

Between War and Peace

A Translation of Pendle Hill Pamphlet 45

Zwischen Krieg und Frieden:

Fragen zur Verständigung und Versöhnung

by William Sollmann, 1948

translated by Irene M. Miller, 2024

Editor's Note:

In 1948, Pendle Hill published this pamphlet in German in support of Wilhelm Sollmann's work helping the German people think through how they wanted their democracy to work. The Germans' first experiment in democracy arrived in 1918 after World War I, but lasted only until the ascendancy of the Nazi party in 1933. After World War II, Germany was occupied by Allied Forces who required it to take certain steps, including instituting a representative democracy, before withdrawing.

Memory of the purpose behind the German pamphlet faded over time, and many of us were puzzled about its inclusion in the series. At [the celebration of 90 years of Pendle Hill pamphlets in March 2024](#), we mentioned our confusion, which led to Irene Miller's generous offer to translate.

The theme of making democracy viable in a world that might prefer strongmen still resonates more than seventy-five years later. In the United States today, there is a political minority that is trying to undermine democratic processes and seize power. Reading through this translation, I'm struck both by Sollmann's idealism and his realism. His reflections on democracy are worth revisiting, especially in this time.

Janaki Spickard Keeler
Editor & Pamphlet Coordinator
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Preface

This pamphlet is offered as a contribution to the German discussion on the possibilities of democratic ways of living.

William Sollmann's familiarity with European and American political life, positive as well as negative, add validity to his words. We believe his comments apply to all countries and peoples. We here in the United States are very aware that achievement of democracy requires unending effort, and we are grateful to William Sollmann for his formulation of goals towards which all nations should strive.

Howard Brinton
Director of Academic Studies
Summer 1948

Bibliographic Note

In Germany, prior to 1933, William Sollmann was known as editor and author, a member of parliament and federal minister. Since 1937 he acted as docent for political problems at Pendle Hill. He taught at numerous educational institutions, among them Haverford College, Bard College, City College in New York and at Pittsburgh and Harvard Universities.

He traveled extensively as docent for the Institute of Voelkerverstaendigung der Rotary Internationale and for the International Collaborative Work of American Quakers.

Besides other numerous publications, in 1941 he wrote Pendle Hill pamphlet 14, *Religion and Politics*, widely read in English.

Between War and Peace

It is difficult, perhaps impossible, to completely understand from abroad everything that contributed to the materialistic and intellectual life of Germany since 1933. This becomes the more troublesome as the misery and hunger curves in Germany rise. The abyss between the well-fed and the hungry is always deep and not easily bridged. We are well aware of this when speaking to Germans here. History is full of political and religious confusion, found in all small and large community organizations and their leaders. Indeed, only modern science and technology have created the means,¹ which fanatics used with maximal effect for propaganda and extirpation; these measures were unavailable to our forebears.

Multiple dangers threaten all of us, making self-examination ever more urgent, and equally necessary for the victorious as well as the defeated. Germans would be mistaken to think, that military victors lack serious self-examination. In the United States and Britain, as well as in other democratic nations, one quite freely discusses past errors and mistakes. War- and peace politics, as well as past treatment of Germany, especially in 1918, are thoroughly analyzed by free citizens.

The sole reason for this small text is to bring to discussion some basic questions of national and international coexistence. We turn to reasonable, thoughtful people found everywhere, within and without religious bodies, in all layers of society and in all economic or political settings.

What is Democracy?

All discussions about Germany are abuzz with democracy. But alone the fact that all four occupation forces have different concepts of what it means, teaches us the impossibility of nailing down content and method of democracy forever. The same applies to other significant concepts: religion, socialism liberalism, nation, freedom, right, truth. It is easier to see, what is **not** democracy: one man rule, one party, one class or clique; censure of press by government; banning of all opposition; willful imprisonment or liquidation of opponents; loss of independent judges and similarly more.

The Germans like to remind their Allied Military Governments,² that in regarding democracy, they leave much to be desired. No one will deny that. We have not yet arrived at peace, but are in a state of transition from the battlefields in a search for a tolerable state of peace. This still remains an unsolved international problem. As long as Germany does not know its borders, its duties and its position in the international community, a political and economic democracy in

¹ Sollmann is referring to the gas chambers. –Ed.

² The four Allied countries occupying Germany. –Ed.

Germany are impossible. The problem is even more complicated, as neither the victors, nor many Germans can believe that in the presently ruined Germany with its material, spiritual and moral devastation, self-governing would be possible.

Whatever the graver historic causes of this global catastrophe may be, which will occupy generations of historians and philosophers, the prevailing world opinion is, that the Imperial Reign of 1914 does not bear sole responsibility, but contributed significantly to the First World War and Hitler's dictatorship undoubtedly started the Second World War. In both cases the German people followed undemocratic, military governments. Therefore, the victors believe that such a population needs to prove their understanding of democratic principles, an acceptance of same as well as a validation of same. None of Germany's neighbors who had so severely suffered under Hitler's attack, would at this time accept an unimpeded self-governing Germany. It would prove useful for Germans and all friends of peace the world over to have a clear understanding of political realities, whether they agree or not.

