THE EARLIER GERMAN NATIONALISM IN AMERICA

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The sense of responsibility for a national civilization and a concrete ideal of national development has come at a comparatively late period to the German people. The first landmark between an old and a modern Germany is the revolutionary period ending with the overthrow of the first Napoleon. After that catastrophe the German mind, like Germany herself, could never again be what it had been before. The national conscience would forever goad the Germans to struggle for the realization of a free and united Germany, the emancipation from the thralldom of a patriarchal economic and political system, and for *Deutschland über Alles*. But what were the aims of German nationalism in America? What form did the German political consciousness take with the German-American? How did the sense of responsibility for German national ideals, a German national civilization, affect things American and influence the vitality of American ideals and the direction of American political forces? The problem of the "hyphen" today is vital, and it is worth while to observe how it solved itself in the past.

German nationalism was brought to America shortly after 1830. It came in four important different forms: (1) as a movement to plant German colonies, states, and compact settlements; (2) as a *Kulturpolitik*, a keen sense of responsibility for German culture; (3) as a specific reaction upon American political experience; and (4) as a tendency toward separate political organization.

German nationalism has stimulated several attempts to carve a German colony or colonies for the German people out of the public domain of the United States. Of these some of the more ambitious were the Giessener Auswanderungsgesellschaft and the Mainzer Adelsverein, formed in Germany, and several societies formed in America, like the German-American settlement society of Philadelphia and some "Germania" societies. Needless to say, none

of these plans matured in the sense of the original purpose, nor were such efforts at colonization as were actually made simply a manifestation of the national motive pure and simple. They shared with other German or American emigration societies and with the westward movement in general the admixture of capitalistic enterprise and *Wanderlust*—sometimes, too, a degree of missionary purpose. The nationalist motive appeared purest perhaps in the aims of the Giessener Auswanderungsgesellschaft as described by Friedrich Muench, one of the original promoters:

We must not go from here without realizing a national idea or at least making the beginning towards its realization; the foundation of a new and free Germany in the great North American Republic shall be laid by us . . . and thus we may be able, at least in one of the American territories, to establish an essentially German state in which a refuge may be found . . . and in which we shall be able to make a model state in the great republic.

In favor of the idea it was urged with a great deal of warmth that it would mean an asylum for Germans in America, that it would preserve the ardor for liberty in its German purity, and that it was a sacred duty of Germans in America to preserve the culture of mind and heart gained in the old fatherland, and to hand it down to future generations.

On the other hand, there was no lack of dissenting opinions. The idea itself was thought to be improper. Nationalism had proved a source of misery in Europe, and America should be kept free from it. Then, again, it was not considered feasible under any condition, on account of the habitual disunion among Germans; moreover, it would be unfair to expect rich and poor alike to undergo the hardships of pioneer life on the frontier merely for the sake of the national idea. Furthermore, the German state thus to be formed would ultimately have to come into the Union; leaders, at least, would have to learn English; hence the preservation of German among the masses would doom them to political helplessness and social inferiority, and the scheme would defeat its own purpose, the preservation of German language and culture.

The factor of nationalism has undoubtedly lessened the centrifugal tendencies of the German westward movement through the greater desire to live in compact German communities, favorable

to the preservation of German language and traditions in schools, churches, and social customs. But the desire for the amenities of congenial social life, and the consciousness of difference impressed on the German by contact with the habits of English, and especially Irish, types on the frontier remained the most general cause of German gregariousness, and it is characteristic that the numerous national German congresses, although always interested in the preservation of their language, traditions, and influence, did not identify themselves with any scheme to propagate a German cause through colonial enterprise.

A more influential manifestation of German nationalism, as fostered by the emigrés of the thirties, was a general tendency among Germans all over the United States to form comprehensive national, as well as local, associations. Prompted by the new consciousness of a solidarity of special interests, the Germans strove to further them through collective efforts. In this sense the German element in the United States, through its *Vereine*, mass meetings, state and national conventions, can be said to have had, after 1835, a distinct, though loose, corporate organization. It was organized as a German *Kulturprovinz* and an American section. This organization caused little or no attention among Americans with the exception of its militant forms: the innumerable *Turner*, *Schützen*, and *Militarvereine*. Representing the "preparedness" aspect of the new nationalism of the Germans, they aroused a great deal of antagonism among the other American groups. Organized street fights were common in the thirties and forties; and between the German and the Irish type of "preparedness" there was much disturbance of the peace. Nor were all Germans entirely in accord as to the morality of such organization. A dissenter who was hushed by the enthusiasm and unanimity in favor of such organizations would afterward insist on being heard, at least through the local paper. "The preservation of German nationality, an acknowledged ulterior purpose of such an organization, is reprehensible and irreconcilable with the common weal. The idea of drilling to German orders and command is absurd." Nevertheless these organizations of a new militant patriotism and vigorous civic spirit were to play a most important rôle during the

early days of the Civil War, and they formed a valuable contribution to American preparedness.

