Parallels and Contrasts

Carl Schurz was born in Liblar, near Cologne, March 2, 1829, but after involvement in the unsuccessful German revolution of 1848, left Europe in 1852 for the United States where he became a Union general in the Civil War, a US senator from Missouri, 1869-75, and secretary of the interior, 1877-81, in the cabinet of President Hayes. One of the first ceremonies commemorating the centennial of his arrival in the United States was a dinner in Bremen Feb. 7 under the auspices of the Carl Schurz Society. Principal speakers were Dr. Heuss and Rear Admiral Charles R. Jeffis (USN, Ret.), United States state commissioner for Bremen.

Translated Text of Address

By DR. THEODOR HEUSS
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May I start with a personal remark: when and how and through whom the personality of Carl Schurz made its first impression on me? I have to mention a name in this connection, which may be known to the older generation of Bremen citizens, or at least to the historians of this city: Theodor Barth, legal adviser to the Bremen Chamber of Commerce, who, at the age of 29, was appointed representative of the Bremen Senate in the Federal Council (Representation of States) of imperial Germany, to fight Bismarck's shift to a protective customs policy. He did this job gladly and ardently, though unsuccessfully, but to the satisfaction of Bremen.

This man Theodor Barth, whose friendship I enjoyed during my political adolescence, went to America several times, including once in 1907 to dedicate a Schiller monument—I believe it was in St. Louis. He was very proud of this invitation. The conditions in Germany worried him. He had not been reelected to Parliament. When he went to America that time, he did not meet Carl Schurz, whom he used to visit regularly. Schurz had died in 1906. When Barth returned, inspired by the reception German organizations in America had accorded him as the interpreter of an endangered German liberalism, there was a deep tone of concern in his reports. To him, Carl Schurz had become the embodiment of America's conscience. Perhaps he overestimated Schurz' significance, out of his personal friendship for him, but other Americans may have been seen in a similar light by the Americans themselves. Barth's judgment may reflect earlier conversations about Schurz' years of fighting at the side of Abraham Lincoln. It could not, therefore, claim general validity.

If you read the correspondence of Theodore Roosevelt in the years after 1900, you will note that this old man Schurz, certainly a revered figure of yesterday, had become a nuisance to, and subject of ridicule by, Roosevelt and his friends. The legend surrounding him since Lincoln's days had become a somewhat embarrassing burden to the younger generation, along with his constant warnings of the spreading young imperialism, which he sensed in Roosevelt's aggressiveness. These warnings were not always comforting. He feared that the soul of the American nation could suffer, and here
he met with Barth's concern about Wilhelm II and his chancellor Buelow.

What do I mean to say by this? In the years around the turn of the century the parallelism of American and German history became imperiled. Would it break? Would the two nations meet as enemies? Nobody would have dared to predict then, that within ten years after Carl Schurz' death the two nations would be at war with each other. A completely inconceivable development! Inconceivable also to Theodor Barth, who understood the Anglo-Saxon nations politically and spiritually better than any other German politician. His, too, was a merciful death before the catastrophe.

I will not speak about Carl Schurz, because I have been told that my audience is so well versed in the story of his life that I would probably only repeat well known facts. To some extent that is a little unfortunate. On the occasion of Schurz' 100th birthday anniversary back in 1929, I delivered a memorial address in Frankfurt's St. Paul's Church, and it would have been much easier for me to get this manuscript out of the records than to ponder, in a life of work and constant changes, what I should speak about. I cannot talk about America, I have never been there, I had booked a passage once, and I was to be introduced over there by a friend, but he fell ill.

As I said, I cannot talk about America from firsthand experience. Maybe it is not necessary, after all, since the discovery of America has become a continued mass occupation, and we in Germany are by no means in want of four-week experts on American life. But if I do not know America, I do know many Americans. And I have learned, first of all, that there is no such thing as "the American." The popular collective terms — the Germans, the Frenchmen, the Americans — are somewhat brittle. I have learned that there are very smart Americans and rather stupid ones. There are daredevils and cautious ones, polite ones and rude ones. There are highly educated ones and there are those who acquiesce in the role of a rustic.

INITIALLY, AFTER 1945, the impression of the typical American was dominating, not due to the people involved, but rather attributable to the uniforms they wore. We had to discover — which we did pretty soon — how many camouflaged civilians wore such uniforms. At that time I was minister of cultural affairs in my home state of Wuerttemberg-Baden.

