## Excursus

## Attacks on Americanization and Westernization and One Problematic Line of Defense

Doctor Pusch had once again gotten ready to take off, and he had gone over to America. Yet he found freedom there freer than he liked, and very soon after he had tried living in New York, then in Chicago, he returned to Europe.<sup>1</sup>

he American hemisphere, in the form of metaphor, myth, and utopia, has been a presence in Germany for hundreds of years. Germans, like other Europeans, long projected their dreams and fears onto the terra *incognita* on the other side of the world. After the founding of the United States, myths gradually gave way to new cultural, political, and social realities, to which numerous German immigrants contributed. Reflecting a characteristic ambivalence, German observers have felt both an affinity with and an aversion to the American project more pronounced than any other found on the European continent. The positive feelings about democracy, efficiency, and technology that arose in the nineteenth century have been at times overshadowed by resentments regarding the American role in the military defeat of Germany in the two world wars. In addition, the American popular culture that began to sweep the world in the 1920s and has in the meantime penetrated into almost every corner of the globe has elicited enthusiasm from the masses and skepticism, if not outright scorn, from the educated elite. Postwar attempts at reeducation and the presence of American troops since 1945 have of course also had a tremendous impact. In short, the U.S. has been the most significant "other" in German life for over a half-century. (The Russian presence in the former GDR, though significant, was not—if one considers the long term—a comparable phenomenon.)

American influence is often discussed on a purely theoretical plane. To illustrate its quotidian ubiquitousness, I have selected a number of passages from *Der Tagesspiegel*, the Berlin daily, from August 1997 to January 1998. They represent only a fraction of the information about, interpretation of, and comparison with America available day in and day out in the print and visual media. An alien reader who knew nothing about the earth's geography might well have the impression that Germany and the U.S. were not separated by an ocean, but rather close neighbors.

- On a tour of the U.S., Dieter Schulte, head of the German Labor Federation (DGB), asserts that wages are too high in Germany, and that the Germans talk things to death rather than acting creatively like the Americans. ("In Amerika wird einfach mal etwas ausprobiert," August 2, 1997.)
- After Brandenburg's prime minister, Manfred Stolpe, publicly worries that Germany will fall apart trying to copy the American system, American historian David Schoenbaum feels the need to lecture him about "American conditions" (excessive energy use, the gap between private wealth and state funding, the love affair with guns, the number of people without health insurance), claiming that "relatively few Americans" are affected by them. ("Amerikanische Zustände," August 9–10, 1997.)
- After wearing a Stetson on a European tour and talking tough, the American secretary of state is dubbed "Sheriff Albright." (Stefan Kornelius, "Der Erste unter Ungleichen," August 9–10, 1997.)
- Reporter Rainer Stadler is not impressed with arguments against affirmative action. His article begins: "Berkeley, of all places." ("Korrekt und ungleich," August 30–31, 1997.)
- Andrew Young speaks in the legendary Nikolai Church in Leipzig, one of the centers of the GDR opposition before 1989. Some listeners leave early, shaking their heads because Young talks not about the civil rights movement they so revere, but rather about business. He characterizes the opening of a Mercedes plant in Alabama as "one of the greatest victories of the civil rights movement." (Paul Stoop, "Big Business: Verbündeter im Kampf für die Menschenrechte," September 5, 1997.)
- Reporter Rüdiger Scheidges is skeptical about trying out the "get tough" policies of U.S. police departments in Germany. He points out that the U.S., "the most industrialized, most capitalist, most technically advanced country in the world," still has a murder rate twenty times higher than Britain and ten times higher than Germany. ("Mit aller Gewalt gegen Gewalt," September 11, 1997.)

- A German expert on labor law wants his colleagues to consider the American method of job creation, "even though . . . it increases the economic inequality in the populace more and more and creates a growing class of marginalized workers." (Martin Gehlen, "Das amerikanische Jobwunder-eine zwiespältige Verheißung," September 21, 1997.)
- The first McDonald's restaurant is opened in Potsdam. Prime Minister Manfred Stolpe (see above!) is photographed taking a big bite out of a hamburger. Preservationists had been against the opening, but youth members of the Christian Democrats applaud it, saying that now the Potsdamers have an alternative to "conservative gastronomy [!]." ("Ein kräftiger Biß in den 'Branden-Burger," October 9, 1997.)
- In an article about the Crazy Horse Memorial in South Dakota, an American journalist is quoted as saying that the people behind the memorial are "news Nazis." Tagesspiegel reporter Robert von Rimscha explains to his readers: "In contemporary American usage, the suffix '-Nazi' refers to a stubborn ideologue who only accepts his own truths." ("Das größte Denkmal der Welt," October 13, 1997.)
- In a review of the movie Air Force One, critic Jan Schulz-Ojala expresses his disgust at the role of German directors in Hollywood: "American directors shy away from making such cineastic stories for first graders. . . . In Roland Emmerich [Independence Day] . . . and now Wolfgang Petersen, Hollywood has found two Germans who are willing to deliver crude patriotism —and they're even proud of it." ("Fritzchen spielt Krieg," October 23, 1997.) In an interview with Petersen in the same edition, the director admits that, "as a German," he was not able to try his hand at patriotic films.
- In an interview with American expatriate author Donna Leon, German readers are provided with the following tidbit: "Today, I feel like a foreigner in my own country. . . . Everything there is plastic, everything is garbage ... I no longer desire to live in the midst of all this cultural trash—and to be constantly subjected to the terror of pseudo-psychological gabbing." ("Kritische Italien-Liebhaberin," November 2, 1997.)
- Gary Smith, the newly appointed founding director of the American Academy in Berlin, tells his interviewer: "This shouldn't sound arrogant, but a half-century after the Berlin Airlift (Luftbrücke), we are initiating a kind of intellectual airlift." ("Eine intellektuelle Luftbrücke," November 12, 1997.)
- · Robert von Rimscha describes American anxiety about globalization (the "fast-track" bill had just been voted down) and concludes: "The U.S.A. . . . , which likes to make fun of social-welfare-oriented Frenchmen and Germans because of their timidity and deliberateness, have now demonstrated that fear of the new has a majority at home, too." ("Angst made in U.S.A.," November 12, 1997.)

