

VOLUME ONE ARECKONING

CHAPTER 1: MY HOME

To-day I consider it a good omen that Destiny appointed Braunau-on-the-Inn to be my birthplace, for that little town is situated just on the frontier between those two German States, the reunion of which seems, at least to us of the younger generation, a task to which we should devote our lives, and in the pursuit of which every possible means should be employed.

German-Austria must be restored to the great German Fatherland, and not on economic grounds. Even if the union were a matter of economic indifference, and even if it were to be disadvantageous from the economic standpoint, it still ought to take place. People of the same blood should be in the same Reich.

The German people will have no right to engage in a colonial policy until they have brought all their children together in one State. When the territory of the Reich embraces all Germans and proves incapable of assuring them a livelihood, only then can the moral right arise, from the need of the people, to acquire foreign territory. The plough is then the sword, and the tears of war will produce the daily bread for the generations to come.

For this reason the little frontier town appeared to me as the symbol of a great task, but in another respect it teaches us a lesson that is applicable to our day. Over a hundred years ago this sequestered spot was the scene of a tragic calamity which affected the whole German nation and will be remembered for ever, at least in the annals of German history.

At the time of our Fatherland's deepest humiliation, a Nürnberg bookseller, Johannes Palm, an uncompromising nationalist and an enemy of the French, was put to death here because he had loved Germany even in her misfortune. He obstinately refused to disclose the names of his associates, or rather the principals who were chiefly responsible for the affair, just as Leo Schlageter did.

The former, like the latter, was denounced to the French by a government official, a director of police from Augsburg who won ignoble renown on that occasion and set the example which was to be copied at a later date by the German officials of the Reich under Herr Severing's regime.

In this little town on the Inn, hallowed by the memory of a German

martyr a town that was Bavarian by blood but under the rule of the Austrian State, my parents were domiciled towards the end of the last century. My father was a civil servant who fulfilled his duties very conscientiously.

My mother looked after the household and lovingly devoted herself to the care of her children of that period I have not retained many memories, because after a few years my father had to leave that frontier town which I had come to love so much and take up a new post farther down the Inn valley, at Passau, therefore, actually in Germany itself.

In those days it was the usual lot of an Austrian civil servant to be transferred periodically from one post to another. Not long after coming to Passau my father was transferred to Linz, and while there he retired to live on his pension, but this did not mean that the old gentleman would now rest from his labours.

He was the son of a poor cottager, and while still a boy he grew restless and left home. When he was barely thirteen years old he buckled on his satchel and set forth from his native country parish. Despite the dissuasion of villagers who could speak from 'experience', he went to Vienna to learn a trade there. This was in the fifties of last century.

It was a sore trial, that of deciding to leave home and face the unknown, with three gulden in his pocket but when the boy of thirteen was a lad of seventeen and had passed his apprenticeship examination as a craftsman, he was not content. On the contrary, the persistent economic depression of that period and the constant want and misery strengthened his resolution to give up working at a trade and strive for 'something higher.'

As a boy it had seemed to him that the position of the parish priest in his native village was the highest in the scale of human attainment, but now that the big city had enlarged his outlook the young man looked up to the dignity of a state official as the highest of all. With the tenacity of one whom misery and trouble had already made old when only half-way through his youth, the young man of seventeen obstinately set out on his new project and stuck to it until he won through.

He became a civil servant. He was about twenty-three years old, I think, when he succeeded in making himself what he had resolved to become. Thus he was able to keep, the vow he had made as a poor boy, not to return to his native village until he was 'somebody.' He had gained his end, but in the

village there was nobody who remembered him as a little boy, and the village itself had become strange to him.

Now at last, when he was fifty-six years old, he gave up his active career, but he could not bear to be idle for a single day. On the outskirts of the small market-town of Lambach in Upper Austria he bought a farm and tilled it himself. Thus, at the end of a long and hard-working career, he returned to the life which his father had led.

It was at this period that I first began to have ideals of my own. I spent a good deal of time scampering about in the open, on the long road from school, and mixing with some of the roughest of the boys, which caused my mother many anxious moments. All this tended to make me something quite the reverse of a stay-at-home.

