

REVOLUTIONARY SOCIALISM IN THE
WORK OF ERNST TOLLER

by
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ABSTRACT

This study analyses Toller's revolutionary Socialism and its reflection in his literary work. It adopts a chronological and synoptic approach, in which Toller's political speeches, journalism and documentary prose are shown to amplify and clarify the better-known dramas.

Toller's ideology had its roots in the Anarchist tradition as mediated by Landauer; the last half of Die Wandlung (1917-18) transposes Landauer's conception of social revolution into the dramatic conventions of Expressionism. Eisner's influence lent Toller's thinking a neo-Kantian dimension, evident in Masse Mensch (1919), in which Toller distilled his experience of the 'Räterepublik' into a dialectic of opposing philosophies of revolutionary action. Die Maschinenstürmer (1920-21) marks a shift in ideology and dramatic form, treating a dialectical theme derived from historical sources. The materialist connotations of theme conflict, however, with an idealist conception of revolution, illustrating the essential dichotomy in Toller's political thinking. Der deutsche Hinkemann shows an ideological regression, placing revolution in a framework of existential pessimism. The subsequent development of his attitude of commitment without illusions is documented in Das Schwalbenbuch, Der entfesselte Wotan and the revisions to Hinkemann (all 1923).

Hoppla, wir leben! (1927) presents a re-evaluation of his political ideas; the play's portrait of the Weimar Republic complements his political journalism. Similarly, the documentary drama Feuer aus den Kesseln (1930) is a counterpart to the prose works Justiz and Quer Durch (1930). Toller's conception of Socialism and revolution received its most extended exposition in his autobiography. While acknowledging the role of economic factors, he ultimately placed them in a perspective of ethical idealism. The conflict in his work, often consciously transposed into dramatic conflict, is therefore one of political ideas - those of Anarchism and Marxism, idealism and materialism, voluntarism and determinism. The study concludes by reviewing Toller's work in exile and evaluating his place in the theatre of the inter-war years.

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ABBREVIATIONS

The following abbreviations have been used in the footnotes:

1. Works by Toller:

- GW + volume number = Gesammelte Werke (Wolfgang Frühwald and John M. Spalek eds.) Vols. I-V, Munich 1978.
- Justiz = Justiz. Erlebnisse, Berlin 1927
- Nationalsozialismus = Nationalsozialismus. Eine Diskussion über den Kulturbankrott des Bürgertums zwischen Ernst Toller und Alfred Mühr, Berlin 1930
- Quer Durch = Quer Durch. Reisebilder und Reden, Berlin 1930.
- Eine Jugend = Eine Jugend in Deutschland, Amsterdam 1933.
- Briefe = Briefe aus dem Gefängnis, Amsterdam 1935.
- LP = Letters from Prison, London 1936
- Der Fall Toller = Der Fall Toller. Kommentar und Materialien. (Wolfgang Frühwald and John M. Spalek eds.), Munich 1979.

2. Documentary Sources:

- 'Prozeßakten' = Records of Toller's trial for high treason in Staatsarchiv, Munich
- 'Protokoll' = Transcript of Toller's statement following his arrest, June 1919.
- MNN + number & date = Report of court martial proceedings in Münchner Neueste Nachrichten, 15, 16 and 17 July 1919

- 'Provisorischer Nationalrat' = Verhandlungen des Provisorischen Nationalrates des Volksstaates Bayern im Jahre 1918/19. Stenographische Berichte 1-10.
- 'Rätekongreß' = Stenographische Berichte über die Verhandlungen des Kongresses der Arbeiter-, Bauern- und Soldatenräte Bayerns vom 25. Februar bis 8. März, 1919.
- DWÜ = Das Werk des Untersuchungsausschusses der Verfassunggebenden Deutschen Nationalversammlung und des Deutschen Reichstages 1919-28, Berlin 1928.
- Secondary Literature
- Altenhofer = Rosemarie Altenhofer, Ernst Tollers politische Dramatik, unpublished diss., University of Washington 1976.
- Aufruf = Gustav Landauer, Aufruf zum Sozialismus (2nd edition), Cologne 1925.
- Bütow = Thomas Bütow, Der Konflikt zwischen Revolution und Pazifismus im Werk Ernst Tollers, Hamburg 1975
- Daiber = Hans Daiber (ed.), Vor Deutschland wird gewarnt, Gütersloh 1967.
- D.Klein, Der Wandel = Dorothea Klein, Der Wandel der dramaturgischen Darstellungsform im Werk Ernst Tollers (1919-1930), unpublished diss., Bochum 1968.
- Nehru = J.Nehru, A bunch of old letters, London 1958.
- Ossar = Michael Lee Ossar, Anarchism in the Dramas of Ernst Toller, Albany, N.Y., 1980.

- PT = Erwin Piscator, Das politische Theater, Berlin 1929.
- Spalek + number = corresponding item in John M. Spalek, Ernst Toller and his critics. A bibliography. Charlottesville 1968.
- Ter Haar = Carel ter Haar, Ernst Toller: Appell oder Resignation? Munich 1977.
- Wolff, Briefwechsel eines Verlegers = Kurt Wolff, Briefwechsel eines Verlegers, 1911-63, (Bernhard Zeller and Ellen Otten, eds.), Frankfurt am Main 1966.
- Willibrand = William A. Willibrand, Ernst Toller and his ideology, University of Iowa 1945.
- Journals
- GQ = German Quarterly
- LWJB = Literaturwissenschaftliches Jahrbuch, Neue Folge
- WB = Weimarer Beiträge

INTRODUCTION

1. A short review of Toller criticism.

The accepted critical view of Ernst Toller is still that of the dramatist who was unable to outgrow the conceptual and stylistic conventions of Expressionism. Implicit in this view is the judgement that his political philosophy showed little or no development, and that his plays merely reflect the course of his own life from idealistic revolutionary commitment to disillusionment and despair. This view is largely shared, despite differences of ideological perspective, by his critics in both West and East.

Toller's critics in the West have, until recently, concentrated largely on his Expressionist dramas, assigning them a certain importance in literary and theatre history. In this way, they have been able to absorb his political commitment into a literary perspective, reducing his involvement in the 'Räterepublik' to a youthful indiscretion, and passing over his continuing commitment to Socialism. As a corollary of this, they have perceived a decline in his creative powers after the 'prison dramas', discounting the value of his later work.

It is this view of Toller which characterises Willibrand's pioneering study, Ernst Toller & his ideology - which in fact makes little attempt to evaluate Toller ideologically, except in negative terms¹. While he maintains that Toller embraced Marxism in 1918, making

'this dogmatic faith henceforth his own', he goes to great lengths to prove that Toller was not a Communist. He sees a weakening of Toller's political commitment, and a decline in his creative powers - citing the fact that some of his later plays were the product of artistic collaboration.

No less typical of this view is Hugh Garten, for whom Toller's plays reflect, above all, the downward curve in his political faith and commitment². The American critic, Walter H. Sokel goes further, seeing Toller's talents as essentially lyrical, and his plays as fragments of 'a great dramatic confession', ending with Hoppla, wir leben! He dismisses all Toller's later plays as 'schwächliche politische Gelegenheitsarbeiten'; Toller, he says, had 'ein feuriges Herz, aber keinen sehr klaren Kopf'³. Werner Malzacher virtually glosses over Toller's political commitment, calling him 'ein Sozialist aus Gefühl' and a politician despite himself, maintaining that he advocated spiritual regeneration and rejected revolution⁴.

While Toller's critics in the West have played down his political commitment, putting his plays in a predominantly literary context, his critics in the GDR have considered him from the viewpoint of Marxism-Leninism. The most representative of the GDR critics is Martin Reso, who calls Toller's political thinking 'verschwommen und utopisch. Er ergreift lediglich gefühlsmäßig für das

Proletariat Partei'⁵. He describes Toller's position as that of the moral idealist, who is preaching a Utopian conception of a new mankind, which he fails to relate to social and economic conditions. He specifically criticises his lack of a class analysis ('der fehlende Klassenstandpunkt') and 'seine Ablehnung der führenden Rolle der Partei'⁶. Hans Marnette sees Toller in much the same terms, describing him as an 'ethischer Sozialist', whose identification with the working-class is emotional⁷. For both Reso and Marnette, Toller's work, while an effective expression of social protest, lacks historical optimism and ideological clarity.

What all these critics have in common is the tendency to interpret Toller's work in terms of their own ideology rather than his, and a consequently undifferentiated view of the development of his political ideas. This is perhaps best demonstrated by reference to Willibrand and Reso. The former goes to considerable lengths to exonerate Toller from the charge that he was a Communist; in a chapter entitled 'The troubled unorthodox Marxist', he summarises Masse Mensch by saying that 'the avowed Marxist author transcended Marxism and championed Christian ethical principles'⁸, a judgement which is quite inapt, for Toller's ethos is that of Socialist humanism, not Christianity. Given the time Willibrand was writing, one must ask if he was looking over his own shoulder at the Un-American Activities Committee. Reso, for his part, measures Toller's work against Marxist-Leninist precepts of

art - and not surprisingly finds it wanting: 'Da er sich nicht auf die ideologische Plattform des Proletariats begab, d.h. Marxist wurde, konnte er auch schlecht die selbstgewählte Aufgabe erfüllen'⁹. That is, he denies any real developments in Toller's philosophy or dramatic practice, since they do not conform to the precepts of Marxism-Leninism. Both critics are so concerned to demonstrate what Toller is not, that they fail to address adequately what he is.

A considerable landmark in Toller criticism was the publication of John M. Spalek's bibliography, which made possible a much wider view of his work¹⁰. The research of Spalek and Wolfgang Frühwald has corrected the idea of Toller's creative decline, re-directing attention to his work in exile¹¹. Spalek has also questioned the accepted view of Toller as a 'Gefühlsmensch', citing the clarity of his political analysis of Fascism, and above all his autobiography, as proof that he was 'a rational person, able to judge himself and his environment objectively'¹².

How much - and how little - Toller criticism in Germany has effectively changed can be seen in Frühwald's editorial 'Nachwort' to the recent edition of Toller's work, and even more in the work of Carel ter Haar, whose study of Toller is probably the best-documented to date¹³. Ter Haar seeks to examine the relationship between life and literary work, interpreting the latter as 'gelebtes Leben' (p.2). He sees the dominant concern of Toller's

life and work as the problem of existential isolation: 'Das Leiden am Leid des um seine Einsamkeit wissenden Menschen' (p.8). He characterises this as a fundamentally religious problem, which in Toller's case was compounded by the fact that he was a Jew: he traces at length the significance for Toller's development of 'einer Reihe von jüdischen Vorbildern' (p.7). He therefore considers the dominant themes of his work to be existential and religious, rather than 'merely' political; ultimately he does not evaluate Toller as a political writer.

Other recent studies of Toller have challenged the prevailing critical consensus more directly. Dorothea Klein seeks to give 'ein geschlossenes Bild der Gesamtentwicklung seines dramatischen Schaffens (...) durch das Verfolgen des Zusammenspiels von politischer Überzeugung, Wirkungsabsicht und Formwillen'¹⁴. She sees an inner continuity in Toller's work, in which the evolution of his political ideas is reflected in the development of dramatic form. Thomas Bütow, on the contrary, sees Toller as a personality split between 'Dichter' and 'Politiker'¹⁵. The view of the poet, who consistently invoked an ideal reality, was at odds with that of the political man, who had 'einen überraschend nüchternen Blick für politische Entwicklungen' (p.13). He considers the most important manifestation of this contradiction to be the conflict between revolution and pacifism. While he provides stimulating interpretations of individual plays, his hypothesis is ultimately unjust to Toller's overall

development: the conflict between pacifism and revolution was one which he was able to rationalise fairly early.

The two most recent American studies of Toller both attempt to define his political ideas. Michael Lee Ossar seeks to show that his philosophy is directly descended from the tradition of European Anarchism¹⁶. Rosemarie Altenhofer, on the other hand, characterizes his position as one which lies between Anarchism and Marxism¹⁷. While considering all his plays, she particularly tries to re-evaluate those concerned with Fascism, concluding that Toller is much more the 'Chronist und Analytiker' of the inter-war years, than the 'Bekennnisdramatiker' he is generally considered to be (p.323).

Despite differences of emphasis, these critics all set out to correct the view that Toller was merely a typical representative of Expressionism, motivated by misguided political idealism. They have addressed themselves to Toller's political philosophy, taking a more differentiated view of his overall development. It is this position which the present study takes as its point of departure.

2. Aims and critical methods of this study

It is a critical common-place that all Toller's work has autobiographical significance. While his work is a reflection of experience, however, it is above all a

reflection of political experience, and the conclusions he drew from it; that is, it also articulates his political commitment and philosophy. Thomas Bütow seeks to emphasise the conflict in Toller's personality between 'Dichter' and 'Politiker' - I shall argue that he was able to reconcile these tendencies, interpreting his plays as a reflection, not a contradiction, of his political philosophy. It is implicit in this argument that the political statements he made in his speeches, correspondence and journalism are essential to an understanding of his literary work. The study therefore places greater importance than hitherto on primary sources, including unpublished letters and other documents.

All the major studies of Toller, except Carel ter Haar's, have concentrated exclusively on his plays¹⁸. Though certainly best known as a dramatist, Toller also published lyric poetry, autobiography, reportage and political journalism. These works have received little critical attention, and where individual works have been studied, they have been considered largely in isolation. They are, however, not only intrinsically worthy of attention, but often complement and clarify the dramas, and are therefore often indispensable to a proper understanding of them.

It will be shown, for example, that the tendency of Die Wandlung is manifested in the Leitsätze für einen kulturpolitischen Bund der Jugend in Deutschland, that the

dramatic conflict of Masse Mensch transposes the ideological conflict between Toller and Eugen Leviné, that minor works, such as the fragment Deutsche Revolution, help to clarify the dramatic intention of Die Maschinenstürmer, that the political statement of Hoppla, wir leben! and Feuer aus den Kesseln is confirmed and amplified in the political journalism and documentary prose in the years 1926-33, and that his literary work in exile has striking analogies with his lectures and speeches.

The aims of this study are therefore to examine Toller's philosophy of revolutionary Socialism and trace its development between 1917 and 1939, to place this development in its contemporary political context, and to examine the reflection of his political consciousness in his work.

The subject-matter and focus of interest largely determine the methodology. The development of Toller's literary work will be analysed in parallel with the development of his revolutionary Socialism, that is, dramatic intention will be explicitly related to political statement. The clear, though sometimes irregular, line of development in Toller's work imposes a strictly chronological approach¹⁹. Such an approach will identify the inadequacy of critical categories, such as 'the prison dramas', which comprise works with considerable differences in political statement and dramatic technique, and will show the artificiality of separating prose narrative and

drama - viewing them in isolation, when in Toller's case they are almost always complementary. These critical methods in turn influence the choice of sources, and the importance assigned to them.

3. Sources.

The main primary sources are:

1. Toller's published speeches and essays
2. Unpublished documentary sources:
 - a. the records relating to his trial for high treason in July 1919 in the 'Staatsarchiv', Munich, filed under 'Staatsanwaltschaft, München' I, Nr. 2242 (three files).
 - b. other contemporary records, such as the report of the trial in Münchner Neueste Nachrichten, 15, 16 and 17 July 1919.
 - c. The proceedings of the 'Provisorischer Nationalrat' and the 'Bayerischer Rätekongreß' (1918/19); the stenographic records are in the 'Bayerische Staatsbibliothek'.
 - d. Proclamations signed by Toller during the 'Räterepublik' (April 1919).

3. Autobiographical Accounts:

Toller's main autobiographical accounts, in chronological order, are:

- a. The transcript of his statement to Staatsanwalt Lieberich, following his arrest in June 1919. This is contained in the Prozeßakten, and has now been published in GW IV, pp. 239-52.

- b. The autobiographical notes submitted to Heinar Schilling, at the latter's request in 1921, probably written late 1920. The original hand-written notes are in the Deutsches Literatur-Archiv, Marbach. They are reprinted in H. Daiber (ed.), Vor Deutschland wird gewarnt, Gütersloh 1967, pp. 90-105.
- c. The autobiographical notes which form the introduction to F. Droop, Ernst Toller und seine Bühnenwerke, Berlin 1922. These differ from the notes to Heinar Schilling only in minor respects.
- d. His autobiography, Eine Jugend in Deutschland (1933).

Toller also wrote several accounts of his role in the 'Räterepublik'. Most of them have the character of retrospective self-justification, primarily because all were written in answer to political attacks on him.

These are, in chronological order:

- a. 'Antworten', Ernst Toller, in Die Weltbühne, XVII, 1, 6 January 1921.
- b. Zur bayerischen Räterepublik. Legende und Geschichte, unpublished MS, 1926, GW I, pp. 51-61.
- c. 'Ernst Toller antwortet auf E. Wollenbergs Angriffe', in Neue Bücherschau, VII, 10 (1929), pp. 542-44.

4. Toller's published and unpublished correspondence.

His published correspondence is contained in:

- a. Briefe aus dem Gefängnis, Amsterdam 1935.
- b. Letters from Prison, London 1936, which is the English translation of Briefe, but contains additional material, including some letters not included in Briefe.
- c. Eight letters to the Kurt Wolff-Verlag, in Wolff, Briefwechsel eines Verlegers, Frankfurt 1966.
- d. Five letters in K. Edschmid, Briefe der Expressionisten, Frankfurt 1964.
- e. Three letters to Jawaharlal Nehru, in Nehru, A Bunch of old letters, London 1958.

There are also the following unpublished letters:

- a. Letters to Betty Frankenstein in Deutsches Literaturarchiv, Marbach.
- b. A collection in the Akademie der Künste, Berlin, Sammlung Ernst Toller, which includes letters to Alfred Kerr, and correspondence with the 'Deutsche Liga für Menschenrechte'.
- c. Letters to Gustav Mayer in the 'Nachlaß Gustav Mayer', Istituto Giangiacomo Feltrinelli, Milan.

Autobiographical material presents, of course, inherent problems of critical interpretation. Eine Jugend in Deutschland has been widely, and somewhat uncritically, used as source material in interpreting Toller's life and work. Unfortunately, it is not always a reliable source,

since it is a conscious attempt to invest his experience with representative validity, and is consequently characterised by a degree of self-stylisation, in which events are selected and presented for their historical and political significance. It also contains, like his other autobiographical accounts, elements of self-justification. Some of the book also consists of a reworking of material which had already been published piece-meal²⁰. Perhaps most importantly, there are documentary records and other accounts of the events described. For all these reasons, I have used the book as source material only when it is the only source available, drawing in other cases on documentary evidence or on the autobiographical accounts which are chronologically closest to the events they describe.

The Briefe aus dem Gefängnis pose particular problems of critical judgement. They date originally from 1919-24, but were not published until 1935. Toller himself stated that the backbone of the book was the manuscripts which Dora Fabian rescued from his apartment in 1933, and which he edited, together with Hermann Kesten, in London in 1934/35. Their authenticity has recently been challenged by Carel ter Haar, who considers 'daß es sich in erster Linie um ein poetisches Werk handelt' (p.33). He alleges that the letters are not an authentic contemporary record, but the result of conscious literary stylisation and retrospective addition, that they indeed include letters which Toller did not write, or wrote and included retrospectively.

Es handelt sich bei den in den Eriefen aus dem Gefängnis enthaltenen Texten nur zum Teil um ursprüngliche Briefe. Diese werden im Vergleich zu den Originalen meistens gekürzt und stilistisch überarbeitet wiedergegeben. Auch werden Briefe an Toller umgeschrieben und als eigene aufgenommen oder es wird aus Rede- und Antwortbriefen ein einziger Brief zusammengestellt (p.33).

As proof of 'fictional' character, he cites the inclusion - as 'letters' - of accounts which had first appeared elsewhere, for example, in Justiz, the arbitrary dating of letters, in which chronology is less important than 'Inhalt und Sinn der einzelnen Texte im jeweiligen bewußt aufgebauten Zusammenhang' (p.34). Since these arguments have been repeated by Wolfgang Frünwald in the recent edition of Toller's work²¹, they require critical analysis which can only be summarised in this framework.

There is no doubt that Toller edited the letters (his English translator confirmed that 'some omissions of personal passages have been made')²² and revised them stylistically in places. There is equally no doubt that the letters have been ordered and arranged for publication. They were to illustrate the historical significance of his experience: '(sie) haben neben ihrer privaten Geschichte, die Bedeutung von Dokumenten deutscher Historie'²³. From the perspective of 1935, they documented the suppression of the revolution, the resurgence of nationalism and the rise of Fascism: the arrangement of the letters was to show how the Republic had persecuted its pioneers and nurtured its own enemies. Consequently, the letters are occasionally

grouped thematically, and not strictly chronologically - indeed some letters are undated, and a couple are demonstrably wrongly dated. Overall, however, the order is chronological and, given the documentary intention, it can only be chronological.

The suggestion that some letters were written retrospectively, and addressed to fictitious correspondents, remains unproven: the evidence cited to support it is ambiguous and inconclusive. Since the manuscript, and most of the original letters on which it was based, have not survived - the files of the Querido Verlag were impounded at the time of the German occupation of Amsterdam - the hypothesis cannot be proved or disproved. There is, however, much evidence to suggest that the letters are essentially authentic.

1. Very few of the hand-written original letters seem to have survived. Where they have, a comparison between the original and the published versions shows signs of editing and minor stylistic revision, but not of re-writing. In fact, the letters as published remain remarkably faithful to the sense of the original²⁴. The same is broadly true of those letters which had already been published elsewhere, before inclusion in Briefe, though here comparison is complicated by the fact that the hand- or type-written originals have not survived²⁵.
2. Some of Toller's other prison letters were published subsequently (see 4 c and d above). Although Toller

could not have had access to these when compiling Briefe, they contain passages which not only confirm the central themes of Briefe, but often repeat them almost word for word²⁶.

3. Many passages in Briefe endorse the perceptions of his creative work; these passages are, moreover, chronologically consistent with the works they parallel²⁷.
4. Many of the letters are to well-known public figures, such as Romain Rolland, Henri Barbusse, Stefan Zweig, Gustav Mayer, Fritz von Unruh, Max Beer, Kurt Hiller. Except for Mayer, none questioned the letters' authenticity, either at the time of publication or later²⁸.

The hypothesis that Toller's prison letters are not an authentic contemporary record, but were stylised and falsified retrospectively, remains unproven. The letters have, of course, been edited and slightly revised stylistically, resulting in a more documentary, and less personal, tone. They are sometimes arranged thematically, rather than strictly chronologically; in a few cases, the dating is unreliable. While stylistic revision and conscious compositional arrangement are characteristic of all Toller's documentary prose, deliberate falsification is not. The evidence that he printed correspondents' letters as his own, or wrote letters retrospectively to fictitious correspondents, is ambiguous and inconclusive. I have therefore concluded that Briefe aus dem Gefängnis

represents an authentic contemporary record, which is faithful to the spirit, if not always the strict letter, of his correspondence from 1919-24. Wherever possible, I have naturally confirmed or supplemented the evidence of the letters by reference to other sources.

Notes to Introduction

- 1 William A. Willibrand, Ernst Toller & his ideology, University of Iowa, 1945.
- 2 Hugh F. Garten, 'Ernst Toller' in Modern German Drama, London 1959.
- 3 Walter H. Sokel, 'Ernst Toller' in Deutsche Literatur im 20. Jahrhundert, (Otto Mann & Wolfgang Rothe, eds.) Berne and Munich 1967, p. 315.
- 4 Werner W. Malzacher, Ernst Toller, ein Beitrag zur Dramaturgie der zwanziger Jahre, unpublished dissertation, University of Vienna, 1959.
- 5 Martin Reso, 'Die Novemberrevolution und Ernst Toller', in Weimarer Beiträge, V, 3, 1959, pp.387-409, quote p.408. See also Reso, Der gesellschaftlich-ethische Protest im dichterischen Werk Ernst Tollers, unpublished dissertation, University of Jena, 1957.
- 6 Reso, 'Die Novemberrevolution und Ernst Toller', pp.408, 399.
- 7 Hans Marnette, Untersuchungen zum Inhalt-Form Problem in Ernst Tollers Dramen, unpublished dissertation, Potsdam 1963.
- 8 Willibrand, op.cit., p.57.
- 9 Reso, op.cit., p.399 (my emphasis).
Alfred Klein, 'Zwei Dramatiker in der Entscheidung', Sinn und Form X (1958) pp.702-25, comes to similar conclusions. He makes a sensitive analysis of Toller's portrayal of his revolutionary experience in Masse Mensch, but concludes that his re-interpretation of that experience in Die Maschinenstürmer 'an den entscheidenden Punkten eben doch nicht durch eine weltanschauliche Umkehr von idealistischen Positionen zur materialistischen Geschichtsinterpretation neu gedeutet wird' (p.712).
- 10 John M. Spalek, Ernst Toller & his critics. A bibliography, Charlottesville, 1968.
- 11 Spalek & Wolfgang Frühwald, 'Ernst Tollers amerikanische Vortragsreise 1936/37' in LWJB, VI, (1965), pp.267-311.
- 12 Spalek, 'Ernst Toller: the need for a new estimate' in GQ XXXIX (1966), p.591.

- 13 Ernst Toller, Gesammelte Werke (5 vols.), (Wolfgang Frühwald and John M. Spalek eds.), Munich 1978.
Carel ter Haar, Ernst Toller. Appell oder Resignation?, Munich 1977.
- 14 Dorothea Klein, Der Wandel der dramaturgischen Darstellungsform im Werk Ernst Tollers 1919-30, unpublished dissertation, University of Bochum, 1968, p.5.
- 15 Thomas Bütow, Der Konflikt zwischen Revolution und Pazifismus im Werk Ernst Tollers, Hamburg 1975.
- 16 Michael Lee Ossar, Anarchism in the dramas of Ernst Toller, Albany, N.Y., 1980.
- 17 Rosemarie Altenhofer, Ernst Tollers politische Dramatik, unpublished dissertation, Washington University, 1976.
- 18 D. Klein examines only the six major plays up to 1930, a choice she justifies on the grounds that Toller 'nach den ersten sechs Dramen keinen grundsätzlich neuen Gestaltungsimpuls mehr verwirklicht, sondern in den noch folgenden Stücken auf bereits erprobte Techniken zurückgreift' (p.6). She thereby indicates that her focus of interest is primarily formal and structural, and only incidentally political.
- Bütow too discusses only the plays. His study focusses on the symbolism of the prison dramas, which provides 'den idealen Zugang zum Verständnis der Realitätsproblematik bei Toller' (p.18) and indeed over two thirds of his study deals with Toller's first four plays, and only the final third with his work after 1924.
- Ossar examines Toller's philosophy 'as it appears in his plays', but he treats in detail only the five plays to Hoppla. Altenhofer discusses the most comprehensive selection of his plays, including those which have hitherto been discounted, but she too passes over Toller's other literary work: she uses the autobiography and prison letters as source material, but does not discuss them as works in their own right. (See discussion under I/3 below).
- 19 Bütow recognises the need for a chronological approach (see p.18) but fails to apply it with the necessary rigour. Altenhofer also acknowledges that 'Tollers Dramen in ihrer Aufeinanderfolge... Ausdruck entscheidender Stufen in Tollers eigener politischer Entwicklung sind' (pp.3-4).

- 19 (Continued)
Despite this, her method is not primarily chronological, and its value as a chronological analysis is further weakened by her use of Toller's retrospective self-evaluation to interpret his development.
- 20 See Chapter XIV, particularly note 2.
- 21 Der Fall Toller, p.282.
- 22 LP, translator's preface.
- 23 Introduction to Briefe, GW V p.9.
- 24 The published version of the letter to Frau Anna Sch(ickele), GW V, p.166, is shorter than the original, GW V, p.202: the last sentence and the postscript are omitted, and there are two minor stylistic revisions.
- The letter to Adolf von Hatzfeld, GW V, p.89 is about one third shorter than the original, GW V, pp.200-201, modifying the emotional language of the original, but retaining the sense.
- The letter to B., GW V, p.160, is one sentence shorter than the handwritten original (cf. facsimile in LP, p.326).
- 25 For example, the letter to Reichstag President Paul Loebe GW V, pp.162-65, was first published in Die Weltbühne XX, 42, 16 October 1924. The version in Briefe omits two lines and adds two new sentences, which certainly suggest Toller's artistic self-awareness, but do not alter the tone or meaning of the letter.
- The letter to Juergen Fehling, GW V, pp.37-39, was first published as a preface to the second edition of Masse-Mensch. As one would expect, the version in Briefe is not identical: it contains a personal introductory paragraph and the content has been rearranged, but the thought and its expression are essentially the same. The earlier version is dated October 1921; in Briefe, the letter is undated and assigned to the year 1920, forming part of a group of letters concerned with the composition and performance of Masse-Mensch. Since the letter refers to the Berlin production in September 1921, its position in Briefe is obviously anachronistic, an example of the conscious subordination of chronology to thematic relevance.

- 26 As examples of this, compare the following pairs of letters:
 to Anne-Marie von Puttkamer, 22.5.1921 in Wolff, Briefwechsel eines Verlegers, p.326, and to Tessa, 18.5.1921, GW V, p.66; to Kurt Wolff, 12.11.1921, Briefwechsel, p.329, and to Romain Rolland, 13.12.1921, GW V, p.85; to Kurt Wolff, 19.1.1921, Briefwechsel, p.325, and to a worker, undated (1922), GW V, pp.116-17; to Alfred Kerr, 6.4.1923, in Edschmid, Briefe der Expressionisten, pp.133-34, and to Stefan Zweig, 13.6.1923, GW V, p.152. Other examples are cited in the text.
- 27 A few passages can be cited as representative examples of such parallels:
 The dramatic conflict of Masse-Mensch is summarised in the letter to Tessa, 12.11.1920, GW V, p.50; Ned Lud's final speech in Die Maschinenstürmer is echoed in the letter to Tessa, 14.8.1922, GW V, p.112, in which the implicit conclusion of the play is made explicit; Landauer's reported last words, included in Requiem den ermordeten Brüdern (written 1920) are cited in a letter to Maximilian Harden, undated (1920), GW V, pp.33-34; the fragment Deutsche Revolution (written late 1920) dramatises comments contained in letter to B, undated (1920), GW V, p.27. The implicit conclusion of Hinkemann's vision - 'All true sight is insight' - appears in the letter 'to a friend', undated (1921), LP, p.104 (not included in Briefe). These and other parallels indicate that, even when the text may not be completely authentic, the spirit of it is.
- 28 Gustav Mayer suggested that Toller printed material which he (Mayer) had originally written, see Mayer, Erinnerungen, p.293. Ter Haar, (op.cit., p.206, note 55) seems to accept this, but in fact the claim is difficult to substantiate. Briefe contains only two letters to Mayer. The first (GW V, pp.60-61) falls into two distinct halves. The first half, concerning the composition of Die Maschinenstürmer cannot have been written by Mayer; the second half could, but no proof has been offered that it was. The second letter, (GW V, p.122) opens with a paragraph which, by its sense, must have been written by Toller; the second paragraph is a long quotation illustrating the first. Therefore, Mayer could only have written half of one letter - and even here proof is lacking.

SECTION A. Formative Years 1893 - 1918

I. THE ORIGINS OF TOLLER'S POLITICAL AND LITERARY IDEAS

1. From patriotism to pacifism.

There is little independent evidence about Toller's formative years; the critic is forced to rely almost entirely on Toller's own accounts¹. Ernst Hugo Toller was born on December 1st, 1893, one of three children of middle-class Jewish parents living in Samotschin, a small town in the Prussian province of Posen, a part of the German Empire which was ethnically and historically Polish. The family, which was long-established in Posen, ran a general store, which Toller's father had inherited from his parents. The family was comfortably off, being able to afford servants, and to pay for private education. Toller's father was also a man of some standing locally, being a town councillor.

At first sight, there seems little in Toller's background to suggest his development as a revolutionary Socialist. His education was Prussian and provincial, his upbringing bourgeois and orthodox Jewish. If there was one motif of his childhood, which was to remain characteristic of his adult life, it was the feeling of being an outsider, which can be attributed largely to the fact that he was a Jew.

The situation of the Jews in Posen was typical of that in other parts of central and Eastern Europe. Although politically emancipated, they had not been wholly assimilated to the culture of the state in which they lived. The Jews in

Posen considered themselves the standard-bearers of German culture, which they cultivated with application, but however much they might regard themselves as German, the Germans did not fully accept them as such. For their part, the Poles regarded them - for reasons of language - as part of the ruling minority. To the Poles, they were Germans, to the Germans they were Jews. It was an environment well calculated to produce an outsider (a similar environment produced Franz Kafka) and there was much in Toller's childhood to emphasise his difference from other children. Some of his first conscious memories were of anti-semitism. His elementary school was a 'Jewish' school, as opposed to the 'evangelical' school which other German children attended, or the 'Catholic' school for Polish children - divisions symbolising the mutual antipathy of Poles and Germans and the anti-Semitism latent in both.

Toller's early experience of anti-Semitism not only distressed him, but induced strong feelings of rejection and isolation which made him repudiate his Jewish heritage in an attempt to be 'like the others'. Even years later, on active service, he wrote asking the authorities to remove his name from the list of members of the Jewish community. If he rejected his Jewish background, he equally rejected the comfortable materialism of his family. This can be partly explained by his rebellious nature: his mother recalled that he had been 'schon als Knabe so trotzig'². The authoritarian Prussian education system seems to have succeeded only in nourishing this rebellion. His favourite

reading was precisely those works which the school system proscribed, the plays of Ibsen and Strindberg, Hauptmann and Wedekind.

In many respects, his youthful rebellion was probably little different from that of many other young men of middle-class origin in Wilhelmine Germany, inspired largely by the ethos of the 'Jugendbewegung'³. The Youth Movement reflected the impatience of the younger generation with the rigid and restrictive nature of German society. The movement suffered from a lack of ideological clarity, but had several qualities which characterise Toller's subsequent thinking - the ideal of 'Gemeinschaft', the idealisation of the 'natural' life of simple people, the faith in social regeneration, and in youth as the means of attaining it.

Toller later claimed: 'Ich habe mich vor dem Kriege mit Politik überhaupt nicht beschäftigt'⁴, but he was nonetheless influenced by the prevailing social ethos. For all their rebellion, his contemporaries were not unpatriotic, and Toller was as receptive as any to the mood of patriotic fervour which greeted the Agadir crisis of 1911. As a student in Grenoble in 1914, he shared the aggressive chauvinism of his compatriots. Toller had gone to France to continue his studies after leaving the Gymnasium at the age of 19. France seems to have made no deep impression on him, for he makes no reference to it in any of his plays or poems. He later summed up this period in his autobiography: 'Ich lebe in Frankreich und habe Deutschland nie verlassen' (GW IV, p.40).

On the outbreak of war, Toller returned to Germany, and, swept up in the popular enthusiasm for the war, volunteered for the army, enlisting in an artillery regiment. Such idealistic nationalism was almost universal in 1914, but in Toller's case had particular connotations. His decision to volunteer sprang from his deep desire to 'belong', to become part of the national community from which his race had so subtly, but successfully, excluded him. The Kaiser's declaration of the 'Burgfrieden' symbolised the ideal of the nation, which had briefly united all Germans in a sense of common purpose. It seems significant that he later particularly remembered that 'als er Soldat geworden sei, habe ihn kein Mensch gefragt, ob er Jude sei'⁵. He seemed finally to have been assimilated.

After some months behind the lines, Toller's regiment moved into the front at Pont-à-Mousson in March 1915. His diary contained the entry: 'Wie froh bin ich endlich ins Feld ziehen zu dürfen. Mit dem Leben beweisen, was man denkt und fühlt'⁶. His enthusiasm even managed to survive his first months at the front, while he was still convinced that Germany was fighting a defensive war. In August 1915, he was posted to a machine-gun unit at Bois-le-Prêtre, one of the bloodiest sections of the front, and it was this experience of daily slaughter which finally dispelled his ideal of patriotism, and made him a convinced pacifist. In May 1916, he suffered a complete physical and nervous breakdown, spending several months in hospital and in a

convalescent company, before he was finally discharged as unfit for active service in January 1917.

Once discharged, Toller was able to resume his studies in Munich. In retrospect, he saw this as a time in which he gradually found himself, both politically and artistically. His revulsion against the war now forced him to question the social order which, he increasingly felt, was responsible for it. He had come to realise that it was not enough to oppose the war privately, he must oppose it publicly and actively.

2. First steps towards political involvement

Toller's first active involvement in politics was at the 'Kulturtagung' organised by the publisher Eugen Diederichs at Burg Lauenstein in Thuringia⁷. Those taking part included prominent academic and literary figures, such as Max Maurenbrecher, Max Weber, Werner Sombart, Richard Dehmel, Paul Ernst and Walter von Molo. Diederichs also invited a number of younger artists, among whom was Toller. He was twenty-three, unknown and unpublished, but the very fact that he was invited suggests that he had made some impression on literary circles in Munich. The theme of the autumn Congress was to be 'Das Führerproblem im Staat und in der Kultur'. Diederichs's own expectations are of particular interest:

Die (erste) Lauensteiner Tagung hat mich insofern nicht befriedigt, als doch der Schöpferisch-politische Mensch fehlte(...) der neue Mensch, der in den Gesetzen der Seele seine Orientierung findet, und der

sich darum nicht von den wirtschaftlichen Gesetzen des Lebens imponieren läßt, sondern mehr platonisch schauend den Geist auch als den Gestalter des wirtschaftlichen und Staatslebens empfindet. ... So ist das eigentliche Problem: wie entwickelt sich im Staat dieser Typus, wie gelangt er zur Führerschaft? 8

Diederichs's comments may help to explain why Toller and other younger writers were invited; they are also eloquent of the intellectual atmosphere of 1917, illustrating the Utopian illusions widespread among the intelligentsia, which influenced their hopes of the November Revolution - and helped to influence the course it took.

Toller attended the Congress in search of kindred spirits, of others who found the continuation of the war intolerable. He seems to have expected some positive initiative to result from it, but none emerged. He saw the proceedings as proof of the futility of intellectual discussion, at a time which cried out for action; he was bitterly critical of 'die Verwirrung, die Feigheit, die Mutlosigkeit' of the older generation⁹.

Immediately after the Congress, Toller transferred his studies to Heidelberg. Although he never stated the reason, it was clearly to follow the lectures of Max Weber, who had made a decisive impression on him at Lauenstein. Weber later called Toller 'eine Jüngernatur', but it was not Weber whose disciple he was to be: while he admired Weber's courage and moral integrity, he did not share his ideology. Weber believed in a continuing prosecution of the war. Even his assertion that, once the war

was over, he would provoke the Kaiser into prosecuting him for lèse-majesté, so that the politicians responsible for the war would be forced to testify under oath, revealed his attachment to institutions which Toller and his contemporaries simply dismissed. In Heidelberg, Toller joined Weber's Sunday discussion circle, soon feeling sufficiently confident to read his war poems, including probably extracts from Die Wandlung, which he had begun writing that summer¹⁰.

Toller later called his period in Heidelberg one of 'rebellion', but his activities were certainly more consciously political than he subsequently depicted them¹¹. He was soon invited to join a group of Socialist students, who held regular political discussions; it is unlikely he would have been invited if he had not already been a Socialist, though his Socialism was certainly still of an emotional nature. It was this group which formed the nucleus of Toller's pacifist student association, the 'Kulturpolitischer Bund der Jugend in Deutschland'. It is clear that Toller was both the instigator and the main spokesman of the association; it is equally clear that its influence was negligible, since it never numbered more than a dozen members. Toller later dismissed it as 'ein Don Quixote von 1917' (Daiber p.92), but it was undoubtedly more Socialist and more practical than this description suggests. At his trial, Toller referred to its 'kulturpolitische und sozialistische Ziele'¹².

When Nationalist students disrupted a lecture by the pacifist Professor Förster, the Bund used the incident to campaign for the removal of restrictions on students' rights of association and assembly¹³. In a wider context, its immediate aim was to counter the annexationist demands of the Deutsche Vaterlandspartei, and canvass support for Socialist initiatives for a peace 'without annexations or reparations'. The University authorities referred to Toller's 'agitation' among Heidelberg students, and (mistakenly) linked his activities to the USPD¹⁴.

Toller sought Max Weber's support for the association, particularly for a declaration drafted to rally support at other universities, but Weber refused. He not only considered the appeal confused, but was reluctant to endorse any action which might deflect the German soldier from his duty. The declaration was also sent to other prominent academic and literary figures, and messages of support were received from F.W. Förster, Walter Hasenclever, Carl Hauptmann, Heinrich Mann, Walter von Molo and others¹⁵. The declaration was prematurely leaked, and published in the Deutsche Zeitung on December 11, 1917. It was immediately disowned by the official 'Ausschuß der Heidelberger Studentenschaft' and virulently attacked by the Deutsche Vaterlandspartei. The Bund's pacifist activities had also been noticed by the military authorities, which then intervened to disband it, expelling its members, who were forced to return to their native state - in Toller's case Prussia, of which Posen was still a province. He left

Heidelberg on December 21, 1917, having spent less than three months there.

The 'Kulturpolitischer Bund', though intrinsically insignificant, represented an important step in Toller's political development. At the time, he clearly saw it as a point of focus for opposition to the war ('Aufrütteln wollen wir alle Teilnahmslosen, sammeln alle Gleichgesinnten',¹⁶) and a means of turning that opposition into practical activity. The 'Bund's' outline programme, written by Toller, reflects his ideology at this time - Activist in tone, pacifist in tendency, appealing to youth as a means of effecting international reconciliation¹⁷. The outline programme reveals above all the formative influence of Gustav Landauer, 'dessen Aufruf zum Sozialismus mich entscheidend berührt und bestimmt hat',¹⁸. Here it is necessary to discuss Landauer's philosophy, which provides a constant point of reference for Toller's political ideas over the next decade.

3. Gustav Landauer: Aufruf zum Sozialismus

Landauer's philosophy is essentially a poetic interpretation of the tradition of European Anarchism. He called himself an Anarcho-Socialist, deriving his ideas from Proudhon and Kropotkin. His Aufruf zum Sozialismus is not a systematic presentation of his philosophy, having been originally delivered in the form of a lecture: 'da muß manches kurz gesagt werden, und ein gefühlsstarker Ton muß oft die eingehende Begründung ersetzen; der Fluß der Rede will weiter',¹⁹. It does, however, contain his main ideas, expressed in characteristic form.

Landauer defined Socialism as 'eine Tendenz des Menschenwillens... ein Bestreben, mit Hilfe eines Ideals, eine neue Wirklichkeit zu schaffen' (p.1). This ideal arose precisely because the modern state, and the capitalist system it rested on, failed to provide the conditions for a satisfying life. The ideal is a vision guiding those who suffer spiritually from the present situation; the ideal would produce what Landauer called 'Geist', the creative force which alone could make the ideal reality.

... die äußere Not hilft die innere erwecken;
 die heilige Unzufriedenheit regt und rüttelt
 sich; etwas wie ein Geist - Geist ist
 Gemeingeist, Geist ist Verbindung in Freiheit,
 Geist ist Menschenbund, wir sehen es bald noch
 deutlicher - ein Geist kommt über die Menschen,
 und wo Geist ist, ist Volk, wo Volk ist, ist
 ein Keil, der vorwärts dringt, ist ein Wille,
 wo ein Wille ist, ist ein Weg. (p.3)

This passage, so characteristic of Landauer's thought and language, summarises his view of the revolutionary process. Central to this process is 'Geist', which remains, despite his repeated attempts to define it, a remarkably ambivalent concept. It was both a force within the individual, and a bond between individuals. It determined the quality of social relationships - and the social and economic institutions in which they find expression. It corresponded to the spirit of community, but also produced the will to achieve that community. In short, Landauer succeeded in defining 'Geist' only in terms of its effect, which was to inspire and unite men in pursuit of a common ideal. Men united in this way were, in Landauer's terminology, a people ('Volk'). He maintained that what

he termed 'Volk' no longer existed in the early twentieth century, though it had existed in the past, for example in the Christianity of the Middle Ages²⁰.

Whereas 'Volk' was an organic entity, formed by an identity of consciousness and aspiration, the state was an artificial political structure, resulting from historical accident. The unity of a people is created by 'Geist'; the unity of the state is imposed ultimately by force. In Landauer's system of thought, 'Staat' and 'Geist' are roughly antithetical:

Der Staat ist das Surrogat des Geistes...
Die Staaten mit ihren Grenzen, die Nationen
mit ihren Gegensätzen, sind Ersatzmittel
für Volks - und Gemeinschaftsgeist, der
nicht da ist. (p.19)

The most obvious sign of the absence of 'Geist' in modern society was the plight of the industrial proletariat. Separated from the earth and its products, forced by the factory organisation of modern capitalism to produce goods unconnected with their own lives, they were completely alienated - 'sie arbeiten auf eine Weise, die sie freudlos und stumpf macht' (p.16) - often succumbing to poverty, sickness and alcohol. The capitalist system was in fact equally detrimental to the capitalist, whose existence was tied to his capital, even though he no longer directly controlled it.

The state, and industrial capitalism, had suppressed the force of 'Geist', but it had not completely died out. It was innate in every human being, waiting only to be

reawakened. It indeed remained active in a few individuals of unusual awareness - the poets and the thinkers - and it was they who must reawaken it in others, they who must invoke the new reality through the propaganda of word and deed:

Unser Geist muß zünden, muß leuchten, muß
verlocken und an sich ziehen. Das tat nie
die Rede allein... Das tat allein das
Beispiel... Beispiel und Opfermut! (p.152)

The social structure in which the new reality would be realised was one of small communities, based on production for need, not profit: ('Der Grundform der sozialistischen Kultur ist der Bund der selbständig wirtschaftenden und untereinander tauschenden Gemeinden', p.130). Within each community, the necessary tasks in agriculture, administration and production would be rotated, in order to prevent the atrophy of faculties inherent in industrial capitalism, with its division of labour²¹.

Landauer's Aufruf zum Sozialismus is also in part a diatribe against Marxism, which he described as 'die Pest unserer Zeit und der Fluch der sozialistischen Bewegung' (p.42). His rejection of it was both temperamental and theoretical. Under the influence of Fritz Mauthner's 'Sprachkritik', he had long considered scientific language an inadequate means of grasping reality, which he believed could only be conveyed indirectly, through poetic image and metaphor²². This perception determined both the manner and content of Landauer's work. Marxists, he maintained, were so blinded by their belief in historical determinism, in the

inevitable evolution of monopoly capitalism into Socialism, that they failed to oppose it with some form of Socialist organisation. Socialism could only be achieved if workers turned their backs on capitalist society and stopped producing for it. Socialism was not the product of a particular stage of material development; it was always possible if enough people wanted it:

Sozialismus hängt seiner Möglichkeit nach gar nicht von irgend einer Form der Technik und der Bedürfnisbefriedigung ab. Sozialismus ist zu allen Zeiten möglich, wenn eine genügende Zahl Menschen ihn will... (p.61)

Landauer's conception of history was diametrically opposed to dialectical materialism: he saw the influence of 'Geist' on society as the dominant historical force. For the Marxist, consciousness is determined by 'social being', spiritual reality is a product of the material world. For Landauer, it was not reality which formed the spirit, but the spirit which informed reality.

This idealist view of history determined Landauer's conception of revolution. He differentiated between social revolution and political revolution: the latter could merely clear the way for the former. Since the Middle Ages, 'Geist' had been active only in inspired individuals. It manifested itself in the masses only in moments of revolutionary upheaval, and quickly subsided, so that once problems of social reconstruction arose, political revolution was unable to cope, and society fell back into a situation similar to the pre-revolutionary one. Landauer acknowledged

that political revolution was a prerequisite of social revolution, but believed that the latter had to be prepared in advance, so that the society in which 'Geist' could re-assert itself could be built.

Landauer's influence on Toller

Toller seems to have read Landauer's Aufruf zum Sozialismus about the time of the Lauenstein Congress; certainly, he had read it before going to Heidelberg²³. The 'decisive' influence it exercised is apparent in both the aims and methods of Toller's student association, and in the conception of revolution expounded in the final scenes of Die Wandlung²⁴. Toller's continuing dialogue with Landauer's theories can be traced above all in the conception of 'Geist' as a revolutionary force, in the antithesis between 'Staat' and 'Gemeinschaft', and in his conception of the proletariat.

The concept of 'Geist', and of revolution as a spiritual process of regeneration, is a common-place of late Expressionism. In Landauer's philosophy, 'Geist' has specific connotations as the dominant historical force; revolution is the reawakening of 'Geist', which is latent in every man, and its realisation in cooperative social organisation. Although Toller used the term 'Geist' in various ways over the next decade and a half, it always signified something innate in mankind, which the process of revolution would bring to the surface²⁵.

In 1917, Landauer's book had offered a view of the bourgeois state, which seemed to explain Toller's own experience. The state was a repressive and unjust institution, 'der letzthin nur die Gewalt und nicht das Recht als Besitz kennt',²⁶. This view of the state is evident in the final scenes of Die Wandlung, in which the state is identified as the agent of war, and therefore the cause of the death and suffering of millions. The suffering of war is, however, only an intensification of the death and suffering inevitable in an inhuman society, in which militarism has destroyed the freedom and integrity of the individual, and industrial capitalism laid waste human potential. The alternative to the state lay in man's aspiration to community, 'die Gemeinschaft freier Menschen, die durch den Geist besteht',²⁶. Toller never precisely defined 'Gemeinschaft', but essentially he used it both prescriptively, as the goal to be achieved, and descriptively, to denote the commitment necessary to achieve it²⁷.

The antithesis between 'Staat' and 'Gemeinschaft' runs through all his early plays. In Die Wandlung, the national community has been perverted by the state ('Hat sich das Vaterland an den Staat verschachtet?') In Masse-Mensch, the Woman rejects the state: 'Dein Staat ausbeutet, drückt, bedrückt, entrechtet Volk'. In Die Maschinenstürmer, Cobbett's vision of a Socialist society ('Die Gemeinschaft allen Werkvolks') is contrasted to a state which passes draconian laws against machine-breaking²⁸.

Landauer considered 'daß die Arbeiterschaft nicht aufgrund geschichtlicher Notwendigkeit das auserwählte Volk Gottes, der Entwicklung ist, sondern eher der Teil des Volkes, der am schwersten leidet... und am schwersten zur Erkenntnis zu bringen ist' (p.112). As the class most exploited by industrial capitalism, it was the class which suffered most, and which therefore represented human suffering at its most acute. Toller's efforts to come to terms with this conception, and to reconcile it with materialist ideas of historical development, are apparent in all his early work, particularly Die Maschinenstürmer and Hinkemann. In the former, he sought to portray the emergence of a class taking its fate into its own hands; in the latter, he reverted largely to a conception of the proletariat as a class which merely suffers. Landauer's prescriptive views on social organisation demonstrably influenced Toller during the revolutionary period²⁹, but his more considered view seems to have been that Anarchist federalism was impractical. He accepted the inevitability of industrialisation and his work shows only traces of the anti-industrialism of other Expressionists, such as Kaiser.

4. Kurt Eisner and the January Strike

The events which committed Toller irrevocably to the revolutionary movement were his meeting with Kurt Eisner and his consequent participation in the munitions workers' strike of January 1918 in Munich. Toller was introduced to Eisner in Berlin in mid-January, when the latter came to

the city for a meeting of USPD leaders to co-ordinate strike action against the war. In view of Toller's pacifist activity, it was inevitable that he should come into contact with Socialist circles. Anti-war agitation had been most outspoken in the USPD, which had indeed been formed as a party of protest against the war. Eisner, leader of the USPD in Munich, was a long-standing opponent of the war, who had been obsessed with the question of German war guilt since late 1914³⁰.

As a political leader, Eisner was a somewhat unlikely figure. He was essentially a literary man, who had made a living as a political journalist and drama critic. He had written verse and was also the author of an Expressionist drama, which he was to complete during his imprisonment following the January Strike³¹.

Toller's meeting with Eisner made such a decisive impression on him, that within days he had followed Eisner to Munich. He maintained that, when he arrived there, he had no idea that a strike would break out³². A brief chronology of the strike will serve to illustrate how rapidly and completely he became involved in it. He first contacted Eisner in Munich on January 26th, and the following evening attended an USPD meeting at which Eisner first announced that Berlin workers would strike in support of demands for immediate peace without annexations. Toller was subsequently invited to attend one of Eisner's discussion evenings at the Goldene Anker,

where he made an impassioned speech 'gegen die Fortsetzung des Krieges mit seinen entsetzlichen Leiden und für die Anbahnung einer Verständigung mit dem Feinde'³³. In the next two days, Eisner addressed a number of factory meetings to appeal for support for the strike. Toller seems to have attended some of these meetings, and, as anti-war propaganda distributed leaflets containing scenes from Die Wandlung.

The strike began on January 31; Eisner was arrested the same evening. The following day, Toller addressed a strike meeting, and was later a member of a deputation to the Chief of Police, demanding Eisner's release. He subsequently addressed several mass meetings, and was elected to the new strike committee, which called for the strike to be prolonged. Within a week of first hearing of the strike movement, he had become a leading figure in it. On February 4, he was himself arrested on a charge of 'versuchten Landesverrats' and reclassified into the army. He spent the next three months in the military prison in Munich, and it was there that he wrote the final draft of Die Wandlung.

Eisner's ideology and influence

Eisner saw the political process as one of enlightenment and education. The diary he kept in prison after the January strike makes the following reference to one of his strike meetings:

Ich wußte, daß die Buchdrucker noch nicht für den Streik gewonnen waren. Aber nicht minder sicher war ich, daß meine geistige Aufklärungsarbeit auch in diesem Kreise nicht verloren war. Das Korn der Wahrheit war aufgegangen. 34

Eisner clearly regarded the strike meetings as a means of enlightening the workers about the real nature of the war - and the state which prosecuted it. This 'geistige Aufklärungsarbeit' had been the essence of his meetings at the 'Goldene Anker'.

Eisner saw the mass strike as the means of ending the war - and changing the social order which he held responsible for it

Das Mittel ... , die Macht für die deutsche Demokratie zu erobern, ist der Massenstreik, der - in Deutschland siegreich, dann ... den Arbeitern aller Länder automatisch die Kriegswaffen aus den Händen nimmt. 35

The strike was to be a prelude to revolution; in retrospect, Eisner claimed the strike had been a dress rehearsal for it: 'Die Revolution war ja schon geplant im Januar'³⁶.

Eisner's political philosophy resulted from the intensive study of Kant, which he had undertaken in Marburg in the 1890's under the tutelage of Hermann Cohen, a leading neo-Kantian scholar. Cohen believed that Kant's philosophy was essentially political³⁷. He maintained that philosophy had come to see the state, not as a power structure, but as the embodiment of man's ethical consciousness. The empirical state, the Kaiserreich of the Hohenzollerns, failed to conform to

this ideal, being all too evidently the 'state of the ruling classes'. This power state (Machtstaat) would become a just state ('Rechtsstaat') only when it ceased to serve particular class interests. In short, Cohen looked forward to a democratic Socialist society, which would be the true expression of the ethical will of Man. That is, he specifically suggested the compatibility of Kant's system of ethics with the objectives of Socialism.

Eisner tried to take these ideas a stage further, asking himself if it was possible to reconcile the idea that Socialism was scientifically determined with the view that it was ethically desirable. Could Social Democrats adhere simultaneously to Marx and Kant? In 1904, he published an essay which he defined as an attempt 'die Synthese Marx-Hegel in die Verbindung Marx-Kant aufzulösen. Denn sachlich gehört Marx zu Kant in die Reihe der großen Aufklärer des 18. Jahrhunderts'³⁸. The reference to Marx in the context of the 'Aufklärung' says less about Marx than about Eisner, for whom Socialism was essentially a process of education: 'Politik ist Erziehung'³⁹.

Eisner nonetheless tried to place Kant in a perspective of historical development. While he conceded that Kant's ethical principles were the product of enlightened bourgeois liberalism, he maintained that they could no longer be identified with a bourgeois society bereft of all ideals. He suggested that they now

coincided with the objectives of Social Democracy and 'daß auf der heutigen Stufe der wirtschaftlich-politischen Entwicklung Kants Ethik nur im Sozialismus sich zu verwirklichen vermag'⁴⁰. The realisation of Socialism was 'die sittliche Idee der Weltgeschichte'⁴¹.

Eisner's conception of the inter-penetration of political activity and ethical will corresponded to Toller's own half-formed ideas. Shortly before meeting Eisner, he had written, in a defence of the activities of his Heidelberg association:

Es liegt uns fern, Parteipolitik zu treiben.
Politik treiben heisst für uns, sich für
das Geschick seines Landes sittlich
mitverantwortlich fühlen und dementsprechend
handeln. 42

Recent discussion of Eisner's ideology has stressed its literary origins and Utopian nature⁴³, but Eisner's charismatic appeal to Toller and other intellectuals lay precisely in his apparent success in making ideals reality. Eisner invoked 'die ... größte Idee, die die Menschheit kennt, daß zwischen Gedanken und Tat kein Widerspruch und kein Zeitraum stehen dürfe'⁴⁴. The revelation of the true nature of bourgeois society would produce the will to revolution.

Toller became greatly preoccupied with Kant's philosophy during his prison years⁴⁵. The development of his ideas from 1920-22 lies in his attempt to integrate a voluntarist conception of revolution into a determinist view of historical development, to reconcile idealism

with materialism. Eisner's attempt to integrate Marx's materialist view of history into the eighteenth century legacy of the 'Aufklärung' was particularly relevant.

In particular, Eisner was a life-long opponent of the Prussian state: it was a 'Machtstaat' serving specific class interests - and precisely for that reason was responsible for the outbreak of war. Echoes of this neo-Kantian conception of the state are audible in several of Toller's political speeches, notably in his final address to the Munich Court Martial, whose verdict he awaited 'nicht als ein Urteil des Rechts, sondern als ein Urteil der Macht'⁴⁶. It is the same conception of the 'Machtstaat' which informs Toller's work in the Weimar Republic, particularly the indictment of 'class justice' in Justiz and Feuer aus den Kesseln.

Eisner's political ideas had much in common with Landauer's: he had indeed urged Landauer to come to Munich in November 1918, in order 'daß Sie durch rednerische Betätigung an der Umbildung der Seelen mitarbeiten'⁴⁷. There were, however, crucial differences, which came from Eisner's long association with the SPD, both as party member and political journalist (he had been, for a time, editor of Vorwärts). In contrast to Landauer, he emphasised the crucial role of the proletariat, which he considered the historic instrument of revolution.

Toller's experience of the January Strike, his first contact with the labour movement, served to place his

convictions in a perspective of working-class revolution. Toller joined the strike - as he stressed in all his later accounts - for pacifist, not Socialist, reasons. He was attracted to the strike by the prospect of effective action against the war⁴⁸. His actual experience of the strike was a revelation: 'ich sah in diesem Streik eine Bewegung, die vollkommen ideale Ziele verfolgte'⁴⁹. The strike was to remain his most positive experience of revolution⁵⁰, effectively demonstrating the capacity of the working-class for 'Gesinnungsrevolution'. Despite its failure, it also suggested the power of mass action to achieve non-violent social change. From it emerged two of Toller's most characteristic political ideas - the mass strike as the ultimate revolutionary weapon, and the idea of the united front ('Einheitsfront') which transcended party allegiance.

5. The intellectual climate of the November Revolution

The influence of Landauer and Eisner can not, of course, be seen in isolation. Many of their ideas are both characteristic of, and influenced by, the intellectual climate which produced the November Revolution. Toller's experience of war, and his transition from idealistic patriotism to radical pacifism, were common to many of his contemporaries, and were reflected in the literature of 1916-18. The prevailing mood of pacifism encouraged the belief that revolutionary social change could be achieved through non-violent means. This belief was particularly

characteristic of the USPD, the party which Toller, under the influence of Kurt Eisner, joined in 1918; pacifism was indeed the common denominator of its otherwise disparate membership.

Toller's association with Eisner and the USPD placed his convictions in a perspective of working-class revolution. The struggle for the emancipation of the working-class was, however, only part of the struggle for the emancipation of all mankind. This conviction, too, is completely consistent with the ethos of the November Revolution, as numerous proclamations and manifestos of the period confirm:

Die Verächter der Masse, die Feinde des Proletariats ... sagen: Die Bewegung des Proletariats ist ungeistig, sie ist nur eine verkappte sozial-kapitalistische Bewegung für hohe Löhne... Wir wissen es anders: ein großes Ziel schwebt vor allen ... ein Ziel der höchsten Menschlichkeit, des Friedens und der Güte. Wir erkennen das Geistige dieses Kampfes als ein Teil des großen Befreiungskampfes der Menschheit. 51

Toller's experience of the January Strike seemed to confirm the possibility of revolutionary social change through spontaneous mass action. The idea of spontaneous popular action was not only intrinsic to the Anarchist tradition, but had been explored and formalised in Rosa Luxemburg's 'theory of spontaneity'. As part of the ethos of the November Revolution, it was reflected in the fateful events of the Spartacus week in January 1919.

The anarcho-syndicalist theory of the general strike as the ultimate revolutionary weapon had been widely discussed in pre-war Germany; there had been long discussion of the issue at the SPD conference in Jena in 1905 and continuing controversy thereafter⁵². The idea had an obvious appeal to all those who, like Toller, saw the need for social change, but rejected the use of violent means to achieve it. While the experience of the 'Räterepublik' forced Toller to rethink his ideas, and reject absolute pacifism, the mass strike remained an important part of his thinking during the next decade⁵³.

Toller's feeling of having been uprooted from the class and traditions in which he had grown up⁵⁴, and his search for the common purpose and common ideals he found in the revolutionary movement, were typical of many other middle-class intellectuals. Arthur Holitscher writes of

... jener Entwurzelten, jener Empörten und Empörer, die aus dem Bürgertum kommend, in die proletarische Bewegung eingetreten sind. Eine Stimme hat sie aus ihrer Klasse gerissen und sie finden sich vor die Notwendigkeit gestellt, eine neue Gemeinschaft einzugehen, ja, wahrscheinlich zum ersten Mal in ihrem Leben Glück und Ungemach einer Gemeinschaft zu erfahren. 55

Holitscher goes on to stress the affinity - or even identity - of art and Socialism: the revolutionary leader was moved by the same desire as the artist to shape the future. It was an idea which enjoyed wide currency among intellectuals, and one to which Ernst Toller was particularly receptive.

6. Poetry and politics: the role of the artist

The growth of Toller's literary ideas closely parallels his political development. His literary vocation became apparent at the Gymnasium, where he tried his hand at various kinds of writing, including plays and poems. While none of this juvenilia survives, Toller recollected that his poems had 'einen rebellischen Ton'⁵⁶. His interest in modern drama - Strindberg, Wedekind, Hauptmann - seems to have been partly dictated by their attack on prevailing social values. One of his early ambitions was to be an actor, and he played leading parts in school productions. His literary ambition was explicit. His father sent some of his first manuscripts to Kurt Pinthus; Toller later submitted poems to the Berliner Tageblatt⁵⁷.

Toller's earliest surviving poem was written in 1912, when he was eighteen. 'Der Ringende' expresses the rebellion and deep metaphysical yearning of adolescence, his alienation from his mother, and the feeling that he must die and be reborn in his own image⁵⁸. He continued to write poems during his military service. None of his poems from 1914 has survived, and it seems likely he suppressed them, disowning the patriotic note they certainly struck. His earliest surviving war poems were written at the front in 1915/16. They reflect his transition from nationalism to pacifism: the transformation of Die Wandlung⁵⁹.

By the time he was discharged from the army early in 1917, Toller's ideals were already those of Expressionism.

He was scornful of 'art for art's sake', for poetry which had no purpose but itself had no purpose at all. The time was past when anyone could take refuge in a world of pure aestheticism:

Zerbrich den Kelch aus blitzenden Kristallen
 Von dem die Wunder perlentauend fallen,
 Wie Blütenstaub aus dunkelroten Tulpen,

he wrote in the introductory poem to Die Wandlung⁶⁰. He told one of his contemporaries in Munich that there was no more time 'for the solution of problems' such as 'what poetry really is or should be'⁶¹. Poetry must be committed, confront the issues of the day, and, in a time of mass slaughter, the only issue which the poet could address was the war.

Toller's poems from this period sound the authentic note of Activism, seeking to awaken men to a new humanity: 'Gott! Bruder! Mensch! Werden Sie jemals wieder erwachen!'⁶² He was particularly conscious of the poet's special responsibility: 'Anklag ich euch, ihr Dichter!/
 Verbuhlt in Worte, Worte, Worte!/. . ./Ihr im Papierkorb feig versteckt./Auf die Tribüne, Angeklagte!'⁶³ The poet must be more than a mere confectioner of words. Words must invoke action, indeed poetry itself was action - action as invocation, as revelation, as inspiration. Toller's views at this point clearly correspond to Hasenclever's view of the 'politischer Dichter', who will seek out the poor and oppressed and awaken them to freedom and revolution⁶⁴.

By the autumn of 1917, at the latest, Toller saw his literary work in a perspective of 'revolution'. This reflected both the growing social ferment in Germany and more specifically his acquaintance with Landauer's Aufruf zum Sozialismus. His meeting with Kurt Eisner in January 1918 placed these ideas in a perspective of working-class revolution.

Eisner's view of the artist, and his role in affecting social change, had much in common with Landauer's. He saw nothing inconsistent in the artist's being involved in politics, indeed he saw politics as a creative activity:

Ein Politiker, der kein Dichter ist, ist auch kein Politiker und es ist ein Wahn unseres unpolitischen deutschen Volkes, daß man ohne solche dichterische Kraft irgend etwas in der Welt erreichen kann. Der Dichter ist kein Phantast, sondern ein Dichter ist der Seher des Zukünftigen.65

The view of the poet as the prophet of the future is, of course, consistent with that of the younger Activists, particularly Hasenclever, but it must be stressed that Eisner's political understanding, derived from his long experience in the SPD, was of a different order. While the function of Hasenclever's 'politischer Dichter' was essentially demagogic, Eisner saw the poet's function within the framework of practical politics. He believed not only that writing was a political activity, but that politics itself was a creative process.

Regieren ist genauso eine Kunst, Politik treiben ist genauso eine Kunst, wie Bildermalen oder Streichquartette komponieren. Der Gegenstand dieser politischen Kunst, der Stoff, an dem diese politische Kunst sich bewähren soll, ist die Gesellschaft, der Staat, die Menschen. 66

The classical age in Germany, Eisner asserted, had turned away from reality, seeking refuge in the 'Reich des Schönen', in the pursuit of formal beauty, but this flight from reality was no longer necessary. He maintained that art no longer had to be a refuge for those who despaired of life, 'sondern daß das Leben selbst ein Kunstwerk sein müßte, und der Staat das höchste Kunstwerk'. It was axiomatic for Eisner that 'das innerste, intimste Verhältnis zwischen Staat und Kunst'⁶⁷ could be achieved only within a Socialist society. Bourgeois society scorned and perverted art and culture, reducing their products to the role of commodities. If the artist rejected bourgeois society, it was no less true that bourgeois society rejected the artist, treating him as a social outcast:

Der Produzent, der ist der Verachtete, der ist der Paria, der irgendwo in der Tiefe leben kann, der Dichter, der Schriftsteller, der Musiker. Wenn aber ein Professor über diese Leute kommt, und sie exzerpiert, und einige Bemerkungen dazu macht, ist er eine Leuchte der Wissenschaft, die geschützt werden muß. 68

Eisner's analogy between the productive artist and the productive class, the proletariat, needs little emphasis. If bourgeois society was inherently philistine, the future of culture lay increasingly with the working-class. This was the audience for which Ernst Toller felt impelled to write.

Notes to Chapter I

- 1 The main sources for this section are Toller's various autobiographical accounts, listed in the introduction, particularly the transcript of his statement following his arrest, the notes submitted to Heinar Schilling, and reprinted in Daiber, op.cit., and his statement in court, quoted according to Münchner Neueste Nachrichten (MNN).
- 2 Elsa Lasker-Schüler, 'Ernst Toller', in Emuna, Blätter für christlichjüdische Zusammenarbeit, Köln, no. 4, 1969, pp.259-260.
- 3 Toller himself implied as much in 'Konflikte der Jugend in Deutschland' in Quer Durch, pp.258-68. There is no direct evidence that Toller was a member of the 'Jugendbewegung' - and indeed some groups did not allow Jews as members - but the influence of the movement was pervasive, and Toller's comments in the first half of the article cited evidently refer also to himself.
- 4 Protokoll, GW IV, p.240.
- 5 MNN, no. 274, 15.7.1919.
- 6 Introduction to Briefe aus dem Gefängnis, GW V, p.9.
- 7 'Aktiv angefangen habe ich auf dem Kongreß in Lauenstein' MNN, no. 274, 15.7.1919.
Two conferences were actually held in Burg Lauenstein, the first May 29-31 1917, the second September 29 - October 3, 1917. Toller attended only the second of these. The best account of these meetings is in Marianne Weber, Max Weber, Ein Lebensbild, Heidelberg 1926, pp.608-15 - an account on which Toller partly based his own in Eine Jugend in Deutschland.
- 8 Letter to Max Weber in Eugen Diederichs, Selbstzeugnisse und Briefe von Zeitgenossen, Cologne 1967.
- 9 Daiber, op.cit., p.92.
- 10 Cf. Weber, op.cit., p.613.
- 11 This account is based on M. Turnowsky-Pinner, 'A student's friendship with Ernst Toller' in Leo Baeck Institute Year Book 1970, pp.211-222, which is a personal memoir of Toller's period in Heidelberg, and on the documents in Toller's Prozeßakten.
- 12 MNN no. 274, 15.7.1919, my emphasis.

- 13 See leaflet, signed by Toller: 'Der neue Fall Foerster als Anlaß zum Protest gegen die Einschränkung der politischen Freiheit der Studierenden in Deutschland', reprinted in Der Fall Toller, pp. 29-31.
- 14 Prozeßakten, letter of 30.1.1918 from Prorector of Heidelberg University.
- 15 Prozeßakten, letter of 20.12.1917 from Toller to Berliner Tageblatt.
- 16 Prozeßakten, 'Aufruf zur Gründung eines kulturpolitischen Bundes der Jugend in Deutschland'.
- 17 'Leitsätze für einen kulturpolitischen Bund der Jugend in Deutschland', GW I, pp.31-34. For detailed discussion, see Chapter II.
- 18 GW IV, p.84.
- 19 Landauer, Aufruf zum Sozialismus, foreword to first edition, p.xviii. Landauer had first delivered his Aufruf as two lectures in 1911. The book had exercised considerable influence within a limited circle; during the war, it had achieved a certain notoriety, when its distribution had been banned in Prussia. Landauer continued to receive a stream of requests for copies, and it was this which persuaded him to prepare a second edition, which appeared after his death in 1919. Page references in the text are to the second impression of this edition, published Cologne 1925.
- 20 Cf. Landauer, Beginnen: Aufsätze über Sozialismus (M. Buber ed.), Cologne 1924, pp.8ff.
- 21 Landauer outlined these ideas, which he derived from Kropotkin, in Die Siedlung, a pamphlet written for his 'Sozialistischer Bund' in 1910, and reprinted in Beginnen, see note 20.
- 22 See Landauer, Skepsis und Mystik. Versuche im Anschluß an Mauthners Sprachkritik, 2nd edition, Cologne 1923.
- 23 Cf. M. Turnowsky-Pinner, see note 11.
- 24 For detailed discussion, see Chapter II/4 (iii).
- 25 For detailed discussion, see Chapter X/2 and Chapter XV/2.
- 26 Letter of 20.12.1917 to Gustav Landauer, GW I, p.36.
- 27 See Chapter X/2.

- 28 For detailed discussion, see chapters referring to these plays.
- 29 See Chapter III/3. According to Oskar Maria Graf, Toller took a particular interest in experiments in agrarian Communism during the 'Räterepublik'. He certainly visited such settlements in Palestine in 1925, see 'Communism in Munich and Palestine. What Ernst Toller saw', New Leader, 11 December 1925.
- 30 Eisner had written a careful analysis of the role of German mobilisation in the outbreak of war, which had been suppressed by the military censorship: 'Die Mobilmachung als Kriegsursache' (1916) in Unterdrücktes aus dem Weltkrieg, Munich 1919.
- 31 Die Götterprüfung, Berlin 1920.
- 32 Cf. Toller's statement in court, MNN, no. 274, 15.7.1919: 'Ich hatte damals keine Ahnung, daß ein Streik ausbrechen werde. Davon erfuhr ich erst in München'.
- 33 Prozeßakten; see also O.M. Graf, Wir sind Gefangene, Munich 1965, p.347.
- 34 Eisner, 'Mein Gefängnistagebuch', entry for February 4th 1918 in Eisner, Sozialismus als Aktion, Frankfurt am Main 1975, p.62.
- 35 Ibid., p.58.
- 36 Eisner, 'Wahlrede vor den Unabhängigen' in Die Münchner Räterepublik. Zeugnisse und Kommentar (Tankred Dorst ed.), Frankfurt am Main 1969, p.38; see also Chapter IV/4, note 23.
- 37 Cf. H. Cohen, Kants Begründung der Ethik, Berlin 1877.
- 38 Eisner, 'Kant' (1904).
- 39 Eisner, 'Der Sozialismus und die Jugend', lecture held in Basle 10 February 1919 in Die halbe Macht den Räten. Ausgewählte Aufsätze und Reden (Renate and Gerhard Schmolze eds.), Cologne 1969, p.288.
- 40 Die halbe Macht den Räten, p.67.
- 41 Eisner, 'Hermann Cohen' (1912), Die halbe Macht den Räten, p.134.
- 42 See note 15.
- 43 Cf. W. Frühwald, 'Kunst als Tat und Leben' in Sprache und Bekenntnis (W. Frühwald and G. Niggel eds.), Berlin 1971 and also ter Haar, op.cit., pp.136-40.

- 44 Eisner, 'Der Sozialismus und die Jugend', Die halbe Macht den Räten, p.289.
- 45 Cf. Ernst Niekisch, Gewagtes Leben, Cologne and Berlin 1958, p.101.
- 46 MNN, no. 278, 17.7.1919.
- 47 Letter from Eisner to Landauer, 14.11.1918, in Landauer, Sein Lebensgang in Briefen, (M. Buber ed.) Berlin 1919, Vol. II, p.296, note 1.
- 48 See, for example, his account in Jugend, GW IV, p.95: 'Eher aus Zufall denn aus Notwendigkeit war ich in die Reihen der streikenden Arbeiter geraten, was mich anzog, war ihr Kampf gegen den Krieg...'
- 49 MNN, no. 274, 15.7.1919.
- 50 Cf. Daiber, op.cit., p.93: 'Nie sah er im Verlauf der unschöpferischen deutschen Revolution... eine Bewegung, die der Januarerhebung in der Reinheit ihrer Motive und ihrer Ziele glich'.
- 51 'Aufruf an das Proletariat', a manifesto signed by academics and intellectuals, published in Vorwärts, 20.11.1919. Cf. Toller's 'Schlußwort vor dem Standgericht', GW I, pp. 49-51:
'Man sagt von der Revolution, es handle sich um eine Lohnbewegung des Proletariats und will damit die Revolution herabsetzen...' (p.50).
- 52 Cf. H. Roland-Holst, Generalstreik und Sozialdemokratie, Dresden 1905, and Luxemburg's pamphlet 'Massenstreik, Partei und Gewerkschaft', Hamburg 1906. The latter is in Collected Works, (P. Fröhlich ed.), Vol. IV.
- 53 Cf. Chapter X/2(i). See also his portrayal of the January Strike in his autobiography - cf. Chapter XIV/4.
- 54 The original title of Die Wandlung was Der Entwurzelte.
- 55 Holitscher, 'Das Religiöse im sozialen Kampf', Die Erhebung II, Berlin 1920, p.330.
- 56 GW IV, p.29.
- 57 Kurt Pinthus, 'Life and Death of Ernst Toller', Books Abroad, Vol. XIV, pp.3-8. Toller showed poems to Sigmar Mehring, literary editor of the Berliner Tageblatt, see Walter Mehring, Die verlorene Bibliothek, Icking and Munich, 1964, pp.185-86. I have found no evidence that any of his poems were actually published in the paper.

- 58 'Der Ringende', Vormorgen, Potsdam 1924, p.9.
- 59 Some of these poems were published from 1918 onwards in Die Aktion, Die weissen Blätter, and other periodicals, and also in the collection Kameraden der Menschheit, (Ludwig Rubiner ed.), Potsdam 1919. Revised and collected under the title 'Verse vom Friedhof', they were later included in Vormorgen, where the selection, and the chronological arrangement, are intended to document Toller's own 'Wandlung'.
- 60 GW II, p.9.
- 61 Otto Zarek (with James Eastwood), German Odyssey, London 1941, p.85.
- 62 'Soldaten', Kameraden der Menschheit, p.69.
- 63 'An die Dichter', Vormorgen, p.17.
- 64 Hasenclever, Tod und Auferstehung, Munich 1917. The final poem in this collection is 'Der politische Dichter', which, according to Hasenclever's own note, must have been written in 1916. It was later included in Kurt Pinthus's anthology Menschheitsdämmerung, Symphonie jüngster Lyrik, Berlin 1920.
- 65 'Provisorischer Nationalrat', 5. Sitzung, 17.12.1918, p.70.
- 66 Ibid., 9. Sitzung, 3.1.1919, p.273. This speech is reprinted in Sozialismus als Aktion, (Freya Eisner ed.), Frankfurt 1975, pp.113-23, quotation p.113.
- 67 Ibid., p.114.
- 68 Ibid., p.119.

