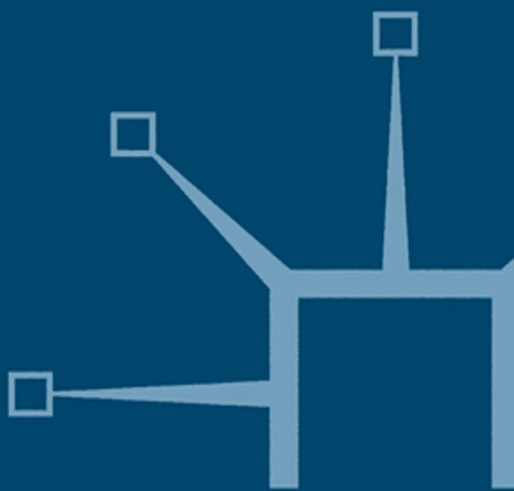


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**The Conservative Revolution
in the Weimar Republic**

Roger Woods



**THE CONSERVATIVE REVOLUTION IN
THE WEIMAR REPUBLIC**

Also by Roger Woods

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The Conservative Revolution in the Weimar Republic

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Reader in German
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For Diana

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Introduction: What was the Conservative Revolution?

The Conservative Revolution has often been described as part of the great counter-movement to the French Revolution.¹ By this definition it extends back beyond the twentieth century as a tradition of militaristic, authoritarian nationalism which rejected liberalism, socialism, democracy and internationalism. The following study concentrates on the Weimar period of German history, however, a period in which the Conservative Revolutionaries assumed the role of 'intellectual vanguard of the right'.² Embracing some of the best-known writers, academics, journalists, politicians, and philosophers of the interwar years, the Conservative Revolutionary movement produced a flood of radical nationalist writings in the form of war diaries and works of fiction, political journalism, manifestos, and theoretical tracts outlining the development and destiny of political life in Germany and the West.

The Conservative Revolutionaries often projected themselves as the young generation of German nationalists. Many of them were born in the last decade of the nineteenth century, and this generational bond was strengthened through the First World War which many of them experienced directly in their formative years.³ The war looms large in their minds, for they see it and the November Revolution which followed in its wake as achieving a clean break with the past, liberating German political life from the constrictions of Wilhelminism and challenging the young generation to create a 'new nationalism'. The writer Friedrich Georg Jünger explains just how fundamental this break with the past was felt to be:

The November Upheaval confronted it [nationalism] with new, vital issues. Changed in its essence, forms and goals, it emerged from the collapse of the Wilhelmine State, no longer bound by the throne and inhibited by it, and consequently freer in itself, more aggressive, more dangerous than ever before. It had gone through such a transformation that it can no longer be compared with what people called nationalist before 1918, before 1914.⁴

Although the term Conservative Revolution predates the First World War it only became an established concept in the Weimar period, passing into the cultural and political vocabulary of the day via the writer Hugo von Hofmannsthal and the political theorist Edgar Jung.⁵ Modern

historians have rightly referred to the term as a paradox,⁶ even a semantic absurdity, and suggested 'neo-conservative' as a more easily justifiable label for the movement.⁷

The following study retains the term Conservative Revolution in recognition of its widespread adoption in the Weimar years by those nationalist intellectuals who shared a set of beliefs and attitudes. Firstly, Conservative Revolutionaries sought to break with that tradition of conservatism which had its roots in Wilhelmine Germany, and they dismissed all thoughts of a political restoration. Secondly, they rejected the whole business of parliamentary politics in the Weimar Republic as a Western import unsuited to the German people. Thirdly, Conservative Revolutionaries sought to come to terms with socialism, not by embracing it in its existing form, but rather by reworking it into a 'German socialism', a 'socialism of the blood'. Weimar democracy was to be swept aside and replaced by a dictatorial order modelled on the military hierarchy and the 'front-line socialism' of the First World War. This national community (*Volksgemeinschaft*), it was argued, would transcend the conventional divisions of left and right, and enable Germany to attain a position of strength in a world where nations had effectively discarded moral standards in their dealings with each other and were guided only by 'natural' self-interest.

This study includes those figures who regarded themselves or who were regarded by their contemporaries as Conservative Revolutionaries. It includes intellectuals who shared the beliefs set out above, since such shared beliefs and attitudes are what made the Conservative Revolution a movement, rather than any formal membership of a group or strict adherence to a clearly defined political programme.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE CONSERVATIVE REVOLUTION: SOME METHODOLOGICAL MATTERS

Students of the Conservative Revolution generally see it as historically significant because it helped prepare the ground for National Socialism. Historians have argued that the Conservative Revolution served to weaken German middle-class intellectual resistance to Nazi ideology.⁸ Its main influence was among the semi-educated middle classes and in the universities, where its 'anti-democratic ferment' found a receptive audience.⁹ It has been argued that figures such as Moeller van den Bruck spread notions of authoritarian leadership instead of a government responsible to parliament among the educated, indeed most gifted, of Germany's youth.¹⁰ Put most generally, Conservative Revolutionary anti-democratic thought in the

Weimar Republic 'succeeded in alienating Germans from the democracy of the Weimar constitution and making large groups receptive to National Socialism'.¹¹

Such accounts of how the Conservative Revolution encouraged Germans to turn away from Weimar democracy and towards National Socialism may be vague, and more research on the transmission and dissemination of ideas certainly needs to be undertaken, yet it is clear that the movement did make its mark on Weimar Germany. Oswald Spengler, a leading figure of the Conservative Revolution, is generally regarded as one of the most influential political writers in Germany after 1918, a view supported not least by the very popularity of his major work, *Der Untergang des Abendlandes*, which went through 47 editions in four years. More generally, the publishing activities of the Conservative Revolutionaries were conducted on a massive scale.¹² Historians looking at public opinion in the Weimar period have rightly referred to the upsurge in demand around 1929 for Conservative Revolutionary writings on the First World War as evidence of the spread of militaristic thinking.¹³

Direct links between Conservative Revolutionaries and mass organisations were numerous. The ex-soldiers and writers Ernst Jünger and Franz Schauwecker were brought into the paramilitary organisation *Stahlhelm* and given their own journal, *Die Standarte*, in order to inject new life into the debate over the league's ideals. *Die Standarte* appeared as a supplement to *Der Stahlhelm*, with a circulation of 150 000 to 170 000. This was in the mid-twenties when *Stahlhelm* had an estimated membership of 300 000. Larger still at this particular time was the 400 000-strong *Jungdeutscher Orden*, led by Artur Mahraun, a key Conservative Revolutionary figure in the debate over new nationalism, and especially the leadership principle.¹⁴ Political scientists are therefore correct in saying that the Conservative Revolution was no esoteric affair for an elite group of ideologues, but rather at the productive heart of antidemocratic thought in the Weimar Republic, providing political groups and even the parties they scorned with elements of their ideology.¹⁵

It is clear that the Conservative Revolution was far from being an exclusively intellectual movement with no involvement in everyday politics (as early studies tended to suggest it was), and it is also clear that there are ideological continuities between it and National Socialism. These continuities have attracted the attention of academics since 1945, yet Helga Grebing sums up the problem for anyone seeking to explain the significance of the Conservative Revolution and its predecessors when she writes that the question of the susceptibility to and preparation for

National Socialism is not the same as the question of the roots and ideological precursors of National Socialism.¹⁶

Acknowledging this means that the Conservative Revolution must be placed alongside rather than above the host of other influences which undermined the Weimar Republic and brought the Nazis to power. This more modest assessment of the significance of the Conservative Revolution has helped to direct researchers' efforts away from straightforward presentations of ideas and towards a consideration of the social, political and economic circumstances which produced those ideas. Thus, recent research conducted by historians, sociologists and political scientists has looked at how the combat leagues helped create not only the intellectual climate but also the physical environment in which the violence of the NSDAP could come to be accepted.¹⁷ The general concern of this research is the sociopolitical base of anti-democratic ideas. Those pursuing this line of enquiry have tended to interpret Conservative Revolutionary ideology as an expression of the 'status panic' of major strata of the middle class after the First World War, a period when they felt crushed between organised labour and capital, when the differences in economic circumstances of white- and blue-collar workers had been eroded, when the free professions were severely overcrowded, and when inflation and depression reduced the income of broad sectors of the middle class.¹⁸ The receptive audience of the Conservative Revolution was the middle class – small- and medium-scale farmers, artisans, shopkeepers, white-collar workers in big industry and the civil service, and the professional middle class – lawyers, doctors, professors, higher civil servants and engineers. It has been argued that these diverse groups were bound together by common reactions to the rapid development of industrial capitalism in Germany. They were 'anxious and afraid of large capital on the one hand and the organised working class on the other'. In this situation the nation-state is projected as being above narrow class interests.¹⁹

This innovative research has provided a necessary corrective to vague attempts by intellectual historians in the postwar period at what has been called 'Nazi pedigree-hunting'.²⁰ Over the years the early phrases about intellectual influence on German thought and the German people have thus given way to detailed studies of specific groups.²¹ Underlying the shift from accounts of ideas to accounts of social, political and economic context was the rejection of the notion of the primacy of ideas in historical causation.²²

Yet the social science approaches have tended to overlook the very special opportunities for interpretation offered by the multi-faceted nature of the subject matter. Ideas, ideology and imagery do not receive sufficient

analytical attention – generally because they are seen as surface phenomena which are unlikely to produce as much information about motives and purpose as a consideration of circumstantial evidence. Fundamental to the approach adopted in the following study, however, is the belief that it is possible to gain important insights into motives and purpose by viewing the Conservative Revolution as an intellectual movement which was driven by the interaction of culture and politics, ideas and ideology.

What can one do then with ideas and ideology, in particular with those ideas conveyed within literary and philosophical works? Recently there has been a call from the social scientists themselves to 'give ideas their due'.²³ As Pocock puts it in his *Politics, Language and Time*: 'Under pressure from the idealist-materialist dichotomy, we have been giving all our attention to thought as conditioned by social facts outside itself and not enough of our attention to thought as denoting, referring, assuming, alluding, implying, and as performing a variety of functions of which the simplest is that of containing and conveying information.'²⁴ Homing in on language, he argues that 'the paradigms which order "reality" are part of the reality they order, ... language is part of the social structure and not epiphenomenal to it, and ... we are studying an aspect of reality when we study the ways in which it appeared real to the persons to whom it was more real than to anyone else'.²⁵ Coming from a background in intellectual history, Dominick LaCapra refers to the historians' habit of reducing sources to mere documents and not paying sufficient attention to the ambiguous structure of complex texts.²⁶ Robert Darnton has pointed to the challenge from social historians who have posed questions not answerable through traditional techniques of narrating or analysing ideas, but he has also pointed to the growing doubts among historians about treating thought as an epiphenomenon of social organisation. Instead, historians are becoming more interested in showing 'how thought organized experience and conveyed meaning among the general citizenry'.²⁷

The Conservative Revolution is a rewarding object of study not least because it presents the researcher with a wide variety of related sources on major issues in the Weimar period. If social scientists and historians have used the more straightforwardly political sources in order to characterise the attitudes of the radical right in the Weimar period,²⁸ it is the task of this study to probe the thought processes which feed into these attitudes by embracing a broader mix of sources. This mix includes novels and diaries, philosophical writings, cultural and political journalism, as well as political tracts. Political journalism may be produced by novelists, and philosophical works by the political actors of the period. Or one individual produces work in all these categories. It is primarily this wealth of

interacting sources which makes the Conservative Revolution an important subject of study for researchers examining the development of anti-democratic thinking in the Weimar Republic.

The principle of interaction means that the main elements of Conservative Revolutionary thought need to be examined not as static ideology but rather as ideas worked out in response to a series of conflicting pressures, as ideas which cannot simply be explained and summarised as if they were a political programme, but rather as expressions of tension. Tension is everywhere in evidence, whether it be over the question of how to find meaning in the sacrifices of the First World War, how to establish links with a tradition of German political and cultural thought, what the contents of 'new nationalism' should be, or whether National Socialism is the movement which might transform Germany according to Conservative Revolutionary ideals.

1 The Conservative Revolution and the First World War

ON METHOD

Conservative Revolutionaries expressed their views on the First World War in best-selling novels, in diaries, and in political journalism. In a flood of publications during the Weimar years they became the major and innovative interpreters of the war for the Right, sometimes associating themselves closely with mass organisations such as the paramilitary *Stahlhelm*, but often coming to distance themselves from the political groups which they briefly saw as the embodiment of their ideals. Examining the tensions in their portrayal of the war, the political instrumentalisation of the war experience, and the way in which their image of war changed during the period of the Weimar Republic sheds light not just on their personal preoccupations but also on the political culture of the Weimar years.

Although the writings of Conservative Revolutionaries are at their most revealing when treated as a single, complex, political and cultural phenomenon, there is a tendency for modern commentators to indulge in a snapshot approach to these sources on the First World War, to home in on individual statements, on fragments of text and to construct an account of attitudes towards the war which overlooks what might be called the dialectic of surfaces. Dialectic of surfaces suggests process, development, change, interplay of ideas, tension and contradiction between ideas, not a fixed and readily stated body of attitudes. The fact that these text fragments are often taken from literary works should cause the reader to think twice before reducing them to unambiguous statements, yet recent research has shown itself keen to get on with what it sees as the real business of the day, that being to summarise where a particular individual stands on a particular issue and to explain this stance in terms of social context.

By this method a handy version of the Conservative Revolutionary view of the First World War emerges: it has been argued that Ernst Jünger, a leading representative of that branch of the Conservative Revolution

known as new nationalism and a major interpreter of the First World War, sees war as myth and not as the suffering and dying of countless people, and in this Jünger is contrasted with Remarque.¹ It has been suggested that books on the First World War written in the Weimar years fall into one of two categories: either they show it as a heroic event or as senseless torture. In nationalist writings on the war it is a test of manhood and heroism, in pacifist writings the collapse of humanity.² The 'soldierly nationalism' of the Conservative Revolution has been cited as an example of violent manliness and explained as a reaction against a social modernisation which called traditional male roles into question.³ One sociological study claims that in his first book on the war, *In Stahlgewittern*, Ernst Jünger celebrated a heroic ideal of soldiers immune to the fear of death and the horror of killing. For Jünger the slaughter and death had not been in vain.⁴ Jünger's war, suggests one historian, was idealised and transfigured: in stark contrast to the pacifist interpreters of war, he and his fellow nationalists sought to blot out the suffering and destruction it caused and to concentrate on its positive aspects.⁵

This is a very convenient categorisation – on the Conservative Revolutionary side, war as an opportunity to show one's heroism, as a glorious test of courage; on the pacifist side, war as bringer of pointless death and suffering. The questionable sociological conclusion often drawn from this categorisation is that the Conservative Revolutionaries' positive view of the war could only be maintained because those who promoted such a view had been officers, and the war experience of officers had been fundamentally different from that of the ordinary enlisted men.

Yet this categorisation does not take into account the complexity of the productive tensions lying at the heart of much Conservative Revolutionary writing on the war. The profound unease in Conservative Revolutionary accounts of the war is not acknowledged.⁶ Where commentators do deal with interplay of responses, they detect only marginal doubts about the war's meaning which the Conservative Revolutionaries have little trouble in brushing aside. But the balance of responses is rather more even than these interpretations allow, and analysis of this more even balance sheds light on the roots of what is undoubtedly correctly seen as a predominantly heroic presentation of the war.

IMAGES OF WAR

Among the Conservative Revolutionaries it is particularly Ernst Jünger whose work contains these productive tensions. In the Weimar period,

Jünger was the most significant representative of that branch of the Conservative Revolution known as soldierly or new nationalism, which sought to carry forward military values and structures into peacetime society, and which redefined socialism in terms of the community of front-line soldiers. The following analysis concentrates on the contradictions and tensions which abound in Jünger's accounts, but, as will become clear, these tensions and contradictions also feature in the writings of other new nationalists, so that what emerges is a group identity based in part on a typical patterning of the war experience.

Jünger had enlisted as a volunteer on the first day of the war at the age of 19, and by the end of the war he had reached the rank of temporary company commander. He was wounded seven times, and in 1918 was awarded the *pour le mérite*. After the war Jünger remained in the Reichswehr until 1923, and during those years he worked on revising infantry training methods. He attracted the attention of the reading public with his first account of his war experiences, *In Stahlgewittern*, published in 1920. It was popular in its time, reaching sales of around a quarter of a million by 1945, and he followed up this first work with many more accounts of the war, ranging in form from war diaries, a novel and edited collections of essays to essays in political journals and *Die Standarte*, the supplement to the Stahlhelm newspaper.

In Jünger's work one can trace without difficulty a development from high expectations of the war to the disillusionment which sets in when he is confronted with its reality. This development is typical of much Conservative Revolutionary writing. In the opening pages of *In Stahlgewittern* Ernst Jünger thus describes the enthusiasm with which he greeted the news of the outbreak of war:

We grew up in the spirit of a materialist age, and in all of us there lived a yearning for the unusual, for great adventure. Then the war took hold of us and intoxicated us. We marched off in a shower of flowers, as if drunk, like gladiators about to die. The war just had to provide the great, powerful, solemn experience.⁷

The ex-soldier and new nationalist writer, Franz Schauwecker, describes the transition from civilian to soldier as a radical switch from a confused, petty, aimless and unclear existence to a simplified and disciplined life in which every movement is precise, clear and purposeful.⁸ Yet Ernst Jünger writes that after a short period with the regiment, he and the other new recruits lose nearly all the illusions with which they had started out: instead of encountering the dangers they had hoped for, they find 'filth, work and sleepless nights'.⁹ Jünger rapidly comes to realise that

traditional chivalry, glory and heroism have little place in modern warfare which is dominated by an impersonal form of battle which consumes men as it does munitions.¹⁰ At this level we see how the Conservative Revolutionaries encounter one aspect of the 'crisis of modernisation' in the pre-Weimar period: Ernst Jünger is well aware of the pacifist argument that technical progress, especially in chemical warfare, results in 'meaningless slaughter and suffering'.¹¹ In a book recommended in the new nationalist journal *Standarte*, Kurt Hesse, a lieutenant in the Reichswehr, recalls how he felt after an encounter with the enemy early on in the war:

There had been too much that was horrifying, too much that was new – that was so completely different from what we had learnt at home. No, we did not want to admit to ourselves that there could be forces which were mightier than a soldier's honour and a soldier's discipline.¹²

Franz Schauwecker writes candidly about how rapidly enthusiasm and elation evaporated at the start of the war, and how the sight of wounded soldiers caused him to reflect on the meaning of the war:

And, God knows, it seems to me that the whole thing is meaningless and totally without justification in God's eyes, in my own eyes and in those of the countless others who were suffering. This awful, crushing burden of hunger, soakings, death, lice, kitbags, excrement, marching, exhaustion which permeates body and soul. Back home they can celebrate our deeds, for a few coppers they can have an uplifting morning reading all about us in the papers... damn it! But here there is no lifting of the spirits, no enthusiasm or heroism.¹³

Group identity is not that easily established for the Conservative Revolutionaries, however, for the profound disillusionment they undergo is a widespread reaction to the war. Indeed it places them in surprising company and distances them from those with whom one might have expected them to share a view of the war. For while this perspective – known in the German as the *Froschperspektive* (worm's-eye view) – marks their war off from the war as retold in the more rigid form of the military memoir,¹⁴ it establishes close links between the Conservative Revolutionaries and the basically anti-war authors of the Weimar years. The possibility of meeting a meaningless death in fact runs through the war writings of both groups. In the conservative camp Werner Beumelburg had participated in the 39-volume *Schlachten des Weltkrieges* project, edited by the Reichsarchiv in the tradition of war accounts which imposed structure on what had appeared to many as futile suffering.¹⁵ Yet

the awareness of random death was so keen that even Beumelburg could give the following account of the war:

A terrible sense of desolation, noise and chaos, a dialogue that frays the nerves, a screaming dialogue with wild death as it gathers itself time and again to pounce. A feeling of impotence, of being at the mercy of ridiculous chance, a game of cards with the devil, and no trumps in your hand. A grotesque interplay of life and death as the will to live suddenly rears up and the shells crash down, as, meaninglessly, staring eyes register a jagged piece of iron bursting forth from the dust and the din, cutting down the man next to you, tearing him to shreds, obliterating him.¹⁶

Such an account is strikingly reminiscent of critical war books such as the one which first appeared in 1929 and which angered so many in the nationalist camp – Erich Maria Remarque’s *Im Westen nichts Neues*. Here the emphasis is also on mere chance which decides whether one will live or die.¹⁷ Similarly, Edlef Köppen’s anti-war novel, *Heeresbericht*, had the idea of senseless death as one of its major themes.¹⁸

Group identity does start to emerge, however, in that the Conservative Revolutionary view of war as senseless slaughter does not always simply follow on from the positive expectations of war in a linear process of disillusionment. Put in most general terms, Conservative Revolutionary writings convey not only a sense of the war’s meaning, but also of its futility, not only a sense of community in war, but also a sense of isolation. They portray war not merely as a splendid adventure in which heroic young men can prove themselves, but also as a profoundly disturbing event because in war pure chance governs one’s fate: a soldier may stay alive by the grace of ‘little circumstances’ or ‘chance’,¹⁹ and may die from a wound inflicted by a ‘meaningless fragment of lead’.²⁰ The wounds of a dead soldier are described as ‘meaningless’.²¹ Contemplation of the chaos of war can result in a laming mood of melancholy.²² The war which had promised to bring the mental relief of total commitment within a community of men could also bring ‘indescribable feelings of isolation’.²³ In *Sturm* Jünger writes:

when death hung over the trenches like a storm cloud, each man was on his own; he stood alone in the dark, surrounded by howling and crashing, dazzled by flashes of light, and felt nothing within himself but loneliness beyond measure.²⁴

The need to make sense of the war is complicated by the fact that Conservative Revolutionary writing on the First World War goes through

a systematic rejection of all those conventional sources of meaning which the more tradition-bound nationalists were intent on upholding during the Weimar years. Death on the massive scale encountered in the First World War is not, for example, rendered meaningful by recalling Germany's war aims. This point is partly a political one which emerged after the war – not least because the war had been lost. Franz Schauwecker, for example, makes the connection between loss of meaning and the lost war when he describes the emotions of the soldiers returning home after the war: 'All at once the effect of the enormous demands made upon them erupted. Suddenly everything had been in vain. The world seemed to have no meaning.'²⁵

But, as we have seen, the feeling that the war had no meaning affected the Conservative Revolutionaries even while it was being fought. Moreover, this sense of futility could clearly often outweigh the idea that if Germany achieved its war aims, the suffering would be justified. Conservative Revolutionaries actually spent very little time contemplating the aims of the war, and Ernst Jünger conveys their mood well when he recalls that soldiers greeted discussions of war aims with an ironic smile. Similarly, in a contribution to the new nationalist journal, *Deutsches Volkstum*, Rudolf Huch is tempted to side with Remarque when he recalls a meeting of 1917 at which politicians told businessmen of the need to secure certain territories without which, comments Huch, the Germans had got on well enough before the war.²⁶ The wish to rescue something from the war without resorting to conventional nationalism is an important distinguishing feature of the Conservative Revolution.

The psychological unease we have noted finds its counterpart at the political level: political unease exists over the idea of a community of soldiers which was united beyond class differences and which was fighting for the fatherland.

Such a simple version of history does indeed feature in the thinking of the Conservative Revolutionaries: in *Douaumont*, a work specifically recommended by the new nationalist journal *Standarte*, Werner Beumelburg displays an idealism which is surprisingly straightforward. He writes that 'suffering and dying is man's fate; suffering and dying for a great idea is honourable; suffering and dying for the fatherland is sacred'.²⁷ And Franz Schauwecker also finds the prospect of dying for the fatherland reassuring.²⁸ This commitment is complicated, however, by an awareness that there were other ways of viewing the politics of the war. Schauwecker calls the war an imperialist war, and he asserts that while nationalists are prepared to fight for the German nation they are not interested in fighting a war for 'percentages of pounds, shillings, marks, lire, dollars and francs'.²⁹

Kurt Hesse records with dismay how the war has been allowed to turn into a business from which particular individuals had benefited, and he calls for restrictions on profiteering.³⁰ This comment comes seven years before Remarque's criticism of factory owners growing rich on the war.³¹

The Conservative Revolutionaries are also ambiguous about the Kaiser as the object of commitment; Schauwecker can on one occasion praise the masses in lyrical terms for seeing the Kaiser as the embodiment of the state: 'This personalised relationship with the state, with the Kaiser was the expression of a powerful bond, – loyalty. The tremendous strengthening of Germanic allegiance sealed by an oath.'³² In the same work, however, he declares that the loyalty to the Kaiser felt by soldiers as they went to war is gone by the time they come home. He sees the inflexible hierarchy of the army as one of the main causes of this turnaround: ordinary soldiers rebel against a system which is designed to keep them at the bottom, and they blame the Kaiser for this system and their lowly position within it.³³

It is therefore all the more paradoxical that the army is also Schauwecker's model for a community which unites soldiers from all backgrounds. The idea of a single community of Germans united in war across class distinctions has to coexist with an awareness of the different experiences of different classes, even at war. Schauwecker's initial enthusiasm for the community of Germans is expressed in his portrayal of men donning their uniforms, a process in which 'all differences fall away'.³⁴ He returns to the idea in the 1927 edition of *Das Frontbuch* where he blends the idea of a community of soldiers at war with the idea of a new nationalism:

In the army, i.e. in the nation we dimly sensed for the first time nationalism as something new. In the community of worker and student, nobleman and peasant, civilised and uncivilised, west German and east German, shoulder to shoulder, and with our souls linked, we felt for the first time that the blood which flowed through each one of these bodies flowed now through all of our bodies.³⁵

Significantly, however, Schauwecker had already called the existence of this community into question a year earlier: in *Der feurige Weg* he had given an account of how the socialist workers regarded him as spoilt and privileged, and of how they refused to treat him as an equal. He felt isolated within his own company.³⁶ Other soldiers played tricks on him to get him into trouble, and he became the company 'victim'. He was driven to a despair which did not stop short of doubting the purpose of the war itself. When criticising pacifism, Schauwecker can attack accounts of the

war which acknowledge only 'each side slaughtering the other' and 'the stupid slaughter'.³⁷ In his despair he now invokes an image of the war which draws on terms which are strikingly similar:

No friends, no house, no home or peace and safety, no hope, no love... nothing,... nothing. I detest this war, this idiotic destruction on both sides, this torture for no good purpose... for what the first fatality exposes as no more than empty phrases and lies, the carrot dangled in front of the obstacle to get you to jump over it, because someone or other will make a profit that way, and behind you the stick, the scourge of hunger and shells, drill, discipline and agonising exertions.³⁸

In his earliest works on the war Schauwecker is in fact preoccupied, even obsessed with the gulf between soldiers from different social backgrounds: his notion of comradeship is difficult to reconcile with his accounts of how he failed to overcome the mistrust ordinary soldiers showed him as a 'man of education', and he sees his failure to bridge the gulf as the result of political agitation which has set the uneducated men against him.³⁹

In psychological terms and in political terms, then, Conservative Revolutionary writings on the First World War were shot through with ambiguity. They reveal minds racked with doubts about whether the vast sacrifices had been in any way meaningful, and they show an awareness not only of community but also of division and isolation, not only of comradeship but of antagonism. This deep-seated ambiguity helps to mark off the Conservative Revolution from other movements of the Right.

STRUCTURES OF MOTIVATION

Theorists have considered the ambiguities of literary texts in general terms and suggested that they might produce a dialectical synthesis leading to a higher level of insight.⁴⁰ What insights might be gained from understanding that a certain body of writing on the First World War is more than a series of unambiguous statements? Is it possible to go beyond pointing out that the picture is more complex than generally thought and correcting this picture? Complex though the sources are, they do contain a typical structure, and this structure can give considerable guidance when it comes to understanding the motives behind Conservative Revolutionary accounts of the war.

Although it is true that these accounts embrace contradictory views, there is a clear tendency for the positive elements of the war to come to

the fore. The switch we have noted from expectations of the war to disillusionment with its reality is not the last stage in the development of attitudes towards the war. For it is clear that different sources of meaning and justification of the war emerge, with war being portrayed as a natural event, as the expression of the fate of the nation. It is this version of the war which political scientists and social scientists who seek to summarise the politics of the Conservative Revolution home in on. Historians have sought to explain why this version of the war should come to predominate. Modris Eksteins sees the tendency of soldiers who wrote about the war to classify what were totally new experiences according to previously existing categories as an 'instinctive reaction',⁴¹ whereas George Mosse suggests cause and effect when he examines the role of nature and argues that it helped to mask the reality of war.⁴² Mosse's argument is plausible, but one can take it further by demonstrating the masking process at work at the level of texts. Precisely how do alternative sources of the war's 'meaning' emerge, and what can a study of the ways in which they emerge tell us?

In *Sturm* Jünger compares war to a storm. War indiscriminately stamps its path through human existence like a tropical hurricane destroying the brilliant flora and fauna. Jünger points out that nature accepts this destruction and merely brings forth new and more beautiful creations, but he adds: 'was that any comfort for the individual?'⁴³ Splendour may be senselessly shattered in war, yet by his use of natural imagery Jünger establishes the beginnings of a positive interpretation of this destruction. Qualified by the idea that such an impersonal overall view of the war offers little comfort to the individual victim, the natural analogy is offered here only tentatively – a fact which reflects the uncertainty in Jünger's mind about its worth. Elsewhere Jünger is able to invoke natural imagery with greater strength of purpose in order to counterbalance the notion that chance governs one's fate in war. He describes his feelings when he comes under heavy artillery fire: 'You had the feeling of being confronted with something inescapable and absolutely inevitable like an eruption of the elements.'⁴⁴

This natural image conveys the idea that the war and the soldier's fate in it are inescapable. What is natural is inevitable, and against a background of 'meaninglessness' and 'chance' – the vocabulary of the counter-image of war in Jünger's work – inevitability lends a kind of meaning. Jünger himself makes these associations clear in the preface to a book he edited on prominent individuals in the First World War:

For the person who sees nothing accidental in any phenomenon, including war and armies, who sees rather the expression of life in all its

might and harshness, but also life's meaning which is far removed from any practical considerations – for this person even the death of an individual, however cruel and irreparable it may seem if one just thinks of the personality involved, can never be a matter of mere chance with no rhyme or reason. This perspective, like any which is founded on inevitability, provides a more profound consolation and a greater sense of certainty.⁴⁵

That Jünger's use of natural analogy and his recognition of the chaotic element of war are related, more precisely that the former is often prompted by the latter, is suggested in *Sturm* when the central character reflects on his narrow escape from death in the front line:

It seemed strange to him that he was sitting here. How close he had come to being hit. How easily it could have been him lying on the ground with twisted limbs like the corpse he had stumbled over in the trench. With great meaningless wounds in his body, and his dirty face spotted with dark blue powder grains.... It was not death that frightened him – that was bound to come sooner or later, but this element of chance,... this feeling that he embodied certain values and yet was no more than an ant to be trampled at the roadside by a careless giant. Why, if there was a creator, did he give man this urge to bore deep into a world he could never understand? Was it not better to live like an animal or like a plant in the valley than to be consumed by this terrible anxiety which lurked beneath the surface of everything one did and said?⁴⁶

The element of chance governing his survival in battle has a disconcerting effect upon *Sturm*. The wounds which killed the soldier are 'meaningless', for they too were inflicted by mere chance. *Sturm* distinguishes between the thought of death itself which is tolerable because ultimately inevitable, and random death in war. The vision of chaos follows on directly from this perception and can only burden man with an acute feeling of fear, for it must make him aware of the precariousness of his situation. Just how profound this fear is becomes clear in a later essay by Jünger in which he hints at the source of his image and records his response: the image of soldiers as ants being trampled by a giant is based on Alfred Kubin's 1914 picture, *Der Krieg*. Jünger describes how the picture shows an army with flags and lances, like ants scarcely visible on the ground. This army faces a giant figure wielding a weapon which is half club and half butcher's knife. The figure is more or less normal down to the waist, but it has the feet of an elephant, one of which is raised over

the army and about to crash down indiscriminately. Jünger explains that Kubin portrays the two aspects of Mars: as master of the sword and the butcher's knife, and he concludes that 'the nightmare wins out; terror, existential dread are dominant'.⁴⁷

In *Sturm*, the intolerable emotion of fear provokes the vision of an alternative mode of existence which provides security by eliminating human consciousness. It is the natural mode of existence. This is the aspect of man's existence in war and of war itself which Jünger and other Conservative Revolutionaries push to the forefront of their accounts.

The character Falk elaborates upon the point when he says that sometimes he wished he were a simple animal or a plant. He hates the thought of any development towards higher sensibilities for this could only serve to increase one's sense of anguish.⁴⁸ It is this simple form of animal consciousness which emerges in Jünger's accounts of war as a sustaining force. In *Der Kampf als inneres Erlebnis* the unwelcome diversification of existence is said to be replaced by just a few basic drives with the advent of war:

We are too diverse; the sap no longer climbs to the tips. Only if we are shot through with a direct impulse like a bolt of lightning will we become simple and fulfilled once again.... In the dance on the narrow blade between existence and non-existence true man reveals himself, his fragmented being once more fuses into a few basic drives of enormous strength.⁴⁹

The theme of chance and the use of natural imagery alone did not mark off the Conservative Revolutionaries from other writers on the war, yet the specific functions of these elements certainly did: when Remarque, for example, stated that it was mere chance that decided whether a soldier would live or die, he concluded that this made the soldier indifferent; Remarque had blamed the war for destroying a whole generation, including those who had escaped the grenades.⁵⁰ For the Conservative Revolutionaries, however, chance is countered by inevitability, and the main source of this inevitability is to be found in the supposedly natural roots of war: Hans Hennig Freiherr Grote writes in the pages of *Standarte* :

What was man in the last Great War? Nothing, and yet everything! Faced with the might of the machine, everyone was equal – and it was an unjust, despicable and damnable business, but that is the way it was, and that is the way it will always be, one way or another, just as birth and death, gale and storm will always be until the end of time.⁵¹

This patterning also occurs in the work of Oswald Spengler who writes that whereas plants have no choice, men and animals do. In times of stress they seek to escape the freedom this gives them and to revert to a 'rooted, plant-like existence'. Spengler connects this with overcoming a sense of self, with the unity which a regiment of soldiers can feel as it advances under fire.⁵² Kurt Hesse quotes Ernst Jünger's argument that because we are humans the time will always come when we attack each other. Significantly, this point comes after a reflection on the forces in war which the traditional soldierly virtues cannot match. Human action and natural events are ultimately not at odds, says Hesse, and it is from this position that he derives his conviction that the war was a meaningful event: 'The only thing that matters is that the events which unfolded during four and a half years of war were natural.'⁵³

Jünger describes how soldiers feel themselves to be mere matériel in battle and how the fate of the individual becomes insignificant. It is understandable, writes Jünger, if men who are stranded in the wilderness for years on end are overcome by horror. Basically they have a sense of meaninglessness, and it makes them try to flee from themselves by talking, drinking and following 'strange mental paths'.⁵⁴ How does this evasiveness of the soldiers in battle relate to Jünger himself? He describes Sturm, the fictional hero who has much in common with the author, and writes that the fascinating thing about him is his ability to 'abstract' from the events of the moment. He thus provides for his friends what they unconsciously seek through drinking and through their conversations: a flight from the present.⁵⁵ Just what is meant by abstracting is explained later on in the same work when Sturm falls to reflecting on the meaning of the war:

What was behind it all? The fatherland? Certainly, like the others, Sturm had not been able to resist the rapture of 1914, but only when he was able to abstract from the idea of the fatherland could he sense the full weight of the driving force. He had long thought of the people of the different nations as lovers who swear their fidelity to just one other and do not realize that they are all possessed by the same love.⁵⁶

'Abstracting' thus suggests a view which reaches beyond conventional ideas on the war and reveals its true driving force: although the fighting men of all nations do not know it, they are in fact possessed by the same love, and this invests the war with a profound and constructive significance.

Although offered here as Sturm's thoughts, the basic idea occurs frequently in Jünger's own voice, as for example in the following passage

from *Waldchen 125* which takes up the suggestion of an unknown force at work beneath the surface of events. It emerges now as a positive counter-balance to the idea that the war is senseless:

We can only sense that what is happening here [in battle] has a place in some great order, and that somewhere the threads on which we seem to wriggle and pull apart without any meaning are woven into an all-embracing meaning.⁵⁷

The image of man dangling by a thread was just one way of conveying the feeling of man's insignificance. By comparing two versions of *Der Kampf als inneres Erlebnis* (from 1922 and 1929) it is possible to see Jünger working on a related image – that of man as a dancing puppet – in order to pattern his experience and introduce the idea that the war had somehow been meaningful. In 1928 he had declared that if the war had not had a meaning, it would have been necessary to give it one: 'The blood of the Great War cannot have flowed for nothing.'⁵⁸ Jünger can be seen putting this principle into practice as he revises his own work. In the first version of the book Jünger relates his thoughts as he awaits relief from sentry duty:

The relief is a long time coming today. It is remarkable how the night can sharpen the senses. One perceives a certain aura emanating from things and concepts and feels it to be the expression of some terrible meaning. One feels like a puppet which has to dance for the demonic entertainment of evil spirits. This was something which had been quite clear to me in dreams, in moments of intoxication and when I was still a child and afraid. Later I laughed about it. As the son of an epoch which had been convinced by the world of matter I entered this war, a cold, precocious product of the city, with my mind sharpened like crystals of steel through science and modern literature. I have changed a lot and believe that I am nearer the heart of things. My view of the world has become more profound, but it has lost some of its clarity.⁵⁹

The earliest irrational fears of the child are dismissed by the adolescent who has come under the influence of rational civilisation. Now, in war, the validity of this rationalism is undermined by the return of a sense of the terrible meaning behind those things which were thought to have been explained by science. The scientific position is abandoned, but this leaves the individual feeling that he is a mere puppet in the war. This image of man as a puppet frequently occurs elsewhere in Jünger's accounts of the war to convey the idea of total subjugation of the individual to arbitrary

forces. The later version of the same scene works upon this state of confusion:

The relief is a long time coming today. It is remarkable how the night can sharpen the senses. One perceives a certain aura emanating from things and concepts and feels it to be the expression of some terrible meaning. This was something which had been quite clear to me in dreams, in moments of intoxication and when I was still a child and afraid. Later I laughed about it. As the son of an epoch which had been convinced by the world of matter, I entered this war, a cold, precocious product of the city, with my mind sharpened like crystals of steel through science and modern literature. The war has changed me a lot and I believe that it must have changed my whole generation. My view of the world is no longer so certain, how could it be, given the uncertainty which has surrounded us for years? Now our actions must be guided by quite different forces, very dark forces of the blood, but one senses that the blood possesses a profound logic. And one senses too that everything around us is not at all clear or rational, but rather very mysterious, and this insight is the first step in an entirely new direction.⁶⁰

In the rewriting of the passage its whole weight has shifted. The idea of man as a puppet dancing for the entertainment of 'evil spirits' has been dropped.⁶¹ Jünger introduces the idea that the changes he has undergone are somehow typical of his entire generation, and typical experience is meaningful experience. Most importantly, the perception of a terrible meaning is no longer Jünger's ultimate perception. This is now embraced by a logic of the blood, and the sensing of this deeper logic is the first step in an entirely new direction. Thus the terrible meaning is accommodated by the suggestion that it is more than the product of one individual's mind and by the idea that meaning can be rediscovered within it. The war, although superficially futile, has a hidden meaning which cannot be grasped by rational enquiry but can be sensed.

Jünger's work on the First World War is a complex interplay of perceptions of futility and meaning, but a typical patterning of experience does develop: reflection loses out to instinct; images of meaningless death are reworked or counterbalanced to suggest a profound meaning; awareness of chance gives way to an insistence on inevitability; the unsettling unique experience of war – the First World War like no other war before it – gives way to a reassuring, stylised, ritualised version of war which can be held up as typical for an entire generation.⁶²

Jünger states that he took a notebook with him when he went to war in order to make notes on his daily experiences, and that he knew the things

that awaited him would be unique and irretrievable.⁶³ The intention of recording the unique experience of wartime is echoed in *Stahlgewittern* where it is the 'longing for the unusual' which makes the prospect of war so enticing. Yet it is clear that Jünger's wish to see his individual experience as 'necessary' and meaningful must lead him away from his declared principles. For necessity and meaning are to be found in the suggestion that one's actions in war follow an archetypal pattern. Thus he writes in *Das abenteuerliche Herz*:

But then I also know that my basic experiences [...] are typical among my generation, a variation which is bound up with the motif of the times, or a species, an odd one maybe, but one which does possess the characteristics of the genus. With this in mind, I believe that when I consider my life, I am not actually referring just to myself, but to what lies beneath this self, and to what everyone else can identify with precisely because it is in its truest and least random form.⁶⁴

Thus, although the reality of modern warfare had cast doubt on the appropriateness of traditional images of war, and the links between trench warfare and traditional warfare had been seen to be tenuous, the need to view individual experience as meaningful resulted in the past being incorporated into the present. A mood is endowed with greater meaning if it is felt to have been the mood of countless generations of soldiers in the past: 'in the evening I sat for a long time in one of those moods suffused with foreboding of which warriors through the ages can tell'.⁶⁵

Jünger in fact enters a timeless world as a soldier, seeking not the unique but the typical experience, as when he meets up with his comrades after battle:

This libation after a battle we had survived is one of the finest memories of old warriors. And if ten out of the twelve had fallen, the last two would be certain to meet up on the first free evening to drink in silence to their dead comrades, and talk and joke about the experiences they had gone through together. They would laugh like lansquenets at the dangers they had survived, take a swig from a full bottle to the dangers they had yet to meet, and care nothing if death and the devil themselves were looking on, so long as the wine was good. That was ever the warriors' way.⁶⁶

Jünger's commentary on an evening of reunion makes of the event a stylised ritual. His appeal to the tradition of the soldier type, accentuated by the use of a vocabulary more suited to earlier forms of battle, establishes the authoritative framework within which the death of one's

comrades can be seen as meaningful. It is the impersonal, eternal qualities of the soldier that transform the desolation of war and lend meaning to what is elsewhere seen as futile suffering.⁶⁷

This preference for the type shows through even when the point Jünger is making seems to require a move in the opposite direction. In *Wäldchen* /25, for example, he writes that the war experience is different according to personal disposition and temperament: one man may be eager for the adventurous life. He will be 'like a modern Sinbad'. Another will see only the bloody face of events and will be lamed by it as by the sight of the Gorgon's head. Yet another will be driven along by fate, trusting in his star. Others are 'soldiers through and through with hard and cool eyes beneath the steel rim of their helmets', the 'new type of fighters'.⁶⁸ In elaborating upon the different attitudes to the war, Jünger refers not to particular individuals of his own acquaintance but rather to various types of soldier. And those he comes to know as individuals he classifies as types: 'young lads who were always cheerful'; 'paternalistic characters'; 'solid men of the people'; 'unreliable fellows'.⁶⁹

The type is a counterbalance to the laming perception of the chaos of war, providing an established role, a pattern of existence by which mental integrity may be regained. Yet the type does not always manage to hold out against perceptions of chaos: in *Der Kampf als inneres Erlebnis* the type is used to suggest that Jünger's understanding of reality is in fact a misunderstanding. Beneath the stylised existence of the hero lurks an awareness that one is living by illusions which may disintegrate at any moment. In the first version of *Der Kampf als inneres Erlebnis* Jünger relates his feelings during a mood of despair:

Space dissolves into chill eternity and I feel like a tiny atom, tossed around incessantly by malignant forces. I am so tired, so weary, that I wish I were dead. A lansquenet, a roaming knight, a Don Quixote who has shattered many a lance and whose illusions dissolve into mocking laughter.⁷⁰

The mood is associated with a feeling of isolation, and Jünger is compelled to speak to a woman in the street of whom he writes:

And she hardly seems surprised, perhaps because of some dark foreboding which she senses in my voice, perhaps too because she is a prostitute. Oh, I wouldn't care if she were the lowest street whore in the world!⁷¹

In a later version of the same work Jünger now alters his account of the incident in a significant way. The passer-by he felt compelled to approach is now described as 'probably a streetgirl, but a lansquenet is not choosy,

and I feel an irresistible need for company'.⁷² The mood of despair is assimilated into the typical experience of the traditional soldier figure. Just how typical this encounter between soldier and prostitute is Jünger notes himself as early as the first version of *Der Kampf als inneres Erlebnis* where he describes the temptations for the soldiers of the red-light district, and he comments: 'warriors and girls, an old motif'.⁷³

Although the finer points of these processes are not easily traced in the work of other Conservative Revolutionaries, the general trend most certainly is. The antitheses of chance and inevitability, futility and meaning are central to their writings, whether one looks at the pages of their political journals or the more theoretical work such as Oswald Spengler's massive *Untergang des Abendlandes*. Here the task of the historian is defined as perceiving history not merely as the sum total of past events without any essential order or inner necessity, but as an organism with a firm structure and a meaningful form. Seen in this light, all events are determined, indeed predetermined, by the organic structure of a culture, and within this structure Spengler insists that the First World War was inevitable.⁷⁴

The political purpose behind this reworking of the war experience is conveyed most clearly in the kind of argument put forward by Wilhelm von Schramm, a young volunteer in the war who went on to write about his experiences in new nationalist publications. He presents the First World War and Germany's defeat as tests imposed by fate. Weaklings see in the war only murder, futility and destruction. Von Schramm himself is obliged to acknowledge that there is something to be said for this pacifist image of war: like other new nationalists, he charts the process of disillusionment, with German soldiers expecting the war to liberate them from a mechanised world, but in fact experiencing that cruel victory of mechanised warfare over living beings which reduced the infantry to cannon-fodder. Notions of victory and defeat lost their original meaning as the battle of matériel raged. But, like the other new nationalists, von Schramm does not allow this to be his ultimate insight: he suggests that war and defeat are a constructive force. Seen from a 'spiritual perspective', their 'higher meaning' can be appreciated. The German people must be won back to a 'natural fitness for war', and this can be done by adopting a creative approach to history which will restore meaning to an event which appears meaningless. He argues that the German soul was ultimately strong enough to resist mechanical warfare. That von Schramm is also taking up a clear political position is indicated when he goes on to claim that Germany rejects all forms of mechanical thought, including Marxism, which is a fundamentally mechanical *Weltanschauung*.⁷⁵

The search for meaning in the typical experience is also a feature of Conservative Revolutionaries' work. Franz Schauwecker recognised the need to disregard the individual and focus on the collective experience if a positive image of the war was to emerge: in *Der feurige Weg* he describes how the path of any one individual meanders aimlessly, but above this there exists 'a meaning which creates a harmonious order out of the millions of twists and turns'.⁷⁶ He argues that everything individual is meaningless. There is nothing more presumptuous and alien to the times than the megalomaniac insistence of the individual on the worth of his own life. In fact only the collective counts,⁷⁷ even if it is 'terribly difficult' to gain the overview which provides the randomness of the individual's experience with a 'profound justification' and makes a 'symbol of each and every musketeer'.⁷⁸ This move away from an exclusive preoccupation with the individual's experience – in Jünger's case towards the type and in Schauwecker's case towards the collective⁷⁹ – is characteristic of the Conservative Revolutionaries, and it is here that they part company from the anti-war lobby.

