

THE DIARIST REVISITED: THE PAPERS OF SEAMAN STUMPF

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RARELY does a historian have an opportunity to study the life and career of a historical figure more than once. Generally, the initial study encompasses all of the available evidence and spans the entire career of a subject. This is not necessarily true in the case of contemporary history. Occasionally the historian of recent times is granted a second opportunity to assess the subject of earlier work in the light of new or recently discovered documentation. Through a fortuitous series of events the papers of former Seaman Richard Stumpf of the Imperial German Navy were recently made available to me. Thanks to the kind generosity of the Stumpf family they will now be placed in the archives of the Rutgers University Libraries.

When I first edited and translated Stumpf's World War I diary ten years ago,¹ I knew that Stumpf was no ordinary diarist and that his writings were somehow different from those of thousands of enlisted men and officers who recorded their experiences during that great conflagration. What distinguished Stumpf from his contemporaries was his unique appreciation and understanding of the social and historical forces that operated on his immediate environment: the German High Seas Fleet during four long and agonizing years of war, frustration, hunger and deprivation that eventually impelled it onto the path of mutiny and revolution. This was understood by the Reichstag Investigating Committee on the Causes of the German Collapse which singled out his work as the only diary to be published in the minutes of its proceedings.

When Dr. Joos, the Centrist Reichstag Deputy to whom Stumpf first submitted his diary, read the sailor's work, he immediately sensed that he had made an important discovery. In his words, Stumpf's feelings were "typical of the feelings of all of the crews" and constituted an answer to all of the questions raised in the committee. The eminent historian, Arthur Rosenberg, concurred with this appraisal when he as-

¹ See *War, Mutiny and Revolution in the German Navy: The World War I Diary of Seaman Richard Stumpf* (New Brunswick, 1967).

serted that this was not the work of an ordinary witness but the "basic memoir for later historians."²

Unfortunately the young sailor who made such an impression upon the Reichstag soon vanished from view, leaving many questions about himself and his work unanswered. Of Stumpf's personal life it was known only that he was born in Bavaria in 1892, that he was a tinsmith by trade, that he enlisted in the German Navy and served in it until the end of 1918 when the High Seas Fleet was wracked by mutinies of its enlisted men and Imperial Germany was overthrown by revolution. Additional evidence gathered by the Reichstag and from the pages of his diary revealed that Stumpf was a devout Catholic, an ardent nationalist and conservative monarchist, who, despite his lowly status as a worker had somehow acquired on his own an amazingly rich education and knowledge of history and literature. Aside from that, Stumpf's life and thoughts remained an enigmatic puzzle with no possible solution.

The Stumpf papers ought to help to clarify parts of that puzzle. More than that, however, they add a new and totally unexpected dimension because they span virtually his entire life and allow us to trace him through the Weimar Republic, the era of the Third Reich and on into the post-World War II period of the Soviet occupation of East Germany.

The Stumpf papers are composed of three main parts. The first of these is a scrapbook containing all of his extant writings as well as some newspaper accounts of his activities during the Weimar era. The second part consists of a fragmentary chronicle which Stumpf wrote on the occasion of his twenty-fifth wedding anniversary on April 23, 1946, and contains a retrospective look upon his life from 1919 to 1932. The third and possibly most interesting portion is comprised of a fairly sizable memoir dealing with Stumpf's imprisonment in the Soviet Zone of Occupied Germany and the German Democratic Republic. Although undated, it was probably written in 1954. Attached to this are some brief essays and letters dealing with the same theme. Finally, there is also a taped interview with Richard Stumpf Jr. of Oberkochen, West Germany in response to some basic questions about his father's life.

As he had predicted in his war diary, Stumpf's life under the Weimar Republic was hard and difficult. The demise of the Empire and the ignominious abdication of Wilhelm II and his flight from Germany created a republic for which the ex-sailor had little initial love or admira-

² *Ibid.*, pp. 7-8.

tion. As an ardent nationalist, as a former member of the extremist Fatherland Party which had clamored for a peace of victory with extensive territorial annexations, Stumpf could hardly welcome the advent of a revolutionary Social Democratic regime. Its acceptance of a harsh peace settlement for Germany and its inability to maintain internal peace in the face of uprisings by the extreme left and right did not serve to endear it to this monarchist and essentially conservative petty bourgeois veteran. Moreover, his personal life was equally unsatisfactory. Upon his discharge from the Navy in November 1918, he returned to Franconia only to face unemployment and despair in the village of Neunkirchen near Nuremberg.