II. DIE WANDLUNG: DRAMA OF REVOLUTIONARY OPTIMISM

1. Introduction: critical perspectives

The traditional critical view of Die Wandlung is that the play is a typical example of late Expressionism. Horst Denkler, for example, brackets the play with Der Bettler as an example of the 'einpoliges Wandlungsdrama'; Lämmert regards both Die Wandlung and Masse Mensch as examples of the 'Verkündigungsdrama', a term he uses to embrace all Expressionist drama¹. The effect of such criticism, which assimilates the play to a literary tradition, is to preempt proper consideration of its political dimensions.

Those critics writing more specifically on Toller have naturally acknowledged that the play has strong elements of autobiography, and that it therefore reflects Toller's involvement in the growing anti-war movement in Germany in 1917/18. Nonetheless, they have singularly failed to treat the play as a reflection of Toller's emerging political consciousness, that is, as an expression of political ideas. They have interpreted the revolution proclaimed by Toller's protagonist solely as an instance of the Expressionist evocation of the rebirth of mankind - that is, in literary terms. Thomas Bütow explicitly states that the revolution of Die Wandlung is not to be understood in any political sense². Altenhofer argues that the play stems from 'einem mehr literarischen als politischen Aktivismus, mit idealistisch-utopischer

Zielsetzung'³. Carel ter Haar is even more explicit:

Das Finale des Dramas enthält dementsprechend kein revolutionäres Manifest, sondern ist Franz Werfels in jener Zeit sehr bekanntem und beliebtem Gedicht 'Lächeln Atmen Schreiten' nachgebildet. 4

That is, he considers the play to be an exposition of Werfel's theme (the overriding theme of all Expressionism): 'Die Welt fängt im Menschen an'. The tendency of recent Toller criticism is therefore to endorse the prevailing critical consensus.

It is certainly true that Die Wandlung exemplifies the process of spiritual transformation characteristic of Expressionism - indeed this process is summarised in the play's title. However, the play also reflects the process of rapid politicisation which Toller underwent in 1917/18, a process reflected in the play's structure and content. The two formative influences on Toller's political development at this time were the philosophy of Gustav Landauer, as presented in his Aufruf zum Sozialismus, and his meeting with Eisner and subsequent participation in the January Strike. This chapter will argue that Die Wandlung, like much of Expressionist drama in its later (Activist) phase, reflects not only a literary but a political tradition - the Anarchist tradition in European Socialism. It is therefore proposed to outline the analogies between Activism and Anarchism (particularly as mediated by Landauer), to trace the latter's influence on Toller's political activity in 1917/18, and its reflection in the last half

of Die Wandlung, and finally to examine the traces of the January Strike in the final scenes of the play.

2. Anarchism and Activism⁵

The importance of the Anarchist tradition in Germany in 1918 was not as an organised movement, but as a body of ideas. Despite differences of emphasis, all Anarchists have aimed at the renewal of society through abolishing the state and replacing it by voluntary cooperation between individuals. The social revolution they propose transcends class conflict, leading not to the dictatorship of one class but the dissolution of all classes. In practice, Anarchists reject party organisation in favour of the belief in popular impulse; social renewal will be achieved through spontaneous popular revolution, prepared by loose circles of propagandists, whose task is not to lead people, so much as to enlighten and give example. A classic case of such a circle of propagandists was the Freedom Group around Kropotkin in London, and it was the German translator of Kropotkin's work, Gustav Landauer, who was the most influential exponent of Anarchism in Germany.

Activism was not a product of the war; it had emerged in the immediate pre-war years, exemplified in such journals as Die Aktion. It sprang from profound dissatisfaction with the complacent materialism of the 'Kaiserreich' - the 'heilige Unzufriedenheit' which Landauer had always believed would provide the impulse for

social change. In 1914, the rebellion of Activism had been submerged in the wave of popular enthusiasm for the war, though some signs of it were still evident in the pages of Die Aktion. It was not until 1916 that the tide of public opinion began to turn against the war. By 1917, the anti-war movement was growing in strength; the SPD had split and the USPD had been founded as a specifically anti-war party.

Not surprisingly, the literature of these war years reflects this transition from patriotism to radical activism. In the course of 1916/17, a number of anti-war plays were written, published, and in some cases even produced, despite the strict censorship. Among the best-known are Kaiser's Die Bürger von Calais and Gas, Unruh's Ein Geschlecht, Hasenclever's Antigone and Rubiner's Die Gewaltlosen⁶. These Activist plays have striking similarities of form and theme - and also some striking analogies with Anarchism. The Activist protagonist proclaims a New World, being actively opposed to the old order, and indeed openly subversive of it. This New World will be attained, not through class conflict and political action, but through enlightenment prepared by the propaganda of word and example. Landauer, like all Anarchists, rejected class conflict. His own activity was consciously propagandist: 'Der Sozialismus ist zuerst die Tat der Sozialisten', he wrote in 1915⁷, and certainly his 'Sozialistischer Bund' and the Socialist colonies it sponsored were based

on the precept of propaganda by example. Intrinsic to this precept was the ethic of self-sacrifice - Landauer spoke of the need for 'stille unscheinbare Opfer, um für das rechte Leben ein Beispiel zu geben'⁸. The protagonist of Activist drama not only proclaims a new humanity but is also prepared to demonstrate it, often - as in all the dramas mentioned above - through extreme self-sacrifice. Activist drama also shares the hostility to industrialisation, and hence to industrial capitalism, which is characteristic of Anarchism. Above all, Activism shared the conception of art as a means to moral and social regeneration which had been common to Anarchist thinkers from Proudhon to Tolstoy. It is indeed this conception which represents the most obvious point of congruence between Activism and Anarchism. By 1917, the two currents were converging, a process aptly illustrated in Landauer himself.

Landauer had always assigned a crucial role in the achievement of Socialism to the poet, who incorporated the force of 'Geist'. He had opposed the war from the outset, and for entirely characteristic reasons: 'nichts hat in diesem Krieg so kläglich versagt wie der deutsche Geist'⁹. As the war continued, Landauer had lapsed into silence¹⁰. In 1916, the military censorship in Prussia had banned distribution of his Aufruf zum Sozialismus and he had gradually withdrawn into his studies of Shakespeare¹¹. In the course of 1917, however, he had concluded that his political writing, which had had only

a marginal influence before the war, had suddenly found an audience. He spoke of reissuing his Aufruf in conjunction with Die Revolution¹². As the war drew to a close, he felt that the poet must play an active part in the coming revolution: 'Sie sollten sich der Neuheit der Revolution anschließen... Sie sollten den Elan finden, zu handeln und zu jubilieren, statt anonym zu bleiben, sie sollten tätig sein, statt nur zu schreiben'¹³.

In 1918 Landauer accepted the post of 'Dramaturg' with the Düsseldorfer Schauspielhaus. He regarded the theatre as a means of social education, not a refuge from reality:

Die Bühne hat in den Zeiten, die kommen, eine wundervolle Aufgabe... Wir fliehen nicht vor den Menschen zur Menschheit in die reine Kunst; wir wollen mit Menschen das Kunstwerk des guten Lebens aufbauen; und die Brücke zwischen dem Bild der Menschheit, wie es die Kunst aufbaut, und den wimmelnden Menschenhaufen, die Gestalt werden sollen, ist die Bühne, die zugleich Kunst und... unmittelbaren Verkehr mit Menschen bietet. 14

He felt his own affinity with Expressionist drama, particularly with Kaiser: there was 'keinen größeren, keinen gewaltigeren, keinen reineren Dramatiker, der jetzt lebt'. He greatly admired Gas ('ein soziales Drama von letzter Wucht und Hoheit'), believing that its Anarchist philosophy derived ultimately from his own¹⁵. Landauer's intellectual influence probably reached its peak in the years 1916-19; during this time he received a constant stream of requests for his Aufruf zum

Sozialismus¹⁶. Among those who wrote to him in 1917 was Ernst Toller, who had just completed the first draft of Die Wandlung.

3. Form and structure

Die Wandlung is of course an Expressionist play¹⁷.

The theme of spiritual regeneration, a process summarised in the play's title, is the Expressionist theme 'par excellence'. The play is written in the typically Expressionist form of the 'Stationendrama', in which the spiritual progress of a central character is portrayed in a series of 'tableaux', loosely connected through his experience. The secondary characters are not individually delineated, but embody specific attitudes and social roles, their function being to illuminate the development of the protagonist. Even the protagonist himself is less an individual figure than a paragon: Friedrich's spiritual regeneration is a model of the anticipated regeneration of mankind.

Perhaps the keynote of the Expressionist theatre is the attempt to portray sub-conscious experience on stage, and Toller uses the techniques of staging and spotlighting which had been developed to evoke this world of inner reality. Die Wandlung is divided into six stations, representing the successive stages in the protagonist's progress towards spiritual regeneration and rebirth. The stations are sub-divided into thirteen tableaux ('Bilder'), consisting of 'realistic' scenes,

which are played front stage and comprise a roughly consecutive narrative of the protagonist's conscious experience, and 'dream' scenes, which are played rear stage - 'schattenhaft wirklich, in innerlicher Traumferne' (p.12) - and which represent the inner reality of that experience.

Despite this apparent unity of theme and form, Die Wandlung is not an entirely homogeneous work, its parts reflecting the stages in its composition. Toller wrote two drafts of the play, the first in the summer and autumn of 1917, the final draft in February and March 1918¹⁸. The period of composition therefore corresponds to the time at which Toller first became actively involved in politics, and during which his political philosophy began to develop. It is hardly surprising that the different parts of the play reflect the successive stages in his political development, or that these remain partly discernible in the final version.

The play falls into three distinct parts. The early scenes (Bilder 1-6) portray Friedrich's experience of war, contrasting his idealistic patriotism to the reality it blinds him to. Scene 7 represents a dramatic turning-point, culminating in Friedrich's decision 'zu den Menschen zu gehen'. The three following scenes portray his attempt to embrace humanity through his experience of suffering, death and rebirth. The

final scenes (Bilder 11-13) show Friedrich's emergence as a popular leader, ending with his call to revolution.

In retrospect, it no longer seems possible to document the precise chronology of composition, though it can be inferred to some extent from the content. Certainly, the early scenes, tracing Toller's own transition from patriotic enthusiasm for the war to physical revulsion against it, were the first to be written. Friedrich is an outsider figure, socially isolated by his ethnic origin, and yet estranged from the comfortable materialism of his family: 'denen drüben Fremder, den andern fern' (p.17). He greets news of the outbreak of war in the colonies with enthusiasm: by volunteering, he feels he can demonstrate his patriotism, thereby gaining acceptance into the national community, from which his race has always excluded him. ('Oh, der Kampf wird uns alle einen... Nun kann ich beweisen, daß ich zu ihnen gehöre' (pp.20-21). The following dream scene suggests the true reality of warfare: 'Ziellos irren wir, furchtsame Kinder/ Preisgegeben sinnloser Willkür/ Morden, hungern, vollbringen gewaltige Taten' (p.22). But Friedrich is not yet able to perceive this reality at the level of conscious experience.

In the second station (3.Bild), Friedrich seeks to justify the death and suffering of war in the face of the cynicism of his fellow-soldiers. To prove his patriotism, he volunteers for a dangerous mission; it is

only after the successful completion of this mission that his conscious doubts arise. His realisation of the brutal reality of war is prefigured in the 'dream' scene 'Zwischen den Drahtverhauen'. The essential brotherhood of mankind, and the desecration of common humanity in war are grotesquely symbolised by the skeletons, united in death as they hang in the barbed wire in No Man's Land: 'Nun sind wir nicht mehr Freund und Feind/ Nun sind wir nicht mehr weiß und schwarz./ Nun sind wir alle gleich' (p.26)¹⁹.

Friedrich's doubts are consciously articulated in the third station (5.Bild). He is decorated with the Iron Cross, the ultimate mark of the acceptance he had sought, but is appalled at the cost: 'Durch zehntausend Tote gehöre ich zu ihnen... ist das Befreiung? Ist das die große Zeit?' (p.29). Once again, the scene is juxtaposed with a 'dream' scene, in which sub-conscious realisation far outstrips conscious articulation. The grotesque ministrations of medicine are exemplified by the Professor, who summons the mutilated to demonstrate his artificial limbs. The only possible release for the victims of war is death: 'Wir wollen nicht erwachen'. Although these early scenes are among the theatrically most effective in the play, they show little sign of political awareness or analysis. They were almost certainly written in the summer of 1917, before Toller's first active involvement in politics²⁰. The historical evidence is inconclusive, confirming merely that they had been completed, and indeed printed, by January 1918²¹.

The central section of the play, reflecting the emergence of Toller's political philosophy, was almost certainly written in Heidelberg in the autumn of 1917. Up to this point, Die Wandlung is an anti-war play, transposing Toller's experience of active service into dramatic symbols of great force. Scene 7 represents a dramatic turning-point, in which Friedrich is finally disillusioned in his ideal of patriotism and recognises the new direction he must take. The following two scenes are dream scenes, evoking Friedrich's spiritual regeneration through the experience of suffering, death and rebirth. (Scene 9 actually bears the title 'Tod und Auferstehung'.) The motif of symbolic death and rebirth is, of course, a common-place of Expressionism, representing the climax of the typical process of spiritual regeneration. It is the title of a seminal collection of poems by Hasenclever, and appears in varying forms in Die Bürger von Calais, Ein Geschlecht and Antigone²². Toller's formal conception was undoubtedly influenced by some or all of these literary antecedents, but at the same time these scenes have a concrete point of reference, enacting Toller's own turn to pacifism and Socialism, using the symbolic techniques of Expressionism to portray his growing identification with the cause of the proletariat²³. It seems possible that the first draft of Die Wandlung actually ended with the scene 'Tod und Auferstehung'. In view of the significance which the motif of symbolic

death and rebirth had for the whole Expressionist generation, it may well be that Toller originally intended to end the play with this climax of the process of spiritual regeneration. The hypothesis receives some support from the Berlin production of the play at the Tribüne, in which Karl-Heinz Martin actually changed the published sequence of scenes, so as to end the play with 'Tod und Auferstehung'²⁴.

In the published version of the play, however, there is a coda consisting of three further scenes, which portray Friedrich's attempt to take his message to the people. It is possible that these scenes are a subsequent addition, written entirely in February and March 1918. Toller's own comments, written long after the event, seem to suggest this, but it is impossible to corroborate the hypothesis from contemporary sources²⁵. All that can be said with certainty is that they were, at the very least, substantially revised after January 1918, since they contain a number of specific references to Toller's experience in the January Strike²⁶.

These concluding scenes are markedly more political in their emphasis. They translate Friedrich's spiritual regeneration onto a social plane: his rebirth is to be a model for the rebirth of society. (The action of Die Wandlung is located 'in Europa vor Anbruch der Wiedergeburt'.) The point of focus has shifted from the war to the social order which prosecutes and prolongs it.

In the eleventh scene, the typological figures who address the meeting are overt spokesmen for the bourgeois state, representing the institutions which support and uphold it; the state itself is indicted as the author of war. This emphasis is confirmed in the final scene, when Friedrich proclaims a revolution, in which spiritual transformation is clearly a prelude to social transformation. In fact, Friedrich's call to revolution, like his earlier decision to 'go to the people', must be understood within a specific frame of reference, that of Gustav Landauer's Aufruf zum Sozialismus.

4. The political dimensions of Die Wandlung

(i) Drama as political action

The break in Die Wandlung after the third station reflects not only Toller's personal transformation, but that of Expressionism - the change from the passive protagonist, reflecting social conditions, to the active protagonist, whose purpose is to convert the masses to his ideals. Toller's rapid politicisation in the course of 1917 led him to adopt an extreme Activist conception of art. The purpose of art was no longer merely - or even primarily - aesthetic, for art was to be an appeal to action, in which the artist himself was to be both advocate and exemplar: 'Den Weg!/ Den Weg!/ Du Dichter weise'²⁷. Die Wandlung was not simply a statement of pacifist conviction, but an appeal for direct action against the war. The play itself became an integral part of Toller's anti-war activity:

1917 war das Drama für mich Flugblatt. Ich las Szenen daraus vor im Kreise junger Menschen in Heidelberg und wollte sie aufwühlen ('aufhetzen' gegen den Krieg!), ich fuhr nach der Ausweisung aus Heidelberg nach Berlin und las hier wieder das Stück. Immer mit der Absicht, Dampfe aufzurütteln, Widerstrebende zum Marschieren zu bewegen, Tastenden den Weg zu zeigen... und sie alle zu gewinnen für revolutionäre sachliche Kleinarbeit. 28

Later, he distributed leaflets containing scenes from the play at Eisner's meetings before the January Strike. The connection between theory and practice, dramatic statement and political action, is therefore more direct than in almost any other Activist drama.

Toller believed that art demanded the artist's complete commitment: 'ich fordere von denen, die mit uns gehen... daß sie (ihr Leben) seelisch und geistig und körperlich als Einheit einsetzen werden', he wrote to Gustav Landauer in December 1917²⁹. And indeed Friedrich's final call to revolution can only be understood with reference to Landauer, in whose terms it is unmistakably framed.

It is uncertain precisely when Toller first read Landauer's Aufruf zum Sozialismus, though it was certainly before he went to Heidelberg in October 1917, and therefore most probably during the preceding summer³⁰. Toller's letter to Landauer effectively documents the fact that he was not only acquainted with the main elements of Landauer's philosophy, but had adopted them very much as his own:

Was könnte ich Ihnen noch sagen? Daß ich glaube, wir müssen vor allen Dingen den Krieg, die Armut und den Staat bekämpfen, der letzthin nur die Gewalt und nicht das Recht (als Besitz) erkennt, und an seine Stelle die Gemeinschaft setzen, wirtschaftlich gebunden durch den friedlichen Tausch von Arbeitsprodukten gegen gleichwertige andere, die Gemeinschaft freier Menschen, die durch den Geist besteht (p.36).

Toller is of course outlining the very programme Landauer himself advanced: the renunciation of force, the rejection of the state - which rests on force - and its replacement by a federation of cooperative communities, the Anarchist commonwealth of free men united through creative spirit.

(ii) Der kulturpolitische Bund

Toller's letter to Landauer specifically requested his support for the work of the student association he had formed in Heidelberg - and Landauer's influence is certainly paramount in the association's 'guiding principles', which bear Toller's name³¹. He defined the task of the association as 'in jungen Menschen Verantwortlichkeit zu erwecken, und sie zu politischer Aktivität zu führen' (p.31). It would initiate action through example and inspiration: 'Wir wollen Führer sein, indem wir schreiten, die Gesamtheit entflammen, indem wir brennen' (p.31). The association was 'eine Gemeinschaft von Gleichgesinnten und Gleichgewillten', guided and united by 'der uns einenden Idee Wahrhaftigen Geistes' (p.31).

Landauer's influence is evident in the conception of 'Geist' as the creative source of social change; its purpose was to transform the 'Dinghaftigkeit' prevailing in social and economic relations into 'Menschhaftigkeit'³²: 'Damit an Stelle starr gewordener Formen und Institutionen formbildende Kräfte wirken. Damit an Stelle willkürlicher Organisation von gestaltendem Geist beherrschter Organismus wächst' (p.31). In this way, 'Geist' would provide the impulse for new social forms, dissolving the arbitrary organisation of the (capitalist) state. It was the task of the few ('Künstler und Menschen, die aus Liebe schaffen') to prevail on the many, in whom 'die schöpferischen Keime vom Sud und Abfall der Fabriken und Großstädte, verschüttet sind' (p.32). The force of 'Geist' would imbue reality, bringing about an organic growth of community:

Durch Liebe die Keime von Schutt und Fäulnis zu befreien sei unsere Aufgabe. Auf daß jeder seinen Wirkungskreis umgestalte in schöpferische geisterfüllte Wirklichkeit und wir gelangen zu einer Gemeinschaft von Persönlichkeiten (p.32).

The belief in creative spirit as the agent of social change induced a parallel belief that the message could best be diffused through works of literature - the products of creative spirit. The association hoped to educate opinion and rally support by distributing leaflets with appropriate texts from Tolstoy, Barbusse, Hasenclever - and Gustav Landauer³³.

Toller's outline programme is a striking mixture of the utopian and the concrete. While it contained a number

of realisable objectives, its ultimate aspirations were more grandiose: 'Nur aus innerlicher Mensch-Wandlung kann die Gemeinschaft, die wir erstreben, erwachsen' (p.32). Toller clearly considered the association as a means of translating the aspirations of the play he was then writing into practical political activity. In short, the 'Leitsätze' are a programmatic re-statement of some of Landauer's most characteristic ideas, in which social revolution rests on the evocation of creative spirit and the reawakening of a sense of community, in which the regeneration of the individual must precede the regeneration of society, and in which the role of the Socialist is to invoke Socialism through the propaganda of word and example. The final scenes of Die Wandlung transpose this conception of the revolutionary process into dramatic form.

(iii) Call to Socialism: Die Wandlung as an evocation of Landauer's conception of social revolution

The seventh tableau of Die Wandlung marks a dramatic turning-point. Friedrich is increasingly assailed by doubts, which undermine his ability to complete the statue of the 'Sieg des Vaterlandes' on which he is working. Victory has become more and more questionable: the statue which represents it 'wirkt brutal'. His doubts are finally confirmed by the visit of the 'Kriegsinvalidin' and her husband, disfigured and

debilitated by venereal disease. They confront him with the true price of patriotism: 'Geschändete Menschen! ... Um des Vaterlandes willen... Gott... kann ein Vaterland das verlangen?' (p.39). His ideal of patriotism has finally been shattered - and he therefore smashes the statue which his patriotism had inspired. He is saved from suicide by the arrival of his sister, who directs him to the new path he must take: 'Zu Gott, der Geist und Liebe und Kraft ist,/ Zu Gott, der in der Menschheit lebt./ Dein Weg führt dich zu den Menschen' (p.40). The scene ends with Friedrich walking out 'ecstatically' - and symbolically - to pursue his new mission.

This dramatic turning-point is also an ideological one. Friedrich's decision to embrace humanity, and his consequent experience of working-class poverty and deprivation, rest on a conception of the proletariat, and of the social role of the intellectual, which both derive directly from Gustav Landauer³⁴. His decision reflects the conviction, which Toller had already expressed in the 'Leitsätze', that society could be transformed only if artists and intellectuals, those in whom 'Geist' was active, once more had their roots in the people. To attain his goal, Friedrich must first realise fully his own humanity: 'Wer zu den Menschen gehen will,/ Muß erst in sich den Menschen finden' (p.40)³⁵.

To embrace humanity, Friedrich must share the daily life of the common people. As 'Schlafbursche' in a slum

dwelling, he experiences the fate of the urban proletariat: poverty, sickness and demoralisation. He must not only experience their suffering, but recognise the reasons for it: the reality behind everyday appearances. 'Zur Arbeit führe ich dich-/ Die du und deinesgleichen schaffen müssen./ Tu deine Alltagsbrille ab/ Und lerne sehen' (p.42), he is told by the 'nächtliche Besucher', who leads him to the 'große Fabrik', which proves to be a prison paved with gold: a striking metaphor of the social and economic condition of the working-class. Friedrich therefore embraces humanity through his experience of the suffering of the proletariat which, as the class most exploited, and whose suffering is therefore most acute, is also the class most representative of human suffering in general. Toller's conception of the proletariat, echoing Landauer's, is of a class which suffers, a passive force unable to shape its own future. This conception is pursued in the final scenes, in which the people play a purely passive role, being merely the object of Friedrich's message.

Landauer's influence is indeed even more specific. In Scene 11, Toller contrasts the antithetical concepts of 'Staat' and 'Geist'. The state is embodied in its representative institutions - the army, the universities, the church - and in rejecting them, Toller is rejecting the state itself. In the latter part of the scene, Friedrich invokes 'Geist' as the means of transforming reality - that is, as an antithesis to the state. The

scene is a mass meeting, which is addressed by a series of typological figures - the old soldier who invokes the victories of 1870 ('die große Zeit'), the professor eulogising a learning which is quite irrelevant to his starving audience, the churchman expounding the thesis of the just war - who are not only spokesmen for the Old Order, but represent the institutions which uphold the state. The Professor indeed makes this explicit: 'Die Wissenschaft, die ich verkünde... dient der Erhaltung des Staates, sie ist eine Apologie dieses vollkommensten ethischen Organismus' (p.47).

No less explicit is the rejection of these institutions, and therefore of the state itself, by the 'Kommis des Tages': 'Staat ist ein neuer Ausdruck für Vaterland. Das ist eine Lüge' (p.48). He portrays the state as contained within arbitrary boundaries, sanctioning and institutionalising existing injustice; it is also the agent of war:

Wenn die Reichen noch nicht genug Paläste haben und raffinierte Lustvillen wünschen, sagen sie: Verdammt. Wir machen Krieg. Setzen sich hin, telephonieren ein paar Lügen in die Welt, lassen Krieg erklären (p.48).

Friedrich concurs in this rejection of the state, but dismisses the solutions of the 'Kommis' as 'Halbwahrheiten'. It is not enough simply to reject the state, for 'state' cannot be replaced by 'Community' until men have rediscovered their common humanity. The 'Kommis' regards the people as an undifferentiated mass, and fails to perceive what will unite them as 'Volk':

Volk ist aber für ihn Masse. Denn er weiß nichts vom Volk. Glaubt ihm nicht, denn ihm fehlt der Glaube an sich, an den Menschen. Ich aber will, daß ihr den Glauben an den Menschen habt, ehe ihr marschieret. (p.50)

The state is, in Landauer's sense, a 'surrogate of the spirit', for it is 'Geist' which will unite men to transform their social conditions. At the end of the scene, Friedrich addresses the young people who have stayed behind to hear his message: 'Du Jugend schreite, ewig dich gebärend/ Enstarrtes ewig du zerstörend/ So schaffe Leben gluterfüllt vom Geist' (p.51). Only the young are still uncorrupted by the prevailing ethos of materialism, and it is therefore above all they who must dismantle the Old Order and build the New. Toller's student association had embodied his belief that youth could effect international reconciliation. Over the next decade, he continued to believe that youth had a crucial role in social change: youth was indeed a symbol of social rebirth³⁶.

The gathering of the people in the final scene is now revealed as doubly symbolic. Their readiness to listen to Friedrich's message illustrates the reawakening of their innate sense of community, that is, their capacity to come together again as people ('Volk') - and also their willingness to overcome the state, which Friedrich now invites them to destroy: 'Geht hin zu den Machthabern und kündet ihnen mit Orgelstimmen, daß ihre Macht ein Truggebilde sei' (p.60). Friedrich has undergone an exemplary process of spiritual regeneration.

His task ('the task of Socialists') is to awaken others to follow his example. He has shared the prison of working-class experience, thus fulfilling the precept of Toller's 'Leitsätze' in overcoming 'die immer tiefer werdende Kluft zwischen Volk und Intellektuellen' (p.31). He can therefore claim with justice that he knows their lives: 'Keinen von euch kenne ich, und doch weiß ich um euch alle' (p.58). It is this which entitles him to show them to themselves as they really are - dehumanised by factory mechanisation and demoralised by poverty, disease and alcoholism. In attempting to make them realise their own humanity, Friedrich invokes the ideal vision of the artist:

Ich weiß um deinen erstaunten Blick, wenn
 du schreitenden Jüngling sahst, den ein
 Künstler geschaffen.-
 Warum konnte der ihn gestalten? Weil er
 da ist, wirklich da ist! (p.59)

That is, the artist can visualise only what is innate in them. They, however, have been dehumanised: 'Und so seid ihr alle verzerrte Bilder des wirklichen Menschen/ .../Denn ihr habt den Geist vergraben' (p.59).

Creative spirit has been buried by the prevailing system of social and industrial organisation: 'Gewaltige Maschinen donnern Tage und Nächte/ Tausende von Spaten sind in immerwährender Bewegung, um immer mehr Schutt auf den Geist zu schaufeln' (p.59)³⁷. They have the ingrained attitudes of bourgeois society - the hardening of hearts, the materialist values, the mistrust. They are no longer men - 'ihr seid alle keine Menschen mehr,

seid Zerrbilder euer selbst' (p.60)³⁷ - but they could become men again if they were to recognise their essential humanity: 'Und ihr könntet doch Menschen sein, wenn ihr den Glauben an den Menschen hättet, wenn ihr Erfüllte wäret im Geist' (p.60).

It is therefore 'Geist', the yeast of revolution, which will enable men to transform relationships and the society which articulates them. That is, spiritual regeneration is a prerequisite of social revolution. Only now, as the people rediscover their common humanity, can Friedrich call on them to march: 'Marschieret! Marschieret am lichten Tag!'. The revolution he proclaims must embrace all social classes, for the rich are as much victims of their luxury as the poor of their poverty: 'Geht hin zu den Reichen und zeigt ihnen ihr Herz, das ein Schutthaufen ward. Doch seid gütig zu ihnen, denn auch sie sind Arme, Verirrte' (p.61). In accordance with Anarchist precept, the revolution will lead, not to the dictatorship of one class, but to the dissolution of all classes in the spirit of community, echoing Landauer's conception of a revolution, presaging 'früher als irgend jemand ahnt, nicht die Diktatur, sondern die Abschaffung des Proletariats und die Erhebung der neuen Menschengesellschaft'³⁸.

The demonstrable influence of Landauer disproves the assertion that the revolution of Die Wandlung should not be understood in a political sense. The final

tableaux are not simply an exposition of the Expressionist process of spiritual regeneration, but a symbolic representation of Landauer's conception of social revolution, in which people rediscover their common humanity (that is, the reality of community) which has been buried by the accretions of bourgeois society. It is the rediscovery of something which is innate. Accordingly, the role of the Socialist is not to lead, but to enlighten and give example. Significantly, Friedrich does not accept the role of leader which others wish to thrust upon him: he answers their cry of 'Du sei uns Führer' with 'Mitsammen wollen wir schreiten' (p.51)³⁹.

Landauer defined social revolution as 'ein friedlicher Aufbau, ein Organisieren aus neuem Geiste und zu neuem Geiste und nichts weiter'⁴⁰. It was precisely this organisation of new spirit which Toller's student association invoked: 'statt geistloser Organisation, Organisation des Geistes' - instead of the 'geistloser Organisation' of the 'Totenkaserne', the creative organisation of the spirit which Friedrich begins in the final scene. It is now clear why 'Die Totenkaserne' is designated as 'ein Vorspiel, das auch als Nachspiel gedacht werden kann' (p.13), for it portrays the inevitable conclusion if Friedrich's message goes unheeded.

5. The reflection of the January Strike

If the final scenes of Die Wandlung are a dramatic representation of Landauer's conception of social revolution, they also have a concrete and specific point of reference in Toller's own experience of mass political action in the January Strike. The strike had been his first direct involvement in popular action; it also provided his first experience of addressing a mass meeting, and his first taste of imprisonment. This seminal experience is rendered in the symbolic form and rhetorical manner of late Expressionism.

As we have seen, the scenes were possibly written, but certainly extensively revised, in February and March 1918. Toller's revisions must in fact have begun with Scene 9 ('Tod und Auferstehung'). The typical motif of death and rebirth must be read as a purely literary reference, indeed the idea of rebirth through one's own efforts was one which Toller had sought to express in his earliest surviving poem⁴¹. However, the scene is also based on concrete recollection, using an incident which took place during Toller's detention in military prison⁴². The scene is designated as 'Erdgeschoß eines Gefängnisses (Der großen Fabrik)', in which a prisoner, who bears Friedrich's face, has thrown himself downstairs to his death. His dying cries, which break open the cell doors, force his fellow-prisoners to realise 'Wir sind vereint im Leiden' (p.44). The scene, together with the preceding one, enacts Toller's own turn to humanitarianism and

Socialism. The prison motif symbolises the condition of the working-class; it is only by realising their suffering, that is, by sharing the prison of working-class experience, that Friedrich can be reborn. In other words, the prison which is the scene of his rebirth also symbolises the means of achieving it. Toller has fused literary reference and concrete experience into a dramatic symbol of spiritual regeneration.

Scenes 11 and 13 ('Volksversammlung' and 'Platz vor der Kirche') are of course a representation of Friedrich's mission 'to go to the people'; their form is a specific reference to Toller's own experience in the strike movement. In Scene 11, the room is decorated 'nach Kriegervereinsmanier mit verlogenen Kriegsbildern', images which adumbrate Friedrich's mission of enlightenment, but also document Toller's sensitivity to official war propaganda. His involvement in the strike had been precipitated by the revelation of German war guilt. Eisner had considered his strike meetings to be a means of 'geistige Aufklärung', of revealing the truth obscured by the lies of government propaganda⁴³.

Scene 13 also had a concrete point of reference, encapsulating one of Toller's most formative experiences. In the course of the strike, he addressed a mass meeting for the first time. While his later accounts make only laconic reference to the occasion, a poem written in the immediate aftermath suggests that it made a much deeper impression on him:

Ich habe Euch umarmt mit Flammenhänden,
 Worte wurden blutdurchpulste Speere,
 Die Euch
 Zum Lichte, rauschendem, erlösten.
 Ihr Tausende, fabrikgemartert, Arbeitssielen,
 Ihr wurdet einzig strahlend Auge,
 Ihr wurdet einzige gestraffte Hand,
 Die ich ergriff in brünstiger Umklammerung - 44

He clearly felt that his words inspired the mass of workers to transcend the misery of their economic condition. Above all, his message united them - and him with them; he could feel that he had finally bridged 'die immer tiefer werdende Kluft zwischen Volk und Intellektuellen'⁴⁵. The tribune was united with the people. The poem dates, of course, from the same time as the final scenes of Die Wandlung, and it is no coincidence that Friedrich's final address also calls on the people to rise above their economic misery. His last words are taken up by the people, who repeat them in unison, thereby uniting themselves with him.

The January Strike was to remain Toller's most positive revolutionary experience, assuming in retrospect almost mythical proportions⁴⁶. Nonetheless, his involvement did not mark a new departure ideologically - and has consequently left little trace on the ideology of Die Wandlung. He later maintained that he had joined the strike for pacifist, not Socialist, reasons: 'was mich anzog, war ihr Kampf gegen den Krieg' - nor was this illogical, for the aims of the strike were pacifist rather than explicitly Socialist, its main demand being for peace without annexations or reparations⁴⁷. Toller suggested that, on arriving in Munich, he had had no idea

a strike was being planned. He had addressed a students' meeting on students' rights of freedom of assembly and association, and had held a literary evening which included readings from his poems and scenes from Die Wandlung⁴⁸. He distributed scenes from the play at Eisner's strike meetings, just as he had read them to fellow-students in Heidelberg. In other words, he identified with a movement whose aims seemed consistent with those of his student association. His own aspirations seemed to be echoed in the resolution which Eisner addressed to workers in enemy countries: 'Vereint euch mit uns, den Völkerfrieden zu erzwingen, der im Aufbau einer neuen Welt allen Menschen Freiheit und Glück sichert...'⁴⁹.

The political philosophy of Die Wandlung is, of course, Utopian, but it is important to stress that such ideals were widely held in 1917/18, and even more that the November Revolution seemed to many to translate ideals into reality. Friedrich Wolf was typical of many eye-witnesses who felt that the revolution presaged a new world of brotherhood and humanity. René Schickele, from the perspective of Swiss exile, saw it as a prelude to national regeneration: 'Die neue Welt hat begonnen... Der Tag der unromantischen Verwirklichung ist da. Jetzt ist die neue Zeit da, die sozialistische'⁵⁰. Even harder political heads were turned: Liebknecht proclaimed a Socialist Republic for which there was neither a political nor an economic basis in fact.

It is therefore evident that, while Die Wandlung is very much an Expressionist play, which draws its formal inspiration from identifiable literary models, it is also a play about political ideas, which reflects the course of Toller's politicisation in 1917/18. Toller's dramatic statement is contained within a conceptual framework derived from his reading of Landauer's Aufruf zum Sozialismus. These ideas demonstrably influenced Toller's own political activity in Heidelberg, and were apparently reinforced by his experience of mass action in the January Strike. Toller's political development over the following decade can be seen as an extended dialogue with Landauer's philosophy, an attempt to reconcile his voluntarist precepts with tenets of economic determinism.

Notes to Chapter II

- 1 Horst Denkler, Drama des Expressionismus. Programme - Spieltext-Theater, Munich 1967, pp.177 ff.; Eberhard Lämmert, 'Das expressionistische Verkündigungs-drama', in Der deutsche Expressionismus. Formen und Gestalten. (H. Steffen ed.), Göttingen 1965, pp.138-57.
- 2 Bütow, op.cit., p.68.
- 3 Altenhofer, op.cit., p.51. Altenhofer makes a perceptive analysis of the play, correctly identifying the dominant influence of Gustav Landauer, but fails to consider it as a reflection of the development of Toller's political views in 1917/18 - and thereby seems to miss a significant point of her own analysis.
- 4 Ter Haar, op.cit., p.94 and p.241, note 58. Toller certainly knew and admired the poem (cf. Jugend, GW IV, p.99). However, while Die Wandlung certainly echoes Werfel's theme - 'Die Welt fängt im Menschen an' - the analogy is not sufficiently specific to justify Ter Haar's assertion, since this theme is common to virtually all Expressionist drama.
- 5 This section does not pretend to make an extensive analysis of Anarchism or Activism, but simply to indicate some analogies between them. I have consulted the following general works: George Woodcock, Anarchism; Ulrich Linse, Organisierter Anarchismus im deutschen Kaiserreich von 1871; Wolfgang Rothe, Der Aktivismus. Works of specific interest include: Ulrich Linse (ed.), Gustav Landauer und die Revolutionszeit 1918/19; Helmut Kreuzer, Die Bohème. Beiträge zu ihrer Beschreibung; Michael Ossar, Anarchism in the dramas of Ernst Toller. Full details of these works are given in the Bibliography.
- 6 Die Bürger von Calais was published in 1914, but not produced until January 1917. Ein Geschlecht was finished in the autumn of 1916, published in March 1917, and performed in June 1918. Antigone was completed and published in 1917, and performed in December of that year. Gas was written in 1917/18, published in 1918, and performed in November of that year. Die Gewaltlosen was begun in January 1917, and completed in the autumn of 1918.

- 7 'Stelle dich, Sozialist!', Der Aufbruch, no.1, Berlin 1915, reprinted in Landauer, Erkenntnis und Befreiung. Ausgewählte Reden und Aufsätze, (Ruth Link-Salinger (Hyman) ed.), p.78.
- 8 Aufruf, p.152.
- 9 Letter to Fritz Mauthner, 2.11.1914, in Gustav Landauer. Sein Lebensgang in Briefen (Martin Buber ed.), Berlin 1929, Vol II, p.8, subsequently cited as Lebensgang.
- 10 Letter to Hugo Warnstedt, 25.3.1916, Lebensgang II, p.134: 'Es geht mir wie dir, in immer steigendem Maße: ich verstumme'.
- 11 Cf. letter to Hugo Warnstedt, 1.7.1916, Lebensgang II, pp.152-53 and letter to Margarete Susman, 4.11.1916, *ibid.*, p.167.
- 12 Letter to Leo Kestenberg, 13.12.1917, Lebensgang II, p.201. Cf. also Chapter I, note 19.
- 13 Landauer, 'Ansprache an die Dichter', Die Erhebung. Jahrbuch für neue Dichtung und Wertung (Alfred Wolfenstein ed.), pp.296-304. This essay was written in October 1918, but only appeared posthumously in an anthology which also includes a scene from Die Wandlung: 'Totentanz', pp.56-62, which corresponds to Scene IV of the published version.
- 14 Letter to Louise Dumont-Lindemann, 8.1.1919, Lebensgang II, pp.351-52. Cf. Eisner's conception of art - see Chapter I/6, notes 66 and 67.
- 15 Letter to Georg Springer, 23.4.1918, Lebensgang II, p.225, and to Auguste Hauschner, 26.12.1918, *ibid.*, p.342: 'Und nun sollten Sie Georg Kaisers Drama 'Gas' lesen, das auch von der Siedlung handelt und wohl irgendwie von mir herkommt.'
- 16 Cf. Lebensgang II, pp.152-53, 201, 278.
- 17 Die Wandlung. Das Ringen eines Menschen. Potsdam 1919. This version is reprinted in GW II, pp.7-61; page references in the text of this chapter are to the latter edition.
- 18 Cf. GW II, p.8, and Daiber, *op.cit.*, p.93.
- 19 Toller's earliest attempt to express this theme had been in the poem 'Leichen im Priesterwald' (1916) - see Vormorgen, Berlin 1924, p.17.

- 20 Toller's first active involvement in politics had been at the Lauenstein Congress - see Chapter I/2.
- 21 Toller distributed scenes from the play, printed in leaflet form, at Eisner's strike meetings - cf. 'Bemerkungen zu meinem Drama Die Wandlung', dated October 1919, published in Tribüne der Kunst und Zeit, no. XIII, Berlin 1920, pp.46-48. In his autobiography (GW IV, p.88) he states that he distributed 'die Lazarett- und Krüppelszenen'.
- 22 See W. Hasenclever, Tod und Auferstehung, Munich 1917. The most obvious formal and stylistic influences on Die Wandlung are Strindberg and Sorge, but Toller also knew the work of Hasenclever, particularly admiring his Antigone, which he specifically mentions in the 'Leitsätze für einen kulturpolitischen Bund der Jugend in Deutschland' - see section 4 (ii) below. The influence of Unruh also seems likely. Ein Geschlecht was published in Munich in March 1917, at a time when Toller was actually studying there; while there is no direct evidence that he read it, certain passages in Unruh's play show striking similarities with Toller's poem 'Mütter', written in 1917 - cf. note 27 below.
- 23 More specifically, Toller sought to bridge the gap between the intellectual and the people - see section 4/ii below. In December 1917, Toller spoke in Berlin at a meeting with the slogan 'Arbeiter der Stirn und der Faust vereinigt euch' - see Der Fall Toller, p.13.
- 24 For a comprehensive account of the Tribüne production, and the critical debate which ensued, see Bütow, op.cit., pp.28-30 and 89-90.
- 25 In his autobiography, Toller writes:
 Jeden Tag darf ich eine halbe Stunde auf dem steinernen Gefängnishof umhergehen... Verse bilden sich mir auf diesem Hof, die 'Lieder der Gefangenen', die letzten Szenen der 'Wandlung'. (GW IV, p.96)
- 26 Cf. Section 5 below.
- 27 These are the final lines of 'Aufrüttelung', the introductory poem to Die Wandlung. Toller's poems written in 1917 sound an authentic note of Activism, cf. 'An die Sprache', Die Aktion VIII, 23/24, 15 June 1918, 'Mütter', Kameraden der Menschheit, (L. Rubiner ed.), p.70. The latter poem ends on a typically Activist note:

27 (continued)

Recht gramverkrampfte Arme,
Seid Vulkane, glutend Meer:
Schmerz, gebäre Tat!

This poem was one of those which Toller revised for inclusion in Vormorgen: the revised version (p.21) blunts the Activist ending by the addition of another stanza.

28 'Bemerkungen zu meinem Drama Die Wandlung' - see note 21.

29 Letter to Gustav Landauer, 20 December 1917, GW I, pp. 34-37.

30 See M. Turnowsky-Pinner, 'A student's friendship with Ernst Toller', Leo Baeck Institute Year Book, 1970, pp.211-222.

31 'Leisätze für einen kulturpolitischen Bund der Jugend in Deutschland', dated November 1917, GW I, pp.31-34. Page references are to this edition.

32 Cf. Aufruf, p.143:

Die Menschen sind in unseren Zeiten Beziehungslose und Unverantwortliche geworden. Beziehung ist ein Zug, der die Menschen zueinander und die Menschen zur Arbeit für die Herstellung ihrer Bedürfnisse bringt. Diese Beziehung, ohne die wir keine Lebendigen sind, ist veräußerlicht, ist verdinglicht worden.

33 GW I, p.33; cf. also Daiber, op.cit., p.92.

34 Landauer's influence on Toller has been widely acknowledged in recent years. His specific influence on Die Wandlung has also been noted: see Marnette, op.cit., pp.186-88, Altenhofer, op.cit., pp.26-34, ter Haar, op.cit., pp.134-35, Ossar, op.cit., pp.57-74. This influence has hitherto been analysed in general terms; here it is proposed to document it through specific textual reference.

35 Cf. Aufruf, p.145:

Wir können nicht auf die Menschheit warten;
Wir können auch nicht erwarten, daß die
Menschheit sich für eine gemeinsame Wirt-
schaft, für gerechte Tauschwirtschaft
zusammenschließt, solange wir in uns
Individuen nicht das Menschtum gefunden
und neu geschaffen haben.

- 36 Cf. Chapter IX/4, particularly note 29. Toller's foreword to his autobiography expresses some of his subsequent disillusionment - see GW IV, pp.10-11.
- 37 This passage is among several which indicate that Landauer's influence on the play is not only conceptual but linguistic. In Aufruf, p.155, he describes capitalism as 'dies gräßlich widerliche Menschenzerrbild'. He also invokes 'die Schuttberge... die von der Niedertracht des Bisher auf die Zustände und zumal auf die Seelen der Massen getürmt worden sind' (Aufruf, p.XIII). See also note 32.
- 38 'Die vereinigten Republiken Deutschlands' in Erkenntnis und Befreiung. Ausgewählte Aufsätze und Reden (Ruth Link-Salinger (Hyman) ed.), Frankfurt 1976, p.85.
- 39 Friedrich's attitude is echoed by Toller's later protagonists - cf. Die Maschinenstürmer, Act II, Sc.3, where Cobbett declares: 'Ein jeder dient dem Volk, ein jeder Führer'.
- 40 Landauer, Die Revolution, Frankfurt 1907, p.115.
- 41 'Der Ringende', Die Weißen Blätter VI, 6 (June 1919), reprinted in Vormorgen, p.9. The poem, dated 1912, is the only pre-war poem he chose to include in Vormorgen. He relates that he recited it to Richard Dehmel at Burg Lauenstein in autumn 1917, when he was already working on the first draft of Die Wandlung (GW IV, p.79).
- 42 Cf. GW IV, p.97.
- 43 See Daiber, op.cit., p.93. For Eisner's views see Chapter I/4(ii).
- 44 'Ich habe euch umarmt', dated 'Militärgefängnis 1918', Vormorgen, p.22. Toller's accounts of the occasion are in Daiber, op.cit., p.93, and in Eine Jugend (GW IV, p.90).
- 45 Leitsätze, p.31.
- 46 Toller's retrospective treatment of the strike is discussed in Chapter XIV/4.
- 47 GW IV, p.95. Arthur Rosenberg notes 'Wie sehr dem Berliner Streikprogramm vom Januar 1918 jeder sozialistische Charakter fehlt' - Die Entstehung der deutschen Republik, Berlin 1928, p.197.

- 48 There are reports of both occasions, given by police informants, in Toller's 'Prozeßakten'.
- 49 Quoted in Fechenbach, Der Revolutionär Kurt Eisner, Berlin 1929, p.25.
- 50 R. Schickele, 'Der neunte November', Tribüne der Kunst und Zeit VIII, pp.21, 27-28.

SECTION B. Revolution and 'Räterepublik' 1918-19

III. THE ACTIVE REVOLUTIONARY SOCIALIST

1. Historical and biographical outline¹

Toller was released from prison in May 1918 and posted to a reserve battalion at Neu-Ulm. The proceedings against him were not formally dropped until September, when he was finally discharged from the army. During these months, he took no public part in politics, 'arbeitete aber für mich im Studium der sozialistischen Literatur weiter'². In private, he continued his anti-war activity. Gustav Mayer was among those attending a private meeting in the summer of 1918, at which Toller gave a reading of Die Wandlung:

In diesem Kreis hörte ich zum erstenmal von der deutschen Revolution als von einem Ereignis sprechen, das bestimmt eintreffen werde, und für das schon jetzt vorzuarbeiten an der Zeit wäre. 3

In October 1918, Toller was briefly in Berlin, and spoke at a meeting held to protest against the call for a mass levy as a last measure of national defence. By that time, the war had been lost; shortly after, the November Revolution swept away the 'Kaiserreich'.

Toller was not in Munich at the time of Eisner's revolution of November 7, 1918, but on hearing the news, he sent a congratulatory telegram, and shortly after travelled to Munich. He was quickly co-opted onto the 'Zentralarbeiterrat' which had been formed in the wake of the revolution. Many of the leading council activists knew Toller from the January Strike, which helps to

explain his rapid rise in the revolutionary movement. He became a delegate to the Bavarian Congress of Councils, then Chairman of its Executive Committee, a member of the Provisional National Assembly, and Vice-chairman of the Munich USPD.

The crucial issue in the early weeks of the revolution was the respective roles of the revolutionary councils and parliament. Eisner rejected formal parliamentary democracy, advocating the councils as the means of a new participative democracy, but was forced by the SPD members of his government to call elections to a Bavarian parliament in January 1919. Toller stood as a candidate for the USPD: he still believed that the councils could co-exist with the 'Landtag', which they would eventually supercede 'durch eine evolutionäre Entwicklung'⁴. He was rapidly disabused. In December, he attended the German 'Rätekongreß' in Berlin, which voted in favour of elections to a National Assembly, thereby renouncing its own claim to political power. In Bavaria, the opposing factions were finally polarised by the so-called 'Bürgerwehr' crisis, when the SPD leader Auer backed an attempt to set up a Citizens' Defence Force. Toller led the attack on Auer in the Provisional National Assembly, exposing the reactionary forces behind the undertaking⁵.

The Landtag elections were a crushing defeat for Eisner and the USPD, confirming the suspicions of Toller

and other members of the revolutionary councils that parliamentary government would serve only to reinstate the old ruling class. Toller remained a leading figure in the councils, which became increasingly pre-occupied with assuring their own future role. In February, Toller attended the meeting of the Second International in Berne at which Eisner made the speech acknowledging Germany's war guilt, which earned him the implacable hatred of German nationalists: on February 21, he was shot dead by a nationalist assassin. His death transformed the political situation. Power, which had nominally passed to a Socialist ministry under Johannes Hoffmann, effectively lay in the hands of the revolutionary councils. There were renewed demands for a 'Räterepublik', which grew stronger towards the end of March, with the proclamation of a 'Räterepublik' in Hungary, which seemed to offer the prospect of a 'revolutionary corridor' in Central Europe.

The immediate decision to declare a 'Räterepublik' was reached at a meeting on April 4/5, attended by representatives from all the main Socialist organisations. The proposal seemed to command the support of the SPD, USPD and members of the councils; only the KPD, under Eugen Leviné, stood aside. One notable absentee from this meeting was Toller, who had been travelling to Berlin to attend the German 'Rätekongreß'. Hearing the news in Nuremberg, he returned immediately to Munich. He viewed the imminent proclamation with uncertainty.

Although he felt it was premature, he also believed that the workers had confronted their leaders with an accomplished fact. Negotiations between the parties therefore concerned only 'die förmliche Durchführung der Räterepublik, die nach eingehenden Berichten bereits in zahlreichen Städten Bayerns ausgerufen sein sollte'⁶.

On the night of April 6/7, a 'Räterepublik' was finally proclaimed by a coalition of USPD and Anarchists, among whom was Landauer. Toller considered a united front of the three Socialist parties to be essential; he finally committed himself and his party 'um die Einigung des Proletariats zu stützen'⁷. The SPD was divided about the undertaking, the KPD dismissed it as bogus, a 'Scheinräterepublik'. Leviné argued that revolutionary struggle was inevitable: 'Die Bourgeoisie gibt ihre Rechte nicht freiwillig her'⁸.

Following the proclamation, Toller became Chairman of the 'Zentralrat', and thus nominal head of government, an office he assumed reluctantly. He was amazed by the attitude of the Communists, attempting to win their support, and insisting that differences between them and the 'Zentralrat' were not fundamental⁹. Levine replied by calling for Toller and the 'Zentralrat' to be deposed: 'Es ist nicht die Zeit für Phrasenpolitik'¹⁰. During its brief rule, the 'Zentralrat' issued various decrees intended to give effect to the 'Räterepublik' - such as the nationalisation of the banks, the creation of a

revolutionary tribunal and a Red Army, and the arming of factory workers. In fact, the 'Räterepublik' was doomed from the first. It had been intended partly as an example to inspire similar action elsewhere, particularly to influence the German 'Rätekongreß', then in session, to proclaim a German 'Räterepublik'¹¹ but even in Bavaria support was half-hearted. The Hoffmann government, which had withdrawn to Bamberg, controlled Northern Bavaria, and prepared for armed intervention.

Toller's own attitude was indecisive. While authorising measures to defend the 'Räterepublik', he also tried to open negotiations with the Bamberg government. His efforts were frustrated when, on April 13, his government was overthrown by a counter-revolutionary putsch, which was in turn defeated by armed resistance from Munich workers. The Communists assumed control of a second 'Räterepublik' through a newly-elected 'Aktionsausschuß'. Toller offered his services to the new government, exhorting the workers to defend the revolution 'mit euren Leibern, eurem Willen und eurem Herzen'¹². He expected 'von dem neuen Regiment nichts Wertvolles'¹³, but felt more strongly than ever that he could not desert the revolutionary cause.

When news came that 'white' troops were advancing on Munich, Toller felt bound ('verpflichtet') to join the spontaneous defence of the city, assuming command of the hastily-formed Red army which defeated the 'Whites' at

Dachau. Although confirmed as military commander by the Communists, he was soon in conflict with them. He opened negotiations with the enemy 'trotz ausdrücklichen Verbots des Münchner Oberkommandos'¹⁴; he disregarded orders to bombard Dachau and to shoot 'white' officers taken prisoner. In Munich itself, he opposed the policies of the Communists and the military strategy of the General Staff¹⁵. Leviné, in turn, attacked Toller before the 'Betriebsräte', calling for his arrest¹⁶.

This conflict reached a climax on April 26, when Toller resigned his military command. He considered the Communist government 'ein Unheil für das werktätige Volk Baierns', their leaders 'eine Gefahr für den Rätegedanken'; incapable of any constructive action, 'zerstören sie in sinnloser Weise'¹⁷. Convinced that the Red Army faced overwhelming odds, he considered negotiation the only possible course of action: 'Ich machte den Betriebsräten klar, daß wir verhandeln müssen, weil es nichts anderes gebe'¹⁸. The Communists rejected negotiations: 'Es gilt jetzt, die Position zu halten bis zum letzten'¹⁹. They called for armed resistance in the belief that defeat, though inevitable, would raise the consciousness of the working-class. On April 28, the 'Betriebsräte' passed a vote of no confidence in the Communist 'Aktionsausschuß' and elected a new committee, controlled by the 'Independents'.

The split in the revolutionary ranks was now total. The 'Betriebsräte' tried to open negotiations, which the

Communists condemned as 'zwischen Schwäche und Verrat'²⁰. With Munich surrounded by the advancing 'Freikorps', the Communists called for 'Kampf und Tod für den Kommunismus'; the 'Betriebsräte' appealed to workers to lay down their arms, denouncing those whose actions betrayed 'die heilige Sache des Proletariats im Kampf für die Menschlichkeit'²¹. The contradiction between Toller's ideals and revolutionary reality reached its peak with the execution of counter-revolutionary hostages. On hearing the news, Toller condemned the action as 'nicht Kommunismus, sondern Nihilismus'²². At his instigation, the 'Betriebsräte' issued a statement expressing 'tiefsten Abscheu über solche unmenschliche Taten'²³. Toller subsequently released six surviving hostages at the Luitpoldgymnasium (April 30/ May 1).

On May 1, 'white' troops entered Munich, completing the capture of the city the following day. Toller went into hiding, which undoubtedly saved his life. In the aftermath of the fighting, Egelhofer was summarily shot, Landauer brutally murdered, and Leviné tried by court martial and executed. On June 5, more than a month after the fighting had finished, Toller was denounced by an informer and arrested.

2. Toller's conception of revolution

In the months following the January Strike, Toller had applied himself to the serious study of Socialism, reading works by Marx, Engels, Lassalle, Bakunin,

Luxemburg. He suggested in his autobiography that it was only then that he had become a Socialist, but in fact the process was much more one of clarification. His reading provided a conceptual framework for what had previously been an emotional conviction.

It is incorrect to conclude - as some critics have done - that Toller became a Marxist at this point²⁴. The very diversity of his reading confirms that he approached the study of Socialism with an open mind. While his political speeches during the revolutionary period sometimes use Marxist phraseology, his conception of revolutionary change was not Marxist. He clearly accepted some Marxist precepts, but equally clearly did not accept their basis in dialectical materialism. He spoke of a revolution 'deren wesentlicher Inhalt der Kampf zwischen Kapitalismus und Sozialismus bedeutet', and called for wide-ranging socialisation of industry²⁵. At the same time, he did not consider Socialism to be merely - or even primarily - a form of economic organisation, but a spiritual and intellectual process, in which a new sense of community, a new relationship between people would emerge:

Wir wollen leben, leben für den Sozialismus, der für uns ebensosehr eine neue Gemeinschaft, ein neues reines Verhältnis von Mensch zu Mensch, von Volk zu Volk darstellt, wie eine wirtschaftliche Umgestaltung. 26

Nor did he see the role of the proletariat in a Marxist perspective. While he saw it as the most

oppressed class within the bourgeois state, and also as the only force capable of overthrowing it, the struggle for the liberation of the working-class was only part of the struggle to free all humanity from economic and spiritual repression:

Es gilt die Befreiung des Menschen von aller kapitalistischen, von jeder geistigen Unterdrückung. Wir Volk müssen zusammenstehen, wir seit Jahrhunderten geknechtet, endlich befreit, müssen bewußt den Kampf gegen alle Gegner der Revolution für die Durchführung des sozialistischen Gedankens aufnehmen. 27

Toller's speeches frequently document the literary connotations of his conception of revolution. He spoke of the German people:

das vielleicht von Elend zu Elend, von Station zu Station gehen wird, bis es endlich in sich den Menschen finden wird, den in Freiheit und Liebe zum Mitmenschen Gebundenen. 28

The 'stations' of Die Wandlung have been transposed into the reality of the November Revolution.

3. Revolutionary organisation

Toller's conception of revolution inevitably reflected his experience. In December 1917, he had acknowledged that, while he knew what he opposed, and even 'welche neuen Inhalte' were desirable, he was still not clear 'welche äußeren Bindungen' would give them organisational expression²⁹. The emergence of the revolutionary councils in November 1918 had seemed to provide the answer.

Toller was, from the first, an enthusiastic advocate of the councils. He addressed delegates to the inaugural meeting of the Bavarian 'Arbeiterräte' as 'die Träger der revolutionären Idee, jener Idee, die die Kraft in sich schließt, nicht nur die Wirtschaftsordnung umzugestalten, sondern auch den Geist der Menschen zu revolutionieren'³⁰. These tasks were interdependent. On the one hand, the councils were to be the agents of economic and political change, the means of reorganising industry and the channel for direct democracy, but these changes would remain sterile unless accompanied by a fundamental change of attitude. It was the councils which would nurture this change of attitude - and in this sense that they embodied the 'revolutionary idea'.

As the tide turned against the councils, Toller remained a determined advocate of them. He reproved his fellow-members of the Executive Committee of the Bavarian Councils for being too attached to the parliamentary principle: 'Im Grunde sind Landtag und Räte etwas Widersprechendes, wir drängen noch zu stark auf das parlamentarische Prinzip'. He went on to expound a conception of direct democracy through the councils which reveals the influence of Landauer's Anarchist federalism³¹.

4. The USPD and the United Front

It must be emphasised that Toller's ideas should not be viewed in isolation, but in the context of the



USPD, the party of which he was a member from 1918 to 1924. He had joined it at the same time - and for the same reasons - as he joined the January Strike - as a means of practical action against the war. Nor was this illogical, for the USPD had been formed as an anti-war party, and had consistently attempted to create mass support for a peace without annexations or reparations.

The character of the USPD in Bavaria was strongly influenced by Eisner, under whose leadership it evolved as a loose federation rather than a political party in the traditional sense. Eisner's experience of the SPD had made him hostile to the traditional party organisation, which prevented workers from becoming directly involved in the political process³²: to this, he opposed an organic structure, allowing the direct participation of the workers in a way which would transcend traditional party loyalty and affiliation.

The main plank of the party's election campaign in January 1919 was the policy of the 'Einheitsfront', in which the proletariat would make common cause across party divisions. Toller was a leading spokesman for the idea, demanding 'ohne Rücksicht auf Parteirichtungen und Meinungsverschiedenheiten eine einheitliche Front des Sozialismus und der Republik'³³. In March 1919, following Eisner's death, Toller became Chairman of the Munich USPD. He saw the party as heir to Eisner's

political legacy, and interpreted that legacy as action to create mass support for a government of the revolutionary councils:

Hier ist nun die große Streitfrage: Räterepublik oder parlamentarische Republik?... Ich mache mir keine Illusionen und trete prinzipiell für die Räterepublik ein... Aber wir können dieses Räteresystem hier nicht verankern, wir können es nicht statuieren, wenn nicht die Einigung im gesamten Proletariat besteht. 34

The councils would embody the ideal of working-class unity; a 'Räterepublik' would complete the revolution begun in November. Under Toller's leadership, the USPD pursued a policy of creating mass support for a 'Räterepublik', its spokesmen even advocating the dissolution of parties in the interests of revolutionary unity³⁵.

Toller consistently argued that the 'Räterepublik' could be prepared through 'geistige Propaganda' and established 'im Wege einer friedlichen Entwicklung, nicht durch Gewalt'³⁶. The history of the USPD has been described as 'that of a party which tried to carry out a revolutionary policy by peaceful methods and found them wanting'³⁷. This verdict aptly summarises Toller's role during the 'Räterepublik'.

5. Toller in the 'Räterepublik': the role of the revolutionary leader

Toller's actions in the decisive phases of the 'Räterepublik' were determined by his view of the role

of the revolutionary leader. 'Die Führer der heutigen Revolution' he declared in January 1919, 'dürfen nichts als Werkzeuge der (revolutionären) Idee sein'³⁸. As such, they were at the service of the proletariat which embodied that idea. In April 1919, he had felt the declaration of a 'Räterepublik' to be premature, supporting it in the conviction that the masses had already declared it 'over the heads of their leaders: 'Für uns sind allein maßgebend der Wille und das klare Ziel der revolutionären Massen'³⁹. In the second 'Räterepublik', he offered his services to the new government, but only after assuring himself that its authority derived from the 'Betriebsräte'⁴⁰. He later issued a statement appealing to workers to unite behind the new government⁴¹.

When 'white' troops began to advance on Munich, Toller joined the spontaneous defence of the city in the same belief that revolutionary solidarity transcended party allegiance: 'ich hielt mich für verpflichtet, trotz meiner Stellung zu der neuen Regierung, dem (Putsch) entgegenzutreten'⁴². The same sense of obligation made him accept nomination as commander of the Red Army: he insisted that he had assumed and retained command only 'auf Betreiben der Betriebsräte'. When the Communists had tried to remove him, they had failed 'weil die Truppen zu mir hielten'⁴³.

Toller's actions as military commander reveal the inherent ambivalence of his position, torn between the

principle of non-violence and the imperative of revolutionary solidarity. As troop commander, he had initially tried to parley with the enemy. He had expressly refused to subject Dachau to artillery bombardment, but later did not hesitate to join the spontaneous attack on the town. He had subsequently advocated pushing the 'white' troops back beyond the Danube, but the plan had been vetoed by the General Staff in Munich⁴⁴. He had finally resigned his military command in the belief that the Red Army faced overwhelming odds which made further struggle pointless. He bitterly opposed the Communists' call for resistance to the bitter end. When battle was joined, he tried to reach the remnants of the Red Army, not to take part in a hopeless, but heroic, struggle, but to appeal to workers to lay down their arms⁴⁵. In the aftermath of the fighting, he remained preoccupied with the role and responsibility of the revolutionary leader. On hearing that Leviné had been sentenced to death, he spoke of giving himself up, as a demonstrative gesture 'daß wir Revolutionäre auch das Standgericht nicht fürchten'⁴⁶, a statement prefiguring the exemplary self-sacrifice of his revolutionary protagonist in Masse Mensch.

Notes to Chapter III

- 1 This account of Toller's activity during the revolutionary period is based on the available documentary sources:
- a. The stenographic record of the proceedings of the Provisional National Assembly, the Bavarian Congress of the Arbeiter- Bauern- und Soldatenräte, and of the Bavarian Arbeiterräte, which are in the Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Munich (cited as 'Provisorischer Nationalrat', 'Rätekongreß' and 'Arbeiterräte').
 - b. The proclamations, decrees and statements issued during the two Soviet Republics, many of them signed by Toller, which are reprinted in Max Gerstl, Die bayerische Räterepublik, Munich 1919 (cited as Gerstl).
 - c. The official records of Toller's trial for high treason (cited as 'Prozeßakten'). These include the official transcript of his cross-examination following his arrest in June 1919, which has now been published in GW IV, pp.239-52 cited as 'Protokoll', page references to this edition.
 - d. The report of the trial in Münchener Neueste Nachrichten nos. 274-278, 15-17 July, 1919 (cited as MNN).
 - e. Other newspaper reports, particularly during the period of the 'Räterepublik', largely from the Münchener Post and the Münchener Rote Fahne.
 - f. I have also referred to the standard historical works: Allen Mitchell, Revolution in Bavaria, Princeton 1965 and Hans Beyer, Von der Novemberrevolution zur Räterepublik in München, Berlin(Ost), 1957.

Toller also wrote several retrospective accounts of these events, and his part in them. Although broadly consistent, they reveal a growing degree of stylisation. They generally present a more logical and more militant position than Toller in fact adopted, a consequence both of their character of retrospective self-justification, and of the development of Toller's convictions in the subsequent decade. I have refrained from using these sources, except in occasional instances, where their use is acknowledged. These accounts are listed in the Introduction, Section 3.

- 2 'Protokoll', p.241.
- 3 Gustav Mayer, Erinnerungen. Vom Journalisten zum Historiker der deutschen Arbeiterbewegung, Munich 1949, pp.292-93.

- 4 MNN, no.274, 15 July 1919.
- 5 'Provisorischer Nationalrat', 7.Sitzung vom 30. Dezember 1918, pp.186-191.
- 6 'Protokoll', p.242.
- 7 Georg Escherisch (ed.), Der Kommunismus in München, VI, p.8. This series comprises eight pamphlets, of which number VI deals with 'Die Scheinräterepublik', published Munich, 1921.
- 8 Rosa Meyer-Leviné, Leviné. Leben und Tod eines Revolutionärs Frankfurt 1974, p.84 (subsequently cited as Leben und Tod).
- 9 Cf. proclamation 'An das Proletariat', dated 10 April 1919 signed by Toller, which begins:
 Die Einigung des revolutionären Proletariats ist unbedingt notwendig. Die Gegensätze zwischen dem gegenwärtigen Zentralrat und den Kommunisten sind keineswegs grundsätzlicher Natur.
- 10 Leben und Tod, p.98.
- 11 See Niekisch, pp.73/74. The exemplary nature of the 'Räterepublik', with its connotations of 'propaganda by deed', are indeed clear from the original proclamation:
 Die bayerische Räterepublik folgt dem Beispiel der russischen und ungarischen Völker... Sie ruft alle deutschen Brüdervölker auf, den gleichen Weg zu gehen...
 - quoted from Gerhard Schmolze (ed.), Revolution und Räterepublik in München 1918/19 in Augenzeugenberichten, Düsseldorf 1969, p.271.
- 12 'An das werktätige Volk Baierns', a statement issued by Toller, dated 14 April, Gerstl, p.62. Gustav Landauer also offered his services to the new government, see Gerstl, p.63.
- 13 'Protokoll', p.244.
- 14 'Protokoll', p.245.
- 15 Münchner Post, 23 April 1919.
- 16 Statement of witness Burger at Toller's trial, MNN no.277, 16 July 1919.
- 17 Toller's statement, dated 26 April 1919, quoted in Gerstl, pp.108-109.
- 18 MNN no.275, 15 July 1919.

- 19 Münchener Rote Fahne no.26, 25 April 1919.
- 20 Münchener Rote Fahne no.29, 29 April 1919.
- 21 Statement by the 'Betriebs- und Soldatenräte', dated 30 April quoted in Gerstl pp.126-27; Münchener Rote Fahne no.30, 30 April 1919.
- 22 Münchener Post, 2 May 1919.
- 23 Statement by the 'Betriebs- und Soldatenräte', dated 1 May, quoted in Gerstl, p.127.
- 24 See Walter H. Sokel, The writer in extremis, Stanford, California, 1959, p.183:
 It was only subsequently, in military prison, that Toller immersed himself in Marxist works, and made the Marxist position his own.
Willibrand, op.cit., p.16, also asserts that Toller embraced Marxism in 1918 as a result of his reading in prison.
- 25 'Provisorischer Nationalrat', 7.Sitzung vom 30. Dezember 1918, p.186.
- 26 'An die Jugend aller Länder', a manifesto issued by Toller at the Berne Conference of the Second International in February 1919, GW I, p.49.
- 27 'Provisorischer Nationalrat', 7.Sitzung vom 30. Dezember 1918, p.191.
- 28 'Rätekongreß', 2. Sitzung vom 27. Februar 1919, pp. 51-52.
- 29 Letter to Gustav Landauer, 20 December 1917, GW I, pp.34-37.
- 30 'Verhandlungen der bayerischen Arbeiterräte am 9. und 10. Dezember 1918', 'Provisorischer Nationalrat', Beilage III, p.128. Toller opened the meeting in his capacity as 2. Vorsitzender.
- 31 'Aktionsausschußsitzung der A-, B- und S-Räte Bayerns am Dienstag dem 21. Januar 1919', Bayerisches Hauptstaatsarchiv, Munich, 'Arbeiter- und Soldatenrat' IV.

Toller expounded his ideas during a discussion on 'Räte und Verfassung':

Das Rätssystem wäre im Grunde genommen nichts anderes als eine vollkommen erweiterte Gemeindeverfassung. Diese ist aufgebaut durch das Prinzip Verwaltung des Volkes selbst.

31 (continued)

Wir wählen die Beamten hinein in den Magistrat. Es sind Kommissäre des Volkes, die vom Volk jederzeit wieder abberufen werden können... Die Stadt wählt so und sovieler Delegierte, die Beamten für die Stadt, sämtliche Delgierte der kommunalen Verbände wählen die Leiter des Kreises, sämtliche Kreisaußschußdelegierte wählen die Leitung der Provinzen, sämtliche provinziale Delegierte wählen das Ministerium, sodaß die wirkliche Demokratie, die vollkommene Verwaltung durch das Volk erreicht wird. Hier wäre entwickelt das Prinzip der Räte.

Both conception and language are virtually identical to Landauer's in his pamphlet Die vereinigten Republiken Deutschlands, published in the same month. Landauer proposes 'Gemeinden, Korporationen und Verbände' electing 'Delegierte, die jederzeit von ihnen abberufen werden können'. He continues:

...was nun die Gemeinden angeht, ordnen die Gemeinden für sich, in Selbstverwaltung, der niemand hineinredet, und so weiter zum Bezirk, zum Kreis, zur Landschaft, zur Provinz, zur autonomen Republik, zum Bund deutscher Republiken und zum Völkerbund.

(Landauer, Die vereinigten Republiken Deutschlands und ihre Verfassung, Frankfurt/Main, January 1910, reprinted in Landauer, Erkenntnis und Befreiung. Ausgewählte Reden und Aufsätze, (Ruth Link-Salinger ed.), Frankfurt/Main 1976, pp.82-83.

- 32 Eisner, 'Gefängnistagebuch' in Sozialismus als Aktion. Ausgewählte Aufsätze und Reden, (Freya Eisner ed.), p.74. See also Chapter XIV/4 below.
- 33 'Provisorischer Nationalrat', 8.Sitzung vom 2.Januar 1919, p.256.
- 34 'Rätekongreß', 2.Sitzung vom 27.Februar 1919, p.52.
- 35 'Ankündigung der Räterepublik', MNN, 5 April 1919.
- 36 Prozeßakten, statement of witness Wagner; 'Protokoll', GW IV, p.242.
- 37 A.J. Ryder, The German Revolution of 1918, Cambridge 1967, p.267.
- 38 'Provisorischer Nationalrat', 8.Sitzung vom 2.Januar 1919, p.258.

- 39 'Erklärung der Münchner USP', signed by Toller
(and probably drafted by him), MNN, no.159, 7 April
1919.
- 40 'Protokoll', p.244.
- 41 'An das werktätige Volk Baierns', Gerstl, p.62.
See note 12 above.
- 42 'Protokoll', p.244.
- 43 'Protokoll', p.245.
- 44 Münchner Post, 23 April 1919.
- 45 MNN, no.275, 15 July 1919.
- 46 Ibid.

IV. MASSE MENSCH¹: THE MORAL DILEMMA OF REVOLUTION

1. The assimilation of experience

Masse Mensch was Ernst Toller's attempt to come to terms with the intense emotional experience of revolution. The Bavarian 'Räterepublik' had ended in bloody failure; the revolutionary ideal had foundered on reality. Reflecting on this failure during the early months of imprisonment, Toller had been troubled by feelings of guilt and remorse which had threatened to overwhelm him. The translation of this experience into drama had been a necessary catharsis:

Masse Mensch war nach Erlebnissen, deren Wucht der Mensch vielleicht nur einmal ertragen kann, ohne zu zerbrechen, Befreiung von seelischer Not... 2

The emotional impulse of the play is clear from the fact that he had written it 'in drei Tagen, ohne äußere Vorarbeiten, in einem Zug'³. He was forced to admit that he had been unable to achieve the necessary distance from events: 'Das Ungeheuere der Revolutionstage war noch nicht Bild der Revolutionstage geworden, es war irgendwie noch schmerzende qualvolle 'Seelenssubstanz''⁴.

Toller's experience of revolution had confronted him with the conflict between revolutionary ends and means, between moral principle and revolutionary expediency. He had come to see this conflict as inevitable and the position of the revolutionary activist as inherently tragic, a view he summarised most succinctly in a letter written about the time of the first performance of Masse Mensch:

Der ethische Mensch: Ausschließlich Erfüller seines inneren Gesetzes.
 Der politische Mensch: Kämpfer für soziale Formen, die den anderen Voraussetzung zu höherer Lebenshaltung sein können. Kämpfer, auch wenn er gegen sein inneres Gesetz verstößt. Wird der ethische Mensch politischer Mensch, welcher tragischer Weg bleibt ihm erspart? 5

The distinction between the ethical and the political, which is crucial to the dramatic conflict of Masse Mensch, derives directly from Kant, whose philosophy preoccupied Toller during the early years of imprisonment⁶. Toller's subsequent interpretations of the play are all an elaboration on this idea. He suggested that revolutionary conflict was twofold, taking place both on a social plane and within the individual revolutionary himself. Man was both an individual (Mensch) and a social being (Masse); as an individual, he acted according to the prevailing moral code, holding to it at all costs; as a social being, he was driven by social forces, pursuing his objective even at the expense of the moral idea⁷.

Dorothea Klein has argued that Toller, as a pupil of Max Weber's, formulates the dramatic conflict of Masse Mensch in terms of Weber's categories of 'Gesinnungs-' and 'Verantwortungsethik'⁸. While such an interpretation - derived of course from Toller's own retrospective comments - is undoubtedly correct, the dramatic conflict is also formulated in terms of opposing political philosophies, of ethical and determinist Socialism. Toller's protagonist, the Woman, calls for revolution, but believes that it can be achieved through non-violent

means. Confronting her is the Nameless One, for whom the only means of freeing the masses from poverty and oppression is violent revolution. The dramatic conflict consists in the clash between their two points of view. The struggle between revolution and reaction is secondary in importance, providing no more than the background against which the real argument of the play is conducted. Toller also formulates this dramatic conflict in terms of that between USPD and KPD, and more specifically between himself and Eugen Leviné, in the crucial days of the 'Räterepublik'. This does not, of course mean that the play is a direct autobiographical account, for Toller has distilled his own experience into a dialectic of opposing conceptions of revolutionary action. It is from these two viewpoints that it is proposed to analyse the play.

2. Form and structure

Masse Mensch is very much an Expressionist play. As in Die Wandlung, Toller divides the drama into 'reale Bilder', which follow the course of actual events, and 'Traumbilder', which evoke the protagonist's subconscious experience, but the distinction is not as clear-cut as in the earlier play. The stage directions require the third, fifth, and seventh tableaux - that is, precisely the 'realistic' scenes - to be played 'in visionärer Traumferne'. Toller vigorously defended the play's Berlin producer against the charge

that he had failed to distinguish between real and dream scenes: 'Sie haben, ich möchte es Ihnen eigens sagen, ganz in meinem Sinne gehandelt'⁹. The real scenes are not naturalistic presentations of reality; the characters are not individually delineated, but are representative figures, embodying social functions and attitudes. The action itself lays claim to representative significance: the play is sub-titled: 'Ein Stück aus der sozialen Revolution des 20. Jahrhunderts'.

These formal similarities to Die Wandlung conceal basic structural differences. Whereas the earlier play has the typical structure of the 'Stationendrama', concentrating exclusively on the experience of the protagonist, and stressing the exemplary nature of that experience, the structure of Masse Mensch is dialectical, resting on argument and opposition. In the 'dream' scenes, this takes the form of conflict between the Woman and the 'Begleiter', in the 'real' scenes, between the Woman and the Nameless One. This dialectical structure, in which the argument gives roughly equal weight to protagonist and antagonist, indicates the shift in political perspective since Die Wandlung. The Woman expounds a conception of revolution which, as in the earlier play, rests on the idea of spontaneous mass action, with the essential difference that here it is submitted to a dialectical examination, which reveals its inherent weaknesses and contradictions.