The need to transcend the sense of futility is expressed by Rudolf Huch in his review of Remarque's *Im Westen nichts Neues*. Huch argues that Remarque's book only gives an account of what one individual could see, and that this individual was not in a position to see beyond his particular experience. What Huch is criticising is the *Froschperspektive*. Yet, as we have seen, he does acknowledge that there were many things wrong during the war: soldiers on leave were not pleased to hear the politicians' version of what the war was supposed to achieve. Nor did they appreciate the cheap jingoism which was much in evidence in Germany during the war. At the battle-front things were not always as they should have been either, and Huch cites the example of the different provision made for officers and other ranks. Such matters are not always given sufficient consideration in German war-books, and he refers to Bernhard Kellermann's *Kampf im Argonnenwald* (which appeared during the war) as a book which allows the terrible earnestness and the cruelty of the war to disappear beneath an account of heroism. But ultimately these problems are not crucial, argues Huch, and even if it were true that they were as widespread as Remarque would have the reader believe, the book as a whole is 'untrue'. Huch likens it in this respect to the work of Zola in which only the 'base, filthy, mean and corrupt world' finds expression. Even if the war did bring out depravity, concludes Huch, it also brought out greatness, and Remarque's book has nothing to say on this count.⁸⁰

What parallel structures are discernible in the more narrowly political response to the war? The political response is determined in part by the

simple fact that Germany did not emerge as the victor: Artur Mahraun, leader of the Jungdeutscher Orden, wonders about the political meaning of the war, and he gives a version which offers some solace, yet leaves the issue unsettled. In *Der Meister* he writes that while thousands of soldiers died every day at the front and sealed their martyrdom with a hero's death, the leadership back at home surrendered without a fight and thus deprived the generation of frontliners of the meaning of their heroic struggle.⁸¹

Kurt Hesse sets out the problem differently and reveals the mental process by which a solution is reached. In *Der Feldherr Psychologos* he asks whether the fact that the war was lost is sufficient reason to see this episode in the history of the nation as a negative experience. One must try, he argues, to establish what positive aspects of the war remain. After listing just how much Germany did lose in the war, he asks whether there must not be some gain to emerge from a struggle which was kept up with so much spiritual and physical effort. His suggestion of where meaning is to be found helps explain a key feature of Conservative Revolutionary writings on the war. If the war was lost there must be a new battle-cry: 'So be it! We must annex spiritual values.'⁸² In this suggestion we see how failure in the world of actual military power prompted the Conservative Revolutionaries to internalise the war experience, why for example Ernst Jünger called his war-book of 1922 *Der Kampf als inneres Erlebnis* (Struggle as Inner Experience). In this 'inner experience' the best qualities of the soldier – courage, heroism, selflessness – become ends in themselves.⁸³ Franz Schauwecker describes the situation of the Germans in the war and concludes that they were fighting against hopeless odds. In such a situation there is 'no point' in fighting on. Yet if fighting on has no point, says Schauwecker, it does have a 'meaning'. This meaning resides in the courage and commitment of the soldiers who fight the losing battle.⁸⁴

Werner Best, who went on to draw up the Boxheim Papers on Nazi plans in the event of a communist revolution, pursues this idea when he explains that new nationalism sees the world as dynamic, consisting of tension, struggle and turbulence. He quotes Friedrich Nietzsche on the 'world which is perpetually creating and destroying itself', and he quotes Ernst Jünger's dictum: 'The crucial thing is not what we are fighting for, but how we fight.' Extending the 'logic' of his thinking, Best concludes that the aims of any struggle are ephemeral and ever-changing, and for this reason the success or failure of the struggle is not important.⁸⁵

The Conservative Revolutionaries' heroic portrayal of war thus does not directly tackle the insight into its futility: the feeling of one's own insignificance in war is not conquered by fixing one's gaze on a higher goal but is suppressed when Conservative Revolutionary writers revert to

a preconscious, animal existence, or else relinquish the responsibility for finding meaning to a more profound, though scarcely perceptible force ('a profound logic'). The reaction to the problem that the stated war aims are insufficient to make sense of death on the huge scale encountered in the First World War is not to find some other, worthier aim, but to suppress the problem and make war an end in itself. The individual's fate is not rendered meaningful in itself. Rather, the individual is disregarded and the focus switches to the typical or the collective experience. This evasiveness suggests that the term 'heroic realism' – used by the Conservative Revolutionaries themselves and echoed by the critics – is inappropriate to describe their stance in war. For it implies a greater willingness to confront reality than is actually demonstrated in their work.

The political response to the war is also influenced by the postwar situation of the Conservative Revolutionaries in the 'alien' environment of the Weimar Republic. Franz Schauwecker's *Der feurige Weg* suggests just how intrusive the Weimar factor was in their view of the war. Trying to recall the war years, Schauwecker writes:⁸⁶

Yes, it was a long time ago, so much time has lurched by in an ocean of mist and smoke. Months and years, each month like a year and each year like a decade, for so much has happened,... armistice, going home, revolution, Versailles, Republic, uprisings, murders, plots, hardship, worry, talking, price rises, promises, despair, words, words, and striving, consolation, slavery and suffering. Nothing but waves and wrecks, nightmares and evil fairy tales, enough to make my head ache when I try to find my way back through this thick and seething tangle of crime and disgrace and misery – back to those times.⁸⁶

Ernst Jünger shows how, as far as the Conservative Revolutionaries are concerned, giving way to their nagging doubts about the meaning of the war would be tantamount to conceding the superiority of the thinking which underpinned the Weimar Republic. He writes that any philosophy which sees the death of millions in war as meaningless must be a philosophy devoid of God, spirit and heart, and it must also be fundamentally barren. He attributes this philosophy to liberalism in all its forms, and claims that one of the leading politicians of the Weimar Republic, Walther Rathenau, embraces this view of the war.⁸⁷ Significantly, he acknowledges his own mixed feelings about the war: 'were our hearts never besieged by the feeling of emptiness urging us to surrender by insidiously whispering to us that it [sacrifice in war] was somehow really all in vain?'⁸⁸

The view of war as natural and self-justifying was further developed in the Weimar period in order to cope with what the Conservative

Revolutionaries saw as the spread of alien Western values across the German border. Two expressions of these alien values were the 'war-guilt clause' of the Versailles Treaty and the Kellogg-Briand Pact of 1928 which outlawed war. Thus a key feature of the Conservative Revolutionary view of the war is the irrelevance of moral categories. A. E. Günther feels uneasy about German propaganda which proclaims Germany did not start the war. This propaganda presented the German cause not as the 'inner experience of the nation' but as a legal dispute which, like any other, can be lost by trickery. It was dangerous to concentrate on the morality of self-defence. A nation's right to exist includes attack, yet unlike in Mussolini's Italy, this was not driven home in the German public sphere as the philosophy of the nation. Referring to Germany's efforts to refute the war-guilt charge, Günther records his amazement at seeing German historians and politicians rummaging in piles of documents, seriously engaging in a 'search for the truth'. Günther cites Thomas Mann's essay on Frederick the Great which had set out what was wrong with an approach based on the question of guilt. Mann had argued rather in terms of the rights of those things which 'have become' and the rights of those things which are just 'becoming'. This, suggests Günther, is the proper perspective for studying events. Germany's rights in fact lay beyond all morality.⁸⁹

The rise of class-based socialism in the postwar period preoccupied the Conservative Revolutionaries and led them to introduce the war into their vision of 'German socialism'. Kurt Hesse is therefore offering the radical right's remedy for the ailments of the Weimar Republic when he recalls how in war 'social issues took a back seat, even among the workers'. What arose in their place was a consciousness based on national unity.⁹⁰

The earliest pronouncements on these problems are not always thought through, not even for their implications for nationalism. Conservative Revolutionaries generally agree that the 'social issues' must be faced, and that decent opportunities must be created for workers. But Franz Schauwecker seems to surprise himself when he concludes that communism alone holds the key to dignity in life.⁹¹ However, he goes on to say that such talk is high treason and out of the question for the present. What the Conservative Revolutionaries opt for instead is an alternative socialism. It is an alternative socialism developing against the background of rapidly growing anti-war and revolutionary ideas during and after the war. Kurt Hesse's detailed account of these developments shows just how much they featured in the thinking of the Conservative Revolutionaries at the time,⁹² but the reactive origins of alternative socialism are everywhere apparent: Artur Mahraun proposes for the future of Germany a state based on the experience of soldiers in the front line. This state would be

sustained by the values of comradeship, fraternity and community which were learnt in the face of mortal danger. Mahraun describes this vision as a 'counter-idea to Moscow's idea'.⁹³

This politicisation of the war relied heavily on selective memory: in order to produce the harmonious vision of a future state Conservative Revolutionaries had to suppress their own awareness of how the 'community' of the front could disintegrate along class lines. Thus Helmut Franke, one of the co-editors of *Standarte*, wrote of soldierly values which outweighed the equality expressed by socialist ideology:

Leader and men, man to man, from first to last ever relying upon each other and closely bound to each other – they can demonstrate their humanity better than all pacifist and international theories of humanity.⁹⁴

WEIMAR POLITICAL CULTURE

There are signs that it is possible to extend some of the arguments about the Conservative Revolutionary view of the war into the broader context of Weimar political culture. The very popularity of new nationalist writings on the war indicates that tensions and problems existed not just in the minds of a relatively small (but prolific) group of novelists, diarists and political journalists. As one historian has pointed out, the 'urge to find a higher meaning in the war experience' which would make sense of the enormous sacrifices, was widespread in the postwar period, particularly among veterans.⁹⁵ But so too was the unease about this higher meaning. The tendency for the *Frontgemeinschaft* and the home front to disintegrate into class-based groupings has been well documented by historical research,⁹⁶ and this tendency found its concrete expression in the emergence of not one but two opposing large scale veterans' organisations in the postwar period – *Stahlhelm* and *Reichsbanner*.⁹⁷ The initial upsurge of interest in pacifist ideas in the Weimar Republic, followed by the increasing isolation of the *Nie-wieder-Krieg-Bewegung* ('No More Wars Movement') and the remilitarisation of public opinion around 1929 suggest that the internal wranglings of the Conservative Revolutionaries contain elements of a microcosm of Weimar political culture, a political culture which was ultimately receptive to the transformation and suppression of the realities of the war experience.⁹⁸

2 Nietzsche as ‘Mentor’

INTRODUCTION

Conservative Revolutionaries frequently declare their ‘indebtedness’ to Friedrich Nietzsche and proclaim him their chief philosophical mentor. Typically, they seize upon Nietzsche’s accounts of war, the animal instincts in man, the rights of the strong over the weak, the objection to the democratisation of Europe, and they see the Germans as the direct descendants of the race for which they assume Nietzsche had only admiration – the Germanic race. But exactly how great is the Conservative Revolutionary debt to Nietzsche? Where does Nietzsche lie on the scale between direct influence and frequently, but unjustifiably, invoked authority? In what sense is it correct to argue, as some have, that the Conservative Revolution was ‘unthinkable without Nietzsche’?¹

It is a common enough undertaking to call into question the idea of Nietzsche as a straightforward source of inspiration for any individual or group, and part of the analytical task must be to register the differences between him and his Conservative Revolutionary ‘disciples’. But it is equally, if not more important to examine these differences for the light they can shed on the forces which shaped Conservative Revolutionary thought in the interwar years. This chapter will examine just how ideas were adapted and their meaning changed as they entered the political and cultural arena of the Weimar Republic, and what pressures operated at the time to produce these particular transformations.²

The Conservative Revolutionaries were certainly fulsome in their praise of Nietzsche: Ernst Jünger wrote of ‘the lonely Nietzsche, whom we have to thank for practically everything that moves us most profoundly’.³ Oswald Spengler praised Nietzsche’s account of the will and declared: ‘In this matter we are all his pupils, whether we want to be or not, whether we know him or not. Without anyone realising it, his perspective has already conquered the world. Nobody writes history any more without seeing things this way.’⁴ Yet the tensions behind such praise become immediately apparent when one considers the diametrically opposed uses to which Nietzsche is put by various Conservative Revolutionaries: in 1937 the philosopher Alfred Baeumler, the major interpreter of Nietzsche in the Weimar and Nazi periods, wrote that when calling ‘Heil Hitler!’ to the Nazi youth, he was also greeting Friedrich Nietzsche.⁵ Edgar Jung, however, uses Nietzschean terms to distance himself from the Nazis. Ernst

Jünger's Nietzsche is more complex still: Jünger first 'credits' him with views he did not hold, and during and after the Second World War attacks the Nazis indirectly by criticising Nietzsche for holding these views.⁶

To some extent Nietzsche's fragmentary mode of expression allows contradictory uses of his work. With his particular understanding of the concept of the legend, the Germanist and writer, Ernst Bertram, encouraged a kind of Nietzsche interpretation in the 1920s which was based not on Nietzsche's meaning to his contemporaries but on the reality of the interpreter's times. Bertram also highlights the ambiguity of Nietzsche's thought and gives examples of the countless interpretations his work allows. For Bertram, Nietzsche is 'the typical ambiguous philosopher'.⁷

Whereas Bertram saw this ambiguity as a virtue, modern Nietzsche interpretation appreciates its dangers: Nietzsche's aphorisms often stand alone, and this tends to undermine attempts to construct a contextual interpretation. Furthermore, Nietzsche's work is not free from contradictions, and a faithful rendering of his attitudes requires a reading which balances one Nietzschean argument against another.⁸ In the Weimar years, however, Alfred Baeumler's solution was to declare Nietzsche's pronouncements on matters German to be a collection of 'contradictory judgements', but with a consistent basis to them.⁹ In common with many other Conservative Revolutionaries, Baeumler paid considerable attention to the text which first appeared in 1901 under the title *Der Wille zur Macht*, but which subsequent research dismantled once it was established that Nietzsche did not in the end wish to write any such work. Nevertheless, we are concerned with the Conservative Revolutionary reading of Nietzsche, and we shall therefore take account of this work as one of the Nietzsche sources available at the time.¹⁰ Baeumler's description of *Der Wille zur Macht* – which is characterised by its use of aphorism – as 'a genuine philosophical system, tightly structured ideas' is wrong, yet he defines his interpretative task as no more than taking on the 'logical work of making the connections for which he [Nietzsche] had no time'.¹¹

Modesty of this kind was heavily attacked by Thomas Mann when he accused Oswald Spengler of interpreting Nietzsche 'in a stupidly unambiguous way' as the philosophical patron of imperialism.¹² Mann calls Spengler 'Nietzsche's clever ape', a reference to the scene in *Also sprach Zarathustra* where Zarathustra's way into the city is barred by 'a fool foaming at the mouth' whom the people call Zarathustra's 'ape': 'for he had taken on something of the style and cadence of his speech and liked borrowing from his abundance of wisdom'.¹³

Is Thomas Mann's bitter commentary on Spengler (which prefigured one important rehabilitating strand of Nietzsche interpretation after 1945)

a fair statement of the connections between Nietzsche and the Conservative Revolution as a whole?¹⁴

FROM GERMANIC TO GERMAN

Conservative Revolutionaries intent on recruiting Nietzsche for their cause had to find a way round his hostility to the Germany of his day. In an essay of 1919 Moeller van den Bruck argued that Nietzsche did not turn away from Germany until 1870, that he approved of Bismarck and never rejected militarism. While he gave vent to his 'insane outbursts of hatred' in *Ecce Homo*, he still had a sense of Germany's mission.¹⁵

Alfred Baeumler argued that although Bismarck created the Reich, the bourgeoisie took it over, and that Nietzsche's contempt was aimed at this Germany. Moreover, Nietzsche said the worst things possible about Germany so that he would be heeded. For Baeumler, Nietzsche had two objections to the Germany of his day: the first was that, although Bismarck was not a Christian, he was running the state on Christian principles, the second that Bismarck was sacrificing Germany to the democratic movement. Baeumler quotes Nietzsche:

Is it possible to take an interest in this German Reich? Where is the new idea? Is it just a new combination of power? Even worse if it does not know what it wants.... Peace and letting people get on with it is not any kind of policy that I can respect. Ruling and helping to ensure that the supreme idea is victorious – that is the only thing that could interest me about Germany.¹⁶

Conservative Revolutionaries take up and connect Nietzsche's thoughts on the invigorating effects of war, the Germanic past and the Germany of their own time. Like Nietzsche, Ernst Jünger sees war as inevitable,¹⁷ but here it is possible to establish a significant difference in attitude towards the Germans by pursuing the arguments accompanying one particular Nietzschean term. In *Der Kampf als inneres Erlebnis* Jünger refers to the traditional enmity between Germany and France:

What would we be if we were not audacious and reckless neighbours who wiped the rust from our swords every fifty years? Europe as a flatland, green and given over to pasture, occupied by as many good-natured animals with cowbells as can find space to feed. As long as Germanic and Gallic blood courses through our hearts and our brains, this will never be our lot.¹⁸

The view of Europe as a pasture for 'good-natured animals' points to the Nietzsche of *Jenseits von Gut und Böse* for whom European morality is 'the morality of the herd-animal' (II, 659). Christian morality has dominated Europe and bred 'a shrunken, almost ridiculous species, a herd-animal, something obedient, sickly and mediocre...the European of today...' (II, 624). For Nietzsche, Christian and democratic ideals had gained mastery over Europe, and in Jünger's time the 'Western ideals' of pacifism, democracy and internationalism had infiltrated German political thought. Jünger is also close to the Nietzsche of *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches* for whom war is capable of providing new energy for cultural and spiritual development. And of war-surrogates such as hunting, gladiator-fights, persecution of Christians in the past and expeditions of various kinds in the present Nietzsche writes:

People will go on finding many such war surrogates, but perhaps through them come to appreciate ever more clearly that such a highly cultivated and therefore inevitably feeble humanity of the kind represented by today's European does not merely need wars, but the greatest and most terrible wars – in fact occasional reversions to barbarism –, if it is not to forfeit its culture and its whole existence because of the forms of its culture. (I, 688)

Yet here the similarity ends. For Nietzsche 'Germanic blood' certainly did not course through the hearts of modern-day Germans (II, 786), and the difference in outlook widens when one examines one more Nietzschean term taken up by Jünger. Jünger argues that, without the traditional enmity between Germany and France, Europe would become a 'flatland'. The term is taken from Nietzsche, but Nietzsche uses it in a strikingly different way. In *Götzen-Dämmerung* he states that we are witnessing a 'withering of the intellect's instinct' and explains that Germany's 'politics on the grand scale is fooling nobody... Germany is regarded more and more as Europe's flatland' (II, 985). It is just Germany, then, not all Europe, which is becoming a 'flatland', and the reference to 'politics on the grand scale' points to the reason:

If one gives all one's energy over to power, to politics on the grand scale, to economics, world trade, parliamentarianism, military interests – if one uses up one's share of reason, commitment, will, strength of purpose on these matters, there is little left for other pursuits. Culture and the state – let us not deceive ourselves – are antagonists: 'The cultured state' is just a modern idea. The one lives off the other, the one flourishes at the expense of the other. All great periods of culture are periods of political decline. (II, 985)

Since for Nietzsche German cultural and political ambition are necessarily alternatives, he concludes that Germany's political rise also rendered it 'stupid': "'Deutschland, Deutschland über alles", I fear that was the end of German philosophy' (II, 983).¹⁹ Moreover, Nietzsche argues that German political success had a beneficial effect on France: as Germany attained the political status of a great power, France assumed the status of a centre of culture, and Germany ceased to be culturally significant (II, 985f.).²⁰ For Jünger then, political rivalry between France and Germany prevented Europe from becoming a 'flatland', whereas for Nietzsche it was precisely this rivalry which had turned Germany into one.

Where Nietzsche's argument about the harmful effects of German military victory on German culture is acknowledged, it is seen as secondary to his distaste for the political institutions which the Conservative Revolutionaries scorned in their own time. The philosopher Kurt Hildebrandt points out that the most casual observer can hardly be in any doubt that Nietzsche is contemptuous of the German nation. Nietzsche had seen that German military victory was a potential danger to its culture. He grew critical of the Germans and said harsh things about them, yet with the aim of helping them achieve the goal he had set for them. Nietzsche also declared himself an opponent of the idea of nationalism, and in favour of the good European rather than the German. Hildebrandt concedes all this and yet concludes that this does not make Nietzsche an anti-nationalist. He claims that, for all his bitterness, Nietzsche always put his hope in the nation, and his real hatred was directed at democracy, liberalism and parliament.²¹

Conservative Revolutionaries' eagerness to use Nietzsche in establishing a tradition was prompted in part by what has been called the conservative dilemma: once traditional models of nationalism had been discarded, the difficulty of establishing a new nationalism encouraged a flight into the distant, mythical past.²² Hence, Nietzsche's concept of the 'Germanic' race was enlisted with much enthusiasm but little regard for its original significance in Nietzsche's thought. For Nietzsche, the 'Germanen' were one example of the noble races which had within them the 'beast of prey', the 'blond beast'. From time to time this beast burst forth and embarked with equanimity on a campaign of murder, burning, rape and torture (II, 786). The *Germanen* were tamed, however, by Christianity which claimed to have improved them (II, 980). Nietzsche did not have unreserved admiration for such 'reversions to barbarism', but it is also clear that he did not have unreserved admiration for the *Germanen*. As has been pointed out, he could mention '*Germanen* and other boors', '*Germanen* and other heavy-footed people' in the same breath, and define the qualities of the *Germanen* as 'obedience and long legs'.²³ Moreover, Nietzsche

expressly pointed out that there was scarcely a conceptual tie, let alone a blood one between *Germanen* and the Germans of his own time (II, 786).²⁴

Alfred Baeumler nevertheless sees Nietzsche taking a 'Germanic-Hellenic' stand in *Der Wille zur Macht* and *Also sprach Zarathustra* against Christian Roman Europe.²⁵ Like so many others at the time, Baeumler does not hesitate to establish the kind of continuity between *Germanen* and Germans which Nietzsche forbade in his own work, arguing that the strained relationship between Nietzsche and Germany arose from the fact that he returned to the 'Germanic roots' of German nature.²⁶

Having planted Nietzsche firmly in a Germanic tradition and gone on to argue that whenever Germans achieved historical greatness it was thanks to the Germanic element in them coming to the fore,²⁷ Baeumler moves on to tackle Nietzsche's defiant attitude towards the state. He quotes Nietzsche's dictum that culture and the state are at odds, with the one flourishing at the expense of the other, and goes on:

The Germanic need for freedom, the Germanic warriors' pride and defiance are alive in Nietzsche when he resists the state, the institution he regards as un-German, as Roman....

How much true Germanic sentiment emerges from Zarathustra's defence of the people against the state, of the warrior against the bureaucrat!... That all-embracing order which we now call 'the state', with its imperial centre, its centralised administrative apparatus, its insistence on subordination and obedience is something alien to the North. The Germanic peoples' lives are founded upon kinship and military units...²⁸

This account of Nietzsche's view of the state seems to do little to advance Baeumler's cause, since the Conservative Revolutionaries were in fact convinced of the need for a strong state, order, discipline and the subordination of the individual. The account does, however, satisfy two of their needs. Firstly, the idea that the state is a foreign institution ties in with the standard right-wing attack on the Weimar Republic as an alien political system which could never have any relevance for the German nation. The point is made more bluntly by Philipp Hördt in his consideration of the 'Nordic idea of the state'. Hördt sees what Nietzsche yearned for actually realised in 'Nordic man'. The Nordic *Übermensch* (superman) may feel some sense of community, but this tends to work against rather than for the formation of a state. Instead, the 'North Germanic races' are strongly tied through kinship, and are 'in a certain constitution'. They cannot 'have a constitution', nor 'import' one, a point which the present

has forgotten. The political nature of the German nation is fixed by its Germanic origins.²⁹

Secondly, the alternative to this state meshes with the widespread call from the radical right for a dictatorship based on military principles. For Baeumler the Germanic ideal is 'kinship' and the 'military unit'; for Hördt it is the 'league of men'. Ernst Jünger makes the connection between German, Germanic, military prowess and Nietzsche in his accounts of German offensives in the First World War:

Oh, only now do we sense our true strength and feel in top form! We appeared here like the War-God himself, as Germans occasionally appear in the course of history, with that Germanic rage which cannot be resisted. Over there [on the English side] they hate us. There is only one way to deal with that if one does not want to be contemptible: by being formidable.³⁰

Friedrich Hielscher sets out to disprove interpretations of Nietzsche's anti-German attitudes and associates him with all the features of nationalism about which Nietzsche had so many reservations. Unlike Baeumler, Hielscher also decides that Nietzsche is a strong advocate of the idea of a state. Surveying Nietzsche's thought, he summarises: 'Now the nation is affirmed, the strictly run "military state" complete with nationalism is called for ..., and the great state is itself glorified as the immortalization of the victory of a blond elite of rulers.'³¹

The references to the nation, nationalism and the disciplined military state all come from *Der Wille zur Macht*, but Nietzsche's immediate context certainly does not suggest he was demanding their introduction. In fact, Nietzsche declares that the military state is the very last way of founding or retaining a great tradition of superior men (WzM II,180). Nietzsche makes his point shortly after a politicised version of his thoughts on the excesses of the 'noble races': he describes the state as 'organised immorality' – internally ordered and kept in check by such institutions as the law and the family, but expressing itself towards the outside world as 'the will to power, war, conquest, and revenge' (WzM II, 174).³² A less tendentious reader would automatically be put in mind of Nietzsche's reservations about noble races.³³ Yet the textual arrangement of *Der Wille zur Macht* may well have encouraged Hielscher in his interpretation of Nietzsche as an advocate of nations indulging in unreflecting self-assertion: for Nietzsche's point is directly preceded by an account of how living things must grow and extend their power. Nietzsche argues that confusion created by 'moral narcosis' leads people to talk of the individual's right to protect himself, but that one could just

as well talk of his right to attack others. 'Aggressive egoism and defensive egoism' are not a matter of choice but essential features of all living things. Nietzsche goes on to apply this idea to nations and to suggest that any nation which fundamentally rejects war and conquest is in decline.³⁴

The idea of the great state as an eternal monument to the victory of a blond master race refers to a passage in *Zur Genealogie der Moral* where Nietzsche defines the state as 'some pack of blond animals of prey, a race of conquerors and rulers that is organised for war and has the drive to organise others, and that unscrupulously lays its awful paws on a population which may well be far greater in number, but is still lacking form and unsettled'. There are signs here of a certain admiration on Nietzsche's part for the race which expresses its 'natural' being through conquest: 'That is the way the "state" is established on earth: I think the ravings which have that it is established through a "treaty" have been dealt with. Anyone who can give orders, anyone who is "master" by nature, anyone who can think and act brutally, is not interested in treaties!' (II, 827). Yet ultimately this is no more than a slight variation on Nietzsche's basic view of the beast of prey outside his own community, and consequently hardly a call for the establishment of such an order. In the same passage Nietzsche also refers to those who create such a state knowing they will be justified 'in all eternity', a point Nietzsche makes in order to illustrate their lack of conscience, not the greatness of their achievement (II, 827).

NIETZSCHE AGAINST DEMOCRACY

Conservative Revolutionaries also looked to Nietzsche as the opponent of democracy, and there can be little doubt that Nietzsche was indeed a harsh critic of whatever trend towards democratisation he witnessed in his own time. Baeumler quotes Nietzsche's view of democracy as the 'historical form of the decay of the state'.³⁵ According to Baeumler, belief in democracy involved a belief in the ultimate triumph of truth, love and justice, but such a belief must destroy life and was at odds with Nietzsche's idea in *Der Wille zur Macht* that a hierarchy must emerge with a clear distinction between those who give orders and those who obey.³⁶

The Conservative Revolutionaries' mobilisation of Nietzsche in their onslaught on democracy was, of course, directed against the Weimar Republic: Friedrich Georg Jünger, confronted with the conservative dilemma of a nationalism in need of redefinition, resorts to Nietzschean terminology in order to give a negative account of the aims of the nationalist movement:

It [the nationalist movement] does not want political parties, parliaments, voting rights any more, nor the torrent of words, the frenetic activity of an ancient mechanism which weighs down the nation, nor the swarms of little politicians and writers who go out of their way to mock the state, nor the insubordination and intellectual rebellion which are going on all around us. It detests the mass assemblies of the mediocre in the parliaments, where the Will to Power has assumed dwarflike forms and is taken up with internal struggles.³⁷

The state Jünger advocates is the fanatical, authoritative, nationalist state.³⁸

For Moeller van den Bruck, Nietzsche's attack on democracy and his thoughts on hierarchy and subordination filled the same ideological gap. Moeller's main work, *Das dritte Reich*, reveals the tensions of the conservative dilemma which encouraged him to turn to Nietzsche in this way. Moeller's Nietzsche is firstly the advocate of an alternative socialism: Nietzsche was Marx's opposite. Marx's materialist thinking and Marxism eventually gave way to democracy, and this in turn produced a counter-movement in the form of Nietzsche and his idea of aristocracy.³⁹ And when Nietzsche addressed the 'proletarian issue' he detached it from the democratic politics of the herd instinct. In common with other Conservative Revolutionaries, Moeller then goes on to develop his vision of an alternative socialism for which Nietzsche supposedly provides the model: not 'that socialism which is a doctrine, but socialism as the vital expression of an emerging humanity with its instincts still strong, healthy and intact' (p. 175). For Moeller, Nietzsche's socialism was not that life-denying legacy of Christianity, but rather the foundation upon which a higher species can take its stand (p. 176).

Moeller ties in his account of Nietzsche's socialism with the events which formed the backdrop to the writing of *Das dritte Reich* and with Moeller's own political vision of an alternative socialism: he concludes that the German revolution gave the proletariat power but then took it back and passed it on to democracy. The proletariat is still pressing for power, however, and it will attain it if it realises that gaining power does not involve the distribution of material wealth, but 'taking a spiritual share' (p. 178).

Moeller's Nietzsche is furthermore the advocate of an anti-democratic, aristocratic order, the 'enemy of everything that was of the masses and not built on order, rank and hierarchy' (p. 175). For Moeller, the rule of mediocrity attacked by Nietzsche had taken on its German form in the Weimar Republic (p. 173). Moeller argues that the ways of Western liberalism are not for Germany (pp. 114–15), and he locates Nietzsche in the

mainstream of a German alternative tradition. Yet this 'tradition' is far from clear: Moeller accuses Germany of flinging away its customs, its memories, its destiny and its claim to greatness in favour of a democracy which would see it perish (p. 174). Part of this democracy is parliamentarianism which, argues Moeller, has no roots in Germany (p. 147). He likens German history to a mighty river which seeks to regain its proper bed (p. 3). Yet where an account of the substance of this 'German tradition' should be, Moeller talks in the most general terms of long-existing factors and eternal forces which keep reasserting themselves (p. 48). Moeller harks back to the moment when Germans stepped out of prehistory and knew how a people can take a hand in its own fate: the democracy was the people, based on the bond of blood rather than any social contract. This was a 'democracy which was begotten and conceived, born and reared' (pp. 138–9).

The strong influence of contemporary politics on Moeller's image of Nietzsche becomes apparent if one compares these thoughts of Moeller's on Nietzsche after the November Revolution and the establishment of the Weimar Republic with his attitude towards Nietzsche at the turn of the century. For the early Moeller, Nietzsche was far from being the advocate of order and subordination depicted in *Das dritte Reich*. Nietzsche was rather the 'prophet of a new cultural anarchy',⁴⁰ with the *Übermensch* showing distinct signs of being a self-deception (p. 34) and a 'splendid phantom' (p. 51). Moeller accuses Nietzsche of an intellectual lapse by suggesting that he needed a new God and that *Also sprach Zarathustra* was therefore written out of a feeling of weakness (p. 34). For the early Moeller, Nietzsche was fundamentally incapable of life: he was not part of humanity, and 'like no other personality of our time, he illustrates for us the concept of decadence' (p. 48).

MAN'S ANIMAL BASE

One of the key ideas which Conservative Revolutionaries take from Nietzsche and adapt to their own needs is that of war as a return to man's barbaric or animal self. In large part they are motivated by the same need to see the First World War as meaningful which prompted them to portray it as a natural phenomenon. Uncertainty over the war's meaning and the hope that a simplified, animal existence would drive out uncertainty are clearly connected in Conservative Revolutionary writing.

Looking back, Ernst Jünger describes modern city-life before 1914 and the belief that scientific progress would produce the *Übermensch*.⁴¹ He

uses the *Übermensch* ironically, suggesting that the belief in essentially materialistic and rational progress is ill-founded. Beneath the veneer of civilised man lurks naked, primitive man, and it is this man that emerges in the First World War:

Here [in war] real man made up in a wild orgy for everything he had missed. Here his instinctive drives, too long held in check by society and its laws, once more became all-important, sacred and the ultimate logic. And everything that the human brain had perfected over the centuries only served to increase man's striking power beyond all measure.⁴²

Not only does war shatter any belief in rational progress, it also uses the tools of rationalism to increase its power. In this particular case Jünger is referring to modern technology, traditionally thought of as a means of achieving mastery over nature, but now seen as equally capable of becoming the servant of man's primitive drives. Jünger describes civilised man's dormant animal being as follows:

It is true that increased refinement has purified and enriched him [the individual], but the animal still lies dormant in the depths of his being. There is still a lot of animal in him, slumbering on the rich woven carpets of a polished, refined, smoothly running civilisation, veiled in familiar habits and pleasing forms, but when life's graph line swings back to the red of primitivism, the disguise falls away; naked as ever he bursts forth, primitive man, the totally unrestrained cave-dweller, with his unleashed drives.⁴³

Jünger's 'new race' of front-line soldiers are 'splendid beasts of prey',⁴⁴ combining technological expertise with these unleashed drives.

Vocabulary and imagery suggest that in these arguments on the deeper significance of the First World War Jünger is consciously borrowing from Nietzsche. The basic elements of Jünger's arguments are to be found in the first section of *Zur Genealogie der Moral* entitled "'Good and Evil", "Good and Bad"' which deal with the evolution of moral concepts. Here Nietzsche gives an account of how noble men are bound within their own community both by group sanctions and by self-control but in their behaviour towards outsiders they are completely different:

Towards the outside world, where the unknown begins, where foreign lands begin, they are scarcely better than unleashed beasts of prey. They revel in the freedom from all social constraints, and once in the wilderness they work off the tension accumulated by a long confinement in

their own peaceful community, they revert to the clear conscience of wild animals, like jubilant monsters, perhaps leaving behind a horrific trail of murder, arson, rape and torture, but in high spirits and at peace with themselves, as if they had just pulled off some student prank, and convinced that the poets will once again have something to sing about and to praise for a long time to come. Unmistakably lurking at the heart of all these noble races is the beast of prey, the magnificent blond beast, roaming far and wide in his craving for spoils and conquest; from time to time this hidden core has to erupt, the animal must break out and return to the wilderness.... (II, 785f.)

Common to both arguments is the idea of a resurgence of an original animal being which lurks at the most profound level of man, and here Jünger uses the Nietzschean term 'Raubtier' (beast of prey). The probability that this term is taken from Nietzsche is strengthened by Jünger's use in the same work of the second of Nietzsche's animal images – that of the beast – to describe man in his basic state: Jünger asserts that from one generation to the next, man is building a tower towards the divine, but that the base of this tower is 'resting on wild and primitive mountains like a saddle, forced onto a wild beast's back'.⁴⁵

For both Nietzsche and Jünger this animal base has no outlet in a community based on peace but finds one in war. War is seen as the return to this animal self.

In a passage which closely parallels Nietzsche's account of the murderous exploits of the blond beast in *Zur Genealogie der Moral*, Jünger declares his preference for Tamerlane's hordes:

When Asiatic despots, when a Tamerlane drove his storming hordes across far lands to the sound of the clashing of swords, they set the torch to everything they found and left only a wasteland in their trail. The populations of great cities were buried alive, or their bloody skulls piled high into pyramids. The plundering, raping, burning and torturing were done with great passion.

Despite all this, one can take to these great exterminators. They behaved according to their natures. Killing was a moral act to them, just as love of one's neighbour is to Christians. They were wild conquerors, but just as well-rounded and complete in their way as the Greeks in theirs. One can take delight in them as one would in brilliant beasts of prey that glide through tropical forests, their bold eyes ablaze.⁴⁶

There are clear verbal and structural similarities in Nietzsche's and Jünger's arguments. But how similar are the underlying attitudes?

Nietzsche's argument progresses from a consideration of the 'noble races' of the past to a critique of what in contemporary Europe is held to be the purpose of all culture, namely 'to breed from the beast of prey "man" a tame and civilised animal, a house-pet' (II, 787). If this were truly the purpose of culture, then its tools would be those 'instincts of reaction and resentment' characteristic of what Nietzsche calls 'slave morality' (II, 785, 787). It is in opposition to this version of culture that Nietzsche expresses his approval of, but also his reservations about the 'blond beast'. The blond beast is to be feared, and one must be on one's guard when he is near. Yet Nietzsche does appear to prefer him to 'civilised' man who is 'perverted, diminished, stunted and poisoned' (II, 787). When Nietzsche applies his argument to the contemporary world he offers his image of a fearsome man desirable not as an unqualified ideal but as a counterbalance to degenerate modern European man:

But from time to time, grant me – assuming there are goddesses that have the power, beyond good and evil – one look, grant me just one look at something complete, finished, joyous, mighty, triumphant, something that can still inspire fear! At a man who can justify the existence of mankind as a whole, a complementary, redeeming, glorious man for whose sake one may keep one's faith in mankind (II, 788).

In *Der Wille zur Macht* Nietzsche therefore describes the preparatory work for his 'inversion of values' as 'slowly and carefully unleashing a host of suppressed and maligned instincts' (WzM II, 339). Even in his more strongly worded assertions of man's animal base he sees its acknowledgement as the precondition for true humanity, not as the entire substance of humanity: 'the magnificent "animal" must first be given, – otherwise what is the point of all "humanization"?' (WzM II, 385). He stresses the need to 'master one's passions, not to weaken or eradicate them!... The "great man" is great by virtue of the free play he allows his desires and of the even greater power that knows how to harness these splendid monsters' (WzM II, 324f.).

The specific interpretation of particular texts is supported if one looks to Nietzsche's treatment of related themes elsewhere in his work as it was available to the Conservative Revolutionaries. In *Der Wille zur Macht* Nietzsche stresses how important it was for him to understand the connection between Dionysian and Apolline forces in the Greek world:

I was basically intent on discovering why Greek Apollinism had to grow out of a Dionysian substratum: ...Excess, wildness and the Asiatic are part of his [the Greek's] innermost self: the Greek's courage lies in

his struggle with his Asiatic self: beauty is not given to him as a present, no more than his logic or the naturalness of his morality – it is won, wanted, taken through struggle – it is his victory (WzM II, 387f.).

Nietzsche's examples of the few who achieve the highest levels of existence are therefore not barbarians of the past but those men who achieve a blend of 'intellect' and 'senses', men such as Hafis and Goethe (WzM II, 388).⁴⁷

The recurrent pattern at the heart of Nietzsche's thought on man's animal, his Dionysian and his bellicose urges thus indicates that he does not advocate the absolute rule of these urges but rather an acknowledgement of their existence within man and of their potentially beneficial effect on man's culture, and it is significant that Nietzsche can employ his military imagery (in this instance 'victory') not to describe the emergence of the barbaric but to describe the successful struggle to channel and utilise it to cultural ends.⁴⁸

Nietzsche's habit of shifting perspective does mean, however, that the vision of synthesis can break down: *Der Wille zur Macht* contains this vision but it also contains the vision of a new order of values which casts aside moral values in favour of 'naturalistic' ones. This new order suggests that the split between morality and life is fundamental and that when life reasserts itself the drive to express one's will to power will not be restrained by any vision of synthesis between man's natural and his ethical self (WzM I, 486).

What then of the Conservative Revolutionaries? One of the most prolific Conservative Revolutionary interpreters of Nietzsche, Alfred Baeumler, certainly could go along with Nietzsche's views on sublimation. In an essay of 1930 Baeumler selected Nietzsche's view that man's instincts could not be suppressed as his most profound insight: from the depths of nature where what is wild and evil is to be found there also come the best and most noble aspects of man. The Greeks owe their greatness to their ability to channel and control their bellicose instincts.⁴⁹ Yet, encouraged perhaps by Nietzsche's own deviations from notions of synthesis, the Conservative Revolutionary interpretation of Nietzschean sublimation can give way to a simpler message: Baeumler quotes Nietzsche on the never-ending feuds between the Greek city-states and on the 'murderous greed' that provoked their wars, but he turns Nietzsche from fascinated observer into uncritical enthusiast, commenting that he found delight in these feuds.⁵⁰ Far from seeing the sublimation of aggressive, acquisitive instincts for the good of a culture as Nietzsche's aim, Baeumler focuses on the meaning of the envy which underlies these feuds in the Greek world as

the 'urge to self-assertion, to power and to victory', and claims that Nietzsche portrayed this urge in his 'main philosophical work' as 'the foundation of the whole world' (*ibid.*, p. 93).

Like Nietzsche and Baeumler, Ernst Jünger also suggests that man has an animal base and that the animal drives in man can be channelled and transformed:

The animal forces within us are the roots of our existence, without them we can only wither. But we may be able to redirect them, transform them, just as we are able to transform the raw energy of a waterfall into a shower of sparks. This is a path to the stars, and war is a stage which cannot be bypassed.⁵¹

This is very close in structure to Nietzsche's view that war, although capable of destroying fragile cultures, can also provide a new and powerful driving force in the 'workshops of the spirit' (I, 687). The other images Jünger uses to convey the idea of the sublimation of man's animal drives are those of the tower and the primeval forest ('Urwald').⁵² Jünger explains that the human race is an 'Urwald' in which the treetops reach out from the close, steaming atmosphere of the forest and stretch upwards to the sun. Whereas a 'will to beauty' embraces the treetops, a horrific chaos in which animal kills animal thrives at the base of the trees.⁵³

Like the 'Urwald', man derives the strength to strive for the heights, for beauty, from the horrific decline of previous generations. Jünger now switches his image to that of the tower. Generation after generation, mankind is giving his energy over to building a tower of great height:

Slowly, agonisingly slowly, its square stones rise up towards to the deity, its great weight resting on wild and primitive mountain ranges like a saddle forced onto the back of a wild beast. The construction is still just a shell, a grand gesture, aiming at the obscure goal of a promised land (*ibid.*, p. 6).

With this image Jünger affirms that man's higher striving towards 'the deity' is based on his animal being, but also on control of this animal being, and here the Nietzschean argument is brought to mind. Yet at this stage the weight of Jünger's argument shifts in a significant way. Using both the imagery of the tower and of the 'Urwald', he turns his attention to the individual:

The individual is also built up and joined together from countless building blocks. The endless chain of his ancestors trails along the ground behind him; he is fettered and tied by thousands of bonds and invisible

threads to the tangle of roots in the swamps of the primitive forest from whose ferment his seed germinated. His wild, brutal, and harsh instincts may have been smoothed down, polished and restrained over the millennia as society curbed impulsive desires and passions. Increasing refinement may have purified and enriched him, yet the animal still lies sleeping at the base of his being. There is still much of the animal in him, slumbering on the comfortable woven carpets of the polished, refined and smooth mechanism of civilisation... (ibid., pp. 6–7).

