

Online Supplement II
to
The End and the Beginning

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II

Unsere Töchter die Nazinen (Our Daughters the Nazi Girls).

A Synopsis in English

(Prepared by L. Gossman)

The conditions in which this novel was written, published, and subsequently banned, are briefly described in the essay “Remembering Hermynia Zur Mühlen” in the main volume.

Zur Mühlen and Klein both gave their own accounts of the novel’s genesis and subsequent fate.

Here is Stefan Klein’s as it appeared in the *Österreichisches Tagebuch* soon after Zur Mühlen’s death:

When we returned on April 1, 1933 to Vienna, her native city and mine, Hermynia was deeply shaken by all the things she had witnessed and experienced in the Third Reich, and as she observed the general lack of concern among the Austrians, she became truly obsessed with the desire to tell them what was really going on in the ‘fraternal’ German land and what Austria, which she still thought of as her beloved homeland, should expect. The only way she could do this was by writing. But ‘in the shadow of the Third Reich,’ some ‘democratic’ editors – men who, in their snobbery, would otherwise have been flattered by a visit from a countess – refused even to receive ‘the damned Red.’ Even a truly dear and decent features-page editor told her that he could do absolutely nothing with the sort of thing she had written and that she should bring him humorous sketches that would make readers ‘split their sides laughing’ (his very words). When we got back to our rented room in the Alserstrasse, Hermynia, in despair, flew into a rage.

In the three weeks that followed, she did not write a single humorous sketch. Instead, she completed at one go the novel *Unsere Töchter, die Nazinen*, which was published by the Gsur Press of Dr. Karl Winter, a leftwing Catholic former vice-mayor of Vienna and a critic of the Dolfuss dictatorship,¹ only to be banned two weeks later at the behest of Hitler's ambassador to Austria, Franz von Papen.²

In a supplementary chapter written in 1950 for a post-war republication of *Ende und Anfang*, Zur Mühlen had already given her version of the circumstances in which she wrote her novel and of the difficulties she experienced as she tried to get it published:

I immediately got it into my head that the people here had to be warned. We had to write the truth about National Socialism, we had to write it day and night, we had to write it when it was convenient for us to write and

1 Klein's brief characterisation of Winter needs to be nuanced. See "Notes on the Persons and Events mentioned in the Memoir" under "Gsur Verlag" and the essay "Remembering Hermynia Zur Mühlen: A Tribute," note 33, following the text of Zur Mühlen's *The End and the Beginning*.

2 Klein's testimony is quoted in Manfred Altner, *Hermynia Zur Mühlen*, pp. 140-41. The text of the German Embassy protest (dated 17.XII.1935) is reproduced in facsimile on <http://www.literaturepochen.at/exil/multimedia/image/hzm2.jpg>. Roughly translated, it reads: "The German Embassy has the honor to inform the Foreign Affairs section of the Chancellor's office that among the anti-National Socialist writings published by the Gsur Publishing Company a book has recently appeared, the overall content of which is full of derogatory and defamatory comments about the National Socialist movement in the Reich. Worse still, there are seriously offensive remarks about the Führer and Reichskanzler Adolf Hitler and members of the government of the Reich in innumerable places, and also insulting statements about the German Ambassador von Papen. The book is *Unsere Töchter die Nazinen*, listed as a novel, by Hermynia zur Mühlen. The aforementioned directly offensive comments appear on pp. 20, 32, 47, 50, 80, 125/26, 138, and 155. For example, p. 20: 'The swindler, the charlatan, the guy who can only open his mouth and yell and who is in the pay of heavy industry, Hitler'; p. 32: 'What this Party (the NSDAP) is made up of – the leader, the members, the fellow-travellers – is scum.'" The Austrian government official's comments on the note (marked "Urgent") read as follows: "The novel that appeared with Gsur Verlag, Vienna, contains a series of severe personal attacks and insults directed against Reichskanzler Hitler, as well as Goering and Goebbels. There are also some remarks about Herr von Papen on p. 103. Apart from its hostile attitude to National Socialism, the novel is marked by a strong Marxist, indeed Communist orientation (pp. 112, 127, etc.), along with comments indicating a free-thinking, anti-religious position. All 'good' characters in the novel are for the most part members of Communist organizations, some are Social Democrats. The Soviet Union is the object only of friendly comment. One of the leading characters in the novel, an old Countess, is converted to Communism and indeed to active terrorism at the end. It almost seems as though a clear line of social revolutionary propaganda is being pursued beneath the mask of hostility to National Socialism." The recommendation is that the book be immediately banned and all copies confiscated, "less on account of the offences to Hitler, [which would be punishable] in virtue of the law protecting the honor and respect due to foreign heads of state, than on account of the virtually unconcealed marxist-communist propaganda in it (see, for instance, pp. 112, 123, etc.)." See <http://www.literaturepochen.at/exil/multimedia/image> under "hzm1" through "hzm5" for relevant documents.

when it was not convenient for us. Somehow we had to get the indifferent to open their eyes to the frightful truth – and to the terrible danger threatening Austria. But in this enterprise I was not very successful. Only very few newspapers – among them the *Arbeiter-Zeitung* – agreed from time to time to publish an anti-Nazi short story. Most wanted humorous stories. When one features-pages editor explained that he did not want anti-Nazi things and that I should bring him entertaining little sketches that would make readers split their sides laughing, I flew into such a rage, that I went home, sat down at my desk, and in three weeks wrote my anti-Nazi novel *Unsere Töchter die Nazinen*. It took a good deal longer than three weeks to find a publisher for it. This novel had a strange fate: every publisher who was given a copy to consider, declared he was willing to publish it – on condition that certain passages were altered or eliminated. Every one of them was bothered by something different. But I was unwilling to make the required changes, since I believed they would result in a false representation of the way things truly were. Then I took the novel to Schiller Marmorek, the Socialist, who, with his genuine friendship and infinite willingness to come to the assistance of others, was helping greatly to make our lives easier. (In my first youthful enthusiasm for socialism, I had imagined all socialists were like him.) I shall always think of him with love and gratitude.³ He read the novel and recommended it to Julius Braunthal. Braunthal did not let himself be put out by certain esthetic shortcomings, from which, from his point of view, the book unavoidably suffered, and he agreed to publish it. Naturally, I was delighted – but he wrote at the end of January 1934. Then February came,⁴ and the manuscript disappeared without a trace. After the assassination of Dollfuss, the book was finally put out by the publishing house of Gsur, without any changes, only to be banned two weeks later at the behest of Von Papen. Proceedings were instituted against me, the sole effect of which was that from that time on I received a monthly visit from a detective, who inquired in a friendly manner how I was getting along, said: “You haven’t gotten up to anything, have you?”, politely kissed my hand, and left. The good man must have been very well informed, moreover, for about a month before the *Anschluss* he advised us to move to Czechoslovakia where the climate, he said, might well be healthier for us. Even after the Liberation the unfortunate little book still could not find a publisher. Although the spirit

3 On Schiller Marmorek, see “Notes on persons and events mentioned in the memoir,” following the text of Zur Mühlen’s *The End and the Beginning*, p. 262.

4 In February 1934, weapons searches by the extreme rightwing Dollfuss regime among members of the already outlawed “Republican Defense League” [*Republikanischer Schutzbund*] and the arrest of many well known Social Democrats led to calls for nationwide resistance to the government. A limited civil war broke out (February 12 - February 15), with some of the fiercest fighting in the districts in Vienna where the celebrated workers’ apartments built by the leftwing municipality were situated. The resistance was put down by the police and the military; the Social Democrats were outlawed; and their leaders were imprisoned or fled abroad. On Braunthal (b. 1891), who, like Marmorek, was Jewish, see “Notes on persons and events mentioned in the memoir,” *The End and the Beginning*, pp. 262-63.

of National Socialism is by no means dead, publishers once again prefer humorous novels.⁵

Finally, Klein gave an even fuller account of the episode in a letter to Wilhelm Sternfeld, dated 18.4.1951:

When we came back to Vienna in April 1933, my wife tried to place anti-Nazi pieces warning people in all possible newspapers. People laughed at her and made fun of her warnings, just as they did later in Slovakia. ('Such things can't happen here!'). When the feuilleton editor of an otherwise uncompromisingly anti-Nazi paper told her he wanted not horror stories from her but humorous sketches that would make readers split their sides laughing, she flew into a rage, came home, and wrote the novel *Unsere Töchter die Nazinen* in the space of three weeks... The Allert de Lange firm (Amsterdam) [an important publisher of "exile" German literature – L.G.] said it was willing to publish the novel if my wife would present the workers in a less "positive" light. My wife refused. The Malik-Verlag (Wieland Herzfelde), then located in Prague, was ready to print the novel if a female character in it, a Communist who becomes a Nazi, were recast as a Social Democrat who becomes a Nazi. My wife again refused. The Oprecht firm in Zurich [another major publisher of exile literature – L.G.] declared it would publish the novel if my wife – a penniless writer – would guarantee the translation fees of 800 Swiss francs. That was impossible for financial reasons. The editor-in-chief of the Social Democratic *Kleines Blatt*, Julius Braunthal, accepted the novel and planned to bring it out in a large, popular edition at a low price. . . Then came February. The novel could not be published. The manuscript vanished from the printing press of the *Arbeiter-Zeitung*. After the assassination of Dolfuss, it was published by the left-wing Catholic Gsur Press of Dr. Ernst Karl Winter, but, within two weeks, at von Papen's behest, all copies were confiscated and proceedings instituted against my wife. However, as she had voluntarily renounced all royalties from the book, even though she was in financial straits, in order that the book might be sold at a very low price, 'idealist motives' were acknowledged...and the proceedings were dropped. (But the book was still banned and all copies were destroyed.)"⁶

Unsere Töchter die Nazinen – the term "Nazine" was an invention of Zur Mühlen's and has a satirical ring to it – did in fact make its way into print two years before its short-lived publication in 1936 by the Gsur Verlag in Vienna.

5 Final chapter of the serialized republication of *Ende und Anfang* in the socialist woman's magazine *Die Frau* October 6, 1949 – April 20, 1950, reprinted in *Nebenglück: Ausgewählte Erzählungen und Feuilletons aus dem Exil von Hermynia Zur Mühlen*, ed. Deborah J. Viator-Engländer, Eckart Früh and Ursula Seeber (Bern: Peter Lang, 2002), pp. 243-55.

6 Quoted by Beate Frakele, "'Ich als Österreicherin...'" Hermynia Zur Mühlen [1883-1951]," in Johann Holzner, et al., eds., *Eine schwierige Heimkehr. Österreichische Literatur im Exil, 198-1945*, [Innsbruck: Institut für Germanistik, 1991], pp. 378-79).

It appeared in installments in the Social Democratic Saarbrücken newspaper *Deutsche Freiheit*⁷ between June and August 1934 – a few months before the referendum of January 13, 1935, in which the Saar voted overwhelmingly to rejoin the German Reich.⁸ It thus formed part of the campaign to persuade the Saarlanders to reject reincorporation in the Reich. It was also published that same year (1934) in a Norwegian translation by the Tiden Norsk Forlag in Oslo, a new press founded by the Norwegian Labour Party. (Tiden Norsk was the only publishing house shut down by the Germans during the occupation of Norway.)

As a deliberately political and polemical work, *Unsere Töchter die Nazinen* does not have the nuanced historical and psychological richness characteristic of Zur Mühlen's major works of narrative fiction, such as *Das Riesenrad* (1932; engl. trans. *The Wheel of Life*, 1933), *Reise durch ein Leben* (1933; *A Life's Journey*, 1935), and *Ewiges Schattenspiel* (serialized in the Bern newspaper *Der Bund*, 1938-39; *We Poor Shadows*, 1943) or even of lighter works that Deborah Vietor-Engländer, one of the Austrian writer's few champions, has described – somewhat unjustly in my view – as “potboilers,” such as *Nora hat eine famose Idee* (1933; *Guests in the House*, 1947) or the quite witty and ingenious *Vierzehn Nothelfer* (serialized in the Vienna *Arbeiter-Zeitung*, 1933).⁹ It does not move the reader and provoke a wide range of reflections, as those other works do. Instead, it is narrowly

7 The editor-in-chief of *Deutsche Freiheit* was the Socialist Wilhelm Sollmann. A member of the National Assembly in Weimar in 1919, Sollmann was elected to the German Parliament in 1920, served on its foreign affairs committee, and was the founder and director of the Social Democratic Press Service. He sat on the executive board of the SPD and was one of the first Socialists to be beaten up, imprisoned, and tortured by the Nazis in 1933, but managed to escape to Luxemburg and then to the Saar, against the French occupation of which, ironically, he had demonstrated in the early 1920s. After the referendum of 1935, he fled to England and from there to the United States. He taught international affairs at Haverford, Swarthmore, and Reed Colleges and became an American citizen. Sollmann died in the U.S. in 1951.

8 “I believed that even at very worst, a bit more than 50 percent of the Saarlanders would vote for the status quo, that is for anti-Fascism,” the Austrian writer Manès Sperber wrote. “The fact that in this free election 98 percent had hurried to the polls made us even more hopeful. This made the results even more terrible; they were shattering. [...] We had not been defeated but [...] pulverized: 90.3 percent wanted to ‘come home to the Reich’ immediately, and only 8.8 percent had voted against it. In that region of miners and industrial workers, the Catholics, Socialists and Communists had not even been able to induce 10 percent of the electorate to oppose solidarity with Nazi Germany.” (*Until my Eyes are Closed with Shards*, trans. Harry Zohn [New York and London: Holmes & Meier 1994], pp. 61-62)

9 Deborah Vietor-Engländer, “Hermynia Zur Mühlen's Fight Against the ‘Enemy Within: Prejudice, Injustice, Cowardice and Intolerance’,” in *Keine Klage über England? Deutsche und Österreichische Exilerfahrung in Großbritannien 1933-1945*, ed. Charmian Brinson et al. (Munich: Iudicium, 1998), pp. 74-87.

focused on exposing an immediate political situation and on provoking a practical response to it. One might say that it is related to the author's other works as a political cartoon is related to an oil painting.

Its structure is unusually tight, clearly outlined, and symmetrical for a work by Zur Mühlen. It consists of six interlocking parts, each of which is a first person narrative. The narrators are three women, three mothers of three daughters in a small town on the shores of Lake Constance in Southern Germany, representing three major social classes – Kati Gruber, a working class widow and staunch Social Democrat like her late husband Anton; Countess Agnes, the widowed descendant of an old aristocratic family, who has withdrawn, after a lonely childhood and an unhappy marriage, to a villa by the lakeside where she spends her days in a world of her own; and Frau Doktor Feldhüter, the socially ambitious middle-class wife of a scheming, equally ambitious doctor, who has a club foot, like Goebbels, and whose practice lags far behind that of the long-established and caring local Jewish doctor.

Each of the women has two narratives – an earlier narrative (just prior to the elections of March 1933, which gave the Nazi Party a majority of seats in the Reichstag), and a somewhat later narrative (shortly after the elections). These are arranged symmetrically in the following sequence: Kati Gruber (first narrative), Countess Agnes (first narrative), Frau Doktor Feldhüter (first narrative), Frau Doktor Feldhüter (second narrative), Countess Agnes (second narrative), Kati Gruber (second narrative). The novel thus turns full circle, opening and closing on the testimony of the Social Democratic working-class woman. The testimony of the ambitious and opportunistic middle-class Frau Doktor Feldhüter occupies the center, where it stands in striking contrast to the accounts of the other two women.

