



With a New  
Introduction  
by the Author

# In My Time

*R*obert *S*trausz-*H*upé

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 **Routledge**  
Taylor & Francis Group  
LONDON AND NEW YORK

Originally published in 1965 by W. W. Norton & Company Inc.

Published 1996 by Transaction Publishers

Published 2017 by Routledge

2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4RN

711 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10017, USA

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Library of Congress Catalog Number: 95-31867

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Strausz-Hupé, Robert, 1903-

In my time / Robert Strausz-Hupé ; with a new introduction by the author.

p. cm.

Originally published : New York : W.W. Norton & Co., 1965.

Includes index.

ISBN 1-56000-853-9 (pbk. : alk. paper)

1. Strausz-Hupé, Robert, 1903- 2. Historians—Austria—Biography.  
3. Diplomats—Austria—Biography. 4. Historians—United States—  
Biography. I. Title.

D15.S85A3 1995

943.605—dc20

95-31867

CIP

ISBN 13: 978-1-56000-853-8 (pbk)

# *Introduction to the Transaction Edition*

After thirty years, I have nothing to add to or subtract from my autobiography—but for this introduction. I no longer know the man who wrote it. Nor do I quite understand why he wanted to write his autobiography in the first place. I do not disown *In My Time*, but I cannot review it critically. I am too far from it in time, yet too close to it to see it with a cold eye.

I recently reread *In My Time* for the first time in many years. Although the exercise did not leave me any wiser about the identity of the author, some of his preoccupations, I found, are mine. Every so often, the author of *In My Time* sheds the cares of the day and reaches out to history for an explanation of his own condition. *D'ou venons-nous; ou sommes-nous? Ou allons-nous?*

I was born in Middle Europe on the eve of the Great War that destroyed its political and social order. I lived between the great and avoidable massacre of a whole generation and the global and unavoidable catastrophe that goes by the name of World War II. These events changed my life, as they changed the lives of millions. That my experiences were not exceptional did not make them less traumatic to me.

In 1914, my parents and I had good reason in the logic of middle-class expectancies to look forward to a secure and, if that were our

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bent, comfortable future. History (with a capital H) disposed of these quaint expectancies.

*In My Time* records my pilgrimage through the 1920s and 1930s. On the way, I saw a great deal that I did not understand. I was certain, however, that the troubles of Europe would intrude upon America. The author of *In My Time* was no Tocqueville, but that he got right. The Depression was an end and a beginning. The Americans would put their own house in order, and then set the world right. On this ground, the author of *In My Time* and the undaunted Atlanticist still meet. As for our other concerns, we have nothing to say to one another. I have put the book aside. I will not open it again.

Statesmen as a species are capable of committing acts of folly far beyond the ken of ordinary men. One reason for their peculiar imperviousness to reason is the arrogance of power. The statesmen who, during the last 400 years, have run the affairs of the great Western nations have been immensely powerful. They possessed themselves of ever more effective instruments of power, until just a few men—even, at times, just one man—could set vast forces in motion by decisions ever more shrouded by the complexity of the machinery of the state.

In the nineteenth century, a few notes drafted in council, or, more likely, a few words spoken sotto voce to the statesmen's men-of-confidence sufficed to switch the controls from peace to war and from war to peace. How exactly this was done and how public opinion exercised its influences by endorsing decisions that it had not made and the consequences of which it did not understand—this is the last chapter in diplomatic history. It begins with the ascendancy of mass society and the people's ever more insistent demand for a commanding voice in the conduct of diplomacy. That chapter is not finished.

There have been improvements. In the age of instant communications, statesmen are less likely to indulge their megalomaniac fancies. Too many whistle-blowers are watching. But all is not yet what it seems. The margin of foolishness has narrowed. Yet the cost of foolishness has risen geometrically. Now it takes only that metaphoric finger-on-the-button to translate foolishness into high policy—and blow up the realm. Even a Grey, a Izvolsky, or a

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Bülow—to cite only a few cases of rampant professional malformation—could not have done that. Even so, they managed to brutalize the peoples they professed to serve. By now, their names are forgotten by all except specialists in modern history. Some of the consequences of their folly are still with us: the peoples of the Balkans are still killing one another.

As noted, I was born in Austria-Hungary. The Hapsburg monarchy happened to be the place upon which the forces unleashed by the statesmen of the times converged. The ensuing collision shattered the diplomatic system that, for a hundred years, had guarded Europe against a general war. The first rampart to give way was Austria-Hungary. Nationalism levelled it to the ground.