I gave scarcely any serious thought to the question of choosing a vocation in life, but I was certainly quite out of sympathy with the kind of career which my father had followed. I think that an inborn talent for speaking now began to develop and take shape during the more or less strenuous arguments which I used to have with my comrades.

I had become a juvenile ringleader who learned well and easily at school, but was rather difficult to manage. In my free time I practised singing in the choir of the monastery church at Lambach, and thus it happened that I was placed in a very favourable position to be emotionally impressed again and again by the magnificent splendour of ecclesiastical ceremonial.

What could be more natural for me than to look upon the abbot as representing the highest human ideal worth striving for, just as the position of the humble village priest had appeared so to my father in his own boyhood days?

At least that was my idea for a while, but the childish disputes I had with my father did not lead him to appreciate his son's oratorical gifts in such a way as to see in them a favourable promise for such a career, and so he naturally could not understand the boyish ideas I had in my head at that time. This contradiction in my character made him feel somewhat anxious.

As a matter of fact, that transitory yearning after such a vocation soon gave way to hopes that were better suited to my temperament. Browsing among my father's books, I chanced to come across some publications that dealt with

military subjects. One of these publications was a popular history of the Franco-German War of 1870–71.

It consisted of two volumes of art illustrated periodical dating from those years. These became my favourite reading. In a little while that great and heroic conflict began to occupy my mind, and from that time onwards I became more and more enthusiastic about everything that was in any way connected with war or military affairs.

The story of the Franco-German War had a special significance for me on other grounds also. For the first time, and as yet only in quite a vague way, the question began to present itself: Is there a difference—and if there be, what is it—between the Germans who fought that war, and the other Germans?

Why did not Austria also take part in it? Why did not my father and all the others fight in that struggle? Are we not the same as the other Germans? Do we not all belong together?

That was the first time that this problem began to agitate my small brain, and from the replies that were given to the questions which I asked very tentatively, I was forced to accept the fact, though with a secret envy, that not all Germans had the good luck to belong to Bismarck's Reich. This was something that I could not understand.

It was decided that I should study. Considering my character as a whole, and especially my temperament, my father decided that the classical subjects studied at the Gymnasium were not suited to my natural talents, he thought that the *Realschule* would suit me better.

My obvious talent for drawing confirmed him in that view, for in his opinion, drawing was a subject too much neglected in the Austrian Gymnasium. Probably also the memory of the hard road which he himself had travelled contributed to make him look upon classical studies as unpractical and accordingly to set little value on them.

At the back of his mind he had the idea that his son should also become a government official. Indeed he had decided on that career for me. The difficulties with which he had had to contend in making his own career led him to overestimate what he had achieved, because this was exclusively the result of his own indefatigable industry and energy.

The characteristic pride of the self-made man caused him to cherish the

idea that his son should follow the same calling and if possible rise to a higher position in it. Moreover, this idea was strengthened by the consideration that the results of his own life's industry had placed him in a position to facilitate his son's advancement in the same profession.

He was simply incapable of imagining that I might reject what had meant everything in life to him. My father's decision was simple, definite, clear and in his eyes, it was something to be taken for granted.

A man of such a nature who had become an autocrat by reason of his own hard struggle for existence, could not think of allowing 'inexperienced' and irresponsible young people to choose their own careers.

To act in such a way, where the future of his own son was concerned, would have been a grave and reprehensible weakness in the exercise 'of parental authority and responsibility, something utterly incompatible with his characteristic sense of duty.' Still, he did not have his way.

For the first time in my life (I was then eleven years old) I felt myself forced into open opposition. No matter how hard and determined my father might be about putting his own plans and opinions into effect, his son was no less obstinate in refusing to accept ideas on which he set little or no value. I would not become a civil servant.

No amount of persuasion and no amount of 'grave' warnings could break down that opposition. I would not become a government official, not on any account.

All the attempts which my father made to arouse in me a love or liking for that profession, by picturing his own career for me, had only the opposite effect. It nauseated me to think that one day I might be fettered to an office stool, that I could not dispose of my own time, but would be forced to spend the whole of my life filling out forms.

