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THE DRAMATIST AS SOCIAL CRITIC :
Left-Wing Dramatic Literature of the Weimar Republic.

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SUMMARY

Dramatists have used their work to express criticism of the prevailing social order since the first beginnings of drama itself. While they by no means invented critical drama, the playwrights of the German Weimar Republic nevertheless brought such outspoken topicality and political controversy to the theatre that they seemed to be inventing a wholly new form. This was variously known as Tendenzdrama, politisches Theater or Zeittheater.

The rise of socially critical drama in the years following the establishment of the Republic in 1918 followed the lively, experimental dramatic tradition of Expressionism and gave voice to a serious concern with modern social conditions and political developments. At the height of the Zeitstück's influence in the late 1920s it was commonly assumed by writers of all political shades that a dramatist's first responsibility was to preach a political doctrine or expose social evils; the theatre's major concern was no longer entertainment or artistic excellence but denunciation and persuasion.

The authors of Tendenzdrama were soon obliged to adapt existing dramatic techniques or invent new ones in order to present a complex modern society on stage and to convince audiences of the truth of their portrayal or the desirability of a particular ideology. Among the new developments were Piscator's use of film, projection and complex stage machinery and Brecht's establishment of the

basic rules of epic theatre; through these two innovators in particular, Zeittheater achieved an importance beyond that of specific relevance to its own age.

The decline of Expressionism and the emergence of Neue Sachlichkeit which can be observed in the literature of the Weimar Republic is also reflected in the Tendenzstücke of the era as a gradual progression from passive to active characters, from generalised social discontent to specific attack, and from vaguely expressed ideals to a distinct political ideology. Expressionist drama showed powerless idealists struggling against evils more symbolically than realistically expressed, inspired by only indistinct visions of reform or revolution. The heroes of the final phase of Weimar drama are much more active and aware: they have a party and an ideology to back them up, a precise grasp of what is amiss with the world, and are set specifically in the Germany of the early 1930s. That they are still unable to achieve their aims is shown to be the consequence of the growing political reaction rather than of their own failings - a pessimistic but accurate picture of the last years of the Republic.

The left-wing Zeitstück became more extreme but also declined during this period, for reasons both literary and political, and the NSDAP's assumption of power in 1933 brought all critical drama to an abrupt end. The Tendenzdrama written in exile exerted some influence but its scope was perforce limited. In the 1960s, however, the rise of documentary theatre showed that the

Weimar concept of drama as social criticism had survived; theatre once again became a controversial forum for the thoughtful analysis of contemporary society.

STATEMENT

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any University and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published by another person, except where reference is made in the text of this study.

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I N T R O D U C T I O N

INTRODUCTION

In the present climate of German literary scholarship, it has become a matter of course that a proper study of literature should proceed by way of sociological as well as purely aesthetic or philosophical principles. A knowledge of the sociopolitical, economic and cultural factors influencing the author of any work and the placement of that work in its own time is regarded as vital to proper understanding. Yet this has not always been the case; the sociological view of literature, while no longer new, has gained widespread acceptance only in the last two decades of this century.

In his survey of modern literary scholarship, Jost Hermand¹ outlines several schools of thought which have influenced the study of German literature. At about the turn of the century, data-collecting Positivists were superseded by those espousing a more philosophical and contemplative approach²; the exponents of Geistesgeschichte during the same period relied on instinct, intuition and emotion to evaluate works of art. Another increasingly popular view was the national or völkisch interpretation of art or literature according to the racial origin of its author, which became one of the central tenets of National Socialist aesthetics. The psychoanalytic approach, which used the work of Freud and Jung as a basis for interpreting art as the product of its creator's inner urges and complexes, was yet another theory in circulation during the 1920s and '30s.³

The sociological approach to literature found expres-

sion as early as 1937 with Bramstedt's Aristocracy and the Middle Class in Germany⁴, but took many more years to establish itself as a popular and valid view. Post-war Germanistik preferred to concentrate on the philosophical and spiritual elements of literature, or on a close textual analysis which highlighted the formal and aesthetic qualities of a work and left no room for the consideration of social or historical factors. Even Hauser's Sozialgeschichte der Kunst und Literatur, which appeared in 1953, made little impact at the time.⁵ During the conservative 1950s the Marxist origins and connotations of the sociological view⁶ proved a barrier to its acceptance, but in the following years it slowly established itself. Hermand's Die Literarische Formenwelt des Biedermeiers, which first appeared in 1958, was a significant part of the new wave.

Since 1965 the sociological approach to literature has tended to dominate the field⁷, and its Marxist exponents have become more than acceptable. Georg Lukács has undoubtedly been the greatest influence on Marxist aesthetics between 1945 and 1956; he is sometimes regarded as a political heretic among Communists, but his theory of art as a dialectical reflection of reality⁸ has helped to establish the view of literature as an instrument of social change as well as the product of a historical period.

In recent years literary scholarship has been firmly in the grip of a Marxist orthodoxy which is only now showing signs of lessening: Adorno's kritische Theorie has been one manifestation of this. Such a domination of the field by one political viewpoint has had its disadvantages, but one result has certainly been that literature is now universally seen as part of a social context.

The following thesis does not take a Marxist stance but nevertheless examines the dramatic literature of the Weimar Republic from the point of view of an interaction between literature and society. It treats issues common to socially oriented criticism, but does not follow either of the two current schools of Literatursoziologie, Fügen's empirischpositivistisch study of literary institutions or the kritische Theorie of Horkheimer and Adorno.⁹

A socially oriented approach is virtually unavoidable in the study of satirical or critical literature. It represents an extremely complex and interesting aspect of the interplay between a written work and its cultural setting, and one in which the precise details of an author's reaction to life in the contemporary world are of more importance than usual.

Historical materialists such as Lukács believe that every aesthetic reflection of reality bears the stamp of its author's opinions and thus of a historical period. In his Ästhetik, Lukács claims that any work of art contains an "untrennbare Simultaneität von Reproduktion und Stellungnahme, von Objektivität und Parteinahme". This simultaneity

macht die unauflösbare Historizität eines jeden Kunstwerks aus. Es fixiert nicht einfach einen an sich seienden Tatbestand, wie die Wissenschaft, sondern verewigt einen Moment der geschichtlichen Entwicklung des Menschengeschlechts. 10

Critical or tendentious literature is thus a more pronounced form of this reflection of contemporary circumstances. That society influences literature is beyond dispute, but here we have the phenomenon of literature in turn attempting to influence society by noting its faults and suggesting reform, by trying to become in itself an instrument of change.

Social criticism through literature is an ambitious and uncertain undertaking, for the influence of literature at any one time may be minimal in comparison to the other powerful economic or political forces shaping society. Authors have nevertheless persisted in exercising their role as social critics throughout a number of different historical periods. Drama has often proved to be the most popular medium for social criticism, because the public nature of a performance obviously provides the ideal setting for discussion or persuasion on a large scale. Even the very earliest plays known, Aeschylus' The Persians and his Oresteia, were overtly political statements which had the effect of forcing their author into exile.¹¹ The history plays of Shakespeare and the satires of Molière certainly reflected their authors' opinions of the social and political situation of their own time, as did the plays of Schiller and Büchner.

During the years of the Weimar Republic, dramatists set themselves up deliberately and openly as the conscience of contemporary society. The critical plays written during this period were remarkably direct and outspoken, sometimes tending to abandon artistic considerations altogether in order to concentrate on propaganda. A literary term was coined to describe what appeared to be a new phenomenon: Tendenzdrama. Its product was the Tendenzstück or Zeitstück, and its concerns were criticism and persuasion: attack on prevailing conditions and an appeal to the audience for action.

As a literary form, the socially critical play provoked a great deal of antagonism and controversy¹², but it

was immensely successful in terms of public involvement, and firmly established itself as the dominant form of drama in the latter years of the Weimar Republic. Social criticism was far more than subject matter; it was the driving force and major creative impulse for writers such as Bertolt Brecht, Ernst Toller or Friedrich Wolf, whose anger at the suffering and injustice they witnessed in contemporary society led them to denounce the system which caused it. The urge to criticise and to reform proved a very powerful motivation in the search for new forms of dramatic expression.

In extremely troubled times such as the fourteen-year span of the Weimar Republic, a writer's desire to express personal commitment to some cause or belief becomes more than a matter of individual conscience; it becomes a necessity. In the 1920s theatre in particular responded to a public desire to see contemporary issues portrayed on stage, to have important questions brought out into the open and fairly debated. Objections that political controversy was not the proper concern of a literary form such as drama proved ineffectual: Aktualität was everything.

The critic Herbert Ihering at first numbered himself among those who mistrusted the use of drama for political purposes. He nevertheless came to realise that the age he lived in demanded to be portrayed in controversial drama. In answer to charges that the topical productions of the Volksbühne amounted to a "Bedrohung der Kunst", Ihering wrote in 1927:

In einer politisch aufgewühlten Epoche kann man nicht anders als "politisch" Theater spielen. In ruhigen Jahren denkt der Zuschauer "unöffentlich". . . . Er betritt das Theater als Einzel-

person. In erregten Zeiten denkt der Zuschauer "öffentlich". Was außerhalb seines privaten Kreises vorgeht, ergreift ihn mit. . . . Alle Fragen sind lärmend in Bewegung. Die Justiz steht im Tageskampf wie die Kirche, die Schule wie das Militär.

* * * * *
Die Situation fordert die politische Bühne, nicht der Propagandawille einzelner Theatermenschen. Der Zuschauer fordert das Zeitstück, nicht literarische Theoretiker. 13

The playwright Friedrich Wolf was also in no doubt that the troubled times called for explicit social comment:

Ein Dichter, der heute noch l'art pour l'art: die "Kunst um des ästhetischen Spieles willen" vollführt, dieser Verse- und Szenenbastler, er ist in unserer Zeit der Arbeitslosenheere, der Mütterelbstmörde und Abtreibungsparagrafen, der Wohnungsnot, Grubenunfälle und Eisenbetongerüste ein Ziseleur, ein Filigranschmied . . . aber kein Dichter, der unsren Tagen etwas zu sagen hat! 14

In the face of extreme political choices, alignment of some kind was clearly necessary. To remain aloof in literary isolation as the older established figures like Stefan George or Gerhart Hauptmann managed to do in those years was regarded by many as a shirking of responsibility: not to make a choice was in itself a choice.

Of the dramatists who responded to the pressures of the time by espousing a particular political ideology, the majority aligned themselves with the Left. Those few like Hanns Johst, Arnolt Bronnen or Heinrich Zerkaulen who upheld the nationalist ideal produced heroic and militaristic epics which became part of the literature of National Socialism; although they sometimes imitated the fashionable documentary form of the Zeitstück, they contributed nothing new to its development and remained very much on the fringe of the movement. When discussing Tendenzdrama or Zeitdrama in general, it is therefore fair to regard it

largely as a manifestation of left-wing opinion. The social criticism which it brought forth seems usually to have been based on a Marxist or socialist viewpoint. That there was wide divergence even within this leftist group will become apparent in the course of the present study, but most dramatists were agreed upon one thing: a great deal was rotten in the Weimar state, and it was their responsibility to point it out.

The period 1918-1933 saw the production of literally hundreds of new topical plays¹⁵, and their concern was wide-ranging. Some documented great events such as war, revolution, inflation or the rise of Fascism; others attacked the SPD (the ruling Social Democratic Party) for its failure to live up to the high hopes of the Republic's first days, castigated the legal system for its reactionary bias, or deplored the blind militarism and nationalism which had involved Germany in one war and seemed to be leading to another. Sexual morality was an important concern. Previously forbidden topics such as homosexuality were mentioned more openly, and the promiscuity and disorientation of the post-war generation was discussed a great deal. Issues like abortion and the campaign to abolish the notorious Paragraph 218 aroused tremendous controversy in public life as well as in the theatre. Contemporary types worthy of pity or contempt were paraded across the stage for the spectators' edification: the demoralised Heimkehrer, the ruthless war profiteer or inflation speculator, the backsliding SPD man made soft by success, the suicidal mother, the starving unemployed worker, the self-sacrificing Party member or the pompous uniformed Fascist

all made an appearance in contemporary drama as objects of bitter satire or humanitarian pathos, reflecting the rich variety as well as the serious divisions within Weimar society.

The nine plays which this study undertakes to examine in detail provide a fair sampling of these concerns. Chronologically they span the whole Weimar period, and their subject matter covers the major problems which occupied both writers and reformers at that time. Each represents an aspect of social criticism in drama which is of interest both as an example of the playwright's technique and for what it reveals about social conditions and public attitudes in a particular period.

Georg Kaiser's Gas (written in 1917-18, first performed in November 1918) indirectly reflects the catastrophe of war and the first stirrings of a mass movement and a will for power among the proletariat. Brecht's Trommeln in der Nacht (written in 1919 and 1922, performed in 1922) looks at the aftermath of war, using the plight of the returned soldier and the confused enthusiasm of the 1918-19 revolution as the background for his story. Toller's Hoppla, wir leben! (written and performed in 1927) shows a former revolutionary attempting to come to terms with the bizarre contradictions of the new Republic and despairing at its cynical abandonment of socialist principles. Ferdinand Bruckner's Die Verbrecher (written 1927-8, performed 1928) examines the problem of justice, following a number of cases through to judgement in order to prove the legal system both rigid and corrupt, showing how it imposes harsh and misguided penalties on victims whose only crime is

poverty or human weakness. Lampel's Revolte im Erziehungs-
haus (1928) concerns itself with the problems of youth,
demonstrating the inappropriateness of harsh authority
exercised upon young people who are more victims than
troublemakers. Walter Mehring's Der Kaufmann von Berlin
(1928, 1929) documents the inflation of 1923, showing a
succession of profiteers, military fanatics, society
ladies, whores, beggars, nationalists, Jews and anti-
Semites in a fascinating sketch of Berlin life. Ödön von
Horváth's Italienische Nacht (1929, 1930) concerns itself
with the growing threat of Fascism and the blind complacency
of Republican supporters who refuse to face the danger.
Gustav von Wangenheim's Die Mausefalle (1931) is a desperate
exercise in propaganda aimed at diverting the middle classes
from their drift to Nazism and allying them in solidarity
with the Marxist proletariat. Friedrich Wolf's Professor
Mamlock (1933, 1934) is one of the first exile plays,
written after its author had escaped from the new Nazi
regime; it documents the major events of 1932 and 1933
which lead up to Hitler's assumption of power. Together,
these plays provide a quite remarkable history of their
age, reflecting the exhilaration or outrage felt by those
caught up in contemporary events. While such reportage
certainly lacks the objectivity of the historian, its
emotional immediacy and wealth of carefully observed detail
provide a vivid impression of an era. The documentary
value of such plays certainly remains one of their chief
assets today.

It is commonly claimed that literature which con-
cerns itself too specifically with contemporary issues

suffers the disadvantage of Zeitgebundenheit, of being too closely tied to its own age to survive in later years.¹⁶ Nevertheless, it is precisely the closeness of these plays to their own age which makes them of relevance to the present study.

This thesis aims to examine the socially critical drama of the Weimar Republic not simply as literature, but as a product of its historical background, observing how the authors have interpreted and portrayed their own age through the medium of drama. Each play is taken as an example of one man's attempt firstly to encompass a significant aspect of the contemporary world, then to pass judgement on it, and to impart this judgement to an audience. The literary skill emphasised here is the dramatist's ability to select and present aspects of reality, to formulate a criticism and successfully persuade the onlooker of the justice of his opinion.

A number of questions which arise from the topic will be answered or at least considered in some detail. They include the following: What social conditions, public attitudes, political events or trends were reflected in the plays of the Weimar Republic? What kind of social background or political orientation served to motivate the critical dramatists? What techniques did they employ in order to persuade the audience to see the world through the playwright's eyes, to begin to think seriously about the issues raised, or even to fight actively for a cause? What effects did these plays have on their first audiences, and was there any demonstrable success in terms of an influence on public opinion? Did the theatre's involvement with

political and social issues lead to any important new literary developments? What precisely was the Zeitstück's contribution to German drama?

The first part of this thesis sets out the historical background of the literature of the Weimar Republic, from its beginnings in the war to its demise under the Nazi dictatorship, indicating the constant interaction between historical and literary movements. Factors such as the failure of the November revolution and the decline of Expressionism, or the economic recovery of the years 1924-1928 and the rise of Tendenzdrama, are shown as interrelated parts of a whole progression rather than as individual fragments of political or literary history.

The second part of the thesis examines the nine plays in detail. In general, each play is treated under four main headings: the way it reflects the contemporary world, the aims of the playwright or the special target of his criticism, the dramatic techniques employed to persuade an audience, and finally the effects of the first performances in terms of audience response or public reaction to the play's message.

The conclusion summarises and evaluates the major findings of the thesis, assessing in particular the Zeitstück's contribution to 20th Century drama.

FOOTNOTES

1. Jost Hermand and Evelyn Torton Beck, Interpretative Synthesis - The Task of Literary Scholarship (New York: Frederick Ungar, 1975).
2. Ibid., pp.18-20.
3. There is an interesting glimpse of the popular version of such an interpretation in Ernst Toller's play Hoppla, wir leben! (1927), in which Kritiker Z is seen to demolish Lyriker Y thus: "Man sollte ihn zum Psychoanalytiker schicken. Nach der Analyse wird er aufhören zu dichten. Nichts als verdrängte Komplexe, die ganze Lyrik." - from Günther Rühle, Zeit und Theater (Berlin: Propyläen Verlag, 1975), Vol. 2, p.213.
4. Ernst Kohn-Bramstedt, Aristocracy and the Middle Classes in Germany: Social types in German Literature, 1830-1900 (Chicago University Press, 1964).
5. According to Jost Hermand, Interpretative Synthesis, p.79.
6. Its basic principle is, of course, founded on Marx's theory of economic Basis and cultural Überbau.
7. According to Hermand, op. cit., p.79.
8. For example in the essay "Kunst und objektive Wahrheit" in Georg Lukács, Werke, Vol. 4: Essays über Realismus (Neuwied & Berlin: Luchterhand, 1971).
9. See H. Ivo and H. Tiel (eds.), Texte zur Literatursoziologie - Texte und Materialien zum Literaturunterricht (Diesterweg, 1972).
10. Georg Lukács, Ästhetik Teil I - Die Eigenart des Ästhetischen, Werke, Vol. 11 (Neuwied: Luchterhand, 1962), p.248. Cf. Arnold Hauser, Soziologie der Kunst (Munich: C.H. Beck, 1974), pp.75-78.
11. According to Siegfried Melchinger, Geschichte des politischen Theaters (Velber: Friedrich Verlag, 1971), pp.10-11. See also Arnold Hauser, Soziologie der Kunst (Munich: C.H. Beck, 1974), p.237.
12. Purists have always claimed that political or tendentious content degrades art, while political extremists conversely deny that art has any function other than to serve the cause. Despite many claims to the contrary, however, the compromise between the claims of literature and political commitment inherent in Tendenzdrama has proved extremely fruitful.
13. Herbert Ihering, Von Reinhardt bis Brecht - Vier Jahrzehnte Theater und Film (Berlin: Aufbau-Verlag, 1959), Vol. 2, p.255-56.

14. Friedrich Wolf, "Kunst ist Waffe!", in Gesammelte Werke (Berlin & Weimar: Aufbau-Verlag, 1967), Vol. 15: Aufsätze 1919-1944, p.87. Cf. Arnold Hauser, Soziologie der Kunst, p.337.
15. There were 576 in all, according to Adolf Gentsch, Die politische Struktur der Theaterführung (Dresden 1942), p.320 - cited by Frank Knellessen in Agitation auf der Bühne (Emsdetten: Lechte, 1970), p.3.
16. It is perhaps true that a play which agitates for specific social change may lose its chief impact once reform has been achieved, but in practice this is rarely so; criticism of social evils can remain valid for years. As recently as the theatre season of 1976/77, for example, three German revivals of Weimar Zeitstücke managed to capitalise on their continuing relevance: Wolf's Zyankali (Staatstheater Stuttgart), Lampel's Revolte im Erziehungshaus (Städtische Bühnen Freiburg) and Horváth's Italienische Nacht (Landestheater Württemberg-Hohenzollern, Tübingen) were successfully linked to present-day concern with abortion law reform, child welfare and political extremism.

PART ONE:

THE WEIMAR REPUBLIC,
HISTORICAL AND LITERARY BACKGROUND.

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The fourteen-year span of the Weimar Republic was a time of immense change. Politically, the period saw the shaky foundation and brief survival of a nominally Socialist democracy, then a long-drawn-out struggle of increasingly extreme parties, and finally the swift and violent triumph of the National Socialists. Socially the Republic brought previously untried freedoms, new ideas, enormous upheavals in the old social order; economically it suffered the traumas of inflation and then depression with their legacy of bitterness and disillusionment.

The artistic life of the Republic was no less prolific and diverse. Its tremendous upsurge of creativity included the Bauhaus school of architecture founded by Walter Gropius, a flourishing film industry whose great successes ranged from Dr. Caligari to The Blue Angel, the art of Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, Wassily Kandinsky, Emil Nolde, Max Beckmann and George Grosz and the musical revolution of Arnold Schönberg's twelve-tone system and its application in Alban Berg's Lulu. The Republic provided a framework for the continuing literary output of already established figures such as Stefan George, Rainer Maria Rilke and Thomas Mann as well as other such varied and influential talents as Hermann Hesse, Ernst Jünger, Kurt Tucholsky, Gottfried Benn, Carl Sternheim, Georg Kaiser, Carl Zuckmayer, Ernst Toller, Bertolt Brecht, Ödön von Horváth or Friedrich Wolf.

Of all literary forms, drama was undeniably the most prominent and controversial. Berlin's multitude of theatres and the major theatrical centres of the provinces provided an insatiable demand for old and new plays, for frivolous entertainment as well as serious social comment. Political controversy took its place on stage from the very beginning. The lifting of the old censorship laws in 1918 quickly brought a new wave of tendentious material before the public. Goering's Seeschlacht, Toller's Die Wandlung and Kaiser's Gas were all performed in 1918 and 1919, and Jeßner scandalised conventional audiences in 1920 with a revolutionary production of Schiller's Wilhelm Tell and his assertion that "das Theater hat Politik zu treiben".¹ The lengths to which authors pushed the propagandistic potential of theatre in those years caused fierce debate about art and politics as the extreme commitment of directors like Piscator or writers such as Wolf made it difficult, if not impossible, to judge their work only by conventional aesthetic standards. Throughout the lifespan of the Republic, social and political contradictions continued to give rise particularly to critical drama, to plays which examined many aspects of this unfamiliar new Germany and invariably found it wanting.

The Weimar Republic was born out of the chaotic aftermath of the war. Begun with optimism and ended in misery and disillusionment, the war was the most powerful shaping force influencing the early history of the new Republic and its subsequent development.

The most disturbing legacy of the war was a large number of ex-soldiers who for some time constituted the

dominant group in a confused and violent society. Soldiers' and sailors' revolutionary councils helped to force the peace and then formed the basis of the November Revolution and thus of the new state itself. Whether as recruits for the Spartakus revolt or, paradoxically, as the regular troops and mercenaries who fought against the rebels on behalf of the tentative new government, returned soldiers were the agents of much bloodshed in the first few months.

Experience of the war was a decisive influence on the lives of those who had lived through it, but the same experience led different men to very different courses, sometimes to the Left and sometimes to the Right of the political spectrum. One group was driven by loathing of the war and its devastation to reject the society which had caused it: such men became the revolutionaries of 1918 and members of the USPD (Independent Socialist Party) or KPD (Communist Party) in later years. Ernst Toller's play Die Wandlung (1918) shows the classic pattern of an intellectual's development from patriot to revolutionary. The horrors of war are seen to destroy the traditional concept of Vaterland and replace it with a disgust for militarism and a desire for international brotherhood. A contrary tendency, however, led others to regret not the war but the defeat and to seek compensation for remembered humiliations in hopes of renewed national superiority. The voice of such a diehard who has learned nothing from the lost war is heard in Hanns Johst's play Schlageter:

Exzellenz: Ein verlorener Krieg ist kein Grund, seinen Glauben abzuschwören! Er ist nur Grund, den Sieg tiefer, fanatischer und frommer zu beschwören!! 2

The major long-term problem left by the war and the decades of militarism which had preceded it was the existence of thousands of disaffected military men who had lost their profession but not their manner of thinking. Trained in loyalty to the old Empire, they were unable to accept the new socialist Republic as anything but a distasteful interregnum. Under the terms of the Treaty of Versailles the size of the German army was limited to 10,000 men; this rendered redundant a large group of officers who were, not surprisingly, unable to find a place for their particular abilities and attitudes in civilian life. Many veterans became members of organisations such as the Stahlhelm in order to keep alive cherished feelings of patriotism and Frontkameradschaft; others joined the Freikorps to fight the unofficial war against left-wing insurgents in the eastern provinces, and many found a place in the Schwarze Reichswehr, the illegal extension of the army disguised under other names. In this manner the military provided a constant and largely hidden threat to the democratic and conciliatory aims of the Republic, which it regarded as an imposition of the enemy, to be tolerated only under duress and abolished as soon as possible.

Eschenburg explains:

So entstand in der Weimarer Republik eine der Demokratie wesensfremde, nach monarchischen Prinzipien aufgebaute, weitgehend autonome Militärmacht, die unter dem Schutz des Vaterlandes geschaffenen Illegalität sich demokratischer Kontrolle entzog. Sie hatte ein geheimes Vetorecht, was in Konfliktsfällen von entscheidender Bedeutung sein konnte. 3

This military pressure-group constituted a very serious source of opposition to the Republic. It gave rise to a

series of abortive military coups like the Kapp Putsch of 1920 as well as providing the backbone of support for Hindenburg's election as President in 1925 and 1932. It was particularly responsible for propagating such dangerous myths as that of the Novemberverbrecher who had signed the Treaty of Versailles, and the Dolchstoßlegende.

The rumour of a treacherous "stab in the back" which had supposedly sabotaged the German army and brought it to an undeserved defeat began to circulate soon after the war and was given official credence by none other than Hindenburg himself in 1919 when he declared before a commission set up to examine the conduct of the war that the German army had been betrayed - "von hinten erdolcht". Such an idea naturally appealed to many people who could not face the fact of defeat; soon a widespread conviction arose that Germany had not really lost the war at all and would one day be able to wipe out the shameful defeat in a second war.⁴ Both Jews and Socialists were held to be responsible for sabotaging the war effort at the last moment - and both groups were well represented in the new Republican government, which for a number of reasons thus found itself bitterly opposed by military men of all kinds, including the new Reichswehr commanded by General von Seeckt, the unofficial Freikorps, and the many other private citizens whose war experience had confirmed them as conservative patriots who longed for a return to the monarchy and despised and distrusted the new order.

The Treaty of Versailles was the source of both political and economic crises which lingered on through many years of the Republic's history. The enormous repara-

tions insisted on by the Allies kept Germany poor and contributed not a little to the inflation which reached grotesque proportions in 1923. Other humiliating and unfair clauses such as the Kriegsschuldparagraph which maintained that Germany alone had been responsible for the war made the treaty universally loathed, and with it the unfortunate men who had been forced to sign it on the new government's behalf. The Prime Minister, Scheidemann, refused to accept the treaty and resigned, but others were forced to take over his task, condemning themselves to the burden of unjustified political vilification which followed.⁵ Herzfeld relates the consequences:

Wie die Dolchstoßlegende, die eine unleugbare militärische Niederlage im Kriege in das Feld einer innerpolitischen Fehde hinüberspielte, ist auch dieser Entschluß der Unterzeichnung . . . zum Gegenstand eines erbitterten Ketzerkrieges gegen die Parteien und Persönlichkeiten geworden, die . . . am 28. Juni 1919 im Spiegelsaal von Versailles ihre Unterschrift im Auftrag der Mehrheit einer frei gewählten Nationalversammlung geben mußten. Der agitatorische Kampf gegen den "Schmachfrieden" wurde zum dauernden Gegenstand eines maßlos erbitterten innerdeutschen Agitationskampfes, der die ganze Entwicklung der deutschen Demokratie unsaglich belastet hat.⁶

This bitterness and resentment was to plague the Republic for many years. Outrage at the demands of the Treaty of Versailles conveniently obscured in many minds Germany's share of blame for the war; the Allies' behaviour over the peace agreement was claimed to be as bad. Right-wing rhetoric thrived on demands for an abrogation of the 'dictated peace' and punishment of the 'November criminals' who had accepted it. The Nazis in particular knew how to turn this dissatisfaction into practical political gains.⁷

With the treaty signed, however, the peace was

official and life had to continue. Germany faced a disastrous situation at home: violence threatened from both Left and Right, while despair at the lost war and hope for the new democracy mingled to create a tense and disruptive atmosphere. The economy was in ruins; hunger and desperation had embittered the same masses who had rejoiced at the outbreak of war.⁸

In this atmosphere of excitement, hatred, disillusionment and hope the Expressionist playwrights were creating highly subjective portrayals of the world in drama. The war and its aftermath gave rise to such bleak visions of a perverse and doomed world as Kraus' Die letzten Tage der Menschheit (1919), Hasenclever's Die Menschen (1918), Carl Hauptmann's Krieg (1914) and Unruh's Ein Geschlecht (1918). Blame for the war was assigned to the previous generation and the society which had produced it: Hasenclever's Der Sohn (1913) and Kornfeld's Die Verführung (1913) condemned its bigotry and authoritarianism. Visions of a new humanity and a quest for peace and brotherhood inspired Rubiner's Die Gewaltlosen (1918) and Kaiser's Gas (1918). The characteristic Expressionist mixture of horror at the depths to which humanity can sink and elation at the wonders which it might achieve in the future accurately reflected the moods prevalent in early Weimar society. Expressionism gave voice to what one observer called the "allgemeinen Fieberzustand der Zeit".⁹

The movement saw itself as a revolt against everything to do with the old order, a youthful and ecstatic breaking forth from narrow-mindedness and conservatism. Toller described its origin thus:

Während des Krieges drang durch die strenge Zensur nur wenig in die Öffentlichkeit. Nach dem Zusammenbruch brachte jeder Tag neue Werke freiheitlichen Geistes. Die Form jener Kunst nannte man Expressionismus. Der Expressionismus war ebenso Reaktion wie synthetische, schöpferische Aktion. 10

The revolt was primarily aesthetic, but ethical, social and some political elements were present too. The Expressionists felt themselves to be closely allied with pacifism, humanism, Socialism and other emotional, vaguely Utopian movements of their age. Their plays reflect the excitement and revolutionary energy of the years following the war - extremes of language, distortion, exaggeration, grotesqueness, implausibility, violent outbursts of hatred and lyrical visions of peace jostle each other in what proved to be a sometimes naive and preposterous but also importantly innovative literary movement.

Many of the dramatists of the early Weimar Republic were part of the movement or reflected its characteristics in their work. Kaiser's Gas belongs almost completely to Expressionism and the early plays of Brecht show strong influences; playwrights such as Toller never wholly escaped from its emotionalism, even while attempting a sternly intellectual Marxist interpretation of the world. Perhaps the most important legacy of Expressionism, however, was its renewed assertion of the artist's role as social critic. As Toller explains, the young Expressionist rebels were not content simply to mirror the world around them, but wanted to go further and change it:

Denn auf diese Umwelt wollte der Expressionismus wirken, sie wollte er ändern, ihr ein gerechtes, helleres Gesicht geben. Die Realität sollte vom Strahl der Idee neu erfaßt, neu geboren werden. 11

It is clear that Reinhard Goering and Fritz von Unruh, for example, felt a compulsion to combine literary concerns with serious social comment and to warn against those self-destructive tendencies of the human race which were only too apparent in the world about them. Toller saw commitment to social change as a significant new trend in the literature of the time:

Seit Schillers 'Räuber', seit 'Kabale und Liebe' war das Theater nie mehr so Tribüne zeitlichen Geschehens gewesen, so umwoigt vom Streit und Widerstreit der öffentlichen Meinung. Leidenschaftliche Anteilnahme auf der einen Seite, heftige Vorwürfe einseitiger Tendenz auf der anderen. 12

Toller's observation was accurate; precisely this division of attitudes was to become a familiar pattern in the future, setting up hostile divisions between reforming enthusiasts and those who decried the intrusion of propaganda into literature. The question of the proper relationship between art and politics became one of the major artistic controversies of the Weimar period.

Ludwig Rubiner was another dramatist who regarded art as something functional, a useful changer of society and an expression of commitment to some political ideal. In essays like "Der Dichter greift in die Politik" he described theatres as Wirkungszentren for new ideas; drama was to be the instrument of renewal.¹³ Rubiner and the writer Kurt Hiller were leaders of the short-lived Activist movement which reached its peak in Berlin and Munich in 1917 and 1918 - others involved for a short time included Alfred Kerr, Ernst Toller, Walter Hasenclever, Johannes R. Becher and Leonhard Frank. Motivated firstly by rejection of the war and all it stood for, the Activists constituted

that branch of Expressionism most conscious of the propagandistic power of the word, of literature's potential to effect change in the outside world. Their journal was christened Das Ziel. Viviani explains its philosophy:

Der Glaube an die Macht des Wortes, die politische Aufgabe des Dichters, die zivilisatorische Bedeutung des Literaten, der die Welt verbessern sollte, wurden dort am Beispiel der Französischen Revolution aufgewiesen.

But the movement's basic weakness was this:

Das Ethos der Aktivisten zeigte sich als Gesellschaftskritik ohne metaphysischen Unterbau. . . . Da sie überzeugt waren, eine kulturelle Erneuerung und durchgreifende Gesellschaftsreform mit Hilfe der Vernunft als Träger des 'Geistes' durchführen zu können, glaubten sie auch an den Zündungswert der Sprache, die sie als demagogisches Instrument benutzten. 14

The Activists represent both the strengths and the limitations of Expressionist social criticism: they showed tremendous commitment and idealism but lacked a reasoned intellectual basis and they created visions of renewal which were strongly emotional and appealing but disappointingly vague in substance. Like the rest of the Expressionist movement, they regarded the November Revolution as the climax of all their striving, and the collapse of that movement into defeat and disillusionment signified the disintegration of their own. It appeared at first to all such groups of spiritual rather than political revolutionaries as a practical realisation of their dream, but they were prepared neither for its violent reality nor for the shabby, though necessary, compromises into which it soon subsided.

The revolution of 1918 marked the end and the beginning of many movements. It was the culmination of years

of growing restlessness in which factory strikes and naval mutinies had been the outward signs of hatred of the war and a steadily increasing demand for popular democracy; it brought once and for all the end of the war and of the old Empire. What it gave birth to was more than the hastily improvised socialist Republic; it marked the beginning of the extreme division in German politics which proved disastrous in later years. After November 1918 the Left felt itself to have been betrayed and spoke bitterly of "die sogenannte Revolution"; they felt that nothing had really changed. The Right despised a Republic founded on the uprising of a dangerous rabble, and regarded it as a moral and political disgrace to be ended as soon as possible. While bitterly at odds with each other, both groups were thus united in resentment of the Weimar democracy and worked to undermine it whenever possible.

The German revolution is so often dismissed as a failure or a mistake that it is perhaps necessary to state its real and positive achievements. It did end the war and abolish the Prussian and other monarchies, it provided the first opportunity that many people had ever had to take politics into their own hands, and it established a new state which was democratic in aspiration if not always in practice. Most importantly for Germany's cultural life, it also opened the door for countless talented but hitherto oppressed or ignored innovators, the "outsiders", as Gay calls them, who for the first time had some chance to show what they could do, unhampered by traditional sanctions against Jews or radicals or experimental artists.¹⁵ For such people November 1918 must certainly have seemed a turning point.

Unfortunately there was much to mar the new beginning: nothing could disguise the fact that the revolt had been shot down by the army on the orders of the new Social Democrat government. Once in power, the SPD felt obliged to defend its position with military force, employing regular soldiers and members of the Freikorps to silence the workers and ex-soldiers whose rebellion had recently helped them to power.

The revolution's dismal end was to remain an unforgotten symbol of the Weimar Republic's failure to live up to its first promise - it now seemed a sham, a facade for the old tyranny and conservatism which continued under a new name. Had there been a revolution at all? The writer Kurt Tucholsky commented with characteristic sarcasm:

Wegen ungünstiger Witterung fand die deutsche Revolution in der Musik statt. 16

Rühle notes:

Die Skepsis, ob die Revolution überhaupt stattgefunden habe, war nach der Mitte des Jahrzehnts für die fortschrittlichen Geister nicht mehr zu unterdrücken. 17

This doubt proved central to the work of writers like Ernst Toller, whose personal involvement in the brief Bavarian Soviet Republic made him more sharply aware than most of the consequences of failure. Like his hero Karl Thomas in Hoppla, wir leben!, Toller was unable to come to terms with a society which had in fact developed out of revolution but managed to deny that fact in every way. Political leadership and constitution had changed, but the power structure of the Weimar Republic remained identical to that of Imperial Germany; industrial magnates, army

chiefs and large landholders were as influential as ever.¹⁸

The failure of the revolution in reality seems nevertheless to have contributed to its greater triumph in the theatre. A lingering revolutionary awareness and the unresolved question of why it had failed inspired a series of plays about uprisings and revolts of all kinds, from Brecht's Trommeln in der Nacht (1918-19) and Toller's Masse Mensch (1919) to Wolf's Die Matrosen von Cattaro (1930) and Plievier's Des Kaisers Kulis (1930). Perhaps revolutionary enthusiasm on stage compensated for the revolution's failure in reality. Grimm and Hermand support this theory:

Die Deutschen waren nie imstande, ihre Revolution zu vollenden. Sie haben keine Revolution. Was sie haben, sind Revolutionsdramen. Mit einer Fülle und Vielfalt, die wohl von keiner anderen Literatur übertroffen wird, sind sie ihrer Neigung zur gestalteten Idee nachgegangen und haben Stücke über die Revolution geschaffen. Es ist ihre tragische Leistung die Revolution nicht durch die Tat, sondern durch bildhafte Darstellung und Leidenschaft des Gedankens vollendet zu haben. 19

The Spartakus uprising in Berlin as well as the Räte-republik in Munich were soon crushed, but their effect on literature was more lasting; bitterness, cynicism and a painful awareness of the confused and imperfect consequences of revolutionary action became part of the experience of new authors - Brecht's Trommeln in der Nacht reflects the feeling particularly strongly. Such an insight was instrumental in transferring revolution to the theatre: the gulf between aspiration and attainment could not be forgotten, even by those writers as unflaggingly faithful to the revolutionary ideal as Friedrich Wolf. It

was Wolf who noted that no less an observer than Karl Marx had described the discrepancy between German revolutionary thought and action:

So sei Deutschland eigentlich stets um seine wahre Revolution betrogen worden, weil es seine Revolutionen im Gedanklichen - und wir dürfen hinzufügen: auf der Bühne - ausfocht. Es stimmt schon: wir setzten unsre politischen Leidenschaften und Erkenntnisse nicht in konkrete Taten um, sondern wir reagierten sie im Geistigen und auf dem Theater ab. 20

Whatever the consequences for practical politics, such a transfer of energies certainly enriched German drama. History's loss seems to have been literature's gain.

The incomplete revolution did at least give rise to a new Republic, albeit under rather confused and at times almost farcical circumstances: the actual proclamation of a Socialist Republic was made hurriedly by Scheidemann on November 9th, 1918, simply to forestall Liebknecht's proclamation of a Soviet Republic a few hours later.²¹ The event was characteristic of the almost accidental nature of the revolution itself; there was no guiding plan or oversight, and no organised leadership to shape events.²²

One of the most serious consequences of the Republic's hastily improvised foundation was a lack of foresight which allowed much of the established hierarchy of power to linger on. The bureaucracy, the legal system, the universities, churches and economic organisation of the Wilhelminian era continued almost unchanged, to the serious detriment of the new state.²³ Many of the government's endeavours were undermined by the opposition of entrenched and powerful officials whose training and experience kept them stubbornly loyal to the attitudes of the old Empire and inclined to oppose the new order. The

consequence of such reactionary conservatism in the legal profession, for example, was soon notorious.²⁴

During the first years of the Republic there were serious problems to be solved. Hunger, disorder, the demobilization of the army and the reorganisation of an economy ruined by the war should have been the first concerns of the new government, but political chaos diverted much of its energy into the simple matter of survival. During the first years the Republic was on several occasions threatened by violent action from the Left and the Right. The Kapp Putsch, the Munich revolution, the Hitler-Ludendorff Putsch, the fighting in Saxony, Thuringia and Hamburg, separatist movements in the Rhineland and a spate of political assassinations were symptoms of serious unrest.²⁵ So many groups had reason to hate the Republic, and so few of its supporters were ever more than unenthusiastic Vernunftrepublikaner who reluctantly accepted its existence without feeling moved to support or defend the new order in any practical way. Gay comments:

To the 'Vernunftrepublikaner' the Republic was, in a sense, the punishment that the Germans, aristocrats and bourgeois, deserved; it was infinitely preferable to the barbarism of the right and the irresponsibility of the left; it should enlist cooperation, even if it could not command enthusiasm. 26

This lukewarm support was insufficient to defend a shaky institution against the attacks of militarists and monarchists who despised it as an unworthy successor to the Empire, or left-wing revolutionaries who condemned its betrayal of socialist ideals. As Knütter points out:

Linke wie Rechte betrachteten die Republik lediglich als Durchgangstadium zum Sozialismus oder zur nationalen Diktatur. So kam das Wort

von der 'Republik ohne Republikaner' auf. 27

Not even the Social Democrats who had first created the new Republic showed much lasting commitment to its welfare. After its initially important role in the revolution, the SPD wavered and declined into a position of compromise and weakness; the anomaly of a Marxist party finding itself in power and having to defend itself with force against more radical Marxists proved to be a major stumbling-block. As Mohler relates of the events of 1920:

So kommt es beispielsweise zu dem grotesken Schauspiel, daß eine mehrheitssozialistische Regierung erst dem von Rechtskreisen ausgelösten Kapp-Putsch mit einem Generalstreik begegnet und hernach den mit durch diesen Streik entflammten kommunistischen Aufstand im Ruhrgebiet mangels guter eigener Truppen durch Einheiten niederschlagen läßt, die während Kapps Versuch zum mindesten nicht auf der Seite der Regierung gestanden haben. 28

Such bizarre contradictions abounded in the first years of the Republic. However, the SPD soon ceased to be the ruling party; in practice it declined into a minor coalition group while still remaining stubbornly firm in theory. This "Starrheit", this "ewige Wiederholung derselben abstrakten These"²⁹ alienated particularly its young supporters.³⁰

Another of the party's failings from the start had been an excess of fairness, an easy-going liberalism which rendered it too ready to share power with smaller parties less dedicated to the Republican ideal. The constitution had been so written as to allow any party with a majority the right to govern, and the SPD were scrupulous in defence of the rights of other parties. As Mann remarks, these were "noble, gute Spielregeln; gut nur, wenn alle mit-

spielten, alle an sie glaubten."³¹ But as early as 1920 public disenchantment with the achievements of the SPD became apparent³²; in the June elections its position was weakened, and the retreat into ineffectual coalition began. The party thus found itself in opposition to the state which it had founded, and control passed into the hands of those who were indifferent or at best only mildly interested in the preservation of the Republic, and later to others who actively opposed it.³³

Gay has summarised the causes of the Weimar Republic's eventual demise as "part murder, part wasting sickness, part suicide".³⁴ It is certainly apparent that successive governments ignored the growing strength of anti-Republican groups and were quite inexplicably tolerant of open contempt for the democratic system, for example in the universities³⁵ and in the army.³⁶ Official tolerance of a legal system whose reactionary judges, prosecutors and police officials did their utmost to persecute left-wing offenders and exonerate 'patriotic' nationalists was yet another factor guaranteed to weaken any lingering faith in the Weimar state.

These numerous abuses certainly had their critics. Journals such as "Die Weltbühne" thrived on satirical attacks against all aspects of the political system, and novels and plays exposing the government's corruption and inefficiency abounded. Some observers have even gone so far as to claim that the satirists should be listed among the Republic's enemies; Golo Mann, for example, claims that "ungebundene Linksliteraten" such as Tucholsky only helped to weaken a system which was deserving of more

support.³⁷ It is certainly true that the flourishing group of social critics was itself despised as a part of the Weimar 'system' by its even fiercer critics on the Right, who saw all such "Asphaltliteratur" or "jüdisch-zersetzende Intelligenz"³⁸ as part of the decadence of the new age. It would be a much sadder irony if the agitators and reformers whose literary output was designed to publicise and if possible rectify various faults in the system only helped to destroy it. But satire itself is of no threat to a democracy: the Republic's stability was endangered by more powerful forces than a merely literary attack could provide.

One factor which put the democratic state in jeopardy from the first was the complete lack of practical experience on which to build. Decision-making by the people was an unfamiliar concept; the institutions of the Empire had prevented any real public involvement in the process of government. But democracy was now to be tried: the authoritarian state had failed and as an alternative the people were presented with responsibility - an idealistic but perhaps foolishly optimistic measure. Inexperience as well as extreme internal division made das Volk an unlikely source of wise decisions, nor was a well-intentioned constitution sufficient guide in itself. Attempts at democratic government were made difficult by political extremism: radicals of both Left and Right rejected the Weimar experiment from the outset, and those occupying the middle ground soon had cause to lose faith in it as well.

By 1923 most of the serious social problems which

led writers, and particularly dramatists, to document the manifold imperfections of life in the new Republic were apparent. Brecht's Trommeln in der Nacht and a number of plays outlining the Heimkehrer problem and the troubled aftermath of the war had already appeared. Ernst Toller was still imprisoned and coming to terms with the failed revolution with plays like Masse Mensch and Die Maschinenstürmer. Plays which looked back to the war and its consequences, such as Hasenclever's Antigone (produced in 1919), von Unruh's Ein Geschlecht and Platz (produced in 1919 and 1920), Kraus' Die letzten Tage der Menschheit (published in Germany in 1922) and Toller's Hinkemann (produced in 1923) were giving way to more analytical portrayals of society in general such as Franz Jung's Die Kanaker (produced in 1921), Wolf's Der arme Konrad (1922) and Brecht's Im Dickicht der Städte (1923). The irrational extremes of Expressionism were being slowly replaced by the critical 'new realism'. The failure of the SPD which Toller and Horváth later exposed was already apparent. So too was the gross bias of the judicial system which Bruckner and a host of other writers used as material for critical drama; the demoralisation of the younger generation had also been observed with concern and was to feature in the next few years in plays by Klaus Mann, Bruckner and others. But 1923 was also the year in which a more immediately serious problem became apparent: social and political disorder was for a time completely overshadowed by economic crisis.

The inflation which reached its peak in 1923 was not the first sign of economic malaise: even in the very earliest years of the Republic, troubled times gave

opportunities to profiteers and speculators while others found themselves inexplicably impoverished.³⁹ By 1923, however, the situation was extreme. A combination of heavy borrowing during the war, the burden of reparations and the foolish practice of printing ever more paper money to cope with the demand⁴⁰ reduced the mark to a tiny fraction of its pre-war value. The government clearly did not understand the causes of this mysterious problem and sought the questionable advice of financiers and industrialists⁴¹, with disastrous results. The collapse of the German currency impoverished the middle and lower classes, yet still enabled the rich to speculate and consolidate. Those dependent on paper money - pensioners, small investors, employees - were completely ruined. Those few who possessed property of real value such as land, factories or mines, made enormous financial gains.⁴² The revaluation of November 1923 left most of the population desperate, embittered, and full of the not unjustified suspicion that they had been cheated in some mysterious way.

