



The Goetheanum after the fire. Dornach, January 1, 1923
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The fire that destroyed the Goetheanum in Dornach only two years and three months after its inauguration was fueled by the aggression that Rudolf Steiner's work elicited. This aggression grew from year to year after the war.² Rudolf Steiner's widely disseminated "Appeal to the German People and the Civilized World," his criticism of German politics and of a "Reich" that had remained ineffective and had become embroiled in outer demonstrations of power, had come to the attention of diverse far-right groups. As early as November 1919,³ Rudolf Steiner spoke of the growing hatred of Anthroposophy and of attempts not only at interfering with his work but also at "destroying it." He was not exaggerating when he spoke of a "will to annihilate" his work.

The quickly growing protests against Anthroposophy came as no surprise to Rudolf Steiner. "That a violent hatred would surge up against anthroposophical Spiritual Science, which we have cultivated here in Europe for two decades now, was foreseeable to anyone who knew, and knows, about the intimate connection between this Spiritual Science and the powers we need to call upon for the advancement of humanity now and in the near future" (Dec. 1919).⁴ Soon after the end of the war, more articles and pamphlets disparaging Rudolf Steiner and Anthroposophy appeared weekly and were disseminated widely. In January 1920, a Berlin news agency released a piece headlined "Rudolf Steiner: Henchman of the Entente," which was printed by many German daily newspapers. The article alleged that the "Social Threefolding Association" was not only cooperating with the Bolsheviks and Communists but that it also gathered evidence on acts committed by German officers in World War I which violated international law, so that these officers could be handed over to the Entente as war criminals in accordance with the Versailles Treaty.⁵ The influential *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, which supported the

German nationalists and was particularly sympathetic toward the *Deutschvölkische Schutz- und Trutzbund* (German Nationalist Protection and Defiance Federation, a predecessor of the NSDAP) even called the social threefolding concept a “danger to the existence of our State and to the soul of our people.” “It is our duty to put all our energy into fighting [the social threefolding idea].”⁶ Ever more frequently the threefolding initiative and the anthroposophical movement were denounced as a “threat to the State” and as “internationalist.” “These hostilities are growing rapidly, and they are becoming incredibly intense,” Rudolf Steiner said in early 1921.⁷ The mere fact that Russian was taught in Waldorf schools was seen as proof of “Bolshevik” intentions and an attempt at infiltration.

In April 1921, General von Gleich, speaking to an audience of three thousand in the Stuttgart *Liederhalle*, said that Rudolf Steiner’s threefolding reform aimed at generating a “Bolshevik chaos,” a “spiritual dictatorship,” and “drawing-room communism.” Rudolf Steiner’s involvement with the Workers’ School had been communist-inspired “high treason” against Germany, he said, and the Waldorf school pursued the “gradual degradation of state schools and the crypto-communist amalgamation of the classes.”⁸ A few weeks earlier, in March 1921, von Gleich had proclaimed (in his pamphlet *Rudolf Steiner as a prophet. A warning to the German People*, and in a public lecture in Ludwigsburg, citing information he had received from the German general staff) that the German defeat in the Battle of the Marne, and consequently its general defeat in World War I, was a result of Rudolf Steiner’s negative influence on Helmuth von Moltke. Although he withdrew this accusation after General von Dommès and Eliza von Moltke intervened, he had already achieved his purpose in certain places. Opposition to Rudolf Steiner and Anthroposophy became more vehement. “Our sick folk soul will be able to produce only the necessary antidotes to the new epidemic, if we do not cease to warn people against it.”⁹

On March 4, 1921, around the time of von Gleich’s Ludwigsburg’s lecture and accusations against Moltke, the renowned *Frankfurter*

Zeitung ran an article entitled “Traitor of Germany.” The writer of this article described the activities of the Social Threefolding Association in Upper Silesia as antinational and “hostile to the Reich,” going as far, albeit indirectly, as demanding sanctions be made. “Anyone who is intent on separating Upper Silesia from the Reich is clearly an enemy of Germany and needs to be treated as such.” Rudolf Steiner and his followers, the article claimed, were spreading “Polish propaganda.” “Their behavior, which might have been considered pathological in the past, has become criminal, for what they preach is treason.”¹⁰ This article, too, was published widely in the German and Swiss press. It was triggered by activities of members of the Social Threefolding Association in Upper Silesia who, with the help of Rudolf Steiner, had become active in the run-up to the plebiscite that was to decide whether the region would be German or Polish.

