

Thesis  
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**Memoir and Memory: The papers of a pre-war German  
— Alfred Huhnhäuser, 1885 to 1950.**

**A thesis in two volumes submitted to the University of Stirling in partial fulfilment of the  
requirements for the degree of doctor of Philosophy.**

September 2000

~~09/01~~



**Dr Alfred Hermann Max Huhnhäuser**  
**1885-1950**

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## ABSTRACT

The personal archive of Dr Alfred Huhnhäuser (1885-1950), a German civil servant, is examined with regard to this thesis. The archive consists of an unfinished personal memoir, *Aus einem reichen Leben*, five chapters of a political memoir concerning Huhnhäuser's time in Norway during the German occupation, publications edited by Huhnhäuser and other personal documents. A full catalogue of the contents of the archive has been included in this thesis.

An attempt has been made to identify the significance of the Huhnhäuser archive within a literary framework and, therefore, a brief analysis of the study of autobiographical writings has been undertaken. The importance of the archive within the context of social history has also been stressed, for Huhnhäuser was an "ordinary" German and not one of the Great and the Good. The personal memoirs operate on three levels — personal, world-stage and cultural — and extracts from the archive have been used to illustrate this. A brief historical summary of events in Norway prior to and immediately after the German occupation is given in order to place the events described by Huhnhäuser in context.

The contents of the personal and political memoirs are summarized and analyzed in this thesis. Recurring themes are identified and examined. Perhaps the most significant is Huhnhäuser's repeated claim that he is an inherently "unpolitisches Wesen". Evidence has been obtained from the *Bundesarchiv* in Berlin which proves that Huhnhäuser joined the NSDAP on 1 May 1933. Huhnhäuser does not refer in the memoirs to his membership of this party, claiming instead that he has never voluntarily been involved in party politics.

A second volume of materials has been included in this thesis in order to provide more detailed information as regards to the composition and contents of the archive. Extracts from the memoirs and letters have also been selected.

## Acknowledgements

Professor Brian Murdoch, my supervisor, inspired me to write this thesis. Attending his literature tutorials in the final years of my undergraduate degree gave me the desire to continue my studies in the field of German culture and undertake postgraduate research. He proved to be as motivating a supervisor as he was a tutor, and his help and support over the years have been invaluable. I would like to say a huge thank you to Professor George Peden, without whom this thesis would not have been possible. Not only did he generously donate the archive material to the German Department, but he also entrusted me with the care of precious family photographs and documents. I thank also Dr Malcolm Read for his help and advice on computing matters; it was he who taught me how to scan and edit photographs, in addition to solving in minutes technical problems which it would otherwise have taken me hours to overcome. I owe a debt of gratitude to Dr Bruce Thompson, who ensured every semester that all the postgraduates in the department were given the opportunity to gain valuable teaching experience, and furthermore, who assisted me in the organisation of my research trip to Berlin and Rostock. My thanks to Dr Heather Valencia, not only for selflessly allowing me to share her office, but also for all her advice and suggestions.

To Maggie, John and Janice I would like to say that it has been a pleasure to share the Ph.D. experience with them. Collectively, they have managed to keep all of my worries and doubts in proportion. Thanks too to John for his practical assistance in Glasgow University library, not to mention driving me there several times. Dr Ingolf Sieben assisted me in the very earliest stage of my research by transcribing the diary of the First World War, which was written in *Schreibschrift*. This helped me greatly in learning to read this script. Ingolf also

helped to convince me that a Ph.D. was within my capabilities when I first began to consider the idea, and for that I thank him.

Finally, I would like to express my gratitude and appreciation to Colm and my parents for all their support over the past six years. They have encouraged me every step of the way. Colm, in particular, has made many personal sacrifices to enable me to complete this thesis. To him, and to all of those mentioned above, I say again, thank you.

# INTRODUCTION

## An Overview

The aim of this thesis is to present a summarized version of the Huhnhäuser memoirs, both autobiographical and political, and to provide commentary upon and analysis of these memoirs. A further aim is to provide an outline of the social, political, literary and historical framework within which these memoirs were written. In order to do so, material has been included from other archival sources, such as the *Bundesarchiv* in Berlin and Rostock University library. Huhnhäuser's son-in-law was also interviewed for the purposes of this thesis in 1995.

In the first chapter of this thesis "Memoir and Memory", the full contents of the archive are listed and a brief life history of Alfred Huhnhäuser is given. The literary definitions of the terms 'memoir' and 'autobiography' are then examined, and an attempt is made to highlight the differences between the two. In addition, examples of and variations within the genre of autobiography are reviewed. The reception of autobiographical writings, the motivation of the author and his role as both writer and subject are also discussed. The significance of memoir and other autobiographical writings in the study of history is analysed and finally, evidence of the practical difficulties inherent in the study of memoir and autobiography is presented.

In the second chapter, "The Huhnhäuser Archive", an analysis of the material in the archive has been undertaken, based upon the survey of the autobiographical genre carried out in the preceding chapter. An attempt has been made to put these memoirs in context by placing emphasis upon their value as a socio-historical document, spanning as they do several decades of a tumultuous period of German and world history, as viewed through the eyes of an "ordinary" German. However, *Aus einem reichen Leben* contains not only historical, but also many autobiographical elements, and the most fascinating of these is Huhnhäuser's consistent



presentation of himself as an “unpolitisches Wesen”, and his complete omission of the fact that he joined the NSDAP. The memoirs operate on three levels — personal, world-stage and cultural — and examples are given from each as illustration. Finally, the significance of the Huhnhäuser archive to the modern reader is examined. There are several reasons why such an archive is worthy of study. The first is that contained within it are descriptions of historical world-stage events as witnessed by a man who was not a public figure. He was neither rich nor powerful, but rather a relatively anonymous citizen from a “pre-war” era. Secondly, Huhnhäuser is an interesting figure because he appears to be always out of step with his time, and states that he feels himself to be so. He was unlike many of his countrymen in his attitudes and behaviour, and this became particularly apparent during the period of the German occupation of Norway — although he worked for the occupying forces within a violent totalitarian system, his actions in Norway were benevolent and humane. Thirdly, he is a man who does not recognize the contradictions within himself. He believes he has lived his life according to the strictest moral code and is reluctant to compromise this, yet was prepared to work for, and consequently support, what was probably the most immoral regime ever known in the history of mankind. Furthermore, despite stressing that he is unpolitical, evidence is available which confirms that he joined the Nazi Party on 1 May 1933. Finally, the fact that an “ordinary” man feels he has led such an interesting life that it is worth recording for posterity, is in itself enough to make these memoirs worthy of further examination.

In the third, fourth and fifth chapters, “The Kaiserzeit to the First World War”, “The Early Weimar Years” and “Direktor”, the material within *Aus einem reichen Leben* is summarized and is the subject of critical analysis. Certain themes are identified, such as Huhnhäuser’s repeated claim that he is inherently unpolitical. Comment is made upon what Huhnhäuser does, and more importantly, does not include in his account of his life. As

Huhnhäuser's career progresses the professional aspects of his life begin to dominate the memoirs and personal memories become infrequent. *Aus einem reichen Leben* ends in 1928, for Huhnhäuser was never able to complete these memoirs.

The sixth chapter, "Norway during the Occupation" provides a brief historical summary of the events leading up to the German invasion on 9 April 1940 and also outlines the significant political developments which ensued during the course of the occupation, including the battle for power which was waged between Quisling and Terboven. The purpose of this chapter is to allow the reader to place Huhnhäuser's political memoirs of this period in their historical context. These political memoirs, which consist of five chapters written with a view to publication, are summarized in the seventh chapter "Huhnhäuser in Norway", together with the affidavits from the seventeen Norwegians who provided evidence of his humanity and compassion. These memoirs focus upon the political events which affected the educational institutions in Norway, such as the closure of Oslo University on 30 November 1943. Frequent references are made to Terboven and Quisling, for Huhnhäuser is now operating on the level of the world-stage, albeit in a minor capacity. His actions during this period consist often of *reactions* to circumstances which are beyond his control as he tries to limit the terrible excesses of Terboven, Quisling and their acolytes. Attention is paid to the change in the tone of the political memoirs, which is far more objective than in *Aus einem reichen Leben*, and also to the alteration in Huhnhäuser's role. He is now no longer the main focus of the memoir. He was involved personally in political events but his purpose here is to describe the events themselves and not just concentrate on the part he played in them. Consequently, Huhnhäuser does not have to address the question of why he chose to work within such a system.

The final chapter of this thesis, "1950 — The Final Year", is based upon the

correspondence between Huhnhäuser, his wife, Else, and his daughter and son-in-law, Heidi and Alexander Peden, between mid-1949 and 1950. Through these letters the events of the final year of Huhnhäuser's life unfold. He describes his move from Flensburg to Hambach, where he found employment writing for a regional newspaper, and the difficulties he and Else faced in starting life afresh in post-war Germany. The fate of several of their friends and acquaintances is revealed. The sequence of events surrounding the day of his death are recounted in detail in a letter from his wife to his daughter, as are the details of his funeral. His obituary is included in the archive, and this gives a picture of Huhnhäuser through the eyes of those who knew him.

In addition, a second volume of supplementary materials has been included in this thesis with a view to providing additional information, such as detailed catalogues and notes on the archive. Extracts from *Aus einem reichen Leben* and the wartime letters have been selected for this volume to offer a flavour of the original material, and a small number of photographs have been reproduced from the Huhnhäuser family albums (on loan from Professor George Peden) for the same purpose. Background information on Huhnhäuser's known publications has been included in this second volume with the aim of providing a concentrated overview of his prodigious output. Extracts from the interview with the late Alexander Peden are also present.

Given the vast amount of material contained within the Huhnhäuser archive, it has been impossible to study all aspects in detail for the purpose of this doctoral thesis. There is material within the thesis which has not been exploited to its full potential. The hundreds of letters written by Huhnhäuser and his wife Else during their years apart in the 1940s are a prime example of this. Unfortunately only the letters written between January 1942 and December 1944 have survived, but within them lies a fascinating account of life in the occupied Scandinavian territories for German civilians. These letters contain a wealth of historical

material, and occasional reference is made to them in this thesis.

Remarks and comments which can be found in the archive provide evidence which supports the argument that Huhnhäuser believed he was doing his duty for his country by working for the Nazi regime, unlike others who chose to go into exile in order to fight against this evil or who actively resisted from within. Perhaps he hoped that by working for the government he could effect change from within. It may be that Huhnhäuser, like many other Germans, believed Communism was a greater evil than National Socialism, and that it was therefore necessary to support the Nazis for the good of the German nation. Whatever the reasons that lay behind his choices, it is difficult to reconcile his decision to remain in Germany and work for the Nazis with his claim to have a love of the truth and be inherently unpolitical. Huhnhäuser himself does not explicitly recognise that there is any conflict between his words and deeds, although by stressing that he is unpolitical it appears that he wishes to disassociate himself from this aspect of his past. Consequently, can Huhnhäuser claim with any justification to adhere to a high moral code when by serving such brutal masters, he implicitly supported the regime? It is not, however, the objective of this thesis to condemn or condone Huhnhäuser's conduct, for in addressing this issue, another question is raised. Do we, as "desk moralists" who have not had to live through this situation and make such choices, have the right to judge the actions of those who did? Who amongst us can honestly say "Had I been there, I would have had the courage to resist"? It is, rather, the aim of this thesis simply to analyse Huhnhäuser's presentation of himself and his past as he records a life which has spanned so many interesting periods of German history.

## Conventions of Reference

a) The following abbreviations have been used throughout this thesis to refer to the books, chapters and sections of *Aus einem reichen Leben*:

Book I:

**KJ** — Kindheit und Jugend

Book II *Lehr- und Lernjahre*:

**SME** — Schlosser, Maschinenbauer und Elektromonteur in Rostock (Chapter 1)

**WS** — Wieder auf der Schule (Chapter 2)

**SB** — Studienjahre\*: Berlin (Chapter 3, section (a))

**SR** — Studienjahre\*: Rostock (Chapter 3, section (c))

Book III *Mannesjahre*:

**LR** — Lehrer in Rostock (Chapter 1)

**LRF** — Lehrer in Rostock: Fortsetzung (Chapter 1)

**DN** — Direktor in Neukloster (Chapter 2, section (a))

**DNF** — Direktor in Neukloster: Fortsetzung (Chapter 2, section (a))

**DB** — Direktor in Breslau (Chapter 2, section (b))

\* Initially called 'Studienzeit' this chapter is later referred to as 'Studienjahre'.

b) The following abbreviations have been used to refer to Huhnhäuser's political chapters on Norway:

**GSJ** — Von der Gründung des Sportdepartements bis zum Jugendgesetz

**RS** — Der Reglementsstreit

**OA** — Von der Oktoberverhaftungen bis zum Aulabrand

**AF** — Der Aulabrand und seine Folgen

**BFPS** — Bemühungen um die Freilassung der Professoren und Studenten. Vom 30. November 1943 bis zum 8. Januar 1944.

## CHAPTER ONE

### Memoir and Memory

#### Introduction

The Huhnhäuser archive — the papers of a German teacher and civil servant who lived through the Weimar and Nazi periods — was donated to the German Department at Stirling University by its Professor of History, George Peden, whose uncle was married to Huhnhäuser's daughter. The archive consists of two main parts. Firstly, there are several notebooks and typescripts which contain Huhnhäuser's autobiographical memoirs. These memoirs, which were written between autumn 1943 and 1946, give a detailed account of his life from childhood until his early forties and end in 1928. Huhnhäuser entitled them *Aus einem reichen Leben* and they are divided into three books which contain a maximum of three chapters. Also present in the archive are Huhnhäuser's memoirs on political events in Norway during the occupation. Here he documents the tense relationship between the Norwegian Fascist administration, university staff and students and the Germans, and describes his own part in the frequent conflicts which arose. In these memoirs he recollects events which place him firmly as a participant, albeit a minor one, on the world stage. There is also a collection of affidavits from various Norwegians, many of them university students, which vouch for Huhnhäuser's conduct towards them during the war and show that he was well regarded. They list the actions he took in order to protect them as best he could from arrest or deportation.

The second major part of the archive consists of hundreds of letters, the correspondence between Huhnhäuser and his wife from January 1942 to January 1944. There are also letters written between 1949 and 1950. From August 1940 until the German

surrender in 1945 Huhnhäuser was working as a *Ministerialrat* in the Education Ministry in Oslo, and was head of the *Schulabteilung*. In addition, the archive contains an anthology of poetry collected by Huhnhäuser but not written by him, a journal of the first eight days of the Great War, and a detailed account of a spa holiday in Austria in 1940, illustrated by postcards and photographs. Apart from personal papers, the archive also contains the remnants of Huhnhäuser's once extensive personal library, some of it now in Stirling University library, those in the archive including primarily works edited by Huhnhäuser. The archive is continued even after Huhnhäuser's death, for there are letters written by his wife describing the events surrounding his death and his funeral, and a newspaper clipping of his obituary. This was taken from the newspaper *Die Rheinpfalz*, to which he contributed as an arts critic in the year before his death.

### **Contents of the Huhnhäuser Archive**

The manuscript of *Aus einem reichen Leben* consists of the following:

**Book 1 - *Kindheit und Jugend*.** Typescript, 93 pages.

**Book 2 - *Lehr- und Lernjahre*:**

**Chapter 1 – “Schlosser, Maschinenbauer und Elektromonteur.”** Typescript, 70 pages.



**Chapter 2** – “Wieder auf der Schule.” Typescript, 83 pages.

**Chapter 3** – “Studienjahre”:

- a) “Berlin.” Unfinished. Large green marbled notebook, handwritten, 81 pages, 3 lines of notes.
- b) “Studentische Ferien.” Mentioned in outline, but never written.
- c) “Rostock, 1908-1912.” Loosescap paper, handwritten, 104 pages.

**Book 3 - Mannesjahre:**

**Chapter 1** – “Lehrer in Rostock, 1912-1921.”

Black marbled notebook, no. I, “Fortsetzung”, handwritten, pp. 1-66 missing, pp. 67-185, and 10 pages of notes.

(Schlußteil) “Die Zeit von 1918 bis 1921, drei schaffensreiche Jahre.” Green marbled notebook, no. II, handwritten, 255 pages and 49 pages of notes.

**Chapter 2** – “Direktor”:

a) “In Neukloster, 1.1.22 - 31.3.26.” Blue and red marbled notebook, no. III, handwritten, 159 pages and 12 pages of notes. Continued in blue marbled notebook, no. IV, handwritten, pp. 1-115.

b) “In Breslau, 1.4.26 bis 31.12.27.” Blue marbled notebook, no. IV, handwritten, pp. 118-149, with preface p. 117, and 10 pages of notes (notes refer to pp. 1-149). Also present are three loose sheets of squared paper containing notes.

This completes the catalogue of the manuscript for *Aus einem reichen Leben*.<sup>1</sup> The following are present in the archive but not part of the autobiographical memoirs:

*Kriegserinnerungen 1914*. Black marbled notebook, handwritten in *Schreibschrift*, pp. 1-20. Journal from 8 August to 16 August 1914. Copy of poem “Krieg” by Julius Hart written in front inside cover. On pp. 25-69 are stories and a diary kept by Heidi Huhnhäuser, which was written no later than the mid-1920s.

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<sup>1</sup> Further notes on the manuscript are to be found in the appendix.

Journal of holiday in Bad Gastein, May 1940. Handwritten on loose parchment and illustrated by postcards and photographs, 94 pages.

The Norway chapters:

“Von der Gründung des Sportdepartements bis zum Jugendgesetz”, typescript, 15 pages.

“Der Reglementsstreit”, typescript, 10 pages.

“Von den Oktoberverhaftungen bis zum Aulabrand”, typescript, 13 pages.

“Der Aulabrand und seine Folgen”, typescript, 21 pages.

“Bemühungen um die Freilassung der Professoren und Studenten. Vom 30. November 1943 bis zum 8. Januar 1944”, typescript, 24 pages.

Also present in the archive is the original, handwritten manuscript of “Der Aulabrand und seine Folgen”, attached to which is a letter, dated 29 December 1947 from Huhnhäuser to Didrik Arup Seip, former Rektor of Oslo University, regarding this chapter and the publication of the book for which this and the other chapters are intended. There is a translation by Dr Norman Balk (30 August 1946) of a declaration by Christian Lerche (26 June 1946), one of the students released after arrest, stating that Huhnhäuser played a significant role in his release. There is a translation of a Swedish newspaper article, dated 2 December 1943, concerning the arrest of the students. Finally, there is the first page of a letter, in German, to the Oslo Chief of Police dated 4 June 1945, detailing Huhnhäuser’s role in Norway and his connections with Scandinavia.

The archive contains a large brown envelope postmarked 12 December 1946 and sent from Norway to Scotland. The contents of this envelope are as follows:

- a) Letter from Huhnhäuser to Alexander Peden, 12 December 1946, typed.
- b) Copy of article from *Die neue Zeitung*, dated 21 October 1946, regarding British

announcement on allowing entrance to Germans with relatives in Britain.

c) Copy of Huhnhäuser's visa application to Britain, typed.

d) Copy of letter from Huhnhäuser to British Embassy regarding visa application, 11 November 1946, typed.

e) Note from Peden to British Legation in Oslo, 30 July 1946, handwritten.

f) Affidavits from the following:

1. Prof. Dr Dale, Dean of the Medical Faculty, Oslo.
2. Direktor Dysthe.
3. Prof. Dr Seip, Rector of Oslo University till 1941.
4. Prof. Dr Solberg, Dean of Mathematical Science.
5. Prof. Dr Monrad-Krohn, Director of the Neurological Clinic.
6. Emeritus Prof. Dr Heegaard.
7. Dr Balk, university lecturer.
8. Dr Adolf Hoel, Rector of Oslo University from 1941-45.
9. Cand. mag. Asbjörn Hagen.
10. Rector Brinck-Lund, headmaster.
11. Rector Lödrup, headmaster.
12. Engineer Johannessen, curator of Viking Ships.
13. Cand. med. Lerche.
14. Dental surgeon Christophersen.
15. Miss Bergljot Fossum, Huhnhäuser's former landlady.
16. Mrs May Kielland, Huhnhäuser's former English tutor.
17. The Group of the German Social Democrats in Norway.

g) A medical certificate for Huhnhäuser provided by Dr Dale.

The archive contains an anthology of poetry, and four of the works edited by Huhnhäuser:

Humboldt's *Briefe an eine Freundin*,<sup>2</sup> two editions of Busch's *Der lachende Weise*,<sup>3</sup>

Goethe's *Lebensweisheit*<sup>4</sup> and two copies of *Der Weihnachtskreis*,<sup>5</sup> a poetry anthology.

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<sup>2</sup> Wilhelm von Humboldt, *Briefe an eine Freundin*, ed. by Alfred Huhnhäuser, (Berlin: Wegweiser Verlag, 1921).

<sup>3</sup> Wilhelm Busch, *Der lachende Weise*, ed. by Alfred Huhnhäuser (Oslo: *Deutsche Zeitung in Norwegen*, 1944; repr. 1945).

<sup>4</sup> Goethe, *Lebensweisheit*, ed. by Alfred Huhnhäuser, (Flensburg: Christian Wolff, 1949).

<sup>5</sup> *Der Weihnachtskreis*, ed. by Alfred Huhnhäuser, (Flensburg: *Arbeitshilfen der*

The letters in the archive are divided into separate files. All letters are handwritten unless otherwise stated. They are as follows:

- 1) Letters contained in brown paper parcel labelled: "Briefwechsel Hhr/ M. 1942." There are 169 items, including several newspaper articles from summer 1942. The first letter from Huhnhäuser is dated 4 January 1942, the last 23 November 1942. The first letter from Else Huhnhäuser is dated 9 January 1942, the last 13 December 1942.
- 2) Letters contained in brown paper parcel labelled: "Briefe, M 1943 und Hhr an M." There are 198 items, including a copy of a satirical speech, the origin of which is unknown. The first letter is dated 26 January 1943, the last February 1944.
- 3) Letters contained in blue cardboard file labelled "Briefe von Hhs an M. 1949/50". There are twenty-three letters and postcards. The first letter is dated 29 May 1949, the last 18 March 1950.
- 4) Letters contained in brown cardboard file labelled: "V. & M. — Briefe! 1950." There are eighty-two items. The first letter is dated the 31 December 1949, the last 27 December 1950.

### **Alfred Hermann Max Huhnhäuser — A Brief Life History**

The first question which had to be answered when work on the archive was begun, was "Who was Alfred Huhnhäuser?" He was born the son of a *Kreisausschußsekretär* and enjoyed a fairly comfortable childhood in the Pomeranian *Kleinstadt* of Demmin. His father wanted him to become an engineer and sent him to Rostock to serve a four-year apprenticeship. He was not particularly successful in this and so returned to Demmin to finish his schooling. He decided to go to university in order to become a teacher and studied in Berlin and then in Rostock. In 1914 he began working as a teacher in a *Realgymnasium* in Rostock. He was married to Else Schulze in May 1913 and had two daughters. Heidi was

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*"Beratungsstelle für Volkstumsarbeit im Landesteil Schleswig", 1949).*

born in October 1914 and Inge in April 1917. In January 1922 he left Rostock to take up his new position as head of Neukloster, the Mecklenburg teacher training college. In April 1926 he moved to Breslau, where he remained as head of a *Gymnasium* for eighteen months, after which he moved to Koblenz. Few details are given in the archive concerning the years after this until 1942. He was by then serving as a *Ministerialrat* in Oslo, a title he was awarded in 1936, when he was promoted to the Ministry of Education in Berlin. His daughter, Inge, died of tuberculosis in February 1936 in Berlin's Charité Hospital. Heidi married a Scotsman, Alexander Peden, in 1939, and spent the war in Scotland. Huhnhäuser was sent to work in the *Reichskommissariat* in occupied Norway in August 1940, and remained there after the war until 1948, when he was allowed to join his daughter and son-in-law in Hull. In 1949 he and his wife returned to Germany, first to Flensburg, then moving in 1950 to the Rhineland, where he died on 23 December 1950.

Huhnhäuser can be seen as a fairly typical member of the educated middle-classes in the Weimar years. He appears to have been a dedicated teacher, a scholar, and a lover of the arts. His social circle consisted mainly of fellow *Gymnasiallehrer*, but he also had many friends and acquaintances in the theatrical world. His great interest in German literature and drama brought him into contact with several authors and playwrights. He counted the dramatist Hans Franck, and the writer and composer Emil Mattiesen as close friends. Huhnhäuser claims repeatedly in his memoirs and letters to have no interest in party politics, and was certainly not involved with any party in the years detailed in the archive. He states that he has always followed his father's philosophy that "Politik verdirbt den Charakter", although, paradoxically, he confesses that he identifies with the liberals of 1848. This idea of being out of step with the age is one that recurs throughout the memoirs.

## Memoir and Autobiography

The term 'autobiography' is a relatively recent one, which first made an appearance at the end of the 18th century: "Indeed it was not until the middle of the nineteenth century that it began to be widely used as a substitute for *memoir* and *confession*."<sup>6</sup> Although there has been an explosion of interest in secondary literature on autobiography itself in recent years, which has traced the origins and development and discussed the literary merits of the genre, few works have appeared concerning memoir. Its straightforward approach and lack of poetic symbolism and imagery appears to lessen its appeal for the critics, many of whom pay scant attention to the effect of the inaccuracy of memory on autobiography, or are dismissive of the importance of memory.

There is a distinct tiresomeness about the ease with which literary critics assure themselves that 'mere' fact has little to do with the art of autobiography. The truth or falsity of autobiography is thereby subordinated to the creativity, the design, the 'inner' truth of the narrative.<sup>7</sup>

Little attempt has been made to define memoir in relation to autobiography in critical essays, perhaps because critics are still attempting to define autobiography itself as a genre. Spengemann, for example, proposes three classifications within autobiography, historic, philosophic and poetic. He states:

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<sup>6</sup> James M. Cox, "Recovering Literature's Lost Ground Through Autobiography", in *Autobiography: Essays Theoretical and Critical*, ed. by James Olney (Princeton Guildford: Princeton University Press, 1980), pp. 123-24.

<sup>7</sup> Cox, "Recovering Literature's Lost Ground", pp. 124-25.

What I call historic autobiography seems to me to accord perfectly with the climate of opinion regarding the self which prevailed from the Middle Ages to the Enlightenment, philosophic autobiography to reflect the changes in that climate which occurred around the turn of the nineteenth century, and poetic autobiography to express the radically altered conditions that occurred from the ideological upheavals of the nineteenth century. Only St Augustine remains the true anomaly in this pattern, accomplishing the entire course of autobiographical change in a single work written at its very beginning.<sup>8</sup>

Whilst attempts have been made to define the variations within autobiography, few similar endeavours have been made to identify the particular characteristics of memoir, or of those other, little discussed, branches on the autobiographical family tree, the journal and diary. One notable exception to this is in dictionaries of literary terms, which distinguish between memoir and autobiography, diary and journal. On the latter subject, Shipley states that diaries and journals are:

by their nature less connected, less refashioned by retrospective analysis of events. They give us the inestimable boon of personal impressions while they are still fresh, yet often, too, provide reappraisals in the light of later experience. [...] The two terms, identical in derivation and in primary meaning, have acquired a slight differentiation, "journal" being used for a more detached or reflective record than diary.<sup>9</sup>

Little heed is paid in common usage to this subtle difference of meaning, just as the differences between memoirs and autobiography are often ignored. Shipley points out that the terms 'autobiography' and 'memoir' "are often used as if interchangeable".<sup>10</sup> However, there is confusion even within such attempts to define memoir and autobiography. Whilst

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<sup>8</sup> William C. Spengemann, *The Forms of Autobiography* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980), p. xv.

<sup>9</sup> Joseph T. Shipley, *Dictionary of World Literary Terms* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1970), p. 23.

<sup>10</sup> Shipley, *Literary Terms*, p. 23.

Beckson and Ganz define memoir as “an account of a person’s life and experiences written by himself”, Barnet *et al* describe autobiography as “the author’s account of his own life”. Elkhadem goes so far as to define memoir as “an autobiography, or part of an autobiography in which the author gives a detailed account of certain historical events as witnessed by him.”<sup>11</sup> Although it is difficult to draw any absolute lines of distinction between memoir and autobiography, for they share many common elements, it could be argued that memoir suggests a continuous narrative of straightforward, factual recollections, the purpose of which is to relate the life history of an individual, or the events of a certain period in the life of that individual. Memoir “will relate itself to the external world of the author in history, not to the inner world of self-reflection.”<sup>12</sup> Memoir’s primary function is to entertain and educate, interest and inform its audience and is not attempted as a voyage of self-discovery, or a cathartic journey, although the writer may indeed learn much about himself in the course of writing. Abrams states that:

**Autobiography** is a biography written by the subject about himself or herself. It is to be distinguished from the **memoir**, in which the emphasis is not on the author’s developing self but on the people and the events that the author has known or witnessed.<sup>13</sup>

Unlike autobiography, or even biography, where the author attempts to capture the very essence of his subject, memoir does not attempt to define the self. In other words, given the importance of “telling the story” in memoir, it could be described as autobiography in its most simple form.

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<sup>11</sup> Saad Elkhadem, *The York Dictionary of Literary Terms* (Fredericton, N.B.: York Press, 1976), p. 64.

<sup>12</sup> Cox, “Recovering Literature’s Lost Ground”, p. 143.

<sup>13</sup> M. H. Abrams, *A Glossary of Literary Terms* (Fort Worth, London: Harcourt Bruce



This is in contrast to what may be termed literary, or poetic, autobiographies, which are an exercise in artistic self-expression, often to trace the development of the inner-self, written by “those peculiar people who are obsessed with the puzzle of their own natures”.<sup>14</sup> Howarth refers to the view sometimes encountered, that the growth of autobiography since the Middle Ages represents “a history of the human mind”.<sup>15</sup> Wordsworth’s *The Prelude*, completed in 1805 and published in revised form in 1850, “established the seriousness of autobiography as a genre by his rigorous investigation of his own experience, memory, psychology, creativity and sense of values.”<sup>16</sup> Following this, many autobiographical works have appeared in the form of novels or poetry, some based only loosely on details of the author’s life, or claimed by the author to have no basis in reality whatsoever. Consequently, there is some debate as to whether such works should be classified as autobiographies, or fictional works of art, or both. It is interesting to reflect that the biographer has no such freedom in his portrayal of his subject, giving rise to Virginia Woolf’s comment that the biographer is a “craftsman, not an artist”.<sup>17</sup> This assessment of the work of the biographer, however, does not give him full credit for his efforts to capture the essence of his subject with mere words — a difficult task which requires an element of creativity beyond that of reporting the details of another’s life. O’Connor likens the approach of Strachey and Maurois to that of the artist, paraphrasing Strachey’s approach as follows: “while the biographer must not ignore the vast amount of knowledge now available to him, he must

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Jovanovich, 1993), p. 15.

<sup>14</sup> V. S. Pritchett, *Autobiography* (London: The English Association Presidential Address, June 1977), p. 4.

<sup>15</sup> William L. Howarth, “Some Principles of Autobiography”, in *Autobiography: Essays Theoretical and Critical*, ed. by James Olney (Princeton Guildford: Princeton University Press, 1980), p. 84.

<sup>16</sup> Martin Gray, *A Dictionary of Literary Terms* (Harlow: Longman, 1993), p. 38.

<sup>17</sup> Cited from Barnet, Berman, Burto, *A Dictionary of Literary Terms* (London: Constable, 1964), p. 22.

still select from it with the discretion of the artist if he is to achieve a true portrait.”<sup>18</sup> Thus, it can perhaps be said that merely to summarize the details of a life into a work capable of publication requires craftsmanship, but to breathe life into the subject, and reveal his true nature to the reader, is art.

However, there have been cases of biographers who have attempted to “achieve a true portrait” of their subject by creating imaginary conversations between him and another, a device O’Connor refers to as ‘faction’.<sup>19</sup> This then moves the work from a creative selection of fact to a hybrid of fact and invention. Such a device may be possible within the parameters of poetic autobiography, but it is infinitely more difficult to justify in biography, for no one can claim to think exactly as another. Similarly, the memoir-writer is expected to be as truthful as his memory allows. He faces condemnation if found to have knowingly lied. All three writers, the memoirist, the biographer and the autobiographer, may at some time face a moral dilemma over exactly how truthful to be. There is pressure upon them all to “avoid hurting the living or distressing the dead”.<sup>20</sup> Despite these similarities, the memoir-writer is nevertheless attempting a different task from that of the autobiographer and biographer, for he is not “obsessed with the puzzle” of his subject’s “nature”. He is restricted, in that he is forbidden the freedoms of the autobiographer to go wherever his art takes him, and he is bound to recreate his memories of people and events as faithfully as possible. In this respect he is the craftsman, the chronicler. But the memoir-writer may also borrow some colours from the palette of the autobiographical artist, if he endeavours to illustrate the spirit of the times and the people he is describing. To do this certainly requires him to be a skilled writer, hence a “craftsman”, but it also requires some of the talents of

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<sup>18</sup> Ulick O’Connor, *Biographers and the Art of Biography* (London: Quartet Books, 1993), p. 8.

<sup>19</sup> O’Connor, *Biographers*, p. 1.

<sup>20</sup> Vladimir Nabokov, *Speak, Memory. An Autobiography Revisited* (New York: Pyramid

selection demanded of the biographer, and also autobiographer, in order to evoke the atmosphere, to recreate the *Zeitgeist*, and to bring to life the personalities who surrounded him at the time of his recollections. Thus, the “craft” of memoir also requires a degree of artistry.

As memoir derives its credibility from the recounting of genuine experiences and events, however, there can be no interplay between fact and invention. Fictional diaries, journals and memoirs, usually humorous in nature, may be written, but it must be made clear from the outset that they are works of the imagination. It is this lack of ambiguity that limits the author’s scope for creativity. This limitation may perhaps be interpreted as lack of artistry, which explains why memoir has been overlooked in the debate surrounding the autobiographical genre. As Cox asserts: “much criticism avoids the memoir, it is in a category of autobiography that needs attention. The memoir is after all, pointed toward history and fact whereas literary criticism invariably seeks after creativity and imagination.”<sup>21</sup>

### **The Reception of Memoir and Autobiography**

Consequently, if memoir and autobiography can be defined separately, are they written for different audiences? If so, then for whom is the plethora of published diaries and journals intended? Is biographical writing also aimed at a specific target readership?

When a work on a famous person, either autobiographical or biographical, is published, then it is generally assumed that there is already a wider public interest in this

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Books, 1968), p. 12.

person. This is not the case, however, with those not in the forefront of public attention, who choose to record the story of their life. It is regarded almost as an extraordinary action, and the motivation of the author is subjected to the greatest scrutiny. The student of autobiographical writing may ask why the author considers his story to be of interest to an audience. Does the author have a specific group in mind, which he or she believes will find his or her life story of particular interest, such as fellow professionals or compatriots, or does he consider his life to be of interest to a wider readership? What does he consider so interesting about his life? Is it his career, the people he has known, or a unique experience that has changed him profoundly? Or does he simply consider himself to be intrinsically interesting? Princess Marie-Louise deals with such questions in the introduction to her memoirs.

To write one's reminiscences is always a serious as well as a bold undertaking, the more so if it is attempted by one who cannot claim to possess any outstanding literary talent. This being so, you may well ask why I am venturing not only to write but also to publish my memories. It is in the hope that they may be of interest and amusement to those who have a spare hour to browse through the pages of a book that records some of the events in the life of an old lady — events reaching back over eighty years.<sup>22</sup>

Of course, the fact that the old lady in question was Queen Victoria's granddaughter and related to many European royal families gives her memoirs an obvious historical significance. Edward Gibbon informs the reader that he now proposes "to employ some moments of my leisure in reviewing the simple transactions of a private and literary life. [...] My own amusement is my motive, and will be my reward". Gibbon suggests here that he

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<sup>21</sup> Cox, "Recovering Literature's Lost Ground", p. 124.

<sup>22</sup> Princess Marie Louise, *My Memories of Six Reigns* (Evans Brothers, 1956; repr. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1959), p. 13.

does not wish his memoir to be read beyond the intimate circle of his friends until after his death. This claim was made only in the first of the memoirs' six drafts; later Gibbon repeatedly expressed the desire that his memoirs be published in his lifetime.<sup>23</sup>

The aspects of his life that the author chooses to dwell upon will generally decide whether the work may be called memoir or autobiography, and the period, the character of the subject and the nature of his experiences will all be significant in determining who his audience will be. Shipley has detailed four reasons why he believes that autobiographical writings interest the reader and why some examples of the genre have survived for centuries. They are as follows:

(1) The mere contact with great historical events or movements may ensure a memoir-writer's or diarist's being consulted by later generations; here the purely personal element may be reduced to an unconscious revelation of a mental frame fairly prevalent in the age concerned [...]. (2) The writer may have played an important part in shaping history. He may be a notable conqueror, religious leader, or statesman. People will always be interested in hearing his own comments on himself and his world. [...] (3) There may be something particular in his point of view, the special angle from which he surveys persons and events; he may be in advance of the age, or otherwise out of step [...]. (4) Although the autobiographer or diarist may have lived centuries ago, he has through the detailed exploration of his own personality, achieved an affinity with contemporary readers. Some at any rate of these qualities are to be found in all the world's great self-portrayals. [...]<sup>24</sup>

Although the Huhnhäuser memoirs were never completed, the author had hoped that they would be published, thus indicating that he believed they were of interest to the reading public. However, some of the most famous autobiographical works were never intended for publication. This is often the case with diaries and journals, which often were never intended

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<sup>23</sup> Edward Gibbon, *Memoirs of my Life and Writings*, ed. by John, Lord Sheffield, 2nd edn (1814), ed. J B Bury (London: OUP, 1907, repr. 1950) p. 1.

<sup>24</sup> Shipley, *Literary Terms*, p. 23.

for anything other than private or family consumption. As Shipley observes: “What they lose in artistic shape and coherence, they gain in frankness and immediacy, many of the most famous having been kept with little if any thought of subsequent publication.”<sup>25</sup>

The intended audience for *The Diary of Anne Frank*, for example, written around the same period that Huhnhäuser began to write his memoirs, was initially of no consequence to Anne. She writes on 20 June 1942:

It’s an odd idea for someone like me to keep a diary; not only because I have never done so before, but because it seems to me that neither I — nor for that matter anyone else — will be interested in the unbosomings of a thirteen year old school girl. Still, what does that matter? I want to write, but more than that, I want to bring out all kinds of things that lie buried deep in my heart.<sup>26</sup>

Her diary became a substitute for a “real friend” with whom she could share her secret thoughts,<sup>27</sup> but the circumstances under which the diary was written are so poignant and so tragic that readers all over the world are still moved to share vicariously in Anne’s experiences, and perhaps also learn from them a little about themselves. And for whom was Samuel Pepys recording his life in diary form? Did he expect to retain an avid readership for over three hundred years? The publication of letters, edited by a third party, is another form of autobiographical writing that may originally never have been intended for publication, although sometimes the writer will be writing for posterity. This is an interesting form of the genre, as the editor acts a type of biographer. Although the words are written by the subject, the editor ultimately controls the content of the work, and his selection of the

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<sup>25</sup> Shipley, *Literary Terms*, p. 23.

<sup>26</sup> *The Diary of Anne Frank* (London: Pan, 1954/66), p. 14.

<sup>27</sup> Anne Frank then decided to edit her diary into a public record, after hearing a radio broadcast which called for the Dutch to document the events of the occupation. There are, therefore, two

material is of paramount importance to the presentation of the subject. The image he creates of the subject will vary according to the letters, or parts of letters, he selects. Thus, when examining forms of autobiographical writing, such as diaries, journals, letters, memoirs and autobiographies, it is important to consider whether they were written simply for the pleasure of the author or whether they were created with a view to publication.

As the previous example of edited letters shows, it is often difficult to classify individual works under a specific heading of memoir, journal, autobiography or biography. *Aus einem reichen Leben*, for example, Huhnhauser's volume of personal memoirs, contains many autobiographical elements. There are moments of introspection, such as his depiction of his crisis of faith following the death of his youngest sister, or his expression of regret that he did not put the needs of his family before his work. V.S. Pritchett distinguished in his presidential address to the English Association in June 1977 between "reminiscences", which he said were "mostly concerned with other people" and "the memoirs of statesmen, soldiers and other great public figures", which "depend on diaries, letters and historical documents"<sup>28</sup>. Therefore Ilse von Bredow's *Kartoffeln mit Stippe*, which consists of a series of tales concerning events and personalities from her childhood, would be described as reminiscences rather than memoirs under this definition. Another critic also refers to reminiscences as opposed to autobiography, but makes no mention of memoir.<sup>29</sup> Very recently Peter Mayle parodied the form of memoir, and in particular the money-making, public relations exercise which "celebrity" memoirs often become, in *A Dog's Life*, although he uses the terms "memoirs" and "journal" interchangeably when referring to the work. To

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versions of the diary, one public and the other private.

<sup>28</sup> Pritchett, *Autobiography*, p. 4.

<sup>29</sup> "Then also there are reminiscences, like Sir Osbert Sitwell's volumes that are revealing of his family but tell us little about what it feels like to be in Sir Osbert's skin." C.f. Stephen Spender, "Confessions and Autobiography", in *Autobiography: Essays Theoretical and Critical*, ed. by

take an example close to Huhnhäuser, who developed an interest in the novels of Knut Hamsun during his time in Norway, Marie Hamsun's autobiography, *Regnbuen*, depicts her childhood and the influences which helped to mould her, but her reason for writing is that she is the wife of Knut, and he becomes the dominant character in the latter two thirds of her book, although there is no mention of his or her incarceration. Knut and Marie Hamsun were arrested as traitors after the war, and the investigations concerning Knut's wartime activities lasted for many months. He wrote an autobiographical novel describing this period, *Paa gjengrodde Stier*,<sup>30</sup> subtitled *A Diary* as an act of revenge upon his captors, and in particular, the psychiatrist who assessed his mental condition over a period of many months. Tankred Dorst then based the biographical play *Eiszeit*, into which he inserted some fictional characters and events and in which he does not mention Hamsun by name, upon this period in Hamsun's life.

The play *Shadowlands* by William Nicholson, based upon the life of C. S. Lewis and his relationship with Joy Davidman, is another interesting example of the genre, not least because it has been reviewed by D. H. Gresham, Davidman's son and Lewis's stepson. The play is "unashamedly fictional", and yet in the opinion of Gresham, who appears as a character in the play, "this piece of fictional entertainment" captures far more accurately than any biography: "the very essence of what that remarkable relationship [...] was all about. It has often been said that truth is stranger than fiction, but this is a case in which fiction is truer than supposed fact." Gresham was also delighted with the film of the same name which he found "at times and in places, almost too real [...] to bear to watch". Thus, *Shadowlands* illustrates that a dramatization of factual events can be far more successful

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James Olney (Princeton Guildford: Princetown University, 1980), pp. 115-22 (p. 117).

<sup>30</sup> Huhnhäuser's copy of the German translation of this novel, *Auf überwachsenen Pfaden*, is inscribed by Hamsun's son, Tore. The inscription is dated "Weihnachten 1949", by which time



than any strictly factual biography in recreating the true nature of the subject and bringing him or her to life. The play “brings strong emotional truth and a sense of underlying reality into the mist and murk of opinion with which the biographers cloud their works”.<sup>31</sup>

Thus, it is evident that there is a close relationship between the various forms of autobiographical and biographical writing. The contents of a letter, or reference to them, may appear in a diary or journal. Diaries, journals or letters may then form the basis of a memoir or autobiography, and from such a work a biography may later take much of its material. It is often the case that memoir contains elements of autobiography or vice versa. Furthermore, memoir and autobiography may contain elements of biography, if the author refers to the life of another, and the autobiographical writing of one individual may be mentioned in the biography of another. Conversely, there have also been a number of biographies which use the word “memoir” in their title, such as Austen-Leigh’s *A Memoir of Jane Austen*, which further blurs the divisions between the genres. Do biographical memoirs and biography differ in the same way as memoir and autobiography? Another curious example of the genre is the “biography” of Thomas Hardy. This work was actually one of the more celebrated literary deceits of the century. Hardy wrote his autobiography, which was then published after his death as a biography written by his second wife, Florence.

The veritable explosion in the popularity of biography, autobiography and memoir in the twentieth century can perhaps be traced to our increasing awareness of ‘celebrity’ as such. We are increasingly encouraged by the media to admire personalities such as pop singers, actors, and sportsmen, to whom we are becoming ever more exposed, and

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Huhnhäuser had returned to Germany.

<sup>31</sup> D. H. Gresham, “Shadowlands - The play, A Review”, *The Chesterton Review*, 17 (1991), 492-95 (p. 493).

consequently our interest in the personal lives of those who become known in the public domain grows ever keener. “The famous and infamous alike are expected to write their life story.”<sup>32</sup> Individuals are often tempted to commit their life story to print by the lure of financial gain. Unfortunately, such celebrities sometimes have little of significance to say — or may indeed be relatively young — and even less idea of how to say it. This has led to the rise in professional ghost writers, who produce “as told to” memoirs. This type of “autobiographical” writing is often incorrectly labelled as autobiography, for there is little in the way of introspection or self-scrutiny. Rather, “as told to” memoirs and autobiographies can be an unsatisfactory hybrid of autobiographical and biographical writing, which have little of the objectivity normally present in biography. In fact, as the ghost writer is normally approached by a publisher to write on behalf of the subject, we can learn little or nothing from the choice of subject by the author. Furthermore, the balance of the author-subject relationship normally present in autobiographical writings is altered significantly. The insight into the character of the author is lost, because we cannot accurately assess the extent of the ghost-writer’s influence regarding the content of the work or the portrayal of the subject. As Gibbon observes, “[writing] style is the image of character.”<sup>33</sup> Ghost-written autobiographies are an adulterous affair, in which the reader is forced to accept the liaison between subject and writer, and, consequently, denied his customary intimacy with the author.

### **The Subject as the Author or the Author as the Subject**

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<sup>32</sup> Gray, *A Dictionary*, p. 38.

The lack of critical attention paid to memoir might suggest that it is a poor relation of autobiography, just as it was erroneously held in the past that autobiography was an inferior off-shoot of biography, or indeed that biography itself was a lesser form of writing, as Shelston illustrates;

Until the beginning of this century there had been little tendency to regard biography as an art-form in its own right. Such discussion of the genre as there had been had involved questions either of morality or of practice, and the motivation of the biographer had been seen primarily as a functional one, whether to record, to praise or to instruct. But, acting in the light of the biographies of Lytton Strachey [...] a number of writers in the earlier parts of this century [...] began to talk of biography as an art, with a tradition and requirements of its own.<sup>34</sup>

Each form of writing deserves critical consideration. The reasons underlying the author's selection of material in a memoir are just as complex as in autobiography. Of biography Shelston states:

The nature of the author-subject relationship however is a crucial factor in the study of the form: the choice and treatment of a subject can reveal as much about the biographer as the biography may reveal about the subject itself.<sup>35</sup>

In autobiography and autobiographical memoir the author-subject relationship is even more intricate, as one individual assumes both roles. His choice and treatment of himself reveal more than he intends to show. That he has elected to write about himself shows that he esteems himself of sufficient worth to justify exposing the details of his life to an audience.

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<sup>33</sup> Gibbon, *Memoirs of my Life and Writings*, p. 1.

<sup>34</sup> Alan Shelston, *Biography* (London: Methuen, 1977), p. 62.

<sup>35</sup> Shelston, *Biography*, p. 30.

This and the author's treatment of his subject allow us to see beyond the carefully crafted image he has painted with words. The author is unaware that he presents more information than that contained in the words he has written. Pritchett claims the autobiographer is "in a sense [...] a sort of stripper: the suspense of his story lies in guessing how far he will undress".<sup>36</sup> The background image, that he has unwittingly created through the selection and presentation of his material, enables his audience to view his image in more dimensions than he originally intended, and distorts the equilibrium of the (perhaps carefully balanced) figure he has been at pains to portray. Shipley asserts that in autobiography and memoir "a large part of the interest resides in a conscious or unconscious self-portrayal by the author."<sup>37</sup> Howarth links the portrayal of the self in words, and in images, with the analogy that "an autobiography is a self-portrait." He states,

The *self* thinks and acts; it knows that it exists alone and with others. A *portrait* is space and time, illusion and reality, painter and model — each element places a demand, yields a concession. A *self-portrait* is even more uniquely transactional. No longer distinctly separate, the artist-model must alternately pose and paint. He *composes* the composition, in both senses of that verb; his costume and setting form the picture and also depict its form.<sup>38</sup>

Like a self-portrait, autobiographical memoir and autobiography do not tell all of the story. A self-portrait is the image of a man captured by himself over one relatively short point in time. There is no sense of how that man has aged, how he used to look, how he will look in the future. A written portrait offers more scope in that it can record the individual's development from childhood. Lewis Thomas, for example, "recalls his humble beginning as

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<sup>36</sup> Pritchett, *Autobiography*, p. 3.

<sup>37</sup> Shipley, *Literary Terms*, p. 23.

<sup>38</sup> Howarth, "Principles", p. 85.

a single cell”, an imaginary recollection, of course.<sup>39</sup> The author can even begin before birth by listing his ancestors. Gibbons remarks:

A lively desire of knowing and recording our ancestors so generally prevails, that it must depend upon the influence of some common principle in the minds of men. [...] Our imagination is always active to enlarge the narrow circle in which nature has confined us. Fifty or an hundred years may be allotted to an individual; but we step forward beyond death with such hopes as religion and philosophy will suggest; and we fill up the silent vacancy that precedes our birth, by associating ourselves with the authors of our existence.<sup>40</sup>

At which point, however, can the author confidently state that the influences upon him began? Can he claim only to be influenced by those ancestors he actually met, or can the actions of a long deceased relative that particularly impressed him be said to have influenced him? Does the blood of long dead forefathers still run in his veins, as Robert Louis Stevenson suggests in *Memories and Portraits*?<sup>41</sup> Parents are normally regarded as a tremendous influence in our formative years. Stefan Zweig, for example, comments:

Aber es ist mein Vater in mir und sein heimlicher Stolz, der mich zurückzwingt, und ich darf ihm nicht Widerstand leisten; denn ihm danke ich, was ich vielleicht als meinen einzig sicheren Besitz empfinde: das Gefühl der inneren Freiheit.<sup>42</sup>

But parents have, of course, been influenced by their own parents, and they, in turn, by theirs, therefore each individual is simply part of a pattern. What is the effect of this pattern

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<sup>39</sup> Cited from Pat C. Hoy II, “The Art of Remembering”, *Swanee Review*, 96 (1988), 688-95 (p. 690).

<sup>40</sup> Edward Gibbon, *Memoirs of my Life and Writings*, p. 2.

<sup>41</sup> Robert Louis Stevenson, *Memories and Portraits* ([1887] Glasgow: Richard Drew, 1990).

<sup>42</sup> Stefan Zweig, *Die Welt von Gestern: Erinnerungen eines Europäers* ([1942] Berlin: Fischer,

upon the author? How can he assess it correctly? And how can he possibly even begin to identify all the events and experiences that helped to shape and mould him? As Zweig remarks: “was ein Mensch in seiner Kindheit aus der Luft der Zeit in sein Blut genommen, bleibt unausscheidbar.”<sup>43</sup> Nabokov is troubled by this impossible task when attempting to define the significant influential factors that combined to create his inner nature:

Neither in environment nor in heredity can I find the exact instrument that fashioned me, the anonymous roller that pressed upon my life a certain intricate watermark whose unique design becomes visible when the lamp of art is made to shine through life's foolscap.<sup>44</sup>

Thus, the memoirist or autobiographer will never truly be able to list all of the influences that helped to form him into the man he has now become. The point at which he chooses to begin his story is almost arbitrary, for he will never be able to go to the very beginning.<sup>45</sup>

Furthermore, the author can only begin his memoirs or autobiography properly from the time of his first memory, when he first becomes conscious of himself as an individual. All he can tell us up to this point is what he has learned from other sources, not what he remembers. From this moment he is then hampered by the inaccuracy of memory, although this difficulty tends normally to decrease in relation to the temporal distance of the events he

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1962), p. 20.

<sup>43</sup> Zweig, p. 16.

<sup>44</sup> Nabokov, *Speak, Memory*, p. 18.

<sup>45</sup> This situation does not apply to adopted children who have no knowledge of their birth parents and, therefore, their ancestry. Peter Wawerzinek, in his autobiographical account of his childhood, *Das Kind das ich war*, cannot dwell on the importance of his birth heritage and instead places emphasis on the significance of his environment, “da woher ich komme.” He identifies Mecklenburg as the main influence that helped shape him. “Meine Heimat ist Mecklenburg. Meine Vaterstadt Grimmen. Meine Muttersprache wohnt in der Gesichtsfarbe der wetterfesten Bauern.” Whilst he identifies the other children as simply belonging to the next generation, “Die Kinder der Leute...Die Söhne der Bauern”, he belongs to the land, the sea, the seasons: “Mein Puls ging mit den Jahreszeiten.” (p. 5) Peter Wawerzinek, *Das Kind das ich war*

recounts, in other words, the more recent the event, the better he will remember it. His memory will be further influenced by his mood, his circumstances and his emotions at the time of writing. These factors may vary from day to day, hour to hour. If the author had chosen to write at another time his account might have been significantly different, because he had felt differently. Hume

spoke of the mind as a theatre which parades a variety of postures and situations. What we have to decide is what play we are putting on, what its *theme* is and what postures fit into it. The play is not '*The truth*' but '*a truth*' or '*our truth*'. It can only be a part.<sup>46</sup>

Consequently, the notion of 'truth' in memoir and autobiography is highly subjective and vulnerable to revision.

Finally, the whole story cannot be told because the author must stop writing when he reaches the present. Author and subject become inextricably linked. His writing becomes part of the story, no longer simply a method of narration. Just as when the artist "moves to paint a hand, the hand must also move",<sup>47</sup> so now the author cannot write without mentioning the act of writing. Past merges into present, and leaves a question mark over the future. The story of a life must, by definition, end with the death of the subject to be complete, but man is dependent upon others to tell him of the events of his birth, and relies upon them also to record his death. Thus, memoir is able only to tell the story so far. It ends when past catches up with present, but this present then slips quickly back into past. The reader, on completing the memoir, is denied the end of the story, ultimately the death of the author.

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(Berlin: Transit, 1994).

<sup>46</sup> Cited from Pritchett, *Autobiography*, p. 4.

<sup>47</sup> Howarth, "Principles", p. 85.

## The Importance of Memoir in the Study of History

To tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. To tell my own story.

To tell the story of an intellectual in the period from 1920 to 1940 — a character who spent the best time of his life in a social and spiritual vacuum; striving for a true community but never finding it; disconnected, restless, wandering; haunted by those solemn abstractions in which nobody else believes — civilization, progress, liberty.

To tell the story of a German who wanted to be a European: of a European who wanted to be a citizen of the world. Of an individualist equally opposed to standardization and anarchy.

Every testimony counts. Why should mine be worthless?

Every human life is at once unique and representative. Limited in its scope and molded by specific conditions; and yet full of infinite suggestions, transcending the range of its own problems and objectives, pointing to potentialities far beyond its empirical margin.

To tell my story, not despite the crisis but because of it.<sup>48</sup>

Like biography and autobiography, memoir can also provide significant information concerning the politics, culture, economics and society of the period, as well as documenting the life of one individual in the manner that he himself selects. In fact, how he chooses to do this, and indeed that he has chosen to do so at all, tell us much about both the man and the period in which he is writing, for “autobiography as memoir holds itself in relation to history as well as to personality”.<sup>49</sup> This is in contrast to Elton’s flawed assertion that:

even at its best biography is a poor way of writing history. The biographer’s

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<sup>48</sup> Klaus Mann, diary entry from 11 August 1941. Cited from *The Turning Point* (London: Serpent’s Tail, 1987), p. 347.

<sup>49</sup> Cox, “Recovering Literature’s Lost Ground”, p. 141.



task is to tell the story, demonstrate the personality, and elucidate the importance of one individual; he should not be concerned with the history of that individual's times except in so far as it centres upon or emanates from him. [...] The limits of one man's life rarely have any meaning in the interpretation of history.<sup>50</sup>

In fact, the limits of one man's life have a great deal to tell us about history. A man does not have to be a great man for his story to be worth telling. History should not be limited in that way. We must also be open to learning of the experiences, trials and tribulations of the 'ordinary' citizen, a man to whom most of us can relate best of all. Victor Klemperer addresses this very issue in the introduction to his autobiography:

Denn wer schreibt im allgemeinen die Geschichte seines Lebens, und wer darf auf Beachtung für sie hoffen? Außer dem Großen, der wirklich Großes geleistet, der Kleine, der ein für seine Verhältnisse großes Stück Weges zurückgelegt hat, ein Schriftsteller etwa, der, an sich nicht übermäßig bedeutend, immerhin 'vom Hirtenstab zur Feder' gelangt ist. Ich aber stammte aus mittleren Verhältnissen und habe Mittleres geleistet. [...]

Gewiß warf ich mir häufig ein, daß gerade das Durchschnittliche ein besonderes Recht auf Beachtung habe, weil es ja das Schicksal der allermeisten ist, zum Durchschnitt zu gehören, und daß eine der wesentlichsten Entwicklungslinien des Literarischen vom Außergewöhnlichen und Romanhaften fort zu Alltag und Durchschnitt hin führe.<sup>51</sup>

Furthermore, any individual who writes his memoirs, however small he might seem to the world at large, declares that he has an interesting tale. That very fact alone is a reason to examine what he has to say; therefore his "private relationships and petty concerns"<sup>52</sup> should not be treated with the contempt which Elton reserves for them. As for "the history of that individual's times", it is important to learn how national and world events affected

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<sup>50</sup> G. R. Elton, *The Practice of History* (Glasgow: Fontana, 1967), p. 169.

<sup>51</sup> Victor Klemperer, *Curriculum Vitae: Jugend um 1900*, 2 vols (Berlin: Siedler, 1989), I, p. 8.

the life of the ordinary man, in order to understand the full significance of these events.

History consists of the actions of individuals, groups and nations, and these actions cannot be fully understood and evaluated unless their influence upon the life of 'ordinary' citizens has been examined. Martin L. Davies, in a perceptive study on an eighteenth century writer Marcus Herz, warns against studying history only through the works of great men. He argues:

A view of the past that relies solely on the canon of masterpieces, on what Jauß calls the 'anonymous automatic continuities of received traditions' (*einem anonymen Überlieferungsgeschehen der 'Meisterwerke'*) ultimately belittles both the actual process of history and the experiential potentiality of the past itself. More to the point, it glosses over the more complex issue of what an individual actually counts for in history, and whether and to what extent historical circumstances really permit an individual to count for anything. It is certainly worth invoking another nineteenth-century, more populist conception of history held by both Marx and Dilthey that 'the existence of living human individuals' in actual material circumstances is the basis of history; and that 'these ordinary individuals, just as much as the great, contribute through the working out of their own lives to cultural systems and social communities, indeed to humanity itself, and so collectively define the nature of society and history.' To sense the lived reality of the past we need to insist on history as 'the common memory of ordinary humanity' (*la commune mémoire de la commune humanité*) and to look beyond the important actors in their leading roles, who always draw attention to themselves, to what is happening behind the scenes; just as to discover what the tradition has overlooked or cast aside we need to go against the grain of the development of history itself.<sup>53</sup>

Sometimes through memoir "we begin to see what history books rarely reveal". Hoy cites Melton McLaurin's *Separate Pasts*, in which he depicts events from his childhood in the racially segregated town of Wade, North Carolina. McLaurin is a "good storyteller" whose "memory, although subjective, remains a valuable source of both fact and

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<sup>52</sup> Elton, *Practice*, p. 169.

<sup>53</sup> Martin L. Davies, *Identity or History? Marcus Herz and the End of the Enlightenment*

truth<sup>54</sup>...[his] stories provide perceptive accounts of entangled relationships in the segregated South and confirm the historical value of personal narratives.”<sup>55</sup>

If there is one flaw in the use of autobiographical writing in the study of history, it is that autobiographical writing is likely to contain some inaccuracies. It is not in the nature of mankind, which comes complete with ego and a desire for acceptance amongst one’s peers, to reveal one’s basest thoughts and most selfish actions. As Rousseau states in his *Confessions*, “It is not the criminal things which are hardest to confess, but those things of which we are ashamed.” And furthermore, as Escott Reid illustrates, memory is fallible, even if, or perhaps especially when, we are convinced of its accuracy and freshness.

Consequently, when examining the content of memoir, and particularly when the memoir is being treated as a historical document, certain questions must be asked. Firstly, are the facts contained in the memoir correct, or can they be confirmed as correct? Secondly, how does the author present himself and those around him? How does he present the events which he recounts? What has he chosen to include, and why? Thirdly, and perhaps more importantly, what has the author chosen to omit and what are his reasons for doing so? How do these omissions affect the way in which memoir, and the author, are regarded by the reader? And finally, for whom were the memoirs written? Were they intended as a personal or a public document? Did the author stand to gain or lose anything by writing his memoirs?

In order to answer these questions, the memoir must be placed in the context of the period in which it was written. Background knowledge of the contemporary historical period and its personalities is crucial to the attempt to gain understanding of the author’s

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(Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1995), pp. 12-13.

<sup>54</sup> Hoy does not indicate what, if any, research has been done to establish the veracity of the facts in McLaurin’s stories.

motivation and influences, otherwise the subtleties of the political and social constraints of the era will be lost to the modern reader. Thus, whilst reading a memoir will give insight into the experience of living in the past, reading other related historical works will provide a framework upon which we can base our evaluation of the author, his actions and his motivation. When the individual is caught up directly in historical events, the recounting of his experiences can bring history to life. But the modern reader must be familiar with the historical background to aid his understanding of the constraints, social, political, cultural and economic, under which that man lived. Davies comments that: "The study of history is inevitably a narcissistic obsession; after all, it is not indefensible to suppose that the past is really only populated with people like ourselves but a little further back in time."<sup>56</sup> This may be true, but even if human nature has basically changed little through the centuries, the world man inhabits alters continually. Consequently, the attitudes and behaviour of our antecedents may appear alien to us. Their actions seen from our late twentieth-century viewpoint may seem ridiculous or even shocking. Davies asserts: "The present becomes estranged from the past because behaviour and mentality are constantly being modified as they now adapt to, now react against material changes in the environment." (p. 5)

Consequently, we cannot understand the author unless we understand the society in which he lived. But we must not forget the importance of the personal when focusing upon the historical. An individual is more than just a series of reactions to events. He also has his own unique agenda, his own aims and desires, thoughts and emotions, his own personal as well as historical past, which may affect him in ways of which even he is unaware. Davies observes:

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<sup>55</sup> Hoy II, "The Art of Remembering", pp. 691-92.

It is a question of discovering not simply what resources or possibilities a past culture offered to an individual, not even what opportunities he or she seized or rejected, but — more crucially — the motives behind such choices, motives that individuals may have failed to recognize or may even have repressed. (p. 3)

In other words, we must not only confront directly the “intricate issue of how an individual relates to his or her times”,<sup>57</sup> but also become amateur psychologists, and attempt to assess the influence of the character and the personal experiences of the individual upon his life. Furthermore, we must be aware of the fact that we may never truly comprehend the influential factors governing any one era. We may be unable to truly understand what life was really like for our historical subject, and therefore should heed Davies’ warning that: “It is a conceit peculiar to the modern present to believe that it has a privileged perspective on the past that offers the possibility of total disclosure, whereas in fact it has no means of verifying this conviction.” (p. 4)

Finally, the modern reader should not make the mistake of assuming that the relevance of the memoir lies only in the past. The memoir influences the present. It affects the reader, instructs and informs him, encourages him to question, analyse and evaluate. It carves a niche for the author in the memory of the reader, where he will remain always to some degree, perhaps like some dusty and abandoned object in an attic, but present there nevertheless. Thus, a brand new chapter in the memoir is created but will never be written, concerning the influence of the author upon those who read the memoir long after his death. Students of memoir analyse the influences upon the author, and the way in which he affected those around him, but neglect to document the effect that reading the memoir has had on them. Memoir and autobiography are perhaps the closest man will ever come to

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<sup>56</sup> Davies, *Identity*, p. 4.

achieving immortality, for they allow the author to extend his sphere of influence beyond death, and live on in the minds of those who may even view him as part of history. They allow him to continue indefinitely to tell his story to anyone wishing to listen. A part of him is able to survive for as long as his memoir or autobiography continues to be read. Thus, Klemperer observes:

Am Anfang autobiographischer Schriften kann man häufig lesen, der Autor schreibe zur Belehrung seiner Kinder und Enkel, oder auch, er schreibe allein für sich selber, etwa um zur Klarheit über sich zu gelangen oder um seine Beichte niederzulegen oder weil er sich so interessant sei und sein Leben noch einmal genießen wolle. Beide Begründungen kommen für mich nicht in Betracht; Kinder habe ich keine, und mit mir selber habe ich mich ja in sechsendvierzig zum Teil recht dicken Heften auseinandergesetzt und stehe beim siebenundvierzigsten. Und im übrigen bin ich davon überzeugt, daß es sich bei solchem Motivieren immer nur um Ausreden handelt. Wer seine Vita schreibt, folgt im Letzten bestimmt immer nur dem einen, dem ganz sinnlosen und ganz unwiderstehlichen und ganz unausrottbaren Triebe: Er mag es sich nun eingestehen oder nicht, es geht ihm ums Fortdauern, er möchte persönlich noch länger hier sein, mit seinem ganzen Ich, mit Haut und Haaren, auch wenn dies Ich längst nicht mehr hier ist, einerlei wie er sich das Anderwärts vorstellt, als Nichts oder irgendeinen Himmel oder irgendeine Hölle oder Schattenwelt.<sup>58</sup>

### **Practical Issues Relating to the Analysis of Memoir**

There are a number of general problems that arise when dealing with the study of memoir. The first is the paucity of relevant literature dealing specifically with memoir. Escott Reid's article "Memoirs and Memory", in which emphasis is placed on the unreliability of memory, is one notable exception. When writing his own memoirs, Reid, a retired Canadian diplomat,

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<sup>57</sup> Davies, *Identity*, p. 3.

<sup>58</sup> Klemperer, pp. 7-8.

discovered that memories he regarded as quite vivid proved to be completely false when contemporary documents were consulted. As further evidence of the inaccuracy of memory, Reid refers to the findings of the British organization Mass Observation. The participants in their original wartime experiment, who kept nightly diaries during the London air raids, were asked to recount from memory thirty-four years later their feelings and actions during the Blitz. It was discovered that,

there was 'usually little or no logical relation between the two sets of accounts. [...] Memory had glossified and sanctified these "finest hours"'. The collective image of the past had imposed itself on and even erased individual recollections.<sup>59</sup>

It is necessary, in order to test the accuracy of the facts contained in the memoirs, to check these facts against documents of the period, such as the author's letters, diaries and other personal papers if this is possible, and compare the author's depiction of events with that of historians. This establishes in part the factual accuracy of the recollections. The memoirs, diaries and letters of the author's contemporaries are another valuable source of information, which can either support or cast doubt upon the validity of the author's assertions. Such comparisons can also bring to light events which the author has chosen to exclude, and perhaps even offer some clues as to why he has chosen to ignore them. Similarly, a comparison of such sources may reveal that the author regarded a particular event as significant enough to include in his memoirs, but that his peers did not share his assessment of the incident and that there is no other mention of it in contemporary documents, or even historical writings. In the case of the Huhnhäuser archive, the unique post-war situation caused Huhnhäuser to gather the testimonies of seventeen Norwegians

from various walks of life regarding his behaviour towards them during the occupation of Norway by Germany. In the affidavits there is a general consensus that Huhnhäuser was a “pre-war” German of the type commonly found in Germany before 1933. These objective assessments of Huhnhäuser’s character and actions are of great importance to any student of the Huhnhäuser memoirs.

Any differences which arise between the author’s account in the memoirs and other sources require an examination of the motivation of the memoir-writer. What are the reasons for his choice of material. Was it simply to please the reader, that is to say, did he regard a particular event as too dull to mention, or interesting enough to warrant inclusion? Or were his motives more self-serving? Did he choose to describe an incident which portrayed him in a favourable light, or suppress an occasion where his conduct was less than exemplary? An author, who is confident that his depiction of events will go unchallenged, may be tempted to alter events sufficiently in order to remove any potential blemishes on his character. Mayle highlights the dangers of this type of self-censorship in his parody of celebrity memoirs. The work is prefaced with an author’s note, the “author” being a dog called Boy, who writes: “This is a work of non-fiction, except for certain passages. Following the current autobiographical custom adopted by politicians in their memoirs, I have adjusted the truth wherever it might reflect unfavourably on myself.”<sup>60</sup> This is a light-hearted commentary upon what can be a very serious issue. A recent example of this type of historical manipulation in order to sanitize the truth comes from Albert Speer, who insisted in his autobiography that he was not fully aware of what was happening to the Jews. Comments he made subsequently show that he was indeed in possession of all the facts, but that he chose simply to ignore them at the time, and later deny all knowledge of them.

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<sup>59</sup> Escott Reid, “Memoirs and Memory”, *Scholarly Publishing*, 23.2 (1992), 105-09 (p. 107).



Unless there is independent historical evidence available to validate or disprove such claims, the reader must approach memoir and autobiography with caution and take care that he too is not manipulated into believing a falsehood.

Of course, as Reid highlights, memory “simplifies, embroiders, and dramatizes past events”<sup>61</sup>, and such ‘rewriting’ of history may occur without any forethought or intention. The memory may feel the need to either glamorize or sanitize the part one played in an event. Pritchett observes that when the writer describes his career, “we see him putting more and more important clothes on”,<sup>62</sup> that is to say, he feels the need to exaggerate the significance of what he has achieved. Similarly, he may not like to be reminded of things of which he is ashamed, and the memory of such acts can evolve quite unconsciously into something much more palatable to the individual concerned. Even harmless recollections can be misremembered. Words, emotions, actions may all be revised and edited by the memory. Consequently, even in the absence of intentional disingenuousness on the part of the author, the reader must still be alert to the fact that his recollections could be inaccurate. Furthermore, memory is tainted by both time and audience. That is to say, the relater of the memory usually wishes to retain the interest, the respect, even the admiration of his listener. Thus the ego feels even more inclined to censor and embellish the telling of a memory to another, than when operating within the confines of the self. Reid warns in particular of the danger of interviews, for,

off-the-cuff answers to an interviewer on what happened many years before will have many more errors. It is not just that as you get older your memory becomes increasingly unreliable, it is that the older you get the more likely you are to succumb to the temptation to exaggerate the importance of the

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<sup>60</sup> Peter Mayle, *A Dog's Life* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1995), p. vii.

<sup>61</sup> Escott Reid, *Memoirs*, p. 106.

<sup>62</sup> Pritchett, *Autobiography*, p. 3.

part you played in some event. (p. 106)

The public image of the self is something which the ego does not take lightly, and Reid admits that his readers may conclude that his “egotism has taken a terrible toll of truth” (p. 107). Emotions such as vanity, and a desire to win approval, necessitate or encourage the alteration of some facts before they are subjected to the glare of public scrutiny. The individual feels too vulnerable to expose his true inner-self to the judgement and condemnation of others. However, the author may not even be trying to deflect disapproval from his actions, or wanting to receive praise for the deeds of others; he may have other reasons. In the Mass Observation experiment, for example, a period of death and destruction was transformed into a ‘finest hour’ in the recollections of the participants, thus turning negative emotions into positive memories.

Despite warning of the inaccuracies of oral interviews, Reid comments that, “they can also be illuminating” (p. 107), meaning that while they may misinform us of the facts, they often provide us with a revealing glimpse into the character of the interviewee. Remarks made on the spur of the moment will often divulge far more in this respect than carefully considered prose. Similarly, letters written by the author himself are often an interesting — and differently angled — insight into the psyche that is so carefully presented in the memoirs. The author relaxes his guard, for normally he will be writing to someone who knows him fairly well, and therefore the need for pretence is diminished.

The feelings of family and friends also often require that the truth be issued with some degree of economy, therefore even if the memoirs are not written for the purpose of publication, the author is still afraid of complete frankness. Princess Marie Louise confesses in the foreword to her memoirs that: “There are of course a great many incidents and

experiences which, alas, I do not think it wise to include, for, as the French saying runs, ‘Toute vérité n'est pas bonne à dire.’”<sup>63</sup> (Gibbon, on the other hand, confidently asserts that “Truth, naked, unblushing truth, the first virtue of more serious history, must be the sole recommendation of this personal narrative”.<sup>64</sup>) The feelings of others are often also an important consideration in letter writing, and occasionally the author is even aware that his letters might one day be published. However, if the letter-writer is familiar enough with his correspondent and sure of confidentiality, then he may produce some startling revelations of his true character, or even his life, which he might wish to conceal from all others. A letter to a lover, for example, might display such emotions as anger, jealousy, insecurity or possessiveness, which would appear most unattractive to an outside observer. Human nature is such that few people would wish to appear unreasonable to the world at large. Therefore, such feelings would be unlikely to appear in print without modification and the accompaniment of a degree of self-justification.

However, to find the true measure of the man, it is often necessary to look beyond his self-portrait, and instead study his image as painted by another. A comparison of the two impressions might find little similarity, for as Howarth asserts, “In a mirror he studies reversed images, familiar to himself but not to others. A single mirror restricts him to full or three-quarter faces; he may not paint his profile because he cannot see it.”<sup>65</sup> It is his profile that we need to see if we are to become familiar with all the dimensions of his character. The opinion of his peers perhaps says most of all about the nature of the man. It is the reader’s only opportunity to assess the degree of objectivity with which the author attempts to portray himself. Of course, just as it is almost impossible to be objective about the self,

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<sup>63</sup> Princess Marie Louise, *My Memories of Six Reigns*, p. 13.

