

Introduction

The Haushofers And The Nazis

Luise Haushofer's Jail Journal follows on from Albrecht Haushofer's *Moabite Sonnets*, a bilingual edition of which appeared in 2001 with an introduction about the Haushofers, Geopolitics and the Second World War. Luise (*née* Renner) was Albrecht's sister-in-law. After *Moabite Sonnets* appeared, her daughter—Andrea Haushofer-Schröder, Albrecht's niece—contacted me and gave me some documents which illustrate the family consequences of Albrecht's resistance activities. One of these was that Luise served time in jail as the Gestapo suspected her of helping Albrecht to elude capture after the *20th July 1944*—a phrase which is shorthand for the attempt to assassinate Hitler and establish an alternative Government that would attempt to negotiate an end to the Second World War, and re-establish democracy in Germany. Because of the Nazi policy of *Sippenhaft*—arresting the family of an accused—Albrecht landed the Renner as well as the Haushofer families in trouble with the Gestapo and caused some dispute and ill-feeling between the two. The documents Andrea gave me appear here in the original German and in English translation. They comprise a communication from Martha Haushofer to Anna Renner; another from Karl Haushofer to Paul Renner; a reply from Renner; and a surviving fragment of a Jail Journal written by Luise Haushofer in 1963. In addition, there are several illustrations from the Haushofer archive (provided by Andrea).

Albrecht was summarily executed in the closing hours of the War for his part in the Resistance to the Hitler regime. He had been captured in December 1944 and kept on ice in the Berlin Moabite Prison by the Nazis, in case his English contacts would be useful in the event of a negotiated end to the war. During his confinement he wrote some amazing sonnets, reviewing his life and his world-view, and these were clutched in his hand when his body was found in Berlin by his brother, Heinz.

Albrecht's position as a member of the Resistance was particularly curious because of his family background. His father, General Professor Karl Haushofer, was a geopolitician who influenced Hitler's thinking. The General had absorbed the geopolitical ideas of Sir Halford Mackinder, the Fabian Socialist who taught in the London School of Economics, and popularised them in Germany. Mackinder's ideas went far beyond narrow academic horizons, influencing first the British imperial project and later the strategic vision of Hitler's *Mein Kampf*.

Inspired by Mackinder and other British writers, Karl established a vigorous Institute of Geopolitics in Munich, which produced high-quality material, including

a magazine (*Zeitschrift für Geopolitik*, founded 1924) to which Albrecht also contributed, and many books. Karl also developed a cultural association for Germans overseas, which later came under direct Nazi control. His wife, Martha Mayer-Doss, was half Jewish (on her father's side). However, she involved herself in Karl's work to the extent of translating a work of the British Conservative Imperialist, 'Al Carhill', into German. (More about 'Carhill' can be found in Manuel Sarkisyanz, *Hitler's English Inspirers*, Athol Books, 2003.)

The family's Nazi connections, above all through Rudolf Hess, meant that Martha's sons, Albrecht and Heinz, were able to hold prominent public positions, despite their Jewish ancestry. Hess provided the family with a document confirming an Aryan clean sheet—which is reproduced in this pamphlet (see page 66).

Of the two Haushofer sons, Albrecht was the more political. He carried on the geopolitical inheritance and combined academic life with work in the Foreign Office. Heinz, an agriculturalist, became somewhat involved in the *Blut und Boden* movement, directed at the peasantry by the Nazis. (The cooperative banks associated with that movement survive to the present day: Raffeisen Banks are still to be seen in Germany.)

As an adviser to government in the 1930s, Albrecht attempted to moderate Hitler's ambitions, while appealing to his influential English friends to use their influence with the British Government to limit its concessions to the German Chancellor. When he failed to prevent war, he refused to leave Germany, but stayed on and became associated with the Resistance, hoping to further a conservative *coup d'état*. That career came to an end with the failure of the attempt on Hitler's life of 20th July 1944.

Albrecht did not fully confide in his family about his involvement in the Resistance. However, Luise's Jail Journal makes it clear that she was aware of it in general. His brother, too, was somewhat in the picture. Rainer Hildebrandt, who was close to Albrecht, mentions that the two brothers met while Albrecht was on the run (see *Moabite Sonnets*, p86-87). Everyone agrees that Albrecht was very close to his mother and that it would be very surprising if she was not fully informed of his political thoughts and actions, but it would have been quite a different matter with his father who was a soldier of the old school, which valued honour and loyalty above all other virtues. To undermine one's country in time of war would have been anathema to him.

But the General would also have had a more personal reason for shunning family resistance activity: and that was the abiding fear that Martha would be sent to Theresienstadt, a ghetto in the East which for many provided a staging post to the Concentration Camps. (My grandmother was sent from Vienna to

Theresienstadt and then Auschwitz; my grandfather, who had escaped from Vienna to Belgium, was sent directly to Concentration Camp when he was caught: see *Memoirs Of My Jewish Great-Grandfather* by Angela Abukhalil-Clifford, Athol Books 2003.)

The position of people of Jewish ancestry in Germany/Austria was a delicate one. If they were married to Christians and kept out of trouble, they could survive. But they were not allowed to work and life was very difficult for them as they were often blamed for the hardships of war by their neighbours. (This is what happened to some cousins of mine in Vienna.)

The policy of Karl and his household during the Second World War was therefore to be absolutely punctilious in obeying the law, and to live quietly in their Bavarian homes. (Karl had three residences: a house in Munich; Hartschimmelhof Farm; and the wooden upland cottage he built at Partnachalm in 1938. The latter is called 'the Alm' in the documents reproduced here and lies above the small town of Partenkirchen. An *Alm* is a kind of lush Alpine meadow. Partnachalm has an Inn but no other residents. Even today the only other buildings to be seen in this vicinity are small wooden cow huts belonging to those who use the Summer pasture for their cows.)