One can imagine what kind of thoughts such a prospect awakened in the mind of a boy who was by no means what is called a 'good boy' in the current sense of that term. The ease with which I learned my lessons made it possible for me to spend, far more time in the open air than at home.

To-day, when my political opponents pry into my life, as far back as the days of my boyhood, with diligent scrutiny so as finally to be able to prove what disreputable tricks this Hitler was, accustomed to play in his young day, I

thank Heaven that I can look back on those happy days and find the memory of them helpful.

The fields and the woods were then the terrain on which all disputes were fought out. Even attendance at the *Realschule* could not alter my way of spending my time. But I had now another battle to fight.

So long as the paternal plan to make me a state functionary contradicted my own inclinations only in the abstract, the conflict was easy to bear. I could be discreet about expressing my person it views and thus avoid constantly recurrent disputes.

My own resolution not to become a government official was sufficient for the time being to put my mind completely at rest. I held on to that resolution inexorably.

But the situation became more difficult once I had a positive plan of my own which I could present to my father as a counter-suggestion. This happened when I was twelve years old. How it came about I cannot exactly say now, but one day it became clear to me that I wanted to be a painter—I mean an artist.

That I had an aptitude for drawing was an admitted fact. It was even one of the reasons why my father had sent me to the *Realschule*; but he had never thought of having that talent developed so that I could take up painting as a professional career. Quite the contrary.

When, as a result of my renewed refusal to comply with his favourite plan, my father asked me for the first time what I myself really wished to be, the resolution that I had already formed expressed itself almost automatically. For a while my father was speechless.

“A painter? An artist?” he exclaimed.

He wondered whether I was in a sound state of mind. He thought that he might not have caught my words rightly, or that he had misunderstood what I meant, but when I had explained my ideas to him and he saw how seriously I took them, he opposed them with his characteristic energy. His decision was exceedingly simple and could not be deflected from its course by any consideration of what my own natural qualifications really were.

“Artist! Not as long as I live, never.” As the son had inherited some of the father’s obstinacy, along with other qualities, his reply was equally

energetic, but, of course, opposed to his, and so the matter stood. My father would not abandon his 'Never,' and I became all the more determined in my 'Nevertheless.'

Naturally the resulting situation was not pleasant. The old gentleman was embittered and indeed so was I, although I really loved him. My father forbade me to entertain any hopes of taking up painting as a profession. I went a step further and declared that I would not study anything else. With such declarations the situation became still more strained, so that the old gentleman decided to assert his parental authority at all costs.

This led me to take refuge in silence, but I put my threat into execution. I thought that, once it became clear to my father that I was making no progress at the *Realschule*, he would be forced to allow me to follow the career I had dreamed of.

I do not know whether I calculated rightly or not. Certainly my failure to make progress became apparent in the school. I studied just those subjects that appealed to me, especially those which I thought might be of advantage to me later on as a painter. What did not appear to have any importance from this point of view, or what did not otherwise appeal to me, I completely neglected.

My school reports of that time were always in the extremes of good or bad, according to the subject and the interest it had for me. In one column the remark was 'very good' or 'excellent, in another 'average' or even 'below average.' By far my best subjects were geography and general history. These were my two favourite subjects, and I was top of the class in them.

When I look back over so many years and try to judge the results of that experience I find two very significant facts standing out clearly before my mind. Firstly, I became a nationalist. Secondly, I learned to understand and grasp the true meaning of history.

The old Austria was a multi-national State. In those days at least, the citizens of the German Reich, taken all in all, could not understand what that fact meant in the everyday life of the individuals within such a State.

After the magnificent triumphant march of the victorious armies in the Franco-German War the Germans in the Reich became steadily more and more estranged from the Germans beyond their frontiers, partly because they did not deign to appreciate those other Germans at their, true value or simply because

they were incapable of doing so. In thinking of Austria, they were prone to confuse the decadent dynasty and the people which was essentially very sound.

