Royal Bavarian

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ROYAL BAVARIAN Post Office, R.B. State Railroad, R.B. Mint, R.B. Academy of Music, R.B. National Museum, R.B. Infantry Regiment Body Guards, R.B. Humanistic Gymnasium Wittelsbach. Royal Bavarian, that was the world in which I grew up as a boy in the Royal Bavarian Capital and Residential City of Munich. What did it mean to live in a monarchy? How did life present itself to a youngster, who, surrounded by R.B. institutions, was a loyal R.B. himself?

The major part of those of my years which preceded the end of the 750 years of dynastic rule by the House of Wittelsbach were spent in R.B. schools: four years of grammar school, then nine years of *Gymnasium.* Judging from what life required in later years of change, uncertainty, demands and troubles, that schooling cannot have been bad. In fact, looking back, those years evoke pleasant memories of friendships, much play, much nonsense and stimulating interaction.

Under the Kingdom of Bavaria's peculiar system of education, all children had to attend the first four grades in one and the same school, the public grammar school. As my family lived in a district of mixed population, we pupils of Public School Princess Louise were a motley crowd. The fathers of some of us were upper class businessmen or even members of that top class of society: army officers and high civil servants. Others had small shop keepers as their fathers, or workers. One of my special friends was the son of a brewery worker, another came from the home of a carpenter; several children's fathers worked as mill hands in the nearby railroad car manufacturing plant. Some had no fathers at all; one's mother was a washerwoman and another's a sales woman in a store. The grammar school brought together not only diverse social classes, it was also coeducational. Boys and girls were together at least in the lower grades. One of the teachers was a man, another, in the 3rd and 4th grades, a woman. Their task was not easy: to keep together a crowd of sixty-five—yes, sixty-five, six and seven year olds in one

classroom, to teach them the basics of the three R's, and to teach them so that at the end of fourth grade those who wished could transfer to the Latin Schools, the *Gymnasium*, without difficulty.

Such a job required discipline. From the very first day of first grade we, the little quick-silvers, were sternly commanded to sit motionless at our desks, keeping both hands firmly on the top, four fingers above, thumbs underneath. The teacher would walk along the rows with his Spanish cane and hit the knuckles of those who would move or who would be so daring as to whisper with a neighbor. On command, we had all to get up in a flash, stand stiffly besides our desks and then, again on command, either sit down again, hands on the desk, or march in close order through the hall and down the stairs to the yard, where for ten minutes we could romp, run, fight, laugh wildly and freely until the bell sounded the signal for reassembling and orderly marching back to the big classroom, with the crucifix on the wall behind the teacher's desk on the raised dais. Yes indeed, our teachers maintained strict discipline, but they were able teachers, who had been trained in the progressive methods of pedagogy of that great educational leader, Georg Kerschensteiner. The colorful, gay readers that had been elaborated under his guidance introduced us to reading and writing, the writing to be practiced with a slate pencil on a plate of black slate. How many slate pencils were broken in the effort, I do not know. But I still see the black slate plate before me in its frame of white wood, through a hole of which a string was slung with a small sponge at its other end with which we could quickly erase what we had laboriously written, then to engage in new exercises of writing arithmetic.

Instruction was not limited to the three R's; we also were to learn of the world around us. So the whole big class, in close formation, would march along the streets to visit the local police station, the fire department, the streetcar depot, the post office, the railroad station and, of course, the parish church. We were told the anecdotes and stories connected with the ancient buildings of the city, the story of the monkey that was kept at the ducal residence, and one day, imitating the nurse, had taken the baby out of the cradle and, when disturbed, fled to the top of the spire, with the baby in its arms, the baby that later was to be Louis the Bavarian, Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire. We were shown the black spot in our Lady's Cathedral where the devil had tread and disappeared into the ground when the host was elevated by the bishop; and we were told the stories about our kings, of Max I, the Good, how on his arrival in Munich he was greeted by a brave brewer: "Maxie, how good that you have come at long last." And we were shown the churchyard of the little church in Sendling where in 1705 the mountaineers had fought the Austrian invaders and had been mowed down to the last man, the heroic Blacksmith from Kochel. Yes, we were brought up to be good Bavarians and loyal subjects of the House of Wittelsbach, but the discipline was not stultifying. We were taught to think, to figure out problems by ourselves, and to be observant of the world around us.

