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The Germans

Frederick Luebke

IN 1928, MIDWAY BETWEEN the two world wars, H. L. Mencken observed that with few exceptions the leaders of the Germans in America were an undistinguished and unintelligent lot, a collection of mediocrities, most of whom had something to sell. The few national German ethnic organizations still in existence, he noted, were led by entirely unimportant men. Moreover, the leaders of German immigrant churches were nonentities, unknown to the general public. The blame for this lamentable dearth of leadership, in Mencken's view, rested upon the German Americans themselves, who displayed an unfortunate tendency to follow inferior men. As Catholics they are slaves of their priests, he said; as Protestants they are slaves of their pastors; and when they leave the church they become slaves of the first political buffoon they encounter. During World War I, in Mencken's judgment, they had turned almost instinctively to fools for leadership.¹

Mencken's surpassing skill in verbal hatchetry tends to overshadow the perceptive qualities of his analysis. Though he was a prisoner of his elitist prejudices, Mencken described circumstances that were typical of most immigrant groups in America. The vast majority of persons had emigrated in search of a better life. Coming from the lower classes of Europe, they were culturally backward persons who inevitably devoted their energies in America to material advancement. This worked against the emergence of wise and able leaders. When an educated and cultured person attempts to lead the apathetic masses of immigrants, Mencken wrote, he quickly becomes discouraged and succumbs to despair as his place is taken by demagogues, self-servers, and other third-rate noise-makers.

Yet, because of World War I, the experience of Germans in America was qualitatively different from that of any other immigrant group. The

largest non-English-speaking group in the country, the Germans had already begun to arrive in the eighteenth century. They prospered in this country and were well received. They were proud of their language and culture; while many Germans assimilated with remarkable speed, others labored mightily to erect a complex of institutions that served to sustain ethnic culture. When German immigration dropped off sharply at the end of the nineteenth century, ethnic leaders sought to inhibit the inevitable disintegration of the group by espousing a new cultural chauvinism. Later, when Germany experienced its early successes in World War I, the leaders of German America were encouraged to exploit the Kaiser as a symbol around which to rally the group, thereby bolstering a considerable financial investment in ethnic newspapers and a variety of other business establishments. An unprecedented measure of support seemed to unify the German Americans and to stimulate their leaders ever more boldly to flaunt partisanship for Germany. At the same time this behavior was infinitely offensive to persons whose emotional attachments were with the Allies. The advocates of the Allied cause, led by President Woodrow Wilson and other champions of English culture, began to attack German-American leaders as disloyal and un-American. Unsure of the capacity of American society to assimilate ethnic diversities, they began a war on German culture in America as early as 1915. The German Americans, however, saw themselves as entirely loyal to the United States. In their view, strict neutrality was in the nation's best interest, while Wilson's policies would lead to war. That nonintervention worked to Germany's benefits was as incidental as the fact that Wilson's understanding of the national interest served to aid the Allies.²

The entry of the United States into the war in 1917 radically altered the circumstances of German Americans. Behavior that had been legal in the neutrality period was now tantamount to treason, and most persons of German birth or descent, regardless of citizenship, were suspected of nurturing some measure of loyalty for Germany. Although the spirit of oppression was not uniformly felt across the country, the German-American community generally experienced much persecution. Superpatriots delineated a new, narrowed conception of loyalty and demanded conformity from everyone. A fierce hatred for everything German pervaded the nation. German cultural symbols were debased; instruction in the language was practically eliminated in the schools; the use of the German language was restricted on the state and local levels; and German-language newspapers were harassed and censored. Gradually suspicion escalated to threats of violence, to forced sales of government war bonds, to liberal applications of yellow paint to churches, schools, and monuments, to vandalism, book-burnings, flag-kissing, tar-and-feather ceremonies, and, in one case, the lynching of an innocent German alien.

The German-American community was devastated by these events. For the majority of the seven million persons of German stock in the United States at that time, German ethnicity had become a source of social discomfort or deprivation. Countless families ceased conversing in the German language. Name changes were common among persons, businesses, and societies. Thousands stopped subscribing to German-language newspapers and periodicals. Memberships in ethnic organizations of all kinds plummeted. As a group, the German Americans were embittered, disillusioned, and demoralized, unsure of what appropriate behavior should be. For most of them, ethnicity had lost its savor. The injustices of World War I remained imprinted upon their memories, and they were eager to express their resentment in the polling booths. But above all they wanted to prevent a recurrence of the persecution. They were convinced that this could be accomplished best by avoiding obvious displays of German ethnicity. Few were ready to respond to a leader who promised to solve the problems of the Germans as an ethnic minority group. The majority were not interested in the promotion of ethnic consciousness or in the political defense of *das Deutschtum*.

At the core of the German ethnic group, however, were persons whose commitment to ethnicity was primary. They were convinced that the problems of the Germans in the United States were due to past failures of ethnic leadership. They believed that German Americans had been insufficiently aggressive during the prewar years, especially in politics, and that if German-American citizens would participate vigorously in political affairs at all levels their power would be such that no one would dare trample upon their rights. The most prominent of these ethnic chauvinists was George Sylvester Viereck, the notorious propagandist of Germany's cause during the neutrality period of 1914-17. In September, 1919, a time when German Americans still suffered from sporadic super-patriotic violence, Viereck published an editorial on German ethnic leadership in his periodical, the *American Monthly*, as he had renamed the *Fatherland* of the prewar years. Noting that the Germans were a numerous and powerful force in American politics, he observed that they were now floundering for the want of a national leader. The need, he wrote, was for a new Carl Schurz, a man whose record of loyalty and service to the nation was impeccable, someone above envy and petty intrigue who could combine the wrangling and conflicting subgroups of German Americans and lead them by inspiring word and courageous deed out of the wilderness of war to a promised land of respect and honor. He should have financial independence and mastery of the English language, announced Viereck, and he must not be a recent immigrant or a newspaper man. As a possibility, Viereck mentioned Charles Nagel, who was well known among German Americans as the secretary of com-

merce in former President Taft's cabinet. But judging from his subsequent behavior, Viereck had himself in mind as the new leader of his ethnic group.³

Viereck's editorial evoked a variety of responses over the next several months. Most reveal how deeply German Americans were wounded by the humiliations of the war period and how earnestly they desired a restoration to their former status. Moreover, most respondents called for some form of political organization as the means to unite the group and to articulate its goals. The names of many persons were naively suggested as potential leaders in these letters, which collectively demonstrate a shallow understanding of the German ethnic group, its characteristics, and its relationships to the larger American society.⁴

The fact was that there was no possibility of a national leader arising who would fit the mold that Viereck described. The Germans in America never had had one in the past, not even the revered Schurz. This was because they were so diverse socially, economically, culturally, and politically that there was no common interest strong enough to bind them together. They were as heterogeneous as the nation itself, with its rich and poor, its educated and undereducated persons, its urban and rural divisions, its occupational range from unskilled laborers to mightily industrialists and financiers. The Germans included people who organized their lives around religious values and those who were secular minded; there were pietists and ritualists, Catholics and Protestants, Democrats and Republicans.

Unlike blacks, Chicanos, or Japanese, the Germans had no serious social or economic problems to unite them in a struggle against oppression. They had never been discriminated against in a serious way except during the World War I era, and even then it had not been universal or uniform. When the Germans had been persecuted it was chiefly because of the tenacity with which they clung to their language and culture. Even though German language and culture were not in fact as uniform as they appeared, their defense was the only foundation upon which a potential leader could base his appeal. Because it was in the economic interest of the press to emphasize ethnic unity and cultural maintenance and because leaders had no choice but to stress it in their speeches, sentiment in favor of nurturing the German language and culture appeared to be strong. Yet it was rarely capable of overcoming the centrifugal forces of personal or subgroup interest.

The inadequacy of ethnicity as a cohesive force was due also to the fact that the Germans, in their physical, linguistic, and cultural characteristics, were close to Anglo-American norms. Indistinguishable in appearance from dominant elements of American society, they were persons of Christian heritage who spoke a language closely related to English.

It was possible for them to assimilate with astonishing ease if they so chose. When the retention of obviously German behavior became a source of discomfort or deprivation, as during World War I, the proportion of those who consciously abandoned ethnicity was dramatically enlarged.