<sup>64</sup> Edward Gibbon, *Memoirs of my Life and Writing*, p. 1.

<sup>65</sup> Howarth, “Principles”, p. 85.

the reader must bear in mind that one individual is not always honest and unbiased in his assessment of another. However, if there are several similar testimonies as to the character of the man, then there is less room for doubt. The reader of memoir who has access to such independent testimonies is very fortunate indeed, for he will have many questions answered.

## Summary

With reference to dictionaries of literary terms, both sections of the Huhnhäuser memoirs, the life story and the political chapters on Norway, correspond to the definition of memoir, although *Aus einem reichen Leben* contains many autobiographical elements. Memoir, journals and diaries have often been ignored in the critical discussion on autobiographical writing, although biographical and autobiographical writings are becoming increasingly popular with the reading public. Furthermore, there has been little debate on the importance of memory in this kind of writing. It may be difficult to identify an individual work as either as autobiography or memoir, for it may contain elements of both. In some cases, the difficulty lies with whether to call a work autobiography or fiction.

Part of the fascination of autobiographical writing is the suspense of how much the author will reveal about himself subconsciously. He communicates much unknowingly through his selection of material, and an omission can say more than a chapter of prose. The autobiographical writer will often be challenged by the point at which he should begin his story. He cannot reveal all the influences upon his life, which moulded and shaped him into the person he has become, because he does not know himself, nor can he measure the strength of these influences of which he is aware. He may merely guess. Nor will he ever be

able to tell the story from beginning to end, birth to death, for he is not aware of either of those events. When he must rely on memory to tell the tale, he is at its mercy; it may vitiate the accuracy of his recollections but leave him convinced of their precision. He is also hampered in the quest for truth by his obligations to the living and the dead.

Autobiographical writing can also be of great importance in the study of history, even if the author was not one of the great and the good, but just an ordinary citizen. There is much to be learned from a first-hand account of how the repercussions of national and international political events affected the life of the average citizen. Autobiographical accounts can also contain a great deal of valuable information for students of social history, such as the working and living conditions of the age, or the social taboos of the era. The author is part of a society and knowledge of the society in which he lived helps us to assess his actions and beliefs, but we must not lose sight of the fact that the author is also an individual. If autobiographical writing has one flaw as a historical document, it is that it may not always be factually accurate. The author may misremember some details, particularly if he is writing about events of many years ago, or he may choose to lie for his own advantage. Thus, the student of history must be careful to corroborate the factual accuracy of autobiographical writing, whilst considering the author's motivation. Furthermore, as it provides a subjective rather than an objective view, autobiographical writing cannot be regarded as a substitute for researched historical works, but rather as a complement to them.

Wherever possible, the student of autobiographical writing should also read the work of his subject's peers and refer to contemporaneous documents where they exist, together with his text for study. Research has shown that memory can often transform the nature of events over a period of time to such an extent, that the recollections bear little

relation to the experiences they recall. Corroboration by objective sources is essential to confirm or disprove the veracity of the work. Here again the student should examine the author's motivation, as this may shed light upon his selection and omission of material. An author's decision to be economical with the truth may be conscious or subconscious. It is incumbent upon those who study the work to decide which, on the basis of the evidence he has collected regarding the life of the author from independent and objective sources.

Interviews are one very useful method of gathering information on the nature of the subject, but the interviewer must beware of inaccuracies and exaggeration on the part of the interviewee. If it is possible to interview the subject himself, his comments can often provide a revealing insight into his true character, particularly off-the-cuff remarks. Such unguarded moments may also be discovered in the subject's correspondence to trusted family and friends. Similarly, the opinions and anecdotes of those who know him often illuminate an aspect of his personality that he does not recognize or wish to disclose. To gain a true picture of the subject, it is necessary to turn to those around him to complete his self-portrait by adding the light and shade of their impressions.

## CHAPTER TWO

### The Huhnhäuser Archive

#### Introduction

The extraordinary circumstances of wartime have provided some of the answers to the many questions posed in the theoretical examination of memoir with regards to Alfred Huhnhäuser, in the form of the seventeen affidavits provided by various Norwegians in 1946. The testimonies of these individuals, as previously stated, established Huhnhäuser's character and actions during the period of German Occupation, and were used to support Huhnhäuser's application for entry into Britain to join his daughter and her Scottish husband, Alexander Peden, after the war. They confirmed much of what Huhnhäuser wrote in his account of the political events involving Norwegian education during the Occupation. Peden, who sadly died in the summer of 1997, was interviewed for the purposes of this thesis in October 1995. These independent sources, the affidavits and Peden's recollections, confirm the impression which Huhnhäuser himself gives that he belonged to that type commonly referred to as a "cultural", or "pre-war" German, hence my deliberately ambiguous title, "The Papers of a Pre-war German", of which more will be said later.

There are many problems inherent in dealing with an archive of this nature. The majority of the hundreds of letters are written in *Schreibschrift*, as are some of the memoirs, and Huhnhäuser's handwriting was initially hard to decipher. There are also a small number of items in Norwegian, Swedish and Danish, such as newspaper articles. Names and nicknames present another problem. There are hundreds of people referred to in the

memoirs and letters. I have recorded every reference to any individual, however trivial, in an index, in case of any future reference to that person. The memoirs are helpful in explaining the origin of the nicknames of close family members. In the case of the Norway memoirs and letters, some names are also found in the history books, such as Terboven, Quisling and Schiedermaier. Also, in the memoirs written during Huhnhäuser's time in prison hospital in 1945/6, there are several notes made in the margins in abbreviated form referring to individuals and circumstances at the time of writing, the meaning of some of which has proved elusive. One possible reason for this is that, due to their politically sensitive nature, Huhnhäuser perhaps did not want the Norwegian authorities to read them. Some of the notes appear to refer to the war crimes trials of people he knew.

### **Memoir or Autobiography?**

The first volume of the memoirs, *Aus einem reichen Leben*, differs considerably from the second, the political memoirs of Norway during the occupation, in that it contains autobiographical elements. That is to say, although the main emphasis is on the personalities and the world around Huhnhäuser, nevertheless there are moments of introspection, such as when he reflects that he perhaps spent too much time on his work and did not place enough importance on spending time with his family. There are many other similar passages in the personal memoirs which are purely autobiographical. Such passages describe Huhnhäuser's thoughts and emotions. They depict the feelings the author experienced, his soul searching in times of personal and professional indecision, the delights of his family life and the



sadness which overshadowed much of his life. For example, Huhnhauser's portrayal of the effect of the sudden death of his youngest sister at Christmas 1904 upon his spirituality is autobiography rather than memoir. His feelings of grief, loneliness and despair are all starkly reflected in his writing. He explains how they led to his subsequent loss of faith and sense of alienation from the church, and describes how he turned instead to contemporary literature, with its common themes of death and nihilism, in an attempt to make sense of the world.

There are elements present in the first volume of memoirs which correspond to autobiography as defined by those such as Shipley: "the autobiography proper is a connected narrative of the author's life, with stress laid on introspection, or on the significance of his life against a wider background."<sup>1</sup> However, no such passages are to be found in the political volume of memoirs concerning Norway. These five chapters, as Huhnhauser himself defines them, correspond closely to Beckson and Ganz's definition of memoir:

Where an account of autobiography is concerned primarily with the writer, his personal experiences, and the delineation of his character, the memoir centres more on the world in which he has lived. Sometimes the writer of a memoir is a person of no great significance but one who has come into contact with noteworthy people and events; he himself may play a relatively minor part in his book. Since World War II, innumerable memoirs have appeared in which high ranking officers describe their roles in that conflict.<sup>2</sup>

Although not an officer, nevertheless Huhnhauser wrote his second volume of memoirs specifically to describe the events of the period, with regards to education, during the

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<sup>1</sup> Shipley, *Literary Terms*, p. 23.

<sup>2</sup> Beckson, Ganz, *Literary Terms - A Dictionary* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1986), p. 141.

German occupation of Norway. The line between memoir and autobiography is much more clearly drawn here than in *Aus einem reichen Leben*. Huhnhäuser's objective when writing the Norway section of the memoirs is not to talk about the experiences of Alfred Huhnhäuser in Norway. It is, rather, to give a first hand account of the political events concerning the Norwegian education system as the head of the *Schulabteilung* in the *Reichskommissariat*, and also as a German official concerned with helping many Norwegians to gain fair and just treatment from the German authorities.

### **Public or Personal Reception?**

One question which must be asked is, for whom did Huhnhäuser write the memoirs? According to Alexander Peden, the answer is Huhnhäuser's surviving daughter Heidi. Peden claims that Huhnhäuser intended to publish *Aus einem reichen Leben* and give any profits made to Heidi. There is further evidence from Huhnhäuser himself to support this claim. Heidi's name and address are on the inside cover of all the notebooks and he states that they should be returned to her if they are lost. He writes on 28 December 1945 that he had originally intended to retire at the age of sixty, in order to write his memoirs with the aid of the personal papers he had been keeping for such a purpose since 1900. He explains: "Das ist nun alles anders geworden, and deswegen habe ich bereits im Herbst 1943 bei einem Kranksein in Kopenhagen mit der Niederschrift der Lebenserinnerungen angefangen und diese Arbeit in meinen freien Stunden in Oslo geführt." (LRF, p. 381)

It is unclear whether it was the war, or his ill health, which caused him to start

writing his memoirs two years earlier than originally planned. Both factors were probably equally influential. It was wartime conditions, however, which prevented him from gaining access to the letters and other personal documents that he had been hoarding for this purpose, therefore he is forced to rely for the most part on memory. He writes on 28 December 1945 that this may have one positive aspect:

die Folge ist, daß an manchen Stellen das Fleisch fehlen wird und bei manchen Bildern die Farbe. Wird auf diese Weise ihr eigentlicher Wert stark herabgemindert, so mag als ein gewisser Vorteil dagegen angesprochen werden, daß die Darstellung durch das Fehlen gewisser Einzelheiten im Ganzen vielleicht flüssiger geworden ist und auch wohl lesbarer, zum mindesten für den allerengsten Kreis, für den ja zunächst diese Erinnerungsblätter gedacht sind. Was Du, mein Heidikind, einmal damit machen wirst, ist Deine Sache. (LRF, p. 380)

Thus, he believes that the memoirs could in fact benefit from lacking in detail. In this statement Huhnhäuser also clarifies two points. Firstly, that the memoirs were written initially as a personal, family document, although it is clear that he considered publication a possibility; and secondly, that he had decided to leave the decision of whether to have the memoirs published to Heidi.

Within the memoirs he gives several indications that he expects others, outside the family, to read these memoirs. For example, he states that he is describing the staff at Neukloster in such great detail for the benefit of those who knew them, namely his wife and his daughter. However he apologises to those reading the memoir who did not know them, for he is afraid that they will find such detail boring: “Wenn ich nun im folgenden einige Namen nenne, so geschieht das um derentwillen, die noch mit mir alle jene Menschen kennen gelernt haben.” (DN, p. 49) Furthermore, he spends a great deal of time elaborating

on educational theory. This can at times be rather dull. It is questionable whether he really believed that this would be of any great interest to his wife and daughter. There are often long sections where his family are not mentioned at all. He discusses at great length his teaching methodologies for his various teaching subjects and age groups, his approach to discipline, the importance of a well-stocked personal library to a school teacher, several tips on handling recalcitrant colleagues, his polished approach to public speaking and even how best to take lecture notes, right down to the best type of paper to use and how to arrange it on the desk. All such advice is, of course, based upon the wealth of his own experience. He expands at such great length on educational theory that it seems he wishes to record his teaching prowess for posterity. Furthermore, he urges young teachers not to reject out of hand the methods of their predecessors for the sake of modern theories that come into fashion. He is attempting to pass on to others in that profession the 'correct' way to teach. Consequently, such sections support the claim that Huhnhäuser wrote his personal memoirs with a view to having them published.

If, as the evidence suggests, Huhnhäuser wrote the first volume of his memoirs with the intention of publishing them, then this answers the important question of Huhnhäuser's intended audience, but not why he chose to write his memoirs at all. Huhnhäuser attempts to answer this question himself in the memoirs. He explains that he has a great love of history, and expresses his belief that each link in the chain that is the generations should have knowledge of their history and of those who came before them. He states that from adolescence he had begun, "alles, was irgendwie für mein Leben bedeutungsvoll sein konnte, aufzubewahren und nach Jahren zu ordnen." (LRF, p. 382) This material included letters, theatre and concert programmes and pictures from Huhnhäuser's youth, and was

supplemented in later years by essays, memoranda and speeches.

However, there is a difference between an individual having a keen sense of their own personal history and wishing to record it for the future generations of their family, and considering one's personal history interesting enough to be worthy of publication. After all, Huhnhäuser was not a famous man, not one of the "great and the good", and herein lies much of the importance of the archive. Admittedly, he was in professional contact with some world figures, such as Terboven, but his personal memoirs do not include this stage of his career. He had done nothing to court wider public recognition in his life and was just an 'ordinary' citizen. The fact that the memoirs even exist, and, furthermore, that Huhnhäuser considered publication, shows that he regarded his life's experiences as having much that would interest and entertain an audience. The title alone, *Aus einem reichen Leben*, indicates that he believed he had led a life full of many exciting and varied experiences. Perhaps he felt that the memoirs were worthy of the attention of the reading public as his intention was not only to entertain, but also to educate in a professional capacity. If this is indeed the case, then the memoirs can be viewed as being intended not only as an account of one man's life for his family and friends, which would also be of interest to others beyond his familiar environment, in other words to the anonymous reading public, but also as a means of handing down valuable professional advice to future generations of teachers. Thus Huhnhäuser is attempting to extend his sphere of influence into the future by recording his past. He is an 'ordinary citizen', who believes that he has something of importance to say to the world at large, and a contribution to make to the future of his profession. This belief alone makes his memoirs worthy of examination.

The fact that Huhnhäuser was separated from his family, and had already lost his

younger daughter, is perhaps one of the factors in his decision to begin his memoirs earlier than planned. It could be argued that Huhn­häuser wrote these memoirs as a comfort to himself. In the letters dating from 1942 to 1944 he frequently states how much he misses his wife and two daughters. The postal service between Oslo and Copenhagen was erratic, and the additional intrusion of censorship further served to hamper communication and make the separation harder to bear. Any messages sent by Heidi were generally received months after they had been written, and therefore both parents and daughter endured a great deal of uncertainty as to the welfare of their loved ones. Thus, it is only natural that Huhn­häuser's thoughts began to dwell upon the relative tranquillity of the past. In one letter from Easter 1942, he writes that he had been reminiscing with his nephew over happier times on the previous evening and that when memories are as vivid as his, one should write them down in case they lose their freshness and clarity in the future. He is eager to do this: "Zur Zeit jucken mich wieder sehr die Lebenserinnerungen."<sup>3</sup>

Similarly, in the memoirs written during his incarceration in hospital at the end of the war, he writes that recalling the happy events in his past helps to distract his thoughts from the miserable situation in which he finds himself, a situation caused by events beyond his control. He spends the saddest but most poignant New Year's Eve of his life in 1945, when he is seriously ill, in prison and separated by death or distance from the three most important people in his life. To help ease his sadness he recalls happier memories of how he celebrated New Year in his childhood, then details every year from 1924 to 1942, which was the last time he was able to celebrate the occasion with his wife. On a practical note, this chronological list offers a small clue to his whereabouts during those years not

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<sup>3</sup> Letter to Else Huhn­häuser, Easter 1942.

documented in the archive.

In the second volume of political memoirs the question of audience and publication is resolved by Huhnhäuser himself. The archive contains copies of letters he addressed to his friend, and former Rector of Oslo University, Didrik Arup Seip. In 1946, at Seip's request, Huhnhäuser agreed to write several chapters on the political events concerning Norwegian education during the occupation. These chapters were to form part of a book on the occupation which was intended for publication in Norway, and possibly also in Germany. The fact that Huhnhäuser, formerly part of the hated German occupying forces, had been asked to contribute to such a book so soon after the end of the war, is indicative of the esteem in which Huhnhäuser was held by those Norwegians who knew him. Thus, when the reader asks himself for whom was Huhnhäuser writing, he can answer that question satisfactorily. Both volumes of memoirs were written for publication, but most probably intended for different audiences, the former mainly for a German and the latter for a Norwegian audience. What can never be known is the impact which Huhnhäuser's memoirs would have had on the contemporary reading public had they been published.

The intended audience for Huhnhäuser's *Kriegserinnerungen* of the First World War, in which he details the course of the first eight days of the war, is unknown. As it is written in journal form, this suggests that perhaps it was intended, at least originally, as a purely personal document. This does not preclude the fact that Huhnhäuser may have considered developing the idea further at a later date. The last entry in the journal is dated 16 August 1914. It is unclear exactly when it was written, but it was no later than the early 1920s, for his daughter uses the blank pages of the notebook to write a little diary around this time, and the calendar page for 1 January 1922 has been placed between the pages of

the notebook. He refers in *Aus einem reichen Leben* to a journal he kept during the first few days of the war, and the account of these days which is contained in the archive appears to be either this original version or a later account based on this. There are many possible reasons why he may have stopped writing after eight days. He may possibly have been spurred on to write a journal by the feverish euphoria which swept the populace at the beginning of the war, when all were certain of a quick and decisive victory. He may not have wanted to record the hardship and suffering which quickly followed. Perhaps the explanation is more mundane and Huhnhäuser was simply too busy to continue writing. Or perhaps once the stalemate on the battlefield set in he felt that there was little to write about. Huhnhäuser was called up in 1915 but an ankle injury sustained during basic training meant that he was never sent to the front.

The journal of the Huhnhäuser's holiday in Bad Gastein in 1940 also merits brief examination. The journal is very detailed, and illustrated with photographs. The introduction reveals the interesting fact that Huhnhäuser had been working for the army for eight months. (He must have begun in September 1939, for he returned to the Ministry on 1 May 1940.) With close attention paid to matters such as train times, the journal would appear to have been written purely as a personal memento of the holiday, as the photographic illustrations suggest. There are some interesting passages around two thirds of the way into the journal. Huhnhäuser details the political remarks made in conversation by a friend of his, ranging from gossip about Goebbels and Ley, to the "Dämonin" which "possessed" Hitler from time to time and gave him a magnetic quality which those around him found irresistible, to criticism of Britain and France. Huhnhäuser does not add his own observations to the remarks of his friend, so it is impossible to know what he thinks of these



matters.

If the question of for whom the memoirs were written can be answered to a satisfactory degree, the question of for whom the letters were written might appear on initial consideration to be rather straightforward. However, it must not be forgotten that the letters written between January 1942 to January 1944 by Huhnhauser to his wife, and by her to him, were routinely read by the censor. This brings into question the validity of even the most remotely political statement made by Huhnhauser in his correspondence. Any pro-Nazi statement he makes must be questioned. Did he really mean it, or was it merely a precaution? Similarly we must not regard any lack of criticism as signifying tacit approval, for as is well known, no individual could regard himself as safe from reprisal if he criticized the regime. Perhaps Huhnhauser believed that he could achieve far more from working within the system. As the affidavits show, he helped protect many Norwegians, particularly students and staff at the university, from the excesses of the fascists, both Norwegian and German. Therefore as Huhnhauser was aware that his letters were no longer private but instead open to the scrutiny of prying eyes, some of the material contained within them must be treated with caution.

### **The Importance of the Huhnhauser Archive**

Having raised the issue of for whom the memoirs were intended, the next question must be, what is the nature and significance of their content? There are many omissions in the memoirs that are never explained. The night of his proposal to his wife is elaborated upon in

great detail but there is no mention of the actual wedding. The account skips several months over this period. It seems rather odd that this should be omitted. Perhaps the explanation is that he felt it was too personal an experience and one he did not want to share. It is possible that he did in fact write about these months in his diary because several pages have been torn out of the front of the notebook. There is also no explanation of his decision to leave Berlin University and return instead to Rostock. Again the memoirs jump a period of several months. It is strange that a man who frequently describes things in minute detail should leave out matters of such importance and relevance.

However, the most significant omission from the archive is the absence of any mention of life in Germany from 1933 onwards. Huhnhäuser was trained in historical research and must surely have been aware of the importance of such a turbulent period to the political and social history of Germany. However, there is merely a reference to a holiday in Austria in 1938, when he mentions that there were no longer any border posts and they were no longer “abroad”, and also the detailed account of the holiday in Bad Gastein in 1940. He refers to the totalitarian regime indirectly when he mentions the effect it had on the lives of several acquaintances, of whose politics the state did not approve. However, there is no mention of the effect it had on Huhnhäuser’s life and career or the life of his family, except when, in the political chapters on Norway, he launches a diatribe against the Hitler Youth and the detrimental effect this organization had on the German school system and the respect which teachers enjoyed in society.

Huhnhäuser makes no direct reference as to whether he was a member of the Nazi party, but states clearly in the personal memoirs that he has never voluntarily been a member of any political party. Alexander Peden, his son-in-law who was responsible for bringing

him to Britain in 1948, believed that Huhnhäuser was never a member of the Nazi party.<sup>4</sup> Files held in the *Bundesarchiv* in Berlin, however, reveal that Huhnhäuser did in fact join the NSDAP on 1 May 1933. (Furthermore, he became a member of the *Reichsbund der Deutschen Beamten* on 1 March 1934, the *Reichsluftschutzbund* on 10 March 1934 and the *NS-Lehrerbund* on 1 December 1934; his wife joined the *Deutsches Frauenwerk* on 1 March 1938.)<sup>5</sup> There are also two clues in the memoir which point to this fact. When Huhnhäuser was applying for permission to come to Britain after the war, no mention was made of the fact that he was not a party member. Had he never joined, this would have been an important card for him to play in his attempt to be granted a visa. Secondly, in a letter to his wife, Huhnhäuser quotes in full a birthday greeting sent to him from Terboven, in which the *Reichskommissar* refers to him as "Lieber Parteigenosse Huhnhäuser!"<sup>6</sup> Of course, there were thousands who joined the party simply in order to retain their jobs, or in the hope that they would avoid further harassment by doing so, and such people did not subscribe to the Nazi ideology. When Huhnhäuser states that he never voluntarily joined any political party, he implies the he was forced to join the Nazi Party, and this may indeed have been his perception of events.

Furthermore, Huhnhäuser does not refer to his time in Berlin as a *Ministerialrat* in the Education Department, which must surely have been a very interesting period in his life.

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<sup>4</sup> Interview with the late Alexander Peden, 17 October 1995.

<sup>5</sup> This information was obtained from Huhnhäuser's *Personalnachweis* from the *Reichsministerium für Wissenschaft, Erziehung und Volksbildung*, dated 9 November 1938, and a *Parteistatistische Erhebung*, dated 30 June 1939. In the Ministry's *Personalnachweis* Huhnhäuser makes at least three factual errors: he records his Party membership number as 3055 521 instead of 3055 821, he gives the date of his arrival at Neukloster as 1 January 1921, which is one year earlier than the date given in the memoirs, and he writes that his military service lasted from 21 September 1915 to 30 November 1915, but gives the correct date of 30 November 1918 on the previous page.

His career advancement from head teacher to ministerial secretary is not explained. This raises the question of how he was regarded by the Nazis, and also how did he regard them? Was he promoted solely on merit, or was his rise aided by Party connections, just as his appointment as headmaster in Neukloster came about because of his relationship with the then Mecklenburg Education Minister, Reincke-Bloch? The only personal insight into how Huhnhäuser felt about Hitler comes from Peden, who states that Huhnhäuser regarded the Nazi takeover of power in 1933 with some foreboding, as he feared that Hitler would lead Germany into another war. Does Huhnhäuser choose not to discuss the events after 1933 because he is now ashamed of his association with the Nazi party? This explanation is supported by the fact that Huhnhäuser presents himself throughout the memoirs as a man uninterested, temperamentally unsuited and hence uninvolved in party politics. But perhaps he feels a sense of guilt at his failure to act, and wishes to excuse himself by stressing his incompatibility with politics. It is also possible that Huhnhäuser felt that this period was too painful to write about for personal reasons, as it incorporates both his wife's illness and his daughter's death from tuberculosis. However, perhaps the most likely explanation for this omission is, as Peden claims, that the chaotic situation in Germany after the war, the demands of writing the political memoirs on Norway, his commitment to produce articles for the *Rheinpfalz* and his failing health all prevented Huhnhäuser from completing the memoirs.

There is, however, one indirect reference to the events after 1933, and that is a mild denunciation of anti-Semitism in the first pages of the memoirs. As this first book of the memoirs, entitled *Kindheit und Jugend*, was written between 1943 and 1944, it is perhaps

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<sup>6</sup> Letter to Else Huhnhäuser, 15 June 1943.

bold of him to speak up for the Jews at all — although the manuscript was typed, and possibly altered, after 1946. The modern reader is appalled to see the Jews in Demmin described as “ungefährlich” because they remained Jews and did not enter into mixed marriages with non-Jews. Huhnhäuser’s comments on the character of a Jewish friend of his father’s, David Davidsohn, also appear to be influenced by Nazi propaganda which sought to spread the lie that all Jewish men were sexual predators: “Seine Rasse verleugnete er insofern nicht, als er gern junge Mädchen um sich sah und auch zweideutigen Geschichten [...] nicht ganz abgeneigt war.” (KJ, p. 10) However, Huhnhäuser’s assertion that Davidsohn, with whom he had always remained on good terms, was “ein biederer anständiger Kaufmann” (KJ, p. 10) would not have been well-received in certain circles at that time.<sup>7</sup> Huhnhäuser also states in later chapters of the memoirs that he had little time for anti-Semitic literature. He also frequently expresses his admiration for his Jewish history professor, and friend, Reincke-Bloch, an assimilated Baptist. However, there is one suggestion in the archive of a less sympathetic attitude to the Jews. In a letter from his wife she asks, “Wie geht es in Deiner feinen Judenvilla, Liebes [Herz]?”<sup>8</sup> The reader is left to wonder whether Huhnhäuser has any idea as to the fate of the former occupants of his new domicile, or indeed any interest. It is not an issue which it would be sensible to raise in censored letters, so neither Huhnhäuser nor Else can be condemned out of hand for failing to bring up this matter. Furthermore, such expressions had slipped into common parlance at that time. Language was a very powerful weapon in the Nazi armoury of propaganda, and the insidious influence of expressions such as this exerted itself so strongly that anti-Semitic

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<sup>7</sup> Huhnhäuser relates that Davidsohn was forced to flee Demmin and take refuge abroad in November 1938, when he was over eighty years old (KJ, p. 10).

<sup>8</sup> Letter to Huhnhäuser from Else Huhnhäuser, 13 February 1943.

words and phrases quickly evolved into everyday speech. Therefore, one must be careful not to place too much emphasis upon Else's use of this phrase, no matter how repulsive it may seem to the modern reader.

Much of the importance of this archive lies in the fact that Huhnhäuser was not a famous man but an ordinary citizen, albeit one with access to historical figures and interest in the world of literature. Therefore that he wrote his memoirs at all is interesting. His vivid account of his life experiences is both unique to himself but also gives an authentic insight into many aspects of life in Germany and Scandinavia during the first half of this century. Huhnhäuser lived through periods of momentous social and political change and he has documented the effects of some of these changes on the life of an ordinary middle-class citizen (although we are denied his account of the fall of the Weimar Republic and the rise of the Nazi dictatorship). The Norway memoirs differ in that they are a political document. Their importance lies in their value as world-stage history. One factor of added significance is that this history was recorded by someone who is closely involved in many of the events, and yet who was in some respects an outsider. Huhnhäuser was regarded by many Norwegians as being markedly different from most of his compatriots, and indeed statements in the affidavits indicate that many in the *Reichskommissariat* shared this view.

Also of added interest is that Huhnhäuser experienced a variety of lifestyles, in a number of geographical locations. Despite coming from a middle-class background and spending most of his working life as a teacher, Huhnhäuser spent the first four years of his working life as an apprentice in Rostock. This made him aware for the first time of the great social problems inherent in Germany's newly industrialized society and altered his hitherto limited bourgeois perspective irrevocably. His travels in Scandinavia offer an observer's

view on these Northern peoples, with whom Huhnhäuser felt a great affinity. Similarly, his description of Mussolini's Italy, which he toured in the spring of 1925, gives an account of some of the visible social changes effected by the Fascist leader and Huhnhäuser's reaction towards them. Many of the changes, such as the removal of beggars and pickpockets from the streets, met with his approval.

### **Fact or Fiction? The Reliability of the Huhnhäuser Memoirs**

As much of the material is personal to the author, there is little opportunity to check the validity of his statements. Huhnhäuser's son-in-law, Peden, was able to verify certain details, such as the fact that Huhnhäuser had a pleasant baritone voice, or that the Huhnhäusers did indeed appear to have a very happy marriage. This fact is also confirmed by the warmth in the letters between husband and wife during their long separation in the war years. Huhnhäuser states several times in the memoirs that he could give a much more accurate and detailed portrayal of specific events if he were still in possession of certain documents, such as letters, or concert programmes. Thus, Huhnhäuser is relying solely on memory for certain sections of the memoirs, and is aware that his memoirs may contain some inaccuracies as a result. Unfortunately, the Allied bombing raids on Rostock during the war destroyed many of the places mentioned by Huhnhäuser in *Aus einem reichen Leben*, and many of the records and documents held there. Other personal papers were lost or destroyed in transit to Scandinavia, or moved to Demmin, where they were presumably lost when Soviet forces destroyed the town in 1945, thus increasing the difficulty of

confirming dates and the like. Some of the personal facts contained within the memoirs are impossible to check, such as Huhnhäuser's reminiscences of people long since dead, which would not be contained in any official document. However, his family would presumably have knowledge of many such individuals and anecdotes, therefore, it may be assumed that in such cases Huhnhäuser would maintain an acceptable degree of accuracy.

The Norwegian volume of memoirs was written soon after the events themselves, thus increasing the probability that Huhnhäuser remembered the events correctly. Furthermore, Huhnhäuser states that he was to appear as a witness in the trial of Ragnar Skancke, the NS (*Nasjonal Samling*) Minister for Education, and an adversary of his. His appearance as a witness would again increase the probability that Huhnhäuser would retain the events of the occupation freshly in his memory, as he would be required to go over many things time and time again. Furthermore, Huhnhäuser was writing his account of the history of the Norwegian education system during the occupation for publication just two years later. Consequently, he would have been aware that it was vitally important for his credibility that the information contained in these chapters was as accurate as possible. He is careful to give the sources of his information and challenges the claims of others regarding their version of the "truth". If his information is based not on first-hand experience, but upon the reports of others, then he makes this clear in his account. Moreover, the contents of the seventeen affidavits contained in the archive also support Huhnhäuser's version of the events in Norway and his account of how he acted under circumstances such as he describes. As a German writing for a Norwegian audience shortly after the war, Huhnhäuser would have been aware that there would be many Norwegians ready to challenge his account, therefore, he would have realized the importance of factual accuracy and evidence



to support his claims. Finally, Huhnhäuser's description of the events which took place can be compared with the work of modern historians who have written on this period, and also with surviving contemporaneous documents. Most of the records that were not destroyed by the Germans and Quisling's NS men at the end of the war have been retained in various archives in Oslo. In fact, historians have quoted Huhnhäuser from material found in these archives. Consequently, the reader can approach Huhnhäuser's political memoirs with confidence in their veracity and accuracy.

### **Personal, Cultural and Historical**

The various levels in the memoirs reflect the altering circumstances in Huhnhäuser's life. These levels can be divided into three categories; personal, literary and "world-stage" history. The personal recollections contain a great deal that is of interest with regards to social history. The literary memories highlight much that was relevant to the cultural life of North Germany at the turn of the century and in the Weimar years. Finally, within the area of "world stage" history there are two further levels — that of memory, when he recounts events as he observed them — and that of participation, whereby Huhnhäuser details political events in which he himself had a role to play. For the purpose of illustration, examples will be given from each of these levels. The first is deliberately trivial.

In 1921 Huhnhäuser went to Munich with his wife, to attend the Wagner and Mozart opera festival that was being held in the city. In order to save money they rented a flat. Initially they were very happy with their choice of accommodation until they suddenly

noticed that their bodies were covered in a number of red lumps. These they identified to their horror as insect bites. Faced with the landlady's denials Huhnhäuser was forced to look for the offending creatures himself. When confronted with the evidence she then sent her daughter to buy a tincture to rub onto the furniture. The bedposts were dismantled and all the cracks and joints were treated. This disturbed their uninvited guests somewhat and that night they were on the move. Although they left a light on, the bugs would not leave them in peace. Huhnhäuser's wife sat crying in bed while he stood guard, a slipper in his hand, ready to kill anything that moved. It was, he says, the biggest hunt of his entire life. They changed their accommodation the next day but had to leave their cases until the flat had been fumigated. Unfortunately they had many such problems with infestations in Munich which led Huhnhäuser to conclude that this experience was more than just bad luck.

There are many literary anecdotes contained in the memoirs. Initially Huhnhäuser was interested in North German authors such as Wilhelm Raabe, Wilhelm Busch, Georg Diederich Babst, Theodor Storm and, in particular, the *Plattdeutsch* poet Fritz Reuter. A set of his works exists in the archive. In fact, Huhnhäuser's wife's nickname, "Melms", comes from Reuter's poem "Das Läschen". One January evening in 1910, Huhnhäuser went with a friend to the local barracks where they had been invited to the celebrations marking the Kaiser's birthday. Else was rather sad that they were going without her and so Huhnhäuser quoted from the poem, likening her to "die kleine Melms" — the little pig that had to have company. From that evening she was known as "kleine Melms".

Huhnhäuser's other literary interests were numerous. By January 1921 he had produced a translation of Hans Christian Andersen's autobiography *Das Märchen meines Lebens* and *Briefe an eine Freundin*, an edition of Wilhelm von Humboldt's letters to

Charlotte Diede. He was the opera critic for the *Rostocker Anzeiger* from 1920 to 1922. His essay on etiquette for theatregoers was so popular it was reprinted on several programmes in the larger theatres. He also edited several school readers during his years at Neukloster. In the 1940s his publications included editions of Busch and Goethe. Whilst in Norway he discovered the works of Knut Hamsun. Several German translations of Hamsun's novels are contained in what remains of Huhnhäuser's library, including his autobiographical novel *Auf überwachsenen Pfaden*. This novel would be of personal interest to Huhnhäuser as it concerns Hamsun's time in captivity, under arrest after the war on charges of treason.

Huhnhäuser's love of Reuter's work, and the *Plattdeutsch* in which he wrote, led him to spark off a controversial and contentious debate on the revival of the *Volkskunde* movement which flourished in the early Weimar Years. In 1920 Huhnhäuser proposed the founding of a *Plattdeutsch* guild which would concern itself with critical and academic tasks. One lecture he gave for this group unexpectedly caused a literary feud over the work of Rudolf Tarnow,<sup>9</sup> a Mecklenburg poet whose amusing rhymes had been popular with the public there since 1910. Huhnhäuser regarded his harmless rhymes as linguistically inferior to even Reuter's weakest verse. Huhnhäuser saw the overemphasis of Tarnow's insipid work as a danger to the whole *Niederdeutsch* movement. He felt that if *Plattdeutsch* sayings were only there to be used in stupid jokes, then why go to all the effort of keeping it alive as a living dialect and a subject for serious academic study and research. In his opinion Tarnow's rhymes were threatening to destroy the language. His lecture caused a great sensation and as a consequence he was accused of having no sense of "niederdeutscher

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<sup>9</sup> Rudolf Tarnow (25.2.1867 - 19.5.1933) was in the military for over twenty years, leaving in 1906. His style of verse became popular following the success of Reuters "Läuschen un Rimels", and is still popular today with new editions of his work appearing in 1997.

Humor” (LRF, p. 86). He was warned not to publish and even threatened with counter measures. Huhnhäuser believed, however, that his silence would be cowardice and went on to write an even longer article on the subject for the *Rostocker Anzeiger*. This caused a great stir and the local paper in Schwerin mounted a furious crusade against him.

Huhnhäuser’s allies leapt to his defence in this war of words which was christened the “Rostocker Läuschenkrieg”. After this Huhnhäuser was able to retire into the background although it was several months before the affair ran its course. Of particular importance to Huhnhäuser was that in the Hamburg newspaper *Quickborn*, which was read all over North Germany, an article was published which supported his views. With this he believed the matter was settled to a certain degree in his favour.<sup>10</sup>

Throughout the memoirs Huhnhäuser occasionally refers to political events in Europe and Germany. He recalls the moment when he heard of the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand. It was a hot July afternoon and he and Melms had gone on an excursion to Bernstorf, outside Rostock. They were enjoying Kaffee und Kuchen, sitting in the shade of some old trees and being pestered by some persistent wasps, which were attracted by the cakes and sugar. When they received the unexpected news from Sarajevo their mood changed instantly. Everyone was worried and wondered whether this would settle the general conflict with Serbia, or lead instead to an all out war.

When war was declared Huhnhäuser likened it to an enormous popular uprising. The people marched through the streets of Rostock singing “Das Deutschlandlied” and “Die Wacht am Rhein”. Professor Reincke-Bloch gave a speech to the students on the steps of the university in which he invoked the spirit of 1813. All party discord appeared forgotten.

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<sup>10</sup> It is interesting to note that the late Alexander Peden claimed Huhnhäuser was “horrified”

The Kaiser even made the pronouncement that he no longer recognized any political parties, only Germans, and everyone, states Huhnhäuser, believed him. Huhnhäuser and his friend Bök tried to join up immediately, as all the young men seemed to be doing. They were turned down for the Home Guard however, and told to wait until they were called up. The press also helped to stir up enthusiasm for the “Heiliger Krieg”. Huhnhäuser contrasts this reaction to the outbreak of war to the feelings of horror and dismay felt over thirty years later:

Wie anders hat man damals den kommenden Krieg in Deutschland betrachtet als 1939, wo es sich wie lähmendes Entsetzen auf uns legte, als an dem verhängnisvollen Sonntag die Kriegserklärungen bekannt gegeben wurden. Nun wußten wir was ein Krieg bedeutete! (LRF, p. 105)

These recollections portray Huhnhäuser reacting to external events. In Norway he was active in the political processes which effected the lives of others. He was in daily contact with *Reichskommissar* Terboven and ministers in Quisling’s puppet government. In a letter to his wife, Huhnhäuser describes an ostentatious state celebration which he was invited to attend. He writes:

Das war am Sonntag ein wirklich feierlicher Staatsakt. Auf besonderen Wunsch von Quisling fand der Festakt in dem alten, kapellenartigen Saale der Festung Akershus statt. Punkt 1 Uhr waren alle Teilnehmer, etwa 150 Personen versammelt. [...] Q [Quisling] hatte diesen Raum gewünscht, weil er in ihm die Verbindung mit der Überlieferung erblickte. Nach zwei einleitenden Musikstücken des philharmonischen Orchesters sprach zunächst der Reichskommissar. Er hielt eine hochpolitische Rede und rechnete fürchterlich mit Bischof Berggraf [*sic*] ab, einem der führenden Köpfe der Gegenbewegung. Von diesem hatte er ein Dokument in der Hand über eine

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when he realized his daughters were speaking *Plattdeutsch* in Neukloster.

Unterhaltung zwischen ihm und Halifax im Winter 1939. Daraus geht schlagend hervor, wie stark die Norweger damals mit England verbunden waren; weiter auch, daß damals wirklich noch Friedensmöglichkeiten bestanden haben.<sup>11</sup> Es war eine ausgezeichnete Rede, vernichtend für die Gegenseite, eine Rechtfertigung der Handlungsweise Quisling aus Berggrafs [*sic*] Munde. Dann sprach Quisling gut pointiert, tief greifend und leidenschaftlich. Man merkte wie er sein neues Amt als einen hohen Auftrag fühlte, und immer wieder betonte er das freie Norwegen im großgermanischen Raum. [...] Beide Reden wurden häufig von Beifall unterbrochen. Nach der Feier ging man die steinere Wendeltreppe hinunter auf den Schloßhof [...]. Hier standen Hirdmänner in ihren blauen Skiuniformen Spalier. Unten an der Straße stand deutsche und norwegische Polizei zur Parade aufgestellt. T. und Q. nahmen sie ab. Wir waren Publikum, bekamen aber am Schluß von Q. einen freundlichen Händedruck.<sup>12</sup>

This description is interesting not only as an eyewitness account of an event on “world-stage” history, but also because of Huhnhäuser’s reactions to the events he observed. His assertion that Quisling spoke well is surprising in the light of Hoidal’s claim that he was “never a particularly good orator”, whose speeches remained “unconvincing except to the limited number who were already believers”.<sup>13</sup> Another interesting fact is that Peden claims

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<sup>11</sup> Gunnar Heine, “Bischof Berggravs Friedensinitiativen am Anfang des Zweiten Weltkrieges”, *Kirchliche Zeitgeschichte*, 4.1 (1991), 138-52, states that Bishop Eivind Berggrav was involved in a peace initiative at the beginning of the war. He attempted to mediate between the belligerent parties and his efforts culminated in a meeting with Hermann Göring, which took place on 21 January 1940. In the months before this encounter he met with a number of influential politicians and church leaders from Britain, France, Germany and certain neutral countries to promote his peace initiative (p. 138). He travelled to London in December 1939, and met with Lord Halifax in Downing Street on the 15th. Here he proposed that secret negotiations take place between Britain and Germany to end the war. Halifax refused to negotiate with Hitler on the basis that this would strengthen the position of the latter (p. 144). Following his meeting with Göring, he returned to London and was received by Halifax on 27 January. What Berggrav did not know was that his discussions with Göring in Berlin had aroused the suspicion amongst the British that he was being exploited by the German *Friedenspropaganda* (p. 150).

<sup>12</sup> Letter to Else Huhnhäuser, 4 February 1942.

<sup>13</sup> O.K. Hoidal, *Quisling: A study in treason* (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget AS, 1989), p. 476.

Bishop Berggrav was a friend of Huhnhäuser's who helped him during the immediate post-war period — although he did not provide him with an affidavit. Finally, Terboven's speech, in which he boasted of having evidence that Norway and Britain were in league and that Germany wanted peace, must surely have corresponded exactly to what Huhnhäuser wanted to believe. He had a close affinity with Scandinavia and would be seeking to justify the occupation to his own conscience. The fact that he had moral qualms is best illustrated by Peden's claim that Huhnhäuser was initially to be sent to Denmark, until he requested a transfer on the grounds that he had so many Danish friends.

### **A Pre-War German**

Finally, the question must be asked whether the Huhnhäuser memoirs are still of interest to the modern reader. Shipley gives four reasons why "personal writings appeal to readers and survive",<sup>14</sup> cited above, of which the first and the third are of particular relevance to the Huhnhäuser memoirs. Certainly, as far as the political memoirs are concerned, which describe the situation in Norway as experienced by Huhnhäuser, they would be of interest today because of Huhnhäuser's "contact with great historical events or movements".

Huhnhäuser's eyewitness account of the state celebrations on 1 February 1942 is a fascinating example of this. This corresponds to the first of Shipley's reasons, although the "purely personal element" in these memoirs is very seldom present. It is limited to Huhnhäuser's thoughts concerning the people and the events he is reacting to at the time,

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<sup>14</sup> Shipley, *Literary Terms*, p. 23.

and his attempt to outwit his opponents, some of whom will be known already to the modern reader, especially to a German or Norwegian audience, for whom these chapters were originally intended.

The political memoirs would also correspond to a certain degree to the third reason given by Shipley, that of the subject being “out of step”, in this case at odds with both the German and the Norwegian Fascists. Huhnhäuser was given the somewhat ironical nickname “der liebe Gott” within the *Reichskommissariat*, and, on the basis of the material in the memoirs, clearly had more in common with the Norwegian teachers and academics than his German compatriots. Huhnhäuser was allowed to remain in Norway after the war, at a time when Germans were hated and reviled by the Norwegians. He was given food and shelter and even asked to write on the events of the occupation. He was seen by certain individuals who provided affidavits as representing a different type of German to the Nazis; they regarded him as the type of cultured German who once fulfilled the role of a national stereotype abroad. This image was soon supplanted in foreign consciousness after 1933 by that of the Nazi storm trooper.

This theme of being out of step with the times is also very evident in the personal memoirs, *Aus einem reichen Leben*. In these unfinished memoirs, Huhnhäuser states that he identifies with the political liberals of 1848, and not with the political movements prevalent in his lifetime, hence the ambiguity of my title, *A Pre-War German*. He completely rejects the party politics of his own era, repeatedly claiming that he is an “unpolitisches Wesen”, thus creating a paradox whereby he is an unpolitical man who identifies in spirit with the politics of the liberals of 1848. He thereby indicates that he would have been involved politically if he had been alive during that era. This, by implication, means that he is latently



political, and, consequently, that he is not apolitical. Furthermore, he concedes that his bourgeois upbringing has influenced some of the views he holds, such as a deep distrust and dislike of socialism — this is, of course, a political opinion. Peden states that Huhnhäuser refused to speak to his nephew Hans Jochen ever again, because he decided to return to live in the Russian zone after the war. This was because of Huhnhäuser's hatred of the 'Bolsheviks', to which he refers several times in the memoirs, but does not recognize as a political statement. In addition, his claim that he is a non-political being is a political statement in itself.

It is symbolic that whilst his contemporaries were dying in the First World War, Huhnhäuser is prevented from joining them, and thus did not share in the experience of the front which moulded and shaped a generation of young men across Europe. Huhnhäuser's experience of that war was restricted to the Home Front, and, therefore, it was that of the older generation; he had no idea of the carnage and bloodshed which his peers witnessed at first hand. His loyalty to the old order, his obedience to authority and his acceptance of the status quo remained unchallenged until the Kaiser's abdication, which he viewed as a betrayal. He reacted to the subsequent attempt at political revolution in November 1918 by refusing to hand over control of the military police section, of which he had been put in charge when his superior officer decided to abandon his post. He insisted that he would continue as normal until he received orders to do otherwise.

Huhnhäuser's attitude to authority during the First World War contrasts sharply with his later attempts during the Second to thwart the aims of Terboven, as regards the fate of the Norwegian students arrested after the closure of Oslo University on 30 November 1943. What caused him to question the instructions of his leaders at this later

date? He went against the general consensus of his contemporaries to “obey orders”, no matter what those orders might be, by seeking to change the course of events in a political conflict in which he sided against his superiors in favour of what he considered to be fairness and justice.

It is evident that he is not a man of his times even with regards to his appearance. There is an anecdote in the memoirs concerning a pair of old-fashioned boots, which illustrates this aspect of his character. In an age when lace-up boots were more usual, Huhnhäuser bought a pair of button boots from a fellow student in Berlin who had money difficulties. Not only did they differ conspicuously from the lace-up boots his peers were wearing, but they were also extremely narrow and long. He wore them on his first visit to Melms’ family, and his footwear made such an impression on her stepmother, that she teased him about them for many years afterwards (SR, p. 14), thus suggesting that others must have found them most unusual too. This anecdote illustrates that Huhnhäuser had little interest in fashion, or a sense of vanity concerning his appearance, and that he was obviously not concerned with the opinions of his more fashion-conscious peers.

Thus, Huhnhäuser is in many ways a man out of step with his times, politically, mentally and spiritually. There is a sense that he was born at the wrong time — he was a learned, studious, literary man, yet fate ensured that he was involved in two World Wars and periods of great political upheaval. Even his wish of a quiet retirement was not granted; instead he was separated from his family and sent to Norway. It is fitting that Huhnhäuser was also an historian with a love of the past, for this is where he seems to feel most at home. He claims to be out of step with his own age and presents himself as something of a political anachronism.

However, although he claims not to identify with the politics of the era, Huhnhäuser was actively involved in the cultural life of Weimar Germany, especially in the areas of opera and literature and the *Volkskunst* movement. In relation to his published works, this was his most fruitful period. He also contributed significantly to the improvement of the Weimar education system through his position as headmaster of a teacher-training institution and later as a *Ministerialrat* in the Education Department. He appears to have had little interest, however, in the modern literary movements that originated in Germany at that time — Expressionism and *Neue Sachlichkeit*.

## Summary

The seventeen affidavits form an accompaniment to the political memoirs from the Norway period, written in the form of five chapters and intended for publication. Huhnhäuser was one of many involved in the events of the Second World War, who chose to write about their experiences and contributed to the increase in popularity in the post-war period of all forms of autobiographical writing. His partially completed life history, *Aus einem reichen Leben*, written in the latter stages of the war and the immediate post-war period, is a much more personal document which contains autobiographical elements. There is a degree of introspection contained within this detailed chronicle of the events and personalities in Huhnhäuser's life. He also uses his *Lebenserinnerungen* to discuss, in detail, matters relating to his profession in which he regards himself as having been successful, and to pass on advice to his fellow professionals.

There is much evidence to suggest that these autobiographical memoirs were also written with the eventual intention of having them published, but for a different type of audience. The style of writing in the political memoirs is consistently one of objectivity, as Huhnhäuser strives to record the long and complex sequence of events in a logical and accurate manner. In contrast to this, the tone of *Aus einem reichen Leben* ranges from humorous to didactic, passionate to poignant, with subjects as varied as childhood, culture, history, family, travel, and, last but not least, politics, or rather Huhnhäuser's repeated claims of inherent unsuitability to party politics. Huhnhäuser's interest in history, and his desire to record his life story for the benefit of future generations, help to explain why this "ordinary" citizen chose to write *Aus einem reichen Leben*. He undertook smaller projects of a similar nature, namely his 1914 *Kriegserinnerungen*, and a detailed diary of his holiday to Bad Gastein in May 1940. Huhnhäuser's proclivity to keep personal papers and mementoes is evident in the hundreds of letters written during wartime in the archive. As these letters were likely to be censored by the authorities, their contents must be treated with caution.

*Aus einem reichen Leben* ends in 1928, and there is, consequently, little reference to the years of political conflict at the end of the Weimar Republic, or the brutal Nazi regime. It has been suggested by Alexander Peden that the ill health of the author was the reason for this, but this may not have been the only factor. The demands of writing the political chapters on Norway must have taken precedence over completion of the personal memoirs. Furthermore, the political climate in Europe in the immediate post-war period may not have been conducive to retrospective writings on the Third *Reich*, and, as a prisoner of war, Huhnhäuser was in a very vulnerable position. There are also other unexplained gaps

present in the autobiographical memoirs: the chapter on student holidays which Huhnhäuser states he intends to write, his reasons for leaving Berlin and any reference to his wedding, for example. Most significant of all, however, is Huhnhäuser's failure to mention that he joined the NSDAP in 1933.

There are two areas on which Huhnhäuser chooses to break his customary silence regarding the activities of the Nazis. The first appears in the introductory pages of his autobiographical memoirs, written in the autumn of 1943, in which Huhnhäuser refutes all aspects of anti-Semitism, stating that he has never had any time for such beliefs, although his manner of defence is tarnished by his use of Nazi racial terminology. The second is his criticism of the Hitler Youth, which he blames for the loss of prestige and respect amongst the population as a whole, and the shift of power in German schools from teachers to Hitler Youth leaders. This passage appears in the political memoirs.

In the matter of corroborating the claims of the author, Huhnhäuser's political memoirs can be subjected to far more rigorous scrutiny than the autobiographical memoirs. There is a plethora of contemporary documents extant in Oslo, which have been subjected to the scrutiny of post-war historians. Huhnhäuser often refers the reader to his sources when attempting to disprove the claims of others, and there would be many Norwegians immediately after the war who would be willing to discredit him if he attempted any disingenuousness. The fact that he was a witness in the trial of Ragnar Skancke suggests that he would have the course of events fixed accurately in his mind in preparation for giving evidence. The loss or destruction, however, of many of Huhnhäuser's personal papers limits the opportunity to verify the facts of his life history as related by him. Alexander Peden was able to confirm some details. It is interesting that Peden sometimes

differed from Huhnhäuser in his recollection of some insignificant details. The most likely explanation for this is simply that Peden remembered inaccurately. The unreliability of memory in oral interviews has been well documented, and Peden was asked to talk of events that occurred some fifty years or so earlier.

One of the most interesting aspects of Huhnhäuser's life history is that he enjoyed a wide diversity of personal experiences and professional challenges, in a variety of locations, both in Germany and abroad. He lived through periods of great social and political change, including two World Wars. Throughout his life, his interest in cultural matters grew ever greater, although the emphasis of his participation shifted from a musical to a literary one when he progressed from amateur singer to published translator and editor of literary works. Huhnhäuser's changing circumstances are reflected in the memoirs by the various levels contained within them, namely personal, cultural and historical, the latter encompassing both those historical events whose consequences and repercussions affected Huhnhäuser, and those which he himself attempted to influence.

Finally, Huhnhäuser's political ideology, which is to claim not to have one at all, plays a major part in the memoirs. In the autobiographical memoirs Huhnhäuser states his position on this matter in the introductory pages, when he claims that he adheres to his father's philosophy that politics ruins the character. He then claims, however, that he identifies with the spirit of the liberals in 1848. At many points in his life he is out of step with the general political trends of the time, and is also recognized by others as such. He states repeatedly in the memoirs that he is an "unpolitisches Wesen", but his hatred of socialism and communism is clearly in evidence, and there are other inconsistencies in his unpolitical stance.

Huhnhäuser does not seem to recognize these contradictions in his political philosophy. He appears to believe genuinely in his claim that he is unpolitical and points to his assertion that he has never voluntarily been involved with any political party as verification of this. This complete lack of any political involvement, if this is indeed the case, is untypical of either pre-war period. This makes Huhnhäuser an interesting figure, who is paradoxically at one and yet out of step with his age.

## CHAPTER THREE

### The Kaiserzeit to the First World War

#### Introduction

The sections of the archive under discussion in this chapter span the period from Huhnhäuser's childhood to the end of the Great War, when he was in his early thirties. They include Book I *Kindheit und Jugend*, Book II *Lehr- und Lernjahre*, Chapter 1 "Schlosser, Maschinenbauer und Elektromonteur", Chapter 2 "Wieder auf der Schule", Chapter 3 "Studienjahre", a) "Berlin" and c) "Rostock", and finally Book III *Mannesjahre*, Chapter 1 "Lehrer in Rostock" from 1912 to 1918. (This chapter also includes the period 1918 to 1921, subtitled "drei schaffensreiche Jahre" but this will be dealt with in the discussion on the Weimar Republic.)

#### Kindheit und Jugend

Huhnhäuser begins the introductory pages of his life story with two themes that continue throughout the memoirs; history and race. He gives a short history of his home town, Demmin, then traces his family tree from the late seventeenth century onwards. Huhnhäuser claims he undertook this genealogical research purely out of interest after the First World War. However, although Huhnhäuser was rejected by the navy for being too weak and his own father was regarded as a "Krüppel", his ideas on race are often underpinned by the



sinister aspects of the theory of Aryan racial superiority — the darker a person's colouring, the more physically inferior or morally degenerate they are in his eyes. This is illustrated early in the memoirs when he describes the family of a school friend:

Alles in dem kleinen Hause — Menschen und Gegenstände — war denkbar unsauber, was mich, der ich von Hause aus an die denkbar größte Reinlichkeit gewöhnt war, besonders unangenehm berührte. Und leider muß ich gestehen, daß es bei diesen rassisch anscheinend minderwertigen Menschen — kleinen dunkelhaarigen Gestalten von gelblicher Hautfarbe — auch an der inneren Sauberkeit zu mangeln schien. (KJ, p. 67)<sup>1</sup>

Throughout the memoirs, Huhnhäuser illustrates his admiration for the supposedly North European racial group of blond hair and blue eyes, often indicating that he regards individuals from such a group as both physically and morally superior.

Huhnhäuser's childhood memories evoke the atmosphere of life of a bourgeois family in a small town in rural Germany at the end of the nineteenth century. The local military regiment, the *Ulanen*, holds both a fascination for the local children, as well as playing a major role in the social world of the adults and the economic fabric of the town: "Meine Vaterstadt war ohne sie nichts." (KJ, p. 32b) The pride in and affection for the military was surpassed only by the patriotic fervour which the citizens of the town reserved for the Kaiser. They were able to display this to the full when he came to visit their town on 30 August 1895:

Die ganze Stadt wurde mit Guirlanden [*sic*] geschmückt, Blumen auf seinen

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<sup>1</sup> The eldest son of the Lorenz family referred to here was a class mate of Huhnhäuser's with whom he was friends for a short time. The attraction for Huhnhäuser was that the boy's father owned the town's iron foundry and engineering works and he was allowed to visit the factory.

Weg geworfen, kurz alles getan, was man nur dem deutschen Kaiser zu Ehren tun konnte. Wir Schüler waren in Reihen in der Bahnhofsstraße [...] aufgestellt und standen in Erwartung des großen geschichtlichen Augenblicks, was es für uns Jungen damals war; denn was ahnten wir von Bismarcks Entlassung und all dem Unerfreulichen, was hinter den Kulissen spielte! Und so kam er. Leider nur ein Augenblick, und dann war's vorüber. [...] Mein bedenklicher Vater hatte am klügsten von allen gehandelt. Er hatte sich mutterseelenallein am Ausgang der Treptowerstraße aufgestellt...und da hatte er dann auch seinen Kaiser ganz persönlich tief grüßen können, und dieser hatte den Gruß erwidert. (KJ, pp. 33-33b)

It is a scene reminiscent of Heinrich Mann's description of Diedrich Heßling's first meeting with "his" Kaiser in *Der Untertan*, but unlike Heßling, who exploits his association with the political right to further his business ambitions and win power in his small town, Huhnhäuser's father was a civil servant whose motto was "Politik verdirbt den Charakter". It is clear from the memoirs that Huhnhäuser was influenced very strongly by his father, and this influence continued after his father's death in 1900, when Huhnhäuser was aged just fourteen. He claims that, like his father, he is inherently an "unpolitisches Wesen" and that he is temperamentally unsuited to party politics — a statement which must be viewed in the context of the fact that Huhnhäuser joined the Nazi Party on 1 May 1933. Although he recognizes elsewhere that he has assimilated the values of the social sphere in which he grew up, which were also those of the ruling classes and conformed to the status quo, he is nevertheless of the opinion that he has no political philosophy. The thought of living under a different political system soon betrays this discrepancy. For example, when relating Demmin's history of occupation by foreign powers he writes:

Nach der Niederlage Karls XII. von Schweden gegen seinen ebenbürtigen Rivalen Peter den Großen von Rußland muß sie abermals einen neuen Gebieter in ihren Toren aufnehmen, und damals ist sie sogar über ein

Vierteljahr russische Residenz. Man beachte: die Russen in Demmin! (KJ, p. 61)

This comment, presumably written before the ferocious Soviet onslaught upon his home town in 1945, now appears highly ironic.<sup>2</sup>

The gradual effects of technological invention and development upon the lives of the townspeople are documented in the memoirs. Gas lamps are slowly replaced by more sophisticated models and then by the new modern wonder of electric lighting. Demmin was linked to the railway network in 1878 on the Stralsund - Neubrandenburg - Berlin line but connections were not extended to any other area until almost twenty years later. The main form of transport was, therefore, the stagecoach. Huhnhäuser's father was given an increase in salary to oversee the building of the new line to Treptow, as a result of which the family moved in 1897 to a large flat with a garden, which was more befitting of his new station in life. With the invention of the pneumatic tyre in 1885 by a "schottischer Tierarzt" (KJ, p.66b) the bicycle developed into its modern form and became an essential method of transport rather than a luxury item. This allowed Huhnhäuser to explore villages in the surrounding area which were previously unknown to him.

Before the town was connected to the main water supply all water was fetched from a pump, but as this water was very hard people preferred to wash themselves in rainwater. A hot bath in the local public facility was regarded as a treat by the children. Huhnhäuser refers to the fact that outside toilets caused many difficulties for the old and infirm, especially in winter. The smell when such installations were emptied, which understandably

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<sup>2</sup> As the manuscript was typed after 1946, this document may not correspond exactly to the original version, written in 1943/44, but it seems unlikely that he would have added this

took place in the dead of night, was indescribable. Huhnhäuser remembers the great interest with which he and his friends followed the laying of the water mains pipes and the building of the water tower. The great advances which were being made at that time and their practical applications in everyday life fuelled a fascination with technology, science and engineering amongst boys of Huhnhäuser's age:

Man muß sich einmal vergegenwärtigen, daß sich gerade in jenen Jahrzehnten zwischen 1880 und 1910 die Welt fast auf den Kopf gestellt hat. [...] Noch gab es kaum elektrisches Licht, und soweit es vorhanden war, steckte es in den allerersten Anfängen; denn seit der Erfindung der Glühlampe durch Edison waren kaum dreißig Jahre vergangen. Auch das Gasglühlicht war eine Neuerung; erst 1885 hatte Auer seine bahnbrechende Erfindung gemacht, in dem er an Stelle des einfachen Stahlbrenners den Glühstrumpf erfand. Vom Auto ahnte unsere Seele noch nichts; denn erst um die Mitte der achtziger Jahre war von Daimler und Benz unabhängig von einander der Explosionsmotor erfunden worden. Die Fliegerei kannten wir nur als gescheiterten Versuch aus Ovids Metamorphosen in der schönen — uns damals allerdings weniger sympathischen — Erzählung von Dädalus und Ikarus [...]. Das bewegliche Bild erschien uns in rotierenden Trommeln oder kleinen Büchern, die sehr schnell geblättert wurden. Schon das war ein unerhörter Fortschritt. [...] Auch der Rundfunk war noch ein unbekannter Begriff. Es gab also noch eine Welt zu erfinden. (KJ, p. 66b-67)

Huhnhäuser began his long association with education shortly before his sixth birthday, as a pupil at the *Vorschule* attached to the local *Gymnasium*, to which he transferred after three years. He is scathing when he compares modern educational standards to those of his school days, despite what might be regarded as the paucity of facilities in those days:

Und doch hat die damalige Generation weit mehr gelernt und lernen können

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comment in the light of events after the war.

und müssen als die von heute, die in wissenschaftlicher Hinsicht fast ans Analphabetentum herangekommen ist. Wenn wir uns gerade in dieser Kriegszeit immer wieder auf die großen deutschen Leistungen in Wissenschaft und Technik berufen, und vielleicht noch mit Recht berufen, so wollen wir dabei nicht vergessen, daß die Träger dieser Leistungen im Grunde die Generation ist, die heute zwischen 40 und 60 steht, also durch die alte Schule gegangen ist. (KJ, p. 21b)

Huhnhäuser laments the current general unpopularity of school, which has its roots, in his view, in “eine durch nichts gerechtfertigte Hetze” (KJ, p. 22) directed towards school and teachers by certain sections of society after the First World War.<sup>3</sup> Under the Nazi regime intellectual abilities were despised and distrusted by the leadership. As the *Gleichschaltung* of society was implemented with ever increasing efficiency, teachers were also forced to compete with the Hitler Youth for the attention and energy of their young charges:

Unsere heutige amtliche Jugenderziehung hält die Jugend fast den ganzen Tag in Atem. Schule und Dienst sind die beiden Inhalte, welche die Jugend erfüllen sollten. Kaum hat man die Schulstunden hinter sich, in aller Hast zu Mittag gespeist, so stürzt man zum Dienst, den die Hitler-Jugend in ihren männlichen oder weiblichen Formationen angesetzt hat. Oft kommen die Kinder dann erst abends müde und abgehetzt nach Hause, und man fragt sich unwillkürlich, wo noch der unbeschwerte Frohsinn der jungen Menschenkinder geblieben ist. Man sollte nicht auch schon die Kinder ausrichten und Erwachsene spielen lassen, sondern sie frei wachsen lassen und nur in ihrem Wachstum, wie es auch ein guter Gärtner bei seinen jungen Bäumen tut, ab und an regulieren. In Herden und Kolonnen und in Unrast werden keine Persönlichkeiten gebildet, sondern sie gedeihen am besten im Stillen und im kleinen Kreise, wo noch Besinnlichkeit möglich ist und Ruhe zur Entfaltung. (KJ, p. 33b)

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<sup>3</sup> Authors such as Remarque and Glaeser attacked the role of the teachers in the First World War, criticizing their militarism and lack of compassion, the pressure they exerted upon their pupils to volunteer for the army before they were conscripted, and their inability to help the boys deal with the difficult conditions of wartime. See Caroline Martin, “The Conflict of Education: Soldiers, Civilians, a Child and a Teacher”, in *Remarque Against War: Essays for the Centenary of Erich Maria Remarque 1898-1998*, ed. by Brian Murdoch, Mark Ward and Maggie Sargeant, *Scottish Papers in Germanic Studies*, 11 (Glasgow: SPIGS, 1998), pp. 39-61.

Thus he views the Hitler Youth and their activities as an educational rather than an ideological problem.

There was great parental pressure placed upon Huhnhäuser and his peers to do well at school, and his parents were horrified by any bad marks he was given. The school also had a great deal of influence and control on the boys' lives outside of school hours, such as enforcing church attendance every other Sunday and dictating which *Konditorei* the boys were allowed to visit.<sup>4</sup> The teachers were supported at all times by the parents: "Für viele Eltern bedeutete die Schule fast alles." (KJ, p. 23b) The boys had to work tremendously hard and were often terrorized by their teachers, who could be extremely severe on the slightest error, mistakes which were frequently exacerbated by the boys' nervousness. As a result, Huhnhäuser was not very happy at school. He complains that in lessons such as Latin and Greek, which, as in all humanist *Gymnasien*, were the two main subjects in the school, pupils remained passive in the lessons, apart from the rare occasions when they were called upon to translate orally in class. This happened every few weeks and was the sole basis for their grade in class work. If they did not perform well on this one occasion it had a major effect on their position in the class until their next assessment. (Glaeser depicts a similar scene in his novel *Jahrgang 1902*.) Huhnhäuser complains that this system was very unfair, and also that the choice of subject materials and the style of teaching in general were not suited to the minds of young boys, who required stimulation to awaken their interest. Instead they learned through fear without fully understanding the authors they read.

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<sup>4</sup> Remarque also refers to this strict control in *Der Weg zurück*, when the returning soldiers laugh at the fact that before the war they were not allowed to be in the street after 7pm without their

Huhnhäuser comments that the whole system encouraged cheating, for the adults placed immense pressure on the children, who also had to cope with the excessive demands made upon them by their teachers. Every bad mark was regarded as a disaster. This led to a situation where the pupils considered cheating to be allowed in the school and even made fun of those teachers who regarded it as a serious matter. Huhnhäuser comments that a real educationalist must regard cheating as a warning sign, instead of placing the blame on the pupils. He refers to his own experience in this matter:

Keinesfalls aber darf man in der Schule zulassen, was sonst im Leben verpönt ist. Wahrheitsliebe und Ehrlichkeit sind aber nicht Eigenschaften von nur bedingter Gültigkeit. Aus diesem Grunde bin ich als Lehrer stets bemüht gewesen, meine Jungen so zu unterrichten, daß jeder Betrug ausgeschlossen schien. Das setzt natürlich eine völlige Beherrschung der modernen, d.h. wahren, Erziehungsgrundsätze und -Methoden voraus, vor allem aber ein tieferes Verständnis für die seelische Verfassung der einzelnen Jugendphasen wie auch für die Leistungsfähigkeit des jugendlichen Menschen. Erst, wenn der Lehrer nach solchen Gesetzen handelt, hat er ein Recht, gegen Verirrungen, die sich dann meistens auf wenige Fälle beschränken werden, nachdrücklich einzuschreiten. (KJ, p. 63)

This is one of the first examples of the teaching advice which Huhnhäuser dispenses throughout the memoirs. Such advice illustrates Huhnhäuser's perception of himself as an expert on teaching methodology and youth psychology.

Huhnhäuser demonstrates how the German school system was slow to realize the importance of sciences in this technological age, and very resistant to the idea that the time had come for the supremacy of Latin and Greek in its *Gymnasien* to end. Huhnhäuser's scientific education consisted of half a year of chemistry lessons in the *Sekunda*. He and his

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teacher's permission. (Köln: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 1990), p. 119.

friends formed their own “wissenschaftlicher Verein” to discuss and learn more about chemistry and physics, and their practical applications in new inventions such as the steam engine. They even conducted their own chemistry experiments, unaware of the potential hazards. Thus, the boys had the initiative to fill in a gap in their education: “All dies war noch ein Spiel, bei dem wir Jungen von kaum 14 Jahren auf unsere Weise uns Erkenntnisse und Einsichten zu verschaffen suchten, die uns die damalige Schule nicht bot.” (KJ, p. 73)

Huhnhäuser’s father recognized that the future lay in technology, and suggested that his son become an engineer, rather than follow in his own footsteps as a *Beamter* which, thinks Huhnhäuser, may have been because he regarded this career as restrictive: “eine Beobachtung, die schon damals richtig gesehen war und zu der es nicht der bitteren Erfahrungen bedurfte, die wir später durchleben mußten.” (KJ, p. 67) Therefore, his father arranged with a family friend, Bremer, who ran a large drapery business in Rostock, that Huhnhäuser would live in his house, where his aunt also lived as housekeeper. Huhnhäuser was in full agreement with this plan. He was glad to be leaving school, for he was not particularly happy there, and excited by the thought of his new life training to be an engineer. Bremer arranged an apprenticeship for him, which was to last for four years. So, after obtaining his *Abschlussprüfung*, referred to often as the *Einjährige* because it entitled the holder to do only one year of military service rather than two, Huhnhäuser left for his new life in Rostock at Easter 1900. Shortly before his departure he began to feel some apprehension for it signalled the end of his childhood and a break with the comfortable and familiar world of the *Kleinstadt* Demmin.



## Schlosser, Maschinenbauer und Elektromonteur

Huhnhäuser's trepidation proved to be justified. The formerly jovial and generous "Onkel Bremer" turned out to be a domestic tyrant who demanded from others the same exceptionally high standards of work and behaviour that he asked from himself. The first year of Huhnhäuser's apprenticeship, which he spent in a small metalworking shop, was perhaps the hardest. Although not physically strong, he was asked to work very long hours doing a difficult, sometimes dangerous, job in unpleasant conditions. He found it hard to make friends. The four other apprentices in the workshop, who all spoke *Plattdeutsch*, were suspicious of Huhnhäuser and did not immediately accept this *Hochdeutsch* speaking newcomer. Huhnhäuser states that they sensed he was from a higher class and turned against him in a mini class war. One boy was the son of a committed socialist and was himself a member of the Social Democratic Party's youth organization. He used to read aloud from the party's Mecklenburg newspaper and the young bourgeois Huhnhäuser was shocked and horrified by what he heard, claiming that he could not escape the effects of his birth and education — a further indication that his apolitical claims are not quite accurate.

On 17 May 1900, only a few weeks after he had left Demmin for Rostock, Huhnhäuser's father died. This was a huge blow to the young boy who had been so close to his father. His mother was keen that he return to live with her and continue his schooling, but Huhnhäuser felt he owed it to his father to continue on the path that he had chosen for him. When one considers that Huhnhäuser felt lonely and deeply unhappy in Rostock, it indicates the strength of his father's influence upon him and his own strength of character that he chose to stay.

The second and third years of his apprenticeship were spent in the *Neptun* shipyard, where he complains that he did not receive a varied training and that the benefit from these years was, therefore, limited. Huhnhäuser made many friends in the yard, for most of the apprentices there had, in common with him, left the *Gymnasium* after six years and wanted to become marine engineers. Although he had always been a high-achiever at school, he found that he was not one of the most talented apprentices. This, together with Bremer's constant criticism of him, lowered his self-esteem and made him feel that he was a failure in all things. Fortunately, his sense of self-worth was salvaged by his success at trade school, where he discovered both an interest in and aptitude for technical drawing, and also by his group of friends, with whom he formed a *Fachverein* entitled "Theory and Practice" which met once a week. They drank beer, discussed technical subjects, and often one of them gave a lecture on a chosen topic. It was around this time that Huhnhäuser found one other escape from the daily misery of his life. He developed his passion for opera and the theatre during these years — a passion that would remain with him for the rest of his life.

The final and happiest year was spent with an electrical firm, the only one in the area, which had the local franchise from AEG. Huhnhäuser was treated very decently here. He was required to work fewer hours and received an increase in wages, as he was now employed as a trainee. He made friends with an *Obermonteur* Wilke, whose fiancée's father, *Postsekretär* Timm, was one of the leading members in the *Deutscher Flottenverein*. He was responsible for winning Huhnhäuser over to the idea of a German fleet, and the idea that their future lay "auf dem Wasser" (SME, p. 59). Wilke was a talented and accomplished singer, who played an important role in Huhnhäuser's musical development, familiarising him with the works of many composers and inspiring him to explore the

possibilities of his own singing voice. This was the foundation of his successful amateur singing career.