Huge ramparts of mistrust and fear, which were a century in the making, cannot be erased in a couple of years. Must not Germans ask themselves who bears the blame for the current military occupation? And compared to Hitler's dictatorship, have not civil rights made great progress in spite of military occupation? Once again we can find newspapers, journals, books, as well as political, trade and ideological groups of differing opinions. This indicates a new beginning for freedom of expression, one of democracy's basics.

It appears to many foreigners that free expressions of differing opinions are not appreciated by the Germans at this time and therefore they exaggerate the same, and would rather submit to a monarch, a squire or a plebeian dictator like Hitler; a start-up, whom the great Dr Sauerbruch diagnosed as a very serious pathological case. Many foreigners, especially in America and Great Britain, want to see timely replacement of the occupation forces by a government of the people. Germans, judging democracy, should also remember that all their wars were waged by German governments that opposed democracy.

What is this much talked about democracy? The American Declaration of Independence in 1776 states: "All men are created equal, endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness." Schiller stated it similarly, when he proclaimed, that man is created free, even when born in chains. Goethe sang this song to freedom: "Come! We want to promise you deliverance from deepest pain—arrows and columns can be broken, but not a heart that is free; for it lives eternally, it is itself the whole man, in him are joy and aspiration, which cannot be crushed." Seumes's democratic credo: "Where there is no justice, there is no freedom, and where no freedom, there is no justice."

An American Answer

A group of outstanding American educators and competent specialists in statesmanship and civil service recently formulated this answer to what is democracy after a two-year study:

Democracy means recognition of the worth of a person. Every human being holds a worth of his own and has to be regarded always as a cause, never as a means. (Which is almost identical to Kant's Imperative.) The state exists for the man, not the man for the state.

Democracy means freedom: all men must actively participate in the election of their leader, the formation of the laws and share a sense of duty for government.

Every man should have freedom of thought and speech, to write and to create, to consent or criticize, to participate in meetings or unions, choice of profession, free to relocate to better his life, to worship as he chooses, to follow his conscience, free in the pursuit of truth and happiness.... freedom is the ancient, eternal and irreconcilable enemy of totalitarian demands and of any form of tyranny over the human body and spirit.

Democracy means equal rights... recognizing that, based on God given rights, at no time should there be exploitation, enslavement or violation or discrimination against race, caste, or other selection.

Democracy means lawfulness: the establishment and function of government needs to be firmly based on the Constitution: the entire political process of elections, legislature, administration and judicial decisions must follow the rules and the Constitution as freely laid down by its citizens. Every person and minority must be supported in their rights and freedoms against the passions of mobs, the revenge of parties, the might of privilege, the tyranny of police, the whims of officialdom, the ambitions of maniacs and the willful interference by government.

Democracy means public ethics: this means a basic understanding of decency in all public affairs... without any trust and goodness human community will decay and crumble.

Democracy means the possibility of personal advancement: this means a developing and progressive society, in which all can determine their own paths according to talent, and divergent beliefs; a community accessible to all: opportunities for all in work, health, education, social intercourse of human enlightenment and all the arts and sciences.

Democracy means personal responsibility: all people should be filled with the spirit of sacrifice for the common well-being, the spirit of brotherly love for

everyone, and a love for truth and justice. If we abuse our freedoms solely for the promotion of selfish personal interests, if we become calloused about injustices and inequities, if we become indifferent to the well-being of everyone, we shall surely sink back into servitude. Democracy will outrank all other systems of government in its demand for time and energy, virtue and reason from every citizen.

This is the grand American definition of democracy. The German poet Reinhold Schneider uttered these deep words about democracy: “I am concerned about a realization of a historical vision, in which there is room for the heavenly as well as the adversary powers, in which man and his kingly and fruitful freedom can find fruition.

Ideal and Reality

Naturally, great ideas and goals exist, but in no way are they realities. The best democracies know this and admit it. The imperfections of man always create sizable differences between the highs of ideals and the lows of the walk. However, it remains necessary to keep the highest possibilities in clear view, to strive for, in order to prevent remaining chained. One of the noblest early fighters of a German democracy, Ernst von Harnack, executed on March 5th 1945 for his love and activism for a free Germany, said to his wife and children, while being walked to the gallows: “It is not important that one reaches the goal, but that one finds the right path.” That is it! One must walk the way that conscience prescribes. It is easy to point out weaknesses of democracy. Especially in a starving country occupied by the military, following a dictator’s loss of the greatest war of all times. It is also quite easy to point out that most Christians did not follow the Ten Commandments or the Sermon on the Mount, nor Jesus’ main command: “Love your neighbor as yourself!” Can something Great and Beautiful be false, only because we are still too weak and immature to understand or apply it?

It is part of democracy that its methods and results may be criticized by all, even its archenemies, without offering better alternatives. This often-abused critique, which after all only reveals how free its citizens feel, leads to a lack of belief in democracy. In contrast, dictatorships appear, at least at the start, quite free of mistakes. One hears only about its noble, courageous and unselfish leader, nothing at all of the ruling party’s corruption. One can read only about the successes of the ruling party, and any opponent is called evil, a criminal or in the service of the enemy. A glowing facade is all one sees, and not what goes on behind it. The end of such naive acceptance of the glorious state: war, mass murder, defeat, hunger, shame, flight of the adored leader into death or hideout, whence the violated international rights will hold them to the line. Dictatorship is finally dead, but adherents to that dictatorship survive; they and their people have to accept the consequences of their surrender of democracy.