While Zur Mühlen is often ironical in her writing, here, in the testimony attributed to the Doctor's wife, she exhibits a remarkable talent for sustained and vigorous satire. The distance between the narratorial voice of the novel and the voice of the character as narrator of her testimony is minimal in the first and last two testimonies; in the case of the two central testimonies by the scheming but unintelligent Frau Doktor, in contrast, the narrator of the novel maintains maximum distance from the voice of the narrating character. This stylistic feature unites the Frau Doktor's two testimonies, which are otherwise given a formal distinction intended to reflect the fact that the electoral triumph of the National Socialists, which occurred between the first and the second, significantly affected their

content and tone. Whereas – appropriately in view of her social class and her self-described impulse to express her feelings openly – both Kati Gruber’s testimonies are represented as spoken and both Countess Agnes’s testimonies – appropriately in view of her social class and reclusive life – are represented as written into a personal diary, Frau Doktor Feldhüter’s two testimonies are delivered differently. The first – before the elections confirm the Nazi hold on power – is said to be “whispered” (“Frau Doktor Feldhüter erzählt flüsternd”). This corresponds both to the opportunistic Feldhüter’s insistence that his wife keep her mouth shut prudently in public until the political situation has become absolutely clear and to the Frau Doktor’s feeling that she counts for nothing, either in society or in her own family, where she is respected neither by her husband nor by her daughter. Her thoughts and her feelings of frustration, rage, and resentment must be concealed not only from the public but from her family and may only be “whispered” to herself. The second testimony – after the Nazis are securely entrenched in power, the super-cautious Feldhüter has publicly declared his family’s support for the movement, and the Frau Doktor has finally realized her dream of being respected as “somebody” in the small town – is represented, in contrast, as told “out loud.”

There are already signs in the first testimony of the Frau Doktor’s capacity for rewriting her own history and of her quite extraordinary Sartrean bad faith. For instance, by the time Hitler has been appointed Chancellor, she has reinterpreted her previously avowed attraction, when she was still an unmarried hospital nurse, to a handsome, young, and, above all, very well-to-do Jewish patient, and her eagerness to marry him (the marriage was frustrated by the opposition of the young man’s parents to their son’s marrying a non-Jew) as a – fortunately unsuccessful – attempt by a filthy Jew to sully a pure German maiden. Likewise a fleeting night of love with a handsome young Austrian – her unique, barely confessed infidelity as Feldhüter’s wife – is recalled at a later point in the narrative as a cunning attack on her Protestant virtue by a Jesuitical Catholic foreigner, while the young man’s lack of interest in pursuing the relationship is explained as the consequence of the awe inspired in him by German womanhood. In the second testimony, however, not only does the Frau Doktor appear as a changed person, sure of herself and increasingly aggressive, but the feelings, situations, and events recounted in the narrative that she “whispered” are totally reconfigured. The hatred, contempt, and physical repulsion she feels for her physically impaired, mean-spirited, ever

calculating, and affectless husband and admits to in the “whispered” narrative is suppressed in the second narrative and replaced by expressions of admiration, love, and devotion. The abortion Dr. Feldhüter performed when his flirtatious daughter, who is chiefly interested in having a good time, had “ein Malheur” vanishes from memory in the second narrative as the Doctor and his wife loudly champion the breeding duty of healthy Aryan German women and condemn the selfishness of those who avoid this obligation. Upper-class and aristocratic ladies, whose recognition had been craved – vainly – in the “whispered” testimony, are loudly suspected in the second narrative of having Jewish ancestors. With the electoral victory of the National Socialists, in sum, the Frau Doktor’s covert narrative of repressed envy, resentment, rage, and frustrated ambition explodes into a triumphant, exemplary narrative which is not only adopted by the speaker herself but offered for public consumption in the new German Reich. The ugly reality of envy, resentment, and rage underlying the heroic “Aryan” façade of National Socialism is thus exposed through the Frau Doktor’s double narrative of the life of the Feldhüters and in particular of her own relation to her husband, her daughter Lieselotte, and other members of the community.

Zur Mühlen also uses the successive testimonies adroitly to advance the narrative gradually through time. Each one reflects a slightly later stage in the historical evolution toward total Nazi dominance of the life of the little town; each one bears witness to the lawlessness and organized violence that increasingly characterize everyday life. At the same time, there is sufficient overlap to allow for anticipations in one narrative of what will be developed more fully in the succeeding one as well as for contrasting versions of the same events by different narrators.

The tour de force of *Unsere Töchter die Nazinen* is to have located the complex issue of the rise of National Socialism not only in the social history of the time – war, revolution, inflation, economic depression, unemployment – but in the personal life experiences and family relationships of the characters, which are, in turn, seen as influenced by social class and class ethos. The focus of the novel might be said to be, in short, on the way family relations both affect and are dramatically affected by politics.

The opening narrative by Kati Gruber provides the basic historical background for the novel – and at the same time the elements of a general historical explanation of the rise of National Socialism. While in service

as a maid with Countess Agnes, we learn, Kati met and married Anton, a good-looking working man with a steady job as a typesetter. The marriage is soon blessed with a child. Kati might have died giving birth to her daughter, however, had not the Countess called in her own doctor, the compassionate Jewish Dr. Bär, who often treated the poor of the little town without charge and who, it turns out later, is a Social Democrat like Anton. Kati, who is not well-read and does not know much about politics, greatly admires her husband, a model of the serious, self-educated, and well-informed member of the working class. She shares his Social Democratic political convictions, partly because she trusts his judgment and partly because her common sense and her instinct, as a woman and a mother, tell her what he has learned by reading and reflection. Like all Social Democrats, Anton believes in a new and better world in the future, after a time of struggle and hardship. The War comes, however, and with it the first significant setback to Social Democratic hopes. Anton had long foreseen that the ruling class would instigate a war, Kati recounts, but he had been convinced that in every country the workers would refuse to serve. Normally strong and in full control of himself, he wept when the Social Democrats in the Reichstag voted the necessary credits for the Kaiser's war and when workers' organizations everywhere went along with the policies of their national governments. Women might have been expected to be opposed to the war, Kati reflects, but in fact many women, no less swayed by nationalist fervor than their menfolk, enthusiastically supported it. Anton, in contrast, predicted that it would be a bloody and ugly affair. And so it was. Many local boys who had been fired by patriotic zeal never came home from the front, many others returned maimed and incapable of supporting themselves or their families. For those behind the lines, the problem was the ever worsening shortage of food. Kati's daughter Toni began to look like a starving stray cat. Once again Countess Agnes helped her former servant out as much as she could, but her resources were stretched as she was trying to help others too. Her own daughter Claudia, nineteen years old by then, was nothing but skin and bone. Only the ten-year-old daughter of Dr. Feldhüter had fat, rosy cheeks, Kati reports. That, she explains, was because, with Dr. Bär serving at the front, Feldhüter, who, like Goebbels, had been exempted from military service because of his club foot, was temporarily the only doctor in town.

Anton is one of the lucky ones who return from the war unharmed. But once again he is disappointed. The war is over, Germany has become a

republic, and the Social Democrats are in power. But they do little to bring about the far-reaching social changes they advocate. As a result, there is a splintering of the left into rival groups – Communists, Independent Socialists, and Social Democrats. Anton is concerned that in its eagerness to establish its credentials as a responsible defender of the new constitution, the Social Democratic government has adopted harsh policies toward its rivals on the Left, while pursuing a more accommodating and lenient policy toward its opponents on the right – even though the irreconcilable hostility of the latter was clearly demonstrated by the failed Kapp putsch. On the material side, the war reparations are a heavy burden on the defeated country and the uncontrolled hyperinflation of 1922 makes life extraordinarily hard for working people. Kati finds some solace in Toni's growing up to be a fine young woman, tall and reflective like her father, and like him, an avid reader and stalwart socialist. She and her father march in the May Day parades, proudly bearing the red flag. Toni's boyfriend at this time is a young Communist and Toni is soon touting the merits of Soviet Russia and comparing it favorably with Germany. Anton worries about his daughter: he fears that she is in for a hard time because of her idealism and her unwillingness to recognize that the road to socialism will be accompanied by many setbacks and disappointments, which it will take patience, determination, and shrewdness to overcome. Kati, for her part, notices with some misgivings that Toni has inherited her father's undemonstrativeness and laconicity, his way of keeping his thoughts and feelings to himself.

Meantime there is a new development in the little town. The National Socialists are gaining ground, making new recruits, parading noisily through the streets, claiming they are the only party that is both socialist and German, fostering enmity between Christians and Jews, and announcing their intention to get rid of the Marxists along with the Jews, since both groups, according to them, are behind Germany's misery. When Kati calls a young Nazi recruit – the errand-boy from the local dairy-farm, whom she has known since he was a child – an utter idiot for being taken in by the Nazi propaganda about "internationalist," un-German Jews and Marxists, she finds a large swastika painted on her door the next day.

After Anton falls sick and dies, Kati takes in washing and mending clothes to make up for the loss of his wages. Toni's Communist boyfriend Seppel wants to help out but Toni rejects his offers and Kati notices that the two are no longer on as good terms as they once were. Meanwhile the

depression has hit the little town and there is rising unemployment. Of the many who are let go at the factory where Toni is employed, most of the white-collar workers and a fair sprinkling of blue-collar workers join the Nazi Party. Street fights between Nazis and Social Democrats and between Nazis and Communists erupt more and more frequently. On January 3, 1931, the factory is closed altogether and Toni too is out of a job. She looks desperately for work, but in vain. Kati finds employment as a cleaning woman for a couple of middle class families and with the income from that and Toni's unemployment benefits, she says, the two of them could have scraped by. But Toni is restless and frustrated, like a caged animal. She spends her time studying the books in Anton's little collection and she and Seppel quarrel more and more frequently and heatedly. She also begins to quarrel with Kati too, as well as with her long-time friends from the Social Democratic movement.. "I did not hold it against her," Kati explains. "I knew that idleness and anxiety about the future were eating away at her." (p. 18)¹⁰

As the 1932 elections for Reichspräsident approach, Kati is surprised that "our Party" (i.e. the Social Democrats) has pledged its support to Hindenburg. "After all, the old man is still a Junker and isn't a proper President for a workers' party." Still, she reflects, he had held to his oath to defend the constitution. "He may not be very smart, he may not sympathize with the workers, but he is an honourable, decent man and he will keep his word." (p. 19) Seppel tries to persuade them both to vote for the Communist candidate, Ernst Thälmann. Kati sticks loyally to the Social Democratic party recommendation. Toni's unexpected and vehement reaction, however, hits Kati like a thunderbolt and opens the central scene of her first narrative.

"Your Thälmann has to dance to Moscow's tune," Toni objects. "I wouldn't dream of giving him my vote." Seppel gets angry. He can understand that Kati, a loyal Social Democrat for so long, will follow the party line and vote for "the old man," but Toni? Toni responds that she has no intention of voting for the old man. "I have to tell you something," she adds. "This international socialism doesn't mean a thing to us Germans. We've seen how much help we got from the International. What we need is German socialism, a socialism that is right for *our* country." Seppel stares at her: "What do you mean by that?" Toni looks at her mother, then at Seppel.

10 Page references are to Hermynia Zur Mühlen, *Unsere Töchter die Nazinen* (Berlin and Weimar: Aufbau Verlag, 1983).

"I don't know yet," she replies, somewhat embarrassed. "But when I vote it will be for a leader of the workers." "So you mean Teddy [Thälmann] after all," Seppel cries. "Silly girl, why didn't you say so right away?" But Toni answers: "There is someone else." For a moment, Kati does not understand. But Seppel immediately grasps who is meant: "That swindler, that charlatan? Have you lost your mind? A lowdown bum who can only shout and scream and is in the pay of the big industrialists – Hitler?" Kati feels a weakness in her knees. That cannot be what her Toni means, what Anton's child means. Seeing how pale Kati has become, Seppel sits down beside her and tries to comfort her. "She is just having us on, comrade," he says. "She's far too smart to do anything like that." But after a moment's silence Toni gives her response in a tormented and sad tone of voice: "I have so much time to think about things now, Seppel," she says. "And I've realized that none of the promises of 1918 have been fulfilled. Our Chancellor is a man of the Centre and the Party [the Social Democrats] lets him get away with everything he wants, every single emergency decree, everything. The Communists yell, but do nothing. The others [the National Socialists] have a program that is right for Germany. No, don't say anything yet. I'm not completely sure yet where I stand. But I have a sense that the real revolutionary energy is now with them. And that's what it's all about. All the parties have disappointed us. We have to give the National Socialists a chance to show what they can do. They'll help the German worker, they'll get rid of the greedy capitalists, and they'll nationalize the big industrial companies. They'll release us from the peace treaties and our country will become strong again, a strong workers' state." (p. 20) Kati is flabbergasted. "My God, Toni, where did you get all this?" Toni answers in her quiet, serious way ("as though trying to excuse herself," Kati thinks): "I have so much time on my hands, so many vacant hours. And I know that if things go on the way they are, I will never find work again. But I want to work. I've read the National Socialist newspapers, I've spoken with National Socialists, and just recently I went to a meeting and heard the Führer speak." Seppel strikes the table with his fist. "The Führer! The Führer! If you already speak like that, you're a lost cause. You... you Nazi Girl!"¹¹ Whereupon he picks up his cap and runs out of the room without a good-bye.

Kati now questions her daughter. "You can't be serious, Toni? You can't, I won't let you do that." "Let me be, mother," Toni replies. "We all have to work this out for ourselves." Suddenly Kati is overcome by rage: "You are

11 The German reads "Du...du Nazine!"

not going to any more Nazi meetings, do you hear. You will have nothing more to do with that mob." But Toni has her answer ready. "Many years ago the Social Democrats were also called a 'mob,' mother. I read that in father's books. Besides, I'm not a child any more. No one tells me what to do and what not to do." Kati resorts to pleas and what few arguments she can muster, but Toni is unmoved. "Don't torture me, mother, please. It's no use... Do you think it was easy for me to break with everything I've believed in for so long? Look, I'm a working class girl. I have to be on the side of those who side with us. Not with a Herr von Hindenburg and not with a man who takes his orders from a foreign country and from the Jews, but with an honest German worker and with a party that is being persecuted just because it *is* revolutionary."

After this exchange, Kati and Toni grow more and more estranged. Toni keeps reading Anton's old books, but also the new books and pamphlets being put out by the Nazis. Kati does not know how her daughter voted in the April 1932 runoff elections for President and does not dare to ask. [Hitler had placed second behind Hindenburg in March but as Hindenburg had not won a clear majority the constitution required a runoff election. - L.G.] Meanwhile the situation in the little town is going from bad to worse. The Nazis are attracting more and more supporters, especially after the lifting of the ban on uniforms. There are more and more threats and attacks against Jews and Socialists. Two workers are killed; the culprits never found. One evening after dinner, Toni puts on her coat and goes out. Kati knows she is going to a big Nazi rally. "If only Anton were still alive" she thinks, "our Toni would not be where she is today. He would have explained everything to her and she would not have let herself be taken in by stupid slogans. I know my Toni. I know she acts only out of conviction. But she is just not as smart as her father was. Still, she is smarter than me, and so she doesn't listen to me." (p. 24) At this point, Kati hears shouting and bawling from the street: "Heil Hitler!" "Deutschland ewache!" [Germany awake!]. "Juda verrecke!" [Death to the Jews!] Then comes the Horst Wessel song "and then another with the line 'Wenn das Judenblut vom Messer spritzt!'" [When under the knife spurts the blood of Jews] She thinks of Dr. Bär, who lives in the same street and must also have heard it. What must he feel, she wonders, after spending his life taking care of the sick in the little town and never sending a bill to the poor?

