

OTTO VON CORVIN -- AN APPRAISAL OF THE MAN
AND HIS WORKS

by

Myron Hutzler Vent

Thesis submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School
of the University of Maryland in partial
fulfillment of the requirements for the
degree of Doctor of Philosophy

1950

UMI Number: DP71154

All rights reserved

INFORMATION TO ALL USERS

The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the copy submitted.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.



UMI DP71154

Published by ProQuest LLC (2015). Copyright in the Dissertation held by the Author.

Microform Edition © ProQuest LLC.

All rights reserved. This work is protected against unauthorized copying under Title 17, United States Code



ProQuest LLC.
789 East Eisenhower Parkway
P.O. Box 1346
Ann Arbor, MI 48106 - 1346

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
Preface	1
Part I. Biographical Background	1
Part II. The Works of Otto von Corvin	27
Chapter 1. Religious Polemics	27
Chapter 2. Histories	37
Chapter 3. Memoirs, Letters, Biography	51
Chapter 4. Miscellaneous	103
Part III. Appraisal	109
Chapter 1. Corvin as a Historian	109
Chapter 2. Corvin as a Literary Figure	122
Chapter 3. Corvin as a Journalist	128
Chapter 4. Corvin and the Revolution of 1848-49	132
Chapter 5. Corvin and America	158
Chapter 6. Corvin the Man	182
Conclusion	197
APPENDIX	
Abbreviations	199
A List of Works of Otto von Corvin	200
Corvin's Plan for Recruiting Germans for the Union Army ..	204
Selected Bibliography	206

PREFACE

The investigation and study of the life and works of Otto von Corvin it is felt by the author makes a definite contribution in the direction of research in the fields of German-American relations, activities of the Forty-eighters in America, and the German Revolution of 1848. Outside of the short evaluation of Corvin's life and works by Dr. Ludwig Fraenkel, to be found in the Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie, no serious attempt has been made to estimate the over-all effectiveness of this man and his writings. To be sure, the sketch by Dr. Fraenkel is concise and well-written, but it presents Corvin from a German point of view. By that is meant that little reference is made to the extent and character of Corvin's connections with the United States. Besides, it is of little value in clearing away the haze of suspicion that has gradually settled down over his name because of his widely published, infamous Flaflenspiessel and the part he played in the surrender of the fortress of Rastatt at the end of the Revolution of 1848.

The Flaflenspiessel, translated into three major languages and the medium through which he is chiefly known, was written for a commendable purpose, namely, to aid the German-Catholic movement of the 1840's in its struggle with Rome. It has, however, been picked up out of its historical context by almost all antifederal or anti-Catholic propagandists since then who have used it to further their own ends. If it has not already been translated into Russian, it certainly soon will be. It is to be questioned, however, if the Russians, who will

place a stamp of authority on Corvin's verdict concerning the Roman Catholic Church, will do likewise with his verdict concerning America.

Reluctance to accept Corvin's writings as a whole has been met with in the historical field, where some men give credence to certain parts of his books but doubt those parts which do not fit into their concept of the situation. To be sure one must determine whether the statements under consideration are Corvin's own or borrowings from another source, and this is not always easy to do. The readiness, however, to accept certain portions of his works and reject others is not fair to a man who endeavored to write with consistent integrity.

Much less justifiable is the tendency of others to repudiate his writings in whole or in part because they are suspicious of him or are repelled by certain aspects of his personality. The author is well aware of Corvin's personal shortcomings, though he feels they are few and are well outweighed by his virtues. Granted that Corvin's self-adulation at times reached colossal proportions, it did not prevent his finding good in his fellow men, and granted that an element of cheap "muckraking" appears in some of his works, it still does not restrain him from expressing high and lofty sentiments in others. The author does not feel that he would have selected Corvin for a boon companion, but he cannot help admiring the man who wrote: "He who cannot credit others with greatness and nobility contains none of these qualities in himself."

Besides aiding in the clarification of Corvin's character and his writings, it is to be hoped this work will open up an additional source of information to those doing research in the Civil War period. Corvin's

knowledge of military science and tactics was not inconsiderable and should be taken into account by those making an analysis of Northern campaigns. Just as important in this regard are his judgments of leaders in military and governmental circles. For those desiring a clearer picture of American social life during the same period, his descriptions are especially helpful, since they present the point of view of an outside observer, who was able to see salient characteristics more easily and regard the scene before him more clearly than those who took part in it.

The author by no means has the feeling that he has said all there is to say about Corvin, but he hopes he has covered sufficiently those features of Corvin's life and writings which may be of interest to American historians.

An expression of deepest gratitude is extended Dr. Dieter Gutz for his consistent helpfulness to the author, Dr. Richard H. Bauer for indicating appropriate bibliographical sources, Dr. Augustus J. Fahl, resident dean of the University of Maryland Foreign Study Center, Auerich, Switzerland for securing a copy of Midas, Dr. A. E. Tucker for aid, advice, and a critical reading, Professor Doctor Werner Haef of the Historisches Seminar of the University of Bern, for contributing an important item of research, and Oberstudiendirektor Johannes Wicht of Wiesbaden, Germany, for the procurement of necessary books unavailable in the United States, as well as to his son, Henning, for the receipt of information requiring research at Frankfurt/Main and at the University of Mayence.

College Park, Maryland
July 1950

PART I

BIOGRAPHICAL BACKGROUND

Otto von Corvin-Wiersbitzki was a descendant of the Corvin family that had its origins in Hungary. Among his illustrious ancestors was Johann Corvin Hunyadi, Hungary's great hero who defeated the Turks at Belgrade in 1456. The branch of the family from which Corvin sprang moved at an early period to Poland and later, because of its adherence to the Lutheran religion, to East Prussia, where the name of the locality wierzba was included in the family name to make it Corvin-Wiersbicki or Wiersbitzki.¹

Corvin himself was born in Gumbinnen, October 12, 1812, as the youngest of four children. His early life there forms an interesting chapter or two in his memoirs with accounts of hunting forays, travels, escapades, and life on an East Prussian landed estate. While he was still very young, his mother, nee Mandel, divorced his father and married Dr. Bernhard Thiersch, a secondary school teacher (Studienrat) of considerable ability. This step on the part of his mother no doubt had a far-reaching influence on Corvin's later life.

His father's house offered little that would have encouraged the development of a boy into a man of letters. Typical of many homes of the small landed nobility, the house contained no library. The few

¹wierzba, Polish for meadow. From this Corvin derived the pseudonym Otto von der Weiden under which name he published both Fassan and Die Hunyaden. See Otto von Corvin, Ein Leben voller Abenteuer, Frankfurter Societäts-Druckerei, Frankfurt/Main: 1924, p. 26. Hereafter referred to as Ein Leben.

books that were available pertained either to hunting or the care of horses. An intellectual milieu was completely lacking.

At Lyk, on the other hand, in the Masurian lake region, where Corvin remained for a period with his mother and stepfather while attending school (Gymnasium), he had ample opportunity to develop a taste for good literature. Perhaps more important than the Gymnasium itself was the extensive library of his stepfather. There the young Corvin read until "his head smoked", and there he became acquainted with the best German writers -- above all, Schiller, who, though he is only mentioned in passing, had considerable influence on an impressionable lad. At the home of his stepfather he also made his first acquaintance with a flesh-and-blood poet, the nature poet Hiller. Nor did his stepfather's success in composing both music and poetry go unnoticed. The years at Lyk laid the foundation on which Corvin was later to build.

In the spring of 1821 Corvin returned to Gumbinnen where he remained until the death of his father in the following year. Immediately thereafter he left with his mother for Berlin, where an attempt was made to have him enrolled in the exclusive cadet corps. Failing in this, mother and son preceeded to Halberstadt, and Corvin attended the cathedral school for two years. Here he once more came under the influence of his stepfather.²

²Corvin's stepfather was the composer of the Prussian song: "Ich bin ein Preusse, kennt ihr meine Farben." He also wrote three books under the pen name, Robert Walthers: Der Student von Leiden, Der anrechende Falke, and Der Drei-Weilchen Brakat.

Although resident in Halberstadt, Corvin's mother continued in her efforts to get her son placed in the cadet corps. This was finally effected through a letter which she addressed to the King of Prussia. In the spring of 1824, at the age of twelve, Corvin proceeded to Potsdam and was accepted in the military academy which at that time enrolled about 150 cadets. His life there followed a fairly strict military routine, enlivened by the usual pranks and hazing common in such institutions. He remained there for three years and later called them the happiest of his life.³

At Potsdam he showed himself an industrious student with special interests in history and German. His literary taste was encouraged by regular visits to the theater and through good books which were made available by the school authorities.⁴ The cadets of their own accord organized a sort of literary circle with Friedrich von Sallet as their head.⁵ In this period Corvin made his first attempt at writing, composing a tragedy in verse entitled Jururthe.⁶

³It is interesting to note in this regard that while Corvin was republican in sentiments, he was not necessarily antimilitary:

The supervision of older cadets, the advancement to private and noncommissioned officer, everything was most purposeful and reasonable; the cadets thus learned from youth onwards to accustom themselves to punctuality, order, and absolute obedience, but also the rudimentary basis of commanding, an art which is by far more difficult than that of obeying and which ought to be much more studied. Corvin, Ein Leben, Vol. I, p. 77.

⁴Among the books which Corvin read here with considerable delight were the works of James Fenimore Cooper.

⁵Friedrich von Sallet (1812-1843) from Heinsse, democratically minded, was a poet of philosophical, pantheistic lyrics and ballads. He also wrote short stories. His best-known work is Das Laienevangelium.

⁶Destroyed by Corvin because of adverse criticism.

In 1827 he was transferred or promoted to the Berlin military academy, where he spent three more years preparing for his commission in the Prussian army. This period was similar to that in Potsdam with perhaps some of the carefree elements omitted. In 1830 he was commissioned and assigned to the 36th Infantry Regiment at Mayence.

The account of Corvin's life as a young officer is filled with descriptions of eccentric officers, love affairs, duelling, trips along the Rhine, and balls and gambling in nearby Wiesbaden. It presents an extremely interesting picture of the social life of the times, but can hardly be treated fully here. His point of view, however, concerning the dangers that lie waiting to ensnare a young officer give a rather interesting insight into his character. Certainly the following paragraph should be included in any evaluation which one might make of him:

Drinking and card playing were the rocks on which many a lieutenant foundered. I must admit I am surprised that this was not more frequently the case, and those who are inclined to judge officers severely should try to imagine themselves in their position. When other young people of their age were still sliding around on school benches, the young officer is already accounted a man; when passions awaken and temptations press in from all sides and a paternal guidance is more than ever necessary, then he is free; older officers mislead him not only through their example, but ridicule him if he wishes to play the man of virtue; false shame and a false feeling of honor drive him to participate in activities which his feeling in part and in part his taste strive against until he is finally drawn into the vortex. ⁷

During the three years that Corvin remained stationed in Mayence, he was often in the company of von Sallet, whom he especially liked

⁷Corvin, Ein Leben, Vol. I, p. 151.

because of his literary abilities. It is quite likely that von Sallet's opinion of military life may have affected Corvin, since he gradually began to express a dislike of the rigid military caste distinctions and the almost unbridgeable gap between military and commoners. He quotes Goethe's Leiden des jungen Werther to prove that many a commoner's daughter may make an excellent wife for an officer. His own attachment for a girl of lower social standing and his ultimate marriage outside the nobility find justification therein.

While Corvin was still at Mayence the July Revolution broke out in Paris, and the Rhinelanders, closely akin to the French in temperament, expressed their sympathy with events in the neighboring country by wearing cockades and singing the Marseillaise. Productions of Wilhelm Tell were forbidden because of their effect upon the public. Although Corvin himself states that his own political consciousness was not sufficiently developed at this time, he shared more the feelings of the people than those of the existing governments.

In 1833, after his return from a leave to Berlin, Corvin was transferred to Frankfurt to take part in the occupation of that city because of a political insurrection of its inhabitants. He was quartered in the house of a Mr. Cardini, an Italo-German, with whose daughter he soon fell in love. Before marriage could take place, however, Corvin was transferred with his regiment to Saarlouis. It was there that he decided to become an author, probably not so much out of conviction as through desire to earn an independent living, if he were to marry a girl of lower birth. In order to carry out his plan, he immediately took up correspondence with von Sallet whose advice in this matter he

valued highly.⁸

The first short story he wrote was called "Die Hochzeit auf Sonnenstein" and dealt with the Peasants' War. It was never published, however, and was later lost among his papers. A lyric contained in it was published in the Didaskalia under the title "Morgenstaendchen".⁹ He then began a five-act tragedy in blank verse called Hunyaden, the material being taken from his family history. For military instruction Corvin had also written, while at Saarlouis, a booklet entitled Die Schwimmkunst (The Art of Swimming). These first attempts at writing gave him an opportunity to gain practice in composition even if they brought little remuneration or recognition.

In 1835 he was released from that army at his own request and proceeded to Leipzig where he planned to carry out a serious campaign of writing. There he completed the Hunyaden and began a tragedy in prose, Die Graefin von Chateaubriand (The Countess of Chateaubriand).¹⁰ Three acts were completed of the latter work, but it was apparently never published.

⁸ A number of extremely interesting letters by von Sallet appear in their entirety in Otto von Corvin, Erinnerungen aus meinem Leben, F. Thiel, Publisher, Leipzig: 1880. Hereafter referred to as Erinnerungen.

⁹ The Didaskalia, of which no trace has been found, should not be confused with the Deutsch-amerikanische Didaskalia, published in Baltimore from 1848-1849 by S. Maclean.

¹⁰ Corvin was undoubtedly impressed by the history of his illustrious ancestor and meant so far as possible to emulate him throughout his life. At one time he even considered becoming a Hungarian author. He abandoned this idea after a letter from von Sallet.

During a short stay in Dortmund Corvin carried his plan through further by writing short articles for a weekly paper the Zeitgeist. According to his own report, he created a sensation with "Letters from the Moon", written in a humoristic tone about Dortmund by a supposed interplanetary visitor. Here he also succeeded in getting the Hunyaden published, though permission for its distribution was withheld by the censor "because of the many obscene ideas and scenes". A comedy entitled Hassan, adapted from the 1001 Nights, he dedicated to von Sallet.

In 1837 at Eastertide he left Westphalia for Frankfort to try his luck as a dramatic reader. Since there was only one paid admission to his first performance, he quickly abandoned this idea. In the meantime paternal friends advised him to seek a military appointment at some small German court. After a number of months spent in visiting the various capitals of Germany without finding a suitable position, Corvin returned to Frankfort and succeeded in getting Wilhelm Rieger, the Frankfort merchant, liberal, and philanthropist to finance the publishing of a newspaper for hunters called Der Jaeger (The Hunter). Somewhat typical of Corvin's unbounded optimism was his attempt to publish the paper daily with a Sunday edition entitled Der Sonntags-jaeger (The Sunday Hunter). This idea he had to abandon because of insufficient material. In one of the issues he published a ballad of von Sallet, modeled on Percy's Reliques, and paid him the first literary fee he ever received.

Although Der Jaeger first proved successful, Corvin decided, because of unfavorable writing conditions, to leave Frankfort and go to

Leipzig. While there he made arrangements with Hartknoch to publish a journal on horses, Der Marstall (The Royal Stables). In September 1839, however, he returned to Frankfort and after securing citizenship there married Helene Cardini. Upon his return to Leipzig with his wife, he was forced to give up further publication of Der Jaeger because of bankruptcy proceedings against the publisher. This caused Corvin to think of writing something more substantial, and he at last came upon the idea of writing a history. Aware of the fact that Schiller had at one time begun work on a history of the Dutch Rebellion, he decided to carry this work through to completion. In 1840 he signed a contract with the Fleischer Publishing House for a two-volume work entitled Der niederlaendische Freiheitskrieg (The Dutch War for Independence). On the completion of the first volume Corvin came into difficulty with his publisher who refused to send free copies to the book reviewers. As a result only a few copies were sold and he was forced to forego the fees he might have realized from his work. Almost at the point of giving up further work, he accidentally learned that the first volume had already been translated into Dutch and had appeared in Amsterdam well-printed and illustrated. The Amsterdam publisher Binger shortly afterwards got in touch with Corvin and made arrangements to publish the history in six volumes. This connection with Binger proved to be a very favorable one.¹¹

From the point of view of mental stimulation, Corvin's residence in Leipzig proved most fruitful. Along with thirteen others he helped

¹¹ Binger later accepted Corvin's Erinnerungen aus meinem Leben for publication at a time when no German publisher would accept it.

to found the Literatenverein, an association of young, liberal writers that had for its purpose aid to German authors. It acquainted them with regulations in regard to publishers, the public at large, and the government and also gave monetary help to those writers in need of it. The society met once a week. Through it Corvin came to know personally a large number of young writers. Among those mentioned are Friedrich Gerstaecker, Adolf Glassbrenner, Alexander Weil, Georg Herwegh, Moritz Hartmann, Wilhelm Jordan, Hoffmann von Fallersleben, Heinrich Heine, Georg Kuehne, and Wilhelm Kienberg. The last three mentioned also belonged to the group which called itself Das junge Deutschland (Young Germany), of which Corvin was not a member.¹²

Corvin at this time also came to know Alexander Held whom he encouraged to publish a political newspaper for all of Germany.¹³ The paper appeared as Die Lokomotive (The Locomotive) and did more, according to Corvin, in forwarding political thought than any of the big papers. It was suppressed at the end of six months because of its political satires. The article especially objected to concerned the King of Bavaria and Lola Montez, and was written by Corvin himself. Held, as the editor, was forced to serve a prison term.

¹²At one time Corvin was extremely interested in sketching and painting. This interest carried over into his literary work, and the result is that one finds character sketches of most of the above-mentioned authors but little about their works or their influence on Corvin himself.

¹³Friedrich William Held, actor, pamphleteer, orator, who took a leading part in the political upheaval in Berlin. He was well known as a popular speaker and as the editor of the Lokomotive. He gradually fell from his position of power because of advocating unification of Germany under Prussian leadership.

As Corvin states, the six years in Leipzig were the most important in helping him develop a political and social consciousness. By birth, education, and social connections he was an aristocrat and had the inclinations and customs of this class. His acquaintance with the works of "renowned" and unprejudiced writers, his study of history, and personal observation and reflection gradually extinguished his sympathies for the nobility. It occurred to him that not only the king but the people too had rights. He became convinced through further work on the history of the Dutch Revolution that a change in government would never come about through lawful processes and that everything in Germany pointed to the outbreak of a revolution.¹⁴

Corvin watched all political movements with interest hoping each one might somehow change the status quo. A movement that seemed to grip him at this time concerned the German-Catholics and their attempts to separate from the Church of Rome.¹⁵ Undoubtedly he was more interested

¹⁴Corvin, *Ein Leben*, Vol. I, p. 370: "Everyone who was not actually struck with blindness could see that everything in Germany pointed to the outbreak of a revolution."

¹⁵The German-Catholic Movement broke out as a protest against the displaying in 1844 by Bishop Arnoldi of Trier of the holy robe of Christ. To many Roman Catholics in Germany it seemed like a return to the days of Tetsel. Led by Johannes Ronge, a Catholic priest who spoke out against obedience to Rome, a large number of Roman Catholics renounced papal authority and set themselves up as a separate sect. The movement was partly political in character. *Die Zeit* Valentin, *Geschichte der deutschen Revolution von 1848-49*, Ulstein Publishers, Berlin: 1930, Vol. I, pp. 190, 223. Hereafter referred to as *Geschichte*, Nicarda Buch, 1848 - *Die Revolution des 19. Jahrhunderts in Deutschland*, Atlantic Press, Zurich: 1944, p. 272 f. Also Bruno Bauer, *Die bauerliche Revolution seit dem Anfang der deutsch-katholischen Bewegung*, G. Neapel Publisher, Berlin: 1849. Friedrich Engels and Karl Marx, *Revolution und Kontinuität in Deutschland*, Dietz Publishers: Stuttgart, 1913. Heinrich von Treitschke, *History of Germany in the Nineteenth Century*, Allen & Unwin, London: 1919, Vol. VII, p. 77 f.

in the political than in the religious implications. In any case he looked upon the Catholic Church as reactionary and out of step with the times. Influenced by Herder's philosophy and without orthodox religious convictions of his own, he decided to aid the movement by writing a book that would uncover the abuses of catholicism. To this end he wrote and published in 1845 Historische Denkmale des christlichen Fanatismus (Historical Testimonials of Christian Fanaticism), later revised to Historische Denkmale des Fanatismus in der römisch-katholischen Kirche (Historical Testimonials of Fanaticism in the Roman Catholic Church) or Der Pfaffenpiegel (The Priests' Mirror). Concurrently on the non-political side he edited a sporting almanac and published a Taschenbuch fuer Jagd- und Naturfreunde (Vest-Pocket Book for Hunters and Nature Lovers).

In collaboration with Held he also began work on Die illustrierte Weltgeschichte fuer das Volk (Illustrated World History for the People). He felt that the existing history books were either too learned or failed to present historical events in a true light.

Writing failed to occupy all of his time, however, so that when the city of Leipzig began considering the possibility of constructing a swimming pool to prevent numerous cases of drowning in the Elbe and Elster rivers, Corvin interested himself in the deliberations and finally took an active part as director of the pool. In connection with this activity he developed a rheumatic condition that forced him to try the baths at Wiesbaden. During his absence from Leipzig an uprising took place and Held was forced to flee to Berlin. Thus ended for a time the close association of the two men.

On Corvin's return to Leipzig he published the Illustrierte Weltgeschichte which found both acclaim and buyers. It was translated into Swedish and published by the liberal Baron Hjerta. The illustrations in the book, however, were a source of annoyance to Corvin because of their lack of clarity. In order to have clearer ones, Corvin finally went so far as to buy an unpatented process of illustrating developed and improved from the English-patented glyphography. He spent considerable time working on the perfection of this invention. Finally he moved with his wife to Gotha where his work was subsidized by the Duke of Gotha himself. In the autumn of 1847 he progressed to the point where he was ready with his first proofs. He then decided on a trip to Paris in search of a patent and a manufacturer. Before leaving, however, he completed his work on Der niederlaendische Freiheitskrieg and the first volume of his Biographien historisch berühmter Maitressen (Biographies of Historically Famous Mistresses). This delay brought him into Paris in time for the February Revolution and changed the whole course of his later career.

His interest in the February Revolution which brought about the abdication of Louis Philippe was not limited to an idle observation of events in the French capital. Hearing that a "German Democratic Society" under the leadership of Georg Herwegh had begun recruiting troops mostly among German laborers in Paris in an attempt to form a democratic expeditionary force and feeling sure that a revolution would also break out east of the Rhine, Corvin went to Herwegh, placed his military knowledge at his service, and began training a motley assortment of volunteers.

The means at hand, however, were not sufficient. Help was sought from the newly formed French government, which, uncertain of its own position, hesitated, then finally advanced a sum stipulated by Herwegh of 2,000 francs. This amount appeared ridiculous to Corvin, who was far more aware than Herwegh of what the troops needed. Taking the matter in his own hands, he approached M. Flocon, a minister of the provisional government, and succeeded in obtaining an additional 5,000. A promise of weapons on the part of Flocon never materialized.

After a period of training in Paris under somewhat demoralizing conditions, the "Republican Legion", numbering about a thousand men, chiefly German but also including some French and Polish, proceeded to Strasbourg. Because of the nonmilitary character of its leaders, difficulties soon arose.¹⁶ Corvin, who recognized the source of difficulty, finally succeeded in getting Herwegh to replace Adalbert von Bornstedt with Heinrich Boernstein as troop commander.¹⁷ He himself was Boernstein's General Staff Chief.

In spite of insufficient arms and ammunition, the legion crossed the Rhine at Kembs on Easter Monday, 1848, in an attempt to join forces with Hecker's army at Kandern in Baden.¹⁸ On arriving on the east bank

¹⁶According to Corvin, Herwegh, who knew nothing about military affairs, was able to inspire but not to conduct a military expedition. This opinion is substantiated by Riccardo Much, op. cit., p. 227: "His nature had nothing of the determination, the definiteness, that emanates from his poems. He was on the contrary, reserved and easily lost in reverie, in that regard a completely Swabian poet." And Veit Valentin, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 486, says: "Herwegh was indeed completely unsuited for such a position of leadership."

¹⁷Corvin's judgment in this matter is corroborated by Valentin. Ibid., Vol. II, p. 486.

¹⁸This statement is taken from Veit Valentin. According to Corvin's account the legion crossed at Bannenheim on Easter Sunday.

it was learned that Hecker had already been repulsed. An attempt was then made to join Sigel's and Struve's forces in southern Baden. This also failed. Sigel's army was divided before the legion could reach it, and its leaders were forced to seek refuge in nearby Switzerland. Alone and inadequately equipped, the legion also proceeded toward Switzerland, attempting to avoid open conflict en route. Misled by a guide, at Niederdossenbach, almost within sight of the Swiss border, it was attacked and in spite of brave resistance severely beaten. Corvin escaped disguised as a blacksmith to Strasbourg via Switzerland.

In Strasbourg a fresh start was made to recruit new forces in cooperation with Struve and Heinzen, the latter using funds supplied him by sympathetic elements in the United States. A Refugees' Aid Committee was formed of which Corvin was elected president. The effectiveness of the committee was soon undermined by petty jealousies and factional disputes, and the leaders were finally forced to leave France by order of the French government.¹⁹ Corvin, therefore, accepted an invitation from Held to return to Berlin and continue to work on the Illustrierte Weltgeschichte and the Lokomotive, which Held had resurrected after its suppression in Leipzig.

Arriving in Berlin in October 1848, he was immediately introduced by Held into the political commotion of the day. Although he visited with Held the various democratic assemblies, clubs, and committee meetings, he took no active part in their deliberations. Nevertheless,

¹⁹For a full treatment of the Refugees' Aid Committee see: Otto Wiltberger, Die deutschen politischen Flüchtlinge in Strassburg von 1830-1849, W. Rothschild, Berlin: 1910.

with the failure of the democratic movement in Berlin, he was ousted by the authorities along with Held. He took up residence in Potsdam and worked further on the World History in the hope of bettering his financial condition.

With the outbreak of the May Revolution in Baden in the following spring, Corvin again decided to throw in his lot with the democratic forces.²⁰ Leaving Potsdam, he proceeded to Mannheim and offered his services to Col. Ludwig Elenker.²¹ Within a short time he was persuaded by Wilhelm von Truetzschler to take charge of the Mannheim Volunteers (Volkswehr), which consisted of a battalion of five companies.²² The position of the democratic troops, however, was by no means favorable. Corvin himself saw that the revolutionary army, lacking money as well as disciplined troops and qualified leaders, had little chance for any far-reaching military gains.²³ He supported them loyally, however, hoping that some type of political concessions might result. The

²⁰This uprising, the most promising of all, came about because of the failure of the Baden government to support the Reich constitution formulated by the Frankfurt Assembly. It broke out first in Rastatt as a popular protest against the arrest of a soldier who, during a mass meeting, urged the military to join with the people against the government in support of the new constitution. From there it spread quickly throughout the entire state.

²¹Elenker later distinguished himself in the Union Army as a general in the battle of Cross Keys.

²²Wilhelm von Truetzschler from Dresden was a member of the Frankfurt Parliament who was later made civil commissioner for Mannheim by the Provisional Government of Baden. He was executed after the collapse of the Revolution in 1849.

²³This statement is not in his memoirs but in Otto von Corvin, Geschichte der Neuzeit, Gessner and Schram, Leipzig: 1882, Vol. I, p. 309. Hereafter referred to as Der Neuzeit.

replacement of Blenker by Franz Sigel did not materially change the lot of the democratic forces. The situation developed more and more into one of encirclement. Hessians, Prussians, and Bavarians attacked from all sides. Corvin himself had sufficient opportunity to display his own qualities of military leadership and personal bravery. He directed successfully military operations against the Prussians and Bavarians when they attacked Mannheim.²⁴ However, by the end of June, the position there also became untenable and he received the order to withdraw to Rastatt.

The situation within the Fortress of Rastatt was a most difficult one.²⁵ Dissatisfaction among the troops and officers, confusion, and counterrevolution prevented any degree of military effectiveness from being reached. Corvin, who gradually gained recognition among the leaders and was finally appointed Chief of the General Staff by Gustav K. Tiedemann, tried his best to bring order out of chaos but to little avail.

On July 17, 1849, after a prolonged siege, Tiedemann began negotiations with General von der Groeben, commander of the Prussian troops, that were to end with surrender. A suggestion by von der Groeben that Tiedemann choose two officers for a reconnaissance trip to southern Baden to determine whether help from that direction could be looked for, was accepted. Corvin and Major Lang were the two officers

²⁴The battle lasted for three days. When Corvin finally bombarded Ludwigshafen, the Prussians were forced to withdraw. It was shortly after occupied by the Bavarians.

²⁵See: Albert Foerderer, Erinnerungen aus Rastatt, Schoemperlin Publisher, Lahr: 1881, p. 71 ff. for the best description of conditions within the fortress.

selected. Dressed in civilian clothes and accompanied by a Prussian officer, Corvin and Lang proceeded to Freiburg im Breisgau, where it was learned that the revolutionary troops formerly located there had retreated into Switzerland and that Bismarck was cut off from further help by an army of some 20,000 men. While there Corvin was permitted to interview the Chief of the General Staff of the Princes of Prussia and received in word if not in writing the promise of honorable treatment in case of surrender. On Corvin's return to Rastatt a council of war was held and his report recommending surrender was read.²⁶ The council accepted Corvin's recommendation and commissioned him to arrange for final terms. This he did but was unable to wring from the Prussian commander more than a promise of mild treatment on the basis of unconditional surrender. These conditions were accepted by the revolutionary leaders on Corvin's advice, and the papers marking an end of hostilities were signed at Niederbuehl on July 23, 1849.

The promises of mild treatment, however, were not kept. Corvin and the other officers were mishandled and imprisoned in Rastatt as traitors. Along with forty other officers he was condemned to death before a court-martial composed chiefly of Prussian soldiers. Other active participants were given sentences of imprisonment. On the very day of execution Corvin's sentence was commuted to ten years imprisonment. Six of these ten years Corvin spent in prison at Bruchsal, mostly

²⁶ An eyewitness account of Corvin's actions and the proceedings of this council are recorded by Carl Schurz, op. cit., Vol. I, pp. 218-219. op. cit., pp. 29-90.

in solitary confinement and under deplorable living conditions, while his wife tried with unceasing devotion to get him released. During his imprisonment he occupied himself with painting, writing memoirs, working on the improvement of his invention, and with the study of English grammar. He was finally freed on October 2, 1855 through the intercession of Bettina von Arnim²⁷ at the Prussian court.

Once released he took up residence with his wife at Bad Soden in the Taunus in order to avoid the Frankfurt police and again began writing. The German journals refused his articles, however, because of his "unsavory" reputation. In order to gain a respite from poverty he was forced to sell his illustrating process. In the following year he left for England, where he barely managed to eek out a living by giving German lessons and writing occasional articles concerning the revolution for Dicken's Household Words, a popular magazine of the time.²⁸ During the summer even this work ceased, and he was forced to return to Bad Soden, where he completed Aus dem Leben eines Volkskämpfers (From the Life of a Revolutionary). Because of an agreement with Campe and Hoffmann, publishers of Hamburg, for the printing of his memoirs,

²⁷ Bettina von Arnim (1785-1859), outstanding literary figure, author of Goethe's Briefwechsel mit einem Kinde, was related to Corvin through the marriage of two of his aunts into the von Arnim family. Valentin says of her that she fought more passionately with the King of Prussia for freedom than any man. She dedicated one of her books to Frederick Wilhelm IV, encouraging him to espouse the cause of the revolution. See Veit Valentin, op. cit., Vol. I, pp. 50-52.

²⁸ Corvin's articles were accepted after they had accidentally been seen by Dickens. He was compelled to submit them in English and they were then corrected by a member of the editorial staff. Household Words appeared in the decade 1850-1860. Its title was later changed to All the Year Round.

he proceeded to that city in the winter of 1856. There he remained with his wife until he was threatened with arrest by the police. Although guards had already been posted about the house, he succeeded in escaping dressed in women's clothes and fled to Berlin, only to be hounded again by the police. In desperation he left Germany and returned to England. His wife, who was no less permitted to live in peace, joined him shortly afterwards.

From 1856 until 1861 he remained in England improving his English, giving German lessons as before, and writing occasional articles. It was an extremely difficult period and one in which only the efforts of his wife, working as a governess, helped him escape complete penury. With the passage of time and a change in government in Germany, the German press looked upon him with less disdain and accepted articles for print. He received some remuneration for items in the Morgenblatt, published by Cotta; the Hausblaetter, by Haacklaender and Hoefer; and, in the Gartenlaube press.

In 1861 the Cotta publishing house accepted Corvin's suggestion that he be sent to America as special correspondent to cover the course of the Civil War for the Augsburger Allgemeine Zeitung.²⁹ During the delay entailed in re-booking passage, he made an agreement with the London Times to furnish them two articles a week from the States as an occasional correspondent.

²⁹The Augsburger Allgemeine Zeitung first appeared in 1789 as Die Neueste Weltkunde. Founded by Johann F. Cotta, an admirer of the French Revolution, the paper shifted from place to place because of censor restrictions until it came to settle in Augsburg. Decidedly liberal, it gave aid to the writers of "Young Germany" such as Heine, Karl Gutzkow, Laube, Ludwig Boerne, and others. Heinrich Laube claimed that it was the only literary-political power in Germany during the Restoration period. See: Johannes Proells, Das Junge Deutschland, Cotta, Stuttgart: 1892, p. 73 f.

Once in the United States Corvin very quickly became acquainted with American journalists, especially in New York.³¹ Before travelling on to Washington he secured letters of recommendation from Charles Dana of the New York Tribune, William Cullen Bryant of the New York Evening Post, and others prominent in newspaper circles.³² With these as a means of introduction, he succeeded in gaining entrance to some of the highest offices in the capital, obtaining even an interview with Lincoln.³³ A note given to him by the President enabled him to become acquainted with Secretary of State Seward concerning whom he expressed great admiration. With letters from the State Department Corvin could and did visit all types of fortifications and observed at close hand military operations.

His effectiveness as a reporter and observer was also increased by his acquaintance with former German democratic revolutionaries who had preceded him to the States. Ludwig Blenker, with whom he immediately renewed connections, had become a general in the Northern army, and

³¹Corvin's first impressions of America recorded in his memoirs are well worth reading. He was a keen observer and noted everything from the latest improvements in plumbing to the republican simplicity of "Father Abraham".

³²It is reported that Bryant treated him with utmost courtesy and gave him a letter of recommendation in which he stated that the Augsburger Allgemeine Zeitung was the best newspaper in the world as a historical source. Ibid., p. 756. Charles A. Dana (1819-1897) exercised a great influence on American journalism. He later became Assistant Secretary of War.

³³For Corvin's impressions of Lincoln, see Part III, Chapter 4, "Corvin and America". The gruesome end of Lincoln's assassins is described by him as an eyewitness representative of the press. Ibid., p. 916 f.

commanded the Eighth New York Regiment, later a division of some twelve thousand German-Americans.³⁴ Through Blenker Corvin managed to get at first hand a good picture of conditions in the Union Army. He expressed admiration for General McClellan and the Union soldier,³⁵ and his dislike of Halleck, Pope, and Grant.³⁶

After the second battle of Bull Run Corvin presented a plan to Lincoln whereby the lack of soldiers in the Northern ranks might be overcome by recruiting men in Germany. Lincoln did not appear averse to the proposal, but advised Corvin that he first had to submit it to the Secretary of War for consideration. Stanton, whom Corvin suspected of anti-German sentiments, was fundamentally opposed, hence the plan was dropped.³⁷

³⁴ Blenker was well-liked by Corvin who defended him through the columns of the Allgemeine Zeitung against his German-American foes. See especially nos. 312, 316 for the year 1861, and 43, 80, 110 for 1862.