Evidence for that comes from the fact that in the spring of 1919 Stumpf joined the counter-revolutionary forces that were recruited to crush the Soviet Republic that had seized power in Munich. As he subsequently put it, he was impressed by the recruiter who told him "we shall pay you ten Marks per day; you will receive new clothing and good food. This is the wish of the government and the urgent request of the entire diocese." However, it is unlikely that Stumpf would have joined this expedition for such paltry consideration if he had not endorsed its goal: the quelling of a communist uprising in the Bavarian capital.

Providentially, he did not participate in any of the fighting. As he wrote later, "for most it was a disappointment that the enemy did not make an appearance anywhere. After all, we had been told that there were a hundred thousand armed men in Munich." To his dismay, however, Stumpf soon discovered that what was lacking in real fighting was more than made up by rumors that circulated among the counter-revolutionary troops who seemed to be animated by "almost incredible mental confusion." Thus it was rumored that an entire cask of human organs had been unearthed in the basement of the Luitpold Gymnasium, that Amazon women were running amok in all districts of the city and that captured soldiers had been mutilated and burned. With a sailor's cynicism about such atrocity stories, Stumpf calculated that the government forces actually lost only eighteen men while they killed approximately five thousand of their alleged opponents. "It is difficult to say, but unfortunately true that a large number of these were cold-blooded murder," he commented regretfully.

What outraged Stumpf the most and permanently alienated him from right wing politics was the massacre of twenty-one of his comrades in the Munich St. Joseph's Journeymen's Association on May 6, 1919. These

innocent men were arrested while rehearsing a play, and were pushed into a cellar. Thereupon a contingent of government forces from Bayreuth threw in hand grenades and proceeded to shoot wildly at them through the window. As Stumpf phrased it with revulsion, "When nobody moved any longer, one of them went down and stuck his bayonet into each one who was still breathing and then proceeded to remove the boots from one of the dead . . ."

His experience with this kind of senseless violence and brutality propelled Stumpf in the direction of pacifism. He concluded his piece on this incident by proclaiming: "If only the martyrdom of these poor journeymen could have one good end it would be that all those of us who are still alive develop an ineradicable aversion for war. Then this deed, too, would not be in vain."³

Subsequent to these sobering events Stumpf returned to Neunkirchen and settled down to a normal civilian life. In 1921 he married and lived with his wife, Anna, in one tiny room of his sister's house. Unable to find work in his own trade, Stumpf eventually obtained a position as a polisher in a metal factory in nearby Nuremberg. During this peaceful interval the first of four sons, Lothar, was born. The others, Xaver, Hans and Richard Jr. arrived in fairly rapid succession afterward.

Despite his preoccupation with his growing family, Stumpf continued to be an interested observer of the contemporary scene. He kept a sharp watch on the economy and complained bitterly about the ravages of reparations. These he felt caused the hard times he and his fellow-citizens were experiencing. They were responsible as well for unleashing the incredible wave of inflation that struck Germany in 1923. Regarding that inflation, his chronicle records the following economic index: "When our first child was born on January 11, 1923, I earned a hundred Mark note as my weekly salary. That amounted to exactly one dollar. . . . After a few weeks, a zero was added: a thousand Marks were equal to a dollar. In July came the first bills in a million denomination. A week's salary bought a loaf of rye bread. A visit to the doctor was paid for with a quarter of a hundredweight of rye; a newspaper cost a half a hundredweight a month . . ."

In 1924 Stumpf lost his job. Although he had a wife and two children

³ For Stumpf's Free Corps experiences, see Scrapbook, "Wie München befreit wurde. Aus Toller Zeit!" in *Vossische Zeitung*, April 24, 1929. For the history of the Soviet Republic in Munich and its brutal liquidation, see Allan Mitchell, *Revolution in Bavaria, 1918-1919. The Eisner Regime and the Soviet Republic* (Princeton, 1965), especially pp. 300-301.

to feed, he was ashamed to leave his house lest the neighbors discover his unemployment. When finally forced to take the "bitter, hard road to the unemployment office," he received an inadequate dole of twelve new Marks per week. This he supplemented by an occasional day's work and at one point he was lucky enough to work for a short time as a street cleaner for the municipal sanitation department of Nuremberg.⁴

Better times returned in 1925. Stumpf found a job in his own trade and was finally able to contemplate establishing his own household and moving to Nuremberg. This he accomplished the following year through the personal intervention of Mayor Luppe of Nuremberg. Stumpf had gotten to know this official by attending Democratic party meetings. The mayor liked him and arranged for him to be granted a municipal apartment in the district of St. Johannis. Along with this change in fortune, Stumpf now began to write articles for the large market in war literature that had developed. "I worked diligently and in a pacifist manner, also gave lectures and thus became known in a wider circle," he proudly recalled the way he reached the limelight in Berlin and the Reichstag. One of his articles in the *Rhein-Mainische Volkszeitung* came to the attention of Dr. Joos who was responsible for bringing him to the capital.⁵