Heinz, who specialised in agriculture, was fairly out of the way in Austria. But Albrecht, at the centre of things in Berlin, was almost reckless in the way he conducted his affairs. His lectures and writings had seditious double-meanings; he associated with the Resistance; and, when he was sent by the Nazi authorities to conduct negotiations in Switzerland, he acted on two levels—one official, and the other unofficial on behalf of the opposition conspirators.

Though Albrecht had been arrested and imprisoned on a previous occasion, when Rudolf Hess had undertaken his mission to England, he continued his seditious activity after his release, if more cautiously. He had no wife or children of his own to worry about and he did not seem to consider that he was endangering his wider family with his actions. (Andrea has confirmed that the great love of his life was Annemarie Schwarzenbach, a Swiss intellectual who rejected his proposals as her affections were directed to Thomas Mann's daughter. Having failed in a suicide attempt, Annemarie died following a bicycle accident in September 1942. One of Albrecht's sonnets, *Das Traumgesicht*, is about her. Further information about Annemarie can be found in Ella K. Maillart's account of their journey to Afghanistan, *The Cruel Way*, though her name is changed. This was published by Heinemann 1947 and Virago 1986. The German edition is called *Flüchtige Idylle*.)

When the Gestapo could not capture Albrecht, it arrested and imprisoned Karl,

Luise, and Rainer Haushofer (one of Heinz's two sons by his deceased first wife). Heinz was jailed on 25th August 1944, remaining in captivity until the end of the war.

The Story

After the *20th July* miscarries, Albrecht goes into hiding in Berlin and makes his way South by train in stages. His idea is to hide out in the Bavarian Alps until the Americans should arrive to liberate South Germany. But this plan implicates his family in his problems.

Albrecht arrives in his home area on 28th July, going not to the family farm (Hartschimmelhof) but to Partnachalm. On the very day Albrecht arrives on the Alm the Gestapo come there looking for him. Albrecht's parents, Karl and Martha, are there for the Summer. Not finding Albrecht, the Gestapo go off with Karl, having made Martha promise—on pain of being sent to Theresienstadt—to hand up her son, should he turn up. It should be said, however, that this account of what happened does not quite tally with the story Martha tells Anna in the document reproduced here. Here she merely says that Karl was taken for questioning in an important matter.

As the Gestapo depart Albrecht arrives—coming by a different route. Albrecht spends two days with his mother on the Alm. He rejects the offer made by the local inn-keeper and his family to help him hide out in local caves and to assist his escape to Switzerland over the mountains. Albrecht does not care for the discomfort of cave dwelling, nor for internment in Switzerland.

Meanwhile the Gestapo takes Albrecht's father, Karl, down to the family farm, Hartschimmelhof, and then—when Albrecht is not found there—off to internment in Dachau. They question the people at the farm, including Luise, Albrecht's sister-in-law. Luise herself is very worried about what might have happened to Albrecht in the wake of the *20th July*: he has confided in her down the years and she has even given him cover for some of his resistance meetings.

After the Gestapo leave, she finds out that there is a mysterious visitor up at the Alm. Driving up with her little daughter, Monika, she finds Albrecht trying to think of a place of refuge close to home. Luise brings Albrecht back to Hartschimmelhof, where he stays for a few days before going off to stay with a family to which they have been introduced by some local nuns. However, the cover story for general consumption is that Albrecht is returning to Berlin. This pretence is maintained not only to the Gestapo and the farm workers, but also to Albrecht's parents.

The Gestapo come looking for Albrecht at regular intervals, become increasingly frustrated, and eventually take away Luise, the farm manageress, and the local Mother Superior to internment in jail.

Albrecht himself eludes capture for nearly five months, being arrested on 7th December 1944.

(I visited these locations in the Summer of 2004. Hartschimmelhof is located in a hilly area, with heaths and woods. It is easy to see how Albrecht felt he could hide there. The Convent which gave him assistance has since been wound up, because of declining vocations. It is now devoted to environmental studies and sound rural practice. The Alm is much as it was in his day.)

The Documents And The People

The surprising thing about the documents which appear here is that, for the older generation—the fathers of Albrecht and Luise—Albrecht's involvement in resistance activities and his implication of the family in escaping the consequences, is anything but heroic.

We do not have the initial letter in the sequence, but it is clear that Luise's mother, Anna Renner, has written to Martha blaming her and Albrecht for the trouble Luise is in and demanding that the Haushofers pull out all the stops to get her out of it. One of her suggestions is that Monika's godmother be approached. Andrea Haushofer-Schröder tells me that this is Ilse Hess. But, by this time, the Hess family was very much out of favour and living very quietly.

Martha's reply, in the form of an account of her evidence to the Gestapo in two interrogations, appears here. There may have been a further letter from Anna, which again we do not have. And this may have occasioned the angry letter, reproduced here, from Karl Haushofer to Paul Renner blaming *Luise* for deceiving him, endangering the family and abusing his hospitality by assisting Albrecht to escape the Gestapo.

Paul Renner's long, angry, but reasoned, response places the blame for Luise's imprisonment and for the deception on Albrecht. His view is that it is contradictory and unreasonable to blame Luise for something she did innocently, at Albrecht's instigation. Paul affects to disbelieve that the self-centred Albrecht would turn against a regime which has treated the family so kindly. What comes across in Paul's letter is the sheer fury of a father whose daughter is endangered by what he regards as political dabbling of the Haushofers.