³⁵ The Union soldier who had little more than crackers to eat, swamp water to drink, and was unpaid for months especially merits Corvin's praise. His support of McClellan is especially well taken and should be considered by those who defend the position and reputation of this oft criticized man. See Corvin, Erinnerungen, Vol. III, pp. 221-222, 287-288; Vol. IV, pp. 175-176, 204, 347-350.

³⁶ Corvin was considerably disturbed by Halleck's lack of knowledge of military strategy, Grant's conduct and inadequacy, and Pope's supposed superiority over McClellan. See: Corvin, Neuzeit.

³⁷ Wilhelm Kaufmann in Die Deutschen im amerikanischen Buerrerkriege, R. Oldenbourg Publisher, Munich: 1911, p. 588, refers to Corvin's project and presents the opinion that it failed to be accepted because Corvin apparently wished to profit financially by it. His version reads:

Corvin presented the plan to Lincoln, who was at first delighted with it, but finally let it fall after Stanton,

As a war correspondent Corvin covered the second battle of Bull Run, the battles of Antietam and Fredericksburg, and many minor skirmishes between Union and Confederate forces in the Washington area. He gradually felt forced to relinquish his connections with the London Times because of its editor's outspoken sympathy for the South. This cut him off from an income of some four to five hundred dollars a month and forced him to seek some other type of employment as compensation. He had previously been offered the command of a regiment by Seward, but now that he wished to accept such an offer no openings were available.³⁸ The result was that he finally accepted a position in the Treasury Department as a chemical assistant. This was done along with the decision to remain in the States and take out American citizenship.

The work in the Treasury Department, however, did not turn out to his liking. He also became involved in inner departmental jealousies, was released, reinstated, and finally placed as first correspondent in the Bureau of Loans, Department of Finance, under McCulloch. Although

the Secretary of War, opposed it. If the plan had been presented by such men as Schurz, Osterhaus, or Sigel it might have been accepted. But Corvin, who let it be seen that he himself thereby wished to earn money, was the most unsuited person to bring about its acceptance.

Since Kaufmann's version appears to be based on Corvin's account in his Erinnerungen, the entire transaction as described by Corvin is reproduced in the Appendix to this dissertation.

³⁸ Corvin had been previously commissioned a colonel in the Northern Army, but he had not been placed in command of a regiment due to scarcity of troops. He served for a time as colonel in the office of the Provost-Marshal General. Corvin, Erinnerungen, Vol. IV, p. 396.

this work was more agreeable to him, he left it after several years because of the strain under which he was placed. Having become an American citizen in the meantime, Corvin was eligible for a number of important positions. He was promised the District Superintendency of Immigration at Baltimore, but the bill under which the office was to be established failed to pass Congress. The consulship in Hamburg was also promised him by Seward, but, through an unfortunate accident the post was filled by the President without prior reference to the Secretary of State. Prince Felix Salm-Salm, a former American army officer whose friendship Corvin had made, wrote him from the court of Emperor Maximilian, encouraging him to accept a position in the Mexican capital. This Corvin refused because of his reluctance to serve under royalty and because of his conviction that the United States would not long tolerate a monarchy in a neighboring state. In the summer of 1867 he finally signed a contract with the New York Times as a special correspondent for Germany and adjacent countries and left with his wife in the same year for Berlin.

Because of a delay in remittances from the United States, Corvin was compelled during the first few months in Berlin to tide himself over by making a translation of the memoirs of Emperor Maximilian for Richard Bentley, publisher, of London. With the end of the Mexican affair and the return of Prince Salm to Germany, Corvin left Berlin for Rorschach, where he stayed with the Prince, writing and translating the latter's memoirs. He also translated his own at the same time for Bentley under the title, A Life of Adventure.

Since his connection with the New York Times ended with the death

of the editor in 1869, he visited London in the same year and entered into an agreement to write articles for the Temple Bar magazine. He also established connections with the New York Staatszeitung and the Gartenlaube press. On his return to Germany the following year, he set up residence in Coblenz. The outbreak of the Franco-Prussian war found him acting again as war correspondent, this time for the Vienna Neue freie Presse. What he experienced during the war he wrote for Bentley in English in a two-volume book entitled, In France with the Germans. 39

In 1871 after the war he took up residence in Berlin from where he reported the events in the new German capital to the Boston Daily Advertiser until the latter part of 1873 when he moved to Vienna for financial reasons as a representative of the Northern Pacific Railroad. Within five months after he reached that city the Northern Pacific was forced to close its office in Austria because of the failure of the Jay Cooke Banking House, and Corvin found himself once again in straightened circumstances. He returned to Germany, settling first in Bonn, to finish the diary of Princess Salm (1875), and then in Wertheim on the Main, where he wrote Die goldene Legende (The Golden Legend), a rationalistic historical examination of the Bible and the origins of the christian religion. In the same year that marked the appearance of Die goldene Legende he moved to Leipzig. There he again

³⁹ During the course of the war Corvin visited a friend at Bismarck's headquarters and had the opportunity to meet Bismarck himself. The Chancellor is reported to have said to him after hearing a short account of his activity as a revolutionary: "And so you see how fate shapes things; the same sentiments which led you to prison brought me to the position I hold today." Corvin, Ein Leben, Vol. II, p. 940.

became active in literary circles and, just as many years earlier he had taken part in the formation of the Literatenverein, he now took part in the founding of the Emposalon, an association of writers which in turn founded the Allgemeiner deutscher Schriftstellerverband (Mutual German Writers' Union).

Still hoping to improve his finances he had in the meantime brought his illustrating process to such a degree of perfection that it was patented and accepted by the J. P. Kaysner company of Krefeld under the name of the Corvinello process, but it failed to bring him much in the way of monetary returns. Undaunted by his impoverished circumstances, he took up his pen once more with renewed energy to bring forth some of his longest, best, and most serious works. The colorful experiences of his earlier years did not find a repetition in this later period, but the quality of his literary production improved decidedly. By 1880 he completed a revision of his Erinnerungen, bringing it up to date. He also rewrote Geschichte des Altertums (History of the Ancient World), two volumes, for incorporation into the revised edition of the Illustrirte Weltgeschichte. From 1880 to 1884 he worked simultaneously on the three-volume Geschichte der Menschheit (History of Modern Times), and the two-volume Geschichte der grossen Franzoesischen Revolution (History of the Great French Revolution). In the following year on his seventy-third birthday his helpful friends and acquaintances held a celebration in honor of his fiftieth anniversary as an author. The same year marked a sudden change in his health, and although he continued to write, it was with diminishing results. His long and varied career came to a close on March 1, 1886,

in Wiesbaden, to which city he had retired because of its climate. At his burial services the poet Friedrich von Bodenstedt, representing the Allgemeiner deutscher Schriftstellerverband placed a wreath on his grave and intoned a verse composed in his honor, from which the following is extracted:

Er war ein Held und Herold in dem Streit
 Für Deutschlands Einheit, Macht und Herrlichkeit.

Doch sein Gedächtnis wird ihn überleben,
 Solang es Deutsche gibt von gleichem Streben,
 Wie's ihn erfüllt, von dem man rühmen kann!
 Er war in Tat und Wort ein ganzer Mann. 40

He was a hero, calling in the fight
 For German glory, unity, and might.

The mem'ry of his life will ne'er grow dim
 As long as Germans live and strive like him
 For nobler things, to whom one must concede:
 He was a real man both in word and deed.

⁴⁰Friedrich von Bodenstedt (1819-1892), Munich poet, whose lyrics have an oriental tone and a cosmopolitan philosophy. Noted for his Lieder des Mirza Schaffy.

PART II

THE WORKS OF OTTO VON CORVIN

Chapter 1

Der Pfaffenriese

Die Geiseler

Die goldene Legende

Der Pfaffenpiegel

The Pfaffenpiegel, or Historische Denkmale des Fanatismus in der römisch-katholischen Kirche, first printed under the title Historische Denkmale des christlichen Fanatismus, by Gebauer of Leipzig in 1845, is the most widely known of Corvin's books. Its popularity is based partly on its sensational character and partly on the fact that it is an open attack on the Roman Catholic Church, which during the 19th century was looked upon by political reformers as a reactionary stronghold opposing the liberal, democratic, and national tendencies of the times. As such it has given German nationalists from Bismarck to Hitler support for their campaigns against the "meddling" of the Roman Catholic Church in German internal affairs. The fact that the book was written by a "half aryan" and an ardent democrat who figured in the Revolution of 1848-49, did not deter the National Socialist regime from giving the book its full approbation.⁴¹

Corvin's reasons for writing the Pfaffenpiegel are best set forth in his Foreword to the second edition printed in 1868. He claims there, while making a study of source materials preparatory to writing Niederländische Freiheitskrieg, to have been impressed by the religious element which played a major role in the Dutch revolution against Philip II of Spain. In reading the works of the church fathers, he became convinced of the "horrible crimes which the Roman church had committed

⁴¹On January 24, 1934, the National Socialist regime seized and withdrew the Pfaffenpiegel from circulation only to countermand the order four months later. The sale of the book was particularly encouraged when Hitler came into conflict with the Catholic hierarchy.

against humanity". He perceived that "the slavery under which humanity sighs is rooted in the church and that all our strivings for freedom would be powerless, if we did not first free ourselves from the chains into which the church had thrown the spirit of man".⁴² He points out further that the fanaticism springing from religious belief showed itself everywhere to be the most horrible enemy of freedom. In order to fight and destroy fanaticism it seemed necessary to him to present through historical examples to the people not only the hideous results of fanaticism but also to indicate the dismal sources of belief itself of which fanaticism is a consequence. Since this belief, according to Corvin, rests in the faith and trust which the people have in the authority of the priests, he wished to expose the historical nature of the authority and to show that it proceeds from thoroughly false premises.

Thus he intended to write a series of books: the first one tracing the growth of power of the priests and the pope, the second depicting the history of the flagellants, and succeeding volumes concerning the Albigensians and Waldensians, the Anabaptists, the Inquisition, and the persecutions of Jews. Of these only the first two were completed. Before he was able to write the third, "the storm of 1848" broke loose, and he was unable to carry out his plan. Actually there is nothing to indicate that Corvin desired to continue the series in later years when "the storm" had subsided and time was at his disposal. After his release from imprisonment he first finished his memoirs and then engaged in

⁴²Otto von Corvin, *Der Kaffenspiegel*, A. Book Publisher, Berlin: 1934, p. 12. Hereafter referred to as *Kaffenspiegel*.

journalism. When he returned to a religious theme in the 1870's it was Die goldene Legende that engaged his interest.

The immediate stimulus for writing the Pfaffenpiegel as well as Die Gaisler (The Flagellants) stems from an incident which took place in 1844; namely, the displaying by Bishop Arnoldi in Trier of the alleged holy robe of Christ. This act gave rise to religious controversy and caused the setting up in Saxony of a sect of German-Catholics whom Corvin meant to support. He mentions the incident a number of times and expresses his disgust at this apparent fraud. His collected antichristian writings can be partly understood as a reaction to it. While no immediate cause is stated for his undertaking Die goldene Legende, it can be assumed that his interest in religious controversy was again awakened by Bismarck's Kulturkampf with the Catholic Church.⁴³

Before a general description of the Pfaffenpiegel is attempted, it might be mentioned that in writing it Corvin never lost sight of the political and social injustices of his own day. Whenever possible he drew analogies between ancient and modern times. In the beginning of the book he writes: "The enslaved peoples of the Orient hoped for a liberating hero, the Messiah, whom they imagined as a sort of Washington or Garibaldi, who should free them from the hated Roman yoke."⁴⁴ Furthermore, "Jesus was a revolutionary, who also in our times, if not crucified, would certainly have been summarily shot or cast into jail".⁴⁵

⁴³That Corvin followed with intense interest the struggle between Bismarck and the Church is evident from his articles to the Boston Daily Advertiser. See copies of that paper for June 8 and July 6, 1872.

⁴⁴Corvin, Pfaffenpiegel, p. 46.

⁴⁵Ibid., p. 47.

As a special tribute to the cause of democracy he states that:
 "Revolutions often hurt individuals, but more frequently they do good for the whole of humanity. Where would we be without 1848?" ⁴⁶ It is not to be wondered that the Pfaffenkrieg stirred up opposition from ecclesiastical as well as civil authorities!

Corvin begins the book by describing the growth of the Roman Catholic hierarchy from its simple beginnings in democratically governed religious communities. He then turns to a consideration of Catholic saints and the reasons for their canonization. The supernatural wonders connected with their lives and relics, to which an additional chapter is devoted, are, of course, discounted as not being in harmony with the findings of modern science. In the fourth chapter Corvin dwells on the misdeeds of the popes and traces the rise of the papacy. His especially sympathetic treatment of Emperor Henry IV at Canossa and of the struggle of succeeding German emperors betrays his strong nationalistic feelings. Among the various sins committed by the pontiffs are: the persecution of heretics, the hindrance of the advancement of science, the distortion of christian teachings, the introduction of censorship, the instigation of religious wars, and the extortion of money through tithes and indulgences.

In a chapter entitled, "Sodom and Gomorrah", Corvin attributes to the introduction of celibacy among the priests the hypocrisy and immorality that waxed for some time within the church. The vow of chastity for the regular clergy as well as those of poverty and

⁴⁶Corvin, Pfaffenkrieg, p. 204.

obedience are attacked in a separate chapter concerned with monastic life and organizations. Land hunger, soft living, exaggerated discipline, religious fanaticism, and the subjection of primitive peoples to European rapacity are ascribed as outgrowths of monasticism. The writings of individual monks are held up to ridicule, including those of the well-known Abraham a Santa Clara.

Corvin dedicates a concluding chapter to exposing the evils of the confessional. He maintains that the Catholic Church through this invention has been able to rule the world with little expense and difficulty. Although he is cognizant of the fact that individual confessions must remain secret, he suspects the Jesuits, above all others, of disregarding this regulation when it serves their own ends: "The confessional was used for the achievement of political and ecclesiastical ends; however, it served mainly to satisfy the lewdness of the priests."⁴⁷

In the main, the purpose of the Pfaffenpiegel is to disclose the clerical misdeeds and expose doctrines of the Catholic Church which run counter to the dictates of reason and common sense. It must be recognized, however, that a secondary aim is an undermining of general belief in a divinely revealed christian religion which causes the book to be unacceptable not only to Catholics but to the remainder of orthodox christians as well.

⁴⁷Corvin, Der Pfaffenpiegel, p. 314.

Die Geisseler

In Die Geisseler (The Flagellants), a sequel to the Flaggenknäuel, Corvin takes up in a somewhat more scholarly fashion the subject of flagellation, tracing it historically from earliest times in all of its various forms and manifestations. Although he intended to disclose the evils of self-flagellation and flagellation inflicted upon others as a form of asceticism within the Catholic Church, Corvin, after he has seemingly exhausted his topic, allows himself to digress for the purpose of considering beatings as applied in earlier times as a form of cure for fever, epilepsy, lameness, stuttering, and sexual impotence. The relationship of cudgelling and massaging, and the origin of blows or accolades administered in religious rites are also treated.

If Corvin's life were not so completely above reproach one might accuse him of sadistic pleasure in his occupation with such themes. Considering, however, the political basis of his almost fanatic aversion to the Roman Catholic Church, such an accusation would be groundless.

Exactly as in the Flaggenknäuel, Corvin attacks, when the opportunity arises, the social injustices of his own century.⁴⁵ In discussing the treatment of slaves under the Greek and Romans, he makes the following observation concerning the conditions of the negroes in America:

The notices in the American papers prove sufficiently in what manner the negroes are treated even today by the free Americans. Here a planter seeks a runaway slave who is

⁴⁵Not only social injustices are exposed but political as well: "In Italy they tried with blows to beat out of the Carbonari the last spark of revolutionary spirit." Otto von Corvin, Die Geisseler, A. Beck, Publisher, Berlin; undated, p. 62.

distinguished by a slit nose, by a missing ear, by a fresh scar or an iron-pronged collar; there another seeks a buyer for slaves whose distinguishing marks he describes in a similar manner. In this case the cruelties of the old Romans to their slaves are even surpassed.⁴⁹

This observation, made some fifteen years before the Civil War, is in complete agreement with his later support of the Northern states.

After tracing the growth of flagellistic discipline, especially as it manifest itself in its extremest forms in the monastic orders of the Catholic Church, Corvin attempts to explain the reasons for its existence. He is not satisfied with the explanation that it is a form of religious zeal growing out of self-abnegation, a form of penance for sins committed, or a castigation of the flesh, that symbol of worldly evil to the medieval church. Rather, he brands it as an expression of cruelty, mental aberration, or sexual perversion. It is this judgment and the admonition to his readers to espouse the ideals of the enlightenment -- reason, nature, and humanity -- that appear as an accompanying commentary to the innumerable examples of religious excesses.

Die goldene Legende

Die goldene Legende (The Golden Legend) is the longest and undoubtedly the best written of Corvin's trilogy dealing with the christian

⁴⁹Corvin, Die Salasche, p. 57.

religion. Whereas the two preceding books were directed mainly at the Roman Catholic Church, this one undertakes an examination of the Bible, chiefly the New Testament, the life and doctrines of Christ, and the lives of the apostles. In two chapters, however, one entitled, "Der römisch-katholische Christus" ("The Roman-Catholic Christ") and the other, "Maria, die Mutter Gottes" ("Mary, the Mother of God"), the Catholic Church is again singled out as a perverter of the true teachings of Christ.

The introduction to the goldene Legende defines most clearly Corvin's position in reference to the Bible and the Christian religion, or to any religion based on miracles and revelation. It is a position based on the rationalism of the eighteenth century and the natural science of the century which followed. According to Corvin the origin of a religion must first be explained on natural grounds and then considered within its historical framework. Miracles and wonders are the result of prestidigitation, suggestion, faith healing, or natural phenomena. He sees as the sole purpose of religion the creation of respect before the law and aid in its execution. Taking into consideration his point of view it can be seen in advance what must necessarily happen to the divinity of Christ, the miracles of the apostles, the doctrine of the trinity, and specific dogmas of the Catholic Church. In relating the story of Christ, he depicts him as a wise and respected teacher but devoid of divine attributes. He discards as contrary to nature the virgin birth, the immaculate conception, the resurrection and ascension, and the assumption.

Corvin's knowledge of both Greek and Hebrew permitted him to make

a rather careful examination of sources of biblical history. He makes use of both canonical and apocryphal gospels and the history of the Jewish peoples.

According to its organization the book first considers the simple teachings of Christ. It then takes up certain doctrines and practices of the Catholic Church, representing them in a ridiculous light. The veneration of the relics is especially scored. Corvin seems to take an iconoclastic delight in recounting the absurdities committed in this regard. From incidents he relates a reader would not question the necessity for a reformation. Luther, however, receives no high praise. Corvin states that he only served "to bring the Christians out of the land of Egypt and into the wilderness".

After treating the veneration of relics, he considers the practice in the Catholic Church of praying to the saints for intercession or aid. This again draws especially scornful treatment. The growth of the Mariencult or worship of the Virgin Mary is then traced and criticized as not being in accordance with the teachings of Christ. In conclusion the author turns to an examination of the life of the apostles, describing their individual importance in the development and dissemination of the christian religion and the position each holds within the Catholic Church.

The manner in which Corvin handles subjects sacred to a large body of Christianity and the vulgar humor many times unnecessarily employed, does not always win a sympathetic response from the reader. Undoubtedly Corvin was made aware of this fact after the first edition of the Eschenspiegel appeared, since he wrote in his foreword to the

second edition: "Some well-meaning friends expressed the opinion to me that my book would have produced a still better effect, if the most revolting facts had been omitted and if in judging that which was presented more moderation had been observed."⁵⁰ To this view Corvin expressed the following reactions:

As far as my judgments are concerned, they are to be sure often expressed in rough and bitter words, but I ask what claims the Roman Church then has to considerate and gentle treatment? To tell the truth is indeed not so coarse as to burn someone at the stake because he cannot believe in an obvious lie. No. What I consider bad, I'll name bad! ⁵¹

The result of such an attitude and the fact that Corvin fails to cite source materials except for isolated cases makes his religious writings unacceptable from the historian's point of view. It was, however, never his plan to write for the more intellectual few. He states clearly that "the book /Der Pfaffenpapst/ is not designed for the scholar or for the salon. It is written for the people and in order that they read it, it is written as it is.... One cannot take into consideration the nerves of perfumed dandies when one is fighting against a brazen and unshamed enemy and for freedom."⁵² Nevertheless, Corvin's very zeal in fighting fanaticism seems to betray him into making statements that sometimes appear to spring from a very similar feeling on his part.

⁵⁰ Corvin, Pfaffenpapst, p. 13.

⁵¹ Ibid., p. 14.

⁵² Ibid., p. 14.

Chapter 2

Histories

Illustrierte Weltgeschichte fuer das Volk, Bde. I, II

Geschichte der Neuzeit

Geschichte der grossen franzoesischen Revolution

In France with the Germans

Illustrierte Weltgeschichte aus das Volk

According to his memoirs, Corvin had for some time during the early 1840's entertained the idea of writing a world history which would be popular in tone and would aid in giving his compatriots a proper orientation to the political developments of his own day. During his stay in Leipzig he disclosed his plan to Held, who at that time also resided there, and suggested that he accept the part of co-editor. Corvin was to write most of the copy in rough draft and Held was to supervise the necessary organization and revision of the material for final printing. To this Held agreed and work was begun. By 1844 Volume I appeared in an edition of 5000 copies and was well received by the public. In Sweden, where a translation was made, it also found ready acceptance. Encouraged by this initial success, the two authors continued their work, not, however, without frequent prolonged interruptions. Held, because of a politically objectionable article in the Lokomotive was imprisoned, and Corvin, who became involved in the Revolution, shared a similar fate. The result was that the history was not completed until 1851 when the fourth and last volume appeared, mainly through the efforts of Held. Within a subsequent thirty-year period over 50,000 copies of the history were published.

Notwithstanding this success Corvin decided to revise the work after the death of Held on his return to Germany from America. In his foreword to the second edition Corvin states:

Held had brought into the book many things which according to my views did not fit in a world history and through too great an expansion of individual sections had disturbed the harmony of relationships in an inadmissible manner. Further, many new discoveries had been made in the last decades which shed an entirely new light on very important periods of time. ⁵³

In addition to these reasons, Corvin wished to make use of his invention, that is, the Corviniello process, in order to improve the illustrations.

Originally Corvin had planned to revise only the first and last volumes. Unfortunately, however, for the progress of the revision, his views on more recent historical events failed to coincide with those of the publisher who "at the time the contract was signed was willing to publish a liberal world history, but considered it expedient to adapt the tone of the work to the reactionary current which had meanwhile set in". Moreover, the publisher, Otto Spamer, attempted to revise Corvin's manuscript after it reached his office in accordance with his own ideas. A quarrel ensued and Corvin withdrew from the project after having finished the first two volumes, agreeing to let the publisher complete the revision by employing other historians. Thus the eight-volume Illustrierte Weltgeschichte fuer das Volk which appeared 1880-1884, still bearing the names of Held and Corvin as editors, actually had little connection with them.

Volumes I and II of the history are entitled, Geschichte des Altertums, (History of the Ancient World), with Corvin as author; Volumes III and IV, Geschichte des Mittelalters, (History of the Middle Ages),

⁵³Otto von Corvin, Illustrierte Weltgeschichte fuer das Volk, Vol. I, Geschichte des Altertums, Otto Spamer Publisher, Leipzig: 1880, Vol. I, p. V. Hereafter referred to as Weltgeschichte.

written by L. F. Dieffenbach and J. G. Vogt; Volumes V and VI, Geschichte der neueren Zeit (History of More Recent Times), by Otto Kaemmel, and Volumes VII and VIII, Geschichte der neuesten Zeit (History of Most Recent Times), by Berthold Voß.

Since it is impossible to determine how much of the first edition was written by Corvin, he himself having said in his foreword to the second edition that it was written chiefly by Held, and since only volumes I and II of the second edition came from his pen, it will be these volumes which are considered here.

Die Geschichte des Altertums. volume I, which bears the subtitle, "From the First Beginnings of History to the Downfall of the Independence of Greece", begins with a preface concerning the origin and the age of the human race, its types and distribution, life of man in prehistoric times, his religion and his political organization, his sagas and legends. It is then divided into two periods, namely from earliest times to the founding of the Persian Empire and from the Persian Empire to the reign of Alexander the Great. Volume II, subtitled "From Alexander the Great to the Division of the Roman Empire", again falls into two periods, the first from Alexander to the decline of the Roman Republic and the second from the Roman Empire up to the beginnings of the Great Migrations, 400 A. D.

Instead of restricting his history solely to a consideration of the western world with its beginnings in the civilizations of the Near East, Corvin makes it universal in character and includes chapters on China and India. Although he mentions in his criteria of a historian that he should "strive to a certain degree to detach himself and not be

influenced by his prejudices, his personal religious beliefs, national feeling, political party, or the spirit of his own times", it is interesting to note that in his treatment of Asiatic despotism one can sense parallels to the nineteenth century absolutism of Europe. His failure to draw the readers attention expressly to these parallels indicates his confidence in the ability of the common man to note them himself. It must be said to Corvin's credit that the history as a whole is surprisingly objective.

Only in rare instances does Corvin consider it necessary to inject his own observations in didactic form. When he does, these observations are colored with the feelings engendered by the political events of his own day. His judgment of despots, for instance, is that "they are fearful and espy in every corner & revenger of the injured rights of man". Convinced as he was that the Church was a tool of reactionary control, he makes the statement in discussing the Egyptian religion that "at the time it was described by Greek, Roman, and Christian writers, it had degenerated -- a fate which not a single religion which we find or found on the earth has escaped".⁵⁴ In describing the Greeks, who Corvin believed should be held up to his countrymen as ideal citizens, he is completely carried away by his admiration. His introduction to the chapter on Greece begins with the following paragraph:

History opens up before us the most interesting page of all of ancient times, a page which at the same time is the most worthy of glory. A free people arises to fight against

⁵⁴Corvin, Weltgeschichte, Vol. I, p. 109.

human bondage; public spirit and love of freedom come out of this most unequal battle as victors; but — in order that history should give a lesson for all times, that the unity of a nation is the sole security of freedom — we see that victorious people immediately afterwards subject to a foreign power, because it — broke the band of its unity.⁵⁵

Although the Geschichte des Altertums is written in a tone somewhat more popular than his other histories, it must be admitted that Corvin took considerable pains to compare and evaluate the material available to him. In discussing the various races of men he came to a conclusion not unlike that held by some of the most outstanding anthropologists of our own day, namely, that all of man is best divided into three races: negroid, mongoloid, and caucasoid. He would probably never have conformed to national socialist teachings as to race superiority, but he approaches the danger line with the statement that "the caucasian race was destined for freedom and mastery".⁵⁶ On the other hand, he is no belittler of other races. He praises Chinese culture and criticizes those historians of his own day who looked down upon the oriental as inferior to the European.⁵⁷

In general Corvin's history retells primarily the rise and fall of the early civilizations. In keeping, however, with the purpose for which he wrote, he devoted considerable space to the cultural life of the various peoples and carefully dissected political, religious, and

⁵⁵ Corvin, Weltgeschichte, Vol. I, p. 462.

⁵⁶ Ibid., Vol. I, p. 2.

⁵⁷ This position is similar to the stand taken in his Geschichte der Neuzeit where he supports the cause of Poland against his own native Prussia.

social institutions of remoter ages with the scalpel of eighteenth century rationalism. He wished in this manner to demonstrate that the institutions of his own day might be treated similarly. It is the emphasis on the cultural aspect in the Geschichte des Altertums that most distinguishes it from his other historical works. The absence of detailed descriptions of military campaigns is also to be noted.

A careful analysis, though by no means a profound one, is made in this work of the various types of government with an enumeration of their advantages and disadvantages. As might be expected a republican form based on the will of the people is that form of government which is held up as being most desirable. In describing the Greek Republic he makes particular mention of popular assemblies, councils, public law, and civic rights, and gives special attention to voting -- how it was done and who were enfranchised. He makes the pertinent observation in regard to the Greeks, and one which he undoubtedly meant for his own times as well, that "freedom of the citizens⁵⁸ is the basis for the formation of the state".

To Corvin's credit it must be said that this history is interestingly and entertainingly written. A clear, direct style is coupled with a careful balancing of material. The paragraphs are relatively short, and there are few involved discussions which might interfere with the excellent proportion of the whole. Of his three major histories, the Geschichte des Altertums shows the most careful organization. Since this is a point where Corvin usually displays a weakness, it is quite

⁵⁸Corvin, Weltgeschichte, Vol. I, p. 363.

possible, though not demonstrable, that Held's co-editorship in the earlier edition had a salutary influence.

Although the Geschichte des Altertums has little significance today, it met the needs of Corvin's time and admirably expressed the purpose for which it was written. The fact that it was translated into English gives proof of its wide appeal. It was published in America by J. C. Yarston and Company in 1884-1886 as Yarstons Popular History of the World. The translation was made by H. W. Dulcken. Needless to say, the "Ph. D." after Corvin's name on the title page must have been added to give the work a more ready acceptance on the part of American readers. Remarkably enough, it was this book, not the Pfaffenspiegel, which Corvin, imprisoned in Bruchsal, felt was his chief contribution toward the political reformation of his own day. He wrote in a letter to his mother, dated September 2, 1849: "Out of my world history which is distributed in 5000 copies throughout Germany the new generation is being formed according to my ideas, and thus I assist in the imminent transformation of the Fatherland." ⁵⁹

After having finished the revision of the first two volumes of the Illustrated World History in 1879, Corvin would like to have proceeded with the revision of the last two as well. Thwarted in this through the attitude of the publisher, Corvin took up the plan of issuing a separate work with a similar title which would cover the same period as the last two volumes of the series. This plan finally crystalized in the form of the three-volume work, Geschichte der Neuzeit, which was published

⁵⁹ Otto von Corvin, Aus dem Zellengefangnis, W. Friedrich Publisher, Leipzig: 1884, p. 67. Hereafter referred to as Zellengefangnis.

several years later, and which enabled him to incorporate his experiences in the Revolution and in America as part of the history of the period.

Geschichte der Neuzeit

The Geschichte der Neuzeit covers a turbulent period in European and world affairs, 1848 to 1871, in which the forces of nationalism and democracy caused revolutions in a score of countries, and national rivalries and internal quarrels led to armed conflicts in Europe, Asia, and America. It would have been a difficult period for any historian of that time to interpret and record, and yet Corvin mastered a tremendous amount of detail and presented it in a manner so that the events of the era were made intelligible to the common man. The revolutions in France, Italy, Germany, and the Civil War in America are described in surprising detail. Although one third of the work pertains to these struggles. His training as an officer led him to devote more space to the description of military campaigns than one feels is necessary. Although he does not lose sight of social, political, and economic factors, he does at times minimize their importance. The human element, that is the role played by outstanding personalities, is, however, seldom overlooked.

The history is divided chronologically into three parts: (1) from the Revolution of 1848 to the founding of the Second French Empire in 1852, (2) from the founding of the Second French Empire to its end, and (3) from the founding of the Kingdom of Italy to the end of the French Empire. These three chronological divisions point out one of the weaknesses in organization, since the latter two overlap. Some chapters

such as those dealing with the Crimean War stand completely outside these divisions. His treatment of the Revolution of 1848, as far as organization is concerned, might have been better had he treated the movement as a whole, that is, as it ran its course within national boundaries and within the entire span of the movement itself. By breaking it down into its local components and attempting to present it on a month-by-month basis, he fails to give a unified picture. This criticism is made, however, from a modern point of view and overlooks the earlier particularist approach common before the European states had achieved national boundaries.

Volume I of the history describes fully the events of the revolutionary years 1848 and 1849 and also the year 1850 in France, Germany, Austria, Italy, Prussia, Schleswig-Holstein, Hungary, and the several Italian states. It then presents a general picture of conditions in each of the remaining European countries, Russia and Turkey included.

Volume II devotes five chapters to the Crimean War, which Corvin calls the Russian-Turkish War (1853-1856) and describes the conditions during the years from 1853 to 1871 in the Western and Central European countries, the Far East, exclusive of Japan, and North and South America. The last six chapters deal with the Civil War in the United States, which Corvin had covered as a war correspondent.

Volume III concerns Mexico, particularly during the Empire under Maximilian. It also describes the relations of Prussia and Austria leading to the war with Denmark and the Seven Weeks' War. Finally, it describes the conditions prevailing toward the end of the period,

1853-1871, among the remaining great powers of Europe. This volume also includes 240 pages in fine print of biographical notes concerning persons mentioned in the text, also a number of pertinent documents.

As might be expected, considering the part Corvin played in the Revolution of 1848 in Germany, he places emphasis on the struggle of the people throughout Europe to achieve democratic reform and national statehood. The leaders of the various revolutionary movements are depicted as heroes, though he does not hesitate to level criticism at them should the wisdom of their actions be placed in question. On the other hand, the leaders of reaction and counter-revolution are given their just desserts. They are usually unalloyed villains, and he does not fail to express satisfaction if in the course of events they are punished by what appears to him to be poetic justice. For those who fail to take a stand on the vital issues of the day or who show themselves willing to compromise on principles he has only contempt.

The author is never blinded by his feelings to the point of condemning the people ruled by a reactionary government, however, or of condemning the actions of a particular government should those actions be just. There is no room in his history for sheer emotionalism. He remains an advocate of reasonably objective analysis.

Only in two cases does Corvin come in danger of losing a noble balance. One is in dealing with the United States. His admiration for America almost seems to place the integrity of his own nationalism in question.⁶⁰ The other case is in dealing with the church, especially

⁶⁰See Part III, Chapter 5, "Corvin and America".

the Roman Catholic Church, which gave its support to the established governments, encouraging the suppression of nationalists and democrats alike. The attitude of the church seemed to Corvin hypocritical in view of its professed aims of giving aid to the oppressed and suffering and of promoting in general the welfare of its followers. Again, however, it is not blind hatred of one church; he is just as ready to denounce the Evangelical Church in Prussia and the Anglican Church in England when their policies contravene the principles of political progress.

The most important chapters in Corvin's history from a present day point of view concern the Revolution of 1848-49 and the American Civil War. The treatment of the Revolution comprises over two thirds of volume I and the Civil War at least a half of volume II. Since the author plays the double role of historian and participant, the chapters chronicling these events and his own observations concerning them certainly have more value than those chapters in which he records history from secondary sources, considering also the fact that as a popular historian he fails to indicate those sources.

In Corvin's treatment of the Revolution of 1848-49 two elements of analysis seem important: first, his enumeration of the causes which brought about the Revolution, and, secondly, his enumeration of the reasons for its failure to achieve a successful conclusion. The course of the Revolution itself has been sufficiently recorded, and Corvin's account in this respect does not deviate from standard works.

The treatment of the causes of the Revolution is general in character and fails to show particular depth. Corvin regards the

revolutionary movement as stemming from the French Revolution of 1789 and more immediately from the Paris revolutions of July 1830 and February 1848. He emphasizes the widespread dissatisfaction of the German people with the arbitrary and whimsical actions of their rulers and maintains that this dissatisfaction was constantly kept alive by an ever vigilant press grown clever in the ways of evading censorship. The disappointment of the people over the broken promises of the individual princes following the War of Liberation and the contempt felt for the "ridiculous" Bundestag are also elements of this dissatisfaction. What finally aroused the Germans out of their usual "obedience and patience", according to his view, was the bold resurgence of the Catholic Church and above all the Schleswig-Holstein Question.

Not overlooking the importance of these factors, it must be pointed out that Corvin, especially in this case, ignores social and especially economic factors which also played an important part in the general unrest.⁶¹ He does not discern the increasing influence of a middle class growing in numbers through the development of science and technology, nor does he detect in Germany the emergence of an unorganized though vociferous proletariat. Nowhere does he make reference to Karl Marx, whose Communist Manifesto appeared in 1847, or to Friedrich Engels, although both were in Paris at the same time Corvin was. The general business depression and food shortages of the forties are also not mentioned, nor is reference made to the uprisings of the weavers in Silesia or the unrest

⁶¹For an elaboration of this point of view see: Oscar J. Hansen, "Economic and Social Factors in the Prussian Rhineland in 1848", American Historical Review, Vol. LIV, No. 4, pp. 825-840, July 1949.

of the workers in the Rhineland. Although Corvin seemed aware of a class conflict in France, he never refers to the struggle in Germany in these terms.