About the period of more than a year that Stumpf spent in Berlin there are but a few pages in the chronicle. Stumpf was, of course, delighted with the twenty Marks a day stipend (later generously increased to forty) he received. He enjoyed the ample but cheap meals in the Reichstag cafeteria and luxuriated in the parliamentary immunity and franking privileges he was granted. Pleasant and profitable as well was his stay at the Catholic *Gessellenhaus* at the Anhalter Railroad Station where he mingled on intimate terms with many important Centrist deputies.⁶ Unfortunately, however, Stumpf tells relatively little about the behind-the-scenes politics of his investigating committee. This was probably an outgrowth of Stumpf's essential rejection of parliamentarism and party politics. Wishing to avoid embroilment in a political structure which he disliked, Stumpf concentrated his attention on the specifics of the naval collapse.

Here he gained the impression that the navy knew it had a poor case. Its spokesman, Admiral Brüninghaus, impressed Stumpf as being "fairly

⁴ See *Chronik der Familie Richard Stumpf*, a chronicle of his career, presented to his wife on their twenty-fifth wedding anniversary, April 23, 1946. Henceforth cited as *Chronik*.

⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 7-8.

⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 8-17.

undisciplined and outspoken." Stumpf had the feeling that he was principally concerned "to save what could be saved" and would have been content for the navy to emerge from the battle in the Reichstag "with a black eye." Of Wilhelm Dittmann, the proponent of the Social Democrats, Stumpf had a relatively low opinion. This was not dispelled even when the Socialist went out of his way to have Stumpf's diary published by Dietz Verlag, the party publishing house. As a Catholic, a conservative and a monarchist, Stumpf never seems to have overcome his inbred antipathy for people whom he undoubtedly regarded as godless, republican and revolutionary Social Democrats. As a consequence, he always rather ungratefully portrays Dittmann as "smirking ironically and cynically in an urchin-like fashion."⁸

Stumpf's closest associate and best friend in Berlin was Warrant Officer Emil Alboldt. The former Naval Secretary and chairman of the Warrant Officers' Association was someone of his own class and inclination. He shared Stumpf's dislike of the naval officers' corps and testified in support of Stumpf's position.⁹ However, his credibility was damaged by the fact that he had not served in the High Seas Fleet during the war. Moreover, according to Stumpf, Alboldt displayed his bias against the officers too openly, being "one of the many who could not forget that they had been denied officers' epaulettes and therefore spewing poison and gall upon this admittedly arrogant company."¹⁰

Stumpf's activities in the Reichstag and the publication of his diary turned him into a minor celebrity. Paradoxically, most of his adulation came from the Social Democrats. Thus the *Illustrierte Reichsbanner Zeitung* called his diary "the most objective testimony about the causes of the collapse as well as that of the armed forces. . . . It is the best book of the year and belongs on the Christmas table of every German front soldier, of every German who was in the war."¹¹ The Socialist *Arbeiter Zeitung* of Vienna was equally enthusiastic. "He is a patriot, an opponent of Marxism, a conservative person. He rejects revolution, but his book is a document of revolution. He accepts the status quo—but his book is a cry against that which existed. . . . His book is an indictment that

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 29.

⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 8 and 19.

⁹ Emil Alboldt, *Die Tragödie der alten deutschen Marine* in *Das Werk des Untersuchungsausschusses der Deutschen Verfassungsgebenden Nationalversammlung und des Deutschen Reichstages 1919 bis 1928*, Vol. X, Part I (Berlin, 1928).

¹⁰ *Chronik*, p. 20.

¹¹ Scrapbook, *Illustrierte Reichsbanner Zeitung*, December 24, 1927. For less enthusiastic reviews by liberal papers, see *Berliner Tageblatt*, December 11, 1927 as well as the *Berliner Börsen-Courier* of December 13, 1927.

dashes all lies and leaves no escape for [the forces] of reaction," it exclaimed in a perceptive review.¹²

Remarkably, all this publicity did little to change Stumpf's life. According to the Catholic *Germania*, "the tinsmith from Nuremberg with four children and a weekly wage of forty Marks" lived a perfectly normal existence. Although his diary sold fourteen thousand copies and yielded about five thousand Marks in royalties, Stumpf sought security by returning to his old job with the Kanes Company.¹³ The only difference was that he now also pursued a most interesting career as a writer, political commentator and naval expert.