- In a review of Zbigniew Brzezinski's new book *The Grand Chessboard*, Jacques Schuster states: "After all, the United States is one of the few powerful nations that will finish this century for the most part morally undamaged. Beyond that, its principles are values that are worth living by." ("Kein Interesse an globaler Konkurrenz," December 6, 1997.)
- "America is religious and multiethnic. That won't change, even if the immigration laws become more restrictive and bizarre groups claim the status of religions." (Robert von Rimscha, "Religiös und multiethnisch," December 27, 1997.)
- "Drastic change arouses mistrust in Germany—for understandable historical reasons. However, a dramatic shift is exactly what the world increasingly demands." (Fred Kempe [editor of Wall Street Journal Europe], "Der 'German Dream' von Ruhe und Frieden," December 28, 1997.)
- "The puritan esthetic is not permitted to be an end in itself; it must have a message, the most edifying message possible. A Christ figure submerged in urine does not look very edifying. . . . One side calls for political correctness, the other for patriotic correctness. Both are (in the European view) esthetic nonsense. As if nonconformist, disturbing, undemocratic, and message-free content . . . had not always been the privilege of the arts." (Andreas Zielcke, "Frohe Botschaft," December 31, 1997 / January 1, 1998.)
- "No graffiti on the walls of the single-family homes with porches and back yards. The venerable walls of the university are decorated with neither posters nor political slogans. In Princeton, demonstrations don't have to be broken up, for there are none. Whoever lives here is content. Princeton is beautiful, and Princeton is not America." (Hans W. Korfmann, "Hier gibt es keine Demonstrationen," January 2, 1998.)
- "Critics of the gigantic highway expansion are most upset about the shopping malls out in the country. . . . With their dozens of shops and free parking, they cause the traffic problems, they say. But the objections are coming too late. When Berlin and Brandenburg agreed in 1993 not to allow another 'Wild East,' most of the shopping malls were already up and running or under construction." (Claus-Dieter Steyer, "Im Kriechgang zum Einkaufstempel," January 4, 1998.)

The wealth of information about the U.S. might be one reason why the Germans have such strong opinions about the former occupying power. It is certainly indisputable that they know much more about us than we do about them. This has of course always been the lot of small(er) states.

Many of the key figures in the German tradition of conservative cultural criticism, including Nietzsche, George, Hofmannsthal, and Thomas Mann, felt ambivalence, even antipathy toward the United States.<sup>2</sup> Many of the

contributors to Die selbstbewußte Nation picked up this thread. To bring these sentiments into focus, one might consider the following two statements made in 1925, during the most stable period of the Weimar Republic. The first expresses sympathy, even enthusiasm for the U.S.:

Concrete and sentimental, thus in a positive sense naïve—such is the method of Americanism, in the life of the soul and the spirit as in practical affairs. No burden of culture weighs this method down. It is young, barbaric, uncultivated, willful. It has that free and strong breath we sense in the poems of Walt Whitman and which already enchanted Baudelaire. It follows no abstract or historical ideal, but instead follows life. Americanism is fanaticism for life, for its worldliness and its present-day forms.