In their long history in the United States, the Germans acted in concert only in response to external threats or events that impinged upon their culture. Prohibition, legislative threats to parochial schools, and anti-German propaganda are examples of issues that could temporarily stimulate German Americans to unity. When the threat disappeared, possibilities for strong leadership also vanished. If the defense of ethnic culture was the only basis for leadership, it was inevitable that when German-American voices were heard in the land, they sounded negative, harsh, and unattractive to old-stock Americans.

The alternative lay in the kind of leadership exemplified by Carl Schurz. As a politician, Schurz had not pursued specifically German-American interests. Even though he was willing enough to exploit German-American votes, he was essentially an American statesman who happened to have been born and educated in Germany. While his cultural heritage certainly influenced his goals and methods, his political appeal was rarely circumscribed by ethnicity. It was the quality of leadership in national affairs that gave him status and position. When he spoke on the issues, the nation as well as German Americans listened, even though they often did not agree with him. Thus Schurz's role as spokesman for his ethnic group was almost incidental—a by-product of his national leadership.

In the years following World War I, however, there was no one of German birth or descent of comparable stature on the national scene. Nagel probably came the closest. But he, like most men of modest fame in the political, business, or academic worlds, had no desire to be identified as the leader of the Germans. As for those persons who were closely tied to ethnic organizations, most were unknown to the public at large or were broken in spirit by the events of the World War—men such as Dr. Charles Hexamer, the former president of the defunct National German-American Alliance. There remained the vainglorious Viereck. Though his notoriety as a propagandist eliminated him from any substantial leadership role, Viereck saw himself in a different light.

The German immigrant churches in particular would have nothing to do with Viereck and his ilk. They had been the chief victims of super-patriotism, and superpatriotism had been stimulated by the verbal excesses of the German ethnic chauvinists. For the churches, ethnicity had been primarily a means to achieve religious ends; when it tended to hinder rather than to ease the attainment of their goals, they readily abandoned programs of language and culture maintenance. Most church leaders distrusted political activity as a way to accomplish their objec-

tives, and they remained deeply suspicious of the ethnic political organizations, perceiving them as the heirs of the liberal, anticlerical traditions brought to America by the refugees of the revolutions of 1848.⁵

In most denominations there was a remarkably swift transition to English-language services in the first postwar decade, a mandatory step if the loyalty of the younger generation was to be retained. German-language church periodicals were gradually replaced by English equivalents. Most parochial schools converted to instruction in the English language. In the Evangelical Synod and in several Lutheran synods, notably the Iowa and Ohio synods, these alleged "nurseries of Kaiserism" virtually disappeared. Meanwhile, dozens of German Methodist congregations withdrew from German conferences and merged with parent organizations. Transition to English usage was especially dramatic in German Catholic parishes, and membership in the German Catholic Central-Verein, the national layman's organization, dropped to one-half of its prewar figure during the 1920s. Even the isolationist, pacifistic Mennonites, though slower to give up the use of German, developed extraordinary benevolence programs and voluntary relief work to demonstrate in positive ways their worth as American citizens.⁶

John Baltzer, president of the Evangelical Synod during the early 1920s, was typical of many German-American church leaders of the time. He repeatedly declared that his church, though German in origin, was thoroughly American in spirit and constitution. Yet he opposed the movement led by the great American theologian Reinhold Niebuhr, then a young parish pastor in Detroit, to merge the Evangelical Synod with other denominations. As a moderate, Baltzer admitted the inevitability and even the desirability of the transition to English, but he pleaded for a slowing of the process for the sake of clergymen and parishioners who could not accommodate themselves to an abrupt change. At the same time, some denominations, notably the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, inaugurated broad programs to equip the faithful for life in an English-speaking church. Sermons, instructional materials, religious literature, hymns, and prayers were published in English in the hope that orthodoxy could be sustained as linguistic barriers fell.⁷

In some respects the traditionally anticlerical *Amerikanische Turnerbund* acted much like the churches. Its leaders also believed survival depended upon transition to a nonethnic basis. By the 1920s, its political radicalism was only a memory, its name had been legally changed to the American Gymnastic Union, its periodical, the *Amerikanische Turnzeitung*, included many columns of English-language articles, and its adult male membership dwindled to about 30,000 persons. Its national chairman, Theodore Stempfel, strongly objected to German ethnic politics and disapproved of mass protest meetings. The assimilationist drift of the

Turnerbund was not unopposed, of course, and its leaders were bitterly attacked by the faithful, both within and without the organization.⁸

On the local level, thousands of ethnic clubs, societies, and associations of all kinds continued to exist, despite the corrosive effects of the anti-German hysteria. Some of their members advocated the conversion of their *Vereine* to "American" institutions, but most hoped to enjoy unobtrusively the pleasures of ethnic sociability, to celebrate their culture with drink and song, and to reap the economic rewards of ethnic contacts within the privacy of their organizational quarters.⁹ A few societies experienced a resurgence of life after the war, as they were strengthened by persons whose ethnic consciousness had been awakened by wartime persecutions.¹⁰ In many of the large cities, dozens of these societies were united into an umbrella organization, such as the influential United German Societies of New York and Vicinity.¹¹ Ordinarily not given to political activity, the umbrella organizations often coordinated charitable endeavors, such as relief programs for war sufferers in Germany, and promoted annual German Day cultural festivals, which by 1920 had begun to revive. Some members of the *Vereine* feared that organized political involvement was a senseless rocking of a leaky boat. But others attacked such attitudes as promoting self-indulgence, complacency, and a deceptive spirit of security. They urged participation in the activities of the two national organizations for German ethnic political action that had emerged in the immediate postwar period.¹²

The first of these was the Deutsch-Amerikanische Bürgerbund, or the German-American Citizen's League, which had its origin in Chicago under the leadership of Ferdinand Walther. It was deliberately patterned on the discredited National German-American Alliance, with state and local branches organized wherever sufficient interest could be generated. The Bürgerbund was dedicated to the revival of German language and culture and was motivated by a spirit of revenge. George Sylvester Viereck found such militancy to his liking and, for a time, served as its eastern regional director. Its leadership consisted largely of former National Alliance officers, but, unlike that organization, it was openly and avowedly political. In August, 1920, when it sponsored a national conference to support the presidential candidacy of Republican Warren G. Harding, it resolved "to sweep from office all miscreants, irrespective of party, who abused the authority conferred upon them by the people for the prosecution of the war, to make war upon their fellow citizens, who hounded and persecuted Americans of German descent, . . . who, contemptuous of any hyphen except the one which binds them to Great Britain, unmindful of the supreme sacrifice of Americans of German blood in the late war, attempt even now to deprive our children of the noble heritage of speech and song and prayer that has come down to us from our sires beyond the sea."¹³

The Bürgerbund was formally organized as a national body at a poorly attended meeting in Chicago in January, 1921, when it adopted a series of resolutions defining its policies and commenting on current national and international issues.¹⁴ Never very successful on the national level, the Bürgerbund was influential chiefly in Chicago and the Midwest, but even there it lacked the support of the German-language press. No German ethnic leaders of importance emerged from the organization. Its strategy was excessively chauvinistic; it spelled trouble in an intolerant age.¹⁵

The second national organization was the Steuben Society of America. Founded originally as a secret society in 1919, it was no less committed to political action than the Bürgerbund. It also sought to protest against the treatment which Americans of German descent had suffered during the war, and it accepted the theory that if the Germans could unite they could hold the balance of political power in the United States. But this organization recognized that German Americans also had to establish their credentials for civic virtue and patriotism. Instead of screaming for its rights to be recognized, the Steuben Society hoped to demonstrate that it deserved respect. Hence, it constantly urged energetic participation by its members in the political life of America and, as its name suggests, publicized the contributions of Germans to the greatness of America from colonial times to the present. Its defense of Germany in international affairs was less strident than what was typical of the Bürgerbund, and to the disgust of the chauvinist radicals, it chose English as its official language. The Steubenites believed that this strategy would bring sufficient status and power to prevent the German Americans from being persecuted or ignored politically in the future.¹⁶

Although the Steuben Society became the best-known national German-American organization in the two decades between the wars, it also produced no significant leaders. Carl E. Schmidt of Detroit, an aging businessman of moderate wealth and culture who had played a minor role in Michigan politics, consented to serve as national chairman, but he never gave more than symbolic leadership to the society, which was centered in New York City. Thus, leadership fell by default to Theodore H. Hoffmann, who was hobbled by acting chairman status until Schmidt's death in 1934.¹⁷ As an instrument of German-American unity, the Steuben Society was also a failure. Throughout the interwar period it suffered from indecisive leadership, internal dissension, and severe criticism from German Americans outside the organization. Despite the respectability it enjoyed, its membership never exceeded twenty thousand.¹⁸