What has happened here? Jünger switches from the tower to the 'Urwald' image, and in so doing shifts the emphasis from the striving for higher goals to the inescapability of man's animal being. Civilisation as Jünger sees it is ultimately no better than that false culture Nietzsche had attacked for excluding man's animal self. Jünger gives up on Nietzsche's idea of an alternative civilisation which might channel and sublimate the animal in man, a move which is reflected in his redefinition of the divine. Originally a goal to be approached by means of the tower, it is now equated with the unleashing of man's animal being in war:

In struggle, in war that tears away all understanding between men like the patched together rags of a beggar, the animal rises up as a mysterious monster from the bottom of the soul. It shoots up, a consuming flame, an irresistible frenzy that seizes the masses, a deity enthroned above the armies (ibid., p. 7).

The shift in Jünger's argument is reflected also in the way he describes animal man at war. In terms of Nietzsche's argument, man at war is not an ideal but the source of primitive energy in man's striving for beauty. 'Primitive man' is Jünger's term for this. Yet where the belief in this sublimation of man's animal being breaks down, Jünger describes animal man as 'real man' (ibid., p. 3), that is to say, the rare and true self-expression of man.

Nietzsche's and, to a greater extent, Jünger's ideas on war correspond closely to what has been called the drive-discharge model of war. Essentially this holds that war is a safety-valve for aggressions built up in society. Yet it has also been pointed out that this model was closer to men's expectations of the First World War than to its reality. The more relevant model turned out to be the 'cultural patterning' model, according to which the restraints on aggression learned through socialisation were not purely external rules to be left behind with one's civilian clothes but rather an essential element of the soldier's personality.⁵⁴ One must ask therefore why the Nietzschean model – albeit in distorted and simplified

form – was so popular among Conservative Revolutionaries writing about the war in the postwar period. Although the Nietzschean model was not the most appropriate to describe the experience, it was adopted not least because its emphasis on instincts could be made to mesh with the automatism involved in a reversion to 'natural behaviour'. Automatism helped to support the notion of the war's inevitability against what we have already seen to be the nagging suspicion that the sacrifices it demanded may have been for nothing.

Nietzsche's view of life as more than a struggle for survival is bound up with achieving higher spiritual goals, but Jünger, while invoking Nietzsche as his authority, does not follow this line of thought to the end. Ultimately it is abandoned in favour of the simpler vitalistic message which Jünger proclaims in Nietzschean terms when he describes the massing of troops for an offensive:

It flows past us here, the will to life, the will to do combat and the will to power, even at the cost of life itself. In the face of this nightly unending flood to the fight all values lose their meaning, all concepts turn hollow, one senses the expression of something elemental, powerful which has always existed and will always exist, even long after men and wars have ceased to be.⁵⁵

Beyond all values and concepts the will to life is closely linked with the will to do combat, the will to power. Although this argument ignores Nietzsche's ideas on spiritual achievement, it does owe something to the Nietzsche of *Also sprach Zarathustra* and *Der Wille zur Macht* in which life is often identified with the will to power.⁵⁶ Yet it seems that Jünger drew upon an additional source here, a source which encouraged him to focus on this particular aspect of Nietzsche's work and to apply it to a real war. In *Feuer und Blut* Jünger recalls how, in his criticism of Darwin, Nietzsche had said that life was more than a 'miserable struggle for survival' (pp. 66–7), yet we have also noted that Jünger did not see this idea through to its Nietzschean end of spiritual progress. When Nietzsche writes about the struggle for survival in *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches*, therefore, it is significant that he does not do so in quite the way Jünger suggests: Nietzsche does not actually call the struggle for survival 'miserable' ('erbärmlich'). In another discussion of the struggle for survival Jünger describes the principle with a similar term, 'wretched' ('elend'), and in so doing, provides the key to his extra source. *Das Wäldchen 125* contains an account of how a young medical orderly in the Franco-Prussian War of 1870–71 saw a cavalry regiment charge by:

'As this column stormed past me', he said in his own words, 'into battle and perhaps to its death, so splendid in its vitality, its fighting spirit, so wholly the embodiment of a race intent on conquering and vanquishing or perishing – I clearly felt that the strongest and highest will to life is not expressed in any wretched struggle for survival, but as a will to do battle, as the will to power and supremacy' (pp. 190–1).

Jünger concludes by writing that it is unnecessary to say who spoke these words. It is therefore interesting to note that the quotation comes not from Nietzsche's own work, but from the notoriously unreliable biography of Nietzsche written by his sister, Elisabeth Förster-Nietzsche.⁵⁷ She recalls this incident as she explains when and how her brother first formulated the idea of the will to power and thus gives this idea a directly historical and military meaning (ibid., p. 681). Whereas Nietzsche's anti-Darwinian 'higher goals' in *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches* had been spiritual – he had argued that spiritual progress could come from weaker individuals who occasionally inflict wounds on a self-satisfied community and that the struggle for survival was therefore not the only guarantee of progress – the anti-Darwinian 'highest goals' reported by his sister in her biography are the will to power and supremacy.

She expands upon this point as she reports Nietzsche's further thoughts, explaining that he thought it good that Wotan had given military commanders a hard heart, for without it they could not have sent thousands to their deaths in order to ensure that their nation was victorious. Here Elisabeth Förster-Nietzsche's recollection of her brother's thoughts offers a useful point of comparison with what we know to be Nietzsche's own words. For in *Jenseits von Gut und Böse* he refers to Wotan in the same way in order to describe the absence of pity in 'noble men' (II, 731). This reference points the reader on to the 'noble races' of *Zur Genealogie der Moral* and thus also to Nietzsche's doubts about their unbridled self-assertiveness.⁵⁸

NIETZSCHE THE ACTIVIST

Conservative Revolutionaries also turned to Nietzsche as a source of a self-sufficient, self-assertive, vitalist philosophy. A frequently quoted Nietzschean thought is that a good war sanctifies any cause. The point is first made in Nietzsche's work by Zarathustra in his address to the 'warriors', and it is repeated by the kings who have sought Zarathustra out (II, 312, 486). It is true that Zarathustra mocks them for their enthusiasm, and that he speaks the words primarily as a criticism against Christianity. It is also true that Nietzsche's arguments about the sublimation of man's

bellicosity must be borne in mind, yet Nietzsche's ambiguous style leaves the way open for Conservative Revolutionaries to incorporate the idea into their own thinking for their own purposes.

There are two main reasons for their interest in the idea: firstly, as they look back, it helps them to come to terms with a war which demanded great sacrifice yet brought no tangible benefit to the German nation, and secondly it helps them overcome the problem of working out a coherent nationalist political philosophy at a time when traditional nationalism was no longer seen as viable and there was no consensus about a new 'national socialism'.⁵⁹

The first reason is well illustrated in the attitude of Werner Best who had invoked Nietzsche's view of perpetual change to argue that success or failure in a struggle was not important.⁶⁰

More specifically, Ernst Jünger adapts Nietzsche's words on a cause being sanctified by a good war when he sets out the problem involved in coming to terms with the mass slaughter of the war: 'Countless men die without knowing why, countless men die for a fatherland which may even tomorrow reject its own principles. Perhaps a peace will be concluded which leaves everything just as it was before the war.'⁶¹ We have already seen how for Jünger the overt aims of the war cannot of themselves make sense of the enormous sacrifices it claims. He responds by discounting these aims and seeking a justification of the sacrifices within the war itself. Hence he writes that sacrifice may be for something unimportant yet nobody can take away the value of what the soldiers have done: 'The crucial thing is not what we are fighting for but how we fight. Pushing on towards our goal until victory is ours or we fall. The fighting spirit, total commitment to even the most trivial cause are worth more than all the fretting about good and evil' (*ibid.*, p. 76). And later in the same work he asserts:

Dying for a conviction is the supreme achievement. It is a declaration of loyalty, a deed, fulfilment, faith, love, hope and a goal; in this imperfect world it is nothing less than perfection, a consummation. And the cause is nothing, the conviction everything. If a man dies, obsessed with an idea that is clearly wrong, he has nevertheless achieved something great (*ibid.*, p. 112).

Here we see one of the main roots of the activist style of politics which characterises Conservative Revolutionary thinking: the search for meaning in the face of a chaotic war which ended in defeat leads the Conservative Revolutionaries not to wonder whether the war should have been fought at all but to seek meaning in action for its own sake.

Werner Best adds to this argument an attack on the Kellogg–Briand Pact of 1928 which condemned recourse to war for the solution of international disputes. Drawing on Nietzsche, Best argues that the concepts of right and wrong in international law are no more than the ‘marking out of the current balance of power’, and that the Kellogg–Briand Pact which commits nations to renounce war is in fact an expression of the will to power and ultimately also a continuation of war.⁶² In these arguments Best is implicitly drawing upon Nietzsche’s view of Christian morality as a veiled expression of the will to power of the weak.

Jünger establishes the significance of Nietzsche’s idea in postwar political terms after emerging from a failed debate which was intended to hammer out a nationalist programme.⁶³ He takes up the question of commitment in a study of ‘heroic realism’. Here he writes that German nationalism wishes to see Germany just as it is, and he explains that modern nationalism has lost the link with the idealism of his generation’s grandfathers and with the rationalism of its fathers. Jünger surveys the range of political activity of the time and asks whether one should come down in favour of the dictatorship of the proletariat or that of capital, or even both at once. Such questions, he writes, provide material for books, pamphlets, questionnaires, editorials and cultural reviews, but they are not of great concern to nationalists whose stance is ‘heroic realism’. Jünger brings together Nietzschean activism and conflict over the nationalist programme with the lesson learnt from the war:

It [heroic realism] does not seek out solutions, but conflicts, – it sees the eternal meaning of life embedded in their unrelenting ferocity. It therefore resists the idea that a war should be considered meaningless because it was lost just as much as it refuses to view a situation in which a country lives in a state of high tension, subject to the most frightful internal and external pressure as anything other than necessary.⁶⁴

In the mid-twenties Jünger had declared himself in favour of working out a nationalist programme and actually set a debate in motion among nationalists about the contents of such a programme. By his own admission, however, the debate was a failure since it did not produce anything which could transcend traditional nationalism. As a result, the vitalist element in Conservative Revolutionary nationalism comes to play an ever more central role, with programmes downgraded to ‘dogma’ and losing out to the ‘force of life’.

Alfred Baeumler asserts that the activist delight in struggle not as a commitment to the fatherland but as an end in itself is a Nietzschean idea, and he goes on to see this as the essence of the Germanic spirit.⁶⁵ The

political message which Baeumler derives from his interpretation of Nietzsche's activism is spelled out in unambiguous terms in his *Studien zur deutschen Geistesgeschichte* which appeared under the Nazis in 1937. Here Baeumler uses Nietzsche's activism in order to justify a brand of nationalist politics based on negation and the absence of a positive programme. He describes how Nietzsche was regarded as eccentric or even insane by his friends for his total rejection of everything that was held in any regard. Nietzsche was seen as the critic who did not have a 'positive programme'. Baeumler goes on to explain that this criticism has also been levelled at the National Socialist movement, and that it was difficult to believe that the Weimar Republic, its constitution and its political order meant nothing at all. Yet the key fact was that there was one man who declared the whole system worthless, even if he could not predict how things would eventually turn out. It was sufficient for him to know that the Republic was on the point of collapse, and 'what is falling down should also be pushed'.⁶⁶

NIETZSCHE AND OSWALD SPENGLER

In the case of Oswald Spengler the various uses to which Nietzsche's thought is put over time can shed light on one particular interaction between intellectual and political history. An examination of Spengler's changing attitudes towards Nietzsche tends to confirm what our analysis has suggested up to now: that the idea of Nietzsche exerting a direct influence upon Conservative Revolutionary thinkers must take second place to Nietzsche being made to do service according to the needs of the moment.

In the first volume of *Der Untergang des Abendlandes* (completed in 1917) Spengler's acknowledgement of Nietzsche is in fact somewhat reluctantly given,⁶⁷ and indeed, on many key issues Spengler criticises Nietzsche for seeing things wrongly. Spengler points out that Nietzsche's Zarathustra figure is not truly beyond good and evil since he wishes to change man. *Also sprach Zarathustra* was therefore written by 'a do-gooder' whose ideas are based on the will to change the way people are. For this reason Spengler declares Nietzsche to be a 'socialist' (UA1, 435-6).

For the early Spengler Nietzsche is close in spirit to the Darwinists who understand the world in terms of the drive for power (UA1, 435), and Spengler has little time for Nietzsche's 'doctrine of the Übermensch' which, he declares, has no substance because modern civilisation has no

goals and man has nothing to hope for. All that is left is a 'Faustian' drive with nothing to be achieved (UA1, 466).

Spengler's pre-1918 view of Nietzsche is not crucial in its own right, but it does become interesting when compared with his assessment of the philosopher after the November Revolution and the establishment of the Weimar Republic. Nietzsche starts to take on a new role in the second volume of *Der Untergang des Abendlandes* which appeared in 1922 and in which anti-intellectualism is accorded far greater importance than in the first volume. In the earlier work Nietzsche had been viewed only in passing as the philosopher who put the will above reason. Mainly he had been the philosopher who used the tools of the intellect to formulate the idea of a transvaluation of values. Nietzsche had been clearly located in Spengler's period of civilisation which is dominated by intellectualism and the scientific, analytical spirit.

In the second volume of *Untergang des Abendlandes*, however, Nietzsche is made to do service as the critic of precisely this spirit: Spengler distinguishes between facts and truths, with truths being theoretical constructs which have nothing to do with life, and here Spengler's praise of Nietzsche is far more fulsome than in the first volume. Nietzsche is now no longer invoked as the 'do-gooder' with an intellectual approach to existence, but as the vitalist: 'It is one of Nietzsche's greatest achievements to have posed the problem of the value of the truth, of knowledge, of science – an irreverent blasphemy in the eyes of every born thinker and scholar who sees the meaning of his whole existence being called into question' (UA2, 569–70). Spengler is here referring to *Zur Genealogie der Moral* where Nietzsche argues that the value of truth is a new problem, and that the 'will to truth' needs to be subjected to a critique (II, 891). Nietzsche directs the reader's attention to a section of *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft* where he sees the 'will to truth' as a principle which may be 'hostile to life' and destructive, and he links the question of why science is needed with the problem of why morality is needed in a situation where life, nature and history have shown themselves to be immoral (II, 208).

In the second volume of *Untergang des Abendlandes* Spengler takes up Nietzsche's points when he contrasts the analytical with the vitalist view: 'All do-gooders, priests and philosophers are agreed that life is a matter for precise reflection, yet life on earth goes its own way and remains unconcerned by such reflection' (UA2, 576).⁶⁸

What is the purpose of this re-evaluation of Nietzsche? It coincides with the launching of Spengler's critique of the contemporary political scene, and it clearly underlies this critique. In the second volume of *Untergang des Abendlandes* Spengler sets about the Weimar Republic when he

argues that a written constitution can never be complete, and he goes on to contrast its imperfection with the reality of the life of a nation:

What is unwritten, indescribable, customary, felt, self-evident is crucial – and this is something theoreticians will never grasp – inasmuch as a written account of a state or a constitutional charter cannot even hint at the essential structure which underpins the living reality of a state. Indeed, a living entity is spoilt for all time if one seriously attempts to subject its development to a written constitution (UA2, 1005).

Spengler continues his attack when he asserts that 'literature' – in Spengler's work a synonym for intellectual theory, in particular the theory of Marxism⁶⁹ – takes no account of the real forces which determine the fate of nations:

In constitutions literature is set against a knowledge of men and things, language against race, an abstract notion of right against thriving tradition, regardless of whether the nation remains able to conduct its affairs and in form midst the torrent of events.... Not only the three most doctrinaire constitutions of our time, the French of 1791, the German of 1848 and 1919, but virtually all constitutions refuse to see the great destiny of the real world and believe thereby to have disproved its existence. Instead of the unforeseen, of the chance elements of strong personalities and circumstances, causality is to rule supreme, eternally just, ever the same reasonable association of cause and effect (UA2, 1077).

This is the postwar context, then, within which Nietzsche is recruited as an anti-intellectual in order to add weight to Spengler's counter-offensive against the Weimar Republic and the spirit of the November Revolution. Spengler makes no bones about the fact that he wrote *Preußentum und Sozialismus* (1919) 'out of disgust and bitterness over the Revolution'.⁷⁰

Spengler also invokes Nietzsche's critique of morality in order to underpin his attack on the Weimar Republic. He considers it one of Nietzsche's particularly noteworthy achievements that he was the first to recognise the 'dual character of all morality', and Spengler refers to Section 260 of *Jenseits von Gut und Böse* where Nietzsche distinguishes between 'the morality of masters and the morality of slaves'. Spengler attaches his own concept of nobility to Nietzsche's morality of masters, and he stresses that it acknowledges all differences of rank and privilege as facts. He attaches his critique of that brand of morality which is a matter of conviction and based on statutes to Nietzsche's critique of the 'good and evil' embodied in religious morality (UA2, 981). Just which group embodied this low morality is explained in Nietzschean terms in the later work, *Jahre der*

Entscheidung (1933) when Spengler marks off his own brand of socialism from class-based socialism:

The flat-heads cannot escape Marxist thinking of the last century. Throughout the world they see socialism not as an ethical way of life, but as economic socialism, as workers' socialism, as mass ideology with materialist goals. Programme-based socialism of every kind is base thinking which rests on base instincts, the apotheosis of the herd instinct which today lurks everywhere behind the slogan 'overcoming individualism'. It is the opposite of the Prussian spirit which has experienced in its model leaders the need for discipline and dedication, and hence it knows that inner freedom which comes from having done one's duty, it knows what it is to command and to control oneself, and to fix one's gaze on a great goal.⁷¹

Nietzsche's account of aristocracy in *Jenseits von Gut und Böse* is certainly in line with Spengler's, and Nietzsche also gives it a contemporary political dimension by declaring 'the morality of the masters' alien to the tastes of his time and to 'modern ideas'. Yet Nietzsche goes out of his way to explain the barbaric roots of aristocratic societies and sophisticated cultures: predatory peoples, barbarians attacked more peaceable races. Noble peoples were initially always the barbarians. They were the more complete peoples, meaning too: 'the more complete beasts' (II, 727). These thoughts encourage the reader to recall Nietzsche's reservations about 'noble man', yet Spengler's interpretation ignores the relativising effect of Nietzsche's other pronouncements on the subject.

Spengler's later work is directed against class-based socialism, and Nietzsche is certainly vehement in his attack on socialism. Spengler's view of nihilism – 'the unfathomable hatred of the proletariat against everything superior', the 'flattening out of society down to the level of the mob' which was 'the aim of bolshevism' – is no more than an updating of Nietzsche's view of nihilism as underlying the 'decadent values' of Christianity in his own time.⁷² In *Der Antichrist* Nietzsche himself draws the political conclusions from his onslaught on Christianity when he explains the influence Christianity has had on politics: nobody has the courage any longer to grant himself special rights, the rights of a ruler, and the contemporary political scene is 'sick' because of this lack of courage. The belief in the rights of the majority will bring about revolutions, and Christianity will be responsible. Christianity is 'an uprising of everything that crawls on the ground' (II, 1205–6).

Moreover, the antithesis of life and socialism is already worked out in Nietzsche's thought, as for example in *Der Wille zur Macht* where social-

ists seeking a society without vice, illness, crime, prostitution and poverty are accused of seeking to condemn life (WzM I, 68).⁷³ It is also in *Der Wille zur Macht*, however, that Nietzsche pairs his attack on socialism with an attack on the hypocrisy of its opponents who are ridiculous for not acknowledging the egoism underlying their rule (WzM II, 195–6).

Spengler intensifies his attack on socialism by using Nietzschean terminology with ever less regard for its original function, as for example in his criticism of the word capitalist as a label to describe everyone who is not a worker or a workers' leader and did not end up 'coming off badly' (*schlecht weggekommen*) for lack of talent. 'Capitalist' for Spengler is a term used by the dissatisfied and the spiritual rabble to define the strong and healthy.⁷⁴ Spengler argues that no sentimental notion of equality can alter the fact that different people are born to different grades of work, yet socialists see the lowest worker as more important than the highest, a situation which he summarises as a 'transvaluation of economic values'.⁷⁵

Like Ernst Jünger, Spengler takes up Nietzsche's ideas on the 'beast of prey'. In the second volume of *Der Untergang des Abendlandes* he examines the reversion to primitivism which he sees as a feature of civilisation. In concrete terms this reversion is enacted by 'Caesarist' leaders in their exercise of power, and Spengler comes to see Mussolini as one such leader. From the chaos of a destroyed culture there emerge such men, driven by instinct and the urge to dominate (UA2, 1102).

In the later work, *Der Mensch und die Technik* (1931), Spengler elaborates upon the theme with direct reference to Nietzsche: as Nietzsche knew, he argues, man is a 'beast of prey' and life a struggle resulting from the will to power. The beast of prey for Spengler is a superior being, and he opposes the strength of the ultimate beast of prey, the lion, to the herd instinct of the cow. The political message is clear enough when Spengler associates the herd instinct with the 'masses' and thereby with the democratic ethos of the Weimar Republic. The implied prescription for the future is also clear enough: Germany must cease to live by the 'herbivore ethics' of animals which are the quarry of others and recognise the 'ethics of the beast of prey' which are determining the shape of the world.

Whereas the early Spengler had lumped Nietzsche and Darwin together as 'socialists' for wanting to change mankind, he now goes out of his way to distinguish between Nietzsche and Darwin by explaining that man's struggle with the outside world is not 'wretched', as Darwin and Schopenhauer thought, but rather the very meaning of life which ennoble life. For this higher view of man's struggle Spengler uses Nietzsche's formula of *amor fati*.⁷⁶ Spengler's use of the term 'wretched' suggests that, like Jünger, he formed part of his image of Nietzsche by reading

Elisabeth Förster-Nietzsche's biography of her brother.⁷⁷ Spengler is not interested in Nietzsche's reservations about the beast of prey, nor in the idea that the beast of prey was just one element in man: Spengler simply equates man with the beast of prey. The *amor fati* reference is taken from *Der Wille zur Macht*, and certainly Nietzsche goes out of his way here to separate off from any countervailing influence those aspects of life which have hitherto been shunned:

Highest state that a philosopher can attain: to have a Dionysian attitude to existence—: my formula for this is *amor fati*.

This involves understanding those elements of life which have hitherto been denied not only as necessary, but as desirable: and not only as desirable in relation to hitherto approved elements (for example, as complementary to them or as their precondition), but for their own sake, as the more potent, fruitful and true elements of existence which express its will more clearly (WzM II, 383).

This express wish to elevate the Dionysian side of existence to the status of a value in its own right is at odds with the perspective in *Zur Genealogie der Moral* according to which, as we have already noted, fearsome man is a complementary type. For Spengler, however, the overriding need was to work out Germany's salvation, and this need was too urgent to permit such qualified self-assertiveness.

Man's tactics for life are those of a 'splendid beast of prey': he lives by attacking, killing, annihilating, and his wish is to rule, argues Spengler. Every real man occasionally senses this spirit flickering within him. It is a spirit which makes man proud to be feared, admired and hated, and it obliges him to take his revenge on all who injure his pride.⁷⁸ There are master races which have retained the character of the beast of prey and take their delight in dominating others.⁷⁹ The nobleman, the warrior and the adventurer live in the world of facts, not in the world of 'truths' which is inhabited by priests, scholars and philosophers. The former seek to make the intellect serve the will of life, whereas the latter would put their lives in the service of the intellect.⁸⁰

The key factors determining the future will be as in the past: the will of those of superior strength, healthy instincts, race, the will to possess and the will to power. Any other considerations such as justice, happiness and peace must remain mere dreams.⁸¹ Man is a beast of prey, and great beasts of prey are noble creatures which do not indulge in the hypocrisy of a morality founded on weakness.⁸²

Spengler argues that barbarism must be revived in critical times in order to save the day and to be victorious, and this barbarism will express itself

in wars. The barbaric spirit has only died out in the cities where a pacifist mire has engulfed whole generations. Life is fundamentally war,⁸³ and he clearly regards it as Germany's task to ensure that such bellicose forces come to the fore in order to save the nation: 'We Germans shall never bring forth another Goethe, but we shall bring forth a Caesar.'⁸⁴

Spengler seizes also upon Nietzsche's ideas on might and right, and gives the morality of good and bad absolute preference over the priests' morality of good and evil. The real world knows only that the success of the strong brings them rights and enables them to determine what shall be regarded as right. Spengler ties this in directly with Germany's fate when he writes of 'the right of the stronger, as it appears in one-sided treaties and even more in the way they are interpreted and observed by the victor' (UA2, 1008–9).

Ernst Jünger took the same line when he wrote in 1927 that Germans had learned in a hard school that life is unjust, that there is no fixed notion of right, but only rights which may be preserved or lost. The weak have no rights, and one should not be surprised at injustice.⁸⁵ Jünger forges the link with Nietzsche in an interview published in an English newspaper in 1929. Here he states that he is a 'disciple of Nietzsche', and that he takes the greatest pleasure in a struggle for power, wherever it occurs and whoever wins.⁸⁶ Jünger applies the Nietzschean argument in an intentionally transparent way to the imposition on Germany of the Allies' peace terms after the First World War, yet his pleasure in the struggle for power is far from total when he comes to discuss the Treaty of Versailles. For Jünger the Treaty had not brought about a genuine peace since the victors were using their superior strength 'to deprive defeated nations of the fruits of their labours and to force men to live without dignity'. Jünger points to what he sees as the moralistic phrase-making of the victors which cannot conceal the harsh treatment of a disarmed opponent. President Wilson's idea that nations should determine their own fate – put forward in January 1918 as the basis for a peace settlement – is dismissed as a mere deceit designed to split the German nation while it was still able to wage war.⁸⁷

Spengler sums up this view of the world with the Nietzschean concept of the will to power: 'As for history, it is a matter of life, always and only life, race, the triumph of the will to power, and not the victory of truths, inventions or money' (UA2, 1194).

Although Spengler has little time for Nietzsche's ideas on synthesis when he launches his philosophical attack on the Weimar Republic, he certainly knew of this train of thought in Nietzsche's work, and there is a sense in which it proved usable – albeit only at the most superficial level. In *Preußentum und Sozialismus* he points out that Nietzsche told of the

split between Apollo and Dionysius, Stoa and Epicurus, Sparta and Athens, senate and plebeians, tribunate and patriciate in antiquity.⁸⁸ Spengler states that these antitheses form a higher unity, and goes on to transfer the idea to the Europe of his time. The key antithesis for Spengler is that of freedom and service, and its resolution is summed up in the formula 'be free and serve'. This combination of opposing tendencies is at the heart of Spengler's 'German socialism', and his examples of this freedom in obedience are the Prussian army and civil service, and Bebel's workers.⁸⁹ Spengler thus first discards the original meaning of Nietzsche's notions of synthesis and then transfers the terminology of synthesis to his own time in order to establish an alternative socialism to the class-based socialism he saw around him.

Spengler underlines that his main purpose in writing *Preußentum und Sozialismus* was to refute Marx and his analysis based on class struggle by applying Nietzsche's ideas on good and evil to the issue. He argues that Marx wished to replace the 'evil' capitalist dictatorship with a 'good' proletarian one, and Spengler plays with Nietzschean terminology in order to suggest a unity beyond class division: 'But the Prussian socialist state is located beyond this good and evil. It is the whole people ('Volk').'⁹⁰ In Prussian socialism conservatives and workers – hitherto separated by Marxism – meet to create Spengler's ideal:

The route to power is laid out: the valuable element of German labour working with the best representatives of the old Prussian state ethos, both determined to establish a strictly socialist state, to bring about democracy in the Prussian sense, both welded together through a shared sense of duty, through the realisation that a great task lies ahead, through the will to obey in order to rule, to die in order to be victorious, through the determination to make enormous sacrifices in order to achieve the purpose for which we were born...⁹¹

In Spengler's thinking, then, there are two apparently contradictory strands: firstly, a world based on the ethics of the beast of prey which knows of no limits to its self-assertion and its striving for power and domination. Secondly, there is Spengler's projection of a society based on order and discipline, where the worker knows his place and exists in harmony with those who play a leading role in the economy. These two images can coexist because they refer to two aspects of the same society: its behaviour towards outsiders and its internal structure. This combination parallels Nietzsche's account in *Zur Genealogie der Moral* of how noble men are bound within their own community by group sanctions and self-control,

but hardly behave better than unleashed beasts of prey towards the outside world.

This overview brings the question of Spengler's 'dependence' on Nietzsche to a head. For Nietzsche we have seen that, although his ideas of sublimation and synthesis can break down, the 'blond beast' lurking within all noble races is not an ideal in its own right, but a corrective force to be acknowledged as a counterbalance to degenerate modern European man. Nietzsche's idea of synthesis is not encapsulated in his account of the two aspects of noble men, with such men observing discipline and self-control within their own societies, and giving vent to their animal drives in their dealings with the outside world. Rather, it involves acknowledging and controlling man's primitive drives. For Spengler, however, synthesis involves no more than Nietzschean vocabulary when it refers to a harmony between conservatism and socialism. When Spengler paints his picture of a nation united internally but knowing only self-assertion towards the outside world, he is setting aside Nietzsche's vision of synthesis and using individual observations from Nietzsche in order to pursue his dual aim of a hierarchical, disciplined nation which has the will to overthrow the Weimar Republic and reassert itself on the world stage.

CONCLUSION

Ultimately the difference between Nietzsche and the Conservative Revolutionaries who claimed to be in his debt is that Nietzsche operated from an ever-changing perspective. Whereas the Conservative Revolutionaries tended to take a Nietzschean idea and build upon it as if it were dogma, Nietzsche in fact offered ideas in a relative way. At any one point in his work he can appear dogmatic and clear in his intention, yet the overall spirit of his work is that of an insatiably curious and intellectually rigorous critic. He therefore returns time and again to any given idea, treating it in a sometimes slightly and sometimes radically different way. In *Der Wille zur Macht* Nietzsche has little time for convictions when describing the needs of his 'great man': 'the need for a faith, for absolutes to affirm or reject is proof of weakness' (WzM II, 342).

Nietzsche is best understood through an appreciation of the interaction of ideas in his work as a whole.⁹² An appreciation of a related kind had been undertaken during the First World War: Thomas Mann cited Nietzsche in *Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen* as an anti-democrat, but

he also saw that through his sharp critical prose Nietzsche contributed to the democratisation of Germany. Although such interaction was there to be seen by a conservative reader, the Conservative Revolutionaries' situation in the interwar years led them instead to construct a Nietzsche who advocated a self-justifying activism, unbridled self-assertion, war over peace, and the elevation of instinct over reason.

3 The Conservative Revolution and the Conservative Dilemma

INTRODUCTION

Early studies of the Conservative Revolution have been criticised for failing to give an adequate account of the sociological background to the anti-democratic thought they portray.¹ If the historian does not examine the socioeconomic roots of ideology, it is rightly argued, then the interests served by that ideology remain unclear.² As long ago as 1960 Walter Bußmann made the point that analysing political ideology meant 'looking at its motives and aims, at its social origins, its effect and how widespread it was'.³ As has been the case with studies of the First World War, more recent studies of anti-democratic thought in the period up to 1933 have taken up this challenge and examined not just political thought but also its social and political context.⁴ For example, Oswald Spengler's financial support from figures such as Hugenberg has come under scrutiny, as have Conservative Revolutionaries' links with big business.⁵ Studies of the specific political, social and economic circumstances of individuals and groups within the Conservative Revolution have tended to conclude that its ideology was not revolutionary since its sociopolitical roots were in the middle classes and its economic support was drawn from traditional conservative sources. There was a tendency for the Conservative Revolutionaries to ride on the financial backs of organisations which were more committed to the very tradition of nationalism which they scorned. Much of the new nationalists' publishing activity, for example, was financed by Stahlhelm, the ex-servicemen's league, which in turn was closely involved with the monarchist Deutschnationale Volkspartei.

The historical research done in this area is clearly important for our understanding of the period, but the following chapter returns to ideas and ideology. The purpose is not to give a self-contained account of the ideas and ideology. Rather, it aims to shed light on motives and aims, but to do so by focusing on the tensions contained in the political ideas which lie at the heart of the Conservative Revolution.

Studies of the ideas and ideology of modern conservatism have sought to produce a philosophical theory of conservatism. For example, Martin Greiffenhagen's starting-point is that there are certain 'constants' in German conservative thought in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries which ought to make it possible to detect common 'basic structures' in the work of conservative thinkers, regardless of when they were writing.⁶ This approach is more easily employed when studying the relatively brief period of the Weimar Republic, yet one needs to understand 'basic structures' not so much in terms of a typical body of beliefs but rather in terms of a typical development. For differences of opinion and belief abound among Conservative Revolutionary thinkers. Indeed, the more one appreciates these differences, the more they seem to preclude any general theory. And it is not just groups of thinkers who are at odds with each other; within the work of individuals there are contradictions, reversals, shifts of emphasis and developments. Yet, as we have suggested in our first chapter, there is a sense in which contradiction can be made into a useful interpretative tool. For unresolved contradictions between groups and within an individual's thinking are crucial indications of the forces which shape that thinking. In this connection it has been rightly argued that many studies of the political philosophy of the Conservative Revolutionary group known as the *Tat-Kreis* present it as an 'almost timeless arsenal of ideas' and fail to appreciate the 'element of process', that is, the way in which attitudes develop in response to change in the outside world.⁷ The dynamic approach is offered in more recent studies which call for an examination of the links between socioeconomic structure, cultural trends and politics in an attempt to explain the 'unfolding of events'.⁸

Certainly it is possible to locate the Conservative Revolution in general and specific terms in the economic and social spectrum and to draw conclusions on the basis of its location. Moreover, it is possible to set out a range of principles adhered to by many Conservative Revolutionaries and to discern the main differences between groups. In these areas this study can draw on the valuable work of others. But it is also possible to discern typical dilemmas and tensions which reveal the origins, allegiances and the driving forces of Conservative Revolutionary thought. Such dilemmas and tensions develop around the problem of formulating a new nationalism once its old forms have been discarded, around the leader principle, and the question of how to respond to class-based socialism. These dilemmas and tensions are characteristic of the often disparate ideologies, and they will therefore be the primary focus of this chapter.

THE 'NEW' NATIONALISM

The Conservative Revolutionaries projected themselves as the young generation of German nationalists, with their sense of mission and shared identity growing in large part out of the First World War which so many of them had experienced at first hand during their formative years.⁹ The First World War had 'given birth' to 'new nationalism',¹⁰ and, according to its supporters, this new nationalism was fundamentally different from the forms of nationalism which had preceded it.

The differences between old and new nationalism and the difficulty of finding a unique place for new nationalism in the political landscape of the Weimar period are set out in *Deutsches Volkstum* in 1929. Here it is argued that after 1919 everyone had assumed that any attempts at a *coup d'état* from the conservative camp would be preoccupied with restoration. But ten years on, the political discussion had transcended such primitive thinking and had left 'conservative reaction' behind. On the other hand, the political discussion had still not reached the stage where it could present a clearly formulated alternative.¹¹

Edgar Jung, adviser and ghostwriter to Franz von Papen, dismisses the idea that true conservatives are intent on stopping the wheel of history,¹² and other new nationalists mock traditional conservatism for its restorationist outlook and for failing to come to terms with such key features of the present as technology, the city and the proletariat.¹³ Of the claims made by the new nationalists in this self-presentation the anti-restorationism is easier to accept than the claim that they are finding new ways of meeting the challenge of organised labour: the distaste for the Wilhelmine era is a constant theme for the Conservative Revolutionaries,¹⁴ and it is a characteristic which distinguishes them from the nationalists organised in the *Deutschnationale Volkspartei*.

Equally strident, however, is the new nationalists' assertion that they are not guided by the 'sterile resentment of the class struggle',¹⁵ and even that the two new nationalist goals which seem to be emerging from the uncertainty over the future are communism and nationalism.¹⁶ This particular claim invites detailed analysis since it invokes the *Frontgemeinschaft* of the First World War as the model for the *Volksgemeinschaft* to follow. It seems possible that the model will contain the kind of illuminating tensions noted in our first chapter in the context of the war: the new nationalists themselves were all too well aware of how the *Frontgemeinschaft* could disintegrate along traditional class lines. Does the new state based on the memory of the *Frontgemeinschaft* show the same tendency?

GERMAN SOCIALISM

The Conservative Revolutionaries were eager to project their *Volksgemeinschaft* as a community based on principles beyond the established political categories of right and left. *Standarte* explains this in terms of being outside parliament:

The Third Reich which we feel destined to serve lies beyond whatever concepts we have today of right and left, because it lies beyond parliamentarianism and beyond the Versailles State which has been bestowed upon us. We are not looking for anything from this Republic, neither a majority nor a synthesis We are neither imperial nor republican citizens, we are revolutionaries.¹⁷

Yet it was not merely this refusal to have anything to do with parliamentary processes which made the Conservative Revolutionaries reject the categories of right and left. They were intent on transcending them in order to create a sense of national unity, and in this endeavour they were particularly preoccupied with socialism. Edgar Jung describes the unresolved issue of the workers as the 'open wound in the body of Germany' and is convinced that the German worker will have to feel part of the German national community before the nation can throw off its lowly international status.¹⁸

Within the Conservative Revolution one strand of thought was preoccupied with redefining socialism in order to make it suit the nationalist purpose and the other was eager to embrace as much class-based socialism as possible without having to abandon the commitment to nationalism.

Among those intent on redefining socialism there is agreement that the excesses of capitalism have to be eliminated. Edgar Jung writes in *Die Herrschaft der Minderwertigen* that a community based on shared interests must be established between worker and employer, and he concludes his book with a kind of constitution for a future state which includes the principle that the economy should remain in private hands, but the 'greed of capital' should be kept in check.¹⁹ In the pages of *Standarte* a letter to a 'property-owning conservative' is reproduced in which the 'socialist' tendencies among young nationalists are explained. This 'national socialism' is not of the materialist variety, declares the writer, but rather a feeling of closeness with the workers which young nationalists brought home with them from the front.²⁰

The other element of this front-line socialism is an aversion to the excesses of capitalism in the form of profiteering from the war and from inflation.²¹ Franz Schauwecker argues that the rule of money and high

finance has to be eliminated, and that this inevitably involves socialism. Yet he goes on to say that this would not be the socialism of the Communists or the Social Democrats, but the socialism which Germans experienced at first hand for four years in the front line.²² This attempt at redirecting socialism is based not least on a concern for the future of capitalism. *Standarte* writes of the growing bitterness towards capitalism which is creating a 'dangerous feeling of solidarity among the workers', and this in turn could provoke a Marxist revolution. Entrepreneurs need to stand up to socialism and communism, and come up with a major initiative which will bring 'something new' and create the basis for the national state of the future.²³

The two characteristic points about this position are the inability to state what the great initiative might be, and the fact that it is fear of communism which generates a decidedly limited critique of full-blown capitalism. Claus von Eickstedt takes this approach to the need to overcome the opposition between capital and labour and to produce a conviction that the two are in fact bound by the principle of service to the economy, the nation and the state, and he quotes approvingly from an earlier article in *Standarte* on the consequences of such an attitude:

Only when such an attitude has been created and a genuine transvaluation has been established can the excesses of capitalism – for it is only these we are concerned with here – be eliminated. We should not seek to eliminate capitalism as an economic system, but rather to imbue it with the proper spirit and a moral sense.... Eliminating capitalism as an economic system based on the private ownership of the means of production and the free, creative entrepreneurial spirit because of its excesses and the way it uses its power would mean throwing out the baby with the bathwater. It would mean unconsciously adopting the kind of Marxist and socialist thought which one way or another leads to state socialism.²⁴

If this concern with the excesses of the capitalist system was provoked in part by a fear that such excesses might fan the flames of socialist discontent, it was also provoked by the fact that the middle classes, in which the Conservative Revolution was rooted, felt subjected to economic pressure on two fronts. The point is made directly by Ferdinand Fried of the Tat-Kreis when he describes the process by which capital and the masses were shaping up to each other and crushing the middle classes between them.²⁵

Some ideas on what 'German socialism' might look like find early expression in the famous but inconclusive debate of 1923 on nationalism

and socialism between Moeller van den Bruck and Karl Radek. In a June 1923 speech to the Executive Committee of the Communist International (of which he was a member) Radek had homed in on the case of Leo Schlageter, the Freikorps fighter and member of the Nazi Party who had been executed by the French for sabotage during the occupation of the Ruhrgebiet. Radek refers to Schlageter as a 'fascist' and a 'class enemy' who regarded the revolutionary working class as the 'enemy within'. Yet Radek is conciliatory and argues that the nationalists need to join with the majority of the population which is suffering at the hands of the German bourgeoisie. A united front must be formed between working people in Germany and 'patriotic circles' if Schlageter's death is not to have been in vain. Radek is convinced that the great majority of nationalists do not belong in the capitalist camp but rather in the camp of the workers.²⁶

Moeller's answer is not encouraging. He implies that Radek is merely seeking to exploit the nationalists for the working-class cause, especially now that the prospect of world revolution is fast receding. Moeller argues that the struggle to liberate Germany must include the proletariat but cannot be led by it. Appealing indirectly to the 'spirit of the front line', but with no reference to the antagonisms between groups of soldiers which other new nationalist writers had documented, Moeller argues that the German nationalists' relationship to the German worker is based not on dogma but on a comradeship which should unite all people of the same nation. Marxism assumes that capitalism will be replaced by socialism, yet it is possible that socialism could be replaced by a 'third idea' which would unite capitalism and socialism. During the French occupation of the Ruhrgebiet German workers began to see the factories as 'their affair' and to protect them, and workers and entrepreneurs might one day see that they are defending the same cause. Whereas Radek sees the German economy in need of a strategy led by a government of workers, Moeller puts the German entrepreneurs above all others since they have the vision which the workers lack.²⁷

Moeller's response makes it clear that a concern to combat class-based socialism is the major driving force behind 'German socialism'. The aim is to create a new sense of community without resorting to a fundamental restructuring of the social and economic order. Thus Edgar Jung can criticise the socialists for seeking to 'socialise the basically healthy system of private enterprise'.²⁸ He can also square his interest in 'German socialism' with membership of the anti-socialist Deutsche Volkspartei.

Jung argues that the workers seem to be rooted in their class and that they must be liberated from it if the German nation is ever to be united.

But exactly how this liberation might come about is unclear. Paul Ernst addresses the question by attacking traditional conservatism. He explains that the 'conservative party' is made up of a few remnants from the old era of the Junkers, and has its roots in the pre-capitalist and capitalist phase. Officers and civil servants also feature, and Hugenberg is their representative. Ernst asserts that these men can never take on a leading role for they scarcely understand the capitalist era and have no comprehension whatsoever of the 'new tasks'. The main new task for conservatism is the 'winning over of the workers'.²⁹ Franz Schauwecker tries to look at the nationalists from the workers' point of view and regrets that they confuse nationalism with patriotism, right-wing parties and the prewar period. But, argues Schauwecker, new nationalism is intent on helping the workers obtain what is rightfully theirs.³⁰ This idea is taken up by Friedrich Georg Jünger when he calls upon the fighting leagues (Kampfbünde) to support the legitimate claims of the workers. Jünger goes so far as to demand that the Kampfbünde broaden their base by forming nationalist trade unions, works councils and consumer cooperatives.³¹

This eagerness to pin the Conservative Revolution down to specific economic reforms is not shared by all, however: Edgar Jung criticises 'well-meaning entrepreneurs' for seeking to satisfy the 'profound longing' of the workers by introducing welfare schemes, higher wages, unemployment and other material benefits, and he counters such efforts by declaring that this profound longing of the worker is in fact directed at something quite different: at 'recognition of his human and social worth'.³²

Against the background of growing working-class militancy and the spread of class-based socialism during and after the First World War, the Conservative Revolutionaries seek to detach the concept of revolution from November 1918 and to attach it to August 1914.³³ The November Revolution is dismissed as a betrayal of the true revolution and no more than a hunger protest by the mob.³⁴ Oswald Spengler makes the reactive connection between the November Revolution and his version of socialism explicit when he states that the work in which he unfolded his thoughts on the subject, *Preußentum und Sozialismus* (1919), was written 'out of disgust and bitterness' over the November Revolution.³⁵ In *Jahre der Entscheidung* he goes further still:

I hated the filthy revolution of 1918 from its inception, as treason perpetrated by the second rate among our people.... Everything I have written since then about politics was directed against the powers which entrenched themselves, with the aid of our enemies, on our mountain of misery and misfortune.³⁶

Such was the dependence upon Marxism and the intensity of the reaction against it that it carried over into the very structure of Conservative Revolutionary thinking. It is clearly in Spengler's mind when he quotes the maxim of Goethe's which he claims to have made the key to his whole philosophy: 'one should not seek anything behind phenomena – phenomena themselves are the lesson'. Spengler goes on to say that Goethe's words could not be understood in the century of Marx and Darwin (UA1, 204). Moeller van den Bruck's *Jedes Volk hat seinen eigenen Sozialismus* is devoted to discounting Marx's view of history as the history of class struggles in favour of a view in which spiritual life is the dominant and autonomous force behind change.