My father was a free-thinking liberal in politics and a monarchist by sentiment. He, like his forebears, lived comfortably with the contradiction. The monarchy—progressive and hide-bound, cosmopolitan and provincial, supra-national and multi-religious—throve on contradictions. It was too old and too feeble to forge unity from diversity. It could have been the model of a united, federated Europe. Not only did the then-practicing statesmen botch it, they made sure that the emerging nation-states would be more antagonistic toward one another than their peoples had ever been—that they would hate one another. Even after some eighty years, it is not clear what the statesmen, in their folly, wanted Europe to be. Did they get what they wanted? Did they get what they got by inadvertence? You can have it either way. Suffice that the unresolved issues of the settlements they wrought stoked the fire that, twenty years later, would set the world aflame.

*In My Time* examines haphazardly, and then skips over, the happenings of these traumatic years. I did not write history. I examined my own life and what history did to it. I now see it as a bridge between the Europe I left and the America I found, the land in which the immigrant's boldest dreams come true.

ROBERT STRAUSSZ-HUPÉ  
July 1995





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## *Preface*

When one no longer has anything to say about the world at large, one writes about one's own world, about oneself. Having squared accounts with the life of action, I survey the long columns of the entries and the blank spaces of the might-have-beens. The gaps of the record—the things that did not come to pass—are more vivid than the events, pegged and tagged. I have read through volumes that purport to be autobiographical, yet reveal little about the author except his determination to revise history and his own role in it. What is offered as a "life" is but a series of maneuvers for launching the barque, stranded on the beach of neglect and disfavor, back onto the tide of action. Not so surprisingly, this sort of autobiography absorbs the leisure of the unemployed politician whom neither dotage nor some irretrievable "public relations" error has stricken from the lists. Since I have found my beach livable and the view pleasing, since my barque will never float again, I need not concern myself unduly with voyages ahead and cock my ear anxiously to the distant rumble of the tide. Of course, I live with anxiety. But I have learned games to calm it. And, then, I have taught myself to believe that the rules are mine and that I am the umpire between my embattled self and the hopes and fears that trouble me.

I am sure that among the legions of men and women who

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have sought to turn solitude to good account or to escape it the best and the strongest drew their portraits with firmer strokes than mine, their hands steadied by repose that comes from wisdom and does not falter before the last encounter with the unknown, and by unasking love. Of wisdom I have little, for I would still trade my book of maxims for the colors, sounds, and smells around me this very morning. Although I have traveled to the valley that disappears in the unscalable folds of the range, I still want to go I know not exactly where.

On second thought, to write about my life might be one way to find out about it, to discover what I thought I had always known, yet had never met face to face. Then, having found what I seek, I might stop searching for the random trophies that seem to be mounted for no other purpose than to be left moldering, boasts of unprovoked prowess. Then, my adventure no longer calls for a cast, for a hero and his victim, nor for an audience.

*Avec la croix dans ma main . . .* I do not think that I could have ever written (and proofread) this superb and somber phrase. But I would think my life to have been all I wanted it to be, awake and dreaming, could I say these words to myself (without troubling about the signs and symbols) during that unique transaction which necessarily extends beyond the scope of autobiography.



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*An unexamined life  
is not worth living . . . .*

Plato, THE APOLOGY

## Chapter One



I WAS born in Vienna, the Vienna that history and stupidity have transformed from a metropolis into an overpopulated provincial town, its dullness being one of the most closely guarded secrets of the travel bureaus. Notwithstanding its antiquity and healthful climate, Vienna once had more in common with New York than any other European town. At that time it drew its airs and peoples from a score of races. Its tailors, bookmakers, and pastry cooks were Bohemians whose tongue had not lost the rasping twang of Czech; its nobles hailed from every corner of Catholic Europe, including the Hapsburgs' lost domains in the Lowlands, in Lombardy, Umbria, Silesia, and Spain, in the lands under the colonial rule of heretics and heathens, such as Wallachia, Greece, the Levant, Ireland, and Scotland; its most beautiful women and its most openhanded hosts had left their native Hungary and Poland to grace an uninterrupted succession of official and private festivities; and its most colorful soldiery was recruited from Bosnia, Hungary, and the Tyrol.

In Europe the monarchy, a frail repository of the residual ideas

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and splendors of the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation, held the last rampart against nationalism. It stood in the way of virtually every *Idée force* of the late nineteenth century: English liberalism, French secularism, Pan-Germanism, Pan-Slavism, and the Socialist International. How these forces, so ill-assorted and so mutually antagonistic, managed to topple the Monarchy and, in the process, balkanize all of Eastern and part of Central Europe—this is the real inside story of World War I, the story that will be retold and garbled *ad nauseam*, long after the saga of Verdun, the White and Yellow Papers, Wilson's inspirational messages, Clemenceau's canny silences, and the chronicles of appalling military and political mismanagement—the first head-on collision of politics and strategy with modern technology—will have been forgotten.