Americanism thus appears as the strongest opponent of romanticism, which sought to flee worldliness. It is the natural enemy of all distraction from the present, whether through a backward-looking conception of history, through the mystical, or through intellectualism.<sup>3</sup>

In this text, America has become an illustration of German vitalist philosophy. The reference to the "burden of culture" also harks back to Goethe's 1827 poem "To the United States," in which the poet envies the people who need not engage in "useless remembering." Those who believe in the inherent superiority of a culture that has evolved over time—despite their veneration of the Goethean icon—are of course horrified by this and fear what is to come:

An equivalence of souls unconsciously arises, a mass soul created by the growing drive toward uniformity, an atrophy of nerves in favor of muscles, the extinction of the individual in favor of the type. Conversation, the art of speaking, is danced and sported away, theater brutalized into cinema; literature becomes the practice of momentary fashions. . . . And since everything is geared to the shortest units of time, consumption increases; thus does genuine education—the patient accumulation of meaning over the course of a lifetime—become a quite rare phenomenon in our time, just like everything else that can be achieved only by individual exertion. . . . What is the source of this terrible wave threatening to wash all the color, everything particular out of life? Everyone who has been there knows: America. The historians of the future will one day mark the page following the great European war as the beginning of the conquest of Europe by America.<sup>5</sup>

Although he perhaps was not aware of it, the author of these lines was not speaking about Europe at all, but rather about the European cultural elite and its conception of what the "Old World" should be. From the perspective of the masses, life had become actually more colorful than before thanks to the availability of cheap entertainment in the form of movies, gramophones,

radio, competitive sports, dance halls, etc.<sup>6</sup> High culture had not been consumed by the masses in earlier epochs (Shakespeare's Globe Theatre being a notable exception), and that did not change. What did change was the status granted to those who produced works of high culture. Over a period of time, the creators of such culture had to yield their pedestals to technological wizards like Edison, daring adventurers like Lindbergh, and athletes like Joe Louis (or, in the German case, Max Schmeling).

Although the decline of the *Bildungsbürgertum* began in the nineteenth century, it has yet to reach its conclusion. Some conservatives even dream of reversing the process of decline.<sup>7</sup> The lamentations of the last hundred years continue to be repeated with little variation:

Someone has said that the people ("Volk") is the highest and the lowest. That may be accurate in a historical sense, even more so in a mythical one. Today, however, the German people no longer creates a secret treasure in the soul of the individual, a treasure from which he could derive strength. He [the people] is nothing but a moody, lazy majority potentate. A destroyer of absolutely all intellectual power. He speaks German only out of laziness. Most of his emotions and interests could be better expressed in American [English].<sup>8</sup>

Botho Strauß wrote these words in the 1990s, shortly before the publication of "Impending Tragedy." His vision of the German people in its unspoiled state is a Romantic idealization of a people's community (Volksgemeinschaft) that may or may not have existed in a distant past. The idea of a "treasure" produced by a homogenous culture is similar to the "secret Germany" (geheimes Deutschland) yearned for in the George Circle. Peter Handke has expressed similar feelings, but there is one important difference. Whereas Strauß, despite his interest in American literature and theater, never felt especially close to the U.S., Handke did. As a critic has recently pointed out, the protagonist of his 1972 novel *The Short Letter about a Long Good-bye* (Der kurze Brief zum langen Abschied) did not fear that his European identity and artistic sensitivity would be damaged by "eating fast food at some gas station in the U.S.A." Until 1989, when he wrote his Essay on the Jukebox (Versuch über die Jukebox), his love of pop culture and "commodity esthetics" remained strong, and anti-American resentments did not appear. It was only the disappearance of the old Yugoslavia that brought forth anti-Western feelings.9

German elitist writers and other New Right intellectuals would be less concerned about the infiltration of American mass culture if they were to read—and believe—the analyses of it provided by certain scholars writing in English. Richard Pells, for example, argues that "the 'Americanization' of Eu-

rope is a myth. A powerful and enduring myth, often cherished by the Europeans themselves because they can use it to explain how their societies have changed in ways they don't like, but a myth nonetheless." Despite Allied efforts at postwar reeducation, Germany provides, according to Pells, in its "mixture of acquiescence and defiance," an illustration of the European ability to resist outside pressure. The motivation behind Pells's book is a desire to advocate democratic "free choice" as opposed to the "paternalistic prescription" favored by European elites. 10 Similarly, Rob Kroes describes how American cultural products are adapted to European sensibilities, and he celebrates the "resilience [of] . . . the old European cultures that refuses to be washed away easily."11 Kroes speaks of "cultural appropriation," of "an experiment in creative identification,"12 but neither he nor Pells has much empathy for those who might chafe at the role of mere adapter.

The same is true for Roger Rollin, who states categorically: "The world has been McDonaldized." From Rollin's perspective, anyone who asks whether this is "progress" is a "cynic." 13 He seems surprised that "those on the receiving end of American exports" seem more interested in the process than the exporters. 14 Stephen Haseler, who rather simple-mindedly equates anti-Americanism with opposition to democracy, discusses "traditional German criticisms of the United States" in the context of the "contemporary search for a separate German identity" and worries that "these deepseated . . . 'cultural' criticisms could enter mainstream thinking." <sup>15</sup> Haseler wrote this in 1985, and he located the troublesome elements not in the New Right, but rather among the "Greens" and the "peace movement." Perhaps the most thoughtful contribution to this discussion is that of Paul Hollander, who began his study of anti-Americanism with conceptions not unlike those of Pells. Even though Hollander retains his partisanship for the American system, he concludes that "hostility toward the United States, and especially certain aspects of American culture, is not always or entirely irrational, and even some of its irrational manifestations may originate in conditions that warrant concern." 16 Like Haseler, he examines such hostility on the left, not the right (as evidenced by his multiple references to Günter Grass). Despite his capacity for objective analysis, Hollander has a blind spot that distorts his perception:

[T]he restlessness of estranged intellectuals and the hostility of the adversary culture are in all probability generalized responses to the discontents of life in a thoroughly modernized, wealthy, secular, and individualistic society where making life meaningful requires great ongoing effort and remains a nagging problem—at any rate for those whose attention does not have to be riveted on the necessities of survival. <sup>17</sup>

German critics of American influence doubtless exhibit the responses described here, but these responses are not completely unrelated to the social conditions referred to at the end of this passage. This is to be expected, since practically the entire German populace has been engaged in a struggle for survival twice in this century. This experience has not disappeared from the German collective consciousness, and there is no reason to believe that it will in the near future. Those who have been pushed to the edge of the abyss in wartime would surely be traumatized if that were to become a real possibility in peacetime.<sup>18</sup>

In his 1993 study of German anti-Americanism, 19 Dan Diner takes a stance similar to Hollander's. Diner, a history professor who teaches in both Tel Aviv and Essen, writes that his study was "triggered by the reactions of the German public to American involvement in the Gulf War of 1991" (ix). As someone who has gained a reputation as a critical intellectual, <sup>20</sup> Diner displays a strange form of self-censorship when writing about German attitudes toward the U.S. On the one hand, he obviously has no sympathy with the "Romantics' clear disapproval of America [that] went hand in hand with general opposition to liberal views" (38). In convincing fashion, he demonstrates why one should reject the modern versions of such disapproval as manifested in such books as Adolf Halfeld's Amerika und der Amerikanismus (1927), Leo L. Matthias's Die Entdeckung Amerikas oder das geordnete Chaos (The discovery of America or the orderly chaos, 1953) and Die Kehrseite der USA (The other side of the USA, 1964), and Caspar Schrenck-Notzing's<sup>21</sup> Charakterwäsche. Die amerikanische Besatzung in Deutschland und ihre Folgen (Characterwashing: The American occupation of Germany and its consequences, 1965). On the other hand, he devalues any and all criticism of the U.S. by linking anti-Americanism with anti-Semitism:

Like a cultural code, it [anti-Americanism] is expressed even by people having neither practical nor theoretical knowledge of America.

In this way, though not only in this way, anti-Americanism resembles anti-Semitism structurally (as well as in the selection of metaphors). In some respects, anti-Americanism can even be understood as a further stage in the secularized hostility towards Jews. Even though the two phenomena, on account of their different developmental histories, could never be considered identical, they both represent ideologically shaped reactions to modernity. (20)<sup>22</sup>

Although Diner is cautious in his formulations ("in some respects," "even though"), this linking is comparable to the "fascism club" oft wielded by German leftists against their critics. What is strange is that one finds another turn of phrase that sounds much like Hollander: "[N]ot all perceptions are products of irrational spouting of blind figments of the imagination" (12). Diner has no desire to discuss such perceptions, however. When critiquing Rolf Winter's<sup>23</sup> book about the violent nature of U.S. society, for example, he speaks meekly of "facts which are not being contested here individually" (146). When dealing with Hans Magnus Enzensberger, a sometime critic of the U.S. with a formidable intellect, Diner's analysis is more than questionable. He cites a 1968 statement by Enzensberger ("Fascism is not hideous because the Germans practiced it, but because it is possible everywhere."24) and interprets it as follows: "The horror of Nazism referred to as fascism thus does not lie in its past reality, but in its future possibility" (129). What Enzensberger meant to say was that it is not the particular perpetrator that makes fascism hideous (a characterization that he would not reject), but rather the realization that this was—and continues to be—a human possibility. As we have seen above, Enzensberger does not view his countrymen through rose-colored glasses, but his 1968 statement does dispute the singularity of the Holocaust, something that Diner cannot accept. In the end, Diner is not sure that Germany has irreversibly become part of the West. His reservations are not his alone, and he cannot be denied the right to be "anxious" (108) about the future. However, he opens himself up to criticism when he asserts that "the stance toward America is an indicator for the Westernization of Germany" (108). This is tantamount to proclaiming that there is only one viable model for modern society, and those who do not embrace it are untrustworthy. Such proclamations are of course welcomed by the New Right, since they support the view that Germany is a mere satellite without its own identity. If Diner refers to American "political culture" as the measure of all things, the authors of another study also include U.S. popular culture, making the mix even more potent.