Still to this day many Germans declare they had no knowledge of the extent of the crimes committed in the concentration camps. Supposing that were true, what kind of a regime can hide from its citizens the murder and torture of hundreds of thousands of political and religious opponents and the millions of Jews solely for being Jewish? It is quite possible that in other countries with dictatorships similar crimes can be committed and kept secret. But the world questions over and over again why it was possible among the German people, who for more than two hundred years could read and write and should have been educated in critical thought.

Germany's Democratic Forerunners

We are quite aware of the democratic tradition in Germany. It is remarkable that many Germans did not appreciate it. Therefore, other countries had the impression long before Hitler, that rather all Germans liked militarism and only felt well with a strong leader. The fact that in early nineteenth-century German history, a growing democratic movement fought for existence, is virtually unknown abroad.

The 1848 Democratic Revolution is only a shadowy memory abroad and in Germany. The impression of most people about the German Reich and people, was one of hard aggressive militarism of the Prussian Kingdom, the certainly brutal, yet powerful person of Bismarck, its intrigues of the officers and master-men against the Weimar Republic, and finally, the barbaric outbreak of Hitlerism and its wars. It will surely take lengthy political moral efforts to erase this one-sided impression.

Should the error abroad that mistook almost all Germans as permanently antidemocratic amaze us? Did not the democratic battles, their heroes and martyrs, find a very modest place in German education, literature and generally in the heads of most German leaders? Was the remembrance of men like Goerres, Weitling, Robert Blum, Carl Schurz, Lassale, Wilhelm Liebknecht, Bebel, Ketteler, Kolping, Reichensperger, Eugen Richter, Theodor Barth esteemed? We intentionally grouped the names of democratic liberals and democratic socialists, Catholics, Protestants, Jews, and white and blue collar workers together to show the width of the democratic movement. But who recognizes these names and their significance any more today? Who knows or did know in Germany, that Reichspräsident Friedrich Ebert, the first worker and statesman of highest rank in world history, was characterized by strength, wisdom and goodness? How can it then be known abroad?

The Germans never were able to revere a non-military leader such as the Americans, who have Jefferson and Lincoln, do, and the British had Gladstone and Disraeli, who was Jewish.

Surely, it was hardly possible to develop high-caliber statesmen from among the people under the Prussian-German governments, which resembled the absolute monarch more than it did the parliament. The domineering influences of landowning nobility, the military machine, and a thin

layer of the industrial complex had for too long determined politics. It is exactly this, what the liberal thinking world today holds against the Germans. Should not the German people have given it a little thought?

We find valuable attempts at democracy already in the Middle Ages by the Guilds with their free citizens and the common properties of agricultural communities. In the Wilhelminic Empire the Germans still were vassals without sovereign rights, but a wide path to democracy was in the making: the free equal right to vote for parliament, even though the government was not yet responsible to parliament; strong democratic and liberal parties of the people's representatives and in city halls; an expanding liberal press; sizable unions and cooperatives with exemplary democratic methods; democratic self-governing health insurances; free and secretly elected trade and merchants courts; large movements for democratizing Prussia and equal rights for women; free activities among the youth, traces of which can still be found in democratic countries today.

And then there was the Weimar Republic. Accepting the defeat of the Empire, it was misjudged from its very start, but no one can deny that its constitution was one of the finest and noblest. The question remains, whether the leaders and their parties were not up to this great task, or whether reality was too far removed from the great ideas. Was everything really recorded on paper only? Is the industrial democracy, so advanced in the Republic's councils, for workers still but a dream in most countries today? Is not the Republic of Weimar's democratic social legislation barely achievable or exceeded in only a few countries, even today? Where in the world can we find more freedom of thought and speech today than in the former Republic, which was sadly so abused? Surely entrepreneurs and workers, farmers and the middle class, academia and laborers found much to be dissatisfied, but did not democracy provide the opportunity to make their complaints known and to steer for betterment? Was not the economic crisis, for which they ultimately abandoned their freedom, a global event?

All this is laid bare here, not to diminish any of the critique of the imperfections of the sunken Weimar Republic, but to establish a consolable truth: democracy is not a hopeless matter in Germany. There were and are millions, who remain true to it. The democratic spirit is deeply rooted in the nationhood. Every rebirth of German democracy must connect with former realities of the empire and its regions.

What the European Finds Remarkable about American Democracy

Naturally there is a fundamental difference between the German, perhaps also the continental, understanding of democracy and the American concept. In Europe, especially in Germany, democracy was regarded primarily as a political, economic and social system. Elections and the public control of the elected were the deciding factors, for many the only importance of democracy. These certainly are necessary democratic rights. But, beyond that, democracy is

much more: something immeasurable yet great, which cannot solely be achieved with laws, but by cultivation and nurture amongst the citizens. We think: a personal democratic attitude, daily democracy, a democratic spirit in all human encounters, the absence of commandeering and blind obedience, bullying by superiors and ducking of inferiors. The author admits experiencing this kind of democratic attitude among citizens only in the United States; especially in North Americans, whose families had lived here for generations and who are no longer caught in the customary “old country” ways.

