Shadows of War

Ryoko Adachi
and
Andrew McKay

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Long Way from Kokoda

Phil Rhoden made many difficult decisions when the death of his superior officers thrust him into leading the Australian defence of the Kokoda Trail. The Japanese Imperial Army was swarming along the trail, intent on the capture of Port Moresby and New Guinea, just a day's boat ride from Australian home soil.

But one of the hardest decisions came some 60 years after the Asia-Pacific War and it took place at his modest house in a tree-lined street of a Melbourne suburb. It was a decision that represented a milestone in his declining years; he died soon after. It was the decision to allow a Japanese to step inside his home – for what was to be his final interview. Allowing a Japanese through his door was not something he had anticipated or considered. That he made the decision surprised, and even shook him. It was a huge personal gesture of reconciliation.

Phil Rhoden was 27, and had been exposed to fire in Syria against the Vichy French, when he found himself on the Kokoda Trail and it was nothing like anything that he and his mates had experienced before. In his un-ironic understatement 'it was very, very challenging.'

'Official papers had told us what type of enemy the Japs were, especially after Singapore, that great bastion, fell. It put us on notice about what we were up against. They were an all-conquering nation at that time and you had to pay respect to that. They weren't going to be a pushover.' Phil Rhoden speaks with careful phrasing, a habit grown from a lifetime in the Law. He is sitting in the comfortable surrounds of his study, a panelled room of books and family photos. A place of gentle memories and security that would deny the possibility of Kokoda's brutality where 500 conscripted

and untried Australian militiamen threw themselves against a Japanese force of five thousand.

'We met the Japanese on 26 August at Isurava. You could only get one person on the track at a time so our troops were arriving piecemeal. I first exchanged fire with the Japs on 29 August. By that time I was still a captain but I was second in command of the 2/14th Battalion. On Thursday the 27th both sides were feeling for each other's flanks with a lot of patrol action. The next day four companies from the 14th came up and on that day, Friday, all hell broke loose. The Japs had the edge on things and they out-gunned us and out-numbered us by about six to one – and they had better weapons. On the 29th, the fourth day of the battle saw us taking huge losses but compensation for that was that the Japanese also suffered huge losses. That was the day Kingsbury won his VC.

'When Kingsbury won his VC, late in the afternoon of Saturday the 29th... Just visualise a hole in the wall. That afternoon they punctured a hole in our wall of defences. And if Kingsbury and his section hadn't beaten off the Japanese and plugged the hole, the Japanese would have poured through that hole and simply marched onto Moresby and Australia would have been in mortal danger. This boy Kingsbury, a typical Australian boy, I saw him running past me on his way down this track and I said to him, "Where are you off to Bruce?" And he said, "There's something down here I've got to attend to." And off he raced, cheerful – part of the job. No cringing, just as you would imagine a real Australian boy to be. And a sniper got him, up a tree. Kingsbury had won the day and they were pausing for a moment and a sniper killed him. His great friend Alan was so upset about it, he just emptied his Tommy gun up into the tree and down the sniper came. There was an example of hatred. We will soon be gone, the Second World War people.'

The feeling and clarity with which Phil Rhoden relates this brief, shining moment of sacrifice and swift response shows that it is fully alive in his memory, and still has the power to hurt. It is as if the many deaths he saw have been concentrated and refined into

the single death of Kingsbury whose citation for the supreme bravery award of the Victoria Cross says:

> To avoid the situation becoming more desperate, it was essential to regain immediately lost ground on the right flank. Private Kingsbury, who was one of the few survivors of a platoon which had been overrun and severely cut about by the enemy, immediately volunteered to join a different platoon which had been ordered to counter-attack. He rushed forward firing the Bren gun from his hip through terrific machine-gun fire and succeeded in clearing a path through the enemy. Continuing to sweep enemy positions with his fire and inflicting an extremely high number of casualties on them, Private Kingsbury was then seen to fall to the ground shot dead by the bullet from a sniper hiding in the wood. Private Kingsbury displayed a complete disregard for his own safety. His initiative and superb courage made possible the recapture of a position which undoubtedly saved Battalion Headquarters, as well as causing heavy casualties amongst the enemy. His coolness, determination and devotion to duty in the face of great odds was an inspiration to his comrades.

How did Phil Rhoden feel then about Kingsbury's last, valiant action? He is silent, seeming to recede from the moment. When he speaks it is in the measured words of a soldier, who deals in actions not emotions.

'Pardon me taking time,' he says. 'I'm thinking back, it was a long time ago... Personally you have a job to do and that takes up everything, your thoughts, your fears if there are such things. But you've got mates all around you and you are all trying to help each other. There's no time for fear, no time for feelings. The enemy's out there and you may stop him. You don't hate him, he's a worthy opponent. If there was going to be hatred it would come later. It came I suppose during the battle of Isurava but it went on during the ensuing days until we were pulled out of the line on 16 September.

'In the meantime we had heard of the way that...the alleged way...that Japanese were treating those troops that were wounded,

the bodies of our troops. There was some suggestion of cannibalism. I'm not suggesting for one moment that there was but there was evidence available. That sort of thing kicks up a hatred pretty quickly. Rumours gain currency very quickly and like a bushfire they are very hard to put out, whether they are right or wrong. I never personally saw any evidence. I understand but it has never concerned me as such. Japanese equalled enemy. Enemy and Japanese equalled a force trying to get to Australia. And the rumours I heard didn't change that.

'There were 650 men in the battalion and were bound together to defeat the enemy. Only 93 walked out on 16 September – 166 were killed – casualties from sickness, dysentery, malaria. I walked out. It transpired later our Commanding Officer was captured and I was asked to take over the battalion and I commanded it for 10 days until a new CO was appointed and I had charge of the battalion at a very critical time in the Owen Stanley Ranges. The Isurava battle was the battle that you could almost equate with Gallipoli. It's been said that Gallipoli made a nation and that Kokoda saved a nation. If the Japs had got through they would have just walked their way to Moresby.

'If there was any bitterness in our battalion it mainly arose, I think, because we were up against an enemy who knocked us about a bit. When you lose a mate, you have really lost something and that makes you bitter. I came back to Australia after the battle of the beachheads [Gona and Sanananda]. By July we were called upon to have another run, this time up the Ramu Valley. The 9th Division also took part in Lae, Finschhafen and Shaggy Ridge. There wasn't much time...everything crowded in. Time lost its sense. I was at Balikpapan in Borneo [Kalimantan], I took part in the landing, the first by Australian troops in the war...there was always a fear that a stray bullet might collect you. Then the battalion was shifted to the Celebes [Sulawesi], to be responsible for the surveillance of 23,000 Japanese troops of the Second Japanese Army at a place 90 miles north of Macassar.

'Strangely enough, I sat down from time to time with General Toshima on my visits to where these 23,000 Japanese were

congregated – not behind barbed wire – and he wasn't a bad old feller I suppose. I was quite interested in the old chap because in the 1930s there used to be goodwill visits in the Pacific and the dear old general said to me one day he had been to the Melbourne Cup and I told him I had never been and I think he thought I was pulling his leg. To their credit, during a period of two to three months they played the game. Mind you, I wouldn't trust them and I still don't – with all respect.

'I had a friend, a great friend, a prisoner of war of the Japanese in Ambon. He used to tell us that whenever he found himself after the war in the presence of a Japanese person, at a function or the like, he just couldn't stop there. He had to excuse himself and get out of their company because of what had happened. Another great friend lost his eye at Gona. And he was here yesterday sitting in that chair and his face is all emaciated and cut up by the machine gun and he still wears a patch over his eye. I showed him your correspondence and I said: 'Come along if you like, Chas' [for this interview] but he said no, couldn't do it. Not a bar of it. He was a wonderful looking young man but just knocked around so much.'

Phil Rhoden finished the war, he says, with no more emotional baggage than most and yet there were times when heightened past feelings unexpectedly caught up with him.

'I was playing golf one day with my wife, one Sunday out at Commonwealth, the short hole and we were held up by a group of four on the green and we were on the tee. And I said to my wife: "Jeezus, they're Japanese!" This is at the time when it was thought that for the Japanese to play at your golf club was a little bit...rough. I suppose they were in the vanguard of the change of attitudes. So I said to my wife, "I'm going to do the best shot that I have ever done here." They called us through and went to the side of the green. And I played a shot that went within *that* far of the hole. They bowed and scraped and said, "Good shot, good shot" – and I don't intend to be rude – and I said: "Thank you. Thank you." And off we went.

'There was another occasion in Collins Street when I was coming home from work. There was a group of Japanese outside a hotel and

they were saying goodbye to people and taking up the whole of the footpath, and they had every right do so, mind you. But I must have been a bit tired because I said to my wife, "I'm going to knock right through this gang." And she said, "You're not, you're not!" And I said, "I am! I am!" But she won and I didn't. That was pre-Vietnam and since then we have grown up.'

There are family photographs grouped on a bookshelf in his study, pictures of his children.

'I think they have inherited my attitude, only because they have seen what a mess it's made of people. What a mess it *is* making of people. There are very few of us left now.

I have been since 1981 the Honorary Colonel to the Cadet Unit at Ivanhoe Grammar School which has some 275 young men and girls. I see them at camp and I go to their passing out parades. I make myself available so that they can come up and talk to me and latterly, over the last six years or so, there has been a difference in attitude. Whereas formerly they knew of the war, knew what happened, now they want to know how did you do this? How did you do that? What happened to...? Some of them want to know what happened when the killings went on. And you can see them and you realise, all of a sudden, that they are the questions that *you* have been asking. I think they are learning.

'Albeit history is not taught in the schools as it ought to be, not as much as it ought to be. There are quite a number if people who say this, and who have a right to say it. They are not just people who are making mischief. They are suddenly realising, I suppose, that Australia was in danger at that time. My son's and daughter's era has passed on and we are into the new generation – their children. And I think they are realising that Australia was in danger and they are now wanting to know and see people who had been there...there is an interest in what happened, why it happened, and it must not happen again. It's very hard for someone, plenty of us, who have been through the war... I find it difficult to completely wipe the slate clean. I'm still tossing and turning at night in bed, it crops up. So I haven't lost the war days.

I am 85 and it's hard for me to get rid of all that so I still carry the baggage.'

A long silence.

'I don't know if I express myself very well.'

Phil Rhoden looks keenly at Ryoko Adachi and after another silence says, 'I have done something this afternoon. A few years back you might still be out in the street, waiting to see me but you have come into my home, my feelings. I have taken a big step during this last couple of hours.'

He is silent again, for quite some moments. Then...

'We had a pilgrimage back to Isurava, two years ago now, and it was a great success. About 80 on the trip, some war veterans, some carers, the carers being grandchildren, and the Government provided us with a Boeing 707 from Australia to Moresby and to Kokoda on Caribous. But the Government wouldn't cover the Kokoda to Isurava part of the trip so we had to hire helicopters from the locals. But the trip was very emotional, very emotional. We had no time on the trip, it's been five days, we left on a Sunday and we were back on Friday. We had a ceremony at Isurava and then a service at Bomana War Cemetery which is a terribly moving place. That brought everything back in full focus.

'It was...a...a moment in space. But I am glad we did it. The Last Parade, it was called... Everything came tumbling down in a heap for me...all those years after, it just hit me. I couldn't believe what we had done. There was a place called Ower's Corner at the start of the Owen Stanley Track where you got off vehicles and started to walk. That was the place where visiting generals would go up to with politicians and the like. That's where they stopped; they went no further.

'We were taken there on the trip and you look out on the bloody mountains, just sitting there waiting to pounce, eat you up. They looked benign enough but they are full of guile, full of mystery...

'It's a great family, the battalion. We still meet at Anzac time, have a meal, lay a wreath at the Shrine and look after our widows.'

By September 17 the Japanese reached Ioribaiwa, only 32 miles as the crow flies from Port Moresby. On September 28 Australian

troops found Ioribaiwa deserted by the Japanese who were exhausted and starving. The Australians pursued and fought rear-guard actions and on November 2 gained control of Kokoda. A subsequent three-month campaign at Buna, Sanananda and Gona in the swamps of the north-eat coast drove out the Japanese but only at a cost to the Australians of 6154 killed and wounded and nearly five times as many felled by disease.

It was the first defeat on land of the mighty Japanese Army yet there was no great celebration by the Australians. Rather something both more simple and more profound: a feeling of vast, ineffable relief.

The Shadow

Phil Rhoden's passion for educating the young about what happened at Kokoda and elsewhere in the Asia-Pacific is not mirrored in Japan. Yet few Australians think to question what the post-war generations of Japanese believe – what *their* histories have taught them about the Asia-Pacific War or, worse, have kept secret from them.

It is revealing to hear from top Japanese official Yasushi Akashi who is the former Undersecretary-General of the United Nations and now Chairman of the Tokyo-based Japan Centre for Conflict Prevention – a vital role in creating harmony between Japan and other countries. Akashi is a widely experienced senior diplomat and old enough to remember the war, Japan's defeat and the American-Allied occupation. Throughout a low-key visit to Australia in 2004 his statements to academics and foreign policy advisors had a constant theme: that Japan was ignoring its war history and that it badly needed to build stronger bridges with its wartime enemies.

It sounded fine. But then in an interview with the authors, he revealed that the history that he was talking about was Japan's 'shared history with China and Korea'. The Battle for Australia when Japanese troops swarmed over the Kokoda Trail right on Australia's doorstep is not on his radar or that of his organization. Their perception and focus is elsewhere.

Australia has a problem at two levels with Japan's attitude towards those grim years of 1942-45 when battles were fought – and appalling atrocities committed – as Imperial forces swept south through the Pacific towards Australia. At a primary level there are influential Japanese who have tried, and had some success, in re-writing those

years of 'dark history'. They deny Japanese defeat and war crimes. At a secondary level there are Japanese like Yasushi Akashi, his Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi, and many others who have made the big step in admitting guilt and making apologies – but not to Australia. They persist in ignorance of what happened in New Guinea and other Pacific islands, and seas and skies, where Australians fought them – and often suffered unthinkably if captured.

Beneath all this lies a third problem. The few Japanese who do have the knowledge that Australians were once the enemy regard Australia as only a minor enemy. They believe that actions against Australian troops and civilians were just small parts of a minor skirmish in the greater Asia-Pacific theatre of war where Japan clashed mightily with America and its principal ally Britain.

For either side, the end of war and the beginning of peace are not the same thing. Echoes of the last shot can ring down the years. In Japan those echoes are silenced. In Australia the opposite is happening. Australian veterans who, aware they have not much time left, are making it their mission to pass on the blunt truth of what it was like fighting the Japanese. These veterans are being encouraged to speak to a new generation of young Australians eager to learn about the Asia-Pacific War. These youngsters are being targeted for ever-increasing involvement in traditional remembrance ceremonies, awareness programs and now a national education campaign – The Battle for Australia Commemoration. It is strongly supported by Prime Minister John Howard whose distant relative, Sgt Len Siffleet, was beheaded by a Japanese executioner in New Guinea. A grim photo of the execution has prominent place in a gallery devoted to the conflict with Japan at the Australian War Memorial and according to at least one newspaper report, the PM was visibly affected when he saw it during the official opening of the gallery.

At the end of the war and under the iron hand of General Douglas MacArthur, Japan experienced a stunning transformation from an emperor-worshipping, largely closed and virtual theocracy to a country of extraordinary innovation and openness to Western ideas

and fads. It invented anime, advanced AI and a range of extraordinary electronic gadgetry. But there remains a deeply rooted respect for the old ways, the ways of *Yamoto*, the eternal spirit of old Japan. Embedded in this is the belief by powerful men that Japan should not shame itself by recognising its WW2 defeat and abandoning old values. Their unwillingness to admit the truth means they will never ask forgiveness for atrocities let alone with genuine humility, because those atrocities and all the events surrounding them are buried; they do not exist.

These men, politicians, bureaucrats and jurists use the Big Brother strategy of re-writing or ignoring inconvenient history – or 'dark history' as they call it. The result is that almost all Japanese youth have no knowledge of what the Imperial Forces did during the Asia-Pacific War in fighting Australians. No knowledge of humiliation and atrocities committed on Australians. No knowledge even that Australia and Japan were enemies.

Informed Japanese who have fought long campaigns for the recognition of 'dark history' and public contrition have gone unheard at any significant political level. They are regarded as negative, debasing national pride, harping on the past. They have no audience in a nation that above all others is forward-looking, almost obsessed with the future. And even they, who should be talking about battles with Australians and what happened to Australian prisoners of war (POWs), don't do so. Because they don't know it happened – and the way things are now – they never will.

There have been a very few, almost lonely voices speaking up. Japanese academic Toshiyuki Tanka, who lived in Australia for years, wrote *Unknown War Crimes – What The Japanese Forces Did To Australia* in which he described acts of cannibalism, the slaughter of nurses and other horrors committed by Imperial soldiers. Australian historian Hank Nelson has had limited Japanese-language publication of his *Prisoners of War – Australians Under Nippon*. But these are whispers in the wind of accepted history.

Australia's present political leaders have recognised and recompensed those who suffered as POWs of the Japanese. But they have

not carried that recognition to its logical conclusion of seeking apology or sincere acknowledgement from the Japanese and thus bestowing final dignity on the old Diggers who are passing away. Questions to the Australian Foreign Affairs Minister Alexander Downer bring a wishy-washy response. His spokesman avoids responding to a suggestion that Australia is afraid of offending its biggest trading partner. Instead he provides a history of Japanese 'expressions of regret' reaching back to 1957 when Prime Minister Nobusuke Kishi, on a visit to Australia, said, 'It is over 12 years since hostilities ceased but notwithstanding that passage of time it is my official duty, and my personal desire, to express to the people of Australia our heartfelt sorrow for what occurred in the war.' These remarks are vague at best, evasive at worst. Says the spokesman, 'There comes a point where pursuing further expressions of apology become counterproductive.' In a neat exercise of buck-passing the spokesman then suggests that the authors of this book should 'urge Japan to build for the future by teaching correct and accurate history of WW2 to its youth'. The whole response is so pussyfooting that the Japanese could be totally excused for thinking that the Australian Government regards WW2 as nothing more than a nasty little episode best forgotten. Yet on the home front, for local consumption, the government sponsors and boosts commemoration of the war.

Today's leaders will be replaced quite soon by a newly educated Australian generation, including up-and-coming business and political leaders. The new guard will be making contacts in Japan and discovering that their Japanese contemporaries have an appalling ignorance of a shared, grim and bloody past. This ignorance could deeply offend Australians, particularly if those horrors have been learned since Australian primary school. Japanese, too, could be offended and angered to find themselves being accused of something that, as far as they are concerned, just never happened.

Yet Japan can be made to recognise its war history, if pressed, and without a sense of calamitous dishonour. A mass of ordinary people

in China and the Koreas over decades after the war increasingly raised their voices in protest about Japanese WW2 atrocities to the point where their governments had to take up the cause and protest to Tokyo in the strongest terms. No diplomatic breakdown occurred as a result. No retaliatory trade embargos. What did happen was that successive Japanese governments, despite reactionary dinosaurs in their ranks, first tentatively and then more openly expressed public regret about Imperial occupation, oppression and atrocities.

If there are still Australian politicians and bureaucrats who fear offending Australia's biggest trading partner, there is a lesson. The Japanese Government's apologies to China and South Korea for oppression and atrocities were resented by some Japanese Right-Wingers but most people found the apologies cathartic. For them it was cleansing to learn the truth and start anew.

Young Australians, including those whose families arrived long after the peace of 1945, are learning more and more about Australia's Asia-Pacific War history through The Battle for Australia Commemoration. The Commemoration National Council is a coalition of the heads of the major Australian ex-Service Organizations, the Department of Veterans' Affairs, teachers and community leaders. It aims to enhance public knowledge and understanding of Australian and Allied actions in the war against Japan of 1942–45 and encourage annual Battle for Australia Commemorations on the first Wednesday in September every year. It also has the specific aim of 'Educating Australian children to appreciate and learn from the heroism, sacrifice and service of all those who fought between 1941 and 1945 to defend Australia, its territories and national interests from attack and ultimately to expel the Japanese from Australian territory and waters... Building upon the goodwill that exists between the people of Australia and the peoples of New Guinea and our Allies in that period, notably the United States, United Kingdom, Netherlands, and our traditional partner New Zealand.' It is certainly not a bridge-building exercise nor an occasion for reaching out to the old enemy.

On the 60th Anniversary of The Battle for Australia, PM Howard said, 'For the first time in our history we defended our nation from sustained attack by a relentless foe. It was a struggle that cannot be underestimated and should never be forgotten.' During the 2004 Federal election campaign, then Opposition Leader Mark Latham committed by saying a Labor Government would make the Commemoration a national day of remembrance. The Returned and Services League of Australia (RSL) nurtures and funds the administration of The Battle For Australia Commemoration which is seen, after a sometimes hesitant start, as having an unstoppable future. 'It's growing in strength all the time. There is no way it will be stopped now,' says RSL National Secretary, Derek Robson. 'Since its inception the RSL has had the aim of educating our children in war history.'

Inevitably the Commemoration creates powerful awareness of what happened at Kokoda and Wau, at Milne Bay and Changi, at Sandakan and the Railway and other resonant places. It's an awareness that is gaining strength and will endure as organisers across the nation increasingly involve youngsters not just in The Battle For Australia Commemoration but also increasingly in Anzac Day and Remembrance Day. The latter once marked only the Armistice of 1918 but now embraces the Asia-Pacific conflict. On 11 November 2004 schoolchildren flocked to services and in Sydney an Asia-Pacific War veteran Ken Baldwin said he hoped young people would continue to honour those who died in all wars. 'Only by making the youngsters aware of what happened, why it happened, how it happened, can we avoid the same disasters,' he said.

Then at the end of 2004 the Victorian State Government launched an education program to give every child at least two visits to the Shrine of Remembrance in Melbourne during their schooling. Created by the Shrine and the Education Department it is aimed at keeping alive Anzac values – even as the last of the WW2 Diggers are passing away. The program sets course work for students, including a module on the Asia-Pacific War, which they will study

before attending the Shrine. The program is planned to be a model for every State throughout Australia.

Traditionally Anzac Day, which remembers all Australians who fell in battle, has been the main focus of education. In Western Australia schools' teaching kits provide children with the means of remembering sacrifices in the Asia-Pacific and elsewhere. In Tasmania the State Government issues schools with videos of the Pacific Conflict. In 2003 the Defence Department ran an education program in schools across the nation.

Victoria's Governor, John Landy, said at the Anzac Day service in 2002, 'One of the most fascinating aspects of Anzac Day is its appeal to the community and particularly the young... There were 40,000 killed in WW2 but there was a time some decades ago when Anzac Day seemed to be in decline. As late as 1984 the Dawn Service attracted only 300 people. Nowadays it seems many young people see Anzac Day as a rite of passage, to offer their respects. The Dawn Service crowd last year exceeded 15,000 people.'

In 2003, Anzac Day attendances in capital cities exceeded 100,000 people. At the War Memorial in Canberra PM John Howard said many marvelled at the way young Australians were embracing Anzac traditions. Attendance at Victoria's Dawn Service rose to more than 20,000 and was accompanied by an even more significant shift, one that represented a change in attitude around the nation. Victoria's new RSL chief, Major-General David McLachlan, a Vietnam veteran, overturned the decades-long prohibition by his predecessor Bruce Ruxton, a WW2 veteran, on children taking part in the Anzac Day March. Several hundred youngsters from almost-toddlers to teenagers did march with many wearing the medals of their forefathers.

ABC-TV broadcasts live the Anzac ceremonies and inevitably, like verbal mortar rounds, two words thud again and again in the commentary – 'Japan' and 'Japanese' – but nary a mention of Germans or Italians, the latter marching in their splendidly cockaded hats. The ABC-TV's 7:30 Report on the anniversary of Hiroshima interviewed a Japanese official who said there was a significant decline

in the number of high school visits to the Hiroshima memorial and half of current school children were not even aware of the A-bomb. In Australia on almost every day of the year busloads of school-children arrive at the National War Memorial in Canberra to place wreaths. Each child laying a wreath knows it represents 1,000 lives. This is a Federal Government-funded program targeted to reach every single school in Australia.

Politically, Japan and Australia smile at each other and hold hands in a relationship that seems to grow warmer – despite Australian protests over the slaughter of whales – but which, according to respected security analyst Professor Desmond Ball, has reached its likely zenith in terms of mutual military support. When Australia joined the Allied coalition in the invasion of Iraq, Japanese Prime Minister Koizumi was swift to lend support saying, 'It was a decision that had to be made.' His first thought behind the statement obviously was the Japan-US nexus but it also came very soon after another affirming statement. In the aftermath of the Bali bombings, PM Howard, with an excess of bravado threatened pre-emptive strikes against neighbouring nations harbouring terrorists. The neighbours quickly protested and John Howard retreated but not before a single Asian voice spoke in his defence – the voice of Japan.

It was an unpredicted political moment but one that could be thought of as reverberative. It came at a time when Japan had made another significant gesture by sending Crown Prince Naruhito to lay a wreath at the tomb of the Unknown Soldier in the National War Memorial. And this against a concurrent background of strong mutualism: Japan and Australia constantly and closely confer about regional defence and security; Australia champions Japan as an international peacekeeper and they have worked together in war zones ranging from Cambodia and East Timor to Afghanistan and, most recently, Iraq. With other allies, Australia and Japan have conducted military exercises aimed at raising readiness for any regional threat, particularly from North Korea.

At a more covert level other bonds are forged. Most recently two satellite ground stations have been built at Telstra's Perth

International Communications Centre under a joint contract with Japan's National Space Development Agency. Their role is to guide two Japanese spy satellites that monitor North Korea's ballistic missile program. While these snoops will be controlled from Japan it is expected that their intelligence gathering will be shared with Australia just as Australian and Japanese surveillance aircraft tic-tac when their paths intersect high over the oceans, exchanging intelligence mid-air. In late 2003, the Defence Ministers of Australia and Japan signed a memorandum on Defence Exchange recognising their countries' common strategic interests in the Asia-Pacific region. Australian Defence Minister, Senator Robert Hill, said the memorandum 'demonstrates the increasing emphasis that Australia and Japan are placing on security cooperation... Australia is a strong supporter of Japan's moves to play a more active role in international and regional security.' Only weeks earlier, Japanese and Australian forces had participated in a joint security exercise. It was held in the Coral Sea – creating an event rich with irony.

But all is not light and bright. The Australian Defence Force School of Languages, at Laverton, Victoria, has for decades run super-intensive crash courses in Japanese for top military and diplomatic attaches. In 2003 it had two Japanese teachers – and just one student, from the Navy. The previous year the students numbered zero! In 2004 there was a single teacher and a single Air Force student – with the school scheduled to close at the end of the year. Reliable sources say that in the recent past some of Australia's Defence Attaches in Tokyo have had no Japanese language at all. Omissions are far from being confined to Australia which raises few blips on the Japanese Government's radar. One example is sufficient – in the Japanese Department of Foreign Affairs, Australia is handled by the Oceania Desk thus lumping it in with powers like Nauru and Vanuatu. There is much to be done if an enduring pact of mutuality is to be built between two old combatants at a government level.

There is an old saying that strong bonds between two countries can be a 'marriage' of nations. But in many marriages there are dark episodes that are ignored for the sake of continuing harmony. Or

ignored until the marriage comes under pressure, begins to buckle. Then the dark moments are remembered and brought out to be given sudden, angry importance and justification. They become not just regrettable events but part of a rationale for what has gone wrong. And because they have never been examined they cannot be coolly assessed and given proper importance and balance when it is most needed; thus an unexamined past is a dangerous past. Further, nation marriages that begin with no obvious mutuality – but are arranged by the eternal matchmaker Trade – need more help than those where they have known each other through years of solid mutual support. In such marriages the dark moments are potentially more dangerous still.

Diplomat and peace-maker Yasushi Akashi told the authors, 'I have very strong hope for the younger generation of Japanese who are much more cosmopolitan and much less nationalistic. At the same time I have some apprehension that the new generation are not sufficiently conversant with their past history. Therefore I would like to see very strong emphasis on the teaching of history in Japanese schools.' Yet direct questioning as to whether this should involve the teaching of Australia-Japan war history saw him immediately segue into a reiteration of the importance of China; he could not or would not answer the question.

This double standard of true war history between Australia and Japan is not something that can be ignored. And according to responses to a questionnaire for this book, Japan should not fear that recognition will lead to a flood of Australian compensation claims. Nor will it just go away without awareness and action. It is not as if there were some unspoken but firm and blanket understanding between Australia and Japan that is totally shockproof and can live with the potential for what the double standard may bring. For the many points of Japan-Australia agreement and cooperation there are as many which cause on-going tension. There's a lot of each-way betting, of contrary attitudes.

The secret visit to Japan by RSL National President, Major-General Peter Phillips, in late 2000 led to a low-key visit by RSL State

Presidents. They have revealed their innermost – and ambivalent – thoughts and impressions for this book. They were disappointed that they had no contact with a Japanese 'RSL'. Such an organization doesn't exist. No explanation was given to them but they assumed it was another indication of Japan's determination to bury its wartime history.

In Australia, in addition to the ceremonial remembrances of the Asia-Pacific War, there is wider public education. *The Australian* national newspaper published every day for a year, extracts from war diaries written by pilots, nurses, privates, generals, politicians, war correspondents and civilians in 1942. Both the ABC and commercial TV channels have broadcast documentaries and dramas about Australians fighting the Japanese. Dozens of recent books have celebrated Australian military heroism. Now hardly a week goes by without some major newspaper reporting a wartime anniversary or the death of a hero veteran. This becomes a flood of information in 2005 with the 60th anniversary of peace in the Pacific. At the nationally broadcast official opening of the POW Memorial in Ballarat in 2004, the then defence chief Major-General Peter Cosgrove said that every day of the year somewhere in Australia a WW2 unit or association gathered to remember.

In 2001, the Federal Government reminded Australians of the fate of POWs of the Japanese, but with no mention of POWs of Germans or Italians, by paying compensation to the victims. The Treasurer said in his Budget statement, 'In recognition of the unique circumstances of their captivity, the Government will make a one-off payment of $25,000 to former prisoners of war of the Japanese, and to civilian internees and detainees of the Japanese. For those who are no longer alive, payments will be made to their surviving spouses. No amount of compensation will ever make up for the pain and the loss these diggers suffered. But our nation should make a statement of recognition and thanks.'

In 2004 the Japanese Supreme Court rejected an appeal by plaintiffs representing 20,000 former POWs from Australia, Britain, NZ and the US for Government compensation.

Further evidence that scars of Asia-Pacific War remain came with the invasion of Iraq. That high-tech strike, seen so graphically on TV and in newspaper spreads sent the thoughts of many Australians spinning back in time to another war, fought with .303 rifles and mortars not smart bombs and missiles. In many minds there was an instant synaptic link not with Korea nor Vietnam but WW2. Some journalists made the link too, like the TV reporter describing Iraqi troops bunkered in a building emblazoned with the Red Cross insignia – 'It made you recall Japan sinking a hospital ship during WW2'. The link was stengthened by PM Howard announcing Australia's involvement in the Iraq war with a speech evoking the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, arguing there could be no further delay in seeking evidence that Saddam Hussein had weapons of mass destruction. It provoked many letters to newspapers, a typical example of which is reprinted here:

> I was appalled to hear John Howard... I live in Darwin, where the same bombers that attacked Pearl Harbor came on February 19, 1942 to bomb Australia. Some 64 bombing raids were made on Australia – much more than took place on Pearl Harbor. Can you tell me how many Australians died, John Howard – or is the tragedy of Pearl Harbor all you can remember? – Sam Doherty, Darwin.

The Pearl Harbor reference disappeared quickly from the transcript of the PM's speech as recorded on his website.

Then the Bali bombings provoked newspaper readers to remember kamikaze pilots.

Still vivid awareness of the Asia-Pacific War as living history – which reaches out to touch present experience – can be found in the responses for this book. Responses from people who were touched intimately and hurtfully by the war and came back with physical or unseen scars. And those who only experienced its effect second hand but still powerfully. Who as children heard their fathers, returned from the war, screaming and sobbing in the night and were puzzled in the morning when their mothers told them it was

'nothing'. Some have by effort of will put the most awful experiences firmly in the past and truly forgiven. Others make no pretence of hiding their bitterness at what they suffered – only needing an emotional trigger to burst into condemnation of Japan and the Japanese nation. Some differentiate between the Japan of then and the Japan of now. Others do not. And not all who hate powerfully are men.

'My feelings are of disgust – during the war, after the war and still. My views have not changed,' says Nurse Elizabeth H. Marchant. 'People don't trust the Japanese, as they did not face up to what they did or had done... Even now if I see a Japanese person in the street I steer clear of them'. Fellow nurse Joy Hughes says, 'I have never met a decent Japanese person since the war...' A RAN sailor says, 'There is, and will continue to be, a belief in Australia that at the first opportunity Japan will look to extending its empire; history will repeat itself.' An infantryman who fought in Burma wrote, and was later contacted by phone, to confirm his credentials and statement that, 'I personally killed four or five of the swine and my men killed another 50-odd. I only wish we had killed more. I *hate* the slant-eyed savages and always will.'

Others have over time come to a more balanced view. Ex-POW Victor Brand says, 'At that time I hated their guts!' But now, 'Information can only do good... Education of youth is the only way.' Douglas McClean fought along the Kokoda Trail and says, 'One matures... There are good and bad in all countries.'

So the shadow of war remains and demands the light of truth in future. Changi and Thai-Burma Railway survivor, David Barrett, became chairman of the Queensland Ex-POW Reparations Committee that presented a powerful indictment *Nippon Very Sorry – Many Men Must Die* to the United Nations Commission of Human Rights. He says, 'Through a judicious mix of revisionist history and censorship, Japan seeks to escape reminders of its past mistakes. Australia also downplays this aspect of our relations with Japan as it tries to build strong ties to a country that has become an important economic and political ally.