Appropriately enough, Stumpf's early journalistic career was devoted to elaborating on his diary. One of his early articles appeared in the *Illustrierte Reichsbanner Zeitung*. It represented an attack on the grandiose claims of the pseudo-Communist Willy Sachse who had played a dubious role in the 1917 mutiny and was then seeking to establish a career for himself by fabricating all kinds of stories about his adventures as a true Communist revolutionary in the navy.¹⁴ Soon thereafter there appeared a repertoire of articles which were published in numerous German newspapers in different guises over the years. Among the earliest of these were Stumpf's "Naval Battle at Dogger Bank," "The Last Sailing of the Fleet," and "The Day at Scapa Flow."¹⁵ Many others, dealing with different aspects of naval warfare during World War I appeared from 1929 until as late as 1942.¹⁶

In all of these Stumpf was consistently critical of the mismanagement of the war at sea by the Imperial Navy and particularly of its poor treatment of the enlisted men. Not even the advent of the Nazis to power in January of 1933 could stop Stumpf's prolific pen. On May 31, 1933 he produced a commemorative article on the Battle of Jutland for the *Thüringer Allgemeine Zeitung*, and as late as September 22, 1942

¹² Scrapbook, *Arbeiter Zeitung*, December 14, 1927.

¹³ *Chronik*, p. 30; Richard Stumpf Jr. Interview.

¹⁴ Scrapbook, *Illustrierte Reichsbanner Zeitung*, October 6, 1928. For the unreliable and contradictory writings of Sachse, see his [Anti-Nautikus], *Deutschlands revolutionäre Matrosen* (Hamburg, 1925) as well as his completely different and proto-Nazi account, *Rost an Mann und Schiff. Ein Bekenntnisroman an Skaggerak* (Berlin, 1934).

¹⁵ Scrapbook, *Germania*, January 27, 1929; *Nürnberger Zeitung*, June 19, 1929 and *Vossische Zeitung*, June 22, 1929.

¹⁶ See Scrapbook for samples. These include "Baptism of Fire on the Sea. The Tragedy at Helgoland," "Disastrous Journey to England" and "Skylark 1916" all in *Vossische Zeitung*, August 24, 1930, December 20, 1930 and May 30, 1931.

For samples of this in Catholic newspapers, see Stumpf's articles in the *Osnabrücker Volkszeitung*, the *Bayrische Volkszeitung* and the *Reichspost* of Vienna.

he still published an appreciation of the celebrated submarine commander, Otto Weddingen, in the *Thüringer Gauzeitung*.¹⁷

More meaningful than these money-making activities were Stumpf's writings on the naval affairs of the Weimar Republic as a naval expert for the liberal *Berliner Tageblatt*. As in the past, Stumpf maintained a skeptical attitude toward the policies of Germany's new naval leadership. As he saw it, the Weimar Navy was still under the influence of Grand-Admiral von Tirpitz and pursued an overly ambitious program of naval construction without giving any thought to the real defense needs of the country or the legitimate aspirations of its enlisted men and warrant officers.

On February 9, 1928 Stumpf castigated the navy for wasteful spending. He revealed that the small German navy, consisting of 15,000 men, nine ships of the line and a handful of torpedo boats was budgeted to spend just about as much as the French and Italian navies although these had to provide for three to four times as many men and triple the number of ships. Accordingly, Stumpf strongly urged the Reichstag not to dissipate its defense capability by wasteful and unnecessary spending on the navy.

More scathing still, was Stumpf's critique of the personnel policies of the navy and its bloated bureaucracy. That bureaucracy he described as "a giant's head on the shoulders of a dwarf . . . who is threatened to be suffocated by it." His major complaint was that the navy was undermining its fighting power by providing a multitude of high paying jobs for its officers. As he declared with bitterness, "On top of this relatively small force, they have superimposed no fewer than ten extremely large, 42 large and 127 medium and smaller sized administrative offices. These are commanded and staffed by 14 admirals, 180 captains, 827 other officers, 335 higher officials and 2,795 medium ranking officials."

Worse than that, Stumpf noted, was the navy's persisting discrimination against enlisted men and warrant officers. He was particularly concerned with the latter who were threatened with removal from the navy for political and social reasons. Stumpf indignantly explained, "they remained at their posts without exception during the collapse. They contained the Bolshevik forces and saved valuable property for the state. In times of direst need—at the beginning of 1919—on their own courageous volition and at great personal sacrifice, they unconditionally

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

lent their support to the government and represented its only loyal troops. . . . During the Kapp Putsch they upheld the legal government with all their might and even though they were forced to take strong steps against the officers whose actions had been most questionable." Under these circumstances, Stumpf could not understand why a reactionary officers' corps should be allowed to disband such a bulwark of support for the republic.¹⁸

