

Translator's Introduction

This interview of George Mosse by Irene Runge and Uwe Stelbrink was conducted shortly after the 1989 fall of the Berlin Wall, around the time when, in October 1990, Germany was unified and the German Democratic Republic ended, and marks the first occasion when George Mosse spoke at length about his own history. The topics covered span birth, family history, school years, family life to the years of the Weimar Republic, exile and the Nazi years, Hitler, and the Second World War. There is extended discussion of Jewish identity, the German-Jewish liberal legacy, Zionism and Israel, and his academic writings on gender in relation to his concepts of nationalism and its instrumentalization by those in power. First published in German by the East German Dietz-Verlag publishing house in 1991, the interview documents a particular moment in history, and discusses in detail the intersection of the personal coupled with historical analysis; yet it is still very timely and relevant.

Although the broad scope of the interview is impressive, the interviewers' comments are also noteworthy. Ms Runge and Mr Stelbrink, two sociologists from the former GDR, also published monographs with similar titles based on interviews with Gregor Gysi (currently a leader of The Left Party in Germany) and Markus Wolf, former head of the East German spy ministry. There is a shared sense of loss, dislocation and potential expressed both by the interviewers, and Mosse as they share insights into lives and preconceptions disrupted by immediate and radical social change. On occasion, the interviewers maintain that the information in Professor Mosse's answer was not widely known in East Germany.

This fascinating analysis of twentieth-century history through the lens of personal experience is essential reading for anyone interested in twentieth-century German and Jewish

history. It reflects a great historian's keen insights into his life, the events surrounding the last century in Europe and the world, including an extended discussion of the United States, the Cold War, and mid-century political life. Enjoy!

-- Dr. James Keller, translator

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George Mosse
Always an Emigre: Conversations with George L. Mosse

Preface

As it turns out, the end of the German Democratic Republic creates the need for a reexamination of German history. Key insights into much of the confusion of the present situation have been offered by observers in questions posed through the lens of German history.

Our country's history, East Germany, lasted a mere 40 years; it had a beginning and an end. Since then, we have been obsessed with the incongruity between its inception and its collapse.

Beginning in the late fall of 1990, we spoke often with George L. Mosse about our concerns with the newly emerging Germany. As an emigrant, former Berlin resident and eminent American historian of European history, he has been witness to events of an era spanning from the Weimar Republic to Operation Desert Storm.

We can all gain fresh perspectives on recent events by broadening our historical horizons. George L. Mosse has helped us do just that.

Runge/Stelbrink: Professor George L. Mosse, you were born in Berlin in September, 1918. On the west side of the city there is a square named Rudolf Mosse Platz; on the east side, a Rudolf Mosse Strasse. The Nazis must have renamed the street. The Mosse name is a part of Berlin.

Long-time residents of Berlin are familiar not only with the "Berliner Tageblatt," the liberal newspaper published from January 1, 1872 until it was closed by the Nazis, but also with the "Volkszeitung" and "8-Uhr-Abendblatt," and with Mosse Publishing, its international advertising agency, and the address books, telephone books and trade magazines it published. The famous architect Erich Mendelsohn designed a facade for its headquarters on Leipziger Strasse, a sensation in its day, but of which little of the original design remains. Any part still standing after World War II was then decimated by the Berlin Wall. On the west side of the Wall, the Springer Publishing Company built its empire with hopes of a new German unity, seemingly inconceivable even a short time ago. Rudolf Mosse, the founder of his own media corporation, was your grandfather. Your father Hans was the director until the Nazis came to power. What does the "L" of your middle name stand for?

Mosse: "L" stands for Lachmann. It is really a hyphenated name: Lachmann-Mosse. My mother's maiden name was Mosse, and my father was a Lachmann. Through marriage his name became Lachmann-Mosse.

Runge/Stelbrink: In the Jewish cemetery at Berlin-Weissensee now under historic preservation protection, there is a family grave for the Mosses, and nearby there are gravestones for the Lachmanns. In the Jewish cemetery on Schönhauser Allee one can also read the names Mosse and Lachmann. In our research we discovered that your grandfather Mosse bought the "Berliner Morgenzeitung" newspaper in 1889, the "Volkszeitung" in 1904 and, in the 1920s, your family bought the "8-Uhr-Abendblatt." That must have made it the first publishing monopoly in Berlin. Where did your grandfather come from?

Mosse: The Mosses owned mostly the "Berliner Tageblatt." The Lachmanns were fairly well-to-do business people. My great-grandfather, as was often the case for Jews at that time, was a grain dealer, very strictly religious, who died a wealthy man. My great-great-grandfather was involved in the Revolution of 1848. After the revolution he fled from Germany to Holland, helped found the city of Zaandvoort, established the first railway there, and was buried as a German patriot in Bonn. Those were the Lachmanns. From my great-grandfather Mosse I still have a so-called letter album, a book with all his correspondence. He was a country doctor in Poznan and helped organize the 1848 revolt against Prussia. When the revolt failed, he was imprisoned in K strin for many years. He had 13 children, but that did not prevent his wife from having affairs while he was in prison. Once out, he divorced her. There is a wonderful contract between him and his wife, which stipulated how he would take her back. It stated: you may only speak when spoken to; you may not make so much noise; and you may leave the house only with my permission. It was sanctioned by a rabbi which made it binding. My mother always said her grandmother had been so very shy, and that was why. The Mosse Platz in his native town Gratz was named after that grandfather.

Runge/Stelbrink: With whom did she have affairs?

Mosse: I cannot recall. With someone or other in the small town Gratz, I suppose. Anyway, each of the 13 children made something of their lives. One of them, Albert Mosse, even developed the municipal legal system for Japan. Martha Mosse, Albert's daughter, lived in Nazi Germany until she was deported to Theresienstadt. The Japanese tried to come to her aid as long as they could. There is said to be a famous photograph from 1936 in which Göring and the Japanese Crown Prince are standing at Albert Mosse's grave in the Jewish cemetery at Schönhauser Allee. I believe the grave has recently been restored. Albert Mosse was a pupil of Rudolph von Gneist, the great German scholar of constitutional law. The Japanese had approached Gneist to find someone to help them develop their constitution. Another Mosse developed German business law, another one went into business and worked for his grandfather. That is the so-called founder's generation. They would leave the provinces for Berlin and help each other there. In the end, all of them got ahead.

Runge/Stelbrink: You are from the Jewish haute-bourgeoisie, from an urban elite. Thus you experienced Berlin from a specific perspective, from the top down, so to speak. The conflicts of the 1920s that we know only from the history books are part of your life history..

Mosse: But I was born in 1918. In the 1920s I was really still a child. Moreover, most of the time I lived outside the city, at our estate in Schenkendorf; later I went to a boarding school: that's another story altogether. Of course I had many experiences in Berlin, when I happened to be there in town. It is interesting to note that my earliest childhood recollections are political ones. The earliest thing I remember: I was looking out the window and asking my governess why all the lights were out on Nollendorfplatz. She told me it was because Ebert had died. The second memory was of me walking to Nollendorfplatz with my mother. She had organized a soup line there; it must have been during the years of the high inflation. I helped her serve food to the poor. So I guess I was political from the very beginning. Other than that I cannot tell you much about Berlin in the twenties. It often perturbs me when students ask me again and again what the Weimar Republic was like, or whether Toller was a good storyteller, etc. But the students just forget that I experienced the Weimar period only until I was about fifteen years old. I certainly never talked with Ernst Toller, even though he was a friend of my sister, and his death mask hangs on my living room wall in Madison. So it goes. When someone comes along who was there and experienced something, they are turned into a historical monument. But often one's memory is faulty.

Runge/Stelbrink: You said something about a boarding school. Why didn't you attend a regular school?

Mosse: In Berlin I went to school for one year. All my cousins and all the smart students and especially the more obedient boys from my milieu went to the French prep school. But I went to the Mommsen prep school because there were doubts about my intelligence. After a year I was out of there. The cause of it was irregular Latin verbs and several shameful confrontations with teachers. Then I ended up at a boarding school near Lake Constance, far from Berlin. Then, when the situation in Berlin worsened, I was kept at Schenkendorf. The city was considered dangerous; the "sins" were there, as the haute-bourgeoisie put it. The boarding

school was in Salem on Lake Constance. Kurt Hahn, the founder, had been my father's classmate. He was a German nationalist. But more about that later.

Runge/Stelbrink: It's all quite peculiar: Wilhelminian Germany seems like ancient history to us, the Weimar Republic as a phase between the two World Wars. The Nazi era shrouds everything almost beyond recognition. Our knowledge is filled with clichés. The silent films of the twenties are followed up by the hysteria of the thirties. You were born at the end of World War I, during the time period that seems so distant to us. We have certain images of the First World War: Karl Liebknecht on the Palace balcony, the November Revolution, the proletariat in revolt, the haute bourgeoisie-class conflict- right out of the picture books. Do you understand what we mean?

Mosse: Yes, that era is very difficult to put in perspective today. You might think that what I am about to say sounds snobbish, but here are the facts. From my earliest childhood I had my own chauffeur and automobile. Naturally, as an infant, one had a nursemaid, then an English governess, followed by a French one. The sequence depended upon what direction the training would take. I had first the French one and then the English one. During the student protests of the sixties a student once said to me, "My God, George, you must have really oppressed your servants during your childhood and youth." Of course that was not the case because the servants considered themselves part of the family and were treated that way to a certain degree. It was similar in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. For example, the servants were the ones who saved anything we were able to salvage from the Nazis (who had confiscated everything of ours and also of our friends). They risked their lives for us. I shall never forget that. In our circles most people had many servants. Until 1933 my mother had never dressed herself, the lady's maid did it for her; what are they called today? Attendants? Au-pairs? It all seems so long ago now. Moreover, my mother could not even boil an egg, but she was able to manage a huge household, with all the social events and dinners with ten waiters. That way of life has all but disappeared today, but historically it is very interesting. One could throw all those galas and dinners because one had servants. In those days, waiters catered our meals, and we children were often on bad behavior. My brother Rudolf was six years older than I. He always pestered me. We would race up the stairs, to the bedroom or wherever, and if I was first, he would say, "Dirt before the broom." If I would lose, he would say, "The servant follows the master." And did we ever fight! My sister Hilde was seven years older than I. But nobody really cares about these stories from back then.

Runge/Stelbrink: Please go on. What did the servants do when you fought?

Mosse: What? We had an English governess, a very nice person, but she had no idea how to discipline a naughty boy like me.

Runge/Stelbrink: Apparently you were a problem child who had to be trained to fit his social role. Were values more clearly defined then than now?

Mosse: Yes, and in the boarding schools discipline was very important; that was their advantage. No, I was rebellious mostly before my boarding school years, but I still behaved wildly whenever I went home. We had many governesses, and all of them quit. Today I can

laugh about all those things that were really quite sad at the time. The finest prank I pulled was this one: since 1930 we had had an alarm system in our house, something very common nowadays, but we were truly in peril and needed it. We had buttons on the wall to call security. So once I pushed them while my sister was lying in the bathtub. My father was having his shave downstairs, and the police stormed in, past him, through my room, and straight into the bathroom where my sister was bathing. That was my best trick. Hilde and my father never forgot it. My father never shaved himself, he had Mr. Zaske come every morning, and on that day he cut my father because of all the commotion.

Runge/Stelbrink: Your sister Hilde became a famous psychoanalyst in the United States. She worked mostly with children from poor families, with black children, specializing in reading and writing problems, dyslexia . . .

Mosse: That's right. She was a girl from a rich family and she had a feeling of social responsibility. She was the only one in the family who really thought in those terms, and she was a very interesting woman. Against my parents' wishes she got involved in a left-wing youth group, the Train Gang, working class youngsters from the north side of Berlin, from Wedding. I can still clearly remember when she told my father at dinner (it must have been in the early thirties) that young workers with Nazi swords would come to the Train Gang's meetings.

Runge/Stelbrink: We'll return later to discussion of your sister. You are related to the Ullsteins. What was the relationship? Weren't you actually competitors?

Mosse: But not socially! We visited each other often. As I mentioned earlier, my great grandfather had 13 brothers and sisters. One niece married Hermann Ullstein. Moreover, my mother was actually my grandparents' adopted child, but she wasn't told that until she married. That was considered traumatic in those days. Maybe she was the result of my grandfather's affair, and of course my grandmother treated her badly. The other affair was my great grandmother's, when my great grandfather had been in prison from the revolt against Prussia. But I've already told you about that.

Runge/Stelbrink: At the very beginning you mentioned Schenkendorf. Why did your family have a country estate in addition to a home in Berlin?

Mosse: Nearly everyone in the haute-bourgeoisie had a country estate, usually a manor. Do you know why? Many wealthy Jews bought the nobility's estates so that the word "noble manor" could be on their calling card. The title was all part of it; it was almost considered a title of nobility in those days. It was part of the Jews' desired integration. Today it is an element of a long lost world, so distant, that I experience no feelings of attachment when I return to Schenkendorf, where I had spent so many wonderful hours in my youth. Nor do I have sentimental feelings anymore when I return to Berlin. My grandfather, who loved to hunt, purchased Schenkendorf around 1900. On his calling card it said "noble manor" and "Dr. hc.": he had received the title from the University of Heidelberg. Schenkendorf spread over about 8,000 acres including the surrounding area. The village itself was economically depressed; it had been a coal mining town, but most mines were closed around 1890. The population still

left worked at Siemens, the largest employer; our estate was the second largest. In the park alone we employed fifty to sixty gardeners, and even more in farming. You know it is not a very large town.

Runge/Stelbrink: That means the family lived from the farming and from the town? But the upkeep of such a large park must also have been very expensive, wasn't that so?

Mosse: Schenkendorf was an unfertile hole, I believe it was probably never worth it. But it wasn't so bad if you had enough money. The conditions were quite different from today. Between 1930 and 1933 the village, as far as I recall, was half Nazi and half Communist, on account of the hopeless situation. In appearance, not much has changed from those days, as is often the case in former East Germany: The same houses, the same cobblestone streets.

Runge/Stelbrink: And even the same political polarization?

Mosse: That changed during the years of East Germany. Now everyone is hoping for an improvement and wonders what will happen with the estate. I do not own it now, but the question remains of what to do with it. There is a lot of interest in it, justifiably so, because it could potentially bring much-needed income to the town. The East German army had been using it. Now the village needs investment. It has a capable young mayor who makes a good impression, but there is no money for investment. The only factory, what was once our factory, has been reduced to half capacity. I don't know why. There is also a collectivized farm, but it has been nearly completely shut down. When I was there a few years ago, it had several thousand geese and was full of life; but now it is completely barren, and the farm seems abandoned.

Runge/Stelbrink: The name Mosse is said to have a good reputation in the village even to this day. After all, not only did your father donate the church clock tower, but the townspeople were also helped during the inflation crisis by your family's soup kitchens and other activities. Older people in Schenkendorf still remember that. Your father was a philanthropist, but philanthropy was non-existent in former East Germany . . .

Mosse: But in those days people knew about it. Even my grandfather was not only a successful publisher, but also a philanthropist who opened the Mosse Foundation in 1895, at what is now Rudolf Mosse Platz in the Wilmersdorf section of Berlin. This foundation operated an orphanage. Originally it cared for 50 percent Christian and 50 percent Jewish children, but afterwards it was independent of the children's religion. It is normal for the liberal Jewish bourgeoisie to be open to all religions, but at that time period it was considered somewhat unusual. Later on, after the Second World War, half of it was turned into a children's hospital, and the other half became dormitories for apprentices. I believe it is still that way today, funded by the town government. The other foundation my grandfather established was a home for workers, no, that was my father. My grandfather also founded an orphanage somewhere in the countryside. So they were very active philanthropists. My grandmother Emilie founded the Berlin Girl's Home, for fallen girls and young women, as they were called back then. It was for unwed mothers. I am not exactly sure how it was administered. My grandmother and then my mother were its presidents. Each district had one, administered by ladies from the haute

bourgeoisie. My grandmother received the "Pour le Merite" award from the Kaiser: it was a high honor.