Following World War I, this important industrial area was placed under the administration of an Allied Commission and was now to be allocated to one of the two countries. Rudolf Steiner had always known that the intended plebiscite, stirred up on both sides by nationalist fervor, could end only in disaster. He therefore welcomed the initiative of the Breslau threefolding group to take public action in Upper Silesia in the run-up to the plebiscite. (“He strongly agreed with it [the initiative in Upper Silesia]. I remember him explaining that it was our duty to publicly represent social threefolding in places that attracted international attention, so that the world would hear of it.” Heyer¹¹) Rudolf Steiner helped composing an “Call to Rescue Upper Silesia” that described the problem of Upper Silesia as a *European* problem. “The annexation of the region to one of the existing centralized states, which is to be voted on, will make it impossible for Upper Silesia to manage its economic, political, and cultural affairs in ways that will prevent new conflicts and more fighting. The legal, cultural, and economic life will be increasingly shaken by violent insurgences.”¹² This prognosis was fully confirmed in the following years. After the plebiscite of March 20, 1921, which decided with a sixty-percent majority that the region was to belong to Germany,

Polish paramilitary groups invaded Upper Silesia although the Allied forces occupied it. Six months later the Allied Supreme Council decided to divide the country, assigning most of Upper Silesia's industrial region to Poland. The long-term effects of this decision, which fanned the flames of right-wing revanchism, were utterly disastrous. Again, the media made Rudolf Steiner and the anthroposophical movement the main target of their indignation. In the summer of 1921, the "Privy Consistorial Councilor" and Breslau professor Erich Schaeder, writing in the renowned Catholic paper *Hochland*, demanded that systematic action be taken against Rudolf Steiner. He concluded his lengthy rationale by saying:

The previous deliberations will have illustrated why the fight against Steiner is imperative for anyone concerned with retaining the purity of our state.... It may be impossible to avoid organizing this fight and joining those who are prepared to support it into a working association. There are theoretical and practical tasks to tackle. In addition to an analysis of "Spiritual Science," which will not require an in-depth refutation; in addition to the scientific, political, religious instruction of those who are drawn to it, particularly in academic circles, a number of practical steps will be necessary: we need to monitor Steiner's propagandist actions and organizations and be particularly awake to anything that may, and probably will, bring him into conflict with the law: his financial activities, his political actions (possibly treason), his medical and therapeutic teachings (most likely quackery), especially his personal influence on individuals who are at risk of incurring financial losses or—as a result of his meditative exercises—of suffering moral harm or harm to their health.¹³

Even Friedrich Rittelmeyer's insightful book on Rudolf Steiner's life work—published on February 27, 1921, amid the Upper Silesian uprisings—was taken issue with and made instrumental for political purposes. "Your essay on the statements I made during the war was certainly most justified, but its effects are reflected in many of our opponents' actions now," Rudolf Steiner wrote to Rittelmeyer, referring to the introduction to Rittelmeyer's book, which described,

Aufruf zur Rettung Oberschlesiens!

Oberschlesier! Soll in Oberschlesien zur Qual seiner Bevölkerung, zum Schaden der Wirtschaft, zur Vernichtung aller kulturellen Güter, der Unfrieden, der versteckte und offene innere Kampf Dauerzustand werden? Darf Oberschlesien der Herd ständiger Bedrohung des Friedens für Europa bleiben?

Nein! Wie aber ist das zu verhindern?

Die oberschlesische Frage ist eine **europäische Frage**. Auf das **wirtschaftliche** Gedeihen der Industrie, insbesondere auf die Kohlenschätze Oberschlesiens richtet ganz Europa seine besorgten Gedanken und Wünsche. Für den europäischen Wirtschaftskreislauf ist Oberschlesien von entscheidender Bedeutung. Die **geistig-kulturellen** Probleme und Aufgaben dieses Gebietes, als einer Mitte zwischen Ost- und Mitteleuropa liegen schwer in der Waagschale. Die Geistigkeit der oberschlesischen Völker kann nur dann in der rechten Weise sich auswirken, wenn hier eine wirkliche Lösung der Nationalitätenfrage gefunden wird. Damit wäre auch Entscheidendes gewonnen für die Heraufführung eines neuen Zeitalters der Völkerbeziehungen überhaupt.

Auch eine Gesundung der **politisch-staatlichen** Verhältnisse ist im europäischen Interesse ein unbedingtes Erfordernis; soll nicht Oberschlesien ein politischer Unruheherd werden, der den europäischen Frieden dauernd in Frage stellt.