(One example of the regime's kindness to the Haushofers was in connection with Paul Renner himself. Andrea Haushofer-Schröder told me that, when Renner was imprisoned by the Nazis for publishing a socialist booklet, *Kultur-bolschewismus?*, he had to turn to the Haushofers for help to extricate himself. Renner had got the work published in Zurich in 1932, as even German publishers with whom he was friends refused to risk issuing it. He then himself sent the booklet around for review. That landed him in jail in April 1933, within weeks of the Nazis forming a Government. The upshot of Karl's intervention was that Paul

had to retire from his position as Director of “*Meisterschule*”/Master College, leave Munich, and live quietly.)

Luise herself, unlike the older generation, reveals no bitterness in her Jail Fragment—though she is worst affected as she is not only imprisoned in a very dangerous location but also has worries about her five small children, left behind on the family farm. But it must be remembered that she was writing in hindsight—when she knew that Heinz and the five children had come through the crisis safely. (There were two children from Heinz’s first marriage, along with three children born to Heinz and Luise.) It must also be remembered that her document was not written with the Nazi censor in mind.

As Andrea Haushofer-Schröder pointed out to me, all the letters reproduced here were sent through the post. That means they were written for the authorities to read: and they should be considered in that light. The effect of the way the regime exerted control in war-torn Germany was that those under suspicion found themselves shifting the blame for anything that could be viewed as disloyalty on to others. Thus we see the Renners putting the blame on Martha and Albrecht, while Martha and Karl mainly castigate Luise.

I asked Andrea about Albrecht’s friend, Rainer Hildebrandt (who features in my translation of Albrecht’s *Moabite Sonnets*), as Paul Renner mentions Hildebrandt’s evidence to the Gestapo in his letter. It seems that Hildebrandt informed his interrogators of Albrecht’s hunted demeanour during his brief stay on the family farm. What I found surprising was that someone close to Albrecht should have given such damaging information to the authorities. Andrea replied that that is how awful things were then: everyone felt the need to shift the blame on to others.

Both Paul Renner and Karl Haushofer were high-powered members of the German intelligentsia. Karl is the author of: *Geopolitik des Pazifistischen Ozeans* (Geopolitics And The Pacific Ocean, Berlin 1925), *Grenzen in ihrer geographischen und politischen Bedeutung* (Frontiers And Their Geographic And Political Significance, Berlin 1927), *Der Rhein. Sein Lebensraum, sein Schicksal* (The Rhine, Its Living Space, Its Fate, Berlin 1930), *Der nationalsozialistischer Gedanke in der Welt* (The National Socialist Idea In The World, München 1933), *Japan und die Japaner* (Japan And The Japanese, Berlin 1933), *Kitchener* (Lübeck 1934), *Weltpolitik von Heute* (World Politics Of Today, Berlin 1934), *Geopolitische Grundlagen* (Geopolitical Foundations, Berlin 1936), *Weltmeere und Weltmächte* (World Seas And World Powers, Berlin 1937), *Der Kontinentalblock. MittelEuropa—Eurasien—Japan* (The Continental Block. Middle Europe—Eurasia—Japan, München 1941), *Japans Kulturpolitik* (Japan’s Political Civilisation, Berlin 1944).

Renner, a well-known artist, designer and typographer, is the author of:

Typographie als Kunst (Typography As Art, 1922), *Kultur-Bolschevismus?* (Culture, Life And Bolshevism, Erlenbach, Zürich 1932), *Der Kunst der Typographie*, (Of The Art Of Typography, Berlin 1939), *Mechanisierte Grafik. Schrift, Type, Film, Farbe* (Mechanised Graphics. Font, Type, Film, Colour, Berlin 1930), *Das moderne Buch* (The Modern Book, London 1947), *Ordnung und Harmonie der Farben* (Colour, Order And Harmony - translated 1965), *Schrift im Bauhaus* (Script In The Bauhaus Movement 1969).

When the Americans planted memorable items on the moon on their space-landing, one of the things they left was a document written in *Futura* script, a famous typeface Paul designed. His artistic work was renowned and Andrea Haushofer-Schröder, his granddaughter, was able to show me a 1934 commendation signed by the King of Italy and by Benito Mussolini, along with a further written authorisation signed by Adolf Hitler enabling Renner to accept a foreign award. These two documents are reproduced here (see pages 64-65).

The personal records reproduced in this pamphlet show how great events shape lives: they reveal the personal predicaments and divided loyalties faced by people who are subject to a regime which severely penalises resistance.

Ambiguities

A few years ago I visited Amerdingen, the village local to the Graf von Stauffenberg Schloss. I wanted to see what kind of memorial had been erected to the man who nearly succeeded in blowing up Hitler on 20th July 1944. There was no memorial to him. What I found was a War Memorial for the Franco-Prussian War, with side memorials for the 1st and 2nd World Wars. For the Second World War, the names of local casualties were listed year by year—1941, 1942, 1943, 1944, 1945—but Stauffenberg's was not there. This officer had admired Hitler when he was breaking the Versailles Treaty and restoring hope to a broken nation. He would have happily gone to war against Bolsheviks in alliance with England and France, but he joined the Resistance and attempted to kill Hitler when he realised that he was wrecking, not saving, Germany. Stauffenberg, and the fellow-conspirators who lost their lives when the attempt to oust the Nazis failed, were as much casualties of war as the others on the Amerdingen memorial. So it is perhaps indicative of the ambiguity with which that attempted *coup d'état* was viewed in Germany that even in his local area—where sympathy for his position might have been greatest—his name was not on the roll of the honourable casualties of war.