The Germans in the Reich did not realise that if the Germans in Austria had not been of the best racial stock they could never have given the stamp of their own character to an Empire of fifty-two millions, so definitely that in Germany itself the idea arose—though quite erroneously—that Austria was a German State.

That was an error which had dire consequences; but all the same it was a magnificent testimony to the character of the ten million Germans in the *Ostmark*. Only very few Germans in the Reich itself had an idea of the bitter struggle which those Eastern Germans had to carry on daily for the preservation of their German language, their German schools and their German character.

Only to-day, when a tragic fate has wrested several millions of our kinsfolk from the Reich and has forced them to live under the rule of the stranger, dreaming of that common fatherland towards which all their yearnings are directed and struggling to uphold at least the sacred right of using their mother tongue—only now have the wider circles of the German population come to realise what it means to have to fight for the traditions of one's race.

So at last, perhaps there are people here and there who can assess the greatness of that German spirit which animated the old *Ostmark* and enabled those people, left entirely dependent on their own resources, to defend the Reich against the Orient for several centuries and subsequently to hold the frontiers of the German language by means of a guerilla warfare of attrition, at a time when the German Reich was sedulously cultivating an interest in colonies but not in its own flesh and blood at its very threshold.

What has happened always and everywhere, in every kind of struggle, happened also in the language fight which was carried on in the old Austria. There were three groups the fighters, those who were luke-warm, and the traitors.

This sifting process began even in the schools and it is worth noting that the struggle for the language was waged perhaps in its bitterest form around the school, because this was the nursery where the seeds had to be tended which were to spring up and form the future generation.

The tactical objective of the fight was the winning over of the child, and it was to the child that the first rallying cry was addressed, "German boy, do not forget that you are a German," and "Remember, little girl, that one day you must be a German mother."

Those who know something of the juvenile spirit can understand how youth will always lend a ready ear to such a rallying cry. In many ways the young people led the struggle, fighting in their own manner and with their own weapons. They refused to sing non-German songs.

The greater the efforts made to win them away from their German allegiance, the more they exalted the glory of their German heroes. They stinted themselves in buying sweetmeats, so that they might spare their pennies to help the war fund of their elders.

They were incredibly alert to the significance of what the non-German teachers said and they contradicted in unison. They wore the forbidden emblems of their own nation and were happy when penalized, or even physically punished. In their own way, they faithfully mirrored their elders, and often their attitude was finer and more sincere.

Thus it was that at a comparatively early age I took part in the struggle which the nationalities were waging against one another in the old Austria. When collections were made for the youth Mark German League and the School League we wore cornflowers and black-red-gold colours to express our loyalty. We greeted one another with *Heil!* and instead of the Austrian anthem we sang our own *Deutschland uber Alles*, despite warnings and penalties.

Thus the youth was being educated politically, at a time when the citizens of a so-called national State for the most part knew little of their own nationality except the language.

Of course, I did not belong to the luke-warm section. Within a little while I had become an ardent 'German National,' which had a different meaning from the party significance attached to that term to-day.

I developed very rapidly in the nationalist direction, and by the time I was fifteen years old, I had come to understand the distinction between dynastic patriotism and *völkisch* nationalism, my sympathies being entirely in favour of the latter even in those days.

Such a preference may not perhaps be clearly intelligible to those who have never taken the trouble to study the internal conditions that prevailed in Austria under the Habsburg monarchy.

In Austria it was world-history as taught in schools that served to sow the seeds of this development, for Austrian history, as such, is practically non-existent.

The fate of this State was closely bound up with the existence and development of Germany as a whole, so that a division of history into German history and Austrian history is practically inconceivable. And indeed it was only when the German people came to be divided between two States that this division began to make German history.

The insignia of a former imperial sovereignty which were still preserved in Vienna appeared to act as a magic guarantee of an everlasting bond of union.

When the Habsburg State crumbled to pieces in 1918 the Austrian Germans instinctively raised an outcry for union with their German mother-country. That was the voice of unanimous yearning in the hearts of the whole people for a return to the unforgotten home of their fathers.