This conspiracy of silence about the recent past endangers the development of that trust which both countries seek in their transaction with each other. Lingering after-effects remain because certain questions persist which leave that conflict not wholly settled. Japan and Australia need to move beyond these last doubts if we are to achieve a durable peace and ensure harmonious relationships between our two peoples.

Across Australia, through education, the war with Japan is becoming a central thread in the fabric of national heritage and identity for both migrant families and those long settled. It is heedless to assume that this will not affect relations with Japan and that the issue can be ignored.

Remembering the Railway

For Bill Toon the Thai-Burma Railway is a constant and ever-enduring experience. His life's mission is that it should not be forgotten. His daily concern is that its victims have a little more ease. This near-obsession inevitably colours his attitudes to the Japanese. Asked to appear on TV a few years ago with a Japanese apologising for what happened at Hellfire Pass, Bill Toon was almost apoplectic in his refusal.

He goes about his chosen chore in many ways. Some are entirely pragmatic: selling mounted and plaqued chunks of the Railway to raise funds. Some are polemic: talking on TV and radio at every opportunity to recall again what happened. Some are propagandist and less public: making available near-racist tracts that emanate from a group of extremists in the United States. Calling themselves the Global Alliance for Preserving the History of WWII in Asia, they are based in Cupertino, California.

Without comment or excuse, Bill Toon hands over a selection of Global Alliance pamphlets. They are filled with shocking photos of death and torture and typically one bears the caption: *Note arms bound behind the backs of Filipino civilian victims. Massacres such as these were outright genocide. A further reminder of Satanic Jap barbarism. Atrocities that the world must never forget. This was just a foretaste of the 'Yellow Peril'.* Other pictures of bound, naked women are partially blacked out with 'CENSORED' tags.

He is not a man prepared to forget. In 2004 he led a protest against a corporation's circular red logo that perpetually glows behind Melbourne's Shrine of Remembrance. 'It could be construed to be a Japanese flag,' he said. 'The sign brings back a lot of bad memories.'

Also by Primo Levi in Abacus

THE WRENCH

THE DROWNED AND THE SAVED

THE MIRROR MAKER

PRIMO LEVI

If This is a Man

and

The Truce

Translated by Stuart Woolf
With an Introduction by Paul Bailey
and an Afterword by the author

ABACUS

Author's Preface

It was my good fortune to be deported to Auschwitz only in 1944, that is, after the German Government had decided, owing to the growing scarcity of labour, to lengthen the average life-span of the prisoners destined for elimination; it conceded noticeable improvements in the camp routine and temporarily suspended killings at the whim of individuals.

As an account of atrocities, therefore, this book of mine adds nothing to what is already known to readers throughout the world on the disturbing question of the death camps. It has not been written in order to formulate new accusations; it should be able, rather, to furnish documentation for a quiet study of certain aspects of the human mind. Many people – many nations – can find themselves holding, more or less wittingly, that 'every stranger is an enemy'. For the most part this conviction lies deep down like some latent infection; it betrays itself only in random, disconnected acts, and does not lie at the base of a system of reason. But when this does come about, when the unspoken dogma becomes the major premiss in a syllogism, then, at the end of the chain, there is the Lager. Here is the product of a conception of the world carried rigorously to its logical conclusion; so long as the conception subsists, the conclusion remains to threaten us. The story of the death camps should be understood by everyone as a sinister alarm-signal.

I recognize, and ask indulgence for, the structural defects of the book. Its origins go back, not indeed in practice, but as an idea, an intention, to the days in the Lager. The need to tell our story to 'the rest', to make 'the rest' participate in it, had taken on for us, before our liberation and after, the character of an immediate and violent impulse, to the point of competing with our other elementary needs. The book has been written to satisfy this need: first and foremost, therefore, as an interior liberation. Hence its fragmentary character: the chapters have

been written not in logical succession, but in order of urgency. The work of tightening up is more studied, and more recent.

It seems to me unnecessary to add that none of the facts are invented.

PRIMO LEVI

If This is a Man

You who live safe
In your warm houses,
You who find, returning in the evening,
Hot food and friendly faces:
    Consider if this is a man
    Who works in the mud
    Who does not know peace
    Who fights for a scrap of bread
    Who dies because of a yes or a no.
    Consider if this is a woman,
    Without hair and without name
    With no more strength to remember,
    Her eyes empty and her womb cold
    Like a frog in winter.
Meditate that this came about:
I commend these words to you.
Carve them in your hearts
At home, in the street,
Going to bed, rising;
Repeat them to your children,
    Or may your house fall apart,
    May illness impede you,
    May your children turn their faces from you.

5. *Our Nights*

AFTER twenty days of Ka-Be, when my wound was practically healed, I was discharged to my great displeasure.

The ceremony is simple, but implies a painful and dangerous period of readjustment. All who have no special contacts are not returned to their former Block and Kommando on leaving Ka-Be, but are enrolled, on the basis of criteria wholly unknown to me, in any other hut and given any kind of work. Moreover, they leave Ka-Be naked; they are given 'new' clothes and shoes (I mean not those left behind at their entry) which need to be adapted with speed and diligence to their own persons, which implies effort and expense. They have to worry about acquiring a new spoon and knife as at the beginning. And finally – and this is the gravest aspect – they find themselves inserted in an unknown environment, among hostile companions never seen before, with leaders whose characters they do not know and against whom it is consequently difficult to guard themselves.

Man's capacity to dig himself in, to secrete a shell, to build around himself a tenuous barrier of defence, even in apparently desperate circumstances, is astonishing and merits a serious study. It is based on an invaluable activity of adaptation, partly passive and unconscious, partly active: of hammering in a nail above his bunk from which to hang up his shoes; of concluding tacit pacts of non-aggression with neighbours; of understanding and accepting the customs and laws of a single Kommando, a single Block. By virtue of this work, one manages to gain a certain equilibrium after a few weeks, a certain degree of security in face of the unforeseen; one has made oneself a nest, the trauma of the transplantation is over.

But the man who leaves the Ka-Be, naked and almost always insufficiently cured, feels himself ejected into the dark and cold of sidereal space. His trousers fall down, his shoes hurt him, his

shirt has no buttons. He searches for a human contact and only finds backs turned on him. He is as helpless and vulnerable as a new-born baby, but the following morning he will still have to march to work.

It is in these conditions that I find myself when the nurse entrusts me, after various administrative rites, to the care of the *Blockältester* of Block 45. But at once a thought fills me with joy: I am in luck, this is Alberto's Block.

Alberto is my best friend. He is only twenty-two, two years younger than me, but none of us Italians have shown an equal capacity for adaptation. Alberto entered the Lager with his head high, and lives in here unscathed and uncorrupted. He understood before any of us that this life is war; he permitted himself no indulgences, he lost no time complaining and commiserating with himself and with others, but entered the battle from the beginning. He has the advantage of intelligence and intuition: he reasons correctly, often he does not even reason but is equally right. He understands everything at once: he knows a little French but understands whatever the Germans and Poles tell him. He replies in Italian and with gestures, he makes himself understood and at once wins sympathy. He fights for his life but still remains everybody's friend. He 'knows' whom to corrupt, whom to avoid, whose compassion to arouse, whom to resist.

Yet (and it is for this virtue of his that his memory is still dear and close to me) he himself did not become corrupt. I always saw, and still see in him, the rare figure of the strong yet peace-loving man against whom the weapons of night are blunted.

But I did not manage to gain permission to sleep in a bunk with him, and not even Alberto succeeded, although by now he enjoyed a certain popularity in Block 45. It is a pity, because to have a bed-companion whom one can trust, or at least with whom one can reach an understanding, is an inestimable advantage; and besides, it is winter now and the nights are long, and since we are forced to exchange sweats, smells and warmth with someone under the same blanket, and in a width little more than two feet, it is quite desirable that he be a friend.

In the winter the nights are long and we are allowed a considerable interval of time to sleep.

The tumult of the Block dies down; the distribution of the evening ration ended over an hour ago, and only a few stubborn people continue to scrape the by-now shining bottom of the bowl, turning it around with care under the lamp, frowning with attention. Engineer Kardos moves around the bunks, tending wounded feet and suppurating corns. This is his trade: there is no one who will not willingly renounce a slice of bread to soothe the torment of those numbed sores which bleed at every step all day. And so, in this manner, honestly, engineer Kardos solves the problem of living.

From the outside door, secretly and looking around cautiously, the story-teller comes in. He is seated on Wachsmann's bunk and at once gathers around him a small, attentive, silent crowd. He chants an interminable Yiddish rhapsody, always the same one, in rhymed quatrains, of a resigned and penetrating melancholy (but perhaps I only remember it so because of the time and the place that I heard it?); from the few words that I understand, it must be a song that he composed himself, in which he has enclosed all the life of the Lager in minute detail. Some are generous and give the story-teller a pinch of tobacco or a needleful of thread; others listen intently but give nothing.

The bell rings suddenly for the last ceremony of the day: *'Wer hat kaputt die Schuhe?'* (who has broken shoes?), and at once the noise of forty or fifty claimants to the exchange breaks out as they rush towards the *Tagesraum* in desperate haste, well knowing that only the first ten, on the best of hypotheses, will be satisfied.

Then there is quiet. The light goes out a first time for a few seconds to warn the tailors to put away the precious needle and thread; then the bell sounds in the distance, the night-guard installs himself and all the lights are turned out definitively. There is nothing to do but to undress and go to bed.

I do not know who my neighbour is; I am not even sure that

it is always the same person because I have never seen his face except for a few seconds amidst the uproar of the reveille, so that I know his back and his feet much better than his face. He does not work in my Kommando and only comes into the bunk at curfew time; he wraps himself in the blanket, pushes me aside with a blow from his bony hips, turns his back on me and at once begins to snore. Back against back, I struggle to regain a reasonable area of the straw mattress: with the base of my back I exercise a progressive pressure against his back; then I turn around and try to push with my knees; I take hold of his ankles and try to place them a little further over so as not to have his feet next to my face. But it is all in vain: he is much heavier than me and seems turned to stone in his sleep.

So I adapt myself to lie like this, forced into immobility, half-lying on the wooden edge. Nevertheless I am so tired and stunned that I, too, soon fall asleep, and I seem to be sleeping on the tracks of a railroad.

The train is about to arrive: one can hear the engine panting, it is my neighbour. I am not yet so asleep as not to be aware of the double nature of the engine. It is, in fact, the very engine which towed the wagons we had to unload in Buna today. I recognize it by the fact that even now, as when it passed close by us, I feel the heat it radiates from its black side. It is puffing, it is ever nearer, it is on the point of running over me, but instead it never arrives. My sleep is very light, it is a veil, if I want I can tear it. I will do it, I want to tear it, so that I can get off the railway track. Now I have done it and now I am awake: but not really awake, only a little more, one step higher on the ladder between the unconscious and the conscious. I have my eyes closed and I do not want to open them lest my sleep escape me, but I can register noises: I am sure this distant whistle is real, it does not come from an engine in a dream, it can be heard objectively. It is the whistle of the small-gauge track, it comes from the yard where they work at night as well. A long, firm note, then another one a semitone lower, then again the first, but short and cut off. This whistle is an important thing and in some ways essential: we have heard it so

often associated with the suffering of the work and the camp that it has become a symbol and immediately evokes its image like certain music or smells.

This is my sister here, with some unidentifiable friend and many other people. They are all listening to me and it is this very story that I am telling: the whistle of three notes, the hard bed, my neighbour whom I would like to move, but whom I am afraid to wake as he is stronger than me. I also speak diffusely of our hunger and of the lice-control, and of the Kapo who hit me on the nose and then sent me to wash myself as I was bleeding. It is an intense pleasure, physical, inexpressible, to be at home, among friendly people and to have so many things to recount: but I cannot help noticing that my listeners do not follow me. In fact, they are completely indifferent: they speak confusedly of other things among themselves, as if I was not there. My sister looks at me, gets up and goes away without a word.

A desolating grief is now born in me, like certain barely remembered pains of one's early infancy. It is pain in its pure state, not tempered by a sense of reality and by the intrusion of extraneous circumstances, a pain like that which makes children cry; and it is better for me to swim once again up to the surface, but this time I deliberately open my eyes to have a guarantee in front of me of being effectively awake.

My dream stands in front of me, still warm, and although awake I am still full of its anguish: and then I remember that it is not a haphazard dream, but that I have dreamed it not once but many times since I arrived here, with hardly any variations of environment or details. I am now quite awake and I remember that I have recounted it to Alberto and that he confided to me, to my amazement, that it is also his dream and the dream of many others, perhaps of everyone. Why does it happen? Why is the pain of every day translated so constantly into our dreams, in the ever-repeated scene of the unlistened-to story?

While I meditate on this, I try to profit from the interval of wakefulness to shake off the painful remnants of the preceding

sleep, so as not to compromise the quality of the next dream. I crouch in the dark, I look around and I listen.

One can hear the sleepers breathing and snoring; some groan and speak. Many lick their lips and move their jaws. They are dreaming of eating; this is also a collective dream. It is a pitiless dream which the creator of the Tantalus myth must have known. You not only see the food, you feel it in your hands, distinct and concrete, you are aware of its rich and striking smell; someone in the dream even holds it up to your lips, but every time a different circumstance intervenes to prevent the consummation of the act. Then the dream dissolves and breaks up into its elements, but it re-forms itself immediately after and begins again, similar, yet changed; and this without pause, for all of us, every night and for the whole of our sleep.

It must be later than 11 p.m. because the movement to and from the bucket next to the night-guard is already intense. It is an obscene torment and an indelible shame: every two or three hours we have to get up to discharge ourselves of the great dose of water which during the day we are forced to absorb in the form of soup in order to satisfy our hunger: that same water which in the evenings swells our ankles and the hollows of our eyes, conferring on all physiognomies a likeness of deformation, and whose elimination imposes an enervating toil on our kidneys.

It is not merely a question of a procession to a bucket; it is the rule that the last user of the bucket goes and empties it in the latrines; it is also the rule that at night one must not leave the hut except in night uniform (shirt and pants), giving one's number to the guard. It is easily foreseeable that the night-guard will try to exempt his friends, his co-nationals and the Prominents from this duty. Add to this that the old members of the camp have refined their senses to such a degree that, while still in their bunks, they are miraculously able to distinguish if the level is at a dangerous point, purely on the basis of the sound that the sides of the bucket make – with the result that they almost always manage to avoid emptying it. So the can-

didates for the bucket service are a fairly limited number in each hut, while the total volume to eliminate is at least forty gallons, which means that the bucket has to be emptied about twenty times.

In short, the risk which hangs over us, the inexperienced and non-privileged, when we are driven by necessity to the bucket every night is quite serious. The night-guard unexpectedly jumps from his corner and seizes us, scribbles down our number, hands us a pair of wooden shoes and the bucket and drives us out into the middle of the snow, shivering and sleepy. It is our task to shuffle to the latrine with the bucket which knocks against our bare calves, disgustingly warm; it is full beyond all reasonable limit, and inevitably with the shaking some of the content overflows on our feet, so that however repugnant this duty may be, it is always preferable that we, and not our neighbour, be ordered to do it.

So our nights drag on. The dream of Tantalus and the dream of the story are woven into a texture of more indistinct images: the suffering of the day, composed of hunger, blows, cold, exhaustion, fear and promiscuity, turns at night-time into shapeless nightmares of unheard-of violence, which in free life would only occur during a fever. One wakes up at every moment, frozen with terror, shaking in every limb, under the impression of an order shouted out by a voice full of anger in a language not understood. The procession to the bucket and the thud of bare heels on the wooden floor turns into another symbolic procession: it is us again, grey and identical, small as ants, yet so huge as to reach up to the stars, bound one against the other, countless, covering the plain as far as the horizon; sometimes melting into a single substance, a sorrowful turmoil in which we all feel ourselves trapped and suffocated; sometimes marching in a circle, without beginning or end, with a blinding giddiness and a sea of nausea rising from the praecordia to the gullet; until hunger or cold or the fullness of our bladders turn our dreams into their customary forms. We try in vain, when the nightmare itself or the discomforts wake us, to extricate the various elements and drive them back, separately, out of the

field of our present attention, so as to defend our sleep from their intrusion: but as soon as we close our eyes, once again we feel our brain start up, beyond our control; it knocks and hums, incapable of rest, it fabricates phantasms and terrible symbols, and without rest projects and shapes their images, as a grey fog, on to the screen of our dreams.

But for the whole duration of the night, cutting across the alternating sleep, waking and nightmares, the expectancy and terror of the moment of the reveille keeps watch. By means of that mysterious faculty of which many are aware, even without watches we are able to calculate the moment with close accuracy. At the hour of the reveille, which varies from season to season but always falls a fair time before dawn, the camp bell rings for a long time, and the night-guard in every hut goes off duty; he switches on the light, gets up, stretches himself and pronounces the daily condemnation: '*Aufstehen*,' or more often in Polish: '*Wstavac*.'

Very few sleep on till the *Wstavac*: it is a moment of too acute pain for even the deepest sleep not to dissolve as it approaches. The night guard knows it and for this reason does not utter it in a tone of command, but with the quiet and subdued voice of one who knows that the announcement will find all ears waiting, and will be heard and obeyed.

Like a stone the foreign word falls to the bottom of every soul. 'Get up': the illusory barrier of the warm blankets, the thin armour of sleep, the nightly evasion with its very torments drops to pieces around us, and we find ourselves mercilessly awake, exposed to insult, atrociously naked and vulnerable. A day begins like every day, so long as not to allow us reasonably to conceive its end, so much cold, so much hunger, so much exhaustion separate us from it: so that it is better to concentrate one's attention and desires on the block of grey bread, which is small but which will certainly be ours in an hour, and which for five minutes, until we have devoured it, will form everything that the law of the place allows us to possess.

At the *Wstavac* the hurricane starts up again. The entire hut enters without transition into frantic activity: everybody climbs

up and down, remakes his bed and tries at the same time to dress himself in a manner so as to leave none of his objects unguarded; the air is filled with so much dust as to become opaque; the quickest ones elbow their way through the crowd to go to the washroom and latrine before the queue begins. The hut-sweepers at once come on to the scene and drive everyone out, hitting and shouting at them.

When I have remade my bed and am dressed, I climb down on to the floor and put on my shoes. The sores on my feet reopen at once, and a new day begins.

6. The Work

BEFORE Resnyk came, I slept with a Pole whose name no one knew; he was gentle and silent, with two old sores on his shinbones, and during the night gave out a squalid smell of illness; he also had a weak bladder, and so woke up and woke me up eight or ten times a night.

One night he left his gloves in my care and entered the hospital. For half an hour I hoped that the quartermaster would forget that I was the sole occupant of my bunk, but when the curfew bell had already sounded, the bed trembled and a long, red-haired fellow, with the number of the French of Drancy, climbed up beside me.

To have a bed companion of tall stature is a misfortune and means losing hours of sleep; I always have tall companions as I am small and two tall ones cannot sleep together. But it could at once be seen that Resnyk, despite everything, was not a bad companion. He spoke little and courteously, he was clean, he did not snore, did not get up more than two or three times a night and always with great delicacy. In the morning he offered to make the bed (this is a complicated and difficult operation, and also carries a notable responsibility, as those who remake the bed badly, the '*schlechte Bettenbauèr*', are diligently punished) and did it quickly and well; so that I experienced a certain fleeting pleasure later in the roll-call square on seeing that he had been assigned to my Kommando.

On the march to work, limping in our large wooden shoes on the icy snow, we exchanged a few words, and I found out that Resnyk is Polish; he lived twenty years at Paris but speaks an incredible French. He is thirty, but like all of us, could be taken for seventeen or fifty. He told me his story, and today I have forgotten it, but it was certainly a sorrowful, cruel and moving story; because so are all our stories, hundreds of thousands of stories, all different and all full of a tragic, disturbing

have two at midday as well as the normal ration, and will come back to the hut in turns for the other four during the afternoon, besides being granted an extra five minutes' suspension of work to fill ouselves up.

What more could one want? Even our work seems light, with the prospect of four hot, dense pints waiting for us in the hut. The Kapo comes to us periodically and calls: *'Wer hat noch zu fressen?'* He does not say it from derision or to sneer, but because this way of eating on our feet, furiously, burning our mouths and throats, without time to breathe, really is *'fressen'*, the way of eating of animals, and certainly not *'essen'*, the human way of eating, seated in front of a table, religiously. *'Fressen'* is exactly the word, and is used currently among us.

Meister Nogalla watches and closes an eye at our absences from work. Meister Nogalla also has a hungry look about him, and if it was not for the social conventions, perhaps he would not despise a couple of pints of our warm broth.

Templer's turn comes. By plebiscitary consensus, he has been allowed ten pints, taken from the bottom of the pot. For Templer is not only a good organizer, but an exceptional soup-eater, and is uniquely able to empty his bowels at his own desire and in anticipation of a large meal, which contributes to his amazing gastric capacity.

Of this gift of his, he is justly proud, and everybody, even Meister Nogalla, knows about it. Accompanied by the gratitude of all, Templer the benefactor enters the latrine for a few moments and comes out beaming and ready, and amidst the general benevolence prepares to enjoy the fruits of his work:

'Nu, Templer, hast du Platz genug für die Suppe gemacht?'

At sunset, the siren of the *Feierabend* sounds, the end of work; and as we are all satiated, at least for a few hours, no quarrels arise, we feel good, the Kapo feels no urge to hit us, and we are able to think of our mothers and wives, which usually does not happen. For a few hours we can be unhappy in the manner of free men.

8. *This Side of Good and Evil*

We had an incorrigible tendency to see a symbol and a sign in every event. For seventy days we had been waiting for the *Wäschetauschen*, the ceremony of the change of underclothes, and a rumour circulated persistently that the change of washing had not taken place because, as the front had moved forward, the Germans were unable to gather together new transport at Auschwitz, and 'therefore' the liberation was near. And equally, the opposite interpretation circulated: that the delay in the change was a sure sign of an approaching integral liquidation of the camp. Instead the change took place, and as usual, the directors of the Lager took every care to make it occur unexpectedly and at the same time in all the huts.

It has to be realized that cloth is lacking in the Lager and is precious; and that our only way of acquiring a rag to blow our noses, or a pad for our shoes, is precisely that of cutting off the tail of a shirt at the time of the exchange. If the shirt has long sleeves, one cuts the sleeves; if not, one has to make do with a square from the bottom, or by unstitching one of the many patches. But in all cases a certain time is needed to get hold of needle and thread and to carry out the operation with some skill, so as not to leave the damage too obvious at the time of handing it in. The dirty, tattered washing is passed on, thrown together, to the tailor's workshop in the camp, where it is summarily pieced up, sent to the steam disinfection (not washed!) and is then re-distributed; hence the need to make the exchanges as unexpected as possible, so as to save the soiled washing from the above mutilations.

But, as always happens, it was not possible to prevent a cunning glance piercing through the canvas of the cart which was leaving after the disinfection, so that within a few minutes the camp knew of the imminence of a *Wäschetauschen*, and in addition, that this time there were new shirts from a convoy of Hungarians which had arrived three days ago.

The news had immediate repercussions. All who illegally possessed second shirts, stolen or organized, or even honestly bought with bread as a protection against the cold or to invest capital in a moment of prosperity, immediately rushed to the Exchange Market, hoping to arrive in time to barter their reserve shirts for food products before the flood of new shirts, or the certainty of their arrival, irreparably devalued the price of the article.

The Market is always very active. Although every exchange (in fact, every form of possession) is explicitly forbidden, and although frequent swoops of Kapos or *Blockälteste* sent merchants, customers and the curious periodically flying, nevertheless, the north-east corner of the Lager (significantly the corner furthest from the SS huts) is permanently occupied by a tumultuous throng, in the open during the summer, in a wash-room during the winter, as soon as the squads return from work.

Here scores of prisoners driven desperate by hunger prowl around, with lips half-open and eyes gleaming, lured by a deceptive instinct to where the merchandise shown makes the gnawing of their stomachs more acute and their salvation more assiduous. In the best cases they possess a miserable half-ration of bread which, with painful effort, they have saved since the morning, in the senseless hope of a chance to make an advantageous bargain with some ingenuous person, unaware of the prices of the moment. Some of these, with savage patience, acquire with their half-ration two pints of soup which, once in their possession, they subject to a methodical examination with a view to extracting the few pieces of potato lying at the bottom; this done, they exchange it for bread, and the bread for another two pints to denaturalize, and so on until their nerves are exhausted, or until some victim, catching them in the act, inflicts on them a severe lesson, exposing them to public derision. Of the same kind are those who come to the market to sell their only shirt; they well know what will happen on the next occasion that the Kapo finds out that they are bare underneath their jackets. The Kapo will ask them what they have done with their shirt; it is a purely rhetorical question, a formality useful only to begin the game. They will reply that their

shirt was stolen in the wash-room; this reply is equally customary, and is not expected to be believed; in fact, even the stones of the Lager know that ninety-nine times out of a hundred whoever has no shirt has sold it because of hunger, and that in any case one is responsible for one's shirt because it belongs to the Lager. Then the Kapo will beat them, they will be issued another shirt, and sooner or later they will begin again.

The professional merchants stand in the market, each one in his normal corner; first among them come the Greeks, as immobile and silent as sphinxes, squatting on the ground behind their bowls of thick soup, the fruits of their labour, of their cooperation and of their national solidarity. The Greeks have been reduced to very few by now, but they have made a contribution of the first importance to the physiognomy of the camp and to the international slang in circulation. Everyone knows that '*caravana*' is the bowl, and that '*la comedera es buena*' means that the soup is good; the word that expresses the generic idea of theft is '*klepsiklepsi*', of obvious Greek origin. These few survivors from the Jewish colony of Salonica, with their two languages, Spanish and Greek, and their numerous activities, are the repositories of a concrete, mundane, conscious wisdom, in which the traditions of all the Mediterranean civilizations blend together. That this wisdom was transformed in the camp into the systematic and scientific practice of theft and seizure of positions and the monopoly of the bargaining Market, should not let one forget that their aversion to gratuitous brutality, their amazing consciousness of the survival of at least a potential human dignity made of the Greeks the most coherent national nucleus in Lager, and in this respect, the most civilized.

At the Market you can find specialists in kitchen thefts, their jackets swollen with strange bulges. While there is a virtually stable price for soup (half a ration of bread for two pints), the quotations for turnips, carrots, potatoes are extremely variable and depend greatly, among other factors, on the diligence and the corruptibility of the guards at the stores.

Mahorca is sold. Mahorca is a third-rate tobacco, crude and wooden, which is officially on sale at the canteen in one and a half ounce packets, in exchange for the prize-coupons that the

Buna ought to distribute to the best workers. Such a distribution occurs irregularly, with great parsimony and open injustice, so that the greatest number of the coupons end up, either legitimately or through abuse of authority, in the hands of the Kapos and of the Prominents; nevertheless the prize-coupons still circulate on the market in the form of money, and their value changes in strict obedience to the laws of classical economics.

There have been periods in which the prize-coupon was worth one ration of bread, then one and a quarter, even one and a third; one day it was quoted at one and a half ration, but then the supply of Mahorca to the canteen failed, so that, lacking a coverage, the money collapsed at once to a quarter of a ration. Another boom period occurred for a singular reason: the arrival of a fresh contingent of robust Polish girls in place of the old inmates of the Frauenblock. In fact, as the prize-coupon is valid for entry to the Frauenblock (for the criminals and the politicals; not for the Jews, who on the other hand, do not feel affected by this restriction), those interested actively and rapidly cornered the market: hence the revaluation, which, in any case, did not last long.

Among the ordinary Häftlinge there are not many who search for Mahorca to smoke it personally; for the most part it leaves the camp and ends in the hands of the civilian workers of the Buna. The traffic is an instance of a kind of '*kombinacja*' frequently practised: the Häftling, somehow saving a ration of bread, invests it in Mahorca; he cautiously gets in touch with a civilian addict who acquires the Mahorca, paying in cash with a portion of bread greater than that initially invested. The Häftling eats the surplus, and puts back on the market the remaining ration. Speculations of this kind establish a tie between the internal economy of the Lager and the economic life of the outside world: the accidental failure of the distribution of tobacco among the civilian population of Cracow, overcoming the barrier of barbed wire which segregates us from human society, had an immediate repercussion in camp, provoking a notable rise in the quotation of Mahorca, and consequently of the prize-coupon.

The process outlined above is no more than the most simple of examples: another more complex one is the following. The Häftling acquires in exchange for Mahorca or bread, or even obtains as a gift from a civilian, some abominable, ragged, dirty shred of a shirt, which must however have three holes suitable to fit more or less over the head and arms. So long as it only carries signs of wear, and not of artificially created mutilations, such an object, at the time of the *Wäschetauschen*, is valid as a shirt and carries the right of an exchange; at the most, the person who presents it will receive an adequate measure of blows for having taken so little care of camp clothing.

Consequently, within the Lager, there is no great difference in value between a shirt worthy of the name and a tattered thing full of patches; the Häftling described above will have no difficulty in finding a comrade in possession of a shirt of commercial value who is unable to capitalize on it as he is not in touch with civilian workers, either because of his place of work, or through difficulties of language or intrinsic incapacity. This latter will be satisfied with a modest amount of bread for the exchange, and in fact the next *Wäschetauschen* will to a certain extent re-establish equilibrium, distributing good and bad washing in a perfectly casual manner. But the first Häftling will be able to smuggle the good shirt into Buna and sell it to the original civilian (or to any other) for four, six, even ten rations of bread. This high margin of profit is correlative to the gravity of the risk of leaving camp wearing more than one shirt or re-entering with none.

There are many variations on this theme. There are some who do not hesitate to have the gold fillings of their teeth extracted to sell them in Buna for bread or tobacco. But the most common of cases is that such traffic takes place through an intermediary. A 'high number', that is, a new arrival, only recently but sufficiently besotted by hunger and by the extreme tension of life in the camp, is noticed by a 'low number' for the number of his gold teeth; the 'low' offers the 'high' three or four rations of bread to be paid in return for extraction. If the high number accepts, the low one pays, carries the gold to

Buna, and if in contact with a civilian of trust, from whom he fears neither denunciation nor fraudulent dealing, he can make a gain of ten or even as much as twenty or more rations, which are paid to him gradually, one or two a day. It is worth noting in this respect that contrary to what takes place in Buna, the maximum total of any transaction negotiated *within* the camp is four rations of bread, because it would be practically impossible either to make contracts on credit, or to preserve a larger quantity of bread from the greed of others or one's own hunger.

Traffic with civilians is a characteristic element of the *Arbeitslager*, and as we have seen, determines its economic life. On the other hand, it is a crime, explicitly foreseen by the camp regulations, and considered equivalent to 'political' crimes; so that it is punished with particular severity. The Häftling convicted of '*Handel mit Zivilisten*', unless he can rely on powerful influences, ends up at Gleiwitz III, at Janina or at Heidebreck in the coal-mines; which means death from exhaustion in the course of a few weeks. Moreover, his accomplice, the civilian worker, may also be denounced to the competent German authority and condemned to pass a period in *Vernichtungslager*, under the same conditions as us; a period varying, as far as I can see, from a fortnight to eight months. The workmen who experience this retaliation have their possessions taken away like us on their entry, but their personal effects are kept in a special store-room. They are not tattooed and they keep their hair, which makes them easily recognizable, but for the whole duration of the punishment they are subjected to the same work and the same discipline as us – except, of course, the selections.

They work in separate Kommandos and they have no contact of any sort with the common Häftlinge. In fact, the Lager is for them a punishment, and if they do not die of exhaustion or illness they can expect to return among men; if they could communicate with us, it would create a breach in the wall which keeps us dead to the world, and a ray of light into the mystery which prevails among free men about our condition. For us, on the contrary, the Lager is not a punishment; for us,

no end is foreseen and the Lager is nothing but a manner of living assigned to us, without limits of time, in the bosom of the Germanic social organism.

One section of the camp itself is in fact set aside for civilian workers of all nationalities who are compelled to stay there for a longer or shorter period in expiation of their illicit relations with Häftlinge. This section is separated from the rest of the camp by barbed wire, and is called E-Lager, and its guests E-Häftlinge. 'E' is the initial for '*Erziehung*' which means education.

All the bargaining-transactions outlined above are based on the smuggling of materials belonging to the Lager. This is why the SS are so eager to suppress them: the very gold of our teeth is their property, as sooner or later, torn from the mouths of the living or the dead, it ends up in their hands. So it is natural that they should take care that the gold does not leave the camp.

But against theft in itself, the direction of the camp has no prejudice. The attitude of open connivance by the SS as regards smuggling in the opposite direction shows this clearly.

Here things are generally more simple. It is a question of stealing or receiving any of the various tools, utensils, materials, products, etc. with which we come in daily contact in Buna in the course of our work, of introducing them into the camp in the evening, of finding a customer and of effecting the exchange for bread or soup. This traffic is intense: for certain articles, although they are necessary for the normal life of the Lager, this method of theft in Buna is the only and regular way of provisioning. Typical are the instances of brooms, paint, electric wire, grease for shoes. The traffic in this last item will serve as an example.

As we have stated elsewhere, the camp regulations prescribe the greasing and polishing of shoes every morning, and every *Blockältester* is responsible to the SS for obedience to this order by all the men in his hut. One would think that each hut would enjoy a periodic assignment of grease for shoes, but this is not so; the mechanism is completely different. It needs to be stated first that each hut receives an assignment of soup some-

what higher than that prescribed for regulation rations; the extra is divided according to the discretion of the *Blockältester*, who first of all distributes the gifts to his friends and protégés, then the recompense to the hut-sweepers, to the night-guards, to the lice-controllers and to all other prominents and functionaries in the hut. What is still left over (and every smart *Blockältester* makes sure that there is always some over) is used precisely for these acquisitions.