Andrea Haushofer-Schröder told me a story which bears out the ambiguities in the popular German view of the past. One of the places in which Albrecht took refuge when escaping the Gestapo was a peasant cottage high in the Bavarian Alps. In *Moabite Sonnets* I reported his bequeathing the old woman who sheltered

him some land in recompense and suggested she would not suffer adverse consequences for shielding him (p87). But Andrea told me that she had in fact been imprisoned and made to suffer for helping Albrecht. But when, in recent times, the Haushofer family suggested putting a memorial plaque on the cottage, there was stolid refusal. Only trouble could come from reviving those times and drawing attention to oneself in that way. And it could all change back.

Official Germany regards things differently, however. Histories assign Stauffenberg an honourable place amongst the resistance leaders, and there is a military barracks named after him.

Morality And The Second World War

Books about German Resistance activities have adopted the standpoint of the victors and the resistance is portrayed in uncomplicated terms. On the basis of the simplistic understanding cultivated by the victors it is hard to appreciate why so many people who were *opposed* to Hitler and to Nazism failed to *act* against the regime. But the real story is far more complicated than is allowed for—especially once Germany was at war.

In Britain it is customary to apply double standards in making assessments of political action. Other countries are judged by moral standards, those of Right and Wrong. But Britain's own actions are justified in terms of pragmatism, what is possible and prudent to do in a given situation. And the tendency is so deep-seated, that British people are not even aware that they are applying double standards. Hypocrisy implies consciousness of moral posing. But British dual standards are not hypocritical. The moral pose is real and the duplicity is unconscious. This kind of double-standard approach seems unique to the Anglo-Saxon world. (Israel engages in it, but it is largely hypocritical in its case. Jewish nationalist propagandists know very well when they play on the moral sensibilities of others.)

Given the two standards for judging actions, it should be said that some countries incline more to morality, and others to pragmatism. Germany has tended to morality; France to pragmatism.

Hitler attempted to make out a moral case for Nazism based on race theory, and won adherents for his party on that basis. Convinced Nazis were always a minority in his Germany, however. Most of his support was pragmatic: a generation of Germans felt that it was time that they became worldly-wise, and they looked to the conduct of the victorious Allies in 1919 as indicating the way of the world for the 20th century.

On the moral view, Germans should never have put Hitler in power, and once

he had embarked on aggressive policies, he should have been overthrown. But the moment when Hitler's Germany became an aggressor is not easily pinpointed when events are looked at in detail, from one event to the next, instead of with the backward glance which disdains detail. The military occupation of the Rhineland merely restored a region of Germany to the effective control of the German State. The *Anschluss*, if seriously considered as an invasion, takes on a comic opera aspect. Hitler crossed the frontier without permission and Austria (which had voted for unification with Germany in the early 1920s) fell into his arms. It was the British and French Governments which broke the will of the Czechoslovak Government and delivered the Sudetenland to Germany. The Slovaks seceded from Czechoslovakia of their own volition and placed themselves under German protection. Danzig was an entirely German city discriminated against by the Poles and its transfer back to Germany was the demand of every political party in the Weimar Republic.

On the pragmatic view, it is possible to see why the German electorate felt that a desperate situation required desperate measures and why support for Hitler grew as he showed himself the only man in Germany able to tackle the post-war catastrophe, a crisis largely made and exacerbated by the victors of the First World War.

The British moral view of what Germans should have done as regards Hitler when he became an aggressor takes no account of the consequences, individual or national, of overthrowing a State.

The individual price of taking part in a conspiracy was high before the war and even higher once the war had started. The problem for a conspirator was that his entire circle was punished if he was exposed: it was not just himself he put at risk. *Sippenhaft* is condemned universally as a policy in these liberal times, but it was certainly effective (which is why it is uniquely applied today by Israel against Palestinians—a Nazi policy which goes unpunished).

And, even where a person was prepared to accept the personal cost of conspiratorial opposition, there was the *national* price to be considered.

The precedent of 1918-1919 was very much alive in the minds of opponents of Hitler in 1944—and indeed from 1938 onwards. Germany agreed to the Armistice of November 1918 and enacted a change in the structure of the State. It did so because the war propaganda of the *Entente* promised a reasonable post-war settlement on condition that the Kaiser's Government was replaced by a Republic. The German Army had been conducting an orderly retreat for some months, but the Front was unbroken and military defeat lay in the indefinite future. The combination of Armistice and Regime-change brought about military disintegration and political chaos. The *Entente* took advantage of the disrupted condition of

Germany to interpret the Armistice as an unconditional German surrender, to impose the most humiliating conditions on Germany once it was clear that it could no longer defend itself, and to engage in wholesale plunder as the legitimate spoils of war.

It seemed obvious in retrospect that Germany could not have been worse off if it had fought the *Entente* to the bitter end. And the conspirators against Hitler from 1938 onwards were determined that they should not be responsible for bringing about a repeat of the 1918-1919 situation.

The Hohenzollern State was similar in kind to Britain and France in that it was a developing democracy. The *Reich* of 1871-1914 was no worse than any other European country and a lot better than most. In those forty-three years it had not fought a single war, while Britain and France had fought many. Though Germany was called an Empire, it was not living off colonial tribute as were the British, French, Belgians etc. The subordinates of the Emperor were German Kings and Princes. And it had no territorial ambitions. Despite that, it was wrecked by the *Entente* Allies after the Armistice was turned into unconditional surrender: its geographical extent, social structures, and economy were trashed.