At Christmas 1903, Huhnhäuser had to decide upon his future profession and he chose to register with the navy for entry at Easter 1904. Most of his friends from the *Neptun* yard had gone into the navy, and when they returned on holiday he was envious of their smart blue uniforms. He had a further naval connection in the form of his cousin Willi Stüber. Stüber, who had been in the navy for years, regaled him with tales of his travels when they met, for, as Huhnhäuser comments: “Lag doch dem jungen Kaiser daran, seine Lieblingsschöpfung, die neue Flotte, überall in der Welt zu zeigen, ohne dabei zu bedenken, daß der auch dadurch sich den Haß der englischen Vetternschaft zuzog.” (SME, p. 66) Huhnhäuser failed his medical examination, however, on the grounds that he was not strong enough for the physical demands of military service, particularly for his chosen profession. This left him with the obvious dilemma of what to do next. He rejected the technical professions, such as engineering or draughtsmanship, as he knew from his experience as an apprentice that he possessed neither the ability nor the enthusiasm to progress far in this field. Thus, his options were limited by the cost of retraining in a new occupation. He had two remaining alternatives: the post office or teaching. As he did not relish a life of selling stamps, he chose the latter. His uncle Stüber, who was a teacher, advised him to go to teacher-training college. This meant he would be finished in just a few years and able to start earning his living. When Bremer heard of this plan, however, he insisted that Huhnhäuser go to university in order to become an *Oberlehrer* and offered to support him financially. Huhnhäuser was now aiming for something he would not have dared hope for just a short time ago. Despite this complete change of direction, he did not regard the years

he spent as an apprentice as wasted. On the contrary, he writes thirty years later that not only did he learn a great deal technically, he also gained an insight into another way of life; in other words, he experienced first hand the life of a worker and for a short time became one of them. In this way he learned:

welch wertvolle Substanz auch in diesen Schichten unseres Volkes lebte, wenn sie auch politisch zum großen Teil irregeleitet war, vor allem aber waren mir zum ersten Male die Augen für die großen sozialen Probleme geöffnet worden, und nie mehr konnte es mir geschehen, das Leben meines Volkes nur vom rein bürgerlichen Standpunkt aus zu betrachten. (SME, p. 70)

The fact that Huhnhäuser speaks in negative terms of the politics of the working class is a political statement in itself, and contradicts his claim to be unpolitical. He clearly identifies himself at this time with the politics of the bourgeoisie, although he does not seem to recognise that this is so. It is also ironic that he refers to the working class as being misled, when it was his own class who played such a significant role in Hitler's rise to power.

### **Wieder auf der Schule**

Before Huhnhäuser could begin his university career, however, he had, first of all, to obtain his *Abitur*. This meant a return to his family in Demmin and to his old school. Initially, the headmaster, who had been appointed in his absence and did not know Huhnhäuser, only granted him permission to return on a three months' trial basis. He repeated several weeks in the *Untersekkunda* before moving with the rest of his new class into the *Obersekkunda* at

the start of the new school year. Huhnhäuser faced many disadvantages on his return. He was on average four years older than his classmates. He had forgotten much of his *Hochdeutsch*, and also had to catch up on subjects such as Latin, Greek and mathematics. He had, therefore, copious amounts of work to do and often had to sit up late at night to ensure that he was prepared for the next day, but despite his efforts, his marks were still poor after the three months. His headmaster interpreted this as a sign of his lack of ability and wanted him to leave. Huhnhäuser was completely at the mercy of his decision and it was only the intervention of one of his former masters which saved him.

Huhnhäuser remarks upon the spirit of change which had begun to permeate slowly through the school system, even in the short period of his four-year absence. Certainly the old tyrants were still there but the new, young teachers who had joined the staff had already slightly altered the character of the school. Huhnhäuser refers again to the contempt in which contemporary teachers and schools are held by the country's leaders and claims that the roots of this disdain are to be found with these old-style teachers and their methods — an opinion somewhat at odds with his earlier claim that students educated by the old methods learned far more. He cites the trials and terrors of their Latin lessons in the *Obersekunda* as an example of these methods, which quickly killed any enjoyment the boys may have had from the content of the texts, which were based on some wonderful stories. They concentrated instead on the grammar, endlessly reading and translating and always afraid of making a mistake and incurring the wrath of their teacher.

In order to help his mother financially, and because most young men of his age were now earning, Huhnhäuser gave private lessons to other pupils once he had caught up with his own work. He was not very robust, however, and his body soon could not cope with the

demands he placed upon it, combining his own considerable school work with the additional burden of preparing lessons for his paying pupils. When his youngest sister, Lene, suddenly became ill, and died just days later at the age of ten, Huhnhäuser could not cope. The strain of staying up through the night to nurse her used all of his remaining strength, and the inconsolable grief he felt at her death left him feeling empty. He lost his faith in God and the church for a time — in God for allowing such an innocent child to die, and in the church for the comfort it failed so dismally to provide his family in their time of need. He felt the response of their minister to be rather cold and unfeeling, for once he had conducted the funeral he believed his job was done. This moves Huhnhäuser to reflect that:

Wie es unter hunderten von Lehrern nur ganz wenige Erzieher gibt, unter hunderten von Medizinern nicht viele Ärzte, so kann man auch die Seelensorger mit der Laterne suchen. Um das zu sein, bedarf es keines theologischen Studiums, sondern der angeborenen Menschenliebe und eigener überstandener Leidenserfahrungen. (WS, p. 92)

This is a theme which recurs throughout the memoirs. He believes that academic qualifications and professional experience are not enough to make one good at a job in which one must also care for the emotional needs of other people, and that one must also be inherently suited to the job in having the correct character traits. He believes that having the right personality for a certain job turns it from a profession into a vocation. It is also his opinion that he has a natural talent for teaching, although it is interesting that he also considered studying medicine for a time, particularly after the First World War.

Huhnhäuser's health suffered as a result of the grief, stress and both physical and mental exhaustion. Despite this time lost to illness, his progress at school continued fairly

smoothly. The arrival of two young teachers who had spent some time in France heralded a change in the teaching of modern languages. The boys spoke and read French for the first time, using it as a living language rather than approaching it purely in the form of dry grammatical exercises. Huhnhäuser was also taught English for three years, and learned enough to be able to translate some quite difficult passages. With what little free time he had, he resumed learning the violin. Many of the other boys in his class were musical, and they were invited to play every Saturday evening in the home of a local doctor, the father of one of the boys. Despite the age difference, Huhnhäuser was accepted by the other boys and settled back comfortably into a life of security and familiarity which he believes can only be experienced in a small town:

Wie schön sind doch diese Jahre des Reifens und wie produktiv ist man in jenen Jahren! Die Erde hat kaum Grenzen, und es gibt eigentlich keine Hindernisse. Noch spürt man nichts oder kaum etwas von den Niedrigkeiten und Gemeinheiten im menschlichen Dasein, und als Idealist sieht man alles in einem verklärten Lichte. Nirgends zu einer Zeit im Leben des Menschen ist auch wohl Kameradschaft und Freundschaft so ausgebildet wie in jenen Jahren, und so war es auch bei uns. (WS, p. 124)

After spending four lonely and hard years in Rostock, living with the tyrannical Bremer and experiencing the harsh and demanding life of a young apprentice, Huhnhäuser must have appreciated all the more the feeling of solidarity within his group and their freedom from many of the cares and much of the unpleasantness of the adult world.

Huhnhäuser returned to Rostock for a holiday in 1904. Bremer had since remarried, to a widow Voß with a large family. Huhnhäuser was invited back the following year along with his aunt, Bremer's former housekeeper. He recalls that on one of the frequent walks he

took with his aunt he had his first political discussion. The topic of their conversation was the Moroccan crisis of 1905 which was, in his opinion, intended to strengthen the position of the Moroccan Sultan and to show that: “das deutsche Reich nicht gesonnen sei, die Provokationen des französischen Außenministers und Kriegstreibers Delcassé stillschweigend hinzunehmen.” This incident and the fall of Delcassé a few months later was on everyone’s minds like “ein leises fernes Donnerrollen, durch das sich ein heraufziehendes Gewitter anzukündigen pflegt” (WS, p. 147). Huhnhäuser states that they chatted on their walks about Germany’s policy for peace and *Reichskanzler* Bülow, little suspecting that Kaiser Wilhelm’s indecisive behaviour, which varied from one extreme to another, would manoeuvre them into a world war a decade later.

The last school trip before he settled down to work for the *Abitur* exams was also to Rostock. Whilst he was there, he and a friend slipped away for an hour to meet Emma Voß, Bremer’s stepdaughter. She brought a friend with her, a “hübsch(en) Backfisch mit langem blonden Zopf [...], ein typisches Rostocker Mädel” (WS, p. 152), by the name of Else Schulze, who would one day be his wife. Six months later he faced the final hurdle of the oral exams but was exempted on the day on the basis of his performance in the written examinations. Now that he was free from the pressure of the exams he did not feel the expected euphoria, but rather “eine große Leere” (WS, p. 154) as he was again on the verge of leaving behind his family and friends and the comfortable familiarity of Demmin, to face alone the fresh challenge of university.

**Studienjahre: Berlin**



Huhnhäuser now had to make two important decisions: what and where to study. The former question was settled when he chose German and history, two subjects which interested him greatly, and Latin as a third teaching subject which was widely taught and required little preparation. He had considered medicine as a career but was discouraged by the great expense this entailed and the prolonged duration of the course of study, although he did not realize then that a thorough study of philology together with practical educational training would take at least as long. Ten years later after the war, this idea of studying medicine returned to him and he seriously considered changing career. The economic considerations of a wife and two children persuaded him that he would be reckless in giving up a steady job. He claims that he came to regret this missed opportunity in later life, partly because he believed that doctors enjoyed more freedom in their profession whereas he came to feel the restrictions placed upon the civil servant:

Andrerseits habe ich im eignen Leben oft die Ketten, die dem Beamten angelegt sind, zu spüren bekommen und meinem Vater recht geben müssen, der schon dem Jungen abriet, Beamter zu werden und ihm deswegen nahelegte, den ihm frei erscheinenden [*sic*] des Ingenieurs zu ergreifen. (SB, p. 3)

By which “chains” in particular Huhnhäuser felt bound he does not state. It seems most likely that he is referring in particular to the Nazi regime, when he would no doubt have been involved in the implementation of policies of dubious educational value and morality.

His next task was to choose a university. He was forced to compromise his own wishes on this matter for the sake of his mother who did not want him to go too far from

home, and finally decided upon Berlin. He rejected Bremer's offer of financial support if he chose Rostock, preferring instead to remain free from the influence of this domestic tyrant. In April 1907 he arrived in Berlin for the new term and spent a miserable first day searching for suitable accommodation. He finally settled for a dark and dingy but expensive room near the university which he left as soon as he could, owing to the fact that it was infested with bugs. He was fortunate to find alternative accommodation with an old friend of his mother's in Charlottenburg that was not only cheaper, but also very comfortable. The train journey to the university allowed him to see "etwas von dem wahren Gesicht dieser Großstadt". He travelled through the grim squalor of the working-class districts, observing the "rauchgeschwärzte(n), trostlose(n) Hinterseiten der Häuser". (SB, p. 56) He contrasts this with the splendour of the area around the Brandenburg Gate, dedicated to celebrating the glory of the German *Reich*. The ostentation of the many monuments and fountains to be found appeared to him more repulsive than attractive, however, and he comments that: "Äußerer Glanz und Macht sind häufig die Feinde der Kultur." (SB, p. 60)

His first term at university was a lonely time for Huhnhäuser. Any contact he had with fellow students remained on a superficial level and he felt detached from university life. He ate as cheaply as he could, often going hungry. He mentions that at this time the first vegetarian restaurants opened in Berlin. He found, however, that a filling meal was rather too expensive for his limited pocket. The food was not the only novelty to be found in these restaurants, for he states that one met "gerade in solchen Lokalen oft recht sonderbare Typen [...], die einen sehr reformerischen Eindruck machten." (SB, p. 17)

Huhnhäuser soon discovered that his lecturers at the university could be just as ferocious as his old school teachers. Any student who did not manage to translate correctly

was subjected to ridicule and given no help towards the correct answer. Gustav Roethe, who lectured in medieval German, was firmly opposed to women studying and refused to let them attend his lectures. He did bend this principle, however, to give literature lectures to the Kaiser's daughter. Erich Schmidt was another prominent lecturer in *Germanistik*, and attracted a large female following. The first lecture of Schmidt's which Huhnhäuser attended had an audience of adoring society ladies who occupied the front rows to gaze upon this "vornehme, hochgewachsene, tadellos gekleidete, ritterliche Erscheinung" (SB, p. 26). Huhnhäuser was less impressed by a certain coldness and naked vanity in his manner. The first Latin lecture he attended, given by Johannes Vahlen, was unsuccessful as it was delivered solely in that language and thus rendered incomprehensible to its audience. This disappointing beginning discouraged Huhnhäuser from returning to hear him speak. He tried instead the lectures of Otto Norden, who also began in Latin but switched to German when he realized no one was listening — not, however, before lamenting the "mangelhafte Vorbildung der damaligen Jugend" (SB, p. 39). Huhnhäuser remarks that had Norden lectured to students in the years just prior to 1939, he would scarcely have been able to find a term in the German language to describe their level of education.

Huhnhäuser remained in Berlin for a total of three semesters and believes, with hindsight, "daß ich...im eigentlichen [deutsch]fachlichen Können kaum irgendwo Boden gewann." (SB, p. 32) His retrospective assessment of the tuition he received there was that it fell far short of his own teaching standards. The professors lectured upon their own research as if addressing fellow specialists, rather than students at the outset of their studies. As a result, the students learned little and would, Huhnhäuser claims, have benefited far more from seminars which introduced the material at a basic level, and offered increased

opportunity for active participation.

Huhnhäuser returned to Berlin for his second semester in the company of his school friend, Hans Klinkott, who shared his room to save money. His hopes of finally enjoying the company of a close companion were soon disappointed, however, by Klinkott's involvement in the student fraternity *Burschenschaft Germania*. His friend attempted to involve Huhnhäuser in the activities of the society, but although he liked the other members whom he met through social evenings, he could not bring himself to join a duelling organization, to which he believed himself to be inherently unsuited. In addition to being repelled by the duelling, his dislike of the compulsory drinking and his strong sense of independence all combined to prevent him from becoming more deeply involved with this fraternity. When Klinkott eventually moved out to find a room of his own the two men had grown so far apart that it did not cause Huhnhäuser any great sadness.

His yearning for closer social contact was filled instead by his involvement with a group, whose purpose was to provide evening classes for workers. In response to an advert on a university notice board, he attended a meeting at which he committed himself to teaching a course on writing in German for beginners. This gave him a feeling of immense personal satisfaction: "Konnte es doch nichts Schöneres geben, als unbemittelten, vorwärtsstrebenden Menschen, die das Leben unten gehalten hatte, weiterzuhelfen." (SB, p. 69) His first class consisted of around thirty people. As most of the students did not have time to study at home, each teacher was given two helpers who went round the class assisting those who were unable to follow the lesson. Huhnhäuser began with teaching the simplest spelling rules and tried to enliven the whole affair through interesting teaching methods and examples. He enjoyed these classes so much that this soon became his

favourite night of the week: “Was waren das für prachtvolle Menschen, mit denen man auf diese Weise zusammenkam! Alle so wissensdurstig und bildungshungrig und so uranständig im Denken und Handeln!” (SB, p. 70) He built up a good relationship with his students, and so they formed the habit of going for a drink together after the class. They would sit in the back room of one of the small Berlin pubs which, he claims, represented “ein Stück vom echten alten Berlin” (SB, p. 71), with the landlord in shirtsleeves and the customers playing *Skat*, and swapping their humorous asides. After a while, their hours of informal conversation developed into a more structured drama group and they began to read together plays and poetry chosen by the students.

When discussing the leaders of the organisation, Huhnhäuser makes one or two rather illuminating observations which reveal aspects of his own character. Firstly, he states “Unter uns Lehrern befanden sich auch einige Juden”, but makes no further comment, neither positive nor negative, regarding this fact. He then mentions politics, stating that he was unaware of and uninterested in the political leanings of his fellow teachers. He does recall, however, that they would meet occasionally in a small group in a café to debate heatedly “die großen sozialen Probleme [...] denn selbstverständlich standen wir überzeugungsmäßig auf Seiten der Arbeiter gegen das ausbeutende Kapital” (SB, p. 72). Although Huhnhäuser had initially been introduced to the hardships of the working man through his experience as an apprentice, this was the first time that he records his involvement in a political discussion concerning the exploitation of the workers. He may claim to be apolitical, but such recollections of past political awareness contradict his assertion. His involvement with the *Arbeiterunterrichtskursen* is a political act, even if he does not intend it to be so, therefore, when he claims to be innately apolitical, the inference

is that he chooses to ignore politics when it suits him to do so. He provides further evidence of his own political standpoint when he comments upon the position of one of the leading lights in the organisation: “Am weitesten links gerichtet war wohl Engelbert Graf, der dem Kommunismus nahe stand, für mich, im Grunde immer noch bürgerlich eingestellten [*sic*], eine fast unvorstellbare Haltung.” (SB, p. 72)

His intensive lesson preparation soon brought Huhnhäuser to the attention of the leadership and he was promoted to a supervisory post. When referring to this rapid progress he remarks that it was very unusual to progress from a teaching assistant to an inspector in the course of a year, “abgesehen von den revolutionären Zeiten nach 1933.” (SB, p. 73) Huhnhäuser was himself promoted to the Ministry for Education in Berlin in 1935. Whether this promotion was obtained on merit, through party connections or both is unclear.

### **Studienjahre: Rostock**

The Berlin section of the memoir was never finished and ends rather abruptly. The Rostock section begins without any explanation as to why Huhnhäuser transferred from Berlin to Rostock for the start of the winter semester 1908/09.<sup>5</sup> He comments that he considers Rostock to be his adopted home town for he has spent as much time there as in Demmin. He refused Bremer’s offer of accommodation, who had moved in the meantime to the village of Bramow, because “gebranntes Kind scheut das Feuer” (SR, p. 1), so Bremer

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<sup>5</sup> The Rostock section, which covers the period from 1908-1912, is handwritten on loose sheaf paper. It was written between 21 August and 8 October 1945 and is entitled Kapitel III Studienzeit, Abschnitt 3 Rostock.

provided him instead with a monthly allowance of 20 Marks.

He felt immediately at home in Rostock University. Studying at a small university with only around one thousand students was much different to studying in a big city. Here the lecturers and students were, he claims, like an extended family. In contrast to Berlin he quickly formed a close friendship with a previously superficial acquaintance from Demmin, August Schmidt. Schmidt was studying Dentistry, still a relatively new subject at that time, which, along with Pharmacology and Chemistry, did not require the *Abitur* as a condition of entry. As a result the “Zahnklempler” were generally not taken seriously. This Huhnhäuser decries as “Akademikerhochmut!” and adds that it was “eine damals und auch noch später weit verbreitete Krankheit!” (SR, p. 5)

Just a few weeks after returning to Rostock he met Else Schulze at the theatre, the friend of Emma Voß to whom he had been introduced more than two years before. He chatted to her during the interval and learned that she was now attending the *Lehrerinnenseminar* in Rostock. He also discovered that she was still good friends with Emma and visited her frequently. As he wanted to see Else again he began to visit Bramow more often. Often he and Else were the only visitors and they would walk home together. In this way he learned about her family. Else was born in 1890 in Neukalen, and was brought up by her grandmother after her mother died. Following her grandmother’s death she had been left a fortune of 40 000 Marks, to come to her when she came of age.<sup>6</sup> Her father, a *Volksschullehrer*, married again soon after her grandmother’s death to a woman who was only ten years older than Else. Thus, she was keen to pass her teaching exams, as this would

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<sup>6</sup> Huhnhäuser never again refers to this money. He claims that the family often had limited funds, requiring them to live modestly. Perhaps the bulk of her fortune was spent on buying the family home in Rostock. If so, this would have proved a fortuitous investment, given the years of

allow her to become independent. In return, Huhnhäuser told her all about his life and in this way they grew closer together. When he returned to Rostock after Christmas he was sure that he wanted to marry this woman, but was not yet in the financial position to be able to do so. He did not know what his future prospects were, and he also felt responsible for his mother and sister who had sacrificed so much for him. He finally proposed to Else after a brief courtship on 26 January 1909. This occasion remained, claims Huhnhäuser, the most significant of all the personal events in his life and even thirty-five years later the recollection of that day still moves him:

Kein anderer Gedenktag ist mir später so bedeutungsvoll geblieben als dieser, und immer noch nach mehr als 35 Jahren beschleicht mich heute ein wehmütig-glückliches Gefühl, wenn jene Erinnerungstunde naht und mich in die Vergangenheit zurückruft. (SR, p. 10)

In the meantime Huhnhäuser had taken a room in the centre of Rostock, in the house to which his aunt had moved following her retirement. August Schmidt had finished his studies but Huhnhäuser now had many friends to fill the gap he left. One was a young man from the Lübeck area called Ringeling, or Taps as he was known to his friends. He was highly talented and began to write at a young age, fulfilling his early promise by producing, in Huhnhäuser's opinion, some valuable *Mecklenburger Heimatdichtung*. Also included in his close inner-circle of friends was George Reid, of Scottish descent. Reid was responsible for introducing Huhnhäuser to the works of Wagner, of which he was to become passionately fond. The friends met almost daily at lectures:

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hyperinflation that were to follow.



So schloß sich bereits in den ersten Rostocker Semestern ein Kreis junger Menschen in freundschaftlicher Gesinnung zusammen, verschieden geartet in ihrer Veranlagung wie in ihrem innersten Wesen, verschieden auch in ihren besonderen Neigungen und Interessen, alle aber vereint durch die Bande der Freundschaft und zusammengehalten durch das gemeinsame Studium an der Universität. (SR, p. 41)

Huhnhäuser describes some of the academics with whom he most came into contact. Latin was taught at the university by Professor Rudolf Helm, a student of Otto Norden, the Berlin academic. Medieval and modern history was represented by Professor Hermann Reincke-Bloch, who was to become Huhnhäuser's mentor and friend. He was an excellent teacher and all of his students, claims Huhnhäuser, went on to be successful in their chosen fields. His lectures formed the high point of the day: "seine begeisternde Art weckte auch in uns Begeisterung." (SR, pp. 44-45) Reincke-Bloch's seminars were just as interesting as his lectures. Usually only his best students were present and from these seminars grew the circle of his doctoral students, for a doctorate under Reincke-Bloch had great kudos, so difficult was it to achieve. Only a few who attempted this feat achieved their goal.

Professor Wolfgang Golther lectured in *Germanistik* and his name was known far beyond Rostock, both for his academic research and his expert knowledge of Wagner. It was because of Golther that Huhnhäuser's interest in the study of linguistics was reawakened. Golther propounded the theory that all German literature which preceded Wagner culminated in his works. The theatre in Rostock at that time offered plenty of opportunity to view these works, for Golther had created a Wagner tradition in the *Stadttheater* which endured until the 1920s. Many singers, artists and musical directors were trained in the Bayreuth style, and Golther ensured that Rostock did not in any way deviate from the original. Huhnhäuser, as a result of his exposure to Wagner, developed a

passionate interest in his works. He read his biography, collected his writings and studied his songs. Later he became acquainted with his writings on opera, drama and Judaism in music, but he does not mention or criticize Wagner's anti-Semitism. Instead, he describes watching a performance of the *Meistersinger* with Else in terms of an almost spiritual experience:

Die Eindrücke dieses herrlichen Abends vermag ich in meiner Sprache nicht wiederzugeben. Wenn aber heute nach rund 35 Jahren jenes Erlebnis noch in unverminderter Leuchtkraft vor mir steht und seinen Glanz über die traurigsten Tage meines Lebens auszustrahlen vermag, wird man ermessen können, was mir jener Abend bedeutet und was er mir gegeben hat. Zwei Menschen, die solches gemeinsam erleben, können kaum je durch das Leben auseinanderkommen. (SR, p. 56)

In an interesting aside, when Huhnhäuser laments the loss and destruction of the programmes he had carefully collected of all the performances he attended over the years, he claims that they have fallen victim to “dies(em) sinnlosest(en) aller Kriege” (p. 56). It is not clear why he regards this war as “sinnlos”. Did he blame Hitler for dragging Germany into another war, or the Allies for fighting for the principle of freedom from brutal totalitarian rule?

In view of his experience in Berlin, Huhnhäuser decided to set up classes for workers in Rostock. One evening he held an introductory evening for those interested. There were two other spokesmen, one an economics student by the name of Walter Schmitz who had just arrived from Heidelberg, and was regarded by Huhnhäuser as a young hothead. Huhnhäuser soon found himself clashing with him over basic issues in the discussion. Each energetically defended his own position. The result, however, was that

Schmitz shook his hand after the debate in a gesture of friendship, and indeed they did become great friends. The *Rostocker Arbeiterunterrichtskurse* came to fruition and Huhnhäuser was involved with teaching and assisting in the organization until his final exams. The classes were set up on a similar basis to those in Berlin, but in Rostock they arranged an entertainment evening for the teaching volunteers at least once a month. These cultural events were always very popular, but for Huhnhäuser the personal bonus from the workers' classes was his friendship with Schmitz.

After conversing with a Russian academic, who had taken a room in Huhnhäuser's aunt's house whilst conducting some research in Rostock, Huhnhäuser decided he would like to do some research of his own. Reincke-Bloch suggested that he look in the town archive, which was full of unexamined material. Whilst looking through these files he and the archivist, Dr Ernst Dragendorff, found one on the "Warnemünder Zoll" relating to the levying of duty that Gustav Adolf of Sweden had introduced during the Thirty Years' War. As he had always been interested in Hanseatic history he requested those files and from then on used every free hour in the morning to work in the archive. First of all he had to learn to read the unfamiliar script. He bought a magnifying glass to help him read the small, unclear writing but sometimes even that was not enough and he had to ask Dragendorff or his assistant, Krause, for help. Huhnhäuser loved working in the archive and the weeks he spent there were happy ones:

Da saß man mit prachtvollen Menschen zusammen in einer Stille, die fast klösterlich anmutete, bei Dokumenten vergangener Zeiten, aus denen nach und nach sichtbar wurde, daß hinter diesen vergilbten Blättern, auf denen noch der Streusand haftete, Schicksale von Menschen standen, die ihre Sorge und Nöte gehabt hatten, wie auch wir in unserer Zeit sie kannten. (SR, pp. 62-63)

Reincke-Bloch pointed out to him that he also would have to visit the *Landesarchiv* in Schwerin and so Huhnhäuser duly spent some time there in the holidays. By chance he found one day in the archive a row of larger parchment volumes which likewise bore the inscription “Warnemünder Zoll”. These files contained duty calculations, drafted meticulously by Swedish customs officials, for ships entering and leaving Warnemünde, dating from 1635 to 1648. This was a great find but he did not know exactly what to do with this new material. Fortunately, he was given permission to have the files sent to Rostock where he was advised to catalogue their contents, for only then was a fruitful evaluation possible. This he did in every free hour he had, in addition to all his other studies. As the research progressed, he realized that it was important he go to Denmark to examine the *Sundzollregister* recently published by Nina Ellinger-Bang,<sup>7</sup> if his own research was really to be valuable. Reincke-Bloch was happy to agree to this and arranged a grant for him to fund the trip.

Meanwhile, Else passed her teaching exams in the spring of 1911. She was particularly good in German and languages, writes Huhnhäuser, and was taught in German by Dr Franz Weber, who would later become a friend of his. Else had to find a job quickly when she had finished her studies as her stepmother was expecting her second child. She found a position in a doctor’s house at Ukleisee in Holstein, and this meant a painful separation for the couple for a time. She was unhappy there, however, and returned after a few weeks. The family circumstances nevertheless required that she soon find alternative accommodation, and this was provided in the house of *Superintendent* Kliefoth in Doberan.

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<sup>7</sup> Huhnhäuser spells her first name both “Nina” and “Ninat”.

Young girls were constantly accepted into the large household to learn the art of running a home. Kliefoth was a friendly, kind man with a family of four daughters and two sons, so there was always plenty of life in the house. Else remained with the family for two years, until she married, with Huhnhäuser a frequent visitor.

At Easter of that year, 1911, he learned that his trip to Denmark had been made possible for the coming summer. His first priority was to learn Danish, and so he enrolled in the Berlitz school. His teacher was a middle-aged Danish lady called Sophie Bruun. They got on extremely well together, and thanks to his studies in linguistics he made rapid progress. She was, he states, a typical Dane, as he was later able to ascertain: “ausgestattet mit allen guten Eigenschaften dieses guten Volkes.” (SR, p. 72) As she was taking her holidays at the same time as Huhnhäuser planned to leave for his trip, she invited him to spend a few days with her in Skagen before he began his research.

They set off in July, accompanied to the station by Melms and his closest friends. Seldom had Huhnhäuser ever undertaken a journey with such excitement. On arrival in Copenhagen they were invited to lunch by his companion’s brother-in-law, Steincke, who later became the Minister for Justice in Denmark. Sophie felt obliged to mention before they arrived that he was a Social Democrat. Huhnhäuser’s reaction to this news is very interesting:

Mich politisch Ahnungslosen durchfuhr ein gelinder Schreck, da ich mit dieser Bezeichnung gar zu leicht den Gedanken als Umstürzlerischen, ja auch Unkultivierten verband, und dabei hatte ich mich doch jahrelang unter Arbeitern bewegt und besonders als Student in ihrer Mitte so wohlgeföhlt! Aber diese Abneigung gegen alles Parteipolitische saß mir wohl zu tief im Blut, als daß ich sie so schnell hätte überwinden können. [...] Wie war ich überrascht, als ich dieses behagliche und doch so geschmackvoll eingerichtete dänische Heim betrat! Und wie beschämt, als ich diesen feinen

Mann kennen lernte, kultiviert und gebildet und anscheinend auch menschlich gütig. (SR, p. 75)

Once again Huhnhäuser displays his political bias, whilst believing that he has none. He may regard his friendships with the workers as proof of his ability to accept all men regardless of class or status in the world, but this seems only possible when he regards these men as individuals. As a political force he is afraid and distrustful of the workers, as his antipathy to the mention of the Social Democratic party shows. It is also interesting that he feels more comfortable with the workers as a student, rather than when he was himself one of their number and on an equal footing. His association with the workers as a student is through the *Arbeiterkurse*, where he holds the position of teacher. He is, therefore, to all intents and purposes their intellectual and social superior; intellectually superior because he is better educated and controls the knowledge that he imparts to them, and socially superior because of his bourgeois background and connections. In this respect his relationship to the workers must be regarded as one of patronage and he is deceiving himself by regarding it in any other light.

On board the steamer returning from Skagen Huhnhäuser met again a young man who had spoken to him on the outward journey. Huhnhäuser had been unable to understand much of what he had said on that occasion and was pleased to note the man's surprise when he realized that Huhnhäuser was now conversing fluently in Danish. When the man, Kirchheiner, learned of the purpose of Huhnhäuser's visit he insisted that Huhnhäuser stay with him and his family until he had found a suitable room to rent. Huhnhäuser was overwhelmed by his hospitality, as it was obvious that the family had no money to spare.

He was given a tour of the city on his first day by Kirchheiner and also introduced

He was given a tour of the city on his first day by Kirchheiner and also introduced himself to a friendly official at the National Archive, situated opposite the Danish parliament, who gave him the necessary information to enable him to begin his work. This consisted of looking up all the ships which had sailed through the Sound in the original volume of the *Sund* customs register and establishing whether the cargo agreed with that given in the Warnemünde calculations. Other avenues of research emerged from this and his work was only made possible by the fact that he had catalogued all his source material. Initially he had to familiarize himself with the old Danish language but the archivist was always ready to help with the more difficult sections.

Melms and her father came to visit him, an event he had very eagerly awaited. It would be, he comments, impossible to portray all the events of those unforgettable weeks, but Melms recorded her time there following her return in a book he still possessed at the time of writing.<sup>8</sup> Her father could only stay for a few days, but when he and Melms were alone he could not neglect his work if he was to return to Rostock by the end of September as planned. He worked regularly in the archive each day, while Else would stay in his room, either working on his lists of ships or reading. On Sundays they would go on excursions and it was on one of these excursions that Huhnhäuser, in gratitude for the pleasure of the weeks that they had spent together, vowed to his fiancée that he would sit his doctoral exams by the spring of 1912, following which they would announce their engagement publicly. He intended to sit the state examination the following summer and begin his teaching practice in the latter half of the year:<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> This book is not amongst the contents of the archive.

<sup>9</sup> He kept this promise. Education Ministry records show that Huhnhäuser sat his doctoral examination on 30 March 1912 and passed his public teaching exam on 27 June 1912.

So ist durch diesen Sommer Kopenhagen für uns beide ein besonderer Begriff geworden, und daher zog es uns immer wieder hin zu dieser schönen Stadt und ihren glücklichen, von Sorgen nicht beschwerten Phäakenleben, bis dann der grausigste aller Kriege auch dieses Paradies in eine Hölle verwandelte. (SR, p. 85)

Melms' departure was very painful for them both, and Huhnhäuser's reaction was to throw himself into his work. He visited Nina Ellinger-Bang, who published the *Sund* customs register. Her husband was a lawyer and a well-known Socialist leader. She was also a Social Democrat and, following his death after the First World War, became Minister for Education in Denmark. Huhnhäuser found her to be a highly cultivated if charmless woman, whose academic achievements were admirable.

Huhnhäuser left Copenhagen on the arranged date with a wealth of good memories. He observes that it would have been nice if he had been able to capture these memories in photographs but at that time he did not own a camera. Because of this, however, the memories in his head have remained all the more vivid and have never faded. On his return he began to prepare for his forthcoming exams and was required, moreover, to produce a paper on a general educational topic. In addition to this, Reincke-Bloch had secured him some daily tutoring, teaching the son of the Law Professor, Rudolf Hübner.<sup>10</sup> With so many demands upon his time, Huhnhäuser worked out a timetable for himself to which he stuck rigidly, in order that he might also have time for other things. Through Hübner and Reincke-Bloch, he was introduced to the Zoologist Professor Hans Spemann, who had a great

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<sup>10</sup> Rudolf Hübner came from a family of academics and artists. His two brothers were professional painters, and the eldest, Ulrich, had made a name for himself as an Impressionist and was later to hold a leading position in the Academy of Arts in Berlin. Rudolf became vice-



interest in education. He was a friend of the founder and head of the *Landerziehungsheime*, Hermann Lietz, and was himself at the forefront of the society that supported these homes. Spemann tried to interest Huhnhäuser in the project, but Huhnhäuser observes that he was not mature enough for this great idea.

Huhnhäuser's first task was to complete his thesis. Reincke-Bloch was hard to satisfy and would make him change many things or consider new historical points just as he thought he was nearly finished. Students with other supervisors had to conform to much less demanding standards: "So war es leicht begreiflich, daß der deutsche Doktor draußen in der wissenschaftlichen Welt kaum noch Ansehen genoß." (SR, p. 93) In Huhnhäuser's opinion, Reincke-Bloch was, therefore, correct to have such high standards even if the other academics did not follow his example. When the thesis was eventually completed Huhnhäuser began to prepare for his oral exams. He performed well overall and was awarded his doctorate with the grade of *magna cum laude*. He now felt that the time was right to announce his engagement publicly, over three years after his proposal had been accepted. He is ashamed to admit that he cannot remember whether they had an engagement party, but can recollect an evening at the Hübner's, during which Frau Hübner decorated his bride with a floral wreath.

Following his doctoral exams, he spent the next three months preparing for his *Staatsexamen*, which would test his knowledge of his three main subjects and other general educational topics. An unpleasant encounter with Helm had caused him to alter his plans. At the beginning of the winter semester, he called upon Helm at home to enquire in detail about the demands of the Latin exam. The Professor was very unfriendly and this made

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chancellor of Halle University.

Huhnhäuser decide to find a new subject as a matter of principle. This was not an easy task at the end of his studies but finally he decided upon religion, as he knew the history of the church thoroughly from his days at school and was still fairly confident about his Ancient Greek. His weakest area was Bible knowledge but he would not consider giving in to Helm.

Problems with other examiners caused him further difficulties. When he visited Professor Erhard and asked him to examine him in the history of philosophy, he was told that it was the professor's responsibility to decide in which subjects he would be examined. That he had angered the professor became clear when he began the exam with the words: "Nun, Herr Doktor, Sie haben mich zwar gebeten, Sie nicht in der Logik zu prüfen, aber darin muß ich Sie doch prüfen." (SR, p. 98) Although the questions were not difficult Huhnhäuser remained stubbornly silent until the questions moved on to his preferred area. He was examined in educational theory by *Oberschulrat* Strenge from Schwerin, who also displayed a very unfriendly attitude to Huhnhäuser from the beginning, describing him as the man with the "unsympathischen Namen". Strenge stood at the window with his back to Huhnhäuser and questioned him on school rules in Saxony, thus rendering Huhnhäuser's thorough preparation completely futile. This causes Huhnhäuser to comment on the art of examining:

Einem böswilligen Examinator ist der Beste nicht gewachsen. Die Kunst des Prüfens aber liegt darin, einwandfrei festzustellen, was der Prüfling weiß. Das setzt aber eine große Beweglichkeit des Prüfenden voraus und auch ein umfangreiches Wissen. In den langen Jahren meiner späteren Tätigkeit als Prüfender habe ich immer wieder Gelegenheit gehabt, dies festzustellen. (SR, p. 99)

Of his university tutors, he believes that only Reincke-Bloch understood the art of

examining because he allowed the student to discuss all the topics with which he was familiar, but would encompass all areas into the exam in order to discover what the student did not know. When he discovered the weak areas, he did not dwell upon them but moved on quickly, with the result that the student did not feel like he was being examined at all. As a man who has spent over thirty years in education, and regards himself as a gifted and innovative teacher, it is obviously a topic to which Huhnhäuser has given a great deal of thought, especially after his personal experiences as a student. He was informed of his results in the *Staatsexamen* by the State Commissioner in a blunt and insensitive manner:

Als er begann, stockte mir das Blut in den Adern. "Ich muß Ihnen zu meinem Bedauern mitteilen", so eröffnete er seine Ansprache; "daß Sie die Prüfung nicht bestanden haben," dachte ich weiter — er aber: "daß Sie sowohl in der Philosophie wie in der Pädagogik nicht die erforderlichen Kenntnisse besitzen. Es erscheint daher fraglich, ob Sie die Eignung für den Lehrerberuf besitzen. Im übrigen haben Sie die Prüfung mit dem Prädikat Gut bestanden." (SR, p. 100)

The effect of this "menschlich häßliche Art der Bekanntgabe" was so strong upon Huhnhäuser that he never forgot it, and when he was later in the position of announcing exam results to nervous candidates, he always acted differently. From these examinations he learned how not to examine, and that bad examining technique often stems from a deficiency in the knowledge of the examiner.

**Lehrer in Rostock, 1912 - 1918**

The memoir is continued after a break of around a year.<sup>11</sup> Huhnhäuser and Else are now married, and he begins with a description of their first summer holiday as a married couple, which was in Stockholm and Copenhagen.<sup>12</sup> There is neither an indication as to why the continuity of the narrative is disrupted, nor a reference to the wedding. The opening words of this section indicate that it has taken place: “Wie im Fluge vergingen die ersten zwei Monate unserer Ehe.” (LR, p. 67) Several pages at the front of the book have been removed and the page numbering suggests that they contain his description of this period. One can only speculate as to why these pages appear to have been removed. Perhaps the memory of this year was such a happy one that he decided to detach the relevant pages and keep them with him, or even to send them to his wife as a romantic gesture. It is hard to imagine that there could be anything of a politically sensitive nature in these pages which would have upset the Norwegian authorities and brought about their confiscation.

After Stockholm, they continued their summer holidays that year in Warnemünde, which was Huhnhäuser’s favourite resort: “Hat es doch kein Bad gegeben, das mir so ans Herz gewachsen ist als jener Ort.” (LR, p. 81) He had a long association with the town, visiting frequently between 1898 and 1934. He and Melms were joined there by Buchholz, or Bök, who was to become the couple’s closest friend. Huhnhäuser and Bök both taught at the *Realgymnasium* in Rostock and shared a common interest in music that grew into a deep bond of friendship. Bök also shared Huhnhäuser’s enthusiasm for photography and the two men constructed their own makeshift darkroom in Huhnhäuser’s cellar, for it was very

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<sup>11</sup> The notebook begins on p. 67. It is highly likely that the first part of the chapter has been removed, covering the summer of 1912 to the summer of 1913. See “Notes on the Manuscript of *Aus einem reichen Leben*” in the appendix for more details.

<sup>12</sup> They were married on 10 May 1913. The date is recorded in Huhnhäuser’s personnel file from the *Reichsministerium für Wissenschaft, Erziehung und Volksbildung*.

expensive to have films and plates developed professionally.

Another similarity between the two men, claims Huhnhäuser, was their attitude to politics. Huhnhäuser describes his own political stance as follows:

Schon gelegentlich habe ich in diesen Blättern das Thema Politik gestreift. Meine Auffassung darüber, die im Grunde der Einstellung meines Vaters entsprach, war bisher die gleiche wie früher geblieben. Nun, wo ich im Beruf stand, fühlte ich mich mehr denn je verpflichtet, mich von aller einseitigen Parteipolitik fernzuhalten, auch entsprach solche einseitige Stellungnahme nicht meiner Neigung und Anlage zur Toleranz. (LR, p. 84)

This perhaps gives an insight into why Huhnhäuser feels able to claim that he is apolitical, despite having joined the Nazi Party. He considers it his duty as a *Beamter* to serve the state. If the state itself is politicized and reorganized to serve the ends of one party, then it is possible that Huhnhäuser regards it as part of his role to serve the new system without question. It may be that he believes his conduct in following the state's example is apolitical, and that to question the new government would threaten this impartiality. To follow the orders of his superiors without question would appear to suit what he claims is his inherent temperament and would also save him from having to make difficult choices on matters of conscience when the true nature of the regime became apparent. In this way he would be able to reconcile his membership of the Nazi Party with his claim that he is not political.

The reason he introduces this reference to politics is that he and Bök attempt to gain a general political education, not from a biased party newspaper: "sondern aus einem mehr kulturpolitisch eingestellten Organ, das in gut geschriebenen Übersichten und Aufsätzen die nötigen Informationen auf allen Gebieten gab." (LR, pp. 84-85) The best newspaper for this appeared to them to be the *Rote Tage*, which was a special edition of the Berlin daily *Der*

*Tag*. The “red” in the title referred not to any political affiliation, but to the red lettering in which the title was printed. In Huhnhäuser’s opinion, it was the best newspaper of its kind that ever appeared in Germany. They also read *Die Tägliche Rundschau*, which was, he claims, certainly the most widely read newspaper in academic circles before the First World War. Huhnhäuser then says that he can only give his political opinions at that time in general outlines:

In die Zwangsjacke einer Partei hätte ich, wie gesagt, nie und nimmer gepaßt. Erschienen mir die Parteien doch mehr oder weniger alle als Zweck- oder Standesorganisationen, denen am allgemeinen Wohl um so weniger gelegen war, je mehr sie es in ihren Programmen hinausschrien. Mir fehlte jede Veranlagung zum Fanatismus und zur Einseitigkeit, und bei dem mir eingeborenen Gerechtigkeitsinn glaubte ich keiner Gruppe, wenn ich mich auf ihren Standpunkt stellte, die Berechtigung ihrer Forderungen absprechen zu können. Ein ausgesprochener Parteipolitiker mag das vielleicht als charakterlos nennen, aber ist dies im Grunde nicht eine Einstellung von höherer Warte aus? Damit soll nicht gesagt sein, daß ich mir dessen bewußt war. Es war nichts anderes als der Ausdruck meines inneren Wesens. Auf Grund meiner mehrjährigen praktischen Tätigkeit mitten unter Arbeitern, vor allem aber auch durch die in den Studentenjahren mit Arbeitern und Arbeiterinnen aller Sparten gesammelten Erfahrungen, weiter durch das persönliche Erleben sozialen Elends im Berliner Norden hatte sich in mir eine Lebensauffassung gebildet, die den Sozialismus bejahte, nicht aber in der revolutionären Form, wie ich die Sozialdemokratie in Norddeutschland bisher kennengelernt hatte. Daß es eine andere, sich des eigenen Volkstums bewußte Richtung gab, hatte ich in Dänemark gesehen. Um nun das politisch andere Extrem zu berühren, so stand ich dem ostelbischen Junkertum völlig fern und war viel zu fortschrittlich und liberal eingestellt, um dessen Konservativismus für mich bejahen zu können [...] Wenn auch später Zeiten kamen in denen ich mich mehr mit diesen Fragen befassen mußte, so hat sich meine Grundeinstellung zur Politik doch niemals verändert. Kam ich mir doch stets ein [...] (*zoon apolitikon* = ein unpolitisches Wesen) vor, es sei denn, daß man den Begriff der Politik im Sinne Platons auffasse. Gute Deutsche wollten wir sein und weiter nichts. (LR, pp. 85-86)

Bök was now his only friend in Rostock, as all his friends from his student days had moved from the area. They were, of course, in close contact with Melms’ parents and his

mother visited them occasionally. Her visits always caused a great deal of domestic upset, as she was jealous of Melms and showed this by frequently reducing her daughter-in-law to tears. In order to prevent this conflict escalating, Huhnhäuser felt that he had to intervene. He told his mother that he could not tolerate anyone coming between him and his wife and so she must decide whether she wanted to keep them both or lose him. This course of action was painful for both sides because he knew that she did everything out of love for him, but, he adds, life has taught him that nothing is worse than leaving such tensions to fester unresolved. When his mother realized that he was serious she gave way and consequently the relationship between the two women improved considerably.

At Michaelmas he was offered the job which had been promised to him in the *Realgymnasium*, but he asked to postpone his employment for a year in order to complete his training. Although it was merely a matter of a piece of paper, he did not know what the effect on his career would be if he did not have this qualification. This meant a financial loss of at least 1000 Marks, a considerable sum at that time, especially in view of the fact that they ran their household on 80 Marks per month. Huhnhäuser observes that the social life of the middle classes at that time was “in voller Blüte” (LR, p. 91), but claims they refused to join in with these attempts to outdo one another, such as employing servants and putting on lavish dinners. (Walter Kempowski’s novel *Aus großer Zeit*, set in Rostock in at the end of the Wilhelmian period, depicts lavish entertaining amongst the wealthy middle classes.) When they entertained they did so in small numbers and presented their guests with plain and simple fare: “denn es erschien mir wie eine Heuchelei, etwas vorzutäuschen, was nicht vorhanden war.” (LR, pp. 91-92) This did not prevent their evenings from being considered a success, he claims, as they had more to offer by way of intelligent conversation.

His new status as a professional man was reflected in the increasing number of functions to which they were invited. There was usually dancing on such occasions but he regrets that he did not refresh his dancing skills for his wife. Although he used to be very good he had given up when his heart condition first appeared. His wife had been passionate about dancing when she was young. Their engagement had afforded them little opportunity, but now that they had the chance he did not make the effort to regain his former proficiency and so neglected to make her happy in this way: “und das war ein schwerer Fehler.” (LR, p. 96) Otherwise he considers himself to have been a good and thoughtful husband:

Ich glaube, heute als alter Mann mit gutem Gewissen sagen zu können, daß ich es an den kleinen Aufmerksamkeiten, mit denen man ein liebes Herz erfreuen kann, in all den Jahren nicht habe fehlen lassen; denn Schenken und andern eine Freude machen ist mir stets ein Herzensbedürfnis gewesen. (LR, p. 96)

Early in 1914 the couple began to prepare for the birth of their first child which was due in the autumn. Huhnhäuser reflects now, at the end of his life, with melancholy upon those days full of hope, joy and expectation. They hired another maid to help out, arranged for the midwife and engaged a nurse for the first few weeks. They thought that they were fully prepared for the future, but world events intervened in the most dramatic fashion.

When news of the events in Sarajevo reached Rostock, the mood was initially one of concern, but this changed to euphoria when war was declared: “Es war 1914 wie eine ungeheure Volkserhebung.” (LR, p. 105) Huhnhäuser refers to the diary he kept at that time, and compares the people’s jubilant reaction to the outbreak of war in 1914, with their fear and horror in 1939: “Wie anders steht man heute zu diesen Dingen! Aber was wußten



wir von einem Kriege? Hatte doch niemand von uns auch nur eine entfernte Ahnung von den Schrecknissen, die er mit sich bringen konnte.” (LR, p. 106) He explains that their perceptions of war had been formed through tales told by the veterans of 1870/71, or from novels depicting the same period which romanticized the conflict by portraying acts of derring-do. He also blames the press for their role in whipping up a fervent jingoistic patriotism amongst the people. Furthermore, the people of Rostock were influenced by the departure of their local regiment, of which they were very proud and for which they felt a deep affection. The excitement of the constant movement of troops through Rostock to the Western Front was soon matched by the news of victories that came flooding in. One of the first successes was the fall of the fort at Liège. This was of particular interest to the people of Rostock because the *Neunziger* were involved in its capture. The main source of news was the local newspaper, the *Rostocker Anzeiger*. When new information was received, it was quickly printed and placed in the windows of the *Anzeiger* premises, which were quickly surrounded by a news-hungry crowd. However, the *Anzeiger* soon became the bearer of another type of news — black-bordered notices with iron crosses became an all too familiar sight in the obituary column. Many of Huhnhäuser’s acquaintances were killed in those first few weeks. Huhnhäuser claims in his memoirs that he lamented the loss of young life in the war, and that this sensitivity was heightened by the birth of his daughter:

An unserem Kinde aber spürten wir die ganze Tragödie dieser Zeit. Mit welcher Liebe und Sorgfalt wird doch ein Kind von seinen ersten Lebenstagen an betreut und aufgezogen! Wie sorgt man sich, wenn dem lieben Wesen etwas zustößt! Und nun erlebten wir täglich, wie die blühende Jugend von den Schrecknissen der Kriegskatastrophe hingerafft wurde. (LR, p. 114).

The war had a dramatic effect upon the running of the school in which Huhnhäuser worked. Soon many of the teachers were called up, and this left those remaining with an increased teaching load. Every report of a fresh victory was celebrated with a special assembly after which the children were sent home and, consequently, many hours of schooling were lost. This, in addition to the fact that departing teachers were replaced by university lecturers and students in their final years of study who were unfit for war service, led to a drop in standards. Furthermore, the teachers were asked to provide emergency exams for those pupils leaving for the army, which had, in Huhnhäuser's opinion, "eigentlich überhaupt keine Bedeutung." (LR, p. 128) Huhnhäuser himself was faced with the pedagogical challenge of replacing the teacher of the youngest class in the school, for he had no previous experience of teaching this age group.

Huhnhäuser and his friend Bök received their call-up papers in September 1915. It was, he writes, a strange feeling to realize that he was no longer in control of his own life. By this time they had also become more aware of the reality of this war and knew that it would not be over quickly: "die ständig wachsenden Verluste [zeigten], wie furchtbar ernst die Lage auch für unser Volk war." (LR, p. 134) Their entrance into the army was made even more difficult, Huhnhäuser suggests, by the fact that they were really too old for the training which, he states, was designed for young men aged between eighteen and twenty. He and his friends were aged thirty and over and consequently found it less easy to adapt to drill training and the corresponding physical exertion, although the married men were allowed to live at home. All the schoolteachers were allocated to the same *Korporalschaft*; the first thing they learned there, writes Huhnhäuser, was how to wait, the second, not to think: "das besorgten andere für einen." (LR, p. 135) The uniforms with which they were

provided were ill-matched and ill-fitting; they were even told to select their footwear from a pile of old boots and shoes on the floor. The daily drudgery of basic training was filled with the mind-numbing repetition of simple and senseless tasks, “wie langsamen Schritt üben, Grüßen lernen und alles, was der Drill verlangte und den Infanteristen ausmachte. Nachmittags gab es Sport, Gewehrreinigen, Flicker, Singstunde und dergleichen.” (LR, p. 136)

When volunteers to learn signalling were called for, there was no shortage of interested men who hoped that this would bring some variety into their monotonous days. One day they were assembled in the parade ground when a request was made for volunteers to train others in semaphore at the front. The reaction of Huhnhäuser and his colleagues is interesting in the light of criticism of the profession after the war:

Selbstverständlich meldeten wir Schulmeister uns alle; denn wir hatten untereinander ausgemacht, in allen Dingen mit gutem Beispiel voranzugehen. Selbstverständlich waren wir in etwas gedrückter Stimmung; denn nun hieß es Abschied nehmen von daheim, vielleicht für immer. (LR, p. 138)

Huhnhäuser and his colleagues took the decision to lead by example, in the knowledge that this principle might cost them their lives. Despite their trepidation, they volunteered immediately. They were very relieved when the order was cancelled and their departure for the front postponed.

As their training intensified, they were made to carry increasingly heavy loads on route marches. On returning from one such march, Huhnhäuser sustained the ankle injury that may well have saved his life. Despite an operation on the injured ankle, it remained weak and he was exempted from frontline service. Instead Huhnhäuser was assigned to

office work, then moved to Rostock harbour to work as a translator. The harbour had been closed at the outbreak of war, but was reopened to allow in Danish vessels carrying essential cargoes. As the authorities were afraid that such neutral boats could be used by the enemy as a cover for espionage, all boats were searched and accompanied into and out of the harbour. Huhnhäuser was allowed to wear civilian clothes for this job, because his lowly rank did not convey the correct air of authority. He got to know many of the sailors because he generally saw them several times a year. Sometimes he was able to buy margarine or dripping from them, which was very fortunate as fat was becoming increasingly scarce and his wife was pregnant again.

Huhnhäuser worked here for approximately eighteen months until the late summer of 1917.<sup>13</sup> This was also a significant period in his private life. In April 1916 Inge was born, and in June of that year the family became property owners and moved into a large house in the *Alexandrinenstrasse*. Despite the ever increasing scarcity of food, they managed to hold a christening party for Inge that August. Shortages in most commodities made life very harsh, but Huhnhäuser appreciated how lucky he was to be at home with his family: “Immer tiefere Wunden schlug der Krieg unserm Volke [...]. Man lebte nicht, sondern vegetierte, und doch mußte man dankbar sein, wenn man sein Geschick mit dem mancher anderen verglich; denn noch waren wir beieinander.” (LR, p. 160)

Huhnhäuser received a bitter reminder of his own good fortune when he learned that Bök, his closest friend, had been killed on the Eastern Front in Romania.<sup>14</sup> He twice had to

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<sup>13</sup> Huhnhäuser later recalls the date as late autumn 1917.

<sup>14</sup> The First World War led to an increase in interest in spirituality and the afterworld as grieving relatives attempted to contact those whose lives were cut short on the battlefield. The occult became quite fashionable amongst the middle classes and Huhnhäuser, a sceptic, and his wife once took part in a seance. The name “Rachitosu” was spelt out on the *ouija* board but this

break the news to Reincke-Block that one of his sons had been killed. He was sad to leave his family behind when posted to Hamburg to continue his work as an interpreter and translator in Scandinavian languages at General Headquarters, but realized this was a small sacrifice to make compared to the suffering of others. His time in Hamburg also coincided with perhaps the harshest period of the war for those on the Home Front as the effects of the Allied blockade were felt in every aspect of daily life. The little food that was available was extremely unappetising. Huhnhäuser was not only malnourished, but also suffering from sleep deprivation due to constant night shifts. This strained his weak heart to the point where he collapsed. He was diagnosed with physical exhaustion, and was prescribed rest and recuperation in a military hospital at Bad Pyrmont. His accommodation was a former *Pension* which had been turned into a hospital for the lower ranks. Unlike many military hospitals the atmosphere was relaxed, due mainly to the efforts of the *Lazarettmutter*, who did all she could to make their stay as pleasant as possible. The food here was little better than in Hamburg, but the men were able to joke about the awful “Kriegsessen” which seemed to consist mainly of “Dörrgemüse” (LR, p. 175).

Huhnhäuser’s description of the regime at the *Kur* highlights some of the inequalities which existed in the army between officers and men. Only the officers were allowed to use the best of the facilities. Morale in the German army was very low at that time, one of the many reasons being this active discrimination against the lower ranks. Huhnhäuser observes that, “damals die Stimmung schon sehr schlecht war, und wir garnicht daran dachten, solchen törichten Befehlen nachzukommen.” (LR, p. 176) Thus, when he and some fellow musicians wished to use to instruments in the assembly rooms, they approached the

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meant nothing to those present. Huhnhäuser later discovered that *Rachitosu* was the name of the

*Kurdirektor*, a Major, for permission. He initially refused their request, but when he discovered that Huhnhäuser came from Rostock he was reminded of a wonderful meal he had enjoyed in a hotel there and consequently reversed his decision.

As Huhnhäuser's strength increased, he began to go on hikes round the countryside. Although he enjoyed these opportunities to acquaint himself with the local landscape, they also had a more serious purpose. He visited farms in the area with a *Kamerad*, in search of food to supplement the meagre diet at the *Lazarett*. He was so badly nourished that by this time he weighed just sixty kilos in full uniform. Huhnhäuser and his friend had worked out a system which usually encouraged the generosity of the most obdurate farmer's wife, with the result that they were mostly able to share their booty with their fellow patients at the *Lazarett*:

Wies man uns ab, so pflegte ich der Bäuerin in plattdeutscher Sprache die Geschichte von Algernissens Verwundung zu erzählen und zur Bekräftigung der Tatsache ihre Hand zu nehmen und die tiefe Narbe am Vorderkopf fühlen zu lassen. Algernissen aber nahm dann meinen Uniformrock und zeigte, wie er mir auf dem Leibe hing und wie erschreckend abgemagert ich war. Das verfehlte selten seine Wirkung. (LR, p. 182)

These "Hamstern" expeditions allowed Huhnhäuser to behave in a way he would never have been able to in Rostock, where he was always conscious of "die Würde des Amtes". His actions are so out of character that he describes this time as his "Ferien vom Ich" (LR, p. 181). He is able to hide the *Oberlehrer* in the disguise of the soldier's uniform and relax for a short time. He is also extremely lucky to be at liberty to roam the countryside and enjoy nature, instead of facing the dangers of combat.

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village where Bök had been killed.

When Huhnhäuser left Bad Pyrmont, he was sent to work in a military police office in Rostock. He would have preferred to return to teaching, he states, but had no choice in the matter.<sup>15</sup> The main function of the military police office was to protect against espionage and sabotage, but Huhnhäuser can remember no notable successes. As the war ground slowly to its bitter end Huhnhäuser saw evidence in the course of his work of what he calls the “Zersetzung”, above all many desertions.

Die für die Front bestimmten Nachschubzüge kamen häufig nur mit einem Teil des vorgesehenen Mannschaftsbestandes an Ort und Stelle, die militärische Lage an der Westfront sah bedrohlich aus, und der immer neue, gewaltige Materialeinsatz von amerikanischer Seite bedeutete eine große Gefahr für unsere ermüdeten und abgekämpften Truppen. (LRF, pp. 2-3)

In the autumn of 1918 the men in Huhnhäuser’s office were warned by their superiors of Germany’s imminent defeat. He claims that he had been suspecting as much since the spring offensives. And indeed, it was not long before the outbreak of the November revolution, although Huhnhäuser claims that it was conducted in Rostock “mit mecklenburgischer Gemütlichkeit”; “von einer eigentlichen Revolution konnte keine Rede sein, und in unserer friedlichen Stadt ist wohl in jenen Tagen kaum ein Schuß gefallen.” (LRF, p. 3) A workers’ and soldiers’ council was formed in Huhnhäuser’s office, although in effect it remained purely symbolic. The head of the office decided to leave his post and return to his family a few days before the armistice, a decision which Huhnhäuser and his colleagues viewed as cowardice. There was some confusion over the situation and several of the military police offices had ceased to operate. Huhnhäuser decided, however, to continue running the

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<sup>15</sup> The final part of Book III, Chapter 1 “Lehrer in Rostock” is continued in another notebook

Rostock office, of which he was now acting head, and he remained in this position until demobilisation in early December. His authority was challenged only once, when he was visited by a member of the revolutionary forces who demanded that he relinquish control:

Ich blieb völlig ruhig und bat ihn, mir seine dienstliche Überweisung vorzuzeigen und sagte ihm gleichzeitig, daß ich bisher von meiner vorgesetzten Behörde keinen Auftrag erhalten habe, der mich meines Amtes enthebe. Darauf er, ob ich denn nicht wisse, daß wir eine Revolution hätten. Ich entgegnete ihm, daß mir das sehr wohl bekannt sei, daß ich aber nur der Gewalt weichen werde. Im übrigen möge er mir doch sagen, was er eigentlich wolle. — “Für Ruhe und Ordnung sorgen.” — Das sei auch meine Aufgabe. Wenn ihm damit gedient sei, könne ich ja in Ruhe meiner Stelle weiterarbeiten. — Dann verließ er mich und kam nicht wieder. (LRF, p. 5)

Huhnhäuser is a man who claims throughout his memoirs that he is apolitical, but also states that he hates Bolshevism. It seems clear that he regards his actions here as unpolitical; he is simply following the correct channels and carrying out his orders until he is told officially to do otherwise. This he would regard as his duty. When considering his previous political comments, however, it is most likely that he would be glad to thwart the aims of this leftist revolution in any way possible.

The memory of the day he learned of the Kaiser's flight to Holland has stayed with Huhnhäuser, for it destroyed the very foundations of the bourgeois society in which he had grown up, and which had provided him with his system of values. The news was placed in the window of the *Rostocker Anzeiger*, where it was read by the shocked townsfolk.

Das war der Zusammenbruch der Welt, in der ich groß geworden war! Und doch war dies erst ein Anfang! Der Kaiser schmachvoll geflohen, als oberster

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from this point, hence the page references return to p. 1 ff.



Heerführer seine Armee im Stich lassend nach all den hochtönenden Reden! Alles erschien einem so unfasslich. Sollte nun alles vorbei sein? Wozu denn alle die unzähligen Opfer? Völlig geschlagen begab ich mich nach Hause. Und doch war die Heimat intakt; denn kein feindlicher Soldat stand auf deutschem Boden, und fast ungestört vollzog sich die Demobilisation, wenigstens in unserem friedlichen Lande. (LRF, p. 6)

Thus, Huhnhäuser appears to subscribe to the *Dolchstoßlegende*, a theory so beloved of the right-wing in the Weimar Republic, although he views himself as someone who has consciously rejected involvement in politics, especially in the frenzied days of the immediate post-war period. Like so many who did not experience the horrors of war at the fronts, he is unaware of the extent of the suffering which the *Frontsoldaten* underwent. The only common experience he shared with these men was the few weeks of basic training. As a result, his main concern at the end of the war is not the creation of a better society, but rather the honour of the Fatherland.

## Summary

The introductory pages of *Kindheit und Jugend* are filled with historical detail, both of Huhnhäuser's home town and of his ancestors. It is significant that Huhnhäuser feels he must place his life in a historical context before the reader can become properly acquainted with the man himself, and his own life history. By identifying his forebears, however, Huhnhäuser also places himself within the context of his racial origins. Racial ideology permeates the pages of his memoirs in a manner that would today be considered unacceptable.

Huhnhäuser depicts a typical bourgeois childhood in a North German *Kleinstadt*. He appears to have had a very close relationship with his father, whom he presents as a wise and well-respected man, and claims that he inherited his “unpolitical” nature. He does not appear to recognize that he is a conservative man with correspondingly conservative views. Huhnhäuser conveys the general sense of wonder that he and many others felt at the swiftly accelerating pace of technological development, which had an immediate impact upon their daily lives. He claims that the young, especially, became fascinated with science and technology, but criticizes the *Gymnasien* for failing to adapt the education they provided in order to meet the demands of a rapidly changing world. He is also disparaging of the teaching methods used at that time, although he asserts that children were given a far better education then, in comparison with those educated after 1933.

On his father’s advice, Huhnhäuser left school after the *Einjährlige* and became an apprentice. This was intended to be the first stage of a career in engineering, but his experiences during this time were generally very negative. He was not physically or temperamentally suited to the life of an apprentice, nor was he suited to the harsh environment of Bremer’s home. His unhappiness was compounded by the death of his father just a few weeks after he arrived in Rostock. Although his mother wanted him to return home, he felt compelled to stay and honour his father’s wishes. This provides an indication of the depth of feeling he held for his father. His decision to remain placed him at the mercy of Bremer’s constant criticism which, together with his merely average skills as an apprentice, reduced his spirits to a very low point.

His escape came when he failed his medical examination for entrance to the navy. He decided, supported by Bremer’s offer of financial assistance, to become a

*Gymnasiallehrer*, but first he had to return to school in Demmin to study for the *Abitur*. He found that his former *Gymnasium* had changed a little under the modernizing influence of new, young staff members. In general, however, teaching methods had not improved and the boys still learned through fear. Huhnhäuser claims that the feelings of contempt with which teachers and their profession were viewed in the 1940s had its origins in the lessons of these classroom tyrants, yet he also believes that the students of these tyrants were, nevertheless, better educated than those educated in the Third Reich.

It was during this time that Huhnhäuser's youngest sister died very unexpectedly. The strain of nursing her through her short illness, combined with his subsequent grief, proved too much for Huhnhäuser whose health had never been robust. He had a breakdown and also suffered a crisis of faith, turning away from God and the church; God had, in Huhnhäuser's view, allowed an innocent to die, whilst the minister's response to their personal tragedy had proved completely inadequate and provided no comfort. He comments that few in the caring professions have a vocation for their chosen field.

In spite of his ill health, Huhnhäuser's schoolwork did not suffer unduly and he passed his *Abitur* on the strength of his written examinations alone. He chose then to study German, history and Latin in Berlin, after giving serious consideration to a career in medicine. This was an idea to which he returned at several points in his life, but financial considerations always led him to reject this option. He claims that one of the aspects of a medical career which attracted him was the freedom doctors enjoyed within their profession, something he professes is denied to civil servants. In Berlin, Huhnhäuser saw for the first time the miserable conditions in which the urban working classes were housed and contrasts this with the ostentatious grandeur of the area around the Brandenburg Gate.

Huhnhäuser felt isolated in Berlin, finding it difficult to make contact with fellow students. He also struggled to survive financially. He found that teaching methods in the university were little better than those in the *Gymnasium*, and observes in retrospect that they fell far short of his own standards as a teacher. The arrival of a school friend at the university failed to ease Huhnhäuser's sense of isolation, for his friend became closely involved with the *Burschenschaft Germania*. Huhnhäuser asserts that he was too independently minded to feel at home in such a movement. Instead he became involved with an organization which provided evening classes for workers, and derived a great deal of satisfaction from this occupation.

Huhnhäuser moved to Rostock University in 1908 and was far happier there. He states that he made many friends, and also became reacquainted with Else Schulze, to whom he soon became secretly engaged. As the university was much smaller, there was a far more intimate atmosphere in lectures and tutorials. Huhnhäuser found a friend and mentor in Hermann Reincke-Bloch, professor of medieval and modern history, and chose to study for his doctorate under him. His research topic required him to learn Danish and visit Copenhagen; this began an association with Scandinavia which was to continue for the rest of his life.

Huhnhäuser decided to set up classes for workers in Rostock on the basis of his experiences in Berlin. He gained several friendships from this venture, and a popular programme of cultural events also developed around these classes. Huhnhäuser continued to cultivate his interest in opera, which first began when he was an apprentice in Rostock. He became passionate about the music of Wagner, but does not comment upon the composer's anti-Semitism. Following his return from Copenhagen in summer 1911, he

began to prepare for his final examinations. A clash with a professor caused him to alter his plans at the last moment and to change his third subject from Latin to religion. This caused him a great deal of extra work, but indicates the strong, even stubborn, adherence to principle which governed his behaviour. He would, even at personal cost, stand up for what he believed to be right. Despite this setback he passed all of his exams, but was, with the exception of Reincke-Bloch, unimpressed with the skills of his examiners.

The memoir continues after a break in continuity of around twelve months. No explanation is given as to why this is the case, although several pages appear to have been removed from the notebook. Buchholz, a colleague of Huhnhäuser's from the *Realgymnasium* where he was now officially employed, became Huhnhäuser's closest friend. Huhnhäuser cites the two men's similar attitude to politics as a common bond, claiming that now he was a *Beamter*, he felt duty bound to refrain from any political involvement. He states that both he and Bök (Buchholz's nickname) attempted to educate themselves politically by reading good quality, unbiased newspapers. He declares that he would never have fitted into the "Zwangsjacke" (LR, p. 85) of a political party, adding that his inherent sense of justice prevented him from denying any group the legitimacy of their demands when he viewed matters from their standpoint. He feels the need to defend this stance, declaring that it is a high-minded attitude adopted, amongst other things, as a result of the time he spent amongst the workers in Rostock and Berlin. He hints that there was later a time when the political situation no longer allowed him the liberty of this ideological position, but maintains that his inner feelings towards politics never altered. This is a very clever method of distancing himself from the Nazi Party, without even acknowledging directly his involvement. He implies that he adapted to an altered political situation under

duress, but gives little or no indication as to the extent of his political activity. He maintains that he and Bök wished only to be “good Germans”; the reader is led to assume that any political involvement would be motivated by this aim alone.

Huhnhäuser was given the chance to put his patriotic ideas into practice with the outbreak of the First World War. His first child was born in October 1914 and this caused him to lament even more deeply the loss of life on the battlefields of Europe. He was called up in September 1915, but remained in Germany throughout the war due to an ankle injury. He collapsed with exhaustion and malnourishment while working as a translator of Scandinavian languages at General Headquarters in Hamburg, and was sent to Bad Pyrmont for several months to recover his health. Shortages had become so severe that, when he regained a little of his strength, he and a *Kamerad* visited farms in the vicinity to cadge food. On his return to duty, Huhnhäuser was assigned to the military police office in Rostock, where he was able to witness at first hand the collapse of morale in the German army. As deputy, he took command of the office when his superior officer left his post and managed to retain this control until demobilization, even in the face of a challenge from a member of the revolutionary forces. He has little to say on the events of the November revolution, claiming that Rostock remained relatively peaceful, although his reluctance to submit to the authority of the revolutionary forces indicates his opposition to their cause. The flight of the Kaiser to Holland, however, shook Huhnhäuser to his very core, forcing him to question the system of beliefs with which he had grown up. He does not recognize that his political standpoint helped to shape his reaction. Like so many others from the bourgeoisie, he appears to believe that the surrender of the German army was not yet necessary, despite the fact that his commanders had warned him in previous months that

defeat was imminent.

In sum, in these first five chapters of the memoirs, Huhnhäuser recreates a childhood which is typically bourgeois. He left this comfortable environment for the harsh life of an apprentice in Rostock, which brought him into contact with the working classes for the first time. The death of his father was a severe blow to him emotionally, but also caused his family much financial hardship. He returned to his middle-class milieu in Demmin but now his family and financial responsibilities rested heavily on his shoulders. His sister's death had a significant impact on his life both physically and spiritually, but in his schoolwork he found at last the success which eluded him as an apprentice. In Berlin he himself lived on a very limited income, and he witnessed directly the miserable conditions in which the urban workers were forced to dwell. He contributed his time and efforts to a project which attempted to improve the life of the workers through education, and started a similar project in Rostock. He claims that these experiences helped to turn him into a "socialist", that is to say, someone who wishes to improve the life of the workers through education, but he remained in fear of the SPD and in loathing of the Bolsheviks. Huhnhäuser maintains throughout the memoirs that he is unpolitical, inherently unsuited to politics, too tolerant to hold any political stance and later inhibited by his employment as a teacher from linking himself with any political party. He neither recognizes that he holds many political views typical of his class, nor acknowledges that his deep hostility to the Communists and Social Democrats is a manifestation of the political ideology through which the members of his social class justify and maintain their privileged position in society.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### The Early Weimar Years

#### Introduction

The following chapter of this thesis covers the final part of Book III, Chapter 1 “Lehrer in Rostock”. All the German headings in this chapter are those used by Huhnhäuser himself in the memoirs.

#### Die Zeit von 1918 bis 1921, drei schaffensreiche Jahre

Following his discharge from the army, Huhnhäuser returned to teaching. He resumed his position at Rostock’s *Realgymnasium*, and refused to be drawn into the political maelstrom which followed the collapse of the German army and the abdication of the Kaiser. At a teachers’ conference his name was put forward as a candidate for one of the political committees which were being formed, but he refused immediately to stand and suggested instead his old friend Richard Möller,<sup>1</sup> who had always been interested in politics and, states Huhnhäuser, possessed many of the qualities required by a politician, although he does not elaborate upon what he thinks these qualities are. He adds that after the new political parties had formed — the majority of which were formed along the same political lines as before the war — Möller joined the Democratic Party and played a not insignificant role in it until

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<sup>1</sup> Huhnhäuser spells his friend’s name both as “Moeller” and “Möller”.