Runge/Stelbrink: Why was it so important for liberal Jews to work in philanthropy; in other words, not just for their own people, for poor Jews, but also for the common good?

Mosse: Yes, that is a good question. It must have been important because of the prestige -- it was especially important for the Jews towards achieving integration, and it was part of their liberalism, the legacy of the enlightenment they upheld. All the wealthier Jews donated and contributed and established foundations, even, for example, the chairs of Deutsche Bank and Dresdner Bank. You can read about it in my cousin's Werner Mosse's book on the German-Jewish elites. My grandfather belonged to it. With a mere 90 million gold marks he was one of the poor among the rich. Philanthropy was part of the Jewish tradition. But wealthy non-Jews were philanthropic too. As for the church clock tower in Schenkendorf, my name and my sister's name are engraved on it. Mine still works today; the one for my sister was melted down for the war effort. I still remember the ceremony for the clock tower's dedication, with superintendents and my parents in attendance. In a certain sense we were the lords, but at the same time, we were not. The village was too political, and some people complained.

Runge/Stelbrink: What was the reaction of the Jewish haute-bourgeoisie before 1933, during the street battles and demonstrations?

Mosse: There was no reaction, nobody went out on the streets; that would have been out of the question- one just did not do it. Most were in the Democratic Party, and then the State Party, as long as it existed; that was how one was politically active.

Runge/Stelbrink: Hitler's plans could be read in "Mein Kampf" where it was all laid out. Why was it not taken seriously?

Mosse: But no, nobody from our circles believed a word of that book. My father always said that the only place for Hitler was in the "Ulk," on the comic page of our newspaper. Later as a historian I often read "Mein Kampf," I had to. It is partly autobiographical and partly ideological. I do not even know whether it impressed people back then. The book is written from the perspective of the First World War; experiences from the war play a significant part in it . . .

Runge/Stelbrink: That made the book so popular? We shall return to the Hitler years a bit later. We read that Kurt Tucholsky edited the "Ulk" section for a short time in 1919. But now back to your family and to Maassen Strasse on Nollendorfplatz, where your family's city villa was. Your grandparents' home with the gallery and library was on Potsdamer Platz, on Leipziger Platz, to be exact, which no longer exists. Can you tell us a bit about the Maassen Strasse house?

Mosse: My father had a large concert hall built on Maassen Strasse, where famous musicians performed. It was the era when the so-called house concerts were popular, and the first floor had the exhibit rooms and the dining room. The second floors were the family rooms and the

children's play rooms; the children's bedrooms were on the third floor, and the servants lived in the attic. It was basically the same in the Schenkendorf villa, the same number of servants, although it was much larger than the house on Maassen Strasse. There is a funny little story about it my father used to tell. He ran across a young girl on the stairs in the Maassen Strasse house and asked her what she was doing there. She replied that she was the kitchen maid. He had never seen her before. Of course, the same sort of thing could have happened to him at the publishing house too . . .

Runge/Stelbrink: In East Berlin there was a small privately-owned photography and film store that is still in business. It sells old photographs, including one of the Mosse publishing building, and you can clearly see bullet-holes on its side . . .

Mosse: I do not know whether you are aware of it or not, but during the Spartacists' revolts the Mosse building was occupied and became one of their centers of activity. My grandfather, who was at least 70 years old then, had complained, and my father ran down to the office to salvage what he could. I still can imagine him sitting down there and Rosa Luxemburg arriving and them conversing the whole night through, with the "Berliner Tageblatt" being printed and delivered, in spite of attempts by the Spartacists to prohibit it. That was probably the conversation that resulted in his invitation to Russia. My father did send photographers to Russia, to the early Soviet Union. But perhaps he was only invited because of who he was.

Runge/Stelbrink: Which other relations were there with the emerging Soviet Union?

Mosse: I still recall one time when I was misbehaving and came running into the large dining hall, and a gentleman in a suit was sitting in the front hallway. My governess whispered to me that it was the Russian Foreign Minister Chicherin. I stood there, in all my audacity, and said, "What, a Bolshevik in a suit?" He was visiting us for dinner. The emergent Soviet Union fascinated my father. He was naturally enthusiastic about everything that was modern, he supported Hindemith and Mendelssohn and Hubermann, and the Soviet Union; for him, they were all one and the same thing. But of course no connection was made between all that and Communism in Germany. He himself went to the Soviet Union only once.

Runge/Stelbrink: If the first Foreign Minister of the Soviet Union visited your home, then surely Rathenau also visited . . .

Mosse: Yes, of course, but he was an old friend of the family anyway. I vaguely remember the time my mother took me to visit Mrs. Rathenau at their villa, to extend our sympathies- that must have been 1922, I believe, yes, I was four years old. I mean of course Rathenau's mother, you know he was not married. My cousin Werner wrote that book I mentioned before about all those people; about the members of the Jewish haute bourgeoisie, very wealthy, very refined, and they all knew each other. It just occurs to me to mention Otto Nutschke, although he wasn't in that elite, the famous Nutschke of East Germany, he was one of our editors. Later I spoke with him. He was the head editor of the "Volkszeitung," a newspaper mostly for the working class, actually it was a rather unsubstantial paper, it was not often cited, rather a left-wing local color paper; Mehring was the founder. But now I am unsure how that is all related. Theodor Wolff represented the typical liberal head editor of the "Tageblatt." By the way, he was never

invited to my grandfather's home, even though he was a relative. Do you know why? He had married an actress. Today I would say that he outlived his effectiveness—that he should have stepped down after the First World War. That was his great era. As early as the Wilhelminian era the "Tageblatt" was a much-hated paper. I believe that during the later years Wolff lost an understanding of mass movements and such mass movement politics as the Nazis. That was his generation's tragedy, the tragedy of well-educated and liberal Jews.

Runge/Stelbrink: Theodor Wolff must have been a very interesting contemporary—did you know he also wrote plays? The Nazis had him arrested by the Gestapo in 1934 in France, whereupon he was sent to Sachsenhausen and died in 1945 in the Jewish Hospital of Berlin, after the liberation. He is also buried in the Jewish cemetery on Weissensee. Back to your family's history: your family supported reformed Judaism in Berlin whose services were in German and on Sundays. Today there is not even a hint of those ideas around. Could you please tell us a bit about your experiences as a Jew from that time?

Mosse: What should I say? Traditionally, to be German, Jewish and liberal meant supporting tolerance, individual freedom. All of them tended to favor the Republic. Yet my grandfather received the title of nobility. Economic freedom, freedom of the press, freedom of thought -- that was what it was all about. My parent's generation lived by the ideals of the Enlightenment. To them, orthodoxy was something from the dark ages. Within Judaism they were all reformed, and reformed Judaism had become completely Germanized. And by the end many Jewish bankers, business people and the "Verein deutsch-nationaler Juden" were reformed Jews. My father always said that synagogue music was bad, so he rented the Berlin Philharmonic with such singers as Josef Schmidt and Alexander Kipnis, and a new liturgy in the Reformed congregation was recorded and sold as records. Then there was the reformed prayer book. Much of the liturgy was from Levandovsky who had been influenced in the mid-nineteenth century by Mozart, Brahms, and Beethoven. He was Schumann's student, hence from the German Romantic tradition. Every German could understand the service. There was music, a chorus and an organ. There were no robes. Even as early as my father and his generation, robes were considered something exotic. That is how you have to imagine it. The congregation's rabbi was Rabbi Lehmann, a great figure within the reform movement. The radicals back then were in the reformed wing.

Runge/Stelbrink: There have been claims made that the concept of Weimar was in reality an intra-Jewish dialogue. German-Jewish identity is a product of the nineteenth century. Today in Germany it seems that there is no common thread, probably because the Holocaust wiped away that historical dimension . . .

Mosse: Yes, you must follow it back to the nineteenth century, for the Jews were emancipated and integrated into the German bourgeoisie. Education was very important. The German bourgeoisie defined itself through education. But what exactly was that? In Humboldt's time, in Goethe's time, education was something quite individualistic. It was an inner process, and rationality was thought to be something that was formed. Education and enlightenment went together; religion and other distinctions did not matter, as long as one educated oneself. It was a process, not an end result that it became later, when one goes to universities and comes out with what is called an education. If Jews educated themselves, they believed they could

become full-fledged members of the society and would gain acceptance. Classical literature was a symbol of that education, and that was true for Jews as well. Auerbach said that whereas before religion was important, now it was education. The symbol of Jewish emancipation was friendship between scholars, it was the friendship of Mendelssohn and Lessing, educated discourse and dialogue carried out in the salons. The German Jews' "Magna Carta" was "Nathan the Wise," as it exemplified a new tolerant, educated identity. There was a virtual Lessing cult among German Jews, nobody knows about all that anymore. Kurt Blumenfeld, leader of the German Zionists, said in the thirties, "The Jew who understands German culture is most likely to come to a Jewish national consciousness." Or what about Walter Benjamin, who wrote that it is primarily by studying Goethe that one finds one's true Judaism. One half of the Goethe Society in Berlin was Jewish. German Jewish emancipation had always been connected with Goethe, Schiller, and Lessing. For example, recall the Left intellectuals in the twenties, the tradition that tried to humanize Marxism. I am also speaking about Ernst Bloch. For Toller, for example, socialism made the ideal of humanity something concrete as long as it was based on the Enlightenment. Socialist children of Jews were often kicked out of the house, but they actually had a lot in common with their liberal parents. They were open to new ideas in the society, to experiments. Education was a process, not a finished product, and the same was true for socialism. Bolshevism had forgotten the Hegelian aspect of Marx. Why did so many Jews in Germany always support the avant-garde? Who went to Brecht plays? Certainly not the working class! It occurred because one was open to new impulses in the culture. Reformed Judaism definitely was open to that, as early as the mid-nineteenth century, even the famous orthodox Rabbis Nobel and Hirsch held to the ideals of education. The very first performance in the theater of the newly founded Jewish League of Culture under the Nazis in 1933 was, I hardly dare say it, "Nathan the Wise." As you know, at the end of the play, the Christian, the Muslim and the Jew all leave together. But in the 1933 performance, the Christian and the Muslim left, but the Jew stayed back. It was a valiant protest. In 1936 the Jewish League of Culture made a public declaration, on the 100th anniversary of Humboldt's death, that they would never lose the spirit of Humboldt. The attempt was always to humanize more, even to humanize the Nazis. Such Zionists as Buber and Robert Weltsch wanted not only to establish a bi-national state in Palestine, but they also said that nationalism can only be a step on the way to humanity. Then many of those people left Palestine in 1948 because they became disillusioned with the state, not many people know that today either. They were for the most part western Zionists, and you know Buber died in inner exile.

Culture was important to my parents' generation. For the German-Jewish tradition, politics was considered secondary. That is why they never understood mass movements. It was said that Hitler was not refined and that such a man could never become the leader of Germany of Goethe and Beethoven. The things that Adorno and Horkheimer wrote about National Socialism can make your hair stand on end. They understood nothing about popular culture, nothing at all, they considered mass culture a form of oppression and stultification; but the driving force behind it was something they never comprehended.

Runge/Stelbrink: What part did Zionism play in your childhood? How was it then; was one a German Jew or a Jew in Germany?

Mosse: Both. By the way, the Reformed movement was utterly anti-Zionist in leaning. The "Berliner Tageblatt" was also anti-Zionist, although in other cases it was very tolerant. Today Zionist ideas are very important, so that people do not realize how it was during earlier periods. We felt like Germans and Jews and did not perceive any contradiction in those feelings. There was not even any notion of a paradox, at least not until the rise of the Nazis, until around 1930. After all, we were assimilated.

Anti-Semitism became more noticeable beginning in 1928. Police guards stood in front of the synagogues. Of course that left quite an impression on a child. After that it got worse and worse. The growing anti-Semitism and increasing hatred directed toward Jews made it very difficult for such good liberals as my father. Of course they were anti-Zionists. Until Hitler's time Zionism was not even seriously considered within bourgeois circles, I repeat, within bourgeois circles. There were exceptions, but the exceptions were considered to be weird. When I was 14 or 15 I suddenly decided to become a rabbi. Moreover I naturally also wanted to be a Zionist. What did my father do? He had me chauffeured to the "Scheunenviertel," to the non-assimilated eastern European Jewish neighborhood. Then he asked me whether I wanted to become like them, and of course I said I did not. That is all that became of the idea. Here, today, it is hard to imagine, but that is exactly how it was. Yet there was also a certain admiration back then for the eastern European Jews. I remember my father coming home once and saying, "Do you know what happened today? Two beggars from Poland came into the office!" So that was the eastern European Jewish issue. But of course there is also another side. My mother had a stand in the Anhalter train station where many eastern European Jewish refugees arrived after the war: she gave them coffee and tea and whatever else. All in all, and I guess that is what you were asking, the Jewish haute-bourgeoisie was put in a difficult intellectual position by Hitler's rise to power.

Runge/Stelbrink: Actually, you are describing a loss of security that had been expected. For integrated German Jews, hope for assimilation and equal rights collapsed with Hitler. The loss must have been immense, for Jews had been excluded entirely from the new German change in values, even if they viewed themselves as German patriots, were baptized, or whatever!

Mosse: Yes, of course. One must ask what the Jewish bourgeoisie's ideal was. It was France, that too is forgotten today. France was, for my parents' generation, nearly the Promised Land, strange, seen from today's perspective. Because France was also the home of anti-Semitism, but the Jews did not wish to see it that way then, in spite of the Dreyfus affair. France, that was the country of the Enlightenment and ratio. It was thought to be a messianic event that Dreyfus was cleared. Liberal Germans shared the admiration of France; Heinrich Mann comes to mind. We experienced it quite differently as emigrants-that "promised land." Anti-Semitism had simply been overlooked.

Runge/Stelbrink: What was your experience with the rising anti-Semitism that eventually led to your early, even timely flight?

Mosse: I can only say that until about 1930 (I was at boarding school at the time) life was relatively normal. Until 1930 Hitler was out of the picture. And what do you mean by anti-Semitism? Udet, for example, was one of the friends of our family, but he later under Göring

was in charge of Air Force research. He always came with his beautiful, White Russian girl-friend. Of course no Nazis were among our friends. But someone like Udet did not consider himself a Nazi, he was a German nationalist. Such people as Admiral Dönhoff, the last Chancellor during the collapse, would pay us visits. Newspaper publishers have a lot to do with people in public life.