In the past few years, Germanist Richard Herzinger has become a tribune of liberalism in Germany. His cultural commentary, which has appeared in *Die Zeit, Der Spiegel, Der Tagesspiegel*, and elsewhere, concentrates on themes like human rights, cultural pessimism, the Holocaust, neonationalism, fundamentalism, and utopia.<sup>25</sup> In 1995, he published, together with Hannes Stein (whose field is English literature), a volume entitled *Endzeit-Propheten oder* 

Die Offensive der Antiwestler (Apocalyptic prophets or the offensive of the anti-Westerners). The authors' views are close to those of Dan Diner, but they go much farther. In contrast to most of the writers who have been presented in this study, they clearly enjoy utilizing humor and irony to make their points. This can be quite refreshing; unfortunately, there are also instances of unintended humor. These arise mainly when the virtues of mass culture are being praised. The dedication and epigraph of Apocalyptic Prophets were carefully chosen to emphasize the direction of the authors' thinking. The book is dedicated to the memory of Karl Popper, whose rejection of nationalism and primitivism are cited in the text (89, 225). The epigraph is a quotation from Robert Kennedy's To Seek a Newer World:

To be an American also means having been ostracized and foreign, it means having gone down the path of exile and knowing that whoever turns away the ostracized, the foreign, and the exiled is also turning away America.<sup>27</sup>

The insertion of this quotation should indicate to the reader that the book in question has less to do with America than with an idealized view of what America should be.

Herzinger and Stein reject pacifism, so it is only logical that they would resort to a scorched-earth policy in their book. After they have attacked representatives and resurrectors of the Conservative Revolution, anti-Semites, regionalists, communitarians, cultural nationalists, tribalists, advocates of political correctness, environmentalists, pacifists, fundamentalists, and others,<sup>28</sup> there are few figures left standing. These include Voltaire, Karl Popper, Albert Camus, Robert Hughes, liberal Israelis ("A miniature version of the U.S.A. has emerged on the Mediterranean." – [43]<sup>29</sup>), and Woody Allen.<sup>30</sup> Many of those subjected to scathing criticism (or sarcastically humorous dismissal) are also "red flags" for the New Right. This is because both liberals and rightists reject the world view of the generation of 1968. Herzinger and Stein of course see no common ground, as evidenced by the following statement about the legacy of Romanticism: "The leftists repeated the litany that bourgeois democracy is only a formal one; their rightist opposite numbers [the English term is used in the original] decry the absence of values ("Wertevakuum") in mass society" (12). They reject both "progressive" and "reactionary" (195) antiliberals while defending the empty space ("Leerstelle") at the center of liberalism (12). This is not the place to discuss the supposedly nonideological character of liberal thought. Of interest here is the authors' attitude toward American culture, especially popular culture.

That their assessment would be a positive one is a foregone conclusion, given their characterization of the U.S. as "a kind of new founding of the human race . . . a continuing, unfinished experiment with a society that is open to all people of every ethnic and cultural origin" (33). Europe has no right to a separate identity, since it has almost destroyed its own "so highly praised culture" in two wars. (This is a rather strange formulation, given the otherwise sharp criticism directed toward the path of German history in the volume.<sup>31</sup> The two world wars were not initiated by "Europe.") At this historical juncture, "'Americanization' is not an unpleasant secondary effect, but rather the conditio sine qua non of European freedom" (34). Herzinger and Stein have no sympathy with European intellectuals who—like theater director Ariane Mnouchkine - see Euro-Disney as a "Chernobyl of culture" (34). More to their liking is the attitude of German-Romanian writer Richard Wagner, who has said that the progress of democratic reforms in Eastern Europe can be measured by "the degree of proliferation of McDonald's restaurants" (35). (In 1995, Romania still did not have one.) They claim that in every anti-American, there is a small voice persistently whispering: "Do it right, go to McDonald's" (24).32 An explanation of why this is the "right" thing to do is also provided: "McDonald's symbolizes the American experiment of combining equality for all with the profit motive and entrepreneurial initiative" (25). This institution is hated by both right and left, it is claimed, because it has surpassed the fascist notion of "Eintopfsonntag" (people from all walks of National Socialist life came together to eat a simple bowl of soup on Sundays) and also realized the old goal of the labor movement to have the proletarians partake of the culinary bounty of the bourgeoisie. It is difficult to take such (admittedly humorous) statements seriously, but there is no question that the authors are not joking when they contrast the purportedly antimodern, tribalistic comic Asterix (in which the last remaining Gallic village defies the modernizers from Rome) with the world of "Entenhausen," the German name for the town where Donald Duck lives.<sup>33</sup> Here we find a "voluntary association of autonomous individuals" that has replaced "tribal ties" (179). Allowance is made for a great variety of lifestyles, and the private sphere is respected. (This was before the advent of Kenneth Starr.) There is no discrimination, since dogs, pigs, and owls can compete with ducks for leading positions in the community. The political system is stable, prosperity has reached (almost) everyone, and Donald is the kind of worker that European entrepreneurs fantasize about: "mobile and willing to retool and unwilling to put up

with the lack of opportunities in his profession" (183). Entenhausen even offers niches for the "social-romantic" pigs and the "hypermoralistic collectivist" Bad Boy Club. These outsiders demonstrate that there is no alternative to "modern metropolitan civilization" (184).