The 'Traumbilder' introduce issues which anticipate the events of the 'reale Bilder'. They represent the protagonist's sub-conscious awareness of the issues confronting her: only in the real scene which follows does she encounter them at the level of conscious experience. In the dream scenes, the Woman is accompanied by a mysterious companion. In the second tableau, he accompanies her into the Stock Exchange, his face has 'eine magische Ähnlichkeit mit dem Gesicht der Frau'¹⁰; in the fourth tableau, he appears in the guise of a sentry, in the sixth as a warder. The 'Begleiter' is not, of course, a separate character, but an aspect of the protagonist, the embodiment of her sub-conscious premonition. It is he who introduces the issues which are presented in the following scenes - in the second tableau, the resilience of the system which the revolution is trying to overthrow, in the fourth, the moral dilemma of revolutionary violence, in the sixth, the recognition of guilt within a perspective of determinism. She does not always accept what he introduces, and it is only through opposition and argument that she finally reconciles herself to it.

This dialectical pattern of the 'Traumbilder' is repeated in the 'reale Bilder', where the dramatic tension arises from the conflict between the Woman and the Nameless One. Toller himself observed that the Woman is the only character who is individually delineated: she is indeed based loosely on the character of Sarah

Sonja Lerch, whom Toller had met briefly in the January Strike of 1918¹¹. Although Toller attempts to outline the personal context of her revolutionary commitment, the Woman remains an abstract figure, embodying a specific moral and political position. This abstraction is even more marked in the character of the Nameless One, a figure symbolising the voice of the masses. He is nameless, because the masses themselves are nameless - the password in the fourth tableau is 'Masse ist namenlos!' His dramatic function is to provide the opposition which the dialectical conception of the play requires; his ideological function is to present an alternative conception of revolution to the Woman's, and to make explicit the moral dilemma which is inherent in her position. It is to this revolutionary dialectic that we must now turn.

3. Dramatic conflict and revolutionary dialectic

The dramatic tension in Masse Mensch arises from the conflict between opposing philosophies of revolutionary action, but this conflict does not emerge immediately. The first tableau serves both as an outline of the revolutionary situation, and an exposition of the Woman's conception of revolution. She has joined the revolutionary movement from compassion for the suffering of the masses. She recognises that their suffering can be alleviated only by changing the social system which causes it, but believes that this change can be achieved peacefully.

The country is at war; the means of bringing the war to an end is the mass strike. The Woman is conscious that, in calling for the strike, she will transcend herself: 'Bin ich es noch, die Streik verkünden wird? Mensch ruft Streik, Natur ruft Streik!' (p.67). That is, she will speak, not as an individual, but as the mouthpiece of humanity, or of Nature itself¹². Equally, the masses' struggle for peace is one conducted on behalf of humanity:

...Die Massen,
 Auferstanden frei vom Paragraphenband
 Der feinsten Herrn am grünen Tisch,
 Armeen der Menschheit werden sie mit wuchtender Gebärde
 Das Friedenswerk zum unsichtbaren Dome türmen. (p.67)

That is, the struggle for the liberation of the proletariat is only part of the struggle for the liberation of mankind¹³. Once the masses have heard and understood the revolutionary message, the servants of the state will be powerless to contain them:

Umfängt die Massen erst der Saal,
 Sind sie gewaltige Flut, die keine Polizei
 Zu Parkfontänen ruhig plätschernd formt. (p.68)

We shall see, moreover, that the mass strike is not merely the means of bringing the war to an end, but a potentially revolutionary weapon.

The Woman's revolutionary philosophy has a strong dimension of idealism: 'Wie sehnt ich diese Stunde/ Da Herzblut Wort und Wort zur Tat wird' (p.67). She is articulating the activist conviction, which Toller shared with Eisner, that words must become deeds, ideals must become reality¹⁴.

The entry of the Woman's husband introduces the personal dimension of her revolutionary activity. He appeals to her to desist from action which threatens his honour and career, but she refuses, considering revolutionary action to be a moral imperative: 'Nicht Wunsch hat mein Geschick gewendet,/ Not wars... Not aus Menschsein,/Not aus meiner tiefsten Fülle'(p.70). In rejecting his appeal, she rejects the state he serves:

Morgen werde ich dem Staat, dem Eid du schwurst
Die Maske von der Mörderfratze reißen...

...

Dein Staat führt Krieg
Dein Staat verrät das Volk!
Dein Staat aubeutet, drückt, bedrückt,
Entrechtet Volk (p.72).

The state is clearly defined as the author of war, repressing and exploiting its people. The system on which it rests degrades both exploiters and exploited: 'Erniedrigt habt Ihr sie/Erniedrigend euch selbst geschändet' (pp.70-71).

Though the Woman and her husband are on opposite sides, she follows him out at the end of the scene. Her emotions are clearly at odds with her revolutionary commitment: this conflict between subjective feeling and objective perception presages the wider dilemma which will shortly confront her.

The second tableau portrays the system which the revolution intends to overthrow. The scene itself is a 'Traumbild', presenting a grotesque parody of the capitalist system through the apt symbol of the Stock

Exchange. The four bankers are not individually delineated, they are simply faceless representatives of the system they manipulate. The Woman's husband reappears in the role of the Recorder, a device which serves to remove him from his personal context and emphasise that his objective function is to uphold the system. The hypocrisy of this system is illustrated in the plan to set up a state brothel, disguised as a patriotic undertaking. The system is not only hypocritical but inhuman, treating men as mere 'Menschenmaterial' to feed an insatiable war machine. At the same time, it is infinitely resilient and adaptable. If any defect can be detected and rectified, the mechanical stability of the system can be restored:

Die Baisse
 Oder Hausse heute
 Ist nebensächlich.
 Das Wesentliche:
 Mechanisches Gesetz stabil.
 Die Folge:
 Das System gerettet (p.78).

The 'Begleiter', accompanying the Woman into the Stock Exchange, suggests that the mechanism of capitalism can be overturned ('Ein Fußtritt/Und die Mechanik/Ist zerbrochenes Kinderspielzeug' (p.78.) The Woman utters a single word - 'Menschen' - an appeal for humanity in the face of the mechanical degradation of the system, but the system is not susceptible to moral appeal, or rather is able to absorb it. The bankers respond by organising a charitable entertainment, the proceeds to go to the poor. The 'Musik klappernder Goldstücke',

as the bankers dance a foxtrot round the Recorder's desk, provides further confirmation of the dual standards of the system - and the difficulty of overthrowing it.

It is only in the third tableau that the dramatic conflict between opposing philosophies of revolutionary action emerges explicitly. The Woman calls for a mass strike to end the war and liberate the workers:

Den Ausweg, Brüder, wollt ihr wissen?
 Ein Ausweg bleibt uns Schwachen,
 Uns Hassern der Kanonen.
 Der Streik! Kein Handschlag mehr.
 Streik unsere Tat!
 Wir Schwachen werden Felsen sein der Stärke,
 Und keine Waffe ist gebaut, die uns besiegen könnte (p.82).

Toller clearly intended to stress her belief in the revolutionary effect of non-violent action, an intention confirmed by his revisions to the text for the second edition¹⁶.

Her call for a strike is opposed by the Nameless One, an anonymous spokesman emerging from the masses. He argues that, even if the strike brought the war to an end, it would not change the lot of the workers. They can free themselves only through violent revolution:

Mit Händedruck, Gebet und brünstgen Bitten
 Erzeugt man keine Kinder.
 Schwindsüchtige werden nicht gesund durch Wassersuppen,
 Zum Bäumefällen braucht's die Axt (p.85).

The Woman protests that she wants no more killing, but he brushes aside her objection. Has she shared, day after day, the lot of the masses? He is the masses: 'Sie sind nicht Masse!/Ich bin Masse!/Masse ist Schicksal!' The determinism of the argument is clearly audible, a

determinism which the Woman opposes with the force of individual conscience. While she identifies emotionally with the masses, she cannot suppress her scruples about the use of armed force: 'Gefühl zwingt mich in Dunkel,/Doch mein Gewissen schreit mir: Nein!' (p.86). The Nameless One dismisses such scruples, contending that individual conscience must be subordinated to collective action: 'Was gilt der Einzelne,/Was sein Gefühl,/Was sein Gewissen?/Die Masse gilt!' (p.86). That is, class interest transcends moral principle. He invokes again their common ideals, but insists that in order to achieve them they must wage one final war to end all wars. The Woman seems to concede his argument and, suppressing her scruples, places herself at the service of the masses: the scene thus ends on a note of uneasy alliance.

The fourth tableau, a 'Traumbild', explores the conflict between moral principle and revolutionary expediency, introducing at the level of sub-conscious premonition the issues which emerge as conscious experience in the fifth tableau. The worker sentries bring in a prisoner, bearing the face of her husband, who has been condemned to death. The Woman intercedes on his behalf, calling for forgiveness; the Nameless One demands whether their opponents would forgive them. The Woman, however, insists that this begs the real question: 'Kämpfen/Die für Volk?/Kämpfen die für Menschheit?' (p.91). That is, those who fight for humanitarian ideals should

use means which are consistent with those ideals. The sentry with whom she pleads is scornful of her appeal, but even as she is speaking the prisoner's face changes into that of the sentry, underlining the import of her words: 'Das bist du,/Der heute/An der Mauer steht' (p.92). In killing the prisoner, the sentry is killing himself: revolutionary violence will destroy the humanitarian principles which the revolution sets out to achieve, and so destroy the revolution itself.

This conflict is restated as conscious experience in the fifth tableau. The terms of the argument make increasingly clear that it is a conflict between opposing views of revolution - between the ethical Socialism which views the moral precept as absolute, and the determinist Socialism in which morality is considered to be relative to the present stage in the class struggle, between the Socialism Marxists reject as Utopian, and the Socialism non-Marxists condemn as pseudo-scientific. The revolution is now in progress. The Woman has not overcome her aversion to force: 'Schrie ich nicht gestern gegen Krieg?/Und heute... laß ichs zu,/Daß Brüder in den Tod geworfen - ' (p.94). Her remorse grows as it becomes apparent that the revolution has been bloodily suppressed. The moral dilemma is suddenly posed in an acute form, when the defeated revolutionaries propose to shoot their prisoners, an action which cannot even be justified in terms of expediency, for it is clearly a reprisal: 'Ihr rächtet eure Brüder./Masse ist Rache am Unrecht

der Jahrhunderte' (p.95). Violence is no longer a means to an end, for the means have clearly become ends in themselves.

The Woman condemns this blind revenge, which will do nothing to advance the revolutionary cause:

Blinde Wut! Nicht Dienst am Werk.
Ihr tötet Menschen.
Tötet ihr mit ihnen Geist des Staats,
Den ihr bekämpft? (p.96)

Revenge will neither destroy the state they are trying to overthrow, nor eradicate its spirit. (And unless it is eradicated, the state will always rise again.) And there is the nub of the argument. The Nameless One, believing that the masses can only be liberated through the seizure of political power, considers the means of achieving this to be unimportant. For the Woman, on the other hand, they are all-important, not just because violent means are inconsistent with the ends they are fighting for, but because they corrupt those ends, ultimately destroying them and destroying the revolution itself:

Rache ist nicht Wille zur Umgestaltung.
Rache ist nicht Revolution,
Rache ist Axt, die spaltet
Den kristallinen, glutenden,
Den zornigen Willen zur Revolution. (p.97).

Revolution is therefore the will for social transformation, culminating in the dissolution of class conflict in the unifying reality of community:

Masse soll Volk in Liebe sein.
Masse soll Gemeinschaft sein.
Gemeinschaft ist nicht Rache.
Gemeinschaft zerstört das Fundament des Unrechts,
Gemeinschaft pflanzt die Wälder der Gerechtigkeit (p.95).

This passage illustrates how little Toller's conception of revolution had actually changed since 1917. The state is defined in spiritual rather than material terms: it is, in Landauer's sense, a relationship between men. Consequently, it cannot be destroyed through political revolution, but only by eradicating the spirit which nurtures it. The will to revolution will be realised in 'Gemeinschaft', the community of people united in mutual love¹⁷. The spirit of community will establish a just society by destroying the foundation of injustice - that is, the state, in which injustice is institutionalised.

This Anarchist conception of the state is repeated in the final tableau. The Woman rejects her husband's attempts to win her back to bourgeois society, accusing the state - and therefore her husband, whose function is to uphold it - of responsibility for the war. The state and its servants are also responsible for the degradation of the masses, whose plight is evoked in terms strikingly similar to those Toller had used two years earlier:

Wer stieß die Massen in verweste Höhlen,
 Daß heute sie beladen mit dem-Sud des Gestern,
 Wer raubte Brüdern menschlich Antlitz,
 Wer zwang sie in Mechanik,
 Erniedrigt sie zu Kolben an Maschinen?
 Der Staat!... Du! (p.105) 18

The Woman's subsequent exchanges with the Nameless One carry the dramatic argument to its climax. He has come to help her escape, but she rejects a plan which would entail killing a warder, since such a plan denies

the very principles she has expounded. The Nameless One replies that the revolution demands it: 'Die Revolution hat ein Recht auf dich'. To this (Marxist) argument of revolutionary expediency, she opposes the (Anarchist) ethic of self-sacrifice: 'Nur selbst sich opfern darf der Täter' (p.110).

What ultimately divides them is their different understanding of the antithesis Masse: Mensch. The Nameless One asserts that the interests of the masses are pre-eminent: 'Die Masse gilt und nicht der Mensch.' He maintains, indeed, that to talk of humanity is inapposite within the prevailing social system, which divides men into rulers and ruled: 'Noch gibt es nicht 'den Menschen'./ Massenmenschen hie!/Staatsmenschen dort!' (p.107). This antithesis makes class conflict inevitable, forcing the masses to struggle for political power. The Woman's humanitarian principles are premature, for the new mankind will be formed only in the successful revolutionary struggle: 'Durch harte Tat erst wird das freie Volk' (p.110).

The Woman rejects the primacy of the masses, arguing that they are only what social conditions have made of them:

Masse ist nicht heilig.
Gewalt schuf Masse,
Besitzunrecht schuf Masse.
Masse ist Trieb aus Not... (p.107).

Revolution does not consist merely in the seizure of political power, but in the spiritual liberation of the

masses. The capitalist state has laid waste their human potential: 'Masse ist zerstampfter Acker/Masse ist verschüttet Volk' (p.107) - that is, the state has destroyed the harmony inherent in a people united by common ideals. The revolution must realise this potential, release their innate sense of community:

Tat! Und mehr als Tat!
Mensch in Masse befreien,
Gemeinschaft in Masse befreien (pp.107-8).

That, as Landauer said, is the task of Socialists, and indeed, the Woman is making precisely Landauer's distinction between the seizure of political power and the reconstruction of society - between political and social revolution. Social revolution pre-supposes a radical transformation in consciousness, for only the spiritual emancipation of the masses can lead to their social emancipation¹⁹.

The argument inevitably ends in the same deadlock as before: to use force is to violate the ideals of the revolution, to renounce it is to condemn the revolution to failure. Toller regarded this problem as insoluble, and in fact this had been precisely his point of departure: 'Dieser Widerspruch ist heute noch für den politisch Handelnden unlöslich, und gerade seine Unlöslichkeit wollte ich zeigen'²⁰. He is forced to project a solution into the future. The Woman invokes the sense of community, of men united in common work ('Werkverbundene freie Menschheit'), which will one day inform all humanity. The Nameless One tells her scornfully

that she is before her time, but she replies: 'Ich aber werde ewig,/Und einst werde ich/Reiner/Schuldloser/Menschheit/Sein' (p.110). She incorporates the future - but the contradictions of the present remain. This is the last word of the dramatic argument, an ending which is inconclusive and even equivocal.

4. USPD and KPD: dramatic statement and historical fact

While Toller has distilled his experience into a dialectic of opposing philosophies of revolution, the play's frame of reference remains that of the Munich 'Räterepublik'. It does not, of course, present historical facts in the manner of the documentary drama - the symbolic style of Expressionism precludes such a possibility - but it nonetheless renders, often in some detail, the historical conflict between USPD and KPD, and therefore between Toller and Leviné, in the crucial days of the 'Räterepublik'²¹.

In his study, Bütow has already contrasted dramatic statement and historical fact²². He argues that in practice Toller had been prepared to condone armed force as long as there was any prospect of success. That is, his position was consistently 'verantwortungs ethisch', whereas that of his dramatic protagonist is uncompromisingly 'gesinnungsethisch'. Masse Mensch, he concludes, reveals 'überhaupt nicht seine politische Stellung zur Revolution, sondern nur seine dichterische' (p.276), meaning that the play illustrates the split between 'Dichter' and 'Politiker'

which he believes is crucial to an understanding of Toller's personality. However, his analysis of Toller's historical role rests almost exclusively on Toller's own retrospective accounts, not least his autobiography, and virtually ignores the contemporary evidence (including Toller's own). He therefore applies the very critical method he rejects in other critics, that of interpreting Toller through his own retrospective accounts, and for precisely that reason his conclusions must be qualified.

The contemporary evidence summarised in Chapter III shows that Toller's position was much more ambivalent than his subsequent accounts suggest. In short, his actions were often dictated, or tempered, by considerations which were 'gesinnungsethisch': his historical position was much closer to that of his protagonist. Indeed, a closer analysis will show that Toller transposes the substance, and often the letter, of the revolutionary argument conducted during the 'Räterepublik'. He has, of course, condensed it in the interests of dramatic economy, but it is only in the final tableau, in which protagonist and antagonist both take their positions to a logical conclusion, that he seriously departs from historical truth.

In the early scenes, his protagonist preaches a revolutionary pacifism identical to his own. Her association of Mass Strike and revolution represents the subjective truth of Toller's own experience, in which

the January Strike was viewed as a dress rehearsal for the November Revolution²³. She argues passionately against the use of force; Toller himself had consistently believed that the 'Räterepublik' (the climax of revolution) could be established 'im Wege einer friedlichen Entwicklung und nicht durch Gewalt'²⁴. Leviné, on the other hand, had consistently argued that revolutionary struggle was inevitable, and that to raise moral objections merely served to divide the workers and weaken their resolve²⁵. The Nameless One echoes this argument:

Krieg ist Notwendigkeit für uns/Ihr Wort bringt
Spaltung/Um der Sache willen/Schweigen Sie (p.86).

The Woman is appalled at the prospect of armed force, but consciously subordinates her scruples to the imperative of revolutionary solidarity: 'Du... bist... Masse/Du... bist... Recht'. Her acquiescence and her hesitation are Toller's own, her words a condensed statement of his conception of the role and responsibility of the revolutionary leader: 'Für uns sind allein maßgebend der Wille und das klare Ziel der revolutionären Massen'²⁶.

As the Woman finds it increasingly difficult to suppress her scruples, the Nameless One repeats that the ideals of the revolution cannot be realised by words alone:

Es fordert erzne Panzer,
Es fordert mehr als Rede heißen Herzens.
Es fordert rücksichtslosen Kampf (p.93).

Leviné had advanced the same idea in almost the same words: 'Nicht mit weichen Wehmutsherzen kann man Revolution machen, es gehört dazu ein rücksichtsloser Wille'²⁷. He had attacked the 'Phrasenpolitik' of Toller

and the 'Zentralrat': words had very real consequences, for which the revolutionary leader could not escape responsibility²⁸, an argument which Toller transposes into the following exchange:

Die Frau: Genosse, im letzten überwind ichs nicht.
Kampf mit Eisenwaffen vergewaltigt.

Der Namenlose: Auch Kampf mit Geisteswaffen vergewaltigt.
Ja, jede Rede vergewaltigt.-
Nicht so bestürzt, Genossin,
Ich packe nackte Dinge (p.93).

The Woman's sense of guilt grows, as it becomes clear that the revolution has been bloodily defeated. It seems to her that defeat was inevitable, but the Nameless One rebukes her:

Noch einmal: Schweigen Sie, Genossin!
Das Werk ist nicht mißlungen.
War heute unsere Kraft zu schwach,
Morgen dröhnen neue Bataillone (p.95).

Toller is paraphrasing the argument which Leviné had used to justify the defence of Munich. Revolutionary struggle, even if unsuccessful, would serve to heighten revolutionary consciousness: present defeat would sow the seeds of future victory²⁹.

The Woman's moral dilemma is posed in an acute form as the revolutionaries prepare to execute their hostages. When she attempts to intervene, the Nameless One accuses her of treachery ('Dein Schutz Verrat'), though she declares that her action is purely humanitarian ('Ich schütze Menschheit, ewige Menschheit' (p.98)). The Nameless One orders her arrest. The direct references to Toller's own experience need little elaboration. Leviné had ordered Toller's arrest for attempting to

parley with the enemy. His analysis of the situation cast the USPD in the role of unconscious traitors to the revolution. Their very humanitarian ideals forced them into positions of compromise and negotiation; they would always draw back from the struggle which was the inevitable result of the revolution they themselves proclaimed³⁰. He actually reduced the argument to the simple slogan which the Nameless One uses: 'Wer nicht mit uns, ist wider uns' (p.97). For their part, the USPD contended that the Communist appeal to fight to the end betrayed 'die heilige Sache des Proletariats im Kampf für die Menschlichkeit'³¹.

This argument, merely outlined in the fifth tableau, is taken up and developed in the seventh. The Woman, so far from conceding the necessity of force, now rejects its use in any circumstances: 'Kein Mensch darf Menschen töten/Um einer Sache willen./Unheilig jede Sache, dies verlangt' (p.110). While she therefore adopts a position of absolute moral principle, the Nameless One continues to argue in terms of revolutionary expediency: 'Die Masse hat ein Recht auf dich' (p.107). That is, the revolutionary leader belongs to the masses, and has no right to indulge in acts of heroism or self-sacrifice which will deprive the masses of leadership. It was this argument which had persuaded Leviné to go into hiding in the death-throes of the 'Räterepublik'. His disappearance had been the basis of the charge of 'dishonourable motives', against which he had defended himself by reference to a different moral code³².

The argument between the Woman and the Nameless One veers rapidly into more personal terms. She makes a sweeping attack on the use of force, rejecting his argument that they are fighting for humanity:

Der Namenlose: Wir kämpfen für die Menschheit.
Die Frau: Ihr mordet für die Menschheit (p.108).

The methods they use make them no better than the representatives of the system they are trying to overthrow:

Ich sehe keine Unterscheidung:
Die einen morden für ein Land,
Die andern für die Länder alle (p.108).

They cannot build a new order by means of force and repression, their new order will bear a terrible similarity to the old: 'Du führst in seltsam neues Land, / Ins Land der alten Menschensklaverei' (p.109). He in turn accuses her of bearing the marks of her bourgeois origin: 'Selbstbetrug und Schwäche'.

Their exchanges follow closely the dialogue of mutual accusation and recrimination between Toller and Leviné. The latter argued that the Independents' attempts to negotiate simply betrayed the revolution into the hands of its enemies, hovering 'zwischen Schwäche und Verrat'³³. Toller accused the Communists of instituting a regime worse than Ludendorff's, and opposed their call for armed resistance to the end, accusing them of sacrificing workers' lives to a dogmatic conviction. Toller translates this argument into the dramatic shorthand of Expressionism. The Woman declares the paramount importance of humanitarian principle; for the Nameless One, all other considerations

are subordinated to the revolutionary cause. She accuses him of sacrificing human lives to that conviction; he accuses her of indecision, and consequent treachery:

Die Frau: Der Mensch über alles! Der Lehre willen/
Opferst du/die Gegenwärtigen.

Der Namenlose: Der Lehre willen muß ich sie opfern.
Du aber verrätst die Masse, du
verrätst die Sache.
Denn heute gilts sich zu entscheiden.
Wer schwankt, sich nicht entscheiden kann,
Stützt die Herren, die uns unterdrücken...
(p.109)

Toller's personal difficulties in resolving this dilemma are reflected in the ending to Masse Mensch. The Woman insists on the absolute principle of non-violence:

Nur selbst sich opfern darf der Täter.
Höre: kein Mensch darf Menschen töten
Um einer Sache willen.
Unheilig jede Sache dies verlangt. (p.110).

In renouncing the use of force under any circumstances, she of course abandons any further possibility of political action. Toller himself was perfectly well aware of the implications of such a renunciation, as his later statements on the subject confirm³⁴.

In Masse Mensch, Toller attempts to resolve the dramatic conflict by resorting to the characteristic Expressionist motif of redemption through self-sacrifice. The Woman goes voluntarily to her execution, but her death is not in vain, for it effects a change in consciousness in two prisoners who enter her cell to steal her belongings. The motif of exemplary self-sacrifice is a recurring one in Toller's work, and in his early plays is crucial to an understanding of his

conception of revolutionary commitment³⁵. In the context of Masse Mensch, it is an unsatisfactory ending, which leaves the dramatic conflict unresolved. While offering an apparent solution at a personal level, it evades the social issues implicit in the revolutionary theme. The note of apparent affirmation on which the play ends is therefore marginal to the main dramatic argument about revolutionary action.

5. The conception of determinism

There is one further aspect of Masse Mensch which has crucial implications for Toller's political development: the strong current of determinism running through the play. The naive optimism of Die Wandlung, with its belief in individual and social regeneration, had receded. Toller had been forced to acknowledge that the masses were what hunger, repression and injustice had made them ('Gewalt schuf Masse/Besitzunrecht schuf Masse/Masse ist Trieb aus Not'). This idea emerges strongly in the third tableau, in which the introductory choruses articulate the consciousness of different groups of workers, emphasising how far their perceptions have been formed by the material reality of their lives.

Toller's conception of the proletariat is still that of a class which suffers:

Wir ewig eingekeilt
 In Schluchten steiler Häuser.
 Wir preisgegeben
 Der Mechanik höhnischer Systeme.

Wir Antlitzlos in Nacht der Tränen.
 Wir ewig losgelöst von Müttern,
 Aus Tiefen der Fabriken rufen wir:
 Wann werden Liebe wir leben? (p.80)

The Chorus of young women workers demand the destruction of the machines which have enslaved them, a demand which the Woman is quick to counter: 'Denn seht: wir leben zwanzigstes Jahrhundert./Erkenntnis ist:/Fabrik ist nicht mehr zu zerstören' (p.81). The machine must serve mankind, not vice-versa:

Fabriken dürfen nicht mehr Herr,
 Und Menschen Mittel sein.
 Fabrik sei Diener würdigen Lebens!
 Seele des Menschen bezwinde Fabrik! (p.81)

In rejecting their demand, she is rejecting the Anarchist argument against industrialisation: the crucial point is - who controls the factories? This argument anticipates the theme of Die Maschinenstürmer, indeed Masse Mensch contains in embryo several ideas which are developed in the later play³⁶.

The workers' response to their suffering is instinctual and immediate: 'Einfache Not ist, die wir rufen.../Wir wollen nicht warten' (p.82). The Chorus of farm workers articulates the consciousness of those driven from the land to work in the industrial cities:

Verstoßen hat man uns von unsrer Mutter Erde,
 ...
 Die freudlosen Städte zerbrechen unsre Kraft.
 Wir wollen Erde!
 Allen die Erde! (p.82).

Consciousness is clearly a product of material environment, but not in a Marxist sense. The Woman condemns the prevailing economic system for degrading

and dehumanising the workers:

Wer raubte Brüdern menschlich Antlitz,
 Wer zwang sie in Mechanik,
 Erniedrigt sie zu Kolben an Maschinen? (p.105)

The effect of the factory system, with its inevitable division of labour, is not therefore to instil class consciousness in the masses, but to degrade and dehumanise them. It is in this sense that we must understand the antithesis of the play's title³⁷. The sense of fatalism in the choruses emerges again at the end of the scene, with the Nameless One's declaration: 'Masse ist Schicksal', an ambiguous phrase with simultaneous connotations of fate and class determinism.

The effect of material environment on consciousness is evoked both explicitly and symbolically in the fourth tableau. The 'hochummauerter Hof' symbolises the prison of working-class experience, a recurrent motif in Toller's work³⁸. Here it represents the way in which the revolution is both physically and psychologically circumscribed, a fact emphasised in the sentries' refrain, which repeats the message of the workers' choruses in a grimly humorous form. This is made explicit later in the scene, when the sentry ridicules the Woman's plea for forgiveness for his prisoner.

The determinist strain in Toller's thinking is most explicit in the sixth tableau. The Woman appears as a prisoner, chained and shut in a cage, accompanied once more by the 'Begleiter', this time in the guise of a warder. Their dialogue explores the nature of guilt and responsibility, as the Woman tries to come to terms with

her experience. She is haunted by grey shadows with no head, which accuse her of having murdered them. She begins by denying her guilt, but finally acknowledges it, recognising that guilt is inherent in Man's condition and his attempts to change it: 'Leben ist Schuld'. In answer to her question whether guilt was inevitable the 'Begleiter' replies:

Jeder lebt sich./Jeder stirbt seinen Tod./
 Der Mensch,/Wie Baum und Pflanze,/
 Schicksalsgebundene/Vorgeprägte Form,/
 Die werdend sich entfaltet,/Werdend sich zerstört (p.102).

The note of determinism is clear in words like 'Schicksal' and 'vorgeprägt', and receives an evolutionary twist in the comparison 'wie Baum und Pflanze'. Toller's line of thought is made more precise in his correspondence:

Diese Haft dünkt mich oft wie eine Probe. Ich werde sie bestehen oder nicht bestehen. Das hängt nicht von meinem Willen ab, nicht von meinen gedanklichen Anstrengungen, sondern von der schicksalhaften Gegebenheit meines letzten, entblößten Seins. Die allein ist entscheidend. Ich glaube nicht mehr an Wandlung zu neuem Menschtum, zu 'neuem' Geist. Jede 'Wandlung' ist Faltung und Entfaltung. Tiefer denn je spüre ich den Sinn des tragischen und gnädigen Wortes Pindars: Der Mensch wird, was er ist. 39

A man becomes what he is: the lapidary phrase suggests a determinism in which a man's fate is the inescapable consequence of heredity and social environment, drawing on the precepts of Naturalism⁴⁰.

This determinism is symbolically portrayed by the line of figures in prison clothes, which appear in the Woman's last vision. They wear prison clothing,

both because many revolutionaries are now in prison, but also to symbolise the prison of their social condition and experience. It is this which impels them to act as they do: 'Masse ist Muß'. Recognising this, the Woman questions whether they can be guilty, for if their guilt is a consequence of their social predicament, they are also guiltless: 'Masse ist schuldlos'. It is only now that the Woman understands the true nature of her guilt:

O, ungeheuerlich Gesetz der Schuld/Darin sich/
Mensch und Mensch/Verstricken muß (p.103).

Having acknowledged her guilt, and understood the nature of it, she can be freed. In releasing her, the 'Begleiter' answers her question as to whether she can be free with the words: 'Unfrei! Frei!'. That is, her freedom consists in recognising, and reconciling herself to, the material limitations on her freedom.

Toller's line of thought is echoed in his correspondence:

Für euch mag wahr sein, was allein ihr gut nennt.
Ich bin gebunden und weiß: der Weg ist mir
gezeichnet, notwendig gezeichnet. Und weil
ich's weiß, bin ich frei - trotz allem. 41

Toller's revolutionary commitment was clearly a moral imperative. He did not see determinism in historical terms, that is, in the Marxist sense of recognition of the historical process and his own place within it. The moral argument of Masse Mensch is conducted out of historical context: the Woman's moral dilemma is seen in personal, not class terms. It was only after the completion of Masse Mensch that Toller attempted to place determinism

in an historical perspective, and it was this which impelled him to choose an historical subject for his next play.

Masse Mensch therefore reflects the extent and limitations of Toller's political development since 1917. Whereas Die Wandlung had been a subjective evocation of political awakening, the subjectivity of Masse Mensch is qualified by the dialectical structure. Friedrich proclaims his ideals without opposition: the Woman's are submitted to a dialectical examination which calls them into question, a shift which is symptomatic of Toller's political development.

The limitations of this development are implicit in Toller's treatment of his theme. He explores revolution in moral, not material, terms - indeed the revolution itself is little more than a background for the moral dilemma of the individual. Only later, in Die Maschinenstürmer and Hinkemann did he attempt to abstract from his subjective experience the objective reasons for the failure of the revolution.

While the dramatic conflict of Masse Mensch is, at one level, an exposition of the conflict between Toller and Eugen Leviné, Toller has distilled the argument into a dialectic of opposing conceptions of revolutionary action. The arguments of the Woman and the Nameless One are formulated in terms of ethical and determinist Socialism. However, even the Woman's voluntarist

conception of revolution is qualified by a strong strain of determinism. Toller no longer believed in immanent spiritual regeneration, acknowledging that men could not escape the consequences of their material environment and experience. This materialist perception is not, however, seen in an historical context - that is, it is not derived from dialectical materialism. Only in his next play did Toller attempt to place revolution into a framework of historical development.

Notes to Chapter IV

- 1 Masse Mensch. Ein Stück aus der sozialen Revolution des 20. Jahrhunderts von Ernst Toller, Potsdam 1921 (see Spalek no.39). The first edition is reprinted in GW II pp.63-112; page references in the text are to the latter edition.

The second edition, published in 1922, includes the author's foreword, 'Brief an einen schöpferischen Mittler', and shows some minor additions to the text itself (see Spalek no.40). Subsequent impressions reprint the text of the second edition (see Spalek nos. 41-45).
- 2 Letter to Theodor Lessing, undated (1920), GW V, p.36.
- 3 Letter to Frau T.D., undated (1920), GW V, p.36.
- 4 Letter to Jürgen Fehling, undated (1920), GW V, pp.37/38. It was this letter which Toller adapted as a foreword to the second edition of the play - see note 1. The dating of the letter in Briefe is clearly anachronistic (see ter Haar, op.cit., p.259, note 88). The letter refers to the production at the Berliner Volksbühne, which Fehling directed, and which opened on 29.9.1921. Toller's 'Brief an einen schöpferischen Mittler' is dated October 1921.
- 5 Letter to Tessa, 12.11.1920, GW V, p.50. Masse Mensch was first performed at the Stadttheater, Nuremberg, on 15.1.1920; the production was suspended after four performances on the orders of the police.
- 6 See J. Habermas, Theorie und Praxis, Neuwied & Berlin, 1969, p.14. See also Chapter V, notes 10 and 11.
- 7 Quer Durch, p.282, Eine Jugend, GW IV, pp.222-23. See also Chapter XIV/7 below.
- 8 D.Klein, Der Wandel, p.48, pp.55-58. Her view is endorsed by Bütow - see discussion in Section 4 below. Weber formulated the distinction between 'Gesinnungs-' and 'Verantwortungsethik' in a lecture, 'Der Beruf zur Politik', given in 1919, which was republished in 1981 as a pamphlet by Duncker and Humblot, Berlin. In the comments on Masse Mensch in his autobiography (p.222), Toller actually refers to Weber's lecture.
- 9 GW V, p.38 - see note 4 above.
- 10 This stage direction appears only in the second and subsequent editions. Toller presumably inserted it in order to stress the symbolic significance of the 'Begleiter', as an aspect of the Woman's own self.

- 11 Cf. Eine Jugend, GW IV, p.89. Sarah Sonja Lerch was the Russian-born wife of a Munich university professor, who had joined the anti-war group around Eisner and had played a leading role in the strike committee until her arrest, together with Eisner and other strike leaders. She hanged herself in Stadelheim Prison two months after her arrest (not four days as Toller writes in Eine Jugend).
- 12 Toller had first attempted to express this idea in the poem 'Ich habe euch umarmt' (Vormorgen, Potsdam 1924, p.22):
- Sprach ich zu euch?
Der Mensch
Der farbige Ellipsen um Sonnenbälle fliegt,
Er sprach zu euch!
Der Mensch!
- 13 See Chapter I/5.
- 14 In a speech given in February 1919, Eisner had spoken of 'die eine größte Idee, die die Menschheit kennt: daß zwischen Gedanken und Tat kein Widerspruch und kein Zeitraum stehen dürfe.'
(Eisner, 'Der Sozialismus und die Jugend' in Die halbe Macht den Räten. Ausgewählte Aufsätze und Reden, Renate und Gerhard Schmolze (eds.), Cologne 1969, p.289.
- 15 Cf. Chapter I/4.
- 16 In the second edition, Toller inserted a new line in order to clarify his intention:
- Wir Schwachen werden Felsen sein der Stärke
Gewaltlos werden wir die Ketten sprengen
Und keine Waffe ist gebaut, die uns besiegen könnte.
- 17 For Landauer's ideas, see Chapter I/3. Landauer had defined community as a bridge of love between people (cf. Die Revolution). In his final address to the Court Martial, Toller invoked 'die Weltgemeinschaft... äußerlich gebunden durch ein Minimum von Gewalt... innerlich gebunden durch den Geist der Liebe' (GW I, p.50).
- 18 Cf. 'Leitsätze für einen kulturpolitischen Bund der Jugend in Deutschland', in which he invokes 'die schöpferischen Keime (welche vom Sud und Abfall der Fabriken und Großstädte verschüttet sind' - see Chapter II/4(ii). In the finale of Die Wandlung, Friedrich addresses the people as 'Verschüttete'; the Woman declares: 'Masse ist verschüttet Volk'.
- 19 Toller developed the distinction between political and social revolution more explicitly in Deutsche Revolution (1925) - cf. Chapter X/2.

- 20 Quer Durch, p.282.
- 21 See Chapter III/1.
- 22 See Bütow, op.cit., pp.273-95.
- 23 Eisner claimed that the strike had been planned as a dress rehearsal for the subsequent revolution in Munich: 'Die Revolution war ja schon geplant im Januar' (see Chapter I/4, note 36).
- 24 See Chapter III/4, note 36.
- 25 See Chapter III/1, note 8.
- 26 See Chapter III/5, note 39.
- 27 Rosa Meyer-Leviné, Leviné. Leben und Tod eines Revolutionärs, Frankfurt 1974, p.123.
- 28 Ibid., p.98 - see Chapter III, note 10.
- 29 Ibid., pp.92-93.
- 30 Ibid., p.83.
- 31 See Chapter III/1, note 21.
- 32 See Leviné, 'Rede vor Gericht' in Leben und Tod, pp.173-79, particularly p.178:
- ...ich muß mich in meinen Handlungen richten nach den Ehrbegriffen, die in den Kreisen meiner Freunde bestehen; am letzten Abend habe ich eine Sitzung gehabt mit meinen Freunden... und es wurde von den Anwesenden einstimmig der Beschluß gefasst: die Mitglieder der Roten Armee begeben sich auf ihren Posten, die, die Mitglieder der Regierung waren, haben zu verschwinden. Ich bin verschwunden. Ich bin verschwunden, habe mich verkrochen im Einverständnis mit meinen kommunistischen Freunder. Aber nicht um meine Haut zu retten.
- 33 See Chapter III/1, note 20.
- 34 See Toller, 'Eine Ansprache', Die sozialistische Erziehung V, 2 February 1925. See Chapter X, note 16.
- 35 The idea of exemplary self-sacrifice is crucial to Die Wandlung. It is also present in Toller's Sprechchöre, Tag des Proletariats and Requiem den erschossenen Brüdern (1920) which are dedicated to Liebknecht and Landauer respectively, that is, to the martyrs of the revolution, whose example will inspire its future victory. Cf. also Weltliche Passion - see Chapter XV/3.

- 36 Toller returned to this idea again in Quer Durch, pp.123-4, see Chapter XIII/2 for further comment.
- 37 Toller himself insisted that the title was intended to convey an antithesis:
- 'Masse Mensch' ist ein Begriff, den ich nicht verstehe. Er entstand durch die Verballhornung meines Dramentitels: Masse - Mensch, der Antithetisches enthält.
- (Nationalsozialismus, p.20)
- 38 Cf. 'die große Fabrik' in Die Wandlung, and Das Schwalbenbuch in which imprisonment becomes a symbol of the human condition in general.
- 39 Letter to Annemarie von Puttkamer, 22.5.1921, in Wolff, Briefwechsel eines Verlegers, pp.327-8.
- 40 Toller's interest in modern drama had been stimulated by the Naturalist dramatists, particularly Ibsen, Strindberg and Hauptmann - cf. Eine Jugend, GW IV, p.34.
- 41 Letter to Tessa, 16.6.1920, GW V, p.26.

SECTION C. The prison years 1919-21

V. REFLECTION AND REVISION

In July 1919, Toller was tried by a Court Martial, which - recognising his 'honourable motives' - sentenced him to the minimum of five years fortress imprisonment. He served this sentence in full, mostly in the fortress of Niederschönenfeld. Although he was offered a pardon by the government as early as 1920, as a result of the success of Die Wandlung, he refused it, because it did not also apply to other revolutionary prisoners.

Oskar Maria Graf once said that Toller referred to his years in prison as a time when he was really happy¹. In fact, he suffered both physically and psychologically. He was frequently in conflict with the prison authorities over their arbitrary application of the regulations for 'Festungsgefangene'. While in prison, he spent a total of 149 days in solitary confinement, 243 days deprived of writing materials, and 24 days without food. He was aware of the psychological damage caused by imprisonment: 'es gibt zerstörerische Wirkungen der Haft, die den ganzen Menschen treffen'². The initial comradeship between prisoners rapidly declined, a fact he attributed to prison psychosis: 'die eingesperrten Menschen sind nicht gut'³. The feeling of being cut off from life is a constant theme of his letters and lyrics. In addition, he was troubled by poor health, suffering from violent headaches; while in prison, he went prematurely grey.

At the same time, these years were the most artistically productive of his life. He wrote a major play almost every year: Masse Mensch (1919), Die Maschinenstürmer (1920/21), Der deutsche Hinkemann (1921/22) and Der entfesselte Wotan (1923). He also wrote poems - Gedichte der Gefangenen (1918-21), Das Schwalbenbuch (1923) -, two choral works - Requiem den erschossenen Brüdern and Tag des Proletariats (both 1920), and three 'Massenspiele', scenarios for performance by a mass cast, which were played in successive years (1922-24) at the Trade Union Festival in Leipzig.

The bitter experience of revolution forced Toller to rethink and revise his philosophy in search of a practical basis for political action. The idealism of Die Wandlung, in which consciousness had been transformed through revelation and proclamation, had proved illusory. He could no longer believe in the simple proposition of collective spiritual regeneration as a means of social change:

Könnte ich nur wie früher an Neugeburt, an
reineres Werden glauben. Menschheit, immer
hilflos, immer gekreuzigt. Gerechtigkeit -
ein bitterer Geschmack ist auf meiner Zunge. 4

While it is impossible to overlook the note of regret for lost ideals, his commitment to Socialism had not weakened. What he had lost was his faith in 'die erlösende Kraft des Sozialismus', in the power of Socialism as a moral force to redeem and transform mankind, but this did not make Socialism as a form of economic organisation

any the less necessary:

Der Sozialismus, der neue notwendige Wirtschafts-
gestaltung, ist das nicht genug? Ein gigantisches
Werk. Und der Mensch?... Wund bin ich und
zerwühlt. 5

The dual theme of the disappointment of his former
ideals, and continuing belief in the necessity of
Socialism, runs through his correspondence for 1920/21:

Ich glaube nicht mehr an Wandlung zu 'neuem'
Menschtum, zu 'neuem' Geist. Jede 'Wandlung'
ist Faltung und Entfaltung. Tiefer denn je
spüre ich den Sinn des tragischen und
gnädigen Wort Pindars: Der Mensch wird,
was er ist. 6

Elsewhere he writes:

Ich könnte mir Kämpfer denken, für die Glaube
an die Menschheit oder Nichtglaube keine
Frage entscheidender Bedeutung ist, die
Kämpfen, weil sie die Kraft zur Idee, zur
Mitarbeit an bewußter gesellschaftlicher
Selbstgestaltung haben. 7

That is, what was important was the will to struggle,
despite the acknowledgement of human imperfection. It
was this theme he emphasised in his retrospective
interpretations of Hinkemann, though it was not the
dominant note of the play itself.

The tension between vision and reality, between
idealistic commitment and sceptical recognition, is
reflected in most of Toller's subsequent dramatic work,
reaching a crisis point in Hinkemann. It first emerges
in the fragment Deutsche Revolution⁸ in which the
argument between 'der Wanderer' and 'der Einäugige',
the idealist and the sceptical realist, anticipates that
between Jimmy Cobbett and the beggar; this clash is

repeated, with a marked shift of meaning, in Hinkemann's exchanges with the showman, and in Karl Thomas's dialogues with his former comrades.

Toller continued to be influenced by the thinking of both Eisner and Landauer. His conception of democracy remained closely aligned to Eisner's⁹, whose influence can also be seen in Toller's interest in Kant. When Ernst Niekisch lectured to fellow-prisoners on Kant's Theory of Cognition in 1920/21, Toller was among the 'unermüdlichsten Zuhörern, und kam in vielen Erörterungen immer wieder auf die erkenntnistheoretische Problematik zurück'¹⁰. An aphorism of Kant's serves as an epigraph to the Gedichte der Gefangenen; the cycle ends with the poem 'Unser Weg', which Toller had originally dedicated to 'dem Andenken Kurt Eisners'¹¹.

The continuing influence of Landauer can be documented from Toller's prison letters. 'Mit Gustav Landauer hat die deutsche Revolution einen ihrer reinsten Menschen, einen ihrer größten Geister verloren'; his choral work Requiem den erschossenen Brüdern was dedicated to 'dem Andenken Gustav Landauers'¹². Toller was not simply paying tribute to Landauer as a man; he deplored the fact that his work was now hardly read. He himself read the posthumous collections published in 1921, and recommended them to his young nephew¹³. His prison writing documents the influence of Landauer's 'Sprachskepsis'¹⁴.

Landauer's continuing influence is evident in Toller's conception of revolution. He saw his own revolutionary commitment as a synthesis 'aus seelischem Trieb und Zwang der Vernunft'. It is equally evident in his early attempts to define political drama, 'das den geistigen Inhalt menschlichen Gemeinschaftslebens erneuern, verwesene Formen zerstören wird'¹⁵. Though he had lost faith in the emergence of a new mankind, he still believed in the innate impulse towards freedom, justice and cooperation, which had to be reawakened and reactivated. He was increasingly concerned to integrate this conception into a dialectical conception of historical development.

During the summer of 1920, he turned to the study of the theory and history of Socialism, and it was this which determined the choice of historical subject-matter in Die Maschinenstürmer (1920/21) and Bilder aus der großen französischen Revolution (1922), the first of his 'Massenspiele'¹⁶.

Toller's historical studies had implications for the present; he recognised that, while the revolutionary wave of 1918/19 had receded, many still regarded revolution as immediate and inevitable¹⁷. He was critical of his own party for failing to recognise the present situation: 'Man vergisst scheinbar, in welchem Stadium der Revolution wir uns befinden, daß uns nur zielklare, praktische Arbeit, vor allem praktische

Kleinarbeit gegenwärtig übrigbleibt,¹⁸. This conclusion remained part of Toller's thinking throughout the decade, providing the conceptual justification for the position of Kroll and Berg in Hoppla, wir leben!

Notes to Chapter V

- 1 O.M.Graf, 'Gedenkrede auf Ernst Toller', Sinn und Form XXI (July 1969), pp.897-900.
- 2 Letter to Tessa, 1.8.1922, GW V, p.111.
- 3 'Gemeinsame Haft' in Gedichte der Gefangenen, Munich 1921, p.28.
- 4 Letter to Tessa, 1.9.1920, GW V, pp.34-5.
- 5 See note 4.
- 6 Letter to Anne-Marie v. Puttkamer, 22.5.1921, Wolff, Briefwechsel eines Verlegers, p.326. The same thought, in virtually the same words, is contained in Briefe, GW V, p.66. See Introduction: 'A note on sources', particularly note 26.
- 7 Letter to Stefan Zweig, undated (1921), GW V, pp.57-58.
- 8 'Deutsche Revolution', Das Tagebuch II, 26.3.1921, pp.358-65. The piece seems to have been written in late 1920, when he was already working on Die Maschinenstürmer. See also Chapter VI below.
- 9 Cf. letter to B., 28.6.1923, and to Tessa, 29.6.1923, GW V, pp.155-56.
- 10 E. Niekisch, Gewagtes Leben, Cologne 1958, p.101.
- 11 'Unser Weg' was first published in Die Weltbühne, XVI, 51, 16 December 1920. It was included, as an introductory poem, in Der Tag des Proletariats, Berlin 1920. In Gedichte der Gefangenen, the dedication is not included.
- 12 'Requiem den erschossenen Brüdern' in Tag des Proletariats, see note 11 above.
- 13 Undated (1921), GW V, pp.86-87.
- 14 Cf. letter to Tessa, 10.9.1922, GW V, p.115, also Das Schwalbenbuch passim.
- 15 'Bemerkungen zu meinem Drama Die Wandlung', Tribüne der Kunst und Zeit, Berlin 1920.
- 16 Bilder aus der großen französischen Revolution. Historische Folge in 15 Bildern, entworfen von Ernst Toller, in Festschrift zum 25. Gewerkschaftsfest, Leipzig am 6. August 1922.
- 17 Letter to the editor of the newspaper Kampf, undated (1920), GW V, p.48.
- 18 Letter to K., undated (1920), GW V, pp.49-50.

VI. DIE MASCHINENSTÜRMER: REVOLUTION AND THE HISTORICAL DIALECTIC

1. Political Reappraisal

If Masse Mensch was Toller's attempt to come to terms emotionally with the experience of revolution, Die Maschinenstürmer¹ was written to put that experience into historical perspective. The new play, written in the winter of 1920/21, showed significant changes in both content and style. Toller chose to dramatise an episode of early Labour history, the spate of machine-breaking known as Luddism. The play is loosely based on incidents which took place in Nottinghamshire in 1811/12, when the local framework knitters rebelled and wrecked the new machinery which threatened their livelihood.

The realism of content is emphasised in the treatment. For the first time, Toller turned away from the conventions of Expressionism - the symbolic characters, the ecstatic language, the dream interludes - towards a much greater realism. Die Maschinenstürmer has a conventional five-act structure, a realistic historical setting, and characters whose actions are motivated socially and psychologically. The dialogue is largely naturalistic: the play is written in prose, interspersed with passages of blank verse. The dramatic conflict is no longer, as in Masse Mensch, simply the abstract clash of opposing philosophies, but arises from the specific social conditions portrayed on stage.

This new-found realism of content and treatment was the result of Toller's reflection on his experience of revolution. In the enforced leisure of Niederschönenfeld, he had turned increasingly to the study of the theory and history of Socialism in search of a more objective basis for his political convictions:

Seit Monaten arbeite ich wieder intensive an 'Realem', beschäftige mich mit nationalökonomischen, politischen, soziologischen Werken. Weil ich immer deutlicher erkenne, daß Politik mehr verlangt als 'Gesinnung', 'seelische Grundstimmung', 'Ethos', und gründliche sachliche Kenntnisse notwendig sind, um die Gesetze des politischen Handelns beherrschen zu können. Allerdings fallen, soweit es sich um nacktes politisches Geschehen handelt, manche Illusionen, Wirklichkeiten und 'Ideologien' werden erkennbar. 2

Toller's reappraisal of his political position matched the course of events outside prison. In retrospect, the revolution in Bavaria had proved no more than an interlude. Within a year, the counter-revolution had triumphed so completely that the revolutionary events themselves seemed remote and unreal. Toller himself wrote in July 1920 that 'es gilt immerhin noch als historisches Faktum, daß Kurt Eisner in prähistorischen sozusagen legendären Zeiten bayrischer Ministerpräsident war'³. The tone is striking - the sense of unreality matched by a feeling of historical distance. The experience of revolution was no longer 'schmerzende qualvolle Seelensubstanz'⁴, but had become 'historisches Faktum'.

Toller's attempt to re-appraise his political position, and simultaneously to revise his artistic practice, was a long and difficult process. How difficult it was can be judged from the fact that, in contrast to Masse Mensch, which he had written in a single creative outburst of three days, Die Maschinenstürmer was the result of a patient and sometimes painful process of rewriting and restructuring, which took several months⁵.

Inevitably, the subject-matter of Die Maschinenstürmer invited comparison with Hauptmann's Die Weber, and contemporary critics even called Toller's play a direct copy⁶. Toller was quick to reject the suggestion:

Jeder Vergleich mit den 'Webern' hinkt. Als ich die 'Maschinenstürmer' schrieb, hatte ich dieses Werk an die zwölf Jahre nicht mehr gelesen, nein, ich hatte es vorher nie gelesen, hatte es als Knabe nur auf der Bühne einer Provinzstadt spielen sehen. Ich hütete mich, es in jener Zeit zu lesen. Was mir als Erinnerung blieb, war die Tragödie der dumpfen, der aus Hunger und Verzweiflung rebellischen Massen. Ich wollte (unter anderem) gestalten: das erste Erwachen des Volkes zu revolutionärem Bewußtsein. 7

Hauptmann's own interpretation of Die Weber emphasised that his intention had differed radically from Toller's. He had set out to depict a social milieu, and the lives trapped inextricably within it. He had been moved to write the play by human compassion, not by any belief in revolutionary ideology⁸. Toller, on the other hand, had chosen the Luddite events as an illustration of the first dawning of revolutionary consciousness among the working-class. This was not merely an argument advanced in

retrospect to defend his own artistic originality, for his correspondence while he was actually working on the play confirms that he was primarily interested in the broader historical relevance of the Luddites:

Die Ludditenbewegung ist eine der ersten bekannten großen Arbeiterbewegungen, die in der Geschichte des Sozialismus, auch bei Marx eine Rolle spielen. Ein erstes Aufflackern jener Bewegung, die später zum Chartistenaufruch reifte. 9

He therefore wished to treat Luddism as an historical turning-point, an early example of concerted action (and therefore of political awareness) in the working-class. It was a conception he derived from his main historical sources.

2. The historical sources and their treatment

In writing the play, Toller made extensive use of historical sources. Ernst Niekisch, his friend and confidant in Niederschönenfeld, confirms that Toller had numerous works of reference sent to him¹⁰. He had consulted Gustav Mayer, the historian and later biographer of Engels, about works dealing specifically with the Luddites and containing 'für die Kultur jener Tage charakteristische Episoden'.¹¹ Toller himself listed the most important sources for the play: Marx's Kapital, Engel's Condition of the Working-Class in England, and Max Beer's Geschichte des Sozialismus in England¹². Toller had been interested in the Luddite movement for some years, but his reading of early labour history served to suggest a new understanding of the events which in turn determined his dramatic treatment of them.

Toller's main source was undoubtedly Engels's Condition of the Working-Class, which suggested the dialectical significance of his material as the first example of working-class action under the impact of industrialisation:

Die Arbeiter klasse ergriff erst Opposition gegen die Bourgeoisie, als sie sich gewaltsam der Einführung der Maschinerie widersetzte, wie dies gleich am Anfange der industriellen Bewegung geschah... Später kamen eine Menge von Aufständen gegen Maschinerie vor, ... die Fabriken wurden demolirt und die Maschinen zertrümmert. 13

Engels suggested that, even in the domestic system of production, the workers had been 'keine Menschen, sondern bloss arbeitende Maschinen im Dienst der wenigen Aristokraten, die bis dahin die Geschichte geleitet hatten' (p.14). The Industrial Revolution had simply carried this process a stage further

... indem sie die Arbeiter vollends zu blossen Maschinen machte und ihnen den letzten Rest selbständiger Thätigkeit unter den Händen wegnahm, sie aber eben dadurch zum Denken und zur Forderung einer menschlichen Stellung antrieb. (pp.14/15)

This analysis is clearly reflected in the early scenes of Die Maschinenstürmer. The weavers hope that, by destroying the machines, they will be able to return to the handwork of domestic production: 'Kein Handschlag an Maschinen! Von unserer Hände Arbeit wollen wir leben wie bisher'. Jimmy is able to recognise this as an illusion: 'Habt ihr wirklich als freie Menschen gewebt?... War Euch Arbeit Werk, dem ihr dientet in Schaffenslust, in

Schaffensdemut? Eure Arbeit war Frondienst, Lohndienst, Notdienst...' (p.141). The weavers had always been wage slaves; the new machinery has simply forced them to recognise that they must struggle, if only to assert their own humanity: 'Und wenn es Wahnwitz ist, und wenn es zwecklos ist. Wir müssen kämpfen, weil wir Menschen sind' (p.130).

Engels's work not only influenced Toller's dialectical conception of the play, but provided many of the concrete details used in it. Dorothea Klein has already made a comparison of the play with its sources, which has been amplified recently by N.F.Furness¹⁴. It is therefore sufficient here to summarise some of the more important details which Toller derived from Engels. There are details of social and living conditions, such as the motif of the itinerant workman, and the specific use of the word 'Tramper' (Jimmy describes himself as 'Tramper, Handwerksbursche, der Arbeit sucht', cf. Engels, p.216); references to the cottage system and its enslaving influence on the employee (Engels, p.224), to the workers' miserable dwellings, in which they sleep on straw, or whole families to one bed (Engels, pp.86-7); the adulteration of foodstuffs by unscrupulous merchants (Engels, pp.92-3); drunkenness and sexual licence as a consequence of economic repression (Engels, pp.158-161); the sale of quack medicines to the poor (Engels, p.131 specifically mentions Parr's Life Pills); the motif of prostitution to the masters (Engels, p.221).

There are also specific details of working conditions in the textile industry, such as the discussion of the spinning-jenny and the mule as an extension of it (Engels, pp.168-70); the replacement of men as machine workers, because their fingers are not deft enough (Engels, p.175); the system of fines imposed as part of Ure's conditions (Engels, pp.218-9); Margaret Lud's story of working while still nursing a child (Engels, p.178).

Despite his fidelity to a well-documented historical source, Toller's main concern was not with historical accuracy. Many of the details he uses are, after all, anachronistic, since they belong to the 1840's, whereas the play is set 'um 1815'. This would be a serious objection, if Toller had set out to write a documentary play. However, the details are not intended to reconstruct a precise historical period, but to evoke the relations between the factory-owner and his operatives, and the conflict between capital and labour which they represent. Moreover, Toller's treatment of these details often lends them a symbolic dimension which serves to underline his historical theme.

This quasi-symbolic method can be illustrated in the conception of both major and minor characters. The main protagonists, Cobbett and the factory owner Ure, were intended as specific allusions to real historical figures: 'Ure ist in der Geschichte der Großkapitalist,

dessen Reden von Engels häufig zitiert werden, Jimmy Cobbett (sein wirklicher Name war William Cobbett) ein Führer aus den späteren Chartistenkämpfen¹⁵. Toller clearly did not intend them to be historical portraits, but rather figures representing particular historical attitudes and roles and in this connection Toller's use of his sources is particularly revealing.

His original conception of Cobbett was derived from Beer's Geschichte des Sozialismus in England. Beer devotes several pages to Cobbett, describing him as 'ein politischer Lehrer des aufsteigenden Proletariats' (p.151), and quoting at length from his open letter to the Luddites of Nottingham, in which he tried 'sie von der Schädlichkeit oder Nutzlosigkeit des Maschinenzerbrechens zu überzeugen' (p.155). The essence of Toller's protagonist is adumbrated in his historical source: Cobbett as workers' leader, both agitator and educator, a man whose vision is ahead of his time and who therefore anticipates future historical development.

Ure is related even more obliquely to historical fact. He is a specific allusion to Dr. Andrew Ure, who was not a 'Großkapitalist', but the author of a reactionary work on economics, based on the cotton industry¹⁶. Toller's knowledge of Ure was obviously gained at second hand from Engels, who saw him as the 'chosen apostle' of the bourgeoisie, the apologist par excellence of capitalism. Engels quotes at length from Ure and Toller actually puts some of these quotes directly

into the mouth of his factory-owner¹⁷. If the historical Ure provided a philosophical justification for the social role of early capitalism, Toller's Ure personifies that social role: he believes that 'das lebendige Band der Gemeinschaft zwischen Fabrikanten und Arbeitern ist keine Legende' (p.146), and announces that 'aus Prinzip und wahrer Humanität' he gives not a penny to beggars. The historical sources provided both specific reference and broad historical authority for Toller's dramatic conception. Ure and Cobbett confront each other as symbolic representatives of capital and labour, a dimension which is strikingly apparent in their clash in Act IV, Scene 1.

This representative dimension is equally evident in the treatment of some minor characters. The pedlar selling Parr's Life Pills is a dramatic evocation of a passage in Engels, which records the enforced resort of the poor to quack remedies, specifically citing Parr's Life Pills (Engels, p.131). Toller turns documented fact into a symbolic figure evoking the predicament of the working-class: 'Parrs Lebenspillen! Kein Weber braucht mehr zu hungern. Ohne Fleisch, ohne Speck sieht jeder blühend aus wie Englands Königin. Parrs Lebenspillen!' (p.127). We are to understand that capitalism will exploit even the starvation of the workers: it is no accident that the pedlar's exit is followed by the appearance of the beggar searching the street for bread.

Similarly, Young Lud embodies the drunkenness and sexual licence which Engels records as endemic among the

proletariat (Engels, pp.158-161). He appears only once, in an incident which has no bearing on the plot, its function being to evoke the moral degeneration resulting from poverty and economic repression. Significantly, Young Lud appears in a scene (Act IV, Scene 1) which depicts the poverty and suffering of the weavers in some detail; the effect of poverty is illustrated by the women's looting of bread, and by Ned Lud's confusion and vacillation - at the end of the scene, he agrees to join in the destruction of the Machine.

The scenes which depict the weavers' material conditions are crucial to Toller's dramatic purpose, for they provide the motivation for the dramatic action: 'die sozial-psychischen Quellen der Ludditen-Rebellion'¹⁸. It is the weavers' material conditions which form their consciousness, thus causing their revolt - and also dooming it to failure. The fact that some details are anachronistic pales into insignificance beside the broad accuracy of the historical truth they evoke.

3. The drama of a social class.

The development of Toller's political thinking in 1919/20 is implicit in both the historical subject-matter of Die Maschinenstürmer, and the conscious choice of that subject-matter for its dialectical significance. The extent and limitations of this development are most evident in the treatment of the working-class characters, both collectively in the weavers, and individually, in the

figures of Jimmy Cobbett, John Wible and Ned Lud, each of whom represents a specific stage of development of working-class consciousness.

(i) The weavers

Toller had consciously set out to write 'das Drama einer Klasse, wenn auch kein Klassenkunstdrama im Sinn der deutschen Nachahmer des Proletkults'¹⁹. He stressed that he saw the weavers as his real protagonist:

Führertypen sind zwei andere Gestalten: ein Chartist, der unverstanden von den Arbeitern erschlagen wird; ein anderer, Demagoge, Phraseur, handelnder aus Ressentiment, subalterner Rebell um der Rebellion willen. Hauptakteure aber : die Weber. 20

The weavers were to occupy the centre of the stage, the subject rather than the object of the dramatic action.

In both his earlier plays, Toller had presented the masses in accordance with the literary conventions of Expressionism, in Die Maschinenstürmer, he places them in a definable historical situation. In Die Wandlung, the people had played a passive role, being no more than the object of Friedrich's mission; in Masse Mensch, the masses had been largely an aspect of the protagonist's subjective experience of revolution. In Die Maschinenstürmer, Toller wished to emphasise their active role in attempting to take their destiny into their own hands, an emphasis which is echoed in the language of the early scenes: 'Noch sind unser die Fäuste', 'Von unserer Hände Arbeit wollen wir leben wie bisher', 'Kein Handschlag an

Maschinen' etc. Following his main historical sources, he wished to show that 'the proletariat is not only a class that suffers'²¹.

Although the weavers are individually named and differentiated, their response to their desperate economic conditions is a collective one. Their defiant singing of the 'Weberlied' is clearly intended to evoke the dawning class consciousness which Engels had argued was the product of early industrialisation. Indeed, throughout the play, Toller portrays the weavers in materialist terms which are derived from his main historical sources. Working and living conditions are portrayed realistically, rather than evoked through rhetoric. The weavers' situation is defined at a specific stage in industrial development. The capitalist system has reduced them to the level of a dispensable commodity: 'Zur Ware, die man kauft, und wenn sie rissig, fortwirft, drückte uns der Ure. Jetzt hat er die Maschine und sein Sieg wird taumelnder Triumph' (p.139). The introduction of new machinery enables Ure to replace workers and depress wages. More specifically, it enables him to lay off men and replace them with women and children, who are more adept at operating the new machinery. The conditions against which the weavers revolt are therefore the result, not of industrialisation, but of industrial capitalism; their plight is a direct consequence of the prevailing mode of production. Their intolerable conditions have forced them to strike and to form a union,

these being precisely the forms of action which Engels identified as typical of a burgeoning labour movement.

Moreover, Toller attempts to relate political consciousness directly to economic and technical change. The weavers' consciousness stems directly from their material conditions. They see the Machine as a tyrant and a monster. In denying them the right to work, it denies their very humanity: 'Wer Menschen Arbeit stiehlt, der sündigt wider die Natur' (p.139). In this situation, it is the Machine itself which they regard as their enemy. In other words, the weavers' attitude to the Machine is symptomatic of their level of political awareness. Only Jimmy Cobbett is able to transcend this material environment.

(ii) Jimmy Cobbett

Toller intended his protagonist to have representative significance, personifying the emergence of the politically-conscious industrial worker. If Luddism was 'ein erstes Aufflackern jener Bewegung, die später zum Chartistenaufstand reifte', Jimmy was to embody that development: 'ein Chartist, der unverstanden von den Arbeitern erschlagen wird'. Toller therefore saw Cobbett as a man whose consciousness was clearly in advance of the historical situation - and indeed, he advocates the idea of a national trade union well over a decade before the idea was current.

Unlike Toller's previous protagonists, Cobbett is specifically a worker. He introduces himself to Ned Lud as 'ein Arbeitsmann gleich dir'. In contrast to his brother Henry, who has become manager of Ure's factory, Jimmy stresses that he has remained a working-man ('Bin Arbeitsmann, bin Weber'); he rejects his brother's denigration of the workers by explicitly identifying with them: 'Wenn er die Arbeiter beschimpft, beschimpft er mich' (p.132). John Wible attempts to discredit Jimmy by denying his claim to be a worker: 'Er ist...mag er auch zu uns stehen...kein Arbeitsmann mehr. Er kann lesen und schreiben wie die Herren' (p.172). Conversely, the beggar recognises that Jimmy is 'ein studierter Arbeiter, ein Aristokrat', but a worker nonetheless. The very fact that he has attained a higher level of political consciousness is an intimation of immanent historical development.

Jimmy's task is to teach the weavers 'daß auch Arbeiter Menschen sind'. He can articulate their own dimly-felt aspirations: 'Er sagt was wir alle fühlen, alle wollen', declares Ned Lud. He recognises that the cause of their suffering is not the new machinery as such, but the capitalist system which exploits it²². Ultimately, the weavers cannot destroy the machinery, for they cannot reverse the process of industrialisation: 'Ich weiß, daß die Maschine unser unentrinnbar Schicksal ist' (p.130). It can become the means of freeing them from their servitude. The Machine itself is not a denial

of their humanity, but a means of realising it, not an obstacle to freedom, but a way of attaining it. Cobbett not only sees the vision of a Socialist society, but can define it in practical terms - the eight-hour day, production for need, not profit. He can also define the necessary preparatory steps: organisation and collective action in the (clandestine) workers' union. The greater emphasis on the means of achieving revolution, particularly on the day-to-day work which would prepare the ground for it, reflect Toller's attempt to find a more practical basis for political action²³.

Thus far, the figure of Cobbett is consistent with the (materialist) conception Toller derived from his historical sources; at the same time, the character shows numerous parallels with Toller's earlier protagonists. He sees working-class revolution in idealist, rather than materialist, terms: 'Der Sieg der Arbeiter wird der Sieg der Gerechtigkeit sein' (p.174). He is less a political organiser than an inspired propagandist, preaching communitarian Socialism ('die Gemeinschaft allen Werkvolks') and relying on rhetorical persuasion. Significantly, he lays no claim to leadership: 'Ein jeder dient dem Volk, ein jeder dient dem Werk, ein jeder Führer!' (p.144). His words document Toller's continuing affinity with Eisner's conception of revolutionary democracy²⁴. Indeed, Cobbett's activity provides a much broader analogy with Eisner, for whom Socialism was essentially an educative process, and

revolution consisted above all in 'geistige Aufklärungsarbeit'²⁵. Jimmy seeks to educate the workers as to the true nature of their condition, in the clear belief that political enlightenment will, of itself, produce the will to revolution.

Jimmy tells the weavers they are fighting the wrong enemy. To see their true condition they must first see themselves: 'Es leben andere Feinde, gewaltiger als das Gerüst von Eisen... das man Maschine nennt... ein Feind lebt in euch... schaut in euch hinein, Brüder...' (pp.141-42). The future Socialist society he summons up is a dream which is innate in every man:

Und doch ist Traum in euch! Traum vom Land der Wunder... Traum vom Land der Gerechtigkeit... vom Land der werkverbundenen Gemeinden, vom Land des werkverbundenen Volks... vom Land der werkverbundenen Menschheit... (p.142).

Like Friedrich in the final tableau of Die Wandlung, Jimmy therefore appeals to what is innate in his audience. His vision is one which the weavers can achieve only through their own action, for community can only be lived:

Eure Schuld ist, daß ihr nicht kämpftet, daß ihr euch nicht eintet zum Arbeitsbund. Daß ihr nicht Gemeinschaft lebt, daß ihr nicht baut am Hause der Gerechtigkeit!...
Bundet euch! Beginnt! Beginnt! Nicht ich und ich! Nein: Welt und wir und Du und Ich!
Wollt die Gemeinschaft allen Werkvolks und ihr werdet sie erkämpfen (pp.142-43).

The thought and language are both reminiscent of Landauer - the belief in voluntary association ('Bundet euch!'), the call to make a beginning. The prerequisite of Socialism is will: Socialism was always possible, Landauer had maintained, if enough people willed it²⁶. Toller's

materialist perception of the weavers' condition is juxtaposed with a voluntarist conception of revolution, derived from Eisner and Landauer.

Landauer's influence is most evident in the solutions Jimmy proposes:

Ned Lud: Wie klar schien alles, da Jimmy zu uns sprach... Man müßte aufs Land zurück... Wir haben das Blut der großen Städte wie Gift in unserem Leib. Die großen Städte sind nicht gläubig... Man müßte Erde haben (p.173).

Jimmy is advocating the Anarchist imperative of a return to the land, expounded by Kropotkin and interpreted by Landauer²⁷. These theories posited a small-scale community, based on communal production and consumption, in which the rotation of work tasks would prevent the atrophy of faculties caused by the division of labour which was inevitable in a capitalist system. Only in such conditions could man become master of the machine: 'Die Erde wird euch wieder Schoß der Kraft sein. Und der Tyrann Maschine, besiegt vom Geist schaffender Menschen... wird euer Werkzeug, wird euer Diener!' (p.143). Once more, Toller assigns a crucial role to 'Geist', defined as a creative force distinct from pure reason. Toller's scepticism about the power of reason emerges in the figure of the Engineer, who eulogises the harnessing of steam power as the final triumph of God-given reason: 'Wer wider die Maschine kämpft, / Kämpft wider göttliche Vernunft' (p.181).

Toller's continuing dialogue with the ideas and personality of Landauer can, of course, be documented

from his prison letters. A letter written in 1921, the same year he completed Die Maschinenstürmer, illustrates the link in his mind between Landauer and Cobbett:

'Er (d.h. Landauer - R.D.) kämpfte um eine hellere Menschheit. Er diente dem Geist der Gerechtigkeit, er diente dem brüderlichen Bund aller Schaffenden...'²⁸.

Cobbett also serves the cause of justice ('Auf meiner Fahne flammt das Licht Gerechtigkeit'); he too preaches voluntary association ('Eintet euch im Bund der Schaffenden'). Toller described Landauer as 'ein Märtyrer für die Idee des Sozialismus', and the final murder of Cobbett, beaten to death by those unable to comprehend his message, may well be an oblique reference to the fate of Landauer, whom he had commemorated the previous year in his Requiem den erschossenen Brüdern²⁹.

Toller was, however, concerned to re-evaluate Landauer's inheritance in the light of his own revolutionary experience, a concern which influences the presentation of Jimmy Cobbett, who is viewed more critically than either of Toller's previous protagonists. Jimmy is inspired by a revolutionary optimism which the objective situation belies. He believes that political enlightenment will engender the will to revolution, but fails to acknowledge the extent to which material deprivation has formed the weavers' consciousness. The effect of his words is only transitory, for the legacy of their material environment is ultimately too

strong. Their consciousness is the product of material reality, which persuasion alone is powerless to change. In retrospect, Toller could see the truth which his own idealism and his own facility as an orator had blinded him to: 'Reine Toren klammern sich an die göttliche Macht des Wortes'³⁰. Cobbett clearly believes, as Toller had believed, in the power of rhetorical persuasion - and like him, he is tragically disabused.

Jimmy's optimism is challenged by the beggar he befriends. The beggar has no dramatic function, serving simply as a critic of Jimmy's revolutionary idealism. The dialogue between the idealist and the sceptical realist was a device which Toller had already used in the sketch Deutsche Revolution³¹. The argument between 'Der Wanderer' und 'Der Einäugige' substantially anticipates that between Cobbett and the beggar, a parallel supporting the argument that Toller intended to view his protagonist from a critical distance. It is only in the fifth act that the beggar exposes Jimmy's illusions. Finding him writing a leaflet at the very moment the weavers are about to smash the machine, the beggar warns him: 'Flugblätter sind wie Flugsand. Wenn sie wehen, verstopfen sie Augen und Ohren, aber sie dringen nicht ins Herz' (p.174). Ironically, Jimmy leaps to the defence of the weavers ('Arbeitsmänner halten ihr Wort') but the beggar accuses him of seeing the workers through rose-tinted spectacles:

Du siehst sie, deucht mich, wie du sie sehen
 möchtest. Du hast die neue Götter erschaffen,
 die heißen 'heilige Arbeitsmänner'... Reine
 Götter... treue Götter... weise Götter,
 vollkommene Götter... Englische Arbeitsmänner
 von 1815, du Träumer! (p.174).

He calls on Jimmy to recognise that his human material
 comprises both good and bad. He does not deny the
 possibility of future victory, or even that men may
 change through involvement in that struggle: 'Wenn du
 mit denen den Sieg erkämpfst, und sie sich kämpfend
wandeln, will ich den Hut vor dir ziehen' (p.174, my
 emphasis). Toller is clearly attempting to transpose
 the Expressionist belief in 'Wandlung' into a practical
 social context; this is the first suggestion in his
 work of the growth of consciousness through struggle
 invoked in his later political speeches³².

Even in defeat, Jimmy does not surrender his vision.
 He berates the weavers for their lack of insight and
 poses the choice which confront them:

O Brüder, wenn die Schaffenden von England
 Abtrünnig werden ihrer heiligen Sendung...
 Die Schaffenden des Kontinents, die Schaffenden
 der Erde...
 Sich nicht zur großen Menschheitstat vereinen...
 Aufrichten Weltgemeinschaft allen Werkvolks...
 Den Menschheitsbund der freien Völker...
 Dann, Brüder, bleibt ihr Knechte bis ans Ende
 aller Tage!(p.187).

The proletariat must either struggle for its own
 emancipation, or remain oppressed and exploited, for
 there is no middle way. It is the same choice Toller
 put to an audience of Berlin workers five years later
 in his address Deutsche Revolution:

Wähle, Proletariat!
 Du bist die Knechtschaft, schwach und verblendet.
 Du bist die Freiheit, wissend, wollend und gläubig.
 Entscheide dich! 33

(iii) John Wible - rebel not revolutionary

The dramatic conflict of Die Maschinenstürmer is twofold, firstly between the weavers and the manufacturer Ure, and secondly amongst the weavers themselves. The struggle between the weavers and Ure is socially determined, a consequence of the prevailing mode of production; it is symbolised at a personal level by the confrontation between Cobbett and Ure. The struggle amongst the weavers also has its personal counterpart in the clash between Cobbett and John Wible. While Cobbett recognises that the weavers can only become free through their social emancipation, Wible manipulates their blind fury, which can see no further than destroying the machine which is the immediate cause of their suffering.

As the play progresses, the clash between Wible and Cobbett becomes increasingly important - it is Wible who brings about the dénouement by inciting the weavers to smash the machine and kill Cobbett. Wible is not simply a dramatic device, for he is also a character of some psychological complexity. He is motivated both by egoism and injured pride; he is ambitious and ruthlessly determined to better himself: 'Zum Geschäftsführer wie bei dem Schleicher Henry langte es auch bei mir' (p.145). He forces his wife into prostitution in

order to protect his own position: 'Geh hin und laß dich zärtlich küssen. Ohne dich verliere ich meine Stellung' (p.138). His desire for revenge against Cobbett springs from resentment that the latter has displaced him as the weavers' leader, but even his treachery is a complex process, which he tries to justify to himself: 'Ich Verräter? Unsinn! Proleten müssen mit Ochsenziemern angetrieben werden. Blut heißt die Peitsche, die sie aus trägem Schläfe reißt' (p.147). That is, at the very moment of his pact with Ure, he tries to convince himself that his action is necessary. While he incites the weavers to murder Cobbett, he himself takes no part, for he cannot stand the sight of blood.

Moreover, Wible has a specific role in Toller's symbolic scheme. Like Cobbett, he has qualities of leadership, but he is also 'Demagoge, Phraseur, handelnder aus Ressentiment, subalterner Rebell um der Rebellion willen'³⁴. If Cobbett articulates the weavers' nobler aspirations, Wible embodies their primitive response to their desperate plight: 'Ein Moloch lebt in Nottingham. Erschlagt ihn! Bis morgen mehrt er sich und heckt zu Tausenden die Ungeheuer!' (p.140)³⁵. He therefore articulates the weavers' blind rebellion, with its urge to destructive (and ultimately self-destructive) violence. Indeed, he has become their leader precisely because he knows and can articulate their feelings. He himself recognises this, and is confident that he understands the weavers better than Cobbett. His confidence is not misplaced.

