now painstakingly embroidered the Fleming. Gold on green. A huge golden swastika shone out, and it seemed to us as if the dugout was filled with this glow.

The constable hugged his bride again and again. "Girl, you've given me the greatest pleasure. How can I thank you for that/

Oie little Fleming's eyes were moist. "That you can be so happy! And I just wanted to say thank you for your love/

I had to keep waving to the bunting. I wondered if it would flutter in front of us when the battle started. What would the flag look like after the first battles? Who would carry it, and who would fall under it?

The next few weeks were fraught with tensions that made life unbearable. Card greetings from Upper Silesia became sparser. Oer Hauptmann came to the dugout a few times when he was passing through on his way to the Ruhr area; he made an overworked, irritable impression and didn't speak much. All we could gather from his statements was that a great betrayal being prepared down there, that the government authorities were completely failing and that the police were causing unexpected difficulties. The behavior of the Inter-Allied Commission was becoming more challenging by the day, and the French General le Rond was not making the slightest secret of his hatred of the Germans. We sat up into the night poring over maps of Upper Silesia, reading newspapers, looking for material in magazines and eavesdropping on joyful citizens from the association of Upper Silesians loyal to their homeland. When Korfantg struck, Germany was to respond, that was our firm intention. We still had no idea what this third advance by the insurgents would look like. We only knew one thing

that this time Korfantg's aim was to Upper Silesia into a Polish country, using the last of his reserves. The border was to be the Oder. The Polish magazines I received spoke openly about this and showed the white eagle holding its wings over the land on the other side of the Oder.

It was not foreseeable whether it come to a regular war. Given the pacifist attitude of the German government, it was to be feared that it would also tolerate this dismemberment of the Reich, albeit with protests but without any serious resistance.

Fine, so once again we would be marching without the government's blessing.

On April 11, the former German Empress Auguste Biktoria died in Ooorn. The news was generally greeted with great emotion, as the Empress was popular and, the old Emperor's wife, who had made Bismarck's life extremely difficult, she had shown little concern for politics, but all the more concern for social institutions and, later on, for the wounded. Even the Red newspapers refrained from any vulgarity.

The funeral was to take place in Potsdam. The news spread through the country like wildfire. Would the emperor also attend?

In this case, the patriots hoped to strengthen the monarchist idea. The west of Berlin was flagged black, white and red. There was hardly a house that did not a flag. Men and women wore mourning flags on their upper left arm. Every flower store had huge wreaths with ribbons of some national reformation on display. The paper stores had good days, even postcards with pictures of the Emperor and Empress were sold on the streets.

On the evening of 1S. April, the captain arrived with three comrades. He had reported in by telegraph from Ratibor. I had been sent alone to Zoologischer Garten station to avoid the watchful eyes of the criminal investigation department. We gave our comrades a warm welcome. The master baker had baked a huge cake, and his wife made a coffee to go with it was certainly not available in Upper Silesia.

At first my comrades told us about Silesia, we eager for any news. I listened with a pounding heart to the mostly dry descriptions, from which it was clear how certain the battle was to be expected. Much was happening there every day and every night, which under normal circumstances would certainly have led to war long ago. But the German government? The Reich Chancellor Fehrenbach his eyes and ears so as not to have to know anything.

At last the captain waved him off. "That's enough now. Everything else will fall into place. The main thing is that you are at the post when I call. First of all, we will attend the funeral on April 19.

On the night of April 18, we lined up in Herderstraße. Our steel helmets still bore the swastika the Kapp Putsch. Despite the police ban, we had sidearms strapped on. Oer constable carried the green flag. The captain walked three steps ahead of us. He had put on all his medals.

We marched through Kaiserallee, through Steglih, singing. Men and women who were still on the street at this time stopped in amazement. Policemen put their hands on their helmets in greeting and looked after us in surprise. It didn't occur to any of them to stop our train.

Oer Heide marched beside me. We looked at each other and felt a deep sense of joy. Oer night wind rustled in the

heavy flag silk. The tops of the trees moved and the sky was filled with clouds. Here and there a star shone as if lost in the infinity of the sky.

Lake Wannsee shone in a deep black. I had to think back to my school boat days. Here we were often dragged in our boats. Our songs rang out again and again. Oer Wald gave a distant echo.

Oer Heide nudged me. "Ou, there's a general appeal for the national revolution in Potsdam. Ludendorff is coming too/

I nodded. How could it have been otherwise, we finally had to get going. I would preferred it if we had made a real fuss right away.

At the Glienicke Bridge we met other sections who were resting here before marching to Wildpark in the early morning.

Our captain had arranged quarters for us in a Potsdam barracks. He wanted us to a fresh impression when we marched past.

We entered the barracks around three o'clock and were truly grateful that the soldiers of the Reichswehr were still serving us coffee and sandwiches. We had brought an honest hunger with us. Fifteen minutes later we were already lying in the straw.

Llm seven Ahr we were awakened. We jerked off the Lederzeng with special love. We drank our coffee standing up. At seven thirty we marched off.

The streets were already jammed. Warriors' clubs, regimental detachments, officers' clubs, school chaplains, citizens and children crowded together to see something of the great parade. Potsdam was sea of flags. But the streets were hung with garlands, every house was decorated with fir trees.

Oer Heide laughed to himself: "I just want to know what the black Mr. Fehrenbach would say, this chancellor by the grace of God, if he saw this Potsdam!"

There were more peacetime uniforms than others, and almost more officers than men. Our platoon stood out, firstly because of the unusual sign on the steel helmet, but then above all because of the green flag with the swastika, which aroused people's curiosity. However, nobody dared to approach our procession and ask our name. looked too serious in the colorful picture of the festive Potsdam.

We were given our place near the New Palace. Since we were standing in two rows, we had an excellent view. It was teeming with photographers, excited stewards and police officers. Oa's trellis grew thicker by the minute. Behind us were girls' boarding schools, women, men. Next to us and opposite us stood military units, mostly like us in field gray and steel helmets, followed delegations in picturesque peacetime uniforms and war clubs in tunics and top hats.

Although it still early morning, the sun was beginning shine brightly. A huge cloud of dust lay over the whole parade ground, and the numerous medics who were busily wandering around soon had enough to do. We had to wait in the tents for a long time and passed the boredom trying to recognize the senior officers standing on the wide steps or to establish the origin of the sometimes very strange foreign decorations.

Slowly and solemnly, the funeral procession finally approached. It was unmissably long. Officers, knights, princes, a disproportionately large contingent of clergy, then the relatives, the crown prince, the crown princess, the princes with their wives and sons, then high and highest officers, among them Hindenburg and Luüendorff. A military display of national Germany. In addition to the mourning for the dead empress, there was a peculiarly melancholy mood, as if the coffin, which passed by decorated with a wreath, also marked the final burial of the monarchy.

would be worn. And the men who stood there in their costly military uniforms did nothing about it, couldn't and probably didn't even seriously want to. Potsdam was not Germany, and the splendor of imperial Germany, which showed itself here for the last time in the brightest colors, no longer fit in with the times, just as little as we, with our serious field gray, fit in with the imperial parade uniforms. It seemed to me that the only reason we stood so solemnly and immovably in front of the New Palace was so that the monarchy could enter the tomb of history with dignity and honor.

Later, the military units marched past in front of Ludendorff. We pulled ourselves together and our parade march earned the captain special praise. In the afternoon, shortly before we marched out of Potsdam, we passed Hindenburg's hotel. When the field marshal stepped onto the balcony, the captain commanded "Attention!" and again we threw our legs and stretched our bodies in the parade march.

As we sat in the dugout again in the evening, we let the impressions of the day pass us by once more. Oer Crown Prince had aged. His stay in Holland had made him serious. And the princes had also lost some of their stiff dignity, differing only in their virtue from the other senior officers.

The Emperor had not been allowed to come, the government had feared conflict. As if we were absolutely dependent on the emperor's presence if we had wanted a monarchist putsch!

That same night, Oer Hauptmann and the comrades he had come drove back to Silesia.

We were given the task of cordoning off the Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church, where a memorial service for the Empress was to be held a few days later.

I had been expressly ordered to wear a peace uniform. I took my school uniform out of the wardrobe and realized that it had become very small and tight. My place in front of the church was at a small portal, in front of which the Crown 's carriage was to stop. Even before the crown princess arrived, my Latin teacher, who had squeezed through to the doorway, asked me to be let into the church or at least to allowed to stand very close to the doorway. I felt unspeakably superior to the teacher and generously gave him a seat in the front rows of the nave.

The crown princess drove up in a carriage. Before the coachman could jump down, I opened the door and helped the deeply veiled woman. As gently as I could, I escorted her through the mutely greeting crowd into the church. She thanked me and asked for my name.

Strange, you see, since there was no longer a monarchy, the princes we had once been taught to revere as higher beings seemed very human. Almost more forlorn and needy than ordinary mortals, who had learned in early youth to assert themselves, without privilege, without nimbus, solely through the strength of their will and the steadfastness of their character!

On May 3, 1921, the Poles made their third invasion of Upper Silesia. The German government wrung its hands in despair and urgently asked the Inter-Allied Commission to direct the Corps troops. The Inter-Allied Commission obligingly and then stepped aside to see how the situation would develop.

It would have developed entirely according to the wishes of the energetic insurgent leader and his Warsaw backers if only the German government had had its way. The Oder would certainly and truly have become the border between Germany and Poland if German soldiers had not again acted on their own initiative and become rebels for the sake of the nation's honor!

The French openly supported Korfantg and his troops; was enough evidence that there were often enough Frenchmen fighting in the ranks of the insurgents. The English, however, did not openly sympathize with the Poles; here and there they even gave the Germans words of encouragement. However, it was not yet clear what England's final stance would be. The Italian divisions, especially in Ratibor, did their duty and fired on the insurgents. As expected, the Apo fell apart almost everywhere. It held its ground better in individual towns. However, it did not make any decisive advances against the peace-breakers.

On the evening of May 3rd we received a telegraphic order to be in Wroclaw on the 6th in the morning near the main train station in a certain restaurant. Clothing: Roll clothes! Be especially careful of the criminal police! Avoid any conspicuous behavior! Under no circumstances carry weapons! These orders were cleverly disguised in the telegram.

We had long known all the trains that went to Silesia. How often had we studied the timetable in the last ?

The morning dawned as we left the shelter. See you on May 5, in the evening? We wanted to use the 4th to settle our personal affairs, if they hadn't already been basically sorted out in the last few days.

It wasn't that easy for me. I knew that my school and parents wouldn't be impressed by my plans.

On May 4, around noon, I first visited the commandant. I had telephoned him beforehand.

I met a sick man. He'd been stuck with an insidious flu for weeks. Jesus sa, I hadn't taken care of the commander the whole time. But too much had happened in the meantime.

Oer Kommandant graciously rebuffed my stammered apologies. "I know, Eggers. Don't talk about it, I've had plenty of time to read the papers/

Then he asked about Potsdam. I gave a detailed report. And what was the captain doing? He was already in Upper Silesia, I said.

The commander straightened up. "And you?"'

I assumed a posture as if I had a report to make. "I've come to say goodbye, Herr Kommandant!"

Oer Kommandant looked me firmly in the eye and then reached for my hand. "I didn't expect it any other way." And after a while: "What do your parents say?"

I could only shrug my shoulders.

We were silent for a while. Then the commander began, breathing heavily: "You can't imagine, Eggers, how difficult it will be for me to let you go alone. But I can't go with you. For a street fight

I'm useless for the war, I would only be in the way of you young guys/

I wanted to say something. Maybe that we knew what dashing soldier he was.

But he beckoned me to remain silent. "I experienced once again during the Kapp Putsch what it means to lead a detachment of volunteers. And now, when I imagine what it means for a soldier to be able to fight in the Freikorps, my heart bleeds that I am condemned to stay here and read every morning in the newspaper where you are storming and then wait for the news that this one and that one has fallen/ Again he squeezed my hand.

"I think you will have to leave the house without saying goodbye. As soon as I can get up, I will go to your parents and try to explain your move to them. Farewell, Eggers, I am glad to have done something for your military career, and I know you will be brave. I hope that you will return home. If not, at least you have been allowed to fall in freedom/

When I left the room, I saw that he was still running his hand over his eyes, and my heart was also very heavy, because I adored the commandant like hardly anyone else.

In the afternoon, I strolled through the streets again, spoke to acquaintances I met here and there, and then slipped away to my room. I carefully hid my school books and crammed my folder with the items I considered indispensable. Handkerchiefs, stockings, underwear, washing things , above all, the little Nietzsche book that Heide had given me shortly after my confirmation.

At the dinner table, I tried to make as unbiased an impression as possible. I didn't quite seem to succeed, because Mother and Grete often gave me questioning looks. Father talked about the latest political events.

"It's terrible that Germany can't find peace. Now it seems to be starting again in Upper Silesia."

I nodded, my heart almost beating in my throat.
"The insurgents will just have to be driven out."

Father laughed disdainfully. "Right, right! But who? I can already see that we're going to lose Silesia very soon."

"No," I rebelled, "after all, we're still here too!"

Father eyed me suspiciously. "We're good! You've probably realized for yourself that your adventurous days are over, haven't you? You'll do your A-levels first, then you can become an officer if you still feel like it today."

"No!" I said cryptically and steered the conversation away from this sensitive question.

At eleven o'clock I asked to be allowed to go to bed. Oer goodnight kiss for my mother was a little more solemn.

On May 5, as usual, I got up at seven o'clock in the morning, hurriedly got dressed and went to the window to say goodbye to the streets and small squares that I could see from my room and that had become something like home to me over the years. At the coffee table, father told me that the first columns of the newspaper filled with reports from Upper Silesia.
"Villages are already burning, inhabitants are being abducted, and the men who resist are being mercilessly gunned down."

"Then it's time for this situation to end," I said and said goodbye briefly, as I did every morning. I took my folder, had the kitchen give me a few sandwiches just in case and put some apples in my pocket.

I spent the morning in the Grunewald forest. It was a warm May day and the birch trees shone brightly among the pines. I walked along the Grunewaldsee, past the hunting lodge and lay down under a chestnut tree in the middle of a small meadow. The big white clouds stood very still

in the pale blue sky, and birds were chirping in the branches above me. It was unspeakably beautiful to be alone, just standing on my own. The endless expanse of the great adventure unfolded before me. Operations, battles, attacks, battles, perhaps even wounds, or even death somewhere on the field. What my whole sung life with its ups and downs, with its subtle little worries and great longings against the one act of running away into the unknown? Tomorrow they might still be looking for me, the day after tomorrow they would surely know where I had gone. And on the third day the commander would probably already be with them. And the Ggmnasium! Oh God, sa, I'd forgotten all about the Ggmnasium. dug out one of the business cards from my wallet that a loving aunt had given me for my confirmation - long ago was that? - and wrote on the back in pencil:

Dear Mr. Director!

I am hereby taking leave from the grammar school, as I am to Oberschlesten with my comrades in the Freikorps.

Kurt Eggers.

I decided that I would put this card in the school's letterbox. It was enough to let the principal know tomorrow.

Then I let myself sink back into the grass and dreamed into the clouds with my eyes open.

Girls' voices sounded from afar. Schoolgirls were on a class trip. I couldn't help thinking of Grete. She would certainly be astonished. Tomorrow or the day after tomorrow.

Horsemen trotted past. The Tattersall horses were lean, harmless beasts, just good enough to carry the frightened Jews. It was good manners for the nouveau riche ride in the Grunewald. Let them ride until they fell off. Today I didn't care about any of that. The little anger I usually felt at such moments didn't affect me

more. At noon I arose, stretched myself and wandered along the bank on the other side to the forester's lodge, sat down on a stuffed pine tree and ate my sandwiches with ravenous appetite. Then I strolled along the Königsallee, stopped for a while in front of Rathenau's inconspicuous but precious villa and arrangements to stand in front of the grammar school at about three o'clock. The principal was certainly not in his study at this time. When I the card in the box, the school usher discovered me. An ordinary man who had been badly wounded in the war. He eyed me with cheerful suspicion. "You must have played truant again today/

Why shouldn't I make an announcement to the man that would have the whole grammar school in a tizzy tomorrow? I approached him and took hold of the top button of his fine work coat. "If you promise not to talk until tomorrow, I'll tell you something/

He pricked up his ears. "Word of honor, I won't say anything!"

"Good," I replied and let go of him, "I'm going up and away now, I'm going to be a soldier!"

Oer Schuliener opened his mouth and eyes, then clapped his hands. "Excellent, excellent, theres nothing going on in Germany either." He blinked slyly. "Foreign Legion?"

I tapped my forehead in annoyance. "Where you thinking, man! Freikorps!"

He shook his head, smiling in disbelief. "So it is!" I walked away laughing. I turned around once more, "And hello to Friedchen!" Friedchen was his cute sixteen-year-old daughter, whom we all liked. It was even said that some of the Primans loved her more than a few coasts.

Oer school servant laughingly threatened me his finger: "I'll careful!"

I entered the shelter at seven o'clock in the evening. Most of my comrades were already there. The little Fleming was tears. She hugged her constable again and again, sobbing. "What am I supposed to do without you? They'll shoot you dead and then I'll be all alone in the world, all alone in Germany, that's just my fatherland when you're there/

The constable was in tears. He was obviously embarrassed by his appearance, although each of us pretended not to see them at all. "Last time the Polenkrteg lasted eight days, watch out, this time it will only last twenty-four hours, and then I'll bring you something really nice, girl. And now be quiet, it's not our way to whine to others!"

Damn it, we were very upset that the Fleming couldn't calm down. We really loved her. But how could we have comforted her? It was harder for her, much harder than the baker's wife, who was desperately trying to make a composed impression. Oer Heide sat down at the piano, played a few chords and gave us a wave. As cheekily and cheerfully as we could, we caught the song from the little Polish town. And really, the baker's wife laughed: "It could suit you so well!"

Oie little Flämin sat down very quietly in a corner and didn't let her constable out of her sight, bravely suppressing her sobs, even if the tears were still running. We sang a few more songs, then we sat down around the big table and ate the
"last meal", which the baker's wife had prepared for us with great love.

We always had to laugh when we looked at each other. One of us looked like a farmhand, the other like a forester, the third like a radio operator, and yet a trained criminalist would have realized at first glance that we soldiers in disguise.

We had to leave on the tenth of Ahr because we were to be given our tickets by a liaison from Silesia in a small pub at Lharlottenburg station. The baker's wife and the little Flemish girl held their ground. They weren't allowed to accompany us to the station because their crying would have made us even more suspicious.

The pub looked anything but trustworthy; Spartacists, pimps and prostitutes frequented it, but no soldiers. But that was precisely why it was unlikely that the police would here to carry out raids against Freikorps soldiers. We spread out at the few tables, chatted with the extremely uninteresting guests and only raised our heads when a man entered who could see the officer at a distance of ten paces. Shortly afterwards, Oer Heide received an envelope from the stranger, with whom had communicated in a few apparently trivial words. The stranger drank his beer, paid and left with a polite greeting.

We were divided into several groups to board the O train at Lharlottenburg, Zoologischer Garten, Frtedrichstraße, Alexanderplah and Schlesischer Bahnhof stations.

2The Lharlottenburg station was already unusually busy an hour before the train left. Many young guys, who looked just like us, stood around and, like us, looked suspiciously and curiously at every traveler who came along. Older men with lurking glances, their hands their pockets or behind their backs, walked around and asked questions of individuals, questions that were usually answered with a shake of the head or a shrug of the shoulders. We had been given strict orders not to get involved in any conversations. If we were asked by detectives who themselves, we were supposed to say that we were countrymen.

arbelter, forester, estate officials who were going to Vreslau to take up jobs in Silesia. It soon became apparent how good it was we hadn't taken any weapons with us, because almost all of the young lads who were carrying large suitcases were stopped by the officers patrolling around and led into the stationmaster's house. In order not to arouse suspicion, we did not in the investigation, but left it to the resourcefulness of those caught to pull themselves out of trouble. Nevertheless, some had to stay behind when the train finally left. We could still see their wistful looks as we passed the stationmaster's house. 2We would have liked to have kicked them out, but then we would have been taken off the train at the zoo. Before we took our seats, we looked at our fellow passengers. They didn't seem to up to any mischief; there were hardly any informers among them. The two Andes who had taken the corner seats were talking animatedly and very loudly about the business situation. We were far too excited sit down. So we stood in the corridors of the O train and looked out over Berlin at night, at the streets and squares we all knew, which brought back memories of marches, meetings and clashes. 2 At Schleft station, the rest of our comrades boarded the train. We breathed a sigh of relief when the train finally started moving and the lights of Berlin gradually disappeared.

In the compartment, we drew our fellow passengers into conversations in order to get indifferent thoughts. We talked about the weather, the economy, the prospects in our supposed professions. We were not at all happy when the conversation to politics. One of the Arids acted as if he knew exactly what was going on in the world. Did we even know who the press chief of the Kapp Putsch was? Trebitsch-Lincoln, an Aryan of course, and no one else? We kept quiet about it. What we have said? We knew nothing about it.

After Frankfurt an der Oder the train became somewhat emptier, and we could now dare to occupy some of the neighboring compartments. One of them was occupied a bold-looking man in his thirties who made no secret of the fact that he wanted to join the Freikorps. He seemed to have up his mind only after a long struggle.

Oer Heide nudged him inconspicuously and put his finger over his mouth as a sign that he had better keep quiet. Oa he went down badly with the other. "As far as I'm concerned, everyone should hear it, man. I'd like to see who's trying to get me off the train now. I'll punch anyone in the freffe, even if it's Fritz Lbert!"

In the blink of an eye, the man was surrounded by groups of curious people who called on him with cheerful words to give vent to his troubled heart. The man looked around, breathing heavily, knowing full well that he was speaking to like-minded people.
"Why I joining the Freikorps? Guys, because I'm fed up with this state that I fought for with all my passion."

He dismissed the partly astonished, partly indignant interjections with a wave of his hand. "You're better off than me, you were nothing but soldiers, but I was a socialist. You don't know what it means not to have a fatherland. That's why you don't know what it means to find one again."

He was silent for a while, and none of us spoke either. Only the rhythmic thumping of the wheels prevented the silence from becoming burdensome.

Then he leaned back and closed his eyes. His voice became quiet and colorless, as if he were speaking to himself. "We believed in the honest power of the international proletariat, and we fought for the liberation of the working class from the brutal clutches of capitalism. And our struggle was a single sacrifice. For ourselves, we wanted nothing when we collected the pennies we had starved ourselves of. But for our children we wanted a

A better time, a happier world. They should be able to laugh again and have sunshine. That's why we took to the streets and let the police ride us down, that's why we renounced Germany and left it to the citizens, who were only providing a service to capitalism. No one believes what we suffered all those years. What do you know about what it means to become a traitor out of conviction? It started in 1916, on the very day you were celebrating the Kaiser's birthday somewhere, we published the Spartacus Letters for the first time. I wore field gray like you! But I had other thoughts in my heart than you, and had to hide these thoughts like the pamphlets I had to distribute secretly to reliable comrades. You only have one death to die, I had two deaths to die, a death in the trenches as a soldier, a death at the hands of the executioner as a traitor/

Oer Wann paused for a moment and wiped his forehead with his hand, which was covered in thick drops of sweat.

Then he continued. -When I went home on vacation, I went from meeting to meeting, secretly, always as if on run. Comrades had gone to Bern for the conference of the International. There was a lot to hear there. Liebknecht spoke to us. Leaflets had to be designed, printed and distributed. Then we had to organize hunger demonstrations and prepare for strikes. Everything had to be done quickly, because the police could us at any moment. Then we waited for the success of our work, tense, overexcited, just like the pioneers waiting for their explosives to work in the tunnel ahead/

The man paused again. A word fell whipping into the silence: -pigs/

We turned to the caller and saw the pagan, pale, with an evil gleam in his eyes.

Oer man nodded. "Ou are quite right, it was a mess. Today I see it, back then we thought we were doing a tremendous work for humanity/

Oer Heide stepped close to the man, shook him so that he hit the wooden wall with his hoof and shouted: "You've started it all, you bastards. And you're going to Silesia to start all over again, aren't you?"

The man seemed to smile. "Then I would probably have started it differently."

One of his comrades pushed his way between the two and pushed the heathen back. "Can't you see that this one has changed? Why don't you let him finish?"

Oer Heide mumbled something that sounded like an apology, then slapped the man on the shoulder. "Well, my heart sinks when I of the outcome of the war. In the end, we were all betrayed, and it's only fair that you were betrayed too."

Oer man continued to speak. We felt that it did him good to open his heart, and no one interrupted him any more.

"When Adler shot Count Stürghk in Vienna, we celebrated him like a Tell and thought that this shot would be the beacon for the uprising of the workers' movement throughout the world. But there was no echo from over there. So we thought that the hour had not yet come and carried on working. In the spring of 1917, left-wing radicals united in all the major cities and in the most important factories, and in April the Spartacus League founded in Gotha. The Entente gave us the means set up a revolutionary headquarters in Switzerland. From then on we were able to work according to plan. The best couriers were the agents of the English and French, who in turn placed our confidants at the service of their espionage arm. The next strikes in Germany proved that the cooperation

was successful. And in the summer was the first mutiny in the navy. You probably know the trial that the German government against the navy members Reich-Pietsch and his comrades. At that time, death sentences and prison sentences were handed down, but the effect of our propaganda was all the more lasting. In the winter of 1917, we gained new allies in the Bolshevik Estates of Russia. We were able to set up a new central office on Unter den Linden in Berlin. The year 1918 began promisingly. Our propaganda was effective in the Bolk, it echoed our slogans. The number of revolutionaries grew at the stage and in the ports, and we were also successful at the front. In Bulgaria there were major uprisings, so that Bulgaria had to give up the war. We were able to act more and more openly until Germany also had to lay down its arms. You know the end of the war, we hoped that power would finally pass to the people, that the hour of freedom had come. We were deceived in our hopes, the whole nation was deceived and sold out/

Exhausted, the man fell silent and put his head in his hands.
We looked at each other in silence and didn't know what to say.

After a while, the heathen came up to him and put his hand on his head. "Man, you've missed a lot, but you've also suffered a lot. It should not be up to us, we want to respect you as a comrade if you make an effort outside to make up as a soldier for what you have done as a seduced man/

The man looked up at him gratefully. "You can count on me. I know how much I have to make up for and I am to you for not pushing me back/

We shook his hand one after the other and accepted him into our comradeship. We had respect for him because we felt that he was honest. We drove further and further into the East, into the unknown, into the evening.

expensive, and the closer we came to Breslau, the more excitedly we spoke of our duty to take revenge. We kept making new demands in case we were to return victorious from Silesia. Liebknecht was dead, but the other traitors were still alive. The government, the state of Weimar, was also still alive. They were all to die. Provided that we stayed alive. One of us, a former cadet, two years older than me, swore that he would shoot the Jew himself, whom the government had made director of the Lichterfeld Cadet Institute out of mockery, in order to thoroughly destroy the cadet ghetto. We all took on a very special enemy for the great reckoning.

When it finally dawned and we extinguished the lamps in the compartment, we were a newly united team, sworn to the spirit of revenge.

9n Neisse, we marched to a field barn right next to the shiny yellow Neisse. Weapons and old uniforms from the war were stored there. The rifles were well greased and could easily have waited years for the day of battle. I picked out one that stamped 1916, it had an almost black stock and a wide leather sling. My uniform coat fitted me like a glove, it had a high collar and the badge of the Mafchinengewehrschühen on the sleeve. I threw away my civilian coat in the bow. Steel helmets and field caps were also available in sufficient quantities, only sidearms and breeches were in short supply. But I was lucky and found a sidearm with a saw. While we were still getting kitted out, the alarm went off unexpectedly. A car with members of the Inter-Allied Commission was approaching. Due to a carelessness on the part of the post, the occupants of the car became of us and turned around in a hurry before we could grab anything. We would have loved to have a

A thorough search was carried out! Around midday we marched to the station and picked up ammunition from a freight train. Then we left in the evening after a long swim in the Neisse.

Oer Hauptmann had assigned us to the "Schwarze Schar" Free Corps. We formed a special platoon and only regretted not having brought our green flag with us, because we had no ill desire to fight the war on our own.

We did not enter the battle immediately, as we had hoped, but ended up in an assembly camp inTwardawa after a few incidents. The formation and combat training of the Freikorps was carried out here at full speed. We had to drill as if we were in the barracks yard, even the slow step and the salute were not forgotten, and there were many a hearty whistle during the rifle roll call. We looked pretty daring, wearing a skull with red eyes on our left sleeve, with the Iron Cross ribbon underneath as an angle. We painted a question mark on the steel helmet with white oil paint and pinned the battle shield of the formations to the chest. After a few days, Feder Mann received two hand grenades with instructions to use them sparingly,

he population was very cordial to us throughout. A few insecure cantonists, including a community leader from the neighborhood, had occasionally received considerable beatings during the house searches that we had to carry out on the basis of voting lists that had fallen into our hands, so that all who had a guilty conscience scrupulously avoided any contact with us.

I was given permission to stay with small farmers along with some of my comrades. The people were touching in their concern for me. They had a son who was in a self-shoe formation near Gogolin and hadn't heard from me for a long time.

Oer Selbstschutz consisted of members of the population who, as a rule, only had to protect their closest home in the manner of the residents' militia. Their armament was very inadequate, very few had a uniform, and the Selbstschutz was not intended as an assault force. General Höfer, the leader of the Selbstschutz, had decided to have his formations stand at gunpoint and only give the order to fire when the enemy attacked. As a result, after the Polish combat detachments had broken through, the front was very soon frozen, with only small-scale fighting here and there, fire attacks and local, sometimes very dashing patrols. When we heard the echo of gunfire, we got excited and would have loved to rush to where the fighting was taking place. When the news finally leaked out that we would soon be called to a decisive operation, we breathed a sigh of relief; we had feared that we would not get to fight at all.

We no longer received any news from home. We also had no interest in knowing what the Jews were doing in Berlin; we would establish order once the Upper Silesian question had been resolved. We had taken note of the fact that in the meantime the centrist Fehrenbach given way to his black brother-in-arms Wirth. So it was once again the good old Weimar coalition of Social Democrats, Center and Democrats at the feeding trough. We would punch them in the mouth! If only Höfer hadn't been so reticent!

We had occasionally overheard statements from our officers and knew that there had been tensions between Höfer and his Selbstschutz on the one hand and our Freikorps on the other. It was understandable that we scolded the tame Selbstschutz like sparrows. Why didn't the others join forces with us in a mighty assault on the Polish LIndring

to sweep them out of Germany? We would gladly marched a little way into Poland to make a thorough return visit before we took pity on the German Republic.

When we shot our light machine guns at cardboard targets, we wrote names on the targets that were particularly close to our hearts, and the targets that got the most hits were then looked at with shouts of joy. We saw this as a kind of oracle. "Erzberger" and "Rathenau" almost always got the most shots, but also "Wirth" and "Korfantg", "Ebert" and "General le Rond" were impressive.

We once got our hands on a copy of "Welt am Montag". Its pacifist editor Hella von Verlach had personally taken the trouble to write a screaming report about the danger of the Freikorps in Upper Silesia. He wanted to know for sure that back there on the upper reaches of the Oder there were young men under arms who were as bellicose as they were irresponsible and who did nothing more than lust for murder and blood. They sang terrible songs, these boys, who wore palm-sized swastikas on their chests, and one of these songs contained the gruesome passage: "Anch Rathenau, der Walther,

Does not reach an advanced age.
Always skin Wirth hard, skin his skull
until it rattles. Knock off Walther
Rathenau, Oie gottverfluchte
Judensau!"

We held our stomachs with laughter when Heide read the essay to us. And then we realized that the song was very beautiful. We only regretted that not all the verses were printed. Nevertheless, we did Herm von Gerlach the favor of including this verse in the village council of our songs; it was suited as an appendage to our marching songs.

A wild, adventurous spirit prevailed in the Freikorps. Oer tone was rough and full of juicy expressions, but there was no one among us who did not love the harshness of this life. In front of us lay the enemy, behind us stood a treacherous government, which we knew would gladly have sold us for any acceptable price. But the awareness that we had no one in the wide world but like-minded comrades welded us inseparably together. We felt strong, much stronger than the cowardly world of the bourgeoisie, which we despised with all our hearts. The unusually hot May sun tanned our faces, and the strenuous service steeled our bodies, the fighting spirit made our eyes shine, and we accepted with proud equanimity the praise of the officers, who nodded approvingly when we performed a combat exercise. We knew what it meant when they said: "That's quite a job you've done!

The nights were mild and starry. An indescribably happy feeling made me breathe faster when I stood guard at the Oorf exit with my rifle under my arm. OThe distant shots were greetings from a longed-for land that I would soon enter. The deep stillness of sleeping nature was enlivened, illuminated, made dangerous by these greetings from my land of longing. The adventurous mood was intensified by the lazing of the dogs, to whom the shots were unfamiliar, uncanny. An almost exciting contrast to this mood was the suppressed giggling of the village beauties, who unhesitatingly surrendered to the stormy tenderness of my comrades. An unwritten law of the Freikorps is that everything that is beautiful and does not harm the troops is allowed. How I, as a guard, have insisted that my comrades go into the camp if a lovely girl was waiting for them out here?

The girls in this country were beautiful, strong and healthy, they liked the cheeky, cheerful, carefree guys of the Freikorps. Perhaps many a girl suspected that her love would sweeten the bitter death of a young lad.

My landlord had a nice young daughter, a lively seventeen-year-old girl who made eyes at me and would quickly bring me some refreshment in my room when I wanted to go to sleep. But I was still too young to hold a girl in arms, and I was somehow embarrassed to look into her alluring eyes.

In the afternoon, when the longed-for marching orders finally came, I was on guard duty again. I heard the loud cheering from the camp and knew what the bell had rung. Old field soldiers, who considered it unseemly to even one patriotic expression and preferred to throw in the popular, always appropriate word "shit" every opportunity to show their superiority over maudlin moods and lurking dangers, shouted their hurrah with the youngest volunteers.

In ten minutes the Freikorps was in place. A yellow and white flag - the colors of Silesia - embroidered with touching zeal by women and girls from the town of Brieg, which was well-disposed towards us, fluttered in front of us. The dispatch riders' horses pranced, obviously as happy as we were to be able to march. The Freikorpsführer's car rattled, and the horses' whips crunched in front of the baggage wagons. No one was missing from the village, men, women, young girls and children stood in the line of honor.

They marched alongside us many hundreds of meters, and the girls put their handkerchiefs to their eyes as we sang the song of the little Polish town in their honour.

It was May 19 when we marched from Twardawa to Pietna. In the evening we arrived in the small village of

on. In the meantime we had learned that the decisive blow would not be struck. In Oberglogau, it was said, there had a heated argument between General Höfer and the Freikorps riders. The deserving, one-armed general was a man of honor through and through. Lr felt bound by an assurance to the government that he would only offer resistance and would never attack. The Freikorps leaders expected everything from a surprise attack and were not prepared to wait any longer.

So we marched towards the enemy against orders! Now we were all alone, rebels who to rely only on our own strength!

Well, we were ready to march against the whole world and felt strong enough to do so. The Bagern were advancing, Freikorps Oberland. The Bagern had a good ram on us. Freikorps Winckler marched, Freikorps Lensch, Strachwttz, Heinz, Eichen, all names that guaranteed that real soldiers stood behind them. Now, all in all, there were only about nine hundred men who marched, and these nine hundred men were without any heavy weapons, hardly any heavy machine guns. But more effective than the best artillery was their passionate courage, and more superior than any ingenious tactics was the boldness of their will to attack. What should we fear?

Rumor had it that it was heading straight for the Annaberg. We knew that it was the key position of the entire Polish network of positions and, moreover, the symbol of Oberschlesten in general. There was a famous monastery on the mountain, to thousands of devout Catholics made pilgrimages every year. Oer Annaberg was in the hands of the Poles, from which the pious and superstitious concluded that heaven and the divine Virgin were on the side of the Polish invaders.

We knew that an attack on the Annaberg would be very difficult, perhaps even hopeless according to the general consensus. And yet we didn't bat an eyelid when we heard the news. We were prepared for anything, and a rebel spirit does not question the outcome of an undertaking that is recognized as necessary and important. Nor would we have been surprised if we had heard that the target was Warsaw or Moscow. We would have marched, because we were Fretkorps men and felt that we were there to attack precisely what seemed impossible to the others.

We spent May 20th thoroughly cleaning our weapons once again, preparing our machine gun belts, writing postcards, stocking up on whatever we could grab and putting notes with our addresses in our breastplates in case we fell. As I filled out my note, I for the first time that I was a very dangerous path. I had never realized it so clearly during the fighting in Berlin. I made a promise to myself that if I had to, I would rather die than taken prisoner. We knew that our enemy almost always killed the prisoners in gruesome ways. Horribly mutilated corpses had been dug up; even the English, who were not usually particularly squeamish, had had to turn away when the bodies were shown to them.

I gave my hand grenades to the heathen to arm, I didn't quite know how to handle the fuses yet.

In the afternoon, we bathed in a small pond and lay naked in the thick grass. The jokes and conversations soon fell silent. Everyone pondered their thoughts and sent them to the clouds that sailed above us into the shoreless, infinite, where the sky of longing unites with the earth of reality.

As dusk descended, we camped at the edge of a field. The woods in the background grew into black walls, and the bats seemed to us like voices from the land of death.

Our rifle pgrams stared like bare trees into the gray sky. The heather had fetched a bundle of straw and dry wood from a farmstead. He piled a pile of these and lit it. The crackling flame chased away all dark thoughts, and we began to sing our songs, first tender folk songs, then soldier songs, and finally we sang "Morgenrot, Morgenrot". Men and women and young people had come from the nearby houses. They sang along with our songs as if we were having an open village singing evening.

The moon was high in the sky and the stars were shining brightly as we were loaded onto commandeered wagons. It was strictly forbidden to smoke or speak, and the horses' had been torn from their hooves. We were to approach Krappih, the starting point of our assault on Annaberg, as silently as possible.

The silent ride was indescribably beautiful. The gun barrels rattled quietly against the steel helmets, and the side arms clinked brightly here and there. When a horse neighed, the driver yanked anxiously on the reins. We listened intently into the night. Not a single shot was fired today, not a hand grenade burst with a bang.

We formed up into columns just outside the gates of Krappih. Our hobnailed boots hit the bumpy pavement hard.

Unnoticed by the enemy, we had reached our first objective, the starting position. The assault battalions stood in an open square on the market square. The moon cast its shimmering gold on the helmets and rifles of the silent soldiers, and the unfurled flags flapped dully against the stock.

Oer Freikorpsführer gave a very short, hard-sounding speech about duty and honor and concluded with a hurrah from Germany and our victory. Our hurrah also sounded bright and metallic to the night sky. Then we marched to our ordered positions.

I was lying with my comrades in a small ditch a few meters from the last houses in the town.

So the enemy was lurking behind the walls of fog? If only he at least wanted to shoot, his silence was grating the nerves. Was he trying to lure us into a trap? Cursed thought. I had signed up for the first assault squad. It was natural for me to step forward when asked for volunteers. But now I didn't know how to meet the stranger in front. My helplessness somehow embarrassed me, and I didn't want to ask the leader of the shock troop just then. Next to me was former Spartacist we had met on the O-train. He was a splendid comrade. And when he realized that we trusted him, the last of his shyness disappeared and he became one of the funniest. It always seemed as if he wanted to make up to us personally for what he had once done to the whole nation, so self-sacrificing and selfless was his willingness to help. He too had immediately stepped forward, and although he was one of the oldest of us, he was chosen because his eyes almost pleading. Oer former cadet was also in the first strike force that the heathen led.

We still had five minutes left. Most people were smoking their cigarettes and some people's hands were shaking with excitement. I fiddled with my wraparound leggings to distract myself, because my heart was beating hard

out. The faces of his comrades were as pale as the dawn, their faces as steely as their helmets. Their eyes had become narrow and lurking, a strange, piercing gleam had come into them.

One more minute!

Oer Heide raised his arm, slowly we half straightened up and walked bent over into the fog. I felt that my uniform was completely soaked by the damp grass of the trench, the shirt slapped unpleasantly against my body.

We walked across a wide field. The green seed soaked our shoes and gaiters.

We lay down behind a bump for a moment. There was still no of the enemy. But we knew he couldn't be far away. There was a ridge nearby, we had been shown it on the map, and according to the Gogolin crew, this ridge was supposed to be peppered with machine-gun nests.

Again we went eighty, a hundred meters ahead. Again we let a bump swallow us up.

As the fog began to lift, we saw the blurred outlines of hills. Just as the heathen waved his hand, as if to draw our attention to the hills that could not escape our eyes, the fire suddenly started. I threw myself to the ground and felt a nameless fear gripping my heart, a fear that I perceived with horror. Was that supposed to be me, this helpless, trembling person who would loved to crawl into the ground as bullets splashed into the earth all around me or whistled over my head? ugh, I was ashamed of my fear, I felt pathetic and despicable, but I couldn't myself to lift my head. I wonder if my comrades realized how cowardly I was. I probably wouldn't be able to them in the eye again. I felt as if I was going to throw up.

We were sitting in the middle of the sheaves of enemy machine guns. The enemy couldn't seen much of us, but perhaps that's why they were firing so hard at us. The first shells howled towards us, but hit so far behind us that I was no longer startled by their explosion. The bullets seemed much more murderous to me, much more inescapable.

I heard the voice of the former Spartacist calling over.
"Hello, have you met?"

I still didn't dare raise my head and had my comrade call out to me several times.

Over time, I became calmer. I dared to look around me, very carefully, centimeter by centimeter. Next to me, behind me, were my comrades from the assault squad. From the distance, the distant commands of our first storm waves rang out.

Oer former Spartacist had probably been watching me. Now he was shouting cheerful words at me. I tried to smile. I still couldn't get a word past my lips.

Whenever a bullet hit nearby and sprayed sand and stalks in my face, I would involuntarily duck.

When I looked out again, I . Thunder! Oer Heide had risen up as if there were no enemy machine guns and was running along our line. "We're going fifty to sixty meters ahead again!" With that he jumped ahead.