Because the government had been unable to improve the situation, inflation became one more evil to be laid at the door of the Republic, and of those who began to search for some alternative, many were attracted to Fascism.⁴³ The increasing drift to the Right was one indication that democracy had always seemed to many to be a temporary, unsatisfactory political aberration: strong authority exerted from above seemed not only more familiar but infinitely more desirable. A passage from Feuchtwanger's novel Erfolg sums up this feeling:

Im Grunde habe sich der Kleinbürger immer nach einer Autorität geseht, nach jemandem, dem er

andächtig gehorchen dürfe. Im Herzen sei er niemals Demokrat gewesen. Jetzt gehe mit dem Wert seines Geldes seine demokratische Tünche vollends dahin. 44

The less perceptible but possibly even more serious consequence of the inflation and its collapse was a widespread feeling of uncertainty and insecurity. Money, a basic and crucial commodity, had turned unpredictable and false; a whole nation had suffered while the government showed itself powerless to help. Perhaps even more than the war, the inflation of 1923 shattered public confidence. The consequences took shape not only in political trends but in literary developments as well: the inflation had an obvious impact on the pessimistic trend in much later writing. Thöming comments:

Während bei Kriegsende Hoffnung und Erbitterung sich mischten, bis zunehmende Desillusionierung eintrat, war die Inflation Ursache eines ausgeprägten Gefühls von Unsicherheit und Bodenlosigkeit, das grundlegend für die Literatur der zweiten Hälfte der zwanziger Jahre ist. 45

Inflation, like war, represented a new kind of catastrophe in which millions were involved together; the fate of an individual seemed to count for little in the face of such all-encompassing crisis. As Rühle remarks:

Die zwanzig Jahre zwischen 1913 und 1933 brachten drei neue Formen von Katastrophen: die politische (der Krieg), die monetäre (Inflation) und die Arbeitskatastrophe (1930/31 beides: Wirtschaftskatastrophen). Alle trafen das ganze Volk. Untergänge einzelner darin hatten nur noch symptomatischen Wert, insofern sie das allgemeine Schicksal beleuchteten. Die neuen Katastrophen wirkten fast wie Naturkatastrophen, nur daß sie menschlichen Handeln entstammten. 46

This was the important difference: the anonymous fate which overtook millions of victims was recognised by writers and intellectuals to be man-made; catastrophes came no longer from nature or from God but were seen to be

the result of human action, however mysterious or unpredictable the connection between cause and effect. Such a realisation was a significant new development in man's perception of the world, and its reflection in literature - and particularly in drama - was to have several important implications.

Firstly, it radically altered the function of the 'hero' in drama. If individual fates were of value only to the extent that they illustrated the general dilemma, then it was a dramatist's task to portray not unique individuals but average figures representative of a whole class or social group, as well as to fill in the historical background which influenced his characters' fate. Secondly, there was a significant change in the form of the play; as events were the result of social processes rather than of individual psychology, the plot could no longer develop organically through human interaction but had to reflect those processes at work. Plays came to be manufactured, to be 'made', just as events in the real world were seen to be 'made' by various factors. Rühle notes:

Das Schauspiel erscheint nun als etwas Zusammen-
gesetztes, Gemachtes, so sehr es auch durch die
Dynamik in der Vorführung gebunden wird. Seine
montagehafte 'Gemachtheit' entspricht der Auf-
fassung von der ebenfalls 'gemachten' Wirklich-
keit. 47

One implication of such an approach to drama was a new emphasis on its topicality rather than its literary excellence. Plays were produced for the moment; their chief function was to comment on the contemporary situation, their aim Zeitwert more than Kunstwert.⁴⁸

The late 1920s abounded in plays which had been put

together with the intention of explaining a historical situation rather than telling a human story: the term Stück which began to replace Drama as a label for such works indicates the change of approach.⁴⁹ Most of the plays which Erwin Piscator produced were consciously manufactured products, put together by a team of writers and adaptors from the raw material of a novel or an existing but inadequate play, as well as from the historical background: Rasputin (1927), Schweik (1928), Konjunktur (1928) and Der Kaufmann von Berlin (1929) are perhaps the best examples.

Piscator was one of the first to confront a problem new to contemporary theatre: how to portray on stage the huge and anonymous forces at work in society, the vast hidden movers of events. Rühle explains:

Bis 1918 war die Macht personalisierbar. Noch die Expressionisten personalisierten sie mit den Vaterfiguren. Jetzt wurden neue, andere, anonymere Mächte sichtbar: Wirtschaftsmächte zum Beispiel (Verteiler von Öl, von Weizen, von Fleisch, die Verwerter von Kapital) oder die Justiz, deren gesellschaftliche Machtrolle man entdeckt. Poetologisch gesehen sind das neue Stoffe für das Drama, das immer von den schicksalsbestimmenden Mächten handelte. Indem sie als solche aufgegriffen werden, verändern sie auch die Voraussetzungen für das Drama. 50

Piscator was obliged to balance his human characters against these forces and show their interaction - and thus found himself breaking new ground, because there was no precedent for the portrayal of the individual's relationship with those networks of class struggle, vested interests and economic pressure which constitute society. The various novel production techniques which he developed were intended to solve precisely this problem: photographs,

film clips and statistics provided constant reminders of the larger world inside which the smaller action was taking place, and stage machinery (for example the different stage levels in Der Kaufmann von Berlin) contributed visual symbols of social class. Human individuals were made to appear as part of a vast social and historical process: the background of every story remained omnipresent. History and the forces which shape it loomed larger than human figures, just as the huge sets and mechanical apparatus overshadowed the individual actors. Processes, and not people, were intended to dominate.

There were many dramatists, of course, whose interest in the psychological development of their characters tended to conflict with the intention of portraying society as more important than single characters. Ernst Toller, for example, for all of his insights into the complex relationship between the individual and his social environment, generally allows the individual to dominate - Die Wandlung, Hinkemann and Hoppla, wir leben! are highly subjective portrayals in which the personality of the 'hero' seems to be of far more interest to the author than the problematical social background. Brecht, too, often allows his characters to develop a fascinating individuality which is certainly at odds with their function as exemplary figures (and incidentally with Brecht's stated aims of creating non-involving 'epic' theatre); Kragler, Galy Gay, Mackie Messer and Johanna Dark are memorable for much more than their didactic function, and the motivations of each are intriguingly human rather than just socially determined. The individualist tradition of literature must inevitably

have found itself in conflict with the Marxist-determinist interpretation of events - and yet a mixture of the two, while perhaps ideologically unsound, most certainly made for more richly complex and engaging theatre.

Studies of the Weimar Republic usually divide its history into three distinct segments.⁵¹ First come the founding years 1918-23, the period of confusion and instability bordered by the November Revolution and the great inflation; lastly comes the economic slump of 1929 and the subsequent lapse into political extremism and violence ending with the Nazi takeover in 1933. The years between, however, were more stable and saw some prosperity⁵²; between 1924 and 1929 the economy became relatively healthy as the Dawes Plan took effect, and a series of important international conferences such as the one at Locarno gave Germany a significant voice in the world again and culminated in its admission to the League of Nations.⁵³ Prosperity managed to bypass a still dangerously unbalanced political situation and concentrate on economic essentials.⁵⁴ The period 1924-29 was perceived as a 'breathing-space', a welcome interlude during which the Republic's more pressing problems could be set aside, if not forgotten. The literary expression of the period came with plays such as Zuckmayer's Der fröhliche Weinberg (1925) and a return to simple, rustic comedy. As Rühle notes:

Zuckmayers Erfolg war der einer Atempause. Die Inflation mit ihren Ängsten war vorbei; die Rentenmark hatte zu einer Konsolidierung der wirtschaftlichen wie der politischen Verhältnisse verholfen, die neuen Radikalisierungstendenzen von Anfang 1924 waren im Dezember, als die Kommunisten und die Völkischen bei der Reichstagswahl die Stimmgewinne einbüßten, wieder aufgehoben; die Republik schien sich zu stabilisieren. . . . 1925

schien ja ein Jahr der Entspannung. 55

Zuckmayer's play marked a return to earthy humour, uncomplicated sexuality and a freshness and naturalness which had been absent from German drama for years; it prompted the critic Alfred Kerr to remark: "Sic transit gloria expressionismi"⁵⁶ and seemed to promise a respite from those troubles of the outside world which had started to appear in drama. The complex and threatening problems of the Republic are in fact represented in Zuckmayer's play, but they are still mild enough to be merely laughed off. Der fröhliche Weinberg portrays a right-wing student full of unpleasant rhetoric, a pair of timid Jewish merchants aware of the veiled hostility of their colleagues and a group of conservative and aggressive war veterans, but all conflicts are kept on a personal level and threats are simply laughed away.

Even during its relatively stable period, the Republic continued to face more and more serious problems. Constant political crises weakened the government's grip on any given situation and undermined public confidence. The superficial gaiety and frivolity of the 'Roaring Twenties' or goldene Zwanziger hardly disguised the very real conflicts beneath. Golo Mann recalls that crisis and struggle seemed at the time to be commonplaces of daily life:

So ist die gute Zeit der Weimarer Republik, wenn man näher zusieht, doch keine recht gute Zeit. Sie wurde auch nicht als solche empfunden. Von Krise, Schande, höchster Not schrieben die Zeitungen, als sei es nachgerade etwas Gewöhnliches. Die Regierungen, welche verfassungsgemäß einer Mehrheit im Reichstag bedurften, sturzten häufig, um in nur wenig veränderte Gestalt wiederzukehren. Das Volk gewann den Eindruck, daß ihr mühseliges

Zusammenstellen nahezu so lang dauerte wie ihr Amtzeit, und fand den ganzen Betrieb unwürdig. 57

In its brief fourteen years the Weimar Republic experienced twenty different governments and fourteen chancellors, with an average of only eight months each in office.⁵⁸ Endemic disunity and extremism plagued all levels of political life, expressing itself in monumental struggles over petty affairs such as the question of the colours of the German flag⁵⁹ or the participation of the Kaiser's grandson in army manoeuvres⁶⁰ - minor issues which became the focus for serious and deep-seated dissension.

It was also during the period 1924-29 that the theatre finally came into its own as the platform for fierce and outspoken social criticism. The Zeitstück flourished; Neue Sachlichkeit cast a cold, shrewd eye on the contemporary world and noted its faults in detail. A host of plays and revues established the dramatist's right to outspoken social criticism and brought recent events like the war or the inflation as well as sensitive topics like justice, secret rearmament, the problems of youth, political assassination or abortion into public debate. Typical manifestations of this urge for actuality were Piscator and Gasbarra's Revue Roter Rummel (1924) and Trotz Alledem! (1925), Rehfisch's Wer weint um Juckenack? (1924), Bronnen's Rheinische Rebellen (1925), Paquet's Sturmflut (1926), Bruckner's Krankheit der Jugend (1926), Wolf's Kolonne Hund (1927), Rehfisch's Der Frauenarzt (1927), Toller's Hoppla, wir leben! (1927), Piscator's adaptations of Rasputin (1927) and Schweik (1928), Hörváth's Sladek, der schwarze Reichswehrmann (1928), Brecht's Dreigroschenoper (1928), Bruckner's Die Verbrecher (1928),

Lampel's Revolte im Erziehungshaus (1928), Wolf's Zyankali (1929), Mühsam's Sacco und Vanzetti (1926) and Mehring's Der Kaufmann von Berlin (1929). Rühle has defined the genre thus:

"Zeitstück" meint das Schauspiel, das sich unmittelbar mit den Problemen der Gegenwart, der nahesten Zeit, beschäftigt. . . . Das Zeitstück ist selbst herausgefordert von der Zeit. Seine Gebärde ist aufklärerisch, aufsässig oder revolutionär, die Intention pädagogisch, die Absicht heißt: Erkennt Euch, Eure Umwelt, und entscheidet Euch. 61

Critics have also defined the Zeitstück as "Debattenstück" or "Reportagestück"⁶² and the genre as "Zeittheater, Tendenztheater, Aktualitätstheater"⁶³ or simply "political theatre": its trademarks were topicality and critical intent. Brecht's Trommeln in der Nacht was the first such play to gain public attention (Gregor's Schauspielführer actually defines it as 'the' Zeitstück⁶⁴), and its success led to many more widely ranging portrayals of contemporary or recent events. The Expressionists had clothed their social concerns in lyrical language and symbolism, but the writers of Zeittheater were more realistic and direct, employing at most a historical situation (e.g. Welk's Gewitter über Gottland or Rehfisch's Die Affäre Dreyfus) in order to make a point applicable to their own time. The language of the new plays was conversational, even vulgar prose and their concern was very much with the present.

The relative novelty of such topical theatre is revealed by the reaction of a contemporary observer to Jung's Die Kanaker in 1921. Its closeness to everyday affairs becomes apparent to the spectator just as the curtain falls and the play ends:

Wir sind wieder im Leben und merken jetzt, daß

wir eigentlich gar nicht weit vom Leben weg waren, die ganze Zeit über. Das ist das grundlegend Neue an diesem Theater, daß Spiel und Wirklichkeit in einer ganz sonderbaren Weise ineinander übergehen. Du weißt oft nicht, ob du im Theater oder in einer Versammlung bist, du meinst, du müßtest eingreifen und helfen, du müßtest Zwischenrufe machen. Die Grenze zwischen Spiel und Wirklichkeit verwischt sich dauernd. 65

Theatre has ceased to be a remote artistic experience for this onlooker - the drama is asking its audience to take a stand on important issues inside the theatre as well as in the outside world.

Zeittheater was part of the larger movement known as Neue Sachlichkeit which also embraced painting, music, and forms of literature other than drama. Neue Sachlichkeit is generally held to have replaced Expressionism as the dominant artistic style during the early 1920s.⁶⁶

Just as the passionate idealism of the Revolution turned gradually into a reluctant and slightly cynical acceptance of the status quo, so Expressionist emotionalism gave way to a more sober and objective approach to literature. The word sachlich was being used to mean praiseworthy matter-of-factness as early as 1920, but the term Neue Sachlichkeit was fixed by the art historian Hartlaub in 1923 as the title for an art exhibition and subsequently for the whole movement.⁶⁷

Some critics have accused the dramatists of Neue Sachlichkeit of failing to live up to the objective neutrality which the movement's name seems to imply⁶⁸, but this is to misunderstand its basic nature; Sachlichkeit means simply a devotion to the thing itself, to facts, to authenticity and accuracy. A contemporary observer noted:

Der Name Sachlichkeit enthält viel mehr, als die

meisten ahnen. Er ist nicht, wie seine Urheber im Anfang meinten, eine einfache Übersetzung des Namens "Realismus". Er besagt: an die Stelle des Kunstwerks will sich die "Sache selbst" schieben; das Ding selbst, der authentische Gegenstand. 69

Plays of the new type concerned themselves with factual reportage about matters of public concern: Paragraph 218, the illegal army, industry, education, the operation of the stock market or the legal system. Authenticity was assured by the author's expert knowledge - Credé (Paragraph 218) and Wolf (Zyankali) were doctors, Alsberg (Voruntersuchung) a lawyer⁷⁰ - or by painstaking research into the details of a reported incident; Wolf based Die Matrosen von Cattaro on interviews with men actually involved in the mutiny, and Plievier is said to have conducted 192 interviews before writing Der Kaiser ging, die Generäle blieben.⁷¹ Underlying all such plays was the belief that facts speak for themselves: once a situation was explained, public indignation and reform should automatically follow. It may be true that in this assumption the writers of Neue Sachlichkeit overestimated their potential; Gruber certainly claims that "they expected more of literature than it could hope to accomplish".⁷² Yet many of their plays did provoke hoped-for public discussion (the debates about abortion and justice were particularly fierce) and in rare cases led to actual reform.⁷³ Most importantly, however, the Zeitstück became accepted as a valid new form of drama. Social and political controversy were transferred from public life into the theatre and sometimes back again; the stage became a focus for contemporary concerns as rarely before.

It may perhaps seem strange that Zeittheater

flourished most strongly during the Republic's stable period, at a time when its more urgent problems seemed to have subsided. The social abuses which inspired critical drama continued, however, in spite of relative economic stability, and documentary plays about the immediate past - the Revolution or the inflationary period - were still being written. More importantly, there was now money available for theatrical enterprise and the political situation was settled enough to permit public tolerance of radical plays. The Piscatorbühne, for example, was very much a product of this era: only a few years later, financial difficulties and growing opposition to outspoken left-wing drama made the establishment of such theatre impossible.

The economic crisis of 1929 and the increased unemployment and political extremism which followed marked the final stage of the Weimar Republic's history. The Wall Street crash of October 1929 had repercussions all over the world, and for a country as economically unstable and dependent on foreign aid as Germany, it had especially serious consequences. Unemployment had been steadily growing even in the stable period, but during the severe winter of 1928/29 there were over two million out of work⁷⁴, and by the end of 1930 the figure had risen to over four million.⁷⁵ The consequences of higher unemployment in terms of decreased government revenue from taxation and the increased burden of unemployment relief contributed further to Germany's economic chaos.

Political extremism thrived in such an atmosphere of crisis and collapse. A tendency to abandon the reasonable, middle-of-the-road parties for the political fringe groups

had been observed as early as 1920 and 1924⁷⁶; when the situation worsened, more people sought a radical solution. Both Communists and National Socialists made gains in the elections of 1930 and 1932, but the Right profited far more than the Left. The Nazis in particular seemed to promise strong leadership and hope to the masses of impoverished small farmers and middle-class employees⁷⁷ and to offer in their mixture of ideologies something peculiarly attractive to a growing number of supporters.⁷⁸ Many unemployed men are said to have joined the Nazi SA (Sturmabteil) simply for the free uniform, food and accomodation which it offered.⁷⁹ Politics soon became a matter of fists and boots and hysterical demagogy; those who still espoused caution or compromise went unheard.

The effect of radical political polarisation on the theatre was twofold: the Zeitstück became more extreme, abandoning artistic considerations in an attempt to be more hard-hitting and persuasive than ever, and financial problems combined with harassment from the Right forced many theatres to close their doors altogether.

In 1929 Piscator reviewed his past achievements but looked to the future with misgiving. This is how he saw "Die Situation 1929":

Die erste Periode der Piscator-Bühne lag in einer relativ stabilen, ruhigen Situation. Die zweite Periode der Piscator-Bühne, die Periode, die vor uns liegt, sieht bei weitem weniger ruhig aus. Proletarische Organisationen, wie der Rote Front-Kämpfer-Bund, werden unterdrückt, "nationale" Organisationen dürfen ihren Aufmarsch planvoll und ruhig vorbereiten. Die "Gefahr von rechts" wächst sichtbar. 80

Piscator goes on in this passage to detail unemployment and

economic crisis, the major industrialists' support of Hitler, the impotence of the League of Nations, massive rearmament and open talk of the 'next war', as well as a spiritual crisis brought on by the rapid changes in modern thinking. He continues:

Dieser gewaltige Umschichtungsprozeß, in dem sich wie vor hundertfünfzig Jahren die Geburt einer neuen Gesellschaftsordnung abzeichnet, kann nicht spurlos am Theater vorbeigehen. . . . Das Kunsttheater beginnt abzustarben. Es ist kaum noch möglich, die Linie der reinen Kunst (die Verteidigungslinie der politischen Reaktion) zu halten. Das Publikum interessiert sich nicht mehr dafür. Auch das bürgerliche Publikum nicht. Es beginnt, aufgeschreckt durch die Fragwürdigkeit seiner eignen Existenz, auch vom Theater Antwort auf politisch-gesellschaftliche Fragen zu fordern. 81

Piscator's description of the mood of 1929 is very revealing, but his conclusion certainly overestimates public demand for his own kind of theatre. Piscator was observing the end, not the beginning, of a wave of public enthusiasm for political controversy on stage. The real situation was becoming so serious that tendentious theatre only seemed to worsen political polarisation, and people were tiring of agitation in the place of relaxation and entertainment. By this stage, as Rühle suggests, the theatre had probably passed its peak of usefulness as a political forum.⁸² The growing threat from the Right was nevertheless such an overriding concern that left-wing drama, still charged with the urge to warn and convince, became ever more extreme. Friedrich Wolf, for example, certainly felt that he was being forced into a more crudely persuasive style as the situation worsened. He wrote in 1930:

Es gilt heute mit dem Hammer zu arbeiten, nicht

mit Pinzette und Seziermesser. Und deshalb wollen wir Stücke, die die Menschen vorwärts-treiben, die die Menschen packen, erregen, ihnen Wege zeigen, Stücke, die die klare Linie, wohin der Kurs geht, beleuchten, Stücke, die Kompaß und Fackel sind. 83

There was certainly a reflection of this resolve in Wolf's own work; whereas Zyankali (1929) still appeals to the liberal bourgeoisie with its emotional plea for humane law reform, his next plays are specifically Marxist and revolutionary.

There were fewer left-wing Zeitstücke in the final years of the Republic, but those which did appear were more radical in intent: Wolf's Die Matrosen von Cattaro and Plievier's Des Kaisers Kulis were produced in 1930, Wolf's Tai Yang erwacht and Wangenheim's Die Mausefalle in 1931, and Brecht's Die Mutter and Wangenheim's Wer ist der Dümme? in 1932. These later plays were in fact so closely tied to KPD propaganda that they can be said to form a separate group: Rühle claims, for example, that the Zeitstück proper (which he regards as a product of liberalism) was exhausted by 1930 and replaced by a different form, the engagiertes Parteistück or Lehrstück.⁸⁴ The propaganda plays of the early 1930s can still be classified as Zeitstücke by their topicality and critical intent, but their revolutionary directness does make them more closely allied to the AgitProp tradition of factory-gate propaganda than to the more sophisticated products of Zeittheater.

The Zeitstück undeniably declined in its final years. Political theatre was not simply cut short in 1933 by Hitler's rise to power; it had suffered a crisis several years before that.⁸⁵ There are several explanations for

this. Firstly, Zeittheater too quickly became a medium for merely party-political propaganda, which lessened its appeal to the wider public.⁸⁶ There was also opposition from reactionary forces which constantly attacked left-wing drama for its excesses; as Laqueur remarks, although the theatre stayed Left, public sympathy was moving irresistibly to the Right.⁸⁷ A smaller but significant branch of right-wing Zeittheater appeared, produced by authors like Bronnen, Johst and Möller and espousing heroic and nationalistic ideals; such plays were enthusiastically received by the increasing numbers of Nazi supporters and became the basis for the official theatrical style established by the National Socialist government in 1933. But most seriously of all, Zeittheater became a fashionable trend which was overindulged and thus exhausted public interest. Irresponsible and uncommitted authors who turned out weakly imitative Zeitstücke⁸⁸ led Herbert Ihering to despair that the genre had become corrupt. He wrote in 1930:

Zeitstück, politisches Stück, welche Mißverständnisse haben sich hier eingenistet! Aus der harten Notwendigkeit, endlich das Theater an die Zeit heranzuführen, endlich das Theater wieder zu einer Angelegenheit des öffentlichen Interesses zu machen, ist längst eine behagliche Mode und spießige Gewohnheit geworden. So war es nicht gemeint. . . . Das Theater ist nur ein kleiner Teil der Kulturkrise. Aber sie wird hier am rapidesten deutlich. 89

The problem of arranging performances at all plagued those left-wing authors still writing in the last years of the Republic. The few theatres which had survived in spite of increasing financial difficulties were reluctant to perform even the works of liberal authors, let alone revolutionary ones. Wolf complained bitterly in 1932 that the

same managers who had eagerly profited from his plays in better times now shunned anything controversial: "Keine deutsche Bühne wagt heute noch, unsere Stücke zu spielen . . . Heute nimmt kein Hund mehr einen Knochen von uns".⁹⁰

Looking back in 1934, he wrote:

Nach 1931 war an der Theaterfront kein Zweifel mehr möglich über den Aufmarsch des Faschismus: alle Bühnen, die früher mit unseren Stücken "volle Häuser" erzielt hatten, lehnten jetzt "prinzipiell" jedes unserer Stücke ab, schon wegen der Theaterskandale, die immer häufiger mit einer Aufführung von Brecht oder Wolf verbunden waren. 91

Theatre managers with a careful eye on public trends sensed a growing sympathy for the Nazi view and also refused to risk the violence caused by agitators sent to disrupt some performances. Police prosecution of left-wing productions was more frequent, needing no other justification than their political content. Wolf himself was arrested in 1931 ostensibly on charges connected with Zyankali, but actually because he was a known agitator and a threat to the right-wing pressure group which was gaining more and more power over government action.⁹²

The formation of actors' collectives, Notgemeinschaften⁹³, during the period 1928-32 provided a temporary solution to the problem of unemployment among actors and the closure of established theatres to radical drama. Some of the most important plays of the Weimar Republic's final years were presented by these groups, who hired theatres where they could and travelled from town to town with outspokenly propagandistic plays. The "Gruppe Junger Schauspieler" (formed in Berlin in 1928) toured with Lampel's Revolte im Erziehungshaus; the "Piscator-Bühne Kollektive" (Berlin, 1930) toured with Mühsam's Sacco und Vanzetti and

Wolf's Die Matrosen von Cattaro and Zyankali; Wangenheim's "Truppe 1931" (formed in Berlin) presented Die Mausefalle.⁹⁴ They continued to bring lively and topical plays before a wide public at a time when the few remaining traditional theatres were retreating into vapid musicals or sabre-rattling classics⁹⁵, but their influence was too limited and came too late to have much effect on political life.

The history of the Weimar Republic and of its theatre came to an end with the NSDAP's rise to power in 1933. Hitler became Chancellor as the result of a political deal in January 1933 and worked rapidly to consolidate his power; the Reichstag fire and the elections which followed gave him the support necessary to suspend the Weimar constitution and realise National Socialist anti-Communist and anti-Semitic policies, both officially as legislation and unofficially as street-corner violence.⁹⁶ As a result, a flood of refugees began to pour out of Germany, perhaps the most illustrious group of exiles of all time, as Gay⁹⁷ and others have noted. Most of the major dramatists were forced to leave, among them Brecht, Bruckner, Feuchtwanger, Horváth, Kaiser, Toller, Rehfisch, Wangenheim, von Unruh and Zuckmayer - and with them the great directors who had helped make their success, such as Jeßner and Piscator.⁹⁸ The shock of the Nazi regime's rapid rise to power, the hardships of escape and the difficulties of finding acceptance in a foreign country reduced many previously outspoken authors to silence, but rage and the need to broadcast the truth about Hitler's Germany made playwrights like Brecht and Wolf continue to

write. There was a brief revival of the Zeitstück in exile which centred largely around the Schauspielhaus in Zürich, where Bruckner's Rassen was performed in 1933 and Wolf's Professor Mamlock in 1934. Altogether there were some 800 performances of German Exiltheater in various countries.⁹⁹ There was obviously no shortage of material for critical drama at this time; the struggle to get plays produced abroad proved daunting, however, and most authors were disadvantaged by the precariousness of their position as a German alien in a foreign country.¹⁰⁰ Cut off from first-hand knowledge of current developments, now outsiders in every sense of the word, they were exiled from the society which had given rise to their work as well as from the language itself.

Leonhard Frank gives a vivid first-hand account of the exiled author's dilemma in his autobiographical novel Links wo das Herz ist:

Das Wort "entwurzelt" bekam seine grausamste Bedeutung. Die Emigranten gehörten nirgends hin und bekamen Tritte wie Hunde, die sich verlaufen hatten und umherstreunten, und besonders wuchtige Tritte, wenn sie versuchten, im Gastland zu verdienen, was sie zum nackten Leben brauchten.

. . .
Der Kernschuß hatte die emigrierten Schriftsteller getroffen, die Arbeit am Lebenswerk war unterbrochen. Er mußte erfahren, daß er ohne den lebensvollen, stetigen Zustrom aus dem Volk seiner Sprache und ohne die unwägbare stetige Resonanz der Leser als wirkender Schriftsteller nicht mehr existent war. 101

Most refugee writers suffered from the dilemma of having no conceivable audience in reach; for dramatists, dependent on live performance of their own works for continuing artistic development, the disadvantage was particularly severe. As Rühle has remarked:

. . . Dieses deutsche Zeitstück stirbt im Exil bald ab, weil es dem historischen Boden entzogen ist, der Gesellschaft, auf die es sich bezieht und die es zur Resonanz braucht. . . . Im Exil hatte es die ihm gemäße Gesellschaft verloren. 102

Under circumstances which combined physical hardship with creative difficulties, it is thus hardly surprising that the outburst of literary protest in exile was of only short duration.

Theatre in the National Socialist state was in the meantime being reorganised and brought under the personal oversight of Goebbels, who defined the desired new form of drama in 1933 as "heroisch, stählern-romantisch, national mit Pathos."¹⁰³ A specially appointed Reichsministerium für Volksaufklärung und Propaganda had control of theatrical activities. Ironically, after years of right-wing criticism of the left-wing dramatists' tendency to sully art with politics, art in Nazi Germany became politics, and politics became a kind of art.¹⁰⁴ Theatre and all other kinds of officially encouraged artistic expression were defined quite openly as the means used to mould mass consciousness, and the new state expressed itself in artistic terms as a kind of heroic theatre with banners, parades, uniforms and emotional rhetoric. National Socialist drama consisted mainly of massive Thingspiele (the "national-kultisch-heroisches Drama des neuen Deutschlands"¹⁰⁵) and tasteless revivals of historical plays about the Holy Roman Emperors, Luther, or Frederick the Great.

The polarisation which had characterised the political and also the artistic life of the Weimar Republic was thus taken to even greater extremes after 1933. Inside Germany the nationalist playwrights had their way and were

able to indulge their heroic and militaristic fantasies; outside, the critical Zeitstück continued for a while, given added impetus by the bitterness of the exiles, but handicapped always by a sense of its own futility as authors turned to other concerns in their new homelands. Within the German borders dramatists had no opportunity to act as critics of contemporary society, and their colleagues outside were too cut off from that society to make an effective contribution as dramatists at all. It was not until 1945, when National Socialist drama vanished as completely as the regime which had nurtured it, that critical Zeittheater had the chance to play a role again - this time as a remembered tradition which served as the basis for post-war developments in drama.

FOOTNOTES

1. Jahrbuch der Berliner Bühnen 1925/6 (Berlin: Verlag August Scheel), pp.265-74.
2. Hanns Johst, Schlageter, in Günther Rühle, Zeit und Theater, (Berlin: Propyläen Verlag, 1975), Vol. 3, p.132.
3. Theodor Eschenburg, Die improvisierte Demokratie. Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Weimarer Republik. (Munich: Piper paperback, 1963), p.49.
4. See Erich Eyck, A History of the Weimar Republic (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1967), Vol. 1, pp.137-9; Hans Herzfeld, Die Weimarer Republik (Ullstein, 1975), p.49; Golo Mann, Deutsche Geschichte des 19. und 20. Jahrhunderts (S. Fischer Verlag, 1973), p.658.
5. See e.g. Eyck, op. cit., Vol. 1, pp.122-3, and Peter Gay, Weimar Culture. The outsider as insider. (Penguin 1974), pp.16-17.
6. Herzfeld, op. cit., pp.40-41.
7. Gay, op. cit., p.17.
8. As is shown, for example, in Ernst Gläser's novel Jahrgang 1902 (Berlin: Non-Stop-Bücherei, 195-?).
9. Julius Bab, Die Chronik des deutschen Dramas (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1972), p.142.
10. Ernst Toller, Bemerkungen zum deutschen Nachkriegsdrama, cited by Günther Rühle in Zeit und Theater, Vol. 1, pp.911-12.
11. Ibid., p.912.
12. Ibid., p.913.
13. Cited by Günther Rühle in Zeit und Theater, Vol. 1, p.36.
14. Anneliese Viviani, Das Drama des Expressionismus. Kommentar zu einer Epoche. (Munich: Winkler, 1970), p.18.
15. Gay, Weimar Culture, p.18.
16. Kurt Tucholsky, Gesammelte Werke (Rowohlt 1975), Vol. 8, p.346.
17. Günther Rühle, Theater in unserer Zeit (Suhrkamp 1976), p.109.

18. Eschenburg, op. cit., p.49; Mann, op. cit., pp.686-90.
19. Reinhold Grimm & Jost Hermand (eds.), Deutsche Revolutionsdramen (Berlin: Suhrkamp 1969), p.7; see also Frank Trommler, "Das politisch-revolutionäre Theater", in Wolfgang Rothe (ed.) Die deutsche Literatur in der Weimarer Republik (Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam jun., 1974), p.78.
20. Friedrich Wolf, Gesammelte Werke in sechzehn Bänden (Berlin and Weimar: Aufbau-Verlag, 1967), Vol. 15, pp.320-1.
21. Eyck, op. cit., Vol. 1, p.45; Gay, op. cit., p.11; Herzfeld, op. cit., p.14.
22. Golo Mann, op. cit., p.689.
23. Eschenburg, op. cit., p.50; Mann, op. cit., pp.667, 686-90, 743, 804.
24. See section in Part Two dealing with Die Verbrecher and the justice controversy.
25. Herzfeld, op. cit., p.14; Armin Mohler, Die konservative Revolution in Deutschland 1918-1932, ein Handbuch (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1972), p.40.
26. Gay, op. cit., p.25.
27. Manfred Durzak (ed.), Die deutsche Exilliteratur 1933-45 (Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam jun., 1973), pp.27-8.
28. Mohler, op. cit., p.40.
29. Golo Mann, op. cit., p.726.
30. As is clearly illustrated, for example, in Horváth's play Italienische Nacht.
31. Mann, op. cit., p.692.
32. Herzfeld, op. cit., pp.58-9.
33. Mann, op. cit., p.692.
34. Gay, op. cit., preface p.xi.
35. Eschenburg, op. cit., pp.57 & 124; Mann, op. cit., p.716.
36. Eschenburg p.49; Mann p.691.
37. Mann, p.727. Cf. Gordon Craig, "Engagement and Neutrality in Weimar Germany", Journal of Contemporary History 2, No. 2, April 1967, pp.57ff, and

- Günther Rühle, Theater in unserer Zeit, pp.115-6.
38. Mann, op. cit., p.727.
 39. Ibid., p.685.
 40. Eyck, op. cit., Vol. 1, p.257; Mann pp.696-7.
 41. Mann, p.697.
 42. Manfred Brauneck (ed.), Die Rote Fahne: Kritik, Theorie, Feuilleton 1918-1933 (Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 1973), pp.26-7; Eyck, op. cit., Vol. 1, p.266; Mann, op. cit., p.697.
 43. "Hitler wurde der Prophet der durch die Inflation Enterbten". Eschenburg, op. cit., p.69; also Eyck, op. cit., Vol. 1, pp.247-8.
 44. Lion Feuchtwanger, Erfolg. Drei Jahre Geschichte einer Provinz. (Berlin: Aufbau-Verlag, 1954), p.435.
 45. Jürgen Thöming: "Soziale Romane in der Endphase der Weimarer Republik", in Rothe (ed.), Die deutsche Literatur in der Weimarer Republik, p.169.
 46. Günther Rühle, Zeit und Theater, Vol. 2, pp.17-18.
 47. Ibid., p.25.
 48. Ibid.
 49. Ibid.
 50. Ibid., p.18.
 51. Gay, op. cit., p.126; H.F. Garten, Modern German Drama (London: Methuen, 1959), p.171; Reinhold Grimm & Jost Hermand, Die sogenannten Zwanziger Jahre (Bad Homburg: Verlag Gehlen, 1970), p.8; Mohler, op. cit., p.39.
 52. Walter Törmin, Die Weimarer Republik (Hannover: Fackelträger Verlag, 1973, "Edition Zeitgeschehen"), p.137.
 53. Eyck, op. cit., Vol. 2, p.109.
 54. Mann, op. cit., p.713.
 55. Günther Rühle, Zeit und Theater, Vol. 2, pp.9-10.
 56. "Berliner Tageblatt" 23.12.1925, quoted by G. Rühle, Zeit und Theater, Vol. 2, p.772.
 57. Mann, op. cit., p.742; see also Rothe, op. cit., p.9.
 58. Herzfeld, op. cit., p.47.

59. Eyck, op. cit., Vol. 2, pp.66-68; Mann, op. cit., p.742.
60. Mann, op. cit., pp.742-3.
61. Günther Rühle, Theater in unserer Zeit, p.83.
62. Thomas Koebner, "Das Drama der Neuen Sachlichkeit und die Krise des Liberalismus" in Rothe, Die deutsche Literatur in der Weimarer Republik, p.28.
63. Friedrich Knellessen, Agitation auf der Bühne (Emsdetten: Lechte, 1970), p.3.
64. Joseph Gregor, Der Schauspielführer (Stuttgart: Hiersemann, 1953), Vol. 6, p.31.
65. Article by "r.n." in "Die Rote Fahne" 13.4.1921 - quoted in Manfred Brauneck (ed.), Die Rote Fahne, p.119.
66. Some critics dispute this, maintaining that the two trends continued together or even that they were both part of the one larger movement - see Jost Hermand, "Unity within diversity? The history of the concept 'Neue Sachlichkeit'", in Keith Bullivant (ed.), Culture and Society in the Weimar Republic (Manchester University Press 1977), pp. 166ff; and in Grimm and Hermand, Die sogenannten Zwanziger Jahre, preface, and pp.15ff.
67. Grimm and Hermand, op. cit., p.9; Bullivant, op. cit., p.166.
68. e.g. Helmut Gruber, "The German Writer as Propagandist", in studi germanici, Year 6, February 1968, p.27.
69. Quoted in Giesing/Girshausen/Walther, "Fetisch 'Technik'", in Weimarer Republik, published by Kunstamt Kreuzberg, Berlin, and the Institut für Theaterwissenschaft der Universität Köln (Berlin: Elefanten Press, 1977), p.805.
70. Ibid., p.835.
71. Helmut Gruber, "The German Writer as Propagandist", studi germanici, February 1968, p.24.
72. Ibid., p.39.
73. See e.g. the section in Part Two dealing with Revolte im Erziehungshaus.
74. Eyck, op. cit., Vol. 2, pp.195-6.
75. Ibid., p.300.
76. Herzfeld, op. cit., pp.59 and 95.

77. Ibid., p.136.
78. Mann, op. cit., p.776.
79. Ibid., p.773. The same assertion is made by Wolf in Act 1 of his play Professor Mamlock.
80. Erwin Piscator, Das politische Theater (Rowohlt 1963), p.225.
81. Ibid., p.226.
82. Günther Rühle, Zeit und Theater, Vol. 3, p.9.
83. Friedrich Wolf, Gesammelte Werke in sechzehn Bänden, Vol. 15, p.134.
84. Günther Rühle, Theater in unserer Zeit, p.106, and Zeit und Theater, Vol. 2, p.38.
85. Frank Trommler, "Das politisch-revolutionäre Theater", in Rothe (ed.), Die deutsche Literatur in der Weimarer Republik, p.108.
86. Günther Rühle, Theater in unserer Zeit, pp.113-4.
87. Walter Laqueur, Weimar. A Cultural History 1918-1933 (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1974), p.196.
88. Rühle mentions particularly Corrinth's Die Trojaner as one of these "Halbprodukte" in Theater in unserer Zeit, p.102, and in Zeit und Theater, Vol. 2, p.34.
89. Herbert Ihering, Die Zwanziger Jahre (Berlin: Aufbau-Verlag, 1948), pp.196, 197.
90. Wolf, Gesammelte Werke, Vol. 15, p.258.
91. Ibid., p.323.
92. Ibid., pp.128ff.
93. Ibid., p.260.
94. Weimarer Republik, Kunstamt Kreuzberg/Institut für Theaterwissenschaft, p.872.
95. Wolf, Gesammelte Werke, Vol. 15, pp.259-60.
96. See e.g. the section in Part Two dealing with Professor Mamlock.
97. Peter Gay, Weimar Culture, preface.
98. Günther Rühle, Zeit und Theater, Vol. 3, p.67.
99. Ibid., p.68.
100. Wolf, Gesammelte Werke, Vol. 15, pp.345-6.

101. Leonhard Frank, Links wo das Herz ist (Munich: Nymphenburger Verlagshandlung, 1952), pp.190-91.
102. Günther Rühle, Theater in unserer Zeit, p.114. Cf. Manfred Durzak, Dürrenmatt, Frisch, Weiss. Deutsches Drama der Gegenwart zwischen Kritik und Utopie (Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam jun., 1972), p.12.
103. Günther Rühle, Zeit und Theater, Vol. 3, p.28.
104. Ibid., p.31.
105. Ibid., p.37.

PART TWO :

THE PLAYS

PART TWO: THE PLAYS

GEORG KAISER - GAS

Kaiser wrote Gas in 1917-18, at a time when Germany was enduring the last stages of an appallingly costly and destructive war. Although Gas is not obviously topical - a coming war is talked of but has not yet broken out - it reflects much of the spirit of its time. Kaiser's sensitivity to the prevailing ideas of the age he lived in¹ brought to the play several central themes: a horror of destruction, revulsion against industrialisation and the new technology and a vaguely socialist concern with the welfare of the working class. The play certainly has many Expressionist features, such as its non-specific setting, the abstract and allegorical figures, and the familiar search for an ideal neuer Mensch, but Gas also reflected enough of contemporary reality to appeal to its first audiences as a parable of their own age. Its performances in November 1918, in the very first days of the Weimar Republic, earned an enthusiastic response, "denn alle witterten die ungeheure Zeitgemäßheit der Probleme".² It is clear that Gas served to express already widespread misgivings about the real nature of the patriotic war just ending.

Strongly supporting and encouraging the war at every turn had been the massive force of German heavy industry. Germany's wealth and power in 1914 was the culmination of over forty years of large-scale industrial

enterprise which had had an enormous impact on the economy and on the lives of the people:

Die Industriegesellschaft hatte die Aufhebung des Agrarstaats betrieben, Millionen waren vom Land in die Städte gezogen; Berlin, Hamburg, die Industrieorte an der Ruhr waren schnell gewachsen; die Entwicklung der neuen chemischen Industrie, der Elektro- und Schwerindustrie am Ende des vergangenen Jahrhunderts hatte Deutschland in knapp zwanzig Jahren eine beherrschende Stellung auf den Weltmärkten verschafft. . . . Kohle- und Eisenindustrie schlossen sich unter Führung der schnell wachsenden Banken zusammen, die schließlich die Macht des Kapitals repräsentierten. Eine kleine Gruppe wirtschaftlich Mächtiger wurde immer wichtiger für das Schicksal der Nation. 3

This is the world which Kaiser portrays in Gas, albeit in allegorical form. The gigantic power of industry is recognised as the real controller of human destiny. Its destructive potential is made clear by the explosion in the gas factory⁴, its sinister power is symbolised by the five schwarze Herren who appear in the third act to demand a return to production, and its crippling, dehumanising effect on the workers themselves is made explicit in Act Four.

Kaiser's portrayal of the ruthless self-interest of the technical and industrial era, not previously regarded as a subject for drama at all⁵, makes Gas a significant play. Something of the same insight is to be found in Sternheim's 1913 (first published in 1915); the critic Günther Rühle, for example, sees in Gas

die Fortsetzung jenes unverantwortlich und ziellos gewordenen Kapitalismus, den Sophie Maske in 1913 ankündigte und dessen Gewinndenken auch auf die Arbeiter übergreifen hatte. 6

In 1913, however, the power of industry is simply a weapon

of the dynastic struggle within an aristocratic family. In Gas it occupies centre stage: Kaiser shows a capitalist monopoly industry in operation and thereby illustrates the connection between economic and political forces in the modern state as well as the dehumanising drudgery which the technology of mass production inflicts on those involved.

Kaiser's vaguely humanitarian socialism, which is revealed in this concern for the workers and in his portrayal of an industrial enterprise run entirely for the profit of its employees, reflects another trend of his time: the irrepressible Utopian dream. As Rühle observes, "Wie in keinem anderen Stück näherte sich Kaiser hier sozialen Gegenwartsproblemen und vor allem: Gegenwartshoffnungen".⁷ Gas reflects some of the prevailing visions of a better future which in their most overtly political form manifested themselves as moves to end the war through strikes in munitions factories (Berlin, January 1918), in naval mutinies (Kiel, October-November 1918) and at last in actual revolution (Munich and Berlin, November 1918). Kaiser was acquainted with Gustav Landauer, one of the men involved in the brief Munich Räterepublik and was doubtless influenced by him⁸ and his Aufruf zum Sozialismus, but Kaiser's own version of socialism was idealistic and literary rather than activist or seriously political. He can hardly be labelled a Marxist, as Huder has pointed out:

Schon als Kaufmannslehrling hatte Georg Kaiser zwischen Zuckersäcken seinen Schopenhauer gelesen. Die Lektüre blieb durch die gesamte Produktion derart wirksam, daß man überall dort, wo man in Georg Kaisers Werk Karl Marx erwartet, schließlich Schopenhauer vorfindet. 9

But, as was the case with many Expressionists, Kaiser's view of humanity was often strikingly similar to the Marxist one. Mennemeier notes for example Kaiser's skilful portrayal of alienation in a capitalist society, and adds:

Auch der Gedanke der marxistischen Philosophie, daß die bisherige Geschichte nur die Vorgeschichte des wahren, ganzen Menschen sei, ist in Georg Kaisers Werk (wie in vielen expressionistischen Werken) lebendig. Freilich nur als Sehnsucht. 10

Kaiser was a salesman by profession and had no personal experience of the struggle of the working class. In Gas, however, his revulsion against the encroachments of industrialisation and his concern for human freedom led him in fact to take issue with the power of capital and the exploitation of the proletariat, although he never analysed the conflict in such explicitly political terms.

Kaiser's social criticism is expressed both implicitly and explicitly. It is implicit in his projection of the ideal factory where workers share all profits and there are no bosses: his exception condemns the more usual power and profit hierarchy of capitalism.

Schreiber: Es gibt hier keinen - Chef!

. . .
Es gibt hier keine - Lohnlisten!

. . .
Wir arbeiten - und wir teilen! 11

It seems at first an ideal situation; however, as Bernhard Diebold observes, "Der sozialistische Gedanke triumphiert; aber nur im Sinne des Programms, der Formel".¹² The structure has changed, but the workers are still enslaved; greed for profit and a fanatical obsession with work drive them on.

Milliardärsohn: Eure Arbeit - in eure Hände

Höhlung aller Lohn. Das muntert euch auf
 - das spornt noch über den Gewinn - da wird
 Arbeit um der Arbeit willen getan. . . .
 - Graut euch nicht? Vor der Verstümmelung,
 die ihr an euch selbst anrichtet? 13

The capitalist system itself, with its fixation on profit and production, is the real enemy: isolated reforms are seen to be ineffectual in the face of the greater evil.

Kaiser's attack on the effects which industrial mass production has on its human components is most explicit in Act Four, where the 'mutilation' of which the Milliardärsohn spoke is detailed. A girl tells of her brother, killed in the explosion, and of his hand - only the hand was ever needed for his work, a hand to raise and lower a single lever, hour by hour.