(iv) Ned Lud: the dawning of revolutionary
consciousness

The dawning of revolutionary consciousness, and the inhibiting effect of material environment, are personified in Ned Lud, who has a key role in Toller's dramatic purpose. Toller intended him to be a typical, rather than an exceptional, figure:

Ned Lud ist auch in meinem Drama nicht 'Führer'. Er trägt das Antlitz eines geraden mutigen Arbeiters, der keinerlei 'Führerqualitäten' besitzt, keine eigenen politischen und Wirtschaftlichen Erkenntnisse erringt, sich treiben läßt, aber da, wo er glaubt richtig zu handeln, immer als erster handelt. (Als erster auch auf die Maschinen einschlägt.) 36

His courage and commitment are illustrated by his readiness to keep the union funds, his upright character by his action in rescuing Mary Wible. His dramatic function underlines his representative role. He is Jimmy's first contact among the weavers, the first to respond to his message ('Wir wählen dich zum Führer'), and the last to desert him. He anticipates the weavers' initial failure to understand Jimmy's message ('Deine Worte sind mir fremd, ich versteh' dich nicht' p.130). He articulates their emerging sense of solidarity ('Wir müssen uns zusammentun. Kein Handschlag an Maschinen' p.130), but also their ignorant and superstitious attitude towards the Machine ('Sie wollen uns schmieden an ein furchtbar Ungeheuer' p.129).

Above all, Ned illustrates the weavers' confusion and vacillation in the face of material suffering.

Act IV Scene II presents a detailed picture of the poverty to which Ned and his family, like the other weavers, are reduced. Its consequences are illustrated in the drunken licence of Young Lud. The desperate response which poverty will provoke is adumbrated in the action of the women who have looted bakers' shops; they jeer at Ned's condemnation, and mock his defence of Jimmy's strategy of patient union organisation. Ned's confusion is all too clear in his ensuing conversation with John Wible. What had seemed so clear after Jimmy's exposition is clouded once more by uncertainty. The death of his child merely completes his confusion.

His vacillation is typical of his comrades', for it is only within this context of material deprivation that John Wible is able to reassert his influence. Ned's representative validity is stressed above all in the final scene. When the weavers break into the factory, it is he who articulates their superstitious awe of the Machine; it is he who, incited by John Wible, strikes the first blow against Jimmy, but also he who is the first to question Wible's role: 'John... warum... warum hast gerade du nicht zugeschlagen?'. In the aftermath, as the weavers realise their tragic mistake, it is he who predicts the emergence of a more enlightened proletariat.

Jimmy's death is therefore not ineffectual³⁷, for it serves to clarify Ned's political understanding. Jimmy's ideas have been defeated, but Ned's last defiant

words make clear that that defeat is not final:

So sperrt uns ein. Wir wissen, was wir taten!
 Und wollen sühnen, daß wir den erschlugen,
 Andere werden kommen...
 Wissender, gläubiger, mutiger als wir.
Es wankt schon euer Reich, ihr Herren Englands (p.189).

Present defeat is tempered by the promise of future victory. The fiction of historical distance allows Toller to suggest that the defeat of the November Revolution is historically relative.

To summarise: Toller attempted to put the determinism of Masse Mensch into an historical perspective. The situation of the weavers is depicted as the result of a specific stage in the development of industrial capitalism; their final response is determined by the misery of their social conditions. Consciousness is again portrayed as the product of material environment, but that environment is now placed in an historical context. At the same time, the play illustrates the essential dichotomy in Toller's political thinking. While Cobbett evokes the will to revolution, the actions of the weavers are determined by their material environment. Toller is proposing a voluntarist solution within a determinist framework. The (materialist) implications of his dialectical theme, as derived from his historical sources, are at odds with the (idealist) conception of revolution, derived essentially from Eisner and Landauer. This contradiction is reflected in the juxtaposition of realistic and symbolic elements of style.

4. Realism and Symbolism

Toller's attempt to integrate a voluntarist conception of revolution into a determinist framework of historical development is reflected in the dramatic treatment, in which the dominant mode of realism is interspersed with symbolic elements derived from Expressionism. Certain scenes and characters are clearly intended to be understood figuratively rather than literally. The intermittent use of blank verse and heightened language deliberately underscores the symbolic dimension. It is proposed to illustrate Toller's quasi-symbolic method by brief discussion of two scenes: the confrontation between Cobbett and Ure in Act IV Scene 1, and the weavers' destruction of the Machine in Act V Scene 2.

The confrontation between Cobbett and Ure takes place at a figurative as well as a realistic level. They meet firstly as adversaries in a concrete social conflict: Ure is the specific capitalist who 'aus Prinzip und wahrer Humanität Bettlern keinen Pfennig(gibt)', Jimmy is the agitator 'der die Arbeiter in Nottingham lehrte... daß auch Arbeiter Menschen sind'. They meet also as representatives of their social class. Jimmy introduces himself to Ure as 'namenlos', not simply to protect his brother, but precisely to stress his representative role: 'Nennen Sie mich 'Namenlos'. Oder nennen Sie mich 'Vollzeitler', wie Sie Ihre Arbeiter nennen...' (p.159).

But they meet also at a symbolic level, as exponents of opposing political philosophies. The move from a literal to a symbolic frame of reference is indicated by the abrupt change from prose to blank verse, and from dialogue to monologue. Naturalistic dialogue has given way to Expressionist declamatory rhetoric. The return to a realistic frame of reference at the end of the scene is marked by an equally abrupt relapse into prose, as they once more return to the 'Geschäften des Tages'.

Toller's dramatic method, fusing documentary fact with dramatic symbol, is best illustrated in his treatment of the Machine. The Machine is a steam engine which powers the looms - and it therefore stands as a symbol of the Industrial Revolution, evoking both technical change and the capitalist system which exploits it. We have already seen that Toller represents the Machine as an illustration of the Marxist analysis of capitalist production: separating workers from the product of their labour and reducing them to mechanical appendages. The Machine is therefore placed in an explicitly materialist context, but as Toller himself indicated, its significance transcends its purely material effect:

Begierig bin ich auf Butlers Buch. Auch in meinem Stück hat die Maschine mehr als materielle Bedeutung. Sie ist 'Teufel', 'Dämon', und nicht allein das soziale Elend, das sie verursacht (Arbeitslosigkeit der Männer, Lohnrückerei, Arbeitsteilung) führt zu ihrer Zerstörung, sondern auch ihre 'gespenstische Erscheinung'. 38

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The weavers see the effect of the Machine, but not the economic causes of it. They attribute almost supernatural powers to it, seeing it as a monster and a moloch. The Machine therefore assumes a wider significance, as a symbol of retarded political consciousness.

In the final scene, the Machine itself dominates the stage, at once the cause of the weavers' material suffering, and the object of their irrational urge to destruction. Toller evokes the noise of machinery in a series of short stage directions. The intolerable level of machine noise is a well-documented fact about the early factory system³⁹; Toller, however, lends it a symbolic dimension, transforming it into a 'Symphonie tönender Geräusche'. Toller had already used the noise of factory machinery in the eighth tableau of Die Wandlung (a dream scene) to represent a subjective apprehension of working-class experience. In Die Maschinenstürmer, it is both subjective apprehension and objective fact.

The early part of the scene confirms the Machine's objective role, giving tangible evidence of its material consequences: 'An Webstühlen arbeiten Kinder und einige Weiber. An der Dampfmaschine zwei Männer' (p.176)⁴⁰. The harsh factory régime is emphasised by Ure's hypocritical attempts to justify it to his visitor. It is in the latter part of the scene that the Machine achieves 'mehr als materielle Bedeutung'. As the weavers burst into the factory, they stop dead, 'überwältigt

vom Wunder der Maschine'. Their attitude of superstitious awe contrasts with that of the Engineer, for whom the Machine epitomises Man's ability to control the forces of Nature. The harnessing of steam power is the prelude to a Golden Age in which Man will finally become the Lord of Creation: 'Der Mensch ward Herr der Erde' (p.181). The symbolic dimension of his words is again emphasised by the use of blank verse.

The Engineer's attitude is the obverse of the weavers'. While he sees technical development as intrinsically progressive, they see it only as the cause of their suffering; while he considers it the embodiment of human reason, they attribute demonic powers to it. Their subjective perception illustrates an objective truth. They view the Machine with such awe, precisely because they see it in isolation from the system which manipulates it. By destroying it, they will not destroy the system, but simply strengthen its domination, a fact which Ure himself has already recognised. The weavers' destruction of the Machine is indeed self-destructive, a fact which is aptly symbolised when, as they attempt to smash it, it kills one of their number.

Their irrational impulse to destroy the Machine unleashes other destructive forces, symbolised in the storm which rages outside the factory. Even after they have smashed the Machine, it seems to live on. One of the weavers goes mad, and seemingly possessed by the

spirit of the Machine, paints a lurid picture of its malignant power. These supernatural forces are, of course, a reflection of their irrational impulse in attacking the Machine. The destructive power of these forces is also symbolic, for the weavers' act of destruction has dissipated the strength and unity which could have built a revolutionary organisation. Their decision to destroy the Machine reflects their rejection of Jimmy's leadership; their final attack on it prefigures their attack on him.

It is Ned Lud's final realisation of what they have done which perhaps best exemplifies Toller's use of stylistic elements of Expressionism to illustrate his dialectical theme. The Expressionist theme par excellence is that of spiritual transformation reached through a process of suffering, guilt and atonement. In Die Maschinenstürmer, Toller gives this theme a new twist, deliberately placing it in an historical context.

So sperrt uns ein! Wir wissen, was wir taten!
 Und wollen sühnen, daß wir den erschlugen,
 Andere werden kommen...
 Wissender, gläubiger, mutiger als wir.
Es wankt schon euer Reich, ihr Herren Englands! (p.189).

The acknowledgement of guilt and atonement is explicit.

In Masse Mensch, the Woman's sacrifice effected only individual transformation, which lacked any social resonance; here it is suggested that individual enlightenment heralds the emancipation of a social class. It is an ending which perfectly reflects Toller's

efforts to reconcile ideals with experience, to assimilate the ideological inheritance of Eisner and Landauer to a dialectical view of historical development. 'Der sozialistische Kampf ist ein Kampf auf lange Sicht' he acknowledged in a letter written in the same year he completed Die Maschinenstürmer⁴¹. The observation might stand as an epigraph to the play.

5. Die Maschinenstürmer as an historical analogy

Toller's interest in the revolt of the English Luddites was, of course, also in the analogies he perceived with his own experience of revolution. Under the guise of historical drama, he was once more examining the 'Räterepublik' and the reasons for its failure⁴². It was the analogies with the present which led Toller to set the play 'um 1815'. The main phase of Luddism in Nottinghamshire had been in 1811/12, leading, in February 1812, to the passing of the Framework Bill, which had been the occasion of Byron's famous maiden speech. Toller was obviously aware of the dates of events on which he drew so extensively in his prologue; he chose to set the play at the end of the Napoleonic wars, in order to emphasise the analogies with the immediate post-war period in Germany⁴³.

Above all, Toller wished to establish the reasons for the failure of the revolution in Germany. He believed that it had been defeated, firstly because the workers had been divided amongst themselves, and secondly because

they had not been sufficiently imbued with the spirit of social transformation. These two causes were interdependent, for the fragmentation of the Left was a sign of intellectual and spiritual confusion: 'In diesen Zeiten trauriger Zersplitterung der Arbeiterschaft, die mehr als eine organisatorische Zersplitterung darstellt, die Verwirrung geistiger und seelischer Natur ist...' ⁴⁴.

It is precisely these causes which he explores in his historical analogy. He felt that the 'Räterepublik' had degenerated into violence and senseless destruction:

Die jetzige Regierung betrachte ich als ein Unheil für das werktätige Volk Baierns. Die führenden Männer bedeuten für mich eine Gefahr für den Rätegedanken. Unfähig nur das Gerigste aufzubauen, zerstören sie in sinnloser Weise... ⁴⁵

The machine-wrecking of the Luddites seemed an apt metaphor to express his own experience.

If Toller had seen working-class unity as an essential condition for the success of the 'Räterepublik', Cobbett sees unity in a national trade union as a prerequisite of revolution: 'Die Schaffenden von England bereiten den Kampf vor. In London haben wir geheimen Bund gegründet, der alle Werkenden des Königreichs umfassen soll' (p.143). Toller seems to have seen the national trade union as an historical precedent for the idea of the revolutionary 'Einheitsfront'. Cobbett sees the weavers' attack on the Machine as a betrayal of that unity.

Toller himself now saw revolution in a much longer perspective, and was explicitly critical of his own party for failing to recognise the present stage of revolutionary development, and the tactics it imposed⁴⁶. Cobbett attempts to convince the weavers that they must pursue long-term objectives; he advocates negotiations with Ure, not as an alternative to struggle, but because the time for struggle is not yet ripe. When Wible urges an attack on blacklegs working in the factory, Jimmy rejects force in favour of persuasion: 'Warum die Leute überfallen, da überzeugen uns zum Ziele führt? Es sind Arbeiter, unwissende, irreführte Arbeiter' (p.148)⁴⁷. He warns against precipitate action, and even more against action for its own sake:

John Wible: Es wäre eine Tat! Es wäre eine Aktion!

Jimmy: Ist jede Tat ein Altar, der Menschenknie zur Andacht beugt? Sinnlose Tat ist Rausch der Feigen und der Toren.

John Wible: Wir brauchen Niederlagen. Nur tiefstes Elend schafft Rebellen. Gib ihnen Fett, gib ihnen Schnaps, sie furzen dir auf die Erkenntnis und sühlen sich im Trog wie vollgefressene Säue. (p.148).

Toller is, of course, using his historical analogy to rework the arguments of the 'Räterepublik' - his attempt to instigate negotiations in the face of inevitable defeat, his rejection of the Communists' argument that defeat was necessary to heighten revolutionary consciousness⁴⁸. Subsequent events, particularly the unsuccessful 'Märzaktion' of the KPD in 1921, had seemed to vindicate his judgement:

Welche Tragödie in Mitteldeutschland. Die Putschtaktik ist nicht zu rechtfertigen... Wie gewisse Radikale jetzt um eine Phrase willen Arbeiterblut opferten, so taten sie es in den Apriltagen in München, als sie zum sinnlosen Kampf auf die Barrikaden riefen, weil 'die blutige Niederlage die Reife des Proletariats beschleunige' und 'Verhandeln Verrat bedeute'. 49

Wible's words therefore paraphrase the argument advanced by the Communists in the 'Räterepublik', which Toller applied, by extension, to the 'Märzaktion' of 1921.

The reason for Toller's continuing preoccupation with the events of the 'Räterepublik' is not far to seek. His role in it had been the object of a polemical campaign from both Left and Right, which had reached a climax late in 1920 with the publication of a pamphlet by Paul Fröhlich, which specifically accused Toller of betraying the 'Räterepublik' with his call for negotiations; Toller had finally felt obliged to refute these accusations publicly⁵⁰. In the play, Toller puts the accusation of treachery in instigating negotiations into the mouth of John Wible ('Jimmy ist gekauft'); that is, the accusation is not only untrue, but is made by someone who knows it to be untrue and who is himself a traitor. In the dramatic context, Jimmy's call for negotiations is manifestly a correct tactic, just as the accusation against him is manifestly malevolent. Once again, Toller has transposed his actions into dramatic circumstances which provide a justification for them. Clearly, his historical drama, no less than the frankly subjective Masse Mensch, contains elements of retrospective self-justification.

It is equally clear that the contemporary analogies determined the play's structure. The dramatic conflict is twofold - between the weavers and Ure, and among the weavers themselves. Whereas the historical theme requires concentration on the conflict between Ure and Cobbett (that is, on the clash of industrial capitalism with an emerging proletariat), it is in fact the conflict amongst the weavers, personified in the clash between Cobbett and Wible, which increasingly dominates the play. Toller originally seems to have intended the confrontation between Cobbett and Ure to form the climax of the play, and indeed this is strongly suggested by the prologue, in which the stage directions indicate that the parliamentary duel between Byron and Castlereagh was intended to prefigure the confrontation between Cobbett and Ure. However, as the play progresses, it is not Ure, but Wible, who becomes Cobbett's main adversary; it is their conflict which produces the dénouement. That is, Toller was increasingly concerned, not so much with the Luddite revolt itself, as with the reasons for its failure.

It can therefore be seen that Die Maschinenstürmer marks a significant turning-point in Toller's ideology and dramatic practice. He chose his historical subject-matter for its dialectical significance, deriving his dramatic conception from his main historical sources, which also furnished concrete details to illustrate it. This conception implies an increasingly class view of history: the play was to be 'das Drama einer Klasse', its main characters were to represent different levels of working-class consciousness.

The determinism of Masse-Mensch is placed increasingly in an historical perspective: consciousness is not only the product of material environment, but that environment reflects a specific stage in the historical development of capitalism. However, Die Maschinenstürmer also illustrates the essential dichotomy in Toller's thinking. The materialist implications of his dialectical theme are at odds with an idealist conception of revolution, derived essentially - as in Masse-Mensch - from Eisner and Landauer. This contradiction is echoed in the juxtaposition of realistic and symbolic elements of style. Toller also used his historical material to explore an extended analogy for his own experience of revolution. In so doing, he sought to integrate that experience into a continuing historical process - to achieve, as it were, historical distance from the present.

Notes to Chapter VI

- 1 Die Maschinenstürmer. Ein Drama aus der Zeit der Ludditen-Bewegung in England in fünf Akten und einem Vorspiel von Ernst Toller. Leipzig/Vienna/Zurich 1922. This version is reprinted in GW II, pp.113-190; page references in the text are to this edition.
- 2 Letter to Tessa, undated (1920), GW V, p.31.
- 3 Wolff, Briefwechsel eines Verlegers, p.324.
- 4 See Chapter IV/1, note 4.
- 5 Letter to Tessa, 27.1.1921, GW V, p.59, in which he mentions that he is changing the play for the fifth time.
- 6 One such critique is Julius Bab's, under the heading 'Toller's 'Weber'', Welt am Montag, 13.7.1922.
- 7 Letter to Elsbeth B., undated (1923), GW V, p.160.
- 8 Cf. Hauptmann's comments, made during a discussion with Toller, in Rudolf Kayser, 'Erinnerungen an Gerhart Hauptmann' in Gerhart Hauptmann, Leben und Werk, (Bernhard Zeller ed.) Stuttgart 1962, p.360.
- 9 Letter to Anne-Marie von Puttkamer, 22.5.1921, in Wolff, Briefwechsel eines Verlegers, p.326.
- 10 Niekisch, Gewagtes Leben, Cologne & Berlin 1959, p.101.
- 11 Letter to Gustav Mayer, 8.12.1920, quoted ter Haar, op.cit., p.216.
- 12 Cf. letter to Gustav Mayer, 7.2.1921, GW V, p.60. Cf. also Toller's notes in Die Glocke VII, 43, 16.1.1922, reprinted in GW II, p.361.
- 13 F. Engels, Die Lage der arbeitenden Klasse in England, Leipzig 1845, p.259. All subsequent page references are to this edition.
- 14 Klein, Der Wandel; N.A.Furness, 'Fact & Symbol in 'Die Maschinenstürmer'', Modern Language Review, LXXIII, 1978, pp.347-58.
- 15 GW II, p.361 (see note 12).
- 16 Andrew Ure, The Philosophy of Manufactures, 1835. For further details, see Furness, op.cit., p.857.

- 17 For example, Ure's conversation with the factory visitor (Act V, Sc.2, pp.177-79) follows, often word for word, the following passage from Ure, quoted by Engels (p.170):
- Hören wir, wie (Ure) die Arbeit der Kinder schildert: 'Ich habe manche Fabrik besucht... und nie Kinder mißhandelt, körperlich gezüchtigt, oder nur übel gelaunt gesehen. Sie scheinen alle heiter und alert, an dem leichten Spiel ihrer Muskel sich erfreuend, die ihrem Alter natürliche Beweglichkeit in vollem Maße geniessend... Es war entzückend, die Hurligkeit zu beobachten, mit der sie die zerrissenen Fäden wieder vereinigten, so wie der Mule-Wagen zurückging. ... Die Arbeit dieser flüchtigen Elfen schien einem Spiel zu gleichen, worin ihnen ihre Übung eine gefällige Gewandheit gab. Ihrer Geschicklichkeit sich bewußt, freuten sie sich, sie vor jedem Fremden zu zeigen.
- 18 See note 15.
- 19 See note 15.
- 20 Unpublished letter to Gustav Mayer, 2.1.1921, quoted in ter Haar, op.cit., p.216.
- 21 Lenin suggested that Engels was among the first to say that 'the proletariat is not only a class that suffers; that it is precisely its shameful economic situation which irresistibly drives it forward, and obliges it to struggle for its final emancipation' (V. Lenin, 'Frederick Engels' (1895).)
- 22 In this, as in many other details, Toller follows both Marx and Engels. In his Vorwort zur Kritik der politischen Ökonomie, Marx points to the contradiction between 'Produktivkräfte' and 'Produktionsverhältnisse'. Toller was certainly familiar with this conception - see letter to Tessa, 29.6.1923, GW V, p.156.
- 23 See Chapter V, particularly note 17.
- 24 Cf. Eisner's remarks to the 'Münchener Arbeiterrat', of which Toller was a member: 'Der Gegensatz zwischen Führern und Massen, der bisher uns beherrscht hat, soll verschwinden. Jeder soll lernen, selbst ein Führer zu sein. Das ist die große Erziehungsarbeit, die diese Räte leisten müssen'. (Rede auf der 1. Sitzung des Münchener Arbeiterrats, 5.12.1918, reprinted in Sozialismus als Aktion, (Freya Eisner ed.), Frankfurt 1975, pp.78-80.
- 25 See Chapter I/4, and particularly notes 34 and 39.

- 26 Cf. Landauer, Aufruf, pp. 61 and 106.
- 27 Kropotkin developed his theories in Fields, Factories and Workshops. Though there is no evidence that Toller knew this work, he certainly knew Landauer's interpretation of Kropotkin's ideas - cf. Landauer, Aufruf, Vorwort zur 2. Auflage, p.xvi: '...daß wir um (des Sozialismus) willen, um unserer Rettung und um des Erlernens der Gerechtigkeit und Gemeinschaft willen zur Ländlichkeit zurückkehren müssen und zu einer Vereinigung von Industrie, Handwerk und Landwirtschaft...'
- 28 Letter 'an meinen Neffen Harry', undated (1921), GW V, pp.86-87. The letter was first published, in a slightly different form, in Der Fackelreiter, no.XII (December 1928), pp.519-20, and in this version is dated 18 October, 1921.
- 29 See Chapter V, note 12. Ossar (op.cit., p.86) has already suggested that Cobbett's death may be a conscious reference to Landauer's.
- 30 Daiber, op.cit., p.92. Toller is reviewing the activity of his student association in Heidelberg. His notes were written in the winter of 1920/21, while he was actually working on Maschinenstürmer.
- 31 'Deutsche Revolution', Das Tagebuch II, 12, 26.3.1921, pp.358 ff. This fragment was probably written late in 1920; Toller seems to have abandoned work on it, incorporating some motifs into Die Maschinenstürmer, on which he was already working.
- 32 See, for example, passages in 'Rede auf der Volksbühnentagung in Magdeburg' (1927) and 'In Memoriam Kurt Eisner' (1929). The same idea underlies the dramatic conception of Feuer aus den Kesseln (1930) - see Chapter XII.
- 33 Deutsche Revolution, Berlin 1926, reprinted GW I, pp.159-65 - not to be confused with the sketch of the same name cited in note 31 above. For an extended discussion of this speech, see Chapter X/2.
- 34 See note 20.
- 35 Cf. Beer, op.cit., p.78, which suggests that such attitudes were widespread. Engels cites the poem 'The Steam King', written by the Chartist poet Edward Mead, as an example of the workers' sentiments. Mead refers to the Steam King as 'a tyrant fell' and a 'monster God'. There is evidently historical authority for the attitudes Toller portrays.
- 36 See note 20.

- 37 See D. Klein, Der Wandel, p.79. Willibrand, op.cit., p.75, agrees that the ending of the play is pessimistic.
- 38 Letter to Gustav Mayer, 7.2.1921, GW V, p.60.
- 39 Engels, op.cit., p.216.
- 40 Cf. Engels's comments on the use of female and child labour, Engels, op.cit., pp.175-76.
- 41 Letter to FP, undated (1921), GW V, p.69.
- 42 Contemporary critics undoubtedly recognised the play's allusions to the present - cf. Stefan Großmann's critique in Das Tagebuch, III, 15, 15.7.1922, reprinted in Der Fall Toller, pp.135-37. Cf. also 'Toller-Tumult' in Rote Fahne in which what purports to be criticism of the play is in fact criticism of Toller's role in the 'Räterepublik'.
- 43 Dorothea Klein has pointed out that Toller based his (blank verse) prologue on the (prose) translation of Byron's maiden speech, which is contained in Beer, op.cit., pp.75-77.
- 44 Letter to B., undated (1920), GW V, p.27.
- 45 Toller's statement of 26.4.1919 - see Chapter III/1, note 17.
- 46 See Chapter V, note 18.
- 47 Cf. the proclamation dated 17.1.1919, signed by Toller, quoted in Gerstl, p.75. This statement, issued after the engagement at Dachau, mentions captured soldiers as 'irregeführte Proletarier', who were released after having been convinced that they had been misled by propaganda.
- 48 See Chapter III and Chapter IV/4.
- 49 Letter to Tessa, 2.4.1921, GW V, p.64.
- 50 See Paul Fröhlich, Die bayerische Räterepublik. Tatsachen und Kritik, Leipzig 1920; 'Antworten: Ernst Toller', Die Weltbühne XVII, 1, 6 January 1921, pp.29-30.

SECTION D. The prison years 1922-24

VII. RESIGNATION AND REAFFIRMATION

1. Biographical outline

The years 1921/22 were a time of profound spiritual crisis for Toller: 'Denn ich bin müde. Ich habe einen Glauben verloren und bin noch nicht ganz durchdrungen von der großen Kraft, Glauben nicht mehr nötig zu haben'¹. He was increasingly depressed by political developments in Germany, which were indeed conducive to pessimism. The defeat of the revolution was incontrovertible, the fragmentation of the Left reduced it to political impotence:

Der Weg, den wir in Deutschland gehen, ist ein anderer, als der im Jahre 1918 der Revolution inbrünstig erhoffte, von breiten Menschenmassen erträumte... Wohin treiben wir und wohin treibt Europa? Was in Deutschland seit der Ausschaltung Deutschlands als weltpolitischem Subjekt sozialwirtschaftlich, finanzpolitisch, kulturpolitisch zu erreichen wäre, wird unmöglich gemacht durch die katastrophale Zersplitterung der Arbeiterschaft, durch den Minuten-Opportunismus der Sozialdemokraten, die Blindheit der Extremisten...²

Toller was not alone in this disillusionment: 1921/22 was a time of crisis for many left-wing intellectuals³. For Toller and his fellow-prisoners, political developments outside prison were directly reflected in the treatment they received. Many of the nominal rights of 'Festungsgefangene' were, for example, arbitrarily withdrawn. The Reich government twice declared an amnesty for political prisoners, which the Bavarian government refused to apply, thereby deepening Toller's conviction that he and his comrades were the victims of 'political justice'.

He found the deprivations and petty restrictions of imprisonment increasingly intolerable. Prison censorship made even letter-writing a burden. He was frequently in conflict with the prison authorities over their arbitrary interpretation of the regulations⁴. He was aware of the destructive psychological effect of imprisonment. Relations between prisoners declined into an ideological factionalism which mirrored the divisions within the Labour Movement outside prison. He found it increasingly difficult to write: 'wie oft wünschte ich Zelleneinsamkeit!'⁵ Above all, his health had seriously deteriorated, and violent headaches sometimes prevented him from working at all⁶. A crisis of political conviction was therefore exacerbated by considerable personal difficulties.

Toller remained convinced of the necessity of Socialism, though he was prepared to acknowledge its limitations - those inherent in any social system:

Freudige Bejahung des Schicksalsnotwendigen -
und der Sozialismus ist für mich eine
Schicksalsnotwendigkeit. Was kommt es
darauf an, ob er Paradies bedeutet oder
nicht! Nur Schwächlinge brauchen Glauben
an ein Paradies auf Erden. 7

It was against this background that Toller wrote Der deutsche Hinkemann, which he completed in the early months of 1922. His prison letters document his state of mind while working on the final draft. He was moving towards a tragic view of history, which seemed increasingly to be revealed as a repetitive cycle of revolt and repression:

Las die 'Geschichte der sozialen Kämpfe' von Beer. Wiederkehr der gleichen Kämpfe, der gleichen Ideen, des gleichen Widerstreits zwischen Realität und Idee, des gleichen Heroismus, der gleichen Sackgassen, der gleichen Verwechslungen zwischen Nöten der Massen und Nöten der Intellektuellen - von Revolution zur Reaktion, von Reaktion zu Revolution, der gleiche Kreislauf. Wozu? Wohin? Ich habe ein tiefes, tiefes Heimweh. Und das Heim heißt : Nichts. 8

In a later letter to Max Beer himself, he confessed that reading the work had left him in a state of peculiar depression: 'Dieser Eindruck ließ mich wochenlang nicht los. Erst allmählich wuchs mir wieder die Kraft, einzusehen, warum die moderne soziale Bewegung ein andres Schicksal haben muß'⁹.

While it was his 'Zustand eigentümlicher Depression' which informed Der deutsche Hinkemann, he made determined efforts in the following months to qualify pessimism with faith in the future, efforts demanding an historical perspective, which is reflected in the scenario Bilder aus der großen französischen Revolution, written in the early summer of 1922, and the revisions to Die Maschinenstürmer shortly after¹⁰. He now saw revolution in a much longer perspective ('Ein Kampf, der gegen Jahrhunderte geführt wird, wird nicht in Jahren entschieden'¹¹) and hastened to reaffirm his commitment:

Wir gehen einer chaotischen Epoche entgegen. Es wird nicht 'schön und bequem' sein, in den nächsten fünfzig Jahren in Europa zu leben. Nicht müde werden, wach bleiben und sich bewahren und bereit sein.¹²

Determination to face up to reality, and carry on the struggle 'nonetheless', becomes increasingly characteristic

of Toller. The attitude of continuing commitment without illusions, summarised in the word 'dennoch', is the leitmotif of the last year of the prison letters: 'Fromm sein, wie der, der an Götzenbilder glaubt, und doch kein Götzenbild nötig haben. Keines. Dennoch wollen. Dennoch handeln. Wer es kann, der ist frei'¹³.

It was in this context that he tried to revise Der deutsche Hinkemann early in 1924. In retrospect, he was aware that the play offered no political solutions, and even acknowledged that there were arguments against allowing it to be performed¹⁴. The fact that he did allow it to be performed confirms his decision not to pursue a political career: 'Vor zwei Tagen hat der Landtag seine Auflösung beschlossen. Damit habe ich mich gleichfalls aufgelöst, bin des Mandats, der Ehre und Würde ledig...'¹⁵. Shortly after, he announced his 'längst gefaßten Entschluß' to leave the USPD¹⁶.

2. From USPD member to unaligned revolutionary Socialist

The main elements of Toller's political thinking are consistent with the ethos of the USPD, the party of which he was a member from 1918, until its virtual disintegration in 1924. In fact, he continued to occupy the position of the USPD, isolated between the reformism of the SPD, and the dictatorial elitism of the KPD, long after the party itself had disappeared as a serious political force.

During the first years of imprisonment, he continued to consider himself very much a party member, though critical of some aspects of party policy¹⁷. In June 1921, he accepted nomination by the party to the Bavarian Landtag, remaining a deputy for three years without attending a sitting. He was invited to become the party's leading candidate in the new elections to Landtag and Reichstag, but refused. He had already decided to leave the party and now considered himself without party allegiance.

It has been suggested that Toller's decision to leave the USPD 'underscores his basically Anarchist political orientation'¹⁸, but it is clear that his reasons largely concerned his work as a dramatist. Firstly, he obviously felt that political work conflicted with creative work:

ich glaube, daß mein Beruf sich entschied,
der stete Konflikt zwischen wirken wollen
durch Handeln und wirken wollen durch
(Trieb zur) Gestaltung sich klärt. 19

He also felt that the narrower requirements of party politics compromised artistic independence: the 'idea' remained more important to him than the 'slogan of the day'. What inhibited him, however, was not so much the opposing claims of art and party, as the bitter strife between left-wing parties which pre-determined the response to his work. He evidently believed that party membership inhibited his effectiveness as a dramatist by identifying him overtly with one group, thus cutting

him off from many of those he wished to reach. ('Als Schriftsteller spreche ich zu allen Bereiten, gleich, welcher Partei oder Gruppe sie angehören'²⁰).

Toller certainly had doubts about the effectiveness of party politics as a means of achieving Socialism:

Deine Zweifel an die Möglichkeit, über die Parteipolitik zu den Menschen zu kommen, ward längst mein Zweifel. Werden die Parteien (Organisation mit Klügelbetrieb) den Sozialismus schaffen können? Aber wie sonst? 21

He nevertheless saw the need for party organisation and discipline, emphasising that his participation in the 'Räterepublik' had originally been the result of a party decision²². At his trial, he rejected prosecution suggestions that he was mentally unbalanced, and therefore not responsible for his actions, because it would have discredited the party of which he was Chairman. He recognised the role of the party as a focus for working-class commitment, and as a means of channelling it:

Für den Proletarier bedeutet die Partei etwas anderes als für den Bürger... Für den Proletarier ist sie... trotz aller Flecken... trotz aller Schmutzspritzen...mehr. Seinen Menschen-glauben, seine Religion bringt er der Partei. (Hinkemann, Act 2 Scene 4)

Toller's resignation from the USPD, and his failure to join another party, owe as much to circumstances as to temperament or conviction. At the time he left the USPD, it had shrunk to a small rump which had lost all political significance. The left-wing majority of the party had joined the KPD after the Halle conference in

October 1920, while most of the remainder had re-entered the SPD in September 1922. Toller was bitterly critical of both decisions; he saw the 21 Conditions as 'fateful for Socialism in Europe' and re-entry into the SPD as the end of all revolutionary pretensions²³. In other words, his decision to leave the party was largely made for him: the party had left him, rather than he it.

Martin Reso's criticism that Toller had no idea of the role and significance of the party is true only within a narrow Leninist frame of reference²⁴. He did not share the view of the party as the élite vanguard of the working-class. Reso also criticises his failure to join another political party - or more specifically the KPD - after 1924. Although the break-up of the USPD left Toller politically isolated, he did not turn his back on politics. If his efforts were not channelled through a political party, it was partly because, with the demise of the USPD, there was none which represented his ideals, and even more because past experience made it virtually impossible for him to join either the SPD or the KPD. He regarded the reformism of the former with contempt, and the Putschism of the latter with despair²⁵.

Most importantly, he felt that party allegiance inhibited the ideal of working-class unity, of common action across party divisions, which derived from Eisner's ideas of the 'Einheitsfront'. This ideal, which had guided Toller's actions before and during the 'Räterepublik', continued to influence him in prison. He deplored the

splintering of the labour movement, seeing these divisions as signs of intellectual and spiritual confusion²⁶. He considered the splits 'katastrophal', feeling that they undermined the effectiveness of the Left: 'Die Uneinigkeit der Arbeiter hemmt jede große Entscheidung'²⁷.

He considered solidarity the supreme revolutionary virtue²⁸, which transcended party allegiance - indeed it was the latter which created self-defeating sectarian divisions within the working-class. In the dramatic fragment 'Deutsche Revolution' (1921), he likened the ideological differences on the Left to the theological hair-splitting of the medieval church, a theme he repeated over a decade later in his memoirs. His belief in united front action remained central to his political thinking, determining his pursuit of Broad Left Unity in the Weimar Republic, and his support of the Popular Front in exile.

3. The Committed Artist: Proletarian Theatre

The revision of his political ideas forced Toller to rethink his conception of art, but whereas other Expressionist writers, such as Hasenclever and Schickele, turned away from politics in the aftermath of revolution, Toller continued to see his creative work in terms of political commitment.

His work in prison, the most productive period of his life, was devoted to the pursuit of an appropriate formula for 'proletarian art', for the artistic means of evoking 'der schwere Pulsschlag der Massen, der

Fabriken, und der unentrinnbaren großen Städte'²⁹. He had consciously set himself to write for working-class audiences:

Sie wissen, daß meine Schaffenskraft den Arbeitern gehört, aber indem ich mit ihnen und für sie lebe, lebe ich für die Menschheit, die alle umfaßt. 30

In identifying with the working-class, he was therefore not only siding with the most oppressed and exploited section of society, but adopting what he saw as the cause of humanity. The working-class suffered social conditions which prevented them from attaining their full human potential, and since only working-class revolution could change those conditions, he saw the revolutionary cause as that of humanity. 'Proletarische Dichter' could be equated with 'menschliche Dichter'.

At his trial for high treason, Toller had spoken of the workers' struggle for spiritual liberation, their deep yearning for art and culture. It was this audience he felt impelled to write for: 'inneres Gesetz treibt mich zu proletarischer Kunst'³¹. It was no accident that Die Wandlung was first produced at the Tribüne, a theatre founded to perform plays for working-class audiences. When the theatre management refused to sanction a performance of the play for striking metal-workers in Berlin, Toller sent an indignant telegram from prison in Eichstätt:

Erhebe schärfsten Protest gegen das Verhalten der Geldmänner der Tribüne gegenüber den Streikenden. Mein Stück gehört nicht dem Kurfürstendamm, sondern den Arbeitern. 32.

Although he resented police restrictions on the performance of Masse Mensch, he was happy that the play was consequently first staged at a closed performance for trade unionists³³. He had anticipated a hostile reception from the critics who he assumed would have little sympathy with the play or its problems, but he had been delighted with the understanding and involvement of his fellow-prisoners:

Ich habe das Stück einigen Genossen, Bauern, Industriearbeitern, Tagelöhnern, auch verknöcherte Aufseher, waren anwesend, vorgelesen - und mich erfüllte innige Freude, als ich sah, wie jeder das Stück verstand, wie jeder auf seine Art seelisch mitlebte und kämpfte. 34

It was, however, only after the completion of Masse Mensch, as he turned away from the conventions of Expressionism, that his ideas on proletarian drama began to crystallise. His search for a suitable artistic formula led him to experiment with new forms - the 'Sprechchor', or poem for mass declamation³⁵, and the 'Massenspiel', intended for performance at popular festivals, in which workers could see, and actually perform, aspects of their own history. Three of his 'Massenspiele' were performed in successive years at the Trade Union Festival (Gewerkschaftsfest) in Leipzig, with a mass cast of workers³⁶.

Toller also attempted to define his theoretical position:

Ich verstehe - in groben Umrissen - unter 'proletarischer Kunst' die Gestaltung der ewig menschlichen und menschheitlichen Probleme, die in der Seele des erwachten Proletariats neu erlebt werden.

He saw Die Maschinenstürmer as a tentative step in this direction: 'ein Arbeiterdrama, ein Volksstück, wenigstens ein tastender Versuch dazu'³⁷. He was conscious that the play was a new departure for him³⁸. Der deutsche Hinkemann was originally conceived as a 'proletarische Tragödie'; the working title Die Hinkemanns documents the representative significance his protagonist was to have³⁹.

Toller saw proletarian art as a means of evoking the experience of the modern industrial working class: it had therefore to be contemporary in subject-matter and realistic in manner. He was careful to differentiate 'proletarian drama' from 'propaganda':

Es ist nicht Aufgabe der proletarischen Kunst, irgendwelche Parteiresolutionen in die Massen zu werfen, das mögen Agitatoren besorgen. 40

While proletarian art had implicit class connotations, he nonetheless insisted that it had to portray 'eternal human problems':

Die ewig menschlichen Probleme, wie der Proletarier sie erlebt, gestalten, nur das kann Inhalt proletarischer Kunst sein. Proletarisches Schicksal, Leben, Not und Kampf und Traum der Massen werden dem Antlitz der proletarischen Kunst ihre besonderen Züge verleihen. 41

In this formula, so frequently repeated during the prison years, he implicitly acknowledged the continuity of his conception with the bourgeois artistic tradition. Indeed, he went on to define another important task of proletarian

art as: 'das große geistige Erbe der bürgerlichen Epoche zu hüten, und es wahrhaft zum Besitz des Volkes zu machen'.

Toller's conception of proletarian art had crystallised by 1924:

Der Proletarier ist in höherem Maße als der Bürger von Trieben bewegt. Aber auch in höherem Maße zu beeinflussen. Zu beeinflussen nur durch eine Kunst, die sein Leben, sein wirkliches Leben gestaltet. Er muß sich sehen, sich in seiner seelischen Rohheit, seiner Vergewaltigungsgier, seiner Hilflosigkeit, seiner Schwäche, seiner Feigheit, seiner Verzagtheit, seiner Untreue gegen sich und die Sache, sich in seinem Mute, seiner heroischen Haltung, seinem Traum.

Er muß sich reden und überreden, klagen und anklagen, lachen und verlachen hören. Ecce Proletarier! Dieses Gefühl muß ihn erschüttern, wenn das Kunstwerk ihm ergreifen soll. 42

He therefore intended to put characters on stage who were both realistic and representative. The worker should see and recognise himself, but also what was typical in himself: Ecce Proletarier! Drama was to act as a catalyst of social consciousness.

The new drama was to create an emotional unity of stage and auditorium, which would both exemplify, and foster, the community of aims and ideals ('die Gemeinsamkeit der Idee') existing between them:

Was wir träumen ist die große Gemeinschaft zwischen Bühne und Publikum, die Gemeinschaft des Lebensgefühls, des Weltgefühls, die Gemeinsamkeit der Idee...

Wer weiß noch, wer das Werk geschaffen hat, aus der Gemeinschaft wuchs es! Die Gemeinschaft wird Mittler, und indem sie dem Werk ihren Atem gibt, empfängt sie

vom lebendigen Werk neue, tiefe, geheimnisvolle, schöpferische Kräfte, ihre eignen Wesenskräfte, entschlackt von den Trübungen des Tages. 43

In 1917/18, he had used parts of Die Wandlung as an anti-war pamphlet: in 1924 he no longer believed that the theatre could mobilise its audience to immediate action. That was more properly the function of propaganda. The effect of art was more gradual, crystallising and clarifying latent feeling and intuition:

Die künstlerische Wirkung erschöpft sich nicht darin, daß sie sich das Gefühl des Hörers erreicht. Sie vermag latente oder verschüttete Gefühlsströmungen zu erwecken und ihnen bewußte, intellektuelle Rechtfertigung zu geben. 44

This conception of proletarian art was in fact shared by many intellectuals who were members or sympathisers of the USPD. Critics have insufficiently stressed that, because of Toller's continuing connection with the USPD - he was a nominal deputy to the 'Bayerischer Landtag' until 1924 - his work continued to be identified with the party, a factor which strongly influenced its reception and which, in turn, seems to have influenced his decision to leave party politics. When the management of the Tribüne banned the performance of Die Wandlung to strikers, they did so because they refused to put on a production 'die einer partei-politischen Stellungnahme gleichkäme',⁴⁵ - the trade union involved, the play's director, Karl-Heinz Martin, and Toller, all being associated with the USPD. The performances of Toller's 'Massenspiele' in Leipzig were given under the auspices of the USPD-

dominated 'Arbeiterbildungsinstitut'. So was the première of Der deutsche Hinkemann⁴⁶. The 'Arbeiterkulturwoche' in Leipzig in August 1924, also organised by the ABI, included a performance of Die Wandlung, at which Toller was guest of honour.

The theories of proletarian art expounded in Kulturwille, the cultural journal of the 'Arbeiterbildungsinstitut', largely coincide with Toller's.

Ja, auch in der Kunst gibt es ewige, zeitlose Formen und Probleme... Die Aufgabe des Dichters scheint zu sein, mit den Geschöpfen seines zeitbedingten Geistes das Spiel jener zeitlosen Eigenschaften zu zeigen. Er greift mitten hinein in seine Zeit, hebt Figuren heraus und modelt sie... zu einem ewigen Typus des Menschlichen. 47

The journal's editor Valtin Hartig had been a friend and fellow-prisoner of Toller's in Niederschönenfeld⁴⁸. He saw art in an educative perspective, defining its functions as:

...erstens, den Arbeiter geistig zu stärken für seinen wirtschaftlichen und politischen Kampf, zweitens, ihn teilnehmen zu lassen an wertvollen geistigen Gütern der seitherigen Kultur, und drittens bewußt mitzuhelfen an der Schaffung einer neuen Kultur aus dem Geist der klassenbewußten Arbeiterbewegung.

The parallels with Kulturwille help to position Toller's theories within the aesthetic debates in the labour movement in the 1920's. He accepted, with reservations, the traditional Social Democratic ideal of mediating bourgeois culture to the proletariat, but sought to create new art forms which would be specifically proletarian. He did not accept the

inference that, since art was merely a product of prevailing social conditions, the role of proletarian art could only be to raise political consciousness in the class struggle. It was this (Leninist) view of art, summarised in Friedrich Wolf's lapidary formula 'Kunst ist Waffe'⁴⁹, which determined the cultural policies of the KPD after 1925, and which Toller was never fully able to endorse.

Notes to Chapter VII

- 1 Letter to Tessa, 26.10.1922, GW V, p.132.
- 2 Letter to F.P., undated (1921), GW V, p.68.
- 3 Two well-known examples are J.R. Becher and Friedrich Wolf. Becher became a member of the USPD in 1917, and of the KPD in 1919, but was greatly disillusioned by the defeat of the revolution, and in 1920/21 suffered from attacks of despair and nihilism:

So lag in mir durchaus die Möglichkeit,
zu einem Sänger der Sintflut, des
Weltuntergangs zu werden, einer
'großartigen' nihilistischen Konzeption
mit Verzweiflungsausbrüchen, menschlichen
Vulkaneruptionen vergleichbar.
(Becher, Das poetische Prinzip, Berlin
1957, p.331.)

This crisis, in which he turned his back on political reality, lasted until 1923 (cf. 'Deutsche Ostern 1923', in Maschinenrhythmen, Berlin 1926, and his declaration for the KPD in Frankfurter Zeitung, September 1923).

Wolf, a member of the USPD, had been 'Stadtarzt' in Remscheid, and had taken part in the fighting in the Ruhr in March 1920. He had left his job in spring 1921 to join the anarcho-communist community in Worpsswede, only to leave it again in disillusionment before the end of the year. See W. Pollatschek, Friedrich Wolf, Leipzig 1974, pp.60-79.

- 4 Cf. letter to Paul Cassirer, undated (1921), GW, pp.70-71; letter to the prison governor, 25.2.1921, GW V, p.62; letter to Tessa, 4.10.1921, GW V, p.78, and diary notes, GW V, pp.71-75.
- 5 Letter to Kurt Wolff, 19.1.1921, Wolff, Briefwechsel eines Verlegers, p.326.
- 6 Cf. letter to Kurt Wolff, 12.11.1921, Wolff, Briefwechsel, pp.328-9.
- 7 Letter to Kurt Wolff, 19.1.1921, Wolff, Briefwechsel, p.326.
- 8 Letter to Tessa, 20.3.1922, GW V, pp.98-99.
- 9 Letter to Max Beer, 7.7.1923, GW V, pp.157-9.
- 10 See Chapter IX/2.

- 11 Letter to Tessa, 14.8.1922, GW, V, p.113.
- 12 Letter to B., 19.7.1923, GW V, p.160.
- 13 Letter to Tessa, 16.3.1924, GW V, p.185.
- 14 Letter to Niekisch, 28.2.1924, GW V, p.180.
- 15 Letter to Tessa, 23.2.1924, GW V, p.177.
- 16 Letter to Paul Z(ech), 4.5.1924, GW V, p.192.
- 17 Cf. letter to F.P., undated (1921), GW V, pp.68-70 and to K., undated (1920), GW V, p.49.
- 18 Ossar, op.cit., pp.5 and 237 ff.
- 19 Letter to Kurt Wolff, 12.11.1921, Wolff, Briefwechsel, pp.328-9.
- 20 See note 16.
- 21 Letter to Tessa, 1.8.1922, GW V, p.111.
- 22 '(er) tritt auf Beschluß der Partei in die Regierung der Räterepublik ein.' - Daiber, op.cit., p.94.
- 23 Cf. letter to Tessa, 9.10.1920, GW V, pp.53-55, and 30.9.1922, GW V, p.130.
- 24 Reso, 'Die Novemberrevolution und Ernst Toller', WB, V, 3, 1959, pp.387-409.
- 25 See, for example, his letter to Max Beer, 7.7.1923 (see note 9), and to Tessa, 2.4.1921, GW V, p.64.
- 26 Letter to B. undated (1920), GW V, p.27.
- 27 Letter to K., 7.2.1922, GW V, p.94.
- 28 Cf. for example his (anonymous) letter to Die Weltbühne, in which he appeals to 'ehrliche Menschen... die noch das Heiligste, die Solidarität besitzen...' ('Brief aus einem bayrischen Gefängnis', Die Weltbühne XVII, 1, 6 January 1921.)
- 29 Letter to E, undated (1920), GW V, p.26.
- 30 Letter to Fritz von Unruh, undated (1919), GW V, p.12.
- 31 See note 7.
- 32 Quoted in Fähnders & Rector (eds), Literatur im Klassenkampf, Munich 1971, p.226.
- 33 Letter to Siegfried Jacobsohn, undated (1920), GW V, p.37.

- 34 Letter to Frau T.D., undated (1920), GW V, p.36.
- 35 Toller wrote two Sprechchöre at this time: Requiem den erschossenen Brüdern (1920) and Tag des Proletariats (1920).
- 36 These were Bilder aus der großen französischen Revolution (1922) (see Chapter IX/1), Krieg und Frieden (1923) and Erwachen (1924).
- 37 Letter to Annemarie von Puttkamer, 22.5.1921, Wolff, Briefwechsel eines Verlegers, pp.326-7.
- 38 'Wie mein Stück wird, weiß ich noch nicht. Ich gehe (für mich) neue Wege. Stärker als je wird. das Sinnliche Ausgang' - letter to Tessa, 27.1.1921, GW V, p.59.
- 39 Die Hinkemanns. Eine proletarische Tragödie in 3 Aufzügen, - extract corresponding to Act 2 Scene 1, in Volksbühne II, 3 (January/February 1922).
- 40 Letter to a worker, undated (1922), GW V, pp.116-7.
- 41 This formulation is repeated, in whole or in part, on several other occasions during 1921/22: e.g. letter to Kurt Wolff, 19.1.21, Wolff, Briefwechsel eines Verlegers, pp.325/26; 'Brief an einen schöpferischen Mittler', foreword to the second edition of Masse Mensch, Potsdam 1922; foreword to Die Hinkemanns, see note 39; 'Ernst Toller über proletarische Kunst', in Vorwärts, 28.4.1922.
- 42 Letter to K., undated (1924), GW V, pp.181-2.
- 43 'Zur Revolution der Bühne' (1923/24), in GW I, pp.113/14. Toller submitted this piece, slightly edited, as a foreword to a popular edition of Masses and Man, published in September 1924 by the British journal Plebs. See Plebs XVI, October 1924, pp.394/95.
- 44 Letter to a Polish translator, 28.1.1924, GW V, pp.175/76. This idea, which is obviously derived from Landauer, is a constant theme of Toller's statements on the function of art.
Cf. Quer Durch, pp.195/96:
Kunst erreicht mehr als den Verstand, Sie verankert das Gefühl. Sie gibt dem verankerten Gefühl geistige Legitimation... Kunst gehört zu jenen seltenen geistigen Mitteln, verschüttete Instinkte zu erhellen, tapfere Haltungen zu schulen...
It is echoed in a number of speeches and articles in exile e.g. 'Art & Life', London Mercury XXII,

- 44 (Continued)
191, September 1935, pp.459-61, where he talks of 'buried streams of feeling' and defines the function of art as being to 'give them conscious intellectual justification', or the speech 'Unser Kampf um Deutschland' (1936), GW I, pp.198-209.
- 45 Statement in Vorwärts, no.531, 1919, quoted in Fähnders & Rector, op.cit., p.226.
- 46 Cf. notice in Leipziger Volkszeitung, 18.9.1923 (Spalek no.2603).
- 47 Kulturwille I, 1, Leipzig 1924. This article, in the first issue of the journal, is a programmatic statement by Valtin Hartig.
- 48 See Niekisch, Gewagtes Leben, p.94. The friendship between Toller and Hartig is documented by the former's dedication of one of the poems in Gedichte der Gefangenen to 'meinem lieben Zellennachbar Valtin Hartig' - see GW II, p.314.
- 49 See Wolf's essay 'Kunst ist Waffe', written as a pamphlet in 1928, in Wolf, Gesammelte Werke, Vol.15, Berlin and Weimar 1967, pp.76-96.

VIII. DER DEUTSCHE HINKEMANN: PROLETARIAN DRAMA AND
EXISTENTIAL PESSIMISM

1. Introduction: Critical Interpretations

Der deutsche Hinkemann, to use the title under which the play was first published, occupies an ambiguous, and even contradictory place in Toller's development as a dramatist, a fact which is reflected in the divergent and often contradictory critical interpretations and evaluations. Walter Sokel interprets the play naturalistically, reducing its central problem to one of personal relationships, beyond questions of philosophy and ideology¹. Michael Ossar interprets it allegorically, seeing the figure of Hinkemann as an allegory of the political poet². Other critics have based their judgement largely on Toller's own retrospective interpretation. Wolfgang Frühwald thus sees the play 'nicht nur als allegorisch auf den Zustand Deutschlands verweisendes Drama, sondern vor allem als die Tragödie des Sozialismus'³; similarly, W.A. Willibrand considers it a critique of Socialism and its limitations: 'one might call this tragedy Toller's 'Kritik des reinen Sozialismus''⁴.

These differing interpretations have led to differing conclusions as to the place and importance of the play in Toller's work. Thomas Bütow calls it only indirectly relevant to the conflict between revolution and pacifism which he identifies as the over-riding

theme of Toller's work⁵; Carel ter Haar, on the other hand assigns the play a position of central importance in his development⁶.

The ambivalence of the play first emerges in the style and structure. It is written largely in a style of heightened realism, which suggests continuity with Die Maschinenstürmer, but there are also visionary interludes in the Expressionist manner. The setting of the play is realistic and contemporary: the place is a 'kleine Industriestadt in Deutschland', the time 'um 1921', the year of composition. Despite this suggestion of contemporary realism, the stage directions do not call for a naturalistic illusion of reality: the working-class milieu was to be suggested ('angedeutet') rather than depicted - a word recalling the stage directions for Masse Mensch, or the stage sets for the Tribüne production of Die Wandlung, which had so impressed Herbert Ihering as 'Versatzstücke der Andeutung'⁷.

Der deutsche Hinkemann also marks Toller's reversion to the Expressionist device of the 'Traumbild', though it is not used contrapuntally, as in Die Wandlung and Masse Mensch, but only in a single scene, with the dual function of portraying the spiritual conflict of the protagonist, and a visionary evocation of social reality. (The precise function of this scene will be discussed in greater detail later.)

The dialogue is largely naturalistic, and indeed language and delivery are actually used to define and individualise character. Hinkemann, for example, 'spricht weder 'fließend' noch 'pathetisch'' (p.195), while Unbeschwert is apt to lapse into the 'Pathos des Versammlungsredners' (p.216). Despite this, the very names of the characters indicate that their significance is less individual than representative.

This ambivalence of style and structure, noted by contemporary critics such as Kerr and Ihering⁸, reflects a more profound, ideological ambivalence, which is implicit in Toller's original conception of the play as a 'proletarian drama'.

2. Die Hinkemanns: a proletarian tragedy

Toller's original conception of the play emerges from his comments on the first draft, which he had apparently completed by November 1921, under the working title Die Hinkemanns⁹. He considered the play a step along the same path he had trod in Die Maschinenstürmer, with its marked tendency to greater realism. More explicitly, he called Die Hinkemanns 'eine proletarische Tragödie', confirming that the play was an attempt to realise the theories of proletarian drama which he had begun to formulate in 1920/21¹⁰:

Inneres Gesetz treibt mich zur 'proletarischen' Kunst. (Ich verstehe - in groben Umrissen - unter 'proletarischer Kunst': die Gestaltung der ewig menschlichen und menschheitlichen Probleme, die in der Seele des erwachten Proletariats neu erlebt werden. Lebensform, Charakter, dumpfer Trieb, bewußte Sehnsucht des proletarischen Menschen und der proletarischen Massen geben dem Erlebnis, also auch dem Kunstwerk eigne Züge und Form.) 11

Proletarian art could only be based on the reality of working-class experience:

Nur der wird proletarische Werke schaffen, der eindringt in die Seele des Proletariats, sie nackt sieht in ihren elenden Verkümmierungen, verseucht von Gewöhnlichkeit und Brutalität - und in ihrer strahlenden Kraft, ihrer kindlichen schuldlosen Reinheit. Nicht das Abstrakte, das Programm, sondern das Sinnliche wird wieder Ausgang und Tor werden. 11

Proletarian art was therefore to be realistic in subject-matter and setting, presenting the worker with the dramatic reality of his own life. The portrait it painted was to be plain and unvarnished, its only duty was to the truth. He rejected the tendency to romanticise the worker. This was not only an expression of his growing political realism, but a direct reflection of his prison experience:

Das enge jahrelange Zusammengepferchtsein von 40 Gefangenen auf einem Zellengang (wie oft wünsche ich Zelleneinsamkeit) verhilft zu mancher reichen Schau. Heilt etwa vorhandenen Romantizismus. 11

The first published extract from Die Hinkemanns was accompanied by a dedicatory note in which Toller elaborated on his specific intention:

Dir widme ich dieses Drama, namenloser Prolet,
 Dir, namenloser Held der Menschlichkeit, von
 dem kein Ruhmesbuch meldet, keine Revolutions-
 geschichte, kein Parteilexikon. Nur irgendein
 Polizeibericht im Winkel der Presse weiß von
 dir unter der leidenschaftslosen Rubrik:
 'Unfälle und Selbstmorde' zu sagen. Eugen
 Hinkemann ist dein Symbol.

Hinkemann was therefore to symbolise the anonymous suffering of the proletariat. The working title Die Hinkemanns itself effectively documents the representative significance which Toller wished to attribute to his protagonist: the tragedy of an individual was to stand for that of an entire social class.

Moreover, in Toller's political philosophy, the proletariat - as the class most exposed to the depredations of capitalism - was the class most representative of human suffering in general. While he originally called the play 'eine proletarische Tragödie', Hinkemann was also to stand as a wider symbol of human suffering, and indeed the first published edition of the play, under the title Der deutsche Hinkemann was called simply 'eine Tragödie'. The conception of working-class suffering as the extreme example of human suffering in general is indeed implicit in Toller's conception of proletarian art.

Daß auch proletarische Kunst im Menschlichen münden muß, daß sie im tiefsten allumfassend sein muß - wie das Leben, wie der Tod, brauche ich nicht zu betonen. Es gibt eine proletarische Kunst, nur insofern, als für den Gestaltenden die Mannigfaltigkeiten proletarischen Seelenlebens Wege zur Formung der Ewig-Menschlichen sind. 12

This conception has a certain ambivalence, which undoubtedly contributes to the ambivalence of the play itself. The sufferings of the working-class are of two kinds - those attributable directly or indirectly to the capitalist system, and those inherent in the human condition itself. The former are a result of their social and economic situation, the latter are independent of it. The blurring of the distinction between them is an ideological ambiguity, which in Der deutsche Hinkemann becomes an aesthetic flaw. It is now proposed to examine the play in the light of this conception.

3. Hinkemann as the victim of capitalist society

Contemporary critics were quick to recognise that Hinkemann's mutilation has figurative, rather than literal, connotations. Toller himself defined its symbolic significance as 'die menschliche Not'¹³, a comment which must be placed in the context of Toller's political credo. While human need transcended class, it was most strikingly illustrated in the suffering of the proletariat at the hands of capitalism. Hinkemann's mutilation was therefore also to symbolise the condition of the working-class, robbed of its vitality and creativity by an unjust and repressive society.

Accordingly, Hinkemann is presented during the early scenes of the play as a victim of society. He is firstly, and most obviously a victim of the war, and therefore of the capitalist and militarist interests which

were responsible for it¹⁴. Hinkemann indeed later reproaches himself with having failed to resist, 'damals, als die Mine entzündet wurde von den großen Verbrechern an der Welt, die Staatsmänner und Generäle genannt werden...' (p.244). He is equally a victim of post-war society, in which the same capitalism and militarism have reasserted themselves, a society which denies him the means of living a worthwhile life:

Ich bin ja ein Hampelmann, an dem sie so lange gezogen haben, bis er kaputt war... Die Rente läßt uns nicht genug zum Leben und zuviel zum Sterben... (p.198).

Hinkemann's situation does not simply represent an individual misfortune. He repeatedly emphasises his own typicality, as in his comment to the Showman ('Unsereiner hat nicht viel Liebe' (p.206)), or in the story he tells his fellow-workers, alluding covertly to himself: 'Es war einmal ein Mann. Kein besondrer Mann. Kein Führer. Einer aus der Masse. Ein Arbeiter...' (p.220).

His situation is placed in social context. His difficulties in his relations with his wife, arising from his impotence, are compounded by poverty and unemployment. Although he is repulsed by the 'job' he is offered at the fairground, he feels he has no alternative to accepting it, if he is to provide for his wife, and thus keep her love. He later alludes specifically to the corrosive effect of poverty on personal relations:

Ich kann ja nichts dafür, daß wir arbeitslos sind. Aber weißt du, Frauen fassen leicht einen Haß gegen den Mann, wenn ihnen das Nötigste fehlt... (p.223).

His impotence is not only physical, but social. He feels helpless, manipulated by forces beyond his control, a plight he evokes in the apt symbol of the roundabout:

Unsereiner... unsereiner!... Wien... Karussell muß man sich drehen! Immer rundum! immer rundum!... Ich tus, Herr (p.206).

Moreover, it is not only Hinkemann whose plight is socially defined, for the other working-class characters are equally victims of capitalist society. The opening conversation between Hinkemann and Großhahn establishes their common economic fate: poverty, unemployment, deprivation. Großhahn is a strongly individual character - boastful, insensitive, an inveterate womaniser - but he is also very much a product of his material situation. It is only in sexual adventures that he feels able to escape the hopelessness of his daily life:

Was hat denn son Prolet von seinem Leben?... Er verkauft seine Arbeitskraft, wie man einen Liter Petroleum verkauft und gehört dem Unternehmer, dem Prinzipal. Er wird... sozusagen... ein Hammer oder ein Stuhl, oder ein Dampfhebel oder ein Federhalter oder er wird ein Bügeleisen. Es ist doch so! Was bleibt sein einziges Vergnügen? Die Liebe. Wo keiner ihm etwas dreinzureden hat? - Die Liebe! (p.200).

Großhahn insists on the typicality of his experience, and to some extent of his response to it:

Was hätte unsereiner wohl vom Leben, wenn er nicht jeden Tag einmal bei seinem Mädchen sein könnte? (p.201).

The conclusion he draws has a dramatic irony and a foreboding of tragedy which need little emphasis:

Für uns Proleten ist die Liebe ganz was anders als für die reichen Leute. Sie ist für uns... sozusagen... der Lebenskern. Wenn der angefault ist, dann lieber gleich einen Strick. Ist es nicht so, Eugen? (p.201).

Grete Hinkemann too has strong individual characteristics. She has compassion for her husband, yet sometimes fears him. Despite their situation, she still believes in divine justice: 'Ich hab an Gottes Gerechtigkeit mein Leben lang geglaubt, und den Glauben kann mir keiner nehmen' (p.199). At the same time, she recognises herself as the product of a social environment which has formed her expectations:

Nicht daß ich große Ansprüche ans Leben stellte, Paule... Das brauchst du von mir nicht zu glauben... Was ein Proletariermädchen ist, das sieht schon zuhaus, was es erwartet. Wenn es gut geht, ein Leben voll Mühe, bis man alt wird, und auf die Kinder angewiesen ist. Wenn es schlecht geht, Zank, Streit, Prügel (p.209).

While both Grete and Großhahn have strong individual traits, their social predicament - the result of economic, not personal factors - is generalised, thus continuing a tendency already noted in Die Maschinenstürmer¹⁵.

The tragedy of the proletariat, personified in Hinkemann, is juxtaposed with a savage critique of the society which is responsible for it. The Germany of 1921 is evoked in the vivid metaphor of the fairground, with

its lurid and often sensational spectacle. The economic reality of this society is summed up by the Showman:

'Versuchen Sie doch 'ne andere Arbeit zu bekommen, Mann. Alles besetzt! Hahaha! Entweder - oder!' (p.206). If Hinkemann typifies the plight of the working-class, the Showman is a crude symbol of unscrupulous capitalism, simultaneously exploiting the 'talents' of Hinkemann, and the degenerate impulses of a sensation-hungry public:

Volk will Blut sehen! Blut!!! Trotz
zweitausend Jahren christlicher Moral!
Mein Unternehmen trägt dem Rechnung. So
harmonisiert Privatinteresse mit Volks-
interesse (p.205).

The Showman personifies a system which degrades men to the level of material objects - 'nur erstklassiges Menschenmaterial möge sich melden' runs his advertisement. He inspects Hinkemann's physique before hiring him, as one might inspect livestock before buying it.

The working-class context of the tragedy is therefore defined, not only by the proletarian characters, but by the society which represses and exploits them. Toller's criticism is directed specifically at the Germany of 1921:

Ich sehe dieses Deutschland von 1921, ich sehe
es trotz des Zerrspiegels der Zeitungen.
Ich habe manchmal das Gefühl, als ob ich
aufschreien müßte wider eine Zeit, nur um
mich von den lebendigen Nachtmahren zu
befreien, die im ungeheuerlichen Gewimmel
der Brutalität, der Haßorgien, der völligen
Nichtachtung des Lebens, der Seelenlosigkeit
mich umschwirren. 16

It is the same nightmare vision which Toller attributes to his protagonist.

A significant aspect of this social reality is summarised symbolically in the visionary interlude which is interpolated into the fairground scene (Act 2 Scene 3). A chorus of one-armed and one-legged old soldiers march on stage, playing barrel-organs and singing a 'Soldatenlied': a striking image of the legacy of war. Their real significance, however, is at a much deeper level, for they symbolise the aggression which is latent in society, and the debilitating and destructive effects of militarism. Each claiming the same pitch, each refusing to give way, they converge and clash violently, miming a grotesque parody of war. Their aggression is briefly converted into revolutionary ardour,

Als ob sie, revolutionsentflammt, eine Barrikade
der Reaktion stürmen wollen, singen sie, dabei
fanatisch orgelnd, das Lied:

Nieder mit die Hunde, nieder mit die Hunde
Nieder mit die Hunde von der Reaktion! (p.212).

This change is merely superficial, for it does not entail a deeper change of consciousness: it has simply changed the object of their latent aggression. Their revolutionary ardour vanishes almost immediately on the arrival of the police, shouting the slogans of reaction:

'Ruhe und Ordnung'
'Staatsautorität'
'Alte Soldaten'

Hearing these familiar sounds, the old soldiers respond instinctively. Military discipline reasserts itself, as (symbolically) they perform an about turn, and march off 'in a strammer Haltung', singing a conspicuously chauvinistic marching song: 'Siegreich wollen wir Frankreich schlagen!'

The old soldiers are, in a double sense, the victims of militarism - physically crippled by the effects of war, and morally debilitated by the habit of instinctive obedience. Their ingrained habits of chauvinism and military discipline exemplify the instinctual response which inhibits social change, exemplifying one of the specific lessons of Hinkemann's crucial encounter with his fellow-workers.

4. The critique of working-class consciousness

The two central scenes of Der deutsche Hinkemann are the workers' discussion, which ends with the disclosure of Hinkemann's emasculation (Act 2 Scene 4), and Hinkemann's vision (Act 3 Scene 1), which will now be discussed in turn. The first of these amounts to an oblique statement of Toller's political position, extending his attempt to analyse the failure of the November Revolution into a loose critique of the labour movement itself. Toller portrays the ideological fragmentation of the working-class, and the corruption of working-class consciousness by the prevailing ethos of bourgeois society, in satire verging on the grotesque. He also broaches the fundamental argument about the inherent limitations of Socialism, which he later chose to identify as the central theme of the play. If the scene is crucial to the dramatic argument, it is no less so to the plot, for it is Hinkemann's encounter with his fellow-workers which provides the dramatic turning-point. Its immediate

consequence is to open his eyes to a new vision of social reality, a vision which causes his collapse, despair and ultimate suicide.

The scene opens with a parody of working-class false consciousness in the ridiculous quarrel between the slater and the tiler. Their lack of comradeship, their competitiveness, their petit bourgeois concern with the social standing of their trade, are revealed as profoundly anti-revolutionary:

Und wenn hundertmal Revolution war! Da kann keine Revolution was ändern. Dekorationsmaler ist etwas besseres als Tüncher, Buchdrucker etwas besseres als Tapetendrucker... Wir bleiben Schieferdecker und ihr bleibt Ziegeldecker! (p.214).

Their rejection of the revolution ('An meine Ehre kann keiner ran! Auch keine Revolution!'), and their acceptance of the bourgeois ethos of 'Leistung', show how far they have absorbed the dominant values of the society they live in¹⁷.

Their petty quarrel is an apt prologue to the ensuing argument among the group of workers, which reveals the deep ideological differences within the working-class. The participants in this argument embody specific working-class attitudes. Their names - Unbeschwert, Singegott, Immergleich - suffice to indicate that they, like Hinkemann, have representative significance¹⁸.

The theme of Der deutsche Hinkemann, with its implicit critique of dialectical materialism, was one which Toller had already broached in his correspondence:

Fortanschreiten in bewußter gesellschaftlicher Selbstgestaltung (die ökonomisch wichtigste Seite des Sozialismus) bedeutet die Überwindung sozialer Unordnung durch gesellschaftsbauende Kräfte. Damit wird das 'Geheimnisvolle', das 'Irrrationale' des Lebens nicht, wie selbst manche dogmatische Sozialisten glauben, vollkommen rationalisiert, sondern es wird 'beschränkt', es weicht zurück - und bleibt da in seiner ganzen Unfaßbarkeit. 19

Michel Unbeschwert, the Marxist party functionary, personifies the dogmatic Socialist, for whom 'scientific Socialism' provides the solution to all human problems. He proclaims the triumph of Socialism inevitable, resting on inexorable scientific laws, and inaugurating the millenium of the party's programme.

So wie die Nordsee und die Ostsee immer mehr und mehr sich ins Land hineinfressen, ohne daß wir es im Inland merken, so werden wir in den sozialistischen Staat hineinwachsen. Das ist keine Phantastere!! Das ist wissenschaftlich bewiesen! ... Dann geht es analog den Parteibeschlüssen (p.216).

He dismisses Hinkemann's doubts that Socialism will make all its citizens happy, for the society of the future will be organised on a rational basis: 'mit drei Worten eine vernünftige Menschheit... Und eine vernünftige Menschheit produziert ein glückliches Dasein'. In his superficial understanding of the Marxist dialectic, he sees Socialism as the inevitable product of historical conditions and castigates the Anarchist Knatsch for believing that it is possible to jump stages of historical development:

Jene aber, die glauben, sie können die historischen Zwischenstufen überspringen - jene radikalen Sendlinge und Schwärmer aus dem Osten, die den Glauben an die Stelle der Wissenschaft setzen wollen... (pp.216/17).

Unbeschwert's shallow rationalism is exposed when he at first fails to comprehend Hinkemann's reference to the soul:

Hinkemann: Und wenn einer krank ist in seiner Seele?

Michel Unbeschwert: (robust, unsentimental):
Der kommt in einer Heilanstalt,...

Hinkemann: Ich denke nicht an solche, die krank sind im Kopf oder im Gehirn... Ich meine solche, die gesund sind, und doch krank in ihrer Seele.

Michel Unbeschwert: Das gibt es nicht! ... (p.219).

If Unbeschwert is dogmatic in his belief in dialectical materialism, Max Knatsch is no less so in asserting the primacy of revolutionary will and spontaneity:

Wendet euch an den Willen der Menschen! Wenn die Menschen nicht revolutionären Willens sind, helfen alle 'Verhältnisse' nicht. Und wenn die Menschen revolutionären Willens sind, können sie in allen Verhältnissen ein neues Leben beginnen. Gleich. Noch heute (p.217).

Knatsch can be seen as a caricature of the Anarchist belief in revolutionary will. Landauer had written that Socialism was always possible, if enough people willed it: the conscious parody of this argument marks the critical distance which now separated Toller from his former convictions.

A further ideological dimension is represented by Sebaldu Singegott, whose faith is a surrogate for revolutionary commitment, imposing a metaphysical perspective which transcends the solution of material social problems. He symbolises the wide sections of the proletariat who had embraced a religion which

absolved them from the effort to achieve social change²⁰.

The cross section of proletarian attitudes is completed by Peter Immergleich, who doesn't care what happens, as long as he is left in peace: 'Mir ist alles gleich, wenn ich nur meine Ruhe habe...' (p.217). His reference to 'Ruhe' suggests the extent to which he has absorbed bourgeois values, epitomised in the precept 'Ruhe ist die erste Bürgerpflicht'. More specifically, 'Ruhe und Ordnung' had been the watchword of those who had suppressed the November Revolution: Ure, in Die Maschinenstürmer, puts his trust in law and order, a slogan appealing not only to the bourgeois but to the worker who had unconsciously adopted his values.

The sectarian tone of the discussion disturbs Hinkemann. The slogans and facile solutions seem irrelevant to his case, and he poses, in hypothetical form, his own problem within the context of a Socialist society. Unbeschwert and Knatsch are, significantly, equally insensitive to the implications of his problem. Unbeschwert is momentarily nonplussed, but soon finds the answer: in the society of the future, there will be no wars, and so the problem will not arise. Knatsch dismisses such cases as 'Spitzfindigkeiten': they are victims of society, and the proletariat has a right to its martyrs.

It is at this point that the ambiguity of Toller's conception becomes apparent. On the one hand, Hinkemann

is a victim of the war, and therefore of the economic system which caused it, on the other a symbol of human suffering which will always exist, no matter how humane the social system. This ambiguity is indeed inherent in Toller's original conception, for while he had intended Hinkemann to symbolise working-class suffering within capitalist society, he also wished to portray his tragedy as eternal:

Dir widme ich dieses Drama, namenloser Prolet...
Immer littest Du, in jeder Gesellschaft, in
jedem Staat und wirst, von dunklem Schicksal
gezeichnet, selbst leiden müssen, wenn in
hellerer Zeit die sozialistische Gemeinschaft
erkämpft und gewachsen ist. 21

Hinkemann hesitates to admit that his hypothetical case is himself, realising that, by doing so, he would expose himself to what he fears most - ridicule. Despite their professed Socialist principles, his comrades still manifest the traditional prejudices of the society they form part of. There is a gulf between precept and practice which Knatsch is prepared to acknowledge: 'In jeder Versammlung reden wir zu fremden Menschen vom neuen wahrhaften Leben... bei der eignen Frau bringen wir kein Wort über die Lippen' (p.215). The climax of Hinkemann's 'story' provides the cue for the entry of Großhahn, linking the workers' discussion to the external action of the play. Großhahn is the most conspicuous example of the failure of Socialist conviction. He himself stresses his commitment to the social struggle: 'Wir kämpfen nicht um den Himmel, wir

kämpfen um die Erde, wir kämpfen um die Menschen' (p.199)²².

But his actions belie his words. Not only his callous revelation of his affair with Grete, but his calculated ridicule of Hinkemann's emasculation show his commitment to be no more than lip-service.

Großhahn's ridicule is immediately echoed by all the others, their laughter providing a direct answer to Hinkemann's question: all blueprints to change society will remain fruitless until men have changed themselves. Turning on his fellow-workers, Hinkemann bitterly denounces their cruelty, embourgeoisement and sectarian intolerance:

Ihr Toren! Was wißt ihr von der Qual einer armseligen Kreatur? Wie müßt ihr anders werden, um eine neue Gesellschaft zu bauen! Bekämpft den Bourgeois und seid aufgebläht von seinem Dünkel, seiner Selbstgerechtigkeit, seiner Herzensträgheit! Einer haßt den andern, weil er in ner anderen Partei sekte ist, weil er aufn andres Programm schwört! Keiner hat Vertrauen zum andern. Keiner hat Vertrauen zu sich. Keine Tat, die nicht erstickt in Hader und Verrat (p.225).

This bleak insight has for Hinkemann the force of revelation.

5. Hinkemann's nightmare: vision and reality

Hinkemann's conversation with the Showman, at the beginning of Act III, reveals him as a changed man.

His experience has had the effect of 'opening his eyes':

Mir haben sie den Star gestochen. Ich bin sehend geworden. Bis auf den Grund sehe ich! Bis auf den nackten Grund! (p.228).

His heightened perception has revealed men as they really are. He has recognised the spirit of the times, in which the war which made him impotent has been resumed:

Die Menschen sehe ich! Die Zeit sehe ich!
 Herr Direktor, der Krieg ist wieder da!
 Die Menschen morden sich unter Gelächter!
Die Menschen morden sich unter Gelächter! (p.228).

This insight into social reality is symbolically enacted in Hinkemann's nightmare: it is a revelation which transforms him, driving him to despair and ultimate suicide. The process of revelation and transformation is, of course, the Expressionist theme 'par excellence' - and it is conveyed in the typical Expressionist technique of the 'Traumbild'.