For a moment I wondered whether I shouldn't stay put. Who could have proved to me that I must have heard the command? But pride was stronger than fear, and perhaps the feeling of comradeship, the duty that bound me to the others, won out over all the selfishness of my despondent heart. I pulled up my rifle and ran straight ahead, stumbled over a molehill, fell face down on the ground, so that

I spat out, picked myself up and ran on until I reached a small hollow where my comrades had already found cover. They laughed at me. Only the cadet seemed to be going through similar struggles to me. He looked at me with wide eyes, as if he didn't understand any of this. Oer Heide crawled up next to me and gave me a hearty poke in the ribs.

^Nice feeling, an attack like that, eh? Ra, you'll get used to it, we've all had stage fright at one time or another during a storm attack/

I nodded convulsively.

Ten minutes later we had conquered the first hill. There had skirmishes at various machine gun nests. But it had all happened as if in a dream. I felt as if I could see myself jumping forward, throwing the hand grenade, shooting, jumping forward again, shooting again.

When I came to my senses and awoke as if from a stupor, I looked around me and noticed how my comrades were on the food that the Polish soldiers had left lying around. A sausage was passed around, was disgusted to eat it. I drank some of the still-warm coffee hastily. Oer Heide laughed with satisfaction: ^Kids, that went smoothly for once, not a man lost, four machine guns captured, someone should imitate us/

The dead and dying Poles in their brownish Haller uniforms gave me the creeps, and I didn't understand how the comrades managed to search them for papers. No prisoners had been taken.

At noon we were trapped with the entire Freikorps in front of the Wggoda Heights. We had no heavy weapons to break the enemy's destructive fire. Oa the Poles were in favorable hill positions and we had free access to the enemy.

field, we could not even comb the enemy positions with our few machine guns.

Freikorps Oberland had much more success, working its way up the Annaberg via Strebtnow and Sakrau.

Our situation was more than unpleasant, it became downright embarrassing when reports from Oberland kept through, blaming us for the outcome, i.e. the downfall of the storm, if we not finally take the Wggoda Heights and thus eliminate the stalemate in the attack.

Again and again we started to storm, again and again we were forced into the meager cover by the raging fire.

I had long since stopped ducking my head when a bullet whizzed past or when a shell hit at a reasonable distance. Only the shrapnel remained abhorrent to me because it was unpredictably insidious in its scattering.

Our shock troops were sent forward again. Before we had run the first ten steps, the former Spartacist collapsed with a short cry, reared up once more and then fell to the side.

I heard later that he had been pierced by five shots. I was never able to see his body, it was said that it had been buried in a mass grave.

The cadet was also hit shortly before the victorious assault on the infamous height. Lr was shot in the head and collapsed silently. I myself was gripped by a fever and experienced the images of this desperate storm like a movie. After we had finally taken the Wggoda Heights, we advanced far into the enemy positions. Our attack proceeded inexorably from hill to hill, from village to village, from forest to forest.

to woodland. The enemy was already retreating in a hurry and inflicted far fewer casualties on us than before the Wggoda high. The other Freikorps had almost all experienced similar situations and survived them with more or less luck. The greatest success was achieved by Freikorps Oberland, whose officers were a very special selection. While we broke through to Leschnitz and thus stuck our thumb in the eye of the Polish front, the Oberlanders were already hoisting the German flag on the church tower of Annaberg.

The Freikorps lined up on the market square in Leschnitz, exhausted, shot up, but happy about the heavy victory. There was no need for the short speech to know that we had struck the decisive blow against the Polish front with the conquest of the Annaberg. With only our weapons in our fists, we had stormed position after position until we reached the mountain. We held off counterattack after counterattack and were thrown back. We had had to work our way forward again and again through the heaviest fire over open terrain. And when the Korfantg armored train approached, we could only meet it with infantry fire.

The fact that we had nevertheless won and had rolled up and overrun the entire Polish front made us proud. And the fact that our attack had forced the German government to take a look at Silesia and take a stand on the fighting seemed to us an act worthy of sacrifice. But the fact that we had shown the world that Germany would not cowardly bow to any claim, even at this time, seemed so glorious to us that we would have started the storm again that without a second thought.

Dead tired, I sank onto the bundle of straw that had been assigned to me as a bed. The excitement of this first battle gradually receded, and before I fell asleep I felt tears streaming down my face.

May 21 remained the high point of our Schlestenkamp. The German government used every means at its disposal to prevent the Freikorps from engaging in further hostilities. In particular, a very strict border barrier was put in place, which made it almost impossible to bring in any more men and weapons. At the same time, however, the enemy received considerable reinforcements.

While we were hurriedly going through and replenishing our weapons and equipment in the morning hours of the 22nd, while we were making the greatest efforts to replenish our stock of ammunition, Rathenau gave a fiery speech at a protest meeting against the Polish invasion of Upper Silesia, an appeal to the world's conscience, which ended with a magnificent quotation from Schiller. The government was very moved by its own pathos, and the indigenous population felt it had done its duty by applauding this protest.

But when we fired the three volleys over the mass grave of our comrades in Leschnih on the 23rd, the German government issued a decree that punished any attempt to form military units with a prison sentence or a fine of 100,000 marks. So anyone who wanted to go from protest to military action was sent to prison. We just spat when we read the decree. We knew that the government had betrayed us. We didn't expect anything else. But the fact that they were so undignified as not to at least somewhat conceal this vile betrayal from eyes of history astonished us.

But we had no time to dwell on our thoughts, as the first strong Polish counterattacks were already coming in. Again we went into the fire, without relief, without supplies. The shortage of men and material grew ever greater. Our hopes of leading enough men out of the witch's cauldron to see fle for the march from Berlin sank lower and lower.

We knew that we were doing the government a favor if we let ourselves be hunted down somewhere here in Upper Silesia. We gritted our teeth and decided sell our lives as dearly as possible.

Another Polish attack had failed under our fire. We counterattacked and drove the enemy ahead of us towards Ltchinia. About 20 meters in front of me, a Haller soldier suddenly emerged from the seed. I raised my rifle and fired. Then I ran to where the man had fallen. There must have been five meters between me and him. I could clearly see how his thigh was red with blood. The wounded man reached for his rifle lying next to him and took aim at me. With a mighty leap I was in front of him and the butt of my rifle smashed into his skull. I heard a sickening cracking sound, a viehisch mißtöntgen scream and felt it trickle warmly over my face. The whole thing was the work of seconds. I had acted without thought, completely impulsively. Run, the unconscious man twitched at my feet, , reared up and died gasping. My face, my helmet and my uniform were covered in blood and brain splatter.

The butt of my rifle had broken off and lay encrusted next to the dead man, whose face, where it was not covered in blood, gleamed a waxy yellow. I mechanically grabbed the enemy's weapon - a German carbine - and charged on.

Our counterattack took us as far as Salesche. Oort I was ordered to the field guard and was now lying in a small trench a few hundred meters from Salesche. Our enemy was in a wood. A meadow stretched out between us and him. Now and then shots were fired from the forest. We didn't answer them so as not to give away our position. Oer

The moon was high and gave good light. We had cleverly stashed our machine gun in a willow. We would receive the enemy!

He arrived around two o'clock in the morning. It had started with a fire attack. Oa returned fire from the village> we only found out when the enemy ranks were about a hundred meters from us. Oa's machine gun had fired well, and in a few minutes the meadow was covered with wounded. The rest of the enemy fled back into the forest.

But before we could really our success, we received a murderous fire from the village. At first we thought our comrades had missed their target and started shouting and waving. Then we realized that the Poles were already in Salefche. They cautiously moved closer and kept us under constant fire. Now the enemy also stormed forward out of the forest.

Oa's bright moonlight no longer suited us at all. We unhooked the machine gun from its sled with a few simple movements, loaded the cartridge belts and water crates onto our shoulders and ran as fast as we could. Oer Heide covered the retreat by throwing hand grenades at short intervals. We never saw this brave comrade again. No one could find out whether he had been killed or taken prisoner.

When the Poles noticed us, a chase began, exciting and wild beyond description. We ran for 60 or 70 meters and made an excellent target for the bullets. Then we threw ourselves down and crawled a few meters in another direction as fast as we could, jumped up again and ran on towards Lichinia. We didn't have much hope of escaping. The enemy was keen to capture us. We were able to escape after all thanks to a small patch of forest that kept us out of sight of our pursuers for a few crucial moments. In Lichinia

At first they thought we were Poles and were about to open fire when they recognized the machine gun without the sled.

They reported that the order to retreat to Lichinia had been given at night. An excited soldier, who was supposed to give us the news, had reported that the field guard had been killed by the enemy after a fire attack.

Only one had been wounded during our escape, the volunteer Scheja. We found him lying completely mutilated on a dung heap during our counterattack, which ended the next afternoon.

We also found the carriage of the machine gun. It was completely undamaged.

2In mid-June, I traveled back to Berlin from Ratibor with a comrade. My transportation bill said that the authorities were asked to give me shoes and help. My left ear was injured, the eardrum had been destroyed by the earth that had been thrown up by a mine and the auditory canal was festering. My left thigh had suffered a severe muscle strain and there was a small wound near my left ankle. My comrade's right hand was torn. We traveled first class. Oer conductor was a decent fellow. We settled between the red plush with a certain amount of apprehension. At first I didn't really dare to lean against it, because I didn't want to see the lice that were constantly tormenting me in the compartment.

My comrade kept shaking his head. He couldn't grasp the madness of our situation. He didn't know whether he would be able to use his right hand again. The question didn't bother him that much, even though he was a locksmith by trade.

But what made us roar with rage was the realization the government had been playing tricks with us. We had wanted to march into the industrial area in a bold move. To hell with it, the coup d'état would have been successful, certainly as successful as the conquest of the Annaberg. But Berlin stabbed us in the back. We had found Frenchmen among the fallen enemy, we were able to prove that there was no neutrality in Upper Silesia. Nevertheless, the government claimed to find peaceful ways of unification. We were portrayed as saboteurs of the work of peace, we were blamed for the confusion. Because we were bellicose adventurers, we did not want to lay down our arms. We looked wistfully at the industrial area that would now fall into enemy hands. With anger we thought of our fallen comrades, whose sacrifice had been rejected by the cowardly government. Should it all been in vain?

With Slawenhih, the key position to the industrial area had been conquered and all we had to do was grab it. The trucks we needed for the assault were withheld from us. The enemy sent ever stronger divisions attack us. Again and again we were victorious in the battles. But no one came to our aid. We were supposed to bleed to death! And we bled ourselves . But the enemy's front line lay shattered in front of us. When the French troops finally pushed in front of us and sealed us off, the fate of the betrayed nation was fulfilled: as far as we had advanced, so far had Germany gone. The other part of Upper Silesia fell into the hands of the enemy we had defeated, despite the vote, despite international law and world conscience.

The rest of the Freikorps went home, man by man. Some detachments remained united on estates and in forests, hiring themselves out for low wages and waiting for the day of revenge.

he rhythm of the wheels was tiring. Outside in the corridor, curious people stared in at us as if we were exhibition animals. A young girl gave us oranges. We greedily devoured the fruit; we 't eaten anything proper for a long time. We didn't get involved in conversations with the curious. What would they have understood about our anger, our disappointment? Neisse came into view. We went to the station. That's right, our adventure had begun in Neisse! The field barn must have been back there. How long had it ?

My comrade nudged me. There was a stand with hot sausages. There was a sign: "For Upper Schlestsche refugees!"

We approached and the smell of the sausages our mouths water.

We would have loved a sausage!

The elderly sister behind the stand asked us above whether we had an ID card from the Refugee Committee.

We shook our heads in amazement. We didn't know Lin Flüchtlingskomitee. What did we have to do with such bourgeois things?

The nurse shook her huge hood dismissively so that the brightly lit cross on her chest began to flutter. "Sorry, you won't get anything without ID!"

A bitter taste rose up in my mouth. So Oas was the first greeting from home. We didn't have any money. Everything had been taken from us. Money, weapons, identity papers. The man with the white armband who controlled the train had done a thorough job.

My comrade looked at me: "Ou must understand, we are enemies of the state. You don't give them anything to eat, you know! They should die, one way or another, either from the bullets or from hunger!"

Then he reached out with his left hand, grabbed as many sausages and rolls as he could and kicked the stall with such force that the entire supply of refreshments to the ground in a high arc. Screeching, the nurse let go. We slowly boarded the train and were glad when Beiße disappeared behind us.

As we drove past Frankfurt, I had to think of the former Spartacist. Dead! We had once thought we could march on Berlin as one. What a beautiful dream!

My comrade got off at Friedrichstraße station and I drove Zoo station.

The walk to Nhlandstrasse was cursedly difficult for me. I would loved to take a cab, but I had no money.

It was three o'clock in the morning when I rang the doorbell at my parents' house. It was a long time before I heard footsteps. Then the maid opened the door sleepily, cried out when she saw me and threw the door shut in my face. Father finally appeared, with Mother and Grete close behind him.

There was a heartfelt, tearful reunion. The parents had said that evening that I probably wouldn't be coming back and had tried hard to come to terms with this fact. That's why the girl had thought a ghost at the door.

I had to report again and again and ate all the supplies without realizing it.

My father hesitantly interjected that I would now have to look for a job.

I was taken aback: "Profession? I'm going to do my A-levels first!"

My father shook his head: "No, son, it's too late for that.
You have been dismissed from the grammar school. attitude and behavior are not in line with the school rules."

I must have made a very astonished face, because father repeated his words twice more.

Oa I got up and went to my room without saying a word.

I slept continuously for almost 24 hours, then got up, bathed thoroughly and slept again until it was broad daylight.

My first route was to the grammar school. I arrived just as there was a big break. There was a lot of buying up, a lot of joy and a lot of questions. The principal approached curiously and was taken aback when he saw me. But he was already gripped by my question as to whether it true that I had been dismissed? He just nodded.

Oa in my excessive anger I used a quote from Goethe's Göh von Berlichingen. The effect on the pupils was extremely positive, they burst out into a roar of applause. The on the principal, however, was negative. He turned around with every sign of disgust and disappeared. I had to laugh myself. Right, my colloquial language had become clearer in the Freikorps. I really didn't fit in with the school rules any more!

<^)hat should I start now? Oer Hauptmann had gone to Munich. Oer Heide was missing, surely he had long since been buried somewhere. Oer master baker had fallen. His wife had sold the business and gone back to East Prussia. Oer Wachtmeister had married little Flämin and moved to Cologne with her to take up a job as an insurance agent. It had become lonely in Berlin. I only kept going back to the commandant. But he couldn't help me either. I didn't want to to sea anymore. Maybe it was a good idea to Germany for a few years? My father encouraged me. He wanted to me to Peru, I had distant relatives there who exporting and importing in Areyuipa and Lima. Well, I agreed to that. I would also have to Australia or Tierra del Fuego. First I was supposed to learn to be an export clerk. After a lot of effort, my father found a company. It was called Nllmann L Engelmann and was located in Nitterstraße, Berlin's export district. I introduced myself as a new apprentice and mnstered suspiciously the Jewish grimaces of the owners.

It took a lot of effort to be friendly, but I had good will. I stood for hours in customs offices, at bank counters, wrote out invoices, sorted samples, operated the photocopying machine, filed correspondence and played the role of a girl for everything. I fetched Baumkuchen from a special bakery in Kochstraße for the disgustingly made-up secretary of the Jewish Lhess, and when the Jewish accountant had his epileptic seizures, I was ready with a glass of water to help him. I doggedly carried out all the orders I was given.

I wanted to stick with it, finish my apprenticeship and then go out into the world, become something and then return to Germany. In the evenings, I listened to lectures on foreign trade and economics. I also took Spanish and Portuguese courses at a language institute on Wittenbergplatz.

The fact that my day passed as if in a blur was only li^ I was thus reminded only slightly of all the shame of the present.

I must have been working at Llllmann L Engelmann for about a fortnight when fate struck me. I had been standing at the stinking customs office until about noon and came back to the office to eat my bread. I noticed that a sunge clerk was crying to herself and one of the young correspondents had an abnormally red cheek. When I asked why, no one would give me an answer, only the clerk began to cry harder. After pressing for some time, I found out what was going on. The boss had told the young girl a few dirty jokes in his private account and hinted that he would like to have a nice evening, but he didn't like girls who played coy. Anyone who was sensible would have a good life with him! Oa's girl had run out crying and confided in the correspondent. Oaraushin had gone into the office and the Lhes. Oer success was that the young man was slapped in the face and threatened not to interfere in matters that were none of his business. Besides, the clerk was a completely morally groundless Oing who just sucked lies out of her fingers!

I vented my indignation loudly and said that the dude couldn't treat me like that. At that moment he stuck his head out of the door and asked scornfully what there was to be mumbling about. I told him rudely that if either one of us was cheating, it wasn't me, and besides, this was a rather strange company!

Then the Jew rushed over angrily and threatened me that he would slap me too and make sure that this mess was put in order.

He had to keep his further remarks to himself because I hit him with my fist between the eyes with such force that he staggered against a table.

Fifteen minutes later I was relieved. I had 25 marks in pocket, the money I was entitled to for a month during the first year of my apprenticeship.

Over the next few days, I thought hard about what I could now. My export career was over. My father tried to me a job with Hecht, Pfeiffer L Lompanie. A short phone call from this company to Illlmann L Engelmann was enough to explain in a friendly but firm manner that the valued services of Mr. Eggers were not appreciated. Mother tried to encourage me to become a farmer. She herself came from an East Prussian farming family and could not praise the generous country life enough. Father wasn't too keen on the plan to make me a farmer because he said to himself that a farmer without his own farm would be nothing more than a better farmhand. But after all, I couldn't sit at home and wait for a miracle. Miracles didn't happen, even though Rathenau was a minister on the board of the Ministry of Economic Development. Germany's economy was getting worse and worse, so a sung man had to run hard not to be pushed off the track. Nor was it a miracle when, at the end of August, Mr. Matthias Erzberger was shot to death by the Freikorps officers Tillessen and Schulz in the middle of the beautiful Black Forest in Baden. Certainly, there was great excitement, and Mr. Harden, Mr. Schwarzschild and Mr. Gerlach had the satisfaction of being able to point out that they had always been

had warned against letting the Freikorps people roam free. The public trembled. With a huge contingent of police, press, political parties, republican associations and Catholic organizations, a hunt was launched for the murderers and, as an aside, the soldiers' associations were also hunted down. Here one was arrested, there one was interrogated: the press had columns to report.

But a miracle did not happen. The German people did not of rising up on their own and beating down the other traitors with clubs.

When we met here and there, a few Freikorps people, we nodded to each other and rejoiced that we were still alive. And the fact that Erzberger died was a sign of life of the unbowed will to freedom of the sung activists of the ration. The activists went about their dangerous work alone. It was not true what even the bourgeois press obediently and unthinkingly regurgitated, that there were secret secret organizations that did nothing more than cast as to who was to die and who was to be the judge and executioner.

Oa's life soon resumed its usual course. At mostthe government men, who had a particularly guilty conscience, had the guards outside their houses doubled.

Before I embarked on an agricultural apprenticeship, I first wanted to get to know the ins and outs of agriculture. The agricultural college in Berlin seemed particularly suitable for this. Oa's Abitur was not required for enrollment, so I was accepted. I took a few subjects that seemed particularly interesting to me: Meteorology, botany, zoology, heredity, a practical course on Darwinism and Lamarckism, the cultural history of domestic animals and, above all, experimental physics. I also did a practical course at the veterinary college

on the diseases of domestic animals and a lesson on shoeing. That was quite enough for me to start with. However, I hadn't thought about a regular course of study, otherwise I would have had to choose the lectures with a view to a later exam. When I went to the bursar's office to pay my fees, a handsome young man with a green and gold ribbon around his chest and a green toil on his head approached me. He asked me politely if he could help me in any way, as I seemed be a stranger at the university. I could only confirm this and was glad to have found someone who knew the place, because the university reminded me so much of grammar school. The young man introduced himself as stuä. Eggert. We laughed at the similarity of our names and were soon in conversation. I soon learned that Eggert had been a soldier for a long time and that he was now studying agriculture after three years of training somewhere in Pomerania. After graduating, he wanted to become a livestock inspector.

I nodded in amazement, because I had never heard that there were livestock inspectors in the world and that you had to take a diploma exam to enter this rare profession.

When we parted company, I had an invitation to a pub run by the free fraternity Swebia in my hand.

At nine o'clock in the evening, I entered the small pub in Llsäjser Straße where the fraternity was meeting. About a dozen young men were seated around a long table. Most of them looked good, they were young and healthy. Some had fresh scratches on their faces and heads. The greeting was very solemn. The foxes at the lower end of the table in particular stood stock-still and held their caps at right angles over their stomachs. The foxes wore beautiful dark green pub jackets, the fox major had a magnificent fox tail at his toil, which gave him a little

comically solemn. He and the first student at the other end of the table had clubs in their hands with which they banged the table. In front of each student was a pint glass, and to the side was a commissary book.

Oa's picture somehow captivated me. I had read a lot about student goings-on in bourgeois novels. Walter Bloem's "The Crass Fox" had also fallen into my hands once, but for some reason I hadn't gotten past the first ten pages.

I was seated next to the first batch, entertained very attentively, drank to me incessantly and made that I was well entertained. As time went on, I was delighted to discover that despite their stiff and manners, the students were actually quite jolly and orderly fellows. Almost all of them had already the wind blowing around their noses, had been in the war, in all kinds of armed forces in Europe and the East, had changed professions, learned something here, found new inspiration there, and finally had stuck with farming. One interested in seed breeding, the other in animal husbandry, the third in dairy farming, the fourth wanted to become an agricultural teacher, the fifth wanted to go into the sugar industry, the sixth liked brewing, the seventh wanted to become a surveyor. All of them already had a fairly clear idea of the direction they wanted to take in life. They spoke of their future as something very certain, most of them were engaged and hoped to find a position that would enable them to marry immediately after their exams. I was a bit ashamed because I couldn't say clearly why I was studying and what my goals in life . I stammered something about wanting to go into the world one day, but for now I wanted to have a look around. The others took this to mean that I intended to go to the former German colonies one day and strongly advised me to do so,

to go to the colonial school in Wihenhausen for a few semesters after my final exams. I nodded devotedly and was glad that the questions about my future had fallen silent. What could I have said? I didn't even know what I was going to do next year, I was a complete mess inside and hoped that the Freikorps would be deployed somewhere on the border again as soon as possible. I only felt at home among soldiers, and as long as Germany was powerless and dishonorable, it seemed trivial and also cowardly to think about my own future. But I didn't want to tell the students that, perhaps they would have laughed at me. Politically, they were all staunchly national, most were German national, a few were nationalist and wore the swastika.

When I said goodbye, I promised to come back soon.

Eggert took care of me, he made life easier for me in the university, told me how to get certificates, which concessions, discounts and benefits I could claim on the basis of the student card and everything that with being a student. A short time later, I joined the fraternity and was now a fox. I wore the beautiful green jacket on pub evenings, made an effort to stand quite stiffly, gave the lads and the old men a light, opened the Kommersbücher and even sang the mostly very romantic songs. I only really enjoyed fencing. The lessons with the fencing master were a real pleasure for me, and I was also reasonably skillful, so that I was soon able to put the mask on my head and step in front of the fencing teacher. The first-year fencing teacher promised me that he would give me a test in the first semester if I kept up the good work. The fraternity held mensuras in a hall in Auguststraße. For this purpose, some free fraternities that were not affiliated with any of the big

old student weapons associations had formed a very loose fencing group. No mensur had yet taken place this semester. Like almost all student fraternities, Swebia also belonged to the Hochschulring Deutscher Art. Oer Hochschulring had its offices Mohstraße. Politically-minded students now met here several times a week for study groups. The spirit that prevailed in the Hochschulring was fresh and lively, and was even activist in matters of borderland politics. Many of the Hochschulring students were old Baltic citizens, Silesian fighters and putschists. The language was tough and clear, and the lectures that were given were on an astonishingly intellectual and ideological level. The student magazine "Deutsch-Akademische Stimmen" was also characterized by its superior viewpoint. I realized for the first time how incredibly important the intellectual mobilization that the Hochschul- ring was carrying out must be for the German struggle for freedom. Even the otherwise particularistic student associations realized this, for in the rooms of the simple rented house in Mohstraße, Freistudenten, Lorps students, fraternity members, Wingolfite countrymen, men who gave unconditional satisfaction, and enemies of satisfaction with weapons sat peacefully side by side and talked about questions that were more important, more urgent, more generally binding than the band and the effort. Now and then professors, well-known national and national politicians, old academics and men from practical life came to the evenings of the Hochschulring. I hardly ever missed one of these evenings, they meant too much to me.

It was an honorary duty for members of the Hochfchulring to join the Red Cross Technical Assistance. I was assigned to a department for special operations. A former member of the Corps, whom I met on one of the evenings, prompted me to join the particularly active "Verband national

of like-minded soldiers". My evenings were filled to the , and I experienced the gradual growth of a secret Germany that was struggling for shape and form. Hundreds of ideas and conceptions were alive, and many hundreds of minds and hearts were moving their own thoughts, but from the abundance of tensions the will to change, to overthrow, to real revolution grew ever clearer. But no one had yet come to us who had the gift of forging the sword from the will.

One Saturday morning, I saw the first mensur. The second ranked member of my fraternity was fighting against the second ranked member of a free fraternity. Both were good fencers and let their clubs fly at an astonishing speed. The clanking of the clubs, the dull clapping of the steel as it hit the thickly lined armbands, the shouting of the seconds, the inquiries to the referee, the barbaric appearance of the fencers, which was caused by the mensur glasses, the high neck bandage and the huge leather apron, the smell of carbolic acid and all sorts of medicines, the colorful students, the white-shirted doctors: All this together created a strangely impressive milieu and created an atmosphere that no one escape. As the blood trickled down the fencers' faces and the doctors examined their wounds, the students crowded in and gave more or less expert opinions. I recoiled in shock when I the length and depth of the wounds. One of the fencers, the compatriot, had received a gaping quarter from which bright red blood gushed like a fountain. His temporal artery was damaged. Nevertheless, he kept on fencing! I thought for a moment that in war such a wound was not without danger, for the heavy loss of blood must have been alarming if there was not a field hospital nearby.

It didn't take long for a bloody pool to form at the feet of the .

he atmosphere of this duel excited me tremendously. There was a certain education in courage and the strengthening of will and self-control. Opposite the fencers stood the federal bicycles, closely observing each phase of the fight. If one of the fencers had retracted his head or put his arm in front of his face at a seemingly dangerous moment, or even just remained in a defensive position without striking himself, he would have been taken away and a fine score would not have counted. A rebuff was only honorable if it was declared in consideration of the fencer's health, i.e. due to his injury.

Fourteen days later, I was bandaged up for my first mensur. My heart was pounding almost as loudly as it did on Annaberg when I walked into the fog with my shock troop.

My wrist was a bit banged up and hurt, but I hadn't wanted to step back at the last moment. A few meters away from me, my opponent was being bandaged up. He was a little taller than me and a little broader, a muscular guy who smiled at me in a friendly way before his mensur glasses were strapped on. I had to yawn heartily, not from tiredness but from excitement. All fencers yawn before the first sharp gait.

The thickly padded apron, which was wrapped around my chest and lower body as a shoe, was disgustingly sticky with half-curdled blood, and even the fresh blood of the last fencer was still stuck in the neck bandage. The high bandage was placed so tightly around my neck that at first I was afraid I wouldn't be to breathe. But the anxiety quickly disappeared, and I felt that the tight bandage gave my head a strong hold, it easier to keep still. The only thing that disgusted me was that the bandage stuck to my neck and smelled horribly of carbolic acid. The thick bandages made the arm very heavy, and the misshapen one,

The glove, secured with chain inserts, almost gave the impression that it was impossible to hold the bat in it. However, as the weapon was essentially balanced with the index finger and only clasped with the other fingers, I still had surprising mobility. Strapping on the was painful, I feared my skull would be blown apart, the straps were so tight. But the tighter the goggles fit, the less risk there is of them slipping during a gait exposing the eye to the bat. In addition, the congestion of the blood makes the head less sensitive and experience has shown that wounds do not bleed as much.

Wein Gegenpaukant finished bandaging at about the same time as me. We got up from our chairs and, led by the second and testant, who supported the fencing arm, we walked to the mensur.

A large square piece of roofing felt, sprinkled with sawdust, formed the battlefield. The blood of the previous fencers had dyed the sawdust dark red, and where the blood stood in small puddles, one of the derelict servants threw in a few handfuls of sawdust.

My effort was my head, and my second announced to the impartial judge that I would be taking the mensur. As by custom, I bowed briefly to the impartial referee, the opposite second and my opponent. Then I put my upper body forward measure the distance to my opponent.

Silentium for the Lhrengangl

My hand trembled as I raised my arm and crossed my racket with my opponent's.

Silentium for the first sharp gear!

My effort was torn from my head, I jerked my arm up and delivered my blows as I had learned them, quart, terz, hookyuart, deepyuart, terz. In between, I turned the bat well away so that I didn't expose my face.

And then I had to keep my arm high, otherwise the blows would have my head. My opponent fought quickly and elegantly, but he didn't hit very hard. I was amazed at how quickly a move was finished and the second was already in one piece. His skill consisted of inconspicuously catching at least the last blow or looking for a reason to fall in during the course when he saw that his man was completely sreilag and his opponent was about to strike. The first six rounds were bloodless. I was almost disappointed that so little came out of the fencing. In the seventh course there was a slap across my face and I felt a pain as if I had received a powerful blow with the rod. After the gait, I quietly asked the second if I didn't have a lump on my face. He just shook his head. I felt my unbandaged left hand suspiciously over my cheek. I only felt a hot swelling, no blood. So it was a flat one!

In the next corridor, I got a scratch on my forehead. I hadn't felt it at all and only found out from the second.

By now the initial excitement had faded, I could see exactly where I had to hit and felt completely safe between the neck bandage and goggles. After the fifteenth course there was a break. The bandages were tightened, the racket straightened and disinfected, and then the second gave good advice. My opponent had received a few minor scratches on head and nose. Now I had to a few powerful hooked quartets because, as my second had observed, he hadn't raised his arm high enough.

The counter-secondary had also noticed some of my shortcomings and whispered about them to his husband.

After the break, I hit two hooked quarts in the first gear and got away with one. An approximately ten-centimeter-long smear ran through my blond hair

of my opponent. I had struck with force, the blood was out brightly and the wound was gaping wide. I hardly noticed that the blood was also down my face. Gin's long tear ran across the left side of my forehead. It 't particularly deep, though, because my opponent hadn't put any force into his blows this time either.

Five gears later, I landed a quart that smashed through the opponent's temporalis and took a hefty bone splinter with it. Oie compatriot led off on Schmiß. Oie mensur was finished. I shook my opponent's hand, did the usual I bowed and had myself bandaged.

I was indescribably proud when I was congratulated from all sides. I had imagined that a mensur would be much more difficult and dangerous, but the serious game with the weapon had really gripped me and carried me away. My opponent was given eighteen pins, my crack was brushed with iodine and sprinkled with iodoform.

That evening, the beer tasted really good for the first time. Before the semester came to an end, I fenced again. This time I crammed, got five pins on fourths and two on thirds.

I had now put my nafes into the science of agriculture and was as clever as before! I was very interested in heredity, experimental physics and veterinary medicine, and the evenings at the home of the original Professor Hahn, who gave lectures at the college and university on the historical development of land use and on world views and land management, were extremely stimulating and lively, but how was I supposed to make a career out of it? I couldn't really study if I didn't have the Abitur. Even with my studies with Professor

Auhagen's knowledge financial and agricultural policy was of little use to me professionally.

But at least my visit to the university had the practical value of making me realize the unprecedented versatility and unique importance of agriculture.

So I was glad to get an apprenticeship in Mecklenburg through a distant relative who ran an agricultural and technical institute in Berlin. I quickly got dressed, mainly in overalls, breeches, long boots and rough shirts, and one evening I left Berlin to go to the Vogelfang manor near Lalendorf. It was a recognized, well-managed estate of just over two thousand acres of the best beet and wheat land, which now took me on as an apprentice farmer.

In Lalendorf, a grumpy but kind-hearted coachman had picked me up in a wagon intended for smaller cattle transports. The old man's Mecklenburg language seemed like a greeting from the world of Fritz Reuter. I sat there in a small room in the innkeeper's house, which was built at a respectful distance from the castle, and put my seven-fold in the primitive cupboard. Line cheeky mouse me from a corner. The panes of the small window were blind, one had a wide crack. Cobwebs hanging low from the ceiling that the new apprentice's room was of little interest to anyone. The kerosene lamp smoked and its bell had a large hole in the side. There was a tiny on the rickety washstand, and the bed, with its red checkered coverslooked like a clumsy coffin. I had to smile when I thought about how posh our maids lived at home.

I had just washed myself when the gong sounded from the castle. A white-gloved servant, to whom the blue

He met me at the kitchen entrance and led me up the back stairs to the dining room. The open staircase was for gentlemen, he explained. With that he had fully convinced me that the kitchen entrance was for me. I had to take my place at the lowest end of the table and wait until the gentlemen appeared. Until then, I had enough time to inspect the furnishings. It consisted of solid oak furniture without any taste of its own. The pewter compartments on the shelves were haphazardly arranged, the paintings were colorful mass-produced items. There was no sign of tradition. Surely a bourgeois family that had become rich not so long ago. I didn't care at all whether I was visiting princes or peasants. What mattered to me was finding open, friendly people with experience of the world who made it more or less bearable for me to find my way from Berlin to the countryside, which for me was more than just a way into a job, which for me meant entering a new world, the beginning of a completely new life.

Guided by the oiener, who held a lamp high above his head, the gentlemen, husband, wife and son finally appeared. The son looked the most sympathetic, unmistakably a former officer. The woman made a very self-confident, imperious impression. Oer husband looked like a friendly but harmless lord of a castle from Rormandy next to her. Oer thinning gag beard and the not particularly well-groomed spike beard emphasized the impression.

Oer Oiener pointed to me and called my name. I took a step forward and bowed. The woman graciously me her hand to kiss and was somewhat surprised when I limited myself to squeezing it gently. The man mumbled a few unintelligible words into his beard, which were supposed to be a greeting, and the son squeezed my hand heartily.

Oa's supper consisted of fried potatoes, white cheese, bread and sausage and passed almost in silence. I noted matter-of-factly from the peculiar clatter that both husband and wife wore false teeth. After the meal, which lasted less than ten minutes, I was allowed to follow them into the living room. Oa's not very large, but disproportionately high room was brimming with bourgeois comfort. Embroidered cushions lay on the sofa and armchairs. Pictures of the emperor and the last grand duke hung on the wall between antlers and horns. In one corner stood a trustworthy and extensive safe, and one wall of the room was filled with a bookshelf mainly reference books.

A conversation did not want to flow. I readily gave information about my family and couldn't help smiling when I noticed how my husband and wife shook their heads disapprovingly at my background. They must have thought I was a dangerous adventurer who had come to spy out an opportunity to plunder the estate with his cronies. Oh God sa, what did the bourgeois people know about the battle that was still being fought for Germany today. They had sat on their estate throughout the war, had never felt need, were perhaps annoyed that the forced economy deprived them of the opportunity to calculate even more freely and advantageously, had known only one real concern, namely that for their sons, who were their duty as officers outside. They certainly saw the revolution of 1918 as a great misfortune, a stroke of fate or as the providence of the inscrutable but always just God, and now hoped that conditions in Germany would soon be stable again and that agriculture would become more profitable. Incidentally, they were against hail and fire!

I must have seemed to them like an uprooted existence, blown here today, there tomorrow, just as it was

the whim or chance would have it. They could not have known in the tranquil peace of their enclosed lives that the great restlessness, the instability, which was already revealed in my gaze, outgrowth of longing, of the great, agonizing foreboding of coming battles.

Perhaps they thought I was some kind of national Spartacist, because the man suddenly asked, looking at me sharply, whether Berlin wasn't bright red without exception. I shook my head and asked if it was true that there still agrarian slaveholders in the country like the Pomuchelskopp so well described by Reuter. The man indignantly rejected such backwoods views on rural life. Don fetzt ab he distrusted me even more.

Oer son blinked his eyes. But Lr didn't seem to have the slightest desire to join in the conversation. He certainly didn't want to anger his parents.

Before I was graciously dismissed to my chamber I was allowed to take an exam to see if I was suitable to read books and newspapers aloud. Unfortunately, I failed the test, so when I was finally able to say goodbye, I was asked to read aloud every evening. The only newspaper available was the Deutsche Tageszeitung, but it was the very best. And I was currently reading an old man's memoirs of his youth. I fell asleep with a heavy heart.

I worked like a farmhand, except that I earned nothing for it. The pension price I paid was not high, though.

I up around three and a half o'clock in the morning. First I unlocked the feed room, had the grooms take oats and bean meal and then went over to the cowshed. There I learned to milk. Oer Schweizer didn't me for some reason, perhaps because

He was a Social Democrat and still hoped that one day he would become a dairy director for his merits in the contribution stamp business. I didn't care at all whether the Swiss hated or loved me, I was only embarrassed by his hatred when he didn't teach me how to milk a pious, experienced and therefore calm and easy-milking cow, but chose a very sensitive and energetic young cow for this purpose, who gave me painful blows with her tail and foot. Oie milk, which I managed to get after much effort using good words, a lot of cunning and a little violence, I had to regularly pour into the manure as unusable in the end. The Swiss man sneered and said that anyone who knew how to milk a heavy-milking cow properly could easily compete with any normal-milking cow.

Well, I learned how to milk! I even learned quickly, because I wanted to earn the respect of the Swiss. After a fortnight he was able to instruct me to milk every cow, I them according to the instructions and the bucket was clean when I poured out the snowy milk.

We had black and white herdbook cattle, an excellent Raffe, which produced strong calves and gave a lot of good milk. We used beet pulp to ensure that the dairy had to produce special percentages for the high fat content.

I switched from the cowshed to the sheepfold. We had round baptized sheep, Merino meat and wool sheep. Their wool was in great demand at auctions and was in no way inferior to Vietgester wool, the best sheep breed in Mecklenburg. Oer Schäfer was an original, a limping, sly rogue, a slus-ear, as they say in Mecklenburg. He was called Lang- paap and was very proud of his name, and nothing could make him so angry as when the day laborers said Lang- pup to him. I learned how to wash and shear sheep, how to herd them and how to protect them from death.

liver fluke. Above all, I also learned that when a lamb falls, it is never the shepherd's lamb! Like all shepherds, Langpaap had secretly become a wealthy man. Quite in contrast to his brother, who was in charge of the pig farm. Lr didn't like to be called a shepherd, he was more, he was a pig farmer and knew something about his Zach. He had once attended a course in Ruhlsdorf and had pushed so hard that instead of the German Edelschwein, the refined German Landschwein was bred in Vogelfang, and bred with great success, so that buyers came from far and wide to buy piglets.

I kept my eyes open and learned and enjoyed learning. And I had so much to relearn, to absorb intellectually what the smallest day laborer boy already knew without anyone having to teach him. I found a loyal friend in old Teddg Wachtel, a veteran of 1864, 1866, 1870/71, who had only one great sorrow, that he was not allowed to go into the field in 1914. Teddg Wachtel was a humorous fellow who would spit in the rye, barley or wheat when he had to stir the grain in his granary before he made his opinion known. Teddg Wachtel was always right. What he said, he said, and he took nothing back. Even his husband and wife were powerless when he put on a fine head and defied them. With Teddg Wachtel I not only learned to recognize the types of grain, how to use the rummy and the big sieve, how to handle the handcart, how to fill the bushel properly and how to load a two-ton sack on my shoulder so that it didn't knock me to the ground, but above all I learned from him how to speak the proper dialect and how to understand Mecklenburg legends, stories and whispers. I owe it to him that I became and remained half Mecklenburger in my heart. When, after

I had learned enough on his corn floor, and shared his last priem with him, he gave me the golden words to take with me on my way: "You are still a young child, you can still make a difference, but remember, the world is a big mess and the people are all different, only the soldier 1s a miner.

I was assigned to the governor, a gnarled codger who had been on the farm for forty years and had started out as a young "horse". His name was Möller. He was hard on me and gave me nothing. I had to scatter manure, mix dusty artificial fertilizer, plant beets and pull them up, dig and dig potatoes, work seed grain with Aspulun, hoe and rake, weed and turn until my back was stiff and my hands were torn open. If you want to supervise farmhands, you have to know what farmhands can do! Oas was his scolding word when he reprimanded me and his when he wanted to praise me. I learned how to ploughs to the right depth, how to operate the oampf plough, the tractor and the threshing machine, how to drain wet meadows, when to apply lime as top dressing, when to use ammonia and when to use potash or Chile saltpetre and when to use Thomas flour. I learned from him that Vogelfang worked with crop rotation. We had the crop rotation: wheat, sugar beet, oats, rye, meslin, clover and fallow. And that the crop rotation was chosen so that the soil was not depleted and tired so quickly by the alternation of nitrogen collectors and nitrogen consumers. And that stable manure is still the best for the soil, that all artificial fertilizers cannot counteract it. Möller could and swear foul-mouthedly, but underneath his rough exterior he had a childlike soft heart that took pity on the animals in particular. With his

He would whack me with a knotted stick if he saw that an animal had been tortured through ignorance or malice. I also learned from him how to grease wagons and turn box wagons into ladder wagons, how to give a cow a trocar, and how to help a horse out of its stall by wrapping it in vinegar-soaked clay. Some evenings Möller sat in my room, drank from my köhmbuddel and smoked my cheap pot. I had to tell him about Germany, and he told me in his awkward and ponderous way about the country, about the hard life of the day laborers and farmhands, about the arbitrariness of some agrarians and about the decency and loyalty of the poor man. Sometimes I thought that Möller, as he was today, could well have marched under the black Bundschuh flag back then. A rebellious farmer who fought in fierce anger against the oppressors of his free clod. Today Möller was no longer a spokesman for the farmers, today he was the governor who obediently ensured that day laborers remained day laborers. Once I asked him if he wouldn't prefer to become a farmer. He looked at me, almost startled. Farmer? Fa, dear God, where would the land come from? I told him that I believed that not all the large manors would be profitable, that in a future state one or would probably have to be reduced in size in order to them into profitable farms, and that the Baltic people had also fought for Germany to have farms in the east. Möller shook his head in bewilderment. He couldn't believe that a day laborer or even a governor would ever get a farm.

