

Ambivalent Exile: Heinrich Brüning and America's Good War

Stephen A. Schuker

I. Brüning in the United States

Heinrich Brüning served twenty-six tumultuous months, from late March 1930 to early June 1932, as chancellor of the German Reich. Assailed by the spectacle of Nazis and Communists battling each other in the streets, hobbled by a nonfunctional Reichstag, and indifferently supported by a Reich president who was slowly engulfed by Alzheimer's disease, Brüning struggled on multiple fronts to overcome the miseries of the Great Depression. Abroad, Brüning aimed to end reparations, secure equality of armaments, terminate the servitudes of the Versailles treaty, and revivify the prewar vision of a German *Mittleuropa*. Foreign-policy achievements, so went the argument, would induce the German people to resist Nazi blandishments and to accept the financial sacrifices necessary to reconfigure an economy in which a cyclical crisis came on top of fundamental structural disequilibrium. The odds against success were heavy. But so they had been in the summer of 1918, when Captain Brüning, as commander of an elite infantry sharpshooters detachment, had held off several enemy divisions against the heaviest of odds.¹ In 1918 Brüning had won the highest commendation. This time he fell, as he put it in a prophetic Reichstag speech, in »the last hundred meters before the goal.«² Scarcely a year later, the Nazis had consolidated power. Ailing and socially isolated, virtually without funds, Brüning now lived on sufferance in a single room at a Berlin Catholic hospital, shadowed everywhere by the Gestapo. At the end of April 1934, he learned that a purge was planned. His name and those of two successor chancellors headed the list of prospective victims. »At that time«, as he later recalled it, »a number of decent people went into the Gestapo as police officers, and were able to warn people.« Brüning skipped over the Swiss border in the second half of May. He

1 Brüning, Heinrich: *Memoiren 1918-1934*, Stuttgart 1970, pp. 18-24, 45.

2 »Hundert Meter vor dem Ziel«, *Stenographische Berichte des Deutschen Reichstags*, 11 May 1932, pp. 2593-2602, reprinted in: W. Verneke (Ed.): *Heinrich Brüning: Reden und Aufsätze eines deutschen Staatsmanns*, Münster 1968, pp. 127-164.

survived for another thirty-six years, comfortable nowhere, a wanderer between two worlds, at home neither in the United States nor in the postwar Federal Republic, to which he returned to drink the wormwood of disillusionment from 1951 to 1955.³

Insofar as externals went, Brüning had a far easier time than most refugees of his generation. Before World War I he had spent several years in England completing a doctoral dissertation on nationalization of the British railroads, and, except for a residual accent, had become virtually bilingual.⁴ In 1934, he was taken in by intimate English friends, Mona and Ian Anderson, whom he had met through the latter's business partner, Major Archibald Church, parliamentary undersecretary at the War Office during the Labour government of 1929-31. He dispensed free advice on German affairs in Whitehall, and found his old contacts, among them Prime Minister J. Ramsay MacDonald and Sir Robert Vansittart of the Foreign Office, at least disposed to listen. Brüning's beloved elder brother had spent the war years as a priest in the United States, and Heinrich too boasted devoted friends in the American Catholic hierarchy. When he crossed the Atlantic in September 1935 under the cover-name Henry Anderson, he was at once offered refuge at a priests' seminary in Huntington, Long Island.⁵

In the following years, Brüning suffered from heart trouble, sciatica, and a succession of other illnesses, some of which appear to have had a psychosomatic component. Certainly he frequently felt lonely, depressed, and deracinated. But he never faced the practical problems of making a living in

a foreign land that troubled his contemporaries, even the famous among them. After a stint at Oxford, Brüning was invited to give the Lowell Institute Lectures in 1936. He soon became a regular on the American college circuit. Professor Oliver Sprague, with whom he had hit it off at the 1931 London Reparations Conference, arranged for him to give the Godkin Lectures at Harvard in 1937. Brüning spoke on »the Essentials of Free Government and the Duties of the Citizen«. President Abbott Lawrence Lowell and members of the Harvard Government Department were impressed, no doubt as much by the pedigree of the speaker as by the content of the talks.⁶ Brüning returned to Harvard as a tutor and lecturer on government in 1938, and was appointed Littauer Professor of Public Administration in 1939. He continued to hold that post for thirteen years.⁷

Brüning remained something of a social isolate at Harvard, but that largely reflected his personal inclination. Like most Germans of a certain generation, he did not take easily to the informality of the American college campus. Government department colleagues like Bruce Hopper, William Y. Elliott, and Carl Friedrich, or George Shuster of Hunter College, soon called him »Henry« or »Harry«. Brüning, however, reciprocated awkwardly and as slowly as possible, preferring to write »dear Friend«. All the same, he had few complaints about his treatment by the university administration during the early years of his Harvard tenure. He lived without charge in a comfortable Lowell House suite, commandeered a choice Littauer office, and laid claim to the best department secretary. His teaching consisted exclusively of advanced graduate seminars, where the presence of faculty colleagues, friends like John Wheeler-Bennett, or foreign service officers sent by George Messersmith from the State Department often relieved the tedium of the instructional process. He won full dispensation from the drudgery of large lecture courses, and even at Lowell House had almost nothing to do with undergraduates.⁸ Aside from a few luminous essays, he did not produce much scholarship. He had plenty of time for his favorite activity - exchanging letters about the past with like-minded German patriots such as Erwin Brettauer, Hermann Rauschning, Wilhelm Sollmann, and Gottfried Treviranus.⁹ For the mass of German refugees, he had nothing but

3 There exists to date no satisfactory scholarly biography of Brüning. Of shorter sketches, the best remains Lohe, E.: *Heinrich Brüning: Offizier - Staatsmann - Gelehrter*, Göttingen 1969. However, the essays in F.A. Hermens/T. Schieder (Eds.): *Staat, Wirtschaft und Politik in der Weimarer Republik: Festschrift für Heinrich Brüning*, Berlin 1967, provide partial compensation; see particularly Shuster, G.N.: *Dr. Brüning's Sojourn in the United States (1935-1945)*, pp. 449-466. Treviranus, G.R.: *Für Deutschland im Exil*, Düsseldorf 1973, pp. 85-102, 147-201, offers insights based on intimate friendship. Brüning's own memoirs do not go beyond 1934. For the exile years, the best substitute is C. Nix/R. Phelps/G. Pettee (Eds.): *Heinrich Brüning, Briefe und Gespräche 1934-1945 and Briefe 1946-1960*, Stuttgart 1974 [hereafter cited as »Brüning, Briefe und Gespräche«]. On Brüning's life in exile, also see Hürten, H.: *Ein Reichskanzler im Exil: Heinrich Brüning als Emigrationspolitiker*, in: *Zeitgeschichte* 2/9-10, 1975, pp. 195-202; Knapp, T.A.: *Heinrich Brüning im Exil. Briefe an Wilhelm Sollmann, 1940-1946*, in: *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte [VfZ]* 22, 1974, pp. 93-120; Morsey, R.: *Brüning und Adenauer: Zwei deutsche Staatsmänner*, Düsseldorf 1972; Shuster, G.N.: *The Ground I Walked On: Memoirs of a College President*, Notre Dame 1969, pp. 146-149, 157-160; Langer, W.L. et al.: *Minute of the Life of Heinrich Brüning*, in: *Harvard University Gazette*, 3 Dec. 1974; and Spevack, E.D.: *Enigma in Exile: Heinrich Brüning in America, 1937-1952*, (Harvard Univ. honors diss.) 1986.

4 Brüning, H.: *Die finanzielle, wirtschaftliche und gesetzliche Lage der englischen Eisenbahnen unter Berücksichtigung der Frage ihrer Verstaatlichung*, (masch. Diss.) Bonn 1915.

5 Brüning, *Briefe und Gespräche 1934-1945*, pp. 21-98.

6 Brüning, *Briefe und Gespräche*, pp. 109-111.

7 Introductory note to the *Heinrich Brüning Papers*, Pusey Library, Harvard University. Comments about Brüning at Harvard, where not otherwise identified, come from a reading of the papers. Reginald Phelps' memoir of Brüning at Harvard is quoted by Shuster Dr. Brüning's *Sojourn*, pp. 461-463.