My father was actually unpolitical, as I think back now, and the times were difficult financially. We only would have to print one page every day claiming to be in favor of Brüning, he told us, and we would need to do no more. Of course I noticed the changes the growing anti-Semitism brought about, in the boarding school too. My father came with the woman who later became my step-mother, that is, his later second wife, every four weeks, it seemed, to Lake Constance, not really to visit, but because yet again the "Berliner Tageblatt" had been closed down by the governments that increasingly were leaning toward the National Socialists. Then there were demonstrations in front of our house in Berlin, everything was organized, they shouted anti-Jewish slogans-that was hard for a child. The worst thing was when the German newspapers turned on my father and claimed he engaged in underhanded business dealings, was disloyal, etc. That is why to this day I sympathize with children of politicians who are attacked in the press, regardless of whether it is justified. February, March, April 1933, when the newspapers started printing that, then sent it to us; of course, with all those charges-it was very difficult to bear. All imaginable bad things were attributed to my father. I was very young, just 15, of course one does not know at such a young age what is going on and thinks that if it is in the paper it must be true. The newspapers did not attack my mother very much, but she was beaten outside on the sidewalk. During the demonstrations our windows were shattered, not only once, but many times, and we children were sent away then. We were too exposed to all of that. The "Berliner Tageblatt" never wavered in its anti-Nazi stance until 1933. Therefore, Hitler always preached against the Mosses. He hated the Mosses. The Nazis were everywhere. The same tactics were used in our business as in many others: the Nazi insider in our publishing house was the elevator operator, the doorman-after 1933 he ascended to an important position in the Nazi organization. My father was then pressured to sign over the business to a foundation controlled by the Nazis, they threatened him with a pistol. The Nazis merely camouflaged the fact that it was expropriation by having it appear as a transfer of ownership.

Runge/Stelbrink: From today's standpoint that fact is especially important, because in the legal challenges for East German property the argument has often been made that Jewish property was voluntarily transferred to non-Jews.

Mosse: In West Germany, that is asserted again and again, but it is a blatant lie. Opportunistically, Nazi strategies are being unquestioningly believed. In January 1933 they got us. My father then left for Paris, but he was ordered back by Göring. That is an interesting episode. Göring had said, Mr. Mosse, you must return, otherwise your former Jewish colleagues will be locked up. So my father went back. That was a very brave thing to do. I have read that he was to have been murdered then because he would not go along with it. Göring had offered him the opportunity to "aryanize" . . .

Runge/Stelbrink: Nobody in the former East Germany ever spoke about that chapter. And according to the Nazi's biological theories, that would not have been possible, unless they would have switched his blood. What were the real reasons your father was called back? Was one of them his reputation-that the Nazis wanted to enhance their esteem through your father?

Mosse: That is an interesting thought. No, it was not a matter of reputation. Why did Göring want to see him? The excuse was that he was supposed to testify against the S.A. leader who had presided over the "transfer of ownership" of the publishing house and had embezzled large amounts of money in the process. But we can only guess about the real reasons, there is no proof. The best theory would be that Göring wanted to use the Mosse Advertising Agency, which was based all over Europe, as a kind of headquarters for espionage. Perhaps my father's fame was secondary. But there is something else. I have seen the correspondence between Theodor Wolff and Goebbels. Goebbels had ordered Wolff to return to Germany. Imagine that, it was the end of 1933. Wolff did not bluntly turn down the offer. It is necessary to see things the way they really were, not with our vantage point of today: the Nazis came to power and boom, that was it. First of all they had put on the mask of respectability, so that even a Theodor Wolff apparently seriously considered returning to the country from exile.

Runge/Stelbrink: But if the Nazis already had the Mosse's property in their hands, why did they need your father to begin a headquarters for espionage?

Mosse: We had retained the foreign branches of the business-they had remained ours. The largest was in Switzerland; the largest Swiss advertising agency. From the Zurich office, the other foreign branches were administered, the ones in Prague, Poland, Yugoslavia, Rumania, Paris, all of them.

Runge/Stelbrink: How did you finally leave Germany?

Mosse: That is another long story. My parents left right away, my brother and my sister too. But the headmaster of my boarding school, the Schloss Hermannsberg school on Lake Constance, refused to let me go. My parents' had implored her, but she said that Gerhard (that was my name) must first pass his exam. That woman was very fair. She was even laid off for a time. Do you know why? As I later heard, it was because she had refused to teach Hitler's "Mein Kampf" on the grounds that it was in poor German. She really was one of those typical Protestants. She also refused to take the oath required at that time for all teachers in the Reich. Not because she was in any way political. Thus she was unable to understand my parents' concern. At that time in Germany there was a so-called a "clearance stamp." One needed it after a certain date to be able to leave the country. I had never received it. So how was I able to leave? After my final exam I took the ferry to Switzerland. For better or worse, it was on the evening when Hitler had broadcast another speech against the Mosses. So I got on the last ferry for which one still did not need one of those stamps. After midnight one would have been necessary. Thus, the German obsession for order and punctuality is what saved me. "Sturmabteilung" (SA) guards were standing guard in front of the ferry. They were everywhere in those days. So I showed my passport, and they all looked at it, for they had just heard all about the Mosses. But they did not hold me back. It was one half hour before midnight. And that is a very German story.

If it had been one-half hour later, they would have been able to detain me. Well, I guess that was the proverbial German attention to rules, and today, looking back, it seems almost inconceivable.

Runge/Stelbrink: Thus your flight was more like a boat ride, or does it only seem so easy in the act of remembering?

Mosse: It can hardly be called a flight seen from my perspective at that time. Today one imagines a daring adventure, little carts with mounds of books and papers, but in my case it really was not that way at all. As a fifteen-year-old, I was excited to be able to see the world.

Runge/Stelbrink: So you went to Switzerland on that night in 1933. What transpired after that?

Mosse: I stayed in a Swiss boarding school for one year, and then I went to England.

Runge/Stelbrink: Was it usual in those years for a pupil to go from one boarding school to the next? The boarding school on Lake Constance seems to have been more like a punishment than a model school . . .

Mosse: No, no, it was fairly common. Those boarding schools, as we discussed previously, were more than schools. Their model was in England. For example, Salem was for the sons and daughters of the bourgeoisie and for the nobility. Prince Max of Baden owned it. Today in looking back it seems that one went to the boarding school if one's parents were in public office, or if one had a mother who was very civic-minded, or if one was a problem child, as was my case. Of course it was also a matter of prestige to be able to attend Salem or the Odenwaldschule or Wickersdorf. Wickersdorf, by the way, was a progressive model school.

Runge/Stelbrink: What was studied there?

Mosse: In my opinion not much, but then again I was only in elementary school. Studying was not the most important thing. The most important objective at the boarding school was to build the character of the students. The students were given responsibilities, and that was good. A special honor was to be assigned a training schedule where you had to list whether you had successfully completed your daily duties: jogging, cold shower, brushing your teeth. In four years I never once heard of anyone cheating. That was the marvelous thing about the boarding school: cheating was out of the question. Today it is quite common, but back then it was inconceivable. The students did not cheat with their training schedules, even though nobody checked up on it. Shoe polishing was also part of it, and I hated that the most.

Runge/Stelbrink: And the ice-cold shower, did you enjoy that?

Mosse: That is just the way it was done, according to the English model. In England then it was the same. There they also created positions of responsibility for the pupils. I was the room leader, I had to check that everyone went to bed and that their slippers were properly placed . . .

Runge/Stelbrink: That sounds nearly militaristic, a kind of cadet camp for life . . .

Mosse: Oh well, it was good for disciplining oneself. But children can be brutal to one another. When students reached a certain age, they received certain honors and were placed in charge of a whole group. The idea was to have students watch after each other; the children even determined the punishments. In England there is a long tradition of that.

When the Nazis took over, many students had to flee Lake Constance. Prince Philip even had to leave Salem and return to England. From my class, most people died in the war: Hitler had placed the nobility on the front line for the Poland offensive so that they were the first to die. That is why nearly all of them died. Only very few from the boarding school became Nazis. One of them was high-ranking "Staatssicherheitsdienst" (SS). After the war he became a monk, his name no longer matters. He was the one who prayed on the Jewish holidays . . .

Runge/Stelbrink: What? A Jew became an SS man?

Mosse: No, he was not a Jew, he just had a beautiful voice and sang on the Jewish holidays. By the way, we hated to have to be separated out again, even at the boarding school. Salem was not really liberal, more German nationalist, but still anti-Nazi. It took years for me to rid myself of the animosity toward Poland and France that I learned there. It is important to distinguish between the German nationalist and the Nazi atmosphere, because the racist elements were entirely absent in the former.

Runge/Stelbrink: And what became of the other Jewish students?

Mosse: As far as I know, all of them were able to leave in time. But I do not believe that there are any statistics on it.

Runge/Stelbrink: What was your family able to live from while abroad?

Mosse: From the advertising agencies. When Hitler invaded Prague, Poland, and other countries, they were gone too. But we retained the Zurich business.

Runge/Stelbrink: So you were in England, your parents were in France, your brother and sister were studying in Switzerland. At the beginning, what was exile like for you?

Mosse: It is necessary to remember something about German-Jewish culture. France was, as I said before, its point of reference, in spite of the Dreyfus trial and all the rest we knew about it. My family was very oriented toward France. My father was the first to invite a French artist to Berlin after World War One. It was (Mistinguett), it must have been in 1919. The French ambassador also socialized in our circles. He saved my grandmother's life after 1933. We had no difficulty obtaining permission to remain in Paris, neither my father and mother nor my step-mother. My parents were no longer living together then. Relations with France were very close. Not so with England. That was typical for German Jews. With America there was no contact at all. The only thing I knew about America: I had a distant cousin who, I believe it was around 1900, made a social faux-pas and was sent to America. I did not want to go to

America at all. My parents threatened to cut off their support to me unless I went, otherwise I would never have gone. We had no contact with America, not even my father, a publisher . . .

Runge/Stelbrink: Who was your step-mother?

Mosse: Her father was Alfred Bock who was a well-known Hessian homeland poet, one would call it nowadays. A street in Giessen is named after him. They had a large house there, a factory, Bock's cigarette factory, but he was not its director. He was a writer famous in Romantic circles prior to the First World War. His daughter later studied Protestant theology at the university in Berlin. In Berlin my father made her acquaintance. In those days, divorce was considered impossible for those in public life.

Runge/Stelbrink: You emigrated very early. Others recall emigration with sentimentality, with bitterness, with pain. Many Jews still refuse to travel to Berlin and Germany, even for a visit. You make your home in the United States, but if someone wants to get in touch with you, they would be more likely to find you in Jerusalem, London, Amsterdam, Munich, or wherever, sometimes in Berlin . . .

Mosse: You must not forget one thing. We are talking about 1933-1934. Refugees were still considered something unusual in those years. Refugees as we imagined them were the eastern European Jews, and in my day they came mostly due to economic conditions. Today we are used to refugees; one can imagine that someday one could find oneself in the position of refugee. In those days it never would have occurred to anyone to flee, at least not among our acquaintances. And what kind of refugee was one supposed to be, anyway? You could not become French, nor a Brit, and America-that was no-man's land. Where could you set down roots? Back then it was important to have roots. To be without a home country is something very modern, very new. Today I can say that a country is as good as its passport. We learned that in the thirties. We members of the Mosse family really had our citizenship taken from us right at the start!

Runge/Stelbrink: How did you travel when you had your citizenship stripped from you, without a passport?

Mosse: How did we travel? We had Turkish friends, so my mother and my brother were Turks, my father had a passport from Costa Rica or some such place, but now I am no longer certain. We took passports wherever we found them. I had a passport from Luxembourg which had been personally forged by the Minister President. I have saved it to this day. I just have a refugee mentality, and it is something you just cannot rid yourself of. I cannot say that National Socialism ruined my own life, but it committed such horrors on the Jewish people. The Jews learned from that. Some said in those years they no longer needed roots, but most still searched for new ones. One was always in trains that were departing, and those were the exile years, and that is why I shall always remain the eternal emigrant.

Runge/Stelbrink: That sounds like an arrangement with reality that nobody would choose but from which people find their own strategies for coping to survive, until they someday return to the tempting state of normalcy. You chose the political route . . .

Mosse: The change was simply too great and I was too young to be able to deal with it all. You see, my political awakening began, and this is true for many from my generation, with the Spanish Civil War; that is, neither with the inflationary years nor with the beginning of Nazism. Both of those events actually passed me by. During that time I would not have been able to do anything against the Nazis anyway. But the Civil War in Spain seemed like a chance to be able to struggle against the Nazis. Back then we thought, when I was living in England, that there was a real opportunity to work against fascism, and we worked for the republicans. Of course we did not know what was really going on in Spain. We became aware because we saw the struggle as the chance to become politically active. During my childhood in Berlin I was for the most part politically passive, although I still have a lot of memories of political events. I witnessed the riots in Paris in 1935 on the Place des Concorde started by the right. But in Spain it was more than riots: it was all-out war. In Cambridge we made a wreath with a ribbon that we wanted to place at the War Memorial, and it read "Stop fascism and imperialism." The police said that if we cut out the word "imperialism" we could display it, but we refused . . .

Runge/Stelbrink: Did your family become politically active later as a reaction to the events? Indeed, your sister was close to the Trotskyites . . .

Mosse: Yes, but she never talked much about those things with us. Her political views were not discussed much. At first my sister voted for the Social Democrats; later, as far as I know, for the Communists, but thank God she did not say so, it would have been a scandal. When she said that she voted for the Social Democrats, my mother started talking about illegitimate children and my father threatened her with a shared toothbrush. Do you know why a toothbrush? That was the only personal thing that the bourgeoisie could mention that was respectable. You could not threaten with a change of underwear. So Communists shared toothbrushes. In spite of that, my father still said that Rosa Luxemburg was the most interesting woman he had ever met. Those are the contradictions one needs to consider. And the family? In 1934, after the Röhm affair, when I arrived from England, my father, beaming, met me at the train station in Paris and said now that it was all over, we were returning home. Some time after that my sister left for America, where she completed her medical schooling. My father also had to go to America in 1939, and I had to go along. I was not yet 21 years old and had to go on my father's visa before my birthday. I visited my sister. She called me on the telephone in the middle of the night. She said that the Germans had attacked Poland. I answered that there was no use in getting so upset about it, and went back to sleep.

Runge/Stelbrink: Thus the war was the real reason for your going to America?

Mosse: No, the war was a reason to stay in America. But that again is another story altogether. So I stayed, but because I was a student in England, I could also have been able to return to England. But the war had begun. My sister was there, and I had little money. My boarding school in England had been run by Quakers, and so I spent all the money I had left to travel to Philadelphia, the city founded by Quakers. I told the taxicab driver to take me to a Quaker meeting center. So he drove me to a Quaker boarding school, and they recommended Haverford College to me. There I went to see the president of the school, he still spoke English

with a Quaker dialect, and I told him, "Here I am." ("We will accept thee"). He saved me, so to speak. After all, we had no money . . .

Runge/Stelbrink: Why didn't you have any money; the Zurich office must have kept the business going?

Mosse: The money was in France or Switzerland. At the start of the war we had been totally cut off from the money. At least I did not have a single penny. Later I was able to have money transferred to me. When the war started, my brother, mother and step-mother all came to the United States. At that time it was still possible to travel through unoccupied France to Portugal. So that is how they got out, yes, in 1940. My father and step-brother were still in France. Here is another story about how my father was saved. He had some kind of letter of thanks from the American Foreign Minister Cordell Hull. The Nazis thought it was an official document and let him go. So they also came, quite late, in 1941, also by way of Portugal. They then settled in Berkeley, California, and my mother and sister settled in New York. I was in Philadelphia.

Runge/Stelbrink: Did you have any idea of your future, in those days?

Mosse: It is rather difficult to describe. In 1933 I was happy to leave Germany, I was in seventh heaven. It had been my first trip to Paris, and that was much more important to me than all the political reasons. I never imagined that I would never return. Everyone thought the whole mess would be over after one winter, nobody even took anything with them. Do not forget that in 1935 some 5,000 Jews returned to Germany. Do you know that? They went back because they thought they could live with the racist Nuremberg laws. They were unable to see long-term to the future. With our hindsight we must not judge them- that was just the atmosphere at the time.

Runge/Stelbrink: You were in the United States for the duration of the war. What did you know about the events in Europe, what was happening in Germany, and above all what was happening to the Jews?