At the end of fourth grade, at the age of ten, the great divide was reached, the step from the grammar school to the *Gymnasium*. The selection of those who would enter this indispensable atrium to higher life was largely determined by the social standing of the families. I say social standing rather than money. The *Gymnasium* was as much a public school as the grammar school. Tuition was charged, but the amount was low, about eleven dollars a year, a sum which was modest even in terms of the pur-

chasing power of that day, and tuition scholarships were easily obtainable. Acceptance at the *Gymnasium*, however, depended on a stiff entrance examination. So the composition of the first Latin grade, of some 35 pupils, was still colorful, although not quite so colorful as grammar school had been. Quite a few of our classmates were children of army sergeants, policemen or other lower civil service officers, of small tradesmen, even of firemen, but the majority came from upper and middle class families and those were the ones who carried on to the higher grades. Most of the boys of modest origin dropped out after the 6th Latin grade, at which time they had earned the privilege of serving in the army for only one year instead of the two or, in the cavalry, three required of ordinary mortals, and with that privilege went the other, even more precious one, of being qualified for reserve officer's training and thus to a social position of glamour and influence.

Discipline at the *Gymnasium* was still strict, but grew freer with each higher grade. There was no Spanish cane. Discipline depended upon the authority and personality of the teachers, who were addressed with the illustrious title of "Herr Professor," so that at least in title they were equal to the occupants of the highest rank in the social scale of old-time Germany, the university professor. Some of the professors at the *Gymnasium* were strange characters, some were weak, some were poor teachers, but by far the majority were men of high competence and personality.

The *Wittelsbacher Gymnasium* belonged to the "humanistic" group which was supposed to cultivate the tradition of the humanists of the sixteenth century: a literate elite combining the Greco-Roman ideal of the educated gentlemen with the Christian faith. That tradition had worn thin. Plodding through Cornelius Nepos, Cicero, Horace, Homer or Plato we acquired more knowledge of grammar, etymology and prosody than the image of the man beautiful and virtuous (*Kaloskagothos*), but our minds were disciplined; we learned to think, logically, autonomously and critically. We became conscious of the Great Tradition, acquired a sense of history and with that, perhaps, a degree of conservatism, but a conservatism of the liberal, royal Bavarian kind and its dominant religion, Catholicism. In the bloody wars and persecutions of the seventeenth century all heresies had been stamped out in the old parts of the later Bavarian kingdom. The Catholic Church was so firmly established that it no longer needed to be militant, but neither had it become narrow or obscurantist. When Napoleon doubled the size of Bavaria and elevated the Elector to the rank of King, so many Protestants were made Bavarians that in the new Kingdom they amounted to about forty percent of the population, and these new Bavarians—Franconians and Swabians, were people of vigor, energy and ambition. They quickly acquired leading positions in the government, in business and in education. Among the professors of the *Gymnasium* the Old Bavarians constituted a minority, and at the top of the educational system, the universities, the tone was decidedly set by that large number of non-Bavarians who were called to the faculties because of their achievements as scholars.

Much narrowness, dullness, conventionalism and lethargy existed in the villages and small towns, but life in the larger cities was vigorous, particularly in Munich, the seat of the leading university, the academies of fine arts and of music, the coffee houses of Schwabing, the publishers of the great newspapers and many of the important books of German tongue. Munich was a liberal city, in political complexion, in thought and in style of life. It was a city in

which one lived and let live, a city of outspoken individualists among the thousands of writers and would-be writers, artists and would-be artists, Germans and foreigners, who had chosen to live in the stimulating air of endless debate, of new styles and new crazes, of the carneval, the *Oktoberfest,* the scenic countryside, the architectural monuments. Munich had, and incidentally still has, two permanent opera houses and five major repertory theaters, in addition to about a dozen cabarets, satirically commenting on current politics, art, literature and mores. There were the great collections of classical, old and modern painting and sculpture, and there were such experimental theaters as Baron Bernus' Shadow Plays or Papa Benz', where Frank Wedekind, author of "Lulu," "Spring's Awakening," and other daring plays, accompanied on his guitar his ribald songs of protest against the sex tabus of the Establishment. There was Steinicke's book store with its lecture room, where Thomas Mann presented chapters of the *Magic Mountain,* Erich Muhsam, the bearded prophet, proclaimed the eternal happiness of the coming age of socialism, Rudolf Steiner magnetized his audience of middle aged ladies, starry-eyed youngsters and eternal searchers for truth with the ultimate truth he had found, that mixture of occultism, Goethean classicism and crusading Christianity. Ernst von Possart, grand master of pathos and theatralics, wove the spell of his annual recitation of Enoch Arden. Tom Jensen, long-haired, bearded, barefoot and wrapped in a tunic of coarse brown cloth sermonized about the soul saving grace of a diet of onions and garlic, Jacques Dalcroz and Mary Wigman presented their rhythmic gymnastics, Indian gurus chanted Vedic Verses, Joachim Ringelnatz recited his nonsense verses, Hans Vogeler sang the praise of the unfettered free life of the Youth Movement, that early protest against authority of parents, school, army, state and the sex code of tradition, and Gustav Wyneken and Karl Blüher glorified the deepness of the bond of male companionship and its cosmogonic eros.