Good Möller, just because you and your brothers are so decent, so were selflessly decent and honest, agrarians could hold on to a piece of land that they often did not understand, often did not even love, which they had once acquired through some favorable speculation for a sandwich, an apple and a li.

Spring had come. Spring in the countryside. A spring with real violets and catkins, with larks and scents and an inexplicable buzz in the air. Oa's breathing became heavy in the abundance of fragrant life. I already knew how a day begins, how it slowly sends a dark red of the still hidden sun through the fog as its first messenger and how it then, gradually becoming brighter, lets the dew glisten, how it then draws up the wafts of fog like a curtain until the sun rises, greeted by the first chirping of the early birds. A warm breeze met me as I walked through the stables, and the neighing of the horses told me that they too were welcoming the spring day. I had recently got four horses, a team. In Mecklenburg and wherever the ground is particularly heavy, two horses are not enough to pull the heavy wagon across the field, especially when the ground is soft and clayey. The melting snow had covered the fields with a thick slurry, it difficult for man and horse to get the carts out. But the spring wind had made the topsoil drier so that we could begin to pull out the plows.

When I held the plow in my hand for the first time and broke up clods, I had realized that the field was alive, that it was in fermentation, in a swelling movement, that it was breathing, that it was steaming. I understood that this knowledge must make the right farmer reverent, and that a right farmer must love this field as if it were the blood of his own blood. But I also felt that only the possession of the , of the farm, could make the farmer a master and bind him to the soil with a love like that of a father his child, or rather like that of a child to its mother. But there is a peculiar relationship between the farmer and his land. The farmer is master of the land, but is subject to its laws. He forces the soil under his command, under the command of his labor, but the soil

works again according to its own, a greater law, which is also alive and demanding in the blood of the farmer. Oer servant does not have this relationship to the clod, nor can he have it at all. He can love and respect it, but that is all. Only the farmer, who can hand the plow and the reins to his son in the knowledge that he himself must measure the path from sowing to harvest, but that when it has borne fruit, new seed will sprout in the new spring, can hold a dialogue with the field. Every spring of the field is a new beginning of the family! This is known only to the farmer who remains on the field to bequeath it to his blood. Oer servant does not know that. He can move on and be happy. Oer farmer cannot move on because he cannot tear his heart from the clod.

I learned to understand this secret when I broke the clods with the plough for the first time and realized that the field was alive!

Oer spring is different in the country than in the city. It is more powerful and casts a spell over all of life, forcing people to set out with a fine heart. I understood why even the oldest farmhand whistled or hummed when he plowed in spring, and why the youngest farmhands sang with a bright voice. It was whistling, humming, singing, cracking the whip when we pulled the furrows in the field with ten or twelve plows, and the horses neighed and tossed their heads so that it was not always easy to keep the hand horse in the furrow.

This spring I have just experienced what it means to breathe! To take in the spicy, almost numbing air, the bitter smell of the steaming earth and thus some of the power of the eternal field.

Oas was not a romantic feeling that seizes city dwellers when they confuse a shepherd's idyll with farming. Rather, Oas was the experience of life itself.

The country looked unbelievably beautiful, a single part of which I saw this spring. Half hidden between tall trees, the white walls of Schliefsenberg Castle shone in the distance, rising from a hill above the flat, only slightly undulating land. Small groups of bushes repeatedly interrupted the undulations of the fertile land, and ponds and small lakes opened up where the hollows were deepest.

I felt that owning a piece of this land was a goal worth experiencing and fighting for. But how was I supposed to a farmer?

I realized how poor we city dwellers are and how hollow the education is, which no longer knows anything of true values. For countless generations, the bearers of my name have been teachers and pastors, but they always and forever took their wives from the countryside, and through contact with the living field, the bloodsteel that I carry in me from the farmer began to speak and demand.

This spring I was more restless than ever, more aimless than before, as one goal seemed unattainable. Should I up money to buy a farm here somewhere? Ridiculous thought! What was I supposed to save from? I had realized that I was not suited to be an inspector. And earning enough money in another profession to become a farmer seemed even more hopeless. The world where you could earn money was full of noblemen and angels who would make sure that a guy like me stayed outside. Or should I marry into a court? The very thought of it was disgusting to me. Using a marriage to gain possession of my own farm was more than an ordinary deception, it was an unparalleled betrayal of the soul that I couldn't have endured for a week. Here and there, when a dance was organized by the warriors' association in a neighbouring

village, danced with peasant girls. There were beautiful, healthy, lively girls among them, of course, for the Mecklenburgers are a beautiful and healthy race in general, but there was no girl among them with whom I could have lived together for a lifetime. I had read Nietzsche too closely, and his admonition that one should choose a woman from the point of view that one could converse with her was always present. When I married, I did not want to be the master of my wife, as is usually said, but my wife should also be the companion of my thoughts and longings, my hopes and disappointments. And from this point of view, I did not find a girl in the small farming villages, the few that the big agrarians had left standing at all. Looking around among the daughters of the landowners was a ridiculous thought. I was not at all socially acceptable, an immigrant agricultural apprentice who, despite his youth, had already led a very adventurous, almost forbidden adventurous life.

Precisely because I was consciously experiencing spring in the country, I that my stay here could not be much longer.

During the short breaks in which I ate my very meagre breakfast with the farmhands, we talked about heaven and earth, about work, justice and ingratitude. The Mecklenburg farm workers are a tough lot, they know only work and no pleasure. They live in low cottages, most of which are not particularly light and airy, and although both husband and wife work on the estate from morning to night, they also have to provide a farmhand, a halfway house between a boy and a farmhand, and in addition to some hard they receive food in the form of grain, potatoes and wood and a few rods of arable land. This farmland is cultivated by fle,

when they are dead tired from work or on Sunday, which is supposed to be a holiday and should be kept holy. Rarely does an owner allow the day laborers to keep a cow. But everyone has a pig or two in the barn. If someone keeps a few geese, he usually has to give a percentage of them to the owner, who has the geese herded in return.

The conditions under which the men, women and children live there are difficult! But way I got to know them made a deep impression on me. Just as clean and decent as the cottages were the poor people, the Mecklenburg farm workers, who were among the bravest soldiers of the valiant German army when Germany called. Many of the farmhands the Iron Cross 1st Class in their chests and were too modest to pin it on their frock coats on the few holidays they were not working but an important family celebration. But no cottage was without a picture of the husband or son as a soldier. I never met a man or woman there who struggled with their fate. They did their duty and hoped that their children would have the of it. By the best, however, they meant that the boy might one day become a borknecht or even a governor, and the daughter, yes, she might one day be able to marry into better circumstances. Perhaps a gardener, a shepherd, a manorial servant or coachman might take liking to her. It was a great stroke of luck if the daughter was taken to the castle as a housemaid, or if the boy was whisked away from the crowd of courtiers to the stables, the stable or even the garden. The farm laborer had to be of a versatility that the city dweller cannot imagine. A farm laborer

must be able to sow and mow, he must be able to shred potatoes and turnips, bind sheaves, thresh grain, he must be able to do everything that can be done on the land.

We often talked, the workers and I, as we lay on the grass and savored our break from work. They opened their eyes when I talked about the fact that one day the most capable and honest would have to get their own land, because I soon realized that the solution to the burning farm worker question was closely to the extent to which it would be possible to give the farm worker a piece of land so that he could have a home. Most of them, of course, shook their heads in disbelief and said that I was telling fairy tales, .beautiful fairy tales, because in reality, no star thalers fell from the sky, and in reality, justice did not descend to earth. But the boys came to me more than once in the evening and begged me not to forget them later, when I had the power to do so. Because they believed I would have power one day.

On Sundays, I sometimes went to the forest with the young people, a few farmhands and a couple of maids. There we sat down under the high stones that perhaps covered a barrow, and I told them about Germany or read them something from Löns' Werewolf, or I told them some poems that I had secretly composed and now passed off as the work of some poets who were certainly unknown to them. Once they had overcome their shyness, the girls sang the beautiful, simple Mecklenburg Low German songs and even dared to dance an old Neigen, albeit only very rarely.

Sometimes I went out into the field at dusk and sat down on a stone or a tree stump and looked into the blue expanse, into the distance, which lured me so strongly that I would have loved to howl and run away into the unknown.

At the castle they didn't like the fact that I spent so much time with the workers. I was very much mistrusted after I had once expressed my very unsolicited opinion in my short-tempered manner when, as so often, I had complained with moving words about the agricultural laborers' question, which was growing more and more into a plague of agricultural workers. It was not my style to talk at anyone's mouth, and it was even less my style to remain silent when I heard or saw what was right. It didn't matter to me at all whether the right came from not wanting to understand or not being able to understand, from a deaf, a foolish or a hardened heart.

I had made myself quite unpopular in the castle. Not because I wasn't hard-working enough. No, I quickly grasped the work and enjoyed it. Nor was because I was lazy, I worked alone outside many a Sunday, especially during the hay harvest or when the sheaves were outside, because if the workers had gone out, I would have had to be paid for overtime. I was also modest in Estonian and didn't grumble about the fact that brown bread, butter and syrup were very scarce. But there was something in my nature that man and woman in the castle did not like, something that seemed dangerous, provocative and irreverent to them. Perhaps it was because I did not say "yes" to everything that appeared as a condition, but that I made an effort to get to the bottom of the phenomena in order to recognize the causes of Abel's illness. The tensions began when I was reading the bordeaux. Oie Deutsche Tageszeitung was far from covering everything that was happening in the world; on the contrary, it skillfully selected some things that defended yesterday and concealed tomorrow, and it often emphasized, not unskillfully, what was pleasing to the landowner's eye. A popular read

and the spoken word was: "Agriculture must be helped!" But not every farmer wanted to hear that agriculture in dire need of reflecting on itself and looking over the church spire of its own village to the great suffering Germany and there were many a farmer, especially among the large landowners, who liked to insist on fine old rights without wanting to hear anything about the demanding and compelling duty. There were many who lamented the terrible times, but without mustering the serious and hard will to contribute to the improvement of the times. At that time, agriculture was far better off than the rest of the great German nation, because food prices were rising very high and farmers did not have to about whether they could sell their supplies on the market. In the German Reich, however, many people no longer knew whether they had enough money to buy enough supplies to satisfy their own hunger and, more worryingly, that of their wives and children. Oer Reichskanzler Wirth, the pious centrist, had started the food supply policy. It was entirely in keeping with his character, for he sweetened on the words of the Bible that the God revealed there and revealing himself chastens those whom he loves. And the final wisdom of the so very devout chancellor was that one had to resign humbly to this state, as given from God's hand. Translated from the language of religion into that of politics, this meant nothing other than to fulfill its price. He hoped for the mercy of his God, in whose hands it lay to turn the evil around, and next to that the perhaps still dawning insight of the enemy, who would one day have to recognize that Germany was doing more than it could actually achieve through its policy of filling the void. Such a convinced opponent would then realize that all the peace dictates, reparations and other chicanery he had concocted was vain! Wirth and

his comrades and filled mutlg wilker, while emptying Germany of all substance in the process.

The castle was certainly hostile to the Grfüllungspolittk and her pious father, and the newspaper did its part to point out the dangers that were becoming increasingly apparent as a result of this indulgence. But they did not see and did not want to see that a change could only be brought about by a revolution of the soldiers. They the past and hoped that, as if by a miracle from heaven it could become the present again. In order to realize these hopes, however, people confidently turned to the Oeutschnationale Volkspartei, whose programme largely took yesterday into account. The people in the castle shook their heads angrily at me for pretending to be national without wanting to my political thoughts around yesterday and the Oeutschnationale Volkspartei. And I, on the other hand, was young and mischievous enough to insert a few remarks now and then when reading aloud that didn't fit into the text at all. I secretly hoped to be relieved of the office of reader, but in this I had built on sand, for the other candidates for the reading, the teacher, the landlady and the woman of the house, could not call such a sleep-inducing voice their own as I could.

Just this spring, the Reparations Commission had determined that Germany would have to pay 750 million gold in cash and 1450 million gold in kind for the year 1922. Agriculture suffered less from this than the rest of the German people, because government also made use of the stocks of cattle and grain that agriculture possessed, without confiscating and expropriating these stocks outright.

The mark sank lower and lower, and it turned out that above all the mineral resources, the grain and all foodstuffs were stable in value. For a hundredweight of wheat you could buy

The farmers were able to buy a lot of things that had cost many times more before the devaluation of money. It was grotesque to see how, for just a few sacks of grain, a few wagonloads of potatoes or turnips, objects that would have been better left in the city up in farmers' homes. Old, splendid farm chests were chopped up or taken to the stables to make way for tastelessly veneered kitsch furniture. Farmers bought two pianos without even one of the family knowing how to play the piano. But it was considered modern, urban and educated to have a piano. The city dwellers only had one, so the farmer could afford two? The unsightly fashion of the city came to the country, and the peasant girls wanted to wear silk stockings even in the cowshed.

The word inflation appeared for the first time. A terrible term that devalued substance in favor of appearance. It is regrettable that some farmers were not ashamed to make money from the inflation that plunged the majority of the population into misery.

I hoped to be able to send some food to my parents in Berlin to help them, who had become very embarrassed by the devaluation. Ole Frau des Schlosses refused to let me have even a small amount of the supplies. When I bluntly her what I thought, I was punished by having my supper sent to my room. I was happy not to have to read and went late to the day laborers, who gladly gave me a sausage, a side of bacon and an almond of eggs.

My relationship with the castle, which had already severely damaged when I refused to act as a beater and chase the deer in front of neighbors during the winter hunt, was completely clouded when I confronted the man of the castle, who had taken me to task for the disagreement I had had with his wife.

gave a not very friendly lecture on the plight of the people and the egotistical stubbornness of some of the rich people.

Things looked bad in Germany, but the government didn't think about stopping the avalanche of inflation. The ghouls of the economic battlefield came from America and bought Germany out. Irreplaceable valuables, works of art and goods were dragged away for just a few dollars, and the Germans became accustomed to living from hand to mouth. Those who their hands on as much as possible today and had to live well in order to acquire as much as possible tomorrow considered clever. It seemed self-evident in the race for pleasure, character was just a ballast to be thrown away if possible. I went to Berlin in the Wat to fence twice in a row for the association, which was currently engaged in a bitter dispute with another, in which all the fencers on both sides were called up. And since I was considered a good fencer, I was given the honor of fencing twice in a row. I arrived in Berlin three days before the competition in order to practise in a hurry. It went better than expected, and when I stepped onto the board on Saturday, I felt more confident than ever. I was lucky in the first round, in the seventh round I knocked a palm-sized flap out of my opponent's scalp, so that the rebuff was declared. A blow had split my left nostril and I got away with a pin. At the second round, which took place about three hours later, I was taken away because frontal artery had been cut so that the blood gushed out in a wide arc.

That evening I sat in the pub and was shocked to see that inflation had completely taken hold of the minds of the otherwise cheerful and honest students. The most respectable of them had gone to the bank and were earning their daily money in an irreproachable way. The others tried to connections with racketeering circles and traded in

whole shiploads of goods that they had never seen, that they didn't even know were actually there. And they were still very much in the merchant's spirit, dressed over-fashionably and threw the money out with full hands, because tomorrow it would be worth nothing. I fumbled with my green farmer's soup and my very shabby pants among the people whose language I didn't understand. I drank my cheap beer, which I could just about pay for, and refused the champagne that some of today's rich people had generously ordered. And when the others urged me to leave to go to a bar to which they had ordered some "fabulous women", I strolled to the Stetln train station and shuffled into the waiting room to the next train to Mecklenburg. My head ached badly, the bikes were making themselves felt, and the heavy loss of blood made me feel sick and weak. At the station I bought a newspaper and read a long article about the Rapallo Treaty that Minister Rathenau had concluded with the Soviet Union. The newspaper praised this treaty as the dawn of a new economic era. So Rathenau the savior in the red I spat out. What if this cursed Berlin was behind me?

I had not gone to see my parents for fear of frightening them. And when I saw bandaged head and pale face in the mirror, I was satisfied that they didn't need to see me.

Ekelhaftl Oa were such decent young lads who were always ready to lay down their lives for honor. And now, when the general sell-out of Germany was in full swing, they fell in with the assassins without giving any account of it. It was just as well that not everyone acted in this way. There were certainly enough young in the big city who would rather go hungry than join the racketeers and inflation profiteers.

Maybe I was lucky, I was sitting in the countryside, far away from the action, had food and drink and a roof over my head and didn't need anything else. Who knows where and how I would earn my money today if I were in Berlin, it my mind. I shook myself. No, I would be one of the starving.

A few days later, the wound started to fester. I went to Güstrow and had it treated by a doctor. The man at the castle was furious, he thought it was irresponsible of me to put my labor, which actually belonged to him, at risk in such an irresponsible way. One word led to another, and the tragic conclusion of the clash was that I packed my bags with a bang, said an emotional farewell to the day laborers, Teddg Wachtel, Möller, Langpaap and a few other friends, and drove back to Berlin. My report card said that I had always been hard-working, loyal and willing to work, that I was a good housemate, and that if I learned a lot more, I could become a good farmer one day!

I had to laugh out loud. Oa's testimony was as empty as the people on the ravine themselves. What a pity, the beautiful estate! I liked it for its workers, for its boys and girls, for its horses, for its forest and for its lonely places where I had dreamed away into the distance. Once more I looked out of the window. Over there it was, the sheep were grazing on the fallow as usual, and the cows and foals were grazing in the large paddock. Perhaps there would soon be a new apprentice, a humbler one than me, someone who talked to people, who could do the driving. Right, yes, rich people who lived by their whims could keep their drivers. In the country and in the city, was a pity there so many drivers. I realized that the beaters and the hunted should stand together against those for whom life was nothing but a hunt for ever more delightful pleasures.

Beautiful Mecklenburg, it went through my mind, you are a truly blessed land with your fertile fields, with your countless lakes and your deep forests, but your poor people will come to Germany faster than the rich, who mean well, but mean of all with themselves!

2?My parents were horrified when I walked into the house unannounced. And how I looked! But my forehead had a deep, blood-red scar, my face still looked pale, and my half-rural, half-urban suit made me look even more adventurous than already was. They would probably have preferred to me the door, because the reception was anything but warm.

Father looked at me angrily: "You can't walk around Berlin dressed like that, you'll embarrass yourself and all of us."

I had no objection to being bought a new suit. Bater handed me a wad of banknotes and, venting his anger in a long monologue, began to ask about my future.

I looked at him for a long time. -You don't have worry about me, I'll go my own way."

Bater roared: -I don't really know what will become of you. You slap one boss and insult the other. I see a bleak future for you!"

His dark suspicions came true more quickly than he had probably feared. Because the next afternoon, before could even buy the suit I so urgently needed, was already behind bars.

I paced back and forth in my cramped, smelly cell and still 't fast how I'd gotten in here. I read the stupid house rules for the hundredth time,

and for the hundredth time I rummaged through the shelf, picked up the black-bound Bible, moved to the "cell" bucket and banged my foot against the water jug. Damn mess, that's all I needed. My parents would be so happy!

For the hundredth time, I let the events pass me by. I closed my eyes and saw everything clearly:

It was June 24th. I had walked through the Tiergarten to buy a new suit in one of the clothing stores. I walked through the Brandenburg Gate, and now I was on Unter den Linden. The red tower of the even redder Berlin City Hall was already shining far to my right. Over there was Wtlhelmstraße, where the men I hated ruled. There was a lot of shouting on the street, I could hear Ramen Rathenau from time to time. Newspaper sellers called him out. What could it be, maybe he had made a new pact. As far as I knew, the Negro republic of Liberia had never had a close pact with the German republic. Surely the Negroes rejected that too, because they had become a Negro state in order to become free, and Germany was a slave state, suddenly my eyes fell on an advertising pillar.

Golly! My heart stopped! Oa it was written in black and white: Rathenau murdered!

I ran across the street in large columns. The letters danced before my eyes. With difficulty I deciphered that this morning Minister Rathenau had been shot from another car as he was to the Foreign Office. He or the perpetrators had escaped!

My first thought was of the perpetrators. Hopefully they really had escaped. They had killed the biggest fuden, the most dangerous villain. The whole world would join in the hunt for them. I searched my memory. I wondered if it an acquaintance of mine who had fired the fatal shot.

had delivered? And whether the circles behind this act had emerged from the Freikorps? What a pity that the shelter in Herderstrasse no longer existed. If it had, I would been there and perhaps had a share in this determined action.

My mind was whirling. Oh God, if the Anterstand had still been there, I would never have become a farmer, I wouldn't have gotten to know beautiful Mecklenburg, but I would have remained connected to the secret Germany that kept reaching for the masses to fight for freedom. I felt like a deserter. What was the connection with their mensuras! Here, lonely fellows had once again taken to the redoubt, had no doubt spent long nights preparing the deed while other young men were drinking champagne and pulling women onto their laps, and I had lived peacefully in Mecklenburg all those weeks, had milked cows, warbled sweet nothings in the woods and wasted my time with foolish chatter. But here men had acted. Now they were wandering around somewhere, pursued, hounded, perhaps already a race against death. At best, I had to prove that I hadn't sunk to my knees in front of the sack of grain. But that was no merit!

People crowded next to me. Men and women. Most of them said nothing, shaking their heads. A few murmured reproachful or frightened words, suddenly an excited, fat voice struck my ear: -These wretched murderers, these swastika thugs, these bloodhounds! Rathenau was the most capable head of the entire government, now Germany is completely ruined, now we all have to go to the begging stick!

I turned around and looked into a spongy, cowardly face that might have belonged to some shifter. If it had another Jew, I could have understood that he was whining about the head Jew. But it was a German! A boundless rage rose up in me and I shouted at him:

You idiot! You should thank the man who shot this most dangerous Jew. What do you know about honor and freedom, you whistle face! Don't you dare to insult men again, you bogeyman!"

Oa's cowardly face gasped: "You want to defend the murderers? You... . You . .."

He didn't get any further. My fist smacked him in the face, once, twice. I felt other people's fists hitting me. I flailed around blindly. Again and again. My heart felt lighter as I punched, as if I could up for having lived peacefully in solitude for so long.

All of a sudden a sinewy, older man stood in front of me and raised his hand: "You're under arrest!"

I punched him, received a few blows and hit my face on the stones. The next moment my hands were tied. Oie bells glanced in metallically. Oann I was grabbed, lifted and thrown into a car. I could still hear people screaming in the street. Perhaps they thought one of the fiends had been caught.

I wasn't taken to Alexanderplah, but to Moabit. In front of the cell, an officer untied my hands, grabbed me by the back of the neck and pushed me in the back so that I the wall with my heels.

I had been pacing and forth in the cell for hours. The scar on my forehead had broken open, I didn't know whether it had been caused by the fight or earlier when I my head against the wall. Oa's blood was trickling. Oa's was good, so the Hops was free. I let the blood run, the cell might have stains on the floor for a while, maybe the felon who would occupy it after me would get a fright.

Gradually I calmed down and sat down on the cot. Did the police really believe that I was involved in the assassination? The police couldn't be that stupid,

because someone who shoots a huge Jewish minister over the Hansen also has ways of escaping, at least he doesn't start a brawl in the middle of the city. After all, there were more comfortable ways of committing suicide.

I had to wait 24 hours before I was brought before the examining magistrate. Oa's interrogation was very short. I couldn't have been involved in the crime. After all, they kept me there for another four days. Probably as a reward for punching a criminal police officer in the face when I was arrested.

I had enough time to clean the blood off my clothes and my foppe. When I was free again, I continued on my way to the clothes store. But my money was hardly worth anything. In the meantime, the exchange rate of the mark had fallen so low that I could barely buy a cheap tie. My old tie had been destroyed in the brawl.

^During my imprisonment, my father out all the stops to get me a position as soon as possible. It didn't seem particularly advantageous to him if I stayed in Berlin for any length of time. He thought it would only cause new inconveniences for me and a series of unbearable upsets for himself. In fact, he managed to get me to stay at the Giesensdorf Oominium in Riederlausih.

On i7. Füll, the two brave men who, as avengers in the ram of secret Germany, their guns at Walther Rathenau, Fifcher and Kern, died a lonely and brave death in the converted tower of the Saaleck ruins, which a German man, Dr. Stein, who had often given refuge to scattered German activists, made available to them.

In total, a reward of over 4 million marks had been placed on her head.

After a long chase, the police had tracked down the men, who had only lost their safe escape from the pursuers through an unfortunate mistake. Kern was fatally wounded by a chance shot from the wild shootout that the police officers had opened on the tower. Fischer, after carefully covering his dead comrade's eyes, gave himself a hero's death.

Beer days later, however, the government of the pious Mr. Wirth passed the law on the shoe of the German Republic, which permitted everything that served to destroy the growth of the secret empire and forbade everything that was likely to arouse feelings for law, honor, freedom and justice. Now a hunt began for the entire national and ethnic movement. The swastika was persecuted as a badge of murderers and bandits.

Wherever the henchmen of the Weimar state sensed upright men, they did not rest until they had arrested and charged them with preparation for high treason. And there were always judges, right up to the Imperial Court, who gave in to the government's insistence and brave soldiers into prison. -

The flag of secret Germany was taken down, but not struck down in front of the enemy;

The state banned our old fighting leagues. We founded new ones until they too were banned. We joined sports clubs or founded our own. But here, too, we were tracked down. Betrayal flourished. They confiscated our badges, carried out house searches, snooped for lifts and used these means to work into the hands of the Inter-Allied Commission.

Only deu Geist could not be confiscated. Oer was also not recognizable by badges.

^)n Giesensdorf the conditions were completely different from those in Mecklenburg. Even in terms of the landscape. Mecklenburg with its wealth had given me the impression of a safe and secure country. But Riederlauflh, at least where the estate was located, was poor soil, belonging to class five to eight. It was jokingly said that when the wind blew, the field was in the air. The poor soil potatoes, rye and oats. The cultivation of the soil was easier than in Mecklenburg, but the yield was low. Dry pine forests covered much of the land, and the lakes were smaller and, as it seemed to me, also somewhat swampier. The people were not as broad and massive, nor as proud and harsh as in Mecklenburg, but smaller and more agile, more adaptable and compliant. There was more finery than in and more dark hair. Nowhere in Mecklenburg did I see cows harnessed to the plow, in Lower Lusatia the small farmers plowed exclusively with cows. But these people were also hard-working and undemanding. While I had come to know Mecklenburg as a land of large estates, I found farm after farm in Niederlauflh. The villages were spacious there was a well-kept garden in front of every farm, however small it .

Giesensdorf was a stately manor belonging to a well-known Berlin furniture mover. He had bought the once completely neglected estate for little money and brought it back to its former glory with great love by his managers. When I moved in, the estate was exemplary in its management, buildings and stables. The administrator a former lieutenant who had grown into farming

and was prudent enough not to a mistake a second time.

Since the owner no longer cared too much about the economy as the estate was profitable, it was a real pleasure to live on the farm. We could try out this and that to our heart's content, which a narrow-minded owner would never allow. I was able to pass on the experience I had at Vogelfänger Viehzucht in the form of suggestions, was able to have a say here and there and was regarded as a volunteer manager much more than I had been as an apprentice at Vogelsang. Wein's room in the Kavalierhaus was large and bright and furnished with beautiful furniture. I was allowed to have a small orahthaarfox as my constant companion, I was allowed to ride horses and take on certain with my own responsibility. After a few days, I had settled in completely. Oer Administrator was secretly engaged to the landlady, so our food was extremely plentiful and prepared with love. Oer Administrator, the landlady and I formed a cloverleaf that got on well together. Our laughter spiced up the work and put the whole estate in a cheerful mood, which affected the last worker. We had good workers in Giesensdorf, all of them the second and third sons of farmers. And these young lads spat in their hands and went to work so hard that it was a pleasure. They all hoped that one day they would be able to acquire a piece of land of their own and worked so that one day they could earn a small amount of equity from their wages. I have rarely seen a farm as well-kept and well-organized as this one. Everything ran like clockwork, from the poultry to the last potato rent. There was a small pub in the village where a foot of beer was often served on a Sunday evening, paid for by the farm. Then the young lads could dance with the girls - they made the music themselves with an accordion and a few harmonicas. When a

If one of the free farmers, who had nothing to do with the farm, came along, he was cordially invited. And if a free farmer to the farm to a book, a newspaper or some advice, he never went home empty-handed or disappointed. Ha, it also often happened that we borrowed a horse when a farmer needed it urgently. Here I experienced that an estate can influence a whole village for the better. Oa's estate was the center in every respect, spiritually, economically and especially politically. The Jewish merchants had no foothold in Giesensdorf. It was always a festive day when we went to Bees- kow to collect wages. Then we harnessed the nimble Trakehner horses to the Hagdwagen and drove the beautiful streets of the town. We unhitched the "Engel" and regularly met farmers from the surrounding area who had also come to money from the bank or savings bank. We talked about agricultural issues and politics and drank our beer. The moon was already high in the sky when we drove home.

On Sundays, the young people sat under the broad lime tree behind the manor house and sang their songs to the harmonica. I was with them as often as I could.

When the owner came to us from Berlin, it was a happy day for everyone. We were given wine and good cigars, the people always got something special, sometimes a barrel of herrings, sometimes a big, dull Harz cheese. Oer owner went through the stables with the administrator and me in the morning. Hede's animal was thoroughly inspected and assessed. In the afternoon, we drove across the fields and through the forest.

If the tour turned out well, we would sit together in the evening with a particularly good bottle of wine. Oann, the owner probably told us about his life, his hardships and his hopes. I had gained a great deal of respect for him when he once, without hesitation

told how, as a very poor young man, the child of a locomotive driver who had never been able to collect any treasures in his life, he had started to build his own life. Lr had completed a commercial apprenticeship and had come up with the idea of starting a haulage business. As he no money, he approached the town council until they granted him a loan to buy a few horses and several old furniture carts. He then set to work with great diligence and skill, overcoming failures and disappointments until his work was complete. He now had agencies in Paris and London, in Prague and Budapest, in Vienna and Warsaw, and his name was one of the most respected furniture movers in Europe.

He was a white-haired, stocky man who had his heart and mouth in the right place. He was not fooled, demanded a lot, but also recognized achievements without reservation. He had an almost grateful love for the horses that helped him to prosperity and later to wealth. There were always two, three or more pavement-weary nags in boarding in Giesensdorf. They could eat oats to their heart's content and graze in the paddock until their hooves firm and their coats shiny again. Then they had to resume their work in Berlin until they were ready to recover.

He constantly had poor relatives or nieces and nephews from Berlin visiting Giesensdorf. We proud to show the townspeople our art as farmers and the opportunity to drive across the fields with them in the hunting cart.

The forester was a bit of an oddball, an East Prussian bachelor who until recently was completely out of shape and whose only friends were trees, huntable game, pointing dogs and rifles and shotguns. We called him

jokingly "Mannche", because that's how he addressed each of us in his often Prussian dialect.

Mannche had suddenly found himself with a woman. Not because he had fallen in love. He didn't even know the lady of his heart. He had only once read a letter she had written in response to a forester's marriage announcement in the magazine "Wild und Hund". In this letter it was in pale blue ink on rofa paper that fle, who came from a good family, originally conspired to become an artist. She would have become an actress, would have celebrated tremendous triumphs due to her beauty and her outstanding art and yet would have defied all offers of marriage and attempts at seduction for the love of art. But now fle was tired of being alone and of external successes; fle for the love of a simple but faithful man, who would be for her than all the dashing counts and rich factory owners. And nothing could be more beautiful for fle than the thought of continuing to walk through life at the side of a good greencoat, in the midst of glorious nature, which knows no wickedness. And what's more, she was an excellent cook. Enclosed was a picture, she had no other at hand.

But Oa's picture had it all! A full-figured young lady smiled mildly and coyly placed her hand over the plunging neckline of her veil. From her hand, however, grew a full-blossomed nosegay. The forester to whom this sweetbread belonged had decided on another lady who had even more features. Out of friendship, however, he had overcharged Mannche for the second-best offer.

For several days, Mannche walked around as if disturbed, taking everyone he met into his confidence. Lr grabbed him by the top button of his jacket, put his finger over his mouth, looked around shyly and then quickly pulled the picture out of his pocket. The only thing he said was a hasty "Devil,

Devil!"' Then he waited for the onlooker to say friendly, suggestive or encouraging words.

Again Maunche said nothing but "Devil, devil!" and hurried on take the next man into his confidence.

After eight days, he was ready. Oa sent a telegram with an offer of marriage. And he immediately received a simple "da" by telegram. Mannche had never for leave in his life. Lr therefore left it to his telegraphic bride to order the offer and decide the day of the wedding. He then traveled to Berlin to marry the young woman on the evening of the ceremony. He had no time for the honeymoon because he believed that there was no one there who could look after his dog in the meantime.

The farmers and workers decorated the forester's lodge with flowers and fir branches, filled the pantry with sausages and food of all kinds, and in the evening the young couple arrived.

When the carriage pulled up, they wanted to welcome the celebrated beauty with a thunderous cheer, but this time they could only manage a "Devil, devil!", because the lady who helped Mannche out of the carriage was elderly and plump and at all beautiful, nor modern or otherwise striking. And anyone who tried to look her in the eye was fooled, because her left eye always looked in a different direction.

But the lady, immediately called Mrs. Wannche, bowed like a prima donna, which did not look particularly distinguished because of the boards on her backside, and barked in an incredibly deep creaky voice: "Thank you, you good people, thank you a thousand times!"

I often went into the forest with Wannche to listen to the game. We would climb onto one of the many high seats, put the glass our eyes and watch the changes. Oer game population was excellent, we had deer, roe deer, fallow deer and wild boar, and since Wannche had everything else

was a wild shooter, the game felt at home in the Giesensdorf forest. On the way home I had to tell Mannche a lot, he especially wanted to know about "education". I realized from this that his wife wanted to show him her superiority in this area. It didn't matter to me to tell Mannche the greatest stories, the main thing was that he was able to amaze his wife with them.

Over time, a group of men had in Beeskow who were concerned about the future of Germany. A leader of the Völkische, Wilhelm Hübe, had once spoken in Beeskow a long time ago, and after his lecture a number of men had come together who very soon became a close-knit community. Among them was a young veterinarian who had studied in Munich and was very familiar with the strong national force field there. He often spoke of the impression made on him by the speeches of a man who had taken a completely different path to that taken by the usual politicians. This man had a glowing enthusiasm and was not in bondage to any parliamentary direction. Nor did he believe that the freedom of the nation could be fought for by any government, but that the people first had to be awakened to think. We should memorize the name of this man: his name was Adolf Hitler.

From Fürstenwalde, from Beeskow, from Königswusterhausen, sa, even from Berlin, more and more men and women came to steal potatoes. At first, it was enough if Mannche came with a fine shotgun, or if the administrator and I showed up on our horses, for the thieves to fail. But each time they became bolder. At last they came by the hundreds in droves and raised their heels threateningly when they saw us. Oer gendarme was seriously beaten when he tried to apprehend one of the cheekiest.

It was no use, we had to ask for soldiers to be sent. The Beeskow horsemen sent us a squadron which, even before it was ready to attack, so frightened servants with its lances and rifles that they abandoned their hoes, sacks and even their clogs and ran away screaming at the top of their voices. From then on the thieves were more cautious, they came at night, and then at most two or three at a time, and were gone by dawn.

For a lot of money and good words, we had to hire a few field guards, but almost all of them were unreliable and preferred to read at night rather than walk the fields. They also showed little desire to risk their health. The administrator had no choice but to set up a village guard who had to send out regular patrols. Without exception, the farmers took part in these patrols, as they also suffered a lot of theft in those days. Now the Otebe came in trucks, stole potatoes and grain, fruit, poultry, and once they even slaughtered a cow in the pasture and cut it up properly.

At our request, the Beeskow cavalry often carried night exercises in our area. On this occasion I got to know a blood-sucking ensign who made my heart heavy with his ideas that I should definitely the Reichswehr.

The Reichswehr already looked different today than it did during the Kapp Putsch, when we thought we had been betrayed by it. In a short time it had become an excellent force whose attitude was generally conspicuous. All the men who had to enlist for twelve years came from healthy, decent families. General von Seeckt, the creator of the Reichswehr, ensured that despite the pacifist attitude of the government, despite the spying by the red and black groups, despite the constant snooping of the Inter-Allied Commission, there was a ready force.

The Reichswehr Minister Geßler was either too weak or too clever to oppose this spirit of the sung troops. Oer Reichswehr Minister Geßler was either too weak or too clever to oppose this spirit of the sungen troops. In any case, he was decent enough not to fast to Seeckt's back when some anxious republican or eager snoop raised his voice. It happened often enough that Geßler himself in front of Seeckt. Oer Fähnrich recounted many an almost amusing incident from the constant petty war waged between the Reichswehr and the augurs of the Republic.

I somehow liked the midshipman's concern. At first, I couldn't understand why officers put themselves at the disposal of the Weimar state. But the ensign convinced me that it was better, for the sake of the national idea, impose a sacrifice on personal taste than to hand over such an important member of the coming "freedom fighters", as the Reichswehr was, to staunch republicans.

The oath to the freedom of the nation also seemed more binding to the ensign than the oath to the Weimar Constitution.

The conversations with him caused me many a sleepless night. And I lost my mental balance completely when I accepted an invitation to the barracks and watched the riders' performances. The skill tests would have put many a circus rider to shame. Giesensdorf suddenly seemed very small and insignificant to me, and my job as a volunteer administrator seemed even more insignificant and smaller.

I had met a beautiful young peasant girl, Liesbeth, at the rider's test in Beeskow. Liesbeth came from Tauche, a neighboring village of Giesensdorf. I could tell by the way she looked at me that she liked me. But I introduced

I looked at her so stupidly that when I said goodbye I forgot to make a date with her.

Some evenings I rode my bike to Tauche and then sat in the ugly village until late at night, talking to farmers and farmhands, cattle dealers and traveling salesmen, all in the foolish hope of meeting Liesbeth.

One Sunday, I was driving through Tauche in broad daylight. Oa I suddenly heard a young man's voice recite the beginning of the Odgssee from the farm that belonged to Liesbeth's father. In Greek! I was so shocked that I got off my bike and listened. Sure enough, someone was reciting Homer. I looked through the half-open gate and saw horse manure flying out of a stable door in a high arc. No doubt someone was mucking out the stables and spicing up the work with Homer quotes!

After all, I knew that Heracles had been credited with mucking out the Augean stables as a heroic deed, but I was still surprised by this strange encounter. After I had listened for a while, I took advantage of a short pause, which the stranger behind the door had allowed to follow his work and his statements, to recite some verses from the Odyssey in Greek with a great deal of vocal effort on my part. Oer success was not long in coming. Oie fork in hand, a black-maned fellow my age rushed out, with his legs apart when he saw me, thrust the fork into the ground with his left hand, solemnly raised his right, bowed and offered me the greeting of the Greeks:

I walked up to him laughing and said my name. He grinned, wiped his hand awkwardly on his not exactly clean or new Manchester trousers, squeezed my hand and said: "I already know you, Liesbeth told me about you/

would have loved to hug him, that's how good that word made me feel.

But before could ask him about Liesbeth, I first had to answer his questions, especially how I came to know Greek. So far he, with the exception of the pastor, but he was out of the picture, had the fame of being the only one who was so educated.

When I asked him about the origins of his vast education, he threw himself on his chest and told me that he was the son of a Magdeburg pastor. But now he had escaped the very boring parsonage to see the world.

"Tauche is at least a part of the world," I admitted. The other made a dismissive gesture: "Oas is just the beginning. I want to go to Africa, India or Australia later. Farmers are needed everywhere."

At that moment, Liesbeth came out of the cowshed with a bucket in her hand. She let out a soft cry: "What are you doing here?"

Oer pastor's son put his arm around my shoulder: "Oas is my friend, Liesbeth!"

She laughed and nodded to me: "Oanu is sa all good. My bater very rough!"

Wonderful evenings in the old farmhouse! We played dominoes and sixty-six, games I didn't like at all, on the contrary, I found their monotony extremely irritating, but I was able to exchange a few words with Liesbeth, I could look at her and even squeeze her hand furtively. Oer Pfarrersson then spoke particularly loudly about Rausikaa, Penelope and Kirke and mocked outrageously. Oer Bauer grumbled gruffly that he should finally shut up about that darn Greek stuff and learn to milk better instead, because that still didn't work! Incidentally, he didn't want to be disturbed during the game.

The farmer's wife was rarely present at our evenings, she sometimes had to work late into the night. Two older sons were in agricultural apprenticeships, one in Pomerania, the other in East Prussia. They had not fared well in their apprenticeship, they even had to send the washing home, and now the farmer's wife stood up into the night washing, flattening and darning for the manure. She had no maid, she did everything alone, and she didn't want Liesbeth to help her too much. Liesbeth should have some of her virtue! I have rarely met such a self-sacrificing woman as this farmer's wife, who gave her daughter the few hours of the evening just so that joy would come into her life. And the joy short and brief enough; the farmer would never have tolerated his daughter accompanying me outside for even a minute. All we could do was look each other in the eye and shake hands.

And that was enough to get Liesbeth talking. The farmers in Tauche soon realized who I was visiting. And farmers don't tolerate strangers coming and flirting with their daughters. When a young lad from the village or a farmer's son from the neighborhood comes, that's something else. Oa you know the father and the mother, the farm and the whole family, and they get married if theres any affection. But you can't trust a strangerhe can pack his bags every day and move to a place where no one from the village will see him. You can't a fellow like that if he refuses to marry a girl he's been flirting with. Someone must given the farmer a hint, because one evening he told me that he no wanted to play oomino and sixty-six.

Tears welled up in Liesbeth's eyes. She got up hastily and left the room.

For a while, the pastor's son brought little letters in which she told me trivial things, probably out of fear that her father might get hold of one. She had urged me never to write to her. Then she stopped writing. The pastor's son told me that Liesbeth wanted to become a nurse. I just nodded. I kind of liked the father's harshness, although it hurt me and destroyed something for Liesbeth and me that was far too tender to be mean or even a threat to the farmer's name and honor.