The rest is obvious. Those Häftlinge at Buna who have the chance to fill their bowl with grease or machine-oil (or anything else: any blackish and greasy substance is considered suitable for the purpose), on their return to the camp in the evening, make a systematic tour of the huts until they find a *Blockältester* who has run out of the article and wants a fresh supply. In addition, every hut usually has its habitual supplier, who has been allotted a fixed daily recompense on condition that he provides the grease every time that the reserve is about to run out.

Every evening, beside the doors of the *Tagesräume*, the groups of suppliers stand patiently around; on their feet for hours and hours in the rain or snow, they discuss excitedly matters relating to the fluctuation of prices and value of the prize-coupon. Every now and again one of them leaves the group, makes a quick visit to the Market and returns with the latest news.

Besides the articles already described, there are innumerable others to be found in Buna, which might be useful to the Block or welcomed by the *Blockältester*, or might excite the interest or curiosity of the prominents: light-bulbs, ordinary or shaving-soap, files, pliers, sacks, nails; methylic alcohol is sold to make drinks; while petrol is useful for the rudimentary lighters, prodigies of the secret industry of the Lager craftsmen.

In this complex network of thefts and counter-thefts, nourished by the silent hostility between the SS command and the civilian authorities of the Buna, Ka-Be plays a part of prime importance. Ka-Be is the place of least resistance, where the regulations can most easily be avoided and the surveillance of the Kapos eluded. Everyone knows that it is the nurses

themselves who send back on the market, at low prices, the clothes and shoes of the dead and of the selected who leave naked for Birkenau; it is the nurses and doctors who export the restricted sulphonamides to Buna, selling them to civilians for articles of food.

The nurses also make huge profits from the trade in spoons. The Lager does not provide the new arrivals with spoons, although the semi-liquid soup cannot be consumed without them. The spoons are manufactured in Buna, secretly and in their spare moments, by Häftlinge who work as specialists in the iron and tin-smith Kommandos: they are rough and clumsy tools, shaped from iron-plate worked by hammer, often with a sharp handle-edge to serve at the same time as a knife to cut the bread. The manufacturers themselves sell them directly to the new arrivals: an ordinary spoon is worth half a ration, a knife-spoon three quarters of a ration of bread. Now it is a law that although one can enter Ka-Be with one's spoon, one cannot leave with it. At the moment of release, before the clothes are given, the healthy patient's spoon is confiscated by the nurses and placed on sale in the Market. Adding the spoons of the patients about to leave to those of the dead and selected, the nurses receive the gains of the sale of about fifty spoons every day. On the other hand, the dismissed patients are forced to begin work again with the initial disadvantage of half a ration of bread, set aside to acquire a new spoon.

Finally, Ka-Be is the main customer and receiver of thefts occurring in Buna: of the soup assigned to Ka-Be, a good forty pints are set aside every day as the theft-fund to acquire the most varied of goods from the specialists. There are those who steal thin rubber tubing which is used in Ka-Be for enemas and for stomach-tubes; others offer coloured pencils and inks, necessary for Ka-Be's complicated book-keeping system; and thermometers and glass instruments and chemicals, which come from the Buna stores in the Häftlinge's pockets and are used in the infirmary as sanitary equipment.

And I would not like to be accused of immodesty if I add that it was our idea, mine and Alberto's, to steal the rolls of graph-paper from the thermographs of the Desiccation Depart-

ment, and offer them to the Medical Chief of Ka-Be with the suggestion that they be used as paper for pulse–temperature charts.

In conclusion: theft in Buna, punished by the civil direction, is authorized and encouraged by the SS; theft in camp, severely repressed by the SS, is considered by the civilians as a normal exchange operation; theft among Häftlinge is generally punished, but the punishment strikes the thief and the victim with equal gravity. We now invite the reader to contemplate the possible meaning in the Lager of the words 'good' and 'evil', 'just' and 'unjust'; let everybody judge, on the basis of the picture we have outlined and of the examples given above, how much of our ordinary moral world could survive on this side of the barbed wire.

9. The Drowned and the Saved

WHAT we have so far said and will say concerns the ambiguous life of the Lager. In our days many men have lived in this cruel manner, crushed against the bottom, but each for a relatively short period; so that we can perhaps ask ourselves if it is necessary or good to retain any memory of this exceptional human state.

To this question we feel that we have to reply in the affirmative. We are in fact convinced that no human experience is without meaning or unworthy of analysis, and that fundamental values, even if they are not positive, can be deduced from this particular world which we are describing. We would also like to consider that the Lager was pre-eminently a gigantic biological and social experiment.

Thousands of individuals, differing in age, condition, origin, language, culture and customs, are enclosed within barbed wire: there they live a regular, controlled life which is identical for all and inadequate to all needs, and which is more rigorous than any experimenter could have set up to establish what is essential and what adventitious to the conduct of the human animal in the struggle for life.

We do not believe in the most obvious and facile deduction: that man is fundamentally brutal, egoistic and stupid in his conduct once every civilized institution is taken away, and that the Häftling is consequently nothing but a man without inhibitions. We believe, rather, that the only conclusion to be drawn is that in the face of driving necessity and physical disabilities many social habits and instincts are reduced to silence.

But another fact seems to us worthy of attention: there comes to light the existence of two particularly well differentiated categories among men – the saved and the drowned. Other pairs of opposites (the good and the bad, the wise and the foolish, the cowards and the courageous, the unlucky and

the fortunate) are considerably less distinct, they seem less essential, and above all they allow for more numerous and complex intermediary gradations.

This division is much less evident in ordinary life; for there it rarely happens that a man loses himself. A man is normally not alone, and in his rise or fall is tied to the destinies of his neighbours; so that it is exceptional for anyone to acquire unlimited power, or to fall by a succession of defeats into utter ruin. Moreover, everyone is normally in possession of such spiritual, physical and even financial resources that the probabilities of a shipwreck, of total inadequacy in the face of life, are relatively small. And one must take into account a definite cushioning effect exercised both by the law, and by the moral sense which constitutes a self-imposed law; for a country is considered the more civilized the more the wisdom and efficiency of its laws hinder a weak man from becoming too weak or a powerful one too powerful.

But in the Lager things are different: here the struggle to survive is without respite, because everyone is desperately and ferociously alone. If some Null Achtzehn vacillates, he will find no one to extend a helping hand; on the contrary, someone will knock him aside, because it is in no one's interest that there will be one more 'musselman'* dragging himself to work every day; and if someone, by a miracle of savage patience and cunning, finds a new method of avoiding the hardest work, a new art which yields him an ounce of bread, he will try to keep his method secret, and he will be esteemed and respected for this, and will derive from it an exclusive, personal benefit; he will become stronger and so will be feared, and who is feared is, ipso facto, a candidate for survival.

In history and in life one sometimes seems to glimpse a ferocious law which states: 'to he that has, will be given; from he that has not, will be taken away'. In the Lager, where man is alone and where the struggle for life is reduced to its primordial mechanism, this unjust law is openly in force, is recognized by

*This word '*Muselmann*', I do not know why, was used by the old ones of the camp to describe the weak, the inept, those doomed to selection.

all. With the adaptable, the strong and astute individuals, even the leaders willingly keep contact, sometimes even friendly contact, because they hope later to perhaps derive some benefit. But with the musselmans, the men in decay, it is not even worth speaking, because one knows already that they will complain and will speak about what they used to eat at home. Even less worthwhile is it to make friends with them, because they have no distinguished acquaintances in camp, they do not gain any extra rations, they do not work in profitable Kommandos and they know no secret method of organizing. And in any case, one knows that they are only here on a visit, that in a few weeks nothing will remain of them but a handful of ashes in some near-by field and a crossed-out number on a register. Although engulfed and swept along without rest by the innumerable crowd of those similar to them, they suffer and drag themselves along in an opaque intimate solitude, and in solitude they die or disappear, without leaving a trace in anyone's memory.

The result of this pitiless process of natural selection could be read in the statistics of Lager population movements. At Auschwitz, in 1944, of the old Jewish prisoners (we will not speak of the others[1] here, as their condition was different), '*kleine Nummer*', low numbers less than 150,000, only a few hundred had survived; not one was an ordinary Häftling, vegetating in the ordinary Kommandos, and subsisting on the normal ration. There remained only the doctors, tailors, shoemakers, musicians, cooks, young attractive homosexuals, friends or compatriots of some authority in the camp; or they were particularly pitiless, vigorous and inhuman individuals, installed (following an investiture by the SS command, which showed itself in such choices to possess satanic knowledge of human beings) in the posts of Kapos, *Blockältester*, etc.; or finally, those who, without fulfilling particular functions, had always succeeded through their astuteness and energy in successfully organizing, gaining in this way, besides material advantages and reputation, the indulgence and esteem of the powerful people in the camp. Whosoever does not know how to become an 'Organisator', 'Kombinator', 'Prominent' (the savage eloquence of these words!) soon becomes a 'musselman'. In

life, a third way exists, and is in fact the rule; it does not exist in the concentration camp.

To sink is the easiest of matters; it is enough to carry out all the orders one receives, to eat only the ration, to observe the discipline of the work and the camp. Experience showed that only exceptionally could one survive more than three months in this way. All the musselmans who finished in the gas chambers have the same story, or more exactly, have no story; they followed the slope down to the bottom, like streams that run down to the sea. On their entry into the camp, through basic incapacity, or by misfortune, or through some banal incident, they are overcome before they can adapt themselves; they are beaten by time, they do not begin to learn German, to disentangle the infernal knot of laws and prohibitions until their body is already in decay, and nothing can save them from selections or from death by exhaustion. Their life is short, but their number is endless; they, the *Muselmänner*, the drowned, form the backbone of the camp, an anonymous mass, continually renewed and always identical, of non-men who march and labour in silence, the divine spark dead within them, already too empty to really suffer. One hesitates to call them living: one hesitates to call their death death, in the face of which they have no fear, as they are too tired to understand.

They crowd my memory with their faceless presences, and if I could enclose all the evil of our time in one image, I would choose this image which is familiar to me: an emaciated man, with head dropped and shoulders curved, on whose face and in whose eyes not a trace of a thought is to be seen.

If the drowned have no story, and single and broad is the path to perdition, the paths to salvation are many, difficult and improbable.

The most travelled road, as we have stated, is the *'Prominenz'*. *'Prominenten'* is the name for the camp officials, from the Häftling-director (*Lagerältester*) to the Kapos, the cooks, the nurses, the night-guards, even to the hut-sweepers and to the *Scheissminister* and *Bademeister* (superintendents of the latrines and showers). We are more particularly interested in the Jewish prominents, because while the others are automatically invested

with offices as they enter the camp in virtue of their natural supremacy, the Jews have to plot and struggle hard to gain them.

The Jewish prominents form a sad and notable human phenomenon. In them converge present, past and atavistic sufferings, and the tradition of hostility towards the stranger makes of them monsters of asociality and insensitivity.

They are the typical product of the structure of the German Lager: if one offers a position of privilege to a few individuals in a state of slavery, exacting in exchange the betrayal of a natural solidarity with their comrades, there will certainly be someone who will accept. He will be withdrawn from the common law and will become untouchable; the more power that he is given, the more he will be consequently hateful and hated. When he is given the command of a group of unfortunates, with the right of life or death over them, he will be cruel and tyrannical, because he will understand that if he is not sufficiently so, someone else, judged more suitable, will take over his post. Moreover, his capacity for hatred, unfulfilled in the direction of the oppressors, will double back, beyond all reason, on the oppressed; and he will only be satisfied when he has unloaded on to his underlings the injury received from above.

We are aware that this is very distant from the picture that is usually given of the oppressed who unite, if not in resistance, at least in suffering. We do not deny that this may be possible when oppression does not pass a certain limit, or perhaps when the oppressor, through inexperience or magnanimity, tolerates or favours it. But we state that in our days, in all countries in which a foreign people have set foot as invaders, an analogous position of rivalry and hatred among the subjected has been brought about; and this, like many other human characteristics, could be experienced in the Lager in the light of particularly cruel evidence.

About the non-Jewish prominents there is less to say, although they were far and away the most numerous (no 'Aryan' Häftling was without a post, however modest). That they were stolid and bestial is natural when one thinks that the majority were ordinary criminals, chosen from the German prisons for

the very purpose of their employment as superintendents of the camps for Jews; and we maintain that it was a very apt choice, because we refuse to believe that the squalid human specimens whom we saw at work were an average example, not of Germans in general, but even of German prisoners in particular. It is difficult to explain how in Auschwitz the political German, Polish and Russian prominents rivalled the ordinary convicts in brutality. But it is known that in Germany the qualification of political crime also applied to such acts as clandestine trade, illicit relations with Jewish women, theft from Party officials. The 'real' politicals lived and died in other camps, with names now sadly famous, in notoriously hard conditions, which, however, in many aspects differed from those described here.

But besides the officials in the strict sense of the word, there is a vast category of prisoners, not initially favoured by fate, who fight merely with their own strength to survive. One has to fight against the current; to battle every day and every hour against exhaustion, hunger, cold and the resulting inertia; to resist enemies and have no pity for rivals; to sharpen one's wits, build up one's patience, strengthen one's will-power. Or else, to throttle all dignity and kill all conscience, to climb down into the arena as a beast against other beasts, to let oneself be guided by those unsuspected subterranean forces which sustain families and individuals in cruel times. Many were the ways devised and put into effect by us in order not to die: as many as there are different human characters. All implied a weakening struggle of one against all, and a by no means small sum of aberrations and compromises. Survival without renunciation of any part of one's own moral world – apart from powerful and direct interventions by fortune – was conceded only to very few superior individuals, made of the stuff of martyrs and saints.

We will try to show in how many ways it was possible to reach salvation with the stories of Schepschel, Alfred L., Elias and Henri.

Schepschel has been living in the Lager for four years. He

has seen the death of tens of thousands of those like him, beginning with the pogrom which had driven him from his village in Galicia. He had a wife and five children and a prosperous business as a saddler, but for a long time now he has grown accustomed to thinking of himself only as a sack which needs periodic refilling. Schepschel is not very robust, nor very courageous, nor very wicked; he is not even particularly astute, nor has he ever found a method which allows him a little respite, but he is reduced to small and occasional expedients, '*kombinacje*' as they are called here.

Every now and again he steals a broom in Buna and sells it to the *Blockältester*; when he manages to set aside a little bread-capital, he hires the tools of the cobbler in the Block, his compatriot, and works on his own account for a few hours; he knows how to make braces with interlaced electric wires. Sigi told me that he has seen him during the midday interval singing and dancing in front of the hut of the Slovak workers, who sometimes reward him with the remainders of their soup.

This said, one would be inclined to think of Schepschel with indulgent sympathy, as of a poor wretch who retains only a humble and elementary desire to live, and who bravely carries on his small struggle not to give way. But Schepschel was no exception, and when the opportunity showed itself, he did not hesitate to have Moischl, his accomplice in a theft from the kitchen, condemned to a flogging, in the mistaken hope of gaining favour in the eyes of the *Blockältester* and furthering his candidature for the position of *Kesselwäscher*, 'vat-washer'.

The story of engineer Alfred L. shows among other things how vain is the myth of original equality among men.

In his own country L. was the director of an extremely important factory of chemical products, and his name was (and is) well-known in industrial circles throughout Europe. He was a robust man of about fifty; I do not know how he had been arrested, but he entered the camp like all others: naked, alone and unknown. When I knew him he was very wasted away, but still showed on his face the signs of a disciplined and methodical energy; at that time, his privileges were limited to the

daily cleaning of the Polish workers' pots; this work, which he had gained in some manner as his exclusive monopoly, yielded him half a ladleful of soup per day. Certainly it was not enough to satisfy his hunger; nevertheless, no one had ever heard him complain. In fact, the few words that he let slip implied imposing secret resources, a solid and fruitful 'organization'.

This was confirmed by his appearance. L. had a 'line': with his hands and face always perfectly clean, he had the rare self-denial to wash his shirt every fortnight, without waiting for the bi-monthly change (we would like to point out here that to wash a shirt meant finding soap, time and space in the overcrowded washroom; adapting oneself to carefully keep watch on the wet shirt without losing attention for a moment, and to put it on, naturally still wet, in the silence-hour when the lights are turned out); he owned a pair of wooden shoes to go to the shower, and even his striped suit was singularly adapted to his appearance, clean and new. L. had acquired in practice the whole appearance of a prominent considerably before becoming one; only a long time after did I find out that L. was able to earn all this show of prosperity with incredible tenacity, paying for his individual acquisitions and services with bread from his own ration, so imposing upon himself a regime of supplementary privations.

His plan was a long-term one, which is all the more notable as conceived in an environment dominated by a mentality of the provisional; and L. carried it out with rigid inner discipline, without pity for himself or – with greater reason – for comrades who crossed his path. L. knew that the step was short from being judged powerful to effectively becoming so, and that everywhere, and especially in the midst of the general levelling of the Lager, a respectable appearance is the best guarantee of being respected. He took every care not to be confused with the mass; he worked with stubborn duty, even occasionally admonishing his lazy comrades in a persuasive and deprecatory tone of voice; he avoided the daily struggle for the best place in the queue for the ration, and prepared to take the first ration, notoriously the most liquid, every day, so as to be noticed by his *Blockältester* for his discipline. To complete the separation,

he always behaved in his relations with his comrades with the maximum courtesy compatible with his egotism, which was absolute.

When the Chemical Kommando was formed, as will be described, L. knew that his hour had struck: he needed no more than his spruce suit and his emaciated and shaved face in the midst of the flock of his sordid and slovenly colleagues to at once convince both Kapo and *Arbeitsdienst* that he was one of the genuinely saved, a potential prominent; so that (to he who has, shall be given) he was without hesitation appointed 'specialist', nominated technical head of the Kommando, and taken on by the Direction of the Buna as analyst in the laboratory of the styrene department. He was subsequently appointed to examine all the new intake to the Chemical Kommando, to judge their professional ability; which he always did with extreme severity, especially when faced with those in whom he smelled possible future rivals.

I do not know how his story continued; but I feel it is quite probable that he managed to escape death, and today is still living his cold life of the determined and joyless dominator.

Elias Lindzin, 141565, one day rained into the Chemical Kommando. He was a dwarf, not more than five feet high, but I have never seen muscles like his. When he is naked you can see every muscle taut under his skin, like a poised animal; his body, enlarged without alteration of proportions, would serve as a good model for a Hercules: but you must not look at his head.

Under his scalp, the skull sutures stand out immoderately. The cranium is massive and gives the impression of being made of metal or stone; the limit of his shaven hair shows up barely a finger's width above his eyebrows. The nose, the chin, the forehead, the cheekbones are hard and compact, the whole face looks like a battering ram, an instrument made for butting. A sense of bestial vigour emanates from his body.

To see Elias work is a disconcerting spectacle; the Polish *Meister*, even the Germans sometimes stop to admire Elias at work. Nothing seems impossible to him. While we barely carry

one sack of cement, Elias carries two, then three, then four, keeping them balanced no one knows how, and while he hurries along on his short, squat legs, he makes faces under the load, he laughs, curses, shouts and sings without pause, as if he had lungs made of bronze. Despite his wooden shoes Elias climbs like a monkey on to the scaffolding and runs safely on cross-beams poised over nothing; he carries six bricks at a time balanced on his head; he knows how to make a spoon from a piece of tin, and a knife from a scrap of steel; he finds dry paper, wood and coal everywhere and knows how to start a fire in a few moments even in the rain. He is a tailor, a carpenter, a cobbler, a barber; he can spit incredible distances; he sings, in a not unpleasant bass voice, Polish and Yiddish songs never heard before; he can ingest ten, fifteen, twenty pints of soup without vomiting and without having diarrhoea, and begin work again immediately after. He knows how to make a big hump come out between his shoulders, and goes around the hut, bow-legged and mimicking, shouting and declaiming incomprehensibly, to the joy of the Prominents of the camp. I saw him fight a Pole a whole head taller than him and knock him down with a blow of his cranium into the stomach, as powerful and accurate as a catapult. I never saw him rest, I never saw him quiet or still, I never saw him injured or ill.

Of his life as a free man, no one knows anything; and in any case, to imagine Elias as a free man requires a great effort of fantasy and induction; he only speaks Polish, and the surly and deformed Yiddish of Warsaw; besides it is impossible to keep him to a coherent conversation. He might be twenty or forty years old; he usually says that he is thirty-three, and that he has begot seventeen children – which is not unlikely. He talks continuously on the most varied of subjects; always in a resounding voice, in an oratorical manner, with the violent mimicry of the deranged; as if he was always talking to a dense crowd – and as is natural, he never lacks a public. Those who understand his language drink up his declamations, shaking with laughter; they pat him enthusiastically on the back – a back as hard as iron – inciting him to continue; while he, fierce and frowning, whirls around like a wild animal in the circle of his

audience, apostrophizing now one, now another of them; he suddenly grabs hold of one by the chest with his small hooked paw, irresistibly drags him to himself, vomits into his face an incomprehensible invective, then throws him back like a piece of wood, and amidst the applause and laughter, with his arms reaching up to the heavens like some little prophetic monster, continues his raging and crazy speech.

His fame as an exceptional worker spread quite soon, and by the absurd law of the Lager, from then on he practically ceased to work. His help was requested directly by the *Meister* only for such work as required skill and special vigour. Apart from these services he insolently and violently supervised our daily, flat exhaustion, frequently disappearing on mysterious visits and adventures in who knows what recesses of the yard, from which he returned with large bulges in his pockets and often with his stomach visibly full.

Elias is naturally and innocently a thief: in this he shows the instinctive astuteness of wild animals. He is never caught in the act because he only steals when there is a good chance; but when this chance comes Elias steals as fatally and foreseeably as a stone drops. Apart from the fact that it is difficult to surprise him, it is obvious that it would be of no use punishing him for his thefts: to him they imply a vital act like breathing or sleeping.

We can now ask who is this man Elias. If he is a madman, incomprehensible and para-human, who ended in the Lager by chance. If he is an atavism, different from our modern world, and better adapted to the primordial conditions of camp life. Or if he is perhaps a product of the camp itself, what we will all become if we do not die in the camp, and if the camp itself does not end first.

There is some truth in all three suppositions. Elias has survived the destruction from outside, because he is physically indestructible; he has resisted the annihilation from within because he is insane. So, in the first place, he is a survivor: he is the most adaptable, the human type most suited to this way of living.

If Elias regains his liberty he will be confined to the fringes

of human society, in a prison or a lunatic asylum. But here in the Lager there are no criminals nor madmen; no criminals because there is no moral law to contravene, no madmen because we are wholly devoid of free will, as our every action is, in time and place, the only conceivable one.

In the Lager Elias prospers and is triumphant. He is a good worker and a good organizer, and for this double reason, he is safe from selections and respected by both leaders and comrades. For those who have no sound inner resources, for those who do not know how to draw from their own consciences sufficient force to cling to life, the only road to salvation leads to Elias: to insanity and to deceitful bestiality. All the other roads are dead-ends.

This said, one might perhaps be tempted to draw conclusions, and perhaps even rules for our daily life. Are there not all around us some Eliases, more or less in embryo? Do we not see individuals living without purpose, lacking all forms of self-control and conscience, who live not *in spite of* these defects, but like Elias precisely because of them?

The question is serious, but will not be further discussed as we want these to be stories of the Lager, while much has already been written on man outside the Lager. But one thing we would like to add: Elias, as far as we could judge from outside, and as far as the phrase can have meaning, was probably a happy person.

Henri, on the other hand, is eminently civilized and sane, and possesses a complete and organic theory on the ways to survive in Lager. He is only twenty-two, he is extremely intelligent, speaks French, German, English and Russian, has an excellent scientific and classical culture.

His brother died in Buna last winter, and since then Henri has cut off every tie of affection; he has closed himself up, as if in armour, and fights to live without distraction with all the resources that he can derive from his quick intellect and his refined education. According to Henri's theory, there are three methods open to man to escape extermination which still allow him to retain the name of man: organization, pity and theft.

He himself practises all three. There is no better strategist than Henri in seducing ('cultivating' he says) the English PoWs. In his hands they become real geese with golden eggs – if you remember that in exchange for a single English cigarette you can make enough in the Lager not to starve for a day. Henri was once seen in the act of eating a real hard-boiled egg.

The traffic in products of English origin is Henri's monopoly, and this is all a matter of organization; but his instrument of penetration, with the English and with others, is pity. Henri has the delicate and subtly perverse body and face of Sodoma's San Sebastian: his eyes are deep and profound, he has no beard yet, he moves with a natural languid elegance (although when necessary he knows how to run and jump like a cat, while the capacity of his stomach is little inferior to that of Elias). Henri is perfectly aware of his natural gifts and exploits them with the cold competence of a physicist using a scientific instrument: the results are surprising. Basically it is a question of a discovery: Henri has discovered that pity, being a primary and instinctive sentiment, grows quite well if ably cultivated, particularly in the primitive minds of the brutes who command us, those very brutes who have no scruples about beating us up without a reason, or treading our faces into the ground; nor has the great practical importance of the discovery escaped him, and upon it he has built up his personal trade.

As the ichneumon paralyses the great hairy caterpillar, wounding it in its only vulnerable ganglion, so Henri at a glance sizes up the subject, '*son type*'; he speaks to him briefly, to each with the appropriate language, and the '*type*' is conquered: he listens with increasing sympathy, he is moved by the fate of this unfortunate young man, and not much time is needed before he begins to yield returns.

There is no heart so hardened that Henri cannot breach it if he sets himself to it seriously. In the Lager, and in Buna as well, his protectors are very numerous: English soldiers, French, Ukrainian, Polish civilian workers: German 'politicals'; at least four *Blockältester*, a cook, even an SS man. But his favourite field is Ka-Be: Henri has free entry into Ka-Be; Doctor Citron and Doctor Weiss are more than his protectors,

they are his friends and take him in whenever he wants and with the diagnosis he wants. This takes place especially immediately before selections, and in the periods of the most laborious work: 'hibernation', as he says.

Possessing such conspicuous friendships, it is natural that Henri is rarely reduced to the third method, theft; on the other hand, he naturally does not talk much about this subject.

It is very pleasant to talk to Henri in moments of rest. It is also useful: there is nothing in the camp that he does not know and about which he has not reasoned in his close and coherent manner. Of his conquests, he speaks with educated modesty, as of prey of little worth, but he digresses willingly into an explanation of the calculation which led him to approach Hans asking him about his son at the front, and Otto instead showing him the scars on his shins.

To speak with Henri is useful and pleasant: one sometimes also feels him warm and near; communication, even affection seems possible. One seems to glimpse, behind his uncommon personality, a human soul, sorrowful and aware of itself. But the next moment his sad smile freezes into a cold grimace which seems studied at the mirror; Henri politely excuses himself (*'... j'ai quelque chose à faire,' '... j'ai quelqu'un à voir'*) and here he is again, intent on his hunt and his struggle; hard and distant, enclosed in armour, the enemy of all, inhumanly cunning and incomprehensible like the Serpent in Genesis.

From all my talks with Henri, even the most cordial, I have always left with a slight taste of defeat; of also having been, somehow inadvertently, not a man to him, but an instrument in his hands.

I know that Henri is living today. I would give much to know his life as a free man, but I do not want to see him again.

10. Chemical Examination

KOMMANDO 98, called the Chemical Kommando, should have been a squad of skilled workers.

The day on which its formation was officially announced a meagre group of fifteen Häftlinge gathered in the grey of dawn around the new Kapo in the roll-call square.

This was the first disillusion: he was a 'green triangle', a professional delinquent, the *Arbeitsdienst* had not thought it necessary for the Kapo of the Chemical Kommando to be a chemist. It was pointless wasting one's breath asking him questions; he would not have replied, or else he would have replied with kicks and shouts. On the other hand, his not very robust appearance and his smaller than average stature were reassuring.

He made a short speech in the foul German of the barracks, and the dissillusion was confirmed. So these were the chemists: well, he was Alex, and if they thought they were entering paradise, they were mistaken. In the first place, until the day production began, Kommando 98 would be no more than an ordinary transport-Kommando attached to the magnesium chloride warehouse. Secondly, if they imagined, being *Intelligenten*, intellectuals, that they could make a fool of him, Alex, a *Reichsdeutscher*, well, *Herrgottsacrament*, he would show them, he would ... (and with his fist clenched and index finger extended he cut across the air with the menacing gesture of the Germans); and finally, they should not imagine that they would fool anyone, if they had applied for the position without any qualifications – an examination, yes gentlemen, in the very near future; a chemistry examination, before the triumvirate of the Polymerization Department: Doktor Hagen, Doktor Probst and Doktor Ingenieur Pannwitz.

And with this, *meine Herren*, enough time had been lost, Kommandos 96 and 97 had already started, forward march,

Also by Primo Levi in Abacus

IF THIS IS A MAN/THE TRUCE
THE WRENCH
THE MIRROR MAKER

THE DROWNED AND THE SAVED

Primo Levi

Translated by
Raymond Rosenthal

Introduction by
Paul Bailey

ABACUS

unicum, both in its extent and quality. In no other place and time has one seen a phenomenon so unexpected and so complex: never were so many human lives extinguished in so short a time, and with so lucid a combination of technological ingenuity, fanaticism and cruelty. No one wants to absolve the Spanish *conquistadores* of the massacres perpetrated in America throughout the sixteenth century. It seems they brought about the death of at least sixty million Indios; but they acted on their own, without or against the directives of their government; and they diluted their misdeeds – not very 'planned', to tell the truth – over a span of more than one hundred years; and they were also helped by the epidemics that they involuntarily brought with them. And, finally, did we not try to dispose of them by declaring that they were 'things of another time'?

From: 'The Drowned and the Saved' by Primo Levi Simon & Schuster, 1986.

CHAPTER ONE

The Memory of the Offence

Human memory is a marvellous but fallacious instrument. This is a threadbare truth known not only to psychologists but also to anyone who has paid attention to the behaviour of those who surround him, or even to his own behaviour. The memories which lie within us are not carved in stone; not only do they tend to become erased as the years go by, but often they change, or even increase by incorporating extraneous features. Judges know this very well: it almost never happens that two eyewitnesses of the same event describe it in the same way and with the same words, even if the event is recent and neither of them has a personal interest in distorting it. This scant reliability of our memory will be satisfactorily explained only when we know in what language, in what alphabet they are written, on what material, and with what pen: to this day we are still far from this goal. Some mechanisms are known which falsify memory under particular conditions: traumas, not only cerebral ones; interference by other 'competitive' memories; abnormal conditions of consciousness; repressions; blockages. Nevertheless, even under normal conditions a slow degradation is at work, an obfuscation of outlines, a, so-to-speak, physiological oblivion, which few memories resist. It is probable that one may recognise here one of the great powers of nature, the same that degrades order into disorder, youth into old age, and extinguishes life in death. It is certain that practice (in this case, frequent re-evocation) keeps memories fresh and alive in the same manner in which a muscle that is often used remains efficient; but it is also true that a memory evoked too often, and expressed in the form of a story, tends

to become fixed in a stereotype, in a form tested by experience, crystallised, perfected, adorned, which installs itself in the place of the raw memory and grows at its expense.

I intend to examine here the memories of extreme experiences, of injuries suffered or inflicted. In this case, all or almost all the factors that can obliterate or deform the mnemonic record are at work. The memory of a trauma suffered or inflicted is itself traumatic because recalling it is painful or at least disturbing: a person who was wounded tends to block out the memory so as not to renew the pain; the person who has inflicted the wound pushes the memory deep down, to be rid of it, to alleviate the feeling of guilt.

Here, as with other phenomena, we are dealing with a paradoxical analogy between victim and oppressor, and we are anxious to be clear: both are in the same trap, but it is the oppressor, and he alone, who has prepared it and activated it, and if he suffers from this, it is right that he should suffer; and it is iniquitous that the victim should suffer from it, as indeed he does suffer from it, even at a distance of decades. Once again it must be observed, mournfully, that the injury cannot be healed: it extends through time, and the Furies, in whose existence we are forced to believe, not only wrack the tormentor (if they do wrack him, assisted or not by human punishment), but they perpetuate the tormentor's work by denying peace to the tormented. It is not without horror that we read the words left us by Jean Améry, the Austrian philosopher tortured by the Gestapo because he was active in the Belgian resistance and then deported to Auschwitz because he was Jewish:

> Anyone who has been tortured remains tortured ... Anyone who has suffered torture never again will be able to be at ease in the world, the abomination of the annihilation is never extinguished. Faith in humanity, already cracked by the first slap in the face, then demolished by torture, is never acquired again.

Torture was for him an interminable death: Améry, about whom I will speak again in Chapter Six, killed himself in 1978.

We do not wish to abet confusions, small-change Freudianism, morbidities and indulgences. The oppressor remains what he is, and so does the victim. They are not interchangeable, the former is to be punished and execrated (but, if possible, understood), the latter is to be pitied and helped; but both, faced by the indecency of the act which has been irrevocably committed, need refuge and protection, and instinctively search for them. Not all, but most; and often for their entire lives.

By now we are in possession of numerous confessions, depositions and admissions on the part of the oppressors (I speak not only of the German National Socialists, but of all those who commit horrendous and multiple crimes in obedience to a discipline): some given in court, others during interviews, others still contained in books or memoirs. In my opinion, these are documents of extreme importance. In general, the descriptions of the things seen and the acts committed are of little interest: they amply coincide with what was told by the victims; very rarely are they contested, judgements have been handed down and they are by now part of history. Often they are regarded as well known. Much more important are the motivations and justifications: why did you do this? Were you aware that you were committing a crime?