Let it be understood that democracy rests on a democratic attitude of the interactions between parents and children, professors and students, teachers and pupils, pastors and their congregations, entrepreneurs and their staff, employees and craftsmen, housewives and domestic help, between public servants and the general public, who are regarded as paying customers and not as burdensome petitioners. Even between richest and poorest there should never be demeaning or subservient attitudes. In civilian American life you find only rarely military pluck and smart standing at attention (perhaps only internally). No real American, children included, feels inferior or permanently discriminated against by anyone only because he lives in a different part of town, earns more money, has a higher education or wealth status, appears to be better dressed, or somehow seems more successful. There are many, far too many, Americans who despise all politics, know little about democratic theories and only rarely read a leading article or book about politics. Yet they feel and act in a democratic way for it is the custom and manner of the land. That is true for millionaires as well as messenger boys. Even though the differences in income may be enormous, the thought of class-fighting is accepted by an ever-dwindling minority. Even though competition is severe, exploitation and economic insecurity large, and the wants of a weakly developed social system palpable, the cry for public assistance is far less and the belief in self-help is much stronger than in Europe. Even the unions fear from a mistrust stemming from democratic tradition, that the state and ruling parties could become too strong.

Germans hostile to Jews often point at the lacking equal rights for Blacks especially in the Southern States. It is correct that the racial question in America is awaiting solution. Blacks and other racial minorities have many justifiable complaints. Millions of Americans consider the treatment of Blacks and other Orientals a national shame. Yet the difference between the persecution and extermination of Jews in Hitler-Germany and the constitutional, economic and social discrimination against Blacks in large parts of America is vast. Above all in the United States one can openly discuss the racial question, also in congress. There are large organizations taking on the rights of Blacks. Blacks have their own press and literature. More and more do the Blacks penetrate economics, education, and the arts and sciences. Already eighty years after their liberation from slavery you cannot find any profession without Blacks, often in leading positions. Comparing the racial question in America and the persecution of Jews in Germany there are clearly the deepest differences between democracy and dictatorship. In America the Black has the opportunity to move up and eventually to prevail, all be it against great odds. In contrast in

the Hitler Dictatorship from its beginning there was only destruction, first the economic and then the physical.

One should always remember that at the core of democracy—as of religion—is the human being, his inviolability and his dignity. His value as a citizen should not depend on his possessions, but on his contribution to society. All government actions and all public and private establishments should only serve the human being, and only the human being, namely his physical, intellectual and spiritual development. The essence of democracy has to begin and grow in every citizen and not in the parliaments, government departments and city halls. We may deduce our democratic basics from religion or ethics, from our love of our homeland, or from the belief in a better humanity, or simply from reasonable self-interest – the higher or lower degree of democracy will always depend on the citizens of the country and on no one else.

In a dictatorship, responsibility is easily passed on to the leader and a reckoning for it will be presented later. In democracy, as in religion, the decision rests with each individual. That is the first and decisive precept of democracy. **Therefore, democracy cannot be imposed anywhere.** On the other hand, totalitarian systems demand acquiescence of all citizens to the state and ruling parliaments. No higher loyalty is permitted other than the state and its ideology. That excludes any freedom of conscience under God or other universal moral law. People become slaves of the state and the secret police become guardians and judges of private morals.

The Expansion of Peoples' Rights

As old as the idea of democracy is, so is the new granting of democratic rights to all members of the nation. Equal rights of workers, women and youth became reality only in this century, all be it not yet everywhere in the world. This progression of democratic theories into practice is unusually difficult for civil and municipal government. Each major decision requires prior convincing of parliament as well as of multiple free organizations,³ which depend on the favor of the broadest masses. This means constant wrangling between democrats and demagogues about the possible and the impossible, differentiating between responsible art of government and sometimes irresponsible propaganda.

Therefore, democracy cannot have a bright and shiny facade, which would be a dictatorship's fantastic pride, where means of cleansing are life threatening and the "unclean" will be met by a revolver or rope. Also, we still find in American Democracy many disturbing, meaning immature, features and elements. A politician deals with these as a wise father or teacher would deal with the unbridled romps of his developing children. From its beginnings and also later on democracy can't work smoothly; for democracy also means the opportunity to develop freely, to be given time to advance upwards in the stages of one's life. Dictatorship does not allow time.

³ Political parties, community groups, interest groups, etc. –*Ed.*

Already in childhood one has to be a little soldier or policeman and upbringing concentrates on smart stepping, stronger fists and an ever more obedient mind.

The faithful civil servant, whether in government or opposition, must count on millions of people, who cannot possibly foresee the full consequences of state politics. Therefore the democratic process often is very slow and cannot be achieved but by compromise of the opposing interests and ideas, which possibly weakens and delays urgently necessary reforms. It is easy to think of systems, which would transfer state leadership only to the best, wisest and unselfish. But who determines the elections in such an intellectual- and soul-aristocracy? The decision will either rest with every citizen, which means democracy, or one slips into clique-power, which places its own into the chosen leadership.

The latter is the method of totalitarian dictatorships, whether they be German, Italian, Spanish or Russian. When opposition develops within these cliques, the conflict will not be resolved through discussion but by caustic judgments. The “enemies of the state”, meaning the opponents of the ruling dictators, will be liquidated. Should not the incomplete but civilized democratic methods of adjusting interests and opinions be preferred? Whether Christian or belonging to other God- believing religions, the question must arise: can one agree to such acts of brutality of a dictatorship? It still remains incomprehensible to many Christians in democratic countries that even leaders of the church needed long years until they recognized the incompatibility of state-crimes with the life and soul of Christianity.