8 See Reginald Phelps' testimony in Shuster: *Dr. Brüning's Sojourn*, pp. 462-463.

9 See the correspondence in Boxes 4, 26, 32, and 34, *Brüning Papers*, Pusey Library; also *Korrespondenz Heinrich Brüning - Wilhelm Sollmann, 1939-1946*, F 206, Institut für Zeitgeschichte, Munich; and *Zeitgeschichtliche Sammlung H. Brüning*, ZS 20, Institut für

contempt, and he disdained to join émigré organizations. He made it a point of honor never to speak out publicly against the excesses of the Nazi regime, on the ground that criticism from a former chancellor could harm the country to which he remained intensely loyal.¹⁰

Once the United States entered the war, life for all »enemy aliens« became unpleasant. Many of Brüning's acquaintances were interned for absurd reasons or followed around pointlessly by the F.B.I. Brüning himself was required to seek permission from the U.S. Attorney in Boston whenever he wished to travel outside the area. He complained bitterly of his »honorary confinement in Lowell House«. ¹¹ Harvard also let the welcome-mat fray. Because Harvard prizes its status at the pinnacle of American education, it has always attracted celebrities who enhance its radiance. Stars that lose their luminosity are dispensable. Nor is a university that so treasures public image likely to mount the barricades in defense of academic freedom. The herd of independent minds in the Harvard community has all too often followed the politically correct fashions of the day.¹² It is hardly surprising, therefore, that the dean of faculty complained about an article that Brüning had written on the Russian war for *Foreign Affairs*, or that he later advised Brüning against giving lectures on such sensitive subjects as American constitutional law. At Lowell House, embarrassing contretemps also took place. At one emblematic common-room function, Brüning stood morosely nursing a drink while nearby the anti-clerical historian Gaetano Salvemini, surrounded by admirers, proclaimed: »When Catholicism comes to power, can fascism be far behind?« These »humiliations«, as Brüning perceived

them, became so oppressive that he frequently considered resigning his professorship.¹³

The passions engendered by war also widened the ideological chasm between Brüning and the more outspoken leaders of the German refugee community. No doubt the majority of Jewish refugees who arrived after harrowing experiences in the late 1930s focused determinedly on acculturating to a new society and rebuilding their shattered lives. They were not particularly political.¹⁴ The celebrities of the »intellectual migration«, on the other hand, stood overwhelmingly on the left. Few had displayed much sympathy for Brüning when he held office. Time and common misery had not softened their views. A leading popular chronicler of the émigré experience in America goes so far as to claim that »fellow-traveling was almost unavoidable if one opposed Fascism.«¹⁵ At any rate, the adepts of Marxism in its various permutations did not easily abandon the unforgiving sectarianism that had so poisoned the politics of the Weimar Republic, nor did they suddenly discover the virtues of ecumenical tolerance once they had arrived at the piers of Hoboken.

However rigid his loyalties to the old Germany, Brüning never let political dogmatism interfere with standards of honor, personal empathy, or humanitarian concern for his fellow man in distress. Not only did he devote almost all of his net disposable income as a professor to helping less fortunate refugees, without regard to their political convictions. He also worked tirelessly to induce wealthy fellow nationals like Erwin Brettauer and Jakob Goldschmidt, and American acquaintances like Shepard Morgan, his one-time nemesis on the staff of the Agent General for Reparations, to open their homes and purses with equal generosity.¹⁶ He found it disillusioning that the doctrinaire left failed to reciprocate. Sadly, Marxists vouchsafed no greater compassion for those outside the party network in New York than

Zeitgeschichte. The most significant Brüning-Sollmann wartime exchanges in the Institut für Zeitgeschichte files are published in Knapp, T.A.: Heinrich Brüning im Exil: Briefe an Wilhelm Sollmann, 1940-1946, in: VfZ 22, 1974, pp. 93-120. The surviving Brüning Papers at Harvard overlap with the Institut für Zeitgeschichte documents as well as with the Briefe und Gespräche selected by Claire Nix. However, there are lacunae in every source and no complete collection anywhere.

10 These themes appear constantly in his letters. See Brüning, Briefe und Gespräche, pp. 228, 244, 306, 336, 363, 368, 373, 377, 402, 452, 529.

11 Brüning, Briefe und Gespräche, pp. 393, 398-399; also Brüning to Hermann Pünder, 15 Dec. 1946, Box 25, Brüning Papers. (During the great fear that followed Pearl Harbor, the U.S. government obliged even Jewish refugees and others with unmistakable anti-Nazi credentials to observe a stringent nighttime curfew. For the reactions of a sensitive academic to this double victimization, see Blumenthal, H.: Challenges Along My Twentieth-Century Odyssey, New York 1981, pp. 41-45.)

12 On the atmosphere at Harvard in the postwar McCarthy years, which received »politically correct« attention when the wheel turned, see Schrecker, E.: No Ivory Tower: McCarthyism and the Universities, New York 1986, and Diamond, S.: Compromised Campus: The Collaboration of Universities with the Intelligence Community, 1945-1955, New York 1992.

13 For Brüning's ruminations on resignation, see his Briefe und Gespräche, pp. 392-393 and 415. The article on Russia, written anonymously at the request of Hamilton Fish Armstrong, showed little respect for the Bolshevik regime, but in other respects demonstrated Brüning's considerable powers as a military analyst. It received favorable comment from non-Harvard sources. See: Policy and Strategy in the War in Russia: The Winter Interlude, in: Foreign Affairs (July 1942), pp. 607-634; also Brüning Papers, Box 37. For the Salvemini incident, the writer relies on an eyewitness report. For the impression that Salvemini made in the Harvard history department, see Hughes, H.S.: Gentleman Rebel, New York 1990, pp. 210-211.

14 Lowenstein, S.M.: Frankfurt on the Hudson: The German-Jewish Community of Washington Heights, 1933-1983. Its Structure and Culture, Detroit 1989.

15 Heilbut, A.: Exiled in Paradise: German Refugee Artists and Intellectuals in America from the 1930s to the Present, New York 1983, p. 103.

16 See, among other files, the Erwin Brettauer correspondence in Box 4; Jakob Goldschmidt correspondence in Box 12; Rudolf-Rose Hilferding and Julius Hirsch folders in Box 15; and George Shuster correspondence in Box 31, Brüning Papers.

they had displayed a decade earlier in Frankfurt and Berlin. In September 1940, for example, when Brüning still hoped to arrange the rescue of the Socialist leaders Rudolf Hilferding and Rudolf Breitscheid from occupied France, he called on Dean Alvin Johnson of the New School for Social Research in order to seek teaching posts for them. Johnson curtly dismissed the idea. Hilferding, opined the dean, was a »mixed-up character, neither Marxist nor liberal«. And Breitscheid failed to qualify, not because he wasn't Jewish, but rather because he had committed the ultimate Socialist apostasy: He had supported Brüning's emergency decrees. After all, observed Johnson with a smile, he had to »take the views of the faculty into consideration«. ¹⁷

As the United States prepared to enter the war in the fall of 1941, the battle lines among refugee groups hardened further. Brüning continued to abstain from public comment or political activity. Nevertheless, writing in the *New York Post* and *P.M.*, newspapers widely read in the Jewish community, the émigré journalist Johannes Steel discerned a gigantic plot by the former chancellor and assorted German generals and other reactionaries to arrange a premature peace. ¹⁸ Two years later, a sometime *Rote Fahne* correspondent who now purported to be a democratic socialist published a scurrilous pamphlet under the auspices of »Fight for Freedom« accusing Brüning of fronting for a Vatican anti-Soviet conspiracy. Lord Vansittart took up the cry as part of his campaign against any compromise with German Junkers, militarists, or heavy industry. Again Brüning became the butt of withering comment in the tabloid press. ¹⁹

No doubt the various confrontations within Harvard and the unfavorable newspaper publicity in the country at large were disagreeable. Yet it does not speak well for Brüning's maturity that, as a man approaching sixty, he perceived as deliberate personal affronts incidents that derived from the institutional nature of the university which employed him or from the quite impersonal hysteria that had always afflicted America in wartime. In describing his treatment afterward, Brüning went so far as to claim melodramatically that Harvard would have succeeded in forcing him out except for the back-channel intervention of Secretary of War Henry Stimson, and also that his critics had pursued him in books, pamphlets, magazine articles, and

17 Brüning to George Shuster, 27 Sept. 1940, Box 31, Brüning Papers; excerpt in Brüning, *Briefe und Gespräche*, pp. 321-322.

18 *New York Post*, 29 Oct., 29-30 Nov. 1941; *P.M.*, 1 Dec. 1941, cited in Brüning, *Briefe und Gespräche*, p. 388 n.

19 See the pamphlet by Menne, B.: *The Case of Dr. Brüning*, New York 1943; discussion and analysis in Brüning, *Briefe und Gespräche*, pp. 408-409.

radio broadcasts »as a quarry no less desirable to kill than Hitler himself«. ²⁰ The most important question for historians is whether the features of personality that Brüning displayed during World War II developed from his traumatic refugee experience or derived from deep-rooted earlier ways of looking at the world. The answer remains unclear. Even paranoids have real enemies. And Brüning, during his chancellorship, had more of them than a person of perfect psychological equilibrium can normally bear unscarred. Nevertheless, Schwerin von Krosigk, the financial bureaucrat who served both Brüning and the Nazis with impartial dedication, later recalled the »persecution mania« that Brüning had evinced even while in office. He saw intrigues everywhere, Schwerin recalled, »among the generals and the civil servants, within his own party and in the entourage of the Reich president. Everyone wanted to kill him, or at a minimum was working for his downfall.« ²¹

At any rate, »Henry« Brüning at the end of World War II had become a deeply disturbed and frustrated man. In evaluating his comments to war-crimes investigators in 1945, one must take into account not only the deeply held convictions to which he had borne witness throughout his political career, but also the hammer blows to his psyche and ideals that he had suffered during his refugee years.

II. *An Interview, 1945*

In the fall of 1945, Justice Robert Jackson's staff in the Office of the U.S. Chief of Counsel for the Prosecution of Axis Criminality interviewed prominent German refugees in preparation for the Nuremberg trials. Lacking any serious documentation about the Weimar Republic, they sought out Edmund Stinnes, Wolfgang Stresemann, and others who could fill them in. In late September two young investigators turned up to see Brüning in his Littauer School office. The result was a dialogue of the deaf. The conversation might as plausibly have emerged from a play of Eugène Ionesco as from the orderly workings of a government inquiry.