So ist das Problem der Gestaltung Oberschlesiens eine Frage der wirtschaftlichen, rechtlich-politischen und kulturell-geistigen Gesundung **ganz Europas**. Alle bisherigen Maßnahmen der Mächte brachten nichts weniger als eine Lösung der europäischen Probleme und sozialen Fragen. Da aber die oberschlesische Frage nur aus dem ganzen großen Zusammenhang einer wahrhaft zeitgemäßen Neugestaltung der europäischen Verhältnisse gelöst werden kann, **wird keine gegenwärtige Lösung dieser Fragen, die auf dem Boden der Wirklichkeit steht, etwas anderes sein können, als ein vorübergehender Zustand. Man muß daher bewußt einen solchen Übergangszustand in Oberschlesien schaffen.** Weder die berühmten weltfremden Punkte Wilsons, deren Anwendung auf das wirkliche Leben besonders im Osten eine Unmöglichkeit bedeutet, noch die Gewaltmethoden einer abgelaufenen Epoche können zu einem Neuaufbau des europäischen Lebens

führen. Zu diesem Neuaufbau kann man nur kommen, wenn man sich klar darüber ist, daß es sich im Grunde um **drei verschiedene Gebiete** handelt:

**Das Wirtschaftsleben,
Das rechtlich-politische Leben,
Das geistig-kulturelle Leben.**

In dem bisherigen Staate waren diese drei Gebiete verwickelt, und aus diesem Durcheinander sind letzten Endes die chaotischen Zustände der Gegenwart hervorgegangen. Die einzige wirklichkeitgemäße Gestaltung des sozialen Lebens kann daher nur in einer Vonselbständigkeit dieser drei Gebiete bestehen. Den Weg dazu weist

die Dreigliederung des sozialen Organismus.

Sie verlangt, daß der Staat auf der einen Seite die Wirtschaft, auf der anderen Seite das Geistesleben aus seinem Machtbereich entlasse.

In das Wirtschaftsleben gehört dann nur noch Warenerzeugung, Warenverteilung und Warenverbrauch, die auf „assoziativer Grundlage“*) von Sachverständigen zu verwalten sind. Ungehindert von staatlichen und politischen Machtverhältnissen werden die Produzenten und Konsumenten der verschiedenen Länder in gemeinsamer Arbeit die Befriedigung aller Bedürfnisse regeln.

Das geistige Glied im dreigliedrigen sozialen Organismus umfaßt Wissenschaft, Kunst, Religion, das gesamte Erziehungswesen und die richterliche Rechtsprechung. Alle diese geistig-kulturellen Faktoren können nur in vollkommener Freiheit von staatlichen Eingriffen ihre Aufgabe erfüllen und in rechter Weise das soziale Leben befruchten. Das Geistesleben, die Kultur, muß aus dem freien Zusammenwirken aller geistig-schöpferischen Einzelpersönlichkeiten sich herausgestalten und sich selbst eigene Verwaltungskörper geben.

Dem mittleren Glied, dem rechtlich-politischen Teil des sozialen Organismus, verbleibt dann in erster Linie die Polizei- und Verwaltungstätigkeit auf rechtlicher Grundlage; es wird geregelt durch ein in demokratischer

*) Einzelheiten über die „assoziative Wirtschaft“ finden sich in den umstehend aufgeführten Schriften.

among other things, Rudolf Steiner's attitude and political views during the war.¹⁴ In this introduction Rittelmeyer related how Rudolf Steiner, in the early years of the war, appealed to his audiences in many lectures to remember Germany's cultural heritage and concerns, but then gradually refrained from touching on this topic. "Then came a long period when Steiner no longer spoke of German culture. If people asked him, they were told that 'much that should be told now because it is true, cannot be said at present.'"¹⁵ Rittelmeyer cautiously hinted at Steiner's critical view of Germany's military leadership and policies during the war. Outlining Steiner's failed threefolding initiative of 1917, he added, "After 1917, with foresight that has imprinted itself in the souls of anyone who met him, Steiner saw only the chaos; neither the hopes for peace raised in the east nor the grand offensives in the west could disabuse him. Looking back today, there is only one word to describe the clear vision Steiner retained in all the years of global disasters, and that is *phenomenal*. Anyone witnessing this vision would certainly develop unlimited trust in him. Any assessments he made, whether of Ludendorff, Michaelis, or Hertling, clearly ran counter to public opinion from the beginning, and all of them were later confirmed. There was no word he spoke about the world situation that the events, as they unfolded, did not prove to be profoundly true."¹⁶