Conservative Revolutionary thinkers also show their dependence on Marxism by using its terminology, as for example when Edgar Jung stresses the 'historical inevitability' of conservatism taking over from the liberal era.³⁷ That Spengler's view of the future of the West as inevitable is developed not least as a counterargument to Marxism is suggested by the fact that it has some of the characteristics of a mirror-image of its enemy even as it develops its counter-logic and downgrades Marxism to mere idealism: 'We are not concerned with what ought to come, but with what will come. It is more important for us to remain the masters of reality than become the slaves of ideals.' Spengler opposes his Prussian Socialism to Marxism, and declares the former a reality, the latter 'literature'.³⁸

This view of an inevitable future which parallels and competes with Marxism has to be reconciled with the anti-Marxist view of life which knows no goals. Spengler confirms that anti-Marxism is one of the sources of his self-contained, vitalist philosophy when he argues that Marxism has retained the Christian division of history into ancient, medieval and modern, and it has thus taken over an essentially evolutionary perspective which, in Marx's version, encompasses the final goal of paradise on earth.³⁹ Spengler sees it as his task to provide modern man with a new 'socialist' perspective which will enable him to realise that life has no specific purpose.⁴⁰ If Conservative Revolutionaries' vitalist irrationalism can be explained partly as a reaction to the lost war which would enable them to salvage some meaning from what was always threatening to degenerate into futile sacrifice, it was also accorded special status as an inversion of Marxism. Spengler asserts that the materialist version of history which sees economics as cause and all else as effect appeals to irreligious city-dwellers who have severed all links with tradition. Spengler sees this attitude based on nineteenth-century science and argues that the twentieth century is the age of psychology: 'we no longer believe in the power of reason over life. We feel that it is life which dominates reason.'⁴¹

Yet, if anti-communism was a stance which enabled the Conservative Revolution to find its voice, it was also a source of danger for the Right. It discouraged attempts to work out a positive ideal since negation was the easier option. There are signs that the Conservative Revolutionaries could grow anxious at the possibility of becoming bogged down in mere negation, with Artur Mahraun of the Jungdeutscher Orden expressing concern that the great struggle for the 'new Germany' was being overtaken by the bourgeois battle-cry: 'Death to Marxism!' and that the great debate over the new system had petered out as the hatred for the existing order came to the fore. Through this hatred all energy was being dissipated in the struggle to overthrow Weimar, and the national movement was thus setting itself unworthy goals.⁴²

It is over the issue of how to escape from mere negation and provide German socialism with substance that Conservative Revolutionary thinking starts to yield clues to its typical structures. The difficulty of providing German socialism with its contents encourages political evasiveness, and a willingness to call for the authority of a single leader who would not need a programme. Franz Schauwecker thus follows up his definition of new nationalism via a series of negations with a call for rule by a single individual who does not need to commit himself to a particular political order.⁴³ Oswald Spengler's political thought contains a tension which stems from the same dilemma: at one point in his *Preußentum und Sozialismus* he traces his alternative socialism back to Bebel's 'military' socialism.⁴⁴ In the same work, however, he can lift his own socialism entirely out of the historical realm and discover in it more profound features than Marx's social critique. These features are not attributable to any named socialist, however. Nor are they 'expressed on paper' since they are located 'in the blood'.⁴⁵ In the call for the authority of a leader without a clear programme, and in the appeal first of all to an earlier version of socialism, but then to a completely ahistorical version, we see the Conservative Revolutionaries' response to the problem of coming to terms with socialism. As we shall see, this pattern will repeat itself at just about every stage in the enterprise of defining the new nationalism.

The problem shows itself in more than one way over the model of the front-line community. Moeller van den Bruck points to the fate of the principle of international socialism at the start of the First World War, arguing that the principle had no reality before the war and was thoroughly disproved by the end: the German workers 'must accept that the proletariat of all nations thought primarily of its own nation during the war'.⁴⁶ But Ernst Jünger shows a Conservative Revolutionary awareness of how

temporary the workers' conversion to nationalism had been when he writes:

Internationalism is a matter for the parties and groups dominated by big-city intellectualism in its late phase. Unfortunately, most of our workers currently still line up with these groups and have forgotten how their practical philosophy collapsed in 1914 like a house of cards when it was confronted with a piece of living reality.⁴⁷

If mere negation was to be overcome, what contemporary sources were available as positive models for German socialism? One particularly appealing source was Italian fascism. Its progress was followed closely in Conservative Revolutionary circles in Germany, and it was generally praised for transcending the class struggle. *Standarte* carried regular reports from Rome, as for example the following from mid-1926:

Who is not tempted to regard with envy this *fata morgana*? A land with a long cultural history which managed to sort out its finances in just a few short years and is now giving legal status to the principle of the national work community, a land which has no unemployment and no class struggle.⁴⁸

The leaders of Italian fascism, it is stressed, have socialist backgrounds and they know how to get through to the workers. This point must be taken on board by the new nationalists, and the new leadership in Germany must embrace the 'sons of workers'.⁴⁹

Edgar Jung looks back as far as the Middle Ages for his economic model and sees in this period an economy which was not governed by bargaining over wages but one which imposed a rigid system on all concerned. In return it enabled citizens to take pleasure in their work and removed the need to worry about their economic future. This is what Jung advocates for his own time, with workers becoming involved with their workplaces, a common interest developing between entrepreneur and worker, and the establishment of a community based on moral principles.⁵⁰

Yet the advocates of German socialism engage less and less in discussions of how it might be achieved and prefer to restate the goal. Captain Ehrhardt's words on economic peace within the framework of a militaristic community are a typical example: 'Our goal is for people to co-operate in peace for the good of the whole.'⁵¹

Verbal confirmation of the problem and reiteration of the goal of economic harmony without any analysis of how to achieve that goal became standard fare for the Conservative Revolutionaries in the mid-

twenties. Claus von Eickstedt, for example, homed in on the antagonism between employer and employee and argued that as long as this antagonism continued there could be no movement towards a national community (*Volksgemeinschaft*). A new state must therefore make it a priority to retie the broken threads of this community based on an organically constructed economy; capital and labour belong together in the service of the economy, the people and the state.⁵²

Moreover, debates intended to clarify matters tended to confirm that the Conservative Revolutionaries were not breaking the traditional mould of right versus left, but rather that they were quick to fall back into the categories they claimed to have rejected. One example is the oscillating Conservative Revolutionary view of the city. Oswald Spengler wrote of the cerebral and soulless art of the cities which culminated in naturalism, mere imitation of what the senses could perceive and of what was scientifically ascertainable (UA1, 247). When he looked to the future he saw the culture of the country going into decline and city life coming to the fore. This was the inferior period of civilisation which lay in store for Germany. What underlies this rejection of the city is explained when Spengler goes on to see socialism as the product of 'city minds'. In *Preußentum und Sozialismus* he associates Marxism with 'irreligious city-dwellers who lack all tradition'.⁵³

The city is viewed as the breeding ground of class-based socialism which must split the nation.⁵⁴ Ernst Jünger had seized upon this point and realised that such a view had to be overcome: the city is indeed the place where workers' solidarity might flourish and it was up to the new nationalists to rise to this challenge, not to sink back into reaction. In this connection he criticises Spengler for his attack on the city.⁵⁵ Yet even within the ranks of the new nationalists there is a harking back to a pre-industrial, rural idyll which is hardly in line with the image which Jünger wished to cultivate for the movement. In the poignant document *Was wir vom Nationalsozialismus erwarten*, edited by the Conservative Revolutionary Albrecht Erich Günther on the eve of the Nazi takeover, Kurt Woermann asserts that the metropolis means the death of the *Volk* in body and soul as the forces of life shrivel under its influence. He advocates letting the cities run down and taking the population back into a rural setting.⁵⁶

Such failures did not go unnoticed by the Conservative Revolutionaries' opponents: the left-wing journal *Weltbühne* published a criticism of the Tat-Kreis in 1931, arguing that the group thought it could steer a middle course between monopoly capitalism and revolutionary Marxism, but that this middle course did not exist. Just as the middle classes were being

squashed between capital and labour, so too were their political slogans. The group must choose between monopoly capitalism and the revolutionary workers' movement.⁵⁷

If one branch of the Conservative Revolution was intent on redefining socialism but regularly lapsed into a tradition of right-wing thinking, another branch seemed intent on dragging the right closer to traditional socialism. The main groups involved in this enterprise were Ernst Niekisch's Widerstand circle and Karl Paetel's Group of Social Revolutionary Nationalists which in turn had links with the group within the Nazi Party around the Strasser brothers.

These groups generally favoured an alliance between the Soviet Union and Germany against the capitalist West.⁵⁸ Whereas the 'German socialists' we have looked at so far were unable to state by what method they would achieve the all-embracing social and economic community which they saw as the ultimate goal, Karl Paetel calls upon young nationalists to take a stand with the proletariat. He asks nationalists to say exactly what they will do when the proletarian revolution breaks out, for this will be the day of reckoning for the revolutionary nationalist movement. The 'National Bolshevik' Ernst Niekisch also comes down in favour of a clear decision when he looks back on the period and writes that the question arose around 1929 of which front to join – the bolshevist or the fascist.⁵⁹ This kind of thinking emerged in particular after the May 1928 elections to the Reichstag in which the anti-Weimar parties of the right saw their share of the vote decline and that of the SPD and KPD increase. Whereas this result prompted some radical nationalist groups to end any experiments with parliamentary involvement, others concluded that if the right was to gain working-class support, 'more militancy on social and labour issues' was needed.⁶⁰ Movement from the left was also apparent when the KPD embraced elements of nationalist thinking in an attempt to improve its election performance. Individual communists argued that cooperation with the National Socialists was clearly out of the question, but a united front of all genuine revolutionaries was both possible and necessary. 'Genuine revolutionaries' were those who affirmed the revolutionary class struggle and the socialisation of the means of production. The Bund der Kommunisten stated that the possibility of collaboration had existed since 1918, and that concepts of right and left were part of the declining world of democratic parliamentarianism.⁶¹

Yet even with their ready commitment to class struggle, these groups were unable to break free from traditional nationalist thinking, as was confirmed in a debate initiated by *Die sozialistische Nation* in January 1931. Were there, the editors asked, any opportunities for collaboration

between the emerging anti-capitalist, revolutionary forces on the far right and groups of the revolutionary proletariat?

Kurt Hiller, for the 'revolutionary pacifists', replied that he rejected any joint revolutionary activity because the ideologies of the socialists and the nationalists were too far apart. Hiller contrasts in particular the humanitarianism of the socialist revolution with the racial hatred and striving for racial supremacy among the nationalists. The socialists sought to establish a classless society in which war has no place, whereas the nationalists regarded war as an eternal, natural phenomenon. Even if one takes the narrowly economic view of the two ideologies, says Hiller, the national revolutionaries and the Marxist-Leninists are a long way apart. The two groups are only united in what they do not want. If the anti-capitalist, revolutionary forces on the far right were to abandon their love of war, their anti-Semitism and their cultural conservatism, *the time would be right for the left to join with them*. But then, adds Hiller, they would no longer be the forces of the far right.⁶²

Graf Reventlow (NSDAP) deepens the divide when he argues that the revolutionary proletariat adheres to the Marxist doctrine of putting an end to the private ownership of the means of production, and he cannot find this just. Indeed, no political collaboration is possible with revolutionary proletarian groups which take up this position. The class struggle is a crime against the idea of the *Volk*, and true socialism is to be found in the national community (*Volksgenossenschaft*). German socialism, he concludes, has no time for Marxism or Jews.⁶³

The 'national revolutionary', Karl Paetel, now gives his reaction to these and other answers on behalf of the journal. He sees the only possible basis for cooperation as socialisation of the means of production and commitment to the class struggle. If this position is adhered to and nationalists come out in favour of a social revolution, all 'pseudo-socialists' will fall by the wayside. Paetel agrees that the basis for cooperation is the KPD's Declaration on the National and Social Liberation of the German Nation, and he urges the nationalists to align themselves with the KPD. No socialist can join with Goebbels or Hilferding. In the NSDAP, argues Paetel, Reventlow is about the last socialist. That Paetel can see Reventlow in this way shows how flexible the concept of socialism has become, even in the minds of those Conservative Revolutionaries who were eager to cooperate with the communists. There is a clear tendency for the stance of these Conservative Revolutionaries to blend with that of figures such as Oswald Spengler, Moeller van den Bruck, Ernst Jünger and Franz Schauwecker, who were intent on redefining socialism in opposition to its established meanings.

THE CALL FOR A PROGRAMME

We have already suggested that some attempts at characterising Conservative Revolutionary thinking have oversimplified ideas for the sake of clarity. Others have identified so many different sub-categories within the movement that the effect is to fragment it into a series of ideologies which seem to have little to do with each other and which may confuse rather than clarify matters. We have also suggested that the unity of the Conservative Revolution may not lie in any adherence to a narrow, readily stated set of political beliefs. Rather than looking for the differences and similarities in what is often enough somewhat obscure political thinking, it is more helpful to look for unity within the movement in terms of typical responses to crises and typical developments of thought. Apart from helping to establish the nature of the underlying unity of the Conservative Revolution, such a study of ideas in transition can also reveal more about the origins of those ideas than can the 'snapshot approach' to political thinking, an approach which attempts to provide an unambiguous account of ideas by focusing upon a particular moment in time rather than by following the development of ideas over an extended period.

The essential dilemma of the Conservative Revolution in the Weimar period has been well summarised by Martin Greiffenhagen who sees a shift in the conservative theory of sacrifice at the end of the nineteenth century: instead of calling for sacrifice for the sake of generally recognised goals, conservative theory goes in search of values and institutions for which it is worth making a sacrifice. To the extent that existing religious, political and moral beliefs have been called into question, conservative interest shifts from the values for which sacrifices might be made to the act of sacrifice itself. On this point Greiffenhagen quotes Ernst Jünger's dictum: 'The greatest happiness known to man is to be sacrificed.' Greiffenhagen concludes that this 'inversion' is only fully worked out in revolutionary conservatism.⁶⁴ This interpretation of a reaction to a sense of loss of purpose was not unknown to the Conservative Revolutionaries themselves. As early as 1936 Ernst Niekisch had worked out what was essentially the same interpretation and attached it to the figure of the 'Bürger' and the theory of 'decisionism':

The characteristic things about this whole period [the years of the Weimar Republic] is that 'decisionism' is made into a system in its own right. Decisions are made not on the basis of compelling ideas, but an idea is made into something compelling by commitment to it. The

bourgeois world is aware that it lacks substance and has become a void. It expects that whoever commits himself to it will bring new values with him.⁶⁵

Observers see this conservative dilemma not merely in the Weimar period, however, but also taking shape in the work of Novalis and Adam Müller in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and to this extent the conservative dilemma counts as one of Greiffenhagen's constants of modern conservative thinking.⁶⁶

Certainly, tradition plays an important part in explaining the interest in an anti-democratic, authoritarian order which focuses more on hierarchical power structures than on the aims of that order. German political culture in the late nineteenth century had been shaped by notions of strong leadership, with Bismarck as the prime example. German unification had been a 'solution from above'. In intellectual life, Nietzsche had been the philosopher of activism, and after him the Expressionist movement had stressed the value of the intensity of experience above all else. In the Weimar period itself, right and left alike were drawn to the idea of a strong leader. Activism and a scorn for political programmes certainly appear to be constants in the Weimar period: as early as 1919 Spengler was writing that Westerners had grown sceptical, and that they would no longer permit themselves to be led astray by ideological systems. Programmes were a nineteenth-century affair, and they were no longer in demand.⁶⁷ Moreover, there is from the start general agreement among Conservative Revolutionary thinkers and their counterparts in the paramilitary organisations of the Weimar period that a nationalist, authoritarian state run on military principles is the ultimate goal.⁶⁸

Yet if these ideas are 'constants' which draw on a tradition of conservative thinking there are also particular reasons for them attaining special prominence in the Weimar period. In Spengler's case the objection to ideological systems from the nineteenth century is fairly transparently rooted in his revulsion at the November Revolution. The call for an authoritarian state run on military lines harks back to the experience of the First World War and builds on a traditional antipathy towards democracy which was heightened with the establishment of the Republic. In the following discussion we shall further examine how these ideas came to occupy centre-stage in Conservative Revolutionary thought and seek to explain them by studying the problems faced by the radical right in the Weimar period.

Conservative Revolutionaries in fact go through distinct phases in their attitude towards political programmes. The switch away from a call for clarity over political aims towards anti-programmatic activism and the

ideal of the strong leader is one of the major developments in their thought in the Weimar period: Ernst Jünger's words on self-sacrifice which Greiffenhagen quotes have their political parallel in his assertion in 1929 that programmes are not needed and that the young generation of nationalists must learn to march without flags.⁶⁹ In his memoirs Ernst Niekisch suggests firstly that the Conservative Revolution failed to overcome the left-versus-right split, and secondly that the result of this failure was a withdrawal from the problem.⁷⁰

Niekisch's recollection is a useful reminder that a process is at work, and if we look back to 1925 we find the new nationalists at the other end of the process. In December of that year Ernst Jünger writes that the war left behind two opposed camps in Europe. The 'progressive' camp proclaims pacifism, internationalism and democracy, whereas the nationalist camp asserts the value of war and the right of the individual to wield dictatorial power. Nationalism, he continues, must pass through three essential stages:

In the first stage blood, which is already completely certain of its mission, must make reason into its servant so that it defines the goals and sets out programmes. In the second stage political power must be obtained through struggle so that these goals and programmes may be implemented. And in the final stage they have to be pushed through in our dealings with the outside world.⁷¹

This call for a clear statement of aims and programmes as the nationalists' primary task is resumed two weeks later when Jünger writes that nationalists are waiting for the great programmes and the nationalist manifesto. In the coming year the 'four pillars' of modern nationalism – the national, the social, the military and the dictatorial – have to be provided with their intellectual foundation. The will to power already exists and it just has to be shown its goals.⁷²

The contrast between these thoughts and those expressed some three-and-a-half years later in an article for *Widerstand* is striking. For the task of working out a programme is no longer of prime importance. Indeed, such a task is now the 'last stage of nationalism'. The beginning of nationalism, declares Jünger, is not marked by establishing a party or a programme.⁷³ This retreat from the call for a clarification of nationalist aims is taken one step further in September 1929 when Jünger responds to an invitation from the left-wing journal, *Das Tagebuch*, to write about his 'young nationalism'. Jünger begins with a by-now familiar rejection of the traditional tenets of German nationalism and immediately goes on to state:

Let me just say for the benefit of those who cannot do without having it put into words that nationalism, inasmuch as it is a *political* phenomenon, has as its goal a state which embraces all Germans and which is based on national, social, military and authoritative principles. These are of course words which must be given meaning by life itself. I am convinced that nationalism has enough energy at its disposal to get by without any dogma at all.⁷⁴

Jünger thus reaches the point where he feels obliged to suggest that nationalism is in part something other than a political force, and where even the four pillars – the most constant elements of his nationalism – are restated only reluctantly and appear to be ranked with the dogma he repudiates. Why should Jünger and his fellow new nationalists change their minds on these central issues between 1925 and 1929?

Part of the explanation for the change of attitude is to be found in a debate on what the contents of a nationalist programme should be – a debate initiated by an article Jünger wrote in June 1926 and in which he calls upon nationalists to form a united front. The new nationalists clearly felt pushed into formulating a political programme in the mid-twenties after the failure of the military assault on the state in the form of the Kapp Putsch of 1920 and the Beer Hall Putsch of 1923. Jünger thus expresses his qualified admiration for Captain Ehrhardt who had been involved in the Kapp Putsch:

Ehrhardt wanted to get the job done quickly, and that was superb, but once again it turned out that although the front-line soldier had learnt to use his strength, he had not learnt to attach his will to a political system We should have learnt from the war that one must have war aims, or, in terms of domestic politics, a programme.⁷⁵

Jünger's feeling came to be shared by the paramilitary organisations themselves: Captain Ehrhardt had written in 1926 that the time was past when one could hope to change things by means of a *coup d'état*.⁷⁶ By October 1926 Stahlhelm had finally ruled out any thoughts of a coup to overthrow the Republic and had determined upon a course characterised as 'Into the State', that is, a policy of trying to change the state from the inside.

In his call for a programme Jünger says that after the war nationalists saw the things they stood for apparently sink to miserable depths. They needed to retain their belief that the sacrifices they had made had served some profound purpose. Jünger goes on to say that they resolved to cling to tradition, but now he strikes out in a new direction by asserting that

nationalists have found a new meaning to the word 'tradition': it is no longer a 'fixed form' but the 'living and eternal spirit' which each generation must shape anew. The idea of a fixed form seems to hark back to Spengler, for whom it is a feature of a moribund civilisation, and by using it Jünger is pointing out the futility of upholding traditional nationalism in the postwar world.⁷⁷ The race that was transformed by the war must fight to establish a new state based on the four pillars of nationalism. This state will be radically different not only from Weimar but also from the old *Kaiserreich*, for nationalism is not reactionary but revolutionary. Jünger sees the four principles of a future nationalist state becoming a basic feature of all non-parliamentary nationalist groups, and he declares that the finer points of these principles are still being clarified. Individual nationalist movements are not large enough to operate independently and the time is therefore approaching when they must form a nationalist front around a clear and decisive programme.

A social programme must be worked out since its absence is causing concern to nationalist workers' leaders: Jünger suggests that nationalist workers should be left to conduct the economic battle while nationalist soldiers lead the struggle for power. The workers will be supported in their battle by nationalists who took leave of 'bourgeois ideology' in the war. Former bourgeois and Marxists will thus stand shoulder to shoulder. Finally, in the absence of a single great leader, a central council of leaders should be formed in order to maintain the purity and clarity of the movement.⁷⁸

In short, Jünger is attempting to make the nationalist groups confront what he saw as the crucial problem of cutting loose from traditional nationalism with its monarchist beliefs and founding a new nationalism which would set out to win over the workers. Just what groups Jünger is addressing is spelt out in the same issue of *Standarte* when particular nationalist organisations are called upon to discuss his ideas and to ensure that they do not remain mere theory.⁷⁹

A selection of the replies to Jünger's article and the accompanying call for a discussion on it was published in the following five issues of *Standarte*. The unnamed writer who introduces the replies is decidedly pessimistic: he is amazed that the leaders of organisations who have written to *Standarte* have merely repeated 'tired old phrases'. Instead of taking the trouble to examine the issues thoroughly they approach them with preconceived ideas. The writer concludes that if no nationalist group is prepared to budge from its present position then Jünger's call for unity is doomed to failure.⁸⁰

How far his proposal was practicable emerges from the answers to his appeal. They cover the entire range of nationalist politics in the years of

the Republic. Captain Ehrhardt agrees with the general line of Jünger's article and asserts that, if groups continue to pursue their individual aims and interests, the nationalist movement will not survive, and he adds that the movement lacks a 'profound and great impulse'.⁸¹

For the Ludendorff-Kreis and Tannenberg-Bund, Constantin Hierl, a retired colonel, follows and extends Jünger's argument. Hierl agrees that nationalist groups lack a consistent political ideal. 'Young nationalism' struggles against the old and seeks to fill the word 'nationalism' with new meaning. Like Jünger then, Hierl appears to cut loose from traditional nationalism, but his suggestion for the contents of new nationalism reaches far beyond Jünger's:

The contents of new nationalism cannot be any form of dynastic patriotism, nor an anaemic concept of the state. It is the feeling of being one with the German people in a community of the blood

Young nationalism is therefore committed to protecting the German people against any further bastardisation through alien peoples of low race, in particular the Jews. It strives to free the German spirit and German morality from materialist and Jewish contamination.⁸²

In a later issue of *Standarte* Hierl makes a further contribution, again lamenting the lack of unity among nationalist groups and blaming this state of affairs on those who fear a united front and who dominate Germany – the 'Jews, freemasons and Ultramontanists'. Just a few sentences later, however, Hierl blames the disunity of nationalists on the lack of a coherent ideology and declares that the word national does not have any uniform political meaning in modern Germany. He does not regard working out a detailed programme as essential but seeks a 'firm standpoint' from which to judge events.⁸³ Hierl thus offers a confused explanation of the lack of unity among nationalists, at one time citing the absence of an ideology, at another the influence of the Jews, freemasons and Catholics. The problem is resolved by abandoning the attempt to work out a programme and favouring instead a firm standpoint which he claims still to be seeking but which already seems to exist in the form of anti-Semitism.

In the next reply Walter Schotte, editor of the *Preußische Jahrbücher* and member of the Ringbewegung, welcomes Jünger's call for unity but says that the hour of the nationalists has yet to come. Schotte points to the vagueness of Jünger's proposals for a future state, insisting that they say nothing about its essence. Indeed, all that is known is its opposite:

Apart from military strength, for which the old Prussian state of the militia still provides the immortal model, we do not know how or to

what extent our state is to be structured on national, social and authoritative principles. We only know the opposite, how and to what extent the state we have is not nationalist but internationalist, not social but capitalist, not authoritative but democratic and parliamentary.⁸⁴

Schotte's argument highlights the problems faced by nationalism once it has cut most of its links with tradition, and it tends to support the interpretation of new nationalism as a reaction against the ethos of the Weimar Constitution. Schotte goes on to say that the concepts national, social and authoritative are in a revolutionary melting-pot and should no longer be regarded in opposition to each other. In the following issue of *Standarte* Freiherr Grote of Stahlhelm takes up one of the questions at the heart of Jünger's original article when he reminds him that nationalist groups are already theoretically united in an organisation called the Vereinigte Vaterländische Verbände Deutschlands which attempts to bring together 'fire and water', that is, the revolutionary fighting leagues (*Kampfbünde*) and the peaceful ex-servicemen's associations. Yet Grote sees this body as a hindrance to the work of the revolutionaries and suggests it be left to reactionary groups so that the two fronts might emerge as quite distinct from each other.⁸⁵

For the Jungdeutscher Orden Kurt Pastenaci stresses a vitalist idea of the state based not on logic or intellect but stemming rather from the experience of the First World War and what followed it. A 'strong' state relies upon a 'healthy' and 'strong' nation. Such a nation does not exist today because of the excessive differences between individuals in matters of class, education and property. The state should be in the hands of the whole nation and any leader must have the support of his followers. Pastenaci asserts that this in fact describes the way in which the Jungdeutscher Orden is organised.⁸⁶

August Winnig, who in the following year was to become co-editor with Ernst Niekisch of *Widerstand*, points to the plight of the German workers after the war and the Versailles *Diktat*. A former trade union leader and Social Democrat, Winnig explains that it is no longer the aristocracy which must carry out the 'German task' but the workers, and German nationalism must therefore embrace this group.⁸⁷

In the next issue of *Standarte* Eduard Stadler, leader of the Bund der Großdeutschen, declares that Pastenaci's ideas on the state are hardly original. The 'front-line experience' was the basis of all activist groups and the Jungdeutscher Orden's claim to be a model of the ideal state merely hinders the unification Jünger had called for.⁸⁸

Gustav Sondermann, editor of the Bund Oberland's journal, *Das Dritte Reich*, feels that Jünger's appeal was directed only at the 'black, white and

red front' and that nationalism must also acknowledge those 'black, red and gold' organisations which have already adopted Jünger's four criteria for a new German state. By this reference to the colours of the old Empire and those of the Republic Sonderrmann is calling for the established political divisions, which he thinks the parties have only deepened since the war, to be transcended. This call is undermined by Sonderrmann himself, however, when he refers to Jünger's words on the 'vital energy of the cities' and declares that a village doctor would think this energy was remarkably similar to that released by a decomposing corpse. For Jünger had been attempting to do precisely what Sonderrmann suggests by rejecting the aversion to cities which he saw as a feature of traditional conservatism, and in so doing to bring the nationalist camp closer to the worker and his environment. Jünger urges nationalists to engage with the forces of the city, the machine, the masses and the worker, for in these forces is the potential energy which nationalism needs for the future. The opposition of country and city, argues Jünger, is the equivalent of 'old-style patriotism'.⁸⁹

Sonderrmann continues by pointing to the vagueness of Jünger's notions of 'social' and 'authoritative' and writes that nationalists' socialism springs from comradeship and that it must reject not only the present order but also any future attempt to tie it down to one particular economic system. Sonderrmann realises that these are 'purely negative insights' and as such only a beginning, and he expresses the hope for central leadership from which might emerge a great individual who will regard the nationalists as 'useful tools' and 'well-hewn stones' for building the third Reich.⁹⁰

Heinz von Steinrück of the Jungkonservative Vereinigung echoes Sonderrmann's call for a strong leader and his rejection of liberalism. He confirms that the nationalist groups lack a sustaining idea or a great leader, either of which could unite them. At a general meeting of the organisation Jünger's proposals had been discussed, and it was unanimously felt that not only was there no agreement among the leaders as a group about aims and methods, but that leaders as individuals were not able to state what their aims and methods were. Although all were in agreement with Jünger's principle 'We want what is German and we want it combined with power', von Steinrück concludes:

It emerged clearly that we shared a totally revolutionary will. It was not clear whether all those who declared their revolutionary stance understood what it meant and what it required of them.⁹¹

At this stage in the debate Goetz Otto Stoffregen, editor of the *Ostpreußische Zeitung*, upbraids the leaders of the various nationalist

groups for the evasiveness of their answers and challenges them either to arrange a general meeting or to declare that they will have nothing to do with each other.⁹² As if in answer to this accusation of evasiveness the deputy leader of Stahlhelm, Theodor Duesterberg, enters the discussion and affirms Jünger's four principles for a new state. For Duesterberg these principles are clearly the continuation of the 'spirit of the front line' cultivated in the First World War. Duesterberg sees general agreement among nationalist groups that they must gain political power, and he advocates joining with political parties to this end. The ultimate goal is to liberate and unite all Germans in the central European bloc. For Duesterberg opposition to the 'red terror' originally made unity among nationalists possible and now resistance to the imminent onslaught of Marxism should once more ensure this unity.⁹³

The next two contributors lament the lack of unity and a unifying ideal or programme among nationalists,⁹⁴ as does the final writer, described simply as a local group leader. He points to the cooperation between the 'red front' – presumably a reference to the communist Roter Frontkämpferbund founded in 1924 – and Reichsbanner, which contrasts with the antagonistic attitudes of nationalist groups towards each other. The long-term aim of nationalism cannot yet be clearly stated, nor does there exist a single leader who could create unity. Yet, the writer declares, a turning-point has been reached:

Everywhere a great change has got underway. The attitude of resistance and negation has been left behind. We are no longer concerned with reaction. It is clear for all to see that we are at the start of a new development whose final goal is a state born of the German spirit.⁹⁵

This debate has been related in some detail because it makes it possible to apply the theory of the conservative dilemma to the Conservative Revolution not by speculatively extending a plausible argument but by objectively illustrating its central importance in nationalist circles in the mid-twenties. For what the debate shows is the problem of formulating a new nationalist ideology once the traditional forms of nationalism have been discarded.

Despite general agreement on the need for unity, if only among the more 'revolutionary' groups, there are few clear positive ideals to sustain this unity. What definite political stances are proposed may largely be characterised as reactive: anti-liberalism, anti-communism, anti-Republicanism and anti-Semitism, or what Sondermann described as 'purely negative insights'. Moreover, contributors' claims to have abandoned traditional nationalism and reaction are frequently undermined by

the form of 'new nationalism' they advocate: Sondermann's anti-urbanism calls into question the sincerity or at least the objective validity of his call for traditional political divisions to be transcended. Similarly the reactive nature of Hierl's position is apparent not least to Jünger himself. In an article for *Arminius* entitled 'Die antinationalen Mächte', which deals with a speech he made to Hierl's organisation, the Tannenberg-Bund, and with Hierl's reply, Jünger expresses his pleasure at the fact that Hierl regards the Bund as in basic agreement with the aims of new nationalism but he has reservations about Hierl's ideas on Jews, freemasons, high finance and the Church. Although he attempts to minimise the distance between himself and Hierl, Jünger suggests that these groups are not the true enemy and concludes that a 'positive war must be waged!' and that new nationalists should not expend energy in providing a 'counterargument to Marxism'.⁹⁶

In an attempt to take the revolutionary nationalists beyond a purely negative stance, their leaders repeatedly call for the single great personality who can provide the movement with unity and direction. But, in the absence of such a leader, aims remain vague and centre upon Germany recovering its position of power in world politics; the frequently invoked terms 'new beginning' and 'turning-point' merely underline the inability of the writers to generate a positive programme. In a commentary on the responses to his call for unity in late July 1926⁹⁷ Jünger asserts that the interest which his call met with shows that one can speak of a single movement, even if it is progressing along different routes, and he concludes:

We may quarrel over the status of the various routes, but the ultimate goal must be shared. And so it is: not a goal that can be set out in a programme, but one which is clearly engraved in the heart of everyone who takes our cause seriously. We need waste no words over this goal.⁹⁸

Jünger goes on to say that nationalist groups are essentially soldierly, and elections and compromises are irrelevant to them. Beneath the cracked crust of the existing state these soldierly nationalists are the dynamite which will clear the way for a new state. All words fade into insignificance when blood starts to flow: the nationalists' path is revolutionary and does not lead through debates and German soirées. Jünger declares that nationalism lost its first encounters because it had not freed itself from reaction, yet these lost encounters are still the only events which make the postwar period tolerable. He names in particular those men who blew up bridges in the Ruhr and were at the Brandenburg Gate, in Upper Silesia and in Munich.⁹⁹

Jünger stresses that in the nationalist debate there was no disagreement over the four basic features of the state which he had set out in his first article. He declares that, apart from the danger of becoming involved with the Vereinigte Vaterländische Verbände, the prospects for a fruitful unification of nationalist groups are good. But he also says that the suggested creation of a hard core of nationalists on the basis of a special programme is tantamount to removing the yeast from one's daily bread. What binds nationalists together is a common idea, and programmes are relatively insignificant. Instead, he stresses the need for a fighting troop which can only come from the leagues and the National Socialists.

Jünger's commentary is illuminating, particularly when seen against the background of the debate and his original call for unity. Here he had written of the tendency to cling to tradition but also of the possibility of creating a new meaning for tradition. By returning to the point and reasserting the relative merit of these 'reactionary adventures', Jünger underlines the failure to create the new tradition he had sought and to progress to a revolutionary policy. Moreover his original call for a united nationalist front around a clear programme gives way in his concluding article to a nationalism which is a 'single movement' but progressing 'along different routes'. Nationalism is now an aim which cannot be defined in a programme but is 'engraved in the heart' of every committed nationalist. Here Jünger is taking a step away from rational debate,¹⁰⁰ and it seems reasonable to conclude that this step reflects his realisation that the nationalist debate has largely failed. Indeed, in his closing article he reaches the point where debate and action are practically alternatives: words and blood, programmes and fighting units are set against each other, and the former lose out to the latter. The attempt to evolve a revolutionary programme gives way to a revolutionary stance whose aims are not articulated.

This shift in position tends to cast doubt upon Jünger's assertion that there is agreement about the four pillars of a nationalist state, and this doubt is confirmed by a brief reference to the debate in March 1927 when he writes that the calls for unity of the previous year were based upon the idea that 'everybody basically wanted the same thing', but that the different interpretations of the word 'social' showed this was not so.¹⁰¹ The debate was in fact an example of how limited the notion of 'German socialism' was once one attempted to operate with it as the basis for a political movement.

A further consequence of the problems of nationalism can be seen in Jünger's change of attitude towards the idea of a single great personality to lead the nationalist movement. In the nationalist debate it became apparent

that the leader principle was made all the more crucial by the inability of leading members of particular nationalist groups to lay down acceptable aims for the movement as a whole or even, on occasion, to state coherently the aims of their own organisations. A strong leader was called for who would use these groups as 'reliable tools' and set them clear goals.

Jünger's own initial position is set out in two articles which appeared in the first issue of *Standarte* in September 1925. In the first he explains that the political war now being waged has ground to a halt and that the forces engaged in this war lack 'a great and clearly defined framework'. In this situation it comes as no surprise that people are calling all the more fervently and desperately for a great national politician. Jünger argues that a plan is necessary, and only a great personality can draw it up and execute it, but he also asserts that the 'strong man' cannot be summoned and will only emerge when his time has come. Until then the nationalists must work upon themselves so that they become 'hard material for hard policies'.¹⁰² In his second article Jünger elaborates upon the nature of this preparatory work:

Clearing the way for him [the leader] is the first task for the front-line soldiers. This means ending internal strife, clarifying our ideas, keeping strong our will to act which must merge in a supreme and single will, and building ourselves into a disciplined and usable instrument of power.¹⁰³

Jünger here suggests a dual task for the nationalist movement in preparation for the great leader. Firstly, disputes within the movement must be eliminated and its ideas clarified, and secondly the movement must be made into a resolute instrument of power.

By the time he returns to the theme some eighteen months later Jünger has rather different thoughts about the leader principle. In 'Die zwei Tyrannen' he looks back to the calls for unity of the previous year and says that it was both right and wrong to assume that there was basic agreement about the aims of the nationalist movement.¹⁰⁴ In domestic politics there was certainly no agreement, yet Jünger does see unanimity about the aim of foreign policy: a strong, independent Reich, secure against the outside world. If the threat of an attack from abroad will always be the greatest force for unity within Germany the second greatest force is an outstanding personality. Here Jünger shows a different perspective on Italian fascism from that offered by Gelimer in April 1926 as a movement which has overcome class struggle and brought nationalism and socialism together. For Jünger Italian fascism is not the realisation of any such political programme. Instead, he quotes approvingly from Wladimir von

Hartlieb's travel diary on Italy in which a great individual such as Italian fascism possesses is seen as an object of commitment which is both more acceptable than, and an alternative to, a political programme. Jünger had written in one of his earlier articles that the work of nationalists was hampered by the conflicting ideas within the movement, with the result that the great aim of nationalism is lost from sight.¹⁰⁵ Although he can now write that the leagues have succeeded in spreading the form and the idea of the loyal following, Jünger also states that the nationalists have programmes enough and that the arguments they provoke are a waste of time. What is needed is not a new organisation but a man who can reduce the available forces to a common denominator. The disputes within the movement will not prevent his appearance, indeed he will transcend them and 'create a higher unity' from them. Thus, whereas Jünger had originally seen it as a task of the nationalist movement itself to eliminate its internal disagreements, this task is now redefined as finding a higher unity, and it is left to the future leader. The original task of clarifying the ideas of nationalism seems now to be dismissed by Jünger with his comments on the relative unimportance of programmes, and he favours instead enthusiastic devotion to a leader who will settle these questions and the work of drawing up the nationalist ranks into an instrument of power. The dual task becomes a single task.

The failure of new nationalism to generate a unifying programme also encourages the vitalist attitude to politics we have already noted. In 'Revolution um Karl Marx' Jünger attacks socialist internationalism and Marx's 'mechanistic' concept of revolution, yet, as his reference to 're-arranging old things' suggests and his point that both the nation and the workers have 'outdated representatives' confirms, his rejection of programme-based politics has as much to do with the failures of nationalism as with an attack on Marxism as the model of political theorising:

Giving [nationalism] political shape is not the first but the last step for nationalism; it is a completion of a phenomenon which cannot be constructed but grows. Nationalism does not begin with the founding of a party or setting out a programme in which old things are rearranged and ordered. Rather, the beginning is like an embryo which embodies the delicate life-force and which draws sustenance not from the mechanical but the organic world and which takes shape not by being constructed but through metamorphosis.¹⁰⁶

Jünger's development is by no means unique in nationalist circles. Wilhelm Kleinau, co-editor of *Standarte* and a major figure in Stahlhelm's publishing activities, indicates that the problem also existed for the

Stahlhelm organisation itself. For whereas Duesterberg, the co-leader of Stahlhelm, had seen resistance to the 'red terror' as a uniting factor in the past and had sought to unite Stahlhelm around the principle of anti-Marxism in the future, Kleinau argues in the *Stahlhelm-Jahrbuch* of 1926 that Stahlhelm's goal and programme were perfectly clear in the stormy days of 1918 when it was founded: the state had to be protected against the 'red chaos' of revolution. But he goes on to say that new aims are now needed for the future. Kleinau returns again and again to the point that the wishes of front-line soldiers must be formulated in a series of clear demands in the form of a programme:

It was certainly a good and useful thing that the first years of our [Stahlhelm's] development were not weighed down with ideological baggage and demarcations which programmes inevitably bring with them. A young tree must grow free before the gardener sets about giving it shape. But now we are big and strong enough as an organisation. Now it is time to peel our movement down to its strong intellectual core and present this core to the German public as a programme.¹⁰⁷

This kind of thinking within the ranks of Stahlhelm had become more important after the failure of the Beer Hall Putsch of 1923 and, with it, the realisation that policies were needed to win supporters since frontal attacks on the state were doomed to failure. Kleinau's interest in formulating clear policies was short-lived, however: in August 1927 we see *Standarte*, under his editorship, quoting with some enthusiasm from Mussolini's thoughts on political programmes:

Fascism did not have a programme which it could instantly put into action. If it had possessed such a programme, it would now be proof that fascism was totally bankrupt. For nothing is more damaging than the illusion among the parties that once they have packed their ideas away neatly in a case they are the custodians of the great and ever changing secret of life. Fascism possessed something far more valuable than a programme: it possessed the will to act and basic principles in the form of attitude and character.¹⁰⁸

By the end of the year Kleinau is taking issue with Artur Mahraun, leader of the Jungdeutscher Orden, who had just produced a manifesto for his own organisation. Kleinau argues that the task of the nationalist movement is the reconstruction of the Reich, and that this depends less on the building plans than on the builders themselves. It is not a matter of pushing through particular programmes and theories but rather of bringing a certain kind of person to power. A nationalist leader should be at liberty

to ignore political programmes if he does not take them seriously and if he no longer needs them as a crutch.¹⁰⁹

Hermann Ehrhardt, often viewed as the epitome of the Conservative Revolutionary activist, undergoes a similar development. Historians have presented him as a representative of 'nihilistic nationalism' which rejects the present and has little to say about what should take its place. As one commentator puts it, Ehrhardt reveals 'a frightening absence of ideas and a total lack of positive aims. His impact did not extend beyond negating what existed and advocating struggle for its own sake, he offered an "attitude", heroic realism, to use Ernst Jünger's term'.¹¹⁰ Yet a look at Ehrhardt's development shows that the situation was more complex than this characterisation allows. For, like Jünger and Kleinau, Ehrhardt did not always show an indifference towards political programmes.

At the head of the Ehrhardt Brigade and its successors, Organisation C and Bund Wiking, Ehrhardt had taken part in the Kapp Putsch of 1920 and shortly afterwards produced *Deutschlands Zukunft: Aufgaben und Ziele*. Here he criticises the November Revolution for not having the ideas and the men to build the future, but points out that the lesson has to be learnt by the paramilitary organisations too: 'We are obliged to commit ourselves to a positive programme. We need the truth and clarity on all the fundamental issues of public and political life.' He goes on to try his hand at the kind of German socialism which Oswald Spengler and Moeller van den Bruck were also advocating. He calls for a state which would exercise control over the organisation of the workforce and wage levels, though not, he hastens to add, in the sense of 'making everyone the same'. Economic justice means an end to individuals accumulating massive fortunes at a time when others do not know how they are to make a living. The limits to Ehrhardt's vision are indicated when he goes on to insist that none of these measures should involve interfering with the individual's right to property. Property brings not only rights but also obligations. The economically weak must be cared for, and, in particular, the 'weakest of the weak'. Significantly this turns out to be not the workers, 'who have, after all, organised themselves into powerful groups' with millions of members and who can even start to consider the possibility of their class ruling the country on its own in the form of the dictatorship of the proletariat. Instead it is the 'middle classes which are at an all-time low' and which require support. No one class should dominate society, and between workers and employers there should be a 'moral relationship'.¹¹¹

In this political programme the seeds of activism are sown. For in the polarised political atmosphere of the Weimar Republic, the call for economic justice without fundamental economic reform and the highlight-

ing of the plight of the middle classes above all else were to prove an unrealistic basis for a programme and one which would provoke hostile reactions. Ehrhardt himself came to appreciate this, for by the mid-twenties he had abandoned the attempt to work out the detail of a programme and thus reached the paradoxical position of offering a programme without contents. In 'Captain Ehrhardt's and Associated Organisations' Work Programme' of March 1926 he calls for the creation of a 'national bloc'. As for the aims of such an organisation – which he had once insisted on spelling out in detail – he declares: 'Forget special aims, programmes – they only cause splits and conflict!' What the bloc might do with the power it would hold Ehrhardt describes as 'a purely tactical affair on which the leaders will have to rule at the appropriate time'.¹¹²

In a statement made shortly after this 'programme' appeared Ehrhardt returns to the idea of harmony between workers and employers and advocates a 'community of work' which is defined as the peaceful cooperation of all for the sake of the whole, yet he now acknowledges the problems attached to such an ideal when he admits that the 'harsh realities will always lead to confrontation' and that as a result trade unions will have to continue to exist for workers as their 'only protection against exploitation'.¹¹³

The gradual loss of interest in setting out a political programme and the drift towards activism and the call for a leader who would determine the nationalists' path are also discernible in the thought of Franz Schauwecker. For Schauwecker the switch is never complete, and he alternates between the call for a programme and a commitment to hierarchy above all else. By mid-1926 his early hints of an interest in communism give way to a series of negations. He goes over to attacking the Weimar Republic and communism, and he calls for 'one man to take charge and to exercise power without having to commit himself here and now to achieving a particular political order'.¹¹⁴ In the following year, however, his unease over this stance prompts him to return to an attack on the excesses of capitalism and the call for new nationalism to clarify its concepts.¹¹⁵

Similarly, before the nationalist debate initiated by his brother, Friedrich Georg Jünger can call upon nationalists to support the claims of the workers and for the establishment of nationalist trade unions,¹¹⁶ but after the debate he concentrates on the idea of a 'nationalist revolution of action', and he sees the paramilitary organisations as an instrument rather than as the source of a programme when he calls for the 'fighting leagues' to be organised more tightly around leaders who will use them as the 'flashing swords of nationalism'.¹¹⁷ Germany, he declares, is ready for dictatorship.¹¹⁸

Goetz Otto von Stoffregen, who had attacked nationalist leaders for the evasiveness of their answers to Ernst Jünger's call for a programme, moves on to a position which combines indifference to programmes with a call for authority:

The question of what form the state should take is irrelevant at the moment. It is irrelevant to the great task set us by fate: the task of totally eradicating the all-pervading system of liberalism and replacing the political structure with the organic state in which the great nationalist individual will make the decisions and – let nobody forget – take responsibility for his actions. That is the crucial point. Nothing else matters for the present.¹¹⁹

By 1932 the new nationalists sensed that they had failed: Artur Mahraun looks back and points out how hard it was for nationalism to act upon the frontliners' vague feeling as they returned home that 'everything had to be changed'.¹²⁰ That the negative, activist, leader-orientated version of revolutionary nationalism meshed well with the needs of National Socialism was soon to become clear.