1933. The main financial backer of this party in Mecklenburg was the Rostock industrialist and liberal, Friedrich Karl Witte, whose country villa Huhnhäuser had helped to wire many years before as a trainee electrician. Witte was a charismatic figure whose main traits were kindness and benevolence and Huhnhäuser regrets that he never had the opportunity to get to know him well:

Dieser Mann erschien mir immer als das Urbild eines der großen Liberalen aus der Zeit von 1848, also jener Zeit, zu der ich mich stets hingezogen fühlte. Waren in ihr doch Männer tätig, die aus Idealismus für die deutsche Sache ein auf demokratischer Grundlage ruhendes, konsitutionelles Deutschland schaffen wollten. Und aus jener Epoche stammten auch die Witteschen Traditionen, und darum erschien mir Friedrich Karl Witte immer als der letzte Achtundvierziger. (LRF, p. 8)

His friend and mentor, Reincke-Bloch, also joined a political party, the *Deutsche Volkspartei*, which more or less continued the traditions of the former National Liberals.<sup>2</sup> He is unable to say whether it was his father's warning or his own inherent aversion to politics, or perhaps both, which prevented him from being able to identify with one particular party. He stresses, however, that on the basis of his experiences as a youth and later in adult life he had "ein gewisser demokratischer Hang" (LRF, p. 9), but in a form not represented by any party. He prefaces this remark with the claim that it is made "um die Wahrheit willen" (LRF, p. 9) This suggests a certain anxiety on his part to be properly understood. He had been, after all, a member of the NSDAP since 1933, but wishes to convey the impression, clearly and unequivocally, that he is a man with no interest in contemporary politics. He continues in this vein:

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<sup>2</sup> It is odd that Huhnhäuser does not mention the fact that Reincke-Bloch headed the government

Im Scherz habe ich später des öfteren zum Ausdruck gebracht, daß ich eigentlich hundert Jahre zu spät auf die Welt gekommen sei; denn mein Ideal war das burschenschaftlich-nationaldemokratische, das zur Paulskirche führte. Allerdings war die kleindeutsche Neigung auf Grund meiner ganzen Erziehung damals überwiegend; erst als in dieser Zeit (nach dem Weltkrieg) Österreich, die alte deutsche Ostmark, die mit dem Erlöschen des deutschen Kaisertums um 1806 sich vom Reiche gelöst hatte, aus eigenem Willen wieder in den Reichsverband zurück wollte, ging mir — wohl zum ersten Male — der Sinn für die Bedeutung der großdeutschen Frage auf, die ja schon die Geister von 1848 so stark beschäftigt hatte. (LRF, pp. 9-10)

At the end of the 1920s, Huhnhäuser met Wilhelm Mommsen, grandson of Theodor Mommsen, who had published a collection of the most important documents and speeches from 1848. This book, claims Huhnhäuser, led him deeper into the spirit of the Pan German movement. He reiterates that his experiences with the workers have left him with “ein starker Sinn für alle sozialen Fragen” but even in this respect he was never able “‘Partei’ zu ergreifen; denn es war doch allzu viel, was mich davon trennte” (LRF, p. 11). Huhnhäuser claims that he was keen, in the early days of the Weimar Republic, to examine from an academic standpoint socialist issues and ideas, and chose to study deliberately leftist works. He concludes these reflections on politics by recounting a large political meeting he attended with Reincke-Bloch, at which the *Reichstag* representative Herzfeld, an Independent Social Democrat, was speaking. He attacked everything that Huhnhäuser valued highly:

Er schimpfte besonders auf den alten Hindenburg, dem es doch wohl zu verdanken war, daß das deutsche Heer seinen Rückzug so geordnet durchgeführt hatte. Besonders abstoßend wirkte, daß dieser kümmerliche

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of Mecklenburg in 1920/21.

kleine Nichtkombattant alles in den Dreck zog, was kämpferisch sein Bestes eingesetzt hatte. Für mich war dabei besonders aufschlußreich, daß mein Lehrer, der doch selber durch Abstammung Volljude war, mich zum vorzeitigen Aufbruch mahnte mit den Worten: "Kommen Sie, Huhnhäuser, wir wollen gehen." Und seine bebende Entrüstung faßte er in die Worte: "Was ist das doch für ein widerlicher Jude!" (LRF, p. 12)

He adds that this has remained the only political gathering in his life, "zu der ich aus freien Stücken<sup>3</sup> gegangen bin." (LRF, p. 12) Obviously, he wishes to convey that the NSDAP gatherings he must have attended were compulsory and that he was forced to go. At this point, and various others, in the memoir Huhnhäuser endeavours to present a certain image of himself, which appears on the surface to be at odds with his actions from 1933 onwards. Neither here, nor at any other point in these autobiographical memoirs, which admittedly end in 1928, does he confront the issue of his party membership. In fact, without actually lying, he skilfully conveys the impression he has never been a member of any party. There may, of course, be many reasons for this. It would be in his immediate interests to be circumspect when discussing this matter, given his situation as a prisoner in Norway, and one who does not wish to be returned to Germany. Presumably there existed still the possibility that he might be prosecuted for his role as a senior member of the *Reichskommissariat*, despite evidence of his benevolence and humanity. Finally, his own conscience was probably a major factor behind these attempts to distance himself from the NSDAP. Despite his proclamations of bureaucratic impartiality, he is tainted by his association with the Nazi totalitarian state which used terror to suppress opposition amongst its own people and the occupied European territories. By serving this brutal regime, he has become implicated in its horrific crimes, even if he personally did not

participate in acts of violence or corruption.

The end of the war brought other changes to Mecklenburg. The Grand Duchy was turned into a free state, and the medieval constitution, “mit der man immer noch ganz gut regiert hatte” (LRF, p. 13), was replaced. Social Democrats were voted into leading positions in the town’s administration and the government of Mecklenburg. Apart from this, observes Huhnhäuser, the next three years in Rostock were uneventful and without major disruption as far as politics were concerned, at least for those who refrained from entering the political sphere. The only exception to this was the *Kapp-Putsch* in the spring of 1920, the effects of which were felt in Rostock. The pathologist at the university, Prof. Schwalbe, was killed in an armed skirmish<sup>4</sup> and shots were fired in several of Rostock’s streets. However, he recollects that calm was restored after just a few hours.

### **Arbeit in der Schule**

When Huhnhäuser returned to the *Realgymnasium*, he found that much had changed as a result of the war. Several teachers, like his friend Bök, had been killed in the war or had

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<sup>3</sup> The word “freiwillig” has been scored out and replaced with “aus freien Stücken”.

<sup>4</sup> The report in the *Rostocker Anzeiger* of this event, dated March 26 1920, reads as follows:

Eine Abteilung Zeitfreiwilliger von etwa 100 Mann, die unter Führung von Prof. Schwalbe nach Warnemünde marschiert war und sich auf den Rückmarsch befand, wurde von den Arbeitern bei Schutow gestellt. Es kam zum Kampf und es gab Tote und Verwundete. Auch Professor Schwalbe [...] fand beklagenswerterweise bei diesem Treffen seinen Tod.

According to reports in the *Anzeiger*, events in Rostock were far more dramatic than Huhnhäuser portrays. Students and workers fought bitter armed battles and several lives were

retired. Their places were taken by five new teachers, four of whom had fought at the front. The new men gave the teaching staff a different dimension. Furthermore, the political upheaval brought with it a number of proposed changes to the education system. Huhnhäuser observes that in this political “revolution” only the men at the top changed. The whole civil service remained intact, which allowed the state to function smoothly, but also meant that many measures were blocked if the officials did not approve of them politically. It was, in his opinion, to the benefit of the education system that the speed of change was slowed down because in this area in particular one should guard against hasty decisions:

Wer einmal in einer Zentralstelle gearbeitet hat, weiß, wie schon der geringste Druck auf den Hebel weit draußen in den Provinzstellen einen gewaltigen Ausschlag gibt, und darum sollte man oben jedes Wort genauestens abwägen, ehe man es hinausgehen läßt. (LRF, p. 16)

In this respect Huhnhäuser believes that the Weimar state did not err in the area of the academic school system and even did much for the education system which could stand honourably in later years under changed circumstances — in other words, the Third Reich. The first aim of the reforms was a change in the organisation of the school system, to create an *Einheitsschule* which offered all gifted children the chance to advance in life. This required free schooling and free books and equipment, but if this principle was to be followed to its logical conclusion the state would then also have to provide free university tuition for those who could not afford to pay. Huhnhäuser comments that this would have revolutionized the whole education system, but with serious consequences:

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lost.

Die plötzliche Durchführung einer solchen Reform würde sicher unser ganzes Schulwesen zerstört haben; indem die Gefahr eines geistigen Proletariats heraufbeschworen wäre; denn damals war der soziologische Aufbau unseres Volkes nicht so geartet, daß er eine plötzliche Umwälzung vertragen hätte. (LRF, p. 17)

This view contradicts somewhat the ethos of the *Arbeiterunterrichtskurse*, which Huhnhäuser claims gave him so much pleasure because he was helping the workers to better themselves. Cost was another factor which prevented the implementation of these reforms; a nation impoverished by war could not afford to implement such measures. He observes that the Scandinavians are unjustified in the pride they feel for the free books and equipment they have long since provided because it is easier to introduce reforms into such small nations, and easier still when the people live in prosperity.

The reformers in the Weimar Republic had to settle, therefore, for some basic improvements rather than radical restructuring.<sup>5</sup> All children now had to attend the *Grundschule* for four years from the age of seven. Consequently, the *Abiturienten* had to begin their studies, or their careers, one year later, for they now had thirteen instead of twelve years of schooling. This, Huhnhäuser remarks, is a long time when one considers that these young people were also delayed from starting a family by a year. It did not occur to anyone, he states, to consider reducing the length of schooling in the senior schools, despite the positive experience in Austria of the eight-year *Gymnasium*. In Germany, the

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<sup>5</sup> “The new *Reichs*-Constitution (11 August 1919) guaranteed certain minimal rights in education: equal access to education, complete equality between men and women, free education for eight years with an additional two-year period of vocational training, compulsory attendance during the first four years of elementary school, entrance to secondary education based on ability, stricter control of all aspects of education by the central government”, cited from H.-J. Hahn in *Education and Society in Germany*, (Oxford: Berg, 1998), p. 55.

*Gymnasien* were not very positively disposed to the new law concerning the *Grundschule*.<sup>6</sup>

Many thought that the previous system of three years at the *Vorschule* had achieved as much if not more, and that the introduction of the four-year *Grundschule* was a political concession to the left-wing parties: "Daß aber auch ein volkserziehlicher Gedanke dahintersteckte und weiter ein jugendpsychologischer erwog man nicht." (LRF, p. 19)

Huhnhäuser claims the objections came purely from the standpoint of the syllabus:

Wohl war es möglich, die Kinder in drei Jahren so zu fördern, daß sie in der Sexta mitarbeiten konnten, aber man darf dabei auch nicht vergessen, daß das jugendliche Gehirn teilweise mit einem Stoff gefüllt wurde, der der Auffassungsstufe in keiner Weise entsprach. Man denke nur dabei an die Grammatik. Diese kleinen Anwärter auf die Sexta mußten schon Sätze analysieren und die lateinischen Wort- und Satzteilbezeichnungen kennen. Als dann bald, nachdem die ersten Grundschüler in die Höhere Schule gekommen waren, diese nicht mehr die Kenntnisse der früheren Vorschüler aufzuweisen hatten, erhob sich ein großes Geschrei über den Niedergang der Bildung, man beachtete aber nicht, daß es auf ganz andere Dinge als auf solche stofflichen Einzelheiten ankam. Freilich wurde das Gesetz des Reifens und Wachsenlassens auch auf der andern Seite falsch verstanden, indem man aus der Grundschule eine Art Spielschule machte, in der die Kinder herzlich wenig lernten. (LRF, p. 19)

Entrance to the senior schools from the *Grundschule* was determined on the basis of an exam.<sup>7</sup> When headmaster of a *Gymnasium* in Breslau, Huhnhäuser did not rely on the exam alone to determine which pupils he should accept, but visited each of the *Volksschulen* which wished to send him pupils, in order that he might see the children in their familiar environment. He felt that this was a more accurate means of assessing a child than a one-day exam, in which many things could temporarily affect the child.

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<sup>6</sup> The *Grundschulgesetz*, 28 April 1920, cited from Hahn, *Education*, p. 64

<sup>7</sup> Hahn states that entrance to the secondary sector from the *Grundschule* was almost entirely at

As the proposed reforms were not feasible at that time, the development of gifted pupils was promoted instead by increasing the number of *Mittelschulen*, vocational schools that provided a level of education beyond that of the *Volksschule*. This did not solve the problem of wasted talent, however, because these changes only affected the towns, and the rural schools remained as they were. Thus, Huhnhäuser believes one must consider the fact “daß ja gerade vom Lande her ständig die frischen Kräfte einem Volke zuströmen” (LRF, p. 21). Consequently, the solution to the problem of the schools was still far from completion, but the advantage of this was, as he has already stated, that initially nothing was destroyed and the reorganization took place slowly, step by step. This was the most significant factor, for the *Gymnasien* had already suffered considerably through the war and standards of achievement had fallen since 1914.

The new state was interested in the education system and those who worked within it. The teachers were respected and both school and university retained their former prestige in society.<sup>8</sup> The state was also loyal to its civil servants and one had to show a very negative attitude before any action was taken. He claims that people were happy, therefore, to cooperate and work with the state — but has already stated that the civil servants were equally as happy to block the reforms of which they did not approve. Looking back on the years 1918-33, Huhnhäuser admits that his pleasure in his work was never spoiled by attack from outside influences and “daß einem — auch als nicht Parteimann oder gerade deswegen — alle Freiheiten der persönlichen Entfaltung vorbehalten blieben”<sup>9</sup> (LRF, p. 22). He

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the discretion of the secondary schools, in *Education*, p. 56.

<sup>8</sup> This seems to contradict his assertion that the declining status of teachers in society had its roots in the post-war period.

<sup>9</sup> Although not a member of the *Deutsche Volkspartei*, it was Huhnhäuser's personal connection to Reincke-Bloch which led him to become the head of the *Seminar* at Neukloster and he claims



implies, once again, that he experienced restrictions and loss of freedom of action during the Nazi regime. So much of what he wishes to convey is contained in the words he does not write. He implies that after 1933 he no longer enjoyed the luxury of being able to remain aloof from political matters. But he does not state that he was forced to become a member of the NSDAP. He treads a very cautious path, and is careful to prepare the ground to explain his future actions without ever making direct reference to his involvement.

When he returned to teaching he was presented with some fresh challenges. He now had a History class with the *Obersekunda*, and soon after that was given the *Prima* for German. It was the first time Huhnhäuser had been required to teach Ancient History and he thought deeply about how to interest his young charges in the subject and motivate the entire class to participate. He read many works on the period, but they were often unsuitable for use in the classroom. He felt it was important to find materials which did not lose themselves in detail. Educational theory had also changed since the war; in place of learning by rote came the new educational principle of training the pupils to think independently and, with the help of the lesson, to produce their own academic work. In History, for example, where only through constant repetition can the material be remembered permanently, Huhnhäuser endeavoured to shape the repetition of material in the *Oberstufe* in such a way that the pupils learned how to think for themselves. Initially, he would teach the basic facts, but then his pupils would re-examine these events in a new light, thereby learning to consider them independently. In this way, Huhnhäuser hopes to have given his pupils something to take with them into adult life and when, at the end of the 1920s, one of his former pupils wrote to him from America to say that his History lessons

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that it was the new political administration which forced him to leave Mecklenburg altogether,

had helped him over there, Huhnhäuser was “aufrichtig beglückt” (LRF, p. 30), for a teacher seldom learns of the effect of his own efforts.

Many teachers who taught History and German in the *Oberstufe* would, in so far as they had to present their material, prepare lecture manuscripts in a similar way to university professors. This meant a considerable reduction in preparation as they could be used over and over again, but Huhnhäuser rejected this method. He believes that only words delivered in a lively manner have an effect on young people, and that this demands spontaneity. This type of lesson demands a well-stocked personal library in order to have all the necessary information to hand at all times, and to be able to make notes in the book at will. This was a further incentive to Huhnhäuser to build up his book collection, a task he had begun in earnest in his student years. He always based his lesson upon a different book every time he retaught a topic, which demanded many hours of preparation, but in this way his own knowledge grew and the lessons remained fresh and lively.

Thus he began to develop his own style of teaching and his own methodology: “Es waren zwar erst ein bescheidener Anfang, aber ich war doch auf dem rechten Wege, den ich nun schrittweise weiter verfolgte.” (LRF, pp. 36-37) In a similar manner he developed new teaching methods for the *Mittelstufe* when he was given an *Untertertia* in Latin. He had frequently witnessed how many *Abiturienten* did not know the simplest things in Latin, even after nine years, and had often wondered where the reason for this could lie:

Wozu denn überhaupt eine neunjährige Schinderei, wenn doch nichts dabei herauskam? [...] Und weiter dachte ich an die Verdrossenheit bei den Lehrern und Schülern, welche dieser Leerlauf auslöste. Sollte da wirklich keine Änderung möglich sein? Die allgemeine Unterrichtserfahrung hatte mir

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before he was dismissed, and accept a position in Prussia.

gezeigt, daß die Stofffrage nicht das Entscheidende ist, sondern daß jeder Stoff, auch der sprödeste, interessant werden kann, wenn man ihn richtig angreift und zu gestalten versteht. Alles ist im Grunde nur eine Lehrerfrage und warum sollte mir nicht im Lateinischen gelingen, was in andern Fächern so gut gegangen war? Man mußte nur einmal den Mut aufbringen, mit der hergebrachten Überlieferung völlig zu brechen. (LRF, pp. 37-38)

In order to make the lessons more interesting, he did not correct the pupils when they made a mistake in translation, but instead made the pupils themselves responsible for this. As a result, the whole class now participated in the lesson with enthusiasm and learned far more in this relaxed atmosphere. Every individual now felt responsible for the success of the whole. Huhnhäuser had achieved what he set out to do and at the end of the year he handed over to the class to another teacher, who would return to the usual method of teaching and destroy all that he had built up: “wie wollte ich als einzelner gegen den Strom schwimmen?” (LRF, p. 40) He states that to implement his plans he would have had to be the head of his own school, and even then he would have scarcely been able to achieve his goal.

Far more significant than all of this, however, was his ability to maintain discipline in the classroom. Gradually, he became more and more of the opinion that the strap was undignified for a teacher, and immediately after the war he stopped using corporal punishment on boys in the *Mittelstufe*. He used the strap occasionally on boys in the *Unterstufe*, according to the wishes of their parents, but later refused to do even that. Experience showed that the less one used corporal punishment, the better. In the *Tertia* class in which he carried out his experiment in teaching Latin, he was so successful that in the end even the slightest disruption was sorted out by the pupils themselves.

## Seminarinstruktor und Seminarleiter

After the war, the headmaster of Huhnhäuser's school was instructed to set up a *Seminar* to educate the new teachers in educational theory. He approached Huhnhäuser's friend and colleague, Franz Weber, to organize it, and Weber, in turn, asked Huhnhäuser to assist him in this and, furthermore, delegated the practical and theoretical training in German and History to him. In the initial years most of their students were war veterans, "gereifte Menschen" who went about their task "mit größter Zielstrebigkeit" (LRF, p. 45). Weber left the school some time later to take up his new post in the Mecklenburg Ministry of Education as deputy to the *Landesschulrat*, a position which carried the title of *Regierungsrat*. Following Weber's departure, Huhnhäuser was also placed in charge of teaching general educational theory to the seminarists. This meant copious amounts of work, as he had never studied the subject in any great detail. He also doubted its value, for he believed that in this case practical experience was more valuable than theory. In his opinion, if a person is not born a natural teacher he can, at very best, become a good educational workman. He observes:

Ich habe dies absichtlich etwas übertrieben, weil wir Deutschen von Hause aus gar zu leicht dazu neigen, der Theorie im Leben allzu viel Gewicht beizulegen. So wenig wie reine Geistesbildung einen Charakter formen kann — das hat man leider bei den politischen Katastrophen zur Genüge erlebt — so wenig wird man durch pädagogische Theorien aus einem nicht zum Lehrer veranlagten Menschen einen Erzieher schaffen können. (LRF, p. 49)

As a historian he concentrated most on educational history with his students, although there were other branches of this subject, psychology for example, which he believes would have

been more relevant.

### **Lektor für Dänisch an der Rostocker Universität**

Looking back on the three years after the war, they appear to Huhnhäuser to be the most fruitful of his life. He was in his early thirties and possessed an almost unbridled energy for work: “Vielleicht brachen die im Kriege gestauten geistigen Kräfte jetzt hervor und verlangten ihre Auslösung.” (LRF, p. 51) In retrospect, he is amazed at how much and how many different things he achieved, for just two years before he had considered giving up teaching to study medicine. He still feels drawn towards medicine even forty years later; he regards it as his “stille Liebe” and believes that he would have been a good doctor, “Da mir die Gabe der Menschenbehandlung von Natur geschenkt war.” (LRF, p. 51) Thus, Huhnhäuser expresses yet again his regret that he was never able to fulfil the potential he believed he had to be successful in the medical profession. His teaching career went from strength to strength, however, and he enjoyed prestige “über weitere Kreise” (LRF, p. 52). He considers, therefore, his decision to remain in teaching, necessitated by financial considerations as much as any, to have been the correct one:

was freilich nicht hinderte, daß ich in späteren Jahren noch manchesmal mit einer gewissen Wehmut auf das Glück des ärztlichen Berufes blickte, vor allem dann, wenn ich mir dessen bewußt wurde, wie abhängig doch im Grunde der Beamte — und damit auch der Lehrer — war. (LRF, p. 53)

Yet again he insinuates that as a civil servant he was not free to act according to conscience,

but bound by duty to serve his masters.

When the university decided to appoint two teaching assistants for Scandinavian languages, Huhnhäuser applied for the post of Danish teaching assistant, confident in the knowledge that the war years had given him plenty of opportunity to improve his language skills. Shortly afterwards he received a letter from the *Rektor* of the university, Herbig, informing him that he had been appointed as *Lektor* for both Danish and Norwegian. The languages were grouped together in the belief, common at that time, that the literature of both peoples originated from the same root. Huhnhäuser was only familiar with the Norwegian classics, which was not enough to give his audience a picture of the Norwegian people. He was, on the other hand, very familiar with Denmark. He knew the Danish countryside, the people and most of their towns very well and was familiar with the literature and the history of the country. He had, moreover, tackled the historical grammar of Danish, with the result that he brought many prerequisites to his new job. He discussed Hans Christian Andersen, his favourite writer, in a two hour lecture based on some of his fairy tales and had consequently become even more interested in the man behind the writing. He immersed himself in Andersen's extensive autobiography *Mit Livs Eventyr*, which he would later translate into German.

In hindsight, Huhnhäuser believes that the assistantship would have been better executed by a native speaker, as the first and foremost priority was to convey the living language. He did not feel fully comfortable in his role but enjoyed the academic side of the work and decided, therefore, to progress in this area. He discussed the matter with Golther, who encouraged him to undertake a postdoctoral lecturing qualification. Huhnhäuser intended to prepare for this by studying at Copenhagen University for an extended period.

But before the trip could be properly organized the effects of rising inflation began to be felt in Germany, making all plans of this nature impossible. As the idea of applying to Denmark for a grant never occurred to him, his ambition to become a lecturer on Nordic culture came to nothing, and when his promotion to Neukloster required that he move away from Rostock he gave up his post at the university altogether.

His post as a teaching assistant allowed him a direct involvement with the 500th anniversary celebrations of Rostock University. Huhnhäuser laments the loss of his papers which would have, he states, allowed him to describe the celebrations much more vividly and colourfully. These were, in any case, great days in the academic life of Rostock:

Im Mittelpunkt stand ein Festzug, der von der Universität ausging und sich zum Theater bewegte. An der Spitze gingen der Rektor und die Ehrengäste, dann folgten die Professoren in ihren Talaren und den Barets auf dem Haupt, hinter ihnen kamen Privatdozenten und Lektoren in Frack und Zylinder, dann die farbentragenden Korporationen und dann die andern Studenten. Im Anschluß an den Festzug folgte der Festakt im Stadttheater mit einer feierlichen Rede des ehrwürdigen Rektors Herbig. (LRF, p. 58 / A5 p. 372)

Among the honoured guests were Professor Hübner, to whose son Huhnhäuser used to give tuition and who was now the *Rektor* of Halle University, and Sven Hedin, the great Swedish researcher and Germanophile.<sup>10</sup>

Around this time Hermann Lietz, founder of the *Landerziehungsheime*, died.

Huhnhäuser had already been made aware of him by Spemann, the Zoology professor with

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<sup>10</sup> There was a strong political element to the celebrations. The foreign guests came from countries either neutral or friendly to Germany during the war and Hedwig's speech was full of bitterness over the war, as can be ascertained from the book published to commemorate the anniversary by the university, *Die Fünfhundertjahrfeier der Universität Rostock 1419-1919: Amtlicher Bericht im Auftrage des Lehrkörpers* (Rostock: Selbstverlag der Universität, 1920).

an interest in education whom he had met through the Hübners. Lietz had spent some time in England, and had come into close contact with the English boarding schools and their educational principles. He returned to Germany where he created his own educational system. Later he divided his three schools according to age; he had one school for the *Unter-*, one for the *Mittel-* and one for the *Oberstufe* in three different areas. These schools specialized in placing great weight on manual activities and young craftsmen were employed to teach these classes. Huhnhäuser was offered the job of head of the *Mittelstufe* school. He was interested in the offer, but wished to learn more of the conditions first and so turned to the heads of the other schools for further information. When he received a rather cool reply from the head of the *Oberstufe* school, stating that he could only be employed on a trial basis, and that the probationary period would last for one to two years, he decided that this was completely unacceptable and with that the matter was closed.

### **Heimatkundliche Arbeit**

Huhnhäuser's writings on the subject of North German culture, discussed in Chapter 2, fitted comfortably into the general framework of the *Heimatabewegung* which flourished at that time in all German states, in what Huhnhäuser calls a healthy reaction against the war. In Rostock many events such as local festival, dances, concerts and even a religious service in *Plattdeutsch* were organized. Huhnhäuser often sang in musical recitals and was occasionally required to give a literary lecture. These were pleasant, harmless events but their main purpose was entertainment, and Huhnhäuser missed the seriousness and depth



which they lacked.

Looking back over this period, Huhnhäuser expresses the doubts that he felt in later years regarding the *Heimabewegung*, and makes reference to their dangers when cultural aspirations are exploited for political purposes. He adds that after the First World War, in particular, there was cause for concern that the movements would further the cause of separatism in an increasingly fragmented and demoralized nation. He talks of the “auseinandergerissene deutsche Volk” (LRF, p. 90) torn apart by its tragic history and fails to recognize that Germany herself was responsible for much tragedy across Europe. He comes to the conclusion that the *Heimabewegungen* were of great value to the nation, as they were responsible for enriching the various peoples throughout the land by nurturing their dialects, traditions and culture, and so gave them new strength. He feels, therefore, that his work in this area was worthwhile and profitable.

### **Opernkritiker am *Rostocker Anzeiger***

Huhnhäuser’s friend, the composer Emil Mattiesen, decided during this period to relocate himself in Munich and, consequently, to give up his employment as opera critic for the *Rostocker Anzeiger*. Before resigning, he suggested to Huhnhäuser that he take over this role. Huhnhäuser felt initially that he did not have the necessary prerequisites for such a responsible job, for he lacked a detailed knowledge of musical theory. Mattiesen convinced him that this was more a matter of having good artistic discernment, and so, in spite of all his doubts, he decided after much persuasion to accept the job. The director of the theatre

since the end of the war was a man called Ludwig Neubeck, who differed from his predecessors in that he was a musician, and an excellent conductor, whereas the others had all come from an acting background. Neubeck was extremely ambitious, and brought many talented artists to Rostock, such as Fritz Mecklenburg as director of music and the theatrical producer Alfons Godard who led the *Kölner Schauspielhaus* in later years.

It was, claims Huhnhäuser, with a strange feeling that he took his place for the first time as opera critic of Mecklenburg's largest newspaper in the stalls of Rostock's

*Stadttheater* :

Dabei wanderten meine Gedanken rückwärts in die Zeit, in der ich als kleiner Lehrling oben im 3. Rang mich auf dem Stehplatz herumdrückte und zum ersten Male den Genuß der Opernmusik in mich aufnahm. [...] Und nun sollte ich Richtung gebend wirken durch mein Wort, sollte Künstler beraten, das Publikum bilden, eine unermeßliche Aufgabe, vor der ich fast zurückschreckte; denn ich muß gestehen, daß ich es sehr sehr ernst mit dieser neuen Aufgabe nahm und mir unendlich klein vorkam, als ich nun davor stand. (LRF, pp. 95-96)

He took his responsibility to educate the public particularly seriously, for he had himself been annoyed by off-hand reviews which had appeared in so-called leading newspapers, and which he regarded in many cases as merely a mirror which reflected the vanity of the writer. He was conscious that he would be compared to Mattiesen, and was nervous about following the reviews of his friend which were written not only with a thorough knowledge of the subject, but also with sparkling intellect: "Wie bedrückend für mich!" (LRF, p. 96) On that first evening he had to review a performance of *Madame Butterfly*. The article was positively received, but there was one unpleasant aspect attached to this new occupation. He was required to write through the night in order to have the article finished by the

deadline, which was early next morning, and very often had then to be in school for eight o'clock.

One thing he was very careful to do from the beginning was to avoid personal contact with the artists, and when he did become acquainted with a very few, he always felt awkward when giving his judgement. Occasionally there were differences of opinion, but these were usually soon smoothed over, although when others challenged his criticism, he stood his ground. He does not wish, he states, to say much about the artists and names only the two singers who stood significantly above the others in terms of talent. One was a bass singer with a particularly beautiful voice by the name of Meurs, the other was a heroic tenor, Globberger, who possessed outstanding creative power. He became very well acquainted with the young director Josef Turnau, who called on him shortly after he took up his position in the theatre. Despite his policy of not becoming too familiar with any of the artists at the theatre, Huhnhäuser was won over by Turnau's charm and the two families soon became good friends. Fortunately, Huhnhäuser was impressed with Turnau's first production in Rostock, *The Barber of Seville*, and the full extent of his prodigious talents became clear when he staged more demanding operas.

### **Vom eigenen Musizieren**

His work as an opera critic left Huhnhäuser with little time to go to plays, so he and Melms limited themselves to modern works. In this way they became acquainted with the dramatists Hans Franck, whose *Godiva* was performed in Rostock, and Herbert Eulenberg,

whose plays had already been successfully performed in Düsseldorf. Despite their involvement with the theatre, they did not neglect their own musical study and even during the war they played whenever possible. At that time Huhnhäuser began to play the violin again and for a short time after the war, he formed part of a male quartet which built a large repertoire of German folk songs. A far more significant musical influence was his colleague *Oberlehrer* Frick.<sup>11</sup> He was a fine musician and his particular love was Hugo Wolf, a composer whom Huhnhäuser had never come across before. Together they studied a number of Wolf's songs and Huhnhäuser learned a great deal from this.

Shortly after the war a young singer from Hamburg, Max Spilker, arrived at the Rostock theatre. Huhnhäuser soon realized that Spilker was a man with exceptional talent, and arranged for Spilker to give him singing lessons. Spilker played the piano excellently and possessed a thorough understanding of all branches of musical theory. Huhnhäuser learned many techniques from him and studied the works of a variety of composers from different periods, such as Schumann, Schubert, Wolf, Brahms and Richard Strauß, under his tuition. He regards this as a very productive period in his musical development. One day some relatives from America arrived to visit the Spilkers, Frau Spilker's sister and her husband, the famous Bayreuth bass, Karl Braun. Braun had been engaged by the Metropolitan Opera House in New York at the outbreak of the First World War. He was now on his way to begin his engagement with the Berlin *Staatsoper*, but as a heroic baritone, and he wished to study Wotan from *Die Walküre* before he arrived there. As the Spilkers lived in a *Pension*, Max Spilker asked for permission to practise in Huhnhäuser's music room. Huhnhäuser was delighted to agree for it meant he could follow every detail of

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<sup>11</sup> Huhnhäuser does not give his first name.

the rehearsal. He was surprised at Braun's decision to change from a bass to a baritone as there were so few good basses, and he wondered whether this change would not damage Braun's voice in the long term. Indeed, although Braun was still a young man he did not remain on the Berlin stage for long and later took over a theatrical agency: "ein betrüblicher Ausklang einer großen Künstlerlaufbahn!" (LRF, p. 145)

Huhnhäuser was asked to sing in public on several occasions during this period. Through his acquaintance with the organist in the *Marienkirche* he was asked to perform in one of their church concerts. The concert took place on a Sunday evening and the huge church was full. He remarks that he cannot say how well he sang, but that he was told his voice filled the church and sounded good. He was also asked to perform during an evening of Schumann. After the war, the *Arbeiterunterrichtskurse* and their social evenings had been replaced by *Volkshochschulkurse* and *Volksunterhaltungsabende*, which were run by a teacher called Methelmann, and it was he who asked Huhnhäuser to perform the love cycle "Frauenliebe und -Leben" at the Schumann evening. He was to be accompanied by Heumann, another teacher who was, in his view, a fine musician, and as Huhnhäuser had studied the love cycle down to the last detail everything was set for a fine performance. He was disappointed, however, with the result and attributes this to a certain diffidence on the night:

Wie anders war ich einst als junger Student im selben Raum bei ähnlichen Veranstaltungen aufgetreten! Nun aber war aus dem Dilettanten inzwischen ein Wissender geworden, und mit dem vermehrten Können war die Selbstkritik gewachsen. Jetzt kannte ich meine Grenzen und Schwächen, und diese Erkenntnisse trugen nicht gerade dazu bei, das Wertgefühl zu erhöhen. Vielleicht hätte sich das bei häufigerem Auftreten gegeben; ich aber beschloß nach diesem Erlebnis, nicht mehr öffentlich zu singen. Mochten das andre tun. Mir bot die Musik, wie ich sie nunmehr seit Jahren gepflegt hatte, mehr.

## Ferienreisen

With the summer of 1921 came their first opportunity for a proper holiday together since 1915. The war and then work commitments had denied Huhnhäuser and Melms a family holiday until this third summer in peacetime. Even this trip combined business with pleasure. The first stage of their journey took them to Saalfeld in Thuringia to visit Else's childhood friend, Lieten Zimmermann, who had married a local businessman. The second led them to Munich where a Wagner and Mozart festival was being held. The *Rostocker Anzeiger* had requested that Huhnhäuser write a few reviews of the concerts and were willing to pay a small travel supplement. This leads Huhnhäuser to reflect that the fee of 20 Marks which he received for each review was meagre when considered in relation to the amount of work required, not to mention the extra expense of purchasing books and music. But whilst he is proud to confess that money was never the decisive factor where work was involved, he also admits that perhaps this could also be seen as a flaw in his character: "Für meine Familie wäre es vielleicht besser gewesen, wenn ich etwas mehr aufs Verdienen aus gewesen wäre; denn es hat Jahre gegeben, in denen wir sehr eingeschränkt leben mußten, trotz scheinbaren äußeren Glanzes." (LRF, p. 153) This provides us with a small insight into his family life which has hitherto been lacking in this section of the memoirs dealing with the post-war period. The main emphasis of his recollections for this period between 1918 and 1921 has been centred upon his professional and musical activities and one could easily

forget that this period also covers the early formative years of his two daughters, Heidi and Inge. He mentions briefly that his relatives in Demmin came to Rostock to look after the children during their absence, bringing with them his sister's son, Hans Jochen, who was three years old at that time.<sup>12</sup>

The focal point of the Munich trip was, of course, the opera.<sup>13</sup> The director of scenery for the Wagner festival was Professor Willi Wirk who had sung in the *Rostocker Stadttheater* in 1900-03. Huhnhäuser paid him a visit to pass on Golther's regards and the two men became friends. Wirk even took Huhnhäuser behind the scenes before the last act of *Die Götterdämmerung*. Bruno Walther conducted several of the Wagner operas and Paul Bender sang many of the main roles. Although he was at his artistic peak at this time, Huhnhäuser remarks that he finds it amazing how one man could manage to sing so many of Wagner's main roles in the course of a week. As Hans Sachs he caused the audience to rise spontaneously to their feet at the end of Act 3 of the *Meistersänger* when he sang: "Und welschen Dunst mit welschem Tand, die pflanzt man uns ins deutsche Land."<sup>14</sup>

As well as the Wagner festival, Huhnhäuser also attended two other operas, *Oberon* by Weber and Mozart's *The Marriage of Figaro*. *Figaro* was, he claims, one of the best opera performances he ever saw. The role of the eponymous hero was sung by Gustav Schützendorf, who, he remarks, was one of three brothers all engaged by premier opera

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<sup>12</sup> He does not mention his sister and her family again until the end Book III, Chapter 2 "Direktor in Neukloster".

<sup>13</sup> Two articles by Huhnhäuser concerning the Munich festival appeared in the *Rostocker Anzeiger*. The first was a review of *Der Ring des Niebelungen* written on 1 August, and was published on 17 August 1921. The second was entitled "Stimmungsbilder von den Münchener Festspielen" and appeared on 18 August 1921. Copies of both articles were obtained from Rostock University library in September 1997.

<sup>14</sup> The actual text reads as follows: "und welschen Dunst mit welschem Tand sie pflanzen uns in deutsches Land." Cited from Richard Wagner, *Musikdramen*, ed. by Edmund E. F. Kühn

houses in Berlin, Munich and Hamburg. Susanna was sung by Maria Ivogün, a stage name formed from her real name Ida von Günther.<sup>15</sup> Huhnhäuser claims Ivogün was one of the most important female singers at that time.<sup>16</sup> The orchestra was conducted by Bruno Walter.<sup>17</sup> Huhnhäuser observes that seeing this performance was the key that enabled him to understand Mozart fully: “und es konnte für mich fortan nicht mehr heißen Wagner oder Mozart, Bayreuth oder Salzburg, sondern Wagner und Mozart, Bayreuth und Salzburg.” (LRF, p. 186)

### Freunde und Bekannte

The gap left in their lives by Bök's death took a long time to fill. Huhnhäuser's old friends from university had all moved out of the area, with the exception of Taps (Ringeling) who lived in Doberan. He not only taught, but also ran a gardening business and later began to write Mecklenburg *Heimatkichtung*. The Huhnhäusers made new friends, such as Willi Kolz. He was employed as an *Oberlehrer* in Luckenwalde, south of Berlin, after the war but as a native of Mecklenburg, longed to return there. Huhnhäuser used his influence with the school committee — he knew *Bürgermeister* Becker through the *Verein für Rostocks*

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(Berlin: Globus, 1914), p. 830.

<sup>15</sup> There is a black and white postcard showing the portrait of Maria Ivogün in one of the Huhnhäuser family albums.

<sup>16</sup> At this point in the memoirs, Huhnhäuser addresses a personal remark to his daughter Heidi, in which he states that he has never forgotten hearing Ivogün sing the “Rose” aria, and that when Heidi, or “Wiesching” as he calls her, reads this, she will understand why he practised this aria with her so often: “Stand Deine Stimme an Schönheit nicht hinter der jener Sängerin zurück.” (LRF, p. 185)

<sup>17</sup> Huhnhäuser spells his name as Walther (LRF, p. 178).



*Altertümer* and the *Senatoren* Link and Wiggers (he taught the eldest son of the latter) — to help Kolz. Thanks to his efforts, Kolz was offered a job in the *Studienanstalt*. They now got to know his wife Aline, who was a splendid, kind-hearted woman and so a close friendship soon flourished between the two couples.<sup>18</sup> In addition, they came into close contact with two other families, the Friesian Dr Folker who taught at the *Realschule* and his old friend Richard Möller. The four men were all strongly interested in academic research and each had a different area of expertise: Folker was a folklorist, Kolz was familiar with both English and German literary history and Möller immersed himself in the study of modern political history, such as the Bismarck era. But of all, the Huhnhäuser were closest to the Kolz family and Huhnhäuser was godfather to their second son, who was called Andrees at his suggestion.

It was, he states, a direct consequence of the war that social life in the first few years following 1918 flourished in comparison to more peaceful periods: “Der Lebenshunger will gestillt sein.” (LRF, p. 195) The Huhnhäuser also found time to attend parties and social evenings in the immediate post-war years, when those who could afford it would provide their guests with the best in the way of luxuries. But these light-hearted entertainments, which did not impinge upon his more serious commitments, soon stopped and were quickly forgotten.

The composer Emil Mattiesen played a very influential role in Huhnhäuser’s life, until his death in September 1939.<sup>19</sup> Their friendship developed during the war and continued for over twenty years, despite the fact that — or perhaps because —

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<sup>18</sup> Melms corresponds with a woman named Aline from Rostock during the war, but does not mention a surname.

<sup>19</sup> Huhnhäuser wrote an article on Mattiesen to celebrate his fiftieth birthday. It appeared in the

geographical distance kept them frequently apart. When he returned to Rostock from Munich, where he moved in 1921, Huhnhäuser was living in Breslau. It was not until Huhnhäuser was transferred to Berlin in 1935 that the two men were able to see each other regularly: “Wie reich an Ausbeute hätte diese Freundschaft werden können, wenn man ständig an einunddemselben Ort gewohnt hätte!” (p. 207) Mattiesen was, in Huhnhäuser’s opinion, an exceptional person who was gifted in many areas other than his specialities of philosophy and music. He had travelled extensively in his youth as a ship’s doctor, and wrote an extensive work on parapsychology called *Der jenseitige Mensch* which appeared in 1925. Huhnhäuser likens Mattiesen’s style as a composer to that of Hugo Wolf, and like Wolf, he also almost exclusively composed songs. Huhnhäuser discusses some of Mattiesen’s compositions: his first work was called “Balladen vom Tode”. He considers the ballad “Lenore von Bürger” to be particularly well crafted; he talks also of Mattiesen’s Opus 2 in which he regards the most beautiful song as “Tod im Ähren”, written by Liliencron. To the “Balladen vom Tode” were added the “Balladen der Liebe”, which consisted of three songs, one of which was the Goethe ballad “Der Gott und die Bajadere”. Huhnhäuser attributes the lack of popularity of these songs, some of which he regards as masterpieces, to the fact that they are difficult to perform. He frequently had the opportunity to study some of the songs with Mattiesen (or Tiensen, as he is affectionately called). They also studied some pieces from Schubert’s *Winterreise* together. Huhnhäuser recalls these memories fondly, and remarks on how wonderful it would have been if he had been able to grow old with his friend: “Das Schicksal hatte es anders beschlossen.” (LRF, p. 215)

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*Rostocker Anzeiger* on 24 January 1925.

Huhnhäuser remained close friends with his colleague Franz Weber for as long as the latter remained in Rostock. They were brought even closer together by the concern they shared for the welfare of the *Redaria*, the academic choral society attached to the university. Huhnhäuser had been made an honorary member some years before. Soon after the war, the *Redaria*, in common with many of the other flag-carrying student organizations, began to flourish and the old A.G.V *Redaria* was replaced by the new *Burschenschaft Redaria*. Unfortunately this change caused a split within the society, and some of the older members who remained loyal to the old *Sonderhäuserverband* left to form their own society. At first Huhnhäuser felt the change had come at the wrong time, because he believed that there were many aspects of the colours principle which were out of step with the present day. However, when he learned that the *Redaria* had joined the old fraternity movement, represented by the *Bubenreuther* in Erlangen, the *Arminen* in Jena, the *Alemannen* in Bonn and the *Razceks* in Breslau, he decided to accept the honorary membership offered to him.

Huhnhäuser and Weber were entrusted with the task of finding a suitable house for the society to buy, which had sufficient rooms and space for the society to meet and also to offer accommodation to those members who were less well off. Both men found this idea out-dated in a time of economic hardship. When they found a house which suited all their requirements they did not have enough money to purchase it, and so approached the Rostock industrialist and liberal Friedrich Karl Witte. He received them very graciously but felt compelled to refuse their request, as he did not approve of the direction the *Redaria* had taken and had consequently left the organization. Huhnhäuser greatly admired Witte, and he was impressed by his conduct: “Auch hier verleugnete sich der alte Demokrat nicht.” (LRF,

p. 200) Huhnhäuser and Weber were now forced to look for smaller premises and had to drop the idea of a hostel. They soon found a two-storey house which met their revised requirements. By investing in this property, the society's funds were saved from the ravages of inflation and the *Redaria* was well-housed for several years. Later they were able to buy a larger house and the society remained there until it, and all the other student societies, fell victim to the National Socialist revolution.

Amongst the younger “Altherrenschaft” in the *Redaria* were a number of former *Frontsoldaten*, who were eager to become involved in educating the students. They arranged for papers to be read and lectures to be given in the society’s new house. Huhnhäuser spoke several times, and each time his theme was selected passages from Fichte’s speeches on the German nation, which he had first read in a historical seminar with Reincke-Bloch. From the reaction of the students and the other members of the society he soon realized that he had chosen the correct topic. He remarks that recently in Nuremberg a Frenchman referred to Fichte’s writings as the root of National Socialism, but that he had forgotten to mention Fichte’s speeches were only made in response to Napoleonic oppression. Huhnhäuser believes, moreover, that the speeches contain many wonderful ideas on “Volk” and “Volkstum”, (LRF, p. 202) and that it was with regards to these basic ideas that National Socialism lost its way: “indem er fremdes Volkstum nicht so hoch achtete wie das eigene, es vielmehr mit Füßen trat, und daran ist er letzten Endes in diesem Kriege gescheitert und hat das deutsche Volk mit sich in den Abgrund gerissen.” (LRF, p. 202) It is significant that he suggests here that the Germans were destroyed by National Socialism, thus denying the charismatic thrall in which Hitler held the German people. He was the strong leader so many from Huhnhäuser’s class had long desired and they willingly

and enthusiastically supported him and his Party.

At this time Huhnhäuser was introduced by Weber to pamphlets and publications “welche sich mit der Juden- und Freimaurer- Frage befaßten.” (LRF, p. 202) For the first time in his life he heard the names of anti-Semitic publications such as *Glocke und Hammer* and *Geheimnisse der Weisen von Zion*. He claims that he had been immunized against this poison as a child and remained unaffected by this “bacteria”. As a small boy he was taken by his parents to visit their Jewish friends in Demmin and he remained in contact with this family [the Davidsohns] as an adult. He had, moreover, a great admiration for his friend and mentor Reincke-Bloch — an assimilated Baptist — who showed “daß ein edler Jude deutsches Wesen und deutsche Art ebenso gut verkörperte wie der beste Deutsche” (LRF, p. 203). Huhnhäuser does not seem to notice that he is, by implication, denying Reincke-Bloch the right to be considered German by such remarks. Reincke-Bloch was a practising Christian but he was judged and labelled according to his origins. The message Huhnhäuser conveys runs along the lines of “despite not being one of us, he is as good as the best of us”. This was most probably a very positive attitude for the period, but the modern reader is immediately aware of the hidden prejudice in the statement. He claims that he was properly equipped to remain unaffected by this anti-Semitic propaganda but that many were not: “Nichts ist hier gefährlicher als die Halbbildung. Das haben wir in unserer Zeit zur Genüge erlebt.” (LRF, p. 203) He is, presumably, referring here to the Nazi leaders and their contempt for intellectuals and academic study. But despite his avowed lack of prejudice, he discusses the Jewish question nevertheless:

Es ist bekanntlich ein großer Unterschied zwischen Ost- und Westjuden, und die letzteren lehnen ihre östlichen Glaubensgenossen selber ab. Unter dem

Druck der russischen Revolution und auch aus dem neugebildeten polnischen Staat wanderten damals viele Ostjuden in Deutschland ein. Hier hätte der Staat eingreifen und die Grenze sperren müssen, freilich ein schwieriges Unterfangen im Zeichen des Versailler Friedensvertrages. Nun aber kamen allerhand minderwertige Existenzen ins Reich hinein, machten sich die Notlage des deutschen Volkes zu nutze, und bald eroberte sie weitere Positionen, so daß gegen Ende der zwanziger Jahre in einigen Großstädten die führenden Stellungen überwiegend in jüdischen Händen waren. Bei der führenden Presse, im Theaterleben und auch zum Teil auf den Hochschulen konnte man das Gleiche feststellen. Es war auch nicht uninteressant zu sehen, wie die alteingesessenen jüdischen Familien sich von den Neureichen absonderten. Alle diese Fragen beschäftigten mich in jenen Jahren nicht; denn bei uns in Mecklenburg gab es keine Judenfrage. Als sie dann 1926 in Breslau an mich sichtbar herantrat, habe ich mir wohl hin und wieder Gedanken darüber gemacht, aber bei den engen Beziehungen, die wir dort mit einigen jüdischen Freunden hatten, trat alles andere demgegenüber in den Hintergrund. Überhaupt war ich auf Grund meiner humanitären Einstellung jeder radikalen Lösung abhold und lehnte infolgedessen den Antisemitismus ab. (LRF, pp. 203-04)

This passage gives us a very lucid insight into Huhnhäuser's attitudes towards the Jews.<sup>20</sup> It is unclear to what extent these feelings are the result of twelve years of living in a racist state where anti-Semitic language became part of the every-day vernacular, and to what extent he resented the prominence of Jews in public life. The remark he makes concerning the latter reflects the sentiments of anti-Semites who used such claims to arouse public feeling. He equates anti-Semitism with violence and does not recognize that someone with Jewish friends can be anti-Semitic. He is oblivious to the fact that he is prejudiced, just as he does not recognize that he is political.

He claims that his opposition to Freemasonry was also not political, but rather personal. His father-in-law had often urged him to join and Huhnhäuser was attracted by the

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<sup>20</sup> Huhnhäuser claims there were few Jews in Rostock and therefore, that the Jewish question was irrelevant. However, Rostock University is listed as one of the most anti-Semitic in the country at that period. See Peter Gay, *Weimar Culture* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1974), p. 45.

charitable work of the organization: “denn was kann wohl schöner sein, als andern Menschen zu helfen!”<sup>21</sup> (LRF, p. 205) However, the secret nature of the society repelled him. Furthermore, there were two other reasons why he did not wish to join, one professional and the other personal. Professionally he was already extremely busy and was in danger of overstretching himself with every new task he accepted. His personal reasons were connected with his father. His membership had been blocked by an opponent and he had remained bitter about this for the rest of his life. Huhnhäuser admits that this reason is childish, but that nevertheless he felt it would be disloyal to his father to join. (This is one further example of the huge influence his father exerted upon him, even after his death.) Hence, he is at pains to stress that any opposition to Freemasonry he may have held had no connection to the politics of the NSDAP.

### **Haus und Familie**

Huhnhäuser recognizes that he could not have coped with such a heavy workload after the war, if it had not been for his happy family life. His “kleine Melms” (LRF, p. 241) was not only an excellent housewife, but also remained his dearest companion, with whom he could discuss anything if he needed advice and who took a lively interest in all that concerned him. She was an excellent mother to the girls, managing to raise them well on relatively limited means: “und wenn diese in späteren Jahren in ihrer Mutter ihre beste Freundin erblickten, so war das nichts anderes als das in sie hineingepflanzte Vertrauen, das nun seine Früchte

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<sup>21</sup> The affidavits prove that Huhnhäuser did indeed do much to help people in Norway during the

trug.” (LRF, p. 241) The children were two “liebe Wesen”. They were easy to bring up and, looking back, he can think of nothing they ever did intentionally to cause him any pain or sadness.

During this time Heidi’s health was causing them some concern. Although she had had an operation in 1917 which had stemmed the progress of her complaint, she was still developing very slowly. So worried were her parents that they sent her to a renowned specialist in Berlin but this only made her worse, as she pined for her family. Fortunately they eventually found her a doctor in Friedenau, Dr Bosses, under whose care she flourished. Towards the end of the war they also found a benefactor in Dr Kühn, who was caring for Huhnhäuser’s heart condition. He prescribed for Heidi a long-term treatment of exposure to ultra violet light, and also arranged for a litre of milk to be delivered to the family every day from his clinic’s supply — a considerable help during those times of shortage. The garden provided plenty of opportunity for the girls to enjoy the fresh air and when Heidi grew strong enough to join in the games of the other children, there was soon a group of youngsters from the neighbourhood who played together, usually on the lawn outside the Huhnhäuser’s home. Inge soon became a leader amongst the other children but she remained always very protective towards her older sister and looked after her: “wie eine kleine Puppenmutter ihre Lieblingspuppe.” (LRF, p. 246)

Inge’s little idiosyncrasy was to create new words out of those she could not say properly; “fürleicht” in place of “vielleicht”, for example. As was the case with Heidi, Huhnhäuser did not record Inge’s development in writing, but did jot down all her malapropisms in a notebook. The *Alexandrinenstrasse*, where they lived, was devoid of

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occupation.



meaning for her and so she transformed it into the “Altehexstinenstraße”, and she could make little of the word “Bauchfelltuberkulose”, the condition from which her sister suffered. As a result she told others that Heidi was suffering from “Bauchborkeltulose”. Huhn Häuser remarks that he can only record here a little of the great enriching experience with which the girls provided them, but he recalls one of their childhood habits with particular fondness:

Allmählich wagten sich die Kinder vom Hause fort, und sie hatten, ich weiß nicht wie, meinen Schulweg ausfindig gemacht. Jedenfalls entdeckte ich eines Tages meine beiden Sprößlinge, schmutzig, wie sie vom Spielen kamen, vor dem Schultor; sie hatten sicher schon eine Weile gewartet, und strahlten vor Freude, als ich endlich heraus kam. Fortan stellten sie sich nun täglich ein, und mir fehlte etwas, wenn die beiden Kleinen einmal nicht zur Stelle waren. (LRF, p. 248)

He talks also of the photograph album he compiled, containing pictures of his two girls in their earliest childhood. He recalls in particular one photograph he took of Heidi when she was taking a nap one afternoon, tired out from playing, her beautiful face, he states, framed by her golden shimmering curls. And he laments the fact that he is no longer surrounded by this and other treasured possessions: “Was würde ich geben, wenn ich dieses Bild heute besitzen könnte!” (LRF, p. 248)

## **Ausklang**

In the late autumn of 1921, Huhn Häuser was faced with making a fateful decision. As a candidate of the *Deutsche Volkspartei*, Reincke-Bloch had become the Education Minister

for Mecklenburg some time before. Consequently, when the position of headmaster of the Mecklenburg *Lehrerseminar* in Neukloster, near Wismar, became vacant, Huhnhäuser was recommended by his friend for the position. The previous incumbent, Klaehn, had been promoted to *Landesschulrat* in the Ministry. Following an inspection visit by Klaehn and Reincke-Bloch to an *Oberstufe* History class, he was called to Schwerin and offered the job. He was given the opportunity to visit Neukloster before he made his decision. His immediate reaction upon his return was to turn down the offer, as he did not wish to move to such a small rural backwater, far from the cultural events which had become such an important part of his life in Rostock. On reflection, however, he began to change his mind. This was his first promoted post and, moreover, was a position with very good prospects. He felt that perhaps he owed it to his family to accept. But Huhnhäuser also felt that he would be sacrificing a huge amount if he had to leave Rostock and give up his many fruitful activities and projects, and that his wife and children would be similarly affected. The children were due to start school at Easter — Heidi's illness had rendered her too frail to begin her schooling any earlier, hence she would begin with her younger sister. His decision, therefore, held serious consequences for all of them. After much thought on the matter, he finally wrote to Reincke-Bloch after fourteen days, explaining why he felt he must refuse the offer. Relieved, he believed that the issue was settled once and for all.

This was not to be the case, however, and Huhnhäuser was summoned back to Schwerin where he was received in Reincke-Bloch's ministerial apartment. This time Reincke-Bloch appealed to his sense of duty: "Man dürfe in solchen Zeiten nicht nur an sein eigenes Wohl denken, sondern habe dem Staat gegenüber, wenn dieser es verlange, seine Pflicht zu erfüllen." (LRF, p. 251) It was a great task for which Huhnhäuser had been

selected and he did not have the right to refuse. Laden with new doubts, Huhnhäuser returned to Rostock to reconsider his position. His closest colleagues advised him to accept. Finally he asked his friend Mattiesen; he would not give him any advice, for he said that it was Huhnhäuser's decision alone, but quoted the words of the Bible: "Was hülfe es dem Menschen, wenn er die ganze Welt gewönne und nähme doch Schaden an einer Seele?" (LRF, p. 252) As a result Huhnhäuser declined the offer again. But his refusal was not accepted and when he was asked again for the third time he finally gave in and agreed to take the job.

He was informed that he was to take up his new post on 1 January 1922, which left him only a short time to make all the necessary arrangements. His family could not join him until May, when the headmaster's flat would finally become vacant. Only when he had finally made the decision did it become completely clear to him what he was giving up by making this step. It meant leaving behind the house they had bought; they had only recently finished altering it to their specifications and now they were going to have to leave it after such a short time of enjoying the fruits of their labour. Heavier still weighed the consideration that the children were losing their house and their home, Rostock, all at once. Huhnhäuser and Melms were giving up a lifestyle and social circle that had become very familiar to them, and in which they felt comfortable. The departure, therefore, was going to be very painful. The owner of the *Rostocker Anzeiger* made one last attempt to keep Huhnhäuser by offering to raise considerably the fee for each opera review, for he was aware, as he explained to Huhnhäuser, that he was very popular with the readers. Huhnhäuser was extremely flattered but it could not influence the decision he had already made. Nevertheless, he was also very sorry to be leaving this occupation behind.

At the *Realgymnasium* his colleagues arranged a special farewell evening for him. *Direktor* Arendt made a speech in which he expressed his hope that he would see Huhnhäuser return one day to take over the running of the school. Huhnhäuser's response to this idea indicates clearly that he was still less than enthusiastic about leaving Rostock to take on this new task: "Das war eine schöne Aussicht und ein kleiner Trost." (LRF, p. 254) And then came the day of his departure. He set off alone, not with a happy heart, but full of melancholy. As the towers of the old *Hanse* town disappeared, the truth of John Brinckmann's words was confirmed to him: "O Rostock, min oll Väderstadt, ick heww Di gor to leew." Huhnhäuser ends this section of the memoirs with the remark that he has loved Rostock since his childhood and this love has never left him: "und wer diese Erinnerungen liest, wird die Wahrheit dieser Behauptung bestätigt finden." (LRF, p. 254)

Huhnhäuser never returned to live in Rostock following his departure for Neukloster, although the family retained possession of the house. They returned to visit, of course, and, as Alexander Peden recollects, in the last months of Inge's life she loved to sit in the sun in her grandfather's garden. At the time of writing this chapter of the memoirs Huhnhäuser had not been to Rostock for several years, but he was aware of how badly it had been affected by the Allied bombing raids through letters which his wife sent to him in 1942 when she was visiting her family there. He had, claims Peden, vowed never to return to Rostock for the town he knew and loved had been destroyed. He wanted to remember Rostock as it had been and did not wish to be confronted with the painful sight of the town in ruins. The family home in *Alexandrinestraße*, renamed *Blücherstraße* after the war, was requisitioned by the state and Heidi attempted to win compensation for this loss until the mid-seventies. The house was apparently sold to relatives of the Huhnhäusers after this and

is still standing today.

## **Summary**

This section of the memoirs concentrates heavily upon the working life of Huhnhäuser and there is little mention of his family. It is clear that these years were a time of great creativity for him professionally, as the sub-title, "Drei schaffensreiche Jahre", suggests. His lack of political involvement and his unpolitical nature are frequently stressed in his account of these years, but this may have much to do with the fact that he is writing in 1946 as an Allied prisoner. It is clear from what he writes in the back of this notebook concerning the present day that he is frequently depressed and is finding it difficult to cope with his confinement. In addition, he appears to have little direct contact with his wife, causing him to worry about her welfare, and his own health is very poor.

Huhnhäuser continues to maintain that he is by his very nature "unpolitical", citing the example of how he rejected the proposal that he stand as a candidate for one of the political committees representing teachers which were so prolific at that time. He claims that he feels closest politically to the liberals of 1848 who represented his ideal of national democratic politics. He jokingly declares that he was born one hundred years too late, and indeed, Huhnhäuser often does seem at odds with the world around him. He does not comment upon the evident paradox inherent in the fact that a man who declares himself inherently unpolitical chooses also to identify himself with the spirit of an age of political revolution. Nor does he reconcile this claim with his membership of the NSDAP, to which

he does not refer. He does make the claim, however, that he only ever attended one political meeting voluntarily. He admits that the orator, an Independent Social Democrat, maligned those things he held most dear but does not seem to connect this with the fact that he himself holds essentially right-wing, conservative views.

The effects of the war brought about many changes in the *Realgymnasium* where Huhnhäuser worked, not least the death of his friend and colleague, Bök. He observes that the introduction of many reforms was thwarted by the civil servants who disapproved of the measures, but believes that this had the beneficial effect of slowing down the pace of change. He cites the example of the *Einheitsschule* as a reform which carried with it serious social consequences, in effect declaring that German society could not remain stable if equal educational opportunities for all social classes were provided. However, the reformers were able to make certain basic improvements, such as the introduction of the *Grund-* and *Mittelschulen* and Huhnhäuser gives these new developments his cautious approval. He observes that political pressures never interfered with his work, and recalls that, in general, there was no direct conflict between the new government and the civil service, and that teachers were still held in high esteem.

Huhnhäuser began to develop his own teaching methods during this period, and experimented with his material and style of delivery. The results he obtained were highly satisfactory. His ability was recognized when he was placed in charge of the practical and theoretical training of new teachers of German and History. He further added to his workload by taking on the position of assistant for Scandinavian languages at the university. In hindsight he is amazed by the diversity and quantity of his intellectual activity during this period, suggesting that this may have been a reaction to the war. In 1918 he had again

considered becoming a doctor, and writes of this desire with some regret in 1946, firstly because he feels he had a gift which was not developed, and secondly because he regards the medical profession as being much freer from political influence.

Huhnhäuser's list of publications grew rapidly during these three years, and much of his work related to North German literary and historical topics. He was involved in the *Heimatabewegung* which thrived in Mecklenburg, as in all German states, at that time, taking part in many cultural events and even becoming involved in the "Rostocker Läuschenkrieg" (see Chapter 2). Huhnhäuser expresses the concern he felt in later years that such *Volkskunde* movements could be exploited for political aims, but feels overall that the *Heimatabewegungen* played a valuable role in the cultural regeneration of the German people. The post of opera critic at the *Rostocker Anzeiger* provided Huhnhäuser with many challenges, both musical and journalistic. He took his responsibilities to both the artists and the public very seriously, endeavouring always to be fair, and appears to have been very popular with his readership. As his musical knowledge increased he became aware of his own deficiencies as an amateur performer, and consequently retired from singing in public. Huhnhäuser comments that the financial rewards for his work as a music critic were slight, but that this was never a consideration for him when accepting work. He is a little self-critical of this character trait, believing that he should perhaps have taken the financial needs of his family into greater account.

The social life of the Huhnhäusers after the war was initially rather frenetic; the bourgeoisie celebrated the peace by entertaining extravagantly. New friendships were formed during this period, including the influential relationship with the composer Emil Mattiesen. Through his friend and colleague, Franz Weber, Huhnhäuser became actively

involved with the *Redaria*, an academic choral society. Weber also introduced him to anti-Semitic literature, but Huhnhäuser claims his upbringing and subsequent friendship with Reincke-Bloch rendered him immune to its message. However, it is clear from remarks he makes throughout the memoirs that, despite what he might wish to think, Huhnhäuser is not without prejudice. What cannot be ascertained is the extent of the effect of the anti-Semitic Nazi propaganda upon Huhnhäuser. In contrast, the strength of his father's influence upon him is illustrated by the fact that Huhnhäuser feels it would be disloyal to join the Freemasons, given that his father's membership bid was opposed.

References to his family are sparse in this chapter, but he does recollect that his family life was very happy and gave him the energy to cope with the demands of his professional life. He appears to be extremely fond of his wife and two girls, although he must surely have been able to devote little time to them. Heidi's health caused them a great deal of concern, but despite the food shortages she did eventually regain her strength. The whole family was affected by the development in his career, when he was finally persuaded by Reincke-Bloch to accept the position of headmaster at Neukloster. This involved a huge upheaval for them all, but Huhnhäuser also had to consider the financial benefits. When, in January 1922, Huhnhäuser left behind the familiar environment of Rostock to take up the challenge of running a *Seminar* in the cultural backwater of Neukloster, he did so with great apprehension. This apprehension was to prove by no means fully unjustified.



## CHAPTER FIVE

### Direktor, 1922 to 1928

#### Introduction

This final chapter of the memoirs is written in two sections. The first section concerns Huhnhäuser's time at Neukloster, as head of the Mecklenburg *Lehrerseminar*, where he remained from January 1922 to January 1926. He then moved to Prussia, to become head of a *Gymnasium* in Breslau, but remained there for less than two years before he took up a new position in Koblenz as a school inspector. The autobiographical memoirs end abruptly during his time in Breslau. All German headings used here are taken directly from the memoirs. Those in English are the work of the present author.

#### Auftakt in Neukloster

Huhnhäuser's journey to Neukloster was a melancholy one in which he had had much time to lament "das verlorene Paradies" (DN, p. 1) of Rostock. His first concern was his inaugural speech, which he had chosen to base on the writings of Fichte. He was familiar with Fichte's speeches through his activities with the *Redaria* and now he wished to give these thoughts the correct form: "und sie in lebendige Beziehung zu bringen zu dem Geist der Anstalt, deren Leistung ich übernahm." (DN, p. 1) The first few months he spent at Neukloster were lonely ones for Huhnhäuser, "meine Familie fehlte mir auf Schritt und Tritt" (DN, p. 7), and he had to cope, in addition, with many problems, including interference by the wife of the former headmaster, who had not yet joined her husband in

Schwerin. One political event from this period stands out in his mind. On 27 January, shortly after his arrival, Huhnhäuser received a deputation of older students, some of whom had fought at the front. This was the date of the Kaiser's birthday, and the students requested permission to hold a torchlight procession which would culminate at the Friedrich-Franz II monument in the grounds of the *Seminar*, where they intended to throw down their torches. Whilst he claims his attitude was "innerlich ablehnend", he told the students that he would have to consult the Ministry before he could make a decision. This delegation had scarcely left his office, when the seminarists' representative came in a state of agitation to see him and informed him that some "extrem Gerichtete" were planning a procession, and that if this were allowed to go ahead, all those who were of a different political persuasion would demonstrate against it. Huhnhäuser's reaction is typical both of the turbulent political situation at that time, and of his own attitude towards all things political, expressed repeatedly throughout the memoirs, which is to portray himself as uninvolved and untainted by any political association:

Das war eine für mich äußerst peinliche Situation. Ich tat zunächst, was man als pflichttreuer, gut erzogener Beamter zu tun gewohnt war: ich rief Landesschulrat Klaehn in Ministerium an und erhoffte von ihm das befreiende Wort und eine mich entlastende Weisung. Aber anstatt dessen wickelte er sich in einen Schelm und teilte mir salomonisch mit, daß man das nur örtlich entscheiden könne, denn von zentraler Stelle aus ließen sich die Dinge nicht übersehen. Dies war natürlich eine gemeine Drückebergerei, da Herr Klaehn, der 14 Jahre in Neukloster regiert hatte, die örtlichen Verhältnisse weit besser kannte, als ich, der ich kaum 14 Tage im Amte war. So erfuhr ich zum ersten Male an dieser Stelle, daß ich an meinem Vorgesetzten in entscheidenden Fällen keinen Rückhalt finden würde, eine Beobachtung, die ich noch häufig in diesen Neuklosterer Jahren habe machen müssen. (DN, pp. 7-8)

Thus Huhnhäuser had no option but to resolve this conflict alone. He gathered the teachers and students together, and informed them that anyone taking part in a political demonstration would be expelled from the *Seminar*, and that he would not tolerate any such demonstrations amongst the students or within Neukloster's grounds. He observes that his words were sharp, but they allowed him to assert his authority upon the *Seminar*, and as there were no further consequences, the authorities were satisfied with his actions. As a direct result of this affair, however, Huhnhäuser was suspected in right-wing circles of being a "Roter".

Another event he recounts, from the cultural sphere, took place not in Neukloster but in Rostock. In early spring 1922, a week of festivities was organized to mark the twenty-fifth anniversary of Rostock's *Stadttheater*. Huhnhäuser was invited to attend and was asked at the same time to write some reviews for the *Rostocker Anzeiger*. He was delighted to be able to do this, but this brief return to the way of life he had left behind made him realize exactly what he had given up and how much he had lost: "Erst jetzt, als ich wieder mit meiner Frau auf den alten, uns so vertrauten Plätzen saß, spürte ich, was mir verloren gegangen war und beklagte innerlich aufs bitterste den getanen, nicht wieder rückgängig zu machenden Schritt." (DN, p. 11)

### **Der flecken Neukloster und ein Rundgang durch das Seminar**

As the name indicates, Neukloster was originally a Cistercian convent. There were some

two thousand people living in and around Neukloster. The village comprised of little more than one long main street, two inns, a post office and a shop. The *Seminar*, founded by Archduke Friedrich-Franz II., a contemporary of the old Kaiser Wilhelm, lay in enclosed grounds, which encompassed a large lake encircled by meadows, which were in turn surrounded by forest. (On leaving Neukloster Huhnhäuser's staff presented him with an album of photographs of Neukloster and the grounds. This album is one of many still extant in the Huhnhäuser archive.) The *Seminar*'s complex of buildings contained classrooms and an assembly hall, as well as accommodation for both pupils and teachers. Most of the boys were boarders and a dormitory and living room was shared between every four. A *Volksschule*, in which the students taught classes as part of their training, was connected to the *Seminar* and a commercial farm was also attached. This was quite separate from the kitchen gardens which provided much of the food required to feed staff and boarders.

### **Unsere Wohnung**

Huhnhäuser regards his home as having been "die Quelle aller Kraft" (DN, p. 21) throughout his life, perhaps more at this point than ever before. The past few lonely months without his family around him had taught him: "was ein glückliches Familienleben für einen schaffenden Menschen zu bedeuten hat." When he returned to Rostock to assist Melms with the removal, he found her in a state of such despair that he sent her to recuperate with a friend in Berlin while he took charge of all the arrangements. Her

absence was a “lehrreiche und schmerzliche Erfahrung” for both him and the children and he realized that Melms was “die Seele dieses Lebens” (DN, p. 22).

The new flat was certainly the largest and grandest in which Huhnhäuser had ever lived, although not the most comfortable. Ideally, two servants were required to help with the upkeep but this had now become an unaffordable luxury. Huhnhäuser comments: “Wir waren ein armes Volk nach dem Kriege geworden, das nicht mehr in Goldmünze ausbezahlt wurde, sondern mit dem ständig vermehrten und dadurch entwerteten Papiergeld das Notwendigste für seinen Unterhalt erwarb.” (DN, p. 22) Apart from the financial aspect, Huhnhäuser adds that they also did not feel inclined to change the way they lived by operating on such an ostentatious level, and so were satisfied with engaging the services of a young girl from Rostock, Martha Bliesener, who had helped out on a daily basis when they lived in the *Alexandrinestraße*. There was a great deal of work involved in running this household, which for some, in Huhnhäuser’s opinion inexplicable, reason did not have any indoor plumbing, but they were lucky enough to have one of the caretakers from the *Seminar* to bring them water every day. Melms did not shy away from taking on her share of the hard tasks. Huhnhäuser observes that he did not notice any of the effort which went into the smooth running of the household behind the scenes and states that there cannot be greater praise than this for a housewife. The garden provided them with all they could eat by way of vegetables, potatoes, berries and other fruits. They were even able to sell some of their leftover apples to the village: “Alles das bot eine wesentliche Erleichterung für den Haushalt, besonders in den drückenden Inflationsjahren.” (DN, p. 34)

Huhnhäuser decided to commandeer the *Seminar*’s guest room as his official office

for he wanted to keep his home as a place to relax and escape from the pressures of work. But in breaking with tradition in this way, he inadvertently managed to annoy his predecessor, Klaehn, who was now obliged to pay for his accommodation out of his overnight expenses any time he was required to come to the *Seminar*. This, states Huhnhäuser, was certainly “schmerzhaft empfunden” (DN, p. 27) and he believes this was probably held against him by Klaehn: “Aber davon ahnte meine Seele damals noch nichts; denn ich befand mich noch in dem paradiesischen Zustand, in dem man an die Güte des Menschenherzens glaubt.” (DN, p. 27)

### **Das Seminar und die damalige Lehrerbildung**

The *Landeslehrerseminar* for Mecklenburg-Schwerin was a state institution. Huhnhäuser was the fifth head of the *Seminar*; the previous four had all been theologians, which indicates, in his opinion, the closeness of the links between church and school at that time. *Volksschule* education had also basically been the domain of the theologians, but times had now changed, comments Huhnhäuser, and this signalled a new era for teacher-training institutions. Huhnhäuser adds that he does not wish to offend his predecessors with this or any other remarks, “denn man darf nicht vergessen, wenn die mecklenburgische Volksbildung nicht hinter der anderer Länder zurückstand, so war das doch im wesentlichen ein Verdienst der Volksschullehrerschaft” (DN, p. 36), who had received their training almost exclusively at Neukloster, but he believes that the system was flawed, and the reason lies not just with the headmasters but with their appointed staff. Typically,

the teachers at the *Seminar* were former *Volksschullehrer* who had at some point passed the *Mittelschullehrer* exam and had been appointed to the *Seminar* on the basis of personal efficiency as specialist subject teachers. Without ever having come into contact with a university, these men became, often for decades, the educators of each new generation of teachers. Huhnhäuser believes that this shows clearly the weakness of the system. The teachers lacked academic training and: “damit das Vermögen, das Wichtige vom Unwichtigen und das Richtige vom Falschen zu unterscheiden.” (DN, p. 38) As a result, their students were, of course, also unable to exercise sound judgement on these matters, for they had not been taught how to do so. The teachers who fared best were those who restricted themselves in their lessons solely to the subject matter, but it was easier to do this in some subjects than in others:

Wenn man im Scherz oft unsern Volksschullehrern zum Vorwurf gemacht hat, daß der liebe Gott alles, der Volksschullehrer aber alles besser wisse, so liegt hinter diesem Scherz wie so oft eine tiefere Wahrheit verborgen, nämlich die Tatsache, daß der Volksschullehrer auf fast allen Gebieten auf Grund eines eingedrillten Lehrbuchwissens sich zu Hause fühlte und in dem Glauben an seine Vielwisserei in der glücklichen Lage war, nichts zu ahnen von den Rätseln dieser Welt und den Problemen, mit denen die Wissenschaft täglich zu ringen hat. Wächst doch erst mit zunehmender Erkenntnis das Gefühl des Nichtwissens, und nur der Nichtwissende fühlt sich glücklich und frei. So waren letzten Endes die alten Seminare Stätten der Halbbildung, und die Gefahren solcher Halbbildung hat wohl kaum ein Deutscher so scharf durchschaut und angeprangert wie Goethe in gelegentlichen Äußerungen. (DN, pp. 38-39)

He concludes his remarks on this topic by expressing his intention to return to this problem, whose solution he considers to be one of the most difficult matters in the education system.