Mädchen: - Ich wußte nicht, daß ich einen Bruder hatte. Ein Mensch ging morgens aus dem Hause und kam abends - und schlief. Oder er ging abends weg und war morgens wieder zurück - und schlief! - Eine Hand war groß - die andere klein. Die große Hand schlief nicht. Die stieß in einer Bewegung hin und her - Tag und Nacht. Die fraß an ihm und wuchs aus seiner ganzen Kraft. Diese Hand war der Mensch! - Wo blieb mein Bruder? 14

A mother speaks of her son and his eyes¹⁵, a wife of her husband and his foot.¹⁶ The worker is seen to be reduced by the machines he serves to a mere function of their activity; the whole person dwindles merely to a hand that moves a lever, eyes that scan a glass, a foot that presses a switch. Kaiser's message is clear - Herbert Ihering paraphrases it thus: "Der Mensch wird mechanisiert, und das Produkt, das der Menschheit dienen soll, vergewaltigt den Menschen, der es herstellt".¹⁷ Kändler also notes: "Der Mensch wird als Sklave der Maschine gesehen, herab-

gewürdigt zu deren Zubehör".¹⁸ A strikingly similar passage occurs in Toller's Die Wandlung (1918), revealing that distrust and resentment of the machine age was more than Kaiser's personal concern. Toller also emphasises the degrading misery of factory work:

Friedrich: Ich kenne dich, Mädchen, feinknochig und marzart . . . Vor ein paar Wochen verließest du die Schule froh, da du glaubtest, Jugend und Freiheit läuteten mit himmlischen Glocken . . . Aber nun stehst du in der Fabrik. Von morgens bis abends schlägst du immer wieder mit einem Hebel zurück. Immer wieder denselben Hebel. Und dein Atem wird schwer in der stickigen Luft und deine Augen füllen sich mit Tränen, wenn du durch die verstaubten Fenster das Licht ahnst, und die Freiheit und Blumen und Jugend.
19

Unlike Kaiser, however, Toller lets this vision pass as just one of many "verzerrte Bilder des wirklichen Menschen"²⁰; industrialisation is one of the many evils such as poverty, war, religious oppression or materialism which prevent humanity from reaching its full potential. Toller proceeds to an ecstatic cry for revolution²¹ without really examining the problem he has raised. Kaiser's criticism goes further; he condemns not merely the factories but the human exploiters behind them, the profiteers and politicians who manipulate what others have produced. The owner-workers of Kaiser's reformed factory are still vulnerable to the pressures of the sinister schwarze Herren who represent other industries dependent on their gas, or the demands of a government which requires the gas for its next war.

Regierungsvertreter: Wir stehen vor einem Kriege.
Ohne die Rohenergie von Gas wird das
Rüstungsprogramm undurchführbar. Aus

diesem schwerwiegenden Grunde kann die Regierung eine längere Unterbrechung in der Lieferung von Gas an die Waffenwerke nicht dulden! 22

The reform of one factory has not been enough; the Milliardärsohn's dream of saving the workers from danger and slavery crumbles in the face of society's grim demands for ever more power and profit.

Kaiser's main purpose in Gas, however, seems to be not so much a particular reform along socialist lines as the continued quest for his ideal 'new man'. Renewal is sought first from within the human spirit, not through external social reforms. As Viviani observes:

Die expressionistische Revolution spielt sich . . . nicht in der Außenwelt ab, sondern im Menschen selbst, denn sie fordert nicht in erster Linie eine neue politische, wirtschaftliche und gesellschaftliche Ordnung, sondern den 'neuen Menschen', der durch einen Akt geistiger Reinigung entstehen soll. 23

Gas has spiritual rather than political ends in mind. Melchinger goes so far as to describe Kaiser's play as totally apolitical, and finds even its Expressionist aspects shallow and unconvincing:

Entlarvend ist sein "politisches" Theater, die vier "Gas"-Stücke; hier werden Entscheidungen vollzogen, die nicht Konsequenzen aus einer politischen oder sozialen Realität sind, sondern durchgespielte Kombinationen ausgedachter Möglichkeiten, deren "expressionistisches" Grundschema so banal ist wie der gesetzte Fall: der Einzelne und das Kollektiv, der Mensch und die Masse, das Ich und die Welt. 24

Kaiser's experimentation with his own intellectual and dramatic constructions perhaps interested him more, but he did share with the authors of later Zeitstücke the desire to express the problems and aspirations of the contemporary world and to defend the poor or the exploited.

This at least was his claim:

Meine szenischen Werke haben stets denselben Ausgangspunkt: das Bedürfnis, diejenigen zu verteidigen, die im Schatten leben. Jeder Sache, die ich geschrieben habe, liegt das Gerechtigkeitsgefühl zugrunde. . . . Ich erlag . . . ganz einfach einem unwiderstehlichen Zwang, über Menschen zu schreiben, die das Schicksal ungerecht behandelt hat. 25

Kaiser was certainly a social critic, a "Widersacher der Sitten und Formeln seiner Mitzeit", as Huder says²⁶, and the plays of his "Gas" trilogy (Die Koralle, Gas, and Gas - zweiter Teil) were apparently meant as "Beschwörungs-Bilder gegen die Zeit . . . sich zu besinnen".²⁷ Yet Kaiser denied the necessity of setting a play directly in its own age. While Gas reflects numerous aspects of its own time, the author is reluctant to make it specific; he prefers the Expressionist technique of clothing his message in a more generalised and abstract form. As Kaiser explained:

Was ist Gas? Was sind hier Arbeiter? Mittel der Gegenwart, um ins Menschenunendliche vorzudringen; aus diesen Figuren abzuleiten das Gleichnis, das beständig gültig ist; den Aufruf zu uns, der so am scharfsten laut werden kann. Stellung unserer Epoche in Unvergänglichkeit. Es wird Zufall, daß solches von solchen Zungen geredet wird - ein Mittel, daß solche Figuren solche Gesten tragen. Es geht niemals um das Personenverzeichnis. 28

It is significant that Kaiser does describe one of his purposes as "den Aufruf zu uns", but his techniques for actually achieving this take far more account of the "Menschenunendliche" and the eternal verities of art than of the need for immediate action. As the author also explained: "Das Dichtwerk sagt aus im Gleichnis. Die Entnahme des Stoffes aus der Zeit, die gegenwärtig ist,

enthebt diesen Stoff über die Zeit."²⁹

Gas in fact exemplifies a play between two genres; it is a semi-abstract Expressionist drama with a modern and quite realistic social awareness, a protest against modern technology dressed in ecstatic and visionary language. Its hero is at the same time one of the lonely, tenaciously optimistic outsiders common to the Zeitstück³⁰ and a version of the enlightened but doomed neuer Mensch of Expressionism. Kaiser's position is somewhat confused: he is caught between the urge to criticise and reform, which reached its peak a decade later in the drama of Neue Sachlichkeit, and the Expressionist desire to indulge his visions of spiritual renewal. Mennemeier comments on Kaiser's position as a potential social critic thus:

Satire springt in Kaisers Stück unvermittelt hinüber zur Utopie. Kritik schlägt irrational in Hoffnung um, Verzweiflung in Glauben. Und natürlich gilt auch das Umgekehrte: Glaube ist bei Kaiser nie vor Verzweiflung gefeit; die utopische Hoffnung gerinnt unter der Hand zur Satire, so grimassierend artikuliert sie sich. Für die schlichte Wahrheit, daß die Therapie immer schwieriger ist als die Diagnose, liefert Kaisers Dramatik einen klassischen Beleg. Brecht hatte von seinem Standpunkt aus recht, wenn er im Blick auf Autoren vom Typ Kaiser konstatierte, hier werde eine "bloße Symptomatologie der sozialen Oberfläche" gegeben. 31

Inasmuch as Kaiser is attempting in Gas to warn, to criticise or to reform as well as simply inspire or intrigue, his techniques lend the play considerable impact. Kaiser's 'what-if' view of the world, which begins by postulating a radically reorganised work situation and later unfolds a plan to retard technological advance and give the workers a peaceful, rural existence in its place, at least presents an audience with positive alternatives,

however vaguely they are conceived.

The intense and concentrated language with its emotional outcries and jerky, half-formed sentences comes into its own as a dramatic device in the crowd scene in Act Four, where it vividly portrays a confusion of ideologies fighting for the crowd's attention:

Milliardärsohn (Stimme): Ich bin in der Halle! -
 - - - Ich habe euch
 gehört!
 (Summendes Suchen nach ihm)
 Milliardärsohn (Stimme): Ich will euch antworten
 - - hier in der Halle!
 (Bewegung im Wachsen)
 Milliardärsohn (Stimme): Ihr sollt mich nun hören!
 (Schon Gasse vor ihm)
 Schreiber (auf die Tri-
 büne gejagt): Laßt ihn nicht sprechen!!
 - - Laßt ihn nicht
 herauf!! - - Steht dicht
 - - macht nicht Platz!! 32

Milliardärsohn (unten) : Kommt aus der Halle - -
 und richtet die Siedlung
 ein!
 Ingenieur: Steht hier!! - - steht
 hier in der Halle!! -
 Stimme bin ich groß für
 euch - die dröhnt hier!!
 Milliardärsohn: Kommt aus der Halle!
 Ingenieur: Steht in der Halle - seid
 nicht Betrüger!!
 (Summen im Murren laut) 33

The fragmented and almost hysterical language of this scene certainly contributes to its urgency; the decision eventually made by the vacillating crowd will be of the greatest importance, and Kaiser builds up to it with melodramatic force. Martini has called him, with some justification, "der Virtuose der theatralischen, fast schon kino-mäßigen Spannungen"³⁴ and comments particularly on his handling of the crowd scenes. Diebold was similarly impressed, noting the important role assigned to the masses here; he found their speech

voller Kunst und Künstlichkeit - und doch ergreifend. Es ist ein Zauber um die Wortkraft dieses Georg Kaiser. 35

The fourth act of Gas is significant for another reason. Here the anonymous masses actually appear; no longer merely symbolic objects of pity, or isolated individuals from a working class background, they surge to and fro as an enormous, excitable and powerful crowd, the proletariat made visible on stage. The decision they are forced to make is an artificial one, depending only on the limited choices available to them in Kaiser's imagined world, but the scene certainly exemplifies "die Bühne als Tribunal"³⁶, that characteristic feature of later Zeittheater. A decision is made, albeit a reactionary one, and seen to be made by the sheer power of the masses. With this particular technique Kaiser portrays the excitement as well as the dangers of the basic democratic process. In the Germany of 1918, this was a remarkably relevant point to make. The November Revolution was shaped by just such anonymous and excitable masses, and the painful and uncertain beginnings of practical democracy were of very immediate concern when Kaiser's play was first performed. The limitations of his portrayal are apparent, however, when one compares his crowd of workers with the more enlightened proletariat of other contemporary plays. Toller saw the new and old characterisations thus:

In den alten Dramen³⁷ war der proletarischer Mensch ein dumpfes Wesen, das aus starkem, doch vagem Gefühl gegen sein Geschick rebellierte. Der Künstler, der ihn zeichnete, wollte im Hörer Mitleid wecken. Im neuen Drama ist der prole-

tarischer Mensch aktiv, bewußt, gegen sein Geschick rebellierend, für eine neue Wirklichkeit, eine neue Gesellschaftsordnung kämpfend. Ihn treibt Gefühl und Erkenntnis. 38

Such a portrayal was certainly Toller's aim in his own later plays such as Hoppla, wir leben! (1927) and Feuer aus den Kesseln (1930). Kaiser's workers, however, seem to be halfway between the old world and the new. They have certainly become more aware and rebellious, but exercise their power by following the suggestions of demagogues; they lack ideas of their own. The masses resolve only to preserve the status quo and are still unable to accept any radical change in the system of production and profit.

At the end of the play, Kaiser's Milliardärsohn is forced to conclude that the people are after all unfit to decide for themselves; his experiment has failed. In spite of all warnings, the workers want to proceed, "von Explosion zu Explosion", to provide gas for industry and for the inevitable war. The neuer Mensch cannot be found under these circumstances - the only hope left is the daughter's promise at the end of the play: "Ich will ihn gebären!" Salvation has been postponed until the next generation.

When Gas was first performed (in Frankfurt and Düsseldorf, November 1918, and in Berlin the following February), more than one critic commented on the shallowness of this promise. Ihering observed: "Eine peinliche Erlösergeste, die sich leicht als bequemoptimistischer Ausweg einstellt, muß ein Ende vortäuschen, das keins ist."³⁹ Diebold noted rather sarcastically that the 'new

man', though often heralded, had still not appeared; nor was his birth to be expected from the weak and ghostly female characters of Kaiser's plays, whom Diebold described as "noch blutarmer als die schwächsten ihrer allegorischen Brüder; und eine Geburt des neuen Menschen darf ihrer Konstitution überhaupt nicht zugemutet werden."⁴⁰

Other commentators found the play superficial and pointed out that while it reflected contemporary ideas, no real solution to the problems was offered. Ihering described Kaiser's approach with remarkable insight:

Seine nervöse Empfänglichkeit bemächtigt sich aller in der Zeit liegender Gedanken. Was ihn packt, ist nicht ihre Wahrheit, nicht ihre Richtung, ihr Wille, sondern ihre Farbe, ihr Glanz, ihre Sensation. Er sieht die Idee als Überschrift, als Formel, als Plakat. . . . Er spürt die Zeit und ihre Tendenz nur als szenische Pointe, als farbigen Punkt, als technischen Akzent. 41

Alfred Kerr was of a similar opinion; he criticised Gas as much ado about nothing, a play full of loudly repeated ideas which fail to develop into anything profound: "Ja, der Verfasser ist reich an Einfällen, doch seine Einfälle sind nicht reich."⁴² Another observer noted the play's striking portrayal of the masses, but seemed uncertain as to the possible effects of this: "Ein stolzes Geschenk an die Arbeiterschaft, die aber vorläufig nichts damit anzufangen wissen wird."⁴³ Kaiser had certainly introduced the industrial proletariat into drama, but was not particularly interested in the political implications of such a move. As Ihering shrewdly noted, his feeling for the spirit of the times was that of a sensation-seeker who

knows how to capitalise on the excitement of new trends and popular catchphrases, but lacks a serious commitment to their realisation. An articulate and politically aware working class did not appear in German drama until much later, in the work of more seriously propagandistic writers like Friedrich Wolf.

Although its many shortcomings were detailed by the critics, Gas was certainly a popular success⁴⁴, and brought Kaiser a measure of long-awaited recognition and acclaim. In spite of its artificiality and abstraction the play proved to be exciting and involving⁴⁵; the Milliardärsohn's tirades against the evils of industrialisation found a sympathetic response, and the spectacle of a rough and ready exercise of mass power in the crowd scenes must have seemed highly topical to a society which was itself still experimenting with the possibilities of street-corner democracy. In 1918 the time had certainly come for a theatre of social comment, for plays which reflected the modern world and more particularly the multitude of problems and paradoxes beginning to emerge in post-war German society. Gas, although still strongly rooted in the abstract Expressionist tradition, was able to partly fulfil this need. Other plays more firmly based on contemporary reality and more harshly critical of society were to follow.

BERTOLT BRECHT - TROMMELN IN DER NACHT

Brecht's first version of Trommeln in der Nacht (originally entitled Spartakus) was written in a few weeks during January and February 1919, under the immediate influence of the attempted revolutions in Berlin and Munich and of the first massive return of soldiers from the front. Brecht was a sensitive and reliable observer of his own time, reflecting in Trommeln in der Nacht a detailed picture of the postwar situation. Feilchenfeldt's study of contemporary newspapers and pamphlets, for example, shows how thoroughly the spirit as well as the actual events of 1918 and 1919 were incorporated into the play.¹ The dangers and confusions brought about by the disorganised flood of returning soldiers², the problems faced by a soldier who might have been believed dead³, the fear felt by the ordinary citizens in the face of the unruly returned men⁴, the attempted Spartacist uprising⁵ and the various stages of the bitter fighting in the Berlin newspaper district⁶ are all reflected in Brecht's play.

In his history of the Weimar Republic, Eyck sums up the confused post-war situation thus:

A nation which, after four years of war, was experiencing the collapse not only of all its hopes but also of its entire political structure, could hardly find a new equilibrium within a few days. This condition of uncertainty was increased by the addition of all the soldiers, returning in millions from the war.

. . . It lay in the nature of things that, especially in large cities like Berlin, the crowds of people who gathered were particularly easy prey for demagogues, whether idealists or tough-minded

agitators: and the numerous weapons which found their way to the hands of the crowds gave these people the sensation of holding real power. In the streets of the government district in Berlin bullets whistled past at all hours of the day and night. Newspaper offices were occupied by armed bands; a so-called People's Naval Division had taken up quarters in the palace; a representative of the extreme Left was directing the police; even the chancellery was threatened with violence. 7

This is the chaotic world to which Andreas Kragler returns, and in which Brecht sets his play.

The central character of Trommeln in der Nacht is a figure representative of millions: the Heimkehrer, one of the returning soldiers who discovered that the longed-for return, far from marking the end of their troubles, only set them adrift in a world full of far more complex and baffling problems than the simple challenge of staying alive. Brecht uses Kragler to highlight a number of specific problems suffered by such men: the uneasy contrast between the lingering heroic myth and its shabby survivors ("Unsere Armee hat Gewaltiges geleistet. Sie ist lachend in den Heldentod gezogen."⁸), the shortage of civilian clothes which forced them to carry about with them unwelcome reminders of their war service ("Hast du keine andere Montur gekriegt? Hast du immer noch die alte blaue an? Das trägt man nicht mehr!"⁹), and the overwhelming question of survival ("Sie haben keinen roten Heller? Sie liegen auf der Straße? Das Vaterland drückt Ihnen eine Drehorgel in die Hand?"¹⁰). Feilchenfeldt's study of contemporary reports and pamphlets reveals that precisely these problems were being discussed at the time. The difficult position of the returned soldiers drove many

of them to join the revolutionary struggle, motivated by a mixture of conflicting and questionable impulses, as indeed Kragler is seen to be.

In Trommeln in der Nacht, one soldier's return and the threatened Spartacist uprising combine to harass that other significant mover of events, the bourgeois who has done well out of the war and has every interest in preserving the old order. Balicke and Murk are portrayals of such opportunists, strivers for profit and property who see returned soldiers and Spartacists alike as a threat to their hard-won security. That this bourgeois group was widely recognised at the time to be a reactionary force is indicated, for example, by Tucholsky's poem "Berliner Kämpfe", written in January 1919. This is a short extract:

Und der Bürger? Du liebe Güte!
 Es wackeln im Wind die Zylinderhüte.
 Er ist gegen jede Volksempörung.
 Politik ist geschäftliche Störung.
 Spartakus will seine Kasse bedrohn?
 Das geht zu weit mit der Revolution.¹¹

The feeling of bitter disillusionment which followed in the wake of the revolution's defeat and was widely felt in 1919 is reflected in the conclusion of Trommeln in der Nacht, which Brecht quite deliberately chose as "die schäbigste aller möglichen Varianten".¹² As Mennemeier points out, the play's action does in fact take place at the very height of the struggle while the outcome is still far from certain, "doch sind die Erfahrungen des Scheiterns der Revolution mit darin eingegangen".¹³ The bitterness of hindsight, the effect of "der großen Ernüchterung, die die Niederlage der Revo-

lution mit sich gebracht hatte"¹⁴ contribute to the cynicism and disillusionment of Brecht's play. Even before Anna's return, Kragler sees no future in revolutionary ideals: "und die Welt ist zu alt für die bessere Zeit und der Himmel ist schon vermietet, meine Lieben".¹⁵ The drunken man's mocking refrain:

Im November war ich rot
Aber jetzt ist Januar 16

similarly emphasises the mood of resignation. There is nothing left to believe in; cynical self-interest seems the only course. In the absence of any viable ideology, Brecht finally offers personal survival as the one positive value in a confused, violent and unjust world.

Brecht's main aim in writing Trommeln in der Nacht seems to have been to create a realistic portrayal of an era, a fact which led several critics to regard it as "tendenzlos":

Ein Revolutionsstück ohne politische Tendenz,
sogar ohne die Tendenz seiner Tendenzlosigkeit. 17

Keine Tendenz, keine Spur von Deklamation.
Alles ist Ausdruck und Gestaltung. 18

Er [Brecht] denkt nicht an Tendenz, gestaltet
rein künstlerische heftige Bilder vor einem
stürmischen Hintergrund. 19

This is certainly not the case, however; the playwright's social criticism may be less obvious than in other plays and does not fall into a recognisable ideological pattern, but Brecht is very critical of the society which makes men like Kragler outcasts. Balicke and Murk, stalwart defenders of their property (Anna) against the claims of an undesirable intruder, are especially attacked. Humane feelings obviously come a poor second to this pair's deter-

mination not to be deprived of present possessions or cherished plans for future prosperity.

Brecht's own social origins are probably a key to his hatred of the middle classes. He was himself the son of a prosperous family in Augsburg, but rejected his social background while still a young man²⁰ and delighted in first shocking 'respectable' people with his rowdy bohemian behaviour and later in denouncing middle-class stupidity and greed in his plays. As Mennemeier has remarked, "Brecht, Bewunderer Frank Wedekinds . . . spielte damals mit Vorliebe den Bürgerschreck".²¹ Long before Marxism had given him the theoretical basis for such an attitude, Brecht thus instinctively sided with the proletariat in the shape of such rebels and outcasts as his hero François Villon, the model for many of his early ballads and the first play Baal. This same Räuberromantik leads him in Trommeln in der Nacht to pillory the prosperous and conservative (Balicke, Frau Balicke, Murk) and to espouse the cause of the shabby outcasts (Kragler, Glubb, Manke, Auguste, Marie).

The play's second target is the senseless revolutionary enthusiasm which drives this group towards a needless death. While Brecht certainly sympathised with the revolutions in Munich and Berlin, and demonstrated this by attending among other things the USPD's Trauerfeier for Luxemburg, Liebknecht and Mehring, a memorial march for Eisner on the day after his assassination, and later his funeral²², he clearly rejects pointless heroism and the romantic ideal of dying gloriously for a cause.

The 'revolutionaries' portrayed in his play are far from glorious; they are shown as a drunken rabble with very doubtful motives: "Mit Schnaps getränkt bis ans Herz und mit Geschwätz gefüttert bis zum Nabel, und die Messer in unseren Pfoten".²³ Under the stress of Kragler's desertion and the sound of cannons from the newspaper district, this doubtful group soon scatter. With such a negative portrayal Brecht may well have expressed his own disillusionment, as Mennemeier points out: his

Schmerz über den verständlichen, vielleicht notwendigen 'Verrat' der verlorenen revolutionären Sache auch seitens der Ausgebeuteten, die, hätten sie ihr das Opfer des Lebens gebracht, vielleicht nur eine leere, rhetorische Geste ausgeführt hätten. ²⁴

Kragler acts as the spokesman for such reluctant revolutionaries when he quite specifically rejects the ideal of dying a 'heroic' death for no clear purpose.²⁵

Brecht's play exposes human weakness on every side, but does not rigorously attack it: weakness and imperfection seem to be accepted as part of the natural scheme of things. On the other hand, greed and brutality are bitterly criticised. While all of the characters are more or less foolish or fallible, a significant distinction is made between the unpleasant, grasping selfishness of the bourgeoisie and the more tolerant sympathy of the proletariat. Kragler, like Brecht, feels an instinctive attachment to the seedy low-life characters of the taverns and the back streets; they extend to him a rudimentary human sympathy and acceptance which is totally lacking in the hypocritical middle class.

There is one further target of Brecht's social

criticism: the bourgeois audience itself, the theatre-goers who enjoy a play about revolution while rejecting the reality. Kragler's final words become a kind of Publikumsbeschimpfung as he forgets his own concerns for a moment, beats on the drum and shouts: "Glötzt nicht so romantisch! Ihr Wucherer! . . . Ihr Halsabschneider! . . . Ihr blutdurstige Feiglinge, ihr!"²⁵ The hated bourgeois is to be found not only on stage as part of the play, but in the audience as spectator. As Mennemeier observes:

In Kraglers Zorn aufgenommen ist die wütende Entrüstung Brechts über ein bürgerliches Publikum, das wie eh und je seine Geschäfte betreibt, auf der Bühne aber - wie im damaligen Expressionismus der Fall - mit Vorliebe idealistische Revolutionsstücke des Alibis halber gespielt sieht. 27

The figure of Andreas Kragler is the central focus of Trommeln in der Nacht and contributes in several ways towards realising Brecht's intentions. He engages the audience's sympathy as returned soldier, rejected bridegroom and penniless outsider, incorporating the plight of Heimkehrer and revolutionary together. Kragler's almost spectral intrusion into the family celebrations in the Picadillybar provides an exemplary contrast between shabby worker-soldier and guzzling bourgeoisie. At the end of the play, his unheroic but practical refusal to die for the cause also serves to express Brecht's own reservations about the revolution: Kragler as the author's mouthpiece makes his point brutally clear.

Mein Fleisch soll im Rinnstein verwesen, daß eure Idee in den Himmel kommt? Seid ihr besoffen?

.

Der Dudelsack pfeift, die armen Leute sterben
 im Zeitungsviertel, die Häuser fallen auf sie,
 der Morgen graut, sie liegen wie ersäufte
 Katzen auf dem Asphalt, ich bin ein Schwein,
 und das Schwein geht heim. 28

With this unheroic but realistic choice, Kragler becomes the model for the numerous compromisers and survivors in Brecht's later plays, the shrewd antiheroes whose common sense rejects virtue or idealism to enable them to survive a little longer in a tough world.

Kragler's fate also represents a deliberate reversal of literary tradition; it shows "die Auflehnung gegen eine zu verwerfende literarische Konvention"²⁹, a "Gegenentwurf"³⁰ to counter the Utopian idealism of Expressionist drama. The name Andreas may possibly be intended to remind us of the saint and to highlight the fact that this Andreas refuses to be martyred for the faith.³¹ His decision to survive at all costs parodies the self-sacrifice of classical heroes³²: Kragler, betrayed lover and social outcast, declines the chance to turn his back on the world and rush off to certain death as a more romantic tradition might have it. Anna's survival provides a similar reversal, in her case of the tradition of the unmarried mother. Unlike her numerous literary predecessors, she rejects desperate measures such as ins Wasser gehen and clings to Kragler - a rather second-hand bride, no longer with "die Lilie in der Hand", but a realist.

When Brecht first began to write, he was faced on the one hand by the still flourishing idealistic and revolutionary pathos of Expressionism, and on the other by

the dismal reality of a post-war world which no writer had as yet found possible to portray. His position is described by Kändler in these terms:

Als jüngste Literatur sieht Brecht zunächst den Expressionismus vor sich, der sich nach dem November 1918 die Bühne erobert, als Wirklichkeit aber die Welt der Schieber und Kriegsgewinnler. 33

Brecht was young enough not to have been personally involved in the ecstatically pro-war and then anti-war reactions of an earlier literary generation which produced romantic 'revolutionary' dramas such as Goering's Seeschlacht, Unruh's Ein Geschlecht, Rubiner's Die Gewaltlosen, Kaiser's Gas or Toller's Die Wandlung. As Kändler had pointed out: "Alle seine Erlebnisse und die davon ausgelösten Überlegungen zielen im Gegenteil darauf ab, solchen Ekstasen gegenüber mißtrauisch zu sein."³⁴

Brecht's war experience consisted of working as a hospital aide in an infirmary for "Kavalierkrankheiten" (venereal diseases), and after the war he witnessed with many others the unpleasant spectacle of a bourgeois reaction rapidly setting itself up in place of the revolutionary dreams of 1918 and 1919. No author had as yet managed to do justice to the period, as one contemporary observer noted:

Der zwanzigjährige Brecht, "in Asphaltstädte verschlagen", suchte nach Stücken, die sich mit der neuen Republik dramatisch aussprachen.
. . . Was Brecht sah, war ihm zu wenig. 35

Brecht thus began to write down his own observations of the world around him, and because his relative uninvolvedness in the war and the failed revolution had left him free to reject their respective ideologies, he wrote about the crass contradictions and injustices of contemporary

society from a bitterly realistic standpoint - and one very much at odds with the Expressionist tradition. As Mennemeier remarks, Brecht displayed

eine gesellschaftskritische Reflexion, die gleichsam nie in die Versuchung gekommen war, an den idealistischen Illusionen zu partizipieren, wie sie den weitaus größten Teil des damaligen Theaters kennzeichnete. An den Toller, Sorge, Rubiner gemessen, scheint Brecht auf geradezu zynische Weise Realist oder Materialist. 36

Trommeln in der Nacht was thus written in part against Expressionist ideals: like the earlier character Baal, Kragler is a neuer Mensch of a kind who espouses selfishness and crude materialism, a deliberate antithesis of the Expressionist visionary. As Kändler has remarked:

Beide Gestalten [i.e. Baal and Kragler] entsprangen dem Mißtrauen des Dramatikers gegen expressives, übersteigertes Menschheitspathos.

 Mit beiden Gestalten bekämpft der Stückeschreiber ideologisch überspannte und irrationale Menschheitsvorstellungen. 37

Just as Baal was an answer to Johst's portrait of the artist as a lonely, misunderstood genius in Der Einsame (1917), Trommeln in der Nacht can be seen as a parody of Hasenclever's Jenseits (1919).³⁸ In Jenseits the ghost of a dead soldier returns and struggles with a living man in order to reclaim his former lover; Brecht's Kragler on the other hand, for all his ghostly attributes, is very much of flesh and blood. At the end of Hasenclever's play a number of complicated stage effects combine in a mystical climax which transcends reality, but at the end of Brecht's play a deliberately anti-illusionist stage technique reveals "der Mond, der ein Lampion war" and "der Fluß, der kein Wasser hat", while a sign in the

auditorium admonishes the audience throughout: "Glottz nicht so romantisch!" Uncompromising reality is the aim for, as Melchinger notes, "Um 1922³⁹ wollte niemand mehr etwas von dem "O Mensch"-Geschrei wissen".⁴⁰ Literary as well as political disillusionment was the order of the day.

In spite of Brecht's decisive rejection of Expressionism, his play nevertheless shows traces of some of its characteristic techniques, both in the characterisation - several of the figures are "exemplarisch gestaltet ("der" Kellner, Kragler als "der" Heimkehrer)"⁴¹ - and in its extremely wild and colourful language. Klotz notes the "gehetzte Substantivballungen und staccatierte kurze Sätze".⁴² Like Kaiser and the other Expressionists, Brecht reveals his characters' agitation and excitement in their rather extravagant and unnaturally poetic language, particularly in the second and third acts.

Er ist da, er ist mit dem Mond gekommen. Der Wolf mit dem Mond. Aus Afrika. 43

Geh weg da! Jetzt hab ich's satt! Was menschlich! Was will diese besäuftete Hirschkuh! Ich bin allein gewesen und will meine Frau haben. Was will dieser weinerne Erzengel! Willst du ihren Unterleib verfeilschen wie ein Pfund Kaffee? Wenn ihr sie mit Eisenhaken von mir reißt, ihr zerfleischt sie nur! 44

Schon entschwindet sie, die in die Zeitungs- viertel eilt. Wie ein weißes Segel ist sie noch sichtbar, wie eine Idee, wie eine letzte Strophe, wie ein berauschter Schwan, der über die Gewässer fliegt... 45

There is an important difference, however; Brecht's language, while confused and rather highly coloured, always serves a practical purpose. The ugly animal imagery which the Balickes use (Schwein, Hyäne, Elefant)

condemns their own coarseness and brutality, and the waiter's absurdly romantic imagery (Lilie, Schwan, Flügel) serves to parody the conventionally saccharine treatment of the theme of the long-lost lover; he is in fact scorned by the other characters for using it. ("Sie Romanleser!"⁴⁶ - "O Sie romantisches Institut, Sie!"⁴⁷) Kragler's stammering, incoherent speech further emphasises his lostness and uncertainty, his long separation from the Balickes' world.

While the language and the confused, sweeping action in the second and fourth act of Trommeln in der Nacht certainly show Expressionist influences, they relate not to some abstract or visionary portrayal of humanity but to a concrete situation: the conflicts of real people and of a specific historical time. The vaguely conceived Expressionist revolution has at last become a real one, but the hero rejects it; he turns his back on all inspirations and theories and clings to the physical and the obvious. With this deliberate rejection of ideology or idealistic self-deception Brecht is striking out in a new direction: Trommeln in der Nacht can be seen as an interesting link between Expressionism and the more objective and realistic Neue Sachlichkeit which followed in the later 1920s. Rühle classes Brecht as one of "die neuen jungen Autoren, . . . die die Ekstase des Expressionismus zwar noch im Blut hatten, aber nicht mehr dessen Idealismus"⁴⁸: that was the important difference.

The bitterness and hard-headed realism of Trommeln in der Nacht thus proclaim a new tendency in drama: "der

Einbruch der Realität in die irrealen expressionistischen Strukturen", as Kändler puts it.⁴⁹ One example of this 'reality' is Brecht's vivid creation of character; the Balickes and Kragler are a lively contrast to the abstract figures of Expressionist drama, even though they are still used symbolically to represent 'the' bourgeois, or 'the' returned soldier. He shows considerable skill in delineating each of the different personalities in a few lines of dialogue, creating believable and human types with just a few well-chosen words. Balicke's unfeeling practicality, for example, is rapidly revealed by his remarks in the opening scene:

Schneiden kostet nichts, aber Licht!⁵⁰

Aber er fehlt dir! Also nimm einen andern Mann!⁵¹

Richtig betrachtet, war der Krieg ein Glück für uns! ⁵²

Was unzufrieden ist, an die Wand!⁵³

Murk is soon shown to be as blunt and aggressive as his prospective father-in-law: "Was ein Mann ist, kommt durch. Ellenbögen muß man haben, genagelte Stiefel muß man haben und ein Gesicht und nicht hinabschauen."⁵⁴

Frau Balicke completes the picture with her admonition to Anna: "Hörst du es, Anna? Er h a t nichts!"⁵⁵ Money and property obviously matter most to these people. No other commentary within the play is needed to make Brecht's criticism clear; the bourgeois is condemned by his own words. Their behaviour under stress also shows the Balickes and Murk to be crude and brutal. They hurl the most violent insults and accusations at Kragler, treating him more as an animal than as a human being,

seeing in him only an ugly threat to their well-ordered middle-class lives.

Balicke: Habenichts! Anarchist! Frontsoldat!
Sie Seeräuber! Sie Zibebengespenst! 56

Murk: Sie sind ja ein Leichnam! Sie stinken
ja schon! 57
Schwein! . . . Räuber! . . . Gespenst! 58

Frau Balicke: Die haben ja alle was! Syphilis!
Syphilis! 59
Du Hyäne! Du Schwein, du! 60

In comparison to this unlovely trio even the drunks and prostitutes of Glubb's Destille are sympathetic characters; Brecht uses the device of contrast to good effect in order to emphasise the gulf between proletariat and bourgeoisie, between shabby revolutionaries and complacent profiteers, between the new world which is at least fighting for some confused idea of justice and the old world which just clings greedily to what it possesses.

As a stage performance, Trommeln in der Nacht proved a tremendous success when it was produced first in Munich in September 1922 and then in Berlin the following December. Critics praised the "hinreißend wirksame Darstellung"⁶¹ and recognised "die packende und beflügelte Energie"⁶² of Brecht's dialogue, as well as his skilful portrayal of the Familie Balicke - "Nach zehn Sätzen steht sie leibhaftig vor uns und lebt".⁶³ "Dieser verblüffende und befreiende Ausgang der Komödie, dieser Sieg des gesunden Blutes über papierene Ideen"⁶⁴ was also understood and appreciated by many observers.

Several critics commented on the contrast between Brecht's strong portrayal of individual suffering and his

rather vague, sketchy treatment of the revolution:

Wenn das Unglück des einzelnen sich aus-
wächst in der Empörung der Masse, dann ver-
sagt Brecht, dann verliert er sich ins Leere
und Literarische. 65

Sinsheimer remarks:

Die Revolution versagt in ihm [i.e. the play],
so wie sie in der Wirklichkeit versagt hat.
Sie ist eine schwankende Kulisse. Man sieht
sie nicht, man erlebt sie nicht, sie bleibt
dekorativ. 66

He notes, however, that the miseries of Kragler are
presented in a much more realistic and forceful way.

Siegfried Jacobsohn was a little disappointed by
the play - but explained: "vielleicht, weil Trommeln
in der Nacht mit einer Begeisterung angekündigt worden
war, die meine Erwartung überspannt hat".⁶⁷ Emil Faktor
reported lively applause and repeated curtain calls for
the author, but added: "Daß sich in den Schlußapplaus
auch ein wenig Opposition mengte, soll nicht verschwie-
gen werden".⁶⁸ He concluded at the time that Berlin was
possibly a little more sceptical than Munich - but it is
hardly surprising that some people objected to the play:
the harshness of several portrayals, the earthy and even
gross language and the outspoken rejection of all ideal-
ism would certainly have been offensive to some. Because
the play appeared to be anti-revolutionary, there was
even some applause from an unexpected quarter - con-
servatives who misunderstood Brecht's intention and saw
only his criticism of the revolution.⁶⁹

The most important feature of the play for its
first audiences, however, was the fact that it came to
grips with a piece of contemporary history, that it

brought the real world and a commonly experienced political and social crisis into the theatre after a number of at best only symbolic or allegoric portrayals of war, revolution or class conflict. As one observer noted: "Brecht bestätigte plötzlich die Sehnsucht einer Epoche nach einer nachexpressionistischen, geformten, sachlichen Dichtung".⁷⁰ The production of Trommeln in der Nacht also represents "das erste Mal, daß Nachkriegswirklichkeit ins Schauspiel eindringt".⁷¹ Its success was not merely due to the play's entertainment value: contemporary audiences obviously understood and shared Brecht's desire to express something of the confusion, excitement, hope or bitterness of a crucial period in their recent history. Ihering spoke of the great need which had been felt: "Niemals war die Spannung zwischen dem Erlebnis einer Zeit und seinen Ausdruck so groß wie in unserer Gegenwart".⁷² Trommeln in der Nacht was thus a breakthrough after the post-war "unproduktive Erstarrung" because of its concern with the real world: in Ihering's words, its author was "in seinen Nerven, in seinem Blut vom Grauen der Zeit durchdrungen".⁷³ Or, as Emil Faktor remarked: "Seine Hände wühlen ein Stück Gegenwart auf, um das Allzumenschliche an der Menschlichkeit, die Fatalität des Irdischen am Geiste auszugleichen".⁷⁴

It was also apparent that a new and original talent was taking drama in a new direction. As early as 1926, one observer noted the novelty of Brecht's work:

An dem Stil . . . fiel Brechts eigener Ton auf.

Man konnte sich seiner aufregenden dichterischen Kraft nicht entziehen. Es sprengte den Rahmen des bisherigen Theaters, wenn Brecht auf die Zuschauer losschoß: "Glottzt nicht so romantisch!" 75

The play's topicality, its lively presentation of a piece of crucial recent history, was perhaps its most important contribution to contemporary drama. A new trend soon became apparent. Trommeln in der Nacht was among the first of a great many plays which portrayed the problems of the Heimkehrer⁷⁶; it strongly influenced Menzel's Toboggan (1928)⁷⁷ and certainly helped pave the way for several others. The realistic and topical Zeitstück had begun to emerge.

ERNST TOLLER - HOPPLA, WIR LEBEN!

With this play Toller seems to have attempted nothing less than the depiction of a whole society from top to bottom, with all of its problems, confusions and perversities. The thirteen widely-ranging scenes encompass a multitude of different characters and settings, all illustrating Toller's own impressions of life in the Weimar Republic. He sets the play in 1927, eight years after the defeat of the revolution. The central character, Karl Thomas, emerges from his asylum to discover at first hand what the world has become since then, and through his experiences Toller confronts the audience with significant elements of the new German society.

In the beginning was the revolution - its failure has changed the lives of Thomas' former companions, forcing them all to reach a compromise with the world as it is and to abandon the reckless zeal of 1919. One, Kilman, has even worked his way up through the SPD government to the position of Innenminister, and denies his former beliefs with the weary justification: "Die Masse ist unfähig und wird unfähig bleiben vorerst ... Wir müssen heute regieren".¹ Nothing has really changed; the new 'socialist' Republic preserves the same power structures as the old Reich. Although the Weimar constitution banned titles and decorations², Kilman enjoys being called "Exzellenz"; Pickel has even been advised to wear white gloves for his audience with the great man,

and finds this quite natural:

Pickel: Das war im alten Staat so, das bleibt auch im neuen so. Das verlangt die Zeremonienvorschrift. 3

Zwar man sollte gegen die alten Hofschranzen strenger vorgehen, jedoch wir Republikaner lassen uns alles gefallen. 4

Toller's criticism of this lack of change in the new Republic was well founded. Heinrich Mann observed, for example, that although the Weimar state claimed to be a Volksstaat:

Gerade das ist er nie gewesen. Die Republik hat an der vorgefundenen Machtverteilung nichts geändert. Herrschend blieben, wie je, Generäle, Großgrundbesitzer und Industrielle - damals drei Unterabteilungen derselben Klasse. 5

Toller reflects much of this weary sameness, the survival of the old order behind the new democratic facade, in Hoppla, wir leben!

In the new Republic the workers are still the slaves of industry; Toller's banker schemes to force increased overtime and a reduction in wages⁶ and Kilman works closely with the industrialists to ensure that things run smoothly and above all that the economy does not suffer.⁷ Toller's depiction is based on fact. One example: when a longer working day was declared by industrial management to be necessary for the solution of Germany's post-war economic problems, several Social Democrats supported the move and made of the working-day decree of 1923 such a dismal compromise that the principle of the eight-hour-day hardly survived at all.⁸ The distress of the working class during these years can be gauged by the rising unemployment figures (over one

million in December 1925, increasing to over two and a half million in 1928), and the intolerance of employers is indicated by their refusal even to grant wage rises awarded by an arbitration decree.⁹

In Toller's version of the new Republic, politicians talk of peace and brotherhood but secret rearmament continues.¹⁰ In Germany at this time many knew but few dared to speak openly of the increasing strength of the 'Black Army', secret military divisions officially listed as civilian clerks or labourers¹¹, and of the massive clandestine military expenditure¹² which went on in spite of the fact that Germany had at last been admitted to the League of Nations and that Stresemann's achievements at Locarno seemed to promise new international understanding.¹³ Toller further shows how the Republic was resented by the old military and aristocratic conservatives who detested "diese liberalen Utopien von Demokratie und Volksfreiheit"¹⁴ and longed for a putsch or a "nationale Diktatur".¹⁵ Other contemporary observers were aware of the same threat. One noted that the forces of diehard militarism "were supported in their attempt to regain power for themselves by inexhaustible material resources, arms, the forces of tradition, ideology, and three hundred years of German standing at attention and goose-stepping".¹⁶

A long history of right-wing assassinations (including Eisner in 1919, Erzberger in 1921 and Rathenau in 1922) provided the pattern for Toller's depiction of the assassination of Kilman by a student. Murder was certain-

ly a favourite political device of the time, as Lion Feuchtwanger also observed:

In jenen Jahren war eines der beliebtesten Mittel, den politischen Gegner zu widerlegen, seine Ermordung. In Deutschland waren es vornehmlich Anhänger der Rechtsparteien, die, den Führern der Linken in der Handhabung geistiger Waffen nicht gewachsen, sich dieses Mittels bedienten. 17

When in Toller's play Graf Lande further assures the assassin that his judges will support the murder by passing a sympathetic verdict¹⁸, we are also reminded of the notorious right-wing prejudices of the Weimar Republic's judiciary. As early as 1921 the critic Kurt Tucholsky had pointed out the undeniable facts: in the previous three years 314 murders by right-wing extremists had been punished by a total of thirty-one years imprisonment and one (meaningless, because later revoked) 'life imprisonment'. In contrast, thirteen left-wing murders had been punished by eight death sentences and a total of 176 years imprisonment.¹⁹ (Peter Gay quotes similar statistics in Weimar Culture.²⁰) It was clear that the sympathy of the judges was quite shamelessly with the Right, and this naturally had the effect of encouraging further violence.

Toller's play also portrays Hindenburg's election as Reichspräsident in 1925, a victory which revealed Germany's lingering respect for the military hierarchy and which was seen at the time as "a triumph of nationalism and militarism and a heavy defeat for the Republic and parliamentary government".²¹ Toller interprets this event as the victory of a former Minister for War after

a farcical election in which workers are deprived of their votes by trickery²² and the ignorant are only confused by meaningless and contradictory election promises.²³ To Karl Thomas, Toller's hero, the result seems one final proof of the country's drift to madness and self-destruction.

Toller completes his survey of the contemporary world by showing how money reigns supreme ("Heute ist die einzige Fundierung Geld"²⁴) in a society full of technological wonders, where poverty and misery and frivolous extravagance exist side by side²⁵ and men trample on each other in the struggle for their own selfish interests.²⁶ It is a grotesque and depressing indictment of modern society, but Toller's hopes for any alternative apparently die with his hero: he offers no way out of the confusion. Thomas' suicide at the end of the play only completes a mood of frustration and despair. Even the assassination, his one act of revenge, ends in failure, providing a sadly apt symbol for the end of the Weimar Republic. As Grimm puts it: "über die Schulter einer zerstrittenen und orientierungslosen Linken zerstört die faschistische Rechte den Staat von Weimar".²⁷

In his all-encompassing panorama of contemporary society Toller condemns almost everything he sees, although his prime target remains the capitalist system itself, the underlying framework and cause of the disparity between rich and poor, manipulator and oppressed, superfluity and need which is illustrated throughout the play.

Toller was himself the product of a comfortable

bourgeois background, as he described in his autobiography Eine Jugend in Deutschland.²⁸ He also wrote once from prison:

Man nannte mich ein Bourgeoissöhnchen, ja, ich bin als Bourgeoissohn geboren. Da ich erkannte, daß wir eine Gesellschaftsordnung haben, die auf sozialer Ungerechtigkeit aufgebaut ist, schlug ich mich auf die Seite der Arbeiterschaft. 29

Toller's conversion to Marxism was brought about by his war experiences and by his personal observation of the world, and the Marxist enthusiasm is reflected in plays such as Die Wandlung (which is largely autobiographical), Masse Mensch, Die Maschinenstürmer and Hoppla, wir leben! He played a central role in the Munich Räterepublik of 1919 and during his subsequent imprisonment was regarded by many as a revolutionary martyr. Toller was a far from orthodox Marxist, however. His plays offended the Right but also the Left; while the Nazis labelled him a "Salonbolschewist", the KPD sneered at his "sentimentale Rührszenen" and called him a "Halbfaschist"³⁰. Piscator was uneasy about the anarchic emotionalism of Hoppla, wir leben!, which was very much at odds with his own relatively sober, functional and more orthodox Communist approach to theatre, and found it necessary to make many changes when he produced the play.³¹ But while never a party member and by all accounts possessing too much humanity to be a 'real' Communist³², Toller remained a convert to his own individual version of Marxism and continued to interpret the world from that standpoint.

Accordingly, the greatest villain in Hoppla, wir leben! is Kilman, the former revolutionary who has

betrayed his old Marxist ideals to become a successful politician, "versippt mit den Feinden von einst".³³ He is very much the kind of man pilloried by Tucholsky in his satires on successful SPD men such as "Sozialdemokratischer Parteitag" (1921):

Wir saßen einst im Zuchthaus und in Ketten,
wir opferten, um die Partei zu retten,
Geld, Freiheit, Stellung und Bequemlichkeit.
Wir waren die Gefahr der Eisenwerke,
Wir hatten Glut im Herzen - unsre Stärke
war unsre Sehnsucht, rein und erdenweit.
Uns haßten Kaiser, Landrat und die Richter:
Idee wird Macht - das fühlte das Gelichter...
Long long ago -
Das ist nun heute alles nicht mehr so.