Mosse: During the Kristallnacht I was in England. Everything still seemed very close to home to me then. That event politicized me. People got involved, in America too, and during the war German emigrants were enlisted . . .

Runge/Stelbrink: We have heard said that in spite of all the information, the developments in Germany were not taken seriously in the United States until the first photographs from Auschwitz had been published. But they did not appear until after the liberation by the Soviet Army, at the end of the war. Would you confirm that?

Mosse: Yes, that is nearly correct. Among the Jews then there was great controversy about Zionism that turned strongly against England as the mandate for Palestine. I held the opinion- as did many of my friends- that we had to support England against Germany. The war against Germany was important, nothing else. Many emigrants thought the same thing.

Runge/Stelbrink: And the deportations, the persecution and expelling of Jews, those were things that you experienced yourself. Did you have any idea that it would escalate to such an extent?

Mosse: I felt it, but I was not able to imagine it. Very little about it became public knowledge. The people who escaped were isolated cases, unable to reach a larger public with the news. Of what was really going on there, the genocide of the Jews, we refugees were more likely to have an idea than others who knew more and had more sources. We struggled to get more out and on their way to the United States- that was important. Because until quite late in the war it was still possible for Jews to leave.

Runge/Stelbrink: The war, the end of the war, the Cold War, Stalinism, McCarthyism . . . How did leftist intellectuals live under those historical events?

Mosse: Oh, we knew a lot about them, there is no question of that. At least for me it was rather clear. But my relation to these historical crises was quite ambivalent. The trigger for my generation's political awakening was the Spanish Civil War, yes, I reiterate, we are the Spanish Civil War generation. That means that our political awakening occurred on the left, with the Socialists. We were all members of the Socialist Club in Cambridge and we all wanted more than anything else to fight in Spain, even those who had signed the petitions for peace. We all signed them, and suddenly we were considered Communists. Those petitions and the signatures were to play a rather significant part later on, during the McCarthy years. Indeed, with our minds filled with those socialist ideas, we observed the development in the Soviet Union. Surely one was aware of some of the reports of tyranny there, but failed to recognize the whole picture. We simply did not believe many of the reports. You see, we had been cornered into the extreme left by our engagement for the Spanish Republic; the hatred of Communists flourished in the postwar years. The Soviet Union had achieved greatness by defeating the Hitler's Germany. Thus we underestimated the Stalinist structures in place in the Soviet Union, all the excesses, the terror, the gulags, all of that. I believe that many intellectuals from those years, many of them, would say the same thing today. For our feeling was that the danger always came from the right, and I think that was reasonable. McCarthy is also partly to blame for our complete misunderstanding of the real situation in the Soviet Union.

Runge/Stelbrink: But what did McCarthy mean in fact? To a certain degree, in the former East Germany McCarthy was a code word one could use to discuss and evaluate the domestic situation in the United States without having to be explicit.

Mosse: Well yes, that too is overestimated. McCarthy was not America, only a minority supported him . . . You see, during those years I taught in the state of Iowa, that does not mean much to you: it is in the middle of America, and was -- back then at any rate -- an agricultural state and hence very conservative. I got involved in politics and had organized an anti-McCarthy meeting right during the middle of the McCarthy years. The featured speaker for the meeting was none less than the treasurer of the Republican Party in Iowa. Therefore you see that the lines were not clearly drawn as it is often described today. McCarthy was a radical to many conservatives, a destructive radical, and I believe that was his downfall: Less due to the

Left than the Right, because he was even too radical for them, too anti-democratic. I never had any problems in spite of my activity. Back then I even helped organize the Wallace campaign, that was in 1948, the election campaign for Henry Wallace. Can't remember him, right? He was running as a left liberal against Truman. Dewey was the Republican. Wallace was far left: friendly towards Russia, in favor of nuclear disarmament, etc. Back then that was a sensation! I worked on his campaign, organizing for the election. I had not yet gained tenure at the University of Iowa, so it was fairly risky. But the president of the university said I could go ahead, that it did not matter. Yes, and then there was that singing candidate for Vice President under Wallace, a singing cowboy by the name of Taylor. Well, he came to my home and sang! Imagine if you will, a little politics, a little youthfulness, a little leftist nostalgia -- no, no, I was just lucky. Something that happened somewhat later could also have brought me problems. There were no classes held at Harvard on Marxism-Leninism, so we went over to MIT to study Marxism under Dirk Struik. We were all later denounced. Many of my colleagues had an awful time of it, some were nearly fired. I, on the other hand, had no problems in my conservative state of Iowa. Yet it was a serious matter. I could have had my American citizenship revoked. Yes, that was my McCarthy experience.

Runge/Stelbrink: So that was your McCarthy experience. What about the political influence of the others- the people from the Spanish Civil War for example? The Lincoln brigade people must have been able to exercise considerable authority. But such influence has not really been apparent in the two major parties.

Mosse: No. Even those of us on the left, the former Spanish Civil War sympathizers, had no chance to effect political change within a party. We had real influence neither in America nor in England. Most of those who fought in the Spanish Civil War were Communists, often members of the Communist Party of their respective countries; the rest were left liberals. The statistics bear that out. Spain was important for us because it was the first chance to do political battle with fascism. The Soviet Union's solid engagement for Spain was a reason for our sympathies with Russia, which remained even through the years after the war. One must not forget that at first the Soviet Union was the only country to consistently stand up to fascism, at least until the Hitler-Stalin pact. That came as an immense shock to us.

Runge/Stelbrink: We have suppressed the truth about that for a long time. That is why the gulag was turned into Solzhenitsyn's invention. For example, many of us have just had the opportunity to read Leonhardt's book "The Revolution Is Leaving Its Children." From inside the Soviet Union itself, since Gorbachev's years, we had heard facts and more facts, and yet justifications were still sought . . .

Mosse: Excuse me, but one actually thought that everything in the Soviet Union was only good? But you could see television from the west . . .

Runge/Stelbrink: Yes, we had western television. On East German television, these topics remained more than taboo -- even to the very end. Reports we saw on television from the west we were not completely ready to accept as fact; but that is surely our own problem.

Mosse: During our time there was good reason to defend the Soviet Union. Until the Nonaggression Pact, we were sure who the enemy was, and whoever took a position against the Soviet Union was a fascist.

Runge/Stelbrink: Yes, and later Cold War began, and new enemies were found. In former East Germany, an Ernst Thalmann aphorism went something to the effect that one's relation to the Soviet Union was the litmus test for any true Communist. We were raised with those ideas.

Mosse: And you believed them?

Runge/Stelbrink: Well, a lot of what was happening in the Soviet Union, the complicated economic situation, even the political conditions, were excused as resulting from the costs of the war and the expense of rearmament, and as a result of the history of that great country, of its special mentality. We probably needed that kind of modified image of the Soviet Union. Perhaps later just to be careful we no longer even asked questions anymore. We knew old comrades who had been in the Soviet Union, even in the gulags, but they either tried to justify it, or simply said nothing at all right to the end. Maybe they feared that if they did, their own worldview might be shaken? And when they returned from the Soviet Union, we always asked them how everything was with "our friends."

Mosse: One would rather not know the excuses for those things. We even had our "sins" in that regard. I have already mentioned that our enemy at that time was clear cut. Moreover, for me was the fact that my father had always spoken of the great experiment whenever he spoke of Russia. That left a deep impression on me. As I said- until the Hitler-Stalin pact. That was the major turning point. Later we learned what was really going on in that country, and even how contradictory the Spanish Civil War had ended. The pact was in 1939, the Civil War in 1936 -- that is how quickly things changed. Well, we were mistaken a lot about the Civil War.

Runge/Stelbrink: Mistaken in which way?

Mosse: Franco of course was not a fascist but rather a reactionary dictator. And that was a great difference. We were wrong; but in those years we naturally could not have known where the difference was. We were not mistaken about whom we supported. But we misunderstood Stalin. We knew nothing about Stalin's murder of the Trotskyites, we missed that. To us, the Spanish Civil War was also the songs, they set the tone, they were sung by Ernst Busch. In America, the left also had and still has a certain cult around stirring political songs. We knew nothing at all about inner power struggles among the republicans. We were formed during an era of dictatorships. That was our age. We were all between 18 and 21 years old. There were better reasons for not being completely well-informed than today. The treacherous war against the Trotskyites in Spain certainly did not come to light in former East Germany, did it?

Runge/Stelbrink: Trotsky's ideas were forbidden. What historians knew or were permitted to know is one thing, but the public at large? No. The first tips were found in Siqueiros's memoirs. But that was right before the massive changes, in 1988. It was not discussed in the press. Then there were Ehrenburg's memoirs. That was during the thaw, i.e., long before the stagnation under Brezhnev. But those things were not publicly discussed. Some of it was seen

in a more differentiated light over the years, but the general view of the Spanish Civil War was left intact. Officially in the former East Germany there was only the tradition of the Beimler brigade, the Soviet Union's assistance, etc. Very one-sided. We only had a limited desire for more information. How were things with you later?

Mosse: Naturally my image of the Soviet Union changed after the Hitler-Stalin pact. By the way, I was one of the first people in the United States to plea for recognition of East Germany. That was in 1954 in the magazine "The Progressive," published in Madison. I made the argument that East Germany existed and that the division of Germany was a good thing. The latter was the real motivation, because we were against Adenauer and the ideology of "the West" which we thought would just revive old animosities.

Runge/Stelbrink: Oh, that is quite interesting. But back to the United States again, to history: how do you view the role of the Communist Party of the United States during the Cold War and before? How much of the charge of "Browerism" is justified?

Mosse: That party has a rather ridiculous history. They underwent a division at that time. Browerism, that was a rightist branch . . .

Runge/Stelbrink: But was it not true that Moscow had dictated the dissolution? And hadn't the place of that party in American politics thus been destroyed by outside forces?

Mosse: I do not know the details. The CPUSA was a sect. That became clear to me when my best friend at Harvard became a Communist and the rest of his life was nearly ruined by it. One summer in the forties I went with him to Detroit to help him start up a book store for the United Auto Workers, led at that time by a man close to the Communists by the name of Thomas. I'll never forget what that was like: one had one's "dates," one's meetings or a dance, sponsored by the party. Nonmembers were kept completely on the outside. It was a sect, not a party, as far as I could tell. But you cannot win people over to sects, you really cannot effect anything at all. You see, the good thing about the American political system, in my opinion, is its affinity for personalities. One elects a representative, not a party. Anyone can become a candidate. It is an open system, very democratic. In Europe on the other hand the candidate must first go through the party's bureaucracy. In America, candidates are held responsible if they fail; in Europe, it is the party's fault. If candidates fail, they are voted out of office; but in Europe the party is not. Consequently the options for choice are slight. But of course the large parties are not that different, not even in Germany. How different can one large popular party be from another one?

Elections in America are between candidates who, upon their election, must then accept responsibility. The flip side is that individuals have to speak for a broad spectrum of the populace. That way many good people are elected to congress. I am not now speaking about the president-that is another matter. The procedure for electing the president lasts much too long, all those primaries, a lot of candidates fall by the wayside. But one is astonished by the quality of the senators. Several people are very influential; the American president is controlled anyway. He certainly has a lot of authority, but in practice not much more than the British prime minister. In Germany it is different: there the chancellor relies on the party.

Runge/Stelbrink: The Vietnam War influenced the party system in the United States, mostly regarding the president's authority in matters of war and peace. Or do you think that the Vietnam War's importance lay more in its psychological meaning?

Mosse: Both, but for the most part the changes in mentality are noticeable. Especially in connection with Operation Desert Storm one felt it. Bush stressed over and over that it would not be another Vietnam. The shock runs deep; the Vietnam War was a traumatic experience, quite different from the Korean War. No president would dare wage such a long-lasting war again. Vietnam was not worth it for anybody, except for a few conservative fringe groups. But the critics of the war dominated the public and the media. A political issue is what it remained -- and that is why Operation Desert Storm was so controversial. Bush wanted to avoid an escalation, but nobody knew how Iraq would respond. It was supposed to be a peaceful solution.

Runge/Stelbrink: In your publications you deal with the relationship between racism, fascism, nationalism, and sexuality. You also research the symbolic meaning of those "-isms." In symbol-laden former East Germany, we did not intensively study those aspects of history. You write on the direct connection between nationalism and sexuality . . .

Mosse: Yes. I wrote the first serious analysis ever on the connection between National Socialism and sexuality, published in 1965, now available in German translation entitled "Volk und Nation." It was clear to me from the beginning that National Socialism could only be understood if it were interpreted by focusing on it as a movement of men and masculinity. That is how the Nazis themselves described their movement. My technique has always penetrated the motives and self-definitions of the subjects under study. I am not interested in what a "man on the street" in Görlitz thinks about the Nazis. Instead, I want to know what the Nazis thought about themselves, how the organization represented itself. From the beginning they viewed themselves as a men's movement. I was able to discover that fact in sources which had not yet been tapped, in "Völkisch" sources. Now with Theweleit's book it has met with greater interest.

Runge/Stelbrink: Nazism's self-concept as a league of men must have consequences. Perhaps there is the key to the Röhm affair?

Mosse: Partially. Hitler was only interested in Röhm's homosexuality for political reasons. He used the entire issue to move against oppositional forces inside the movement and against the Catholic Church and certain other groups. That can be seen in homosexual trials, among other purges which gave him the chance to move against the army, against General von Fritsch, for example. But precisely on this point in that historical context I would stress the difference between theory and practice. Why? You see: all those swift decrees by Himmler against homosexuality in the SS which even threatened to punish two men touching each other were never carried out. They were on paper only. Indeed, it is even more complicated: as far as we can tell today, no single SS man was killed for being homosexual. With the Nazis one must be very careful to determine the differences between their public posturing and what they actually did.

Runge/Stelbrink: But the gay movement has proven that many gays were deported to the camps and died there. The pink triangle was the mark for homosexuals . . .

Mosse: Yes, some went to the camps and were killed. Others could not be caught, and still others were acquitted because of missing proof. But I am speaking of something else. Those in the camps were not the ones Himmler's decree targeted. It was for SS soldiers. It is correct: many, many homosexuals went to the camps -- but I am speaking of the elite of the Nazi Party who feared being undermined by homosexuality: Hence the decrees. But when it came to enforcement, nothing was done. I mean nothing more by my comments. Or to return to the aspect of the men's movement: even this component, so important to the Nazis, stressed camaraderie. Everything revolved around camaraderie, as in the First World War.

Runge/Stelbrink: That is interesting, but it does not really address the entire question. Perhaps this comparison will help to clarify it: you have presented the connection between nationalism and the camaraderie of males as something specifically German. Is it -- for example -- different in England?

Mosse: No, not very different at all. Take for example the public schools, the boarding schools. They impressed the Nazis enormously. During the war, in 1940, a high-ranking Nazi wrote an article entitled "Hitler Youth and Eton Boy," in the middle of the war! He wrote that Eton was fabulous, just fabulous training, and so on. It is interesting to note what he criticized, namely: that Eton was an elite school, whereas the NAPOLA, the Nazi elite school, was open to anyone. I do not mean that parallels can be drawn in this respect between England and Germany, but there were similarities. England is an especially masculine society, we all know that. Perhaps less theoretically so than Germany. Until very recently, for example, there were few good, prestigious schools for women.

Runge/Stelbrink: You are certainly right, but it seems a bit strange to label England a men's society. The English man hardly seems to exemplify what we would term masculine. One would tend to view the election of a woman as prime minister as a confirmation of the status of women in English society.