The pupils in the *Seminar*, under the system which was in place on Huhnhäuser's arrival, had all performed well in the *Volksschule* and been accepted into the teaching seminary on passing the entrance examination. The new arrivals were, on average, fourteen years of age. They spent the next three years in the *Präparandum*, where they prepared for the *Seminar*. If they were successful here the boys then went into the rural *Volksschulen* as assistants to the village schoolteachers to gain two years of practical experience. This was quite a good arrangement in Huhnhäuser's opinion, for when the boys came to the *Seminar* enriched by two years of practical experience they were able to see their lessons in educational theory in a completely different light. Huhnhäuser had taught many such classes and found himself impressed by the maturity of the boys and was able to work just as well with them as with pupils of the same age in a secondary school. Huhnhäuser comments that he believes a teacher-trainer who subscribed to modern theories would, on reading his unfashionable and out-dated opinions on the subject, like best to "stone" him (his own image) but his response to such a person would be that he too once belonged to the "modernists" and had believed in constant progress: "Heute nach jahrzehntelangen Erfahrungen wage ich zu behaupten, daß auch Veraltetes gut gewesen sein kann. 'Prüfet alles und behaltet das beste.' Diesen Grundsatz sollte man sich auch im Bildungswesen stets vor Augen halten." (DN, p. 41)

The final part of the training in the *Seminar* lasted for two years. In addition to the subjects required by the *Volksschule* — religion, German, history, geography, arithmetic, biology and physics — particular emphasis was laid during these two years on educational theory, mainly the history of educational theory and psychology, as well as on the teaching methodology of the *Volksschule* subjects. Thus there was a wealth of different areas to



master, which left no time to study subjects in depth. In addition to this came the lessons the students were required to teach in the *Volksschule* attached to the *Seminar*. This left little option, states Huhnhäuser, but to drill the contents of a text book into the students in every subject: “Auf diese Weise war dann wenigstens der für den späteren Schulunterricht notwendige Wissensstoff einigermaßen gesichert.” (DN, p. 42)

When Huhnhäuser took over as head of the *Seminar* there were five university graduates, and seven *Seminar*-trained teachers on the staff. They were all good teachers and, with one exception, were of pleasant dispositions and not too difficult to lead with skilful handling. Huhnhäuser’s recollections of his staff are interesting because they shed some light upon the attitudes and social customs of the educated bourgeoisie in the early Weimar years. He mentions, for example, the petty social jealousies which led to a craving for status amongst the civil servants. It was during this period that:

man in der deutschen Beamtenschaft von der Titelwut befallen wurde. Alles strebte höher hinauf [...]. Aus den Oberlehrern [...] wurden nun Studienräte — eine greuliche Bezeichnung — aber man mußte den andern Räten — z.B. den Amtsgerichtsräten — gleichsein, und in Anlehnung an die Amtsbezeichnungen bei den Juristen gab es fortan auch bei den Philologen keine Seminar- und Probekandidaten mehr, sondern nur noch Studienreferendare und Studienassessoren. [...] Selber hatte ich glücklicherweise niemals die Bezeichnung “Studienrat” führen müssen. Nun aber fiel auch meine Amtsbezeichnung “Seminardirektor”, worunter sich jeder etwas vorstellen konnte, und an ihre Stelle trat das nichts besagende “Studiendirektor”. (DN, pp. 49-50)

It is interesting to note that he chooses to name the university trained teachers first, and only then turns to the teachers trained in the *Seminar*. The hierarchy of teacher training

seems clearly fixed in his mind, but this attention to status was most certainly in keeping with the customs of the time. However, he describes his favourite amongst the *Seminarlehrer*, the drawing master Boldt, as being his ideal teacher: punctual, conscientious to the last detail, always the first to volunteer his services when required. Huhnhäuser concludes his overview of his colleagues by remarking that as they not only worked, but also lived together their relationships were more complicated than would be the case in a normal day school. And as most of the men were married, this not only affected him but also his wife. It cost them both a great deal of effort to keep their relationships with the other members of staff on an even keel, but he adds that his wife proved to be able for the challenge in every way.

Huhnhäuser had been advised by Klaehn to gain a working knowledge of all the subjects taught in the *Seminar* in order to give classes in them, but he considered this to be a dilettante approach and chose instead to limit himself to his own subjects of German and history. The style of teaching at the *Seminar* was didactic, “Lern- und kein Arbeitsunterricht” (DN, p. 56), and not at all that with which Huhnhäuser was familiar. The students were required to learn the information contained in certain books by rote, and he believed that Klaehn, now *Landesschulrat*, who knew nothing other than this system of learning and was inherently petty, would have been reluctant to incorporate a new method into the exam. Huhnhäuser finds it interesting that youth psychology, of which later there was so much discussion, was still not taught at that time, although it appeared to him to be of more significance than general psychology. He was of the opinion that there was much to be improved in the teaching of psychology, which was given little importance in the final year examination. Again, the whole subject was approached on the

basis of learning by rote. Huhnhäuser felt that although young medics would derive great benefit from knowing in what part of the human brain certain functions were situated, such as memory, such knowledge provided little professional assistance to teachers. He also had many objections to the way the history of education was treated as a subject. Whilst a study of the German education system increased general historical knowledge, it was of little value in the classroom. He has, he claims, thought a great deal about such problems and wishes to stress that these insights developed very gradually and that it took many years before he saw the matter with the clarity he has today. He considered himself nevertheless to be ahead of his peers because of his experiences in teaching history, which had allowed him to highlight many problems and identify where they lay.

He limited himself, therefore, to teaching his own subjects, by taking over the history lessons of the penultimate eleventh class of the *Seminar* and the German lessons of the twelfth. He recounts at this point a very illuminating anecdote, which says much about his feelings regarding the Versailles Treaty and Germany's post-war situation:

Vom Geschichtsunterricht kann ich Besonderes nicht mitteilen, nur ein Einzelerlebnis, das beweisen möge, daß man auch mit einer reinen Vortragsstunde die Geister aufrühren kann. Es war damals eine neue Geschichtskarte von Deutschland herausgekommen, welche das neue durch den Versailler Vertrag geschaffene zeigte. Ich brachte diese Karte mit in den Unterricht und baute darauf meinen Vortrag auf, indem ich in einer großen geschichtlichen Übersicht das Schicksal unseres deutschen Vaterlandes an Hand dieser Karte aufriß [...]. Die Klasse folgt mit gespanntester Aufmerksamkeit und als ich mit dem Glockenzeichen schloß, löste sich die Spannung dadurch, daß einer der jungen Leute, wie um sich von einem inneren Druck zu befreien, mit fast gehauchter Stimme "Donnerwetter" sagte. Auf allen Gesichtern aber lag die gleiche Hochspannung, und ich verließ mit dem erhebenden Gefühl meine Klasse, daß diese Stunde ein einmaliges Erlebnis gewesen und auf guten Boden gefallen war. (DN, pp. 60-61)

It must not be forgotten that Huhnhäuser is teaching the teachers of the future, therefore, increasing the probability that his attitudes and opinions will influence not just his pupils, but the pupils of his students, too. Implicit in the above passage is the anger and sense of injustice concerning the Treaty of Versailles, one of the emotions which the Nazis exploited to the full in their rise to power. He makes no further comment on this episode. As his attitude is typical of that of the educated bourgeoisie of the period, it is possible that he does not even realize he is disseminating a political point of view rather than a pure history lesson. He does not appear to question his own objectivity.

Huhnhäuser's classroom teaching formed just a fraction of his daily duties, but in certain ways provided relief from his other work, which was very varied. On an average day he would rise between six and six-thirty, and walk through the school buildings to ensure that everything was running smoothly, which also gave the boys the feeling that "der Alte" was "auf dem Posten" (DN, p. 65). At seven, after lessons in the *Seminar* had begun, he used to inspect the farm in the company of the farm manager, and this was a task he enjoyed very much. As a layman, he did not attempt to interfere with the running of the farm, but demanded that he be kept informed of all matters because he was responsible to the Ministry. At eight o'clock he liked to be in the vicinity of the *Volksschule* building, for this was the time when lessons were supposed to begin there, but many of the teachers were young and tended to be unpunctual. After this he was at liberty to eat breakfast, following which he retired to his office. Soon after taking over his new position, Huhnhäuser had realized that much of his day was taken up with administrative tasks, and that this left little time for actual educational matters. He had seen that it was

the fate of most headmasters, at least in the larger schools, that they became purely administrators, and in doing so sacrificed their position as the intellectual leader of the staff. This had been Huhnhäuser's experience of his former head in Rostock and now he saw that Neukloster had, up to this point, been run along the same lines — as a boarding school with a commercial farm attached, however, the amount of administrative work far exceeded that of any other school. One of his first actions, therefore, was to employ a local woman to assist him with the administrative work. Her presence in the office meant that Huhnhäuser was able to spend much of his time in the actual *Seminar*. One exception to this was his daily meeting with the *Seminar's* treasurer. They had to meet every morning because the many varied aspects of the institution raised numerous questions. Only in the afternoons did he keep two hours completely free. He held a consultation hour in the evening which was often so full that sixty minutes was not enough to see everybody, and yet this only dealt with purely professional matters. As soon as a student at the *Seminar* had a personal matter of concern Huhnhäuser asked him to come to his private office in his home, because there one could speak more confidentially. Several times he was required to counsel a suicidal student. Reflecting on the variety of skills required to lead such an institution successfully, and the personal qualities which he brought to the job, he comments:

Ja, ein Internat gibt einem schöne und große Aufgaben, und heute bedaure ich nur, damals vielleicht noch nicht nur reif genug für alles gewesen zu sein. Dafür aber besaß ich den Schwung der Jugend und konnte mich voll und ganz für die pädagogischen Ideale, wie ich sie damals sah, einsetzen.  
(DN, p. 69)

Inflation caused particular problems for the manager of an institution such as Neukloster. The ever-quickening pace of the Mark's devaluation meant that the students' catering allowance had to be increased continually. There were constant complaints from the catering manager that he could not create the meals on the money he was allocated, and the students complained more frequently about the quality of the food. Huhnhäuser ordered that one of the teachers should always eat with the seminarists, and that he should write down his comments about the meal in a book set aside for this purpose. In this way all unjustifiable complaints could be dismissed immediately. As the economic situation became more critical, Huhnhäuser found that he was required to calculate board for each individual in millions, thousands of millions and billions from the catering manager's figures of daily expenses: "Nie werde ich diese Arbeit vergessen, und wenn diese Berechnungen in den Akten des Seminars aufbewahrt sein sollten, so dürften sie ein interessantes Dokument aus einer seltsamen Zeit sein." (DN, p. 71)

Huhnhäuser did not initially make many changes to the running of the *Seminar*, for he felt that would show a lack of tact towards his predecessor. The first initiatives he undertook were improvements to Neukloster's grounds. The school janitor, Krüger, whose job it was to implement these improvements is criticized quite harshly by Huhnhäuser. This is interesting because his criticisms are based mainly on his racist assumption that the flaws in Krüger's character stem from his Polish origins:

Infolge der Nachkriegszeiten aus der abgetretenen Provinz Posen vertrieben, war er nach Mecklenburg gekommen, aber der Aufenthalt im Mecklenburgischen Lande hatte ihn in keiner Weise beeinflusst, er war und blieb ein Polacke mit den wenigen erfreulichen Eigenschaften seines Stammes. Liebedienerisch und unterwürfig in seinem Auftreten war er

sobald man den Rücken kehrte, ein anderer, und das wahre Gesicht kam gelegentlich zum Vorschein, wenn er, was öfter vorkam, einen über den Durst getrunken hatte. Auch hatte er vom Kommiß die Eigenschaft mitgebracht, solange man ihn vor Augen hatte, zu laufen; im übrigen war er faul wie die Sünde. (DN, p. 72)

Thus Huhnhäuser's views on the racial superiority of the North Germans, a recurring theme throughout *Aus einem reichen Leben*, are again expressed, and this time it is the Poles who are the target of his disdain. However, he does reflect that perhaps he has been a little too hasty in writing such a negative account of this man and admits that he did, of course, have his good points too and had tried hard to fulfil the tasks set before him. Krüger was, nevertheless, very different from the other *Seminar* janitors and Huhnhäuser much preferred their manner, which corresponded far more closely to his own.

Stimulated by the ideas of the educationalist Förster, Huhnhäuser turned his thoughts to the question of student self-administration. He observes that the seminarists of this old system were, in general, more mature than *Primaner* and claims that it went against his inner nature to treat them like children. His predecessor had instigated a system of representatives for both individual classes and the student body as a whole, and Huhnhäuser often consulted them on disciplinary matters and such like and always received them when they wished to raise issues with him. In fact he used this body to revitalize the Monday morning prayer service. Attendance at this service had formerly been compulsory for all seminarists but Klaehn had dropped this requirement. The result of voluntary attendance was a vast decline in the numbers. When Huhnhäuser called for the abolition of the service, he met initially with strong resistance from his staff. He explained to the teachers, however, that a prayer service could only be of value if it appealed to the

young people and fulfilled them in some way. He proposed that they make the seminarists responsible for the service, for which he suggested a new time of Monday evening, and hand over to them its organization. The representatives, when informed of this plan, declared themselves very willing to take on this new task. From now on each class would take it in turns to organize the service. They were allowed to choose the teacher and to discuss with him the programme for the evening. This brought the thing to life, Huhnhäuser asserts, by encouraging competition between the classes to produce the best service. Initially the doubters amongst the staff, who thought that attendance would have to be made compulsory again because nothing would change, appeared to be right. But gradually more and more people began to attend and the idea proved to be a success in the end: "So hatte also auch in diesem Falle das Leistungsprinzip gesiegt, indem man der Jugend bot, was sie brauchte." (DN, p. 76)

Huhnhäuser claims that in spite of all his hard work and innovation, he did not receive any recognition from his superiors. In fact, although Klaehn frequently visited Neukloster, he refused to respond to Huhnhäuser's requests for advice or information and instead would comment: "Ich bin ja nicht das Ministerium." (DN, p. 81) Their relationship, which in the beginning had been cordial, was spoiled by a comment made to Klaehn by Möller, Huhnhäuser's friend. A member of the Democratic Party, Möller had been elected to the Mecklenburg parliament. On meeting Klaehn one day, he made a cutting remark Huhnhäuser believes was designed to cause mischief, stating that Huhnhäuser, as the new man in Neukloster, would bring a breath of fresh air into "die alte muffige Bude" (DN, p. 81). Möller laughingly repeated this incident to Huhnhäuser, but the latter knew enough of Klaehn's character to realize that he would pay for his friend's insolence. He had already



been warned in a letter from an old acquaintance about Klaehn's temperament. His friend had also taught at Neukloster and had enjoyed many aspects of the job, but his relationship with Klaehn had so soured his experience that he could only look back on the time he spent there with bitterness. He feared that Huhnhäuser would suffer the same fate, for: "ehrliche gerade Menschen könne jener Mann nicht vertragen. Nur inferiore Naturen könnten es mit ihm aushalten." (DN, p. 82) Huhnhäuser observes that this was a very harsh judgement which gave him much to ponder.

### **Mittelschullehrerprüfungen in Schwerin und Lehrplanarbeit**

The years spent in Neukloster were very important professionally for Huhnhäuser, not just because they allowed him to become familiar with the system of teacher training, but also with the *Volksschule* system. He was called to sit on consultative committees concerned with the *Volksschule* curriculum, which convened in Schwerin. Huhnhäuser found this a productive occupation: "Diese Arbeit brachte mir manche Anregungen, andererseits konnte ich auf Grund meiner guten Unterrichtserfahrungen in bescheidenem Umfange auf eine mehr arbeitsunterrichtliche Behandlung des Geschichtsunterrichts einwirken." (DN, p. 87) But over and above this he also learned much about the *Mittelschule*, with the result that when he finally left Neukloster he was familiar with all aspects of the German school system: "Auch insofern also bedeuteten diese ersten Jahre meines Direktorats einen großen Gewinn, der mir später sehr zu Nutzen kommen sollte." (DN, p. 83) Once or twice a year, examinations for *Mittelschule* teachers were held in the Ministry in Schwerin and were

chaired by Klaehn. Huhnhäuser was given responsibility for examining candidates in the subject of German. They were also examined in educational theory and psychology, and in two further subjects. In addition to this academic exam, which lasted for around ninety minutes, the candidates also had to pass two “crits” in his subjects. If these lessons were regarded as unsatisfactory then the candidate failed the whole examination. In general, the demands made in the subjects were quite high. Huhnhäuser also learned a great deal from these examinations; he was obliged, above all, to keep his knowledge of German studies constantly up-to-date. Almost more valuable than this, however, was his familiarization with the *Mittelschule*. He refers to his earlier discussion of the *Einheitsschule*, in which he explains that it was never achieved in its original concept. Apart from the four year *Grundschule* that was compulsory for all children, there existed in Germany a differentiated school system and the transfer from one type of school to another was difficult, if not impossible. He states: “Das kam daher, daß nach Beendigung der Grundschule fortan alle drei Schulgattungen die Volks- wie die Mittel- und die Höhere Schule grundständig waren und nicht wie anderswo aufeinander aufbauten, sondern nebeneinander herliefen.” (DN, p. 85)

The *Mittelschule* was intended to prepare its pupils for the world of work. It taught two foreign languages, English and French, in addition to all the other subjects. It consisted of six classes in total, with the result that its pupils left school at the age of sixteen after ten years of schooling. In general, claims Huhnhäuser, this type of school was very popular and its achievements were thoroughly satisfactory. But the school existed as an independent branch between the *Volksschule* and the *Höhere Schule* and therein lay its disadvantage. In order to rectify this situation at least at one end of the system, it was later

decided to add on two *Mittelschule* classes to urban *Volksschulen*, and in this way at least a certain connection with the *Volksschule* was established.<sup>1</sup>

In order to give the rural schools in Mecklenburg the opportunity to become acquainted with their state theatre, the authorities had come up with the idea of schools' performances which took place from time to time in the course of the seasonal programme. This was, remarks Huhnhäuser, an arrangement worthy of praise but unfortunately the theatre management did not monitor the quality of the performances. Consequently, the clowns on stage during one performance of *Freischütz*, which Huhnhäuser witnessed, were so poor that he walked out in the middle of the performance:

Es juckte mich in den Fingern, dem *Rostocker Anzeiger* eine Besprechung über diese skandalöse Aufführung zu schicken und dabei meine grundsätzliche Auffassung über Wert und Unwert der Schülervorstellungen darzulegen, aber ich hätte damit die Meute des Ministeriums auf den Hals gehetzt, und dazu brachte ich damals nicht die Mut auf. Im Landestheater aber spielte zu gleicher Zeit noch ein anderes Theater, in das ich bei solchen Anlässen häufiger mein Blick tat. Das war der Landtag, der dort tagte, und immer, wenn ich mich in den Saal hineinstahl, erlebte ich eine Komödie. Jedenfalls konnte ich die gegenseitigen Schimpfereien, die man zum Fenster hinaus redete, nicht anders auffassen. Wie anders hatte ich mir ein Parlament vorgestellt; denn bisher war für mich mit diesem Begriff der des Anstandes, der Würde und der Leistung verbunden. Nun erging es mir damit wie mit der ersten und einzigen politischen Versammlung, und mein Bedarf war für dauernd gedeckt. Ich war nun einmal ein *Zöon apolitikon*, d.h. ein politisches unmögliches Etwas und bin es geblieben Zeit meines Lebens. (DN, pp. 90-91)

Thus, Huhnhäuser takes this opportunity to express what he claims is his inherently apolitical nature, but writes here also with thinly disguised contempt for party politics and

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<sup>1</sup> At this point Huhnhäuser notes the date of writing (9 March) and adds the following

democratic government at regional level. He seems to regard the workings of democracy as a joke, but rather than offer any insights into how the political system could be improved, he chooses instead to turn his back on it altogether. It is ironic that Huhnhäuser's only period of political involvement comes during a period of totalitarian rule, when he is no longer free to make a choice.

His old friend and mentor Professor Reincke-Bloch left political office and Mecklenburg shortly after Huhnhäuser arrived in Neukloster. He fell victim to a political conspiracy in which his former pupil, and Huhnhäuser's friend, the "ehrgeizige" Möller played a role. Reincke-Bloch then took up a position at the University of Breslau as Professor of medieval history where he remained until his death in 1929. His place at the Education Ministry was taken by a Democrat, the clergyman Gladischewski.

### **Die Gründung der Aufbauschule in Neukloster und ihre Einrichtungen**

Following reforms in Prussia, the authorities in Mecklenburg also decided to give teacher training in their state a completely new form. In Prussia *Lehrerakademien* had been introduced in place of the *Lehrerseminare*, which elevated teacher training into the sphere of an academic discipline. The *Abitur* was a prerequisite for entry into one of these academies and training was complete after six semesters of study. Efficient *Studienräte* were appointed to teach in these new academies, which were no longer to be situated in the country, but in university towns in order to indicate their academic parity, and also that

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cryptic message: "Antrag. St. an Z. Papst."

the students might make use of the university's institutions. Huhnhäuser comments that whilst a fundamental reform of teacher training was most welcome, one may not, in face of all the good reforms these academies brought with them, forget the dangers they also held. He states that within the framework of his memoirs he can only deal with this question superficially, but as he was personally affected by these reforms he wishes to express his own opinion:

Meine Bedenken waren dreifacher Art. Was zunächst die akademische Bildung anlangte, so glaubte ich, daß eine sechssemestrige Ausbildung gerade für den Volksschullehrerberuf keineswegs ausreichend sei. Gesetzt den Fall, daß der betreffende Student außer der Pädagogik nur noch zwei Fächer in seinem Studium wählte, so kam er später an der Schule in die gefährliche Lage, alle die andern Schulfächer aus den Erinnerungen seines Schulwissens bestreiten zu müssen. Auch die praktisch pädagogische Ausbildung konnte bei der Belastung durch das Studium nur oberfächlich betrieben werden. Und dann vergesse man nicht, daß man eigentlich erst nach sechs Semestern anfängt mit den Problemen wissenschaftlicher Arbeit vertraut zu werden. So lag also auch über diesen Akademien die Gefahr einer Halbbildung. Andererseits wurde in vielen sicher der Wunsch rege nach einem Vollstudium und damit nach der Stelle eines Studienrats. (DN, p. 94)

Huhnhäuser's second concern was economic. Once the teachers had been elevated from the intermediate level of the civil service into the academic sphere, their salaries also had to be raised accordingly. However, this would place a great strain on the state budget. His third and final objection was based on sociology and was, he believed, the most serious:

Bisher hatte sich die Volksschullehrerschaft aus dem flachen Lande rekrutiert. [...] Da die Seminare meist in ländlichen Gemeinden lage, jedenfalls in der Mehrzahl mit dem Lande verbunden waren, so blieben im Grunde die jungen Leute in ihrer Umwelt, und daher waren die meisten von ihnen froh, wenn sie später eine gute Landlehrerstelle erhielten. Vielfach heirateten sie dann Bauerntöchter und wurden

auf diese Weise noch fester an den heimatlichen Boden gekettet. Was gerade dieser alte Lehrerstand im Aufbau unseres Volkes bedeutet hat, dürfte allgemein bekannt sein. Wieviele akademische Lehrer und wieviele Geistliche sind nicht aus dem Lehrerverband gekommen! Jeder soziale Aufstieg in einem Volke muß sich meines Erachtens allmählich vollziehen. Es mag sein, daß diese Auffassung bürgerlichem Denken entspricht, aber man kann nun ja einmal nicht aus seiner Haut heraus. (DN, p. 95)

He states that the new recruits for these teacher-training academies were now from a different, more urban social class who no longer had any immediate contact with rural life, and even if they did come from a rural background they would no longer feel comfortable or content in the country after having embarked upon an academic career. Thus, these were the concerns which he had felt from the outset of the reforms and he was, therefore, unable to champion these changes to the teacher-training system.

The fact that the government of Mecklenburg was reviewing the system meant that no more new classes were accepted into the *Seminar*. But as no-one desired that this valuable institution be left empty an alternative use had to be found for the buildings, and it was decided that the *Seminar* would be replaced by an *Aufbauschule*. This new type of school also originated in Prussia and was the idea of Hans Richert, whom Huhnhäuser describes as the great Prussian school reformer of the 1920s. This “Wiedererwecker des deutschen Idealismus” (DN, p. 96) had, according to Huhnhäuser, enriched the secondary school system with another important branch by introducing the *Aufbauschule* in his reforms. He explains that the educational principle underlying this was to give gifted children from the rural *Volksschulen* immediate access to the secondary school system. This school led on directly from the seventh class of the *Volksschule*. As the pupils were, at fourteen on average, older, the *Aufbauschule* dispensed with the first three classes of

the normal secondary school, *Sexta* to *Quarta*, and began instead with the *Untertertia*. The task of the *Aufbauschule* was to achieve in six years the same results as the other secondary schools, which had nine years to bring their pupils up to the required standard for university entrance. The children came to the school, however, with no knowledge of a foreign language and lacking the basic prerequisite knowledge in mathematics. Moreover, teaching methods were quite different in the *Volksschulen*, especially in rural schools with only one class. If the *Aufbauschule* was to be successful, states Huhnhauser, two basic conditions had to be fulfilled. Firstly, the school had to be for gifted children only, and secondly, it had to be a boarding school. He adds that in spite of the reformers' efforts after 1918, attempts to create an *Einheitsschule* had failed. He claims the financial cost of such a scheme "war in einem durch das Versailler Friedensdiktat immer ärmer werden [*sic*] Deutschland mit seinen über 10 000 Höheren Schulen unmöglich" (DN, p. 98), although he has previously stated that the sudden implementation of such a reform would have destroyed the whole school system by creating an educated proletariat.<sup>2</sup> Thus, secondary school attendance still remained dependent upon parental income: "So mußte man den Ballast oft bis zur Oberstufe mitschleppen, und selbstverständlich litt die ganze Schularbeit darunter." (DN, p. 98) He reiterates that transfer from one branch of the school system to another was very difficult to achieve, but that it was often hard to establish academic talent in a nine or ten year old child: "Wie oft kann man nicht erleben, daß Kinder, die in diesem Alter als aufgeweckt gelten, später nachlassen und daß andererseits scheinbar schwerfällige Kinder mit der einsetzenden Reifezeit erwachen." (DN, p. 99) All these factors were not

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<sup>2</sup> He claims that the nature of the sociological structure of German society at that time rendered it unable to withstand any sudden radical change. (LRF, p. 17)

taken into account at that time, states Huhnhäuser, and, furthermore, the majority of children living in the country had no possibility of entering a secondary school, which also stemmed the influx of young people from the countryside into the towns: “also gerade die Jugend, die am meisten Lebenskraft und vielleicht auch Eignung für einen Aufstieg mitbrachte.” (DN, p. 99) Previously the rural *Lehrerseminare* had offered the chance of advancement to such young people. A noticeable gap arose with their discontinuation which was filled fully by the *Aufbauschulen*, Huhnhäuser claims, but only if they met the conditions he has listed. He came to the conclusion some years later on the basis of what he had witnessed first hand that urban *Aufbauschulen* without boarding facilities did not fulfil the demands placed upon them, and that this was the case for a great many of the Prussian *Aufbauschulen*: “Aus diesem Grunde war es falsch, die Aufbauschule ohne weiteres in die früheren Lehrerseminaren hineinzulegen.” (DN, p. 100)

In order to familiarize himself with the ideological world behind this new type of school, Huhnhäuser studied Richert’s plans for the *Aufbauschule*, along with his other writings on school reform, and found that his own thoughts on the subject ran along the same lines: “All diese Gedanken waren mir wie aus der Seele gesprochen. Enthielten sie doch gewissermaßen die Summe meiner bisherigen Lebensarbeit.” (DN, p. 100) However, he disliked the fact that the *Aufbauschulen* taught English and French as their two foreign languages. He personally felt that Latin was the best foreign language to teach, for he perceived knowledge of it to be especially valuable for research into medieval German culture, as well as for many other areas of study such as medicine or pharmacy. Furthermore, without Latin the *Aufbauschulen* would be completely devalued from the outset in university circles, which already regarded them with great scepticism.



Huhnhäuser also favoured Latin for another reason; over the years his experience had shown lessons in this subject to be particularly successful in welding a class together mentally and he would now have to reckon on pupils recruited from all different types of schools. In addition to all of this, learning the important romance languages of French, Spanish and Italian was made much easier by a basic understanding of Latin.

Meanwhile there was a struggle taking place in the Ministry to gain responsibility for the administration of the *Aufbauschule* between Klaehn and Weber, Huhnhäuser's former colleague who was now a *Regierungsrat* in charge of matters concerning the secondary schools. Huhnhäuser remarks that as a secondary school, the *Aufbauschule* was within Weber's area of jurisdiction, but Klaehn did not want to lose control of "sein altes Neukloster" (DN, p. 102) for personal reasons. In the end the decision was made in Weber's favour which came as a relief to Huhnhäuser, for now he had as his superior a friend who trusted him and knew his abilities. This gave him a feeling of security which he had never enjoyed under Klaehn, to whom he was still answerable on matters regarding the *Seminar*. Shortly before the final decision had been taken in Schwerin, Klaehn did something which Huhnhäuser felt exposed his real attitude towards him. He demanded that the management of the *Aufbauschule* be removed from Huhnhäuser's area of authority and given to a *Studienrat*. This would have caused serious difficulties from the very start, Huhnhäuser claims, even with the best will of both partners. In this way Klaehn's wish would be fulfilled because the *Aufbauschule* would be relocated. Fortunately Huhnhäuser heard about this plan in time and arranged with Weber's approval that whilst the new man would receive the authority of an *Oberstudienrat*, the running of the two institutions would remain under Huhnhäuser's sole control.

The problem of arranging the boys' living quarters was one with which Huhnhäuser was particularly concerned, for if this new school was to be successful, the set-up of the boarding school had to correspond to modern educational principles. First of all, he felt it was important that this new class be housed together in a single building. He also wished to provide a certain substitute for a family upbringing for these thirteen and fourteen year old boys, and so employed a housekeeper to ensure a female influence on their education. The boys were only required to mix with the older seminarists at the two main meals of the day, which were served in the dining hall. Smaller meals were eaten in their own building, where there was also a common room set aside for entertainment and relaxation: "So bekam durch diese Neueinrichtungen das Internat für die Aufbauschüler ein völlig neues Gesicht, und später habe ich von manchem früheren Schüler gehört, daß man es gut in Neukloster gehabt habe." (DN, p. 105)

Less easy to arrange than the accommodation was the matter of the entrance exam. They had received three times more applications than there were places in the new school. Huhnhäuser's first task was to obtain the necessary documents from their current teachers in order to assess the pupils. The school reports did not give a reliable picture, however, even less so because scarcely any two pupils came from the same school. He turned, therefore, to a psychological questionnaire which had recently been published by Martha Muchow, colleague of the Hamburg psychologist W. Stern. The questionnaire was very long, but as Huhnhäuser did not have time to create his own version, he wrote to the teachers, indicating which questions were of particular interest to him and giving them the option of answering the less important questions if they wished. The teachers responded conscientiously and filled out the questionnaires with general success, although

Huhnhäuser adds that it would have been no easy task for them, never having been faced with anything like this before. Huhnhäuser appears to have been at the forefront of utilizing such experimental assessment methods, which shows a certain initiative and open-mindedness on his part.

When he had collected all the questionnaires his next step was to design the actual examination. In addition to essay writing and arithmetic tests, Huhnhäuser and a colleague experimented with psychological tests designed to record the nature and extent of each child's intellectual ability. The results of these tests in the first year were not completely satisfactory and they had to make certain adjustments in the selection of the pupils, above all where the results differed from the class teacher's assessment. Huhnhäuser states that this type of psychological testing had major disadvantages and that it was important not to rely solely upon it, for there is much in the mental-spiritual sphere of the individual, particularly with regards to character, which cannot be measured or assessed by experimental psychology. Huhnhäuser and his colleague also believed they could ascertain that children who had had practice in solving puzzles, such as crosswords, found the tests easier than those with no experience in this area. Acquired reserve, such as innate shyness, also plays a role in the solving of so-called intelligence tests that should not be underestimated, he adds. On closer examination of their procedures they realized that the examination methods required further improvement. His selection of the first intake was good, nevertheless, as was shown by their results at the end of that school year.

The following year a new element was introduced into the exam. This was a test lesson in various subjects, the purpose of which was to ascertain how the examinee dealt with new material in the lesson. He selected only subjects and material which did not

require specialist knowledge, in order that all pupils be tested on the same basis. Three teachers were present during these test lessons, two of whom took notes. The whole selection process lasted for about a week and the candidates were accommodated for the length of this period, which was during the holidays, in the school. Huhnhäuser comments that the results of this extended exam were better and more reliable. They had, moreover, developed their own questionnaire by this time, which was less complicated than the one designed by Muchow.

The official opening of the *Aufbauschule* took place in June 1923. As the subject of his speech, Huhnhäuser chose the ideas of the Dane, Grundtvig [*sic*],<sup>3</sup> who had, after the collapse of the Danish state in 1814, based his plans for reconstruction on awakening concepts of national identity and had attempted to return to the roots of national traditions, beginning with the peasant culture. As such notions were being discussed at that time, Huhnhäuser thought this a suitable topic to mark the foundation of a new rural *Aufbauschule*, whose main task it was:

deutsche Bildung im besten Sinne des Wortes zu vermitteln und eine Jugend heranzubilden, die sich in einer schweren Zeit der Aufgaben, die Volk und Vaterland an sie stellten bewußt war, nicht befangen in engstirnigem Chauvinismus, sondern den Blick gerichtet auf den Aufbau eines neuen Europa. (DN, pp. 110-111)

It should be noted that Huhnhäuser's lesson on the Treaty of Versailles would most likely have produced the opposite effect.

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<sup>3</sup> Nikolai Frederik Severin Grundtvig (1783-1872) founded the first Danish *Volkshochschule* in 1843 on Christian principles; he became a bishop in 1861.

## Die Kunstkasse

Unfortunately, Neukloster was virtually cut off from all cultural events. The nearest town of Wismar had little to offer and both Schwerin and Rostock were so far away that trips there involved an overnight stay if one wished to attend an evening performance. For this reason Huhnhäuser decided in his second year there to bring some cultural events to Neukloster. He rejected the idea of founding a society because he wished to retain complete control of any organization, and established instead a *Kunstkasse*. For a contribution of two marks per month, members were entitled to attend events arranged by the *Kunstkasse*. After the first evening the number of members rose quickly and Huhnhäuser was able to cover all expenses from this income. The seminarists and pupils from the *Aufbauschule* were allowed to join for the reduced fee of fifty *Pfennig* each month. Huhnhäuser held the view that they should be asked to make a small sacrifice for the planned events, because to make art free would be to devalue it. He chose two of his staff to work with him on the project, the artistic Dr Düwel and Hartmann, the music teacher. In the years 1924 to 1925, he states, a number of high quality artistic performances and academic presentations took place which spread the reputation of Neukloster and the *Kunstkasse* in Mecklenburg.

The events were divided into three main types: lectures, concerts and theatrical productions. The latter were the least frequently arranged, due to the extensive preparations they required. Düwel turned out to have a real talent for stage design, and so

Huhnhäuser gave him permission to set up a workshop and he selected certain pupils from the *Aufbauschule* to help him. This had the added benefit, Huhnhäuser states, of allowing him to provide a type of youth workshop that offered those who wished it the opportunity to learn the many different skills involved in building theatrical sets. Their first great achievement was building the set for the opera *Tiefland* by d'Albert. Huhnhäuser approached his old friend Paul Stiegler, a *Kammersänger* then engaged by the *Hamburger Staatsoper*, who agreed to sing the part of Sebastiano in this production. Stiegler's wife accepted the main female role, and for Pedro they cast the heroic tenor, Neubert, a very good singer who at that time was about to leave Rostock for the *Staatsoper* in Dresden. Thus, Huhnhäuser observes he had engaged three superb talents for the main roles and in doing so had already guaranteed the success of the production. The only flaw was that it was impossible to use an orchestra, and so he had to be satisfied with a piano. But even here he claims he found a leading exponent of the art, namely the director of music at the *Rostocker Stadttheater*, Freund. The resulting performance was unique in Huhnhäuser's experience — the performers gave of their best, the set was extremely impressive and the audience were enraptured: "Dieser Abend in Neukloster wird allen, die ihn erlebt haben, in dauerndem Gedächtnis sein als eines der stärksten Erlebnisse, welche die Kunstkasse bot." (DN, p. 122)

Between concerts and theatrical performances Huhnhäuser arranged lectures to provide some variation. He mentions first some poetry evenings. A colleague from Rostock spoke on Hermann Löns, the nationalist and nature poet who fell in the First World War, another gave a lecture on and read from the work of John Brinckmann, and an evening was dedicated to readings from the work of Fritz Reuter. The *Plattdeutsch* poet

Karl Wagenfeld was invited to read from his own works, which had impressed Huhnhäuser and reminded him of medieval poetry in their devoutness. And former Neukloster seminarist Hans Franck was asked to return to read some of his works. He replied to this offer by saying that he would prefer to come in the winter, for he feared that he would see ghosts in the daylight: “So stark also wirkte das alte Neukloster noch nach Jahrzehnten in diesem Manne nach.” (DN, p. 133) When he did come he and Huhnhäuser developed a closer friendship on the basis of this first meeting. Huhnhäuser also invited some of the professors from Rostock University to address the *Kunstkasse*, including his former teacher Golther, who gave four lectures on the *Edda* and made the topic so interesting, according to Huhnhäuser, that everyone would have liked to have heard more from him.<sup>4</sup>

Huhnhäuser concludes this section by reflecting on the work of the *Kunstkasse* and what it meant to the members. He believes this is most clearly illustrated by the fact that one group of members walked even in winter from Warin, approximately six kilometres from Neukloster, to attend *Kunstkasse* events. He adds that:

Mit geringsten Mitteln — ohne irgend welche Unterstützungen — war hier eine Einrichtung geschaffen worden, welche uns Älteren, vor allem aber der Jugend in der Abgeschlossenheit eines kleinen mecklenburgischen Fleckens enge Berührung mit Kunst und Wissenschaft brachte, und zwar in einer Form, die auch in größeren Gemeinden in Ehren hätte bestehen können. (DN, p. 136)

Thus, from this the reader can see that Huhnhäuser retained his active interest in and enthusiasm for the arts, despite the difficulties posed by his geographical location. His

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<sup>4</sup> Huhnhäuser gives no precise details of this topic (DN, p. 135).

commitment is evident, especially when one considers the time and effort which must have been required to organize events, which often required a huge amount of preparation. This was achieved in addition to his other demanding duties regarding the running of the *Seminar*, the setting up of the *Aufbauschule*, the management of the farm and grounds, and not least the welfare of all the boys under his care. In addition to all of this, he had a difficult relationship with Klaehn, his superior. The achievements he brought about in such a short period of time are testament to his hard work and sheer dedication.

### **Unser persönliches Leben**

As can be inferred from all that has been written on his work at the *Seminar* and their life there, remarks Huhnhäuser, their environment was limited almost exclusively to the *Seminar*. The locality itself had little to offer. There were only two families, apart from the teachers at the *Seminar*, with whom the Huhnhäusers socialized regularly, *Forstmeister* Krüger and the local doctor, Gerlach. In the latter family it was the wife, above all, who formed a close bond with Melms. She was an extremely stimulating person and very musical — her father, *Gymnasialprofessor* Raase, enjoyed an almost mythical reputation in Rostock as a Beethoven expert. The foresters were also very nice people, and the Huhnhäusers enjoyed visiting them even if, he writes, the atmosphere of this house was quite different to that with which they were otherwise familiar: “Hier fühlte man sich wie in einem ländlichen Haushalt.” What particularly appealed to them was the honesty and directness of these people. He claims that he has always had a special liking for people



from the forest: “Die ständige Berührung mit dem Walde und seinem Leben veredelt und prägt diese Menschen genau wie der Landmannsberuf.” (DN, p. 149) As well as playing host to many of the various performers and academics who came to Neukloster for *Kunstkasse* events, they also had visits from old friends, such as Weber, Mattiesen, or the Turnaus, theatrical friends from Rostock.

Huhnhäuser states that he has already spoken in passing on the life of his family, thus indicating perhaps that the fact that he writes mainly about his work rather than his family life is intentional. The children started school when they arrived in Neukloster; both girls entering the first class in the *Grundschule*. Huhnhäuser believed it was very valuable for the girls to be in the same class. Their teacher was, in his opinion, “kein Schulmeister von Gottes Gnaden” (DN, p. 152) but he was a well-intentioned and good-natured young man. In the school the Zimmermann primer had been introduced and they began with capital letters. The children were no longer taught to read phonetically, but to read the syllables coherently. The individual consonants were given amusing names like “der Laller” (L), “der Summer” (S) and all other possible sounds, which were fun to decipher.

Huhnhäuser states that the general principle behind this type of teaching was “Freude ist alles”, and thinks that this was good, although it would not have hurt, he believes, if the children had learnt a little more in the process. He repeats his assertion that, on the whole, the *Grundschule* did not achieve much during these years because there was too much experimentation: “Erst als man später zu festen methodischen Ergebnissen gekommen war, stieg auch die Leistung wieder.” (DN, p. 153)

The children had lots of friends to play with in the *Seminar*, including a German Shepherd dog given to Huhnhäuser by a teacher in a neighbouring village. He claims it was

a wonderful environment in which to grow up, for the girls were able to roam freely through the grounds. He is very grateful that his children were granted the opportunity to enjoy this “Kinderparadies” (DN, p. 154). They did not realize how good their situation actually was until they had a child from the Ruhr stay with them for a while. She arrived half-starved and infected with head lice, which soon spread to the girls; even Melms discovered the beginnings of an infestation in her hair. They called for the district nurse, whose remedy of *Sabadill* vinegar killed the lice but did not dispatch the nits. It was the Rostock school doctor, von Brunn, a former surgeon who lost an arm in the war, who came to their rescue. He had been invited to Neukloster by Huhnhäuser to give a lecture on school hygiene, and recommended a special nits’ comb to get rid of the eggs. They were not unhappy when the visiting child left but Huhnhäuser was annoyed by the ingratitude of the parents who did not contact them to say thank you.

Huhnhäuser expresses his regret that he did not record any details of the children’s development. He writes that only one small experience with Heidi still lives on in his memory:

Ich ging einmal mit ihr über den alten Friedhof bei der Kirche, und bei dieser Gelegenheit wollte mir das achtjährige Heidikind etwas besonders Liebes antun, indem es sagte: “Vati, wenn Du nun bald tot bist, pflanze ich immer Schneeglöckchen auf Dein Grab.” Diese ersten zarten Frühlingsboten hielt sie sicher für die schönsten aller Blumen. Auch konnte man ja nicht wissen, ob sie nicht auch läuten konnten. Bezeichnete doch die sprachschöpferische phantasiebegabte Inge die Maiglöckchen als “Schmeichelglöckchen”. (DN, pp. 155-156)

Huhnhäuser ends this section, and indeed this notebook, of the memoirs by

reminiscing on the walks they used to take together as a family. This was the thing he and Melms enjoyed best. The area was very beautiful and offered many different opportunities for rambles. Their favourite route took them through the forest where they would look for mushrooms. There were many different varieties to be found and he informs us that the children quickly learned to distinguish between the poisonous and edible varieties.

It is curious that Huhnhäuser can remember so little of his daughters' childhood, but can recollect many of the details of his professional life with such clarity. It is another indication of how he dedicated himself to his work at the expense of his family life — something he now claims was a mistake.

### **Erholung auf Reisen**

The isolated situation of Neukloster stimulated Huhnhäuser and Melms' natural inclination to travel, and Huhnhäuser's demanding workload during term-time gave further impetus to these desires. He felt that he required the recuperative effect of new impressions and stimuli that come with travel. They were now in the financial position of being able to afford several trips each year, thanks mainly to the produce yielded by their garden and free milk from the *Seminar* farm which allowed them to make large savings in their household budget, although the currency depreciation in the summer of 1923 caused many difficulties.

Their first major holiday took place in the summer of 1922. The Turnaus invited Huhnhäuser and Melms to join them in St. Wolfgang in the *Salzkammergut* where they

were spending their vacation. The train journey to St. Wolfgang offered their first ever sight of the Alps, and for this reason, writes Huhnhäuser, he will never forget it. The weakness of the German currency caused them some difficulties. To their regret they found that could only afford to stay for a few days, “denn die Inflation wirkte sich schon damals recht lästig aus.” (DNF, p. 4) They did not wish to become a burden on their friends, and so Huhnhäuser observes that he followed the advice his father used to give, which was “daß man mit dem Essen aufhören müsse, wenn es am besten schmecke” (DNF, p. 4). Thus, they left so early that their friends were sad to see them go. Huhnhäuser and Melms returned to this area in the summer of 1938, and their thoughts turned to their first trip to the *Wolfgangsee*, which was then in a foreign country. He comments:

Nun waren die Grenzpfähle gefallen und damit war ein altdeutscher Traum in Erfüllung gegangen. Nirgends spürten wir einen Gegensatz, und keiner von uns ahnte damals, daß sich bereits ein neues Weltungewitter über unserm Kopfe zusammenzog. (DNF, p. 5)

It is interesting to note how he rationalizes the *Anschluß* as the fulfilment of Pan Germanic ambitions, desired by all. This would appear to be a typical view of educated middle-class Germans at that time. But his expression of surprise that the *Anschluß* was a contributing factor to the Second World War seems at best naive, and at worst disingenuous.

Huhnhäuser must have been only too well aware that this act broke the terms of the Versailles Peace Treaty, and would alarm the Allies. Indeed, Alexander Peden claimed that Huhnhäuser had been concerned Hitler would lead Germany into a war.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Interview with the late Alexander Peden, 17 October 1995.

They were also able to enjoy a long summer holiday in 1923, and although German inflation was spiralling out of control they invited their old friends from Copenhagen, the Kirchheiners, who had shown them so much hospitality in 1911, to come on holiday with them. After spending some time at Neukloster, they travelled together to Schliersee in Bavaria. The Kirchheiners were not very happy with their accommodation, however, and soon decided to return to Denmark. Although sad that their friends had decided to leave, their departure was nevertheless very fortunate for the Huhnhäusers. In exchange for the marks he needed for the remainder of his time in Germany, Kirchheiner gave them almost one hundred Danish crowns.

The Huhnhäusers accompanied their friends as far as Munich, in order to show them the sights. Huhnhäuser comments that the atmosphere in Munich was quite frenetic: “In jenen Tagen herrschte [...] ein gewaltiger Trubel” (DNF, p. 11), for their visit coincided with a gymnastics festival to which participants had travelled from all over Germany. At lunchtime they ventured into a crowded *Hofbräuhaus*. The people were in very high spirits and a few couples were already dancing on the tables. Suddenly the army band struck up the national anthem, and then something happened which Huhnhäuser regarded as unbelievable:

Anstatt, daß die Leute eine würdige Haltung annahmen, wurde der Lärm nur noch größer, noch mehr erkletterten die Tische, die Humpen schwingend; andere tanzten, kurz es mußte einem anständigen Deutschen die Schamröte ins Gesicht steigen. [...] Das war das Deutschland der Inflation. Alles im Gleiten. Jeden Tag gingen Vermögen verloren. Konnte man doch am Schluß dieser grauenvollen Zeit ein Haus in der Berliner Innenstadt für etwa 100 norwegische Kronen käuflich erwerben. (DNF, pp. 11-12)

Deeply humiliated, Huhnhäuser states, they left the brewery. He adds that he later often thought of this scene, and from this concluded that the German is unfortunately as excessive in good fortune as in misfortune and describes this as “eine der nationalen Schwächen, die unserm sonst so tüchtigen Volke so viel geschadet haben.” (DNF, p. 12)

After the Kirchheiners had left, Huhnhäuser immediately looked for a bank and discovered that the new exchange rate for the German mark was published in the early afternoon. Cautiously he exchanged five crowns and they returned to Schliersee “mit Schätzen reich beladen” (DNF, p. 12). As the value of the mark was still depreciating rapidly, they soon ran out of funds, but Huhnhäuser made the two hour journey to Munich several times to await the new exchange rate and change another five crowns into marks, which kept them solvent for several days.

During his last week in Schliersee, Huhnhäuser’s landlord, Dr Buchner, arranged for him to meet the eminent German educationalist, Georg Kerschensteiner, who was an old friend of the family.<sup>6</sup> Huhnhäuser travelled to Munich to visit him. Although initially reluctant to discuss the *Aufbauschule*, his interest was aroused when he learned that Huhnhäuser’s plans for the school differed from those of Richert, who introduced the concept of the *Aufbauschule*, with regards to foreign language provision. Huhnhäuser had introduced Latin as the first foreign language, whereas in Prussia it was not included in the

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<sup>6</sup> Kerschensteiner (1854-1932), a Professor at Munich University, was a “controversial figure whose theories are indebted to the German humanist tradition, but also to certain aspects of the Youth Movement with its occasionally anti-industrial and even prefascist elements”. He is “seen both as the founder of the [...] *Arbeitsschule* and as an innovator in the dual education *Berufsschulsystem*”. Cited from H.-J. Hahn, *Education and Society in Germany* (Oxford: Berg, 1998), p. 32.

curriculum at all. On hearing this, Kerschensteiner began to take notes, questioning his guest on all the details of his policy. Kerschensteiner admitted that he thought little of the Prussian form of the *Aufbauschule*, for, in his opinion, it would be only partly able to fulfil the role for which it was designed. Huhnhäuser's own experiences as a school inspector in the Rhineland several years later proved Kerschensteiner's judgement on this matter correct, and he adds that he has already explained earlier in the memoir the reasons why this educational experiment could not be completely successful. On a personal note, their meeting made a deep impression upon Huhnhäuser:

Für mich war dieser Besuch bei dem größten lebenden Pädagogen Deutschlands nicht nur ein Erlebnis, sondern er wurde zu einer bleibenden Erinnerung, und immer, wenn ich später ein Buch von ihm zur Hand nahm, sah ich diesen Mann mit den unvergeßlichen Augen vor mir. (DNF, pp. 16-17)

There are few people for whom Huhnhäuser has such a great respect. Perhaps the reason Kerschensteiner provoked such a positive reaction was that he was interested in Huhnhäuser's ideas and shared his thoughts on the subject of the *Aufbauschule*. Huhnhäuser may well have been extremely flattered that an educationalist of such repute literally noted what he had to say. He does not discuss this possibility but it would be an extremely human reaction. The ego exerts a significant controlling influence upon the writing of memoir and autobiography, and what could please Huhnhäuser more — he was, after all, a man who derived a great deal of his sense of identity through his work — than being taken seriously by one of the most eminent academics in his profession.

Whilst in Schliersee, he had been alerted by a letter from his deputy that trouble

awaited him on his return to Neukloster. He describes this affair as not only typical of the short-sightedness of the authorities, but also as very enlightening regarding his own position, and wishes, therefore, to recount the details of this matter — although it must be remembered that we have access only to his version of events. The new man at the *Aufbauschule*, Dr Burmeister, had urgently requested that Huhnhäuser provide him with a flat so that he might be reunited with his family. Huhnhäuser immediately contacted the Ministry in the hope of expediting the removal of a teacher's widow from a staff flat. The Ministry did not respond, however, and as this was also the period when inflation was reaching its peak, Huhnhäuser asserts that he decided to save the state unnecessary expense and fulfil Burmeister's request by granting him permission on his own authority to move provisionally into a vacant pupils' flat. Huhnhäuser states that he immediately informed Schwerin of this, then left on holiday. He was summoned to the Ministry upon his return to explain his actions. Huhnhäuser went first of all to Weber, who told him that his behaviour had excited great frustration. They then went together to *Ministerialrat* Chrestien, the official in charge of legal matters for his school, who, Huhnhäuser declares, reprimanded him for taking a decision on such an important matter without the Ministry's permission. Huhnhäuser then alleges that when he explained the reasoning behind his actions, Chrestien rejoined that saving the state money was not his concern and rebuked him on the Ministry's behalf. Huhnhäuser replied brusquely that he would take the same decision if ever placed in a similar situation again, and left the room. No sooner were they outside when Weber observed that he had now made an enemy for life in Chrestien, to which Huhnhäuser responded that he did not care for he had right on his side. The experience did, however, alert him to the fact that he would have to be careful in future:



Eine Lehre aber nahm ich diesmal von Schwerin mit, nämlich, daß ich fortan mit zwei erbitterten Gegnern im Ministerium zu rechnen habe — denn ich war felsenfest davon überzeugt, daß Klaehn hinter der Sache stand — und weiter, daß ich in der Not an meinem Freunde Weber keine feste Stütze finden werde. Seiner gefügigen Art lag das Durchhauen nicht. (DNF, p. 20)

For the time being, however, everything carried on as normal at Neukloster. Inflation continued on its rapid ascent and as their salaries had to be brought from Wismar — in a large suitcase now — the money had often depreciated in value so much by the time they received it that they could scarcely buy anything with it. In order to have a more stable method of payment they purchased a sack of rye, and in so doing were, Huhnhäuser comments, a step ahead of the forthcoming Rye Mark.<sup>7</sup> He kept a collection of curiosities from this period, such as banknotes and whole sheets of stamps which had to be attached to a letter as postage. Unfortunately this collection was lost during one of his later moves.

In 1924 they visited Bad Pyrmont twice. The first visit took place during the Easter holidays and was intended to form part of his recuperation from an intestinal haemorrhage which he suffered earlier that year. He had fond memories of the spa from his wartime visit and they decided, therefore, to return there. They were able to stay in the same *Pension* that had served as his ward in the military hospital, run still by the *Lazarettmutter*, Frau Raeydt. He also travelled to Hildesheim to visit Algernissen, his old “Hamstern” comrade from Bad Pyrmont. On another occasion he and Melms visited the *Hermannsdenkmal* in

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<sup>7</sup> Scheele notes that “several proposals were put forward” in the search to find a stable currency in summer 1923: “The agrarian interests [...] proposed a ‘Roggenmark’ anchored to the price of rye, and notes and bonds so denominated were issued in Oldenburg.” Godfrey Scheele, *The*

Teutoburg Forest. Unfortunately, it started to snow just as they wanted to climb the monument, with the result that visibility was reduced and they were unable to enjoy the view. Huhnhäuser comments:

Wie anders war einst an jenem wundervollen Fronleichnamstage 1918 dort oben gewesen! So war mein Versuch, meiner lieben Frau, diese historisch bedeutende Stätte zu zeigen und sie auf diese Weise an meinem eigenen Erleben teilnehmen zu lassen, gescheitert. (DNF, p. 26)

The memoirs themselves can also be seen as an attempt by Huhnhäuser to allow his wife to share his experiences, in addition to Heidi and the wider audience he clearly has in mind. He tried in real life to recreate an experience, and now he does so on paper. On paper, however, he can control events far better and can recreate experiences as he wishes them to be seen by others, and also by himself.

They returned to Bad Pyrmont that summer, this time with Heidi and Inge. They stayed again with Frau Raeydt and found her guests to be an interesting and varied group of people. The guest who impressed Huhnhäuser most was Hartmann, editor of the *Hannover Kurier*. Huhnhäuser describes him as a highly educated and cultivated man and something of an expert on Wilhelm Raabe. Also a guest was a young *Oberlehrer*,<sup>8</sup> a member of the SPD who lacked tact in Huhnhäuser's opinion, for he attacked Huhnhäuser verbally when the latter made a positive comment on Richard Wagner:

Da widersprach er aufs heftigste und bezichtigte die Wagnersche Musik der

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*Weimar Republic: Overture to the Third Reich* (London: Faber & Faber, 1946), p. 184.

<sup>8</sup> Huhnhäuser does not give his name.

Unechtheit, er hielt sie geradezu für gefährlich mit Bezug auf die Jugend, indem er ihr vorwarf, daß sie die Sinnlichkeit aufpeitsche und stellte dieser Musik als Ideal der Reinheit die eines Bach und Händel gegenüber. Ich war damals sehr aufgebracht über die rücksichtslose Art, mit welcher dieser Fremde unaufgefordert in einen mir heiligen Bezirk vorstieß, und war erst einigermaßen versöhnt, als er uns im Musiksaal des Kurhauses — seligen Andenkens — Händel vorspielte. Er zeigte sich hier als vorzüglicher Klavierspieler und ausgezeichnete Kenner dieser Musik. Ich habe in späteren Jahren oft über unser damaliges Gespräch nachgedacht und je mehr ich in der Welt der reinen Musik heimisch wurde, desto mehr mußte ich jenem Mann in seinem Urteil recht geben. Freilich habe ich mich nie dazu verleiten lassen, zu verbrennen, was ich einst angebetet hatte, aber meine vielleicht allzu stark auf Richard Wagner eingestellte musikalische Linie erhielt später doch eine andere Richtung. Im Grunde aber war auch sie von Anfang an vorhanden gewesen; denn was mir bereits zu Anfang meiner musikalischen Studien Schubert bedeutete, habe ich ja bei der Schilderung meiner Studienzeit und auch später noch eingehend auseinandergesetzt. (DNF, pp. 29-30)

It is questionable whether Huhnhäuser now admits that this stranger was correct in his judgement on the basis of a more developed and sophisticated musical taste, or whether it has more to do with the fact that Wagner's music has been tainted and discredited by its association with Hitler and the composer's own anti-Semitic writings.

Frau Raeydt had become a pacifist and joined a peace movement at the end of the war. According to Huhnhäuser she now tried "ihre Gesinnung auch ihren Gästen einzuimpfen" (DNF, p. 30). They had discussed this issue often during their Eastertide visit, and Huhnhäuser comments:

so friedliebend ich auch persönlich war, so war es mir doch ein Rätsel geblieben, warum in einer Zeit, in der Deutschland beständig abrüstete und mit seinen 100 000 Mann eigentlich wehrlos war, die anderen Mächte, wie z.B. Frankreich beständig aufrüsteten. (DNF, p. 30)

He adds that these ideas interested him all the same and listened in order to learn: “denn man kann nie genug lernen.” He was not, however, impressed with some of the pacifists he met: “Was allerdings alles zu diesem Kreise gehörte, war nicht immer sehr ansprechend.”

The first member of the movement he met was a young actor, a descendant of the humanist and linguist Schottelius. He claims that he and Melms considered this young man, whose most striking characteristic was a particularly large nose, to be “ein typisches Degenerationsprodukt”, an impression reinforced by a visit to the man’s home:

“Lebensuntüchtigkeit und Untauglichkeit sprachen hier aus allem.” (DNF, p. 31) Thus these representatives could not win them over to the idea. It was a different matter that summer when the secretary of the peace society, Gerhard Seeger, came to Bad Pyrmont to give a lecture: “Dieser junge, blonde, sympathisch aussehende Mann wirkte tatkräftig und zielbewußt und hatte in seiner durchaus männlichen Art etwas sehr Anziehendes.” (DNF, p. 31) He claims that Seeger spoke convincingly and with dignity. Huhnhäuser remarks that Seeger’s opponent in the debate was a Protestant minister who poured out such a diatribe of enmity against the Jews that Huhnhäuser felt compelled to take issue with his behaviour:

Was mich damals dazu bewogen hat, das Wort zu ergreifen und dem Geistlichen eine schlechte christliche Haltung vorzuwerfen, weiß ich heute nicht mehr; es war aber wohl die Empörung darüber, daß ein Vertreter der christlichen Religion — oder besser gesagt Kirche — sich öffentlich zu solch einem Haßgesang fortreißen ließ. (DNF, p. 31)

This is a very significant passage, for it gives us some insight into Huhnhäuser’s political views at the time, all the more important for the fact that he claims he is inherently

unpolitical. The language he uses to denigrate the actor is reminiscent of the terminology of the Third Reich. Does he use it now because he has simply grown used to phrases such as “Degenerationsprodukt” or would he also have used this term in 1924. We cannot confirm or refute his claim that Melms shared his opinion on this matter. It is not until the pacifist cause is espoused by a young, blond, attractive and charismatic man that he feels sympathetic towards this philosophy. It is very clear from the memoirs that Huhnhäuser does judge people upon their appearance and racial origin by his own alleged North Germanic criteria, and one wonders whether the appearance of this young man was one of the main reasons why he made a favourable impression. This also raises the question of whether perhaps Huhnhäuser wished to impress him by intervening in the debate to criticize his opponent. Whatever the reason, it is clear that Huhnhäuser did not remain completely aloof from politics. His mindset is conservative, his language sounds reactionary on occasion, and he expresses his horror of Bolshevism several times elsewhere in the memoirs. His attempt in 1924 to be open-minded by learning about the peace movement was spurious in the sense that he already held a fixed opinion on the matter — that Germany was being left defenceless while the other European Great Powers rearmed. This was a view in tune with Germany’s political right.

Huhnhäuser points out, however, that they did much more on this holiday than confine themselves to intellectual discussion and he relates with evident fondness several incidents involving the children and their family activities. His recollection of this first family holiday is of “einige geruhsame Wochen, die vor allem dadurch für uns besonders an Reiz gewannen, weil wir die Mädels bei uns hatten” (DNF, pp. 34-35).

The next big trip was in spring 1925 and was again for medical reasons. Soon after

they returned from Bad Pyrmont his stomach complaint returned, and the painful symptoms continued almost without respite throughout the autumn. In December 1924 he suffered from another internal haemorrhage, and was immediately admitted to hospital, where he spent the first two days wondering whether his weak heart could survive this illness. The experience both weakened him physically and affected him mentally, and although he was allowed home for Christmas his spirits were very low. He was advised to undergo a thorough cure and so placed himself under the care of a doctor in Rostock. To avoid the expense of a stay in hospital they rented rooms, and a car was placed at their disposal by a friend of Mattiesen's. (He does not state why they could not stay in their old house in the *Alexandrinenstrasse*. It seems likely that they let the house, but he never refers to any such arrangement.) On the drive to Rostock they passed a hearse and it was indicative of his fragile state that he dwelled on this coincidence for days. The children lived with their grandparents during this period, and attended the *Volksschule* in Rostock for three months. Huhnhauser looks back fondly on that period of convalescence as, despite his many visitors, it gave him a chance to concentrate upon intellectual matters more intensively. When he was well enough to be allowed his first outing, he commissioned two specially designed gold rings for himself and Melms, which he intended both as a souvenir of this time and also as a symbolic reaffirmation of their union.

. The doctor ordered him, in addition to this rest cure, to go on a recuperative holiday in Southern Europe, and they eventually decided upon Italy. The financial aspect of their holiday was a difficulty which had first to be surmounted, however, as they required around one thousand marks, but this hurdle was overcome by the generous offer of a loan from a *Bundesbruder*. They began their Italian adventure in February of that

same year, staying initially in the old German town of Bolzano. (Huhnhäuser uses the German name “Bozen” throughout, but refers once to the fact that the town is now called Bolzano.) He observes that before he describes the following trip to Italy, he must, unfortunately, note yet again that he is not in possession of the notebook in which he recorded the impressions of the journey, intending later to turn it into a diary, although he did not manage to complete this project. Had he had these notes, he believes he would have been able to write a more vivid account of their experiences — “mir selber erscheint jetzt manches allzu blaß und oberflächlich” (DNF, pp. 44-45) — but recognizes that a reader less familiar with the details might gain a more favourable impression of his efforts. This provides us with yet another sign that he was writing with a wider audience in mind than just his family.

Huhnhäuser claims that the German influence in Bolzano was very evident. German was spoken in all the streets and shops: “weder die Carabinieri noch die Schwarzhemden, die Parteigänger Mussolinis vermochten den deutschen Charakter dieser Stadt zu verwischen.” (DNF, p. 45) From Bolzano they travelled to Florence. Here Huhnhäuser was overawed by the city’s Renaissance architecture, which he felt expressed the strength, power and self-confidence of the Medici, and which brought to life all that he had read on this subject as a student. He feels he must explain why they did not visit any museums in Florence, claiming that they were right not to do so, for the purpose of the trip was relaxation and recuperation, and with this in mind he had decided not to visit any museums in Italy at all.

From Florence they moved on to Naples. Huhnhäuser’s first impression of Naples was rather negative. Although the Bay of Naples was beautiful, he found the actual town

smelly and dirty:

Man muß einmal durch die engen Gassen dieser Stadt gegangen sein mit den dunklen Wohnlöchern im Erdgeschoß der hohen Häuser, zwischen denen häufig Wäscheleinen gespannt sind, mit allen möglichen Fetzen behangen. Und dann diese Gerüche! Und dieser Schmutz! Unbeschreiblich. (DNF, pp. 52-53)

The Neapolitan opera, on the other hand, was a different matter. They found several differences here, such as the time of the performance; in Italy the opera did not begin until nine in the evening and finished around midnight. They attended a performance of *Aida*, which they considered excellent musically and which had everything in the way of scenery, even a live elephant on stage. Nevertheless, Huhnhäuser was disturbed by the enthusiastic applause which broke out after every successful aria, but recognizes this as a cultural difference: “Aber ein Norddeutscher empfindet eben anders als ein Neapolitaner.” (DNF, p. 54)

They had been warned before their trip to Italy to beware of pickpockets and of being cheated over money. To their delight they found that the instructions they had been given related to an earlier time and were no longer necessary, although the custom of haggling was still observed. Huhnhäuser attributed this change to the new system by which the country was governed, “denn die Schwarzhemden hielten streng auf Ordnung.” (DNF, p. 182) They were, he admits, less effective in the South than in Rome and the northern parts of the country. Southern Italy was also badly plagued by the problem of begging. Thus we have evidence of another political statement from Huhnhäuser, who does not raise the question of *how* the Black Shirts managed to keep order. What seems to matter



to him is that street crime is kept under control and order is imposed.

Huhnhäuser had been very interested in Hans Christian Andersen's description in his memoirs of his visit to Mount Vesuvius, but as both he and Melms lacked the energy to climb the mountain and judged the *Cookbahn* to be too expensive, they visited Pompeii instead. It was an experience which surpassed their wildest expectations, for they had read so much in history books and in novels on the fate of this town. Now they had the opportunity to see everything at first hand, from the Roman houses in the eerily quiet streets to the petrified human and animal figures, the pain and fear of death still etched on their faces.

Their next destination was Rome, where they had been recommended an excellent *Pension*, run by a Herr Hallier. He had once been the valet of the Vatican envoy, von Bülow, cousin of the *Reichskanzler*. They stayed in Rome for ten days, the longest time they spent in one place on the whole trip. This was, states Huhnhäuser, long enough to win them a fleeting impression of this ancient city. There were many pilgrims in the city at that time, for 1925 was a Holy Year which only came round every twenty-five years. This meant that the *porta sancta* was opened and Huhnhäuser felt that to enter St Peters through this portal was something very special indeed. The highlight of their visit was an audience with the Pope, which Hallier arranged through his connections. The men had to wear dark suits, the women veils and dark dresses. There were sixty of them altogether, which was a relatively small number compared to the hundreds of pilgrims who were otherwise received. They were asked to kneel when the Holy Father entered the room:

Die Ankunft des hohen Herrn wurde angekündigt durch das Erscheinen

einer Wache unter Führung eines Offiziers von der Schlüsselgarde, dann folgten Cardinäle und schließlich in weißem Gewande S. Heiligkeit, ein alter freundlich aussehender Herr von mittlerer Größe mit einem klugen, feinen Gelehrtenkopf. Wir waren zusammen mit einem jungen Mann die letzten im Saale. Der Papst begann an der uns gegenüberliegenden Längseite des Audienzsaales und reichte einem jeden die Hand. Die meisten drückten ihre Lippen auf den großen Siegelring mit dem Symbol des Fisches. Mit einigen unterhielt er sich kurz. Schließlich kam er zu uns. Auch wir bekamen den Händedruck und machten unsere Vorbeugung. Unsern jungen Nebenmann fragte er nach seiner Herkunft. Als der ihm erzählte, daß er aus Stettin stamme, sagte der alte Mann im guten Deutsch: 'Also aus Deutschland, ja das kenne ich auch.' (DNF, pp. 66-67)

Afterwards, they were allowed to view the downstairs rooms in the Vatican, such as the Sistine Chapel. Some visitors had brought mirrors with them to see the paintings better. Later, they frequently recalled this audience with the Pope, and for Huhnhäuser it was an historical event in which he imagined himself back in centuries past and thought of all the Germans who had begged for a blessing from the head of the Christian Church. He observes that after this experience, it became clear to him as a Protestant just how important symbolism was for the longer Masses, which were so often used by the Catholic Church.

There was much they were unable to see due to their restricted budget and the limited time of six weeks which they had at their disposal. It was always their wish to return to Italy when Huhnhäuser had retired and visit all the places they did not manage to see on their first trip, but: "Das Schicksal hat es anders gewollt." (DNF, p. 73)

In the autumn of 1925, Huhnhäuser was required to travel to Frankfurt for a meeting with an editorial colleague, Prof. Sprengel. Diesterweg, the publishers of the *Lebensgut* reader he edited, wished to produce a supplementary volume for the

*Aufbauschule*. Sprengel introduced Huhnhäuser and Melms to the owner of Diesterweg, Erich Herbst. Herbst was around three years older than Huhnhäuser, and he immediately made an excellent impression on them both. Not surprisingly, in the light of Huhnhäuser's previous comments, we hear now that Herbst was "ein durchaus nordisch geprägter Typ" (DNF, p. 79). He gave them a tour of the publishing house and they were amazed by the huge warehouse filled with schoolbooks. Huhnhäuser had felt a certain sense of pride on joining the ranks of the company's staff, and was even more pleased following his meeting with the owner of the firm. Herbst had appealed to him from the first moment and Huhnhäuser had the feeling that they would soon become much closer. He adds that Melms had gained a similar impression and this served to confirm his judgement: "Wohnt doch vielen Frauen ein feiner Instinkt inne, wenn es um die Erfassung von Menschen geht; während der gröber gebaute oder stärker verstandesmäßig veranlagte Mann dabei leicht versagt." (DNF, p. 80)

Herbst asked him to go to Wiesbaden in order to discuss the further particulars of the project with the chief editor of *Lebensgut*, *Geheimrat* Schellberg, who was on holiday there. To his surprise Huhnhäuser found that Schellberg was much younger than he had imagined. In the course of their hour-long discussion, their wives had become friendly with each other. Husband and wife were both from the Rhineland, and she in particular possessed what Huhnhäuser regards as the typical characteristics of the inhabitants of that region, being "lebendig, humorvoll und lebenslustig" (DNF, p. 81). Schellberg invited them to stay in Wiesbaden for a few days and arranged accommodation for them in his hotel. They found that they got on very well indeed with their new friends. He had previously been a headmaster in a school near Aachen, and had then been called into the

Prussian Ministry of Education shortly after the November Revolution. He was a devout Catholic, “aber keiner von den politischen Streitern, wie man sie in der Zentrumspartei fand” (DNF, p. 81), although Huhnhäuser did not know whether Schellberg was a member of the Centre Party. As he and Huhnhäuser took a long walk together every afternoon, it was only natural that Huhnhäuser discussed Neukloster and his relationship with the Mecklenburg Ministry. Schellberg advised him to apply for a post in Prussia and assured him of his full support.

### **Das letzte Jahr in Neukloster**

He returned to Neukloster after a break of three months at Easter 1925. The institution was now running so smoothly that there was little still to do in the way of organising. The *Seminar* was being phased out and the course of the *Aufbauschule* was already mapped out. All that was required was the development of the curriculum as the pupils progressed through the school. Weber had given him the freedom to experiment in this matter in the initial stages of the school’s existence. This allowed him to match theory to practice and create a curriculum that placed realistic demands upon both pupils and teachers. He cites the example of the so-called *Lehrbataillon* which was used by the German army before the First World War to try out experimental new ideas. Only after the results of the experiment had been assessed were the reforms introduced into the rest of the army. Huhnhäuser comments that such a facility should have existed within the school system, in order to try out educational reforms before they were introduced generally.

Leider haben wir, besonders an den Höheren Schulen Preußens, im Laufe der letzten Jahrzehnte zuviel herumexperimentiert; woran die politischen Ereignisse die Schuld tragen. Es ist aber eine bekannte Tatsache, daß geistige Revolutionen mit den politischen nicht Schritt halten können, und wenn dann der Staat nicht die nötige Zeit gibt, etwas Neues im Geistesleben aufzubauen und wachsen zu lassen, kann es leicht Störungen geben, die sich später empfindlich bemerkbar machen können. (DNF, pp. 89-90)

He observes that mistakes made in the “Kulturleben” are often only felt much later, when it is too late. He came to this realization early in his career, and for this reason has always opposed introducing reforms too soon. He believes that experience has proved him correct, and that the reason the *Aufbauschule* was successful was because nothing was rushed.

In the Whitsun holidays of 1925, they were invited to the country residence of the writer Hans Franck, situated in the vicinity of Schwerin.<sup>9</sup> As Franck had a wife and two children Huhnhäuser found it somewhat odd that his friend and secretary, the painter Gertrud Kliehm, lived in a small house in the garden. The Francks had other guests, including the wife and daughter of the Berlin literary historian Julius Bab,<sup>10</sup> who was part of the management of the publishing company *Deutsche Buchgemeinschaft*. Huhnhäuser claims that during this visit to Franck he had the idea of the *Reuter* edition which he finished in the course of the summer for the *Buchgemeinschaft*. His more intimate friendship with Franck also brought him into closer contact with Franck’s work, and after Huhnhäuser left Neukloster they continued to write for many years. Whenever Franck had

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<sup>9</sup> At this point Huhnhäuser uses the spelling “Frank”.

a new work published, he would send Huhnhäuser a copy, and he even dedicated the second volume of his anecdotes to Huhnhäuser. Huhnhäuser was honoured twice in this way, for Mattiesen dedicated the song “Weiße Wolken” to him, which Huhnhäuser regards as one of his most beautiful.