I went with Liesbeth once more, when there was a big farmers' festival in Tauche. Although I wasn't invited, I went to the jug, where there dancing in the hall. Liesbeth beautiful, proud and elegant in her yellow dress, and she was to dance with the boys. When she saw me, her eyes grew wide and fixed, then she looked over to the bar, where her father was standing with other farmers, and walked out with her head bowed. The last time I saw a farmer was when the large distillery in Tauche was on fire. When the fire alarm sounded, I had galloped over with the Giesensdorf volunteer fire department on a large ladder wagon and joined the large line passing the buckets of firearms. When the fire was extinguished and I was about to leave with my men, I saw the farmer nearby. I went up to him, said a few indifferent words and wanted to shake his hand. But the farmer looked past me, didn't my hand either and growled after me as I left: "I don't want you to come to Tauche again!"

I once spoke to the administrator about this harshness. He just nodded indifferently, sucked on his pipe and then said lightly: "In these matters, our farmers are like a pack of wild horses. They bite out anyone who comes from another pack. And that's a good thing!"

Ach no longer went over to Tauche. New, powerful political events made all personal matters seem secondary. The hope that the situation would stabilize proved to be deceptive. Fritz Ebert had been confirmed in office as President of the Reich by the stroke of a pen, by a short law, without the people consulted, and a government consisting of the Center, the Democrats and the German People's Party had come to power under the leadership of the Director General of the Hamburg-America Line, Luno, but without this alleged consolidation of internal political conditions also bringing about a consolidation of German politics. The Enlightenment policy suffered one terrible defeat after another. The enemies did not even think of being moved by Germany's good will, which paid to the point of bleeding white. On the contrary, they became even greedier and more shameless in their demands and humiliations as a result of Germany's policy of revelation. They proved to Germany that it did not want to pay, that it was insubordinate. Germany had to punished for this! And the punishment was carried out on 11th January 1923 by five French and one Belgian division, who marched into the Ruhr with a resounding roar and thus put their hands on the throat of an exhausted and emaciated Germany!

And at the same hour that French and Belgian troops were marching through German streets in the west, Lithuanian troops were the Germans in Memel under the eyes of the French.

The Germans up there hated to the last that the French Alpine troops, the best troops in France, would have enough honor in their bodies to prevent the brutal rape of the people who were their wards. Their hope was all the more justified as the French

In a pompous and empty exclamation, the French High Commissioner had assured the Lithuanians that he would everything in his power to prevent them from violating the territory. His Alpine troops, however, he affirmed, would resist the putschists to the last man. The Germans believed! And the Lithuanians marched! They drew their ring closer and closer around the city of Memel, and the French, heavily armed, war-tested Alpine troops retreated further and further before the only lightly armed Lithuanians! By January 14, the city of Memel and with it the entire German Memel region was in the hands of the Lithuanians. France gave way to "violence" and rubbed its hands together. The cursed Germans had suffered another defeat.

The year 1923 began cruelly and devastatingly. In the East and in the West, Germans bled. In the East and in the West, bullets whistled through the streets, people cried out in agony, and in the East and in the West, foreign sounds buzzed through German streets.

The hand on his throat closed tighter and tighter.

But Mr. Reich President Fritz Gbert remained silent. He did not write an appeal to his German people. And the Holy Father, who had once praised the Versailles Act as a blessed beginning, did not tear his robe When a German suffered, it did not upset the world. For the German seemed to be condemned by God to suffer!

Allegedly, a few undelivered telegraph poles were the reason why France marched. In reality, however, France wanted more, it wanted to deal a fatal blow to the German strengthening that was beginning against all expectations. Perhaps there were also men over there who believed that they could drive Germany into a new war so that they could then give the order to fire under the pretense of being right. Nobody could know, because the enemy was silent and the German government was silent. But while

the enemy remained silent out of calculation, the German government remained silent out of fear.

When the first news of the raids in the east and west appeared in the newspapers, I harnessed the Trakehner horses to the hunting wagon and beat them so that they reached far out. I hoped to meet the Beeskow riders before the march out. When I brought the horses to a halt in front of the barracks, I was surprised to see that everything was going on as usual. Oer Posten stood there as usual, and the soldiers went in and out as if country were at peace. I had myself reported to the ensign of M.. He came immediately, greeted me amiably and asked the reason for my obvious agitation.

When I mentioned it, he shrugged his shoulders: "Fa, my dear, the situation has become unbearable for Germany, that's true. But when has it ever been bearable since 1918?"

I asked him to report me to the cavalry captain. Oer Rittmeister squeezed my hand heartily and slapped me on the shoulder.
"Nice of you to come. When the time really comes, I will call you personally and take you into my squadron. But I don't think I'll be allowed to fetch you."

Shocked, I searched for home. At a walk. I let the reins hang down. So Germany didn't mobill Who was going to resist? And resistance had to be offered! Or were those damned Reds and Blacks going to give Germany away?

You cursed traitors, it kept going through my mind, smashed the soldiers' associations with your beautiful republican shoes, you watched day and night to make sure that a few decent, courageous, incorruptible guys didn't somewhere to pour out their hearts. You crushed every little movement that yearned for freedom. You threw hundreds into prison. German officers who did nothing else in the world war.

have been put in irons before the Imperial Court. And you see where Germany is attacked, you have no one to stand up for German honor. You have betrayed the soldiers because you were afraid, you bigwigs, and see, where it gets dangerous, where you need soldiers, they are to the four winds. Who calls them together, the old Freikorp fighters? You are afraid to issue a single shout! And yourselves don't come out from behind the stove when things get dangerous, you brave republicans!

I grumbled to myself so loudly that the cyclists passing me on the road looked around in amusement. They thought I was crazy. As far as I was concerned. This time of year was enough to drive you crazy.

The sound of gunfire can be heard far away. Much further than bourgeois people can believe. It still reaches the ears of the activists, the rebels, the freedom fighters, even if they are at the far end of the world.

Although there was no longer an association of old Freikorps fighters, there were still men with a Freikorps mentality. And this attitude was awakened by the shots. They came from all parts of Germany, the ostracized, persecuted, cursed, condemned, the German activists. They came without anyone having called them, without anyone promising them a reward for a lonely, determined act.

The Luno government did not know what do. It was "bourgeois", so she was obliged to at least act as if she possessed a patriotic passion. But it was not national, so it did not consider itself obliged to repay one blow received with two back blows. Rather, she did a third thing, she chose a compromise and declared "passive resistance".

The activists in Germany had hoped until the very end that they would still be able to mount an active resistance. They would run with their usual bravery against occupied bridgeheads, thrown the enemy's clenched charges under the armored cars in open combat and, if they had to, would have fallen as soldiers in the uniform they wore as a sign of their martial spirit. But the passive resistance demanded that they take off their uniforms, that they disguise themselves as if they were playing theater, demanded that they war in the dark.

What the bourgeois government demanded of the eternally voluntary German soldiers by restricting the Ruhr War started by France to passive resistance went to the limits of what was bearable. But the German activists, accustomed to sacrifice, accepted this restriction and into the battlefield disguised as workers, citizens and merchants to fulfill their national duty. But the whole of Germany held its breath and looked eagerly towards the Rhine and the Ruhr. Rarely was there such unity throughout the Reich as in those days, when even the last worker who was in thrall to international phrases felt the blush of anger rise in his face. If Luno and his friends in the government had gone among the Bolk more often, who knows whether the Ruhr War would not have been the beginning of a great national revival. But the Bolk was prepared to sacrifice the last. And the workers in the Reich were ready to jump to the aid of their threatened brothers in the Ruhr. One brave word from the government and the Bolk would have stood up. But Fritz Ebert remained silent! He was the president, but not the representative of the German Reich. He sat in his chair by his own grace, not summoned by the people.

The government missed the people's hour.

Collections and donations yielded rich amounts. In Giesensdorf alone we put together a normal freight train of food, mainly potatoes. We had collected the food throughout the district, and there was no one among the farmers and landowners who did not donate a percentage of their total harvest to the incipient struggle for freedom.

In the afternoon, however, we practiced with the young men. We had bought some hand grenades, pistols and a few old military rifles. When the day of revenge dawned, we wanted to be prepared.

Oa's people were as united and determined in the kingdom as the men and women in the area affected by the invasion.

We always thought that passive resistance was just a test of strength, a test of endurance. Now the people's war would finally have to break out, after the people had so unanimously declared their will to resist for the last time. I went to Beeskow as often as I could to talk to the ensign. He was already completely desperate himself, poring over maps of the Ruhr area, making calculations with compass and ruler and memorizing bridge and railroad crossing. But he didn't know how to help me or himself.

The French initially came up empty-handed. The company offices and industrial associations had been brought to safety in good time, files, drawings, everything that was needed to get to know a company, calculations, instructions had disappeared. And the miners and workers stood by, fists in their pockets, as the enemy's engineering commission struggled in vain to get a plant up and running. No German lifted a finger for the enemy, and there was no mercy for the traitor. If a girl got involved with a Frenchman or a Belgian, the dishonorable one was

cut the hair off their heads. When the French a pub, the Germans stood and walked out. Oa's people showed far more dignity than the government, and the enemy felt with horror the icy abyss of contempt, the only mass the Germans had left to at least literally keep the peace-breaker at bay.

Railroads, run by French engineers, derailed.
Blast furnaces cooled down, shafts soaped up.

The enemy realized that the passive resistance had turned into a war of sabotage. The daring irregulars worked eerily. No one saw them, but everyone felt them, sensed them in the crackling of the beams, in the groaning of the bridges, and the French soldiers stood suspiciously and fearfully at the bridges, on the tracks, at the entrances to the shafts, at the gates of the factories, expecting to be blown up at the next moment, along with everything they had to guard.

Every civilian strolling by seemed dangerous to them, but they couldn't shoot every civilian. They thought there were bombs in every crate, but they couldn't confiscate and every crate. Neither terror nor good words nor even bribery could dissuade the population from their stance. Mayors, directors and workers were sent to prison, but none of them whined for mercy.

It had long since become apparent that a secret will was at work, ordering the deeds, giving orders and always ordering sabotage where a disturbance would be particularly detrimental to the enemy. But where was this will? It was not in the German government, and the German police were the last to determine the defensive struggle.

And yet bridges flew open, switches and rails were blown up, locks were destroyed, tunnels collapsed, and yet hand grenades were lobbed in front of the

guardhouses and barracks of the enemy, persistent patrols were launched.

Oa's secret of the success that the secret avengers, the sabotage soldiers, had was that only a few, but very bold and very ruthless men fought in their ranks, men who had experienced, had experienced a thousand times in the lonely battles of the post-war period, that an irrepressible will is incomparably more explosive, more powerful, more dangerous than even the highly sensitive ekrasite.

Oie explosive charge of the will of German freedom soldiers was the new war material, unknown to the French, whose unheard-of effect they repeatedly encountered to their horror.

Nm the Freikorpskämpser Schlageter had gathered together, the loneliest of the lonely, the most lost bunch in the lost bunch.

And the secret of the personal success that accompanied the deeds of Schlageter and his men was that they were both general staff and shock troops.

When the French saw that no Germans wanted to work for them, they had no choice but to bring men from across the Rhine to transport the German raw materials mainly coal. But every wagon that was carried away could blow up after the first hundred meters at a switch or on a bridge. The avengers kept watch. No transport left a factory that was not reported to them.

The French began to become even more agitated, even more uncertain. They had soon learned that a man named Schlageter was at work, a representative of a new movement among the German people, an all-out freedom movement, a National Socialist.

The nervousness of the enemy manifested itself in a brutality that grew from day to day. The guns of the French

even before it had been clearly established that the person to be hit hostile intent. According to the principle that a dead man is harmless, they killed without hesitation.

On 3i. March, a detachment of Frenchmen, led by a lieutenant, entered the Krupp factories in Essen to carry out confiscations. They were particularly in the trucks because they thought it was safer to transport the looted goods by truck than by rail, which was constantly under attack. The workers became extremely agitated and the German works council tried to negotiate cautiously with the very sung, very inexperienced French lieutenant. But the officer had no negotiating with the Germans, whom he hated. He demanded and threatened and suddenly, without giving any further warning, opened fire on the terrified retreating workers. The outcome of this less than heroic French enterprise was horrific: three German men lay dead in the factory yard and 41 wounded men were rolling in their blood. But the French soldiers marched away from the dead, the dying and the wounded.

A passionate outcry went up throughout the German people, and the call for revenge rose to the heavens. But the government had not been called by the voice of the people. The government deeply regretted the incidents and issued paper protests, but it did not give the signal for successful resistance. It still expected the men and women on German territory to allow themselves to be slapped on the left and right cheek.

Fa, there were very soon quite a few people of German nationality who saw with a certain mistrust and growing concern that the new activist freedom movement was spreading more and more as French terror grew. And in the group led by Luno

Many a person sat in the government whose heart began to beat uneasily when he saw a swastika appear somewhere.

The activists, however, who stood in the urnkämpften West and saw their lives every hour, were all swastika lerl

It was not very long before this or that government agency took the view that the activists' actions went far beyond the scope of passive resistance. It was then only a short step before these bodies refused to support the activists. And from here to the outright betrayal of the brave men was also only a very small step.

There were authorities who made no conscience of playing one of the persecuted into the hands of the enemy, and again there were very high authorities of the government who did not lift a finger to reclaim one of the betrayed from the dungeons of the French. Indeed, their fear of the selfless fighters for German freedom went so far that they made no use of the offers made by the comrades of those arrested, who made themselves available to free the prisoners. The authorities in question were supposed to do nothing more than turn blind eye when a detachment of determined people the occupied territory. But even that did not seem advisable to the authorities!

And the longer the struggle below the surface, the war on one's own initiative lasted, the sooner the enemy found ways and means to send traitors, informers and agents into the occupied territory to paralyze the actions or lure the activists into traps.

On April 7, Schlageter was played into the hands of the French.
He himself wrote that treachery must have been involved.

Nothing was done on the part of the government to save this man from the hands of his French executioners.

rescue. The plans of ready, foolhardy comrades were .

Schlageter, however, sat in his cell and calmly awaited his sentence. One day after his arrest, his comrades blew up the locks of the Rhine-Herne Canal as if to send him a dignified farewell.

The government was still not thinking of fighting for justice in the Ruhr itself. Let the poor and tormented people there continue to put up passive resistance! Oas did not burden the government, and it was so easy to humbly say to the enemy at the decisive moment: "I didn't want it!"

Over time, the people began to completely lose faith in their government. On this basis, there was no end in sight to the Ruhr struggle. After all, there was barely one activist for every few hundred Frenchmen.

At the beginning of May, however, the government of the German people began to put out feelers to France and ask for peace in the Ruhr War. In the prisons sat the men who had fought for honor, who were used to repaying like with like. Nobody thought of their freedom!

It was to the government that the destruction of values in the Ruhr area be stopped. But it did not know, nor did it want to know, that its miserable behavior was destroying completely different values, values that were far more difficult to see than coal and iron. She only saw in her fear that the mark was plummeting unsustainably. But she did not want to suspect that confidence in natural decency, which even a bourgeois government must have, was sinking even deeper.

Poincare, the hater, himself signed the order ordering Schlageter to be shot. It was not that a hasty court-martial had made the decision and that some obedient

sarner officer would have given the command. No, France knew what it wanted. The German awakening, the German indignation was to be met in Schlageter.

France knew that anxious minds became humble when shots rang out. Oas had already known it when it shot Palm, when it gunned down the els Schill officers in Wesel. Who in France also had to know that the real Germany never forgets any of its true heroes?

2 On May 26, at the first early red light, Schlageter was shot by the French on the Golzheimer Heide near Düsseldorf.

He died not only as a victim of the French, he also fell as a victim of the cowards and traitors in Germany, of whom the greatest guilt was borne by the Reich Minister of the Interior, Mr. Severing, who hated nothing in the world as much as the swastikas, the National Socialists.

Oer Ruhr War . Schlageter was dead, his closest friends blown to pieces, captured, sentenced, deported. Deported to the French criminal islands!

Oer General Director of the Hamburg-America Line, Luno, was shipwrecked. He relied too much on the mind and too little on the heart of the people. This proved that he was a good businessman, but by no means a good politician.

Luno was soon booted out.

His successor was Stresemann, who brought with him two recommendations that perhaps had a conciliatory effect on international relations, one was his Jewish wife, the other was his membership of Freemasonry!

Stresemann came to power on August 13, 1923. He supported by the German People's Party, the Democrats, the Social Democrats, the Center Party and the Bagrische Volkspartet.

Just four weeks later, the passive resistance was broken off.

I just couldn't stop in Giesensdorf. From day to day I became more restless, more irritable, more grumpy. The administrator and the landlady often looked at me sadly and uncomprehendingly. They didn't know what to do with me anymore. Perhaps they also thought I was ungrateful.

I woke up at night, feeling as if I had heard gunshots and screaming. Then I lay awake until dawn.

I rode out early in the morning, but riding would bring me no calm, no relaxation. Again and again I felt as if I had to lead the horse into battle, and the thought that the enemy might be behind the fog made me forget for a moment that I was living in the midst of peace, even though men were fighting on the frontier. Then, when the first teams moved onto the field, I realized all the more shamefully that I had only been playing.

So I up and away.

I had wavered for a long time as to whether I should enlist in Beeskow. I liked the riders, and the ensign and the cavalry captain were good soldiers and decent people.

But as a simple soldier, wouldn't I lose the right to be their comrade? Was I anything more than a subordinate who had to treat his superiors with respect? But then the confidential conversations were over, the opportunity to discuss all the problems of this time and this world. Then I had to pull my shit together and say yes and no. Oer rank tore apart the light-heartedness of personal acquaintance.

So it was with a heavy heart that I drove through Beeskow to Frankfurt an der Oder.

I didn't know anyone there. An ensign had only told me once that if he hadn't already been in the cavalry regiment, he would have enlisted in the field artillery. There was field artillery in Frankfurt, so I asked my way to the barracks.

It was a rather old box, quite a distance the town, that I entered. But it seemed to me to be more beautiful than all the castles and manor houses in Mecklenburg and Lower Lusatia put together.

Admission was quicker than I thought. Even then, they turned a blind eye if I didn't have all my papers together or if the usual entry times weren't quite right. I was assigned to the 5th battery, Captain Bremer, a very conscious and dashing soldier, shook my hand again when he heard that I had fought at Annaberg.

lun I was a soldier again! Gunner in the 5th battery of the 3rd (Prussian) field artillery regiment with the traditional name
"General Feldzeugmeister".

The first few days were damn hard for me. Giesensdorf had made me very soft.

His service in the Reichswehr was ruthless towards the recruits, but it was precisely his toughness that made him a unique performer.

The days flew by: morning exercise, horseback riding, horseback riding, infantry duty, technical instruction, field training, weapon cleaning, and the day was already over. I went to bed dead tired and thought I had just fallen asleep when the sergeant on duty woke me up again.

I did the hard service with great joy. Soon we soldiers would have to be deployed. Oa's underground smoldering would one day have to flare up into a bright free fire.

The Reichswehr was apolitical. That was the guarantee Seeckt had to give the government. But none of my comrades were apolitical. We had many locksmiths, farmers' sons, craftsmen, but also many men among us who were the only ones who had learned the soldier's trade and could no longer break away from it. There were some wonderful guys among them. The Reichswehr was generally well off, it was able to cover its small requirements from a large supply and at the same time make very high demands on character, intelligence and physical performance. If a recruit did not meet the requirements in these areas, he could easily be discharged. Three others took his place.

None of our NCOs did not have the Iron Cross, most of them even had the First Class. Because they were experienced field soldiers, they were tough on duty. They ground the last of our bourgeois dross, but all drill was geared towards maximum operational readiness. That's why the drill was never as embarrassing, never as harassment. They were the best and funniest comrades off duty.

There was a very strong cohesion with the weapon. We knew that we had countless opponents in the Reich who watched our soldiers in public in order to unload complaint after complaint at the slightest opportunity. But we also knew that many young, aware Germans looked at us critically and judged our reliability as soldiers according to our attitude.

This strengthened our awareness of being the representatives of the will to defend in a defenseless time. We were given clear orders to fend off any physical attack by anti-soldier circles with our weapons and, in an emergency, to remember that the enemy masses should recognize that it was life-threatening to attack a German soldier. This means nothing other than that we were brought up to stab any attacker.

A soldier who allowed himself to be beaten or disarmed by a civilian was removed from the Reichswehr.

This was the only way we could win the trust of decent circles in Germany. They should know that we weren't mutineers, that we didn't know any parliamentary or pacifist methods, that we didn't have a wimpy stance that was curbed by soldiers' councils. But for the time being I didn't get out of the barracks. A recruit first had to be put through his paces, and that took time.

We had excellent horse material, all Hanoverians. For the first riding lessons, however, we chose the old nags, the so-called "Garderoben

stallions", whose protruding ribs were a pain when bareback. I sometimes preferred to drop into the turf rather than endure a few more laps. But over time, I became insensitive.

At the end of October, rumors began to spread that things were again not right in the West. We were pretty closed to rumors, every day there was one that made us look attentively at the nearby eastern border. But these rumors were persistent, they kept coming back.

Somehow France was supposed to have a finger in the pie again. We believed it, because we still had vivid memories of the Ruhrkamps. We talked about Schlageter every evening. He was particularly close to us because he had once been an artilleryman.

The NCOs nodded meaningfully when we asked them if there was any truth to the rumors. And the NCOs got their dung from the captain, who in turn got it from the colonel. And the colonel already had very good connections in Berlin, he must have known best.

It was around October 20th when we got certainty. We had just had a history lesson and were trying hard to understand why the breech of the field gun 16 had to be called a flat wedge sliding lever recocking breech and nothing else. Then the captain came, stopped the lesson, put his hand to the effort and told us that a separatist uprising had broken out in Aachen, on behalf of and with the help of France, of course, and that we couldn't yet foresee what it might entail.

When the captain left again, the officer looked at us affably in turn, took a grenade in one hand and a cartridge in the other and said lightly: "Look the Oinger here, people, if they go off, there will be no more separatists. But if they don't go off, there will be no Rhineland!"

During these days, the greatest emphasis was placed on training. We were familiarized with the aiming circle, range estimation, map reading and indirect shooting earlier than usual.

We wanted to be ready, and it shouldn't be to us if the Rhineland was lost.

The captain was delighted to see how we jumped onto the guns, how we threw the gun carriage around and how quickly the gun was ready to fire. With his battery he could already be seen.

We were eagerly awaiting the final command
"Gunners mounted!"

The Rhineland was in chaos. So Oas was France's thanks for giving up passive resistance! Oas was the success of Stresemann's government, a fine second government, as the first had only lasted two months.

Oas was the receipt for the fact that the government had once again stabbed the activists in the back. Who among the volunteers who had been betrayed so often would take up arms? The population was still deeply shaken by the disloyalty of the government, which had so casually forgiven France for the invasion of peace.

Who would throw themselves into the dangerous attack on the unity of the empire? Were there any volunteers left at all?

Would at least the Reichswehr be deployed?

The separatist uprising spread like fire in a storm. Oas France's gold worked all the more successfully as Germany had become destitute. The gold mark was close to being worth a trillion paper marks. It was therefore a very lucrative business to be a traitor, because the franc was a precious currency. Soon the flames of revolt were blazing over the whole of the Rhineland and the Palatinate.

In the early hours of October 26, the first Rhenish government was proclaimed in Koblenz. Two days earlier, France had already recognized the Palatinate as an autonomous state. The French-paid instigator of the separatists, a former public prosecutor by the name of Dorten, who had been treason since 1919, believed that his hour had come. had already planned to introduce his own currency, the government franc, in the Rhineland a few weeks earlier and could now triumphantly point out that his "state" was on a much healthier footing than the German one. And there were already citizens who, in their stupidity, gave Mr. Dorten's state the borough train! After all, Dorten was more skillful than his colleague in the Reich, the arch-scientist Hilferding, whom Stresemann had appointed as his finance minister for inscrutable reasons. Hilferding did not even attempt to disguise his hatred of Germany and deliberately drove Germany into impoverishment. Dorten, on the other hand, acted as a bourgeois who only wanted the best, the most beautiful, the noblest, who could promise the citizens of this fine state a secure existence.

Mr. Dorten went about his regulatory business with grand gestures. First he appointed a no less dishonorable rag, the peasant leader from Orbis, Mr. Heinz, as General Commissar of the Palatinate, and France hastily gave its blessing.

Priests and Reds, separatists, traitors, in short, rags of all colors, met up with the separatists.

If a people-conscious German gave vent to his disgust, he was pulled to the ground, beaten and kicked and could still count himself lucky if he escaped with prolonged infirmity. But where the police of the German government made an attempt to confront the separatist mob, French soldiers intervened and disarmed the German policemen. With French help and after French

The separatists set up their own troops, practiced in public and made no secret of their intention to fight with German troops if necessary.

N)o would we have liked to take on the task of bringing the guns into firing position against these troops of treason?

There was probably no man in the Reichswehr who would not have longed to prove that the old Prussian spirit in his battery, in his company, in his squadron had long since overcome all other influences that Mr. Seve- ring wanted to inoculate into the German army, especially by way of the former republican soldier's army. And just like usall soldiers in the Reichswehr at that time probably looked after their weapons with particular care.

It was certainly no coincidence that we were presented with maps of the Rhineland and the Palatinate without exception.

It was noticeable that the visits by the Inter-Allied Commission became more frequent and that almost only Frenchmen carried out the checks. They snooped in the remotest corners and would have loved search our lockers. The fact that they sometimes knew more than our colonel would have liked indicated that there were still traitors despite the strict selection.

It was self-evident that the artillery in particular had to have some equipment that it could not completely do without, despite the provisions of the Versailles Dictate.

When the English came to inspect, things were relatively friendly. Then there was breakfast before the inspection began, and during breakfast it happened that one or other of the English officers made a small suggestion, which was quite sufficient to bring a piece of endangered equipment to safety. The French

were almost always insultingly petty. Oa was searched and rummaged through that it was just a kind of thing, and pages of reports arrived if there was any cause for complaint.

When we were standing guard, we could tell from the Commission's eyes when they left their car whether they were up to something particularly hostile or whether their visit just the usual check.

Although it was forbidden for "political reasons" to use the "Völkischer Beobachter", we received it almost regularly from strangers in the barracks. In those days, he spoke particularly sharply and clearly against the inaction of the government in Berlin. In the Reich, the
The "Völkische Beobachter" was banned, only Bagern did not comply, and moreover there were enough clandestine ways to play the newspaper into the hands of the activists. Above all, we gathered from the articles that there had been increasingly sharp tensions between Bagern and the Reich government in the last few days, and it was not yet clear how the tensions would erupt.

The republican organizations sent us large quantities of propaganda material. They attached the greatest importance to ensuring that the warlike spirit did not return to our ranks and tried to make it clear to us our main task was to protect the young republic, which had taken us under oath and pay, against any enemy, especially internal enemies. This propaganda fell on very poor ground. We felt that we were primarily called upon to protect the German borders and were reluctant to be called upon to disperse any hunger demonstrations. We thought that was what the police were there for.

In the first days of November, the red newspapers from the "Freiheit" to the "Vorwärts" and the Jewish democratic newspapers from the "Vossische Zeitung" to the

The "Frankfurter Zeitung" and even the "Berliner Tageblatt" were highly agitated about mysterious borrowings in Bagern and warned of the ethnic extremists who were preparing a putsch down there. The names of Hitler and Ludendorff appeared again and again as the carriers of the nationalist outrage.

A state of emergency had been imposed on Bagern since the end of September, but during the last few weeks we been so excited by the separatist uprising that we hardly looked at Bagern any more. But when the Reichswehr division in Bagern was suddenly committed to the Bagern government, we expected a coup d'état. But how it would manifest itself was not only beyond our knowledge, but also beyond our guesses. If the German Reich was to be liberated from the clutches of the Reds from Bagern, there would probably not have been a single member of the Reichswehr who would not have voluntarily placed himself at the disposal of the Bagern government immediately. However, we would have fought against a Bager separatist movement with the utmost determination. We would have shot them down just we would have fired on the Rhenish separatists if we had been deployed in the Rhineland. Years ago, we had already had our experiences with the emissaries of the ultramontane Bagerische Konigspartei in order to find out what treasonous aims some black circles were pursuing down there. Wherever separatist activities became notorious, men of the caliber of Prelate Kaas were behind them. It no different in Bagern than in the Palatinate, the Rhineland and Upper Silesia.

We knew from the "Völkischer Beobachter" that Hitler and Ludendorff were in bitter conflict with the ultramontane separatists and hoped confidently that they get the upper hand at the decisive moment.

Long after the taps had been called, we were still talking about the difficult decisions facing Germany. Everywhere we looked and heard, there was a rustling in the woodwork. What was the Reich government planning to do with us? Was that why they kept us back from the borders, so that they could see us at the decisive moment against a national revolution? We talked openly about how we would then go over to the national revolution. We believed that our officers would not prevent us from doing so.

2 On November 8, the decisive blow was struck in Munich. Adolf Hitler turned the tide before the Nazis could take advantage of the great nationalist wave to realize their own very sinister intentions. Together with Ludendorff and the treacherous Herr von Kahr, he formed the national government against the government of the Weimar Republic, which would have won its battle for the German people if Kahr had not broken word and, together with the military district commander von Lossow, stabbed Hitler in the back.

Together with the stormtroopers of the National Socialist movement, the men of the soldierly nationalist associations, the young officers and war students stood under arms and waited for the order. They hoped to be able to unfurl the teeth of freedom, the swastika, over Germany without much bloodshed. They knew nothing yet of the treachery that the Dark Ones had already prepared and accomplished. On November 9, the National Socialists marched through the streets of Munich without weapons, singing battle songs under the flag of longing. The police had lined up at the Feldherrnhalle and set upon the procession of armed men. Heroically, the men walked on upright, and it was not the calculated intention of those who had given the order to fire that Hitler and Ludendorff were spared from the bullets. Among the

16 dead in the Feldherrnhalle could also have been these two Germans.

Perhaps Mr. von Kahr regretted that death passed the men to whom he had broken his allegiance. Thus he had to surrender ever more deeply to the spectre of betrayal: in addition to the National Socialist German Workers' Party, he also betrayed the national associations with which he had hitherto underpinned his policy. Although the great national revolution that Adolf Hitler wanted to spread from Munich across the entire Reich had been bloodily crushed, the dark plans to carve out a black secondary empire from Bavaria, Austria and other southern German, predominantly Catholic states were also destroyed.

Once again, the empire had become a seething cauldron: in the west, the fires started by the separatists were still smouldering, in the south the blood of the cowardly slain was mourned, and in the heart of the empire, in Saxony and Thuringia, the Bolshevists rose up anew, having used the parliamentary system to conquer the government offices with the help of the seduced and discontented masts. Central Germany could only be pulled out of the chaos by an imperial execution.

In the Rhineland, the Separatist spook had already faded by the end of November. This time, armed, courageous groups of peasants played a major role in ensuring that the separatists had to take down the flag.

In the Palatinate, however, the Frank was much more successful. France used every means at its disposal to maintain its influence in the "autonomous" state. The "president" of this state by the grace of France, Heinz, was still firmly in the saddle.

It seemed impossible to liberate the Palatinate without bloodshed. The terror of the separatists was too brutal. And once again, the determined, the activists, the lonely set to work to dare the liberating deed. In the

the first days of danuary 1924 the braves had no success, on 9. but they succeeded in shooting the leader of the separatists, Heinz, at the Wittelsbacher Hof in Speger.

Two of the executors of the German people's will to defend themselves, Hellinger and Wiesmann, fell victim to the bullets of a French detective during this operation. But their deed had the desired effect: the separatists so terrified that no new leader could be found, and four weeks later the People's Court of Pirmasens swept the last remnants of the "Autonomous Palatinate". France saw that its were slipping away, and made a desperate effort to stop the separatists from fleeing. In vain! Oer spook had finally fluttered away.

Inflation was over? When the trillion mark was reached, the value of the mark could no longer fall.

Stresemann had resigned and was succeeded by the centrist Marx.

Oeutschnationale Helfferich, who had already shown courage and energy in his fight against Erzberger and his backers, was one of the main creators of the Rentenmark, which was intended to bring about a new economic order.

Emergency decree followed emergency decree; the Marx cabinet had become downright inventive.

Certainly, there was not a decent person among the people who had not welcomed the Rentenmark as the last resort out of the utter chaos. There was no one among the honest who was not glad that with the end of inflation, the pack of inflation hounds, the parasites, the speculators, who lived from hand to mouth and were content to let each day have its own worries, also disappeared. But the emergency ordinances, which the revaluation

were incredibly cruel and unjust. The pious Chancellor Marx did not feel guilty about the fact that almost the entire German people had been of their wealth by these decrees. The honest, the industrious, who had not their money to carry out shifts and lucrative but indecent speculations, were the defrauded. A fraction of their wealth was "revalued" by the state, by the banks, by the castes. The rest was gone, without a trace in the frenzy of inflation. A sad fate awaited the defrauded, who became "small pensioners" and recipients of charity. Old family jewels, carefully guarded and revered mementos went to pawnshops, home furnishings, beds, clothes, everything that was in any way dispensable was sold.

A great poverty came over Germany. The bitterness was great, and rarely did a little joy enter the home of the decent. During the inflation, the most miserable waste material was still "worth", real values were paid for with pennies.

Mr. Stresemann had become foreign minister. He called fine business "understanding policy" and dreamed of silver linings on the horizon. The extent to which he seriously believed in this mirage remained unexplored. The friends of his government tried to force a smile on his face and share his strange optimism, which was not justified by any real action. Oa's people, however, were unable to discover a rosy glimmer in the dull gray of misery without self-deception.

The understanding that Stresemann pursued was nothing but yielding to the enemy's demands.

Oa's misery in Germany became so great that people began to become apathetic. Their resistance was almost broken by the constant disappointments. Who was going to be able to help? Cold calculators, opaque men who tried to cloak their cowardice in optimism.

were in the government. In the murderous, betrayed, secret struggle of recent years, the bravest of the activists had been shot, imprisoned, scattered to the winds. Who was to lift up the soul of the people now?

In empty churches, clergymen preached about the merciless counsel of a God whose most cunning servants sat in the government of the aimless, inactive state. Only there did the sheep of the Christian flock gather, where a shepherd was able to describe in glowing colors the beauty of the kingdom of the Lord of hosts that had come near.

Oer wheat the sects and prayer communities flourished. Even there, people were still likely to be found where a pulpit speaker spoke with moving words about the fatherland. But these pastors were rare, and they were not held in high esteem in the circles of their fellow ministers who had made their peace with the state. Indeed, in the churches of both denominations, were even movements that openly flirted with communism as the last resort out of earthly misery.

There was no longer any soul guidance in Germany, because the God that the churches proclaimed had become the plaything of all the political and spiritual plans to which his servants adhered. In the ram of God, one said right, the other left. In the Lord's ram, one said hü, another said hott. And the increasing godlessness about which the churches complained was largely the fault of the churches themselves and their teachings.

Where should the Germans raise their eyes? To Rome, for example? It was only too well known that the Pope had not blessed the Germans in the decisive hours of world history, but had cursed them. Or even to Wtttenberg? Oh, dear God, Oa was not a unified will, not a common spirit, not planned thinking. Oa was also no more protesting! Oa was aimlessness, indulgence, there was an ironcladness about unrealistic ideas, there was dialectics")

2 On November 9, it seemed, the idea of the nation had been wounded to death. And there was no one to teach the people to take the path into their own hearts.

The despair was ever greater, and the number of suicides grew from day to day.

And since the soul was homeless, since it did not sand to the blood, doctrines of superstition arose, oracles and wondrous proclamations sprang up that sought to divine the last things between heaven and earth and to exploit them for the shaping of personal everyday life. Impostors of fear entered the public arena, and the population listened to them in droves. As no way out of despair became apparent, there were many people who went completely cold and surrendered to the whims of everyday life.

Their attitude was even less than the surrender that the Orient teaches. It was - and this means the worst - complete renunciation!

Wlr sungen Neichswehr soldiers were not so quickly overcome by the great, paralyzing fatigue. We had to fulfill our hard service, which gave us enough tension. But there were also suicides in our ranks. Scholarly-looking statistics tried to prove that the reason for this was the excessively long and yet mostly monotonous service. We knew best: the reason lay in the fact that the political situation had "stabilized", but also hardened completely, petrified to the point of lifelessness. We had the army with very few exceptions, because we wanted to be the first on the battlefield in the coming conflicts. And now it turned out that there was no longer any talk of making the nation fit for military service. The silver lining of understanding veiling the prospect of freedom. It must have been an unbearable thought for every honor-loving soldier to see the

to sacrifice the best years of his life to a state that did not even of defending itself when it had the greatest right to do so.

Why were we still there at all? Certainly, we had been on the alert often enough when fires started on the borders, but then we had to stand idly by while the government waited for the fire to burn itself out. And it was even worse for us to see men voluntarily jumping forward to extinguish the fire while we waited in our barracks for the order.

Oa's awareness that he had no real duty and was therefore worthless had given the desperate a weapon against his own life.

Germany no longer had any honor. And what can elevate the soul of a soldier more than the honor of his people?

We did well after the inflation, at least better than most Germans. We had a roof over our heads, kept a bed, had very good uniforms, plenty to eat and still received very decent pay. But we were choked by the bitter feeling that, despite our weapons, despite our will, we weren't worth much. And nothing offended us so deeply as when we were publicly called drones by the Communists. Was it our fault that we were held back in the barracks? We went into the city as often as we could now. We had enough money to make our lives pleasant. We were welcome guests at cabarets, cinemas and dance halls because we didn't keep the money in our pockets. But sometimes we were disgusted up to our necks. Our duty became even stricter so that the lost excitement would return. But there was nothing we could about it, the "secure" conditions had a tiring effect on us. We did a lot, almost too much, for our future. Those who performed well among the long-serving soldiers did not have to worry about their future their twelve years. He could become a civil servant, a settler, a farmer, a handyman

worker, businessman. He also received a round settlement of 10,000 marks. The state was by no means petty in these matters. But we didnt thank the state, neither in word nor in deed. But for a state that would have given us nothing, that would have only ever demanded more from us, that would have thrown us here today, there tomorrow, wherever there was a fire, we would have given everything for the state.

Since Stresemann was Foreign Minister, the controls of the Inter-Allied Commission were no longer carried out quite so strictly. The French probably sensed that Germany wanted to be tame at all costs. So they could confidently overburden the German government by repeatedly clipping our wings.

Some of us yearned to break out of the unwanted sense of security, to no longer be taken care of but to shape the destiny of life with our own hands.

The guard detachment in Berlin would provide a change from the uniform harshness service and everyday life.

For two weeks we did little else but clean our uniforms and weapons "to new". Finally we were able to pass X-ray eyes of even the most dangerous NCO.

The handles folded in one fell swoop. We could already see each other!

Berlin!

It was a damn strange feeling to march in. I used to dream of marching through the Brandenburg Gate. We wanted to come as liberators, as saviors, and be greeted by the people. ffeht we came as soldiers who had sworn an oath to the state we hated like the plague.

Our barracks were in Invalidenstraße. When we moved in, there were a few spectators standing around who with benevolent curiosity that we were artillerymen. That was all.

We were given a map of Berlin and a list of the benefits to which we were entitled as soldiers. In addition, we had to sign up to uphold the honor of the Reichswehr and our regiment in the capital with a particularly dignified appearance. We marched to the guard with music. The music knew how to arrange it skillfully, always playing the song

"The flag proudly flies black, white and red" when we marched past the Reichstag building. But the flags of the Republic flew from the corners of this building! We had to stop ourselves from laughing out loud. Occasionally a cheerful shout came from the crowd of people who escorting us. Most of them were old soldiers who marched alongside us on the sidewalks at the same pace, but were also sunge people who looked us and our weapons with envious glances. When a young girl smiled at us, we blinked our eyes, but otherwise we went on our way as if there was nothing else in the world. We weren't allowed to march through the Brandenburg Gate, the Republicans wouldn't tolerate it. It too militaristic for them that we were wearing helmets and carrying rifles and marching with military music.

Now we spent our hours standing in front of the government buildings, in front of offices, in front of the Reich Chancellor's Palace. Fritz Ebert lifted his stiff black hat when he passed us. We stared straight ahead and paid our respects. Ministers came and went, some looked at us kindly, some nodded good-naturedly, some measured us with cold, contemptuous glances. How easy it would have been to carry out an assassination! I think many of us toyed with the idea. We didn't love the men we had to protect, nor did we respect them. At best, we were completely indifferent to them. The representatives of the foreign governments looked at us with undisguised contempt.

Curiosity, then we gave ourselves a special jolt: the foreigners should have respect for us!

We had plenty of free time. I showed my comrades the sights of Berlin, especially the arsenal, of course. But then we went to Schlesischer Bahnhof, Alexanderplatz, everywhere we had once fought to create a more decent Germany. How long ago that was!

In the evenings we went to the Nlap or the Luna Park. As soldiers, we lived cheaply. Many a girl asked us shyly at the dance if she could buy us a glass of beer. Soldiers were in demand! And how superior we sporty, tanned and healthy guys felt to the dance floor cavaliers with their flowing manes, padded shoulders, pointed shoes, slouchy posture and degenerate, tired and pale faces! We just laughed derisively when we saw them dancing with their limbs swaying, when we heard the lard with which they sang the stupidest lyrics.

All in , we were glad in the end when our guard duty came to an end and we returned to the Frankfurt barracks.

Berlin was probably a nice and welcome change, but nothing more. The people seemed to be going about their business and not thinking much about Germany.

!Hnd in Germany, Stresemann's very dangerous optimism began to completely paralyze the will of the people. Stresemann basically saw silver linings on the horizon, but on closer inspection the silver linings turned out to be banks of rebellion that very quickly fizzled out into nothing.

Oas Bolk, however, which had lost everything in the few years of the Weimar Republic, which had betrayed and

was lied to, fooled and sucked dry, grasped at every straw like a drowning man. In April 1924, the chairman of the International Commission of Experts, the North American politician and General Oawes, had an expert opinion on the new arrangements for German reparations payments. This

The "Oawesplan" gave a completely impoverished Germany a short grace period during which the foundations for new national wealth were to be laid. From the fifth year onwards, however, the billions in tribute were to be paid in full. So Germany was nothing! On the contrary, the sick slave was only supposed to regain his strength in order to then be exploited all the more mercilessly. 2V2 billion marks a year! This meant that Germany had to pay almost seven million marks in tribute every day!