Suddenly the door opens and Toni enters wearing a swastika badge. She greets Kati with a "Good evening, mother," then hangs up her wet coat.

Kati cannot respond. Words stick in her throat. She looks at the Swastika sign and her thoughts course wildly through her brain. Toni nods. "Yes, mother," she says, "it's our only salvation, even if you don't believe it. When the Führer comes to power, there will be jobs for everybody." Kati is overcome by rage: "I was never so angry in my whole life. I berated my child as though she were the lowest of the low. I spoke the coarsest and harshest words. I wanted to give her a thrashing. Finally I screamed. 'Get out of this house and don't come back, you swastika trollop, you are a curse on me.'" Toni does not answer. "She has a way of keeping silent that reminds me of Anton," Kati explains. "She just stood there, then turned and went for her coat, bending down first to wipe up the little pool of water that had dripped from it. 'I'll just wipe this up, mother, then I'll go,'" she says. Suddenly Kati feels a sharp pain shooting through her heart. "What am I doing? Driving out my child, our child, my Anton's daughter? Yes, she is Anton's daughter. But she is also a swastika type, she has become our enemy. She has betrayed us. Still, she is our child. Who else should try to have patience with her, if not me?" At that point, though Toni never cries, Kati sees two tears running down her daughter's cheeks. She relents. "Stay," she says, "stay, I spoke in anger." Toni looks at her, her eyes still full of tears. "I don't want to leave you, mother," she says. "But you need to think this over. I'm in the National Socialist Party now. I'll often act in ways you can't understand. But, believe me, as soon as the Führer comes to power, everything will be all right, and you too will see where the workers really belong." (p. 26) "She spoke so earnestly, so from the heart, my Toni," Kati notes, "that I knew no words could get her to change her mind.... Maybe later on she will see that she has been bamboozled by liars and cheats. But I'm not the one who can get her to see it." She simply tells Toni to go to bed. Toni "came over to me and wanted to kiss me – which normally she does only on my birthday. Even as a child she was never demonstrative." But as Toni bends down to kiss her – for she is a head taller – Kati sees the swastika sign again and turns her head away, "as though I wanted to look at the clock to see the time." Toni, however, is not fooled and quietly sighs. Suddenly Kati reflects that Anton's photograph is hung over Toni's bed and she has the feeling that he will see the swastika and be upset. She tells Toni to wait a moment while she goes into the room and stealthily removes the photograph. "My Anton should not be in the same room with a swastika," she thinks. (p. 27) Nevertheless, "from that day on I never again had a swastika painted on my door; for I had one right here in my own home."

A few days later she has a momentary pleasure. The “old man” [Hindenburg] seemed to want to keep his oath to preserve the constitution – albeit not much of it remained – for he had refused to accept Hitler as Chancellor. But the Nazis only laughed. They demanded nothing less than total power, they jeered, and they would get it. By now it had become dangerous to show the Social Democratic three arrows sign in the street.¹² Kati shows it all the same, partly out of fidelity to the party but also a little, as she says, “because nothing mattered much to me any more and I wouldn’t have cared if I had got beaten up by our enemies.” (p. 28) The only thing that now worried her was that Toni might get hurt by “one of our people” when she was marching in one of the frequent Nazi processions. Toni, she knew, had the same worry about her, for she kept trying to keep her from going out and wanted to pick up and deliver the washing she did for people. But that was not possible, Kati, explains. All her clients were opposed to the Nazis and would have refused to do business with a girl wearing a swastika. In any case, the danger was not so great in daytime for the Nazis preferred to beat up people at night, when they could easily slip away, and were satisfied with verbal abuse at other times. Though mother and daughter, while still living under one roof, now communicated little, Kati could not refrain, on one occasion, from bringing up the way the Nazis fall upon defenceless people: “Don’t you see what a bunch of cowards they are. They attack people who can’t defend themselves and they do all their shooting and stabbing in the dark. And this is the crowd you belong to!” (p. 28). Kati can spot that Toni is upset. “The daughter of my Anton could not justify such actions; and she did not try. She said nothing and looked depressed.”¹³ Kati wonders what will happen when Toni’s eyes are finally opened to the truth about the Nazis.

At the same time she derives some consolation from the fact that Toni acts out of conviction, not opportunism – unlike most of those who join the Nazi Party, according to Kati. For of the large numbers who were now flocking to the Nazis, “most were doing so because they expected to get something out of it” or because, if they were young, they could strut around

12 A circle with three arrows shooting downward through it to the left was the symbol adopted by the Social Democrats in opposition to the Nazi swastika and the Communist hammer and sickle.

13 Outrage at attacks on the weak and defenceless is a recurrent motif of Zur Mühlen’s writing – both in longer works like *Reise durch ein Leben* and *Ein Jahr im Schatten* and in short feuilletons like “Man muß es ihnen sagen.” It can doubtless be traced to the stories of chivalrous knights that she read with her grandmother as a child. As often happens, an old aristocratic virtue is reinterpreted by Zur Mühlen as universally human.

and be important in their Nazi uniforms, or if they were workers, because they were desperate after having been out of work for so long and because the Nazis promised them jobs.

Still, her unhappiness weighs on Kati and she goes to the villa by the sea to unburden herself to her old employer Countess Agnes, who has always been kind to her. After Kati tells her story, the Countess is silent for a moment. "Then her face turned deep red. 'Your Toni, with that rabble?' she said. Whereupon her face grew even redder and she looked apologetically at me. 'You know what I mean by that rabble, don't you, Kati? I don't mean the workers. Everyone in that party is rabble – the leaders, the members, the fellow-travellers.' Heaven knows the woman was speaking what was in my own heart, but somehow it bothered me that she had thrown my Toni to the rabble, so to speak, and so I said maliciously: 'There are quite a few aristocrats in it.' The old woman laughed. I think she knew why I had made the comment. They are the worst rabble of all," she said. "The very worst. For they have no excuse."

At this point the Countess's still unmarried, thirty-year old daughter Claudia, whose sullenness and resentfulness had given her mother so much to worry about over the years, came into the room. Kati was surprised and pleased to see how well the once plain, discontented young woman now looked. "How good Claudia looks," she says. "She seems ten years younger." The old woman laughs joyfully. "Yes, I'm so pleased about it. She no longer avoids people. She runs into town every day. And everything interests her. She reads the papers, she listens to the radio. I think she is normal again at long last." (pp. 30-31)

For their part, Kati and Toni continue to live together. When Kati's rheumatism flares up, Toni helps out by taking over the housework as well as the washing Kati takes in to earn a few pennies. Kati has only to pick it up and deliver it. Toni does the rest. But they cannot communicate with each other. By Christmas, because of rheumatism in her hands, Kati has not been able to finish a sweater she was knitting for Toni. She has dusted off a little Christmas tree and lit the candles on it – "not because I am religious, but because we always used to do it for Toni when she was little" – and she is upset that without the sweater she now has no Christmas present to put under the tree. When a package arrives for Toni, Kati is relieved. It can go under the tree. Toni tries to reassure her that she doesn't mind if there isn't anything under the tree. But Kati insists, gets hold of the package, and opens it. Toni snatches it out of her hands, but it is too late. Kati has

seen that it is a copy of Hitler's *Mein Kampf*. The evening on which she had hoped she would be able to forget her worries for a while and which was to have been like old times is spoiled. Toni senses what she is thinking. "I told you not to open the package, mother," she says. "I felt as if I had received a blow to the head," Kati relates. "I wasn't angry. Just sad and confused. I had only one thought. 'Just don't put it in Father's bookcase, Toni, just not in Father's bookcase.'" Toni only nodded and then we sat for a long time in silence by the side of the tree, with its burning candles – mother and child, and yet two strangers who can no longer understand one another. The candles began to sputter. As each one went out, I had the feeling that my Anton had died again and taken my Toni with him."

On the first of January, Kati pays a New Year's call on Countess Agnes, as she does every year. The maid opens the door and looks pleased and relieved to see her. "'Good that you have come, Frau Gruber,' she says. 'I'm at my wits' end. The dear old lady' – Marie the maid, a young thing of nineteen, finds it beneath her dignity to refer to the Countess by her title,'" Kati explains; "Countess Agnes knows Marie calls her 'the dear old lady' and laughs about it – 'the dear old lady has been sitting there all morning crying. She won't tell me what is wrong. I'm worried that she might be falling ill on me.'" Kati runs into the living room and finds "the Countess huddled near the fireplace weeping so much that her body is shaking. 'What happened?' Kati asks. The old woman looks up, her face contorted, as if she were in acute pain and stretches out her hand. 'I came to wish you a Happy New Year,' Kati says. 'Make your wish that I should die soon, Kati,'" the old woman answers. "That's the best thing you can wish for me." Kati is surprised that the Countess has reverted to the familiar "du" form of address which she used when Kati was a young girl in service with her but has not used since. The old woman tries in vain to control her tears. Kati thinks that perhaps she has lost all her money "since that happens quite often these days, and then what would she do, since she has never had to work and Claudia has no experience of working either." She asks if that is what is wrong. The old lady shakes her head. "If that were all it is, Kati," she answers. Kati feels truly sorry for her, though she also thinks inwardly that people who have money don't understand how important it is. Even Countess Agnes, who is so completely unpretentious, has no idea what it means to be really penniless. "That would be a serious blow, I know," the old lady says at last. "I'm old and can't work. But at least, there would be no disgrace. And I wouldn't have to wonder whether I might

not be partly to blame.” To all Kati’s efforts to find out what the problem is, she responds only that it is “the worst thing, the very worst thing that could have happened, the most terrible disgrace that could have befallen me.” For over an hour, Kati tries to get her to tell her what is wrong. To no avail. “I can’t Kati, I can’t, I’m too ashamed,” is the only reply she can elicit. “Maybe tomorrow. I just can’t talk today, I can’t.” The Countess clasps Kati’s hand tightly in hers and suddenly bursts out: “We were always decent people, always. When I think of my father and my grandfather and their womenfolk, I have absolutely no reason to be ashamed. My grandfather served time in Spielberg prison because he fought for freedom.” Then she begins to cry again, uncontrollably and desperately. Finally she says: “This is not a good start to the new year for you, Kati. Go home. You can’t do anything for me. Come back tomorrow. Maybe I’ll be able to tell you what it is then.”

Kati did not have to wonder what the old woman’s problem was for long. On her way home along the lakeside promenade, she sees Claudia walking ahead of her, briskly, like a young girl. A local lawyer’s son who has become a Nazi comes toward her and Claudia raises her arm. “Heil Hitler!” she says “in a loud voice audible to everybody around.” He responds in kind, and the two of them go off together. Kati feels her legs weakening under her. “I thought of Countess Agnes and of what she had said about aristocrats who join the Nazis – that they are the very worst kind of rabble. And now the old woman has to go through it herself with her Claudia – she who is so proud that her grandfather fought for freedom. My Anton fought for freedom too – and now our Toni...Toni and Claudia, our children, our daughters, the Nazi girls. Such was our New Year’s Day.” (p. 35)

Countess Agnes’s narrative describes a much more fraught mother-daughter relationship than that of the working class Kati and Toni Gruber. The very first lines hint at the reclusive nature of the old Countess and her estrangement from her child. “I always used to hide from my daughter Claudia when I wanted to write in my diary. There is something ridiculous about it after all – an old woman writing down her thoughts and feelings like a teenager. And Claudia’s scornful laughter always hurt me. She never understood that a lonely person has to share her thoughts, feelings, and anxieties with someone, even if that someone is only a blank piece of paper.” (p. 35) Further reflections fill in the picture of the Countess – a lonely childhood as a sickly little girl, set apart from her boisterous and

healthy brothers and sisters, always being warned that she has to be careful not to overexert herself, always being forbidden to go riding, play tennis or join the others on trips. "I was always 'poor Agnes,' too frail to hold up." Yet she also hints at a tough fibre in her frail body. Strange," she reflects, "that of all of us I am the only survivor. Both my brothers fell in the war and my sister died ten years ago." We learn how, from an early age, she sought refuge from the humiliating and unpleasant reality of her life in books and that these offered her another world in which she felt more at home and happier than she ever did in the real world:

This cowardly fear of reality has pursued me all my life. I shut my eyes when I should have opened them; I stopped up my ears so as not to hear the discordant sounds of life. I did so as a child, as a growing girl, and as a grown woman. And now that I am sixty-six years old, reality is suddenly staring me in the face, horrifying and threatening – an enemy I can't deal with, an enemy that comes in and out of my house and shouts and screams so loudly in the street that the racket comes all the way through the garden into my quiet living room. I am old and I tremble before this enemy.

But no, I won't paint myself worse than I am. A life that has never been besmirched, a long line of honorable ancestors, pride, aristocratic distinction, are these not weapons too? And did I not use these very weapons as a young woman to hold out in an unhappy marriage. Neither my parents nor my relatives nor any of my acquaintances ever knew how unhappy my marriage was. I always appeared content, always had a smile on my lips, and when my husband stayed away for months at a time, I always had an explanation to give for his absence. (pp. 36-37)

These reflections provide Countess Agnes with an opportunity to unburden herself to her diary (and tell the reader of the novel) about her unhappy marriage and to explain why her relations with her daughter Claudia were always distant and difficult.

To tell the truth, it was hard for me at first. I could not and would not believe that the handsome young officer, six years junior – I was thirty at the time – had married me for money. I loved him, and when I became his wife I thought I was about to begin the life of bliss I had read so much about in the books of the Romantics. But after six months, I had to acknowledge that I bored my husband to death. All the quiet pleasures that made me happy – books, beautiful landscapes, paintings – meant nothing to him. Horses, gambling, and women – other women, women bursting with life – that was all he was interested in.

When our daughter was born, he insisted that we name her Claudia. I knew very well that he was then in love with a beautiful Roman woman by the name of Claudia, and that his love had not gone unrequited. That

name and that memory created a wall between me and my child. Long after Ferdinand had forgotten his Roman Claudia [...], I still thought of that woman who had dealt me the first blow in my marriage whenever I spoke my daughter's name.

Perhaps Claudia felt this instinctively. Who knows what children experience? In any case, she was not the same with me as other children are with their mothers and I often secretly envied my sweet Kati who got on so well with her little girl. But that came later, after we gave up our house in Munich and bought the villa on Lake Constance.

At first Ferdinand was against this move. But I was strongly drawn to this place – perhaps because Annette von Droste-Hülshoff lived, suffered, and wrote her books nearby. She too had been unhappy, sickly, and frail, but what power is expressed in her work!