And now, in 1944, the Allies were openly demanding unconditional surrender, and were threatening to do to Germany what they had done in 1919, only more so.

The moral Britisher might concede that it had been a mistake to treat Hohenzollern and Republican Germany in the same way as the Allies were now threatening to treat the Nazi regime. But the British State would give no guarantee that the treatment would not be repeated.

Similarly with Austria. The Hapsburg Empire had been part of the fabric of Europe for hundreds of years—most of the time allied with Britain. Yet the Allies did not hesitate to disrupt the prevailing structures of Austria and Eastern Europe as the price for being on the losing side.

Even apart from these considerations there was the Soviet threat. After 1942 it was likely that a German defeat would lead to a Soviet regime, under Russian hegemony. The prospect of this terrified large numbers of ordinary Germans and Austrians. This phenomenon has been well-described by Sarah Gainham in her novel based in war-time Vienna, *Night Falls On The City*. The heroine, Julia Homburg-Wedeker, who is married to Dr. Franz Wedeker—a Jew she is hiding in a secret room in her apartment—is absolutely terrified at the thought that the Resistance in Vienna, by its attempted takeover on *20th July*, is bringing about a Russian occupation. She is in daily fear for both their lives in case he is discovered, but fears the Russians more. Franz, on the other hand, looks forward to a popular uprising in support of the conspirators, one which will overthrow

Nazism. Here is how the novel describes their discussion of these events:

[Franz:] “‘Is there any sign of disorder?’

[Julia:] “‘What sort of disorder are you talking about?’

“‘A rising! Some sign that the people would rise against their tyrants, now the signal has been given.’

“‘Ah, my dear, what could they do?’ she asked. It filled her with terror even to consider it, and she was ashamed of her fear; but she would have felt nothing but anger for such an idea if anyone but Franz suggested it.

“‘The rebels broadcast an hour or so ago, on Vienna Radio’, explained Franz. ‘The Gestapo and SS units are being disarmed all over Vienna it seems. But if they are not supported—the rebels—by the people, they can do nothing. ...Everything depends on the Bendlerstrasse. If the War Office does its part the army will follow...’

“‘The army?’ she cried in horror. ‘What can the army do—they are retreating and fighting rearguard actions every foot of the way. That I do know for certain.... If the army stops fighting for even a day it means letting the Russians in.’

“‘Even the Russians can’t be worse than the Gestapo’, he began...

“‘The Russians, she thought bewildered, the Bolsheviks... The mysterious vast hinterland to the east loomed out of the shadows of history, blundering into the present; the hordes of Ghenghis Khan, the armies of the Turks, the imminent threat of Asia against civilised Europe...’

“...Mutiny—she thought of mutiny as a sudden comprehensive act, not of men’s wills but as if of nature, such as perhaps a great storm, which would disrupt organisation and expose its victims unarmed to the forward roll of the Russian armies. She had already unconsciously adopted the official version to some extent, that of huge masses of loyal men betrayed by a small number of selfish mutineers; there was some reality in this view for those behind the fronts as for the armies and this confusion with the view she had held for years that the real betrayers were the Party ‘*Bonzen*’ [big-wigs] oppressed her with its contradiction...” (1968 edn, p486-9).

This novel describes well the helpless state of mind of ordinary people faced with a choice between a present evil of which the dimensions are known and an imminent catastrophe without bounds.

The British attitude is that the issues at stake in the Second World War were so serious that it was incumbent upon every individual to oppose the Hitler regime, whatever the cost—personal or national. It is held that Germans had the duty to rebel against the policy of extermination of European Jewry and, by failing to do so, were complicit in that policy. Indeed, it is often said that it was an Allied war aim to prevent this extermination. The facts are ignored in order to build a false consciousness of guilt amongst the current generation of the German people. The facts are otherwise.

Germans certainly knew of the *persecution* of the Jews, an explicit Nazi policy. As did Neville Chamberlain when he gave Hitler success after success in the 1930s, culminating in the Munich Agreement resulting in the transfer of the Sudetenland without a shot being fired, a concession which wrecked the arms-rich Czechoslovak State constructed by the victorious allies at Versailles in 1919. Chamberlain was happy to promote a regime which *persecuted* Jews. Later on, the Soviet Union made an alliance with that same regime, again ignoring the persecution of its Jewish population. The Americans maintained diplomatic relations with the racist Hitler regime until Pearl Harbour. Other countries, such as neutral Sweden, continued to trade with Hitler—accepting payment in suspect gold—to the very end. Germany was not treated as an international pariah state on account of its discriminatory treatment of the Jews under the Nuremberg Laws.

It might be that Britain, France, Russia and the USA would have acted differently if there had in the 1930s been a Nazi policy of extermination, as it is now often pretended that there was. There was no *extermination* policy in 1938, when Britain gained the Sudetenland for Hitler, or in 1939 when it declared war and when Stalin signed his Pact with Hitler. *Extermination* did not start till the Winter of 1941-2, when Russia had not crumbled under the initial assault. And when it did start it was a heavily-guarded secret, and it was conducted in the eastern hinterland of the war, outside Germany, in the context of the war on Communism.

The war declared against Germany by Britain and its allies in 1939 was not the war of good against evil which it was possible to portray it as in retrospect. In the war of 1939 one may sympathise with Democracy as against Totalitarianism, but for the British Government it was essentially a war of Great Power politics. The banners in Trafalgar Square in 1945 read, *Victory over Germany*.