The quickening of the new group consciousness is most conspicuous in the changing character of the German-American press. While the petty organs rarely rose above the narrow horizon of local interest, the newly founded papers even in the smaller centers of German population were conscious of a moral unity of the German people on both sides of the Atlantic, and they became truly German national organs. With them the center of gravitation of the German people was sometimes in Europe and sometimes in America, but they never lost sight of European events. They usually measured American events by the standards of the European mind, or rather of an international consciousness, and considered it their mission to educate their readers to a militant citizenship that would seek to harmonize German and American traditions and institutions. On European developments not a few of them were exceedingly well served during the half-century beginning with 1835, and the letters of Karl Blind from London do not find their equal today in range of information, power of observation, and independence of point of view. Frequent letters from Germany, which ran in one Western paper under the caption *Zuchthausstatistik*, helped to refresh pleasant memories of the fatherland; extracts from such books as Wienbarg's *Aesthetische Feldzüge* and Heine's *Deutschland* aimed to maintain contact with its political and literary events until book reviews, editorials, and contributions on such subjects as socialism and social questions, present and future of trades, of agriculture, credit associations, railroad politics, commerce and tariff policies, informed the colonial German of the brisk trade winds blowing at home. Later the astounding tidings of the "iron chancellor" forced even the most inveterate enemy of the old system to admit, at least, that the era of the German nationalities of mere table-toasts was over, and to express hope or confidence that the cause of liberalism might be marching along within reasonable distance of that of nationalism. In this connection it is worth mentioning that a great many former German radicals became admirers of the "honest broker" at a time when such backsliding still caused astonishment to their former associates in Germany. To such men

American political experience had brought such an acquaintance with the imponderabilia of practical politics that the process of assimilation tended to close rather than to widen the gap between Germany and German America. Nor were the German-American radical republicans out of sympathy with the prospects of a German imperialism, for on the very threshold of Bismarck's career as a national statesman a Western paper based its good-will toward him on the belief that he intended to acquire the mouth of the Rhine and of the Scheldt and make Germany a great naval power: *Das hat uns lange genug gefehlt*.

Aside from nursing an intelligent understanding for the development of the mother-country, the German papers in America continually urged their readers to become American citizens, and the injunction, *Werdet Bürger*, was a standing motto at the head of successive issues for years. Indeed, they performed a splendid service in educating the German-American to intelligent citizenship, and the long popular articles on American political institutions, on party system, on national and state government, on local government, as well as on tariff, money, public land, and necessary conservation of national resources and forests, read today like people's extension courses of a Western University rather than like newspaper "stuff." The writings of progressive and radical thinkers in both hemispheres were diligently searched by the German radicals, and the *New York Tribune* was clipped with a will. After 1870 the tenor of editorials became somewhat supercilious. Exchanges of opinion took the form of mutual belittling, ridicule, or abuse. Before that time the better papers were remarkably dignified in style and unprejudiced in point of view, and only from the lesser centers came a lighter tone. Thus by a strange irony of fate the Milwaukee *Atlas* called the *London Manifesto* a "comedy for many readers."

Another precipitation of German nationalism in its cultural aspect was a new sense of responsibility for German language and learning culminating in the ambition to have something like a German school system in the United States. Under reference to the prospective foundation of a German republic in the United States, a speculative pedagogue in St. Louis announced in November, 1835,

that he had opened a school in German with nine pupils, and he added somewhat apologetically that considering the trouble and *Aerger* which a school teacher usually has, the tuition would be one dollar a month. A general tendency toward the foundation of German school societies set in with the middle of the thirties and a complete program for a national German-American educational system was worked out by a national German congress, consisting of about forty delegates, meeting at Pittsburgh in 1837. The call for the congress stated as its special purpose the reform of the educational system in the United States, and the choice of a special textbook for elementary German in American and German schools. One of the then westernmost colonies of Germans, that of Belleville, Illinois, sent a delegate with instructions expressing the desire for the preservation of the German language, but the disapproval of schemes for separate institutions of higher learning, of church synods, or of the introduction of German as court language. The instructions lay down the general principle that the German must preserve his individuality, but that no nation has the right to continue here as a separate entity. The report of the committee on education at the Pittsburgh conference provided for a general German school committee, whose activities should be guided by the following principles:

We all are descendants of a nation which far excels many others in intellectual culture and is second to none. Therefore, let not the German name fall in esteem through our neglect; let not the descendants of a nation of high culture fall back in America and become intellectually barren. We all now belong to a people with whom the poorest has the sacred right to be a master of himself, to make unto himself the laws of his own actions. Let us strive to be worthy of that right, let us bring up a younger generation as champions of truth and liberty in honor of the German name.

The more concrete aims of this committee seem to have converged on the plan of a German university in America. It was to be the center and seminary of the German-American *Kulturprovinz*. Unfortunately, this became one of the mooted questions of the whole nationalist program, opinions differing on the essential nature of the institution to be founded, whether it was to be a university, or a normal school for teachers of German, or a college.