What kind of a situation were those men in? They had a green book in their desk drawers, instruction number so and so. In a friendly conference with an American official I once said jokingly that, actually, this green book should be entitled "Instructions for the Domestication of Uncivilized People." The joke was not taken amiss — it is an amiable American characteristic not to take things amiss, which is a German speciality. But that is how they came to Germany: with a prepared, paragraphed opinion as to how they should go about the business of introducing something like order, education, freedom, democracy, etc., in this country.

And then, step by step, came the discovery that this was not quite correct, and that apparently not either. It was followed by individual observations and fruitful analyses of these regulations. They had an ideology, a catalogue of certainties, and now they learned from the realities. It would be wrong to assume — and I do want to be understood to that effect — that I want to mock events and mistakes, which were inevitable in as vast an undertaking as the occupation by foreign armies of a spiritually confused and physically destroyed nation.

On another occasion here in Bremen, I spoke of this strange and unique historical development, that the American people — the American taxpayers — paid their taxes up to May 8, 1945, to destroy the German state, and from that day on to save the German people.

LET US TALK NOW for a moment about ways and means of getting out of the spiritual situation of the war and its immediate consequences, which the nations have not yet overcome. Where are the difficulties? They lie in the difference between the German and American aspects of history. We Germans live more from the past, which is a strength as well as a burden. American feeling is basically rooted in the present, and confident of the future. The Germans like to call that superficial. However, it is a great power.

Our farmers in Germany are proud if their farms have for centuries been in the possession of the same family. The German farmer is a conservative element, and it has only been in the past few decades, under the influence of modern techniques and education, that he has parted with traditions which Americans have never known. The farmer in the New World has won and is winning new land. The agricultural expansion of the time following the Civil War has taught him to think in terms of crops per acre. The idea of grandfather, great-grandfather or the old family farm, cannot stop him. I do not mean to establish values here, I am simply outlining the difference of the psychological positions.

Historians, if they choose to engage in the game of drawing parallels, usually point out that timely coincidences in German and American history are of a symbolical significance. In 1763 Frederick the Great of Prussia asserted himself in the Hubertusburg Peace Treaty, thus strengthening a new development not readily apparent at that time: the possibility of a shift of the hegemony in Germany to Prussia. In the same year 1763 France lost its dominance over the Mississippi area. The Prussian war had had the consequences of a war in America. Nobody understood that more clearly than Frederick himself, who passionately watched the developments on the other side of the ocean and was the first European sovereign to express, in the Prussian-American trade agreement, the need for political and economic complementation, which the Americans had admitted to exist.

THE AMERICAN CIVIL WAR, the fight for a democratic way of life in the endangered old Union, is often compared with the simultaneous German fights for a new unity. We want to be careful in establishing
of aggressive elasticity. People who had wanted to see everything complicated and ingenious now realized the simple possibilities of the sound human intellect and were not afraid of it at all.

I receive many American visitors, and to give me an idea how I should act so as not to be embarrassed, I get in advance memoranda on their biographies. It is remarkable what kinds of vocations these people have had in their lives. It is a matter of course to them to have been at one time engineers, later farmers, then diplomats, attorneys, journalists, and I do not recall what else. It is not out of an adventurous curiosity, but rather because it is natural to them to tackle any new task and try to meet it.

I have always found that inspiring. The Germans still have to learn not to consider that a shortcoming. They are always looking for an “expert,” and there is nothing that can be done about that. Think, for instance, of the Beamte (professional civil servant), who represents our state. I once told a leading American, who complained about our civil service: In your country, Carl Schurz has created the Beamte. You have them, too, only you have not noticed it. But we have noticed that there are American Beamte.

In American politics it was not an accidental decision to practically discard the Monroe Doctrine, which had been established in 1823 with two basic concepts: one, the Americans wanted to have their continent protected against the political influence of European countries and, two, the Americans would not care, politically, what happened in the rest of the world.

Many persons have forgotten—or have never known—how the Monroe Doctrine came about. It was directed against Russia, which at that time owned Alaska and wanted to have California as well. The Russo-Alexandrian imperialism threatened America’s west coast. Behind it the Americans sensed the policy of the “Holy Alliance”—so foreign to the young Americanism—and the entire European system.

This political doctrine outlasted the giant achievement of the 19th century: the development of the United States through the western expansion, through the discovery of its tremendous resources and through immigration. One of the other speakers has mentioned that Friedrich List, who built one of the first American railroads, participated in early coal mining, and, in his “Outlines,” interpreted to the Americans the system of their developing economic policy. In this growth of America, Europe helped by giving enterprising, young and politically active men and women, as well as money.