Mosse: In my view, the difference is that in England, masculinity has been more integrated into bourgeois society and thus loses its distinct character. Until recent times, the English elites lived in that emphatically masculine society of famous boarding schools, from Oxford to Cambridge and the London Clubs. In Germany, on the other hand, there was a camaraderie of males in every social class. They understood themselves in their own terms, as camaraderie, even if often in an elite sense. But it was not the case in England. There masculinity was seen as something aristocratic and elitist, yet open to the middle classes by way of the public schools and such places as Oxford and Cambridge. But that makes camaraderie of males no less dominant, and one still frequently finds quotes to the effect that masculinity is the dynamic force in a society. But what Himmler claimed was never stated in England, that the country actually was a "Männerstaat," a state based on a camaraderie of men. That is not possible in England.

Runge/Stelbrink: But how does masculinity dominate in England if it is constrained and never appears as a state ideology?

Mosse: As I have said, the masculine is more embedded in the political and social elites there. One must determine where the society's priorities are. Consider the clubs in London for example. Until very recently they were the most important. That is where the elites met, had dinners, made political connections, etc. And those were strictly men's clubs!

Runge/Stelbrink: Why do you say "until recently"? Is it different now?

Mosse: Yes, as far as I know, women have since gained entry into many of the clubs. At least that is what I have heard. In a very famous club, in Athenaeum, but in other ones too, had always been a separate entrance for women.

Runge/Stelbrink: It was also that way in the pubs, where women went upstairs via their own stairway.

Mosse: Yes, that's right, it was a totally male social setting, even if not as extreme as in Germany. In Germany, everything eventually gets a theoretical underpinning. The militant aspect is absent in England. There everything revolves around compromise, out of politeness, respectability, etiquette. The camaraderie of males in Germany functions differently. The strict gender divisions have existed especially since the nineteenth century, as a result of the bourgeoisie. I would venture to say that bourgeois society itself is based primarily on gender divisions. It was that way everywhere, even and especially in Germany, where it was intensified by wars, first of all by the Wars of Liberation. Likewise in France, by the way. After the First World War, with the rise of fascism, those rules from earlier eras were in danger, especially the difference between the sexes. There was a women's liberation movement during the Weimar Republic! The world, the bourgeois world, seemed to be coming apart at the seams. Fascism officially claimed to represent the middle class, the bourgeois values, and one of the central middle-class values quite simply reflects differences between the sexes. The same is also true for racism: the Nazis preserved what they called "Germanic values." And that claim coincided fatally with the interests of the middle class.

Runge/Stelbrink: Consequently the ideal woman for the Nazis was not really a social being . . .

Mosse: No, it was not quite as simple as that. The whole organization of National Socialist society was much more complicated and differentiated than one imagines or would like to imagine today. On the one hand, women's roles were sharply defined from men's roles. The gender division reflected society's concept of itself. Division of the sexes was fundamental to social organization.

Runge/Stelbrink: The German woman as German mother of German children in the German women's league . . .

Mosse: Yes, that was the division of the sexes. But on the other hand, National Socialism also offered emancipation to women: It was the first time that girls were allowed to travel unaccompanied on commercial flights, or that they could participate in sports. Admittedly some of that had been possible before in certain emancipation-minded groups, and in the "Wandervögelbewegung" (youth groups) and the workers' movement. But for most bourgeois girls, those things had not been possible before, and certainly not throughout the society. It was not much, but still something. The image of the woman was still as the mother, but it also included her work, fitness and beauty.

Runge/Stelbrink: With all those facts why do you conclude in your books that Germania has no family?

Mosse: That has always been a paradox. On the one hand attempts were made to save the family. The family was part of the state and -- viewed internally -- and the state was part of the family. But on the other hand, the SA and SS were extremely anti-family. Naturally those contradictions were never resolved.

Runge/Stelbrink: With the SA and SS, the Hitler Youth and the "Bund deutscher Mädel" (the German girls league) had a form of replacement for the family been created, to a certain degree a total subjugation of the families' daily life to state control?

Mosse: No, the organization as such did not replace the family. I am now referring specifically to the elite organizations. And it was not an original invention of German National Socialism. Camaraderie replaced the function of the family, as elsewhere, especially strengthened in its role by the war. National Socialism was developed in Germany for the entire spectrum of the political right based on the idea of comradeship, as a new political idea. The state itself was to become a camaraderie -- like the camaraderie on the front. All people were equal, they just had different functions. In 1943 Himmler gave a speech on the future of the SS after the war victory. He said that the SS would then colonize the land beyond the Ural Mountains and would look death in the eye. No time for Fasching in Munich. The spirit of expansion had to live on, not the spirit of dialogue, which in their view was the spirit of a softened bourgeoisie . . .

Runge/Stelbrink: Which was also their ideal of a perfect world order: Clean and healthy, purged of all impurity. At the center of the family was the German mother; at the center of society, the man and his concept of camaraderie. But is that not to a certain degree a goal in every society?

Mosse: Yes, everything under National Socialism was to be straightforward through and through, and everything was immeasurably exaggerated. But in a superficial way it is the same in America. In America we are always the best and the biggest; it is not enough for us to say we have not only the greatest, but the world's greatest universities. I am very much against that idea of national character, even if there are similarities and differences. But you have to be very careful with generalizations, especially when it comes to America, which really is a multicultural society. But the political culture in America, if I may put it that way, goes to great lengths formally, as it does in Germany. In reality, though, in the United States political culture

relies on compromise and balancing interests. In Nazi Germany, on the other hand, everything had to be controlled to such an extreme; elsewhere, there were conflicts, disagreements -- think of Mussolini's Italy. In Germany it even came to organized crimes. The question you posed earlier about the connection between nationalism, the camaraderie of male, sexuality and the like; those relationships can also be found in other countries. But they were all-decisive in Germany and led to horrifying excesses because of the dominant political culture. At the same time, the political culture, as it existed under Hitler and Himmler, clearly had historical roots.

Runge/Stelbrink: And that political culture became the everyday norm. But it was a norm that, for example, gays fitted only marginally. In a society oriented toward ideals of the family, anyone outside of that model becomes suspicious . . .

Mosse: No, that is not correct; there were always plenty of bachelors on the outside.

Runge/Stelbrink: But that presupposes an acceptance of that status. In former East Germany, the bachelor was usually viewed as scurrilous and cowardly or as a lady's man who was afraid of settling down, or else he was gay. Living alone as a rule had no social prestige; it was not until the 1980s, with the singles movement, that it received positive publicity, but the social consequences were negative: higher taxes, limited living space, fewer choices for vacation planning, because families with or without children always received their first preference. Whoever wanted to have a career had to lead a normal life, and that meant marrying . . .

Mosse: Oh, really? In America and England that is different, one is used to eccentric people, and bachelors were always considered harmless eccentrics. Then the situation must have been like under the Nazis: they also favored marriages. Stable families, that is typically bourgeois. Whatever occurs in them is not questioned. Young people today have no idea what it was like to be gay; in those years, until the 1970s, one had to be entirely secretive, otherwise a career was impossible. One would have been removed immediately from the teaching profession, for example.

Runge/Stelbrink: Why did you choose to study history?

Mosse: I studied history because I did not know what I should do when I got to Cambridge.

Runge/Stelbrink: Well, for a historian with your stature, that is a rather meager explanation . . .

Mosse: But that is the way it was. History was the "gentleman's subject." I lied a bit. In the English school, I had a particularly good history teacher, and thus I was interested in the subject. But at that time I could have done something else too, in the humanities, in philosophy. But I stayed with history. I was never an especially good student, and my grades in Cambridge were not exceptional.

Runge/Stelbrink: Was Germany always your topic?

Mosse: No, not by any means; at least not from the beginning.

Runge/Stelbrink: What was the subject in which you earned your degree?

Mosse: Seventeenth century, English history, constitutional history. Then for a long time, until 1960, I studied the history of early modern religion. It did not always have to do with Germany specifically, but it was often European history. For example, I wrote a textbook on the Protestant Reformation. But that was not specifically about Germany either. Then I wrote a book with a colleague on the sixteenth century, on the early modern era, published in 1968. We have just revised it, brought it up to date.

Runge/Stelbrink: Anyway, you became a historian in the United States . . .

Mosse: Yes, but first you need to clarify that statement! History and English, those were subjects in the United States that were once nearly devoid of Jews! Who still knows that today? I was one of the few Jews in the United States who made it in those days in the field of history.

Runge/Stelbrink: It surely has to do with German history that we Germans always think of blacks when we think of racism in America.

Mosse: I tell you: that is how it was! In every department I was in, I was the first Jewish historian.

Runge/Stelbrink: Where did you teach during which years?

Mosse: First I was at the University of Iowa. Since 1955 I have been at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. But later I had two positions, beginning in the late 1960s, one in Madison and the other at the Hebrew University in Israel. Since then I was always in Madison for the fall term and in Jerusalem for the spring term. According to the semester scheduling in those years, I could work for two semesters in Jerusalem and one in Madison. Between 1969 and 1978 I worked that schedule every other year, but from 1978 until 1986, until my retirement, I spent every year that way.

Runge/Stelbrink: That means that you must have educated entire armies of historians, because besides Madison and Jerusalem, you have also taught in Munich, Amsterdam, Cambridge and elsewhere. You must have even taught in Australia, because we have heard that you were upset there, that there were no English muffins in the cafeteria. But perhaps that is only a rumor . . .

Mosse: Umm, well, a university should have more than just lecture halls, don't you think?

Runge/Stelbrink: Let's return to the historian; when did you finally make the transition from studying the early modern period to specializing in contemporary history?

Mosse: As I said, not before 1960 . . .

Runge/Stelbrink: But that was 30 years ago . . .

Mosse: Yes, and I actually started on contemporary history rather late. Why? I cannot really answer that. I rather slid into it. First of all there was a job open that I wanted, in modern history. No, that is not really the truth either. I could have taught English early modern history and the other subjects for several more years. But suddenly I gained greater interest in the Nazis, in recent German history. My teaching assignment in Wisconsin was in modern cultural history. That contributed to my increasing interest in that specific field.

Runge/Stelbrink: Perhaps it was also your own history you had not yet researched?

Mosse: Certainly, in some way. I just cannot define it exactly. I began as a historian of the medieval period. In my day in Cambridge, for example, very little modern history was taught. History ended in the eighteenth century, and even that was considered modern history. It was an entirely new field I entered at that time -- contemporary history. It was just beginning to come into its own -- though certainly not as cultural history. But it was exciting and interesting. But I cannot say exactly why I turned to it . . .

Runge/Stelbrink: Then you studied the Weimar Republic era, the Nazi era, nationalism, racism, sexuality. A colorful mixture for a historian . . .

Mosse: Yes, isn't it? No system to it! Oh, I never was interested in chronology or periodization; only in problems and issues. Their causes, their consequences. I never went along with narrow specialization.

Runge/Stelbrink: Your turn to contemporary history occurred in the years after 1960. It then seems pertinent to ask what part the year 1968 meant for your decision.

Mosse: Yes, the events from 1968 were very influential, certainly on me personally too, because I had a certain part in them at my university. But not that of a leader of the revolution, it was more as a -- what is it called? -- yes, maybe as a wasp under the skin of the revolution. The one who stings with questions and asks: Think about it. Similar to how a teacher should proceed. And so they respected me.

Runge/Stelbrink: As a historian, you return time and again to the subjects of Germany and fascism. There are countless studies on how nearly an entire population could have fallen for that insanity. For all the theories that can answer the question of how it could have occurred, none have addressed the one of why it occurred. Why did the Germans go along with it, why did they follow Adolf Hitler . . .

Mosse: Now then, precisely among your researchers in the former East Germany the analyses almost always concentrated on explanations that went beyond the individual, to the social and economic conditions, etc. All of that is surely partially correct, but they forget that the entire driving force was Hitler himself. All biographies of Hitler in the east and the west were written by non-historians. Not until the last few years has there been a change. Historians must ask how it was possible that such a ridiculous man could have such a central position in that important chapter of history. It puts all rational explanations to the test! Then there is the theory that the whole Third Reich was just chaos. But if the whole Third Reich had just been

chaos, how could the genocide of the Jews, the deportations, etc., have taken place? Those were complicated efforts . . . Thus, one must address the irrational side of history.

Runge/Stelbrink: Right, but it does not seem to represent the self-concept of a nation of culture to accede to that man, that the vast majority of an entire educated populace, in the middle of the 20th century, could have done that.

Mosse: Yes, and it doesn't fit into the explanations a lot of historians give, either, and not only in Germany. I have to remind all those who ascribe to some form of socialism, whatever it is, that people just don't behave rationally like that. But perhaps it was just an aberration that post-war Germans and East Germans, I mean their historians, attributed too little importance to Hitler the man, the individual. It is true: without the Depression, without the world economic crisis, perhaps there would not have been Nazis. But that doesn't mean that one can turn the question around to find the explanations! No, for an explanation, one must consider much more, the history, the mentality of the people, even the irrational elements and their effects . . .

Runge/Stelbrink: You have studied those phenomena . . .

Mosse: Naturally, that approach was the more logical one, at least if the phenomenon of National Socialism was not going to just be discounted and ignored and considered unimportant, or was going to be taken seriously only for the sake of appearances. Instead of that, Nazism must be analyzed in its entirety. The first study I wrote on the topic treated the occult and mystical roots of National Socialism. From that study arose "A People, a Leader," now entitled "People and Nation," a book that gained wide attention and caused a stir. In between those two I wrote a book on the cultural history of western Europe -- it has also just been reprinted -- and another on a similar theme: the history of totalitarianism, although I don't like to use that term.

Runge/Stelbrink: What bothers you about that term?

Mosse: The term is too broad, too all-inclusive without describing the differences, for example, between Mussolini and Hitler or between the Soviet Union and Hitler, where the differences are especially great. All the important differences are buried under the term totalitarianism. The term describes history from the point of view of parliamentarianism. But I am against the term, it is one-sided. To most observers, parliamentarianism failed during historical crisis, and that is how they arrived at their own concept of democracy. And what about populism? Hitler's and Mussolini's ideas were really rather populist, and to a certain degree Bolshevism was also populist. I have never sought to treat history from just one standpoint: One must seek to transpose oneself into others' history. Even the differences between Hitler and Mussolini are considerable, for example on Jewish issues or on cultural policy. Who still knows that the people around Gropius, in the Bauhaus movement, all wrote to Mussolini and wanted to build for him and even did work for him? To say nothing of Russia's appeal! For theoreticians of totalitarianism that cannot be explained; for them, parliamentarianism is the same as democracy, there is nothing outside that model. But for those who followed Hitler and Mussolini or the Soviets, it was all very different from that. That was their democracy, they were there, they were part of it! Participation gave people the feeling that they are able to effect

change. Why do students and others take part in political demonstrations? Because it gives them the feeling of being involved, and that is the concept of democracy for each movement. Viewed that way, Hitler was democratic for those who followed him.

Runge/Stelbrink: There are theories that view Hitler and Stalin the same, something that in our opinion is not only unhistorical but is also devastating if the differences are not pointed out.