In 1925 he also attended a conference for boarding school heads, organized by the *Zentralinstitut für Erziehung und Unterricht* in Berlin. The delegates came from all over Germany, writes Huhnhäuser, from both state and private schools. Huhnhäuser was very interested in those from the private sector, including the heads of the *Landerziehungsheime*, where he had been offered a job several years before. One of the conference speakers spoke on the topic of pupil self-administration, and this was of particular interest to Huhnhäuser as he had already carried out a number of successful experiments in this area in the *Seminar*: “Meines Erachtens kann man die Jugend nicht früh genug an Selbsterziehung und Selbstverwaltung gewöhnen, und wir waren vor 1933 in unsern Höheren Schulen ein gutes Stück vorwärts gekommen.” (DNF, p. 97)

Co-education was another topic discussed at this conference. The representatives from the *Landerziehungsheime* led the debate, for they educated girls and boys together in their boarding schools until the *Oberstufe*. Huhnhäuser points out that the discussion was not on co-instruction, that is to say girls and boys being taught together in the same class. He states that this is “eigentlich mehr ein Unterrichts- als ein Erziehungsproblem” (DNF, p. 98), for the teaching of girls and boys together in a day school does not present any difficulties. The highlight of the conference was a paper given by the man responsible for the Prussian school reforms of 1924-25, *Ministerialrat* Richert. Huhnhäuser had expected

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<sup>10</sup> Julius Bab (1880-1955), a Jew, emigrated to New York in 1933.

him to be a man of great physical stature, and was surprised to find that he was a small man who seemed almost aged on the podium. Scarcely had he begun to speak, however, when Huhnhäuser became aware of his great intelligence and enthusiasm. These were a very stimulating few days, he writes, whose value lay, above all, in having personal contact with a number of important educationalists.

In the late summer of 1925, a party from Schwerin, including the Minister, Klaehn and Weber, came to inspect Neukloster. At that time control of the Education Ministry had passed from the Democratic Party to the *Volkspartei*, and Stammer, a former pastor of Rostock's *Nicolaikirche*, was now Minister. At the end of the visit Stammer pronounced that he had found everything satisfactory, and then added with a certain emphasis that Huhnhäuser had his complete confidence. This last remark, which had appeared so deliberate, made Huhnhäuser suspicious. He wondered whether someone had informed Stammer of the tension in his relationship with Klaehn, or whether he might view this as a hint that he was to be made head of the new teacher-training institution which was to open at Easter 1926. He felt more mistrustful than confident after this visit, however, and his instinct was to look for another position before it was too late.

He applied, therefore, for a post in Hameln, but before sending the application he travelled to Wismar to discuss the matter with Weber. Huhnhäuser concluded from their meeting that he was out of favour with the Ministry, for otherwise Weber would never have allowed his friend to send the application: "Merkte ich doch in dieser Besprechung, was für ihn eine Trennung von mir bedeuten würde." (DNF, p. 101) It was also a very difficult decision for Huhnhäuser, for he felt himself to be now "mit Mecklenburg aufs engste verbunden", and adds that "jeder, der diese Blätter bis hierhin gelesen hat, wird

diese Tatsache darin bestätigt finden” (DNF, p. 102), thus giving another indication that he has a wider readership than immediate family in mind. This said, however, he could not imagine staying at Neukloster for the rest of his career. He personally needed the stimulus of the outside world, and he felt, furthermore, that he owed it to the girls to leave this small town so that they could attend secondary school without having to undertake the long journey to Wismar every day. His application to the school in Hameln was unsuccessful, but soon after a position in Breslau became vacant. His friends Reincke-Bloch and Turnau were now living there<sup>11</sup> — and he had the support of Schellberg, his colleague from the *Lebensgut* project who worked in the Prussian Ministry of Education. For weeks after posting the application he heard nothing until he was called out of the auditorium during a *Kunstkasse* concert to receive a visitor. The unexpected arrival was *Stadtschulrat* Dr Lauterbach from Breslau and the purpose of his visit was to inspect Huhnhäuser’s institution. He stayed for the rest of the concert and then arranged to meet Huhnhäuser early the next morning. He arrived at eight-thirty, and asked first of all to see his flat and meet Huhnhäuser’s wife; it later emerged that, when appointing a headmaster, he placed great importance on the suitability of the wife, including how well she ran the home. Lauterbach divulged during his visit that there was only one other serious contender for the position, *Oberstudienrat* Wagner, who already taught at the school. After several tense weeks of waiting, Huhnhäuser finally learned that he had been successful. Before accepting the offer, he travelled to Schwerin in a final attempt to secure his position in Mecklenburg, and was received by the Minister in the presence of Klaehn and Weber.

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<sup>11</sup> Turnau had been engaged by Richard Strauß as director of the *Wiener Staatsoper*. There had, however, been some tension in his relationship with the director of the opera, Schalk, and



Er war gemessen freundlich. Ich teilte ihm kurz die Tatsache meiner Wahl in Breslau mit und sagte weiter, daß ich gern in Mecklenburg bleiben würde; ich müsse aber dazu wissen, wie man sich meine weitere Zukunft denke. Nachdem der Minister mir gestattet hatte, einige Fragen zu stellen, fragte ich zunächst, ob ich als Leiter der neuen Lehrerakademie in Frage komme. Darauf erteilte der Minister Landesschulrat Klaehn das Wort, und der sagte, daß er sich darüber nicht äußern könne; denn man wisse noch nicht, wie die Sache geregelt werde. Darauf sagte ich, ob ich vielleicht damit rechnen könne, die Leitung des Schweriner Realgymnasiums zu erhalten, da mir bekannt war, daß der alte Direktor Schmidt zu Ostern 26 abgehen wolle. Der Minister antwortete, daß man diese Stelle bereits dem Bützower Direktor Galle versprochen habe. Nun blieb nur noch eine letzte Frage übrig. Ich sagte, daß einst mein ehemaliger Direktor Ahrendt in Rostock den Wunsch geäußert habe, ich möge sein Nachfolger werden. Nun werde die Stelle in einigen Jahren frei und ich möchte fragen, ob man mir diese Stelle zusichern könne. Hierzu bemerkte der Minister, daß man mir auf längere Sicht hin nichts versprechen könne. Nun wußte ich, woran ich war. (DNF, pp. 105-106)

What hurt Huhnhäuser most of all about this meeting was the fact that Weber sat through it in silence. From this he deduced that Weber's own position with the Minister was weak and that Klaehn had managed to win favour. Consequently, he told the Minister that he had made his decision and asked to be released from his position at Easter. As he left the Ministry Huhnhäuser met *Landesschulrat* Dr Maybaum, who must have known of his situation for he asked about the outcome of the meeting. He congratulated Huhnhäuser upon his decision, saying he was pleased and convinced that Huhnhäuser would "make his way" in Prussia.

From Schwerin Huhnhäuser travelled directly to Breslau. He had telegraphed the Turnaus of his imminent arrival, and he was received with the usual warmth. He claims

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this caused Turnau to move to Breslau.

that he felt glad they would soon be living in Breslau, although he may have been putting a brave face on matters. He also claims that when he travelled into the town the following morning, a strange feeling came over him, and he felt that he had been there before. Everything seemed familiar and he remarks that he knew he would feel happy there. He strolled around the old town taking in the sights, including his new school. This fleeting tour provided him with very satisfactory impressions and he travelled home with the feeling that this town would not prove to be a disappointment.

On the return journey a curious coincidence occurred. When changing trains he met his old friend Kolz, for whom he had made such efforts to secure his appointment to the *Realgymnasium* in Rostock. He could not explain why Kolz seemed so embarrassed to have met him, but later learned that he was returning from Schwerin, where he had been offered the headship of the new teacher-training institution. At the time Huhnhäuser had been very hurt by his conduct, for he felt that as an old friend Kolz ought to have discussed the matter with him, especially as Huhnhäuser had once gone to so much trouble on his behalf: "Um so froher war ich, beizeiten den Knoten zerhauen zu haben." (DNF, p. 108) Later Huhnhäuser learned that Klaehn had tried to prevent him from being offered the post in Breslau by providing him with a less than favourable reference. Thus the friend who had warned Huhnhäuser of Klaehn's poor character had been proved correct.

When news of his departure became known, he claims it caused a stir and writes, perhaps with false modesty: "es mag sein, daß es mancher bedauert hat." (DNF, p.109) To mark his departure there was a final operatic performance organized by the *Kunstkasse*, and his staff held a farewell celebration at which he was presented with an album containing numerous pictures of Neukloster. (This album is still extant in the archive.)

He writes that he would like to end his depiction of this period by briefly referring to their relationship with their families in Rostock and Demmin, for he has failed to mention this aspect of his life in previous chapters. This does not signify, he asserts, that they had become less close. The war had admittedly prevented him from visiting Demmin as often as in peacetime but he tried always to see his mother on her birthday, 17 September. In 1917 his sister, Else, married. Her first child, Hans Jochen, was born the following year, and then a daughter, Anneliese, was added to the family in 1923. His sister's marriage would have been happier, he writes, if her husband, *Postsekretär* Karl Müller, had insisted that they move away from Demmin and his mother-in-law's influence. Huhnhäuser has already described how it was only his prompt intervention that prevented his possessive mother from causing conflict in his own marriage.

The relationship with Melms' family in Rostock remained similarly strong. When they had lived in Rostock, the two families had seen each other almost every day. His father-in-law took pleasure in helping him work on the house and garden and gave them much support. Huhnhäuser's relationship with his mother-in-law remained as good and as warm as it had been from the start, and the two girls were very fond of both their grandparents and their uncles, Hans and Werner. These two brothers differed markedly in character. The elder boy, Hans, was very open and outgoing but Werner, born in 1911, was shy and became increasingly introverted as he grew older. Consequently, his parents decided to send him to the *Aufbauschule* in 1924. This, reports Huhnhäuser, had the desired effect and he made many friends.

Huhnhäuser, writing some twenty years later, reflects upon his time at Neukloster and thinks of it with nothing but gratitude. He believes the experiences he gained there

enriched him in every possible way.

Ich hatte mir meine Sporen als Anstaltsleiter verdient und wußte, daß die Steuerung einer Schule mir keine Schwierigkeiten bereiten werde. Manches hätte ich, von den späteren Erfahrungen aus beurteilt, vielleicht anders anfassen können, aber nach allem zu schließen, was andere an Urteilen abgegeben haben, darf ich wohl ohne Übertreibung sagen, daß die Anstalt einen Auftrieb erhielt, wie sie ihn später nie mehr gehabt hat. Die Nachfolger setzten das Begonnene fort, ohne selber Neues zu bringen. Später haben mir dann ehemalige Schüler erzählt, daß sie auf der Hochschule in jeder Beziehung mit den Abiturienten der andern Lehranstalten hätten konkurrieren können. Alle bestätigten mir, daß das Lateinische für sie von großer Bedeutung gewesen sei. So darf ich den Versuch mit der Aufbauschule als gelungen betrachten. Der Erfolg hing aufs engste mit der Schülersauslese zusammen; denn nur als Begabenschule hatte dieser neue wichtige Typus der Höheren Schule eine Daseinsberechtigung. Insofern war er auch dazu berufen, richtunggebend auf die anderen Schularten zu wirken. (DNF, p. 115)

This concludes the description of Huhnhäuser's life whilst headmaster of Neukloster. He clearly believes himself to be an innovative educationalist, who leads where others follow, and finds confirmation of this opinion in the comments of others. In his own eyes, then, he is clearly more than a gifted teacher. In assessing his performance he notes that he had the foresight to identify potential problems in the school reforms and the initiative to develop his own system, avoiding these pitfalls.

**Direktor in Breslau — 1 April 1926 bis 31 Dezember 1927**

## Introduction

This second *Abschnitt* is prefaced with a short foreword in which Huhnhäuser states that “die folgenden Aufzeichnungen über Breslau können nur als eine Skizze aufgefaßt werden” (DB, p. 117).<sup>12</sup> This, he explains, is because of the shortness of the time he worked there, only one and three quarter years, three months of which he spent on holiday recovering from illness. His impressions from this time are, therefore, more superficial than of other periods. He comments yet again that the description would be more vivid and more detailed if he had access to material from the months spent in Breslau, such as notebooks from the school, letters or pictures, and that “insofern gilt das bereits früher öfter darüber Gesagte hier in erhöhtem Maße” (DB, p. 117). The reason why he has chosen, in spite of this, to record his impressions of that time is for the sake of the memoir’s continuity.

## Einführung ins Amt und das Kollegium

As the family’s new flat would not be ready for them to move into for a few weeks, Huhnhäuser initially stayed alone in a *Pension*. He did not wish to work in the school until he was officially instated but in order not to remain completely on the outside he allowed

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<sup>12</sup> The preface is dated “11/4. 8 Mon.”, which perhaps refers to the eight-month anniversary of Huhnhäuser’s arrest or incarceration.

his deputy, Wagner, to introduce him to his new staff of around twenty teachers. After the introductions the oldest teacher, Professor Goehlich, gave a short speech which at first alarmed Huhnhäuser with its blunt honesty, but for which he was later grateful. The staff, he said, had wanted Wagner as head, but as Huhnhäuser had been chosen they had to accept it. They would, of course, be professional enough not to make his work more difficult, but it was up to Huhnhäuser to win their confidence. The new head of the school was taken aback for a moment: “anfangs wirkten diese Worte wie ein kalter Strahl auf mich.” (DB, p. 119) However, he quickly regained his poise and responded immediately. He thanked Goehlich for his candour, then explained that he wished to answer with equal frankness. He told them that he came from a school where the success of the educational work depended completely upon trust and co-operation between the management and staff. He hoped that he would succeed here too in winning the trust of the staff by working together with them. If it should turn out after some time, however, that the desired and indeed essential relationship of trust had not been created, he gave his word that he would look for another post for he valued this school much too highly to dare to damage it. He felt immediately that his words had not lacked effect, and that any tension there might have been had eased from this moment.

Huhnhäuser stayed away from all official duties until his inauguration and spent his time writing his speech for the ceremony. He claims that he never enjoyed being the centre of attention, but Lauterbach was so effusive in his praise that Huhnhäuser purports to have found it one of his most embarrassing situations ever. As a result he felt rather bashful when he began to give his address. He soon recovered his equilibrium, however, and gained the impression that the speech was well received. At the end of the evening the staff

asked him to join them in a local pub and here the mood relaxed and the conversation began to flow. Huhnhäuser was able to feel even on this first informal gathering how well the staff complemented one another. He attributed this to the fact that all but two came from Silesia, but also believed that the traditions of the school played an important role. It was one of the oldest in Breslau and one of the first, if not the first, Latin school from the time of the Reformation. The Protestant ethos of the school was consciously nurtured and the staff were all Protestants, although some of the pupils were Catholic. He thought that another factor was the personality of his predecessor, who had not only employed a good selection of young teachers, but had also understood how to have, and maintain, contact with his staff on a personal level.

During Huhnhäuser's time at the school two of the older teachers left and were replaced by Protestant teachers. When a third vacancy arose, however, the *Provinzialschulkollegium* (PSK) insisted that a Catholic teacher be appointed, despite the opposition of the staff. Huhnhäuser supported his staff's stance on this matter although there were, he admits, no objective grounds on which to protest; the school was a public and not a Protestant institution. His personal intervention with the PSK was in vain and so the former *Präparandendirektor* König became the first Catholic teacher to be employed in the school. Huhnhäuser writes that "damit hatte die katholische Seite einen nicht unbedeutenden Sieg davongetragen" (DB, p. 133), thus suggesting that this matter was both indicative of and significant for religious tensions in the area. König was, incidentally, a peace-loving man who soon fitted in well with the other staff. Huhnhäuser comments that it was a very decent staff he had been given to lead. He alone now shouldered the responsibility of whether the school would succeed in maintaining its high standards, or

even in raising them where possible: “Stand sie doch wie alle andern Schulen Preußens in einer Reform von großem Ausmaß.” (DB, p. 134)

### **Unser Heim. Auf Besuchstour**

Huhnhäuser was fortunate this time that he did not have long to wait before his family joined him in Breslau. He comments that he wants to sketch a picture of their flat: “denn es werden beim Lesen dadurch vielleicht manche Erinnerungsbilder wieder lebendig.” (p. 136) He does not state that this remark is directed to his family but this is obviously the case, thus reminding the reader that the memoir is at times a very personal document, in that it attempts in part to recreate the intimate life of a family. In the ensuing description, Huhnhäuser frequently uses the pronoun “wir”. One of the main distinguishing features of the flat was the superb view they had of the town and the fast-flowing river Oder: “Tief hat sich dies Bild [...] in mir eingegraben, und wenn ich heute an Breslau denke, so ist es dieses Stadtbild, das zuerst in mir auftaucht.” (DB, pp. 137-38)<sup>13</sup>

The girls now spent much more time indoors than in Neukloster, where they had roamed in the huge grounds. The flat was also smaller than the grand home they had just left, but still large enough for them to live comfortably. They even had a little garden with a summerhouse, although they never used it and the girls seldom played there because it lay on the Oder promenade. There was only one really unpleasant aspect of their new

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<sup>13</sup> He comments later in the text that all remarks relating to the townscape of Breslau should be checked later against a map of the town. This is another indication that his memories of this



home and that was the soot which lay constantly over Breslau and turned the town black. It was spread by the chimneys of the Linke-Hoffmann works in the west of the town. The soot penetrated every nook and cranny and as a result it was very difficult to keep the flat clean. He does not comment upon the detrimental effect this must also have had upon their health, perhaps because the link between air pollution and health problems had not been fully established at that time.

After they had allowed themselves a little time to settle in, they began the round of obligatory social calls to the staff on Sundays between the hours of eleven and one. It took several weeks for them to get through all the visits, for they could not afford a car and had to travel by tram. Thus they could usually only fit in three or four visits each day. Apart from his own staff, he and Melms also had to visit the heads of the other schools in Breslau and *Stadtschulrat* Lauterbach. That entailed fifteen further visits in various parts of the town. Huhnhäuser regarded this type of introduction as a troublesome obligation “welche nicht mehr in die Zeit paßte” (DB, p. 142); one was required to don formal dress, forced to wear a top hat and kid gloves on a summer’s day, and go visiting with one’s tastefully dressed spouse. He claims that the absurdity of this social eccentricity is best illustrated by the fact that most people were glad if they were not at home when called upon, or preferred their callers to have their cards delivered by a servant. Furthermore, he remarks that when one considers the fact that after completing one’s own visits, one was then busy for weeks receiving all the return visits, it becomes obvious how ridiculous the custom was. Huhnhäuser believes it would have been much better and easier to have made oneself known at a general social function. He adds that he did not, however, have the

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period are generally more superficial than in the rest of *Aus einem reichen Leben*.

courage at that time in Breslau, or two years later in Koblenz, to break with this convention, despite regarding it as outmoded. This reluctance to break with a social custom which he believes to be obsolete serves to illustrate two conflicting elements of Huhnhäuser's character: he is an innovative thinker in his professional sphere, but highly conservative in other aspects of his life.

### **Die Richertschen Schulformen und meine Schule**

The *Gymnasium zum Heiligen Geist* had been converted from a *Gymnasium* into a *Reformrealgymnasium* some time before. When Huhnhäuser arrived, the school had eighteen classes and over six hundred pupils. He writes that both the *Realgymnasium* and the *Oberrealschule* were innovations of the nineteenth century. Germany's continuing industrialization increased the demand for a workforce educated to fulfil the requirements of industry. Thus many *Gymnasien* were either turned into *Realanstalten*, or had a *Realgymnasium* attached to them. Huhnhäuser cites the development of the Rostock secondary school system as typical for the period.

Ursprünglich hatte es als einzige höhere Schule nur die Große Stadtschule als humanistisches Gymnasium gegeben. Dann hatte sich zwischen Volks- und höherer Schule die sogenannte Bürgerschule eingeschoben [...]. Aus der Bürgerschule wurde später die Realschule [...]. Die Realschule entwickelte sich weiter zur Oberrealschule. Etwa zur gleichen Zeit hatte man dem Gymnasium ein Realgymnasium angegliedert. Das war organisatorisch insofern nicht schwer durchzuführen, als die drei Unterklassen von Sexta bis Quarta genau den gleichen Lehrstoff hatten wie das Gymnasium. Erst in Untertertia begann die Verzweigung. (DB, pp.

He adds that in “Lehrer in Rostock” he has already discussed the danger that existed in the juxtaposition of these two institutions, as the less gifted pupils were easily transferred from the *Gymnasium* to the *Realgymnasium* and this undermined the status of the latter.

Huhnhäuser then describes the provision of education for girls in Rostock:

Im Mädchenschulwesen war es ja bis zur Jahrhundertwende so gewesen, daß in den meisten Orten die sogenannte Höhere Mädchenschule oder Höhere Töchterschule — man bedenke den für das damalige bürgerliche Denken bezeichnenden Ausdruck “Höhere Tochter” — die einzige Bildungsanstalt war, die über die Volksschule hinausführte! Später nannten sich diese Schulen Lyceum. Als dann auch den Frauen das Studium ermöglicht wurde, kamen die ersten Studienanstalten auf, in ihren Plänen etwa dem späteren Reformrealgymnasium ähnlich. Die Lyceen wurden vielfach zu Oberlyceen ausgebaut, d.h. neusprachlichen Lehranstalten, zunächst ohne Latein. (DB, pp. 145-146)

In 1924 to 1925 the Richert reforms were introduced in Prussia. Huhnhäuser does not state whether they were copied in Mecklenburg, although it is most likely that they would be highly influential in the smaller states — Mecklenburg copied Richert’s earlier teacher-training reforms by introducing the *Aufbauschule*. The form of the humanist *Gymnasium* remained more or less without alteration.<sup>14</sup> The *Realgymnasium*, on the other hand, was modified considerably by the addition of the *Reformrealgymnasium* which taught French or English as the first foreign language, and not Latin as in the old

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<sup>14</sup> Huhnhäuser notes here that this section on school reforms should be checked against Richert’s memorandum and plans. He adds: “Da ich mich gerade damals mit diesen Dingen sehr eingehend auseinandergesetzt habe, würde sicher die Darstellung hier noch um manchen

*Realgymnasium*. In the North and East of Prussia, English was taught first in the main, whereas French was the preferred first foreign language in other areas. There were two types of *Reformrealgymnasium*: in the first type Latin was the second language taught, introduced in the *Untertertia*, and followed by English or French in the *Untersekunda*. The second type introduced English or French as the second language and Latin as the third in the *Untertertia* and the *Untersekunda* respectively. Huhnhäuser observes that: “Damit hatte also das Realgymnasium fortan fünf verschiedene Möglichkeiten des Aufbaus.” (DB, pp. 146-47) The *deutsche Oberschule* was introduced as a new type of secondary school, in which the emphasis lay on “deutschkundliche” subjects: “In dieser neuen Schulart kamen zum ersten Mal die Gedanken und Bestrebungen der Gesellschaft für deutsche Bildung zum Ausdruck.” (DB, p. 147) He adds that it possessed many possibilities for further development. Finally, he remarks that the timetable of the *Oberrealschule* retained on the whole its old character.

The two main types of girls’ school were the *Oberlyceum* and the *Studienanstalt*.<sup>15</sup> They were little affected by the reforms. On the other hand, a completely new type of school was introduced, the *Frauenschule*, which was initially a one and then a two class institution. Students transferred to the *Frauenschule* after finishing at the *Lyceum*. The curriculum of this school was shaped by the attitudes of the period:

Es war eine ausgesprochen weibliche Erziehung, die sich diese Schule als Ziel gesetzt hatte. Die jungen Mädchen wurden in den wichtigsten Gebieten unterrichtet, welche für sie später im Familienleben von Bedeutung waren,

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Gedanken bereichert werden können, wenn ich das Material zur Hand hätte.” (DB, p. 181)

<sup>15</sup> Hahn uses the spelling *Lyzeum*, p. 35, 62, but for the sake of consistency I will use Huhnhäuser’s spelling.

und so standen auf dem Plan, Kochen und Haushaltsführung, Nähen, Sticken wie alle möglichen anderen Handarbeiten. Auch Säuglingspflege war im Plan vorgesehen. Das Wesentliche dieser Schulart aber bestand darin, daß alle Fächer geistig unterbaut wurden. (DB, p. 147)

From this school-type the three-year *Frauenschule* later evolved, which led to the *Abitur*.

This caused many problems regarding the parity of the qualification, writes Huhnhäuser, as it was not regarded as being of equal status with certificates awarded by the male institutions.

Huhnhäuser's school in Breslau was a *Reformrealgymnasium* which taught Latin as the third foreign language. This meant that the school had only four years to teach Latin, and many subject specialists claimed that it was impossible to achieve fairly satisfactory results in such a short time. He observes that as he has discussed this matter thoroughly in relation to the curriculum of the *Aufbauschule*, he can forego further explanation here. He restricts himself to the observation that one had to approach the subject in a completely different manner when limited to just four years, but that nothing is more difficult than asking teachers to change their habits. He thinks, therefore, that perhaps such classes should have been placed in the hands of Romance language teachers, who had been trained in modern educational methods. Huhnhäuser ends this section and the autobiographical memoirs with the observation that:

Es war insofern verhängnisvoll für die Schule daß ich sie schon nach so kurzer Zeit wieder verließ, ohne die Neuerungen durch reichliche Erfahrung ausprobieren zu können, deren Durchführung ich mir als pädagogische Aufgabe gestellt hatte. (DB, p. 149)

It is fitting that Huhnhäuser ends his memoirs on an educational topic. The strong emphasis on his professional life throughout the memoirs, and in particular in this chapter, indicates that work was his main priority at that time, and perhaps was still at the time of writing, for when writing he is free to choose upon which aspects of his life he wishes to dwell. During his post-war incarceration, it was probably very comforting for Huhnhäuser to remind himself that he was successful in his career. He clearly derived a great deal of his sense of identity from his professional abilities, but Germany's defeat and his own ill-health combined to deny him a return to the high-level position he once held.

## Summary

The first few months at Neukloster presented Huhnhäuser with a great many challenges of a personal, educational and even political nature. His life here was vastly different from that which he had known in Rostock, especially with regards to his cultural activities, but he and his family were compensated by a rise in their standard of living and quality of life. The financial hardship caused by German hyperinflation was offset to an extent by the produce they harvested from their garden and the free milk provided by the *Seminar* farm.

During Huhnhäuser's time at Neukloster, the *Seminar* underwent several significant changes, some dictated by the Ministry and others introduced by Huhnhäuser himself. Huhnhäuser frequently states his own views regarding the Ministry reforms and points out what he considers to be their merits and flaws. He often places such reforms within their historical and political context. His description of and his attitudes towards his

subordinates at the *Seminar* serve to highlight contemporary social attitudes amongst the educated bourgeoisie. He unwittingly reveals his political standpoint in his description of a history lesson he gave, which was based upon the territorial conditions of the Versailles Treaty. His own patriotic, or rather nationalistic, view is conveyed to the pupils, but Huhnhäuser never questions his own objectivity.

Administrative tasks took up much of his time, but Huhnhäuser believed it was important for the *Seminar* that he also retained his place as its intellectual leader. He comments that as head of a multi-faceted institution such as Neukloster, he was responsible not only for the administrative and educational requirements of the various establishments, but also for the physical and emotional well-being of the students and, to a lesser extent, the staff. This required a number of personal qualities which he believes he was then too inexperienced to possess in full, but adds that he did bring the energy of youth to the job. One of the reforms which Huhnhäuser introduced was to increase the amount of student self-administration. This proved to be very successful over time, but Huhnhäuser complains that he did not receive any recognition from his immediate superior. His relationship with Klaehn had initially been cordial, but deteriorated throughout the course of his headship until he came to regard Klaehn as his enemy. It was Klaehn, however, who appointed Huhnhäuser to sit on a consultative committee for the *Volksschule* curriculum and as an examiner in German for the *Mittelschullehrerprüfungen*. This enabled Huhnhäuser to become familiar with these aspects of the German education system.

The *Aufbauschule*, which Huhnhäuser was given the task of setting up in Neukloster, provided him with a demanding new educational challenge. He expresses his

own firm views on the conditions under which such an experimental school should function. This new school came under the authority of his friend Weber, much to the chagrin of Klahn, who was still responsible for the *Seminar* until its closure. Huhnhauser shows that he was open to new ideas and innovations by incorporating modern educational and psychological principles into all aspects of the new school, from the development of the selection process to the design of the boarding accommodation.

Huhnhauser's cultural aspirations were fulfilled in part by the *Kunstkasse*, to which he devoted a great deal of time and energy. He was able, through his contacts in Rostock, to bring many professional artistes to Neukloster, as well as several writers and academics. These cultural interludes were perhaps all the more necessary because Huhnhauser found that there was little in the way of interesting society in the locality. His life and the life of his family revolved around Neukloster and its surrounding grounds.

Their isolated existence at Neukloster encouraged Huhnhauser and his wife to seek the stimuli which travel offered. Although somewhat limited by inflationary factors, they managed to undertake several trips. In 1924 the family travelled to Bad Pyrmont as Huhnhauser searched for some respite from a chronic stomach complaint. Here he became acquainted with the pacifist movement. The views he expresses here do not support his claim that he is apolitical, for they correspond to the position held by the contemporary German right-wing factions. When visiting Fascist Italy the following year, Huhnhauser makes no comment upon the political situation there, other than that the Black Shirts had solved the problem of beggars and pickpockets, at least in Rome and the North.

Huhnhauser had little time available for academic research but he did become involved with Diesterweg, a publishing company which commissioned him to co-edit



school readers. Through this project he made the acquaintance of an official in the Prussian Ministry of Education, who was to prove a very valuable contact. Following a visit to Neukloster by the Minister and several officials, Huhnhäuser began to sense that his position had become less than secure. This prompted him to consider moving to another post before it was too late. When the Minister failed to give him any guarantees regarding his future, he applied for two jobs. He was successful in his application for the headship of a *Gymnasium* in Breslau. The decision to leave Mecklenburg was very painful, but he felt that it was better both for his children, and his career that he leave Neukloster. His own assessment of his years there is that although he may have made mistakes, the institution benefited greatly from his innovation and prescience. Furthermore, he felt that after the demands of Neukloster, he could now head any school without difficulty.

## CHAPTER SIX

### Norway During the Occupation, April 1940 to May 1945

A short summary of the events which preceded and took place during the occupation is given below, in order to provide a context for the specific events described by Huhnhäuser regarding the struggle between the professional educators and the National Socialist authorities for control of Norway's schools and institutes of higher education.

Vidkun Quisling, former Minister of Defence in the Agrarian government from 1931-33, founded his own political party, *Nasjonal Samling* (National Union) in May 1933, shortly after the government was forced to resign. This national socialist party never gained widespread popularity amongst the electorate in Norway. Its best electoral performance came in the mid-1930s when the party achieved modest electoral success. Following the disastrous *Storting* elections of 1936, NS was riven with internal strife which contributed to the decline in the party's fortunes. In the months immediately preceding the German occupation, NS had disintegrated into an extreme right-wing political faction. Nevertheless Quisling held tenaciously to his belief that he would one day create a new corporate society in Norway, dispensing with the party parliamentary system which he so despised. By 1939 the party was facing bankruptcy. However, Quisling found a supporter, and personal friend, in the form of Alfred Rosenberg, the Nazi theorist and head of the Foreign Political Office, who provided him with financial backing. Quisling became Rosenberg's protégé. In December 1939 Rosenberg persuaded Hitler to meet with Quisling, in order to discuss the political situation in Norway. Quisling stressed that the Nygaardsvold government was in league with the British and intended to allow Britain to use the country as a base for attack

against the Reich.<sup>1</sup> He also provided the Germans with vital military information, the details of which he knew from his time as Minister of Defence. As Norway was economically and strategically important to the course of the war, Hitler became convinced he had to gain control of Norway before the British.

The German invasion came on 9 April 1940. Initially there was some confusion amongst the Norwegians as to who was actually invading, for Britain had mined Norwegian territorial waters twenty-four hours earlier. Nevertheless, the Germans encountered more resistance in certain areas than they had expected, for Quisling had led them to believe that the army would not fire upon the German Navy. This slowed down the progress of the invaders and gave the king and the government time to flee from Oslo. There was also time for an emergency session of the *Storting*, in which an emergency resolution was passed invoking powers under the constitution, whereby the king and the government were granted permission to fulfil their constitutional functions from abroad.

In the chaos that ensued from the invasion, Quisling took full advantage of the situation and declared himself Prime Minister, to the astonishment of everyone, including the Germans and even the ministers he named in his cabinet. However the Quisling “government” survived only for a few days. The Germans were keen to establish a quasi-legal governmental authority in Norway. They sought at first to secure the approval of the king, initially by attempting to capture him, and when that failed, through negotiation. King Haakon, however, flatly refused to sanction a government headed by Quisling. He insisted that Quisling be removed. Hitler refused to agree to this and the negotiations broke down on this point.

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<sup>1</sup> Johs. Andenæs, Olav Riste and Magne Skodvin, *Norway and the Second World War* (Oslo: Johan Grundt Tanum, 1966), pp. 34-36.

Although the Germans quickly gained control of the south of Norway, the campaign in the North lasted for almost two months. The Norwegians, with the help of British, French and Polish troops, were winning this campaign.<sup>2</sup> They were able to recapture the strategic port of Narvik, and enjoyed other military successes. However, when the British troops were withdrawn on 24 May and sent to aid the French, who were in difficulty on the Western front, the Norwegians had no choice but to surrender.<sup>3</sup> Some of the troops chose to continue the fight against the Germans from Britain and were evacuated along with the royal family and the Nygaardsvold government.<sup>4</sup> In the absence of those two constitutional authorities, it was agreed with the Germans that the Supreme Court would function temporarily as the highest Norwegian administrative authority in place of the impromptu Quisling government. On 15 April an Administrative Council was set up under the authority of the Supreme Court to replace Quisling's short-lived attempt at government.

Hitler installed Josef Terboven, *Gauleiter* of Essen, as *Reichskommissar*, the highest civilian authority in Norway. The first two years of the occupation were marked by the struggle for power between the *Reichskommissar* and the *Fører*. It had always been Quisling's ultimate goal to head an independent government in Norway, and he had received vague assurances from Hitler to this effect. He viewed the *Reichskommissariat* as the main obstacle to achieving this aim. Quisling was backed by his friends in Berlin, Rosenberg and Grand Admiral Erich Raeder, Commander-in-Chief of the German Navy, both of whom disliked Terboven, but both Quisling and Terboven initially enjoyed Hitler's

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<sup>2</sup> Maurice Harvey, "The Balance Sheet of the Norwegian Campaign", in *Britain and Norway in the Second World War*, ed. by Patrick Salmon (London: HMSO, 1995), pp. 18-25 (pp. 22-23). Also. Wilhelm Keilhau, *Norway in World History* (London: Macdonald, 1944), p. 198.

<sup>3</sup> Andenæs, Riste and Skodvin, p. 51.

<sup>4</sup> King Haakon, his government and their officials left Tromsø for London on 7 June aboard the British cruiser *Devonshire*. C.f. Keilhau, p. 198.

good will.

The Administrative Council was dismissed by Terboven on 25 September 1940 and replaced by a Commissarial Council.<sup>5</sup> The *Reichskommissar* had hoped to persuade the Administrative Council to agree to a Council of State, thus achieving quasi-legal status, for he had pressured the Norwegian parliamentary party groups into voting that “the Royal House had ceased to reign for the duration of the war”.<sup>6</sup> However negotiations failed when the Germans insisted on installing an NS man as Minister of Justice, and Terboven created the Commissarial Council in its place. The new Council consisted mainly of NS men, except in areas vital to the economy, where experts in the various fields were appointed. Quisling was persuaded not to become directly involved in the Council at this time; his actions during the invasion had aroused the contempt and hatred of ordinary Norwegians, who were inherently democratic and fiercely independent. However, due to the *fører* principle upon which the NS party operated, Quisling retained tight control of all the departments headed by NS men. He met his ministers once a week in order to instruct them. No minister was allowed to make decisions independently. (It must be stressed, however, that in reality, the authority of the Commissarial Council was always subordinate to that of the *Reichskommissariat* and that the ministers were aware of this fact.) Nevertheless, Quisling was allowed some freedom of action and now attempted to Nazify Norwegian society as quickly as possible, until his dream of an independent Norwegian corporate state, which was an equal partner within a federation of Greater Germanic states, had been achieved. However, Quisling’s attempts to gain control of economic and professional organizations failed without the support of the *Reichskommissar* and served only to weaken, not to

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<sup>5</sup> Keilhau, p. 199.

<sup>6</sup> T. K. Derry, *A Short History of Norway* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1968), p. 245.

strengthen, his position. Thus, as Hoidal states: “The anti-NS feeling did not reach the great heights that it eventually rose to during the occupation merely because party officials followed German orders. It was Quisling’s attempt to Nazify society that hardened the public’s resolve to resist.”<sup>7</sup>

Already in November 1940, the Department of Sport and Labour Service announced the reorganization of organized sports. The new organization was to be manned by NS members or sympathizers. The two main sporting organizations in Norway were abolished, and all smaller groups were to be incorporated into the NS umbrella organization. The sporting public responded to this measure by boycotting all NS organized training sessions and competitions, sometimes holding private, clandestine competitions in the mountains or woods instead.<sup>8</sup> The Department of Sport also tried to gain control of school sports. Details of this are outlined in the chapters on Norway in the Huhnhäuser archive.

School teachers were quickly singled out as a soft target by Quisling and NS. As Hoidal states, “If they could be made to obey the party, then Quisling could expect to impose his credo upon future generations within the classroom.” (p. 491) Ragnar Skancke, Minister for Church and Education, was in charge of this measure to gain control of the teaching body. In November 1940 he threatened teachers with dismissal if they did not sign a declaration, which basically forced them to indoctrinate their pupils in NS ideology. News of this loyalty declaration leaked out, however, and resistance and teachers’ leaders were able to produce a counter declaration, stressing that the teachers would continue to obey all “lawful” instructions. As a result Skancke had to admit defeat on this occasion.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> O. K. Hoidal, *Quisling: a study in treason* (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget AS, 1989), p. 515.

<sup>8</sup> Gerd von der Lippe, “Sport under the Nazis in Norway”, *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, 6 (1989), 112-116 (p. 115).

<sup>9</sup> Hoidal, p. 491.

Action was also taken against the university. Terboven used a spontaneous strike by workers in an Oslo factory to declare a seven-day state of emergency on 8 September 1941. The strike, commonly referred to as the “milk strike”, began when the workers discovered that their milk rations had been abolished, and soon spread to become a general strike despite the desperate efforts of the union leaders to get their members back to work.<sup>10</sup> During the state of emergency the rector of Oslo University, Didrik Arup Seip, was dismissed and arrested, along with three other professors known for their anti-German attitudes. Seip had strongly resisted all NS attempts to gain influence over the university. Skancke used this opportunity to have himself installed as rector, and shortly afterwards Adolf Hoel was delegated to serve as acting rector under Skancke. (Huhnhäuser claims to have been instrumental in this measure, for he believed Skancke was not competent for the task.)

After the lifting of the state of emergency on 17 September 1941, the occupation changed markedly in character. The Norwegians were shocked by Terboven’s systematic use of terror, designed to end all attempts at organized resistance, and horrified by the execution of two trade union leaders. These men, of whom an example was being made, had done nothing to encourage the “milk strike” — quite the opposite, in fact. However, Hoidal points out that this increased use of terror actually fostered the growth of a coordinated resistance movement (p. 515). Moreover, as Terboven’s actions were highly unpopular in Berlin, being viewed as clumsy and unnecessary, Quisling enjoyed increased regard at Terboven’s expense. However, he still gained nothing more than a general assurance that when he and Terboven agreed on the terms for his taking office, the details

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<sup>10</sup> Magne Skodvin, “Det store fremstøt”, in *Norges Krig 1940-1945*, ed. by Sverre Steen, 3 vols, (Oslo: Glydenal Norsk Verlag, 1948), II, pp. 573-[726(?)] (pp. 695-96).

would then be forwarded to Hitler for his final approval.<sup>11</sup>

Germany's invasion of the Soviet Union on 22 June 1941 led to a frustrating time for Quisling. As a fervent anti-Communist, he was glad to see the alliance between Germany and the USSR come to an end, for this allowed him to resume publicly the anti-Bolshevik stance he had held since the early 1930s. However, Hitler's preoccupation with the invasion meant that there would be no possibility of raising the issue of an independent government, headed by Quisling, for some time to come.<sup>12</sup>

Quisling was officially proclaimed Minister President in an Act of State, which took place at Akershus castle on 1 February 1942. Huhnhäuser was present at this ceremony, and wrote a detailed description of what he had witnessed to his wife.<sup>13</sup> This change was little more than one of status, however, much to Quisling's disappointment. In another letter to his wife, Huhnhäuser remarks: "Am 30.1 wird Q[uisling] wohl Ministerpräsident, was im Großen und Ganzen für uns kaum eine Änderung mit sich bringen wird."<sup>14</sup> Hoidal comments:

He [Quisling] anticipated he would assume real power, with the *Reichskommissar* either eliminated or greatly reduced in authority [...]. He therefore looked forward to serving as the head of an independent country in alliance with the Third Reich and under German military protection. (p. 539)

In fact, it was not until the morning of 29 January that confirmation of Terboven's

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<sup>11</sup> Hoidal, p. 537.

<sup>12</sup> Fritz Petrick, "Das Okkupationsregime des faschistischen deutschen Imperialismus in Norwegen 1940 bis 1945", *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft*, 31 (1983), 397-413 (p. 411).

<sup>13</sup> Letter to Else Huhnhäuser, 4 February 1942.

<sup>14</sup> Letter to Else Huhnhäuser, 18 January 1942.



continuing authority over Quisling was received from Berlin.<sup>15</sup> Thus, as Minister President, Quisling became nothing more than the head of a collaborationist “puppet” government, still hated by the vast majority of Norwegians. Rumours of an assassination plot dampened the celebrations in the evening following the state ceremony on 1 February, and prevented Quisling and his wife, Maria, from attending the gala concert held in his honour that evening.<sup>16</sup> Hoidal comments that:

Although German overall control of government administration remained unchanged after February 1, 1942, National Union’s *Fører* had obtained some advantages by the Act of State. Not only did he secure the external trappings of office, but more significantly, he gained a freer hand to pursue his objectives. Terboven, aware of the residual good will that Quisling still possessed with Hitler, was willing to allow the Minister President considerable latitude in seeking to realize his ambitions.

The latter did not waste any time in launching his political offensive immediately after the Act of State. [...] he [...] set in motion National Union’s most concerted effort to break down opposition and to establish supremacy over society. This offensive and the conflict it engendered made 1942 the most critical year of the entire occupation. (p. 557)

This formed the background for NS’s next major offensive on Norway’s schools, when they attempted once more to indoctrinate the Norwegian youth in the philosophy of National Socialism. On 5 February 1942, the first cabinet meeting of Quisling’s new government, two laws concerning teachers and pupils were passed. The former was the National Youth Service law, which required all young people between the ages of ten and eighteen to join NS’s Youth Organization. The second law announced the creation of Norway’s Teachers’

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<sup>15</sup> Skodvin, “Det store fremstøt”, *Norges Krig*, II, p. 734.

<sup>16</sup> Huhnhauser refers to attempted bomb attacks upon both railway stations in Oslo that evening, and describes them as “leere Demonstrationen”. Letter to Else Huhnhauser, 4 February 1942.

Corporation, an NS-controlled organization.<sup>17</sup> Membership of the Corporation was compulsory for all schoolteachers.

This attack upon the independence of the teachers and the attempt to politicize children aroused great hostility amongst the population. The threat of dismissal if teachers did not agree to teach NS propaganda was regarded as completely immoral and stiffened the teachers' will to resist. The resistance movement prepared a protest letter, which they sent to every teacher. The teachers were asked to send the protest to Skancke's Education Department; the vast majority complied. Quisling was completely unprepared for this defiance and responded with the use of force.<sup>18</sup> Very few of the teachers, however, were moved by the repeated threat of dismissal and other penalties if they did not withdraw their resignations from the Corporation. Reluctant to admit that an overwhelming majority of teachers were involved in the protest, NS now adopted a face-saving measure and closed the schools for a month, on the pretext that there was a fuel shortage. On 8 March 1942 Huhnhäuser comments:

Die Lehrerlage wirkt verzweifelt. 6000 sind aus dem Verband ausgetreten und nun sollen sie alle Arbeitsdienst für die deutsche Wehrmacht tun, ohne Gehalt u.s.w. Verfahrener kann die Lage kaum noch werden, und das Tragikomische bei der Sache ist eigentlich, daß man meinen Namen mit all diesen Pannen in Verbindung bringt, wo ich in Wirklichkeit immer das Gegenteil gepredigt habe. Aber ich habe nun mal das Referat. Seit Q. das Regiment hat, kracht es an allen Ecken und Enden, und ich weiß nicht, wie er aus der Sache herauskommen will. Man stelle sich nur einmal vor: von 15 000 Lehrern im Ganzen 6000 entlassen. Wo will man neue hernehmen?<sup>19</sup>

Then, on the following day, he writes:

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<sup>17</sup> Keilhau refers to this organization as the "Nazi Teachers' Association" (p. 199).

<sup>18</sup> Hoidal, p. 562.

<sup>19</sup> Letter to Else Huhnhäuser, 8 March 1942.

Die augenblickliche Lage auf meinem Sektor erscheint fast trostlos. Durch rigorose Maßnahmen der Regierung sind von rund 15 000 Lehrern 8000 aus dem Lehrerverband ausgetreten. Nun sollen 1000 verhaftet und in ein Lager gebracht werden. Meinethalben. Möge man alles zerschlagen. So schafft man Grabesstille, aber keinen Aufbau.<sup>20</sup>

There are no further details given as to why Huhnhäuser feels so responsible for the situation regarding the teachers' conflict, which he clearly views as disastrous. He is also highly critical of the actions of Quisling's government, which he feels have precipitated the crisis.

During this period of school closures the parents mounted a campaign against the Youth Service. The protests began to arrive at Skancke's Ministry on 6 March. In all around 200 000 to 300 000 letters were received, illustrating the fury which this law had aroused. In some areas NS continued to try to implement the compulsory attendance at the Youth Service but in the end they had to admit defeat.<sup>21</sup>

The Church also became involved in the protests against this measure. Their opposition led to a direct confrontation between the Church and NS, with the bishops breaking off all connections with the state. Bishop Berggrav, Bishop of Oslo and a leading figure in the resistance movement, was placed under police guard and was interned for the remainder of the occupation. Huhnhäuser remarks: "Eine Hauptschuld an allem trägt der bekannte Bischof. Wann hätte die Kirche sich nicht in politische Affären gemischt!"<sup>22</sup> The great majority of the pastors followed the example of the bishops and resigned from their

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<sup>20</sup> Letter to Else Huhnhäuser, 9 March 1942.

<sup>21</sup> Hoidal, p. 563.

<sup>22</sup> Letter to Else Huhnhäuser, 12 March 1942. However, the late Alexander Peden claimed that Berggrav was a personal friend of Huhnhäuser's. Interview with Alexander Peden, 17 October

state positions. Hoidal asserts that:

Externally as well as internally Quisling had thus been weakened by the offensive he set in motion during his first three months as Minister President. Rather than achieving the quick breakthrough that he had constantly predicted would occur when he headed a government, making him and his party the masters of society, he had succeeded in creating an all-powerful alliance against him, combining the Church, the schools, and the home. All his efforts were stymied as a result of this invincible coalition, whose moral fortifications could not be breached. (p. 568)

Although this situation proved many Germans correct, who had previously expressed doubts as to Quisling's competence as a political leader, the German authorities could not stand by and watch the regime they endorsed be humiliated in this way. Consequently, they chose to punish the teachers for their resistance which "represented also a threat to German authority".<sup>23</sup> Terboven gave his approval to Quisling's plan to arrest around one thousand teachers and send them to northern Norway for a period of hard labour. On 20 March, 1300 male teachers were arrested and taken to a concentration camp, where they were subjected to an extremely harsh, brutal regime intended both to break their resistance and serve as a warning to others.<sup>24</sup> The longer the teachers resisted, the worse their treatment became. Five hundred teachers were transported in a steamer designed to carry 150 passengers to Kirkenes, close to the Russian border in the extreme north of Norway — a journey which lasted almost two weeks. The teachers endured the gruelling conditions in Kirkenes until winter began to approach, and then agreed to withdraw their resignations. However, NS

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1995.

<sup>23</sup> Hoidal, p. 569.

<sup>24</sup> Hoidal, p. 571; Keilhau also gives this figure, p. 199; Derry states the number was 1100, p. 249; Petrick puts the number of teachers deported to northern Norway as high as 1500, p. 410.

had long since lost the battle, and had been forced to permit the unrepentant teachers to resume their duties without further sanction, as Terboven refused to allow further arrests, or any other measure which would escalate the dispute on a national scale.

Further policy failures in 1942 led to the adoption of the “general opinion in German quarters that Quisling had to be written off as a political failure”,<sup>25</sup> and the subsequent withdrawal in September of that year of the freedom of action which Quisling had been granted following the Act of State. Terboven could now declare a resounding victory in his battle with Quisling for control of power in Norway. A report to Martin Bormann by Dr Wilhelm Stuckart, who led an investigatory commission to Norway, estimated that ninety-five per cent of the population were now hostile to NS.<sup>26</sup> From this point Quisling became totally subservient to German interests, in the hope that he could re-establish “his value and that of his party”.<sup>27</sup> However, Andenæs et al., state that:

The German attitude towards Quisling had at least been fairly consistent. Hitler used him when he could be useful, and otherwise ignored him. [...] The more Quisling’s political weightlessness became apparent, the more this German attitude was revealed. (p. 79)

This did not prevent NS from endeavouring to influence the running of the university. (As events concerning the university are dealt with in detail in the Norway section of the Huhnhäuser archive, a summary of which will follow shortly, only the briefest outline will be given here.) In the autumn of 1942, Skancke attempted unsuccessfully to force the faculties of medicine and pharmacy to accept NS members without the necessary academic

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<sup>25</sup> Andenæs, Riste and Skodvin, pp. 77-78.

<sup>26</sup> Hoidal, p. 593.

<sup>27</sup> Hoidal, p. 595.

qualifications. Then in February 1943, NS student leaders decided to use the law of 22 February 1943, which established the National Work Effort in Norway, to remove some of their most active opponents amongst the students. Twenty-one students received notice that they had been conscripted to join several labour projects. As the NS university administrators had not been given prior warning of what was intended, Hoel went directly to Quisling to have the call-up papers withdrawn.

On 21 August 1943, Skancke's department issued new regulations governing the admission of students to the university. This sparked a bitter dispute, which led to the arrest of around a dozen staff and fifty students in October. Huhnhäuser returned from Copenhagen, where he had been on sick leave, and decided immediately to become involved in attempting to settle this dispute, in the hope that he could prevent Terboven's involvement. However, on the night of 27/28 November, an arson attack on the Assembly Hall of the university gave Terboven the pretext he had long been waiting for to close the university and arrest the students. Huhnhäuser was at the forefront of the efforts to gain the release of the students arrested, and to keep at least the research work of the university functioning as normal.

The Norwegian Jews, though insignificant in number, did not escape the Nazi terror. More than a quarter were deported to Auschwitz by the end of 1942, and in total Norway lost around forty per cent, or seven hundred and sixty, of her Jews.<sup>28</sup> Marrus and Paxton state that Norway and Vichy France were the only two countries in Western Europe

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<sup>28</sup> Michael R. Marrus and Robert O. Paxton, "The Nazis and the Jews in Occupied Western Europe", *Journal of Modern History*, 54 (1982), 687-714 (p. 707-12). T. K. Derry states the number was 630 (p. 251). See also Helmut Müssener, "Deutschsprachiges Exil in Skandinavien: 'Im Abseits ...' — Die Gastländer Dänemark, Norwegen, Schweden", *German Life and Letters*,

where there appeared a very determined and energetic anti-Jewish drive from the beginning [...], where collaborationist governments forged ahead on their own, eager to set their national stamp upon a new political and ideological order. [...] In Norway the Quisling-dominated government — Nazi imposed and extremely unpopular — punished the tiny Jewish community of under 2000 by various measures: removal of Jews from the state bureaucracy, as well as university and high school teaching; removal of books by Jewish authors from the library of Oslo university; and so on. (pp. 695-96)

The high concentration of Jews in Oslo, the fact that they were far out-numbered by the German police, in addition to the anti-Semitism of NS, and Quisling in particular, made the Norwegian Jews very vulnerable to harassment and deportation.

As the tide of the war turned in 1944, the military wing of the Norwegian resistance, *Milorg*, intensified their campaign of sabotage, damaging or destroying targets of significant military or economic importance. They also liquidated NS officials who were involved in implementing measures against the resistance. The most spectacular of these liquidations was the shooting of Karl Marthinsen, head of the Norwegian State Police from 1941 and the Security Police from summer 1943. In June 1944 he also took over control of the *Hird*. The reaction of the Germans and NS to the assassination was swift and brutal. In the two days which followed the shooting, more than thirty prisoners and hostages were executed in retaliation, and further punitive measures were introduced.<sup>29</sup> In all, apart from the hundreds of Jews who perished, almost fifteen hundred people lost their lives at the hands of the Nazis. Half this number died in concentration camps in Germany. Of the rest, 366 Norwegians were officially recorded as executed, 162 were killed while trying to escape arrest, 130 died in prison, 43 committed suicide after being captured and 38 men and one

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n.s. 51 (1998), 302-23 (p. 306).

<sup>29</sup> Hoidal, pp. 684-85.

woman were tortured to death.<sup>30</sup>

Norway did not become the last German stronghold on mainland Europe, although this plan was discussed. Fortunately the “fight to the death” never took place. Terboven, who had done everything to prevent a peaceful handover of power, committed suicide on 8 May 1945, one day before the capitulation came into effect officially. Quisling was executed by firing squad on 24 October 1945, in Akershus castle, scene of his former glory. Skancke followed his *Fører* to the firing squad after much legal wrangling in 1948, one of only two of Quisling’s ministers to be sentenced to death.<sup>31</sup> In general, however, the treatment of collaborators in Norway after the war was mild in comparison to other countries formerly occupied by the Germans. Hoidal states that:

This lack of severity in comparison with other societies was to a considerable degree due to the nature of the occupation which Norway had experienced. Despite its repressive, at times barbarous, character, the German occupation was far less severe than in most European countries, above all when compared with eastern Europe. (p. 774)

Of the 18,000 prison sentences handed out by the courts for collaboration, approximately 14,500 were for less than three years, and only 600 people were given sentences of over eight years. Around eighty of these received a life sentence. Many sentences were reduced under the terms of an act adopted on 9 July 1948; most prisoners sentenced to less than

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<sup>30</sup> T. K. Derry, pp. 251-52. Other sources give details of the loss of life amongst the intelligence gathering groups: of 267 deaths, “102 [persons] were executed, 94 died in prison or camps, 67 died in combat or under arrest, and four died as they attempted to escape.” Cited from Ragnar Ulstein, “Norwegian Intelligence in the Second World War”, in *Britain and Norway in the Second World War*, ed. by Patrick Salmon (London: HMSO, 1995), pp. 129-40 (p. 135).

<sup>31</sup> Andenæs, Riste & Skodvin, p. 146; see also T. K. Derry, “Norway”, in Nicolson, 1968), pp. 217-30 (p. 230). *European Fascism*, ed. by Stuart Woolf (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1968), pp. 217-30 (p. 230).



eight years were now required to serve only one half of their term of imprisonment rather than two thirds, as the authorities decided reconciliation was more important for the future of Norway than retribution. By November 1957 the last remaining prisoners had been released.<sup>32</sup>

### **Huhnhäuser in the Historical Context**

This brief overview of the history of occupied Norway provides a general framework in which to place the specific actions of Huhnhäuser during this period. The role of Huhnhäuser in Norway, an intellectual surrounded by compatriots who despised academic learning, will be examined on the basis of material contained within the Huhnhäuser archive. As can be shown, Huhnhäuser, the former teacher and headmaster, now head of the *Schulabteilung* in the *Reichskommissariat*, had little in common with his Nazi superiors. Terboven, in particular, was contemptuous of intellectuals, but also feared the influence they were able to exert over others. Instead Huhnhäuser chose to work closely with Norwegian academics, particularly at the university, in an attempt to avoid disruption and disputes within the Norwegian education system as NS endeavoured to Nazify Norwegian society.

The archive material relating to Huhnhäuser's time in Norway is in the form of five chapters, which were written with a view to publication in post-war Norway. In these chapters Huhnhäuser presents his analysis of the events in which he was involved, concerning the university and Norwegian schools. The fact that Huhnhäuser was involved in

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<sup>32</sup> Andenæs, Riste and Skodvin, pp. 143-44, p. 151.

the events he is describing mean that the chapters are written from a subjective standpoint, for the writer must always be aware of the self-image he is projecting to the world at large. However, his description of events can be validated by comparing his account with those of other histories of occupied Norway. Furthermore, to support Huhnhäuser's interpretation of his own actions, which he describes in the chapters, there are also seventeen independent affidavits from various Norwegians, with whom he came into contact during the years of the occupation. Huhnhäuser has also been cited by Norwegian historians, although they did not have access to the Huhnhäuser archive.

In sum, the Norwegian section of the Huhnhäuser archive illustrates Huhnhäuser's role in attempting to soften the blows of Nazi terror aimed at the country's educational institutions. These chapters provide an insight into the efforts of one man, who chose to oppose his superiors, and set himself and his department to work on redressing an injustice which he believed had been committed. The chapters are of value not only because of their historical worth, but also because they document the actions of a self-professed "unpolitisches Wesen", who attempts to outmanoeuvre his powerful opponents in a tense political conflict, in which lives are at stake.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### Huhnhäuser in Norway

#### Introduction

Huhnhäuser arrived in Norway in August 1940. Originally he had been sent to Denmark, but had pleaded to be spared from this as he had many friends in that country. Huhnhäuser's association with Scandinavia began as early as 1911 when he first visited Denmark in order to research material for his doctorate. His general familiarity with all Scandinavian languages and peoples enabled him to understand the national characteristics of the Norwegians far better than most of his German compatriots in the occupying forces and, consequently, this factor, in addition to his moderate approach and polite manners, allowed him to befriend many Norwegians otherwise hostile to the Germans. Proof of this comes in the form of the seventeen affidavits he collected from various Norwegians after the war which supported his application for permission to stay with his daughter and son-in-law in Britain. Furthermore Huhnhäuser was able to remain in Norway until 1948, when he left for Britain, and hence escape the privations of post-war Germany thanks to the kindness of his Norwegian friends, who provided him with food and shelter on his release from prison hospital.<sup>1</sup> Huhnhäuser was also required officially to stay in Norway in order to give evidence at the trial of the Minister for Church and Education, Ragnar Skancke.<sup>2</sup> In the accompanying letter to his son-in-law, to whom Huhnhäuser sent copies of the affidavits, he

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<sup>1</sup> Interview with the late Alexander Peden, 17 October 1995.

<sup>2</sup> Letter from Huhnhäuser to British Embassy in Oslo, 11 November 1946, requesting a visa to Britain. The affidavits were enclosed within.

tells him to contact Minister President Dr Seltzer in Schleswig-Holstein, and refers to the fact that Seltzer's colleague *Graf Moltke* also knows him. In addition, Huhnhäuser mentions that Willi Brandt will be declared Norwegian press attaché in Berlin, and states that Brandt "likewise knows exactly what I'm like and has promised me his support".<sup>3</sup> In these affidavits Huhnhäuser is described several times by different people as "a representative of the culture of old Germany",<sup>4</sup> "one of those we might meet rather often before 1930";<sup>5</sup> "a man from before the war",<sup>6</sup> who had "authority among all the cultured Germans";<sup>7</sup> and had been "quite unpolitical".<sup>8</sup> Even during the Second World War Huhnhäuser remained a "pre-war German".

Amongst those who provided the affidavits were two former rectors of Oslo University, Adolf Hoel and Didrik Arup Seip, as well as several other prominent academics. Sworn testimony was also provided by a number of ordinary Norwegians, including a student, a dentist and Huhnhäuser's former landlady. A glowing reference was even provided by the Group of German Social-Democrats in Norway. Included with the affidavits is a medical certificate which gives detail of Huhnhäuser's serious heart condition, including the fact that he had almost died from this illness several times, and was now incapable of doing any kind of work. All of the affidavits testify to the vital role Huhnhäuser played in limiting the excesses of Nazi terror upon the university and students, or other

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<sup>3</sup> Letter to Alexander Peden, 12 December 1946.

<sup>4</sup> Prof. Poul Heegaard, affidavit, 27 May 1946.

<sup>5</sup> B. Brinck Lund, headmaster and former chairman of the Association of Lecturers, affidavit, 27 May 1946.

<sup>6</sup> B. Brinck Lund, affidavit, 27 May 1946.

<sup>7</sup> Dr Norman Balk, lecturer and leader of the *Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst* in Oslo, affidavit, 8 July 1946.

<sup>8</sup> Prof. Heegaard, affidavit, 27 May 1946.

individuals.<sup>9</sup>

Seip comments that Huhnhäuser intervened to solve difficulties between the university and the German and NS authorities.<sup>10</sup> Direktor Dysthe expands on this aspect of Huhnhäuser's work, stating that Huhnhäuser:

has been working very positively in order to neutralize the injurious effects of the interference of the NS with our cultural life, he has especially rendered great service through his acting for the High School for Dentists and the University, which brought him into the most serious conflict to for [*sic*] ex. Minister Skancke and Mr Holm, the leader of the phalanx, the two who induced Quisling to close the University with the assistance of the *Reichskommissar*.<sup>11</sup> Dr Huhnhäuser made the greatest endeavour to save what could be saved, and when all proved to be of no use this told so severely upon him that he collapsed. When it was possible to release about 500 of the arrested students before they were sent to Germany, this is for a great part due to Dr Huhnhäuser's infatigable [*sic*] co-operation with the Norwegians who undertook to help.<sup>12</sup>

Professor Solberg, Dean of Mathematical Science, comments upon Huhnhäuser's "moderate attitude" and states that he was "without doubt the most amiable and helpful [*sic*]" German with whom he ever came into contact. He adds that:

Not only did he act as a 'wave-subduer' against the most aggressive Germans — in the first place his superior *Ministerialdirigent* Müller and *Reichskommissar* Terboven — but he also very strongly opposed many of the worst outrages from the 'Minister of Education' Skancke.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> All the affidavits were translated into English by one official translator.

<sup>10</sup> Didrik Arup Seip, affidavit, 5 July 1946.

<sup>11</sup> According to Hoidal in *Quisling: a study in treason* (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget AS, 1989), p. 621, and Huhnhäuser in "Der Aulabrand und seine Folgen", it was Terboven who took the initial decision to close the university.

<sup>12</sup> Direktor Sven Dysthe, affidavit, 11 May 1946.

<sup>13</sup> Professor Halvor Solberg, affidavit, 11 November 1946.

In a similar fashion, Professor Monrad-Krohn, Professor of Medicine, expresses the opinion that Huhnhäuser

has always shown due respect to the academic point of view and that he, in accordance herewith, to his ability has counteracted the aggressiv [*sic*] antagonism of *Reichskommissar* Terboven towards the University and the academic classes of Norway.<sup>14</sup>

Dr Norman Balk fled Germany in 1937 to protect his wife, who was not of Aryan descent. He asserts in his statement that “it is principally thanks to [...] Dr Huhnhäuser that I during these years have been able to continue my activity as a lecturer in German, without being disturbed”. Balk testifies in his affidavit that Huhnhäuser was requested three times to remove him from his post as head of the Oslo branch of the *Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst*, because of Balk’s wife. Huhnhäuser successfully defended him each time, and did not inform Balk of these attacks against him. Then, in September 1944, Balk’s wife was ordered to leave Norway with their two children. Balk applied to Huhnhäuser for help, despite the fact that he had no authority in these matters. Nevertheless Huhnhäuser appealed to *Oberpräsident* Hans Reinhard Koch, who allowed the family to stay in Norway. Balk believes that without Huhnhäuser’s help his family “probably [...] would have perished in a camp in Germany”.<sup>15</sup>

Huhnhäuser worked closely with Adolf Hoel, acting rector of the university under Skancke, who, although an NS man, enjoyed the trust of the faculty members. Hoel’s main

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<sup>14</sup> Professor G.H. Monrad-Krohn, affidavit, 25 May 1946.

<sup>15</sup> Dr. Norman Balk, affidavit, 8 July 1946.

concern was not to increase the influence of NS on the university, but instead to ensure that the day-to-day administration of the institution continued to run smoothly. He declares that Huhnhäuser was in a “very difficult” position, as a “representative for the occupying power” on the one hand, and on the other, someone who viewed the Norwegians benevolently, which made him attempt to mediate in “all disagreements between the occupying power and the University and highschoools [*sic*]”. He “could speak our language, and understood Norwegian mentality better than most of the Germans”. Hoel praises Huhnhäuser for his intervention in disputes between the university and the Germans, by means of which he “averted great dangers which threatened our highest seats of learning”. With reference to his work following the closure of the university Hoel adds that Huhnhäuser “also constantly stepped into the breach for individual persons by obtaining discharge of arrested University teachers and students, and by preventing the arrest of others”.<sup>16</sup>

Asbjörn Hagen, Hoel’s secretary on the committee set up to process the release petitions, provided a five page affidavit, based on his dealings with Huhnhäuser from the November arrests in 1943 until the end of the war. He states that Huhnhäuser “stuck up for Norwegian interests” and “defended the applications without any regard whatsoever”.<sup>17</sup> Hagen continues, “Dr H. displayed an exceptional kindness to me during these difficult times, which I shall never forget.” He allowed Hagen to brief him on the most difficult cases which required his special attention half an hour before the meetings, and also offered Hagen a letter of recommendation in case of difficulties with the Gestapo or NS officials.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Adolf Hoel, affidavit, 4 June 1946.

<sup>17</sup> Asbjörn Hagen, affidavit, 17 June 1946.

<sup>18</sup> Hagen refers to the Gestapo as the German authority they were dealing with over the arrests, whereas Huhnhäuser refers to the SP, the organization, consisting of the Gestapo and the Kripo, to which Ohm belonged, and the SS, from whom Ohm took his orders in this matter.

Hagen makes reference to the fact that: “Among the people of the *Reichskommissariat* he was usually called ‘der liebe Gott’ (there was here perhaps a certain bit of irony with a reference to his moderate view).”<sup>19</sup> Huhnhäuser also assisted Hagen in various other matters, such as protecting the countryside from destruction by the military, and the eider duck from “reckless hunting” by German military men. He helped to “obtain room for the schools at the University”, whose pupils were “working in miserable conditions”, thus also preventing seizures of university property by the Germans, and an attempt by NS to start lectures again, “which would lead to protests and fresh catastrophes.”<sup>20</sup> Hagen adds that, “In these cases of seizure we could always count on Dr H. siding with us and yielding us an excellent support.”<sup>21</sup> Huhnhäuser, states Hagen, also procured travel documents and visas to Sweden for a number of individuals, and “took care of young people, interned at Grini, in such a way that I know these young people were very much devoted to him”.<sup>22</sup> Hagen concludes his testimony by expressing his belief that:

If his wise and cultivated policy, where professional and not political regards were decisive, had been followed, we should have escaped the catastrophes we met with, even if aggressive elements from both sides were constantly making difficulties.<sup>23</sup>

A student by the name of Christian Lerche, who was arrested and held in Stavern, also provides a declaration on Huhnhäuser’s behalf. Lerche describes the situation and the

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“Bemühungen um die Freilassung der Studenten und Professoren”, p. 12.

<sup>19</sup> Asbjörn Hagen, affidavit, 17 June 1946.

<sup>20</sup> Asbjörn Hagen, see above.

<sup>21</sup> Asbjörn Hagen, see above.

<sup>22</sup> Asbjörn Hagen, see above.

<sup>23</sup> Asbjörn Hagen, see above.



mood in the camp during the initial days of his internment, and states that after his release he “learnt of [Huhnhäuser’s] work to release as many as possible of the students and to avoid their being sent to Germany”. He continues, “Dr Huhnhäuser’s view of the action against the students was surely of the greatest importance to the result that so many were released during the days after December 10th.”<sup>24</sup> Thus news of Huhnhäuser’s involvement in the work for the releases spread beyond those who participated in the committee, to those they were attempting to free. The latter consequently felt a debt of gratitude to Huhnhäuser for his efforts. The dentist, Georg Christophersen, provides a very brief statement, stating that Huhnhäuser “made use of all his influence” and prevented his son, a student, from being deported to Germany in January 1944.<sup>25</sup>

The testimony of two headmasters, Brinck Lund and Hans Loedrup, provides details of Huhnhäuser’s involvement with the schools. Brinck Lund, former chairman of the Association of Lecturers, outlines how Huhnhäuser’s influence caused Skancke to modify two very contentious points of a directive issued by the Education Department on 17 March 1941. In the original document, “outrage” against Hitler, the *Reich*, Quisling, or NS was “most severely forbidden” and to be reported to the Department, as was “any kind of propaganda to the benefit of England or the Norwegians having sided with England against their native country”.<sup>26</sup> Any pupil reported for this kind of behaviour could be “taken out of school and sent to a special educational institution”.<sup>27</sup> On gaining a copy of this circular, Huhnhäuser demanded a meeting with Skancke. As a result, the circular was amended one week later, on 8 April. The additional provisions now stated that the Department in no way

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<sup>24</sup> Christian Lerche, affidavit, 24 June 1946.

<sup>25</sup> Georg Christophersen, affidavit, 15 June 1946.

<sup>26</sup> Circular from the Church and Education Department, 17 March 1941.

wanted to reduce the authority of their headmasters, and restored the responsibility of disciplining pupils to the schools, although the Department “reserved the right to take special measures” if “such punishments should prove insufficient”.<sup>28</sup> This incident perhaps helps to explain why Huhnhäuser claims that by July 1943 his working relationship with Skancke had broken down irretrievably. Both Brinck Lund and Loedrup comment on Huhnhäuser’s work to help the teachers arrested in the course of the disputes with NS. Loedrup states, “I had the impression that he felt a personal joy in helping teachers out of prison, or annulling the rigorous provisions of the Department”<sup>29</sup> and declares that “during the action against the teachers he staked his own vital interests in order to thwart Quisling’s and Terboven’s beastly plans for punishing the teachers”.<sup>30</sup> Furthermore, Loedrup adds that Huhnhäuser indicated to him that the outcome of the war was uncertain, and he gained the impression that Huhnhäuser was “not national-socialistically tuned”, nor an “adherent of Hitler’s”.<sup>31</sup>

Several of the affidavits testify to Huhnhäuser’s assistance with problems outside the area of education. Engineer Johannessen, curator at the House of the Viking Ships, details the assistance Huhnhäuser provided to various individuals when their plight was brought to his attention. He won the release of one woman, enabled Johannessen to visit a second every fortnight during her stay in Grini, and allowed him to send food parcels to two other friends. He obtained a visa for the engineer to travel to Stockholm, and even managed to provide him with oak from the German stores for restoration work, after his requests to

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<sup>27</sup> Circular from the Department of Church and Education, 17 March 1941.

<sup>28</sup> Amendment to Department of Education circular, dated 17 March 1941, published 8 April 1941.

<sup>29</sup> Hans Loedrup, affidavit, 5 July 1946.

<sup>30</sup> Hans Loedrup, affidavit, 5 July 1946.

other authorities had been ignored time and time again. He did this despite knowing that Johannessen was “an adversary to the Germans and the NS”.<sup>32</sup> Johannessen declares that Huhnhäuser considered himself to be thwarted in his “cultural work” by both his “own people” and even more so by NS, and that he once said to Johannessen, he “thus had to fight on two fronts”.<sup>33</sup> His former landlady, Bergljot Fossum, listed several cases where Huhnhäuser helped her family and friends when she appealed to him for assistance, adding that these requests were never in vain. Several times he procured visas to Sweden or other travel documents, or obtained the release of a detainee. He prevented her boarding house from being seized by the Germans, and Fossum herself from being arrested when she told “disagreeable Germans” to leave her boarding house.<sup>34</sup>

Similarly, British born Mary Kielland, Huhnhäuser’s English tutor for a time, detailed how he helped her daughter-in-law, who was ill and required urgent medical treatment in Sweden. He arranged the original visa for her, and an extension six months later at very short notice. Three months after that, Mary Kielland approached him again for another extension, but did not disclose that fact that her son was at that moment under arrest “being mixed up in a radio affair”.<sup>35</sup> She states that Huhnhäuser doubtless learned of this fact elsewhere, but did not mention it. He made it clear to her that it was highly unlikely the second extension would be granted, but he managed to achieve this nevertheless. It transpired that Huhnhäuser vouched personally for the family, despite the fact that the son was under arrest. Kielland states, “On this occasion Dr Huhnhäuser ran a great risk; had

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<sup>31</sup> Hans Loedrup, affidavit, 5 July 1946.

<sup>32</sup> Fr. Johannessen, affidavit, 19 June 1946.

<sup>33</sup> Fr. Johannessen, affidavit, 19 June 1946.

<sup>34</sup> Bergljot Fossum, affidavit, undated.

<sup>35</sup> Mary Kielland, affidavit, 3 October 1946.

these other details come to light, Dr Huhnhäuser would have been put in a very uncomfortable position.”<sup>36</sup> Kielland and her son both wrote to Huhnhäuser to express their gratitude for all his help.