In addition to the navy, Stumpf also addressed himself to a wide range of political questions, being primarily concerned with the rise of National Socialism and the problem of maintaining peace in Europe. Almost from its first appearance as a small racist group in Bavaria, Stumpf kept a watchful eye on Hitler's party. At considerable personal risk he made it a point to attend its meetings and to listen to its demagogic speakers. The observant sailor noted that the support of the Nazis came principally from among "floundering students, small businessmen, unemployed white collar workers and soldiers and officers uprooted by the war." By the same token, he detected few workers in their ranks. What repelled him most about this movement was that among its leaders there were many "repulsive figures, even dehumanized, criminal types." Among these he ranked Edmund Heines and Julius Streicher who openly bragged about murdering their political opponents. Curiously, Stumpf was impressed by the oratorical gifts of such Nazi luminaries as Joseph Goebbels, Ernst Roehm and Hermann Goering, but was left cold by the *Führer's* charismatic powers. He did concede, however, that Hitler's physique and well-groomed appearance made him "truly hypnotic to women."¹⁹

Characteristically, Stumpf's views on National Socialism were decisively influenced by his consuming devotion to Catholicism, its ideology and institutions. He therefore saw the National Socialists largely as a threat to religion and morality rather than as a general danger for Germany's social and political constitution. As a consequence, he generally lumped National Socialism together with Communism and remained unwilling to recognize that either had any animating ideology other than rank opportunism and a lust for power. This is illustrated by Stumpf's response to Nazis in his beloved Nuremberg. As early as 1925 he condemned that movement and its fanatical leader, Julius Streicher,

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, *Berliner Tageblatt*, February 9, and March 16, 1928. See as well, *Nürnberg Zeitung*, May 9, 1931.

¹⁹ *Chronik*, pp. 5-6, 30-31.

a virulently anti-Semitic and pornographic school teacher who published a lurid newspaper called *Der Stürmer*. Streicher not only outraged Stumpf's sense of propriety but also managed to recruit masses of followers who were violently opposed to the Church. This anti-Catholicism and propaganda that the Jesuits were conspiring to acquire control over all of Germany, Stumpf bluntly labelled as "hysteria" whose proponents belonged in a sanitarium.²⁰

Once again using Nuremberg as an example, Stumpf depicted the Nazis as completely unprincipled and immoral because they recruited their members from among the pariahs of Communism and other political parties. Writing of a former comrade from his own journeymen's association, Wolf by name, who had been rejected as a Christian trade union official, Stumpf declared: "In the year 1922, when Julius Streicher gathered up the shattered remnants of the Communists under [the banner] of National Socialism, Wolf once again rose to the fore. He soon became Streicher's best friend and ranted furiously against Jews and Marxists at meetings. The new friendship, however, did not last long. [Before long] Wolf began to convene meetings announcing revelations about the 'great Julius' and offered to sell his material to the editor of a Social Democratic newspaper."²¹

During 1929, as the depression struck Germany, Stumpf detected that the "spiritual rabies" of National Socialism had infected large numbers of the unemployed. Although he too was jobless and forced to join millions of others on the road to the unemployment office with his red identification card "burning against his chest with shame," Stumpf remained immune.

Managing to find part-time work, he spent most of his time at the municipal library in Nuremberg, reading and writing. He also frequented Nazi meetings, always making sure to bring along his unemployment card, for this not only secured him free admission but also provided a modicum of protection against physical violence. On one occasion, when baited beyond endurance by the antireligious ravings of one of the most fanatic Nazis, Arthur Dinter by name, who had written a book entitled *The Sin Against the Blood*, Stumpf could not contain himself any longer. He rose up and announced in the form of a pun that Dinter had committed "a sin against printer's ink."²²

During 1930 and 1931 Stumpf's writing took on an international

²⁰ *Bayerische Volkszeitung*, August 8, 1925.

²¹ *Ibid.*, *Vossische Zeitung*, October 13, 1929.