Some even scouted the whole idea of such a school, contrasting, not without animus, the needs of pioneer society and the futility of an old system of higher learning. This conflict between the enthusiastic guardianship of the traditions of abstract thinking and aesthetic culture and the necessary materialism and practical turn of economic beginning shows, if anything, the fluctuation, under the vicissitudes of peripheral existence, in the conception and appreciation of "culture." The earliest German-university movement resulted in the foundation of a homeopathic academy in Allentown. The Pittsburgh committee, after two more conventions and some quarreling, invested the \$3,000 which it had collected in a normal school, a national German-American teachers' seminary. It bought a house, hired two teachers, and started with about thirty students, who received tuition free on condition that they would engage to teach German in elementary schools for a number of years. The life of this school was short, but the problem of a national German teachers' seminary has remained to the present day a favorite at all subsequent meetings and congresses of German-Americans for purposes of agitation and discussion. The present National German-American Teachers' Seminary in Milwaukee is the result of this desire for national organization of German teaching. It has made itself exceedingly useful as a seminary in method of language teaching, has trained not a few prominent scholars and educators, and has rekindled year after year the love of a Pestalozzi in the hearts of its pupils. Into the congested German classes of Cincinnati or Milwaukee and of many smaller centers they bring the wondrous world of German language and poetic imagination through Grimm's *Märchen* or other classical children's tales. But today the seminary again goes begging from door to door in German America. At every convention the hat is passed around, and even at *Skat* and bowling clubs the German-American may be asked to register his concession to the *noblesse oblige* of culture by the size of his contribution to keep this institution alive. On the whole, however, the movement for the preservation of the German language has shown a vigorous and increasing participation among the German element. Other collective efforts, stimulated by the new sense of German kinship, were equally successful: a great

deal, for instance, was done to establish a service of organized charity everywhere within the group.

Occasionally, however, a faithful worker for the cause of the German people would give vent to a note of despair over the lack of enthusiasm and response of the German masses, their lack of responsibility for their higher traditions. It was discouraging, indeed, that the institution of a German university, advocated with so much enthusiasm by the emigrés, and materialized after three national conferences in its behalf as a training school for teachers of elementary German, should shortly afterward end in a brewery, as it had done by 1840. Nor did some charitable institutions fare better. For twelve years funds had been collecting for a German hospital in New York City, resulting in the sum of \$40,000 in 1887, which showed little generosity per head and year on the part of the 160,000 Germans then in New York. Perhaps the least successful aspect of the German movement is presented by the fate of the frequent attempts to introduce popular lecture courses in German—they always promptly failed.

Where the results of collective efforts did not correspond to the size of the national group or the vitality of the group-consciousness, they can easily be explained by the intense psychic differentiation of German civilization of the age. The habit of imitation was weak, the talent for co-operation was slow to develop, and individualism was rampant. European groups within the national group more than survived transplantation; many German liberals were fanatical freethinkers, and in the fifties they were on the warpath against the Catholic church on account of its close relation to the ancient régime of monarchies abroad and of the Democratic party here. Then there were Germans and Germans—the nationalists of 1832 and of 1849, of Fichte and of Pfizer, of Kleist and of Herwegh. There was the new sectionalism of the East and of the West, and men changed here as well as abroad. The Latin farmer of Missouri became a hewer of wood and a drawer of water, and soon distrusted the academic radicalism of the professional revolutionist. He began to take root in the new soil, formed new attachments and loyalties and was shocked by the bitterness of the mere emigré, his former companion, who had failed to find a home. Many odd

strands made up the tapestry of German-American civilization, and if the fine imported threads would not match, how could they blend with the coarse homespun brand of Pennsylvania "Dutch"? The development of the new German colonies in Missouri could not fail to stimulate the missionary ambitions of the German evangelical synod of Pennsylvania. At all events, a circuit rider, claiming to come from that denomination, soon made his appearance among the German settlements in Missouri to gather the scattered lambs into the fold. He made a most unfavorable impression on the Germans from the old fatherland.

He had the features of a butcher rather than of a servant of the Lord, he was a gross materialist, and the apostolic greeting was usually followed by a call for the whisky jug. His German was such that the humblest peasant in Germany would have been ashamed of it, and his views on matters of dogma were such as are sometimes heard in Germany from the mouth of some blessed cobbler who usually holds forth in some asylum, a warning example of the ravages of religion gone astray.

He was indeed weak on dogma, if we can believe the writer of the open letter to the "venerable evangelical synod of Pennsylvania," printed in a Western paper in 1837, who says that this minister of the gospel, after a sermon, seized the bottle of wine, contributed with the host for the Lord's Supper, and emptied it with the words: *Ich trinke für euch alle.*

In the last analysis *Kultur* was not the least factor in determining the frontiers, the lines of resistance, and forms of reaction of the German element as an American political section. The comment in a Western paper on the Lincoln-Douglas debate is suggestive in this respect:

It is a senseless show, a tournament, unwarranted in the age of the printing-press. Stump speaking is out of date. The exhaustion of Douglas at Alton was repulsive; with broken voice, more babbling and barking than speaking, he made a disgusting appearance. Lincoln had better husbanded his forces. He showed classical repose and masterful logic—even the Missourians were full of praise for him and surprised by his talents.

This is significant because it betrays deeper rifts between the German element and the Democratic party than mere differences of political views or moral susceptibilities, and incidentally it marks the discovery of Mr. Lincoln by the German element.

If the early association of the German group with culture had its significance, the dominant fact politically is that for half a century German nationalism was synonymous with liberalism. That has given the German element in America political unity and singleness of purpose, while American experience has determined its behavior as an important American political section. Not all American nationalism was of American origin, nor all German-American sectionalism "made in Germany." But German-American national liberalism always had its own ax to grind, and, whatever its means, its ends were always those of a constructive democracy.

In the thirties, German national liberalism helped to make Jacksonian democracy a national institution, while the unity of the German element in its hostility to slavery accentuated the sectional aspect of this issue. In the fifties, the intimate association of the Democratic party with slavery, of the Whig party with nativism, and the desultory recurrence of the temperance question forced the German element into something like political independence and gave it the nature of a political section, an independent political party in all but organization.