My mother was a good woman. The wisdom of her folly gave me those few notions which nowadays are being called values. A most undramatic person, she did not tell me about Good and Evil, Right and Wrong. Rather, when I was a child, she taught me how to behave decently about little things, ignored steadfastly my tendency toward hypochondria, guarded my daydreams, encouraged my liking for adults, and made me display that deference and reserve without which any child can readily annoy and bore even the most tolerant adult.

Having left school when she reached thirteen, my mother turned to books in her fifties. Like every good German, she revered the poets and the thinkers whose busts graced the bookshelf. Beyond a few quotations, she knew hardly anything of their verse and thought. But she watched proudly my attempts to make sense, at the age of ten, of Goethe, Hegel, George, Rilke, and Schopenhauer. I understood hardly anything at all, but learned to leaf the encyclopedia, *Meyer's Encyklopadie*, which, because of its massiveness, I recall as the first durable birthday present of my memory.

This encyclopedia, incidentally, followed me for many years. Eventually, it came to rest in my Paris apartment. Then it disappeared with the retreating German major who, quartered in my flat, polished my Empire table and cared for the bindings of my first editions of Malraux, Gide, and Giraudoux. The most expen-

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sive ones shared the major's homeward journey. After the war I did not seek to find them, though I wish I could retrieve those ungainly volumes of the encyclopedia, thumb to the item of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, and reread the summary of *Faust*, in particular.

For this summary of *Faust*, under Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, relieved me from the drudgery of plowing numbly through the lengthy tragedy; thus freed for the afternoon, I would spin my own more plausible yarns. As a marshal of Napoleon, for example, I sat my horse at Wagram and then, struck by a musket shot, expired in the arms of a suitably distressed aide. On foot, I rallied my infantry on the bridge of Arcole. With a handful of men, musket in hand, I covered the retreat across the Beresina. In fact, the first book I read because I wanted to read and not because I felt I should, was Kircheisen's solid biography of Napoleon. My mother, again, led me to Napoleon.

My mother abhorred violence and war. (At the end of her life she turned to theosophy. She died, in the second year of World War II, a firm pacifist.) She was a Saxonian, born and reared in the village of Konnewitz, near Leipzig, where her father raised roses and carnations for sale to the Leipzig florists.

Though a Lutheran—my grandmother's forebears lie in a small churchyard in Wittenberg—my mother learned the little history she knew from a Saxonian primer. The kings of Saxony professed the Roman faith. Chastened by the profligacy of Augustus the Strong, and defeated in war, the Royal Princes prided themselves on their parsimony, dressed shabbily, and conversed with their subjects, as well as among themselves, in the grotesque patois of Saxonian people. They hated the Prussians who had despoiled them in the Seven Years' War. A king of Saxony was Napoleon's ally and stood by him, until his troops deserted, at the battle of Leipzig. My grandparents had talked to men who said that they were—and could have been—present at the battle.

After the defeat of Austria in 1866, the Saxonians again elected defeat as well as surrender. The least warlike of the German people, they chafed under the hegemony of Prussia. Their sly wit contrived the best anti-Prussian jokes. Their remarkable business acumen, untiring industry, and practical inventiveness made them



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rich. But the legends of Saxony's brave struggle against Prussia and brief companionship-in-arms with Napoleon lingered into my mother's time. Indeed, my mother kept a lithograph likeness of Napoleon after David on her desk. Her heart went out to the great short man, distraught by the frivolity of Josephine. My mother sowed the seed; I still tend the grove of the hero.

Like Napoleon, I, too, was a studious child, fair at mathematics, scrupulously—perhaps compulsively—clean, and small of stature. I have read a good many biographies of Napoleon and learned studies of the man, the ruler, the captain, and the mover of history, French, German, English, and Russian. I am content to avow today the belief I held long ago: among the greatest doers of history, all of whom wasted lives and treasure to make it, he stands least in need of apology or, what is worse in contemporary historiography, patronizing rehabilitation. The hero still stands on his own and well-shaped feet. The compelling eyes do not blink.

It is preposterous to judge Napoleon by the canons of post-Hiroshima quietism, by the survival mythology of Lord Russell. To say that Napoleon was a man of his times is both trite and true. Made of the stuff of the Colleoni and Pescaras, he stepped from his bastioned and clannish rock into the Age of Enlightenment.