But such a general yearning could not be explained except by the historical training through which the individual Austrian Germans had passed. It was a spring that never dried up. Especially in times of distraction and forgetfulness its quiet voice was a reminder of the past, bidding the people to look beyond the mere well-being of the moment to a new future.

The teaching of universal history in what are called the higher grade schools is still very unsatisfactory.

Few teachers realise that the purpose of teaching history is not the memorizing of some dates and facts, that it does not matter whether a boy knows the exact date of a battle or the birthday of some marshal or other, nor when the crown of his fathers was placed on the brow of some insignificant monarch. That is not what matters.

To study history means to search for and discover the forces that are the causes of those results which appear before our eyes as historical events. The art of reading and studying consists in remembering the essentials and forgetting what is inessential.

Probably my whole future life was determined by the fact that I had a teacher of history who understood, as few others understand, how to make this viewpoint prevail in teaching and in examining. This teacher was Dr. Leopold Poetsch, of the *Realschule* at Linz. He was the ideal personification of the qualities necessary to a teacher of history in the sense I have mentioned above.

An elderly gentleman with a decisive manner but a kindly heart, he was a very attractive speaker and, was able to inspire us with his own enthusiasm. Even to-day I cannot recall without emotion that venerable personality whose enthusiastic exposition of history so often made us entirely forget the present and allow ourselves to be transported as if by magic into the past.

He penetrated through the dim mist of thousands of years and transformed the historical memory of the dead, past into a living reality. When we listened to him we became afire with enthusiasm and we were sometimes moved even to tears.

It was still more fortunate that this master was able not only to illustrate the past by examples from the present, but from the past, he was also able to draw a lesson for the present.

He understood better than any other the everyday problems that were then agitating our minds. The national fervour which we felt in our own small way was utilised by him as an instrument of our education, inasmuch as he often appealed to our national sense of honour, for in that way he maintained order and held our attention much more easily than he could have done by any other means. It was because I had such a master that history became my favourite subject. As a natural consequence, but without the conscious connivance of my teacher, I then and there became a young rebel.

But who could have studied German history under such a teacher and not become an enemy of that State whose rulers exercised such, a disastrous influence on the destinies of the German nation?

Finally, how could one remain a faithful subject of the House of Habsburg, whose past history and present conduct proved it to be ready, ever and always, to betray the interests of the German people for the sake of paltry personal interests? Did not we, as youngsters, fully realise that the House of Habsburg did not, and could not, have any love for us Germans?

What history taught us about the policy followed by the House of

Habsburg was corroborated by our own everyday experiences. In the north and in the south the poison of foreign races was eating into the body of our people, and even Vienna was steadily becoming more and more a non-German city. The 'Imperial House' favoured the Czechs on every possible occasion.

Indeed, it was the hand of the goddess of eternal justice and inexorable retribution that caused the most deadly enemy of Germanism in Austria, the Archduke Franz Ferdinand, to fall by the very bullets which he himself had helped to cast. He was the prime mover in the work, begun by the ruling classes, of turning Austria into a Slav State.

The burdens laid on the shoulders of the German people were enormous and the sacrifices of money and blood which they had to make were incredibly heavy. Yet anybody who was not quite blind must have seen that it was all in vain.

What affected us most bitterly was the consciousness of the fact that this whole system was morally sanctioned by the alliance with Germany, whereby the slow extirpation of Germanism in the old Austrian Monarchy seemed in some way to be more or less countenanced by Germany herself.

Habsburg hypocrisy, which endeavoured outwardly to make the people believe that Austria still remained a German State, increased the feeling of hatred against the Imperial House and at the same time aroused a spirit of rebellion and contempt.

Only in the German Reich itself did those who were then its rulers fail to understand what all this meant. As if struck blind, they stood beside a corpse and in the very symptoms of decomposition they believed that they recognised the signs of renewed vitality. In that unhappy alliance between the young German Empire and the illusory Austrian State lay the germ of the World War and also of the final collapse.

In subsequent passages of this book I shall go to the root of this problem. Suffice it here to say that in the very early years of my youth I came to certain conclusions which I have never abandoned, Indeed I became more profoundly convinced of them as the years passed.