Groups of constantly shifting membership and proclaiming constantly changing ideas and ideals, and claiming to hold the key to the future, competed with one another for the allegiance of the intellectuals. The artists were organized in three antagonistic groups, the traditionalist Artists' Cooperative, the rebellious Secession and the wild Juryless, each presenting annual exhibitions, the contents of which were as passionately debated in the press and the coffee houses as the current performances of opera singers, leading actors, conductors or musicians. Impressionist German painting had its origin and center in Munich. Great classical masters like Lenbach and Kaulbach were succeeded by bold innovators, a Franz Marc, Otto Schmidt-Rotluff, Eduard Slevogt, Franz Stuck, and the revolutionary abstractionists beginning with Kandinsky's orgies of flaming turbulent color and Paul Klee's little jocular insights into the mysteries of our tragic-comic world.

Art, literature, science were vigorously alive in the capital of royal Bavaria and so was the struggle for the right philosophy, the right way of life.

In this great debate another force played its role, the force of modern business, industry and technology. Large enterprises had settled in Munich, the Munich Re-Insurance Corporation, which was and again is the insurer of the insurers the world over. When its resources were tapped in 1906 after the great fire at San Francisco, the shock was felt all over the city. The first department stores sprang up, Munich banks expanded their influence beyond the borders of the Bavarian Kingdom, and in large industrial plants railroad cars

and engines, textiles and ceramics were manufactured as well as the first airplanes to be produced in Germany. To us youngsters this side of Munich life presented itself mainly in the German Museum, that huge, magnificent showplace that has become the model for museums of science and industry the world over, including the one in the city of Chicago. Here, while we were boys, we could rush from exhibit to exhibit, pushing buttons and hardly waiting to see what would happen. But as we grew up we could read the explanations, perform experiments to accompany the physics course of the school, watch miners in the coal mine and gaze at the moon through the big telescope. I do not know how many hundreds of hours I spent in this place of inexhaustible observation, experience and stimulation.

Industrialization brought to the royal capital another phenomenon: the labor movement and the Social-Democratic Party. It was a Marxist movement, revolutionary in theory, hostile to the established order including the monarchy, often wild in its rhetoric. Every year, on the 1st of May, the Sozis paraded through the town toward the great meadow where half a year later that great festival of all-Bavarian brotherhood in beer is celebrated, the *Oktoberfest*. Red flags flying, bands playing the International, the parade would march past our *Gymnasium*, the professors making uncomprehending remarks about those poor fellows who had fallen for the propaganda of foreign agitators. But the mellow spirit of Bavaria had also touched the Bavarian Marxists. Their leader in the Diet was a baron, who often had such kind words about the dynasty that one jokingly came to speak of the Royal Bavarian Social-Democrats. We sons of bourgeois families had little comprehension for this strange phenomenon, but I did know at least one Social-Democrat, Valentin, the husband of a former maid of my grandmother. The girl had been with my grandmother some twenty years, the marriage had been celebrated in my grandmother's house, and Elise and Valentin would come every now and then to visit. Valentin was a plumber in the employ of a railroad car plant; in fact he was with that firm from early youth until he retired at the age of sixty, and, of course, he was a member of the union and of the Social-Democratic Party. I hoped that I would find out from him what the movement was all about, but he did not have the gift of words. "Well," he would say, "when we have the power everything will be divided up, equally." Speaking such fearful words, he would smile benignly. He was a kindly Marxist, after all.