Even so, the Steuben Society's strategy was consonant with the advice of the historian Ferdinand Schevill, who had urged, in response to Viereck's 1919 editorial on the lack of German ethnic leadership, that any action the Germans took should be preceded by a self-examination "to discover

the qualities . . . which have invited hostility and contempt." Such dispassionate reflection was difficult for the chauvinists; it was impossible for Viereck, who seemed to have learned nothing from the war. Eagerly seeking distinction as the leader of the German Americans, Viereck plunged into the political waters as the presidential election of 1920 approached. He exhorted his fellows to unified political activity in order to force decision-makers in the national government to recognize German-American political power and to reward it when used to their advantage. He energetically supported the candidacy of Republican Warren G. Harding with every means at his disposal. First he tried to establish a German-American political action group which he called the Committee of 96. When it failed to catch on, he shifted to the Bürgerbund which, like almost all the German-language newspapers, endorsed Harding, not because they regarded him highly, but rather as a means to defeat Democrat James Cox, whom they despised as the political heir of Woodrow Wilson. Everywhere Viereck preached boldness to the intimidated German Americans, and everywhere the press, to his delight, identified him as their leading spokesman. Indeed, as the campaign drew to a close, Cox singled out Viereck as his whipping-boy, as he denounced the return of hyphenism to American politics. But Viereck was not dismayed; such treatment was to be expected if he was to project himself successfully as the dauntless leader of all German Americans who were properly conscious of their ethnicity.¹⁹

Viereck's claim to ethnic leadership had little substance. The *New York Times* and other newspapers gave him much publicity because he was articulate and arrogant; apparently they assumed that he was also influential. But most German Americans, including the publishers of the German-language press, ignored or disputed his claims to leadership; many found his extremism appalling.²⁰ It is true that in the election of 1920 the majority voted overwhelmingly for Harding, as did the electorate generally, but they would have done so even if Viereck had remained silent.²¹

Viereck pressed on. Remembering Schurz's alleged delivery of the German-American vote to Abraham Lincoln in 1860 and his subsequent reward of the ministry to Spain, Viereck dispatched a congratulatory telegram to Harding with a reminder that six million Americans of German descent had voted Republican as he had predicted.²² In January the Bürgerbund resolved to send a five-man delegation, including Viereck, to visit Harding before he took office and urge him to consider the great contributions of Germans to America when he made his cabinet appointments.²³

Harding politely received the Bürgerbund delegation on February 16, 1921, while vacationing in Saint Augustine, Florida. The president-elect

understood fully that he owed no debts to Viereck or, indeed, to the German-American voting population as a group. He assured the delegation that no candidate for high appointive office would be discriminated against because of German birth or descent. The effect of Viereck's well publicized visit was to make it politically impossible for Harding to appoint a German American to any significant position, regardless of the candidate's qualifications. Ethnic politics, especially German, was simply repugnant to large numbers of native-stock voters. The *Buffalo Express*, for example, denounced the Viereck visitation as "ridiculously impudent," and in Kansas the *Salina Journal* called it "insolent stupidity." The American Legion protested against what it perceived as a German-American demand to receive an appointment to the cabinet. In Texas the state legislature adopted a resolution endorsing the stand taken by the Legion.²⁴

Viereck and the chauvinists were disappointed with Harding's refusal to appoint a German American to high office. Even though it was apparent that their tactic was bound to be counterproductive, given the xenophobic tendencies of the times, they continued to pressure the President, especially in autumn, 1921, when the position of ambassador to Austria fell vacant. Instead of agreeing on a single candidate, each of several activist elements within the German community, mainly in New York, lobbied for their own men. In the end Harding appointed a non-German.²⁵

The whole affair resulted in laying bare a deep division within the ranks of Germans who were committed to united ethnic action. The Viereck clique believed in the open organization of raw political power; some even seemed to think that a frankly German political party would be ideal. They were opposed by persons, usually German-language newspaper editors and publishers, who were influential as leaders in local umbrella organizations. Fearful of renewed nativistic recriminations against the Germans, this group of leaders espoused a more covert strategy. They preferred to limit the public display of German ethnicity to cultural and social affairs such as German Day celebrations, bazaars, and benefit concerts. Meanwhile, they hoped to negotiate privately with leaders of the major political parties, trading German ethnic support for promises to pursue policies they favored. They wanted to bargain under circumstances where rationality and discretion could prevail, without the extremism of either Viereck and his followers or of latter-day super-patriots such as the leaders of the American Legion. No less committed to German ethnic goals than the extremists, these moderates believed they could gain more for the Germans at less risk. Chief among them were the Ridder brothers, Bernard and Victor, the owners and publishers of the *New Yorker Staats-Zeitung*, one of the largest and most influential of the German-language newspapers in the United States.²⁶

Once it was apparent that no German American would get the Vienna post, Viereck began a sustained attack on the Ridders, Paul Mueller of the *Chicagoer Abendpost*, F. W. Elven of the *Cincinnati Freie Presse*, and the German-language press generally. Incensed by their refusal to publicize, much less support, the activities of the Bürgerbund and other chauvinist groups, Viereck denounced them in January, 1922, as "renegade Judases" of "supine docility" and "bovine passivity" who meet "in secret conclave" with log-rolling politicians. In April he published his version of how the Ridder brothers, by their meddling, had prevented Bernard Heyn, a German-American attorney of New York, who had been a member of the delegation that had visited Harding, from getting the Austrian ambassadorship. The Ridders, charged Viereck, had inherited, not earned, their positions of leadership and were motivated solely by desire for financial gain. He complained that any potential leader who failed to concur in their dictation could expect to be punished by being denied publicity in the German-language press. Viereck pointed out that the Ridders' alleged manipulation had led to their banishment from the halls of the socially prestigious Liederkrantz, whose president, William O. C. Kiene, had also become tangled in the Austrian imbroglio. Viereck dragged out what he considered to be dirty laundry from the war period to incriminate the Ridders. Finally, he reported that "throughout the country, Americans of German descent, desirous of bringing about harmony, are in open revolt against such individuals claiming leadership."²⁷

Viereck's outbursts inevitably alienated intelligent men of good will among the German Americans. Frustrated by his failure to attract a substantial number of followers, Viereck next broadened his verbal attack to include his chief journalist rivals, the editors of *Issues of To-Day*, George Abel Schreiner and Frederick Franklin Schrader. Their periodical, closely tied to the Steuben Society of America, was strongly pro-German, like the *American Monthly*, but was better edited and more moderate in tone. In Viereck's indictment, Schreiner committed the crime of defending the French on one occasion, and Schrader had expressed some doubt about the truth of all the stories then circulating about forced prostitution of German women for black French soldiers then occupying the Rhineland.²⁸ But Viereck continued to suffer a steady erosion of support. Ultimately he was unable to command publicity in either the American or German-language press.

During the next two years the German ethnic group seemed to acquire a new sense of community. The storm-cellar mentality of the immediate postwar period faded as German-American leaders became more openly assertive of their rights and hopes. They made frequent references in their speeches and editorials to the wartime persecution their people had endured, and fresh voices were heard in favor of political organization. The Amerikanische Turnerbund, for example, received new, aggressive

leadership in the person of George Seibel. He urged German Americans to ignore their differences, to unite in order to fight prohibition and other forms of cultural imperialism, and to denounce such international injustices to Germany as the French invasion of the Ruhr. Similarly, the United German Societies of New York acquired a Lutheran clergyman, Dr. William Popcke, as its president; he also espoused political organization to prevent the disintegration of Germany.²⁹ The German-language press also waxed more aggressive. The *New Yorker Staats-Zeitung*, for example, agreed that the time had come for all German Americans to develop a powerful, united political organization for their own self-protection and self-interest.³⁰ The Steuben Society of America emerged as the dominant political organization as the more radical Bürgerbund faded from the national scene. The *New York Times*, as well as the *Staats-Zeitung*, frequently publicized Steuben Society leaders and activity. Meanwhile, sympathy in the United States for Germany grew as the Weimar Republic struggled with inflation and the occupation of the Rhineland and the Ruhr. At the same time, revisionist historians and journalists, building on the widespread disillusionment with the Peace of Versailles, explained the origins of the Great War in terms much less favorable to Britain and France than given in the "official" version. Thus, as the election of 1924 approached, it appeared that German ethnic political action could succeed, even though the nation continued to be troubled by excesses of racism, xenophobia, and superpatriotism.