The answers to these two questions, or to others which are analogous, are very similar to each other, independent of the personality of the interrogated person, whether he be an ambitious and intelligent professional like Speer or a gelid fanatic like Eichmann, a short-sighted functionary like Stangl in Treblinka and Höss in Auschwitz, or an obtuse brute like Boger and Kaduk, the inventors of torture. Expressed in different formulations and with greater or lesser arrogance, depending on the speaker's mental and cultural level, in the end they all say substantially the same things: I did it because I was ordered to; others (my superiors) have committed acts worse than mine; in view of the upbringing I received, and the en-

vironment in which I lived, I could not act differently; if I had not done it, another would have done it even more harshly in my place. For anyone who reads these justifications the first reaction is revulsion: they lie, they cannot believe they will be believed, they cannot not see the imbalance between their excuses and the enormity of pain and death that they have caused. They lie knowing that they are lying: they are in bad faith.

Now, anyone who has sufficient experience of human affairs knows that the distinction (the opposition, a linguist would say) good faith/bad faith is optimistic and illuminist, and is all the more so, and for much greater reason, when applied to men such as those just mentioned. It presupposes a mental clarity which few have, and which even these few immediately lose when, for whatever reason, past or present reality arouses anxiety or discomfort in them. Under such conditions there are, it is true, those who lie consciously, coldly falsifying reality itself, but more numerous are those who weigh anchor, move off, momentarily or forever, from genuine memories, and fabricate for themselves a convenient reality. The past is a burden to them; they feel repugnance for the things done or suffered, and tend to replace them with others. The substitution may begin in full awareness, with an invented scenario, mendacious, restored, but less painful than the real one; in repeating its description to others but also to themselves, the distinction between true and false progressively loses its contours, and man ends by fully believing the story he has told so many times and still continues to tell, polishing and retouching here and there the details which are least credible or incongruous or incompatible with the acquired picture of historically accepted events: initial bad faith has become good faith. The silent transition from falsehood to self-deception is useful: anyone who lies in good faith is better off, he recites his part better, is more easily believed by the judge, the historian, the reader, his wife and his children.

The further events fade into the past, the more the construction of convenient truth grows and is perfected. I believe

that only by this mental mechanism is it possible to interpret, for instance, the statements made in 1978 to *L'Express* by Louis Darquier de Pellepoix, former commissioner in charge of Jewish affairs in the Vichy government around 1942, and as such personally responsible for the deportation of 70,000 Jews. Darquier denies everything: the photographs of piles of corpses are montages; the statistics of millions of dead were fabricated by the Jews, always greedy for publicity, commiseration and indemnities. There may perhaps have been deportations (he would have found it difficult to dispute them: his signature appears at the foot of too many letters giving orders for these very deportations, even of children), but he did not know where to and with what results; there were, it is true, gas chambers in Auschwitz, but only to kill lice, and anyway (note the coherence!) they were built for propaganda purposes after the end of the war. It is not my intention to justify this cowardly and foolish man, and it offends me to know that he lived for a long time undisturbed in Spain, but I think I can recognise in him the typical case of someone who, accustomed to lying publicly, ends by lying in private too, to himself, and building for himself a comforting truth which allows him to live in peace. To keep good and bad faith distinct costs a lot: it requires a decent sincerity or truthfulness with oneself, it demands a continuous intellectual and moral effort. How can such an effort be expected from men like Darquier?

Reading the statements made by Eichmann during the Jerusalem trial, and those of Rudolph Höss (the penultimate commander of Auschwitz, the inventor of the hydrocyanic acid chambers) in his autobiography, one can see in them a process of re-elaboration of the past, more subtle than the one mentioned just above. In substance, these two defended themselves in the classical manner of the Nazi militia or, better yet, of all militiamen: we have been educated in absolute obedience, hierarchy, nationalism; we have been imbued with slogans, intoxicated with ceremonies and manifestations; we have been taught that the only justice was that which was to the advantage of our people, and the only truth were the words of the Leader.

What do you want from us? How can you even think to expect from us, after the fact, a behaviour different from what ours has been and that of all those who were like us? We were the diligent executors, and for our diligence we were praised and promoted. The decisions were not ours, because the regime in which we grew up did not allow us autonomous decisions: others have decided for us, and it could only happen that way, because our ability to decide had been amputated. So we are not responsible and cannot be punished.

Even projected against the background of the Birkenau smoke stacks, this reasoning cannot be considered purely the fruit of impudence. The pressure that a modern totalitarian state can exercise over the individual is frightful. Its weapons are substantially three: direct propaganda or propaganda camouflaged as upbringing, instruction and popular culture; the barrier erected against pluralism of information; and terror. Nevertheless, it is not permissible to admit that this pressure is irresistible, especially in the brief twelve-year term of the Third Reich, and in the affirmations and exculpations of men responsible for such serious crimes as were Höss and Eichmann, the exaggeration, and to an even greater degree the manipulation of memory, is obvious. Both were born and raised long before the Reich became truly 'totalitarian', and their joining the Nazi party was a choice dictated more by opportunism than enthusiasm. The re-elaboration of their past was a later work, slow and (probably) not methodical. To ask oneself whether it was done in good or bad faith is naïve. They too, so strong in the face of others' suffering, when fate put them before judges, before the death they deserved, built a convenient past for themselves and ended by believing in it: especially Höss, who was not a subtle man. As he appears in his writings, he was in fact a person so little inclined to self-control and introspection that he does not realise he is confirming his coarse anti-Semitism by the very act in which he abjures and denies it, nor does he realise how slimy his self-portrait as a good functionary, father and husband, actually is.

As a comment on these reconstructions of the past (but not

only on these: it is an observation that holds for all memories) one must note that the distortion of fact is often limited by the objectivity of the facts themselves, around or about which there exists the testimonies of third parties, documents, 'corpus delicti', historically accepted contexts. It is generally difficult to deny having committed a given act, or that such an act was committed; it is on the contrary very easy to alter the motivations which led us to an act, and the passions within us which accompanied the act itself. This is an extremely fluid matter, subject to being distorted even under very weak pressures. To the questions 'Why did you do this?' or 'What were you thinking as you did it?', no reliable answers exist, because states of mind are by nature labile and even more labile is the memory of them.

An extreme case of the distortion of the memory of a committed guilty act is found in its suppression. Here, too, the borderline between good and bad faith can be vague. Behind the 'I don't know' and the 'I do not remember' that one hears in courtrooms there is sometimes the precise intent to lie, but at other times it is a fossilised lie, rigidified in a formula. The rememberer has decided not to remember, and has succeeded: by dint of denying its existence, he has expelled the harmful memory as one expels an excretion or a parasite. Lawyers for the defence know very well that the memory gap, or the putative truth, which they suggest to their clients, tends to become forgetfulness and actual truth. It is not necessary to trespass in the field of mental pathology to find human examples whose declarations perplex us: they are most certainly false, but we are unable to detect whether the subject does or does not know he is lying. Supposing, absurdly, that the liar should for one instant become truthful, he himself would not know how to answer the dilemma; in the act of lying he is an actor totally fused with his part, he is no longer distinguishable from it. A glaring example of this, during the days in which I am writing, is the behaviour in court of the Turk Ali Agca, the would-be assassin of Pope John-Paul II.

The best way to defend oneself against the invasion of burdensome memories is to impede their entry, to extend a

cordon sanitaire. It is easier to deny entry to a memory than to free oneself from it after it has been recorded. This, in substance, was the purpose of many of the artifices thought up by the Nazi commanders in order to protect the consciences of those assigned to do the dirty work, and to ensure their services, disagreeable even for the most hardened cut-throats. The *Einsatzkommandos*, who behind the front lines in Russia machine-gunned civilians at the side of common graves which the victims themselves had been forced to dig, were given all the liquor they wanted so that the massacre would be blurred by drunkenness. The well-known euphemisms ('final solution', 'special treatment', the very term *Einsatzkommando* just cited, which literally meant 'prompt-employment unit') disguised a frightful reality, were not only used to deceive the victims and prevent defensive reactions on their part: they were also meant, within the limits of the possible, to prevent public opinion, and those sections of the army that were not directly involved, from finding out what was happening in all the territories occupied by the Third Reich.

At any rate, the entire history of the brief 'millennial Reich' can be reread as a war against memory, an Orwellian falsification of memory, falsification of reality, negation of reality. All of Hitler's biographies, while disagreeing on the interpretation to be given to the life of this man so difficult to classify, agree on the flight from reality which marked his last years, beginning especially with the first Russian winter. He had forbidden and denied his subjects any access to truth, contaminating their morality and their memory; but, to a degree which gradually increased and attained complete paranoia in the Bunker, he barred the path of truth to himself also. Like all gamblers, he erected around himself a stage set woven out of superstitious lies, which he ended by believing with the same fanatical faith that he demanded from every German. His collapse was not only a salvation for mankind but also a demonstration of the price to be paid when one dismembers the truth.

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In the vaster field of the victim one also observes a drifting of memory, but here, evidently, fraud is not involved. Anyone who receives an injustice or an injury does not need to elaborate lies to exculpate himself of a guilt he does not have (even though, due to a paradoxical mechanism of which we shall speak, it can happen that he feels ashamed of it); but this does not exclude the fact that his memories may also be altered. It has been noticed, for instance, that many survivors of wars or other complex and traumatic experiences tend unconsciously to filter their memory: summoning them up among themselves, or telling them to third persons, they prefer to dwell on moments of respite, on grotesque, strange or relaxed intermezzos, and to skim over the most painful episodes which are not called up willingly from the reservoir of memory, and therefore with time tend to mist over, lose their contours. The behaviour of Count Ugolino is psychologically credible when he becomes reticent about telling Dante of his terrible death, and he is induced to do so not out of acquiescence but only out of a feeling of posthumous revenge against his eternal enemy. When we say, 'I will never forget that', referring to some event which has profoundly wounded us but has not left in us or around us a material trace or a permanent void, we are foolhardy: in 'civilian' life we also gladly forget the details of a serious illness from which we have recovered, or those of a successful surgical operation.

For the purpose of defence, reality can be distorted not only in memory but in the very act of its taking place. Throughout the year of my imprisonment in Auschwitz I had Alberto D. as a fraternal friend: he was a robust, courageous young man, more clearsighted than the average and therefore very critical of the many who fabricated for themselves, and reciprocally administered to each other, consolatory illusions: 'the war will be over in two weeks', 'there will be no more selections', 'the English have landed in Greece', 'the Polish partisans are about to liberate the camp', and so on, rumours heard nearly every day and punctually given the lie by reality.

Alberto had been deported together with his forty-five-year-old father. In the imminence of the great selection of October 1944, Alberto and I had commented on this event with fright, impotent rage, rebellion, resignation but without seeking refuge in comforting truths. The selection came. Alberto's 'old' father was chosen for the gas, and in the space of a few hours Alberto changed. He had heard rumours that seemed to him worthy of belief: the Russians were close by, the Germans would no longer dare persist in the slaughter, that was not a selection like the others, it was not for the gas chamber, but had been made to choose the weakened but salvageable prisoners, like his father in fact, who was very tired but not ill; indeed, he even knew where they would be sent, to Jaworzno, not far away, to a special camp for convalescents fit only for light labour.

Naturally his father was never seen again and Alberto himself vanished during the evacuation march from the camp in January 1945. Strangely, without knowing about Alberto's behaviour, his relatives who had remained hidden in Italy, escaping capture, also behaved in the same way, rejecting an unendurable truth, constructing a different one for themselves. As soon as I was repatriated, I considered it my duty to go immediately to Alberto's home town to tell his mother and his brother what I knew. I was welcomed with courteous affection, but as soon as I began my story the mother begged me to stop: she already knew everything, at least as far as Alberto was concerned, and there was no point in my repeating the usual horror stories to her. She *knew* that her son, he alone, had been able to slip away from the column without being shot at by the SS, he had hidden in the forest and was safe in Russian hands; he had not yet been able to send any word, but he would do so soon, she was certain of it; and now, would I please change the subject, and tell her how I myself had survived. A year later I was by chance passing through that same town, and I again visited the family. The truth was slightly changed: Alberto was in a Soviet clinic, he was fine, but he had lost his memory, he no longer even remembered his name; he was improving though and would soon return – she had this from a reliable source.

Alberto never returned. More than forty years have passed; I did not have the courage to show up again and to counterpose my painful truth to the consolatory 'truth' that, one helping the other, Alberto's relatives had fashioned for themselves.

An apology is in order. This very book is drenched in memory; what's more, a distant memory. Thus it draws from a suspect source, and must be protected against itself. So here then: it contains more considerations than memories, lingers more willingly on the state of affairs such as it is now than on the retroactive chronicle. Furthermore, the data it contains are strongly substantiated by the imposing literature that has been formed around the theme of the man submerged (or 'saved'), and through the collaboration, voluntary or not, of the culprits of that time; and in this corpus the concordances are abundant, the discordances negligible. As for my personal memories, and the few unpublished anecdotes I have mentioned and will mention, I have diligently examined all of them: time has somewhat faded them, but they are in good consonance with their background and seem to me unaffected by the drifting I have described.

CHAPTER TWO

The Grey Zone

Have we – we who have returned – been able to understand and make others understand our experience? What we commonly mean by 'understand' coincides with 'simplify': without profound simplification the world around us would be an infinite, undefined tangle that would defy our ability to orient ourselves and decide upon our actions. In short, we are compelled to reduce the knowable to a schema: with this purpose in view we have built for ourselves admirable tools in the course of evolution, tools which are specifically the property of the human species – language and conceptual thought.

We also tend to simplify history; but the pattern within which events are ordered is not always identifiable in a single unequivocal fashion, and it may therefore happen that different historians understand and construe history in ways that are incompatible with one another. Nevertheless, perhaps for reasons that go back to our origins as social animals, the need to divide the field into 'we' and 'they' is so strong that this pattern, this bi-partition – friend–enemy – prevails over all others. Popular history, and also the history taught in schools, is influenced by this Manichean tendency which shuns half-tints and complexities: it is prone to reduce the river of human occurrences to conflicts, and the conflicts to duels – we and they, Athenians and Spartans, Romans and Carthaginians. This is certainly the reason for the enormous popularity of spectator sports, such as soccer, baseball and boxing, in which the contenders are two teams or two individuals, clearly distinct and identifiable, and at the end of the match there will be vanquished and victors. If the result is a draw, the spectator

feels defrauded and disappointed: at the more or less unconscious level, he wanted winners and losers and he identified them respectively with the good guys and the bad guys, because the good must prevail, otherwise the world would be subverted.

This *desire* for simplification is justified, but the same does not always apply to simplification itself. It is a working hypothesis, useful so long as it is recognised as such and not mistaken for reality; the greater part of historical and natural phenomena is not simple, or not simple with the simplicity that we would like. Now, the network of human relationships inside the Lagers was not simple: it could not be reduced to the two blocs of victims and persecutors. In anyone who today reads (or writes) the history of the Lager is evident the tendency, indeed the need, to separate evil from good, to be able to take sides, to repeat Christ's gesture on Judgement Day: here the righteous, over there the reprobates. The young above all demand clarity, a sharp cut; their experience of the world being meagre, they do not like ambiguity. In any case, their expectation reproduces exactly that of the newcomers to the Lagers, whether young or not; all of them, with the exception of those who had already gone through an analogous experience, expected to find a terrible but decipherable world, in conformity to that simple model which we atavistically carry within us – 'we' inside and the enemy outside, separated by a sharply defined geographic frontier.

Instead, the arrival in the Lager was indeed a shock because of the surprise it entailed. The world into which one was precipitated was terrible, yes, but also indecipherable: it did not conform to any model, the enemy was all around but also inside, the 'we' lost its limits, the contenders were not two, one could not discern a single frontier but rather many confused, perhaps innumerable frontiers, which stretched between each of us. One entered hoping at least for the solidarity of one's companions in misfortune, but the hoped-for allies, except in special cases, were not there; there were instead a thousand sealed-off monads, and in between them a desperate

hidden and continuous struggle. This brusque revelation, which became manifest from the very first hours of imprisonment, often in the instant form of a concentric aggression on the part of those in whom one hoped to find future allies, was so harsh as to cause the immediate collapse of one's capacity to resist. For many it was lethal, indirectly or even directly: it is difficult to defend oneself against a blow for which one is not prepared.

Various aspects can be identified in this aggression. It is necessary to remember that the concentrationary system even from its origins (which coincide with the rise to power of Nazism in Germany) had the primary purpose of shattering the adversaries' capacity to resist: for the camp management, the new arrival was an adversary by definition, whatever the label attached to him might be, and he must immediately be demolished to make sure that he did not become an example or a germ of organised resistance. On this point the SS had very clear ideas and it is from this viewpoint that the entire sinister ritual there must be interpreted – varying from Lager to Lager, but basically similar – which accompanied the arrival: kicks and punches right away, often in the face; an orgy of orders screamed with true or simulated rage; complete nakedness after being stripped; the shaving off of all one's hair; the fitting out in rags. It is difficult to say whether all these details were devised by some expert or methodically perfected on the basis of experience, but they certainly were willed and not casual: it was all staged and this was quite obvious.

Nevertheless, the entry ritual, and the moral collapse which it promoted, was abetted more or less consciously by the other components of the concentrationary world: the simple prisoners and the privileged ones. It rarely happened that a newcomer was received, I won't say as a friend but at least as a companion in misfortune. In the majority of cases, those with seniority (and seniority was acquired in three or four months; the change-over was swift!) showed irritation or even hostility. The 'newcomer' (*Zugang:* one should note that in German this is an abstract, administrative term; it means 'access', 'entry') was

envied because he still seemed to have on him the smell of his home. It was an absurd envy, because in fact one suffered much more during the first days of imprisonment than later on when habituation on the one hand and experience on the other made it possible to build oneself a shelter. He was derided and subjected to cruel pranks, as happens in all communities with 'conscripts' and 'rookies', and in the initiation ceremonies of primitive peoples: and there is no doubt that life in the Lager involved a regression, leading back precisely to primitive behaviour.

It is probable that the hostility towards the *Zugang* was in substance motivated like all other forms of intolerance; that is, it consisted in an unconscious attempt to consolidate the 'we' at the expense of the 'they', to create, in short, that solidarity among the oppressed whose absence was the source of additional suffering, even though not perceived openly. Vying for prestige also came into play, which in our civilisation seems to be an irrepressible need: the despised crowd of seniors was prone to recognise in the new arrival a target on which to vent its humiliation, to find compensation at his expense, to build for itself and at his expense a figure of a lower rank on whom to discharge the burden of the offences received from above.

As for the privileged prisoners, the situation was more complex, and also more important: in my opinion, it is in fact fundamental. It is naïve, absurd, and historically false to believe that an infernal system such as National Socialism was, sanctifies its victims: on the contrary, it degrades them, it makes them similar to itself, and this all the more when they are available, blank, and lack a political or moral armature.

From many signs, it would seem the time has come to explore the space which separates (and not only in Nazi Lagers) the victims from the persecutors, and to do so with a lighter hand, and with a less turbid spirit than has been done, for instance, in a number of films. Only a schematic rhetoric can claim that that space is empty: it never is; it is studded with obscene or pathetic figures (sometimes they possess both qualities simultaneously), whom it is indispensable to know if we

want to know the human species, if we want to know how to defend our souls when a similar test should once more loom before us, or even if we only want to understand what takes place in a big industrial factory.

The privileged prisoners were a minority within the Lager population, but they represent a potent majority among survivors; in fact, even if one does not take into account the hard labour, the beatings, the cold, the illnesses, it must be remembered that the food ration was decisively insufficient even for the most frugal prisoner: the physiological reserves of the organism being consumed in two or three months, death by hunger, or by diseases induced by hunger, was the prisoner's normal destiny. This could be avoided only with additional food, and to obtain it a large or small privilege was necessary; in other words, a way, granted or conquered, astute or violent, licit or illicit, to lift oneself above the norm.

Now, one mustn't forget that the greater part of the memories of those who came back, told or written, begin in this way: the collision with the concentrationary reality coincides with the unforeseen and uncomprehended aggression on the part of a new and strange enemy, the functionary-prisoner, who instead of taking you by the hand, reassuring you, teaching you the way, throws himself at you, screaming in a language you do not understand, and strikes you in the face. He wants to tame you, extinguish in you the spark of dignity that you perhaps still preserve and he has lost. But trouble is in store for you if this dignity drives you to react: this is an unwritten but iron law. *Zurüchschlagen*, answering blows with blows, is an intolerable transgression that can only occur to the mind of a 'newcomer'. Anyone who commits it must be made an example of: other functionaries rush to the defence of the threatened order and the culprit is beaten with rage and method until he's tamed or dead. Privilege, by definition, defends and protects privilege. I remember now that the local, Yiddish and Polish term to indicate privilege was '*protekcja*', which is pronounced 'protekzia' and is of obvious Italian and Latin origin. I was told the story of an Italian 'newcomer', a

Partisan, flung into a work Lager with the label of political prisoner when his strength was still at its height. He had been beaten when the soup was being distributed and had dared to shove the distributor-functionary: the latter's colleagues rushed to his help, and the culprit was made an example of by being drowned, his head held down in the soup tub.

The ascent of the privileged, not only in the Lager but in all human coexistence, is an anguishing but unfailing phenomenon: only in utopias are they absent. It is the duty of righteous men to make war on all undeserved privilege, but one must not forget that this is a war without end. Where there exists power exercised by the few or by only one against the many, privilege is born and proliferates, even against the will of the power itself; but on the other hand it is normal for power to tolerate and encourage it. Let us confine ourselves to the Lager which (even in its Soviet version) can be considered an excellent 'laboratory': the hybrid class of the prisoner-functionary constitutes its armature and at the same time its most disquieting feature. It is a grey zone, with ill-defined outlines which both separate and join the two camps of masters and servants. It possesses an incredibly complicated internal structure, and contains within itself enough to confuse our need to judge.

The grey zone of '*protekcja*' and collaboration is born from multiple roots. In the first place, the more the area of power is restricted, the more it needs external auxiliaries; the Nazism of the final years could not do without them, determined as it was to maintain its order within subjugated Europe and feed the front lines of the war bled white by its opponents' growing military resistance. It was indispensable to draw from the occupied countries not only labour but also forces of order, delegates and administrators of the German power which was by now committed elsewhere to the point of exhaustion. Within this area must be catalogued, with different nuances of quality and weight, Quisling in Norway, the Vichy government in France, the Judenrat in Warsaw, the Saló Republic in Italy, right down to the Ukrainian and Baltic mercenaries employed

elsewhere for the filthiest tasks (never in combat) and the *Sonderkommandos*, about which we will have more to say.

But collaborators who originate in the adversary camp, ex-enemies, are untrustworthy by definition: they betrayed once and they can betray again. It is not enough to relegate them to marginal tasks; the best way to bind them is to burden them with guilt, cover them with blood, compromise them as much as possible. They will thus have established with their instigators the bond of complicity and will no longer be able to turn back. This way of proceeding is well known to criminal associations of all times and places, has always been practised by the Mafia and is also the only thing that can explain the otherwise indecipherable excesses of Italian terrorism in the 1970s.

In the second place, and in contrast with a certain hagiographic and rhetorical stylisation, the harsher the oppression, the more widespread among the oppressed is the willingness to collaborate with the power. This availability is also variegated by infinite nuances and motivations: terror, ideological seduction, servile imitation of the victor, myopic desire for any power whatsoever, even though ridiculously circumscribed in space and time, cowardice, and finally lucid calculation aimed at eluding the imposed orders and order. All these motives, singly or combined with one another, have been at work in originating this grey zone, whose components were held together by the wish to preserve and consolidate their privilege *vis-à-vis* those without privilege.

Before discussing separately the motives that impelled some prisoners to collaborate to a varying extent with the Lager authorities, it is necessary however to declare that before such human cases it is imprudent to hasten to issue a moral judgement. It must be clear that the greatest responsibility lies with the system, the very structure of the totalitarian state, the concurrent guilt on the part of the individual big and small collaborators (never likeable, never transparent!) is always difficult to evaluate. It is a judgement that we would like to entrust only to those who found themselves in similar circumstances,

and had the possibility to test on themselves what it means to act in a state of coercion. Manzoni knew this quite well: 'Provocateurs, oppressors, all those who in some way injure others, are guilty, not only of the evil they commit, but also of the perversion into which they lead the spirit of the offended.' The condition of the offended does not exclude culpability, and this is often objectively serious, but I know of no human tribunal to which one could delegate the judgement.

If it were up to me, if I were forced to judge, I would lightheartedly absolve all those whose concurrence in the guilt was minimal and for whom coercion was of the highest degree. Around us, prisoners without rank, swarmed low-ranking functionaries. They formed a picturesque fauna: sweepers, kettle washers, night-watchmen, bed smoothers (who exploited to their minuscule advantage the German fixation about bunks made up flat and square), checkers of lice and scabies, messengers, interpreters, assistants' assistants. In general, they were poor devils like ourselves, who worked full time like everyone else, but who, for an extra half-litre of soup, were willing to carry out these and other 'tertiary' functions: innocuous, sometimes useful, often invented out of nothing. They were rarely violent, but they tended to develop a typically corporative mentality, and energetically defended their 'job' against anyone from below or above who might covet it. Their privilege, which at any rate entailed supplementary hardships and efforts, gained them very little and did not spare them from the discipline and suffering of everyone else; their hope for life was substantially the same as that of the unprivileged. They were coarse and arrogant, but they were not regarded as enemies.

Judgement becomes more delicate and varied for those who occupied commanding positions: the chiefs (*Kapos:* the German term derives directly from the Italian *capo*, and the truncated pronunciation, introduced by the French prisoners, spread only many years later, popularised by Pontecorvo's movie of the same name and preferred in Italy precisely because of its differentiating value) of the labour squads, the barracks chiefs, the clerks, all the way to the world (whose existence at that

time I did not even suspect) of the prisoners who performed diverse, at times most delicate duties in the camps' administrative offices, the Political Section (actually a section of the Gestapo), the Labour Service, and the punishment cells. Some of these, thanks to skill or luck, had access to the most secret information of the respective Lagers and, like Herman Langbein in Auschwitz, Eugen Kogan in Buchenwald, and Hans Marsalek in Mauthausen, later became their historians. One does not know whether to admire more their personal courage or the cunning which enabled them concretely to help their companions in many ways, by attentively studying the individual SS officers with whom they had contact, and sensing who among them might be corrupted, who dissuaded from the crueller decisions, who blackmailed, who deceived, who frightened by the prospect of a *redde rationem* at the war's end. Some of them, the three mentioned above, for example, were also members of secret defence organisations, and therefore the power they wielded thanks to their positions was counterbalanced by the extreme danger they ran, inasmuch as they were both 'resistors' and the depositories of secrets.

The functionaries described were not at all, or only apparently, collaborators, but on the contrary were camouflaged opponents. Not so the greater part of the other persons with positions of command, who prove to be human specimens that range from the mediocre to the execrable. Rather than wearing one down, power corrupts; all the more intensely did their power corrupt, since it had a peculiar nature.

Power exists in all the varieties of the human social organisation, more or less controlled, usurped, conferred from above or recognised from below, assigned by merit, corporate solidarity, blood, or position: it is likely that a certain degree of man's domination over man is inscribed in our genetic patrimony as gregarious animals. It is not proved that power is intrinsically harmful to the collectivity. But the power of which the functionaries of whom we are speaking disposed, even if they were low-ranking, such as the *Kapos* of the work squads, was, in substance, unlimited; or, more accurately put, a lower

limit was imposed on their violence, in the sense that they were punished or deposed if they did not prove to be sufficiently harsh, but there was no upper limit. In other words, they were free to commit the worst atrocities on their subjects as punishment for any transgressions, or even without any motive whatsoever. Until the end of 1943 it was not unusual for a prisoner to be beaten to death by a *Kapo*, without the latter having to fear any sanctions. Only later on, when the need for labour became more acute, a number of limitations were introduced: the mistreatment the *Kapos* were allowed to inflict on the prisoners must not permanently reduce their working ability; but by now the malpractice was established and the regulation was not always respected.

Thus inside the Lager, on a smaller scale but with amplified characteristics, was reproduced the hierarchical structure of the totalitarian state, in which all power is invested from above and control from below is almost impossible. But this 'almost' is important: there never existed a state that was really 'totalitarian' from this point of view. Some form of reaction, a corrective of the total tyranny has never been lacking, not even in the Third Reich or Stalin's Soviet Union: in both cases, public opinion, the magistrature, the foreign press, the churches, the feeling for justice and humanity which ten or twenty years of tyranny were not enough to eradicate, have to a greater or lesser extent acted as a brake. Only in the Lager was the restraint from below non-existent, and the power of these small satraps was absolute. It is understandable that power of such magnitude overwhelmingly attracted the human type who is greedy for power: that even individuals with moderate instincts aspired to it, seduced by the many material advantages of the position, and that the latter became fatally intoxicated by the power at their disposal.

Who became a *Kapo*? It is once again necessary to distinguish. In the first place, those to whom this possibility was offered, that is, those individuals in whom the Lager commander or his delegates (who were often good psychologists) discerned a potential collaborator: common criminals, taken

from prisons, to whom a career as torturers offered an excellent alternative to detention; political prisoners broken by five or ten years of sufferings, or, in any case, morally debilitated; later on, also Jews who saw in the particle of authority that was being offered them the only possibility of escaping the 'final solution'. But many, as we mentioned, spontaneously aspired to power. It was sought by sadists, certainly not numerous but very much feared, because for them the position of privilege coincided with the possibility of inflicting suffering and humiliation on those below them. It was sought by the frustrated, and this too is a feature which in the microcosm of the Lager reproduces the macrocosm of totalitarian society: in both, without regard to ability and merit, power is generously granted to those willing to pay homage to hierarchic authority, thus attaining an otherwise unattainable social elevation. Finally, it is sought by the many among the oppressed who were contaminated by the oppressors and unconsciously strove to identify with them.

This mimesis, this identification or imitation, or exchange of roles between oppressor and victim, has provoked much discussion. True and invented, disturbing and banal, acute and stupid things have been said: it is not virgin terrain; on the contrary it is a badly ploughed field, trampled and torn up. The film director, Liliana Cavani, who was asked to express briefly the meaning of a beautiful and false film of hers, declared: 'We are all victims or murderers, and we accept these roles voluntarily. Only Sade and Dostoevsky have really understood this'; she also said she believed 'that in every environment, in every relationship, there is a victim–executioner dynamism more or less clearly expressed and generally lived on an unconscious level.'

I am not an expert of the unconscious and the mind's depths, but I do know that few people are experts in this sphere, and that these few are the most cautious; I do not know, and it does not much interest me to know, whether in my depths there lurks a murderer, but I do know that I was a guiltless victim and I was not a murderer. I know that the murderers

existed, not only in Germany, and still exist, retired or on active duty, and that to confuse them with their victims is a moral disease or an aesthetic affectation or a sinister sign of complicity; above all, it is precious service rendered (intentionally or not) to the negators of truth. I know that in the Lager, and more generally on the human stage, everything happens, and that therefore the single example proves little. Having said all this quite clearly, and reaffirmed that confusing the two roles means wanting to becloud our need for justice at its foundation, a few more remarks should be made.

It remains true that in the Lager and outside, there exist grey, ambiguous persons, ready to compromise. The extreme pressure of the Lager tends to increase their ranks; they are the rightful owners of a quota of guilt (which grows apace with their freedom of choice), and besides this they are the vectors and instruments of the system's guilt. It remains true that the majority of the oppressors, during or (more often) after their deeds, realised that what they were doing or had done was iniquitous, or perhaps experienced doubts or discomfort, or were even punished; but this suffering is not enough to enrol them among the victims. By the same token, the prisoners' errors and weaknesses are not enough to rank them with their custodians: the prisoners of the Lagers, hundreds of thousands of persons of all social classes, from almost all the countries of Europe, represented an average, unselected sample of humanity. Even if one did not want to take into account the infernal environment into which they had been abruptly flung, it is illogical to demand of them, and it is rhetorical and false to maintain that they all and always followed, the behaviour expected of saints and stoic philosophers. In reality, in the enormous majority of cases, their behaviour was rigidly predetermined. In the space of a few weeks or months the deprivations to which they were subjected led them to a condition of pure survival, a daily struggle against hunger, cold, fatigue and blows in which the room for choices (especially moral choices) was reduced to zero; among these, very few survived the test and this thanks to the coming together of many improbable

events: in short, they were saved by luck, and there is not much sense in trying to find something common to all their destinies, beyond perhaps their initial good health.

An extreme case of collaboration is represented by the *Sonderkommandos* of Auschwitz and the other extermination camps. Here one hesitates to speak of privilege: whoever belonged to this group was privileged only to the extent that – but at what cost – he had enough to eat for a few months, certainly not because he could be envied. With this duly vague definition, 'Special Squad', the SS referred to the group of prisoners who were entrusted with the running of the crematoria. It was their task to maintain order among the new arrivals (often completely unaware of the destiny awaiting them) who must be sent into the gas chambers; to extract the corpses from the chambers, pull gold teeth from jaws, cut the women's hair, sort and classify clothes, shoes, and the contents of the luggage; transport the bodies to the crematoria and oversee the operation of the ovens; extract and eliminate the ashes. The Special Squad in Auschwitz numbered, depending on the moment, from seven hundred to one thousand active members.