20 English-language version in Brüning to State Secretary a.D. Pünder, June 1947, Box 25, Brüning Papers; German-language version (which was circulated to Konrad Adenauer, Jakob Kaiser, and other Christian Democrats as Brüning's authorized »spin« on his American experience) in Band 613, Nachlaß Hermann Pünder, Bundesarchiv Koblenz.

21 Krosigk, L. Graf Schwerin v.: *Bemerkungen zu den Brüning-Memoiren*, Zeitgeschichtliche Sammlung ZS A-20/8, Institut für Zeitgeschichte, Munich. Not surprisingly Brüning, who believed that he had saved Schwerin von Krosigk from postwar deportation to Poland and probable execution, offered an equally negative evaluation of the latter's character (Brüning to H. Fritz Berger, 21 Oct. 1954, Box 3, Brüning Papers).

The report of the meeting reveals the state of utter mutual incomprehension into which relations between Americans and even non-Nazi Germans had fallen by 1945. Brüning, at his most crotchety, took no great pains to explain himself. Yet one may doubt whether, under the best of circumstances, many young Americans at that time and place could have comprehended someone with Brüning's *Weltanschauung*. The requisite historical knowledge was simply not available, even to well-meaning students.

Arthur Rosenberg's *History of the German Republic* still counted as the most reliable history of Weimar, and few who knew the mild-mannered Brooklyn College professor in his democratic-socialist phase realized how much he had contributed to Weimar's fall as a merciless Communist *apparatchik* in the 1920s, or how cleverly he had covered his tracks.²² Samuel Stirk's *The Prussian Spirit* and William McGovern's *From Luther to Hitler*, both crude artifacts of wartime propaganda, rated as the works in vogue for those seeking to trace long-term continuities in German society.²³ And Franz Neumann's *Behemoth*, despite its heavy ballast of *Marxist* jargon, held pride of place as the last word on Nazi economics.²⁴

Today, after the corrective research of Henry Turner, no respectable scholar would argue that German big business, or the military for that matter, welcomed the advent of National Socialism.²⁵ At the time, however, Neumann drew on his authority as a radical labor lawyer and political operative in Berlin before the *Machtergreifung*, as well as on his immense talents as a teacher and dialectician, to make a case that Nazism figured as »an affirmation of the living force of capitalist society«. Neumann viewed the Nazi ruling class as an overlapping and mutually reinforcing amalgam of four groups - heavy industry, the armed forces, the bureaucracy, and the party. The empirical evidence was thin to nonexistent, and the analysis obfuscated the critical distinctions that would prove necessary to restore Germany as a bourgeois democracy after the war. Nevertheless, in the heat of wartime militancy the argument proved widely persuasive. Neumann and his ideological sidekicks, Otto Kirchheimer and Herbert Marcuse, became the guiding spirits of the Central European Section in the Research & Analysis Branch of the O.S.S. and persuaded a whole generation of Ameri-

can-born specialists on Germany to interpret things their way. Not surprisingly, Neumann went on to serve as an expert consultant to the American War Crimes Staff.²⁶ Moreover, the atrocities discovered as U.S. Army troops penetrated the Reich in the spring of 1945 caused a wave of revulsion and indisposed even sober-minded Americans to make fine distinctions among Germans. The investigators who came to see Brüning no doubt had this dismal record in mind. Their report to Washington follows:²⁷

1 October 1945

MEMORANDUM FOR LT. COLONEL JOHN W. GRIGGS

Officer in Charge

Office of the U.S. Chief of Counsel for the Prosecution of Axis Criminality.

SUBJECT: Interview with Dr. Heinrich Bruening
c/o Littauer School of Public Administration
Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts

Residence - Lowell House, Cambridge, Mass.
Tel. Kirkland 7600, ext. 663 or 483

Dr. Bruening was interviewed on 28 September 1945 by Lt. Morton E. Rome, USNR, and Captain Samuel R. Conkling, JAGD.

Personal Background

Born in Munster, Westphalia, in 1885. Leader of the Catholic Centrist Party. Became Chancellor of Germany in 1930 under former President von Hindenburg and held this post for over two years. Was succeeded by von Papen. Fled Germany just before the June 1934 purge and escaped to Switzerland with the aid of a friendly frontier guard; he had previously received word that he was No. 1 on the Nazi purge list and was slated for »liquidation«. Fled first to England and taught at Oxford University and later

22 Rosenberg, A.: *A History of the German Republic*, London 1936; Schachenmayer, H.: *Arthur Rosenberg als Vertreter des historischen Materialismus*, Wiesbaden 1964.

23 Stirk, S.D.: *The Prussian Spirit. A Survey of German Literature and Politics, 1914-1940*, London 1941; McGovern, W.M.: *From Luther to Hitler: The History of Fascist-Nazi Political Philosophy*, Boston 1941.

24 Neumann, F.: *Behemoth: The Structure and Practice of National Socialism*, New York 1942.

25 Turner, H.A. Jr.: *German Big Business and the Rise of Hitler*, New York 1985.

26 See the affectionate defense of Neumann by Hughes, H.S.: *Franz Neumann between Marxism and Liberal Democracy*, in: D. Fleming/B. Bailyn (Eds.): *The Intellectual Migration: Europe and America, 1930-1960*, Cambridge/Mass. 1969, pp. 446-462; also Katz, B.M.: *Foreign Intelligence: Research and Analysis in the Office of Strategic Services, 1942-1945*, Cambridge/Mass. 1989, pp. 29-96.

27 Interrogations, Washington Branch Office, Office of the U.S. Chief of Counsel for the Prosecution of Axis Criminality, Box 16, Record Group 238, Collection of World War II War Crimes, National Archives and Record Service, Washington, D.C.

at Harvard University. In 1940 he became Professor of Government at Harvard, and has been in the United States since that date. Has made no effort to become a United States citizen but expects to return to Europe sometime in the near future.

Comments

Although anti-Nazi, Bruening is a violent reactionary and is 100 % pro-German. He is very much opposed to the War Crimes Trials to be held at Nuremberg and thinks that Stalin is the worst war criminal. He believes that the Germans can be trusted to bring their own war criminals to trial as in Leipzig after the last war (sic!). For this reason he refuses to take any part in the trials, even to the extent of signing an affidavit as to matters within his own knowledge. He prophesies that the defendants will be martyred in Germany because of their trials before a non-German tribunal.

A brief analysis of the causes of this war, according to Bruening, runs somewhat as follows:

Of course, one can't discuss this war without going into the last war, which was started by Britain on the ridiculous excuse that one of the innumerable minor incidents in the Balkans was endangering her security. During the first war, the brutal inhuman British blockade of Germany (and this was the first great war crime) starved a whole generation of German youth. Because of the lack of fats and other nourishing foods, the nervous systems of millions of young Germans were seriously affected. When the Nazis came along with their great promises as these young people were reaching maturity, they were not in a position to see things clearly and were taken in by Hitler. Ergo, the rise of the Nazis; but Hitler would never have been able to wage war without the help of the French who gave him his great financial support. A powerful French group of industrialists, the *Comité des Forges*, consisting, among others, of the owners of the Schneider-Creusot Munitions Works, which controlled Skoda in Czechoslovakia, wished to sell munitions and contributed great sums of money to Hitler for that reason. After Hitler had the youth with him, and the money to pay his own private Brown Shirt Army, there was no stopping him and war resulted.

Other reasons for the start of the war were the elimination of the monarchy by the Allies after the last war. You can't upset a thousand-year old tradition and not have a vacuum result. Bruening today would be in favor of a monarchy in Germany, except that it would be difficult to find a representative member. Therefore, he favors a rule to be composed of high military leaders and the old Prussian aristocracy.

Bruening follows the Nazi line closely, except for its religious and racial persecutions. He claims, for example, that the Poles were ready to march into Germany even as far back as his own regime in 1930, and that Paul Reynaud's party in France was always in favor of war with Germany. He hates the Communists very much more than he dislikes the Nazis. The silly policy of Benes in Czechoslovakia, according to him, was really responsible for the difficulties with the Sudeten Germans. Although Bruening is unquestionably much opposed to the Nazis, he seems to think almost as little of our own form of government.

He states that other countries were delighted when the Nazis started their rearmament program as their own unemployment problems were cured when the arms race started.

He claims that if the Allies had allowed Germany to have a larger army, he would have been able to suppress the Nazis and Communists before they became too powerful.

Miscellaneous Comments

A great number of Bruening's statements concerning happenings in Germany and prominent Nazi figures would seem nearly worthless but some of them are set out below as a matter of possible interest and as an indication of Bruening's own opinions.

Bruening claims to know of no German industrialists who were really Nazis except old [Emil] Kirdorf and [Fritz] Thyssen, and he states that the latter supported the NSDAP only on a very small scale.

Admiral [Erich] Raeder was a violent anti-Nazi.