The idea of a special organization of the German element for purposes of collective bargaining with American parties had been part of the nationalist program as early as 1835. One of the early results of the idea had been the New York *Staatszeitung*, which was to have assumed an independent attitude toward parties and thus worked toward political independence of the German element. A special German political organization was one of the purposes of the Pittsburgh congress of 1837. Nothing tangible seems to have resulted from those early efforts, apparently because the German nationalist idea itself was not then strong enough in America. The real incentive toward a German party movement was of American origin: the combination of slavery and nativism. The experience of the German element in the states and cities where it was numerically strong and compact suggested to it the necessity and feasibility of organization. Thus the formation of a German Benton party of Missouri was urged, as early as 1851, against the "Jackson resolutions," which committed the legislature of Missouri to the

principle of congressional non-interference with the expansion of slavery. But the incentive to nation-wide separatism was furnished by the Kansas-Nebraska bill of Mr. Douglas. "Only 6 days after the bill was introduced, a mass meeting of Germans was held in Chicago . . . the first indignation meeting against the passage of the bill"; by the middle of January, 1854, Western German papers called the bill a "veritable calamity for the Union," and predicted that it would do to Douglas what the Nicholson letter had done to Cass. The proceedings of the mass meeting of leading Germans held in February, 1854, at Louisville, Kentucky, are most instructive as to the trend of the German political consciousness, showing that slavery was only one of the lines of resistance of the German sectional mind, and incidentally that the German group in 1854 was prompted by a political philosophy which is not entirely un-American today. The Louisville resolutions proclaim that the great revolutionary principles brought over by the Germans and laid down in the declaration of independence and the American constitution had only been partly realized in America; that the great right of liberty was denied to millions of slaves and monopolized by races and classes through control of administrative and legislative machineries. "Speculation has taken the place of duty, corruption the place of virtue and reaction is in power." "The people are replaced by parties, parties by cliques, congress is in the hands of privileged classes, and the resources of the nation are in the hands of predatory interests. The common interests are ignored, and popular measures are defeated." It sets forth the principle that, as a powerful part of the American people and jealous guardians of democratic principles, the "free Germans shall do their duty by their new fatherland by forming an organization for the realization of those grand principles of the declaration of independence and the constitution." The purpose of separate organization was to be, not separation, but an effective agreement with "all true Americans, that is, all true republicans"; a temporary separate organization was only a "practical necessity, brought about by the difference of language and the necessity to secure a worthier position for the older immigration which has allowed itself to be misled by deceptive names and used by unscrupulous

demagogues." It promises to support, in municipal, state, and national elections, without regard to names, conventions, and parties, only such men and parties who "pledge themselves to our principles or promise most for their realization." The platform contains sections on slavery, religion, public welfare, constitutional development, tariff, internal improvement, foreign politics, women's rights, rights of freedmen, penal legislation, limits of legislative activities, etc. The slavery plank declares that institution to be a political and moral cancer and destructive to all republican life, but considers its immediate abolition neither possible nor advisable. On the other hand, it demands as an earnest for its ultimate extinction that there shall be no further extension of it, and that its indirect spread through the Fugitive Slave Law is "unconstitutional, demoralizing, and disgraceful." The plank on religion contains strong denunciation of the Catholic church, popes, bishops, and especially Jesuits, as incompatible with, and hostile to, republican principles of government and liberal institutions. The social-welfare plank demands free soil, national aid to needy settlers, and a national immigration and colonization office; support of labor through arbitration by the federal government of disputes between capital and labor, or aid of labor and labor unions through credit banks; minimum-wage law and standard working day of not more than ten hours. Laws of inheritance must be modified to counteract the accumulation of idle capital. Schools are to be free, and there is to be a German teacher whenever the number of Germans warrants it. The constitution of the United States is declared to be the best in existence, but by no means perfect: timely reforms and amendments would be provisions for the election of all offices without exception by direct vote, and the recall. Candidates for congress might stand for election in any state of the Union, and for state legislatures in any county of state of their residence. The tariff plank declares for free trade in principle, and reciprocity where there is discrimination. Internal improvements of national scope—especially a Pacific railroad—are to be carried out with national means and as a national enterprise. The plank on foreign politics holds that the principle of neutrality has ceased to be part of the American creed, and is to be abandoned whenever contrary to American interests.

This Louisville platform was discussed in all German papers, and was indorsed by German organizations of Boston and made the foundation of comprehensive state organizations by the delegates of German societies of Ohio and Indiana. The political background of this platform is perhaps best described by an editorial of a St. Louis German paper of October, 1854:

We are the political confessors of thousands of Germans in the country who ask us what to do. The fact is: There is no party at all at present with which one can go. One thing, however, is certain: The German element must no longer allow itself to be abused for party purposes and [it must] therefore break party ties altogether and give preference to those candidates whose political creed corresponds to our own. The important questions of the day are slavery and nativism.