These Special Squads did not escape everyone else's fate; on the contrary, the SS exerted the greatest diligence to prevent any man who had been part of it from surviving and telling. Twelve squads succeeded each other in Auschwitz; each one remained operative for a few months, then it was suppressed, each time with a different trick to head off possible resistance, and as its initiation the next squad burnt the corpses of its predecessors. In October 1944 the last squad rebelled against the SS, blew up one of the crematoria, and was exterminated in an unequal battle which I will discuss later on. The survivors of the Special Squad were therefore very few, having escaped death because of some unforeseeable whim of fate. None of them, after the Liberation, has spoken willingly, and no one speaks willingly about their frightful condition. The information we have about these Squads comes from the meagre depositions of survivors; from the admissions of their 'instigators' tried in various courts; from hints contained in the depositions of German or Polish 'civilians' who, by chance, came into contact with the squads; and lastly, from diary pages which were written feverishly for future memory and buried with extreme care near the crematoria in Auschwitz by some of the squads' members. All these sources are in agreement, and yet we found it difficult, almost impossible, to form an image for ourselves of how these men lived day by day, saw themselves, accepted their condition.

At first, the SS chose them from among the prisoners already registered in the Lager, and it has been testified that the choice was not made only on the basis of physical strength but also by a deep study of the physiognomies. In a few rare cases, the enrolment took place as a punishment. Later on, it was considered preferable to pick out the candidates directly at the railroad platform, on the arrival of each convoy: the SS 'psychologists' noticed that the recruitment was easier if one drew them from among those desperate, disoriented people, exhausted from the journey, bereft of resistance, at the crucial moment of stepping off the train, when every newly arrived person truly felt on the threshold of the darkness and terror of an unearthly space.

The Special Squads were largely made up of Jews. In a certain sense, this is not surprising since the Lager's main purpose was to destroy Jews and, beginning in 1943, the population in Auschwitz was composed of ninety to ninety-five per cent Jews. From another point of view, one is stunned by this paroxysm of perfidiousness and hatred: it must be the Jews who put the Jews into the ovens, it must be shown that the Jews, the subrace, the sub-men, bow to any and all humiliation, even to destroying themselves. On the other hand, it is proved that not all the SS gladly accepted massacre as a daily task; delegating part of the work to the victims themselves, and indeed the most filthy part, was meant to alleviate (and probably did) a few consciences here and there.

Obviously, it would be iniquitous to attribute such acquiescence to some specifically Jewish peculiarity: members

of the Special Squads were also non-Jewish, German and Polish prisoners, although with the 'more dignified' duties of *Kapos*; and also Russian prisoners-of-war, whom the Nazis considered only by one degree superior to the Jews. They were few, because the Russians in Auschwitz were few (they were, for the greater part, exterminated before, immediately after being captured, machine-gunned on the edge of enormous common graves): but they did not behave in a different way from the Jews.

The Special Squads, since they were bearers of a horrendous secret, were kept rigorously apart from the other prisoners and the outside world. Nevertheless, as is known to anyone who had gone through similar experiences, no barrier is ever without a flaw: information, possibly incomplete or distorted, has a tremendous power of penetration, and something always does filter through. Concerning these squads, vague and mangled rumours already circulated among us during our imprisonment, and were confirmed afterwards by the other sources mentioned before, but the intrinsic horror of this human condition has imposed a sort of reserve on all the testimony; so even today it is difficult to conjure up an image of 'what it meant' to be forced to exercise this trade for months. It has been testified that a large amount of alcohol was put at the disposal of those wretches and that they were in a permanent state of complete debasement and prostration. One of them declared: 'Doing this work, one either goes crazy the first day or gets accustomed to it.' Another, though: 'Certainly, I could have killed myself or got myself killed; but I wanted to survive, to avenge myself and bear witness. You mustn't think that we are monsters; we are the same as you, only much more unhappy.'

It is evident that these things which were said, and the innumerable others which were probably said by them and among them but did not reach us, cannot be taken literally. From men who have known such extreme destitution one cannot expect a deposition in the juridical sense of the term, but something that is at once a lament, a curse, an expiation, and an attempt to justify and rehabilitate themselves. One

should expect a liberating outburst instead of a Medusa-faced truth.

Conceiving and organising the squads was National Socialism's most demonic crime. Behind the pragmatic aspect (to economise on able men, impose on others the most atrocious tasks), other more subtle aspects can be perceived. This institution represented an attempt to shift on to others – specifically the victims – the burden of guilt, so that they were deprived of even the solace of innocence. It is neither easy nor agreeable to dredge this abyss of viciousness, and yet I think it must be done, because what it was possible to perpetrate yesterday can be attempted again tomorrow, can overwhelm ourselves and our children. One is tempted to turn away with a grimace and close one's mind: this is a temptation one must resist. In fact, the existence of the squads had a meaning, contained a message: 'We, the master race, are your destroyers, but you are no better than we are; if we so wish and we do so wish, we can destroy not only your bodies but also your souls, just as we have destroyed ours.'

Miklos Nyiszli, a Hungarian physician, was one of the very few survivors of the last Special Squad in Auschwitz. He was a renowned anatomical pathologist, expert in autopsies and the chief doctor of the Birkenau SS whose services Mengele – who died a few years ago, escaping justice – had secured; he had given him special treatment and considered him almost as a colleague. Nyiszli was supposed to devote himself in particular to the study of twins: in fact, Birkenau was the only place in the world where it was possible to study the corpses of twins killed at the same moment. Alongside this particular task of his, to which, it should be said in passing, it does not appear he strenuously objected, Nyiszli was also the attending physician of the squad, with which he lived in close contact. Well, he recounts an episode that seems significant to me.

The SS, as I have already said, carefully chose from the Lagers or the arriving convoys the candidates for the squads,

and did not hesitate to eliminate on the spot anyone who refused or seemed unsuitable for their duties. The SS treated the newly engaged members with the same contemptuous and detached attitude that they were accustomed to show towards all prisoners and Jews in particular: it had been inculcated in them that these were despicable beings, enemies of Germany, and therefore not entitled to life; and in the most favourable instance, they should be compelled to work until they died of exhaustion. But this is not how they behaved with the veterans of the squad: in them, they recognised, to some extent, colleagues, by now as inhuman as themselves, hitched to the same cart, bound together by the foul link of imposed complicity. So, Nyiszli tells how during a 'work' pause he attended a soccer game between the SS and the SK (*Sonderkommando*), that is to say, between a group representing the SS on guard at the crematorium and a group representing the Special Squad. Other men of the SS and the rest of the squad are present at the game; they take sides, bet, applaud, urge the players on as if, rather than at the gates of hell, the game were taking place on the village green.

Nothing of this kind ever took place, nor would it have been conceivable, with other categories of prisoners; but with them, with the 'crematorium ravens', the SS could enter the field on an equal footing, or almost. Behind this armistice one hears Satanic laughter: it is consummated, we have succeeded, you are no longer the other race, the anti-race, the prime enemy of the millennial Reich: you are no longer the people who reject idols. We have embraced you, corrupted you, dragged you to the bottom with us. You are like us, you proud people, dirtied with your own blood, as we are. You too, like us and like Cain, have killed the brother. Come, we can play together.

Nyiszli describes another episode that deserves to be meditated upon. In the gas chamber have been jammed together and murdered the components of a recently arrived convoy and the squad is performing its horrendous everyday work, sorting out the tangle of corpses, washing them with

hoses and transporting them to the crematorium, but on the floor they find a young woman who is still alive. The event is exceptional, unique; perhaps the human bodies formed a barrier around her, sequestered a pocket of air that remained breathable. The men are perplexed; death is their trade at all hours, death is a habit because, precisely, 'one either goes crazy the first day or gets accustomed to it', but this woman is alive. They hide her, warm her, bring her beef broth, question her: the girl is sixteen years old, she cannot orient herself in space or time, does not know where she is, has gone through, without understanding it, the sequence of the sealed train, the brutal preliminary selection, the stripping, the entry into the chamber from which no one had ever come out alive. She has not understood, but she has seen; therefore she must die, and the men of the squad know it just as they know that they too must die for the same reason. But these slaves, debased by alcohol and the daily slaughter, are transformed; they no longer have before them the anonymous mass, the flood of frightened, stunned people coming off the boxcars: they have a person.

One cannot help but think of the 'unusual respect' and the hesitation of the 'foul Monatto' when faced by the individual case, faced by the child Cecilia killed by the plague whom, in Manzoni's novel *The Betrothed*, the mother refuses to let be flung on the cart together with the heaped-up corpses. Occurrences like this astonish because they conflict with the image we have of man in harmony with himself, coherent, monolithic; and they should not astonish because that is not how man is. Compassion and brutality can coexist in the same individual and in the same moment, despite all logic; and for all that, compassion itself eludes logic. There is no proportion between the pity we feel and the extent of the pain by which the pity is aroused: a single Anne Frank excites more emotion than the myriads who suffered as she did but whose image has remained in the shadows. Perhaps it is necessary that it can be so; if we had to and were able to suffer the sufferings of everyone, we could not live. Perhaps the dreadful gift of pity for the

many is granted only to saints; to the Monatti, to the members of the Special Squad, and to all of us there remains in the best of cases, only the sporadic pity addressed to the single individual, the *Mitmensch*, the co-man: the human being of flesh and blood standing before us, within the reach of our providentially myopic senses.

A doctor is called, and he revives the girl with an injection: yes, the gas has not had its effect, she will be able to survive, but where and how? Just then Muhsfeld arrives; he is one of the SS men attached to the death installations. The doctor calls him to one side and presents the case to him. Muhsfeld hesitates, then he decides: no, the girl must die; if she were older, it would be a different matter, she would have more sense, perhaps she could be convinced to keep quiet about what has happened to her, but she's only sixteen: she can't be trusted. And yet, he does not kill her with his own hands; he calls one of his underlings to eliminate her with a blow to the nape of the neck. Now, this man Muhsfeld was not a compassionate person; his daily ration of slaughter was studded with arbitrary and capricious acts, marked by his inventions of refined cruelty. He was tried in 1947 in Cracow, sentenced to death and hanged and this was right; but not even he was a monolith. If he had lived in a different environment and epoch, it is likely that he would have behaved like any other common man.

In *The Brothers Karamazov* Grushenka tells the fable of the little onion. A vicious old woman dies and goes to hell, but her guardian angel, squeezing his memory, recalls that she once, only once, gave a beggar the gift of a little onion she had dug up from her garden: he holds the little onion out to her, and the old woman grasps it and is lifted out of the flames of hell. This fable has always struck me as revolting: what human monster did not throughout his life make the gift of a little onion, if not to others, to his children, his wife, his dog? That single, immediately erased instant of pity is certainly not enough to absolve Muhsfeld. It is enough, however, to place him too, though at its extreme boundary, within the grey band,

that zone of ambiguity which irradiates around regimes based on terror and obsequiousness.

It is not difficult to judge Muhsfeld, and I do not believe that the tribunal which sentenced him had any doubts; on the other hand, in contrast to this, our need and our ability to judge falters when confronted by the Special Squads. Questions immediately arise, convulsed questions for which it is an arduous task to find an answer that will reassure us about man's nature. Why did they accept that task? Why didn't they rebel? Why didn't they prefer death?

To a certain extent, the facts available to us permit us to attempt to answer. Not all did accept; some did rebel, knowing they would die. Concerning at least one case we have precise information: a group of four hundred Jews from Corfu, who in July 1944 had been included in the squad, refused without exception to do the work and was immediately killed by gas. There has remained the memory of various individual mutinies, all immediately punished by an atrocious death (Filip Müller, one of the very few survivors of the squads, tells of a companion of his whom the SS pushed into the oven alive), and many cases of suicide at the moment of recruitment, or immediately after. Finally, it must be remembered that it was precisely the Special Squad which in October 1944 organised the only desperate attempt at revolt in the history of the Auschwitz Lager, which we have already mentioned.

The information about this exploit which has come down to us is neither complete nor without contradictions. It is known that the insurgents (the personnel of two of the five Auschwitz-Birkenau crematoria), poorly armed and without contacts with the Polish Partisans outside the Lager and the clandestine defence organisation inside the Lager, blew up crematorium number three and engaged the SS in battle. The battle was soon over; a number of the insurgents managed to cut the barbed wire and escape to the outside but were captured soon afterwards. Not one of them survived; approximately four hundred and fifty were killed immediately

by the SS; among the latter, three were killed and twelve wounded.

Those whom we know about, the miserable manual labourers of the slaughter, are therefore the others, those who from one shift to the next preferred a few more weeks of life (what a life!) to immediate death, but who in no instance induced themselves, or were induced, to kill with their own hands. I repeat: I believe that no one is authorised to judge them, not those who lived through the experience of the Lager and even less those who did not live through it. I would invite anyone who dares pass judgement to carry out upon himself, with sincerity, a conceptual experiment: let him imagine, if he can, that he has lived for months or years in a ghetto, tormented by chronic hunger, fatigue, promiscuity and humiliation; that he has seen die around him, one by one, his beloved; that he is cut off from the world, unable to receive or transmit news; that, finally, he is loaded on to a train, eighty or a hundred persons to a boxcar; that he travels towards the unknown, blindly, for sleepless days and nights; and that he is at last flung inside the walls of an indecipherable inferno. This, it seems to me, is the true *Befehlnotstand*, the 'state of compulsion following an order': not the one systematically and impudently invoked by the Nazis dragged to judgement, and later on (but in their footsteps) by the war criminals of many other countries. The former is a rigid either/or, immediate obedience or death; the latter is an internal fact at the centre of power and could have been resolved (actually often was resolved) by some manoeuvre, some slow-down in career, moderate punishment or, in the worst of cases, the objector's transfer to the front.

The experiment I have proposed is not pleasant; Vercors tried to describe it in his story *Les armes de la Nuit* (Albin Michel, Paris, 1953), in which he speaks of 'the death of the soul', and which reread today seems to me intolerably infected by aestheticism and literary lechery. But it is doubtless true that it deals with the death of the soul. Now, nobody can know for how long and under what trials his soul can resist

before yielding or breaking. Every human being possesses a reserve of strength whose extent is unknown to him: it can be large, small, or non-existent, and only extreme adversity makes it possible to evaluate it. Even without having recourse to the extreme case of the Special Squads, it often happens to us who have returned that when we describe our vicissitudes, our interlocutor will say: 'In your place I would not have lasted for a single day.' This statement does not have a precise meaning: one is never in another's place. Each individual is so complex an object that there is no point in trying to foresee his behaviour, all the more so in extreme situations; and neither is it possible to foresee one's own behaviour. Therefore, I ask that we meditate on the story of 'the crematorium ravens' with pity and rigour, but that a judgement of them be suspended.

The same *impotentia judicandi* paralyses us when confronted by the Rumkowski case. The story of Chaim Rumkowski is not exactly a Lager story, although it reaches its conclusion in the Lager: it is a ghetto story, but so eloquent on the fundamental theme of human ambiguity fatally provoked by oppression that I would say it fits our discourse only too well. I repeat it here, even though I have already told it elsewhere.* On my return from Auschwitz I found in my pocket a curious coin of light alloy, which I have saved to this day. It is scratched and corroded; on one side it has the Hebrew star (the 'shield of David'), the date 1943, and the word *getto*; on the other side it has the inscription *Quittung über 10 Mark* and *Der Älteste der Juden in Litzmannstadt*, that is, respectively, 'Receipt for ten marks' and 'The elder of the Jews in Litzmannstadt': in short, it was a coin for internal use in a ghetto. For many years I forgot about its existence, and then, around 1974, I was able to reconstruct its story, which is fascinating and sinister.

In honour of a certain General Litzmann who had defeated

* In *Moments of Reprieve* (Michael Joseph, London, 1986).

the Russians during the First World War, the Nazis had rebaptised the Polish city of Lodz with the name of Litzmannstadt. During the final months of 1944, the last survivors of the Lodz ghetto were deported to Auschwitz: I probably found that by now useless coin on the ground in the Lager.

In 1939 Lodz had 750,000 inhabitants and was the most industrialised Polish city, the most 'modern' and the ugliest: it made its living from the textile industry, like Manchester and Biella, and it was conditioned by the presence of a myriad of small and large factories, which were mostly antiquated even then. As in all cities of a certain importance in occupied Eastern Europe, the Nazis hastened to set up a ghetto in it, reinstating, aggravated by their modern ferocity, the regime of the medieval and Counter-Reformation ghettos. The Lodz ghetto, begun as early as February 1940, was first in order of time, and after that of Warsaw second in the number of inhabitants: it grew to more than 160,000 Jews and was disbanded only in the autumn of 1944. So it was the longest lived of the Nazi ghettos, and this must be attributed to two reasons: its economic importance and the perplexing personality of its president.

His name was Chaim Rumkowski. Formerly a failed small industrialist, after varied travels and uneven fortunes he had settled in Lodz in 1917. In 1940 he was almost sixty and a widower without children; he enjoyed a certain esteem, and was known as the director of Jewish charities and as an energetic, uncultivated and authoritarian man. The position of President (or Elder) of a ghetto was intrinsically frightful, but it was a position, it constituted social recognition, raised one a step up the ladder and conferred rights and privileges, that is, authority: and Rumkowski passionately loved authority. How he happened to obtain the investiture is not known: perhaps it was simply a hoax in the sinister Nazi style (Rumkowski was, or seemed to be, a fool with an air of respectability – in short, the ideal dupe); perhaps he himself had intrigued to be chosen, so strong in him must have been the will to power.

It is proved that the four years of his presidency or, more exactly, his dictatorship, were an astonishing tangle of megalomaniac dream, barbaric vitality, and real diplomatic and organisational skill. He soon came to see himself in the role of absolute but enlightened monarch, and he was certainly encouraged along this path by his German masters who, true enough, played with him, but appreciated his talents as a good administrator and man of order. He obtained from them the authorisation to mint money, both metallic (that coin of mine) and on watermarked paper which was officially supplied him. This currency was used to pay the worn-out workers in the ghettos; they could spend it in the ghetto stores to acquire their food rations, which on the average amounted to 800 calories a day. (Let me mention in passing that at least 2,000 calories are needed to survive in a condition of total repose.)

From these famished citizens of his, Rumkowski aspired to obtain not only obedience and respect but also love: in this respect, modern dictatorships differ from the ancient ones. Since he disposed of an army of excellent artists and craftsmen, ready to perform at his slightest hint in exchange for a quarter-loaf of bread, he gave orders to design and print stamps bearing his effigy, with his snow-white hair and beard haloed by the light of Hope and Faith. He had a carriage drawn by a skeleton nag and in it he rode through the streets of his minuscule kingdom, streets crowded with beggars and postulants. He had a regal mantle, and surrounded himself with a court of flatterers and henchmen; he had his courtier-poets compose hymns in which 'his firm and powerful hands' were celebrated, and the peace and order which, thanks to him, reigned in the ghetto. He ordered that the children in the nefarious schools, devastated daily by epidemics, malnutrition and German raids, should be given the assignment to write essays in praise 'of our beloved and providential President'. Like all autocrats, he hastened to organise an efficient police force, ostensibly to maintain order, but in fact to protect his own person and impose his discipline. It was composed of 600 guards armed with clubs and an unspecified number of spies. He delivered

many speeches, some of which have been preserved for us and whose style is unmistakable: he had adopted the oratorical technique of Mussolini and Hitler, the style of inspired recitation, pseudo-colloquy with the crowd, the creation of consent through subjugation and plaudit. Perhaps this imitation of his was deliberate; perhaps, instead, it was unconscious identification with the model of the 'necessary hero' who at the time dominated Europe and was sung by d'Annunzio; but it is more likely that his attitude sprang from his condition as a small tyrant, impotent with those above him and omnipotent with those below him. The man who has throne and sceptre, who is not afraid of being contradicted or derided, speaks like this.

And yet his figure was more complex than it may appear thus far. Rumkowski was not only a renegade and an accomplice; to some extent, besides convincing others, he must have progressively convinced himself that he *was* a Messiah, a saviour of his people, whose welfare, at least at intervals, he must certainly have desired. One must benefit in order to feel beneficent, and feeling beneficent is gratifying even for a corrupt satrap. Paradoxically, his identification with the oppressor alternates, or goes hand in hand, with an identification with the oppressed, because, as Thomas Mann says, man is a mixed-up creature; and he becomes all the more confused, we might add, the more he is subjected to tensions: at that point he evades our judgement, just as a compass goes wild at the magnetic pole.

Even though he was constantly despised and derided by the Germans, it is probable that Rumkowski thought of himself not as a servant but as a Lord. He must have taken his own authority seriously: when the Gestapo, without warning, seized *his* councilmen, he came courageously to their rescue, exposing himself to jeers and slaps which he knew how to endure with dignity. On other occasions, he tried to bargain with the Germans who kept exacting more and more cloth from Lodz and from him ever more numerous contingents of useless mouths (children, old and sick people) to send to the gas chamber in Treblinka and, later on, Auschwitz. The very

harshness with which he hastened to repress signs of insubordination on the part of his subjects (there existed in Lodz, as in other ghettos, nuclei of bold political resistance, with Zionist, Bundist, or Communist roots) did not originate so much in servility towards the Germans, as in *lèse-majesté*, indignation over the outrage inflicted on his regal person.

In September 1944, as the Russian front approached, the Nazis initiated the liquidation of the Lodz ghetto. Men and women by the tens of thousands were deported to Auschwitz, *anus mundi*, ultimate drainage site of the German universe; worn out as they were, they were all eliminated almost immediately. About a thousand men remained in the ghetto, to dismantle the machinery of the factories and cancel the traces of the slaughter: they were liberated by the Red Army shortly afterwards, and it is to them that we owe the information recorded here.

About Chaim Rumkowski's final fate two versions exist, as though the ambiguity under whose sign he lived was protracted to envelop his death. According to the first version, in the course of the ghetto's liquidation, he supposedly tried to oppose the deportation of his brother, from whom he did not want to be separated. A German officer then, it is said, proposed he should leave voluntarily with his brother, and he is supposed to have accepted. Another version claims instead that Rumkowski's rescue was attempted by Hans Biebow, another figure drenched in duplicity.

This shady German industrialist was the functionary responsible for the ghetto's administration and at the same time its exclusive contractor: hence his was a delicate position, because the textile factories in Lodz worked for the armed forces. Biebow was not a ferocious beast; he was not interested in creating useless suffering or punishing the Jews for the sin of being Jewish, but he was interested in profiting from his contracts, in both legitimate and other ways. The torment in the ghetto touched him, but only indirectly; he wanted the slave workers to work, and therefore he did not want them to

die of hunger: his moral sense ended there. In reality, he was the true master of the ghetto, and he was linked to Rumkowski by that buyer–supplier relationship which often becomes a crude friendship. Biebow, a small jackal too cynical to take race demonology seriously, would have liked to put off forever the dismantling of the ghetto, which, for him, was an excellent business deal, and to preserve Rumkowski from deportation, on whose complicity he relied. Here one sees how often a realist is objectively better than a theoretician. But the theoreticians of the SS thought otherwise, and they were the stronger. They were *grundlich* radicals: get rid of the ghetto and get rid of Rumkowski.

Unable to deal with the matter otherwise, Biebow, who had good connections, handed Rumkowski a letter addressed to the Lager of his destination, and guaranteed that it would protect him and assure him special treatment. Rumkowski supposedly asked and obtained from Biebow the right to travel to Auschwitz – he and his family – with the decorum becoming his rank, that is, in a special car, attached to the end of a convoy of freight cars packed with deportees without privileges: there was only one fate for Jews in German hands, whether they were cowards or heroes, humble or proud. Neither the letter nor the special carriage were able to save Chaim Rumkowski, the king of the Jews, from the gas chamber.

A story like this is not self-enclosed. It is pregnant, full of significance, asks more questions than it answers, sums up in itself the entire theme of the grey zone and leaves one dangling. It shouts and clamours to be understood, because in it one perceives a symbol, as in dreams and the signs of heaven.

Who is Rumkowski? He is not a monster, neither is he a common man; yet many around us are like him. The failures that preceded his 'career' are significant: few are the men who draw moral strength from failure. It seems to me that in his story it is possible to recognise in an exemplary form the almost physical necessity which causes the ill-defined area of ambiguity and compromise to be born from political coercion. At the foot of every absolute throne, men such as Rumkowski crowd in order to grasp their small portion of power. It is a recurrent spectacle. We remember the deadly struggles during the last months of the Second World War in Hitler's court and among the ministers of Mussolini's Republic of Salò; grey men, blind first and criminal later, frenziedly dividing among themselves the tatters of an iniquitous and moribund authority.

Power is like a drug: the need for either is unknown to anyone who has not tried them, but after the initiation, which (as for Rumkowski) can be fortuitous, the dependency and need for ever larger doses is born; also born is the denial of reality and the return to childish dreams of omnipotence. If the interpretation of a Rumkowski intoxicated with power is valid, it must be admitted that the intoxication occurred not because of, but rather despite, the ghetto environment; that is, it is so powerful as to prevail even under conditions that would seem to be designed to extinguish all individual will. In fact, in him as in his more famous models, the syndrome produced by protracted and undisputed power is clearly visible: a distorted view of the world, dogmatic arrogance, need for adulation, convulsive clinging to the levers of command, and contempt for the law.

All this does not exonerate Rumkowski from his responsibilities. That a Rumkowski should have emerged from Lodz's affliction is painful and distressing; if he had survived his own tragedy, and the tragedy of the ghetto which he contaminated, superimposing on it his histrionic image, no tribunal would have absolved him, nor certainly can we absolve him on the moral plane. But there are extenuating circumstances: an infernal order such as National Socialism was, exercises a frightful power of corruption, against which it is difficult to guard oneself. It degrades its victims and makes them similar to itself, because it needs both great and small complicities. To resist it a truly solid moral armature is needed, and the one available to Chaim Rumkowski, the Lodz mer-

chant, together with his entire generation, was fragile. But how strong is ours, the Europeans of today? How would each of us behave if driven by necessity and at the same time lured by seduction?

Rumkowski's story is the sorry, disquieting story of the *Kapos* and Lager functionaries; the small hierarchs who serve a regime to whose misdeeds they are willingly blind; of the subordinates who sign everything because a signature costs little; of those who shake their heads but acquiesce; those who say, 'If I did not do it, someone else worse than I would.'

Rumkowski, a symbolic and compendiary figure, must be placed in this band of half-consciences. Whether high or low it is difficult to say: only he could clarify this if he could speak before us, even lying, as perhaps he always lied, to himself also; he would in any case help us understand him, as every defendant helps his judge, even though he does not want to, even if he lies, because man's capacity to play a role is not unlimited.

But all this is not enough to explain the sense of urgency and threat that emanates from this story. Perhaps its meaning is vaster. We are all mirrored in Rumkowski, his ambiguity is ours, it is our second nature, we hybrids moulded from clay and spirit; his fever is ours, the fever of our Western civilisation that 'descends into hell with trumpets and drums', and its miserable adornments are the distorting image of our symbols of social prestige. His folly is that of presumptuousness and mortal Man as he is described by Isabella in *Measure for Measure*, the Man who,

> Dressed in a little brief authority,
> Most ignorant of what he's most assured,
> His glassy essence, like an angry ape,
> Plays such fantastic tricks before high heaven
> As make the angels weep . . .

Like Rumkowski, we too are so dazzled by power and

prestige as to forget our essential fragility: willingly or not we come to terms with power, forgetting that we are all in the ghetto, that the ghetto is walled in, that outside the ghetto reign the lords of death and that close by the train is waiting.

Bernhard Schlink

Guilt about the Past

UQP

reflects my education and training: I am a law professor and was for many years a judge, never a literary scholar or critic. I might also confess at the outset that I don't reflect on my fiction writing in a theoretical way. I live with my plots and characters and play with them in my mind until I'm ready to write down the novel or story I have in my head. And since my characters think and feel within the parameters of my own thoughts and feelings, political, moral and philosophical themes enter into my fiction. But I haven't developed an epistemology of writing, and don't miss or feel the need to have one. In fact, the few reflections about literature and writing that I will try to offer in the last essay have only been triggered by the questions I have been asked and the criticism I have received long after the actual writing.

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by Bernhard Schlink
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Collective Guilt?

Exploring the topic of collective guilt affords a view into the history of law. In ancient Teutonic law, documented in reports from Tacitus onwards, when an injustice was committed it disturbed the peace between the individual perpetrator and the individual victim and, in addition, between the perpetrator's clan and the victim's clan. And this was and is true of many other tribal law systems. Thus, it was not just the perpetrator, but the perpetrator's whole clan that was exposed to the revenge or the penalty exacted by the victim and their entire clan. The victim's clan made the claim for atonement

money, and the perpetrator's clan was accountable for paying it. This collective responsibility, liability, and atonement operated through all levels of society and affected adults as well as children. If the victim of the wrongful act was a child, then the revenge sacrifice chosen was often not the actual perpetrator, but a child from his or her clan. As a reprisal for a crime committed against the community, the perpetrator along with their partner and children might be deprived of any sustenance. Beyond this, children were legally liable for some of their parent's actions such as high treason and later also heresy. In the year 1320 in Nuremberg, a special law was recorded stating that persons constituting a danger to the public could be drowned in a sack together with their children. When families and clans were absent, and when the ties of families and clans became weaker, then the next highest-ranking collectives assumed responsibility, liability, and atonement; Germanic law recognised appropriate penal sanctions against guilds and municipalities.

Starting in the late Middle Ages the concept of collective responsibility, liability, and

atonement lessened in significance. But even into the nineteenth century, when the notion had long since disappeared, there was discussion in Germany as to whether associations could be found guilty and punished for the acts of their members. And if I have informed myself correctly, Anglo-Saxon legal systems still recognise the imposition of fines against associations. Current international law prohibits collective punishments. It does allow, however, so-called reprisals that may contain elements characteristic of retaliation to be taken against collectives. A treatise of international law makes the subtle distinction that although the individual victim of the reprisal is being punished for a deed for which he or she is not guilty, this punishment is merely a reprisal vis-à-vis the collective. Of course, the victim will not feel the subtle distinction between a reprisal and a collective punishment.

There are a number of reasons for the diminished importance and eventual disappearance of the concept of collective responsibility, liability, and atonement. Today collective responsibility for an act is rarely included under the notion

of guilt. Once guilt is defined as individual and subjective, based on fault, knowledge and the intent to commit an offence, strict liability, based only on causation or the result of the harm, becomes more difficult to understand and defend, even if it is the same person who caused the result and is held strictly liable. Collective guilt becomes even more difficult to understand and defend once the concept of individual and subjective guilt, or simply the guilt principle as the foundation of liability, becomes dominant. There are numerous causes for this development. In the first millennium, Christian theology developed a notion of sin that focused on individual intent and individual reform. In the early second millennium, Germany began to adopt Roman law in which the individual provides the conceptual and structural framework for judgment. Finally, the individualism and subjectivism of the Enlightenment left no room for collective judgment. Against this historical backdrop, the concept of guilt in connection with collective responsibility, liability and atonement can be recognised, if at all, only as an irrational conceptualisation of guilt. In a

modern German legal treatise referencing Carl Jung, collective guilt is understood as a psychological phenomenon where guilt spreads itself from the perpetrators over the broader human and even physical landscape into the surrounding areas, seizing houses, villages, and woods where the crimes took place; it is as irrational as it is primal.

And yet, the developments that gave rise to our current concept of individual guilt were not only the adoption of Christian theology on sin, the reception of Roman law, and the growth and flowering of the Enlightenment rationality over superstition and irrationality. The disappearance of tribal liability or liability based on clan affiliation coincided with the dissolution of the tribe and clan system, which together with the decline of rural populations due to feudalisation allowed many to become, as we say in colloquial German, 'too low for the feud and too poor for the penance'. The increase of territorial rule and the monopolisation of the use of force by regional lords required that vengeful feuds had to be repressed. Whereas the individual had once been a legal entity not

of his or her own accord, but only as he or she was recognised and protected by a tribe, clan, guild, or municipality, society transformed itself economically as well as politically so that the individual now became the fundamental legal entity.

It is not irrational to form communities that grant legal recognition and protection and are capable of liability. The rationale for collective responsibility, liability and atonement becomes apparent when we look at how old Germanic law approached the release from liability. The perpetrator's clan would be released from liability if they broke with, if they expelled, or if they handed the perpetrator over to the victim's clan. One reason for this was that the perpetrator contributed to the clan's economic wellbeing. The clan was sustained by the labour and the performance of its members and ought not be able to continue to profit from the perpetrator's work. If abandoned to members of the victim's clan, this clan then had the discretion to either put the perpetrator to death or to make him their slave. In later times public authorities took over this role; instead of being delivered to the

victim's clan, the perpetrator was handed over to the public authorities. Public authorities also punished the guilds and municipalities if they did not of their own accord expel, punish, or deliver the perpetrator up for punishment. The idea behind these ways of achieving a waiver of liability is clear: the collective incurs liability for the perpetrator's misconduct if solidarity and economic community with the perpetrator are maintained in reaping the profits from their labours, aiding them after the fact, and obstructing their just punishment. The terms 'obstruction of justice' and acting as an 'accessory after the fact' are relatively modern. To punish a community because it did not of its own accord address a crime and either punish the perpetrator or hand them over for punishment presupposes the existence of a public authority that hardly existed in early Germanic law and can be recognised in any real sense only during the course of the Middle Ages. But releasing the perpetrator's clan from liability through the dissociation, expulsion or ostracism of the perpetrator is an old idea, and the thought that collective liability has its foundation in

freely-chosen solidarity is discernable therein. It is not the idea of responsibility for someone else's crime, but of responsibility for one's own solidarity with the criminal.

The web of guilt that captures offences of this kind is high and wide. Beyond the perpetrators, every person who stands in solidarity with them and maintains solidarity after the fact becomes entangled. In a legal sense, today one can only be judged guilty if, according to existing law, maintaining or establishing solidarity amounts to criminal obstruction of justice, acting as an accessory after the fact, or receiving stolen goods. But the concept of guilt is not only associated with the standards of existing law, but also with norms of religion and morals, etiquette and custom as well as day-to-day communications and interactions. The unavailability of legal remedies does not exclude other norms from being identified and applied in other cases of maintaining solidarity with the perpetrator.