Could the critical attitude of people towards democracy be a sign of progress? Only a generation ago inequalities and injustices, namely in economics, were still accepted as self-evident, even as God ordained, but now are opposed by millions of people. Wealth and poverty are not any more regarded as God-given. Visions and plans of greater economic equality and social justice find expression in modern democratic movements. Democratic ideas and rights should not only be present in state governments, but prominent in economics as well. Does this not show a broadening and deepening of democratic thought? Could the crisis in democracy possibly be linked to higher democratic aims than those of our fathers? Can democracy be blamed for our inability to harmonize an endlessly complicated modern society? Were dictatorships able to accomplish more? No dictatorships, including communist Russia, could even approach the high standard of living of Switzerland, Denmark, Sweden, Norway, Finland, Holland, Belgium, Great Britain and its dominions, and the United States of America. Not all of these countries are as rich as Germany was, before Wilhelm II. And later Hitler destroyed German wealth by wars. At what cost were the twelve years of dictatorships to the German people?

Life, as It Really Is

Can our disappointment really be attributed to democracy? Or are we only confused and discouraged because democracy lays bare all problems of social life and the difficulties of

solving these? Dictatorships simplify everything: by strict censorship the gray areas of politics and economics are kept from public view or clouded by propaganda, not to be contradicted. That is the reason why dictatorships can paint leaders of very modest intellectual and moral stature as great men, who otherwise might in actuality occur only once in a thousand years.

In dictatorships the leader and his clique control the press, radio, schools and all literature and it is quite easy to play the great man. To be great is much more difficult for democratic statesmen, as they are raked over the coals daily and need to respond to public criticism. In addition, when democratic leaders accomplish something under near humanly impossible circumstances, they will be criticized for not accomplishing more. No democracy can maintain one-sided propaganda as a multitude of opinions always will be heard. Therefore, in the public life of democracy, the human life is revealed in all its forms: knowledge and ignorance, bravery and cowardice, truth and lies, decency and corruption, straightforwardness and deceit, goodness and brutality, faith and mistrust. As democracy bares all the conflicts of humanity, it has become the most honest political system that we know and is also the most progressive. An extended unaltered endurance, a status quo, is impossible in a democratic nation.

Democracy is a constant struggle between multitudes of interests, programs, philosophies and religions. On the heels of each solved problem new questions arise immediately. As soon as a goal is reached, there will always be the unsatisfied, the pushers and assailants with new problems. A democratic nation can never be in a comfortable state of contemplation about past achievements. The free people's opinions will always be pointing to imperfections and seeking new reforms. Therefore, the democratic ideal can never quite trickle down into daily life. Each generation will bring its own visions and own prophets of yet better societal rules. Only totalitarian dictatorships can force the poor into a 'brave' acceptance of their lots. In a democracy there will always be noisy protests by millions against such injustices. The fact that so many well-meaning people, including many Christians, were deceived about the dangers and failures of the totalitarian dictatorship, can only be explained by the absence of critique that should have exposed the societal failings.

There are many causes of the present crisis of our Western society, not only present in Germany: The tremendous increase of productivity on the one hand and then the dire needs of millions of people on the other; the still unsolved problem of a practical connection between raw materials, manufacture and nutrition. Our society is split from top to bottom by class-advantage and prejudice. Many privileged people persist in political stubbornness and political indifference, whereas the neglected people push wild radicalism.

The insufficient cooperation in national life corresponds to similar circumstances in international life.

In the realm of intellectual cultures, we find an addiction to uniformity and a trend to regard only their own program as acceptable, and then impose it most likely on the rival.

Whereas, on the one side we adore human intelligence as the highest attribute in the world, we regretfully barely perceive, on the other side, an impoverishment of religious and ethical life.

We delude ourselves if we believe it is possible to regulate in a flash the great problem of peaceful human coexistence by a system or article of constitution.

We err too often in believing that progress in technology is the deciding factor for the moral edification of mankind. Further, we foster the misleading hope that government, economy and a societal order of any kind will deliver the individual from his responsibility to strive after his own intellectual and moral development.

Not even one of these manifestations was brought about or worsened by democracy. These manifestations simply exist, and they cause the disintegration of any kind of government or economic system.

Democracy exposes social and moral disorders, dictatorship conceals them. It should in no way be cause for distrust of democracy, when in democracy we freely can express the truth as we perceive and see it. To the contrary: no cure is possible without first finding the causes of the illness and using the most suitable therapeutics. You cannot find a new social order by giving up looking for it.

The Way to Commonwealth

Democracy has strong roots in many Europeans. Three centuries of war, economic crises, financial upheavals, revolutions, civil uprisings, persecutions and terror could not destroy it. Reign-by-terror is certainly no proof of a dictator's strength, but always a sign of fear of the people and their free decision. In the long run, democracy, as any other truly spirited movement, whether religious or worldly, is invincible.