Unfortunately, Countess Agnes reflects, “I was not creative like her. I could do nothing, nothing. I was a woman who had failed to hold on to her husband, and a mother who did not know how to make contact with her own child.” (p. 38)

With the years the distance between mother and daughter only increased. “There was a restlessness in the grown girl that was completely foreign to me,” the Countess notes. “As though she was looking for something she could not find.” She had become quite good-looking,

but there was an off-putting coldness about her. I had no idea what lay hidden behind this coldness. I only noticed that she had neither friends of her own sex nor any of the innocent little flirtatious relations with boys that girls of her age usually have. For a time, when she was about twenty, she became very religious. Her room was filled with pictures of saints and she spent hours at church. She fasted like a Carmelite nun. But this seemed not to satisfy her in the end. [...] One day all the pictures were gone from her room and she stopped going to Church. She wouldn't even visit her father's grave. For me she had nothing but scorn and contempt. [...] And she made no secret of it. She laughed at my books, mocked my love of the flowers in the garden and made a fool of me for my pathetic efforts to be of help to others. She laughed at my passion for reading, though she read quite a bit herself at this time. Once I took a look at her bookcase and I was horrified. I had no idea that such books existed – ugly, vulgar books that were about nothing but sex. Not serious or scientific treatments of the subject, but revoltingly frivolous and cynical trash. But the worst was yet to come. These books must have worked like a poison on Claudia, for one day the young gardener who worked for me asked if he could have a word with me. (p. 38)

It turns out that Fritz, the gardener, whose skill and personal good nature the Countess has come to value, wants to hand in his notice. The

Countess refuses to accept it. Believing he is reacting to disagreements they have had over the garden, she offers to allow him to cut down a large pine tree, even though she is attached to it, since he insists it is necessary to do so. She makes other concessions on the management of the garden. But Fritz only becomes more and more embarrassed. "For God's sake, please try to understand me, Countess Agnes," he blurts out finally. "It's way too difficult for me to have to tell you this, but my wife has noticed it and has become jealous. Countess Claudia will not leave me in peace. [...] The other day, in the early morning, she came into the garden in her night gown and asked me whether she wasn't attractive and whether I mightn't..." (pp. 39-40)

The Countess finally has to understand. Fritz looks away in order not to embarrass her but, overcome by shame, she becomes unsteady on her feet. The young man puts his arm around her and leads her back into the house. She begs him not to stop working for her and promises to deal with the situation. Fritz leaves and she sits motionless. "I am an old woman," she thinks. "A very old woman. I don't understand the young people. I don't understand Claudia. I am certainly to blame. How old is Claudia now? Thirty. I was thirty too before I got married, but then I was always so sickly and frail, whereas Claudia is a healthy girl... Maybe... Still, to throw yourself at a man, a married man into the bargain." At this point Claudia comes into the garden. "What's the matter," she asks. "You are so pale." "If I could only find the right words," the Countess reflects, "if I could only get Claudia to feel that I understand her, perhaps everything could still be right between us." "Fritz has spoken to me," she says. "He..." She notices that Claudia does not blush and is not ashamed: "She only gave a wicked laugh. 'Is he scared of me, the chicken? And you mother, of course you are morally outraged. But it is all your fault, you know. I have to hang around here, in this godforsaken hole, where one never meets anyone and hasn't a chance in China. What kind of life is that for a young person? Young, did I say?' She laughed, a cold, cutting laugh. 'Young? I turned thirty last month. What have I gotten out of my youth? Just take a look at me? Can any man find me attractive? But you wouldn't understand any of this.'" Countess Agnes's desperate response that she wants so much to understand her child falls on deaf ears. "You, you're not a real woman, and you never were," Claudia replies. "That's why poor father couldn't stand to live with you. That's why he needed other women." The Countess is stunned. She always thought Claudia knew nothing of her father's affairs with other women.

"He was a real man, that's what," Claudia continues mercilessly. "A man like that is what I need. All the young men you used once to invite over – yes, I know you were trying to find a husband for me – what kind of men were they? They were all the kind of men that would have suited you – bookworms, poets, people you could at best carry on a sentimental correspondence with, like your beloved Annette with her Levin Schüking. But I want a real, strong man, not someone refined and sensitive. I am not a half-woman like you... Do you know how it feels on these summer nights, when the air is filled with the scent of jasmine and the nightingales sing in the garden. No, you don't. You only find it poetic. But I don't want poetry; I want life, real life." (pp. 41-42)

The Countess senses that if she fails to come up with the right response, Claudia will be lost to her for ever. "Would you like to travel, dearest?" she suggests. "We could spend the winter on the Riviera." Secretly, she almost hopes that Claudia will say no, because she loves the quiet winters in the little lakeside town, the mists that roll in off the lake, the snow-covered garden paths, the leafless tree branches standing out delicately against the sky as in a Japanese drawing, the long evenings by the fireside plunged in a book that opens up another, free, beautiful, secret, yet familiar world. She did not have to worry. Claudia is scathing: "The Riviera? What would I do there? Compete with the cocottes? Or move in the same circles as here, among quiet, refined people of the kind you like, shadows, ghosts from another age that vanished long ago. No, mother, it's too late for that." (pp. 42-43) Thereupon she turns on her heels and leaves the room. "I remained sitting there," the Countess notes in her diary, "with a leaden weight pressing on my heart and frightful feelings of guilt in my head. I hated myself because I had never understood Claudia and I hated my dead husband from whom she had inherited everything that I could not understand in her." (p. 43)

Countess Agnes now remembers Claudia's attempt at suicide and the months she spent in a psychiatric institution. On her return home, she recalls, it was not Claudia herself she feared, but the unidentified thing living inside her and driving her, the thing she, her mother, was incapable of understanding.¹⁴ This thing had now returned, she reflects, and

14 The simmering of unruly, irrational energies in women, in whom natural impulses have been unnaturally repressed by culture and convention and who have never been permitted to confront and deal with their own emotions, is a theme that recurs in much of Zur Mühlen's writing. It informs, for instance, two striking short stories in the collection *Fahrt ins Licht* (Vienna: Ludwig Nath, 1936, rpt. Klagenfurt: Sisyphus Verlag, 1998). In "Kultur" (pp. 148-53) Edith, the wife of the psychiatrist Sir Percy Langton, is known for the impeccable taste with which she creates her surroundings and her own social persona. Sir Percy, however, tells

destroyed the peaceful world she had created for herself by retreating into her garden and her books. The reality she had feared and tried to shut out of her life had invaded her house and it was impossible to ignore it any longer. Anticipating later developments in her narrative, Countess Agnes associates the frightening demonic force that she cannot understand in her daughter with developments in the street and the political arena, from which she had also always held back. This allows Zur Mühlen to develop one of the few passages of explicit political rhetoric in the novel. In politics too, Countess Agnes reflects, an ugly reality had intruded into her world and was destroying the modest hopes for peace and a more just social order that, as an aristocrat with a conscience and a descendant of brave men who had sided in their time with the forces of emancipation, she had hoped would follow the end of the World War in 1918. A new Germany was indeed emerging now, but it was neither “the cultivated, perhaps no longer viable Germany of the poets, nor the decent, realistic Germany of the immediate post-War years. A fraudulent, barbarous mass had begun to take control of the street.” She remembers the beautiful autumn day when the results of the elections of 1930 were announced and she could not understand how “liars, cheats, and murderers” had won so many votes. “What is the use of all our culture when such people can come to power, led on by a dodger, a crazy megalomaniac, a charlatan without a conscience?”¹⁵ Dr Bär, the Jewish doctor who was her regular physician had been on a house call and had tried to calm her down. “It’s the unemployment, the economic crisis,” he had said. But she did not accept this explanation. These rowdies were no revolutionaries, she had insisted, their motivation was only envy and deceit. Some members of her own class supported the National Socialists, she admitted to herself, with a feeling of shame. “They did so not out of conviction, not even out of foolishness or ignorance, but

how he once deliberately removed his wife from an environment, in which the shutting up of their bodies in “corsets, tight-fitting clothes, and long dresses” was emblematic of the general condition of women, and took her to Africa in order to shake her out of the “harmonious monotony” of her existence. The explosion of passion that occurred in the new environment taught Edith to revise her understanding of human nature and, in particular, to come to a better understanding of her own nature. “Tod eines Schattens” (pp. 167-72) has a less happy outcome. Perdita W. has been brought up in a highly civilized and controlled environment. Her adoring and cultured parents allow nothing vulgar or dissonant to enter the refined world they have created and share with their child. After their death, Perdita loses her bearings and is easy prey to the wild enthusiasms of National Socialism. When she realizes the utter vulgarity of what she has succumbed to, she is totally disoriented and kills herself.

15 These were obviously fighting words in 1934 when Zur Mühlen’s novel appeared. They were also the words to which the German ambassador, von Papen, objected in his diplomatic note to the Austrian authorities, on the grounds that they were insulting to the leader of a neighboring power.

because they hoped this would enable them to protect their own fortunes. They seemed to me – and still do – more vulgar and more despicable than the murderers and criminals in the S.A. For there was no way for them not to have seen the truth. And if there is one unforgivable sin, it is to know the truth and reject it.” To Countess Agnes, unpolitical as she says she is, no aristocrat worthy of his or her class could possibly support the National Socialists. Aristocrats have a special obligation to humanity. “I thought of the bad days of serfdom. How many men and women suffered so that a single class of people might have the opportunity to develop culturally, what a debt this class owes to mankind, and how is it repaying it now? I am an unpolitical woman and I am not very worldly-wise, but I would have liked to be the head of state of our country so as to take the most energetic action possible against this party. As for the members of my own class, I would gladly have sent them to the guillotine. But such betrayers of humanity, who were perfectly aware of what they were doing, would not even have been able to die with dignity.” (pp. 44-45)

The year 1932, the Countess continues, looked at first as though it would be a better year for her. Claudia suddenly became more cheerful; there was colour in her cheeks and a sparkle in her eyes. She even behaved in a more friendly manner toward her mother. The two women no longer sat together at mealtimes in oppressive silence. Claudia went out a lot and had started reading again – not the horrible pornographic books of the past, which had now disappeared from her library, but all kinds of pamphlets. To the Countess’s inquiry as to what these were about, Claudia replied off-handedly, but in a friendly way, that they would be of no interest to her and that she would not understand them anyway. During the wonderful spring and summer of 1932, the Countess spent entire days in the garden, reading. Sometimes Claudia would come and sit by her. “Your Romantics, as usual,” she once said teasingly, with a smile. “I think you haven’t a clue, mother, what century we are living in. What counts today is strength, toughness.” “There is also a quiet kind of strength, dear, and in my view it is more unshakable than the noisy variety,” the Countess countered. But Claudia, paying no attention, went on enthusiastically: “Strength, mother, and the power to win people over, the power to mean everything to them. That’s what counts. A name that fires up whoever hears it.” As she said that “her cheeks glowed; she looked beautiful; and her blue eyes shone mysteriously.” Countess Agnes recalls that once, many years before, being in love had given her too a glow that had transformed the rather plain girl she was in

reality. She wonders what had magically transformed the expression on Claudia's face, but does not dare to ask, for "a single thoughtless word might disturb our good relationship." She cannot help imagining, however, that Claudia might be in love and be loved in return. She lets herself hope that "perhaps everything will still work out for her."

Once again, however, she notes in her diary, she had only allowed herself to flee reality. "In the long run, however, reality cannot be banished. In vain we wrap ourselves in the rose-coloured dream clouds of other times and other places; in vain we shut our eyes and stop up our ears to keep out the harsh sounds that destroy all harmony. One day the clouds break, one day something forces us to open our eyes, and the shrill scream of reality shatters everything." (p. 47) What awakened the Countess and shattered her dreamworld was no loud scream, however, but a low moaning that she heard in her room one October evening and that seemed to come from beyond the garden wall. It turns out to be Fritz, the gardener, who, it transpires, is a Communist, and who has been shot in the leg by a Nazi gang.

Countess Agnes interrupts her narrative at this point to provide the background of this event. She tells of the increasing political prominence of Hitler; of the possibility – in March and April 1932 – that he might be elected President of Germany, "which would be laughable if it were not so shameful" (p. 47); of her own support of Hindenburg, which, like Kati Gruber's, was unenthusiastic, motivated only by a residual trust that he would at least respect the constitution; and of her failure even to consider the third (Communist) candidate, since – perhaps wrongly, she reflects – she knew nothing about the Communist Party and, in any case, disliked every form of dictatorship. She notes that she is herself surprised that she is constantly writing in her diary now about politics, whereas in the past she had always written about books, about quiet walks, about beautiful landscapes. "At first my dislike of the National Socialists had been a matter of esthetics," she observes, "the repugnance with which a cultivated person reacts to barbarism, the repugnance of a quiet, peace-loving person when she is confronted by noisy ranting and raving. I still remember the first time I saw a picture of their *Führer*. He was in the midst of a rant and his mouth was wide open. Instinctively I felt, at the time, that whoever rants so much must have something to hide. The truth expresses itself quietly because it is the truth. As for their constant refrain of '*Deutschland erwache*' [Germany, awaken], Germany *had* awakened after the terrible war; it *had*

opened its eyes and it had seen that great things can be achieved only in peace. The Germany of this new party was not my Germany; it was not the earnestly struggling, hard working land that in my mind resembled a good man who has made a serious blunder and tries as hard as he can to repair the damage and change his ways. That was my Germany, the Germany I knew and loved, a noble Germany that behaved chivalrously to its enemies." The thought of chivalrousness sends the diary-writer back to the attack on Fritz, the gardener.

After she finds Fritz lying on the ground beyond the garden gate, unable to move because of the bullet wound in his leg, Countess Agnes runs back to the house to fetch Claudia and the maid. Together the three of them manage to get the young man into the house. The maid calls Dr. Bär who comes over immediately. To Fritz's repeated statements that he was set upon by ten men, Claudia responds in disbelief and anger, repeatedly claiming that it is not so, that it cannot be true. Countess Agnes is so busy tending to Fritz and so pleased by her daughter's outrage at the "unchivalrousness" of an attack by ten men against a single one that she does not pay attention at the time to Claudia's retort to Fritz: "That's what you all say," or to the meaning of the "you" in that remark. Instead, she and Dr. Bär commiserate on the increasingly dangerous situation in Germany. The good doctor tries, without much success or conviction, to reassure his aristocratic friend that "perhaps" the country won't get to the point where "these people" actually come to power. But Countess Agnes notices that he seems to have grown years older in a few weeks and gives the impression of a man who has seen an abyss opening before him.

The next weeks are spent in growing agitation and horror as Countess Agnes reads the newspapers and listens to the radio, mostly alone, for Claudia is now very often out. She cannot understand why all decent people do not overcome their differences and unite in opposing the monstrous thing that threatens them all; she cannot understand what magic the Nazis use to entice so many people into their ranks – "people like my dear Kati's daughter, that good and clever Toni." (p. 52) She can understand why certain lower middle-class people are drawn to them – employees or struggling small shopkeepers who have had to cringe and cower all their lives. The Nazis make them feel they are somebody. But the workers and so many people who struggled for culture and human rights even under the old Kaiser, how can one explain the attraction National Socialism has for them? The question turns out to affect the Countess more directly than she

had realized. One day Claudia develops a fever and her mother says she will call Dr. Bär. Claudia tells her she should not. "Why not, dearest. Just to put my mind at rest." "Well, not Dr. Bär" Claudia answers. "If you really must, call Dr. Feldhüter." Countess Agnes is surprised: "But why? He has never treated you before." "Because I do not want to be treated by a Jewish doctor [...] The Jews have brought ruin to our country. It will not develop to its full greatness until we have driven them all out." The Countess cannot believe her ears. "How can you say such things," she cries. "Isn't Dr. Bär one of our best friends? Haven't the Jews helped to make Germany into a country admired everywhere for its culture? Where did you learn this kind of talk?" Claudia tries to avoid an argument. She does not feel well, she protests, she is too weak to discuss the matter. But Countess Agnes "felt no sympathy for her. I think I did not realize at that moment that I was speaking to my own child," she writes in her diary. "The individual lying before me was a stranger. The thought ran through my mind: What is this person doing here in my house? 'We *have* to discuss it, Claudia,'" she retorts, barely recognizing the harsh, unforgiving tone of her own voice. In the ensuing conversation, she learns that her daughter has become a Nazi. She is beside herself. The aristocrat in her is outraged. "It was impossible, it couldn't be, my daughter and that scum." Hard words follow and she leaves the room. Neither mother nor daughter has the courage to pursue the matter. Countess Agnes then relents somewhat. Perhaps it was because of the fever, she thinks. When Claudia gets over it, they will both laugh at the whole episode. It is impossible that her Claudia "who was so haughty and who set such store by good manners and chivalrousness" should have become a Nazi. She remembers her as a little girl of six responding with pride and joy to the stories of her honorable and brave ancestors, especially the one about her great-grandfather who had been imprisoned for his independent stand. Her husband had wanted a son, the Countess recalls, but she had felt that a girl can carry on family traditions of honour, courage, and principle, just as well as a boy.