So, for the person in Germany who was opposed to Nazism—to the *persecution* of Jews, to Hitler's imperial ambitions in the East, to the abolition of Parliamentary government—what had to be weighed up was, on the one side, the costs of opposition on a personal level and on a national level and, on the other, the evil which non-opposition would allow remain in being. This was a pragmatic judgement. However, there can be little doubt that, if Germans had known that millions of Jews and other minorities were being exterminated by their Government, an unconditional resistance would have erupted in Germany.

Churchill himself was a pragmatist when determining British interests but not when the interest of others was at stake. Thus Britain stimulated terrorist activity in the hinterland of German-occupied Europe without regard for consequences. And Churchill, a rabid anti-Communist, even overthrew the Royalist resistance of Yugoslavia, and replaced it with Tito's Communist Partisans, because it was not sufficiently indifferent to the heavy reprisals occasioned by its war against German

occupation forces. Despite a good record of opposition to Hitler and fascism, the Royalists were ditched by Churchill for minimal short-term gains and with serious long-term consequences for Yugoslavia after the war.

Moral principle was unconditionally applied elsewhere by Britain, but in the one spot where British subjects were under direct Nazi occupation, there was a different attitude. There was no resistance to the Nazis in the Channel Islands, no terrorist action behind the lines. In fact, there was a cosy collaboration between the islanders and the occupying forces. And, after the war, rather than excoriating the Channel Islanders for behaviour condemned elsewhere, they were honoured and the collaborationist history hushed up.

Moreover, while advocating to others that they should strive for the defeat of their own Government when it on the wrong side in a war, the British have never accepted that principle as being legitimate in their own sphere. Even where a defeat would have no cataclysmic consequences and where a war is totally unjust, the principle in Britain is that there must be no dissent once the State is at war: all must pull together.

The Boer War of the late 19th century was started by a Conservative administration and it was disapproved of by the Liberal opposition in Westminster. When the Conservatives introduced Concentration Camps in which thousands of Boer women and children died, the Liberal leader, Campbell-Bannerman, described this policy as the “*methods of barbarism*”. Yet the Liberals never went beyond verbal opposition to a completely unprovoked war, even though a defeat on the other side of the world would not bring immediate disaster at home—as a German defeat would have done.

Similarly with regard to Ireland the British governing standpoint has always been one of pragmatism—of what would serve British interests—never one of principle. There was widespread support for the British war to defeat the Irish democracy after the 1918 General Election, with only minority voices raised in favour of the principles of democracy and self-determination for which the Great War was supposedly fought.

It was asserted at the Nuremberg Trials that there was an “*international law*” to which individual citizens were responsible and which had priority over the laws of the particular states. Germans were judged under this law. It was admitted to be a new law, which was being retrospectively applied, but it was said that it would in future be generally applied. However, subsequent attempts by small groups of principled activists to base a defence to charges of sabotage against instruments of war on Nuremberg law have never been allowed in British courts.

What I am suggesting is that Germans were acting no differently to right-minded British people when they supported Hitler on pragmatic grounds in the 1930s. Nor did they act differently to the prudent Briton when they did not join the Resistance or the anti-war movement during the war years, given the dangers to family and country. Of course, it would be preferable if Britain had acted on grounds of principle in 1914—and not fomented and joined a European war for its own self-aggrandisement. And, history would have been very different if the Allies had cherished the Weimar democracy, or if Chamberlain had acted in a principled way in the late 1930s and faced down Hitler at Munich (and before). Principle is a grand thing if applied universally, but it is an abomination when applied selectively by a Great Power against the people of an enemy state while blind loyalty is encouraged at home. While moralising about German subordination to authority, the British State engaged in two major acts of barbarism *after* 1945, in Malaya and Kenya, while the people looked on, and nobody was ever prosecuted afterwards.

However, I am also suggesting that pragmatic and prudential considerations would have been set aside by millions of Germans if they had known about the Extermination Camps.

The Guilt Of The Resistance

A book in which the complications of ‘resistance’ in the German context are touched on appeared in 1992. It is a biography of General Friedrich Olbricht (a leading military organiser of the anti-Hitler movement) by Helena P. Page, an American student at Hamburg University,. The book, which does not appear to have been translated into English, has an introduction by Götz Friedrich, whom I remember for a rather unsatisfactory modernist production of Wagner’s *Ring* cycle at Covent Garden, featuring the Valkyries as Storm Troopers. What is surprising is that neither Page nor Friedrich appear touched by the German guilt complex, which prevents a dispassionate assessment of the Hitler era; Page because she is not German, and Friedrich partly because he grew up in East Germany and partly because his world-view was formed by his father, himself a military subordinate of Olbricht’s and member of the Resistance.

Götz Friedrich’s father, Ernst (a lawyer), campaigned for official recognition of those who broke the consensus by direct action. (Indeed, to this day, some of those who broke ranks are penalised in pension arrangements, whilst former members of the SS—not all war-criminals, it might be remarked—get extra money.) It appears that Ernst Friedrich wrote an account of the Resistance, *The Betrayal Of The Generals—The Last Nazi Lie*, which he gave to the Soviet Military Commandant of the Querfurt District of Germany in July 1945 with a view to publication. However, the Soviets were as little interested as the Americans or British in restoring the morale of a defeated nation. Friedrich quotes from his father’s account as follows—

“A stream of calumnies and invective was directed at the participants in 20th

July 1944: they were robbed of their human and military honour and given over defenceless to the fury of a people near despair. Now the Generals were guilty for all the defeats, now at last Hitler and Goebbels had found the whipping boy onto which could be diverted the wrath of a people formerly spurred on to the highest hopes and now confronting bitter disappointment. The virtuosity with which Goebbels operated the propaganda machine was certain of success. The fairy tale about betrayal by the Generals came into being...