Hinkemann's vision reveals the true face of contemporary social reality, a reality encapsulated in the headlines shouted by the newsboys who run across the stage. The Germany of 1921 is characterised by greed and exploitation, by vicious anti-Semitism and para-military repression, by sadistic and sensational amusements - all dressed in the American fashions of the 'Roaring Twenties' (striptease and cocktails, the jazz-band and the shimmy). The spirit of the times is epitomised in the film of Christ's passion, in which the supporting attraction is a world championship prize-fight.

In his nightmare, Hinkemann is confronted by a succession of symbolic figures, who represent a grotesque

cross-section of society: the stuffed-shirt, the whore, the Freikorps thug, the street-trader. It is a society in which the ideal of community is dead ('wird nicht mehr fabriziert. Hat sich als unrentabel erwiesen. Eiweißloser Zimt.'), in which murderous Nationalism is endemic, in which the slogan 'Der Mensch ist gut' is a quack remedy peddled by a street-trader. Hinkemann sees human beings stripped of all humanity:

Ich bin durch die Straßen gegangen, ich sah keine Menschen... Fratzen, lauter Fratzen. Ich bin nach Hause gekommen, ich sah Fratzen... und Not... sinnlose unendliche Not der blinden Kreatur... (p.244).

Life is a vicious struggle for survival, in which human suffering is the inevitable consequence of cruel and predatory human nature. This is the inner reality of the figures which people his vision:

Immer geht man durch die Straßen wie ein Blinder. Und auf einmal sieht man. Knatsch, es ist furchtbar, was man sieht. Die Seele sieht man. Und weißt du, wie die Seele ausschaut? Nichts Lebendiges ist. Die eine Seele ist ein Speckgenick, die zweite eine Maschine, die dritte ein Kontrollzähler, die vierte ein Stahlhelm, die fünfte ein Gummiknüppel...(p.234).

In his interesting analysis of the scene, Walter Sokel suggests that this use of the 'Traumbild' marks the transition from Expressionism to the 'epic' theatre of Paquet and Piscator, with its use of film, newsreel and statistics to illuminate social reality²³. While there are certainly formal similarities in the analogous use of the stylistic device of montage, there are also ideological differences which are fundamental. Piscator

used the technique objectively, using newsreel and statistics to create the socio-economic framework in which the characters act. Toller uses it subjectively, portraying reality as a projection of Hinkemann's disturbed state of mind. Piscator used social details as an epic extension of the dramatic action; Toller uses them to enact his protagonist's revelation, that is, the portrayal of reality is the dramatic action. Essentially, Toller is using the 'Traumbild' in an Expressionist way, to convey the spiritual conflict of his protagonist.

The technique of the 'Traumbild' represents a stylistic regression on Toller's part, one which becomes clearer, if we compare it with the methods he had adopted in Maschinenstürmer. In the earlier play, he had drawn on documented historical fact to create scenes of heightened realism; in the later play, he assembled the 'facts' of his newspaper headlines into a visionary montage of reality²⁴. There, the portrayal of reality was intended to evoke collective experience; here, Hinkemann's vision of reality is essentially an individual one. There, Toller had stressed the material causes of the weavers' revolt; here, we see only isolated fragments which demonstrate effects, but not causes. While we see the brutality of the Freikorps thug, the degradation of the 'Liebesmaschine', the crude irrationality of anti-Semitism, we do not see the social determinants of this behaviour. Toller's reversion to the Expressionist

technique of the 'Traumbild' is a stylistic regression, which in turn reflects an ideological one.

It is this ideological regression which marks a shift of emphasis within the play itself. The early scenes portray Hinkemann as the representative of a social class, trapped by the exigencies of an economic system. His injury is a consequence of the war, and therefore of capitalism; it is poverty and unemployment, and their effect on his relations with his wife, which force him to take the 'job' at the fairground. Hinkemann's vision places his situation in a different perspective. The cruelty and brutality he sees are not so much the product of a socio-economic system, as intrinsic to human nature. In other words, it is not society which conditions human nature, but human nature which conditions society. It is the tension between these two points of view which constitutes the ambivalence of Der deutsche Hinkemann.

6. Hinkemann's despair: existential pessimism

The shift of emphasis from social to psychological causation, from material to metaphysical, is confirmed in the final scene of the play. The revelation enacted in Hinkemann's nightmare is that life is inherently savage and destructive, human beings cruel and predatory. He now recognises that his tragedy is not so much his emasculation, as the fact that, in an inhuman society, emasculation is the object of ridicule and derision.

It is the ridicule of his comrades which opens his eyes. His intention to kill his wife is not because of her infidelity, but because he thinks she has ridiculed him:

Und dafür mußt du sterben, Weib. Nicht dafür, daß du einen anderen nahmst - das war dein Recht... nicht dafür daß du mich belogst - das nahmst du dir als Recht... sterben mußt du, weil du mich verlacht hast vor der Jahrmarktsbude! (p.242).

The character of Hinkemann's mother is introduced solely to reiterate this motif: the sin which she was unable to forgive his father was his ridicule of her²⁵.

Hinkemann does not kill Grete, because he recognises the common denominator of human suffering which unites them:

Ja, Gretchen ich dachte, du bist viel reicher als ich, und dabei bist du ebenso arm und ebenso hilflos... Ja, wenn das so ist, wenn das so ist... dann sind wir Bruder and Schwester. Ich bin du und du bist ich (p.243).

It is a suffering which transcends social class and material affluence:

Und wenn du in seidenen Kleidern gingst und hättest eine Villa und kämest aus dem Lachen gar nicht mehr heraus - alles gleich, du bleibst eine ebenso arme Kreatur wie ich. In dieser Stunde habe ich es erkannt... (p.243).

The ideological ambiguity of Toller's dramatic conception is apparent. If Hinkemann's injury was originally a symbol of the suffering of the proletariat in the capitalist system, it has now transcended class and come to suggest the suffering inherent in the human condition itself.

What finally drives Hinkemann to despair is ultimately not his injury, but his recognition of inevitable human cruelty - and its corollary, inevitable human suffering.

Es ist nicht um meine Krankheit... es ist nicht um meinen zerschossenen Leib... Ich bin durch die Straßen gegangen, ich sah keine Menschen... Fratzen, lauter Fratzen. Ich bin nach Haus gekommen, ich sah Fratzen... und Not... sinnlose, unendliche Not der blinden Kreatur... (p.244).

This realisation of cruel and predatory human nature is shared by his wife:

Oh... Oh... ich habe solche Angst vorm Leben! Denk doch! allein! Im Leben allein! In einem Wald voll wilder Tiere allein!... Keiner ist gut. Jeder nagt an deinem Herzen... Nicht allein lassen!! (p.245).

Life is a jungle, in which men obey naked instinct in the struggle for survival. The most basic and powerful of these instincts is the sex drive, summarised in the image of the Priapus.

Es ist kein Gott außer dir... Du trägst keine Maske, du hüllst dich nicht in heuchlerische Worte, du bist das A und das O, der Anfang und das Ende, du bist die Wahrheit, du bist der Gott der Völker... (p.235).

These elemental forces in human nature are stronger than the power of human reason: reason is merely a means of self-deception:

Die lebendige Natur vom Menschen ist stärker als sein Verstand. Der Verstand ist nur ein Mittel zum Selbstbetrug (p.244)²⁶.

It is the ideological implications of this realisation which reduce Hinkemann to despair. He no longer has the strength to carry on the fight for his

ideals, for he no longer believes that they can be realised. While Socialism offers a reasoned alternative to the jungle of capitalist society, there is little hope of achieving it. In order to change society, men must first change themselves ('wie müßt ihr anders werden, um eine neue Gesellschaft zu bauen') - but they are incapable of such change:

So sind die Menschen... Und könnten anders sein, wenn sie wollten. Aber sie wollen nicht. Sie steinigen den Geist, sie höhnen ihn, sie schänden das Leben, sie kreuzigen es... immer und immer wieder (p.246).

If men will not change, all hope of changing social reality is ultimately vain. Hinkemann finds this realisation completely debilitating. Having lost his vision, and lost the strength to struggle for it, he has lost the will to live.

Ich habe die Kraft nicht mehr. Die Kraft nicht mehr zu kämpfen, die Kraft nicht mehr zum Traum. Wer keine Kraft zum Traum hat, hat keine Kraft zum Leben. Der Schuß, der war wie eine Frucht vom Baume der Erkenntnis... Alles Sehen wird mir Wissen, alles Wissen Leid. Ich will nicht mehr (pp.244-45) 27.

The determinism and pessimism of the dramatic argument emerge clearly at the end of the scene. Hinkemann enjoins Grete to carry on the struggle for a better world. but she sees the illusion of his appeal. There is no escape from their situation, for they are trapped by elemental forces, for which she finds the metaphor of the spider's web, a motif which Hinkemann echoes in his final monologue.

In this pessimistic vision, men are no longer the victims of social oppression, but of the blindly malevolent impulse to mutual cruelty and destruction:

Auf allen Straßen der Welt schreien sie nach Erlösung! Der Franzos, der mich zum Krüppel schoß, der Neger, der mich zum Krüppel schoß, schreit vielleicht nach Erlösung... Ob er noch leben mag? Und wie wird er leben?... Ist er blind, ohne Arm, ohne Bein? Er tat mir weh, und ein anderer tat ihm weh...
Wer aber tat uns allen weh? (p.246).

There is an awful inevitability about human cruelty, as though men cannot help themselves:

Wie ist das sinnlos! Machen sich arm, und könnten reich sein und brauchten keine himmlische Erlösung... die Verblendeten! Als ob sie so tun müßten im blinden Wirbel der Jahrtausende! Nicht anders könnten. Müßten. Gleich Schifffern, die der Mälstrom an sich reißt und zwingt einander zu zermalmen... (p.246).

In this context, it is pointless to look for pattern or progress in human history. Human suffering is as inevitable as human cruelty, its victims chosen quite arbitrarily by an implacable Fate. The play ends on a note of incomprehension and submission:

Immer werden Menschen stehen in ihrer Zeit wie ich. Warum aber trifft es mich, gerade mich?... Wahllos trifft es. Den trifft es und den trifft es. Den trifft es nicht und den trifft es nicht. ... Was wissen wir?... Woher? ... Wohin?... Jeder Tag kann das Paradies bringen, jede Nacht die Sintflut (p.247).

The final eschatological image emphasises the gulf which separates the play from historical materialism.

7. The ideology of *Der deutsche Hinkemann*

Though the ideology of the play is ambiguous, its main tendency is clearly towards existential pessimism. The central proposition of the play is not simply that Hinkemann's problem is beyond the power of Socialism, or any other social system, to solve, but that society cannot be changed until men have changed themselves: 'Wie müßt ihr anders werden, um eine neue Gesellschaft zu bauen'.

Toller continued to believe that the creation of a Socialist society presupposed a revolutionary change in consciousness which the German working-class had far from achieved. His workers, for all their declaration of revolutionary commitment, are characterised by sectarian hatred, arrogant intolerance and petit-bourgeois aspirations²⁸. Their Socialist convictions are no more than skin-deep, for beneath the skin, they respond instinctually, driven by cruel and atavistic impulses.

These pessimistic conclusions are derived directly from Toller's experience in prison:

Oft sehe ich den Bruch zwischen sozialistischen Einsichten und traditionellem Empfinden... Die traditionellen Instinkte, die in Elternhaus und Schule, in Kaserne und Kriegerverein gezüchtet werden, sind stärker als die ideologischen Auffassungen, die mit der Parteikarte flüchtig erworben wurden, das erlebe ich immer wieder in Gesprächen mit Kameraden. 29

As we have seen, in *Der deutsche Hinkemann*, Toller goes so far as to suggest that these instincts are innate,

an ineradicable part of human nature. The perception that men must change themselves, if they are to change society, is made even bleaker by the suggestion that they are incapable of such change. The Expressionist theme of transformation, of 'anders werden', has been placed in a perspective of existential pessimism.

It was this pessimism which Toller was concerned to qualify in his subsequent work - and to rationalise in his retrospective interpretations of Hinkemann. He specifically suggested that these instinctual responses were not the result of 'human nature', but of social conditioning, and that they could be eradicated by the inculcation of Socialist ideas and attitudes³⁰.

Der deutsche Hinkemann is not, however, primarily a critique of Socialism, for Toller's social criticism is directed specifically at the Germany of 1921, in which capitalism and militarism flourished: 'Schuld hat eine Zeit, in der es sowas gibt', Grete Hinkemann declares (p.211). Nor is the play 'die Tragödie des Sozialismus'³¹, for Hinkemann's injury is not an example of the 'tragischer Rest' which would still be inevitable within a Socialist society - both because his injury is a consequence of the war, and therefore of the capitalist system which was responsible for it, and because his despair is a reaction to the derision of an inhuman society, in which impotence remains a subject of ridicule. Toller recognised that a Socialist society

called for a higher level of consciousness, in which sexual mutilation would be regarded differently. It was precisely the lack of this consciousness, and the consequent absence of the spirit of community and solidarity which Toller saw as the reasons for the failure of the German Revolution. Der deutsche Hinkemann is therefore more concerned with the failure to achieve Socialism than with a critique of it.

Hinkemann himself suggests that Socialism is intrinsically incapable of solving problems such as his, but the final act of the play fails to develop this theme, which remains virtually a blind motif. It was only in his retrospective interpretations that Toller chose to make this critique of Socialism the dominant idea of the play, apparently in order to rationalise a theme which - as he himself admitted - he had grasped emotionally rather than intellectually³². Certainly this theme came to assume increasing importance for Toller, since he later chose to define it as the over-riding theme of his entire dramatic work:

The plays collected in this volume are social dramas and tragedies. They bear witness to human suffering and to fine yet vain struggles to vanquish this suffering. For only unnecessary suffering can be vanquished, the suffering which arises out of the unreason of humanity, out of an inadequate social system. There must always remain a residue of suffering, the lonely suffering imposed by life and death. And only this residue is necessary and inevitable, is the tragic element of life, and of life's symboliser, art. 33

Nevertheless, Hinkemann's despair does not arise from his realisation of the tragic limitations of Socialism, but from his doubt that Socialism will ever be achieved. In his nightmare vision, social reality is revealed as irrational, depraved and self-destructive; human behaviour is governed by elemental and atavistic impulses, which reason is powerless to moderate. If this is so, then all aspirations towards social progress are futile: human history is the vicious circle of revolt and repression which he had perceived in Max Beer's Geschichte der sozialen Kämpfe³⁴.

To summarise, Der deutsche Hinkemann was Toller's attempt to realise his conception of proletarian drama. Hinkemann was to symbolise the tragedy of the proletariat, and his suffering is therefore enacted within the framework of the society which causes it. The central scene of the play, with its critique of working-class consciousness, concludes that men cannot change society until they have changed themselves: Hinkemann's vision suggests that they are incapable of such change. The final act of the play acquires increasingly visionary and metaphysical overtones: Hinkemann's plight is portrayed, not as a consequence of social oppression, but of cruel and predatory human nature. It is the ideological implications of this realisation which drive Hinkemann to despair.

Der deutsche Hinkemann therefore fails to confirm the steps towards a materialist interpretation of history which were evident in Die Maschinenstürmer. The play not only satirises the application of dialectical materialism by dogmatic Marxists, but contains an implicit critique of dialectical materialism itself. Hinkemann's loss of will-power, his despair of the constructive power of reason, his submission to a capricious and arbitrary Fate, are a measure of the distance which divides the play's ideology from Marxism. The predominant note of the play is one of existential pessimism, and it was this which Toller was concerned to qualify in his own interpretations of the theme - and in his subsequent revisions to the play itself.

Notes to Chapter VIII.

- 1 Walter H. Sokel: 'Ernst Toller' in Deutsche Literatur im 20. Jahrhundert. Strukturen und Gestalten, (Otto Mann and Wolfgang Rothe eds.), Vol II, Munich 1967, pp.299-315:

Das Problem ist also kein weltanschauliches, ideologisches wie in Masse Mensch und in den Maschinenstürmern. Es ist ein individuelles und seelisches Problem.

He sees the theme as

...viel intimer und daher auch universell: kann eine Frau ihren Mann lieben, auch wenn er aufgehört hat, Mann zu sein, und kann der Mann an solche Liebe glauben. Damit wird die Frage nach dem Wesen der Liebe überhaupt gestellt (p.308).

- 2 Ossar, op.cit., p.127.

- 3 Der Fall Toller, p.278.

- 4 Willibrand, op.cit., p.67.

Both he and Frühwald derive their interpretation from Toller's own attempts to rationalise the theme of the play - see below, Section 7. Like many of Toller's retrospective interpretations, however, they are not a reliable guide to his original intention.

- 5 Bütow, op.cit., p.216.

- 6 Ter Haar, op.cit., pp.29-33.

Ter Haar considers Hinkemann, 'dem in Tollers dichterischem Schaffen zentrale Bedeutung zukommt' (p.3), to be an exemplary expression of Toller's tragic conception of life. He uses it to try to demonstrate the close connection between autobiography and literary work, which is revealed in the stylistic and structural analogies, specifically those between 'der gedankliche Aufbau' of the drama and that of the final chapter of the autobiography (pp.31-32).

- 7 Der Tag, 2.10.1919, quoted in G. Rühle, Theater für die Republik 1917-33 im Spiegel der Kritik, Frankfurt 1967, p.162.

- 8 'Der unheilbare Bruch in Tollers Hinkemann ist, daß realistischen Motiven eine bildhafte Szenenform aufgezwungen wird.'
- Herbert Ihering in Berliner Börsen-Courier, 10/11.12.1923 see Rühle, pp.487-89.
- '(Toller) scheint in diesem Werk ungewiß, wo er in drei anderen gewiß war. Der Übergang zum Halbnaturalismus ist nicht leicht.'
- Alfred Kerr in Berliner Tageblatt, 11.12.1923. see Rühle, pp.490-93.
- 9 cf. Letter to Kurt Wolff, 12.11.1921, in Wolff, Briefwechsel eines Verlegers, pp. 328-29.
- 'Das Manuskript des 'Hinkemanns' sandte ich an sie ab... Ich will das neue Stück (abgesehen von kleinen Änderungen und Vertiefungen) lassen, wie es ist.
- ...
- Ich beabsichtige, die Uraufführung der Berliner Volksbühne zu übertragen, die sich schon zweimal wegen des Stücks an mich gewandt hat, und ich hoffe, daß Jürgen Fehling die Regie führt, und Friedrich Kaißler Mittler des Eugen Hinkemann sein wird.'
- Since Toller is obviously referring to a completed first draft, it is incorrect to suggest: 'Die ersten Szenen des 'Hinkemann' entstanden vermutlich im Oktober/November 1921' - Der Fall Toller, p.142. This first draft was subsequently revised in the early months of 1922 - cf. letter to Tessa, 14.8.1922, GW V, pp.111-113, where Toller quotes his correspondence with the Volksbühne:
- 'Das Stück hat in seiner veränderten Fassung stark gewonnen' (my emphasis).
- 10 Ernst Toller: Die Hinkemanns. Eine proletarische Tragödie in drei Aufzügen, (published extract corresponding to Act 2 Scene 1) in Volksbühne II, 3 (Jan.-Feb. 1922), p.93.
- 11 Letter to Kurt Wolff, 19.1.1921, in Wolff, Briefwechsel eines Verlegers, p.325-26.
- 12 'Brief an einen schöpferischen Mittler', foreword to the second edition of Masse Mensch, dated 'Festung Niederschönenfeld, Oktober 1921'. Toller repeats this almost word for word in his foreword to Die Hinkemanns - see note 10 above.
- 13 Letter to Tessa, 14.8.1922, GW V, pp.111-13.

14 Toller's conviction that the war was a consequence of capitalism and militarism is documented in several statements and articles e.g. 'Die Friedenskonferenz zu Versailles' in Neue Zeitung, 1.4.1919, GW I, pp.37-44, or 'An die Jugend aller Länder', a manifesto issued at the Berne Conference of the Second International, February 1919, GW I, pp.46-49.

15 The social predicament of Toller's weavers is explicitly generalised, sometimes in words which are echoed in Der deutsche Hinkemann, e.g. Act II, sc.2, GW II, p.138:

John Wible: Sei vernünftig, Mary. Geh hin und laß dich zärtlich küssen. Ohne dich verliere ich meine Stellung. Er gibt dir Geld. Sei ihm zu Willen und tue wie die Werkelleute tun. Bevor du küßt den Lohn gezahlt...

Mary: Ach, lieber Gott, ich tu's ja. Was hat unsereiner für ein Leben.

(my emphases)

16 Letter to F.P., undated (1921), GW V, p.68.

17 In the crudely capitalistic ethos of the Showman, 'Leistung' becomes the keynote of the age:

Machen Sie nur Augen auf. Man muß was leisten! Leistung! Das ist Schlüssel zu unserer Zeit! Gleichgültig was! (p.228).

18 For Toller's use of symbolic names, see Toller, Hinkemann, (W. Frühwald, ed.), p.61, note 3.

19 Letter to Stefan Zweig, undated (1921), GW V, pp.57-58.

20 Bütow suggests that Singegott is a deliberate self-parody: a travesty of Friedrich's ecstatic proclamation of spiritual rebirth in Die Wandlung, see Bütow, op.cit., pp.222-23. This seems a gross over-interpretation of a character who has scarcely a dozen lines of dialogue, and whose significance is more obvious.

21 See note 10.

22 Großhahn's words echo the final lines of Toller's poem 'Unser Weg':

Das Reich des Friedens wollen wir zur Erde tragen
Den Unterdrückten aller Länder Freiheit bringen -
Wir müssen um das Sakrament der Erde ringen.

See also Chapter V, note 11.

- 23 Sokel, op.cit., p.312.
- 24 Toller employed the same technique of montage in Hoppla, wir leben (1927): for example, Karl Thomas's conversation with the radio operator is punctuated by news headlines which provide implicit comment on social reality - see Chapter XI/4 below. Similarly, the radio play Berlin - letzte Ausgabe! (1930) enacts a series of apparently disconnected newspaper headlines.
- 25 An interpretation of the significance of the 'Lachmotiv' is contained in D. Klein, Der Wandel, pp.100 ff., and Bütow, op.cit., pp.223-232.
- 26 Cf. letter to Tessa, 1.8.1922, GW V, p.111:
 Es gibt zerstörerische Wirkungen der Haft, die den ganzen Menschen treffen. Elementare Lebenskräfte (immer versagt die Vernunft, wo es sich um Urkräfte handelt) kehren sich gegen den Menschen, gegen den 'bewußten' Willen'.
- 27 Frühwald has already identified the crucial importance of this passage to the meaning of the play - see, Hinkemann (W. Frühwald ed.), p.59.
- 28 Cf. letter to Tessa, 30.1.1922, GW V, p.90.
- 29 Letter to Mathilde Wurm, undated (1922), GW V, pp.126-28.
- 30 Cf. Deutsche Revolution, GW I, p.163:
 Wir sahen mit sozialistischen Augen, wir handelten aus unsozialistischen Instinkten. Lernen wir in uns, in unseren Kindern sozialistische Instinkte züchten - man kann Instinkte züchten - so lösen wir uns von Vergangenen und binden uns an Zukunftsträchtiges.
 His ideas on the inculcation of Socialist values were first formulated in 'Eine Ansprache', Die sozialistische Erziehung V, 2, February 1925.
- 31 See notes 3 and 4 above.
- 32 Cf. letter to the 'Regisseur des Dresdner Staatstheaters', 1.2.1924, GW V, p.176:
 Wäre mir zur Zeit, als ich 'Hinkemann' schrieb, die tragische Seite des Problems nur intellektuell klar gewesen, ich hätte einen analysierenden Aufsatz, eine reflektorische Bemerkung, aber kein Drama geschrieben. Im Werk löst sich... wer bedrängt ist.
- 33 Author's introduction to Seven Plays, London 1935.
- 34 Cf. letter to Tessa, 20.3.1922, GW V, pp.98-99.

IX. 'DENNOCH!' - COMMITMENT WITHOUT ILLUSIONS

1. Introduction

The extreme pessimism of Der deutsche Hinkemann is only partly consistent with the trend of Toller's overall development. It marks the lowest point of his political faith, a blind alley from which he was forced to retreat. The political attitude which came to characterise him in the years of the Weimar Republic - one of commitment without illusions, summarised in the word 'dennoch' - was formed during his last two years in prison. Its emergence is reflected in his creative work - in Der entfesselte Wotan and Das Schwalbenbuch, both written in 1923, and in the revisions to Die Maschinenstürmer in the summer of 1922 and Hinkemann (as the play was now called) in 1924.

Many critics have noted these revisions, particularly those to Hinkemann, but none has placed them in the chronological perspective which alone reveals their full significance for Toller's development. While Bütow claims to apply a chronological method to Toller's work, he conspicuously fails to apply it with the necessary rigour to his work in prison. For example, he bases his analysis of both Die Maschinenstürmer and Hinkemann on the second (i.e. revised) editions¹. While noting the main differences between the first and second editions, he draws no specific conclusions from them. He does not attempt to interpret the different endings to Hinkemann,

for example, although he considers the assessment of these endings 'ein klassisches Problem der Toller-Forschung' (p.16). His analysis of Toller's political development is therefore ultimately undifferentiated, failing to distinguish his position in 1922 from that in 1924.

Die Maschinenstürmer was the first play which Toller revised extensively after publication. While the successive reprintings of Die Wandlung and Masse Mensch show only minor revisions², the second edition of Die Maschinenstürmer constitutes 'a thoroughly revised version of the play'³. In revising Hinkemann, he changed both the title and the ending, a precedent which he followed in subsequent plays, notably Hoppla, wir leben! and Pastor Hall, in which two different versions of the final scene were actually published⁴.

2. Revisions to Die Maschinenstürmer

In the months following the completion of Der deutsche Hinkemann Toller made determined efforts to qualify pessimism with faith in the future - efforts demanding a sense of historical perspective which is evident in the choice and treatment of the subject-matter for the scenario Bilder aus der großen französischen Revolution, performed at the 'Arbeiterkulturwoche' in Leipzig in August 1922⁵. The outline Toller submitted covered the years 1789-92, ending with the formal constitution of the Republic; contrary to historical fact,

he portrayed this as a working-class revolution which had culminated in the proclamation of a bourgeois Republic. This distortion of historical fact, noted and criticised in some quarters, emphasises that Toller's interest in his historical material was primarily for the contemporary parallels which it offered. The analogy to the Weimar Republic was unmistakable, and made more so by the three-year time-span: the conclusions for the Germany of 1922 were implicit in the 'erzielten optimistischen Schluß'⁶.

It was shortly afterwards that Toller began to revise Die Maschinenstürmer, apparently in the light of the production at the Großes Schauspielhaus in 1922⁷. While some revisions, such as the changes to Wible's two monologues in Act 3 Scene 1, improve dramatic continuity and motivation, others are clearly meant to strengthen the note of historical optimism, and therefore to reaffirm Toller's own continuing commitment.

Thus, while Jimmy still advocates negotiations, his reasons for doing so are now made more explicit:

Es wundert dich, daß ich mit Ure verhandeln will? Laß dir den Grund sagen. Wir müssen heute dem Entscheidungskampf ausweichen. Trieben wir es heute zum entscheidenden Kampf, wäre die Niederlage gewiss. Sie schwächte unsere Kraft. Der Entscheidungskampf kommt, wenn das Volk in England bereit ist. Dann, Kamerad, verhandeln wir nicht mehr (p.54).

Jimmy is therefore advocating a tactical withdrawal which in no way compromises his revolutionary commitment.

A line inserted in Act IV Scene 2 similarly justifies his

advice to accept Ure's conditions: 'Wir wollen die Entscheidung vertagen, bis alle Städte zum Kampf bereit sind' (p.84). Toller indeed attempts to emphasise Jimmy's commitment through a further addition in Act III Scene 2:

Wible: So willst du Maschinenknechtschaft?
Jimmy: Ich will die Revolution (p.55).

Bütow cites this passage as proof 'daß Toller das Drama bei der Überarbeitung für die zweite Fassung ins Marxistische verschärft hat' (p.193). His statement must be contradicted, not least because Jimmy's conception of revolution is patently un-Marxist: these revisions must be read in the light of Toller's need to reaffirm his own revolutionary commitment in the face of continued Communist (i.e. Marxist) criticism of his role in the 'Räterepublik'⁸. For the same reason, he revised Ned Lud's final words in order to strengthen the note of historical optimism:

Andere werden kommen...
 Wissender, gläubiger, mutiger als wir!
 Und werden kämpfen gegen den wahren Feind!
 Und werden ihn bezwingen!
 Es wankt schon euer Reich, ihr Herren der Welt! (p.121).

Toller took up Ned's words in a letter written about this time, stating the conclusion which is only implicit in the play:

Tun, was uns zu tun notwendig ist. Und kämpften wir umsonst, es werden andere kommen. Ein Kampf, der gegen Jahrhunderte geführt wird, wird nicht in Jahren entschieden. 9

3. Der entfesselte Wotan

Toller's change of heart is confirmed by the comedy Der entfesselte Wotan 'geschrieben in der heiteren Kraft wachsenden Vorfrühlings im Jahre 1923'¹⁰. The very fact that he could write a comedy suggests that he had been able to qualify the pessimism of Der deutsche Hinkemann - indeed some of his contemporaries found Toller's comedy all too light-hearted¹¹.

Later critics have praised the play's prophetic foresight, noting the extraordinary accuracy with which it analyses National Socialism, and anticipates the career of Adolf Hitler¹². Nevertheless, the play is not a prophecy, but a satire of the contemporary resurgence of nationalism and anti-Semitism in post-war Germany, attempting to sketch their social and psychological roots.

Toller himself was quick to emphasise the play's contemporary relevance. His satire was directed explicitly at

jene Typen, die nach meiner tiefsten Überzeugung uns in den jammervollsten Dreck geführt haben und die das Volk, befreit es sich nicht von ihrem Einfluß, weiter und weiter hineinstoßen. 13

He expressly endorsed the portrait of contemporary Germany he had painted in Der deutsche Hinkemann. His comedy was to complement the earlier play: it was intended to influence social reality positively:

Mit welcher furchtbaren Klarheit ich ein Schicksal schon vor zwei Jahren geschaut habe, das jetzt in Deutschland entsteht - das mögen Sie aus dem 'Hinkemann' sehen, den ich Ihnen mit diesem Brief schicke... Daß wir aber aus diesem Taumel der Dumpfheit herausfinden, dazu soll der 'Wotan' mithelfen. 14

He was disappointed that the play would not be performed then and there, clearly demonstrating that he considered its relevance to be immediate¹⁵. Der entfesselte Wotan is therefore a satire on 'völkisch' nationalism, with the intention of weakening its baleful popular influence by exposing its psychological roots.

Wilhelm Dietrich Wotan, the epitome of 'völkisch' nationalism, is made in the image of the Teutonic God; he is introduced in the 'Wotanisches Impromptu' which crudely parodies the revival of Teutonic mythology. Wotan considers himself an unrecognised genius, his poems have been pirated, his inventions suppressed: 'Wie eine germanische Eiche (haben sie) mich ruchlos gefällt' (p.260). His resentment at society's misuse of him has overtones of anti-semitism and 'völkisch' racial ideology:

Die Juden stecken dahinter! Die dreihundert
Weisen von Zion!... Sie werden ihre krummen
Nasen mit Gold umpanzern! Sie werden das
blauäugige Heldenweib in ihr schmutziges
Bett zerren! (p.260).

Schleim, the unemployed salesman, echoes this ideology in disowning his Jewish father: 'Ich verkehre nicht mit Judenzern. Ich betrachte mich als Arier' (p.265).

Wotan also typifies 'völkisch' resentment of the hated republic; its leaders are 'ein Otterngesücht' who have led Germany 'in Irrnis und Wirrnis, in Chaos und Wüste' (p.261). He considers France the traditional enemy and alludes to the 'Dolchstoß'. He rails against

(Jewish) 'Weltfinanz' and the 'Pestsumpf der Zinsknechtschaft', but his real enemy is 'die rote Schmach' (p.291). It is he, and not the Marxists, who will redeem Europe. He sees himself very much as a redeemer figure ('Diktator und Jesus in einer Person' p.273), but the play goes beyond the parody of political messianism, sketching the social climate in which it flourishes.

Wotan's followers are representative of the class and type which espoused right-wing nationalism, and ultimately supported Hitler: the retired officer, the déclassé aristocrat, the reactionary (Jewish) banker, and various representatives of petty-bourgeois officialdom. But Wotan is ultimately 'vom Vertrauen des Volkes erwählt', gaining the acclaim of the masses¹⁶. The only character who rejects Wotan's mission is the young worker: 'Was liegt an Eurem Europa! Jedes Leichenfeld wird Brachfeld. Zum Brachfeld kommt der Pflüger...' (p.262). Toller dedicates his play to 'den Pflügern', but this does not imply a facile alternative, for he was well aware of the ease with which some erstwhile revolutionaries had been converted to 'völkisch' nationalism. The social and economic climate fostered both despair and credulity. The subservience instilled in school and barracks was reinforced by a psychological need to believe which left the masses a prey to unscrupulous demagogy¹⁷. Toller's later comments on National Socialism confirm that he had recognised the economic and psychological ground from which it had sprung¹⁸.

If Hinkemann had been 'ein Schrei in die Zeit', Der entfesselte Wotan is altogether more detached. This detachment is illustrated by the play's elements of self-parody: Toller himself stressed the 'Selbstironie der Sprache'¹⁹, but the self-irony extends into the characterisation. Schleim, a half-Jew, seeks acceptance in nationalist circles: 'Was fragen Sie mich nach meiner Abstammung, fragen Sie mich nach meiner Gesinnung' (p.265). Wotan's messianic mission is a caricature of the role of the Expressionist protagonist; his language often parodies the Expressionist manner, for example, in his vision of rebirth and regeneration: 'der edle Mensch gebiert sich jeden Tag' (p.260). His philosophy is explicitly Activist: 'Es muß was geschehen' he tells his wife, invoking 'des starken Mannes Anfang: Tat!' (p.261)²⁰. He will convert the masses through proclamation and rhetoric. His purpose is, 'die Reinen, die Schlichten, die Unverdorbenen zu sammeln' (p.292), an explicit echo of Toller's student activity in Heidelberg.

Spalek suggests that the play's prophetic significance was not appreciated in Germany. Certainly, it was not performed until February 1926, having been premiered in Moscow, and received its first performance in German in Prague²¹. However, Toller himself suggested that the nationalist campaign against Hinkemann had succeeded in making theatres reject Wotan²². The play was the last he wrote in prison. Thematically, it anticipates the latter years of the decade, in which he

consistently warned against the dangers of Fascism²³. Its importance for his development in the prison years lies in its turn away from the existential pessimism of Hinkemann to a detached satirical analysis of contemporary social trends.

4. Das Schwalbenbuch

Pessimism, qualified by faith in the future, is also the keynote of the poetic cycle Das Schwalbenbuch, 'gewachsen 1922, geschrieben 1923'²⁴. The occasion of the work is well known: 'in meiner Zelle nisteten im Jahre 1922 zwei Schwalben' (p.324). The following discussion is not intended to be a formal analysis of the cycle, but to identify those features which are significant for Toller's psychological and political development²⁵.

In a sequence of free verse poems, the cycle records Toller's feelings, prompted by his contemplation of the swallows: from misery and incipient despair, to wonder and elation, and finally to the quiet strength of stoical acceptance and renewed commitment. On the one hand, therefore, it is descriptive of the gamut of feeling he passed through in 1922/23, forming a lyrical counterpart to the more prosaic record of the prison letters²⁶. On the other hand, it is prescriptive, defining the ideals of regeneration and revolution which are inspired by his contemplation of the swallows.

The death of a friend is the occasion of spiritual crisis, making the monotony and repression of imprisonment unbearable. He finds that even the intellectual freedom which had preserved his integrity is increasingly threatened, as imprisonment becomes a state of mind:

Und wohin du blickst,/Überall/Überall siehst
Du Gitterstäbe./Noch das Kind, das im fernen,
ach so fernen lupinenblühenden Feld spielt,
/Ist gezwängt in die Gitterstäbe Deiner Augen
(pp.325/26).

He sinks into introspection and inertia, and is even driven to contemplate suicide:

Es muß schön sein einzuschlafen jetzt,/
Kristall zu werden im zeitlosen Eismeer des
Schweigens./Genosse Tod./Genosse, Genosse...
(p.327).

It is the unexpected song of the swallows which summons him back to life. They are a token of the coming of spring, and therefore a metaphor for the renewal and regeneration which are both the cause and the object of revolution. He asks what has impelled them to come to Germany, where revolution having been suppressed, spring has become indistinguishable from winter:

Was trieb Euch zum kalten April des kalten
Deutschland?
...
Zu welchem Schicksal kamet Ihr?
O unser Frühling/Ist nicht mehr Hölderlins
Frühling,/ Deutschlands Frühling ward wie
sein Winter,/Frostig und trübe/ Und bar der
wärmenden/Liebe (pp.328/29).

The swallows appear as symbols of freedom: 'Wo soll ich euch eine Stätte bereiten, Vögel der Freiheit?/'

Ich bin ein Gefangener, und mein Wille ist nicht mein Wille' (p.329). He does not perceive imprisonment as a personal misfortune, but as a reflection of the condition of contemporary society: he is a 'Gefangener eingekerkert von Gefangenen' (p.332). The shrill enjoyments of the Jazz Age ('Jazztänze schrill von verruchter Zeit' p.337) cannot obscure the poverty of Man's spiritual state:

All Euer Lärm, Euer Gekreisch, Euer Gekrächz,/
 Euer Freudeplakatieren, Lustigsindwir:/Hahaha-/
 Übertönt nicht/Das leise kratzende/Nagen/
 Der drei heimlichen Ratten/
 Leere... Furcht... Verlassenheit (pp.337-38).

But this deep pessimism about contemporary society is qualified by faith in Man's ability to change his lot: the second half of the poem is a celebration of the revolutionary vision of youth: 'Aber schon schaue ich dich,/Gewandelte Jugend der Revolution' (p.338).

Hinkemann's debilitating recognition that men could be different, but will not be, is reversed in this evocation of what Man could be - and will be.

Significantly, it was this poem which Toller chose to appear in the Leipziger Volkszeitung, on the day the Leipzig première of Der deutsche Hinkemann was reviewed.²⁷ The poem is the optimistic pendant to a pessimistic play, as though Toller had anticipated the Left-wing criticism which the play received, and wished to demonstrate his own continuing commitment. The poem was subsequently published on its own, both before and after the publication of Das Schwalbenbuch, suggesting that, for Toller, it had

a significance which transcended its context in the cycle. He included it in Verbrüderung, a selection from his work, where it serves the function of a preface²⁸. Toller's evaluation of the poem's independent importance makes it worth brief examination. The poem celebrates youth as the force which will transform the old society, and already symbolises the new. Youth is portrayed as the symbol of social rebirth: ('Deine Tat: Zeugung./Deine Stille: Empfängnis./Dein Fest: Geburt') and as the means of achieving it: 'Opfernd/Im todnanen Kampf heroischer Fahne' (p.338).

The celebration of youth as the crucial force in social change is of course a repetitive theme of Toller's work²⁹. In execution, the poem is a good example of Toller's public manner, inviting comparison with earlier work, such as the poem 'Unser weg'³⁰. Its language is abstract and symbolic - conception, birth, spring, heroic banners - and its conception idealist. Its aspirations are unrelated to social conditions, giving no indication as to how youth will transcend the spiritual poverty of society portrayed in the preceding poem. To demonstrate revolutionary action, Toller is forced to resort to the analogy of the swallows which, in an example of solidarity and collective action, join forces to attack a sparrow-hawk and force it to drop its prey: 'Die Schwachen haben den Starken besiegt!/..../ In seligen Flügen feiern die Schwalben den Sieg der Gemeinschaft' (p.339).

The power of community and collective action, shown in an example from the animal world, is derived from Kropotkin's Mutual Aid, which Toller must have read in Landauer's translation³¹. The influence of this work is evident in several passages in Das Schwalbenbuch. For example, Toller interprets the way in which the swallows care for their young as an example of innate social instinct in the animal world: 'Hat der Vater/Das Junge zur Rechten gefüttert,/Füttert die Mutter/Das Junge zur linken./Geheimes Gesetz/Waltet' (p.342). He makes this interpretation explicit in one of the prison letters, observing, after describing the way the swallows care for their young: 'Und es gibt Menschen, die leugnen das soziale Apriori in der Tier- und Menschen-welt. Tier... Mensch, eine Nuance, nicht mehr'³². It is in this context that we must understand the final poem of the cycle:

Ich habe gelernt andächtig zu werden vor Eurem
unnennbaren Tiersein./Bevor nicht die Menschen
wiederfinden den Grund ihrer Tierheit/Bevor
sie nicht sind/Sind/Wird ihr Kampf nur wert
sein/Neuen Kampfes,/Und noch ihre heiligste
Wandlung/Wird wert sein neuer Wandlung (p.350).

Toller's renewed commitment to revolution can therefore be seen to contain a regressive element, looking back to his own earlier work, and to the voluntarist tradition of revolution expounded by Kropotkin, and interpreted by Landauer.

5. Hinkemann: retrospective interpretation and revision

Toller's efforts to revise Hinkemann in the early months of 1924 reveal his own reservations about the play as it stood. His retrospective interpretations of the theme, in which he attempted to qualify pessimism with a reaffirmation of commitment, confirm that the original version of the play is only partly consistent with his overall political development.

In his retrospective comments, Toller claimed that he had written the play at a time when, 'ich, schmerzhaft, die tragische Grenze aller Glücksmöglichkeiten sozialer Revolution erkannte'³³. While there was much suffering which could be attributed directly to the inadequacies of the social system, there was a residue which no form of social organisation could alleviate. There would always be cases like Hinkemann's, and these constituted the essential tragedy of human society:

Auch der Kommunismus hat seine Tragödie. Immer wird es Individuen geben, deren Leid unlösbar ist. Und gibt es ein Individuum, dessen Leid nie enden kann, ist die Tragik des einen Individuums gleichzeitig die Tragik der Gesellschaft, in der es lebt. 34

Despite this retrospective emphasis, the play is demonstrably not 'die Tragödie des Sozialismus'³⁵; Toller's comments shed more light on his own development than on the play he had written. He was anxious to stress that his recognition of the inherent limitations of Socialism had weakened neither his conviction nor his

commitment: 'als ob, wer die tragische Grenze der Glücksmöglichkeiten sozialer Revolutionen ahnt, darum weniger rigoros für die Umgestaltung sozialer Un-ordnung zu kämpfen gewillt ist',³⁶. This statement is repeated and elaborated in his letter to Stefan Zweig, in which he asserted that only the weak despaired, stressing the need for commitment without illusions:

Ich sage das nicht aus Resignation. Nur der Schwache resigniert, wenn er sich außerstande sieht, dem ersehnten Traum die vollkommene Verwirklichung zu geben. Dem Starken nimmt es nichts von seinem leidenschaftlichen Wollen, wenn er wissend wird. Not tun uns heute nicht die Menschen, die blind sind im großen Gefühl, not tun uns, die wollen - obwohl sie wissen.

Toller's comments are both a statement of his own position, and a retrospective gloss on the character of Hinkemann; in reaffirming his own commitment, and explicitly rejecting resignation, he was distancing himself from his protagonist. Hinkemann no longer has the strength to dream: 'Ich habe die Kraft nicht mehr. Die Kraft nicht mehr zu kämpfen, die Kraft nicht mehr zum Traum' (p.244). His new insight has sapped his will-power to the point where he can no longer carry on: 'Alles Sehen wird mir Wissen, alles Wissen Leid. Ich will nicht mehr' (p.245). In his letter to Stefan Zweig, Toller is posing an alternative to this despair; it was one he was increasingly concerned to emphasise in the play itself.

Toller had made one important change to the play even before it was produced. Der deutsche Hinkemann had

been widely interpreted as an allegory of post-war Germany, impotent and defeated; it was this interpretation which led to the Nationalist campaign of disturbance and intimidation, when the play was produced in Dresden in January 1924³⁷. Toller explicitly rejected this interpretation, and believing that it was the title which was misleading, shortened it to Hinkemann for the play's first performance in Leipzig in September 1923. The play was reprinted under the new title in January 1924, though initially the text remained unchanged³⁸.

In the following months, Toller attempted to revise the play in order to mitigate its unrelieved pessimism. The revisions were no doubt partly a response to the left-wing accusations of 'defeatism', which Toller took very much to heart, angrily repudiating the charge that he had abandoned his political commitment³⁹. He had his own reservations about the play itself, however, acknowledging that there might well be (political) arguments against allowing it to be performed⁴⁰. He consequently made a number of revisions which were incorporated into the new edition of Hinkemann published later that year⁴¹.

Of the two major changes, the one is largely structural, the other ideological. Toller shifted the chorus of old soldiers from its original place in the fairground scene (Act 2 Scene 3) to Act 3 Scene 1, assimilating it to Hinkemann's nightmare vision of society. The change is not only structurally more

effective, but conceptually more logical. As part of Hinkemann's nightmare, it becomes an aspect of his heightened awareness. The old soldiers' ingrained habits of chauvinism and military discipline exemplify the instinctual response which inhibits social change, and therefore illustrate, as does the rest of Hinkemann's nightmare, a specific lesson of his encounter with his fellow-workers in the preceding scene.

The most important change, however, was to the ending, where Toller deleted the stage direction in which Hinkemann prepares the noose with which he will hang himself. The removal of the suicide motif, obviously intended to mitigate the play's predominant pessimism, necessitated corresponding changes to the character's motivation, which Toller attempted to make through other minor changes to the text.

He had made the first of these changes for the second production of the play in Dresden in January 1924, inserting new lines in the crucial passage in which Hinkemann attempts to explain his despair: 'O würde mir alles Leid Wille: es müssen Menschen kommen, die alles Leid lebten und dennoch wollten'⁴². A slightly different version of this passage, but with the same intention of posing a positive alternative to Hinkemann's despair, appeared in the second edition of the play, published later that year. Wolfgang Frühwald has

already identified the crucial importance of this passage, which Toller repeatedly revised in successive versions of the play⁴³.

Toller clearly wished to qualify the pessimism of Hinkemann's social perception with the suggestion of future optimism. He also made other small changes to the text, such as the modification of Grete Hinkemann's comparison of society to being 'in einem Wald voll wilder Tiere', which became 'in einem Wald voll genetzter Tiere'. If the first version suggested that human nature is inherently cruel and predatory, the second suggests external causation. 'Keiner ist gut' became 'keiner ist gut heute', implying that human cruelty was not innate, but a product of the age, thus echoing her earlier conclusion: 'Schuld ist eine Zeit, in der es sowas gibt'.

It must be said that Toller's revisions are not sufficiently radical to achieve his aim, as the passage he most frequently changed best exemplifies. The purpose of the passage is to explain and motivate Hinkemann's suicide; Toller's revisions do not alter this, they simply clarify it. While Hinkemann now outlines an alternative to his own despair, it is only to emphasise what he himself is incapable of: 'Alles Sehen wird mir Wissen, alles Wissen Leid. Menschen, die alles Leid leben und dennoch wollen... Ich will nicht mehr'⁴⁴. Toller's revisions to this crucial passage which, with the

specific use of the word 'dennoch', reformulates the argument he had used to Stefan Zweig, confirm that he increasingly wished Hinkemann to illustrate the attitude of commitment without illusions which was to become characteristic of his later work. In fact, Hinkemann's despair remains unchanged, and the logic of despair is suicide. It is therefore Toller's original ending which is more consistent with the play he had actually written.

Toller's attitude of commitment without illusions was therefore formed during his last two years in prison. The attempt to mitigate the profound pessimism of Der deutsche Hinkemann is reflected firstly in the revisions to Die Maschinenstürmer and in Der entfesselte Wotan which, in satirising the contemporary resurgence of nationalism, aimed to contribute positively to changing social reality. Toller's restatement of his ideals of regeneration and revolution in Das Schwalbenbuch qualify deep pessimism about contemporary society with faith in the revolutionary vision of youth; the evident influence of Kropotkin indicates that Toller's renewed commitment to social revolution contains elements which are ideologically regressive. Finally, Toller's revisions to Hinkemann attempt to qualify resignation with reaffirmation: to use the play to illustrate the attitude of 'dennoch'. The fact that they fail to do so strongly suggests that the tendency of the play he had written could not be reconciled with the pattern of his subsequent development.

Notes to Chapter IX.

- 1 Bütow, op.cit., pp.143, 214. In the case of Hinkemann, he refers throughout to the Reclam edition, edited by Wolfgang Frühwald, which prints the text of the second edition.
- 2 For successive printings of Die Wandlung, see Spalek nos. 65-70. For Masse Mensch, see Spalek nos. 39-45; see also Chapter IV, note 1 above.
- 3 See Spalek no.34.
- 4 For discussion of the various endings to Hoppla, see Chapter XI below. For the two endings to Pastor Hall, see GW III pp.313-316 and pp.330-331.
- 5 Bilder aus der großen französischen Revolution. Historische Folge in 15 Bildern. The contents of the scenario are outlined in Festschrift zum 25. Gewerkschaftsfest Leipzig am 6. August 1922, see Spalek no. 2289.
- 6 L. Hoffmann and D. Hoffmann-Ostwald, Deutsches Arbeitertheater 1918-33. Ein Dokumentation, Berlin 1961, p.33.
- 7 See Spalek no.34. The revised version was published later that year, and is marked '1922, fünftes bis zehntes Tausend', E.P.Tal und Co. Verlag, Leipzig/Wien/Zürich. Page references are to this edition.
- 8 See Chapter VI/5 above.
- 9 Letter to Tessa, 14.8.1922, GW V, p.113.
- 10 Der entfesselte Wotan. Eine Komödie, Potsdam 1923. Reprinted GW II, pp.249-302; page references are to this edition.
- 11 Cf. Max Brod's critique of the production in Prague, Der Fall Toller, pp.166-68, also Ernst Niekisch, Gewagtes Leben, Cologne and Berlin, 1958, p.103.
- 12 Cf. Willibrand, op.cit., pp.77-81; Heinz Beckmann, 'Eine prophetische Komödie', Zeitwende, 8 August 1969. There is a stimulating discussion of Wotan in H-J Knobloch, Das Ende des Expressionismus. Von der Tragödie zur Komödie, Berne and Frankfurt 1975, pp.93-107. The most comprehensive analysis of the play is contained in Altenhofer, op.cit., pp.218-250.
- 13 Letter to the actor Max Pallenberg, 20.6.1923, GW V, p.154.

- 14 Ibid.
- 15 Cf. LP, p.255, where the letter to Max Pallenberg has a final paragraph which is not included in the German edition:
- You say you will not perform the play now: perhaps in six months time, you'll say, this is the moment to produce the play. You will say it with that sense of responsibility which belongs to your vocation.
- 16 Cf. letter to B., 28.6.1923, GW V, p.155:
- Reaktion und Kleinbürgertum rufen heute mit der gleichen Inbrunst nach der Diktatur und meinen: einen Diktator mit unbeschränkter Machtfülle. Dieser Ruf ist Ausdruck einer seelischen Stimmung, die erschreckt, weil sie auch die Massen ergreift.
- This passage, describing what Toller portrays in his play, is one of many parallels confirming the essential authenticity of the Briefe - see Introduction, particularly note 27.
- 17 Cf. letter to Gustav Mayer, 7.2.1921, GW V, p.61:
- Nicht ohne Befürchtungen betrachte ich das Aufkommen der mannigfachen Bünde, besonders der pseudoreligiösen Bünde, die ich für Zentren künstlicher Betäubung halte. Die Unfähigkeit zu glauben, greift nach einem Opiat. Diese Menschen brauchen Rausch, denn nur im Rausch vermögen sie zu glauben, daß sie glauben. (Auch in extremen politischen Parteien findet man sie.)
- 18 Cf. Chapter XV/2(iii), particularly note 37.
- 19 Toller refers to 'die Selbstironie in der Sprache' (see GW II, p.364). Dorothea Klein has already suggested that the play contains elements of self-parody - see Klein, Der Wandel, p.116.
- 20 Toller pursues this self-parody in the character of Karl Thomas in Hoppla, wir leben! - see Chapter XI.
- 21 The play was first performed at the Bolshoi Theatre, Moscow, 16 November 1924. The first production in German was at the Deutsches Theater, Prague, 29 January 1925. The first production in Germany was directed by Jürgen Fehling at the Tribüne, Berlin, 23 February 1926.
- 22 Letter to Tessa, 23.2.24, GW V, pp.179-80.

- 23 Toller explicitly warned against the threat of Fascism as early as 1926 - see Chapter X/2(ii) below.
- 24 Das Schwalbenbuch, Potsdam 1924. Page references are to GW II, which reprints the text of the first edition, but incorporates corrections made in subsequent printings during 1924.
- 25 The most comprehensive analysis of Das Schwalbenbuch is in Reso, 'Gefängniserlebnis und dichterische Widerspiegelung in der Lyrik Ernst Tollers' in WB VII, 3 (1961), pp.520-556. There is a useful short analysis in Pittock, Ernst Toller, 1979, pp.157-61.
- 26 'Ich bin nicht mehr allein - immer sind Schwalben um mich. Es ist gut zu wissen, daß nicht alle Bewohner der Zelle gefangen sind. Fröhlich macht dieses Wissen.'
- letter to Tessa 23.6.1922, GW V, p.106.
- There are a number of subsequent references to the swallows, one of which refers to the process of composition:
- 'Es wächst ein eigentümliches Buch, das "Schwalbenbuch" wächst, ohne daß ich viel dazu tue, wächst nach seinem eignen Rythmus, nach seinen eignen Gesetzen.'
- letter to Tessa of 29.7.1923, GW V, p.161.
- 27 Leipziger Volkszeitung No.218, 18 September 1923, Feuilleton, where it appeared under the title 'Die Jugend der Revolution'. Cf. Spalek no.224, where it is described as an 'excerpt from Das Schwalbenbuch, beginning with 'Menschen, wie arm Eure Feste' - the text differs from the later published version'.
- 28 Verbrüderung. Ausgewählte Dichtungen, Berlin 1930, pp.15-16 in which it is published - very much as an author's preface - under the title 'Schon schaue ich dich, gewandelte Jugend'.
- The poem had also appeared, prior to the publication of Das Schwalbenbuch, in Vorwärts, 27 March 1924, Beilage: Heimwelt I. Cf. Spalek 233. It was subsequently published in Kulturwille II (1925), 4, p.72, under the title 'Die neue Jugend'.
- 29 Cf. 'Leitsätze für einen kulturpolitischen Bund der Jugend in Deutschland' (1917); Die Wandlung, 11.Bild (1918); 'An die Jugend aller Länder' (1919), the 'Chor der Jugend' in Requiem den erschossenen Brüdern (1920); 'Den Jungen gilt mein Wort' (1922); 'Konflikte der Jugend' (1929) in Quer Durch, pp.258-267.

- 29 (continued)
The appeal to youth was, of course, a common theme of left-wing literature, particularly in the 'Sprechchor' movement. As titles which exemplify this trend, one might mention Bruno Schönlanck's Jugendtag, or Karl Ziack's Ein Gedicht der Jugend, both published by the Arbeiterjugend-Verlag.
- 30 'Unser Weg', first published in Die Weltbühne XVI, 51, 16 December 1920, later included in Tag des Proletariats (1920) and in Gedichte der Gefangenen (1921), where it appears as a kind of epilogue.
- 31 Landauer had translated it into German in 1904 as Gegenseitige Hilfe in der Entwicklung: a new edition appeared in 1908 with the title Gegenseitige Hilfe in der Tier- und Menschenwelt. Wolfgang Frühwald notes an 'unverkürzte Volksausgabe', published in Leipzig in 1923 (see Toller, Hinkemann, W. Frühwald ed., p.61).
The parallels between Das Schwalbenbuch and Mutual Aid are discussed at greater length in Ossar, op.cit., pp.118-122.
- 32 Letter to Tessa, 14.8.1922, GW V, p.112.
- 33 Letter to Stefan Zweig, 13.6.1923, GW V, p.152.
- 34 See note 33.
- 35 See Chapter VIII, note 3.
- 36 Letter to Alfred Kerr, 6.4.1923, in K. Edschmid, Briefe der Expressionisten, pp.133-34. He repeats the idea, of course, in his letter to Stefan Zweig (see note 33), one of several examples of confirmation of the authenticity of letters in Briefe from other published or unpublished correspondence. See Introduction, note 26.
- 37 For a full account of the 'Hinkemann-Skandal', see Hinkemann, W. Frühwald ed., pp.89-93 and ter Haar, pp.39-43.
- 38 Hinkemann. Eine Tragödie in drei Akten, see Spalek no.23. That the play was produced in Leipzig under the title Hinkemann is clear from references in the debate in the Sächsischer Landtag in January 1924, following the disturbances in Dresden (see ter Haar, p.211, note 109).
- 39 Cf. letter to a Communist critic, 28.9.1923, GW V, p.167. The letter is dated shortly after the Leipzig première of Hinkemann, so that the criticism

- 39 (continued)
presumably referred to the play. The allegations of 'defeatism' were repeated by Communist deputies in the debate in the Sächsischer Landtag (see note 38 above).
- 40 Letter to (Ernst) Niekisch, 28.2.1924, GW V, p.180.
- 41 Hinkemann. Eine Tragödie, Potsdam 1924, see Spalek no.24.
- 42 See ter Haar, op.cit., p.204, note 32.
- 43 Hinkemann, W. Frühwald ed., p.59.
- 44 Ibid., p.52. Subsequent impressions of the play are virtually identical to the second edition, though they incorporate the successive variants of this short passage (see Spalek nos. 25-27).

SECTION E. Toller in the Weimar Republic 1924-33

X. PUBLIC FIGURE AND POLITICAL WRITER

1. Biographical outline

Much less has been written about Toller's years of freedom in the Weimar Republic than about any other period of his life. Bütow suggests that little is known about the life he led after his release from prison, but it is more accurate to say that the available information has not yet been collected and analysed¹. This omission has been matched by a comparative neglect of his work during the period, much of which is only now emerging from obscurity. It is symptomatic of this neglect that much of his major work from this period remained out of print for almost fifty years until its recent republication². This neglect is combined with the assertion that Toller's creative powers declined and his political commitment weakened after 1924; the available evidence supports neither proposition.

Toller had emerged from prison embarrassingly famous, and not the least of his problems had been learning to live with his standing as a literary and political celebrity. He devoted much time to personal appearances and readings from his work, but despite these distractions he was active both politically and creatively. Despite initial difficulties, he was able to re-integrate himself into the political life of the Republic. He campaigned energetically on behalf of political prisoners, and made an effective contribution to campaigns against 'class

justice' and censorship³. He was prominent in the Volksbühne controversy of 1926/27, was involved in the campaign against the indemnification of the German princes (1926), and was a member of the unofficial committee of inquiry into the events of May Day 1929 in Berlin. Though he never rejoined a political party, he was an active member of the 'Liga für Menschenrechte'⁴, joined the 'Gruppe revolutionärer Pazifisten' (1929) and became a familiar figure at international congresses and conferences⁵.

Despite these distractions, he was able, during these years, to produce five plays - Hoppla, wir leben! (1927), Bourgeois bleibt Bourgeois (with Walter Hasenclever) (1928), Feuer aus den Kesseln (1930), Wunder in Amerika (with Hermann Kesten) (1931) and Die blinde Göttin (1933), two works of documentary prose - Justiz. Erlebnisse (1927) and Quer Durch (1930), as well as a large number of literary and political essays.

There was certainly a decline in Toller's reputation after 1930, which can be seen in the reception of his work. Feuer aus den Kesseln, though well received by the critics, was a box-office failure; the publication of Quer Durch was virtually ignored. Neither work was reprinted in his lifetime and none of the plays he wrote after 1930 received a Berlin première. The reasons for this comparative lack of success lay primarily, however, in the deteriorating political situation, and the abrupt

change of public mood which accompanied it. The commercial theatre was increasingly dominated by operetta and escapist fantasy; working-class theatre groups turned almost exclusively to 'Agitprop'. There was growing censorship, of which Toller himself was a direct victim. In 1932, he was to make a series of broadcasts on his visit to Republican Spain the previous winter, which were programmed, then abruptly cancelled. Die blinde Göttin received its première in Vienna - presumably because no suitable theatre could be found in Germany.

The political position Toller adopted in the Weimar Republic, that of an independent revolutionary Socialist advocating a Broad Left Front, was one which he had virtually defined before leaving prison⁶. At the same time, his political perceptions changed during these years, largely through the impact of a social reality from which prison had isolated him. The radicalisation of some of his views reflects the growing political polarisation in the Republic. Toller increasingly recognised the role of material and historical conditions, and their influence on political consciousness, which in turn forced him to re-evaluate once more the idealist and voluntarist inheritance of Landauer and Eisner. His firmer grasp of political reality is reflected in his literary work, both in the change of style and subject-matter and in the choice of medium.

Having declined to re-enter party politics, he turned increasingly to journalism and public speaking as the means of influencing social reality; in both of these activities, he was concerned with specific issues, involving concrete short-term goals. The changes in his political thinking during these years can be followed in three main areas - his conception of Socialism and revolution, his documentary prose and political journalism, and his theoretical statements on political theatre.

2. Toller's conception of revolution

(i) Deutsche Revolution

Toller was not an original political thinker, and it is not surprising that he never made a complete and systematic statement of his views. He came closest to doing so in a speech to Berlin trade unionists on the occasion of the seventh anniversary of the November Revolution⁷. Although it is one of his few extended statements on the nature of revolution, it has received little critical attention⁸.

Deutsche Revolution takes the form of reflections on the course of the November Revolution, providing an indispensable yardstick for the evolution of Toller's ideology. It shows his continuing efforts to come to terms with the intellectual inheritance of Landauer and Eisner, and to reconcile it with precepts of materialism.

The success of revolutionary action, Toller suggests, depends on the proletariat's 'Wille zur Macht'. In November 1918, there had been no obstacle to working-class power, except the unwillingness of the working-class to exercise it: 'Denn hätten wir gewußt, das Entscheidende zu tun, keiner wäre so mächtig gewesen, wider unseren Willen zu handeln, die Revolution preiszugeben den alten Gewalten' (p.160). This emphasis on will suggests the residual influence of Landauer, who had contended that revolution was always possible, irrespective of social and economic conditions, if enough people wanted it⁹. Toller's insistence that the objective conditions existed is one of several examples of his attempt to integrate voluntarist ideas into a materialist framework.

The will to power was itself only one half of the equation, the other being the will to creative action:

Nur durch Tat und Tun kann man überzeugen,
 durch Tat, die sich nicht wegdisputieren läßt
 in Leitartikeln, durch Tun, das alle, auch
 die Widerstrebenden, bindet in sinnvoller
 Arbeit. Tat und Tun - Einmaliges und
 Mannigfaltiges - so deuten wir das Wesen
 der Revolution (p.162).

Toller uses the terms 'Tat' and 'Tun' in a sense corresponding directly to Landauer's distinction between political and social revolution. 'Tat' is the seizure of political power: 'Tun' is the task of social reconstruction which political revolution itself cannot guarantee. The reflection of this distinction in Toller's prison plays is examined elsewhere¹⁰. It is a

distinction he continued to make as late as 1933¹¹.

Social revolution rested on the growth of the spirit of community, the lack of which Toller diagnosed as a key factor in the failure of the German Revolution:

Als Schöpferisches muß hinzukommen Geist der Gemeinschaft. Hatten wir den?... Eine Revolution, der der Geist fehlt, gleicht einer Flamme, die jäh auflodert, um ziellos zu verflackern, weil ihr die nährenden Kraft mangelt (p.162).

Toller is using the term 'Geist' in the sense of a creative force which will transform society according to the humanitarian and communitarian principles of Socialism; it becomes increasingly, in his language, a metaphor for the development of Socialist consciousness. Significantly, he did not see it as a purely rational force:

Geist: das ist von Gefühl und Erkenntnis zugleich besessen sein, skeptisches Wissen haben, und trotzdem die unbedingte Hingabe, die Kühnheit des Gläubigen, in heller Entschlossenheit Dennoch! zu sagen, Grenzen sehen, alle und noch die grauesten Wirklichkeiten tragen und ertragen können und sich nicht lähmen lassen (pp.162-3).

'Geist' is therefore a synthesis of emotional commitment and rational judgement, lacking the mystical overtones with which Landauer had invested it. It is the political awareness, and consequent commitment, which make revolution possible - and the creative vision which alone can make it productive.

It would be wrong to identify Toller with the 'Vernunftrepublikaner' such as Heinrich Mann, for he was

sceptical of the power of intellect. Reason without commitment remained sterile: reason without vision was so often wrong-headed. We can see here the doubt which made Toller profoundly sceptical of the intellectual's role in society¹².

'Gemeinschaft', like 'Geist' is a key category in Toller's revolutionary Socialism, a term he uses both prescriptively, as an ultimate goal, and descriptively, meaning the quality of feeling necessary to produce that goal. In the prescriptive sense, it defines a society striving for common ends, and consequently organised in a particular way; descriptively, it denotes the unity which springs from a sense of common purpose and endeavour. In the conscious revolutionary these two are fused: 'Gemeinschaft, das ist aus Einheit des Wesens kämpfen'. Instinctive feeling will reinforce rational understanding. In the German revolution they had all too often been divided against each other: 'Wir sahen mit sozialistischen Augen, wir handelten aus unsozialistischen Instinkten' (p.163). Even those who were intellectually committed to Socialism, often reacted instinctually in a way which contradicted their professed principles¹³.

The consciousness of too many workers had been corrupted by the values and material conditions of bourgeois society - undermined by subservience or brutalised by deprivation. He saw the acquisition of Socialist consciousness in a longer perspective, since

he recognised much more clearly the effect of material environment, which often determined consciousness in ways which rational persuasion was powerless to change: 'Die Menschen lassen sich selten durch Worte überzeugen, und wenn sie sich überzeugen lassen, bleiben sie nicht bei ihrer Überzeugung' (p.162).

In this sense, the idea of 'Gemeinschaft', and the growth of consciousness on which it rested, reflected social and material conditions. In a capitalist society, such as the Weimar Republic, the spirit of community was expressed in working-class unity and solidarity - here again we see a development of one of Toller's most characteristic ideas, for it was precisely the lack of that spirit which had caused the sectarian divisions within the labour movement, which he continued to identify as a major cause of the failure of the November Revolution: 'Geist der Gemeinschaft. Hatten wir den? Hat die deutsche Arbeiterschaft ihre Macht nicht mit zerstören helfen durch den Egoismus der Parteien, der Gruppen, der Personen?' (p.162).

Deutsche Revolution also confirms Toller's thinking on the question of revolutionary action and the use of force¹⁴. He had outlined his attitude in his final statement to the Munich Court Martial:

Ich würde mich nicht Revolutionär nennen, wenn ich sagte, niemals kann es für mich in Frage kommen, bestehende Zustände mit Gewalt zu ändern. Wir Revolutionäre erkennen das Recht zur Revolution an dann, wenn wir einsehen, daß Zustände... nicht mehr zu ertragen sind, daß sie erstarrt sind; dann haben wir das Recht, sie umzustürzen. 15

He thus explicitly condoned the use of force where it was the only way to change conditions which were intolerable. It has already been shown that this statement contradicts the tendency of Masse Mensch, and that, at a deeper, emotional level, he found it difficult to resolve this conflict between moral principle and political action. The fact remains that this stated position was one he frequently repeated over the next decade.

He recognised that the absolute moral principle was incompatible with the demands of political action, that the absolute pacifist must be clear that he could not also be a revolutionary Socialist¹⁶. The revolutionary had to recognise that he could not choose the means at his disposal, 'daß Gesetz und Folgen seines Kampfes von anderen Mächten bestimmt werden, als seinen guten Absichten' (p.162). He concluded that no revolution could dispense with force, but that there were distinguishing emphases ('Akzentunterschiede'); the revolutionary Socialist would never use force for its own sake, and if obliged to use it, would see it as 'furchtbares, tragisch notwendiges Mittel'¹⁷. Both the

thought and its expression emphasise the consistency of Toller's position: ten years earlier, he had felt the use of force to be 'tragische Notwendigkeit'¹⁸. Further proof of this consistency was his decision to join the 'Gruppe revolutionärer Pazifisten' in 1926. The group dismissed unconditional pacifism as counter-revolutionary; class struggle was the only means of bringing about a social and political order which would ensure peace.

Deutsche Revolution, which predates Toller's collaboration with Erwin Piscator, marks a turning-point in his political development. On the one hand, it looks back to his earlier work - indeed, the speech ends with a rhetorical appeal which encapsulates Cobbett's final speech in Die Maschinenstürmer. On the other hand, it paints a sober picture of the Weimar Republic of 1925, anticipating the portrayal of political reality in Hoppla, wir leben!

(ii) 'Nationalsozialismus'

Toller's political views continued to develop in the course of the decade, acquiring a more radical, sometimes Marxist, note, which reflects the increasing political polarisation of the Weimar Republic. Symptomatic of this polarisation was Toller's radio discussion with Alfred Mühr, Nazi editor of the Deutsche Zeitung, which states some of his characteristic views at this time¹⁹.

Toller rejected the bourgeois democracy of the Weimar Republic, in which the ruling class manipulated the democratic structure in their own interests: '(Der Bürger) benutzt die demokratischen Rechte, um die große Masse des werktätigen Volkes von materiellen und geistigen Gütern auszuschließen' (p.15)²⁰. He believed that the very nature of bourgeois society made class conflict inevitable. However, these Marxist precepts are contained within a conceptual framework which reveals a continuing debt to Landauer and Eisner.

Economic theory had to be matched by moral commitment: 'Kant hat einmal gesagt: 'Begriffe ohne Anschauungen sind blind'' (p.33). The economic framework of Socialism was important only in so far as it allowed an egalitarian and participative democracy to emerge. He rejected the dictatorship of the proletariat in favour of a more vaguely defined classless society:

Wir Sozialisten wollen nicht nur das Bürgertum beseitigen, auch das Proletariat... Wir wollen an Stelle gesellschaftlicher Klassen die klassenlose Gesellschaft, das Volk mit wirtschaftlich und kulturell gleichen Entfaltungsmöglichkeiten (pp.26-27).

He did not share the belief of the KPD in the leadership role of the revolutionary party. Revolutions were neither dictated from above by political parties, nor instigated by an élite revolutionary vanguard: 'Revolutionen werden nicht 'gemacht'. Ihnen gehen Zusammenbrüche voraus' (p.11). The German Revolution had come from below as a largely spontaneous response to the collapse of the

existing social order. He did not discount the role of leadership, indeed it was precisely the lack of it which he identified as a major cause of the failure of the November Revolution. Revolution was not the inevitable result of a particular point in the historical dialectic, but rested on conscious insight and commitment. It was this conception of the revolutionary process which informed Feuer aus den Kesseln, and which received an extended exposition in his autobiography²¹.

He continued to believe that the success of a revolutionary movement depended on its 'Wille zur Macht', and on concerted mass action. In February 1929, he interpreted Eisner's resignation a decade earlier as 'Wiedersichereinreihen in die Front der Arbeiterschaft... ein Versuch zur Neuorganisierung aller zielbewußten Kräfte'²² - that is, as an attempt to create a united revolutionary front. The idea of united front action dominated his thinking in the last years of the Republic. In the deteriorating situation of 1930, he saw 'die Einheitsfront der deutschen Gewerkschaften' as the only force capable of averting the threat of Nazism; two years later, he appealed for 'die Schaffung einer einheitlichen Organisation der gesamten Arbeiterklasse mit klar umrissenen konkreten Kampfzielen'²³.

3. Documentary prose and political journalism

Toller's firmer grasp of political reality, and his growing ability to analyse objective conditions, are both reflected in his increasing resort to documentary prose and political journalism. The articles he wrote for Die Weltbühne and other periodicals are characterised by a concrete style in which facts are observed, recorded, and used to illustrate a political argument.

In the first years after his release, Toller campaigned energetically on behalf of political prisoners in Bavaria. Interviewed at the time of his release, he claimed he had no literary plans, being concerned solely with the question of an amnesty for his political comrades still imprisoned²⁴. On 18 July 1924, only three days after his release, he gave evidence on conditions in Niederschönenfeld to a Reichstag parliamentary committee. It was this testimony which formed the basis of a series of short articles, published under the general title Dokumente bayerischer Justiz, in which he described the experience of himself and his fellow-prisoners²⁵. It was these pieces, with some additional material, which were published in book form in 1927 as Justiz. Erlebnisse²⁶. If their original publication in 1924/25 had been part of a short-term campaign for an amnesty, their appearance in book form, after most of the prisoners had already been released, was intended to place the treatment of political prisoners in Bavaria into a broader perspective²⁷.

The title of the original articles itself suggests that Toller did not intend to give a subjective account of his own experience, but an objective documentation:

Diese Sammlung möge nicht als Buch meiner Gefängniszeit betrachtet werden. Jenes Buch, das aus Distanz geschrieben werden muß, weil nur so Nähe erreicht wird, bleibt als Aufgabe (p.9).

Contemporary critics were indeed virtually unanimous in admiring the sober, detached tone of the book, in which 'subjektives Erlebnis nahezu restlos objektiviert wird'²⁸.

Toller's theme of 'Klassenjustiz' is exemplified in the crude manipulation of the law to secure a death sentence against Eugen Leviné, in the dubious legal justification for the charges of high treason brought against Toller and others, in the arbitrary application of the regulations for fortress prisoners, in the politically-motivated refusal to apply successive Reich amnesties to left-wing prisoners in Bavaria, in the death by neglect of August Hagemeister, and not least in Toller's own expulsion from Bavaria on his release from prison. The book is intended as incontrovertible proof that he and his comrades had been the victims of class justice: 'Jedes Kapitel belichtet beispielhaft den Geist bayerischer Justiz, darüber hinaus: den Geist der Klassenjustiz' (p.8).

The bourgeois class had deliberately perverted justice to defend its own privileged position:

Das Bürgertum, in seiner Macht von den Pionieren künftiger Gesellschaftsgestaltung bedroht, hat, sehend oder blind, seine Idee der Gerechtigkeit preisgegeben (p.7).

The continuing influence of neo-Kantian philosophy is implicit in the perception of the bourgeois state as a power mechanism - and in the contrasting idea of a universally valid conception of justice. At the same time, Toller accepted that the Law could not be seen in isolation:

Rechtszustände dürfen nicht isoliert betrachtet werden: auch sie sind Machtauswirkungen der Herrschenden, sind Symptome für Umfassenderes, für Wesentliches und Wesendes der Zeit (p.15).

Class justice was therefore the product of a class society. This materialist perception of the Law, which is seen to reflect the ethos of the ruling class, is juxtaposed with an abstract conception of justice which implies universal moral categories. The tension between these two perceptions is evident in both Feuer aus den Kesseln and Die blinde Göttin.

Toller's concern with specific issues, and his pursuit of limited concrete objectives, are apparent in much of his political journalism, which alone effectively disproves the well-worn argument that he failed to come to terms with political developments in the Weimar Republic. Some of these articles are written in the margin of the great issues of the decade, such as disarmament, or the struggle for colonial freedom²⁹, but rather more deal with specific short-term issues,

such as the battleship debate, or the campaign to free Max Hölz. While the first type of article was clearly intended to influence social consciousness in the longer term, the latter sought to mobilise public opinion immediately, and were sometimes combined with public speaking in support of a specific campaign.

The manner of these articles matches the subject-matter. Toller's firmer grasp of political reality is evident in his presentation of material conditions: factual recording of these conditions and their causes has replaced an emotional response to the suffering they cause. In 'Das sozialistische Wien', for example, he does not proclaim abstract aspirations, but records the concrete achievements of the Socialist 'Gemeinderat' in Vienna³⁰. In 'Heimarbeit', he describes the conditions of domestic workers in the 'Erzgebirge', in the hope that publicity will force discussion and eventual improvement³¹. In 'Sprechen wir vom Panzerkreuzer', the short-term intention of intervening in the battleship controversy is balanced by a critique of the long-term consequences of the 'Realpolitik' of the SPD, which had led it into collusion with militarist and anti-democratic forces³².

Toller's grasp of political reality is most apparent in his insight into National Socialism. He had long shared the belief of the Weltbühne circle in a Broad Left Front as the only possible antidote to the increasing domination of the Republic by its enemies.

He had recognised the dangers of European Fascism, and the imperative of opposing it, as early as 1927: 'Der Faschismus ist eine solche Gefahr für die europäische Arbeiterschaft, daß ich glaube, man sollte jede Offensive gegen ihn begrüßen...' ³³. By early 1929, he could foresee the consequences of a Fascist takeover in Germany:

...wir stehen vor einer Herrschaftsperiode der Reaktion. Glaube keiner, die Periode eines noch so gemäßigten, noch so schlaunen Faschismus werde eine sehr kurze Übergangsperiode sein. Was jenes System an revolutionärer, sozialistischer, republikanischer Energie zerstört, ist kaum in Jahren wiederaufzubauen. ³⁴

He repeated these words in October 1930 in his article 'Reichskanzler Hitler', going on to predict the Nazis' seizure of power and its results - the repeal of social legislation, the purge of SPD supporters from positions of influence, the destruction of the trade unions ³⁵.

Although he had no illusions about Republican democracy, he saw the necessity of defending it against Fascism. If Hitler came to power, he predicted in June 1932, 'wird er die Reste der Verfassung mit Hilfe der Verfassung außer Kraft setzen' ³⁶. Such insight is in striking contrast to the self-deception of both SPD and KPD.