HANS ZEHREER: MATERIALISM, ROMANTICISM AND MYTH

The drift towards abstract politics, activism and the leader principle is also discernible in the political journalism of Hans Zehrer. He had fought in the war and been involved in the Kapp Putsch. He was largely responsible for reviving Eugen Diederich's ailing journal *Die Tat* when he took over as editor in October 1929 and saw its circulation boosted from fewer than 1000 to 30 000. (The best known left-wing journal of the time, *Die Weltbühne*, had a circulation of just 13 000.)

Zehrer had already started writing for the journal before he took over as editor and while he was still editor of Ullstein Verlag's *Vossische Zeitung*. He managed to gather together a small group of four writers as the editorial board and some eleven further writers as regular contributors to the journal, and it was this constellation of writers which became known as the Tat-Kreis. The key figures of this group were all from middle-class backgrounds. They also had connections with the Jugendbewegung and had studied at university. Under Zehrer's guidance the journal became the 'most widely read and discussed political journal of the day' and appealed to young middle-class readers, in particular those hit hardest by unemployment.¹²¹ So popular was the journal that separate Tat-Kreise were set up spontaneously to discuss the ideas it put forward, and leading politicians

feared its criticism. Von Papen claimed indeed that it had caused his downfall.¹²²

Zehrer saw his task as working out a programme which would transcend right and left, and benefit the 'new middle class' which was caught between organised labour and organised capital. For Zehrer the new middle class consisted of the impoverished strata of the old middle class and the rising strata of the proletariat.¹²³ His focus was clearly on the fate of the old middle classes, however, which he saw as economically proletarianised but unwilling to identify with the proletariat. Just which groups within the middle class he was addressing is set out in December 1929:

In economic terms the middle classes, whether one is talking about the former property-owning bourgeoisie, independent farmers, civil servants or white-collar workers, the petty bourgeoisie, tradesmen, craftsmen, or office workers, are today part of the proletariat. The Social Democrats are quite right when they claim on the basis of their materialist approach that these forces have to be counted as proletarian.¹²⁴

The ideas of Hans Zehrer and the Tat-Kreis are a good example of a constantly developing set of responses to contemporary events.¹²⁵ The following analysis will trace the developments in one particular set of responses in the work of Hans Zehrer himself. The events all highlight the inability of the right to transcend traditional political boundaries, and the developments in Zehrer's thinking illustrate the resultant shift towards activist, abstract and authoritarian politics.

Zehrer makes his initial interest in political ideals clear in April 1928 when he argues in favour of working out a programme for the decade to come.¹²⁶ Yet he combines this with a scorn for political parties: Zehrer suggests that voting in the forthcoming elections can have little point since one will be voting for the same 50-year-olds who have already demonstrated that they have no new ideas. As an alternative, Zehrer suggests that the paramilitary organisations on the right and the left – Stahlhelm, Wehrwolf, the Windthorstbünde, Reichsbanner and Roter Frontkämpferbund – should put an end to their enmity for they have much in common, not least the fact that they are from the same generation. Their ideological differences, Zehrer suggests, are superficial when compared with what they share – the 'frontline spirit' and, at a more profound level than party allegiances, the potential to become a united force for change. Describing the run-up to the next elections to the Reichstag, Zehrer predicts the harmful effects of failing to recognise the potential for unity:

This generation will be on the move in the coming weeks, demonstrating on the Kurfürstendamm, that western street of splendour in Berlin.

Stahlhelm, Reichsbanner and Roter Frontkämpferbund. Stahlhelm will give a show of the frontline spirit against the splendid façades of houses and luxury shops. Reichsbanner will demonstrate against the monarchists and reactionaries who live in the houses. And the red frontliners will mount an attack on the capitalist spirit of the street. But when the demonstrators meet, they will fight. Do these young people not realise how near they are to each other?¹²⁷

Where Jünger had called upon the paramilitary leagues, former Free Corps members, the Nazis and leaders of other nationalist organisations to unite in 1926, Zehrer appeals to organisations of all political persuasions to call a truce.¹²⁸ Zehrer receives enthusiastic support for his initiative from Fritz Herrmann of the Jungdeutscher Orden. Herrmann echoes Zehrer's view that the 'league movement' embraces paramilitary organisations from the Roter Frontkämpferbund to the Nazis, and that what binds them is far stronger than what separates them. The roots of their bond are *in their experience as frontline soldiers in the war, and they only appear to be at odds with each other. The division into right and left, says Herrmann, is arbitrary.*¹²⁹ Zehrer's first lesson in political realism is provided by the Verband der Vaterländischen Verbände Deutschlands, however, when it replies to his call for a truce. (It was this traditionalist organisation which Ernst Jünger had warned new nationalists to steer clear of some twelve months earlier.) This association asserts that as long as Reichsbanner is dominated by internationalist and pacifist conscientious objectors, and organisations such as the Roter Frontkämpferbund 'receive their instructions from abroad', it is idle to suppose there would be any purpose in entering into talks with them.¹³⁰

Zehrer makes the best of this outright rejection by hastening to point out that he was perfectly well aware that his call for unity of the organisations across the party lines was doomed to failure from the start, but it was and is necessary to make the effort in order to get beyond purely a purely negative stance.¹³¹ Zehrer shows greater tenacity than Jünger who was quick to seek a way out of the impasse by concentrating on authoritarian structures, for Zehrer goes on to point out that the political ideas of an organisation are more crucial than the structures it might wish to impose upon a state.¹³² Even as he calls for party differences to be swept aside as superficial, Zehrer is attempting to introduce the idea of a politicisation which would inevitably involve some kind of political programme rather than simple activism.

This concern with sorting out a political programme becomes apparent when *Die Tat* returns to one of Zehrer's key themes – that of generational

conflict. In an anonymous article in the same issue which carried the reply from the Verband der Vaterländischen Verbände, it is argued that the problem of youth has a different meaning in different organisations. With a clear dig at the Verband, which had spurned Zehrer's call for unity, the article continues by pointing out that the generation gap is particularly crucial when it becomes necessary to break with tradition. In this there is a contrast between the left's Roter Frontkämpferbund and the nationalist youth. Young people in the former organisation may have their differences with the older leadership, yet young and old alike are agreed on the direction in which they are all marching. But nationalist youth, for example in the Jungdeutscher Orden, has to face the task of agreeing its direction and doing so in opposition to the older generation of nationalists. That the author of this article is pointing to the conservative dilemma becomes clearer still when he writes that the new nationalism has hardly anything at all in common with the old beyond a love for German ways and the German nation.¹³³

Zehrer is able to argue the case directly when he comments on his second lesson in the perseverance of political tradition which came with the expulsion of Walther Lambach from the DNVP for daring to suggest that, for the generation born after 1905, Kaiser and King are no longer sacred concepts which must never be called into question, and that the DNVP should appeal to monarchists and republicans alike. Zehrer comments that there is nothing sensational in what Lambach said, and he continues: 'these are the words of a new generation which finally wants to dispense with the old fictions and slogans and get things clear'.¹³⁴

This concern for political clarity also makes itself apparent when Zehrer rejects the option of preparing for revolution by throwing everything into the melting-pot and risking all without knowing in any precise way what should be created and how to create it. He also rejects the option of dictatorship in which the masses would play no part. Instead Zehrer asks if there is not a third way, a middle way. That he is aware of the polarised political background against which he is developing his ideas becomes clear when he anticipates what criticism they will encounter. It will be argued, says Zehrer, that the idea of a middle way is just a fiction, that there are only capital and labour, employers and workers, rich and poor. Yet Zehrer defiantly embarks upon the task of outlining his programme: state socialism, many now realise, does not work. Nor, however, does the free economy. In this situation the 'middle' has a great opportunity, and it must fulfil its mission by taking a radical programme into the middle ground. By this Zehrer means that the middle class, which was severely shaken by the war and the inflation which followed it, should embrace

radical economic reform: in order to achieve harmony between labour and capital, the 'vital elements of socialism' must be taken on board. In this way the future of the centre will be secured.¹³⁵

Zehrer returns to the idea in October 1928 when he stresses that Germany is undergoing an economic crisis: relations between capital and labour are unclear and leading to unrest.¹³⁶ The sense of foreboding grows in Zehrer's mind as the new year starts, and he explicitly refers to the events which he sees as a disaster for the middle class. If the collapse of 1918 was to have any meaning, he argues, it should be to create 'a new harmony between capital and labour'. This did not happen in 1919, and the Social Democrats also failed to introduce a full-blooded programme of socialisation of the economy. What is worse is the fact that Hugenberg has managed to become leader of the DNVP although the mood of the country is anti-capitalist. Parties cannot survive on moods, however, and they need the financial support of industry. The example of the DNVP shows that in this situation there can be no harmony between capital and labour; there can only be victory and defeat. Hugenberg's elevation is a victory for capital, and other parties will follow the same path.¹³⁷ This third lesson in the realities of Weimar politics leaves Zehrer unable to suggest what the next positive step might be, and he can only look back over his own learning process, in which he came to see that to transcend right and left was no simple matter. In frustration at the leagues' inability to unite and to take on board the kind of social reform which would create harmony between labour and capital, and in his disgust at the polarisation implicit in Hugenberg's rise he predicts collapse for all concerned:

The solution is still nowhere in sight! For a while people looked to the leagues which came together beneath the official party line. But they no longer offer any hope. A conference of the leaders of the various leagues certainly took place a few weeks ago in Berlin, to work out a united front. A failure! Stahlhelm went over to Hugenberg's camp, and called for a petition for a referendum to change the Constitution, an enterprise which of course cannot succeed. Stahlhelm also refused to commit itself to social reform. That was the end for Stahlhelm. It has been in a severe internal crisis for a long time now, and soon the crisis will break the organisation. In this it is only revealing the fate awaiting all the leagues. So far, they have not managed to get their best thinkers together and draft a positive programme of their own.¹³⁸

Yet Zehrer is not easily deterred from his mission of charting a middle path. Despite his scorn for political parties he can therefore even find words of praise for the Centre Party's new thinking which puts it econom-

ically on the left and politically on the right. Zehrer calls for nationalisation of key industries while stressing that this would have nothing to do with socialism or Marxism. Instead, Zehrer advocates 'state capitalism'.¹³⁹ Again, Zehrer returns to the DNVP which he sees as heading for a crisis: for the party has had the misfortune to acquire Hugenberg – the 'crass entrepreneur type' – as its dictator. Against this background of political polarisation between capital and labour and a move away from any notion of harmonisation of economic interests, Zehrer reasserts the need for new thinking: new ideas, new men and new leaders are essential.¹⁴⁰ Zehrer points out that people feel a desperate need for authority and dictatorship but sees this as a dangerous phenomenon since there is a risk of people following false idols who adhere to old ideas. With a clear reference to Hugenberg's shortcomings, he insists that the right men for taking control are not yet available.¹⁴¹

Zehrer's stubborn refusal to accept the political polarisation he registers all around him accounts for the confusion which characterises his work from this time on. Just as he had described how sections of the old middle class had been proletarianised in economic terms but refused to align themselves with the proletariat, he can now both accept and reject the economic realities in his political theorising: in May 1929 he had come to the conclusion that, since economics had come to outweigh other differences between the parties, the Communist and the Social Democratic Parties could only benefit from their clear-cut economic foundation.¹⁴² Just seven months later, however, he can argue that Marxism and Social Democracy are in decline because of their unmodern materialist outlook. The times had dispensed with materialism and reverted to a 'romantic' outlook. But immediately after asserting this reversion he goes on to argue that one must learn from Marxism that the one and only crucial factor is the economic and social position of the individual. (The self-interest behind Zehrer's ideological confusion becomes clear when he goes on to relate it to his new middle class by stating that the rejection of materialism goes hand in hand with the fight against those forces seeking to limit the freedom of others – capital and the masses).¹⁴³

With a characteristic switch of perspective, Zehrer now rounds upon this same middle class for taking leave of the real world and refusing to acknowledge the erosion of the economic gap between it and the proletariat. He introduces the vocabulary of illusion to explain the plight of the middle class:

It is particularly extraordinary that it is precisely among the middle classes that the world of ideals and Utopias is preserved. The forces

which think in practical terms are located above and below them; yet the middle continues to exist in a romantic sphere where self-assertiveness, the principle of honour, class consciousness, commitment to learning, etc. develop via the intellect in a Utopian sphere which hardly ever leads to action or connects with reality, but rather contents itself with illusions. Putting it crudely: the illusion of being somebody, of being important, is quite enough to confirm the middle classes in their passivity.¹⁴⁴

Whereas Zehrer had started off with a spirited defence of middle-class romanticism in the face of Marxist materialism, he rapidly goes over to accusing the middle class of only consenting to 'throw overboard some of its ballast of Utopianism and self-deceit' when it was confronted with the need to fight for its very existence.¹⁴⁵

It is at this point – when Zehrer cannot deny the economic reality but also cannot explain how the conflicts underlying that economic reality can be resolved – that he introduces the theme of activism. The idea of class is now described by Zehrer as a 'fiction', and, returning to his description of the new middle class as the old middle class in decline plus those sections of the proletariat on the way up, he goes on:

The newly emerging middle class is made up of both elements, the one on the way down, the other on the way up. And from the next generation it is already receiving so much militant, activist and revolutionary blood that it will very quickly expand into a truly significant political force.¹⁴⁶

That this new political force cannot readily be converted into a political party is apparent to Zehrer, for he comments that any new party seeking to accommodate it would have to mark itself off from large industry and capital, and this would cause half of all potential founders of parties immediately to lose interest. The blurring of the political profile of this new 'stratum' and the emphasis placed on its revolutionary and activist potential are prompted by Zehrer's realisation that it is at odds with the mood of the dominant political organisations of the time.

When a political party does absorb this political energy, it does so because the electorate is drawn to revolutionary slogans. Thus when the NSDAP makes its dramatic gains in the September 1930 elections, leaping from 12 to 107 seats in the Reichstag, Zehrer does not see this as a victory for the policies of the party but rather as the electorate's incoherent support for the NSDAP's incoherent backing of an anti-capitalist, 'national' and 'social' trend. Yet, in contrast to his earlier position of July 1928 that one should resist throwing oneself into revolutionary change

without knowing what was to be changed and how the change was to be brought about, Zehrer is now quite willing to accept this:

For the moment people are protesting against anonymity, against the dull aggression and violence which everyone senses but which cannot yet be clearly identified. One person is against everything foreign, a second against international capital, a third opposes the principle of property and the way the economy is organised, and a fourth is against the Jews. This revolutionary resentment is as yet without shape, just as the power it opposes lacks shape. But it is no less effective or real for that, and it cannot now be halted. Let us get used to the fact that the revolution is on the move!¹⁴⁷

Although Zehrer regards this revolutionary zeal with enthusiasm as a starting-point, he goes on to say that a detailed programme must be worked out over the following two years. The Nazis have never found the time to consider theories and to work out precisely what they want, and this leads Zehrer to conclude that political parties should be bypassed. But he can go on to argue, via Carl Schmitt, that authority and power should incorporate the will of the people, and that the Reichspräsident and the Reichswehr should therefore become the foundation of the state and be in touch with this will. Zehrer has noted the revolutionary will of the nation but sees no possibility of the radical parties working out a programme to accommodate it. Instead he switches to the principle of strong leadership outside the parties.¹⁴⁸

Yet his interest in the parties is not entirely abandoned. He now finds it acceptable that the Nazis have no programme and are only intent on avoiding committing themselves and ensuring that the movement grows. The programme that is needed is not just for the Nazis but for the German nation as a whole.¹⁴⁹ Out of the failure of the political parties to transcend right and left there emerges in Zehrer's thinking an indifference to what side people claim to be on: 'right and left are no more than names within the existing system', but beneath this level the poles are drawing closer together, and we are witnessing a 'total mobilisation of the masses' and a 'total revolution'. While clinging to his ideal of social harmony through a redistribution of property and some measure of state ownership of the means of production, Zehrer lifts this ideal out of the realm of practical politics and introduces the notion of a relentless development towards this goal, which continues regardless of what political programmes might demand. This shift makes the particular forms of practical political activity a matter of indifference to Zehrer:

Can new programmes, new parties, new projects help here? There is a great deal of aimless activity in these times, people trying to intervene, make a start, be helpful, and build something. Would a strong man help? The whole nation is crying out for one. Should we add one more appeal or call to the hundred we have heard in the past? Should we gather together all 'men of good will', as has been done a dozen times already? What should we do? None of this! Events will unfold in their own harsh, irresistible way.¹⁵⁰

Zehrer takes one further step along the path to activism by starting to reassess the value of a political programme. Whereas he had originally kept his distance from political parties but been intent on working out a programme, the idea of a programme of any kind starts to appear in contexts which suggest that it is no more than one of the instruments of liberalism.¹⁵¹

Zehrer writes of the old political ideologies which no longer have anything to do with the new political reality. For the established parties the Brüning cabinet has hastened a process of collapse by allowing the ideological opposition of right and left to resurface. Brüning and Treviranus are forming a new Christian conservative right, rather than attempting to draw the right closer to the left.¹⁵²

Zehrer comes to regard activist politics with less alarm. And, just as Ernst Jünger revised his ideas on the leadership ideal once it had become clear that a political programme was impossible to achieve and looked to the leader principle in Italian fascism as an alternative to a political programme, Zehrer turns to Italian fascism as a successful model of activism. Whereas in 1928 he had rejected the option of attempting to seize power without having a clear idea of goals as an affair for 'sensitive, artistic natures who have a tendency towards radical solutions',¹⁵³ and preferred to pursue his 'third way' between labour and capital, he now quotes approvingly from the journal *Deutsche Freischar*, where it criticises the radical right in the shape of the Nazis for neither seizing power without a programme, as the fascists had done in Italy, nor working out a detailed programme in advance, like the Russian Bolsheviks:

For movements like National Socialism, which are playing an ever greater part in determining the fate of modern states, there are two radical possibilities. Either – as happened with fascism – they spring up spontaneously, spread out like an avalanche, are driven onwards by primitive and powerful emotions and strength of will, and only face up to the questions of contents, systems and basic beliefs after they have seized power. Or else the movement does not rely on its spontaneous

origins, or on primitive and powerful emotions alone, but builds upon a doctrine which may take the small group of founders all their effort over an extended period of time to develop into an intellectual system. This happened with Russian Bolshevism. And when a movement like this comes to power, it is already in possession of a programme worked out in the finest detail.¹⁵⁴

At this point Zehrer looks at the potential way out of the conservative dilemma shown by the man whose work clearly influenced him: Moeller van den Bruck. Zehrer argues that Moeller had come from the ranks of conservatism but had rejected liberalised conservatism as a solution. Instead, Moeller looked to the new conservatism which had taken leave of Wilhelminism and was not part of the parliamentary system, to make common cause with the radical left: 'In Moeller the right wing extends its hand to the left and attempts to establish a truly anti-liberal national community.'¹⁵⁵ We have seen how little substance emerged from Moeller's 1923 debate with Karl Radek on this very point, and Zehrer acknowledges that the idea of a new conservatism leading a German socialism is a 'dream', and that Moeller himself knew of no force which could 'solve the outstanding problems of socialism'.

Although Zehrer can go on to assert that radical left and radical right are partners in opposition and thereby imply that some form of synthesis is in fact still possible, he soon drops this idea. In his frustration he turns on communism, seeing it not as a potential ally but, rather as the *Verband der Vaterländischen Verbände Deutschlands* had dismissed the *Roter Frontkämpferbund* in 1928, as an organisation under the influence of Russia. He criticises the communists for not adapting the Marxist programme to German circumstances – for not giving it a clear nationalist dimension – and concludes that they do not have an achievable programme for Germany.

At this point Zehrer looks to Georges Sorel and Carl Schmitt as the theorists of the political myth and deals one more blow to programme-based politics. From Sorel he takes the definition of myth as a mobilising force which has scant regard for the finer points of a political programme:

It is of very little importance to know the details of the myth which will emerge in the future. Myths are not astrological manuals, and it may even turn out that absolutely nothing they contain actually comes to pass. It is the totality of the myth alone that is important.¹⁵⁶

Sorel did not argue in terms of what kind of socialism political parties might achieve, and Zehrer seems to have turned to him out of despair at

the state of the political parties. Moreover, if party politics were demonstrating to Zehrer that the hoped-for transcendence of right and left was not going to come about, Sorel's myth was welcome because it was a 'creator' of realities.¹⁵⁷ From Carl Schmitt, Zehrer takes the idea that in modern times there are two opposing myths – nationalism and communism. In setting these two political forces on a par with each other Zehrer has had to forget his earlier troublesome insight that class analysis in fact came from the 'forces that think in practical terms' as opposed to the 'romantic' middle classes. If the new anti-liberal right cannot overcome the problems of working out a programme, then the anti-liberal left (which Zehrer long envied for having its ideas clarified) must be downgraded to equal status. Communism is henceforth seen as a mobilising myth which could win the 'belief' of the masses and enable the left to seize power in Germany.¹⁵⁸

At the start of the thirties it was the position of the NSDAP in particular which prompted Zehrer to take up these ideas: he writes that, as representatives of the anti-liberal right, the National Socialists had understood the need for synthesis with the revolutionary economics of the left and even claimed to have united nationalism and socialism, but failed to allow socialism within the party to be any more than a 'weapon to be used against Marxism'. For this reason the Nazis' progress had been halted, and 1931 had brought the party no new successes.¹⁵⁹ Having been disappointed yet again with the failure of organisations to synthesize extreme right and left, Zehrer reviews his attitude towards organisations of any kind and locates the spirit of a highly abstract form of politics in the 'masses' and in movements which are 'shapeless and anonymous'. Within these movements programmes have no part to play, and indeed, the term movements seems to become interchangeable with the more abstract and activist term 'movement'. Writing of the Nazis and the communists he concludes:

We are talking here about the radical organisations, not the radical movement as such! We must make a clear distinction here between the two. The organisation is a structure, made with the materials of the time, dependent on these materials and therefore exposed to the processes of decay and decomposition. The organisation is created with programmes, theories and tendencies which are valuable for one moment, but which are bound to their time. As soon as they are founded, organisations set themselves against change and growth, against embracing new developments..., whereas the masses that followed them are not so strongly bound by the inertia principle. These masses are becoming ever more fluid, mobile and liberated....

In Germany today we have reached a stage where organisations have become peripheral and without influence on the masses because they no longer represent the masses. We have already reached the point where it is only amorphous, anonymous movement that is setting the pace. And soon, after the last of the organisations has collapsed, the people will be movement and nothing but movement. Traditions, programmes, world-views and affiliations, fictions and reservations, all these will be lost in the whirlpool of change. The people will be the people again, and nothing but the people, and man will be man again, and nothing but man. And the political organisation of the German People's Party or the German National People's Party will lose its members and founder.... From today there are only movements in Germany! The question: right or left will have been answered: right and left!¹⁶⁰

That Zehrer should conclude with his ideal of a synthesis of right and left is a sign of despair rather than conviction, for it is located in the highly anti-programmatic context of activism.

Zehrer now carries his discussion further out of the realm of practical politics by maintaining that it is man himself that must be changed, and that new systems are secondary. This change involves not a political re-orientation but a political neutralisation of man. Once neutral ground has been reached, it will be time to construct a new foundation. At this stage Zehrer adds the next element of activist politics to his equation – the leader principle:

Once the people are the people again, and man is man, and there is movement and nothing but movement, we shall have reached the historic moment when fate must intervene. Then the hour has come for the great individual – if he is available.¹⁶¹

Whereas Zehrer had pointed out some two-and-a-half years earlier that people's desperate need for authority and dictatorship was a dangerous phenomenon, since there was a risk of following false idols,¹⁶² he now seems less troubled by this danger, and stresses what a relief it would be for the nation if a great individual were to emerge: for he would show the nation the way and thus unite it. Zehrer points out that whatever direction such an individual came from, it would be nationalist and therefore his way forward would be correct, and an order which liberals would dismiss as serfdom would appear to the nation as freedom precisely because it would be order and have a purpose behind it. The willingness to abdicate responsibility for the precise form of a new state to the leader for the sake of clarity and unity has clearly grown in the course of Zehrer's

education.¹⁶³ Zehrer refers to this as the drift towards Caesarism – an idea taken from Spengler who develops it within the context of his critique of a society in transition from culture to civilisation. Significantly enough the great individual expresses for Spengler not clarity of purpose but ‘superficial history’ which lacks certainty, direction and purpose (UA2, 977).

It will also be the time for the elite who withdrew to neutral ground to assist the great individual. Just as it had for other Conservative Revolutionaries, the instrumental nature of the new nationalist movement now comes to the fore for Zehrer. Zehrer sees this elite retaining its neutrality and offering its technical expertise to help run the state and the economy in the way intended by the leader. Zehrer goes on to suggest that the time for great leaders might have passed and that this elite could itself take on the leadership role, but he is unable to specify how the elite might organise itself or what the basis for its actions might be. Zehrer’s difficulty further testifies to the impasse faced by the radical right.¹⁶⁴

By March 1932 Zehrer is forced to admit that the nation is currently divided into two camps, a national and a social camp which are separated from each other by the ‘old terms “right and left”’. His only consolation is found in abandoning the level of practical politics and arguing the activist case which is that the two radical parties – Communists and Nazis – are two columns of the same army. To the extent that they are fighting for the same thing it is of no significance which side they are on. Like Ernst Jünger before him, Zehrer emerges from a failed debate on the new nationalism with a commitment to struggle for its own sake:

If one wanted to put a name to this community of the people, one could say: we have been fighting for almost two decades for a German socialism! This is why we went to war.... The individual is not judged by what he fights for or against or by which of the two fronts he joins, but by how much he gives to the fight and how great his sacrifice is, by his devotion and commitment to the fight!¹⁶⁵

INEFFABLE CONSERVATISM: WILHELM STAPEL AND THE *DEUTSCHES VOLKSTUM* CIRCLE

The group gathered around the journal *Deutsches Volkstum* under the editorship of Wilhelm Stapel and Albrecht Erich Günther was well aware of the conservative dilemma, and it developed its own very particular

response to the problem. With a print-run of between 3000 and 5000, the journal did not attain the circulation figures of *Die Tat*, yet among Conservative Revolutionaries it was held in high esteem: Oswald Spengler referred to it as the best journal appearing in Germany in his time, and Ernst Niekisch remarked that it had great attraction for a large section of the educated young. Moreover, those involved with the journal in turn played a key role in the political work of the *Deutschnationaler Handlungsgehilfenverband* which financed the journal and was one of the largest non-Marxist employees' organisations in the Weimar Republic. Stapel himself was co-chairman of the Fichte Society and influenced the work of the *Hanseatische Verlagsanstalt*, one of the largest right-wing publishing houses of the period.¹⁶⁶

As with so many Conservative Revolutionary groups, the financial backers of *Deutsches Volkstum* were more traditional in their politics than the groups themselves: the *Deutschnationaler Handlungsgehilfenverband* excluded Marxists, women and Jews from membership and saw the white-collar workers (*Angestellte*) as the key to 'cultural and political renewal'.¹⁶⁷

Like other Conservative Revolutionaries the group around *Deutsches Volkstum* has no hesitation in distancing itself from traditional nationalism. Wilhelm Stapel points out that the national movement of the day has little to do with the 'provincial nationalism' of the Wilhelmine era; it is rooted rather in the 'deepest earth of German history'.¹⁶⁸ Stapel also distances himself from all forms of nationalism based on a longing for the past and the resentment this produces. Modern nationalism would be condemned to sterility if it was based on such an attitude of 'backward-looking Romanticism'. Stapel praises Moeller van den Bruck for distinguishing between reaction and conservatism and for his combination of revolutionary and conservative thinking.¹⁶⁹ Like other Conservative Revolutionaries too, the group had an uneasy relationship with socialism: Wilhelm Stapel wrote in 1919 of the need for men who could combine 'the great, authentic, forward-looking ideas of socialism with the splendid, proud, chivalric and noble sentiments and ideas of nationalism'. He expresses his sympathy with the Social Democrat workers and sees the need for the socialist and the nationalist sections of the German people to be won to the cause of a new German state.¹⁷⁰ 'National' and 'social' are 'two terms for the same thing'.¹⁷¹ Yet at the same time socialism was subjected to the kind of redefinition which was so typical of Conservative Revolutionary thought: Stapel argues that the German people reject Marxist socialism but not 'an ethical restraint on the economy based on professional honour and respect for man'.¹⁷² The people (*Volk*) was a term

in Stapel's vocabulary heavy with a sense of harmony, tradition and shared purpose, as he explained in his 1917 *Volksbürgerliche Erziehung*:

The *Volk* is a living entity of people who share a soul. It stretches back over the centuries, with the people passing on their physical and spiritual characteristics from generation to generation. They develop among themselves a shared culture and shared ideals.¹⁷³

Socialism, which was purely concerned with the 'external matter' of what form the economy took, was not capable of creating such a *Volk*. If socialism as an economic concept was dismissed as a superficial affair, incapable of re-establishing this sense of shared purpose, a 'socialism of the mind' was put forward as a more likely source of social integration:

Socialism of the mind is a different matter. It is based on a love which can create a *Volk*, for it brings souls together. But this love cannot be planted in the soul from the outside through economic and social measures; it can only grow from within the soul.¹⁷⁴

In these early efforts at countering the kind of socialism which embraced social and economic reform Stapel, like many other Conservative Revolutionaries, operates with a concept of ineffable conservatism which Thomas Mann and Oswald Spengler had helped to formulate around the end of the First World War. Mann had pointed out the automatic associations of the term 'politician' in his *Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen*: 'There is no such thing as a "democratic" or a "conservative" politician. Either you *are* a politician or you are not, and if you are, you are a democrat.'¹⁷⁵ Politics, argues Mann, is inevitably a commitment to democracy and therefore alien to the German spirit. The 'authoritarian state' is the political order desired by the German people.¹⁷⁶ Unlike 'civilisation', German culture was 'of the soul, something which could not be grasped by the intellect',¹⁷⁷ but it is under threat from the 'literati of civilisation', the 'sons of the French Revolution', who wish to 'politicise the German spirit' and set about reordering society according to the political ideals of democracy.¹⁷⁸ Germany's military resistance to the West was stronger than its spiritual resistance, primarily because its 'national ethos' is not quick to express itself in words and therefore cannot effectively counter the solid rhetoric of the West.¹⁷⁹

Looking back, Oswald Spengler had suggested that conservatism had not needed to explain itself before the November Revolution and the fall of the monarchy. The chivalric way of life he praises is not governed by any moral code, but rather by 'a noble, self-evident morality, based on that natural sense of tact which comes from good breeding' (UA2, 891).

This morality is not the product of reflection but is rather 'something which grows, something innate which one senses and which has its own organic logic (UA2, 982). The values of conservatism are embodied for Spengler in the rural life, and in the pre-conscious cultural phase of a nation these values are 'eternal' (UA2, 679-80). Now Spengler has to acknowledge that the model of the pre-conscious phase which was imbued with an instinctive morality became difficult to sustain when challenged by the rise of the city which in turn has its association with the politics of liberalism, democracy and socialism (UA2, 1085). When Spengler writes that morality becomes a problem in the artificiality of the cities, where a theory is needed and life becomes the object of observation, he is thinking not least of the challenge to conservatism posed by the 'scientific' analysis of society which he sees as one of the chief characteristics of socialism (UA1, 452-3; UA2, 793-4).

It is against this background that Stapel's early concept of the *Volk* is to be understood. For Stapel the *Volk* is an irrational, non-reflective, God-given entity which cannot be conveyed in conceptual terms; it can only be experienced.¹⁸⁰

Socialism is perceived more and more as the articulate ideology, and conservatism as its silent opposite. Yet Stapel is aware of the growth of a will systematically to reshape society according to a conscious plan which provokes the 'natural' order of conservatism into finding a political voice. This is apparent even in his early work when he talks of the need to 'educate' man to take his place in the national community. He thus asks why, if the national community is independent of the human will, man needs such an education. His answer is a lament for a social harmony which 'no longer exists':

My answer is this: first of all, because we have torn apart this natural community, because we are in the process of forcing man into artificial structures created by the human mind and by human powers. These structures will never replace the natural order of life.¹⁸¹

A. E. Günther, co-editor of *Deutsches Volkstum*, also laments the lost innocence of conservatism and describes the process by which the 'eternal norms' of the life of society are replaced by a constitution based on reason as 'secularisation'. This secularisation first created a 'conservative consciousness' since it called the eternal norms of society into question and obliged conservatism to argue its case in rational terms.¹⁸²

Stapel's adherence to the idea of a national community which cannot be expressed in concepts receives a further jolt in 1923 with the failure of the Hitler Putsch.¹⁸³ Like other Conservative Revolutionaries, Stapel has

words of praise for the Putsch which he sees as part of the nationalist movement. Yet, like other Conservative Revolutionaries, he also sees the failed Putsch as a turning-point. In January 1924 he stresses the bankruptcy of democracy and socialism and goes out of his way to highlight the role of nationalism as a source of new ideas. In the first of many airings of the point Stapel argues that Germany has taken over more and more of the political forms of the Western nations since the defeat of 1918, but that the German *Volk* has instinctively resisted this trend. 'Political forms' include parliamentarianism, pacifism, democracy and socialism. Stapel then goes on to express the dilemma of new nationalism. On the one hand, the national idea and the national movement must be allowed to mature and develop a stance by undergoing a period of reflection:

We must not lose sight of the fact that the contents of the national idea have not fully matured by any means.... The young nationalist movement needs a great deal of philosophical, historical, sociological and psychological work of a critical, creative and practical kind in order to provide the tools for national policies. It is not possible to make great statesmen, but one can certainly provide them with the tools.¹⁸⁴

On the other hand, Stapel fears that the nationalist movement's attempts at working out a political position may cause it to degenerate into an organisation no better than a political party with a programme: the national movement must convince people by the qualities of those within it, not by 'some theory or other on money, land or race'.¹⁸⁵

At this stage then Stapel is balancing the nationalist movement's need to abandon discredited putschism and to work out a political message against the wish to avoid being absorbed into the Weimar political system by using its methods and to avoid the problems nationalism would face if it were to embark upon a course of political clarification. He is aware that the nationalist movement has yet to formulate a political message, and he advocates working on precisely this issue. At this stage, too, he regards this task as a short-term one, after which nationalism, like a 'stream which springs from ancient and uncharted mountains', will return to its old course. The natural imagery is indicative of the reluctance with which Stapel brings nationalism into the sphere of rational politics, and of his hope that it will soon be able to return to a pre-conscious phase where it will no longer need to justify itself.¹⁸⁶ Yet the image also conveys two elements of the conservative dilemma: firstly, nationalists who have rejected the nationalism of the recent past and have yet to formulate their new nationalism tend to locate their new nationalism in a remote and mysteri-

ous past. Secondly, if traditional nationalism has been cast aside but the contents of the new nationalism remain unclear and essentially negative (anti-socialist and anti-democratic), the tendency is for the gaps to be filled with vitalism. Thus, even as Stapel is proclaiming nationalism as the source of ideas, he can describe the emergence of the nationalist movement in vitalist terms: 'the *Volk*'s innermost instinct for life, that unchanging, austere, demonic instinct which has been in us since ancient times, awakes in all its epoch-making might'.¹⁸⁷

Insight into the origins of Conservative Revolutionary attitudes comes not least in the implicit debate and disagreements between the various contributors to *Deutsches Volkstum*. In the issue for which Stapel had presented non-reactionary nationalism as a movement which knew where it was going, as the source of new ideas and as the inevitable basis for any future order, the writer Erwin Guido Kolbenheyer suggests that the German nation did not know where it was headed and therefore tended to turn its spokesmen into leaders in the hope that they would show the way forward. He argues that the German will – which for Stapel had been in need of shaping but was fundamentally strong, like the river which always resumes its original course – is not yet mature enough to be shaped. In this situation the German people seek to transfer responsibility for themselves to their leaders who thus take on the role of the *deus ex machina* by deciding the outcome of the theatre of life in which the Germans are players. The German people's duty, warns Kolbenheyer, is not blindly to follow their leaders but rather to 'recognise and become themselves'. The leader's only proper function is to articulate a people's development.¹⁸⁸

By May 1924 Wilhelm Stapel sees the *völkisch* movement as the grouping which is capable of reconciling the tensions which his own writings show to be at the heart of nationalism: a movement beyond mere parties, it seeks to embrace the whole nation; it has an idea as opposed to a party programme, and it is led by heroes, not calculating politicians. Stapel also sees the *völkisch* movement as beyond right and left and embracing the whole *Volk*. It does not yet have a single leader, and it must form a united leadership. It must not degenerate into a party among other parties, and the very act of working out the points of a programme seems suspect to Stapel. The movement did not grow out of a programme but from an idea, and this idea and the great leader figure are the supreme values of the *völkisch* movement.¹⁸⁹

In the mid-twenties Stapel takes this kind of thinking as the basis for his own outlook and makes little effort to set out what the nationalist policies he once felt needed clarifying might be. He presents his ideas on strong leadership in the form of an attack on the Weimar Republic's parliamentary

democracy. This system, he argues, is unsuited to turbulent times, and 'free, spontaneous, dominant personalities' are needed to make quick, responsible decisions.¹⁹⁰ That these ideas are presented in opposition to the Weimar system should not, however, obscure the fact that they were also developed as a response to the conservative dilemma, as is indicated by their very lack of programmatic detail and their stress on the form of rule. When he discusses electoral systems, he therefore tends to have little regard for political programmes and to focus his attention on the qualities of the candidates. He distinguishes between voting for an individual and voting for a programme, the former being an act of instinct, the latter an act of the conscious will:

Thus every vote is either an act of instinct or will. Where voting is done by instinct, the candidate has to have a strong character and a clearly defined personality which can decide whether he is accepted or rejected. In such cases one talks of the 'magic of the personality' which has its effect in a way which reason cannot grasp. Such personalities are rare, there are only ever a few of them available, sometimes none at all. The voter needs to possess an unbroken and, as it were, pure instinct, a certain childlike quality and an innocence. All sensations and suggestions, all rational considerations confuse and destroy instinct.¹⁹¹

Stapel makes it clear that he comes down in favour of this instinctive form of election when he goes on to dismiss political programmes as largely produced for propaganda purposes.

But even as he proclaims the superiority of leadership over programmes, he is obliged to concede the necessity of something like the latter: in the issue of *Deutsches Volkstum* where he had praised instinctive elections over rational ones, he reflects on the state of the nationalist movement. He shows himself aware of the internal power struggles between leaders of the *völkisch* movement, and he elaborates upon his conviction that a Putsch would not be likely to succeed when he declares that, even if there were a sudden *völkisch* revolution, it would only end with 'half a dozen German Mussolinis' locked in battle with each other, since they all disagree, and each is convinced that he has the correct solution. Like many of the participants in the new nationalism debate of 1925/6, Stapel comes to realise that the *völkisch* movement is only in agreement over what it rejects. It is necessary, however, to put forward some positive ideals, and Stapel goes on to do precisely this: trade unions must be won over to the nationalist cause; independent capital must be created; the mass media – press, news services, theatre, film and radio – must be 'conquered'; educational work in the schools must be

undertaken; scientific criticism, together with ideas and ideals, must be carefully worked out.¹⁹² Stapel's wavering between activist, negative, irrational, leader-oriented nationalism on the one hand and a rational, programme-based nationalism on the other encapsulates the conservative predicament. The realisation on the one hand that a Putsch is not an option and mass support requires some form of political platform, and on the other that any attempt at working out a political platform is probably doomed to failure accounts for the wavering.

The switch from programmes to activism within the *Deutsches Volkstum* circle is expressed by Albrecht Erich Günther. At the end of 1926 he shows his interest in transcending political divisions when he pleads for a reorganisation of the trade unions along national revolutionary lines, yet he notes that he still has to contend with 'class hatred'. This he attempts to dismiss as something superficial which has been imposed on socialist trade unions. Also, he still has to argue against 'middle-class attitudes' stopping nationalists becoming involved with the unions.¹⁹³ Such resistance to Conservative Revolutionary ideas encourages Günther just seven months later to take the activist way out by declaring that nationalism has no programme which can be set out in a manifesto; it is rather a feeling which he explains in vitalist terms:

Only as an activist, not as a philosophical observer can the nationalist sense his feeling for life. He wants the state which emerges from the special values of our *Volk*, values which he experienced in war, not as a moral code but as a life-giving force.

Authority and freedom are irreconcilable for introspective intellectuals, but nationalists have seen that they are inextricably linked. The power and the honour of the nation, the sovereignty and dignity of the state, courage, self-sacrifice and loyalty are political realities for nationalism.

These words convey little of the nationalist feeling for life, and it is equally difficult to set out the principles of the nationalist state in a draft constitution. Certainly, the emotions and the state are living realities to the nationalist. But he can only experience the nationalist feeling for life as an urge, and a splendid urge to develop. Here he has his roots, and his idea of the state can only reveal itself in actions, not arguments.¹⁹⁴

Just as Günther's national revolutionary concepts met with resistance from a polarised political reality, so too did Stapel note the spread of socialist categories of thought from the city to the country: class antagonisms, he argued, were being exported from the city, with the farmer

becoming the entrepreneur and employer, and the farm labourers becoming workers. The true peasantry, based on a self-contained community for living and working, was being replaced by two parties with conflicting interests.¹⁹⁵

Many of the elements of the *Deutsches Volkstum* circle's particular dilemma are brought together by Rudolf Fischer. Fischer argues firstly that liberalism and Marxism are the dominant forces of the day and the enemies of nationalism. They have obliged nationalism to adopt their demagogic methods. Nationalism must choose between a leader and a programme. Although it is in the nature of nationalists to follow a great leader who embodies their essential characteristics and takes care of practical politics on their behalf, no such leader is currently available, and the nationalists must therefore resort to a programme with which to win over 'the masses'. Yet at this point Fischer makes a typical course change. He attempts to define what the programme of German nationalism might be, and states that, when looking for effective slogans, nationalists avoided the term conservatism, for although they shared much, if not everything, with the old conservatives, conservative leaders revealed themselves as 'out-and-out reactionaries'. Significantly, he has no more to say on what a nationalist programme might look like and instead reverts to negation through an attack on the socialist 'demagogues' for sweeping away the last group of the *Volk* trying to retain the ancient bonds with the earth by 'making proletarians out of peasants' and 'farmers out of estate-owners'. Far from offering the foundations of a political programme, Fischer comes down in favour of keeping nationalism at the pre-articulate 'natural' level. The civilisation of the city can only be resisted by keeping the roots for one's growth pure. Science and philosophy cannot help, and the secrets of growth must remain secrets to which the only appropriate responses are respect and humility.¹⁹⁶ Despite Fischer's earlier conclusion that a great leader was not available, he also returns to the need for a great statesman who would create an 'organism of the *Volk*'.¹⁹⁷

Albrecht Erich Günther gives some indication of the specific background which prompts the switch from programmatic to activist thinking when he considers why there cannot be a good conservative press. He first of all states his adherence to Moeller van den Bruck's version of conservatism which is of the present, not the past, and then goes on to declare conservatism to be 'beyond discussion' and 'unutterable'. The conservative press is doomed to failure since conservatism is not a propagandistic phenomenon. Conservatives are not grouped in a class, a party or other organisation with a clear programme, but rather seek to express themselves through violent confrontation, as in battle. Significantly, Günther's

example of the failure of conservative newspapers is Hugenberg's press empire which seeks to shake up every citizen. In so doing, says Günther, Hugenberg's papers capture practically nothing of the true conservative spirit. We have seen how Hugenberg's nationalism frequently features in Conservative Revolutionary circles as an example of the failure to transcend reaction. For Hans Zehrer, Hugenberg's rise confirmed that there could be no harmony between capital and labour, only victory or defeat. Hugenberg was the 'crass entrepreneur type', and the suggestion now from Günther is that once nationalists try to articulate their political stance, they tend to reveal themselves as falling far short of Moeller van den Bruck's goal beyond right and left. Faced with this realisation, Conservative Revolutionaries stress the ineffable, activist, natural essence of true conservatism.¹⁹⁸ Thus, Günther can move from optimism in November 1924 that the nationalist movement which was in the process of laying its intellectual foundations would have no trouble in finding formulations which can provide the originally silent national movement with its slogans,¹⁹⁹ via the education process of his abortive attempts to win the trade unions to the national revolutionary cause, to the view that conservatism is beyond words.