The eighteenth century bridged its complexities by that serene cadence which ordered its music, architecture, and passions. A society in dissolution indulged its infatuation with every possible type of imposture and with geometry, with the Kabala and with science. The Middle Ages were still fermenting in miasmatic decay beneath the polished floors of the Trianon; bats nested in the instrument-littered studies of the *philosophes*. A part of Napoleon belonged to the contrived symmetry of this age; another part of him, however, seems puzzlingly remote—out of the way, as are the island of his birth and the island of his death.

We know that Napoleon read those magnificent bores Corneille and Racine; Plutarch's *Lives*; the banalities of Voltaire, spiritual forebear of our more elevated columnists—and Goethe's *Werther*. Notwithstanding this intellectual fare, he mastered his trade, which was war, and cultivated his avocations, which were

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to make laws, to draw straight city streets and country roads, to write concisely, and to collect almost everything from obelisks to recipes.

Nowhere did his inspired dilettantism achieve more splendid results than in the field of public Relations: he wrote his press releases; invented, graded, and made easily accessible military and civilian decorations for mass distribution; devised the status symbols of democratic inequality; extended impartially the list of subscribers to Jacobins and ci-devants; and converted his memoirs into an action program. All this he did with obvious relish and, at times, with an engaging hilarity. In the crush of business, he neglected to bone up on technological developments and maritime navigation, oversights which accrued chiefly to the benefit of the English military establishment. A gunner, he did not improve the technical equipment of the French artillery; a trained geographer, he knew little about the high seas. He was a devoted son, a patient brother, and a doting father. Unlike most of his prominent contemporaries, he was free of avarice. He rewarded his captains generously and forgave them a long list of vices, including rank treachery. A part of him belongs to this century: he anticipated not only status society but also plebiscitary democracy, fetishist hygiene, and prestige scientism.

Appalled as I might be at the results, I do not choose now to defect from my adolescent hero worship. Napoleon prompted tendencies that issued from the womb of mass society. He reduced the obvious to order a generation before the ideologues scrambled it again. He provided the last great spectacle before state and art parted company. His pseudo-Roman was archaeologically no less authentic than Mr. Walpole's and the Romantics' Gothic and a great deal less neurotic. He made Europe, the good and the bad of it. Among the vanquished, he excited the nationalist spirit, for he, like all the great conquerors before him, was a cosmopolitan. His European dream, however, was deflowered by those "liberation" movements which, in our time, still rally around the tribal cooking pot; nevertheless, the European Common Market and the Atlantic Alliance owe him a monument in the good classic manner with appropriate *son et lumière*. And he fostered tourism. Ave Napoleon!

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So I stand in the ranks of those innumerable European adolescents whom the Napoleonic cult marked for life. Like Napoleon, behind whom lurked the role-player, I wrote my scenario and lived it; for that matter, some of the roles I played so convincingly that I can no longer tell the difference between the actor and myself. I imagine, therefore I am.

This lack of sense-of-process is my father's gift. My father's charm suffused a variety of traits, such as his love of games and gaming and his restless passion for motor vehicles and small arms as well as novel designs for manufacturing both, and his ever-resurgent faith in a long succession of men with breakthrough ideas and insufficient capital. Possessed of a modest capital, he was little attached to his fortune, which he spent freely and, but for his ventures in technical innovation, well.

My father acquired an estate in eastern Hungary, not far from the town of Temesvár (now Timisoara) and, for a few years, engaged in farming. Though the monetary rewards were slight, this undertaking repaid him richly in kind; guests thronged the house and stayed for days, weeks, and months. Here my father, who played the violin mostly by ear, indulged his passion, which remained constant, for gypsy music. Here a retired artillery sergeant who had served with my father taught me how to ride, a skill which was to stand me in good stead in later years. And the seasons provided additional instruction and entertainment—sleighrides; the planting and harvesting of Indian corn (which was grown extensively in Hungary before its introduction to Central and Southern Europe), the pheasant shoots, the drying and curing of tobacco (I have been a consistent smoker since the age of twelve); suckling pig and goose liver (in its natural state) for breakfast; and the lazy oxen at the waterhole. Eventually, however, my father had to sell the farm. A short while later our family broke up.

Thereafter, my father divided his time between Vienna and Munich, where he devoted his leisure hours to the enjoyment of Wagner's operas and the company of musicians and singers. Of small stature and sallow complexion, he dressed immaculately; I am told that women thought him attractive. My father died in poverty in 1928, a few days after my return to Europe from a

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five years' sojourn in the United States. My mother, who had not seen him for many years, attended his painful illness and kept from him the cause of his death, which was cancer.

I grew up and reached manhood in the midst of disaster. I was eleven years old when World War I broke out. After my father was called back into service, my mother settled in Munich, where I spent my school holidays.