Behind and beyond the intellectual, artistic, creative and so often crazy life of Schwabing, which was defined as a state of mind rather than a geographic concept, and the new world of business, science and labor, there was the old Munich of the broad middle classes, the Church, the ties with the countryside, the dialect, the gruffness, the joy of pageantry and festivals, the beer gardens, the *Hofbräuhaus*, the pretty girls who were so quickly ready for amorous liaisons. These natives of Upper Bavaria were proud of the intellectual and artistic vitality of their city, but they also resented it. They felt uncomfortable about the eggheads, they vaguely smelled danger for religion, tradition, and their royal Bavarian language. To them the advocates of newfangled ideas, the highbrows were all *Schlawiner* or, worse, Prussians. In the city government they were outvoted by the Liberals and Socialists, but in the Diet, the representation of the country as a whole, they held the majority, which was dominated by the clergy, which, in turn, was dominated by Bavaria's most powerful man, Doctor Orterer, rector of the Royal Luitpold Gymnasium in Munich. This man

of little stature, sallow complexion, iron will and unbounded energy regarded it as his God-given task to save King, Country and Church from modernism, corruption, revolution, immorality and upheaval; he fought for the cause of law and order, purity and faith. As a result, he was the perpetual butt of the liberal press, the political joker, and the two satirical magazines, *Jugend* and *Simplicissimus.* No better source can be found to recapture the spirit of the capital of Royal Bavaria than the volumes of these periodicals, filled with contributions of such leading writers and artists, as Ludwig Thoma, Th. Th. Heine or Hans Thöny. The intellectual, artistic and political issues of the time were captured in the short stories, the anecdotes, the jokes, the cartoons and even the advertisements of their colorful pages.

Above and beyond all this was the state: the Royal Bavarian government and the "Magistrat" of the Royal Capital and Residential City. The government was the source of secular authority: and so was every holder of governmental office, all the way from the prime minister to the patrolman of the city police, the sergeant of the Royal Bavarian Army or the janitor of the *Gymnasium,* not to speak of the *Herr Leutnant,* the *Herr Professor* or the *Herr Ministerialrat.* Like the Church or the Army or the Civil Service, society was a hierarchy, with clearly marked levels of rank all the way from the millhand and peasant, the craftsman and tradesman, the merchant and banker, the lawyer and doctor, the officer of the army, the professor of the university, to the princes of the royal house.

Everybody who was not of the lowest level would be addressed with his professional or official title and so, of course, would be his wife. But in its way this hierarchical society was also democratic. Mr. and Mrs. Ministerial Counsillor at the beergarden would not in the least mind sitting at the same table with Mr. and Mrs. Master Chimney Sweep or Mr. and Mrs. Locksmith or Mr. and Mrs. Farmer in town from Grossdingharting.

And who was the top of the pyramid of Royal Bavaria? Not the king. His Majesty, Otto I, was insane, isolated from the world in the little country estate of Fürstenried, at the outskirts of the city. His place was held by his uncle Luitpold, Prince Regent. When he was elevated to this exalted position in 1886, he was distrusted or even hated. In a series of quick moving dramatic events, Ludwig II had been declared insane and interned at Berg Castle on the shore of Lake Starnberg. Ludwig, romantic and extravagant, the misanthropic builder of the anachronism of Neuschwanstein Castle, that phantastic replica of a medieval knight's castle as it had never existed in the Middle Ages and as it is shown today on innumerable posters of German tourist agencies and Lufthansa advertisements. In addition to that masterpiece of noble "kitsch" he had built his own Trianon at Linderhof and his Versailles on an island of Chiem Lake, closed to the world. There he would fancy himself to be the Sun King or the Master of the Wartburg, receiving minstrels amidst murals of scenes from the operas of Richard Wagner, whom he worshipped. It was exactly this romantic anachronism that appealed to the plain people of the countryside, to whom a colorless king of the constitutional pattern had no meaning. It did not matter to the mountaineers or peasants that the king made himself unavailable to sign those documents which required the royal signature even though it was just an empty formality. It did not disturb them that debts were incurred in the millions for which the budget had no room. They had no idea of the homosexual relationship of the king with his favorite lackey, who was the only person whom the