Günther regards the ineffable approach to nationalism as appropriate for nationalist thinkers, but not for all nationalist groups. Thus he can praise Hitler for his skill in appealing to the 'natural instincts' of his audience. Despite the effects of alien propaganda in the city environment Hitler can awaken the healthy biological forces by means of his personality rather than any arguments. Günther acknowledges that the arguments Hitler uses bind his supporters to the dogma of a programme, yet he does not dismiss such tactics out of hand. Elaborating on just what he means by the alien propaganda of the city, Günther continues:

Of course he fills his followers with rigid fanaticism, and in their blindness he ties them to the dogma of a programme. Yet how else should people who are incapable of sorting out their convictions for themselves, or clarifying their thoughts through criticism..., preserve the feeling that their everyday sufferings have a meaning when they are sons of Social Democrats, brothers of Communists, living in the back courtyards of the working-class districts, and in the atmosphere of terror at their workplace where arguments have no effect? It is a liberal illusion that the fundamental value of a view can only spring from one's understanding of it and not from simple dedication to it. People in tune with nature need dogma; they need an intolerant faith which is not a matter for discussion and to which they commit themselves by a

decision of their whole being, not by critical assessment of bits of evidence.²⁰⁰

There is no suggestion here that Hitler had bridged the ideological gap between right and left. While this problem was continuing to torment nationalist thinkers, it did not have to lame a nationalist movement intent on winning over the masses. For these purposes the content of the nationalist programme was of little interest. What counted above all else was the fanatical commitment to a cause, and it was the ability to achieve precisely this which led Günther and many other Conservative Revolutionaries to praise Hitler.

As we have seen, this activism is in fact also advocated with increasing fervour by some Conservative Revolutionaries as their ideological plight intensifies. The group around *Deutsches Volkstum* makes half-hearted attempts at working out a programme, but it returns time and again to the view that the national, conservative state is not to be based on programmes but rather on a profound belief which cannot be articulated.²⁰¹

4 The Conservative Revolution and National Socialism

CRITICAL APPROACHES

Traditionally, studies of the links between the Conservative Revolution and National Socialism have given an account of what the two have in common and what separates them. This is a relatively straightforward undertaking. When it comes to similarities they clearly share a scorn for liberalism and an insistence on the superiority of a dictatorial order. This is backed up by the elevation of militarism to the status of an ideology. The notions of self-denial and total commitment to a cause during the First World War resurface as the basis for a nationalist community, with the army providing the model for the new state. Both Conservative Revolutionaries and Nazis knew disputes over the meaning of socialism, and both claimed to have transcended reaction and traditional nationalism. Both movements argued Germany's case in vitalist terms: struggle was the law of life, and there was no such thing as the right of the weak. On the basis of such similarities it has been suggested that the Conservative Revolution provided the ideas for all branches of German nationalism, including National Socialism.¹ From here it is one short step to seeing the Conservative Revolution as a causal factor in the rise of National Socialism by virtue of the anti-democratic ferment it created. Political writers such as Oswald Spengler and Moeller van den Bruck 'helped to make National Socialist ideology socially acceptable'.²

Researchers have also pointed to the involvement of Conservative Revolutionary individuals and groups with Nazism. The Nazis were certainly eager to win over nationally known Conservative Revolutionaries: Ernst Jünger was repeatedly offered (and he repeatedly refused) a Nazi seat in the Reichstag. Although Jünger distanced himself from the Nazis, the Prussian Gestapo had no objections to his giving readings from his work in 1936.³

Other figures were absorbed into the Party: the new nationalist Werner Best, who had written on legal aspects of the First World War, was able to put his ideas of natural justice and the 'absolute state' into practice when

he became an SS Oberführer and a key figure in the development of the Gestapo.⁴ Nazi Party documents indicate a wide variety of responses to Nazi overtures. Many Conservative Revolutionaries joined the Party when it came to power. Albrecht Erich Günther, for example, editor of *Deutsches Volkstum* and of a 1932 book on what nationalists expected of National Socialism,⁵ became a Party member in 1933 and was a member of the Reich German Press Association.⁶ Wilhelm Stapel rejected attempts in 1933 to recruit him into the Party, but he did apply to join the Reich Association of German Writers in December 1933, signing a declaration that he would always support German writing in line with national government policy.⁷

Within the Conservative Revolutionary movement Edgar Jung expressed the sentiments of some, though certainly not all, when he took some of the credit for the electoral successes of the NSDAP in 1932:

The intellectual preconditions for the German Revolution were created outside National Socialism.... Through our untold efforts, particularly among the educated, we prepared for the day when the German people voted for the National Socialist candidates. Our work was heroic, for it renounced all thought of success and public acclaim.⁸

As for what separates the Conservative Revolutionaries from the Nazis, observers have referred firstly to the refusal of the former to have anything to do with parliament or a 'legal revolution'. Artur Mahraun distanced himself and his *Jungdeutscher Orden* from the Nazis in the mid-twenties, arguing that his organisation was fundamentally hostile to political parties. The *völkisch* movement, however, had signed its own death-warrant by forming political parties. The NSDAP in particular has allowed itself to engage in party-political wrangling and 'Jewish-democratic tactics' which were fundamentally 'un-German'.⁹

The idea that an absence of anti-Semitism in Conservative Revolutionary circles marks the movement off from National Socialism does not stand up to close scrutiny. It is true that some prominent Conservative Revolutionaries do indeed reject anti-Semitism. Edgar Jung, for example, declares that there is no such thing as a racially pure great nation and that race is not a biological issue. In the course of the 1920s Jung actually expanded his criticism of biological racism, yet ultimately he was ambiguous on the issue himself, retaining the idea of valuable and inferior races.¹⁰ Similarly, the new nationalist journal *Standarte* rejects anti-Semitism only to the extent that it calls upon nationalists to admit that they themselves have made the mistakes which allow 'aliens' to destroy the German nation and its culture.¹¹

Intellectual elitism and reluctance to seek mass support have also been put forward as characteristics which separate Conservative Revolutionaries from the Nazis.¹² Thomas Mann expressed a commonly-held view when he declared in an essay of 1937:

Conservative Revolution. What have stupidity, rebelliousness and malevolence, what has well-read brutality made of this term which was once spoken by intellectuals and artists!¹³

Such arguments based on notions of quality certainly appealed to Conservative Revolutionaries themselves. Arnolt Bronnen reports in his autobiography that Ernst Jünger found Hitler 'too loud and plebeian',¹⁴ and in a famous passage from his Second World War diary Jünger describes National Socialism as the 'ametaphysical solution'.¹⁵ Yet, as we shall see, the idea that the Conservative Revolution operated on a higher intellectual level is misleading. For beneath the surface current of political distance runs a more profound current of basic philosophical agreement between the Conservative Revolution and National Socialism.

Difference has also been expressed in terms of distance between intellectual experimentation and political practice. In his diary notes for 1933 Thomas Mann notes that Hugo von Hofmannsthal liked to talk of a 'conservative revolution' and was unconcerned about 'what form it might take in reality'. German intellectuals, writes Mann, were not accustomed to thinking about what might be the practical outcome of their ideas. This made them bold and free in their views, but it also made them remote from life and irresponsible.¹⁶

Much of the post-1945 writing of Conservative Revolutionaries was taken up with an attempt to prove that they had very little in common with the National Socialists and even how they had opposed them. Armin Mohler, a leading conservative interpreter of the Conservative Revolution in the postwar period, sees the differences in ideas as crucial, and he presents the Conservative Revolution as theory, and National Socialism as practice. This leads him to ask to what extent a theory can be made responsible for a practice which varied from it.¹⁷ Even those commentators who are hostile to conservatism can acknowledge the ambiguous relationship between the Conservative Revolution and National Socialism when they present a figure such as Ernst Jünger as a 'proven opponent of National Socialism' but also 'a proven pacesetter of the Third Reich'.¹⁸

Such paradoxical summaries and comparisons may shed some light on the relationship between the Conservative Revolution and National Socialism. Yet there are many strands to Conservative Revolutionary thought, and, even if it were possible to assemble a definitive list of

similarities and differences, such a list would hardly be the end of the matter. For, as has been suggested in the earlier chapters of this study, the Conservative Revolution is not important because of any fixed set of political ideas, but because it enables the observer to study the intellectual processes by which political ideas take shape. Here the forms of expression used by key figures in the Conservative Revolution are of particular interest. For by tracing ideas expressed not only directly through political journalism but also indirectly through works of literature and philosophy, it becomes possible to understand something of the origins of those ideas and the mentality which informed them.

While it is entirely possible to show which ideas the Conservative Revolutionaries had in common with National Socialists, it is also possible to show how the Conservative Revolutionary response to the problems they encountered revealed a mentality which could be instrumentalised by the Nazis. For example, the desperate need to find meaning in the First World War had fostered a view of that experience as self-justifying: the message which went forth from a flood of Conservative Revolutionary works was that the aims of the war had not been crucial. What mattered was that the war had been fought with a fanatical conviction and commitment. That this image of the war had only emerged after a counter-image of the war as an experience which brought futile suffering had been suppressed, was forgotten. What was preserved and what contributed to an upsurge of militarism was the idea of fighting for its own sake. Equally important for the relationship with the National Socialists was the failure of the Conservative Revolutionaries to generate a clear-cut programme and their subsequent cultivation of the notion that political programmes were of no great significance. The young generation of Germans 'had to learn to march without flags'. Here, too, promoting the idea that nationalists should form themselves into a fighting force and foster aggression which would be given direction by a future leader was a crucial development. Just as important for our understanding of the link between the Conservative Revolution and National Socialism as similarities and differences of outlook was the encouragement of conflict for its own sake, of commitment to an unspecified cause and to a leader who would not need to present a programme.

Another example of how an approach which considers the Conservative Revolution as a political, philosophical and literary whole which undergoes a development in the Weimar years might yield insights into the key tensions underlying that movement's connections with National Socialism is provided by the question of responsibility for making National Socialism intellectually respectable. For even as Conservative Revolutionaries look

back in their political memoirs on the Weimar and Nazi periods and point to their early resistance to the Nazis, there is a more complex process at work in their literary production. Here the denial of responsibility is qualified by the switch in Conservative Revolutionary writing to the idea that vitalism is an inadequate basis for action and must always be accompanied by moral concepts.

As we shall see, analysing the development of typical Conservative Revolutionary imagery qualifies straightforward statements of political attitude: the Conservative Revolutionaries' shift from seeing themselves as the 'earthquake' which would bring down the Weimar Republic and clear the way for a dictatorial order to seeing themselves in retrospect as the 'seismograph' which merely registered the inevitable upheavals of their time tells one more about their position *vis-à-vis* the Nazis than the simple denials of any connection which recur throughout the memoirs of those Conservative Revolutionaries who were still active after 1945.

Tracing the origins and development of ideas in any depth inevitably involves narrowing the analytical focus to the work of a small number of representative individuals rather than offering a general survey of all groups and individuals, and this will be the approach adopted in this chapter.

ERNST JÜNGER AND NATIONAL SOCIALISM: FROM ADVENTURE TO MORALITY

Ernst Jünger was just one among many Conservative Revolutionaries who were highly enthusiastic about the NSDAP in the early years of the Republic. He praises Hitler as a skilful orator, and regards the Nazis in general as comrades in the nationalist struggle against Weimar and the West. This enthusiasm is, if anything, heightened by the abortive Beer Hall Putsch of November 1923, with Jünger rejoicing and declaring that the NSDAP's 'revolutionary fire' was an inspiration to all those nationalists who had turned their back on traditional nationalism.¹⁹

The verbal commitment to socialism was also attractive to those Conservative Revolutionaries who defined socialism in terms of attitude rather than social reform. In response to Hitler's declaration that he intended to plant a swastika in every last workshop and factory Ernst Jünger points out that, unlike Ehrhardt who had no clear political goals, Hitler stated his aims and got through to the workers. Hitler should be left to form Nazi trade unions, for he could 'plough the hardest ground', and he realised how essential workers were for the nationalist cause.²⁰

Yet although Jünger repeats his early favourable comments on National Socialism in 1926 and 1927, his reservations about the movement loom ever larger and eventually give way to blunt criticism. Jünger was at odds with the Nazis over the issue of whether to seek entry into parliament. Whereas the Nazi Party had decided to participate in the elections after the abortive Putsch, Jünger was an implacable opponent of parliamentary involvement throughout the interwar years. Front-line soldiers should instead develop into an independent force which would eventually grow stronger than the state. A new fighting unit was worth more than a parliamentary victory, and the day when the parliamentary state collapsed under the front-liners' assault would be their greatest day of victory.²¹ Jünger sees the pre-parliamentary period of the Nazi movement as the time of its greatest inner strength.

He steps up his criticism of National Socialism after the failure of his call for nationalists to unite. In late November 1926 he explains that he had been optimistic about organisations such as Stahlhelm because they were the only available forces for a fascist advance. He goes on to register his disappointment with all intransigent nationalist organisations and concludes that true nationalists do not recognise each other merely by wearing the Stahlhelm badge, the swastika or the colours of the Reichsbanner.²² Jünger thus comes to extend his criticism of Stahlhelm as a potentially revolutionary, non-reactionary force which finally revealed itself as 'bourgeois' to include the Nazi Party.

Jünger tends to stress the need for clear ideas when confronted with the detail of Nazi policies. This explains why he shifts his ground on the contents of nationalism from one piece of writing to the next. In an article of March 1927 Jünger explains that nationalists do not all pursue the same domestic policies. The greatness of fascism lies in the fact that it does not worship a programme but a great personality.²³ We have seen how this disregard for programmes results partly from the failure of the nationalists to establish a genuinely new and generally acceptable set of aims. Yet just two weeks after expressing this disregard for programmes Jünger returned to the subject in a decidedly different way when he writes about the National Socialists. He refers to those who criticise the nationalists for their 'predominantly literary activities', and means by this their inaction. Jünger acknowledges this feature of nationalism and contrasts it with National Socialism which is concerned with practical political organisation, but he totally rejects the conclusion that the two movements are therefore quite separate. He declares that the 'intellectual movement' plays an important role while 'practical movements' await their opportunity to take action, for 'every shot is fired either for an idea which is crystal clear

or it is fired in vain'. One cannot form ranks until one is 'inwardly unassailable', as the history of National Socialism demonstrates.²⁴ Jünger thus goes out of his way to stress the need for clear ideas in the Nazi movement, and he goes on to explain his reasons. By the history of the movement he means the abortive putsch of 1923. Since the putsch, he argues, the National Socialists have conducted necessary debates, but more such debates are required, above all with the intellectual circles which provide other movements with their 'contents'. Jünger returns to the idea of a positive struggle and suggests as an example of such a struggle the aim to create works which are as authoritative and convincing as Marx's *Kapital*, instead of trying to disprove it. Nationalists should not take their criteria from 'the other side'. It is here that National Socialism and nationalism meet, with the former seeking to realise an idea and the latter to 'grasp the idea as deeply and purely as possible'. Hence, unlike National Socialism, nationalism is not concerned with winning over the masses, and a figure such as Spengler is worth more to it than a hundred seats in parliament. With this indirect reference to the Nazi offer of a seat in the Reichstag Jünger seems to suggest that the difference between nationalists and Nazis is one of theory and practice. Yet for Jünger at least, this distinction does not mean that nationalists have abandoned all attempts at influencing the practical sphere, for he goes on to say that the intellectual and the practical may be united in a single body. If the National Socialist idea becomes sufficiently profound, National Socialism and nationalism will draw ever closer together.²⁵

Jünger's uncharacteristic concern for ideological clarity seems prompted by his growing awareness that National Socialist practice is guided more by tradition and reaction than by a genuinely new and revolutionary will. His call for clear ideas in the Nazi camp cuts across his increasing reluctance to enter into detailed political discussions after the failure of the call for nationalist unity in mid-1926.

By 1929 Jünger explains that if national and social forces seem to oppose each other, this means that the nation and labour have old-fashioned representatives, since there is no essential antagonism between nationalism and socialism.²⁶ He returns to this point some five months later when he expresses 'comradely concern' for the National Socialists and declares that if one is genuinely possessed by the image of a new world, this must be clear in the weapons one uses, and if one really wishes to drive out 'bourgeois thinking' one may not use bourgeois methods. Jünger is disappointed that the Nazis have decided to cooperate with Stahlhelm leaders and Alfred Hugenberg in forming the so-called National Opposition to the Young Plan on German reparations and in pressing for a

plebiscite on the plan, for this stand involves joining with forces from which any workers' party should keep its distance. He would prefer the Nazis to keep clear of men such as Hugenberg, and he concludes that events have shown his distinction between nationalism and National Socialism to be a necessary one. The party will only be victorious if it forges its weapons from a pure metal which takes nothing from the past.²⁷

Jünger concludes his reflections on the Nazi Party by referring to its 'best forces'. His objections to some aspects of National Socialism could provoke hostile and favourable responses from different party papers, and the favourable responses come largely from the left-wing group around the Strasser brothers who contributed to Jünger's 1931 volume *Der Kampf um das Reich*.²⁸

In 1933 Jünger moved from Berlin to Goslar, and in the following years he kept his distance from National Socialism, writing a letter of protest in 1934, for example, when *Der Völkische Beobachter* printed an extract from one of his works without permission. In 1939 *Auf den Marmorklippen* appeared, the work which many regarded as an indirect attack on National Socialism. Whatever Jünger's intentions were, his correspondence from the time indicates the suspicion with which National Socialist circles regarded him.²⁹ Yet although Jünger was, in his own words, able to publish practically nothing in Germany after 1941, the Nazi regime sought to exploit his early work for its own ends. In 1941 a collection of extracts from the works of German writers was published for distribution within the Wehrmacht in celebration of Hitler's birthday. Among the extracts quoted is one taken from Jünger's early writings on the First World War which tells of soldierly comradeship. Göring provides the unwarranted interpretation in his foreword to the anthology: 'From these writers' statements speaks the love of the German people for its leader. The German Wehrmacht is sworn to serve him in unswerving loyalty and blind obedience.'³⁰

Jünger spent most of the Second World War as an officer in occupied Paris. In 1942 he published an unenthusiastic account of his experiences in the first years of war; the book was banned in 1943 after Jünger refused to remove a reference to a passage on tyranny in the Bible.³¹

During the war Jünger worked on the essay *Der Friede*, which he regarded as a form of opposition to Hitler's regime. In a letter of January 1946 he describes the manuscript as 'part of the intellectual preparation for the 20th of July'.³² In the late stages of the war Jünger could thus express his pleasure at the fact that his fiftieth birthday was to be ignored by the Nazis, regarding such treatment as a distinction rather than as an insult.³³

After the war the Allies banned Jünger from publishing anything in Germany. The ban lasted until 1949 when further sections of his war diaries appeared together with the novel *Heliopolis*. In these later works Jünger continues to discuss National Socialism, sometimes directly and sometimes in a way which goes beyond that single historical phenomenon. In this latter form the discussion turns on the issues of technology and morality, and it invokes the imagery of the 'beast of prey' and the 'primeval forest'. These images are familiar from Jünger's early work, and it is clear that his later writings are in part a debate with the earlier. In the later work Jünger attempts again and again to convey National Socialism's most fundamental nature and to state his moral position on it. These attempts are far more revealing and thoughtful than any bald statement to the effect that guilt for National Socialism must be borne like the guilt of a brother,³⁴ or that people who read his work and became Nazis should have read him more carefully.³⁵

We have seen that, in his early work, Jünger had described how the First World War unleashed man's primitive animal being which was ultimately man's 'true', 'divine', 'barbaric' self. Blood triumphed over intellect, and the once progressive force of technology was accorded the new role of aiding primitive man to express himself more violently. The new elite combined primitive man's strength and will with the technical expertise required of the modern warrior. In his political journalism Jünger applied these ideas to postwar politics which he viewed as essentially beyond questions of morality, since neither nature nor technology was concerned with such questions. In the new state political issues would not be judged by moral standards but according to how they fitted into the overall plan.

Jünger saw the elite which emerged in the First World War coming to dominate the world. These men were the fitting leaders of a society which was becoming 'civilised and barbaric, conscious and elemental', for cities built upon technology's 'absolute reason' now exuded an 'animal warmth' and 'healthy barbarism'.³⁶ The differences between the organic and mechanical world were thus yielding to the 'organic construction' which would unite man and technology.³⁷ Although moral questions were irrelevant in the face of such inevitable changes the figure of the worker could provide 'meaning'.³⁸

In many of these attitudes Jünger is close to Oswald Spengler. Although Spengler insists on the distinction between the organic and the mechanical world (UA11, 562), he nevertheless sees technology as a fact beyond morality with which man as the 'beast of prey' seeks to master nature.³⁹ Spengler sees life as a struggle, and this struggle is the 'great meaning of

life'.⁴⁰ He asserts that although fascist ideology will not survive, Mussolini will certainly continue as a leader since he was ruthless towards his party and showed the courage to take leave of all ideology.⁴¹

If Jünger began to voice his doubts about National Socialism as early as 1926, the views summarised above and which Jünger later came to see at the heart of that movement persist into the thirties. The essay 'Über den Schmerz', published in 1934, illustrates how Jünger seeks to distance himself from National Socialism while adhering to these views. In his introduction to the volume containing this essay Jünger writes that the world of the individual is gone, even though its values may linger on.⁴² In what can only be a criticism of National Socialism Jünger goes on to state that the present attempts to find new values are welcome but they are not succeeding. One cannot assert superiority by an act of will since superiority is basically existential. Nor can one artificially cultivate or proclaim a heroic philosophy, for what is innate in the hero degenerates when seized upon by the masses. The same is true of race and the 'total state'.⁴³

Beneath this surface current which is at odds with National Socialism, however, runs a stronger current of approval for the inevitable changes Jünger detects in those parts of the world where technology predominates. An example of the extreme demands made upon man in the world of technology is the Japanese manned torpedo, for which the operator is regarded as a 'technical component'. Although such demands conflict with our ethics and involve sacrificing one's freedom, declares Jünger, they signal changes which are inevitable and should therefore be observed rather than judged. Freedom of research is now under attack, for it is superfluous once one realises which things should be known and which should not. The trend towards rearmament determines the tasks of research and will replace free research at the pinnacle of education with more limited and guided goals.⁴⁴

For Jünger this development is a European one, and those nations which currently have a one-party state are undergoing a transitional phase. In such states the masses' freedom is being reduced to the single freedom of agreeing. Jünger also points to armies of the past marching like 'living machines', and he sees this combination of vitalism and technology as the key to their success. Such changes, whereby the masses lose their moral quality and become 'objects', Jünger views as 'a good sign'.⁴⁵ This world is amoral, unchivalrous and dominated by technology, but it possesses its own ethos, even if this ethos is not visible at the moment. Jünger finds the 'logic, the mathematics and the coldness' of the process by which this technical perspective comes to the fore 'admirable'.⁴⁶

Jünger ends his essay by stressing the need to consider the purpose for which men sacrifice themselves and by suggesting that no great power exists at present which can subordinate men as one might place a man at a machine. The present is notable instead for the mediocrity of its actors.⁴⁷ Thus a new order is emerging but without appropriate values, a fact which explains much current confusion:

People are starting to understand that great organisational skill and total absence of value judgements can coexist, belief without contents, discipline without legitimation, – in short that all ideas, systems and people are representative only.⁴⁸

In these circumstances technology and ethics have become synonymous, yet, although in all states men regard the present order as a transitional phase, Jünger asserts that the individual should nevertheless participate in these preparations for decline or a new order.

By 1936, however, Jünger's thoughts on these basic issues look decidedly different. In that year *Afrikanische Spiele* appeared, a novel based loosely on his brief experience of the Foreign Legion in 1913. The novel also re-examines the themes which are bound up with Jünger's attitude towards National Socialism. It is the story of an adolescent who is fascinated by danger and evil and hopes to confront them by joining the Foreign Legion. It is a story of disappointment and disillusionment, however, in which the narrator recognises his foolishness and ends his childhood. Jünger reviews his attitude towards the combination of natural and artificial life, arguing that, for the time being, one must be guided by Théophile Gautier's maxim that barbarism is more valuable than platitudes, especially given that man seems to be proposing to embrace both at once.⁴⁹ The blend of natural and artificial life is familiar from Jünger's early work in which he praises the healthy barbarism of the cities and detects the growth of an elite which will lead urban society. Yet Jünger's reference to a time which seems bent on opting for both barbarism and platitude suggests that this promise has not been fulfilled, that technology is as banal under the present order as it was in the hands of liberalism.

Two of the main themes of *Afrikanische Spiele* are home and adventure. Yet if home is synonymous for the young hero Berger with tedious order, adventure is not the unreservedly favoured opposite. As the schoolboy Berger withdraws from his school environment, he becomes ever more deeply engrossed with the prospect of joining the Foreign Legion. Significantly, Jünger introduces the perspective of age and thereby the opportunity for reflecting and commenting on Berger's plans, even though the novel is written in the first person. Thus the older Berger likens his

youthful adventure to a fantasy or a fever which turns his imaginings into reality. He has 'long half-drunken waking dreams' about the primeval forest and he hatches a series of 'insane plans' by which he might reach Africa. He longs to be confronted by a recruiting officer 'who gets young men drunk and drags them off',⁵⁰ yet he describes the recruitment office as a 'trap for fools'.⁵¹ Berger 'imagines' that the realm of legendary occurrences and entanglements will reveal itself to him all the more clearly as he leaves his normal existence behind him, and he 'imagines' too the bold, manly society he wishes to join.⁵²

The vocabulary of illusion and the perspective of the older Berger are brought together when the narrator takes up the theme of order, adventure and morality:

I correctly surmised that one could only hope to meet the natural sons of this life by turning one's back on legitimate order. Of course, my ideals were formed by the standards of a sixteen-year-old who is still unaware of the difference between heroes and adventurers. But my ideas were healthy inasmuch as I supposed the extraordinary world to be beyond the social and moral sphere which surrounded me. Hence, I did not want to be an inventor, a revolutionary, a soldier or any kind of benefactor to mankind, as is customary for boys of this age. Rather, I was drawn to a zone in which the struggle between natural forces was conducted in pure form and without purpose. I really thought there was such a zone.⁵³

The narrator points out that nature and adventure are at odds with morality and order, and in his youth he sought out the former. Yet he can now suggest that what he sought was an illusion, and this suggestion is underlined again and again in the novel with each disillusionment that Berger undergoes. For what he in fact finds in the Foreign Legion undermines the original opinion of Africa which he formed from his reading.⁵⁴

The novel is hedged around with reservations which are uncharacteristic of the early work. These reservations are reinforced in the epilogue to the novel where Jünger points out that there is no clear dividing-line between the teacher and the author. The former must have experienced the 'great school of life', and the latter must adhere to moral laws.⁵⁵ The moral perspective which Jünger introduces into his novel contrasts starkly with his earlier view that moral questions have no bearing on the essentially amoral, natural world.

Over the following years Jünger's growing interest in moral categories and his reservations about technology and nature develop into a series of fundamental criticisms directed both at the major political forces of the

day and at his own attitudes in his early work. This helps the reader understand why Jünger should look back at his early work and label his war books, *Der Arbeiter*, 'Die Totale Mobilmachung' and 'Über den Schmerz' his 'Old Testament'.⁵⁶

Jünger revises his ideas on the animal in man when he revises his work for new editions. In the second version of *Das abenteuerliche Herz* one can detect a note of criticism for the views which he had ascribed to Nietzsche in his early work. Whereas Jünger had originally written that the nineteenth century did not call upon the 'slumbering lion in the innermost thicket' (a reference to civilised man's dormant animal being),⁵⁷ and, in his studies of the First World War, that man's primitive animal being is his true self, he now asserts that man is more than a 'beast of prey':

Our thinking about power has been distorted for a long time by the exaggerated link with the will.... Man is after all rather more than a beast of prey – he is the master of the beasts of prey.⁵⁸

Bearing in mind what Nietzsche actually had to say about sublimation of the animal in man and of the will, one may conclude that, even as Jünger seeks to distance himself from Nietzsche, he is in fact drawing closer to the spirit of his work. However that may be, Jünger can now compare men to animals when expressing disgust at their actions.⁵⁹

Auf den Marmorklippen pursues the themes of technology, the animal in man and morality. Although Jünger claimed a general validity for the work as a study of tyranny throughout all history, it clearly took National Socialism as one of its starting-points.⁶⁰ The novel is an account of how an orderly society, the Marina, is overrun by the Mauretians, the anarchic forces of the 'Chief Forester'. The figure of the Chief Forester had appeared in the second version of *Das abenteuerliche Herz*, and his environment had been the heart of the forest with its 'islands of primeval forest' and unexplored mountain ranges.⁶¹ In *Marmorklippen* he inhabits the swampland of the Campagna and is said to want to populate the Marina with wild beasts.⁶²

This plot inevitably reminds the reader of Jünger's own earlier taste for the anarchy of the 'primeval forest', as for example in the first version of *Das abenteuerliche Herz* where he recalls with some enthusiasm his youthful interest in the equatorial regions, 'the truly tropical land with its terrible primeval forests and great rivers, its animals and people, far from the beaten track'.⁶³ He recalls too how he had asserted the right of the slave-dealers in these regions to be brutal, and praised Africa as an example of 'life's splendid anarchy' which yet possessed a deep and tragic order.⁶⁴

In *Marmorklippen* Jünger now develops the theme of control of nature. The swamplands which are the home of 'bloody tyranny'⁶⁵ also bring forth an 'excess of growth'.⁶⁶ The two brothers in the novel first went to the Marina to study plants, and this work does not cease when the Chief Forester comes to power.⁶⁷ Thus, one brother can reflect on the purpose of the work in the herbarium: 'I felt that, as we studied, the power to resist and tame the fiery forces of life grew, as one might lead a horse by the reins.'⁶⁸ This idea of controlling the unruly forces of life is taken up once more when Jünger contrasts the vintners who cultivate and refine nature with the 'wild and untamed' shepherds of the Campagna.⁶⁹ That Jünger is here taking a critical look at his own early attitudes becomes apparent when the narrator in *Marmorklippen* reports how he and his brother Otho once enjoyed the company of the Chief Forester, and he looks back to their 'Mauretanian days'. Otho had said of these times that an error only becomes a mistake if one persists in that error.⁷⁰

Another type of Mauretanian, although also an enemy of the Chief Forester, is Braquemart. Whereas the Chief Forester aims to populate the Marina with wild beasts, Braquemart seeks to populate it with slaves. He believes that there have always been two races – masters and servants – and that these two races need to be separated out. In this he is a pupil of 'the old warrior', Jünger's new name for Nietzsche.⁷¹ Braquemart shows himself to be a 'technician of power'. Although he is a 'moralist' he is not interested in the narrator's wish to justify in moral terms an attack on the Chief Forester.⁷² This difference between the narrator and Braquemart is a measure of the distance Jünger has come since writing 'Über den Schmerz'. For it is precisely the lack of moral justification and the blurring of technology and ethics which Jünger was prepared to condone in that essay.

In *Der Friede* Jünger's revised ideas on technology, morality and the animal in man are worked into a plan for rebuilding the postwar world. Technology, he argues, must be subordinated to human and divine forces. Whereas he had once been enthusiastic about that blend of the natural and the mechanical worlds which he characterised as an 'organic construction', Jünger now favours separating out the technical and the organic worlds.⁷³ He sees the state as the supreme symbol of technology, and technology in the Second World War as murderous. Pure technicians and those who scorn all binding morality must not be permitted to lead men.⁷⁴

Whereas Jünger had praised man's emerging primitive animal nature in his works on the First World War, he now relates how in the Second World War men annihilated each other 'like vermin' and hunted each other as one would hunt wolves.⁷⁵ Parts of the world had been turned into abattoirs, and 'creatures played the parts of hangmen'.⁷⁶

Strahlungen underlines the political relevance of such thoughts by applying them to National Socialism. German atrocities which Jünger comes to hear of convince him that men are now surrounded by 'bestiality'.⁷⁷ He writes of Hitler's 'elemental and devastating personality',⁷⁸ and he divides mankind into two races, one with an animal, one with a spiritual character. This is acceptable so long as the animal race does not provide the rulers.⁷⁹

As for technology, Jünger writes that the First World War confronted mankind with the question of whether men or machines were stronger. Now the question has become whether men or automata will rule the world.⁸⁰ In *Feuer und Blut* Jünger had been able to assert man's ultimate supremacy over the technology of war:

A new kind of man is emerging, and we can already sense his presence. It is not the first time that a new will and a new breed have appeared in war. He grows strong, the master of material and of himself. The sorcerer's apprentice becomes the master.⁸¹

Some 24 years later Jünger returns to the question and makes the connection between technology and man's animal being, but concluding now that man has not mastered his machines:

Reflected on the machine and what we have failed to do here. As an extension of the pure male intellect it is like a wild animal which man did not realise in time was dangerous; he reared it without thinking, only to find out that it cannot be domesticated.⁸²

The National Socialists possessed the 'negative advantage' of having discarded all moral baggage before most others and introducing the laws of machine technology into politics.⁸³ Jünger quotes from *Mein Kampf* and provides a bitter commentary when describing German youth, redefining Hitler's ideal as a product of the base zoological and mechanical elements in man:

Those were the fellows, 'hard as Krupp steel, tough as shoe leather and fast as greyhounds', that Kniebölo [i.e. Hitler] rightly harangued as the kind of followers that suited him – i.e. the kind that could be produced if necessary in metal foundries and tanneries with the help of animal sperm.⁸⁴

Like *Strahlungen*, Jünger's novel of the same year, *Heliopolis*, often provides an implicit commentary on his early work. In the essay 'Über den Schmerz' he had suggested that freedom in research was superfluous once one realised what things should be known and what should not. The

inevitable trend towards rearmament determined the tasks for research and set education specific goals. Whereas Jünger had contented himself with observing these 'inevitable changes' and suspending judgement upon them, he now takes a moral stand. The character Thomas in *Heliopolis* is the technician who sees freedom in research resulting in anarchy.⁸⁵ Against this figure Jünger sets the Proconsul whose military academy combines technical instruction with the development of the personality, the intellect and chivalry. The academy is to be reformed, we are told, and will teach international law and moral theology, for the soldier's honour is in danger where the 'automatic character' prevails. The Proconsul wishes to ensure that spiritual and moral education keep pace with technical training.⁸⁶

In his later work Jünger can criticise Oswald Spengler in a way which sheds light on his own early work. *An der Zeitmauer* explains why Spengler's morphology is lacking:

It is one of the special features of the human mind that it can expend much time and energy sorting and linking phenomena that are similar, but this does not satisfy the mind if the question as to the basis of the comparisons and the overall composition of the acts and scenes in the great theatre remains unanswered. Comparisons for their own sake only establish connections, not standards by which to judge those connections. Hence Spengler does not explain the grand design or the meaning of existence, be it divine, moral or material in nature.⁸⁷

Comparing this view of Spengler's work with that expressed in Jünger's political journalism of the twenties, one sees what extra demands Jünger now makes of any philosophy. Whereas he had once derived pleasure from reading Spengler because doing so had made him realise that the nation was following a 'particular line', and enabled him to discover a 'supreme unity' in world history,⁸⁸ Jünger now notes the absence of an 'inner unity' in Spengler's work and suggests that this unity is to be found in the moral, religious spheres. Whereas Jünger had originally found sufficient meaning and direction in Spengler's self-contained system, he now demands the additional dimension of a universal plan such as Herder and Hegel offered in order to provide man with a sense of direction.⁸⁹ The later Jünger clearly finds the universal plan in religion and morality, and in so doing implicitly distances himself from his belief in a self-justifying, 'natural' political order.

Jünger returns to the point in *Der Weltstaat*, where he writes that man's history would be natural history if there were no free will. Although the human will cannot prevent the 'move into a new house' it can decide what

to take with it.⁹⁰ This idea of a certain measure of human freedom with which to influence events that are inevitable creates the room for moral arguments which Jünger had previously dismissed as irrelevant precisely because the developments he registered were 'inevitable'.⁹¹

When considering Jünger's links with National Socialism, one may conclude that comparing ideas is of limited value. Many of these ideas are so commonplace that showing them to be shared signifies little. But in his later work Jünger revisits many of his central themes and, in so doing, he provides an internal point of comparison by which to assess his early work and its connections with National Socialism. The views he comes to criticise so vehemently were once his own and became the views he attributes to the Nazis.

OSWALD SPENGLER AND NATIONAL SOCIALISM: NIETZSCHE CONTRA NIETZSCHE

One measure of the importance of the leading figures of the Conservative Revolution was the eagerness of the Nazis to lay claim to them as the thinkers who helped lay the intellectual foundations for the day in January 1933 when Hitler became Chancellor. Writing in the *Völkischer Beobachter* of 31 August 1933, Alfred Baeumler describes Spengler in these terms, and he praises in particular Spengler's anti-liberalism, irrationalism and imperialism.⁹²

In October of the same year Goebbels asked Spengler to write an essay in support of Hitler's policies, suggesting that he might like to pay particular attention to the ways in which the government was preserving German culture and standing up for the honour of Germany in the world.⁹³ Spengler sets the tone for his general attitude towards National Socialism when he replies that he does not take part in election campaigns by writing propaganda, but he would be happy to write about significant foreign policy initiatives of which he approves, such as Germany quitting the League of Nations. Presumably in the hope that Goebbels will intervene on his behalf, Spengler goes on to draw Goebbels's attention to the fact that he (Spengler) has been called a traitor in the nationalist press. Spengler refers to a meeting he had a few months before with Hitler, on which occasion Hitler is supposed to have expressed his enthusiasm for gaining the support of people outside the party. Spengler asks to meet Goebbels in Munich, since he may have some suggestions for him.⁹⁴

If Spengler seemed to have no fundamental moral objection to the NSDAP, it is clear that his attitude is marked by disdain. This was

apparent not least to the Nazis themselves, and Alfred Baeumler therefore balances his praise for Spengler with the criticism that Spengler refuses to acknowledge Hitler's greatness and continues to look down on the *völkisch* movement from his lonely study.⁹⁵

This concentration on Spengler's aristocratic disdain, even contempt, for the Nazis is also widespread among historians of the Conservative Revolution, and it has sidetracked many enquiries into the link between the Conservative Revolution and National Socialism. It tends to take the place of a close analysis of Conservative Revolutionary writings which might reveal a complex reassessment of earlier attitudes in the light of the Nazi takeover (as in the case of Ernst Jünger) or, as we shall see in the case of Spengler, an inability to mount a fundamental philosophical attack on the Nazis.

The natural focus of attention for anyone seeking to understand the link between Spengler and the Nazis is the book Spengler started to write before they came to power and which appeared in 1933: *Jahre der Entscheidung*.⁹⁶ The Nazi reaction to the book was mixed, with some voicing criticism and expecting it to be banned, and other senior figures in the party enthusiastically quoting from it.⁹⁷ The Nazis either praised what they liked about the book and ignored its implicit criticism of the NSDAP, or they showed their frustration at Spengler's evident failure to realise that the Nazis were making his Prussian vision a reality.⁹⁸ As early as 1930 Alfred Rosenberg had turned the point around by criticising Spengler for rejecting anti-Semitism but also for failing to acknowledge that he had taken his ideas from National Socialism.⁹⁹

After Spengler had declined Goebbels's invitation to write in support of the party Alfred Baeumler went over to attacking Spengler as the workers' enemy.¹⁰⁰ Johann von Leers, Head of the Foreign Policy Department of the Deutsche Hochschule für Politik, attacks Spengler for criticising the trade unions instead of Marxist leaders. *Jahre der Entscheidung*, he continues, is a 'damaging book and the first large-scale ideological onslaught on the National Socialist *Weltanschauung*'.¹⁰¹

Postwar commentators who seek to mark Spengler off from the Nazis have presented *Jahre der Entscheidung* as 'the only manifesto of internal conservative opposition which appeared in Germany during the Third Reich'.¹⁰² Specifically, it is Spengler's rejection of biological racism which is cited as proof of opposition, and it is certainly true that the absence of biological racism in Spengler's work provoked angry criticism from the Nazis.¹⁰³ Yet *Jahre der Entscheidung* was never banned by the Nazis. Moreover, the book shows that if he was opposed to the Nazis it was because he disliked the 'democratic' and 'socialist' trends they

embodied in the form of mass politics.¹⁰⁴ Recent historical research on Spengler's notes from after 1933 has confirmed that these views persisted during the Nazi period.¹⁰⁵

Yet such exchanges of ideological slogans are ultimately arbitrary and tell us little of value about the deeper links between the Conservative Revolutionaries and the Nazis. A more useful starting point for analysis is the fact that Spengler's objections to the Nazis were not fundamental. In the introduction to *Jahre der Entscheidung* he had written that the Nazi rise to power was not a reason for excitement, nor was it a triumph. Mobilisation should not be confused with victory. A movement had just started, but the goal had not yet been reached. The great issues of the day remained unresolved, and it was worrying that the Nazi takeover had been celebrated with such enthusiasm.¹⁰⁶ This is neither an endorsement of National Socialism, nor a fundamental critique. There is good reason to wonder, as Nazis like Zweiniger had wondered, exactly what the difference was between their vision and Spengler's.

In his introduction to *Jahre der Entscheidung* Spengler looks back to the start of 1933 and declares that nobody had wished for the nationalist revolution more than he had (p. vii). He also sends Hitler a copy of the book and asks for his opinion, suggesting they might meet to discuss it.¹⁰⁷ At the same time as he was voting for Hitler in the 1932 presidential elections, however, Spengler was describing Hitler privately as a fool.¹⁰⁸ And if we are to accept his biographer's account, Spengler referred to the Nazi Party as the 'organisation of men without work by men who did not want to work'.¹⁰⁹

This tension in Spengler's thoughts is not insignificant, for it underlines the point that he declined to revise his particular philosophical position when the Nazis came to power. Essentially, the critique of National Socialism offered in *Jahre der Entscheidung* is not a moral one but rather a critique based on criteria of success and failure in which morality is irrelevant. It is the logical conclusion of Spengler's deterministic view of history which was in place in the early twenties. For example, against the background of the abortive Beer Hall Putsch of 1923 and Hitler's subsequent trial and imprisonment, Spengler delivered a speech in which he warned that nationalist politics were being conducted with a mixture of enthusiasm and amateurishness, but without success at a time when the only thing that mattered was success.¹¹⁰

This attitude resurfaces in 1933 when he declares that he will refrain from any value judgement about the Nazi assumption of power. Facts are the only things that matter, and great events do not require the judgement of those who live through them.¹¹¹ Spengler declares that he is not

interested in dreams of the future or in programmes for achieving dreams. A series of hard facts is unfolding and cannot be reversed. Now Germans must march in step with the facts, whether they want to or not.¹¹² The future will be shaped by the will of the strong, by healthy instincts, by race, by the will to possess and the will to power. Viewed in this light, justice, happiness and peace are irrelevant. Here Spengler seems to lump together and dismiss both the rational forces of progress and the National Socialists, the shared ground supposedly being an unrealistic urge to change the world.¹¹³ Spengler thus stays loyal to his original philosophical determinism, and in this refusal to break with his past he contrasts with Ernst Jünger who took leave of what he referred to as his Old Testament when he introduced the moral dimension to his view of the present and future around 1936 – the year, incidentally, in which Spengler died.

Spengler advocates a scepticism which sees no value in theorising about changing man's condition. Spengler's scepticism takes the form of an 'incorruptible insight' into the facts of history and the nature of man. Genuine historical thinking fosters reverence for the innermost secrets behind world events, secrets which can at best be described but never explained. Men of race, not romantic programmes or systems, can master these secrets.¹¹⁴

Like Jünger before him, Spengler now equates Nietzsche's vision of the beast of prey as a complementary type with man himself, but, unlike Jünger, he presents the equation at the same time as he dismisses political parties, including the NSDAP, as pedlars of feeble ideals and all politicians as liars: 'Man is a beast of prey. I shall never tire of saying so' (pp. 12–14).