If anything had ever been settled in my unsettled family, it was that I should choose the military or the diplomatic career. Given the circumstances, these were not altogether unreasonable expectations, though fairly ambitious ones. In the old monarchy, considerable social prestige attached to both professions. The nobility enjoyed privileged access to the army, especially to the elite regiments. The great majority of the diplomats hailed from the great aristocratic houses of the empire. Yet the army was large, and there were not enough nobles to officer the line regiments. In the General Staff and the scientific branches of the army, especially artillery, officers of bourgeois antecedents, including not a few Jews, had gained advancement. The doors of the Foreign Ministry on the Ballhausplatz were opening, albeit not without some creaks and groans, to *bürgerliche* candidates. The idea of making a living did not occur to me. This matter had been taken care of by previous, more mercenary generations; moreover, it was unmentionable in that very reserved circle which I was destined, so I told myself, to enter. Since I could not help but overhear snatches of my elders' conversation, my mind was not entirely at rest. There were pitfalls along the road: to enter a cadet school and thus the regular army, not to speak of being admitted to the Theresianum (Diplomatic Academy) and thus to receive a pass key to the highest civil service, one had to have connections in high places. I took the measure of those of our "connections" in high places who consented to inspect me personally and did not always feel assured as to their devotion to my cause. Yet, were they to fail me, I still need not despair of the future; I could travel abroad, explore remote places, coast along tropical seas, sample exotic philosophies and return to Austria, a polished cosmopolite with an aura of adventurous exploits. This, too, was not altogether an unreasonable expectation, for the cen-

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tury was still young and my family fortune, depleted as it was by paternal extravagance, was still large enough to support a life of judicious leisure and studious travel.

The earth was still immense. Throughout most of it, men moved on ships at seven knots at best and mostly at lesser speeds, on horse- or muleback, on dog sleds and on foot. A great part of the polar regions had not yet been surveyed; large parts of Africa, most of Central Asia, the Amazon Basin, and all of Arabia's deserts were closed to all but the most venturesome and incurable explorer. Some of the living civilizations of the Far East, not to speak of their predecessors in antiquity, still kept most of their mysteries. The tremors of World War I had opened, here and there, cracks in the West's colonial edifice. Yet, a few miles beyond the coastal towns from Zanzibar to Aden and all the way to Shanghai and Hulatao, the lives of the peoples, together with their faith, their water wheels, their shaggy ponies, their women—painted, veiled, tatooed, secluded, and promiscuous—their potentates—bejeweled, incalculable, and tainted by Oxford or the Sorbonne just enough to make them all the more enigmatic—went on as it had long before the West had established its enclaves. That they should do so forever was the premise of Western rule. The Russo-Japanese War had made perfectly clear that the West could put up with anything—except the Westernization of non-Western peoples. Yet, in the early 1920's, this prospect, at once so flattering to Western culture and so ominous for its progenitors, still seemed remote—a matter not of years but of generations.

Thus the earth was still a Western preserve—a good deal of it still untrodden and in the alluring state of nature—which beckoned the select traveler in search of knowledge and adventure. Since the traveler had to start out with considerable reserves of money and even larger reserves of time, he was likely to be a man freed of the common concern for making a living. Indeed, with few exceptions, the kind of traveler of whom I speak—the amateur ethnographer-archaeologist-geographer-explorer, collector-journalist—belonged to that nearly extinct species, the cultivated man of leisure, of adequate means, and of no particular profession.

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An eclectic, this man of leisure roamed many fields of interest and thus discerned affinities and relationships where the mere specialist could not; financially independent and not beholden for his livelihood to institutions, he could afford to embrace unpopular causes; back the perennial revolt of genius against academic rote; dabble in experiments without hope of financial gain and fear of academic censure; and, perhaps most importantly, act the middleman between the comers in the arts, sciences, and politics and the Establishment. His influence on the political and social development of England has been ever-present and deep; the "breakthrough" in the arts between 1900 and 1920 is as much the work of a handful of discriminating and well-heeled men and women of leisure as it is of the artists themselves; the foundations of modern archaeology, anthropology, ethnography, ichtheology, and ornithology were laid almost entirely by amateurs who footed the bills with their own money; the beginnings of aviation are inextricably linked to a galaxy of moneyed sportsmen who took to flying for no other reason than the thrill and the sheer beauty of it, and combined a flair for technical innovation with that indifference to danger which was the hallmark of the caste.

That, in my teens, I could contemplate such a "career" as an honorable and promising alternative to more stationary, though gentlemanly, employment, and could do so unruffled by even a *soupçon* of doubt about my claim upon permanent financial security—this quaint conceit belongs to the times, as do consols at four per cent, international travel without passports, the Sitwells-in-bloom, and *l'art nouveau*. Yet, the arts, the politics, the scholarship, and even the technical progress of the age are inconceivable without the contribution of the cultivated man of leisure.