The democratic dream of work, food, housing, science, beauty and spiritual edification was never as common and strong as it is now. If only one could comprehend that the needed progress will never be achieved by war or other crimes of men, but only by the fruits of intellectual and moral growth.

Under the present circumstances in Germany, it may be hard to comprehend that power-politics are shortsighted and disastrous. And yet it will eventually emerge as true.

Jean Jaurès, the famous leader of Socialist France and perhaps the finest spirit ever among democratic socialism, murdered as a martyr of peace August 1914, answered to the question of what he understood as revolutionary: "Revolutionary means to become more reasonable!"

To become more reasonable! That is the great task democracy confronts us with and the great chance it provides us. No church is worth more than the spiritual quality of its believers, and no democracy is worth more than the sum of the insight and common good deeds of its citizens. This cannot be changed by any constitution and fundamental human rights declarations— which also add basic duties. Democracy and the freedom within and around us require daily struggle. This is not merely the task of governments, but the very task of every citizen in a democracy.

Democracy is in no way just a question of voting at long intervals, demanding handouts and criticizing between elections, but it is a steady cooperation in all areas: in the parties, leagues, unions, agricultural associations and coops, churches, education, in the entire material and spiritual life of the nation. The twentieth century citizen will not simply accept that he might indeed have the right to choose and to control the highest-ranking officers, but his fate actually also depends upon economic life of several hundred millions or anonymous banks and industrial corporate bodies. Therefore, he affiliates himself with production or consumption.

In an industrial society you cannot avoid that next to organized capital will be organized labor. In a democracy the freedom of an organization is just as important as freedom of conscience. In Germany it was very damaging to the churches that so many Christians did not appreciate this moving trend. Equal rights and equal opportunities for all is not only a democratic maxim, but also a truly Christian principle. This equality of rights includes protection of the weak on grounds of solidarity. “United even the weak become mighty!”

In all modern democracies we find that large economic and political organizations wrestle for influence and power. All citizens are free to join or to avoid, to support or oppose such organizations. Democracy can do nothing else, but to invite all citizens of all layers of society to level their interests in line with the commonwealth of all. Class dominance from above or below is incompatible with democracy.

Likewise, on the international level, democracy is only possible when no country or group of nations suppress or exploit other nations. The Second World War and its ending should have taught, that any attempt to subjugate neighboring countries or whole continents is condemned to failure. Even small countries like Denmark, Holland, Belgium, Norway and the tiny Luxembourg could not really be subjugated. Was not their resistance a strong manifestation of international democracy?

The end of the war resulted in the founding of the United Nations, which was built on the thought of equal rights for all people. This is clearly stated many times in the constitution. Naturally this is by far not yet reality, as anywhere under democratic constitutions many undemocratic establishments and undemocratic people still exist.

Nevertheless, the foundation of international democracy, including economic life, was accepted by the United Nations. Only fifty years ago that would have been unthinkable. Around the year 1900 neither a European monarch nor the President of the United States would have agreed to

equal rights for all peoples and races or the necessity of international democratic organizations in economics or social welfare. Here lie progressive democratic ideals in international life. It is now up to the people, and the people alone, to put these ideas into practice.

The Germans should understand that only under the rights of international democracy have they got a chance of finding again their place among the nations. Supposing that the dictatorial practices, as practiced by Hitler in Europe, were adopted for international life, Germans would not stand a chance at equality. One could exclude them by turning the error-laden racial theories on them as being “inferior people”. Naturally no real democrat in any country would back such a demand.

The Germans should now readily understand that they cannot believe in a dictatorship in their own nation and at the same time want to further democratic equal rights for themselves in the framework of international life. The one excludes the other. We repeat - the military occupation of Germany is surely not democratic. But it is considered necessary as one rightfully doubts, whether the German masses are already able to act democratically. The foreign troops will be removed from Germany, just as they were in the Republic of Weimar, only when the democrats of the victors are convinced, that the Germans will accept the basics of live and let live. Freedom of Germany is only possible in tandem with democratic advancement. We will not address obvious tensions between world powers as that lies outside the framework of this brochure.

Leadership in a People-State

Abroad it is often said that Germans in their tremendous need are again calling for a strong leader. That may not be an undemocratic position, when one considers a leading statesman freely elected, who remains subject to public opinion and may be removed as soon as the public demands.

The difference between a dictator and a democratic leader is by no means strength in the one and weakness in the other. It is rather the opposite, that the one can play irresponsibly and willfully “go broke”, while the other is steadily responsible as the representative of the people. Exactly this strengthens political character. Dictatorships produce violent men but no great statesmen; that is only possible in democracies.

Why could not the Germans, certainly an intelligent people, produce statesmen as Britain did with Pitt, Disraeli, Gladstone, Lloyd George, Churchill, or as the Americans did with their Jefferson, Adams, Lincoln, Theodore Roosevelt, Wilson, Franklin Roosevelt? None of them were old nobility or generals. Such leaders could only develop under civil liberties. The period of the Weimar Republic was too short, even though men like Ebert, Stresemann, Hermann Mueller and Heinrich Bruening showed, what the Germans would be capable of after long enough

democratic practice. Already earlier political talents existed in the democratic opposition. But they never were able to reach responsible government positions.