In my opinion, such norms are alive and well. The maintenance and establishment of solidarity is a normative occurrence, supported

and accompanied by normative expectations. By normative I mean expectations that are maintained despite factual disappointment and distinguished from factual expectations that are tested against reality and willingly modified when mistaken: affirming one's solidarity with another is a declaration that they should be regarded, respected and treated as an equal, while in fact, as anyone can see, the two are in separate situations and therefore the declaration can be regarded as factually incorrect. Nevertheless, the expectation that both should be regarded as equals is not given up but held onto against the facts; one who declares oneself in solidarity with another is insisting on this expectation – as does an outsider who takes the declaration seriously. The price for establishing and maintaining solidarity is of course that one is regarded and treated equally when one would rather not be. As long as the ties of solidarity are not severed, all the behaviour of the one will also be credited to the other.

The norms that bring about this connection of responsibility are not of a particular

moral code or etiquette. They are the rules that communications and interactions follow and function under. If establishing and maintaining solidarity is creating a community of responsibility, of answering for actions and ultimately of bearing the accusations and consequences, how is it achieved? By belonging to a family, an association, an organisation or institution, and even to a people. Not that the ties could never be severed, that there could be no dissociation and expulsion, but as long as those options have not taken place, the solidarity exists as by default, if you will.

The assumption that membership to a people engenders solidarity is something Germans of my generation do not easily like to accept. Many of us tend to regard ourselves as world citizens of a global society, as free citizens in a free world, as Westerners or Europeans, rather than as Germans. But everyone with minimal awareness who travels knows that the world is not so cosmopolitan and international as one might like it to be. That wish is symptomatic of another wish to escape feelings of common responsibility and guilt assumed to exist

through the solidarity of belonging to the same country of people.

Allow me to posit these last thoughts with regard to the Third Reich. The crimes committed before 1945 did not include only perpetrators, inciters, and accessories to the crimes; there were also those who were fully capable of resistance and opposition but did nothing. After the crimes had been committed it was possible to either maintain or withdraw solidarity from them. The perpetrators and those who were implicated in one way or another in the crimes could have either remained within the circle of solidarity or have been cast out if it. The legal historical perspective shows that the act of not renouncing, not judging and not repudiating carries its own guilt with it. And it is not a legal historical reminiscence; it is equally true today that one becomes entangled in another's guilt if one maintains or establishes solidarity with that person. The principle is as follows: to not renounce the other includes one in that person's guilt for past crimes, but so that a new sort of guilt is created. Those in the circle of solidarity who are themselves not guilty through actions

of their own, bring about their own guilt when, in response to attendant accusations, they do not respond by dissociating themselves from those who are guilty. According to this principle it was possible for Germans, if not already guilty as perpetrators and participants prior to 1945, to be implicated in guilt thereafter for not having separated themselves from the perpetrators and participants though renunciation. That the Germans did not do so, or only did so haphazardly and half-heartedly and not as they were in a position to have done, is true without a doubt. They didn't even do it when they, as the German protestant churches did, recognised collective guilt after the war; whilst acknowledging everyone's guilt and seeking forgiveness for all, they neglected to renounce individual perpetrators and participants.

The webs of guilt have their own tragic nature, in the sense that dissociation, judgment and repudiation could not and cannot be fully successful after 1945. For one, the numbers were huge; those who were involved in one way or another were just too many. And then there is the grim alternative between

repudiation by 'a night of long knives' that would cut down both the guilty and innocent, and repudiation by the state governed by the rule of law through court cases that can only be insufficient in the face of organised crimes against humanity. There is no third choice. Even if the Germans had wanted to renounce the perpetrators and participants decisively and wholeheartedly, instead of haphazardly and half-heartedly, they would not have been spared the guilt: because renunciation would not have included all those who were guilty or because innocent people would have been implicated as well.

And the children? It is self-evident that the perpetrators, inciters, and accessories to the crimes are guilty. We understand also that those who did not offer any resistance or opposition in spite of being in a position to do so are guilty. We even understand that guilt also reaches those who do not actively separate themselves from the perpetrators and participants through dissociation, judgment, or repudiation. Finally, we understand that renunciation, if it had happened in a radical fashion, would still have

produced guilt again and again. Still, is it necessary for children to find themselves entangled in this web of guilt as well?

After the considerations up to this point the answer appears obvious: if members of a community of solidarity bring guilt upon themselves by not renouncing those guilty members of their community, and if a nation of people is such a community of solidarity, then yes, children too become entwined in the guilt of non-renunciation. This guilt sits in wait for them until they become able to recognise the guilt of others, dissociate or not dissociate themselves from it, and therewith become capable of acquiring their own guilt. But I think that the conclusion is more complicated than that.

It has been observed that children whose parents experience guilt solely on the basis of not dissociating themselves after 1945, who were neither perpetrators nor involved in some other way, are usually free from feelings of guilt. The relationship with guilt that causes the norm of dissociating oneself does not appear to reach far enough. However, while guilt has an effect on horizontal relationships, i.e. among

contemporaries, it also has an effect on vertical ones, i.e. between parents and children, since the children of perpetrators, inciters, and accessories to the crimes and, to a lesser extent, children of parents who despite being able to failed to offer any resistance or opposition, often experience feelings of guilt. Moreover, they experience the challenge of confronting their parents about their guilt and either coming to terms with it or withdrawing. Perhaps it could be said that the norm of self-dissociation extends to one further level of relationship only, horizontal or vertical, so that guilt emanates from perpetrators and other implicated parties to their contemporaries and to their own progeny, but not to the offspring of their contemporaries.

I would like to offer an explanation for this. The guilt of non-repudiation presumes a community of solidarity, which has to be actually experienced as a community inhabited by real people with whom one communicates and interacts. A community of solidarity is not something unintelligible or extrasensory, rather it is the tangible intertwining of relationships by real people

as they communicate and interact. Seen in this light, belonging to a people in common is not wholly sufficient to establish a community of solidarity. It has to be concretely experienced, and it is experienced in an especially fundamental way – by belonging to one generation or one family. The state of belonging to a generation or to a family makes personal the experience of living among a people in a community of solidarity. One's own identification with a people, its structures and history and the corresponding perceptions and expectations of others can likewise achieve this arrangement, albeit in decreased clarity and strength. What is more, one can avoid such identification and withdraw from it; one can live consciously in the here and now, not mired in history, and avoid contact with non-Germans, who confine one within one's German identity. The experience of belonging to one's own family or generation is inescapable, and for that reason the norm of dissociating oneself spreads at least as far as to one's contemporaries and to the next generation.

In conclusion, no judge can exempt, no verdict can free the children from their share of

guilt formed as part of their parents' bequeathal to them. Maybe a psychotherapist or psychoanalyst could offer a sort of release. Obviously, repression can substitute for release aggravated by occasional feelings of dismay and self-consciousness, embarrassment and shame. In any event, over the generations, collectively experienced historical events become individually varied memories. The task of dissociation from specific historical guilt leads to the creation of one's own identity, an undertaking that every generation has to master.

Legal standards and the other norms considered in the course of my deliberations release the generations to come from guilt resulting from the crimes committed by the national socialists. To a great extent, they are released into the future without a ready narrative and have the freedom to decide for themselves whether to define their identity as arising from history or as defined only by the here and now. Insofar as they choose an identity saturated by history or one that other people assign to them, they stand in a certain sort of solidarity with past generations and will have come to terms with their

guilty past, either by acceptance or dissociation. Only in this weak sense is guilt preserved in history and kept alive into the future.

The Presence of the Past

These years the people of my generation are turning sixty. We were born in the last years of the war and the first years thereafter and grew up with the German Federal Republic. We enjoyed the seemingly intact world of the fifties, grew tired of it and rebelled against it. In the sixties we became political, in the seventies we entered into our professional and working lives, in the eighties we grew successful in our careers, and in the nineties we secured influential positions in politics and government, the economy, education and the media. In a few years our star will begin its descent.

On our birthdays we give speeches about what we wanted to accomplish and what we achieved. Most of these speeches broach the subjects of the Third Reich and the Holocaust. For those of us employed in the humanities – in universities, culture and the media – the past, at one time or another, was or still is our topic; I don't know of any colleague of mine who hasn't, as I also have, given lectures and seminars on legal doctrine and practice in the Third Reich. For those of us working in politics, the administration, and the law, the past sharpened our understanding of freedom, equality, and a just system of government; the lessons to be learned from the Third Reich are an integral part of the advanced training programs for administrators and judges. When those of us in business or who offer professional services contemplate the ethics and responsibilities of their chosen fields they also contemplate the former involvement of these fields in the Third Reich and the Holocaust; they have organised exhibitions and publications on the role of doctors in the Third Reich, pharmacists in the Third Reich, chemists in the Third Reich and so forth.

For most of us our formative years were deeply influenced by the past of the Third Reich and the Holocaust. Its memory stood at the centre of our arguments with our parents and our rebellion against them. During the sixties, when those actually involved were reluctant to speak of the past, we developed a strong need to confront them, provoke them, ask them what they had done. Some of you may have seen the film, *The Nasty Girl*, in which a schoolgirl assigned to write a paper about her town decides to explore its wartime history, and encounters massive hostility from her older neighbours – this was a common experience among my friends. We regarded it as self-evident that the past had to be talked about, researched, taught, learned. Our image of German history acquired its contours from its shadow. When travelling abroad we were confronted as heirs of this past, and such confrontations came to define our experience of ourselves as Germans. Dealing with the past became a part of our self-perception and self-expression, even if it only played a minor role in our work.

Hence, for my generation the past is still very present – and not just for the intellectuals.

Two summers ago, during the soccer World Cup, I was watching a match in a beer garden in Berlin. When the German team scored its first goal, a worker my age threw his arms into the air and shouted, '*Wir sind wieder wer*!' ('We are somebody again!'). So even this worker saw himself under the long shadow of the past and experienced this moment as a liberation, as a chance to get back into the light. Since the expectations and ideas of our generation now define the cultural mainstream, the past that has moulded us and still occupies our thoughts has found its way into every corner of public life.

That was not without risk. During the sixties, the public discussion about the Third Reich and the Holocaust had to be insisted upon against great resistance. To break down the resistance of those who would rather have repressed and forgotten the past, the topic had to be raised again and again. But even after there was no longer anyone who needed to be convinced that the past may never be repressed or forgotten, my generation still prided itself on its moral fortitude. And it kept discussing the past as if

doing so still demanded courage, still justified pride, still could not happen often enough.

The result has been a sort of banality. The Holocaust has become small change that is easily handed out. Yet another memorial event, conference, article or book against forgetting the past, another comparison between Auschwitz and some awful contemporary event. The analogies stretch far; I have seen Kosovo and Darfur compared to Auschwitz, Saddam Hussein to Hitler, East German border guards who patrolled the Berlin Wall to concentration camp murderers, and current prejudices against foreigners to those against Jews back then.

The legacy for the next generation is dangerous. The ennui sometimes exhibited by schoolchildren concerning the Third Reich and the Holocaust has its roots in the deadening frequency with which they are confronted with the past by their teachers and the media. Likewise, the careless to cynical tone they sometimes adopt in speaking about the past is partly a result of being steeped in comparisons whose heavy tone of moral pathos does not always carry a corresponding moral weightiness.

That is not to say that comparisons may never be drawn. The idea of the Holocaust as incomparably unique is as fatally belittling as inappropriate comparisons. In hindsight, the so called *Historikerstreit* (Historian's Fight) of the eighties, in which German historians and philosophers debated whether the Holocaust was unique, or could be compared to other events, looks almost absurd. Historical situations are always unique and can still be compared; comparing situations doesn't cancel their uniqueness. The historians and philosophers who insisted on the incomparable uniqueness of the Holocaust, because they feared that otherwise the Holocaust would lose its power as a warning signal to future generations, defeated their own purpose. Future generations can be warned by the Holocaust not to do something they are about to do only if what they are about to do is somehow comparable to the Holocaust. One can learn from history and from the Holocaust only if one compares.

If a situation is so unique that it can't be compared to anything, increasing historical distance will mean that it can no longer

concern or engage us. It has lost its actuality. If the situation is discussed with moral pathos, that moral pathos amounts to almost nothing. Moral pathos not undergirded by moral engagement, and moral engagement not carried by contemporary concern, are not genuine. And the next generation keenly senses that hollowness.

What is both historically unique and persistently disturbing about the Holocaust is that Germany, with its cultural heritage and place among civilised nations, was capable of those kinds of atrocities. It elicits troubling questions: if the ice of a culturally-advanced civilisation upon which one fancied oneself safely standing was in fact so thin at that time, then how safe is the ice we live upon today? What protects us from falling through it? Individual morality? Societal and state institutions? Has the ice grown thicker with time or has the passage of time only allowed us to forget how thin it really is?

These questions concern the very foundations of our individual moral existence and our ability to live together in our society and its institutions. They are questions that are unsettling

and challenging even after decades of relative safety within the political, economic and cultural realms of a civil society. At the same time, we are not confronted with, nor do we have to find answers for, these questions on a daily basis. Perhaps there are no answers for them other than living our lives with accountability for what we have been given: our relationships with other human beings, our work and our institutions.

This brings me to the next danger resulting from my generation's preoccupation with the Third Reich and the Holocaust. The lesson we drew from the past was a moral one rather than an institutional one. We accused our parents, teachers, professors and politicians of blindness, cowardice, opportunism, the ambitious and ruthless pursuit of their careers, and a lack of moral courage. The accusations levelled placed the blame on individual moral failings, and within those indictments lay an implicit duty to embrace a higher standard of moral behaviour.

Therefore, those among my generation who became teachers attempted to instruct their students how to show civil and moral courage.

Some of you may have seen the film *Rosenstrasse* about the wives who demonstrated against the deportation of their Jewish husbands until the deportation was cancelled. It is a movie that teachers love to see with their students. It illustrates what they took to be the lesson from the past: it is righteous to show moral courage and resist. It is righteous to fight the beginnings of evil because courage has a better chance then than later. It is righteous to prepare oneself for possible future situations by looking at past situations and pondering what one would have done in them.

Certainly, moral courage is one of the lessons gleaned from the past. But I have doubts about the extent to which it can be taught in this didactic way. I think it is learned mostly from living example, experience and repeated practice. Fighting and winning yesterday's moral battles with bravery in one's mind doesn't necessarily prepare one for today's moral conflicts. After the wall had come down and the question came up which East German judges could be accepted as judges in the unified Germany, the president of the Federal Administrative Court advocated a

generous acceptance policy. He received a petition from West German judges who objected to this generosity: since East German judges had not shown the courage of insisting on their judicial independence but rather followed party orders, they were unsuited to be independent judges under the rule of law. So far so good. But since the West German judges didn't want to upset the president whose opinion was important for their careers, they decided not to sign the petition with their names but rather turn it in as an anonymous collective petition. They had learned something and they had done something but obviously they had also missed something.

Even if learned properly, moral courage is not the only and maybe not even the first lesson to be gleaned from the past. What the past likewise so glaringly shows is the helplessness of individual morality in the absence of institutions in which citizens are recognised and matter, institutions that they can impact by their appeals and which they can depend on to respond and support. Once parties, unions and associations, churches and clubs, universities, schools and courts have been forced into line,

there comes a point when the ethics of opposition survive only in quixotic heroic gestures.

In as far as there was any resistance during the Third Reich and the Holocaust that had an effect beyond being symbolic gestures, its basis was found less in individual morality than in communist or socialist solidarity, Christian faith and ecclesiastic responsibility, and the honour code of officers or of the aristocracy. The lessons of the past pertain not just to individual morality, but also, and perhaps more importantly, to societal and state institutions in which individual morality must be preserved if it is to have the power to resist in the crucial moment. This applies to citizens' engagement within and on behalf of institutions to ensure their proper functioning. That does not mean, however, that well-functioning institutions are built on constant evocations of morality. Moralising appeals in politics, moralising arguments in court decisions, moralising sermons in churches on all aspects of life, and moralising lectures about the responsibilities of schools and universities are again wrong-minded remnants of the past. Properly

functioning institutions embody morality without constantly preaching it.

Again, the engagement within and on behalf of institutions is something not taught and learned easily. Among my students I have many who strive for excellence because they want to go into corporate law and become rich. I have students who care about justice and human rights and want to work for non-government organisations, the United Nations (UN) and affiliated international organisations. I have students who want to enjoy the quietness and reliability of life as a civil servant or a judge, because today this life allows best for combining professional life and family life. But a judgeship at home needs and deserves as much engagement with justice as a job with the UN in Africa, and being an excellent lawyer in government, the administration, a union, or the church may not make you as rich, but is certainly as much fun as excelling in a corporate law firm. And the lesson from the past is that the maintenance of these and other institutions is as crucial a vaccine as assertions of individual morality.

Is this what it means to come to terms with the past, *die Vergangenheit zu bewältigen*? Contemplating what the past teaches us about life on thin ice?

The longer we live with the idea that the past is something we can and must come to terms with, the more paradoxical this proves to be. *Bewältigen*, which is probably translated most closely as 'to master' in the original and correct sense of the word, applies to a task; it stands before us, we set to work on it, and finally it is finished and mastered. Then we are done with it.

The thought that the past could and should be mastered contains not only the yearning for freedom from it; it even asserts an entitlement to such an end. As with every task, whoever works hard at it expects that the task will eventually be completed, and then demands to be released from duty once the task is finished. Whoever vigorously applies him- or herself to the work of commemorative remembrance wishes to be held captive by the past no more. Whoever remembers wants the right to forget.

The paradox becomes palpable when members of my generation, who are especially

sensitive to issues of the past and are actively engaged in its commemoration, leave their home country. Somewhere abroad they run into reprobation on account of the past and they are incensed: they have delved into the problems of the past with such sensitivity and commitment – how dare those outsiders hold them accountable for it?

And yet, longing not to be chained to a traumatic past is not wrong. What is mistaken, however, is the idea that fixation on the traumatic past would somehow guarantee being set free from it. A collective past, like that of an individual, is traumatic when it is not allowed to be remembered, and is just as much so if it has to be remembered. In other words, fixation on the past is merely the flipside of repression. Detraumatisation is the process of becoming able to both remember and forget; it is leaving the past in the past, in a way that embraces remembrance as well as forgetting. This applies in the same way to the victims and their descendants as to the perpetrators and their descendants. Detraumatisation can only fully succeed if it is successful on both sides, but for it to happen

and be successful across the divide can only be hoped for, with no expectations harboured.

There is no entitlement to having the victims and their descendants lay aside the past once the Germans have shown exemplary efforts in coming to terms with it. How and what they remember and forget, to what lengths they go in attempting to free themselves from the traumatic past through mourning the victims or accusing the perpetrators or claiming restitution from the perpetrators' descendants is their business. Whatever course of action they follow – it is not for us Germans to raise objections or feel indignation. Instead we owe respect to the other side's difficult struggle with a past that we made traumatic for them.

We must accept what they do but we do not always have to comply with it. An accusation made on behalf of the victims is not true solely because it was made on their behalf, restitution must not be paid simply because restitution has been claimed. Still, though the law may not require it, there are cases where respect and tact may require restitution to be paid even when it is not due, in consideration for their sensitivity,

as well as for the perception of the world. It makes sense even though it goes beyond what is required in a strictly legal sense. It pays tribute to the fact that the past is still traumatic to others. It does not mean that it has to be traumatic for us to the same extent. Detraumatisation takes place concomitantly within the dialogue and on each side independently, and one side does not have to wait until the other side successfully completes the process. Waiting for each other can also keep both mutually mired in trauma.

There is no mastering the past. But there is living consciously with present-day questions and emotions that the past releases. Questions and emotions – of course the past does not just trigger questions, but also makes us lose our composure, be at a loss for words, and become sad, fearful, and enraged, despair of cosmic and human justice, and suffer under the guilt that ensnares not only those who were then perpetrators, but those who later tolerated the perpetrators living among them.

In the instances in which the past does not currently evoke questions or emotions nothing is gained by referring to it again and again.

This only devalues and squanders the past's moral legacy. Where the Third Reich and the Holocaust do not bring up the questions and emotions that our generation has experienced, the next generation will have to experience its own questions and emotions and in its own way. In any case, they will not have to confront some of the issues that the first generation and my generation faced; the third generation is only slightly caught up in the guilt of the past, and the following generation will not be at all.

Under no circumstances does the past allow itself to be dismissed. Not only because its horrors were so terrible that they can never be forgotten. Not only because it makes us perceive the threats to our cultural and civilised existence. It touches on all themes and problems of morality. Responsibility and conviction, resistance and accommodation, loyalty and betrayal, hesitation and taking action, power, greed, justice and conscience – there is not a single drama that cannot be exemplified by an occurrence out of this particular past with ample proximity to our present world and with adequate aesthetic quality.

Unlike Stalin's gulag and Pol Pot's killing fields, the Holocaust and the Third Reich are perversions of bourgeois culture and offer, moreover, this culture's universal content and structure in a perverted form. So the flood of books, films, plays, and performances dedicated to the Holocaust and the Third Reich will not cease for a long time to come, not in Germany and not throughout the rest of the world. And the past they encompass is global: the Holocaust and Second World War were the last historical occurrences that seized all the world at once, Germans and Jews, Eastern and Western Europe, America and even Asia and Africa. That past is our common history.

And so, the past is not lost, even without special efforts and events, even without the endless reproduction of what my generation started in the sixties and seventies, even without the next generation being confronted with the past to the dangerous point of becoming bored and cynical. Precisely because the Third Reich and Holocaust have become a universal experience and teach universal lessons they will not fade into obscurity. The past can become history for

the generations to follow without losing any of its importance and impact.

When a collective occurrence, just as an individual one, is deemed as history, it no longer dominates the collective or individual narrative, but is integrated into it. With regard to the Third Reich and the Holocaust that means that German history does not have to be viewed as if everything in the past were building up to this particular outcome and would be fulfilled by it. It means that German history should not be evaluated in the present day only in light of those years, and that it should not be viewed and dealt with only from this perspective. It means that the literature of persecution and exile, so prominent in German literary scholarship since the eighties, can easily give up some of its prominence. It also means that the well-intentioned way in which German institutions take care of the Jewish legacy beyond what the Jewish community in Germany can afford and administer themselves should be more careful not to become patronising.

If something is wrong with one's biography, then one's sense of self and also one's

relationships with others will suffer. What makes sense about the younger generation's often-heard wish to be able to be proud to be German is not that being German is in fact a merit one deserves to be proud of. One deserves to be proud only of what one achieves, not of what one is. But the younger generation's wish makes sense as an expression of the desire for a biography that allows for an undamaged sense of self and undamaged relationships with others. For these young people the Third Reich and the Holocaust can no longer be present the way it is for my generation, and if we would like them not to be dismissive of the past then they must be allowed to see the past merged into history. Instead of assuring the younger generation that they have the right to be proud or denying them the right, we owe it to them to integrate the past into our collective biography. The future of the presence of the past is history.

Mastering the Past through Law?

What is past cannot be mastered. It can be remembered, forgotten or repressed. It can be avenged, punished, atoned for and regretted. It can be repeated, consciously or unconsciously. Its consequences can be managed either to encourage or discourage their impact on the present or the future. But what is done is done. The past is unassailable and irrevocable. The word 'mastering' in its true sense applies to a task at hand that must be worked on and worked through, until it is completed. Then the task no longer exists as such. That the term *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*, i.e. mastering the past, is used and

The Clash of Civilizations?

Samuel P. Huntington

THE NEXT PATTERN OF CONFLICT

WORLD POLITICS IS entering a new phase, and intellectuals have not hesitated to proliferate visions of what it will be—the end of history, the return of traditional rivalries between nation states, and the decline of the nation state from the conflicting pulls of tribalism and globalism, among others. Each of these visions catches aspects of the emerging reality. Yet they all miss a crucial, indeed a central, aspect of what global politics is likely to be in the coming years.

It is my hypothesis that the fundamental source of conflict in this new world will not be primarily ideological or primarily economic. The great divisions among humankind and the dominating source of conflict will be cultural. Nation states will remain the most powerful actors in world affairs, but the principal conflicts of global politics will occur between nations and groups of different civilizations. The clash of civilizations will dominate global politics. The fault lines between civilizations will be the battle lines of the future.

Conflict between civilizations will be the latest phase in the evolution of conflict in the modern world. For a century and a half after the emergence of the modern international system with the Peace of Westphalia, the conflicts of the Western world were largely among

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SAMUEL P. HUNTINGTON is the Eaton Professor of the Science of Government and Director of the John M. Olin Institute for Strategic Studies at Harvard University. This article is the product of the Olin Institute's project on "The Changing Security Environment and American National Interests."

princes—emperors, absolute monarchs and constitutional monarchs attempting to expand their bureaucracies, their armies, their mercantilist economic strength and, most important, the territory they ruled. In the process they created nation states, and beginning with the French Revolution the principal lines of conflict were between nations rather than princes. In 1793, as R. R. Palmer put it, "The wars of kings were over; the wars of peoples had begun." This nineteenth-century pattern lasted until the end of World War I. Then, as a result of the Russian Revolution and the reaction against it, the conflict of nations yielded to the conflict of ideologies, first among communism, fascism-Nazism and liberal democracy, and then between communism and liberal democracy. During the Cold War, this latter conflict became embodied in the struggle between the two superpowers, neither of which was a nation state in the classical European sense and each of which defined its identity in terms of its ideology.

These conflicts between princes, nation states and ideologies were primarily conflicts within Western civilization, "Western civil wars," as William Lind has labeled them. This was as true of the Cold War as it was of the world wars and the earlier wars of the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. With the end of the Cold War, international politics moves out of its Western phase, and its centerpiece becomes the interaction between the West and non-Western civilizations and among non-Western civilizations. In the politics of civilizations, the peoples and governments of non-Western civilizations no longer remain the objects of history as targets of Western colonialism but join the West as movers and shapers of history.

THE NATURE OF CIVILIZATIONS

DURING THE COLD WAR the world was divided into the First, Second and Third Worlds. Those divisions are no longer relevant. It is far more meaningful now to group countries not in terms of their political or economic systems or in terms of their level of economic development but rather in terms of their culture and civilization.

What do we mean when we talk of a civilization? A civilization is a cultural entity. Villages, regions, ethnic groups, nationalities, reli-

gious groups, all have distinct cultures at different levels of cultural heterogeneity. The culture of a village in southern Italy may be different from that of a village in northern Italy, but both will share in a common Italian culture that distinguishes them from German villages. European communities, in turn, will share cultural features that distinguish them from Arab or Chinese communities. Arabs, Chinese and Westerners, however, are not part of any broader cultural entity. They constitute civilizations. A civilization is thus the highest cultural grouping of people and the broadest level of cultural identity people have short of that which distinguishes humans from other species. It is defined both by common objective elements, such as language, history, religion, customs, institutions, and by the subjective self-identification of people. People have levels of identity: a resident of Rome may define himself with varying degrees of intensity as a Roman, an Italian, a Catholic, a Christian, a European, a Westerner. The civilization to which he belongs is the broadest level of identification with which he intensely identifies. People can and do redefine their identities and, as a result, the composition and boundaries of civilizations change.

Civilizations may involve a large number of people, as with China ("a civilization pretending to be a state," as Lucian Pye put it), or a very small number of people, such as the Anglophone Caribbean. A civilization may include several nation states, as is the case with Western, Latin American and Arab civilizations, or only one, as is the case with Japanese civilization. Civilizations obviously blend and overlap, and may include subcivilizations. Western civilization has two major variants, European and North American, and Islam has its Arab, Turkic and Malay subdivisions. Civilizations are nonetheless meaningful entities, and while the lines between them are seldom sharp, they are real. Civilizations are dynamic; they rise and fall; they divide and merge. And, as any student of history knows, civilizations disappear and are buried in the sands of time.

Westerners tend to think of nation states as the principal actors in global affairs. They have been that, however, for only a few centuries. The broader reaches of human history have been the history of civi-

lizations. In *A Study of History*, Arnold Toynbee identified 21 major civilizations; only six of them exist in the contemporary world.

WHY CIVILIZATIONS WILL CLASH

CIVILIZATION IDENTITY will be increasingly important in the future, and the world will be shaped in large measure by the interactions among seven or eight major civilizations. These include Western, Confucian, Japanese, Islamic, Hindu, Slavic-Orthodox, Latin American and possibly African civilization. The most important conflicts of the future will occur along the cultural fault lines separating these civilizations from one another.

Why will this be the case?

First, differences among civilizations are not only real; they are basic. Civilizations are differentiated from each other by history, language, culture, tradition and, most important, religion. The people of different civilizations have different views on the relations between God and man, the individual and the group, the citizen and the state, parents and children, husband and wife, as well as differing views of the relative importance of rights and responsibilities, liberty and authority, equality and hierarchy. These differences are the product of centuries. They will not soon disappear. They are far more fundamental than differences among political ideologies and political regimes. Differences do not necessarily mean conflict, and conflict does not necessarily mean violence. Over the centuries, however, differences among civilizations have generated the most prolonged and the most violent conflicts.

> The conflicts of the future will occur along the cultural fault lines separating civilizations.

Second, the world is becoming a smaller place. The interactions between peoples of different civilizations are increasing; these increasing interactions intensify civilization consciousness and awareness of differences between civilizations and commonalities within civilizations. North African immigration to France generates hostility among Frenchmen and at the same time increased receptivity to immigration by "good" European Catholic Poles. Americans

react far more negatively to Japanese investment than to larger investments from Canada and European countries. Similarly, as Donald Horowitz has pointed out, "An Ibo may be ... an Owerri Ibo or an Onitsha Ibo in what was the Eastern region of Nigeria. In Lagos, he is simply an Ibo. In London, he is a Nigerian. In New York, he is an African." The interactions among peoples of different civilizations enhance the civilization-consciousness of people that, in turn, invigorates differences and animosities stretching or thought to stretch back deep into history.

Third, the processes of economic modernization and social change throughout the world are separating people from longstanding local identities. They also weaken the nation state as a source of identity. In much of the world religion has moved in to fill this gap, often in the form of movements that are labeled "fundamentalist." Such movements are found in Western Christianity, Judaism, Buddhism and Hinduism, as well as in Islam. In most countries and most religions the people active in fundamentalist movements are young, college-educated, middle-class technicians, professionals and business persons. The "unsecularization of the world," George Weigel has remarked, "is one of the dominant social facts of life in the late twentieth century." The revival of religion, "la revanche de Dieu," as Gilles Kepel labeled it, provides a basis for identity and commitment that transcends national boundaries and unites civilizations.

Fourth, the growth of civilization-consciousness is enhanced by the dual role of the West. On the one hand, the West is at a peak of power. At the same time, however, and perhaps as a result, a return to the roots phenomenon is occurring among non-Western civilizations. Increasingly one hears references to trends toward a turning inward and "Asianization" in Japan, the end of the Nehru legacy and the "Hinduization" of India, the failure of Western ideas of socialism and nationalism and hence "re-Islamization" of the Middle East, and now a debate over Westernization versus Russianization in Boris Yeltsin's country. A West at the peak of its power confronts non-Wests that increasingly have the desire, the will and the resources to shape the world in non-Western ways.

In the past, the elites of non-Western societies were usually the

people who were most involved with the West, had been educated at Oxford, the Sorbonne or Sandhurst, and had absorbed Western attitudes and values. At the same time, the populace in non-Western countries often remained deeply imbued with the indigenous culture. Now, however, these relationships are being reversed. A de-Westernization and indigenization of elites is occurring in many non-Western countries at the same time that Western, usually American, cultures, styles and habits become more popular among the mass of the people.

Fifth, cultural characteristics and differences are less mutable and hence less easily compromised and resolved than political and economic ones. In the former Soviet Union, communists can become democrats, the rich can become poor and the poor rich, but Russians cannot become Estonians and Azeris cannot become Armenians. In class and ideological conflicts, the key question was "Which side are you on?" and people could and did choose sides and change sides. In conflicts between civilizations, the question is "What are you?" That is a given that cannot be changed. And as we know, from Bosnia to the Caucasus to the Sudan, the wrong answer to that question can mean a bullet in the head. Even more than ethnicity, religion discriminates sharply and exclusively among people. A person can be half-French and half-Arab and simultaneously even a citizen of two countries. It is more difficult to be half-Catholic and half-Muslim.

Finally, economic regionalism is increasing. The proportions of total trade that were intraregional rose between 1980 and 1989 from 51 percent to 59 percent in Europe, 33 percent to 37 percent in East Asia, and 32 percent to 36 percent in North America. The importance of regional economic blocs is likely to continue to increase in the future. On the one hand, successful economic regionalism will reinforce civilization-consciousness. On the other hand, economic regionalism may succeed only when it is rooted in a common civilization. The European Community rests on the shared foundation of European culture and Western Christianity. The success of the North American Free Trade Area depends on the convergence now underway of Mexican, Canadian and American cultures. Japan, in contrast, faces difficulties in creating a comparable economic entity

in East Asia because Japan is a society and civilization unique to itself. However strong the trade and investment links Japan may develop with other East Asian countries, its cultural differences with those countries inhibit and perhaps preclude its promoting regional economic integration like that in Europe and North America.