The issues of slavery and of nativism dominated the political mind of the German element between 1854 and 1860. Both the Democratic and Republican parties were for a time objectionable. The Democratic party bore the *Kainsmark* of the Nebraska deed, and the Republican party was slow to disguise what was in German eyes a yellow streak of nativism. If there was to be a German party at this time in American history, it would be of American making. The Republican national convention of Pittsburgh, early in 1856, did not satisfy the German press; it missed and demanded explicit guaranties against nativism, and by June, 1856, a German paper estimated that hardly one-tenth of the German vote would go to McLean, one of the Republican candidates for nomination who was known to have nativistic leanings. Even after the nomination of Fremont, Buchanan was still supported by 48 German papers against 50 for Fremont, which, considering the overwhelming antagonism in the German press against the Nebraska act, suggests the strength of the negative pole of nativism. Between the two poles of slavery and nativism, the constructive imagination of a German nationalist might well have seen all German elements united in an independent German-American party with nationalism as the central idea. Indeed, the scheme, then a quarter of a century old, was again extensively discussed in the German papers between 1858 and 1860.

The best presentation of the subject in all its aspects was made by Ad. Douai during September and October, 1858, in the *Westliche*

Post of St. Louis. He thought that the Germans of all parties could be brought together on the Louisville platform of 1854. He pointed out that this great reform program of the Germans had been utterly ignored by the Democratic party, and was afraid that the Republican party, although nearer to the Germans through the temporary community of interest in the limitation of slavery, would in the end be equally unfit to become a truly progressive party. First of all, he said, it was a great question if the Republican party would ever be able to seize the reins of power without the previous formation of a German party. But even then, he thought it would either fall asunder into its heterogeneous elements or it would eliminate its progressive element and become a conservative party:

Victory of the Republican party means the victory of conservatism and the end of true reform. The germ of a progressive party, on the other hand, lies in the German Republicans and Democrats, both now deserted by their respective parties and joined by a small host of true American Republicans. The power of nationalism as a political force is well known—it has but recently been demonstrated by the nativist movement; used as a binder, it must make the new party a success. The Germans are justified in raising the standard of nationalism for “is it not a crime to lose one’s nationality? Can a man be a true *Weltbürger* without being at the same time a truly national being?

Then again:

Ours is not the aim to make the union all German as the nativists want it all English. We have sworn to be Americans, but not to become all English, and if the nativists have a right to found a party which is all Anglo-Saxon, we have a right to have ours all German. That indeed would be an accomplishment of great statesmanship, a turning-point in our public life, and at the same time the basis for the upbuilding of great German educational institutions in this country. Such a German national union would send delegates to the great American party conventions, American parties would be informed as to the wishes, temper, and numerical importance of the German element: caucus, convention system, the whole American party would be fundamentally reorganized; all reformers and progressives would unite with the Germans in a great party of social and political reform, the apprehensions of the nativists would disappear, for national, no longer sectional, politics would be the result. The reorganization of American parties is bound to come, the German element should take the initiative, become the leverage of reform in American politics. The German would hold the balance of power in American politics and become the guardian of both national German and national American interests.

At this time a call for a national German *Steubenassociation* was issued from Washington, with the purpose of securing a legitimate influence of the German beside the Anglo-Saxon element, an organized participation of the German element in the development of free republican institutions, the erection of a German system of higher education through *Realschulen*, *Universitäten*, *Lehrerseminare*, *Volksschulen*.

The *Westliche Post* and the *Illinois Staatszeitung* deprecated the idea of a national organization of Germans, while they suggested local organizations, local political activity, and, in general, a more vigorous participation in American political life and a closer contact with Americans. The comment of the *Illinois Staatszeitung* on the plans of a *Steubenassociation* implied considerable skepticism as to the value of the idea of a national organization, as well as the fitness of the German element for such grand purposes. It suggested that the East seemed to represent the European, the West the more American, type of Germans. The Western German had come under the American influence, while the Eastern German still considered politics "an unwelcome interruption of *Lagerbierfeste*. Politics with the Germans in the West had long been a matter of permanent work, not of desultory efforts, prompted by temporary discomforts through casual contact with a foreign environment. "The poor support of popular lecture courses in German makes us doubt if the Germans are already sufficiently clear and ready within themselves to tackle things American with anything else than *Lagerbier*."

Nevertheless the nationalist aspect of German insurgency assumed a prominence hitherto never obtained. In some states it culminated in the struggles for the election of German lieutenant-governors, as in Iowa, Wisconsin, and Illinois, and in an acute clash between Germans and nativism, and made ethnic sectionalism for a time a dominant issue at least in the West. The fate of the Republican party and of the campaign of 1860 hung in the balance, and astute politicians could not fail to appreciate the justice of Lincoln's timely warning that "tilting against foreigners would ruin us in the whole Northwest." But when the German group-consciousness assumed the character of a fight for office, an interest in the spoils

of a prospective Republican victory, it lost most of its impetus in the direction of a separate national party. On the other hand, the influence of the Germans upon the Republican nomination and the election of 1860 was very great indeed. They did not secure the nomination of their favorite, Mr. Seward, but their uncompromising hostility blasted the hopes of Mr. Bates. Without the support of the German element in the Northwest, where they held the balance of power, the election of Mr. Lincoln would not have been possible. The Republicans exercised the spirit of nativism, and the Germans hoisted the Republican flag and not the black, red, and gold of forty-eight. A German convention did meet in Chicago, in May, 1860, just before the opening of the great Republican convention, yet no longer as a separate party convention, but rather as a caucus of a loosely knit, though well-defined section—the one great solid section in this great moment of American history besides the solid South—a moral, not a political or geographical, section.