In 1919 the Austro-Hungarian military establishment—or what defeat and desertion had left of it—followed the monarchy into limbo. The empire, despite its colorful extravaganzas, had been kept solvent by the great wealth of Bohemia and Hungary. Severe financial disturbances attended its dissolution. The Austrian crownlands and Vienna lost their hinterland, market for their products and source of their tax revenue. The purchasing power of money dropped precipitously. Every penny my parents

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owned had been invested in government bonds. Within a few months our once comfortable income shrank to a pittance. My personal prospects dimmed. The plans for my professional education needed drastic revision. The Peace Treaty of 1919 closed all military schools, a provision intended to ensure the pacific disposition of defeated Austria. Loss of Great Power status left Austria with a serious problem of technical unemployment: now, ten qualified diplomats were available for each meager foreign service job. Recruitment ceased; the service schools were closed. I awoke from my dream. At an early age I learned that it is safer to dream about the past than about the future. Whatever the future held for me, it would be neither an official career, aloof from all but the most portentous cares, nor gentlemanly leisure. My long search for a profession and a livelihood began. How well had milieu, family, and education endowed me for this quest?

My parents had not succeeded in rooting themselves firmly in any place or stratum of society. Upon their separation, my mother's home was mine. Moreover, the adults in my vision were either military or members of that Central European middle class that did not fit Professor Riesman's categories, and had only one common characteristic: the impenetrable partitions that separated it from peasantry and aristocracy, from the working class and the very rich. Within its ranks, the lines of separation between middle-rung government servants and merchants, between lawyers and physicians, schoolteachers and apothecaries, were tightly drawn. Since we lived on fixed income from government consols, we "rated" middle class; since my father had not found a niche in any of the professions, soon stopped trying to succeed in business, and then vanished in the eastern cantonments of the monarchy-at-war, we were left stranded on the margins of this not unkindly but fussy and anxious society. Intuitively, my mother understood that I would not fit. Narrow as were the passages through this labyrinthine edifice of bourgeois mores, bureaucratic hierarchies, and deferential snobbisms, one wide avenue led into the world and, for odd individuals of my kind, into freedom: arts and letters.

The middle class of Central Europe, somewhat embarrassed by

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its own tolerance, was hospitable to the intellect, to the arts and to their irregular supporting troops such as actors, the makers of batiqued materials, the *Kunst* photographers—the jacks of all and any aesthetical trade who lived, wrote, drew, conversed, and cross-fertilized in the coffeehouses. Probably more than half of this fringe population was Jewish. The crucial role of the Jew in the Old Monarchy has only lately attracted the attention of Western scholars. Perhaps it has been the horrors and the humiliations of the Nazi period which have made its assessment impossible. How great was the contribution of the Jew to the life of Vienna and the German cities has become plain only now.

After World War II, the German-speaking peoples would have relapsed into the dull provinciality of the Germanies of two centuries ago had it not been for the cultural infusion administered by their conquerors. Even so, there is still a void that has not been filled, a heaviness of hand that weighs upon the present effort to rejoin the creative currents. So much of the German struggle for beauty-regained, for the lost horizons of the spirit, lacks authenticity, a dutiful matching of cultural refinement against complacent grossness, of abstract painting against Mercedes-Benz, of Karl Barth against the *Deutsche Bank*. These acts of penance will not revive the zest for playful innovation and the ruthlessness of creative thrust, the marriage of baroque imagination and surgical introspectiveness, which set off the arts and letters of Vienna and Munich and, later, Berlin, from those of the centers of Western Europe.

In 1920 I left school. (I did not return until twenty years later.) My mother and I had moved to Munich. Of the Communist rising of 1919 I remember only the stillness of the suburban streets, doors shut and windows curtained, the hush of fear, the menacing posters and the columns of Communist militia, bright red armbands against war-worn field gray, marching to intercept the approaching troops of General von Epp. And then the battle for the town. One day I bicycled along the Briennerstrasse on I know not what errand. A rifle barked, a machine gun sputtered, and then the frenetic clatter and stealthy silences of street-fighting opened to me the era of global civil war. I ducked with that self-effacing nimbleness which, under these and similar cir-



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cumstances, makes up by spontaneity for the lack of systematic training.

Never have so many men ducked in so many places as in our century. By far the most infernal phenomenon of our age is the marriage of modern technology and civil war, particularly its consummation in modern cities. Its incongruous violence might be among the deepest roots of contemporary neurosis. To die, in the midst of metropolitan facilities, from a bullet fired from one knows not where, victim of the struggle between two concepts of civic order, mocks the one common aspiration of mankind in this century: security. And there is, of course, the mopping up.