This reference to Nietzsche offers the observer another way into Spengler's links with National Socialism. For although Spengler failed to take a moral stand over National Socialism, he did take a different kind of stand in an indirect way. This he did over his links with the Nietzsche Archive which, under the direction of Elisabeth Förster-Nietzsche, had developed close ties with the Nazis. In October 1935 Nietzsche's sister wrote to Spengler expressing concern over his intention to break all contact with the Archive, of which he was a director. She has heard that Spengler was highly critical of the Third Reich and of Hitler, and that this is one reason for him wishing to end his association with the Archive.¹¹⁵ Like so many others in the Nazi camp, Nietzsche's sister expresses her surprise that Spengler does not see his ideals realised through National Socialism.

There is no record of a direct answer from Spengler to Elisabeth Förster-Nietzsche, but he does explain his resignation from the Board of

Directors of the Archive in a letter of October 1935 to Walter Jesinghaus. Here he declares his action to be a response to the underlying tendency in 'the book by Oehler', a reference to Richard Oehler's *Friedrich Nietzsche und die deutsche Zukunft* which had appeared earlier that year.¹¹⁶ Spengler states that one can either follow Nietzsche's philosophy or that of the Nietzsche Archive, and 'if both are so very much at odds with each other, as they evidently are in this case, one has to make a choice'.¹¹⁷ Oehler's Nietzsche study starts with the well-known picture of Hitler admiring a bust of Nietzsche at the Archive in Weimar, and this sets the tone for the rest of the work. Oehler quotes Nietzsche's wish for 'one look at something complete, finished, joyous, mighty, triumphant, something that can still inspire fear! At a man who can justify the existence of mankind as a whole, a complementary, redeeming, glorious man for whose sake one may keep one's faith in mankind.' Needless to say, Oehler ignores the reservations Nietzsche had about such a man and takes Nietzsche's words as a perfect description of Adolf Hitler and other Nazi leaders.¹¹⁸ Nietzsche himself cleared the way for National Socialism, declares Oehler, and much of Oehler's book is taken up with juxtapositions of quotations from Nietzsche and Hitler with the aim of showing that they both wanted the same things.

If Spengler suggests that Oehler has distorted Nietzsche's message, it is worth noting that on the key issue of unbridled self-assertion Spengler had distorted Nietzsche in the same way. Indeed, Spengler had gone further than Oehler by returning time and again to his equation of man and the beast of prey. This equation even prompted protests from the Nazi ranks, as, for example, when Johann von Leers attacks Spengler for his vision of the beast of prey in the shape of a modern Caesar ruling the earth. Von Leers insists that Hitler is something more than an unleashed despot. In political terms, retorts von Leers, Spengler favours low wages and the abolition of all measures designed to protect the weaker members of society and working people. In its place Spengler would have a society based on the principle of dog eat dog.¹¹⁹ Similarly, Karl Muhs, a professor of economics under the Nazis, accuses Spengler of taking his brutal doctrine of the animal in man not from anthropology, but from zoology.¹²⁰

If Spengler did not approve of the Nazi appropriation of Nietzsche, his criticism was directed in particular at Nazi racism and anti-Semitism. Oehler had quoted Nietzsche on racial purity and his supposed admiration for the 'Northern race', and had gone on to claim it was unnecessary to show how these views were shared by the Nazis.¹²¹ Yet when Spengler explains his own positive ideal of race, he does so via a misunderstood Nietzsche, for Spengler's concept of race is based on the barbaric nature

of man which Nietzsche knew of in a complementary role but which Spengler took as the whole:

A strong race needs strong parents. Something of the ancient barbarism must still be in the blood, beneath the forms of ancient culture, and it must burst forth in times of need to rescue and to be victorious. This barbarism is what I call strong race. (Let me say again: race that one possesses, not a race that one belongs to. The former is an ethos, the latter zoology). It is what I call the eternal warrior in the species of beast of prey called man. Often it seems that it is no longer there, but it lies coiled in the soul, ready to pounce.¹²²

Spengler himself thus uses simplified and distorted Nietzscheanism both to describe his own ideal and to attack National Socialism while at the same time accusing the Nazis of distorting Nietzsche. Moreover, he sticks to his view of a Caesar-like figure arising in the period of civilisation, and we have seen that he can accept Mussolini in this role.¹²³ He also sticks to his morally indifferent perspective on the 'civilisation period' of human history in which a reversion to barbarism is inevitable. Thus we see in Spengler's thought, as in Ernst Jünger's for a transitional period, a rejection of National Socialism at the superficial level of statements and ideological exchanges, although the deeper current of Spengler's philosophy, which remains unaltered after 1933, leads logically to Hitler.

CONCLUSION: PHILOSOPHICAL CONTINUITY

When it looked as though the NSDAP could be voted into power, prominent Conservative Revolutionaries stated their expectations of the Party in a book entitled *Was wir vom Nationalsozialismus erwarten*,¹²⁴ a work which suggests that many of the attitudes we have traced in the work of Jünger and Spengler have representative status. Essentially the book reflects what we have seen to be the Conservative Revolutionary failure to work out a programme which would reconcile nationalism and socialism, the resultant switch to an activist, hierarchical view of politics, and the logical conclusion of these developments: the absence of a fundamental philosophical critique of National Socialism.

The basic problems of new nationalism are still not resolved as the Nazis move towards power. Thus Ernst Forsthoff declares that it remains to be seen what form the state will assume, but its main characteristic will most definitely be 'authority'. It will extend its influence into the spheres of economics, culture and the intellectual heritage of the nation, spheres

which liberalism once rendered independent of the state. Forsthoff summarises his ideas by stating that they are not any kind of programme but rather an attempt to show in practical political terms the opportunities for shaping the new Reich. Essentially it would be a firmly united Germany based on power and authoritarian leadership.¹²⁵ Similarly, Wilhelm Grewe senses that the constitutional route to power now seems open to the National Socialists, and he trusts that they will not end up betraying the nationalist cause by adopting party political habits. More importantly, Grewe backs the Party by attacking the 'rationalist nonsense' coming from those who object to the fact that the Nazis have not worked out a detailed programme or a draft constitution. It is not crucial that lawyers present the constitution for a 'Third Reich', but rather that the leaders of the movement are clear about the basic political issues. Grewe goes on to argue that every dictatorship is a transitional phenomenon, an arrangement to do with form, not content, and what contents there are will depend upon circumstances. If a constitution does eventually emerge from a dictatorship, it will do away with parliament and democracy; it will introduce an imperial order and reconstruct the Reich according to hierarchical and corporate principles; it will create a strong state with power resting in the hands of the executive and an elite; and it will dispense with any kind of democratic legitimation by the people.¹²⁶

In another contribution Hans Bogner asserts that certain fundamental conservative beliefs are becoming generally accepted, and this has been achieved not by an intellectual elite but rather by the 'elemental' National Socialist movement. The healthy natural drives of the people have shaken off liberalism,¹²⁷ and Bogner continues:

The valiant breed of young German with his soldierly code of honour and his desire to act, the breed that was pushed out of our public life with the so-called revolution, has now received his due recognition, and he can see a return to that way of life based on allegiance and loyalty which has been the German way since ancient times.¹²⁸

Kurt Woermann alludes to the confusion in the National Socialist movement but claims that it is merely a reflection of confused times. Yet whereas other governments and parties are incapable of gaining control of this confusion, the National Socialists will be able to bring clarity by virtue of their 'vital force', their 'faith' and their 'commitment to the cause'.¹²⁹ Hanns Johst agrees and declares that professional politicians accuse Hitler of having a vague programme and insist that he clarify his demands and his promises so that they can then tear them apart. Ultimately they seek to undermine his Romanticism and his status as a

great personality with their rationalism. But Hitler stands and falls by his belief in the personality and the idea of the great leader. Moreover, in fascism what counts is a fanatical belief in action.¹³⁰

Wilhelm Stapel's contribution raises no basic objection to a Germany run by the Nazis, declaring that the Jewish question would cease to be a matter of propaganda and would instead be a matter of practical politics. When he declares that the Jews cannot be killed or expelled, his reasons are not moral but practical: it would be impossible to say who was a Jew and who was not, and the reaction from abroad would have to be considered. Stapel considers it comical that large numbers of Jews flee the country when nationalists win an election, as if a great slaughter would follow the very next day. Jews who flee demonstrate only that they 'do not have a clear conscience', and they know that many of their prominent representatives 'are not loyal to Germany'. Stapel goes on to advocate an apartheid policy towards Jews in Germany based on 'distance and respect'.¹³¹

At one level the arguments put forward in this volume of Conservative Revolutionary responses to National Socialism show a blindness towards the true nature of the Nazis. Yet at a more profound level the arguments demonstrate the continuity of Conservative Revolutionary political thinking from the time of the failed debates about the contents of a new nationalism to the time when the Nazis were poised to take power. Regardless of individual Conservative Revolutionary criticisms of the Nazis, the deeper commitment to activism, strong leadership, hierarchy and a disregard for political programmes persists. These features suggest that the detail of the responses to National Socialism which we have traced in Jünger and Spengler are significant for the Conservative Revolution as a whole. Unresolved political dilemmas result in an activism and an interest in hierarchy which mean that there can be no fundamental objection to the National Socialist assumption of power.

Notes

INTRODUCTION: WHAT WAS THE CONSERVATIVE REVOLUTION?

1. See Armin Mohler, *Die Konservative Revolution in Deutschland 1918–1932*, third edn, 2 vols (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1989), 1, pp. 10–11; Karl Dietrich Bracher, *The German Dictatorship* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1973), p. 183; Kurt Sontheimer, *Antidemokratisches Denken in der Weimarer Republik* (Munich: Nymphenburger Verlag, 1968), p. 120; Otto-Ernst Schüddekopf, *Linke Leute von rechts* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1960), p. 248.
2. This is Walter Struve's assessment of their role in *Elites against Democracy: Leadership Ideals in Bourgeois Political Thought in Germany, 1890–1933* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973), p. 227.
3. Stefan Breuer rightly sees the majority of the Conservative Revolutionaries as belonging to the 'Generation of 1914' (*Anatomie der Konservativen Revolution* [Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1993], p. 33).
4. Friedrich Georg Jünger, *Aufmarsch des Nationalismus* (Leipzig: Aufmarsch, 1926), pp. 5–6.
5. See Mohler, pp. 9–10.
6. Bracher, p. 183.
7. Struve, p. 224.
8. Martin Broszat, *German National Socialism 1919–1945* (California: Clio, 1966), p. 40.
9. Bracher, p. 184.
10. Walter Bussmann, 'Politische Ideologien zwischen Monarchie und Weimarer Republik', *Historische Zeitschrift*, vol. 190, no. 1, 1960, p. 77.
11. Sontheimer, pp. 13–14.
12. See Sontheimer, pp. 32–4; Joachim Petzold, *Konservative Theoretiker des deutschen Faschismus* (East Berlin: VEB Deutscher Verlag der Wissenschaften, 1978), p. 12. An informative survey of how right-wing publishers sought to create an identifiable movement out of various strands of neo-conservative thought is provided by Gary Stark in his *Entrepreneurs of Ideology: Neoconservative Publishers in Germany, 1890–1933* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1981).
13. See Wolfram Wette, 'Ideologien, Propaganda und Innenpolitik als Voraussetzungen der Kriegspolitik des Dritten Reiches', in W. Deist *et al.* (eds), *Das Deutsche Reich und der Zweite Weltkrieg*, vol. 1 (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlagsanstalt, 1979), pp. 94–9.
14. Estimates of the size of Stahlhelm, Jungdeutscher Orden and other combat leagues vary considerably. See James Diehl, *Paramilitary Politics in Weimar Germany* (Bloomington and London: Indiana University Press, 1977), pp. 293–7. On Stahlhelm, see Volker Berghahn, *Der Stahlhelm. Bund der Frontsoldaten* (Düsseldorf: Droste, 1966).

15. Sontheimer, p. 17. Sontheimer refers in particular to the new nationalism of the Conservative Revolution and links this with the combat leagues Wehrwolf (with an estimated membership of 40 000), Bund Oberland (10 000), Bund Wiking (6–10 000), and the youth leagues Freischar Schill, Eidgenossen, Deutsche Falkenschaft, Deutsche Jungmannschaft, Deutsches Jungvolk, die Geusen, die Artamanen, Adler und Falken (p. 27n.). Schüddekopf estimates that the new nationalist journal *Die Kommenden* represented leagues with a total membership of 50 000 (*Linke Leute von rechts*, p. 240).
16. Helga Grebing, *Der Nationalsozialismus. Ursprung und Wesen*, eighteenth edition (Munich and Vienna: Olzog, 1964), p. 75.
17. See James Diehl, *Paramilitary Politics in Weimar Germany*, p. ix. Also Struve (*Elites against Democracy*), who has looked at the particular circumstances of key individuals in an attempt to clarify their motives. At another level, Joachim Petzold has examined the financing of Conservative Revolutionary activities in an attempt to shed light on motives, and to question the revolutionary character of the movement (*Konservative Theoretiker des deutschen Faschismus*).
18. Struve, p. 13.
19. Jeffrey Herf, *Reactionary Modernism: Technology, culture and politics in Weimar and the Third Reich* (Cambridge, London: Cambridge University Press, 1984), p. 22.
20. See the criticism of this approach in Ian Kershaw, *The Nazi Dictatorship* (London: Edward Arnold, 1985), p. 7; John Hiden, John Farquharson, *Explaining Hitler's Germany* (London: Batsford, 1983), p. 34.
21. Herf's *Reactionary Modernism*, which deals with the engineering profession, is a recent example of this.
22. See, for example, Walter Struve, *Elites against Democracy*, p. 18.
23. Herf, p. 218.
24. J. G. A. Pocock, *Politics, Language and Time: Essays on Political Thought and History* (New York: Atheneum, 1971), p. 37.
25. *Ibid.*, p. 38.
26. Dominick LaCapra, *Rethinking Intellectual History* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983), p. 14.
27. Robert Darnton, 'Intellectual and Cultural History', in *The Past Before Us: Contemporary Historical Writing in the United States*, edited by M. Kammen (Ithaca, New York and London: Cornell University Press, 1980), pp. 327–54.
28. See Detlev Peukert's perceptive characterisation of the radical right in *Die Weimarer Republik: Krisenjahre der Klassischen Moderne* (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1987), pp. 83–4.

1 THE CONSERVATIVE REVOLUTION AND THE FIRST WORLD WAR

1. Martin Greiffenhagen, *Das Dilemma des Konservatismus in Deutschland* (Munich: Piper, 1971), p. 277.

2. See, for example, Kurt Sontheimer, *Antidemokratisches Denken in der Weimarer Republik* (Munich: Nymphenburg, 1968), p. 95.
3. Peukert, pp. 110–11.
4. Herf, pp. 72–5.
5. Wolfram Wette, 'Ideologien, Propaganda und Innenpolitik als Voraussetzungen der Kriegspolitik des Dritten Reiches', in *Das Deutsche Reich und der Zweite Weltkrieg*, edited by the Militärgeschichtliches Forschungsamt, 10 vols (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1979), 1, p. 48.
6. Thus, when Modris Eksteins writes in general terms of the conservative view of the war as 'a necessity, tragic of course, but nonetheless unavoidable', he does not exploit the interpretative potential of what is, in the case of the Conservative Revolution, a development of the themes of necessity and inevitability (*Rites of Spring: The Great War and the Birth of the Modern Age* [London, New York: Bantam, 1989], p. 287).
7. Ernst Jünger, *In Stahlgewittern* (Hanover: published privately, 1920), p. 1.
8. Franz Schauwecker, *Der feurige Weg* (Leipzig: Aufmarsch, 1926), pp. 21–2.
9. Ernst Jünger, *In Stahlgewittern*, p. 6. For a historian's account of the horrors of trench warfare see Modris Eksteins, pp. 139–55.
10. *Ibid.*, p. v.
11. Ernst Jünger, 'Der Pazifismus', *Die Standarte*, 11 (15 November 1925), 2. For a discussion of the theory of modernisation as applied to the Weimar Republic, see Peukert, pp. 87–190. George Mosse gives a convincing account of the First World War as a 'modern war' characterised by 'organized mass death' in his *Fallen Soldiers: Reshaping the Memory of the World Wars* (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990). Here p. 3.
12. Kurt Hesse, *Der Feldherr Psychologos: Ein Suchen nach dem Führer der deutschen Zukunft* (Berlin: Mittler, 1922), p. 30.
13. Franz Schauwecker, *Der feurige Weg*, p. 49.
14. See Martin Travers, *German Novels on the First World War and their Ideological Implications, 1918–1933* (Stuttgart: Akademischer Verlag, 1982). Travers demonstrates that military memoirs presented a paradigmatic view of war. This form survived through the First World War to emerge in the memoirs of Hermann von Stein, for example, who had command of the XIV Reserve Division in a Bavarian Regiment. His is above all an orderly view of war, in which all the events described have a beginning, a middle and an end. The typical memoir, argues Travers, does not recognise (does not have the categories to recognise) the less paradigmatic features of war – the fortuitous, the random, the anomic, and the personal torments of hunger, fear and pain (p. 23). See also Hans-Harald Müller, *Der Krieg und die Schriftsteller* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1986), on senior officers writing military memoirs in order to justify strategic decisions in the war (p. 22).
15. See Travers, pp. 23–4.
16. Werner Beumelburg, *Douaumont* (Oldenburg: Stalling, 1933), pp. 41–2.
17. See, for example, Erich Maria Remarque's account of how the soldiers are made indifferent by the fact that they can do little to avoid being killed: it is chance which kills them or keeps them alive (*Im Westen nichts Neues* [Frankfurt a.M.: Ullstein, 1976], p. 76).

18. See Michael Gollbach, *Die Wiederkehr des Weltkrieges in der Literatur* (Kronberg: Scriptor, 1978), p. 116. Travers has pointed out that Ludwig Renn's *Der Krieg* stresses the formlessness of war and the soldier's struggle to survive in an environment governed by the random and fortuitous, by the failure of purpose and the subversion of order (p. 68). See also Paul Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory* (London, Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 1975) on the gap between expectations and reality which became such an important feature of British writing on the First World War, pp. 34–5. Fussell also reports on the elaborate rumours which circulated in the war about how the Germans gained information on the position of enemy artillery. These rumours reflected the need to make sense of events which would otherwise seem merely accidental or calamitous (p. 121).
19. Ernst Jünger, *In Stahlgewittern*, pp. 63, 119.
20. *Ibid.*, p. 133.
21. Ernst Jünger, *Sturm* (Olten: Oltner Liebhaverdruck, 1963), pp. 56–7.
22. Ernst Jünger, *In Stahlgewittern*, p. 67.
23. Ernst Jünger, *Feuer und Blut* (Magdeburg: Stahlhelm, 1925), pp. 16f.; *In Stahlgewittern*, p. 93.
24. Ernst Jünger, *Sturm*, p. 12. See also Müller, pp. 232–5.
25. Franz Schauwecker, *Deutsche allein* (Berlin: Frundsberg, 1931), p. 9.
26. Rudolf Huch, "'Im Westen nichts Neues'", *Deutsches Volkstum*, 11, no. 8 (August 1929), 598–603.
27. Werner Beumelburg, *Douaumont*, pp. 7–8.
28. Franz Schauwecker, *Der feurige Weg*, pp. 28–35.
29. Franz Schauwecker, 'Auseinandersetzung des Nationalismus', *Standarte*, 13 (28 August 1927), 365–9.
30. Kurt Hesse, pp. 163, 208–9.
31. Erich Maria Remarque, p. 195.
32. Franz Schauwecker, *Im Todesrachen* (Halle: Diekmann, 1919), p. 214.
33. *Ibid.*, pp. 57–8. Kurt Hesse makes a similar point when he moves from his first impression of the nation at war as 'all forces pulling together' to the realisation that within the army people are starting to look very closely at the different rations, pay and promotion opportunities (p. 160). Such differences were also institutionalised in postwar Germany where, for example, before the pension system was reformed in 1920, very different financial treatment – based on rank – was given to wounded soldiers and to the dependents of the war dead. See Robert Whalen's account of the bitterness and resentment this caused in his study *Bitter Wounds: German Victims of the Great War 1914–39* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1984).
34. Franz Schauwecker, *Der feurige Weg*, p. 6. In the same work Schauwecker conveys the idea by using the image of a single great family, p. 51.
35. Franz Schauwecker, 'Vorwort zum Frontbuch', in *Das Frontbuch*, sixth edition (Halle: Diekmann, 1927), p. viii. Friedrich Wilhelm Heinz argues in a similar vein that the front line had dispensed with class. Parties, trade unions and the Youth Movement had been unable to prove to the ordinary 'man of the people' that he was equal or even superior to the privileged classes, but the 'democracy of death and the aristocracy based on achievement in battle' had done just this (*Die Nation greift an* [Berlin: Das Reich, 1933], p. 16).

36. Franz Schauwecker, *Der feurige Weg*, pp. 165–71.
37. Franz Schauwecker, *So war der Krieg* (Berlin: Frundsberg, 1928), p. 7.
38. Franz Schauwecker, *Der feurige Weg*, p.165. This outburst comes in a chapter entitled ‘Mancherlei’ – suggesting a collection of less ordered thoughts which have not always been squared with the positive ideas about war put forward elsewhere in the book.
39. Franz Schauwecker, *Im Todesrachen*, p. 34. Eric Leed argues that Schauwecker’s later fixation on the community of the front suggests that his postwar nationalism was an attempt to close and bind the wounding realities of war. Though Schauwecker achieved some recognition, the comradeship he experienced was not of the magnitude of his expectations (*No Man’s Land* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), p. 86).
40. Dominick LaCapra, p. 55.
41. Eksteins, p. 155.
42. Mosse, p. 107.
43. Ernst Jünger, *Sturm*, p. 61.
44. Ernst Jünger, *In Stahlgewittern*, pp. 51–2.
45. Ernst Jünger (ed.), *Die Unvergessenen* (Berlin and Leipzig: Andermann, 1928), p. 12.
46. Ernst Jünger, *Sturm*, pp. 56–7.
47. Ernst Jünger, ‘Alfred Kubin’, *Neues Forum*, no. 154 (October 1966), 629.
48. Ernst Jünger, *Sturm*, p. 82.
49. Ernst Jünger, *Der Kampf als inneres Erlebnis* (Berlin: Mittler, 1922), p. 116.
50. Erich Maria Remarque, pp. 5, 76.
51. Hans Hennig Freiherr Grote, in Franz Schauwecker, ‘Antwort’, *Standarte*, 16 (9 October 1927), 442–7, 446f. See also Schauwecker’s *Aufbruch der Nation* (Berlin: Frundsberg, 1930), p. 75.
52. Oswald Spengler, *Der Untergang des Abendlandes*, second edition, 2 vols. (Munich: DTV, 1973), 2, pp. 558–9.
53. Kurt Hesse, p. 139. Ernst Jünger is himself aware of a possible causal link between the enormous sacrifices in the war and the wish to see the war as meaningful and inevitable. ‘Professorales und Nichtprofessorales’, *Arminius*, 36 (4 September 1927), 3.
54. Ernst Jünger, *Sturm*, p. 17.
55. *Ibid.*, p. 22.
56. *Ibid.*, pp. 29–30.
57. Ernst Jünger, *Das Wäldchen 125*, third edn (Berlin: Mittler, 1928), p. 68.
58. Ernst Jünger, ‘Nachwort’, *Die Unvergessenen*, p. 388.
59. Ernst Jünger, *Der Kampf als inneres Erlebnis* (1922), pp. 81–2.
60. Ernst Jünger, *Der Kampf als inneres Erlebnis*, fourth edn (Berlin: Mittler, 1929), p. 83.
61. In other passages within the 1922 version of *Der Kampf als inneres Erlebnis* the image is reworked so that ‘evil spirits’ are replaced by a benevolent deity controlling the threads of men’s lives. See, for example, p. 108. That conflicting but related images of meaning and futility could appear within the same work confirms that the two aspects of the war tended to coexist in Jünger’s mind rather than follow on from each other.
62. Hans-Harald Müller argues similarly when he points out that Jünger’s notion of the war’s meaning derives from an awareness of its possible lack

of meaning (p. 286). Mosse draws attention to the numbers of casualties in the First World War and concludes that the 'new dimension of death in war called for a much greater effort to mask and transcend death in war than had ever been made before' (p. 4).

63. Quoted in Armin Mohler (ed.), *Die Schleife: Dokumente zum Weg von Ernst Jünger* (Zurich: Arche, 1955), p. 55.
64. Ernst Jünger, *Das abenteuerliche Herz* (Berlin: Frundsberg, 1929), p. 6.
65. Ernst Jünger, *In Stahlgewittern*, p. 11.
66. *Ibid.*, p. 79.
67. Karl Prümm makes a similar point about *In Stahlgewittern* in his *Die Literatur des Soldatischen Nationalismus der 20er Jahre (1918–1933)*, 2 vols (Kronberg Taunus: Scriptor, 1974), 1, pp. 114–15.
68. Ernst Jünger, *Das Wäldchen 125*, p. 3.
69. Ernst Jünger, *Sturm*, pp. 10–11.
70. Ernst Jünger, *Der Kampf als inneres Erlebnis* (1922), p. 68.
71. *Ibid.*, p. 68.
72. Ernst Jünger, *Der Kampf als inneres Erlebnis* (1929), p. 70.
73. Ernst Jünger, *Der Kampf als inneres Erlebnis* (1922), p. 34.
74. Oswald Spengler, *Der Untergang des Abendlandes*, 1, p. 67.
75. Wilhelm von Schramm, 'Das deutsche Volk und der Krieg', *Deutsches Volkstum* (August 1924), 331–6.
76. Franz Schauwecker, *Der feurige Weg*, p. 55.
77. *Ibid.*, p. 161.
78. *Ibid.*, p. 56.
79. Travers notes a similar development when he examines Schauwecker's progression from *Der feurige Weg* (1926) to *Aufbruch der Nation* (1930) and he concludes: 'Gone is the earlier concentration upon the predicament of the self; the later novel, written with a greater epic scope in the third person, sets the sufferings of its hero, Albrecht Urach, against the trials and tribulations of a nation engaged in the epic struggle of Verdun. Within this context, Urach slowly comes to realise that his own experiences are only a small part of the more general movement towards a new idea of nationhood founded on the collective experience of the "Frontgemeinschaft" ("front-line community")' (p. 181).
On the general mechanism in operation here see Eric Leed's discussion of myths in the First World War and their function of closing the gap between the surprising realities of life and the initial expectations (p. 116).
80. Rudolf Huch, pp. 598–603.
81. Artur Mahraun, 'Das Martyrium des Frontsoldaten', *Der Meister*, 1 (December 1925), 6–11.
82. Kurt Hesse, p. 135.
83. Müller also sees a connection between Jünger's failure to find a meaning to the war and his raising of soldierly qualities to the status of self-justifying values (p. 246).
84. Franz Schauwecker, *Der feurige Weg*, p. 132.
85. Werner Best, 'Der Krieg und das Recht', in *Krieg und Krieger*, edited by Ernst Jünger (Berlin: Junker und Dünhaupt, 1930), pp. 151–2. Michael Gollbach notes a similar process at work in Franz Schauwecker's *Aufbruch der Nation* (p. 156). In a hostile essay in the liberal journal *Das Tagebuch*

- Karl Tschupplik had thus characterised the new nationalist idea of war being beyond the will of man and a primitive force as the 'philosophy of defeat'. And to make his view of the vitalist interpretation of the war clear, he adds that this idea is part of the megalomania of inferior generals, politicians who are incapable of thought, and their literary followers. ('Nicht daran denken, nicht davon sprechen?' [*Das Tagebuch*, 12 (September 1931), 1438–43]).
86. Franz Schauwecker, *Der feurige Weg*, p. 90.
 87. See 'Vom absolut Kühnen', *Standarte*, 20 (12 August 1926), 462; 'Die totale Mobilmachung' in *Krieg und Krieger*, p. 29.
 88. 'Die Opfer', *Der Vormarsch*, 6 (November 1927), 114.
 89. A. E. Günther, 'Die Intelligenz und der Krieg', in *Krieg und Krieger*, pp. 91, 96–7.
 90. Kurt Hesse, p. 142.
 91. Franz Schauwecker, *Der feurige Weg*, p. 169.
 92. Kurt Hesse, pp. 162–7.
 93. Artur Mahraun, 'Das Martyrium des Frontsoldaten', p. 10.
 94. Helmut Franke, *Staat im Staate* (Magdeburg: Stahlhelm, 1924), p. 138.
 95. Mosse, p. 6. The broader significance of the Conservative Revolutionary device of describing the war in pre-modern terms is reflected in the style of many monuments erected after the First World War and which portrayed soldiers armed with swords rather than modern weaponry. Our analysis of the evolution of meaning in Conservative Revolutionary texts on war supports Mosse's interpretation of this phenomenon as the result of a confrontation with a new kind of mechanical warfare which resulted in an 'urgent need to mask death' (p. 101).
 96. See Jürgen Kocka, *Klassengesellschaft im Krieg 1914–1918* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1973), esp. pp. 40–57, on the growing militancy of workers during the war, shortages of food resulting in strikes among munition workers in Berlin, war-weariness and the desire for peace among the workers. Kocka also examines the unequal provision made for officers and men at the front, a phenomenon mirrored at home by the easier life for those who could afford black market prices.
 97. See Wette, pp. 78–81.
 98. Gollbach points out that from 1929/30 onwards the market share of nationalist anti-democratic war-books was overwhelming and made the proportion of books critical of the war insignificant. Gollbach takes this as an indication of the popularisation of anti-democratic and nationalist slogans, ideas and groups in the process of political polarisation at that time (p. 276).

2 NIETZSCHE AS 'MENTOR'

1. Armin Mohler, *Die Konservative Revolution in Deutschland 1918–1932*, third edn, 2 vols (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1989), 1, p. 29. Similarly Karl Löwith, *Nietzsches Philosophie der ewigen Wiederkehr des Gleichen* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1956), p. 199. Elements of the inspiration versus invocation argument are dealt with by Gunter Martens in his account of Nietzsche's effect on Expressionist writers: 'Im

- Aufbruch das Ziel', in *Nietzsche. Werk und Wirkungen*, ed. by H. Steffen (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1974), pp. 115–66. Thomas Mann presents a version of the invocation argument in his defence of Nietzsche against charges of being a pre-fascist philosopher: 'Privately, I am tempted to invert cause and effect here, and not to believe that Nietzsche produced fascism, but that fascism produced him...'. Mann sees Nietzsche as the sensitive instrument which registered the rise of imperialism. 'Nietzsches Philosophie im Lichte unserer Erfahrung', in *Schriften und Reden zur Literatur, Kunst und Philosophie*, ed. by Hans Bürgin, 3 vols (Frankfurt a.M.: Fischer, 1968), 3, pp. 21–49 (p. 41).
2. For a general discussion of the problems of tracing influences, see H. Steffen (ed.), *Nietzsche. Werk und Wirkungen*, esp. pp. 5f., 115–20, 128.
 3. Ernst Jünger, *Das Wäldchen 125*, p. 154.
 4. Oswald Spengler, 'Nietzsche und sein Jahrhundert' (speech of October 1924), in Oswald Spengler, *Reden und Aufsätze*, third edn (Munich: Beck, 1951), pp. 110–24 (pp. 12–13).
 5. Alfred Baeumler, 'Nietzsche und der Nationalsozialismus', in *Studien zur deutschen Geistesgeschichte* (Berlin: Junker und Dünnhaupt, 1937), p. 294.
 6. In his main work, *Die Herrschaft der Minderwertigen: Ihr Zerfall und ihre Ablösung*, Jung actually expands this criticism from one edition to the next. On this and Ernst Jünger's anti-Nietzsche stance see the chapter on the Conservative Revolution and National Socialism.
 7. Ernst Bertram, *Nietzsche: Versuch einer Mythologie*, seventh edition (Berlin: Bondi, 1929), pp. 13–16.
 8. Peter Pütz argues that there is great scope for the reader's own viewpoint to determine his image of Nietzsche and sees the cause of this lying 'in the countless contradictions and perspectives of Nietzsche's work' (*Friedrich Nietzsche* [Stuttgart: Metzler, 1967], p. 6). Pütz singles out Baeumler's work on Nietzsche as particularly dominated by Baeumler's own situation (p. 13). Bernhard Taureck discusses the contradictions in Nietzsche's work on the question of war, and points out that this general feature of Nietzsche's work permits selective exploitation of his thought for political purposes (*Nietzsche und der Faschismus* [Hamburg: Junius, 1989], p. 25).
 9. Alfred Baeumler, *Nietzsche der Philosoph und Politiker* (Leipzig: Reclam, 1931), p. 104.
 10. Nietzsche scholars' reorganisation of his manuscripts means that we have to look at the *Wille zur Macht* text that appeared as volumes 15 (2) and 16 of *Nietzsche's Werke*, second edn (Leipzig: Kröner, 1911). For an account of the versions and editions of *Wille zur Macht*, see Mazzino Montinari, *Nietzsche lesen* (Berlin, New York: de Gruyter, 1982), pp. 10–21. Curt Hotzel refers to the *Wille zur Macht* as Nietzsche's main work ('Seher des Reichs', in *Aufstand: Querschnitt durch den revolutionären Nationalismus* ed. by Goetz Otto Stoffregen (Berlin: Brunnen, 1931), pp. 131–40 (p. 131)). For a summary of recent Nietzsche research on this point, in particular for a refutation of the view of *Wille zur Macht* as Nietzsche's main work, see Henning Ottmann, *Philosophie und Politik bei Nietzsche* (Berlin, New York: de Gruyter, 1987).
 11. Alfred Baeumler, *Nietzsche der Philosoph und Politiker*, p. 14. Similarly Friedrich Hielscher stresses the 'consistency' of Nietzsche's work (*Die*

- Selbstherrlichkeit. Versuch einer Darstellung des deutschen Rechtsgrundbegriffs* (Berlin: Vormarsch, 1928), p. 66).
12. Thomas Mann, 'Nietzsches Philosophie im Lichte unserer Erfahrung', p. 42.
 13. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Also sprach Zarathustra*, in *Werke in drei Bänden*, 3 vols, ed. by Karl Schlechta, seventh edition (Munich: Hanser, 1973), II, 425. Except in the case of *Der Wille zur Macht*, all following references to Nietzsche's work will be to the volumes (I, II, III) of this edition, followed by the page number.
 14. For a recent account of a century of Nietzsche interpretation see Steven Aschheim, *The Nietzsche Legacy in Germany, 1890–1990* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994).
 15. Moeller van den Bruck, 'Die Wiederkunft Nietzsches', in Moeller van den Bruck, *Der politische Mensch*, ed. by Hans Schwarz (Breslau: Korn, 1933), pp. 98–105. Friedrich Hielscher, one-time Freikorps member and later editor of the nationalist journals *Der Vormarsch* and *Das Reich*, refers enthusiastically to Moeller's claim that Nietzsche could hardly have thought more highly of the German people: *Die Selbstherrlichkeit*, p. 72.
 16. Alfred Baeumler, 'Nietzsche der Philosoph und Politiker', pp. 146–67.
 17. '...what is the point of energetically proclaiming that war is evil, of not wanting to do harm...! People go on fighting wars! There is no choice!' (Friedrich Nietzsche, *Der Wille zur Macht*, 2nd edn, vols 15 (2) and 16 of *Nietzsche's Werke* (Leipzig: Kröner, 1911), 15 (2), 398). Further references to the two volumes of this edition of *Der Wille zur Macht* will be given in the main text as WzM I and WzM II, followed by the page number. Ernst Jünger: 'Wars have to be fought from time to time, they are an expression of nature's will to intervene in the affairs of the highest forms of life on earth' (*Das Wäldchen* 125, p.176).
 18. Ernst Jünger, *Der Kampf als inneres Erlebnis*, 1922 edn, p. 62.
 19. Nietzsche argues similarly in *Unzeitgemäße Betrachtungen*, where he warns against 'the defeat, indeed the extirpation of the German spirit in favour of the "German Reich"' (I, 137).
 20. Nietzsche uses the term 'flatland' of Germany and with the same associations in *Ecce Homo* (II, 1101), and in the preface to *Nietzsche contra Wagner* (11, 1037).
 21. Kurt Hildebrandt, 'Wagners und Nietzsches Bedeutung für die Nation', *Gewissen*, 12 December 1927, pp. 2–3.
 22. Martin Greiffenhagen quotes Ernst Niekisch on this return to a distant past: 'If some Germanic essence still slumbers in the depths of our being, then our historical obligation is clear: we are duty-bound to press on until we reach the vein of gold in this essence, to expose it, to penetrate all the layers with which the centuries have covered it, to grind them up and get rid of them. That means that we must take up threads again which are long broken. We shall only move onwards and upwards if we go back to the time before Charlemagne, the Battle of the Teutoburg Forest, practically back to before the time when Romans first set foot on German soil.' *Das Dilemma des Konservatismus*, p. 255.
 23. Peter Pütz, *Friedrich Nietzsche*, p. 13.
 24. See also Ottmann, pp. 256f.

25. Alfred Baeumler, 'Nietzsche', *Studien zur deutschen Geistesgeschichte* (Berlin: Junker und Dünhaupt, 1937), pp. 244–80, essay of 1930 (p. 253). See also Mazzino Montinari, 'Nietzsche zwischen Alfred Baeumler und Georg Lukács', in *Nietzsche lesen*, pp. 169–206.
26. Alfred Baeumler, *Nietzsche der Philosoph und Politiker*, p. 88. For Kurt Pastenaci of the Jungdeutscher Orden, there is such a thing as the 'Germanic-German history which happened some two thousand years ago and even earlier' ('Die Gründe des deutschen Niedergangs', *Der Meister*, 1 (October 1932), 30–41 (p. 31).
27. Alfred Baeumler, *Nietzsche der Philosoph und Politiker*, p. 88.
28. *Ibid.*, pp. 90–2.
29. Philipp Hördt, 'Der nordische Staatsgedanke', *Deutsches Volkstum*, 1, (January 1927), pp. 18–23.
30. Ernst Jünger, *Feuer und Blut*, p. 127. Cf from Nietzsche's *Zur Genealogie der Moral*: 'the raging of the blond Germanic beast of prey' [II, 786]; and from *Also sprach Zarathustra* the quotation Jünger elsewhere explicitly attributes to Nietzsche: 'You should only have enemies that can be hated, not enemies for whom one feels contempt' (II, 313). (Jünger's direct quotation of this in *In Stahlgewittern*, p. 87.)
31. Friedrich Hielscher, *Die Selbstherrlichkeit*, p. 70.
32. In the Schlechta edition this section comes directly before the section summarised by Hielscher and thus has greater qualifying force (III, 635).
33. Apart from his own political commitment to radical nationalism as a motive behind his Nietzsche interpretation, Hielscher may well have been encouraged by Elisabeth Förster-Nietzsche: at the start of his book he thanks her and Max Oehler for permission to work in the Nietzsche Archive.
34. The passage is to be found in the Schlechta edition at 111, pp. 700–1.
35. Alfred Baeumler, 'Nietzsche und der Nationalsozialismus', p. 282. Nietzsche makes the point in *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches*, 1, 682.
36. Alfred Baeumler, *Nietzsche der Philosoph und Politiker*, p. 115.
37. Friedrich Georg Jünger, *Aufmarsch des Nationalismus* (Leipzig: Aufmarsch, 1926), pp. 42–3.
38. *Ibid.*, p. 45.
39. Moeller van den Bruck, *Das dritte Reich* (Bremen: Faksimile, 1985), p. 174. *Das dritte Reich* first appeared in 1923.
40. Arthur Moeller-Bruck, *Die moderne Literatur in Gruppen- und Einzeldarstellungen* (Berlin and Leipzig: Schuster & Loeffler, 1899), 1, p. 19.
41. *Der Kampf als inneres Erlebnis* (1922), pp. 2–3.
42. *Ibid.*, p. 3.
43. *Ibid.*, p. 7.
44. *Ibid.*, p. 32.
45. *Ibid.*, p. 6. This image as a whole may rely further on Nietzsche. In *Über Wahrheit und Lüge im außermoralischen Sinn* he writes that man's consciousness rests unknowingly upon ruthless, voracious, ravenous and murderous drives, 'as if on a tiger's back' (III, 310f.).
46. *Der Kampf als inneres Erlebnis* (1922), p. 55.
47. Similarly: 'The highest man would have the greatest variety of drives, and with each as strong as can be tolerated. It is true: where the plant man shows

- himself to be strong, one will find instincts doing battle with each other (e.g. Shakespeare), but kept in check (WzM II, 344).
48. On Nietzsche's use of animal imagery, see T. J. Reed, 'Nietzsche's Animals: Idea, Image and Influence', in *Nietzsche: Imagery and Thought*, ed. by Malcolm Pasley (London: Methuen, 1978), pp. 159–219; D. Brennecke, 'Die blonde Bestie', in *Nietzsche-Studien*, ed. by Mazzino Montinari (Berlin, New York: de Gruyter, 1976), vol. 5, pp. 113–45; Alfred Guth, 'Nietzsches "Neue Barbaren"', in *Nietzsche. Werk und Wirkungen*, ed. by Hans Steffen (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1974), pp. 19–26. For a general discussion of the theme of sublimation see Chapters 7 and 8 of W. Kaufmann's *Nietzsche: Philosopher, Psychologist, Antichrist*, 3rd edn (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968).
 49. Alfred Baeumler, 'Nietzsche', in *Studien zur deutschen Geistesgeschichte*, pp. 244–80 (p. 259).
 50. Alfred Baeumler, *Nietzsche der Philosoph und Politiker* (Leipzig: Reclam, 1931), pp. 92–3.
 51. Ernst Jünger, *Der Kampf als inneres Erlebnis* (1922), p. 96.
 52. Jünger may have taken this image from *Jenseits von Gut und Böse* in which Nietzsche refers to the beast of prey and predatory man as 'the healthiest of all tropical monsters and creatures' and goes on: 'It would seem that the moralists hate the primeval forest and the tropics? And that "tropical man" must be discredited at all costs...' (II, 653). In *Das abenteuerliche Herz* (Berlin: Frundsberg, 1929) Jünger names the German explorer Frobenius as a contemporary source on the primeval forest (p. 124).
 53. *Der Kampf als inneres Erlebnis* (1922), p. 5.
 54. Eric Leed, *No Man's Land*, pp. 7–9.
 55. *Der Kampf als inneres Erlebnis* (1922), p. 116.
 56. See, for example, 11, 371–2; WzM I, 184, 333; WzM II, 101.
 57. Elisabeth Förster-Nietzsche, *Das Leben Friedrich Nietzsches*, 3 vols (Leipzig: Naumann, 1904), 11, 682–3.
 58. It was not uncommon for Conservative Revolutionaries to turn to Nietzsche's sister for inspiration: Alfred Baeumler argues in his 1930 essay that the Nietzsche image currently in circulation is wrong and that on many points Nietzsche's sister's biography is a more reliable guide ('Nietzsche', p. 260). On the shortcomings of the biography see Kaufmann, p. 179.
 59. Martin Greiffenhagen makes the general point that, in its revolutionary phase, conservatism aligns itself with vitalist philosophy as a substitute for history (*Das Dilemma des Konservatismus*, p. 253). In particular, Greiffenhagen traces a shift in conservative ideas on sacrifice at the end of the nineteenth century: 'To the extent that traditional religious, political and moral values become problematic, conservative interest in a cause for which one can sacrifice oneself shifts to the act of sacrifice itself' (p. 195).
 60. See Chapter 1 above.
 61. *Der Kampf als inneres Erlebnis* (1922), p. 92.
 62. Werner Best, 'Der Krieg und das Recht', pp. 157–60.
 63. See Chapter 3 below for details of this debate.
 64. 'Der heroische Realismus', *Die Literarische Welt*, 28 March 1930, pp. 3–4.
 65. *Nietzsche der Philosoph und Politiker*, p. 94.
 66. Alfred Baeumler, 'Nietzsche und der Nationalsozialismus', pp. 282–3.