Finally, the declaration from the Group of German Social Democrats provides the only statement from a political group. This written testimony asserts that Huhnhäuser

has shown a great benevolence to the Norwegians. [...] He yielded a wise and strong resistance to the pogromlike [*sic*] methods of the *Reichskommissar* Terboven against the Norwegian teachers and the High schools [*sic*]. He has during the occupation of Norway, to the utmost, tried and succeeded in helping a great number of Norwegians, even running a great personal risk. It has therefore, in spite of his leading position, been given to him permission [*sic*] to stand [*sic*] in Norway for the present, a permission given only to very few Germans. In the judgement of his person and his activity in Norway we have not the slightest political scruples.<sup>37</sup>

It is clear from an examination of the affidavits provided to support Huhnhäuser’s application to be allowed to travel to Britain that several aspects of Huhnhäuser’s character are mentioned repeatedly. The word “benevolent” is used several times to describe his attitude to the Norwegians; his manners are referred to as “polite”. He is described as “amiable”, “helpful”, and “moderate” in his approach. Huhnhäuser inspires heartfelt gratitude in many of the witnesses. Several state that he helped their family and friends, even when he was aware that they had been arrested for “illegal activity”. It is mentioned frequently that he was prepared to put himself at risk by helping people who had been arrested, or were likely to be. It is often declared that his work was crucial in winning the release of approximately five hundred students arrested after the arson attack on the

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<sup>36</sup> Mary Kielland, affidavit, 3 October 1946.

Assembly Hall, and also that he tried his utmost to help the teachers arrested in the conflict in the spring of 1942. The academics pay tribute to his efforts to keep the university functioning as normally as possible, and to prevent the seizure of the university institutions by the German military. There is complete consensus that Huhnhäuser was opposed to all assaults by the German authorities and the NS-controlled Education Department upon Norway's educational institutions. Hagen's comment that for Huhnhäuser "professional and not political regards were decisive"<sup>38</sup> is interesting, for it could be argued that, whatever the motivation, the very fact that Huhnhäuser's action conflicted with the policy of the Germans and NS was political in itself. However, Hagen's comment suggests that Huhnhäuser was not alone in regarding himself as "unpolitical", and that others also held this view. Perhaps Hagen really meant "national-socialist" when he said "political". One thing is certain at least: he was regarded by many as "a type seldom found among the nazies [*sic*]"<sup>39</sup>

### **The Norway Chapters**

In 1947-48 Huhnhäuser wrote his account of the political events in Norway during the occupation in which he was involved, both directly and indirectly, in his position as head of the *Schulabteilung* in the *Kirchen- und Unterrichtsdepartement*. Professor Didrik Arup Seip, Huhnhäuser's friend and former *Rektor* of Oslo University until his arrest during the state of emergency in September 1941, was also involved in the project. The first chapter

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<sup>37</sup> Group of German Social Democrats, affidavit, 20 October 1946.

<sup>38</sup> Asbjörn Hagen, affidavit, 17 June 1946.

<sup>39</sup> B. Brinck Lund, affidavit, 27 May 1946.

included in this part of the Huhnhäuser archive is called “Von der Gründung des Sportdepartements bis zum Jugendgesetz”. This is followed by “Der Reglementsstreit”. The next chapter is entitled “Von den Oktoberverhaftungen bis zum Aulabrand”, which precedes “Der Aulabrand und seine Folgen”. The final chapter is given the title “Bemühungen um die Freilassung der Professoren und Studenten”. These chapters span the years from September 1940 to January 1944, and are presented below in a summarized form.

### **Von der Gründung des Sportdepartements bis zum Jugendgesetz**

In this chapter Huhnhäuser describes the attempts made by the Department of Sport and Labour Service to gain control of school sports. The first move in this direction came in the fiscal budget of 1940-41 which awarded 50,000 Norwegian crowns for school sport to the *Sportdepartement*. The following year the state gymnastics inspector Ferdinand Naess, who had held this post in the *Kirchen- und Unterrichtsdepartement* since 1937, then intervened and succeeded in winning back the 50,000 crowns lost the previous year in the budget estimate of 1941-42, without first consulting Minister Skancke, head of this department, who, Huhnhäuser believed, must have been aware of what happened the previous year but had done nothing to stop it. In the final talks with the Finance Department on the budget for that year, it was discovered that the 50,000 crowns for school sport was included in the budgets of both the Education and Sport Departments. On the basis of the previous year's budget, the Finance Department stressed that school sport belonged under the control of the Sport Department, and consequently granted it the funds. Naess pointed out that school

sport had previously always been under the control of the Education Department. Instead of now intervening for the rights of his department and on behalf of his colleagues, Skancke felt tied by a special agreement he had made on school sport with Minister Axel Stang, and therefore proposed instead that the money stay in the budget of the Sport Department, which he believed he could then ask for in case of need — a statement, Huhnhäuser comments, which clearly illustrated Skancke's unprofessional ideas on the management and use of state money. Only when the *Expeditionschef* in the Education Department and an office chief in the Finance Department agreed with Naess at this meeting did Skancke back down and school sport remained under the control of his ministry.

At the beginning of 1941 the Sport Department renewed its assault on school sport. A request was made to Naess by the Germans that, in future, instructors of sports associations be employed as physical education teachers in schools. The *Reichskommissariat* had come to be involved because of the political significance National Socialism attached to sport generally. A special Department of Sport was established, which, significantly, was incorporated into the Propaganda Department. The head of this department until March 1943 was called Wagner. He disliked propaganda, regarding it as unfair and basically un-German, and consequently decided to give up his post and prove the honesty of his convictions by fighting as an officer on the Russian Front. He was an idealist, “beseelt von dem unbedingten Glauben an das Gute in der nationalsozialistischen Idee” (GSJ, p. 3), but was also, in Huhnhäuser's opinion, a fair, humane, honourable man, and if his work dealt with a question concerning schools, he would come to Huhnhäuser before he made his decision. This was in order to inform Huhnhäuser of the plans of *Nasjonal Samling*, and in doing so he always endeavoured to keep all politics distant from the

schools.

The Sports Department's demand that the instructors be appointed as physical education teachers in the schools was based on the "Decree on the Organization of Sport", signed by Stang, head of the Department of Sport and Labour Service, and Rolf Jørgen Fuglesang, General Secretary of NS, on 10 November 1940,<sup>40</sup> which that same department had published on the 21 November 1940 in the Norwegian Law Gazette.<sup>41</sup> This decree stated that with immediate effect a Norwegian *Sportverband* was to be established and all other sporting organizations to be either abolished or subject to the rules of the *Sportverband*.

Initially Wagner supported this attempt by the Sport Department to gain more influence on school sport. Faced with Naess's opposition, however, Wagner came with Naess to see Huhnhäuser. At that time there was considerable unrest in the schools due to Skancke's attempt to force the teachers to sign the declaration of loyalty to NS, and in order to prevent the situation from escalating Huhnhäuser supported Naess and convinced Wagner of his reasons. This decision certainly did not correspond to Skancke's wishes, but after much argument Huhnhäuser and Naess were successful in maintaining the status quo.

In order to better train their sports instructors, the Sport Department then tried, with German help, to gain control of the state school for physical education. Until this time the school had been under joint control of the Defence and Education Departments, and the actual administration was in the hands of the latter. As the Defence Department was no longer officially functioning, the Education Department remained as the most senior

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<sup>40</sup> Hoidal, *Quisling*, p. 484.

<sup>41</sup> Gerd von der Lippe gives the date as 22 November 1940 in "Sport under the Nazis in Norway, 1940-45", *International Journal of the History of Sport*, 6 (1) (1989), 112-116 (p.



administrative authority for the school. In order to forestall the intentions of the Department of Sport towards taking control of the school, Naess arranged, in agreement with the *Schulabteilung*, for the decree of 13 June 1941, after which the school was exclusively under the control of the Education Ministry. With this the school was safe for a time. Around six months later the opposition began to manoeuvre against the institution by accusing three of the school's most senior teachers of offences such as inefficiency and sabotage. These groundless accusations were disproved once and for all by Wagner and Naess when they visited the school.

On 5 February 1942, Minister President Vidkun Quisling published the *Gesetz über Nasjonal Samlings Jugenddienst*, just days after the Act of State. This law provided that from 1 March 1942 all young people in Norway aged between ten and eighteen were to serve in *Nasjonal Samling's* youth organization. This law had been prepared in close secrecy and Huhnhäuser himself only learned of it on 6 February. This sudden pronouncement, that young Norwegians were to be forced to serve in the Quisling Youth, shocked all sections of the Norwegian population. Huhnhäuser observes:

Es kann nicht wundernehmen, daß dieses Gesetz wie eine Bombe einschlug, zumal da es in aller Stille vorbereitet und über den engsten Kreis der unmittelbar Beteiligten nicht herausgedrungen war. [...] erst am 9. Februar bekam ich es in den Presseveröffentlichungen zu Gesicht. (GSJ, pp. 8-9)

He remarks that someone on the German side must have collaborated with NS on this matter, for such a serious law could not have appeared without the *Reichskommissar's* permission, and considers the German representative of the Hitler Youth in the *Einsatzstab*,

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who had responsibility for the Quisling Youth as most likely to have been involved.

Huhnhäuser refers to Axel Stang's commentary on the new law, which appeared in the Norwegian newspaper *Morgenbladet* two days after it was first published. The commentary included amongst its observations that *Nasjonal Samling's* youth organization should implement the *Jugenddienst*; "ein gut ausgebildeter Stab von Führern" (GSJ, p. 9) was already available, as were efficient instructors in sport. Schooling was not to suffer because of the youth movement, for it was intended to organize free-time only.

Only one newspaper was brave enough to sound a note of caution, comments Huhnhäuser. *Morgenbladet* pointed to the dangers of this huge assault into the areas of education, home life and the lives of children. He claims that those who were, like him, aware of the effect of the Hitler Youth in Germany were filled with concern when the *Jugendgesetz* was announced.<sup>42</sup> Huhnhäuser comments that:

Diese mutigen und warnenden Worte in der Zeitung Morgenbladet trafen völlig ins Schwarze; denn dieses Jugendgesetz war eine der größten Torheiten, die Quisling und seine Leute begangen haben. Zweifellos hat auch hier wie bei vielen anderen organisatorischen Maßnahmen das deutsche Muster Pate gestanden. [...] Und jetzt wollte man die ganze norwegische männliche und weibliche Jugend hineinpressen in eine parteipolitische Jugendorganisation in der Absicht, sie nationalsozialistisch zu erziehen, obwohl nach wie vor der Prozentsatz der NS-Mitglieder sich kaum erhöht hatte, d.h. also kaum zwei Prozent der Bevölkerung ausmachte. Zwar klangen die programmatischen Ankündigungen in diesen Tagen noch verhältnismäßig harmlos und besagten scheinbar wenig. Man sprach von Beschäftigung in der Freizeit, gelobte, nicht in den Schulbetrieb einzugreifen, betonte, daß man die Jugend nicht der Familie entfremden, sondern sie vielmehr wieder ans Heim gewöhnen wolle, aber das waren vorerst nur Worte, wie man sie uns einst auch in Deutschland vorgegaukelt hatte. Und dabei lagen damals, als die Hitlerjugend allgemein verbindlich wurde [...] die

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<sup>42</sup> This view is reinforced in a letter to his wife, in which he complains that it is now rare amongst the Germans he comes into contact with, to find anyone who speaks well of their former teachers. Letter to Else Huhnhäuser, 18 October 1942.

Verhältnisse ganz anders; denn das Hitlerregime hatte in jener Zeit einen großen Teil des deutschen Volkes hinter sich. Freilich wurden Eltern- und Erziehschaft und mit ihnen die christlichen Kirchen bald aufgeschreckt, als die Hitlerjugend wirklich zu regieren anfang. Da zeigten die jungen Herren um den allmächtigen Reichsjugendführer, einem [*sic*] der Lieblingsjünger Hitlers, bald ihr wahres Gesicht. Systematisch gingen sie zuerst daran, die Autorität der Schule und der Erzieher zu unterwühlen. [...] Habe ich doch einer Konferenz beigewohnt, wo der damals amtierende Leiter des nationalsozialistischen deutschen Lehrerverbandes, Gauleiter Wächtler, selber ein skrupelloser und fanatischer Nationalsozialist, in nicht wiederzugebenden Worten die Hitlerjugend und ihre allgewaltigen Führer angriff. (GSJ, pp. 10-11)

The *Schulabteilung* was instructed on 28 February 1942 to arrange for all schools to draw up lists of those pupils eligible for Youth Service and to hand them over to staff and leaders of the youth organizations on request. On 5 March 1942, states Huhnhäuser, *Fritt Folk* published several statements by Minister Stang concerning the importance of an intimate co-operation between schools and the Youth Service, especially in broadening the scale of sport and physical education.

On 9 March 1942, the Head of Sport, Minister Stang, opened the *Sportting* in the Assembly Hall of Oslo University. In his speech he went one step further than the Youth Law by announcing that children as young as three “sollen [...] an körperliche Übungen gewöhnt werden” (GSJ, p. 14). *Der Sportsmann* quoted further from Stang’s speech that:

Nachdem der Jugenddienst im ganzen Lande eingeführt ist, wird der Sport der Kinder und der Jugend von der Jugendorganisation wahrgenommen werden in enger Zusammenarbeit mit der Schule. [...] Da es eine der wichtigsten Aufgaben des Jugenddienstes ist, sich der Erziehung und Trainierung des Körpers anzunehmen, ist es durchaus natürlich, daß die Jugendorganisation in Zusammenarbeit mit der Schule alle Sportarbeit für Kinder und Jugend in die Hand nimmt. [...] Die Arbeit mit dem Jugendsport ist eines der wichtigsten, wenn nicht das wichtigste Betätigungsfeld für den

norwegischen Sport von heute. (GSJ, p. 14)

Huhnhäuser's comments on events concerning the Norwegian school system end with reference to the *Gesetz zur Durchführung des nationalen Jugenddienstes*, signed by Quisling and Fuglesang on 26 March 1942. New in this law were the threats of punishment to all who opposed its implementation in any way. Parents or guardians who kept children away from compulsory service could be sentenced to up to three months' imprisonment. Youths over fourteen years old were threatened with expulsion from school and disqualification from sitting exams. This increased the likelihood of conflict in an already tense situation.<sup>43</sup>

### **Der Reglementsstreit**

The next chapter contained in this section of the Huhnhäuser archive details the struggle which arose between the university and the Church and Education Department over new regulations governing the admissions process to the faculties. Previously each faculty head had selected the candidates for admission independently from the *Rektor*. These new regulations were issued by decree on 21 August 1943 by the Department with immediate

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<sup>43</sup> Hoidal states that the compulsory Youth Organization met with unexpected opposition, in the form of a huge protest, not just by parents, but also by friends, relatives and neighbours. Ordinary Norwegians combined to send between 200,000 and 300,000 protests to the Education Department. Despite this strong resistance, NS attempted in some areas to force children to attend the Youth Organization, and some parents were arrested for refusing to comply. In the end, however, NS had to give in and abandon compulsory service. Hoidal, *Quisling*, pp. 562-63.

effect.<sup>44</sup>

The first two conditions in the regulations were of particular significance and were the main cause of the conflict which arose. The first was that the *Rektor* would decide on the final admission of the student, the other, that the *Rektor* could now also ask for other declarations from the students apart from those generally demanded upon requesting admission, such as the faculty, the first and surnames and the health certificate.<sup>45</sup>

The problem of the admission process was not a new one. In Huhnhäuser's opinion there were many justifiable objections on the basis of both educational and psychological grounds against the existing admissions process, although he doubted whether it was advisable to tackle these in the middle of a war. Unfortunately, however, the *Reglementsstreit* had political overtones from the very beginning, as shown by events in the university and the Dental College in the autumn of 1942, when political pressure was applied to these institutions to admit NS students who did not have the necessary qualifications.<sup>46</sup>

However the *Reglementsstreit* also seemed to point to an improvement in

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<sup>44</sup> Hoel noted in his diary that the new policy had been drawn up in consultation with the *Reichskommissariat*. Cited from Hoidal, p. 620.

<sup>45</sup> Hoidal gives a more detailed description of the new regulations, stating that: "rather than the individual faculties determining the number admitted and what their qualifications should be, according to Skancke's directive his department would decide how many students should be admitted, while the NS rector would specifically determine who would gain entrance." Hoidal, p. 620.

<sup>46</sup> Skancke attempted initially to blame the Germans for this demand. When that failed he involved Quisling in the matter. Quisling met with the heads of the faculties involved and threatened them with dire penalties, such as the deportation of four thousand students and younger faculty members and the execution of the deans, if the faculties continued to resist NS demands. The faculty heads were aware that Quisling's claim to have Terboven's backing for these measures was a lie. They claimed they were not violating any directive of the Education Department by expressing opposition to the new admission regulations, and Hoel supported them in this view. Thus Skancke and Quisling were defeated in this matter. Hoidal, p. 618.

circumstances, in so far as the decision on admission was from now on to lie with the *Rektor*, and was therefore moved from the immediate sphere of influence of the Department — in this case from the Ministerial office which was politically dependent on the *Nasjonal Samling* party. And, as *Rektor* Adolf Hoel did nothing without consulting the deans, Huhnhäuser commented that as an outsider, he was able to hope that a certain *modus vivendi* had been found.<sup>47</sup>

Regrettably the Department was not content with the *Reglement*, and a covering letter signed by the then *Expeditionschef*, Dr Almar Naess, went far beyond the *Reglement* in its demands. Thus, in place of the regulation, whereby the *Rektor* could call for further declarations from the applicant, it was stated in the covering letter that: “Der Rektor muß [...] auch andre Dinge berücksichtigen, die er unter den gegebenen Umständen bei der Auswahl der Studenten mit in Betracht ziehen zu müssen glaubt.” (RS, pp. 3-4) This meant that various points in the regulations were now being tightened, and people correctly assumed that political demands were hidden behind the “andre Dinge [...] unter den gegebenen Umständen”.

Huhnhäuser only experienced the latter stages of the *Reglementsstreit* due to several weeks of sick leave he took at that time, spent in Copenhagen with his wife. Therefore, as far as initial events are concerned, on his return on 5 October he had to rely on reports from his colleagues in his department, Dr Hjalmar Christiansen and Dr Fritz Volberg, as well as from Adolf Hoel.

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<sup>47</sup> Hoidal appears to suggest that Hoel cooperated with Skancke in the drawing up of the new admission regulations, stating that both he and Skancke retreated in the face of the deans opposition (p. 620). However, Huhnhäuser details how Hoel worked to support the deans over the *Reglement* affair, and that Hoel would not act without the prior approval of the deans (RS, p. 5).

In the situation which arose from the *Reglement*, the university was faced with three possibilities:

- 1) to accept the *Reglement* as it was
- 2) to reject it out of hand
- 3) to procure the necessary assurances through negotiation, so that the university remained protected from the frequent attacks by *Nasjonal Samling*.

The first option was out of the question, given the strong mistrust felt towards Minister Skancke, who was completely dependent upon the party. Also, the deviation of the covering letter from the text of the *Reglement* removed any basis for trust. Following the second way would certainly have led to the closure of the university and all its ensuing consequences. The majority of the professors felt the obligation to keep the university from the worst, as far as this was possible, and regarded closure as a national disaster. Therefore the last option was chosen, and both sides began to negotiate under the prerequisite that the selection would under no circumstances be allowed to be made on a political basis. The deans requested a written statement from Hoel on the *Reglement*, which he duly provided for Hoel refused to act on his own authority without first consulting the faculties. Hoel, remarks Huhnhäuser, had already proved several times that, despite being a member of NS, in decisions concerning the university he always remained completely objective, even to the point of contravening the orders of the Minister and the party leadership. He had already backed the deans Solberg and Monrad-Krohn, when they were under threat, in the conflict over the admission of medical students, and had acted similarly in the dispute over the

Dental College. Huhnhäuser claims that Hoel enjoyed the trust of the majority of the professors, and this appears correct given the close cooperation between Hoel and the deans, documented by Huhnhäuser.<sup>48</sup> It was clear he was the only NS representative at the university who was able to act as a mediator between the Department and the teaching staff in this conflict-ridden period, and also that he would never contravene the interests of the university. It was also widely known that Hoel had become *persona non grata* in both German and Norwegian party circles.

In contrast to Hoel's moderate and purely objective standpoint, the National Socialist student organization (NS *Studentfylking*) under Rolf Holm advocated political selection and proposed the drawing up of four groups:

- 1) Active opponents of NS
- 2) Neutrals
- 3) Sympathizers
- 4) NS members

NS students were to be given preference; active opponents were to be excluded from the university altogether.

The first thing Hoel did was to dissuade the Minister from the demands of NS *Studentfylking*. He succeeded in convincing Naess, the *Expeditionschef*, of the danger, and in a discussion at which the Minister was also present, the latter declared himself in

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<sup>48</sup> Hoidal states that Hoel was "a regular faculty member", and as such, "benefitted from a certain amount of good will, in particular since he did not appear to enjoy his new status." (p. 514).



agreement that, in accordance with the demands of the university, all political questions should remain outwith the selection process, that no student should be accepted on the basis of his membership to NS and that admission to the university could not even be refused to the “active opponents”, as long as the police had not charged them with anything. The Minister assented to Hoel’s further suggestion to postpone the introduction of the *Reglement* until the spring of 1944, on the condition that the first year students should begin studying immediately for their preliminary exams.

When Hoel relayed the result of this discussion to the deans, they requested him to have his written opinion of the implementation of the *Reglement* confirmed by Skancke, also in writing, which he did. In spite of this, the deans sent a sharply worded letter to the Department of Education on 14 September, in which they raised objections to the *Reglement*. Some of the wording of this letter was so curt that it provided a basis for action against the university. Huhnhäuser believed its origins lay in the deep mistrust felt towards the assurances made by the Minister.

Until this point the talks had been internal and neither side had involved the German authorities. On 18 September, however, Hoel was informed by Skancke that he had had a meeting with the *Regierungspräsident*, Dr Koch, in which Dr Volberg, Huhnhäuser’s junior colleague, and Dr Paris, who worked in the Health Department, had taken part. According to Koch, the Germans had learned of the professors’ action and regarded the situation as dangerous. A postponement of the date of implementation would be regarded as sabotage, and the whole action in general as a measure by the university against the government. Skancke claimed he had tried to portray the matter in its correct light, but without

success.<sup>49</sup> Huhnhäuser points out that even if Koch and Paris were positively inclined towards the Norwegians, and in no way sympathized with Terboven's views, nevertheless both were so unfamiliar with the difficult university question that it was impossible for them to form a clear opinion on this complicated matter, not to mention take the final decisions. Volberg, as an official in Huhnhäuser's department, did not have the necessary authority to intervene. Huhnhäuser adds that allegedly *Ministerialdirigent* Müller, as his immediate superior, should also have been looking into the matter but that he never mentioned it to Huhnhäuser following the latter's return from Copenhagen.

On 24 September Skancke had a meeting with Hoel and several deans, in which he gave the assurance that the government pursued no political objectives in this matter. Further talks then led to the formation of a committee on the working of the *Reglement*, which was to present its suggestions to the faculties on 19 October. It was at this stage that Huhnhäuser became involved. Although he still had sick leave, he claims that due to the seriousness of the situation he felt that he should lead the talks himself, especially when he learned that Skancke had deviated once more from the last standpoint he had adopted, and now demanded the admission of NS students. He states: "Auch hoffte ich, durch mein Eingreifen, jeglicher Radikalisierung von deutscher Seite vorbeugen zu können. Es kam jetzt alles darauf an, Ruhe zu bewahren und möglichst Terboven außerhalb der Sache zu halten." (RS, p. 8)

On 14 October Huhnhäuser met Hoel and Volberg in his flat. Here the two visitors

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<sup>49</sup> "It is difficult to pinpoint exactly who bore the responsibility for initiating the jailings. [...] NS officials, most prominently Skancke, have insisted that Quisling acted only after having received threats from Terboven. In providing this explanation, however, Skancke appears to have been motivated by a desire to avoid having Quisling assume culpability for an unpopular act, attempting instead to have the Germans serve as villains." Hoidal, p. 621.

produced summary reports of everything that had happened concerning the *Reglementsstreit* since the end of August. Hoel stressed that the mood of the university had considerably hardened due to the covering letter added to the *Reglement*, as in it demands were made which far exceeded those first made in the *Reglement*. The teaching staff were further indignant that more heed had been paid to *Studentfylking* than to them. This explained the faculties' letter of 14 September. Skancke had previously given both spoken and written assurances that political views would not have a role to play in the selection of applicants, whereupon the moderate representatives of the professors prevailed and declared themselves ready to examine the proposals and to amend them if need be. Meanwhile Skancke had departed from his written undertaking and demanded the acceptance of all NS students. He even went so far as to wish to refuse permission to a student who intended to study in Heidelberg.

Just two hours after this meeting, Volberg informed Huhnhäuser that on the basis of an agreement between Terboven and Quisling, between ten and twelve professors and around one hundred students on the side of the "enemy" were to be arrested on 15 October.<sup>50</sup> Huhnhäuser knew that at this time a meeting was taking place at the home of Carl Otte, leader of the *Reichskommissariat's* economic division, at which Müller, Huhnhäuser's superior, was present. Huhnhäuser had a serious heart condition and was not well enough to go personally, so instead he instructed Volberg to go there right away and inform Müller of the positive result of the meeting that morning, and to request urgently in Huhnhäuser's name that Müller contact the *Reichskommissar* immediately, in order that

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<sup>50</sup> Members of the faculties declared in writing that they regarded the new admission rules as "null and void". Quisling learned of this on 14 October. His reaction was to decree that the rules go into effect immediately, and he gave orders that ten professors and over fifty students were to

Terboven could call off the operation. This seemed to Huhnhäuser all the more possible, as he knew that at that time the *Reichskommissar* was not anxious for a new conflict, for the brutal shooting of hostages in Drammen in the *Mjøndal* affair had aroused extreme emotions.<sup>51</sup> Volberg telephoned a short time later to inform him of the decision to postpone the action.

At about 5 p.m., Huhnhäuser received another call from Hoel, who informed him that Skancke had received a letter from Quisling, in which he objected to his Minister's climb-down in the *Reglement* affair and ordered that the *Reglement* conditions issued in August be implemented without delay. Hoel turned to Huhnhäuser for advice on how he should act in this new, extremely difficult situation. Huhnhäuser answered that he should do nothing; it was the responsibility of the Minister and not that of Hoel. It was Hoel's job to take orders from the Minister. In case of difficulties arising from this lack of action, Huhnhäuser advised Hoel to refer to him. Huhnhäuser was prepared to take responsibility for the fact that Quisling's orders were not passed on.

After all that had previously occurred, Huhnhäuser still hoped that the immediate danger had been averted for the time being. During the night of 15 October, however, Müller fetched Huhnhäuser out of bed and informed him that Quisling, "beim Reichskommissar einen Mordslärm geschlagen' habe und verlange, daß Professoren und Studenten termingemäß verhaftet würden." (RS, p. 10) The *Reichskommissar* agreed with

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be arrested the following day. Hoidal, pp. 620-21.

<sup>51</sup> Possibly referring to the shooting of five hostages from Drammen and Mjøndalen on 14 October 1943 after a bomb attack on an army transport. Fritz Petrick, "Das Okkupationsregime des faschistischen deutschen Imperialismus in Norwegen 1940 bis 1945", *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft*, 31 (5) (1983), 397-413 (p. 412).

some reservations.<sup>52</sup> With regards to what Hoel had told him of the work on the *Reglement* and the present position of the university, Huhnhäuser pointed out to Müller that “diese Maßnahme alles zunichte machen werde, was mühselig aufgebaut sei und mit Besonnenheit zum guten Ende hätte geführt werden können”. (RS, p. 10)

### **Von den Oktoberverhaftungen bis zum Aulabrand**

The following chapter outlines the events which took place after the October arrests at the university and which culminated in the arson attack on the Assembly Hall of Oslo University.

Misunderstandings and mistrust on both sides led to this conflict, asserts Huhnhäuser. Too much had happened already for the representatives of the university to still have been able to trust the weak and indecisive Skancke, who had proved once again, in the previous weeks when the *Reglement* was being disputed, that his word could not be relied upon. Huhnhäuser believes that the October arrests could have been prevented:

Das tief Bedauerliche war auch hier, daß sich diese Oktoberverhaftungen hätten vermeiden lassen, wenn man besonnen und ruhig zu Werke gegangen wäre und auf die Männer gehört hätte, welche die Universität, solange es nur

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<sup>52</sup> Huhnhäuser is quite definite in blaming Quisling for the arrests, in comparison with Hoidal, who remarks that while it is quite plausible that Quisling ordered the arrests, he could not have done so without Terboven's approval. Hoidal is also aware of the fact that Quisling was in contact with the *Reichskommissar* directly before the arrests (p. 621). It is, however, uncertain whether he is aware of Quisling's fury at the postponement of the operation, or that he insisted they go ahead as planned, which Huhnhäuser alleges. Both Hoidal and Huhnhäuser agree that Terboven held intellectuals in contempt, therefore it was highly unlikely that he would intervene out of any sympathy for the opponents of NS who were to be arrested.

irgend möglich war, vor einer Katastrophe zu bewahren wünschten. (OA, p. 1)

It has already been stressed that Terboven was a bitter enemy of the academic class, and was, therefore, looking for a reason to deliver a destructive blow against the university. Huhnhäuser claims that he warned Norwegian academics of this fact frequently. Terboven had pronounced the threat in January 1941 in Huhnhäuser's presence, "daß er von einer Verhaftung des Rektors Seip und einer Schließung der Universität nicht zurückschrecken werde." (OA, p. 1) Only the fact that Huhnhäuser then vouched for Seip completely prevented further measures against the university and the *Rektor*. It was not until the state of emergency in September 1941, during Huhnhäuser's absence, that the university's enemies succeeded in striking the first blow against it by arresting Seip and three professors.

However, after relations continued to worsen following the "hand over" of power to *Nasjonal Samling* on 1 February 1942, and following the widespread teachers' protest which led to mass arrests and deportations to Kirkenes<sup>53</sup> and clearly revealed the course of events to come, no one, states Huhnhäuser, could continue to labour under the illusion that Terboven would not carry out his threats, especially not after the murder of hostages in the summer of 1942 in Trondheim.<sup>54</sup> Terboven referred to this in an address to a small group at Skaugum on 21 November 1942, his official residence. He said, amongst other things, that

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<sup>53</sup> Huhnhäuser gives this long-running dispute merely a fleeting reference, despite the fact that he was clearly involved. He refers to the dispute several times in letters to his wife. Letter to Else Huhnhäuser, 4, 8, 9, 10 and 12 March 1942, and Easter 1942. He is clearly involved in the dispute professionally, fearing that his name will be connected with the situation, which he regards as a mess.

<sup>54</sup> Huhnhäuser may be referring here to the murder of ten prominent citizens in Trondheim in October 1942, carried out in revenge for the "generally hostile attitude of the population". Einar Grannes, "Operation *Jupiter*: a Norwegian perspective", in *Britain and Norway in the Second*

the shooting of the hostages would send shock waves over the intellectuals, who in reality were behind all counter-measures. Huhnhäuser cites the threatening words of the *Reichskommissar*: “Bisher habe man immer nur die Kleinen gegriffen, die sich zu irgendwelchen feindlichen Maßnahmen hätten verleiten lassen. Nun solle jeder Intellektuelle wissen, daß auch er jeden Augenblick das Leben dran geben müsse...” (OA, p. 2)

Huhnhäuser claims that he had been aware of Terboven’s attitude since the state of emergency in 1941, and asserts that he tried again and again to settle all conflicts which arose within his area of work on his own, as far as was possible, without informing his superiors. He often tried to warn Skancke against hasty actions and requested him to discuss as many questions of principle as possible with him beforehand. But instead Skancke forbade his colleagues to turn to Huhnhäuser or his department soon after his arrival in office, until, in the end, there was no longer any professional relationship between the two men. Huhnhäuser does not state how he learned of this, but it is probable that he was informed by those Norwegians with whom he still maintained a close working relationship, such as Hoel.

In Huhnhäuser’s opinion, this dispute over the admissions policy illustrated how poorly Skancke was able to assess a situation by taking into account the given facts. Like Quisling, states Huhnhäuser, he was under the illusion of the supposed power of *Nasjonal Samling*. With only five NS professors and three lecturers, and also a *Rektor* who afforded him no loyalty, but rather opposed everything that could have damaged the university, Huhnhäuser suggests that Skancke should have realized he could not implement university reform. In spite of this, however, Skancke would not allow himself to be advised — in any

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*World War*, ed. by Patrick Salmon (London: HMSO, 1995), pp. 109-18 (p. 115).

case not by the men competent to do so — but rather tolerated that those not competent, like, for example, the leader of the *Studentfylking*, ruled over him irresponsibly, or followed the orders of the party and its leader to the letter.

There is no doubt, asserts Huhnhäuser, that the October arrests were a purely Norwegian affair. The main arrests took place between 15 and 17 October. Ten professors and four other members of the teaching staff were arrested. These arrests appeared to be carried out in a most arbitrary manner. Those arrested were taken first of all to Bredtvedt, and on 22 November to the Norwegian concentration camp, Berg, near Tönsberg. Later they were transferred to Grini.

Fifty-six students had been arrested by 19 October. Huhnhäuser remarks that the criteria according to which the selection took place are hard to ascertain in detail. All that is clear is that a list of students presented to Quisling by Holm, on the former's orders, on 14 October formed the basis of the measure.

While the arrest of the university teachers was in connection with the *Reglementsstreit* originally, the students' arrests had other reasons as their cause. On 12 November 1941, Skancke called the students into the Assembly Hall and declared the special committees (*saerutvalgene*) dissolved. Simultaneously a reform was introduced, which stated that from now on these special committees would be manned by members of NS *Studentfylking* (NSSF) chosen by the Minister. These new committees were the suggestion of Holm, the leader of that body. After the committee members had taken over their office, the majority of the students protested by leaving the university. Nothing was done officially by the university. As there were no further developments, however, most



students returned to the university in spring 1942.<sup>55</sup>

Now, however, activists in the NS *Studentfylking* demanded the “cleansing” of the opposition element and this matter was discussed at the meeting of the NSSF in February 1942. The suggestion from the German representative, that the Oslo students should follow the example of his own student days and eliminate opponents by means of threats and instigated violence, was vigorously rejected by three students: Carl Martin Kramer, Paul Røer and Asbjørn Saeteren. Thus the German example was not accepted and the matter was ended for the time being. The activists amongst the NS students were not satisfied, however, and introduced a new campaign in May and June, in which they won Holm over to the idea that a number of the worst opponents should be deported for a certain period of time to hard labour in Germany. It was decided to implement this plan. The three students mentioned above, who all held positions of trust within the NSSF, resisted this, partly by protesting, partly by thwarting the plan through effective interference. Saeteren resigned from his office; Røer called all the representatives together and succeeded in dissuading them from this plan. As the German representative was sceptical towards this idea and thought that instead of forced labour the students would be better committed to general labour service, Røer was successful in influencing Holm to give up his proposal this time.

A new opportunity presented itself when, on 22 February 1943, Quisling announced the law on the national *Arbeitseinsatz*. This law aroused great fury amongst the students. On the day after the announcement, Carl Martin Kramer, in Holm’s absence, called the students to a meeting in the university Assembly Hall, in order to speak about a possible

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<sup>55</sup> This is confirmed by Hoidal. He adds that Quisling hoped this would result in teaching staff and students being brought under control, with the party being able to use Hoel, the NS rector, to control the academic community. However, NS met increased resistance, with too few faculty

deployment of students in the national *Arbeitseinsatz*. Around 1100 people attended. Kramer spoke first of all about the structure of the *Studentsamband*, the student corporation, and emphasized that this institution should take over “die sozialen, wirtschaftlichen und kulturellen Aufgaben der Studentenschaft” (OA, p. 5). After that he spoke of the difficulties the new law would bring with it for the students, and how he wanted the *Studentsamband* to provide the students with all possible alleviations, and where possible to prevent their studies and examinations from being interrupted. The *Studentsamband* wanted to take the arrangement in hand, but for this it needed the support of the students. Therefore Kramer asked those students present to give him their support by standing up. All followed this instruction.

Press reports on this meeting appeared the following day under large headlines in the newspapers *Fritt Folk* and *Aftenposten*, in which it was stated that the students had placed themselves behind *Studentsamband* in agreement with the ideas of the “new age”. Allegedly these press reports appeared without Kramer’s consent, for the *Pressedirektorat* had denied him permission to hold a press conference. The result was that the students immediately dissociated themselves from the affair and responded with letters of protest to the university which began to arrive on the day after the meeting. The wording was the same in almost all of them. On 1 March 1943 the Norwegian police confiscated all the protest letters that had arrived by that date. On 8 March the number of letters received stood at over 2500. Immediately after the confiscation of the first protest letters, Hoel contacted the police and his efforts were eventually successful in preventing action from being taken against the students.

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members and students to be able to implement its reforms successfully (p. 514).

In May 1943 students were demanded as workers by the *Sozialdepartement* for the *Arbeitseinsatz*, and a list of two hundred students was presented by *Studentfylking*. Nothing came of this, however, although the list allegedly formed the basis for the students' arrests on 15 October.<sup>56</sup>

Despite the fact that Huhnhäuser no longer had any cause to interfere in this purely Norwegian affair, he was constantly asked by Hoel and others to help gain release for those arrested. Obviously the arrest of university teachers immediately caused severe disruptions to the university's running and, initially, to the exams, especially history. Hoel managed, therefore, to gain the release of the Professor of History on 26 November 1943. The other detainee from the History Department, lecturer Schreiner, was not released until Christmas 1944, along with the majority of the professors.

On 19 October Huhnhäuser had his first discussion at home with Hoel. He was informed in detail of the arrests and their effects. Hoel stressed that there were many positive and loyal students amongst those arrested. Furthermore he reported that on 18 October he had had a meeting with the *Reglement* committee and from this had been appointed to inform the appropriate German Department (the *Schulabteilung*). On the same day he had met the deans and their representatives, and they had requested that he effect the release of those university teachers detained. Thereupon Hoel went to the Norwegian state police on 19 October. Here he dealt with an official, who described the arrests as a scandal.

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<sup>56</sup> Hoidal refers to twenty-one students who received conscription papers for labour projects in April 1943. He states that Hoel, whose main concern was to keep the university running normally, went to Quisling to have the conscription orders withdrawn. The NS student leaders claimed that they had Quisling's full backing for the measure, but in a meeting with Hoel and Skancke, he denied this and insisted that Hoel should have the final say in the running of the university. Thus, Hoel managed further to weaken the influence of the student leaders, who had been interfering with his authority (p. 620).

On 25 October *Direktor* Svend Dysthe called on Huhnhäuser for a long discussion and gave him a detailed report on the university's position, placing also a number of documents at his disposal. They arranged a further meeting. In cases of urgency, communication was to be by telephone and, at Dysthe's suggestion, under a code name.

The following day Huhnhäuser was ordered to go to the *Reichskommissar* to provide him with a report on the situation. In order that he be informed exactly on all events, Huhnhäuser asked Dysthe and Hoel to another meeting that morning. Hoel informed him there that the NS professors and lecturers had requested that he address them on the *Reglementsstreit* and the arrests, in his position as *Rektor* of the university and a member of NS. They reproached him for not informing them sufficiently on university matters. One of the participants informed Skancke of the details of the meeting, who assumed that measures against the *Reglement* were afoot; he was very angry and warned Hoel against this. He also forbade the rector from turning to the *Schulabteilung* for help.

Dysthe, on the basis of the statements of some students already released, gave more detailed information on the nature of their questioning by the Norwegian state police. They were asked three questions:

- 1) whether they had protested against the *Studentsamband* in February
- 2) whether they now still stood by this protest
- 3) whether they recognized the Quisling government.

Müller was also present at the meeting with the *Reichskommissar* in the *Storting*. Huhnhäuser reported everything in connection with what had happened in the last two

months, and pointed out the serious errors which had been made on the NS side. The *Reichskommissar*, who had originally been against this operation and had, therefore, only hesitatingly given in to Quisling's demands, replied that:

es ihm nur recht sein könne, wenn die Norweger Dummheiten machten. Diese Verhaftungen seien ihre eigenste Angelegenheit, und wenn etwas passiere, habe er die Möglichkeit, die Universität und die Hochschulen des Landes zu schließen, worauf er schon seit 2 Jahren warte. (OA, p. 9)

Huhnhäuser pointed out the difficult consequences which the closure of the Norwegian colleges would create, and stressed that through such a measure, Norway would be robbed of its new generation of academics for years to come. To this Terboven responded, "daß ihm das völlig gleichgültig sei, desto besser lasse sich regieren." (OA, p. 10)

Next, Huhnhäuser brought up the October arrests and showed how arbitrarily these arrests had been carried out. Terboven agreed that *Oberführer* Heinrich Fehlis, head of the *Sicherheitspolizei* in Norway, should examine the petitions concerning unjustified arrests: "Im übrigen aber sollten wir uns nicht in die Sache einmischen, sondern nur orientieren." (OA, p. 10) As a special case Huhnhäuser now mentioned the plight of Asbjørn Saeteren, who resigned from his position in the NSSF over the plan to deport to Germany students hostile to NS. By openly criticising the October measures and speaking out for those arrested, Saeteren had once more fallen out with Holm, and the Norwegian Chief of State Police, Marthinsen, was also angry with him. Now Saeteren was being threatened with arrest. Huhnhäuser asked the *Reichskommissar* to prevent this. Terboven gave his assent and ordered him to inform Fehlis of this. Hoel was also in danger of arrest at that time.

Skancke's conduct was mentioned in the report on the *Reglementsstreit* and its effects. Terboven commented that it was intended to give him a specific scientific assignment in Germany. This never occurred.

The discussion with Terboven illustrated to Huhnhäuser once again "seine feindselige Grundeinstellung zur Universität und dem gesamten akademischen Stande gegenüber" (OA, p. 11). On the other hand, however, Huhnhäuser had witnessed several times that Terboven did not trust himself to attack when there was no real cause, and thus Huhnhäuser was now more than ever of the conviction that anything which could be interpreted as unrest or as a strike had to be avoided at all costs. Terboven's statement that "es ihm durchaus recht sein könne, wenn die Norweger Dummheiten begingen" (OA, p. 11), seemed to Huhnhäuser to be "ein deutlicher Beweis seiner grundsätzlichen Ablehnung des Quislingregimes und daß ihm daran gelegen war, die Unfähigkeit Quislings und seiner Regierung nachzuweisen" (OA, p. 11).

Huhnhäuser learned, through independent discussions with two representatives of the small group of NS teachers at the university, just how deeply this group had split. One of them criticized the leading men in the party. Ninety per cent of the party, he said, were very worried, for the men at the head of the movement were almost predominantly idiots or crooks. The Education Minister belonged to the former group. He was described as the "Schwachstromminister". He added that Skancke's "Unfähigkeit und Haltlosigkeit gehe deutlich aus dem letzten Konflikt hervor" (OA, p. 11). The second NS representative also mentioned the Minister and described him as a weakling who never kept his word, and always made others responsible for his mistakes.

Saeteren came to see Huhnhäuser on 8 December, to inform him that the Norwegian

police had refused to hand over to Hoel and him the list of students arrested. By refusing they attempted to sabotage the release attempts. Huhnhäuser asked Noot, leader of *Abteilung III* (SD), to obtain the list surreptitiously. In the meantime, renewed attempts were made by the faculties to get those arrested released. In spite of repeated assurances by individual police officials, the releases were postponed again and again. In doing this they also greatly embarrassed Hoel by breaking the promises they had given him. Huhnhäuser comments that apparently they did not know what reason to give for the arrests. Marthinsen was personally behind this harassment, as an outspoken opponent of the university.

The students were now beginning to become restless at the fate of their fellow students, and consequently on 11 November the deans turned to Hoel. At this time an anonymous letter was circulating amongst the students, in which they were asked to write a protest letter to the Department. Huhnhäuser comments that:

Sicher wäre es taktisch richtiger gewesen, wenn die Studenten sich vorher mit den Dekanen in Verbindung gesetzt hätten. Man muß aber hierbei berücksichtigen, daß es eine allgemein anerkannte Studentenvertretung nicht mehr gab. Welche Bedeutung aber der gelegentlich erwähnte 'geheime Studentenausschuß' (hemmelige studentutvalg) hatte und ob er seine Direktiven, wie man sagte, von einer politisch radikalen Gruppe erhielt, ist mir nicht näher bekannt geworden.<sup>57</sup> (OA, p. 12)

The protest letters arrived at the Department in the middle of November. Admittedly, attempts were still made to inhibit the actions of the students somewhat; the wording of the letters was toned down on the basis of a suggestion by the deans Monrad-Krohn and

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<sup>57</sup> Hoidal also mentions the existence of an underground student leadership, as well as an unofficial leadership amongst the faculties, and states that they tended to dominate university affairs, especially resistance to NS attempts to influence the university (p. 514).

Solberg after consultation with Hoel. However, that could not prevent the situation worsening considerably. Huhnhäuser believes it is certain that the releases would have followed if the protest letters had not arrived. Now Marthinsen finally had a reason that gave him the apparent right to hold the detainees. Renewed objections by Hoel remained unsuccessful.

On 17 November Dysthe reported on the situation to Huhnhäuser. By then 950 letters had been sent, of which 150 had been confiscated by the police. Soon afterwards Huhnhäuser learned from Hoel that 2000 letters had been sent. On 22 November Hoel came to see Huhnhäuser for the last time regarding this affair, and brought him the most important documents from that recent period. He told Huhnhäuser that he had recently been to see Quisling personally to try to induce him to change his mind, but in vain. Huhnhäuser expressed openly his concern over the course of events, and both were clear that the smallest incident could entail the most serious of consequences.

These events culminated in the arson attack on the *Aula* of Oslo University, and this action, along with the ensuing consequences, forms the basis of Huhnhäuser's next chapter.

### **Der Aulabrand und seine Folgen**

The attack took place on the night of 27/28 November. The *Aula*, a major symbol of Norwegian cultural achievement, was used regularly by the Germans for concerts and other such events.<sup>58</sup> Initially the Germans even attempted to have the *Aula* ready for a concert

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<sup>58</sup> Hoidal, p. 849.



scheduled for the following evening, as a matter of prestige, but the fire damage was too extensive to make this possible.

The fire gave the *Reichskommissar* “die schon längst gewünschte Veranlassung, den vernichtenden Schlag gegen die Universität zu führen” (AF, p. 1), which he regarded as a centre of national resistance. As previously stated, he had already ordered the arrest of the university’s rector, Seip, during the state of emergency in September 1941. Terboven, states Huhnhäuser, was correct in thinking that the university and colleges were his enemies, but it was another matter altogether whether he was justified in interfering as long as they were “loyal” to the occupying power, that is to say, behaved correctly in the sense of the international agreements. What worsened the position of the university was that Terboven, like the majority of leading Nazis, hated intellectuals — Huhnhäuser attributes this partly to an inferiority complex caused by his lack of education and partly to fear of their influence on others. Huhnhäuser states that the reason Terboven initially treated the Norwegians well on the whole was because it was Hitler’s wish to “win them over”; his methods changed completely with the state of emergency when he began to reign with terror. (This remark made by Huhnhäuser is actually cited by Hoidal.)<sup>59</sup> Huhnhäuser asserts that Terboven was partly supported by Quisling in this, who had stated previously that the Norwegians could only be ruled with harshness. Quisling had made these remarks in a letter to an official in Berlin, prior to Terboven’s use of force during the state of emergency, when he was putting

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<sup>59</sup> The actual quote reads: “As one of his subordinates in the *Reichskommissariat* who disagreed with this reversal put it: ‘If he had in the beginning been inclined to treat the Norwegians well because Hitler wished to “win” them, then he changed his methods from the time of the state of emergency and began a reign of terror.’” Cited from Hoidal, p. 533. Hoidal cites from Magne Skodvin, “Det store fremstøt”, in *Norges Krig 1940-45*, ed. by Sverre Steen, 3 vols (Oslo: Gyldendal Norsk Forlag, 1948), II, 573-734 (p. 715).

the case for an independent government, led by himself.<sup>60</sup> Huhnhäuser remarks:

Wer Terboven genauer kannte, mußte wissen, daß er bei offenem Widerstand vor dem Äußersten nicht zurückschreckte, und darum war es klug und richtig, nicht durch irgendwelche unbesonnenen Handlungen auf dem kulturellen Gebiet Terroraktionen auszulösen. Wurden dadurch doch nur unnötig Menschenleben aufs Spiel gesetzt. Aus dieser Erkenntnis heraus mußte man bemüht sein, offene Konflikte nach Möglichkeit zu vermeiden und wenn sie im Entstehen waren, die Nachricht darüber möglichst nicht an Terboven oder seine engsten Mitarbeiter gelangen lassen, sondern versuchen, sie auf andre Weise zu lösen. (AF, pp. 2-3)

Huhnhäuser's policy of dealing with any conflict which arose on his own, without involving Terboven or any of his colleagues, worked well until the action against the university in October 1943. He asserts that the arrest of several members of the teaching staff and around sixty students on 15 October was a purely Norwegian measure, "für die allein Quisling und seine Hintermänner die Verantwortung trugen." (AF, p. 3) It was later claimed in NS circles that Quisling wanted only to prevent worse measures on Terboven's part, but Huhnhäuser regards this as "nur eine Ausrede" (AF, p. 3), which did not stand up in the face of the events just weeks later. Even if the October operation had no direct connection with the closure of the university in November, Terboven could nevertheless refer to the fact that the university had offered resistance once before.

It was at first thought by some that the arson attack on the *Aula* was a question of something similar to the *Reichstag* fire.<sup>61</sup> However, it was later established that the action

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<sup>60</sup> On 2 August 1941, Quisling wrote to *Reichsleiter* Lammers that "Norwegians must be converted" to the new order with: "a certain amount of harshness. This force, however, must be carried out by a Norwegian government and not by foreigners." (Hoidal, p. 529).

<sup>61</sup> As Huhnhäuser quotes the claim made by *London Nytt* on 29 November 1943, that the *Aulabrand* was started by the Nazis themselves, like the *Reichstag* fire, it is possible that this is

was taken by Norwegians, some of them students. Several leaflets were distributed clandestinely by the Norwegian Resistance on matters concerning the university. The first, dated 27 October 1943, and allegedly in connection with the *Reglementsstreit* and the ensuing arrests, claimed solidarity with all students fighting against national socialism “auf dem Gebiet der inneren Front” (AF, p. 3). This provided Terboven with material against the university which he later used to defend his measures. Present in the same pamphlet was the warning that it might be necessary for the students to leave the university and go into hiding at some point in the near future. Two news articles from London supported the opinion held already by many in Norway that the Nazis were responsible for the arson attack. On 29 November 1943, the illegal newspaper *London Nytt* claimed:

Im Widerschein des Aulabrandes erkennen wir plötzlich die eigenen Züge der Nazigangster. Die norwegische Heimatfront hat niemals Brände gutgeheißen — weder im Tinghaus noch in der Aula; es sei denn man nenne sich Kommunist oder etwas anderes. [...] Was wir feststellen wollen, ist nur die Tatsache, daß wir hier in einem Einzelfall den unzweideutigen Beweis dafür haben, daß die Beschuldigungen der Nazisten gegen die ‘Kommunisten’ eine Klischéphrase sind. Nun müssen wir mit aller Bestimmtheit im Namen der Anständigkeit verlangen, daß sie sich in ihren eigenen Reihen umsehen, die ‘kommunistischen’ Saboteure zu finden. — Dann wollen wir sehen, ob auch der Aulabrand die wehrlosen norwegischen Patrioten belasten soll. (AF, p. 5)

Huhnhäuser then cites *London Radio* which stated two weeks later, on 13 December, that: “Nach einer Provokation ebenso frech und unwahrscheinlich wie der Reichstagsbrand haben die Deutschen unsere Universität geschlossen.” (AF, p. 4) However, a leaflet admitting responsibility for the fire appeared already on the day after the fire, in which a group calling

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the widely held opinion to which he is referring.

itself “SS-Opposition” described the attack as a warning to all Germans, the army and the SS, and to all Norwegian traitors, Nazis and collaborators.

Huhnhäuser states that Terboven knew that the fire was caused by a small resistance group. Nevertheless he used this opportunity to strike a blow aimed at breaking the passive resistance of the professors and the students, and to eliminate it once and for all by closing the university. Already on the evening after the fire Terboven summoned several officers to Skaugum to discuss the matter. He stated that it was his intention to close the Technical College in Trondheim and the university in Oslo and to arrest the students. Fehlis, Gestapo chief in Norway, urged Terboven against this measure, adding that according to their intelligence the professors and students had nothing to do with the attack. In fact, the population, as well as the Home Front, dissociated themselves from the fire. This reaction was not expected by the sabotage group and led to them issuing another leaflet several days after the event, in which they justified their actions, claiming that the *Aula* had been “mit allen möglichen kulturfeindlichen und albernen Propagandaversammlungen, Konzerten und dergl. befleckt” (p. 6).

Noot, head of *Abteilung III* (SD), was summoned to Skaugum on the basis of this intelligence. Amongst those present was Huhnhäuser’s superior, Müller. Noot explained to Fehlis that the proposed measures would cause great indignation in Norway and in neutral countries abroad. He claimed there was no basis for closing the Technical College in Trondheim and arresting the students there, and that one could not ask this of Quisling. Noot stressed that apart from disputes with *Nasjonal Samling*, the university had been running normally. He referred to Huhnhäuser at this point and requested that he come to Skaugum. Terboven refused, using Huhnhäuser’s ill health as his reason. In Noot’s opinion,

however, Terboven was in reality doubtless aware that Huhnhäuser would disagree with his plans, for twice before, in the autumn of 1942 and in October 1943, Huhnhäuser had warned Terboven in his reports against radical measures towards the colleges and pointed out that almost all the unrest was due solely to provocation by Quisling and his men. This was one of the reasons, claims Huhnhäuser, why he intervened to have Hoel installed as Deputy Rector under Skancke following Seip's arrest in September 1941, and when that was no longer feasible, have him named as *Rektor* in autumn 1942, because Skancke's rectorship "die Universität in Kürze in chaotische Zustände gebracht haben würde." (AF, p. 7) In any case, one of Huhnhäuser's junior colleagues was summoned instead. When Fehlis made one last attempt to get Terboven to change his mind, the *Reichskommissar* said that it was also a military matter. If there was an invasion in the coming spring, and this was a possibility he had to consider, "dann würden die Studenten aktiv auf der Gegenseite stehen. Das müsse verhindert werden." (AF, p. 7) Fehlis tried to have the matter postponed in order to win time. Terboven would not permit this, however, as he did not wish to miss this opportunity.

On 29 November Terboven met with Quisling and Alf Whist, who rose through NS party ranks to become Quisling's leading economics expert. He was appointed Minister without portfolio in November 1943 with general economic powers. Quisling was easily won over, much to Terboven's surprise — he had expected this to be the most difficult part of the whole operation. Huhnhäuser claims that Terboven could never have closed the university and deported the students if Quisling had refused, for his position was not as strong as it had been previously.

Huhnhäuser was informed officially of the closure of the university by Müller on 30

November. He was told that it was a purely political measure. Huhnhäuser replied that the best thing would be to disband his own department if he was not going to be consulted on such decisive matters — similarly he had not been involved when the teachers were sent to Kirkenes. Moreover, he added that he wanted nothing to do with the matter and refused to accept any responsibility for this action and its consequences.

Immediately after this interview Müller then saw Hoel. The NSSF student leader Rolf Holm had also been requested to attend but did not appear, as he had allegedly been called to see Quisling. Hoel was then informed that the *Reichskommissar* had ordered that the university be surrounded by police at 11:05 a.m.. All males in the building, both students and professors, were to be arrested, with the exception of the medics. Provided that the police did not have particular reason to detain them, the professors were to be released; the arrested students, however, were to be sent to Germany. The female students were to return to their home towns and villages and were not to be allowed to leave there without permission from the police. NS students, and students proved to have a positive attitude, were exempt from this action.

As Skancke was not called to the meeting with Müller, Huhnhäuser assumes that he had already been informed elsewhere of events. Huhnhäuser neither saw nor heard from him in the days which followed the closure of the university, but since July 1943 there had ceased to be a professional relationship between the two men.

The police, the *Wehrmacht*, even employees of the *Reichskommissariat* were sent out onto the streets to arrest anyone who looked like a student in the vicinity of the university, even on trams and busses, and also in the halls of residence. In all, around twelve hundred students were arrested. Huhnhäuser believes that this relatively small number

proves that many students must have received warning beforehand. The former general secretary of the Norwegian Home Front leadership confirmed in a newspaper article on 30 November 1945 that a high-ranking German officer informed a member of the Home Front leadership on the afternoon of 29 November of Terboven's plan to close the university. This, states Huhnhäuser, shows that Terboven took the army into his confidence and familiarized it with every detail of his plan — apart from the German police, some three hundred German soldiers were involved in its implementation. The Home Front issued a written warning to the students at 9:30 a.m., instructing them to leave the university buildings and go into hiding. They blamed "Naziprovokateure" (AF, p. 12) for starting the fire as a pretext for this action.

Huhnhäuser comments: "Leider kam es bei dieser beklagenswerten Aktion auch zu einigen besonders bedauerlichen, in ihrer Art grotesk wirkenden Vorfällen, die das Ganze schlaglichtartig beleuchteten." (AF, p. 13) Many law students, who were attending a lecture at the time of the arrests, were locked in the lecture theatre. Mowinckel, the professor of theology, was locked in his room for over twenty-four hours without food or water, despite the fact that his release was ordered on the evening of 30 November. Hoel came in complete indignation to see Huhnhäuser and informed him of events. Huhnhäuser called the police and finally managed to secure Mowinckel's release. Similar events occurred elsewhere.

All those students arrested were taken into the *Aula*. Terboven and Friedrich Redieß, head of the German police, arrived there at 2 p.m.. Huhnhäuser comments that Redieß was blamed unjustly for most of the horrors in Norway. In reality he was used and manipulated by Terboven: "Der harten Entschlossenheit und dem unbeugsamen Willen eines

Terboven war er in keiner Weise gewachsen.” (AF, p. 8) Huhnhäuser describes him as solid and retiring, and states that he had a very bad relationship with the *Reichskommissar*. On this occasion Redieß spoke on Terboven’s behalf, outlining the measures to be taken against the students and the “reasons” for this — that they had taken advantage of the “Ritterlichkeit und Großzügigkeit der Besatzungsmacht”, and involved themselves in the membership and leadership of illegal organizations, and in many acts of sabotage, culminating in the “bübischen” (AF, p. 14) arson attack on the *Aula*. Those arrested were to be sent to Germany, to a special camp but not a concentration camp. Those students loyal to the Nazis were asked to have patience until their release.

Huhnhäuser comments scathingly on the “Verlogenheiten, das hohe Pathos und den Zynismus dieser Verlautbarung” (AF, p. 15), and states that it is worthy of the men who bear the responsibility for this crime. He adds that it is regrettable that the arson attack gave them an opportunity and an apparent justification for their actions. He personally had decided not to involve himself and his department in these events. However, that evening Professor Halvor Solberg, Dean of Mathematics and Natural Sciences, came to his office unexpectedly. He too had been arrested that morning, and was only released when Volberg, Huhnhäuser’s colleague, saw him amongst the detainees. Concern for his colleagues and the university institutes had moved him to turn to Müller for help, who in turn had sent him to Huhnhäuser. He admits that when Solberg first came to see him he was tempted not to get involved at all, for he had been told it was purely a political measure. It was clear to him that the whole enterprise would fail from the start: “Würde es mithin nicht besser sein, alles gehen zu lassen, wie es ging, anstatt schon am ersten Tage korrigierend und helfend einzugreifen und dadurch womöglich sich mitverantwortlich zu machen?” (AF, p. 16) On



the other hand, it was clear to him that lives were involved. Concern for the university had forced Solberg to get involved, and that made Huhnhäuser's decision for him.

Consequently, he immediately set his department to work: "Wir sind fortan mit allen Kräften bemüht gewesen zu retten, was noch zu retten war und begangenes Unrecht wieder gut zu machen, so gut es eben ging." (AF, p. 16)

Hoel arrived soon after Solberg. They agreed that something had to be done that same evening. Huhnhäuser phoned Müller and Noot and asked for a meeting. This took place late in the evening in the *Storting*. Müller, Solberg, Hoel, Holm (the NSSF leader), Noot and Huhnhäuser were present. Müller gave the reasons for the closure, stating that continued unrest at the university would certainly have led to drastic measures such as shootings. Terboven, he said, had closed the university to prevent this from occurring. He added that the university would not be reopened until after the war. Then Huhnhäuser put forward the points from his earlier meeting with Solberg and Hoel. The results of the later meeting were firstly that some of the professors who had been arrested on 30 November were to be set free, and secondly that Solberg was allowed to retake control of his institute. A car was placed at his disposal and, furthermore, the buildings were to be kept heated to avoid frost damage. (Huhnhäuser's role in this matter is confirmed in an affidavit by Solberg, who states that:

Already that evening [30 November] he gave me a [*sic*] very effective help in my work to save the Blindern-Institute from destruction. He also modified the Germans' primary plans in the sense that the scientific research should go on at the Institutes. In that way it was possible to create a basis in the work of release of all arrested teachers, assistants and older students.)<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> Halvor Solberg, affidavit, 11 November 1946.

The detainees, however, were taken that same evening, 30 November, to Filipstad and from there to the Stavern camp, near Larvik. As early as the following day petitions for release were arriving at Huhnhäuser's office. His department cooperated with the Norwegians on this matter for weeks, often working long into the night.

On 3 December Huhnhäuser received a copy of a letter, whether inadvertently or on purpose he is unsure, from the *Reichskommissar*'s office to Martin Bormann, whom Huhnhäuser describes as: "einen der einflußreichsten Parteigewaltigen um Hitler, gleich rücksichtslos und brutal in seinem Kampfe für die Vermassung wie für die Entchristianisierung Deutschlands." (AF, p. 17) Huhnhäuser comments that in the letter Terboven not only repeats the lie that the student body actively took part in illegal organizations and actions, and were to blame for the arson attack on the *Aula*, but speaks further of the conquest of a large and active resistance. He states that he had Quisling's backing for the measure, and also support from the army, thus pre-empting any potential attack against him by Quisling's friends in Berlin and other possible opponents. Only at the end of the letter, states Huhnhäuser, does Terboven show his true face. He contradicts what was said in the address to the students: "Wie sich der großmütige Terboven in seiner selbstgerühmten Ritterlichkeit diese Lebensrettung gedacht hat, kommt [...] unzweideutig zum Ausdruck." (AF, p. 18) He intended to save them from the danger of loss of life and property in the future, by sending them to the Russian Front; he wanted to suggest this to Himmler, and thus expose the twelve hundred young men to an almost certain death.

When Huhnhäuser read this letter he immediately made copies of it: "um auf alle Fälle für später ein eindeutiges Beweisstück dieses unehrlichen und gewissenlosen Spiels

mit Menschenleben in der Hand zu haben.” (AF, p. 18) Before Huhnhäuser undertook anything else however, he made one last attempt with Terboven. He sent the *Reichskommissar* a report in which he suggested a moderation of the proposed measures. Huhnhäuser claims that this report, along with much other valuable material, went missing after the capitulation and that consequently he is able to recount only the main points of the document. First of all, Huhnhäuser drew attention to the fact that a number of professors, teaching assistants and scholarship holders were amongst those arrested, as, similarly, were non-students who had merely been attending lectures. Huhnhäuser suggested the immediate release of all those who belonged to one of the above categories. Furthermore, those preparing for or already sitting exams should be freed, along with the large group of students who only matriculated in the autumn, and all those who were proved to be ill. Huhnhäuser also pointed out that many students were experiencing financial hardship and an interruption of their studies could have drastic consequences for them. Huhnhäuser further expressed the opinion in his report that the university was only closed as a teaching, not as a research institution, therefore all scientific institutions as well as the university library and the essential administrative sections had to be reopened.

Huhnhäuser took this report to Fehlis on 4 December because he knew that the *Reichskommissar* would decide on nothing without first consulting him. Noot and Reinhardt, heads of *Abteilung III* and *IV* of the SD respectively, had also been summoned there by Fehlis. Huhnhäuser presented his views on the matter, pointing out the difficult consequences which the operation would entail, and requested Fehlis to try everything in his power to calm the situation as much as possible. Fehlis responded by declaring that he had initially favoured a moderate approach, “nun aber für strenge Durchführung sei.” (AF, p.

19) Huhnhäuser then read out his report section by section and asked Fehlis for his position on each one. The head of the Gestapo consulted Reinhardt on every individual point and the latter responded negatively to all concerning staff. It was he who wanted to evacuate all the young, able-bodied Norwegian males in order to rob the land of all powers of resistance in the face of an Allied invasion. Huhnhäuser claims:

Wenn einer Deutschland geschadet hat, so dieser Fanatiker, der aus der Hitlerjugend hervorgegangen war und nun eine Machtstellung ausnutzte, mit Menschenschicksalen rücksichtslos und grausam zu spielen, selber ein neurastenischer Schwächling. (AF, p. 20)

In the course of the discussion, Huhnhäuser came into sharp conflict with Fehlis and Reinhardt. From that day forward, Fehlis held Huhnhäuser's views against him, and he had also gained an outspoken opponent in Reinhardt.

As Huhnhäuser was outnumbered in his dispute with Fehlis and Reinhardt, for Noot could undertake nothing against the other two, he knew what result his report would have. Through Müller, who agreed with the proposals, Huhnhäuser sent it to Terboven that same day. The report was divided into individual parts so that the *Reichskommissar* needed only to answer "yes" or "no" to the question placed at the end of each section, for Huhnhäuser wanted to have a clear decision on each individual point. The result provided Huhnhäuser with no surprises. Where Fehlis had said no, so too did Terboven. Most of the proposals which related to the release of specific groups were rejected. There was to be a reassessment of those suffering from financial difficulties, and those suffering from illness were to be examined by German doctors. Terboven agreed with Huhnhäuser's proposal that

the institutions should be allowed to continue with their work, and as a result some members of staff were released to assist in their running.

Huhnhäuser's main objective now was to inform Himmler of events before it was too late. He informed Noot of the *Reichskommissar's* letter to Bormann, and handed him at the same time a copy of his report to Terboven from 4 December along with the latter's comments. Noot sent this, together with his own accompanying report to the *Reichssicherheitshauptamt*. Huhnhäuser hoped that in doing this, now at least the very worst had been avoided. Noot had sent a report as early as 29 November to the *Reichssicherheitshauptamt III* in Berlin, in which he had clearly described the situation and warned of the dangers. However this report failed to reach its correct destination until after the operation had been carried out.

#### **Bemühungen um die Freilassung der Professoren und Studenten. Vom 30. November 1943 bis zum 8. Januar 1944**

The final chapter in this section of the archive details the efforts of the Norwegians and of Huhnhäuser's department to save as many individuals as possible from the fate of transportation in the limited time available to them.

Immediately after news of the arrests and the closure of the university became known, there was a strong reaction both in Germany and in the neutral countries against this "unmenschliche und politisch höchst unkluge Terrorhandlung Terbovens" (BFPS, p. 1). Himmler, who had planned to raise between forty and sixty thousand Norwegian volunteers

the following month, was particularly annoyed and wanted the measures to be reversed. Huhnhäuser believes that this would perhaps have happened if there had not been official interference from abroad. The Oslo affair affected Sweden, in particular, and brought forth a number of indignant protests from their institutes of higher education. The Swedish government raised the matter officially in Berlin. The reaction of the circles around Hitler to the Swedish interference is, according to Huhnhäuser, best recorded in Goebbels' diaries. He cites from the entry made on 5 December 1943:

Die schwedische Regierung hat bei uns Protest wegen der Verhaftung der Osloer Studenten eingelegt. Dieser Protest soll auf Befehl des Führers in sehr scharfer Weise von Ribbentrop zurückgewiesen werden.

Wir können ja in der Osloer Studentenfrage jetzt keinen Rückzieher mehr machen. Aber es wäre besser gewesen, die Sache wäre vorher statt nachher überlegt worden. (BFPS, p. 7)

Hitler was extremely angry at the handling of the matter. Redieß was one of two envoys sent by Terboven to Hitler, who vented his annoyance upon them. As Terboven was now very definitely out of favour, this left him in a precarious position. He had to act quickly and present his opponents with a *fait accompli* if the enterprise were not to fail altogether. Huhnhäuser maintains that Hitler would have withdrawn the measures and dropped Terboven, especially as both Himmler and Goebbels were opposed to the operation, if Sweden had not intervened. Consequently, although Hitler expressed his disapproval to Terboven, he added that in order to avoid loss of prestige, students who belonged to illegal organizations were to be transported to Germany.

Although Redieß had claimed in his address to the students on 30 November that

those loyal to NS would be released, this could not be carried out as quickly as he had promised, for after the arrests there was a flood of petitions for release. The overwhelming majority of these were sent to Hoel, the rector of the university. On the basis of Hitler's orders Terboven agreed that Fehlis proposed names of detainees to be released, and Fehlis now instructed Noot to prepare these lists, even though Reinhardt's Department *Abteilung IV*, and not *Abteilung III*, was more appropriate for this task. This solution was certainly the best for the situation itself, for Noot did not agree with Terboven's actions, as his attitude at the time of the arson attack had proved. Hitler's instruction was that only those who belonged to an illegal organization should be sent to Germany. It was only possible to ascertain this through *Abteilung IV*. There were no files, however, on this matter, which showed how weak Terboven's position actually was. The inability to identify students who belonged to illegal groups on the basis of the evidence available proved the injustice of the accusations Terboven made against the university.

To the argument which appeared in the Norwegian post-war press (*Morgenbladet*, 19 July 1948), that the fire in the *Aula* was only intended to warn the students and to prevent worse measures being taken, and consequently that this action was not the direct cause of the transportation to Germany, Huhnhäuser responds with the following points; Terboven was permanently of the opinion that the university formed a centre of resistance. However, he was clearly aware that neither the teaching staff nor the students had committed any acts which justified his implementation of such harsh measures. He was able to differentiate between resistance to the Germans and resistance to NS measures. Resistance against NS had been obvious on several occasions previously and Terboven had not acted to crush it. It was not until the fire that he had a pretext to move against the

university.

Within a short time Terboven had also thought of widening the measure to cover the Technical College in Trondheim. He believed that a resistance group had also formed there, and trained technicians could be far more dangerous as an active resistance force than university students. Despite the fact that German interests were endangered, he quickly gave up this plan as there was no immediate cause for these measures. Huhnhäuser believes that there is no doubt that he dropped the operation for this reason. On the other hand, he is of the opinion that without the arson attack, the deportation of the students and the closure of the university would never have occurred, for Terboven had many enemies in Germany who were waiting for a chance to bring about his downfall. Furthermore, Huhnhäuser describes how he himself was able to prevent Terboven, who had received reports of incidents in Trondheim, from closing the college there and the university in Oslo in November 1942. Noot had informed Huhnhäuser of these secret plans. Huhnhäuser went immediately to Fehlis, who had been summoned to Terboven in relation to this matter. Huhnhäuser pointed out all the consequences of such an action, and immediately produced a report which Fehlis could use as material with Terboven. The result was that Terboven did not put his plan into action.<sup>63</sup>

As the *Reichskommissar* had ordered that Fehlis should present him with all requests for release, written documents had to be created for every individual case. Noot and his department were not in a position to do this, therefore he turned to Huhnhäuser with the request to take over the process of preparing the cases for possible release. Thus, Huhnhäuser agreed to involve himself and his department in this task, as he: “darin die

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<sup>63</sup> Confirmed by Adolf Hoel, affidavit, 4 June 1946.



einzigste Möglichkeit eines wirklichen, positiven Eingreifens sah und hoffte, auf diese Weise eine größere Zahl von Studenten vor der Verschickung nach Deutschland zu bewahren.” (BFPS, p. 9c)

Hoel had remained in constant contact with Huhnhäuser since 30 November. Already on 1 December Hoel had come to Huhnhäuser for help. He brought with him a university professor, one of whose sons had been arrested and sent to Stavern, and whose other son daily ran the danger of being detained, for the arrests continued for several days. Huhnhäuser vouched for the sons to the police and succeeded in obtaining the release of one and the promise of continued freedom for the other.<sup>64</sup> Huhnhäuser comments:

Schon diese beiden ersten Fälle, die Hoel an mich heranbrachte, lieferten den eindeutigen Beweis, wieviel Unrecht und Unglück durch tatkräftiges Eingreifen trotz allem, was bisher geschehen war, noch verhütet werden konnte, und die folgenden Wochen haben dies in vollem Umfang gezeigt. Trat doch die planlose Willkür fast mit jedem neuen Fall, der an uns gelangte, immer stärker zu Tage und damit das furchtbare Unrecht, das jedem der seiner Freiheit beraubten und aus seinen Studien herausgerissenen jungen Menschen zugefügt wurde, ganz abgesehen von all dem Elend und all dem Leid, das zum Weihnachtsfest 1943 über so viele norwegische Familien gebracht wurde. (BFPS, p. 10)

On 3 December the Dean of the Medical Faculty, Monrad-Krohn, and Hoel visited Huhnhäuser with a plan concerning the release of medical students which Monrad-Krohn had devised. Basically, all students who had almost finished their exams were suggested for release. It was further proposed that those who had only six months till their exams, and those with a year or eighteen months to go should likewise be released. These requests were based upon the urgent shortage of doctors and, amongst other things, a diphtheria epidemic

in northern Norway. This was the first official attempt the university undertook to save its students. Many others were to follow.

Huhnhäuser included these suggestions in his report to Terboven on 4 December, in which he suggested whole groups of students for release. Terboven refused these, along with most of Huhnhäuser's suggestions. Therefore, in spite of all efforts in the later meetings, a number of older medical students were sent to Germany.

Other members of the Medical Faculty presented applications for release for individual cases. Most of these requests were communicated via Hoel, who together with Monrad-Krohn and Solberg, worked tirelessly from the first day of the arrests onwards, in order to avert disaster. *Direktor* Dysthe also worked inexhaustibly for the release of students, and the Swedish consulate in Edelstam was involved in a number of individual cases.