General Oawes and his backers could rub their hands: there were enough oumme and bribed people in Germany who thanked him many times over for the great kindness of this period of grace. The enemy did not think of giving Germany even one red penny, he did not even think of giving Germany the economic freedom to create this national wealth. On the contrary, the Germans first had to pledge their customs duties, make their taxes available, transform the Reichsbahn into an international company controlled by the enemy. The government sat there like a pagoda and nodded to all the demands made by the overconfident enemy. What the enemy himself thought about the possibility of implementing the Oawes Plan was later revealed by an American who sat on the General Council of the German Reichsbank, which had also become international. He said that the Germans could fulfill the plan if they worked ten to fourteen hours a day, if the German woman was harnessed to the loaded work wagon instead of the horse, and if the boy had to work in the fields and gardens!

But the pious obscurantists in the German government raised their hands and thanked the miraculous God of their politically active church for the gracious change for the better that had taken hold of Germany!

But the German people had forgotten that in 1919 the cleverest and most brutal Jew, Walther Rathenau, who was endowed with the nimbus of philanthropy, had said:

> In 20 years' time, anyone who sets foot in Germany, which they knew to be one of the most prosperous countries, will sink down in shame and sorrow. The great cities of antiquity - Babylon, Nineveh, Thebes - were built of soft clay. Nature caused them to crumble and smoothed the ground and hills. Oie German cities will not stand as ruins, but as half-dead blocks of stone, still partly inhabited by puny people. Only a few districts are still alive, but all splendor and cheerfulness have vanished. Tired companions along the rotten pavement, taverns are lit up, the country roads are trampled underfoot, the forests have been cut down and the fields are sprouting sparse seed. Railroads, harbors, canals are decaying, and everywhere there are sad dwellings, the tall weather-beaten buildings from the days of greatness. All around, old and new lands flourish, nourished by the blood of the broken land, served by its displaced sons!

Oer Oawesplan cast Germany in the role of the fool, running around borrowing money to pay the demands of a swindler. So merciless were the enemies that they provided for the possibility of arbitrarily increasing the tribute payments in the event that, contrary to expectations, Germany should greater wealth.

The true master of Germany became the general agent for reparations payments, the American Parker Gilbert.

He had the right to control everywhere where value was created in Germany, and was also responsible for the financial sovereignty of the Reich.

Germany had completely become a colony! And we Reichswehr soldiers were supposed to be the shoe troop!

Excitement grew in our barracks. We began to rebel against the inactive calm. There were heated arguments in the lessons. It was pointed out to us that the first evacuations of occupied territories been carried out in the west and that the remaining occupied territories would gradually be liberated. But we didn't trust the government. We felt more abandoned and superfluous than ever. Young officers were sent to eastern countries to do special studies. But we were aware that we would never be deployed by the Republic against the bloodsuckers, against the capitalists of the Western powers.

Bad words fell on our parlors! Were we even supposed to fight as foreign legionnaires of Germany's enemies against the activists' fight for freedom in future? Why had we been kept back in the barracks in a state of alert for the last six months whenever were clashes at the borders?

Our service seemed senseless to us, an irreplaceable loss of valuable time. Why were we serving at all, why were we under arms if the enemies were doing what they wanted with Germany?

Even the Oeutschnationals were partly swayed when it came to the vote on the Oawesplan. Oa's money, which came from abroad in the form of loans, seduced many men of business who otherwise prided themselves on their clear minds. They did not see that the once free economy was also being personally enslaved by interest bondage.

The newspapers we received in the barracks were full of hope and good humor. The Spartacist propaganda died down. But the activists who had fought for a free and honorable nation languished in the prisons and penitentiaries.

And Adolf Hitler was at the Landsberg fortress!

Our first maneuver took place in the summer, the first maneuver ever since the outbreak of war! Without armored cars - instead, cardboard disks were pulled across the fields - and without heavy weapons, without the most essential technical equipment, without anti-aircraft guns. But our enthusiasm was boundless: we were allowed to show what we were worth! We knew that the whole country, the whole world was this first maneuver of the Reichswehr. Nationalist circles hoped that the Prussian spirit had not died out. The Reds seethed with rage at the military demonstration. The representatives of the foreign governments eyed the second phase of the maneuver with suspicion. They had to check whether the Reichswehr could be considered a serious opponent at all.

We left without airmen, without tethered balloons. Our sergeant noted with bitter scorn that in 1870 the soldiers not have been much worse equipped, we were just of the same standard as the army of the Great War.

he cheers of the population were great wherever we went. The young people in particular were beside themselves, they ran away from school, and it was not uncommon for our little battle-goers to accompany us for several days until their anxious parents took them away from the bivouac after an exhausting search. The young girls welcomed us with open arms. The boys had nothing to laugh about during our maneuvers. A soldier was worth everything! Old field soldiers got their eyes wet when they looked over our rifles and guns.

We gave our all in the maneuver. With gritted teeth, we did more than our duty. The enemy should learn to fear us, and the people should be proud of us.

We were reasonably lucky with the weather, and the magnificent landscape of the Prignih did its bit to lift our spirits ever higher.

When the bivouac fires browned in the evening and we sang our songs, surrounded by boys and girls, women, war veterans and battlefield supporters who had even come from Berlin in their cars, I had to think back to the Freikorps days. It was now three years since we had left with the hope in our hearts of building a new Reich. But Oa's empire, which stood today, was cowardly and dishonest, and we soldiers played the pathetic role of puppet figures who were supposed to represent a power that did not exist. My mood around the fire became so agitated every evening that I sought solitude. Our singing also seemed ridiculous to me. Who were we actually singing for? For the young girls or for some old field soldier! We few men who didn't take the enemy observers seriously. We drove our guns into position at a gallop, showed off and fired in record time. But the enemy must have thought with satisfaction that with our puny field guns we must be nothing in the face of their heavy artillery.

I was delighted when the maneuver was over. We were tanned and reasonably proud because the assessment of our military performance was consistently good. Now we were to march past Fritz Ebert, the Reichswehr Minister and the gentlemen of the Reich government. We made jokes about the pacifists, who weren't able to tell the difference between a machine gun and a cannon. Basically, however, the idea of marching in front of civilians was repugnant to us.

It started raining the night before the march past. In the early morning the terrain was soaked, and by midday the water was standing in all the hollows and grooves. That's fine, we didn't mind, but the civilians had to suffer from the weather.

Our regiment didn't get to march past! The parade had been called off! There had been an incident!

We laughed derisively and with satisfaction when we heard the details.

The infantry was already marching. Fritz Ebert stood with his gentlemen in the stands. As the rain became heavier, the civilians almost without exception put up umbrellas. An image that must have been offensive to the soldiers. Ebert had not opened an umbrella, but had turned up the velvet collar of his black coat and lowered his hands deep into his pockets. For one captain, this went against the soldier's sense of honor. Without further ado, he had ordered "Eyes straight ahead" and "At ease".

Insulted, Ebert and his entourage left the stands.

A short time after my return, I went to the captain.

"Captain, may I speak to you on a personal matter?"

He nodded kindly and looked at me full on. "What's wrong with heart, Eggers?"

"I want to resign from the army!"

Oer Hauptmann jumped up. "Man, have you gone crazy?"

I shook my head. "Captain, I just can't stand it here anymore. I've been hoping from month to month that we would be deployed for a decisive action.

Nothing happened. And you see, where everything has become peaceful in Germany, where the population believes in silver linings, I feel that we are just decoration/

Oer Hauptmann grabbed me by the arm. "Jeez, what are you talking about! Do you think I enjoy barracks drills? day in, day out? Do you think I did my dull service out of friendship for Ebert and Kon sorten? The day will come when decisions are made, we have to prepare for that day, and our Münner on this. You also have this duty!"

I was silent for a moment. I had thought about what the captain said often enough over the last few days and weeks.

"Captain, you may be right, and I know that most find it difficult to remain a soldier under these circumstances. But I feel that I must go on. I can't explain it to you as I would like to. I just feel it,
that I would rot in the barracks if I had to stay here." The captain

became angry. "I will gladly
Leave when you're down with nerves. I know the conditions!"

Then his voice sounded friendlier. "You're a good guy, a decent soldier. I'm going to recommend you for officer's commission, even though you don't have the Abitur."

I clicked my heels together. "Thank you very much, Captain. But I want to leave in any case and take my life into my own hands. I know for sure that I'll leave it!"

Oer captain drummed on the table. "You've signed up for twelve rides!"

I shrugged my shoulders. "There will be ways out of the barracks."

Three days later, the colonel's doctor examined me. "You want to be discharged?"

I nodded.

The doctor looked at me mockingly. "You're in perfect health!"

I knew that I could only be discharged prematurely for misconduct or illness. Only openness helped here!

"Mr. Surgeon General, I want to get out. To study or something else. You would find something!"

He rubbed his chin with a grin. Then he patted my broad back. "I suspect you have tuberculosis!"

>< My military ticket was issued for Göttingen. How did I actually end up in Göttingen? Göttingen was my hometown, my grandfather had been principal of a girls' secondary school there, my ancestors had been teachers and pastors in and around Gättingen for centuries. But I hardly knew Göttingen myself, I had only there occasionally during the school vacations. I could have gone to Berlin. But Göttingen seemed cleaner to me than Berlin, somehow more honest. Berlin didn't force me to concentrate as much as the small university in Göttingen.

I had planned to enrol first with the small matriculation certificate and then take courses in the various faculties. I first had to find out whether I was still able to work intellectually, whether I was still able to think scientifically after the adventure of my life during the last few years.

Rur, if the experiment was successful, if it turned out that I was capable of going to university, I wanted to back to school and do my A-levels.

I stood at Göttingen station with a pounding heart. Fraternity students were picking up their foxes or old men. It was a noisy hustle and bustle, shouting, laughing and singing.

I stood a corner of the station building in my shabby suit and my small suitcase, waiting for the swarm to get lost.

The conductor's eyes widened when I held my military check under his nose.

I walked the long way to Hainholzweg, where my grandparents' house was. I had only received a little money when I was released and now had to keep house.

My grandfather had died a few years ago and my grandmother lived a very secluded life. She didn't seem to mind at all when I suddenly turned up on her doorstep and for an exception.

I liked Eottingen a lot. The town was clean and reasonably spacious. Only the fact that the university institutes were scattered all over the city proved to be very annoying, especially for me. I had a practical course in zoology, lectures in experimental physics, anatomy and a few lectures in philosophy, German and history. My day was filled to the brim, even more so when I occasionally attended a lecture that I hadn't attended. I accidentally ended up in a law class and embarrassed myself to the bone when the professor, who was completely unfamiliar with my face, kept asking me questions. Since then, I have been quite hostile to furism. I really enjoyed the zoology practical. All the single-celled creatures under the microscope gave me an insight into the shocking regularity of all life. I approached the humanities lectures with a certain amount of trepidation. Although the philosophers' struggle for knowledge and intellectual freedom captivated me most vividly, I was repelled by the utterly impossible and contrived formulations of philosophy. At the end of every lecture, my head was spinning and I had great difficulty translating the content of my exercise book into understandable German. The way history was taught was anything but inspiring. I liked the German studies lectures much better.

After a month, I had realized that, fortunately, my knowledge had not become rusty during my time as a soldier. But what science was I particularly suited to?

I had not been able to fathom. It had only become clear to me that I wasn't fit to be a lawyer.

I visited the excellent library a lot and made independent forays into the sciences. From time to time I also went to events organized by the Hochschul-ring Deutscher Art. However, I soon realized that the spirit was nowhere near as revolutionary as it had been when we met in Berlin. There were a lot of Russian interests, and then sometimes the fraternity members with the Lorps students, the gymnasts with the Landsmannschaften. The great common idea of revolutionary national resistance, which had brought us together at that time, had faded. This was certainly also due to the fact that the front-line soldiers had left the universities in the meantime. I spoke up a few times and gave my opinion on this or that question. The sung gentlemen, dressed in their best clothes, measured me with astonished looks and shook their heads thoughtfully at my radical views. As an individual, I counted for nothing. Yes, if I had belonged to a Gottingen fraternity or at least to a large student ! But as it wasI was nothing more than a "fink", even if I had plenty of smut. After all, I had already fought six times. My free fraternity had fallen asleep in the meantime, inflation had it the death blow both internally and externally. I had no desire to join a fraternity in Göttingen. I also lacked the connections. Only one singing society, which was called the "Spinatwachteln" or "Spinal mit Ei" because of its cheerful colors, invited me several times when my uncle, who was a pastor in Lehrte, had given his fraternity my address.

A Freistudent counted for little in Göttingen, whose lorps were among the best.

and oldest in Germany. Especially the Lorps

"Bremenssa" had a good name. "Saxonia"

was a noble corps. Bismarck had once been active in the "Hannovera" corps, which was commemorated by many plaques and even more anecdotes. But the other corps, the fraternities, countrymen's societies, singing societies and gymnastics societies also went to great lengths to acquire a good reputation and thus the prerequisite for having enough foxes. Anyone observing the sometimes exuberant and boisterous hustle and bustle of the students must have thought that the fraternities were only made of sunnier men from wealthy families. But that was by no means true. There were certainly sunge boys among them, but most of them didn't have much more than the one suit they wore on their bodies. And the old men of the fraternities had to open their wallets often enough to at least provide their sung brothers with a sufficient lunch in the fraternity house. Despite their brash demeanor, most of the students were very modest, very poor people who made up for the lack of a coat with a tough attitude. Of course, there were also of binge drinkers, but unfortunately they could be found in all professional classes. In Göttingen, the Catholic fraternities in particular had the sad reputation of performing special heroic deeds in drinking. The weapons students had to impose restraint on themselves with regard to the menses.

One day. One day I visited the little Bismarck house on the Wall. Bismarck, who had been a great student, had lived there for a while when the bourgeoisie and the angry academic senate no longer wanted him within the walls. The sight of the clubs hanging on the walls made me want to a Göttinger Corps mensur. Above all, I was excited to see the students wearing the same lorps that Bismarck had once worn.

My cousin Bernhard, who with me in my grandmother's house and, to my astonishment, followed the Christian

Wingolfbund, although he was not a theologian himself, introduced me to a fox from the Hildeso-Guestphalia Corps, who took me out one Saturday evening to the
"Landwehr", the old bar of the Göttingen corps, where Bismarck had already swung his bat. The familiar smell of blood, lgsol, iodoform, tobacco and beer me. Only the sound of the weapons was different here than in Berlin, because in Göttingen they fenced with the basket bat, a weapon that could do without thick hand padding due to its large basket grip that protected the whole hand. For this reason, basket fencing was also more elegant and it was much easier to strike deep blows, pulls and low guards. While the bell mallet I fenced with in Berlin had a bright clang, the basket mallet had a much duller sound. Since, in contrast to the Glockenschläger, the Korbschläger wore the colors of the association, the picture of this fencing was more colorful.

Oie Lorpsburschen and Füchse of the "Hannovera" were distinguished from the other Lorps students by their colors. One fox in my company even tried to convince me that his corps was much better than "Hannovera". I smiled and refused, because I knew that every fraternity student must consider his fraternity to be the best and bravest.

Saronia" was fencing against "Hannovera". Both fencers were good. They hit each other at a hell of a pace, and yet even the fastest blow was calculated. Both were bleeding on their foreheads and faces.

During a break, I paused as I observed the second of the "Saronia" corps. I asked the fox at my side for the student's name.

"Oas is a cartel corps brother of ours. Schwarz, from the Saxonia in Jena. He's a good second and is often called in by the Göttingen corps."

I was not mistaken after all. It really was Heinrich Schwarz, an old acquaintance from Berlin, who

had been in and out of my parents' house for five trips. We often had our differences of opinion because he adored my sister and therefore constantly took sides against me when I had disagreements with my sister, who was not always very agreeable. But then again, we got on well and painted swastikas on synagogues and Jewish newspaper stores together at night. And then I had to meet him here in Göttingen! God knows, I hadn't about Schwarz anymore! He had hardly changed. In the same, somewhat lanky, carefree posture with which he stood and painted in front of the brightly lit synagogue, he stood there, his second's helmet pushed back on his neck, the second's apron with the sacred colors of the noble Göttingen Saxonia casually around his hips, the bat under his arm and the cigarette in the corner of his mouth. When the mensur was finished, I went to Heini Schwarz. The greeting was short and rough, as is customary among students and soldiers. Heini's first question about my sister. I couldn't say much, I only knew that Grete had been staying at an uncle's manor in Hinterpommern for a few months. But what she looked like, how she was doing, I didn't know myself. My first question was whether Schwarz hadn't wanted to become a painter. Lr smiled disdainfully. "Yes, I am still primarily a painter. I first studied at the academy in Berlin, had exhibitions whose moral success was excellent, whose financial success was miserable. I've also enough trouble with friends in painters' associations. Then I decided to learn a decent trade. That's why I went to Fena and studied Fura. Now I'm in Göttingen to prepare for the Referendarexamen/

In the afternoon we walked out to Rtkolausberg and lay down under a tree in the grass. Far over there was Göttingen, the towers rising like matchsticks from the

sky. The sun meant well and we lolled in the warm grass. The forests with their dark green, the blue sky, the white clouds, the buzzing of the insects, the chirping and singing of the birds, all this together created an indescribably pleasant atmosphere. I was happy to have met a childhood friend in my loneliness, with whom I had many memories. After I had briefly described my strange life, Schwarz spoke about his life. In Jena, when the Red Army was fighting for Thuringia, he had decided at short notice to in his band and toil and had rushed to take up arms as a volunteer. He had then taken part in the battles for Suhl and had returned to Jena at the end of the semester just in time to fence his due mensuras. In the next semester he had been given his first batch, had successfully navigated his Lorps through the attacks of the Red population, had found enough time to create watercolors and oil paintings in addition to his student obligations and was now in Göttingen to complete his studies.

I nodded to myself. Black was better off than me. Once again, I had to look for a new beginning!

As the sun sank, we got up and stopped off at the inn at the top of the hill. We crowed our last pennies together and were able to buy ourselves a bottle of Rhine wine. Then we shook hands and drank to a new friendship.

From that day on, we were inseparable. When Schwarz was able to afford a slightly better furnished room, we met there, read Nietzsche and Kant together, sang Löns songs to the lute, which Schwarz was not bad at playing, talked about heaven and hell and let our thoughts soar far above everyday life. Over time

A larger circle grew around us. Older corps students, freelance students, doctoral students, exam candidates joined us, bringing with them new thoughts, new tensions, new points of view. We sat up many a night with our heads red with passion, expressing the thoughts of our hearts, looking for ways out of our emotional distress, for new territory, for a home for our ideas. Radical thoughts clashed with conservative ones, soldierly ones with bourgeois ones, but nevertheless our circle was stimulating and supportive, and we went about our work with increased zeal. It became more and more clear to me that I could only devote myself to the intellectual sciences. I realized that the attainment of freedom required more than a good will and a strong fist. Above all, a great knowledge of the spiritual foundations of the struggle for freedom had to be created. There were certainly enough fools in Germany, but they were at all times a pawn in the hands of the anonymous powers. Wherever we looked, there were cunning Jews, cold neocons, clever jugglers, and we could only overcome them one day if, in addition to our hot hearts, we possessed incorruptible knowledge and a will that would not shrink from any consequence. Until now, intellectuals believed that it was possible to lead a successful life without character, and many of our nationalist friends were of the opinion that a decent character would be able to provide all the other prerequisites for the success of the struggle for freedom. In the years after the war, I myself had experienced enough how much I still lacked clear recognition and deep knowledge.

Oer Hochschulring disappointed more and more. We withdrew

We gradually withdrew from him completely and made an effort to make up in our circle for what had been neglected in the official student body. Among the ten of us, as strong as we had become, there was hardly anyone who had not already demonstrated a sense of national responsibility. Oie

Most of them had been Free Corps soldiers, temporary volunteers or at least active workers in the Technical Red Aid, the others had at least worked as rural helpers. One day we came up with a name in a very funny way. We had watched a movie for preferential prices. "GöstaBer- ling", based on the Lagerlöf novel. This silent movie showed not only very beautiful landscape shots but also a group of guys we liked very much, namely the "Kavaliere". We were impressed by the lads who led a free, wild life in the spirit of camaraderie. However, our sympathy campaigns had the result that we were expelled from the movie theater for disturbing the peace. As "Kavaliere" we soon became famous in Göttingen. We always appeared together, ate together, drank together, attended all sorts of events together and went on excursions together far into the surrounding area as far as the Weser and the Brocken. For the younger students, it was considered a special honor to be allowed to socialize with one of the "Kavaliere". Our reputation for being revolutionaries and rebels entitled us to our truly sovereign appearance in public. We showed no reverence for professors either, and we were almost determined to embarrass professors in societies with our heretical views.

Sometimes we also went to meetings of political parties, from the Reds to the Oeutschnationals, and caused considerable confusion and annoyance in the discussion with our blunt statements. Since we had no qualms about making extensive use of our thick goat hair if necessary, we almost always triumphed over our red opponents. A number of "knots", as we called them, from the Reichsbanner were already running around Göttingen marked by our blows. We were notorious in civic circles, however, because we had anything but genteel manners, we didn't kiss hands, we made

We didn't have silly dance conversations. We had given our word that we would always speak our mind, and it was an extremely revolutionary one as far as common bourgeois views were concerned. We made no secret of our dislike of the state and the hypocritical, sycophantic society, spoke of the men in government only as traitors, bigwigs, bought creatures and wore the swastika conspicuously on our coats.

When, on the occasion of a visit by Reich President Ebert, a bright red bathing suit was stretched the main street, the Weender, about which the head of the republic was outraged beyond measure, we "cavaliers" were suspected, and when one night, it was the night of November 9th, the lions in front of the Göttingen town hall were painted with bright red oil paint, only the
"Cavaliers" must have been. In fact, only a fraction of the pranks were on our account, but our hump was wide enough to bear any suspicion. We had the cheek to be proud of the fact that we were believed capable of any outrageous deed.

A few times in the fall we had been to the delightful resort of Mariaspring, at the foot of the Plefferuine. Because we had no money, we had to walk the long distance. But our appearance caused such a sensation that they willingly gave us a table. We danced with the most beautiful girls from the boarding houses, who were taken to the Mariaspring night parties, and nobody disputed our right to a little stroll with them for half an hour in the mysteriously dusky forest. Our acquaintances with the ladies were short-lived, however, and the pensioners wrung their hands when we took the liberty of them a visit for the sake of a few beautiful blue eyes. And in the families of the daughters of the bourgeoisie, we were not at all popular, because they only valued visits from serious marriage candidates.

It was inevitable that we would occasionally violent clashes with other students because of our presumptuous nature. Since we didn't think to dismiss the usual question as to whether the occasion was a deliberate insult or just a mistake with evasive answers, but scornfully assured them that it would be a satisfaction for us to them emphatically, there were repeated demands for sabres. We practiced sabres for an hour with fencing master Seemann in the morning and were at our fencing best. We were just waiting for an opportunity to compete on sabre. We won the first sabre rounds hands down. After that, the others preferred to out of our way. We were filled with a true elation of superior freedom that despised all worries. Only with horror did we realize that one day we would have to separate. Although we made no secret of the fact that we were in a not particularly unusual period of storms and storms, we nevertheless believed that we had a right to feel like titans in the face of the petty and harmless nerds among the students. True to the words of our master Nietzsche, we wanted to live dangerously and saw no other way to do so. Every now and then we accepted an invitation to a lorp party, but otherwise we remained lonely. With the tent, we began to give lectures on a predetermined topic, and we could not accomplish any seminar work with greater enthusiasm than our self-determined task.

As Christmas approached, our community was firmly closed. The "cavaliers" were gazed at by the students with a mixture of awe and horror, like rare animals in a zoo. We ourselves, however, soon lost the vain consciousness of something special, but of course we had become all the more crude and ruthless in our way of life.

One day before the start of the vacation, we a little riot. Oa's student union had announced that a well-known cigarette factory intended to give each student a pack of fifty cigarettes. We picked up the cigarettes, happily surprised, and when we enjoyed the first one we with indignation that the tobacco was frozen and therefore worthless and inedible. So that was what was behind this foundation that was praised as being so generous! The factory had managed to have its donation glorified by all the newspapers and presented as exemplary!

Ugh! We had a murderous rage against these impudent capitalists, organized processions, carried signs with provocative texts in front of us, made noise and cursed and managed to get the Götttnger newspapers to publish indignant reports. However, they divided their indignation between us and the cigarette factory.

We "cavaliers" drove to Berlin together and decided to have a farewell drink. Through his father's connections, Schwarz had managed to get us free tickets to Strindberg's
"Dance of Death". We were very moved by the performance with Paul Wegner. After the performance, we visited the "Wilhelms" restaurant at the Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church, which is generally known for its patriotic atmosphere. However, we didn't get a chance to drink our farewell drink in peace. As soon as we the pub, we were disturbed by the beer bliss, which had men and women singing national songs to the sound of a dashing military band under the numerous pictures of the Kaiser and black and white red flags. The issues of the nation had become too sacred for us to allow them to be dragged into the everyday muck by this beer rabble. Disgusted, we had already paid and were just about to leave this stupid place of patriotic philistinism, shouting our protests, when - it was already past midnight - the band stood up and solemnly played the chorale "Wir treten zum Beten". Oie

The bourgeois around us rose just as solemnly, and many a drunken man leaned on the black, white and red table flags without being able or willing to prevent the thick tears of alcoholic emotion from rolling down his cheeks. We had sat down ostentatiously and didn't hold back with malicious remarks. As a result, we were met with indignant shouts and a metal beer coffin was hurled at us. At the end of the loral, the gripped bourgeois sat down and washed down the remaining emotion with huge gulps. Six or seven oick-bellies were sitting at the revenge table, loudly their anger at us. We shouted at them, laughing, that they shouldn't get upset, their obesity would be very dangerous. One of them rushed over to our table, waving his arms and shouting in a loud voice that we had no honor in our bodies and that our behavior was more than scandalous. In no time at all, we were surrounded by a whole mob of gesticulating and shouting citizens, whose anger could not even be calmed by the band playing the "Wacht am Rhein". A manager in a frock coat also made indignant gestures towards us. The fat gentleman who had given the signal to attack us felt compelled by the unexpected success of his belligerent attack to hold his fist under Schwarz's nose and terrible threats. Black was now too much for Oas again. He rose slowly, measuring his master with looks that should have warned him. And when the gentleman continued to wave his fist, Schwarz struck and with his blow threw the shouter several meters into the pub. I knocked the manager, who was about to pounce on Schwarz, to the ground with a punch. In a few seconds we were in a real brawl. But we understood,

we got off lightly. After all, it wasn't our fault that there was considerable damage to property.

Afterwards we sat together half the night in a small coachman's pub, washing down our disgust and hands that we wanted to rank the patriotic philistines alongside the traitors and bigwigs and hate them with all our hearts.

One day Hindenburg had come to Göttingen to dedicate the memorial to the fallen in his capacity as honorary citizen of the university. We brought him, whom we respected as a representative of the war army and thus of a better Germany, an enthusiastic song. It was an uplifting sight to see the tall, broad-shouldered old man standing among the students. His voice was creaky, but could be heard in the furthest corners of the university's courtyard. The content of his speech disappointed us somewhat. We had hoped to hear a revolutionary appeal, but instead we heard general phrases about the fatherland.

After Christmas, I began to for the Abitur. There were plenty of humanists among the "cavaliers" who gave me instructions on which old classics I should read. Day and night I sat over Horace, Tibull, Latull, Proper, Plato and Aristotle, Cicero's speeches, Livy, Pliny and Aristophanes. I knew the German classics, and I hoped to do well in German because I had published my first short poems and essays in magazines and newspapers. Mathematics caused me grief, I didn't understand even the simplest theorems. Even my pious Better of St. Wtngolf was unable to help me, even though he studied mathematics. I decided to abandon mathematics altogether and threw myself into it with all my might.

Subjects that suited me better. My knowledge of French was refreshed by a "cavalier" who had studied in Lausanne for two semesters. It was touching to see how my friends made an effort to turn me into a knowledgeable senior high school student.

Oas Fahr 1925 brought some political upheaval right at the beginning. The Marx cabinet was overthrown in mid-January. It was replaced by the Luther cabinet, which was made up of the Center Party, the German People's Party and the Oeutschnatlonalen. We had long since grown accustomed to expecting anything good from the bourgeois nationalists, but we were happy to be wrong. However, we were not instructed. But when Frih Lbert died on February 28 and was buried in Heidelberg, the excitement ran high. Who would become Reich President? After all, Ebert had become president without a by-election. Now it had to be shown what the people really thought. Were the Nationalists even in a position to put forward a promising candidate? There were unusual debates at the university, in the pubs and in public. Schwarz said laconically that it didn't matter who became president of this Jewish republic. We, on the other hand, were of the opinion that a Reich President, at least on paper, would have far too much power for it not to matter who used this power.

It soon became known that the nationalist candidate would be none other than Hindenburg. In contrast to the immediately enthusiastic patriots, we received this news with mixed feelings. Was Hindenburg, at 7? Wasn't he far too old to fill such a post, which required a whole man? Was he still energetic and superior enough to take up the fight with the Reds and Blacks? We thought of his speech in Göttingen and became even more concerned. In addition, Hindenburg himself was reluctant for a long time, pointing to his age, until he

declared his willingness to run. His opponents, the centrist Marx and the communist Thälmann, were much younger and more ruthless. But Htnden- burg was certainly the only one could unite the bourgeois parties, who were jealous of each other. The bourgeoisie were stupid and vain enough to prefer a Thälmann to the helm for so-called prestige reasons than to support an energetic younger man who belonged to a party that did not have millions of followers. Perhaps it was only possible to rely on man who had not emerged from a party and yet had the trust of wide circles.

For us, of course, there was no question as to whom we should vote for. We campaigned vigorously for Hindenburg in public, we disrupted the meetings of the Reds and Blacks, we volunteered for discussions and spoke ourselves at political speech evenings in the villages and small towns.

Hindenburg's opponents pulled out all the stops. On the one hand Hindenburg was condemned as a butcher of the Maflen, on the other he was painted in glaring colors as the stirrup-holder of the monarchy, while others wanted to see in him the arch-capitalist. From the Center to the Communists, there was a consensus that a general should never, ever hold the presidential chair. The Social Democrats made no conscience of electing the center leader Marx. They, who supposedly fought for intellectual freedom with such loud words, unhesitatingly handed the entire cultural policy to the medieval sourpusses, if only no general was elected' And the Center, in turn, preferred a wild marriage with the freethinking and religion-hostile Social Democrats before it thought of giving its vote to the pious, albeit Protestant Hindenburg. When the Center used to throw its weight around and point to its state-preserving attitude

It threw off its mask and spied on everything that had any semblance of soldiering. Indeed, he left no doubt that a Thäl- wann would be more welcome to him than a Hindenburg if necessary.

We spoke of this betrayal to the farmers and townspeople we met. We went into great detail and showed the background to the emergence of the Center at the time of the Franco-Prussian War and talked about how the Center had repeatedly campaigned against Bismarck's empire in the name of its God and how it was working today to prevent Germany from becoming stronger. Only in the Eichsfeld region did we clash with Catholics who listened to the Center; otherwise it was always social democrats who rose to the defense of the Center and its anti-imperial policies. Sometimes we had fun and joined the discussion in our own meetings, then we spoke with unctuous words about the holy center and the calming effect of the belief in miracles, so that even old people began to laugh heartily and didn't want to know anything more about Marx.

In the second ballot on April 26, Hindenburg was elected with a very narrow majority. A lengthy dispute as to whether the election was valid at all, Marx and Thälmann together had more votes than Hindenburg.

In Gottingen and throughout the Reich, the result of the election was met with tremendous jubilation. The old black and white and red flags were brought out, men suddenly wore their war medals again, and patriotic phrases were thrown around by everyone. The people expected Hindenburg's election to bring about a fundamental change in all areas of politics and the economy. On the evening of the 27th, the entire Göttingen student body marched through the city in a huge torchlight procession in honor of Hindenburg. The members of the fraternities dressed in fatigues.

We sang the old student songs, the "Osuäesmus lAitur", the Deutschlandlied and songs of the World War. The enthusiasm knew no bounds, because we thought we on the eve of a great national uprising. There were minor incidents in various streets when a few communists greeted our Zng with shouting and jeering. We made short work of the shouters, who spat at the flags, and hit them with burning torches. Empty flower pots were thrown into our procession from a house in the old town. A student suffered head injuries from the shards. We then stormed the house and beat the crap out of the male occupants. There were no serious incidents. Our procession ended at the old parade ground. We threw the torches in a heap and sang the Oeuschlandlied when the short ceremonial speech was over. Then we went home in the hope that the morning sun would rise over a happier Germany.

We had lost ourselves in optimism. The name Hindenburg was not a program. Nor was there any demonstration of a new, national will. Everything remained the same. Stresemann also remained. The people had been given a representative, not a leader.

Very soon the very circles that had fought his election with the vilest means of slander and defamation of honor began to press the President of the Reich.

We learned to recognize that the people had to be conquered from below.

^/the "Kavaliere" went all over the world. Schwarz was the first to take his Referendarexamen in Teile. The doctors among us took their state exams, I moved to Berlin to my Abitur.

I had firmly resolved not to burden my parents financially any more if possible. I couldn't even blame them for describing my decisions as whims and looking forward to my future development with concern. Almost every year had seen me in a different corner of Germany in a different profession. And I myself felt very clearly that my wanderings were far from over. But I didn't talk to anyone about it.

It made sense for me to earn my living by giving lessons, because I believed that the best to fill the gaps in my knowledge was to give lessons and learn myself.

I was lucky. On the very first day that I in the columns of a Berlin newspaper for a teaching opportunity, my eyes fell on an advertisement in which a forty-nine-year-old bank employee was looking for a student to prepare him for his first year, the Obersekundaretfe. I wrote to him and received a reply by return of post. This bank employee hoped that the exam would entitle him to a position as a civil servant and offered me a lump sum of one hundred marks a month for daily lessons in all subjects. That was an incredible amount of money for me, and it wouldn't have taken much for me to fall around the man's neck. His pretty daughter, who

my age, looked at me in amazement. My second pupil was a baker's son whom heaven had blessed with a larger-than-life stupidity. I felt sorry for the boy in my heart, because he felt miserable at the Ggmnastum and would have loved to become a baker. He would certainly have been well suited to this honorable trade. But his father definitely wanted him to study! His vanity was greater than his intellect, so he didn't see and probably didn't want to see that his son was suffering physically and mentally at the Ggmnastum, where he had long since become the oldest student in the class and at the same time the last, because there was no class that he hadn't passed twice. I could be happy about that, because after all, the stupidity of this quartermaster would earn me thirty marks a month and a portion of coffee and cake every day, which in turn replaced my lunch. I had also agreed with the master baker that I would be given a medium-sized cake as a special reward for every good mark the son received in a mass work. Later on, I had brought the boy so far that he wrote almost only good work, so that for health reasons I had to ask for three marks to be paid to me from almost to almost on request.

So my start in Berlin was auspicious. From the vicissitudes of my life, I had also learned that you only have to tackle your destiny with skill in order to shape it according to your own will.

I had found a cheap and clean room in Lharlottenburg, now I only needed to adapt my knowledge to the Berlin curriculum for grammar schools, then I could try my luck.

About a fortnight before the summer vacation, I felt mature enough to knock on the door of my ggmnaflum, which had slammed so hard behind me at the time. I

couldn't stop my heart from pounding when I had the school usher report me to the principal.

Everything was just as it was back then. The thick velvet portieres didn't let a ray of sunshine through, the bust of Bismarck stood dusty on the bookcase, and the director sat in his upholstered armchair and measured me with partly curious, partly suspicious glances. "Well, Mr. Eggers, what brings you here? Surely not longing!"'

I cleared my throat and suppressed a cheeky reply. "The desire less than the necessity, Mr. Director."

"What does that mean? Are you trying to pump me? I don't have any money myself. These eternal taxes, salary cuts and levies, you understand, don't you?"'

I couldn't suppress a laugh. "I understand, Mr. Director. But that's not the point."

I gave myself a push. "You see, Headmaster, times become more peaceful again. I've looked around Germany as best I could and I'd like to your upper school to take my Abitur next Easter."

The principal made a gesture with his hand as if he wanted to press the bell button for help. Then he lowered his hand and looked at me the way you might look a fool who doesn't know whether he was saying something serious or funny at that moment.

Oa he didn't say anything, I thought it was appropriate to explain my request. "I want to get on in life, I want to study. I need the Abitur for that." Shaking his head, the principal watched me in silence.

I tried to joke. "After the last amnesties, we old Freikorps people are completely blameless citizens."

Slowly and with dignity, the principal rose to his feet, his hands resting gravely on the top of his desk, leaned over to me and looked me sternly in the eye. "You

have always stepped out of line, Mr. Eggers. You have always disrupted my school discipline. Do you seriously think I would be such an idiot as to include you in my senior class so that you can completely confuse the young people with your pernicious influence?"

I had to pull myself together not to tell him that I would very much like to think he was such an idiot. So I just said, almost reassuringly, that it would be perfectly safe to take me in because, as sa emphasized, the amnesty!

The principal stood up to his full height, crossed his arms in front of his chest and measured me with a contemptuous look. -I will never, ever let you into my school. I have not forgotten what you threw at me when you returned from the Freikorps and I had to discharge you from the grammar school. And now go away, your presence upsets me."

Oa he stood before me now, this honorable man, blocking my way into the future with all his noble and cultivated dignity. My hand twitched for a moment. Damn it, even these citizens were generally respected Germans! Then I forced myself. With a cool bow, I grabbed the door handle. -I clearly remember calling out a very popular and frequently used quote to you at the time, Mr. Director. Even today I do not want to leave you without assuring you how much I would like you to comply with my request at that time. But then please do so crosswise, Mr. Director, crosswise!"

I could still see him down in his armchair. His mouth was wide open in shock and astonishment, his hand was pointing to the door, a white, very neat hand, and his voice overflowing with -Get out!"

I stood there and looked at the grammar school again. After all, there were quite a few secondary schools in Berlin. But where were they? Without further ado, I went to the nearest phone booth and read the list of

schools. The nearest grammar school was at Savigngplah, named after Emperor Friedrich. I had taken the streetcar past the ugly red building often enough.

Gin look at the Nhr! It was eleven. If I was lucky, I could still reach the principal. I took the electric train from Nhlandstraße to Kurfürstendamm and walked the few minutes as fast as I could. My hand trembled as I pressed the bell button. How powerless I at that moment! A man I didn't even know was going to decide what happened to me.

Oer valet openedand examined me closely.

-Is the boss there?"

Oer valet bowed his head diplomatically. -Not for everyone, sir. What are you dealing in?"

It was not so easy for me to overcome the man's mistrust. Nor did I think of telling him what I wanted.

-Just let me in, I'm not a moocher!"

But the usher remained firm. -I must know what you want, otherwise there's no point in you standing around in the doorway!"

I looked at him pleadingly. -Were you a soldier?" Oer

valet threw himself into the chest. -Of course, man!"

"Oer Lhef too?"

-Clear, man! Oer was Hauptmannl"

"Well, then report me to the captain. him a soldier wants to see him!"

Oer school usher disappeared, and a few minutes later I was standing in front of the principal, a tall, blond, very youthful-looking man, who held out his hand to me in a friendly manner. -What do you want?"

I took a running start. "You have to help me, Mr. Director!"

He pushed me into an armchair and offered me a cigar.

-Now fire away!'"

He listened to my story and my request with a smile. -You have courage, Mr. Eggers. I don't want to make this leap from the barracks to the school bench without further ado/

I felt that I had won, and already my old cheerfulness had returned. -School days won't be any harder than a campaign/

The director slapped his thigh, laughing. -Please don't take it amiss that I'm laughing. But the idea of a lansquenet like you breaking into my Jewish school has something funny about it. You must know that of the fourteen senior pupils at my school, twelve are religious Jews, the thirteenth is baptized. We are Kurfürstendammggmnaslum!"

I had to laugh too. But I had faith in this principal, he would make sure that I didn't find the beginning too difficult.

Two days later, I passed my entrance exam for Oberprima. I had the language subjects with "good" and "very good", but I had made a fool of myself in math. But at least I was an Oberprimaner!

First of all, I took a few days off to clarify various questions. I had joined the "Sportflug-G.m.b.H.", an association that trained young men in powered flight, through the mediation of a cousin who had just won the first flight in Germany on his small Klemm-Oaimler, not with the intention of helping any young sports enthusiasts to obtain their flying licenses, but rather to serve certain military requirements. It was not easy to get into the circles of post-war aviation because the selection was very thorough due to the risk of espionage. I was all the happier when I was accepted. Now, after the first few weeks of service, I was to leave

to leave! I had felt at home among the fresh, bold comrades, had got to know Ildet and Fritz Siebel and all their names, and now I had to say goodbye because I had become a senior pupil!

My arrival at the Ggmnasium was not entirely without excitement. When I entered the classroom, the twelve Fuderi were standing in one corner, the baptized man in the other. Oer Arier shook my hand and greeted me with a smile. A very elegantly dressed rascal suddenly emerged from the corner of the Jews, stood in front of me with his hands in his pockets, looked me over cheekily and then asked me in a brash tone whether I had ever killed anyone, as they had heard I was a Frelkorpsmann. I laughed in amusement and said that it was part a soldier's duty to kill the enemy and I had done my duty!

Oa the Jew spat out in front of me and said, "You're not human!"

The next second he was rolling on the floor screaming. I had hit his nose with my fist with full force.

Just at that moment, the principal had to to the door! He asked me to follow him into his office. There I had to describe exactly what had happened and vouch for the accuracy of my statements with my word of honor. Oer Jude was given two hours' detention.