²² *Chronik*, p. 35.

dimension as he travelled to the battlefields of Verdun and Alsace. He even made his way to Rome on a workers' pilgrimage. But the growth of National Socialism preyed on his mind. He correctly sensed that a victory of this movement would make a new war an imminent possibility. "If we were only able to overcome the present misery," he wishfully exclaimed, "then the National Socialist will be able to create their Third Reich on the moon and no neighboring country will have to worry about peace."²³

As a German nationalist in France, Stumpf was resentful at the annexation of Alsace and the use of black troops in the army of occupation. However, seeing the carnage at Verdun made him understand the futility of war. Accordingly, he sought to foster peace and international amity between the two countries on the basis of their common religion. This, to his mind, should be able to forge a stronger bond of unity than mere nationalism. As he put it on leaving the battlefield, here was every inducement "to think, to work, to fight, and not least, to pray for peace."²⁴ On his pilgrimage to Rome, Stumpf's perennial optimism was brought to the fore once more by the sight of the ancient holy city and its venerable institutions. Upon passing the *Braunes Haus*, the Nazi Party Headquarters in Munich, he exclaimed, "When this episode of the swastika will remain only as a footnote on the pages of history, then the simple cross without the hooks shall still light the way for mankind."²⁵

Only permanent unemployment and "savings melting away month by month, like snow in the March sun" could bring Stumpf to despair. This is precisely what happened during the height of the depression when his unemployment benefits expired and he faced the prospect of having to apply for public assistance. Against this his "entire inner being" revolted.²⁶ Providentially, however, at this juncture his connections with the Church and its charitable organizations came to the rescue by providing him with a new position and a permanent home. He was given the position of hostel father at the *Mainzerhof* in Heiligenstadt, Thuringia by the Catholic Kolping Association.

Stumpf was to remain in Heiligenstadt for the rest of his life. Work-

²³ Scrapbook, *Osnabrücker Volkszeitung*, November 9, 1930.

²⁴ See *ibid.*, for a series of four articles in the *Sonntags-Plauderer* of the *Osnabrücker Volkszeitung* of November 9, 16, 23 and 30, 1930 as well as two similar articles on the same theme in the *Bayerische Volkszeitung* of November 12, and December 16, 1932.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, "Gläubiges Arbeitervolk. Ein Nürnberger Arbeiter schildert die Eindrücke des Arbeiter-Pilgerzugs zur Enzyklikafeier nach Rom" in *Bayerische Volkszeitung*, May 22 and 23, 1931.

²⁶ *Chronik*, pp. 35-36.

ing for the *Kolpingsverein*, he looked after the welfare of the guests, functioned as a housekeeper and earned a salary of thirty Marks a month plus housing and fuel. His wife, Anna, supplemented the family income by working as a cleaning woman.²⁷ When the Nazis came to power in 1933, life for the Stumpf family became decidedly more difficult. But since Stumpf was a war veteran he was generally left in peace. His age plus a bad case of rheumatism kept him out of the war, but he was compelled to work on "occasional jobs" in a lumbermill, a beer hall and on the *Autobahn*. During the last two years of the war he was conscripted for guard duty.²⁸

Never one to hide his dislikes, during the Nazi era Stumpf used to enter a tavern by shouting the traditional Catholic greeting of "Grüss Gott!" instead of the universal "Heil Hitler!" This hardly endeared him with the Nazi leadership and there are indications that he was on a proscription list when Thuringia was liberated by American troops in April 1945.²⁹

Just as his World War I diary had illuminated that period of history, Stumpf's new memoirs constitute an invaluable document about the Soviet Occupation and the history of the East German state. Written as a prison diary, they reflect in intense fashion Stumpf's feelings about the fate of his country, its division into two separate, ideologically feuding states, and the establishment of a new Communist dictatorship under whose heavy-handed rule he suffered a great deal. As a consequence, the prison memoir, like his naval diary, is not a dispassionate and balanced account. It is partisan, to be sure. It violently rejects domination by the Soviet Union and the subsequent creation of a one-party dictatorship under the Socialist Unity Party with the attendant absence of personal freedom. But, by the same token, his last diary as his first, reflects in some unique way the feelings and psychology of multitudes of people in East Germany who left their country, who participated in the June 1953 uprising and who groaned under the rule of the Potsdam regime. In short, just as Stumpf had attained his *metier* during the First World War, so did he regain that position when he wrote his prison memoirs more than thirty-five years later.

²⁷ Richard Stumpf Jr. Interview. Indicative of Anna Stumpf's role as an exemplary wife, mother and Catholic is a series of poignant articles she wrote on telling children's stories, "The Poetry of the Cooking Pot," and on the sanctity of marriage. See *Die Praktische Hausfrau. Blätter für Weibliche Interessen* in Scrapbook.

²⁸ Richard Stumpf Jr. Interview.

²⁹ Richard Stumpf Jr. Interview and *Prison Memoirs*, p. 4.

World War II and its loss by Germany had a sobering effect on Stumpf's nationalism. He was glad, for example, that the July 20, 1944 attempt on Hitler's life had failed. Although a successful assassination might have saved a million lives and twenty cities, it would surely have created a new wave of fascism in Germany. "Exactly as in 1918 the nationalists would have told the people that we had been deprived of certain victory solely because of this stab-in-the-back. It is proper that things happened as they did because the German people will only learn from the impact of reality rather than through reason," he declared.³⁰ He assumed a greater political commitment than ever before by becoming a member of the *Antifa*. This anti-Fascist Committee devoted itself to eradicating the vestiges of Hitlerism and building the foundations of a democratic Germany.