The factors involved in the failure of the Revolution are treated in greater detail. According to Corvin the movement was abortive because it lacked organization and had no definite plans.⁶² There was no republican party from which the revolution might have drawn its greatest support. What might have gone by that name was in Corvin's opinion composed of a small number of capable men and a more numerous group of fanatic stargazers who were ready to act but completely incapable of proposing a practical and feasible plan of action.⁶³ In addition the republican group was split into quarreling and jealous factions in which it was impossible for a leader to emerge without his being attacked by his own party members.

The constitutionalists, who represented the largest group, were also divided and unorganized. Corvin gives them a unique classification listing them as: aristocratic constitutionalists, aristocratic-democratic constitutionalists or liberals, and democratic constitutionalists, representing right, center, and moderate left wings respectively. As a group the constitutionalists were frightened by thoughts of the bloody revolutions of history and hoped to achieve political reform once having formulated a constitution on paper sworn to by the several legitimate princes in a spirit of love and goodness. To this group he ascribes the

⁶²See Herbert Cahn, Der Gedanke der Trennung von Kirche und Staat, doctors thesis, Wertheim/Main, Buchstein Publishers 1932, p. 7, for a recent emphasis of this point of view.

⁶³Corvin, Monatsschrift, Vol. I, p. 11.

failure of the Frankfort Parliament. Instead of creating a parliamentary army that would have supported its decrees, it lost valuable time in fruitless discussions. It was composed of too many professors for whom Corvin had no particular affection, and it committed the unforgiveable sin of ignoring the republican members of the assembly. It even went so far as to issue denunciations of the uprisings organized to come to its aid.

An additional cause for the failure of the revolution was the outbreak of the war with Denmark over Schleswig-Holstein, which Corvin designates as an unfortunate incident inspired by the nationalists. This only served to divert the attention of the revolutionaries from their main objective.⁶⁴

The political immaturity of the German people is also commented upon. Corvin claims that "on the part of the people nothing happens in Germany" and he accuses them during the uprisings in Baden of "here and there surreptitiously applauding but not moving from their seats".⁶⁵

In Corvin's estimation an unfortunate aspect of particularism which impeded the growth of a national patriotism was the instituting of local parliaments. These gradually came into conflict with the main parliament at Frankfort.⁶⁶ On the other hand, the Frankfort

⁶⁴Corvin, Neuzeit, Vol. I, p. 17.

⁶⁵Ibid., Vol. I, pp. 124, Vol. III, p. 1100.

⁶⁶Ibid., Vol. I, p. 17.

Parliament also acted as a deterrent to progressive action in the individual states, since most eyes were directed there in search of guidance which was not forthcoming. The hope of positive action from Frankfurt impeded local initiative.

Corvin is not as vindictive as many of the participants in the Revolution who looked for scapegoats among their political opponents, but he does single out Heinrich von Gagern, President of the Frankfurt Parliament, as the man most responsible for its ineffectiveness. His most damning criticism of Gagern is that he was a liberal of 1832! ⁶⁷

Over against the disorganized revolutionaries and reformers Corvin discerned a well-organized party of reactionaries who knew what they wanted and were not reluctant to use any means to achieve their ends. Their party was made up of the aristocracy and the greater part of the propertied class and was supported by the military and a passive bureaucracy. Encouraged by the reactionary turn of events in France and the foolish tumults of the left, it slowly but surely developed in strength to the point where it was able to crush its opponents. It did not go about this at first in an openhanded manner, but covered up its aims with well-sounding phrases.

This summation of the factors causing the failure of the Revolution leaves certain elements out of account that have been more clearly high lighted by recent research. It cannot be expected, of course, that he could have viewed the Revolution with as much objectivity and penetrating analysis as more recent historians of the period, but

⁶⁷Valentin speaks out for Gagern's "good will and honesty", but says he was not capable of handling quite complicated situations or significant tasks. cf. Valentin, Geschichte, Vol. I, p. 176 f.

his almost total failure to note the reaction of the bourgeoisie to the programs of social reform advocated by an increasingly vociferous working class and its leaders and its subsequent defection is not very understandable.⁶⁸ His own contemporary, the historian Bloch, writing some ten years later, makes an analysis of the revolution which in this respect is capable of being ranked with the most recent publications.⁶⁹ Oddly enough, in analyzing the course of the Revolution in Paris, Corvin very clearly discerns the reason for its failure there.⁷⁰

While his criticism of the Frankfurt Parliament may have some justification, it completely overlooks the stature and the intelligence of the men who composed it. It was not as insignificant a body as Corvin considered it to be. And his boast that the constitution which the Parliament produced could have been written down inside of twenty-four hours by a popular writer of ordinary caliber shows a

⁶⁸ This view that the bourgeoisie became frightened by the growing radicalism is represented by Rudolf Stadelmann, Alexander Abusch, William Ebenstein, and Veit Valentin in their respective works listed in the bibliography.

⁶⁹ Die Geschichte der deutschen Revolution, Wilhelm Bloch, Dietz Publisher, Stuttgart: 1893, compares favorably in content if not in breadth and depth with the work of Veit Valentin.

⁷⁰ Corvin, Neukait, Vol. I, p. 15: "The bourgeoisie seized the scepter of the interim republican government, just as it had seized the monarchical scepter after the July Revolution. It immediately formed a definite front against the purely democratic as well as the socialist principle, the latter of which was directed at freeing the producing class from the despotism of capitalist power."

lack of appreciation for the work of that august body.⁷¹

The fact that the revolution might have been successful had Germany already been a unified state with a national capital is not mentioned in Corvin's analysis.⁷² He does, however, approach a more recent thesis that the German revolution might have been successful had more aid been forthcoming from France.⁷³

In condemning the German people as politically immature Corvin fails to see that for a large portion of the population, especially the peasant or agricultural class, which according to Valentin comprised at that time two thirds of the population, the revolution had lost its purpose as soon as this class had been freed from feudal obligations.⁷⁴ Hence while support was given by this group during the initial stages of the revolution a defection occurred that seriously affected its chances for success.

In seeking the reasons for the failure of the Revolution solely within Germany, Corvin overlooked the fact that the Revolution was

⁷¹For a more recent evaluation and commendatory of the Frankfurt Parliament see: Sigfrid H. Steinberg, A Short History of Germany, Macmillan Company, New York: 1945, pp. 203-204, and Wilhelm Mohsen, Ursachen und Versagen des deutschen Bürgerkriegs. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der Jahre 1848-1849, Deutsche Verlagsanstalt, Stuttgart: 1949, 226 pp.

⁷²Rudolf Stadelmann, Deutschland und Westeuropa, Laupheim/Wuerttemberg: Steiner Publishers, 1948, p. 30.

⁷³For a full treatment of this point of view see: E. T. Tarsen, Le Gouvernement Provisoire et L'Europe. Paris: Press Universitaires de France, 1948, p. 76.

⁷⁴Valentin, Geschichte, Vol. I, p. 289 f.

part of a general wave of political unrest which swept over most of Europe only to recede before the forces of reaction and counterrevolution -- that achieved no immediate success anywhere outside of Switzerland.⁷⁵

To accuse the Frankfort Parliament or the German people of causing the failure of the Revolution is the result on his part of too restricted a point of view. Less restricted and less partisan are his views of the Civil War in America, which he was able to judge from the point of view of an outsider.

In his preface to the chapters on the Civil War, Corvin states his reasons as a European writer for presenting such a detailed account of the American conflict. According to his views the Civil War deserved a more thorough treatment than it had hitherto received at the hands of European historians. The growing interest in America due to the increased German emigration to "the land of the future" and the influence which this war had had on Europe were sufficient cause for treating it more thoroughly than some of the European wars which seemed to the average German reader to be of more immediate concern.

Corvin begins his presentation of the Civil War first by tracing its historical background. The institution and growth of slavery he ascribes to natural and economic conditions: climate and soil, the invention of the cotton gin by Whitney, and the abolition of slave trade in 1808, which caused an increase in the value of slaves. He

⁷⁵ Rudolf Stadelmann, "Das Jahr 1848 und die deutsche Geschichte", Deutsche Rundschau, May 1949, p. 107.

points out that as an institution slavery encouraged the growth of a landed aristocracy, such as the one in Europe, which looked down upon the farmers and shopkeepers of the North as a race of inferiors. And, this difference in social status was further aggravated by a variance in religious belief between Puritan and Anglican.

As more immediate causes he mentions economic difficulties, such as the protective tariff objectionable to the Southerners and the feeling of political insecurity in the South due to the rapid growth of population in the free North. The waxing intensity of feeling between slavery and antislavery is then traced by recounting the incidents preceding the outbreak of hostilities: the admission of Kansas as a state, the Dred Scott decision, the execution of John Brown, Lincoln's election, the secession of South Carolina, and the bombardment of Fort Sumter.⁷⁶ Within this sequence of events appears a translation of Lincoln's first inaugural address.

Before taking up a fairly detailed account of the military campaigns from the beginning to the end of the war, Corvin describes the feeling and activity that prevailed in both North and South, the political situation in Washington, and the initial military maneuvers on both sides.

The author cannot say whether Corvin's accounts of the battles of the Civil War contribute any new data to that which is already at hand, but it is to be noted that he supports General McClellan in the

⁷⁶Corvin's analysis of the historical background of the Civil War is as complete as could be expected from a writer of his day. It lacks, naturally, that depth of vision supplied by later research. cp. James G. Randall, The Civil War and Reconstruction, D. C. Heath Co., Boston: 1937.

face of all opposition and looks upon his dismissal as the result of Stanton's enmity toward him and the overwhelming influence which the Secretary of War exerted on the President.⁷⁷ The only thing Corvin can bring himself to say against McClellan is that he "perhaps might be accused of an exaggerated reluctance to attack a foe whose strength and skill he overestimated with means which seemed insufficient to him."

In general he regards the Union army commanders as incapable and regrets the unnecessary loss of life brought about by their foolish mistakes. His respect for the American soldier is genuine and forces him to remark that "a government and ambitious, incompetent generals never played more lightly in war with human life than happened in this Civil War in North America".⁷⁸ General Grant is especially selected as a target for criticism⁷⁹ and Stanton and Halleck are referred to as "armchair strategists who could not comprehend that an army couldn't move as easily as their fingers over a map".⁸⁰ Corvin's respect for

⁷⁷ Corvin's defense of McClellan is presented from a military point of view and is certainly worthy of consideration. See Corvin, Neuseit, Vol. II, pp. 868-872, 875, 893-897, 952, 963 f., 975. Additional material may be found in Corvin, Erinnerungen, Vol. III, p. 221 f., 287 f., Vol. IV, pp. 175 f., 204, 347-350.

⁷⁸ Corvin, Neuseit, Vol. II, p. 915.

⁷⁹ Ibid., p. 924.

⁸⁰ Corvin, Erinnerungen, is also worth-while reference for contemporary views of Civil War generals and statesmen. For an estimation of Grant see Vol. III, pp. 247-250; Halleck: Vol. III, pp. 246-250, 266, Vol. IV, p. 373 f.; Blenker: Vol. III, pp. 222, 225, Vol. IV, pp. 96-99, 176; Stanton: Vol. IV, p. 176.

Lincoln is sincere and is expressed in the best tradition of American historians.⁸¹ His comparison of Lincoln and Jefferson Davis is naturally in favor of the former.

Throughout Corvin's account of the war it is quite apparent that his sympathies always lie with the North. The attitude of the Southerners is haughty and contemptuous, and the cruelties committed on both sides are always worse when committed in the South. He brands slavery as a "barbarism inherited from our fathers which is an injustice that cries to heaven and which is condemned by all civilized human beings". In summing up the part played by soldiers of both sides, he states that in the South the war was a question of existence; it affected each man personally. In the North, however, military service was to a large extent the sacrifice of life for a noble cause.

Recognition is also given the part played by the German immigrants in the war, although this phase is not by any means stressed as might be expected. The aid given Lincoln by Carl Schurz in Wisconsin, Gustave Koerner in Illinois, and Carl L. Bernays, in Missouri, in bringing about his election, the appointment of various 48'ers such as Blenker and Sigel, the performance of "German" divisions like that of Blenker in saving Washington during the First Battle of Bull Run receive at least honorable mention.

Corvin's final observation concerning the war from the point of view of a European is of interest to Americans. It runs as follows:

⁸¹ For descriptions of Lincoln see: Corvin, *Heussat*, Vol. II, p. 833 f., p. 1010 f. Also *Erinnerungen*, Vol. IV, p. 112.

The manner in which this historically singular civil war was conducted rightfully aroused the astonishment of the old world. Though one might there smile and make sarcastic remarks about the lack of skill of inexperienced generals in a science which can be acquired only through experience for which one in America has had luckily little opportunity, that which the American soldier performed aroused their admiration in the highest degree, for greater deeds of heroism than were performed in this great war by both North and South were performed neither by the glorious Roman legions, the old guard of Napoleon, nor the Austrians, Russians, or even the Prussians, — of whom it is very doubtful if they would have battled as bravely as the Americans, — if they had been led so badly.

Still more admirable perhaps than the bravery and joy of sacrifice of the Americans in the field was the manner in which they adjusted themselves to conditions which were entirely new to them. In the old world an especially trained general staff provides in case of war for the extremely important and difficult problem of transportation, and everything is previously arranged for the care of sick and wounded; if the war machine is set in motion, everything runs automatically. And that in spite of everything it does not always go so smoothly, one can learn from European wars. Who does not recall the wretched disorder and evil conditions in the Crimean War! The wars in Europe usually take place in an area which is hardly the size of a small American state, while the American theaters of war were often separated by distances such as that from Petersburg to Madrid and were situated in areas for which there were no maps and in which for many miles no dwelling was to be seen. And, nevertheless, in a few months transportation and medical aid were organized in the United States in such a way that it aroused the admiration of the Europeans whose governments⁸² sent official observers to learn from the Americans.

At the close of Corvin's account he describes the assassination of Lincoln and the arrest and execution of John Wilkes Booth. Johnson's speech before the opening session of Congress, December 4, 1865, is present as most praiseworthy and deserving of note by the heads of the various European governments. His treatment of the dispute

⁸²Corvin, Neuzeit, Vol. II, p. 995 f.

which arose between Congress and President Johnson over Reconstruction really falls outside the scope of the war period but is included by Corvin as within the natural framework of the subject.

Geschichte der grossen franzosischen Revolution

The last major work to appear from Corvin's pen like the first was a historical narrative. It chronicled an event in history which Corvin felt was the most important in all the years of man's progress toward political and intellectual emancipation, and no greater testimony could be given of his devotion to democracy or illustrate the perennial spirit of revolution within him than this book written when he was already seventy years of age.

It is characteristic of most men who begin their political life with a radical slant that increasing age tempers their outlook into conservatism, and many of Corvin's contemporaries conformed to this pattern after the Revolution of 1848 had failed and the golden age of Bismarckian rule had set in. It may be that Corvin, too, for a time, came under the spell of the Iron Chancellor, at least he was inclined to attribute Bismarck's failings to the restraints placed upon him by Emperor William I. But if he held his criticism of Bismarck to a minimum, he felt no compulsion in expressing his dissatisfaction with the Hohenzollern government. The constitution and the houses of parliament to him only camouflaged an underlying despotism.⁸³

⁸³ See Boston Daily Advertiser, February 17, 1872, Vol. 119, No. 42 as support for this and the following statement. This source is hereafter referred to as BDA.

At times after his return from America Carvin doubted whether his countrymen were capable of comprehending democracy. The average Prussian seemed to him to be still a "flunky" at heart. Notwithstanding this he hoped for the better and felt certain that education would change things — not an education controlled by state and church, but a self-help or independent type of education acquired through a free press. It was with the hope of aiding this process of self-instruction that he wrote Die Geschichte der grossen franzossischen Revolution (History of the Great French Revolution) and strove to present it not as seen through the eyes of a disciplined, order-loving, servant of Obrigkeit, but through those of a lover of freedom.

The full title of this two-volume work is Die Geschichte der grossen franzossischen Revolution und ihrer Folgen (History of the Great French Revolution and its Effects). It treats not only of the Revolution but of the period and events following it up to the years 1848-49. Although not as universal as his other histories, it does include all of Europe — Russia, Poland, and Turkey as well — and the United States within its scope. The two volumes are divided into four parts unequal in content: (1) from the beginning of the Revolution to the foundation of the Napoleonic Empire, (2) from the Napoleonic Empire to the Restoration, (3) from the Restoration to the July Revolution, (4) from the July Revolution to the outbreak of the European movement for freedom.

Like the two preceding histories this one was meant for the general reader and hence contains nothing new in the way of historical research. It is unlike them, however, in that it is not as popular

in tone as Geschichte des Altertums and does not have the value of a primary document such as Geschichte der Neuzeit. Primarily it is of value as an individual interpretation of the Revolution and as an insight into the author's political make-up, and it is from this point of view that the two volumes must be considered rather than as historical treatises capable of being compared with works more scholarly in nature.

Corvin's concept of the French Revolution is fundamentally that it was a struggle by the freedom-loving elements of all nations to liberate themselves from the servitude of absolutist governments. As he says "the history of France during this period is the history of the world and the history of the world is again the history of the French or great revolution".⁸⁴ That it occurred in France was only a historical accident. As for its specific aims, it strove against the sum of "historical rights", that is, those rights of the privileged classes which arose during the course of history and which at the time of the Revolution were in conflict with reason, freedom, and the general well-being of the people. That the Revolution should have arisen at all was due, not so much to the unbearable subjection of the people in France, as to the relationship between oppression and the knowledge or educational level of the people. In this regard Corvin's judgment coincides with modern historical opinion. In his own words, "the Revolution proceeded from the disproportion in which servitude and intelligence stood to each other, for only to an

⁸⁴ Otto von Corvin, Geschichte der grossen franzosischen Revolution, Cressner and Schramm, Leipzig: 1884, Vol. I, p. 5. Hereafter referred to as Revolution.

intelligent people is servitude unbearable".⁸⁵ Nevertheless, he admits that the burden on the French people was heavy enough to be considered a natural cause, and the various taxes on the people are recorded as in other histories of the Revolution.

An element seldom mentioned by most historians of the French Revolution as an influence in the development of revolutionary fervor is the part played by French troops sent to America to take part in the American War of Independence. Corvin maintains that the soldiers became so imbued in America with a genuine republican spirit that they spread it among the remaining French troops after their return home and won them over for the cause of the people.⁸⁶

It is interesting to note that Corvin condones the Reign of Terror which so many historians have condemned and which no doubt was frequently held up by moderates and conservatives as a warning to order-loving German citizens. He writes:

The historians who inveigh against the Reign of Terror are strangely usually those who speak of the glorious deeds and heroes of wars which they describe with pathos and glorious recognition.... The Revolution was to be sure filled with murders, atrocities, disrespect of rights, etc.; but it had at least, certainly a rational goal, the free state, and a human and moral purpose, the liberation of the people from a brutal slavery and their elevation to human dignity. The countless political wars, however, whose heroes and deeds are so much glorified, had usually no calculable purpose for the people or for human happiness and were no less filled, indeed even more so, with murders, atrocities, and disrespect for rights.⁸⁷

⁸⁵cp. Louis R. Gottschalk, The Era of the French Revolution, Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston: 1929, p. 5.

⁸⁶Corvin, Revolution, p. 15.

⁸⁷Ibid., Vol. I, p. 23 f.

The uprising of the peasants against their feudal lords is considered as justifiable in a similar manner. It is remarkable that a man of Corvin's advanced years could still write about this incident with so much feeling:

They /the peasants/ not only refused payment of their feudal dues and compliance with the corvée, but stormed their châteaux, threw the manorial rolls into the fire, destroyed furniture, set fire to the rooms and outhouses, murdered the persons hateful to them and performed truly bestial atrocities which one, however, in the case of these people treated only as beasts will find quite natural.⁸⁸

The excesses of the Thermidorian Reaction he considers, however, in a slightly different light and relates that in Lyon the "Brothers of the Sun and the Brothers of Jesus" carrying their rosaries and led by priests in sacramental robes, opened the doors of the prisons and struck down in the blindest fanaticism all of the inmates.

In considering the question of the clergy under the decree of June 12, 1790, Corvin does not take the stand that might be expected from the author of the Pfaffenstueckel. He felt that the sensible way to have solved the problem would have been to have pensioned the existing clergy, separate the church from the state and make its support the responsibility of those "whose happiness is dependent on churches and its ministers". The means employed by the National Assembly only occasioned a bitter struggle extremely ruinous to the Revolution.⁸⁹

Corvin's position in reference to the French Revolution receives additional clarification through his appraisal of its leading personalities.

⁸⁸Corvin, Revolution, Vol. I, p. 104.

⁸⁹Ibid., Vol. I, p. 140.

that he thought of Danton, Robespierre, Marat, and Napoleon presents, perhaps, nothing fundamentally new but it does give a singular refraction of their characters through the eyes of an outstanding forty-eighter.

With regard to Danton and Robespierre who have their respective defenders in Albert Mathiez and Alphonse Aulard, Corvin took no particular stand. By that is meant that he did not consider either one the outstanding figure. If forced to choose, however, he would have given preference to Danton over Robespierre. In Robespierre, Corvin sensed a type of fanatic radical with whom he himself had come in contact during the Revolution of 1848. To him Robespierre was a demagogue "enflamed for a self-made, rigid, dogmatic system of political Moralphilosophie. He recognized his keenness, strength of morals, and incorruptibility, but he accused him of coveting honor, envying the influence of others, and yearning for fame. He was not above personal enmity, and his demagoguery was more dazzling than genuine.⁹⁰ He was finally "a man who worked not so much out of love for liberty, for the Revolution, as much as out of a desire for the votive incense of the people, out of fanaticism for his system, and out of a belief in a world historic mission conferred upon him by the Supreme Being".⁹¹ The reason Robespierre was not besmirched with bribery was that at the time the court resorted to such a practice he was too insignificant a man to be approached. Nevertheless, Corvin justifies

⁹⁰Corvin, Revolution, Vol. I, p. 230: Corvin's verdict is certainly supported by Alphonse Aulard in Les Grands Criseurs de la Revolution, F. Bieder & Co., Paris: 1914, pp. 215 f., where he accuses Robespierre of mysticism, pedantry, literary vanity, puritan virtue, and misanthropy.

⁹¹Ibid., Vol. I, p. 325: Aulard likewise supports the view that religion rather than the form of the state was Robespierre's main underlying principle. See Alphonse Aulard, op. cit., p. 238.

Robespierre's actions up to the point where he attempted to erect a Republic of Virtue.

The Revolution had proceeded purely and alone out of the need for liberty; from this source arose also the justification for terrorism.... Up to this time Robespierre had acted according to this view. However, in that he now let fall the idea of liberty as the guiding principle for the founding of a new state in which the idea of virtue was combined with the concept of force, he falsified not only the original goal, but also the character of the Revolution. ⁹²

According to Corvin it was Robespierre who actually took the first step toward reaction by doing away with the men who were more decided and more consistent revolutionists than he.

Danton, on the other hand, was regarded by Corvin as having but one passion, a true love for liberty. He lacked the bad qualities of a demagogue and possessed the good ones to a high degree. He joined a persuasive eloquence with a fundamentally healthy political understanding. And, he was a man of deeds. But he lacked the keen political insight of Marat.

Marat, it was he, after the unavoidable fall of Danton and Robespierre might have saved the Revolution had he been given the recognition from his contemporaries that he deserved and had he not met an untimely death at the hands of Charlotte Corday. It was Marat who had suggested a revolutionary dictatorship and Corvin felt sure that such an agency would have prevented factional disunity, would have produced decisive action, and in the end would have achieved success.

⁹²Corvin, Revolution, Vol. I, p. 330. cp. Albert Mathiez, La Revolution Francaise, Armand Colin, Paris: 1927, Vol. III, p. 25 f.

If the revolution had brought forth a man with both the qualities of Marat and Danton, Corvin believed the Revolution might have taken a different and more favorable course.

If the irrational Robespierre was incapable of leading the Revolution to a consistent goal, and the endeavors of Danton and Marat were lost to it, there was still a man who might have saved the situation -- Napoleon. That this man failed to do so constituted in Corvin's eyes one of the greatest betrayals of all times. In his analysis of Napoleon the negative side of his character far outweighs the positive, and the destructive element of his action outbalances the constructive. Napoleon had had the opportunity through a development of the new spirit which was called forth by the Revolution to make the world happy and strong against the forces of reaction, but he was the victim of his own lust for power and glory. Corvin carefully lays bare Napoleon's ambition and egotism and describes how he deliberately duped the people with his cunning march to the emperorship. Granted that he spread the ideas of the French Revolution into Germany, promoted public works, and was instrumental in establishing the Napoleonic Code, he still did many things Corvin could not accept. He turned the schools into military seminaries, stamped out freedom of the press, and signed a concordat with Rome which reestablished the Church. Through this last step alone he sacrificed in Corvin's estimation all the important moral gains made by the Revolution. Furthermore, he set up a mock constitutional government, created a new nobility, and last of all had himself crowned ruler by "divine right". As a result of this Corvin had little sympathy for him.

To be sure, he defends him in his wish to humble proud, perfidious Albion -- that nation "which seeks to exploit and guide Europe in the interest of its aristocracy and plutocracy" -- but it is only temporary. Those who regard with pity the picture of the once great Emperor alone on St. Helena, deserted even by the woman he had made Empress of most of Europe, are reminded that he left his first wife and that he could not expect love and loyalty from someone whom he had forced into a marriage. Although Corvin admits Napoleon was great, still he insists it was a greatness inferior to that of Frederick II or Joseph II because "he failed completely to serve the historic purposes of his appearance". Napoleon's banishment in the end is pronounced as tragic but just.

That the Napoleonic Empire was extended over Germany is not regarded by Corvin as a misfortune. He does not consider it with the eyes of an ultra-nationalist who sees in it the subjugation of Germany to foreign rule, but rather with those of a man who welcomes the death blow to the antiquated form of the Holy Roman Empire. The oppression of Napoleonic rule in Germany also fails to arouse his emotion because it "fell on the princes, aristocrats, and privileged classes rather than on the burgher and peasant who were no more oppressed than before".⁹³ He points out that the vassal states in Germany enjoyed more of the fruits of the Revolution than France itself.

The picture of Germany during the Napoleonic period, wretchedly divided, made powerless through the selfishness of its petty princes,

⁹³Corvin, Revolution, Vol. II, p. 695.

Corvin brings forcibly to the readers attention, and he delights in the scornful presentation of humiliated German rulers fawning for favors at Paris and Fontainebleau. It is with difficulty that he brings himself to say a good word for Karl August of Weimar, the noble patron of German literature. To be sure the Ministers Stein and Hardenburg are praised, but there are few men in this period whom he considers worthy of commendation. Burke, for example, who aroused his countrymen against the French Revolution, is called "unprincipled", and Washington, who spoke against aid to France, "thankless". Kosciusko is reprimanded for not understanding that the excesses of the revolutionists were only the birth pains of a new government. And, as for Lafayette, he is simply pronounced "intellectually weak".

It might easily be imagined that Corvin with his intense hatred toward despotic royalty would gloat over the fate of Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette. Such is not the case. He exercises remarkable restraint. Louis, whom Corvin presents as a hypocritical weakling rather than a despot is despatched into the hereafter in complete objectivity. The end of Marie Antoinette is barely mentioned, perhaps to avoid arousing sympathy for her. Only in the case of the Dauphin does Corvin show an unnecessary hardness of heart. Concerning the treatment he received at the hands of his attendant, a shoemaker and "king-hater", Corvin writes:

It was indeed rather barbaric, but basically, probably not harsher than that inflicted on many children of poor parents during their apprenticeship. Little Louis had to suffer for his high birth quite in the same manner as other children suffer for being low-born. ⁹⁴

⁹⁴Corvin, Revolution, Vol. I, p. 311.

The period after 1815 is not as fully recorded or as well analyzed as the period preceding it. Corvin describes primarily the post-Napoleonic conditions in the various European and American states, noting thereby the attempts of the Holy Alliance and the reaction to suppress the democratic movement. The wars of restoration in Spain and Italy, the unrest in Ireland and England, the activity of the Burschenschaften in Germany, and the revolutions in Poland, Greece, France, and the South American countries all find a place as expressing the new spirit of liberty. A chapter is even devoted to the extension and strengthening of democracy in the United States. Monroe is praised as one of America's greatest presidents. In treating the Greek War for independence considerable space is devoted to a summary of the diplomatic moves in connection with it. That the great powers became entangled in the Greek question is shown to emanate more from selfish motives than from any love for freedom.

In general Corvin tries to emphasize the role diplomacy played in the formation of historic events. To do this he felt it was necessary to minimize the space given to the narration of military encounters. Although a modern reader of Corvin's works still feels that the military element is overstressed, it is noteworthy that Corvin attempted to break away from a long tradition in historical exposition which considered armed conflicts a major element. As a justification of his point of view he writes:

One will have recognized that, with the presentation of wars, which unfortunately fill up the greatest part of world history, we always treat the really military only very superficially, but that we devote a disproportionately greater care and thoroughness to the political or diplomatic. Without doubt we answer best through this maxim the purpose of the work at

hand, since that political or diplomatic impulse which advantageously teaches on what threads and by what hands the great fate of man is directed, offers the people a more interesting and more educational source of knowledge of that which oppresses them than the presentation of systematic murder. ⁹⁵

Besides the material generally included in a narration of the French Revolution, Corvin adds many items of interest that increase the readability of his book. One learns for example that the guillotine rather than being a symbol of terror was really an instrument of mercy, representing a timely improvement on previous methods of decapitation. The Duke of Brunswick, usually maligned as the author of the Brunswick Manifesto, is shown not to have written the document in question. At another point he tells an interesting story of the origin of the French national colors, and one learns that the goddess of reason enthroned in Notre Dame was not a prostitute but in reality the very respected wife of a reputable Paris physician.

Corvin's descriptions of some of the important events of the Revolution are almost as vivid as if he himself had been present. His journalistic style is especially well adapted for dealing with the many dramatic episodes. It is by means of graphic delineations, recorded conversations, the inclusion of interesting details and admirable character portrayals, that Corvin succeeds in making the Revolution live. His book may not be a profound study and may not present anything new to historical research, but it makes extremely enjoyable reading and it does have value as a document written about a

⁹⁵Corvin, Revolutionism, Vol. II, p. 621.

revolution by a man who himself participated in one.

In France with the Germans

Although Corvin would not have classified this work as one of his histories and it is by no means a history of the Franco-Prussian War, it still has such a strong element of historical narrative about it, that its inclusion here is felt justifiable. In many respects it reads like the report of a military tactician. Its author is unable to refrain from long and involved descriptions of military campaigns that must have been regarded even by the average reader of his own day with considerable lack of interest. However, if one combs through the book with some care, enough may be gained from it to make it worth-while reading to the student of history who is in search of a picture of the times or who is interested in a fairly unbiased presentation of the German attitude preceding and during the conflict that brought about German unity.

The forty-eight page introduction to the work is the most interesting in presenting Corvin's views concerning the war. He traces in brief the history of the Germans from the end of the Thirty Years' War to his own day, stressing the conditions within Germany under the many principalities of the Holy Roman Empire, the relations between France and Germany, and the struggle of the German people to achieve national unity and political freedom. He is sure that the "Germans are a good and fair thinking people" and that they "have had, and are fulfilling a highly creditable

civilizing mission in the world". He also maintains that they are a peace-loving people but that their patriotism is aroused when the French raise the cry for a frontier on the Rhine. He makes a rather strong case for German self-determination and seems to believe that with a united and strong Germany the peace of Europe may be assured. France's activity in the cultural sphere is praised, but her military aspirations past and present are decried. Although it might be assumed from Corvin's record up to this time that Bismarck would be regarded with distrust, such is not the case. He is warmly praised and the onus for the war is placed on Napoleon III.

In view of recent events it is interesting to note that Corvin, who was already an American citizen, a staunch democrat, and a man who prided himself on his unemotional judgments concerning history was able to write the following paragraphs:

A Napoleon I would not be possible in Germany, for the Germans, though always ready to defend their own country and national independence, would never follow the lead of a military hero, whose ambition prompted him to suppress the liberty of other nations. ⁹⁶

Beyond this /self-determination/, the ambition of the Germans does not extend. They do not wish for other conquests, and what was done in former times was not done by them, but by their princes, and a repetition of such an injustice as the division of Poland is impossible in our age. ⁹⁷

Such paragraphs can only be understood when considered within the historical context of the age in which they were written.

Volume I describes the war from its beginning up to the end of

⁹⁶Otto von Corvin, In France with the Germans, Richard Bentley & Son, London: 1872, Vol. I, p. xliii. Hereafter referred to as In France.

⁹⁷Ibid., p. xlii.

the siege of Strasbourg and the entry of the Germans into Versailles. As a correspondent for the Vienna Neue Freie Presse Corvin followed the movements of the German army as closely as possible. He intended at first to attach himself to the headquarters of one of the three armies, but knowing that headquarter correspondents were not free and were expected to write only what was agreeable, he resolved to remain independent. Because of this he was able to change from one front to another at will, depending on the amount of military activity.

Corvin at first attached himself to the Third or South Army, commanded by the Prince of Prussia, and witnessed the battles of Saarbruck, Forbach, Spichern Ridge, and Woerth. On August 19, one day after the great battle of Gravelotte, he joined the 2nd or middle army under Prince Frederick Charles, and although he had missed the encounter itself was able to describe at first-hand the conditions immediately following it as well as the siege of Metz. Feeling that the siege itself would probably be of long duration, Corvin returned to the 3rd army once more where he made a tour through Alsace ending up before Strasbourg in time to witness its bombardment and capitulation. On October 21, he proceeded to Versailles where he remained until the end of the war. On February 12, he visited Paris for a day and returned again to witness the entry of the German troops and their two-day occupation of the city.

As is to be expected there is much of the war which Corvin himself did not personally experience. His narrative is tied together with eyewitness accounts and descriptions from official reports. The

battle of Metzlotte for example is described solely with recourse to second-hand sources, and the Battle of Sedan is not elaborated on at all, because Corvin felt the English newspapers had already done an excellent job of reporting it. Now and then history is resorted to for the purpose of furnishing background material. This is especially true when Corvin explains the relation of Alsace-Lorraine to Germany and France.

Because of Corvin's reporting on the Civil War in the States he was in a favorable position to make comparisons. These comparisons between the German army and the Army of the Republic almost invariably redound to the latter's credit, insofar as they do not refer to the military skill of the American generals. His greatest praise for the Union Army is embodied in the following excerpt:

I saw the war in America from 1861 to the end. The Americans have not made the art of war their principal study, and when the great Civil War fell upon them like a thunderbolt, it found them utterly unprepared. Captains who in time of peace were scarcely able to command their companies -- at least not in such a manner as would be approved in Prussia -- were called to the head of great armies.... I do not think that General Moltke learned his strategy from the American generals; but still he and all military men learned a great deal from the American War in other respects. The Americans are a most ingenious and practical people; and, such as the world laughed at the military blunders of many of their generals, it greatly and justly admired all the arrangements for the comfort of the army in the field. Though the difficulties in America are infinitely greater than in Europe, where towns and villages are to be met with every mile or two, the army was provisioned in unprecedented abundance.

⁹⁸ Corvin felt very strongly that from the historical point of view Germany was justified in annexing these two provinces and quoted Carlyle as having spoken in favor of German hegemony. Corvin, In France, Vol. I, p. 236.

Letters and parcels were delivered to the soldiers with wonderful speed and regularity, though they had to travel sometimes over thousands of miles; newspapers were in the hands of most soldiers, whilst the Prussians in France were held in ignorance of what happened in the world for weeks, and the utmost care was taken of the sick and wounded under difficulties in comparison to which those in Europe appear trifles.

The sanitary arrangements of the Americans soon acquired great and well-deserved reputation throughout the world, and delegates from many nations came to learn from them; even Russia sent there one of her highest sanitary officers....