“So long as it exists, is spread and believed, the German people remains unhealed. Behind this fairy tale is hidden the delusive belief—open or concealed—that Hitler did not run himself and the rest of us into the ground, but that he could have led Germany to ultimate victory, if traitors had not continually been attacking him behind his back... we all have the most fundamental interest wiping out this belief... which... continues to inject the Nazi poison into the people.

“The German people continues to bear a heavy guilt before history and the conscience of the world, so long as it does not recognise that those men who acted, fully committing their honour and their lives, were on the right path. It is its duty to reinstate before the world at large, and beyond their desecrated graves, the honour of these men...” (pix).

Writing in 1992 after East Germany chose to combine with the West, Götz Friedrich clearly thinks that—despite a plethora of books about the Nazi period in general and the German Resistance in particular—the task of rehabilitating the opposition to Hitler remains unfulfilled. He says:

“...it is particularly striking that given the type of democracy Germany has chosen that it is an American student who, with a scientific lack of constraint... has embarked upon an investigation which Germans, most of them, have repeatedly evaded” (px).

I think he is right, though the dissatisfaction with the Resistance is heavily covered over. Nowadays it seems to take the form of denigrating it as ineffective. I believe it is indicative of how deep the evasion about the Resistance runs that one rarely sees a noun used to describe the attempted ambitious military and civilian *coup d'état* which was set in motion in Germany-Austria and throughout occupied Europe by the assassination attempt on Hitler: it is described simply as *the July 20th* (1944). But *July 20th* is an adjectival phrase for which the noun is missing. An Irish equivalent would be to use simply *Easter* when referring to the Easter Rising: *Easter* is the adjective governing the word, Rising. But using a noun in conjunction with July 20th means taking up an attitude towards the events described. What was the *20th July*? Was it a Rising, a Rebellion, a Betrayal, a Traitorous Act? To evade defining it, *the 20th July* has been elevated into a substantive. It was an attempted something, defined only by the date on which it took place.

The *20th July*, like the Easter Rising, was the action of an alternative would-be

administration—one which was planned for in advance in great detail by the military and civilian opponents of the Hitler regime, who had drawn up a programme for a new State in Germany and sketched out many of the policies it would be implementing. The main difference with the Irish rebellion—apart from scale: the conspiracy involved huge swathes of the military and of civil society—was that the military in Germany had the ideal of distancing themselves from civilian administration, whilst in Ireland there was a considerable overlap between the political and military rebels.

Putsch, Rising, Rebellion, Revolution, Coup, Betrayal—these all indicate an attitude towards the attempted takeover of power by the opposition. Using the term, *20th July* evades them all.

Götz Friedrich himself reached manhood in East Germany, where he was taught the profession of opera production. On later moving to West Germany, he found that the same attitudes to the military Resistance prevailed in both parts of the country, despite their different political courses for nearly half a century after 1945:

“...I could never understand why, for both parts of Germany, which [after the Nazi era] had embraced a new democratic self-understanding, but in different ways, the 20th July long remained either taboo or questioned on the grounds of indecision, hesitancy, and often only propagandist speculation. This was at a time when the 20th July could no longer be ignored because of a search by the *Bundeswehr* (like that of the former *Volksarmee* before it) for a further milestone in a democratic military tradition distinguished by Scharnhorst and Gneisenau. Mutiny, resistance, breaking the military oath, irritated and continue to irritate, particularly as the last way out, the murder of the tyrant, miscarried. Just a few days ago someone again told me that the officers of the 20th July had been too ‘cowardly’. The Nazi poison... continues to work its effect—though inversely, insofar as disappointment spread that hopes placed in individuals were not and could not be fulfilled” (pxi).

Another pertinent question raised by Götz Friedrich is of “*the conflicts of conscience*” experienced by the “*women and men of the 20th July*”. As he says—

“...virtues were in play which have well nigh disappeared in the course of a half-century. Faithfulness to an Oath of Loyalty came into conflict with an understanding of what was right and to a deeply-felt duty to fatherland—which was no empty concept, but concretised itself in the millions of individuals, their memories and hopes, their cities, rivers and fields, their culture, their thoughts and songs—their LIFE” (pxi-xii).

What Friedrich is suggesting here is that the Oath the military were obliged to take represented not merely a commitment to serve the political authority of the State but meant rather more: it was a commitment to country. And, for the

Germans, the people and the medium in which they live—both cultural and physical—are bound up into a single whole, the *Heimat*. So, a soldier who became convinced that he should break his oath to Hitler—and that was no light thing for God-fearing men—still had to consider the effect of bringing down the State machine in the middle of a war which had become a war for the very survival of Germany and its way of life.

Immediately on the death of President Hindenburg on 2nd August 1934, Hitler issued a Decree combining the offices of Chancellor and President and had members of the Army swear the following Oath:

“I swear this holy oath by God: that I will give unconditional obedience to the Leader of the German *Reich* and People, Adolf Hitler, the Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces, and as a brave soldier will always be prepared to pledge my life for this Oath.”

Committed to serve Hitler by this strong oath, the Army (and even more so, the Navy) was the only institution in Germany that was not put under Gestapo oversight. And Hitler would have been helped by the military tradition which prevailed under the Weimar instability that politics was a dirty business and should be left to the politicians. Under the ultra-democratic constitution of Weimar Germany, soldiers and their officers were not allowed to belong to political parties, attend party meetings, or vote. The armed forces were alienated from politics. The military were held in contempt by the Right for serving the Republic, hated by the Left as serving monopoly capitalism, and tolerated by the ruling parties as a necessary evil.