Uns imponieren schrecklich die enormen
Zigarren, Autos und die Umgangsformen -
Man ist ja schließlich doch kein Bolschewist . . .
34

"An einen Bonzen" (1923) could also have been written for Kilman; it too describes a former revolutionary turned establishment figure:

Heute ist das alles vergangen.
Man kann nur durchs Vorzimmer zu dir gelangen.
Du rauchst nach Tisch die dicken Zigarren,
du lachst über Straßenhetzer und Narren.

Weißt nichts mehr von alten Kameraden,
wirst aber überall eingeladen.
Du zuckst die Achseln beim Hennessy
und vertrittst die Sozialdemokratie.
Du hast mit der Welt deinen Frieden gemacht.

Hörst du nicht manchmal in dunkler Nacht
eine leise Stimme, die mahndend spricht:
"Genosse, schämst du dich nicht?" 35

This kind of political backslider was obviously a common type: Toller's Kilman corresponds almost exactly with the targets of Tucholsky's satire.

In Hoppla, wir leben!, Innenminister Kilman is part of a clique of cynical and shrewd men in power who manipulate the social system to their own advantage.

Kilman, the banker, the Minister of War and Graf Lande all work by means of secret agreements and private influence to perpetuate their own power and the traditional values of Nation, Disziplin, Autorität and Ordnung. The Social-Democrat Weimar Republic is exposed as a sham, a democratic facade behind which the old order continues unchanged, and its leaders are hated by both extremes of the increasingly violent political confrontation. As Rühle remarks of Kilman's assassination:

Der Mann in der Regierung wird zur Zielscheibe von rechts und links. Das ist ein treffendes Bild. 36

Toller attacks not only the men in power; the people they exploit are also criticised for tacitly consenting to their oppression. Pickel, for example, is too much in awe of Kilman's position and is easily tricked into forgetting his complaint and feeling flattered by the Minister's hurried and insincere attentions.³⁷ Ignorance and foolishness are widespread: the Hausdiener gambles³⁸, the student is bemused by the outdated military ideals of his uncle³⁹, and a grotesque "Gruppe der geistigen Kopfarbeiter" rants about racial purity, Marx and lyric poetry while ignoring real social problems.⁴⁰

Karl Thomas acts as Toller's chief prosecutor in the depiction of this miserable chaos, but does not escape blame himself. Although Thomas in many ways resembles the author⁴¹, Toller contrasts him unfavourably with the others of the old revolutionary group who, without completely losing sight of their former idealism, work steadily towards a real if distant goal and do not weakly

succumb to confusion and despair as he does. In one version of the final scene Albert Kroll comments on Thomas' suicide with these words: "Das durfte er nicht tun. So stirbt kein Revolutionär."⁴² The hero who denounces so much evil and stupidity becomes himself a target for Toller's censure.

As in Trommeln in der Nacht, the author's techniques in this play revolve around a central character, a solitary individual returning after some years' absence to a hostile world which he can no longer understand. By following the story of one man's repeated confrontations with greed or opportunism or injustice, the audience is made aware of the problems of a whole society, and comes face to face with the author's "Zeitspiegel der Gegenwart". As Piscator commented: "Diese Idee gab die Möglichkeit zu einem sozialen und politischen Aufriß einer ganzen Epoche".⁴³

In Hoppla, wir leben!, the central character Karl Thomas also betrays the substantial Expressionist heritage of a play which seems at first to be a model example of Neue Sachlichkeit. Toller allows his main character to range through society from top to bottom so that he can describe, and criticise, every aspect of life: prison cell, minister's office, polling booth, Grand Hotel, police station and insane asylum all become the stages of a Stationendrama which is more a spiritual odyssey than a portrayal of the real world.⁴⁴ As in Expressionist drama, the central character's viewpoint dominates the play, which remains less a depiction of a historical situation

than the story of the individual, the lonely idealist who is finally destroyed by his confrontation with reality. Kändler describes Toller as a dramatist

in dessen Werken der objektiv reale Grundkonflikt der Epoche zwar ins Bild kommt und dramatische Konflikte auslöst, diese haben aber ihre Motive einzig in der Gesinnung des Individuums, das einem idealistischen Urbild vom Menschen anhängt und darum mit der vorgefundenen Wirklichkeit in allen Bereichen kollidiert. 45

Koebner makes a similar observation:

Die späteren idealistischen Helden dieses Autors kommen mit ihrer 'sachlich' egoistischen Zielen nachstrebenden Umwelt, mit ihren 'sachlich' sich mit den Gegebenheiten arrangierenden Mitmenschen nicht zurecht, lehnen sich auf, verzweifeln und gehen unter. 46

Rühle also notes that Thomas' suicide is typical of the kind of disappointment and despair experienced by Expressionist heroes who cannot cope with reality.⁴⁷ But the final scene is more than a literary Schlußeffekt; it is a key to Toller's own feelings. The life stories of Thomas and Toller are almost identical⁴⁸, and while the playwright seems intellectually convinced that patient hard work by faithful party members like Mutter Meller is the best course, emotionally he shares with Thomas a conviction that the world is hopelessly corrupt. Toller's own suicide in 1939 certainly suggests such a conviction.⁴⁹

One other Expressionist feature of Hoppla, wir leben! is its rather naive fascination with the new technology which becomes most apparent in the scene in which the telegraphist of the Grand Hotel demonstrates to Thomas the radio signals he is picking up from all over the world, including the heartbeat of an airborne

passenger in mid-Atlantic. As Ihering remarked: "Toller romantisiert das Mechanische. Ihm genügt nicht die Phantastik der Präzision, er muß auch hier noch "den Herzschlag belauschen"."⁵⁰

The main function of the scene in the radio station, however, is to widen the scope of the play's criticism by documenting confusion and struggle all over the world: the latest international news includes floods in America, jazz music in Cairo, share prices in New York, famine in Rumania, green wigs for the ladies of Berlin, trouble in China, India and Africa and the human heart-beat in a plane over the Atlantic. This strange mixture of the amazing and the frivolous, the serious and the trivial helps to animate Toller's vision of a world full of blatant inequalities and contradictions.

The film sequences have the same function: the Zwischenspiel before Act One, as well as symbolising the passing of the years 1919-1927 (and emphasising the significant differences in the world Thomas will face when he emerges from the asylum) also shows problems such as financial crisis, Fascism, military clashes and inflation in several different countries. These are obviously not just German phenomena: crisis is worldwide.

Toller's multiple set or Etagenbau for the Grand Hotel in Acts Three and Four is another technique used to highlight grotesque contradictions - "ein Bühnengerüst, das über- und nebeneinander verschiedenen Schauplätze enthielt, die soziologische Über- und Nebenordnungen andeuten sollten".⁵¹ It emphasises both the inequality and

the interdependence of the social classes: the rich and powerful dine up in the Separée while the waiter snatches a quick leftover meal down in the servant's room. In Act Four the same set allows for a number of simultaneous demonstrations of human stupidity and desperation. We are shown the banker frantically trying to save himself from ruin, the Hausdiener stabbing himself after gambling away his money and the telegraphist in despair destroying his radio set: individual fates add up to an impression of widespread catastrophe.

Toller's incorporation of such devices as multiple set and film sequences shows how much he had learned from the production techniques of Erwin Piscator. Hoppla, wir leben!⁵² was written very much under the director's influence; it was intended to be the opening production at the new "Piscatorbühne", and like Mehring's "Der Kaufmann von Berlin" two years later, was influenced from the start by the knowledge of who its producer would be.⁵³

Not all of Toller's dramatic devices are technical; among the more conventionally literary are a number of striking character contrasts with which he makes various points about the revolutionary struggle. The first emerges in the Kilman-Thomas confrontation, which becomes a clear exposition of der Fluch der Macht and its corrupting effect on a former revolutionary. Thomas' unaltered simple idealism (for which the opening scene in the prison cell has prepared us) reveals Kilman's urbane, elaborate justifications as the compromises of a shabby opportunist who seeks only power and success

for himself. But Thomas' own weakness is also demonstrated when he and Eva Berg are shown together in Scene One of Act Two; she is grimly determined to go on working but he dreams of escape, already despairing of his power to change things. As a further blow to Thomas, the children who appear in the same scene contrast the younger generation's brutal pragmatism ("Und ihr wart so dumm zu glauben, ihr könntet siegen?"⁵⁴) with his own lingering memories of revolutionary heroism and hope.

The character of Pickel is used to make some further points: Toller has him wandering in and out of a number of scenes as a kind of naive Everyman who misunderstands what he sees, an innocent abroad displaying, among other things, a touching faith in the Republic and the private citizen's rights and privileges in the new democracy. Pickel's arrest under suspicion of being involved in the assassination shows the ludicrous confusion of the law, and his final cry: "Woran soll man noch glauben?"⁵⁵ actually poses the central question of the play.

Belief in anything is rendered impossible as one aspect after another of chaos and corruption is exposed. Thomas/Toller's faith in the revolution seems pointless in the face of the 1918-19 defeat and the shabby compromises of the Social Democrats. Technology achieves meaningless wonders but cannot help mankind because mankind refuses to help itself.⁵⁶ Democracy is a sham and hypocrisy is universal: politicians talk peace and prepare war⁵⁷, Graf Lande unveils a monument to the man

whose murder he has just arranged.⁵⁸ Thomas' act of revolutionary revenge, the murder of Kilman, is pre-empted by a right-wing student; even the differences between political extremes are shown to be meaningless, and, in a further touch of grotesque irony, the wrong man is arrested. Professor Lüdín, the psychiatrist in charge of Thomas and the last man in whom he can possibly have any trust, sneers at his idealism and bursts into a tirade against all reformers in which the doctor is shown to be more dangerously insane than any of his patients.⁵⁹ Thomas ends in prison as he began, and in his last confused and fragmentary monologue the play reverts simply to an Expressionist cry of despair.⁶⁰ Because Toller's world is presented only through Thomas' very emotional perceptions, his suicide leaves the author's social criticism without hope or purpose: by focusing on one disturbed individual, "ein anarchisch sentimentaler Typus, der logischerweise zerbricht"⁶¹, the play's effect can only be negative and its influence limited.⁶²

As with most Piscator productions, first reactions to Hoppla, wir leben! were concerned with the director's style (which in this production included technical novelties and outspoken political comment, particularly in the form of documentary film) than with the play itself. It was certainly a success in terms of audience enthusiasm⁶³, although the more cynical of the critics were inclined to attribute this to the presence of Piscator's faithful supporters and sympathisers:

Ein vorsichtig zusammengesetztes Premieren-

publikum applaudiert, sobald Lenin eine Ansprache hält, sobald Sacco und Vanzetti erscheinen, sobald der Wiener Justizpalast erstürmt wird. 64

Der von vornherein zu erwartende stürmische Erfolg - ein dumpf entschlossener Beifall. 65

Toller's attempt to portray critically the whole of society was certainly recognised:

Tollers Absicht war, eine Art Zeitspiegel der Gegenwart zu schaffen - den einstigen Revolutionären von 1918, die satt und kompromißlerisch geworden sind, die Leviten zu lesen. 66

Toller versucht den Aufriß der Zeit. Er geht durch die Schichten. Er will die politische Struktur des gegenwärtigen Deutschland geben: von links nach rechts, vom Kommunismus bis zu den Völkischen. 67

But the critics found the play thin and poor⁶⁸, full of great ideas miserably executed, boring and absurd.⁶⁹ It was even described as "vier Stunden schlechtes Theater".⁷⁰

Ihering observed that Piscator's production had in fact added strength to a rather emotional text:

Erwin Piscator ist frei von dieser Romantik. Er weicht nicht aus. Er gibt dem "gemütlichen" Stil Tollers das stählerne Gerüst seines Szenenaufbaus. 71

Diebold similarly noted that Piscator had supplied a background to what was otherwise only the tragedy of an individual:

Das Stück ist als Individual-Tragödie des Thomas eine Bilderserie von geringen dialektischen Werten. Es hat Situationen, aber keine Atmosphäre. Toller gab nur Spezielles. Piscator machte das Allgemeine. 72

The attention which the play received in the critical press was certainly less due to Toller's text than to Piscator's production; it was an important step

in the series of propagandistic and technically innovative productions of plays such as Fahnen, Sturmflut, Rasputin, Schweik and Der Kaufmann von Berlin with which Piscator fascinated and scandalised Berlin between 1924 and 1929.

Paul Fechter, writing for the "Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung", took the premiere of Toller's play as an opportunity to consider political theatre in general, raising the familiar problem of how it was to be evaluated. As he explained: if a critic judged it artistically he was repudiated by the assertion that this was a political question; aesthetic considerations were irrelevant. If, on the other hand, he tried to judge it politically, it was assumed that his bourgeois background precluded his understanding. In an attempt to judge Toller's Hoppla, wir leben! fairly, to compare its actual achievements in comparison to Piscator's avowed political intentions, he was still forced to conclude that the play was poor, unconvincing and artistically undistinguished.⁷³ Ernst Hilborn of the "Frankfurter Zeitung" also felt the need to distinguish between true Dichtung and other manifestations of theatre, observing that "Tollers Drama ist in sich nicht Dichtung, sondern dramatisierte Chronik der Zeit".⁷⁴

The actual message of the play did not go unnoticed by right-wing critics, although Piscator, rather than Toller, was the target of their abuse. The "Hamburger Nachrichten" spoke of "Die wahnwitzige Hetze Piscators gegen alles, was dem Deutschen ehrwürdig und heilig

ist".⁷⁵ "Die Kreuzzeitung" wrote: "In jedem Wort, in jedem Bild überschlägt sich die bolschewistische Hetze dreimal. Alles was anderen heilig, wird mit glühendem Eifer durch den Dreck gezogen".⁷⁶

Although such writers seemed to fear the propagandistic force of Toller's social criticism, the play had no very startling impact on the society which it so bitterly criticised. Toller's various attacks on capitalists, politicians, bankers, aristocrats or the military contained little that had not already been expressed by cartoonists such as Grosz or satirists like Tucholsky. Many middle-class Berliners enjoyed a night out at the Piscatorbühne simply as a rather outré entertainment, and were certainly in no danger of being 'converted' or even seriously offended by what they saw; Piscator's political approach was well-known. For those members of the audience with existing left-wing sympathies Toller's play would have served as a pleasant reassurance, confirming the beliefs of a minority already at odds with the bourgeois Weltordnung. It is highly probable that the audience of Hoppla, wir leben! took from the theatre the same prejudices, complacency or enthusiasm as they had brought to it. Toller's play was an exhaustive and desperate indictment of contemporary society which that same society seemed able to digest without obvious difficulty.

FERDINAND BRUCKNER - DIE VERBRECHER

When Bruckner's play was first produced in Berlin in 1928 it contributed one more accusation to an already widespread attack on the legal system. As Herbert Ihering remarked: "Ferdinand Bruckners neues Stück "Die Verbrecher" kommt in eine günstige, durch Kriminalfälle und Prozesse aufgelöste Zeit".¹ The play's topicality was immediately apparent in an age when justice and injustice, trials and judgements, the harsh paragraphs of the legal code and their effects on the population had become common topics of discussion. A series of events had brought the whole system into question.

First there had been the notoriously biased judgements passed after the uprisings and political assassinations of 1918-1922, when it became clear that the power of the law was being used to crush left-wing activism and to condone and even encourage right-wing violence.² At the root of the problem lay the Social Democrats' disastrous leniency in 1918, when the old state apparatus was allowed to continue almost unchanged and thus burden the new Republic with an inbuilt reaction. The judges and prosecutors whose opinions and loyalties had been formed in the Wilhelminian era were totally out of sympathy with the liberal and democratic aims of the new state. At one stage the association of Supreme Court judges actually rebelled against a planned legislation of the Social Democrat government, basing their act on the assumption that

they, rather than the newly elected legislators, had the prior right to enact the law³; many of them obviously refused to accept the SPD government at all.

The gulf between this reactionary group and the aims of the Weimar Republic has been described by several observers:

Der alte deutsche Richter war noch in der Vorstellungswelt der Kaiserzeit befangen, die auch in seinem Verhalten während des Prozeßverfahrens und in seinem Urteil vielfach zum Ausdruck kam. ⁴

The surviving judges of the Empire were taken into service after the revolution; they were irremovable and, as their behaviour was to show, immovable as well: almost all of them came from the privileged orders; with close connections among aristocrats, officers, conservative politicians, they had little pity for accused Communists but suave forbearance for ex-officers.

.
Whenever the judges found it possible to twist the law on behalf of reaction, they twisted it. ⁵

This most obvious abuse of justice for political ends was exposed by numbers of contemporary authors.⁶ The following passage from Kurt Tucholsky shows him characteristically expressing an unpleasant truth which many guessed but few dared declare so openly; his satire Justitia schwofft! (1929) shows the allegorical figure of Justice shamelessly conniving with the Staatsanwalt and his reactionary prejudices.

Der Staatsanwalt: Streiker und Revoluzzer und Demokraten und Spartakisten und Unabhängige und Pennbrüder und Pazifisten und Schriftsteller und Kommunisten und all das Pack - wohin?

Die Justitia: Ins Kittchen, Luis!

Der Staatsanwalt: Und die Offiziere? Und die feinen Leute? Wohin?

Die Justitia: Raus aus die Anklagebank, Luis!

Der Staatsanwalt: Und wenn sie Republik spielen - was tun wir?

Die Justitia: Wir bleiben unserm Kaiser treu!

Der Staatsanwalt: Denn was haben wir?
 Die Justitia: Wir haben die Unabhängigkeit
 der Justiz!

* * *

Der Staatsanwalt: Und die Waage?
 Die Justitia: Hängt schief.
 Der Staatsanwalt: Und die Binde?
 Die Justitia: Hat Gucklöcher.
 Der Staatsanwalt: Und das Schwert?
 Die Justitia: Ist zweischneidig. Komm, Luis,
 gehn wir tanzen! 7

Tucholsky's attack was one of many which testified to the ill repute into which justice had fallen. The problem of political expediency versus legal objectivity was raised even more fiercely at this time by the execution in the United States of Sacco and Vanzetti; the case caused enormous controversy in Germany, where its relevance to the local situation was clearly recognised. As Ihering observed after seeing Mühsam's play about this particular case in 1929: "Die Politik wirft dem Moloch Justiz die Opfer vor".⁸ It was an opinion widely shared.

Political cases were not the only ones to bring justice into disrepute. The confusions of inflation and stabilisation in the early 1920s made possible thousands of false purchase suits in which legal trickery was employed to make extra profit; this "certainly contributed nothing to the Germans' respect for the law", as Eyck remarks.⁹ A series of rather spectacular miscarriages of justice later gave rise to more public debate: the most notorious involved Josef Jakubowski, a farm worker who was executed for murder and later discovered to be innocent. This case was also used as the basis of a play, Josef, by Eleonora Kalkowska (1929).

There were, however, more radical and complex

reasons for casting doubt on the entire legal system. Two factors, society's rapidly changing moral code and the hardships inflicted by economic disaster, brought the theoretical basis of the law into doubt as well as its faulty practice. Changes in sexual mores, for example, made some of the old laws seem grotesquely harsh, and the poverty caused by unemployment or inflation led some to suggest that social conditions, rather than individuals, should be blamed for crime. Rigid traditions in existing legal practice took no account of such changes and thus contributed to what Erwin Piscator called at the time "der wachsende Zwiespalt zwischen dem kodifizierten Gesetz und den realen Verhältnissen".¹⁰ Feuchtwanger also elaborated on the problem in his novel Erfolg:

In jener Epoche redete man überall auf dem Planeten von einer Vertrauenskrise der Justiz. Der Begriff der Gerechtigkeit war unsicher geworden, schäbig. Man wußte zuviel von der menschlichen Seele, um die alten Begriffe von Gut und Böse gelten zu lassen, zu wenig, um neue an ihre Stelle zu setzen. In früheren Zeiten hatten bei einer Exekution die Zuschauer, ja häufig der Gerichtete selber, Befriedigung verspürt; denn es war einer Rechtsordnung Genüge geschehen, an die sich alle innerlich gebunden fühlten: jetzt war die Gerechtkeitspflege von keinem lebendigem Gefühl mehr legitimiert, sie war zum bloßen Instrument der Macht und ihrer Bewahrung geworden, ihre Maßnahmen wirkten schwächlich, willkürlich. 11

This general questioning, searching and analysing of the whole subject of law and legal practice was reflected in Bruckner's Die Verbrecher and in the countless other contemporary plays which reflected what one observer termed the "Kriegszustand zwischen Volk und Justiz".¹² Hasenclever's Mord (1928), Alsberg and Hesse's Voruntersuchung (1930) and Toller's Feuer aus den Kesseln (1929)

and Die blinde Göttin (1932) portray individuals trapped in the mechanism of legal procedure. Toller's Hoppla, wir leben! (1927), Die Affäre Dreyfus by Rehfisch and Herzog (1929) and Brecht's Mahagonny (1929) all contain trial scenes in which injustice is seen to prevail. The Justizdebatte is further reflected in Rehfisch's Wer weint um Juckenack? (1925) and in Horváth's Glaube Liebe Hoffnung (1932). Erich Mühsam's Sacco und Vanzetti and Eleonora Kalkowska's Josef (both 1929) portrayed the notorious trials; Wolf's Zyankali and Credé's Paragraph 218 (both 1929) attacked a specific paragraph of the legal code; Wolfenstein's Die Nacht vor dem Beil (1927) campaigned against the death penalty. There were many more.¹³ Bruckner's play thus contributed only one protest among many, but did prove to be one of the central voices raised against the abuse of justice.

Bruckner's main target in Die Verbrecher is the law's inhumanity, the rigidity and lack of compassion with which it passes judgement on individual lives. Ernestine's insight - "Wir sind alle Verbrecher"¹⁴ - is central to his depiction of human nature and of the incompetent and unbending system which endeavours to regulate it. Bruckner reveals a cross-section of one house and the complicated private lives of all its inhabitants: every character portrayed is 'guilty' in one sense or another, but only as the result of material need or desperate love. Frau von Wieg sells her brother's jewellery to meet the demands of her children; Olga and Kummerer want to keep their child but are forced to promise

it to Ernestine; Alfred steals his firm's money in order to take Frau Berlessen to America; Ernestine is driven even to murder by her possessive love for Tunichtgut; Frank's homosexual love involves him in blackmail and then perjury; Carla's love for Ben Sim drives her to agree to an abortion and then sell herself to Josef to get the money. The story of emotional stress, hardship and resulting crime is endless: "alles, alles geht weiter."¹⁵ The world shown by Bruckner is already full of suffering, but justice steps in to complicate suffering still further by pronouncing cruel and inappropriate verdicts on matters it fails to understand.

As Thomas Koebner explains, the judges portrayed in plays such as Die Verbrecher assume that crime reflects moral weakness and evil intent, but:

Das Publikum erkennt dagegen, daß Armut und Abhängigkeit die Täter zwingen, daß Rechtssprechung und Rechtswirklichkeit das 'Naturrecht' der einzelnen Person auf Selbstverwirklichung verletzen. Die liberale Perspektive dieser Stücke sieht durch die Zustände und die öffentlich gültigen Normen vor allem die Würde des benachteiligten oder unterlegenen Individuums angetastet - etwa der hungernden Mutter, des schwangeren Mädchens, des arbeitslosen Mannes. 16

Bruckner's compassionate portrayal of people who are made criminal by force of circumstance stems from a vaguely humanitarian philosophy¹⁷ rather than a definite political commitment. A product of what Rühle terms the "liberales Bürgertum"¹⁸ (he was the son of an Austrian merchant), Bruckner developed into a bitterly pessimistic critic of Weimar society, analysing its crisis of cultural and moral values in the three plays Krankheit der Jugend

(1926), Die Verbrecher (1928) and Rassen (1933) without being able to suggest a solution. This failure to offer a positive alternative does in fact undermine the reformist message of his plays: by carefully cataloguing so many case histories of helpless misery, he risks imparting only a negative impression and horrifying the spectator instead of urging him to action. How are the rights of the starving mother, the pregnant girl or the unemployed worker to be wrested from such a world?

Koebner writes of Die Verbrecher:

Wo und wie dieses Wünschenswerte Recht des Einzelnen zu verwirklichen ist, kann die szenische Rekonstruktion der Wohnküchen, obskuren Arztzimmer oder kalten Dachstuben, die 'Fotografie' jenes Lebens im Dunkeln, allerdings nicht schildern. Der Abscheu des Zuschauers droht, je mehr seine Erfahrung die Spielwelt als lückenloses Abbild bestätigt, sich in Verzweiflung und Hilflosigkeit aufzulösen. Dies offenbart einen Liberalismus, der mit seiner Weisheit am Ende ist. 19

At the very end of the play, the character Kummerer tries to strike an optimistic note, saying "Ich werde arbeiten, Schritt für Schritt, und nicht verzweifeln. Diese drei Jahre werden einmal vorübergehen, alles, alles geht weiter."²⁰ After the bleak pessimism of the rest of the play, however, Bruckner's final attempt at hopefulness fails to convince. As Grimm has noted: "Daß Bruckner trotzdem mit einem Hoffnungsschimmer, einer Perspektive in die Zukunft schließt, empfindet man zunächst fast als Willkür."²¹ "Alles, alles geht weiter" is likely to inspire gloom rather than optimism in the spectator with its suggestion that the whole sad story will continue unchanged. Justice has intervened, savagely punished the

'innocent' (Tunichtgut, Olga), overlooked the guilty (Ernestine, Schimmelweis, Alfred) and failed to cope with the least of these human problems or even to comprehend them.

The most outstanding device used to achieve Bruckner's aims in Die Verbrecher is the multiple stage setting which shows a number of small, interrelated scenes at the same time - the Simultanbühne. This was by no means a new technique; Strindberg's Ghost Sonata had introduced the idea²², Toller employed it in the hotel scenes of Hoppla, wir leben!, and Piscator used it a number of times, notably for Rasputin and Der Kaufmann von Berlin. In Bruckner's play, however, it provides the essential framework of all three acts, being part of the play's structure rather than just a novel feature of its production.

The function of the multiple set in the first and third acts is twofold. On the one hand it shows the cross-section of a house (and, by implication, of society in general), stressing the interdependence of human actions, revealing how each is shaped by or influences the others²³ and showing how each individual's role links him to the larger network of relationships called society. Secondly, and more importantly for the critical message of the play, it generalises from individual tragedies to show a whole social system at fault. The entire house from top to bottom illustrates Bruckner's main contention: emotional stress and material hardship lead to 'crimes', actions which are simply "Kundgebungen des Lebenswillens

und schon deswegen positiv", as the young judge says²⁴, but which the law treats as moral outrages and judges accordingly.

In the second act, an overall view of six different rooms and four simultaneous trials provides a cross-section of the law at work, this time emphasising the universality of injustice - four arbitrary verdicts are passed after meaningless trials in which the real truth never comes to light. Bruckner exploits the rapid overlap of scenes made possible by the multiple set, linking them together with pointedly ironic repetitions. Olga's prosecutor, for example, finishes his demand for a severe sentence with the phrase: "Der Begriff Strafe würde jeden Sinn verlieren -"²⁵, which is immediately echoed in the other courtroom by Alfred's defence as the opening remark in a plea for clemency. The concept obviously has lost all meaning: it has become just a lawyer's phrase to be used for or against the accused at whim. Similarly, Tunichtgut's judge finishes one scene with the firm statement: "Der Tatbestand liegt klar vor Augen"²⁶ and Olga's judge opens the scene immediately following with the same words - but both are of course mistaken in what they claim to see so clearly. Bruckner's point is obvious: the law is blind. Because similar misunderstandings occur in each of the cases and are expressed in similar words, they imply that this lack of insight extends to every legal situation, that injustice is universal.

At the end of the second act the young judge

rounds off his criticism of the law with these words:

Hier schneidet sich der Mensch ins eigene
Fleisch und nennt das "Gesetz". Hier kastriert
sich das Volk bei lebendigem Leibe immer wieder
selbst "im Namen des Volkes". 27

The scene remains illuminated, and then one by one the four courtrooms appear as the four sentences are pronounced - each one mistaken, and each prefaced by the solemn pronouncement: "Im Namen des Volkes". At the close of the act all are seen together - a multiple indictment of the system and the foolishness of das Volk in whose name it is all done.

To make detailed points of criticism, Bruckner also falls back on the familiar device of having different characters voice his own opinions, and not always successfully: some of the situations appear rather contrived. The most important of these mouthpieces is the young judge: "Wenn es ein Naturgesetz ist, daß sogenannte vernichtende Handlungen begangen werden, warum bestrafen wir es dann als Verbrechen?"²⁸ - and also the defence lawyer: "Hier stehn wir vor der ewig verschlossenen Pforte: was ist Recht, wenn es nicht Menschlichkeit ist? Was ist das Wesen des Rechts?"²⁹ During the first scene of Act Two Ottfried also instructs Frank in some of the pertinent legal paragraphs, which he is conveniently able to recite by heart; the critic Monty Jacobs referred to this rather sarcastically as "die gute, indirekte Methode"³⁰, and also found Kummerer's reading aloud of chapters from his planned book on justice a little too obvious, remarking "Das ist Tendenzkunst von der überholten, von der unwirksamen Sorte".³¹

Kummerer's manuscript does, of course, contain some very important points:

Wir machen, als Außenstehende, einen Denkfehler, wir sehn in einem Gerichtsurteil immer noch eine öffentliche, moralische Wertung. Und die moralische Wertung wird dann für das Leben gültig, während sie doch aus einer ganz anderen Atmosphäre kommt: aus der Atmosphäre des Gerichts. Das ist eine Atmosphäre für sich, eine Welt, die ganz woanders liegt als das Leben, eine in sich gekapselte, seit Jahrhunderten erstarrte Welt. 32

Set out like this, however, Bruckner's ideas constitute prose rather than drama; the rather unimaginative device of a character simply reading aloud only makes the scene static and awkward. As soon as Kummerer reverts to dialogue with Ernestine his words become more natural ("Wer wie Olga gelitten hat, ist kein Verbrecher"³³) and thus more convincing.

Bruckner does have considerable skill with dialogue, as the various trial scenes of Act Two show. One of the most telling techniques which he employs to indicate the incompetence of the law in understanding and dealing with human problems is the contrast between the spontaneous language of the people in the witness box and the moralistic officialese of the judges and lawyers. Natural situations become grotesque when translated into the jargon of criminal law, human actions committed instinctively are subjected to cold scrutiny, and simple people are confronted by clever and articulate interrogators - "dann sprechen zwei Nationen in zwei Sprachen miteinander"³⁴, as Monty Jacobs observed. There can be no communication.

Olga: Ich habe nie Abschiebung gesagt.

Der Vorsitzende: Das Gericht lehnt es ab, sich Ihre infizierte Terminologie oder die Ihres Schwängerers zu eigen zu machen. Wir sprechen hier deutsche Fraktur. 35

Der Vorsitzende: Nach bisherigen Ermittlungen hatte sich das Mädchen vor Ihnen von keinem Manne benutzen lassen.

Kummerer (kaum mehr beherrscht): Herr Vorsitzender!

Der Vorsitzende: Zur Not läßt sich hieraus ein Milderungsgrund konstruieren. Der letzten Endes Schuldige sind Sie, der Sie das Mädchen der Schande in die Arme getrieben haben und schließlich dem Mord.

Kummerer: Zwischen uns stehen Welten. 36

Innocence is of little account in this atmosphere: what the law demands from its victims is humility, seriousness and respect. Any frank and lively self-expression, any divergence from the narrow code is in itself a fresh crime.

Tunichtgut: Sie wissen ganz genau, daß ich nicht der Mörder bin. Alles nur Komödie.

Verteidiger: Der Angeklagte ist in begreiflicher Erregung.

Tunichtgut: Ich lasse mir doch nicht von solchem frisierten Salat einen Mord einreden.

Der Vorsitzende: Das ist eine Beleidigung des Gerichts. 37

Olga: Ich halte das nicht länger aus.

Kummerer (sehr erregt): Herr Vorsitzender -

Der Vorsitzende (scharf): Wollen Sie mich gefälligst nicht unterbrechen.

Kummerer: Sie lassen einen ja nicht zu Worte kommen.

Der Vorsitzende: Wir sind nicht dazu da, Ihre alberne Lebensphilosophie entgegenzunehmen. 38

These contrasts in language and tone continually intensify Bruckner's vision of the irreconcilable gulf separating the people and the law. There can be no bridge between the two. Justice remains "eine Welt, die ganz

woanders liegt als das Leben"³⁹, as Kummerer says, and its attempts to judge the real world can only end in incompetence and cruelty.

Whether because of Bruckner's choice of highly topical subject matter or because of his moving portrayal of suffering, and the contemporary critics did suspect him of capitalising on a currently fashionable outcry against the law, Die Verbrecher was a great theatrical success. "Ein ähnlich starker Premierenerfolg ist kaum erinbar", wrote Kurt Pinthus, and described "die durch einige Pfiffe noch geförderte Einmütigkeit des beifallrasenden Publikums, die den Regisseur und etwa dreißig Darsteller vielmals dem Ruf an die Rampe folgen ließ".⁴⁰ Ihering assumed that Bruckner was attempting to please the sensation-seekers, people who enjoyed the sordid details of criminal cases, as well as the serious thinkers⁴¹, and found the play a mixture of two dramatic trends, the "sexualpathologisch" and the "politisch fordernd" - in other words, "Krankheit der Jugend plus Piscator-Stück".⁴² Monty Jacobs remarked: "Es scheint, als ob Bruckner, wie er alle Zimmer eines Hauses öffnet, auch in alle Behausungen der Tendenzkunst auf einmal einkehren will".⁴³ Pinthus assumed, like his colleagues, that the success of Die Verbrecher owed far more to its fashionable target of criticism than to any literary quality:

Es darf nicht verschwiegen werden, daß der unbekannte Autor, Bruckner⁴⁴, den riesigen Erfolg weniger seiner dichterischen Begabung dankt als der beispiellosen Mißachtung des Richterstandes und der heutigen Justizpraktik in allen Schichten des Volkes. 45

If this is so, then it was also true of a number of other successful socially critical plays, and not to their discredit. They reflected an already existing trend in public thinking and also played a useful role in agitating for reform. Kurt Pinthus, who took pains to distinguish between the play's literary quality and its effectiveness as stage propaganda, enthusiastically endorsed this function of Die Verbrecher:

Das Stück ist ein Lehrstück, ein Aufklärungsstück, ein Tendenzstück - jawohl! Und weil es für eine gute Sache von allgemeinsten Wichtigkeit eintritt und diesen Zweck erfüllt, dabei äußerst wirksam ist, immer spannend, immer erregend, ohne unter das für solche Zeitstücke zu fordernde Niveau zu sinken - deshalb ist es ein gutes Theaterstück. 46

Success in the theatre is, of course, necessary for effectively critical drama: large audiences and a notable success bring the theme of the play more directly into public attention. The fact that Die Verbrecher's success was actually felt to be a danger to the institution it attacked is proved by the banning in Munich of any but restricted private performances, "mit der Begründung, das Stück erschüttere das Vertrauen in die Rechtspflege".⁴⁷ To have such an effect had certainly been one of Bruckner's ambitions.

PETER MARTIN LAMPEL - REVOLTE IM ERZIEHUNGSHAUS

The difficulties faced by young people growing up in a confused and rapidly changing post-war society were described by a number of writers of the Weimar Republic. Lampel's play is one of many which reflected the problems of youth. Klaus Mann's Anja und Esther (1925) portrayed the psychological and sexual complications of life in a children's home; Sternheim's Die Schule von Uznach (1926) attacked the immorality of the 'modern girl'; Bruckner's Krankheit der Jugend (1926) and Heinrich Mann's Bibi, Jugend 1926 showed moral decay and despair; Christa Winsloe's Gestern und Heute (1930 - also filmed as Mädchen in Uniform) dealt with the psychological stresses abounding in a strict, almost militaristic girls' school. An important novel which also illustrated 'the problem of youth' was Ernst Gläser's Jahrgang 1902 (1928), which Martini has summarised as "der Roman der Jugend, ihrer Revolte gegen die lähmende Tradition, ihrer Heimatlosigkeit in einer schwankenden Zeit, ihres dumpfen Verlangens und Aufbegehrens".¹ Other novels with a similar theme were Wilhelm Speyer's Kampf der Tertia (1928) and W.E. Süskind's Jugend (1929). The problems of Fürsorgezöglinge, state wards like the children in Lampel's play who were cared for in institutions, were also much discussed.² The numerous literary forerunners of Revolte im Erziehungshaus which dated back as far as Wedekind's Frühlings Erwachen reflected a serious state of

affairs, but most of them took a morbidly psychological approach, supplying much sensational detail while failing to suggest sensible reform measures.

The real events which forced the whole issue of child welfare into the open were a series of revolts, beginning in 1927, which broke out in Fürsorgeanstalten like Berlinchen and Rastenberg. Lampel reported in 1928:

Fünf Anstalten sind innerhalb ganz kurzer Zeit geschlossen, im Lindenhof . . . hat man unterdessen längst nach dem Überfallkommando telefonieren gelernt. Rastenburg und Berlinchen sind Schauspiele leidenschaftlicher Revolten der Jungen geworden. Die bürgerliche Fürsorge bedarf einer umwälzenden und schleunigsten Veränderung. 3

Various unpleasant incidents had already created a public awareness of a serious problem; Lampel's comments increased it.

In 1928 Lampel worked at the Fürsorgeanstalt Struveshof near Berlin for seven weeks, and compiled his prose report Jungen in Not directly from the stories which the boys there told him. Their accounts made it clear that there was a serious discrepancy between the Reichsjugendwohlfahrtgesetz of 1922 and the miserable reality of life in the institutions for which it provided, and the unpleasant details which Lampel published soon made his report the subject of a fierce debate. When the "Gruppe junger Schauspieler" came to him enquiring about one of his plays, Lampel suggested the material of Jungen in Not instead. In less than a fortnight he turned his prose report into a play⁴, which was then performed in Berlin in December 1928. Revolte im Erziehungshaus was thus lifted directly from reality in a manner rare even

among Zeitstücke; Lampel undertook no artistic interpretation but left it as simple reportage, incorporating whole passages of dialogue compiled from the accounts of the boys he had known in Struveshof. And, as Rühle suggests, "weil sein Stück unmittelbar aus der Wirklichkeit abgeleitet war, wirkte es so stark auf sie zurück".⁵

Lampel's chief attack was upon the inhumane management of the boys' homes, which he held responsible for the various revolts and for other less apparent evils too. His play specifically indicts the men in charge; the directors are shown to be conservative older men with attitudes cramped by narrow and intolerant piety:

Hausvater: Es werden fast nur noch erblich Belastete oder Psychopathen eingeliefert.

Pfarrer: Nun?

Hausvater: Er sagte, dann gehört für die Leitung ein erfahrener Psychiater her.

Pfarrer: Da haben wir's ja. Mit anderen Worten: man will mich und den kirchlichen Einfluß ausschalten. Die Welt wird von Tag zu Tag gottloser. 6

The staff are lazy and self-interested:

Besucher: Sie sind Erzieher. Sagen Sie bitte: was wußten Sie für Vorschläge?

Erzieher (überrascht): Vorschläge?! Zu allererst: bessere Besoldung. 7

- often brutal:

Hausvater (nimmt einen Rohrstock aus dem Schrank): Jetzt werden wir Abrechnung halten über dein gottloses Maul.

Erwin: Denken Sie, ich hab' Angst?

Hausvater: Das werden wir sehen. Stelle den Tisch in die Mitte. (Da Erwin zögert, spöttisch) Ich will doch sehen, ob du Schneid hast? 8

They are determined to preserve a blissful ignorance about the more serious problems of the boys:

Hausvater: Ausgeschlossen - bei unseren modernen Erziehungsmethoden? 9

Pfarrer (gekränkt): Halte ich für gänzlich

ausgeschlossen.¹⁰

The higher officials are vaguely well-meaning but out of touch with the real situation. From top to bottom of the chain of authority and responsibility there is ignorance, intolerance, and a lack of any real contact with the main object of so much organisation, the boys themselves:

Fritz: Da quetschen sich die vollgefressenen Bäuche in die Sessel und hören sich reden und sind der Meinung, daß es wichtig ist, was sie miteinander verhandeln. Aber daß es lebendige Menschen sind, um die es geht, und daß ihr Schicksal auf dem Spiele steht, das kümmert die Herren einen Dreck. 10

Lampel's condemnation is specific; he does not stray beyond the bounds of his particular target in order to criticise society more widely, but attacks simply those abuses which he knew from personal experience. As Knellessen remarks:

Hier wurde nicht versucht, Hintergründe aufzureißen, sondern in direkter Aktion das Schlechte angeklagt und zwar so angeklagt, daß das Mitleid des Zuschauers mit den gepeinigten Knaben heftig erregt wurde. 11

There is little sign of any political allegiance in the play beyond the Hospitant's reported description of himself as a socialist¹² and a brief mention of the proletariat's right to educate its own children.¹³ Lampel's criticism lacks any clear political framework, as one critic noted:

Lampels Stück ist kein Parteistück; vielleicht will es dafür gelten oder läßt es sich dazu machen, aber dann kennt es sich selber nicht. Seine Tendenz ist: durch Aufdeckung von Inhumanität Humanität erzeugen. Sein Grundakkord ist: Mitleid. 14

Lampel was the son of a Silesian pastor; he had

been an officer during the war and later returned to study. Contact with the Jugendbewegung of the 1920s had given him a general interest in the problems of youth. The motivation behind his play was simply humane: the author saw himself as a "Träger der weißen Fahne der Liebe", as Fritz Engel remarked¹⁵, and not a propagandist for any political ideology. Lampel in fact refused to join the KPD when requested to do so by Piscator's group¹⁶, and defended his play against all "Bestrebungen, dieses Stück zur Parteipropaganda hervorzukehren".¹⁷

Man wollte schon keine jungen Menschen in Not mehr sehen, sondern lediglich ein effektvolles Parteitheater, und so machte ich mir sehr einflußreiche politische Kreise der Linken natürlich zu Feinden. 18

Lampel's own political sympathies can only be described by the conveniently vague term links-liberal; in fact, Rühle uses Lampel as an example of "die Hilflosigkeit der liberalen Autoren bei dem Versuch, selbst Vorschläge für die Verbesserung der kritisierenden Zustände zu machen", finding his insights good but his few suggestions for reform rather unconvincing.¹⁹ The members of the actors' collective which took the play on tour and made it such a success seem also to have felt the play's lack of a definite policy; they lent its social criticism a more definitely political slant by rounding off each performance with a short speech in front of the curtain explaining that only world revolution would solve the problems depicted in the play - whereupon the audience sang the "Internationale"²⁰. Like Horváth's Italienische Nacht, Revolte im Erziehungshaus was impatiently received by

those who saw the need for more overtly political agitation on stage and regarded plays with solely humane concerns as weak and uncommitted.

Lampel's play, although determinedly apolitical, is nevertheless a shrewdly calculated piece of persuasive writing aimed at giving force to the author's complaints. Its central technique is the introduction of an outsider as the main character²¹, a young man whose sympathy and idealism contrast strongly with the laziness, conservatism and cruelty of the other staff at the boys' home. His words express the author's own criticism; he is, in short, a mouthpiece through which the play's message can be conveyed to an audience. As a device for imparting an author's viewpoint, the technique of hero-critic is neither new nor original (Kaiser's Milliardärsohn and Toller's Karl Thomas are two other such figures in Weimar drama), but it does reflect the immediate reality which gave rise to the play: the idealistic young ex-officer is obviously intended to represent Lampel himself, and the simplicity and straightforwardness of the central device accords with the play's conception as reportage without artistic pretensions. Agitation for change remains its driving motivation, not literary quality; it is a typical product of "das Zeitalter des Stoffs und nicht der Form".²²

Another aspect of the play which increases its persuasiveness is the lively naturalism; the realistic words and actions of the boys and the culpable but human evasions of the staff give the play a ring of truth. The

audience is persuaded that what they see on stage could really happen, that this is the way things are. The carefully studied realism does more than add conviction to Lampel's criticism; it makes the characters into well-delineated, convincing individuals. Diebold praised Lampel's characterisation thus:

In einer Alltags-prosa läßt er neun Zöglinge reden; aber immerhin so reden, daß vier oder fünf von ihnen persönliche Figur gewinnen: der Diebische, der Gewalttätige, der kleine Vierzehnjährige, dem die Größeren nachts den Schlaf nicht lassen; dann der eigentliche Revolutionär, der schließlich aus ungeheurer Wut und Energie die Revolte auführt. 23

In contrast to the boys, each adult character reveals only the weakness and hypocrisy of that part of the system which he represents. The parson sees things only in terms of his religion and tries to stay aloof from all unpleasantness. The Hausvater has become brutal, hardened by a lifetime of coping with constant problems ("Mir sollte einer kommen, Herr Direktor. - Ich habe zwanzig Jahre Praxis."²⁴). The Erzieher is an unqualified ex-soldier only interested in retaining a secure job. Victoria, the Hausvater's daughter, feels herself as much a prisoner of the institution as the boys are, and to lessen her boredom provokes Kurt, Fritz and the Erzieher with sexual teasing. The official visitor is a hypocrite who poses some very pertinent questions²⁵ but is too easily persuaded to hurry for the midday train without having seen anything at all; he is a party man and his obligations in Berlin matter most to him.

Lampel widens the scope of his accusations to include other boys' homes, and other injustices not shown

in the play, by allowing the boys to tell of their experiences in different places as they sit talking to the Hospitant in the evening.²⁶ At this point the play follows most closely the straight reportage of Lampel's original prose report, but the natural way in which the stories are told makes them far from bald or declamatory; Lampel's skill with dialogue keeps the scene realistic and believable.

When mounting rebelliousness finally breaks out in open revolt, the boy Fritz takes the lead and becomes the playwright's new spokesman, voicing the general discontent and Lampel's own opinions:

Wir haben kein Gewissen, solange die Anstalt keins hat. 27

Mitleid? Wer hat denn mit uns Mitleid? 28

Wir brauchen uns jetzt nicht zu fürchten vor dem Gefängnis, wir wechseln ja doch bloß die Wohnung. 29

When the revolt is defeated, however, the role of accuser and spokesman reverts once again to the Hospitant, who voices his intention of making the whole affair public: "Das werktätige Volk soll diese Sache in die Hand nehmen".³⁰ The final appeal is thus directed to the audience; the matter has now been taken to the public, and it is up to the public to act.