Huhnhäuser, meanwhile, informed the Norwegian student leaders that petitions for release were being processed in the *Schulabteilung*. The first meeting took place on 6 December. Hoel was present from the university and at his request Asbjörn Hagen from the Botanic Museum joined the meeting. Hagen had voluntarily placed himself at Hoel's disposal as the university secretary had fled abroad. NSSF was represented by its leader, Holm, secretary Wulff-Engel, Breien (Holm's representative on his absence), Carl Martin Kramer, Paul Röer and one or two others. Holm rejected Asbjörn Saeteren, as his attitude towards the arrested students was too positive. His omission from the meeting was balanced out by Röer's inclusion, who was no less positive although this attitude often brought him into conflict with the others. He managed to protect a considerable number of students,

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<sup>64</sup> Confirmed by Adolf Hoel, affidavit, 4 June 1946.

particularly law students, from deportation. Kramer also did much for a number of detainees. Present amongst Huhnhäuser's close colleagues in the *Schulabteilung* were Dr Norman Balk and Dr Volberg. Balk taught at the university and knew many of those arrested. Both men were strongly committed to saving as many of the students as possible. Also on the German side, *Oberbannführer* Lemmer, the officer in charge of NSSF in the *Einsatzstab* was occasionally present. As the processed petitions for release were to be presented by Fehlis to Terboven, a representative of the *Sicherheitspolizei* had to be present. Dr Ohm was given this extremely difficult and thankless task. He did not belong to the SS, but was a judge in a small German town, who was conscripted into the police in wartime. The fact that he was not a member of the SS made his job more difficult. He was and remained an outsider. He was also in ill health, and now, asserts Huhnhäuser, was given a task which could hardly be completed without conflict. There was no representative for the Church and Education Department. The reason for this was that the Minister, Skancke, had rejected any responsibility for the whole measure and continued to do so in the forthcoming weeks, offering absolutely no help.

The committee experienced great technical problems during their meetings caused by the fact that each individual case had to be presented in the form of a written document. As most of the petitions for release were in the form of letters or oral requests, all the material had to be processed into forms, including at the same time the position of the committee on each case. As every minute was vital, the required forms were dictated to the typist during the meetings, so that at the end of every meeting they could be submitted together with the petitions received.

Ohm read out the name of everyone arrested from a list compiled by the SP, and the

members of the committee then had the chance to vote on each one. If a written application or oral request had already been submitted with a special recommendation, the case was consequently much easier to process. At first the students' names called by Ohm were frequently unknown to all present. When this happened the case was postponed for the time being and reopened later. The initial requirement for a positive response was an affirmative answer to the question of whether the student was "loyal", a term which referred to whether the students had behaved correctly towards the occupying power in the sense of the international agreements. This was a flexible term and was used extensively. On the first day 222 applications for release were presented. Of those, 81 were recommended for release. Huhnhäuser comments that this was a very reasonable result in the face of all the difficulties, for many petitions had to be reconsidered later. Furthermore, in this commission composed of the most diverse elements, there were many tensions and differences of opinion present from the beginning which had to be ironed out. Asbjörn Hagen's presence on the committee was of the greatest significance for the task in hand. Hagen knew a large number of the students personally, by far the most of all the committee members, and because of this his vote soon gained decisive weight amongst the Norwegians present.

The discussions were continued on 7 December. Because of the necessary preparations — the processing of the newly arrived petitions, the drawing up of a list of "positive" students by NSSF and so on — the proceedings could only begin at 5 p.m.. Initially much time was spent on discussing the release of the professors, and Hoel and Hagen distinguished themselves here. Røer also intervened very positively for the Law Faculty. It was also Røer who expressed the wish that the students arrested in October should also be dealt with at these meetings. Ohm's response was that this was a matter for

the Norwegian police in which they could not interfere.

Huhnhäuser remarks that it is often claimed on the NS side, presumably referring to their attempts to justify the actions of their party and their leader after the war, that Quisling only allowed the October arrests to go ahead in order to prevent Terboven from taking even harsher measures. If that had really been the case, he states, then Holm, who was an influential man in NS, as both leader of NSSF and regional party leader in Oslo, would now have had extensive opportunity to intervene for the release of the October prisoners, because the October arrests were a purely Norwegian, or rather, an NS affair and did not directly concern the Germans. In fact he did the opposite. Every time the name of one of these men came up, it was stressed that these students were to be regarded as especially “negative”. Huhnhäuser states that if he remembers correctly, all the students who were arrested in October were deported to Germany.

Already on this second day of the proceedings the different factions within the commission began to stand out. This was illustrated when Ohm demanded a tougher selection process. Much to the surprise of all, he insisted that the commission did not proceed any further with the processing of releases. Furthermore, he declared that they must drastically reduce the number of those recommended for release, for if the commission approved too many petitions Terboven would have to regard the operation as a failure. For this reason the general declaration of loyalty could no longer be regarded as satisfactory. Rather, the petitions should be divided into groups according to the following categories: 1) urgently approved, 2) approved, 3) loyal, 4) negative. With this demand it was evident that from now on the selection should have a more political character, and that the number would be severely limited by these new criteria. Suddenly all those described as “loyal”

were now third on the list. Most petitions, however, were based on this expression.

In addition to this came a further setback. The SS now demanded that all applications be processed by 2 p.m. on 8 December, and late in the evening Ohm was instructed that the deadline had been set at 10 a.m.. As a result the commission was thrown into agitation and it was only with great difficulty that they managed to continue. Firstly Holm demanded, on the basis of this new deadline, that his NSSF list be approved without examination. Acquiescence to this demand would have meant that only NS supporters were released. Consequently it was rejected immediately by Hoel, Hagen and Röer as well as by Huhnhäuser and his department. When Holm failed with this attempt he only intervened personally for those who were on his list. This too made matters impossible and progress soon began to flag.

Huhnhäuser claims he was totally against the demands made by the SS as they had paralysed the process of decision making. If the number of releases was established from the start, what possible criteria could they use for the selection process? Huhnhäuser explained to Ohm that he could no longer cooperate if this was the way things were to be done. Ohm telephoned his superiors and returned with the news that the categories must be adhered to, and that the final deadline remained 10 a.m. on 8 December. This signalled the end of the joint commission. Never again did it meet on this scale. The majority of the NSSF representatives retired to revise their own list. Hoel and Holm, however, went to Quisling to request that he intervene. Although Ohm thought that Terboven would not listen to Quisling, Huhnhäuser recommended that they go anyway, as he wanted to learn what position Quisling had adopted. One hour later Holm returned with the news that Quisling had refused to intervene. Hoel did not return with him, for as he told Huhnhäuser the

following day, he would have to refuse to sit at the negotiating table with Holm any longer. With this he clearly expressed his attitude towards NS — a view he had already shown during the critical period of the October arrests. Hoel felt himself to be solely an agent of the university, and refused to be party to any political selection of the releases as Holm demanded. The rector wanted to help all of those arrested irrespective of political outlook.

The further work of the reduced committee in the following weeks brought proof that the break up of the panel had been beneficial. Holm no longer attended meetings. Hoel, however, could now work on the ever-growing number of petitions at the university and prepare for the meetings thoroughly. He discussed everything in detail with Hagen beforehand. Hagen then used to visit Huhnhäuser before the meetings and draw his attention to the more difficult cases, so that Huhnhäuser could personally take them up. In the meetings Hagen spoke up robustly for the students. The work so suddenly interrupted on the evening of 7 December was continued by the reduced committee later that night till 4 a.m.. The last few hours were spent in Noot's office where new material was produced. Huhnhäuser does not state the specific nature of this material, although it seems probable that it related to the "loyalty" of certain students.

Huhnhäuser later learned that Terboven was behind these events and that he had given the orders to Fehlis. As the number of applications for release grew ever larger, Huhnhäuser believes he must have had second thoughts, and therefore he explained to Fehlis that he would no longer sanction such proposals for release as they were without sufficient foundation. The students were to be categorized into different groups according to their political views. Meanwhile, at the *Reichskommissar's* insistence, a vessel was made available for the first, rushed, deportation of students in Stavern to Germany on 9

December. On board were 291 students, who were sent via Stettin to the SS “education camp” St Andreas in Sennheim, Alsace. Terboven was now able to present a finished act which was difficult to reverse. Huhnhäuser states that the effects of this act were difficult to describe. Those who were convinced of the injustice of the measure, and now had to witness how arbitrarily the deportees were selected, initially lost all desire to continue the work begun on the releases. Hoel, who was still constantly receiving applications for release, asked Huhnhäuser whether there was any point in presenting further petitions. Although the deadline had not been extended, Huhnhäuser nevertheless answered “yes” to his question, for there were at least eight hundred detainees still in Stavern. Huhnhäuser states: “so mußte auf alle Fälle getan werden, was nur getan werden konnte, ohne Rücksicht darauf, ob die Arbeit den von uns beabsichtigen Erfolg hatte oder nicht.” (BFPS, p. 16) Thus the work begun by his department was continued, and this decision was soon proved to have been correct.

There had been a new directive from Berlin — this time not to Terboven but to Fehlis — ordered by Himmler. He had meanwhile been informed of all the details by the *Reichssicherheitshauptamt (Abteilung III)* to whom Noot had sent his report. As a result he arranged to send a telex to Fehlis through the head of the RSHA, Kaltenbrunner, in which he was ordered to carry out no further measures against the students without Kaltenbrunner’s express authorization, and “nur diejenigen Studenten nach Deutschland zu senden, deren Beteiligung an der Brandstiftung erwiesen sei oder aber die dem Täterkreis angehörten” (BFPS, p. 17). Huhnhäuser claims that this second instruction, which certainly also formed the basis of Hitler’s order, went beyond the first and meant, if it were followed exactly, the end of the whole operation. Furthermore, the fact that Fehlis and not Terboven



received the order proved how poorly the latter was regarded at that time.

It was good that in spite of all the setbacks they had not stopped working on the processing of the release petitions, comments Huhnhäuser, for now everything depended on tackling the matter on as large a scale as possible, and, above all, on making quick progress. This change of mood was also felt in Stavern. On 13 December the assistant commandant informed the students that if there were compelling grounds, new petitions for release could be filed. On 14 December a group of 160 students was released and a further 200 two days later; smaller groups were also released in between times. All the releases were on the basis of petitions processed and approved by the commission. In accordance with the orders of the *Reichssicherheitshauptamt*, routine releases were now ordered by the SS on the basis of the material presented by the committee, without the approval of the *Reichskommissar*. However, they still could not act summarily and a report had to be presented on every individual for whom a written or oral request had been submitted. There were still around four to five hundred students in the camp and it would have required a great deal of work if all the petitions were to have been dealt with in this way, even with a large administrative staff.

Huhnhäuser now wondered whether it would be possible, where the *Reichskommissar* was no longer directly involved, to propose large groups of students for release *en bloc*, similar to the suggestion in his report on 4 December to Terboven. He discussed this question with Hoel and several of the professors on 15 December. At the heart of the negotiations stood the question of the summary release of whole groups of students, to be precise, initially all those who only matriculated in autumn 1943, and further, those who were shortly facing exams and who could already be working in their chosen

professions. The rest were to be dealt with individually as before. In general the professors did not appear averse to this plan, as they saw that in this way a larger number of students would immediately be free. A further proposal was then made that the deans should travel to Stavern and speak to the students there. And, finally, Ohm asked that the professors should make special requests to him for the release of individual students. Huhnhäuser expanded upon this suggestion by proposing that the deans might like to ask all members of their own faculty to do the same. Only Monrad-Krohn showed strong reservations about this suggestion. His argument was that the deans could not possibly pick out individual students as this created proscription lists for the others. If it were a matter of initiating a joint action for the medical students, he would willingly be involved. Although Huhnhäuser had no practical objection to this stance, nevertheless he did not agree with it, for in his opinion the main thing was to win the release of as many students as possible. However, he had to admit that he was in a different situation from that of the deans. Hoel agreed with Huhnhäuser on this matter. As the other men needed time to come to a decision, the matter was left with them for further consultation.

That same afternoon Huhnhäuser received a call from Hoel in which he declared himself ready to travel to Stavern and speak to the students. Even Monrad-Krohn expressed no doubts about this plan. Huhnhäuser immediately passed this suggestion on to Ohm. However, he soon learned from Noot that it had been rejected by the *Reichskommissar* personally. Fehlis had been reluctant to take the responsibility upon himself and so had presented the idea to Terboven. He refused immediately, for obvious reasons. This signalled a change for the worse in the situation. Ohm now seized the initiative. On 19 December he went to Stavern to “hear” the students personally and form his own judgement. They were

divided into small groups and asked certain questions which they had to answer immediately. Huhnhäuser gives some examples of these questions, such as: “Are you loyal to the king? Do you want the Bolsheviks to win the war? Do you want the Allies to win the war? What is your attitude to sabotage?” Huhnhäuser discussed this “psychologische Ungeheuerlichkeit” (BFPS, p. 20) later with Noot. He was assured that Ohm had done this with the best of intentions, in order to give as many people as possible the chance for release. Huhnhäuser felt obliged to point out to him that those who had been involved in the interrogations had done the students a very poor service.

Instead of keeping the results of this “törichte Ausfragerei” (BFPS, p. 20) to himself, Ohm informed Fehlis, who in turn presented them to Terboven. He ordered that the “besonders ‘Belasteten’” (BFPS, p. 20) be taken to Grini, the Norwegian concentration camp. Huhnhäuser states that it has since been written in the press that Terboven wanted to have the students shot. This appears highly doubtful to him, for Terboven could no longer afford this kind of interference in the student affair. He had already lost too much of his reputation over what had occurred. At the end of December he even sent a report to Hitler and in it pointed out that the complete release of the students would make his position in Norway untenable, and that German prestige in the country was at stake.

Towards the end of the year there were still around four hundred students in Stavern. It was regrettable, opines Huhnhäuser, that the attempt by Hoel to speak to the students in Stavern and inform them of the address of the deans had failed, for after 19 December there were no more large-scale releases. At Terboven’s urgent petition there was a new order from Hitler at the beginning of January 1944. This instructed that: “alle Studenten, die sich noch in Haft befänden, umgehend nach Deutschland abzutransportieren

seien, und zwar sollten auch sie nach Sennheim gebracht werden.” (BFPS, p. 20) The convoy left on 9 January from Oslo. It did not end in Sennheim as planned, but rather in Buchenwald concentration camp. As a result of an air raid on Berlin, all the files concerning this matter at *Amt IV* of the *Reichssicherheitshauptamt* were destroyed and the official in charge was killed. This caused some confusion as to the intended destination of the students, and consequently they were treated as a normal consignment of prisoners and sent to the concentration camp. Huhnhäuser ends this final chapter with the words: “Freilich ein äußerst peinliches Mißverständnis! Sollte die ganze Aktion vielleicht ein Mißverständnis gewesen sein?” (BFPS, p. 21)

### **Summary: Huhnhäuser in Norway**

This chapter concludes Huhnhäuser’s account of his role in the political events surrounding the struggle for control of education in Norway during the occupation. The independent affidavits testify that Huhnhäuser also took the time and often the considerable trouble to help individual Norwegians, who needed help for a variety of reasons — securing visas for Norwegians who needed medical treatment in Sweden or helping those whose loved ones had been arrested — as well as offering independent confirmation of the importance of Huhnhäuser’s work with regards to the release of the students detained by the Germans and to schools and the university in general. Details of his efforts on behalf of the Norwegians are provided in the five chapters devoted to his time in Norway in the Huhnhäuser archive. Huhnhäuser was instrumental in thwarting the designs of the Department of Sport to gain

control of physical education in schools, which they intended to exploit for the purpose of NS propaganda and the indoctrination of the country's youth. Consequently, Huhnhäuser was active in helping to keep politics out of the schools, and is critical of those who attempt to exploit the school system for political purposes. He is clearly opposed to the politicization of young people. The attack Huhnhäuser makes upon the Hitler Youth is one of the few where he condemns outright an organ of the Nazi state. He comments upon the political folly of introducing a similar organization in Norway, for NS had scarcely two per cent of the population behind them. Perhaps this is because as a teacher, he witnessed at first hand the negative effects of the indoctrination of school pupils by the Hitler Youth, which effectively undermined the authority of the teachers. Huhnhäuser describes how the Hitler Youth also appeared innocuous initially, and promised not to interfere with the societal bonds that influenced its young members already — those of school, church and family. These promises were quickly broken, however, with frightening effect as the organization's leaders, renowned for their fanaticism, soon assumed enormous power over their members, by means of a potent combination of indoctrination and violence. The Nazi contempt for intellectuals, academic study, education and teachers was in stark contrast to Huhnhäuser's own love of learning and pedagogy, upon which the whole of his professional life and some of his greatest achievements were based. Respect for the family, and the importance of family life was also highly valued by Huhnhäuser, and this was another societal tie the Hitler Youth attempted to destroy, in order to win the complete devotion and unquestioning loyalty of German youth.

Due to his extended absence from Norway, caused by his ill health, Huhnhäuser was not involved initially in the *Reglementsstreit*, the delicate negotiations between the NS

government and the university concerning the dispute over the new regulations governing the admissions process into the individual faculties. The aim of NS was to gain gradual control over the university and its administration, as part of Quisling's political goal of a corporate society. However, Huhnhäuser was also aware of Terboven's hostility towards the university, which was clearly illustrated by his actions against the institution during the state of emergency in September 1941. Huhnhäuser claims to have intervened personally on behalf of the rector of the university at that time, Seip, to keep him safe from arrest, and states that it was only his enforced absence which gave Terboven the opportunity to move against Seip. In his affidavit Seip confirms that Huhnhäuser helped the university several times before his arrest, no matter whether the difficulties were "due to the German authorities or to the Norwegian Quislings".<sup>65</sup>

On his return to Norway, Huhnhäuser immediately became involved in the discussions regarding the implementation of the new regulations. When he learned of Quisling's intention to have a number of university professors and students arrested in October 1943, Huhnhäuser intervened in an attempt to prevent this. At his request, Müller, Huhnhäuser's superior, urged Terboven to postpone this action. Although Terboven agreed to this, he changed his mind shortly afterwards and agreed to Quisling's demands that the measure be carried out as planned. It was to Huhnhäuser, and not Minister Skancke, NS head of the Department of Education, who was regarded with deep mistrust by all sides, that Hoel, the rector of the university, turned for help in his attempts to gain the release of those arrested, even though the arrests were a purely Norwegian measure and beyond Huhnhäuser's area of jurisdiction. From this time, Huhnhäuser worked together with Hoel,

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<sup>65</sup> Didrik Arup Seip, affidavit, 5 July 1946.

and several other university professors, in attempting to avoid the worst excesses of Terboven and NS. Furthermore, he asserts that prior to this event, and since Terboven's threats against the university in 1941, he had adopted a policy of not involving or even informing Terboven or his colleagues of any dispute which arose within the university as far as was possible. Hoel claims that it was "especially due to Dr Huhnhauser" that Terboven did not close the university in November 1942.<sup>66</sup> His course of action, which Huhnhauser would undoubtedly describe as "unpolitical", and "professional", shows that he adopted a political stance nevertheless, and that stance was to limit the policy of both the German and Norwegian administrations towards the university.

In the aftermath of the arrests on 30 November, triggered by the arson attack on the university *Aula*, Huhnhauser states that his first reaction was to remain uninvolved in the conflict, for he viewed it as a purely political affair, and he did not want to share any of the responsibility for the arrests. This is typical of his "unpolitical" stance, which he claims is inherent in his nature. His response may also have been influenced by the events surrounding the deportation of the teachers to Kirkenes, for which Huhnhauser feels he received some of the blame, although he claims he had nothing to do with such harsh measures.<sup>67</sup> In any case, Huhnhauser views the action as unfortunate, and the events which ensued as regrettable and grotesque. He decided to become involved after a visit from one of the university professors, who came to seek his help in winning the release of the detainees. Solberg was taking action out of concern for the university and this influenced Huhnhauser to do the same. It was clear to him that lives were at stake and, therefore, he committed himself and his department to direct action on behalf of the detainees and the

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<sup>66</sup> Adolf Hoel, affidavit, 4 June 1946.

university. His later endeavours stand in direct contradiction to his claim that he is “unpolitical”, although Huhnhäuser regards these deeds as purely professional, undertaken solely for the good of the university. Huhnhäuser’s actions concerning the letter from Terboven to Bormann further counteract his claim to be an “unpolitisches Wesen”. He makes copies of this letter, “um auf alle Fälle für später ein eindeutiges Beweisstück dieses unehrlichen und gewissenlosen Spiels mit Menschenleben in der Hand zu haben.” (AF, p. 18) Thus Huhnhäuser compiled evidence against the most powerful civilian in Norway. This was not an “unpolitical” action, for Huhnhäuser’s intention must have been to use the copies of this letter in order to activate other political forces who would stop Terboven from destroying the university.

In his attempt to save as many of the detainees as possible, Huhnhäuser compiled a report on the situation, which incorporated a number of proposals concerning the release of several different categories of students. He presented this report firstly to Fehlis, as head of the *Sicherheitspolizei* in Norway, and then to the *Reichskommissar*. Most of these proposals were rejected. Huhnhäuser’s attempt to win concessions from Terboven towards the university is a further example of a political action. He took the active measure of compiling the report in the hope that it would have influence politically, and made this decision independently. Furthermore, by presenting the case for the implementation of his proposals, the “apolitical” Huhnhäuser made enemies of two very powerful Nazi figures in Norway, who disagreed with the position he held on this political measure. Huhnhäuser could so easily have avoided this conflict, by holding to his original plan and keeping out of the situation entirely. Professionally, the arrests did not directly concern him. However, he

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<sup>67</sup> Letter to Else Huhnhäuser, 8 March 1942.



chose instead to exploit his position, and do his utmost to help the professors and students in their dire situation; by doing so, he involved himself in the politics of occupied Norway and opposed his countrymen and superiors on this issue. Furthermore his criticism of Reinhardt, the “neurasthenic weakling” who played with people’s lives, is also political in content. It is a condemnation of the brutal fanatics produced by the Hitler Youth, who progressed into positions of power beyond this organization in later years.

Huhnhäuser decided his next action should be to inform Himmler of the events concerning the university before the damage became irreversible. He states: “Im übrigen mußte nun gehandelt werden.” (AF, p. 20) This is further illustration of Huhnhäuser’s new-found talent for political intrigue. Huhnhäuser’s actions here show how he becomes more deeply involved in the political conflict in which he has chosen to participate. He has now appealed to an authority outside of Norway, in the hope that Terboven’s superiors will force him to abandon the political measures against the university, with which Huhnhäuser so strongly disagrees. He believes that Terboven has taken the wrong course of action, and has faith that Himmler will agree with this assessment, therefore he is not condemning the actions of the Nazi Party in general, but rather the actions of the Party’s highest representative in Norway. This tactic was unsuccessful, however, due to a communications failure.

Huhnhäuser’s next act was to chair the committee appointed to process the release petitions for the detainees. Huhnhäuser and his colleagues from the *Schulabteilung* worked closely with the representatives from the university, Hoel and Hagen, to win the committee’s approval for the release of as many of the students as possible. When the SS suddenly imposed a deadline upon the processing of the applications for release, the

committee ceased to function in its original form. Huhnhäuser headed a smaller group of committee members who worked until the early hours of the morning to salvage as much as possible from the situation. Even when the first group of students were deported to Germany, it was Huhnhäuser who insisted that the work already begun on the processing of the releases must continue. This proved to be a very fortunate decision, as hundreds of students were released in the days which followed. However, Huhnhäuser believes that some of their valuable work was undone unintentionally by the “foolish” questioning of the remaining students in Stavern by Ohm. Huhnhäuser was dismayed by Ohm’s course of action. The situation worsened further when Fehlis and Terboven were informed of the results of the interrogation, and as a result there were no further large-scale releases from that time. Consequently, although Huhnhäuser and the committee were not able to save all of the students, his active political involvement prevented hundreds of others from dying in a concentration camp. He was also partly responsible for the fact that the university was allowed to continue with its scientific research, and that the buildings were not commandeered by the Germans.

Huhnhäuser’s closing comment, and play with words, “Freilich ein äußerst peinliches Mißverständnis! Sollte die ganze Aktion vielleicht ein Mißverständnis gewesen sein?” (BFPS, p. 21) is a reference to his personal opinion of the *Reichskommissar*’s actions towards the university. It is clear he considers Terboven to have committed a grave error by ordering the mass arrests and closure of the university, and believes that there was no justification for these measures. Huhnhäuser exploited his position as head of the *Schulabteilung* in the *Reichskommissariat* to fight what he regarded as the injustices perpetrated upon the university and its staff and students by the Nazi regime in Norway. He

remained pragmatic and objective throughout the conflict. He did not regard his actions as political; instead he considered his motivation to be combatting the effects of Terboven's harsh and brutal tactics, saving the lives of the students arrested, and saving the university from absolute closure. In reality, however, Huhnhäuser not only volunteered to lead complex political negotiations, but also committed independent political actions which were intended to influence or even thwart the policy of the *Reichskommissariat* concerning the university. He was prepared to put himself at risk in order to defend those he regarded as victims of injustice, even coming into open conflict with his superiors. As a result, this "unpolitisches Wesen" played a small but significant role in shaping the political events which affected the lives of thousands of individuals in occupied Norway.

### **The Political Memoirs of an "Unpolitical" German**

The material in this part of the archive differs greatly in style and content from Huhnhäuser's autobiographical memoirs concerning his life until 1928, which he intended to have published under the title *Aus einem reichen Leben*.<sup>68</sup> These memoirs cover the events in his personal and professional life until his early forties. Huhnhäuser describes in the greatest detail his feelings and emotions during the various traumatic and eventful periods of his life in these memoirs. He details the course of personal relationships with family, friends and colleagues, and highlights the various stages in his career, both the successes and the setbacks, concentrating particularly upon his experiences as a headmaster. He also outlines

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<sup>68</sup> Interview with the late Alexander Peden, 17 October 1995.

his growing awareness of art, literature and music and describes how his knowledge in these areas developed. In short, the memoirs contained within *Aus einem reichen Leben* are highly subjective, occasionally sentimental, and are a fascinating socio-historical insight into the experiences of one “ordinary” citizen during some of the most tumultuous periods of German history.

In contrast to this, however, the section of the archive dealing with Norway is far more objective. It too was written with a view to publication, but it has a very different purpose. Huhnhäuser was cooperating on this project with Didrik Arup Seip, and he appears to be writing primarily for a Norwegian, and possibly also a German, audience. For the Norwegians in particular, in 1947 the events of the occupation and the actions of those in power at that time would still be a burning and emotive issue. It is an indication of the respect in which Huhnhäuser was held that he was asked to cooperate on such a project in the immediate post-war period, when anti-German feelings were running very high.

Huhnhäuser is no longer writing as an “ordinary” citizen who reacts to world events as they affect his own life. He is now on the world stage, admittedly a bit-part actor, leaving the starring roles to men such as Quisling and Terboven; nevertheless, the part he plays is crucial to the fate of hundreds of Norwegians. He saves hundreds from near-certain death in a German concentration camp. He prevents Seip’s arrest before September 1941 and the closure of the university and the college in Trondheim in November 1942, not to mention attempting to alleviate the suffering and misery of various other individuals. Thus, he is now influencing political events, rather than merely being influenced by them. The main function of this material, therefore, is to provide an historical account of the political events concerning the education system in Norway, but this historical account is written with an

autobiographical slant. Huhnhäuser is offering his account of this historical period, based on his own analysis of his personal experiences. The material focuses predominantly upon the events in which Huhnhäuser was directly involved. The events in which he was not involved are outlined in order that the reader understand the context in which Huhnhäuser acts, when he does later intervene. Huhnhäuser deals solely with the events directly concerning the university, or in the case of school sports, Norway's schools, and does not mention the numerous acts of kindness he performed for a number of individuals in cases unrelated to his professional work, nor does he mention that he sometimes put himself at risk by helping these people. Therefore, the account is clearly not intended to be purely autobiographical, and deals instead with political events. Unlike the memoirs, there is nothing personal in these chapters, no references to family and friends for example. The style is authoritative and objective. He refers to other historical sources, either using his own evidence to dispute their claims, or citing them to support his own argument. Thus, he is concerned with the validity and the authenticity of his account, and of the claims of others. He seems concerned that the "truth" be known, and the lies and misconceptions be discredited. In this respect, the chapters on Norway are very much a historical account, and not concerned with an autobiographical portrayal of Huhnhäuser's role.

It is extremely interesting that Huhnhäuser does not write about the events leading up to the deportation of some five hundred teachers to Kirkenes in April 1942. Letters written to his wife during that period prove he was involved professionally in the teachers' dispute, although he states in his written account that he disapproved of the measures taken against the teachers, and that he was not informed of the deportations until after they had taken place (AF, p. 10). He complains to his wife that he is afraid that he will be blamed for

the situation,<sup>69</sup> and yet he does not use this excellent opportunity to set the record straight by telling his version of events. As head of the *Schulabteilung* in the *Reichskommissariat*, the conflict with the teachers must have dominated his work there for several months at least, and indeed he refers to the dispute frequently in his letters to his wife (unfortunately not in detail, although this is most probably due to the censorship in operation during this period). Despite this, there is merely one brief reference to the deportations in the five chapters he writes on the political events in occupied Norway (AF, p. 10). This begs the question, why is such an important event in this history of occupied Norway neglected in these chapters? There are a number of possible explanations. It was perhaps simply the case that Seip requested that Huhnhäuser write only of the events concerning the university, and the struggle for control of sport in the schools. Seip may have decided that someone else should deal with the teachers' struggle, a major political conflict, perhaps even one of the actual deportees. Another possible reason is that Huhnhäuser may have made a grave error in his handling of the situation. He may have felt that he had unwittingly caused Terboven to become involved, for example, and blame himself partly for what followed as a result.<sup>70</sup> Or, he may have believed that he should have prevented Skancke and NS from provoking this dispute. It also appears likely that the teachers' conflict was a major factor in the disintegration of the professional relationship between Huhnhäuser and Skancke, but the actual reasons for this breakdown are never explained. Thus, this omission leaves many fascinating questions unanswered. Does Huhnhäuser neglect this extremely significant struggle between NS and the Germans, on one hand, and ordinary Norwegian professionals,

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<sup>69</sup> Letters to Else Huhnhäuser, 8 and 9 March 1942.

<sup>70</sup> He appears to suggest something along these lines to his wife. Letter to Else Huhnhäuser, 9 March 1942.

on the other, purely in order to concentrate on other equally important political disputes, in which he was also involved? Perhaps his motivation is more selfish, and the fact is that this is a period of which he simply does not want to be reminded, because he is ashamed of or dissatisfied with his conduct. However, whilst speculating on the reason, it must not be forgotten that Huhnhäuser was provided with affidavits from two Norwegian headmasters. It is likely, therefore, that Huhnhäuser is telling the truth when he states that he was not involved in the harsh measures taken to punish the teachers who resisted NS attempts to force them to indoctrinate their pupils, by teaching national socialist propaganda in the classroom.

In conclusion, the Norwegian section of the Huhnhäuser archive provides us with a somewhat different picture of the man from that portrayed in the autobiographical memoirs. Huhnhäuser is not the main focus of these chapters; instead he plays a subordinate role to the events he is describing, unlike in the autobiographical memoirs which focus directly upon him. In the autobiographical memoirs there is little supporting evidence from other sources to confirm the accuracy of Huhnhäuser's portrayal of the events he details, or of his own character. The affidavits, however, provide objective testimonies which corroborate the truth of Huhnhäuser's account in the Norwegian chapters of the political struggles in which he was involved, and of his own efforts to solve the conflicts which arose. Furthermore, the affidavits also offer a wealth of detail on the man himself. There are many comments relating to Huhnhäuser's character and attitudes; in the seventeen statements he is described as others see him, and not as he perceives himself to be. The fact that the affidavits substantiate Huhnhäuser's depiction of what occurred during the occupation, and his own actions during that same period, support the view that Huhnhäuser is writing

is writing honestly and objectively, and does not exploit the written word for his own aims.

It is clear from what Huhnhäuser writes in the chapters on Norway that he was not in step with the thinking of the Nazi hierarchy, and yet it must not be forgotten that he was a Nazi Party member in a senior administrative position, who was on sufficiently friendly terms with Terboven to be given a puppy by the *Reichskommissar* as a birthday gift in 1943. In respect of his political status, the contents of the affidavits are extremely interesting. The Norwegians who provided these testimonies on his behalf appear to have thought of him as out of tune with National Socialist ideology. They regarded him instead as a “pre-war” German, a typical old-fashioned German pedagogue belonging to a type found more commonly before the Nazi *Machtergreifung*.<sup>71</sup> It is also stated in the affidavits that Huhnhäuser was “unpolitical”,<sup>72</sup> and that he placed professional considerations above all else,<sup>73</sup> thus mirroring exactly Huhnhäuser’s perception of himself. Furthermore there is a reference in one of the affidavits that Huhnhäuser was well-known in the *Reichskommissariat* for his “moderate view”.<sup>74</sup> Consequently, it would appear that whilst technically a Party member, Huhnhäuser was viewed by both Norwegians and Germans as differing from most of his countrymen in his political outlook. Huhnhäuser is cited in the affidavits as having stated that he was fighting a war “on two fronts” against NS officials on one hand, and his own side, the *Reichskommissariat*, on the other.<sup>75</sup> He sided with the Norwegians on moral grounds, and took their part in any disputes which arose. As a result, Huhnhäuser was able to win the respect of the Norwegians who came into contact with

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<sup>71</sup> Poul Heegaard, B. Brinck Lund, affidavits, 27 May 1946.

<sup>72</sup> Heegaard, affidavit, 27 May 1946.

<sup>73</sup> Asbjörn Hagen, affidavit, 17 June 1946.

<sup>74</sup> Hagen, see above.

<sup>75</sup> Fr. Johannessen, affidavit, 19 June 1946.



him; so much so, that they were willing to offer him food and shelter after the war, and to provide these affidavits in order to facilitate his attempt to come to Britain.

One of the reasons why Huhnhäuser gained so much respect amongst the Norwegians was that he did not discriminate politically when helping those in trouble. Thus, he was prepared to assist even the enemies of the Reich, or their family and friends when he was requested to do so. The affidavits and the chapters on Norway provide some evidence that Huhnhäuser displayed no political bias or selection towards Norwegians who opposed the German occupying forces, consequently placing himself at some considerable risk.<sup>76</sup> Frequently he overstepped his area of authority in order to help individuals in any feasible way he could. The affidavits portray the actions of a very humane, unselfish man, whose primary concern was to save lives and alleviate suffering wherever possible. However, they do not portray an “unpolitical” man, merely a man who describes himself as unpolitical. The actions of Huhnhäuser are political, for they are committed with the intention of opposing Terboven’s political tactics in Norway, and Huhnhäuser is not averse to using political channels in an attempt to achieve the end he desires. Thus, the “unpolitical” Huhnhäuser reveals himself as a shrewd political operator when put to the test, although he does not consider that his actions are anything other than professional.

Finally there is no trace of the sentimental family man in these chapters, no mention of literature, or music, or academic study, all of which are familiar themes in the autobiographical memoirs. In *Aus einem reichen Leben* we are presented also with a “pre-war German”, who seems almost happier in the world of learning than in the harsh world of reality. However, the “pre-war German” of the *Kaiserreich* and the Weimar years, reveals

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<sup>76</sup> Fr. Johannessen, affidavit, 19 June 1946; Mary Kielland, affidavit, 3 October 1946.

himself to be a decisive, pragmatic, shrewd man, who shows both great courage and strength of character when he is thrust, reluctantly, onto the world-stage in wartime. In occupied Norway he chooses to play a very demanding, and unusual, role in a complex political drama. Perhaps Huhnhäuser would even prefer to describe it as a tragedy.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

### 1950 —The Final Year

#### Introduction

This last chapter of the thesis is based upon correspondence written by Huhn­häuser and Melms to each other and to their daughter Heidi and son-in-law Alexander Peden. Details of what happened to the Huhn­häuser in the previous years are sketchy. Melms arrived in Flensburg via a transit camp in the autumn of 1947.<sup>1</sup> It seems logical to suppose that she moved there from Denmark, given Flensburg's proximity to the Danish border. It appears that following his release from prison, Huhn­häuser travelled directly to Saltend, Hull to stay with Heidi and Alexander Peden. He and Melms were not together for the New Year of 1949, but Melms must have joined him there later because both left Heidi in Saltend on 10 February and returned to Flensburg on 12 February 1949: "Wie viel an Erlebnissen hat uns doch dieses erste, gemeinsame Jahr in Deutschland gebracht."<sup>2</sup> The first letter from this period is dated 29 May 1949, when Huhn­häuser travelled to a conference in Bad Boll. There are five letters dating from the trip, written between 29 May and 2 June 1949. There is then a gap of seven months until the next letter extant in this section of the archive. The Huhn­häuser's last eighteen months together in Germany can be divided into three distinct phases. Firstly, there is the time they spent together in Flensburg, where they made their home following their return to Germany. Secondly, there is the brief period from 31 January to 23 March during which Huhn­häuser moved to Neustadt to begin working as an arts reviewer for the newspaper *Rheinpfalz*. Finally, the couple spent nine months together in their new home in Hambach before Huhn­häuser's death on 23 December 1950.

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<sup>1</sup> Letter from Else Huhn­häuser to Heidi Peden, 23 March 1950.

## Flensburg

As previously stated, the first letters from this period are written by Huhnhäuser to his wife, describing his trip to Bad Boll, where he gave a paper at a conference. His description of the journey includes references to the decline in the German railways: "Jaja, was ist aus unserer schönen Bahn geworden!"<sup>3</sup> Everything was missing from the toilets, including the toilet seat, the previously comfortable compartments had been stripped bare and the windows were draughty. Huhnhäuser comments on the sight of black American soldiers in the American zone: "Eigenartig muteten die schwarzen Amerikaner auf dem Bahnhof in Stuttgart und Frkt an. So steht die Welt auf dem Kopf, und Asien und Afrika sind im Anmarsch. Armes Europa!"<sup>4</sup> Thus, Huhnhäuser's tendency to comment upon racial appearance has not lessened with the passing of time, and his belief in the cultural superiority of the North Europeans would appear still to be firmly held. (He comments also on the people of Neustadt: "Der Menschenschlag ähnelt dem Koblenzer. Welch ein äußerlicher Unterschied zu dem schönen Schleswig-holsteiner Typ. Aber die Leute scheinen freundlich und entgegenkommend zu sein."<sup>5</sup>) The conference Huhnhäuser was attending had been organized by the Protestant Church, but there is no indication of the topic upon which he spoke. It is clear from his letters, however, that he had been trying to get a job with the church authorities, but that there had been no suitable vacancy. He met *Oberkirchenrat* Ranke at the conference, who advised him that he should speak to another *Oberkirchenrat* called Sauter, because the fact that he was now receiving a pension meant

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<sup>2</sup> Letter from Huhnhäuser to Else Huhnhäuser, 8 February 1950.

<sup>3</sup> Letter from Huhnhäuser to Else Huhnhäuser, 29 April 1949.

<sup>4</sup> Letter from Huhnhäuser to Else Huhnhäuser, 29 May 1949.

that his circumstances had changed and this might help his job prospects. However, he is then advised by a *Ministerialrat* Löffler that there would be little point in this at the moment as the outcome was unlikely to be positive. This was perhaps for the best, for Huhnhäuser confides to Melms that although the majority of the men he met there were all of good character, he had felt as if he were “in einer anderen, mir völlig fremden Welt [...] in der ich mich nicht zurechtfinden konnte.” The reason for this was that he did not share their faith. “Ich fühlte mich beschämt vor diesen in sich (oder besser gesagt in Gott) ruhenden Menschen, und andererseits hatte ich das Gefühl, daß ich doch den Weg zu ihnen kaum je finden könnte. So stand ich eigentlich als ein *outsider* unter ihnen.”<sup>6</sup> Thus, it was partly for this reason that Huhnhäuser did not go to see Sauter. He felt that they considered him an “Ungläubiger”, which made it impossible for him to work alongside them. “Wie aber kann man dann bei ihnen arbeiten? So tun als ob? Das würde ich nie können.” His next destination was Neustadt, where he was going to investigate the possibilities of writing for the *Rheinpfalz*. He states the importance of remaining true to oneself, an illustration of the strict principles by which Huhnhäuser lived his life, sometimes even at a cost to himself: “Was dort auf mich wartet, weiß ich nicht, aber auch dort will ich nichts unternehmen, was einen inneren Bruch bedeuten könnte. Alte Bäume lassen sich schlecht zurechtbiegen und beschneidet man sie zu stark, so können sie gar zu leicht verbluten.”<sup>7</sup> This raises the question of whether Huhnhäuser was able to maintain this stance in the years between 1933 and 1945. Did he find a way to justify his actions to himself, or did he have no moral qualms about his decision to join the NSDAP and support the National Socialist regime? The evidence from Norway suggests that this was not so. Did he, therefore, feel during that period that he had compromised his inner nature many times?

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<sup>5</sup> Letter from Huhnhäuser to Else Huhnhäuser, 4 February 1950.

<sup>6</sup> Letter from Huhnhäuser to Else Huhnhäuser, 1 June 1949.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

At that time, the *Rheinfalz* was the largest newspaper in the area. It sold around 200 000 copies per issue, had 170 000 subscribers and was independent, with no political affiliations. Huhnhäuser was very impressed with his reception there, especially from Dr Meyer, the newspaper's political editor, who was to prove to be a very good friend in the months ahead. At some point during the next seven months, Huhnhäuser made the decision to go and work there.

In the letters which Huhnhäuser and Melms wrote to Heidi and Alexander Peden, clothing, food, rationing and the high prices of everyday basic commodities are constantly recurring themes. The difficulties of everyday life are clear. Heidi and Alexander often sent them parcels of food and material. There was a *Tauschzentrale* for selling unwanted clothes and occasional shortages of basic foodstuffs, such as sugar. The letters illustrate starkly to the modern reader how bleak life in Germany was in the immediate post-war period, but also chart the gradual improvement in living conditions. On the first New Year's Eve Huhnhäuser and Melms had spent together for six years, Huhnhäuser was moved to reflect upon his life, just as he did on New Year's Eve 1945 when he was in prison in Norway. He writes:

Wir werden still beieinander sein und unsere Gedanken zu unsern Lieben senden und auch einen Blick in die ferne und nähere Vergangenheit tun. – 50 Jahre sind eine ganze Zeit. Wie gut kann ich mich noch auf den Anfang dieses Jahrhunderts besinnen! Damals lebten Vater und Großmutter noch. Es war ihr letztes Silvester und wenigstens bei meinem Vater konnte man böse Vorahnungen spüren. Damals stellte er an mich das Ansinnen, von der Schule abzugehen und Maschinenbauer zu werden. Am 18. Februar starb meine Großmutter und am 17. Mai folgte ihr mein Vater, und dann kamen die schweren Lehrjahre in der Fremde, fast vier lange Jahre mit wenig Freuden. Ein Einschnitt kam 1903 auf 1904. Da kehrte ich in die Heimat zurück und fing wieder von vorn auf der Schule an. Ein schweres, aufreibendes Jahr folgte, und Weihnachten standen wir wieder an einer Totenbahre. Meine jüngste Schwester verließ uns für immer am ersten Weihnachtstag. Aber es folgten auch wieder schöne Tage, die letzten sorglosen Jahre auf der Schule und dann die Studentenzeit, besonders die

Jahre von 1908 bis 12 in Rostock, verklärt durch Mutti, mit der ich mich im Januar 1909 verlobte. 1913 bedeutete die Krönung, als wir im Mai unser eigenes Nest bauten. Krieg, der, wenn man es recht besieht, bis heute angehalten hat. Zwei Ereignisse in diesen ersten Jahren ließen uns noch einmal alles Glück erleben, Deine Geburt, mein Wiesching, und anderthalb Jahre später Ingelis. Und als dann der Krieg äußerlich zu Ende war, kamen die schönen unvergeßlichen Jahre Eurer Kindheit, zuerst in Rostock und dann in Neukloster. Was dann weiter geschah, weißt du ja so gut wie wir. Und welcher Tag wäre wohl besser geeignet, eine Rückschau über alle glücklichen Stunden zu halten als der heutige. Aber er wird uns auch an die Vergänglichkeit alles Irdischen gemahnen, wenn wir an die traurigen Zeiten denken, in denen sich unser Ingekind zum Aufbruch rüstete. Es ist mein bestimmter Glaube, daß sie oft um uns gewesen ist und teilgenommen hat an unsern Leiden und Freuden. Ja, mein Wiesching, das sind so einige Betrachtungen zum heutigen Jahresschluß. Uns hat dieses letzte Jahr ja ein gutes Stück voran gebracht, wenn ich an die Zeit vor einem Jahr denke, und darum wollen wir dankbar dieses Jahr verklingen lassen. Den Höhepunkt bedeutete Euer Besuch im Herbst.

Und nun steht etwas Neues vor uns, und bald werden wir wieder den Wanderstab ergreifen und in eine ganz neue unbekannte Landschaft ziehen. Möchte sich auch dort alles zum Guten wenden! Im Hintergrunde steht dann wieder die Vorfreude auf Euren Sommerbesuch. Davon sprechen wir schon jetzt.<sup>8</sup>

It is perhaps more for his own pleasure than for the benefit of his daughter that Huhnhäuser gives this summary of the family history, for much if not all of it must surely have been familiar to her. Unfortunately for the archivist, this historical overview does not give any new information that might help to fill in the gaps of the years missing from the archive. It does, however, help to confirm the dates of certain events.

The political situation in Berlin in early 1950 was causing the Huhnhäusers considerable problems. They were trying to arrange for the transportation of their remaining possessions in Frohnau, their former home before they went to work in Scandinavia. The furniture was badly damaged and there was a possibility that the Russians would not allow it out of the zone anyway. The cost of such a transportation was

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<sup>8</sup> Letter from Huhnhäuser to Heidi and Alexander Peden, 31 December 1949.

also worrying them greatly.<sup>9</sup> Huhnhäuser and Melms were very concerned about money and feared the uncertainty surrounding his move to Neustadt. As Melms explains to Heidi:

Du freust dich sehr über N., ja, das tun wir wohl auch, aber der Anfang ist schwer für uns alte Leute und da die Pension wohl noch lange nicht erhöht wird, so ist Väti ja vorläufig vom Verlag abhängig und da er keinen schriftlichen Vertrag hat, so können sie ihn, wenn er nicht einschlägt, leicht an die Luft setzen, und ich bin dann meine feste Stelle los für immer, denn in meinem Alter nimmt mich keiner mehr.<sup>10</sup>

Huhnhäuser was in receipt of a *Flüchtlingspension* in Flensburg but this was clearly a very small amount and there was little chance that it would be increased. It is clear from the letters that many of their friends and acquaintances were also having to survive on far less money than they were used to, such as Melms' former boss and his wife: "Er ist so stumpf geworden in letzter Zeit und sie so giftig, weil sie nun so wenig Geld haben." Any hopes that the pension might be increased appear to have been without foundation: "der Staat ist zu pleite, es ist sehr unangenehm und sehr ungerecht, aber wir sind ja machtlos und müssen noch dankbar sein, daß wir nicht in der russ. Zone leben."<sup>11</sup>

### Neustadt/ Hambach

When Huhnhäuser moved from Flensburg he stayed initially with Dr Meyer in Neustadt, where the *Rheinpfalz* had its local office, and had planned to rent a furnished room until the house in Hambach where they were going to live was ready. However, he had to move

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<sup>9</sup> Letter from Huhnhäuser to Heidi and Alexander Peden, 4 January 1950. The furniture finally arrived in Hambach on 19 April 1950 in poor condition. The total transportation costs were DM 1002,50. This was more economical than buying new furniture according to Melms.

<sup>10</sup> Letter from Else Huhnhäuser to Heidi Peden, 8 January 1950.



into the new house around six weeks earlier than he had planned. His landlord informed him on 12 February that if he did not move in immediately the house would be reallocated by the town council to one of the eighty refugee families who were due to arrive any day from Bavaria.<sup>12</sup> His attitude to starting afresh is very positive, or at least he wishes Heidi to believe so: “Es ist eigentlich herrlich, noch einmal in seinem Leben mit fast nichts beginnen zu können. Das gibt neuen Lebensmut und stärkt die Kräfte. Nichts ist erschlaffender als die Behaglichkeit!”<sup>13</sup>

Huhnhäuser’s move to Neustadt affected the amount of pension he received each month, for these matters were regulated by the individual *Länder* at that time and not the state.<sup>14</sup> He explains to Heidi that in Flensburg he received DM 300 per month, and that he had been guaranteed at least that sum but is hoping for more because he is actually entitled to a net amount of at least DM 600. However, his hopes of receiving an increased pension in Hambach appear to have been disappointed and on 14 November he writes: “Nur die ersehnte Pension will nicht kommen. Man läßt uns weiter zappeln.”<sup>15</sup> In December they received visitors, the Maywalds, who had come recently from the East and settled in Nordrheinwestfalen. Dr Maywald was paid his full pension of DM 600 there, and Melms writes: “es ist doch doppelt bitter, daß Väti hier mit DM 270 sitzen muß.”<sup>16</sup> They had contacted many officials in the hope that the pension would be increased, but all in vain.

Huhnhäuser was paid a fixed monthly salary of DM 250 by the *Rheinpfalz*, regardless of how little he wrote. His pieces were given a monetary value, for example a large essay was worth DM 100, a commentary DM 25, a review of a novel DM 20. If,

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<sup>11</sup> Letter from Else Huhnhäuser to Heidi Peden, 8 January 1950.

<sup>12</sup> Letter from Huhnhäuser to Else Huhnhäuser, 12 February 1950.

<sup>13</sup> Letter from Huhnhäuser to Heidi Peden, 14 February 1950.

<sup>14</sup> Letter from Else Huhnhäuser to Heidi Peden, 7 October 1950.

<sup>15</sup> Letter from Else Huhnhäuser to Heidi Peden, postscript by Huhnhäuser, 14 November 1950.

<sup>16</sup> Letter from Else Huhnhäuser to Heidi Peden, 2 December 1950.

therefore, at the end of the month it was calculated that he had written more than DM 250 worth of articles, he would be paid the difference. He also reckoned that he would soon be receiving DM 100 per month from the publisher Erich Herbst, presumably payment for the history book upon which he was working.<sup>17</sup> The Huhnhäusers had known Herbst, whose company, Diesterweg, had published some of Huhnhäuser's works, since 1925. Herbst was a very good friend and came to visit them in Hambach several times. By August his heavy workload appeared to be becoming a strain for Huhnhäuser, who had little time to write to Heidi and Alexander because of this. However, by November the book was finished and the Huhnhäusers were hoping that the royalties would supplement their income.<sup>18</sup> At Huhnhäuser's request, Heidi and Alexander both wrote articles on life in Great Britain for the *Rheinpfalz*.

One of Huhnhäuser's first articles for the paper, which was published in mid-February 1950, was a review of Knut Hamsun's *Pa giengrodde Stier*, illustrating that his interest in things Norwegian survived his experience of imprisonment there after the war: "Ich habe ihn mit Verehrung und innerer Anteilnahme geschrieben."<sup>19</sup> By 4 March 1950, Huhnhäuser tells Heidi that he has written reviews of six novels and seven periodicals, an essay on Sven Hedin, the article on Hamsun and four commentaries on current affairs which had not yet been printed. In October Melms began work on translating a children's story by Marie Hamsun, and in November Huhnhäuser reviewed this story for the paper. By December Huhnhäuser was working on an old manuscript of Professor Maybaum's, a work covering the period of the Reformation to the Thirty Years War.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Letter from Huhnhäuser to Else Huhnhäuser, 28 February 1950.

<sup>18</sup> Letter from Else Huhnhäuser to Heidi Peden, postscript by Huhnhäuser, 21 November 1950.

<sup>19</sup> Letter from Huhnhäuser to Else Huhnhäuser, 7 February 1950.

<sup>20</sup> Letter from Else Huhnhäuser to Heidi Peden, 9 December 1950. This is perhaps the same Professor Maybaum who was a *Landesschulrat* in Mecklenburg after the First World War. See Chapter Five, "Direktor".

The income from the house they owned in Rostock was denied to them by the political situation.

Heute teilte uns Omi mit, daß sie nun ein Sperrkonto für das Geld unseres Hauses einrichten soll u. wir also sonst gar keine Verfügung mehr darüber haben. Nun, es hilft ja nicht, wir werden doch alles verlieren, was in der russ. Zone liegt, aber traurig ist es. Omi will noch zu einem Rechtsanwalt gehen u. versuchen, ob man etwas machen kann.<sup>21</sup>

Shortly afterwards they decided that the best way to proceed was to place all income from the house at Omi's disposal, for they could not get the money out of the zone. They hoped that Omi (Melms' stepmother) would use some of the money to buy things for them and send them over.

Huhnhäuser and Melms express great mistrust of the Russians and initially claim that they will never enter the Russian zone. This stance softens a little, however, when Melms says that she will travel into the zone if others are with her: "Väti sagt auch, nur nicht allein."<sup>22</sup> They seem to fear that Huhnhäuser will be in danger if he enters the zone and they are extremely offended and appalled when others suggest that they should return to Rostock to live. Huhnhäuser's nephew Hans Jochen returned there after the war, which caused a rift within the family. When Hans Jochen invited Huhnhäuser to visit, Melms writes to Heidi that his letters makes her sick. "Entweder ist er ein Idiot oder ein völlig gedankenloser Schwätzer. Er müßte ja wissen, daß V. nie in die Zone einreisen kann. Wenn man einreisen will, muß man erst eine Aufenthaltsgenehmigung von dort beibringen." She explains how she has arranged for *Omi* to get her the necessary travel documentation from the *Oberbürgermeister* in Rostock. "Dort wird dann erst in den Karteien nachgesehen, wer man ist u.s.w., sie soll sagen, ich sei die Frau eines pens.

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<sup>21</sup> Letter from Else Huhnhäuser to Heidi Peden, 11 September 1950.

Studienrats.” With the correct documentation Melms can then obtain a pass that will allow her to travel between the zones and visit Berlin and then Rostock: “Ob ich dies letztere kann und will, weiß ich noch nicht, es hängt von vielem ab, so gern ich auch diese wohl letzte Gelegenheit wahrnehmen möchte.”<sup>23</sup> Melms also expresses the desire to bring Inge’s ashes back from Berlin, “denn Berlin ist doch verloren. Ich habe das Gefühl.”<sup>24</sup> She comments on the increasing tension between the Russians and the U.S.: “Na, es ist alles so verrückt u. die Menschheit wohl reif für die Wasserstoffbombe. Schade, daß es so viele Unschuldige trifft.”<sup>25</sup> Whether she felt the same compassion for the innocent who were swept aside by the German tyranny is a question which will never be answered. She then recounts stories she has heard about life in Schwerin:

Es ist toll wie die Menschen bespitzelt werden. Die Lehrer müssen alle in der SED sein, sonst haben sie die Hölle. Übrigens muß man in Briefen sehr vorsichtig sein, nichts über Politik, bitte denke auch daran, wenn du schreibst. Der Druck wird immer stärker, ein Wort gegen das Regime u. du verschwindest, gen Osten. Davon mündlich mehr.<sup>26</sup>

The rift with Hans Jochen intensified over time. He failed to respond to repeated requests to send Huhnhäuser a history book, which seems to have been very important to his work at that time. Melms writes bitterly: “Er wird natürlich als Lehrer besonders bespitzelt, aber natürlich ist er in der Partei.”<sup>27</sup> When she is planning her journey to Rostock, Melms tells Heidi that she will be wearing her oldest clothes and carrying only food and a toothbrush, such is her obvious distrust of the authorities in the Russian zone.<sup>28</sup> Once there she found that living conditions had improved and most goods were readily available, if not in the

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<sup>22</sup> Letter from Else Huhnhäuser to Heidi Peden, 2 February 1950.

<sup>23</sup> Letter from Else Huhnhäuser to Heidi Peden, 14 February 1950.

<sup>24</sup> Letter from Else Huhnhäuser to Heidi Peden, 2 February 1950.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Letter from Else Huhnhäuser to Heidi Peden, 25 February 1950.

<sup>27</sup> Letter from Else Huhnhäuser to Heidi Peden, 12 March 1950.

shops, then on the black market. She was glad to return after three days for: “es ist nicht mehr die alte Moltkestr., man fühlt sich nicht mehr wohl in dem Milieu.”<sup>29</sup> Meanwhile, the ill feeling towards Hans Jochen escalated to the point where Huhnhäuser refused to accept his letters.

Huhnhäuser talks of politics when he mentions that he and Melms attended a meeting addressed by the *Bundespräsident*, Professor Heuss.

Es war ein Erlebnis wie seinerzeit in Koblenz, als wir Hindenburg in der Festhalle hörten. Der Mann machte einen sehr sympathischen abgeklärten Eindruck, ein guter Repräsentant des neuen Deutschlands. Augenblicklich beherrscht ja die Saarfrage die ganze Politik. Nach meiner Auffassung tut man dem neuen Europagedanken keinen Gefallen, wenn man wieder mit Annektionen beginnt. Das ruft nur die nationalen Geister auf den Plan. Man sollte alle diese großen Industrieunternehmungen, wie Ruhr, Saar, die lothringischen Erzgruben, auch die englischen Bergwerke unter eine internationale Kontrolle, in diesem Falle eine westeuropäische Kontrolle stellen, denn mit einer Einteilung in Sieger und Besiegte, kommen wir nie zu einem geeinten Europa. Die Sanktionierung der Saarwegnahme bedeutet auch die Sanktionierung des Raubes der deutschen Ostgebiete durch Polen und Rußland.<sup>30</sup>

He repeats such sentiments later on: “Es kann doch nicht alles auf unsere Kosten gehen, wenn wir auch den Krieg verloren haben.”<sup>31</sup> He does not mention politics very often, but does refer to the Hedler affair<sup>32</sup> and comments on how all sides are behaving stupidly: “Was sind wir doch für unkluge Tolpatsche!”<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Letter from Else Huhnhäuser to Heidi Peden, 3 March 1950.

<sup>29</sup> Letter from Else Huhnhäuser to Heidi Peden, 18 March 1950.

<sup>30</sup> Letter from Huhnhäuser to Heidi Peden, 20 January 1950.

<sup>31</sup> Letter from Huhnhäuser to Heidi Peden, 4 March 1950.

<sup>32</sup> Huhnhäuser is probably referring to Wolfgang Hedler, who in 1950 founded the right-wing youth group *Deutschen Reichsjugend* (DRJ), which was similar to the *Pimpfen* of the Third Reich. Cited from *Die Bundesrepublik in der Ära Adenauer 1949-1963*, ed. by Hans Dollinger (München: Kurt Desch, 1966), p. 243.

<sup>33</sup> Letter from Huhnhäuser to Else Huhnhäuser, 17 February 1950.

There is a break in the correspondence between mid-May and 2 July, which is explained by the fact that Heidi and Alexander Peden were visiting the Huhnhäusers during that time. When the correspondence begins again, the theme of the letters is frequently the bounteous harvest of fruit that the trees in their garden have produced. Melms tells Heidi that the only thing she has to buy from the greengrocer's is potatoes.

The conflict in Korea caused the Huhnhäusers fresh anxiety and in July Melms tells Heidi that she and Alexander must leave Saltend immediately if war breaks out, and come to Germany.<sup>34</sup> Huhnhäuser's colleague and friend from the *Rheinpfalz*, Dr Meyer, talked of escaping to a Jesuit monastery in Switzerland if the Russians should invade. Melms reports that Peggy McLellan, a friend of Heidi and Alexander's, who visited the Huhnhäusers, wrote that she would be there on the 25 August "falls Stalin nicht anfängt zu schießen, in welchem Falle wir packen sollen u. auf nach Schottland." Melms comments: "Na, so schnell wird es wohl nicht losgehen u. hoffentlich überhaupt nicht, ich gehe keinen Schritt aus diesem Häußchen." Melms also writes that she hopes to see them again in the winter, if they can arrange the visit: "Alles hängt von Stalin ab, er hat die Initiative in Händen." Huhnhäuser sends a greeting in the same letter, in which he refers to himself as "ein Stückchen von dem falschen Schwein [...], das Churchill mit Roosevelt und seinem Freunde Stalin geschlachtet hat."<sup>35</sup>

Their fears that another war might break out lessened towards the end of September: "Wegen Krieg flaut unsere Angst etwas ab, seitdem die Amis so Erfolge haben, Gott sei Dank."<sup>36</sup> Müller, Huhnhäuser's former superior in Oslo, visited him in mid-September. He was now the manager of a puppet theatre. A few days later they received a visit from the Beckers, whom they had not seen for thirteen years. Meyer

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<sup>34</sup> Letter from Else Huhnhäuser to Heidi Peden, 10 July 1950.

<sup>35</sup> Letter from Else Huhnhäuser to Heidi Peden, 22 July 1950.

<sup>36</sup> Letter from Else Huhnhäuser to Heidi Peden, 27 September 1950.

brought a Jewish friend from Oslo to see them and they write very positively about this man.

In November they heard reports that Hans Jochen had married in Berlin. It was also at this time that they heard news of other old acquaintances from Rostock. Huhnhäuser received a long report about all his former colleagues from the *Realgymnasium* in Rostock, which awakened many old memories: “Zu schade, daß der eiserne Vorhang uns trennt von alten Stätten.”<sup>37</sup> The following week Melms mentions George Reid, a friend of Huhnhäuser’s from his days as a student at Rostock University. Reid had just been released from prison after nine months: “weil keine Beweise für seine anti-russische Einstellung vorlagen. Der wird eine Wut haben!”<sup>38</sup>

Max Odoj, the painter with whom Huhnhäuser first became acquainted in Breslau is mentioned in the letter dated 1 November. He had spent a significant amount of time in Oslo during the war. He was now living in a village in Thuringia with his wife: “also russ. Zone. Er schreibt sehr unglücklich u. absolut echt. Ja, dieser Krieg hat wohl ein Meer von Unglück über die Heimatlosen gebracht.”<sup>39</sup> In December Melms warns Heidi to be far more careful when she writes to Odoj: “besonders wenn du deine volle Adresse oben angibst. Hoffentlich geht es diesmal gut, u. es hat keine Unannehmlichkeiten.” Melms adds that Omi won’t be able to visit them at Christmas because she will be unable to obtain a passport and describes the fate of M. [Maywald?] who tried to cross the border twice without one and was arrested both times. He was successful on his third attempt, crossing through the Harz with the help of a guide.<sup>40</sup> In the last letter he wrote to Heidi before his death, Huhnhäuser mentions that he has been writing to various Norwegians: Dr Devik, Prof. Adolf Hoel, Dr Monrad-Krohn and a fellow prisoner. This provides further

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<sup>37</sup> Letter from Else Huhnhäuser to Heidi Peden, 4 November 1950.

<sup>38</sup> Letter from Else Huhnhäuser to Heidi Peden, 10 November 1950.

<sup>39</sup> Letter from Melms to Heidi, 1 November 1950.

confirmation, if any were needed, that Huhnhäuser did indeed manage to form genuine friendships amidst the terrible circumstances of the German occupation of Norway and had been able to sustain them in the intervening years.

In December, however, they were again worried that war would break out. Melms declares that they will stay in Hambach, whatever happens.

Maywald sagt, er flieht weiter nach Westen, falls die Russen kommen, ach, das wird alles nichts nützen. Frankreich ist ja so morsch. Die Franzosen hier im Lande kämpfen wie verrückt um ihre Posten, nur um hier bleiben zu können, sie wollen ja auch nicht 'heim in ihr Reich'. Hier leben sie ja auch sehr gut auf unsere Kosten.

Huhnhäuser adds in the same letter that they can now begin counting the days until Heidi and Alexander's visit in February: "falls die blöden Politiker uns keinen Strich durch die Rechnung machen. Falls sie mit den Diplomaten zuerst an die Front müßten, würde es sicher keinen Krieg geben."<sup>41</sup> Melms continues to express her fears the following week: "es sieht böse aus in der Welt, man hat das Gefühl, die bösen Dämonen arbeiten erfolgreich an dem Untergang der Menschen."<sup>42</sup> Again in her next letter, Melms mentions the possibility of war and is afraid that this might prevent Heidi from visiting in February. "Aber sollten auch wir hinterm 'eisernen Vorhang' verschwinden, ich gehe schwarz los, um dich wiederzusehen."<sup>43</sup>

Huhnhäuser's health is another recurring theme in the letters. When he was alone in Hambach, Melms was clearly very concerned that his health would suffer: "Er kann nicht allein sein, sein Herz ist leider wieder schlechter geworden durch all das Neue und die

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<sup>40</sup> Letter from Melms to Heidi, 2 December 1950.

<sup>41</sup> Letter from Else Huhnhäuser to Heidi Peden, 2 December 1950.

<sup>42</sup> Letter from Else Huhnhäuser to Heidi Peden, 9 December 1950.

<sup>43</sup> Letter from Else Huhnhäuser to Heidi Peden, 18 December 1950.



Unruhe, dann ist er auch schon zu alt.“<sup>44</sup> In fact, his symptoms did initially worsen following his move to Hambach, although the doctor assured him that the climate was better there than in North Germany for his condition.<sup>45</sup> In February he writes that he must lose some weight to relieve the pressure on his heart and mentions this again in March.<sup>46</sup> By December he was going to the doctor’s three times a week to receive injections. His liver was swollen, caused by poor circulation, and he no longer ventured outside in very cold weather. On 12 December Melms writes that Huhnhäuser is suffering from a bad attack of chest pains and breathlessness following his return from the doctor’s, where he received his injection. The doctor thought the cause might be a reaction to the injection and Melms hopes this is the case and that the cause is not more serious.

His death, when it came around noon on 23 December, was sudden but peaceful. Huhnhäuser had suffered a very bad attack of chest pains, brought on by something he had seen in the paper that morning. The doctor was called and gave him an injection, but the pains became so severe that he had to return and administer another. He stayed with his patient for an hour until the pain disappeared. When the doctor left, Melms sat by his bed and held his hand:

Er war ganz ruhig, sagte, dies wäre ein schlimmer Anfall gewesen, da kam der Postbote [...]. Väti besah alles und freute sich und ich las ihm die Briefe vor. Dann sagte ich, er solle versuchen, bischen zu schlafen und er machte auch lieb die Augen zu. Ich ging nebenan, um Staub zu wischen. Plötzlich höre ich einen seltsamen Laut, gehe hinein zum Väti, da ist er bereits tot, hörte nichts mehr, ganz plötzlich muß das Herz stehen geblieben sein. [...] Ich kann es noch garnicht fassen, daß der Väti nicht mehr bei mir ist. Wir hatten es so schön und gemütlich hier zusammen, [...] er hat bestimmt nicht an Sterben gedacht. [...] Ein sehr gütiger, wertvoller, kluger Mensch ist unser Väti gewesen.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Letter from Else Huhnhäuser to Heidi Peden, 4 March 1950.

<sup>45</sup> Letter from Huhnhäuser to Else Huhnhäuser, 17 February 1950.

<sup>46</sup> Letter from Huhnhäuser to Else Huhnhäuser, 4 February 1950; letter to Heidi Peden, 4 March 1950.

<sup>47</sup> Letter from Else Huhnhäuser to Heidi Peden, 23 December 1950.

The funeral took place at 2 p.m. on 26 December. There were around sixty mourners there. Many of the local people had come to pay their respects, and Melms was very moved by this, for they had been there for such a short time. Of course, friends such as Meyer and Herbst were also present.

Durch tiefen Schnee kamen wir endlich ans Grab, das ich so ausgesucht habe, daß der Väti unser Haus sehen kann und die Burg. Am Grabe sprach Kauffungen sehr warm und ergreifend und legte einen herrlichen Kranz mit Schleife von der Rheinpfalz nieder. Herbst und ich blieben bis zu allerletzt, dann gingen auch wir. "Lieber guter Huhni, leb wohl" sagte Herbst ganz laut.<sup>48</sup>

Huhnhäuser's obituary was written by Dr Fensterer, the features editor of the *Rheinpfalz*. Fensterer praises his influential work in education and his prodigious list of publications. He also refers to his time in Norway, where he was one of the few Germans who managed to gain the respect of the Norwegians. But it is Huhnhäuser's qualities as a man upon which he dwells in conclusion:

Alfred Huhnhäuser war ein Charakter, kompromißlos gerecht bis zur Strenge gegen sich selbst. Sein Gefühl für die Gerechtigkeit speiste sich aus einer für ihn unversiegbaren Quelle: der Liebe zu unbedingter Wahrheit. Diese Wahrheitsliebe befähigte ihn, nicht nur schwere Schicksalsschläge ohne Bitterkeit hinzunehmen, sondern darüber hinaus im Kreise der Kollegen und Freunde stets eine Sphäre von Frohsinn und Humor aufblühen zu lassen und mit dem Lichte seiner Freunde die oft verdunkelten Gemüter der anderen zu erheitern und aufzumuntern. Es konnte ihm selbst und denen, die um ihn trauern, deshalb an seinem Grabe von einem Kollegen der *Rheinpfalz* kein besseres Wort zugerufen werden als dieses: 'Sieh unsere leuchtenden Tage, nicht weinen, weil sie vergangen, lachen, weil sie gewesen!'<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Letter from Else Huhnhäuser to Heidi Peden, 27 December 1950.

<sup>49</sup> Dr Fensterer, *Die Rheinpfalz*, 27 December 1950.

## Summary

The letters in this, the final section of the Huhnhäuser archive, give a detailed picture of the last year of Huhnhäuser's life, and also a description of the events surrounding his death. He and Melms were reunited for a few short but happy months when he returned to Germany after years of absence. However, even these months were not without a period of separation as Huhnhäuser travelled south to find work that would pay enough to support himself and his wife. Their marriage appears not to have been harmed by the many years they were forced to spend apart, and the tone of their letters to one another and to their daughter is very loving.

Huhnhäuser's character appears to have remained unchanged from that of the principled young man depicted in *Aus einem reichen Leben*, who would rather suffer hardship than feel compromised. There are perhaps two incidents from these last eighteen months which best illustrate this. The first is his decision not to pursue the possibility of a job with the church because he did not wish to pretend to have the beliefs and convictions of its followers. He claims that he had to be true to himself and could not be a hypocrite. Such a decision is also interesting when viewed in the context of his service for the Hitler regime. Huhnhäuser might have argued in his defence that he did not serve Hitler, but rather Germany, and that he was doing his patriotic duty for his country regardless of the morality of its leaders. He may also have said that he felt he had but little choice to serve such brutal masters, whereas in 1949, the only pressures upon him were financial and moral, and that the latter was by far the stronger of the two.

The second incident is his decision to cut off all contact with his nephew Hans Jochen. Huhnhäuser had apparently been very good to him in Norway and had thought that he was very close to his nephew, but this changed when Hans Jochen returned to the Russian zone after the war.<sup>50</sup> Huhnhäuser found it difficult to reconcile himself to this decision. The final straw, however, was Hans Jochen's selfish behaviour, his lack of consideration for those who had helped him in the past, including Huhnhäuser. Thus, just as Huhnhäuser had cut all ties with those whom he felt had wronged him as a young man, such as Bremer, so he refused all further contact with his nephew.

Life in post-war Germany and the daily difficulties that had to be overcome are recorded in the letters and they provide a snapshot of the period. The delay over Huhnhäuser's pension portrays a sense of bureaucratic chaos and confusion, and the difficulties over moving the furniture from Berlin highlight how frustrating many aspects of life must have been. The fear and anxiety caused by the Korean war is also a recurring theme, and shows that the future seemed very uncertain to generations already wearied by years of war and devastation. Many of the middle-classes also had to adjust to relative impoverishment, and those like the Huhnhäusers with property in the Russian zone had to accept that they might never be compensated for its loss. However, there is also a sense of thankfulness on the part of the Huhnhäusers that they are not in the zone themselves.

Several of the people referred to in the memoirs are also mentioned in these letters and, consequently, we learn of their fate: George Reid from Huhnhäuser's Rostock University years, old friends such as Herbst and Odoy, and Müller, who played a role in the Norwegian memoirs. Family members such as Omi, Hans Jochen and Anneliese, Huhnhäuser's niece, are also mentioned.

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<sup>50</sup> Interview with the late Alexander Peden, 17 October 1995.

The archive continues for four days after Huhnhäuser's death. There is a moving description of his last moments and of his funeral. He was clearly a much-valued friend and colleague, who appeared to make a deep impression even on those who knew him for only a short time. His obituary attempts to encapsulate the public and private sides of this man, whose philosophy had always been "mehr sein, als scheinen". His influence as an educationalist at a national level is acknowledged, as are his achievements on the international stage in Norway. He was, in Fensterer's words, "einer Persönlichkeit, die mit heute selten gewordenen Eigenschaften ausgestattet war."<sup>51</sup> He remained to the end a man who was curiously out of step with his era, but who nevertheless played an active and influential role in his society.

Thus, these letters conclude the history of a life, which Huhnhäuser himself was unable to bring to a close. He has left behind him a personal archive, albeit incomplete, which is a valuable and fascinating historical record of an ordinary man, who was extraordinary in both his achievements and experiences. The archive operates on many levels, recording everything from the price of sugar, to Nazi policy in Norway; from his earliest memories of school, to his experiences of running a teacher-training college. It is precisely because of these many diverse levels — personal, literary and world-stage — that Huhnhäuser is such an interesting and important figure and one worthy of study. Consequently, this ordinary pre-war German, who never quite seemed to fit comfortably into his own time, has, by means of his memoirs, managed to establish his place in ours.

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<sup>51</sup> Dr Fensterer, *Die Rheinpfalz*, 27 December 1950.