German militant nationalism had mobilized in favor of an American nation, German liberalism in favor of American democracy. The American spirit of '76 and the German spirit of '48 met. In a sense the American Civil War is a belated chapter of the German revolution of '48. Even so is the reconstruction period a belated chapter of the liberal revolution of '48. It was a liquidation of a European, not merely of an American, past. German liberalism sought fulfilment in American constructive democracy; the Germans poured new wine into old bottles, and the dregs of European experience flavored the American vintage.

German radicalism had its own ax to grind in America. The preservation of mere union, the mere restriction of slavery was an almost contemptible scope in the eyes of German national liberalism in America. Their motive in civil war and reconstruction sprang from the international mind of social democracy. The firing on Fort Sumter aroused once more the lion of the Great Revolution. Americans rallied to the stars and stripes, but the *Aufstand* of the Turners at St. Louis was an insurrection. The men who followed the call of Mr. Lincoln in the East were Union troops, prompted by the sudden indignation of peaceful farmers at the breaking of the law of the land. But the types who gathered

around the commander of the department of the West were revolutionists, with a long-nursed hatred against the existing social order.

Small wonder that General Fremont, instead of being an obedient lieutenant of an infinitely cautious and conscientious leader, became a high-handed tribune of radicalism. He was a defiant major-domo of impetuous Germans, and *Wallenstein's Lager* was at St. Louis. The Fremont interlude is one of the most picturesque chapters in the history of American sectionalism. Never before had any leader so captivated the hearts of the Germans as this knight-errant of abolitionism, and not even the Kansas-Nebraska act had so aroused the latent sectionalism of the German mind as the removal of this their adopted hero. Fremont had been looked upon as the representative of the German element in the administration party. His removal was taken as an affront, an insult to the Germans all over the country. In Missouri feelings were intensified by the hatred against Blair, whom the Germans refused to recognize as their representative in the cabinet. After this some of their sectionalism took the form of a demand for representation in the cabinet, and much of the impetus toward a demand for popular control of the executive through a representative cabinet, or enlarged powers of congress, in the ensuing years of Mr. Lincoln and Mr. Johnson, was due to these early opinions about the nature of the American government, suggested to the German radicals by the ignominious treatment of their idol.

One year after the election of Mr. Lincoln, and largely as a result of the Fremont episode, the activities of the German radical Republicans had in the main two immediate purposes: to goad what they considered a weak administration into a radical emancipation policy, and to secure the nomination of a radical after their own heart in 1864. In this connection it must be remembered that St. Louis, the intellectual center of German radicalism, was at the same time the storm center of Missouri politics in early reconstruction, and that it thus gave Germans all over the Union the benefit of Missouri experiences and experiments for the speedy formation of advanced political convictions on national questions.

To pursue their aims the more effectively, the Germans again took up the question of separate organization, either of a new

radical party with the German element as its *pointe de resistance*, or of an independent German party of radicalism. The first step was a general exodus of Germans from the Union Leagues and the formation of special "German Union Leagues." Then followed preparations for a national German party of radicals, the most elaborate plans that had ever been made in this direction. Obviously, under no circumstances was Mr. Lincoln to be re-elected. The sectional mind of German radicalism would not tolerate such statesmanship.

A German convention was called to meet on October 18, 1863, in Cleveland. Its purpose, as stated in German papers, was to "bring about a closer union of the German element, to contribute to the spread of liberal and radical views, and prepare well-organized dealing with the parties of the American-born." The Missouri delegation was instructed to draft a short, radical platform, to unite German radicals with radical Americans, to work out a machinery which would unite all liberal Germans in the fight for their convictions. They were advised to refrain from discussing prematurely the question of the presidential succession in 1864, since that could be left to a German convention which would have to meet shortly before the national nominating convention. In general, they were advised to deal with common American, not special German, interests. This German convention drew up a short platform of principles, called a convention of border-state emancipationists, and drafted a plan for a national German-American organization which is probably the most elaborate of its kind.

The political platform demanded revision of the constitution to harmonize it with the Declaration of Independence, abolition of slavery in all states, unconditioned suppression of rebellion, treatment of conquered southern states as territories, surrender of confiscated lands in the sense of the Homestead Act, donation of appropriate farms to soldiers and freedmen, maintenance of the Monroe Doctrine, alliance with the European revolution against foreign aggression in America, safeguards for freedom of speech and of the press, Swiss system of national defense, and the support of candidates who indorse this platform.

The organization of radical Germans in the United States was to be based on all German societies and *Vereine*, political or not, which were to have one representative for every hundred members. Such representatives were to constitute a state convention, which was to elect a state committee and delegates to annual national conventions. There was to be a national executive council of five members to act as a committee of correspondence. The members of the organization were to pledge themselves to vote only for such candidates in local, state, and national elections as had been nominated or accepted and indorsed by the state and national conventions of the organization.

The St. Louis delegation took issue with the point of view prevalent at the Cleveland convention and walked out. In its report to its constituency, however, it recommended the indorsement of the Cleveland political platform, and a plan for organization of its own to be submitted to a future national convention. The essential features of its plan were that the elections to state and national conventions should be made by primary assemblies and mass meetings of Germans, and should not be based on societies. The number of representatives allowed a community should be based on census figures, and not on the membership of societies; and delegates of German district, state, and national conventions should be sent to the corresponding conventions of the party nearest to their views, to secure close co-operation; the expenses of the organization should be borne by voluntary contributions, and not assessed by the central committee as the original plan provided. A minority report proposed that each state should send as many delegates as it had electoral votes, and that the social question should be represented by a provision for the confiscation of rebel territory, and its surrender to the free use by any citizens against appropriate payment or free entry upon such territory not taken up. Rebel soldiers should get the benefit of this provision, but not vote for two years, and such colonies should be under the protection of the federal army.