4. Political Theatre

Toller considered his activities as political journalist and dramatist to be complementary: the distinction between artistic and political activity,

which he had made in his prison letters, receded. In the summer of 1926, he discussed with Piscator and others 'die Gründung eines Theaters und einer Zeitschrift... die alle linken intellektuellen Kräfte zusammenfassen sollten',³⁷. In the controversy which split the 'Volksbühne' movement in 1926-27, he advocated an unequivocally 'political' theatre³⁸, which he sought to define in his main theoretical statements from 1927³⁹.

He continued to believe that political art would influence working-class consciousness by confronting the worker with the reality of his own life:

Die Arbeiter, die ihr Leben in künstlerischer Form auf dem Theater sehen, werden von solchem Theater aufs Stärkste angezogen. Fragen Sie die Wiener, lassen Sie sich erzählen, wie die Arbeiter mitlebten, wie sie fühlten: du bist es, der hier spricht, du bist es, der hier handelt. 40

If consciousness developed through commitment and struggle, drama must portray that struggle, depicting not only personal but social conflict, that is, class conflict:

Wir wissen, daß in der Geschichte die gesellschaftlichen Kämpfe sich abspielen in Form von Klassenkämpfen. Wer das erkannt hat, der kann nicht umhin, die Gestaltung dieser Klassenkämpfe auch im Drama zu bejahen. 41

Political theatre must be contemporary in subject-matter and realistic in manner: 'Wenn Sie zur ursprünglichen Idee der Volksbühne zurückkehren wollen, müssen Sie beginnen mit dem Lebendigen, mit unserer Zeit. Nur wer die Gegenwart durchdringt, wird zu dem dringen, was wir zeitlos nennen',⁴².

If committed art must portray struggle, it must itself be committed in that struggle. Toller rejected the notion of artistic neutrality, believing that the artist inevitably demonstrated his own inner conviction: 'Kein wirklicher Künstler, der nicht einer Idee vor anderen den Vorrang gab'⁴³. It was this 'idea' which formed the basis of any portrayal of reality.

Both in his Magdeburg speech and elsewhere, Toller made a deliberate distinction between political art and propaganda:

Man darf politische Dichtung nicht verwechseln mit Propaganda, die dichterische Mittel benutzt. Dieser dient ausschließlich Tageszwecken, sie ist mehr und weniger als Dichtung. Mehr, weil sie die Möglichkeit birgt, im stärksten, in besten hypothetischen Fall, den Hörer zu unmittelbarer Aktion zu treiben, weniger, weil sie nie die Tiefe auslotet, die Dichtung erreicht, dem Hörer die Ahnung vom tragisch-kosmischen Grund zu vermitteln. 44

This distinction, which Toller first made in his prison letters, is crucial to his conception of art. He did not discount 'Agitatorisches in künstlerischer Form' - indeed he described his own 'Sprechchöre' in these terms⁴⁵ - but differentiated it from political art. If propaganda sought to incite its audience to immediate action, political art would articulate the workers' deepest feelings and instincts:

Nicht darauf kommt es an, daß in einem Kunstwerk ausgesprochen wird, die zweite oder die dritte Internationale sei die richtige, das mag der Proletkult tun. Es kommt an auf die revolutionäre Atmosphäre, die in einem Werk lebt, die den im Theater sitzenden Arbeiter anfeuert, in ihm klärt, was er dumpf fühlt und seinem Fühlen gedanklichen Ausdruck gibt. 46

Political art certainly hoped to influence political reality:

Auch wir fragen uns oft: kann Kunst die Wirklichkeit beeinflussen? Kann der Dichter vom Schreibtisch her Einfluß auf die Politik seiner Zeit gewinnen? Es gibt Autoren, die diese Frage verneinen. Ich bejahe sie. Alle Kunst hat magische Wirkung. 47

The effect of committed art should be 'geistig revolutionierend'⁴⁸. Though bourgeois critics would call it tendentious, its function was to challenge prevailing social structures and relationships:

Was nennt der bürgerliche Kritiker tendenzlos, überparteilich? Jenes Gesamt von Betrachtungsarten und Erkenntnisse... die in Wahrheit geistige Legitimierung des bürgerlichen Herrschaftsverhältnisses bedeuten. Gerade dieses Herrschaftsverhältnis will revolutionäre Kunst erschüttern. 49

This was the conception of political theatre which Toller attempted to realise in Hoppla, wir leben and Feuer aus den Kesseln.

Notes on Chapter X

- 1 Bütow, op.cit., p.296. Butow's work contains an interesting discussion of Toller's political journalism - see op.cit., pp.310-23; there is useful biographical information in ter Haar, op.cit., pp.9-24.
- 2 Feuer aus den Kesseln was re-published only in 1978, Justiz in 1979, Quer Durch in 1981. Die blinde Göttin remains out of print (1982).
- 3 He was, for example, particularly active in the campaign to free Max Hölz. Cf. 'Max Hölz', Die Weltbühne XXIII, 5, 1 February 1927, and 'Die Erschießung des Gutsbesitzers Heß', Die Weltbühne XXIII, 18, 3 May 1927. These articles are excellent examples of Toller's political journalism, sometimes linked - as here - with public speaking, in pursuit of a concrete short-term aim.
- 4 Cf. his unpublished correspondence with the League in the Akademie der Künste, Berlin, Sammlung Ernst Toller.
- 5 Toller attended, for example, the Congress of the League against Imperialism in Brussels (February 1927), the fourth congress of the 'Weltliga für Sexualreform' in Vienna (September 1930), the congresses of the International PEN Club in Warsaw (June 1930) and Budapest (May 1932) and the Amsterdam conference of 1932, at which the 'League against war and Fascism' was launched.
- 6 Cf. Chapter VII/2 above.
- 7 Deutsche Revolution, Berlin 1926, reprinted GW I, pp.159-65; page references in the text are to this edition.
- 8 Neither Bütow nor Dorothea Klein attempts to analyse this speech. Recent works on Toller, such as those by Pittock and ter Haar make only passing reference to it. A preliminary analysis is contained in Stephen Lamb, 'Ernst Toller in the Weimar Republic', in Culture and society in the Weimar Republic, (K. Bullivant, ed.), Manchester 1977, pp.71-93.
- 9 Cf. Landauer, Aufruf, p.61 and passim.
- 10 See Chapter VI above.

- 11 Cf. Eine Jugend, GW IV, p.119:
 ... die Arbeiterschaft, von der sozialen
 Tatlosigkeit der Republik enttäuscht, fordert,
 daß der politischen endlich die soziale
 Revolution folge...
- 12 Cf. letter to Kurt Hiller, undated (1923), GW V, p.166.
 See also the discussion of the meeting of the 'Gruppe
 geistiger Kopfarbeiter' in Chapter XI/4 below.
- 13 Cf. letter to Mathilde Wurm, undated (1922), GW V,
 pp.126-28. See Chapter VIII/7 above.
- 14 Bütow considers the conflict between pacifism and
 revolutionary force to be the dominant theme of
 Toller's work. As the following argument will
 indicate, it was a conflict Toller was able to
 resolve at a fairly early date; his views remained
 remarkably consistent in later years.
- 15 MNN, no. 278, 17 July 1919. A slightly different
 version, based on the Munchner Post report, is
 reprinted as 'Schlußwort vor dem Standgericht',
GW I, pp.49-51.
- 16 Cf. Toller, 'Eine Ansprache', Die sozialistische
 Erziehung, (Vienna), V, 2, (February 1925):
 Wir müssen sehen, daß absolute ethische
 Gesetze im lebendigen Falle im Widerspruch
 stehen zu politischen Forderungen... Wer
 absoluten ethischen Forderungen folgen muß,
 und das ist der religiöse Mensch, der soll
 es tun, den wollen wir achten. Wissen aber
 muß er, daß er revolutionärer sozialistischer
 Kämpfer nicht sein kann.
- 17 Quer Durch, pp.98-99.
- 18 Toller, 'Antworten', Die Weltbühne XVII, 1, 6 January
 1921.
- 19 Nationalsozialismus, Berlin 1930.
- 20 Hoppla, wir leben portrays different aspects of
 this manipulation of the democratic process - see
 Chapter XI/4 below.
- 21 Cf. Chapters XII and XIV.
- 22 'In Memoriam Kurt Eisner', GW I, p.167.
- 23 'Reichskanzler Hitler' (1930), GW I, pp.69-73;
 'Zur deutschen Situation' (June 1932), GW I, pp.73-76.
- 24 Der Fall Toller, p.160.

- 25 These appeared in Die Weltbühne between 16 October 1924 and 20 January 1925.
- 26 Justiz. Erlebnisse, Berlin 1927; page references are to this edition.
- 27 Frühwald and Spalek suggest it also helped to pave the way for the Reich Amnesty of 1928, see Der Fall Toller, p.179. Toller's introduction indicates, however, that he wished to suggest broader conclusions.
- 28 H.M., 'Vortragsabend Ernst Toller', Die literarische Welt III, 17, 29 April 1927. Cf. also Tucholsky, 'Der Rechtsstaat', Die Weltbühne XXIII, 12 July 1927: 'Toller hat das Pathos fast zugunsten einer glücklichen Sachlichkeit vermieden - er erzählt. Er gibt Tatsachen wieder...'
- 29 Cf. 'Menschliche Komödie in Genf', Die Weltbühne XXVIII, 11, 15 March 1932 and 'Der Brüsseler Kolonialkongreß', Die Weltbühne XXIII, 9, 1 March 1927.
- 30 'Das sozialistische Wien', Die Weltbühne XXIII, 11, 15 March 1927.
- 31 'Heimarbeit', Die Weltbühne XXIII, 25, 21 June 1927.
- 32 'Sprechen wir vom Panzerkreuzer', Welt am Montag, 26 November 1928. Cf. also his portrait of the 'Realpolitiker' Kilman in Hoppla the previous year, which anticipate his comments in this article and show the complementary nature of his literary work and political journalism.
- 33 Vorwärts, 16 February 1927, quoted from Der Fall Toller, p.171. It was at Toller's instigation that Angelika Balabanoff spoke in Berlin on March 27 on 'Das geistige Gesicht des Faschismus' - see his unpublished letter to the 'Liga für Menschenrechte', 22.1.1927, in Akademie der Künste, Berlin, 'Sammlung Ernst Toller'.
- 34 'In Memoriam Kurt Eisner', GW I, p.168.
- 35 'Reichskanzler Hitler', GW I, pp.69-73.
- 36 'Zur deutschen Situation', GW I, p.75.
- 37 Piscator, PT, p.123.
- 38 Speaking in support of Piscator, Toller declared:
Drama, das heißt Kampf, radikal oder gar nicht sein. Der Proletarier, der heute auf der Bühne steht, trägt eine Fahne. (PT, p.111)

- 39 Toller's reflections on political theatre are contained in three major statements:
- (1) 'Rede auf der Volksbühnentagung in Magdeburg', Das Tagebuch VIII, 27, 2 July 1927, pp.1074-78,
 - (2) 'Bemerkungen zum deutschen Nachkriegsdrama', Die literarische Welt, V, 16, 19 April 1929,
(This article first appeared as 'Post-war German drama', The Nation, CXXVII, 7 November 1928, pp.488-89. The German version is substantially the same, but includes two additional passages: I have quoted from the German version, because it is now much more accessible, having been reprinted in GW I, pp.126-130.)
 - (3) 'Arbeiten', Quer Durch, Berlin 1930.
- Toller's Magdeburg speech was a contribution to the debate on the artistic policy of the 'Volksbühne', but contains in embryo most of the ideas developed in the two later essays. Although their later form is usually more considered and more concise, Toller's original formulation in his Magdeburg speech often makes his meaning clearer.
- 40 'Rede in Magdeburg', p.1078; it was clearly this feeling which Toller hoped to capture in Feuer aus den Kesseln - cf. Chapter XII/2 below.
- 41 'Rede in Magdeburg', p.1074.
- 42 Ibid., pp.1077-78.
- 43 Ibid., pp.1074-75.
- 44 'Bemerkungen', GW I, p.129. It was doubtless this distinction which lay at the heart of his disagreement with Piscator over the production of Hoppla, see Chapter XI.
- 45 Quer Durch, p.167.
- 46 'Rede in Magdeburg', p.1077.
- 47 Quer Durch, p.295.
- 48 See Quer Durch, pp.286-87:
Es ist möglich, daß in einem dichterischen Werk die zentrale Figur ein Bürger mit 'reinem Herzen' ist, der ideal gute Mensch. Trotzdem widerlegt er durch die Divergenz zwischen persönlichem Tun und dem Tun der herrschenden Mächte das System der Gesellschaft, in der er lebt, und ruft damit eine Wirkung im Hörer hervor, die wir als geistig revolutionierend bezeichnen können.
- 49 Ibid., p.278.

XI. HOPPLA, WIR LEBEN!¹

Hoppla, wir leben! has a pivotal place in Toller's work. The play was the product of reflection on his first-hand experience of the Weimar Republic, presenting, in the form of an extended dialectic, a critical re-evaluation of his political ideas. It was also the result of a long period of formal experimentation. Assessment of the play has been complicated by its inevitable association with Erwin Piscator, whose controversial production has achieved a permanent place in theatre history. While the interest in Piscator's production is understandable, it has nonetheless helped to obscure the merits, and indeed the true nature, of the play itself. This is firstly because Piscator produced a version of the play which differed from the published text, and from which Toller later dissociated himself, and secondly because of the difficulty of assessing Piscator's influence on the published text itself. To understand the play and its significance for Toller's development we must therefore place it in the context of its conception and evolution.

1. 'A new form of collective drama'

Hoppla was the first new play which Toller had published for nearly four years - in striking contrast to his production in prison, where he had written a play a year between 1919 and 1923. This pause in his

dramatic output has often been cited as proof of the decline in his creative powers, but there is little evidence to support this view. On the one hand, his energies were channelled elsewhere - travel, personal appearances and political journalism claiming much of his time. More importantly, he was pursuing a new conception of drama which, by its experimental nature, he found difficult to realise. He was seeking 'eine neue Form für ein Kollektivdrama', a form which would convey 'inneres Gesicht und äußere Atmosphäre, Auf und Ab einer großen modernen Massenbewegung'². The conventional means of drama were no longer adequate to express the complex realities of modern society. The theatre had to find a formal equivalent for the cinema's ability to juxtapose apparently unrelated events to show their intrinsic connection, crystallising for the audience 'das innere Tempo und die Vielfältigkeit der Handlung... als gebundene Ganzheit'.

These theoretical reflections, which already reveal the influence of Erwin Piscator, refer to a play with the working title Blockade am Scheunenviertel, dealing with the murder of Liebknecht and Luxemburg, which Toller had begun early in 1926. As work progressed, he had found it increasingly hard to realise his dramatic conception: 'Es existieren vom Stück wohl an die fünfzehn Szenen, aber ob ich packe, was ich möchte - wissen nicht mal die Götter...'³. Six weeks later he wrote:

... von meinem Drama, das schon einmal bis zur letzten Szene fertig war, habe ich die Hälfte zerrissen - und zur ersten Hälfte nicht das mindeste Vertrauen. Nicht nur von jedem Satz, den ich schreibe, wende ich mich im Schreiben schon, widerwillig ab, jeden Gedanken, den ich denke, empfinde ich als medioker, und nicht der Gestaltung wert. 4

Toller had intended his new play to be produced by Piscator in the Volksbühne. Scenes from it were published under the title Berlin 1919, and even included in Toller's readings from his work, but he seems ultimately to have abandoned it⁵.

Toller's experimental attempts to create a new form of 'mass drama' had been made in active cooperation with Piscator. In the summer of 1926, he had spent several weeks with Piscator in the south of France, 'damit er das Stück im Entstehen kennenlerne'⁶. Piscator was an outspoken advocate of 'political theatre'. In all his stage productions, he sought to convey the social and economic forces which provided the context for individual conflict. He believed that the traditional devices of stage production were no longer able to evoke contemporary reality, and that the theatre therefore had to seek in modern technology a correlative for contemporary social conditions. His concern with contemporary relevance, within a framework of Marxist conviction, marked the production of Gewitter über Gottland, which led to his dismissal from the 'Volksbühne', and became the pretext for a bitter argument within the organisation as to the proper function of a 'people's

theatre'. Piscator's experiments with stage machinery and film led to accusations of technical sensationalism and 'formalism', but he always insisted they were subordinate to his political purpose. He considered the theatre to be a means of advancing revolutionary struggle: 'we look on the theatre as nothing more than an instrument to disseminate a specific idea... the idea we represent is a political one'⁷. It was this didactic approach which he brought to the production of Hoppla, wir leben!, with which the new 'Piscatorbühne' opened on September 3rd, 1927.

2. Piscator's influence on the published version

Hoppla was not the play with which Piscator had originally intended to open his new theatre. He had commissioned a play by Wilhelm Herzog, 'eine Art großer politischer Revue'⁸, which would explore the failure of the November Revolution. However, Herzog's early drafts proved unsuitable for Piscator's purposes, and, forced to find a replacement at short notice, he turned to a play which Toller had already shown him in draft outline: 'Das ursprünglich gesteckte Ziel der Revue wurde annähernd erreicht durch einen Entwurf, den Toller mir im Frühjahr gegeben hatte' (p.146).

Piscator nonetheless found much to criticise in Toller's finished manuscript, which he considered subjective and lacking in ideological clarity: '... wie

immer bei Toller ging das Dokumentarische mit dem Dichterisch-Lyrischen durcheinander' (p.146). His objections centred on the character of Karl Thomas, which he found altogether too lyrical and confessional for a documentary exposition of reality. He therefore persuaded Toller to alter the structure of the play - and consequently his conception of the character of Karl Thomas - to conform to his own didactic purpose, though not without difficulty, for there were arguments lasting days over some passages.

Most critics have identified Thomas with Toller himself, and have therefore considered the play a demonstration of Toller's inability to come to terms with political reality, the expression of a fundamental pessimism, in which he anticipated his own eventual suicide⁹. Piscator himself complained that Toller had burdened the character with too many of his own feelings (p.146), calling Thomas the typical Toller hero, who recurs in all his plays (p.148). While there are obvious similarities between Toller and his protagonist, Thomas is in no sense the author's mouthpiece - indeed Toller's letters and essays provide a consistent rejection of his point of view. The character is a device for examining contemporary reality, and determining the necessary political response to it. Although an autobiographical interpretation of Thomas is rendered superficially plausible by Toller's own eventual suicide, it is in fact

inconsistent with the pattern of Toller's ideological development from 1923 onwards, and is incongruent with a closer reading of the play itself.

Above all, it must be emphasised that Karl Thomas's suicide was neither the ending which Toller originally wrote, nor one which he subsequently endorsed. In his original version, Thomas had not hanged himself, but had found the strength to resume the political struggle, thereby endorsing the position of his former comrades Berg and Kroll¹⁰. This ending, however, did not conform with Piscator's reading of the character; he considered Thomas 'in Wirklichkeit ein anarchisch sentimentaler Typus' (p.148) who, once his illusions had been destroyed, would inevitably destroy himself. Suicide was the logical consequence of his reading of the character. The case of Karl Thomas was to illustrate the madness of the bourgeois social order: he was to be 'ein Beweis aus dem Gegenteil' (p.148). Piscator did not see Thomas as a revolutionary faltering in his commitment (though it will be shown that this was precisely Toller's intention), but as a petit bourgeois rebel:

Thomas ist alles andere als ein klassenbewußter Proletarier... Das Thema zeigt nicht den Weg eines schwankenden Elementen der Revolution. Von diesem Gesichtspunkt aus wäre der Selbstmord wirklich falsch... (p.148).

In what amounts to a retrospective justification of his production, Piscator therefore conceded that Thomas's suicide was the 'correct' ending only if one accepted his reading of the character. It will be shown that Toller

did not. Piscator was nonetheless able to persuade him to change the play by adding a fifth act ending with Thomas's suicide, and it was with this ending that the play was finally published.

Toller must, of course, accept responsibility for the changes, but he later regretted them:

Ich bedaure heute, daß ich, von einer Zeitmode befangen, die Architechtonik des ursprünglichen Werkes zugunsten der Architechtonik der Regie zerbrach. Seine erstrebte Form war stärker als jene, die auf der Bühne gezeigt wurde. 11

The original ending, unknown until its recent publication in an edition of Toller's Gesammelte Werke, confirms the summary of its contents which Toller gave in Quer Durch¹². More importantly, it makes it possible to examine the structure of the original play, revealing that the first four acts as published logically anticipate Toller's original ending, and that only this ending is consistent with his dramatic intention.

3. The dramatic conception of Hoppla

The conception of political theatre which Toller attempted to realise in Hoppla can be documented from his theoretical statements of 1926/27. He was committed to an explicitly political theatre; he outlined what he meant by this in a major speech, delivered while he was actually still writing Hoppla. (Its relevance to the play could scarcely be more aptly demonstrated.)

Wenn Sie zur ursprünglichen Idee der Volksbühne zurückkehren wollen, müssen Sie beginnen mit dem Lebendigen, mit unserer Zeit. Nur wer die Gegenwart durchdringt, wird zu dem dringen, was wir überzeitlich, was wir zeitlos nennen. 13

The dramatist must seek his subject-matter in contemporary reality, yet he must portray it, not merely as the photographer of realistic detail, but as the 'Sprachrohr der aus der Zeit wirkenden Idee'. He saw the dominant 'idea' of contemporary society as Socialism and the struggle for its realisation. Drama must therefore portray social struggle, and must itself be committed in that struggle:

Für uns ist dieser Weg der Weg des Sozialismus, und Sozialismus ist Kampf... So gewiss Kunst auch kennen muß Besinnung auf jenes Letzte in uns, das ich nennen möchte Stille des All, muß unsere Kunst doch vor allem Kampfkunst sein, nicht Kunst verschwommenen schönen Willens. Denn das Schöne ist Ziel und nicht Anfang...

The rejection of art which propagated 'utopian' ideals, for which the social basis was lacking ('keine Unklarheit, keine liberalen "Utopien" von politischer Freiheit ohne soziale...') marks the critical distance from which Toller now viewed his own earlier work and the political attitudes it incorporated.

The context of the speech confirms that Toller is outlining precisely the conception of drama he had tried to realise in Hoppla. The theme of the play is the struggle for Socialism, in the context of contemporary social reality, illustrated through the experience of his protagonist, Karl Thomas.

Toller did not intend his play to be, as one critic has described it, 'the tragedy of an individual',¹⁴. Karl Thomas is firstly a device for examining contemporary reality in historical perspective, for revealing 1927 in the light of the ideals of 1918, but he is also a means of examining those ideals, and their relevance to the political reality of 1927. Thomas's encounters with his former comrades are both a means of illuminating social reality, and a dialectical examination of the necessary response to it. That is, the play must be seen as part of Toller's continuing attempt to find a practical basis for his political convictions, a dramatisation of his own internal dialectic. It is consequently proposed to analyse the play as a critique of social reality, and also - more importantly - as an examination of the necessary response to that reality.

4. The critique of social reality

The firmer grasp of political reality which is demonstrated in Toller's journalism and documentary prose is also reflected in his portrait of the Weimar Republic in Hoppla, wir leben! The critique of contemporary society was not, of course, new in Toller's work, since it was a path he had already taken in Hinkemann. What is new is the concrete detail and the objective presentation of conflicting points of view.

In Hinkemann, Toller had evoked post-war society in the metaphor of the fairground. It was a portrait of political reality seen through the eyes of his protagonist, presented kaleidoscopically and subjectively in the form of his fevered visions. In Hoppla, Toller sought to evoke political reality through the portrayal of a series of conflicting attitudes across the political spectrum. Reality is revealed, not so much through the eyes of Karl Thomas, but in the argument between Thomas and his former comrades - that is, not subjectively, but dialectically.

The characters (with the exception of Thomas and Pickel) are not so much individuals as the delineation of specific social attitudes. Their representative function was emphasised by Piscator, who coached his actors in rehearsal to play each part as 'der scharf umrissene Ausdruck einer gesellschaftlichen Schicht'¹⁵. In Hinkemann, the characters confronting the protagonist are grotesque caricatures, this being as true of Michel Unbeschwert, the party ideologue, as of the unscrupulous Showman. In Hoppla, Kilman and Graf Lande are not grotesques, and though viewed in a critical light, are presented with a notable attempt at objectivity.

Toller's dialectical exposition of reality has led Jost Hermand, in his perceptive essay on Hoppla, to suggest that Toller is not concerned to adopt a position of his own, confining himself to a neutral exposition of conflicting attitudes.

In Hoppla werden keine Manifeste erlassen oder Kanzelpredigten ins Publikum geschleudert, sondern eine Reihe von Grundhaltungen zur Revolution auf höchst antithetische Weise 'im Dialog' durchexerziert. Es geht hier nicht um gut oder böse, um richtig oder falsch, sondern um die innere Dialektik zwischen diesen Haltungen. 16

This suggestion overstates Hermand's otherwise convincing arguments about the play. While Toller's method is certainly dialectical, it was not his intention merely to make a neutral exposition of reality. He was explicitly critical of the mimetic realism of 'Neue Sachlichkeit': 'je sachlicher die Dichtung, desto leerer wird sie sein'¹⁷. He repeatedly rejected the idea (or possibility) of artistic neutrality:

Führen wir den Begriff Kunstwerk ein, so ist sein Spezifisches das Vielgeleisige, die Notwendigkeit jedes Weges, der oft dunkle, noch häufige zu durchschauende Zwang, aus dem jeder Mensch handelt, wie er handelt, und jedes Geschehen wird, wie es wird. Damit rede ich nicht künstlerischer Neutralität das Wort. Kein wirklicher Künstler, der nicht einer Idee vor anderen den Vorrang gab. 18

If he aimed at objectivity, it was one which would allow the facts to speak for themselves, which demonstrated a conviction, articulated a commitment.

Toller's presentation of political reality rests partly on devices which reflect Piscator's technical innovation and style of production, notably the use of the 'simultaneous stage' and the integration of film into the dramatic action. Moreover, it is a measure of Piscator's constructive influence on Hoppla that they are not merely formal contrivances, but are central to Toller's dramatic conception.

The fusion of film into the dramatic action had been Piscator's major technical innovation, which he had used to extend the frame of reference and provide indirect political commentary¹⁹. The film interludes in Hoppla were, as Piscator confirms, outlined in Toller's original manuscript, providing historical context and continuity. The 'Zwischenspiel' between the prologue and Act 1, for example, had to provide continuity by representing the passage of eight years between the prologue and Act I; more importantly, it had to suggest, in highly concentrated form, the course of political developments during those years, thus placing present reality in the necessary historical perspective²⁰. The outline contained in Toller's original script comprises a series of visual references to the political issues which characterised the epoch. It is no accident that they are precisely the issues to which Toller addressed himself in his political journalism and public speaking: the Versailles Treaty, the emergence of Fascism, the struggle for colonial freedom²¹.

The device of the simultaneous stage was equally central to Toller's dramatic conception, enabling him to use alternating or simultaneous scenes to evoke the complex and conflicting nature of political reality. In his notes for the director which accompanied the published text, Toller indicated the kind of stage set which Piscator actually used for his production:

a multi-level structure with different acting areas, which could be picked out, as required, by spotlighting.

The importance of this formal device is illustrated in Act I Scene 2, in which the political comment is implicit in the sequence and juxtaposition of scenes. The stage directions require two rooms, Kilman's ministerial office, and an ante-room: 'das Zimmer, in dem nicht gesprochen wird, bleibt dunkel'²². The scenes are counterpointed to contrast Kilman's relations with his former comrades, Eva Berg and Karl Thomas, and those with the reactionary circles he now frequents. His exchanges with Berg show how far he has deserted his past. While his manner to her is openly threatening, his reception of his former Jailer, Baron Friedrich, is strikingly friendly. Kilman's comments expose the real nature of the (ostensibly) democratic state - and his own objective role as one of its ministers. When Eva Berg protests that she is simply exercising the rights guaranteed under the constitution, he retorts: 'Die Verfassung ist für ruhige Zeiten gedacht', adding laconically: 'Der Staat kennt selten ruhige Zeiten' (p.28).

Kilman is the 'Realpolitiker', personifying the political opportunism which led the SPD into tolerance of, and even collusion with, militarist and reactionary forces²³. These forces are introduced in rapid kaleidoscope: the banker, the reactionary War Minister, the nationalist Graf Lande. Kilman's collusion, and

miscalculation, is implicit in his comment to Eva Berg: 'Ich habe für Ordnung zu sorgen' (p.29) - and what order means we hear immediately from the War Minister who declares that the country needs authority to save it from the 'liberalen Utopien von Demokratie und Volksfreiheit' (p.30). The War Minister is the militarist conservative, who has changed, not his views, but his tactics: 'Die Zeiten des Losschlagens sind vorüber. Was wir für unser Vaterland erreichen wollen, können wir legal erreichen'. That is, he can achieve his reactionary aims through the manipulation of the 'democratic' structure of the Republic. His attitude is differentiated from that of Graf Lande, who still talks of a military Putsch, and whom Kilman is (symbolically) willing to engage in his Ministry, and that of the banker, who sees the Republic in terms of financial opportunity, and with whom Kilman (equally symbolically) arranges to dine.

Toller's criticism of Weimar society is not confined to the enemies of the Republic, or the opportunism of the SPD, but is directed at bourgeois democracy itself. The presidential election in Act II Scene 2 produces gerrymandering and manipulation, apathy and enlightenment, ending appropriately with the election of the reactionary War Minister. The illusion of 'political freedom without social freedom' is personified by the old woman who, faced with the confusion of electoral choice, votes for all three candidates. The general critique received a

specific frame of reference through the obvious allusion to Hindenburg's election as President, which the Left had considered tangible proof that the Republic had been subsumed by the 'Old Order'. (Piscator made this allusion explicit by projecting a huge image of Hindenburg onto the rear screen at the end of the scene²⁴.)

It is in the scenic device of the Grand Hotel that Toller completes his portrait of the Weimar Republic - political collusion and corruption, Nationalist hatred of the Republic, nascent Nazism, the compulsive pursuit of profit, woolly intellectual radicalism, empty technical virtuosity. It is a society in which the Old Order has reasserted itself, in which resurgent capitalism and militarism hold sway, illustrating the words of Walter Mehring's theme song: 'Es ist wieder ganz wie vor dem Kriege/Vor dem nächsten Kriege eben'. The structure of the scene is simple: while Kilman is dining with the banker, his daughter is in bed with Graf Lande, who is plotting to kill her father. Elsewhere in the hotel, a discussion circle is meeting, the hotel's wireless station receives messages from round the world, and the hotel staff work and talk 'below stairs'.

The banker, at one social pole, is contrasted with the 'Hausdiener' at the other. The former typifies the cynicism of the new rich, for whom money is the sole criterion. His financial speculation serves no end but itself, for he cannot even indulge the epicurean pleasures

of the rich: 'Nicht mal den Wanst mit Delikatessen füllen kann er sich' (p.108). At the opposite social pole, the 'Hausdiener', having lost his savings in the inflation, now gambles compulsively. He is resigned to his lot, which he believes only a gambling win can change: 'Mir ist alles Wurscht. Ich erwarte von niemand nichts' (p.90). Compulsive speculation as an end in itself is juxtaposed with compulsive gambling as a hedge against despair: Toller contrasts not only the material reality of their lives, but its effect on consciousness.

The meeting of the 'Gruppe der geistigen Kopfarbeiter' has more obvious elements of caricature. Toller had become increasingly sceptical of the role of the intellectual in society; he rejected the elitist premise of Kurt Hiller's demand for the rule of the intellect²⁵. This elitism is implicit in the patronising attitude of the intellectuals towards Karl Thomas, but it conceals something more sinister, revealed in the Philosopher's theory for breeding an improved strain of the 'degenerate white race'. Toller's portrayal of the 'geistige Kopfarbeiter' has also a dimension of self-irony. Their self-appointed task, 'das Proletariat geistig zu erlösen', has an ironic echo of Friedrich's mission in Die Wandlung. The second item on their agenda has an even stronger suggestion of self-irony: 'Die proletarische Gemeinschaft der Liebe und die Aufgabe der Geistigen' (p.86). At his trial in 1919, Toller had evoked 'eine

Weltgemeinschaft... innerlich gebunden durch den Geist der Liebe': subsequent developments had revealed the vanity of such a conception in a world lacking the social and economic prerequisites for it.

The discussion between Thomas and the wireless operator suggests the ambiguous nature of technical progress in a capitalist society - a long-standing pre-occupation of Toller's²⁶. Their conversation is interspersed with radio items, in which reports of revolution and natural disaster alternate with advertisements of stupefying triviality - news of the Mississippi bursting its banks is followed by dance music from a luxury hotel in Cairo²⁷. Through this juxtaposition of apparently unconnected facts and events, Toller sought to emphasise social contradictions, the madness of the social order. The admirable achievements of modern technology are perverted to bizarre and destructive purposes, which are cynically summarised by the wireless operator: 'Vorläufig dienen diese Apparate dazu, damit die Menschen sich desto raffinierter totschiagen. Was ist der Clou der Elektrizität? Der elektrische Hinrichtungsstuhl' (p.83). Like the 'Hausdiener', he is resigned to the world as it is ('Wir werdens nicht ändern'). Toller is suggesting not only the misuse of technology inherent in capitalism, but its effect on consciousness and morale. The superficial gaiety, cynicism and resignation of the Weimar Republic are shown as the product of material reality.

Toller's greater insight into social conditions, his materialist interpretation of social and individual consciousness, his ability to portray conflicting points of view with equal realism, all mark the increasing maturity of his political perception. However, to record reality was only half of his intention: the other half was to determine the necessary response to it.

5. The Response to Social Reality

Just as social reality was to be portrayed through the juxtaposition of conflicting attitudes, so the response to that reality was to be examined in Thomas's clashes with his former comrades. This dialectical structure, with its pattern of growth and change, emerges clearly in Toller's original version, in which Thomas did not hang himself, but gained a new insight into reality. This sudden insight is not artificially imposed, for it is, in fact, implicit in the dramatic structure and development, and is plotted in Thomas's exchanges with his former comrades.

Toller's original version had consisted of a prologue and four acts, and had been some twenty pages shorter than the published version²⁸. The play was to end, as it had begun, with a scene in the asylum between Thomas and Professor Lüdin, a structure which Toller adopted, not merely for reasons of dramatic symmetry, but in order to reinforce the theme of the madness of

capitalist society. The theme had been established in the laconic outline of the first film interlude ('1923. Inflation in Deutschland. Menschen werden irrsinnig' p.22) and received visual emphasis from the interpolation of the figure of Karl Thomas, pacing his padded cell, into the sequence of images evoking the years 1919 to 1927.

Toller's comments on the play stress that his intention was not to study Karl Thomas, but Thomas's relationship to reality²⁹. Thomas fully realises the madness of the social order only in his final conversation with Lüdin. In setting the final scene back in the asylum, deliberately balancing it against the opening scene of the play proper, Toller therefore also sought to stress the change which Thomas had undergone. The opening scene between Thomas and Lüdin emphasises the historical perspective on which the play rests: it recalls the world of 1919 and anticipates the world of 1927. Lüdin recommends Thomas to visit Wilhelm Kilman:

Sie werden Ihr Wunder erleben. Ausgezeichnetes
Rezept für Sie. Klinisch habe ich Sie geheilt.
Von Ihrem Ideenspleen mag der Sie kurieren
(p.26).

His cynicism underlines Thomas's total innocence of what awaits him outside the asylum, suggesting the tension between idealism and reality which remains the substance of both versions of the play. Lüdin embodies professional knowledge at the service of the ruling class. If he were to examine 1000 people, he declares, he would have to certify 999 insane. That he does not, is simply because

'der Staat hat kein Interesse daran' (p.26). Madness is defined, not by clinical diagnosis, but by the prevailing power structure. This remains virtually a blind motif in the published text, but is developed and re-inforced in Toller's original version, in which Lüdin declares Thomas insane only when he realises that Thomas has now drawn the necessary political conclusions from social reality.

The madness of the social order is not immediately apparent to Karl Thomas, dawning on him only gradually. It is not until Act 2 that he asks the question: "Bin ich in ein Tollhaus geraten?" Further experience forces him to enlarge on the question, though it remains a question: "Ist die Welt ein Irrenhaus geworden?" (p.95) Only during his interrogation by the 'Untersuchungsrichter' does it become an affirmation: 'Daß ich allmählich den Eindruck bekomme, ich befinde mich in einem Irrenhaus' (p.104) - a remark which ironically anticipates the final scene, in which he has returned to the asylum. It is only in Toller's original version that this gradual process of enlightenment reaches a climax: 'Ich Narr, jetzt sehe ich die Welt wieder klar. Ihr habt sie in ein Irrenhaus verwandelt' (p.324).

A comparison of Toller's original version of this scene with the published version shows that, while some of the text of the former has survived in the latter, it has been transposed into a different context.

In the original version, the scene was to emphasise the insanity of society - and the sanity of Thomas's new insight into it; in the published version, it becomes merely a prelude to Thomas's despair and suicide. In both versions, the society of which the Grand Hotel is a microcosm is projected into the asylum: but the form and function of these projected images has changed. In the published version, they confirm Thomas's view of the world: 'Wie hätte ich diese Welt weiter ertragen können?' (p.110). That is, Thomas has not changed his mind; as Lüdin observes: 'Also sind Sie der Alte geblieben... Sie wollen immer noch die Welt ändern, Feuerchen anlegen, ja?' (p.111).

In Toller's original version, the projected images have a different function, precipitating sudden realisation: 'Ich Narr! Jetzt sehe ich die Welt wieder klar. Ihr habt sie in ein Irrenhaus verwandelt' (p.324). The distinction between asylum and reality is deliberately blurred - 'Zwischen hier drinnen und dort draußen gibt es keine Scheidewand' (p.324) - forcing Thomas to recognise the madness of the social order: 'Die Welt ist ein Pferch geworden, in dem die Gesunden zertrampelt werden von einer kleinen Herde gallopiender Verrückter'. He is forced to acknowledge the difference between 'then' (1919) and 'now' (1927):

Ich sehe alles klar. In Zeiten wie damals marschierte man unter der Fahne des Paradieses. Heute muß man sich auf den irdischen Chausseen die Stiefel ablaufen (p.324).

The historical perspective of the opening scene is re-established, the dramatic circle closed. The need for change is matched by an optimism that such change will be achieved: 'Ihr glaubt, ihr lebt. Es treibt euch in den Abgrund, bildet euch nur ein, die Welt bleibe immer wie jetzt' (p.324). The arrival of the demonstration in the street below provides instant confirmation, at first audible ('von draußen ferner Gesang'), then visible ('filmisch sichtbar').

Lüdin had at first accused Thomas of feigning madness. He changes his mind only when he sees that Thomas has drawn the necessary conclusions from political reality. That is, only when Thomas has come to his senses, does Lüdin declare him mad, only when he is ready to rejoin the comrades demonstrating on his behalf outside, does he return him to solitary confinement. It was this symmetry, in which structure reinforces theme ('die Architektonik des ursprünglichen Werkes'), which Toller sacrificed to the requirements of Piscator's production. The published version, in which the final scene counterpoints the prologue, gave the play a formal symmetry of a different kind ('Architektonik der Regie'), but remains basically at odds with the first four acts.

Toller's original ending is less important for itself than for the fresh perspective it imposes on Thomas's encounters with his former comrades. Significantly, his first meeting is with Kilman, for

it is this meeting which causes his revulsion from political reality: 'Seit meinem Besuch bei Wilhelm Kilman mag ich nicht mehr' (p.50). Kilman is a frank apologist for reformism: 'Wie Kinder seid ihr. Den ganzen Baum wollen, wenn man einen Apfel haben kann' (p.42). He claims that he and his like have 'saved the revolution', but in fact his commitment to revolution had been highly ambiguous from the start - the prologue shows him seeking - and gaining a pardon on the grounds that he had strayed into the ranks of the revolutionaries against his will. His treachery has more than personal significance, for it symbolises the betrayal of the November Revolution by the SPD, an obsessional element in Toller's thinking³⁰.

Thomas is amazed to find that Kilman is a Minister, and even more amazed at his cynical exercise of power. Kilman attempts to justify himself with the classic apology of the career politician:

Als Minister vertrete ich nicht eine Partei, sondern den Staat. Wenn man die Verantwortung hat, lieber Freund, sehen die Dinge unten anders aus. Macht gibt Verantwortung (p.40).

Involuntarily, he goes on to spell out the defence of property and capital which is the consequence of this position: 'In der Demokratie habe ich die Rechte der Arbeitgeber ebenso zu achten, wie die Rechte der Arbeitnehmer' (p.41). It is in this context that he rejects the use of force as a political weapon:

Wir lehnen den Kampf roher Gewalt ab. Wir haben unermüdlich gepredigt, daß wir mit sittlichen, mit geistigen Waffen siegen wollen. Gewalt ist immer reaktionär (p.41).

Kilman's statement invites comparison with the attitude of Toller's earlier protagonists, but the very fact that it is attributed to Kilman emphasises the change in Toller's views. While Kilman's statement is used to outline a representative political position, the unsympathetic light in which he is shown makes clear that Toller now viewed the argument critically. He no longer believed in the unconditional rejection of force, conceding that in existing circumstances absolute pacifism was impracticable³¹.

Thomas recognises Kilman as the opportunist who has betrayed the ideals of the revolution. For different reasons, he comes to similar conclusions about Albert Kroll and Eva Berg. His former comrades face the dilemma of the revolutionary in an anti-revolutionary period. Their political commitment is undiminished, but they are forced to devote themselves to day-to-day work in party and trade union, which they consider to be the only means of gathering political support. Commenting on the play, Toller stressed that his own sympathies lay with Berg and Kroll³², and this can be corroborated by a closer reading of the play itself, even in the published version. It is striking that Thomas has by no means the better of his arguments with his former comrades: though they

end inconclusively, it is Thomas's attitude which is shown to be unrealistic.

Thomas's view of Eva Berg is as sentimental as his view of the revolution in which they had first met. He asks her to go away with him, to escape to another country, where there are people 'die nichts von Politik wissen' (p.50). She quickly dispels this Romantic illusion:

Dich ekelt vor Politik? Glaubst du, du könntest ihren Kreis durchbrechen? Glaubst du, du könntest über südlicher Sonne, über Palmen, über Elefanten, farbigen Gewändern das Wirkliche Leben der Menschen vergessen? Das Paradies, das du dir träumst, existiert nicht (p.50).

Eva's attitude is lucid and unsentimental. She recognises the revolution for what it was - an episode. She has committed herself to the daily tasks of party work, and it is this commitment which has given her life direction and meaning. She has reached social and political maturity, recognising that political reality cannot be denied simply because it is uncomfortable:

Wir können es uns nicht mehr leisten, Kinder zu sein. Wir können Hellsichtigkeit, Wissen, das uns zuwuchs, nicht mehr in die Ecke werfen wie Spielzeug, das wir nicht mögen (pp.52-53).

Thomas, on the other hand, confesses that he cannot come to terms with political reality: 'Ich finde mich nicht zurecht in dieser Zeit' (p.52). The ideals of the revolution have died: 'Die Flamme, die glühte, ist verlöscht'. Eva disagrees: 'Du täuschst dich. Anders glüht sie. Unpathetischer' (p.52). Thomas cannot see

this, because he is afraid to face up to reality. She attempts to persuade him to rejoin his former comrades. This attempt remains a blind motif in the published version of the play; in the original version, it anticipates Thomas's ultimate change of heart, finding a conscious echo in the demonstration of solidarity on his behalf.

Thomas's exchanges with Albert Kroll follow a similar pattern. Kroll is the class-conscious revolutionary, whose convictions have been formed by social experience. He had known from childhood what kind of society he was living in. In their re-encounter, Thomas accuses him of having lost his ideals, of having been absorbed into the society they had both once fought to overthrow. His participation in the presidential elections is symptomatic of this: 'Ihr macht den Wahlschwindel mit... Was geht mich die Wahl an? Deinen Glauben zeig mir, den alten, der Erde und Himmel und Sterne fortfeigte' (p.65). Kroll retorts that he has not lost his ideals, but that times have changed: different conditions demand different tactics. Experience has made him a bitter realist: 'Jahre wie diese zählen zehnfach. Man lernt' (p.64). He recognises things for what they are, but refuses to despair: 'Man muß sehen lernen und sich dennoch nicht unterbekommen lassen' (p.65). He personifies the very attitude of commitment without illusions, summarised in the word 'dennoch', which Toller had commended in Deutsche Revolution:

...skeptisches Wissen haben und trotzdem die unbedingte Hingabe, die Kühnheit des Gläubigen, in heller Entschlossenheit 'dennoch' sagen Grenzen sehen, alle und noch die grauesten Wirklichkeiten tragen und ertragen können und sich nicht lähmen lassen. 33

Kroll has no illusions about elections, which he calls not action but a springboard for action, that is, a means of winning support and building a revolutionary organisation. He counsels patience - 'weil ich mit Volldampf fahren will, wenn es Zeit ist' (p.73), an attitude which shows obvious similarities to Jimmy Cobbett's³⁴. Thomas equates his attitude with Kilman's: 'Kilman sagt es ähnlich' (p.73). He dismisses what he considers the trivialities of party work, and demands immediate action: 'Geschehen muß was. Einer muß ein Beispiel geben. Einer muß sich opfern. Dann werden die Lahmen rennen' (p.66). He clearly sees his intended assassination of Kilman as an exemplary action, which will shake people out of their indifference, and which he is ready to carry out in a conscious spirit of self-sacrifice. The Anarchist idea of propaganda by deed, and the theme of exemplary self-sacrifice, are central to Toller's earlier work, where in Die Wandlung and Masse Mensch they have a positive function³⁵. It is a measure of the development of his political thinking that in Hoppla they are viewed from a critical distance which reveals their ambiguity and even absurdity.

Kroll tells Thomas that his action will do nothing to further the revolutionary cause. It cannot change reality; it is the isolated act of an outsider who cannot face up to the world as it is: 'Du möchtest, daß um deinetwillen die Welt ein ewiges Feuerwerk sei, mit Raketen und Leuchtkugeln und Schlachtengetöse. Du bist der Feigling, nicht ich' (p.67). Thomas's impractical and impetuous character is emphasised again, when he has to be restrained from attacking a Nazi agitator, but it is the juxtaposition of the following scene which makes clear Toller's implicit criticism of Thomas's 'action'.

The plot between the nationalist student and Graf Lande to murder Kilman echoes Thomas's own intention³⁶. The student speaks a language which is curiously similar - he too believes 'da muß doch etwas geschehen', he too speaks of 'der großen Tat' (p.75), he too is ready to sacrifice himself. This striking congruence of attitude, revealing the equivocal nature of Thomas's plan, is emphasised in the dramatic action, when the student anticipates Thomas's action by shooting over his shoulder. Thomas himself realises the irony of his position, when he finds that the assassin has shot Kilman 'weil er ein Bolshevik ist, weil er ein Revolutionär ist. Weil er unser Land an die Juden verkauft' (p.95). Moreover, the effect of the action is the very opposite of what Thomas had intended. The

people he wished to awaken are moved to spontaneous anger against him; Kilman is not exposed, but apotheosised in a grotesque ceremony which, in the published text, is ironically juxtaposed with Thomas's own suicide.

To summarise, Toller's intention of illustrating the necessary response to political reality is realised only in his original version. The criticism of Thomas which is implicit in the first four acts becomes explicit only if the unreality of his attitude is demonstrated. The suicide ending imposed by Piscator remains equivocal, as the differing critical interpretations, both then and subsequently, confirm only too well³⁷.

Toller's original ending also strengthened the positive statement he wished to make, for Thomas's change of heart shows the commitment of Berg and Kroll in a different light. Their arguments with Thomas end inconclusively, but their commitment to 'revolutionäre Kleinarbeit' - which Toller had consistently advocated³⁸ - is endorsed if Thomas adopts their point of view. Equally, if he changes his mind, his previous attitude can be seen more clearly as an aberration, revealing him as precisely what Piscator denied he was: a revolutionary faltering in his commitment.

Piscator was still far from happy with Toller's final version, finding the language too lyrical for a documentary exposition of reality. He therefore

re-wrote some passages, and even went so far as to insert new scenes without consulting Toller³⁹. Toller, for his part, was so dissatisfied with the Piscator production that he chose to direct the play himself when it was produced in Leipzig a month later. Toller's comments in an unpublished (and hitherto unnoticed) letter to Alwin Kronacher, confirm the reasons for his dissatisfaction.

In the first place, he felt that his text had been changed to suit the technical requirements of Piscator's production. His letter to Kronacher suggests that the cuts made by Piscator should be restored, and his additions deleted, for the Leipzig production:

Mit gleicher Post schicke ich Ihnen das gestrichene Buch von Piscator. Auch Hamburg habe ich nochmals gebeten, Ihnen die Striche zu schicken.

Bitte beachten Sie bei dem Buch von Piscator, daß der Text immer in Hinblick auf den Film gestrichen wurde. ...

K. (i.e. Alfred Kerr - R.D.) hält es übrigens für sehr richtig, daß ich bei den Proben bei Piscator hinzugekommenen Teile wieder herausnehme. 40

He wanted to turn the Leipzig production into a new première, introducing the play as he had wanted it to be seen:

Vergessen Sie nicht den Berliner Kritikern zu schreiben. Ich möchte, daß die Leipziger Aufführung in der neuen Fassung wiederum eine Art Uraufführung ist.

To this end, press notices for the production stressed that it would not follow the published text, but 'a revised version based on Toller's first version of

the play'⁴¹. Karl Thomas was given a completely different emphasis, being portrayed as an 'idealistischen Schwärmer, der in der Welt der Tatsachen herumirrt'⁴². In accordance with this reading, he did not hang himself, but found sufficient reason to continue the fight. There were those who recognised the essential difference between the two productions: 'In Berlin wurde ein Stück von Erwin Piscator aufgeführt - in Leipzig das Stück von Ernst Toller'⁴³.

Toller's original ending is consistent with his political development, which was characterised by an objective analysis of political reality, and a concentration on short-term objectives. It is also consistent with a conception of drama which has its roots in Expressionism, giving a further twist to the Expressionist theme of 'anders werden'. In Maschinenstürmer, Toller had tried to transpose this theme into a framework of historical development; in Hoppla, it is restated in terms of the growth of consciousness through experience.

This crystallisation of consciousness indicates the play's importance for Toller's development, anticipating that growth through experience which characterises his later protagonists, such as Alwin Köbis, in Feuer aus den Kesseln and Anna Gerst in Die blinde Göttin - though in the latter case, it was no longer placed in the context of revolutionary Socialism.

To summarise, Hoppla must be seen in the perspective of Toller's attempt to develop a new form of mass drama, begun in Berlin 1919. In its original form, Hoppla was consistent with the theoretical position outlined in his Magdeburg speech: the portrayal of class struggle, implicit in the presentation of conflicting attitudes, was to demonstrate the necessary response to political reality. The play demonstrates Toller's firmer grasp of political reality. In Hinkemann, he had portrayed reality subjectively and kaleidoscopically; in Hoppla he presents it objectively and dialectically. His portrait of the Weimar Republic has specific echoes of his political journalism, emphasising the interdependence of his political theatre and documentary prose.

The publication of Toller's original ending reveals the symmetry of his dramatic conception, confirming that the first four acts as published anticipate this ending rather than the published one suggested by Piscator. The implicit criticism of Karl Thomas is brought to a climax only if the unreality of his attitude is demonstrated; that the Piscator ending fails to do this is proved by the divergent critical interpretations, particularly those which identify Thomas with Toller. The original version also greatly strengthens the positive statement Toller wished to make: the commitment of Berg and Kroll is endorsed if Thomas adopts their point of view. The original ending also reflects a

conception of drama rooted in Expressionism. Thomas's change of heart is an attempt to restate the typical theme of 'anders werden' in terms of growth through social experience, anticipating the treatment of his later dramatic protagonists.

Notes to Chapter XI

- 1 Hoppla, wir leben! Ein Vorspiel und fünf Akte, Potsdam 1927. This is the only published version of the play; it was never re-printed in Toller's life-time. This must be distinguished from Toller's original version, which differs considerably, notably in the ending - see Section 5 below. Piscator's production was based on the published version, but made a number of cuts and additions - see notes 39 and 40 below.

- 2 'Das neue Drama Tollers' in Die Volksbühne, I, 16, 15 August 1926.

- 3 Unpublished letter to Betty Frankenstein, 29 July 1926, one of a collection of letters to this correspondent in the Deutsches Literatur-Archiv, Marbach.

- 4 Unpublished letter to Betty Frankenstein, 13 September 1926, also in the Deutsches Literatur-Archiv.

- 5 See 'Berlin 1919. Szenen von Ernst Toller' in Die Volksbühne II, 5, 1 March 1927. The journal published 5 scenes, which Toller had apparently read a few days earlier in Berlin. 'Toller bezeichnete diese Skizzen als das Atmosphärische eines neuen Dramas'. cf. also H.M., 'Vortragsabend Ernst Toller' in Die literarische Welt, III, 17, 19 April 1927, which mentions Toller's reading a scene from Berlin 1919. Three scenes had been published earlier, under the heading '3 Szenen aus einem unveröffentlichten Drama' in Kulturwille, III, 12, 1 December 1926; a further three scenes appeared in Kunst und Volk (Vienna), II, 1 January 1927.

The publication of these scenes indicates that up until the spring of 1927 Toller still regarded the play as 'work in progress'. It seems likely that he abandoned it only after beginning work on Hoppla.

- 6 From a short account which Toller wrote early in 1927 in connection with his dispute with the 'Volksbühne' regarding their failure to honour an agreement to produce Die Wandlung. This account is listed under the heading 'Korrespondenz mit Bühnenschiedsgericht' in the material contained in the Sammlung Ernst Toller, Akademie der Künste, Berlin.

- 7 C.D. Innes, Erwin Piscator's Political Theatre, p.53, quoting Vossische Zeitung, 5 September 1927, i.e. two days after the Berlin première of Hoppla.
- 8 Piscator, Das Politische Theater, Hamburg 1963, p.146. Subsequently cited as PT, page references from this edition.
- 9 Cf. Sokel, 'Ernst Toller' in Deutsche Literatur im 20. Jahrhundert. Strukturen und Gestalten, (O.Mann and W. Rothe eds.) Vol.II, Berne & Munich 1967, p.298 - who calls Thomas 'ein leicht erkennbares Selbstportät'. Alfred Klein remarks: 'Es ist, als habe Ernst Toller in diesem Karl Thomas sein eignes Schicksal vorweggenommen'. (Klein, 'Zwei Dramatiker in der Entscheidung' in Sinn und Form X (1958).) Hans Marnette goes so far as to suggest that Thomas is 'mit Toller identisch': Marnette, Untersuchungen zum Inhalt-Form Problem in Ernst Tollers Dramen, unpubl. diss., Potsdam 1963; see also Soergel/Hohoff, Dichtung und Dichter der Zeit, Vol II, Düsseldorf 1963: 'Man erkennt, daß Karl Thomas ein Ebenbild Ernst Tollers ist' (p.295).
- 10 Cf. GW III, pp.317-26, which reprints Toller's original ending; also Toller's comments in Quer Durch p.293.
- 11 Quer Durch, p.292.
- 12 GW III, pp.317-26.
Toller's original version had already been type-set for publication, when he was persuaded by Piscator to change the ending. The publisher's proofs of the original version, with Toller's handwritten corrections, were among papers which Toller gave to Mrs. Louise Mendelsohn, who later passed them to John M.Spalek (personal communication from Professor Spalek).
- 13 'Rede auf der Volksbühnentagung in Magdeburg'. See Chapter X, note 39.
- 14 C.D. Innes, Erwin Piscator's Political Theatre, Cambridge 1972, p.127.
- 15 PT, p.152.
- 16 Jost Hermand, Unbequeme Literatur. Eine Beispielreihe, Heidelberg 1971, p.134.
- 17 'Reportage und Dichtung', Die literarische Welt, II, 26, 25 June 1926.

- 18 Quer Durch, pp.167-68.
- 19 In his controversial production of Gewitter über Gottland for the Volksbühne, Piscator had enlarged the frame of reference and tried to stress the contemporary relevance of the historical material by the use of film showing a history of revolution from Rome to the present time.
- 20 Cf. PT, p.150 for Piscator's comments on details of the work on the 'Zwischenfilm'. The critics were virtually unanimous that the film was one of the major achievements of Piscator's production. In this context, it should be emphasised that we are concerned only with the significance of Toller's original outline.
- 21 See Chapter X/3; the following are examples of Toller's treatment of these themes:
 'Die Friedenskonferenz zu Versailles', Neue Zeitung, 1 April 1919, GW I, pp.37-45;
 'Der Brüsseler Kolonialkongreß', Die Weltbühne XXIII, 1 March 1927, GW I, pp. 63-68; 'In Memoriam Kurt Eisner', GW I, pp.165-69; 'Reichskanzler Hitler', Die Weltbühne XXVI, 7 October 1930, GW I, pp.69-73.
 The outline for the 'Zwischenfilm' specifically mentions Ghandi, confirming Toller's interest in his campaign of non-violent resistance in India. One of Toller's late prose works - now lost - was reportedly a study of Ghandi - see J. Spalek and W.Fruhwald, 'Ernst Tollers amerikanische Vortragsreise 1936-37', LWJB, VI, pp.267-311.
- 22 GW III, p.27. Subsequent page references are to this edition.
- 23 Cf. Toller's comments in 'Sprechen wir vom Panzerkreuzer' - see Chapter X, note 32.
- 24 René Lauret, Le théâtre allemand d'aujourd'hui, Paris 1934, p.164.
- 25 Letter to Kurt Hiller, undated (1923) GW V, p.166.
- 26 Letter to B., undated (1924) GW V, pp.187-88.
- 27 The Mena House hotel, mentioned in the text of Hoppla (p.82), had struck Toller as a symbol of the indifference and corruption of the rich, when he had visited Cairo in 1925 - cf. 'Ankunft in Afrika', published in March 1926, reprinted GW I, pp.224-25.
- 28 GW III, p.318.

- 29 Cf. Quer Durch pp.291-94.
- 30 Cf. letter to Tessa, 30.9.1922, GW V, p.130; letter to Max Beer, 7.7.1923, GW V, pp.157-59, also Deutsche Revolution, GW I, pp.159-65 and Eine Jugend, GW IV, p.111.
- 31 Cf. Chapter X/2(i).
- 32 Quer Durch, p.291.
- 33 Deutsche Revolution, GW I, p.162.
- 34 Cobbett rejects Wible's call for indiscriminate action: 'Ist jede Tat ein Altar, der Menschenknie zur Andacht beugt? Sinnlose Tat ist Rausch der Feigen und der Toren!', GW II, p.148. His call for patience ('Der Kampf ist schwer und heischt Geduld, ihr Brüder', p.144) is echoed by Kroll: 'Es gehört Kraft dazu, sich zu gedulden'. (GW III, p.73). Thomas's attitude has some similarities to Wible's, notably in advocating action for its own sake, and in accusing those who preach patience of treachery.
- 35 This argument has already been advanced by Bütow, op.cit., pp.324-28.
- 36 See also Hermand, op.cit., p.136.
- 37 Piscator himself evidently thought so, since he added several lines of dialogue at the end of the scene in order to make the conclusion more explicit. The Berlin production closed with a line spoken by Mutter Meller: 'Es gibt nur eines - sich aufhängen oder die Welt verändern' (PT, p.154).
- 38 Cf. letter to K., undated (1920), GW V, pp.49-50, which rationalises the position adopted by Berg and Kroll, and even anticipates Thomas's criticism that his former comrades have given up the revolutionary struggle.
- 39 See Quer Durch, p.293, also 'The German Theatre Today', Manchester Guardian, 17 February 1934, p.13. Piscator's cuts and additions are contained in his 'Regiebuch', now in the Akademie der Künste der DDR, Berlin. There is an interesting discussion of some of these changes by Martin Kane, 'Erwin Piscator's 1927 production of Hoppla, We're Alive', in Performance and politics in popular drama (D.Bradby, L.James, B.Sharratt eds.), Cambridge 1980.

- 40 Unpublished letter to Alwin Kronacher, dated 19 September 1927, Akademie der Künste, Berlin, 'Sammlung Ernst Toller'. This letter, which seems to have passed unnoticed until now, confirms that Toller's reservations about Piscator's interpretation were expressed at the time of the production. He thought, for example, that the positive function of Kroll had been much under-emphasised by Piscator: 'Die Figure Krolls, die in Berlin viel zu wenig herausgekommen ist, ist doch recht wichtig...'
- 41 Leipziger Volkszeitung, 5 October 1927, quoted from Spalek no.2760.
- 42 Leipziger Neueste Nachrichten, 10 October 1927, quoted from Spalek no.2825.
- 43 Dora Fabian, in Jungsozialistische Blätter, November 1927 - quoted from Der Fall Toller, Nachwort, p.279.

XII. FEUER AUS DEN KESSELN

1. The drama of documentary realism

Feuer aus den Kesseln, completed in March 1930¹, and produced at the Schiffbauerdamm theatre on 31 August 1930, was a critical success, but a box-office failure. It was the last play of Toller's to receive a Berlin premiere, marking the end of the heyday of the political theatre, and the beginning of the decline in Toller's standing as a dramatist. Its failure was symptomatic of the decline of the Weimar Republic - a fortnight after its opening night, the Nazis gained their first great electoral success, winning 107 seats in the Reichstag.

Feuer aus den Kesseln is an exemplary illustration of the documentary realism which became the dominant trend in German theatre between 1927 and 1930. There had been a growing number of works dealing with contemporary, or recent historical, themes in an 'objective' style. While documentary realism reflected a concern for objective reality, and verifiable facts, objectivity was not an end in itself, but a means of social comment. Erwin Piscator stated this in a characteristically uncompromising manner:

For us Marxist revolutionaries, the theatre cannot confine itself to portraying reality without criticism, to being a mirror of the age... The task of the revolutionary theatre is to take reality as a point of departure for underlining the disharmony of society, making it an element of accusation, of revolution, of the new order. 2

The use of documentation to confront reality, to make of it 'an element of accusation', already apparent in Toller's prose work from Justiz to Quer Durch, is equally characteristic of Feuer aus den Kesseln.

The main documentary source for the play was the proceedings of the Reichstag Committee of Inquiry set up to investigate the reasons for the German military collapse of 1918³. Toller's concern for documentary authenticity is demonstrated by the comprehensive documentation attached to the published version of the play: 'Alle wesentlichen Vorgänge sind, wie der Anhang zeigt, dokumentarisch erhärtet'⁴. At the same time, he stressed that he had altered times and places, and invented characters, 'weil ich glaube, daß der Dramatiker das Bild einer Epoche geben, nicht, wie der Reporter, jede historische Einzelheit photographieren soll'.

Toller's foreword must be read in the light of his repeated criticism of 'Neue Sachlichkeit':

Ich glaube, daß die Neue Sachlichkeit eine Form modernen Biedermeiertums war, nicht den Menschen und Dingen war der Künstler der Neuen Sachlichkeit nahe, nur ihrer Photographie. 5

What distinguished the work of art from the superficiality of mimetic realism was the sense of conviction ('Gesinnung') which informed it⁶. The drama of documentary realism, no less than the subjective works of Expressionism, was to demonstrate the 'Idea' which Toller believed was intrinsic to political art:

Heute, da wir zu den einzelnen Geschehnissen Distanz gewonnen haben, da Wichtiges sich von Unwichtigem scheidet, da tausend Einzelheiten vergessen sind, kommen wir zu einem Stil, der gesättigt ist von Realität, und der doch die Idee als Fundament trägt. 7

Writing in 1930, Toller is virtually summarising the dramatic intention of Feuer aus den Kesseln.

Political theatre had, above all, to have contemporary significance. The November Revolution, and the naval mutinies which had initiated it, had gained an extraordinary resonance in the Weimar Republic. The Reichstag Inquiry, which had added to the topicality of these events, was itself symptomatic of the Republic's preoccupation with the circumstances of its own inception. It had been the occasion of mutual accusation between Left and Right. While the Right had contended that the navy - and hence the nation - had been betrayed by a left-wing conspiracy (a theory elaborated in the notorious 'Dolchstoßprozeß') the Left had tried to dispel this myth by proving that the mutinies had arisen spontaneously. Such was the contemporary resonance of these events, that Feuer aus den Kesseln was one of no less than three plays dealing with the naval mutinies produced in Berlin within three months⁸.

2. The original dramatic conception

Toller himself stated that the original conception of Feuer aus den Kesseln went back to November 1928, when an outline had been published in Die Welt am Montag⁹.

This outline had been Toller's response to the newspaper's question: 'Wer schafft den deutschen Revolutionsfilm?', a fact which confirms beyond doubt that Feuer aus den Kesseln was originally planned as a film, and indeed the finished play reveals the continuing influence of this original conception, comprising a series of scenes, which are linked, not in a consecutive narrative, but in an 'epic' structure.

Toller saw the proposed film in terms of documentary realism:

Aus der deutschen Revolution einen Spielfilm, einen gedichteten Film zu machen, wäre falsch. Er muß die große historische Spannung des dokumentarischen Belegs besitzen. Jede Romantisierung würde diese Spannung abschwächen, ja vernichten. 10

Toller finished the article by giving a brief summary of the plot:

...es wird knapp gezeigt der Alltag vor dem Krieg, die Illusion der Völker, daß die Zeit der Kriege vorbei sei, vielleicht das Spiel hinter den Kulissen des Haager Friedenskongresses, die Rüstungen, den Ausbruch des Krieges, den Taumel, das mähliche Erwachen, und dann in dramatischer Ausführlichkeit (die wir ja durch die Reichstagsakten kennen) den Fall der Matrosen Köbes (sic) und Reichpietsch bis zu ihrer Erschießung. Die beiden müßten schon vorher als einfache Menschen der Masse aufgetaucht sein. Dann mit raschem Übergang, daß sie nicht umsonst starben, daß an Stelle von zwei Rebellen Hunderttausende marschierten, die das morsche Gebäude der Monarchie endgültig zerschlugen und die Fahne der Revolution hißten (pp.118-19).

In the finished play, the historical perspective has been shortened, but the most striking fact about this

summary is that it already includes all the main elements of the play as published: the documentary basis in the proceedings of the Reichstag Inquiry, the detailed dramatisation of the case of Köbis and Reichpietsch, their introduction as 'einfache Menschen der Masse', and the final rapid transition to the revolution of November 1918 which their example inspired. It is clearly incorrect to state, as Dorothea Klein does, that the play 'ursprünglich als reines Revolutionsstück konzipiert war', that the judicial theme 'noch nicht im Vordergrund stand', and that Toller's focus of interest shifted as a result of his study of the Reichstag records¹¹. Toller's original outline establishes beyond doubt that he was already familiar with the Reichstag records, which had been published earlier that year, and that it was part of his original intention to dramatise the case of Köbis and Reichpietsch as a major cause of the revolutionary upheaval in the fleet in November 1918.

The film of the German revolution was not to be reduced to party propaganda:

Denn dieser Film darf nicht der Film einer proletarischen Partei werden, er muß ein Gesicht haben, das das ganze Proletariat als das seine erkennt (p.117).

Its effect was to be 'aufwühlend und anfeuernd', contrasting 'was damals gläubig erhofft wurde und heute geblieben ist' (p.118). The events of the drama illustrate the emergence of revolutionary consciousness

in a repressive and reactionary society, ending with a revolution against that society. In the political situation of 1930, these events were to have exemplary significance. The hopes and aspirations of the November Revolution, inspired by the example of men like Köbis and Reichpietsch, could only be realised if the unity, sacrifice and revolutionary élan of 1918 could be restored. The lessons of Toller's 'historisches Schauspiel' were above all contemporary.

3. 'Buchfassung' and 'Bühnenfassung'

Feuer aus den Kesseln was published in two separate editions - in book form, together with a documentary appendix, and in an acting version, both appearing between the completion of the play in March and its production in August 1930¹². Wolfgang Frühwald considers the play to be a 'Justizstück', suggesting that Toller's original interest in the revolutionary connotations of the naval mutinies gave way to an exposé of the judicial murders of Köbis and Reichpietsch¹³. His argument is based largely on the 'Buchfassung', in which the documentary appendix not only corroborates the text of the drama, but complements and extends it.

The documentary appendix has three sections, dated 1917, 1918 and 1928, an arrangement clearly intended to extend the frame of reference into the present. The first section (1917) comprises a broad selection

from the documentary evidence on which the play is based, the second (1918) briefly documents the Kiel mutiny, but it is the third section (1928) which demonstrates the contemporary analogies. It begins with the published conclusions of the Reichstag Inquiry, but then continues, under the title 'Und was tut die Republik?', by documenting the claim for maintenance by Reichpietsch's parents, and the rejection of that claim by the authorities. The intention is clearly to stress the Republic's tacit endorsement of the injustice of the 'Kaiserreich'. Frühwald correctly concludes that the documentary appendix is arranged to demonstrate 'die Gesinnungsidentität vor- und nachrevolutionärer Justiz'¹⁴. This is indeed confirmed by the final document, which cites the reported comment by Kriegsgerichtsrat Dobring: 'er wäre imstande, die 'Leute' mit der größten Ruhe noch einmal zu erschießen' (p.167). Toller also made a deliberate attack on Dobring in the columns of the Weltbühne, which was intended both to expose his role in the 'Marinejustizmorde', and to challenge his fitness to dispense justice in a 'democratic' republic¹⁵. In publicising the injustice to Reichpietsch's parents, and indicting a judicial system in which men like Dobring continued to flourish, the documentary appendix transcends the scope of the play itself. It stands very much in its own right, performing an independent, though related, function to the play¹⁶. It is therefore only logical to conclude that the 'Buchfassung', published

together with the documentary appendix, and intended to be read in conjunction with it, and the 'Bühnenfassung', containing a number of revisions, but above all without the documentary appendix, are two different versions of the play.

What seems to have escaped critical attention hitherto is that these different versions can both be traced back to Toller's original conception. In one crucial respect, he had remained uncertain as to what treatment the theme should receive.

Eine Frage bleibt noch zu entscheiden: soll der Film die Ursachen der Revolution zeigen und mit dem Tage der Revolution und seinen Hoffnungen schließen, oder soll er die Entwicklung der Revolution, also die Tragödie der deutschen Revolution beleuchten?
(pp.117-18)

That is, should it emphasise the initial unity and success of the revolution - or its ultimate disintegration and failure? Toller seems to have been unable to resolve this question satisfactorily, attempting to realise both objectives in different versions of the play. While the dramatic action itself examines the causes of the revolution, closing - as Toller had suggested - with the day of its outbreak, the documentary appendix extended the frame of reference into the present, implicitly contrasting 'was damals gläubig erhofft wurde und heute geblieben ist'¹⁷. In the 'Buchfassung', the judicial theme predominates; in the 'Bühnenfassung', it is subordinated to the larger theme of revolution. The

judicial murders of Köbis and Reichpietsch, intended to preserve the class hegemony of the 'Kaiserreich', are seen to hasten its collapse, for it is the impact of these events, above all, the manifest perversion of justice, which kindles the spirit of revolution in the High Seas Fleet.

4. Dramatic Structure

Toller's intention to present the 'Marinejustizmorde' as the cause of the emergence of revolutionary consciousness in the fleet is implicit in the dramatic structure. Feuer aus den Kesseln has an 'epic' structure, consisting of a series of loosely-connected scenes which are linked dialectically. The first scene portrays the Reichstag Inquiry in 1926; the second reverts to 1916 and the Battle of Jutland. The central scenes (Scenes 3-11) portray 'in dramatischer Ausführlichkeit' the mutiny of 1917, culminating in the execution of Köbis and Reichpietsch, before the final scene passes to a rapid evocation of the revolutionary events in Kiel in November 1918. This structure, common to both 'Buchfassung' and 'Bühnenfassung', throws the dramatic emphasis onto the final scene from which the play derives its title. This emphasis is already suggested by the play's dedication to the executed sailors Köbis and Reichpietsch:

Der die Pfade bereitet,
 stirbt an der Schwelle,
 Doch es neigt sich vor ihm
 in Ehrfurcht der Tod. 18

They were therefore not simply to be commemorated as the victims of 'class justice', but celebrated as the pioneers of revolution, an intention common to Toller's 'Sprechchöre'¹⁹.

The opening scene ('Sommer 1926. Deutscher Reichstag') provides dramatic exposition - the remainder of the play is seen in flashback, a formal device which emphasises the historical perspective and the fact that the play itself is an inquiry. The intention is firstly to re-open the case of Köbis and Reichpietsch. When the Committee Chairman declares 'Wir haben nicht die Aufgabe, nachzuprüfen, ob die Urteile juristisch berechtigt waren oder nicht', a voice from the wings interpolates: 'Aber wir!' (p.123). Toller's concern, however, is not so much to prove the men's innocence as to illuminate the process by which they were found guilty. He is examining the verdicts, not simply for their correctness, but as a symptom of the society which delivered them²⁰.

Furthermore, the Reichstag Committee itself had been charged with investigating the causes of the German collapse of 1918 - and particularly the part played by the revolutionary upheavals in the Navy. Toller's exposition encompasses this wider framework. A leading

witness at the Inquiry had been Seaman Richard Stumpf, who had testified that the revolutionary events of 1918 would have been inconceivable without the memory of the 'mutinies' and subsequent executions of 1917. Toller's exposition concludes with the testimony of 'Simpf' (i.e. Stumpf), taken almost word for word from the Reichstag records:

Was keine Aufwiegelung zustande gebracht hatte, erreichte dieser unselige Prozeß. Von hier ab war alles Vertrauen dahin. Waren wir denn wirklich nur Kulis und Galeerensträflinge? Dieser Tag ist für die Geschichte der Kriegsgerichte in Deutschland ein schwarzer Tag. Ich habe mir immer gesagt: wenn es noch Gerechtigkeit auf Erden gibt, muß diesen Leuten... ihr Recht werden. Wir genossen die Früchte des Opfers. Das Essen wurde nach dem Prozeß merklich besser. Aber die Offiziere fühlten selbst: der Prozeß hat die Leute erst rebellisch gemacht (p.123). 21

Simpf's statement indicates that Toller's intention was to examine the 'Marinejustizmorde' as the event which kindled the spirit of revolution in the fleet. The opening scene of the play therefore already anticipates the last, establishing the dialectical nature of the action.

This is confirmed in the second scene ('31 Mai 1916. Schlacht am Skagerrak') which has no direct connection with the judicial theme, but a dialectical relation to the final scene, in which the stage direction stipulates 'Szene wie im 2.Bild'. This conscious counterpoint emphasises the developments which took place between 1916 and 1918 - the radicalisation of the

fleet, culminating in the spontaneous uprising at Kiel. It is therefore only appropriate that the final scene should depict that uprising. If the play were simply concerned with the miscarriage of justice, the final scene could only be considered an arbitrary addition²². In fact, it serves to place the events of 1917 into historical perspective, revealing them as a prelude to revolution, illustrating the thesis of the play's exposition.

In the Berlin production of the play, the final scene was nonetheless cut at the insistence of the producer, who persuaded Toller to agree much against his better judgement²³. Its deletion forced Toller to make various additions to the script in order to make clear the conclusion which had previously been implicit in the play's structure - and thereby confirming the importance of the final scene to his dramatic conception²⁴.

5. Documented fact and undocumented addition: Toller's use of his documentary sources

As so often with documentary drama, discussion of Feuer aus den Kesseln has been clouded by argument as to the authenticity of the facts portrayed. Even more recent critics have continued to be preoccupied with this aspect of the play. Both Willibrand and Klein allege that Toller is biased in his selection of sources, the latter concluding

daß Toller im Stück die 'historische Wahrheit' aus einer bestimmten, ihm persönlich gemäßen Perspektive wiedergibt, die sicher in vielen Punkten zutrifft, aber keine objektive Gültigkeit beanspruchen kann, weil es nur eine Perspektive ist. 25

Such criticism is misdirected, resting on a notion of 'objectivity' which, as we have seen, Toller did not share. More importantly, it misses the real point of the way he used his sources.

He himself emphasised, in his foreword to the 'Buchfassung', that all the main events of the play could be authenticated from the documentary sources. A detailed comparison of the play with the Reichstag records reveals that he followed his sources sometimes even more closely than he suggested - there are indeed many passages in the play which are transposed almost 'verbatim'²⁶. It also shows, however, that Toller made a number of undocumented additions and elaborations, which are particularly significant. In the following analysis, it will be shown that Toller's use of documentary sources, and above all his departure from them, illuminate both his dramatic theme, and the way in which he developed it.

Toller's interest in his documentary sources was undoubtedly stimulated by their apparent confirmation of his own perception of the November Revolution, and the understanding of the revolutionary process he derived from it: 'Revolutionen werden nicht 'gemacht': ihnen gehen

Zusammenbrüche voraus,²⁷. Contrary to the thesis of the political Right, the events in the fleet were not the result of organised subversion but of spontaneous discontent. This fact is evident in Scene 3, which depicts the role of the Socialist parties as reflected in the meetings between deputies Dittmann (USPD) and Scheidemann (SPD), and the sailors Reichpietsch and Sachse. Toller's main source was Dittmann's own evidence to the Reichstag Inquiry. The scene is one of the most theatrically effective in the play; it also offers an interesting example of Toller's use of his sources, judiciously balancing documentary fact and dramatic fiction.