2If the principal not stood by me in soldierly comradeship, I would probably have been a senior pupil for four weeks at most. I didn't hold it against them that the Jews hated me like the plague. From the very first day I had made no secret of the fact that I was an enemy of the Jews. What was worse was that they repeatedly denounced me to the provincial school board as a swastika and an enemy of the state and, to this end, they recorded all my statements that I made in anger or

I wrote down everything I did, even just for fun. But the worst thing that some of the teachers were against me and made full use of this dislike. There was one professor in particular, a white-born, bespectacled man, who sought and found the opportunity in every Latin lesson to make me feel superior. He wanted to prove to me that I couldn't know anything because I lacked the upper secondary and the lower primary. He didn't want to recognize that I had worked for myself. Then it didn't suit him that I had shit, that I already knew the university, that I had been a soldier. Yes, and what the worst thought for him, surely I had already loved girls? Nnausdenklich! A senior pupil! Now I was anything but submissive. I didn't laugh at his every stupid joke like the Jews, I didn't raise my voice when I knew something or when I wanted to leave and I had the cheek to have my own opinion. The professor was also a registered member of the Oeutfchnationale Dolkspartei (National Democratic Party) and prided himself on his patriotism. I had rarely seen such a vain peacock and had to fight with myself every time not to be rude to him or even pluck his beard. Sometimes I could have shot him in ribs with a sidearm when he sat so hypocritically on the catheder and tried to make me look stupid and ignorant at some Horazode. And yet Latin used to be one of my best subjects!

The Greek lessons, on the other hand, were very stimulating. Oer Studienrat was a former soldier, had experienced the trench war as a simple country soldier and had retained his sense of humor. We read Plato's "State" and Aristophanes' "Frogs" in the voluntary study group.

And the German lessons with the principal were a real experience. Here we read excerpts from Schopenhauer, Schiller's "History of the Apostasy of the Netherlands" and Goethe's "Faust". It was significant that the Jews were complete strangers to Schiller.

and in that hour tried to bring up the modern playwrights, especially Bronnen, Toller and Schnihler. Here they knew every scene, every actor from Moissi to Kortner to Bergner. I once laughingly told them how we had blown up the performance of Schnihler's "Reigen" in Berlin, the whole Jewish press had screamed "Zeter und Mordio" about this "cultural disgrace". Since then, the Jews regarded me as an extremely dangerous barbarian, but none of them blamed me personally. The history lessons were also generous and stimulating. Unfortunately, the history teacher was punished because the Jews had made well-documented written submissions from which it emerged that the history teacher was engaged in völkisch educational work.

The weeks flew by. My day was completely full. I worked late into the night because I had made up my mind to submit a voluntary thesis on an archaeological topic for my A-levels. became particularly fascinated by archaeology, especially the cultures of Crete and Mgkene. Whenever I could spare an hour after school and after finishing my lessons, I went to the State Library to get advice from the very accommodating clerk. Despite all the stress, the work was not too much for me. I was driven by the idea that I had a lot of catching up to do and that I had to learn more than the average young German.

When summer vacation came, I rented a canoe and along the Havel. I always had my books with me.

Every now and then, when I was lying on the grass somewhere on the beach and had closed the book to relax, I about my life and about the people I had met on my journey.

I had met on my wanderings. Most of them had stopped where I had met them. There was no point in calling them from afar, they might not have understood the call. Ole activists were scattered to the four winds, some were still on the Devil's Islands, others in penitentiaries and prisons, one was in China, the other on his way to Abü el Krim, the brave leader of the Rifkabglen who had started their fight for freedom. I would have loved to rush to the Rlf after an annoying Latin lesson, preferably with the beard of the silly professor in my hand. But my immediate duty held me much stronger than the adventurous distance was able to entice me.

My comrades from the Reichswehr had written from time to time; they were the usual crude, somewhat clumsy greetings. Every now and then a girl had also signed, shy and somewhat helpless. More serious letters never came. That was probably because the men with whom I had once stood shoulder to shoulder had learned to sacred thoughts in candles.

There was no greeting from my time in the country. That time seemed to have died. I'm sure the farm workers' fingers were too stiff from their hard work!

The only friend I had left was Kein, Schwarz, who wrote from time to time. He had returned to Göttingen after his first residency to prepare for his doctoral exams. None of the "cavaliers" were left in Göttingen. So it had become lonely and quiet there too!

I thought of the fact that the adventurers of life must become lonely, for most of their former companions turn into hospitable houses along the way and make themselves comfortable there behind the stove. But comrades on the same path to the same destinations are rare on the stony roads of freedom! I was grateful to my luck that I had found Schwarz. I was not completely alone after all.

The girls I met were fun and friendly, but for the most part it wasn't worth stopping for while. They wanted to be cheerful, nothing more, they wanted to play and be spoiled by their husbands. I had not yet met one who wanted to share in the man's needs, questions and worries, who wanted to be a companion, although I longed with all my heart for such an encounter.

I already knew many girls, and I remembered most of them with joy and gratitude. But with none of them could I have said that I wished to spend a lifetime walking with them.

Perhaps, in order to attain the happiness of which the bourgeois dreamed, one had to become very quiet, very poor in desires, perhaps also very indolent. My life had so far been more stormy than that of all the young people I had met, but there it was especially beautiful, where the storm of fate had seized me with all its force, so that I had to fight it to the death. How could the delicate flower of happiness even in these rough storms? And which girl would dare to go on an adventure with me? My ship of life was a weatherproof sailor who could run aground on a sandbank any day. I needed someone who wouldn't despair, but would get their hands dirty to get the ship afloat again. But the ones I knew wanted to sail to the other side in a lurus cabin. It was not good for me to worry about it, for my heart grew heavy with it, and I began to wish to seek more dangerous adventures, the accomplishment of which all my strength, so that there was no time left for such thoughts, Plato wrote in his -State" of the community of guardians especially valuable to the state. Such a community was as necessary then as it is today. For in this way we mobile, we searching, we restless ones ran ourselves to death, fo

we ran our heads into the walls of incomprehension. That's why so many of the brave ones of the post-war period had miserably, when the bourgeois happiness of security had replaced the longing for creative rest. Where would I end up one day? The thought of my future had nothing liberating about it. I had set myself a new goal, that was all. And once I had achieved it, I would look for a new goal. It would probably stay like that for the rest of my life.

Maximilian Harden once examined in his magazine, in his own way, the cause of my generation's restlessness. He came to his characteristic conclusion the war had made us young people morally unstable, brutal and dissatisfied, that we were the victims of our parents' sins.

But psychologists of a more serious bourgeois character had also written learned treatises and had many things to say about our prematurity, irreverence and distance from God.

In reality, the causes probably lay deeper. The war had overturned old, outdated, long rotten illusory values, made new evaluations according to the heart and character, and in the midst of the destruction, the upheavals, the devaluations, a generation grew up that was not only the war generation, but also a generation of warriors who rebelled against the fact that after all the terrible, but somehow also salutary shocks, a bourgeois, mendacious value system wanted to spread again. We had the intention of wanting to live dangerously. Nietzsche had become our great teacher, an educator, not a prophet. However, we did not see the dangerous life as an accumulation of partly dark, partly cheerful adventures, but life itself appeared to us as a great battlefield, as a single true, very great, very

hard, very ruthless adventure that we had to go through, that ate us or that we forced. We did not want to compromise with this adventure, nor did we want to become traders with fate, we certainly did not want to howl with the wolves, and we despised the teachings we were given taunting us that we would very soon sow our wild oats. We wanted to remain original and not bow our necks. We also wanted to be soldiers in our daily lives, men without reservation or reassurance. Oas was the whole problem of my generation. Jewish psychologists turned it into a "father-son complication" and relegated our view of life to the very extensive "Sturm und Drang" chapter. Surely every youth before us had known their rebellion against people who had grown older and duller and hoped do better one day. But these impulses too domesticated in feeling, in intuition, in longing. We had already come a step further, we already possessed the knowledge of the strength of martial life, and we did not want to have this knowledge taken away from us by pleas, threats or flattery. Under no circumstances did we want to swap the potion of knowledge for the sleeping draught of renunciation.

Life in Germany became more bourgeois from day to day. People went about their work, and the common patriots realized that dealing with political questions could bring many a mischief besides hot heads. Hindenburg was seen as the guarantor of so-called stable conditions, but that meant that the republic became even more Jewish, even more cowardly. Stresemann made every effort to adapt the whole of German life to the rhythm of the capitalist Western powers. We young

Germans were to forcefully educated to become Europeans in the spirit of the old democracies. The waves of excitement that ran particularly high during the Hitler-Ludendorff trial had long since subsided. Hitler was behind bars. The citizens thought nothing more of it. Revolutionaries had to end that way, period! And actually the revolutionaries could still be grateful that they were allowed to live, that's it!

he population has always been ungrateful and will probably always remain ungrateful. They forget the bad with the good. Perhaps they even have the advantage that they can unscrupulously throw off their ballast! She forgot the grayest misery above the repeatedly called silver lining, and she also forgot that men had gone into misery, deprivation and suffering for the sake of the people. She also took little notice of the fact that Adolf Hitler was released from prison on February 2? February 1925 and had now been feverishly at work for half a year gathering the soldiers of German freedom under his banner.

Blessing October I had so well in the Oberprima that even the Latetnprofessor had to give me a good mark. He did so with great reluctance. It was certainly not easy for me to fit in with the school discipline or even to accept the very schematic learning system. I was ahead of the precocious Jews, who loved to discuss every question with a torrent of words, because of my will, which had already been hardened in life; I learned more thoroughly and, because I knew why I was learning, also more passionately and therefore more easily. However, I was completely bewildered by mathematics. If the mathematics professor hadn't been a touchingly decent man, I would have had a lot to worry about at times. But this professor had

after the first flat "five" I had achieved, slapped me heartily on the shoulder and gave me the weak consolation that Schiller no idea about mathematics either. Only once, to my own surprise, did I get a better grade because I had solved an artillery math problem that the Jews failed at. In my mind, I had made use of the unintended aid, the aiming circle. But because I didn't fall back on the old penny-pinching habit of copying, but honestly messed up my work, the professor respected me as a man and let me go scot-free. I was considered to be one-sidedly talented.

Unfortunately, I had to give up my bank employee in the fall. He had now his secondary school leaving certificate, with excellent grades, and had no reason to take lessons for my sake. We had a big party, during which the daughter of the house gave me a few fiery kisses. Three days later, my loyal pupil sent me three months' fees as thanks. My other pupil continued to make good progress and was then to be put on his own spiritual feet. However, this didn't sit well with him, as his next piece of work was a complete failure. I then resumed teaching and, as punishment for the scare that the baker had given me by dismissing me, I was paid a fee of fifty marks.

At the end of October, in a ceremony held by the principal on behalf of the Berlin magistrate, I was awarded the commemorative coin, which was distributed annually to secondary schools at the time, as a reward "for good performance". I never had a thing for badges, medals and other trappings, but I was genuinely delighted to receive this commemorative coin.

I then put my will to a new test: I asked the director to teach me Hebrew.

to direct. I hoped to have acquired the necessary knowledge by the time I finished my A-levels, and for an archaeologist, knowledge of as many ancient languages as possible was a prerequisite for fruitful work. The principal looked at me, shaking his head and tapping his forehead, but at my insistence he agreed to take over the lessons. Apart from the rabbi, he was the only teacher who had a license to teach Hebrew.

Learning this language did not cause me any major difficulties; on the contrary, I soon discovered that the Semitic languages are much less complicated than the Aryan ones. I also took great pleasure in throwing a few of the numerous swear words that their ancestors had already used on the desert migration at my southern classmates with an amiable smile.

There was only one more political clash, when the government had its press announce that at the Locarno Conference Strefemann had brought about a new turn in German policy towards the Western powers. I vented my displeasure at the pointless, verbose and mendacious conferences that led to a misunderstanding of the true situation.

After all, Germany had only concluded a guarantee agreement with the Western powers regarding the territories on the Rhine and also voluntarily renounced military sovereignty in the demilitarized zones. Seen in the light of day, this was anything but a victory for German interests. And then the German government had arbitration agreements with Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, France and Belgium. Oas Rhineland, however, , and no mention was made of whether and when it was to be vacated. The demands of the nationalist parties,

The fact that at this conference, which was intended to settle the tensions, the stain of the lie that Germany was solely to blame for the war was not taken into account. This had so embittered even the Oeutschnationale Bolkspartei, which had grown so large in its acquiescence, that it from the government. On
The Locarno Pact was signed on December 1. The Cologne zone was finally cleared of the enemy, but the other zones remained before. The sanction zone, which was still held against all law, had also been evacuated in the meantime! All in all, Germany had not made any progress, but Stresemann and his backers were very good at beating the publicity drum.

The students wanted to report me for my remarks. So, if I didn't want to be expelled from school just before my final exams, I had no choice but to beat up the head bawler in private to such an extent that he swore stone and bone that he would do nothing more against me until I had passed my exams. Oas was also a pact, and one that seemed much more important to me than the Locarno one!

2When my aunt died, I also met my better, the fighter pilot, and his friend, the National Socialist and very well-known pilot captain, who had gone through very difficult times after his wounding at the Feldherrnhalle and the subsequent exciting escape, until he was able to make himself available again for the German war of liberation when Adolf Hitler left the fortress. The captain, whose exertions were no longer visible, gave a detailed account of Adolf Hitler's new goals with shining eyes, so that the few of us sitting in the living room of the modest house in Fichtenau at the time,

completely forgot that a sad occasion had brought us together. At Easter, I passed my Abitur as a "one-sided gifted student".
At the same time, I passed my Hebrew exam. The rabbi sat on the examination board and praised my achievements. The Jews presented the school with a picture by Fritz Ebert in a precious frame.

When I held the certificate in my hand, I couldn't help feeling very emotional. Oa's last year had been extremely difficult in its demands, and the relaxation that followed made me realize that I had almost taken on too much.

The farewell party from school was to be very festive thanks to the rich donations made by the Jews' parents. Exquisite wines, real ales, expensive cigars, one of which named after my cousin's war hunting squadron, and rare French liqueurs had been procured. Oa's meal passed off reasonably peacefully. Then followed my speech, after which the Jews preferred to leave the small hall of the elegant restaurant in a hurry. Rur the principal, some younger teachers and I stayed until mid-morning and enjoyed ourselves. As friends, we gave each other the fraternal Ou and promised not to forget each other.

How I forget this director!

After a long time, I visited the school ship commander again and was shocked to see how much he had aged. Only his eyes still had their old sparkle. The political developments had disappointed him greatly, and now he was hoping for a major turnaround at the hands of Hitler.

I couldn't help but get the impression that the commander was suffering from red. Inflation had also robbed him of the opportunity to

being able to live out his old age without worry. He brusquely cut off my cautious question. I didn't quite know how to react. I could see how happy he was to see me again, but also how difficult it was for him to conceal his situation. When I said goodbye, the commandant wrote down the address where I could always reached and then told me to wait he called me. Oer Arzt Hütte strictly forbade him to shake his soul.

On a cursory look around, I noticed that many of the valuable pictures and furnishings, precious collections and souvenirs were no longer in their usual places. Moved and deeply impressed, I asked him to write to me soon. Surely I could help him this or that.

I had read the Latin and Greek classics in order to pass my A-levels, had let myself be gripped by their descriptions of the tragic lives and deaths of heroic people and now had to experience that a man worthy of my admiration was able to show the same greatness in the face of fate.

My parents gave me a very warm welcome. I was no longer the prodigal son, but a hard-working and energetic young man with a bright future. Yes, the future!

No sooner had I regained my old vigor than was again driven to my life's skiff into unknown seas. I wanted to become an archaeologist, of course. But the field of archaeology spans the whole earth!

Perhaps it was stimulating and instructive to circumnavigate the earth. I had neither connections nor the inclination to them through petitions and pleas. But I saw from the newspapers that there was fighting in the east, in Lhina. Now, Lhina is an ancient cultivated land, and

Soldiers are needed wherever there is shooting. I knew that many of my comrades from the Reichswehr had accepted commands in all countries of the world as young officers. And they did no dishonor to the German name.

I convinced myself that it would be of unheard-of peace for my entire world view to look at Germany from afar and to research on my own, to gather experience, to acquire knowledge and insight. My father told me that an intellectual hero like Kant would never have left the walls of his Königsberg and that, after all, even Schiller could be very sedentary.

It was easy for me to reply that archaeology had different laws. But there was still some discord between my parents and me. My parents, and I could quite understand them, had hoped that my life would settled. And now I was setting sail again!

It was a long time before the Chinese envoy received me in person. He was an amiable, elderly, very intelligent gentleman with excellent manners. He smiled engagingly when I told him my plans and expressed his great regret that I would not be able to make use of my certainly very valuable services because, despite all my other talents, I had unfortunately failed to take an officer's examination!

Disappointed, I spent a few sad days in my room. My pride forbade me to knock on the door of other embassies. It was very difficult for a German whose fatherland had become a weak republic to go out into the world, all the more so as I didn't want to emigrate, but only to see and learn!

If we still had colonies, it would have easy to go out for a year or two!

With a heavy heart, I said goodbye to my longing and enrolled at Berlin University.

2?Ian looked at me as if I were a miracle animal because I had set myself such a hopeless course of study. The pure humanities were on the decline. Law and medicine were the most sought-after subjects.

I didn't attend too many lectures, apart from the archaeological ones only a few philosophical ones. For the rest, I decided to work through the books of as many researchers as possible who had something substantial to say, because after the first few lectures had already realized that almost every professor wanted to represent his own "school" and tended to dismiss the opinions of almost every other researcher as erroneous. I was annoyed by the claim to infallibility that so many professors made; I felt it was an obstacle to any real research, and in the end it was outsiders who made the greatest discoveries in archaeology and thus all too often put the experts to shame.

I particularly interested in the ancient cultures of Sumer and Akkad, but there was not much to learn about these areas. I realized that in order understand the cultures of the Orient, I had to research not only the cultures of Hellas, but above all those of India and Persia.

An immeasurably vast world opened up before my mind, a world more magical, more enticing, more dangerous than even the fairytale world of the Arabian Nights. The humanities, with the exception of philosophy, seemed to me more and more like worlds full of life the further I ventured into the realms of archaeology. Until then, I had been used to seeing the history of philosophy as an abstract science, but in connection with archaeology, ancient philosophy in particular became a wonderful expression of a blood-bound way of thinking that could never be detached from its cultural context. It suddenly seemed quite self-evident to me that philosophy cannot be transplanted. Ole Renaissance had to work with

Their views of life fail, just as humanism, which wants to give a special place to the spirit and education, must wither in the desert of barrenness!

Now that I had taken up my studies with all my energy, the Göttingen moods faded completely. I saw that I had to find my own way through the domed undergrowth of official opinions, doctrines and insights, and I trembled a little at this task, for I still saw no clearly defined goal before me. But I realized one thing with frightening clarity: that there is no knowledge in any area of life that one could unhesitatingly adopt as traditional truth and make one's intellectual property; rather, all knowledge serves only as a point of reference from which new forays into the forests eternally proliferating science can be undertaken. But all acquired knowledge must pale before experienced knowledge!

Was it just a coincidence that our ancestors placed the experience of life, namely that which the warrior "experiences" in the truest sense of the word on the Viking expeditions of his life, so high above all teachings that instead of religion in the common sense they professed ethics, the attitude born of experience?

For the time being, I had little opportunity in my spare time deal further with the question of the inadequacy of university education. I wanted to earn my own money and had to for a reasonably rewarding side job. My baker's boy had been given up, but his father had come to his senses after a discussion with the class teacher and had taken him out of the grammar school. Finding pupils wasn't easy, because at one point almost every student wanted to give private lessons and because the

The difficulty was the very long distances in Berlin. I couldn't give one lesson in Wilmersdorf and the second in Weißensee. My afternoon would have been wasted. Temporary jobs at major banks or public authorities were even more scarce after deflation had led many companies to bankruptcy and made countless people unemployed. I had little chance of earning a few marks as a trainee at an institute because I didn't know any of the professors. So I had no other option than to to the student employment agency. There wasn't much choice there. Most of the jobs were for tutors in the countryside. But that wasn't for me.

Oer student at the counter leafed through his files for a long time. There was a vacancy for an older student as an assistant in the art department of the "Bossische Zeitung". I thanked him with a smile, I wasn't suited to be a Jew's errand boy. I had to think back to my short apprenticeship at Allmann L Lngelmann!

Oann, the last, two students were wanted as temporary waiters in a popular little restaurant in Müllerstraße in Wedding.

I didn't think about it for long. Oa's job as a waiter was, as I could imagine, more grueling than any other, but I didn't have to start my service until eight o'clock in the evening, and then there was hot dinner, forty marks and service charge. I would get myself a cut or a tuxedo! It was quite difficult to get from Lharlottenburg to Wedding, but after all, the earnings were not to be sneezed at.

I borrowed a tuxedo from an acquaintance. It 't new, on the contrary, it shone like a rind of bacon, and you couldn't say that it fitted me either. But it looked like a tuxedo. And besides, I distinctly remembered never having seen a waiter before.

whose suit was made according to the latest cut. After all, I didn't go to Adlon, but to Müllerstrasse!

I entered the guest room at eight o'clock sharp. One of Berlin's many pubs, not exactly ugly, but not tasteful either. White-rubbed wooden tables, garlands on the ceiling, a few slot machines on the walls, a few oil prints and then a huge bar that stretched along the entire length of the wall. Glass containers held cold cuts, roasts, meatballs, sausages, cold cutlets, brine eggs and fried rings. The landlord was a somewhat grumpy fellow who, together with his old waiter, could have served the guests without overexerting himself. However, he had once it into his head to hire two students as waiters to make his restaurant stand out as particularly "fine".

Oer old waiter was agreeable, he nodded to me kindly as I looked around somewhat helplessly. The second student had shortly before me, a fresh-faced young guy with a chiseled face. We weren't told what to do, we had to bring the beer and food to the tables, be polite and courteous to the guests and not overcharge ourselves. Difficult cases would be taken care of by the old waiter.

Around nine o'clock, the pub began to fill up. Most of the guests were workers, small employees and streetcar drivers, but then there were also couples and a few young girls. From ten o'clock onwards, a blind piano player played until police time. Dancing was also allowed.

The guests looked at us students with undisguised curiosity. They were visibly flattered that we were serving them. But they had no intention of offending or teasing us. But the unusual nature of this service appealed to them. Their otherwise sober everyday life was

gilded us with a little glimmer of romance. I'm sure they would have liked it if we had served them with band and effort. From time to time the piano player had to a student song, which all the guests sang along to. And as the mood became more cheerful, we had to at a table here and there and talk about what we were studying and doing. The young girls were particularly nice to us, they were all from small backgrounds, they were salesgirls and clerks and had put on their good dresses in the evening to experience a little bit of the big world that they were told about in the movies. When it was on, we danced with one of the girls. The landlord just didn't like it. At three o'clock in the morning the restaurant closed, we settled our accounts and I was pleased to find that I had earned five marks in service charges. The other student, a medical student in his first clinical semester, had earned a little more. I was glad that he also lived in Lharlottenburg, so we could walk the long way home together. I was in bed on the fifth.

After a few weeks, I realized how exhausting it to be a waiter. I slept until midday and had enough time to devote to my books, go to the university, the library or once to Wannsee, but my nerves couldn't stand the nightly rush, the noise, the smoke. I hardly drank a glass of beer and didn't smoke, and yet I found that it became difficult for me to summon up the will to work mentally during the day. Oer doctor was better off than I was. He laughed at me when I complained to him

The conversations with the workers were instructive. Almost all of them were, if not exactly communist, at least red, knew Karl Marx's theorems by heart and firmly believed in the imminent victory of the International. If I contradicted them, they listened to my objections calmly

and usually agreed that I was right from my point of view, but that they, as proletarians, had no fatherland.

It was not the dregs of humanity who frequented the pub in Müllerstraße, on the contrary, they were all skilled workers who did not earn badly, they were just completely educated in the class struggle and the trade union spirit. Those among them who had been soldiers complained that the decent spirit of comradeship that had prevailed at the front had long since vanished. Today they were being cheated and exploited by the capitalists, almost worse than before the war. It was now high time for justice reign on earth again, and that would only come about if the proletarians of all countries united.

I asked them if they really believed that their union bosses had a sense of justice. Oa they just shrugged their shoulders. But they hadn't thought about the possibility of national socialism, and they hadn't heard of National Socialism. Their trade-union presidency made them forget the fatherland.

When I spoke to them about how it was only right that the worker should be brought back into the nation and that this hour would have to strike one day, they looked at me with wide eyes and remained silent. They believed that these fairy tales. And fairy tales do not exist in real life!

Of course, there were also occasions when rowdy brothers came into the pub and started fights while drunk. The landlord had an excellent way of dealing with them. And when things got really bad, he would grab them by the seat of their pants and by the collar and send them flying out into the fresh air. The guests themselves prevented the streetwalkers from spreading.

Within a month, I had earned around two hundred marks. That was much more than I had expected.

Nevertheless, I resigned. I wouldn't have stayed there even if I had earned twice as much. If I wanted to complete my studies as I had planned, I had to keep my nerve.

Oa the travel time began, I was assigned a temporary job as a porter at Szczecin station.

The semester was not yet over when an uncle wrote to me from Pomerania and asked if I could decide to take over the education of his children for two to three months.

My uncle owned one of the largest manors in Hinterpommern and had made a name for himself as a potato grower. The most famous potato varieties came from his breeding.

His manor, located between Schlawe and Pollnow, was considered a particularly wealthy enterprise. The distillery a lot of money and the forests were also profitable. Nevertheless, things were bad because my uncle, spoiled by the inflationary period, had made deals that he could not overlook as a farmer. He had bought a car factory in southern Germany that produced racing cars. The factory demanded a very high subsidy, which the estate had to pay. Now the factory had been shut down, and the estate had also experienced a burden that it not cope with.

After the efforts of this semester, I was only happy to spend my vacation in the countryside. I packed my suitcase and left. On the estate, I encountered almost chaotic conditions. But salaries and wages had not been paid two months. The workers were

reluctant, and the bailiff appeared almost every other day.

My aunt had suffered a nervous breakdown and had traveled to a sanatorium in southern Germany. My uncle was in court and spent more time in Stettin and Berlin than on his endangered estate.

I was mistaken when I thought I could relax on the estate! Not only did I teach and educate the children, I was surrounded by everything, the managers, the workers, the craftsmen, the suppliers, and I had probably learned the practical work during my time as a farmer, but what was involved in managing such a large company was beyond my knowledge.

Nevertheless, when a receiver was appointed, I was able to my uncle's family home for at least a few more months thanks to lengthy negotiations with the authorities and creditors.

It was harrowing to witness the demise of the magnificent estate. Later, when German agriculture fell on hard through no fault of its own, such collapses were the order of the day.

In the first few weeks, I rode my uncle's spirited Hanoverian every early morning until the horse was seized and taken out of the stable. At dusk I went duck hunting until the gun cabinet was sealed by the bailiff. Even the valuable furniture was carried out of the castle. In the end, we didn't know what we were going to eat for lunch the next day. I often went to the day laborers at night and asked them to give me eggs, bacon, vegetables and meat so that the children wouldn't go hungry. And the day laborers, who had reason enough to be angry with the lord of the manor, gave from their meagre supplies.

My uncle had promised me one of the racing cars he still had as a reward for my help. I also had

I had already found a buyer and was calculating how long I could live and study on the proceeds when it turned out that this car had also been seized. A Jew from Köslin, who had bought up numerous bills of exchange cheaply, picked up the car one evening.

Oa's estate died! The cows were taken out of the barn, the pigs were driven away. Even the forest been stripped bare. Cars and carts stopped in front of the castle every day, curious people and naff addicts came from far and , and unfortunately there were also landowners among them who were not ashamed to haggle and bid with Jews and other assassins.

haggle and increase.

One evening, a Baptist preacher came to visit his numerous congregation in the area and wanted to uplift them with his encouragement.

The Baptists were rapidly in Pomerania at the time, which was all the more remarkable as some of the agricultural workers had been in league with the Spartacists during the Kapp Putsch. The red agricultural workers' association had succeeded in driving a wedge between owners and workers. However, some of the large landowners were not innocent in the escalation of the situation because they were determined to hold on to their feudal habits. There had been several deaths and injuries among the landowners in Hinterpommern during the putsch.

Nnd now, suddenly, the just then politically left-wing radical farm workers turned to a religious sect! And significantly, the loudest red screamer was the most devout Baptist!

I took the trouble to find out the causes of this transformation. After all, sa der pommer doesn't exactly tend towards mysticism or romanticism.

What I learned was instructive in several respects. On the one hand, the farm workers saw in the country church pastor, the best

The patron was usually the lord of the manor, the spiritual defender of feudal rule. Like the teacher, he belonged to the small household power and, from the besther's point of , his main task was to bring the workers to the manor.
"Raison". However, since the workers rarely went to church, he could only the confirmands or use the few occasions, such as weddings, baptisms and funerals, to teach his moral lessons. The farm laborer felt, often rightly, betrayed spiritually, and he also had no real relationship with the teacher in the estate villages, because it was not unknown that some landlords the view that it would not be good if the children of the day laborers learned too much, otherwise they would become too demanding! Apart from a little reading, writing and, above all, religion in the sense of the ten commandments, they didn't need to learn anything.

The rural workers were happy to the sect preacher because he did not serve the "rich man", because he was not boxed into the castle, where the country church pastor was enthroned, unassailable, unapproachable! Oer sect preacher, on the other hand, cleverly played up his Trumps of only wanting to bring the gospel to the poor. In doing so, he skillfully dug a trench between the village and the castle. And the island of Schloß, from which the rich man, already condemned in the Bible, lived, could now also be hated in the name of God!

But then was another reason. No , of the major political parties seriously cared about the farm worker, who very soon realized that the red unions were doing nothing but inciting him to go on strike. The worker in turn had to bear the consequences of the strike, because his "relationship of trust" with the lord of the manor, which was very often nothing more than a relationship of complete dependence, had been broken. But if the landowner really meant it,

If the Reds wanted to harass a worker, they had all the masses at their disposal, the workers had none. The Reds understood 'worker' to mean first and foremost the factory worker, the industrial worker. He was dangerous when clenched into masts, he could be played off in the power struggle, so he should be in a good mood! No red bigwig did anything for the agricultural worker! And the so-called right-wing parties certainly had no desire to fall out with the landowners, who their most loyal voters, because of the agricultural workers.

So the farm laborer really remained the stepchild. No one care of them, and above all no one did anything to ensure that a lively spiritual life returned to the day laborers' cottages. And there were only a few landowners who felt obliged to sufficient spiritual nourishment for their wards.

I had experienced cases where the castle presented day laborers with ancient anthologies of the garden arbor to read, and the castle residents were still proud of their "social" deed!

But Oer sect preacher, who himself from a poor background, knew where to grab the farm laborer. He knew how to direct the fermenting longing, the richly chaotic thinking of the simple, long neglected man in the country, even if the goal was still vague or false. The fact that the sectarian preacher from the castle was not taken seriously brought him even closer to the peasants.

I had once a cult service in a neighboring village. I had been driven there less by curiosity than by the desire to explore the very modest spiritual world of the farm worker who professed to belong to the sect. I found a blindly devout congregation who, even before the preacher entered the low, narrow room of the smoky pub

was moved to tears. Old women sobbed with emotion and did not take their aprons off their faces even during the speech. Oa's experience of being judged as full human beings robbed them of all composure. The songs they sang with rough, artless voices were of American origin, filled with a sweet, pietistic phraseology to which the dance-like melodies did not fit at all.

The preacher - as I later learned, a former craftsman who had not been much good at his old job - made an unsympathetic impression. He was fat and asthmatic, and his voice was burdened with an untruthful, pompous seriousness. You could tell that he checked every word beforehand to make sure it sounded right. He folded his thick, short fingers over his stomach and rolled his eyes as if in rapture. He based his sermon on the Old Testament word: "Make haste, make haste, save your soul!". He pronounced it: Eulö, eulö, rötto deunö Sälö! What he said was the usual call to repentance with a reference to God's judgment. But the way he said it made a powerful impression on the simple people who were grateful for every gift. They would have let themselves be cut to pieces for their preacher and happily gave their tithes and more, not just to have a shah in heaven, but out of love and reverence for their awakened man.

I had gone home disgusted, only the thought of the spiritual and mental hardship of the farm worker had moved me deeply. How easy and grateful the task of awakening this stepchild of the nation to great ideas must be!

That the success of the sect's work must have been enormous was from the fact that a large baptistery had been built in the small town of Pollnow, to which enraptured believers made pilgrimages from far and wide.

Now the preacher stood before me. He shook my hand with unctuous speeches. He would have heard that I had a heart for the

good farm worker! The way he pronounced the word 'good' outraged me. I the intellectual arrogance of this man, which he wanted to play up to me. There was a clumsy familiarity in it, an ingratiation that said: "We are spiritual equals, you student and I preacher. The others are just good!"

2I would have liked to have shown him the door, but I refrained from doing so out of consideration for the "good" farm workers, whom he would otherwise have upset even more. We didn't a proper conversation and I couldn't quite figure out what the Baptist actually wanted from me. He couldn't count on my covenantal cooperation, neither spiritually nor financially, and he probably couldn't accept that I would bow my knees before him with the request to be rebaptized.

I was already beginning to shift uneasily in my chair, a sure sign of an imminent, very clear outburst of emotion, when what the Baptist might later have called a diabolical thought occurred to me. I knew where my uncle's heaviest wine was!

The Baptist resisted the temptation for a few minutes. But when I held the filled goblet under the vase, he gave in to sin. It was a real pleasure for me to watch how this man's mendacious mental shell sank from glass to glass, until after a few hours he turned his little eyes and began to speak very worldly about the most intimate secrets of his "good" farm workers.

Then I escorted him to the door in a friendly but emphatic manner.

A few days later I went to Rostock to continue my studies there. My father agreed to put up the money, albeit at great sacrifice, so that I could work without worrying about my daily bread. I had chosen Rostock from among the many universities because a young Sanskrit scholar taught there and the Faculty of Philosophy was also well established. Gin Professor had just a sensation with his Assyrian grammar.

On the advice of a Berlin archaeologist, I decided to study theology as well, so that I could eventually qualify as a biblical archaeologist. In Syria and Asia Minor, archaeologically very important areas that were still far too little scientifically researched, only theologians were digging at the time, whose scientific interest was significantly less than their religious interest.

Heini Schwarz had given me the urgent advice to join a corps in Rostock, because a student in Rostock could hardly live without a . I couldn't quite imagine that, because after all, there had to a student committee in Rostock too, and the general student work was ultimately above the fraternities. At least that's how it was in Göttingen and especially in Berlin.

As soon as I looked around Rostock, I had to with Schwarz. In fact, the vast majority of them were only fraternity students or inactive weapons students who were members of some association or other and thus had their own fixed circle. But before I joined the Corps, I wanted to get to know Rostock better. I that in Göttingen people only spoke of Rostock as a city in which

in summer the seals and in winter the polar bears roamed the streets, and the rest of the time there was to be excessive carousing.

I was initially surprised to find a very well-kept Hanseatic city with a wealth of beautiful old buildings that could easily stand alongside Lübeck and Wismar. Despite the historical impression the city made, it was still full of life. Oie Werst was famous, the shipping companies had a good reputation and, above all, the Heinckel aircraft factory brought a touch of German reconstruction to the city. The people made an excellent racial impression, the girls were slim and dressed with taste. In short, the city made a generous impression in every respect, which was reinforced the fact that there was no shortage of green spaces and parks. The air was spicy and fresh due to the proximity of the sea, and life seemed cheaper than in other university towns.

Not far from the university, in Eselsföterstraße, I rented a simple room. Then I enrolled in the Faculty of Philosophy and Theology and took classes in Sanskrit, Aramaic, Archaeology, Philosophy and Theology, so that my bor- day was filled with bor- der reading. I spent two afternoons doing exercises in Sanskrit and archaeology.

On the fifth day, I paid a visit to Corps Bandalia in St. Georg Street. I had mixed feelings when I pressed the doorbell and a jovial older servant opened the door for me. Before I met Heini Schwarz and the "Kavaliere", I had corps students to be blasé young people who had nothing to do but blow their parents' money. As for the fraternity students I met in the Freikorps, I didn't know which special group they belonged to, be it the Corps, the Burschenschaft or the Landsmannschaft.

Oer Lorpsdiener led me into the simply furnished reception room. I looked with interest at the old canteen pictures, the engravings of Mecklenburg as it looked a hundred years ago, the drawings of Old Rostock and above all the large oil painting of John Brinkmann, the Mecklenburg poet who been a vandal. There was also a small picture of Fritz Reuter, who had been in the Lorps for a while before he went to Jena and became a fraternity member.

The pictures gave the room an atmosphere of tradition that had nothing reactionary about it.

Then came the first batch member, a young, long-haired blond Mecklenburger, and greeted me in a polite, but by no means bolted manner. We first talked about Mecklenburg, Rostock, general student issues, spoke about my studies and then came to the Lorps student life and the Lorps Dandalia. I told him about my reservations about the political attitude of the Lorps, or rather about their neutrality in the political sphere, and cited as an example the fact that at the funeral of the socialist leader Wilhelm Liebknecht, Karl Liebknecht's father, the two Lorps to which Liebknecht had belonged were also represented among all the red flags. Such passivity seemed very dangerous to me. Oer Vandale agreed with me and assured me that such an attitude would no longer be possible today. As a counter-example, he told me about the case that had almost led to the expulsion of the Bonn aristocratic corps Borussia from the Kösen SL. association. Borussia had the ribbon to Kaiser Wilhelm, who had been active in the Lorps but had not fought, although the regulations expressly demanded that only those who had fought at least once on Lorps weapons should be awarded the ribbon.

I now asked for information about the political attitude of the Lorps today. Oer Vandale then revealed himself as

Hitler's supporters. He explained to me that every member of the Corps was required to declare their allegiance to the nation; the Lorps did not care which party or denomination the individual belonged to. Of course, being of German blood would be a prerequisite. I interjected that I had just read a book by Walter Bloem in the last few weeks,
"Brotherhood", would have been read. This book would have glorified a southern-blooded Lorps student, the son of an old gentleman. Oer Bandale just smiled: "We Rostock bandals have always outsiders, we already had strict regulations before the war and are still considered particularly radical in national terms today. We were the first active leaders of the Rostock student body in the Hochschulring Deutscher Art, we have almost always an active part in the post-war struggles and will probably not deviate from our path in the future."

After a detailed tour of the house, whose dignified but very simply furnished rooms I liked very much, I was invited to lunch. In addition to the active members, the local inactive members were also present. There was a very cheerful and friendly atmosphere among the students, almost all of whom appealed to me with their natural cordiality and care.

Oa's meal was rather stiff, however, and close attention was paid to how the individual held his knife and fork, how much he put on his plate and fork, whether he did not speak with his mouth full, whether he wiped his mouth before drinking and, above all, whether he sat upright. Anyone who violated table manners had to a fine. After the meal, we had a cup of coffee in the "little pub", the recreation room, read the daily newspapers and magazines and talked about political issues.

Germany's admission to the League of Nations was at the of the political debate. The German government had already approved the admission in February.

Since then, however, the powers had been negotiating whether Germany should also be given a permanent seat. The very raising of this question was an insult, a disparagement before the whole world, for even insignificant small nations had a permanent seat. On September 10, after much toing and froing, Stresemaun finally arrived in Geneva. Germany had now been recognized as an equal in the Geneva Council all. The deal over the Ratsstz, however, had generally been considered unworthy in nationally conscious circles, and I was pleased that the students were unanimous opponents of the League of Nations and thus of the democratic world view. Oer Ratsstz, the democrats and Stresemann had predicted, would bring considerable relief to Germany, and the whole world had looked to the small town of Thoirg, where Stresemann had arranged a long personal discussion with Briand in order to improve German-French relations. The statements made by the two men were full of phrases. They were only taken seriously, if at all, by Stresemann and his supporters.

The first effect of Germany's admission to the League of Nations the signing of the Kellogg Pact!

However, defensive and sanction wars as defined by the League of Nations were exempt from this ban.

No clear-thinking person could regard such a pact as fraternizing as long as obvious claims to Germany made real understanding impossible. But the German government - after Mr. Luther had been shipwrecked a second time, Marx and his fine followers had - was indignant at the ingratitude of the national circles and had proclaimed that the militaristic instincts of the Fugend must be eradicated.

After the dissolution and persecution of the military combat units, the student fraternities were seen as a stronghold of martial resistance against pacifist ideologies.

A trial was currently underway against the Dandalia Corps, which the red press sensationalized outrageously. During a menfur, a vandal had beaten a compatriot with two heavy blows.
"stabbed", as they say in student parlance. The rebuff was by no means dangerous. Unfortunately, the compatriot had contracted periostitis, which turned into meningitis and caused his death a few days later. A case of misfortune that could also occur in any other sport. The red press, however, hoped to exploit this sad case to such an extent that all student associations would have to be persecuted and closed down.

It was understandable that the minds of the Vandals were agitated, and this agitation in turn expressed itself in strong political, anti-government propaganda. As a result, the Mecklenburg red newspapers carried whole columns daily with attacks against the Corps, fencing and students. And every day anongme letters arrived in which the Vandals were insulted as murderers, lumpen, criminals and thugs.

After careful consideration, I this "murder corps". The decision was not easy for me, because although I was older than most of the active members, I had to start as a fox. I was not given credit for the mensuras I had done before Fahren. But I became a Corps student because I thought I would be able to make a better impression within the student body this way.

My move was made easier by the camaraderie with which the Lorp brothers treated me. Nevertheless, there were occasional clashes. When he reported me to the Lorps, Schwarz had expressly pointed out that I had my own view of the world and life, and that I had to be taken as I was. Or I should be rejected!

Among the Lorp brothers I found a number of distinctive personalities, above all Lnrt Helm, the later National Socialist State Councillor of Lübeck.

I fought thirteen more times, adding up the votes and demands, and over time I became a feared brawler. The semesters I spent in Rostock were filled with joy and a variety of cheerful experiences thanks to the fellowship of the Lorp Brothers, despite the difficulty of the time and my personally difficult situation.

I had very little money and had to refrain from some of the pleasures that my wealthy Lorp brothers could afford. But because I threw myself into my work with a real zeal, I never felt that I was missing out on anything.

The theologians resented the fact that I was a Lorps student. Even when I listened to my first theological lecture in Band und Mühe, there already uproars, and when I attended a lecture, would have booed by the Christian students by a hair's breadth.