The majority report was accepted by a vote of 17 to 12, whereupon the minority founded a Sozialer Organisationsverein, but joined the Cleveland movement, hoping to secure with its help

the election of a president who would "break down aristocracy and secure a free home for every citizen."

The majority report of the Missouri delegation is a valuable document to the student of the problem of the disintegration of the European consciousness, the problem of assimilation. It is in a sense a confession, a profound and earnest analysis of self, and shows the process of humanization of the doctrinaire under the influence of American practical experience. This is its comment on the draft submitted to the Cleveland convention, apparently by the great radical Karl Heintzen, the dominating spirit of the convention.

The spirit of *Flüchtlingspolitik* permeated the draft, combined with that socialistic-political hotchpotch which in 1848 in the congresses of the democrats at Frankfort and Berlin embraced the whole world with puff-cheeked tirades, seeking to cure at once the whole world and therefore cured nothing; which on the contrary was so awkward as to poison what already had been done with its medicine of the grand phrase. . . . Social agitation is justified, but time, place, circumstances are factors which must be taken into consideration with every agitation. It is a mistake to bring up the old problem of the ailings of human society in the presence of concrete and very vital dangers. It is sad to meet the words "sham republic" in that document of the radical Germans. This country has harbored the persecuted fugitives of the monarchies of Europe, has given them citizenship and equal rights with the native-born . . . such a country, in spite of all its faults, is no sham republic, and to use such an expression is more than ungrateful, it is childish. The draft says . . . "the principle of the Declaration of Independence would be entirely without meaning if everyone were not entitled to the just price of his labor." This conclusion is sufficient evidence of the confused witch-broth of politico-, socio-moral ideas which were presented to the convention, which had already done so much damage as early as 1848, and has forever ruined the good sense of so many a worthy laboring man. Another paragraph: "Unite with the revolution in Europe. Initiative for the liberation of the world . . . does it befit us to brag and to threaten as long as we are on the brink of death ourselves? There is still danger ahead of us . . . the presidential election is at the door, and if we win . . . it will still be time to remember that monarchies are our enemies." Our mental eye had a vision of the farmer at home in Missouri, who behind his plow never knows when he may be slain by the bullet sped by the traitor from behind the nearest bush . . . we had in mind what such a farmer would have to say to such an assembly that in face of such conditions is spellbound by the ringing sounds of abstract theories of humanistic world-benefaction and permits its imagination to ramble towards far-off utopias instead of concentrating all its energies upon the redress of immediate pressing need.

A study of the proceedings of the Cleveland convention and subsequent newspaper comment leads to the following conclusions: Purposes of an agrarian revolution, a strain of socialism, an uncanonical, frequently revolutionary, attitude toward the American constitutional system, and the treatment of questions of foreign policies from a point of view of an international mind, show that the European mind was still shaping American political ideas, that American traditions had not as yet obliterated European memories. On the other hand, German nationalism had largely ceased to be an end in itself; it was to be exclusively a lever of American political action. An American political section sought to exploit what strength there was to be derived from its *alter ego* as an ethnic group. Finally, there is evidence of the disappearance of the ties of this group altogether, and at least one bold counsel to disband the national group definitely and to take service individually with the American state. This is the advice of Frederick Muench who, though early one of the most active nationalists, had after 1850 discounted all separatist movements and scrupulously subordinated the nationalist idea to the cause of republicanism. The very early signs of a new separatist movement had elicited from him the following contribution to a Western paper:

Special interests like masons, churches, etc., may organize for special purposes, but lest a state be formed within the state and all fall asunder into federalism, the idea of the state must be more powerful than all special interests, and dominate and unite the whole. Where it is a question of citizenship, the Catholic, the Methodist, the Irishman, the German, must be forgotten, else public affairs become abnormal and finally incurable. Let parties form, but not in the nature of permanent corporations. There must be no sectionalism in politics: When a whole class and section organized as a solid political party, we had the bloody conflict. Similar results will follow upon the formation of a powerful Southern, or Catholic, or German party. The state knows only citizens . . . every nation must be united within itself. The proposal to form a German party comes exclusively from such men as have received their education in Germany, and with whom European impressions still dominate.

Nothing came of the proposed national organization, but its nature as an attempted protestant revolt against the *alleinselig-machende* *Lincolnkirche* of the Union party was revealed by subsequent editorials in the German radical press on the coming

nomination. The attitude of the radical German mind is tersely expressed in the following editorial statement: "Lincoln has understood neither his mission nor his party nor his country nor his age. He is a straggler of his age, and instead of representing progress and civilization, he stems himself against it as a stubborn, headstrong backwoodsman of Kentucky." He is declared to be a "powder already spent, and in spending itself it has blown up the bridges to the presidency behind him." The following is indeed a strong array of German against him: "Er hat sich ausgezeichnet durch jammervolle Kurzsichtigkeit, Ratlosigkeit und Unentschlossenheit, Zaghaftigkeit und Stümperei, Wanke Imütigkeit und Mattherzigkeit, Angst und schnöde Nachgiebigkeit." The German radicals, after a conclave of their own a few days before the radical Republican convention in Cleveland, entered the "political cave of Adullam" and helped to nominate General Fremont.