Common culture, in contrast, is clearly facilitating the rapid expansion of the economic relations between the People's Republic of China and Hong Kong, Taiwan, Singapore and the overseas Chinese communities in other Asian countries. With the Cold War over, cultural commonalities increasingly overcome ideological differences, and mainland China and Taiwan move closer together. If cultural commonality is a prerequisite for economic integration, the principal East Asian economic bloc of the future is likely to be centered on China. This bloc is, in fact, already coming into existence. As Murray Weidenbaum has observed,

> Despite the current Japanese dominance of the region, the Chinese-based economy of Asia is rapidly emerging as a new epicenter for industry, commerce and finance. This strategic area contains substantial amounts of technology and manufacturing capability (Taiwan), outstanding entrepreneurial, marketing and services acumen (Hong Kong), a fine communications network (Singapore), a tremendous pool of financial capital (all three), and very large endowments of land, resources and labor (mainland China).... From Guangzhou to Singapore, from Kuala Lumpur to Manila, this influential network—often based on extensions of the traditional clans—has been described as the backbone of the East Asian economy.[1]

Culture and religion also form the basis of the Economic Cooperation Organization, which brings together ten non-Arab Muslim countries: Iran, Pakistan, Turkey, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, Tadjikistan, Uzbekistan and Afghanistan. One impetus to the revival and expansion of this organization, founded originally in the 1960s by Turkey, Pakistan and Iran, is the realization by the leaders of several of these countries that they had no chance of admission to the European Community. Similarly, Caricom, the Central American Common Market and Mercosur rest

[1]Murray Weidenbaum, *Greater China: The Next Economic Superpower?,* St. Louis: Washington University Center for the Study of American Business, Contemporary Issues, Series 57, February 1993, pp. 2-3.

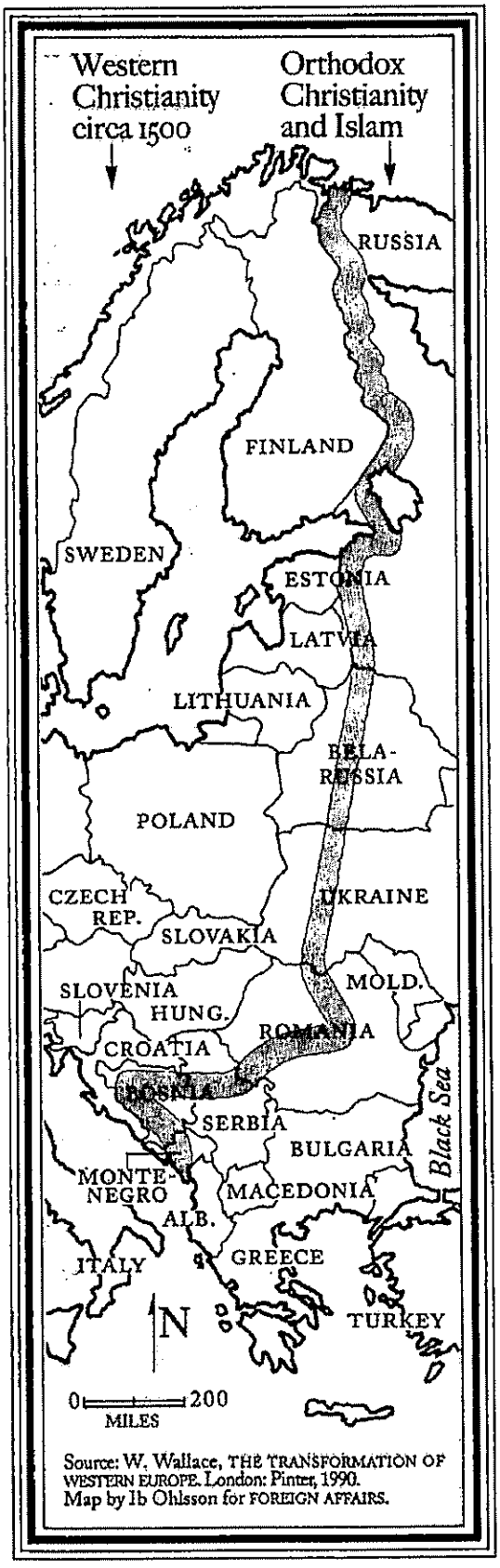
on common cultural foundations. Efforts to build a broader Caribbean-Central American economic entity bridging the Anglo-Latin divide, however, have to date failed.

As people define their identity in ethnic and religious terms, they are likely to see an "us" versus "them" relation existing between themselves and people of different ethnicity or religion. The end of ideologically defined states in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union permits traditional ethnic identities and animosities to come to the fore. Differences in culture and religion create differences over policy issues, ranging from human rights to immigration to trade and commerce to the environment. Geographical propinquity gives rise to conflicting territorial claims from Bosnia to Mindanao. Most important, the efforts of the West to promote its values of democracy and liberalism as universal values, to maintain its military predominance and to advance its economic interests engender countering responses from other civilizations. Decreasingly able to mobilize support and form coalitions on the basis of ideology, governments and groups will increasingly attempt to mobilize support by appealing to common religion and civilization identity.

The clash of civilizations thus occurs at two levels. At the micro-level, adjacent groups along the fault lines between civilizations struggle, often violently, over the control of territory and each other. At the macro-level, states from different civilizations compete for relative military and economic power, struggle over the control of international institutions and third parties, and competitively promote their particular political and religious values.

THE FAULT LINES BETWEEN CIVILIZATIONS

THE FAULT LINES between civilizations are replacing the political and ideological boundaries of the Cold War as the flash points for crisis and bloodshed. The Cold War began when the Iron Curtain divided Europe politically and ideologically. The Cold War ended with the end of the Iron Curtain. As the ideological division of Europe has disappeared, the cultural division of Europe between Western Christianity, on the one hand, and Orthodox Christianity



Source: W. Wallace, THE TRANSFORMATION OF WESTERN EUROPE. London: Pinter, 1990.
Map by Ib Ohlsson for FOREIGN AFFAIRS.

and Islam, on the other, has reemerged. The most significant dividing line in Europe, as William Wallace has suggested, may well be the eastern boundary of Western Christianity in the year 1500. This line runs along what are now the boundaries between Finland and Russia and between the Baltic states and Russia, cuts through Belarus and Ukraine separating the more Catholic western Ukraine from Orthodox eastern Ukraine, swings westward separating Transylvania from the rest of Romania, and then goes through Yugoslavia almost exactly along the line now separating Croatia and Slovenia from the rest of Yugoslavia. In the Balkans this line, of course, coincides with the historic boundary between the Hapsburg and Ottoman empires. The peoples to the north and west of this line are Protestant or Catholic; they shared the common experiences of European history—feudalism, the Renaissance, the Reformation, the Enlightenment, the French Revolution, the Industrial Revolution; they are generally economically better off than the peoples to the east; and they may now look forward to increasing involvement in a common European economy and to the consolidation of democratic political systems. The peoples to the east and south of this line are Orthodox or Muslim; they historically belonged to the Ottoman or Tsarist empires and were only lightly touched by the shaping events in the rest of Europe; they are generally less advanced economically; they seem much

less likely to develop stable democratic political systems. The Velvet Curtain of culture has replaced the Iron Curtain of ideology as the most significant dividing line in Europe. As the events in Yugoslavia show, it is not only a line of difference; it is also at times a line of bloody conflict.

Conflict along the fault line between Western and Islamic civilizations has been going on for 1,300 years. After the founding of Islam, the Arab and Moorish surge west and north only ended at Tours in 732. From the eleventh to the thirteenth century the Crusaders attempted with temporary success to bring Christianity and Christian rule to the Holy Land. From the fourteenth to the seventeenth century, the Ottoman Turks reversed the balance, extended their sway over the Middle East and the Balkans, captured Constantinople, and twice laid siege to Vienna. In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries as Ottoman power declined Britain, France, and Italy established Western control over most of North Africa and the Middle East.

After World War II, the West, in turn, began to retreat; the colonial empires disappeared; first Arab nationalism and then Islamic fundamentalism manifested themselves; the West became heavily dependent on the Persian Gulf countries for its energy; the oil-rich Muslim countries became money-rich and, when they wished to, weapons-rich. Several wars occurred between Arabs and Israel (created by the West). France fought a bloody and ruthless war in Algeria for most of the 1950s; British and French forces invaded Egypt in 1956; American forces went into Lebanon in 1958; subsequently American forces returned to Lebanon, attacked Libya, and engaged in various military encounters with Iran; Arab and Islamic terrorists, supported by at least three Middle Eastern governments, employed the weapon of the weak and bombed Western planes and installations and seized Western hostages. This warfare between Arabs and the West culminated in 1990, when the United States sent a massive army to the Persian Gulf to defend some Arab countries against aggression by another. In its aftermath NATO planning is increasingly directed to potential threats and instability along its "southern tier."

This centuries-old military interaction between the West and

Islam is unlikely to decline. It could become more virulent. The Gulf War left some Arabs feeling proud that Saddam Hussein had attacked Israel and stood up to the West. It also left many feeling humiliated and resentful of the West's military presence in the Persian Gulf, the West's overwhelming military dominance, and their apparent inability to shape their own destiny. Many Arab countries, in addition to the oil exporters, are reaching levels of economic and social development where autocratic forms of government become inappropriate and efforts to introduce democracy become stronger. Some openings in Arab political systems have already occurred. The principal beneficiaries of these openings have been Islamist movements. In the Arab world, in short, Western democracy strengthens anti-Western political forces. This may be a passing phenomenon, but it surely complicates relations between Islamic countries and the West.

Those relations are also complicated by demography. The spectacular population growth in Arab countries, particularly in North Africa, has led to increased migration to Western Europe. The movement within Western Europe toward minimizing internal boundaries has sharpened political sensitivities with respect to this development. In Italy, France and Germany, racism is increasingly open, and political reactions and violence against Arab and Turkish migrants have become more intense and more widespread since 1990.

On both sides the interaction between Islam and the West is seen as a clash of civilizations. The West's "next confrontation," observes M. J. Akbar, an Indian Muslim author, "is definitely going to come from the Muslim world. It is in the sweep of the Islamic nations from the Maghreb to Pakistan that the struggle for a new world order will begin." Bernard Lewis comes to a similar conclusion:

> We are facing a mood and a movement far transcending the level of issues and policies and the governments that pursue them. This is no less than a clash of civilizations—the perhaps irrational but surely historic reaction of an ancient rival against our Judeo-Christian heritage, our secular present, and the worldwide expansion of both.[2]

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[2]Bernard Lewis, "The Roots of Muslim Rage," *The Atlantic Monthly*, vol. 266, September 1990, p. 60; *Time*, June 15, 1992, pp. 24–28.

Historically, the other great antagonistic interaction of Arab Islamic civilization has been with the pagan, animist, and now increasingly Christian black peoples to the south. In the past, this antagonism was epitomized in the image of Arab slave dealers and black slaves. It has been reflected in the on-going civil war in the Sudan between Arabs and blacks, the fighting in Chad between Libyan-supported insurgents and the government, the tensions between Orthodox Christians and Muslims in the Horn of Africa, and the political conflicts, recurring riots and communal violence between Muslims and Christians in Nigeria. The modernization of Africa and the spread of Christianity are likely to enhance the probability of violence along this fault line. Symptomatic of the intensification of this conflict was the Pope John Paul II's speech in Khartoum in February 1993 attacking the actions of the Sudan's Islamist government against the Christian minority there.

On the northern border of Islam, conflict has increasingly erupted between Orthodox and Muslim peoples, including the carnage of Bosnia and Sarajevo, the simmering violence between Serb and Albanian, the tenuous relations between Bulgarians and their Turkish minority, the violence between Ossetians and Ingush, the unremitting slaughter of each other by Armenians and Azeris, the tense relations between Russians and Muslims in Central Asia, and the deployment of Russian troops to protect Russian interests in the Caucasus and Central Asia. Religion reinforces the revival of ethnic identities and restimulates Russian fears about the security of their southern borders. This concern is well captured by Archie Roosevelt:

> Much of Russian history concerns the struggle between the Slavs and the Turkic peoples on their borders, which dates back to the foundation of the Russian state more than a thousand years ago. In the Slavs' millennium-long confrontation with their eastern neighbors lies the key to an understanding not only of Russian history, but Russian character. To understand Russian realities today one has to have a concept of the great Turkic ethnic group that has preoccupied Russians through the centuries.[3]

The conflict of civilizations is deeply rooted elsewhere in Asia. The historic clash between Muslim and Hindu in the subcontinent

[3]Archie Roosevelt, *For Lust of Knowing*, Boston: Little, Brown, 1988, pp. 332-333.

manifests itself now not only in the rivalry between Pakistan and India but also in intensifying religious strife within India between increasingly militant Hindu groups and India's substantial Muslim minority. The destruction of the Ayodhya mosque in December 1992 brought to the fore the issue of whether India will remain a secular democratic state or become a Hindu one. In East Asia, China has outstanding territorial disputes with most of its neighbors. It has pursued a ruthless policy toward the Buddhist people of Tibet, and it is pursuing an increasingly ruthless policy toward its Turkic-Muslim minority. With the Cold War over, the underlying differences between China and the United States have reasserted themselves in areas such as human rights, trade and weapons proliferation. These differences are unlikely to moderate. A "new cold war," Deng Xaioping reportedly asserted in 1991, is under way between China and America.

The crescent-shaped Islamic bloc, from the bulge of Africa to central Asia, has bloody borders.

The same phrase has been applied to the increasingly difficult relations between Japan and the United States. Here cultural difference exacerbates economic conflict. People on each side allege racism on the other, but at least on the American side the antipathies are not racial but cultural. The basic values, attitudes, behavioral patterns of the two societies could hardly be more different. The economic issues between the United States and Europe are no less serious than those between the United States and Japan, but they do not have the same political salience and emotional intensity because the differences between American culture and European culture are so much less than those between American civilization and Japanese civilization.

The interactions between civilizations vary greatly in the extent to which they are likely to be characterized by violence. Economic competition clearly predominates between the American and European subcivilizations of the West and between both of them and Japan. On the Eurasian continent, however, the proliferation of ethnic conflict, epitomized at the extreme in "ethnic cleansing," has not been totally random. It has been most frequent and most violent between groups belonging to different civilizations. In Eurasia the great historic fault

lines between civilizations are once more aflame. This is particularly true along the boundaries of the crescent-shaped Islamic bloc of nations from the bulge of Africa to central Asia. Violence also occurs between Muslims, on the one hand, and Orthodox Serbs in the Balkans, Jews in Israel, Hindus in India, Buddhists in Burma and Catholics in the Philippines. Islam has bloody borders.

CIVILIZATION RALLYING: THE KIN-COUNTRY SYNDROME

GROUPS OR STATES belonging to one civilization that become involved in war with people from a different civilization naturally try to rally support from other members of their own civilization. As the post-Cold War world evolves, civilization commonality, what H. D. S. Greenway has termed the "kin-country" syndrome, is replacing political ideology and traditional balance of power considerations as the principal basis for cooperation and coalitions. It can be seen gradually emerging in the post-Cold War conflicts in the Persian Gulf, the Caucasus and Bosnia. None of these was a full-scale war between civilizations, but each involved some elements of civilizational rallying, which seemed to become more important as the conflict continued and which may provide a foretaste of the future.

First, in the Gulf War one Arab state invaded another and then fought a coalition of Arab, Western and other states. While only a few Muslim governments overtly supported Saddam Hussein, many Arab elites privately cheered him on, and he was highly popular among large sections of the Arab publics. Islamic fundamentalist movements universally supported Iraq rather than the Western-backed governments of Kuwait and Saudi Arabia. Forswearing Arab nationalism, Saddam Hussein explicitly invoked an Islamic appeal. He and his supporters attempted to define the war as a war between civilizations. "It is not the world against Iraq," as Safar Al-Hawali, dean of Islamic Studies at the Umm Al-Qura University in Mecca, put it in a widely circulated tape. "It is the West against Islam." Ignoring the rivalry between Iran and Iraq, the chief Iranian religious leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, called for a holy war against the West: "The struggle against American aggression, greed, plans and

policies will be counted as a jihad, and anybody who is killed on that path is a martyr." "This is a war," King Hussein of Jordan argued, "against all Arabs and all Muslims and not against Iraq alone."

The rallying of substantial sections of Arab elites and publics behind Saddam Hussein caused those Arab governments in the anti-Iraq coalition to moderate their activities and temper their public statements. Arab governments opposed or distanced themselves from subsequent Western efforts to apply pressure on Iraq, including enforcement of a no-fly zone in the summer of 1992 and the bombing of Iraq in January 1993. The Western-Soviet-Turkish-Arab anti-Iraq coalition of 1990 had by 1993 become a coalition of almost only the West and Kuwait against Iraq.

Muslims contrasted Western actions against Iraq with the West's failure to protect Bosnians against Serbs and to impose sanctions on Israel for violating U.N. resolutions. The West, they alleged, was using a double standard. A world of clashing civilizations, however, is inevitably a world of double standards: people apply one standard to their kin-countries and a different standard to others.

Second, the kin-country syndrome also appeared in conflicts in the former Soviet Union. Armenian military successes in 1992 and 1993 stimulated Turkey to become increasingly supportive of its religious, ethnic and linguistic brethren in Azerbaijan. "We have a Turkish nation feeling the same sentiments as the Azerbaijanis," said one Turkish official in 1992. "We are under pressure. Our newspapers are full of the photos of atrocities and are asking us if we are still serious about pursuing our neutral policy. Maybe we should show Armenia that there's a big Turkey in the region." President Turgut Özal agreed, remarking that Turkey should at least "scare the Armenians a little bit." Turkey, Özal threatened again in 1993, would "show its fangs." Turkish Air Force jets flew reconnaissance flights along the Armenian border; Turkey suspended food shipments and air flights to Armenia; and Turkey and Iran announced they would not accept dismemberment of Azerbaijan. In the last years of its existence, the Soviet government supported Azerbaijan because its government was dominated by former communists. With the end of the Soviet Union, however, political considerations gave way to religious

ones. Russian troops fought on the side of the Armenians, and Azerbaijan accused the "Russian government of turning 180 degrees" toward support for Christian Armenia.

Third, with respect to the fighting in the former Yugoslavia, Western publics manifested sympathy and support for the Bosnian Muslims and the horrors they suffered at the hands of the Serbs. Relatively little concern was expressed, however, over Croatian attacks on Muslims and participation in the dismemberment of Bosnia-Herzegovina. In the early stages of the Yugoslav breakup, Germany, in an unusual display of diplomatic initiative and muscle, induced the other 11 members of the European Community to follow its lead in recognizing Slovenia and Croatia. As a result of the pope's determination to provide strong backing to the two Catholic countries, the Vatican extended recognition even before the Community did. The United States followed the European lead. Thus the leading actors in Western civilization rallied behind their coreligionists. Subsequently Croatia was reported to be receiving substantial quantities of arms from Central European and other Western countries. Boris Yeltsin's government, on the other hand, attempted to pursue a middle course that would be sympathetic to the Orthodox Serbs but not alienate Russia from the West. Russian conservative and nationalist groups, however, including many legislators, attacked the government for not being more forthcoming in its support for the Serbs. By early 1993 several hundred Russians apparently were serving with the Serbian forces, and reports circulated of Russian arms being supplied to Serbia.

Islamic governments and groups, on the other hand, castigated the West for not coming to the defense of the Bosnians. Iranian leaders urged Muslims from all countries to provide help to Bosnia; in violation of the U.N. arms embargo, Iran supplied weapons and men for the Bosnians; Iranian-supported Lebanese groups sent guerrillas to train and organize the Bosnian forces. In 1993 up to 4,000 Muslims from over two dozen Islamic countries were reported to be fighting in Bosnia. The governments of Saudi Arabia and other countries felt under increasing pressure from fundamentalist groups in their own societies to provide more vigorous support for the Bosnians. By the

end of 1992, Saudi Arabia had reportedly supplied substantial funding for weapons and supplies for the Bosnians, which significantly increased their military capabilities vis-à-vis the Serbs.

In the 1930s the Spanish Civil War provoked intervention from countries that politically were fascist, communist and democratic. In the 1990s the Yugoslav conflict is provoking intervention from countries that are Muslim, Orthodox and Western Christian. The parallel has not gone unnoticed. "The war in Bosnia-Herzegovina has become the emotional equivalent of the fight against fascism in the Spanish Civil War," one Saudi editor observed. "Those who died there are regarded as martyrs who tried to save their fellow Muslims."

Conflicts and violence will also occur between states and groups within the same civilization. Such conflicts, however, are likely to be less intense and less likely to expand than conflicts between civilizations. Common membership in a civilization reduces the probability of violence in situations where it might otherwise occur. In 1991 and 1992 many people were alarmed by the possibility of violent conflict between Russia and Ukraine over territory, particularly Crimea, the Black Sea fleet, nuclear weapons and economic issues. If civilization is what counts, however, the likelihood of violence between Ukrainians and Russians should be low. They are two Slavic, primarily Orthodox peoples who have had close relationships with each other for centuries. As of early 1993, despite all the reasons for conflict, the leaders of the two countries were effectively negotiating and defusing the issues between the two countries. While there has been serious fighting between Muslims and Christians elsewhere in the former Soviet Union and much tension and some fighting between Western and Orthodox Christians in the Baltic states, there has been virtually no violence between Russians and Ukrainians.

Civilization rallying to date has been limited, but it has been growing, and it clearly has the potential to spread much further. As the conflicts in the Persian Gulf, the Caucasus and Bosnia continued, the positions of nations and the cleavages between them increasingly were along civilizational lines. Populist politicians, religious leaders and the media have found it a potent means of arousing mass support and of pressuring hesitant governments. In the coming years, the

local conflicts most likely to escalate into major wars will be those, as in Bosnia and the Caucasus, along the fault lines between civilizations. The next world war, if there is one, will be a war between civilizations.

THE WEST VERSUS THE REST

THE WEST IS NOW at an extraordinary peak of power in relation to other civilizations. Its superpower opponent has disappeared from the map. Military conflict among Western states is unthinkable, and Western military power is unrivaled. Apart from Japan, the West faces no economic challenge. It dominates international political and security institutions and with Japan international economic institutions. Global political and security issues are effectively settled by a directorate of the United States, Britain and France, world economic issues by a directorate of the United States, Germany and Japan, all of which maintain extraordinarily close relations with each other to the exclusion of lesser and largely non-Western countries. Decisions made at the U.N. Security Council or in the International Monetary Fund that reflect the interests of the West are presented to the world as reflecting the desires of the world community. The very phrase "the world community" has become the euphemistic collective noun (replacing "the Free World") to give global legitimacy to actions reflecting the interests of the United States and other Western powers.[4] Through the IMF and other international economic institutions, the West promotes its economic interests and imposes on other nations the economic policies it thinks appropriate. In any poll of non-Western peoples, the IMF undoubtedly would win the support of finance ministers and a few others, but get an overwhelmingly unfavorable rating from just about everyone else, who would agree

[4]Almost invariably Western leaders claim they are acting on behalf of "the world community." One minor lapse occurred during the run-up to the Gulf War. In an interview on "Good Morning America," Dec. 21, 1990, British Prime Minister John Major referred to the actions "the West" was taking against Saddam Hussein. He quickly corrected himself and subsequently referred to "the world community." He was, however, right when he erred.

with Georgy Arbatov's characterization of IMF officials as "neo-Bolsheviks who love expropriating other people's money, imposing undemocratic and alien rules of economic and political conduct and stifling economic freedom."

Western domination of the U.N. Security Council and its decisions, tempered only by occasional abstention by China, produced U.N. legitimation of the West's use of force to drive Iraq out of Kuwait and its elimination of Iraq's sophisticated weapons and capacity to produce such weapons. It also produced the quite unprecedented action by the United States, Britain and France in getting the Security Council to demand that Libya hand over the Pan Am 103 bombing suspects and then to impose sanctions when Libya refused. After defeating the largest Arab army, the West did not hesitate to throw its weight around in the Arab world. The West in effect is using international institutions, military power and economic resources to run the world in ways that will maintain Western predominance, protect Western interests and promote Western political and economic values.

The very phrase "world community" has become a euphemism to give legitimacy to the actions of the West.

That at least is the way in which non-Westerners see the new world, and there is a significant element of truth in their view. Differences in power and struggles for military, economic and institutional power are thus one source of conflict between the West and other civilizations. Differences in culture, that is basic values and beliefs, are a second source of conflict. V. S. Naipaul has argued that Western civilization is the "universal civilization" that "fits all men." At a superficial level much of Western culture has indeed permeated the rest of the world. At a more basic level, however, Western concepts differ fundamentally from those prevalent in other civilizations. Western ideas of individualism, liberalism, constitutionalism, human rights, equality, liberty, the rule of law, democracy, free markets, the separation of church and state, often have little resonance in Islamic, Confucian, Japanese, Hindu, Buddhist or Orthodox cultures. Western efforts to propagate such ideas produce instead a reaction

against "human rights imperialism" and a reaffirmation of indigenous values, as can be seen in the support for religious fundamentalism by the younger generation in non-Western cultures. The very notion that there could be a "universal civilization" is a Western idea, directly at odds with the particularism of most Asian societies and their emphasis on what distinguishes one people from another. Indeed, the author of a review of 100 comparative studies of values in different societies concluded that "the values that are most important in the West are least important worldwide."[5] In the political realm, of course, these differences are most manifest in the efforts of the United States and other Western powers to induce other peoples to adopt Western ideas concerning democracy and human rights. Modern democratic government originated in the West. When it has developed in non-Western societies it has usually been the product of Western colonialism or imposition.

The central axis of world politics in the future is likely to be, in Kishore Mahbubani's phrase, the conflict between "the West and the Rest" and the responses of non-Western civilizations to Western power and values.[6] Those responses generally take one or a combination of three forms. At one extreme, non-Western states can, like Burma and North Korea, attempt to pursue a course of isolation, to insulate their societies from penetration or "corruption" by the West, and, in effect, to opt out of participation in the Western-dominated global community. The costs of this course, however, are high, and few states have pursued it exclusively. A second alternative, the equivalent of "band-wagoning" in international relations theory, is to attempt to join the West and accept its values and institutions. The third alternative is to attempt to "balance" the West by developing economic and military power and cooperating with other non-Western societies against the West, while preserving indigenous values and institutions; in short, to modernize but not to Westernize.

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[5]Harry C. Triandis, *The New York Times*, Dec. 25, 1990, p. 41, and "Cross-Cultural Studies of Individualism and Collectivism," Nebraska Symposium on Motivation, vol. 37, 1989, pp. 41-133.

[6]Kishore Mahbubani, "The West and the Rest," *The National Interest*, Summer 1992, pp. 3-13.

THE TORN COUNTRIES

IN THE FUTURE, as people differentiate themselves by civilization, countries with large numbers of peoples of different civilizations, such as the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia, are candidates for dismemberment. Some other countries have a fair degree of cultural homogeneity but are divided over whether their society belongs to one civilization or another. These are torn countries. Their leaders typically wish to pursue a bandwagoning strategy and to make their countries members of the West, but the history, culture and traditions of their countries are non-Western. The most obvious and prototypical torn country is Turkey. The late twentieth-century leaders of Turkey have followed in the Attatürk tradition and defined Turkey as a modern, secular, Western nation state. They allied Turkey with the West in NATO and in the Gulf War; they applied for membership in the European Community. At the same time, however, elements in Turkish society have supported an Islamic revival and have argued that Turkey is basically a Middle Eastern Muslim society. In addition, while the elite of Turkey has defined Turkey as a Western society, the elite of the West refuses to accept Turkey as such. Turkey will not become a member of the European Community, and the real reason, as President Özal said, "is that we are Muslim and they are Christian and they don't say that." Having rejected Mecca, and then being rejected by Brussels, where does Turkey look? Tashkent may be the answer. The end of the Soviet Union gives Turkey the opportunity to become the leader of a revived Turkic civilization involving seven countries from the borders of Greece to those of China. Encouraged by the West, Turkey is making strenuous efforts to carve out this new identity for itself.

During the past decade Mexico has assumed a position somewhat similar to that of Turkey. Just as Turkey abandoned its historic opposition to Europe and attempted to join Europe, Mexico has stopped defining itself by its opposition to the United States and is instead attempting to imitate the United States and to join it in the North American Free Trade Area. Mexican leaders are engaged in the great task of redefining Mexican identity and have introduced fundamen-

tal economic reforms that eventually will lead to fundamental political change. In 1991 a top adviser to President Carlos Salinas de Gortari described at length to me all the changes the Salinas government was making. When he finished, I remarked: "That's most impressive. It seems to me that basically you want to change Mexico from a Latin American country into a North American country." He looked at me with surprise and exclaimed: "Exactly! That's precisely what we are trying to do, but of course we could never say so publicly." As his remark indicates, in Mexico as in Turkey, significant elements in society resist the redefinition of their country's identity. In Turkey, European-oriented leaders have to make gestures to Islam (Özal's pilgrimage to Mecca); so also Mexico's North American-oriented leaders have to make gestures to those who hold Mexico to be a Latin American country (Salinas' Ibero-American Guadalajara summit).

Historically Turkey has been the most profoundly torn country. For the United States, Mexico is the most immediate torn country. Globally the most important torn country is Russia. The question of whether Russia is part of the West or the leader of a distinct Slavic-Orthodox civilization has been a recurring one in Russian history. That issue was obscured by the communist victory in Russia, which imported a Western ideology, adapted it to Russian conditions and then challenged the West in the name of that ideology. The dominance of communism shut off the historic debate over Westernization versus Russification. With communism discredited Russians once again face that question.

President Yeltsin is adopting Western principles and goals and seeking to make Russia a "normal" country and a part of the West. Yet both the Russian elite and the Russian public are divided on this issue. Among the more moderate dissenters, Sergei Stankevich argues that Russia should reject the "Atlanticist" course, which would lead it "to become European, to become a part of the world economy in rapid and organized fashion, to become the eighth member of the Seven, and to put particular emphasis on Germany and the United States as the two dominant members of the Atlantic alliance." While also rejecting an exclusively Eurasian policy, Stankevich nonetheless

argues that Russia should give priority to the protection of Russians in other countries, emphasize its Turkic and Muslim connections, and promote "an appreciable redistribution of our resources, our options, our ties, and our interests in favor of Asia, of the eastern direction." People of this persuasion criticize Yeltsin for subordinating Russia's interests to those of the West, for reducing Russian military strength, for failing to support traditional friends such as Serbia, and for pushing economic and political reform in ways injurious to the Russian people. Indicative of this trend is the new popularity of the ideas of Petr Savitsky, who in the 1920s argued that Russia was a unique Eurasian civilization.[7] More extreme dissidents voice much more blatantly nationalist, anti-Western and anti-Semitic views, and urge Russia to redevelop its military strength and to establish closer ties with China and Muslim countries. The people of Russia are as divided as the elite. An opinion survey in European Russia in the spring of 1992 revealed that 40 percent of the public had positive attitudes toward the West and 36 percent had negative attitudes. As it has been for much of its history, Russia in the early 1990s is truly a torn country.

To redefine its civilization identity, a torn country must meet three requirements. First, its political and economic elite has to be generally supportive of and enthusiastic about this move. Second, its public has to be willing to acquiesce in the redefinition. Third, the dominant groups in the recipient civilization have to be willing to embrace the convert. All three requirements in large part exist with respect to Mexico. The first two in large part exist with respect to Turkey. It is not clear that any of them exist with respect to Russia's joining the West. The conflict between liberal democracy and Marxism-Leninism was between ideologies which, despite their major differences, ostensibly shared ultimate goals of freedom, equality and prosperity. A traditional, authoritarian, nationalist Russia could have quite different goals. A Western democrat could carry on an intellectual debate with a Soviet Marxist. It would be virtually

[7]Sergei Stankevich, "Russia in Search of Itself," *The National Interest*, Summer 1992, pp. 47-51; Daniel Schneider, "A Russian Movement Rejects Western Tilt," *Christian Science Monitor*, Feb. 5, 1993, pp. 5-7.

impossible for him to do that with a Russian traditionalist. If, as the Russians stop behaving like Marxists, they reject liberal democracy and begin behaving like Russians but not like Westerners, the relations between Russia and the West could again become distant and conflictual.[8]

THE CONFUCIAN-ISLAMIC CONNECTION

THE OBSTACLES TO non-Western countries joining the West vary considerably. They are least for Latin American and East European countries. They are greater for the Orthodox countries of the former Soviet Union. They are still greater for Muslim, Confucian, Hindu and Buddhist societies. Japan has established a unique position for itself as an associate member of the West: it is in the West in some respects but clearly not of the West in important dimensions. Those countries that for reason of culture and power do not wish to, or cannot, join the West compete with the West by developing their own economic, military and political power. They do this by promoting their internal development and by cooperating with other non-Western countries. The most prominent form of this cooperation is the Confucian-Islamic connection that has emerged to challenge Western interests, values and power.

Almost without exception, Western countries are reducing their military power; under Yeltsin's leadership so also is Russia. China, North Korea and several Middle Eastern states, however, are significantly expanding their military capabilities. They are doing this by the import of arms from Western and non-Western sources and by the development of indigenous arms industries. One result is the emergence of what Charles Krauthammer has called "Weapon

[8]Owen Harries has pointed out that Australia is trying (unwisely in his view) to become a torn country in reverse. Although it has been a full member not only of the West but also of the ABCA military and intelligence core of the West, its current leaders are in effect proposing that it defect from the West, redefine itself as an Asian country and cultivate close ties with its neighbors. Australia's future, they argue, is with the dynamic economies of East Asia. But, as I have suggested, close economic cooperation normally requires a common cultural base. In addition, none of the three conditions necessary for a torn country to join another civilization is likely to exist in Australia's case.

States," and the Weapon States are not Western states. Another result is the redefinition of arms control, which is a Western concept and a Western goal. During the Cold War the primary purpose of arms control was to establish a stable military balance between the United States and its allies and the Soviet Union and its allies. In the post-Cold War world the primary objective of arms control is to prevent the development by non-Western societies of military capabilities that could threaten Western interests. The West attempts to do this through international agreements, economic pressure and controls on the transfer of arms and weapons technologies.