As a university, Rostock was small enough to the students personally with the professors. This had its advantages, but also its disadvantages. Many a professor of theology gave me serious reproaches when I came into his office or even his house with fresh smears, and I enemies as a result.

Since I was the only Sanskrit student, my lectures and classes were like private lessons. I was grateful,

to learn more in a short tent than many a student could in four or five semesters. The archaeology lectures were interesting, although not as important as those in Berlin. I really enjoyed the ecclesiastical history lessons because I was able to follow the various struggles between philosophy, religion, between peoples and doctrines.

Career prospects became increasingly poor. Most students did not find a job after their exams and lost themselves in the academic proletariat. If they found a small job for little money that did not correspond to their knowledge or even their entire education, they were grateful.

I had moved into a small room in "Glatten Aal", a side street of the market, with Mutting School, a real old student mother. There I had buried myself between books and was preparing for my archaeological doctoral thesis. I had chosen the Constantinian basilica as my topic. For my thesis in theology, I had chosen a topic from the academic work of the Catholic Action, which was making successful inroads into the ranks of young students from Munich through the Jesuit przgwara. I also wanted to take the theological exam for this reason.

Until then, I had given little thought to the question of Christian truth. I had studied and researched without being biased. I was interested in the first heretics, the Marcionites, who rejected the Old Testament. had learned oogmatics without seriously assuming that there could be people who believed these strange claims about the existence of heaven and hell, devils and angels, to be true.

I didn't know what my immediate future would look like.
First of all, I wanted to take my exams.

I had gone to Berlin for a few months in between to collect material in the Prussian Secret State Archives in Oahlem on the Cologne church dispute and the Kulturkampf, which had been imposed on Bismarck by the Catholic Church. I had already written a seminar paper on this topic in church history with the highest marks and hoped to publish a volume later on, which I could use to gain a doctorate in theology.

When I explained my field of study in Oahlem, I did not receive a friendly reception. I was told that it would not be good to uncover this historical past and the initial struggles of the Center against the Reich? My objection that I saw many Catholic clergymen working in the archives was dismissed with a non-committal murmur. After some negotiations, I was able to begin my source work, and it was with great shock that I discovered how cleverly, how coldly, how unscrupulously the Center had campaigned against Bismarck and his Reich.

The "Roman files", i.e. the file material that mainly concerned the correspondence and submissions of the Prussian envoy to the Vatican, were withheld from me. I had to a trick to obtain the desired access. However, when the clerk who had to supervise me realized the ruse, I was unceremoniously shown the door "to spare our fatherland the trouble uncovering certain backgrounds."

I thought to myself! Everything that could somehow incriminate the church, which had always been politicized, had to disappear. They didn't put lords in front of the barred doors, it was to have a few officials loyal to each state, they pounce on anyone who wanted to disturb the paradisiacal peace with their wicked thirst for truth!

I was quietly pleased about the cunning I had used, because I had finally got my hands on files that clearly revealed the villainy of the pious first centrists around Windthorst. I came to have enormous respect for Bismarck, who had stood completely alone in his struggle for the Reich. Hede's file contained intrigues, treachery, slander and vile lies against him. And the worst thing was that even at the imperial court a camarilla constantly at work to bring about Vismarck's downfall. Priests, friends of the French, men and women in the pay of England, and representatives of the staunchly Catholic Habsburgs had hidden behind the Empress's back and were skillfully working to further endanger the already sufficiently endangered field of Bismarck's politics with pitfalls.

At school, we were once taught to revere the aged Emperor of 1871 as William the Great. Now the monarch seemed very small to me compared to Bismarck. I could only discover one greatness in the emperor, the greatness of the trust he placed in his chancellor, who, however, had to suffer a lot from the imperial whims. Otherwise, however, Wilhelm was a man full of weaknesses, pettiness and by no means always imperial impulses.

These observations made me realize even more clearly that the presumed divine right of hereditary monarchy is a grotesque error. The true emperors and kings are not given to a people through a particular ruling house, but from the immeasurably rich bloodstream of a nation! To suppress the true emperors and kings in favor of hereditary monarchs would be to suppress the heartbeat of a nation. Allegedly by the "grace of God", Wilhelm had become German Emperor through the work of Vismarck. On closer inspection, however, it turned out that the "grace of God" lay in the willpower of a passionate German who years before had not yet known whether his

inner demon would make him the greatest rag or the greatest man in Prussia!

My time in the State Archives had come to an end. Well, I had been able to a look at the true mayers, at those who build and destroy, and realize that history is created where a superior will tames the powers, awakens the good, the creative of a people and subdues the destructive forces.

But this superior will, as the lonely Bismarck taught me, which I found in the files of his everyday political life, is the enemy of all chance. He plans and forges, he scrutinizes and rejects in ultimate responsibility before his own heart, into which, since it hides abysses, he allows no one to look. High-ranking contemporaries called Bismarck disloyal and maliciously emphasized his saying that politics corrupts character. Bismarck was the only politician of his time who was truly faithful. But he did not serve any anointed or unanointed people in a higher loyalty, but the idea of the German nation.

With burning eyes I had read the files in which Bismarck had himself reported on the activities of the Catholic Church and its representatives in the Prussian East. There in the East, Roman priests made themselves the mouthpiece of the voice of blood and wetness, only the voices, the blood and the race there were not German, but Polish!

I had to thank the short time I was allowed to spend researching in the State Archives for the fact that my knowledge of the political significance of all the world's religions, which all strive for world power on the basis of the law of "mission" at work in them, has been strengthened and deepened.

Bismarck had to be an enemy of Rome and expel her sniffer dogs, the Jesuits! Bismarck had to take action against Habsburg, even if it meant running the risk of appearing "small-minded"!

Since all legitimate and illegitimate powers felt attacked and threatened by Blsmarck's incorruptible ruthlessness, did Bismarck have to become lonely? Nothing about this clear and ultimately simple life now seemed incomprehensible to me.

In order to prepare for the birth of the new German man, he had to introduce civil marriage in the struggle against the Christian church of both denominations and create the possibility of leaving the church, which ended the formal dominance of the church in all areas of life.

He had to become a heretic for the sake of fine higher loyalty?

One Saturday evening, during my stay in Berlin, I visited the pub of my Berkehrscorps together with Heini Schwarz, who was currently a clerk at the Court of Appeal

"Normanuia". Back then, the Normans still had their home in middle of the city, in Linienstraße, while the other Berlin SL. corps had long since moved into their houses in the posh suburbs. The Normans had a lot of decent guys in their ranks, lads who were just as out of line as we were in Rostock. There was hardly anyone who wore carefully pressed pants or gave the impression of being something "better". They weren't all from rich families either, sitting at the long tables and chatting about all kinds of life .

I was warmly welcomed as a Rostock bandale. Many of the Normans had met me in Rostock or in Kösen, at Rudelsburg Castle or somewhere in courts of honor or mensur pubs. I had a reputation as an active young who was by no means averse to trade and was sometimes outspoken. My essays in the Lorps newspaper, in which I tried to cut off many an old braid, had also earned me enough enmity, especially among the pre-war generations of Lorps students.

Heini Schwarz was also well known. His pictures had caused a sensation at the time, and he was also popular with some and feared by others because of his aggressiveness.

Once we had answered the Normans' greeting with our Oank formula, we sat down at the table and were soon engrossed in conversation. A young man with

snub nose and small moustache caught our eye. He was addressed as "Hugi". To our surprise, we learned that he was the son of the German nationalist politician Hugenberg! In our exuberance, we drank beers with him until he said goodbye. The young Hugenberg was active in the Lorps Suevia in Munich and socialized with the Berlin Normans.

A very young Norman lorps boy drank to us with amusement as Hugenberg walked away. When we struck up a conversation with him, he told us his name. His name was Horst Wessel.

It was already quite late when two Normans the room and attracted everyone's attention. Horst Wessel whispered to me: "Two strange opposites! One is called Friedrich Hielscher and is currently racking his brains over an empire that will extend beyond the third we want. The other is Hanns Heinz Ewers, who I'm sure you know from his strange novels!"

I nodded. God knows, I knew Ewers, his novels were anything but encouraging! I had just read his "Alraune". However, after the first 20 pages I had thrown the book away. I found the atmosphere disgusting. So, Ewers was also a Lorps student!

Hielscher, a smaller, very agile man whose huge bald head contrasted almost wholesomely with his restless dark eyes, sat down between Schwarz and me and in a few moments we managed to get involved in a topic that burning at the time, namely what we young Germans would have to do if France used Germany as a deployment zone for the East.

The morning was dawning when the last five or six of us left the house. Ewers was soon gone again.

On the way home, I had a long and serious talk with Schwarz about the composition of the Lorps. The juxtaposition of all kinds of characters, temperaments, world views

It seemed to us that the juxtaposition of different views and opinions was not only a sign of liberalist weakness, but also of a generosity that was stimulating, if dangerous. The tensions created by this juxtaposition were somehow also fruitful, forcing us to make even clearer decisions.

A lot of work was waiting for me in Rostock. I had registered for the exam and now had to chew through all the extensive subject matter of theology and philosophy again. I helped myself as best I could by writing little verses and memorizing them.

75! What an example!
Titus is razing the Jewish temple!

I memorized that in 75 AD Jerusalem was destroyed by Titus and the Jewish state practically ceased to exist. So I learned the history of the Jews and the Christian church, the development of Christian dogma and all the other material that could be put into verse.

Every morning a theologian from Sung called Meger came to see me, who was also preparing for the exam, but although he knew a lot, he had an inexplicable fear of the exam. He wanted to stay in the ministry later and didn't really know what believe about everything he had learned. He was a decent guy who often drowned his world-weariness in a four-pitcher and then solemnly vowed that he would fight tooth and against sinking into the abyss.

In the afternoon I worked through philosophical books or occupied myself with studies in the field of archaeology. In the early evening, I collected material for my doctoral thesis and rummaged through catalogs from various Catholic publishers to obtain documents for my dissertation. Around midnight, my Lorps brother picked me up.

Schäßler. If the weather permitted, we would walk a good hour out of town and drink milk or apple juice in a farmhouse.

I had completely given up drinking beer and smoking when I realized that it didn't agree with my nerves, which were so strained by work. When I wanted to relax, I took my books on the history of the Reformation and Counter-Reformation and immersed myself in that chaotic period of history. My academic love belonged to this period in particular. The tragedy of the unused opportunities shook me deeply, and I tried again and again to fathom the mystery that lay behind the failure of the Reformation. Why, although the time was ready, although the peasants were marching, although a hut was calling, was the Reformation not overcome and expanded into a German revolution? A year ago, when I was suffering from an injury to my meniscus, I came across Hütten in my research and found traces of him again and again, whether was looking at Melanchthon, Erasmus, Sickingen or Luther. Over time, I had painted a picture of Hutt that looked very different from the usual ones. And very shyly and timidly, I had begun to form the first pillars. I was working on a Hutt painting

I was ashamed of myself and called myself romantic. But I couldn't get away from the Hutt picture. I had torn the picture of the sung knight, a woodcut, from the Hutt book by David Friedrich Strauss and pinned it to the wall with thumbtacks.

I felt drawn to Hütten, whereas Luther did not move me inwardly. I downright hated Melanchthon, I didn't like the tgp of this over-intelligent, learned and completely bloodless theologian. Thomas Münzer seemed quite different to me.

Once, in the church history seminar, I had my reservations about Luther, whose Old Testament view of God

seemed strangely backwoods to me. I met with the angry protest of the strictly Lutheran young theologians. One of them from Wingolf sneered that my views were once again proof of how unsuitable I was for theology, because what I was saying was not a Christian view, but a political one.

Since then I have kept my reservations about this circle to myself. At most, I once discussed Christianity with Schüßler, whose legal mind resisted all philosophy. Schüßler laughed rudely: "I don't understand how a person can worry about things that lie outside the realm of sober reason!"

Like most young academics at the time, Schüßler was a good-hearted, decent fellow who had a clean and clear instinct that would not let him stumble; he had no political passions, no ideological ones and certainly no religious ones. The church was an abomination to him, and he went to great lengths to convince me that the values of the mind were more sublime than those of the soul.

I had not met any real Christians during my studies. The students studied diligently to make gramen and sometimes brought an almost scholastic sophistry to the lectures. But I never met anyone who wanted to become a pastor in order to improve humanity through Christ. The theological "school" that the individual professed was decisive. We had followers of Barth and Oibelius, modern and orthodox. As a Corps student, I was not considered a Christian from the outset, but at best a scientist. I didn't even think about contradicting that. I knew the life of a Christian inevitably had to end in the desert, in renunciation, despite Luther's almost touching attempts. I didn't want to renounce, I wanted to fulfill this life, which I had learned to love precisely because of its heaviness and harshness.

As far as I know the church courts, there were serious Christians almost only in the early days of the early church. The later Christians were churchmen who pursued the politics of their empire, which did not want to be of this world, but nevertheless sought to fill and rule this earth. And where serious Christians emerged, they were rapturous enthusiasts who fell victim to the politicians of their empire when they became a nuisance to their plans. Luther was not a pure Christian either, even though he tried to become fully Christian with the help of his God. In Luther, Christ and Wodan lived side by side and wrestled for the soul of this German. When Luther rejoiced over the son from his arms and spoke proudly of fact that he only wanted to serve his Germans or that doing housework was worth more than all the monks' holiness and pious life, then Wodan had triumphed in him. But when he labored for the gracious God and cursed the prince of this world in order to praise the Lord of hosts, then Christ triumphed.

Back then, when I was preparing for my theological exams, I had none of the usual pangs of conscience. I never wanted to go back to Christ, but to continue building where Luther had left off. I wanted to be and remain a Protestant, and the church, as I wanted to see it, was to be the rallying point, the starting point for a spiritual action without which the struggle for freedom seemed impossible to me. As a scientist, I wanted to contribute to the clarification of the spiritual and mental position. For the time being, however, I sought the ultimate clarity myself and felt a certain fear that I was going round in circles as long as I was doing biblical studies. It was always the same pole of freedom around I inevitably moved, regardless of whether it was the Lord God, Christ, the Bible or the Church. I could only think freely when I dealing with Nietzsche or Hütten. Oa was pushing forward, ruthlessness, there was also laughter and joy and cheekiness

heit. Every now and then, young Lorp brothers would come to me at the -Smooth eel", mostly National Socialists. We then talked about attitude and freedom, about duty and nation, about the values that are the highest in all worlds.

The theology professors no longer invited me. They probably sensed that I was a heretic by instinct. Only the professor of church history still invited me into his house from time to time. After all, he had given me the thesis for my degree and felt obliged to watch over my intellectual development.

The Leipzig theology professor Tillich spoke in Rostock one day. He was warmly welcomed by the theological faculty. I attended his lecture to hear the man who was regarded as the founder of religious communism. A soft-spoken man who worked a lot with the hackneyed, sweet words of Christian love. Sometimes I had to laugh to myself, because what he said about the völkisch Wtderchristen, about the heroism of the new nationalism, fitted me perfectly. And many a young theologian who applauded Tillich me disapproving looks.

So a professor of theology went through the empire of the Germans, which was about to break out, and spoke of a coming kingdom of God that would sweep away the nations and the apes in order to realize the demands of Christianity, and at his feet sat people who believed that they would be particularly good Christians if they opened their hearts to his words. And they did not realize who they were serving with their unworldliness. The republican, Jewish and communist students had gathered for Tillich's lecture, and everyone who thought they had to pay homage to the spirit of Geneva had turned up. Doctors, lawyers, academics, merchants, Jews, Christians and those who wanted to be neither.

The dean of the theologians thanked me in moving words for the lecture, which should have been a profound experience for all those who wanted to be Christians in earnest. I drew the young girl,

which I had often my experiences with over the last few weeks, and took a long walk along the harbor under the bright starry sky to calm the excitement in my heart.

What a strange mixture preachers, fantasists, charlatans, believers and genasists the church of that time was! Was there any point in calling for spiritual protest and freedom within the framework of this church?

Oa's commitment to pacifism seemed to be becoming more and more commonplace in the Protestant church. Barth was an enemy of nationalism, the theologian Oehn had reviled the memory of the fallen, and no leading theologian had stood up and professed unconditional nationalism. Wherever someone praised Germany, he immediately made the reservation that the true Germany had to recognize the watch of Christianity.

The next day, I offered a few slaps to a theologian who, in my presence, praised Tillich to the skies and, with a glance at me, went so far as to claim that anyone who claimed the title Wensch would have to confess to Tillich. When the sunge Wann just smiled derisively and then threw down that these were the nationalists' counter-arguments, I , but as he was obviously physically inferior to me, I didn't use any force.

I asked him, also with a sneer, to the other cheek.

But he preferred to report me to the principal.

^^^n a Wednesday afternoon I gave my first sermon in the Nnlversity Church in Rostock as part of the practical theological seminar. I had chosen a topic into which I could incorporate exclusively philosophical ideas.

The idea of giving a sermon chilled me. What did "preaching" actually mean?

I did not take seriously the usual interpretation that preaching meant proclaiming the will of God. Who wanted to know the will of "God" anyway? Who was God anyway? I had learned that the Old and New Testaments were of mutually contradictory and contradictory concepts of God. The God of the Jews, who used to speak in the burning bush, seemed rather silly to me. And I didn't know to do with the God of the New Testament either, who sometimes sounded very mixed and other times philosophical. How could a person speak in the name of God when no one even in the ranks of theologians was clear about him? In the last few months, I had had more and more clashes during the exercises because I had rebelled against the presumption of the church, which seriously claimed to know God's wedge plan in the world. The dogmas and the mostly maudlin stories of the church seemed arrogant to me because they claimed to be taken seriously. As fairy tales, they would have seemed as strangely touching and amusing, as strange and confused as the stories of the Arabian Nights.

Somehow it hurt me that I was supposed to preach. I would have loved to give a lecture on the most absurd philosophical

Question held. But preaching? I had a world view, a picture of this earth, from many thoughts and insights. But I could not discover in my heart that I had any kind of Christian faith, even though I searched hard. Nor could I pray. Prayer, I realized, could only arise from a belief in a power detached from all lawfulness, which ruled absolutely and sovereignly, arbitrarily and without regard for law and justice. But the manifestation of this power had to a miracle, just as the miracle stories of the Bible, most of which are completely unjust, proclaim. I did not believe in miracles, nor did I want to be given anything by a miracle. In the dangerous moments of my life, I was also unable pray because it seemed unworthy of me. Instead, I held a very tough dialogue with myself, I spoke very clearly and in German and silenced the voice, the tempting, flattering voice of fear. This not only enabled me to mobilize the will to defend myself against fear, I was able to gather all my strength to attack. It was no different on Annaberg than it had been before the many mensurations I had fought. I learned that it was possible to pull myself together and my fear. But to pray? I couldn't. I didn't want to be able to either. The thought of bending my cheeks and handing myself over at the mercy or disgrace of a husband who "did everything well" was strangely absurd to me, even if it was against my will and against my knowledge, against my honor and against my duty.

My sermon had become a philosophical treatise. I memorized it word for word, a sermon lasting almost three quarters of an hour. But I found much more difficult to memorize the to learn the "framework program" for the sermon, the liturgy, the call to God, the church prayer, the prayer of thanksgiving. I didn't see why my treatise

had to be given such a framework. Because I lacked any inner prerequisite for sacred thinking, I felt the compulsion to display an act of prayer like a bad spectacle. I was not a priest who wanted to play a mediating role between the will of God, which he proclaimed and claimed, and the humbly believing, ignorant and inwardly bewildered masses of the population. I knew all too well that every pastor and priest began his sermon "In the name of God" and then explained his views on the supposed will of his patron. Feder preached differently, but everyone preached in the name of God! In fact, each one preached only his knowledge, which he called God.

I invoked evangelical freedom when I was tormented by such thoughts. The others, who saw me as a dangerous free spirit for the church, a "liberal", certainly had it better and more comfortable than I did. They could believe and say, even think and feel, feel and interpret what was prescribed. I couldn't. I tooth and nail against any confessional constriction of my spiritual longings. For me, the highest values were not exhausted in the terms "God", "faith" or even "church". I was honest enough with myself not to hide the fact that my love belonged to the nation with its values of duty and honor. Oa's people were completely shattered mentally, rootless, instinctless, hopeless. I wanted to speak to the people about their spiritual values, to make them believe in their inner strength again, that's what I called preaching. And I consoled myself with the fact that although I was not a priest, I was a Protestant, albeit a very extreme one.

he last few days before the sermon brought me many anxious hours. Should I jump back at the last moment and refuse to put on the gown, stand at the altar and in the pulpit? It seemed cowardly to me to turn back now. However, in my heart of hearts, I didn't really trust evangelical freedom either.

As Wednesday afternoon approached, there was a considerable stir in Rostock. I was too well known for the people to miss the opportunity to see me, whom they knew well enough as a wild student, in the pulpit, which was so unlike me.

The church filled up half an hour before the start. Ladies of the "Society"', who danced bandals with us, were the first. Then came girls I had kissed at some point, older women, friends of my landlady, political friends. Rough sailors from the harbor, with whom I had spent many a night in winter chatting over grog and punch in the small smoky taverns. Random acquaintances I had found among the shipowners and merchants who wanted to see how such a young fellow, whose pranks they had heard so much about through their daughters, would take to preaching. The Rostock Waffenring was also represented in large numbers. I had often crossed swords with countrymen and gymnasts and had many friends among the fraternity members. They had now all turned up in their ribbons and toil. A colorful, bold picture, in which the pale-faced Wingolfites, the young theologians who were struggling to become serious pastors, did not fit in at all.

It went without saying that my Lorps Bandalia, including Kobrow and his wife, arrived together.

I was standing in the small, wooden-barred, purple taffeta-covered room below the pulpit, where the preachers used to sit before the service began. I kept pushing back the curtain to look at the visitors. God knows, it was a somewhat unusual picture, these mostly young, fresh, curious people in the old, venerable church, to which a convent had belonged before the Reformation and which was now inhabited by old nuns, some of whom also came hobbling in at the end. They fitted in better with the old, precious woodwork and the

Over the centuries, the paintings have darkened almost beyond recognition, the carefully carved tombstones and the colorfully painted high windows.

I paced restlessly up and down the box. Why were the first two rows empty? Schüßler sat at the front, broad and massive, and harshly dismissed all visitors who wanted to sit there. I could hear him clearly and he didn't make the slightest effort to muffle his voice. Sweat broke on my forehead. I was annoyed with myself. Oer's gown was far too long for me, it dragged a good 20 centimeters behind me. There were only two gowns. The other one was far too short for me, just reaching my knee. I kept looking in the mirror. Oer devil too, I looked pretty strange. Oer gown, the muff and the high collar didn't match my face, which was covered in red scars. I still had two bloody scars on my forehead from which the needles had just been removed. The top of my head didn't either, because my last opponent had hit me across the skull with a hooked guard.

There was a considerable hush in the church. I heard loud words, amused giggling and restrained shouts demanding silence. I already suspected nothing good when I took back the borhang. I recoiled in horror! So that's why Schüßler had kept the rows clear! At the last moment, the Rostock inactive association of the old Lorps students came together to do me the honor. Certainly, they meant well, kind-heartedly, the old, rough lads. They wanted to be there when I took the first step out of my wild boyhood and into other, more nebulous worlds. These hopelessly good-natured and decent guys! Even in the simplicity of their carefree hearts, they couldn't have guessed how abysmally bad their reputation was in Rostock, especially among theology students! Many years ago, some old Lorp students who had come to Rostock

had together to take their exams in peace and quiet, and over time formed an inactive association with the certainly not Christian, sa, rather decidedly satanic name of
"Swamp" was founded. They lived their own style, these wild fellows. They drank when they had money, fought their heavy sabre duels when they tracked down an enemy, made love when they found a willing beauty, and in time, one like the other, passed their exams and became all and all capable, hard-working people in life. They only lost one thing, their good reputation! But they did so in a rarely unambiguous way! If the Rostock student was known far and wide for the wildness of his manners and his sharp edge, the Rostock inactive student was hated and feared.

And yet these wild lads were as gentle at heart as children. They wouldn't hurt a fly. When they ran out of money, they even hired themselves out and went up to Finland, starved and suffered many hardships, and yet they were always in good spirits, were exuberant and up for the most impossible pranks every hour. Their tone, however, was terribly rough, but that was probably also due to the fact that they lived in the harbor district to save money, frequented small sailors' taverns and obviously made a point of scaring off the philistines.

After my induction, I had dutifully the association, but without being able to devote much time to it. On the one hand, I had a lot of work to do as a result of my unusually extensive studies, which were now nearing completion, but on the other, I devoted many a free half hour to a young girl who was close to my heart.

But the inactive ones, who shared the last penny with each other, had come to me in church. I was one of their number. I deserved the honor of their full presence.

However, the other churchgoers could hardly have guessed that the appearance of the inactives was an honor. Instead, they thought it was a student lulk, which was completely inappropriate in these sacred spaces.

My eyes flickered when I saw them enter, all twenty of them. Schüßler had approached them like a church usher, greeted them cheerfully and noisily with a handshake and led them to the two front rows. The inactive members looked around informally, waved to the young ladies, waved friendly words to my Lorp brothers, gratefully accepted the hymn books that Schüßler eagerly handed out and looked around the church with interest. hadn't occurred to any of them to perhaps humbly offer a silent prayer or to immerse themselves devoutly. They didn't know, the good ones. When had they to church since their confirmation? They had never thought about it. It was a touching picture, sitting there like that. One of them, Baron von Harstall, was wearing a cut that was far too long, probably borrowed his landlord. He also carried a tinderbox in his hand, but it was completely blunt due to his advanced age. The others wore tuxedos, worn blue suits, tailcoats, one even a frock coat.

In the unity of their hearts, they did not think that they were a nuisance to the Christian students and a disgrace to the bourgeois visitors. They waited, prepared for anything and ready to take part in any upcoming performances, hymnbook in hand, for the beginning. I only felt sorry for Professor Hupfeld, who had always held my hand up to now. Now he was wiping the sweat from his brow and surely waiting for something terrible to happen.

I wondered for a moment whether I shouldn't rush over there and get the inactive people out of their inactive state with a few clear words.

The idea was to ask them to leave the church they were so unfamiliar with.

But before I could figure out what was going to happen, the organ started to play. It was a wonderful old organ, and the professor who played it was a fine musician. He liked me very much and had talked me through the songs. The first thing I was

"Wake up, wake up,
, , you German land!" is
requested.

After the prelude, the song began. Powerful and hard, a real Protestant song. The inactives gave their best. They belted out the song as if they were doing me a favor. Their rough throats, which were otherwise used to singing old sailor songs or wild student songs not listed in the Kommersbuch, were stronger than those of the others. That's why their singing was the first in the place!

I was moved to see the faithful lads, who lived beyond all bourgeois morals in a daring freedom, sitting and singing like that. They didn't do it to honor a god of the church, but to make one of their own happy.

After the song walked to the altar, taking off my robe, and heard the astonished exclamations of the inactive people, who made astonished remarks each other about my strange garb. They certainly didn't mean any harm, but they were disturbing the other churchgoers. Unfortunately, they had completely forgotten that, as members of the congregation, they had to stand up at certain parts of the liturgy in accordance with the order of the service and join in the chant. And since they were sitting in the first two rows, they could not see that the others were standing up. So they remained seated and waited trustingly for the rest of the service.

I was thankful that the first part had gone reasonably smoothly and mounted the pulpit to preach my sermon. The presence of my friends gave me the necessary cheerful confidence, so that I was in no danger of becoming pathetic. I delivered my sermon in a natural tone, ending with an appeal to reflect on the duties of life. I had spoken of freedom, responsibility, sacrifice and struggle, of the ideas to which every decent German must subscribe. I had not spoken of heaven. Nor had it even to me that I could talk about anything other than this world.

When I looked down at my friends, I was pleased at their willingness. They nodded at me and had a serious gleam in their eyes. They all had their hearts in the right place, the tough guys. They also had a sensitive soul, only they didn't carry it on a tray front of them like some of the others who regularly go to church to be edified. They did not open their hearts in humble vanity to the public every Sunday and did not desecrate their ideals by dragging them out into the glare of the light. But in this ceremony they allowed themselves to be led willingly to the ideas for which countless German students had given their lives and were prepared to give them again every day by someone who belonged to them, who hard and rough like them and yet had a heart and soul just as devout and sensitive.

Harstall clapped as I left the pulpit and turned around indignantly when someone hissed indignantly.

I was glad that my friends had understood me and that I had succeeded in grabbing them and taking them with me during my talk to the places of upliftment, to which we warlike men only wander in ultimate solitude.

I didn't care at all whether the others out there, the Christian students, the citizens, the ladies of "society", had understood me or not.

The final part of the service went according to plan, but the inactive participants remained seated again.

The church was actually packed. It was only now, as it emptied, that I really noticed. Harstall approached as I had already changed my clothes and told me excitedly that the Inactive Association was inviting me to the "Blue Tower", the old sailors' pub, today. It was more than I had expected.

The Christian students, however, picked my speech apart according to all the rules of theological art. It would have been neither dogmatic nor even preachy. Besides, I would have spoken far too "elegantly", not at all with pathos and trembling seriousness at such an important moment in my life! I shrugged my shoulders and kept quiet. The professor my hand good-naturedly. He probably saw deeper than the young, ambitious zealots. "You'll have a hard time, Mr. Eggers, not because you're a Lorps student, but because you're far too honest."

I returned the handshake and went to the "Blue Tower".

Among the young theologians, however, I was already considered a hopeless outsider after my first sermon!

I passed the theological exam with distinction! I had shut myself away for a few weeks and learned Hebrew day and nightDuring the strenuous years of study, I had somewhat neglected this language, which is unattractive in every respect and, above all, completely unmelodic. The other exam subjects didn't give me a headache. A few days before the exam, I was still fighting

a contraction. I was hit on the forehead and forced to stand in front of my examiners with the stitched-up mess.

I was treated kindly and after completing the exam, which lasted several days, I was assured that I was the best candidate since the end of the war. Scientifically, of course, they hastened to add.

Did I want to go into the service of the church?

I left no doubt that I had my sights set on an academic career. But to be able to work in peace for two years, to finish my two doctoral theses, to complete my hut, that seemed incredibly important to me.

I entrusted myself to Krüger, who had met me with great understanding from the very first moment, one of those Protestant theologians who accustomed to unabashedly scientific work. I knew that I was not Christian as the Bible demanded, I knew that I could never become one, as I lacked all the prerequisites of humility. But a Protestant, I hoped, I could be, one who would start Luther left off. I would also be able to lead people, to carry them along, to force them from dull renunciation to action. I knew that I possessed the power of will to strengthen a congregation of men and women who were brave at heart and undaunted in their faith in the meaning and duty of life. However, I did not know whether I would be able to start anything with the weary and hopeless castaways of life. I was certainly more a leader of the strong than a comforter of the desperate. I said all this openly and unreservedly to the white-haired church councilor. And I didn't leave him in the dark about the fact that the world view, the spiritual and external one, of the Bible was by no means the foundation of my faith in life.

Oer Oberkirchenrat put his hand on my shoulder and looked at me for a long time, as if he was searching for kindred features in my face.

"Do you think, Mr. Eggers, that it was any different for me than for you? We only become something through life, never through mechanical learning. The main thing is not to lie to ourselves, even if the lie promises to make life pleasant and easy for us!"

I felt a great deal of trust in the man, who didn't fob me off with phrases.

2 The next day I visited the provincial bishop, a recognized preacher of winning amiability, the tgpical high court preacher of the pre-war period. He told me that I would be ordained in four weeks. I told him tooemphasizing to him, whom I knew had once a Wingolfite, that I had often and gladly fought, of my less Christian than Protestant attitude. He nodded to me equanimously: "Sometimes science is a threat to faith. But he has to go through that with himself."

^before I moved to Mecklenburg for good to take up an assistant preacher position at the town church alongside the small farming parish, I went to Berlin and to my parents, who had moved into a nice house on Scharmühelsee.

A lot had changed in Berlin. Almost none of his old friends were still there. Most of them were somewhere far away in the Kamps with their adventurous lives. One had gone ashore to join the Artamans, who were trying to make sense of their fate through hard farm work. Another had been stranded off Australia with his sailing ship and had a job on the subway railroad over there in Sidneg through a German. But little else was known about them all. One or two of them had probably written a postcard from Chile, China or some hidden corner of the empire with the usual phrases about how well he was doing and how beautiful the landscape was. Oann, however, had given no further sign of life. Germany had become peaceful at the borders, and the activists had withdrawn. But as soon as the internal political struggle began, they were back. They marched in the ranks of the SA, fought with the Communists in meetings and at marches and, by putting up a fight, bore misery and unemployment more easily. Their struggle gave their faith a strong and incorruptible confidence.

One of my former comrades had gone over to the Communists. This case in particular touched me deeply, because I didn't want to fast that a soldier could make himself a henchman of inferior forces. But the radicals

sation increased to such an extent that it was possible for a man to be thrown far out of the path of his own law. During the last few months I had attended only a few meetings in Rostock, because the exam took up all my energy. However, I had read with indignation that in Paris, after the reparations agent Parker Gilbert had reopened the question of German reparations earlier, a commission had been formed under the chairmanship of the American Owen Poung, which was now discussing how best the German payments could be made. The question of the evacuation of the Rhineland had also thrown into the debate, quite unjustifiably. Germany's enemies showed that they were not even thinking of returning the pledge of the still occupied territories. The German government, chaired by the Social Democrat Müller, was in a bad fix because the awakening German sense of honor was stormily demanding an end to the unworthy state of affairs. The government everything in its power to free the Rhineland in order to show the German that it too would meet the demands of honor. Before they vacated the Rhineland, however, the enemies demanded new unworthy guarantees from Germany, but above all they again demanded immense sums of money, which an honest government could not guarantee at all without impoverishing the entire people. Oer government, however, was concerned with a ^moral" solution, it did not think about the future. After all, what was the future to a government that did not know whether it would live to see the next day? The enemies demanded bonds that could possibly pass into the hands of private capitalists. Line unbelievable imposition! A capitalist on the stock exchange in London or Reugork could pretend to be a creditor of the German Reich!

The issue of payments was therefore removed from the political level. Germany was to be forced to agree with

of its entire economy and either pay or declare bankruptcy. No government should be able to deny the conditions for payment due to political changes. A special bank was to be established for Germany's tribute payments.

If Germany had signed up to this new ingenious plan, this brutal calculation experiment by callous, foreign-blooded capitalists, then the Rhineland would have been evacuated within six months. Otherwise not!

The philistines in Germany did not see the outrageous danger that threatened the entire German economy, nor did they want to know that it was dishonorable for a nation to allow such conditions to be dictated. They talked about the great moral success of the promised evacuation of the Rhineland and began to in a snivelling tone about the poor Rhinelanders, for whose liberation sacrifices would have to be made. Signing was their only wisdom. They hoped to stir the enemy by constantly emphasizing their humble good will. They had always said yes when a pact was to be signed. And since they were all still , signing didn't seem the worst thing to them, and certainly not the most dangerous.

The government also negotiated with Poland in order to "liquidate past", but that meant nothing more than all claims against Poland. The philistines nodded in surrender. The government should just sign, what was lost was lost. Better to renounce than not to live!

Now, however, all activists and national and ethnic-minded circles in Germany are rising up. The yes-men should stop! Stop the dishonorable and pathetic signing? Gin dash under the pacts and plans of enslavement! Down with the lumpen who put their corrupt Oasein above the honor of the Reich!

The old rage against the traitors broke . Every honest German bore a personal wound inflicted one of the bribed. Now the hour of revenge was at hand. Throughout the Reich, men were found who held up a book of guilt to the Republic. Hadn't the rulers, the Jews, the dark men, the supranationals opened a great sell-out in Germany for ten years? Who had desecrated the honor of the soldiers? Who had allowed women to be dragged into the mud with impunity? Who had stood idly by while the best German land was torn away from the empire? Who had laid their hands in their laps as the invasions of Silesia, Memelland, the Rhineland and the Ruhr ever more threatening? Who had repeatedly plunged the dagger of betrayal into the backs of the nation's volunteers? Who had the Dark Ones into mental and political separation? Who had tolerated literature, the whole of German art, coming into the hands of mad and impudent Jews? A new book had just been published, "Im Westen nichts Neues", by a man called Remaryue, who looked at the war from the perspective of the pantser! Line massive language was spoken by the activists, a language that got on the nerves of the philistines. The government trembled as it watched the streets fill with columns of German men and women shouting for them to stop. National Socialists, steel helmets marched side by side, old Völkische, decent German-conscious business leaders like the industrialist Vögler. The German nationalists experienced a split. The majority of them, however, wanted know nothing of the people's uprising for honor and freedom.

Under the leadership of the NSOAP, a large referendum was called. The name Adolf Hitler reached even the smallest villages. And the plebiscite was won with

more votes than were absolutely necessary according to the constitution.

A decisive step towards the acquisition of the nation had been taken. The Germans' blood was boiling. But the old spirit of resistance was . It sometimes happened that an overly grumbling philistine his fist put under his vase. And where a Jew spoke too grudgingly and contemptuously about the referendum, it also happened that he was slapped in the mouth.

Stresemann, the father of yes-man politics, died in the middle of the battle over the Poung Plan. The cowardly citizens wept at his grave because they feared that they no longer anyone in the world who could understand their fears.

The activists took note of his death only insofar as they realized that the policy of redemption had finally been dealt a severe blow.

The government believed it could override the referendum.

A few months later, in mid-March tyZo, it adopted the Poung Plan, albeit with only a very small majority. The Reich President von Hindenburg signed the plan with his own hand.

The activists then turned their backs on him. They regretted that he was now in line with the circles that had fought his election with the vilest means at the time.

I had experienced the battles over the Poungplan in Berlin. The day before I went back to Mecklenburg, I bought a gown in a store not far from Alexanderplatz and what else belongs to the official dress of a Protestant preacher.

Heini Schwarz took me to the train and made it very difficult for me to say goodbye. God knows he was right, I had to admit it. What was I supposed to do with the gown? I could only wear it like a borrowed costume. But I didn't want to go back. And then I convinced myself that perhaps I could make the start of a new great reformation, a reformation without dogma and without the Bible. Why shouldn't I succeed? Surely there were many, especially among the pastors who had been in the war, who thought as I did. I had not yet met one who strictly believed the word of the Bible.

I slapped Schwarz hard on the shoulder: "I can't suffer more than shipwreck, my dear. Then I'll build myself a stronger ship and set sail again!"

Schwarz shook his head: "Oie time, man, the precious time!"

The town church was filled to capacity when I was ordained. Word had spread quickly that a sung man with a strangely troubled past was to be appointed assistant preacher. And there was hardly a larger town in Mecklenburg without at least one vandal living there. It was a new sensation that a Vandal, a corps student, was ordained. Bourgeois society was almost beside itself with excitement. Nobody wanted to miss it, who knew when such an event would again!

I was highly indifferent to the excitement caused by my first public appearance. I felt extremely unhappy in my gown, even though the wife of one of my Lorp brothers, with whom I stayed for the first few days, kept saying that I looked very distinguished. It seemed to me as if my mensa scars were glowing that morning,

When I went into the town church, it was particularly bloody, and I couldn't get the words that Martin Luther was once said to have shouted in Worms out of my mind:

Little monk, little monk, you're walking a hard walk!"

The regional bishop performed the ordination in a very solemn manner. At the end, after I had been pledged to the Lutheran confession, he laid his hands on my head and gave me the motto that I had already received for my confirmation in Berlin:

> God has not given us the spirit of fear, but of power, love and discipline!"

One of the witnesses to the ordination was the senior church councilor, who had said a few manly words to me in the sacristy shortly beforehand.

When I left the city church, I had a solemn promise to myself to be obedient to my conscience.

I had the good will to become a preacher and educator in the service of a national Lutheran church. The time seemed to me to be overripe with longings and expectations.

I had taken a small furnished room in the city. In the village, I had a large vicarage at my disposal. On Monday I took the train to Kraheburg to give confirmation lessons. The Kraheburg teacher, the fine old sexton Lenz, was waiting for me in front of the school with the confirmands, who had come together from my very extensive rural parish; after all, the Kraheburg parish included the villages of Oalmsdorf, Granhin and Krienke in addition to the parish farm. There was a second church in Granhin and the school in Krienke served as a place of worship.

The confirmands, the boys were in the majority, looked at me with open mouths. My predecessor in office

was an old, somewhat shy man who didn't say a word too much. And then suddenly a sung man stood in front of them who didn't speak biblically at all.

The two hours with the children flew and when we parted, we were on our way to becoming friends.

Sexton Lenz was waiting for me with a bottle of genuine Mecklenburg Kalmüs schnapps. We discussed the issues of church coffee and collections, and I was glad that Lenz was prepared to continue with the cash transactions, because I had an insurmountable shyness about all commercial matters. And at the Kraheburg parish there were many things to calculate, because the old pfründensgstem had for the most part not yet been replaced. They still received hundreds of eggs, many smoked chickens, several loads of straw, a fat pig, sausages, grain and all kinds of food. Perhaps I should start a chicken farm - the thought alone was terrifying. Let old Lenz come to an agreement with the farmers!

The administration was not easy, a lake and a large area of fields and meadows belonged to the parish. Fortunately, there were long-term leases. I thought I was in a different world when I walked through the villages of my parish with sexton Lenz for the first time.

Line beautiful landscape! dedes Oorf was situated on a lake. Kraheburg and Oalmsdorf were located on the huge Käbelicksee lake, which was rich in fish and near which, only a few hundred meters away, springs of the Havel originated. All around, above the barren fields, huge pine forests rose up, giving the slightly hilly landscape something austere and mysterious.

A generally spicy scent emanated from the woods, and I breathed deeply in this pure air.

A healthy, decent people must live here, I thought. And I was proud of the task of strengthening the farmers' faith in their duty in the world.

As we walked through the villages, the farmers greeted us in a friendly manner. But we didn't have time to stop, because we wanted to visit the teachers in Krienke and Granhin to discuss some innovations that seemed important and essential to me.

But the tour of my parish villages lasted four hours. I felt like a ruler who had been entrusted with a large country.

The next Sunday, I preached my first sermon in the old, small, whitewashed village church.