The Cleveland convention of 1864 laid the foundation of a new party, *Die radikale Demokratie*. Undaunted by the desertion of their leader and the overwhelming victory of Mr. Lincoln, the German radicals of the West opened a vigorous campaign of public education in the principles of the newly conceived "radical democracy," hoping to win over the war Democrats, who were supposed to have been as much insulted by the nomination of McClellan as they themselves had been by the nomination of Mr. Lincoln.

The general point of view of the new German radicalism was as follows:

The reorganization of parties is bound to come. The Democratic party, by clinging to the heresies of its new leadership, has committed suicide, and the Republican party has long ceased to exist. As soon as the great struggle is over and ceases to absorb the whole interest of the Union men, political questions will again come to the foreground, and then the mission of our new party of radical democracy will be the guardianship of the true interests of the people.

A platform based upon the editorial policies of the central organ of the new party, the *Westliche Post*, was as follows: The party takes over the planks in paragraphs 11-13 of the Cleveland Fremont platform, demanding a constitutional amendment providing direct election of the president; congressional, not executive, reconstruction; confiscation and redistribution of land in the South in

the interest of social justice. In addition, it repudiates the centralistic tendencies of the Republican régime and demands return to the principles of Jeffersonian democracy and of the old Republican party, which "was based on the ideas of the Gironde and of Madison." This was specified later as implying decentralization in the interest of the greatest possible autonomy of local government, state sovereignty in internal state policies, and home rule for cities and counties through general, not special, legislation; but, on the other hand, the centralization of powers of government in the hands of legislatures and of congress, preferably under abolition of the presidency altogether. A naturalization period of about ten years is suggested for negroes, and rebels are to be disfranchised. With such views, the German radical democracy was for congressional reconstruction in principle, but while it participated in the campaign against President Johnson, it took congress to task for its "high-handed acts on the one hand, and its cowardliness on the other." "Impeach the president, which is perfectly within their constitutional rights, that they dare not do. But to decree away the president's constitutional powers, to depose him as commander in chief of the army—that costs them nothing." "To make territories out of the rebel states and force them to accept republican constitutions before readmitting them into the Union, that is a right which they dare not exercise. But to tread underfoot all republican principles, to give a West Pointer absolute power over the administration of those states, over life, liberty, and property in the South: such is their courage."

It is evident that the German revolutionist had lost none of his consistency of the contrainaire, nor given up his original conception of the Civil War as a social and political revolution. He takes issue continually with the American attitude toward the problem of reconstruction: "A pitifully narrow conception of the war just finished" an "unworthy conception of the federal government and its military power as a *posse comitatus*" and deplores that so few can see its real significance as a "conflict of ideas and a fight for the principle of absolute justice."

The Germans had participated in this struggle for the "principle of absolute justice" with an intensity of feeling and a con-

centration of effort that could not fail to have a lasting effect on them. It assimilated their nationalism. Before this tremendous American experience European memories faded: after 1864 there was German liberalism, but not the old German nationalism. There were no more efforts to found a national German party. German history and American history had met, and a great and noble part of German history had fulfilled itself in America. The aspirations of a restless generation of Germans had found fulfilment in America—not the fulfilment which they had sought, but in helping to make American history they had become Americans. The report on the Cleveland convention closed with the following words:

I too had felt myself a fugitive, a stranger here. My wishes, hopes, my interests, lay on the other side of the ocean. There was a time when I was not ashamed to confess that the very thought of my bones being buried in this soil was painful to me. Those times are no more. In this great crisis, the longing for the German sod has disappeared—the feelings of bitterness of the fugitive, the stranger. Here, to America, belongs now my heart, my mind . . . I am an American with body and soul. And yet . . . I am a better German for all that.

The radical Democratic movement of 1864 leads directly into the channels of the liberal Republican movement, and under the leadership of Karl Schurtz, the insurgent senator from Missouri and editor of the *Westliche Post*, the Germans in 1872 and in 1876 were united as they had never been united before—united in an American, not a German, party.

Their very conception of civil war and reconstruction as only a phase in the evolution of constructive democracy prevented the moral force of German liberalism from exhausting itself in the reconstruction of the South. American democracy in the making still drew largely from the muddy fountain of instinct, while such instinct in Germany had clarified into a well-developed political and social philosophy. The true German liberal would not waste time gloating over the spoils, nor forget himself and his cause by trampling on what to him had only been the vanguard of the enemy. Constitutional reform, reform of party government, the problem of bosses, of corporations, loomed up early as a problem of German national liberalism in America. There was an unbroken continuity

of thought and effort between the platform of 1854, 1860, 1864, and of 1872 and 1876; between German radical Republicanism, radical Democracy, liberal and progressive Republican movements, as far as the German element is concerned, they have one thing in common: they are manifestations of German national liberalism in America. Their value as an American political force largely depended on leadership, as leadership marked the difference between the Germany of 1848 and of 1870. "Metaphysical" Germans of Louisville of 1854 made American history in 1860; those of 1863-64, in 1876. They frequently failed, and never obtained all they desired. They did not prevent the re-election of a Lincoln, but they made impossible a third term for such a man as Grant, and neither Mr. Douglas, nor Mr. Bates, nor Mr. Blaine ever became president.