Lampel's faith in the power of drama to convince and motivate the onlooker is obvious - and the play's immediate effect on its audiences was, in fact, remarkable. Revolte im Erziehungshaus was enthusiastically received, but more importantly, people stayed afterwards to debate the issues raised. As Rühle has noted:

Die Bühne als Tribunal, Eingreifen der Szene in die Tageswirklichkeit: was die Anhänger des 'Zeittheaters' propagierten, ereignete sich mit dieser Aufführung. 31

The critics agreed that the play was hardly great literature, but were all extremely impressed by its theatrical impact:

Die Kunst ist klein. Die Tatsachen sprechen groß. 32

Lampels "Revolte im Erziehungshaus" ist keine Dichtung im höheren, künstlerischen Sinne. Aber sie stellt szenische Vorgänge aus den Erziehungsanstalten mit solcher Geschlossenheit und Wucht, mit solcher Überzeugungskraft und Ehrlichkeit dar, daß die Wirkung aufrührender und tiefer war als die der "glanzvollsten" Theaterabende. 33

Ihering particularly approved of the play's fairness, of Lampel's refusal to falsify and exaggerate, of his portrayal of believable human characters:

Deshalb springt sein Stück über die Rampe. Deshalb warf es gestern die Zuschauer um. Ein Tendenzstück ohne Phrasen. Gestern dröhnte das Haus . . . von einem Beifall, der die Range erschütterte. 34

Fritz Engel was similarly impressed:

Wie groß die Macht der Bühne sein kann, hypnotisierend, das logische Denkvermögen einschläfernd, wahrer als die Wahrheit. . . . Von der Bühne her, aus dem Munde Lampels, aus seinem Gefühl, auch aus Mund und Gefühl der Darsteller kam Kraft, kam Wucht, kam Glut. Man war angepackt, geschüttelt, aufgerissen. 35

But to Lampel, theatrical success mattered far less than the play's power to change those circumstances which it criticised. First came public awareness and debate: "Nachher wurde der Zuschauerraum zum Redeklub"³⁶ - and the subject under discussion was something more important than the merits of the performance; according to Engel, the audience debated the facts, took sides, and attempted

to judge the accuracy of Lampel's report. Diebold noted the same result:

Kein blöder Applaus der Clique. Kein dummes
Gezische der 'literarisch' Andersdenkenden.
Sondern (wie bei Bruckners 'Verbrechern')
Beteiligtsein an der Sache! 37

The fierce debates which later took place in the Berlin Stadtparlament and in the Reichstag were one direct effect of Lampel's action in forcing the problem of Jugendfürsorge into public attention. Several reforms were actually made, for example a decree issued in June 1929 by the Minister of Welfare which prohibited corporal punishment and gave children under care the right of appeal about their treatment.³⁸ But such changes in the law must be seen in the context of a long-standing and more general reform movement: tempting as it is to discover in Revolte im Erziehungshaus a socially critical play which actually achieved its goal of changing the conditions which it portrayed, Lampel's play was only part of a general trend which began with new psychological insights into adolescence³⁹ and attempts to replace the authoritarian administration of some reformatories with a more democratic system⁴⁰ and which subsequently widened to include various socialist organisations set up with the purpose of reforming child welfare.⁴¹ Lampel certainly provided the whole movement with a point of reference, a well-publicised and appealing piece of dramatic propaganda which must have brought the subject to the attention of a large number of people (the play was performed 500 times in Germany and also abroad⁴²), but the final influence of the play alone is

difficult to gauge. Its apparent success certainly inspired many other writers to turn their agitation for social change into drama⁴³, but even Lampel himself was unable to repeat this first success, although other plays of his were produced in the following years: Verschwörer, 1929 (about young men involved in secret nationalist groups), Giftgas über Berlin, 1929 (which denounced the secret manufacture of poison gas), Putsch, 1929, Pennäler, 1929, Wir sind Kameraden, 1930, Vaterland, 1931, and Alarm im Arbeitslager, 1932. The critical Zeitstück which aimed to reform the social evils of its own age certainly found in Lampel's Revolte an inspiring example, but this seems to have been the peak; no later play by Lampel or any other author was able to achieve so much in obvious and direct influence on the conditions which it criticised.

WALTER MEHRING - DER KAUFMANN VON BERLIN

Mehring's play is set in the corrupt, chaotic Berlin of 1923 and attempts to reflect something of the atmosphere of the inflationary period, a crucial episode in the history of the Weimar Republic. The play shows firstly the financial confusion which enables profiteers to make fast money while others starve, and secondly the military adventurers who are waiting for their chance to overthrow the tentative new democracy and oust the Marxists and Jews whom they imagine to have betrayed the nation. Racketeers, conspirators, opportunists and fanatics abound - it is a wide-ranging and unsparing catalogue of greed and stupidity in which there are no heroes at all, no redeeming virtues and no ideology which looks to possible reform.

The inflation which began to plague Germany after the war and which reached its height in 1923 remained to most people a mysterious and inexplicable phenomenon quite outside their control: perhaps even more than the war or the failed revolution, it undermined the individual's belief that he had any kind of control over his own destiny. This profound loss of confidence had far-reaching effects on political life and naturally found its expression in other areas as well. Thöming has commented, for example, on the feeling of "Unsicherheit und Bodenlosigkeit" apparent in the literature of the time.¹ Because its causes were so anonymous and incomprehensible, many people grasped at the idea that the

inflation resulted from a conspiracy - a deliberate manoeuvre by the financial bosses to make themselves rich and to cancel out Germany's debts. Piscator, for example, called it "eines der grandiosesten Täuschungsmanöver, das die Weltgeschichte kennt"², but was unable to explain in his production of Mehring's play or elsewhere who was in control of it or how it had happened. Although many people made fortunes out of the mark's loss in value, they themselves did not understand the reasons behind it. As Heinrich Mann observed:

Wirtschaftliche Vorgänge werden, die beamteten Vollzieher ganz beiseite, meistens nicht einmal von den wirklichen Urhebern begriffen: sie sprechen sich von der Verantwortung frei und tragen in Geduld, daß die gegebene Konjunktur sie reicher macht als je geahnt. Man sagt wohl, die deutsche Inflation, 1916 leise begonnen, Ende 1923 abgebrochen wie durch Zauber, als die Mark gleich einer Billion in Papier war, dieses Märchen von einer Inflation sei absichtsvoll erfunden worden, um die inneren Schulden loszuwerden. Wer hat die Inflation erfunden, wenn der Reichsbankpräsident sie für ein Märchen hielt, obwohl es ihm ans Leben ging? 3

In fact, the war and the long-term loans used to finance it had set the whole process in motion, and the abolition of the gold standard in 1914 had cut the link between paper currency and its real value.⁴ Inflation had already begun by the end of the war but become noticeable only gradually, and at first its benefits for the manipulators of high finance obscured the disadvantages, as Eyck reports: "The market became fantastically active, and whoever was not too stupid about it found himself able to supplement his shrinking income amply with speculation's profits".⁵ But by January 1923, when French and Belgian troops occupied the Ruhr (the moment

chosen by Mehring for Kaftan's arrival in Berlin), the situation was obviously very serious, with the exchange rate at 10,000 marks for one American dollar.⁶ By the end of July, the figure was more than one million:

In other words, the German currency had ceased to exist. The government requested and the Reichstag passed new taxes, but there were no longer any realistic budgets for the Reich, for the lands, or for communities. The amount of currency in circulation had risen to 44 trillion marks. All commercial relationships had lapsed into utter confusion; all the savings accumulated over decades by an industrious, thrifty folk had disappeared. Worst hit was the once solid middle class, formerly regarded as the backbone of a healthy state. These people had absolutely no way to fight their fate. 7

Even the Reichsbank was helpless in the face of such disaster - in fact, it made the situation much worse by continuing to print vast amounts of new money in the mistaken belief that this was necessary.⁸ When the Rentenmark was finally introduced in November 1923, the currency was stabilised at the almost meaningless rate of one Rentenmark for a trillion paper marks. This meant the ruin of many fortunes built on speculation - and "it signified the utter expropriation of those who still held paper marks", as Eyck notes.⁹ Piscator, looking back on the whole episode, described it thus:

Eins der schmachvollsten Kapitel jüngster deutscher Geschichte, . . . eine Epoche, in der ein 'anonymes Schicksal' das deutsche Volk fast um die Hälfte seines Vermögens brachte, den gesamten Mittelstand enteignete, die Arbeiterschaft unter den Lebensstandard des chinesischen Kulis herabdrückte und Hunderttausende zu einem Dasein zwischen Leben und Sterben verurteilte. 10

This era gave rise to a new human type: the Schieber or Inflationsgewinnler, the profiteer who grew rich on cleverly managed financial deals while others

faced ruin or starvation. Many of them were Jews - the Grenadierstraße in Berlin became the centre for a multitude of new immigrants from the East come to make their fortunes in the capital, just as Mehring describes¹¹ - but some of the wealthiest businessmen who thrived on inflation were certainly not Jews. One of these was Hugo Stinnes - "der eilfertig angeschwollene Inflationskaufmann Stinnes", in the words of Heinrich Mann.¹² It is clear that he could have been the model of Mehring's Kaftan, particularly in his failure to understand the processes that were making him rich and in his plea that the money he made was not for himself. Mann describes him thus:

Eine Forderung der Stunde kam er nach, wenn er ohne Geld zusammenkaufte, was für eine Wucht bedruckten Papiers zu haben war. Auch er hat nichts vorausgesehen und bewies es, als er zusammen mit der Inflation noch schneller ab- als anschwoh. Bescheiden nannte er sich "Kaufmann", ließ drucken, daß seine Mahlzeit aus einem Ei bestehe, und die Frage, wofür er so furchtbar verdiene, beantwortete er schlicht: "Für meine Kinder." 13

In the scramble for wealth there was no distinction between Jews and non-Jews, as Mehring's play shows. A strongly anti-Semitic feeling nevertheless made itself felt in public resentment of the rich speculators, as Eyck points out:

For most Germans were firmly convinced that the Jews knew some secret way to remain untouched by the economic misery that gripped the rest. At the very most, it is only true that a small number of Jewish financiers managed to keep their fortunes and to live in a style that evoked bitter criticism. The overwhelming majority of middle-class Jews - doctors, lawyers, merchants and white-collar workers - were being robbed of their life's work by the inflation, along with their gentile colleagues. 14

Hatred, however, had little to do with reason or reality, and political opportunists found it easy to turn the widespread resentment to their own advantage. The inflationary period brought the National Socialists their largest number of recruits to date. Feuchtwanger's novel Erfolg reflects the atmosphere of the time:

Viele, während sie auf den Einmarsch des Führers warteten, erzählten von ähnlicher Unbill. Alle schimpften sie, daß der Wert der Mark von Tag zu Tag so narrisch sank, alle machten sie die Juden und die Regierung dafür verantwortlich, alle erhofften sie sich Befreiung durch den Kutzner. 15

1923 was a year of military uprisings as well as financial chaos: the occupation of the Ruhr led first to passive resistance and then active sabotage by patriotic extremists such as Leo Schlageter¹⁶, whose execution by the French turned him into a national hero.¹⁷ The Küstrin Putsch of September¹⁸ and Hitler's Munich Putsch in November¹⁹ revealed not for the first time the threat from militarist and nationalist conspirators; the Küstrin Putsch in particular made public the existence of the 'Black Army' and the illegal but widespread recruitment and re-armament of discontented military men. Like the attempted coup described in Der Kaufmann von Berlin, this one was led by a retired Prussian officer and armed from one of the many secret weapons stores left over from the war. Eyck describes the background to the attempted coup thus:

The men who enlisted in the Black Army were the same sort who had made up the Free Corps: there were many who hastened to the call out of an honest sense of patriotism, for they thought their country needed them; but there were others of freebooter mind and freebooter morals,

and the Kapp Putsch had shown what they could do. . . .

When they so radically cut the German Army's size, the victorious Allies did not foresee that many discharged officers, deprived of their chosen careers and unable to bear inactivity, would seek in politics some outlet for their pent-up energies. The fact that, as a rule, the former officers knew nothing of their new professions disturbed neither them nor those they served. All that was required was enough "national sentiment" (nationale Gesinnung). 20

This is the world which Mehring portrays in Der Kaufmann von Berlin, full of military fanatics and opportunists, a confused battleground of both political and financial speculation, where the rich and the ruthless achieve short-lived success but the poor, as ever, stand resignedly in the bread queues. Mehring called his play "ein historisches Schauspiel aus der deutschen Inflation"²¹, and his aim was to reproduce this historical era with all of its tragicomic confusions and abuses; to reform or convert was hardly his intent. He was a writer without allegiance to any one party. Der Kaufmann von Berlin reveals no obvious political bias, attacking as it does all levels of society, but the author's particular contempt for the militarists and nationalists enables us to guess that his sympathies were certainly not with the Right.

Mehring began his career as 'Walt Merin', one of the Berlin Dadaists²², and developed into a notable writer of songs for political cabaret. Der Kaufmann von Berlin certainly displays the skills of the cabarettist in its "Oratorium von Krieg, Frieden und Inflation", which ends the play, and in the other songs, as well as in Mehring's mastery of the Berlin dialects. A multitude

of short, lively scenes and the very realistically observed snatches of dialogue testify to the influence of cabaret rather than of formal drama, and the play's social criticism involves satirical attacks on the money-makers, the militarists and the ignorant man in the street without going on to stress the need for social change, as a play by the politically more idealistic Toller or Wolf would have done.

The central character in Mehring's play is both the villain and the victim of a grotesque society, exploiter and exploited in one. Kaftan comes to Berlin with the single-minded purpose of making money and, although his ruthlessness and aggression soon make him a powerful man, he preserves a rather touching naïveté about the real nature of his business. The cut-throat amorality of the men who first help him and then desert him, always with just their own profit in mind, is beyond even his shrewdness and cynicism. Kaftan is certainly as unprincipled as the rest when it comes to getting value for his money, or grasping at an opportunity to make more, but his precarious position as a newly-arrived outsider and a Jew, his fondness for his daughter Jessi and his final pathetic ruin render him a rather sympathetic character in the end. And while Kaftan and his fellow profiteers Eisenberg, Silberstein and Cohn are certainly a target of Mehring's criticism, they are shown to be less culpable than the viciously competitive system which they have merely learned to exploit. Müller, the other central character, is a more obvious villain: he is

greedier and more ruthless than his protégé Kaftan and his speculations involve political as well as financial dealings. It is he who encourages and finances the planned right-wing putsch by the General and his cronies of the Geheimklub. In Piscator's words:

Skrupelloser, demagogischer, gerissener konnte niemand gezeichnet sein als der "christliche" Rechtsanwalt Müller, der nationale Phrase, Reichsbankdiskont und private Liebschaften der Reihe nach einsetzt, um zu Schluß des Stückes über ein offensichtliches Betrugsmanöver in die Sphären der Schwerindustrie aufzusteigen. 23

Diehard militarists who have learned nothing from the lost war and still talk of Vaterland, Frederick the Great and the Prussian spirit are pilloried by Mehring in his scenes of Potsdam society: the General plays at war alone in his room²⁴, the wives organise their Nationales Frauenbund²⁵, and the old men in the Bund der Acht swear by "Allvater Wotan" and rant against the imagined Jewish world conspiracy²⁶. An irresponsible press aids the whole process by printing rumours of the putsch which far outstrip its reality - "Und wenn't nich wahr is, denn wirds ebent solange jedruckt, bis et wahr is!"²⁷ The people themselves, the masses who starve while Kaftan and his like grow rich or who are threatened by the General's march on Berlin, provide a colourful background to the events of the play but are unsympathetically treated by the playwright. Mehring certainly portrays the miseries of the patient waiters in the breadline²⁸ or the grief of the parents of the little girl killed at Jüterborg²⁹ with apparent sympathy, but his real aim in these scenes is to point out the power of

Kaftan's paper dollars and the callous opportunism of the journalists. The masses in general are portrayed as stupid or corrupt, foolish dupes of political demagogy or the clichés of the press. Their own words reveal it:

Tja, meine Herrn, die deutsche Kohle, meine Herrn, schmachtet in Feindeshand! 30

Was uns fehlt, ist der Mann der Tat! Der Mann, der mit eisernen Besen sozusagen durchgreift... 31

Diese Krummneesen! Drängeln sich hier ein... mit Kind und Kejel ... schachern und wuchern ... hetzen die Proleten auf ... saugen uns aus ... 32

There is hardly an attitude expressed which is any more than an emotional formula, borrowed ready-made from another source: cant phrases are substituted for thought.

In the face of increasing poverty, the ordinary people are also just as ruthless and corrupt as the very rich:

Nackttänze! Nackttänze!
Komm Süßer! Komm! Komm mit!
Kleiner, schenkst Du mir'n Dollar! Ich bin auch sehr lieb zu Dir! 33

Flabben jefällig? Prima Ausweispapiere?
Schulze, Wilhelm, garantiert im Felde jefallen! 34

The blind beggar on the street corner is also a fake.³⁵ Jews and gentiles, rich and poor, military officers and proletariat alike are nothing more or less than unscrupulous opportunists, grasping at whichever economic advantage or political credo seems to offer salvation at the time.

Like Trommeln in der Nacht, Hoppla, wir leben! or Revolte im Erziehungshaus, Mehring's play employs the useful device of presenting an outsider or stranger as the central character, a figure whose confrontations with

different aspects of contemporary reality provide the basis of the author's social criticism. Kaftan is of course horrified by much of what he finds in Berlin³⁶ but nevertheless becomes part of its life, suppressing any faint scruples, like those around him, with thoughts of the profits to be made. He is a contradictory figure, "ein Bejaher des Kapitalismus, der am Kapitalismus zugrunde geht", as Piscator noted.³⁷ Kaftan in fact exemplifies the hero as victim of his age, a character like Hinkemann, Karl Thomas or Professor Mamlock who is destroyed by the times he lives in as much as by any personal failing, a figure representative of a whole era and its afflictions.

As the adventurer from the East arrives in Berlin and starts to look around him, Mehring makes the most of his opportunity to lead a fascinating parade of contemporary types across the stage; nationalists and anti-Semites³⁸, money-changers³⁹, whores⁴⁰, beggars⁴¹, starving workers⁴² and stock exchange speculators⁴³ confront the new arrival and thus the audience. In a number of short scenes Mehring seems to portray an entire cross-section of society - it is the Prinzip des Panoptikums which Toller used in Hoppla, wir leben! and Bruckner in Die Verbrecher, the trick of seeming to show every aspect of life at once, giving an impression of totality. As with Toller and Bruckner, this totality is an appalling catalogue of abuses: there is no virtue or hope to be seen anywhere in the corrupt and chaotic world described by the playwright.

Mehring makes use of some clever dramatic juxtapositions to reveal much that is grotesque and contradictory, as for example in this exchange between Müller and Kaftan:

Kaftan: Wos far a Schuß? Wen hat man derschossen?
 Müller: Nichts von Belang! Ein kleines Mädchen
 ...Es war nichts weiter! Also Ihr Fräulein Tochter trifft mit dem Abendzug ein? 44

The daughter from Jüterborg is dismissed as an insignificant accident, a slight hitch in a questionable but profitable business, but the daughter from Davos is about to be welcomed and cherished with the profits of that business. Mehring's criticism remains subtle; he refrains from more obvious moralising and lets the situations speak for themselves.

In Potsdam, the General's war games are suddenly interrupted by the appearance of a prospective lodger; in the middle of an imagined battlefield the new tenant inspects the wallpaper and checks the window while the military hero bickers with his wife about their debts. The General's fantasies are unaffected by the intrusion of reality, however; his dreams of defeating the French or of marching on Berlin at the head of his troops still flourish.

Perhaps the most telling juxtaposition of characters and situations occurs at the climax of the play, during the scene in which the cream of Berlin society disports itself in Kaftan's house and at Kaftan's expense - the despised Ostjude is able to command them all by the irresistible power of his money.

-Alles da! Ein richtiger Minister...ein Herr von der Reichsbank! ...Offiziere vom Reichswehr und die Presse! ...Der Chefredakteur is der links! Neben dem litauischen Gesandten. Und tout Berlin! 45

Overheard snatches of conversation reveal the shallow and frivolous concerns of the guests:

-Man munkelt was von Generalstreik?

Ein schwarm junger Damen: -Ach bitte, bitte, lieber Herr Minister! Keine Revolution! Wir haben am Sonntag unser Turnier! 46

Then the festivities are interrupted by two decisive incidents: first, the attempted putsch which after some shooting ends as a pogrom in the Grenadierstraße ("Weiter nichts? Da können wir ja weitertanzen"⁴⁷) and second, the sudden announcement of stabilisation, which at a stroke topples all of Kaftan's speculations. As the whispered rumour "Kaftan pleite! Kaftan geplatzt!" runs round the room, the guests suddenly melt away; the previously ingratiating throng abandons Kaftan and his daughter without a second thought. The scene provides an exemplary demonstration of the ruthlessness which underlies society in general and the inflationary era in particular.

Like Horváth, Mehring reveals an ability to condemn his characters out of their own mouths, to reveal in the jargon they speak the poverty of minds formed apparently only of journalistic clichés or political slogans. Most of the popular fallacies of the Weimar age are paraded through Mehring's play: anti-Semitism, hatred of the French, the Dolchstoßlegende, fear of the Left, and a tendency to throw the blame for all prevail-

ing troubles on the treachery of some other social group are all revealed in his lively and realistic dialogue sequences⁴⁸, mixed with other foolish prattle about films, plays, fashions, love affairs or outrageous behaviour. Mehring excels at such dialogue, which represents one of his most effective devices for expressing the spirit of the times. It contributed to what Rühle calls the "stärkste Darstellung Berlins im deutschen Drama".

-Wenn ich die Regierung wäre, ich würde jenen, der nich Order pariert, jlatt an die Wand stellen lassen! 49

Die Inflation hat der liebe Jott nich vorausgesehen in seiner Jüte. 50

Frieiha, wie ick noch uff Kriegsblinda in de Tauntzien stand, da hatt' ick meine fimf, sechs Mark im Handumdrehen. Heit kennste dreist beide Beene abjeschossen haben und die Wacht am Rhein singen, damit is keen Blumentopp zu jewinn'. 51

-Was is denn los?...Is was los?
 -Ick weeß nich! Die hat woll was jeklaut!
 -Was? Gestohlen auf offner Straße? Und so was unterstützt man!
 -Das sind die Früchte des Bolschewismus!
 -Siehst Du, was ich Dir immer sage: Nur kein Mitleid! Nur kein falsches Mitleid! 52

That Mehring was familiar with the directing style of Erwin Piscator is apparent in his use of such devices as the Simultanszene, the crowding together of effects to give the play the widest possible scope, as for example in Kaftan's first encounter with Berlin or in the simultaneous party and putsch. The introductory Vorspiel seems also to have been conceived as a film to set the scene, and songs and symbolic interludes are used to comment on the action in a manner which Piscator often

employed. The story of the individual Kaftan is opened out to encompass the whole contemporary world in songs like the "Lied der drei Straßenfeger" or the "Oratorium von Krieg, Frieden und Inflation". In one surreal episode the seven Elders of Zion appear and are scattered by an apparition of Frederick the Great as an embodiment of the nationalist and anti-Semitic fantasies of the Bund der Acht. Even before it was certain that Piscator would actually produce Der Kaufmann von Berlin, Mehring had his style in mind, rather like a librettist with one eye on his composer, as Bernhard Diebold observed.⁵³

It is necessary to mention in addition the techniques which Piscator himself used in his production on 1929, because contemporary reaction to the play was concerned with those techniques as much as with the play itself. He took over and amplified Mehring's attempts to set the central characters against their historical background - "die Figuren 'in ihre Zeit' zu stellen, daß heißt in ihre soziale Bedingungen und in ihre Kraftfelder".⁵⁴ He strived for generalisation, the "Einbettung eines Einzelschicksals in seine Zeitzusammenhang"⁵⁵, by using documented reality or Wirklichkeitszitate such as photographs and film with scenes and statistics from the world of 1923. On a gauze wall of the stage he projected slides showing newspaper headlines or pictures of Frederick the Great, Rathenau and Erzberger; there was film footage showing the streets of Berlin from trams and on foot, together with sound effects of street noises, and conveyor belts which carried masses of pedestrians to

and fro. As Diebold remarked - "Nie kam 'die Straße' jemals derart aufs Theater".⁵⁶

Piscator's main stage area was conceived in three levels or Stufen: the upper level grotesk for the upper classes and the military, the second tragi-grotesk for Kaftan and the middle class, and the lower level tragisch for the proletariat. Each scene took place on the appropriate level with the actors moving from one to the other on lifts. The role of the working classes, in Mehring's text a fairly slight one, was increased with the aid of songs and film sequences.⁵⁷ In spite of cuts in the play, which made it end with Kaftan's arrest⁵⁸, the whole performance ran for four hours: a massive production full of technical effects, a showpiece for all of Piscator's techniques as well as for the playwright's detailed observations of contemporary society.

Der Kaufmann von Berlin was, unfortunately, a dismal failure in the theatre, but whether because of Mehring's wordiness or Piscator's massive stage apparatus it is hard to say. Bernhard Diebold certainly complained of the length of the text, saying: "Es wird noch zu viel geredet, statt daß es von Schlagwort zu Schlagwort knallt. . . . Piscator hat sich von Mehrings Breite verführen lassen."⁵⁹ The technical effects seem to have caused the most trouble, however: there were several problems and breakdowns on opening night, causing the critic Paul Fechter to comment rather harshly: "Was der Autor von seinem Stoff noch nicht gemordert hatte, brachte der Apparat um".⁶⁰ Even Piscator was forced to

ask himself: "Woran lag es, daß der Apparat, statt das Stück zu verflüssigen, die Szenen mit der ganzen Wucht einer eisernen Maschinerie zermalmte?"⁶¹ He blamed the rushed rehearsals and the awkward, still rather primitive technology which he was forced to employ.

The scandal which the play provoked, however, had little to do with these considerations: Der Kaufmann von Berlin managed to outrage the Left, the Right and those in the middle ground for various reasons.⁶² Communist critics complained that the play was merely negative and not at all revolutionary, while the middle-class liberals were extremely offended by what they saw as its caricature of the Jews. But the attacks from the Right were the most furious: they accused Mehring of dishonouring the war dead in his song of the street sweepers, who clear away first masses of useless paper money, a helmet and then a corpse with the refrain "Dreck! Weg damit!" As Diebold reported:

Man erwartete natürlich wie immer den großen Piscator-Skandal. Es gab nur einen kleinen. Proteste piffen gelegentlich in den Raum; von Klatschern gleich beantwortet. Nur als die Lumpensammler der Inflation - nach Haufen wertloser Papier-Billionen und einem zwecklos gewordenen Stahlhelm - auch noch die Leiche des Weltkriegssoldaten auf ihren Karren luden, gab es spontanen, lauten Widerspruch. Das war zu kraß. (Ach Gott, nach Brechts 'Happy end' gibt es nichts Krasses mehr.)⁶³

The nationalist "Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger" violently attacked the play; the "Deutsche Zeitung" wrote: "Werft alle Piscatoren auf den Kehrichthaufen"; "Der Tag" claimed that "Piscator bedeutet so viel wie Hetze zum Bürgerkrieg".⁶⁴

Mehring repudiated these rather hysterical onslaughts by pointing out that the song simply expressed the "Nichtigkeit aller Wesen nach dem Tode".⁶⁵ Critics like Diebold anticipated objections from other quarters by pointing out that accusations of anti-Semitism would also be unfair:

Mehring sucht offenbar die strengste Objektivität. Ein seltener Vogel. Er erspart keiner Rasse die Satire. Semiten und Antisemiten dürfen sich gleicherweise bedanken. Mehring hat Mut - mehr Mut als die üblichen Bourgeoisietöter unserer Dichtung.

Der 'Kaufmann von Berlin' - er könnte ebensogut wie Kaftan Müller heißen. Hüten wir uns vor beiden . . . Georg Kaiser würde dieses Schauspiel 'Zweimal Shylock' nennen. 66

Such reasonable arguments would not, however, have meant much to the anti-Jewish members of the audience. For them it would have sufficed that the main character was a scheming, ugly Galician Jew straight out of their own fantasies, a proof that their prejudices were well-founded. It is unfortunate that Mehring's portrayal of Kaftan probably fostered rather than discouraged the same anti-Semitism which he satirised in his play.⁶⁷

The controversy over Piscator's production brought to a head many of the current debates about art and politics, and about Tendenzdrama in general. Several critics seized on Der Kaufmann von Berlin as an example of a worthless play masquerading as important drama because of its topical and political content. Felix Hollaender attacked the "trübselige Aufführung" in these words:

Von welcher jämmerlichen Beschaffenheit der Begriff Zeit- und Tendenzstück ist, wenn dahinter keine

dichterische Gestaltungskraft steht, konnten wir in diesen Tagen wieder erleben. . . . Ich pfeife auf das neue, mir hundertmal annoncierte Zeitdrama, wenn ich nicht den Atem der Dichtung spüre. Mit Gesinnung allein lasse ich mich in der Kunst nicht abspeisen. 68

Hollaender concluded that all the film tricks and mechanical wonders were worthless as long as the dramatist put only "Puppen statt Menschen"⁶⁹ on the stage.

Paul Fechter's criticism was even more cruel:

Nur ein Mensch ohne wirklichen Bühneninstinkt vermag befangen von der Hypnose des Politischen und primitiv Technischen einen derartigen szenischen Aufbau an solch eine wirkungslose Masse von dünnster Literatur zu vergeuden und damit die finanzielle Substanz seines Unternehmens selbst zu untergraben. 70

Fechter further complained that the play was

weder Theater noch politische Demonstration, sondern lediglich triste blöde Langeweile von unüberwindlichen Zähigkeit. 71

Fechter's remark about the financial situation was unfortunately true: after Der Kaufmann von Berlin Piscator was forced to give up the Theater am Nollendorfplatz, his second "Piscator-Bühne", and restrict himself to guest appearances at other theatres in the provinces (Paragraph 218, 1929) or Berlin (Des Kaisers Kulis, 1930), and Mehring's play was forgotten. With the exception of Bernhard Diebold, who commended the playwright's courage and the significant issues raised in the "Oratorium" and elsewhere, and who noted Mehring's creation of a new style of "dichtende Journalistik"⁷², most critics declined to discover any literary value in the play, and condemned author and producer together.

Piscator was far from disheartened by all this,

and obviously felt rather exhilarated by the controversy, reporting that "Die Auswirkung der Aufführung war stärker und widerspruchsvoller, ja man könnte fast sagen leidenschaftlicher denn je".⁷³ For him the experiment was everything, the attempt to capture on stage such a vast and complex subject as the inflation worthwhile whatever the outcome.

So merkwürdig es klingen mag: unsere Aufgabe beschränkt sich nicht auf die einzelne Inszenierung. Es ist fast gleichgültig, wie die einzelne Aufführung wirkt, an welchen Schwächen sie leidet, was sie für Fehler enthält, ob sie ein Irrtum ist. Unser Ziel ist die Aufhebung des bürgerlichen Theaters, weltanschaulich, dramaturgisch, räumlich, technisch. Wir kämpfen um die Neugestaltung des Theaters . . . 74

Whatever its success in the theatre, Mehring's conception and Piscator's realisation of Der Kaufmann von Berlin was certainly an embodiment of many things that Weimar Tendenzdrama strove to be: honest, realistic, critical, and above all closely in touch with its own time.

ÖDÖN VON HORVÁTH - ITALIENISCHE NACHT

Horváth's play is set in a small town, the action involves a simple sequence of events and relatively few people, but it nevertheless reflects the dilemma of a whole nation. The problems depicted in the play are those of Germany in the early 1930s: political polarisation, violent factional fighting and a stubborn refusal on the part of the complacent majority to recognise the danger threatening their imperfect but at least relatively democratic Republic. Horváth's "Süddeutsche Kleinstadt" serves as a microcosm; in its tensions and conflicts can be glimpsed the increasing instability of the larger society.

In Germany at this time political subtleties had been superseded: political alignment was crudely 'left' or 'right', and significant differences within the ranks were left unresolved in the face of violent physical confrontation, in which fists and boots counted for more than reason and argument. As Eyck reports:

Sanguinary street fights were deliberately provoked by both National Socialists and Communists, and it is neither possible nor useful to try to determine which party was more frequently the aggressor in these disputes. 1

He quotes as an example of such brutal political rowdiness Goebbels' description of a brawl in the Prussian Landtag in 1932:

In three minutes we were the masters of the hall . . . Our group sang the Horst Wessel song. Eight badly wounded from various political parties. This was a warning

example. It is the only possible way you can create respect. The assembly hall was one great shambles. We stood as victors in the ruins. 2

In that one month in 1932 street fights left ninety-nine dead and 1125 wounded; the situation was close to civil war.³

The accuracy of Italienische Nacht in portraying the reality of its time was rather ironically proved shortly before the play was first produced in 1931 when Horváth himself became involved in a Saalschlacht between SPD and NSDAP in Murnau (the model for his Kleinstadt) very similar to the confrontation described in the play.⁴

Other contemporary trends reflected in Italienische Nacht include a militaristic enthusiasm for banners, songs, uniforms and impressive parades which became increasingly apparent as the various fascist organisations grew in strength, and the "schwarz-weiß-rot/schwarz-rot-gold" flag controversy⁵, both symptoms of growing political strife. Josef Lehninger, the landlord of the local inn, expresses the bewilderment and resentment of the apolitical 'little man' caught between the two extremes:

Und wenn ich jetzt den schwarzweißroten Fetzen nicht raussteck, verderben mir sechzig Portionen Schweinsbraten, das war doch ein furchtbarer Blödsinn, die Reichsfarben zu ändern! 6

He later bemoans further evidence of fanaticism:

Ich denk jetzt an meinen Abort. Siehst, früher da waren nur so erotische Sprüche an der Wand dringestanden, hernach im Krieg lauter patriotische und jetzt lauter politische - glaubs mir: solange nicht wieder erotisch werden, solange wird das deutsche Volk nicht wieder gesunden. 7

This sentiment certainly recalls Zuckmayer's espousal of

earthy common sense in Der fröhliche Weinberg, but Horváth wrote in 1930 - not 1925 - and such cheerful simplicity was rather out of date.

In the dangerously polarized world which Italienische Nacht depicts, one of the most serious problems is the weakness and lethargy of the Republikanischer Schutzverband.⁸ Horváth was, like many other contemporary observers, concerned at the Republic's lack of strong supporters in the crisis which was obviously coming. Not only were there too many Vernunftrepublikaner, those who disliked the Nazis but failed to defend the Republic with great conviction or enthusiasm⁹, but the SPD itself, until 1932 by far the most popular party in Germany¹⁰ and thus the only serious democratic challenge to the extreme Right, had been rendered suspect by much compromise and failure, lost its original revolutionary impulse and seemed to be coasting passively towards destruction.

Horváth's play in fact depicts nothing less than the decline and fall of the Weimar Republic, but its outcome is deceptively harmless. A threatening situation is turned back into comedy again when the Stadtrat, saved by the young Republicans from complete humiliation at the hands of the Fascists, recovers his blustering complacency as if nothing has happened:

Solange es einen republikanischen Schutzverband gibt, und solange ich hier die Ehre habe, Vorsitzender der hiesigen Ortsgruppe zu sein, solange kann die Republik ruhig schlafen! 11

An ironic "Gute Nacht!" from Martin is the only answer to this.

In spite of its serious subject matter, Italienische Nacht seems content to remain a mildly humorous Volksstück. But although it does appear on the surface to be merely a lighthearted satire of provincial politics, Horváth is nevertheless expressing a serious concern with the outcome of the Fascist-Republican confrontation. His main target is not politics itself but the politicians and their hollow phrases and dangerous rhetoric:

Es geht nicht gegen die Politik, aber gegen die Masse der Politisierenden, gegen die vor allem in Deutschland sichtbare Versumpfung, den Gebrauch politischer Schlagworte. 12

In Italienische Nacht both Republicans (e.g. the Stadt-rat) and Fascists (e.g. Der Faschist in Scene Four) are revealed as deluded speechmakers, foolish and pompous Phrasendrescher whose grandiose words mask a miserable reality. But Horváth unmasks more than their words: he himself used the phrase "Demaskierung des Bewußtseins".¹³ Going deeper, he attacks the patterns of thought, the inadequate personalities and the false perceptions of the world which lie behind such jargon. Human beings are shown to be miserable frauds who adopt half-understood rhetoric from those more educated or skilful with words than themselves, rhetoric which is at best misleading but which in the political field becomes dangerous.

Horváth's second target is the smug complacency which enables the older Republicans to enjoy their "Italienische Nacht" at the local inn while the Fascists are holding night exercises with guns out in the woods. The Republicans refuse to take the danger seriously; they ignore or belittle the threat and continue to pursue

their small pleasures, unable to realise that their sheltered world is about to be engulfed. Horváth's criticism of such blindness revolves around his portrayal of the Stadtrat as an embodiment of the SPD in its middle age, the party's malaise reflected in one man. The former youthful idealist has become a petty tyrant, full of empty phrases and completely alienated from the Marxist enthusiasm of earlier days.¹⁴ When challenged by the younger men he still lays claim to a knowledge of Marx - "Ich hab das kommunistische Manifest bereits auswendig hersagen können, da seid ihr noch in den Windeln gelegen, ihr Flegel!"¹⁵ - but it is clear that his kind of Marxism is now only words: as Hein observes, "das Zitat, das bloße Zitieren-Können "ersetzt" die politische Überzeugung und tritt an die Stelle der unbequemen Aktion".¹⁶ The Stadtrat and his cronies have become the kind of men whom Tucholsky described in "Sozialdemokratischer Parteitag" as early as 1921.

Once: Wir hatten Glut im Herzen - unsre Stärke
war unsre Sehnsucht, rein und erdenweit.
Uns haßten Kaiser, Landrat und die Richter.
Idee wird Macht - das fühlte das Gelichter

But now: Skatbrüder sind wir, die den Marx gelesen.
Wir sind noch nie so weit entfernt gewesen,
Von jener Bahn, die uns geführt Lasall'! 17

The comic and yet sharply critical portrayal of characters such as these makes Italienische Nacht an excellent satire of political life. Horváth denied, however, that satire was his primary aim. Speaking of his work in general, he once wrote:

Es ist vollständig falsch, daß ich Satyre geben will. Ich denke nicht daran. Ich will die Leute so zeigen, wie sie sind - das heißt: wie ich sie sehe. Ich sehe sie nicht satyrisch. Ich bin

auch kein Komiker. . . . Für mich ist die Komik etwas Tragisches. Ich schreibe Tragödien, die nur durch ihre "Menschlichkeit" komisch sind. 18

If we take this statement as the key to an interpretation of Italienische Nacht, it becomes clear that Horváth's approach to social criticism through drama was very different from that of playwrights such as Bruckner, Lampel, Toller or Wolf. Their 'tragedies' of contemporary life were more heavily tendentious, with grim points to make and no leisure to laugh at human foibles; Horváth, however, insisted on taking a more human view. His characters, rather than his opinions, occupy centre stage in Italienische Nacht - "In diesem Stück wird vom Autor nicht Politik, sondern Psychologie getrieben", as Gregor notes in his Schauspielführer.¹⁹

Horváth came, like the other critical playwrights of his time, from a middle-class family²⁰; he underwent no Communist 'conversion' like several of his contemporaries and never aligned himself with a particular political party. He remained an independent thinker, an individual observer of the world who insisted on telling the truth as he saw it, without reducing its human complexities to political clichés. As Rühle remarks, his plays seem markedly different from the others of his time:

Dem sich parteilich bindenden Zeitstück, dem politischen Stück, setzt er seine neue Form des beobachtenden und analysierenden Zeitstücks gegenüber. 21

The much more explicitly tendentious plays of the time, however, had accustomed the public to extreme opinions and clearly stated positions in the theatre; any play

which criticised the contemporary world less radically seemed at first glance to be uncommitted. Horváth tried to protest against this assumption:

Ich wehre mich gegen den Vorwurf, ich würde mich nach keiner Seite hin entscheiden. Ein solcher Vorwurf ist das Produkt einer anmaßenden oberflächlichen Einstellung. . . . Kunst ist ein Ventil für die Phantasie. Die "schlechten" Eigenschaften. Die asozialen Triebe. Künstler immer auf Seite des Mörders: Und nun will ich Ihnen das Geheimnis verraten: ich bin nicht auf Seiten des Mörders, nein keineswegs! 22

Horváth certainly did see himself as committed, but realised that his primary dedication to artistic concerns might give rise to misunderstandings - as indeed it did.

Zuckmayer wrote to Horváth in 1931 praising the "innere Unabhängigkeit" of Italienische Nacht and warning him thus:

Vielfach wird man Ihr Stück mißverstehen - wird versuchen, es politisch einzuschachteln, abzugrenzen, dem Schlagwordhorizont bequemer und billiger zu machen. Kümmern Sie sich nicht darum, lassen Sie sich nicht beirren! Ihr Weg ist richtig, er führt zu neuer Menschengestaltung, zu neuer Lebensbedeutung, zum neuen deutschen Drama. Ich beglückwünsche Sie dazu! 23

Perhaps Zuckmayer hoped that this new kind of drama would bypass the documentary style which prevailed at the time (1929: Wolf's Zyankali, Mehring's Kaufmann and Credé's Paragraph 218; 1930: Plievier's Des Kaisers Kulis and Wolf's Die Matrosen von Cattaro; 1931: Wolf's Tai Yang erwacht) for the more human, less propagandistic view of the world found in his own Der Hauptmann von Köpenick (1931), which, like Italienische Nacht, makes an essentially serious point by means of simple comedy. If this is so, his hope was certainly never fulfilled. By 1931 even the Tendenzstücke were fighting a losing battle for

survival, and the "new German drama" proclaimed in the years following took a very different direction indeed.

Horváth's main target in Italienische Nacht is "Politisieren", as he himself explained: the use of political rhetoric which serves only to enhance the self-importance of the speaker and to bemuse his audience. Horváth's critical technique is to make of this abuse of language a weapon used against the speaker. His characters condemn themselves out of their own mouths. Inflated jargon reveals spiritual and intellectual paucity in the characters who use it - but also gives rise to much of the play's comedy, because "was sie armselig macht, macht sie auch komisch".²⁴ When the Stadtrat assures everyone: "An unserem unerschütterlichen Friedenswillen werden alle Bayonette der internationalen Reaktion zerschellen!"²⁵ or the Faschist fantasises to Anna: "Wir haben hier eine Mission zu erfüllen! Der eine fühlt den Trieb stärker in sich, der andere schwächer. In uns brennt er wie Opferfeuer! Wir gehen bis zum letzten durch!"²⁶, they are using not meaningful language but a collection of second-hand formulae and empty phrases which mislead rather than communicate. People who speak like this are suffering the consequences of what one critic terms "der unkritischen Übernahme vorgefertigten, fremden Sprachmaterials, die die eigene Bewußtwerdung ebenso wie die zwischenmenschliche Verständigung verhindert."²⁷ Such people are deluding both themselves and others, and to expose this delusion is one of Horváth's main aims. He once wrote of his own tech-

niques:

. . . letzten Endes ist ja das Wesen der Synthese aus Ernst und Ironie die Demaskierung des Bewußtseins. Sie erinnern sich vielleicht an einen Satz in meiner Italienischen Nacht, der da lautet: "Sie sehen sich alle so fad gleich aus und werden gern so eingebildet selbstsicher." Das ist mein Dialog. 28

Horváth employs two basic techniques to unmask both jargon and personality. The speaker is either interrupted by the shrewd interjections of another character (a method which Hein calls "Außenkritik" - "wenn die Leerformeln eines Sprechers durch den Dialogpartner entlarvt werden"²⁹), or he is placed in such a position by a turn of the plot that the gulf between words and reality is ironically revealed. An example of the first technique can be observed when the Stadtrat is interrupted by Martin:

Stadtrat: Wir nehmen keine Kanonen in die Hand,
aber wer die demokratische Republik
ernstlich zu bedrohen wagt, der wird
zurückgeschlagen!

Martin: Mit was denn? 30

Rhetorical bluster is punctuated by the bitter reminder that the Republicans are, in fact, unarmed in contrast to the Fascists and their much-discussed Kleinkaliber.

Adele questions Betz's ready use of a cliché thus:

Betz: . . . die Ideale, für die sich Ihr Herr
Gemahl aufopfert?

Adele: Opfert er sich denn auf?

Betz: Tag und Nacht.

Adele: Sie müssen ja wissen.

Betz: Es ist natürlich alles relativ.

(Pause) 31

The words reveal their emptiness as soon as they are taken at face value as an assertion of fact³²; one small sarcastic doubt makes them crumble.

When Karl is half-heartedly attempting to convert Leni to an interest in politics, she sees through his posturing and demolishes his fantasies with a similarly brisk retort:

Karl: Ich bin nämlich nicht so verlangt, daß ich eine Blume einfach nur so abbrech, am Wegrand. Ich muß auch menschlich einen Kontakt haben - und das geht bei mir über die Politik.

Leni: Geh, das glaubens doch selber nicht! 33

At other times the situation itself exposes the speaker's rhetoric: Kranz strings together some absurd homilies on the subject of the Ammetsbergers' domestic bliss:

Trautes Heim, Glück allein. Häuslicher Herd ist Goldes wert. Die Grundlage des Staates ist die Familie. 34

However, the unpleasant petty tyranny which prevails in that household is soon made clear. The Faschist tries to subdue Anna with his preformulated idea of a woman's place: "Das Weib gehört an dem heimischen Herd, es hat dem kämpfenden Manne lediglich Hilfsstellung zu gewähren".³⁵ But it is clear that she is the cleverer of the two, leading him on in order to spy for the Republicans. The situation itself reveals the absurdity of the words. In a similar way the Republicans congratulate themselves on having graciously overlooked the landlord's treacherous dealings with the Nazis, but as it is clear that they were simply forced to put up with his decision, their exaggerated claims to "innere Größe" and even "eine propagandistische Tat"³⁶ reveal only a talent for self-delusion. The Stadtrat expresses his decision to end the "Italienische Nacht" in pompous language:

Der Mensch ist ein schwaches Rohr im Winde, in bezug auf das Schicksal, ob er nun Monarchist ist oder Republikaner. Es gibt nun mal Augenblicke im Leben, wo sich auch der Kühnste der Stimme der Vernunft beugen muß, und zwar gegen sein Gefühl! 37

However, it is only too apparent that he is simply frightened and wants to get home before the trouble starts. Here cowardly actions give the lie to brave words, just as the Faschist's solemn warning to Anna: "Hüte dich, Blondmädchel, hüte dich! Du weißt, vor wem -"³⁸ is made ludicrous when he suddenly falls upon her himself, raving of "Zimbern und Teutonen". Similarly, Karl's brooding over the troubled state of the world comes to a sudden end with Leni's offer of 4,000 marks and a small business. Pretentious rhetoric is constantly deflated to expose the human weakness beneath.