Her tactic is to keep out of Claudia's way. She does not go to her room. For days, the two women hardly see one another. On the rare occasions when they do run into one another, they exchange politenesses like two strangers. On New Year's Eve, Claudia announces that she is going out. "Won't you catch cold again?" "No, I'll wear the fur." "Do you have to go out? It's New Year's Eve. Are you going to leave me here all alone?" "I have to go." Claudia turns to the maid and tells her that a man will call

for her and that he should be brought into the living room. She then looks challengingly at her mother. "Don't you want to know who the man is that will be calling for me?" Countess Agnes does not respond. "My friend," Claudia says. "My Party comrade. He is with the S.A." The Countess feels she has been slapped in the face. At one time, she reflects, the term "my friend" would have shocked her, old-fashioned as she was, but by now she might have been pleased for Claudia, had her daughter not added that the "friend" was her Party comrade and was with the S.A. "Something stirred in me," she writes,

something stronger than all acquired good manners, stronger than all our culture. "So that's what it's all about?" I asked scornfully. "Because that's the only way you can get a man. [...] I'd rather you had gone on the street. I can live with a whore in my house but not with what you have become." "I should go then, and not come back?" Claudia asked quietly. Something in her tone of voice reminded me of the child that I had loved in my way – no doubt it wasn't the right way. Did I really want to send that child away? What trouble would she get into without a home to come back to? "You can stay here," I said. "But I don't want to see you. I don't want to sit at the same table with you. You are a stranger to me, no, an enemy." Claudia paled. "If only you would try to understand, mother." "I understand only too well. Put your coat on and go now. I won't have your friend, your Party comrade, in my house."

Claudia goes to the door slowly, "as if she were waiting for me to call her back." But I could not, Countess Agnes writes, and thought of Kati who had acted differently with her child. "Perhaps she was wiser than I; but I could not call her back." (p. 55)

Countess Agnes is now alone with her anger. She was prone to outbursts of anger as a child, she remembers, but became gentler and calmer during the difficult years of her marriage and then, later, age brought further calm. Now she is overwhelmed by anger and shame, far greater shame even than she had felt when Claudia had tried to seduce Fritz.

I hated Claudia, but not only Claudia, I hated myself because I had brought her into the world, I hated my body and my womanhood, I hated the hour when I had been impregnated with her and I hated the hour when I gave birth to her. I felt as though I was sinking into filth and slime and could never be clean again. I had tried to live a decent, honorable life, causing pain to no one and bearing my own with dignity. But what was the value of such a life now that Claudia had gone over to those who, to me, were the very essence of scum and vulgarity. Where in me did the evil that had come to light in Claudia lie hidden? (p. 56)

She felt ashamed in front of the maid, who almost certainly knew about Claudia's activities. She wished the maid, a decent upstanding girl, were her daughter instead of Claudia. She remembered how Claudia had nearly died of scarlet fever when she was ten years old and how she had been saved only thanks to Dr. Bär who had come three times a day to see her. "If she had only died at that time... I shuddered: is it possible for a mother to think such thoughts. But I am not only a mother. I am also a human being, a thinking, feeling human being terrified by something unfathomable." (p. 56) The night passes for Countess Agnes in nightmarish imaginings. This is how the men and women of the Middle Ages must have felt, she reflects, when a devastating plague, the cause of which they could not understand, overwhelmed the land. At times she wanted to rush out into the street crying "Save yourselves, save us all, while there is still time." But she could not move. "My legs were like lead and what I saw was a fearful Dance of Death." In the morning – it is New Year's Day – the maid brings her hot tea and forces her to drink some. Her kindness moves the Countess to tears. Then Kati calls on her. "She wanted to know why I was crying so. But I could not tell her. I could not bring myself to. She will find out soon enough." For the next few days she keeps to her room so as not to run into Claudia. Kati visits her, Dr. Bär visits her. They are worried about her, she can see that, but they seem like ghosts. Endless days and endless nights pass, full of anguish and anxiety. From time to time she hears Claudia's footsteps. "It is as though she was treading on my heart. I knew where she was going." (p. 58) For almost a month she does not see Claudia. "It was strange, this living under the same roof, without exchanging a word, without any contact. Like two dead people in a family tomb. I wondered if Claudia felt this too. If she sometimes had a longing to see me. There was no way for me to know. What did I know of my own child?"

On January 30th 1933 the Countess finally enters the living room in order to listen to the news on the radio. Claudia had the same idea, for as the Countess enters the room, Claudia is switching on the radio. The two of them sit, one on either side of the radio, two people who had become strangers to each other and each of whom hoped to hear something different. The music stops and the announcer's voice is heard. A tremor goes through Claudia's body as the news is broadcast. Hitler has been appointed Chancellor of Germany. "Hitler is Chancellor and I see opposite me a face glowing with happiness and I hear a voice say 'Now everything will go well. You'll see, mother.' Whose face was it? Whose voice? Who was this

person who was exulting over the ruin of our country? The face, the voice came closer. 'Mother, you're not going to pass out?' Everything had gone black, but who was this stranger? 'Don't touch me,' I said. 'Don't touch me.' The blurry figure stood for a moment, then disappeared. A few moments later, I heard footsteps in the garden. Claudia was going out to celebrate victory." (p. 59) The Countess returns to her room, thinking that this is now the end for her and all who think and feel as she does. "But for the others it was the beginning. About an hour later, the street was ringing with their hateful songs and cries of 'Heil.'... And I thought, Claudia is there with them... I no longer wept. I stopped trembling. I stared into the dark night and saw the wounded champion [of freedom] lying on the ground. Will he be able to rise again?"

On that despairing note, the Countess concludes her first diary entry.

The third testimony now opens – that of Frau Doktor Feldhüter "whispering to herself." The tone is set immediately in the first few paragraphs:

I would like to know if there are other women in our town who have as many worries and vexations as I have? The maid handed in her notice today – she is the fourth in three months. And she has absolutely nothing to complain about. I work my fingers to the bone keeping the house in order. [...] Yes, it would really be good if my husband had a better practice and we could afford two maids.

To tell the truth, when I married Arthur I had a very different idea of how things were going to be. I was a pretty girl and at that time a nurse had opportunities to make a good match. I would have much preferred to marry into industry. I still remember young Kurt Frankfurter, the son of super-rich parents. I took care of him after his appendectomy. He was a good-looking, likable, generous young fellow and he would have married me if his parents had not objected to his marrying a Christian. These Jews are so intolerant. It was not easy for me to accept that I was not about to become the wealthy Frau Frankfurter. And the other nurses, the dears, made merry over my misfortune. Women are so mean. I was so disappointed, that I consented to marry Arthur, who was then working in the hospital. It certainly wasn't an easy decision – a cripple, with a club foot, crabbed, always grumpy, and, as I could easily tell, being a nurse, a bad doctor as well. Still, he seemed to have prospects. He wanted to settle down in the little town by Lake Constance because at that time there was only one other doctor there – a Jewish doctor, quite well on in years. One thing I have to admit about Arthur: he looks intelligent. Whether he really is I have not been able to tell in all the years of our marriage. In general, I would have to say that I do not really know

him. At times, when I was still not long married to him, I would ask myself, somewhat anxiously, what there is behind the mean mask of his face. I know only one thing for sure: that he is ambitious. In fact, I had counted on that ambition when I became his wife. And yet the nurses and the patients in the hospital did not call him "Dr. Wait-and-See" for nothing. He was always for "waiting and seeing" and that has been a real handicap to us, both financially and socially. I remember the time just before war was declared. We were all up in arms against the enemy powers and enthusiastically supporting our fatherland. I wept when I heard the national anthem played. And my little Lieslotte sang "Deutschland über alles" so touchingly in her bright child's voice. Only Arthur refused to reveal where he stood. "Wait and see," he would say. "It may not come to a war and then we'll be considered warmongers."

Then, when it did come to war, he was as patriotic a German as any, I have to grant him that. Except that he wouldn't buy any war bonds. But he made speeches, excellent speeches, about our invincible army and about Germany's mission in the world. In 1916 he began to hold back again. I could not understand him. It made a bad impression – just at the point when I was finally succeeding in gaining entry into the local officers' wives' circles. It was my hope that by war's end our position in the town would finally be secure; that old Dr. Bär's patients would come over to us; and that I would play the role in our town that the local doctor's wife has a right to play. Even that arrogant old woman, that Countess Agnes who lives in her lakeside villa and has always kept me politely at a distance, will have to invite me over, I thought. I could already see us moving out of our rented apartment into our own house, I could see our mixing in the best society, Arthur's becoming rich, and Lieselott's making a better match than her poor mother did. I complained to Arthur that he was spoiling all this for us with his behavior. He cast a strange look at me out of his small, sunken eyes.

"Wait and see," he said. "No rushing into anything."

In the summer of 1918 he suddenly began to express pacifist views and to lament the sacrifice of so many young lives on both sides of the conflict – though I knew perfectly well that he had no interest in anyone on the planet except himself. (pp. 60-62)

Then comes the collapse. The Frau Doktor is deeply distressed and weeps profusely at the news that "our poor Kaiser has had to flee to Holland." But soon enough she realizes that the officers' families and many of the better class of people in town have a less generous view of the Kaiser's flight than she and so she too begins to see the matter differently. The repression of the Spartacists by the Social Democratic government leads her to take a more favorable view of the new republican regime. "It wasn't easy to look up to a former saddler as the head of state, but he seemed like a decent man, and after all, one has to adapt to changing circumstances." She now pleads

with Arthur to join the Social Democratic Party as the party in power. But his response is, as usual, "Wait and see. I'm not joining any party. I am for peace. That's enough." (p. 62) In the same breath he forbids his wife – "in the intolerably bossy tone that I hate in him," as she reports – to join any party. "Don't make any ill-considered move, Martha. I will not stand for my wife joining a party and inevitably involving me too." "Whenever he spoke to me in that vein," the Frau Doktor "whispers," "I had to get a good grip on myself so as not to scream in his face: 'You cripple, you dwarf' (I am nearly a head taller than he is), 'how dare you speak to me in that tone of voice?' And I would be overcome by the utter physical disgust I feel in his presence and would remember my fear, during my pregnancy, that my child would also come into the world as a cripple." Fortunately, Lieselotte did not. She is a strong, healthy girl.

At this point we are given a glimpse of Lieselotte's character. There was a moment, the Frau Doktor recalls, when her daughter wanted to marry a poor engineer. For once Arthur and she were of one mind – in their opposition to this marriage. Lieselotte yielded, but warned them angrily that she proposed thenceforth to live her life as freely as she chose, and wanted no comments or interference from them. The Frau Doktor was incensed. "How can you speak in that tone to your parents?" But Arthur only replied icily: "So long as your behavior doesn't damage my practice, you can entertain yourself in whatever way you please. Appearances must be kept up, however, you understand?" Lieselotte did precisely as she said she would and when on one occasion "she got into some trouble," Arthur took care of the problem. "Well, why else does one have a doctor for a father...?" the Frau Doktor comments. "After that, Lieselotte was more careful." (p. 63) In fact, Lieselotte despises her father's ambitious scheming and annoys her mother by mocking her small-town social ambitions and hypocrisies. In contrast to Claudia and Toni, she is interested only in having a good time. As a result, while she is incapable of any generous action, she is also unmoved by grand phrases and heroic posturing and, unlike her mother, does not lie to herself. To the despair of the Frau Doktor, Lieselotte will not pretend to be other than what she is: a self-centered young woman who is out for a good time. Her refusal to participate in the hypocrisies of her parents – even later in the narrative, after her parents have become leading Nazis – is Lieselotte's form of revolt against them, but the simple egoism that is the source of her revolt – also sets its limitations. Even though, in contrast to Claudia and Toni, she is not deluded by ideology

and propaganda, Lieselotte is never remotely tempted to openly question them, much less to offer any form of resistance or to seek and support an alternative. She has no ideals of any kind, but is totally focused on her own self. On the contrary, as soon as it suits her to do so, she follows her father into the Party. In her own way, she is an opportunist like her parents – in the cold, calculating style of her father rather than the deliberately self-deluding style of her mother.

In the little town, things are not going too well for Feldhüter. His patients are leaving him. Only those who for one reason or another don't want to go to a Jewish doctor have stuck with him. It is his own fault, the Frau Doktor observes impatiently. "If you aren't a good doctor, you should at least show some interest in your patients." She also notes that he conceals his hatred of his rival, the elderly Dr. Bär, beneath a mask of admiration and courtesy. Dr. Bär, she remembers, helped them out during the worst of the inflationary period, and though they still owe him money, he never asks for it. "Well, my God, he had plenty," she thinks, "and these Jews always want to maintain good collegial relations."

As the political climate shifts, the Frau Doktor comes to acknowledge that her husband was right about not joining the Social Democrats. She begins to have some success in cultivating the officers' families she considers the leading families of the town, and is eager to enhance her standing with them by joining the political party they support – if only she knew which of the conservative parties that was. Was it the *Deutsche Volkspartei*, or the *Zentrum*, or the *Deutschnationale Volkspartei*, she wonders. As this milieu is also strongly Protestant (hence probably not *Zentrum*, she guesses), the Frau Doktor takes care to assure the officers' wives of her own and her family's strong commitment to the Evangelical Church, expresses her distrust of Catholics, and, conveniently forgetting an early relationship that she would have liked to see blossom into a marriage, confides to them her conviction that "mixed marriages are extremely dangerous" and that she could "never in her life have married a member of another faith." (p. 65) Arthur allows her to join the monarchist *Luisenbund*,¹⁶ to which most of the officers' wives belong, but insists that he not be involved, evoking his usual wisdom: "Wait and see." Lieselotte, for her part, refuses to join: "What is there for me among all those old wives?" she objects. To her mother's response that there are also young women in the association, she has an easy answer:

16 A women's group founded in 1923 and named for the revered Queen Luise of Prussia in Napoleonic times. The group supported the Nazis at the time of the *Machtergreifung*, but like other monarchist groups was disbanded in 1934.