Otto Meissner [state secretary in the office of the Reich president] was anti-Nazi and tried to convince Hindenburg not to appoint Hitler as Chancellor. [Franz] von Papen was also anti-Nazi and only went into the cabinet so that he could fight against Hitler from the inside.

[Hjalmar] Schacht also hated Hitler but helped him for the same reasons as von Papen.

Although it is not generally known, Bruening states that he has heard that Julius Streicher [editor of *Der Stürmer*] is Jewish and that [Robert] Ley [head of the *Deutsche Arbeitsfront*] is half Jewish, the latter's name having been changed from Levy.

[Alfred] Rosenberg [editor of the *Völkischer Beobachter*], who was one-half French, one-fourth Estonian, and one-fourth Jewish, got a great deal of money from French sources in the early days of the NSDAP.

Approximately 65 % of the S.A. were Communists. When asked to elaborate upon this statement, Bruening was extremely vague, but he claims that

he had heard it from an excellent source. He believes that the S.A. started the riots and street fighting on orders from Moscow.

He states that many Jewish bankers helped finance Hitler in the early days in the hope that he would act so foolishly after he came to power, that he would soon be deposed.

The Nazis got great quantities of arms from the Communists.

Part of the great Nazi vote came from Communists, who voted for Hitler on orders of Stalin.

In 1934 the Nazi ›Putsch‹ was to forestall a ›Putsch‹ by Papen against Hitler.

The Nazis got Rolls-Royce aircraft engines from England in large quantities soon after Hitler came to power.

[Foreign Minister Constantin] von Neurath was not a Nazi but later joined the party to save his job.

[Hermann] Schmitz of I.G. Farben was not a Nazi.

[Rudolf] Hess [deputy to the Führer] was the most honest of the Nazis.

[Albert] Speer, an able man, was anti-Nazi.

[Hermann] Goering tried to play the gentleman, but an addiction to morphine was his disaster. In addition, Bruening admits, he did take certain things in Germany which did not belong to him.

(As is obvious from the above comments, Bruening is favorably inclined toward practically everybody alive in Germany. He thinks that everyone who was not an early party member was anti-Nazi, and he condemns only a very few of the real Nazis.)

Poland first started the concentration camps.

[General Werner] von Blomberg, the chief of staff, was the only real Nazi among the army chiefs. He was the only military leader who wanted war.

Bruening condemns Roland Freisler, the president of the People's Court, and claims that he should be tried as a criminal in a German court. He also states, incidentally, that Freisler was a Communist before he became a Nazi, and learned his terroristic methods in Russia.

Another fact not generally known in the United States is that ›until 1938 the German Catholics and Protestants were persecuted worse than the Jews.

There were no Prussians among the leading Nazis. Hitler, of course, was an Austrian, and may even be partly Jewish; most of the rest of the high Nazis were either ›foreigners‹ or ›Bavarians‹. Bruening seems to look down upon the Bavarians and to believe that the Prussians are the real aristocracy of the world.

Bruening, in company with the Nazis, believes that Germany was much too small for her population.

With reference to the story that the undersigned were investigating with reference to Hitler's bribe of Oskar von Hindenburg so that he would use

his influence with the aging President and have him appoint Hitler as Chancellor, Bruening states that he had never heard any such tale. He does admit, however, that young Hindenburg's farm in East Prussia was greatly enlarged at state expense after the Nazis came to power, but claims that this could not have been as a result of any bribe.

Bruening states that during the last war he wrote an uncomplimentary report about Oskar von Hindenburg's ability as an army officer; this was later brought to Oskar's attention, and hurt Bruening very much in his relationship with the elder Hindenburg.

Bruening states that [Joseph] Goebbels and [Wolf von] Helldorf [Berlin chief of police] saved his life on several occasions. Goebbels told him shortly before the purge that he should take a different route than usual when he went out walking. During the last several months that Bruening spent in Germany, his life was in great danger, and he was obliged to spend each night in a different house.

His view is that the Allies should have made a deal with the German General Staff early in the war whereby Hitler would have been deposed, peace agreed upon, and Germany would be governed by a military clique.

Bruening claims that there is no hope for Germany under the peace terms except slow starvation.

Analysis

Although the word ›analysis‹ would seem out of order, as the undersigned spent a total of only six hours with Bruening, some evaluation of his ideas and opinions might be attempted. As is evident from the foregoing, Bruening's only quarrel with the Nazis would seem to be with reference to their domestic policies and not to their conduct of foreign affairs. The war, according to him, was a defensive one, whereby Germany forestalled the Poles and the French.

What impressed the undersigned was the fact that although Bruening is unquestionably anti-Nazi, he espouses the great majority of Nazi ideas and ideals. It would seem safe to state that his main quarrel with them is that their party was in control and not his. His own feelings that Germany needed more room for her population and that the monarchists and militarists should control are certainly opposed to all democratic viewpoints.

Bruening, who might be thought to be the central point for postwar democratic leadership in Germany, would fail miserably in such a position. One can't help but think that World War II would have developed just as surely had Bruening retained power.

His own frankly stated opinion is that all the non-Jewish German refugees

in this country are eager to return to Germany, and that the majority of the Jewish German refugees feel the same way.

To give an example of his thinking, Bruening was extremely critical of [writer and biographer] Emil Ludwig, on the ground that Ludwig's father once held an excellent position under the late Kaiser and that thus it ill behooved the son to come to the United States and criticize Germany!

A few additional comments might seem to be in order. Although the lengthy interview indicated clearly that Bruening's views were not sympathetically received by the undersigned, he nevertheless elaborated upon them at great length. One cannot help but wonder to what extent these outspoken statements are increased and magnified when he is among his own people. As he speaks as a non-Nazi, naturally Bruening is [a] much more effective proponent of German ideas and ideals than if he were speaking as a Nazi.

What sort of ›government‹ he advocates and teaches to the young men in his classes at Harvard must be a matter not only of speculation, but of concern. Certainly his ideas are not American ideas.

MORTON E. ROME
Lieutenant, USNR

SAMUEL R. CONKLING
Capt., JAGD

Charitable readers will doubtless suspect that the inexperienced interviewers may have misinterpreted Brüning's sentiments. This turns out not to be the case. A full transcript of the conversation has surfaced in the recently opened Brüning papers. It shows that in some respects Brüning expressed himself with even more vehemence and specificity than would appear from the Rome-Conkling rendition.²⁸ The old ex-chancellor became almost violent on the subject of the Nuremberg trials. Other nations had »done the same as the Nazis«, he fumed. »You can intern me, or you can shoot me, but you will not be able to force me to participate in the procedure of the War Criminal Trial, which will . . . shield from investigation the war crimes of some other European peoples, especially the Russians.« The French had killed German police during the 1923 Ruhr occupation, and that was a proper subject for Justice Jackson to investigate. Then Josef Pilsudski of Poland, along with his French allies, had planned aggressive

²⁸ Interview, September 1945, Littauer 209, Box 16, Brüning Papers. I am indebted to Harold James for rediscovering this document and calling it to my attention before the reorganization of the Brüning Papers by the Harvard University Archives. The discussion became so intense that Brüning's faithful secretary Claire Nix, who sat in on the interview and took stenographic notes, missed some points. However, Brüning himself reviewed the 38-page transcript and typed two pages of corrections. One may therefore presume his general satisfaction with the result. Ms. Nix published a highly expurgated version in Brüning, Briefe und Gespräche, pp. 539-543.

war against Germany. Jackson should also inquire into the Polish seizure of Teschen. Franklin Roosevelt, not to be outdone, had »provided the greatest factor« in keeping Hitler in power by devaluing the dollar by almost 40 percent; that one fateful policy decision had allowed the Nazis to buy raw materials cheaply for rearmament. The British had also eased the path of rearmament through the Anglo-German Payments Agreement of 1934. Stalin became the »third war criminal« by faithfully repaying to Hitler, in gold and raw materials, the credits granted by the Reich under the Brüning regime. In the game of European politics, Brüning charged, both Stalin and the British sought to preserve Hitler's power because each hoped to »use him against the other«. Either Goering or the Wehrmacht could have carried out a coup against Hitler at any time until 1939. Indeed, Carl Goerdeler had visited London and Paris in order to sound Allied views. But no one dared to confront the Nazi leadership openly owing to »the ambiguity of British policy«. And Western nations could never make up their minds to »deal with the opposition in the Army«. If the United States really wanted to make aggressive war a crime, it should forthwith indict Stalin, who even now was engaging in wholesale liquidation of anti-Nazis in the Soviet occupation zone.

Although Brüning expressed disdain for the Nazis, his greatest objections focused on their financial profligacy and personal dishonesty. National Socialists lacked the Prussian virtue of devotion to the state. Hitler, he suggested, had always feared him because he had proof that, during the Ruhr occupation, the Nazi leader had placed party concerns above the cause of resistance to the French. And other Nazi leaders, he complained, had violated the libel laws or engaged in common tax fraud. Even Schacht, he felt, while innocent of war crimes, deserved prosecution for the »dirty jobs« he had pulled while administrator of Belgian financial institutions during World War I, and for diverting their business to his own bank. Such financial speculation caused the upright Brüning manifest distress.