Just as Horváth plays with language to make his message clear, so he gives a subtle twist to an established dramatic form. One of the most interesting techniques in Italienische Nacht is his use of the Volksstück tradition. To label such a play as a Volksstück lulls audiences into expecting a simple comedy of country manners, but they are then confronted with unpleasant political realities. It is an original use of an existing literary tradition which Volker Klotz refers to as "produktives Epigonentum".³⁹ This is what Horváth delivers to his unsuspecting audience:

kein Volksstück, das sie gern hätten, aber eins, das sie brauchen. Keins, das den harten Asphalt der Weimarer Republik schollenwärts verläßt, sondern eins, das sich darauf einrichtet! 40

Italienische Nacht does begin by portraying the

"heile Welt", the "treuherzig-rustikal" atmosphere of a small Bavarian town, but the apparently cosy idyll is destroyed, not only by the Fascist threat, but by the gradual revelation of its own hollowness and worthlessness. The simple and good-hearted country people are just as deluded and insincere as the petit-bourgeoisie of the cities, and prejudice and foolishness are as common in the country as in the city. Horváth delights in stripping away facades; he exposes a reality behind the Volksstück image, as well as behind the pious clichés of his characters, which is far from comfortable. As Klotz explains:

Auf der Bühne wie erst recht im Bewußtsein des Publikums baut sich auf, was zunächst als traut und wertvoll erachtet wird, um dann, durchleuchtet und erkannt, zu zerbrechen. Am Ende stolpert das Publikum, unsanft geschubst von dieser Dramaturgie, über die Trümmer einmal geliebter oder arglos gutgeheißener Wirklichkeiten, Werte und Haltungen. Sie sind in seinem Bewußtsein zertrümmert worden, sofern ihm schrittweise die eigene Verlogenheit, Dummheit, Blutrünst aufgestossen sind. 41

At the end of Italienische Nacht the dilemma of a nation is acted out in miniature: Horváth shows the helplessness of foolish optimists and blusterers when confronted by the organised brutality which they had refused to acknowledge. Noble speeches are rendered inadequate in the face of uniforms and guns. On this particular occasion the Republicans are rescued by Martin and his following of younger men - and the Stadtrat's rapid recovery of face and renewed assertion that the Republic can rest peacefully while men like himself hold office gives an ironic twist to the end of the play, a comic touch which at the same time expresses a serious

warning. Horváth's characters seem to have learned nothing from the events of the play; essentially they are the same at the end as at the beginning. The attentive spectator, however, is the one who should learn, and the story acted out for his benefit is intended to convey to him an insight and understanding which is denied to the characters themselves.⁴²

Because Horváth chose to express the serious content of Italienische Nacht in comic terms, the play was, as Zuckmayer had predicted, largely misunderstood. It became a great success in Berlin and Vienna - as a comedy. Oskar Sima, who played the Stadtrat in both productions, described it as "eine lustige Persiflage".⁴³ Other commentators referred to a "brillante Komödie"⁴⁴ - "den besten Zeitspaß dieser Läufe"⁴⁵ - and a "Bierulk, in dem sowohl Republikaner . . . wie die als Störenfriede auftretenden Hakenkreuzleute sehr lustig verspottet werden."⁴⁶

Its serious warning note did not go unnoticed - "bitterer Ernst steht hinter dem Stück"⁴⁷ - but most audiences seem to have regarded it as entertainment: far from warning or disturbing, the comedy merely amused. "Sie beruhigte die Menschen wegen der ironischen Beurteilung der politischen Lage" - so said a contemporary observer who had invited some Nazi acquaintances (one of them Arnolt Bronnen) to the premiere to see how they would react. The result: "Die beiden Nazis ließen sich nicht provozieren. Sie applaudierten wie die anderen Zuschauer der erfolgreichen Uraufführung".⁴⁸ As with Zuckmayer's

Der Hauptmann von Köpenick, those who saw Italienische Nacht relished the comic content and ignored the serious commentary on contemporary society, "weil sie die Wahrheit nur als Witz nehmen wollten".⁴⁹ As Krischke points out, the Berlin producer had actually strived to emphasise the play's critical message, but its audience failed to acknowledge the bitter reality it presented, possibly because they preferred not to.⁵⁰

The fate of Horváth's play perhaps illustrates the truth of a point that Friedrich Wolf made at about the same time: he asserted that playwrights need to work with crude hammer blows rather than with delicacy in the face of political extremism.⁵¹ Subtlety was misleading - and comedy even more so. It was doubtless a relief for an audience to be able to laugh and pretend that the looming political crisis was simply a matter of absurd little men on both sides making pompous speeches; but by 1931 there was not much time left in which to laugh.

GUSTAV VON WANGENHEIM - DIE MAUSEFALLE

In 1931 economic crisis and political extremism were the two major factors threatening the stability of the Weimar Republic, and both were visibly worsening. Following "a landslide unique in German parliamentary history"¹, the National Socialists had increased their Reichstag representation from twelve to 107 in the elections of September 1930, and the delegation was already doing its best to disrupt orderly proceedings², a foreboding of worse to come. The unexpected Nazi success resulted largely from the prevailing economic crisis. World-wide economic depression was making people desperate for a radical solution to their misery. Hugenberg's "nationalist opposition" had paved the way for a drift to the Right in past years³, and the same tendency became more and more marked as unemployment increased. A percentage of the working class sought their salvation as always in the Communist Party, but the large middle classes turned increasingly to Nazism.⁴ War, inflation and now unemployment had thoroughly demoralised the petit-bourgeoisie, and its members began to abandon the Social Democrats and the centre parties for the more promising 'rebirth' and reform offered by the NSDAP. As Eschenburg explains:

Hitler wurde der Prophet der durch die Inflation
Enterbten und der durch die Arbeitslosigkeit
Entrechteten. 5

Feuchtwanger makes a similar observation in his novel

Erfolg:

Im Grunde habe sich der Kleinbürger immer nach einer Autorität gesehnt, nach jemandem, dem er andächtig gehorchen dürfe. Im Herzen sei er niemals Demokrat gewesen. Jetzt gehe mit dem Wert seines Geldes seine demokratische Tünche vollends dahin. In der steigenden Not repräsentiere der Kutzner⁶ den letzten Fels und Hort, des Kleinbürgers Idol: den Helden, den strahlenden Führer, dem man aufs großartige Wort wollüstig gehorcht. 7

One particular section of the lower middle class very badly affected by economic hardship and thus particularly vulnerable to the propaganda of the NSDAP was the large group of employees or Angestellten, whose plight has been highlighted in studies such as R. Künl's Formen bürgerlicher Herrschaft: Liberalismus-Faschismus⁸, and Siegfried Kracauer's Die Angestellten.⁹ It was to the humble Kleinbürger that Gustav von Wangenheim decided to address his play. This is how Wangenheim's group summarised the problem at the time:

Der Kleinbürger, durch die Krise aufgeschreckt aus seiner Ruhe, in voller Verzweiflung darüber, daß seine Gartenlaubenwelt ihm zusammenbrach, kirre gemacht durch jahrelange Arbeitslosigkeit - fünfhunderttausend erwerbslose Angestellte gab es bereits! -, dieser Kleinbürger schielte schon nicht mehr nur mit einem Auge, sondern mit beiden Augen nach einem "Retter". Politisiert und revolutioniert durch die eigene katastrophale ökonomische Situation, war er bereit, gegen diesen Staat, der ihm nicht half, aktiv zu werden. Da der "Führer" alles versprach und es mit Propagandamethoden tat, die dem Kleinbürger zusagten, war er drauf und dran, die Massensstütze des Faschismus zu werden. 10

And yet to Wangenheim and many others it seemed obvious that as the Angestellte was little different from the worker in dependence on dwindling wages and exploitation by the employers, his logical move should have been to show solidarity with the proletariat, to combine in a solid front to demand better wages and conditions.

Friedrich Wolf wrote in 1933:

Diese "Mittelschichten", die deklassierten Angestellten, Kleinbürger und Kleinbauern, sie stellen eine Masse dar, die wir in keinem Falle in unserm Rücken lassen dürfen! Gewiß, der Faschismus ist eine Herrschaftsform des Kapitalismus; aber er stützte sich bei seiner Macht-ergreifung nicht auf die Arbeiterschaft, . . . sondern grade auf die Massen der schon proletarisierten Kleinbürger, Kleinbauern, kleinen Handwerker und Angestellten, die aus ihrer Verelendung und Katastrophenstimmung einen Ausweg suchten. Viel zu wenig haben wir das beachtet, viel zu gering auch eingeschätzt die Kampfkraft und den Fanatismus dieser Massen, die nach ihrer ökonomischen Basis längst zu uns gehörten.

Der Faschismus eroberte vom Krämerladen mit den leeren Gefächern, von dem schwindsüchtigen Portemonnaie der Angestellten, von der verschuldeten Scheuer des Kleinbauern her im Sturm das Land. 11

This insight was reflected in an early version of Wolf's play Professor Mamlock, the opening scene of which originally showed Dr. Inge's mother complaining of the ruin of her small grocer's shop as a result of the hard times.¹²

As Pollatschek points out: "Klares Erkennen müßte sie zum Marxismus hinführen, aber sie - wie eben die große Mehrheit des Kleinbürgertums - erliegt der faschistischen Demagogie".¹³ The woman portrayed by Wolf is successfully encouraged to blame the Jews and Marxists for her troubles and to regard the NSDAP as her only hope of redress; it was a common tendency.

One of the major forces preventing the mass of middle-class employees from making common cause with the working class was snobbery, a conviction that they occupied a higher social position than the ordinary workers and would be demeaning themselves to identify with them in any way. The foolishness of such a reservation was

obvious to many observers. As Küh1 pointed out, the average employee

unterschied sich in seiner Arbeit - oft auch in seinem Einkommen - nicht mehr wesentlich vom Arbeiter. Gerade deshalb aber hielt ein großer Teil der Angestellten, zumal sie sich überwiegend aus den selbständigen Mittelschichten rekrutierten, an ihrem besonderen Prestigeanspruch gegenüber der Arbeiterschaft fest. 14

The carefully preserved but unrealistic social distinction between 'employee' and 'worker' is well documented by a contemporary novel, Hans Fallada's Kleiner Mann - was nun? In one scene, for example, the worker Mörschel discovers that his prospective son-in-law is an employee:

"Angestellte, wenn ich so was schon höre", sagt Mörschel. "Ihr denkt, ihr seid was Besseres als wir Arbeiter."
 "Denk ich nicht."
 "Denken Sie doch. Und warum denken Sie das? Weil Sie Ihrem Arbeitgeber nicht 'ne Woche den Lohn stunden, sondern den ganzen Monat. Weil Sie unbezahlte Überstunden machen, weil Sie sich unter Tarif bezahlen lassen, weil Sie nie 'nen Streik machen, weil Sie immer die Streikbrecher sind . . ." 15

As the novel later illustrates, Mörschel is quite right: when Pinneberg's firm is rushing to load some stored wheat, workers and employees alike have to help, but the workers stop for Vesper as stipulated in their wage agreement, while the employees are afraid to do the same because the boss has forbidden it. They are even forced to work on Sunday if their employer demands it; with jobs scarce and unemployment a constant threat, they are entirely in his hands. Pinneberg does begin to realise that much of this can be blamed on the employees' lack of organisation:

"Das ist", sagt Pinneberg, "weil wir gar nichts sind. Wir sitzen allein. Und die anderen, die genau so sind wie wir, die sitzen auch allein. Jeder dünkt sich was. Wenn wir wenigstens Arbeiter wären! Die sagen Genosse zueinander und helfen einander . . ." 16

He does nothing about it, however, beyond saying now and then, when things are really desperate, that this time he ought to vote Communist. But Fallada shows that it might as well be Fascist; Pinneberg and the others of his kind are looking for a radical cure and do not differentiate clearly between the extreme positions. Their understanding of either hardly extends to more than slogans and clichés.

It was this indecision and lack of understanding which Wangenheim's play Die Mausefalle set out to change. Its purpose was agitation alone: direct appeal with direct effect. The play was aimed at a specific audience¹⁷; it attempted to convert to working-class solidarity the Kleinbürger of the lower middle class, the 'little man', the Angestellte who was drifting into the right-wing parties instead of turning to those whom Wangenheim's troupe regarded as his natural allies on the Left. This drift had to be reversed:

Thema des Stückes also: Der Angestellte!
Ideologische Aufgabe: Kampf gegen den Faschismus! . . . 18

Wangenheim was quite clear about his aims:

Da ging's vor allem einmal um die Angestellten, deren Zahl ständig zugenommen hatte; wir suchten, so schwer das wegen traditioneller Vorurteile und falsch verstandener Interessenlage auch war, uns mit ihnen zu verständigen und unser sehr verschiedenes Deutsch in eine gemeinsame Sprache zu verwandeln. 19

Wangenheim's concern with language is significant:

he was of bourgeois origin himself, and felt that the language and the mentality of the bourgeoisie were considerable barriers to inter-class solidarity. Wangenheim had come from a traditional theatrical background; his father was the actor Eduard von Winterstein and he himself had originally been trained in the style of Max Reinhardt. An involvement with revolutionary politics which dated from 1918²⁰ brought him into contact with the USPD and later the KPD. As a result he turned away from the conventional established theatre in order to help organise AgitProp troupes such as "Rote Blusen" or "Truppe 31", which played rather simple, outspokenly propagandistic pieces in beer halls or factory yards with the minimum of equipment. But with Die Mausefalle Wangenheim faced a special task; in order to woo an audience very different from the working-class public of his earlier plays, a carefully considered change of approach was necessary. Unlike Piscator, who preached the proletarian revolution but failed to attract the proletariat to his theatre, Wangenheim and his group realised that the middle classes should form their target audience, and resolved: "Wir müssen uns an jenes Publikum wenden, das tatsächlich ins Theater geht - also an den Mittelstand".²¹ As a result, middle-class prejudices against Communist ideology and particularly the language in which it was commonly expressed had to be considered, and, in the increasingly serious political situation of 1931, the play had above all to be effective, with its targets clear and unmistakable. After weeks of prepara-

tion, Wangenheim's group brought together the material they had collected from widely separate sources²², and Wangenheim then combined the different ideas and gave them dramatic form. The result was a remarkably coherent and single-minded exercise in persuasion.

Die Mausefalle aims its message at the middle-class employee and its criticism at the capitalist system responsible for his increasingly downtrodden and desperate condition. It exposes in a series of simple examples the mechanics of economic injustice and the logical necessity of solidarity with the proletariat. Its directness and simplicity in pursuing these aims make it a remarkable example of socialist drama, because here the processes of economic determinism do not simply appear as the background to a conventional plot: they are the plot. Fleißig's confrontation with and growing insight into the unpleasant consequences of capitalism provide the actual basis of the play. As Kändler observes:

Hier wurde nicht mehr objektive geschichtliche Wahrheit an Beispielen interpretiert, hier war die individuelle Auseinandersetzung mit der geschichtlichen Objektivität zum ästhetischen Zentrum des Werkes geworden. Diese Leistung sichert Gustav von Wangenheim einen Platz in der Geschichte der Gattungsentwicklung. 23

What Die Mausefalle in fact represents is a new type of play, a product quite deliberately put together with a special purpose in mind. Rühle explains:

Das Schauspiel erscheint nun als etwas Zusammengesetztes, Gemachtes, so sehr es auch durch die Dynamik in der Vorführung gebunden wird. Seine montagehafte 'Gemachtheit' entspricht der Auffassung von der ebenfalls 'gemachten' Wirklichkeit. Sein Hauptwert ist kein dichterischer, kein Kunstwert mehr, sondern ein aktueller, ein Zeitwert. 24

Die Mausefalle was a specially manufactured play like Leo Lania's Konjunktur, Piscator's adaptation of Rasputin or Wolf's AgitProp plays; all combined an analytical study of the contemporary world with an attempt to convince or convert the spectator to the author's view of the world.

In the centre of Die Mausefalle stands Fleißig the employee, a figure representative of millions²⁵ - the "kleiner Mann", the German Everyman of 1930. Although his character is simply conjured up by a member of the actors' collective who slips on a mask to assume the role (a deliberately anti-illusionist effect in a play which strives for honesty at every level), he nevertheless remains the hero of the play with whom the onlookers are strongly encouraged to identify.²⁶ While Wangenheim, like Brecht, rejects theatrical illusion and always reminds the audience that it is watching just a demonstration of facts, he by no means frustrates the natural tendency to identify with the central character; instead, he turns this to his own advantage, capitalising on what Klotz terms the "oft besinnungslose Identifikationsucht der Zuschauer"²⁷ in order to ensure the spectator's involvement and interest. The effectiveness of Wangenheim's play does, in fact, depend on just this process of identification: only if the spectator realises that Fleißig is really himself will the character's eventual decision to join forces with the proletariat be understood and shared.

As a simple method of encouraging this act of identification, Fleißig seats himself in the auditorium

shortly after the beginning of the play and becomes just another onlooker; he calls out as one of them might do, and when he emerges onto the stage again it is simply as a representative of the audience.

Fleißig (ruft von unten herauf): Was? Wir
sollen auch mitspielen?

KM: Ja, ohne Sie geht's nicht! 28

Fleißig is also a 'learning hero' like Brecht's "Mutter" or Wolf's Professor Mamlock, whose political education progresses through a number of stages until they realise where their real interests lie. Those members of the audience who follow each story with involvement and interest are persuaded to make a similar progress towards understanding; the character's conclusions should also be theirs.

Fleißig's enlightenment proceeds by means of a series of short examples or parables which illustrate the circumstances governing his existence. The two-faced industrialist Taba (who stands for the shoe manufacturer Bata) acts out the smiling facade as well as the ugly reality of capitalism in a number of short scenes culminating in the "kapitalistische Walpurgisnacht".

Mephisto: Der Zauber wirkt!
Der Besen handelt:
In Waren, Waren wird das Kapital ver-
wandelt.
In Waren alles sich verwandeln muß.
Das Kapital erstickt im Warenüberfluß.
Das ist der Weisheit letzter Schluß. 29

Later the parable of supply and demand reveals the grotesque contrast between overproduction and poverty; an illustration of Wert and Mehrwert shows how owners make profits at the workers' expense; a simple shoemaker from

the fifteenth century is introduced to highlight the contrast between the "Vollmensch" of earlier times who was in complete control of handcrafted production and the helpless "Teilmensch" created by the industrial process.

The scene ends by making the following point:

Geselle: Mein Handwerkszeug, wenn ich es fände,
Was würd' es nützen?
Ich bin von vorgestern.
Mit mir ist's auf ewig vorbei.

. . .

Taba II: Es lebe das Privateigentum!
Taba I: Es lebe die freie Wirtschaft!
Fleißig: Es lebe die Freiheit!
Kunde: Du bist wohl von vorgestern? 30

In other words, an old-fashioned enthusiasm for freedom is as out of place in modern capitalism as the shoemaker would be. Each of these short parables or examples is thus rounded off by a conclusion which stresses the general truth to be found in the individual examples, giving rise to what Kändler calls "der ständige Wechsel von individuell konkreter Spielhandlung und deren sofort erfolgreicher Einbettung in den Zusammenhang des zu analysierenden Systems".³¹ The context is all - separate insights add up to an indictment of the system as a whole.

The individual stages of this progress towards understanding rather resemble the Expressionist Stationendrama (best exemplified by Toller's Die Wandlung or Kaiser's Von morgens bis mitternachts), except that in this case each step is made with the help of logical analysis rather than emotion or instinct, and the central character does not stumble randomly from one stage to the

next but is led from situation to situation with the help of specific guidelines and explanations from the others, who are anxious that he should fully understand the process. As Wolf admiringly noted:

Die "Mausefalle" zeigt sehr langsam und ausführlich nach allen Seiten hin den Entwicklungsgang dieser Deklassierung und Verelendung des Angestellten, so langsam, daß der Zuschauer "Angestellter" auch wirklich diesem seinem "Schicksal" folgen kann, es verstehen kann, es glaubhaft findet! 32

The members of the audience are also encouraged to think for themselves and thus participate directly in Fleißig's development:

KM: Einen Augenblick.
Wer hat recht von den beiden Parteien?
(Längere Pause, im Zuschauerraum knacken die Gehirne.) 33

Fleißig: Ich hab ja schließlich mein Geld bezahlt!
KM(Frack): Geld allein tut's nicht!
Man muß uns auch den Kopf hinhalten!
Fleißig: Sie verlangen ja allerhand von Ihren Zuschauern. 34

The audience is, however, given the entertainment it desires: the serious political message is conveyed in a very lively mixture of theatrical effects. The short sketches, brisk movements and musical embellishments of cabaret or revue are integrated into the text's changing combinations of parody, allegory, song and rhyme. As Rühle remarks, "An Wangenheim's "Mausefalle" fallen die formale Geschicklichkeit, Einfallskraft, Witz, Heiterkeit und Spieltemperament auf".³⁵ Every possible effect is employed in order to ensure the spectators' interest and participation, and not the least of these is humour - "ein relativ seltener Zug in der zeitgenössischen sozialistischen Dramatik"³⁶, as Kändler is forced to admit in his

study of the genre. Wangenheim uses laughter to arouse sympathy for Fleißig, and to ease potentially awkward moments such as the first assertion that an Angestellte properly belongs to the proletariat³⁷, as well as simply to entertain. It is particularly helpful in creating the play's most important effect: good will.

What makes Die Mausefalle remarkable as an exercise in persuasion is its frank and cheerful enlistment of the spectator's approval. Nothing is hidden; every point is made clearly and simply and as if with the onlooker's permission. The whole becomes a game which actors and audience play together. This honesty was part of the group's approach from the very beginning, as Inge von Wangenheim explains:

Zum ersten dürfen wir uns nicht verstellen!
 Unser Spiel muß klar zum Ausdruck bringen, wer wir sind, warum wir es sind und daß wir etwas ganz Bestimmtes wollen. Unser Spiel muß also ehrlich parteilich sein.

.
 Unser Spiel muß betonen, daß wir in solchem Falle ohne Illusionen auszukommen beabsichtigen. Um der Wahrhaftigkeit unserer Wirkung willen. 38

Honesty is of course extremely useful as a dramatic technique, quite apart from its ethical desirability. Volker Klotz, in his detailed study of Die Mausefalle and its calculated effect on the audience, points out that Dramaturgie of this kind "kann ihre Ziele besser erreichen, wenn sich der Veranstalter unverhohlen zu seinem Tun bekennt, indem er offenbart: was er wem zu welchem Zweck beizubringen versucht".³⁹ The artless frankness of Die Mausefalle is designed to put the audience at ease, lulling any fears that they may be overwhelmed by the

propaganda of dangerous agitators. The play's persuasive devices appear to be guilelessly open and obvious. Even the title and its allusion to the play-within-a-play in Hamlet helps to explain the play's function. The spectators are told that the actors' collective hopes to persuade them to a point of view, and the steps towards this persuasion are well delineated. All processes, as Klotz points out, are "antiillusionistisch unverkleidet. Während sie mit der Falle umgehen, können die Beteiligten beiderseits der Bühnenrampe sie ständig erklären und überprüfen".⁴⁰ "Bewußt also soll das Publikum in die Falle gehen".⁴¹

One of the main difficulties to be overcome before the play's message can be successfully delivered is the middle-class employee's instinctive unwillingness to be classed with the workers, and his reluctance to be bombarded by Communist propaganda. To counter this, Wangenheim foresees objections in advance, soothes suspicions and promotes the spectator to an equal partnership in the discussion. Klotz notes:

Er honoriert das Mißtrauen, frönt der Bildung, bestärkt die Selbstsicherheit, indem er Einwände vorwegnimmt, auf schönggeistigen Umgang pocht und die Karten auf den Tisch legt. Zumal dieser letzte taktische Zug - komplizenhafte Mitwisserschaft bei den Angesprochenen herzustellen - ist wichtig. 42

The mutual distrust and misunderstanding between middle class and working class is frankly faced in the play, and the differences shown to be largely a matter of language and manners:

Fleißig: Ich verstehe nicht . . .
Arbeiter: Wat?

Fleißig: Ich verstehe Sie nicht!
 Arbeiter: Na, ich dir ooch nich, du Clown!
 Zieh'n Schlips aus und erkenne
 Det du'n Prolet bist wie ick . . . 43

Two further things stand in the way of solidarity with the proletariat: the bourgeois' claim to be an individual personality with certain rights and privileges and his precious Bildung. The first of these pretensions is destroyed but the second is indulged, in accordance with the playwright's intentions.

In the industrial world of Taba and his capitalist colleagues, the cult of personality is shown to be meaningless; 'personalities' are simply employees to be taken on or sacked as business dictates, and individuality is of no value. In another scene Fleißig's home is built up on stage, with an armchair, a piano and a sideboard purchased on time payment, a radio, the family photographs, busts of Goethe and Napoleon and a print of "Die Toteninsel". The pathetic, mass-produced treasures of his private life make the point that each would-be individualist is just one of many thousands; Klotz remarks "daß just das, woran Fleißig im privaten Gehäus sein Eigentümlisches festzumachen meint, uniforme Einrichtung ist von seinesgleichen".⁴⁴ Fleißig is as much part of the 'masses' of his own kind as is any industrial worker or labourer.

The second concept precious to the bourgeoisie, its ideal of education and culture, is indulged by Wangenheim in an array of quotations, literary allusions and cross-references designed to make his middle-class audience feel at home. Recognised Kulturformeln such as

Hamlet, Faust or Napoleon are introduced not merely to provide useful images for arguments about leadership, greatness or destiny. They create as well a comfortable and acceptable cultural setting, as Klotz observes:

Planvoll nutzt Wangenheim diese Bildungsversessenheit, wenn er dem Publikum mit einem Überangebot erlesener Anspielungen und Zitate kommt. . . . Wie Büchner im Landboten mit biblischen so arbeitet er hier mit ästhetischen Orientierungsmustern. Die politische Botschaft soll sich im Publikum nicht erst Bahn brechen müssen. Sie soll dort eine schon bereitete Bahn vorfinden und gebrauchen können. 45

The onlooker is not only soothed by so many respectable cultural allusions, he is also flattered by the assumption that he will recognise the various quotations used in the play and thus enjoy their new double meanings.⁴⁶ Each member of the audience is treated as a confidante, "als verständiger Mitspieler der Anspielungen"⁴⁷, an insider, one of the educated few. In this way a rather grim social commentary is presented in elegant disguise. Or, as Wolf observed: "unter der Maske von dezenten Analogie-varianten unsrer unanfechtbaren Klassiker".⁴⁸

Besides its many entertaining features, the play does nevertheless stick tenaciously to its purpose, the analysis of the capitalist system and the persuasion of the small employee that his interests are those of the workers. Every technique used has the ultimate purpose of explaining, illuminating, demonstrating or convincing, and every literary flight of fancy has a shrewd and forceful point to make:

Mephisto (KM Frack):

Hört ihr den Krach der Banken schallen?
Hört, wie die Krise sturmt und saust!

Doch statt nun einmal seine Faust zu ballen,
Spielt jeder Fleißig erst mal Goethes Faust. 49

The directness of most of these devices, the lack of superfluous or 'merely' artistic content makes Die Mausefalle a carefully crafted piece of dramatic propaganda quite outstanding in the Zeitstück genre. Its skilful balance of entertainment and serious politics (Herbert Ihering referred to its "lockere Form, strenge Inhalt"⁵⁰) was enthusiastically received when the play opened in Berlin by both the public and the official Communist Party, a rare combination. Friedrich Wolf referred to it in 1932 as "der stärkste, der breiteste und tiefste Theatererfolg im letzten Berliner Theaterwinter".⁵¹ Johanna Schau wrote in Die Rote Fahne:

Grau, lieber Freund, ist alle Theorie. Das stammt auch noch aus Fleißigs Zitatenkiste. Aber hier setzt Truppe 1931 ein. Sie sorgt dafür, daß diejenigen, denen der dialektische Materialismus fremd ist, gefesselt werden. Die Angestelltenfrage in den Mittelpunkt eines Lehrstückes rücken, ist heute wichtig. Ein Lehrstück schreiben, ist nicht mehr neu. Aber das Neue ist hier, daß Altes, längst Bekanntes, Selbstverständliches gezeigt wird in den wichtigsten Zusammenhängen auch des Theaters. Hören wir nicht schon wieder den Blätterwald rauschen, daß man mit dem kühlen Verstand kein Theaterstück machen könne? Aber man muß es sehen und hören, einmal und noch einmal, wie hier strengste Einhaltung der marxistischen Marschrouten endlich wieder zum wahren Theatererlebnis führt. 52

That Die Mausefalle did prove to be a considerable "Theatererlebnis" is shown by its success first in Berlin and then on tour in Germany and Switzerland; it was given 317 performances in all.⁵³ Rühle mentions its popularity in Frankfurt at the Schauspielhaus;⁵⁴ Klotz tells of twenty-five performances in Stuttgart to packed houses.⁵⁵

Wangenheim's immediate aims were thus achieved: he did succeed in reaching a wide theatre public with an uncompromisingly truthful and persuasive political play. According to Klotz, two things testify to his success: firstly the play's popularity, and secondly its failure to alienate or offend the largely bourgeois audiences with its radical message. There was no theatre scandal; the audiences seem to have played along with the actors as intended, and the critics praised the play's cleverness and wit.

In its wider aims, however, the play could hardly hope to contend against the social forces which Wangenheim had recognised at the outset. As Wolf commented: "Schade, daß die "Mausefalle" erst 1932 in Deutschland lief! Zu einer Zeit, als Millionen kleiner Angestellter bereits ins Lager Hitlers übergelaufen waren".⁵⁶ In the two major elections of 1932 the KPD did actually make slight gains, but these counted for little in comparison with the continued strength of the NSDAP, which increased its numbers at the expense of the smaller centre parties, as the voting figures showed.⁵⁷ In other words, it continued to recruit from the middle ground, from the ranks of the dissatisfied Kleinbürgertum, with its promises of radical change and strong leadership. Wangenheim's hopes were thus defeated by the forces he had himself clearly recognised and begun to fight against. One play could do little in the face of such an overwhelming trend.

FRIEDRICH WOLF - PROFESSOR MAMLOCK

On the twenty-seventh of February 1933 the Reichstag, seat of the federal German parliament, was destroyed by fire. A suspect carrying a Communist Party membership card was allegedly arrested at the scene. This one incident sufficed to spark off an enormous and bitter reaction; a huge anti-Communist backlash was successfully manipulated by thousands of Nazi supporters who seized the opportunity to increase their attacks on Communists or their suspected sympathisers as well as on the Jews. The hysterical atmosphere which resulted was sufficient to help the NSDAP to a quite convincing victory in the federal elections a few days later on March the fifth. Although still without an absolute majority, Hitler was able to form a government. On the twenty-fourth of March that government suspended the Weimar constitution, and the Republic's history came officially to an end.

As the repercussions of the Reichstag fire and the first radical legislation of the new government began to take effect, thousands of political and intellectual refugees began to leave Germany, among them Friedrich Wolf. Forced into exile in Switzerland and then France, he reacted as always to political or social outrage by distilling his feelings into drama; Professor Mamlock was written in just a few months as a bitterly propagandistic attack on Nazi barbarity and a call for action to oppose it.

Wolf used as the immediate basis of his play a real incident involving the suicide of a prominent Jewish surgeon¹ and for the background drew on his own experiences in the past year, documenting key events such as Hindenburg's re-election in May 1932, the aftermath of the Reichstag fire in February 1933 and the anti-Jewish legislation of April. The realism of Wolf's report is evident, for example, in Act Two, where the dialogue uses almost word for word comments made by his own friends at the time of crisis. Every remark, from the smug generalisation "Na, denen ist doch alles zuzutrauen"² to the credulous assertion "Kam doch als amtlicher Bericht"³ illustrates a widespread contemporary attitude, as Wolf explains in his essay "Ein Mamlock? Zwölf Millionen Mamlocks!"⁴ Historians have also documented the public credulity, the swift and repressive new legislation and the upsurge of support for the Nazis which Wolf portrays:

The Reichstag fire served the Nazi leaders well. The charges that this was to be the signal for a Communist revolt were swallowed either willingly or unwillingly by the majority of people. 5

Der Brand, wer auch die Täter sein möchten, hatte doch seine Wirkung getan; man war die "roten Strolche" los, Kommunisten und Sozialisten. . . . Terror und Jubel, Zynismus, Schwäche und wieder Jubel, und über allem die unermüdlich krähen- de, triumphierende, schmeichelnde und drohende Stimme des "Führers", wie er sich jetzt nennen ließ - es war kein Wunder, daß in diesem einseitig gegen einen fiktiven Gegner geführten Bürgerkrieg, diesem Siegestaumel ohne vorangegangenen Schlacht, die Nazis noch einmal einen Gewinn von fünf Millionen Stimmen davontrugen. 6

Wolf reflects these events through the growing aggressiveness and confidence of the Nazi doctor Hellpach as well as the ranting radio broadcast of the new dictator him-

self, which fascinates even Mamlock's daughter Ruth:

Ruth: ER spricht!

(Mamlock geht schnell nach rechts zum Radio. -
Das Radio: ". . . Nachdem aber diese Verbrecher-
brut Feuer gelegt hat an das Haus unseres Volkes,
wird nichts mich hindern, diese fremdrassige
Mörderpest mit eisener Faust zu zerschmettern
. . . ")

Ruth (entzückt): Das ist eine Stimme, das ist
ein Mann! Und wenn ihr ihn nicht hören wollt,
ich werde ihn hören! 7

Wolf's portrayal of a mildly conservative middle-class family taken completely by surprise at the virulence and extremism of the new order is quite in agreement with the facts. Several observers noted that the Nazi takeover came as a great shock to most people; no one had thought things would be as bad because it was assumed that the NSDAP's legal assumption of power would lead to less extremism. The surprise left many opponents of the new regime unprepared for resistance or even for emigration.⁸ René König has remarked on the lack of moral resistance to Nazism:

Es war in keiner Schicht eine realistische Alltagsmoral vorhanden, die einen substantiellen (und nicht nur politischen, also "dekretierenden") Widerstand größerer Bevölkerungsschichten gegen den Nationalsozialismus erlaubt hätte. Der Widerstand blieb eine Sache des Einzelnen. Und der überwältigende Rest der Gesellschaft profitierte ganz schamlos von den Opfern der nationalsozialistischen Machtergreifung. 9

This is precisely the situation of Wolf's play; nothing has prepared the Mamlocks for disaster. Only Rolf, because of his Communist involvement, is able to try desperate and rather limited resistance measures through the new underground movement.

The anti-Jewish legislation of April 1933 was certainly the harshest stroke so far by the Nazi govern-

ment; its repercussions at every level of society put great strain on even personal relationships. As Bracher relates:

Am schärfsten trafen die rechtlichen und psychologischen Konsequenzen des totalitären Gesellschaftsbegriffs im Fortgang der Judenverfolgung hervor . . . Und auch . . . zeigte sich, daß die nationalsozialistische Judenpolitik zwar keineswegs so allgemein "populär" war, wie die Propaganda es wollte, daß aber die pseudolegale Steuerung der Neigung des unpolitischen Bürgers entgegenkam, die Maßnahmen als "notwendiges Übel" hinzunehmen und die Augen vor der Wirklichkeit und der prinzipiellen Bedeutung der Judenverfolgung zu verschließen. 10

As we see in Wolf's play, friends of the Mamlocks are indeed pained and embarrassed by the new developments, but accept them along with so much other unpleasantness as 'the will of the people' or 'the new order'. The capitulation of Mamlock's old friend Seidel is an interesting example of a man reluctantly succumbing to public pressure against his personal feelings:

Seidel: Im übrigen, Hans, die Entscheidung richtet sich ja nicht gegen dich persönlich . . .
. . . Schließlich, man hat auch noch eine Verantwortung, die Verantwortung für seine Familie, für über hundert Arbeiter, für die Abonnenten, für die öffentliche Meinung . . . 11

Others are not so scrupulous about accepting the new attitudes: Ruth's old school friends react with outright brutality.

Ruth (blickt sich ängstlich um): Nicht so laut reden, Vater . . . die sind überall, unter den Banken, hinter den Geräten in der Turnhalle, wißt ihr, hinter den Bäumen auf dem Schulhof, sie grinsen, sie rufen, sie beschmieren dich, und waren doch so fabelhafte Kerle . . .
(Weint.) 12

The figure of Mamlock himself is not at all a Jewish stereotype; Wolf meant him to exemplify the

dilemma of the "zwölf Millionen deutscher Kleinbürger und Intellektueller", as he explains:

Denn dieser Mamlock ist nicht irgendeiner, er ist einer von Millionen, er ist der Typus von Millionen deutscher "Demokraten", die gestern den kaiserlichen Feldmarschall Hindenburg zum Reichskanzler der Republik wählten, weil er auf die "Verfassung" geschworen hatte, die heute Hitler als "Wall gegen den Bolschewismus" betrachten und die morgen für ein größeres Deutschland "gen Osten reiten" wollen. Er ist ein Typus des deutschen Intelligenzlers, für den "der Staat", "die Familie", "die Wissenschaft", "die Gerechtigkeit" unwandelbare ewige Werte sind, im Sinne der Kategorien Kants. 13

As this particular German citizen is also a Jew, however, his enlightenment as to the real nature of Germany's 'new order' is particularly abrupt and painful. Wolf describes the destruction of Mamlock's secure background:

Im zweiten Akt bricht die Politik durch die Mauern der "Familie", die Wissenschaft beginnt zu wanken, der Staat läßt seine Bürger im Stich, die Verfassung bricht in Stücke, im dritten Akt wird die Gerechtigkeit geschändet - Mamlock, der verdienstvolle Professor, der tapfere Soldat, ausgezeichnet mit dem EK I, verwundet für sein Vaterland - er wird als Jude mit abgeschnittenen Hosen durch die Straße gejagt; selbst die alten Freunde verlassen ihn, verängstigt durch den Naziterror. Alle Brücken sind abgebrochen, es gibt nur einen Ausweg für den alten Soldaten und Gelehrten: den Revolverschuß in die eigene Brust. 14

Wolf's play faithfully reflected the spirit as well as the events of 1933: the legalised anti-Semitism, the nationalist rhetoric and the hysterical anti-Communism are all lifted directly from contemporary reality in order to reflect back upon that reality and, perhaps, to change it. Professor Mamlock is undisguised agitation, a denunciation of evil and a plea for action to destroy it. As Gregor observes: "Das Theater wird hier bewußt in den Dienst einer aufrüttelnden Zeitchronik

gestellt".¹⁵ In times of crisis a writer of conviction certainly feels there is only one course open to him; as Wolf himself had declared a few years before, "In dieser Schicksalstunde marschieret der Dichter als Trommler neben der Fahne".¹⁶

Professor Mamlock, however, shows Wolf marching beside a banner of a rather different colour than usual. In 1933 he was no longer propagating Communist ideology within a still divided and vacillating society; he was an outcast from a nation which had made its choice and was now systematically crushing all internal dissent. As an exile, Wolf was also denied the playwright's usual access to the public. His appeal had to be to outsiders, to the German-speaking Swiss, to the Poles, to the as yet uninvolved and apparently indifferent European powers who understood little of Hitler's Germany. In this situation Wolf's usual heroic revolutionary flourishes (exemplified by plays such as Kolonne Hund, 1927, Die Matrosen von Cattaro, 1930, and Tai Yang erwacht, 1931) would have been very much out of place. The rest of the world was less interested in Hitler's persecution of Marxists and Socialists than in his unjust treatment of the ordinary middle-class citizen, and the play had to appeal firstly to this concern. Wolf's approach was shrewdly calculated, as Pollatschek explains:

Der Terror gegen die politischen Gegner, in erster Linie gegen die Kommunisten, hätte die von der Bourgeoisie beherrschte Weltöffentlichkeit durchaus nicht bewegt . . . Was die Weltöffentlichkeit alarmierte, das war nicht der Terror, es war seine Anwendung gegen die Juden - nicht etwa, weil das "internationale Judentum" diese Öffentlichkeit mobil gemacht hätte, . . . sondern weil sich dieser

Terror gegen die noch gebliebenen bürgerlichen Reste humanistischer Begriffe richtete und weil in ihm eine bürgerliche Rechtsunsicherheit und eine Gefährdung der im Kapitalismus bis dahin üblichen rechtlich-ökonomischen Gepflogenheiten zum Ausdruck kam . . . Mit einem Stück gegen den Antikommunismus der Faschisten hätte der Autor nicht einmal zu den proletarischen Massen in der Welt sprechen können, weil ihm fast alle Bühnen verschlossen geblieben wären - ein Stück gegen den Antisemitismus der Hitlerbande konnte Interesse und Verbreitung finden, und da es zugleich dramatisch meisterhaft, hoch theatralisch und brennend aktuell war, fand es diese Verbreitung in der Tat. 17

Although Wolf's real interest in Professor Mamlock was to show the Communist resistance at work within Germany, he thus found it necessary to widen the scope of the play's criticism in order that it might reach the largest possible audiences. He was well aware of the play's double function, as he explained in 1934:

Das Stück behandelt im Vordergrund die Tragödie der westlichen Demokratie, im Untergrund aber die beginnende heroische illegale Arbeit der KPD.

In diesem Sinne ist der "Mamlock" ein "getarntes" Stück. 18 Es musste sich dieser Kriegslist des "doppelten Bodens" bedienen, um überhaupt im Westen gespielt werden zu können. 19

Wolf's play thus aimed at arousing international opinion against the Nazi regime's treatment of the Jews, but at the same time brought a pro-Communist message into theatres where it would otherwise never have had a hearing. The purposeful resistance of Mamlock's son Rolf and his friend Ernst contrasts so strongly with Mamlock's helplessness that the point about Communist strength and bourgeois liberal weakness must be obvious, even in the most mildly humanistic production.²⁰ Mamlock's dying words about the "right way" to be taken establish Wolf's basic idea quite unambiguously.

The character of Mamlock himself fulfils several functions. He is firstly the central focus of sympathy, although his wife and children also take on this role at various stages in the play's development. Mamlock's appeal to the audience is that of an innocent and respectable middle-class family man who wishes to know nothing of politics inside the sphere of his private and professional life until it forcibly invades both of these retreats. The spectator is encouraged to admire the old soldier, wise parent and skilled surgeon and thus feel all the more strongly the injustice of his fate.

The fact that Mamlock is himself politically conservative and has until now opposed his Communist son's anti-Fascist work as mere youthful wildness and rebellion²¹ makes him an even more sympathetic figure for middle-class audiences as well as adding to the dramatic tension: the confrontation between father and son sets out clearly the differences between two political viewpoints as well as revealing Mamlock to be human and fallible. This blindness has its advantages dramatically, as Pollatschek points out:

Hätte Wolf eine ganz und gar positive Figur gewählt, . . . so wäre wohl ein trauriges und empörendes Schicksal dargestellt worden, aber um einen wirklich dramatischen Konflikt hätte es sich nicht gehandelt. Der dramatische Konflikt entsteht eben gerade dadurch, daß Mamlock politisch blind auf der Gegenseite steht: in scharfster Ablehnung der wirklichen kämpferischen Gegner des Faschismus, in bürgerlich-reaktionäre Vorurteile verstrickt und erst im Tode erkennend, daß er den falschen Weg gegangen ist. 22

Mamlock's gradual realisation of the threat of Nazism and his last-minute acceptance of Rolf's choice

make him a hero rather like those of the Expressionist Wandlung plays²³ in which the central character is seen to learn slowly through confrontation with different aspects of reality until he is radically changed by his insights. Mamlock's transformation from stalwart supporter of Hindenburg to propagandist of the 'new way' chosen by his son is certainly as dramatic as any of these. But Mamlock also represents a later type of dramatic hero, a man whose downfall is inextricably linked with the general social collapse, the "allgemeiner Untergang".²⁴ In his essay on Neue Sachlichkeit, Koebner notes a tendency in the latter plays to portray heroes doomed simply by the age in which they live rather than by any personal flaws, and, as he points out: "Mit diesen zerbricht dann der liberale Optimismus, am Staatswohl mitwirken zu können".²⁵ Mamlock is indisputably such a character. His fate proves that liberalism is impotent in a crisis and that only militant opposition can hope to confront the Nazi threat: "Das sozialistische Konzept löst das liberale ab".²⁶ The writers of the final phase of the Weimar Republic see a clear alternative between ineffectual humanitarianism and hard-line political commitment; other choices have been rendered irrelevant.

By 1933 Wolf had become one of the masters of propagandistic drama, and Professor Mamlock shows him using practised dramatic techniques to great effect. The play abounds in pathos - the tragedy of Mamlock himself, the suffering of his wife and daughter, the self-sacrifice of Simon the clinic-assistant or the young worker Ernst -

and yet Wolf refrains from exaggerated sentimentality. The characters are believably human and not mere stereotypes of innocent or guilty, aggressor or victim: Mamlock is often annoyingly stubborn and autocratic while the Nazi sympathiser Dr. Inge is shown to be vulnerable and well-intentioned. A series of well-spaced incidents, all of which fit naturally into the historical background of the play, lead rapidly to a crisis. The political extremism centred round the election of May 1932 first confronts Mamlock within the walls of his clinic in Act One; Act Two shows the aftermath of the Reichstag fire, which precipitates Mamlock's bitter confrontation with Rolf and then Dr. Inge; Act Three and the anti-Jewish legislation brings the attack on Ruth and then Mamlock's own humiliation; Act Four shows Mamlock finally driven into a corner, his anger flaring up briefly in a last courageous resistance and then crumbling in the face of his colleagues' betrayal. Real events and the reactions of individual personalities combine to bring about the final tragedy.

Wolf's handling of dialogue reinforces the play's persuasive effect by continually setting up situations in which a character is able to score significant points off an antagonist, thereby acting as a mouthpiece for Wolf's own opinions. The worker who is carried into the clinic after a political brawl, for example, shows how the class struggle cuts across racial differences - as well as introducing a welcome element of humour.

Dr. Inge (zum Arbeiter): Und Sie sind hundertprozentiger Arier?

Arbeiter: Wat für ein Ding?
 Dr. Inge: Sind Sie reinrassiger Germane?
 Arbeiter: Ach so, von d e r Seite? Ick bin ein
 Prolet, Fraulein Doktor, det bin ick!
 . . . und wenn mir so 'nen SA-Mann det
 Messer durch die Rippen stößt, dann
 fragt dieser Naziote ooch nich, ob ick
 vom ollen David oder vom ollen Willem
 von Hohenzollern abstamme. 27

Rolf, in his central confrontation with Mamlock, makes another vital point:

Rolf: Die Frage steht hier so, Vater: Kampf
 um die Wahrheit oder Kapitulation vor
 der Lüge? 28

Mamlock disagrees with this interpretation at the time, but it ironically becomes his own position at the end of the play. Rolf is also clearly the playwright's spokesman with his retort to Dr. Inge in Act Two:

Dr. Inge: Das alles hat mit dem Verstand nichts
 mehr zu tun; hier, Herr Professor Mamlock,
 scheidet Tüchtigkeit, Disziplin, Schuld
 oder Nichtschuld aus; hier sprechen Bluts-
 kräfte, und Blut ist Schicksal!

Rolf: Sie haben völlig recht, Fraulein Doktor, wo
 der Verstand aufhört, da fängt das "Blut"
 an, und wo das Gehirn abhanden gekommen, da
 beginnt das "Schicksal"! 29

Again and again the dialogue becomes a verbal duel in which points are scored with wit and intelligence against the lies or clichés of the opponent; the effect is to make the play lively and fast-moving as well as intellectually satisfying. Wolf has in fact identified the core of Nazi ideology, like other observers - notably Georg Lukács³⁰ - as irrationalism. He accordingly ridicules the meaningless rhetorical bombast of characters like Dr. Hellpach and Dr. Inge, and shows how they rapidly retreat into illogicality when challenged at an intellectual level.

Dr. Inge: Was sind ein Dutzend gefallener Soldaten, wenn ein Volk um seinen Platz an der Sonne ringt?

Dr. Hellpach: Es gibt noch Millionen deutscher Volksgenossen, die unter Fremdherrschaft schmachten; denn Deutschland ist überall, wo die deutsche Zunge klingt, wo deutsches Blut durch deutsche Adern braust, Deutschland ist Elsaß, ist Saargebiet, ist Österreich. . . 31

When confronted by facts or by searching questions, these people merely repeat phrases, seeking refuge in emotion or 'instinct'.

Dr. Hellpach (erregt): Es gibt Dinge, über die man intellektuell nicht streiten kann; die Waffen sind zu verschieden. 32

Mamlock: Da ist doch nicht der Schatten eines Beweises. . .

Dr. Inge: Man f ü h l t das bis in die Fingerspitzen! 33

Dr. Hellpach: Ich habe mit Ihnen nicht zu diskutieren, Herr Mamlock! Diese Dinge werden nicht intellektuell entschieden, sondern mit dem Herzen, und unser Volk h a t entschieden! 34

The atrocities committed against Jews are dismissed as "Greuelnachrichten" by Hellpach, even when he is actually confronted by the dishevelled and shaken Mamlock.³⁵ Wolf is portraying minds which have deliberately cut themselves off from normal doubts and considerations; the self-assurance of bigotry sees no obstacles.