My heart was pounding as I climbed into the pulpit, because I didn't really know what to say to the farmers. Their world had become quite alien to me in recent years, and I certainly didn't want to preach any phrases to these honest people. I didn't have a single sermon book in my extensive library; I considered it worthless to rehash the spiritual products of pastors who lived in completely different circumstances.

The farmers and peasants, the craftsmen, farmhands and maids, the boys and girls from Kraheburg and Oalmsdorf, the railroad workers from the small block stations, the forester and the landowner now gathered around and looked at me in curious anticipation. While they sang the songs, I had enough time to observe them carefully from my little wooden shed next to the pulpit, where the pastor and his fine family were allowed to sit. The farmers were all tall, blond, blue-eyed Mecklenburgers, a tough, open breed. The women were simply dressed, was no trace of a national costume, and yet their clothes were all of the same functional style. Only the older women wore hats, the others had their hair plaited into braids and pinned up so that it like a crown.

As I looked at the people in my church, I wondered what had brought them here. Many of them were no doubt driven by curiosity and probably also by generations of

an inherited habit. But I could also see that some of them had worries and were looking for advice, some word they could on to. They didn't need consolation, but they did need confidence. Almost all of them were farmers who had suffered greatly from Stresemann's policy of destroying agriculture, which was continued by Brüning. There were already almost four million unemployed in Germany, and the city dwellers suffered much more than the people in the countryside, who were still able to fatten a pig. But the farmers could no longer their goods, it wasn't worth selling, the prices were too low because there was no sense in importing from abroad, so the prices were spoiled. It was not worth growing grain. Much cheaper grain was imported from the eastern states. On the other hand, agricultural equipment, artificial fertilizers and all the goods and items that farmers had to buy had become many times more expensive. As a result, the farms were in debt and the people impoverished. And above them stood the danger of being seized. Many a farmer who had led a flourishing, healthy economy just a few years ago had to wander into misery with the white staff in his hand, homeless, sinking peacefully into the sea of unemployment.

What was I supposed to tell the people who had come to me in the small village church? They were far removed from the stories of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, they didn't know what to do with Paul's letters either. And was it supposed to be my job to tell them the story of Jesus from Nazareth, to explain to them how and why they were now redeemed? Was I even allowed to their minds away from the earth and their duty to the kingdom of heaven and its Lord of hosts? Should I perhaps proclaim to the people faces and hands bore the marks of worry: "Do not worry!"? Should I proclaim to them, who knew the law of sowing and reaping, the text:

"Behold the lilies of the field, they sow not, they reap not, and yet the heavenly Father feeds them"?

It would have seemed like sacrilege to me! I hadn't chosen songs like "On earth I have no standing, in heaven is my fatherland".

In front of the altar, I had read out the text prescribed for that Sunday. When I stepped up to the pulpit, I did not open the Bible or speak a word of Scripture. I told them about the cruel plight of Germany, of which they bore their share. I told them about the misery of the cities, about hunger, about hopelessness, about despair, about being outcast from all work and duty. And then I told them about the glory of an empire that would arise when the German people found themselves. I told them about the duty that brings the people of a state together and makes them forget all petty envy and resentment. Then I spoke of the prerequisite of freedom, namely the ardent love of an honest life of justice. And then I told them of the great betrayal that Marxism and its allies had committed against the German people, of the rape of the law, of the enslavement of Germany to capitalism, which was ready to commit murder. And then I told them that it would be cowardly to close their eyes to misfortune hope for a miracle. In its place, Feder would have to start by overcoming evil, betrayal and meanness. And we in our village wanted to make a start. That's why I would have to them, to help them find the way into their own hearts.

I read from their astonished looks that the peasants were surprised first at the unchurchlike language, but that they then understood what I was talking about. And finally they nodded to me as a sign that they didn't want to refuse my hand, but wanted to take it.

As I left the church, the men stood together and greeted me silently. An older man shook my hand: "Stay with us, Mr. Pastor!"

The vicar's car stopped in front of the vicarage to me to the church in Granhin. It an ancient carriage designed to transport the priest and the midwife. The springs of the upholstery of this open vehicle were split in two and stuck out like thorns. It was not easy and above all not painless embark on a journey. But after all, the vehicle sa was only there for urgent tasks and not to give the priest a .

The horses were small and shaggy, Cossack horses from the Great War. Oer parish tenant, an old man with cheerful eyes and a rarely dry sense of humor, drove himself and had a peculiar, carefree, impertinent way of saying Bible verses or hymns at every puffing and even more so at every inappropriate opportunity. Perhaps he obliged to do so as a parish tenant. The first time I groaned and tried to free myself from an upholstery feather that had penetrated my coat, he turned around benevolently and declaimed in his Low German tone:

> "A Christian heart walks on roses, even if it is under a cross."

Then he cracked his whip merrily and left me to my amazement. Oer Küster Lenz laughed to himself, a somewhat mischievous giggle.

Oer parish tenant gave his nags a blow so that they jolted. Again I tried to remove the feather from my coat. My dear coachman had a new verse ready:

"Lord, strengthen me to bear your suffering!" In Granhin, we hitched up with one of the farmers who been obliged to look after the priest's horses since ancient times.

and provide the priest with a good breakfast and a bottle of wine. I gave up the wine and asked a glass of milk. The sexton shook his head disapprovingly: "You must never go without, Mr. Pastor, even if you get a stomach ache. Once you renounce, you renounce a right to the benefice/

The people of Granhin had lavishly decorated their church with flowers and junipers.

When we returned to Kraheburg, we found a gathering of men, women and children from the parish in front of the vicarage.

Everyone had joined hands to decorate my house. The children sang

"I have surrendered," and the sexton gave a short, heartfelt welcome speech. Then we went into the house, followed by the men from the parish council. There were almost a dozen rooms at my disposal. I had set up one of them as my study. Oas means there was probably no question of furnishing it. With the help of an old mattress, a field blanket from my time in the army, a few stitches that young girls had embroidered for me to remember them by, and some old account books that I had found on the parish floor, I had built myself a perfectly shaped sofa bed. But hanging on the wall was my battered bat and my toils and lorps. I had made a desk out of two garden tables. I had placed a shapeless kerosene lamp on it as a showpiece. The rest of the walls were lined with shelves that I had made from old boxes with the help of the merchant. My extensive library was well and worthily stored. The tables and chairs in my study were all made from crates, albeit unpretentious but functional. The room looked decent and homely. I had set up a bedroom as my second room,

Apart from a camp bed and a crate/ on which I placed a bowl and jug, I didn't need anything. A few sturdy nails in the wall replaced the closet. Since the kitchen had a stove, it was fully equipped. Later I made up two more rooms. One was occupied by my Schnauzer called "Schnauz", and "Schnauz" was unpretentious enough to make do with a nice potato sack that I had filled with straw. The other room was occupied by my hedgehog called "Schorsch". He was already satisfied that I piled some hay in a corner for him.

The inhabited rooms were decorated with an abundance of flowers. For the first time, I had the happy feeling of having my own roof over my head and I was infinitely grateful have a home after the turmoil of my life.

As I walked through the bet empty stables that belonged to the parsonage, I only regretted not having come to this beautiful country as a farmer.

One morning in the city, I met my Lorps brother Schüßler, who training as a trainee teacher somewhere in the neighborhood. I greeted him from afar with a raised arm, as was my custom, and Schüßler called out to me in rough student language. We sat down together in the coffee house on the market and talked about what we had encountered over the last few months. We were glad to have met and paid no attention to the people sitting next to us. First we talked about the political situation in Germany, and I had to tell them exactly what had happened at the funeral of Horst Wessel, who had been murdered by the Communists. Wessel had long since become known in Berlin and throughout the Reich as the brave, enthusiastic SA leader and had also won over many of his student friends and corps leaders to the idea of National Socialism.

won. When he succumbed to his wounds, his comrades from the SA and friends of the party, including representatives of his corps, gathered to pay their respects to him on his last journey. I had joined the Normans when I was staying in Berlin and witnessed the vile attack on the funeral procession the Communists. Line unheard-of excitement seized all the participants the funeral procession, especially because it looked as if the policemen of the black-red government were in no hurry to fail the Communists. So it happened that the comrades of the dead SA leader Korst Westel had to help themselves. The Normans also drew their parade clubs and beat the Reds with all their might.

Many a bearer's eyes must have opened when he realized how far people who have become rootless can sink, that they still run against a coffin that holds the body of a man who an honest and open fight to the end)

I told Schüßler all this and left no doubt about how pathetic the government's attitude seemed to me.

Schüßler nodded thoughtfully: "The government should be continued!"

Then we talked about the church and the issues I had set myself as a sung revolutionary. Schüßler didn't really believe that I would succeed in sweetening the church internally. "The priests are all very old and calcified, man, they don't understand you at all. How many years does the second youngest have under his belt?"

The conversation became embarrassing because I noticed that the citizens were starting to whisper excitedly. I wanted to break off the conversation with a curb movement, and I said with a laugh that the second youngest person after me might have made about a hundred trips.

Schüßler grinned cheekily. "Fine, you're twenty-five, the next one's a hundred, the third youngest is a hundred and twenty-five and so on. So you want to rejuvenate the others? Do you know what they'll tell you? First you turn eighty, you young when, then maybe you can talk/

The citizens cleared their throats indignantly. But Schüßler didn't want to hear anything. He clapped his hands on his thighs: "Man, then I suggest you try it with afsendrüsen after all/

At that time there was a great deal of clamor about rejuvenation cures using monkey glands, and several clergymen in Mecklenburg had raised their voices and protested against this presumption of influencing life artificially and arbitrarily. That is why Schüßler's remark must have seemed particularly outrageous.

To end the conversation for good, I said: "Leg, my dear, I'd better stick to the old wooden hammer method. If the hops don't break, at least the lime will come off/ Then I paid and goodbye. Three days later I received a letter telling me that I had to report to the Oberkirchenrat then and . Unsuspecting, I brushed my suit, shaved carefully and hoped in a corner of my heart for a small salary increase, because I was paid ISO marks a month and still had to pay for my room in the city and my trips to Kraheburg. But as I had learned to do without all comforts, I with the money. After all, I wouldn't have refused an increase in my salary, my house wouldn't have suffered from it if I had bought some furniture.

At the appointed hour I stood before the serious, dignified old gentlemen dressed in black. Their expressions alone told me that I had nothing pleasant to expect.

On the contrary! I received reproaches and admonishments. Oncesome citizens complained that I didn't greet them in a pastoral manner at all, but instead raised my arm. As a rule, only National Socialists did that, and I wouldn't want to count myself among them. But then I would not only have spoken about politics in a public place and attacked the government, no, what would be even worse, I would have spoken of the older clergy in an extremely irreverent manner and expressed the desire - it would be terrible to repeat this - the desire to attack older pastors with a sledgehammer!

I must have been standing there quite taken aback. But before I could say another word, I had to take various well-meant pieces of advice. First of all, I should get myself a hat, I couldn't walk around with my head uncovered. And then it would be time for me to let my hair grow out, my shit...! I dared to interject modestly that only by a miracle could hair grow anew on the scars, because the hair roots . . .!

I was harshly interrupted and told that my whole demeanor was not at all what one would expect of a clergyman. This meant I could now leave.

When I got on the train to go to Kraheburg, I had to laugh to myself. What worries the gentlemen in the town had! And what gossip there must have been!

I suspected that I would often be the center of conversation for sensationalist coffee tasters of both sexes. As I found out later, I had been reported by a senior civil servant.

Just before the train stopped, a short fat man, whose oily voice repelled me, asked me if I was the new pastor of Kraheburg. When I answered in the affirmative, he assured me in a mighty torrent of words that he had known that immediately and that he was particularly pleased because he

had repeatedly asked God to send a young, devout pastor to the very difficult and not always sincere farmers. Now his prayer had been answered.

I couldn't get rid of the man, and he followed me into my house. There he looked around curiously and was saddened to see that not a single pious picture adorned the walls. The battered bat was obviously a thorn in his side. Then he began to speak again of God's grace and the answer to his prayer. Half jokingly, I thanked him for allowing me to live in this house through him and wanted to see him out. To my embarrassing shock, the man dropped to his knees, affirmed that he was an unworthy servant of God and a member of a prayer community, and then began to ask God for strength for my faith in an almost shouting voice.

I was disgusted by this exit and, after he had finally calmed down, I gently took the man by the arm to lead him out. But he begged me to pray for him too. I shook my head and said that I wasn't interested in such emotional unchastity. But I hoped, as I expressly assured him, that the good Lord would soon restore him to his senses.

As the door closed behind the outraged man, I knew that the prayer community to which this man belonged would not love me.

A few weeks later, when I had to go to a meeting of that community, I saw a crippled man who, in front of the assembled people, to the most terrible sins, but then triumphantly proclaimed that the grace of God and the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ had washed him white as a lamb.

I objected to this behavior and described it as unworthy and vain. A storm of indignation then arose against me.

Word spread like wildfire through the town that I was a messenger of Satan. Even in my house hung the sword with which I had shed human blood.

From that time onwards, I going to any meetings of a religious nature. After my first appearance, which led to a clash with all those present, I was no longer invited to the house of an elderly noble lady who regularly invited pious circles to expound the Bible.

I preferred to take care of my farmers all the more intimately.

One afternoon I was called into the dying room of an old farmer's wife. I had seen many a soldier die, and her death had always shaken me, if only to think that I too might rolling on the ground moaning like her in the next moment. But as soldiers we didn't talk about dying, it was too natural and probably too sacred us to talk about it.

As a young person, what should I say to an old woman?

The woman was lying in a low but bright room. She looked at me a little suspiciously as I sat down her bed. I waited for her to begin. It took a few minutes, and in the meantime she had shyly taken my hand.

"You are still so sung, Mr. Pastor. Do you even know what it means to die?"

I just nodded.

It was difficult for my wife to speak, but I felt that it was good for her inside.

"I haven't to church much. The farm and the children, Mr. Pastor, and all that dieh, especially the cows. . ."

I shook my head. "Going to church really doesn't matter. The main thing is that you do your duty/
The woman smiled wanly.
"I have always done my duty/

Then she looked at me with an anxious expression. "What about heaven? I've never taken communion, only confirmation/

In the face of death, should I tell the woman something about heaven that she even seemed to be afraid of? Was I even allowed to answer an honest person who had toiled all his life with Bible verses? The whole oogmatic with its doctrine of heaven and the angels, of the Last Judgement and eternal life seemed to me stale and false in the face of the reality of life and death.

"He who has done his duty can die quietly. He has lived better than one who has prayed and been lazy. And if there is justice, then it recognizes the heart that has beaten without wrong. But such a heart need not fear. Of what?"

The woman's eyes grew tired, but she still held my hand. "You have to take care of my son, he can't really cope with the farm, time is so hard/
I promised her.

And again and again the woman spoke a few words from which her love and concern shone, and her whole thought revolved around the duty she had had all her life.

Towards evening, after all her relatives had said goodbye to her, she fell asleep so calmly and easily that I almost didn't want to believe that death could come without pain.

Three days later we carried the woman to her grave. I had to preach the funeral sermon in the house in front of the open coffin, with my eyes fixed on the deceased, as was the custom in Mecklenburg. Oer custom also required that all funeral

The coffin was placed on the fresh mound so that it could be cleansed by the final blessing.

And it was also customary that an hour later a table full of coffee and cake was placed on the spot in the house where the coffin had stood, so that the memory of the deceased could be celebrated with food and drink.

On my afternoons off, I wandered through the villages of my parish and visited the farmers. When they realized that I knew how to handle a plough and how to treat a sick horse or a calcifying cow, they began to trust me. I got an insight into their needs and secret fears. There was no one who was not in debt, and no one who was able to think light-heartedly until the next trip. But there was no one in the government who would have taken care of the misery of the declining peasantry.

In the evenings, when I sat over my books with "Schnauz" at my feet, I couldn't stop thinking about the farmers.

Hadn't I once studied agriculture? I knew how much farmers depended on a responsible government to secure and support production through a sensible customs policy and fair compensation.

And hadn't I been a soldier long enough? Surely I should know that someone who doesn't know how to defend himself will become a whipping boy in the world? What had I to the church for anyway? Was it just to preach? Good heavens, it was often too much for me to speak where words were out of place.

Luther had once the farmer's pleading hand. This was not allowed to happen a second time. Oie

Communists were already beginning to Bolshevik peasant committees in order to spread the uprising from the big cities to the countryside when the time came.

I saw how things could develop when the farmer was seized and evicted.

As a thinking man, didn't I have a duty to help?

When the bell rang the next Sunday and the congregation streamed in, I didn't hold a service.

Sexton Lenz played the old freedom song

"The God who made iron grow",

and the farmers, who wide-eyed at first, sang the verses I had written for them on little handouts with a typewriter with unanimous enthusiasm.

I climbed into the pulpit and spoke of the need of the people and especially of the farmers. It should not happen that the crops on the fields, the cattle in the barns and finally the farms themselves were auctioned off. Now that the government had closed its heart, we had to unite and help ourselves, just as the farmers had stood under the banner of the Bundschuh 400 years ago.

I had become so enthusiastic that I no longer that I was speaking in a church. At the end, I called on the peasants not to wait until they were beaten one by one by the vendors, but to strike the first blow, to begin active resistance. We wanted to form a revolutionary village community and to each other with all our strength and resources if help was needed. No one was to leave the farm. If the government were to use force, we would defend ourselves with force! It wasn't just about us and the farms, it was about something bigger, about Germany!

At the end, the farmers jumped up and shouted their applause.

Standing up, we sang the Deutschlandlied and sexton Lenz rang the bell. Afterwards, all the farmers without exception pledged their allegiance to our village community.

And after just a few days, we were ready to help our comrades in distress with manual labor.

Bailiffs had to leave without having accomplished anything, and the raiders from the towns, who traveled to every auction to scam valuable goods for a ridiculous amount of money in agreement with the journeymen, were left behind.

We were proud to be the first peasant fighting community in Mecklenburg to be born out of necessity and ready for any resistance, and we met several times a week to discuss the burning issues. I was no longer the pastor who was called to the dying, I was seen as a peasant leader who helped the living.

Hur I couldn't help myself! The doubts I had about my church activities grew stronger and stronger. I realized more and more clearly that I was not there to serve a church that was alien to my life. I saw that there had to be a break and yet I didn't know what would happen after the break. Until the gray morning I sat over my books and worked. I wrote page after page. My doctoral thesis was gradually to an end, at the same time I was working on the last two acts of my Hutten-Orama, writing poems, recording thoughts and doubts and yet I saw no end!

I have always worked a lot in my life, more than the average person. But the flood of emotions and experiences has never overwhelmed me as relentlessly as it has in my time.

I hardly got to sleep for a few hours, but I was fresher than I had ever been in my life. In the mornings, afternoons and evenings, I was visited by farmers seeking advice or those who brought new ideas and greater demands. And when there was no one in my room, I would walk to the villages for an hour or ride my bike, which I had borrowed from teacher Lenz, to the remote farms. I felt as if I had to defend a threatened country against enemy attack. The old Freikorps joy danger made my heart beat faster.

I didn't care for all pastoral restraint. When I was at a peasant wedding, I danced the first and last dance, and if a young lad or an old guy cheered me on, I let him know.

Very soon, the gossip bases had more anti-maintenance material than they could handle.

A young girl once came to me in the city and I didn't show her the door. They wouldn't forgive me for that.

The time came when I was called to a different village almost every evening to in front of National Socialists and steel helmets. There wasn't a rally in the wider area where I didn't take the floor for an attack speech. Even when the Luisenbund der Frauen disfigured a retch meeting at the place where Queen Luise died, I had to give the field speech. It was less because I was a pastor than because I was a German revolutionary who stepped forward when others got tired.

When the summer solstice came, I was standing on a hill not far from Reubrandenburg. A huge bonfire blazed in front of me, with the SA. and Stahlhelm, warriors' clubs, my farmers and lots of people from the villages and small towns standing to my side. And I spoke of freedom and the eternal fight against revenge.

Was I even a pastor, a preacher? I didn't believe it myself. But my numerous opponents believed even less.

To the Reds I was a dangerous "right-wing agitator", an extreme terrorist, to the serious Christians an arch-heretic, to the philistines an impossible person!

there, I was impossible!

But I also found friends and comrades, loyal, honest people who had become brave rebels from their rebellion against the Red. I could still laugh heartily with them even in the most serious of times. We laughed when the bailiff came to me one day and seized my property. I couldn't help myself!

There was an advertisement in the newspaper that this and that was up for auction in the rectory in Kraheburg. We laughed as we scraped together the last of the money.

One Sunday morning, when I had to preach to an unusually large congregation in the castle church, a serious Christian rushed up to me, pale with fright, and swore that I had preached everything else but Christ!

I shrugged my shoulders wordlessly and left him standing there. The man was right. But my friends squeezed my hand.

It was a wild, stormy time, chaotic, unpredictable, yet full of revolutionary possibilities.

Hardly anyone shook my hand at the Sgnode. They wanted nothing to do with me. And I had bought myself such a nice, stiff black hat!

Contrary to expectations, I had received permission from the Ministry to set up study groups in the upper classes of secondary schools. I started cautiously with the works of Walter Flex. Then we read Löns and Gorch Fock. And at the end, after I had first studied Max Hölz's book "Vom weißen Kreuz zur roten Fahne" ("From the White Cross to the Red Flag"), the confusion of the

Communism, we took Adolf Hitler's "Mein Kampf" and Alfred Rosenberg's work, which had just appeared in print
"Oer Mgthus of the XXth century".

Some people in the country threw their hands! I looked for my enemies and found them. Not only was the red government outraged that I spoke publicly against Marxism, the church government was also outraged that I disturbed the good relationship with the state, which paid its high subsidies and demanded at least tacit toleration of its political machinations from the church. Even among the pastors, I had a lot of enemies.

I didn't , and I also knew that my days in the church were numbered. It got to the point where I was getting anonymous threatening letters sent to my house, and the reprimands from my superiors became more frequent and more bitter.

It happened more and more often that once profitable estates were bought out by Catholic settlement societies, and then it was not long before closed Catholic villages with fanatically Catholic settlers, skilled Catholic teachers and zealous Roman priests were founded in completely Roman-free areas of beautiful and austere Mecklenburg. I also attacked this dangerous enemy.

Fighting and hostility wherever I looked!

Groups of young people often came to me in the village with flags and pennants. We camped under the large lime tree in front of my house, sang the old songs, laughed with games and folk dances and welcomed the youth of the villages into our midst.

I was also often taken to youth camps or to where young men were doing voluntary work in the quarries and moors. I then told them about the battles in Berlin and around the Annaberg and about the battles we would still be fighting until the day freedom dawned.

It also often happened that I had to preach somewhere in the country, in a small village or in one of the many country towns, standing in for the pastor. Then people would rush from far and wide because they had heard that someone was coming who spoke about freedom and not about submission to God's will.

I never had to speak in front of empty pews. That was probably the only reason why the church hadn't long since dismissed me. They tolerated me because I was a man of the most radical nationalism, of whom they didn't know for sure whether he 't one day lead a victorious uprising. But that was all. The old church councilor who meant so well by me once advised me to become a politician. He saw already knew where my path was leading.

One day, my name was put on the nationalist list for the state elections. I was supposed to be a member of parliament.

As a man in the service of the church, I was not allowed to be politically active. I had strongly advised more than once not to get close to any party. However, the list on which I was to stand as a candidate was the result of an agreement between all national groups.

Shortly before the election, I was summoned to the town in an urgent letter. It was a Sunday, in the morning I had to in Kratzeburg, then in Granhin, and in the early afternoon I attended a farmers' meeting in the area. So I was only able to arrive in the town in the late afternoon. The old church councilor was very worried.

"The government demands that you take your leave immediately, today!"

I had been expecting this announcement for a long time, but the fact that it came so abruptly, so abruptly, disgusted me.

Oer Oberkirchenrat grabbed my arm.
"It's best for all of us if you leave immediately/

I shook my head. "I can't possibly leave my friends over heels!"

The head clergyman walked around his room with long strides.

"For all the months you've been here, your enemies have collected everything that speaks against you. They've even been listening in on the girls you're acquainted with and keeping logs. If you don't leave, there will be a chain of trouble."

I didn't care at all. I hadn't done anything wrong and I wasn't celibate. In the last six months, I was constantly on the road, I didn't even have time to go on a date with a girl.

What were my opponents supposed to do to me? I thought about it for a long time.

In the last few years I had enough offers, I could go to Thuringia, to Kastei, to Berlin, and finally I told myself that at the next opportunity the annoyances would be even greater. If the church was determined to get rid of me under pressure from this miserable government, in which everyone pushed and cheated to their heart's content, then I didn't want to stay any longer.

After I had asked to be discharged, I received an excellent certificate which, however - and this was very dangerous at the time - emphasized that I had served the national cause with particular zeal. Then I packed my things, said goodbye to my bewildered farmers and left with a holy fury for Berlin, where an assistant pastor's position awaited me in the West.

My friends in Mecklenburg sparked no small uprising against the church. The farmers drew up lists and collected signatures, they refused to accept another pastor into their parish.

The National Socialists and the Stahlhelmer were up in arms against the church leadership, which they of behaving unworthily in the face of blackmail from the Marxist government. I was now to be appointed as a preacher at the Oom of Raheburg.

I was deeply moved by this loyalty and honesty. I would also have liked to return to Mecklenburg, which had become my new home, but not as a pastor. What else was I supposed to do in a church that considered my will suspicious, my thoughts dangerous and my actions sinful?

>^)n Berlin it was seething and fermenting dangerously. The streets echoed with fighting slogans. Posters were stuck to walls and pillars, and groups of agitated people gesticulated at the corners. The misery rose higher and higher. The miserable army of the unemployed grew inexorably, and the hearts of the citizens froze in horror of certain doom. More and more people put their hands their laps and despaired of any hope of salvation.

Bolshevism dominated the public, and step by step the storm troopers of National Socialism had to push back the Reds! Blood flowed every day, vengeance flowed, and the life of a fighter for German freedom counted for little.

The Chancellor of the Center Party, Brüning, whose unsympathetic face expressed Jesuitical deviousness, issued emergency tax with which he took away the last of the income. Even the men who still had jobs were soon earning so little that their families had to starve like those on welfare.

In the public spaces, in the parks, in small squares, burly young men loitered and killed the day with silly games. Hundreds of thousands begged shyly at the doors of the decaying houses of the once so rich West. Peddlers, street singers, vacuum cleaner salesmen and family magazines tried in vain to earn a penny a hundred times a day. The clothes of the people in the city became more and more torn off, their eyes more and more hopeless, their posture more and more stooped. The great death came over Germany. At that time I almost buried more suicides outside on the

endless cemeteries in Stahnsdorf than those who died of illness or old age.

Many people were also so degenerate in their thinking and feeling that they hoped for the storm surge of communism as for a liberating act, a liberating act in some cases, because it would either an end to misery or to a ruined life.

The remnants of bourgeois "society" played with the idea of Bolshevism on the doorstep, like ignorant children playing with a bomb. It was considered particularly
"modern", to be a "salon Bolshevik".

Commercial abortionists sought their customers in public and it was considered backward to have children. In the cinema and theater, only raunchy films were shown. Whenever a bourgeois-national film was shown somewhere, possibly with Otto Gebühr as Frederick the Great, there was a veritable migration of nationalists.

The books of the Jews Emil Ludwig and Alfred Neumann and whatever else they might call themselves appeared in print runs of millions. And everywhere in literature, in all of art, the principle of annihilation, of destruction for the sake of destruction, came to the fore. They called it "Lhaospolitik" and imagined such chaos to be extremely "interesting".

I had joined the National Association of German Writers at the time when it rose up against the general writers' associations, which were completely squalid. But the association was far too weak, it wasn't backed by the big publishing houses, almost all of which, like Nllstein, Mosse, Fischer, belonged to Jews.

I met with Heini Schwarz every day. He was also in a bad way, like most young academics. He was no longer able to paint. No gallery was prepared to exhibit his pictures, because in almost all galleries the Jewish

press opinion. Schwarz had passed his assessor's exam some time ago and had become the head of a weaving association, got married, and now his wife was expecting their first child. The weaving association had very soon dismissed him for no good reason, so Schwarz ran around trying get some small position. In vain! Hardship was also upon him.

We often wandered the streets of restless Berlin in the evenings, making plans and discarding them, looking for ways out and finding none. We went to meetings or sat in our apartments.

The market criers of the soul appeared and extolled their infallible panaceas. I attended the reading evenings of the oily chaplain Fahsehder, who talked about Goethe and all sorts of cultural problems and, significantly, the names of the Berlin
"society" and walked away disgusted by the vain behavior of this Oandg in a priest's robe. You would have thought Chaplain Fahsel was Jewish when you heard him praising Judaism and dragging the folkish ideas of National Socialism into the dust. He seemed like a disciple of the Jewish "psychoanalyst" Freud when he, the celibate priest, stood casually at his lectern and wisdom about marriage and burning sexual problems in a soft voice. He sometimes spoke in the same hall that another charlatan had rented after him to the stupid. Oas was the "prophet" Weißenberg, who appeared with unprecedented impudence, followed by his white-clad
"honorary virgins", one of whom occasionally gave birth to an "Olkind" he had fathered and performed miracles. Without exception, however, the miracles were due to the incomprehensible narrow-mindedness of his listeners, many of whom members of the upper classes. Weißenberg, who had previously a cab driver and unskilled laborer and was unable to make a living due to laziness and drunkenness, was now considered one of the richest men in Berlin.

he wanted to raise the dead himself by laying on hands and using white cheese. Despite his prayers and the consecrated white cheese, many of the people whose ulcers he with an ink pen died. But the influx grew and grew. Weißenberg began to use his media not only to quiz the Archangel Gabriel and some holy impostors of the Old Testament, arch-fathers and prophets, but also to quote Bismarck and issue political slogans through him. Weissenberg also published a newspaper that was available from street vendors.

A terrible frenzy had come over Germany. People who had lost faith in themselves to blind superstition in order to make "fate" favorable. Astrologers sprang up like mushrooms after the rain. Clairvoyants, mostly of Mixer origin, maintained their circles at a cost that only millionaires could afford. And high politicians were among their clients?

And each superstition had its sects, its newspapers, its books, its fanatical advocates.

Oa's fate was to be overheard, outwitted? And then one would gladly sacrifice the last of one's money and intellect.

"Runenggmnastics" invited people to take part in their rhgthmic convulsions, which were said to have been devised according to ancient pagan customs. And there were people who bowed their heads to the ground and stretched their right foot upwards while shouting a long drawn-out Iiii. By doing this, they hoped to become stronger than fate?

I walked around Berlin with my eyes open and looked down the aisle. And when I stood in the pulpit of my crowded church on Sundays, I spoke of despair, of folly and madness. And then I called on souls to fight for freedom.

Oas seemed more important to me than preaching about the gospel or Sunday's epistle. Oa's confession of life seemed more valuable to me than the interpretation of any creed. Oie people stood in the aisles of the large church. But very few came because they were of my conviction. Most of them wanted to experience something interesting, a modern heretic, a heretic! And was already receiving a hail of anonymous letters taunting me to hand out pistols and hand grenades in the sacristy. That would be even safer than filling the souls of young people in particular with warlike ideas.

Strange people, religious communists, enthusiasts, pacifists, sectarians, praying sisters, came to my consultation hours and tried to dissuade me from my path. If they got too loud, "Schnauz" would jump out from under my desk and drive them away, barking and snarling.

Heini Schwarz and the young girl, whom I was only able to marry years later, came to me in the church, listened to me and asked me to up my gown as quickly as possible. I just nodded and waited for the final external impetus.

The weather clouds around Germany grew darker and began to twitch and glow in the distance, as if a new world conflagration was breaking out.

Germany was very lonely in the midst of the approaching weather.

Stresemann's successor, Lurtius, made a clumsy attempt to conclude a customs union with little Austria, the League of Nations intervened and forbade further negotiations. The German government groveled, and haughty France rubbed its hands in glee.

Germany was to remain alone. The wedges of separation were already being driven forward again. In Bagern and on the Rhine

warm dark forces were about to tear away parts of the German south and west in case Germany was dragged into a war, in order to deal the hated north the deathblow all the more surely.

The house of the German Empire showed reefs and cracks everywhere, and there was a frightening crackling in the woodwork. Enemies with a lust for plunder stood on the borders and were already selecting important cities and ports to incorporate into their states.

Brüning and Lurtius traveled abroad to plead with the foreign rulers for a reprieve. The German currency began to slide again. A dark day came for the banks.

The citizens complained or prayed. They no longer thought about fighting back. Thälmann's followers were looking forward to the moment when the city and country of Germany would be released to them for the slaughter. Hitler's conspirators, however, supported the house of the Reich with their bodies and saved it from collapse. In Harzburg, Adolf Hitler once again called together the national bourgeoisie to create a rallying point for the final decisions in the "Harzburg Front". However, the middle classes were not up to the task. A panic mood arose, as in 1918.

Hindenburg no longer had any resilience. He could not find his way to the front, where the fighting was fiercer and more bitter than ever. Like the Kaiser at the time, he only saw the sick and cowardly stage and believed it was Germany!

2On Kurfürstendamm, I met the Freikorps leader Beppo Römer, who had fought bravely at Annaberg and during the Ruhr War. We sat down in a coffee house and talked about the vicissitudes of our lives.

"You have to to us!" said Römer.

"Who are you?" I wanted to know.

Römer pulled a brightly colored magazine out of his pocket.

"I am the leader of the AAK, the Aufbruch working group!" I the pages of the magazine attentively and found Names I knew from my time in the Freikorps, but also some that made me wonder.

"Oas are sa communists, man!"

Römer nodded seriously. "We have to go with the proletarian masses, my dear, especially us old activists from the Freikorps."

I looked at Römer in amazement. Was he serious? Could we go with a crowd whose leaders were Jews? Could we even stand up to the Jews? I would understood if Römer had come up with a plan to shoot the Jewish .

"Do you really believe that the Jews will let us get close to the masses who are in bondage to them? Don't you think they just want to use us as a figurehead so that they'll have soldiers who have been tested in barricade fighting? I'm afraid you'll be the first one they shoot from ambush when you can't sew them up!"

Römer shrugged his shoulders. "I won't ask anymore. I don't want to stop my fate either."

When he left, I looked after him for a long time. It had already come to the point where even freedom fighters who had repeatedly shed their blood for their idea had lost faith in the nation and committed themselves to a terrible experiment.

A few days later, I was asked by religious communists to come to a debate evening at the Marxist Workers' School, the "Masch", which was housed near Alexanderplatz in a dull, dirty apartment building in Schicklerstraße, and to answer questions.

I followed the invitation, even though I knew it dangerous to go into the lion's den.

There sat young people, not all of them criminals and lumpen, struggling to find answers to the many questions of the time. And there were Jews, communist members of the Reichstag, sub-humans, who were shaming doubt and killing hope in order to have will-less slaves for the armed uprising. I also met Ludwig Renn, whose bourgeois pseudonym concealed the name of an aristocratic Saxon guard officer, the author of the book "The War", which was still better than Remargue's book. Renn taught his comrades the tactics of partisan warfare. Things heated after I jumped up and protested against a Jew who had just declared that the concept of the nation was as illusory as an onion, from which one peeled off layer after layer in dissection in order to fathom its secret, leaving nothing more than a pile of husks without a core.

I shouted in between that he probably didn't know that there also a will to become, a seed of the law, in the onion. And the germ of the nation would be the blood, but the will to become would be in the nation the longing of the communion of the blood to the people and thus to eternity in this world.

None of the boys who were seriously looking for ways out stood up to me. But the Jews shouted indignantly that I should be beaten to death. I sat with the until the early hours of the morning and tried to convince them that they being played badly. We left in the knowledge that we soon be standing opposite each other with a gun in our hands, to present our final arguments!

As part of the church propaganda, I was supposed to give a lecture to a closed circle of high church dignitaries.

hold the carrier. I had been given the topic: Ole spiritual and mental situation of the German youth of our time!

I knew that this evening bring separation from the church and asked Heini Schwarz to accompany me.

The lecture was supposed to last two hours. After only half an hour I noticed the horror of my listeners. I did not allow myself to be put off and continued to speak about the fact that the activist and valuable part of the German youth never forgive the Church for its ostensible failure in this decisive hour of history. The question of the God of the Bible and the Church would no longer be central in the consciousness and thinking of young people, but the question of the nation, its honor and its life. In Luther's time, Christ would have been overpowered by Wodan, and Sinai would have ceased to "godify" the world. Today, however, the nation would be the only denominator to which all the longings of the brave people of our day would refer!

People whispered excitedly, shook their heads, cleared their throats, looked at me angrily, but when I sat down, most of them fell silent, embarrassed.

Only one senior church councillor, who also had Jewish blood, laughed and said, somewhat huffily, that he had already experienced many things, but today was the first time he had seen a young clergyman who was a total heathen.

Heini Schwarz stood up and gave me the last second service. He spoke harshly and not at all reverently in front of so much assembled dignity, then put his hand heavily on my shoulder. "Come on, you have no here anymore!"

I had left the church. As a freelance writer, I was starving in a small room in Berlin. Bailiffs came and went. They left me my typewriter, but took everything else.

I had nothing left, my only suit was torn, hopelessly torn, most of my books were lost. I learned again what it meant to be hungry and thirsty. Now and then I sold a poem, a novella, a treatise to one of the few newspapers that were not in the hands of Jews. Oa's money wasn't even enough to pay my rent.

Only Heini Schwarz stayed with me and shared my misery. And then there was the young girl who wouldn't leave me. She sacrificed her pocket money so that I could at least buy a bowl of soup every three or four days. With the best will in the world, she couldn't do more, because her father was a pastor at the church where I had once been employed!

The Berleger laughed at me when I offered them my Hutten Orama. It was enough if I starved myself, they said.

Even in radio, I was shown the door with cool words when I brought my first radio play "Annaberg".

I read Nietzsche again and again.

"What doesn't kill me makes me stronger!"

Well, I was still alive! Even if I sometimes felt sick with hunger and had to avoid walking long distances alone.

Every now and then I gave lectures. But it was rare, and I hardly ever got paid for it.

Once I was taken to Mecklenburg for three evenings. I was very happy to see them again, and when the farmers realized that I was going hungry, they sent me parcels.

I found a huge sign on my former house in Kraheburg. Line fur farm had been set up there, and a divorced woman was living more poorly than well in the rooms. Nobody went to church anymore!

And then the starvation and work began again, day in, day out. Was this life still worth it? When I was shaving in the mirror, I was startled.

I had learned to defy and tense my will. Who knows if I wouldn't have been overcome by tiredness otherwise. It was so easy to steal away from life.

One morning I received a letter from Switzerland. Ah sa, I remembered that I had applied for a job in East Asia via Bern, months ago, when I didn't yet know when I would hang up my gown. The heads of the East Asia Miffion, which only sent out academics, were high Freemasons, and the first question was about my membership of the lodge. I just shook my head. Then I'd gone to the university's Oriental seminar and started China and Japan. Now the decision was there!

I had to smile. They really wanted to send me to Tsingtau! I was not only supposed to be a pastor at the German church, but above all a teacher at the German school.

Tsingtau! A distant world of fairy tales and wondrous dangers rose up before me, a tantalizing world.

I my teeth.

Relatives visited me and tried to shove me into office positions. I rebelled against this. What was I supposed to do as a propaganda man for a lignite company? I had goals and ideas of a different kind. Freedom and struggle! It had to start somewhere soon, either at the borders or within the country. I had to work for this day, everything else was irrelevant next to this day. Nothing was going to stop me. No, it was precisely because I was starving that I could not be bribed.

My relatives doubted my state of mind. I just laughed.

The Voluntary Labor Service, which was being carried out on a large scale, offered me a position. I was to lead the Brandenburg district. It was important that this was done in the Freikorps spirit. Yesterday I would have jumped at the chance. Today it seemed to me that I was avoiding the final decision.

On a bench in the zoo, I spotted a young man, torn, undernourished, one of thousands. I was about to walk past him when I stopped. His face, sunken, disheveled, overshadowed by long stubble, looked familiar.

And then a gleam came into his eyes. We rushed towards each other, squeezed hands, hit each other on the shoulders, shouted so that people stopped.

An old Freikorp comrade stood in front of me. We hadn't seen each other for eleven years!

We took shelter and looked for a secluded bench.

"Do you remember back then?"

There was no end to the stories and questions and we kept laughing as if our world was full of sunshine.

When we had scraped together our last pennies, we calculated that together we could buy a bockwurst at Aschinger. And we got any amount of bread rolls for free.

When we finally had our fill, we talked about the future.

My comrade raised his head and looked to the east.

"There's something in the air."

I nodded. "You just don't know when it's going to start."

Oa muffled the other's voice. "I know some of us who are already in East Prussia. They work there in the woods on the border."

I grabbed him hard by the arm. "Come!"

Heiser's train crossed the Vistula bridge. We pressed our noses to the windows. So that's where the threatened Oanzig was!

I felt my pistol in my pocket.

Oer comrade looked at me. -When it comes to fighting, it will be hard, harder than back then. We are all alone, we few soldiers/

I breathed deeply. How small was my misery compared to the misery of the bled-out country that defencelessly open to invasion. And how quickly those wild years had passed the day I left the barracks to study and become a free man.

And who knows if I 't have given in by a hair's breadth and become a civil servant, provided for and safe. But the fate of life was stronger than the temptation. It was so divinely heavy and did not allow my life's skis drop anchor.

The train control came. We gave the Polish officials our tickets and politely greeted them again.

I put my arm around my comrade's shoulder. We would be waiting somewhere in East Prussia.

To destiny? adventure? To death?

We knew nothing of what was come. And we didn't need to know anything.

We just wanted to be ready.

And be the first!

Kurt Eggers

The home of the strong

his thought, through the discipline and consistency of his delivery, the firmness of his movements, the gripping momentum that permeates his words and no reader indifferent. Eggers smashes his opponents and their positions even more clearly and precisely, but also more brutally and, in a completely essential sense, more ruthlessly than before.

Germans, in which the totality of the völkisch idea becomes reality

the world of Mnt and the happiness of the meaning of life.

This is about the great questions of existence that have concerned the nation since its historical beginnings: with poetic words, the

Volkschaft-Verlag, Dortmund

The works of Kurt Eggers