Brüning also waxed eloquent on the subject of »Jewish financial support of the Nazis«. As he saw it, Otmar Strauss, a partner of Otto Wolff, had financed the Freikorps largely with Jewish money in 1919, and subsequently bought S.A. leaders and »staked everything on the Berlin Nazi party«. The Nazi movement, Brüning recalled, originally constituted a »reaction [to] the Communist terror regime in Munich under Levin and Leviné«. But later Jewish businessmen who were frightened by the successes of the S.P.D. made monthly collections for the Nazis. An American Jew had provided the first large foreign contribution for Hitler in 1923. Moreover, Oscar Wassermann of the Deutsche Bank and other Berlin financiers had urged U.S. Ambassador Frederic Sackett as early as 1930 to »abandon support of the existing German government in favor of a Nazi

regime«. In the 1931 financial crisis, Jakob Goldschmidt stood out as the only big banker who »told the truth«, but he had encountered opposition from Wassermann, who was »another type of Jew«.

Brüning, of course, exhibited no trace of anti-Semitism in his personal demeanor. He had always made a point of praising nationalist Jews with whom he had fought in World War I or with whom he had collaborated in such postwar paramilitary endeavors as the »League for Combat against Bolshevism«. ²⁹ But now he sought, without apparent self-consciousness, to persuade his interlocutors that general anti-Semitism had »never existed« in his homeland. Frederick the Great had taken the lead in granting the Jews full civil rights. And Germany figured as the only area in Europe where, throughout history, there had »never been any Jewish persecution«. Accordingly, Brüning deprecated the theory that an influx of eastern Jews had fanned anti-Semitism after World War I. To the contrary, the Reich had not only accepted 150,000 eastern Jews »to save them from persecution«, but had granted them easy citizenship, despite considerable opposition from the German-Jewish elite. Nor had the »ruthless speculation« carried on during the inflation by prominent Jews, like the banker Fritz Mannheim of Mendelssohn & Co., sparked an outbreak of anti-Semitism. In sum, Jewish troubles in Germany did not predate 1930. Even thereafter, no one paid attention to speeches on that theme at the Nuremberg rallies. During his own term in office, Brüning had naturally obtained information about Hitler's »doubtful« origins from Austrian sources, but he lacked clear proof, and, as he pointed out, »if I had said that his grandfather was a Jew, I would only have increased anti-Semitism«. Brüning did not volunteer any general theory about the origins of the Holocaust. But evidently he leaned, in modern parlance, to an »instrumentalist« rather than an »intentionalist« explanation. »I still believe«, he confessed obscurely, »that Hitler ran into the anti-Jewish putsch of 1938 because he was afraid. You know he always talked wildly, and most of his actions were contradictory.«

Brüning's seeming inability to come to grips with the reality of Nazi racial persecutions did not mean that he had lost his capacity for moral indignation, especially when Germans lost their rights without regard to international law. He could hardly contain his fury, a quarter century after the fact, about fellow countrymen driven from Alsace in 1918 »against all tradition, within twenty-four hours, with only their suitcases«. And now, he sputtered, the United States had allowed the Russians and Czechs to uproot twelve million Germans and drive them west, while depriving the Reich of its agricultural areas and concomitantly dismantling industry. This was simple »lunacy«. It would result in starvation for millions. »It would be

²⁹ See the pointed discussion of this subject in Brüning's *Memoiren*, p. 48.

better for you to say, »We will kill so many millions of people«, but you do it without knowing it, at least to judge from the Americans I know.« No doubt Brüning stood on the side of economic logic and geopolitical sagacity in thus criticizing the Morgenthau Plan and its unfortunate sequelae. Eventually prudent Washington policymakers would have to moderate their views, and they did. All the same, the former German statesman had scarcely found the appropriate means of expression to conquer American hearts and minds in the political climate of 1945.

III. *Brüning's Economic and Political Views*

Sixty years after the end of the Weimar Republic, with the surviving records open at last, historians can take a dispassionate look at Brüning the politician and the personality. While the controversy over Brüning's record between 1930 and 1932 raged among contemporaries, his friends and supporters trumpeted their faith in his »sterling nobility«. They expressed confidence that, when historians told the full story, »the cloud which has descended on his name and stature will be dispelled«. ³⁰ Yet the reevaluation of his economic and political legacy currently in progress has so far led to mixed results.

The older interpretation held that, owing to his rigid pre-Keynesian prejudices, Brüning made fundamental errors in economic policy during his chancellorship that needlessly deepened the Depression. On the other hand, statesmen in London and Washington found Brüning a responsive interlocutor. Many believed that they could strike a deal with him on adjustment of the Versailles treaty that would satisfy moderate Germans, stave off Hitler, and strengthen the forces of peace and stability. They experienced his fall as a window of opportunity slamming shut. ³¹ Paradoxically, few of those older beliefs, either about Brüning's economics or his politics, now seem destined to survive. In fact, Brüning had remarkably broad competence and performed as well as anyone plausibly could in the economic sphere. At the same time, he remained all his life – as his 1945 testimony shows – a fierce Prussian militarist and an unreconstructed nationalist. Notwithstanding genuine strategic gifts, he never internalized the Bismarckian principle, ignored by so many in the era of Wilhelminian

³⁰ Shuster: *The Ground I Walked On*, pp. 148-149.

³¹ Herbert Hoover and Henry Stimson embraced this view in the United States, as did J. Ramsay MacDonald and Arthur Henderson in Great Britain. See the justly skeptical analysis by Bennett, E.W.: *Germany and the Diplomacy of the Financial Crisis, 1931*, Cambridge/Mass. 1962, and Bennett, E.W.: *German Rearmament and the West, 1932-1933*, Princeton 1979.

grandiosity, that foreign policy is always the art of the possible. Hence his general outlook and specific territorial ambitions were not easily conciliable with a European order that other nations could accept voluntarily. Like less prescient members of the old elites who believed for a time that they could ride the Nazi tiger, Brüning also wanted, in the expression of the day, »Großdeutschland without a great war«. ³² But that could never be.

In 1979 Knut Borchardt electrified the historical profession by showing that the German government had no feasible alternative to the economic strategy that it pursued during the early years of the Depression. Given the severity of the distributional conflict, the high real wages of the employed, and other stigmata of structural maladjustment, an expansionist fiscal policy could not have worked in a country still dependent on export markets. ³³ Other historians, including Carl-L. Holtfrerich, Harold James, and Theo Balderston, have qualified and elaborated aspects of the argument, but generally it has held. Onetime heresy has become the new orthodoxy. ³⁴ Germany's unique difficulties during the Depression derived not from the poverty of economic theory, but rather from a multiplicity of real-world problems: a cash crisis or »lenders' strike« in which the bond market essentially ceased to function, an inability to secure relief from the Young Plan constraints on credit creation and devaluation, and a banking collapse made worse by the pyramid structure of the leading universal banks.

Remarkably, scholars have now caught up with a lag to what Brüning had claimed all along. One need not accept Brüning's retrospective evaluations, composed in the 1950s, precisely at face value. He had told Harvard colleagues of his aspiration to complete an economic history of the Weimar Republic, and, though the project never reached fruition, he doubtless used the enforced leisure of the war years at Widener Library to revise his memoirs

and retouch his memories on the subject. ³⁵ Nevertheless, the former chancellor's postwar explications of his policies when in office remain both plausible and internally consistent. ³⁶

Brüning saw himself, like Herbert Hoover in the United States, as a statesman who had proposed »constructive measures which might have overcome the crisis«, but who had been traduced and systematically misrepresented by an unsound successor regime. ³⁷ He expressed exasperation with lingering accusations that he had followed a conscious policy of deflation. He had never been a deflationist. ³⁸ Readjusting wages to prices inevitably proved more difficult than working the other way round. No government would embrace a policy of deliberate deflation unless it stood in the unique predicament of Germany in 1930, where public spending had spiraled out of control, the Reichstag refused to levy taxes, domestic lenders would not lend, and foreign credits had dried up. On the other hand, counter-cyclical spending provided no magic bullet to counter a depression, and he knew from his colleague Alvin Hansen that Keynes had intended to revise the *General Theory* to clarify the point in the months before his premature death. ³⁹ Keynes' theories, he maintained, aside from their mathematical formulae and glittering rhetorical formulations, brought nothing that responsible governments had not known and practiced earlier. All European governments had employed public works to fight unemployment during postwar readjustment crises over the course of the nineteenth century. The Prussian state railways had from time immemorial spent their reserves counter-cyclically. The German government had followed an explicit work-creation policy after World War I, and particularly in the recession of 1926, when it had stored up problems for the future by covering such expenditures through an increase in

32 Cf. Blasius, R.A.: Für Großdeutschland - wider den großen Krieg; Ernst von Weizsäcker in den Krisen um die Tschechoslowakei und Polen, Cologne 1981.

33 Borchardt, K.: Zwangslagen und Handlungsspielräume in der großen Wirtschaftskrise der frühen dreißiger Jahre: Zur Revision des überlieferten Geschichtsbildes, in: Bayerische Akademie der Wissenschaften, Jahrbuch 1979, Munich 1979, pp. 87-132; translated with additional essays in: Borchardt, K.: Perspectives on Modern German Economic History and Policy, Cambridge 1991.