Most German Americans were disappointed with the major party candidates for president in 1924. Calvin Coolidge meant only a continuation of a Republicanism that had done little for them. Democrat John W. Davis was a hopeless compromise candidate who, to the Germans, symbolized Wall Street and the kind of financial manipulations that had dragged the United States into the war. Thus, when Robert M. LaFollette, their battle-scarred hero from the days of the World War, ran as a third-party candidate, the majority of the German ethnic leaders rushed enthusiastically to his support. They loved him not so much for what he favored as for what he opposed. All they asked of any candidate was that he be against British and French dominance in international affairs, against the Versailles settlement and any arrangement, such as the Dawes Plan, that tended to perpetuate it, against the international bankers of Wall Street, and against the restrictive immigration legislation of 1924. If a candidate had a record of having opposed prohibition, woman suffrage, and American entry into the World War, so much the better. German ethnic politics thus rested on a foundation of negativism; positive goals were rarely defined. Since party loyalty did not exist, German ethnic leaders could shift easily from a conservative Harding in 1920 to a progressive LaFollette in 1924.

The Steuben Society of America was especially active in the election

of 1924. Its Political Committee sponsored a conference of German-American leaders in Chicago early in June to hammer out a platform for the edification of the major parties in their national conventions.³¹ In August the SSA met to endorse LaFollette, and in September it staged a great rally in Yankee Stadium in New York. LaFollette himself addressed the assembly of forty thousand and told them with his usual eloquence what they wanted to hear—that Germans were hardworking, valuable citizens who had, by their intelligence, thrift, and endurance, contributed immeasurably to America's greatness. Crowds heard similar speeches at meetings staged in many other cities, including Philadelphia, Buffalo, Chicago, San Francisco, and Portland. By these means the German leaders hoped to demonstrate that their people were good patriotic Americans who happened to speak the German language and to value German culture; they were determined to revise the image of the German American as being more interested in Germany than the United States.³²

Still, memories of World War I remained vivid. No longer, announced the *New Yorker Staats-Zeitung*, will German Americans allow themselves to be muzzled, slandered, or harassed. The enemies of *Deutschtum* can be routed if German Americans will work together to present a united front.³³ "The German elements," wrote Frederick Franklin Schrader, "knows when it is insulted, ignored, and impugned. It has a whole register of grievances, and since the policy is to dampen the smoldering fires of discontent rather than to put out the fire, the explosion will take place in due time, and it will not be to the liking of the powers that be."³⁴ Viereck reminded his readers that "no official rebuke was ever administered to the wretches who were guilty of . . . outrages [against Americans of German descent] except in a mild Presidential protest, utterly inefficient in checking the tendency to declare American citizens of German blood beyond the protection of the law."³⁵ Meanwhile, the national press gave extensive coverage to the activities of the Steuben Society and reported in considerable detail the political preferences of German leaders in the various states.³⁶

But even with the LaFollette candidacy, the Germans could not achieve unity; it was impossible to define the group interest to everyone's satisfaction. It is true that the majority of the German-language newspapers condemned both the Democrats and the Republicans as they endorsed LaFollette, but the old divisions between the extremists and the more cautious editors and publishers had not disappeared.³⁷ Fearing a repetition of Viereck's strategy of 1920, F. W. Elven, the publisher of the *Cincinnati Freie Presse*, authored a lengthy editorial in which he reviewed the "flagrant tactlessness" of the Bürgerbund with its policy of ethnic separatism and of making demands in return for concessions. The appropriate leaders of the German ethnic group, insisted Elven, were the pub-

lishers of the German-language press; it was their duty to prevent "persons who lack every qualification of leadership to force themselves into prominent positions and by their blunders compromise the cause of the German element." Elven argued that circumstances made ethnic political activity unwise. "We have our hands full at present to make amends for the sins of men of German blood who do not take their oath of allegiance too seriously and refuse to recognize the fact that we are not living in a German colony."³⁸ While Elven did not mention Viereck by name, it is clear whom he had in mind when he upbraided incompetent and impertinent political amateurs who "immured themselves with their itching vanity and monumental self-esteem." Others shared Elven's view. Schrader, for example, urged that the *Steubenfest* in Yankee Stadium be divested of all suggestions of "hyphenism" that were so susceptible to exploitation by "Anglomaniacs, Ku Kluxers, and the New York Morgan Gazettes." Nothing, he said, must be done "to suggest that our citizens of German origin expect either privileges or rewards in return for the solidarity they will manifest" on election day.³⁹ The *German American World* agreed with Elven that the Viereck visit to Harding was stupid and that German ethnic political segregation was the greatest of follies. Yet it adhered to the notion that if the German element was "to reassert its claim to that position of influence to which it is historically and economically entitled," it must remain neutral in the political contest until partisan lines are distinctly defined and then assign its weight to the candidate or party that is compatible with the German interest.⁴⁰

Viereck was outraged by Elven's attack and published a lengthy defense of his own behavior. Later he countered with charges that German-language newspapers that supported Coolidge, such as Elven's *Freie Presse*, did so because they had been bribed with lucrative advertising contracts arranged by the Republican campaign committee. Viereck associated such corruption with the tragic suicide of Hans Hackel of the Saint Louis *Westliche Post*; but he reserved special scorn for Val J. Peter, publisher of the Omaha *Tribüne*, who, according to testimony given before a congressional investigating committee, had flipped to Coolidge late in the campaign in return for \$12,500.⁴¹

Any prominent German who disagreed with the dominant pro-LaFollette position was severely criticized in the German-American press. When Charles Nagel, whose loyalty to the Republican party was above reproach, announced that he intended to vote for Coolidge on the basis of nonethnic issues, the Steuben Society prepared a long rebuttal. The society charged that Nagel, though proud of his German heritage, chose Coolidge because he was the Saint Louis representative of the Republican powers of Wall Street.⁴²

The failure of LaFollette to win election in 1924 underscores the inabil-

ity of the German-American leaders to marshal the ethnic vote. They obviously had not wielded the balance of political power, even though a substantial portion of his five million votes was cast by persons of German birth or descent. Many thousands had also voted for the major party candidates, especially Coolidge. It was apparent that either major party could ignore the Germans if such a course were otherwise in their interest. Nevertheless, the German ethnic leaders continued to delude themselves. Carl Schmidt wrote that his Steuben Society had finally shed the party yolk. "If we continue to throw our vote whichever way our conscience may dictate, we will compel the respect of all parties, and will henceforth receive consideration by whatever party may be in power." Viereck insisted that support for LaFollette had cut across all German ethnic classes and group divisions; he even toyed with the idea of a third party "recruited largely from the German element."⁴³ Viereck, Schmidt, and other leaders knew that German Americans generally were still bitter about their wartime treatment; they erroneously assumed that the masses would translate their resentment into unified political action. This capacity to misinterpret experience and to believe only that which conformed to preconceptions gives substance to Mencken's observation that the Germans in America were led by mediocrities. Yet the actual voting behavior of German American citizens belies his charge that they almost instinctively followed fools.

There was no way that the strategy urged by the Steuben Society of America could produce strong political leadership among the Germans. In this view, party loyalty was an evil; support was to go to the party that would cater to the ethnic group interest. Such a policy precluded the possibility of a German ethnic leader achieving prominence in one of the major parties.⁴⁴ Election to important political office was therefore impossible. The only remaining avenue to a leadership position was to work through ethnic organizations such as the Steuben Society. But this alternative offered no long-term promise, for the Germans constituted a disintegrating constituency—a melting iceberg, in the words of one observer. Moreover, the Steuben Society as a matter of policy played down the leadership of its officers. Despite his many years of service at the head of the Steuben Society, Theodore Hoffmann was not even well known among German Americans.