Mamlock himself reaches his greatest moment, and functions most tellingly as Wolf's spokesman, when desperation forces him at last to defy his enemies and take a stand. He begins by condemning the Nazi government by its own standards:

Mamlock: Sie fordert Sauberkeit, Gesinnung, Mut, Kameradschaft . . . ausgezeichnet!

Aber, meine Herren, ist das Mut, wenn man wehrlose Leute, verdienstvolle Leute mit Übermacht von ihrer Arbeit und ihrem Brot wegstoßt. Ist das Kameradschaft, ist das Sauberkeit, wenn Tausende Schmarotzer und Denunzianten bereitstehen, um sich in die freien Stellen zu schmuggeln. . . 36

He continues with a sharp reminder that humanity's common sense and demand for justice can never be suppressed for long.³⁷

When Mamlock's colleagues, at Dr. Hellpach's insistence, are about to sign the accusations against him, Mamlock ends with the warning that capitulation on one point will make them only more vulnerable to further pressure. Again, Wolf himself speaks through the lines:

Mamlock (glühend): Wie? Ihr zittert, ihr wollt nicht kämpfen, ihr meint, man kann mit weichen Knien durch die Reihen der Gegner schleichen, man kann den Kampf vermeiden? Ihr täuscht euch! (Mit ganzer Kraft.) Wenn ihr dieses Protokoll unterschreibt, so unterschreibt ihr euer eigenes Urteil! Aus eurer Feigheit wird der Gegner sich neue Waffen schmieden. Denn kein größeres Verbrechen gibt es als nicht kämpfen wollen, wo man kämpfen muß!! Menschenskind, ich beschwöre euch, werft euch nicht kampflös weg!! 38

Wolf may have had in mind at this point the decision faced by the entire nation, when early capitulation to the demands of the new government paved the way for ever greater public lies and atrocities. The Reichstag fire set the pattern, as Golo Mann points out:

Wenn . . . Adel und Bürgertum die Untat hinnahmen, den Feuerzauber zu glauben vorgaben, dann mußten sie von nun an schlucken, was ihnen geboten wurde, selbst noch viel tollere Dinge . . . Sie nahmen hin. 39

In the same way Hirsch, Seidel, Carlsen and the nurse sign Hellpach's absurd document and grant him victory

without a struggle, putting themselves from that moment onward entirely in his hands.

Mamlock's final words contain Wolf's injunction to the spectator; they appeal to direct action. Mamlock abandons hope for himself but finds new faith in Rolf's determination to fight on in the Communist resistance movement, and obviously senses that Dr. Inge's convictions are changing too.

Mamlock: Sie müssen einen anderen gehen, einen neuen Weg. (Dringlich, leise, aber mit ganzer Kraft.) Hören Sie, gehen Sie ihn, wagen Sie ihn. . . (-plötzlich-) und grüßen Sie ihn, grüßen Sie meinen Jungen. . . hören Sie, grüßen Sie Rolf, wenn Sie ihn sehen. . . auf dem anderen Weg, auf dem a n d e r e n Weg. . . (Sinkt zurück). 40

Mamlock's limitations must be transcended in Rolf and the others who dare to actively fight against an evil which most passively accept; his message to Inge is at the same time Wolf's communication to his audience.

Professor Mamlock was finished and ready to perform by the end of 1933, but many obstacles lay between the play and its target audience. Wolf had written it for Wangenheim's "Truppe 31", which had also gone into exile in 1933, but the group was forced to disband because of lack of financial backing. Most of them went to the Soviet Union with Wangenheim, although a few individuals remained in Switzerland and did appear in Professor Mamlock when it was eventually produced there.⁴¹

Like all exiled dramatists, Wolf found that his major problem lay in securing the good will of the government in his adopted country, as most officials were still unwilling to antagonise the Hitler regime by allowing the

performance of overtly anti-Nazi material. Authorities in Zürich, Basle, Strasbourg and Paris proved to be uneasy about permitting plays of protest to be performed - "ein Theaterstück sei "zu provokatorisch und leicht mit einem Theaterskandal verbunden"", as Wolf explained.⁴² In fact, Professor Mamlock was first performed in Warsaw (in Yiddish) in February 1934, where it was a tremendous success: there were 300 performances and a tour of sixty-eight towns.⁴³ The first German production opened in Zürich in November 1934 under the title of "Dr. Mannheim"⁴⁴, and was plagued by violent demonstrations staged by the Swiss fascists "gegen die Wühlerei der Emigranten".⁴⁵ After a legal battle over its right to be performed⁴⁶, the play continued an extremely successful season. Its remarkable content aroused great excitement at the time, as one of the actors reported:

Da es das erste antifaschistische Stück war, das wir gaben, herrschte am Abend der Premiere eine ungeheure Aufregung hinter der Bühne, von der alle - bis zum Garderobier und letzten Bühnenarbeiter - mitgerissen wurden; aber die Aufregung im Zuschauerraum war nicht minder groß; sie entlud sich in immer wiederkehrenden Szenenapplausen, so daß wir Schauspieler minutenlang zuweilen zu Tableaux vivants erstarren mußten, bevor wir weiterspielen konnten. 47

Press reactions were as enthusiastic as audience response; Wolf's intention to outrage and to capture sympathy seems to have well succeeded, judging by the critics:

Kaum einer ist, der nicht im Innersten aufgewühlt beim Nachhausegehen von jener Stimme des Gewissens und der Verantwortung erfüllt gewesen wäre, die aufzurütteln und wachzuhalten man allzuleicht vergißt . . . Es ist ein Zeichen für die Allgemeingültigkeit dieses Zeitstückes, daß es mit einer Begeisterung aufgenommen und ver-

dankt wurde, die ihresgleichen sucht und die aus entflammten Herzen kam, spontan, einmütig, echt und verheißend.

. . .
Der Eindruck war überwältigend. Auch bei den Wiederholungen bricht oft der Beifall auf offener Szene los. Man mag ihn mit der aufpeitschenden Aktualität des Stückes und der vollendeten Leistung des Ensembles erklären. Daß Männer weinen, wenn dieser Professor Mannheim stirbt, das ist nicht bloß dem großartigen Darsteller Kurt Horwitz, das ist auch dem Dichter Friedrich Wolf zuzuschreiben. 48

The Nazi press was of course extremely hostile, recognizing in Wolf's play a powerful propaganda weapon being used to great advantage. Pollatschek points out how the strength of repressive measures used against the play proved its power to injure the Nazi regime:

Die Aufführung war ein Riesenerfolg - vor allem ein Riesenerfolg des Antifaschismus. Das Stück hat außerordentlich zur Errichtung und Stärkung der antifaschistischen Front beigetragen. Die Gefahr für sie erkannte die Hitlerregierung sofort, sie versuchte auf diplomatischem Wege gegen die Aufführung vorzugehen, und da sich das nicht als möglich erwies, spannte sie ihre Schweizer Agenten, die "Fröntler", ein. Im Theater selbst Zwischenfälle zu provozieren, konnten sie freilich nicht wagen (schwache Ansätze dazu wurden von den empörten Bürgern sofort zum Schweigen gebracht), aber sie versuchten, vor dem Theater Krawalle zu entfesseln. 49

After street fighting involving hundreds of police, Nazi sympathizers and socialist and Communist supporters of the play, the production was allowed to continue and also travel to other cities. As Pollatschek remarks: "Von Zürich aus trat "Professor Mamlock" seinen Siegeszug durch die Welt an".⁵⁰ During the next few years the play was performed in Tel Aviv, Toronto, Amsterdam, Oslo, Tokyo, Madrid, Shanghai, Stockholm, New York, and throughout the Soviet Union. As a vehicle for Wolf's anti-Fascist message the play was enormously successful, and

must certainly have gratified the author's ambitions to arouse world opinion.

Like other exile plays such as Bruckner's Die Rassen, Brecht's Furcht und Elend des dritten Reiches and Toller's Pastor Hall, Professor Mamlock managed to carry abroad the spirit of the Weimar Republic's Zeittheater even when the genre had ceased to exist within the borders of Germany. There the stage rapidly lost touch with reality, but in the outside world realistic documentary drama continued for a little longer in the 800 productions of the Exiltheater.⁵¹ There were problems, however; cut off as it was from the mainstream of German theatre, the Tendenzstück in exile became an oddity, an exception, a fringe activity with a limited life expectancy. As Rühle explains:

Dieses deutsche Zeitstück stirbt im Exil bald ab, weil es dem historischen Boden entzogen ist, der Gesellschaft, auf die es sich bezieht und die es zur Resonanz braucht. Das gehört zu den Voraussetzungen des Zeitstückes: da es so radikal auf "Kunstwert" verzichtete, mußte es um so mehr auf dem Situations- und Gesellschaftswert bestehen. Im Exil hatte es die ihm gemäße Gesellschaft verloren. 52

While it is not true to say that Professor Mamlock lacks literary value - excellent characterisation and skilful manipulation of dramatic tension give it a worth other than its moral and political content - its concentration on the problems of a very specific time and situation certainly limited its sphere of influence. Like other tendentious works which have outlived the evils against which they preached, the play is now a fascinating recreation of period rather than propaganda:

it survives as historical documentation and is no longer a call to action. As a fragment of history, however, it provides a remarkable insight into the political and social upheavals of its time.

SUMMARY

These nine plays range in time from 1918 to 1933, reflecting the whole span of the Weimar Republic's historical as well as literary development, from revolution to Fascism and from lyrical Expressionism to shrewdly calculated political agitation. All are to a certain degree documentary plays with a distinct message to impart; each author was faced by the task of firstly reflecting his own society in drama and at the same time persuading an audience to share his opinion of that society and how it might best be changed. The dramatist as social critic has two major aims: to convince and to point the way for reform. He must document the world in such a way that his concerns are made real to the spectator and indicate ways in which such concerns may be turned into useful change. It is interesting to compare the methods used by different authors to achieve this.

One major problem confronting documentary drama in the age of Weimar was obviously the bewildering enlargement of the perceived world brought about by modern communication-technology: radio, telephone, film, rapid transport and mass circulation newspapers brought continuous floods of information, both serious and trivial, from Germany and the rest of the world. Capturing even a part of this complexity in a play must have seemed very difficult.

There was more to the recording of contemporary reality, however, than the reflection of surface detail.

Writers with a knowledge of Marxist theory were aware of the need to portray social processes as well, the causes and effects, the hidden historical and economic forces at work beneath the surface. The world had grown far too complex and problematic to be easily portrayed within the limits of the theatre, yet dramatists faced precisely this task.

Some found a solution by limiting themselves to a smaller, finite world from which generalisations could be made and chose to depict a microcosm of the greater society. Horváth's Italienische Nacht and Lampel's Revolte im Erziehungshaus are plays of this type: the events in the small Bavarian town or in the boys' home are relatively simple but reflect seriously on the state of the world outside their narrow range. In similar fashion Reinhard Goering reflects the growing war-weariness and rebelliousness of a whole nation through the experiences of seven sailors in a gun-turret in See-schlacht (1916); Carl Sternheim recalls the atmosphere of pre-war Germany by showing the situation in one household in 1913 (1915); Marieluise Fleißer castigates ignorance and bigotry with her example of one small town in Fegefeuer in Ingolstadt (1924). In such plays the author has the advantage of working with conveniently limited material. Relevant points can still be made, even though the scope of the play may not be particularly wide.

A different technique used to capture the essence of a complex world was to reduce it to symbol or allegory

as the Expressionists preferred to do. Georg Kaiser's Gas explores important social developments in a non-realistic setting in which colours, shapes and symbolic or abstract figures are used to present the action and an event such as the explosion becomes an allegory of industrialisation's threat to humanity. Hasenclever's Der Sohn (1913) is another allegory which demonstrates the bitterness and tension between two generations, between the old authoritarian Germany and the new liberal, democratic spirit, in the personal conflict of father and son. Rubiner's Die Gewaltlosen (1918) interprets man's struggle to reform the world as a release from prison and then a dreamlike quest on board ship. Symbolism is a useful technique for capturing the essence of a situation, but its drawback for the social critic is vagueness, lack of specific relevance to the real world.

Working-class AgitProp theatre of the streets and beer halls relied on symbolism too, but not as a conventionally 'poetic' device; there it was the only way to present simple ideas to an unsophisticated audience with the minimum of time and equipment. Figures such as the greedy capitalist with his money bags or the fat bourgeois in his top hat enacted simple plots to demonstrate how society functioned according to Marxist theory. Wangenheim's Die Mausefalle developed from this tradition; symbolic figures like the two-faced Taba who represents the exploiting employer and Fleißig who embodies the average hapless employee are used to act out several significant parables illustrating the laws of economic

determinism and the fate of the worker in a capitalist society. There is no attempt at naturalism; a complex reality has been condensed into convenient symbols, which are able to portray its basic political and economic structure but nothing more.

Those authors who wished to do more than this and tried to recreate the whole breadth of the real world on stage faced a mammoth task. Among the techniques which they discovered or adapted in order to make plays as wide-ranging and informative as possible were several which became so well-established as to create a new dramatic style characteristic of the 1920s and early 1930s.

The multiple set was one favourite device, because it could be used to crowd a number of different characters and social classes onto the stage at the same time, providing a cross-section or an impression of totality. Bruckner's Die Verbrecher employed it to reveal the life of a whole house and its fate in the law-courts, Toller's Hoppla, wir leben! showed all the rooms of a large hotel and Piscator's production of Mehring's Der Kaufmann von Berlin employed three stage levels for the three main social classes.

At the same time, individual scenes multiplied and became shorter, pithier and more wide-ranging; their function was less to carry forward the action than to illuminate one more facet of society, one more corrupt or chaotic element of a world which the author wanted to change. Scenes were set in taverns and back lanes or in private supper rooms and ministerial offices in order to

cover as much ground as possible; the wanderings of the main character were designed to reveal a great range of fleeting impressions, a montage of reality. The Expressionist device of Stationen through which the hero passes on his way to spiritual awareness became in the later political theatre a much more deliberately planned succession of confrontations with reality through which the hero's naiveté is slowly replaced by new political awareness. A significant progression can be observed from Kaiser's Von morgens bis mitternachts (1912), through Toller's Hoppla, wir leben! (1927) to Brecht's Die heilige Johanna der Schlachthöfe and Die Mutter (1932); the main character in each of these plays progresses towards a degree of enlightenment which is spiritual or psychological in the earlier plays and increasingly political in the later. Closely allied to the nature of this enlightenment are the fates of the characters; Kaiser's bank clerk simply commits suicide, Karl Thomas and Johanna Dark struggle for a time before being overwhelmed, but Pelagea Wlassowa fights on towards a revolution which will surely come.

Well-documented real events largely replaced psychological motivation as the basis of the plot in many plays. Brecht's Trommeln in der Nacht (1918-22), Graff and Hintze's Die endlose Straße (1926), Wolf's Professor Mamlock and Bruckner's Die Rassen (1933) as well as Toller's Pastor Hall (1938) show characters caught up in the great events of their time: war, revolution, or the National Socialist rise to power. Here the historical situation

becomes both the background to the story and the major problem confronting the people in it: individual personalities still shape the plot in minor ways but outside events dictate the outcome, which is usually tragic.

While Marxist theory suggests that it is misleading or irrelevant to portray individual fates when the fate of a whole class or a historical movement is in question, human individuals were of course still necessary in drama. Many, however, were chosen more as representatives of their class or time than as unique individuals.¹ Toller's Karl Thomas and Brecht's Andreas Kragler embody the heroic and unheroic revolutionary respectively; Mehring's Kaftan is meant to stand for millions of inflation racketeers just as Wolf's Mamlock supposedly embodies the millions of victims of Nazism. The multitude of plays which examined the problems of the law, unemployment, abortion, or the disorientation of the younger generation also showed representative rather than unique characters: a portrayal of individual suffering was felt to be of interest mostly for the light it shed on the condition of millions.

Perhaps the ultimate attempt to portray every possible aspect of the contemporary world on stage was made by Erwin Piscator. Not content with the devices mentioned, which were already to be found in the plays he chose, he developed novel production techniques designed to set his human characters against their historical background and widen the scope of the action until it encompassed nothing less than the whole of a historical period.

Documentary films of historical events as well as his own film footage of street scenes and factories were interspersed with live action; on gauze walls slides of newspaper headlines, news photographs or official statistics were projected; recorded street noises and other special effects combined to create in the theatre a multi-media portrayal of the world outside. Piscator's characters moved and spoke against a background of faithfully documented reality, never individual personalities so much as children of their time, products or victims of a particular historical period.

These were the methods used by authors and directors to mirror their society on stage. The second task of the social critic, to point out how the faults in society might be reformed and to encourage an audience to share this desire, was carried out in various ways, and these were much more open to debate and disagreement.

Georg Lukács has claimed that the essential purpose of the response evoked by any work of art is to personally involve the spectator in the portrayal of the real world set before him.² To shape such a response towards active social or political involvement, however, as Tendenzdrama aimed to do, was a difficult matter. Here intentions varied enormously according to the personal world-view of each writer.

The political allegiance of socially critical dramatists in the Weimar Republic was very obviously to the Left. Surprisingly, however, no significant proletarian playwright emerged, a fact of which Piscator more

than once complained.³ Organisations for the encouragement of proletarian culture were set up in the Republic but produced no dramatist of note from among the working classes, whose cause was espoused, as so often before⁴, by middle-class intellectuals of varying political shades. The nine playwrights examined here came without exception from comfortable bourgeois backgrounds, and in this were typical of the writers of their day. Many experienced a 'conversion' to Marxism and a few like Wolf and Wangenheim dedicated much of their working lives to helping and speaking out for the proletariat, but all found their political direction by a process of intellectual conviction rather than working-class experience. The extreme Left was represented by Friedrich Wolf, Gustav von Wangenheim and Erwin Piscator, who were KPD members; Ernst Toller also regarded himself as a revolutionary Marxist. Brecht declared himself a Communist after 1926 but cherished a certain individualism which made him stop short of party membership. Many others took a moderately left-wing political stance. Dramatists such as Georg Kaiser, Ferdinand Bruckner, Carl Credé, Ehm Welk, Hans José Rehfisch or Peter Martin Lampel expressed convictions in their plays which were based on humanitarian rather than party-political ideas. While vaguely socialist in intent, their work called more for humane tolerance and understanding than for political change. Ödön von Horváth and Carl Zuckmayer made a point of remaining politically unaligned and expressed sympathy for humanity in general rather than for any formulated

ideology; like the others, they gave a much clearer indication of what they were against rather than what they were for. So too did the young Brecht (at the time of writing Trommeln in der Nacht) and Mehring: while revealing some sympathy for the poor and downtrodden, their chief interest was in satirizing greed or foolishness or malice, and their failure to present an alternative made their message a rather negative one. Toller, Wangenheim and Wolf, however - like Brecht in his later plays - seem always to have worked with one eye on the KPD for approval; they were consciously following an existing programme for social reform which shaped their approach to drama. There was still room for individual difference - Toller's Marxism was rather romantically expressed while Brecht always remained wary and cynical - but the programme itself was not in dispute.

Intentions to influence audience opinion naturally varied according to the playwright's political position. Georg Kaiser was undoubtedly giving a grim warning in his play Gas, but his basic concern was with exploring his own ideas rather than instructing an audience, as his later writings reveal.⁵ Lampel, Wangenheim and Wolf quite specifically tried to persuade their audiences to definite action or reform; Toller, Bruckner, Mehring and Horváth railed against a multitude of evils and abuses but offered no very convincing solutions. Yet all of them, even the Expressionist Kaiser, were perforce interested in the problem of how best to get their message across to an audience.

Brecht's development of the ground rules of 'epic' theatre was by far the most intellectual and consciously planned campaign to shape audience response and channel it in the desired direction. In the Anmerkungen zur Oper Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny, published in 1931, Brecht stated the differences, the "Gewichtsverschiebungen", which set his 'epic' theatre apart from the traditional 'dramatic' form, revealing at the same time the methods he regarded as ideal for reaching and convincing the spectator.⁶ Brecht's epic theatre "macht ihn zum Betrachter aber weckt seine Aktivität", "erzwingt von ihm Entscheidungen" and "vermittelt ihm Kenntnisse"; "es wird mit Argumenten gearbeitet", rather than with emotion or suggestion. This is a remarkably cerebral approach: enlightenment is to come from reason and logic, from the onlooker's own thought processes and not from the more usual but, in Brecht's view, suspect act of emotional identification with the characters and the story presented on stage.

In this espousal of alienation Brecht stood almost alone among contemporary playwrights: only Wangenheim approached him in the technique of logical demonstration. Die Mausefalle, written in the same year in which Brecht published his Anmerkungen, partly fulfils the requirements of Brecht's epic theatre, but does not hesitate to use identification and involvement as major weapons in the attempt to win over an audience. The other critical playwrights of the period, however, relied on the more familiar techniques of traditional drama. A number of

popular methods are discernible in their works.

The central character of each play usually acts as the focus for the author's attempts to impart a message of some kind. He is no longer a 'hero' in the traditional sense. Outside circumstances rather than personal qualities influence each turn of events, and processes, not people, provide the subject matter of the play. Nevertheless, an individual spokesman is still important for a number of reasons.

Firstly, the central character is the obvious target for the audience's sympathy and involvement: pathos is a powerful mover of opinion. The emotional appeal which a frustrated idealist, a returned soldier, a rejected lover, a released prisoner, an unmarried mother or a persecuted Jew can make to the spectator provides the playwright's best chance of winning support for his ideas. Brecht's ideal of epic detachment and uninvolvedness was no more than embryonic in Trommeln in der Nacht and was certainly not shared by the other dramatists. While scorning sentimentality for its own sake, even dedicated propagandists like Wolf quite naturally used emotion as well as intellect to further their cause.

Secondly, the main character often provides an ideal mouthpiece for the playwright's opinion. Direct authorial comment was, before epic theatre, more readily possible in prose and verse than in drama. Drama depends on the words of created characters, and it is through them that the playwright must speak, while still allowing them a life of their own. All of the central characters

of critical plays have moments when they obviously speak for the author: Brecht's contempt for needless heroism is voiced by Kragler, Kaiser's horror of industrial drudgery by the Milliardärsohn, Horváth's criticism of the Republicans by Martin, and so on. It is a clear and simple device for making the message plain, but too easily turns into preaching if overindulged, as it certainly is by Bruckner in Die Verbrecher, and to some extent by Wolf in Professor Mamlock.

A subtler and far more convincing device is to create a situation where criticism is implicit rather than explicit, where faults are made plain without the need for separate authorial comment. Brecht needs no mouthpiece to condemn the greed and intolerance of the bourgeoisie: the Balickes provide their own indictment, both in the sentiments they express and in the way they react to various situations. Mehring's parade of Berlin grotesques speaks for itself: an extra voice within the play pointing out the folly of militarism or the ugliness of sly profiteering would only be superfluous and unwelcome. Authors such as Bruckner also have the ability to let situations speak for themselves. Bruckner's closely intercut courtroom scenes reveal the cruelty and inadequacy of the law quite well on their own. But he cannot resist using first the young judge and then Kummerer to voice his condemnation more distinctly. Audiences tend to prefer subtlety to obvious preaching, as Monty Jacob's irritated reaction to the rather heavyhanded methods employed in Die Verbrecher revealed: if an

author's persuasive intent is made too obvious, its effectiveness is weakened. Only Die Mausefalle was able to make a virtue of undisguised propaganda by making honesty part of its appeal to the audience, but such frankness was rare.

A further function of the main character in many of these plays is that of the outsider who comes with fresh insights to an already existing situation, often acting as a catalyst upon it.⁷ Lampel's Hospitant is the best example; as an outsider he is not part of the prevailing vicious circle of laziness and self-interest which dominates the administration of the boys' home, and thus has a better chance of changing things; his increasing insights into the problems there are also the vehicle by which the audience is informed of those problems. Other outsiders who bring an uncomfortably new and direct vision to prevailing evils are Karl Thomas (Hoppla, wir leben!) and Andreas Kragler (Trommeln in der Nacht). Outsiders who have the function of illuminating some aspect of society without necessarily passing judgement on it include Kaftan, whose newness to Berlin provides Mehring with the opportunity to bombard him, and thus the audience as well, with a variety of beautifully observed and savagely critical 'first impressions', and the newcomer to the factory in Gas, whose naive questions enable the secretary and also the playwright to expound the basic principles of worker-ownership in operation there.

It is interesting to note that the main characters of these plays also tend to be one of three types: they

may be defined as helpless idealist, victim, or learning victim.

To the first category belong the impassioned but ineffectual heroes of Expressionism; they confront an imperfect and unsympathetic world with their ecstatic idealism and are, not surprisingly, wounded in the encounter. Kaiser's Milliardärsohn is the obvious example, and Toller's Karl Thomas and Lampel's Hospitant are similar types, as are the main characters of Kaiser's Von morgens bis mitternachts (1912), Hölle Weg Erde (1919) and Nebeneinander (1922), Kornfeld's Die Verführung (1913) and Sorge's Der Bettler (1917). Much use is made of the contrast between their idealism and the imperfections of the reactionary world with which they come into conflict, but their lone protests are ultimately without effect - pathos remains their only appeal.

Much the same applies to the second category - the hero as victim, and specifically as victim of his age. Mehring's Kaftan is one; he is entirely a product of the inflationary period and his abysmal downfall coincides with its end. The central characters of Goering's See-schlacht (1916) and Graff and Hintze's Die endlose Straße (1926), of Horváth's Sladek, der schwarze Reichswehrmann (1928) and Glaube Liebe Hoffnung (1932), of Mühsam's Sacco und Vanzetti (1926), Toller's Hinkemann (1922) and Pastor Hall (1938) as well as Bruckner's Krankheit der Jugend (1926), Die Verbrecher (1928) or Die Rassen (1933) suffer primarily because of the age they live in. War, poverty, injustice or intolerance defeat them rather than

any personal flaw: they are caught up in vast processes beyond individual control. As was the case with the suffering idealists, their most important function is to illuminate the evils in the world around them; they are unable to change that world or help themselves in any way.

The final and most positive category is that of the learning victim, the character who is first seen to be downtrodden and abused but who then learns to take a stand and defend himself. Brecht's Kragler is the first of these; his development does stop short with the simple and tenacious desire to stay alive and enjoy life, but he has ceased to be the passive victim of circumstance. Wangenheim's Fleißig is also seen to learn, after much instruction, how he might break free from his exploited state, and Wolf's Mamlock progresses courageously from humiliation and helplessness to a spirited, if belated, resistance. He dies, but has begun to see the solution. The various plays about revolution - Wolf's Die Matrosen von Cattaro (1930) and Tai Yang erwacht (1931), Toller's Maschinenstürmer (1921), Paquet's Fahnen (1924) and Sturmflut (1926), Plievier's Des Kaisers Kulis (1930) and Welk's Gewitter über Gottland (1927) - all portray characters who have learned to take their fate in their own hands, although with varying degrees of conviction and success. Brecht's later plays provide some remarkable learning heroes: Die Mutter (1932) is the best example of the gradual transformation of an ignorant victim into a confident and purposeful fighter. Sig-

nificantly, the idealists and victims tend to come early in the history of Weimar drama and the tough realists later; a gradual progress is discernible from the Expressionist visionaries to the Marxist activists, from plays which merely detailed the prevailing misery to those which began to suggest positive solutions. A similar change took place in the intent and purpose of drama, progressing from the chiefly literary concerns of the Expressionists, through a gradual increase in interest in portraying the social context and its various concrete problems, to the more outspoken propaganda plays at the end of the era.

One other persuasive device to be found in most critical drama of the Weimar period is the use of contrast - the art of revealing what Piscator called "die gesellschaftliche Diskrepanz"⁸, the basic inequality or injustice which lies at the root of most abuses and provokes people to attempt reform. The key to influencing an audience's attitudes and making the spectator sympathetic to a playwright's message lies in making this contrast or discrepancy obvious. In Trommeln in der Nacht it is the difference between rich and poor, profiteer and soldier, bourgeoisie and proletariat, and Brecht makes it more marked by characterising the middle-class characters as greedy and oafish and the poor as disreputable but sympathetic. Hoppla, wir leben! has a multitude of contrasts to display: there is the discrepancy between former revolutionary zeal and modern disillusionment, between struggling honesty (Thomas) and corrupt oppor-

tunism (Kilman), and also between vacillating idealism (Thomas) and practical dedication (Eva Berg, Mutter Meller and the others). Toller highlights these and other telling contrasts by moving Thomas through many scenes of 'high' and 'low' life and confronting him with different characters and situations. The discrepancy in Bruckner's Die Verbrecher lies between the whole of the first act, which is full of lively and natural but legally 'criminal' actions, and the second, in which the grotesque formality and rigidity of the law dominate. Mehring's Der Kaufmann von Berlin abounds in contrasts, not only between rich and poor but between perverted delusion (plots for a military coup) and sober reality, and between the flattery of the socialites who cluster round the despised Jew while he has money and their callous desertion when he has none. Treatment of such contrasts differs from play to play. For an author like Mehring it is enough to have pointed them out, but others, such as Wangenheim or Wolf, go on from there to outline a plan of action which will level such discrepancies and provide a constructive outlet for the indignation they arouse.

It is only too apparent, of course, that the numerous dramatists who felt moved to portray and criticise Weimar society achieved no obvious success in the sense of exerting a beneficial influence on political life or saving Germany from its reactionary tendencies. They certainly managed to broadcast the idea that a great deal was wrong with the Weimar Republic, but the people chose to end its corruption and weakness by turning to

the political Right. The majority of playwrights sympathised with the Left; in numbers as well as in talent and enterprise they far outstripped the authors of nationalist plays⁹, but what the reaction may have lacked in literary prowess it made up in simple violence, through assassinations or street fighting. It was just as Tucholsky rather wryly remarked: "Deutschland ist eine anatomische Merkwürdigkeit. Es schreibt mit der Linken und tut mit der Rechten".¹⁰ Whether in spite of their warnings, or because their bitter attacks on the manifold imperfections of the Republic had only helped to undermine an institution in which too few people had ever believed, the critical dramatists of that time were fated to see most of their exhortations come apparently to nothing. Their persuasion seems to have failed; the effort made to portray the contemporary world, however, preserved fourteen years of German social history in a quite remarkable series of dramatic documents. As Rühle has observed:

Nie hat sich das deutsche Drama mehr zur 'öffentlichen Angelegenheit' gemacht als in diesen Jahren. 11

Selten hat sich . . . eine Gesellschaft so unmittelbar abgebildet im Drama wie das der Republik. 12

This detailed and uncomfortably truthful portrait of an era has certainly proved to be one of the most valuable achievements of the German drama of 1918-1933.

FOOTNOTESGAS

1. Julius Bab, for example, mentions Kaiser's special feeling for the "Nervenzustand" of his own time - Bab, Die Chronik des deutschen Dramas (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1972), p.140.
2. Bernhard Diebold, article in Frankfurter Zeitung 29.11.18 - cited in Günther Rühle: Theater für die Republik (Frankfurt: S.Fischer Verlag, 1967), p.127.
3. Günther Rühle, Zeit und Theater (Berlin: Propyläen Verlag, 1975) Vol. 1, pp.9-10.
4. As Kändler observes: "Zweifellos spiegelt sich hier schon das Erlebnis des Krieges mit seinem technisierten Massenmord wider". Klaus Kändler, Drama und Klassenkampf (Berlin und Weimar: Aufbau-Verlag, 1970), p.47.
5. Rühle observes: "Die neue technische und soziale Welt erschien hier zum erstenmal auf dem Theater". G. Rühle, Theater für die Republik, p.124.
6. G. Rühle, Zeit und Theater Vol. 1, p.46.
7. G. Rühle, Theater für die Republik, p.124.
8. Rühle suggests this in Zeit und Theater Vol. 1, p.40.
9. Walther Huder, "Nachwort" in: Georg Kaiser, Stücke, Erzählungen, Aufsätze, Gedichte (Cologne and Berlin: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 1966), p.773.
10. F.N. Mennemeier, Modernes Deutsches Drama I (Munich: UTB, W.Fink, 1973), p.151.
11. Gas, Georg Kaiser, Stücke, Erzählungen, Aufsätze, Gedichte, p.586.
12. G. Rühle, Theater für die Republik, p.125.
13. Gas, p.595.
14. Ibid., p.609.
15. Ibid., p.610.
16. Ibid., p.611.
17. Ihering, in G. Rühle, Theater für die Republik, p.128.
18. Kändler, Drama und Klassenkampf, p.34.
19. Die Wandlung, in G. Rühle, Zeit und Theater, Vol. 1, p.578.

20. Ibid., p.579.
21. Ibid., pp.580-81.
22. Gas, p.624.
23. Anneliese Viviani, Das Drama des Expressionismus (Munich: Winkler, 1970), p.15.
24. Siegfried Melchinger, Geschichte des politischen Theaters (Velber: Friedrich Verlag, 1971), pp.366-7.
25. Gas, p.699.
26. Ibid., p.773.
27. G. Rühle, Zeit und Theater Vol. 1, p.47.
28. Gas, p.678.
29. Ibid.
30. As described by Thomas Koebner in Wolfgang Rothe (ed.), Die deutsche Literatur in der Weimarer Republik (Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam, 1974), p.29.
31. Mennemeier, Modernes Deutsches Drama I, p.151.
32. Gas, p.615.
33. Ibid., p.618.
34. Fritz Martini, Deutsche Literaturgeschichte (Stuttgart: Kröner, 1960), p.528.
35. G. Rühle, Theater für die Republik, p.126.
36. Ibid., p.903.
37. Toller has previously mentioned Büchner's Woyzeck and Hauptmann's Die Weber.
38. Quoted by G. Rühle in Zeit und Theater Vol. 1, p.912.
39. Herbert Ihering, Von Reinhardt bis Brecht, Vol. 1 (Berlin: Aufbau-Verlag, 1958), p.96.
40. Bernhard Diebold, Anarchie im Drama (Berlin: Keller, 1928), p.379.
41. Ihering, Von Reinhardt bis Brecht, Vol. 1, p.96.
42. G. Rühle, Theater für die Republik, p.130.
43. Hermann Eßwein, quoted in Rühle, Theater für die Republik, p.124.

44. Ibid., pp.124 & 127.

45. Ibid., p.126.

TROMMELN IN DER NACHT

1. K. Feilchenfeldt, Bertolt Brecht, Trommeln in der Nacht. Materialien, Abbildungen, Kommentar (Munich: Carl Hansen Verlag, 1976), pp.20-33.
2. Ibid., p.21.
3. Ibid., p.26.
4. Ibid., p.21.
5. Ibid., p.22.
6. Ibid., p.32.
7. Erich Eyck, A History of the Weimar Republic, transl. by Hanson and Waite (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1967), Vol. 1, p.50.
8. Bertolt Brecht, Trommeln in der Nacht, (Suhrkamp Verlag, 1975), p.28.
9. Ibid., p.29. Compare the similar role played by the gas-mask spectacles in Borchert's Draußen vor der Tür (1947).
10. Ibid., p.29.
11. Kurt Tucholsky, Gesammelte Werke, (Rowohlt, 1975), Vol. 2, p.39.
12. Quoted in Jürgen Rühle, Theater und Revolution, von Gorki bis Brecht (Munich: dtv, 1963), p.161.
13. Mennemeier, Modernes Deutsches Drama I, footnote to p.354.
14. J. Rühle, Theater und Revolution, p.163.
15. Trommeln in der Nacht, p.49.
16. Ibid., pp.48 and 50.
17. Siegfried Jacobsohn, cited in Günther Rühle, Theater für die Republik, p.404.
18. Herbert Ihering, Von Reinhardt bis Brecht, Vol. 1, p.272.
19. From a newspaper article cited by Feilchenfeldt, op. cit., p.119.
20. Possibly, one suspects, from sheer rowdyism - though Brecht's undeniably genuine contempt for the bourgeoisie was later given a more acceptably Marxist interpretation, for example in the poem "Verjagt mit gutem Grund":

“Ich bin aufgewachsen als Sohn
 Wohlhabender Leute. Meine Eltern haben mir
 Einen Kragen umgebunden und mich erzogen
 In den Gewohnheiten des Bedientwerdens
 Und unterrichtet in der Kunst des Befehlens. Aber
 Als ich erwachsen war und um mich sah
 Gefielen mir die Leute meiner Klasse nicht
 Nicht das Befehlen und nicht das Bedientwerden
 Und ich verließ meine Klasse und gesellte mich
 Zu den geringen Leuten.”

(From Bertolt Brecht, Gedichte, Vol. 4, 1934-1941, Suhrkamp 1961, p.141.) The truth of the matter may lie in a remark Brecht is said to have addressed to Georg Grosz, that he (Grosz) detested the bourgeoisie not because he was a Marxist, but because he was an artist. This seems to have been the case with Brecht himself.

21. F.N. Mennemeier, Modernes Deutsches Drama I, p.248.
22. From a detailed account of Brecht's activities in 1919 included in the Württembergisches Staatstheater Stuttgart Programmbuch Nr. 15 for Trommeln in der Nacht, 1975/76, pp.85-6.
23. Trommeln in der Nacht, p.57.
24. Mennemeier, op. cit., p.264.
25. Trommeln in der Nacht, pp.58-9.
26. Ibid., p.59.
27. Mennemeier, op. cit., p.268.
28. Trommeln in der Nacht, p.59.
29. Brecht, quoted by Kändler, Drama und Klassenkampf, footnote to p.411.
30. Kändler, op. cit., p.152.
31. Feilchenfeldt, op. cit., p.48.
32. Mennemeier, op. cit., p.268.
33. Kändler, op. cit., p.342.
34. Ibid., p.342.
35. Jahrbuch der Berliner Bühnen 1925/26 (Berlin: August Scheel) p.275.
36. Mennemeier, op. cit., p.248.
37. Kändler, op. cit., pp.152 & 343.
38. According to Klotz - Volker Klotz, Bertolt Brecht -

Versuch über das Werk (Darmstadt: Hermann Gentner, 1957), pp.28-9.

39. 1922 was the year of the play's first performance.
40. Melchinger, Geschichte des politischen Theaters, p.370.
41. Klotz, op. cit., p.27.
42. Ibid., p.27.
43. Trommeln in der Nacht, p.21.
44. Ibid., p.34.
45. Ibid., p.43.
46. Ibid., p.26.
47. Ibid., p.43.
48. Günther Rühle, Theater in unserer Zeit (Suhrkamp 1976), p.27.
49. Kändler, op. cit., p.147.
50. Trommeln in der Nacht, p.8.
51. Ibid., p.10.
52. Ibid., p.14.
53. Ibid., p.15.
54. Ibid., p.13.
55. Ibid., p.30.
56. Ibid., p.23.
57. Ibid., p.31.
58. Ibid., p.33.
59. Ibid., p.34.
60. Ibid., p.34.
61. Sinsheimer, cited in G. Rühle, Theater für die Republik, p.402.
62. Bab, ibid., p.402.
63. Sinsheimer, ibid., p.401.
64. Feilchenfeldt, op. cit., p.120.

65. From an article in the "Bayerische Staatszeitung", quoted by Feilchenfeldt, op. cit., p.118.
66. G. Rühle, Theater für die Republik, p.402.
67. Ibid., p.404.
68. Ibid., p.405.
69. Kändler, op. cit., p.343.
70. From Blätter des deutschen Theaters, 1922, cited by Feilchenfeldt, op. cit., p.125.
71. G. Rühle, Theater in unserer Zeit, p.86.
72. Ihering, Von Reinhardt bis Brecht, Vol. 1, p.272.
73. Ibid., p.274.
74. G. Rühle, Theater für die Republik, p.405.
75. Jahrbuch der Berliner Bühnen 1925/26, p.275.
76. They included Heimkehr (Rehfisch, 1918), Das Gericht der Schatten and Die Überlebenden (Lilienfein, 1919 and 1920), Hinkemann (Toller, 1922), Karl und Anna (Frank, 1929), Douaumont (Möller, 1929), Wunder um Verdun (Chlumberg, 1932), and to some extent Horváth's Sladek, der schwarze Reichswehrmann (1928).
77. According to Feilchenfeldt, op. cit., p.109.

HOPPLA, WIR LEBEN!

1. Ernst Toller, Hoppla, wir leben!, in Günther Rühle, Zeit und Theater, Vol. 2, p.181.
2. Eyck, A History of the Weimar Republic, Vol. 2, p.136.
3. Hoppla, wir leben!, p.174.
4. Ibid., p.177.
5. Heinrich Mann, Ein Zeitalter wird besichtigt (Stockholm: Neuer Verlag, 1945), p.358.
6. Hoppla, wir leben!, p.171.
7. Ibid., pp.171-2.
8. Eyck, op. cit., Vol. 2, p.113.
9. Ibid., pp.192-3.
10. Hoppla, wir leben!, p.177.
11. See for example Eyck, op. cit., Vol. 1, p.262.
12. Ibid., Vol. 2, p.149.
13. Ibid., Vol. 2, chapters 1 and 2.
14. Hoppla, wir leben!, p.172.
15. Ibid., p.173.
16. Foerster, quoted in Eyck, op. cit., Vol. 2, p.132.
17. Lion Feuchtwanger, Erfolg. Drei Jahre Geschichte einer Provinz. (Berlin: Aufbau-Verlag, 1954), p.545.
18. Hoppla, wir leben!, p.205.
19. Figures given by Klaus-Peter Schulz, Kurt Tucholsky (Hamburg: rororo Monographie, 1959), p.76.
20. Peter Gay, Weimar Culture. The outsider as insider (Penguin, 1974), pp.21-23.
21. Eyck, op. cit., Vol. 1, p.340. See also Walter Tormin, Die Weimarer Republik (Hannover: Fackelträger-Verlag, 1973), p.140.
22. Hoppla, wir leben!, p.196.
23. Ibid., p.194.
24. Ibid., p.208.

25. Ibid., pp.210-11.
26. Ibid., pp.230-33.
27. Reinhold Grimm, "Zwischen Expressionismus und Faschismus", in Reinhold Grimm & Jost Hermand (eds.), Die sogenannten Zwanziger Jahre (Bad Homburg/Berlin/Zürich: Verlag Gehlen, 1970), p.38.
28. Ernst Toller, Eine Jugend in Deutschland, included in Prosa, Briefe, Dramen, Gedichte (Rowohlt 1961).
29. Quoted by Kändler, Drama und Klassenkampf, p.296.
30. Quoted by Jürgen Rühle, Das gefesselte Theater (Köln: Kiepenheuer und Witsch, 1957), p.318. See also Jost Hermand, Unbequeme Literatur (Heidelberg: Lothar Stiehm, 1971), pp.132-3.
31. Erwin Piscator, Das politische Theater (Rowohlt, 1963), pp.147-9.
32. According to Jürgen Rühle, Das gefesselte Theater, p.316.
33. Hoppla, wir leben!, p.230. The figure of Kilman has been variously identified as a mixture of Otto Braun (Prussian premier 1920-32) and Carl Severing (Reichsminister and Prussian minister 1920-32) by 'Slang' in "Die Rote Fahne", 6.9.27 (cited by Manfred Brauneck in Die Rote Fahne, p.277), and as August Winnig (President of East Prussia) by Jost Hermand in Unbequeme Literatur, p.143.
34. Kurt Tucholsky, Gesammelte Werke (Rowohlt, 1975), Vol. 3, p.53.
35. Ibid., Vol. 3, p.351. Cf. Alfred Döblin, Berlin Alexanderplatz (Munich: dtv, 1970), p.238.
36. Günther Rühle, Theater in unserer Zeit, p.108.
37. Hoppla, wir leben!, pp.183-4.
38. Ibid., p.231.
39. Ibid., p.206.
40. Ibid., p.212.
41. E.g. in his war experience, revolutionary involvement and long imprisonment.
42. Cited by G. Rühle, Zeit und Theater, Vol. 2, p.784.
43. Piscator, Das politische Theater, p.146.
44. As is pointed out, for example, in R. Grimm and J.

- Hermand's Die sogenannten Zwanziger Jahre, p.36.
45. K. Kändler, Drama und Klassenkampf, p.297.
46. W. Rothe, Die deutsche Literatur in der Weimarer Republik, p.41.
47. G. Rühle, Theater in unserer Zeit, p.108.
48. As Kändler points out in Drama und Klassenkampf, pp.274-8. A contemporary critic also observed: "'Hoppla, wir leben!' ist Tollers Leben." - 'K' in "Die Rote Fahne", 6.9.27 (cited by Manfred Brauneck in Die Rote Fahne, p.279).
49. Jost Hermand, however, asserts the contrary, claiming that Thomas is not intended as a mouthpiece for Toller, and that the suicide ending was a version suggested by Piscator: Jost Hermand, Unbequeme Literatur, pp.133-38.
50. H. Ihering, Von Reinhardt bis Brecht, Vol. 2 (Aufbau-Verlag, Berlin, 1959), p.276. Toller shares this tendency to 'romanticise' machinery with authors like Kaiser; only Brecht (in Mann ist Mann first of all) neither idolises nor abhors the new technology but simply incorporates it into his play as something to be taken for granted - Ihering, op. cit., p.232.
51. K. Kändler, op. cit., p.212.
52. According to Günther Rühle, Zeit und Theater, Vol. 2, p.781.
53. The text printed in Zeit und Theater, however, is Toller's original and not the cut and altered text of the actual Piscator production. The differences between the two are detailed in Zeit und Theater, Vol. 2, pp.785-90.
54. Hoppla, wir leben!, p.191.
55. Ibid., p.224.
56. "Wer kauft meine Erfindung? Ich will kein Geld, allen wird die Erfindung helfen, allen. Schweigen ... Keiner antwortet." - Hoppla, wir leben!, p.231.
57. Ibid., p.177.
58. Ibid., p.235.
59. Ibid., p.233.
60. Ibid., p.235.
61. Piscator, Das politische Theater, p.148.

62. Jost Hermand asserts, however, that Thomas is really Toller's 'guinea pig' used to depict a partially mistaken political viewpoint in the hope that the audience will learn from his bad example - Jost Hermand, Unbequeme Literatur, p.134. But if this was indeed Toller's intention, it was not recognised by contemporary critics. Frida Rubiner reflected a fairly widespread opinion of Toller's play and his personal beliefs when she wrote in "Die Rote Fahne" of 7.9.27: "Toller weiß keine Antwort auf die von ihm aufgeworfenen Probleme, denn er selbst hat sich ja nie entschieden, er schwankte sein Lebtag zwischen Revolution und sozialdemokratischem Pazifismus. Um den anderen den Weg zu zeigen, muß man ihn selbst kennen. Toller hat in seinem Stück alle Fragen offen gelassen." (Cited by Manfred Brauneck in Die Rote Fahne, p.284.)
63. "Hoppla, wir leben! war, das kann als Gesamteindruck festgehalten werden, ein außerordentlich großer Erfolg." - Knellessen, Agitation auf der Bühne, p.132. See also Jost Hermand, Unbequeme Literatur, p.131.
64. Monty Jacobs, in Rühle's Theater für die Republik, pp.793-4.
65. Paul Fechter, *ibid.*, p.796.
66. Fechter, *ibid.*, p.796.
67. Ihering, *ibid.*, p.797.
68. Fechter, *ibid.*, p.796.
69. Jacobs, *ibid.*, p.793.
70. *Ibid.*, p.797.
71. Ihering, Von Reinhardt bis Brecht, Vol. 2, p.276.
72. Knellessen, Agitation auf der Bühne, p.131.
73. G. Rühle, Theater für die Republik, p.796.
74. *Ibid.*, p.795.
75. Quoted by Knellessen, *op. cit.*, p.131.
76. *Ibid.*, p.131. Further details of the "chauvinistisches Haßkonzert" brought forth by the right-wing press in response to the play are given by Jost Hermand, Unbequeme Literatur, pp.132-3.