“Yes, but what sort of young women! I know the routine: you sit around endlessly drinking bad coffee, knitting or doing embroidery, lamenting the collapse of the monarchy, and composing congratulatory telegrams to send to the Kaiser and his wife. Thanks very much. I don’t belong in that crowd.” (p. 67) She raises her eyebrows in a gesture that irritates the Frau Doktor intensely because it reminds her of her husband. “You and your good society, mother!” she goes on. “First you ran after Countess Agnes and wanted me to become friends with her daughter, that old maid. And when that didn’t work out, you got on your middle-class high horse and started running down the aristocracy. Later, after the revolution, you changed your tune again. Now it ran: ‘Lieselotte, don’t be so stuck up, speak to that dear, sweet Toni. Everything has changed; we have to see that we get into the best social democratic circles.’ But you had no luck with the best social democratic circles either. And now you are on to me with your *Luisenbund*. Let me tell you something. I don’t give a damn what party anybody belongs to. I want to have a good time, that’s all. I’m not here to help you get into ‘good society.’” She concludes with a comment that could well also have reminded the Frau Doktor of her husband: “Anyway, no one knows how things are going to work out. I have no intention of taking a position.” (p. 68)

In her *Luisenbund* circle, the Frau Doktor does her best to explain Feldhüter’s unwillingness to declare himself politically on the same side as the officer’s families by invoking his noble professional conviction that, however much he may sympathize with a particular political position, as a doctor he must remain neutral publicly and see in others only the sick or suffering human being. (p. 66) Lieselotte for her part, she explains, so admires her father, that she follows his example in everything and feels that a doctor’s daughter must stand above all parties. The Frau Doktor is not at all pleased, however, that she is constantly being placed in a difficult situation by her husband and her daughter: “It is really hard for me to maintain our social position with a husband and a daughter like mine.” (p. 68) Finally, in face of their constant mockery of her, she gives up communicating honestly with them both. She feels oppressed by being unable to express her real feelings to anyone.

I can’t really say out loud what I truly feel. My whole life has become a kind of whispering, a fruitless conversation with myself. Watching every word and gesture, hiding one’s true feelings, making sure to tell everyone what he or she wants to hear, what kind of life is that? How I would love to belong to the crowd that is in power and be able to shout out my opinions as I wish.

The terrible thing is that you never know who will ultimately be in power. Now, there's this new party, under Hitler. I don't care much for him because he is an Austrian and a Catholic, but at least he lets the Jews have it.[...] Sometimes I wonder whether we shouldn't join this new party [...] rather than the Deutschnationalists. If only I were sure that the new party isn't serious about socialism. (p. 69)

Besides, Lieselotte is not altogether wrong about the Luisenbund. *It is boring.* She has been a loyal monarchist all her life, the Frau Doktor reflects, "but do we have to talk all the time about Doorn!" And "the old goats" – the term she now uses to refer to the two leading members of the circle, a Major's wife and a baroness Hellsdorf (whose son will later become engaged to marry Lieselotte) – "never let me get in a word." Because they once visited the Kaiser in Doorn they never stop talking about how graciously they were received. Everyone else, she observes resentfully, is made to feel small and insignificant. (p. 71)

Feldhüter is somewhat less resistant to his wife's new political enthusiasm for the National Socialists. He reassures her that the National Socialist leaders are unlikely to build a socialist system. "That is only to get the workers to go along with them," he explains. But when the Frau Doktor asks whether they shouldn't encourage Lieselotte to join the party, since its leader is now the new Chancellor, and cites the example of Claudia, who has been a member for a month already, Arthur again says no. "A lot of hysterical women have joined," he replies. Lieselotte should not join – not at least for now. "First we have to wait and see the results of the elections." (p. 70) The Frau Doktor is beside herself: "Wait and see, Doctor Wait-and-See. God, how I hated him at that moment. Wait and see. He wouldn't even have married me, the hideous clubfoot, if I hadn't talked him into believing I was pregnant." (p. 71)

The Reichstag fire provokes a violent outburst in the Frau Doktor, a family row, and an unexpected reconciliation with her husband. She is more and more drawn to the National Socialists as they talk of closing down the department stores – where ordinary Germans, she notes, are sold shoddy goods at high prices, like the summer dress, bought only the year before, that became unwearable after the first wash – and getting rid of the Jews and the Communists. When she reads of the Reichstag fire in the newspaper, she immediately announces to Lieselotte that it was the work of the Communists. Lieselotte, however, only yawns and observes that it was an ugly building anyway. The Frau Doktor is enraged: "Our Reichstag, the embodiment of Germany!" "We have to destroy them, root

and branch," she declares. "Who?" Lieselotte asks in a bored tone. "The Communists naturally." "Is that what the old wives in the *Luisenbund* say?" Lieselotte asks, yawning again. Feldhüter himself now chimes in. Raising his eyebrows in the way that infuriates the Frau Doktor, he gives her a harsh look and tells her to stay out of politics. "Politics are men's business. Why don't you see to it instead that the soup isn't burned again today. I don't know any woman who talks so much about how well she runs her house and puts such terrible food on the table." (p. 72) She was used to Feldhüter's meannesses, the Frau Doktor relates, and usually bore them in silence. This time, however, what with the burning of the Reichstag and the new maid's handing in her notice, she could no longer contain herself.

I gave vent to all the bitterness in my heart: the Reichstag fire, the summer dress that shrank in the wash, the maids who are becoming more insolent and demanding by the day, Arthur's lack of success, the affection Dr. Bär is held in, the inner loneliness to which I am condemned, the way I am treated by the ladies in the *Luisenbund*, as if a former nurse were of no account, a nobody, the worry Lieselotte causes me, and the price of butter that keeps going up, the vicious Russians who got the German Communists to set fire to the Reichstag, the kitchen stove that needs to be repaired, Arthur's meanness to me, Lieselotte's lack of respect, the two genuine Meissen cups that the maid broke yesterday, and our poor Kaiser... it all poured out of me...Lieselotte was staring at me, Arthur smiled mockingly. I myself could hear that my voice was becoming ever louder and more shrill. Suddenly Arthur banged on the table with his fist. "Will you shut up!... The window is wide open. Anyone who happens to be passing by can hear every word you say. Can't you learn to wait and see? Do you have to blurt out all your opinions right away? Do you want to spoil everything for me?" Lieselotte got up from the table. "Nice family breakfast," she drawled. "Really heart-warming. Thank God I am not married." (p. 72)

Then the unexpected happens. Feldhüter looks at his wife, leans forward, and places his hand on hers. "Just be patient for a little longer, Martha," he says. "Then maybe you will get everything you have wanted for so long: the house, the second maid. Then maybe the ladies in the *Luisenbund* will learn to be humble. Then maybe, as my wife, you will play the role in our town that you have always wanted to play." The Frau Doktor looks at him in astonishment. "Had he lost his mind?" He notices her reaction and smiles: "Only, for now, no rushing into anything. Not a careless word. When one has two irons in the fire, Martha, one has to watch both of them. Today is February 27th. Can you not wait until the end of March? Then we will know."

The weeks go by. Finally it is election day. Feldhüter disappears in the early morning. Unable to ask him how she should vote, the Frau Doktor simply does not vote. With her customary indifference, Lieselotte also does not vote. As the radio is out of order, the Frau Doktor decides to wait up until her husband returns to hear the results of the election. The hours pass. It is late at night. Lieselotte wants to go to bed, but the Frau Doktor is too anxious and worked up and will not allow her to. Lieselotte stretches out on the sofa with a novel and falls asleep. Finally at one in the morning Feldhüter appears. "His sallow complexion had become red with excitement," the Frau Doktor relates.

He slammed the living-room door shut. "We won!" he shouted at me. I looked at him in puzzlement. "We won" – what can it mean when Arthur says "we"? And then I noticed a large swastika in his buttonhole and I knew who "we" meant. Lieselotte had awakened and she was also staring at the badge. She had never seen her father wearing one. "Since when have you been a Nazi, father?" she asked in a sleepy voice. "Talk respectfully when you speak of the mightiest party in the land," he commanded her, "– of the party you are also a member of." "I am a member of?" "Yes, you. I signed you up months ago." "But I don't want to be a member. All that marching and shouting is a bore. What does it have to do with me?" (p. 77)

Feldhüter goes up to her. At first the Frau Doktor thought he was about to strike her. Instead he says:

"I've been in the National Socialist Party for months. But I explained to the district commander that, as a doctor, I couldn't declare myself openly a member. Now, however... Now everything is different. And you will do as I say, Lieselotte." She shrugged. "Well, all right then.... So long as I don't have to sleep with proletarians." Arthur laughed. I don't know why, but a cold shiver runs down my spine when Arthur laughs. "That won't be necessary. It wouldn't hurt, but if you insist on the more distinguished types, some SS man will surely turn up. You're still a good-looking girl." Lieselotte now laughed too, like an echo of her father. I was of course completely forgotten. Neither of them had a thought for me.

It turns out, however, that there is something for the Frau Doktor too. "Now you will get your house," Feldhüter tells her. "What would you say to Dr. Bär's house?" The Frau Doktor feels her heart pounding in her breast. "I had never felt so German, so German through and through," she relates. "Yes, everything was working out as it should, The Jew yields his place to the German whom he has held down for so long. The German woman takes over where once the Jewess was mistress. I almost felt love for my

husband. He is after all a good and clever man. Smarter than I am. Now let the Major's wife dare to call Dr. Bär! Now let Countess Agnes dare go past me on the street with only a curt greeting! Now, I looked at Arthur, now we are the masters. And woe to them who stand in our way." (p. 78)

As cries and songs of jubilation resound through the street, Feldhüter goes to the window, throws it open, takes Lieselotte by the arm and stands with her looking out at the scene below. The marching men come to a halt and shout up: "Sieg heil! Germany awake!" Feldhüter and his daughter respond with the Nazi salute and the cry of "Heil Hitler!" Not to be left out, the Frau Doktor hurries over to the window, places herself beside her husband and daughter, raises her hand too in the Nazi salute and echoes their shouts of "Heil Hitler." That evening, as the couple gets ready for bed, the Frau Doktor's heart is so full, she feels she has to kneel in prayer and thank God for all He has done for them. Feldhüter asks her what is keeping her from coming to bed. "I am praying, Arthur," she replies. He shrugs and by the light of the night lamp she catches a glimpse of a mocking smile on his pallid face. (p. 79)

The Frau Doktor's second testimony, which follows immediately on the first, is no longer one of whispered frustration and resentment but an outspoken expression of triumph and satisfaction. The opening sentences again set the tone.

My beloved husband, my good, clever Arthur, how right he was with his "Wait and see." Only the individual who submits patiently and humbly to God's will receives his reward here on earth. I never asked anything of life. It was always enough for me to have a good husband, an obedient daughter, and a modest home which I looked after lovingly and joyfully. I was never one of those who demand a lot from life and for that reason, now that everything has turned out so splendidly for us, I am entitled to rejoice with a good conscience. (p. 79)

She goes on to tell how her "dear husband" and her "good Lieselotte" accompanied her to Church where they heard an edifying sermon about the world mission of the "deutsche Christen"¹⁷ and the duties of the German

¹⁷ There had been agitation in German Protestant circles since the end of the nineteenth century for the freeing of German Christianity from its alien, "oriental" origin in Judaism. In his *Foundations of the Nineteenth Century* (1899), Houston Stewart Chamberlain had argued that Christ was not a Jew but an Aryan. In May, 1932, with National Socialism going from strength to strength, a group calling itself the "deutsche Christen" (German Christians) was formed within the German Protestant Church. It excluded baptised Jews, endorsed the "Aryan paragraph," and generally pursued a racist and anti-Semitic agenda. It soon dominated many

“Frau und Mutter” [wife and mother]. She notices how at Church the Frau Major waved to her eagerly from afar and tried, albeit without success, to get her mother, the haughty old Frau General, to follow suit. She admires the SA and SS men in their handsome uniforms.

I felt real love for those brave lads who for years were persecuted, treacherously attacked, and murdered, and who now stand before us as conquerors. I also thought of the boycott of Jewish businesses the week before and how the SA marched up and down in front of the department store (where, by the way, I had bought another summer dress a week earlier, the prices being so low that it would have been a sin not to take advantage of them). The owner, chicken-hearted as all the Jews have now become, had had the window shutters rolled down. One delivery boy was late, however, and tried to slip out of the building without being noticed. But our fearless SA men caught him and gave him a proper beating. It was fun to watch. (p. 80)

The reader is given a hint of what is to come in the later testimonies of Countess Agnes and Kati Gruber when the Frau Doktor tells how she recognized “that crazy Claudia “ in the crowd, standing “pale as death and as if turned to stone.” The “awful Toni, whom I never could abide” was standing next to her, holding her tightly by the arm. At one point it looked as if Claudia was about to dash forward, but Toni pulled her back. “These aristocratic women are frightful,” the Frau Doktor comments. “Degenerate and neurotic. They can’t even stand to see a harmless scrap. In general, that Claudia ought not to be in the Party. They say she had something going with a Jewish doctor in the psychiatric clinic she was once sent to. I took good care to see that that information got spread around. We don’t need women who are so shameless that they let men of an alien race... I simply can’t understand how an Aryan woman doesn’t feel utter disgust when a man of an alien race touches her. It would never have occurred to me, when I was young, to even glance at a Jew. I still remember how hard it was for me when I had to take care of one in the hospital.” During the church service she reflects how she “had to laugh with delight, like a child, when the airplanes flew overhead and dropped white leaflets calling on the population to observe the boycott” and how wonderful it had been, even though there were only three Jewish businesses in the little town. “In Berlin and the other big cities it must have been grand.” She also begins to “wonder” whether the elderly, aristocratic Frau General, who has always studiously avoided greeting her and who had expressed skepticism at one of the *Luisenbund* gatherings about the responsibility of the Communists for the Reichstag fire, might not have Jews among her ancestors. All in all,

of the local *Landkirchen* and emerged as the clear winner in the Church elections of July, 1933.

it is wonderful to feel oneself one with the entire Volk and with all classes of the people. One Germany, united against the enemy within and against the enemy without. And for this we have to thank our great Führer. His picture hangs in our living room and I never tire of gazing on his noble, thoughtful features. A man of the people, no Kaiser and no prince, just a simple human being who raised himself up. That is the strength of the German people – that it always recognizes true greatness even when it appears in the humblest guise. I never really could understand the circle around the major's wife with its glorification of the Kaiser. I was always a good republican – though not, for sure, at the time of the old republic that has now collapsed. For I found the Social Democrats as repulsive as the Jews. (pp. 81-82)

The Frau Doktor notes with satisfaction that her husband's waiting-room is now always full, people having "finally realized who the better doctor is," whereas "only a few proletarians" with workers' insurance "and that stupid Countess Agnes still go to Dr. Bär." (p. 82) And there is "something fishy about her. Everybody knows about the fine morals of aristocratic women. Their menfolk are unable to satisfy them, and so there is always a Jewish tutor around. Not hard to imagine the outcome. I always thought that that Countess Agnes didn't look like a true German woman. That's why for years I refused to have anything to do with her, even though she kept trying to become friends with me."

Given Feldhüter's position in the town now, it is unacceptable, according to the Frau Doktor, that he should have only a miserable five-room apartment. For herself, she declares, she doesn't care, but she has to think of Arthur and Lieselotte. She types up an anonymous letter warning Doctor Bär that he is in danger and sends it to him in several different mailings. Others in the town do the same. But nothing happens. Then some lively lads throw stones at Dr. Bär's windows and smash them. A little later stories begin circulating about concentration camps. "I was thrilled. Our revolution isn't carried out barbarously, like the Russian one. We don't murder people. We place even our enemies in secure places and give them the chance to correct their ways. No other nation would be capable of such a thing." (p. 83) Still, Dr. Bär does not try to leave as so many other Jews have.