Hundreds /of German/ soldiers died on the battlefield who might have been saved, if ... sufficient means had been provided for shelter or transportation, as was done by the less warlike but more paternal government of the great Republic.

The severely wounded American soldiers who could not be transported to the regular hospitals were placed in large and lofty tents, and for those who could be transported hundreds of conveniently built ambulances were ready, whilst the German wounded remained for days and nights on the battlefield, or at least in miserable hovels, or were carried away in miserable ladder-waggons with scarcely as much care as a bale of goods and often without even a drop of water. 99

Corvin draws another favorable comparison when he refers to the treatment of casualties:

Another proof that the German government has no heart for soldiers who are disabled, and still less regard for the feelings of the families who furnish them the life material, is the manner in which the dead are dealt with. In this respect they might also have learned from the Americans. In the neighborhood of Washington, and at many other places, large and beautifully laid out burial grounds, or rather gardens, may be seen, where the soldiers who died in the great war are buried, and whose bodies were carefully brought up from the battlefields, where they had lain for many months in the earth.... Each body lies now under a

99Corvin, In France, Vol. II, pp. 43-46.

separate green hillock, and at the head is a gravestone, with a detailed inscription. These military burial grounds are kept up by the state, and always in most excellent order. Such an idea would appear preposterous to Prussian finances." 100

A great deal of space is devoted to human interest stories which perhaps give the work its greatest popular appeal. The author is adept at making personality sketches and relating anecdotes. He was only too well aware of the impact of the war on the common man and did not hesitate to illustrate it. His descriptions include both sides and the starving French civilian is described with as much sympathy as the Prussian soldier who dies heroically on the field of battle.

There is no glorification of war in Corvin's account, but rather a consistent realism. The descriptions of the battle fields strewn with dead, the maimed and injured, the helpless French refugees, the destruction of private property and cultural objects, more than counterbalance the few accounts of military heroism.

On one point Corvin is quite sensitive, namely in reference to widespread stories of Prussian cruelties and atrocities. He admits in some instances the employment of military severity but only where it was justified by the actions of franc-tireurs or treacherous civilians. Numerous incidents are cited to illustrate the forbearance and kindness of the German soldiers. The author seemed quite impressed that unaccompanied German ladies might travel on German troop trains without fear of being molested. Some reports of wanton destruction

100 Corvin, *In France*, Vol. II, p. 47.

by Prussian soldiers are actually investigated by him and the true state of things reported. He also points out that whereas Napoleon I looted the various galleries of Europe, the Germans removed no art objects from France, but, on the contrary, tried their best to protect them. The artillery before Strasbourg he claims was ordered to avoid striking the Cathedral, and the war itself was unduly prolonged because the King of Prussia refused to permit the bombardment of the beleaguered city of Paris.

For Napoleon III Corvin showed little concern. He looked upon him as the person who rang the death knell of the Second Republic just as his illustrious predecessor and uncle had done for the First Republic. He accuses him of fanning the flame of jealousy in France against Prussia in order to cover up his own failure in Mexico and of coveting a military victory over Prussia in the Seven Weeks' War with Austria. He felt further that Napoleon had no more right to demand the evacuation of the Prussians from Luxembourg after the dissolution of the German Diet than he had in demanding from King William I that he forbid the Prince of Hohenzollern from ever accepting the Spanish crown. In his summation he judges Napoleon along with the French nation:

The arrogant tone of the French, and the interference of their Emperor with German domestic affairs, made them /the Germans/ angry. They wanted a settled state, but this was prevented by the ambition and arrogance of their unruly neighbor; it became evident that peace would not be possible, until France should have received a sound thrashing, and been tumbled down from the position at the head of Europe, which she had so misused, and for which the French were of all nations the least fit, on account of their vanity, levity, and fickleness. 101

101 Corvin, In France, Vol. I, p. xli.

Corvin's appraisal of Bismarck is expressed in more complimentary tones. From one who had suffered six years of imprisonment for aiding the democratic movement of 1848-49 it might be expected that Corvin would regard Bismarck with suspicion. Such is not the case. He is termed "able and bold, prudent and sagacious and skillful". One might suspect with the historian Blos that Corvin "had become converted to a form of national-liberalism" in deference to the Iron Chancellor.¹⁰² Although democratic in his aspirations Corvin was a nationalist at heart and longed for a united Germany. He was in no little measure dissatisfied with the course of events in 1848-49 that they failed to achieve just that. As he himself says in the introduction:

The experiences of the years 1848 and 1849 had taught the leaders of the German people that neither liberty nor unity could be attained in Germany by revolutionary means, and that the latter was the first step to reach the former. It is true that opinion in reference to this point was divided, but the majority of the nation longed for that unity which promised to realize their desire to occupy a respectable political position amongst the nations of Europe.¹⁰³

The fact that Bismarck was able to bring about this unity placed him high in Corvin's estimation.

His accidental interview in Versailles with Bismarck, who remarked to Corvin that "the same ideas which led you into prison

¹⁰²Wilhelm Blos, op. cit., p. 598. Blos means to imply by "national-liberalism" that Corvin forsook his earlier democratic convictions. It must be remembered, however, that In France with the Germans was written by Corvin in the first flush of enthusiasm over the unification of Germany. His later writings do not support Blos' assertion. Already by 1872 he wrote to the Boston Daily Advertiser: "I will not investigate how far Bismarck is tainted with despotic views; but only advise to consider in judging this minister that if he will do any good at all he must never attempt what is made impossible by the character of his master." Feb. 17, 1872, Vol. 119, No. 42.

¹⁰³Corvin, In France, Vol. I, p. xxvii f.

brought me to the position which I occupy at present"¹⁰⁴ converted Corvin on the spot into an ardent admirer of the Iron Chancellor, although he was not alone perhaps in this conversion:

Count Bismarck became far more popular amongst the Germans in America and Australia than he was in Germany itself. In fact, they were the first to feel the effect of the change. Their position was altered in a remarkable manner; the people amongst whom they lived respected them far more than before.¹⁰⁵

He reports the end of the interview with feeling, and remarks: "When he gave me his hand, it seemed to me as if the great years of 1848 and 1870 made peace with each other, and it may be that this interview was intended to express as much, if it had political meaning at all."¹⁰⁶

In concluding Corvin gives an interesting account of the entry of the Germans into Paris:

The Arc de Triomphe was surrounded by a crowd, and I was astonished to find the road underneath unopened, as I thought the Emperor would pass here at the head of his troops. Three innocent hussars, who had been told to ride straight on, and not knowing the way around, prepared to pass underneath the arch, notwithstanding the chains, but they were waved off with angry shouting by the people, and when inquiring for the way, all manner of directions were given, and they were all laughed at

Everywhere I found dense crowds standing behind the lines of the national guard, eager to have a peek at the Prussians. I did not see such excitement amongst the people, nor did I hear expressions of hatred; the people strolled about as they would have done on any holiday.... The whole immense square /Place de la Concorde/ and the wide avenue of the Champs Elysees were crowded with Parisians of all classes. They were astonished that the

¹⁰⁴Corvin, *In France*, Vol. II, p. 211.

¹⁰⁵*Ibid.*, Vol. I, p. xxxi. Even Carl Schurz lauded Bismarck at this time referring to him as "the foremost man in Europe and the most popular man in Germany". See *EDA*, December 24, 1872, Vol. 120, no. 149.

¹⁰⁶Corvin, *In France*, Vol. II, p. 212.

German soldiers looked so red-checked and well, after the hardships of such a severe winter campaign, and many believed that they had been purposely picked out to be sent to Paris. I was almost sorry that the Emperor sent the 11th Corps to Paris, which was, perhaps, the least good looking of all, for it contained a great number of Bavarians, whose field uniforms were somewhat dirty and shabby after such heavy service....

The troops behaved admirably. The behavior of the Germans toward women, and the circumstance that no drunken soldiers were lying about, astonished the Parisians greatly; but, they added, shrugging their shoulders, "they have not the hot temper of the French"; and concerning drink, "they can stand an immense quantity". You see there is no merit even in German virtue!

The moon shone brightly, and the number of promenading people was great. Some social coquettes, who wanted to sign the preliminaries of peace with the fair haired sons of the north, were very roughly handled by fanatical gamins. They were awfully whipped, and after all their finery had been torn from them, they were sent adrift....

In the afternoon of March 2 all Paris was out in the Champs Elysees. The Parisians moved amongst the soldiers, and admired them. Detachments of the guards came in without their guns, and were shown the Louvre and the garden of the Tuilleries, and most of them returned from there, with laurels, or other green branches in their helmets. Many officers from the neighboring camps profited by this opportunity to see at least something of Paris....

Count Bismarck, accompanied by a gentleman of his bureau, rode up from Neuilly to near the arch, smoking his cigar. A gamin recognized him from the many pictures and photographs, I suppose, and cried, "ohé Bismarck!", whereupon the Count shook his finger at him, and rode on.

The ratifications of peace were exchanged on March 2, and on the morning of the 3rd the German troops left Paris. 107

107 Corvin, *In France*. Vol. II, pp. 374-381.

Chapter 3

Memoirs, Letters, Biography

Aus den Zellengefängnis

Aus dem Leben eines Volkskämpfers

Zehn Jahre aus meinem Leben

Blätter aus meinem Tagebuch aus Mexiko

Biographien - historisch, berühmter Matrosen

Aus dem Zellengefängnis

Briefe aus hundert,
schwerer Zeit
1848 - 1856

Corvin claims to have published this collection of his letters due to frequent requests from readers of his memoirs for a more complete picture of his imprisonment in Bruchsal. There is no reason to doubt the veracity of this statement, but it is quite likely that the penury of his later years, aside from requests he may have received, caused him to search for a means of increasing his income. The letters were already at hand, and only the process of selection was necessary to make them ready for publication.

As a means of ascertaining in detail Corvin's political views, the letters from 1848-1856 are invaluable.¹⁰⁸ They are much more subjective than his memoirs and naturally more so than his histories. The contents of the more important letters are revealed in various parts of this dissertation, since there would be little point here in entering into detailed consideration of all of them. Specific reference to some has been avoided because of their purely personal nature, to others because they contain repeated and somewhat monotonous protests against the cruelty of his fate.

In general Corvin's letters reveal the almost unendurable hardship

¹⁰⁸ The book contains actually more letters than the title Aus dem Zellengefängnis indicates, since the letters, beginning with the 11th of June, 1848, predate by more than a year his imprisonment at Bruchsal.

of solitary confinement.¹⁰⁹ His short imprisonment in the fortress of Rastatt, while had enough, at least permitted him friendly intercourse. At Bruchsal to which prison he was sent after his trial, he was not only alone but was continually plagued with neuralgia aggravated by the poor ventilation of the cell. His physical suffering was hardly less severe than the spiritual torment of confinement and separation from his wife. For a man whose chief enjoyment in life was unrestrained activity, it was indeed a hard lot.

We learn from Corvin's letters that he, along with the other rebel leaders who expected to be treated as prisoners of war and who had surrendered on unconditional terms, was immediately after the surrender placed in one of the deepest dungeons of the fortress of Rastatt, without straw, water, light or proper clothing and with only a damp floor on which to sleep. After two days of such treatment Corvin wrote to General von der Groeben with whom he had negotiated the surrender requesting relief. This was granted a day later. Although Corvin was infuriated by such treatment at the hands of the Prussians, he at first excused it on the grounds of military necessity. Their actions, he reasoned, did not proceed from premeditated cruelty since they had 7000 prisoners to care for and were unacquainted with the plan of the fortress.

¹⁰⁹It should not be concluded that these letters reveal the whole man. Like most men, he modified his views from time to time on discovering new evidence. By and large, he was loath to give up a point of view once he had taken it.

It was not long, however, before he discovered that he had underestimated the intentions of his captors. One after another the officers of the fortress were convicted of treason and sentenced to death. ¹¹⁰ To effect his release, Corvin wrote to his wife urging her to do what she could to secure a more lenient verdict at his trial. This request, according to Corvin's letters was not motivated, as it might appear, out of fear of death but rather out of consideration for the pain it would cause his wife and the thought that his life, which he had hoped to devote to the betterment of mankind, would be brought to an untimely end. ¹¹¹

From the letters of Helene Corvin one learns what was being done outside the prison to effect Corvin's release. Helene herself, a most devoted wife, was untiring in her efforts on behalf of her husband. She visited and wrote to all influential persons who could possibly be of help. Corvin's mother wrote to the Prince of Prussia only to learn that "everything lay in the hands of the Generals".

¹¹⁰ Although the action of the Prussians is condemned as extremely harsh by almost all writers dealing with the Revolution of 1848, it should be noted that after the Revolution was over only twenty-eight persons were executed; sixty-two received sentences of ten years imprisonment; two, eight years; two, six years; four, three to five years; and three, imprisonment for life. In all one-hundred-and-one persons were affected. From Franz Sigel's Dankwardigkeiten aus den Jahren 1848-1849, editor, Wilhelm Elos, J. Bensheimer Publisher, Mannheim: 1902, p. 131 f.

¹¹¹ In view of Corvin's consistent honesty there should be no reason to doubt his words. It must be remembered that Corvin did not show any fear of death in actual combat, nor did he hesitate to penetrate well into the danger zone as a war correspondent in two major conflicts.

The case seemed hopeless.

On September 3, Corvin's trial began. On the eighth he received assurance from General von der Groeben that he (the General) had fulfilled his promises already on July 31, "faithfully and conscientiously" and that he had only two days previously petitioned the Grand Duke of Baden. There is, unfortunately, no precise indication of what the General's promises were, but it can be presumed that they were promises made by him to Corvin during the latter part of the negotiations for surrender of the fortress.¹¹²

On September 15, Corvin, who was accused of being one of the ringleaders of the Revolution, appeared before the court-martial at Rastatt. His case was ably defended by Dr. Kusel of Bruchsal, and he himself delivered a two-hour address when asked if he had anything to say in his own defense.

As Corvin says, and as it may well be imagined, the statements in his plea before the court were not intended to magnify his support of the Revolution. Nevertheless, the speech is of importance in any over-all judgment of the man.

He began by contesting the competency of the court to try his case, pointing out that he was not a citizen of Prussia or of Baden but of Saxony. He also appealed to the sympathy of the court and then proceeded to give a short account of his life in more recent times. For twelve years he had written histories "objectively and without bias" for the purpose of ennobling and educating the people.

¹¹²See Part III, Chapter four, "Corvin and the Revolution of 1848-49" for a full handling of the question of Corvin's guilt.

He stated that he was no "blood-red republican" but an honest patriot, who had at first hoped that the Germany of old would be reunited by the democratic forces. As the Revolution had progressed he had begun to see the hopelessness of this plan and felt that a more feasible way would be through the actions of a strong prince. He pointed out that Held and he had published such ideas in the Lokomotive in Berlin for which they earned the hatred of the democrats. Even more hatred was directed at them when the Lokomotive went so far as to criticize the Frankfurt Parliament and the Prussian Diet. When the Revolution broke out in Baden, Gorvin, who had been writing on the history of revolutions, felt that he might be able there to make worth-while observations. Since so many of the democrats in Baden, however, were opposed to him, he did not have the feeling that he would be given a post in the revolutionary forces. He pointed out further that shortly after his arrival in Baden he had openly criticized the actions of the democrats and drew even more opposition to himself than before. At the last minute when he was about to leave Mannheim for Paris and desert the revolutionary cause, he met Truetzschler, who prevailed upon him personally to remain and support him by taking over the command of the Mannheim security troops (Volkswehr). In this position he had played only a minor role in the military activities of the Revolution. At the last minute he had been forced by circumstances to accept the position of Chief of the General Staff of the fortress after it was already encircled. He added that since he

had taken no oath of allegiance to the Grand Duke of Baden, he had broken none and that his actions had been in support of the German Parliament and its constitution. He concluded his defense with a plea appealing to the emotions of the court for leniency. ¹¹³

In spite of Corvin's plea the jury, after a three quarter-hour consultation, voted five to one for the death sentence. According to an unnamed newspaper account to which Corvin refers, he appeared momentarily shaken, then regained his composure, and was led from the court room back to the prison. On the very morning set for his execution, the verdict of death was commuted to ten years of solitary imprisonment.

At the prison in Bruchsal to which Corvin was shortly brought following his sentence, he was compelled to don convict's dress. His beard was shaved off and his hair cut short. He was then forced to occupy himself with the manufacture of small household articles. Nevertheless, he hoped to do creative writing and wrote immediately to Helene for materials.

On October 1, 1850, he was transferred to a solitary cell. From here he protested repeatedly that the death sentence would have been more humane than such confinement. The thought at times of sitting alone for ten years almost drove him mad. His cell contained a collapsible table and chair, a bed and a wash basin. A window, out of which he was not permitted to look for fear of being shot at by the Prussian guards, did not add to his peace of mind. He longed to

¹¹³Corvin, Zellenkatechismus, pp. 78-88.

be free, and in one letter compared himself to a caged eagle. Outside the cell Corvin like all other convicts was forced to wear a hat with a visor protruding over his face through which he could see but not be seen.

The loneliness and depression which Corvin experienced in prison often caused him to express the wish that he were in America, far away from Europe. This wish finally grew so strong that he requested his wife to get his sentence commuted to banishment from Europe. Helene duly petitioned, but the petition was rejected. On hearing this Corvin stated that he too had finally become Europamüde.

His letters during this period reveal to a great extent his romanticism. The finch that sits daily at the window and greets him when he rises in the morning, the pet canaries that he has in his cell, and the flowers sent to him from time to time are often mentioned. Since he was also permitted to read, he often requested books from his wife. Novels by Dumas and the plays of Shakespeare he especially enjoyed.

During his imprisonment Corvin began to write an account of his own experiences as a participant in the Revolution with the hope of having it published by Baron Cotta.¹¹⁴ However, since he had not played a consistently important role such as Sigel or Mieroslawski had done and his writing revealed nothing especially new, his manuscript was returned with the suggestion that he revise it, including descriptions of conditions of the times, personality sketches, etc.,

¹¹⁴Owner of the Augsburger Allgemeine Zeitung.

and that it be shaped in the form of a memoir.¹¹⁵ As a result Corvin rewrote what he had begun using it as a nucleus for his Erinnerungen or autobiography.

Another idea which occurred to Corvin was to bring out a German edition of his Der niederlaendische Freiheitskrieg; however, Fleischer of Leipzig, who had earlier published one volume, refused to accept further installments. The project was finally dropped and this work never appeared in German.

As time went on Corvin was allowed additional privileges in prison. Much time was spent in painting in oils and in making pen and pencil sketches. These were accepted in place of manual labor and sold by the prison authorities.

It is not surprising, considering Corvin's active nature, that he should have thought of escaping from prison. In March 1850, he seriously entertained the idea of freeing all the political prisoners and fleeing with them to Alsace. With money from his wife, he bribed the guards to smuggle in letters and packages. He made wax impressions of locks and even succeeded in having master keys made. Six weapons were acquired to be used on the fateful day, although from his letters it is apparent that he intended to take the guards prisoner rather than to shoot his way out.¹¹⁶ He requested Helene to furnish him with a forged

¹¹⁵ Louis Mieroslawski of French-Polish origin, born 1814 in Nemour, France, took part in the Polish Insurrection of 1830, was sentenced to death in Berlin in 1847 for taking part in a democratic conspiracy, pardoned and released, took part in the Sicilian Revolt, and returned to Baden at the request of the Provisional Government to become chief of the revolutionary forces. Sigel was named Minister of War.

¹¹⁶ Corvin wrote many of his letters in code or with a preparation of lemon juice so that his intentions might not be discovered by the prison authorities who censored all correspondence.

pass with visas. A month later, he learned that the Prussian Dragoneers were still guarding the prison and postponed putting his plan in action. On August 18, a new request for reprieve or banishment was refused by the Prince of Prussia, who had been petitioned by his mother. As a result Corvin again took up the idea of escaping and proceeded with more determination than ever. On November 1, 1850, a fortnight before the escape was to take place, his plans were discovered. A house in the neighborhood of Bruchsal was searched and several letters were found bearing his signature. His cell was immediately inspected and the instruments of escape were found and removed. Luckily the prison officials, who were Badensers and not Prussians, understood that it was possible for a prisoner to wish for freedom and even contemplate escape and did not resort to reprisals other than the withdrawal of minor privileges.

The disappointment was a terrible blow for Corvin. Mental depression and sickness set in. He complained of severe headaches and stomach disorders, but was not treated as ill because, as he put it, "no outward symptoms were noticeable". His life became more and more bleak. He was forced to work on the manufacture of shoes. Quoting Faust, he cursed hope and faith and above all patience. Nevertheless, he found time to continue work on his memoirs.

On October 5, 1851, Helene undertook at Corvin's request a trip to Berlin in order to speak with General von der Grosse, who was at that time visiting at the Prussian court. Unfortunately he left Berlin before she was able to see him. She also sought help from one of Corvin's cousins who was married to a secretary to the minister of

war. The cousin who at first refused to see her, finally granted her a hearing but covered her with abuse and declined to help a man who had brought shame on the name "Wierabitchi". When Corvin learned of this, he became so incensed that he decided to strike the name "Wierabitchi" from his official signature. While still in Berlin Helene succeeded in speaking with Manteuffel.¹¹⁷ It was all to no avail. Corvin had to content himself with one disappointment after the other and the prospect of fulfilling the terms of his sentence. Hope, however, springs eternal in the human breast. The following year found Corvin looking forward to a political amnesty on the occasion of a new Grand Duke of Baden. The reigning Grand Duke unfortunately refused to do so, and his regent rejected all requests for reprieve or banishment.

On January 21, 1853, Corvin received his first letter from Friedrich Gerstaecker, who had only recently returned from abroad. Gerstaecker sympathized with Corvin and promised to send him copies of his latest works which included his travels and adventures in South America, California, the South Sea Islands, Australia, and Java. This letter and five others reveal little of interest concerning Gerstaecker. He was aware that Corvin's correspondence was censored and refrained from expressing himself openly. His letters contain chiefly bits of news about old friends from the Leipzig days, hunting experiences, and items of timely interest. He promised to help Corvin find a publisher for short stories which he, Corvin, planned to write while still in prison. Actually the proposed short stories were never forthcoming.

¹¹⁷Otto von Manteuffel (1805-1882), Prussian Minister-President and Foreign Minister from 1850 to 1858.

Corvin failed to find the peace of mind necessary for literary production.

In the spring of 1854 Helene visited Bettina von Arnim, who was related to Corvin by marriage. On her return she wrote Corvin that Bettina had promised to intercede for him. Oddly enough, Corvin, who placed so much faith in the efforts of others, seemed to underestimate the value of Bettina's help. His answer to Helene bears out this point of view: "Insofar as Bettina's hopes are concerned, I think she is a rather sanguine woman who has been spoiled by success and can hardly think of failure from any steps she undertakes. The prospect of success would only be if the Prince of Prussia should agree to Bettina's request, which I, however, in no way believe."¹¹⁸ On this occasion Corvin was happily deceived. Bettina carried out her promise, and Corvin's sentence was reduced from ten to six years.

There is little correspondence from the later years of imprisonment. Through faulty organization, which the author himself admits, many letters were omitted from the later period so that the stress falls on the earlier years. Enough letters are at hand, however, to indicate that Corvin thought more and more of going to America, in particular to the United States, after his release from prison. Helene, who objected strenuously to this idea, was supported surprisingly enough by Gerstaecker. In the closing pages of the book one finds the author of the Mississippi River Pirates advising his friend for his wife's sake not to go to the States, but rather to "Chile or Costa Rica which has a wonderful future".

¹¹⁸Corvin, Zellenkassernen, p. 473.

Aus dem Leben eines Volkskämpfers

Corvin's autobiography first appeared in 1861. It was translated by him into English in abbreviated form (three volumes) and published by Bentley in 1871 under the title A Life of Adventure. In 1880 the third and revised edition, including Corvin's experiences in America, appeared as Erinnerungen aus meinem Leben (Reminiscences from my Life). At the time it first appeared it was well received by the press. One reviewer called it the portrayal of a "career full of happiness, sadness, and misery" told in terms of "wild poetry".¹¹⁹ And, his judgment was not far wrong.

Corvin relates his many experiences from birth to old age in a fresh and lively manner, accompanied by a never-languishing optimism, enthusiasm, and humor. His observations include everything from the sublime to the ridiculous, reflecting the many facets of a turbulent period in German and American history. His own personal life is revealed frankly and without any signs of equivocation. To be sure, his egotism sometimes makes it appear as if the Revolution of 1848-49 revolved about him, and some of the passages might make it seem as if he were quite lacking in "the milk of human kindness".¹²⁰ Nevertheless, when he pokes fun at others or criticizes them it is usually directed at those who deserve it. He was quick to discover sham and hypocrisy

¹¹⁹See Angsburger Allgemeine Zeitung, January 24, 1862, Beilage, Jahrgang 1862, no. 24. Hereafter referred to as AAZ.

¹²⁰The passage in which he accused his stepfather to whom he owed so much of professional jealousy toward him might well have been omitted.

and delighted in exposing it. Quite natural in it then that Struve should have been offended as well as many another who suddenly found his foibles exposed to the public eye. Corvin did not shrink from making personal enemies. What he thought, he said, and rare is the passage in this book that attempts to cover his true feelings by circumlocution. If he was not sure of a man's true character he drew no hasty conclusion.

In 1924, in the earlier days of the Weimar Republic his autobiography was again edited and republished by The Frankfurter Societäts Press in Frankfurt/Main under the title Ein Leben voller Abenteuer (A Life Full of Adventure) in the hope that it might aid the cause of the Republic. As Hermann Wendel wrote in the preface to this edition, it was fitting and just that Corvin's memoirs should reappear under the black-red-gold flag for which he had fought for almost three quarters of a century, and as a tribute to his style: "Out of these un-yellowed pages which deserve to become a true book of the people /Volkstuch/, a fresh breeze blows from the living works of an energetic man."¹²¹

The story of Corvin's life as it appears in his autobiography has already been sketched in Part I of this dissertation so that it needs no retelling here. This sketch as it stands is only a weak reflection of all that Corvin said and did. Unmentioned, for example, are the chapters pertaining to his first love affair as a young Lieutenant, which forms a short story of sufficient literary merit

¹²¹ Otto von Corvin, Ein Leben voller Abenteuer, Societäts-Druckerei, Frankfurt/Main: 1924, Vol. I, p. 12. Hermann Wendel, liberal historian and author, is best known for his work in the field of the French Revolution. His biography, Danton, was translated into English and published in 1935 by the Yale University Press.

to be republished by themselves. His experiences in the Prussian army and at various German courts have likewise been omitted. It would be impossible to mention here everything to be found in the book.

Certainly those who have read Schurz will miss in it the relatively quiet, reflective tenor of the Lebenserinnerungen, and Corvin's vanity will contrast unfavorably with Schurz' modesty.¹²² But aside from these features which one must balance with Corvin's honesty and sincerity, the book remains a rich source of information about the life of a political reformer, his contemporaries, and his times. It is the best and most interesting of all his works, and it is this book rather than the Pfaffenkrieg by which his name should be handed on to posterity.

¹²²The aforementioned reviewer in the AAT says, Corvin's "vanity hits him everytime in the neck", and suggests as an accompanying title for the book, "Everywhere vanity, the mother of evil".

Zehn Jahre aus meinem Leben

This book which appeared in two volumes in 1875 under the name of the Princess Felix zu Salm-Salm and purported to be leaves out of her diary is in reality from Corvin's pen, though much of it, certainly all of that which appears in Volume I, may have been told to him by the Princess herself.¹²³ Almost the major part of Volume I is a recapitulation of Corvin's experiences in America during the Civil War narrated as seen through the eyes of the princess. Since the two were frequently together during that period and the princess as well as Corvin followed her husband from camp to camp, it is quite natural that they shared many experiences in common. However, the judgments expressed, the personal descriptions, the incidents related are many times not those of the Princess but of Corvin himself. For instance, it is hardly likely that Princess Salm-Salm, a native American, resident in Germany for only a short period and uninterested in deeper political issues, would make the following observation: "In Europe everyone is so to speak already at birth provided with a label by the police and his whole biography is to be found in police files. In America that is not so; there the police only come to know a man when he first violates the law."¹²⁴

¹²³Princess Salm-Salm was born Agnes Le Clerq, the daughter of a Canadian army officer. Corvin acted as a witness to her marriage with the Prince.

¹²⁴Princess Felix zu Salm-Salm, Zehn Jahre aus meinem Leben, E. Hallberger Publisher, Stuttgart: 1875, Vol. I, p. 143.

And it is unlikely that she would have known the following bit of information if Corvin had not related it to her, or that it would have been included in her diary at all if he had not written it:

Mr. Seward even had the intention to make Corvin a general and use him for the purpose of forming a large general staff, since nothing of the kind existed. To this end he had Corvin speak with Senator Wilson of Massachusetts, who was head of the Military Affairs Committee. The affair came to nought, however, because it was impossible to convince this gentleman of the use and still less of the necessity for such a large general staff. ¹²⁵

There would be no purpose to an extended listing of such items to prove the point. Suffice it to say that many of the incidents retold are taken almost word for word from Corvin's own autobiography. Nevertheless, the first volume of "her" book contains much that is useful in gaining a clearer picture of Corvin himself as well as a first-hand idea of conditions in the South immediately after the Civil War. Princeess Salm was made district commanding general of the Union army of occupation which had its headquarters at Atlanta, and both he and the Princess remained there from the end of the war up to December, 1865. Previous to that he was commander of the 68th Regiment under General Stoodman and stationed at Bridgeport, Tennessee. There is a strong ballustristic character to this book and a slightly greater emphasis on American social life than there is in Corvin's Erinnerungen. Both General and Mrs. Salm were young and apparently quite popular in military circles, at least they were frequently visited by some

¹²⁵ Princess Felix zu Salm-Salm, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 145 f.

of the higher officers of the Union army. These visits are included in the narrative. The picture of civil war days is, of course, of interest to the American reader and the student of history. Outstanding among the eyewitness descriptions is a lengthy one depicting the riots which broke out in New York in the Irish segment of the population.

The second volume, also written by Corvin, is of no concern here since it contains recollections of the Princess during her husband's ill-fated support of Emperor Maximilian in Mexico. In it Corvin recorded exactly that which was imparted him, and his influence can only be seen in the arrangement and the handling of the material. Both volumes were well received by the public and were translated from German into English and French. Editions by two different publishers appeared in 1877 in the United States.

Blätter aus meinem Tagebuch in Mexiko

Although this work, (*Leaves from my Diary in Mexico*), was also written by Corvin, it does not, like the preceding one, contain any of his own experiences, and shows even less of his influence. The rather complete personality sketches are indicative of Corvin's treatment, but the dramatic character of the narration may easily have been inherent in the exciting events which occurred in Mexico after the arrival of Prince Salm-Salm at Emperor Maximilian's court. In any event the story related to him by the demoted Prussian Prince, honorably discharged from the United States Army as a brigadier general,

who became the first aide-de-camp and chief of the household of the Mexican Emperor, is exceedingly well told and will undoubtedly hold its place as a first-rate document of historical interest. Besides having written it in German, Corvin translated it into English for Richard Bentley, publishers, with the full title: My Diary in Mexico in 1867, Including the Last Days of the Emperor Maximilian, with leaves from the Diary of Princess Salm-Salm. It appeared in 1868 in both Germany and England and was translated into Dutch two years later.

Biographie—Historisch beruehmter Maitressen
I Maria Aurora, Graefin von Koenigsmark

Considering the subject matter of Corvin's other works, one might justly inquire what it was that caused him to embark on a history of famous or infamous mistresses. From a perusal of this booklet, which is the first and the last of a proposed series, it might be said that the author intended to divest the German princes of that aura of infallibility with which they were clothed by the doctrine of divine right, just as he had already revealed the weaknesses and transgressions of the infallible church. Actually that is what he does. However, the subject matter was selected at the request of a book dealer, and since Corvin had no particular interest in it, he felt no remorse when the events of the following years prevented its continuation.

Although the book would probably have had no serious theme if written by an average author, in Corvin's hands even the life of a mistress must have an expressly political didactic value. He states

quite specifically in his foreword:

Since it is now in very many connections most interesting and also most instructive for the present generation to see on what mysterious threads of destiny the fate of the people depends, and while history is thereby complemented and our judgment of this or that political event or person is set right..., I have decided to write the biographies of historically famous mistresses. ¹²⁶

In keeping with his plan and in spite of a fairly rigorous censorship, Corvin found the opportunity, sometimes with considerable subtlety, to undermine the prestige of the princes. He combines humor with logic in the foreword to score censorship and royalty:

I may without special fear pronounce the three bold words which are the result of diligent historical research: "Princes are human beings." Since now, however, according to a christian hymnbook printed with the permission of the censor, man is "half animal, half angel," it follows therefrom quite mathematically: Princes are half animal, half angel. With many princes of the good old times — I mean those between the Peace of Westphalia and the French Revolution — the bestial half must, however, have been the greater, and even the angelic half had sometimes a quite diabolic appearance. ¹²⁷

This humor so characteristic of Corvin's early works also appears a few pages further on when he discusses more completely the various types of mistresses and the necessity for their being. At this point he makes the observation that "Moses made his laws for the Israelite gentleman, and the German princes were a later invention", and that "since the princes considered themselves to a certain degree as gods, the Sixth Commandment could have for them no validity". ¹²⁸

¹²⁶ Otto von Corvin, Biographien—Historisch berühmter Maitressen, Wilhelm Engelmann Publisher, Leipzig: 1848, p. 7. Hereafter referred to as Biographien.

¹²⁷ Ibid., p. 3.

¹²⁸ Ibid., p. 5.

In his eagerness to illustrate the dissoluteness and corruption of the courts in the century preceding his own, he lets no opportunity escape. The German princes and especially those of Saxony are depicted as they exploit their subjects for the satisfaction of their extravagant tastes. Costly jewels presented to worthless paramours, fabulous feasts and elaborate pageants arranged to give the proper framework to lascivious designs, indecent intrigues by influential statesmen to gain the favor of their sovereign -- everything that might be used to bring the name of a prince into disrepute is described by Corvin in detail. He mentions at least three times in the course of the story that Friedrich August of Saxony, popularly known as August the Strong, was the father of 354 illegitimate children.

The two main characters of the biography are Maria Aurora, Countess of Koenigsmark and Friedrich August II of Saxony, who later also became Carl XII of Poland. In brief the narrative tells the following story: Aurora visits the court at Dresden in order to enlist the aid of Friedrich August in finding her brother, presumably murdered at the Court of Hanover. Her stay in Dresden is not of long duration before she comes to the personal attention of the prince. Because of her many accomplishments along with her charm and beauty, she soon captivates the Saxon ruler, who makes her his official mistress. Aurora does not abuse her position, though she accepts without reluctance the priceless gifts bestowed upon her, and she is wise enough to aid Friedrich August in the political sphere after the order of his affection subsides. For her service to him she is later rewarded with

the position of Abbess of Quedlinburg, and her son, the most preferred of Friedrich August's illegitimate offspring, receives the title of Count of Saxony, with an income of 13,000 thalers annually.

Corvin describes Aurora in a most favorable light. It is apparent that his sympathies lie with her and not Friedrich August. One learns that Voltaire praised her French verses as being good enough for a lady of Versailles. Many of her poems are reprinted. On the other hand, the author feels nothing but disdain for the vain-glorious ruler. He is accused of almost all the vices it would be possible for a man to have. Hypocrisy, drunkenness, extravagance, inconstancy, cruelty, lust, stupidity are only a few of those mentioned. In the end Corvin sums up the two characters by saying:

I close this sketch of the life of this famous woman with the sad feeling which inspires the observation, that so much kindness, talent, and beauty only served to satisfy temporarily the lust of an insignificant unimportant prince, who was not able to recognize the true value of this talented woman. I am forced to repress other remarks. ¹²⁹

The remarks which Corvin was forced to suppress out of fear of censorship he incorporated where possible in the text itself. Such an observation for instance as: "It is difficult to advise kings who are accustomed to flattery, because they always feel insulted by the truth," antedates by several years the famous words of Johann Jacoby to the King of Prussia when the latter refused to hear the petition of a delegation from the Prussian Diet. ¹³⁰ And,

¹²⁹Corvin, Biographien, p. 173.