34 Holtfrerich, C.-L.: Alternativen zu Brüning's Wirtschaftspolitik in der Weltwirtschaftskrise?, in: Historische Zeitschrift 235, 1982, pp. 605-631; James, H.: The German Slump: Politics and Economics, 1924-1936, Oxford 1986, pp. 190-245, 283-342; Balderston, T.: The Origins and Course of the German Economic Crisis, November 1923 to May 1932, Berlin 1993, pp. 287-331; also G.D. Feldman (Ed.): Die Nachwirkungen der Inflation auf die deutsche Geschichte 1924 bis 1933, Munich 1986; Schuker, S.A.: American »Reparations« to Germany, 1919-1933, Princeton 1988; and J. v. Kruedener (Ed.): Economic Crisis and Political Collapse: The Weimar Republic, 1924-1933, New York/Munich 1990.

35 On Brüning's aspirations to write the economic history of Weimar, see Brüning, Briefe und Gespräche, p. 383. On the reliability of the memoirs, consult Morsey, R.: Zur Entstehung, Authentizität und Kritik von Brüning's Memoiren 1918-1934, Opladen 1975.

36 The writer has drawn, for the paragraphs that follow, primarily on Brüning to Hermann Pünder, March (n.d.) 1950, Box 25, Brüning Papers; and Brüning to Heinrich Dräger, 13 Sept. 1954, in Claire Nix Papers relating to the Brüning Memoirs (HUG FP 93.4.5), also published in G. Bombach et. al. (Eds.): Der Keynesianismus II: Die beschäftigungspolitische Diskussion vor Keynes in Deutschland. Dokumente und Kommentare, Berlin 1976, pp. 287-297. See also Brüning's additional remarks on trade issues in his letter to Hans Staudinger, 30 Jan. 1941, and his discussion of the 1931 banking crisis in letters to Karl Goldschmidt, 31 Oct. 1955 and 5 Apr. 1957, to Otto Friedrich, 30 Aug. 1954, all in Claire Nix Papers (HUG FP 93.4.5); also Brüning to Jakob Goldschmidt, 29 Nov. 1945 and 31 Dec. 1951, Box 12, Brüning Papers.

37 Brüning to Herbert Hoover, 4 Aug. 1949, 24 Aug. 1954. Hoover agreed with the analysis, writing on 28 Aug. 1954 that »Germany had a great leader who would have made a different and constructive Europe« (all in Box 15, Brüning Papers).

38 Brüning to Heinrich Dräger, 30 Aug. 1953 (rejecting charges made by Ernst Wagemann of the Institut für Konjunkturforschung), in Brüning, Briefe 1946-1960, pp. 336-337.

39 Brüning to Pünder, March 1950.

the floating debt.⁴⁰ The country's root problems derived from the fact that it had not aimed to minimize unemployment over the long term through a policy of sound finance, but instead had dealt with Allied reparation claims in the early 1920s by heating up the economy artificially and accepting currency depreciation along with all the structural distortions that accompanied it.⁴¹

Both the Reich and local governments had subsidized the building of railroads, canals, highways, and public housing so extensively in the 1920s that, by the time the Depression hit, Brüning had found few projects remaining that could be justified on sound economic grounds. In addition, the capital-goods industries had rationalized too quickly and overbuilt capacity, during the inflation years because they had to deploy monetary assets somehow, and thereafter because foreign capital came for a time too cheap. Since American loans to Germany were to some extent balanced by reparations and war-debt repayments, the continuing capital transfer from the U.S. did not have its predicted upward effect on American interest rates. At the same time, poorly targeted investment added to technological unemployment in the Reich at an unfortunate conjuncture in the business cycle. Then, once the U.S. stock market had collapsed and deflation began its maleficent course, neither industry nor agriculture in Germany could pay the high real interest rates due on foreign loans and still hope to make a profit. The German D-banks had served as the conduit for so much short-term credit that they all risked illiquidity if foreigners recalled their loans. In that situation, the Young Plan embodied a fatal weakness against which Brüning had repeatedly warned: It removed transfer protection at a critical juncture from the Reich. Some sort of banking crisis was, in those circumstances, inevitable. The problem deepened, however, because Oscar Wassermann of the Deutsche Bank and Curt Sobernheim of the Commerz- und Privatbank seized the opportunity to divert business from competitors rather than cooperate to limit the damage.⁴²

Brüning agreed with the Keynesians that the optimal policy in the fall of 1931 was to float the mark jointly with sterling, or else to devalue by 20 percent, and in addition to expand credit vigorously at home.⁴³ However, the

French and other reparations creditors would not sanction any type of devaluation. Keynes, who visited Brüning in Berlin, seemingly failed to understand that the Reich could not blithely ignore the Young Plan and act unilaterally.⁴⁴ The structure of German exports would make retaliation easy. In fact, the Bank for International Settlements did not loosen the legal restrictions on Reichsbank credit creation until September 1932 - just in time to help Hitler.

Nevertheless, Brüning insisted that he had done everything within the realm of practical politics to expand credit and boost aggregate demand, often against tenacious resistance by the monetary authorities. The credit expansion accomplished through the Acceptance and Guarantee Bank, the Russian trade bills, rediscount of savings bank paper, and silver monetization grazed the limits of legality and far exceeded what he could announce publicly without demoralizing the bond market. It frustrated him that business and households did not fully utilize those credits. As events demonstrated, one could not push on a string. Therefore, he turned to work-creation schemes entirely in line with Keynesian prescriptions. His lieutenants elaborated a whole series of proposals for home building and infrastructure creation. However, they had to weave their way through a dense matting of bureaucratic obstacles: the arcane rules of the building industry, Reichsbahn objections to potential trucking competition, Reichswehr opposition to roads that could provide markers for enemy reconnaissance aircraft, Reichsbank reluctance to finance such schemes through funny money, and above all gridlock among the political parties and in the Reichstag. The obstacles were overcome just before his fall.⁴⁵ Brüning maintained that he did not dogmatically oppose planning. He endorsed fiscal outlays to fight poverty in the early Federal Republic, for example, when Marshall Plan counterpart funds lay at hand to pay for them. Looking back, he believed that he had erred during his chancellorship, if at all, not in the conception of his program, but rather in failing to tell the full cabinet and the press precisely what he aimed to do.⁴⁶

If, however, Brüning deserves higher marks as an economist than history has generally accorded him, the popular impression that his foreign-policy views as chancellor provided a basis for accommodation with the West does not stand close scrutiny. Before he ascended to high office, Brüning's reputation abroad rested largely on his work as an aide to Adam Stegerwald in elaborating the ideological basis for a genuine Christian Democracy. The

40 On this well-known precedent, with which Brüning became intimately familiar through his membership on the Reichstag budget committee, see Hertz-Eichenrode, D.: *Wirtschaftskrise und Arbeitsbeschaffung: Konjunkturpolitik 1925/26 und die Grundlagen der Krisenpolitik Brünings*, Frankfurt a.M. 1982.

41 Brüning to Dräger, 13 Sept. 1954.

42 Attacks against Wassermann and Sobernheim form a central theme of Brüning's exchanges with Jakob and Karl Goldschmidt, note 36 supra.

43 For the devaluation alternatives, see Brüning to Hans Staudinger, 30 Jan. 1941, Claire Nix Papers (HUG FP 93.4.5).

44 On this point, see Brüning to Jakob Goldschmidt, 31 Oct. and 9 Dec. 1951, Box 12, Brüning Papers.

45 Brüning to Dräger, 13 Sept. 1954.

46 Brüning to Pünder, March 1950.

Essen Program, which Brüning drafted in November 1920, called for transformation of the narrowly sectarian Center party into a socially heterogeneous, interconfessional party allied with the non-Marxist trade unions. Such a party could transcend antiquated class loyalties and promote social justice within a Christian moral framework.⁴⁷ As an executive of the German Trade Union Federation, as editor of its newspaper, and later as a deputy and chancellor, Brüning remained true to that ecumenical vision. The proposed reconfiguration of German party politics, however, featured an unpleasant underside. A state-supporting party that sought the allegiance of the conservative upper bourgeoisie, the religiously oriented *Mittelstand*, and the socially conscious skilled working class could aspire to unite such disparate forces only on the common denominator of an ultranationalist foreign policy.⁴⁸ Brüning figured as the consummate leader of such a grouping, for he found fervid nationalism temperamentally congenial.