The stubborn old man just wouldn't let himself be helped and his equally stubborn workers' insurance patients still went to him, even though SA men were stationed outside his office warning people politely that he is a Jew and that Germans should have themselves cared for by an Aryan doctor.[...] On the very day of the boycott a boatswain, a Communist, even had the nerve to go to Dr. Bär to get help with an infected finger. But the fellow got the

same treatment as the delivery man for the Jewish department store. The fact that things turned out badly wasn't the SA men's fault. How were these poor young fellows to know that the boatswain had come back from the war with a heart condition and couldn't tolerate even a little thrashing. Naturally, they were all shocked when he suddenly lay on the ground, stiff and still as a stone, and never regained consciousness. They carried him back into Dr. Bär's house and some communist provocateur placed a note on his chest that read: "Dr. Bär, this is what happens to the patients you treat." (p. 84)

But after all, "he would most likely have died of a heart attack anyway, even without the couple of blows he took. God has marked the appointed end for each one of us and the boatswain's last hour had struck. Perhaps if my Arthur had gotten to him, he might have lived a little longer. For Dr. Bär is now in his seventies and such an old man sometimes doesn't quite know what he is doing."

The Frau Doktor's house problem is finally resolved when Dr. Bär and his wife commit suicide. Feldhüter at first only tells his wife that they will be moving into Dr. Bär's house in a week. The Frau Doctor thinks at first that Bär has finally given in and decided to emigrate. Then suddenly she thinks of the doctor's wife and her high spirits drop. "Maybe she will stay on here," she says, somewhat crestfallen. "Don't worry," Feldhüter reassures her. "You can begin packing tomorrow [...] Dr. Bär and his wife shot themselves a couple of hours ago." "I always told you, Arthur," the Frau Doktor responds, "that the two of them were not quite in their right minds these last weeks." "And then," she adds in her testimony, "I was overcome by joy." Feldhüter warns her, however, that the whole town does not have to know about the suicides; the story is being put out, he says, that Bär accidentally shot himself while cleaning his gun and that when his wife saw what had happened she took her own life. "My good Arthur!" the Frau Doktor comments. "When I think of the harm the Jew did to him all those years and now he is concerned about saving his reputation. But Arthur was always like that – good-hearted and considerate." (pp. 84-85) As if to confirm her judgment of him, Feldhüter announces that he is "glad the old man has croaked." "May that be the fate of all enemies of the fatherland," the Frau Doktor responds. "Who knows how many crimes Dr. Bär committed in his long life," she thinks. "Illegal operations and the like. I know that he was always against Paragraph 218 [the law prohibiting assisted abortions - L. G.]. Unlike my Arthur, who has always believed that the living embryo was especially sacred." (Lieselotte's "Malheur" is thus conveniently erased from the Frau Doktor's new consciousness as the wife

of the town's prominent National Socialist doctor.)

The narrative continues in this vein. The Frau Doktor would have liked to refurbish the Bärs' villa with furniture bought from a fellow Party member, but "the good man was so expensive that one evening as it was getting dark I went to the store of the Jewish furniture dealer Kohn. To tell the truth, I went out of compassion, for old man Kohn is seventy-five now and what is the old man to do if no one buys from him any more? Naturally the Jew first tried to cheat me. He wanted to charge nearly as much as our good Party member. I gently pointed out to him that from a person of alien stock that is simply not acceptable. I was irritated that the man seemed not to have appreciated my kindness in coming to him. 'My prices have always been firm, Frau Doktor,' he said in his shameless Jewish way. 'Yes, before,' I answered quietly. 'I can't sell the furniture for less,' was the response. But anger now overwhelmed me. 'Don't you know that it's all over now with price-gouging.' I exclaimed. 'I am duty-bound to report you for trying to sell at higher than the set price.' [...] The old man stood trembling in a corner, staring at me with his huge black eyes. Even if he is a sub-human," the Frau Doktor reflects, "the Bible tells us we must have compassion with animals. 'So, Herr Kohn,' I said encouragingly, 'we can surely come to an agreement. I will pay you half of what you are asking. And you will still be making a good deal.' [...] At the time I still did not know that I would not have to pay the Jew anything at all. He delivered the furniture, but even before I got the bill he had been sent to a concentration camp for engaging in Communist plots." (pp. 93-94)

Two episodes recounted by the Frau Doktor anticipate the later narratives of the Countess and Kati. According to the Frau Doktor,

despite the seriousness of the times, there are all kinds of things that make one laugh, as, for instance, when the Social Democratic Mayor of our town was made to march through the streets carrying a Swastika banner. [...] If he slowed down he would get a good-humoured shove from one of our good SA men. He would then run for a bit, which sent the young people in the crowd into fits of laughter. The day after that the story went around that treasonous documents had been found in his home and that he was to be arrested. But suddenly our Mayor was nowhere to be found. [...] Everyone in the town wondered where he could have gone, for the Swiss border was strictly guarded. I had my suspicions. There is only one person who can have hidden him. So I said to my future son-in-law, Baron Hellsdorf, "If I were you, I would do a house-search at Countess Agnes Saldern's place. I know for sure that that woman is a fierce enemy of our movement. So much so, that she no longer even greets me when we meet on the street. Besides, I

suspect that there are Jews in her family line.” (p. 89)

The story of the search is then told from the point of view of the Nazi investigators in anticipation of its subsequent retelling from the point of view of the anti-Nazi resistance, to which the reader has now been given good reason to suspect that the Countess has gone over. We learn that Countess Agnes adopted a haughtily correct, even provocative aristocratic tone with the men, that the Frau Doktor’s future son-in-law, Baron Hellsdorf, was so incensed by it that he had to restrain himself from striking the old lady, and that Claudia was furious at the indignity done to her mother.¹⁸

A side-issue, satirizing the Nazi obsession with race, is introduced at this point when Feldhüter warns his wife against spreading a story about there being Jews among Countess Agnes’s Saldern ancestors. He has already checked the matter out, he tells her and found – doubtless to his regret – that the family is 100% Aryan. “However, if this question interests you...,” he adds maliciously, pulling out of his pocket a sheaf of papers containing the results of years of inquiry into the racial ancestry of prominent people. The Frau Doktor notices to her delight that the great grandmother of the Frau Major was a baptised Jewess. But to her consternation, Feldhüter’s continued research into the racial ancestry of prominent local figures turns up evidence soon afterwards showing that the maternal great-grandfather of her future son-in-law Baron Hellsdorf, “that splendid, blond, typically Germanic young man,” was a baptised Jew. Lieselotte is already thirty, the Frau Doktor reflects, and it will not be easy for her to find another man. Fortunately, the situation is saved when letters are discovered in the Hellsdorf family archives “demonstrating beyond doubt that his great-great-grandmother had had an affair with a Freiherr Elz von Rübernach and that her one child was the child of their love.” Happily, therefore, there is not a drop of blood from an alien race in Hellsdorf’s veins. The Frau Doktor allows herself to feel sympathy and admiration for the ancestor of her future son-in-law. Forced out of financial necessity to marry a man of

18 Zur Mühlen’s choice of the name Hellsdorf was probably not arbitrary and was curiously prescient. The similarly named Wolf-Heinrich, Graf von Helldorff (1896-1944), was a relatively well-known figure of an “aristocrat” turned Nazi. He had taken part in the failed rightwing Kapp Putsch against the Weimar Republic and joined the SA in 1931. Zur Mühlen could not have known in 1934, when she wrote *Unsere Töchter die Nazinen*, that the National Socialist government would appoint him Chief of Police in Berlin in 1935 and that he would play an active role in the harassing and plundering of the Jewish population, or that, if Goebbels is to be believed, he proposed the construction of a ghetto in Berlin to be financed by the rich Jews themselves. He is also said to have been the brains behind “Kristallnacht” in November 1938. (All this did not prevent him from participating in the failed plot to assassinate Hitler – for which he was put to death in 1944).

alien race, she had had the courage to preserve the purity of her family's blood by engaging in an adulterous relationship. (pp. 96-97)

A second episode anticipating the crucial, culminating event of the later narratives of Countess Agnes and Kati Gruber concerns the pursuit of a Communist by twenty young club-bearing Nazis. The Frau Doktor admits in her second testimony that some improper things have happened under the SA. The other day, for example, when about twenty club-bearing young men were running after a Communist, she relates, they paid no attention to the fact that she was also in the street. She had to dart quickly into a doorway to avoid getting hurt herself. "Cowardly, like all Marxists," as she puts it, unaware, as usual, of any irony in her words, "the Communist was running away as fast as he could. The whole lakeside square was full of running, shouting men." She admits that she was extremely frightened. But once she was out of danger, she relates, everything looked different.

Goodness gracious! One has to have some understanding of the people's spirits and how fired-up they are. And in the end it really was a funny spectacle. Unfortunately, the Communist got away. But that was only because of that crazy Claudia, who stood in the way of the brave young lads, shrieking, and yelling out something about the dignity of the movement. For a moment, she made them hesitate. And that moment was enough to give the Marxist his chance. Claudia's lover was in command of the SA men. He laughed loudly at the frenzy of the old spinster and pushed her gently but vigorously aside, so that she collapsed against the wall of a house. I wondered about this event later. [...] Was it possible that this man-crazy woman was also involved with the Communist? The Salderns are Catholics and it is well known that the Jesuit poison has infected these people and made them thoroughly immoral. In a neighboring town, for instance, a priest, speaking from the pulpit, dared to slander our glorious Führer. The old man must have known he was not telling the truth. But naturally these international brothers, who let themselves be told what they are to do by a foreigner and who live in sin with their housekeepers are almost as un-German as the Jews. The old man is in a concentration camp now and it serves him right. Why doesn't he follow the example of our good Herr von Papen, who submits to the authority of the Führer in everything. (p. 95)

In gratitude for the many benefits that have now come her way – in her own words: "I am now much sought after and honored" – the Frau Doktor ends her second testimony on words of praise for her fatherland – "the only land where true service is rewarded and where, as it is said in the Bible, 'He hath put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low

degree,¹⁹ and on a prayer of thanks to God and to "the chosen instrument of His will, our Führer Adolf Hitler, the most German of Germans." (p. 100)

The broad satire, for which Zur Mühlen reveals a striking gift in the testimonies of the middle-class Frau Doktor, gives way in the concluding two testimonies by the aristocratic mother and the working-class mother to dramatic and pathetic narrative. Countess Agnes opens her testimony with an avowal and a commitment: "I am only a simple mortal, an old woman, who has perhaps sinned throughout a lifetime by withdrawing from everything. Now however, at seventy, despite my age, I would like to make up for all that I failed to do, I would like to help and to rescue people, and I would also like to witness the fall of those who currently wield power." The aristocrat has thus realized that it is time to leave the glasshouse in which in her 1929 autobiographical memoir Zur Mühlen had accused her class of having shut itself up, go beyond distaste and disdain, and join forces with the Social Democratic working class in active opposition to a regime that is the enemy of all humanity. Not surprisingly, therefore, it transpires that it was Countess Agnes who carried out the rescue of the town's Social Democratic mayor and ferried him in her motorboat to the safety of Switzerland on the other side of the lake, that – at great risk to herself, obviously – she has been providing temporary sanctuary in a well concealed room in her house for many other Communists and Social Democrats on the run from Nazi persecution, and that, affecting deep piety, she has been storing weapons for her new friends under piles of prayer books in an old prayer-stool that she brought out expressly for the purpose and ostentatiously placed in a prominent position in her living room. Despite searches of the house, the old lady's skilful planning, resourcefulness, sang-froid, and expert play-acting effectively thwart the Nazis' best efforts to locate an elusive loophole in their surveillance system. Her success is all the more remarkable as she does not conceal her contempt for them and their movement and appears to do nothing to allay their suspicion of her. In fact, she uses her aristocratic hauteur as a useful disguise. Even Claudia's membership in the party becomes a situation to be exploited: it is invoked, for instance, to underline the unlikelihood that a resister is being concealed in a house inhabited by a Nazi.

What remains for a time unclear is whether Claudia knows more about her mother's activities than she lets on. Her disaffection from the party, or

19 In the original: 'Er stößet die Gewaltigen vom Stuhl und erhebet die Elenden.' The passage, unattributed in the text, is from Luke, 1:52.

from its violent and “unchivalrous” tactics, already hinted at in her heated denial of Fritz’s account of having being set upon by an entire gang of National Socialists in the Countess’s first testimony, is hinted at again, twice, in the second testimony of the Frau Doktor. On the first occasion, Claudia wanted to jump in to stop the attacks on the delivery boy from the Jewish department store, and had to be held back by Toni; on the second, as we just saw, she tried to stop a crowd of club-bearing Nazi youths from beating up a lone fleeing Communist and was pushed aside contemptuously by her SA lover. The reason for Claudia’s behavior is made clear on that occasion by Claudia herself: the beatings of lone, defenceless victims by gangs of SA men, she shouts, are a discredit to the party and are inconsistent with what she takes to be its ideals.

That Claudia is deeply troubled by the actions she has witnessed emerges in Countess Agnes’s second testimony from changes the Countess notices – and for which she has, as yet, no explanation – in the young woman’s appearance and behavior. Mother and daughter have by now been partly reconciled. They take their meals together and talk about indifferent matters, avoiding the topics that divide them. Countess Agnes notices, however, that Claudia has become thin and pale, has dark rings round her eyes as though she has difficulty sleeping, hardly eats, but smokes one cigarette after another. Sometimes, when she thinks she is unobserved, there is a look of despair on her face, and her hands shake. On one occasion when the Countess, thinking she has gone out, enters Claudia’s room without knocking, she finds her daughter stretched out on the sofa, weeping profusely. A little later, Claudia comes home deathly pale, with a troubled expression that Countess Agnes recognizes from when she was little. Suddenly she falls to her knees and buries her face in the Countess’s lap, saying only “Mother, mother.” As the Countess strokes her hair, she notices that it has become quite grey. Claudia does not appear that evening for dinner. When she goes in to say goodnight to her, Countess Agnes finds her lying in bed staring at the ceiling. There is a pool of water in front of the washbasin. “You certainly gave yourself a good wash this evening, Claudia,” Countess Agnes says, partly to distract the young woman from her thoughts. “Not good enough, mother, not good enough,” Claudia replies, looking with disgust at her hands and her thin body. “I shall never be clean again, never.” Countess Agnes notices that she did not sleep that entire night for the light was burning in her room until dawn.