Mosse: Yes, that view just sees them from that one standpoint, it's really nothing more. Stalin moved against his real and perceived enemies, had them murdered in the gulags. It was terrible, yes, but he did not attack entire races as Hitler did. Perhaps that is a good way to put it: Hitler, the Nazis, wanted to eliminate everything that did not fit into their ideal for society: the incurably ill, the insane, Gypsies, Jews. And it was a systematic policy! But Stalin proceeded differently. In his case, everything was done based on political animosity. Nevertheless, if Stalin had lived longer, that could also have ended up in genocide. But he still brought too many victims; the man was paranoid, a tyrant. But there is a difference between a tyrant and someone able to put to his use an entire modern state as Hitler did. Incredible organization was needed to systematically kill nearly six million human beings. Perhaps Stalin killed just as many, I do not know, I think it is horrible, the tallying of deaths, it is alien to me. The important thing is that it was a terror of another sort. Hitler was the very modern one, not Stalin. Hitler was a fan of technology; he was the first politician to have flown to a mass rally in an airplane. It was also the dawn of the age of fast cars. He was also very modern with the genocide of the Jews and true to principle. His method for the Jews was that nothing was to be done to any one individual; it was to happen to the entire race instead. It was illegal under Nazi law to beat a Jew. But murder, that was a prerogative for the state! That is very modern and far exceeds the experience of pogroms from earlier periods in history. Hitler was not in favor of pogroms. Stalin was a pogromist in a certain sense. He did not have a huge, ultramodern organization that systematically destroyed entire ethnic groups and races and used the modern state for it. The final solution for the Jews was not possible without modern administration techniques. All so-called racial enemies were to be detected, down to the last child. The railway network demanded exacting administration, for deportations to the camps, in the middle of the war theater. Without modern technology and administration none of that would have been possible. Hitler wanted to eliminate society's outsiders; Stalin, his political enemies. Hitler viewed it as an endangerment to the race. He eliminated the incurable ill, the congenitally ill, the insane, all those who could no longer work. The entire idea of liquidation was directed towards productivity considerations: even the annihilation itself occurred as a public works program. For Stalin, it was entirely different. The questionnaires filled out in the insane asylums in Germany in 1941 during the euthanasia programs always asked about a patient's ability to work. If he or she could not, then that was his or her end. For the homosexuals it was somewhat different. How were they to be detected? Well, they were spotted from lists of personals placed earlier in German newspapers, and by denunciations. Himmler experimented there too. Do not forget that the homosexuals sent to the camps were overwhelmingly Aryan. So they were brought to women -- if they had an erection, it was all O.K., see? That is how it was. Female homosexuality was not the issue, because there were supposedly no lesbians among German women. They could not even imagine such a category. For a long time it was thought that some Gypsies were spared because they were Aryans in the Nazis' view. But that is not true: all Gypsies who could be found were killed.

Runge/Stelbrink: Why were Gypsies considered Aryans?

Mosse: It is too much to go into here, but some theories considered several groups Aryans. But in the end they were all eliminated. You see, all outsiders in society.

Runge/Stelbrink: And those who were a mixture, for example the so-called Rhineland bastards, the children born after the French occupation of the Rhine area after the First World War who had colored fathers from the French colonies?

Mosse: I am not sure about that. Half-Jews were also persecuted but not systematically murdered. And the Communists were not killed either. The commissars of the Red Army were eliminated, systematically as Communists, of course as Jewish Communists. But there was no explicit policy to liquidate all Communists. That would have been virtually impossible because, after all, a large percentage of German workers were Communists. No, the Nazis, Hitler himself, were racists. For them it was a matter of Aryans and non-Aryans, of the subversion of the race.

Runge/Stelbrink: You say that the policy had been above all else racist. In former East Germany racism was always interpreted as an instrument to obtain political power.

Mosse: I believe racism was the main impulse. What you refer to is a product of post-war historiography in the Federal Republic, even more in former East Germany. Racism was always either ignored or underestimated. But Hitler and Himmler -- Goebbels was an opportunist, Göring as well --, the people who set policy at that time were first and foremost racists. Racism is a substantial, concrete ideology, and they were committed to it. Racism is an extreme form of nationalism, and to ignore it in scholarship is puzzling, totally incomprehensible. The reason for it is because scholars do not take racism seriously as an ideology. Their concepts of ideology include conservatism, liberalism or socialism, and those are their categories when they treat ideology. In their view, ideology is actually something good, something reasonable, something respectable. They fail to understand the rationale of racism, they are unable to understand it, and that is why they do not take it seriously as an ideology. And why is nationalism ignored? Extreme nationalism is fundamental for racism and National Socialism, and the old historians, the post-war historians in West Germany, were themselves for the most part nationalists. Many historians who have succeeded them have been excellent, but they arrived during the phase when social history had been adapted from France. History of ideology was not researched. Now it is changing again. I know that because my books are being reprinted or in some cases published for the first time. For years I was out of fashion here, there was a lot published about social history, not the history of ideology, to say nothing of race . . .

Runge/Stelbrink: Race and Germany. How are they related? Would Auschwitz have been possible elsewhere, or was Germany necessary for that?

Mosse: Of course, that is a very tough problem that cannot be answered easily. Take Italy, for instance, that was a fascist country. But anti-Semitism did not take hold there, nor did racism . . .

Runge/Stelbrink: But why? Why in Germany but not there?

Mosse: It is due to one fact. Italy did not have a tradition of anti-Semitism. Nobody remembers that fascism is a variant form of nationalism. Therefore fascism depends on what kind of tradition of nationalism a country has. Racism is a variant form of nationalism. Italy's nationalist tradition is a liberal one that even contains elements of freemasonry, and that tradition remained in place. The Italians saved countless Jews during the Second World War. And why? Italy's generals were liberals and Freemasons. Those phenomena did not exist in Germany: liberal generals, or generals who were Freemasons. In Italy they had taken their oath to the king, not to Mussolini: All this has more to do with historical developments than with national character. In Germany, nationalism evolved differently. At first, racism was not common. If the question of where it would have been most likely for Jews to be killed had been posed in 1914, the answer would have been in France, not in Germany. Racism took hold during and after the First World War, thus during a very particular historical situation. But racism was stronger in France, there was even a large racist and anti-Semitic worker's movement there during the 1890s -- with approximately 300,000 followers. The Dreyfus affair, revolution and counter-revolution brought nationalism to a radical climax. Of course there were also racist and anti-Semitic movements in Germany, and the First World War brought it all to a culmination. Germany had handled its domestic problems very poorly compared with England and France. But more importantly, France always had an antidote to racism ready that was lacking in Germany: the tradition of the Enlightenment, rationalism, and revolution.

Runge/Stelbrink: That does not explain Auschwitz or why what happened was allowed to happen . . .

Mosse: But it can be explained! The population taken as a whole did not know about it. When people heard about it, they didn't believe, because they remembered the First World War. There were a lot of rumors going around then! Germans allegedly cut off hands, the French did worse things, and when it was all over, it turned out that the rumors were untrue. When Germans heard rumors about Auschwitz, they must have not believed them and considered them to be similar to the horror stories they remembered from World War One. Auschwitz was managed very methodically, it was fairly close to the front and was always associated with the war there. In Germany there were the death camps Buchenwald and Sachsenhausen, and the Nazis had enough problems with them. And the population? They were passive. I don't mean to excuse their actions, but nobody voluntarily chooses to become a martyr. It was said that Jews were being deported to the east. So, there was a reason not to do anything. Those who wanted to help Jews knew what was going on and that being caught meant they themselves would be deported to the concentration camps. You know, the passivity of the population under Nazism makes sense because it corresponded to the level of repression. The worst part is how passive the population was when the Nazis came to power! Then something would have still been possible. Yes, even until the beginning of the war people could have stood up to the Nazis. Hitler relied heavily on popular opinion, the year 1938 was bad for him, and there were

protests. But there should have been more protests, strikes; maybe something would have changed . . . For the decision for genocide was made when Hitler took power.

Runge/Stelbrink: Yes, but conforming to the injustice required blind obedience to an authority that operated equally well with corruption and terrorism. In the end was a terrible, monstrous genocide. What was its significance for the Nazis?

Mosse: The Nazis have to be taken at their word, and you cannot seek other meanings or their real intent. Racism was their religion; they believed in it, it was a secular religion. The most important people believed in it; the others were followers. It was believed that if the Jews were annihilated, Germany would win the war. This was believed by doctors, for example. Auschwitz was managed by doctors. They were respectable doctors with successful practices during the peace years, doctors people regularly visited before; for example the Chief Doctor at Auschwitz, Dr. Wirth. They too had drawn analogies to the First World War: Wirth said, it is very difficult to bear indeed, but then they also had to go through corpses. Or they had to select Jews on the ramp to the concentration camp. Young doctors sometimes objected. They were told that the situation was like World War I, the selection process of who was to be carried off the battlefield and who would be left behind. It was war, it was a racial war, and it is easy to see how the First World War served here as a model. It must be remembered that many who were personally involved were not Germans, but rather Ukrainians and others from countries with long traditions of pogroms. You know, for many political rightists in Germany, the First World War had never ended. Just as they had fought France as the external enemy, they now battled the internal enemy of Communists, Socialists, Jews. Those feelings were especially extreme in Germany and the Balkans, both losers in the war. All this is part of the background for Auschwitz. Take England for example. There were also fascist groups there, but what limited their success? Violence did not work in England. Although even England has in some respects a tradition of anti-Semitism, Sir Oswald Mosley's fascists lost when they resorted to violence against their opponents. Public violence is not accepted in England, quite the opposite to Germany at that time, where the Weimar Republic had a difficult status and which many viewed as an illegitimate state.

Runge/Stelbrink: Such observations you are making, as far as we can tell, could hardly be found in East German research. How do you explain that?

Mosse: Marxism separates us. In the view of former East German historians and according to their standpoint, they are right to discredit my work. For example, in my book "The History of Racism," I mention the concept of class only in passing. The Russians, by the way, have also attacked me, but as a progressive bourgeois historian -- and that is still worth something, isn't it? Former East German researchers of fascism made use of an orthodox Marxist interpretation based on the dogma of class struggle. But even in the west, the unorthodox Marxist Horkheimer stated that when you speak of fascism you must also speak of capitalism. My only response is that when you speak of western democracy, you also have to speak of capitalism. I attempt to view fascism the way it viewed itself. Let's take the economy, for example. On that issue the Nazis were very flexible; they had no real economic policy -- because of that they were successful. First they nationalized, then they reprivatized. They were completely pragmatic, and that brought them successes in economic matters. We know that wages fell

under the Nazis. Yet even before they took power they counted 18% of their members from the industrial working class; that is a high proportion for a middle class party. The "Joy through Work" campaign was also successful . . .

Runge/Stelbrink: But those figures alone surely do not make the difference between Marxist historiography and yours! And the facts to which you just referred were also viewed the same way by East German historians.

Mosse: Yes, but they interpreted them differently. The important part for them is that fascism saved capitalism -- and with those priorities everything else is then evaluated, categorized, and classified differently. Important facts then become irrelevant while others are exaggerated. One example is in their ignoring the significance of the irrational for the Nazis, including racism . . .

Runge/Stelbrink: Are you then accusing Marxist research on fascism of underestimating the effects of racism?

Mosse: Yes, among other factors, because for them racism belongs to the superstructure, whereas capitalism, the question of property relations, is at the base. But let us take as an example Mussolini. In East Germany, they avoided comparing him to Hitler. By the end Mussolini had nearly become constituted as a Socialist. What about superstructure and base and the dialectic? In Germany all that is misleading. Initially the Nazis considered their movement to be a cultural and ideological one. They had no interest in economic matters. Did Nazism save capitalism? Nowadays such theories are quite controversial. Many economic historians now contend that when Hitler came to power, the economic depression was already receding. If one had waited longer, the ghost would not have come.

Runge/Stelbrink: But other historians are of the opinion that the reason Hitler was brought to power at exactly that point in time was because the economic crisis was ending . . .

Mosse: No, no, I don't think so. The reason is because in the west, populist movements, and I include Marxist movements among them, only had a chance whenever a real political and social crisis occurred.

Runge/Stelbrink: But was it necessary to make Hitler chancellor at precisely that time?

Mosse: Yes and no, not politically. But Hitler already controlled the streets, and even the police were no longer reliable. Everything was infiltrated by the Nazis. Surely another sequence of events could have occurred, but what would have been the result? In my opinion we cannot determine what that scenario might have looked like, especially based on the election results. The Nazis were of course opposed to parliamentarianism; as a result, many of them never voted. Rabbi Leo Baeck prayed for a military dictatorship -- that was the choice: military dictatorship or National Socialism. A military dictatorship would have been anti-Semitic of course, but not National Socialist. It is always difficult to say what might have been. The fact remains that the Nazis had a large following, especially among the youth. It must be remembered that it was a youth movement. Hitler was the youngest German chancellor;

Mussolini, the youngest Italian prime minister; and the Belgian fascist leader who nearly took power was all of 24 years old.

Runge/Stelbrink: So it was a movement of young men . . .

Mosse: And that brings us back to Marxism. It underestimates, and this goes to the core of the theory, the power of myths and symbols. There was an amusing book written in the sixties by two young German historians entitled "I Saw Hitler." They interviewed people who gave all sorts of responses; for example, that Hitler had had such nice blue eyes. But if it was not true, then it must have been the product of myth. Think of the recent past, of Ronald Reagan, and then you'll see how strong myths are. And the Nazis had myth on their side. Myth was made concrete by symbols and stereotypes. In mass politics they were successful. I sought to demonstrate that in my book "Nationalization of the Masses." The German Communists, by the way, wanted to copy the Nazis, but they had no charismatic figures.

Runge/Stelbrink: By today's standards Hitler seems utterly ridiculous. One cannot look at him, or listen to him, without asking oneself what must have gotten into people to enable them to fall for precisely that man . . .

Mosse: Your view comes from the movies. Charisma cannot be experienced second hand, it must be direct. I told you about the demonstrations in front of our house in Berlin. I was between fourteen and fifteen years old, and something like that of course made quite an impression on a young man. The impression was so great, in fact, that I ran away from home, it must have been in 1932, and went to a Hitler rally. I must admit, even today, that it was an experience. I was swept away. First there were the masses of people; that was very captivating to be in the middle of it all. But it was also Hitler, if I remember correctly, Hitler's charisma that had such an effect on the people, whether they had wanted it or not. I am only telling you so you know that Hitler was an attraction.

Runge/Stelbrink: But that also means that the age of mass media and telecommunications will make charisma a different factor. People who have seen Ronald Reagan live say he is unbelievably mesmerizing. The same can surely not be said of his television speeches.

Mosse: Leaders such as Hitler or Mussolini could not have the same direct effect if they had to use the mass media of today. In the media, other factors are important; there are ways to prop up leader figures. All this is apparently difficult to reconcile with Marxism, which after all bases its theories on humans acting rationally.

Runge/Stelbrink: To return to the Nazis: Their heroes did not fit into the image they had of themselves. There was a saying about the way a true Aryans looked: blond like Hitler, thin like Göring and tall like Goebbels. How then did the Nazis account for the discrepancy between ideal and reality?

Mosse: Not at all. That was precisely the mythology! And at a party convention in Nuremberg, the beer bellies of the Gau leaders marching into the stadium were simply not shown by means of spotlights. So even back then there were methods. After all, the ideal

could hardly be represented by those men with their beer-bellies. But the mythology was so strong that it was not a problem to create illusions. Additionally, of course, there was the secret terror. There were millions who did not believe in all that, but they had to go along, they could not speak out against it.

Runge/Stelbrink: But is there not a paradox between believing in people and their persona on the one hand, and in a cause felt strongly on the other? And the cause, mystified by the Treaty of Versailles and the war dead, was basically a part of the irrationality . . .

Mosse: Yes, but Hitler still did not appear the way he should have. The Nazis can even account for that in their racial theories. It went like this: no one person has every characteristic of a particular race, but everyone has parts. The case of Goebbels created many problems that were never solved. He did not fit it at all, he was called the Germanic midget. But nevertheless, mythology cannot be underestimated, at least in the initial years of the movement. Once Hitler had power, he was able to determine and control everything. Whoever was in opposition had to decide: either one said what one thought, and went to the concentration camp -- or one conformed. People cannot be expected to step out of their own shadows.