DIE VERBRECHER

1. Ihering, Von Reinhardt bis Brecht, Vol. 2, p.361.
2. Gay, Weimar Culture, p.21.
3. Eyck, A History of the Weimar Republic, Vol. 1, p.287.
4. Theodor Eschenburg, Die improvisierte Demokratie: Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Weimarer Republik (Munich: piper paperback, 1963), p.56.
5. Gay, Weimar Culture, pp.21 and 22.
6. See for example Gay, op. cit., p.22; G. Rühle, Zeit und Theater, Vol. 2, p.32.
7. Kurt Tucholsky, Gesammelte Werke, Vol. 7, p.296.
8. Ihering, Von Reinhardt bis Brecht, Vol. 2, p.406.
9. Eyck, A History of the Weimar Republic, Vol. 1, p.289.
10. Piscator, Das politische Theater, p.226.
11. Lion Feuchtwanger, Erfolg, p.800.
12. Gustav Radbruch, cited by Eschenburg, Die improvisierte Demokratie, p.56.
13. Other contemporary plays which dealt with justice included Der Henker, Marie Lazar, 1922; Die Opferung, Hans Kaltenecker, 1922; Der Frauenarzt, Hans José Rehfisch, 1922; Menschen von Heute, Paul Wertheimer, 1924; Feuer in der Stadt, Hans Sassmann, 1927; Die Ursache, Leonard Frank, 1929; Die Ehe, Alfred Döblin, 1929; Krist vor Gericht, Hermann Burte, 1930; Voruntersuchung, M. Alsberg and H.O. Hesse, 1930. These plays are mentioned by Hildergard Emmel, Das Gericht in der deutschen Literatur des zwanzigsten Jahrhunderts (Bern: Francke Verlag, 1963), p.23, and were included in a dissertation by Ilse Subak (Vienna, 1936) entitled Gericht und Recht im modernen deutschen Drama.)
Lion Feuchtwanger's novel Erfolg (1929) portrayed German justice as dependent on whims and arbitrary dislikes or devious behind-the-scenes connections. Kafka's Der Prozeß, which appeared in 1925, had also helped to swell the prevailing gloom with its non-specific but nightmarish impression of the futility of the individual's confrontation with the law.
14. Ferdinand Bruckner, Die Verbrecher, in Günther Rühle, Zeit und Theater, Vol. 2, p.292.
15. Ibid., p.326.

16. Thomas Koebner, "Das Drama der Neuen Sachlichkeit", in Rothe (ed.), Die deutsche Literatur in der Weimarer Republik, p.36.
17. According to G. Rühle, Zeit und Theater, Vol. 2, p.793.
18. Ibid., p.31.
19. Rothe, op. cit., p.36.
20. Die Verbrecher, p.326.
21. R. Grimm and J. Hermand, Die sogenannten Zwanziger Jahre, p.34.
22. As Szondi notes: Peter Szondi, Theorie des modernen Dramas (Suhrkamp, 1977) p.121.
23. This idea was of course expressed most explicitly in Georg Kaiser's play Nebeneinander.
24. Die Verbrecher, p.299.
25. Ibid., p.297.
26. Ibid., p.283.
27. Ibid., p.299.
28. Ibid., p.300.
29. Ibid., p.298.
30. Quoted by G. Rühle in Theater für die Republik, p.900.
31. Ibid., p.901. Cf. Hauser's opinions about subtle or blatant intent in art - Arnold Hauser, Soziologie der Kunst, p.233.
32. Die Verbrecher, p.320.
33. Ibid., p.321.
34. Monty Jacobs, in G. Rühle, Theater für die Republik, p.901.
35. Die Verbrecher, p.285.
36. Ibid., p.284.
37. Ibid., p.277.
38. Ibid., p.284.
39. Ibid., p.320.

40. G. Rühle, Theater für die Republik, p.898.
41. Ihering, Von Reinhardt bis Brecht, Vol. 2, p.361.
42. Ibid., p.362.
43. G. Rühle, Theater für die Republik, p.900.
44. The name Ferdinand Bruckner was a pseudonym adopted by the theatrical entrepreneur Theodor Tagger. It was several years before his identity was discovered.
45. G. Rühle, Theater für die Republik, p.899.
46. Ibid., p.899.
47. Ibid., p.898.

REVOLTE IM ERZIEHUNGSHAUS

1. Fritz Martini, Deutsche Literaturgeschichte, p.537.
2. According to Jürgen Thöming, in Rothe, Die deutsche Literatur in der Weimarer Republik, p.219.
3. From the preface to Jungen in Not, quoted by G. Rühle in Zeit und Theater, Vol. 2, pp.799-800.
4. Lampel's account of this is given in Zeit und Theater, Vol. 2, p.800.
5. Ibid., p.34. Cf. Wolf's observation: "Nackte Wahrheit: das ist die Tendenz, das ist die mit der Kamera des Lebens aufgenommene Photographie dort, die zu spontanem Beifall hinreißt, die jeden Menschen im Zuschauerraum angreift". - Friedrich Wolf in "Die Rote Fahne", 4.12.28. (Cited by Manfred Brauneck in Die Rote Fahne, p.364.)
6. Peter Martin Lampel, Revolte im Erziehungshaus, in G. Rühle, Zeit und Theater, Vol. 2, p.329.
7. Ibid., p.354.
8. Ibid., p.351.
9. Ibid., p.353.
10. Ibid., p.376.
11. Knellessen, Agitation auf der Bühne, p.236.
12. Revolte im Erziehungshaus, p.329.
13. Ibid., p.354.
14. Fritz Engel, in G. Rühle, Theater für die Republik, p.909.
15. Ibid., p.909.
16. Lampel's account of the incident appears in G. Rühle, Zeit und Theater, Vol. 2, p.800.
17. Ibid., p.801.
18. Ibid., p.801.
19. Ibid., p.34.
20. This is reported in Knellessen's Agitation auf der Bühne, p.236, and in J. Rühle's Theater und Revolution, p.154.
21. A device used notably by Hauptmann in Vor Sonnen-

aufgang. (Cf. P. Szondi, Theorie des modernen Dramas, p.77 and elsewhere.)

22. Thomas Koebner in Rothe, op. cit., p.32.
23. Bernhard Diebold, quoted in G. Rühle, Theater für die Republik, p.907.
24. Revolte im Erziehungshaus, p.331.
25. Ibid., pp.352-4.
26. Ibid., pp.341-3.
27. Ibid., p.377.
28. Ibid., p.382.
29. Ibid., p.381.
30. Ibid., p.385.
31. G. Rühle, Theater für die Republik, p.903.
32. Bernhard Diebold, in G. Rühle, Theater für die Republik, p.906.
33. Ihering, in G. Rühle, Theater für die Republik, p.905.
34. Ibid., p.905.
35. Ibid., p.908.
36. Ibid., p.908.
37. Ibid., p.908.
38. Some institutions ignored these instructions, however, and persisted in their old ways, according to Proletarische Sozialpolitik 1930, Heft 5, p.148 - quoted in the programme notes to Revolte im Erziehungshaus published by the Städtische Bühnen Freiburg, Spielzeit 1976/7, p.16.
39. Described by G. Rühle in Zeit und Theater, Vol. 2, p.799.
40. Ibid., p.798.
41. Ibid., p.801.
42. Ibid., p.801.
43. Ibid., p.33.

DER KAUFMANN VON BERLIN

1. Jürgen Thöming, "Soziale Romane in der Endphase der Weimarer Republik", in W. Rothe (ed.), Die deutsche Literatur in der Weimarer Republik, p.169.
2. Piscator, Das politische Theater, p.234.
3. Heinrich Mann, Ein Zeitalter wird besichtigt, p.314.
4. Eyck, A History of the Weimar Republic, Vol. 1, p.131.
5. Ibid., p.172.
6. Ibid., p.246.
7. Ibid., p.246.
8. Ibid., p.257.
9. Ibid., p.266.
10. Piscator, Das politische Theater, p.234.
11. G. Rühle, Zeit und Theater, Vol. 2, p.804.
12. Heinrich Mann, Ein Zeitalter wird besichtigt, p.315.
13. Ibid., p.315. See also Walter Tormin, Die Weimarer Republik (Hannover: Fackelträger-Verlag, 1973), pp.123-4.
14. Eyck, A History of the Weimar Republic, Vol. 1, p.248.
15. Lion Feuchtwanger, Erfolg, pp.540-41. "Kutzner" is Feuchtwanger's name for Hitler in this slightly fictionalised account of contemporary history.
16. Eyck, op. cit., Vol. 1, pp.237-8.
17. See for example Hans Johst's play Schlageter (1933), in G. Rühle, Zeit und Theater, Vol. 3.
18. Eyck, op. cit., pp.262-3.
19. Ibid., pp.272-6.
20. Ibid., p.240.
21. Walter Mehring, Der Kaufmann von Berlin, in G. Rühle, Zeit und Theater, Vol. 2, p.387.
22. Biographical details are given by G. Rühle, Zeit und Theater, Vol. 2, pp.803-6.
23. Piscator, op. cit., p.237.

24. Der Kaufmann von Berlin, p.429.
25. Ibid., p.432.
26. Ibid., pp.435-6.
27. Ibid., p.446.
28. Ibid., pp.398-9.
29. Ibid., p.442.
30. Ibid., p.390.
31. Ibid., p.390.
32. Ibid., p.391.
33. Ibid., p.394.
34. Ibid., p.395.
35. Ibid., pp.397 & 446.
36. Ibid., pp.395 & 439.
37. Piscator, op. cit., p.236.
38. Der Kaufmann von Berlin, pp.390-91.
39. Ibid., p.395.
40. Ibid., p.394.
41. Ibid., p.397.
42. Ibid., p.398.
43. Ibid., p.400.
44. Ibid., p.444.
45. Ibid., p.462.
46. Ibid., p.464.
47. Ibid., p.471.
48. For example in the train, pp.390-1, on the street, pp.394-8, 401-4, 446-7 & 484, at the party, pp.462-8, 470-1, 473-5.
49. Ibid., p.390.
50. Ibid., p.397.
51. Ibid., p.390.

52. Ibid., p.403.
53. G. Rühle, Theater für die Republik, p.963, also Knellessen, Agitation auf der Bühne, p.163.
54. G. Rühle, Theater in unserer Zeit, p.35.
55. Ibid., p.104.
56. G. Rühle, Theater für die Republik, p.963.
57. Piscator, op. cit., pp.235-6.
58. G. Rühle, Zeit und Theater, Vol. 2, p.807.
59. G. Rühle, Theater für die Republik, pp.963 & 964.
60. Ibid., p.968.
61. Piscator, op. cit., p.237.
62. G. Rühle, Theater für die Republik, pp.961-2; J. Rühle, Das gefesselte Theater, p.181. Knellessen also describes the play's "rücksichtslose Aggressivität allen Interessengruppen von rechts und links gegenüber" in Agitation auf der Bühne, p.162.
63. G. Rühle, Theater für die Republik, p.965.
64. Ibid., pp.961-2.
65. G. Rühle, Zeit und Theater, Vol. 2, p.808.
66. G. Rühle, Theater für die Republik, pp.962 & 965. Diebold is referring to Kaiser's play Zweimal Oliver (1926).
67. As G. Rühle suggests in Theater in unserer Zeit, p.113.
68. G. Rühle, Theater für die Republik, p.965.
69. Ibid., p.966.
70. Ibid., p.967.
71. Ibid., p.967.
72. Ibid., p.963.
73. Piscator, op. cit., p.234.
74. Ibid., p.238.

ITALIENISCHE NACHT

1. Eyck, A History of the Weimar Republic, Vol. 2, p.408.
2. Ibid., p.408.
3. Ibid., p.409.
4. The story is told by Krischke in his Nachwort to the Suhrkamp edition of the play, pp.153ff.
5. Eyck, op. cit., pp.66-8.
6. Ödön von Horváth, Italienische Nacht (Suhrkamp 1974), p.14.
7. Ibid., p.54.
8. This was in reality the organisation Reichsbanner Schwarz-Rot-Gold, founded by the SPD in 1924 as a defence against the extremism of both Left and Right.
9. Peter Gay, Weimar Culture, pp.24-6.
10. This is apparent from the voting figures - see for example Sefton Delmer, Weimar Germany - Democracy on Trial (London: Macdonald, 1972), p.97.
11. Italienische Nacht, p.62.
12. Horváth, Vienna 1931, quoted in Suhrkamp edition, p.162.
13. G. Rühle, Zeit und Theater, Vol. 2, p.814.
14. See Italienische Nacht, pp.9, 11, 37, 42, 54 and 62.
15. Ibid., p.41.
16. Jürgen Hein (ed.), Theater und Gesellschaft, Das Volksstück im neunzehnten und zwanzigsten Jahrhundert (Düsseldorf: Bertelsmann Universitätsverlag, 1973), p.181.
17. Kurt Tucholsky, Gesammelte Werke, Vol. 3, p.53.
18. From a "handschriftliches Skizzenblatt im Berliner Horvátharchiv" - cited in the Württembergisches Staatstheater Stuttgart Programmbuch Nr. 22 to Horváth's Zur schönen Aussicht, 1976, p.4.
19. Joseph Gregor, Der Schauspielführer (Stuttgart: Hiersemann-Verlag, 1953), Vol. 2, p.75.
20. His father was an Austro-Hungarian diplomat - see

- G. Rühle, Zeit und Theater, Vol. 2, p.810.
21. G. Rühle, Theater in unserer Zeit, p.111.
22. From the "handschriftliches Skizzenblatt" quoted above.
23. Quoted by Krischke in the Nachwort to the Suhrkamp edition, p.153.
24. G. Rühle, Zeit und Theater, Vol. 2, p.45.
25. Italienische Nacht, p.42.
26. Ibid., p.28.
27. Jürgen Hein, op. cit., p.180.
28. G. Rühle, Zeit und Theater, Vol. 2, p.814.
29. Hein, op. cit., p.179.
30. Italienische Nacht, p.42.
31. Ibid., p.52.
32. Hein, op. cit., p.180.
33. Italienische Nacht, p.25.
34. Ibid., p.35.
35. Ibid., p.28.
36. Ibid., pp.34, 35.
37. Ibid., p.56.
38. Ibid., p.29.
39. Volker Klotz, Dramaturgie des Publikums (Munich: Hanser Verlag, 1976) p.187.
40. Ibid., p.205.
41. Ibid., p.213.
42. A similar explanation was given by Brecht to justify the fact that his "Mutter Courage" apparently fails to learn from her experiences.
43. Krischke, "Nachwort" to Suhrkamp edition of Italienische Nacht, p.159.
44. Ibid., p.159.
45. Ibid., p.161.

46. Ibid., p.160.
47. Ibid., p.162.
48. Ibid., p.160.
49. Ibid., p.169.
50. Ibid., p.159.
51. In "Aus meinem Leben", 1930: Friedrich Wolf,
Gesammelte Werke, Vol. 15, p.134.

DIE MAUSEFALLE

1. Eyck, A History of the Weimar Republic, Vol. 2, p.280.
2. Ibid., pp.292-3.
3. Ibid., p.280.
4. Ibid., p.281.
5. Theodor Eschenburg, Die improvisierte Demokratie, p.69.
6. i.e. Hitler.
7. Lion Feuchtwanger, Erfolg, p.435.
8. Mentioned by Volker Klotz in Dramaturgie des Publikums, p.350.
9. Siegfried Kracauer, Die Angestellten (Frankfurt, 1930)- this book was one of the sources used by Wangenheim in writing Die Mausefalle.
10. Inge von Wangenheim, cited in G. Rühle, Zeit und Theater, Vol. 2, p.827.
11. Friedrich Wolf, Gesammelte Werke, Vol. 15, p.294.
12. This version of the play was published under the title of Doktor Mamlocks Ausweg (Zürich, Oprecht & Halbling, 1935).
13. Walter Pollatschek, Das Bühnenwerk Friedrich Wolfs (Berlin: Henschelverlag, 1958), p.175.
14. Quoted by Volker Klotz, Dramaturgie des Publikums, footnote to p.350.
15. Hans Fallada, Kleiner Mann - was nun? (Berlin: Rowohlt, 1935), pp.21-22.
16. Ibid., p.293.
17. Wolf's play Bauer Baetz was similarly aimed at a target audience, the impoverished small farmers.
18. Inge von Wangenheim, cited by G. Rühle, Zeit und Theater, Vol. 2, p.827.
19. Wangenheim, cited by Klotz, Dramaturgie des Publikums, p.259.
20. Wangenheim was at one stage "Mitglied des Rates geistiger Arbeiter" - G. Rühle, Zeit und Theater, Vol. 2, p.824.

21. Inge von Wangenheim, in Zeit und Theater, Vol. 2, p.826.
22. See G. Rühle, Zeit und Theater, Vol. 2, p.828.
23. Klaus Kändler, Drama und Klassenkampf, p.243.
24. G. Rühle, Zeit und Theater, Vol. 2, p.25.
25. There were 3,500,000 Angestellte in 1925 - see Klotz, op. cit., p.350.
26. It is true that socialist drama should in theory portray no central 'hero' ("Das Individualschicksal lehnte man als nichtrepräsentativ, als bürgerliche Fiktion ab" - Frank Trommler in W. Rothe, Die deutsche Literatur in der Weimarer Republik, p.82), but in Die Mausefalle this one man's fate is shown to be representative of a whole class, and the bourgeois cult of personality which idolises individual 'heroes' is further exposed as a foolish illusion.
27. Klotz, op. cit., p.199.
28. Gustav von Wangenheim, Die Mausefalle, in G. Rühle, Zeit und Theater, Vol. 2, p.612.
29. Ibid., p.657.
30. Ibid., pp.678-9.
31. Kändler, op. cit., p.242.
32. Wolf, Gesammelte Werke, Vol. 15, p.289.
33. Die Mausefalle, p.614.
34. Ibid., p.612.
35. G. Rühle, Zeit und Theater, Vol. 2, p.40.
36. Kändler, op. cit., p.243.
37. Die Mausefalle, p.613, pp.654-5.
38. G. Rühle, Zeit und Theater, Vol. 2, pp.826-7.
39. Klotz, op. cit., p.221.
40. Ibid., p.262.
41. Ibid., p.264.
42. Ibid., p.264.
43. Die Mausefalle, p.654.

44. Klotz, op. cit., p.268.
45. Ibid., p.260.
46. Klotz lists a number of well-known quotations used in the play in his footnote on p.352, Dramaturgie des Publikums.
47. Ibid., p.269.
48. Wolf, Gesammelte Werke, Vol. 15, p.340.
49. Die Mausefalle, p.656.
50. Ihering, Von Reinhardt bis Brecht, Vol. 2, p.216.
51. G. Rühle, Zeit und Theater, Vol. 2, p.830.
52. Die Rote Fahne 24.12.31 - cited in Kändler, Drama und Klassenkampf, p.239.
53. G. Rühle, Zeit und Theater, Vol. 2, p.826.
54. Ibid., p.826.
55. Klotz, op. cit., p.274.
56. Wolf, Gesammelte Werke, Vol. 15, p.289.
57. Sefton Delmer, Weimar Germany - Democracy on Trial, p.97. René König also reports: "Es gab vier Parteien, die hauptsächlich von den Mittelschichten gewählt wurden: die Deutschnationale Volkspartei, die Nationalliberalen, die Demokraten und die Wirtschaftspartei. Diese vier Parteien hatten 1928/9 noch rund 40% der Stimmen, am Höhepunkt der Krise - im November 1932 - aber nur noch 8%. Ihr Verlust entspricht fast genau dem Gewinn der Nationalsozialisten." - René König, "Zur Soziologie der zwanziger Jahre", in Leonhard Reinisch (ed.), Die Zeit ohne Eigenschaften. Eine Bilanz der zwanziger Jahre. (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1961).

PROFESSOR MAMLOCK

1. According to Walter Pollatschek, Das Bühnenwerk Friedrich Wolfs (Berlin: Henschelverlag, 1958), p.174.
2. Professor Mamlock, in Friedrich Wolf, Gesammelte Werke in sechzehn Bänden (Berlin & Weimar: Aufbau-Verlag), Vol. 3, 1960, p.310.
3. Ibid., p.310.
4. Wolf, Gesammelte Werke, Vol. 15, pp.476-7.
5. Koppel S. Pinson, Modern Germany - its history and civilisation (New York: MacMillan, 1966), p.505.
6. Golo Mann, Deutsche Geschichte des 19. und 20. Jahrhunderts (Frankfurt: S. Fischer, 1973), p.819.
7. Professor Mamlock, p.317.
8. According to Manfred Durzak, Die deutsche Exilliteratur (Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam jun., 1973), pp.32-4.
9. René König, "Zur Soziologie der zwanziger Jahre", in Leonhard Reinisch (ed.), Die Zeit ohne Eigenschaften, pp.32-4.
10. K.D. Bracher, Die deutsche Diktatur (Cologne: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 1969), p.396.
11. Professor Mamlock, p.358.
12. Ibid., p.325.
13. Wolf, Gesammelte Werke, Vol. 15, p.478.
14. Ibid., pp.478-9.
15. Gregor, Schauspielführer, Vol. 7, p.399.
16. "Kunst ist Waffe!", Wolf, Gesammelte Werke, Vol. 15, p.87.
17. Pollatschek, Das Bühnenwerk Friedrich Wolfs, pp.178-9.
18. In this sense it resembles Die Mausefalle, which Wolf mentions as a comparison.
19. Wolf, Gesammelte Werke, Vol. 15, p.346.
20. Pollatschek, op. cit., p.179.
21. Professor Mamlock, p.314.

22. Pollatschek, op. cit., p.177.
23. The prototype was Toller's Die Wandlung (1917-18), whose central character is actually remarkably similar to Mamlock. It shows a nationalist war hero of Jewish extraction forced by circumstances in the world about him to reject false patriotism and join in the cry for revolution.
24. Rothe (ed.), Die deutsche Literatur in der Weimarer Republik, pp.28-9.
25. Ibid., p.21.
26. Ibid., p.21.
27. Professor Mamlock, p.305.
28. Ibid., p.318.
29. Ibid., p.319.
30. Georg Lukács, Werke, Vol. 9: "Die Zerstörung der Vernunft" (Neuwied & Berlin: Luchterhand, 1971) pp.622-662.
31. Professor Mamlock, p.302.
32. Ibid., p.307.
33. Ibid., p.318.
34. Ibid., p.341.
35. Ibid., p.340.
36. Ibid., p.353.
37. Ibid., pp.354-6.
38. Ibid., p.359.
39. Golo Mann, Deutsche Geschichte des 19. und 20. Jahrhunderts, p.818.
40. Professor Mamlock, p.364.
41. Pollatschek, op. cit., p.175.
42. Wolf, Gesammelte Werke, Vol. 15, p.346.
43. Pollatschek, op. cit., p.373; Wolf, op. cit., Vol. 15, p.346.
44. The change of title was arranged, "um Schwierigkeiten mit einem Manne zu vermeiden, der Mamlock hieß" - Pollatschek, op. cit., p.373.

45. Durzak, Die deutsche Exilliteratur, p.104.
46. Pollatschek, op. cit., pp.375-6.
47. Ibid., pp.373-4.
48. Ibid., p.374.
49. Ibid., p.375.
50. Ibid., p.376.
51. G. Rühle, Zeit und Theater, Vol. 3, p.68.
52. G. Rühle, Theater in unserer Zeit, p.114.

SUMMARY

1. Lukács, for example, stresses the necessity of typicality as a method of condensing a truthful portrayal of the world into artistic forms - Georg Lukács, The Historical Novel, trans. H. and S. Mitchell (London: Merlin Press, 1962), p.139.
2. "Die künstlerische Evokation bezweckt ja in erster Linie, daß der Rezeptive eine solche Abbildung der objektiven Welt des Menschen als seine eigene Sache erlebe. Er soll in ihr sich selbst - seine eigene Vergangenheit oder Gegenwart - wiederfinden, und sich dadurch seiner selbst als Teiles der Menschheit und ihrer Entwicklung bewußt werden." - Georg Lukács, Ästhetik Teil I - Die Eigenart des Ästhetischen, Werke, Vol. 12 (Neuwied: Luchterhand, 1962), p.297.
3. Erwin Piscator, Das politische Theater, p.235.
4. See e.g. Arnold Hauser, Soziologie der Kunst (Munich: C.H. Beck, 1974), p.244.
5. "Ich suche anderen nichts klar zu machen - ich suche mich." - Georg Kaiser, Stücke, Erzählungen, etc., p.707.
6. Bertolt Brecht, Schriften zum Theater, in Gesammelte Werke, Vol. 17 (Suhrkamp, 1967), p.1009.
7. As Szondi notes, Hauptmann employed this technique in Vor Sonnenaufgang as a significant partial solution to the contradictions inherent in the drama of that time: Peter Szondi, Theorie des modernen Dramas, p.77.
8. Piscator, Das politische Theater, p.133.
9. Certainly in numbers, and arguably in originality and skill: see G. Rühle, Zeit und Theater, Vol. 2, pp.13-23.
10. "Schnipsel", 1931, in Kurt Tucholsky, Gesammelte Werke, Vol. 9, p.124.
11. G. Rühle, Zeit und Theater, Vol. 2, p.30.
12. Ibid., p.49.

C O N C L U S I O N

CONCLUSION

The socially critical drama which emerged in Germany during the years of the Weimar Republic proved to have an importance transcending that of the contemporary issues in which it was involved. While Zeittheater was sometimes regarded as a necessarily ephemeral expression of the spirit of the 1920s, in a wider literary context it appears as a significant part of those developments in modern drama which have encouraged a critical analysis of society as well as a more challenging interaction with the audience.

One characteristic of 20th Century drama to which the Zeitstück made an important contribution is an awareness of those processes at work within the social structure which provide the underlying motivation of human events. The idea of man as a socially determined being is not new; it first gained momentum after the decline of Romanticism and the emergence of bürgerlicher Realismus and reached a peak in the works of the Naturalists. In the years of the Weimar Republic, however, the concept of man's social conditioning was still able to fascinate a generation of playwrights who expressed it in more sophisticated and adventurous terms than before, applying to drama a political world-view which assisted in their analysis of human society.

Historical materialists such as Lukács see the purpose of art as an 'evocation' of the real world which confronts man with an awareness of his own place in the history of human development.¹ Viewed from this stand-

point, the Zeitstück of the 1920s appears as a remarkable attempt to express the newly perceived social realities of its age. In many plays of the period, historical processes replace individual personalities as the author's chief concern; it is no longer God, or Fate, or even the human will of leaders such as Wallenstein or Napoleon which determines the outcome of events, but a complex interaction of economic, political and cultural factors beyond the control of any one man. If these factors can only be understood, humanity becomes the agent, and not simply the victim, of historical change.²

One result of such understanding is the emancipation of drama from traditional concepts of Schicksal and Tragik and the virtual disappearance of the classical hero. Once man is seen as the product of social forces, the individual counts for little; only the masses have real power. The characters of Zeittheater are consequently portrayed not as absolute in themselves but as representative and dependent members of a wider society. Plays such as Brecht's Mann ist Mann and Wangenheim's Die Mausefalle actually show the ritual destruction of individual personality; Kaiser's Gas presents an individual 'hero' frustrated by both the will of the masses and the economic necessities of an industrial society. In the later plays of the Weimar period, representatives rather than individuals become the ideal: the exemplary characters of Brecht's Lehrstücke replace the egotistical Baal and Kragler, the central figure of Toller's Die

Wandlung is superseded by the crowds of his Masse Mensch, and the characters of plays by Lampel, Bruckner and Wolf supposedly represent the sufferings of a whole class rather than individual misfortune.

Piscator was certainly aware of the new dramatic ideology, and described it thus in Das politische Theater:

Nicht mehr das Individuum mit seinem privaten, persönlichen Schicksal, sondern die Zeit und das Schicksal der Massen sind die heroischen Faktoren der neuen Dramatik.

Verliert dadurch der einzelne die Attribute seiner Persönlichkeit? Haßt, liebt, leidet er weniger als der Held der vorigen Generation? Gewiß nicht, aber alle Empfindungskomplexe sind unter einen anderen Gesichtswinkel gerückt worden. Nicht mehr er allein, losgelöst, eine Welt für sich, erlebt sein Schicksal. Er ist untrennbar verbunden mit den großen politischen und ökonomischen Faktoren seiner Zeit. . .

Der Mensch auf der Bühne hat für uns die Bedeutung einer gesellschaftlichen Funktion. Nicht sein Verhältnis zu sich, nicht sein Verhältnis zu Gott, sondern sein Verhältnis zur Gesellschaft steht im Mittelpunkt. Wenn er auftritt, dann tritt mit ihm zugleich seine Klasse oder seine Schicht auf. 3

This, at least, was the theory - but one important factor hindered its complete application. Pathos, always a popular device for involving and persuading the onlooker, continued to devolve on individual characters. Wolf's Mamlock is not just any Jew - the details of his family life, professional skill and war service add to the emotional impact of his fate and also define him as a particular individual. Rehfisch/Herzog's Dreyfus and Mühsam's Sacco and Vanzetti suffer injustice as well-documented individual cases in spite of their symbolic qualities; Mehring's Kaftan is as much a memorable and pathetic individual as an embodiment of the opportunistic

inflationary period. The dramatist's awareness of the efficacy of such individual characterisation does tend to counteract the broader ideological movement towards generalisation. There are contradictions apparent even between Brecht's carefully reasoned theory and its practice; while his ideal of epic theatre rejects emotional identification in favour of intellectual argument, his plays gain much persuasive power from just this element. The pathos of the deaths of Mother Courage's children, for example, probably does more to strengthen the onlooker's distaste for war than any more cerebral proof of its absurdity or wastefulness. While it is true that whole generations suffer the consequences of war or economic upheaval, dramatists find that suffering is most effectively portrayed by sympathetic individuals. History is made on a large scale, but human audiences require human models to make its implications clear.

Man's destiny was already shown to be socially determined in the drama of the 1890s. The Naturalist playwrights, however, portrayed an essentially static world, one in which passive victims suffered the consequences of poverty or injustice without any hope of improvement. A central characteristic of 20th Century social drama is its feeling of movement and change, an awareness of the possibilities of revolt or reform, and this is particularly evident in the Weimar Zeitstück. The drama of the 1920s shows a progression not only from individual to typical characters but from passivity to activity as the playwrights and consequently their

created characters turn from visionary idealism to political involvement.⁴ This progression from man the pitiable victim to man the aware and determined fighter is also a part of the wider and gradual development of modern from classical drama. A change in the human self-image quite obviously necessitates a new Dramatik.

The influence of Marxist theory is apparent both in the concepts of economic determinism and class struggle which have shaped the 20th Century world-view and in the realisation that there is potential for change through reform or revolution. In the Weimar Republic, however, Marxist influence brought about a general shaping of ideas rather than widespread doctrinal orthodoxy. Many authors of Tendenzdrama assimilated the determinist concept of society and the expectation of revolutionary change but adapted them into an entirely personal view, making the movement as a whole eligible for the generalisation 'left-wing' and yet independent of any one political ideology. What Tendenzdrama retained was the essential idea of the downtrodden struggling for justice in a social structure which could be transformed if it were first understood.

The reality which the dramatist found himself challenged to portray was huge and complex.⁵ Such vast themes as the effect of gas or oil on world economy, the artificial fluctuations of the stock market or the political factors influencing peace or war seemed impossible to portray on stage, and yet these were the realities affecting human destiny and thus the proper subject

of drama. Authors and directors were obliged to develop new devices which made the inclusion of such a wealth of background material possible. Some were derived from earlier movements: Naturalism provided some useful techniques for the forceful presentation of social evils⁶, and from Expressionism came the freedom to experiment with new forms. Existing traditions of revue and cabaret also proved suitable to carry the new burden of consistent and serious social criticism. The real innovators, however, were Piscator and Brecht. Their endeavours to express modern realities on stage led them to explore the possibilities of stage technology and to formulate the structure of a new epic theatre. The mainstream of Weimar Zeittheater had broken new ground only in subject matter and purpose⁷; these two men, in trying to develop a form which would correspond to the new content, evolved techniques of direction and stage presentation which have since become essential features of political or documentary theatre.

Implicit in all of these developments was a desire for the closer interaction of the audience with the events on stage. The "Kommunikationsstruktur"⁸ of drama, which arose gradually in the 19th Century, has come into its own in an age of confrontation and involvement. 20th Century dramatists and directors have felt an obligation as never before to reach out from the stage towards the spectator in order to involve him more directly in the action, insist on his intellectual participation in the problems under examination or even drive him to some

further action in the world outside the theatre. The illusionistic Abkapselung of the traditional stage⁹ has been progressively broken down. This began notably in German theatre with Max Reinhardt's Großes Schauspielhaus - but, as Piscator has noted:

Er spürte wohl auch, daß man zu den Massen kommen müsse - aber er kam zu ihnen vom anderen Ufer mit fremder Ware. . . . Erreicht wurde nichts als eine Inflation der Form. Das Mitspielen der Masse aus dem Zuschauerraum war nicht in der programmatischen Haltung begründet und fand infolgedessen kein Echo, das über den "guten Regieeinfall" hinausging. 10

Piscator's own theatre, however, was designed to reach the masses not simply with theatrical display but with a direct political message; he communicated with them directly because he wanted to win them over. Piscator's technical innovations and the effort made to create involving and persuasive political theatre did much to establish audience-directed tendencies in modern drama. The traditionally enclosed and illusionistic stage was thus doubly assailed by new technological developments and an ideology which rejected its aloofness as outmoded and inappropriate. A theatrical convention which had survived for hundreds of years¹¹ gave way to allow plays to project directly out into the auditorium, or even to combine stage area and auditorium. The new dramatic model treated stage action and audience response as equal and necessary parts of a whole.¹²

Developments in Weimar theatre also helped to give rise to the modern assumption that a director's contribution is at least as important to a play as that

of the author. This emancipation of the directorial role from that of mere organiser and presenter began in the days of Max Reinhardt, but became fully apparent in the career of Leopold Jeßner. His production of Schiller's Wilhelm Tell in 1920 was a startling break with academic reverence for the classics and transformed the play into a topical political statement.¹³ Piscator of course went much further, usurping even the author's role as he changed slight, apolitical works into vividly tendentious productions, and abandoned or rewrote large portions of the text to suit his own purposes. There were many playwrights and theatregoers who objected to this high-handedness, but such artistic freedom set a precedent for the radically personal or political interpretation of dramatic texts which is now accepted as a director's right.

It is the political slant in particular which marks one of the major contributions of Weimar Zeittheater to modern drama. Events in Germany in the 1920s gave rise to an answering trend in its dramatic literature which has had an influence much greater than any contemporary propaganda effect.

A modern return to epic theatre (a form as old as the medieval mystery play) was perhaps inevitable: as Szondi's theory of the dialectic of form and content makes clear¹⁴, the tendency of "zwischenmenschliche Aktualität", i.e. interpersonal relationships and communication, to be gradually replaced by "Außermenschliches", i.e. political or economic factors, led to a

serious contradiction. "Subjekt" and "Objekt" (the self and the world) were now separate and opposed in content, but not yet in form. Only epic drama could end the contradiction by establishing this separation in form as well.

If epic drama was inevitable, however, its strong political coloration was not. The marked left-wing tendency which now seems an essential part of the genre arose largely as the result of its most influential architect's association with the drama of the Weimar Republic. Brecht's meeting with Piscator first introduced him to the possibilities of drama as an expression of political conviction¹⁵, and his espousal of Marxism resulted from the reading he undertook with the intention of writing a Zeitstück of his own about international economy (Weizen). Marxism provided Brecht's work with an ideological framework which had been previously lacking. His natural inclination to satire combined with the new political impetus to create a strongly tendentious epic theatre. Brecht's mature style certainly arose from his interaction with Weimar Zeittheater: in his youth he was one of a number of playwrights who regarded a critical confrontation with contemporary society as their major task, and the drama which he evolved in later years retained this same essential motivation.

The left-wing drama of the Weimar Republic appeared to die out when the Nazi regime came to power in 1933 and substituted a theatrical style designed to reflect its own peculiar ideologies, but its influence

was preserved in a number of ways. There was the personal continuity provided by survivors like Brecht and Piscator, who eventually returned to Berlin after years of exile. There they were able to exercise their former professions in a style which had developed and matured, and with a critical shrewdness far from stultified after the experiences of the intervening years. Brecht in particular began to exert such an influence in Germany and abroad after the publication of his major plays and through his continued work with the Berliner Ensemble that post-war drama was with some justification labelled simply "Drama nach Brecht".¹⁶ Piscator's work at the Freie Volksbühne in Berlin in the early 1960s was instrumental in establishing the new Documentary Theatre, and unleashed some theatrical scandals comparable to those of the 1920s with his productions of Rolf Hochhuth's Der Stellvertreter (1963), Heinar Kipphardt's In der Sache J. Robert Oppenheimer (1964) and Peter Weiss' Die Ermittlung (1965).

The "Nullpunkt-Situation"¹⁷ of German literature in 1945 began to change only very slowly in the years immediately following. The tradition of the Zürich Schauspielhaus for a time provided the only German language theatre, with productions of new plays by Zuckmayer (Des Teufels General, 1946), Fritz Hochwälder (Das heilige Experiment, Der öffentliche Ankläger, 1948) and Brecht. German "Bewältigung der Vergangenheit" began only tentatively with Borchert's radio play Draußen vor der Tür (1947). In the next decade it was the two Swiss

dramatists Max Frisch and Friedrich Dürrenmatt who emerged with comments on the recent past, albeit in allegorical form, such as Biedermann und die Brandstifter (1958), Andorra (1961) and Die Physiker (1961). A turning point came in the 1960s with the appearance of factual and specifically critical documentaries by Hochhuth, Kipphardt, Weiss, Wolfgang Graetz (Die Verschwörer, 1965) and Rolf Schneider (Prozeß in Nürnberg, 1967). Their stated intention was to combat the "Verdrängungsprozeß"¹⁸, to break through the discreet silence of the Adenauer era, "offiziell Verschleiertes, Verdrängtes, Verleugnetes aufzudecken".¹⁹ The movement soon widened its scope to other topics; Hochhuth's Soldaten (1967), Guerillas (1970) and Lysistrata und die Nato (1973), Weiss' Gesang vom Lusitanischen Popanz (1966), Viet Nam Diskurs (1968) and Trotzki im Exil (1969) and Enzensberger's Das Verhör von Habana (1970) commented on international politics; Tankred Dorst looked back to 1919 with Toller (1968) and Günter Grass to 1953 in Die Plebejer proben den Aufstand (1966).

While a great number of post-war German playwrights have to some extent emerged as social critics²⁰, the legitimate successor to Weimar Tendenzdrama has certainly been the Documentary Theatre, or, to give it its other titles, "das realistische Zeittheater", "Politisches Theater", "Theater des Protests", even "Anti-Theater".²¹ Many observers have noted its debt to the traditions of the 1920s²², among them Rolf-Peter Carl:

Weder die Beschäftigung mit politischen Ereignissen der Gegenwart oder jüngsten Vergangenheit

im Rahmen eines Bühnenstücks noch die Verwendung authentischen Materials sind ja neu. Wesentlich ist die Verbindung dieser beiden Momente mit einer entschiedenen politischen Haltung und Zielsetzung. Und diese Verbindung ist im politischen Theater der zwanziger Jahre - vor allem in den Inszenierungen der Piscator-Bühne - bereits voll ausgebildet. 23

Carl notes three major similarities between the documentary drama of the 1920s and the 1960s: the choice of politically controversial material, the use of a wide variety of documentary sources, and overt agitation for political ends.²⁴ Peter Weiss' "Notizen zum dokumentarischen Drama"²⁵ show many more parallels: his formulation of what is to him a new genre reveals both direct influence (from Piscator, dating from their work together on Die Ermittlung) and unconscious imitation of many aspects of Weimar theatre.²⁶

If some of the authors of Documentary Theatre were aware of the Weimar heritage on which they were building, however, many critics apparently were not: the early 1960s saw a renewal of the old controversy about theatre and politics, Kunst and Tendenz, Lyrik and Polemik.²⁷ The very same prejudices which Piscator had combated forty years before rose up again to confront the young political dramatists.²⁸

But whether consciously remembered or not, the Weimar tradition had served to revitalize another era of German literature. In the years following both World Wars, the Zeitstück proved a valuable instrument for coming to terms with reality, serving to express both the horrors of the war just past and the uneasy compromises of life in a new Republic. 1945 did not see the same

flourishing of suppressed youthful talent as did 1918; twelve years of Nazi dictatorship and six years of war had impoverished artistic life beyond the point of easy recovery. When the vacuum began to fill, however, it was clear that young playwrights still felt the urge to cast a critical eye over the present or the recent past and to write about the evils they observed. The "realistisches Zeittheater" of the 1960s showed that the Weimar concept of a playwright's responsibility lived on: drama for the purpose of social criticism had become an accepted fact.

FOOTNOTES

1. Georg Lukács, Ästhetik Teil I - Die Eigenart des Ästhetischen, Werke, Vol. 12, p.297.
2. As Rühle has noted: "Das Zeitstück drückt den Willen aus, nicht mehr länger dieser "Spielball anonymer Kräfte" zu sein. Es sucht die Hintergründe, die Mächte zu benennen, sie sichtbar zu machen und ihrer Anonymität, ihres Mythos und ihrer einschüchternden Kraft zu berauben." - Günther Rühle, Theater in unserer Zeit, p.89.
3. Erwin Piscator, Das politische Theater, p.132.
4. See e.g. Toller's description of this change - quoted by Günther Rühle in Zeit und Theater, Vol. 1, p.912.
5. Piscator, for example, referred to "die Weitläufigkeit und Kompliziertheit, die Totalität unserer grundsätzlichen Lebensprobleme" - introduction to Rolf Hochhuth, Der Stellvertreter (Rowohlt, 1963), p.10.
6. These included, for example, Hauptmann's detailed and realistic documentation of working-class life (Die Weber) and his use of the outsider to expose and comment on a situation (Vor Sonnenaufgang).
7. "Das Zeitstück ist mehr von Inhalt und Absicht her, weniger aus der Form bestimmbar." - Günther Rühle, Zeit und Theater, Vol. 2, p.31.
8. Manfred Brauneck, "Bemerkungen zu einer Typologie des modernen Dramas", in Manfred Brauneck (ed.), Das deutsche Drama vom Expressionismus bis zur Gegenwart (Bamberg: C.C. Buchners Verlag, 1972), p.17.
9. See e.g. Piscator's description of the "Guckkastenbühne", Das politische Theater, p.134.
10. Ibid., pp.73-4.
11. "Warum? Weil das Theater, als Institution, als Apparat, als Haus sich noch niemals bis zum Jahre 1917 im Besitze der unterdrückten Klasse befunden hat und weil diese noch nie in die Lage gekommen war, das Theater nicht nur geistig, sondern auch strukturell zu befreien." Ibid., p.134.
12. Manfred Brauneck, Das deutsche Drama vom Expressionismus bis zur Gegenwart, p.18.
13. Alfred Mühr, "Rund um den Gendarmemarkt", in Jahrbuch der Berliner Bühnen 1925/6, pp.265-74.

14. Peter Szondi, Theorie des modernen Dramas, p.75 and elsewhere.
15. According to Günther Rühle, Zeit und Theater, Vol. 2, p.24.
16. Manfred Durzak, Dürrenmatt, Frisch, Weiss. Deutsches Drama der Gegenwart zwischen Kritik und Utopie. (Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam jun., 1972), p.351.
17. Ibid., p.10.
18. Ibid., p.295.
19. Thomas Koebner (ed.), Tendenzen der deutschen Literatur seit 1945 (Stuttgart: Alfred Kröner Verlag, 1971), p.474, also p.364. See also Walter Laqueur, Weimar. A Cultural History 1918-1933 (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1974), p.271 and Erwin Piscator, Vorwort to Rolf Hochhuth, Der Stellvertreter (Rowohlt, 1963).
20. Most social comment has been indirect, e.g. through parable and allegory (Frisch, Die Chinesische Mauer, Walser, Überlebensgroß Herr Krott), travesty (Hartmut Lange, Herakles), the grotesque (Weiss, Ver-sicherung, Mockinpott, Dürrenmatt, Der Besuch der alten Dame) or the comic (Peter Hacks, Schlacht bei Lobositz, Helmut Baierl, Frau Flinz). Thomas Koebner, Tendenzen der deutschen Literatur seit 1945, pp.348-456.
21. Peter Weiss, "Das Material und die Modelle. Notizen zum dokumentarischen Drama", in Manfred Brauneck, Das deutsche Drama vom Expressionismus bis zur Gegenwart, p.250.
22. E.g. Weiss (ibid.), Manfred Durzak, Dürrenmatt, Frisch, Weiss, p.280ff., Jack D. Zipes in Thomas Koebner, Dramatik und Dramaturgie seit 1945, p.463, and Walter Laqueur, Weimar. A Cultural History 1918-1933, p.274.
23. Rolf-Peter Carl, "Dokumentarisches Theater", in Manfred Durzak (ed.), Die deutsche Literatur der Gegenwart. Aspekte und Tendenzen. (Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam jun., 1971), p.101.
24. Ibid., p.102.
25. In Manfred Brauneck (ed.), Das deutsche Drama vom Expressionismus bis zur Gegenwart, pp.250-255.
26. Weiss lists speeches, documents, letters, statistics, newspaper reports, photographs and film among the sources of documentary theatre (Notiz.1), describes it as "eine Reaktion . . . auf gegenwärtige Zustände, mit der Forderung, diese zu klären" (4), as

"Einblicke in Ungleichheiten so konkretisiert, daß sie unerträglich werden. Ungerechtigkeiten so überzeugend, daß sie nach sofortigem Eingreifen verlangen" (9), and explains: "Nicht individuelle Konflikte werden dargestellt, sondern sozial-ökonomisch bedingte Verhaltensweisen." (9) He continues: "Das dokumentarische Theater ist parteilich . . . Für ein solches Theater ist Objektivität unter Umständen ein Begriff, der einer Machtgruppe zur Entschuldigung ihrer Taten dient." (10) These statements are almost paraphrases of the basic philosophy of political theatre expounded by Piscator in 1929. Other echoes of Weimar theatre in Weiss' Notizen include "Das dokumentarische Theater kann die Form eines Tribunals annehmen" (11) (which recalls Die Verbrecher and a multitude of "Justice" plays), "Referate, Kommentare, Zusammenfassungen werden von Songs übernommen. Einführung von Chor und Pantomime. Gestisches Ausspielen der Handlung, Parodien, Benutzung von Masken und dekorativen Attributen. Instrumentalbegleitung. Geräuscheffekte." (12) (Brecht, Mehring, Wangenheim, the revue tradition) and "Das dokumentarische Theater muß Eingang gewinnen in Fabriken, Schulen, Sportarenen, Versammlungsräume." (13) (AgitProp and the actors' collectives of the 1930s).

27. Rolf Christian Zimmermann, "Hochhuths Stellvertreter und die Tradition der pamphletischen Literatur", in Reinhold Grimm, Willy Jaggi and Hans Oesch (eds.), Der Streit um Hochhuths "Stellvertreter" (Basle: Basilius Press, 1963), pp.137-169 passim.
28. Manfred Durzak, Dürrenmatt, Frisch, Weiss, pp. 280ff., also Robert Brustein, "History as Drama", in Eric Bentley (ed.), The Storm over The Deputy, p.22.

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