The "Whites," who had defeated the "reds," were regulars. The Iron Brigade formed the core of the government troops. It had fought the Bolsheviks in the Baltic provinces and, after the Armistice, withdrawn slowly to Prussia. By spring of 1919 it consisted almost exclusively of seasoned professionals, experts in guerrilla warfare—the dirtiest kind even before Asian ingenuity and Western technology refined this bastard branch of war—and in mass execution. Among the officers, not a few carried Rainer Maria Rilke next to the Mauser and, between massacres and muddy retreats, took refuge in Nietzsche, Houston Chamberlain, and drink. Others, the more extrovert type, contented themselves with plying their highly specialized trade, killing matter-of-factly and thus keeping alive that martial spirit which should have prevailed over democratic decadence—had it not been for the "dagger thrust" into Germany's back.

The "dagger" had been "thrust" by an assortment of villains—Socialists, pacifists, capitalists, aliens, Bolsheviks, literati, and Allied propagandists. The principal culprit was the civilian, domestic and foreign, and especially the civilian politician, domestic and foreign. If the men of the Iron Brigade were agreed upon anything beyond their collective contempt for all things civilian, including the government that employed them, it was upon the cause of Germany's defeat: when the soldiers were about to win the war, treason behind the lines robbed them of final victory. Indeed, the Allies had not exacted the surrender of the German forces in the field, and most units drew back from the front in fair order, carrying their weapons with them and receiving the

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accolade of the populace reserved for returning conquerors.

The Iron Brigade's reputation was based upon the fact that it had cut its way out of the depths of Russia, holding on to a part of the Baltic provinces against the Bolsheviks long after the conclusion of the Armistice in the West, and then complying reluctantly with the orders of the German republican government to march home. How much of this story of a great retreat—German historians and poets have always been fascinated with stiff-lipped retreats and Roncevallian last stands—is factual and how much of it shades into pure fiction, I do not know. The association of this body of modern *Landsknechte* with the infant democracy of Germany was no more incongruous than that of Frundsberg's mercenaries with the most Christian king who sacked Rome.

Having accomplished its mission, the brigade did not tarry long in Munich. In the shabby flat of a czarist exile, I met two young subalterns, one a taciturn and pimply Junker, the other a shy homosexual, quoting Stefan George and Rilke between digressions on varieties of automotive vehicles. The latter had commandeered the explosive motorbike of a dispatch rider, and allowed me to try it out. I drove up and down Munich's longest street, and this was one of the most blissful experiences of my adolescence. Finally, covered with grease, I drew up at the curb. My thoughts were on the bike, but not the lieutenant's. He invited me to join him in his quarters and look at Doré's illustrations of the *Divine Comedy*. I declined and we parted. On the way home, I relived my brief tryst with exhilarating motion.

Before I had gone halfway, however, lumps of embarrassment choked recollected pleasure. I had read about Alcibiades; contrary to widely held beliefs, at that time most boys of my age in Middle Europe, for all their familiarity with Krafft-Ebing and the *Erotica* of the Ancients, responded forthrightly to the other sex. Those who did not were average statistical exceptions. The glories of the Victorian Age had bypassed Middle Europe, especially its Catholic half; so had the tide of Victorian repressions and hypocrisies. On the whole, Middle European society accorded to sexual deviations a considerable latitude of tolerance. Had this not been so, the flowering of sex psychology in Vienna

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and Munich would have been an inexplicable phenomenon. Sigmund Freud could not have practiced in Victorian or Edwardian London. In brief, the notion of rampant homosexuality as the key to the collective psychosis of Middle Europe and, especially, its Nazi excrement, is footless.

My first encounter with an erotic inclination I did not share left me uneasy and puzzled: exactly what shapes lie hidden beneath the lilies which float upon the pond? Fortunately, I had been taught by my humanist preceptors that tastes were not a matter of dispute and that a sense of measure was needed for dealing and living with what is askew and shocking to the senses. Implicit, too, in this pedagogy was the distinction between social mores and spiritual authority, the latter being, by a wide margin, the ultimate judge of the sins of the flesh. In practice, legal sanctions imposed upon offenders against the heterosexual standard have been more stringent, and certainly more publicized, in the Western Protestant or quasi-Protestant countries than in Catholic Middle and Southern Europe.