67. Oswald Spengler, *Der Untergang des Abendlandes*, second edition, 2 vols (Munich: DTV, 1973), 1, p. 68n. Subsequent references to volumes 1 and 2 of this work will be given in the main text as UA1 and UA2, followed by the page number.
68. The debt to Nietzsche is suggested by the combination of 'priests and philosophers': in *Der Wille zur Macht* Nietzsche had attacked the 'pious lie of priests and philosophers' for establishing concepts of good and evil which were divorced from the natural concepts of useful and harmful, from 'what enhances life' and 'what diminishes life' (WzM I, 248–9).
69. See, for example, *Preußentum und Sozialismus*, in Oswald Spengler, *Politische Schriften* (Munich and Berlin: Beck, 1934), p. 85.
70. *Politische Schriften*, p. vii.
71. Oswald Spengler, *Jahre der Entscheidung* (Munich: Beck, 1933), p. 137.
72. *Ibid.*, pp. 68–9.
73. Similarly, socialism is the 'tyranny of the stupid and the will to negate life' (WzM I, 232–3).
74. *Jahre der Entscheidung*, p. 100. Nietzsche uses the term *schlechtweggekommen* in *Der Wille zur Macht* to describe those who advocate morality as a form of the will to power which may be used against those who are happy (WzM I, 345).
75. *Jahre der Entscheidung*, p. 115.
76. *Der Mensch und die Technik* (Munich: Beck, 1931), pp. 13–22. The liberal-left *Tagebuch* attacked Spengler for basing this book on a 'misunderstood Nietzscheanism' which saw man exclusively as a 'beast of prey'; Spengler is accused of having written not with the spirit of a philosopher but with that of a 'campaigning, malicious, evil partisan and nationalist' (Paul Kornfeld, 'Philosophie der Barbarei', *Das Tagebuch*, 22 August 1931, pp. 1336–41).
77. In the first volume of *Untergang des Abendlandes* Spengler refers to the scene portrayed in Elisabeth Förster-Nietzsche's biography in which Nietzsche is supposed to have seen Prussian regiments pass by and first thought of the idea of the Will to Power (p. 478). In the twenties Spengler maintained a regular correspondence with Nietzsche's sister, but his attitude towards her is ambiguous. By 1935 he is complaining about the secretiveness of the Nietzsche Archive in Weimar, and he resigns from its governing body, suggesting that the archive has distorted Nietzsche's true message. See Oswald Spengler, *Briefe, 1913–1936*, ed. by A. M. Kocktanek (Munich: Beck, 1963), esp. pp. 63, 358, 751.
78. *Der Mensch und die Technik*, pp. 23, 34.
79. *Ibid.*, p. 54.
80. *Ibid.*, pp. 64–5.
81. *Jahre der Entscheidung*, p. 4.
82. *Ibid.*, p. 14.
83. *Ibid.*, pp. 161–3.
84. Oswald Spengler, 'Pessimismus?' (essay of 1921), in *Reden und Aufsätze*, third edn (Munich: Beck, 1951), p. 79.
85. Ernst Jünger, 'Das Sonderrecht des Nationalismus', *Arminius*, 23 January 1927, pp. 3–4.
86. 'Why I wrote "The Storm of Steel"', interview in *Evening Chronicle*, 29 November 1929.

87. 'Unsere Politiker', *Die Standarte*, 6 September 1925, p. 1.
88. *Preußentum und Sozialismus*, pp. 25–6.
89. *Ibid.*, p. 32.
90. *Ibid.*, p. 80.
91. *Ibid.*, p. 105.
92. Not a few recent studies of Nietzsche go so far out of their way to appreciate this interaction that they neglect to show the side of Nietzsche which made it relatively easy for the Conservative Revolutionaries (and others) to appropriate him for their political purposes. Bernhard Taureck's *Nietzsche und der Faschismus* is a necessary corrective to this trend.

3 THE CONSERVATIVE REVOLUTION AND THE CONSERVATIVE DILEMMA

1. See, for example, Klaus Epstein's review article 'Antidemokratisches Denken in der Weimarer Republik', *Historische Zeitschrift*, 197 (1963), 657–70 on Kurt Sontheimer, *Antidemokratisches Denken in der Weimarer Republik* (Munich: Nymphenburger Verlag, 1962). Sontheimer in turn criticises Armin Mohler, *Die Konservative Revolution in Deutschland 1918–1932* (Stuttgart: Vorwerk, 1950) and Klemens von Klemperer, *Germany's New Conservatism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957) for offering 'mere history of ideas' (*Antidemokratisches Denken in der Weimarer Republik*, second edn [Munich, Nymphenburger Verlag, 1968], p. 12).
2. Reinhard Kühnl criticises the second edition of Martin Greiffenhagen's *Das Dilemma des Konservatismus* (Munich: Piper, 1977) on these grounds. (Quoted by Greiffenhagen, p. 367.) Other studies which can be criticised for much the same reason: Denis Goeldel, *Moeller van den Bruck (1876–1925) un nationaliste contre la révolution* (Frankfurt a.M. etc.: Peter Lang, 1984); Keith Bullivant, 'The Conservative Revolution', in *The Weimar Dilemma: Intellectuals in the Weimar Republic*, ed. Anthony Phelan (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1985), pp. 47–70.
3. Walter Bußmann, 'Politische Ideologien zwischen Monarchie und Weimarer Republik', *Historische Zeitschrift*, 190 (1960), 55–77.
4. See Walter Struve, *Elites against Democracy: Leadership ideals in bourgeois political thought in Germany, 1890–1933* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973), p. 19; Heide Gerstenberger, *Der revolutionäre Konservatismus* (Berlin: Duncker und Humblot, 1969); Herman Lebovics, *Social Conservatism and the Middle Classes in Germany, 1914–1933* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969).
5. See Joachim Petzold, 'Konservative Wegbereiter des Faschismus und ihre Rehabilitierung in der Bundesrepublik', *Blätter für deutsche und internationale Politik* (January 1983), 80–93.
6. Martin Greiffenhagen, *Das Dilemma des Konservatismus*, 1971 edn, p. 15.
7. Klaus Fritzsche, *Politische Romantik und Gegenrevolution: Fluchtwege in der Krise der bürgerlichen Gesellschaft: Das Beispiel des 'Tat'-Kreises* (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1976), p. 327.

8. Herf, pp. 15–16.
9. See, for example, G., 'Nationalismus', *Deutsches Volkstum*, 9 (1927), 497–502.
10. Franz Schauwecker, 'Jugend und Kriegserlebnis', *Standarte*, 17 March 1927, pp. 105–8; Hans Henning Freiherr Grote, 'Nationalismus wider Liberalismus!', in *Aufstand: Querschnitt durch den revolutionären Nationalismus*, ed. Goetz Otto Stoffregen (Berlin: Brunnen Verlag, 1931), pp. 16–21 (p. 17).
11. G., 'Die nationale Revolution', *Deutsches Volkstum*, 11 (1929), 569–76.
12. Edgar Jung, *Sinndeutung der deutschen Revolution* (Oldenburg: Stalling, 1933), p. 20.
13. G., 'Reaktion', *Deutsches Volkstum*, 9 (1927), 8–12.
14. See, for example, Friedrich Georg Jünger, 'Kampf', *Standarte*, 8 July 1926, pp. 342–3; Ernst Jünger, 'Revolution und Idee', *Völkischer Beobachter (Unterhaltungsbeilage)*, 23/24 September 1923.
15. G., 'Die nationale Revolution', *Deutsches Volkstum*, 11 (August 1929), 575.
16. Franz Schauwecker, *Der feurige Weg*, p. 227.
17. Florian Geyer, 'An die Dreißigjährigen!', *Standarte*, 13 May 1926, pp. 148–50.
18. Edgar Jung, *Die Herrschaft der Minderwertigen: Ihr Zerfall und ihre Ablösung* (Berlin: Deutsche Rundschau, 1927), p. 339.
19. *Ibid.*, pp. 181, 339–40.
20. Anon., 'Zur Psychologie des "nationalen Sozialismus"', *Standarte*, 27 October 1928, pp. 5–8.
21. *Ibid.* See also Kurt Hesse, *Der Feldherr Psychologos*, on the soldiers' bitterness at the way the war had been made into a business (p. 163).
22. Franz Schauwecker, 'Wesen des Nationalismus', *Standarte*, 15 July 1926, pp. 366–70.
23. Neo, 'Soziale Revolution', *Standarte*, 27 May 1926, pp. 199–200.
24. Claus v. Eickstedt, "'Frontsoldat und Gildenstaat'", *Standarte*, 29 July 1926, pp. 418–20.
25. Quoted by Klaus Fritzsche, *Politische Romantik und Gegenrevolution: Fluchtwege in der Krise der bürgerlichen Gesellschaft: Das Beispiel des 'Tat'-Kreises* (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1976), pp. 98–9. On the essentially middle-class economic location of the Conservative Revolution, see Herf, pp. 22; Lebovics, pp. 47–8.
26. Karl Radek, 'Leo Schlageter, der Wanderer ins Nichts', speech to the Executive of the Communist International, 20 June 1923, reproduced in Moeller van den Bruck, *Das Recht der jungen Völker*, ed. Hans Schwarz (Berlin: Der Nahe Osten, 1932), pp. 75–9.
27. Moeller's three replies to Radek were originally published in *Das Gewissen* in 1923 and later reproduced in *Das Recht der jungen Völker*, pp. 83–100.
28. Edgar Jung, *Die Herrschaft der Minderwertigen*, 1927, p. 47. On this rejection of socioeconomic change, see James Diehl, *Paramilitary Politics in Weimar Germany* (Bloomington and London: Indiana University Press, 1977), p. 214; Heide Gerstenberger, *Der revolutionäre Konservatismus* (Berlin: Duncker und Humblot, 1969), pp. 56–7, 149; Herf, *Reactionary Modernism*, pp. 90–1.

29. Paul Ernst, 'Zeitwende und Führermangel', *Deutsches Volkstum*, 11 (1929), 803–9.
30. Franz Schauwecker, 'Wesen des neuen Nationalismus', *Stahlhelm-Beilage*, 8 May 1927, pp. 7–8.
31. Friedrich Georg Jünger, 'Die Kampfbünde', *Standarte*, 2 April 1926, pp. 8–11.
32. Edgar Jung, *Die Herrschaft der Minderwertigen* (1927), pp. 47–8.
33. See Jürgen Kocka, *Klassengesellschaft im Krieg*, pp. 40–3.
34. W. K., 'Standarte 1928', *Standarte*, 8 January 1928 pp. 1–2.
35. Oswald Spengler, *Politische Schriften*, 9–15 thousand (Munich and Berlin: Beck, 1934), p. vii.
36. Quoted by Martin Broszat, *German National Socialism* (Santa Barbara: Clio, 1966), pp. 13–14.
37. Edgar Jung, *Sinndeutung der deutschen Revolution*, p. 11.
38. Oswald Spengler, *Preußentum und Sozialismus*, in *Politische Schriften*, pp. 84–5.
39. *Ibid.*, p. 85.
40. *Ibid.*, pp. 85–6.
41. *Preußentum und Sozialismus*, pp. 83–5.
42. Artur Mahraun, 'Der Kampf der Frontsoldaten', *Der Meister* (October 1932), 1–6.
43. Franz Schauwecker, 'Wesen des neuen Nationalismus', *Stahlhelm-Beilage*, 8 May 1927, pp. 7–8.
44. *Preußentum und Sozialismus*, p. 10.
45. *Ibid.*, p. 3.
46. Moeller van den Bruck, *Jedes Volk hat seinen eigenen Sozialismus* (Oldenburg i.O.: Stalling, 1931), p. 70.
47. Ernst Jünger, 'Der Internationalismus', *Die Standarte*, 22 November 1925, p. 2.
48. Gelimer, 'Mussolinis ständischer Staat', *Standarte*, 10 June 1926, p. 258.
49. Gelimer, 'Brief aus Rom', *Standarte*, 29 April 1926, pp. 115–16.
50. Edgar Jung, *Die Herrschaft der Minderwertigen: Ihr Zerfall und ihre Ablösung* (Verlag Deutsche Rundschau: Berlin, 1927), pp. 180–1.
51. 'Werksgemeinschaft oder nationale Gewerkschaft', *Standarte*, 19 August 1926, pp. 492–3.
52. Claus von Eickstedt, "'Frontsoldat und Gildenstaat'", *Standarte*, 29 July 1926, pp. 418–20.
53. Oswald Spengler, *Preußentum und Sozialismus*, p. 83.
54. See also 'Lieber Kamerad', *Führerbriefe des Stahlhelm*, 1 February 1930, pp. 5–6.
55. Ernst Jünger, 'Großstadt und Land', *Deutsches Volkstum*, 8 (August 1926), p. 579.
56. Kurt Woermann, 'Die soziale Befreiung', in Albrecht Erich Günther (ed.), *Was wir vom Nationalsozialismus erwarten* (Heilbronn: Eugen Salzer Verlag, 1932), pp. 138–48, here 140f.
57. Quoted by Klaus Fritzsche, p. 111.
58. See, for example, Leutnant Scheringer, 'Revolutionäre Weltpolitik', *Die sozialistische Nation: Blätter der Deutschen Revolution*, 6 (June 1931).

59. Ernst Niekisch, *Erinnerungen eines deutschen Revolutionärs*, 2 vols (Cologne: Wissenschaft und Politik, 1974), 1, 191.
60. James Ward, 'Pipe Dreams or Revolutionary Politics? The Group of Social Revolutionary Nationalists in the Weimar Republic', in *Journal of Contemporary History*, vol. 15, no. 3, July 1980, pp. 513–32.
61. 'Eine Rundfrage', *Die sozialistische Nation*, 1 (January 1931), pp. 11–13; 2 (February 1931).
62. Ibid.
63. Similarly, Otto Strasser blended a commitment to revolutionary class struggle, a planned economy with racism and anti-urbanism. See, for example, 'Das Ziel der deutschen sozialistischen Kampfbewegung', *Die deutsche Revolution*, 2, 20 March 1932.
64. Martin Greiffenhagen, *Das Dilemma des Konservatismus in Deutschland*, second edn (Munich: Piper, 1977), pp. 195–6.
65. Ernst Niekisch, *Das Reich der niederen Dämonen* (Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1953), p. 67. Niekisch wrote this work between 1935 and 1936. Niekisch traces this idea back to Carl Schmitt and argues that it takes political form in fascist activism. He describes this activism as militant nihilism which found expression in the work of Ernst Jünger (ibid., p. 68).
66. Martin Greiffenhagen, *Das Dilemma des Konservatismus in Deutschland*, p. 253.
67. Oswald Spengler, *Preußentum und Sozialismus*, in *Politische Schriften* (Munich and Berlin: Beck, 1934), p. 4. *Preußentum und Sozialismus* was written in 1919.
68. Commentators are also generally agreed upon this point. See James Diehl, *Paramilitary Politics in Weimar Germany* (Bloomington and London: Indiana University Press, 1977), pp. 94, 213. Also H. C. Schulz and D. Schulz-Marmelius, 'Konservative Revolution', in *Nationaler 'Sozialismus' von rechts*, ed. Jan Peters (Berlin: Klaus Guhl, 1980), pp. 38–9.
69. Ernst Jünger, "'Nationalismus" und Nationalismus', *Das Tagebuch*, 21 September 1929, pp. 1552–8. Otto-Ernst Schüddekopf, *Nationalbolschewismus in Deutschland 1918–1933* (Frankfurt a.M., Berlin, Vienna: Ullstein, 1973), notes the more abstract, 'metaphysical' politics of the last years of the Republic, but explains the shift only in very general, philosophical terms (pp. 233–5).
70. Ernst Niekisch, *Gewagtes Leben 1889–1948: Erinnerungen eines deutschen Revolutionärs*, 1, p. 191.
71. 'Schluß', *Die Standarte*, 20/27 December 1925, p. 3.
72. 'Zum Jahre', *Die Standarte*, 3 January 1926, p. 1.
73. 'Revolution um Karl Marx', *Widerstand*, 5 (May 1929), p. 144.
74. "'Nationalismus" und Nationalismus', *Das Tagebuch*, 21 September 1929, p. 1554.
75. 'Der Frontsoldat und die innere Politik', *Die Standarte*, 29 November 1925, p. 2.
76. Quoted by Artur Mahraun, 'Das Ehrhardt-Programm', *Der Meister*, 10 (August 1926), pp. 30–5.
77. Spengler writes: 'Civilisations are the most extreme and artificial conditions of which the higher species of man is capable. They are a conclusion; they follow upon what has developed as something fixed, they are death which follows upon life' (UA1, 44).

78. 'Schließt Euch zusammen!', *Standarte*, 3 June 1926, pp. 222–6.
79. 'An alle Kampfgenossen!', *Standarte*, 3 June 1926, p. 240. The writer appeals to the National Socialists, the Freiheitspartei, Stahlhelm, Wehrwolf, Jungdeutscher Orden, Wiking, Altreichsflagge, Tannenberg-Bund, Verband Hindenburg, the Ringkreis, Bund der Großdeutschen, Gesellschaft Deutscher Staat, Hochschule für nationale Politik, Nationale Jugendbewegung, old Free Corps fighters, the Bayern, and the Roßbacher. Background information on some of these groups may be found in Mohler's *Die Konservative Revolution in Deutschland 1918–1932*.
80. 'Schließt Euch zusammen! Antworten I', *Standarte*, 10 June 1926, p. 248.
81. *Ibid.*
82. 'Schließt Euch zusammen! Antworten I', p. 249.
83. 'Schließt Euch zusammen! Antworten V', *Standarte*, 8 July 1926, pp. 346–8.
84. 'Schließt Euch zusammen! Antworten I', *Standarte*, 10 June 1926, p. 250.
85. 'Schließt Euch zusammen! Antworten II', *Standarte*, 17 June 1926, pp. 270–1.
86. *Ibid.*, pp. 271–3.
87. *Ibid.*, pp. 273–5.
88. 'Schließt Euch zusammen! Antworten III', *Standarte*, 24 June 1926, pp. 294–6.
89. 'Großstadt und Land', *Deutsches Volkstum*, 8 (August 1926), p. 579.
90. 'Schließt Euch zusammen! Antworten III', pp. 296–7.
91. *Ibid.*, p. 298.
92. *Ibid.*, pp. 299–300.
93. 'Schließt Euch zusammen! Antworten IV', *Standarte*, 1 July 1926, pp. 318–19.
94. Gerhard Roßbach, leader of the Schilljugend and Dr Wolfgang Peters (*ibid.*, pp. 319–22).
95. 'Schließt Euch zusammen! Antworten V', *Standarte*, 8 July 1926, p. 350.
96. 'Die antinationalen Mächte', *Arminius*, 30 January 1927, p. 4.
97. 'Schließt Euch zusammen! Schlußwort', *Standarte*, 22 July 1926, pp. 391–5.
98. *Ibid.*, p. 391.
99. *Ibid.*, p. 392. The references are to the Free Corps which fought in the Baltic region in 1919 under General von der Goltz who claimed to be protecting German interests against Russia. Bridges were blown up in a campaign of sabotage conducted mainly by former Free Corps members after the French and Belgian occupation of the Ruhr in 1923. At the Brandenburg Gate the Ehrhardt Brigade and General Lüttwitz's men had received an enthusiastic reception in the Kapp Putsch. In Upper Silesia German and Polish volunteers had fought over the future of the area. Munich was the scene of the abortive Beer Hall Putsch.
100. On the irrational resonances of blood and heart imagery, see Woods, *Ernst Jünger and the Nature of Political Commitment*, pp. 78, 134–5.
101. 'Die zwei Tyrannen', *Arminius*, 13 March 1927, p. 3.
102. 'Unsere Politiker', *Die Standarte*, 6 September 1925, p. 1.
103. 'Wesen des Frontsoldatentums', *Die Standarte*, 6 September 1925, p. 2.
104. 'Die zwei Tyrannen', *Arminius*, 13 March 1927, pp. 3–4.
105. 'Wesen des Frontsoldatentums', p. 2.

106. 'Revolution um Karl Marx', *Widerstand*, 5 (May 1929), p. 144.
107. Wilhelm Kleinau (ed.), *Stahlhelm-Jahrbuch 1926* (Magdeburg: Stahlhelm Verlag, 1925), pp. 12–13.
108. Wilhelm Kleinau, 'Mussolini über Verfassungen und Programme', *Standarte*, 14 August 1927, p. 339.
109. Wilhelm Kleinau, 'Das Jungdeutsche Manifest', *Standarte*, 25 December 1927, pp. 562–3. Kleinau takes the same line in 'Kritik am Jungdeutschen Manifest', *Standarte*, 8 January 1928, pp. 5–8.
110. Helmut Theisen, *Die Entwicklung zum nihilistischen Nationalismus in Deutschland 1918–1933* (Munich: Lipp, 1955), p. 105.
111. Hermann Ehrhardt, *Deutschlands Zukunft: Aufgaben und Ziele* (Lehmanns: Munich, 1921), pp. 25–32. On the politicisation of the Ehrhardt Brigade after the Kapp Putsch see Gabriele Krüger, *Die Brigade Ehrhardt* (Leibniz: Hamburg, 1971).
112. Quoted by Artur Mahraun in 'Das Ehrhardt-Programm', *Der Meister*, 10 (August 1926), pp. 30–5.
113. Kapitän Ehrhardt, 'Werksgemeinschaft oder nationale Gewerkschaft', *Standarte*, 19 August 1926, pp. 492–3. Significantly, it was Ehrhardt's 'Work Programme' which Stahlhelm took up in October 1926 when it announced that it was entering the political arena.
114. Franz Schauwecker, 'Wesen des Nationalismus', *Standarte*, 15 July 1926, pp. 366–70.
115. Franz Schauwecker, 'Auseinanderstzung des Nationalismus', *Standarte*, 28 August 1927, p. 366.
116. Friedrich Georg Jünger, 'Die Kampfbünde', *Standarte*, 2 April 1926, pp. 8–11.
117. Friedrich Georg Jünger, 'Kampf', *Standarte*, 8 July 1926, pp. 342–3.
118. Friedrich Georg Jünger, 'Revolution und Diktatur', *Das Reich*, 1, 1930/31, pp. 9–12.
119. Goetz Otto Stoffregen (ed.), *Aufstand: Querschnitt durch den revolutionären Nationalismus* (Berlin: Brunnen Verlag, 1931), p. 14.
120. Artur Mahraun, 'Der Kampf des Frontsoldaten', *Der Meister*, October 1932, pp. 1–6.
121. This background in: Klaus Fritzsche, *Politische Romantik und Gegenrevolution. Fluchtwege in der Krise der bürgerlichen Gesellschaft: Das Beispiel des 'Tat'-Kreises*. See also Armin Mohler, *Die Konservative Revolution in Deutschland 1918–1932*, 2 vols, third edn (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1989), 1, pp. 434–5; Ebbo Demant, *Von Schleicher zu Springer: Hans Zehrer als politischer Publizist* (Mainz: v Hase and Koehler, 1971).
122. See Demant, p. 78.
123. Hans Zehrer, 'Die Revolution der Intelligenz', *Die Tat*, 7 (October 1929), pp. 486–507.
124. Hans Zehrer, 'Grundriß einer neuen Partei', *Die Tat*, 9 (December 1929), pp. 641–61. Klaus Fritzsche points out that the average income of the white-collar workers was around the same as for manual workers at the time Zehrer was writing and that the white-collar workers sought ways of 'setting themselves apart from them' (p. 27).
125. Fritzsche, p. 327.

126. Hans Zehrer, 'Parole für die Wahlen', *Die Tat*, 1 (April 1928), pp. 60–5.
127. *Ibid.*, p. 65.
128. 'Ein Vorschlag an die Verbände', *Die Tat*, 2 (May 1928), pp. 122–8.
129. Fritz Herrmann, 'Die Wirkung des Fronterlebens', *Die Tat*, 3 (June 1928), pp. 232–4.
130. Geschäftsstelle des Verbands der Vaterländischen Verbände Deutschlands, 'Jung und alt', *Die Tat*, 3 (June 1928), pp. 231–2.
131. Hans Zehrer, 'Utopie und Realität', *Die Tat*, 3 (June 1928), pp. 227–9.
132. *Ibid.*
133. Anon., 'Das Fenster', *Die Tat*, 3 (June 1928), pp. 239–40.
134. Hans Zehrer, 'Der Fall Lambach', *Die Tat*, 6 (September 1928), pp. 457–64.
135. Hans Zehrer, 'Bürgerliche Mitte: Kompromiß oder Synthese?', *Die Tat*, 4 (July 1928), pp. 279–87.
136. Hans Zehrer, 'Zwischen zwei Revolutionen', *Die Tat*, 7 (October 1928), pp. 524–34.
137. Hans Zehrer, 'Das Gewitter steigt auf', *Die Tat*, 10 (January 1929), pp. 782–6.
138. *Ibid.*
139. Hans Zehrer, 'Achtung, junge Front! Draußenbleiben!', *Die Tat*, 1 (April 1929), pp. 25–40; 'Die Situation der Innenpolitik', *Die Tat*, 2 (May 1929), pp. 110–19.
140. *Ibid.*
141. 'Hugenbergs Glück und Ende', *Die Tat*, 3 (June 1929), pp. 195–212.
142. 'Die Situation der Innenpolitik', *Die Tat*, 2 (May 1929), pp. 110–19.
143. Hans Zehrer, 'Grundriß einer neuen Partei', *Die Tat*, 9 (December 1929), pp. 641–61. Klaus Fritzsche notes Zehrer's thoughts on the rejection of materialism and comments that they reflect 'a petty bourgeois Utopia... , a longing for synthesis and escape from the real world', pp. 131–2.
144. Hans Zehrer, 'Grundriß einer neuen Partei', *Die Tat*, 9 (December 1929), p. 649.
145. *Ibid.*
146. *Ibid.*
147. * * * (i.e. Hans Zehrer), 'Die kalte Revolution', *Die Tat*, 7 (October 1930), p. 485.
148. *Ibid.*, p. 511.
149. Hans Zehrer, 'Das Jahr der Entscheidung?', *Die Tat*, 11 (February 1931), pp. 833–46.
150. Hans Zehrer, 'Wohin treiben wir?', *Die Tat*, 5 (August 1931), p. 348.
151. Hans Zehrer, 'Rechts oder Links', *Die Tat*, 7 (October 1931), p. 515.
152. Hans Zehrer, 'Die Etappe Brüning', *Die Tat*, 3 (June 1930), pp. 161–71.
153. Hans Zehrer, 'Bürgerliche Mitte: Kompromiß oder Synthese?', *Die Tat*, 4 (July 1928), p. 279.
154. Hans Zehrer, 'Rechts oder Links', *Die Tat*, 7 (October 1931), p. 548.
155. *Ibid.*, pp. 538–9.
156. *Ibid.*, p. 545.
157. E. W. Eschmann, 'Moderne Soziologen II: Georges Sorel', *Die Tat*, 5 (August 1930), pp. 367–77. Zehrer had clearly paid close attention to this article by Eschmann: it is the source of Zehrer's quotation on myth from Sorel.

158. Hans Zehrer, 'Rechts oder Links', *Die Tat*, 7 (October 1931), p. 545.
159. *Ibid.*, pp. 547–50.
160. *Ibid.*, pp. 553–4.
161. *Ibid.*, p. 555.
162. Hans Zehrer, 'Hugenbergs Glück und Ende', *Die Tat*, 3 (June 1929), p. 211.
163. Hans Zehrer, 'Rechts oder Links', *Die Tat*, 7 (October 1931), pp. 555–6.
164. *Ibid.*, pp. 556–7.
165. Hans Zehrer, 'Der Sinn der Krise', *Die Tat*, 12 (March 1932), pp. 937–57.
166. This information in Heinrich Keßler, *Wilhelm Stapel als politischer Publizist* (Nuremberg: Spindler, 1967).
167. *Ibid.*, p. 34.
168. Wilhelm Stapel, 'Die Zukunft der nationalen Bewegung', *Deutsches Volkstum*, 1 (January 1924), p. 4.
169. Wilhelm Stapel, "'Das dritte Reich'", *Deutsches Volkstum*, 8 (August 1924), pp. 352–4; 'Politische Briefe 1. An den Reichsinnenminister Severing', *Deutsches Volkstum*, 4 (April 1929), pp. 304–6.
170. Quoted by Keßler, p. 44.
171. *Ibid.*, p. 55.
172. Wilhelm Stapel, 'Die Zukunft der nationalen Bewegung', *Deutsches Volkstum*, 1 (January 1924), p. 4.
173. Wilhelm Stapel, *Volksbürgerliche Erziehung* (Jena: Eugen Diederichs Verlag, 1917), p. 17.
174. *Ibid.*, pp. 47–8.
175. Thomas Mann, *Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen, Das essayistische Werk*, 8 vols, ed. by Hans Bürgin (Frankfurt a.M.: Fischer, 1968), 1, p. 22.
176. *Ibid.*, p. 23.
177. *Ibid.*, p. 24.
178. *Ibid.*, p. 28.
179. *Ibid.*, pp. 28–9.
180. *Volksbürgerliche Erziehung*, pp. 37–8.
181. *Ibid.*, p. 28.
182. A. E. Günther, 'Die Krise des Konservatismus', *Deutsches Volkstum*, 12 (December 1930), pp. 900–5. Similarly Ernst Jünger writes in retrospect that nationalism only became a problem when Germany lost the war: 'Up until the war was lost we had given little thought to the meaning of the word *national*. This situation was healthy, for it meant that, as young men, we had to learn to speak a different language from that of the politicians; our language was more substantial, more intimidating and less reflective. The ties with the nation are located in a tellurian, dark realm; they are roots which have grown, not the slender threads of logic. Overnight we were obliged to start fighting with intellectual means for a cause whose nature lies deep beneath conscious thought.' 'Zum Jahreswechsel', *Der Vormarsch* (January 1928), p. 179.
183. See also Stapel's pessimism about the fate of any Putsch in 'Zur völkischen Bewegung', *Deutsches Volkstum*, 5 (May 1926), pp. 387–90.
184. Wilhelm Stapel, 'Die Zukunft der nationalen Bewegung', *Deutsches Volkstum*, 1 (January 1924), p. 7. See also Keßler, who sees the failure of the Beer Hall Putsch prompting Stapel to call upon the nationalist movement to clarify its ideas (p. 79).

185. *Ibid.*, p. 8.
186. *Ibid.*, p. 8.
187. *Ibid.*, p. 4.
188. Erwin Guido Kolbenheyer, 'Volk und Führer', *Deutsches Volkstum*, 1 (January 1924), pp. 9–11.
189. Wilhelm Stapel, 'Das Elementare in der völkischen Bewegung', *Deutsches Volkstum*, 5 (May 1924), pp. 213–15.
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191. Wilhelm Stapel, 'Vom Sinn und Unsinn des Wählens', *Deutsches Volkstum*, 5 (May 1926), p. 342.
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193. Albrecht Erich Günther, 'Der Nationalismus und die Gewerkschaften', *Standarte*, 9 December 1926, pp. 521–4.
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195. Wilhelm Stapel, 'Bauer und Staat', *Deutsches Volkstum*, 3 (March 1928), p. 189. See also 'Die beiden Fehlerquellen unserer Sozialpolitik', *Deutsches Volkstum*, 10 (October 1929), pp. 721–31.
196. Rudolf Fischer, 'Nationalismus oder Konservatismus?', *Deutsches Volkstum*, 4 (April 1929), p. 253.
197. *Ibid.*, p. 257.
198. Albrecht Erich Günther, 'Warum es keine gute konservative Presse geben kann', *Deutsches Volkstum*, 5 (May 1929), pp. 346–52.
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201. Hans von Wedermeyer-Pätzig, 'Konservatives Programm und Schrifttum', *Deutsches Volkstum*, 8 (August 1930), pp. 624–5.

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1. Kurt Sontheimer, *Antidemokratisches Denken in der Weimarer Republik*, p. 29.
2. Karl Dietrich Bracher, *Die Deutsche Diktatur*, second edn (Cologne and Berlin: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 1969), pp. 155–6.
3. Memo of 11 Sept. 1936 from Kanzlei Rosenberg, Kampfbund für deutsche Kultur to Abteilung Veranstaltungsdienst, held in the Archive of the Institut für Zeitgeschichte, Munich (hereafter IfZ).
4. Documents of the Preußische Geheime Staatspolizei (R58/243), Bundesarchiv Koblenz. See also Robert Gellately, *The Gestapo and German Society: Enforcing Racial Policy 1933–1945* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1990), p. 50.

5. Albrecht Erich Günther (ed.), *Was wir vom Nationalsozialismus erwarten* (Heilbronn: Eugen Salzer Verlag, 1932).
6. See documents on Albrecht Erich Günther at the Berlin Document Center (hereafter BDC).
7. Letter from Gaupersonalamtsleiter of 18 March 1941 to the President of Reichsschrifttumskammer. A letter from Geheime Staatspolizei in Hamburg of 24 May 1941 to President of Reichsschrifttumskammer draws attention to his anti-Semitism, but also to the fact that he has been criticised in the Nazi press for his conservatism. (Documents on Wilhelm Stapel, BDC.)
8. Quoted by Sontheimer, p. 283.
9. Artur Mahraun, 'Der jungdeutsche Orden und die Parteien', *Der Meister*, 1, No. 3, January 1926, pp. 1–8.
10. Edgar J. Jung, *Die Herrschaft der Minderwertigen: Ihr Zerfall und ihre Ablösung* (Berlin: Deutsche Rundschau, 1927), pp. 49–50; Edgar Jung, *Die Herrschaft der Minderwertigen: Ihr Zerfall und ihre Ablösung durch ein Neues Reich*, second edn (Berlin: Deutsche Rundschau, 1930), pp. 120–1.
11. Meyer-Schönbrunn, 'Der Einbruch der Juden in die deutsche Kultur', *Standarte*, 8 April 1928, pp. 155–7.
12. Karl Prümm argues that National Socialism provided the party which the elitist Conservative Revolutionaries refused to form. They thus helped to create a potential which could only be exploited by the Nazis, and to this extent they paved the way for Nazi authoritarianism (*Die Literatur des Soldatischen Nationalismus der 20er Jahre (1918–1933)*, 2 vols [Kronberg Taunus: Scriptor, 1974], 1, 78, 80–81; 11, 396–7).
13. Thomas Mann, 'Maß und Wert: Vorwort zum ersten Jahrgang', *Politische Schriften und Reden*, 3 vols (Frankfurt a.M.: Fischer, 1968), 11, 350.
14. Arnolt Bronnen, *Arnolt Bronnen gibt zu Protokoll* (Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1954), p. 190.
15. Ernst Jünger, *Strahlungen*, third edn (Tübingen: Heliopolis, 1949), p. 308.
16. Thomas Mann, 'Leiden an Deutschland', *Politische Schriften und Reden*, 11, 276–7.
17. Armin Mohler, *Die Konservative Revolution in Deutschland 1918–1932*, third edn, 2 vols (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1989), 1, 9.
18. Helmut Kaiser, *Mythos Rausch Reaktion* (Berlin: Aufbau, 1962), p. 199.
19. Ernst Jünger, 'Der neue Typ des deutschen Menschen', in Wilhelm Kleinau (ed.), *Stahlhelm-Jahrbuch 1926* (Magdeburg: Stahlhelm Verlag, 1925), p. 62.
20. Ernst Jünger, 'Der Frontsoldat und die innere Politik', *Die Standarte*, 29 November 1925, p. 2.
21. *Ibid.*
22. Ernst Jünger, 'Der Nationalismus der Tat', *Arminius*, 21 November 1926, p. 11.
23. Ernst Jünger, 'Die zwei Tyrannen', *Arminius*, 13 March 1927, pp. 3–4.
24. Ernst Jünger, 'Nationalismus und Nationalsozialismus', *Arminius*, 27 March 1927, pp. 8–9.
25. *Ibid.*, p. 10.
26. Ernst Jünger, 'Revolution um Karl Marx', *Widerstand*, May 1929, p. 145.
27. Ernst Jünger, 'Reinheit der Mittel', *Widerstand*, October 1929, pp. 295–7.

28. Ernst Jünger (ed.), *Der Kampf um das Reich* (Essen: Wilhelm Kamp, 1931). A further instance of collaboration between the Strasser brothers and Ernst Jünger is a series of articles under the title 'Vom Sinn des Krieges' which appeared in *Die grünen Hefte der 'NS-Briefe'*, 3 (1930), pp. 1–24.
29. In a letter of 14 December 1939 he writes that he is being 'kept under surveillance by lawyers, Hitler Youth leaders and bank managers'. Letter to Fräulein Litzmann, Deutsches Literaturarchiv, Marbach (hereafter DLAM).
30. *Dem Führer. Worte deutscher Dichter* (Tornisterschrift des Oberkommandos der Wehrmacht, 1941), p. 1.
31. The book was *Gärten und Straßen* (Berlin: Mittler, 1942). Hans Speidel, chief of staff to Rommel, relates how he was asked by the Propaganda Ministry to order Jünger to delete the offending passage. Speidel refused. 'Briefe aus Paris und dem Kaukasus', in Armin Mohler (ed.), *Freundschaftliche Begegnungen: Festschrift für Ernst Jünger zum 60. Geburtstag* (Frankfurt a.M.: Klostermann, 1955), p. 182.
32. Letter to Benno Ziegler, 31 January 1946, DLAM.
33. Letter to Ziegler, 12 February 1945, DLAM.
34. Ernst Jünger, *Jahre der Okkupation* (Stuttgart: Klett, 1958), p. 63.
35. 'Entretien avec Ernst Jünger', *Le Monde*, 20 June 1978, p. 2.
36. Ernst Jünger, 'Über die Gefahr', *Widerstand*, 3 (March 1931), p. 68.
37. Ernst Jünger, *Der Arbeiter*, in *Werke*, 10 vols (Stuttgart: Klett, 1960–5), V1, pp. 187, 197.
38. *Ibid.*, p. 323.
39. Oswald Spengler, *Der Mensch und die Technik* (Munich: Beck, 1931), pp. 2–6, 69.
40. *Ibid.*, p. 22.
41. Oswald Spengler, *Jahre der Entscheidung*, pp. 134–5.
42. Ernst Jünger, *Blätter und Steine* (Hamburg: Hanseatischer Verlag, 1934), pp. 170–2.
43. *Ibid.*, pp. 172–3.
44. *Ibid.*, pp. 173–8.
45. *Ibid.*, pp. 190–1.
46. *Ibid.*, pp. 205–11.
47. *Ibid.*, pp. 211–12.
48. *Ibid.*, p. 212.
49. Ernst Jünger, *Afrikanische Spiele* (Hamburg: Hanseatischer Verlag, 1936), p. 224.
50. *Ibid.*, pp. 5–8.
51. *Ibid.*, p. 51.
52. *Ibid.*, pp. 8–10.
53. *Ibid.*, p. 11.
54. *Ibid.*, pp. 92–3.
55. *Ibid.*, pp. 222–3.
56. Ernst Jünger, *Strahlungen*, third edn (Tübingen: Heliopolis, 1949), p. 166.
57. Ernst Jünger, *Das abenteuerliche Herz. Figuren und Capriccios. Zweite Fassung*, eighth edn (Hamburg: Hanseatischer Verlag, 1945), p. 226.
58. Ernst Jünger, *Das abenteuerliche Herz*, p. 94.
59. Jünger thus describes his reaction to the Marquis de Sade's work as follows: 'The whole thing makes disturbing reading, not so much because of the

- horrors but rather because of the complete calm with which the unspoken agreement between men is broken. It is as if somebody in the room had announced: "Now that all we animals are together..." (ibid., p. 56). And of those who thrive on the sufferings of others: "Their aim is a more or less intelligent form of despotism, but a despotism always constructed on the model of the animal kingdom. This is why, in their speeches and writings, they also give the victims they are intent on wiping out animal features' (ibid., p. 57).
60. In his correspondence of the time Jünger refers to his wish to pre-publish for the connoisseurs a few chapters relating to the latest outrages of the Mauretians (letter of 13 July 1939 to Herbert Steiner, DLAM). 'Mauretians' is one of Jünger's terms in his war diaries for the Nazis (e.g.: *Strahlungen*, p. 172).
 61. *Das abenteuerliche Herz. Figuren und Capriccios. Zweite Fassung*, p. 41.
 62. Ernst Jünger, *Auf den Marmorklippen*, 32nd thousand (Hamburg: Hanseatischer Verlag, 1941), pp. 40, 106. The first edition appeared in 1939.
 63. *Das abenteuerliche Herz*, pp. 34–5.
 64. Ibid., pp. 37–8.
 65. *Auf den Marmorklippen*, p. 40.
 66. Ibid., p. 20.
 67. Ibid., p. 28.
 68. Ibid., p. 20.
 69. Ibid., pp. 40–1. Similarly in *Strahlungen* Jünger sees gardeners and botanists as opponents of the Chief Forester (p. 565). It is likely that Jünger was inspired to oppose crude vitalism with the work of the vintners by a passage from the Bible. In *Strahlungen* he relates Isaiah's description of how the fields and the vineyards were laid waste and the elemental triumphed (p. 187).
 70. *Auf den Marmorklippen*, p. 30.
 71. Ibid., p. 102. In a letter of 1940 Jünger explains the military significance of the name: 'I realise that I did not give a precise answer to your question about the "old warrior" – mainly he gained this title as an artilleryman'. Letter to Fräulein Litzmann, 13 April 1940 (DLAM).
 72. Ibid., pp. 107–8; 108–12. In his diary of the time Jünger tells of his plan to write a piece on Mauretians and their doctrine of the 'amoral technician' (*Gärten und Straßen*, p. 7).
 73. *Der Friede* (Amsterdam: Erasmus, 1946), pp. 42–6.
 74. Ibid., pp. 11, 47.
 75. Ibid., p. 11.
 76. Ibid., pp. 12, 16.
 77. *Strahlungen*, p. 114.
 78. Ibid., p. 329. Later in the same work he says that men such as Hitler have 'the spirit of a fox or hyena' (p. 553).
 79. Ibid., p. 341.
 80. Ibid., p. 124.
 81. *Feuer und Blut*, pp. 31–2.
 82. *Strahlungen*, p. 430.

83. *Ibid.*, p. 172. Jünger's critique anticipates one major line of historical research into National Socialism which interprets it as a form of the 'modernist impulse' which crossed irrationalism with technicism (Eksteins, p. 303). For an account of modernisation theories, see Kershaw, pp. 132–47.
84. *Strahlungen*, p. 343.
85. *Heliopolis*, second edn (Tübingen: Heliopolis, 1949), p. 28.
86. *Ibid.*, pp. 172–3, 233.
87. *An der Zeitmauer*, pp. 80–1.
88. See Jünger's letter of August 1922, reproduced in Armin Mohler (ed.), *Die Schleife: Dokumente zum Weg von Ernst Jünger* (Zurich: Arche, 1955), p. 69. Ernst Jünger, 'Grundlagen des Nationalismus, 3. Der Charakter, *Stahlhelm-Jahrbuch*, ed. Franz Schauwecker (Magdeburg: Stahlhelm, 1927), p. 80.
89. *An der Zeitmauer*, p. 81.
90. *Der Weltstaat* (Stuttgart: Klett, 1960), pp. 56–8.
91. In *An der Zeitmauer* Jünger depicts change as an iceberg. The underwater mass represents what is predetermined, but the tip indicates the extent of human freedom (p. 276).
92. Quoted in Clemens Vollnhals, 'Oswald Spengler und der Nationalsozialismus', *Jahrbuch des Instituts für Deutsche Geschichte*, X111, 1984, pp. 263–303 (here 283).
93. Letter of 26 October 1933, in Oswald Spengler, *Briefe 1913–1936*, ed. Anton Koktanek (Munich: Beck, 1963), p. 709.
94. Letter of 3 November 1933, *ibid.*, p. 709.
95. Quoted by Vollnhals, p. 283.
96. Oswald Spengler, *Jahre der Entscheidung* (Munich: Beck, 1933).
97. See the letter of 16 November 1933 from Heinrich Beck to Spengler. Beck, the son of Spengler's publisher, states that in its year of publication *Jahre der Entscheidung* has already sold nearly 100 000 copies (*Briefe 1913–1936*, p. 715).
98. See, for example, Arthur Zweiniger, *Spengler im Dritten Reich: Eine Antwort auf Oswald Spenglers 'Jahre der Entscheidung'* (Oldenburg: Gerhard Stalling, 1933), pp. 7–17.
99. Alfred Rosenberg in *Nationalsozialistische Monatshefte*, 4, 1930, p. 180, quoted by Vollnhals, p. 290.
100. See Vollnhals, pp. 287–8.
101. Johann von Leers, *Spenglers weltpolitisches System und der Nationalsozialismus* (Berlin: Junker und Dünnhaupt, 1934), p. 6.
102. Anton Mirko Koktanek, *Oswald Spengler in seiner Zeit* (Munich: Beck, 1968), p. 446.
103. Johann von Leers attacks Spengler for ignoring the significance of 'racial science', *Spenglers weltpolitisches System und der Nationalsozialismus*, p. 12. Similarly, a review of *Untergang des Abendlandes* in *Das Schwarze Korps*, 34, 24 October 1935 argues that Spengler's pessimism overlooks the racial foundations of history, and that breeding can halt the decline Spengler describes.
104. *Jahre der Entscheidung*, pp. 96–8.
105. Vollnhals, p. 291.

106. *Jahre der Entscheidung*, p. ix.
107. Letter of 18 August 1933, *Briefe*, p. 699.
108. Vollnhals, p. 291.
109. Koktanek in *Briefe*, p. 17.
110. Oswald Spengler, *Politische Pflichten der deutschen Jugend* (Munich: Beck, 1924), pp. 21–4.
111. *Jahre der Entscheidung*, p. viii.
112. *Ibid.*, p. x.
113. *Ibid.*, pp. 4–9.
114. *Jahre der Entscheidung*, p. 9.
115. Letter of 11 October 1935, *Briefe*, p. 749.
116. Richard Oehler, *Friedrich Nietzsche und die deutsche Zukunft* (Leipzig: Armanen-Verlag, 1935).
117. Letter to Walter Jesinghaus of 27 October 1935, *Briefe*, p. 752.
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123. See Chapter 2 above.
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128. *Ibid.*, p. 121.
129. Kurt Woermann, 'Die soziale Befreiung', in *Was wir vom Nationalsozialismus erwarten*, pp. 138–48.
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