Do Herzinger and Stein look up from their comic book and think that they are still in fantasy land? No, they know the difference between fairy tales and reality.<sup>34</sup> They readily admit that the West is not "the best of all worlds." Their commitment to it is, they point out, "nothing more than the cheerful admission that we have no utopia" (11). At the same time, they fear that the West may be once again betraying its universalist roots, as it did when it stood by and let the Holocaust take its course (228-229). This was—and is—a serious matter, but the authors do not convince us that such a betrayal is contrary to the logic of the liberal system. Although they believe that the uniqueness of Western civilization lies in its capacity for self-criticism (230), there is one area of that civilization that is never subjected to scrutiny, namely the economic system. We learn that the residents of Entenhausen are so absorbed in "the joys of the consumer and leisure society" that they have no time to think about something as "boring" as an "identity" (188). Such thoughts might be boring for the authors, who indirectly hint at their own identity as "rootless cosmopolitans who feel absolutely no desire to belong to a community" (80), but for the majority of the human race, self-definition via consumer goods is not an option. If it were, ecological catastrophe would be a probability rather than a possibility. Capitalism can thrive in a society that upholds the universalist rights of the Enlightenment, but these rights are not a precondition of success. Other things are necessary, however, i.e., constant economic growth, increases in productivity, a quick return on investments, and rising profits. These are the "values" (and the cultural, environmental, political, and social ramifications that follow from them) that warrant no attention from Herzinger and Stein, and this omission—be it intentional or not — greatly diminishes the impact of their polemics against the "anti-Westerners." In the final analysis, their offensive backfires and even provides succor to those who strive to discredit the Enlightenment as a sham purveyed by cynics. Unfortunately, their attempt to neutralize anti-Semitism fails as well. The New Europe, they assert, must embrace the "Jewish component of European history," what is described as "the liberating, opening, cultivating effect of capitalism" (92). The "moneyed Jew" (Geldjude – 93), personified by the cosmopolitan Rothschild family, is offered as a much better model for the

continent than culture, something basically "irrational" that can be used as a springboard for tyranny (94-95). The accompanying portrayal of Switzerland as a model country where money — rather than "mythical origins" — determines identity (91-92) has been rendered especially embarrassing by events of the past few years. This faux pas, together with the implication that "Jewish rootlessness" is an ideal worthy of emulation, will not be quickly forgotten.

Any critique of *Apocalyptic Prophets* undertaken from abroad would be incomplete without an attempt to demonstrate just what Herzinger and Stein are reacting to. Their missionary zeal is at least somewhat more understandable when it is compared to the spoutings of the prophets referred to in their title.<sup>35</sup> Many harrowing accounts of American arrogance, bullying, ignorance, soullessness, etc. have come out of Germany in this century. In this context, one example will have to suffice. It is a 1996 volume entitled *Deutschland* eine amerikanische Provinz. Der große Seelenmord (Germany-an American province: the great killing of souls).<sup>36</sup> The author, Gustav Sichelschmidt,<sup>37</sup> has done students of anti-Americanism and the German right a great service. They need not scour libraries and archives in search of characteristic themes and formulations. Everything that one needs to know is found in this volume. One can speak of four major questions: 1) Who are the Germans? 2) Who are the Americans? 3) What is the West? 4) What is the shape of the future, and how will it be affected by Europeans (especially Germans), Americans, and **Jews?** 

Germany is, for Sichelschmidt, first and foremost the land of idealism as opposed to materialism. Goethe is the embodiment of this idealism, and its purpose, already formulated in the Romantic era, is to counter the "disenchantment" (88, 141) of the world typical of our age. This can only be accomplished in the inner realm ("humane[s] Weltinnenreich") that is the true home of the Germans (95, 163). Germany has been prepared for this task by its many trials over the course of history. The project of dismantling the special German identity during and after the Thirty Years' War is compared to the plan for reeducation after 1945. One important vehicle for this was and is the contamination of the German language ("our old honest German" [49]) with foreign words and concepts, leading to a German-American "Mischidiom" (8). The foreseeable end result is cultural genocide: "One does not think in a German manner anymore, and soon one will not feel in a German manner. One speaks the language of our country less and less"

(61). Citing Lamennais, Sichelschmidt wonders if his people is not destined for the role of martyr ("Märtyrervolk") put on earth to preserve true humanity (93). (Germany already saved the West by battling the Red Army, it is emphasized - [18, 98].) Although one stereotype of the "Hun" is the fanatical soldier, his militarism is supposedly a mere invention (angedichtet [46]). Echoing the words of Thomas Mann, Sichelschmidt also asserts that the Germans are basically "nonpolitical" (91). Their main failing, he claims, is that they are too malleable, too ready to become "loyal subjects" (65, 107), "opportunists," and "fellow travelers" (57). This is not a revelation, but another assertion is: the Germans are more "friendly toward foreigners" than anyone else (63). This is the portrait of a nation of victims subjected to innumerable injustices. (The term "castrated" appears four times in the text.) To bolster his case, Sichelschmidt cites positive assessments of German culture ranging from Madame de Staël and Emerson to Knut Hamsun and former Boston University president John Silber. He leaves no doubt that the disappearance of this culture would be "the true German catastrophe," whereas the destruction in 1945 was terrible, but not a threat to German identity (82-83).