During 1945 and 1946 Stumpf even functioned as a policeman, rounding up former Nazis and delivering them to the Soviet occupation forces. Simultaneously, he was an early member of the Christian Democratic Union, the CDU. This was the successor to the Center Party of the Weimar Republic. Founded by Konrad Adenauer after the war, it was allowed for a time to function even in the Soviet Zone of Germany prior to its forcible amalgamation with the Socialist Unity Party.

In 1945 Stumpf attended the Erfurt Congress of the CDU. He found the town totally desolated, dirty and without hope. Yellow flags were flying from some windows, denoting the presence of typhus, and one could not even obtain a cup of chicory coffee. Nevertheless the congress was optimistic despite the very obvious supervision by the Russian officers who sat there "decorated all over with medals," smiling in their "Asiatic, inscrutable way." They permitted the CDU to publish a newspaper, the *Thüringer Tageblatt*, which initially enjoyed a modicum of independence. However, as soon as it became the least bit critical of what Stumpf termed fascism's "great blood-brother, Bolshevism," the Russians closed it down. When Jakob Kaiser, Stumpf's boyhood friend from the Nuremberg Journeymen's Association and head of the CDU in the East, made a speech referring to the party as a "breakwater against the advancing red tide from the East," he was compelled to flee to the West.³¹

Stumpf, however, decided to remain and observed how the Soviets

³⁰ Richard Stumpf letter of July 20, 1951, commemorating the seventh anniversary of the abortive assassination attempt, in Scrapbook.

³¹ *Prison Memoirs*, pp. 5-6.

created what seemed to him a most inept puppet regime. High ranking government positions went to men totally lacking in qualifications while abuses abounded in staffing the learned professions such as teaching, medicine and law. Stumpf's own son, Xaver, was given a job as a teacher after only eight weeks of training. Worse still, in Stumpf's view, was that "store clerks became district attorneys, and cleaning women, judges." These new officials quickly became the butt of jokes. "Show me how to write a capital F," a minister said to his secretary. "I want to issue a new *Verfügung* (order)."³²

Not all of Stumpf's recollections about the Russian occupation are this amusing, least of all his description of the administration of justice. During the turbulent days of 1946 the merest suspicion of opposition to the Soviet Union sufficed to produce a shot in the back of the neck. In the neighboring village of Struth, where twelve peasants defended themselves against plunder by foreign workers and accidentally struck a Russian in civilian dress, the result was instant execution. As a policeman, Stumpf had ample opportunity to witness the kind of treatment that was meted out to former Nazis. "Each week," he recalled, "I saw a truck filled with men disappear through the gate in the early hours of the morning to deliver its cargo to Buchenwald Concentration Camp. Most of them perished there, about fifteen to eighteen from our little town alone." A similar fate lay in store for former members of the *Volkssturm*, a rag-tag militia formed during the last year of the war from young boys and old men not suitable for the draft. These, the Russians considered members of a mythical *Wehrwolf* organization whose ostensible purpose was to fight to the death even after the collapse of the Hitler regime. They "could hardly count on mercy, to say nothing of a proper trial."³³

In 1946 Stumpf spent four months in the same prison where he had formerly worked as a guard. He was accused of possessing a hidden store of weapons. His account of that unhappy episode is marked by good humor, understanding for his Russian jailers, and a most touching proclamation of his faith "in prayer and the power of the rosary." Stumpf stoically describes the beatings, indignities and cruelties he and his fellow-inmates suffered at the hands of the Russians, but nevertheless manages to excuse them, because as primitive and "poor Asiatics," they did not know any better.

³² *Ibid.*, pp. 6-7.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 50.

He cites numerous incidents to illustrate their strange mixture of barbarism and innate kindness. After being beaten by a Russian soldier, Stumpf was surprised to see him rush off to the kitchen to fetch him some food because he could not stand the sight of blood. At another time, Stumpf was slapped on the face by an officer for having stolen some herring. No sooner was this over, however, than the officer praised him for his skill in stealing. Equally puzzling to him was the egalitarianism between enlisted men and officers in the Red Army who did not hesitate to fight one another without harboring any subsequent recriminations. All these contradictions, Stumpf was convinced, could be explained by Bismarck's statement that all Russians were part lamb and part tiger, hence entirely unpredictable.³⁴