The bankruptcy of the idea that the Germans held the balance of political power in the United States, provided they could unite, was made manifest by the presidential election of 1928, when they were hopelessly split by the candidacies of Herbert Hoover and Al Smith. One group insisted that Smith's Democratic party was still the party of Woodrow Wilson, William McAdoo, and A. Mitchell Palmer and that the hated prohibition amendment had been foisted upon the American people by

Southern Democrats. Hoover, they said, was of German descent and proud of it; besides, he had saved thousands of Germans from starvation in his relief work after the war. But others saw Hoover as a pro-British conservative and a prohibitionist. They much preferred the Irish-Catholic Smith, with his open record of opposition to prohibition, his distrust of England, and his support for liberal, progressive measures. Capitalizing on this sentiment, the Democratic National Committee flaunted the names of persons who endorsed Smith, including the well-known former Republican Congressman Richard Bartholdt of Missouri, Theodore Hoffmann of the Steuben Society, Charles Korz of the Catholic Central-Verein, Val Peter of the Omaha *Tribüne*, baseball players Babe Ruth and Lou Gehrig, and even the disdainful H. L. Mencken.⁴⁵ But there were still other Americans of German descent, chiefly pietistic Protestants, who favored Hoover precisely because he was "dry." After the election, the usually apolitical *Christliche Apologete*, a Methodist periodical, hailed the new chief with a full-page portrait. Meanwhile Lutherans rejected Smith simply because he was Catholic.⁴⁶

The German-American press was similarly divided. A few newspapers, including Elven's *Cincinnati Freie Presse*, endorsed Hoover. A few more, such as Paul Mueller's *Chicagoer Abendpost*, supported Smith. But the great majority, the *New Yorker Staats-Zeitung* among them, were reluctant to offend any significant number of their subscribers and remained independent or even ignored the election entirely.⁴⁷

The Steuben Society of America was incapable of providing leadership under these conditions. At first its organ, the *Progressive*, edited by Frederick Franklin Schrader, dismissed Hoover as pro-British and praised Smith as the champion of all that was dear to German Americans. In August, however, Schrader made a sudden switch, offered apologies to Hoover, and recommended his election. Certain local branches of the SSA also publicly announced for Hoover, but the national organization, wracked by internal dissension, finally endorsed Smith in mid-October. It severed its ties to the *Progressive* and declared the *Steuben News*, the publication of the New York council, to be its official voice in the future.⁴⁸

After the fiasco of 1928, German Americans spoke less of what could be accomplished through political unity. References to World War I became less frequent. Viereck abandoned all pretense of ethnic leadership as he surrendered the editorship of the *American Monthly* to others. The Steuben Society of America continued to exist, of course, but its effectiveness was scorned in many quarters. Unable to agree on presidential candidates, it unintentionally abdicated a national leadership role as it concentrated on state and local politics. Meanwhile, the *Steuben News* larded its pages with glowing accounts of the heroic deeds of the ethnic fathers. Sanitized tales of Steuben, Schurz, De Kalb, Lieber, Sigel,

and many others were repeated ad nauseam, as ever more obscure Americans of German origins were discovered and publicized in this effort to lay claim to authentic Americanness.

But the number of German Americans who were attracted by such unrelieved filiopietism diminished steadily. By the end of the 1920s the Americanizers were firmly in control of most German immigrant churches. The number of German-language publications, including church periodicals and trade journals, dwindled to one hundred seventy-two, only a fourth of the prewar figure, and the multifarious *Vereine* continued to atrophy and die. In 1930, Oscar Illing, editor of *Die Neue Zeit* of Chicago and an old-time German-American journalist in the Viereck mold, delivered an extended lamentation on the impending fate of German America. Illing saw betrayal everywhere. No ethnic institutions, least of all the German-language press, escaped his jeremiads: all were led by fearful, self-serving cowards who avoided controversy and gave lip service only to the maintenance of language and culture. In his view, singing societies, for example, had degenerated into English-speaking businessmen's clubs where German songs could sometimes be heard, but were sung by hired singers. Illing could offer no remedy for the dissolution of ethnicity; he repeated the threadbare lines about political unity, but admitted it was impossible of attainment. He refused to understand that for the ethnic masses, immigrant language and culture could not be perpetuated beyond the point of their social or psychological utility. Illing wanted German Americans to organize in order "to cultivate the imponderable properties of German culture," and he resented it fiercely when ordinary people could not share his elitist values. The only bright spot in Illing's ethnic world was the new Carl Schurz Memorial Foundation, which he understood to be a great German-American cultural institute of imposing character and financial power sure to compel respect.⁴⁹

Although the Schurz Foundation never became quite what Illing imagined, it was symbolic of a new emphasis in German ethnic life at the beginning of the 1930s. The futility of the political strategy having finally become obvious, leadership fell increasingly to the moderates, led by the editors and publishers who stressed the importance of cultural education programs.⁵⁰ Still, new efforts were made to create national organizations capable of serving the interests of Germans in America. One of these, the German-American Federation of the U.S.A., embodied all the cultural goals of the Steuben Society but specifically rejected politics as a means to achieve them. Merely a revival of the old prewar National German-American Alliance, it had difficulty attracting supporters, partly because of the interest shown in it by several American proto-Nazi organizations.⁵¹ More important was the National Congress of Americans of German Descent, an informal conference which met in New York in October,

1932, under the auspices of the German-American Conference of Greater New York and Vicinity. The guidance of the Ridder brothers was much in evidence at this meeting. Cynically interpreted, the congress was an attempt by the German-language press to sustain and revive the ethnic community in a time of economic distress, just as the officers of participating ethnic organizations hoped thereby to preserve their positions of authority and respect.

The United States was approaching the depth of the Great Depression at the time of the first National Congress of Americans of German Descent. It was surprisingly well attended. Most delegates represented national, regional, and city organizations and alliances, but ethnic craft unions, socialist workers groups, and church bodies had no interest in such an affair. At the core of the congress were cultural chauvinists whose prosperity and education permitted them the luxury of cherishing ethnic heritage for its own sake. Many speakers urged the assembly to lead the German element to its rightful place in American society. Their repeated use of such words as "recognition" and "respect" demonstrate that they were still troubled by the status deprivation engendered by World War I. The congress seemed to flounder about in search of some device or some institution that promised to preserve ethnic culture. It supported proposals to create an institute for research in ethnic language and culture, and to establish German houses at universities, German-language instruction programs, information bureaus, and cultural exchanges with Germany. The least realistic was a proposal to create a German-American university.⁵²

Meanwhile, the Schurz Foundation had been established in Philadelphia. Supported by substantial contributions from several wealthy German-American businessmen and industrialists, it made no pretense to ethnic leadership per se. Instead, the foundation promoted cultural exchange programs and sought to acquaint Americans with German cultural achievements through its beautifully edited magazine, *American-German Review*, which started in 1934.⁵³

Philadelphia was also the scene of the second National Congress of Americans of German Descent, held in October, 1933, in commemoration of the 250th anniversary of the first German settlement in America in 1683 at Germantown. Devoid of new ideas and unable to overcome the constrictions of economic depression, the congress movement died thereafter. Quite sensibly, neither the first nor the second congress had shown any concern for Germany, possibly out of fear of being identified with Nazism. But both congresses also tended to ignore the problems of the approximately four hundred thousand immigrants from Germany who entered the United States during the 1920s.⁵⁴

When the older generation of immigrants (or "Grays," as they were

traditionally called) commented at all on the postwar arrivals from Germany ("Greens"), it was usually in uncomplimentary terms. They were distressed chiefly because the latter showed little interest in the preservation of *Deutschtum* and often formed organizations of their own rather than supporting older, established institutions, most of which desperately needed the backing of the newcomers. In one instance, the Greens were even criticized for joining the liberal Evangelical Synod, which was presumably less committed to German-language maintenance, rather than the conservative, orthodox Missouri and Wisconsin Lutheran synods. Observers in Germany also disparaged the postwar emigrants as having an unprecedented proportion of complainers and renegades who, after one year in America, preferred to speak bad English rather than good German.⁵⁵