Brüning's friends in America later tended to excuse his militarism as a harmless eccentricity. »His greatest fault«, notes George Shuster, »was an odd tendency to romanticize about the business of soldiering.«⁴⁹ In fact, Brüning's service as a front soldier constituted a »peak experience«. It remained the lodestar by which he marked his bearings for the rest of his life. Brüning confesses in his memoirs that he considered the post-1918 government in Germany an illegitimate infringement on popular sovereignty, and as late as 1943 he described the Weimar Republic as a »type of mandate or colonial regime«. During World War II, he also advised O.S.S. contacts that the only articles of the Weimar Constitution that had stood the test of time were those adopted »almost literally from the Bismarckian constitution«.⁵⁰ When Brüning drifted to Berlin in May 1919, already imbued with such sentiments about the fledgling republic, he immediately became involved with paramilitary groups that, under camouflaged Reichswehr direction, sought to defend German interests in the East Prussian and Silesian borderlands. The ascetic from Münster was also revolted by the

sexual dissolution of the capital, where, he observed revealingly, »the scum of all European nations seemed to have found each other«.⁵¹

Brüning spent a long evening with Hitler in a Berlin club in 1922, and, though he didn't appreciate the Austrian corporal's calculated hysterics, the salient fact is that they should have travelled in the same circles at that early date.⁵² In fact, Brüning nurtured his contacts on the extreme right carefully throughout the postwar years. While he remained characteristically close-mouthed about details, he appears to have played a significant role in organizing passive - and indeed active - resistance against the French during the Ruhr occupation of 1923. While continuing his work with the Christian trade unions as a cover, he also served as the chief liaison officer between Labor Minister Heinrich Brauns, who administered the passive side of resistance, and Major Friedrich Freiherr von Willisen, who on behalf of the General Staff took charge of spurring on and then controlling anti-French terror bands.⁵³ Brüning became an intimate friend of Willisen, a political adviser to General von Seeckt, and as late as 1935 he passed his proposals for a post-Hitlerian Germany to generals Fritsch and Rundstedt through Willisen's widow.⁵⁴

Brüning recalls innocently in his memoirs that, during the spring of 1923, he dispatched the »passive resistance leader« Edgar Jung to see Hitler. According to the story, Brüning appealed to Hitler to coordinate his efforts in the fight against the French, while Hitler, obsessed by seizing power in Munich, unpatriotically turned him down. The more interesting part of the tale remains untold. What were Brüning's relations with Jung, an associate of the infamous »Heidelberg Murder Central«, who subsequently carried out the assassinations of the Palatinate separatists with weapons supplied by the Reich?⁵⁵ Meanwhile, Prelate Hermann Brüning, the elder brother in this patriotic family, also promoted the national cause by organizing the legal defense of the condemned terrorist and later Nazi hero, Albert Schlageter. Heinrich withdrew from active direction of the resistance for appearance's

51 Brüning: *Memoiren*, pp. 42-45.

52 Brüning, *Briefe und Gespräche*, p. 264.

53 The *Memoiren*, so clear and definite on other subjects, become uncharacteristically vague on Brüning's duties concerning the Ruhr, pp. 87-107. On the role of Heinrich Brauns, who like Brüning combined superpatriotism with strong social commitments at home, see Deuerlein, E.: *Heinrich Brauns - Schattenriß eines Sozialpolitikers*, in: Hermens/Schieder (Eds.): *Staat, Wirtschaft und Politik in der Weimarer Republik*, pp. 41-96.

54 Brüning, *Briefe und Gespräche*, pp. 466-482. On Willisen's activities as head of the Reichswehr cover operation »Zentralstelle Ost«, and his continuing role as a trusted adviser to Seeckt, see Meier-Welcker, H.: *Seeckt*, Frankfurt a.M. 1967, pp. 200-201, 561, 569, 588.

55 Cf. *Memoiren*, p. 99, with Gräber, G./Spindler, M.: *Revolverrepublik am Rhein: Die Pfalz und ihre Separatisten*, November 1918 - November 1923, Landau 1992, pp. 14-17, 640-653.

sake in July, when brother Hermann took on the crucial assignment of guiding the Vatican representative, Monsignor Gustavo Testa, in a supposedly neutral investigation of French behavior in the Ruhr.⁵⁶ The younger Brüning continued to cherish the strong bonds he had formed with the military brass in the Ruhr struggle right through the ill-fated plot of 1944. Unfortunately, not even top-ranking officers held to his elevated standards for placing the good of the nation ahead of parochial concerns. During the Ruhr occupation, for example, the incorruptible Brüning had persuaded Wilhelm Canaris, then a mid-career Navy intelligence man, to tap the phones of ministers whom he suspected of using insider information to speculate against the failing Mark. He would later reap the whirlwind when Admiral Canaris, as head of counterespionage, vastly expanded his wiretap net and fed the »dirt« on moderate politicians to the Nazis.⁵⁷

By the time he left the chancellorship in 1932, Brüning had developed a simple and elegant program for general disarmament and a new economic alignment in Europe. It was an offer, he believed, that men of good will could hardly refuse.⁵⁸ Even after the end of reparations, he observed, Germany lacked the foreign exchange to buy agricultural commodities, coal, and the necessary raw materials on world markets. Poland, by contrast, was »choked with a surplus of grain and hogs and an enormous overproduction of coal and iron and steel«. Czechoslovakia, meanwhile, had profligately developed »the highest war potential, in proportion to her territory and population, that any country has ever possessed«. The solution to this grave imbalance lay in a Central European customs and currency union that would negotiate external exchanges as a bloc. At first the grouping would comprise Germany, Austria, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia, though Rumania and Poland would also be brought in through agreements focusing on specific commodities. Unfortunately, the egocentric Eduard Beneš had failed to grasp the virtues of the scheme. Overseas, Germany would not insist on restoration of its colonies; it would rest content with a hybrid scheme for »free access to raw materials – that is to say . . . without having to sacrifice foreign exchange for them«.

56 Brüning: *Memoiren*, pp. 102-103; cf. Stehlin, S.A.: *Weimar and the Vatican, 1919-1933*, Princeton 1983, pp. 227-276.

57 Brüning to Admiral Huttemaier, 12 June 1956, Claire Nix Papers (HUG FP 93.4.5). Cf. also Brüning's postwar evaluation of Canaris as a preternatural double agent who wore a series of masks and never revealed his true loyalties, if he had any (Brüning to Hermann Ullmann, 13 July 1946, in: Brüning, *Briefe und Gespräche*, pp. 443-446).

58 See Brüning memorandum for Mr. and Mrs. Waitstill Hastings Sharp, »German Policy as It Stood When I Left Office«, 13 Apr. 1943, Claire Nix Papers (HUG FP 93.4.5). There are additional details about the Danube customs-union scheme in Brüning to Hans Staudinger, 30 Jan. 1941, Claire Nix Papers.

Brüning also had a bright idea for resolving the territorial conflicts that beset his tired continent. In the east, the Poles would give back Danzig and the Corridor. In return Germany would »help« Poland to conclude a union with the Baltic States, giving that country the ice-free port of Memel (Klaipeda) and an impregnable strategic position. All military experts, the chancellor maintained, accepted this exchange as »the soundest contribution to a feeling of security in Europe over the long term.« For the west, Brüning advanced an equally modest proposal. France should withdraw from the Maginot line and agree to neutralize Alsace-Lorraine, although those provinces would revert economically to Germany »as the Alsacians wished.« In compensation, Germany would allow the western countries to construct a more practical defensive line from Utrecht to the Dyle and the Meuse and then along the Vosges. Germany also wanted the freedom to fortify its frontiers and to build a fighter air force forthwith. Yet it would waive the right to produce tanks and bombers for five years. If other countries agreed to recast their armies on the Swiss militia model within that period, Germany would reciprocate; otherwise it would »also have the right to build up heavy weapons«.

Later, in exile, Brüning held to this limited geopolitical vision even as Hitler increased his appetite. However, in prewar conversations with such British luminaries as Stanley Baldwin, Winston Churchill, Lord Runciman, and Lord Halifax, he consistently argued that the best way to undermine Hitler and avoid war was to satisfy Germany's »legitimate claims«.⁵⁹ The most legitimate claims had naturally to do with Austria, the Sudetenland, and Poland. Brüning mustered all his powers of persuasion to convey the essence of the moderate German position: »We want the Corridor, but we don't want war with the whole world because of the Corridor.«⁶⁰ In the fall of 1939, Brüning joined others in sponsoring the meetings of the German Resistance figure, Adam von Trott zu Solz, with Assistant Secretary of State George Messersmith and other Washington notables. And Brüning himself called on President Roosevelt in order to explain the views of the Beck-Hammerstein circle in the German Opposition and to appeal for American intervention in favor of a compromise peace. But here the former chancellor's reality-testing began to fail. He never quite understood why the shopping list of familiar territorial demands that Trott had circulated around town might offend the president and his entourage. Instead he blamed a Jewish plot for his subsequent banishment from official

59 Brüning, *Briefe und Gespräche*, pp. 24, 206-211, 230, 247, 261-265, 267-270, 274-284, 288, 500-505.

60 »Treffen mit dem Außenminister [Halifax]«, Aug. 1939, in: Brüning, *Briefe und Gespräche*, p. 280.

Washington. In trying to make sense afterward of why he had lost access, Brüning fastened on the explanation that Hitler had caused the Reich irremediable harm through his November 1938 *Reichskristallnacht* pogrom. Up to that moment influential Jews had considered Hitler »a bulwark against Communist Russia«. Thereafter, unfortunately, »those who decided policy in the Anglo-Saxon countries fell in with the feelings of those whose co-religionists were so brutally mishandled.«⁶¹

As a result of his ill-fated meeting with Roosevelt, Brüning remained out of the policy loop for the balance of the war. After Allied troops landed in Normandy and began their drive on the Reich, however, he volunteered his suggestions for a post-Nazi regime in two memoranda for DeWitt C. Poole, a branch chief at the Office of Strategic Services whom he had dealt with earlier as U.S. counselor of embassy in Berlin.⁶² Brüning pleaded above all that U.S. occupation forces resist the temptation to make use of the émigrés. Not only would such people, who had lost all touch with German life, attempt to impose their »abstract constitutional or economic programs«, but the German population had not forgotten »the strongly anti-religious antecedents of many of them«. Instead, American Military Government should rely on the traditional authorities in the police, the courts, the civil service, the churches, and industry. Even the pre-Nazi officer corps, once liberated from its Nazi overlords, could collaborate effectively. By contrast, Brüning cautioned against placing reliance on an ever-labile working class. He did not revive the proposal that he had floated in dissident military circles before the war to restrict suffrage to war veterans, their widows, and children over twenty-five.⁶³ He counseled the Allies, however, to rebuild governing institutions from the bottom up, with a constituent assembly based on mass politics postponed for five years.