¹³⁰The words of Johann Jacoby, a member of the delegation from the Prussian Diet protesting the appointment of Count Friedrich Brandenburg as Minister President, were: "That is the misfortune of Kings, that they will not listen to the truth."

remarks such as: "Men of superior intellect seldom have many friends at court," or "How the French Revolution has made our courts sober!" were not the kind that should have been passed by a truly reactionary censor.

Chapter 4

Miscellaneous

Die Einzelhaft und das Zellengefängnis in Bruchsal

Die Buchdruckerei

Die Einzelhaft und das Zellengefängnis in Bruchsal

This booklet, (Solitary Confinement and the Penitentiary in Bruchsal), amounting in all to only ninety-six pages, appeared in 1857 and was advertised as a chapter out of Corvin's soon-to-be-published Memoirs. It contains, however, material not found in them and was actually presented to the public in the hope of aiding the movement for prison reform.

Inspired by the trend which had begun in America and which had spread to England, the German authorities began considering the subject of reform more seriously. A definite attempt was made at Bruchsal by the Baden Government to set up a penitentiary modeled after the one in Pentonville, England. Corvin, who had had the misfortune of being imprisoned within its walls for six years in solitary confinement, was in a position to describe its shortcomings. Although he did not particularly enjoy reflecting on the whole unpleasant experience, he decided, out of a desire to help others who might suffer a similar fate, to publish a book on the subject of prison abuses, using his already written chapter from the Erinnerungen as core material.

In his booklet Corvin discusses first the principle of imprisonment itself and takes the modern sociological point of view that a bettering of the living conditions and educational opportunities of the lower classes of society rather than the erection of prisons would be a more effective measure toward the prevention of crime.

The very existence of prisons seems to him to cast an unfavorable reflection on western christian civilization. If their erection is admitted at all, then it should be for the purpose of reeducating a man, in giving him the means of earning an honest livelihood, and not in turning him out into society in a condition or a state of mind as bad as before. In illustrating this he mentions that the library at Bruchsal contained: 3000 volumes including "500 bibles, 500 hymnals, 400 Doells readers, and a mass of pietistic trash".

Above all he protests against the inclusion in such penitentiaries of political offenders whose offenses "for the most part are caused by feelings which are absolutely necessary for the preservation of states", and insists that if such a practice is continued the European nations "will soon be like those of Asia".¹³¹ To force, for example, a man of intellect to do manual labor is to inflict upon him a punishment more severe than that meted out to the ordinary criminal who is only too happy as a rule to work with his hands. Solitary confinement, he feels, also works greater hardship on the intellectual than on a man who is, to a certain extent, used to spending his hours in idleness.

As might be expected Corvin exposes his anticlerical attitude with the statement that a great number of the deplorable cases of madness caused by solitary confinement may be blamed on the unreasonable zeal of prison chaplains. His ever-present rather irreverent humor is revealed in this regard when he writes: "Was nun die Seelsorge betrifft,

¹³¹ Otto von Corvin, Die Einzelhaft und das Zellengefängnis in Bruchsal, Hoffmann and Campe, Hamburg: 1857, p. 85.

so unterliegen die armen Seelen der Sorge von einem katholischen und einem evangelischen Geistlichen; ein Rabbiner aus der Stadt pflegt die beschnittenen Seelen."¹³² In another instance he quotes the English jailer who divided all people into two classes, "those who were in jail and those who were not yet admitted".

The booklet also describes, like the chapter from his Memoirs, the physical set-up of the prison, the dress of the prisoners, their daily routine, food, the care of the sick, and types and kinds of prison officials and attendants. The various prison regulations are also cited with comments as to their application, and he draws an unfavorable comparison between the conditions at Bruchsal and those at Pentonville, England.

In the end, accepting the fact that the prison as an institution will continue to exist, he makes eight recommendations for its improvement, namely: better buildings, a greater opportunity for social intercourse among the prisoners, a maximum limitation of solitary confinement to a four-year period, better food, discretion for the prison director for individualization of treatment, the exclusion of pietistic clergymen, the prohibition of an increase in severity of penalty through hunger diets or confinement in darkness, and finally greater discretion in the employment of officials and prison attendants.¹³³

¹³² Corvin, Die Einzelhaft und das Zellengefängnis in Bruchsal, p. 76. This passage has been quoted in German to preserve the play on words. English: "As far as the care of souls is concerned, the poor souls are entrusted to the care of a Catholic and a Lutheran minister; a Rabbi cares for the circumcised souls."

¹³³ That Corvin's criticisms of the penitentiary at Bruchsal

In principle there is no doubt that Corvin was correct, but it is characteristic of his own idealism that he failed to recognize the tendency of all human institutions to fall short of the goal toward which they aspire. His own attempt to gain for others the conditions which he himself had not enjoyed is indeed admirable. It gives proof again of his constant inclination to work for the good of his fellowmen.

Die Buchdruckzeichnung.

This attractive booklet of forty-eight pages, which appeared in 1846, contains twenty-four illustrations, representing examples of reproductions available through the process of glyphography. It was printed by the Glyphographic Institute at Leipzig, set up by Corvin, in the hope of inducing book publishers to use glyphographic plates instead of inferior woodcuts usually obtained from itinerant Englishmen who farmed out their orders to indigent German craftsmen.

The process itself is described as "a drawing made by galvanic

were not without foundation may be proved by the appearance some years later of a book written by the former evangelical chaplain of Bruchsal who was resident there during Corvin's imprisonment. In this book, Die Grundbedingungen jeder Gefangnis-Reform im Sinne der Einzelhaft, F. Vogel Publishers, Leipzig: 1865, Johannes Fuesslin, who had made a thorough study of prison methods, makes recommendations similar to those of Corvin's and points out in particular the failure of the penal system at Bruchsal. He maintains that in handling the prisoners the authorities at Bruchsal had employed the principle of force, contrary to the American and English pattern of the cell system. Fuesslin also quotes with approval from Corvin's book.

means on an especially prepared corner plate which is then transformed into a relief, the relief in turn being utilized by the printing press to produce impressions". He mentions as the inventors of the process Edward Palmer of London and Volkmar Ahner of Leipzig, and in typically Corvinian manner humorously twits the Saxon Government for failing to recognize and protect the German inventor:

"Glyphography is one of the most attractive and important inventions which has been made in a long time. If Mr. Ahner had had the luck to be a Prussian, he would have received a decoration. If he had been a Frenchman, he would have received a thousand francs and a decoration. Were he a Russian he would have received two decorations, and as an Englishman, at least a patent -- but since he is a Saxon, he receives neither money, nor decorations, nor a patent. 134

The booklet has neither political nor literary significance. It represents solely an endeavor on Corvin's part to improve reproductions as used in books of his day. Unfortunately for the hopes of the sanguine writer and publisher, the booklet met with little success. Corvin, who finally bought the invention from Ahner for 2,000 talers saw the necessity of making additional improvements. The whole project turned out to be a premature attempt. It was to require all the patience, perseverance, and tenacity of purpose his character could muster before he could achieve the desired result. Little did he dream, when he published Die Buchdruckzeichnung (Printing Press Illustration) that this invention would take him to Prague and Paris, cause him to study chemistry and galvanoplastic, induce him to move from Leipzig to Gotha, make the acquaintance of Alexander von Humboldt,

134 Otto von Corvin, Die Buchdruckzeichnung, Glyphographisches Institut, Leipzig: 1846, p. 8.

and finally embroil him in the first armed uprisings of the Revolution of 1848.

PART III

APPRAISAL

Chapter 1

CORVIN AS A HISTORIAN

Corvin, who directed his histories primarily at the largest segment of the German population, may be classified as a popular historian. But, it should be noted that he is not a popular historian in the usual sense of the term, since he never wrote down to a lower level of intelligence or tried to make that entertaining which might be called uninteresting. He succeeded in his aim of writing histories leveled at "people who belong neither to the intellectual aristocrats nor to the intellectual rabble".¹³⁵ Again, as a popular historian he never strove for a purely literary effect. His style is simple, clear, and direct. He can also not be accused of superficiality, since what he did not write or failed to see did not arise from inability to classify or analyse but resulted either from his own proximity to contemporary events or from the absence of subsequent historical research.

On the other hand, Corvin cannot be classified as a historical scholar. There is no evidence that he attempted to make a study of primary sources or that he attempted to conform to historical methodology. He himself makes a distinction between Geschichtsschreiber, that is the writer of history, and Geschichtsforscher, the one who does research in history, which enables him to be classified more easily and which simultaneously presents the point of view from which he must be judged. Corvin was a Geschichtsschreiber rather than a Geschichtsforscher.

The writer of history, as defined by Corvin, must sum up the results of historical research and recount the facts and events after

¹³⁵Corvin, Weltgeschichte, Vol. I, Foreword, p. vii.

an examination of all different available presentations in the way in which they seem to him really to have happened.¹³⁶ His criticism of the scholarly research worker is that "he often loses himself in details, and attributes, because the investigation has cost much effort, a greater worth to unimportant things than they actually possess; further he cannot refrain from parading his erudition and sagacity".¹³⁷

The writer of history must do more, however, than just present history as "it seemed to him to have happened". In the Foreword to an earlier work, Corvin asserts that the writers of history are or should be the actual apostles of truth and that history is the world court before which princes and peoples are tried.¹³⁸ Hence, in summary, the writer of history must set himself up as a truthful recorder of events as they actually happened and as a judge of individuals and human actions. Remarkably enough, Corvin goes even beyond this. Imbued as he was with the democratic spirit, he maintains that the historian should present history in a way that the people might gain not only wisdom but a knowledge of their rights and duties as citizens of a state.¹³⁹

In one respect Corvin was very critical of the historians of his own day. Since most of them were university professors and hence employees of the state, he felt that they were not free to write

¹³⁶Corvin, Neuzeit, Vol. I, p. 4.

¹³⁷Ibid., p. 4.

¹³⁸Corvin, Biographien — p. 7.

¹³⁹Corvin, Neuzeit, p. 3.

objectively when it came to a question of modern history. From the very nature of the situation they could hardly be expected to be adversely critical of a government, its institutions, and fundamental principles, from which they were receiving support. For this reason he believed that the historian should be economically independent.¹⁴⁰

Having considered the nature and aims of a historical writer as Corvin conceived them, it is interesting to note how faithful he remained to his own analysis. To his credit it must be said that his histories are extremely readable. This is especially true for Die Geschichte der grossen franzoesischen Revolution and the Illustrierte Weltgeschichte fuer das Volk. The latter is perhaps written in a more popular vein than the former, but it still shows evidence of study and care. The didactic value, which Corvin felt history should have, never intruded to the point of spoiling his presentation. His teaching is usually through inference rather than precept.

In respect of objectivity, however, Corvin falls short of the standard he set for himself. This is chiefly true of his modern histories. Deeply concerned as he was with the problems of his own day, that is the struggle for political freedom and the achievement of national statehood, he tended to evaluate the actions of both persons and groups in their relation to the realization of these goals. Those persons who strove in any way against the spirit of the times, be it even out of heartfelt conviction that existing institutions were preferable to new

¹⁴⁰This criticism as applied to German historians has been reiterated by a more able writer of a later date. See: Wm. R. Thayer, "Fallacies in History", American Historical Review, Vol. XXV, January, 1920, pp. 179-190.

were vehemently condemned. They were for the most part shortsighted, mean, hypocritical, stupid, narrow-minded, bigoted, or mercenary. It is only natural then that in the period of history in which Corvin was most interested, namely from the French Revolution up to his own day, the reactionary and conservative elements of society receive rather rough treatment. This perspective leads him quite naturally to judge Metternich, "the confirmed supporter of princely absolutism", in a most unfavorable light without regard for the disruptive force of nationalism in Austria and the Balkans and its attendant economic disadvantages. Corvin saw in nationalism only a unifying or liberating force. He was not farseeing enough to detect its ultimate defects or disadvantages.

Governments too he labeled as good or bad according to their position in regard to democratic reform. Russia, Prussia, and Austria were regarded as horrible examples of autocracy, while to a certain degree England and France, but more especially the United States were held up as governments heralding the dawn of a new era of political enlightenment.

In revealing the reactionary forces at work in Europe Corvin was very careful to expose the ulterior motives which lay behind the actions of outstanding individuals and institutions. The Roman Catholic Church was especially singled out for attack because of its selfish support of absolutism. Wherever he could he showed the church as an enemy of enlightenment, as a negative force in the influencing of public opinion, and as a deterrent to national unification in both Germany and Italy. His dislike of the Catholic Church, mildly expressed,

led him into the remarkable position of extolling Lola Montes as a benefactress of the Bavarians.¹⁴¹ He even championed the German-Catholic movement, though fundamentally it was not in harmony with his own beliefs. The part that the secular clergy played in aiding the French Revolution was, as a result of his attitude, also ignored. Whatever stood in the way of nationalism and democracy was completely bad. There were no intermediate shadings. To have recognised anything good in the church would have meant lending it his support.¹⁴² To have acknowledged the cultural benefits which Germany derived from its numerous Residenzstädte would have been equivalent to a betrayal of the cause in which he believed.

In judging the actions of rulers, Corvin wrote in the best tradition of those who believe that Die Weltgeschichte ist das Weltgericht, that is, world history is the world court. He subjected every ruler to the test of whether he had acted in the best interests of his people and the world at large. Here again, however, he injected a democratic perspective in his judgment. Napoleon, for example, who Corvin admits spread the ideas of the French Revolution beyond the

¹⁴¹ Lola Montes, a supposed Spanish dancer, actually Betsey Watson, daughter of a Scotch officer, was driven out of one European capital after another until she finally reached Munich, where she became the close friend of Ludwig I, and caused a political conflict that brought about the abdication of the King. An absolutely excellent treatment of this Bavarian fiasco is found in Valentin, Geschichte, Vol. I, p. 115 ff.

¹⁴² In treating the question of the role played by the church during the Middle Ages of preserving art and science Corvin says: "It is another question if, whether without the monks, yes, even without christianity, art and science would not have developed much earlier and gloriously." See Einflussgeschichte, p. 264.

borders of France and hence performed a service to mankind, is in the end condemned as an evil figure. He is not only the victim of his lust for power, but what in Corvin's eyes loomed even larger, the betrayer of the French Republic. Consequently, he is in no way glorified. The drama of his rise to power unfolds in such a way that the reader is psychologically prepared for his fall, which is, as it were, a moral necessity.

A similar fate befalls Lafayette. It is pointed out that he was a man of noblest character but actually too weak an intellect to grasp fully the significance of the revolution. In the course of the narrative, the man whom most Americans regard as a hero, is accused of vanity, anger, revenge, duplicity, and lack of personal pride. The most serious charge placed against him, however, is that he stood politically in the middle. He was not a true revolutionary. Therefore, when he loses favor and is forced to flee France, and is even jailed outside its borders, his fate is pronounced as just.

In considering those who took part in the Revolution of 1848 in Germany, Corvin is incapable of passing a completely unbiased judgment. The Frankfurt Assembly, which Ebonstein has termed one of the most outstanding group of parliamentarians who gathered in any country, is called by Corvin an assembly of "chatterers".¹⁴³ Most revolutionary leaders are termed impractical, and those of the extreme left are designated as "big-mouthed heroes who lacked courage".¹⁴⁴ To be sure, some truth

¹⁴³Corvin, Neuzeit, Vol. I, p. 168.

¹⁴⁴Ibid.

lies in Corvin's assertions, but he too often overlooks the right these men had in pursuing a course of action, in keeping with their ideals, though they might have differed from his own.

In treating revolutionary movements, whether Dutch, French, or German, Corvin tends to stress the political element to an almost total exclusion of social and economic factors. In this regard he falls into an error committed by most popular historians, namely a tendency toward oversimplification.

That Corvin was sometimes guilty of imprudent assertions cannot be denied. Yet this criticism might also be leveled at some historians of higher academic standing who write with a particular bias. He was republican and a democrat by conviction and remained true to these principles at a time when they were forsaken by a large section of his own countrymen.

The only unscholarly element of his writing other than his failure to quote sources is the air of authority assumed in judging certain historical events. Yet, it is difficult to see how he might have written convincingly had he himself not been convinced that his judgments were correct. Corvin felt that he had discovered a malicious compact between absolutism and christian orthodoxy entered into for the purpose of exploiting and subjugating the broad masses which he must expose to those who would one day rise up out of the ignorance and darkness in which they floundered to cast off the chains of their bondage.¹⁴⁵ This

¹⁴⁵ The best and surest means of enlightening the people according to Corvin was through spreading the ideas of 18th century rationalism and through a study of modern history.

was the goal toward which Corvin strove and for whose achievement he did not refrain from using invective and ridicule even if directed at time-honored traditions and institutions.

It would in no way be appropriate to compare Corvin with Voltaire in relation to the importance of their work, but certain similarities between the two exist. Fueter describes Voltaire as the great Publizist who set all his energy into furthering the reform of the French state, a reform which was to come from above. The past and foreign countries delivered him material and proof for his theories. Actually, however, Voltaire was not a consistent philosopher of history. His views about the nature of historical development are unclear and contradictory. He was not particularly interested in how the state arose or what the force was that lay behind history. He had an immense disrespect for the past and for scholarship.¹⁴⁶

This description of Voltaire fits Corvin who might be suspected of having taken Voltaire as a model. Certainly his own outlook on life was most closely related to the rationalism of the 18th century. However, one element in Fueter's description of Voltaire does not apply to Corvin, namely the direction from which the reform of the state was to come. Corvin saw hope for the future only in an enlightened populace. He himself had succeeded in casting off the prejudices and sentiments of the class to which he actually belonged. In doing this he was indebted to Schiller who so ably took up the cause of the

¹⁴⁶This description of Voltaire is taken from: Édouard Fueter, Geschichte der neueren Historiographie, R. Oldenbourg Publisher, Munich: 1925, pp. 350-351, 359.

common man.

Through Schiller, Corvin was also related to Rousseau, and it is interesting to note how much of this French philosopher Corvin had absorbed without ever having read him. While still imprisoned in Bruchsal he came across a copy of Le Contrat Social. In describing his reaction he says: "I was unpleasantly surprised to find it so much that I had conceived myself; not only the ideas but even the words. Who would now believe that my thoughts are original and that I have not read Rousseau up to now?"¹⁴⁷

In one respect Corvin resembles the historians of his own day, who laid undue stress on military encounters, a tendency exhibited by some German historians even up to the present time.¹⁴⁸ His own training and service as an officer in the Prussian army naturally led him into this position, and it is not then to be wondered at that a very large part of his modern histories is taken up with the narrative of military operations. In treating almost all battles Corvin cannot avoid judging the efficacy of individual maneuvers and the capability of the various army commanders.

His own knowledge of military science and tactic made him especially impatient with the leaders of the Revolution of 1848-1849 who underestimated the strength of the reaction and who failed to organize an effective striking force of their own. Again this knowledge on his part

¹⁴⁷ Corvin, Zellengefängnisse, p. 375.

¹⁴⁸ Bernadotte E. Schmitt, Some Historians of Modern Times, University of Chicago Press, Chicago: 1942, p. 122.

caused him to be especially critical of the performance of certain American generals during the course of the Civil War.

His defense of General McClellan deserves special praise since most of his assertions have proved true in the light of recent research.¹⁴⁹ He criticised governmental interference with McClellan's strategy, recognized the enmity of Stanton and Chase toward him, commended his scientific knowledge of the art of war, and pointed out that if McClellan could be criticised at all it would be for being overcautious.

Corvin was, it must be admitted, a keen observer of men and events, and his greatest contribution as a historian is in the recording of his own impressions with regard to the happenings of the period in which he lived. He himself was aware of the value such reporting had in the writing of history and he consciously left behind him documents of value, such as his Erinnerungen and the Geschichte der Menschheit which have been and still can be of use to historians. There is no particular philosophical depth to his writings and errors in judgment can be found in them, but that does not exclude them from deserving serious consideration.

A service which he particularly rendered America was his endeavor to acquaint German readers with its past history and dispel false ideas as to its way of life and institutions. Contrary to the general tendency of European visitors to belittle the United States, Corvin took a positive

¹⁴⁹Corvin's position has been corroborated by the recent work on McClellan by Hamilton Eckenrode and Bryon Conrad, George B. McClellan, University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill: 1941.

stand and presented this country to his readers in the best possible light. No doubt his attitude toward America was promoted by the generous welcome most Forty-eighters received here after fleeing political persecution in Germany. Still, there was enough in Corvin's character that made him feel akin to the American spirit. His admiration for America, which reached such a degree that he took out American citizenship, led him to go beyond the proper limits of history and predict its importance even in times to come: "In the womb of this great republic lies the future destiny of the world. In it the giant is developing that will destroy the monster that has held for centuries the human race in chains."¹⁵⁰

As much as Corvin revered the years 1848-49 and tended to view history as converging upon those dates it must be said that he placed the greater importance on the French Revolution. History was either a preparation for that upheaval or a continuation of its effects. Thus the Revolution of 1848 is considered by him an extension of the French Revolution. His Geschichte der grossen französischen Revolution does not end with the downfall of the Napoleonic Empire as most others do but continues to the very threshold of 1848. The course of history for him was a continuous struggle for political emancipation.

The fact that the Church had seemingly joined with the state in a reactionary compact attempting to preserve the status quo, caused him to attack not only absolutist governments but orthodox religion as well.

¹⁵⁰ Corvin, Neuzeit, Vol. II, p. 994.

His works concerned with ecclesiastical abuses may be regarded as polemical but they must also be considered partly as historical treatises. Der Pfaffenpiegel, (Priest's Mirror), is a somewhat one-sided reflection of the Roman Catholic clergy from the mirror of history. Likewise the sequel to this work, Die Geissler, (The Flagellants), presents a historical account of the more violent forms of asceticism chiefly in the Catholic Church. The last book of the trilogy, die goldene Legende, (The Golden Legend), undertakes a rationalistic examination of the scriptures with the aid of historical criticism.

It cannot be said with any certainty to what degree Corvin was influenced by the works of David F. Strauss, Bruno Bauer, or Ludwig Feuerbach, but certainly the spirit of the times which produced them affected his own frame of mind.¹⁵¹ It is the occupation of his own age with religious questions that turned him into a Kulturhistoriker when he wrote his Geschichte des Altertums, a position later abandoned. The religions of the early civilizations of Europe and the Near East received as serious consideration as their political institutions. In applying rationalism to pre-Christian religions he hoped to weaken modern christianity itself. His worship of "reason" in the end led him to look upon it as having an independent development, similar to that of Hegelian freedom.

In a final analysis it may be said that Corvin's works are colored to a certain extent by his necessity of making a living, but it cannot

¹⁵¹David F. Strauss' Leben Jesu appeared in 1835/36, Bruno Bauer's Kritik der evangelischen Geschichte der Synoptiker in 1841, and Ludwig Feuerbach's Wesen des Christentums also in 1841, four years before Der Pfaffenpiegel was published.

be maintained that he wrote only with an eye on possible sales. Although Corvin had not had a university education, he was by no means uneducated. He was able to consult works in Latin, Greek, French, Dutch, English, Hebrew, and German, and although he was by nature inclined toward action rather than philosophical reflection, he was nevertheless willing to spend long hours with pen in hand to aid in the realization of political ideals. His works have been translated into Swedish, Dutch, Italian, French, Spanish, and English and have undoubtedly influenced in turn the German-Catholic Movement of the 1840's, the Communist movement in France following the Franco-Prussian War, Bismarck's Kulturkampf in the 1870's, the German Social-Democratic Movement of the late 19th Century, the supporters of the Weimar Republic, the Republican Uprising in Spain, and the National Socialist Movement of the preceding decade. Certainly this man does not deserve oblivion. ¹⁵²

¹⁵²The Pfaffenstiegel, for example, which first appeared in 1845, appeared again in its fifth edition in 1871. It was translated into French in 1874, into Spanish in 1933. It was edited by the Social Democrats in 1920 and received the official imprimatur of the National Socialists in 1934. His Erinnerungen appeared in its fifth edition during the Weimar Republic.

Chapter 2

Corvin as a Literary Figure

It is perhaps unjust here to attempt a critical evaluation of Corvin as a literary figure, since all of his belletristic work, with the exception of Midas has been unavailable to the writer. It is felt, however, that additional research in this direction which would entail a great expenditure of time and energy even for a person resident in Germany would hardly reveal more than that which is already known.

The list of Corvin's literary works is not long. It includes Jugurtha, a youthful attempt at a tragedy in verse, which he destroyed. Die Hochzeit auf Sonnenstein, a short story, of which only a poem, Morgenstaendchen, was published; Die Graefin von Chateaubriand, an imitation of a French drama; Niobe, an epic poem, unpublished; Hassan, a comedy adapted from 1001 Nights (1837); Die Hunyaden, a historical tragedy (1837), revised, abbreviated, and republished (1880); Der Zauberring der weissen Frau, a puppet play (1848); and Die gefrorene Schwiegermutter, a light, one-act comedy (1886).

Almost all of these works, from what has been written about them and from what Corvin himself has to say, contain a strong element of humorous political satire, which in itself restricts their appeal to their own age and endangers their value as pure artistic creations. the Hunyaden, for example, which might be least suspected of a political tendency, was suppressed by the censor because of a scene "between a

lascivious monk and a pretty servant girl". Even the apparently harmless puppet play, Der Zauberling der weissen Frau, pokes fun at General Wrangel and other personalities of the day. Midas, which the composer Mendelssohn rejected as the basis for an operatic libretto as being "too coarse", is literally filled with political allusions, and Hassan likewise falls in the same category.

Still less dramatic productions in spite of their tendentiousness might have been brought to perfection had Corvin possessed sufficient poetic ability. Her certainly had the phantasy and imagination of a poet, but it is quite certain he lacked strong poetic talents, the poet's skill, and above all the poet's soul.

The he was deficient in these qualities, even Corvin came to recognize and his good friend, Friedrich von Sallet, by far more poetically gifted than he, helped him to this recognition. In an undated letter to Corvin which appears in the Erinnerungen, von Sallet suggested that the epic poem, "Niobe", should not be shown to the public. It contained "frightful conjunctions and apostrophies, forced displacements and dislocations of natural word order", and "horribly bad verses".

It may be too that Corvin lacked the ear necessary for finer poetic creation. He himself admitted that "among music enthusiasts", he was taken for a "barbarian" and he pronounced the Gewandhaus concerts in Leipzig "boring".

If he lacked the feeling for harmony in poetry, however, he still was not out of tune with his own age. The period in which he struggled

To write verse was not particularly favorable for the production of poets, and it would have taken a man with far more literary genius than Corvin possessed to wage a victorious fight against the spirit of the time. Perhaps Valentin's appraisal of the period is most appropriate at this point:

After the July Revolution there arose a disgust in Germany for verses: Maidens and moonshine, roses and nightingales had been sung about enough. All rhythms and stanza forms had been exhausted. The era of prose had arrived, prose as form and prose, if one may say, as material.... The writer appeared, keener, colder, more daring than the poet with his long locks, whose effeminate other-worldliness began to appear somewhat amusing /in contrast to/ the writer who in virtue of his high calling was also now to announce to Germany a greater desire. 153

Corvin did not escape from the Zeitgeist. By 1850 he was fully cognizant of the fact that he could never achieve success as a poet or dramatist. He felt that he was not born to "sit behind a desk" and that only a journalistic activity would be suited to him. Moreover, his marriage in the meantime forced him to turn his energies into something more lucrative. Hence from this time on it may be said he applied himself in the direction of prose.

Die gefrorene Schwiegermutter, written shortly before his death, can hardly be considered as a serious wish on his part to return to the more serious literary attempts of earlier days. Forced almost into destitution in his old age, he was, therefore, ready to try anything that would bring quick relief. This last work should not be regarded as evidence of dilettantism.

153 Valentin, Geschichte, Vol. I, p. 251.

Nevertheless, the spirit which moved Corvin to write poetry as a young man remained with him and colored his prose with a strong romantic belletristic strain. Frequent passages can be found throughout his writings that bear testimony to this. The one describing a stroll along the potomac, cited in the chapter, "Corvin and America", might be matched with the following paragraph, written as introduction to a hunting scene, selected at random from his

Erinnerungen:

Sterne erschienen am Himmel; die stille Nacht umfing mit weichen Armen wolluestig Thal und Berg; nirgends Geräusch, nur hier und da geheimnisvolles Knistern und Fluestern in den Bueschen, durchzauselt von einem leisen Winde. Fledermausse wiegen sich geräuschlos in der Luft und ebenso geräuschlos segelt die Eule. Hin und wieder kreuzt ein Hase den Weg, macht ein Maennchen, windet und geht. Hinter dem gegenueberliegenden Berg steigt der Mond herauf, nicht silbern, winterlich kalt, sondern golden, sommerlich warm. ¹⁵⁴

As for Midas, the only one of Corvin's aforementioned dramas at hand, little may be said, since it is a copy of the first edition, later revised by him and published in Switzerland in 1846. It bears oddly enough as the name of the author, Dr. Ernest Falk, a pseudonym never mentioned by Corvin. However, sufficient evidence has been acquired to prove its identity. ¹⁵⁵

The work as its name implies is classical in character and concerns the mythological Greek king of Phrygia who had the power of changing into gold anything he touched. Although all the characters

¹⁵⁴ Corvin, Ein Leben. Vol. I, p. 279.

¹⁵⁵ cf. Katalog der Stadtbibliothek Zurich 1869-96, and Deutsches Pseudonym-Lexikon 1906, p. 79.

in the play are taken from Greek myths, one is often surprised to find them masquerading as Gessler, or Tell, or even capuchin monks. This, however, fits into the scheme of the comedy, because it is in reality a thinly veiled satire of the political conditions in Germany prior to the Revolution of 1848. Hence, mention is often made of freedom, tyranny, censors, German princes, and even German-Catholics.

The story as retold by Corvin presents Midas as a defunct German emperor and Apollo as a free German poet. Apollo visits the Phrygian court and while there exchanges views with the king concerning governmental policies. Midas and his cohorts describe the situation in despotically ruled Phrygia, while Apollo describes that under a republican Athens. For Apollo's entertainment a masque is performed in which Midas plays the role of Gessler and Pan the role of Tell. A humorous allusion to Schiller's play is made when Pan presents Midas with a petition signed by his subjects requesting more freedom in the government. Midas answers by taking Pan's cross-bow and shooting him with it. Disgusted with Midas' attitude and the performance of the masque, Apollo crowns him with ass' ears and takes leave of a country so inhospitable to his spirit. Thus humbled before his subjects Midas promises everything in his power if he is freed of the ignominious device. It is of no avail. The only way to get the ears off is to remove his head in the process.

The idea of the play is clever enough but it miscarries from the point of view of stage production. Little if any action is involved and the somewhat lengthy polemical discussions could only have had

interest for Corvin's day. The play itself is modeled in the classical tradition with a chorus and a strict observance of the three unities. However, the outspoken anachronisms, the bizarre compounding of words, the shifting back and forth between prose and verse, and the utter confusion of metric rhythms spoil its tone and character so that there remains nothing in it of poetic quality that would recommend it to a place in higher literature. If it is characteristic of Corvin's other dramatic works or of his poetic capabilities, there is no need for further research in regard to his position as a literary figure of note.

Chapter 3

Corvin as Journalist

It is to a certain degree misleading if one considers Corvin's work for newspapers and magazines separate from his other writings, since it shows little dissimilarity to that which appears in his books. However, for the sake of a simpler classification such consideration is made here. Corvin's work as a journalist, one might be inclined to say, began as soon as he became aware of the fact that he lacked the qualities of an outstanding literary figure. But such is not the case. His journalistic activity was concomitant with his first serious literary attempts.

While in Dortmund in the spring of 1837 Corvin wrote a series of essays for the Dortmunder Wochenblatt similar to Wieland's Abderiten, which he entitled Brief aus dem Mond (Letters from the Moon), and which were not greatly different in character from the Briefe aus Washington (Letters from Washington), though more humorous in tone, which he was to write some twenty-five years later. In the following year he succeeded in bringing out a periodical of his own especially written for lovers of the chase called Der Jaeger with a Sunday supplement, Der Sonntagsjaeger. This venture proving quite successful he proceeded to Leipzig in 1839 to found a monthly magazine for horsemen, Der Marstall. His next journalistic activity consisted in political pamphleteering during the early 40's in conjunction with Held for the Lokomotive under

Held's editorship. After the suppression of this political newspaper a long lapse of time occurred. His next serious attempt was a series of articles, written in English while in England, for Dicken's Household Words, a weekly magazine of popular nature. In 1861, the year which marked his elevation to the rank of a first-rate journalist, he began work as a war correspondent for the Augsburger Allgemeine Zeitung and as an occasional correspondent for the London Times. In 1867 he returned to Germany as foreign correspondent for the New York Times. Two years later he served in a similar capacity for the New Yorker Staats-Zeitung, and during the Franco-Prussian War, he acted as a war correspondent for the Vienna Freie Presse. In 1871, through his acquaintance with Friedrich Kapp in Berlin, he secured his last position as journalist as foreign correspondent in Germany for the ¹⁵⁶Boston Daily Advertiser.

It is difficult to write much about Corvin's work as a newspaper reporter, since many of the papers for which he wrote are unavailable, and the practice of editors during this period of not allowing writers to sign their despatches makes it difficult to determine their authorship. However, enough of Corvin's reports have been found and identified through a careful examination of style and content to determine the character of his work.

¹⁵⁶ Friedrich Kapp (1824-1884), a Forty-eighter, was editor of the New York Abendzeitung and Commissioner of Immigration for New York. He was a staunch supporter of Lincoln and a good friend of Frederick Law Olmstead. Corvin became acquainted with him shortly after his arrival in America.

With the exception of his articles in Household Words which comprise for the most part the story of his experiences in the Revolution of 1848, his journalistic activity assumes more the character of that of a columnist than that of a pure reporter. His articles, containing his own opinions and thoughts concerning the events he describes, are seldom objective in nature. As a rule they are filled with anecdotes, general descriptions, explanations of political situations, reports from other newspapers, eyewitness accounts, and short human interest stories. As might be expected he had "a good nose for news", and little of what took place escaped his attention.

In writing up events of his time he seriously attempted to be as unpartisan as possible, but his own judgment influenced by his political make-up often colored his despatches. His English readers are given a picture of the despotic conditions of a German state, his German readers are informed of the blessings to be enjoyed under a republican government, and his American readers are made aware of the machinations of kings and clergy in a still unenlightened Europe. It would be false to conclude, however, that his political ideology turned his articles into monotonous repetitions of the same theme. Nevertheless, it reappeared sufficiently to form a leitmotiv of his journalistic work as a whole.

With the exception of Corvin's reports of military encounters which have lost their timeliness his despatches are extremely interesting. They show, however, no particular depth. He was not the Walter Lippmann of his day. Outside of the series of articles for

Household Words, which he wrote in a true Victorian, Dickensian style, his journalistic writings are fresh, straightforward, human, and clear, though unpolished. They lack, to his credit, the egotistic tone so frequently met with in many of his longer works, though they often contain a biting invective in its place.

Chapter 4

Corvin and the Revolution of 1848

The place Corvin holds in the Revolution of 1848 has been not only the subject of controversy with his contemporaries but with later students and historians of the period as well. Many of his contemporaries, especially the more radical republicans and democrats who were prejudiced by his Prussian background, regarded him as a militarist and an aristocrat. Although his personal bearing and his close friendship with Prince Salm-Salm might have seemed to confirm this suspicion, it is in fact ungrounded. In accordance with his liberal views, he believed that a man should be able to choose his friends from whatever section of life he wished, and certainly the four men who stood closest to Corvin represent sufficient diversity: Friedrich von Sollet, the dreamy, revolutionary poetic comrade of his school days; Friedrich Gerstaecker, his hunting companion during the Leipzig period; F. W. Held, his political co-worker; and Prince Salm-Salm, his aristocratic friend during and after the Civil War in America.