Much more serious than his four months' incarceration in 1946, was Stumpf's second imprisonment in the wake of the July 20, 1953 uprising in East Germany. Accused of desecrating a Soviet war cemetery by toppling forty grave stones, Stumpf spent over a year at the Erfurt Interrogation Prison without ever being brought to trial. Even though his life hung in the balance, Stumpf accepted his lot with equanimity. He "could almost physically feel the presence of the protecting angel" hovering over him and even knew that he would be released on his Saint's Day.³⁵ Moreover, Stumpf was psychologically and intellectually prepared for his ordeal, viewing his interrogation as a kind of "intellectual duel" that could be planned in an almost clinical fashion.³⁶ In fact, his interrogation is strikingly reminiscent of Rubashov in Arthur Koestler's celebrated *Darkness at Noon*.

In a very erudite defense, replete with citations from Hegel, Kant, Schiller, Goethe, Lenin and Einstein, Stumpf professed his innocence, indicating how impossible it was for him as a devout Catholic to desecrate the memory of the dead. About this he had a clear conscience, but worried that his trips to the West and his contacts with the West German CDU would be held against him.³⁷ However, Stumpf so overwhelmed his interrogators with his knowledge, that they soon demanded he stop his "Jesuit speculation" and shifted their attack to a much less dangerous charge, namely: that Stumpf had placed wreaths on a monument dedicated to German soldiers of World War I. This

³⁴*Ibid.*, pp. 51-58.

³⁵*Ibid.*, pp. 1 and 8.

³⁶*Ibid.*, pp. 9-12.

³⁷ Stumpf had maintained contact with Jakob Kaiser who was then Minister for All-German Affairs in Bonn. In 1948 Stumpf tried to get in touch with him while in West Berlin as CDU District Delegate from Eichsfeld at the People's Congress for Unity and Freedom. See *Prison Memoirs*, p. 14.

provided him with a splendid chance to demonstrate his historical expertise. Stumpf pointed out that Germany had actually facilitated the Russian Revolution and the triumph of Bolshevism by defeating Tsarism, by transporting Lenin to Russia, and by cooperating with the Soviet Union in illegal rearmament during the inter-war period. Furthermore, he capitalized on his own war diary, demonstrating that it had been published by the same press as Marx and Engels and that the introduction was written by their Comrade Dittmann.³⁸

During the rest of his stay at Erfurt Prison, Stumpf closely studied his captors, again noting the backwardness of the Russians, their inability to understand the German mentality, and above all else, their blatant display of anti-Semitism. In that regard he discovered that they kept Jews within their own ranks in virtual isolation, that they considered Marx and Engels to be Jews, and most incredibly of all, explained to him on a number of occasions that "Chitler," as they pronounced it, "had made a great mistake by not liquidating all Jews."³⁹

The East German regime was the subject of Stumpf's severest criticism. In a most scathing indictment he cried out against its tyranny over the people. With great passion he blamed the 1953 uprising on its exploitation of the workers and bureaucratic mismanagement. Demolishing the argument that it had eliminated the class struggle and class differences, Stumpf irately declared that this was mere myth. "In the Communist Zone there is a supervisor for every three workers. At the entrance of every factory or office there stands a guard demanding a pass. Every fifth man on the street wears a uniform. . . . Wages of labor have only a third or a quarter of the purchasing power than those in any capitalist state. We are much worse dressed and fed than the workers in non-Communist countries. . . ."⁴⁰

Turning to politics, Stumpf accused the regime of depriving the population of all freedom, including the right to vote. He branded its plebescites as null and void. They were even less legitimate than those of the Nazis because they were so arranged that hardly anyone dared to use the secrecy afforded by voting booths, instead handing in the ballots publicly. Addressing himself directly to the ruling Communist party, Stumpf concluded his indictment by declaring: "You could build apartments instead of military barracks and everyone would be happy. You could simplify the administration and everyone would consider that a blessing. With all the power you have at your disposal, you could

³⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 19-29.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 56-59.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 61-62.

do much that would be useful and helpful. However, you care only about yourselves and your positions. Hence unity and freedom will never come to Germany so long as you continue to grow fat from your spoils under the protection of the Red Army.”⁴¹

Stumpf's completion of his prison memoirs after his release on Saint Joseph's Day 1954, virtually brings to a close his long career as a diarist and writer. Over a period of time stretching from 1914 to 1954, he had recorded his perceptive, well-meaning and sensible impressions of the most crucial and exciting years of German history. Spanning forty years, Stumpf's World War I diary and the papers described in this essay, form a unique and invaluable record. Anyone interested in examining the development of contemporary Germany from the point of view of this very uncommon “common man” will find this collection to be a most eloquent and useful source.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 63.