Simultaneously, I experienced the distinction between social mores and military authority, the military rule of Munich. The occupation of Munich was brief, but long enough to afford a full view of the military profession in the wake of defeat and the overthrow of the first Reich. It accommodated respectably, as could no other walk of life, the rejected, the misfit, the maimed knight, and the killer-by-avocation. From its studied monastic anonymity were to emerge not a few of the men who, some fifteen years later, administered the political and strategic affairs of the Third Reich, conceived in the union of romantic verse and the machine-gun stutter. In the intervening years, some of their ex-comrades had turned assassins, amateur or paid; others soldiered abroad, notably in the French Foreign Legion and the armies of the Chinese warlords. Meanwhile, the brotherhood spread over the earth; the beliefs, the deeds, the words spoken, and even the faces were virtually the same.

Forty years later I again met my friend the lieutenant. This time, however, he joined me on the terrace of Fouquet's, quoted Camus, expressed devotion to his pipe of dreams and his almond-eyed mistress. He had marched, during the five years since his

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graduation from St.-Cyr, the whole length of the *via dolorosa* from the jungles of Tonkin to the Kabylia Mountains. Again, valor had prevailed—or could have prevailed, had it not been for the lies of the politicians and the indifference of the masses. This time, too, I felt that his country and his leaders had sent him on impossible errands—and that with or without their leave he would continue marching on the endless retreat from yesterday's glory to today's usurious routine.

His glance swept the wide avenue, scabrous beneath the neon signs and packed with cars and peoples. Not wishing to offend me, he asked me whether this tawdry coating of the triumphal way could not be put to the debit of "Americanization." Without waiting for my answer, he conceded his partiality, professional and private, for certain kinds of "American" gadgets, some of them highly lethal. Then he took his leave, to pass a few hours with his pipe and mistress before returning to his Algerian post—for no purpose whatsoever that he could see. Our suspense at the unfolding of the historical process is matched only by our surprise at the repetitiousness of its outcome. Those who learn from history are condemned to listen forever to its broken record, the needle caught in the same groove.

Meanwhile, in Munich the street cleaner sanded and hosed the patches of gore; the pockmarks on façades behind which another last stand had crumbled beneath a heavier weight of lead were plastered over; and new windowpanes were set. The Soviet agents had melted away; the shops and factories reopened; and the breweries resumed production. The surviving leaders of the Communists insurrections—Eisner had been assassinated by Arco-Valley, a fighter pilot home from the wars, and Gustav Landauer had perished no one knows exactly how during the last days of the fighting—were tried before the courts and sent to prison. By contemporary standards of revolution, the sentences were light.

The Communist revolution in Munich, unlike the one in Budapest and the Spartacus rising in Berlin, had not been master-minded by seasoned professionals.

In the course of that brief and inept experiment, the rift between the thinker and the doer, between Marxist philosophy and Leninist practice, became visible to the naked eye. The leaders of

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the Munich revolution—Eisner, Landauer, and Toller—were neither organization men nor practical “operators.” On the contrary, they were Schwabing literati. Unlike Lenin’s didactic briefs, their compulsive oratory flowed aimlessly above the heads of the perplexed militants.

There were many reasons for the purge of the intellectuals from Communist leadership and the monstrous retrogression in the Soviet Union of all the arts except the least intellectual of them, music. Had they survived, they would have joined the disenchanted chorus of the Koestlers, Orwells, and Djilases. In the West, their brief and awkward performance upon the stage of the world revolution was hardly noted (to the best of my knowledge, no Western study-in-depth of the Munich rising exists). Nevertheless, it is certain that those of the party hierarchy who had always doubted the Western intellectual’s fitness for an executive position in revolution-making found their views confirmed by the Munich fiasco.

Bloody as was the transaction, however, it did not lack comic byplay: echelons of Bohemians, surfacing from their favorite taprooms and descending from their garrets, declaimed avant-garde poetry to captive audiences, the stunned rank and file of the Bavarian Red Army. For a few weeks they controlled the printing presses and the lecture halls, the Ministry of Education and whatever funds were left in the exchequer. The Munich revolution had been suffocated by reams of bad verse, obscure prose, and sectarian social projects; now it was drowned in the blood of its more primitive militants. The Soviet professionals undoubtedly miscalculated the exhilarating consequences of loosening Bohemia from the fetters of the bourgeoisie and the laws of aesthetical supply and demand.

Unlike this unorganized militancy in Munich, the Communist risings in Berlin and Budapest were fomented and led by seasoned professionals, civilian and military, bent single-mindedly upon the bloody liquidation of the opposition and thus upon committing their followers irrevocably to the cause of the revolution. Bela Kun, Lenin’s emissary who was later executed by Stalin, and his associates were organization men (*apparatchiki*). Upon the fall of the Communist regime in Budapest, they made