The accusation that Corvin was "Prussian" in thought or deed is also untrue. He had a good bit of the soldier in him, but not the "Prussian spirit". In fact he was most outspoken against it. In writing on the Franco-Prussian War he clearly voices his own feelings: "These old Prussian officers are incorrigible. They will never learn that time and ideas have changed, and there is only hope

for the better when these old fogies shall have died out." ¹⁵⁷

In another instance he remarks:

Prussian officials in all branches of the government service had assumed the by-no-means agreeable tone and manner prevailing in their army, and which dated from the time when the Prussian army was composed of mercenaries -- vagabonds, recruited from the scum of all nations, who were only to be kept in order by cruel discipline. A Prussian policeman, gendarme, or clerk in an office, thought it hurtful to his dignity to show politeness to simple citizens, and assumed a rude and offensive tone in addressing them. I can say for myself that whenever I came in contact with a Prussian policeman, gendarme, or office clerk, I felt strongly inclined to kick him.... ¹⁵⁸

Again later he asserts: "Everywhere in Germany, the arrogance of the Prussian bureaucrats is the greatest enemy to the popularity of the Prussian government." ¹⁵⁹

That Corvin was enough of a militarist to appreciate discipline in an army, to object to the idea of freely elected officers, and to believe that only a well-organized force should save the Frankfort Parliament and the democratic cause cannot be denied. But he at no time regarded the military man as superior to the civilian, and it must be remembered that he himself gave up a military career to marry a girl of lower social standing. His own knowledge of military science and tactics made him impatient at times with that impractical class of German democrats who "saw in an excited group of apprentices

¹⁵⁷Corvin, In France, Vol. II, p. 63.

¹⁵⁸Ibid., Vol. I, p. xxiii.

¹⁵⁹Ibid., Vol. II, p. 62.

inadequately armed an enthusiastic peoples' army capable of subduing a brutish soldiery".

As a man of action it is only natural too that he should have criticized the delegates of the Frankfort Parliament who were shortsighted enough to underestimate the forces of reaction. That, however, should not justify Dahlinger's epithet of "the ever-sneering Corvin".¹⁶⁰ Already in April of 1848 Corvin, as one of the leaders of the Republican Legion at that time being organized in Paris, communicated with a member of the Fuenfziger-Ausschuss (Committee of Fifty) and offered to furnish five to six thousand men as the first regiment of a parliamentary national army.¹⁶¹ The rude refusal of this offer by the committee did not enhance its standing in his opinion, and when the Frankfort Parliament later disavowed its principles and called for the suppression of the two major uprisings in Baden, Corvin could regard it only with a certain natural bitterness. In this respect his attitude was not unlike that of other Forty-eighters who criticized the Parliament for failing to achieve the aims they espoused.

The criticism that Corvin was undemocratic is more difficult to disprove though it is as unjust as those criticisms which saw in him a "Prussian" or a militarist. That Corvin was of aristocratic origin and was brought up in an aristocratic atmosphere is true enough. That he had an aristocratic bearing is also true. How much of this

¹⁶⁰Charles W. Dahlinger, The German Revolution of 1849, Putnam & Sons, New York: 1903, p. 287 f.

¹⁶¹Corvin, Neuzeit, Vol. I, p. 131.

bearing, however, was due to family pride and military training, and how much was the result of a strong belief in the dignity of the individual man cannot actually be determined. It must be recalled that he broke twice with his own class: first, when he married, so to speak, beneath himself, and, secondly, when he espoused the democratic cause. It was the second break which alienated him not only from his own class but also partly from his own family. The attitude of some of his relatives toward his participation in the Revolution moved him to drop the name "Wiersbitzki".

The proof, however, that he was not an aristocrat in the bad sense of the term can be found in his renunciation of his own class. He did not look to the aristocracy to bring about the necessary social and political reforms of the future, but to the people -- dem Volk. For them he wrote his books, for them he took an active part in the Revolution, and for them it might be said, he sat six years in solitary confinement in Bruchsal. That he was deeply disappointed during the course of the Revolution in the petty jealousies and bickering of the democratic standard-bearers and in the failure of the German people to arise as one against its oppressors is understandable. It was during a period of such disillusionment in Bruchsal that he wrote his wife: "In general people are to me frightfully despicable and yet they interest me, yet I love them. Explain for me, if you can, this riddle."¹⁶² The riddle involved which Corvin did not seem capable

¹⁶²Corvin, Zellengefaengnis, p. 375.

explanation lay in the difference between his training and background and his beliefs as well as in his own political make-up. It lay in the essential dichotomy that separated liberalism and democracy. ¹⁶³

Corvin himself was too much of a liberal to be a complete democrat and too much of a democrat to be wholly a liberal. The government which he considered ideal was not the constitutional monarchy wished for by the liberals of his own day, but a republic with a classless society. It is certain, however, that just as he fought against a despotic absolutism, he would have also revolted against the tyranny of the masses. Even if Corvin was unable to resolve the apparent conflict, he was at least sure of his own feelings to the point of asserting his affection for the people -- an affection which made him look upon imprisonment not as a disgrace but as an honor. He was "far prouder of his prison days than... of the baronial coronet above his coat of arms". ¹⁶⁴

Another accusation which is frequently leveled at Corvin is that he was an "adventurer". Not only certain of his contemporaries have turned him that, but Valentin in most recent times

¹⁶³ Franz Schnabel, *Deutsche Geschichte im 19. Jahrhundert*, Herder & Co., Freiburg im Breisgau: 1953. Vol. II, p. 97: "Liberalism proceeded from the belief in the worth of the individual and wished to preserve the personality within the social organization -- *Gesellschaftsleben* --, whereas democracy on the other hand proceeded from the belief in the worth of the totality and wanted the personality of the individual subordinated or subjected to it."

Schnabel also points out in his analysis, p. 99, that "the democracy of the 19th century contained within it much liberalism", and further that "liberalism took on in the course of time more of the intellectual elements of democratic equality".

¹⁶⁴Corvin, *Zelensky's Friends*, p. 290.

has gone as far as to name him "the Revolution's Landsknecht".¹⁶⁵

This would seem to place Corvin in the category of one who took part in the Revolution out of love for excitement rather than from devotion to a cause. It is apparent, however, from all of Corvin's published writings before 1748-49 that he was essentially democratic, longed for national unity, and was heartily opposed to the established governments and their methods. That one might get the opinion from Corvin's memoirs that he was adventurous cannot be contested,¹⁶⁶ but it is an opinion which cannot be based on a consideration of his life before the Revolution. Previous to that time his life had been quiet enough. It was the Revolution itself with its effects which first gave color to an otherwise fairly normal existence. Certainly Georg Herwegh and Gustav Tiedemann could be more easily called adventurers than Corvin. And Schurz' escape from Rastatt along with his dramatic rescue of Professor Kinkel are deeds far more laden with melodrama than anything recounted by Corvin in his memoirs.

An implication that Corvin was lacking in scruples is made by Valentin in describing the organization of the Democratic Legion in Paris shortly after the February Revolution and its attempts to gain monetary support from the French Provisional Government. He writes:

According to French law every unemployed foreign citizen had the claim to financial aid from the French Government in returning to his native country and to the

¹⁶⁵Valentin, Geschichte, Vol. I, p. 486.

¹⁶⁶The first and second editions of Corvin's memoirs are entitled, Aus dem Leben eines Volkskämpfers, and the English edition of 1871, A Life of Adventure. The last German editions: Ein Leben voller Abenteuer. Undoubtedly these titles have also strengthened the characterization of him as an adventurer.

borders of France. Of this aid the German legionnaires wished to make use. Herwegh was extremely scrupulous. Otto von Corvin, former Prussian officer, had fewer scruples. ¹⁶⁷

This remark certainly casts an unfair reflection on Corvin's character and seems to give support to his opponents. On the other hand, there is nothing in Corvin's writings or what is known of his life that would indicate he was an unscrupulous individual. It was Herwegh who actually headed the delegation to the French Minister of Finance, Fieech, and all evidence indicates that the modest sum he requested for provisioning the Legion arose from his own impractical nature. Valentin himself admits that the workers were entitled to aid from the French Government and states that "all Germans /in France/ were supported by the French Government. Even Karl Marx received money for his communists". ¹⁶⁸ The case of Heinrich Heine is only too well known to need further mention here. If Corvin's opinion that a higher sum should have been requested and his admission that he himself later returned to request an additional sum are taken as evidence of unscrupulousness, it should be considered that his opinion and action were motivated from a heartfelt desire to aid the German revolutionary movement and not from the thought of personal aggrandizement. And if the term "unscrupulous" were to be admitted, which it cannot, how much more unscrupulous in Corvin's eyes were the actions and methods of

¹⁶⁷ Valentin, *Geschichte*, Vol. I, p. 486.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 487.

the reaction in stamping out a revolution which its own selfishness, shortsightedness, and duplicity had brought about.

The chief attack on Corvin's character, however, is based not on his conduct in Paris, but is connected with his role as a leader of the legionnaires and refugees in Strasbourg and on the part he played in the capitulation of the fortress of Belfort. It is, therefore, necessary to consider his action in these two instances in greater detail.

After the suppression of the Hocker uprising and the disbandment of the Democratic Legion because of its defeat at Niederbosenbach, a large number of the legionnaires, Corvin among them, fled by different routes over the German borders and assembled again at Strasbourg. Their number was increased by those of Hocker's forces who had also evaded capture. Among the more outstanding of the latter were Karl Heinzen, Gustav Struve, and Karl Blind.¹⁶⁹

Within a short period of time the two groups of refugees combined and formed a Refugees' Aid Committee of which Corvin was elected president. The committee not only gave financial support to the indigent refugees but strove to spread revolutionary ideas among

¹⁶⁹Karl P. Heinzen, radical republican, was several times forced to flee Germany because of his writings. He finally emigrated to America where he published the *Plough*, a critical analysis of his life and works has been made by Carl Mitche, *Against the Current*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago: 1945, 342 pp. Gustav Struve, also a radical writer, is known for the "*German Future*" and his support of Hocker in the April Revolution of 1848. He later became a captain in the Union Army during the Civil War. Karl Blind, characterized by Valentin as a "popular tavern orator", also belonged to the left wing and gave consistent support to Struve in his machinations against Corvin.

them. In the course of events quarrels over politics and personal jealousies arose and the refugees divided into two opposing camps, with Corvin the leader on one side and Heinzen and Struve on the other. Corvin's opponents proceeded with all the means available to them to undermine his influence and blacken his character, not without a certain degree of success. Fortunately much light has been thrown on this extremely bitter factional dispute through the more recent research of Otto Wiltberger. After a typically German, thorough-going study of the evidence at hand, Wiltberger was able to write: "In the subsequent description of the conflict between the two groups I follow essentially Corvin's presentation. Its author is to be sure himself biased, but appears according to his character to be the more trustworthy."¹⁷⁰

He also quotes from a letter of Proelas: "According to Blind's opinion, in one of his letters to me, Corvin was a person of thoroughly questionable character, a view which I am not able to share."¹⁷¹

Wiltberger's presentation of the feud between the two parties reveals the fact that Corvin because of his own political beliefs was unable to concur in "Struve's heartless fanaticism, Heinzen's boastful arrogance, or Blind's pronounced socialistic tendencies".¹⁷²

¹⁷⁰ Otto Wiltberger, Die deutschen politischen Flüchtlinge in Strassburg von 1830-1849, W. Rothschild Publisher, Berlin: 1910, p. 108.

¹⁷¹ Ibid., p. 109.

¹⁷² Ibid., p. 108.

The result was that Heinsen, Struve, and Blind in turn not only criticized Corvin but sowed dissension among the refugees to the point that Corvin had to request aid from Hecker in an attempt to put an end to the conflict. Theodor Moegling was finally sent by Hecker to Strasbourg, a meeting was held, the old committee dissolved, and Corvin again elected as the president of the new one. Still refusing to accept this arrangement, Heinsen and Blind formed an opposing committee and by underhanded means succeeded in diverting not only refugees but funds destined for Corvin's committee into their own headquarters.¹⁷³ Finally they attacked Corvin in the Mannheim Abendzeitung and in papers of a similar radical direction, while Corvin's friends attempted to answer through the columns of the Augsburger Allgemeine Zeitung and Corvin himself in the Freischaefer.

The dispute aired in this fashion caused considerable harm to Corvin, who was less well known in Baden than his opponents and whose arguments hence carried less weight. Nevertheless, Corvin's activity in behalf of the refugees in Strasbourg has been completely vindicated. Wiltberger writes: "The political refugees in Strasbourg were without means of existence. A great lack of clothing and food very soon prevailed. Corvin appears to have intervened here most effectively. His active and open nature helped him over initial difficulties."¹⁷⁴

¹⁷³ Heinsen even had a watchman stationed at the bridge over the Rhine at Kehl to catch persons coming from Baden with money for Corvin's committee. See Wiltberger, op. cit., p. 112.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid., p. 110.

Further on Wiltberger writes:

The main part of the work in assisting fell to Corvin. He directed the distribution of the numerous donations coming from Germany since June 1848, arranged for the lodging of a new arrival in the various inns available, and negotiated the affairs of the refugees with the French authorities. ¹⁷⁵

Johannes Froelss, who examined Corvin's papers and records at Wiltberger's request, claimed that "in accordance with the interests of the refugees, everything which might have been harmful to them was speedily disposed of". ¹⁷⁶

The disagreement between Corvin on the one hand and Heinzen and Struve on the other was continued by the latter two even after the Strasbourg period, so that when Corvin later returned to give aid to the revolutionary movement in Baden in the following year he was encountered with suspicion and distrust at the revolutionary headquarters. Corvin himself suspected that the feeling against him had been increased by his connection with Held in Berlin who had fallen into special disfavor with the southern democrats. ¹⁷⁷ In any case, the whispering campaign was renewed against him which not only affected him at the time, but hurt his reputation later on.

¹⁷⁵ Otto Wiltberger, *op. cit.*, p. 111.

Valentin, *Geschichte*, Vol. II, p. 256, fails to make any reference to Corvin's effective work, but at least says: "Corvin, who awakened the greatest amount of confidence, was given the direction of the Refugee's Aid Committee."

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, Wiltberger, p. 109.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 110. Corvin mentions this a number of times in his own works. It stems from the fact that Held had suggested Prussia take the lead in unifying Germany under the House of Hohenzollern.

When the revolutionary forces were finally defeated with the fall of the Fortress of Kastatt and it was discovered that Corvin had negotiated the surrender on terms of unconditional surrender, his enemies, in search of a scapegoat, immediately raised the cry of betrayal, and when it turned out that Corvin, among the leaders of the Fortress, was not condemned to death, their suspicions were confirmed. Corvin had bargained the surrender of the Fortress in exchange for his own life.

It is this indictment of Corvin which is the most damning. It is also this one, in spite of Corvin's own denials and the favorable verdict of some historians of a later date which refuses to die out.¹⁷⁸ The most recent historian to reiterate it, a scholar of reputation, is Veit Valentin. Since the accusation is of such a serious nature, it is necessary to consider it and the evidence in support of it quite carefully. Valentin writes the following:

It may be that Corvin did not expressly request for himself any personal advantages, but it fits into the involved situation that Count Goeben, to whom the early surrender of the Fortress is important, is especially friendly to the negotiator and indicates to Corvin that a good end to the affair will mitigate his own fate. Corvin probably, therefore, rejects the idea of escape because he is certain of saving his own life.¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁸ These chroniclers of the period who condemn Corvin or look upon him with suspicion are: Becker & Essellen, Dahlinger, Feerderer, Goegg, and Valentin in their respective works listed in the bibliography, and those who exonerate him of blame are Blas, Hartmann, Berkheim, Froelich, and Fraenkel. Others pass over the question without mentioning it.

¹⁷⁹ Valentin, *op. cit.* Vol. II, p. 534.

The first part of this statement is vouched for by Corvin himself. Count Groeben was friendly and reassuring to Corvin not only in reference to himself but to the garrison at large. In his treatment of the revolutionary fortress during the peace negotiations his conduct contained much of military chivalry and little of harsh reprisal. He promised Corvin to intercede for the garrison and assured him that its fate on terms of unconditional surrender would not be as harsh as might be believed. In reply to a communication from the commander of Rastatt, Gustav Tiedemann, he wrote: "I shall do my utmost, of course, so that all the consideration which the circumstances permit will be given the garrison forces."¹⁸⁰ It would seem that Corvin in trusting to the full the word of a fellow Prussian officer -- a word, to which he in his idealism attached an unimpeachable code of ethics -- overlooked the fact that authorities higher than General Groeben might not be so easily inclined toward a merciful treatment of the surrendered garrison forces. Klos, who acquits Corvin of any duplicity, says in his treatment of the question: "Corvin forgot that capitulation is a form of bargaining in which each party seeks to cheat the other. In this case Corvin was cheated and the garrison of Rastatt with him."¹⁸¹

¹⁸⁰Corvin, Ein Leben, Vol. II, p. 533.

Valentin himself points out that Count Groeben was inclined toward mild treatment of the captured revolutionaries, but that the Prince of Prussia was not.

¹⁸¹Wilhelm Klos, op. cit. p. 592.

It is difficult, however, to see what Corvin might have used in the way of bargaining power. The ultimate surrender of the Fortress was certain. It appeared only a question of time. Through further resistance the garrison would only have lost the chances it had for mild treatment at the hands of its besiegers.

The second part of Valentin's statement is based not only on probability but on a false chronological sequence.¹⁸² The conversation with Count Groeben referred to by Valentin occurred after Corvin's chances of escape were past. It was during his trip through South Baden at which time he became aware of the hopeless plight of those within the fortress that Corvin might have made good his escape but did not. In this regard he writes:

The trip was difficult because at each post station the carriage had to be changed and the weather was bad. During such a change it would have been easy for me to have disappeared and to have reached Eberthberg from where I might easily have proceeded since I was in civilian clothes and also had additional money. The thought went through my mind and the temptation was strong for I could not conceal from myself

¹⁸² The time sequence is as follows: July 18, 1849, Corvin and Lang meet Graf Schmadow, who serves as a Prussian guard, in Niederbuehl; July 19, the party reaches Freiburg; July 20, Konstanz; July 21, Gos, where Corvin parleys with the Chief of the General Staff of the Prince of Prussia, a Major Lindner, who informs him that the Prince wishes unconditional surrender, that such surrender does not necessarily mean harsh treatment; late in the afternoon of the same day, Corvin and Lang return to Rastatt, where Corvin reports to a small council of war the result of his trip; July 22, morning, the large council of war described by Schurz; July 22, afternoon, Corvin meets General von der Groeben at his headquarters in the vicinity of Kuppenheim for the first time; July 23, the fortress surrenders.

Corvin, Ein Leben, Vol. II, p. 599 ff.

that our cause had failed and that a hard lot lay ahead of us officers, but I immediately cast such cowardly thoughts aside. I did not wish to betray the trust placed in me by the garrison; I wished to serve it to the best of my ability to the last minute and to share the fate of my comrades. Count Schmettow claims to have taken all kinds of precautionary measures, but I can assure anyone that it would have been easy for me during the trip to Constance in spite of them to have fled. The trust which he showed and the statement that he had to vouch for us with his honor as well as the concern for my own honor were the best measures to prevent my flight. 183

There is no particular reason to doubt Corvin's words, and since Valentin himself quotes from Corvin's writings at other points to support his own statements it is difficult to see why he should question him here.

Valentin supports his first statement, however, with the further remark that "Corvin advocates the acceptance of the Prussian conditions in spite of the apparent and intentional lack of clarity and puts them through during the council of war".¹⁸⁴ Actually two general councils of war were held: one when Corvin returned from his trip through Baden and one after his conversation with Count Groeben. Already in the first council of war before any assurances could have been made to him by Groeben, Corvin advocated an immediate surrender.

Actually Valentin's assessment of Corvin's motives cannot be categorically denied. However, since its validity is in question, and it is based on conjecture rather than fact, one may contest the author's right to have included it in a consideration of the

¹⁸³Corvin, Mein Leben, Vol. II, p. 598.

¹⁸⁴Valentin, Geschichte, Vol. II, p. 533.

surrender.¹⁸⁵

The imputation in Valentin's account is that Carvin might have spoken against surrender, though how he could have done this under the circumstances is not clear. As a result of his trip through Southern Baden, he had learned that the remaining forces of Sigel's army had retreated into Switzerland. The fortress was cut off from any hope of assistance and was completely surrounded by an overwhelming number of Prussian soldiers. Already in May serious mutinies of the troops within the fortress had broken out.¹⁸⁶ By the time negotiations were taken up in July the situation had reached a crucial point. Even Valentin recognizes this fact when he writes: "That the remainder of the revolutionary army could not hold the fortress against the multiple superiority of the Prussians and the forces of the Reich is quite clear."¹⁸⁷ And again later: "Indeed, it was high time to capitulate. Spy hunts, fights between soldiers and revolutionary volunteers, and desertions increased."¹⁸⁸

¹⁸⁵ Charles v. Langlois and Charles Seignobos: Introduction to the Study of History, Henry Holt & Co., New York: 1926, p. 253. "If the reasoning leaves the least doubt, no attempt must be made to draw a conclusion; the point treated must be left in the conjectural stage, clearly distinguished from the definitively established results."

¹⁸⁶ See Hans Blum, Die deutsche Revolution 1848-49, Eugen Biederichs, Leipzig: 1897, pp. 425-27. Also Albert Foerster, Erinnerungen aus Nassau, Schoemperlin Publisher, Lehr: 1881, entire book.

¹⁸⁷ Valentin, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 530.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid., p. 534.

Why then should Corvin have spoken out against capitulation under these conditions? All available evidence indicates that a prolonged siege with the possibility of bombardment would have worsened the conditions within the fortress and would have jeopardized any chances of mild treatment at the hands of the Prussians after the surrender had taken place.

It is also difficult to believe that Corvin could have talked the council of war into unconditional surrender if the majority had been of a different opinion. That the terms of surrender were so unprotestingly accepted is not the indication of any special gift of oratory on Corvin's part, but rather evidence that the consensus did not seriously diverge from Corvin's own views. Carl Schurz in his Lebenserinnerungen gives a stirring description of the first council of war held before Corvin had personally spoken with General Grosben. In spite of its length it is worth repeating here as a substantially important piece of evidence.

The governor entered and requested silence. Corvin, who stood at his side, delivered his report orally before the assembly. He said that he was accompanied by a Prussian officer to the border of Switzerland and had convinced himself there on the spot that there was no longer a revolutionary army in Baden, nor resistance of any kind against the Prussian troops. The revolutionary army had crossed over on to Swiss territory and had naturally had to give up, at the border their weapons and entire military equipment. The remainder of Germany was also quiet as he had learned through the newspapers — no trace left of a revolutionary movement. Everywhere subjection and order. Even the Hungarians were pressed hard by Russian intervention and would soon be obliged to give up. In short, the garrison of Rastatt was completely deserted and could not hope for help from any side. And finally Corvin added it was announced to him in the Prussian headquarters that the Prussian supreme command requested the unconditional surrender of the fortress and would admit no conditions of any kind.

A profound silence followed this speech. Each of the listeners felt that Corvin had spoken the truth. Finally someone, I can no longer remember who, spoke up and asked some questions. Then there was a confusion of voices in which some hotheads could be heard to speak of "dying to the last man" and the like, until the governor, a former Prussian soldier who had become an officer in the Palatinate succeeded in reestablishing order. He said he was as ready as anyone else to sacrifice his last drop of blood for the cause and that the revolutionary Prussian officers would probably have to die anyway when they fell into the hands of the besieging army. But he counseled the immediate surrender of the fortress. If one doesn't do it today, one will have to do it tomorrow. One should not expose to starvation and bombardment the civilians of the city with their wives and children, and all of this in vain. It was time to make an end, no matter what might happen to us.

There was a murmuring throughout the room that this man had spoken sensibly and so the decision was made that Corvin should try once more at Prussian headquarters to effect the most favorable conditions for the officers and men of the fortress. If he should perceive after a definite attempt the impossibility of obtaining such conditions, he should discreetly conclude the necessary agreement for the surrender. As we left the room, most of us probably felt that anything but unconditional surrender could hardly be considered. 189

Schurz' views are substantiated, according to Blos, in the memoirs of Hermann Mors.

In describing the fate that befell the individual leaders after the surrender of the fortress, Valentin makes the following statement: "Likewise Otto von Corvin is given death sentence pardon for the reasons already known."¹⁹⁰ Again the inference is that

¹⁸⁹ Carl Schurz, Lebenserinnerungen, Georg Reimer Publisher, Berlin: 1906, Vol. I, p. 218 f.

¹⁹⁰ Veit Valentin, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 537.

Corvin received special treatment because of underhanded dealings with the Prussians. It must be pointed out in this regard that the summary court-martial which passed sentence on the garrison forces acted in an extremely irregular manner. Some of those condemned were shot within twenty-four hours, and some of the executions were deferred as long as two months. In other cases officers were sentenced to prison and ordinary soldiers condemned to death. Valentin himself writes: "In this terroristic selection and arbitrariness a maximum degree of injustice to be sure is involved in a seemingly juridical process."¹⁹¹ Is it not possible that Corvin luckily escaped death through the irregular procedure of the court-martial rather than through promises made to him by General Groeben?

The Prussian authorities claimed that they were trying to find the ringleaders of the uprising. Corvin, whose military participation was restricted to the bombardment of Ludwigshafen in an attempt to drive the enemy off and whose political influence in Baden was negligible, could hardly be considered a ringleader. And what explanation can be offered that Theodor Moegling, one of the outstanding figures of the movement in Baden was, like Corvin, sentenced to death and then given a term of ten years imprisonment?¹⁹²

¹⁹¹ Valentin, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 537.

¹⁹² Theodor Moegling was a representative in the Warttemberg Diet who took an early and active part in the Hecker Uprising of 1848. He later played a much more outstanding military role in the revolutionary military operations in 1849 than Corvin did. There would have been more evidence at hand to convict him as a "ringleader" than there was in Corvin's case.

Or, that two other former Prussian officers received similar sentences? According to Corvin's account the only thing that saved him from execution on September 15, was an act of the Baden Government issued a few days previously requiring all sentences of death not pronounced by unanimous verdict to be sent to Karlsruhe for review. His was the first of such cases to be so handled, and the delay provided him with a period of grace to effect an intervention. Actually, Corvin's accumulation of sentence was not made by the Prussian authorities, whom General Groeben represented, but by the Ministry of War for Baden.

Valentin's statement: "It fits into the involved situation that Count Groeben... indicates to Corvin that a good end to the affair will mitigate his own fate," is not, on the other hand, an assumption. Corvin himself admits that Groeben gave such assurances. And openly states that he later made use of those assurances in an attempt to save his own life.¹⁹³ However, that does not constitute conclusive evidence that he "bargained" the surrender of the fortress as Valentin would lead us to believe. Considering Corvin's background and training, the altruistic character of his writings, the otherwise exemplary character of his life, and especially in this situation the absence of any tangible proof of duplicity, it is not only unjust but unfair to suspect the motives for his action.

¹⁹³Corvin, Der Kampf, pp. 605, 610. It is hardly likely that Corvin would have mentioned Groeben's promises if he actually had betrayed the fortress into the hands of the Prussians.

A final criticism of Corvin made by Wilhelm Bloch, otherwise friendly toward him, is that he abandoned the ideals for which he stood in 1848 as so many other Forty-eighters did after Bismarck had achieved the unification of Germany. This is based on Corvin's tribute to the Iron Chancellor in 1871. It is true that Corvin admired Bismarck just as one man of deeds might admire another. But the fact that Bismarck had brought about national unification for which the Forty-eighters so ardently longed was sufficient in Corvin's mind to invest him with an aura of the heroic. Nevertheless, he continued to espouse democratic reform and liberalism. If he was at times carried away with the romantic idea of nationalism, in which he saw a unified Germany freed from all vestiges of absolutism at home and respected abroad, he was not unlike others who took part in the Revolution. The difference between him and his fellow revolutionists lay in the sequence of aims to be achieved. If the majority of the revolutionists used the slogan "Through democratic reform to national unity," Corvin would have reversed it to: "Through national unity to democratic reform." This ardent desire for national unity did not preclude the underlying concepts of liberalism and democracy, since, as Franz Schnabel has stated it so well, the two were most closely related:

One expected from a national state, moreover, that through it the dignity of man could be better protected against the arbitrariness of small princely tyrants than through petty constitutional states. Thus liberal and national thought was inwardly closely connected. ¹⁹⁴

¹⁹⁴Franz Schnabel, *op. cit.* Vol. II, p. 95.

That the national unity achieved under Bismarck's leadership would not bring about democratic reform is a result which Corvin failed to foresee. It does not prove, however, that he abandoned his own faith in democracy. One could hardly wish for a better testimonial of his continued admiration for democratic institutions than that which is to be found in the chapters concerning America in his *Geschichte der Neuzeit*, written ten years after Bismarck had come to power. They show no diminution of feeling on his part that a republican form of government was the ideal after which modern states should strive. The task for which he undertook in writing a history of the French Revolution at the very close of his career, at a time when Bismarckian Germany was at its height, and the sympathy he expressed therein not only for the Revolution but for the very principle of revolution, indicates that he never wavered in loyalty to his original beliefs.

The question of Corvin's influence on the Revolution of 1848 is a most difficult one to assess. In so far as it has been possible to ascertain, none of the leaders of the movement with whom he came in contact mentions him as having influenced their thought or action to any significant degree and no historians accord him more than a minor role. He is mentioned chiefly in connection with the organization of the Democratic Legion which participated in the Hecker Uprising and in connection with the capitulation of Rastatt. To be sure, Valentin includes him among the best known leaders of the people who took part in the second congress of democrats in Berlin, but it is an inclusion which can be questioned.¹⁹⁵ According to Corvin

¹⁹⁵ Valentin, *op. cit.*, Vol. IX, p. 256.

he acted only as an observer at the congress and had no personal following of his own there. Nor did he later arouse popular support for himself. He was neither a spellbinder nor a rabble rouser such as his friend Held nor could he inspire large sections of the population with poetic effusions such as his co-worker in Paris, Georg Harwegh. Corvin was at his best as an anonymous pamphleteer and as a popular historian. In neither of these capacities had he achieved sufficient renown before the Revolution to be considered well-known by any large segment of the population. The first edition of his Illustrirte Politische Geschichte des Volks, on which he, as a writer, based his claim for recognition, appeared in 1840 and amounted to only 5000 copies. And, the Pfaffenknecht and Die Geiseler had only limited circulation at that time because of their suppression in the various German states.

In so far as his influence was felt through his promotion of the Democratic Legion under Harwegh's aegis little can be said. The Legion never numbering more than some thousand inadequately armed workers was easily suppressed once it arrived on German soil. The news of its organization in France had an effect in Germany opposite to that desired. Rumors were spread by the southwest German Government that the "French" were moving "en masse over the Rhine".

"The proceedings in France were the cause of a frightful panic throughout southwest Germany..., which government circles exploited in order to bring back freedom-greedy subjects to a belief in order

and discipline."¹⁹⁶ Nor did Corvin's work with the political refugees in Strasbourg bring better results. Wiltberger who has made a special study of this phase of the Revolution arrives at the conclusion that the refugees were not of special significance in reference to the course of historical events: "Undoubtedly they took part in almost all of the more important events of these years, but their action was nowhere decisive. There was lacking then as well as later a really important personality."¹⁹⁷

Without overlooking the abilities Corvin actually possessed, it must be said that his background and bearing made him suspect by most democrats and that his own outspoken manner and at times almost excessive egotism did not fit him to rise to a major position of influence. That Corvin was ambitious there can be no doubt, and this element of his character did not go unnoticed by his opponents. Borkheim says of Corvin:

There was definitely nothing dishonest about him. Through his military manner which covered his inner good nature as well as through his inclination to play the part of the aristocratic patron of the Revolution, Corvin ruined his chances with the principal democrats.... That not he, but Sigel, received the supreme command also hurt his naive vanity. ¹⁹⁸

And Froells to whom Corvin had entrusted his papers at the time of his death wrote in the Frankfurter Zeitung:

¹⁹⁶ Valentin, Ibid., Vol. I, p. 471.

¹⁹⁷ Otto Wiltberger, op. cit., p. 201.

¹⁹⁸ As quoted by Wilhelm Bloch, op. cit., p. 578.

The aristocratic descent, the aristocratic nature of the former Prussian officer gave Corvin an exceptional position among the south German democrats of the time, and although he was closely connected with Herwegh, Hecker, Moegling, Heinrich Simon, Loewe, Froebel, among others, to the majority he remained a stranger who was regarded with distrust. 199

Corvin's chief service to the Revolution of 1848 was rendered after the revolution was over, and consisted in his efforts to keep alive the memory of the men who had fought for democratic reform as well as the principles in which they believed. He seized the opportunity to use his newspaper reports from America to send back to Germany frequent accounts of the honor and respect bestowed in the New World on men who were regarded in their native land as culprits and renegades. His "Letters from Washington" to the Ausschauer Allgemeine Zeitung are filled with praise for democracy as he saw it in action in America. They must certainly have been a source of inspiration to those who were dejected by the events of 1848-49.

Corvin, who, in his work as a popular historian, was well aware of the value of eyewitness accounts, not only wished to leave behind him an autobiography but a document that would have historical value. In this he succeeded. His memoirs have been used by the best historians as source material on the Revolution of 1848-49. Further, his autobiography was related in such an interesting and entertaining fashion that it contributed in keeping alive the memory of 1848 and in inspiring a later generation in its attempt to realize the

199 Johannes Froelke, Frankfurter Zeitung, March 20-22, 1886.

goals denied its predecessors.

In both of his major popular histories, Geschichte der ersten Französischen Revolution and Geschichte der Menschheit, more especially in the latter, he attempted to justify to the people the events of the year 1848 and 1849 insofar as they concerned the attempt to change the status quo in Europe. Undoubtedly they also aided the growth of dissatisfaction with autocracy.

In a final analysis, out of justice to Corvin, it must be said that although the influence he exercised on events prior to and during the Revolution was far less than that of many a popular military leader of the time, such as Hecker or Sigel, or of a political parliamentarian, such as Moogling or Gagera, his subsequent support of the Revolution in the role of an apologist entitles him to be ranked among them as one of the outstanding figures of the time. The pen is mightier than the sword and has a more lasting influence than the spoken word. Corvin was ready to employ all three in favor of a united democratic Germany, but his right to recognition in regard to 1848 must be based more on what he wrote than on what he said and did. Certainly his case is not much different from that of Carl Schurz whose name was enhanced, not specifically by the part he played in the Revolution itself, but by his later support of its ideals in America. Schurz turned his back on Germany once the Revolution was over. Corvin never did. Although he became an American citizen, his chief interest lay in continuing to sow the seeds of democratic reform on German soil. Certainly this untiring devotion to the cause of 1848 on Corvin's part should not be passed over without its due need of praise.

Chapter 5

Corvin and America

It is difficult to say just when Corvin's interest in America was first kindled. As a school boy in the military academy at Potsdam, he made his first acquaintance with America through Cooper's Leather Stocking Tales. Later in Leipzig he came to know Friederich Gerstaecker and through his close association with him became more familiar with life in the New World. During his imprisonment in Bruchsal, while he had ample time to reflect on the fate that had befallen him and the general depressing state of European affairs, he often expressed his desire to leave the Old World for the New.

The letters to Corvin of Ludwig Storch from Gotha, whose sons had emigrated to America, painted a rather optimistic picture of the States. It was a new Atlantis and would probably become the Athens of German literature. Quite different in tone was correspondence which Corvin carried on with a certain Fran Louise T., who wrote directly to him from New York. In a letter dated May 9, 1853, she imparted more sobering information. According to her the Americans were quite uncultured in comparison with the Germans. The women were better educated than the men, and most of the German scholars in America were forced of necessity to become shopkeepers or house painters. Her closing advice to him was: "If you were only here, it /America/ would hardly please you; still if you were to find your

way into the new life fresh and active, you might in the end perhaps like it." ²⁰⁰ Undaunted by this report, Corvin continued to entertain thoughts of emigrating to the United States. Many of his co-revolutionists had already done so and did not seem eager to return, and besides Corvin had grown wholly disheartened with conditions in Germany. Shortly before his release from prison he revealed his intentions to his wife, but she regarded them less enthusiastically. In the end Gerstaecker dissuaded him and he abandoned the idea for the time being.