The Greens themselves saw their circumstances differently. One of their most eloquent spokesmen was Dr. Fritz Schlesinger of New York, who addressed the first National Congress of Americans of German Descent in 1932. He reminded the assembled Grays that the postwar immigrants had come seeking a new life, believing that America offered them more opportunities and better security than did Germany. Unlike the earlier immigrants, most of whom were farmers and workers who had arrived before 1895, the Greens were representative of all levels of German society, including a disproportionate number of intellectuals. The majority, said Schlesinger, were interested in a rapid acculturation and hence tended to regard the use of the German language as a necessary evil during the transition period. They had not pursued *Deutschtum* in America and generally considered it a hindrance to a successful adjustment. Schlesinger explained that soon after their arrival these immigrants discovered that most ethnic associations were interested in perpetuating an outmoded form of German culture. Moreover, the *Vereine* seemed both unprepared and unwilling to serve the needs of the newcomers. Forced to be self-reliant, the Greens therefore used the societies for the only thing they were good for—convenient social contacts. The idea that the immigrant had a duty of some kind to preserve *Deutschtum* in America never occurred to them. Schlesinger further pointed out that most of the agencies for cultural preservation, such as the Carl Schurz Memorial Foundation, the Goethe Society of America, the many singing societies, and the great umbrella organizations like the United German Societies and the German-American Conference, were almost exclusively run by second- and third-generation German Americans.⁵⁶

The problem of German-American unity, according to Schlesinger, concerned social class much more than people were willing to believe. Americans of German descent completely overlooked the fact that Germany was a land sharply divided into social strata and that in their pri-

vate social relationships Germans rarely crossed the traditional lines. Upon his arrival in America, the newcomer found persons of all classes and occupations mixed together in the *Vereine*; furthermore, the leaders seemed chiefly to be "self-made" men, economically successful but culturally deficient. Thus, the immigrant intellectuals—academics and professional people, many with language problems that forced them to accept work beneath their educational level—felt economically inferior but culturally superior to most of the German Americans. Made uncomfortable by this anomaly, they often preferred to seek admission to American circles rather than to ethnic organizations. Yet these persons were precisely the ones who were expected to be the new champions of German *Geistesgüte*. Even the simpler people among the Greens, Schlesinger observed, sensed a provincialism or the lack of progressive or modern spirit among the German-American leaders. Finally, Schlesinger pleaded for a deeper involvement in American political affairs, not in terms of the German ethnic group interest, but in the service of the entire American society. Ties to German political parties must be severed, he said, and preoccupation with daily political events in Germany must end, if German American unity was to be achieved.

Schlesinger, a Jew, was obviously thinking of the Nazi party and the advent of Adolf Hitler, who came to power in Germany three months later. Other postwar immigrants were also thinking of Hitler, but in rather more favorable terms. American Nazi organizations were formed as early as 1924. Their memberships consisted almost exclusively of urban workers or proletarianized members of the German middle class who found few of their American dreams fulfilled. In their frustration, they consciously rejected assimilation, disparaged American life, and embraced fascism. At no time did the Nazi organizations attract a collective membership of more than a few thousand persons.⁵⁷ But because of their ideology of authoritarianism, racism, and extreme nationalism, they crowded the staid, bourgeois German-American societies from the stage of public attention, beginning with Hitler's rise to power in 1933. From then until the American entry into World War II, the activities of the Friends of the New Germany and its successor, the so-called German-American Bund, were daily fare in the *New York Times* and other major metropolitan newspapers. By the end of the decade, Fritz Kuhn, the leader of the Bund, was the best-known German in America.⁵⁸

American Nazi organizations, like the older ethnic societies, were also concerned with German-American unity and leadership. But instead of basing their appeal on culture, the Nazis used race. In their view, all Germans everywhere were united by blood and were thereby bound in loyalty to the Fatherland. Anti-Semitic and anti-Communist propaganda was spread to attract popular support; brutal methods and threats of

violence were employed in a series of efforts, most of them unsuccessful, to take over or to discredit the old umbrella organizations and the Steuben Society.

The leaders of the German-American Bund repeatedly demonstrated ignorance of American society and of the place of German immigrants in it. They understood nothing of American ideals and values or of the extent to which the masses of German Americans shared them. The efforts of Kuhn and his coterie to assume the leadership of German America on dictatorship principles must be written off as an abject failure. Even the German foreign ministry was frequently embarrassed by Bundist blunders and took all steps short of outright repudiation to control the organization.

Yet the American Nazis succeeded in keeping the established leaders of the ethnic group off balance. This was partly due, of course, to the apparent success of the Hitler government in both domestic and foreign affairs during the 1930s. Few prominent old-line German-American leaders were willing to speak out forcefully and consistently against Nazi outrages, so proud were they of the positive accomplishments of the new regime. They took delight in the way Hitler violated the detested Treaty of Versailles. The leaders of the Americanized German churches likewise refrained from condemning Hitlerism.⁵⁹ Indeed, some of the churchmen seem to have been encouraged to indulge in their own versions of anti-Semitism.⁶⁰ Unlike secular societies, the churches did not count Jews among their members. Thus, only German-Jewish and Socialist organizations fought vigorously and relentlessly against American Nazism from 1933 to World War II.⁶¹

As a matter of policy, the leaders of the old organizations generally avoided commenting on Nazi excesses. In the cases of the churchmen, silence was partly the consequence of their *Weltanschauung*; disposed to divide human affairs into two separate worlds of the sacred and the profane, they rarely discussed contemporary issues of any kind. But the leaders of the secular organizations were fearful of losing their positions of prestige. Their societies had already been enervated by depression and assimilation, and they were reluctant to risk alienating even small parts of their constituencies. Some leaders were practically driven to take strong anti-Nazi stands by the Bundists, whose bully tactics left them no choice. Their moral perceptions dulled by ethnocentrism, the leaders of the German-American Conference of New York and the Steuben Society of America refrained from taking a forthright anti-Nazi stand until 1938, when the insolence and contempt of the Nazi challenge to their leadership was so general it could no longer be ignored.⁶²

Two other events in 1938 stimulated a somewhat more general and open criticism among German Americans of Hitler and National Socialism. One was the imprisonment in a concentration camp of Pastor Martin

Niemöller, a special hero of German Protestants who had been a commander of a German submarine in World War I. The other was the *Kristallnacht* pogrom of November 1938, touched off by the assassination in Paris of a German diplomat by a young Polish Jew. These acts finally goaded both the *Kirchendeutsche* and the *Vereinsdeutsche* into condemning Nazism.⁶³ But even thereafter, muted pride in Hitler's deeds was more common in the German-language press than was consistent condemnation.⁶⁴ Some small-town newspapers, such as the *Fredericksburg* [Texas] *Wochenblatt*, concentrated on local news and ignored the world crisis generally; a great many papers, among them the *Sheboygan* [Wisconsin] *Amerika*, tried to present a neutral or objective reporting of the news; a few, such as the *Iowa Reform* [Davenport] and the *Dakota Freie Presse* [Bismarck], were clearly pro-German, anti-Semitic, isolationist, and intensely anti-Roosevelt.

Just before World War II began in 1939, Carl Wittke, the eminent historian of German America, who was then a dean at Oberlin College, encapsulated the moral problem faced by the leadership in his own ethnic group. It was apparent, Wittke wrote, that newspaper accounts of Nazi atrocities against the Jews were not exaggerated and that there were millions of persons in Germany who were appalled by the policies of the Hitler regime. But instead of giving moral support to honorable men who were fighting against fearful odds for decency, humanity, and brotherhood, the leaders of the German element preferred to extol the glories of the "Forty-eighters" and their flaming liberalism while excusing Nazi excesses as a passing phase or characterizing "the noble fuehrer" as an unfortunate "victim of an ignorant or brutal minority of his party."⁶⁵

While H. L. Mencken had been disdainful of German ethnic group leadership, Wittke was simply disgusted. He was offended by their moral obtuseness and narrow chauvinism. It is clear, moreover, that their record over the two decades of the interwar period is distinguished by neither insight nor foresight. Most spokesmen for the group, self-appointed or otherwise, were deficient in understanding their constituencies and how they, as leaders, might relate to the great masses of Americans of German origins or descent. Remarkably various in economic status, religious belief, and even in language and culture, most German Americans, unlike the core of leaders, were not moved primarily by ethnic considerations. Hundreds of thousands of persons who were technically counted as German Americans had no significant measure of identification with the ethnic group. Indeed, some were antagonistic to programs for the preservation of ethnic identity. Others perceived ethnicity as inhibiting the attainment of other goals deemed more important. Church Germans, for example, abandoned ethnicity at an accelerated pace during the 1920s and 1930s.