That was in the early days of a developing mutual interdependence. Now the picture has changed completely. The debtor country has become the creditor country, with an enormous increase of power, but also of responsibility, which the Americans have come to feel. Please do not think that, by pointing out this change from a debtor country to a creditor country, I mean to identify myself with the theory of historical materialism. History cannot be attributed only to economic or technical forces.
All the slogans which we know from the Soviet Zone regarding “dollar imperialism” or “American monopoly capitalism” are merely propaganda gossip for simpletons.

We must see and understand the spiritual components of these things, we must understand how the responsibilities are distributed in this mutual relationship between Germany and America. They are the source of both the difficulties and the historical significance of the present world-wide political efforts.

America, the child of Europe, is shaping the fate of its citizens' home countries, willingly helping today and disappointed tomorrow, generously meeting the attacker of yesterday, but tenaciously insisting on certain principle demands. We all have given thanks for gifts of charity from humanitarian associations and churches. We should not forget that being grateful is a virtue. But on the other hand we feel, too, that the precarious situation of the German people, with its spiritual, material and economical aspects is impatiently, irritatedly, not given proper recognition. This contributes to the instability of these efforts, but we must not lose patience. They are efforts between statesmen. However, they require the background of understanding and quiet popular opinions, which these statesmen have to watch closely.

I MUST RESTRICT myself to merely indicating this background. But let me once more bring into focus the ingenious figure of Carl Schurz. His memory is not here to give one or the other advice. He was a political figure of his time, his work as a statesman was relatively short but very fruitful. But the power of this man — amiable as prudent, vivid as enthusiastic — was not generated by his merits in legislation, it stemmed from his attitude and convictions.

I will conclude my speech very simply: he believed in the good. And thus he became a moving force, outlasting the temporal limits of his work. His memory should move us, too.

END

Germans Take Over HICOG Journal

A NOOTHER HICOG-SPONSORED pioneer project is in the process of going over to German hands to be continued as a permanent part of German public administration — The Prison Journal, known in German as Zeitschrift fuer Strafvollzug. Beginning with the next issue; it will be edited and produced by a staff of German prison and parole officials.

When American prison and parole experts tackled the task of training both old and new personnel for a modern and democratic prison system in the Federal Republic, they found that one of the foremost needs was for a periodical publication on the problems of treatment, education and guidance of prisoners. Such a magazine, they felt, would be a substantial help in disseminating valuable experiences of workers in this field in and out of Germany, and in promoting a more active interest among the personnel.

The Prisons Division, HICOG, initiated this publication and provided it with grant-in-aid funds for the first two years of operation. Edgar M. Gerlach, deputy chief of the division, was assigned as editor, assisted by an editorial staff of 20 German state prison chiefs, wardens, parole officers and prison workers of all ranks.

In the foreword to the first issue, Chester A. McLain, then general counsel of HICOG, said:

"The task of the re-education of prisoners is not limited to wardens or teachers or chaplains. It is a concern of all of the personnel. For that reason I hope that the editorial staff will endeavor to have articles printed which are provocative and interesting, and which will include discussions of the everyday problems of the guards. They are the ones who have the intimate, day-by-day contacts with the prisoners. They are the ones who have the most opportunity to exercise influence."

The demand for the magazine justified the enterprise. The first issue's press run of 1,000 copies had to be increased immediately to more than 4,000, and the current issue will have a distribution of 6,250. About 50 percent of all prison and parole personnel in the Federal Republic are now subscribers.

The contents of The Prison Journal covered many policy problems, such as the treatment of juvenile delinquents and first offenders or the employment of psychiatrists and sociologists on prison staffs, as well as matters of day-to-day prison operation, ranging from radio reception during spare-time hours to the proper nutrition of the prison population.

Articles were contributed not only by German prison experts, guards and instructors, but through an exchange of information with similar publications in other European countries and the United States the magazine was able to run reports by foreign experts, thus giving German prison staffs an insight into the prison systems of other countries. Numerous pictures and cartoons made the magazine an appealing information medium. The printing was done first in the Darmstadt Prison and later in the Berlin-Tegel Prison as part of the normal working program of the penal institutions.

A S THE TWO-YEAR financing guarantee of HICOG draws to a close, there is agreement among German officials that the publication has been a full success and should be continued. The editorial board has been reorganized to include representatives of prison administrations of all West German states and Berlin.

The Prisons Division, HICOG, recently turned over the editorship to German hands, having only a representative on the editorial board. A moderate subscription rate is now being charged which, it is hoped, will enable the magazine to become entirely self-supporting when HICOG financial support is withdrawn on June 30.