While resident in England Corvin undoubtedly heard much about America, but it is doubtful if the United States was presented in a very flattering light. Dickens, for whose journal, Household Words, Corvin occasionally wrote, visited America in 1842 and painted a rather uncomplimentary picture of the land of the Yankees. ²⁰¹ The anti-American attitude of the English press prior to October 1861 and the rather belittling accounts of German newspaper reporters stationed in the United States, must also have given him a rather dismal conception of the young republic. Nevertheless, with the outbreak of the Civil War, Corvin proposed to the Augsburger Allgemeine Zeitung that he be sent to America as a war correspondent, and unlike those who preceded him arrived in New York without particular bias.

²⁰⁰Corvin, Zellengefaengnis, pp. 427-431. For a description of the Forty-eighters in America, cf. Hildegard B. Johnson, "Adjustment to the United States" in A. E. Zucker's The Forty-Eighters, Columbia University Press, New York: 1950, p. 43 ff..

²⁰¹Charles Dickens, American Notes, Thomas Nelson and Sons, London: 1904, first published 1842. See also Martin Chuzzlewit, 1843.

Corvin's initial impressions of the United States are incorporated in his first series of articles to the Augsburger Allgemeine Zeitung beginning with a report dated October 15, 1861, from New York and published on November 8 of the same year.²⁰² Although his first few articles contain nothing of special importance, they do indicate an innermost desire on his part, probably one of which he himself was not aware, to look for the good in American life. Whereas previous reports in the Augsburger Allgemeine Zeitung appear to belittle the North, scoff at the organization of the army, and criticize McClellan and especially the appearance of his troops, Corvin steps in with a new and fresh attitude of sympathy for America and its people. His first impression of the soldiers he sees is that "they are better than /he/ expected".²⁰³ A volunteer battalion looks excellent and could "as far as appearance and order are concerned compare favorably with any Prussian battalion". Hardly more than a month later he witnesses a review of 70,000 troops in Washington and reports that he has never seen "better precision and order in Europe". He remarks slyly that "the hurrahs don't only come from the soldiers' throats but also from their hearts", and adds: "I do not think any other country in the world could in so short a time call up such an army of 500,000 men, clothe, nourish, pay, and even drill them as North America has done under such difficult

²⁰²Since Corvin's despatches were sent by mail, considerable time elapsed between their writing and appearance. Notwithstanding this they were frequently printed on the front page of the paper.

²⁰³Corvin, AAZ, November 15, 1861, Jahrgang 1861, No. 319, Beilage, unsigned dispatch from New York.

circumstances."²⁰⁴

As an item of interest for readers in Germany Corvin seized upon and exploited to the full the position of honor the refugee leaders of the Revolution of 1848 had achieved in America. He let no opportunity pass to remind the Fatherland that these men were considered here in a far different light from that in which they were regarded in the land of their birth. In his very first article he mentions Blenker, Hecker, Sigel, and Struve and remarks that the "unappreciated energy of the men driven here by the unhappy revolution of 1849, finds here an extended and lawful field of activity". And to this he adds: "Men, who it was thought /in Germany/ could not be tolerated, are held in the highest respect and exert a powerful influence."²⁰⁵ Later in November, after witnessing a torchlight parade in Washington which was organized by Blenker in honor of McClellan and at which various Forty-eighters were present in the reviewing stand with Lincoln he writes: "I was often forced to pass my hand over my eyes as if in a dream. Men who were despised in Germany and cast into jail are here esteemed and feted and associate on an equal footing with the ruler of the great American people."²⁰⁶ This was a theme which was to run through much of his reporting from America.

²⁰⁴Corvin, "Briefe aus Washington-VIII", AAZ, December 17, 1861, Jahrgang 1861, No. 351, Beilage. Hereafter referred to as Briefe.

²⁰⁵Corvin, AAZ, November 8, 1861, Jahrgang 1861, No. 312, Beilage, unsigned despatch from New York.

²⁰⁶Corvin, AAZ, December 8, 1861, Jahrgang 1861, No. 342, Briefe-III.

In Washington he finds the view "attractive and splendid" and the public buildings "an ornament to any European capital". Above all he is impressed with the simplicity of the White House and its occupant. "The building is simply painted white and would not be too good for a moderately wealthy, private individual." The absence of guards and the comparatively free access to the president call forth the remark that "the freely elected of the people need no sentinels, no courtiers, and no ceremonies".

His early championing of the Northern cause, can already be seen in the attitude taken by him in his articles concerning the exchange of notes between England and the United States over the arrest of Patrick and Rahming, and the Confederate diplomats, Mason and Slidell. In the first case Corvin found the note of the English ambassador "insolent and insulting, an unnecessary meddling in the internal affairs of the United States". The second case, which almost led to war between the two countries, caused him to write a number of articles in which he presented the position of the North in the best light possible and made out that England was deliberately seeking a *casus belli*: "If England were to make war against the United States in its helpless position, it would brand the British Cabinet with a despicable action. But such an action would conform with British politics which has given her the name of perfidious Albion."²⁰⁷

²⁰⁷ Corvin, Briefe-XI, AAZ, January 12, 1862, Jahrgang 1862, No. 12, Beilage.

He further accuses John Bull of "protecting the oppressed everywhere when it is to his advantage" and of attacking the weak but "shaking his fist at a stronger adversary". "English morality," he asserts, "stops where cotton begins." If worst should come to worst, however, America could find allies to occupy English ships. "The American soldiers will shortly be as skillful as the English, and American officers are already as good as their English counterparts." ²⁰⁸ It is no wonder that this attitude eventually forced him to sever his connections with the London Times, though it was done on his own volition and caused him to sustain a considerable monetary loss.

The sympathy which the North seemed to be losing in Europe through its failure to speak out for the emancipation of the slaves, Corvin tried to strengthen by presenting the issue of the American conflict on a more practical basis. The Northern Government, according to his point of view, could not consider solely the attitude of European philanthropists. It was engaged in a struggle for its very existence. To speak out for emancipation would cause a defection of the middle states and would not secure the money necessary for carrying on military operations. Besides, the Yankee, he points out, has even less feeling for the negro than the Southerner. To support this assertion he quotes Olmstead's,

²⁰⁸ Corvin, Briefe-VI, AAZ, December 12, 1861, Jahrgang 1861, No. 346.

The Cotton Kingdom.²⁰⁹ "The genuine abolitionists," he claims further, "are the German-Americans."²¹⁰

Although his allegiance to the North remained constant throughout the war, his initial enthusiasm for the Republic was dampened after several months residence in Washington. The confusions in government circles over a plan of operations, and especially the graft entailed in the spoils system gradually engendered in him a disappointment he was not able to conceal. Article after article began to reveal this fact. "The Americans," he writes, "are like young children stripping a Christmas tree."²¹¹ By February 1862 it forced from him the following observation:

That sublime goddess /the republic/, for whom our young men were filled with enthusiasm, for whom they rushed exulting to their death filled with a sacrificial courage, for whom noble men fought and suffered, is here degraded to a common prostitute to be had for money.... I am neither a sentimental enthusiast or idealist nor a youthful virtue lover or moral zealot, and if I speak thus it is only a calm sad conviction that forces me to do so. ²¹²

²⁰⁹ Corvin says of Frederick Law Olmstead: "He was one of the most amiable and best-informed Americans whom I came to know.... He did not ask like a German to whom one comes: 'What good tidings do you bring me?' but rather 'What can I do for you?'" Ein Leben, Vol. II, p. 774.

²¹⁰ Corvin, Briefe - XXII, AAZ, February 10, 1862, Jahrgang 1862, No. 41. cp. A. E. Zucker, op. cit., p. 67 f.

²¹¹ Corvin, Briefe - XX, AAZ, February 8, 1862, Jahrgang 1862, No. 39.

²¹² Corvin, Briefe - XXVII, AAZ, February 26, 1862, Jahrgang 1862, No. 57, Beilage.

Added to his dismay over the corruption of government officials was an annoyance concerning the attitude of many Americans toward German immigrants and things German, probably a vestige of the earlier strong nativist movement. He felt that capable German-Americans were often kept out of higher offices through prejudice.

The Americans gladly make use of German science and talent but are extraordinarily jealous of the Germans and place everything possible in their way to bar them from higher posts.... The Americans are sublimely ignorant but very clever and understand how to use the knowledge of others. However, they ²¹³claim the glory thereby achieved for themselves.

This feeling was later strengthened by the failure of the press to give full recognition to the part played by German-American generals in the successful conduct of the war.

The fact too that the rights of private citizens could be violated under a democratic government also aroused him. The action of the Washington Provost Marshal in closing all public bars by nine thirty at night in order to decrease the appearance of drunken soldiers on the streets seemed to him a false approach to the problem. It was not the order itself so much as the manner in which it was put into effect that angered him. Without investigating, patrols of the military police were empowered to break into establishments that still seemed to be open and to destroy wantonly all stocks of liquor that could be found. As an eyewitness to one such unjustifiable raid Corvin lifted his voice in protest. According to

²¹³ Corvin, Briefe--XIII, AA2, January 25, 1862, Jahrgang 1862, No. 25.

him it would have been better to have directed such energies against the enemy than against loyal citizens.²¹⁴

Again, as the war proceeded, and he became aware of the inadequacy of Northern generals Corvin expressed his dismay. They were slovenly in appearance and in most cases, with the notable exception of McClellan later on, utterly ignorant of the science of war.

His admiration for the American soldier on the other hand knows no bounds. "They are brave, strong, fresh, and frolicsome as young colts" and he noticed that "most of them have that bold, half-shy glance of a falcon" seen in the eyes of free peoples "whose souls have not been embittered by the police".²¹⁵ Although the soldiers are "well-clothed" he regrets that "the American god" does not permit them "to buy a little brandy to keep themselves warm on cold days" such as is done in European armies.²¹⁶

As Corvin watched the preparations on both sides for the gigantic struggle which was to come, he was filled with sorrow at the thought that these brave young men, so important for the future life of the Republic, would be mowed down under gunfire. A unique plan evolved in his mind. The sensible thing to do to avoid such

²¹⁴ Corvin, Briefe - XVI, AAZ, January 29, 1862, Jahrgang 1862, No. 29.

²¹⁵ Corvin, Briefe - XXI, AAZ, April 30, 1862, Jahrgang 1862, No. 120, Beilage.

²¹⁶ Corvin, Briefe - XII, AAZ, January 19, 1862, Jahrgang 1862, No. 19.

bloodshed would be to allow the South to set itself up as an independent nation. It would not be long before the indolent Southerner, used to letting others work for him, would discover "that trade, merchant marine, and factories are not the products of slave labor but the fruits of northern industry, energy, and intelligence". In short order the South would be inundated with speculating Englishmen and above all Yankees who would gradually seize the reins of government from the slave-holding lords and lead the South back into the Union. ²¹⁷

One of the factors that prevented Americans from viewing the situation sensibly he felt was to be found in the sensational American press which failed to distinguish between freedom and license. It was only shortly after his arrival that he found the American newspapers to be completely partisan and unreliable. He deplored their scurrilous attacks on high officials and their habit of exaggeration. And he soon discovered that he had to discount most reports of northern victories and "divide the casualties inflicted /on the enemy/ by ten". It was the unprincipled newspaper reporter and the likewise unprincipled politician who drew the remark from him that "such a nation /America/ would evince the respect and admiration of all Europeans, if it were not that most politicians and a certain class of newspaper men do everything in their power to lower it". ²¹⁸

²¹⁷Corvin, Briefe - XXII, AAZ, February 11, 1862, Jahrgang 1862, No. 42, Beilage.

²¹⁸Corvin, Briefe - XLI, AAZ, April 11, 1862, Jahrgang 1862, No. 120, Beilage.

In spite of the fact that Corvin's initial admiration for America was considerably lessened during his first year in the United States, as is evident in his "Briefe aus Washington" (Letters from Washington), it must be pointed out that a prolonged residence here, during which time he became acquainted with the highest officials in the Government and had ample opportunity to study the American and his way of life, gradually engendered in him a sober but intense respect for America which he took back with him on his return to Europe and which remained with him for the rest of his life. His later writings give frequent testimony to this fact.

219 Perhaps the most succinct statement in regard to his feeling for the United States appears in his Erinnerungen:

I was six years in America and became a citizen of the great Republic. During this time all the prejudices in reference to the character of the Americans which I took with me disappeared and made room for a sincere respect and admiration. One finds in Europe, to be sure, more social polish, finer manners, more refined speech, and by far better education, but this refinement which probably improves the outward appearance of men is not a measure for the inner worth, for the natural character. I have lived in different countries, but I must sincerely admit that I respect and admire America more than any other nation. Political and social conditions have an extraordinary great influence on the character of a people.

In the character of the American — public and private — there is no trace of pettiness /Kleinlichkeit/. Each man feels himself to be his own master and above him is nobody but the law which he himself has called forth as a part of the sovereign people. This

219 Corvin maintained that it was necessary for a European to have lived at least five years in America in order really to understand the United States and its people. Pfaffensuessel, p. 9.

feeling and the ideas stemming from it, the German does not have; therefore the Germans cannot understand the Americans nor the Americans the Germans. Superficialities are first noted and according to them one judges falsely. ²²⁰

The service Corvin performed for America has already been noted in the treatment of his histories. Little has been said, however, concerning the recording of his impressions of American life, which comprises almost a fifth of the space in his Erinnerungen, and which gave a remarkably complete picture of the ways of the New World to his contemporaries. As is peculiar to Corvin very little escaped his observation. Hardly anything was considered too unimportant for inclusion and the human interest element so characteristic of his writings is here met with again. For example, the entire American cuisine is dished up for the benefit of European readers: yams, hominy, squash, tomatoes, eggplant, corn on the cob, cantaloupes, peanuts, bananas are all mentioned as items peculiar to an American menu. And one discovers that pancakes do not appeal to the German palate because they are doughy; that asparagus is eaten green as in England and not white as in Germany; and that "pork and beans is a favorite dish of real Americans". Further the various methods of utilizing corn are recounted as an item of interest for the unknowing European. ²²¹

²²⁰ Corvin, Ein Leben, Vol. II, p. 914 f.

²²¹ Ibid., Vol. II, p. 759 ff.

Not only what is eaten in America but how it is eaten is related. And it can be said that Corvin did not particularly approve of service in an American restaurant. The waiters, "usually wild captured Irishmen" or free American citizens "who often listen to the conversation of their guests and many times interrupt them to make an observation of their own" were not particularly popular with him. Even the wasting of food was noticed. He remarked that what is thrown away in an American inn could easily supply the needs of a small German hotel.

The conduct of Americans in public life also did not go unnoticed. The adept tobacco spitters, the gum-chewing girls, the politicians who sat with their feet on the desks, the officers perched on theater balcony rails with the seats of their trousers directed at the audience, the drunken soldier, and the often-times disorderly citizen who littered the public squares with paper — all find a place in Corvin's sketch of the democratic scene. However, he reminds his readers at the same time that ten years have elapsed since he visited America and that much can and undoubtedly has changed in the intervening period, for "in that country, towns spring out of the earth like mushrooms and one constructs a railroad there faster than one decides to build one in Bavaria".²²²

As a tribute to American ingenuity Corvin mentions the wash-stands in his hotel room with hot and cold running water, the movable barber chairs, and the comfortable train coaches. But

²²²Corvin, Ein Leben: all of the preceding descriptions from Chapter 3, "Amerika".

he had little if anything to say for American culture. The caliber of theater productions he pronounced as good as any he had seen anywhere, but American taste for music did not seem to him to be at a very high level. He remarked that a Union regimental band playing a potpourri from Don Juan which apparently charmed a public gathering in Richmond only caused him to groan. "The bandmaster had improved the 'Dutch' composer in a Yankee-Doodle fashion... that would have caused Mozart to turn over in his grave." As an example of American "humbug" he mentions a concert of whips. ²²³

Before leaving the American scene it should be mentioned that Corvin did not regard this country as "theland where flowers do not smell and birds do not sing". It is amazing to what extent this man in so short a time became acquainted with American nature and wild life. Almost all the American songbirds are noted -- bobolinks, robins, wrens, hummingbirds, catbirds, mockingbirds, kildeers, and others. He enjoyed the wonderful autumnal glow of American forests, the great breadth of the rivers, the pristine beauty of the American landscape. His hunting excursions during the war with Prince Salm-Salm through the hills of Tennessee are recorded with a kind of nostalgic pleasure. And after the war was over, and he and his wife had settled down in Georgetown, just outside of Washington, he took great delight in their Sunday picnics with Princess Salm-Salm along the banks of the Potomac. The

²²³Corvin, Ein Leben, Vol. II, p. 838.

belletristic character of his writing as well as his appreciation of the American countryside are shown in the following paragraph:

The walks along the Potomac on cool evenings are glorious. Whole clouds of fireflies float up and down over the meadows. We often placed them in our hair so that they formed diadems of stars around our heads. The loud cicadas, whose shrill monotonous song is heard almost without interruption during the day, are replaced by frogs, whose tone varies from the unharmonic croak of their European cousins, for it seems to come from small, sweet-tuned silver bells. Between this pleasant, dreamy music is heard at intervals a sound comparable to that which arises when one plucks the string of a bass violin. Then again one is suddenly surprised by the mew of a kitten, which actually comes from some cat-bird we have startled in its sleep. In the distance is occasionally heard the call of the whippoorwill. 224

More important perhaps than Corvin's pictures of American life and nature are his personality sketches and descriptions of men in leading government positions. Almost all of the outstanding figures of the Civil War period are met with somewhere in his various writings. McClellan, Grant, Johnson, Stanton, Seward, Chase, Halleck, Lincoln, Schurz, and a host of others are faithfully recorded for posterity. Of these, the President, whom he so much admired, and his ardent political supporter, Carl Schurz, have been selected for presentation — the former because Corvin's description of him reveals the keenness of his observation and the depth to which his insight had penetrated into the democratic spirit; the latter, because he was a product of the very same revolution which produced Corvin himself.

224

Princess Salm-Salm, Zehn Jahre aus meinem Leben, K. Hallberger Publisher, Stuttgart: 1875, Vol. I, p. 329 f.

As an introduction to Lincoln, Corvin took with him from New York a letter of recommendation from Charles A. Dana, editor of the New York Tribune and later Assistant Secretary of War. The letter addressed to the President bore, to Corvin's amazement, the salutation, "dear sir", and ended with "yours very truly". It was one of the first indications Corvin had as to the extent of American democracy. His first three quarter-hour interview with Lincoln brought forth the following description:

He was a tall, stiff man with large feet and bony hands, which looked even bigger because of the short sleeves of his black coat, very long arms, which he did not know exactly what to do with, a lean, swarthy, yellowish face, somewhat dishevelled brownish hair, a large nose, immensely large mouth, large protruding ears, and small rather dull eyes. If I were to meet Lincoln anywhere in Germany, I would probably take him for a village schoolmaster, but never in any case for the supreme head of forty million men, and I should probably have smiled gently at his appearance. 225

As a result of subsequent interviews and personal encounters with Lincoln in public life, Corvin expanded later the preceding description:

Lincoln was six feet four inches tall, strong-boned, lean, all muscles and sinew and very strong physically; it is said that he could lift with ease five hundred pounds. As a railsplitter or a boatsman he was not able to acquire exactly graceful movements, and, if not exactly disagreeably awkward, still he certainly never knew just what he could do with his unusually long appearing arms and legs. His face was by many often termed homely, and his yellowish, leather-colored skin, his large mouth, his large protruding ears, small eyes, disorderly hair and the thin badly groomed beard could not be called attractive; but to him who could read the soul of a man in his face, his countenance gave the impression of an image of Christ with certain unhandsome

features. Out of his face beamed a warm love for men and good-naturedness, even if it usually bore a melancholy expression, which seemed to bear witness how heavy the burden of Government lay upon him and how serious it was to him to find the right way for the welfare of his people. In spite of this expression he was no sad dreamed but a quietly jovial, kind, sociable man who was gladly seen everywhere; and when the corners of his mouth and eyes twitched peculiarly, one could be prepared for one of his humorous sayings or jokes, which were frequently repeated throughout the States and which were often rather coarse. In spite of his somewhat awkward bearing his appearance on appropriate occasions did not lack dignity, and he never made a ridiculous impression. 226

As a last tribute to the man, whose death caused him to burst into tears, Corvin penned a character analysis of Lincoln which contains the highest praise ever given by him to an outstanding figure of history. It must be recalled in this regard that Corvin looked upon it as a holy obligation of the historian to judge the action of men. Few of those who came under his adjudication were ever released without severe penalty. From Corvin's point of view the following analysis represents not only an exoneration but a eulogy:

Lincoln did not possess those brilliant characteristics which a historian usually demands of men whom he calls great, but still less did he possess those evil characteristics which are usually combined with such greatness. He was a good, honest man who never in his life committed intentionally even an equivocal action and to whom it was a holy earnestness to secure for each man his rights and to administer to the best of his ability the high office which had been conferred upon him. Called to this

226
Corvin, Neuzeit, Vol. II, p. 834.

post from a lower walk of life he underwent the same trial as his generals whose military horizon first expanded with experience. The small provincial lawyer also became only gradually President of the great Republic, but he always remained in spite of that as unpretentious as a simple citizen. His lawyer-like anxiety of depriving any man of his individual rights made him in the beginning often uncertain and irresolute. However, if he once became convinced of the necessity or legality of a measure, he held firm to it. His simplicity, unselfishness, good-naturedness, and gentleness with which he was frequently reproached, as well as his common sense, wit and humor, caused many an error or mistake of this ruler to be forgotten and made him the most popular President the United States has had, not even Washington excepted. 227

On January 2, 1862, Corvin made his first reference to Carl Schurz. He reported Schurz' return from Spain and as a reason for it wrote that Schurz had become dissatisfied with reports as to how the German element in America had entered into relations with Fremont. He also reported a rumor that his return may have been occasioned through Stanton's placing an informer in Schurz' office. A month later he added that Schurz had returned in order to persuade the Government to speak out for emancipation of the slaves. Finally, on March 9, 1862, he paid a visit to Schurz and left this account of his interview:

In his conduct toward me he was simple and unassuming.... People say here that he has a fox's face. I can concur in that, although if he were to hold his hand under his nose and cover his mouth, the upper part of his face might remind one of Renard. That, however, is no bad resemblance for a diplomat. Schurz is still a young, rather tall, slender man of blond complexion with a mustache. One sees that the man has intelligence, and the impression is increased when he speaks.... He is not so popular among the

227 Corvin, Ein Leben, Vol. II, p. 1010 f.

Germans here as I thought. One calls him egoistic, probably because he does not shamelessly promise a consular position to every political co-worker. 228

Later on, hearing that Schurz was made a brigadier general, he transmitted the news to the Augsburger Allgemeine Zeitung with the observation that Schurz' new post presented him with a yearly income of twelve thousand dollars in addition to his salary as Minister to Spain, and continued:

Carl Schurz is not only very talented and clever, but he is also a man who exercises an important political influence through his power of public speaking, who commands a multitude of votes that are urgently desired by persons who have positions to fill. An old saying claims, "A fool is he who buries gold." Carl Schurz is no such fool, and besides he believes himself cut out to be a general. I think highly of shrewd people and have much confidence in them; so I shall believe that Carl Schurz has the stuff out of which generals are made until I perceive otherwise, which I do not hope for his honor and that of the German people. 229

The circumspect tone in which this was written certainly indicates that Corvin had grave doubts as to Schurz' military abilities. However, as time went on and he had more opportunity to become more closely acquainted with him, his attitude changed to one quite positive in character. This is revealed by a last appraisal of Schurz which he included in the memoirs of Princess Salm-Salm:

228
Corvin, Briefe - XXXVI, AAZ, April 2, 1862, Jahrgang 1862, No. 92.

229
Corvin, Briefe -- XI, AAZ, April 26, 1862, Jahrgang 1862, No. 116, Beilage.

General Schurz was at that time a man of some thirty-six or thirty-eight years of age. He is rather tall and slender, walks a little bent, wears glasses, and has suspiciously blond hair, and a short-cropped, decidedly red beard. He is considered one of America's best orators, speaks English fluently without any trace of foreign accent. He moves his audience not by such means as those used by American "stump speakers" whose speeches when analyzed mean nothing, his strength consists in the healthy common sense of his speeches and above all through their irresistible logic. Proceeding from undeniable truths and generally known facts, he derives from them in a quite natural manner other truths, thus leading his hearers from one step to another; and, without their being aware of it, he draws conclusions which he intended to make.... He is a man of great talent and influence, and the Germans have good reason to be proud of their outstanding countryman. 230

Although, like Schurz, Corvin had become an American citizen and had learned to love the country of his adoption he possessed neither Schurz' statesman-like qualities nor his oratorical abilities. His interest lay in journalism, and the somewhat adventuresome life he had led since the Revolution seemed to make him unfit for the rather humdrum existence of an ordinary government official. It is not surprising then that the nature of his work in the Treasury Department after the departure of his close friend Prince Salm-Salm for Mexico began to weigh upon him and forced him

²³⁰ Princess Salm-Salm, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 209 f.

(An additional item of interest regarding Schurz is contained in the same work, but must be attributed to the Princess. It is related that she and Frau von Corvin were accompanied by Schurz on a train trip from Altoona, Pennsylvania, to Pittsburgh, where he was to deliver a campaign speech for the reelection of Lincoln. On arriving at their destination, they found Schurz' hotel room decorated with garlands. After the speech, delivered before an immense and enthusiastic gathering, Schurz returned and entertained the two ladies at the hotel for over an hour with "his masterful piano playing".

to seek something else.²³¹ Failing to secure one position as Superintendent of Immigration at Baltimore and another as American Consul for Hamburg, he finally approached the editor of the New York Times and agreed to serve as a special correspondent for that paper in Germany and its neighboring countries. In the summer of 1867 he sailed from the United States with his wife never to return.

But Corvin did not leave America behind. His six years of residence here, where he had "stood on a free soil and had seen a free people", made a far deeper imprint on him than he himself was aware. Europe seemed small to him on his return. The Rhine was only a stream. Even the men seemed to have shrunk in stature, and the great spaces in America gave him the feeling that Europe and especially Germany was overpopulated. The only way to settle the social problem in Germany and eradicate the evil arising from it was "in assisting people to emigrate to America to settle Minnesota, Montana, etc., where they may be happy and increase the powers and wealth of the great American Republic".²³²

With the exception of Die goldene Legende, a purely religious polemic, none of his major works fails to make mention of the "great Republic". His newspaper reporting to American papers

²³¹Corvin, Ein Leben, Vol. II, p. 921.

"I was tired of my position in the Treasury Department. Inside of six weeks some one hundred and forty million dollars passed through my hands; on many days five to six million. Thirty clerks and more waited for me to finish the checking of these sums. That made me nervous, and the work was nerve wracking."

²³²Corvin, BDA, July 6, 1872, Vol. 120, No. 6, unsigned dispatch from Berlin.

presents European events through the eyes of a Jeffersonian democrat rather than through those of a disheartened German republican. He was not fooled by the government set up after the unification of Germany. Those Americans of German origin who were carried away with enthusiasm by the achievements of Bismarck must have been sobered on reading the following words in the Boston Daily Advertiser:

I called both the German and the Prussian constitutions a humbug, and I deliberately do so again, and every one following and examining the proceedings in the Reichstag and in the Prussian Parliament without being prejudiced and blinded by the fine words, will recognize it as such. 233

If Bismarck was admired as a man of action and an enemy of the Jesuits, he was still criticised by Corvin for attempting to restrict the freedom of the press. The Prussian police also drew fire from him. They were not "servants of the people /as in America/ but on the contrary their masters". And, as for the Prussian military officers, they were ridiculed as wearing "badges of servitude". He laughed because "Count Portales was given the Order of the Crown with the permission to wear it on a white ribbon, with six black stripes and a pink edge". 234

In the end Corvin entertained serious doubts as to the possibility of transforming Prussia into a republic like America.

I am fully convinced that the majority of Prussians, at least in the old provinces, are not matured sufficiently to exert the rights, for instance, of free American citizens. Though they may have enjoyed the blessing of a better

233 Corvin, BDA, February 17, 1872, Vol. 119, No. 42, unsigned dispatch from Berlin.

234 Ibid.

education in most respects, their innermost feelings are not yet those of free men.... Until this moment the education is still under the influence and control of the clergy, and every able-bodied man is a soldier. Though the Prussians are brave and energetic and better educated than any other nation, they are still flunkies in their hearts. ²³⁵

It was not only the Prussians, however, about whom Corvin had his doubts. The type of democracy which he had come to know in America he found nowhere in Europe. He had lived long enough in England to know it well, and his final pronouncement on that "rusty type of constitutional monarchy" was that it remained at heart an aristocratic plutocracy. And, France, the traditional home of freedom and democracy? What about it? In 1871 Corvin walked through the streets of Paris where he had fought on the barricades during the Revolution of 1848. Many of the buildings which he saw bore the words: "Liberty, equality, fraternity." A new French Republic had just been proclaimed. What was Corvin's reaction to this?

The Republic is only at home over the water. "Names are sound and smoke." As long as men still involuntarily curl their backs whenever a whip is lifted, do not talk of a republic! Liberty, equality, and fraternity must first be engraved on the hearts, and if these beautiful words have there become indelible, but not before, you may, if you like, write them on your public buildings. You do not find them written on any house in America, but they live in the hearts of most of the people. ²³⁶

Certainly no finer tribute could have been paid this country

²³⁵ Corvin, EDA, February 17, 1872, Vol. 119, No. 42, unsigned dispatch from Berlin.

²³⁶ Corvin, In France, Vol. II, p. 361.

than the words just quoted, and no service more noble in character could have been performed for it at the time than that of this man who tried to carry the message of freedom and democracy from America to a Europe struggling for light.

Chapter 6

Corvin the Man

At the time Corvin was Chief of the General Staff at Bastatt he was thirty-six years old, and a strikingly handsome man -- fairly tall, slender, supple, black-haired, with a pale but intelligent face. In his makeshift uniform with flashing red trousers and a black-red-gold sash he cut an outstanding figure among the revolutionary officers.²³⁷ Accustomed as he was from military service to giving commands and conscious of his own aristocratic descent, he undoubtedly impressed many of the more radical democrats as a Prussian renegade in the republican camp. Added to this his habit of expressing his opinion without regard for the feelings of others and his express contempt for the "impractical theorist" and the "political babbler" did not tend to make him popular with the rank and file of the revolutionists. Nevertheless his training and intelligence and his willingness to work hard for the revolutionary cause gained for him the confidence of those higher in command. Tiedemann, Sigel, Hecker, Moegling, Blenker, Heinrich Simon, and Freebel recognized and accepted him as an honorable man and a valuable co-worker. Undoubtedly he took himself seriously and would like to have played a more decisive role but his refusal to

²³⁷ Albert Foerderer, op. cit., p. vi, and Carl Schurz, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 215.

act the part of a demagogue or identify himself with the more radical elements lost for him the popular support he might otherwise have had.²³⁸

Still, his reliability and self-sacrifice endeared him to many of those with whom he worked, and it is noteworthy that those men who followed his guidance in the dark days of the Republican Legion remained loyal to him as political refugees when Heinzen and Struve attacked him during the controversy in Strasbourg.²³⁹ Likewise the writers he met in the Literatenverein in Leipzig such as Herwegh, Gerstaecker, Heinrich Laube, and others remained constant in their friendship toward him in later days.

Corvin himself as a friend was a valuable ally. At least he provided such in the case of Prince Felix Salm-Salm, a professional soldier, who on his arrival in America to take part in the Civil War found himself maligned by German-American Forty-eighters of less aristocratic descent.²⁴⁰ The newspaper articles Corvin wrote in defense of his friend did much to counteract the "smear campaign" which was launched against him.²⁴¹ On the other hand, Corvin abandoned

²³⁸ Otto Hiltaburger, op. cit., p. 108.

²³⁹ Ibid., p. 109.

²⁴⁰ Besides helping Salm, he printed von Sallet's poems and paid him the first fee he received from his works. He also helped to make Gerstaecker known in earlier days by using a picture of him for his hunting manual, and Held was encouraged to launch his Lokomotive on Corvin's advice.

²⁴¹ See Gustav Struve, Das 8. Regiment New Yorker Freiwilliger und Prinz Felix Salm-Salm, J. Niedfeldt Publisher, Washington: 1867, 21 pp.

Held, his political co-worker in Berlin and a friend of long standing, oddly enough, on moral grounds. Although his friendship with Held, who was looked upon with suspicion by the Southern German Democrats, lost for Corvin some of the good will he might otherwise have had, he did not sever ties of friendship until years later when it became apparent that Held had deserted his wife and daughter for a life of dissoluteness.

Although Corvin was himself in later life the father of an illegitimate child, it must be kept in mind in passing judgment upon him, that his transgression occurred during a period of forced separation from his wife and that his marriage with Helene was childless. He voluntarily acknowledged his paternity and would have adopted the child, a girl, with his wife's consent, had the mother been willing. With the exception of this incident, there is nothing in Corvin's life that would besmirch his character. He was basically a man of steady morals.

As much as Corvin opposed established religions he did nothing in his personal connections with others to weaken their beliefs. In a letter to his wife he wrote:

Since I consider religion a private affair par excellence, I do not concern myself with what others have for a religious belief or to what they pray, for the particular lack of manners of wanting to force its belief on everyone else is possessed only by the christian church. 242

It is interesting in this regard that Helene remained a catholic and that Corvin lived with her in comparative felicity. In America

²⁴²Corvin, Zellensefaengnis, p. 257 f.

where he found churchmen in highest esteem he may sometimes have felt out of place, but he conformed to prevailing customs. While visiting an American family he happened to be included in an informal prayer evening occasioned by the visit of a clergyman.

Corvin describes the event in the following words:

Now the praying began. All present knelt down in front of their chairs with folded hands, and since my religion permits me to take part in every religious custom -- circumcision excepted -- in order to spare the religious feelings of others, I also knelt down with great aplomb. ²⁴³

In spite of his antipathy to established religions, Corvin never allowed it to interfere with his friendships, and he was able to say a good word for more than one preacher. It was the sanctimonious type of minister which Corvin could not suffer. Albert Foerderer who later became a catholic priest never forgave him for having turned down the services of a chaplain at the time he was condemned to death at Rastatt. He is supposed to have made the remark at that time that he did not want to "hear anything about the proud Nebuchadnezzar". ²⁴⁴

Nevertheless, he had a great respect for Christ as a man and as a teacher. The purpose behind his religious polemics was not to slander or belittle the words of Christ but rather to shear away the superfluities with which others had covered them. In

²⁴³ Corvin, Erinnerungen, Vol. IV, p. 213.

²⁴⁴ This remark refers to the chaplain Corvin might have had who is reported to have spoken for an hour about the wicked pride of the Babylonian king during a burial address for one of the fallen revolutionary officers.

Die goldene Legende he makes this quite clear when he writes:

To me Jesus is a glorious, great Man, and my efforts are directed toward removing his historic, noble, and lovable figure from the gilded, embellished, hieroglyphic-covered sarcophagus in which Hebrew and Christian super-reasoning and Roman Catholic roguery have concealed it. 245

And he once wrote to Helene:

If Jesus had dreamed what a conflict would arise and how much blood would flow over the "is" and "signifies", he would certainly rather not have instituted the last supper. If he were to come again, he would quite certainly not receive a position as preacher if he had not since then studied christian theology and had become aware that he had been caught up during his life in many an error concerning himself which the councils have only just cleared up. O unholy simplicity! 246

His antagonism toward the church was coupled of course with his hatred for absolutism, which he considered a relic of feudal times. Nothing pleased him more than to have the feeling that his life was devoted to a noble cause. Certainly before the July Revolution broke out in France he had had little opportunity for action, but with the firing of the first shots in the streets of Paris he felt that his time had come. Abandoning that which had brought him there, namely the sale of his invention, he joined in the fight and offered his services to the Republican Legion. The further he became involved in the revolutionary movement, however, the more he grew certain that most of its leaders were inadequate. The time called for action not theorizing, for achievable goals, not utopias. He had no patience with longhaired

²⁴⁵ Otto von Corvin, Die goldene Legende, Hallers Publishers, Bern: 1877, p. 297.