The scene opens with a promenade of passing deputies, whose disconnected snippets of conversation summarise the decadence and irrelevance of the Reichstag. They are ironically repeated in the middle and at the end of the scene, stressing the circular nature of the proceedings. The material comforts and trivial concerns of the deputies are contrasted with the hardship and serious purpose of the visiting sailors. Within this fictional frame, Toller places the sailors' meetings with Dittmann and Kleidemann (i.e. Scheidemann), his portrayal following the substance and sometimes even the letter of Dittmann's own account²⁸. Toller's purpose is to demonstrate that the 'mutiny' was not the product of political agitation by the USPD - still less by the SPD.

The sailors' complaints are clearly spontaneous, the reasons for them largely 'unpolitical'. While some of the men read the Socialist papers, particularly the Leipziger Volkszeitung, these do not stir up feelings against the war, so much as articulate those which already exist: 'Die (i.e. the Leipziger Volkszeitung) schlägt am besten an. Die hat Courage. Die spricht aus, was wir fühlen' (p.134)²⁹.

The Socialist leaders, for their part, are anxious not to become too closely involved. So far from instigating revolution, they are clearly concerned to contain the men's discontent. Kleidemann begins by telling them he has little time to spare and seems more concerned to warn them against possible treason than to register their complaints. He is clearly part of the parliamentary roundabout with which the scene opens, and which he leaves the men to rejoin. His contemptuous dismissal of Liebknecht emphasises the gulf which separates the SPD from those they claim to represent. While Dittmann is shown in a more favourable light, he too offers little constructive help. He counsels caution and is careful to remain himself within the bounds of strict legality: 'Was ihr tun sollt? Ihr müßt sehr vorsichtig sein... Einerseits müßt Ihr aktiv sein, andererseits müßt Ihr daran denken, daß Ihr vors Kriegsgericht kommen könnt' (pp.134-35). He seems surprised at the strength of pacifist feeling in the

fleet, and unable to recognise its revolutionary potential, being preoccupied with the forthcoming 'peace conference' in Stockholm.

The ensuing scenes depict the events of the 'mutiny' showing its origins in the universal dissatisfaction with food and conditions, and the growing gulf between officers and men³⁰. The election of the 'Menagekommission' is not calculated but almost casual, following the chance discovery of an item in a newspaper. The 'mutiny' itself is unplanned and uncoordinated, a spontaneous reaction which rapidly acquires a momentum of its own. East German commentators have criticised Toller's portrayal of the spontaneous nature of events, accusing him of elevating spontaneity into a positive principle and of failing to recognise the leadership role of the revolutionary party³¹. It must be stressed, however, that Toller does not dismiss the role of revolutionary leadership, he merely portrays the lack of it. Kleidemann interprets a rebellious statement as support for the enemy, implicitly endorsing the war effort and underlining the SPD's collaboration with an annexationist government. Dittmann has exaggerated expectations of the Stockholm conference, illustrating the inherent weakness of the USPD position.

As to the spontaneous nature of the mutiny, it is confirmed in Toller's documentary sources, which he followed very closely in this respect. He does not,

however, endorse spontaneity, for it is precisely the spontaneous nature of the men's action which is its main weakness. While Köbis appeals to his comrades to take matters into their own hands ('Die Parteien werden uns nicht helfen. Wir müssen uns selbst helfen', p.150), he also recognises that they have acted prematurely. Moreover, his appeal for action from below, with its explicit echoes of Luxemburg, reflects the revolutionary tradition of the German labour movement, albeit a tradition which, in 1930, the KPD had already renounced³². Köbis's appeal is not yet that of the conscious revolutionary, of course, for Toller's theme - exemplified in the character of Köbis - is precisely the growth of revolutionary consciousness. This growth arises from the dramatic conflict.

6. Dramatic conflict as class conflict

Feuer aus den Kesseln is the only play of Toller's in which the dramatic conflict is clearly posed in terms of class conflict. The gulf which divides the enlisted men from their officers is one of social origin, as Köbis is quick to recognise: 'Sterben können die meisten Offiziere, aber leben können sie nicht mit uns' (p.140). The officers and the naval authorities clearly belong to the ruling class: their actions are dictated by a common ethos, which serves to sustain the existing social order. This is not to say that Toller is guilty of the black-and-white characterisation which

he deplored. Scheer and Schuler, Hoffmann and Kohler all belong to the officer caste, but each is individually characterised.

The main representative of the naval authorities is Schuler, whose role is of course central to the plot. He is aware of the importance of the case assigned to him, relentless in his pursuit of confessions, and unscrupulous in the means he uses to extort them. He is given an individual dimension through the letter he dictates to his wife, which reveals his concern with domestic banalities, but the letter's affectionate tone is deliberately juxtaposed with his infamous greeting to the five sailors: 'Aha, da sind ja die Todeskandidaten'. While Schuler is given a personal dimension, we see him largely in his judicial function. Toller carefully documents all the excesses attributed to him³³, for he is primarily a representative figure, embodying the perversion of justice in defence of the existing power structure. Admiral von Scheer is an equally representative figure, the pan-German reactionary, convinced of the need for territorial annexation, and of the treason of those who oppose it. He does not hesitate to arrange the executions before the verdict has even been announced³⁴.

The characters of Hoffmann and Kohler are both invented, though there is historical authority for the transfer of popular officers to the U-Boat fleet and

their replacement by younger officers who attempted to hide their inexperience behind harsh discipline.

Hoffmann's behaviour is authoritarian and punitive:

Weber reduces it to the formula 'ich befehle - ich bestrafe - ich befehle - ich bestrafe' (p.140). His attitude is explicitly contrasted with that of Captain Kohler, a decent and humane officer who is genuinely concerned for the welfare of his men. Toller did not, however, include the character in the interests of dramatic balance: he wished to show that Kohler's personal concern is ultimately irrelevant in that he too cannot escape his social role. When he tries to intercede on behalf of his former crew-members, he is brusquely rejected by Scheer, who believes that death sentences are imperative to maintain discipline - that is, to preserve the military power structure of which Kohler himself is part. It was precisely this revelation of the disparity between personal conduct and class ethos which Toller considered 'geistig revolutionierend'³⁵. While the members of the officer corps are individually delineated, they are united by a common ethos which ultimately determines their actions.

The enlisted men have no such common ethos; they are united by their social predicament. Sachse articulates their awareness that they are, and will remain, workers:

Wenn wir jetzt auch Kulis und Stoker sind, wir sind trotz unserer Militärkluft Proleten geblieben. Wir waren Packer und Metallarbeiter und Eisenbahner und Kutscher. Wenn der Krieg zu Ende ist, werden wir wieder Packer und Metallarbeiter und Eisenbahner und Kutscher sein (p.147).

They are merely 'workers in uniform', unlike the officers, whose trade is war: the dramatic conflict derives from this social tension.

The Sailors' spokesmen are the five members of the 'Menagekommission' - Kobis, Reichpietsch, Beckers, Sachse and Weber - and it is in characterising them that Toller has made his most significant departures from documented fact. The number of sailors actually indicted was eleven, whom Toller reduced to those five originally sentenced to death. Similarly, he brought the five men together on one ship. Such changes can be explained, of course, as a consequence of dramatic economy, but in characterising the five men Toller made other changes which are a consequence of dramatic theme.

The personal and political qualities of the five men emerge in varying degrees from the Reichstag records. The most intelligent and politically conscious was undoubtedly Sachse, whom the prosecution considered the intellectual leader of the political movement in the fleet. Reichpietsch, who served with him on 'Friedrich der Große', was, in comparison, politically inexperienced and unsophisticated. Weber was probably the least militant of the five: 'Wir wollten nur etwas mehr als

Menschen angesehen werden'. Beckers was an Anarchist, who had belonged to the Free Socialist Youth before the war. Probably least is known about Köbis, though like Beckers he was an Anarchist, who had studied Socialism for two years, before losing interest and turning to the study of philosophy³⁶.

Toller's characterisations are undoubtedly derived from his documentary sources, but elaborate on them in ways which are particularly illuminating. The five men are the collective victims of class justice, but they are delineated individually, differing widely in their level of political awareness and commitment. Weber, Beckers and Sachse are assigned relatively minor roles, the latter being in no way a dominant figure. As the play's dedication suggests, it is Reichpietsch and Köbis who dominate Toller's dramatic conception, and specifically Köbis - about whom the documentary records tell us least - who personifies his theme of the growth of revolutionary consciousness under the impact of the judicial proceedings.

The five men are introduced in Scene 2 as participants in the Battle of Jutland. The function of this scene is to evoke the mood in the fleet at the time of the only major naval engagement of the war. The men's boredom with inaction, and their latent resentment at their treatment by the officers, vanish at the onset of battle; they greet the announcement of victory with enthusiasm. The five men say and do

little to distinguish themselves from their fellow-sailors: in accordance with his original intention, Toller is careful to present them as part of the mass of enlisted men, from which they were only later to emerge³⁷.

In contrast, they appear in the foreground of Scenes 3-5, which depict the incidents leading to their arrest. Among the members of the 'Menagekommission', it is Köbis who, from the start, plays the leading role. It is suggested that he has a greater political awareness than his comrades: 'Alwin liest wieder seine gelehrten Bücher' (p.142). It is he who acts as spokesman for the men's complaints, justifying their hunger strike to the inspecting officer, and he who first proposes the election of the 'Menagekommission'. While Weber seeks to minimise its role - 'Was hat die Menagekommission mit Kohlen zu tun?' (p.145) - Köbis is able to identify it as a channel for asserting the men's rights: 'Ihr habt Recht, Kameraden. Nicht um das bißchen Fressen geht's. Es geht um unsere Rechte' (p.145). It is Köbis who argues that the promised film-show must take place, and who is responsible for instigating the men's walkout.

The following scene, portraying the meeting at Rüsterei, confirms Köbis's leading role. He opens the meeting, explaining the purpose of the men's action. He is quick to stress its unplanned nature, suggesting

that they have acted prematurely:

Wir wollen uns darüber klar sein, wir haben zu früh losgeschlagen. Wir hätten warten müssen, bis die ganze Flotte hinter uns steht. Es kommt der Tag, wo wir demonstrieren, daß uns ein Dreck an Belgien und Polen und den baltischen Provinzen liegt (p.150).

His political understanding clearly transcends that of his comrades: he can not only articulate the men's war weariness, but place it in a wider political perspective. Beckers, on the other hand, sees the walkout as a protest against bad food: 'Es kommt darauf an, was in der Pfanne preckelt' (p.148). Reichpietsch is a fundamentalist Christian, for whom the commandment 'thou shalt not kill' has literal force, and whose faith determines his political allegiance: 'Es gibt nur eine Partei im Reichstag die nach Gottes Wort handelt: 'Du sollst nicht töten. Das ist die Opposition. Darum schließt euch der Oppositionspartei an' (p.148). Reichpietsch is ready to put his faith in the peace conference in Stockholm - Köbis recognises that they will get little help from the Reichstag parties. While Reichpietsch is ready to accept the 'agent provocateur' Birgiwski at face value, Köbis instantly suspects him. When the detachment of naval police arrive, it is Köbis whose presence of mind saves the situation.

Köbis's embryonic political consciousness grows under the impact of the judicial proceedings. The strength of will and determination which distinguish him from his comrades emerge during the pre-trial

interrogation. Whereas Reichpietsch breaks down under continual questioning, Köbis refuses to be intimidated by Schuler's threats: the latter acknowledges that Köbis is 'die härteste Nuß' (p.157). It is, however, the Court Martial proceedings which confirm Köbis's dominant rôle. Weber seeks to deny any political involvement; Reichpietsch believes, even at this late stage, in the fairness of the court, Beckers keeps silent. Köbis deliberately uses the occasion to declare his revolutionary commitment: 'Wir sind keine Revisionisten, wir sind Revolutionäre' (p.169). He regrets that they actually failed to do what the prosecution accuses them of - to organise a mass strike within the fleet.

At Rüstiersiel, Köbis had declared the need for concerted action, rather than spontaneous rebellion, advocating a peace demonstration by the sailors. His outburst to the Court Martial is a statement of embryonic revolutionary philosophy, in which he advocates, not a peace demonstration, but a mass strike in the fleet as an expression of international workers' solidarity against the common class enemy:

Ich verachte Sie. Sie sind der Feind, und nicht der Heizer auf den englischen Schiffen, mit dem ich vor dem Kriege zusammen geschuftet habe, und mit dem ich nach dem Krieg wieder zusammen schuften werde (p.169).

Revolutionary action must be organised from below:

Wir haben auf den Reichstag, auf die Abgeordneten, auf die Zeitungen, auf die U.S.P. gehofft. Keiner hilft uns, wenn wir uns nicht selbst helfen. Wir müssen der Anarchie von oben die Ordnung von unten entgegensetzen (p.169).

He ends on a threatening note of prophecy - 'Deutschland wird unsere Stimme hören, nicht Ihre!' - a prophecy which is fulfilled in the final scene.

The strength of his revolutionary commitment is confirmed in prison (Scene 9), when he rejects the spiritual solace of the Church, refusing to enter a plea for clemency. He alone of the five men is able to generalise their individual experience; it is he who rejects Beckers's suggestion that they commit suicide:

Nee, Jungens, Finger weg! Es ist bitter, von diesen Leuten noch an die Wand gestellt zu werden. Aber jede Sache verlangt Opfer. Unser Blut wird nicht umsonst fließen (p.173).

That is, he recognises that their death will serve some purpose only if they are executed. He also recognises that the death sentences are a matter of political expediency, reflecting - and reinforcing - the existing power structure:

Sachse: Was haben wir getan? Woher nehmen sie das Recht?

Köbis: Recht?... Macht (p.173).

The contrast between 'Recht' and 'Macht', between the ideal of justice, and its perversion in the existing 'Machtstaat', suggests the continuing influence of neo-Kantianism on Toller's thinking. It echoes a conclusion he had drawn from his own experience of

revolution and imprisonment: 'Das Bürgertum, in seiner Macht von den Pionieren künftiger Gesellschaftsgestaltung bedrückt, hat, sehend oder blind, seine Idee der Gerechtigkeit preisgegeben'³⁸. Köbis is able to predict that they will not die in vain, that death will transfigure them into martyrs of revolution. The events of the final scene confirm his conviction, lending their subjective experience an historical dimension.

The character of Köbis is therefore crucial to Toller's dramatic theme: his radicalisation is symptomatic of the growth of revolutionary consciousness in the 'Hochseeflotte'. While Toller's characterisation is undoubtedly based on his documentary sources, which he indeed sometimes quotes directly, it also contains significant departures from documented fact, which will now be summarised.

In his portrayal of the so-called mutiny, Toller relies largely on Beckers's account, but deliberately departs from it in assigning the dominant role in these events to Köbis. Beckers's evidence confirms that Köbis was the spokesman for the men's complaints, but states that he, and not Köbis, played the leading part in the 'Soldatenbund' which was to coordinate action between ships. Similarly, he, and not Köbis, organised the men's protest and instigated the walkout: 'Hauptbetriebsfeder war ich'³⁹. Toller's dramatisation

of the meeting at Rüsterei faithfully renders its light-hearted, almost carefree mood. Following Beckers's account, Toller quotes Köbis's reported comments, sometimes almost 'verbatim', but in elaborating on them has lent them a more radical tone which emphasises Köbis's embryonic political consciousness⁴⁰.

Köbis's refusal to make a confession is documented in the accounts of his surviving comrades; his recalcitrance is also consistent with the official records, his failure to cooperate with the authorities being the main reason for the refusal to commute his death sentence⁴¹. There is, on the other hand, no historical authority for Köbis's defiant statement to the Court Martial, which is certainly more radical than anything attributed to him. While he and Beckers had apparently discussed the idea of a peace demonstration, they had never entertained the possibility of a mass strike⁴². This addition is clearly a consequence of the requirements, not of dramatic form, but of revolutionary theme. Similarly, the conversation in the prison scene is based on documentary evidence, but again enlarges on it to give Köbis's remarks a more politically conscious, and even prophetic, dimension⁴³.

What distinguishes Köbis from the other members of the 'Menagekommission' is that he learns from his experience: it is precisely the judicial proceedings against him which force him to recognise the true nature

of the society which sanctions them. Reichpietsch, on the contrary, cannot really grasp what has happened to him, as the evidence of his final letter confirms. Toller's theme demanded a conscious revolutionary protagonist. He therefore elaborated on documented fact in order to emphasise Köbis's inherent qualities of leadership (Scenes 4 and 5), to make his revolutionary commitment explicit (Scene 7) and to show the growth of revolutionary consciousness which enables him to analyse objectively his own imminent execution (Scene 9).

7. The place of Feuer aus den Kesseln in Toller's development as a political dramatist

The play is Toller's most successful attempt to realise his conception of drama: a portrayal of reality informed by the dominant 'idea' he considered intrinsic to political art. Toller's political critics have consistently decried the progressive disillusionment which they allege characterises all his dramatic work after Die Wandlung. Feuer aus den Kesseln is the play which most effectively refutes this charge, showing the more positive affirmation and greater political realism already noted in Hoppla, wir leben! Alwin Köbis exemplifies the positive revolutionary protagonist, representing the culmination of a line of development running through Toller's work from Ned Lud in Die Maschinenstürmer through Albert Kroll in Hoppla: in the

character of Köbis, Toller finally succeeded in placing the Expressionist motif of 'anders werden' into a framework of growth through social experience.

Toller's attempt to portray Socialist conviction must, of course, be distinguished from Leninist 'Parteilichkeit'. The play was to paint a portrait, which 'das ganze Proletariat als das seine erkennt',⁴⁴. Köbis expressly appeals to his comrades to help themselves, since the parties will not help them; the mutiny at Kiel is portrayed as a concerted action by men of all parties and none. In the political climate of 1930, Feuer aus den Kesseln must be read as an attempt to invoke the spirit of the united front which had inspired the revolution of 1918.

Toller's speeches and statements in the Weimar Republic document his belief that class struggle was inevitable in bourgeois society⁴⁵; Feuer is the only play in which he gave this perception dramatic substance. In his earlier plays, class struggle had either been transcended, as in Die Wandlung, or had been simply a background for dramatic conflict within the revolutionary movement itself⁴⁶. In Masse Mensch, this conflict is between differing conceptions of revolution, in Die Maschinenstürmer between conscious revolution and dumb rebellion, in Hoppla between idealistic and realistic commitment - in Feuer, it is posed as class conflict.

Toller's 'historisches Schauspiel' epitomises the trend towards documentary realism which marks all his work in the period 1925-1933; it also seems to mark a peak in his commitment to revolutionary Socialism. His subsequent plays show considerable continuity in style and theme, but are detached from a revolutionary perspective. The short radio play Berlin - letzte Ausgabe! employs the stylistic device of montage used in Hinkemann and Hoppla. It consists of a series of short scenes enacting apparently unconnected newspaper headlines, juxtaposed to emphasise social contradiction. Significantly, its conclusion laments human indifference rather than the inhumanity of society⁴⁷.

Wunder in Amerika, written in 1930-31 in collaboration with Hermann Kesten, and Die blinde Göttin, written in 1931-32, both return to themes treated in his earlier work⁴⁸. The former deals with the business of religion, following the career of Mary Baker Eddy, the founder of Christian Science; the latter takes up the judicial theme of Feuer aus den Kesseln, being based on a notorious legal case in Switzerland. In Feuer, Toller presents the perversion of justice as a consequence of the social order, but Die blinde Göttin contains little suggestion that the miscarriage of justice it portrays is endemic to capitalism - the play indicts a specific injustice, not the injustice of society. Anna Gerst is certainly changed by her experience of

unjust imprisonment, but her transformation has no social significance - she leaves her former lover only to withdraw into private isolation. Feuer aus den Kesseln is therefore the last play of Toller's to deal with the theme of revolution, a theme to which he returned only in his autobiography.

Notes to Chapter XII

- 1 Feuer aus den Kesseln. Historisches Schauspiel. Anhang historischer Dokumente, Berlin 1930.
An acting version of the play appeared in the same year. For discussion of these two versions, see Section 3, particularly note 12. An announcement that the play had been completed appeared in Berliner Tageblatt, 27 March 1930 - see Spalek no.2476.
- 2 René Lauret, Le théâtre allemand d'aujourd'hui, Paris 1934, p.172:
Pour nous autres marxistes révolutionnaires, notre théâtre ne peut se borner à dessiner la réalité sans critique, à concevoir le théâtre comme un 'miroir de l'époque'... La tâche du théâtre révolutionnaire est de prendre la réalité pour point de départ et de souligner la désharmonie de la société pour en faire un élément d'accusation, de révolution, un élément de l'ordre nouveau.
The author does not quote a source, and I have been unable to find the German original.
- 3 Das Werk des Untersuchungsausschusses der Verfassungsgebenden Deutschen Nationalversammlung und des Deutschen Reichstages 1919-28, 4th series: 'Die Ursachen des deutschen Zusammenbruches im Jahre 1918', Berlin 1928. In the documentary appendix to the play, Toller indicated that his sources were Vols IX/1, IX/2 and X. These are cited as DWU, followed by the number of the volume.
- 4 Feuer aus den Kesseln, foreword p.7, reprinted in GW III, pp.327-28.
- 5 Quer Durch, p.281.
- 6 Cf. 'Rede auf der Volksbühnentagung in Magdeburg', Das Tagebuch VIII, 27, 2 July 1927, p.1077:
Der Künstler steht lebendig hinter dem Werk. In ihm wirkt ein Gesamt von Empfindungen, von Lebensanschauungen, von Betrachtungsarten, von Erkenntnissen; dieses Gesamt kommt in seinem Kunstwerk zum Ausdruck, und dieses Gesamt nennen wir Gesinnung.
- 7 Quer Durch, p.281.

- 8 Plivier's Des Kaisers Kulis, produced by Piscator, opened in Berlin on the same night as Feuer aus den Kesseln. Friedrich Wolf's play Die Matrosen von Cattaro, dealing with mutiny in the Austro-Hungarian navy, opened at the Berlin Volksbühne on 8 November 1930. See G. Rühle, Theater für die Republik im Spiegel der Kritik, Frankfurt 1967, pp.1040-46.
- 9 GW III, p.328.
- 10 'Wer schafft den deutschen Revolutionsfilm?', GW I, pp.117-119; page references to this edition.
- 11 D. Klein, Der Wandel, p.151.
- 12 For 'Buchfassung', see note 1. The 'Bühnenfassung', a mimeographed acting version, is reprinted in GW III, pp.119-184. Page references in the text are to this edition; references to the 'Buchfassung' are footnoted as such. Spalek considers the 'Buchfassung' the first edition, calling the 'Bühnenfassung' 'a thoroughly revised version ... designed for production on stage' which 'must be considered the authoritative version' (see Spalek nos.16 and 17). Frühwald disagrees, considering that the 'Bühnenfassung' 'zwar ebenfalls 1930 aber noch vor der ersten Buchfassung erschien' (LWJB IV (1963) p.301, note 55). Klein and Bütow both agree, the latter surmising that both versions may be based on an 'Urfassung' which has now been lost (see Bütow, op.cit., pp.340-41). Bütow also notes the existence of a second stage version, clearly published after the production at the Schiffbauerdamm Theatre, since it prints the version actually performed (see note 24).
- 13 Frühwald, 'Buchbesprechungen' LWJB IV (1963), p.302.
- 14 Ibid.
- 15 'Einladung an Dobring', Die Weltbühne XXVI, 1 October 1930.
- 16 Klein (p.157) concludes that the documentary appendix must be seen as 'eigenständige Ergänzung'; Altenhofer (op.cit., pp.203/4) comes to the same conclusion.
- 17 GW I, p.118.
- 18 'Buchfassung', p.5 (also GW III, p.327). These lines are in fact taken from the Gedichte der Gefangenen, where they follow the dedication to 'den namenlosen Toten deutscher Revolution', GW II, p.305.

- 19 Der Tag des Proletariats is dedicated 'dem Andenken Karl Liebknechts'; the later poem 'Weltliche Passion' commemorates Liebknecht and Luxemburg as an inspiration to future victory - see Chapter XV/3 below.
- 20 Cf. Justiz - see Chapter X/3 above.
- 21 Cf. DWU IX/1, p.52, also DWU IX/2, p.333. The formal conclusions of the Reichstag Committee endorsed Stumpf's judgement:
- Die Verurteilung durch die Kriegsgerichtsräte, besonders aber die Vollstreckung der zwei Todesurteile, sind von einem großen Teil der Mannschaften als ungerecht und zu streng empfunden worden; die Urteile wirkten verbitternd in Die Zukunft.
- Toller cites this in his documentary appendix - see 'Buchfassung', p.157.
- 22 Willibrand (op.cit., p.93) comes to precisely this conclusion:
- Feuer aus den Kesseln is an extremely episodic play. Each scene has a different setting, and there is little evidence of successful dramatic concentration... It is also disturbing to have a play begin and end with scenes which are but remotely connected with the main plot.
- Willibrand therefore unwittingly confirms that he fails to recognise Toller's dramatic theme, considering the play to be simply an example of 'miscarried justice'.
- 23 See Ernst-Josef Aufricht, Erzähle, damit du dein Recht erweist, Munich 1966, pp.101-103. Contemporary critics noted the omission with surprise and criticism - see B.Z. am Mittag, 1 September 1930, Berliner Tageblatt, same date, cuttings in Akademie der Künste, Berlin, 'Sammlung Ernst Toller'. See also Ernst Feder, Heute sprach ich mit... Tagebücher eines Berliner Publizisten 1926-32, Stuttgart 1977, p.265.
- 24 These changes, incorporated in the second acting version of the play (see note 12 above) are listed in Bütow, op.cit., pp.340-41. Bütow assumes that since Toller made, or at least authorised these changes, this version must be regarded as the definitive one, a view which seems quite wrong, given Toller's opposition to cutting the final scene, a fact which Bütow does not mention.

- 25 D. Klein, Der Wandel, p.155; Willibrand, op.cit., p.93.
- 26 Dorothea Klein's analysis of the play includes an invaluable tabulation of the main sources for each scene, see Klein, op.cit., pp.236-37. Unfortunately, she does not specifically discuss those passages for which there is no documentary authority.
- 27 Nationalsozialismus, p.11 - see Chapter X/2(ii). Toller's perception may well have been influenced by the study of the documentary records, particularly Dittmann's account:

Wäre die Rebellion auf den Schiffen von der USPD 'gemacht', wie fälschlich behauptet wird, so hätten die Matrosen in Kiel gewiß nicht ausgerechnet Noske zu ihrem Führer erwählt... Genau wie die Hungerrevolten von 1917, so ist auch die Rebellion von 1918 nicht in die Marine hineingetragen, sondern aus ihr von innen herausgekommen.
(DWU IX/1, p.118).

To substantiate Dittmann's claim regarding Noske, Toller cites the latter's account of the mutiny in the documentary appendix - see 'Buchfassung', pp.151-153.

- 28 See DWU IX/1, pp.32-38. In fact, Dittmann had two meetings with Reichpietsch, the first at the USP party headquarters, the second at the Reichstag. He also met Sachse at the Reichstag, but on a separate occasion; for Sachse's version of this meeting, which confirms Dittmann's, see DWU IX/2, pp.238-39. For reasons of dramatic economy, Toller has fused these separate meetings into one. Reichpietsch did not in fact meet Scheidemann, though he did speak to Stücklen, the SPD spokesman on naval matters.
- 29 Cf. DWU IX/2, p.225, also IX/2, p.292, where Weber confirmed that the Leipziger Volkszeitung 'der Stimmung der Mannschaft am besten entsprach'. Toller also uses Dittmann's statement that he warned both Reichpietsch and Sachse 'sie möchten sich vorsehen, daß ihnen aus solchen Besprechungen nicht ein Strick gedreht werde' (DWU IX/1, p.36).
- 30 For some of the motifs Toller used in the play, see DWU IX/1, p.410, IX/2, pp.245, 332, 404-405, X/1, p.169. Some of these details are cited in the documentary appendix.

- 31 See Hans Marnette, Untersuchungen zum Inhalt-Form-Problem in Ernst Tollers Dramen, unpubl. dissertation, Potsdam 1963, pp.325-26, 333.
- 32 See Luxemburg's Spartacus letter of October 1916:
 Jetzt kann die Arbeiterschaft nur noch von sich selbst etwas erwarten, von der eignen Massenaaktion, vom kräftigen Protest, vom Wiederholten Massenstreik, in denen sie ihre wahre Macht entfaltet.
 ('Wofür kämpfte Liebknecht und weshalb wurde er zu Zuchthaus verurteilt?' in Spartakus im Kriege, (Ernst Meyer ed.), Berlin 1927, pp.147-48.)
 A year later, one of the Spartacus letters specifically invoked the example of Reichpietsch and Köbis. Cf. 'Folgt ihrem Beispiel! (Zum Tode von Reichpietsch und Cöbes (sic), Herbst 1917)', Spartakus im Kriege, pp.172-73. The letter declares: 'Doch diese Opfer sind nicht umsonst gebracht'. In his original outline, Toller had stressed his intention of demonstrating 'daß sie nicht umsonst starben'; in the play, he attributes the same idea to Köbis: '...jede Sache verlangt Opfer. Unser Blut wird nicht umsonst fließen' (p.173). This echo of Luxemburg is largely - but not only - a rhetorical one. See also Chapter XIV/7.
- 33 Cf. DWU IX/1, pp.378-79 (evidence of Michalski), IX/2, pp.281-84 (evidence of Beckers), IX/2, p.252 (evidence of Sachse), IX/2, pp.301-2 (evidence of Webers).
- 34 Cf. Scheer's letter to von Stein, cited by Dittmann, DWU IX/1, pp.74-75, the text of which Toller reproduces almost word for word (GW III, p.160).
- 35 See Chapter X/4 above.
- 36 For Sachse's role, see DWU IX/1, p.34, which also gives Dittmann's evaluation of Reichpietsch: 'Reichpietsch machte den Eindruck eines sehr geweckten, frischen jungen Mannes, war aber politisch völlig ungeschult und unerfahren'. For details of Beckers, see DWU IX/2, pp.257-58; for Köbis, DWU IX/2, pp.225 and 377. The statement of Weber's which is cited (see DWU IX/2, p.313) is attributed in the play to Beckers. This is not untypical of Toller's method - for example, it was Beckers - and not Köbis - who had read Stirner.

- 37 Cf. 'Wer schafft den deutschen Revolutionsfilm?' - see note 10 above.
- 38 Justiz, p.7.
- 39 DWU IX/2, p.265, pp.268-69 and pp.274-75.
- 40 Köbis invokes, for instance, the example of Karl Liebknecht. He also speaks of a peace demonstration, something he and Beckers had only discussed privately. Cf. DWU IX/2, pp.275-280.
- 41 See DWU IX/2, p.405: 'Köbis hat hartnäckig geleugnet.' See also DWU IX/2, p.284, where Beckers suggests: 'Vor Köbis hatte Dobring scheinbar Angst'. Scheer's reasons for refusing a pardon for Köbis are cited in Daniel Horn, Mutiny on the High Seas, London 1973, p.164, note 84.
- 42 Cf. Beckers's evidence, DWU IX/2, p.330.
- 43 Cf. Beckers's evidence, DWU IX/2, p.405; Beckers mentions the suicide plan, but does not say why they desisted from it. Weber's testimony expands on Beckers's, citing Köbis as follows:
 ...es ist bitter, von diesen Leuten noch an die Wand gestellt zu werden, die kein Recht dazu haben; aber Opfer müssen bei jeder Bewegung gebracht werden; das Blut wird wirken!
 (DWU IX/2, p.331).
- 44 'Wer schafft den deutschen Revolutionsfilm?' - see note 10 above.
- 45 Cf. 'Rede auf der Volksbühnentagung in Magdeburg', p.1074, Nationalsozialismus, pp.21, 32.
- 46 Bütow's study already comes to this conclusion, see Bütow, op.cit., p.349.
- 47 Berlin - letzte Ausgabe! in Frühe sozialistische Hörspiele, (Stefan Bodo Würffel ed.), Frankfurt 1982, pp.95-117. The play was written in four days, probably in the autumn of 1930 - cf. Feder, op.cit., p.271.
- 48 Wunder in Amerika. Schauspiel in fünf Akten. Mimeographed acting version, Berlin 1931. Published in English as Mary Baker Eddy, translated by Edward Crankshaw, in Seven Plays, London 1935.
Die blinde Göttin. Schauspiel in fünf Akten,
 Berlin 1933.

XIII. QUER DURCH: TAKING STOCK

1. Structure and Intention

Quer Durch, published in the autumn of 1930¹, is a miscellany of travel-writing, political speeches and literary reflections. The first two sections consist of Toller's accounts of his visits to America in 1929 and Russia in 1926, the last two of a selection from his political speeches, and an essay interpreting his own plays and their reception. It is, at first sight, a somewhat disparate collection, which only on closer inspection reveals the careful structure which gives the work its significance: it anticipates in many respects the autobiography he had already begun², taking stock of a decade of political commitment, and attempting to draw broader social and political conclusions from it.

There has been hitherto little serious comment on the American and Russian 'Reisebilder'. Willibrand dismisses them as 'ordinary tendentious reporting', and even Spalek refers to Toller's 'rather superficial criticism of the U.S.', which he was subsequently forced to revise³. More recently, Malcolm Pittock has made a useful and extended analysis of the American section, but ignores the 'Russische Reisebilder' on the grounds of their alleged inferiority⁴: the problem with such piecemeal analysis is that it ignores the book's structure, which rests on contrast.

Toller's reports on Russia and America take the form of a fragmentary and sometimes anecdotal account of his experiences. Incidents and encounters, facts and events, either witnessed or drawn from reliable sources, are recounted in the detached style of all Toller's documentary prose. Tucholsky considered the 'Reisebilder' no more than objective reporting: 'Toller sagt nur: Ich kam, ich sah, ich schrieb - hier habt ihr's'⁵. In fact, Toller's intention was not simply descriptive, but diagnostic, synthesising fragmentary impressions into a coherent social and political critique. The anecdotal approach was not just incidental, but part of a careful and deliberate method: 'Sie wissen ja, ich liebe mehr als theoretische Beschreibungen sinnliche Episoden, weil sie beziehungsreicher sind' (p.184). The apposite anecdote, with its connotative reverberations, therefore largely replaces theoretical discussion. Indeed, he draws few direct conclusions, allowing the facts to speak for themselves, lending them point through the editorial techniques of selection, emphasis and juxtaposition. His comments on the 'living newspaper' and its 'eminente politische Wirkung' denote his own method: 'Was man zeigt und was man nicht zeigt, was man aufnimmt und wie man es aufnimmt, darauf kommt es an' (p. 61).

2. Which world, which way?

Toller's point of departure in his critique of American and of Russian society was to examine the underlying beliefs of each about itself. In the former, he examines the extent of political freedom in the 'land of the free'; in the latter, he considered the progress towards Socialism in the first Socialist country. His own viewpoint remains implicit - the same principles of revolutionary Socialism which made him suspect to the U.S. immigration authorities.

What was originally written as a description of social and political conditions in two countries, became through careful juxtaposition a contrast of opposing political systems. This underlying contrast is emphasised through deliberate counterpoint - in Russia, he visits Sokolniki prison, in America San Quentin; his study of Fords has its counterpart in his visit to a motor factory in Leningrad; his comments on American film and theatre are balanced by those on Soviet literature. This implicit contrast has a didactic purpose which is made explicit in the author's introduction to the English edition:

Russia and America - two lands, two ways. Both of them immeasurably rich in their variety of races, landscapes and natural resources. Both young and with unimpaired belief in their own strength. But the America of today, controlled by a small section of callous financiers, was the land of the future. Russia is the land of the future. 6

(i) 'Amerikanische Reisebilder'

The 'Amerikanische Reisebilder' consist of Toller's impressions of his visit to the United States from September to December 1929. Much of the material had been published in different journals in the form of separate short pieces in advance of Quer Durch, but it seems certain that Toller always intended to publish them in a more extended and, above all, more consecutive form⁷. In Quer Durch, he arranged and ordered his impressions into an extended critique of American capitalism.

He establishes his theme in the opening sentence:

'Sie haben die Freiheit, wir haben die Statue', heißt es in der Revue 'Fifty Million Frenchmen', die in New York gespielt wird. Von diesem Satz stimmt nur der zweite Teil (p.9).

The lack of real freedom in the 'land of the free' was strikingly confirmed by his own immediate experience. Because of his political reputation, he was detained by the immigration authorities on Ellis Island - 'Ich war wieder einmal Gefangener' (p.11) - and was finally admitted to the country only conditionally:

...Ich dürfe das Land der Freiheit unter der Voraussetzung betreten, daß ich mich nicht mit amerikanischer Politik befasse. Meine Aufenthaltserlaubnis sei anstelle eines Jahres auf drei Monate begrenzt (p.13).

Toller goes on to examine the lack of freedom by considering its manifestations and its causes. The lack of real political freedom is shown to be a consequence

of the lack of economic freedom - that is, of productive relations in the capitalist system. His first section ('Arbeiter') therefore examines the position of the American worker who he had initially thought was incomparably better-off than his German counterpart: 'Bald sah ich die Rückseite der Prosperity' (p.14).

The embourgeoisement of the proletariat, encouraged by devices such as equity participation, the suppression of the IWW, the corruption of the trade unions were symptoms of the decline of the American Labour movement. In fact, the American worker had bought his modest affluence at the price of his virtual enslavement to capital.

His position is illustrated by the example of Ford's, where the division of labour has reached its logical conclusion in the rigid demarcation of assembly line production. The alienation of the worker from the product of his labour was absolute:

So kann es vorkommen, daß einer sein Leben lang einen und denselben Hammerschlag an einem Autoteil tut, ohne daß er je das fertige Auto, an dem er doch mitgearbeitet hat, zu Gesicht bekommt. Das kapitalistische System wird indessen diese Probleme nie lösen können (p.27).

To underline the inhumanity inherent in the capitalist system, Toller describes a visit to a Chicago slaughterhouse, which also adopted techniques of assembly-line production: 'Wenn Ford die Menschenhölle genannt wird, dies ist die Tierhölle' (p.28).

Having illustrated the nature of American capitalism, Toller turns to examine its reflection in the country's social institutions. Malcolm Pittock suggests that Toller is, in Marxist terms, analysing 'the superstructure corresponding to the capitalist base'⁸, but Toller's critique is neither so tightly organised, nor so extensive as to merit this description.

His visit to San Quentin, which epitomises the penal system, opens with his meeting with Tom Mooney, a well-known Socialist, who had been imprisoned for many years for a crime he had not committed. Toller did not view Mooney's conviction as an isolated miscarriage of justice: he remained in prison, long after anyone continued to believe in his guilt, simply because he was a militant Socialist. His case exemplified the use of the law in defence of the prevailing economic system. This theme is reiterated in the short documentation 'Wie man Sozialisten behandelt'. The perversion of justice in the interests of the ruling class is, of course, the theme of Feuer aus den Kesseln, which Toller had completed shortly after his return from America, at a time when major extracts from the 'Amerikanische Reisebilder' had already begun to appear (see note 7). Certainly, there is a striking congruence of attitude in theme and treatment between the two works.

If the law is used, and sometimes blatantly misused, to maintain the capitalist system, religion

serves the same objective function, since it is a means of sublimating social suffering and discontent. In his account of Aimée Semple McPherson, Toller stresses the overt connection between business and religion (or more accurately, the business of religion). Aimée ('die mondäne Prophetin') had acquired the money to build her Church of the Smiling Light from wealthy supporters. Moreover, hers was only one of many different religious sects financed by wealthy patrons:

Überall unterstützen reiche Leute diese Sekten, jede Kirche hat als Schutzheilige ihre kleinen 'Rockefellers'. Ein gutes Mittel gegen Unzufriedenheit, Verzweiflung und rebellische Auflehnung (p.54).

In 'Aimée', his irony is directed against her evidently fraudulent activity. She makes use of the most modern technology and techniques of publicity to promote her position and influence, exploiting credulity and chauvinism in a way which reveals interesting psychological parallels with the emerging cult of Lenin described in the 'Russische Reisebilder'.

Indeed, Toller's overriding interest - as it had been in Russia - was in examining popular consciousness, showing how it had been permeated by the values and ethos of capitalism. This is illustrated in public attitudes to criminality, which ignored the social causes of crime - and even more clearly in the materialist attitudes to sex and love. Although prostitution was illegal, its practice was widespread,

its structure and organisation blatantly reflecting the class hierarchy of bourgeois society. Popular attitudes to love were sentimental, summarised in the cult of the 'happy ending', but they were nonetheless deeply materialistic, virginity being treated as a capital asset, to be realised only in marriage. It was the ethos of capitalism which determined the social position of women in America: 'Die Frau ist für den amerikanischen Geschäftsmann ein repräsentatives Idol, das er in die Watte seiner sentimental, kindlichen, romantischen Gefühle bettet' (p.71). Her role as decorative symbol is implicitly contrasted with the emancipation of women in Russia: 'Die russischen Frauen sind erwacht' (p.111).

The arts, too, reflected - and reinforced - the prevailing economic system. Toller was fascinated by the potential of the cinema, particularly of the 'talkies', which had just been introduced, but he recognised that, like any other technology, it would only reflect the ethos of the society which used it⁹. It would not develop 'über die Grenzen hinaus..., die die von einigen Finanzmächtigen geleitete öffentliche Meinung zieht' (p.62). With few exceptions, the American theatre had degenerated into the business of entertainment for the middle-class. Dominated by 'whodunnits', drawing-room comedies and musicals, it deliberately excluded works of social criticism:

Theater ist in Amerika eine Einrichtung für das besitzende Vergnügungspublikum. Wehe den Autoren, die die Kehrseite amerikanischen Reichtums aufzeigen. Sie werden nicht gespielt, wie etwa Upton Sinclair (p.64).

The function of this theatre was to reinforce the ethos of the social order it portrayed. The arts which, above all, should stimulate intellectual freedom, contributed to its suppression: 'Denn in God's own country, das sich das Land der Freiheit nennt, ist von geistiger Freiheit wenig zu spüren' (p.63).

In the last of the 'Amerikanische Reisebilder', Toller returns explicitly to his point of departure. In the land of the free, the negro was not only denied elementary political freedom, but even deprived of the protection of the law. He documents typical cases of negroes falling victim to lynch law. He sees the subjection of the negro and his eventual emancipation in idealist rather than materialist terms. 'Heute kämpft ein Trupp von schwarzen Pionieren, morgen wird eine selbstbewußte Millionenarmee um Menschenrechte kämpfen' (p.78). Their struggle is not an expression of black consciousness, but an assertion of (liberal) human rights.

(ii) 'Russische Reisebilder'

The 'Russische Reisebilder' are admittedly more impressionistic and less ordered than their American counterpart. Toller had originally written them as a series of letters, but there is no doubt that, following

his return from Russia, he had intended to revise them for publication. In February 1927, he had listed Russische Reisebilder (together with Justiz. Erlebnisse) as 'work in progress', and had actually included extracts from them in readings from his unpublished work at that time¹⁰. It is unclear why he finally decided against publishing them in 1927; he certainly had some reservations about publishing them in 1930, acknowledging their fragmentary nature¹¹.

The theme of the 'Russische Reisebilder' is the progress towards Socialism in the first Socialist country. It is characteristic that Toller's over-riding interest is not so much in social institutions - though he records his impressions of factories, prisons, theatres - as in the development of Socialist consciousness. He admitted that, in some respects, his impressions were already out-of-date.

Nevertheless I venture to publish these impressions, because they serve as a document of Russia's development and are an endeavour to investigate spiritual tendencies which after all do not change so quickly. 12

Toller's Russian impressions have been criticised as bland and uncritical, 'reflecting to the outside world the régime's own view of itself'¹³, but Toller was undoubtedly a much keener and more critical observer than any of the other celebrities who visited Soviet Russia in the '20's and '30's¹⁴. The things which impressed him most were certainly those which impressed

most sympathetic visitors - the immense progress in education, child care and youth provision, the evidence of the emancipation of women and above all the enormous will to social reconstruction. But his impressions were by no means universally positive. A recurrent theme of the 'Russische Reisebilder' is the emergence of ideological orthodoxy and conformism, and the intolerance of independent thinking and dissent. Moreover, his impressions gain a further dimension through conscious juxtaposition with his impressions of America, whose themes they often echo. It is in the light of this implicit contrast that they will be discussed.

Toller's impressions of a motor factory in Leningrad are balanced against his study of Ford's; the position of the worker under Socialism is compared to that of his counterpart in the capitalist system. If Ford workers were subjected to surveillance by management spies and company police, the Russian workers voluntarily submitted to being searched on leaving the factory. Toller recorded that in Russia, as in America, there were wide disparities in earnings, which seemed incompatible with Socialism. The workers' living standards had scarcely improved, but the working ethos had certainly changed.

Unser Leben im Alltag ist ökonomisch nicht viel besser als früher...Aber in der Fabrik ist der Arbeiter Mensch, keine 'Hand' wie früher (p.113).

Ford had exemplified above all the dehumanisation of the worker in the hell of assembly line production; a concrete illustration of the workers' enslavement to capital. Watching what seems to have been early experiments in work study at Moscow's Central Institute of Technology (ZIT), Toller was forced to recognise that Socialist production had not liberated the worker from the tyranny of the machine:

Mir wird beklommen zumute. Das soll das Ziel sein: Mechanisierung des Menschen, Ertötung all dessen, was als Schöpferisches in ihm lebt (p.123).

This mechanical reduction of the worker to a series of predetermined functions which deadened creativity had been the target of the critique of industrial capitalism, which he had broached in Die Wandlung and Die Maschinenstürmer, and refined in 'Ford'. Now, as then, he realised that there was no possibility of a return to small-scale craft industry:

In unserer differenzierten Gesellschaft... wäre es sinnlos, wollten wir zur handwerklichen Kleinarbeit zurück. Das Problem liegt wirklich so, daß die Summe der notwendigen mechanischen Arbeit auf ein Minimum zurückgedrängt werden muß, um den Menschen die Möglichkeit zu schöpferischer Entfaltung in den anderen Stunden zu geben. Es kommt nur darauf an, für wen der Arbeiter Arbeit leistet, ob für sich, seine Klasse, für die Gesellschaft, oder für eine Minderheit von Ausbeutern (pp.123-24).

Capitalism, with its inevitable division of labour, could not solve the problem of the alienation of the industrial worker. How far could Socialism offer the worker a different perspective? While Toller, to his credit, was willing to confront this problem, his comments

provide a rhetorical rather than empirical solution, illustrating the continuing tension in his thinking between libertarian and determinist ideas.

The same inherent dichotomy is present in his reflections on prison conditions in Russia, which once again are implicitly contrasted with those in America. Toller was critical of some Soviet judicial practices, notably the device of administrative arrest used by the GPU, and was shocked at the severity of some of the sentences.

His visit to San Quentin had taken in 'Death Row', where one of the warders had recounted some of its bizarre and macabre practices:

Es kommt vor, daß Gefangene wünschen, mit Musik gehängt zu werden... Einer wünscht sich Jazzmusik, da spielte ihm die Gefängniskapelle Jazztänze vor. Essen erhalten sie besser als wir Aufseher. Sogar Hühnerdiner (p.38).

Toller had also seen flowerpots outside each of the cells: 'Blumentopf, Hühnerdiner und Galgen mit Musik: that's civilisation' (p.40).

His impressions of Sokolniki and the women's prison he visited in Russia were more favourable, but he was bitingly sarcastic about those who praised them as pleasant places to stay. He had learnt at first hand that all prisons were repressive.

Ein noch so tolerantes Gefängnis bleibt Gefängnis. Bezweifeln mag es, wer Gefängnis nicht erlebt hat. Hier soll nicht erörtert werden, ob Gefängnisse zu jenen Institutionen gehören, die der Sozialismus auszurotten die Pflicht hat. Ich gehöre zu den Anhängern dieser Meinung... Nichts gefällt dem wahren Menschen, wenn ihm die Freiheit fehlt (p.130).

A recurrent theme of the 'Russische Reisebilder' is the emergence of conformity and party orthodoxy, and the danger it represented. Toller had suffered its effects directly in the defamatory article by Paul Fröhlich, published in Pravda, accusing him of treachery and defeatism in the 'Münchner Räterepublik'. He was advised to issue a statement admitting his past mistakes, and acknowledging the revolutionary leadership of the Communist International; he refused, and was finally allowed to publish in Pravda a reply to Fröhlich's article. He recounted the incident 'nicht um ihrer persönlichen Elemente willen, die sind unwichtig, das Atmosphärische daran ist bedeutsam' (p.96). He felt the incident had some positive consequences: 'ich lerne furchtsame und feige von tapferen und nachdenkenden Menschen unterscheiden' (p.102). This 'kleiner Zwischenfall', with its overtones of bureaucracy and conformity, consciously counterpoints his treatment at the hands of the U.S. immigration authorities.

Toller repeatedly noted evidence of the emerging 'party line'. This was apparent in the attempts to inculcate ideological orthodoxy at the University of the East, where the Party trained its future cadres:

'Das bedeutsamste Lehrfach aber ist der Leninismus. Aufsätze der Schüler werden genau daraufhin untersucht, ob die inhaltlichen Elemente mit Lenins Zitaten übereinstimmen' (pp.117-8). He was profoundly disturbed at the burgeoning cult of Lenin, rejecting the assertion by Bolsheviks he met that it was a concession to popular psychology, a necessary substitute for religious veneration; he suggested that, on the contrary, its effect was psychologically debilitating:

Immer lähmt Kult Selbstverantwortung, Entfaltung eigener Fähigkeiten, und gibt den Kultanhängern den Glauben, daß das, was erkannt und getan werden muß, vom Idol schon erkannt und getan sei... (p.107).

It exploited latent chauvinism and popular credulity in the same way as the business of religion in America. Toller is therefore not simply criticising the cult of personality in itself, but suggesting that it will prevent the growth of Socialist consciousness. Moreover, he could see the dangers inherent in ideological dogmatism:

...man darf die Gefahr nicht unterschätzen, die darin besteht, daß die sozialistische Lehre zu einem Glaubensartikel wird, den man annimmt, ohne zu denken, wie der Katholik sein Dogma, zumal er noch einige staatliche Vorteile bringt (p.108).

The effects of ideological dogmatism could also be seen in the campaign to discredit Trotsky. His achievement in organising the Red Army had already been written out of the official versions of history. Hearing Trotsky speak, Toller could only admire his

rhetorical gifts, and many-sided erudition. By the time the impressions were published, Trotsky had been disgraced, but Toller saw no reason to retract and characteristically never joined the attacks on Trotsky.

Toller's remarks on Soviet theatre and literature show striking parallels with his views on American film and theatre. If bourgeois conformity gave the dominant tone in the arts in America, in Russia it was ideological orthodoxy. He (mistakenly) detected signs that official censorship was becoming less rigid, but also recorded the growing intolerance of 'independent writers', like Ehrenburg, Babel and Pilniak who, while supporting the revolution, had retained their intellectual freedom, and now suffered officially-inspired attacks from the 'proletarian' writers organised in RAPP, who condemned their failure to produce what officially passed as 'proletarian' literature.

Niemand wird hier so mit Schmutz beworfen, niemand so häufig Verräter und Konterrevolutionär genannt, wie der geistig Schaffende, der der revolution und dem Sozialismus dient, und dabei doch die Freiheit des Blicks, Selbstverantwortung und kritische Haltung wahrt, kurz, der der Idee treu bleibt, ohne ein Opfer des Intellekts zu bringen (pp.165-66).

Official ideology rejected Trotsky's argument that proletarian art was not possible in a period of transition. Schools were being established to teach the basic principles of proletarian art, in which students learnt 'das Revolutionsgeschehen betrachten, wie es der Marxist betrachtet, immer die Rolle der kommunistischen Partei hervorhebend' (p.167).

While the 'Russische Reisebilder' generally endorse the political system they portray, they nonetheless include important qualifications which clarify Toller's own libertarian position. His criticisms anticipate crucial aspects of Stalinism - rigid ideological orthodoxy, the cult of personality, the emergence of Socialist Realism as the officially-approved form of art. In view of this, it is all the more surprising that, on subsequent visits to Russia, notably in 1934, he seems to have been blind to facts which confirmed that his fears had been realised¹⁵.

3. The Revolutionary Writer

If the first two sections of Quer Durch look forward, the last two are retrospective, taking stock of Toller's life and work over the preceding decade. They comprise a selection from his political speeches and essays, and some explanatory reflections on his plays. Read in conjunction, they form an account of his activity as a revolutionary writer, in which political commitment and dramatic statement are complementary.

The 'Reden und Aufsätze' cover the most important issues to which he had addressed himself during the revolution, and following his release from prison. The principle of selection is twofold. Firstly, they demonstrate his commitment and emphasise his foresight in recognising the factors which would undermine the

revolution - counter-revolutionary machination ('Die deutsche Konterrevolution'), the greed of the (capitalist) Entente governments ('Die Friedenskonferenz zu Versailles') and the manipulation of the law by a reactionary judiciary ('Der Justizmord an Eugen Leviné'); this foresight is then confirmed in such pieces as 'Deutsche Revolution', 'Die Debatte ist nicht geschlossen' and 'Rechtsbeugung'. Secondly, the speeches and essays are chosen for their representative significance in evoking a decade of historical development, the same principle which he had applied in the film interlude between prologue and first act in Hoppla, wir leben!, and which would characterise his later autobiographical works. The speeches and essays span the years 1917-29, appearing in chronological order, with the exception of the speech on Henri Barbusse which, although delivered in 1928, is chosen to conclude the section. It was not intended as an interpretation of Barbusse's work, but as

Bekennnis zu einem Menschen, der Millionen erscheint als Sinnbild und Vorbild des revolutionären Dichters, als Stimme der Wahrheit, als Stimme des Geistes, die aller Verfolgung zum Trotz, über die Grenzen zu den Völkern dringt (p.268).¹⁶

The position of this piece is determined by its function in summarising Toller's conception of the revolutionary writer, and thereby introducing the final section, 'Arbeiten', in which he interprets his own dramatic work.

'Arbeiten' has been extensively studied and cited in interpretations of Toller's work. It is indeed

eloquent of the literary bias of virtually all Toller critics that, while this is so, both the 'Reisebilder' and the 'Reden und Aufsätze' (i.e. those parts of Quer Durch which illuminate Toller's political convictions) have been virtually ignored.

The over-riding theme of 'Arbeiten' is Toller's attempt to influence political reality through his plays. This is as clear in his interpretations of his own work, as in his comments on Expressionism, and his reservations about 'Neue Sachlichkeit'. The section thus illustrates the conception of the political writer he had defined in relation to Henri Barbusse:

Ihm bedeutete Literatur nicht nur spielerisches Bilden, ihm ward sie kämpferische Verpflichtung, weil das Wort, vom Geiste erzeugt, höchstes Mittel ist, auf Menschen zu wirken, und die Wege der Verwirklichung zu ebnet (p.269).

Toller ends the section - and the book - with a characteristic re-statement of his own commitment:

Arbeite ich, bin ich von der Arbeit besessen, aber ich weiß, daß wieder Entscheidungen fallen können, in denen persönlicher Einsatz wichtiger ist als Kunst (p.296).

These words foreshadow both political events in Germany, and his own activities in exile. They explain why he wrote only two plays during the last six years of his life and why both are subordinated, in theme and content, to his over-riding objective of enlightening public opinion abroad as to the real nature of the Nazi régime.

Quer Durch is therefore, in outline, a summation of Toller's life in the decade before 1930, providing an oblique statement of his political convictions. The American and Russian 'Reisebilder' go beyond anecdotal reporting, attempting to convey 'spiritual tendencies', that is, the reflection of social ethos in popular consciousness. Composed at different periods, they exemplify the shift in Toller's views in the years 1926-30. His impressions of Russia illustrate his attempt to reconcile libertarian and materialist ideas - and his ultimate failure to do so. The 'amerikanische Reisebilder' constitute a more tightly organised critique of American capitalism. Though his analysis frequently introduces (Marxist) economic precepts, it ultimately judges American society by its failure to achieve the (liberal) ideals of freedom and justice. The uneasy compromise between idealism and materialism is perhaps summarised in the foreword to the 'russische Reisebilder', dated June 1930, in which Toller describes the Bolshevik experiment as 'ein heroisches Beispiel schöpferischen Geistes', which, if it succeeded, would herald 'eine Regeneration der Kulturen' (p.82).

Notes to Chapter XIII

- 1 Toller, Quer Durch. Reisebilder und Reden, Berlin 1930. Subsequent page references are to this edition. Spalek (no.50) suggests it was published in October 1930, on the basis of the date in the presentation copy to Thomas Mann. For reviews of the book, see Spalek nos. 3599-3601.
- 2 See Chapter XIV, particularly note 2.
- 3 Willibrand, Ernst Toller & his ideology, p.25; Spalek, 'Ernst Toller: the need for a new estimate', GQ XXXIX (1966), p.590.
- 4 Pittock, Ernst Toller, Boston 1979, pp.162-170.
- 5 Tucholsky, Werke III, p.794.
- 6 Author's introduction to Which World, Which Way, translated by Hermon Ould, London 1931. The English edition is a translation of only the first two sections of Quer Durch.
- 7 The following chapters or parts of chapters were published in this way:
 - 'Ankunft in Amerika', Die Weltbühne XXVI, 1, 31 December 1929,
 - 'Tonfilm und Theater in Amerika' Die Volksbühne, IV, 11, February 1930.
 - 'Schlachthaus Chicago', Das Tagebuch XI, 6, 8 February 1930.
 - 'Jazz in der Kirche', Das Tagebuch, XI, 9, 1 March 1930.
 - 'Flappers', Die Weltbühne XXVI, 16, 15 April 1930.
 - 'Des Negers Chance', Die Weltbühne XXVI, 36, 2 September 1930.
- 8 Pittock, op.cit., p.165.
- 9 Cf. Toller's comments in 'Die Auftraggeber fehlen', GW I, p.125.
- 10 Unpublished letter to Alfred Kerr, 20.2.1927 in the Akademie der Künste, Berlin, 'Sammlung Ernst Toller'. See also 'Berlin 1919. Szenen von Ernst Toller' in Die Volksbühne II, 5, 1 March 1927. According to this report of a reading by Toller from his unpublished work, in February 1927, the audience showed particular interest in the 'Russische Reisebilder', which included 'Erste Eindrücke in Moskau', 'Satirisches Theater' and 'Gefängnisse'. Toller also published a piece on the Moscow Yiddish Theatre in Das Moskauer Jüdische Akademische Staatstheater, Berlin (Die Schmiede), 1928, pp.7-8.

- 11 Cf. preface to 'Russische Reisebilder' (June 1930), Quer Durch, p.81.
- 12 Author's introduction to Which World, Which Way?, pp.ix-x. The introduction is undated, but must have been written before November 1931, when the book was published.
- 13 Pittock, op.cit., p.163.
- 14 Cf. David Cate, The fellow-travellers, London 1973.
- 15 According to his introduction to Which World, Which Way?, he visited Russia again in 1930. He also attended the All-Union Congress of Soviet Writers in 1934 - see Chapter XV/2(ii).
- 16 Toller had been fascinated by Barbusse since reading Le Feu during the war. The text in Quer Durch had originally been given as a speech in 1928, and published in Die Weltbühne XXV, 11, 12 March 1929. A slightly longer version appeared in Henri Barbusse. Tatsachen, mit einer Vorrede von Ernst Toller, Berlin 1929.

XIV. SOCIALISM AND REVOLUTION IN EINE JUGENDE IN DEUTSCHLAND

1. Introduction

Toller's autobiography is usually considered as an example of 'Exilliteratur'¹ and it was indeed among the first works to be published by the main exile publishing house of Querido. It was, however, planned and largely written during the final years of the Weimar Republic, and indeed partly consists of a reworking of material which had been published piece-meal from the mid-1920's onwards². Toller continued to work on the book during the early months of exile. He seems to have completed it in the late summer of 1933, and it was published that autumn³.

Toller did not, of course, intend the work to be merely a personal memoir, for he believed that his own experience had representative validity:

Nicht nur meine Jugend ist hier aufgezeichnet,
sondern die Jugend einer Generation und ein
Stück Zeitgeschichte dazu. 4

Eine Jugend in Deutschland is consequently a deliberately stylised account, in which events are selected and presented for their wider connotations. Its significance for Toller's political development lies not so much in the events themselves, as in his retrospective view of them - that is, it is more characteristic of the period of composition, than of the period it describes⁵. Recent critics have chosen to emphasise the literary and psychological aspects of the work⁶. Carel ter Haar

even suggests that 'die autobiographischen Schriften Tollers als Dichtungen zu betrachten (sind)'⁷, their significance therefore lying on a psychological rather than a sociological plane.

The fact remains that Toller's intention was to interpret his experience as a reflection of the social and political developments in Germany during these years. The narrative is consequently interspersed with comments and reflections, which attempt to generalise his individual experience. This is particularly so in his account of revolution and 'Räterepublik', an account which dominates the book, constituting over half its length, and providing a constant point of reference for the remainder of the work. This structure alone indicates that the central theme of Eine Jugend in Deutschland is that of all his major work in the preceding decade - the German revolution and the reasons for its failure. The following discussion will therefore analyse Toller's treatment of this theme, utilising it to assess the place of the autobiography in the development of his revolutionary Socialism.

2. Childhood and adolescence

Toller's recollections of childhood and adolescence, while personal and immediate in tone, have a strong social dimension. Personal recollection is a vehicle for what is essentially a critique of the social ethos of the 'Kaiserreich', an ethos which begot

the war, and aborted the revolution, which are the subject of the greater part of the book. As in Quer Durch, the theme is illustrated by the apt anecdote, with its connotative reverberations. In his mother's shop, he steals bars of chocolate, containing pictures of the Kaiser and figures from Teutonic mythology: tokens of the prevailing atmosphere of nationalism and militarism. His earliest recorded memory is of another child being told not to play with him, because he is a Jew.

Many of his early memories turn on the experience of anti-Semitism, a motif which recurs in the later sections. The Jews in Posen had made great attempts at assimilation, but despite assiduous cultivation of their German heritage, they were never fully regarded as Germans. Only on the Kaiser's birthday, he notes, were Jews allowed to sit down with the Reserve officers and old soldiers. While he did not ignore religious anti-Semitism, he always insisted that the political and economic reasons were 'really the only reasons' for it⁸.

Jews and Germans were united only in their common contempt for the Poles. The anti-Semitism Toller experienced has its counterpart in the equally strong prejudice against the Poles, which he himself shared:

Wir Kinder sprachen von den Polen als 'Polacken' und glaubten, sie seien die Nachkommen Kains, der den Abel erschlug und von Gott dafür gezeichnet wurde (p.13).

The Poles were treated as a subject people 'deren Kinder in der Schule nicht die Muttersprache sprechen durften, deren Vätern der Staat das Land enteignete' (p.13).

The economic basis of this prejudice is suggested when Toller notes that Germans who sold land to the Poles were considered unpatriotic to the point of treason.

The German settlements in Posen are portrayed as symbols of colonial expansion, reaching out, 'wie vorgeschobene Festungen' into the predominantly Polish country-side.

This view of his childhood environment was one which Toller had reached as early as 1918⁹.

Toller's relationship with his boyhood friend Stanislaus is a paradigm of these racial and social tensions. Initially, their friendship is able to withstand the mutual antipathy of Poles and Germans:

Der Sohn des Nachtwächters ist mein Freund.
Wenn die anderen 'Polack' schreien, schreie
ich auch 'Polack', er ist trotzdem mein
Freund. Die Polacken hassen die Deutschen,
ich weiß es von Stanislaus (p.14).

By the age of nine, however, they have been separated by the school system, and the economic differences of class, which it reflects and reinforces.

Stanislaus besucht mich nicht mehr.
- Du bist was Besseres, sagt er...
Bisher haben wir mit allen Jungen gespielt,
jetzt sehen wir hochmütig auf die Kinder der
armen Leute, die in die Volksschule gehen
und nicht lateinisch lernen (p.24).

The subjective experience of friendship is clearly intended to reflect the objective reality of a society divided by race and class.

Toller's critique of the 'Kaiserreich' is concentrated in his portrayal of the Prussian education system. The elementary school system institutionalises the racial and religious differences in Prussian society - there are separate schools for German, Jewish and Polish children. The secondary school system perpetuates a rigid social hierarchy. The values it imparts are chauvinistic and authoritarian, inimical to independent thought and inquiry:

Napoleon war ein Dieb, der deutsche Schätze gestohlen hat, sogar die Ziegel der Kirchendächer. Wer in solchem Geist die Fragen des Lehrers nicht beantwortet, ist ein Gezeichnete, der unweigerlich im Zuchthaus enden wird (p.33).

The system is actively reactionary, proscribing modern drama and democratic ideas: its function is to instil the ethos of the 'Obrigkeitsstaat':

Wehe, wenn ein Schüler zu solchem Wort eigene Gedanken bringt, es stempelt ihn zum Verdächtigen, zum Anarchisten. Gottesfurcht und Untertanensinn, Gehorsam soll er lernen (p.34).

The consequences of this ruthless cultivation of aggressive nationalism are apparent in the Agadir crisis:

Wir Jungen wünschen den Krieg herbei, der Friede ist eine faule und der Krieg eine große Zeit, sagen die Professoren, wir sehnen uns nach Abenteuern, vielleicht werden uns die letzten Schuljahre erlassen, und wir sind morgen in Uniform, das wird ein Leben (p.36).

They are confirmed in the arrogant chauvinism of Toller and his fellow-students in France, who keep their own company, think themselves 'Pioniere einer höheren Kultur' (p.40) and are careful never to go home alone in the land of the 'Erbfeind'. The effect of unremitting nationalist propaganda is seen in the hysteria which greets the declaration of war:

Ja, wir leben in einem Rausch des Gefühls.
Die Worte Deutschland, Vaterland, Krieg
haben magische Kraft, wenn wir sie aussprechen,
verflüchtigen sie nicht, sie schweben in
der Luft, Kreisen um sich selbst, entzünden
sich und uns (p.53).

It is this inheritance which later undermines the revolution, contributing to its ultimate failure.

3. Affinities with Eisner

The central sections of the autobiography, dealing with war, revolution and 'Räterepublik', contain what is probably Toller's most cohesive statement on the nature of revolution, summarising his experience and the conclusions he drew from it. The conception of revolutionary Socialism which he outlines shows striking affinities with Kurt Eisner's, documenting the fascination which the latter's ideas continued to exercise in the dying years of the Republic.

Eisner is depicted in the autobiography as the exemplar of the revolutionary leader, who both recognises and represents the mood of the people: 'Eisner, mit psychologischem Instinkt, erfaßte die

Stimmung des Landes, er gewann die Bauern und Arbeiter für den Sturz der Monarchie...' (p.113). Toller depicts him symbolically at the head of a procession of 200,000 people which deposes the Wittelsbachs. As a revolutionary leader, Eisner acts as the instrument of popular will; Toller casts himself in the same role in his account of the 'Räterepublik'.

Eisner considered Socialism as an educative process, in which the revelation of the truth about bourgeois society would produce the will to revolution. In 1918/19, this had meant revealing the truth about German war-guilt - and therefore about the state which, having connived in the outbreak of war, then prosecuted it for expansionist ends. It is this understanding of the revolutionary process which underlies Toller's account of his turn to pacifism and his later politicisation. His experience at the front had led to a gradual deadening of feeling and perception: 'ich sehe die Toten und ich sehe sie nicht'. They have the unreality of waxworks, 'die Grauen zeugt, aber kein Mitleid' (p.69). His realisation of the common humanity of friend and foe comes as a sudden revelation, when he inadvertently digs up the intestines of a corpse:

Ein toter Mensch ist hier begraben.
 Ein - toter - Mensch. (...)
 Ein - toter - Mensch -
 Und plötzlich, als teile sich die Finsternis vom Licht, das Wort vom Sinn, erfasse ich die einfache Wahrheit Mensch, die ich vergessen hatte, die vergraben und verschüttet lag, die Gemeinsamkeit, das Eine und Einende (pp. 69-70).

This account, consciously borrowing the language of the biblical creation, describes what is, literally, a process of enlightenment. Toller describes his subsequent politicisation in the same terms. He attends the Lauenstein Congress, called to elucidate 'Sinn und Aufgabe der Zeit'¹⁰ in the face of the collapse of traditional values. He is bitterly disillusioned by the well-known academics and intellectuals, who seek refuge from the present 'in das Gespinnst lebensferner Staatsromantik' (p.77). It is the younger participants who come in search of enlightenment: 'Nur die Jungen wollen Klarheit. Reif zur Vernichtung scheint ihnen diese Welt, sie suchen den Weg aus den schrecklichen Wirren der Zeit' (p.77). Toller himself appeals for a sign: 'Zeigt uns endlich den Weg, rufe ich, die Tage brennen und die Nächte, wir können nicht länger warten' (p.79). It is therefore the younger - and in Toller's ideology, the revolutionary - generation, which seeks clarification and enlightenment.

Toller's transformation into a revolutionary Socialist follows the same pattern. He describes reading some of the left-wing pamphlets which circulated clandestinely in anti-war circles, specifically mentioning the Lichnowsky memorandum and a pamphlet by Mühlton¹¹. They revealed Germany's responsibility for the outbreak of war - and the greater responsibility of capitalism:

Die Politiker belügen sich selbst und belügen die Bürger, sie nennen ihre Interessen Ideale, für Gold, für Land, für Erz, für Öl, für lauter tote Dinge sterben, hungern, verzweifeln die Menschen. Überall. Die Frage der Kriegsschuld verblaßt vor der Schuld des Kapitalismus (p.87).

It is extremely doubtful whether Toller was able to formulate this with such clarity in 1917, indeed it contradicts his subsequent statement that he joined the January strike for pacifist, not Socialist, reasons. The real significance of the account is that it exemplifies Eisner's conception of the revolutionary process - and it is therefore appropriate that it should be followed immediately by his first meeting with Eisner:

Die Arbeiterbewegung und ihre Ziele waren mir fremd bisher, auf der Schule hatte man uns gelehrt, daß die Sozialisten den Staat zerstören, daß ihre Führer Schurken seien, die sich bereichern wollen, jetzt lerne ich zum ersten Mal einen Arbeiterführer kennen, Kurt Eisner (p.87). 12

Again, he is confronted with a truth which education and upbringing has distorted. His meeting with Eisner precipitates him into the January Strike, finally committing him to the revolutionary movement. Revolutionary commitment is therefore a consequence of the recognition of the true nature of bourgeois society.

Toller's account of the November Revolution projects his experience onto a wider social plane. The transformation of the popular mood from stoical support for the war to opposition to it is described

in the same terms of revelation: 'Dem deutschen Volk, das die Katastrophe nicht ahnte, öffnet das unerwartete Friedensangebot die Augen. So war alles umsonst...'
 (p.108, my emphasis). The introduction of parliamentary democracy evokes no popular response - and the revolution follows inevitably. Toller understood revolution, and particularly the November Revolution, as a process preceded by the collapse of the existing social order¹³. The disintegration of the 'Kaiserreich' is prefigured in his description of the military prison, in which demoralisation and disaffection have reached epidemic proportions: the warders fraternise with the prisoners, a sympathetic doctor is prepared to connive in Toller's release, even an officer has words of sympathy.

Chapter 9 portrays this despair and disaffection as widespread: 'Verflogen ist der Kriegsrausch... Der Hunger geht um in Deutschland' (p.103). The voice of German nationalism, still demanding victory and annexations, is increasingly divorced from reality. Indeed in his account of the psychiatric clinic (pointedly called 'Irrenhaus'), sanity and insanity are reversed:

...ich lerne, daß es zwei Arten Kranke gibt, die harmlosen liegen in vergitterten klinkenlosen Stuben und heißen Irre, die gefährlichen weisen nach, daß Hunger ein Volk erzieht und gründen Eünde zur Niederwerfung Englands, sie dürfen die harmlosen einsperren (p.107). 14

The gulf separating truth from delusion is one which language itself cannot bridge: 'Wir sprechen zwei Sprachen, Herr Professor, sage ich, ich verstehe vielleicht Ihre Sprache, aber meine Worte sind Ihnen fremder denn chinesisches' (p.107). There is an analogue of this account in Eisner's recollections of his own isolation during the war¹⁵.

4. Revolution from below

Toller's conception of revolution was formed partly by his impressions of the January Strike, which remained his most positive revolutionary experience.

Nie sah er im Verlauf der unschöpferischen deutschen Revolution, die Zusammenbruch aus wirtschaftlicher, politischer, seelischer Kraftlosigkeit war, eine Bewegung, die der Januarerhebung in der Reinheit ihrer Motive und ihrer Ziele glich. 16

Historically, the strike action in Munich was of relatively minor importance, the main effect of the strike being concentrated in Berlin and other major industrial centres¹⁷. In Munich, the strike began later than elsewhere, lasting only four days, and involving, even at its height, no more than 8,000 workers¹⁸.

Toller's account inflates both its extent and importance: the strike continues 'Tagelang', a strike meeting on the Theresienwiese is attended by 50,000 workers¹⁹.

Toller portrays the strike as a spontaneous mass movement, over which the party leaders have little

influence or control:

Was wird München tun? Die Rechtssozialisten wollen den Streik nicht, Eisner und die Unabhängigen sind zu schwach, ihn zu entfesseln, trotzdem war der Streik eines Morgens da (p.88).

Its spontaneous nature is reaffirmed in Toller's account of his cross-examination, following his arrest. The magistrate is convinced that mass action can only be the work of political agitators: 'er will das Einfache verzwickt, das Spontane gewollt, das Zufällige berechnet sehen' (p.93). For the magistrate, 'das Volk ist eine willenlose Menge'; for Toller, they are capable of acting determinedly and independently. The workers who form the backbone of the strike are 'Männer von nüchternem Verstand, sozialer Einsicht, großem Lebenswissen, gehärtetem Willen' (p.88). They are motivated by ideal, not material, considerations:

Sie fürchteten nicht Entbehrung, nicht Tod, sie kämpften nicht um Lohnerhöhung, sie kämpften nicht einmal für sich, denn sie waren versorgt, bevorzugt, vom Kriegsdienst befreit, sie kämpften für ihre Brüder im Feld (p.88).

The strike is therefore portrayed as a demonstration of solidarity, the strikers as men of political insight and selfless commitment, representing the ideal virtues of an enlightened proletariat.

The role of leadership is minimised, for even the arrest of Eisner and other leaders fails to break the strikers' determination:

Eine Massenbewegung, die an ihre Ziele glaubt, ist durch die Verhaftung der Führer nicht einzudämmen. Der Glaube ist ein entscheidendes Element, erst wenn er angekränkelt, geschwächt, zersetzt ist, können gegnerische Mächte die Einheit der Bewegung sprengen und sie auflösen in ohnmächtige, willensunfähige Haufen (p.89).

Toller is part of a delegation to the Chief of Police to demand Eisner's release, but his account stresses that he is only a delegated spokesman: 'ich spreche hier nicht für mich, ich spreche für die vielen tausend Menschen, die die Freilassung der verhafteten Führer fordern' (p.91).

That the strike finally collapses is due to the machinations of the SPD leaders, who succeed in gaining control of the movement: 'sie haben dem Kriegsminister versprochen, den Streik abzuwürgen' (p.92). Toller's animosity towards the SPD, and particularly its leaders, stemmed from his experience of the January Strike; in his account, their role in the strike anticipates their later caution and opportunism in the November Revolution.

Toller portrays the strike itself as a model of concerted revolutionary action. His account shows remarkable similarities with that of Eisner, who had described it as 'eine ideale Aktion, in der das Proletariat gar nichts für sich selbst wolle, sondern nur für die Gesamtheit des deutschen Volkes, wie für die Gemeinschaft der Menschheit'²⁰. Eisner too had seen it as an exemplary revolutionary action: 'die revolutionärste Revolution'²¹. He was convinced that the workers must act on their own behalf:

(Die Arbeiter) dürfen sich nicht 'vertreten' lassen, von niemandem... Dann gelingt es auch nicht, daß man die Massen lähmt, wenn man die Köpfe beseitigt. 22

He was equally contemptuous of the machine politicians of the SPD, whom he specifically blamed for aborting the strike. ('Die Herren Auer und Timm haben den Streik wieder in geordnete Bahnen gelenkt, d.h. ins Leere'²³.) Toller's interpretation of the strike is therefore remarkably congruent with Eisner's in his prison diary, which had been published in 1928, and which Toller had undoubtedly read.

Eisner's conception of revolution postulated, of course, united working-class action, across party divisions. Ten years after the event, Toller interpreted Eisner's resignation in February 1919 as an attempt to continue this policy of 'Einheitsfront':

'Wiedersichereinreihen in die Front der Arbeiterschaft... ein Versuch zur Neuorganisierung aller zielbewußten Kräfte'²⁴. The January Strike is, for Toller, an exemplary case of united front action. Analogously, he portrays the November Revolution as a spontaneous popular movement, in which 'ausgemergelten, verhungerten Massen' confound the calculations of the party leaders:

Nicht Führer haben die Stunde des Aufbruchs bestimmt, die revolutionären Obleute der Betriebe rechneten mit einem späteren Tag, die rechtssozialistischen Abgeordneten sind überrascht und bestürzt, sie waren dabei, mit dem Reichskanzler Prinz Max von Baden über die Rettung der Hohenzollern-Monarchie zu verhandeln (p.109).