Runge/Stelbrink: We would like to ask you more about the various methods in historiography. Apparently they entail differences in evaluating rationality, human thought and behavior, and finally the effects of historical processes on human actions. For example, in East Germany in "real existing socialism," it was not possible to discuss the consequences fascism had for daily life, least of all, to research them. The simple question of whether people who were indoctrinated for 12 years by the Nazis bring enough of that experience to bear in their lives today, was not a topic of discussion, was not only taboo for research . . .

Mosse: Of course it was wrong to assume that there were no consequences. At many international conferences I have seen the disagreements with East German historians on just this point. The East German historians were top rate in the areas of ancient history and the Reformation. But in modern history they were not taken seriously by many in the west, except for the past few years, in matters of social history and history of daily life. This situation was especially true for the topics of fascism and the Nazi era, because they had not yet really dealt with them. They treated this period with slogans. If you say that fascism is capitalism, then there is no research to do. There was no work done on Hitler. There was no biography of Hitler from East Germany, was there? They claimed to represent the great break, socialism, that there was nothing left of what had been. In the thirties, one said "red on the inside and brown on the outside." And there were many like that, but the fact was hushed. Why can it not be expected that after 1945 the other variant existed?

Runge/Stelbrink: In former East Germany, anything that did not fit into its proper box was suppressed. That certainly contributed to the country's demise.

Mosse: Yes, of course. That was its history, and not exactly a glorious one at that. It is difficult to come to terms with such a history. One can repress a lot, the West German historians did it too. For years they were not concerned with Nazis and Hitler, but rather with social structures.

I do not mean that those topics are not important, but there is more. Research in social history biographies more or less taboo, yet in West Germany historians did research the Nazi period . . .

Runge/Stelbrink: But that was also researched in East Germany, ideology, persecution, the Nazi Party, the economy and the Nazi state . . .

Mosse: Yes, that is correct. Of course it must be differentiated. Some positive results were attained, but they all applied more narrow models. And who exerts the effort to read between the lines? The best East German historians were those who published documents on Nazi theater and worker's literature, and no deference to the state was required of them. It was very good and helpful. As soon as they moved into the arena of ideology, findings became unclear. That was true not only for East Germany but also for all eastern European researchers. A certain consensus had formed. Actually it is an insult to Marx when that is called Marxism, it was rather more a Bolshevik consensus. I hate calling it Marxist, because Marx was really more careful!

Runge/Stelbrink: Apparently you refer to the acceptance of the Seventh Comintern's definition of fascism? In short, fascism was domination by the most reactionary circles of finance capitalism; Dimitroff offered that definition. As we have since learned, it was the underpinnings of terrible errors of judgment and wrong strategies for action.

Mosse: Correct, correct. One could not, one dared not have any other opinion . . .

Runge/Stelbrink: And therefore that also made it impossible to describe daily life in Nazi Germany, which patterns of behavior continued afterwards, or how certain authoritarian structures have dire consequences . . .

Mosse: No explanation was deemed necessary, because that particular definition offered the only accepted one. I know of no east block research to the contrary. The result was that the working class could not be properly studied, because even though the Nazi Party as early as 1933 had 15% or more of the factory worker vote -- there are still a lot of questions! Fascism, the Nazis, that was the petite bourgeoisie, hence the other expected pattern of inquiry. The Jewish question was not studied either, because of Stalin's anti-Semitism, so it was off-limits until after Stalin's death. Finally, there were the doctor trials and all the rest. Not to differentiate the Jews was part of the Marxist methodology. There was also criticism that the Jewish question had been too central and had forgotten the other victims, for example the political ones. There is something to that contention. At any rate, the Jews did not fit into the approach. No, I stand corrected, in East Germany right after the war there were a few excellent films about the persecution of the Jews, so the beginnings seemed promising. But then it was suddenly suspended. Did it have something to do with Stalin? What was going on with research in the fifties and sixties? You must know that better than I. The subject of the Jews was considered to mystify the class question. One sees that by reading the Communist newspapers prior to Hitler's rise to power. They claimed that Jewish capital was like other forms of capital, it oppressed everyone the same, so why talk just about the Jews.

Runge/Stelbrink: You ultimately portray racism as something that is historically determined. Don't you think that neglects national relationships? For example on the question of "national character," not biologically, but rather historically. When in the context of German reunification a paper was made public in which Maggie Thatcher summed up German characteristics, many people were flabbergasted. But of course everyone says: "The Germans . . ." and knows what they mean.

Mosse: Yes, but one ought not do that. Each country has experienced its own development which has to be considered. I left Germany when I was 15 years old, and I retained some characteristics, and others I picked up at the public school in England. For example the absolute, cursed punctuality. I always come right at the minute, precisely, always. Nobody does that anymore, so what should I do? I also have that tendency toward German romanticism -- that's the way I grew up. When I see the army, my heart beats faster, it is awful. I don't know what causes it, the music, and the rhythm? I was recently in Erfurt and then in Kyffhäuser; those places helped form me--or when I am in the forest, in the beautiful German forest. No, I don't mean that ironically. I say it because it is very difficult to separate oneself from all the prejudices toward other peoples. From my time in the boarding school I adopted prejudice toward Poles for years. Perhaps certain national characteristics even have an influence on the outward appearance of certain historical occurrences, but nothing more. You see, Prussia was in reality an army with a state attached, due to historical reasons. From that particular state constellation a certain mentality arose. That has little to do with national characteristics: one does not come into the world as a little German nationalist. And it cannot be attributed to climate, for if you compare Germany or Prussia with England . . .

Runge/Stelbrink: But in some circumstances one is born into a small German nationalistic family and grows up in it . . .

Mosse: Yes, that is bad, if reinforcement then occurs at school. In summary, I do not believe in national character. Or rather: I believe that national character is only historically determined. But that does not necessarily mean that every German must have that character.

Runge/Stelbrink: National character was not discussed in East Germany. At best there was a dogmatic image of a socialist citizen. Races, national differences, or even minorities, homosexuals: there was no place for such considerations . . .

Mosse: The German Democratic Republic was a very bourgeois state, if I may say, where respectability ruled. Today that fact has not yet been understood. This respectability was a bourgeois invention, but it quickly found firm footing in the populace. Workers sometimes even considered themselves more respectable than the bourgeoisie. I don't know the people of the country, but from what I observed, the way it was set up, it was all very respectable, very proper, and very bourgeois. This respectability extended quite far. Because the German Democratic Republic wanted to be a state of the future, it had to be without vice, without sexual and other sins, for that does not fit into the image of a decent state. There were similarities to the Federal Republic, with the exception that East Germany, formed by Marxism and the corresponding ideas, in some respects had more tolerant laws. Not necessarily in everyday dealings, for example with homosexuals, but in the eyes of the law. Engels by the way was

against homosexuality; Marx was not interested in the topic. Why should he have been? For the Left it was a taboo topic, with some exceptions. Recently two pieces of research were published in France on socialism and sexuality. Even the Left felt too respectable for homosexuality, they repressed the topic. And then there was the episode where the Left accused the Nazis of being gay. Klaus Mann complained bitterly about that. The enemy is always an outsider. The Nazis were called gay, not only by the Left, but the Left went along with it. Then came the Röhm affair. In reality those were just propaganda phrases. One wanted to be pure, because even the Left had taken up respectability. As a result, one had to make the other one culpable of not being respectable enough. The outsiders are always the same; in East Germany, it was just as in the bourgeois world. I don't know how East Germany treated its Gypsies. Was there discrimination against them? I can only say: if one wants a perfect world, perfect and healthy, then there have to be prejudices. Marx had them too. There was continuity throughout, and I would doubt that East Germany was any different, as far as the ruling bourgeois morality.

Runge/Stelbrink: The Soviet Union was the only place where an attempt was made to break with bourgeois morality, to propagate free love, the rights of women and children . . .

Mosse: And that is most interesting. Yet little has been written about that experiment. The Soviet Union has suppressed the study of that period of its history. In the west there has been hardly any work on it. That was such a wonderful era, when there was complete sexual freedom, for about eight years. From the Revolution until approximately 1927 was a fascinating time. Lenin was always against it. The freedom was supported by various people, but not by Lenin or Trotsky. They had internalized bourgeois morality. Lunacharsky and Kollontai, they supported it. Later on, everything was stopped and the country returned to bourgeois dominated morality. It then reigned more completely in the east than in the west. If we turn to the male stereotypes, there is also a continuity, even though nominally the official policy was based on the principle of equality between the sexes. In my new book on the construction of masculinity in modernity I have a photograph of an East German monument, a monument to women workers. Interestingly, it looks just like a monument to men workers. I believe that equality for women in East Germany was more advanced than in the west, am I right?

Runge/Stelbrink: Well, the abortion debate clearly shows differences. The foundation was laid with legal and economic equality of women, and economic independence from men: This cannot be underestimated in the struggle for the emancipation of women. But in everyday life, a lot of things were different from that: families especially preserved the old ways. Then there were all the single mothers who are worse off now in the new Germany. Even if East German women had wanted to be economically subordinate to men, it would not have been easy. Very few people could live on the earnings of one person, and at the latest after child-bearing or a divorce women would have to go back to work. There was no social stigma attached to being divorced. Employment opportunities for women and the degree of social sovereignty that arises from that was a goal East Germany achieved. Now there is a threat to regress to the bourgeois world with the old roles for men and women . . .

Mosse: But much was similar to West Germany. Take for instance homosexuality. In practice, it was taboo in both East Germany and West Germany, in the west even in the laws. That situation did not begin to ease until the eighties.

Runge/Stelbrink: Yes. But there was no infrastructure in place for us to really act on all our possibilities, there were no mass media to disseminate new knowledge. Only recently has a lot of that changed. Only those on the inside knew what was going on. It was that way among women too. The women's league degenerated into a middle-class, politicized knitting club that carefully made sure they were the ones who monopolized women's issues. In the past few years, since about 1985, progress in daily life had advanced further than it appears today. East Germany glorified the family, but in reality it left families little space, so that families and their members nearly suffocated on themselves without knowing where the source of the problems lay.

Mosse: It was similar to that under the Nazis. Regimes with very strong states always create problems for the family's intimate sphere; for families are entities that really exist outside the state. The Nazis could not solve that dilemma either, because it cannot be solved. One wants to capture the youth, but what will one then do with families? In my opinion the same problem existed in all east block states. Hungary and Poland had the additional factor of their Catholicism. On the one hand, a certain level of tolerance is allowed, that comes from Marxism, which objectively has a tolerant component to it, or rather a rational component, but bourgeois respectability becomes internalized. That is not surprising, because people have grown up with that, in all those little houses with lace curtains. I'm sure Honecker's father had those lace curtains, so one grows up with that morality. It would be interesting to find out whether the politburo members had any children who deviated from sexual norms and what was done with them. If they did, they probably did with them what bourgeois parents do: either they threw them out of the house, or they married them off. All that has nothing to do with Marxism, but rather with bourgeois social structures. Until very recently it was not even possible to lecture in your country on the history of homosexuality. If I had offered to do that here, they surely would have been unhappy with me.

Runge/Stelbrink: Until the middle of the 1980s there was no public awareness of all those problems, and hence no official recognition of the need to gain knowledge of those topics. That is also true, by the way, for research of Jewish issues, which was treated exactly the same way, a topic of the second generation, any kind of life stories, research of people's individual past. All those themes were not taken more seriously until the second half of the 1980s. In actual politics that is of course being continued. For example, when gays want to emigrate from the Soviet Union or Cuba, because of persecution at home, their homosexuality is not a valid reason. So they have to arrange fictitious marriages to gain emigration status.

Mosse: Yes, I know about that from Holland, where strangely enough the same situation exists. Marry and then get divorced.

Runge/Stelbrink: Let's turn again to respectability: the Left apparently wanted it, but the bourgeois world denied it to them. But how was it with respectability for gay people?

Mosse: The Left's striving for respectability is understandable because for the good bourgeois, the Left was anything but respectable. Homosexuals were unreal for most people: they did not know anyone who was, and they were totally unaware of them. There was a subculture, though, in Berlin as early as 1904, for example. Magnus Hirschfeld wrote about that. There were even guided tours, like through the colleges at Oxford and Cambridge. As early as 1904 and 1905 there were gay gala dances. Hirschfeld wrote that 800 people attended them. By the 1880s and 1890s, gays appeared for the first time with some regularity in the public eye; prior to that they had been hidden within the society at large. There were salons, and wherever the finest literati gathered, they could suddenly be seen. That occurred at the same time as the development of the worker's movement and Marxism. Bebel was very tolerant of gays, and he was also a friend of the Jews. But that later changed. The topic has not been researched much, so I cannot state anything definitively about it. Workers gained respectability, mostly from the social reforms initiated by Bismarck. Workers went to their doctors, who were like priests, and they said, "Keep washed, do this and don't do that." They also offered advice and information on sexuality. All that was repressed. And when gay people became visible, there was a reaction to them. Since the Middle Ages, gay people had been called sodomites. They were not called homosexuals until the 1860s, when the medical community took an interest in them. Today England is the most backward country in this regard; the Netherlands and the United States are the most progressive. Moreover, in England there is strict censorship. All that is the result of Margaret Thatcher's conservative policies. It was a punishment for the local Labor policies that had supported gay and lesbian projects with taxpayers' money. The conservatives passed a law according to which it is forbidden to publicly support homosexuality. In schools, it can no longer be discussed, etc. England was much freer in earlier times. In the United States, that is different, there are laws according to which it is illegal to discriminate against people because of their sexual orientation. These developments are all new, however, and were spawned by the civil rights movement. The Netherlands is the most advanced country in that respect. The Netherlands even has professorships on homosexuality, the only country that does. In the United States there will now be such positions on the history of sexuality.

Runge/Stelbrink: How is it that you, as a respectable historian, began to treat those subjects?

Mosse: Well, it made sense. I was the first one to write on those topics. A book now being reprinted in German, "The Crisis of German Ideology" from the year 1964, includes a chapter devoted to eroticism, homosexuality and the camaraderie of males, resulting from my research of Nazism. After that book, I did nothing in that area for a long time. Yet I found it so interesting that the Right is always so respectable, always wearing ties, and the Left runs around with unbuttoned shirts. So I began to wonder why that is. The theme of homosexuality was considered unrespectable until well into the eighties; by studying it, one was touching on the strongest taboos. The question is not whether homosexuality should be tolerated or not. The question is: How far are the limits of tolerance? In the United States now there is even a backlash due to AIDS and the general situation. I am skeptical about whether what the majority considers abnormal will ever be integrated. As always, I am a pessimist. On the other hand in Boston a homosexual was reelected to Congress by a rather average constituency, even though he had been involved in a scandal about a male prostitute. The limits today are much wider than I had ever imagined or hoped for. But somewhere along the line there will be a limit. We are still missing research on topics so crucial to understanding fascism: the history of the

outsider in bourgeois society must be studied further, emancipated women, lesbians, gays, Gypsies, outcasts. It cannot be omitted, it must be included. The counter image is as important as the ideal type. The one cannot exist without the other.

Runge/Stelbrink: In several of your books you develop the theory of the anti-ideal who represents a kind of projection glass for one's own self-image . . .