²⁴⁶ Corvin, Zellenaeafaennia, p. 306.

babblers, soap box orators, or charlatans, and there were many of them.²⁴⁷ But he fell victim to the sin of so many of the Forty-eighters who thought that the success of the Revolution depended on the acceptance of their own particular strategy. It is difficult to read Corvin's memoirs without getting the impression that the fight for freedom and unity revolved around his own deeds. His egocentrism at times reaches insufferable heights and lessens the credence one might otherwise give to his more modest statements. For example, the assertion that he could have put over the Revolution at the head of 50,000 troops is unnecessary boastfulness. And his likening himself to a "caged eagle" during his imprisonment at Bruchsal is hardly in good taste. Yet, what he wrote he sincerely believed, and if he was impressed by the qualities of his own personality, so was many another man who wore the revolutionary blouse.

A characteristic of his, however, which balances his egotism, is his humor. To be sure, it was not a humor directed at himself, but it often revolved about a situation not involving the feelings of others or resulted from the application of reason to the incongruous. He was welcomed in social circles as an inexhaustible storyteller, and it must be admitted that his works bear a strong anecdotal color. No one can fail to chuckle over the inclusion in his list of relics of "a feather from the wing of the Angel Gabriel, the wash basin of Pontius Pilate, the Adam's apple of St. George, the sword and shield

²⁴⁷ Veit Valentin, 1848 - Chapters in German History, Unwin Bros. Publishers, London: 1940, p. 378.

of the archangel Michael, when he fought with the devil, a bottle full of Egyptian darkness, and the thorns from the burning bush".²⁴⁸ Many of the tales which he relates in the Pfaffenspiegel might easily have appeared in Boccaccio's Decameron. The monk, who removes his trousers to hear the confession of a lady penitent, flees when he is discovered by her husband, and is saved by the Abbot who pronounces the trousers to be those of St. Francis, could very well take his place next to Brother Rinaldo. To the honor of Frederick the Great he adds the following to the already long list of anecdotes concerning this monarch:

While Frederick the Great was in Sillesia, there disappeared little by little from a picture of Our Lady all kinds of valuable jewels, and the clergymen finally discovered the thief to be a soldier, who was brought before the King. The soldier excused himself and maintained that he was not a thief, since the Mother of God had made him a present of the missing items. Frederick the Great now asked the spiritual gentlemen if such a thing were possible. "Of course, it is possible," replied the confused priests, "but certainly not probable." The thief was released without penalty, but now Frederick the Great forbade his soldiers under punishment of death to accept any more such presents from the Holy Virgin.²⁴⁹

It is not alone in the Pfaffenspiegel, however, that Corvin's humor is evident. In the Geschichte der Neuzeit he stops his historical narrative to repeat a famous reply of Lincoln's to a lady who complained about the shortness of Union Officers: "This may be, Madam, but they command big privates." In almost all of Corvin's

²⁴⁸ Corvin, Pfaffenspiegel, p. 106.

²⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 111.

works, even his newspaper articles, this humorous vein is present.

Although Corvin was skillful in directing a humorous satire against what he considered hypocrisy or sham, he never employed it in reference to genuine qualities or virtues. To a man accustomed to the etiquette and ceremony of German courts and the caste system of European society, certain features of American life might easily have seemed comical, above all the actions of a democratic president. As has been shown, however, in the Chapter, "Corvin and America", such was not the case. One scene which Corvin witnessed shortly after his arrival in the States made such an indelible impression on him that it helped to change his own character. It is recorded in his memoirs and is best described in his own words:

Immediately after my arrival in Washington, after I had breakfasted, I strolled through the streets to look over the city and stopped close by the White House where I found some sixty Pennsylvania recruits who were passing through Washington on their way to the army and wanted very much to see the President. Informed of the wish of these good people, he came out of the house as he was, even without a hat, and delivered a friendly, somewhat humorously spiced address. No "Hurrahs" were shouted, but the men surrounded the President, shook hands with him and then quietly marched off.

I stood very close by and two big tears rolled down over my cheeks, although I don't easily cry. This simple-appearing man in a housecoat and without a cap was the chosen head of forty million people, the representative of the greatest republic on earth, and his simple conduct, exactly because it seemed completely natural to him, seized me and impressed me more than any pope or emperor could have done in highest pomp. I had to laugh aloud immediately afterwards when I thought of our good Germany, where grey-bearded generals had to come to attention if a peasant nurse rode by with an infant prince in her arms, or when I thought of the stiff backs of court marshals and Junkers if the prince of X or Y entered the room. ²⁵⁰

²⁵⁰ Corvin, Erinnerungen, Vol. IV, p. 94 f.

The Corvin who returned to Europe to report the Franco-Prussian War was not the same one who had alienated the feelings of the republicans in 1848-49 or who wrote such egotistical letters from Bruchsal. It was a man who had learned the lesson of democracy. His book In France with the Germans is filled with concern for the common man. He sleeps, eats, and jokes with the soldiers, criticizes the Prussian spirit among officials and officers and is even on one occasion arrested because of his dishevelled appearance. His histories, too, show a tempering of spirit not characteristic of his earlier writings.

One feature of Corvin's character that never changed was his love of nature. It is difficult to say whether this was an element of personal romanticism or naturally lay within the cultural pattern of German life. In any event his letters from Bruchsal reveal an almost childish joy in the flowers in his prison cell. He was beside himself with grief when one of his pet canaries escaped and another died. This may have been the result of the emotional strain caused by solitary confinement, but it should be remembered that he also wrote a Pocket Guide for Hunters and Nature Lovers as early as 1845. Perhaps the happiest days of his checkered career were spent in hunting forays with Friedrich Gerstaecker. Even in America, however, he could take time out to observe the beauty of wild life. The mocking bird was aptly compared with the European nightingale, and both Maryland and Virginia were praised for their landscape.

His interest in nature, however, was not as strong as his interest in people. He enjoyed studying others closely, observing

their features and mannerisms, in order to reproduce them again on paper or canvas. While in Bruchsal he was permitted to spend considerable time in sketching and these pictures were later sold. Whether his paintings actually possessed artistic merit is impossible to say, but one can commend him for the many interesting and entertaining personality sketches found throughout his published works. Most of the men with whom he came in contact whether in America or Germany are portrayed for the benefit of later generations. It is unfortunate, however, that these word portraits rarely reach down into the innermost mind of his subjects.

His failure to take an interest in the philosophies of others accounts partly perhaps for his failure to develop a philosophy of his own. What he believed, he inherited from the eighteenth century, and it was little colored by philosophies of a later day. Outside of Herder to whose Ideen zur Geschichte der Menschheit he is greatly indebted, his philosophical beliefs stem from the enlightenment with its fourfold concept of natural law, reason, progress, and democratic humanitarianism.²⁵¹ Besides this, Corvin had little to offer. He was essentially a pragmatist and a lover of action. He had not time to spend on finespun theories and looked askance at those who did. His report of a meeting of learned men at Gotha is a good illustration of this:

After I had regarded with amazement for several days the rhetorical and sophistic somersaults of the assembled intellectual acrobats and had recorded in my notebook their astonishing achievements, one of the "stars" of the

²⁵¹Carlton J. H. Hayes, The Historical Evolution of Nationalism, New York: 1931, p. 14 f.

philosophical circus handed me a pen that I might sign my name in the register of the word and thought artists convened there. Terrified in my feelings of having penetrated nothing, I stepped back, mumbling shamefacedly, "I am only a historian /Geschichtsschreiber/." "Well," replied the worldly wise one, patting me patronizingly on the arm, "that's also quite honorable!" My spirit turned over in glee, like that of a committee councillor who has just received the order of the green tailed monkey. ²⁵²

Modern sociologists would no doubt classify Corvin as an extrovert. He himself recognized the absence of those elements in his character which might have helped him to become a great writer. On March 30, 1850, he wrote to Helene from Bruchsal:

You have seen with what lack of desire I worked on the World History in Berlin! The smell of gunpowder made me sad. I feel I am not born to sit behind a writing desk. At the most, journalistic activity is suitable for me and then only the feuilleton.... In motion, in activity, in danger I am well. Here I am all too safe and therefore sick. ²⁵³

In spite of his disinclination to sit behind a desk and write, Corvin turned out a tremendous amount of work. As the author of nineteen separate books, comprising thirty-one volumes, not to mention translations, editions, and newspaper articles, he must be admired for his perseverance and strength of character, if not for the quality of his literary production. How Corvin managed to accomplish so much may be seen from his description of life in Leipzig, though it must also be considered that he was not always able to work under such ideal conditions as were present at that time:

²⁵²Otto von Corvin, Die goldene Legende, Hallers Publishers, Bern: 1877, p. 296 f.

²⁵³Corvin, Zellengefängnis, Vol. I, p. 381.

I am an early riser and my wife therefore calls me a "night watchman". I need only four hours sleep and work at my best during the morning. Summers and winters, but preferably in winter I get up at two or three, go into my study, light the fire and start the coffee. When my toilet is ended and the whistle of the coffee pot calls me, I drink my coffee, light a cigar and look for a quarter hour out of the open window into the quiet morning. Then calm and serene in spirit and clear in mind, I sit down to my work. At eight I have coffee again with my wife and work then again until about one. Then I am finished with my day's work and the rest of the day is devoted to recreation. ²⁵⁴

Corvin's life did not consist, however, only in writing. To write he had to reflect and read, and it is amazing to see to what extent he had explored belles lettres alone. In his letters covering the period 1848 to 1855 he quotes from works of Goethe, Schiller, Chamisso, Hoffmann, Tieck, Jean Paul, Heine, Lessing, Wieland, and Gottsched, and from non-German writers, Dumas, Cervantes, Young, Bulwer-Lytton, Disraeli, and Shakespeare. From the latter alone, quotations appear from Macbeth, Hamlet, Lear, Romeo and Juliet, and Henry IV. He pays tribute to the Bard of Avon with the remark: "A scene from Shakespeare can make me cheerful for an entire day." ²⁵⁵

Corvin's literary endeavors did not stop him, however, from turning his interests into other fields. He directed his attention for a time to the construction and supervision of one of the first public swimming pools in Germany, namely the one in Leipzig on the

²⁵⁴Corvin, Ein Leben, Vol. I, p. 381.

²⁵⁵Corvin, Zeitungsausschnitte, p. 442.

²⁵⁶Elster. For the longest time he worked on an invention and in order to market it, he set himself up as a publisher. It was while he was in Paris in 1848, trying to secure a patent that the Revolution broke out, and he was forced to let the matter rest till many years later when he finally secured an international patent.

As might be expected through his love of action and interest in people Corvin was at his best in social gatherings. In Leipzig where he and his wife first established their home, he often was host to resident and visiting literati. Gerstaecker was a frequent visitor and Hoffmann von Fallersleben chatted with him into the early hours of the morning. In America the situation was different and he was often the guest of others. Above all he enjoyed visiting the home of Secretary of State Seward, whom he greatly admired, and where he met most of the American celebrities. He was also a frequenter of the theater, and enjoyed afterwards a good glass of wine, a cigar, or a delectable meal. In the field during the Civil War he often mixed up a bowl of punch for the officers at Colonel Sala's headquarters.²⁵⁷ He was in every respect polished in both speech and manners, and enjoyed the company of ladies as well as of men. Although he seemed to have had a weakness for the fair sex, his conduct was always courteous, and he never slipped into the role of a roue, though it

²⁵⁶In this regard his booklet on the art of swimming should probably be mentioned. It appeared in 1835 and ran through three editions.

²⁵⁷Corvin's favorite mix consisted of GI whisky, lemon peels, pineapple, vanilla extract, and sugar.

would undoubtedly have been easy for him to do so. His affection for his wife remained constant, in spite of the fact that he was often separated from her for long periods, and they were not bound together by the close bonds of parenthood.

A last characteristic of Corvin's which should not go unnoticed was his constant optimism. It was an optimism which led him not only to believe he could overcome all obstacles himself but that the course of events, the march of history, would eventually overcome the forces of reaction and ignorance and that reason and common sense would, if applied to the problems of life — both personal and political — in the end achieve a workable solution. He was no romanticist in the sense of the word that he looked to the past with the hope of recreating former glories, nor did he look to the future envisioning a utopia. For those 'isms' which offered a panacea for the world's ills, Corvin showed little patience or sympathy. Although moderately friendly toward socialism, he was openly hostile toward communism. In a letter to Hecker requesting aid in the Strasbourg conflict with Heinzen and Struve, he wrote the following: "At the same time the declaration /from Hecker/ should be so written as to keep away the communist rabble. These may, in God's name, form a corps of their own and let themselves be shot in Italy or anywhere else for the salvation of the world." ²⁵⁸

Concerning the question as to what Corvin's position would have been

²⁵⁸

Corvin, Zellengefängnis, p. 95.

in the conflict which rends modern society, the answer is quite clear. He pronounced it himself in a burial address over the body of one of his fellow revolutionaries: "There is no deity outside of freedom!" 259

259 Albert Foerderer, *op. cit.*, p. 67.

CONCLUSION

Otto von Corvin, as a man and as an author, not only lived a full life, but he lived every day of that life fully. To be sure, in accordance with Jaques' philosophizing in Shakespeare's As You Like It, every man lives through at least seven stages, but how many more did Corvin pass through! He was not only an author and a revolutionary, but in turn an inventor, officer, swimming pool director, book publisher, pamphleteer, dramatic reader, government official, translator, war correspondent, and railroad agent. Surely this varied career along with the title of his autobiography A Life Full of Adventure would seem to justify those who look upon him as an adventurer rather than as a man with a set and serious purpose in life. But it is an attitude drawn from a false conclusion. It should be noted that the title of his autobiography was, "a life full of adventure", not "the life of an adventurer". Corvin did not go forth seeking excitement as it might seem from a superficial judgment of his memoirs, rather excitement came to him. The second title of his autobiography Aus dem Leben eines Volkskämpfers is far more exact as an analysis of the man than the first. True it is that Corvin was adventuresome and ready for action, but it was always action with a purpose. There were two chief motivating factors that led him to act -- one of which inspires every man, the other, only a few. They were the fight for existence and the fight for the rights of the people. These two factors

interacted throughout his life to make it what it was. He went to Paris to patent an invention; he left it to patent the cause of the Revolution. He was forced to flee Germany because of his beliefs; he left England to keep from starving. What he wrote thereafter was not only to make a living but to further the cause of the people which so many of his compatriots had abandoned. Corvin was not a great man, but he was, as a careful examination of his life shows, a man who fought consistently for a great purpose -- a purpose which led him to sacrifice some of the best years of his life for Germany and no little amount of effort for America.

APPENDIX

1. The first part of the report
describes the general situation
of the country and the
results of the survey.

ABBREVIATIONS

The following abbreviations have been used in the footnotes appearing throughout this dissertation:

AAZ: Augsburger Allgemeine Zeitung.

BDA: Boston Daily Advertiser.

Corvin, Biographien: Otto von Corvin, Biographien - historisch berühmter Maitressen, Leipzig: W. Engelmann Publisher, 1848. 173 pp.

Corvin, Briefe: Otto von Corvin, "Briefe aus Washington" from the files of the Augsburger Allgemeine Zeitung, 1861-1862.

Corvin, Ein Leben: Otto von Corvin, Ein Leben voller Abenteuer, Frankfurt/Main: Frankfurter Societäts-Druckerei, 1924. 2 vols.

Corvin, Erinnerungen: Otto von Corvin, Erinnerungen aus meinem Leben, Leipzig: F. Thiel Publisher, 1880. 4 vols.

Corvin, In France: Otto von Corvin, In France with the Germans, London: R. Bentley & Sons, 1872. 2 vols.

Corvin, Neuzeit: Otto von Corvin, Geschichte der Neuzeit, Leipzig: Cressner and Schramm Publishers, 1882-1884. 3 vols.

Corvin, Pfaffensiegel: Otto von Corvin, Der Pfaffensiegel, Berlin: A. Bock Publisher, 1934. 365 pp.

Corvin, Revolution: Otto von Corvin, Geschichte der grossen französischen Revolution, Leipzig: Cressner and Schramm Publishers, 1883-1884. 2 vols.

Corvin, Weltgeschichte: Otto von Corvin, Illustrierte Weltgeschichte fuer das Volk, Leipzig: O. Spamer Publisher, 1880. 8 vols.

Corvin, Zellengefaengnis: Otto von Corvin, Aus dem Zellengefaengnis, Leipzig: W. Friedrich Publisher, 1884. 546 pp.

Valentin, Geschichte: Veit Valentin, Geschichte der deutschen Revolution von 1848-49. Berlin: Ullstein Publishers, 1930. 2 vols.

A LIST OF THE WORKS OF

OTTO VON CORVIN

(Arranged in Chronological Order)

"Morgenstaendchen", a lyric, published in the Didaskalia,
date unknown.

Kurzzefasste und gruendliche Anweisung zur Erlernung der Schwimkunst,
Leipzig: publisher unknown, 1835.

Die Hunyaden, a tragedy, Dortmund: H. Krueger Publisher, 1837.

Hassan, a comedy, Dortmund: H. Krueger Publisher, 1837.

*Midas, a political comedy, Dortmund: H. Kreuger Publisher, 1838.

Kurzer Abriss zur Geschichte der Niederlande. Leipzig: F. Fleischer
Publisher, 1841.

Sportelmanach, Leipzig: B. C. Teubner, Publisher, 1844.

*Historische Denkmale des christlichen Fanatismus (Der Pfaffenspiegel),
Leipzig: Gebauer Publisher, 1845.

Taschenbuch fuer Jaeger und Naturfreunde, Leipzig: B. C. Teubner
Publisher, 1845-46.

*Die Geissler, Leipzig: Gebauer Publisher, 1846.

*Die Buchdruckzeichnung. Leipzig: Glyphographisches Institut, 1846.

*Biographien - historisch beruehmter Maitressen. Leipzig: W.
Engelmann Publisher, 1848.

Der niederlaendische Freiheitskrieg, (Dutch) Amsterdam: Binger
Brothers Publishers, 1847-49, 6 vols.

Die erste Expedition der deutsch-republikanische Legion. Arnstadt:
Publisher unknown, 1849.

*Illustrierte Weltgeschichte fuer das Volk. Leipzig: O. Spamer
Publisher, 1844-1851, 4 vols. (Geschichte des Altertums,
Vols. I and II by Corvin, 1880, 8 vols.)

*Die Einzelhaft und der Zellengefuehnis. Hamburg: Hoffmann and
Campe Publishers, 1857.

*Aus dem Leben eines Volksheldens, Amsterdam: Binger Brothers Publishers, 1861. 4 vols.

The Secret Letter Writer, New York: W. Radde Publisher, 1865.

*Blätter aus meinem Tagebuch in Mexiko (Prince Salm-Salm), Stuttgart: A. Kroener Publisher, 1868, 2 vols.

*In France with the Germans, London: R. Bentley Publisher, 1872, 2 vols.

*Zehn Jahre aus meinem Leben (Princess Salm-Salm), Stuttgart: E. Hallberger Publisher, 1875, 2 vols.

*Die goldene Legende, Bern: Hallers Publishers, 1877.

*Geschichte der Neuzeit. Leipzig: Gressner and Schramm Publishers, 1882-84, 3 vols.

*Geschichte der grossen französischen Revolution, Leipzig: Gressner and Schramm Publishers, 1883-84, 2 vols.

*Aus dem Zellengefängnis. Leipzig: W. Friedrich, 1884.

Historische Hauspostille: Kurzgefasste Weltgeschichte fuer das Volk, Place and Publisher Unknown, 1885-86, 2 vols.

Translations

From German into English:

*Recollections of my Life (Maximilian I of Mexico), London: R. Bentley Publisher, 1867, 3 vols.

*My Diary in Mexico in 1867 (Prince Salm-Salm), London: R. Bentley Publisher, 1868, 2 vols.

*A Life of Adventure (Otto von Corvin), London: R. Bentley Publisher, 1872, 3 vols.

*Ten Years of my Life (Princess Salm-Salm), London: R. Bentley Publisher, 1875, 2 vols.

From English into German:

Frisch gewort ist halb gewonnen, (J. R. Planche), Place and Publisher Unknown, 1884.

Periodicals edited by Corvin

Zeitschrift fuer Jaeger und Naturfreunde, 1838-1842.

Der Sonntagsjaeger, 1838-1842.

Der Marstall, 1839-1842.

Newspapers and Periodicals

for which Corvin wrote.

*Household Words, 1856-1857, edited by Charles Dickens.

*Augsburger Allgemeine Zeitung, 1861-1865.

London Times, 1862.

New York Times, 1867-1869.

New York Staats-Zeitung, 1869.

Temple Bar Magazine, 1870.

Vienna Neue Freie Presse, 1870-1871.

*Boston Daily Advertiser, 1871-1873.

Notes on bibliography:

1. Die erste Expedition der deutsch-republikanischen Legion besides appearing in Corvin's memoirs was published as an unsigned appendix to Erhebung des Volkes in Baden, edited by F. Hecker, Basel: J. C. Schabelitz Publisher, 1848.

2. The full title of The Secret Letter Writer reads: "A Comprehensive and Secure System of Cipher-Writing for General Use." It is nowhere mentioned in Corvin's works or in Fraenkel's summary in the Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie.

3. Corvin also supplied occasional articles for the Morgenblatt, published by Cotta; for Hausblaetter, Hackländer & Hofer; and, for the Gartenlaube.

4. Die heilige Troedelbude und andere geistliche Kapitel, Berlin: Nordland Press, 1941, has not been listed as a separate work of Corvin, since it actually consists of several chapters from the Pfaffenspiegel published recently under the above-mentioned title.

* Indicates works available and utilized by the author in the body of the dissertation.

CORVIN'S PLAN FOR RECRUITING GERMANS FOR THE UNION ARMY

It was an undeniable fact that there were in Germany and in other countries a large number of capable, ambitious men who, in spite of their industriousness, lived wretchedly in their own countries and would gladly have emigrated to America if the costs of the journey had not been so exorbitant. The question finally arose if it would not be possible, through a guarantee of special advantages to encourage men fit for military service to come to America from Europe, in particular from Germany. The idea seemed to me feasible, and who will blame me if, in connection with it, I also thought of myself. I discussed the project first with a gentleman from Indiana, Mr. Albert Lange, a good friend of mine, who was Auditor and Treasurer for that state.... My plan was to get the governments of the individual states to take part in this recruitment and to induce them -- which they later had to do with far larger sums -- to grant an enlistment fee of fifty to seventy-five dollars. Mr. Lange thought Indiana could probably handle 7000 men, and promised to discuss the matter with the Governor. He kept his word. He wrote to me on July 23, 1862, that Governor Morton considered the plan very favorably, but that the finances of the state made it impossible at the moment to agree to it. "My dear Corvin," he wrote, "I regret that it is denied me to further your splendid project. Apply to the other governors, north of Washington. Your proposal seems so economical to me that I should think the President and the War Department would agree to it without further ado." Mr. Seward and other high officials had the same opinion, and I considered the plan practicable, even if I were granted only a premium of one hundred dollars per man. When I was in Strasbourg in 1849 I could have recruited an entire army without any enlistment fees, with only the promise of regular pay. Now I could offer: free passage to America (which would have cost me about forty dollars); thirty dollars cash; free food and clothing and fourteen dollars monthly pay; citizenship after a year's military service; two or three hundred acres of land; in case of being wounded an adequate pension, and in case of death, a pension for wife and children or other dependents! Thirty dollars would have remained for me and for extra expenses. A high official of the Treasury Department promised to place his banker at my disposal if the plan were accepted.

About this time Prince Salm came to Washington. Through Blenker's resignation his staff had become surplus, and the officers could expect at any time to be discharged. Each officer tried as quickly as possible to secure assignment to another unit. Salm's ambitions had been awakened, and he would have been glad to have had a brigade. That was now no longer so easy, but all difficulties

would have been removed if he could have found enough men to form a brigade. He therefore took up my plan with great interest, and we set our machinery in motion. The main thing was to get the approval of the President and his authorization to recruit 20,000 men for the United States. I thought I would be able to bring this about through the Secretary of State, and it was a question of laying the matter before the President as quickly as possible and under favorable circumstances.

For this purpose we secured the services of a man close to Lincoln through a promise in writing of \$20,000 from Sala and me in the event the plan were approved. This man arranged it so that the affair came to a quick consideration, and Sala and I were brought one morning to see the President. He sat down. I did the talking and disclosed my plan to Lincoln. He had placed his large feet on an item of furniture and sat before us, resting his head in his hands, his elbows supported on his drawn up knees. In this position he listened to me for probably a quarter of an hour without interrupting. When I had finished, he remained silent a while. Then, raising his long arms and letting them fall with a loud clap on his knees, he said lively: "Well, Gentlemen, that's a very big affair! ...but mind... I do not promise anything. I must first speak to the Secretary of War. In the course of further conversation he said: "You probably know that we need men. You are certainly welcome to get them for us." "Yes, Mr. President," I replied, "I do know that, but unless I have a considerable amount of money at hand, I cannot get the men, and without your authorization to recruit 20,000 men, I cannot get the money." He interposed that such recruiting would bring him into troublesome quarrels with other governments, whereupon I answered that I wanted, to be sure, only a quite general authorization and that he would not need to know at all where I got the men. I also mentioned that Mr. Seward and other important persons had praised the project. Nevertheless, he insisted that he had to speak with the Secretary of War, and our interview came to an end.

Little was to be hoped from Stanton, because he disliked the Germans, and neither Sala nor I stood especially in his good graces. That Seward favored the plan was enough reason for him to oppose it, for between the two Secretaries existed a constantly strained relationship, which grew more so through Stanton's enmity toward McClellan, whom Mr. Seward favored. Hence, the plan fell through.

(Translated from Otto von Corvin, Ein Leben voller Abenteuer, Frankfurter Societäts-Druckerei, Frankfurt/Main: 1924, p. 857 ff.)

Selected Bibliography

- Abusch, Alexander, Der Irrweg einer Nationa, Berlin: Aufbau Verlag, 1947, 271 p.
- Allers, Ulrich Stephan, The Concept of Empire in German Romanticism and its Influence on the National Assembly at Frankfurt, Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1948, 187 pp.
- Aulard, Alphonse, Les Grands Orateurs de la Revolution, Paris: F. Kieder and Company, 1914, 300 pp.
-
- Le Culte de la Raison et le Culte de l'Etre Supreme, Paris: Boilliere and Company, 1904, 371 pp.
- Bauer, Bruno, Die bürgerliche Revolution seit des Anfang der deutsch-katholischen Bewegung bis zur Gegenwart, Berlin: G. Hempel, 1849, 295 pp.
- Bauer, Richard H., "Hans Delbruck", Some Historians of Modern Europe, edited by Bernadotte E. Schmitt, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1942, 533 pp.
- Becker, Johann P. and Essellen, Christian, Geschichte der sueddeutschen Mai-Revolution des Jahres 1849, Geneva: G. Becker Publisher, 1849, 455 pp.
- Blos, Wilhelm, Denkwuerdigkeit des Generals Franz Sigel aus den Jahren 1848 und 1849, Mannheim: J. Bensheimer Publisher, 1902, 166 pp.
-
- Die deutsche Revolution, Stuttgart: J. Dietz Publisher, 1893, 670 pp.
- Blum, Hans, Die deutsche Revolution 1848-49, Leipzig: E. Diederichs Publisher, 1897, 480 pp.
- Boernstein, Heinrich, Fuenfundsebzig Jahre in der alten und neuen Welt, O. Wigand Publisher, 1884, 2 vols.
- Cahn, Herbert, Der Gedanke der Trennung von Kirche und Staate in der Bewegung des Jahres 1848, Wertheim/Main: Bechstein Publishers, 1932, 42 pp.
- Dahlinger, Charles W., The German Revolution of 1849, New York: Putnam Sons, 1903, 287 pp.

- Dickens, Charles, American Notes, London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1904, 266 pp.
- Ebenstein, William, The German Record, New York: Farrar and Rhinehardt, 1945, 301 pp.
- Eckenrode, Hamilton J. and Conrad, Bryan, George B. McClellan, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1941, 296 pp.
- Engels, Friedrich and Marx, Karl, Revolution und Kontre-Revolution in Deutschland, Stuttgart: J. Dietz Publisher, 1913, 141 pp.
- Foerderer, Albert, Erinnerungen aus Aastatt, Lehr: C. Schoemperlin Publisher, 1881, 159 pp.
- Frankel, Ludwig, Otto von Corvin, ein deutscher Freiheitskämpfer in Wort und Tat, Berlin: A. Bock Publisher, 1912, 20 pp.
-
- "Otto von Corvin-Wiersbitzki", Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie, Leipzig: Duncker and Humblot, 1903, Vol. XLVII, p. 531 ff.
- Fuesslin, Johannes, Die Grundbedingungen jeder Gefaengnis-Reform im Sinne der Einzelhaft, Leipzig: F. Vogel Publisher, 1856, 249 pp.
- Fueter, Eduard, Geschichte der neueren Historiographie, Munich: R. Oldenbourg Publisher, 1925, 626 pp.
- Goegg, Amand, Nachtraegliche authentische Aufschluesse ueber die Badische Revolution von 1849, New York: S. Zickel Publisher, 1876, 192 pp.
- Goetz, Walter, Propylaen Weltgeschichte, Berlin: Ullstein Publishers, 1930, Vol. VIII.
- Gooch, G. P., "The Centenary of 1848 in Germany and Austria", Contemporary Review, April, 1948, No. 988, p. 222 ff.
- Gottschalk, Louis R., The Era of the French Revolution, Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1929, 509 pp.
- Hammen, Oscar J., "Economic and Social Factors in the Prussian Rhineland in 1848", American Historical Review, July, 1949, Vol. LIV, No. 4, p. 825 ff.

- Hartmann, Ott, Die Vollerhebung der Jahre 1848-49 in Deutschland, Berlin: H. Bermuehler Publisher, 1900, 225 pp.
- Hayes, Carlton J. A., The Historical Evolution of Nationalism, New York: A. Smith, Inc., Publishers, 1931, 327 pp.
- Hoecker, Friedrich, Die Erhebung des Volkes im Baden über die deutsche Republik im Frühjahr 1848, Basel: J. Schabelitz, 1848, 128 pp.
- Hegel, G. W. F., The Philosophy of History, trans. by J. Sibree, New York: Wiley Book Co., 1944, 457 pp.
- Heinemann, Karl, Die deutsche Dichtung, Leipzig: A. Kroeber Publisher, 1911, 308 pp.
- Heinzen, Karl F., Erlebtes, Boston: K. Heinzen Publisher, 1874, 4 vols.
- Heumann, Albert, Graeber berühmter Personen auf dem Wiesbadener Friedhofen, Wiesbaden: Publisher unknown, 1923, 20 pp.
- Herwegh, Frau Emma Siegmund, Zur Geschichte der deutschen demokratischen Bewegung aus Paris, Gruenberg: W. Levysohn, 1849, 56 pp.
- Hoch, Ricardo, 1848 - Die Revolution des 19. Jahrhunderts in Deutschland, Zuerich: Atlantis Press, 1944, 546 pp.
- Kaufmann, Wilhelm, Die Deutschen im amerikanischen Bürgerkrieg, Munich: R. Oldenbourg Publisher, 1911, 588 pp.
- Klein, Timotheus, 1848 - Der Vorkampf deutscher Einheit und Freiheit, Munich: W. Langewiesche and Company, 1914, 446 pp.
- Langlois, Charles V., and Seignobos, Charles, Introduction to the Study of History, New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1920, 350 pp.
- Lee, Henry C., "Ethical Values in History", American Historical Review, January, 1904, Vol. IX, p. 235 ff.
- Maclean, Samuel, Deutsch-amerikanische Didaskalia, Baltimore: F. Reine Publisher, 1848-49.
- Marx, Karl and Engels, Friedrich, Revolution und Kontre-Revolution in Deutschland, Stuttgart: J. Dietz Publisher, 1912, 141 pp.

- Mathiez, Albert, La Revolution Francaise. Paris: Armand Colin Publisher, 1927, 3 vols.
- Meinecke, Friedrich, Die deutsche Katastrophe. Wiesbaden: F. Brockhaus Publisher, 1946, 177 pp.
- Pascal, Ray, "The Frankfurt Parliament 1848", Journal of Modern History, June, 1946, Vol. XVIII, p. 115 ff.
- Prochls, Johannes H., Das junge Deutschland. Stuttgart: Cotta Press, 1892, 304 pp.
-
- Frankfurter Zeitung. Jahrgang 1886, Nos. 62,79,80,81.
- Randall, James G., The Civil War and Reconstruction. Boston: D. C. Heath and Company, 1937, 959 pp.
- Roepke, Wilhelm, The Solution of the German Problem. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1947, 282 pp.
- Schnabel, Franz, Deutsche Geschichte im 19. Jahrhundert. Freiburg/Breisgau: Herder and Company, 1933, Vol. II.
- Schmitt, Bernadotte E., Some Historians of Modern Europe. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1942, 533 pp.
- Schurz, Carl, Lebenserinnerungen. Berlin: G. Reimer Publisher, 1906, 3 vols.
- Sigel, Franz, Denkwuerdigkeiten des Generals Franz Sigel aus den Jahren 1848 und 1849, edited by Wilhelm Blos, Mannheim: J. Bensheimer, 1902, 166 pp.
- Sommer, Bruno, "Reckwert", Der Affenriegel. Reichenberg: Kunge and Company, 1921, pp. 357-370.
- Stadelmann, Rudolf, "Deutschland und die westeuropaeischen Revolutionen", Deutschland und Westeuropa, Laupheim/Wuerttemberg: U. Steiner Publisher, 1948, 177 pp.
-
- "Das Jahr 1848 und die deutsche Geschichte", Deutsche Rundschau. May, 1949, p. 98 ff.
- Steinberg, Sigfrid H., A Short History of Germany. New York: Macmillan Company, 1945, 304 pp.

- Struve, Gustav, Das 3. Regiment New Yorker Freiwilliger und Prinz Felix Salm-Salm, Washington: J. Niedfeldt Publisher, 1867, 21 pp.
-
- Geschichte der drei Volkserhebungen in Baden, Bern: Jonni Sons, 1849, 331 pp.
- Terson, E. T., "Le Gouvernement Provisoire et L'Europe", Collection du Centenaire de la Revolution de 1848, Paris: Press Universitaire de France, 1948, 77 pp.
- Thayer, William H., "Episodes in History", American Historical Review, January, 1920, Vol. XXV, p. 179 ff.
- Treitschke, Heinrich von, Deutsche Geschichte im 19. Jahrhundert, Leipzig: O. Hirzel Publisher, 1913, 5 vols.
- Valentin, Veit, Geschichte der deutschen Revolution von 1848-49, Berlin: Ullstein Publishers, 1930, 2 vols.
-
- 1848 - Chapters in German History, London: Unwin Brothers, 1940, 480 pp.
- Vogt, Friedrich and Koch, Max, Geschichte der Deutschen Literatur, Leipzig: Bibliographisches Institut, 1904, 3 vols.
- Wendel, Hermann: "Geleitwort", Ein Leben voller Abenteuer, Frankfurt/Main: Frankfurter Societäts-Druckerei, 1924, 2 vols.
- Whitridge, Arnold, Men in Crisis: The Revolutions of 1848, New York: Scribner's Publishers, 1949, 364 pp.
- Wilsberger, Otto, Die deutschen politischen Flüchtlinge in Strassburg von 1830-1849, Berlin: W. Rothschild, 1910, 216 pp.
- Wittke, Carl, Against the Current, the Life of Karl Heinzen, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1945, 342 pp.
-
- "The German Forty-Lighters in America", American Historical Review, July, 1948, Vol. LIII, p. 712 ff.
-
- He who Built America, New York: Prentice-Hall Publishers, 1939, 547 pp.
- Zucker, A. E. (ed.) The Forty-Lighters, New York: Columbia University Press, 1950, 379 pp.