An integral segment of victimology is the search for a conspiracy, and Sichelschmidt's description of the United States leads exactly down that path. In his Manichean scheme, America is diametrically opposed to Germany in every possible respect. Symbolized by Hollywood and the "Wall Street mentality" (7), this is a country without culture that represents "the greatest danger for all civilized nations" (39). Educated Germans cannot accept the moralizing tone used by the descendants of both the murderers of the Native Americans and slave owners, according to the author: "How would it be if good old Uncle Sam, instead of putting up Holocaust museums all over, would build memorials to the Indians who were sacrificed on the altar of history or to the (too) many millions of black slaves that died?" (139). (This is the only instance where the world "Holocaust" is used in the book.) Beyond the issue of guilt-Dresden and Hiroshima are mentioned (130) and the conduct of the Vietnam War is termed "bestial" (112)-Sichelschmidt's America is an ametaphysical, conformist, hypermaterialistic, nonreligious, soulless, superficial society that exports catastrophe to the Germans and the rest of the world. The "goods" include

AIDS, alcoholism, antiauthoritarian education, drug addiction, youth sects, violent crime, the Mafia, cultural decline, pornography, record divorce rates, sexism, terrorism, racism, neuroses, and all kinds of damage to civilization. (45)

This is far from the world of Herzinger/Stein, and it is only logical that the author warns of the "horrible legacy of liberalism" (171) and rejects the "Laissez-faire" attitude of modern intellectuals (71). One "export" not on the above list, simply because it permeates the entire book, is American popular culture, especially popular music. German youth, alienated from "serious German music" (56), welcomes the "invasion of the Afro-American jungle" (9). Sichelschmidt chooses his words carefully here. The word "nigger" only appears twice in his book, and on both occasions, it is contained in a citation or reference. Jazz, we are reminded, was considered to be "nigger music" by the Nazis (56), and an unnamed American is quoted as saving that the rhythms of rock-and-roll are being used to bring the whites down to "the level of a nigger" (60). Such rhetorical strategies lead to the question of whether Sichelschmidt is really against America per se. When he refers to John Kenneth Galbraith's thesis about the "capitulation of the white elite" (118), one can imagine that he sees a conspiracy at work in the U.S. as well.

This is indeed the case, although it is difficult to follow the argument. On the one hand, Sichelschmidt clearly rejects the whole idea of an artificial society that has not evolved organically. On the other hand, one suspects that the "white elite" might have done better if it had not been subject to corrupting influences. Who was, then, actually behind the cosmopolitanism, hedonism, and mammonism that he deplores? This only becomes obvious in the second half of the book, where references to Jews abound. The author readily embraces the highly controversial view that it was primarily Jews who profited from the African slave trade (140, 144), so Jewish infiltration can be posited as appearing very early on. The American variety of capitalism is called "Raffkapitalismus" (33), the term, mentioned above, that was favored by the Nazis. The Americans' notion of being a chosen people may have come from the Jews, who joined them in an "unholy cooperation" (37). Despite the use of the word "cooperation," the general impression is that the Jews have worked behind the scenes. They dominate the media (85), and Hollywood was and is "firmly in the hands of the Jews" (121). It is surely no accident that the only film title that appears in the book is Schindler's List ("unspeakable"), and Sichelschmidt blames the "Jewish bosses" in the film industry for cementing the negative image of Germans on the screen (130-131). It is impossible to dispute that such stereotyping exists, but Sichelschmidt does not ask himself if it might at least partially be connected to the course of modern German history. On the contrary: He understands very well, he says, why the German people chose to end the disaster of the Weimar Republic by "opting" (98) for the Nazis, and he theorizes that the Third Reich might have been "a secret revolt against Americanism" (99).

Although the tone of Germany—An American Province is generally pessimistic, the author does hope that another "revolt" might still take place. He often compares today's U.S. to the Roman Empire in its decline. The German "historical mission" is to preserve the West in the face of the "great American apocalypse" (141). In contradistinction to Herzinger/Stein, Sichelschmidt speaks of a "specific occidental self-image" that must oppose Americanism (45). In other words, the center of the West is not America, but Europe. Although Sichelschmidt singles out the French for high praise in light of their resistance to American cultural influence (49-51, 119-123), he envisions Germany as the "spiritual leader of Europe" (the phrase comes from writer and Nobel Prize winner Paul Ernst [156]). If one compares this train of thought to Thomas Mann's Reflections, it is clear that the West has moved in an eastwardly direction. (The position between East and West no longer exists.) Like Mann, Sichelschmidt has found a soul mate in Russia, where, he claims, opposition to American influence in the post-Soviet era goes hand in hand with homegrown anti-Semitism. He is upset that Germans are still afraid to publicly link the two phenomena (126-127). Given his Russophile stance, it comes as no surprise that his favorite critic of the U.S. is Alexander Solzhenitsyn, who became intimately familiar with U.S. "cultural deficits" (127) while an exile in Vermont. When he praises the "brave and disciplined" Red Army (129) and casts aspersions on the U.S. military (13, 111), the reader might well wonder if yet another world war might be in store. This is a mistaken impression, however. Sichelschmidt does intimate that the Germans have secret strengths (Berserkerkräfte [88]), but he leaves no doubt that Germany will not survive as a recognizable entity unless there is "a decisive collapse" of the United States (157). If this were to come to pass, would it be the end of history? Not in Sichelschmidt's view. Even after the American disappearance from the world stage, the "racially homogeneous Jews" would not stop trying to dominate the world (157-158). In the meantime, the German's duty is to "hate" the Americans (174).