The conflict between the West and the Confucian-Islamic states focuses largely, although not exclusively, on nuclear, chemical and biological weapons, ballistic missiles and other sophisticated means for delivering them, and the guidance, intelligence and other electronic capabilities for achieving that goal. The West promotes nonproliferation as a universal norm and nonproliferation treaties and inspections as means of realizing that norm. It also threatens a variety of sanctions against those who promote the spread of sophisticated weapons and proposes some benefits for those who do not. The attention of the West focuses, naturally, on nations that are actually or potentially hostile to the West.

A Confucian-Islamic connection has emerged to challenge Western interests, values and power.

The non-Western nations, on the other hand, assert their right to acquire and to deploy whatever weapons they think necessary for their security. They also have absorbed, to the full, the truth of the response of the Indian defense minister when asked what lesson he learned from the Gulf War: "Don't fight the United States unless you have nuclear weapons." Nuclear weapons, chemical weapons and missiles are viewed, probably erroneously, as the potential equalizer of superior Western conventional power. China, of course, already has nuclear weapons; Pakistan and India have the capability to deploy them. North Korea, Iran, Iraq, Libya and Algeria appear to be attempting to acquire them. A top Iranian official has declared that all Muslim states should acquire nuclear weapons, and in 1988 the president of

Iran reportedly issued a directive calling for development of "offensive and defensive chemical, biological and radiological weapons."

Centrally important to the development of counter-West military capabilities is the sustained expansion of China's military power and its means to create military power. Buoyed by spectacular economic development, China is rapidly increasing its military spending and vigorously moving forward with the modernization of its armed forces. It is purchasing weapons from the former Soviet states; it is developing long-range missiles; in 1992 it tested a one-megaton nuclear device. It is developing power-projection capabilities, acquiring aerial refueling technology, and trying to purchase an aircraft carrier. Its military buildup and assertion of sovereignty over the South China Sea are provoking a multilateral regional arms race in East Asia. China is also a major exporter of arms and weapons technology. It has exported materials to Libya and Iraq that could be used to manufacture nuclear weapons and nerve gas. It has helped Algeria build a reactor suitable for nuclear weapons research and production. China has sold to Iran nuclear technology that American officials believe could only be used to create weapons and apparently has shipped components of 300-mile-range missiles to Pakistan. North Korea has had a nuclear weapons program under way for some while and has sold advanced missiles and missile technology to Syria and Iran. The flow of weapons and weapons technology is generally from East Asia to the Middle East. There is, however, some movement in the reverse direction; China has received Stinger missiles from Pakistan.

A Confucian-Islamic military connection has thus come into being, designed to promote acquisition by its members of the weapons and weapons technologies needed to counter the military power of the West. It may or may not last. At present, however, it is, as Dave McCurdy has said, "a renegades' mutual support pact, run by the proliferators and their backers." A new form of arms competition is thus occurring between Islamic-Confucian states and the West. In an old-fashioned arms race, each side developed its own arms to balance or to achieve superiority against the other side. In this new form of arms competition, one side is developing its arms and the other

side is attempting not to balance but to limit and prevent that arms build-up while at the same time reducing its own military capabilities.

IMPLICATIONS FOR THE WEST

THIS ARTICLE DOES not argue that civilization identities will replace all other identities, that nation states will disappear, that each civilization will become a single coherent political entity, that groups within a civilization will not conflict with and even fight each other. This paper does set forth the hypotheses that differences between civilizations are real and important; civilization-consciousness is increasing; conflict between civilizations will supplant ideological and other forms of conflict as the dominant global form of conflict; international relations, historically a game played out within Western civilization, will increasingly be de-Westernized and become a game in which non-Western civilizations are actors and not simply objects; successful political, security and economic international institutions are more likely to develop within civilizations than across civilizations; conflicts between groups in different civilizations will be more frequent, more sustained and more violent than conflicts between groups in the same civilization; violent conflicts between groups in different civilizations are the most likely and most dangerous source of escalation that could lead to global wars; the paramount axis of world politics will be the relations between "the West and the Rest"; the elites in some torn non-Western countries will try to make their countries part of the West, but in most cases face major obstacles to accomplishing this; a central focus of conflict for the immediate future will be between the West and several Islamic-Confucian states.

This is not to advocate the desirability of conflicts between civilizations. It is to set forth descriptive hypotheses as to what the future may be like. If these are plausible hypotheses, however, it is necessary to consider their implications for Western policy. These implications should be divided between short-term advantage and long-term accommodation. In the short term it is clearly in the interest of the West to promote greater cooperation and unity within its own civi-

lization, particularly between its European and North American components; to incorporate into the West societies in Eastern Europe and Latin America whose cultures are close to those of the West; to promote and maintain cooperative relations with Russia and Japan; to prevent escalation of local inter-civilization conflicts into major inter-civilization wars; to limit the expansion of the military strength of Confucian and Islamic states; to moderate the reduction of Western military capabilities and maintain military superiority in East and Southwest Asia; to exploit differences and conflicts among Confucian and Islamic states; to support in other civilizations groups sympathetic to Western values and interests; to strengthen international institutions that reflect and legitimate Western interests and values and to promote the involvement of non-Western states in those institutions.

In the longer term other measures would be called for. Western civilization is both Western and modern. Non-Western civilizations have attempted to become modern without becoming Western. To date only Japan has fully succeeded in this quest. Non-Western civilizations will continue to attempt to acquire the wealth, technology, skills, machines and weapons that are part of being modern. They will also attempt to reconcile this modernity with their traditional culture and values. Their economic and military strength relative to the West will increase. Hence the West will increasingly have to accommodate these non-Western modern civilizations whose power approaches that of the West but whose values and interests differ significantly from those of the West. This will require the West to maintain the economic and military power necessary to protect its interests in relation to these civilizations. It will also, however, require the West to develop a more profound understanding of the basic religious and philosophical assumptions underlying other civilizations and the ways in which people in those civilizations see their interests. It will require an effort to identify elements of commonality between Western and other civilizations. For the relevant future, there will be no universal civilization, but instead a world of different civilizations, each of which will have to learn to coexist with the others.

'Triage'
by Scott Anderson.
Simon & Schuster, 1998

ONE

He lay beneath a blanket of torn flowers. They were scattered over his chest, gathered about his neck like a garland. Occasionally, the wind found his resting place; stems shifted, loose petals took flight.

Above him, Mark saw a sky that was gray. He searched this sky for something to orient him—a patch of blue, a border of white—but the gray was unending. He thought of the land that surrounded him. It was brown and spread away for hundreds of miles, tumbled to ravines, smoothed to plain. He felt stone dust settle on his skin, licked it from his lips.

It occurred to him that maybe the flowers had caused it, that maybe here even flowers could destroy you. He envisioned the gunner, bored, gazing across all those empty miles beneath the gray sky, hour after hour, day after day, his eyes suddenly drawn to the colors Mark held in his hand. He imagined the joy the man must have felt at that moment.

At the outset, Mark had been thankful for the sky. Gray was the color of a good day in Kurdistan; the sun would not burn his skin, the

glare would not hurt his eyes. Upon reaching the hilltop, he had stood on the highest rock and looked in all directions at the mountains. Not a building or a road. He had climbed down from the rock and begun picking wildflowers. The stalks were brittle, and he felt them snap beneath his fingers.

He didn't hear the artillery shell, but he believed he saw it. When it dug into the hill just below him, little bits of metal and stone had sprayed into the air like a fan. He had stood there amazed, watching the shards arc high before fluttering lightly down to earth.

But not standing, Mark now decided. He had almost certainly been flung to the ground at that very first instant—before sound, before sight. It was while lying beneath the flowers that he had watched the spray against the sky.

No pain. Only a vague, prickly sensation, as if his whole body was asleep. He lifted his head and looked over his chest. He saw that he rested on a large flat rock. His left arm was stretched out to the side, and he studied it carefully. There didn't appear to be anything wrong with it. The right arm lay on his chest, the hand rising and falling as he breathed. Mark watched the hand for a moment. The fingers trembled, and he felt their nervous little taps on a rib.

"Colin?" he called.

He lifted his head a bit more to see his legs. They were splayed over the rock, rigid, the feet turned out to either side. His left foot twitched back and forth. He was troubled by this movement, tried to make it stop, but the foot would not respond to his will.

A dripping sound close to his right ear. Mark twisted to see that his head had rested in a slight bowl in the rock. A pool of blood there. He felt it trickle through his hair, tickling his scalp. He watched it fall from him in quick droplets.

He lay back on the rock. Blood seeped into his ears. Mark took comfort in its warmth and looked up at the gray sky that was eating all sound.

He wasn't sure what to do. If he left the rock, it would only take a few minutes of desert air to dry his pool, and then all that would remain of him would be a small crucible of brown powder, a powder the wind would find and scatter. He wished to stay there, to protect the pool.

But after a time, he thought differently. He understood that if he stayed upon the rock, he would simply disappear as well. And so, he rose.

The sounds, the smells, the things that touched his skin that night, of these details, his memory would part with none. Coming down off the hilltop and across that empty valley, and Mark would remember every step, the slope of the ground beneath his feet, the weight upon his back, the brush of meadow grass on his fingers. A sky of infinite darkness—not a star, not a sliver of moon—and Mark would remember every time he fell to the ground and listened to the wind and imagined it to carry the voices of soldiers, every time he forced himself to rise again; to stand out of the soft, velvet safety of the grass and move on. Seeing himself as he would appear in the nightscope of a soldier's rifle, lit up, a chest and a head floating above the meadow, a target as big and white as the moon. Trying to raise a hand to show he was unarmed, that he was coming off the mountain in peace, trying to forget that none of that mattered in this war. Falling again, forcing himself up, moving on. After a time, the strength of his chant—"stay calm, stay calm"—giving out. Just a half-mad fugitive then, swollen hands sliced by sawgrass, leaden feet that tangled on unseen roots, a chest and throat choking under the weight of its tether, a mind emptied until all it held was the last plea of a thousand dead men—"I don't want to die here, I don't want to die here."

Another sound then, louder than the whispering grass or his shuddering breath, a roar, and Mark reached the bluff and the river lay black before him. He rushed into it, felt the ice water rise to his knees, his hips, and he would always remember that instant when the current caught him, the interminable, slow-motion moment of both sorrow and relief at his own helplessness. Feet slipping on smooth rocks, arms flailing for balance, spinning and down, into the river. Stunned by the cold on his chest, his temples, a light flash of shock and that was too long. Carried under, body hitting rocks, scraping along the riverbed, mouth gasping for air and finding only water, fingers scrabbling for something to hold but going too fast for that, dying now, the dead weight on his back pinning him down, sending him deeper and

colder. The strap pulls taut against his neck, the weight is all on his throat, and he is strangling now, dying quicker, moving downstream, pinned to the bottom, the rocks sliding under his back, and the clutch on his throat won't loosen, won't even let him scream as the life is pinched out of him. Both hands clawing at the strap, no strength, almost finished now, and then he hits something in the water, hits it hard, and the force sends him sideways and the grip on his throat lets off for a moment, the strap goes slack, and Mark gets out and he is done with it and he is in the air again and he is free and alive and all alone, hurtling down this river beneath the deep blue dark of a coming dawn.

Reaching shore, the silhouette of a tree in the fading night, and Mark sat beneath its bare branches to lick the bloodwater from his hands, from his arms, like a dog. Not a shadow of wind then, not an insect or a bird or a swaying reed, only the running of the river. The sky softened to silver, eastern hills emerged from the night, and Mark rested his head against the trunk of the tree and shivered. Shivered from the chill of the wet clothes that clung to him. Shivered at having left the dark behind him, at seeing day break on the land before him.

He lay beneath a ceiling of stone. A yellow light played over the uneven surface, outlining its pits and gouges. Mark saw a series of straight, flat-tipped scars in the rock and recognized them as the marks left by pickaxes. He didn't know where he was.

Sound filled his ears. He raised his head and peered into a murk of smoke and dust.

A long narrow room lit by kerosene lanterns. A Pesh Merga barracks with men lying in army cots, two rows that extended along either wall as far as Mark could see. The aisle between the rows crowded with men sitting cross-legged, leaning their backs on the cot frames. Hundreds of men in the room, and they all seemed to be making noise—shouting, calling, muttering to themselves.

A boy sat in the aisle at the foot of Mark's cot. He was young—fifteen or sixteen—and the sleeves of his olive drab coat were rolled up over his thin arms. He appeared to be the only other silent one in

the room. His hands were raised and cupped below his chin, and he stared into his palms. The boy was so transfixed that Mark thought he cradled something—a small animal, perhaps, or a baby bird fallen from a nest—and he felt an urge to call to him, to ask what he held. Then he saw the hands were covered in bandages from which blood was seeping.

Mark looked about the room again. Now he understood the voices, knew where he was. He lay his head back and heard straw crinkle by his ears.

The Harir cave. A forty-bed ward and an operating theater carved out of solid rock, with no ventilation, no running water, no medicine. During his five weeks in Kurdistan, Mark had made a half-dozen visits to the cave for a photo-essay he was thinking of calling, "The Worst Hospital in the World." Each time, he had been shaken by the sights, the stench, had counted the minutes until he could return to the air and sunlight that waited beyond the cave mouth. This desire now seized him with urgency. He tried to rise.

His arms and legs would not move. Mark stared at the wool blanket that covered him. He checked the sides of the cot, but there were no straps or ropes holding him. He again tried to rise. Nothing.

He looked to the ceiling and thought back to the river. Fragments of memory, of being shaken awake and looking into the faces of two Pesh Merga guerrillas, the sky gray above them, the ground cold beneath him. They had asked him something in Kurdish, but Mark couldn't remember if he answered before going back to sleep. Nothing after that, nothing until now.

Mark felt the first knotting of panic and tried to calm himself. He imagined crawling, out of his cot, over those filling the aisle, crawling until he had slipped beneath the black curtain and reached the outer world. But this was beyond him. Even falling to the ground was beyond him. He could do nothing but lie in the cot and wonder why his body felt made of stone.

The voices of the wounded rose in volume and tempo, took on a fearful edge. A sudden infusion of light in the far recess of the cave, and Mark knew what it meant even before turning his head. There, a mere silhouette against the brilliant light of the operating lamps,

Talzani stepped from the surgery room. The lamps were shut off then, but Talzani's white coat retained their glow as he made his way down the rows of wounded.

Triage. Mark had already seen it, photographed it. He felt fatigue wash over him, push him down toward sleep. He shook his head violently to keep it at bay.

To be alert, that was the important thing. You had to be alert when Talzani came for you, because triage was done quickly. If you were asleep when he came, if you were too slow with your answers, these could be taken as signs and the blue plastic tag placed on you. Your fate decided by the color of plastic. Get a yellow and be shunted aside. Get red and be treated. Get blue and die. On several occasions—when Mark had been a photographer in Harir instead of a patient—he had seen those given blues beg Talzani, cry to him, offer him money and houses and wives, but the doctor was incorruptible.

He turned to see the white coat draw nearer, just seven or eight beds away. The dark at the edge of his eyes grew, took more and more of his vision. Voices in the cave took on a flat clarity.

He tried to raise his right arm. A slight motion under the blanket. He lifted his left leg, then his right. The blanket shifted each time. His body was coming back to him. Talzani would notice this, surely. Mark took deep gulps of air to steady his breathing. In the corner of his eye he saw him, four beds away now.

The ceiling had lost its features, had become a solid mass of blanched yellow. It seemed to be descending, closing on him. Mark looked into a far corner. It was away from the light, the darkest spot in the cave, as dark as sleep.

"Salaam."

Mark jerked awake when the hand touched his shoulder. He stared with wide eyes, the face above him a blur. First the black moustache, then the thin, young face of Ahmet Talzani came into focus. He was smiling.

"Ah, Mr. Walsh," he said in English, "you've decided to visit me again. And to what do we owe the honor?" A holstered gun poked through a flap of his stained white coat. He drew closer, his smile easing away. "What happened, do you remember?"

Mark didn't answer, just stared up at him. The orderly, an aged, white-haired Pesh Merga, muttered something in Talzani's ear.

"They found you down by the river. Do you remember that?"

Mark nodded.

Talzani pulled the blanket back. He gazed at the bruises on Mark's chest and legs, whistled softly through his teeth. "Good heavens. Did someone beat you?"

"I fell crossing the river," Mark said. "I was swept down."

The doctor took a cigarette from his coat pocket and lit it, cocked his head to the side. "You were on the other side of the river? Where were you coming from?"

Mark watched the burning tip of the cigarette. "I went out hiking in the morning. I got lost. And then it turned dark."

Curiosity left Talzani's face, and he smiled again. "A dangerous area to go hiking, Mr. Walsh, so close to the contested zone."

The orderly became impatient and whispered in Talzani's ear once more.

"He says you can't walk. Is that so?"

"I don't know," Mark said. "I just woke up and—I think I'm just stiff."

Talzani handed his cigarette to the orderly. He put a hand on each of Mark's shoulders and pushed down. "Does that hurt?"

Mark shook his head.

"But you can feel it?"

Mark nodded. The doctor traveled down, pressing here and there, as if giving a desultory massage. He dug his hands under Mark's back, felt along the spine. He cupped the hip bones and kneaded them, rubbed around the knees, then went to the feet and squeezed hard.

"No pain?"

Mark shook his head again.

Talzani straightened and took back his cigarette. He stared at Mark's body, sent twin streams of smoke out his nose. "Can you move your arms?"

Mark bit his lip and slowly raised his elbows a little off the mattress.

"Your legs?"

He tried to lift his legs clear from the bed but couldn't; he brought his feet in, pushed the knees up a few inches.

"Very good."

The orderly muttered something else. Talzani raised his eyebrows.

"A head wound, as well? I don't think our rivers agree with you, Mr. Walsh." Holding the cigarette between his teeth, the doctor came forward and began turning Mark's head to the side, but then noticed the thin, straight cut across his throat. He frowned, traced it with a finger.

"A chafing wound. How did you get that?"

"I don't know," Mark said.

Stifling a sigh, Talzani twisted Mark's head until it was flat against the pillow, ran his fingers through the matted hair until he found the cut in back. Mark gritted his teeth as he felt it being spread open, the fresh blood spilling down his neck. A trail of cigarette smoke curled around his head to roil and disperse before his eyes. Talzani let go and stepped away. He flicked blood from his fingertips, took the cigarette from his mouth.

"Very lucky, Mr. Walsh—a flesh wound, maybe a concussion. Kurdistan isn't a good place for a skull fracture. You might want to get stitches though." Reaching into his coat pocket, he withdrew the stack of plastic tags. "As for the rest, it's difficult to say. Your body took quite a jolt, but you're not paralyzed and there don't seem to be any broken bones. You have some neural disruption but, God willing, it's temporary. We'll know soon enough."

The plastic tags were thin and Talzani held about fifty—yellows, reds, and blues. He cradled them in the palm of his left hand, brought up his right, and began to absently shuffle them.

"The legs will be the biggest problem. That's always the case. Legs, legs, legs. For every arm I've amputated up here, I've probably taken ten legs. Puzzling, isn't it?" He waited for a response, but Mark was watching the plastic, watching how the topmost tag changed with each shuffle: red, blue, yellow, blue. "I'm not sure why this is. I think human legs simply weren't designed for modern war."

Talzani stopped his shuffling. He looked at the tags in his palm and, with a careful surgeon's hand, reached in to pull out a yellow. He dropped it on Mark's chest. "Take it easy. Get some rest."

But Mark still stared at the plastic in Talzani's hand.

"You're going to be all right," the doctor said, leaning over, trying to meet Mark's eyes. "Do you understand?"

But Mark couldn't stop looking at the tags.

"You're going to be all right." Talzani turned and moved on to the next man.

He awoke to find he was being shifted onto a stretcher by two orderlies. They took him out of the cave, and Mark shut his eyes tight against the sudden light. He felt himself drift with the lulling motion of the stretcher—head rising and falling, feet rising and falling—and listened to the regular scrinching sound of the canvas each time his weight shifted.

They carried him to the recovery ward. At some time in the past, the building, standing on a level stretch of land sixty feet from the cave mouth, had been a shepherd's hut. Now it more closely resembled a beachside cabana, with a makeshift reed roof and only two walls, and it was filled with those who didn't require the cave's warmth to survive the cold nights. The orderlies moved several of the other wounded to clear a space, then hoisted Mark off the stretcher. They settled him on the stone floor, threw a thick blanket over him, and walked away.

Through the gaps in the roof, Mark saw a pallor of sun. He breathed the fresh air in deeply, but occasionally the smell of the cave came to where he lay. Each time, the stench of waste and disease lingered, seemed to cling to his clothes and nostrils. He would wait, taking short, shallow breaths through his mouth until he felt steady enough to inhale deeply once more.

In late afternoon, he heard the sound rise within the cave. It was low and indistinct at first, like the hum of a generator, but it grew in pitch until Mark could pick out individual voices, individual cries. Others in the recovery bay began to pray. Mark looked to the cave.

The orderlies brought the blues out on stretchers, lined them up in a neat row. There were five of them, and their mouths gulped at the sky like feeding fish. One could move his hands, and he used them to shield his eyes against the daylight.

The mullah from Harir came over the bluff. He went to the

stretchers and walked among them, squatting down to speak, leaning close to hear a whisper. Talzani emerged from the cave. With a nod from him, two orderlies lifted up the first stretcher. The mullah took a Koran from his robe and read aloud from the holy book as his right hand went out to touch the forehead of the dying Pesh Merga. Mark watched the procession move away, the mullah still reciting, still touching the man's forehead, Talzani following, his hands clasped behind his back, his head slightly bowed.

The prayers of the men in recovery grew louder. Mark closed his eyes. The report of a gunshot. Mark twitched but kept his eyes shut. Four or five minutes later, another shot. Then another. Another. After the last one, Mark opened his eyes and stared into the reed roof.

A shadow fell over him. Talzani. Holding the revolver at his side, he gazed down at Mark. His face was white and his eyes were clouded glass.

"Do you know what Pesh Merga means?"

Mark nodded, but Talzani seemed not to notice.

"It means 'those who face death.' A romantic name, don't you think? Poetic. I myself have never seen one face death; they all turn away at the end."

The doctor looked to the ground, ran a trembling hand through his short black hair.

"It's not so easy, is it?" he asked quietly. "Without your camera, it's not so easy."

He started back to the cave, holstering the gun as he went.

The cloud cover blew off that night. Beyond the reeds, Mark saw a thousand stars.

An afternoon cool and clear, the clefts of the surrounding mountains dark with the runoff of melted snow. Mark sat on the edge of the promontory, a hundred yards from the cave mouth, and slowly opened and closed his hands. It felt as if thin needles were being stuck deep into his joints, but the fingers were bending, straightening, coming back to him. He reached for his knees. Even through his heavy trousers he felt the swelling. He rubbed them until the pain made his eyes water. It had been five days since the explosion, four

nights since the river. That morning, he had sent a boy to settle his account at the hotel and collect his things; his camera bag and knapsack were now in the shade of a rock outcropping beside the cave.

Below him was the road. It hairpinned down the mountainside to disappear amid the stone homes of Harir. At the far end of the town it reappeared, twisting past fields and hills before turning north to slip behind a mountain. Somewhere beyond that mountain, the Turkish frontier. The Jeeps would leave at nightfall. Mark was determined to be on one.

He tucked his feet under him, set his right hand on the ground, and rose again. His knees wobbled but held. He waited for the trembling to subside, then took a small step. His legs felt disembodied. Another small step, his body teetering to either side.

"You are doing well."

Mark turned to see Ahmet Talzani coming over the broken ground. In the daylight, his doctor's coat appeared splashed with brown paint. Mark looked back at his own feet and took two more timid steps. Talzani's feet scraped on the ground close by.

"Very good. Very good, indeed."

Mark stumbled and came down hard on his right foot. The pain shot through his hip, into his head. He inhaled sharply.

"It hurts today?" the doctor asked. "Excellent. Pain is always preferable to numbness."

Mark resumed walking and Talzani fell in alongside, watching the tentative steps.

"You should have crutches," he said.

Mark knew this wasn't an offer but an observation. "I'll be okay."

When he tripped again, Talzani caught him by the arm.

"You're overanxious, you're making mistakes. Here, rest." Talzani gently helped him into a sitting position on a boulder. He sat alongside and took a cigarette pack from his coat. "Maybe you should wait another day."

"No," Mark said, "I have to get going. I'm late as it is."

"Suit yourself." Talzani lit his cigarette with a small gold lighter, tilted his head back, and released a plume of smoke. He sniffed at the air. "Spring. A wonderful time of year here. Living in that cave, I would even forget there are such things as seasons if I didn't force

myself to take these breaks." He held the cigarette up. "Breathe air, look at the world. And, of course, one reaches the point of diminishing returns; if I stay too long in there, I begin killing more patients than I save." He laughed lightly, looked to Mark. "And the other photographer, he is leaving with you?"

"Colin? No, he's staying a few more days."

The doctor nodded. "I haven't seen him come by. I would have thought he'd visit you after your accident."

"I doubt he knows about it. He left for the lowlands the day before it happened."

"Ah, that explains it." Talzani smiled. "Anyway, all you war people think you're immortal—probably not good for morale to see a colleague end up in Harir cave."

Mark smiled back. "No, probably not."

They fell into a comfortable silence. For some minutes, they gazed out at the mountains, Mark rubbing his sore hands, Talzani nursing his cigarette, raising it to his lips, rolling it between his fingers. "Still," he said, finally, "I trust you've had an enjoyable visit."

Mark studied the doctor's profile, realized he was serious. "Oh, it's been a real treat, Talzani. I can't understand why you don't get more tourists up here."

Talzani laughed. "Sorry. It's the Moslem in me—a point of honor with us to make sure strangers are content."

They watched a shepherd moving his flock up to pasture on a distant hillside. The sheep were white with black feet, and they looked almost dainty scrabbling over the rock-strewn slope. Talzani folded his arms over his chest, lolled back on the boulder.

"Probably the way the whole world was two thousand years ago," he said, "this kind of life, this kind of beauty. But a cursed place. Beautiful and cursed. I wonder sometimes how that works. Do we see its beauty despite the war, or because of it?"

Mark remembered other places. Afghanistan, Mozambique, Cambodia. Jungle, mountains, desert, savanna. In each one, he had found beauty. In each one, he had felt the land held something sacred. He was thinking of this when Talzani spoke again:

"We're about to be crushed," he said. "The BBC is reporting the Iraqis have expanded their offensive. Already they have taken most of

the plains, and now they will come into the mountains. Every hour the news is worse. More dead, more wounded." He looked to the western horizon, as if for a sign of the invaders. "As you can imagine, the world is outraged. The Americans are giving speeches about it in Congress. The UN is debating a resolution of condemnation." Talzani sighed. "But that's okay, that's okay, it's not their fault. We've been losing wars forever; it's what we Kurds do best."

He stood up, flicked the cigarette out over the escarpment. He stepped to the edge and peered down.

"You know, in my lifetime—just my lifetime—we have fought eight wars: the Turks twice, the Iranians and Iraqis three times each. If you go back to my father and my father's father, you cannot even count them all—Turkey, Iran, and Iraq but also Syria, Russia, the British, the French, everyone. We are like the little guy at the bar who wants to fight all the big men. We get beaten up by one, then get up off the floor and go after another. Over and over. A lifetime of war. Can you imagine?"

"Why do you stay?" Mark asked.

Talzani looked to him and shrugged. "Where am I to go, Mr. Walsh? I am only from one place." He kicked at a large stone, as if trying to dislodge it from the ground. "Not that I always accepted that, of course. When I was studying in Michigan, I hated Kurdistan, hated the war, the leaders who always kept it burning. I wanted nothing to do with it. I was going to stay in America and have a good life. I was going to be a surgeon—a real surgeon—find a wife, live in a great big house." He chuckled, shook his head. "Great big house. If I had kept all the limbs I've cut off here, I could have built a mansion with them."

The rock was too large or the earth too dry. Talzani stopped his kicking and strolled back to the boulder.

"Homeland. It doesn't matter what you do or even what you believe, you never escape the homeland. It always keeps you. They talk of free will, but we are all just homing pigeons in the end."

With the doctor again beside him, Mark gazed down at the village. A breeze was coming up from the valley and it brought sounds—the tinkling of goat bells, a shouting child, a calling vendor—across the miles of air.

Mark saw a figure in black appear on the road below, leaving Harir and walking toward them. He sensed Talzani's attention fix on the figure as well. After a time, Mark recognized the mullah. He looked to the cave mouth and saw that a stretcher had been brought out.

"How many today?" he asked.

Talzani reached into his coat for another cigarette. "Just two. And one burial."

He motioned with his head toward the cave; off to one side was an odd-shaped bundle of dark plastic about six feet long, tied off at either end with white rope.

"They found it by the river this morning—badly decomposed but a man. I had it wrapped in plastic for the smell." Talzani rolled the cigarette back and forth between his fingers as he stared at the bundle. "A curious case. The feet were severed—very jagged wounds, the bones shattered, so clearly an explosion of some sort, a land mine, most likely—but then his hands were tied together. A bootstrap. Someone had tied his hands together like this"—Talzani crossed his own wrists—"with a bootstrap. I cannot account for this." The doctor looked to Mark, gave a quick, incredulous laugh. "You see? It's very puzzling, isn't it?"

"Yes, I guess it is."

Talzani flipped a hand in the air, as if shooing a fly. "Ah well, these little mysteries, morbid curiosities, war is full of them."

In silence, they watched the mullah ascend. He held a Koran in his hands and seemed to be reading from it. His black robe curled and billowed in the wind. Mark smelled the burning tobacco, heard its dry crackle when Talzani inhaled.

"What do you bring with you, Mr. Walsh?"

Mark turned to him. The doctor held the cigarette poised, close to his lips, as he watched the approaching mullah.

"What do you mean?"

"When you come to a place like Kurdistan, a dangerous place, what do you bring?"

Mark shrugged. "Cameras, some filters. The clothes depend on the climate."

Talzani shook his head. "No, no, I mean what charms?" He

looked to Mark with a tired smile. "Surely you carry some talismans to keep you safe."

Mark reached into his jeans pocket and brought out a small, silver-black coin. He held it out to the doctor. "An Indian head nickel. Over sixty years old. My grandfather gave it to me when I was a boy. It's been through every war with me."

Talzani took the coin and studied it, turned it over and over between his fingers. The mullah was passing just beneath them, almost to the crest. Talzani handed the coin back.

"I'll tell you something I've learned from being here, Mark. I think it might help you."

Mark felt himself draw back a little, his toes curling in his shoes; it was the first time Talzani had ever used his first name.

"There is no pattern to who lives or dies in war. Most of us, we can't accept that. We invent all kinds of explanations and superstitions for why things happen. 'He died because he lost his nerve, he died because he forgot his lucky coin.' None of it is true. In war, people die because they do. There's nothing more to it than that."

He reached into his coat pocket and took out the stack of plastic tags. He held them up, as if offering them to Mark.

"My little tags. A pattern, no? A scientific method to decide who lives and dies." Talzani withdrew the offering, cradled the tags close to his side. "If only it were so."

Mark remembered the evening in the cave, watching as Talzani had shuffled the tags.

"Would you believe that sometimes I am so tired, or the cave is so dark, I'm not even sure of the colors I give them? Would you believe that men have been given blues, have been set aside to die, suffering from nothing more than dehydration or a broken arm? Disturbing, I know, but it's true."

The doctor lifted the flap of his coat pocket and carefully placed the tags back inside.

"Well, those were simply mistakes, of course, but always there is this question of what is a blue, and this is not at all about science or medicine, just mathematics. In quiet times, when there is not a lot of fighting and I have more time, maybe even the man with a stomach

wound has a chance. But then more wounded come in and he is out of luck, because now anyone who is going to take up two hours of my time to save is not worth saving. And then more wounded come in, and now the time is down to an hour, a half hour, twenty minutes. You see how it goes? Simple math. Math and luck."

He scraped his foot over the pebble-strewn ground, leaving a swath of cleared dirt.

"But don't imagine I lie awake at night thinking of these things. No. I sleep very soundly. My little tags are for them, because they need to believe there is a system. For me, I know it is all fate. Once you understand this, it makes life here much easier, for you are freed of this idea that you can prevent something from happening. Some live, some die, that's all."

The mullah reached the promontory. He started toward them, but Talzani motioned for him to wait. The mullah stopped, and Mark noticed for the first time that he was middle-aged, with a dark beard and very white skin; as he stood there, thirty feet away, staring at them, he seemed as impassive and still as a statue.

Talzani leaned closer to Mark, rested a hand on his shoulder.

"You were very lucky," he said. "You know that, don't you? The head, the spine, if there had been any complications . . ."

Mark looked into the doctor's solemn, sad eyes. He forced himself to smile. "What, you would have shot me?"

"Yes," Talzani whispered, lightly patting his shoulder. "Yes, I would have done that for you." He let his hand slide off, gazed over the valley. "Some live, some die. It's the only way to view it. Anything else is just self-torture and arrogance. Because we are not gods, none of us are gods."

He rose, started toward the waiting mullah, then suddenly turned.

"Oh, good news. I secured a place for you in one of the Jeeps to the border. It leaves at eight."

"Thank you, Ahmet," Mark said. "Thank you for everything."

The doctor shrugged, walked away.

Mark stared out at the valley and listened to Talzani's footsteps recede until they were lost on the wind. He looked to the hillside where the shepherd had been. He no longer saw the man or his black-footed animals and assumed they had reached the crest and

descended the other side in their search for pasture. Reaching into his vest pocket, he took out his wallet, the photograph he had not viewed in over a month. It had developed a number of creases over the past three years, the colors losing their luster, but her smile was still radiant, her hair still black and soft, and Mark stared at her image with a tenderness and longing that was now safe for him to feel.

He looked out at the road. In his mind's eye, he saw it stretching clear across Kurdistan, over the frontier, all the way to the place where she was.

A gunshot. A soft echo that rolled back from the far mountainside. Mark leaned against the rock, his back to the cave, and waited for night to come.