Democracy and strong leadership can go hand in hand. Democracy requires energetic and courageous leadership when the country faces stormy times. In democracy we choose men and women we trust as our representatives. In office we give them freedom to act, and only when, to the best of our knowledge and our conscience, they abuse this freedom, will we take them in hand. At times even willful acts of our leaders are needed in an hour of great danger or opportunity. We mention only two in the history of North America: in the times of Napoleon, President Jefferson, wanting to take advantage of the French Emperor's difficulties, purchased large Southerly region very favorably from France for the United States, without consulting Congress, which was against the constitution. He later justified his action with the necessity to win greater military safety and more territories. He later asked for and received consent from Congress, which could have accused him of misconduct and removed him from office. Not in spite of, but because of his strong leadership Jefferson became a symbol of American Social Democracy. Abraham Lincoln, one of the greatest among autodidactic leaders of all times, took even stronger responsibility upon himself than Jefferson. He started the Civil War against the feudal, slave-keeping Southern States completely on his own, without awaiting the constitutional consent of the Representatives, which he thereafter sought. He disregarded constitutional rights and had thousands imprisoned on political grounds. As the highest in command, he practically flung the Proclamation for the Freedom of the Slaves at the nation, without back-up of the Representatives. In the interest of the country he defied Congress and the highest judges: "I feel that in an emergency I have to make decisions for military reasons, which in the framework of the Constitution and Congress could not have been met."

This may sound like dictatorship, but really is healthy democratic wisdom and skilled statesmanship as practiced when necessary to save the foundations of democracy, not to destroy it. The goal and moving force of Lincoln's politics were not dictatorship, but democracy, in this case to save the United States and to end slavery.

Can history call Abraham Lincoln's temporarily assumed authority dictatorship? America loves him as the greatest hero and martyr of democracy. No one holds it against him that he did not stick to the letters of the constitution in a national emergency. His democratic character does not hinge on the belief in literal details, but on his love even for the poorest of the people, on his goodness, his equilibrium of soul, on his courage and on his respect for the will of the people. After four years in office, he presented himself to free elections by the people, not hindered by secret police or plebiscite. That differentiates a true democratic president of the people from a dictator, who cannot tolerate opposing candidates. Lincoln formulated his democratic belief thus: "I will be neither slave nor master. That is my concept of democracy. Whatever is different and deviates from this principle or lags behind, is not democracy." This is valid for all peoples. The whole idea of an "Uebermensch," of infallible rulers ("The Fuehrer is always right!"), of superior peoples or superior races is as undemocratic as it is un-Christian.

Can Politics and Religion Unite?

This raises the question are politics and religion ever separable? This is totally different from the separation of church and state, which wants to make the one depend on the other. By reason of democracy this separation exists in America. Americans want free churches and a free state. The state may neither influence, finance, further or suppress the churches, nor may the state be under the influences of churches. However, this does not mean that the state is completely indifferent to the fact, that Christendom is the foundation of our civilization.

The president and other high officials take their oaths of acceptance on a Bible. Congress opens its sessions with a prayer. At numerous official occasions the president and other statesmen will call on God's blessings, but they do not claim the All-mighty for a church, a sect or party. Should any official person refer to one of the hundreds of churches or sects, or an un-churched citizen, of whom millions exist, as second-class Americans, public opinion would protest. The state is free from the church, and the church is free from the state.

There is a big difference concerning the question, if each religious citizen should be indifferent to politics or if he should have a sense of duty towards public establishments being in harmony with his worldviews. Mahatma Gandhi, not Christian but Hindu, an active Statesman and in the eyes of many a Saint, noted in his autobiography: "I say without hesitation and in all humility, that those, who maintain that religion and politics have nothing to do with each other, do not know what religion is." Gandhi's understanding is that real religion permeates all life's doings and must reflect this. Therefore in Gandhi's experience a religious person cannot exclude such an important field as politics. After all, is not politics just an attempt to bring lawful order into our anarchistic human relations?

Religious people may find deeper sources for peaceful coexistence than the laws of the state, but they cannot avoid the responsibility that these laws may be good or bad for inner and outer peace or serve class wars and all wars. Especially in Germany, we have seen that in the years onward from 1933 not only churches, but also religious individuals, were targeted by state politics because of their religious ideation. They did not even have to be politically active, when they were persecuted. Alone the fact that according to their religion they listened to God more than men and that their conscience did not let them yield to dictatorship made them enemies of the state.

Dictatorship declares the state and its leader as the highest law. This cannot be any different in a totalitarian state, as the existence of any independent group, even in the sole realm of religion, always presents the danger of an expanding opposition to the dictatorship and its methods. It is difficult to see how freedom of all religion could be as guaranteed in other governments as in a democracy. Albeit that a church itself is dictatorial or supports without criticism the absolute

ruler or the absolute party. But would that mean that the church still is religious and free? Would there not be the danger that other religious groups are being suppressed or restrained?

Could the political indifference of the many churchgoers have been at fault, that so many Christians in Germany were mistaken about dictatorship for so long? The world admires the resistance of the many Christians after 1933. One has to question, however, how such duality was possible: first, that so many good Christians did not appreciate the worth of German democracy for its freedom of religion; secondly, that they did not recognize the contradiction in Hitler's promise of "positive Christendom," while at the same time persecuting Jews, liquidating any opponents, eliminating civil liberties, and enacting the extreme built up of militarism for the conquests of countries of "racially inferior" people.