Although Sichelschmidt's book was published in 1996, it reflects the temperament and thinking of the Old Right more than that of the New Right. It is a swan song, not a program for political action. Many younger

rightists have realized that it is (politically) suicidal to appear to be loose cannons, and they have decided to transmit their messages in a more subtle manner. In the framework of this excursus, a brief look at Heimo Schwilk's thin volume about the Gulf War can illustrate the shift. In his preface to Was man uns verschwieg. Der Golfkrieg in der Zensur (What we were not told: the Gulf War and censorship),<sup>38</sup> the author sounds not unlike other German anti-Americans.<sup>39</sup> His thesis is that both Saddam Hussein and George Bush had planned from the beginning to manipulate the press. One might expect from this that the two leaders would be put on the same plane, but that is not the case. Although Schwilk rejects the characterization of Hussein as the "Hitler of Baghdad" (23), he does not hesitate to call him a "notorious brute and inveterate militarist," a dictator who is too impatient to develop the kind of military-industrial complex needed to carry out his threats (25). The Germans are criticized for building chemical plants and bunkers and helping to extend the range of the Scud missiles (26), and the possibility that Israelis could be killed by poison gas provided by the Germans is described as "horrible" (31). At least some of these statements could have been made by German leftists.

Schwilk's real concern is connected to the role of the U.S. in the "New World Order" and the lack of respect given the Germans for their contributions to that order. Although he appears to be against press censorship (and upset about the lack of access granted to German journalists like himself), he actually seems to admire American policy during the war. For him, Bush's plan to co-opt the media is a strategy that may be "questionable with regard to democracy" but "understandable with regard to power politics" (29). The German observer appears to be envious of a country that can successfully pursue such strategies. The patriotism of American reporters (75) is also duly noted (see the statement by Wolfgang Petersen above). In contrast to this, the Germans were subject to attacks in the media for not sending ground troops to the Gulf. Schwilk believes that the U.S. wanted it this way, because German reticence made it easy to portray the European "giant" as a fair-weather ally incapable of being counted on in international affairs (78). He boasts that without German logistical support, the preparation for battle would have been impossible (78). A German chancellor from the New Right, one surmises, would not have hesitated to offer the services of the Bundeswehr.

Schwilk's experiences in Saudi Arabia allow him to demonstrate that his countrymen are not undervalued everywhere. He learns that Germans are

treated well there because they are considered to be "honest, capable, and friendly toward the Arabs" (77). When crossing the border into Saudi Arabia, Schwilk has a long conversation with a Saudi officer, and this conversation is the real center of the book. Lt. Abdul Al-Issa first asks for advice about the top Mercedes model, and this is significant, because, we are told, the fabulous wealth of the oil-rich country allows its residents to always choose "only the best" (48). Wealth has of course brought with it an incredible influx of Western goods, as well as "fast-food chains and garishly colorful amusement parks à la Disneyworld" (49-50). Are the Saudis in danger of losing their souls like the Germans portrayed by Sichelschmidt? According to Schwilk, they are not, because they are careful to distinguish between "the material achievements of the West and cultural modernity" (50). The author apparently also believes that it is possible to separate the two, a feat considered impossible by the Old Right. Schwilk leaves no doubt that he sympathizes with the "Saudi experiment of a symbiosis of modernity and tradition" (51). In Germany, there is a group of people who stand in the way of such an experiment. They are only mentioned in a roundabout way in this book about the Gulf War. Schwilk describes how difficult it was for him to obtain a visa for Saudi Arabia, reporting that German journalists were "mistrusted," since they had the reputation of being "hypercritical, moralistic, and undependable" (33). The term "journalist" is actually a code word for "leftists" or "left-liberals," i.e., the generation of 1968. These are also the people who oppose German military operations abroad. 40 With them cast aside (or, more realistically, sent off to retirement homes), the German presence in the Arab world and elsewhere might take on a different dimension. Perhaps this is the subtext of Schwilk's equation of the Arabs' hyperbolic "rhetoric of destruction" with the reunified Germans' "dream of eternal peace" (46): both are mere facades that crumble when tested. Whereas Sichelschmidt's animosity toward America is unequivocal, Schwilk would apparently like to see his country pursue a dual-pronged strategy: While waiting for the collapse of the U.S., Germany can play along with the "Moloch"41 and regain stature on the international stage.