Claudia now begins to urge her mother to cross the border and settle in

Switzerland, indicating on one occasion that she knows it was the Countess who made it possible for the town's mayor to escape over the lake into Switzerland. The Countess is puzzled. "Why do you want to get rid of me, Claudia?" she asks. The answer comes hesitantly, in a monotone, like something rehearsed: "Because a lot of shady elements have infiltrated the SA and it's not impossible now that, against the wishes of the leaders, those agents provocateurs..." Suddenly she breaks off and says in a whisper: "Go to Switzerland, mother, I beg you. Something could easily happen to you. Those people who claim to be National Socialists and in reality are something entirely different..." Countess Agnes looks at her and asks: "Since when have you started to lie, child. I always consoled myself with the thought that however you acted, you were always upright and honest at least.. Have you now lost that one good quality too?" Claudia turns a deep red. Her hands shake and her lips tremble. She places a hand on the image of the Madonna on the prayer stool (in which the Countess stores the weapons of the resisters). "You have become religious again, mother. Pray, pray that everything doesn't..." Unable to complete her sentence, she simply stands still, looking lost and helpless. Countess Agnes feels a pain in her heart. "Come here, Claudia," she says softly. "I want to tell you something." Claudia comes over and sits beside her. "We don't see eye to eye on anything, my dear," Countess Agnes continues. "We have almost become enemies in these last months. Perhaps I was too hard on you. I'll stop reproaching you. Just do one thing for me. Be true to yourself. Don't ever do anything that goes against your better judgment and your truest convictions." Claudia gives a bitter, desperate laugh: "My better judgment, good God, my better judgment." Suddenly she seizes her mother's hand: "Mother, how did you, you of all people, come by such a daughter. How is it possible that a child of yours is a coward, a pathetic coward?" "The bravest of us can feel fear," the Countess answers. "It's a question of overcoming it." Claudia gets up from the sofa and goes to the window. Yet Countess Agnes feels her daughter is closer to her than she ever was and in the midst of all the anguish and distress, she experiences a quiet happiness. (pp. 107-108)

Claudia soon has occasion to follow her mother's advice when her revulsion at her Nazi comrades' tactics provokes her to make the final – and fatal – intervention that becomes the tragic climax and conclusion of Countess Agnes's second testimony. The Countess is at home one day when she hears shots. She wonders who is being attacked this time and thinks of the old man who is in hiding from the Nazis and whom she is

supposed to help escape to Switzerland that evening. As she is reflecting on a conversation she had had shortly before with Fritz, the gardener, and Toni's former friend Seppel – a conversation in which she had asked why Russia has not intervened, and been told in response by the two brave young Communists that she doesn't understand anything about politics – Toni bursts into the house, pale as death and eyes red from weeping. The Countess thinks something has happened to Kati. Toni, who, she notices, is no longer wearing her swastika badge, replies that she has not come to tell her about Kati, but about Claudia. "My God, what has she done?" the Countess asks. "Has she betrayed someone?" Claudia has betrayed no one," Toni answers. "You can be proud of her. Claudia is dead." She then relates how it happened. His would-be rescuers had waited too long with their escape plans for an old comrade (in which, as the reader already knows, the Countess was to have played a major role); he had been discovered and arrested that afternoon. The Nazis had tied a placard round his neck that read "I am Huber, the old big shot" and had driven him through the streets of the town, beating and shoving him as they went. Claudia had encountered the mob in the square by the lake. "I had already had to hold her back once before," Toni explains. "But today, she was alone. By the time I got there, it was too late." Claudia, it seems, stood watching the scene as though shell-shocked. "She saw how one young Nazi stuck out a leg in front of the old man, so that he tripped and fell, and how the lad then began to kick him as he lay on the ground. She saw how they raised the old fellow up and began beating him with their rubber truncheons. At that point she jumped forward and stood in front of the old man, shouting to the SA people: 'Leave the old man alone, you beasts, you murderers!'" Seemingly the old man told her she should go, for there was nothing she could do to help him. But Claudia stood her ground and shouted through the whole square: "Won't any of you step forward to help? Are you all cowards?" She then ripped the swastika from her breast and threw it in the leaders' faces, crying "The badge of murder, the badge of cowardice. Save the old man! Kill the beasts!" A big crowd had gathered, Toni went on. "One young man leaped from the crowd to stand beside Claudia and old Huber, pulling out a knife. A few voices struck up the International. The SA men were soon surrounded. But our people were unarmed. Then the shots rang out. I heard them myself. The young man was hit by the first, Claudia by the second. The Nazi procession moved on, leaving the two dead young people behind them. Our men picked them up and carried them away."

(pp. 113-14)

Claudia's body is brought home that evening. The Countess has her child back. "In the midst of my pain, I also felt happiness," she writes in her diary. "Because now I could weep for my child...I held her cold hand in mine and I thought: 'How quickly she found her way back to me, my Claudia, much more quickly than I could have dared to hope... She is the last of our line and in her death she has brought honor to it. Poor confused heart, poor mixed up head, when the light finally dawned in you, you could only die, but in the service of a good cause. Others might have been smarter and not allowed themselves to be carried away, so that they could live to fight the enemy. You, my child, could fight only through your death. But that is something too, it is a lot. And I am proud of you.'" (p. 115)

Even as she expresses her pride in her child, the Countess thus hints at the limitations of aristocratic opposition to National Socialism. Claudia's objection is to the Party members' brutality and "unchivalrous" behavior: the reader of Hermynia Zur Mühlen is inevitably reminded of little Erika's indignation at the fight of "four against one" in *Reise durch ein Leben*, Tante Aglae's reaction to a similar situation in *Ein Jahr im Schatten*, the distress and anger of the child in a feuilleton entitled "Man muß es ihnen sagen" when she comes upon a group of boys bullying a single one. There is no indication that Claudia has understood how the behavior of the SA might be connected with a political program, the proclaimed ideals of which have a heroic and noble air. The goals Claudia took to be those of National Socialism – the transformation of a people, the building of a community united by the bond of brotherly love in which everyone has a part to play, escape from the lonely, alienated "ugly I" and rediscovery of the original "we" (in the words used by Erika in *Reise durch ein Leben*) – remain detached in her mind from any concrete analysis of social conditions, any consideration of the practical measures that might have to be taken in order truly to improve those conditions, any reflection on the measures proposed and carried out by the National Socialists. Claudia's politics were and remain a politics of pure will. The essentially aristocratic notion of fair play, valuable as it might be on occasion as an obstacle to certain kinds of inhuman behavior, is not in itself, Zur Mühlen makes clear, a policy that can be the foundation of a new and better society. Aristocrats, as Countess Agnes points out several times, are literally a dying class: they are good at dying nobly for a cause; but "working people know how to live for one." It is they, not the aristocrats, who have the qualities needed to envision and to

build a truly new and better world: patience, diligence, resilience, and the capacity to think things through.

The Countess's testimony does not therefore end with Claudia's courageous act of self-sacrifice. On the morning after the death of her child, the Countess calls on the family of the young man who was killed along with Claudia. "I did not know their name, they knew nothing of me, but we felt somehow that we belonged together. I think I shed more bitter tears in the little room of those working people than at the bedside of my dead Claudia. The young man was not yet twenty. [...] In the quiet hours, as I sat next to my dead Claudia, I had the feeling that something had come to its proper end, the feeling of a life fulfilled. But here, next to this dead half-child who had not yet reached maturity and whose life would bear no fruit, I was overcome by a different feeling [...] – hatred and a desire for revenge..." But then, "my gaze fell on the parents of the young victim and my rage and hatred gave way to a feeling of shame. Their features expressed infinite pain, but also something I had difficulty interpreting: a determination, a courageous, unyielding resoluteness that was stronger than death. I had the feeling that I was looking life itself in the face, unconquerable, indestructible life, the life that after the hardest winter frosts pushes forth buds that will become blossoms and fruit, the life not of individual humans but of an idea. What I found here was different from the unreflected outburst of my Claudia, who had thrown herself recklessly, following only her feelings of anger and disgust, into the arms of death. Nor was it the impotent rage of an old woman who, because she is descended from an ancient line that for centuries ruled over others, cannot believe that there is anything she cannot do. What I saw was the patient resilience of a class that is the bearer of the future and that for that reason, in spite of everything, cannot be vanquished. I spoke to these two people with the deepest respect. I felt that they stood higher than I, higher than the past." (p. 117)

As the parents, fearing who might be laid next to him, do not wish their son to be buried in the local cemetery, the Countess suggests that the two children, "who had fought together and died together" – the aristocrat's daughter and the working-class couple's young son, *Ende* and *Anfang*, as the title of Zur Mühlen's autobiographical memoir runs – be buried alongside each other in her garden.²⁰ At the burial ceremony, held in secret and under

20 Published by S. Fischer Verlag in 1929, *Ende und Anfang* traces its aristocratic heroine's development into a committed Socialist through a series of chronologically arranged anecdotes. It begins on an end – that of the old, cultivated, but decayed Austrian aristocracy

cover of darkness, an old man briefly placed a red flag on the graves. Being an aristocrat, in Zur Mühlen's view, had once meant being the beneficiary of the labour performed and the hardships endured by millions, in order that human culture might be developed in one privileged group of people. The new bearer of human culture, as she saw it, was now the working class. It was therefore appropriate that the old aristocracy make for the working class the sacrifices that working people had once made for the aristocracy. Though it is no longer the destiny of the aristocracy to be the carrier of human culture it can and indeed should – *noblesse oblige* – be ready to sacrifice itself for the sake of the class now destined to assume that role. It cannot live the new human culture that is dawning, but it can die for it.

Appropriately, therefore, the final testimony in Zur Mühlen's novel is not that of Countess Agnes but that of the working-class Kati Gruber. As usual, the new testimony advances the narrative itself beyond the point where it was left at the end of the preceding testimony. We learn that the Countess's motor boat has been seized, that Fritz has been arrested and taken away and that no one knows where he is or whether he is even alive, that the Countess herself is under so much suspicion that her villa can no longer be used as a hiding place for people, weapons, or documents, but that she still helps out in every way she can, often incautiously and at great risk to herself, that she was uncontrollably enraged when the workers' unions were banned – she who has probably lived a good part of her life, Kati muses, not knowing what a trades union is – and that she has become so unrelenting in her hatred of the Nazis that she is angry with Kati for having sheltered one of the leftwing SA men who had turned against his former comrades at the time of the murder of Ernst Röhm but managed to escape the fate intended for him. "She cannot or will not believe that beneath the brown uniform there can be a real human being who rues his error," Kati comments. "She, who used to be so much in favor of peace, has become unbelievably harsh and unforgiving in her hatred of the enemy. I think she would be capable of killing one of them with her own hands, quite calmly and in cold blood." (p. 141)

Toni, we learn, has now joined the resistance and is actively involved in dangerous activities such as the rescue of people who are under threat

which tries to protect itself from the world by shutting itself up in a "glass house" – and ends on a beginning, the Russian Revolution of 1917. The final section of the book is entitled "Zdravstvui Revolyutsia" (Hail to the Revolution).

and the distribution of anti-Nazi leaflets. As more and more people, out of need or fear, come to support or join the Nazi Party (p. 125) – at one time, Kati reflects ruefully, you could count the small number of Nazis in the little town but now that could be said of the Social Democrats – those who are opposed to the Nazis increasingly sink their differences and make common cause. Outside Germany the Social Democratic and Communist parties continue their bitter feuding (pp. 125-26), but within Germany Social Democrats and Communists work together, alongside anybody else who opposes the regime. These may include a few upper class people, like the Frau General – the same independent-minded old lady who had refused to believe that the Communists set fire to the Reichstag, who also obstinately resisted her daughter's urgings that she recognize Frau Doktor Feldhüter, and who now goes out of her way to tip Kati off about an upcoming house-search (p. 123) – as well as some sincere Christians, chiefly Catholics, like the local priest, who ends up speaking out in his sermons against the National Socialists and is hauled off to a concentrations camp (pp. 125-26, 142). They may even include a few former National Socialists, who believed in a genuine German social revolution and have been disillusioned by the Party's denunciation of the "leftwing" faction within it and the murder of its leader. At one tense point in the narrative Kati is hiding in her apartment both one such disillusioned SA man and Toni's friend, the Communist Seppel (pp. 129-34).

Ultimately, in light of the failure of other countries to come to the aid of Germany and, most notably, the failure of the Soviet Union to support the beleaguered German Left (Toni attempts to persuade her mother that there are strategic political reasons for the inaction of the Soviet Union but Kati remains unconvinced), the message of Zur Mühlen's book is that the Germans must unite to save themselves. In 1934, Zur Mühlen appears not yet to have given up hope that the regime might be overthrown by disaffected groups from within. In her second testimony Kati refers with what we now know was completely illusory optimism to growing discontent among the peasants (pp. 138-39), workers, and small shopkeepers, and even among some Nazis who expected something different and now recognize that what they brought about was "no revolution for the people and the poor but a revolution for the rich and the 'leaders'." (pp. 142-43) "Our people were rounded up and murdered," Kati reflects, "but those [young Nazis] were deceived. What will happen when they grasp the extent of the deception. These men have been taught to kill defenceless people. What will happen

when, having learned to despise human life, they turn against their leaders? Even the peasants, who were so strongly for Hitler, are beginning to have second thoughts..." (p. 138)

The last words of the novel express – once again with what can now be seen to have been misplaced optimism – the patient determination of the socialist working class to keep up the fight and retain confidence that in time they will triumph. On a fine summer's day Kati and Toni are watching construction workers putting up a house in the street opposite them. "When you look at those piles of bricks and stones, it's hard to believe that a house will ever be made out of them," Toni says. "But in a month's time, it will be there. And that's the way it is with us too. From the ruins we drag one stone after another. We stack them. We sort them carefully. And a new, free Germany will arise out of the stones. We are building it, mother, we are already building it." "Yes, Toni," Kati replies quietly. "You are right. We are rebuilding, we are rebuilding." (p. 144)

By making women – stereotypically impulsive and volatile but also focused on slow maturation and the long-term survival of the species – the central players in her political novel, *Zur Mühlen* may have intended to direct attention to one of the essential tensions of her narrative: the tension, within the opposition to National Socialism, between impassioned, almost instinctive revulsion and considered, clear-headed rejection, between impulsive, short-term protest and calculated, long-term resistance. By giving the last word to the patient, un-heroic, but resolute working class women, rather than the more reckless and heroic aristocrats, she gives precedence to the long, considerate view of historical action over the immediate, subjective personal reaction. Kati and Toni look toward the future, their eyes are trained on the objective of a far-off final victory, not on short-term actions that make a largely ineffectual moral statement or afford a sense of momentary, purely subjective moral satisfaction at having done the right thing and been "true to oneself." Consequently, they manage their resources carefully, avoid unnecessary risk, and refrain from actions that will not contribute to their long-term goals and might even detract from the realization of these goals. Toni, who is no less repelled by the behavior of the SA than Claudia, does not sacrifice herself in noble protest, but withdraws in order to contribute to a larger, longer, planned struggle.²¹

²¹ As Kati puts it, "I thought how full of despair we two old women were when our daughters became 'Nazinen' and how differently the two of them broke with the party. Claudia, like a

The two working class women thus become models of behavior for all the other opponents of National Socialism. Seppel, for instance, goes wild when he learns that his mother has been placed under arrest and thinks of turning himself in to obtain her release. He has to be persuaded that that will do no good and that far more will be achieved by his continuing to work in the resistance. Countess Agnes who behaves recklessly wherever only her own life is at risk, fails to understand that, as Kati puts it, "We cannot afford to lose the services of a single one of us." (pp. 126, 141). The Countess and Claudia, as Zur Mühlen repeatedly points out, act according to the old, by no means unworthy, but in modern conditions unpractical and unproductive principles and values of a dying caste. In the Countess's own words, "I think that we – members of my old caste – can die for a cause, but we do not know how to live for one. We don't have the right strength for that. Dying is also easier." (p. 106)

Perhaps that was also how Hermynia Zur Mühlen – née Hermine Isabella Maria Victoria, Countess Folliot de Crenneville-Poutet – understood her own behavior. Her heroines, usually aristocrats, are often portrayed as impulsive, moved by old aristocratic notions of chivalry and "fair play." To the degree that they identify with the workers' movement it is because that is the right thing for their dying caste to do. *Noblesse oblige*. Their historical role, in short, is to sacrifice themselves for the sake of the new rising class that is destined to be the living bearer of human values in the future. To this class they are joined by their shared rejection of the egoism, opportunism, and narrow utilitarianism that Zur Mühlen associates with the middle class and satirizes ferociously in the figures of the three Feldhüters.

madwoman, consumed by shame and disgust, Toni calmly and quietly, but surely, having thought it all over. I see the same difference between my dear Countess Agnes and me. Whenever others are in danger, she is sly and shrewd, but when it is a matter of herself alone, she cannot control herself... She refuses to see that her very life is valuable to us and must be protected." (p. 126)