But even those leaders who shared the desire for ethnic unity could

not agree on how it should be attained. Some persisted in strategies that were inevitably counterproductive, given the character of the times, and thus stimulated further fragmentation of the ethnic group. Filled with bitterness and resentment over their treatment in World War I and perturbed by an enduring sense of having lost status, they first hoped to regain respect through united ethnic political action. Some advocated the use of raw political power; others preferred persuasion. After the political strategy had failed repeatedly during the 1920s, they shifted to an emphasis on culture. But their programs were based upon elitist values at variance with those of the masses. The leaders refused to believe that immigrant language and culture could not be effectively perpetuated beyond the period of social or psychological utility. Vitiating by the Great Depression, cultural programs faded as the American Nazis, ever bold and arrogant, captured public attention with their strategy of blood. This racist quest for German-American unity, appealing chiefly to recent, postwar immigrants, was so antipathetic to American ideals and habits of thought and attitude that it eventually drove most traditional German-American leaders into opposition. This meant that, except on the local or personal levels, the attainment of ethnic group goals by means of organized activity was abandoned with the advent of World War II.

One may scarcely speak of German ethnic leadership in the United States since World War II. The Steuben Society of America, the Catholic Central-Verein, the Carl Schurz Memorial Foundation, the American Turners, and more than a dozen other national organizations continued to exist, sustained by large numbers of German-speaking refugees from central and eastern Europe who arrived during the 1940s and 1950s.⁶⁶ Old patterns persist. The attitudes of the old *Bürgerbund* are presently reincarnated in the Deutsche-Americanische National Kongress and in the Federation of American Citizens of German Descent. Their rhetoric and strategies often seem unchanged from what they were in the 1920s.⁶⁷ But no one listens; these organizations, united chiefly by a hatred of Communism, are unknown to the general public and ignored by most German Americans who may have heard of them. Meanwhile, German ethnicity thrives in many hundreds of local *Vereine* throughout the land, but especially in major centers of German population, such as New York, Cleveland, and Chicago, plus Florida and California. They gather together persons whose attachment to the German language and culture is more emotional than intellectual, more social than political, who are interested chiefly in maintaining an associational environment in which they may converse, dine, play, sing, and dance with others who share their values and attitudes.⁶⁸ Ironically, it is this dimension of German life in America that the chauvinists of half a century ago predicted could not survive without their leadership.

NOTES

1. H. L. Mencken, "Die Deutschamerikaner," *Die Neue Rundschau* 39 (Band II, November 1928):486-95.
2. This and the following several paragraphs are summarized from my book, *Bonds of Loyalty: German-Americans and World War I* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1974).
3. Viereck's *The American Monthly* 11 (September 1919):5. Cf. George Seibel, "German-Americanism," *American Monthly* 25 (March 1932):9 ff.
4. Viereck's *The American Monthly* 11 (October, November, December 1919):42, 76, 107.
5. *German American World* 7 (15 February 1924):224; Rudolf Cronau, *Drei Jahrhunderte Deutschen Lebens in Amerika*, 2d rev. ed. (Berlin: Dietrich Reimer, 1924), p. 661; J. Eiselseimer, *Das Deutschtum in Angloamerika* (Berlin: Deutschen Schutzbund Verlag, n.d.), p. 30; Heinz Kloss, "Deutschamerikanische Querschnitt: Vereinsdeutsche, Nationalsozialisten, Kirchendeutsche," *Die evangelische Diaspora* 16 (1934):170 f.
6. See my more extended treatment of this development in *Bonds of Loyalty*, pp. 314-18. See also James C. Juhnke, *A People of Two Kingdoms: The Political Acculturation of the Kansas Mennonites* (Newton, Kans.: Faith and Life Press, 1975), pp. 113-16; H. Kamphausen, *Geschichte des religiösen Lebens in der Deutschen Evangelischen Synode von Nordamerika* (Saint Louis: Eden Publishing House, 1924), pp. 300-333; Heinz Koss, *Um die Einigung des Deutschamerikanertums: Die Geschichte einer unvollendeten Volksgruppe* (Berlin: Volk und Reich Verlag, 1937), pp. 164-66.
7. Kamphausen, *Geschichte des religiösen Lebens*, p. 313; Alan N. Graebner, "The Acculturation of an Immigrant Church: The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, 1917-1929" (Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, 1965), pp. 83-161.
8. *Amerikanische Turnzeitung* (New Ulm, Minnesota), 1 May 1921, 14 January 1923, 27 May 1923; *American Monthly* 13 (March, May, 1922):15, 85; Kloss, *Um die Einigung*, p. 302 f. See also Noel Iverson, *Germania, U.S.A.* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1966), pp. 32-35, 91-120.
9. *New Yorker Staats-Zeitung*, 22 September 1924.
10. *Ibid.*, 21 December 1920, 6 September 1920; [Paul G. Kreutz], *Ein Gedenkwerk zum Goldenen Jubiläum des Plattdeutschen Volksfest-Verein von New York und Umgebung* (New York: Plattdeutsche Volksfest-Verein, 1925), pp. 174-76.
11. *New Yorker Staats-Zeitung*, 10 November 1920. In the early 1920s, the Plattdeutsche Volksfest-Verein listed eighty-three member organizations. Kreutz, *Gedenkwerk*, pp. 275-80.
12. For examples, see Kreutz, *Gedenkwerk*, pp. 171-80; *History of the Liederkrantz of the City of New York, 1847-1947* (New York: Drechsel Printing Co., 1948), pp. 48-53.
13. Viereck's *The American Monthly* 12 (September 1920): 199; *American Monthly* 13 (August 1921):169, 175; 14 (September 1922):205; Niel M. Johnson, *George Sylvester Viereck: German-American Propagandist* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1972), p. 82; Kloss, *Um die Einigung*, pp. 295-300.
14. *New York Times*, 11, 12 January 1921; *American Monthly* 12 (February 1921): 359 f.
15. See the scathing editorial from the *Cincinnati Freie Presse*, reprinted in English in *German American World* 7 (15 March 1924):281 f.
16. *Steuben News* 11 (May 1939):2-4; Cronau, *Drei Jahrhunderte*, p. 661; "The German-American Element and the Next Election," *Issues of To-Day* 6 (29 September 1923); "The German-American in Politics," *ibid.*, 5 (21 October 1922):4-5.
17. Dr. Franz Koempel, "On the Twentieth Anniversary of the Steuben Society of America," *Steuben News* 11 (May 1939).
18. In addition to numerous articles in *American Monthly*, *Issues of To-Day*, *German American World*, see the *Steuben News*, which began in 1929. Cf. Kloss, *Um die Einigung*, p. 287.