Many church-leaders were found among those who did not recognize these contradictions or were waiting for their magic disappearance. It is not the intention here to judge, but to pose the question that concerns not only the Germans. How is it possible that so many serious Christians did not recognize the anti-Christian character of totally suppressive dictatorship? Could partial blame be found in the general degrading of politics, an attitude that hinders an understanding of the essence of the government and parties. There is a truth in Gottfried Keller's saying:

"Whoever proudly claims to be above the parties, stands usually considerably under them."

The same democratic poet rejected violent actions with these words: "Respect opponents, whoever they are, but highway robbers are no party!" In party fights there are limits to the permissible. Especially Christians could contribute much to civilize the party spirit.

We do not mean that religion should unite with political parties. Each church individual may decide for any political party. Religion and its establishments should never identify with a political or social creed. Christendom is neither feudalistic nor capitalistic, nor socialistic or fascist, nor communist. The Christian faith has lived and outlived all possible systems: monarchies, republics, oligarchies, democracies and autocracies. These are timed establishments, which come and go. Religion, in contrast, serves the spiritual redemption of mankind, all men in all classes and parties. That is a calling, not bound by any historical period or social order or governmental constitution. This broader religious understanding does include an obligation to examine the leaders, who reject every moral obligation, here and now in the light of Christian standards, as long as it does not serve a single state, a single people, a single class or party. The churches in Germany need only to compare their existence in the Weimar Republic with that under Hitler, to realize which is more suitable to democracy. We have to keep in mind that the word democracy can refer to many kinds of governments. Only democracy always includes a regard for human freedom of conscience, and this touches time and again the deep connection between the Judeo-Christian religion and the essence of democracy.

The Way toward Real Progress

At present almost all Germans live in bitter destitution and great uncertainty. The dominant world opinion is that German dictatorship and its wars are at fault. That does not exclude differing opinions among the victors of whether they always acted politically correct towards Germany since the end of war. The occupational forces are also under public criticism. In the democratic countries this is freely and thoroughly discussed, its echo reflected as well in German newspapers. One also is aware that since 1930 many Germans turned to Hitler only in the belief that he would provide an economic upswing and security. It would be tragic if the Germans repeated the error and expect economic betterment from a dictatorship rather than democracy. Most Germans have learned in meantime that dictatorship brings economic security only to those who acquiesce to the dictator. All others have not won security but lost their freedom at the same time.

The elimination of joblessness and higher wages were the results of militarization and war preparations. Such an economic mirage had to collapse at the end of the war. Mistrust of German industrial intentions resulted in the Allies hesitating to get the German economy back on its feet again. This also is a dictatorship's heritage.

The problem of "economic security and freedom" exists in all industrial countries. It is visible to all, yet no satisfactory solution can be found. Nowhere could a totalitarian dictatorship prove, that in eliminating personal freedom a higher economic security or even a better living standard would result. Impoverished and desperate men see dictatorship as a way out, and then these very people slip into a slavery to the state and its command economics, in which the populace is completely dependent on the whims of their employers: a state-dictatorship.

In 1932, when the world economic crisis was at its height, many Germans said: "Things can't get any worse!" or "Rather an end with horrors, than horrors without end." Could it really not get any worse, than when the poorest still at least could buy bread and potatoes, had a roof over his head, and knew his children were safe? Did the horror take an end under dictatorship, or did it really just begin? And the horror has never yet stopped! One may err again, if one thinks it could not get much worse. Civil wars or international collisions, this time with an atom-bomb, would far surmount any past experiences.

In human history there are no shortcuts to reason, to common understanding, to justice and the furthering of freedom. The road to progress is difficult and in the form of a spiral, which in addition to outer reforms always needs to have an inner one as well, if expected to last. It does not always go uphill. Whole peoples suffer, are even destroyed, when the very basis of progress is disregarded. This is the experience of millennia. At this time, the Germans and their former allies have to endure it. This does not mean that other peoples may still be facing such an experience if they are hastily lead astray in their actions.

Courage along with prudence is needed to weigh whether the next step taken leads upwards or further down the abyss. According to an old Latin saying one should always consider the ending before beginning whatever one does. This wisdom, especially valid for any political attitude in every democracy, permits time and possibilities to discuss thoroughly the possible consequences of political actions. In grave matters, the experience and wisdom of the entire people, not only from its songs and tales, but also the speeches of parliaments and news publications, should be more important than the rash decision of a leader and his court. One should consider that many democratic states develop peacefully, dictatorships by contrast fall from one calamity into the next.

As a tribute to free speech, I bring together thoughts about democracy on these pages. The author and his American friends, who encouraged the writing of this booklet, consider themselves to be good democratic internationals. This means, that we are not only loyal American citizens, but believe at the same time in a world citizenship, as heralded in the constitution of the United Nations.

We would consider ourselves fortunate if we could soon see the day when the Germans could, as they once did in Geneva, now again in New York join the community of peoples as a free and equal nation. We are well aware that this not only depends on the Germans, but we believe that they can be decisive in removing the barriers to being admitted. May many Germans acknowledge this and act accordingly.

Germany's choice between nationalism and internationalism, between militarism and peace, between dictatorship and democracy determines at this time the decline or advancement of the German people.