It is thus all the more surprising that a military opposition to Hitler developed in the 1930s, especially in the upper reaches of the Army and Navy—one that gathered momentum as time went on. There was indeed a fifth column in the armed forces, as Goebbels was to claim after the *20th July*. This was assisted by the considerable freedom of action within the armed forces which Hitler allowed. After all, were they not bound by their honour and a strong oath of loyalty? The considerable freedom exercised by the armed forces, albeit within a limited sphere, led to the situation in which the military preparations for a takeover of power after Hitler was assassinated could be conducted amongst the upper echelons with a degree of freedom, if with caution. Not only was there a growing number of senior officers active in the Resistance, even larger numbers knew of the subversive activity but kept their counsel.

But the oath of unconditional military loyalty to the Commander-in-Chief continued to present a real problem for many of those who felt he was leading Germany to a disaster. It could well be sub-conscious conscience qualms about breaking the oath which wrecked many of the numerous attempts at killing Hitler, who also seemed to have a sixth sense about dangerous situations—though, of

course, a committed Christian could argue that no enterprise based on a broken oath could work. Other Christians held that Hitler himself had broken his oath of office, which absolved those who were pledged to follow his orders. This view was suggested by Professors H.I. Iwand and D.C. Wolf, moral theologians of the Evangelical Church of Germany (see Karl Zentner, *Illustrierte Geschichte des Widerstandes in Deutschland und Europa*, 1966, p505). Professor R. Angermair, a Catholic moral theologian, takes what seems almost a 'Protestant' approach to the men of *20th July*: "whoever acts according to rational... and honourable conviction... never commits a sin according to Christian moral theology..." (ibid).

All this hair-splitting was not of much consequence to the ordinary honourable young man who felt personally bound by the oath he had sworn. Albrecht Haushofer encountered these dilemmas among his geopolitics students in the early years of the war. He tried to persuade one of them to whom he was particularly drawn, Wolfgang Hoffman, to let him find him war-work, rather than have him join the Army. But to no avail. Unable to countenance any double-dealing, Hoffman volunteered for active service. Then he found his honour prevented him from circulating orders instructing soldiers to kill women and children escaping from the siege of Leningrad. He wrote a novel about the dilemma of receiving immoral orders from the State, volunteered for the front, and was killed. Albrecht wrote Sonnet 29 about *My Friend* (see *Moabite Sonnets* p53).

Nowadays, particularly in Britain, such dilemmas are almost incomprehensible. Deceit, dishonour, dishonesty are increasingly prevalent—and the higher up public life one goes, the worse it gets. The name of the British *New Labour* Prime Minister, Tony Blair, was transposed in a 2003 anti-war demonstration to read, BLIAR. Despite distrust, revealed in public opinion polls, there is a sense of resignation: perjury has become a way of life. What keeps the State functional is a visceral loyalty amongst the people.

In these days, it seems, that it is only 'backward' peoples who hold to a sense of honour: Serbs, like Moslem nations, are reviled because they still have principles in an unprincipled world.

Götz Friedrich quotes his father's assessment:

"They were all heroes, even if heroes with no prop among the masses. At that time the masses remained under the Nazi terror. Now, however, or in the near future—or so we hope—the masses of the people will give them their due..."

But that wish has not been fulfilled—at any rate if Stauffenberg and Amerdingen are anything to go by. And I think that the German people cannot be entirely blamed for that. Their State has been destroyed twice in living memory and their

history has been manipulated. That is bound to generate a resentment which prevents things appearing in a proper perspective.

It is against this background that we should judge the views expressed by Martha, Karl and Paul—and the younger generation as represented by Luise—in the documents reproduced here.

Angela Clifford
March 2005

As this pamphlet was being prepared for press, some of the arguments made in the Introduction found striking confirmation from unexpected quarters. Professor David Cesarani—a committed Zionist—himself expresses surprise at, but also endorsement of, the findings of *The Origins Of The Final Solution, The Evolution Of Nazi Jewish Policy 1939-1942* by Christopher R. Browning, with a contribution by Jürgen Matthäus (Heinemann £25). In the London *Evening Standard* (10th May 2004), Cesarani summarises the book's findings as follows:

“Browning shows that the German conquest of Poland was decisive in radicalising Nazi policy. But this was ‘not the result of any long-held blueprint’. Hitler and his minions made up policy as they went along, with chaotic results. They wanted to shove all German and Polish Jews into a ‘reservation’ in south-east Poland, but they also wanted to evict Poles from areas annexed to the Reich and settle ethnic Germans in their place. More than half a million Poles were brutally removed to provide homes and farms for these *Volksdeutsche*. By comparison the highly urbanised Jews got off lightly.

“Nazi plans went awry because not even the ruthless SS could move millions of Poles and Jews simultaneously and Himmler realised there was a limit to the displaced humanity that he could dump in the laps of other Nazi satraps. For, at this stage, the Nazis did not intend genocide against the Jews. They herded them into squalid city districts and segregated them from the population, but only until they could be shifted elsewhere.

“When the Germans overran western Europe, the Nazi leadership anticipated sending the additional Jews to Madagascar, then a French colony. After that plan failed, thanks to the defiance of the Royal Navy, they looked eastward again. Nazi race planners confidently expected that the coming war with the Soviet Union would be a walkover, leaving them free to ship all of Europe's Jews to Siberia...”

Christopher Browning cannot be suspected of anti-Jewish sentiment. He was a major witness for Deborah Lipstadt against David Irving in the famous 'Holocaust denial' libel trial. The book itself forms part of a multi-volume history planned by Yad Vashem, the Israeli memorial and research institute.

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