19. *Viereck's The American Monthly* 11 (October 1919, February 1920):42, 181; *American Monthly* 12 (March, April, July, August 1920):4, 46, 133, 165; *New York Times*, 5 September, 17 October 1920; *Literary Digest* 66 (18 September 1920):11-12; Johnson, *Viereck*, pp. 82-87.
20. *Ibid.*, p. 82.
21. Luebke, *Bonds of Loyalty*, pp. 325-28.
22. Johnson, *Viereck*, p. 88.
23. *New York Times*, 11, 12 January 1921.
24. *American Monthly* 12 (February 1921):359 f; 13 (March 1921):9; Johnson, *Viereck*, p. 89; *New York Times*, 15 January, 17 February 1921. Viereck later published a lengthy article defending his role in the affair and included lengthy excerpts from his correspondence with President Harding. See Alexander Harvey, "German-American Unity and the President," *American Monthly* 16 (July 1924):136-43.
25. See the convenient summary of this affair in Johnson, *Viereck*, p. 90 f. Viereck's version appears in *American Monthly* 16 (July 1924):141-43.
26. Viereck assailed the German-language press as early as February 1921, when it became clear that the editors refused to support the Harding visitation. See *American Monthly* 12:357.
27. *American Monthly* 13 (January 1922):344; 14 (April 1922):40-42. Viereck continued his "exposure" of the Ridders in the May issue of *American Monthly* 14:74-76. An extraordinary display of hypocrisy, this article accused the Ridders of being "professional German Americans" who "aim to build up their own prestige and the power of their newspaper at the expense of their fellows" by "shrewdly utilizing every political break, every personal spite and every personal vanity." No one was more intimately acquainted with such behavior than Viereck himself.
28. *American Monthly* 14 (June 1922):104 ff.
29. *Amerikanische Turnzeitung*, 16 September 1923; *New York Times*, 22 October 1923. Viereck applauded the selection of Seibel, whom he described as "just the man to lead the Turnerbund back to its true ideals which had been deserted so ignominiously by its former president, the unspeakable Stempfel." *American Monthly* 15 (September 1923):213. See also *ibid.*, 15 (August 1923):183.
30. *New Yorker Staats-Zeitung*, 16 September 1924.
31. *German American World* 7 (1 July 1924):440.
32. *New Yorker Staats-Zeitung*, 16, 22 September; 9, 14, 15 October 1924.
33. *Ibid.*, 16 September 1924.
34. "The Potentiality of 'the German Vote,'" *German American World* 7 (1 February 1924):199-200.
35. *American Monthly* 16 (September 1924):225. See also *ibid.*, 16 (October 1924):250.
36. *New York Times*, 15, 30, 31 August; 11, 21, 22 September; 1, 5, 9, 10, 13, 22, 23, 25, 26 October 1924.
37. "Voice of the German Language Press," *German American World* 7 (1924):442-43, 473, 495-96, 547.
38. Reprinted in translation in *German American World* 7 (15 March 1924):280-81.
39. *American Monthly* 16 (October 1924):255.
40. *German American World* 7 (1 April 1924):298.
41. *American Monthly* 16 (June, July, August, December 1924):105, 136-43, 158, 311.
42. *New Yorker Staats-Zeitung*, 17 October 1924; 24 October 1924.
43. *American Monthly* 16 (December 1924):312, 318. See also Alexander Harvey, "The German-Americans and the LaFollette Vote," *ibid.*, pp. 318-19, 330.
44. Senator Robert Wagner of New York, who was born in Germany, never ran as a German-American candidate and carefully avoided identification with German-American political organizations, save the German-American Roland Society, which was staunchly loyal to the Democratic party.
45. *New York Times*, 22 October 1928; *New Yorker Staats-Zeitung*, 23, 25 October

1928; Richard Bartholdt, *From Steerage to Congress* (Philadelphia: Dorrance, 1930), p. 422. See also Sander Diamond, *The Nazi Movement in the United States, 1924–1941* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1974), p. 76 ff.

46. *Der Christliche Apologete* 90 (14 November 1928):1083; Douglas C. Stange, "Al Smith and the Republican Party at Prayer: The Lutheran Vote—1928," *Review of Politics* 32 (July 1970):347–64.

47. *New Yorker Staats-Zeitung*, 26 October 1928; *New York Times*, 25 October 1928.

48. Mencken, "Die Deutsch-Amerikaner," p. 490; Kloss, *Um die Einigung*, p. 288; *New York Times*, 8, 14, 17, 19, 20 October 1928; *Steuben News* 1 (November 1928):4.

49. *American Monthly* 23 (May, June, July 1930).

50. For an impassioned plea for the cultural strategy and a rejection of ethnic political action by a distinguished German-American academician, see Kuno Francke, *Deutsche Arbeit in Amerika* (Leipzig: Felix Meiner, 1930), p. 91.

51. Deutschamerikanischen Bürgerbund von Nebraska, *Protokoll der fünften Jahres-Versammlung* (Omaha, December 1931), pp. 17–19; Kloss, "Deutschamerikanische Querschnitt," p. 167; *Steuben News* 4 (November 1931):1, 4; 4 (December 1931):2.

52. *Erster National-Kongress der Amerikaner Deutschen Stammes. Sitzungsberichte und Erläuterungen. New York City, October 27–30, 1932* (New York: Deutsch-Amerikanische Konferenz von Gross-New York und Umgebung, n.d.). See also *New York Times*, 28, 29, 30 October 1932.

53. Eugene E. Doll, *Twenty-five Years of Service, 1930–1955* (Philadelphia: Carl Schurz Memorial Foundation, n.d.), pp. 3–9; *American Monthly* 23 (November 1930):34 f.; *American-German Review* 1 (September 1934):56.

54. *Steuben News* 6 (November 1933):2; Kloss, "Deutschamerikanische Querschnitt," p. 168.

55. George Seibel, "German-Americanism," *American Monthly* 25 (March 1932):10, 14; Oscar Illing, "The Americans of German Blood, II," *American Monthly* 23 (June 1930):44; Kloss, "Deutschamerikanische Querschnitt," p. 173.

56. *Erster National-Kongress*, p. 50 ff.

57. Diamond, *Nazi Movement*, pp. 146, 169; Klaus Kipphan, *Deutsche Propaganda in den Vereinigten Staaten, 1933–1941* (Heidelberg: Carl Winter Universitätsverlag, 1971), pp. 51–55; O. John Rogge, *The Official German Report* (New York and London: Thomas Yoseloff, 1961), p. 129.

58. In addition to the books by Diamond and Kipphan, see Leland B. Bell, *In Hitler's Shadow: The Anatomy of American Nazism* (Port Washington: Kennikat, 1973); Alton Frye, *Nazi Germany and the American Hemisphere, 1933–1941* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1967); and Arthur L. Smith, Jr., *The Deutschtum of Nazi Germany and the United States* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1965).

59. *Steuben News* 6 (July 1934): 3; *Die Abendschule* (Saint Louis) 79 (4 May 1933):709; *ibid.*, 80 (14 June 1934):796 f.

60. See several articles in *Der Christliche Apologete* (Methodist) 101 (1939), but especially "Verfolgung und Ausweisung der Juden" by John C. Guenther, p. 57 f. For other examples, see *Kirchenzeitung* (Reformed) 103 (11 January 1933):6; *ibid.*, 108 (17 May 1938):16; *Kirchenblatt* (American Lutheran), 12 August 1939, p. 9; *ibid.*, 26 August 1939, p. 3; *Die Abendschule* 80 (21 September 1933):167; and *ibid.* (14 December 1933):371.

61. *New York Times*, 4, 8–11 April 1938; *New Yorker Staats-Zeitung*, 16 September 1939; *Sonntagsblatt* [New York] *Staats-Zeitung und Herold*, 15 September 1940; Robert E. Cazden, *German Exile Literature in America 1933–1950* (Chicago: American Library Association, 1970), pp. 42, 44.

62. Kipphan, *Deutsche Propaganda*, p. 93. A detailed account of the fight is given in *Steuben News* 11 (October 1938):3, 5, and 7; see also *ibid.*, June 1938, p. 8; August 1938, p. 3; and September 1938, p. 3.

63. *Kirchenzeitung* 108 (22 February 1938): 11; *ibid.* (12 April 1938):14–15; *ibid.* (3 May 1938):14; *ibid.* (6 December 1938):15; *Kirchenblatt* 81 (19 March 1938):6; *ibid.* (16 April 1938):11; *Der Christliche Apologete* 101 (4 January 1939); *New York*

Times, 3, 9 October, 23 November 1938; Dieter Cunz, *The Maryland Germans, A History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1948), pp. 414, 437; Johnson, *Viereck*, p. 193; Diamond, *Nazi Movement*, pp. 276-77.

64. "Foreign-language Press: 1047 Immigrant Newspapers," *Fortune* 22 (November 1940):92-93. Even after *Kristellnacht*, the Ridders' *New Yorker Staats-Zeitung* refrained from strong criticism of Hitlerism.

65. *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, reprinted in *American Turner*, 13 August 1939, p. 6.

66. *Die Vereinswelt: Wegweiser der Deutschamerikaner, Sonderbeilage New Yorker Staats-Zeitung und Herold*, 13 May 1973. See especially the article by the publisher Erwin Single, "Aus der Werkstatt der Verleger," p. 3.

67. *Die Vereinswelt*, 1954, p. 3; *Der Deutsch-Amerikaner: D.A.N.K. Mitteilungen* 8 (January 1966):2; 8 (April 1966):9; 8 (August 1966):6; 8 (October 1966):3.

68. *Die Vereinswelt*, 1973; *Deutsch-Amerikanische Jahreskalender des Staates Ohio*, 1963 (Cleveland: Ernst Printing and Calendar Co., [1962]); 78. *Jahres-Bericht und Mitglieder-Verzeichnis, Schwaben-Verein Chicago* (1956); 20. *Jahre-Vereinigung der Donauschwaben von Chicago* (1973); see especially the article by Christ N. Herr, "Die Vereinigung der Donauschwaben in Chicago: Entstehung und Werdegang," pp. 17-35.