king deigned to see and through whom the cabinet ministers had to send their communications. So when the éclat came, when Ludwig drowned in the Lake together with the psychiatrist from whom he apparently had tried to escape, and when the new king, Ludwig's younger brother, was also pronounced to be unfit for his office and to be in need of continuous institutionalization, the people, or rather the country folk, were convinced that it was all a plot engineered by Luitpold, or worse, by that evil man in Prussia, Bismarck, who had ended Bavaria's independence and forced her to enter the Prussian dominated German Reich. But suspicion and aversion soon gave way to affection and attachment, and by the turn of the century the Prince Regent had become the beloved father of the fatherland. People would tip their hats when the old gentleman with the well-groomed full white beard drove through the streets in his noble carriage drawn by two fine horses with a helmeted body guard sitting next to the coachman, and His Royal Highness would bow, to the right and the left, rythmically and yet not mechanically. He would smile at the friendly people who smiled at him and who, when they came home, would tell excitedly that they had seen the Prince Regent. Luitpold won the people's affection through the way in which he combined dignity with urbanity. He felt equally at home with country folk, plain city people, aristocrats, foreign monarchs or scholars of the university, and particularly he felt at home with artists. He made it a point to visit not only the recognized established masters, but the budding young ones, including the wild innovaters and rebels, and when the Prince Regent had visited an artist in his studio, spoken some friendly words of competent criticism or even bought a painting or a sculpture, the young man's reputation was established, his name would be in the papers, his works exhibited at the annual shows and purchased by collectors. The Prince Regent also knew when to wear the country costume of short leather pants, bare knees and heavily nailed mountain boots. Up into high old age he was an ardent hunter of deer, elk and chamois. He also knew how to preside at the colorful ceremonies of the knights of Saint George, or to greet the guests at the grand ball that was the crowning event of the carneval season. But the Prince Regent scrupulously kept away from politics. He had, of course, his own views, those of a progressive liberal conservative. He was careful not to throw his weight into the political life of the country, but in at least two situations of serious crisis he quietly and inconspicuously acted behind the scenes, as umpire and mediator and as the representative of the country at large.

The Prince Regent's popularity was shared by the members of the royal family, none of whom led a life of idleness. One of the princes was famous as an ophthamologist, another practiced gynaecology, a fact that gave cause to many friendly jokes. The Prince Regent's younger brother and his nephew were high ranking army officers who proved their ability in leadership in World War I.

The Army played no small part in the life of the city with its garrison of some 10,000 men. With bands playing the regiments of infantry would march in the streets, the artillery caissons rolling, but the high point was reached with the cavalry, each man, on horseback, holding his lance upright, the little white-blue standards fluttering in the wind.

White and blue, these were, and still are, the colors of the Bavarian flag and, as the Bavarian anthem says, of the Bavarian sky. The white and blue flags of Bavaria and the black and yellow flags of the city would decorate the streets on festive occasions,

and they were not rare in the vivid life of the Bavarian capital. Every now and then there would also be a flag in the black, white and red colors of the German Reich. The relation to Berlin was ambivalent. It was a matter of pride to belong to the neo-German Reich that was respected for its power in all Europe, that had established its place in the world and whose establishment had brought prosperity, but it had also brought new problems, involvement in world affairs beyond the ken of provincial Bavarians. There was the influx of Prussians, spending money, but talking a strange sounding German, often acting as if they were superior. They were respected but not loved. And there was the *Kaiser*, who in his omniscience and his penchant for personal rule was the very opposite of what Bavarians expected a monarch to be and whose relations to the House of Wittelsbach were known to be anything but cordial. Time and again he was lampooned in *Simplicissimus,* whose editor then had to be sent to jail for the crime of lèse majesté.

Bavaria's position in the Reich was peculiar and different from that of any other of the twenty-four states of which the Reich was composed. Unlike the armies of the others, ours was not fused with that of Prussia. We had our own high command, out own general staff, above all, our own uniforms, Bavarian light blue rather than the dark blue of the Prussian troops. We had our own tax system, our own Royal Bavarian State Railway. The king of Bavaria was represented by his own ambassadors at the court in Berlin, in the capitals of the French Republic, and of his Apostolic Majesty, the Emperor of Austria, and at the Holy See; and in Munich we had the diplomatic corps of foreign ambassadors, among them that of Prussia, and at their head the Papal Nuncio. So, of course, we had our own postal system and our own stamps. Bavaria was not just a state like the other states of the Reich. Bavarians felt themselves to be a nation with a long history of its own and its own dynasty.

In 1912, Prince Regent Luitpold died, at the age of 92. His son, already in his late sixties, became Prince Regent and, later on, King. In August 1914, long expected, the World War broke out, ending in unexpected defeat. On November 11, 1918, the King took his daily constitutional in Munich's great park, the English Garden, that had been created one hundred and thirty years before by Benjamin Thompson, Count Rumford, the American loyalist, adventurer and genius who had so impressed the Elector that he was made Bavarian Minister of the Interior. On that morning walk in the Park the King was accosted by a friendly worker: "Your Majesty better go home. In half an hour the Revolution will break out." So the King went home, the Revolution, so-called, did break out and 750 years of Wittelsbach rule came to an end.