In the postwar world, Heinrich Brüning felt ever more out of place. There were unbearable losses to bear. He was devastated by the execution of so many dear friends after the failed plot of 20 July 1944, by the destruction of his beloved Münster, and by the abandonment of his faithful Reichstag

61 Brüning to Pünder, June 1947, Box 25, Brüning Papers. On this thrice-told tale, see also Brüning, *Briefe und Gespräche*, pp. 296-300, 388, 416-423. In fact, contrary to Brüning's information, Roosevelt had remained wholly immune to Trott's much-advertised charm. The president wrote to Felix Frankfurter on 17 Jan. 1940: »Surely you did not let your Trott friend get trotted out of the country without having him searched by Edgar Hoover. Think of the battleship plans and other secrets he may be carrying back« (cited in: Klemperer, K. von: *German Resistance against Hitler: The Search for Allies Abroad, 1938-1945*, Oxford 1992, p. 188).

62 Memoranda for DeWitt C. Poole, October and December 1944, Box 4, Brüning Journals and Personal Papers (HUG FP 93.55), Pusey Library; cf. Brüning, *Briefe und Gespräche*, pp. 525-538.

63 Memorandum for Baroness von Willisen, destined for Generals Werner von Fritsch and Gerd von Rundstedt, 31 Aug. 1935, in: Brüning, *Briefe und Gespräche*, pp. 469-470.

constituency in Breslau to the Poles. He saw sinister forces at work everywhere. Pride of place went, of course, to the Jewish-Socialist émigrés, especially those who had worked for the old Prussian Ministry of the Interior, and who now, as adepts of the Morgenthau line in American Military Government, had embarked on a new *Kulturkampf*, collaborating closely with »the Reds and Pinks . . . to eliminate all leading intellectual families and all Christian tradition in Germany, and to open the door to permanent Russian influence on the Continent.«⁶⁴ He imagined that the State Department had blocked his early return to Germany owing to fear of an international incident with the Russians.⁶⁵ He also envisioned a settling of accounts with a long list of enemies, real or perceived. Looking backward to 1930-32, he concluded that his faithful second in the Finance Ministry, Hans Schäffer, had actually committed high treason by revealing state secrets to the French, and he threatened to go public with those charges if Adenauer appointed Schäffer foreign minister.⁶⁶

Increasingly, however, once he returned as a professor to Cologne in 1951, Brüning began to focus his obsessions on Konrad Adenauer, a man with talents as a strategist and economist notably inferior to his own, who nevertheless had succeeded as chancellor where he had unaccountably failed.⁶⁷ Brüning felt that Adenauer had tied the Federal Republic economically to the chariot wheels of France, embraced rearmament too eagerly, and thus forfeited all chances for German reunification. Rathenau, Stresemann, and Brüning, like Bismarck in his day, had understood that Germany's geopolitical position required it to serve as a balance wheel between east and west. Adenauer, out of historical ignorance and perversity, had abandoned that principle.⁶⁸ After delivering a speech adumbrating the interpretation, Brüning came to believe that Adenauer's minions had started tapping his telephone and otherwise harassing him. In 1955 he retired to nurse his grievances in Vermont.⁶⁹

»Bonn is not Weimar.« So goes the familiar refrain. The contrast between the leading Catholic statesmen of the two eras does much to illustrate the

64 Brüning to Hermann Pünder, June 1947, Box 25, Brüning Papers; similar animadversions against the »pack of Levitical nay-sayers« from the old Prussian state bureaucracy in: Brüning to Frau Theo Kordt, 6 Aug. 1947, Nachlaß Erich and Theo Kordt, ED 157/1, Institut für Zeitgeschichte.

65 Brüning to Bruce Hopper, 11 Sept. 1948, Box 15, Brüning Papers.

66 Brüning to Otto Friedrich, 30 Aug. 1954, Claire Nix Papers (HUG FP 93.4.5).

67 For Brüning's running commentary on the Adenauer government from 1949 onward, the most complete source is his letters to H. Fritz Berger in: Bände 39-40, Nachlaß Oberregierungsrat Fritz Berger, Bundesarchiv Koblenz.

68 See Brüning's speech to the Rhein-Ruhr-Klub in Düsseldorf, 2 June 1954, in: Verne Kohl (Ed.): *Heinrich Brüning, Reden und Aufsätze*, pp. 283-306.

69 Brüning to Otto Friedrich, 30 Aug. 1954, Claire Nix Papers (HUG FP 93.4.5).

difference.⁷⁰ The British writer Harold Nicolson, visiting Berlin in the harsh winter of 1932, concluded that »the unintellectual people are beginning to feel that Brüning and not Hitler represents the soul of Germany«. ⁷¹ Brüning indeed embodied many of the classic Prussian virtues: honesty, laboriousness, a willingness to sacrifice, and selfless devotion to the state. But he also displayed certain characteristic faults. Despite his luminous intellect and mastery of economics, the soul of Germany has fared better in other hands.

70 Morsey, R.: Brüning und Adenauer: Zwei deutsche Staatsmänner, Düsseldorf 1972.

71 Nicolson, H.: Diaries and Letters, 1930-1939, New York 1966, p. 108 (24 Jan. 1932).

Die Zwischenkriegszeit - ein neuer Kapitalismus nimmt Gestalt an

Jürgen Kuczynski

I. *Neuartige Charakteristika des Kapitalismus in der Zwischenkriegszeit*

Die Bourgeoisie, die herrschende Klasse im Kapitalismus, ist in einem gewissen Sinne eine revolutionäre Klasse. Schon im »Kommunistischen Manifest« heißt es: »Die Bourgeoisie kann nicht existieren, ohne die Produktionsinstrumente, also die Produktionsverhältnisse, also sämtliche gesellschaftlichen Verhältnisse fortwährend zu revolutionieren. Unveränderte Beibehaltung der alten Produktionsweise war dagegen die erste Existenzbedingung aller früheren industriellen Klassen.«

Darum hat Lenin den Kapitalismus - und das haben alle kommunistischen Parteien seit Stalin vergessen - stets sowohl als Feind wie auch als Lehrmeister betrachtet. Nach der Beendigung des Bürgerkrieges und der Interventionskriege, seit 1921, seit der Einführung der Neuen Ökonomischen Politik (NÖP) hat Lenin die Bolschewiki immer wieder ermahnt, auf dem Gebiet der Wirtschaft vom Kapitalismus zu lernen.

Und die Entwicklung des Kapitalismus in der Zwischenkriegszeit - das hat uns insbesondere Knut Borchardt, dem dieses Buch als Festschrift gewidmet ist, gelehrt - verlangt die besondere Aufmerksamkeit aller Wirtschaftswissenschaftler. In dieser Zeit - erste Anfänge können wir bereits mit dem Beginn des Jahrhunderts beobachten - fand eine besondere Wandlung in der Gestaltung des Kapitalismus statt, mit Veränderungen, die ihm neue Lebenskraft gaben, die zugleich aber auch ihm innewohnende Widersprüche verschärften.

Positiv wirkte sich für ihn die außerordentliche Konzentration des Kapitals aus. Zwar ging man zuerst den falschen Weg der Monopolbildung. Aber am Ende der dreißiger Jahre wandelte sich die Form der Konzentration zum Oligopol. Es war Lenin, der als erster ausführlicher theoretisch auf die Nachteile des Monopols hingewiesen hatte - etwa auf seine Tendenz, den technischen Fortschritt zu hemmen. Und im Laufe der Zeit erkannte auch das Kapital diesen und andere Nachteile. An die Stelle der »Alleinherrschaft« von Ford in der amerikanischen Automobilindustrie traten drei große Konzerne, und in der Nachkriegszeit, 1945, wurde dem IG-Farben-

Prof. Dr. Christoph Buchheim/
Prof. Dr. Michael Hutter/
Prof. Dr. Harold James (Hrsg.)

**Zerrissene
Zwischenkriegszeit
Wirtschaftshistorische Beiträge**

Knut Borchardt zum 65. Geburtstag



Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft
Baden-Baden

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1994

Die Deutsche Bibliothek – CIP-Einheitsaufnahme

Zerrissene Zwischenkriegszeit: Wirtschaftshistorische Beiträge; Knut Borchardt zum 65. Geburtstag / Christoph Buchheim ... (Hrsg.). – 1. Aufl. – Baden-Baden: Nomos Verl.-Ges., 1994
ISBN 3-7890-3367-7
NE: Buchheim, Christoph [Hrsg.]; Borchardt, Knut: Festschrift

1. Auflage 1994

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