The same conception of revolution from below is implicit in his reference to the Spartacist uprising 'der gegen Liebknechts und Rosa Luxemburgs Willen losbricht' (p.114). Toller's most extensive account is, of course, of the revolution in Bavaria, which he portrays as a broad-based popular movement. He refers repeatedly to the actions of 'Volksmassen' or 'Arbeitermassen', terms which he uses almost synonymously. Thus, 'die erregten Volksmassen' call for Eisner's murder to be revenged, 'die Arbeiterschaft' demands that social revolution should follow political revolution, 'der Gedanke der Räterepublik gewinnt die Massen' (p.119). In retrospect, he interprets the 'Räterepublik' as 'ein tollkühner Handstreich verzweifelter Arbeitermassen, die verlorene deutsche Revolution zu retten' (p.124). The USPD, like the other parties, does not control events, but is controlled by them:

Die Unabhängigen, zögern. Hat eine revolutionäre Partei das Recht, die Massen im Stich zu lassen? Revolutionäre Führer dürfen nicht blindlings Massenstimmungen folgen... Aber sind es nur Stimmungen? Sind nicht schon Tatsachen geschaffen, die unser Tun beeinflussen müssen? (p.123).

The 'Räterepublik' is finally declared over the heads of the Party leaders: 'Die Parteibürokratien beraten, das Volk handelt' (p.123).

In his account, Toller repeatedly contrasts the effective reality of working-class unity with the factionalism of the parties and the opportunism of their leaders. The ideal of revolutionary unity,

forged through concerted action, is realised in the spontaneous defence of Munich, in which 'Münchner Arbeiter und Soldaten, die spontan, ohne militärische Leitung, die weißen Truppen, die München vom Norden überfallen wollten, zur Umkehr gezwungen und vor sich hergetrieben haben' (p.142). Toller assumes command of this makeshift army at the insistence of the workers - and against the wishes of the (Communist) General Staff. That is, he is elected from below, not appointed from above. Similarly, the victory at Dachau is won by the workers, not their leaders:

Ich, der Sieger von Dachau? Die Arbeiter und Soldaten der Räterepublik haben den Sieg erfochten, nicht ihre Führer. Ohne Unterschied der Partei eilten sie herbei, die Revolution zu schützen, auch sozialdemokratische, auch parteilose Arbeiter, sie warteten auf keine Parole, die einheitliche Front der Werktätigen formierte sich in der Tat (pp.146-47).

Toller therefore portrays the defence of Munich as a perfect example of Eisner's guiding concept of the proletarian 'Einheitsfront'.

5. The failed revolution

Toller's account of the November Revolution is inevitably an account of its failure. In Deutsche Revolution, he had identified the reasons for this failure as the lack of 'will to power' of the working-class, the factionalism of the Socialist parties and the opportunism and embourgeoisement of their leaders. In Eine Jugend, these are seen as symptoms of a wider

failure to develop Socialist consciousness.

In his account of the November Revolution, he emphasises that the people are unprepared to exercise the power which has fallen into their hands. They are driven to revolt by the trauma of defeat and starvation, rather than revolutionary idealism; indeed they have no clear idea of Socialism:

Die deutsche Revolution fand ein unwissendes Volk, eine Führerschicht bürokratischer Biedermänner. Das Volk rief nach Sozialismus, doch nie in den vergangenen Jahren hatte es klare Vorstellungen vom Sozialismus gewonnen, es wehrte sich gegen seine Bedrücker, es wußte, was es nicht wollte, aber es wußte nicht, was es wollte (p.111).

The lack of 'will to power' is illustrated by the voluntary abdication of the revolutionary councils: 'Die Räte danken ab, sie überlassen das Schicksal der Republik dem Zufallsergebnis fragwürdiger Wahlen des unaufgeklärten Volkes' (p.113)²⁵:

In his account of the revolution, Toller returns time and again to the caution and opportunism of the established leaders of the working-class movement. They are 'versippt und verfilzt' with the old régime: 'Ihnen fehlte das Vertrauen zu der Lehre, die sie verkündet hatten, das Vertrauen zum Volk, das ihnen vertraute' (p.111). Their embourgeoisement causes them to oppose the revolution and make common cause with its enemies. In November 1918, the ruling class had abdicated without resistance; before long, however,

they were to reassert themselves with the complaisance, and even connivance, of the SPD.

In Munich, the 'Bürgerwehr' which organises the forces of counter-revolution is aided and abetted by Erhard Auer. In 1918, Toller had vigorously opposed the 'Bürgerwehr'; in 1933, he called it the forerunner of the nationalist para-military organisations which culminated in the Nazi storm-troopers. The political dilemma of the SPD is illustrated through the plight of the Bamberg government in the 'Räterepublik': 'Die Regierung muß Hilfe vom Reich erbitten... Bald sind die Generäle die politischen Herren, die Bamberger Regierung wird ihr Werkzeug' (p.153). In the subsequent fighting, attempts to negotiate a cease-fire founder on the generals' intransigence: 'die mächtigen Generäle wollen keine Verständigung.... indem man die Räterepublik niederschlug, wollte man die Republik treffen' (p.154). Chapter 15 ('Antlitz der Zeit') recounts the counter-revolutionary atrocities which follow the defeat of the revolution, pointedly ending with Defence Minister Noske's telegram, thanking the military commander 'für die umsichtige und erfolgreiche Leitung der Operationen in München' (p.202).

Throughout his account of the 'Räterepublik', Toller repeatedly contrasts the effective reality of working-class unity with the factionalism of the parties and their leaders. It is the masses who declare the

'Räterepublik', the parties which prevaricate. The SPD supports it, only to betray it, the KPD opposes it, then tries to assume leadership of it. Following the latter attempt, Toller comments laconically: 'In München bekämpfen sich die Revolutionäre, in Nordbayern sammelt sich der Gegner' (p.132). Shortly after, Munich workers unite to defeat a counter-revolutionary 'Putsch', in the aftermath of which Toller is arrested by the new (Communist) regime: 'Mögen die Arbeitermassen einig sein, die Parteiführer bekämpfen sich weiter' (p.136). The Red Army's victory at Dachau is undermined by party rivalry: 'Der Vormarsch wird vom Generalstab verboten. Die Kommandanten der Dachauer Front sind Unabhängige, die Kommunisten trauen ihnen nicht' (p.149). The Räterepublik finally collapses into internecine strife: 'Das gegenseitige Mißtrauen in den Reihen der Revolutionäre ist so groß, daß manche nicht mehr wagen, in ihren Wohnungen zu schlafen...' (p.155).

The over-riding theme of Toller's account is the failure to develop Socialist consciousness. Wide sections of the proletariat were still conditioned by the ethos of the 'Obrigkeitsstaat', a fact he illustrates with brief anecdotes of unrevolutionary behaviour (pp.110-111). The spiritual legacy of nationalism and militarism are all too apparent in the course of the revolution. The Red Army which

Toller commanded was to renounce the militarism of the 'Kaiserreich', the red soldier would need no parade-ground discipline: 'sein revolutionärer Wille wird die notwendige Ordnung schaffen' (p.147). Such optimism proved misplaced, for shortly after the Red Army had to introduce military discipline, if only to prevent its soldiers from returning home:

Ach, der deutsche Arbeiter war zu lange an Gehorsam gewöhnt, er will gehorchen ... Der Instinkt für Freiheit und Freiwilligkeit ist verschüttet und gebrochen. Jahre wären nötig, um die Laster des Militarismus zu überwinden (pp.147-48).

The most memorable symbol of this false consciousness is the Red Army paymaster, reconciling his accounts to the last penny as the 'Räterepublik' crumbles about him: 'Hier sitzt der deutsche Revolutionär, gutmütig und ahnungslos, addiert Zahlen und kontrolliert Vorräte, damit alles seine Ordnung habe, wenn er erschossen wird' (p.159).

In prison, Toller was constantly confronted with the problem of Socialist consciousness:

Oft wenn ich mit Arbeitern spreche, merke ich, wie dünn der Firnis der Parteidoktrin sitzt, darunter leben die Instinkte, die die herrschende Gesellschaft im Alltag der Schule, der Familie, der Vereine gezüchtet hat (p.206).

Toller ascribed his own adolescent nationalism to social conditioning. Education had a crucial role to play in nurturing Socialist attitudes:

Die wichtigste Aufgabe Künftiger Schulen ist, die menschliche Phantasie des Kindes, sein Einfühlungsvermögen zu entwickeln, die Trägheit des Herzens zu bekämpfen und zu überwinden (p.215).

In this context, the account of his childhood in Eine Jugend demonstrates the precise opposite of the Socialist upbringing he advocated²⁶.

6. The problem of pacifism

The autobiography addresses once more the conflict between pacifism and revolutionary force, which had formed the central theme of Masse Mensch. In his drama, Toller had resolved this conflict in favour of the absolute principle of non-violence; in his public statements, however, he had condoned the use of force in particular circumstances. That is, privately he had adopted the position of the 'Gesinnungsethiker', publicly that of the 'Vernunftethiker'²⁷.

His account in the autobiography does not disguise the conflict between the principle of non-violence and the imperative of revolutionary solidarity:

Vor einem Jahr, als man mich beim Streik verhaftete, weigerte ich mich, die Uniform anzuziehen und Waffen zu tragen. Ich haßte die Gewalt und hatte mir geschworen, Gewalt eher zu leiden als zu tun. Durfte ich jetzt, da die Revolution angegriffen war, diesen Schwur brechen? Ich mußte es tun. Die Arbeiter hatten mir Vertrauen geschenkt, hatten mir Führung und Verantwortung übertragen. Tauschte ich nicht ihr Vertrauen, wenn ich mich jetzt weigerte, sie zu verteidigen, oder gar sie aufrief, der Gewalt zu entsagen? (p.138).

His moral dilemma is multiplied, when the workers spontaneously elect him as military commander. He has no answer to 'dieses törichte, rührende Vertrauen (...) So werde ich Heerführer', (p.143). What he sees as his failure to justify this trust induces strong feelings of guilt:

Wir sind gescheitert, alle. Alle begingen Fehler, alle trifft Schuld, alle waren unzulänglich. Die Kommunisten ebenso wie die Unabhängigen. Unser Einsatz war vergebens, das Opfer nutzlos, die Arbeiter vertrauten uns, wie können wir uns jetzt vor ihnen verantworten? (p.155).

While conceding that the 'Räterepublik' has been a political mistake, Toller defends his own actions in it, stressing above all that they were determined by rational considerations. In his earlier accounts, he had emphasised his peaceful intentions - the avoidance of unnecessary bloodshed, the attempts to initiate peace negotiations, the efforts to secure the safety of hostages²⁸. The retrospective stylisation of the autobiography results in a shift of emphasis: moral principle is qualified by military and revolutionary considerations. He refuses to obey an order to bombard Dachau, since it would be militarily pointless: 'Die Dachauer Bauern stehen auf unserer Seite, wir müssen unnütze Zerstörung vermeiden, unsere Kräfte organisieren' (p.144) - that is, he explains his refusal in military, not moral terms. It is much later that he initiates peace negotiations - and only when the Red Army faces overwhelming odds:

Das ist die Frage: sollen wir die militärische Entscheidung herbeiführen, oder dem Kampf ausweichen? Sollen wir jetzt zwei Schritte zurückgehen, um später, gesammelter und reifer, einen Schritt vorwärts gehen zu können? Wir haben kein Recht, die Arbeiterschaft zu einem Kampf aufzurufen, der zur sicheren Niederlage, zu sinnlosem Blutvergießen führt (p.153).

Once again, he justifies himself in terms, not of moral principle, but of revolutionary tactics, an emphasis confirmed by the somewhat self-conscious echo of Lenin²⁹. Even his attempt to have the bodies of the hostages removed rests on a pragmatic consideration: 'ihr Anblick wird Racheorgien der Weißen entfesseln' (p.159)³⁰.

While Toller's account of his role is largely consistent with his earlier accounts, it presents a more militant, and above all a more rational, position than he adopted in fact. He is concerned both to show his revolutionary commitment and to stress that he had acted throughout 'aus sachlichen Gründen, mit kühler Überlegung'.

7. Eight years after

Eight years after reviewing the November Revolution in his speech Deutsche Revolution, Toller once more took stock in his autobiography. A brief comparison with Deutsche Revolution highlights the shift in Toller's ideological position in the intervening years. The traces of Expressionist rhetoric have vanished - and with them any suggestion of mysticism. The autobiography makes no mention of 'Geist' as the guiding

light of revolution. Even the word 'Gemeinschaft', a key concept in Toller's thinking in 1925, is hardly used. One reason may well have been that the word had been appropriated by the Nazis in their concept of 'Volksgemeinschaft', but a more fundamental reason is undoubtedly the waning influence of Landauer. Hoppla, wir leben! had represented Toller's last extended dialogue with Landauer's ideas. Ter Haar argues that Toller's repeated calls for an 'Einheitsfront' rest on Landauer's ideas of voluntary association³¹. The very terms in which Toller advocated it suggest that this is not so. In 1930, he saw the only antidote to Nazism as 'die Einheitsfront der deutschen Gewerkschaften'; in 1932, he appealed for 'die Schaffung einer einheitlichen Organisation der gesamten Arbeiterklasse'³². The examples of united front action in the autobiography - the January Strike, the spontaneous defence of Munich - are also clearly inspired, not by Landauer's (elitist) idea of 'Bünde' of the few, but by Eisner's (populist) call for concerted action by the many.

The conception of revolution which Toller had outlined in Feuer aus den Kesseln receives an extended exposition in Eine Jugend. Revolutions are not dictated from above by political parties and their leaders; they arise from below as a spontaneous expression of popular feeling. Their success depends on the 'will to

power' of the proletariat, and its capacity for concerted revolutionary action. It is the revelation of the true nature of bourgeois society which produces the will to revolution. Socialism itself is therefore essentially an educative process, resting on the development of Socialist consciousness which must be inculcated through upbringing and education.

The idea of Socialist consciousness outlined in Eine Jugend denotes an increasingly rationalist emphasis. His foreword ('Blick 1933') deplures the popular despair of reason: 'als ob die Vernunft je regiert hätte' (p.8). The aberrations of proletarian conduct which he notes are attributed to social conditioning. The contradiction between Socialist precept and practice had long pre-occupied him, being a central concern of Deutsche Revolution. The anecdotes recounted in the autobiography had been partly contained in another speech made in 1925³³. In 1933, however, the task of Socialist education is not to 'nurture Socialist instincts', but to counter 'die Trägheit des Herzens', to develop 'menschliche Phantasie' and the capacity for empathy. In prison, he experiences at first hand the consequences of a failure to do so.

Toller's ideological position in Eine Jugend has some superficial analogies with Marxism, such as his conviction of the historic role of the working-class (p.225) and his analysis of the role of capitalism

in war (p.87). There are even more specific analogies with the ideas of Rosa Luxemburg, notably with her anti-parlamentarism, with her theory of spontaneity and the idea of the mass strike as a revolutionary weapon, and with her belief of the necessity of freeing the proletariat from the tutelage of the bourgeoisie³⁴.

Unlike Luxemburg, however, Toller does not place these ideas in a perspective of dialectical materialism; they are contained within a largely idealist frame of reference which, as we have seen, derives essentially from Eisner. Toller's view of class is ambiguous.

The masses in his portrayal of the November Revolution include 'alte ergraute Männer, Frauen, die jahrelang an den Drehbanken der Munitionsfabriken gestanden haben, Kriegsinvaliden, Knaben'; they are joined by 'Fronturlauber, Kriegswitwen, Krüppel, Studenten, Bürger' (p.109). He specifically rejects ideas propagated by the KPD, resting on Marx's 'General Law of Capitalist Accumulation': he argued that increasing deprivation would not revolutionise but demoralise the working-class, leaving them a prey to unscrupulous demagogy (p.153), a view which the successes of the Nazis seemed to endorse³⁵.

Notes to Chapter XIV

- 1 See, for example, Wolfgang Frühwald, 'Exil als Ausbruchsversuch - Ernst Tollers Autobiographie' in Die deutsche Exilliteratur 1933-45, (Manfred Durzak ed.), Stuttgart 1973, pp.489-98.
- 2 The short pieces which had appeared before 1930 include:

'Erschiessung auf der Flucht', Die Weltbühne XXII, 5, 2 Feb. 1926,

'Verhaftung. Aufzeichnungen aus dem Jahre 1919', Das Tagebuch VII, 4, 23 January 1926,

'Irrenhaus', Programm der Piscatorbühne, Nr.1, September 1927,

'Kampf mit dem lieben Gott' in 24 Neue deutsche Erzähler (Hermann Kesten ed.), Berlin 1929, pp.202-206.

Toller also gave at least one radio broadcast, recounting his recollections of childhood - cf. 'Radio: Ernst Toller erzählt sein Leben' in Vossische Zeitung, 1 June 1930 in Akademie der Künste, Berlin.

The account of the aftermath of the 'Räterepublik' had partly appeared in Justiz, Erlebnisse (1927). The interpretations of his own work in Chapter XVI repeat, almost verbatim, the section 'Arbeiten' in Quer Durch.
- 3 Cf. Toller's letter of 18.7.1933 to Hermann Kesten in Deutsche Literatur im Exil. Briefe europäischer Autoren 1933-49, p.41, which makes clear that the book was still not finished, and that it was still uncertain who would publish it. The first edition was published in 1933 (see Spalek no.9). The month of publication is not given, but a second edition appeared before the end of the year (see Spalek no.10).
- 4 Eine Jugend, GW IV, p.7. Subsequent page references in the text are to this edition.
- 5 This view is already advanced by ter Haar, op.cit., p.3 : the autobiographical works 'sind primär aufschlußreich für die Entstehungszeit'.
- 6 ter Haar, op.cit., pp.181-82, attempts to relate Eine Jugend to the spate of memoirs published by contemporaries of Toller's (e.g. Klaus Mann and Ernst Glaeser) before 1933. He considers Eine Jugend to be 'ein typisches Beispiel für die

6 (Continued)

geistige Isolation, in der sich diese Gruppe von Autoren befand' (p.182). Frühwald points to the fictional qualities of Toller's autobiography, stressing that 'die deutschsprachige Erstausgabe ... in ihrer Entstehung auf novellistische Pläne Tollers in den Jahren 1926/27 zurückzuführen ist' (Frühwald, 'Exil als Ausbruchsversuch', p.490).

7 ter Haar, op.cit., p.3.

8 Letter to Count Coudenhove-Kalergi, undated (1923), LP, p.248. The letter is not included in the German edition.

9 Cf. his comments in 1918/19:

Man hat die Polen schickaniert, was Volksunterricht betrifft, was Landankauf, was politische Rechte betraf, man hat sie jahrzehntelang unterdrückt. Die deutschen Beamten waren quasi verpflichtet, nur von Deutschen abzukaufen und nicht von Polen.

(Minutes of Aktionsausschußsitzung der A- S- und B-Räte Bayerns am Dienstag den 21. Januar 1919 vorm. 9½ Uhr - EHS München, 'Arbeiter- und Soldatenrat 4').

10 There were actually two congresses in Burg Lauenstein, the first 29-31 May 1917, the second 29 September - 3 October 1917. Toller attended the second of these, though it was actually the first at which participants were invited to discuss 'Sinn und Aufgabe der Zeit'. Ter Haar (p.158) suggests that Toller's account basically follows Marianne Weber's: certainly this phrase occurs in her account.

11 Cf. O.M.Graf, Wir sind Gefangene, Munich 1965.

12 Compare this with Toller's earlier account:

Dem Schreibenden gelingt es, nach Berlin zu entkommen. Hier lernt er Gleichgesinnte kennen, mutige, verantwortungsvolle, erfahrene Männer. (Kurt Eisner heißt einer dieser Männer.) Er liest die 'unterirdischen' Schriften von Lichnowski, Mühlton und vielen anderen Männern und kommt zu der schmerzlichen Überzeugung, daß Deutschland am Ausbruch des Krieges nicht unschuldig ist. Er unterrichtet sich über die Pläne der Alldeutschen, und klarer wird ihm sein Weg, der ihn zum Proletariat führt.

(Daiber, op.cit., pp.92-93.)

12 (Continued)

Here, his meeting with Eisner precedes his reading of anti-war pamphlets; the effect of the latter is markedly less of a revelation.

13 Cf. Nationalsozialismus, p.11.

14 Cf. Toller's interpretation of Hoppla, wir leben! in Quer Durch, p.293.

15 '...wir ganz Verzweifelte, die mitten unter unserem deutschen Volke eine andere Sprache sprachen...'

(Eisner, 'Der Sozialismus und die Jugend' in Die halbe Macht den Räten (Renate and Gerhard Schmolze eds.), Cologne 1969, p.289.

Toller may well have heard this speech, which Eisner gave at the time of the Congress of the Second International. It is hard to say how consciously Toller follows this source. What is certain is that Toller's comment in Eine Jugend must be read in a political context, and not simply in the tradition of 'Sprachskepsis', as ter Haar suggests.

16 Daiber, op.cit., p.93.

17 See Ryder, The German Revolution of 1918, Cambridge 1967, pp.117-18; also Arthur Rosenberg, Die Entstehung der deutschen Republik, Berlin, 1928, pp.196-98.

18 Cf. Revolution und Räterepublik in München 1918/19 in Augenzeugenberichten (Gerhard Schmolze ed.), Düsseldorf 1969, p.58.

19 Eine Jugend, GW IV p.92. This meeting on February 2, 1918 was attended by an estimated 6,000 strikers - see Revolution und Räterepublik in München, p.59.

20 Eisner, 'Gefängnistagebuch', in Sozialismus als Aktion. Ausgewählte Aufsätze und Reden (Freya Eisner ed.), Frankfurt 1975, p.72.

21 Eisner, 'Wahlrede vor den Unabhängigen' in Die Münchner Räterepublik. Zeugnisse und Kommentar (Tankred Dorst ed.), Frankfurt 1966, p.23.

22 Eisner, 'Gefängnistagebuch', Sozialismus als Aktion, p.74.

23 Ibid.

- 24 'In Memoriam Kurt Eisner', GW I, p.167.
- 25 This passage is a good example of the conceptual and linguistic influence of Eisner on Toller's analysis of the revolutionary period. Eisner believed that a period of democratic education was necessary before parliamentary elections were called. In December 1918, he asked in the 'Provisorischer Nationalrat':
 'Soll der Stimmzettel dieser unaufgeklärten Massen maßgeblich sein für das Schicksal eines ganzen Volkes?' Democracy, he said, was 'eine ideale Forderung', but that was no reason to insist dogmatically on 'das Zufallsergebnis eines Wahlrechts'.
 (Provisorischer Nationalrat, 4.Sitzung, 17.12.1918, p.63.)
- 26 This conclusion has already been advanced by ter Haar, op.cit., p.221, note 66.
- 27 See the discussion in Chapters IV and X/2(i).
- 28 See Chapter III/1. The ambivalence of Toller's position emerges particularly in the account by Stefan Großmann, who noted that Toller convinced the Court Martial 'daß er zwar die Gewalt besessen, aber nicht mißbraucht, d.h. gebraucht habe'. See Großmann, 'Der Hochverräter Ernst Toller', in Toller, Prosa, Briefe, Dramen, Gedichte, p.481.
- 29 Lenin used the title 'One Step forward, two steps back' twice - once for a review of the (Social Democratic) Party Congress of 1903, and again in an article answering Rosa Luxemburg, submitted for publication in Die Neue Zeit. Toller obviously used the phrase for its connotative reverberations.
- 30 Toller had already mentioned this as an (additional) reason in his statement to the Court Martial: 'Andrerseits sagte ich mir, wenn die Leichen hier bleiben... so kann es dort zu sinnlosen Taten führen' - MNN, no.275, 15 July, 1919.
- 31 Ter Haar, op.cit., p.172.
- 32 See Chapter X/2(ii), note 23.
- 33 Toller, 'Eine Ansprache', Die sozialistische Erziehung V, 2, February 1925. See also Chapter VIII/7, especially notes 28-30.

- 34 Luxemburg argued that full democracy, as opposed to formal parliamentary democracy, would exist only when social and economic equality had been established - see Luxemburg, Die Internationale, Düsseldorf 1915, p.73.

In 1916, she felt that the immediate task of Socialism was 'die geistige Befreiung des Proletariats von der Vormundschaft der Bourgeoisie, die sich in dem Einfluß der nationalistischen Ideologie äußert.' (Spartacus letter of April 1916, 'Entweder - oder', in Spartakus im Kriege (Ernst Meyer ed.), Berlin 1927, p.111.)

In the same year, she advocated the mass strike against the war (see Spartacus letter of October 1916, 'Wofür kämpfte Liebknecht und weshalb wurde er zu Zuchthaus verurteilt?', in Spartakus im Kriege, pp.147-48.) Cf. also Chapter XII/5, note 32.

- 35 Toller had reached this conclusion as early as 1922 - cf. Die Maschinenstürmer, Act III, Scene 2.

SECTION F. Exile 1933-39

XV. TOLLER'S CAMPAIGN AGAINST NAZISM

1. Biographical outline

In the aftermath of the Reichstag Fire (27 February 1933), S.A. men raided Toller's Berlin flat in order to arrest him, a fate he escaped only because he happened to be in Switzerland to make a radio broadcast. He never returned to Germany. In the following months, his plays were prohibited, his books burnt, his property and personal papers confiscated; he was branded a public enemy of the Third Reich by Goebbels, and in August 1933 was deprived of his German nationality.

In exile, Toller committed himself untiringly to the campaign to expose the real nature of the Nazi régime. At the International PEN-Congress in Dubrovnik in May 1933, two weeks after the book burnings in Germany, he made the first of many speeches indicting the Nazi regime and denying its right to speak for Germany: he and his fellow-exiles must speak for the millions who could no longer speak for themselves¹. His speech was widely reported in the international press², making him once more an international figure. Following the Congress, he gave readings and lectures in Yugoslavia. In September 1933, he came to Britain to testify to the International Commission of Inquiry into the Reichstag Fire, and from February 1934 lived mainly in London, though continuing to travel widely abroad.

He became a familiar figure at international writers' congresses. In June 1934, he addressed the PEN-Congress in Edinburgh, denouncing the harassment of emigré writers by some countries, yielding to German diplomatic pressure. In August-September, he spent two months in Russia, attending the First All-Union Congress of Soviet Writers in Moscow, and afterwards visiting other parts of the country. In May 1935, he spoke at the Paris Writers' Congress ('In Defence of Culture'), the first of many such conferences, reflecting the emerging Popular Front.

By 1935, his reputation in Britain had reached a peak which can be documented from the dates of translations and productions of his work³. In March 1935, he was married in London to Christiane Grautcoff, a young actress who had left Germany to be with him. They spent the spring and summer in France, where Toller campaigned on behalf of fellow-refugees, afterwards conducting a similar campaign in Britain⁴. Toller's campaigning commitments undoubtedly deflected him from purely literary work, but in these years he nonetheless completed a volume of autobiography, Eine Jugend in Deutschland (1933), a collection of prison letters, Briefe aus dem Gefangnis (1935), two plays - Nie Wieder Friede (1934/35) and Pastor Hall (1938/39) - as well as poems and film-scripts⁵.

In October 1936, Toller began a speaking tour of the USA which marked the peak of his anti-Nazi activity. He gave more than fifty lectures, as well as radio broadcasts, in a tour which took him from New York via Canada to California, ending in Los Angeles in February 1937, where he and his wife settled in Santa Monica. He was engaged by MGM to write film scripts, but the experience was not a happy one: none of his scripts was filmed and a year later he allowed the contract to lapse. In the summer of 1938, he returned to Europe, making an extended visit to Republican Spain. The suffering of the civilian population moved him to launch a major relief plan, for which he succeeded in gaining the support of the American, and other governments, but Franco's victory led to the collapse of the project before it could be carried out.

The deteriorating political situation and the decline in his personal fortunes led to increasing bouts of depression. His wife and he had separated the previous year, he was troubled by sleeplessness and failing eyesight, and distressed by a legal dispute over Pastor Hall, the play which he had hoped would restore interest in his work. The Spanish Relief Project had swallowed most of his remaining money; the defeat of the Spanish Republic, and the growing strength of Nazi Germany, represented the apparent defeat of his political convictions. On May 22, 1939, he committed suicide in his New York hotel room.

2. Ideological change and continuity

The course of international events after 1933, and the pressures of life in exile, undoubtedly forced Toller to modify his political objectives. American critics, such as John Spalek⁶, detect a marked shift of opinion in favour of the Western democracies, but such a shift must be seen in the political context of the period. There is certainly a change of emphasis from dramatic writing to public speaking. In the exile years, he gave more than 200 recorded speeches, lectures and broadcasts⁷, and it is these which best reflect the development of his views. It is therefore proposed to examine the themes of his published speeches and statements, in order to assess the continuity or change in his views, before showing how these themes are repeated in his literary work.

(i) Pacifism

By 1924/25 at the latest, Toller had rejected unconditional pacifism as incompatible with the demands of political action⁸. The inescapable conclusion of his revolutionary experience was that force was tragically inevitable, a conclusion he had formulated in Deutsche Revolution (1925) and repeated, word for word, in his autobiography⁹. He repeated this conclusion yet again, in his lecture 'Das Versagen des Pazifismus in Deutschland', transposing it, however, onto a plane of international relations:

Es genügt nicht, sagt der revolutionäre Pazifist, den Frieden zu wollen, man muß wissen, auf welchen Wegen und mit welchen Mitteln er erreichbar ist. Man muß wissen, daß auf der Ebene der Politik, im Miteinander menschlicher und ökonomischer Interessen, Gesetze und Folgen des Völkerkampfes von anderen Mächten bestimmt werden, als von subjektiven guten Absichten, daß die gegenwärtige Gesellschaftsform Konflikte birgt, die notwendig immer neue kriegerische Situationen schaffen werden. 10

Toller's statement is basically a reaffirmation of his attitude of 'revolutionary pacifism'. The 'Gruppe revolutionärer Pazifisten', which Toller had joined in 1929 believed that war was inherent in the capitalist system ('die gegenwärtige Gesellschaftsform') and that pacifism was possible only within a Socialist world order. The remarkable identity of both thought and language between this and his previous statements documents the continuity of his views between 1925 and 1936, when this lecture was actually given.

There is, however, a shift of emphasis in Toller's views in the course of 1936, under the impact of political events. Even at the start of the decade, Toller had condoned the use of force in opposing Fascism, advocating the need, even the duty, of defending the Soviet Union. From the middle of 1936, he consistently argued that the Western democracies should stand firm against Hitler¹¹. John Spalek suggests that 'nichts ist bezeichnender für die Wandlung seiner Anschauung als sein Wort, daß die Demokratie die Pflicht habe, sich mit Waffengewalt zu verteidigen'¹². The event which

caused this change of attitude was undoubtedly the Spanish Civil War; which transformed the attitudes of many on the political Left. Toller rejected the hypocrisy of non-intervention¹³, seeing the defence of the Spanish Republic as the defence of democracy¹⁴. Privately, he regarded war with Hitler as inevitable¹⁵; publicly, he vigorously opposed appeasement¹⁶.

(ii) The Popular Front and support for the Soviet Union

Toller's views in exile, particularly on Spain, were closely aligned with the Popular Front. He had consistently advocated a Broad Left Front as the only means of preventing the Nazis from coming to power. The virtual collapse of the labour movement in Germany in 1933 had proved his case against the sectarianism of the SPD and KPD, emphasising the need for an anti-Fascist front in exile.

During 1933-35, Toller was involved in a number of broad left initiatives, which anticipated the establishment of the Popular Front. In September 1933, he came to London to testify to the International Commission of Inquiry into the Reichstag Fire. He was a sponsor of the anti-Nazi 'Braunbuch', published in 1934, and in the same year joined the directing committee of the Deutsche Freiheitsbibliothek; in May 1935, he spoke at the Paris Writers' Congress 'In Defence of Culture'. When the KPD issued its appeal

for a Popular Front in 1936, Toller was among the prominent signatories who endorsed it.

A milestone in the emergence of the Popular Front was the Soviet Writers' Congress in Moscow in August 1934, which Toller, along with other prominent foreign writers, attended. He had been a critical supporter of the Soviet Union since his first visit there in 1926, and subsequent visits only strengthened his conviction that material progress continued to be made¹⁷.

Whatever his reservations, he had accepted the need to defend the world's only Socialist state, particularly against the depredations of Fascism. In 1930, he had been a signatory of the resolution of the 'Internationales Verteidigungskomitee für die Sowjetunion' ('Gegen die imperialistischen Kriegstreiber'); in 1932, he had attended the anti-war congress in Amsterdam, which had issued a manifesto proclaiming the duty of defending the Soviet Union from attack. In August 1934, he considered this duty more necessary than ever:

Was haben wir der UdSSR zu danken? Ihr Dasein. Heute mehr denn je. Ihr Schutz, ihre Verteidigung ist die Pflicht aller, die sich den Glauben an die historische Mission der arbeitenden Klasse bewahrt haben... 18

He took issue with H.G.Wells for suggesting that the Soviet Union had suppressed intellectual freedom; his visit led him to conclude that 'the mistakes of the USSR in the early years are... being corrected'¹⁹.

Toller's spirited support of the Soviet Union must of course be seen in the context of the emerging Popular Front. During 1934, the Comintern had changed direction in favour of a policy of active collaboration with other anti-Fascist forces, which included enlisting the support of 'left-bourgeois' writers²⁰. Toller's address to the Congress was particularly hailed as a positive contribution to this collaboration, and was published in Internationale Literatur, the journal of the 'Internationale Vereinigung revolutionärer Schriftsteller', which also published his poem for mass declamation, Weltliche Passion²¹.

Toller's contributions to exile periodicals effectively document his commitment to the Popular Front. He contributed to the unaligned literary journal Die Sammlung and to Das Neue Tagebuch, which was 'left-republican', but also to Die Neue Weltbühne (which unlike its predecessor kept fairly closely to the Party line), to Internationale Literatur, and most significantly to Das Wort, the weather-vane of the Popular Front policy, first published in Moscow in July 1936, and which ceased publication in 1939, just before the Nazi-Soviet Pact²².

Toller's support for the Soviet Union, which he expressly linked to the Popular Front, continued at least up to June 1936:

Im Westen Europas sammeln sich ohne Unterschied der Parteien alle jene, die weder Herren noch Knechte sein wollen. Im Osten Europas gibt sich das große russische Volk eine Verfassung, die das Fundament wahrer Demokratie ist... 23

The first of the show trials began shortly after. Toller does not seem to have commented publicly on them, though close friends later suggested that they were one of his greatest political disillusionments. He did not live to see the Nazi-Soviet Pact.

(iii) Voluntarism and Determinism

Toller's speeches and statements after 1933 make few references to revolutionary Socialism. This is, of course, largely a consequence of the political situation, and the tasks it imposed: Socialist revolution was no longer on the political agenda. Anyone evaluating Toller's public speaking in exile has to bear in mind that he would adapt his message to particular audiences. The purpose of his North American speaking tour, for example, was to convince liberal public opinion of the true nature of the Nazi régime. Spalek notes that he adapted his lecture material accordingly, editing the Marxist vocabulary and revising passages which were open to misinterpretation²⁴. It is nonetheless precisely these lectures which suggest that his prescriptive ideas about society had changed very little.

While rejecting crude economic determinism, he readily acknowledged the importance of economic factors. In Das Versagen des Pazifismus in Deutschland he attributed the failure of pacifism to win the minds of his generation to 'ein Ausweichen vor der Erkenntnis um die materiellen Kräfte' (GW I, p.187); he suggested that international conflict, and ultimately war, were inherent in the (economic) structure of society (GW I, p.183).

The ideals of political democracy could, he maintained, only flourish in conditions of social democracy. The economic 'freedom' of capitalism had led in practice 'zu Anarchie und rücksichtsloser Ausbeutung von menschlicher Arbeitskraft... Der Begriff der ökonomischen Freiheit ist sinnlos, wenn dem Menschen nicht ein gewisses Existenzminimum garantiert wird'²⁵. The ills arising from an economic system therefore required an economic remedy. At the same time, he was forced to concede that it was not social democracy, but National Socialism which had triumphed. While he acknowledged the effects of unemployment ('Wo ist die Jugend Europas?... Sie wollte arbeiten und die Tore der Werkstätten blieben ihr verschlossen'²⁶) the collapse of the Weimar Republic could not be explained by economic factors alone; it was crucial to recognise the psychological ground which had nurtured Hitler:

Nicht Wirtschaftskrisen, nicht die Folgen des Versailler Friedensvertrages sind allein verantwortlich für den Zusammenbruch. Ein wesentlicher psychologischer Grund war die Scheu des deutschen liberalen Bürgertums und gewisser Arbeiterschichten vor Verantwortung.²⁷

He remained critical of the crude economic determinism of 'vulgar Marxists':

Vulgärmarxisten vergaßen das dialektische Wechselspiel zwischen ökonomischen Kräften und der Willenskraft des Menschen; im Gegensatz zu Marx unterschätzten sie die bedeutende Wirkung des Wortes. 28

Economic forces and social will had a reciprocal effect. It was this dialectical interaction which was at the heart of Toller's political understanding. Fascism was not simply a product of economic circumstances; it was a spiritual epidemic, to which the only antidote was the written or spoken word. The responsibility of providing this antidote fell to the committed writer.

(iv) The Committed Writer

Toller's campaign to make known the true nature of the Nazi régime, pursued in numerous speeches, broadcasts and articles, was a practical expression of his conception of the committed writer. He continued to reject the idea that the writer could withdraw into an ivory tower, though he accepted that commitment might well deflect him from purely literary work²⁹. His own commitment is documented by his appearance at a succession of international writers' congresses, and above all by his North American lecture tour, 'the purpose of which

was to lecture against Hitler and the Nazi system,³⁰. This propagandist intention is indeed clear from the titles included in his programme: 'Hitler: the promise and the reality'; 'Are you responsible for your times?' etc.³¹

Art had a moral, not an aesthetic, value:

Der Schriftsteller ist einzig dem Geist verpflichtet. Wer glaubt, daß neben der Gewalt auch moralische Gesetze das Leben regieren, darf nicht schweigen.³²

His earlier conception of 'Geist' as a creative ethical force was one which, in the exile years, he increasingly associated with 'the great ideals of liberty, democracy and justice',³³. In 1926, he had affirmed his belief 'an das Gefühl für Freiheit und Menschlichkeit, das seit Jahrtausenden in der Menschheit lebt',³⁴. Indeed, he had recorded in his autobiography that it was 'der Glaube an eine Welt der Gerechtigkeit, der Freiheit, der Menschlichkeit, eine Welt ohne Angst und Hunger', which had sustained him in prison³⁵. It was the writer's duty to invoke such a world, one he identified with the 'other Germany' for which he felt impelled to speak³⁶. The role of the artist, he said in 1936, was: 'das spontane Gefühl für Freiheit, Gerechtigkeit und Schönheit zu erwecken und zu vertiefen', repeating a formula he had often articulated over the previous decade and a half.³⁷

While Toller's lectures and speeches reaffirm many of his former views, it is possible to detect a change of emphasis, particularly after 1936. In the twenties, he had defined the ideals of freedom, justice and democracy within a specific social framework. Political democracy without social democracy was an illusion: the Law was an expression of the social system which produced it³⁸. In exile, he increasingly invoked these ideals in isolation, counterposing them to the reality of Nazi Germany. This shift of emphasis is undoubtedly a consequence of exile itself, in which he was isolated outside a specific political context; it is an isolation which is increasingly evident in his literary work.

3. Literary Work in exile

Toller's literary work in the exile years complements his role as propagandist and public speaker, its purpose being to take issue with Nazism - to examine its causes and to reveal its true nature. He intended to show that Nazism was not an inexplicable phenomenon, but one with historical roots in the tradition of German nationalism and militarism, an intention which is reflected in the historical perspective of the autobiographical works.

Eine Jugend in Deutschland, written largely in the twilight years of the Weimar Republic, had addressed the failure of the November Revolution;

in exile, the significance of this failure could be extended to explain the collapse of the Republic: 'Wer den Zusammenbruch von 1933 begreifen will, muß die Ereignisse der Jahre 1918 and 1919 in Deutschland kennen, von denen ich hier erzähle'³⁹.

The introduction to his prison letters stressed that they had 'neben ihrer privaten Geschichte die Bedeutung von Dokumenten deutscher Historie' (p.9). The sequence and arrangement of the letters is intended to document the assertion that the Republic had persecuted its own pioneers and nurtured its enemies. Some of this material had already been used in Justiz, and the shift of emphasis in exile can be illuminated by a brief comparison of the two works.

In Justiz, Toller had carefully separated 'Objektive Tatbestände' and 'eigene Erlebnisse'; his account of the prison régime in Niederschonenfeld served the polemical purpose of indicting German justice. In the prison letters, the line of personal development is a conscious counterpoint to the course of historical events. For example, his experience in prison is explicitly related to resurgent nationalism outside (pp.71-74). The year 1924 in the prison letters exemplifies this shift of emphasis. In Justiz, the harsh punishment of revolutionaries had been contrasted with the indulgence shown to right-wing prisoners: the case of Hitler had been juxtaposed, under

the ironical title 'Gleiches Recht' with that of a young Communist. In Briefe aus dem Gefängnis, the same material on Hitler is used as the introductory letter for 1924 (pp.172-74), standing as a 'leitmotif' for the resurgent nationalism and 'Kriegsgeist' documented in the following pages. Personal experience in prison, and public events outside, once more converge, coinciding in the account of the nationalist disturbances at the performance of Hinkemann in Dresden and Vienna. The case of Arco-Valley, one of the original 'Dokumente bayerischer Justiz', is used to unite the public and the private spheres of the letters. The description of the release of Arco (described as 'der Mörder des bayrischen Ministerpräsidenten') follows a letter touching on Toller's own possible assassination ('In mir steckt ein gut Teil Fatalismus: jedes Menschen Schicksal erfüllt sich' p.189). Similarly, the decision to speak in Leipzig on the tenth anniversary of the outbreak of war (p.189) anticipates comments on the international dimension of events in Germany: the failure of the League of Nations, the collapse of bourgeois pacifism - themes which Toller explored in 'Das Versagen des Pazifismus in Deutschland'.

In both his writing and public speaking, Toller also wished to pose an alternative to Nazism: the 'other Germany', personified by those opponents of Nazism who languished in prisons and concentration camps.

They symbolised the future of Germany: 'Morgen werdet
Ihr Deutschland sein',⁴⁰.

Weltliche Passion

Toller identified the opposition to the Nazis with Liebkecht's opposition to the war. It was Liebkecht and Rosa Luxemburg whom Toller apotheosised in his poem for mass declamation, Weltliche Passion. Toller had long been fascinated by the figure of Liebkecht, to whom he had dedicated one of his earlier 'Sprechchöre', Tag des Proletariats. Weltliche Passion shows obvious analogies with the earlier 'Sprechchöre', even to the extent of quoting four lines from Requiem den erschossenen Brüdern.

At the same time, it reflects both the history and mood of the emerging Popular Front. Written in 1934, the poem first appeared in the Moscow periodical Internationale Literatur in the autumn of that year. Its publication therefore followed Toller's attendance at the Soviet Writers' Congress - and indeed his address to the Congress also appeared in Internationale Literatur⁴¹.

The strong pacifist tendency of Weltliche Passion reflects, as we shall see, the mood of its time. Its indictment of war is also an incitement to the revolution which will make war redundant. That is, the poem restates the 'revolutionary pacifist' argument

that war can be prevented only by removing the causes of war.

In the poem's opening stanza, revolution is identified with productive labour and the fruitful harvest, symbolised by the hammer and sickle. Luxemburg and Liebknecht, however, are celebrated not as the leaders of a particular party, but as 'Führer des kämpfenden Volkes'. Liebknecht initially symbolises opposition to the war, indeed to war itself: 'Und mit klarer/Allen vernehmbarer/Stimme rief er/Krieg dem Kriege!' (p.174). Though his voice is silenced, his message inspires the struggle for social justice:

Alte gehärtete Männer/Junge, Knaben fast/Kämpften
Für ein Deutschland/Der schaffenden Hände/
Für ein Deutschland/Der Gerechtigkeit (p.176).

The alliance of capitalism and militarism puts a price on the heads of the two leaders and they are betrayed and murdered. But their sacrifice is not in vain: the roll-call of Socialist martyrs confirms that their memory will inspire continued commitment: 'Denn die Toten ehrt/Wer dem Lebendigen dient' (p.181). Present defeat presages future victory: 'Aber die Welt wird unser!/ Die Fahne der Toten/Rauscht gewaltig voran!' (p.182).

Pittock (p.149) writes that there is no evidence that Weltliche Passion was ever performed. In fact, it was performed regularly by workers' theatre groups

in Britain between 1935-39, under the title Requiem. It received a series of street performances in the context of the Peace Ballot of 1935, and the General Election of November that year, and was included in the repertoire of Unity Theatre up to 1939⁴². This connection between performance and political campaigning was repeated in the British production of Draw the Fires in 1935. Toller not only directed the play himself, but while in Manchester for the production spoke at a peace meeting on 'Is material disarmament sufficient?' Peace, he said - paraphrasing his own play - was a revolutionary activity⁴³.

Nie Wieder Friede (No More Peace)⁴⁴

Both the plays Toller wrote in exile show striking parallels with his speeches and lectures. Nie wieder Friede, written in 1934/35, was seen by London critics, when it was produced in 1936 under the title No More Peace, as simply another anti-war play. It is, of course, much more - examining the nature and causes of Fascism, and the frightening ease with which an entire nation could succumb to its aggressive and irrational ideology.

The scene alternates between Olympus (Scenes 1,3, 5 and 7), and the imaginary republic of Dunkelstein (Scenes 2,4 and 6). The scenes in Olympus summarise the argument of the play, which the course of events on

earth then serves to illustrate. Toller may well have wished to universalise his theme by the choice of an imaginary setting, but his satire is clearly directed at contemporary Germany. Dunkelstein is a haven of peace and stability, until popular feeling is whipped into war hysteria by the announcement that war has been declared. The identity of the enemy is uncertain; even the Fascist dictator Emil, when pressed, will only assert that it is the traditional enemy. The ease of this transformation from peace to war is suggested theatrically by the turn of a placard, a device telescoping the post-war development of Germany from pacifism to Fascism which Toller traced in 'Das Versagen des Pazifismus in Deutschland'⁴⁵.

The dictator Emil appeals to the instincts of blind chauvinism and racial hatred, calling for the purity of blood and soil, and forbidding marriage with foreigners. The people echo his demagogic slogans: 'Tod den Rassenschändern. Nieder mit den Ausländern'. Emil does not, however, impose his will on them, for it is a sobering aspect of mass psychology that they actually endorse his dictatorship. 'Da ist keine Unterdrückung, da ist Freiwilligkeit und freudige Unterwerfung', Toller had commented in 1934⁴⁶.

But Toller did not wish to explain the rise of Fascism merely in terms of social psychology. Emil is installed as dictator by Laban, the leading business-

man of Dunkelstein - and is ultimately deposed by him. Laban and his fellow-capitalists judge war and peace solely as a matter of business opportunity, and in fact profit equally from both.

Toller also portrays Fascism as intrinsically irrational. Dunkelstein burns down its own cornfields, in case they harbour any spies, and Emil responds by ordering that the fire brigade should ensure that nobody puts out the blaze. Later, he orders an incendiary bomb attack, which will actually destroy Dunkelstein itself:

Der Hagere: Dabei wird Dunkelstein in Flammen aufgehen.

Emil: Das ist der Krieg, meine Herren. Brennen wird's auf jeden Fall. Lieber durch eigene Bomben verbrennen als durch feindliche (p.230).

In short, Fascism entails a complete inversion of accepted rational values: it is systematic unreason. This corresponds to Toller's perception of 'einer Zeit, in der die Vernunft verachtet und geschmäht wird... Ja, die Unvernunft ist aufgestanden in Europa, und sie verfolgt die Vernunft'⁴⁷. The failure of pacifism in Germany was not, he maintained, a failure of reason itself, but a failure of the belief in reason⁴⁸. He gives this failure dramatic substance, when Socrates, the personification of reason, is sent down to earth to proclaim the truth, but is scorned, rejected and imprisoned.

The role of art in the service of dictatorship - a negative example of Toller's conception of the committed writer - is exemplified by Tomas, for whom form transcends content in importance: 'Was liegt am Inhalt. Nur die Form ist entscheidend. Nur die Form ist das Ewige' (p.204). With the alteration of a few words, he turns his 'Friedenslied' into a 'Kriegslied' - the elevation of form renders war and peace artistically interchangeable.

Toller not only wished to illustrate the dangers of Fascism, but to counterpose the belief in reason, freedom and democracy asserted by St. Francis. The continuity of these latent ideals is expressed in the concept of 'Geist': 'Ein Mensch im Besitz der Wahrheit ist unbesieglich. Der Geist ist mächtiger als die Gewalt' (p.215). Napoleon cynically dismisses this belief: peace is no more than a preparation for new war: 'Friedenspakete haben nur einen Sinn. Sie dienen der Vorbereitung neuer Kriege' (p.189)⁴⁹. Men love the adventure and romance of war, the cult of the hero; the suffering of war fails to deter them: 'Waren nicht viele Menschen glücklich? Glücklich sterben zu dürfen?... Diesen Mut sich zu schlagen und zu sterben nenne ich Heldenmut' (p.241). 'Haben so wenig Menschen den Mut zu leben?' asks St. Francis. It was an idea Toller had already explored:

Überall in Schulen, in Büchern, in Filmen, in den Reden der republikanischen Staatsmänner wurden den falschen Helden Denkmale gesetzt... Die Republik hätte dem Mut zum heroischen Leben Denkmale setzen müssen. 50

In this and other speeches, Toller was concerned to draw a positive conclusion from his analysis: in Nie wieder Friede the question is left open.

Pastor Hall

The most audible echoes of Toller's public speaking in the years of exile are contained in Pastor Hall, written in 1938⁵¹. In 'Unser Kampf um Deutschland', Toller had urged German expatriates to expose the true reality of Nazi Germany. In his last play, he portrayed that reality as the systematised brutality of the concentration camps, contrasting it with the 'other Germany', typified in the courageous resistance to Nazism.

The play takes place 'etwa 1935', and indeed the theme is adumbrated in the introduction to Briefe aus dem Gefängnis, which dates from that year:

Denn in diesem Reich regiert die Furcht.
Furcht vor dem Gegner, Furcht vor dem Nachbarn,
Furcht vor dem Kameraden.
Darum hassen und verfolgen seine Herren ja den
Geist, weil der Geist den Menschen zur
Furchtlosigkeit erzieht. Wer aber die Furcht
überwunden hat, der ist der wahre Feind der
Diktatoren. 52

Toller frequently returned to this idea, most notably in his speech to the Paris Writers Congress in July

1938 - at the time he was actually writing Pastor Hall:

Furcht ist das psychologische Fundament der Diktatur. Der Diktator weiß, daß nur der Mensch, der die Furcht überwindet, jenseits seiner Macht lebt, sein einziger gefährlicher Feind ist. Denn wer die Furcht überwindet, hat den Tod überwunden. 53

He dramatised this statement in his play, even transposing the final sentence into the earliest published version of the final scene. Friedrich Hall, a Protestant pastor, and an opponent of the Nazis, is committed to a concentration camp; he is sentenced to a public beating for denouncing the camp commandant, flees with the help of a guard, but instead of going into hiding, invites certain re-arrest by returning to his church to preach a final sermon against the Nazis.

The fear which buttresses the régime takes tangible form in the concentration camp in which the second act is set. The details portrayed are drawn from first-hand reports, which Toller had begun to collect as early as 1934. Some details were drawn from Willi Bredel, with whom he had talked in Moscow, many others from an account by another ex-prisoner, Hans Borhardt, which Toller had acquired in 1938⁵⁴.

Toller saw his task as that of the chronicler⁵⁵. The facts he portrayed had already been recorded in his speeches: the harsh régime, based on hard labour, military discipline and brutal punishment, which purports to be 're-education' - and the courage of

those, like the Communist Hofer, who had refused to recant and for whom there was no hope of release: 'Auf Entlassung wird kein Wert gelegt'. It is Hofer who recounts the story of Erich Mühsam, whose memory Toller had invoked in at least two major speeches. The story of his refusal to sing the 'Horst-Wessel-Lied' has a symbolic dimension, which Toller had already affirmed rhetorically: 'Der Dichter Mühsam sah dem Tod ins Auge. Und wie er dem Tod ins Auge sah, wuchs er über sich hinaus, ward zum Gleichnis der Freiheit',⁵⁶.

Mühsam's example gives Hall new courage, inspiring him to speak out against Gerte, so fulfilling one of Toller's programmatic demands: 'Wenn das Joch der Earbarei drückt, muß man kämpfen und darf nicht schweigen. Wer in solcher Zeit schweigt, verrät seine menschliche Sendung',⁵⁷. Hall refuses Gerte's request to be 'reasonable': 'Ja, ich weiß, ich soll schweigen. Schweigen wäre das größte Verbrechen' (p.296). In the final act, he again confronts Gerte, having overcome his fear of punishment and death. He declares that he will preach a last sermon, an act of symbolic resistance intended to inspire emulation.

The motif of exemplary self-sacrifice points back to Toller's earliest work - to Die Wandlung, in which Friedrich's self-sacrifice hoped to inspire social regeneration, but even more to Masse Mensch, in which that hope had already receded. The Woman's

self-sacrifice prompts a change of heart in two fellow-prisoners; Hall's resistance also inspires an individual response, the emulation of his wife, daughter and friend. In both plays, the answer evades the real question, providing a solution at a personal level, but leaving the social problem unresolved.

The purpose of Toller's literary work in exile, like that of his lectures and speeches, was to confront the phenomenon of Nazism, analysing its causes and exposing its true nature. The development of his political attitudes during this period must be seen in the perspective of the Popular Front. His speeches up to 1936 reaffirm his 'revolutionary pacifism', appealing for support for the Soviet Union and the formation of a united front against Fascism. Political developments during 1936, which coincided with his North American lecture tour, forced him to modify some of his attitudes. His decision to remain in the U.S.A. following the tour certainly reflects this change, though early in 1937 he still apparently intended to return to London⁵⁸. While the immediate reason for staying was the chance of work for himself and his wife, he recognised that 'America has undergone a tremendous change since I was last here in 1929'⁵⁹. The response to his lecture tour had been sympathetic; he was particularly impressed by the strong anti-Nazi sympathies of many producers, actors and writers in Hollywood.

At the same time, the Spanish Civil War forced him, like many on the Left, to qualify his pacifism. He supported the defence of the Spanish Republic as the defence of democracy itself: democracy had the right, even the duty, to defend itself against Fascism. By 1938, he believed it was no longer apposite

to talk of peace, for the coming world war was already being fought in Spain and China⁶⁰. Toller's attitude clearly reflects the ethos of the Popular Front period. The defeat of the Spanish Republic, and the consequent collapse of the relief project he had planned, symbolise the apparent defeat of his political aspirations.

Notes to Chapter XV

- 1 'Rede auf dem Penklub-Kongreß', Die Weltbühne XXIX, 2, 15 June 1933, pp.741-44.
- 2 For international press comment, see J. Wulf, Literatur und Dichtung im Dritten Reich, Gütersloh 1963, pp.67/68.
- 3 The dates of publication of Toller's work in Britain in 1934-36 are:
I was a German (February 1934, reprinted in both April and May), The Blind Goddess (April 1934), Masses and Man (reprinted May 1934), Seven Plays (February 1935), Draw the Fires (February 1935), Letters from prison (April 1936).
 Productions of his plays included:
Miracle in America, Gate Theatre, London, 1 October, 1934;
The Blind Goddess, Barn Theatre, Welwyn, 3 December 1934;
Draw the Fires, Opera House, Manchester, 10 February 1935;
No more peace, Gate Theatre, London, 11 June 1936.
Requiem, an English version of the poem for mass declamation Weltliche Passion was frequently performed by working-class theatre groups in 1935/36 and was included in the programme on the opening night of Unity Theatre in February 1936.
- 4 John M. Spalek, 'Ernst Tollers Vortragstätigkeit und seine Hilfsaktionen im Exil' in Exil und innere Emigration, Vol II, (Peter Uwe Hohendahl and Egon Schwarz eds.), Frankfurt 1973, p.95.
- 5 Toller wrote two film scripts, Der Weg nach Indien and Heavenly Sinner. For details, see Spalek, 'Der Nachlaß Ernst Tollers', pp.257,265. This source suggests that Der Weg nach Indien was probably written before 1936 in Britain, as Toller mentioned it in an interview on arrival in New York in October 1936 (see 'Mr. Toller on the cinema', New York Times, 1 November 1936, section 10, p.5). Heavenly Sinner was written in 1937 in collaboration with Sidney Kaufmann, though Toller certainly worked on the script before coming to America. Neither script was filmed.

- 6 Spalek, 'Ernst Toller: the need for a new estimate', GQ, XXXIX, (1966), 4, pp.581-98:
 He came to regard the United States as the land of freedom and democracy and disavowed his rather superficial criticism of the U.S. made in 1929 (p.590).
- 7 Spalek, 'Ernst Tollers Vortragstätigkeit', op.cit., p.85. Toller's major published speeches in exile, with dates, are:
 'Rede auf dem Penklub-Kongreß', May 1933, Die Weltbühne XXIX, 2, 15 June 1933, pp.741-44.
 'Address to the International PEN Congress in Edinburgh', June 1934, The Scotsman, 19 June 1934, p.12 and 20 June, 1934, p.11.
 'Vom Werk des Dramatikers', August 1934, Internationale Literatur IV, (1934), 5, pp.42-44.
 'Das Versagen des Pazifismus in Deutschland', 1934-35. See Spalek and Frühwald, 'Ernst Tollers amerikanische Vortragsreise', LWJB VI (1965), pp.305-311.
 'Rede im englischen jungen Pen-Club', 1935, Deutsch für Deutsche, Leipzig 1935.
 'Das Wort' (Eröffnungsrede zum internationalen Schriftsteller-Kongreß in London) June 1936, Das neue Tagebuch IV, 2, 4 July 1936, pp.639-41.
 'Sind wir verantwortlich für unsere Zeit?' 1936, see Spalek and Frühwald, 'Ernst Tollers amerikanische Vortragsreise', LWJB VI, (1965).
 'Unser Kampf um Deutschland . Ansprache auf dem Deutschen Tag in New York', 13 December 1936, Das Wort, II, 3, March 1937, pp.46-53.
 'Rede auf dem Pariser Kongreß der Schriftsteller', July 1938, Das Wort, III, 10, October 1938, pp.122-26.
 'Am Sender von Madrid', September 1938, Die neue Weltbühne XXXIV, 39, 29 September 1938, pp.1218-22.
 'An England', speech in Conway Hall, London, 29 September 1938, Die neue Weltbühne XXXIV, 41, 13 October 1938, pp.1296-98.
- All but two of these speeches have been reprinted in GW I, pp.169-218 and page references in the text are to this edition. In the case of 'Sind wir verantwortlich für unsere Zeit?' and 'Rede auf dem Pariser Kongreß der Schriftsteller', page references are to the original publication.
- 8 See Chapter X/2(i) note 16.

- 9 GW I, p.162; GW IV, p.138.
 Cf. also 'Man and the Masses: the problem of peace'
GW I, p.83, where the first paragraph is a word-
 for-word translation of 'Deutsche Revolution'.
 Spalek and Fruhwald date this MS 'before 1937',
 Pittock suggests 1934, which seems correct, in view
 of the content - see Pittock, Ernst Toller, Boston
 1979, p.27.
- 10 GW I, p.183.
- 11 GW I, p.207.
- 12 Spalek, 'Der Nachlaß Ernst Tollers', p.266.
- 13 Letter of 30 March 1937, Nehru, op.cit., p.223.
- 14 GW I, p.212.
- 15 Letter of 21 July 1936, Nehru, op.cit., p.199.
- 16 GW I, p.216.
- 17 See author's introduction to Which World, Which Way,
 London 1931 and GW I, p.179.
- 18 Internationale Literatur, IV (1934), 3.
- 19 'Stalin & Wells. A comment by Ernst Toller',
New Statesman and Nation, 3 November 1934, pp.614-15.
- 20 Cf. Zur Tradition der sozialistischen Literatur in
 Deutschland. Eine Auswahl von Dokumenten, Berlin
 1962, pp.491-3.
- 21 Internationale Literatur IV, (1934), 5, pp.42-44
 and IV, 4, pp.3-8.
- 22 This is true also of his literary contributions.
Weltliche Passion, for example, was published almost
 simultaneously in Internationale Literatur and
Die Sammlung (December 1934); Scene I of Nie wieder
 Friede appeared in Das neue Tagebuch II, 51, 22
 December 1934, Scene II in Das Wort I, 2, August 1936.
- 23 GW I, p.197.
- 24 See 'Ernst Tollers amerikanische Vortragsreise',
 op.cit., p.276: '(Er) reduziert das marxistische
 Vokabular, streicht Passagen, die politisch
 mißdeutet werden könnten...'
- 25 'Sind wir verantwortlich für unsere Zeit?',
 pp.282-83.

- 26 'Blick 1933', GW IV, p.10. This is repeated almost verbatim in 'Rede im englischen jungen Pen-Club', GW I, p.190.
- 27 'Sind wir verantwortlich für unsere Zeit?', p.280.
- 28 GW I, p.195.
- 29 'Rede auf dem Pariser Kongreß der Schriftsteller', pp.123, 126, which repeats almost verbatim the formulation in Quer Durch, pp.295/96.
- 30 Letter of 30 March 1937, Nehru, op.cit., p.221.
- 31 See Spalek, 'Ernst Tollers amerikanische Vortragsreise', p.273; 'Hitler: the promise and the reality' was frequently given in the course of the tour, but according to Spalek no text survives. Carel ter Haar surmises that it was similar in content to 'Unser Kampf um Deutschland' - see ter Haar, op.cit., p.279, note 40.
- 32 GW I, p.169.
- 33 'The Modern Writer and the Future of Europe', The Bockman LXXXV, January 1934, pp.380-81.
- 34 Quer Durch, pp.98-99.
- 35 GW IV, p.235.
- 36 His introduction to Briefe speaks of 'ein anderes Deutschland - das schweigende, leidende' personified in 'die Gefangenen des Dritten Reiches, deren einziges Verbrechen Liebe zur Freiheit und Gerechtigkeit ist..', GW V, p.10.
- 37 GW I, p.208; cf. GW V, p.176, Quer Durch, pp.295-96.
- 38 Cf. 'Rede in Magdeburg', op.cit., p.1074; 'Das neue Spanien', GW I, p.240; Justiz, p.15.
- 39 GW IV, p.7.
- 40 Eine Jugend, 2nd edition, Amsterdam 1933, p.288. In this edition, Toller makes his intention much clearer, rearranging the foreword of the first edition ('Blick 1933'), most of which is included as a final chapter, 'Blick heute', which ends with the words: 'Morgen werdet Ihr Deutschland sein'. This edition bears the dedication: 'Dem Deutschland von morgen'.

- 41 See Internationale Literatur IV, (1934), 4, pp.3-8 and IV, 5, pp.42-44. Weltliche Passion was also published in Die Sammlung II, 4, December 1934. pp.174-82; page references in the text are to this version, which is now the more accessible. The poem must have been completed in the autumn of 1934, since the roll-call of Socialist martyrs includes Erich Mühsam, murdered in Oranienburg in July 1934. Pittock, op.cit., p.201, suggests that Toller 'does not appear to have learned of Muhsam's fate until 1936'. He certainly knew of it by October 1934 - see also Fall Toller, p.217.
- 42 Author's interview with Bram Bootman, former secretary of Unity Theatre, 14 April 1981.
- 43 Manchester Guardian, 13 February 1935.
- 44 Nie wieder Friede, GW III, pp.185-245, which is printed from a typescript in the Toller Collection, Yale University Library. First published as No More Peace! A thoughtful comedy. Translated by Edward Crankshaw, lyrics adapted by W.H.Auden, London 1937. There are considerable differences between the German and English texts, particularly in some of the lyrics. Although the English text was the only one to be published and performed in Toller's lifetime, I have referred to the German text, both because it is now more accessible, and because the English version undoubtedly owes something to the intervention of the translator and adaptor.
- 45 GW I, pp.183-187. Toller appears to have delivered an earlier version of this address in Britain in 1935. Cf. note 43 above.
- 46 GW I, p.178.
- 47 GW I, p.191.
- 48 GW I, p.187.
- 49 Cf. Toller's own comment on Hitler (GW I, p.194):
 Der Diktator, der den Frieden von heute preist,
 tut es, um den Krieg von morgen vorzubereiten.
 The speech containing this comment was given in June 1936, in the same month No More Peace was produced at the Gate Theatre.
- 50 GW I, p.188. Cf. also GW I, p.201.

- 51 Pastor Hall. Schauspiel, GW III, pp.245-316, which prints from a typescript contained in the Toller collection, Yale University Library. Page references in text are to this edition. The play was originally published in English, first in New York, then in Britain: Pastor Hall. A play in three acts. Translated by Stephen Spender, London 1939. It was published in June, a month after Toller's suicide. In Toller's original version of the final scene, Hall had suffered a heart attack and died, thus avoiding arrest. This version, first published in Das Wort IV, 1, January 1939, is partly reprinted in GW III, pp.330-331.
- 52 GW V, p.10.
- 53 'Pariser Kongreß', p.125.
- 54 Ibid. Toller had paid Borchardt for the information he used in Pastor Hall, but Borchardt accused him of plagiarism, threatening legal action if the play was published or produced, see Willibrand op.cit., p.28.
- 55 GW I, p.203.
- 56 'Pariser Kongreß', p.124. In the first version of the final scene, Hall had told Gerte: 'Und wenn Sie mich töten, die Freiheit stirbt nicht' (GW III, p.331) - applying the symbolic meaning of Mühsam's death to his own action. For a discussion of the two endings, see Altenhofer op.cit., pp.308-312.
- 57 'Blick 1933', GW IV, p.11.
- 58 See unpublished letter of 24.2.37 in 'Sammlung Ernst Toller', Akademie der Künste, Berlin; also letter of 30.3.37 to Nehru in Nehru, op.cit., pp.221-222.
- 59 Nehru, op.cit., p.222.
- 60 'Pariser Kongreß', p.122.

XVI. CONCLUSIONS

Ernst Toller was a pre-eminently political writer, whose major plays up to 1930 are variations on the theme of political action. The close relationship between dramatic statement and political conviction emerges unmistakably when his literary work is read in the light of his political speeches, essays and letters.

A chronological approach to Toller's work confirms a clear line of development, though it is neither as regular nor as continuous as Dorothea Klein suggests. It reveals for example a process of initial regression and subsequent retrenchment in the years 1922-24, and of radicalisation of attitude in the years 1928-30, which have not been properly acknowledged, but which must be recognised if his work during these years is to be fully understood.

Toller's revolutionary Socialism had its roots in the Anarchist tradition, mediated in Germany by Landauer, but it is only in Die Wandlung that his position coincides with Landauer's. Ossar's thesis that his political orientation remained basically Anarchist discounts any ideological development on his part after 1918 and therefore rests, like almost all critical evaluations of Toller, on an undifferentiated view of his work.

Toller's association with Eisner in 1918-19 placed his convictions in a perspective of working-class revolution. Eisner's belief that Kant's ethical ideals would be realised only in the economic organisation of Socialism was to be the most enduring influence on Toller's ideology. His experience of the 'Räterepublik' forced him to modify his political position. In search of a more practical basis for political action, he turned to Socialist history and theory, seeking to integrate the idealist legacy of Landauer and Eisner into a materialist framework of historical development. The creative products of this attempt - and its initial failure - were Die Maschinenstürmer and Der deutsche Hinkemann. The progress towards a materialist understanding of history in the former was not sustained in the latter, the original conception of 'a proletarian tragedy' being vitiated by metaphysical pessimism.

Toller's attempts to qualify this pessimism in 1922-24 illustrate the emergence of his attitude of commitment without illusions. He subsequently saw revolution in a longer perspective, its success depending on the cultivation of Socialist consciousness through education and upbringing. He was obliged to concede that absolute pacifism was incompatible with revolutionary action.

The ideas of Landauer remained a constant point of reference in his work up to 1927. The effort to

reconcile libertarian and determinist ideas is explicit in the 'Russische Reisebilder'. He acknowledged that Socialism in Russia had not emancipated the worker from the machine - but also that it was impossible to return to small-scale craft industry, a conviction already implicit in his presentation of the weavers in Die Maschinenstürmer. 'Anarchie' he asserted, 'erstrebt als Ziel jeder wirkliche Sozialist'¹, but he simultaneously rejected it as a practical basis for political action. In Hoppla, this contradiction is posed in the dramatic conflict between revolutionary idealism and revolutionary realism.

In the years 1928-30, his political views acquired a more radical and activist tone, which is articulated in the 'Amerikanische Reisebilder' and in Feuer aus den Kesseln. This shift of attitude reflected the political polarisation in the Weimar Republic, and it is therefore pertinent to ask why he did not rejoin a political party at this time. Rejecting the reformism of the SPD, he nonetheless found himself isolated from the KPD. His differences with the party were partly historical: his role in the 'Räterepublik' had made him a continuing target for attack. They were also, however, ideological. As a consistent advocate of a Broad Left Front, he was alienated by the increasing sectarianism of the KPD, which culminated in the promulgation of the theory of

Social Fascism. Though Toller had moved decisively away from Anarchism, he never fully embraced Marxism. While he certainly accepted a number of Marxist precepts, he did not accept their basis in dialectical materialism. Thus, he invoked the historical rôle of the proletariat, but his view of class is ambiguous. He acknowledged that class struggle was a necessary means of achieving a just and democratic social order but believed that revolution would introduce, not the dictatorship of the proletariat, but its dissolution in the ideal of community. He remained convinced that increasing deprivation would demoralise, not revolutionise, the worker - a conviction enacted in Die Maschinenstürmer and endorsed a decade later in Eine Jugend in Deutschland.

Toller accepted the crucial importance of economic forces, but he certainly rejected crude economic determinism - the mechanistic interpretation of Marxism which he had caricatured in Der deutsche Hinkemann. His own understanding of the revolutionary process was of the dialectical inter-action ('*dialektisches Wechselspiel*') of economic forces and human will². He consistently invoked Socialism in terms of freedom, justice and democracy. If his work in prison attempted to reconcile these ideals with precepts of determinism, his work from 1924-33 sought to demonstrate their perversion within bourgeois society. They would ultimately be

realised only in the economic organisation of Socialism.

While Toller therefore recognised the importance of economic factors, he consistently viewed them in a perspective of ethical idealism. He stressed the interdependence of political and economic freedom, but explicitly traced this conviction, not to Marx, but to Fichte and the German 'Aufklärung', thus acknowledging the enduring nature of his intellectual debt to Eisner³. Masse-Mensch - and Toller's retrospective interpretation of it - provides an exemplary illustration of the essential dichotomy in his thinking. While the play itself reflects Kant's distinction between ethics and politics, Toller's later comments emphasise the clash between voluntarism and economic determinism. The revolutionary, he suggested, seeks to realise 'die als recht erkannte sittliche Idee im Kampf der Massen'⁴. That is, Socialism is seen as the attempt to realise Man's ethical consciousness. While the individual pursues 'die moralische Idee', the masses are driven by 'sozialen Impulsen', that is, by material forces. For the individual, in whom these impulses co-exist, the resulting problem is insoluble. The conflict between idealism and materialism in Toller's ideology could not be more succinctly stated. The creative tension in his work, often consciously transposed into the dialectic of dramatic conflict, is therefore one of political ideas, a conflict between

precepts of Anarchism and Marxism, idealism and materialism, voluntarism and determinism.

In conclusion, it remains to assess Toller's place in the theatre of the inter-war years. He saw himself as a political dramatist, his plays as a means of influencing social reality. His didactic conception of drama was shared by such contemporaries as Wolf, Brecht and Piscator, though their methods differed significantly from his.

Toller consistently believed that drama could carry intellectual conviction only by appealing to the emotions⁵. This belief reflects his dramatic beginnings in Expressionism, with its characteristic attempt to involve the audience in the action of the play, but the conception of 'proletarian drama' which he developed in 1921-22 rested no less on empathy and involvement. The new drama aspired to 'eine Gemeinschaft zwischen Bühne und Publikum',⁶ producing dramatic figures the worker must recognise and identify with. His later documentary drama Feuer aus den Kesseln sought to paint a portrait 'das das ganze Proletariat als das seine erkennt',⁷ a precept reflecting the philosophy of the 'Einheitsfront', and defining his distance from the Leninist notion of 'Parteilichkeit'. Toller always insisted on the distinction between art and propaganda, implicitly rejecting the inference that, art being an expression

of social being, the function of proletarian art was to mobilise the working-class for political struggle. On the contrary, its function was to form social consciousness in the longer term.

Toller's conception of theatre therefore corresponds to his political position between the reformism of the SPD and the growing sectarianism of the KPD. Thus, his early theories of 'proletarian drama' reflect the aesthetic debate within the USPD after 1920. It must be emphasised that his theories were formulated several years before the KPD began to elaborate its own aesthetic. Similarly, his early experiments with pageant and mass recitation anticipated the later attempts by Bertha Lask and others to create a collective theatre which would supersede the individualism of bourgeois drama. Toller, however, did not pursue his experiments in the 'Massenspiel' and 'Sprechchor'. One of the open questions of Toller criticism is why he failed to do so - and even more, why none of his subsequent work was written for amateur performance. Certainly, the 'Sprechchor' movement declined from 1925, but Toller had already abandoned the form, returning to it anachronistically in 1934. A more pointed reason is that, whereas his 'Massenspiele' were devised and performed under the auspices of the USPD, he did not enjoy such close relations with any political party after 1924.

. His efforts to evolve a new form of mass drama after 1925 belong firmly in the context of the professional theatre. The new drama was to evoke collective experience, but 'das Schicksal einzelner Individuen muß an das kollektive Geschehen gebunden sein'⁸. The attempts to realise this conception in Hoppla and Feuer link his work to aesthetic modernism, and more specifically to the formal innovations of Piscator. The common ground between Piscator and Toller is confirmed by their extensive collaboration in 1926-27, their differences by their disagreements over the production of Hoppla. Piscator's historical and documentary style had been developed in the political reviews he devised for the KPD in 1924-25. His 'epic' theatre certainly sought to involve the audience emotionally through techniques such as placing actors among the audience. At the same time, his style aimed to be concrete and factual. Characters were presented, not so much as autonomous personalities, but as the exponents of social roles and attitudes. Emotional overtones of language were to be avoided because of their connotations of individual personality. (This was indeed Piscator's main objection to Toller's original script for Hoppla.) Toller's distinction between political art and propaganda was one which Piscator rejected - and which undoubtedly helped to motivate their disagreement. Piscator's influence is nonetheless apparent in Hoppla - and in the documentary

basis and epic construction of Feuer aus den Kesseln. The latter play, formally Toller's most original and accomplished, strikingly anticipates the documentary drama of the 1960's.

The move towards epic construction was not, however, sustained. His subsequent plays show a stylistic regression into traditional plot, individual characterisation and psychological motivation. Future research might well address his failure to adapt his work to the political situation after 1930. Certainly, the climate of the commercial theatre was no longer favourable, but such contemporaries as Wolf and Brecht both took to writing for amateur performance, the former turning to 'Agitprop', the latter pursuing the dialectical exposition of the 'Lehrstücke'. Wolf's Tai Yang erwacht and the Brecht-Ottwalt film Kuhle Wampe were attempts to confront the political situation: Die blinde Göttin was divorced from it. Toller, like Alfred Kerr, had apparently begun to question the efficacy of political theatre⁹.

Toller's considerable achievements in political theatre in the 1920's have since been eclipsed by the work and influence of Brecht. It must be emphasised, however, that Brecht did not formulate a coherent theory of 'epic' theatre until 1930-31¹⁰. He distinguished 'epic' theatre from 'dramatic' theatre through a series of 'Akzentverschiebungen' - the former

would demonstrate rather than depict, discuss rather than suggest, employing narrative rather than plot, appealing to reason rather than emotion. In these terms, Toller's theatre clearly belongs to the 'dramatic' rather than the 'epic' tradition. His use of individual characterisation, his reliance on the traditional devices of empathy and involvement, and his insistence that art could not be subordinated to immediate political requirements, place his work ultimately in a liberal artistic tradition, however much he sought to transcend it.

Notes to Chapter XVI

- 1 Quer Durch, p.136.
- 2 'Das Wort' (June 1936), GW I, p.195.
- 3 'Sind wir verantwortlich für unsere Zeit?' in J.Spalek and W.Frühwald, 'Ernst Tollers amerikanische Vortragsreise', LWJB VI (1965), pp.282-83.
Eisner had written: 'Fichte hat die deutsche Aufklärung zu ihrem letzten Gipfel geführt: zur Demokratie, die sozialistisch sich vollendet.' ('Fichte: der Philosoph des sozialen Enthusiasmus', Die halbe Macht den Räten (Renate and Gerhard Schmolze eds.), Cologne 1969, p.106. In his essay 'Kant', Eisner placed Fichte's philosophy explicitly in a neo-Kantian perspective: 'Im Weiterdenken der Kantschen Lehre wurde Fichte dann zum utopischen Sozialisten' (Die halbe Macht den Räten, p.71).
- 4 GW IV, pp.222-23.
- 5 See Chapter VII, note 44.
- 6 'Zur Revolution der Bühne', GW I, p.113.
- 7 'Wer schafft den deutschen Revolutionsfilm?', GW I, p. 117.
- 8 Ibid., p.118.
- 9 Kerr, once a convinced advocate of political theatre, had lost faith in it by 1931 (see C.D. Innes, Erwin Piscator's Political Theatre, Cambridge 1972, p.56). Toller, perhaps influenced by the failure of Feuer aus den Kesseln, seems to have been pessimistic before the end of 1930 (see Ernst Feder, Heute sprach ich mit... Tagebücher eines Berliner Publizisten, Stuttgart 1971, p.271).
- 10 See the notes to Mahagonny and the Dreigroschenoper in Brecht, Schriften zum Theater, Frankfurt 1978, pp.13-37.

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