They were, firstly, that the dissolution of the Austrian Empire was a preliminary condition for the safeguarding of German nationality and culture; further, that national feeling is by no means identical with dynastic patriotism;

and, above all, that the House of Habsburg was destined to bring misfortune on the German nation. As a logical consequence of these convictions, there arose in me a feeling of intense love for my German-Austrian home and a profound hatred for the Austrian State.

The way of looking at history which was developed in me through my study of history at school never left me afterwards. World-history became more and more an inexhaustible source for the understanding of contemporary historical events, which means politics. Therefore, I would not 'learn' history, but let history teach me.

A precocious revolutionary in politics, I was no less a precocious revolutionary in art. At that time, the provincial capital of Upper Austria had a theatre which, relatively speaking, was not bad. Almost everything was produced there.

When I was twelve years old I saw a performance of *Wilhelm Tell* there. That was my first experience of the theatre. Some months later I attended a performance of *Lohengrin*, the first opera I had ever heard. I was fascinated at once.

My youthful enthusiasm for the Bayreuth Master knew no bounds. Again and again I was drawn to hear his operas; and to-day I consider it a great piece of luck that these modest productions in the little provincial city prepared the way and made it possible for me to appreciate better productions later on.

All this helped to intensify my profound aversion for the career that my father had chosen for me, and this dislike became especially strong as the rough corners of youthful boorishness were worn down, a process which, in my case, was fraught with a good deal of pain.

I became more and more convinced that I should never be happy as a government official, and now that the *Realschule* had recognised and acknowledged my aptitude for drawing, my own resolution became all the stronger.

Imprecations and threats had no longer any power to change it. I wanted to become a painter and no power on earth could force me to become a civil servant. The only peculiar feature of the situation now was that as I grew bigger I became more and more interested in architecture.

I considered this fact as a natural complement of my talent for painting

and I rejoiced inwardly that the sphere of my artistic interests was thus enlarged. I had no notion that one day it would have to be otherwise.

The question of my career was decided much sooner than I could have foreseen. When I was in my thirteenth year my father was suddenly taken from us. He was still in robust health when a stroke of apoplexy painlessly ended his earthly sojourn and left us all deeply bereaved.

His most ardent longing was to be able to help his son to advance in a career and thus save him from the harsh ordeal that he himself had had to undergo, but it appeared then as if that longing were in vain. And yet, though he himself was not conscious of it, he had sown the seeds of a future which neither of us foresaw at that time.

At first nothing was changed outwardly. My mother felt it her duty to continue my education in accordance with my father's wishes, which meant that she would have me study for the civil service. For my own part, I was even more firmly determined than ever before that in no circumstances would I become a government official.

The curriculum and teaching methods followed in the higher grade school were so far removed from my ideals that I became profoundly indifferent. Illness suddenly came to my assistance. Within a few weeks it decided my future and put an end to the long-standing family conflict.

My lungs became so seriously affected that the doctor advised my mother very strongly not in any circumstances to allow me to take up a career which would necessitate working in an office. He ordered that I should give up attending the *Realschule*, for a year at least.

What I had secretly desired for such a long time, and had persistently fought for, now suddenly became reality without effort on my part. Influenced by my illness, my mother agreed that I should leave the *Realschule* and attend the Academy.

Those were happy days, which appeared to me almost like a dream; and they were doomed to remain only a dream. Two years later my mother's death put a brutal end to all my fine projects. She succumbed to a long and painful illness which, from the very beginning, permitted little hope of recovery.

Though expected, her death came as a terrible blow to me. I respected my father, but I loved my mother.

Poverty and stern reality forced me to decide promptly. The meagre resources of the family had been almost entirely used up through my mother's severe illness. The allowance which came to me as an orphan was not enough for the bare necessities of life.

Somehow or other, I would have to earn my own bread. With my clothes and linen packed in a valise and with an indomitable resolution in my heart, I left for Vienna. I hoped to forestall Fate, as my father had done fifty years before, I was determined to become 'somebody' but certainly not a civil servant.