Mosse: I have to go back further in history, because that theory is related to nineteenth-century society. There was the ideal of the strong man; and the counter ideal, the Jew, the Gypsies, the homosexual, the insane, the infirm. In contemporary illustrations and pictures there was the counter image of the good German. During the mid-nineteenth century that counter image was often associated with illness and disease. That time also experienced epidemics and syphilis. Hitler was obsessed with thoughts about syphilis. And so a chorus of voices arose, "We are the healthy ones and the others, the diseased, they endanger the body of the populace, they must be eliminated." Such beliefs, once started, continue. Then it enters aesthetics -- and the ideas went further in Germany than in other countries. The German then became not only good, but also beautiful. The outsider was always ugly. It went so far that when doctors at the concentration camps found a Jew who was beautiful in the Nazi sense of the word, they studied and carried out experiments on him or her until an imperfection was found. Jews could not be so beautiful; they belonged to the counter ideal type. Several books with the title "Counter Ideal" were even published! Doctors often wrote such books, and the doctors were the occupation that most readily supported Nazism. They wanted to work against holistic health, their competition. The counter ideal is an invention of the medical practitioners of the nineteenth century. Who defined the homosexual? Doctors did. And who defined the insane? Likewise the doctors. In the nineteenth century, doctors replaced priests, as Foucault correctly asserts. Where was one sent for sexual enlightenment? In earlier times, to the priest; after that, to the family doctor. Isn't that the way it is today?

Runge/Stelbrink: Yes, marriage and sexual counseling in East Germany were part of the health system. One would like to have subsumed homosexuals under that administration too, but they did not let it occur. The position of doctors in the nineteenth century must have something to do with discoveries in biology at the time, and with the fact that science had become mystified, because religion had become ineffective.

Mosse: Correct, but it has only been recently that the doctors' social and political roles have been studied. They were the ones, after all, who testified at trials and helped to classify. A concept such as degeneration was first a medical term! The Nazis dreamt of a healthy society without disease. Hitler had a fear of syphilis, as I said earlier . . .

Runge/Stelbrink: But why was it precisely syphilis that he feared so much?

Mosse: During those years, everyone was afraid of syphilis. It was like AIDS today. Now we are awaiting a new Paul Ehrlich. Who knows about him today? Everyone knows the names of famous generals, but the man who rid the world of syphilis is practically unknown today.

Runge/Stelbrink: Earlier you made an interesting statement: In the Second World War, things were continued that had begun in the First World War. The tried and true was used over. Would you call that historical continuity?

Mosse: Those active in the First World War were still there for the Second, for example the officers. Many of them carried the myth of the Stab in the Back Legend of the November Revolution which had forced the army, undefeated in the field, to its knees. Add to that Versailles . . . The Second World War ended differently. It did not have the effect of the First World War. As soon as Hitler's war began, Nazi propaganda fell apart. Hitler himself said it was a defensive war that they had been pulled into war -- actually that nobody had wanted war. Public opinion in 1939 was quite different from in 1914, when there really had been support for the war. For the Second World War, on the other hand, there was hardly any public enthusiasm for it except, of course, for the SA and the SS and some party members. And after the war there was no attempt to construct new mythologies, but rather to deconstruct the old ones. There were no new war monuments . . . yes, yes, I know, but do not confuse a few memorials in war cemeteries with the monuments erected after 1870 or even 1918. However, in West Germany, in the nativistic pamphlets and the novels of Kopsch, everything continued. Half of the nativistic pamphlets are brutal war stories and the rest are adventures. The mentality of the Second World War had past. People had learned a lesson. Nobody wanted another war. Eisenhower kept the United States out of Indochina. It was Kennedy who led us in -- something people like to forget.

Runge/Stelbrink: And Germany? Germany and Europe -- was the Cold War only a continuation of the Second World War with other means? We are always interested in your views!

Mosse: In the years following the war, Germany had no active role in world affairs. But all states were in some way involved in the Cold War. Eisenhower was giving crusader speeches, but he was not looking for war, and especially not after Stalin's death. Then came the Korean War, which was really still part of that time period. The myth that war could restore the best in people had been debunked and resolved by the Cold War against the evil enemy, defusing many hot wars.

Runge/Stelbrink: You are referring to breaks and continuities . . .

Mosse: Yes, of course. In my opinion, the break came during the 1960s. An example of a continuity up to that point was anti-Semitism. Have I already told you about the letter of recommendation I received from one of my professors at Harvard who actually was not anti-Semitic? A most decent, wonderful person. He wrote, "George Mosse has good manners, although he is a Jew." He thought he had to write that so I could get a position. Even in the United States there were restrictions. Jews were not allowed to go everywhere, to certain hotels, for example. Anti-Semitism was thus one of those historical continuities that could not be ignored. Yet in the 1960s that continuity was broken too. In the United States we are no longer considered a minority. In undercurrents anti-Semitism is still there, but not in such a way that one would notice in daily life. German continuity has also been interrupted; their dislike of war proves that. But no breaks bring about a complete change. There are the larger

continuities. Those that are ended or appear to have ended in the west are now surfacing in the east, especially in the Soviet Union. Nothing disappears; some things were suppressed or not allowed, even punished. I am very much in favor of anti-racist laws. I believe those are the only actions that can hinder the extreme nationalistic developments we are witnessing today.

Runge/Stelbrink: According to your definitions of continuities, the only hope is in the way people deal with one another. But perhaps that is the only way social progress can result, in that its only criterion is measured by the way people treat each other . . .

Mosse: That always depends on the traditions in which people are civilized. In Germany a rather rude decorum has developed. In England you witness the opposite of that, in my opinion. That can also be seen in the tone of parliamentary debates. In the Bundestag, the tone seems very coarse.

Runge/Stelbrink: Not only the tone, but also how the house rules are set and the way the representatives are treated . . .

Mosse: Those are by-products of a society that is still less controlled. That is bad. The state, if it is truly democratic, ultimately has a function to perform. It must regulate social conflicts in such a way they are not resolved by primitive battle, the way it seems sometimes Mr. Reagan and Mrs. Thatcher had wanted it.

Runge/Stelbrink: Yet in order to resolve conflict in a civilized manner, there needs to be a certain everyday political culture. But how can that culture be attained under conditions of economic recession and all it entails?

Mosse: For example, by easing the demands of respectability. Outsiders are obtaining more rights, in Germany and elsewhere. That is a great step forward that strengthens our conviction in the dignity of human beings. Consciousness of minorities and discrimination is much more common today than 20 years ago, when such topics were hardly considered relevant.

Runge/Stelbrink: Yet we now have a new minority in the form of the entire east block, social minorities of history: New outsiders, in a way. Even for former East Germany as a part of Germany that holds true and, to put it mildly, it is incredibly irritating.

Mosse: Yes, something thoroughly hardened and almost inhumane was brought to bear on social issues by the conservative trend, which of course has something to do with uncontrolled capitalism. People simply accept -- as if it were completely natural -- that some people are without a place to live. That is really a terrible thing. Poverty is terrible enough, but then people also say that the poor do not even want to work. The primitive way people who suffer social problems are treated has not changed. I believe that can change even within a bourgeois society, in the way England attempted in the 1960s, for example, where there was an effort to relieve some suffering of the poor. But what is new now is that there is not even an attempt to improve things, and the situation is taken as a given. That all surfaced in the 1980s. Germany on those issues is the same as everywhere else. The true outsiders now are those hurt by this system. The conditions are defended by a theory that has never proven itself in practice,

according to which universal competition offers everyone an equal chance. But it is not really that way.

Runge/Stelbrink: That realization was also one of Marx's assertions. He claimed that capital is only interested in its own increased value. The rest is arbitrary, variously dependent upon the forces of reproducing the existing relationships and their propagation. Economics are also seen that way in the business newspapers. Yet the politicians begin to moralize in order to gain votes. Because social forces are not abstractions, one loses sight of the continuities and the ruptures in the dialectic. The conflicts between the East and the west dominated European developments for decades. Now in fact Eastern Europe no longer exists as an entity. How do you view the developments of the past few years, especially the end of Germany's division?

Mosse: Many people from my generation are very ambivalent about that because their images of Germany were so formed by National Socialism. So people who are haunted by memories of National Socialism are also worried about a united Germany. But the fear of Germany has long since left people; they have found new worries. And the fears were never very great to begin with. After the war, Germany never had the opportunity to act as a great power. Now economic power is more central. Nobody seriously thinks that Germany would act as a great power. But Germany matters as an economic power. Moreover, which countries would Germany attack? The Sudetenland? The great event after the Second World War -- and for this I can forgive Adenauer and de Gaulle of everything else -- was French-German cooperation, the fact that another war between France and Germany has become incomprehensible. For more than one hundred years of contemporary history that has always been a real and dominant concern. It is gone, and that is marvelous. Throughout my life it has always been an issue of when the next war with archenemy France would begin and since 1870 that had always been a premise of all foreign policy. Very early in one's schooling one was taught all the things about the French, and in French schools they learned the same things about the Germans. The second important consideration is that the Germans refuse to fight in any wars that do not immediately concern them. I mean Operation Desert Storm.

Runge/Stelbrink: Europe now has the task of forming its own united states. But what will happen with the former Soviet Union? Do you feel that Gorbachev can keep the country together? A disintegration of that country would mean that several nation states would have nuclear weapons.

Mosse: Well, at the moment at least the Soviet Union is not falling apart, even though there are many indications to the contrary. Those are completely new problems. But I do not know what can be done about it. If the Soviet Union were to come apart, it would be a catastrophe of huge proportions, because each of the republics has reservations about the others. Then it would be difficult to imagine how there could be peaceful solutions to the increasing national conflicts. The division in the Baltic states would then have the least consequences; regardless of the signal it would give to the other republics. That would not even be important in a military-strategic sense because in that area the Soviet Union has no threats to its security. In my opinion it is much more important what is going on in the Soviet Union today than what is happening in the Gulf region. Of course, Americans want to support Gorbachev, even against opposition to him within his own country. It is interesting to note that Marxism apparently has

had little lasting effect. That is quite apparent within the Balkan region and in the Soviet Union proper. Nationalism is what always remains; racism is just a heightened form of nationalism. Perhaps you can explain to me better why Marxism, or rather bolshevism, even after 40 years, has established no roots in any of those countries. Was it the obdurate policies of Stalin, Stalinism? Would it all have turned out differently if there had been real reforms in 1968?

Runge/Stelbrink: On that we would like to refrain from jumping to conclusions. Who today can answer the question of whether certain reforms were possible then, and what shape they might have taken? And most importantly: was this form of society even able to be reformed? Those are the questions that have to be asked before anyone seriously talks about the missed chances of 1968 or even 1985. Yet it would be much more interesting to find out why East Germany never even seriously attempted to reform, or why they remained isolated in small groups inside the Party, except for the revolt on June 17, 1953 and for the intellectual dissenters of the seventies and eighties. In contrast to the other eastern European countries, the potential for an opposition movement in East Germany was always hampered by emigration to the west. From the outside looking in, let's say from West German exile, East Germany could hardly have been reformed.

Mosse: But as a historian I still do not understand why bolshevism never gained a following among young people. Young people are usually the ones who are so susceptible to dominant ideology and who adopt it in their daily lives.

Runge/Stelbrink: Perhaps because daily life for an entire lifetime, sometimes two generations long, stood so diametrically opposed to what was being officially proclaimed, prostituted as the truth by the media. And surely also because material competition was too great, the lack of democracy too painful, and for many the future was becoming too bleak. Pragmatic policies were lacking that were oriented toward concerns of everyday life. Finally, the ideals were frazzled by the disparities and became as worthless as inflated money.

Mosse: Was it like that everywhere, wasn't there anything that the young people could support in East Germany? Was nothing worth it?

Runge/Stelbrink: That would have to be studied. But there were varied currents throughout East Germany's history. Especially in the early years there was a kind of general acceptance, borne of many hopes, placed in the emerging state. Even after the Wall was erected, and especially after the end of the 1960s, there was certainly a number of young people who had not only made peace with this country, but who even considered it their own. That was the first postwar generation. The political support lasted until sobering realizations, disappointments, and bitterness gradually set in. In practice, there was no such thing as the much promised socialist democracy, when it came to concrete reality. Those who were disappointed were people whose primary concerns were not first and foremost for material goods. They must have been the ones who most painfully felt the loss of the hoped for political homeland East Germany. At the latest when East Germany stubbornly rejected Gorbachev, beginning in 1985, the youth were not the only ones who lost out.

Mosse: I always thought that western television played the decisive role, but the same events transpired in Poland, Hungary, and the Soviet Union, where there was no West German television. Perhaps the effects of television were not in fact as great as I had believed. But it must have had some effect to daily watch an economic miracle unfolding before one's very eyes.

Runge/Stelbrink: Of course, and from that image of the west, that actual "mirror image," an ideal was formed. It just cannot work to expect a population to remain isolated from the world, as though in a monastery, ruled by puritans, yet who can freely see on television the exact opposite played out every evening.

Mosse: You know, in eastern Europe, one could always notice travelers by the shoes. Whenever I travelled through East Germany -- and the trains were never very fast -- everyone knew right away that I was not from East Germany. They always wanted to talk with me. They told me that they wanted to travel, that was what they missed: being able to travel.

Runge/Stelbrink: In the past few years, you have been here several times. Did you have any idea of what was about to happen?

Mosse: No, not at all. It could not have been predicted, even in view of the culmination of all those inner conflicts, and certainly not for someone from the outside, from the United States. Scenarios of what would occur were inconceivable. All eastern European regimes were considered one and the same. Stalin, and later Brezhnev: we thought that they had the last word. I even gave lectures at the Institute of Marxism-Leninism and at Humboldt University in the early 1960s. I spoke quite openly about Marx and Thomas Hobbes. Everything went rather well. But I ran into problems crossing the border. I had come with a friend who meanwhile has a quite high post in the United States. He had to undergo body searches. I can still see him in front of me, as they took him away, and he looked at me sadly. I told him that historians have to be prepared for everything. That is how it was here before, right? Later on, things eased up somewhat.

Runge/Stelbrink: None of us had any idea . . .

Mosse: Well, maybe I have misread Gorbachev on this aspect. At any rate, I never expected that he would let everything change like it did. Who would have known that Russian economic power was behind everything, and that it was in such crisis.

Runge/Stelbrink: Do you really think that was the real catalyst?

Mosse: Oh yes, definitely.

Runge/Stelbrink: Instead of merely examining crises in ideology to explain the collapse of the eastern European political system, it is more revealing to see the economy as the real reason, although of course the two cannot be separated . . .

Mosse: Yes, that is also how I view it. On the other hand, the way East Germany collapsed had something to do with political upheaval in the Soviet Union. Imagine, if you can, the whole situation in the Soviet Union without a Gorbachev. Don't you think that if Gorbachev had not said, in his last meeting with Honecker, "Do whatever you want, just not another Peking," that there would have been a similar riot in East Germany? It was merely a matter of survival. In my opinion, shots could also have also been fired here.

Runge/Stelbrink: But there also has to be people ready to command to shoot and people ready to do the shooting. There is also the consideration of survival, as you said. That is something that the rulers, until the very end, apparently had not figured out, in other words it was another example of their miscalculation, a complete misunderstanding of the events. But it was not a civil war situation either.

Mosse: No. It probably would not have been a civil war. But in my opinion the large demonstration in Leipzig, the one Krenz maintained he would not have used military force to suppress, could have ended in a massacre.

Runge/Stelbrink: Well, it is questionable whether Krenz deserves the accolades. New evidence shows that there had been a meeting of the military high command, but that there had not been any intention to intervene militarily, nor had any preparations been made. Peking had probably represented a line that could not be crossed, even for East German hardliners. Here we are in the middle of Europe, directly on the border to NATO.

Mosse: Yes, but do not overestimate that fact. Hitler always said, "Who still remembers the massacre of the Armenians?" That was very important for him, because one million Armenians were killed by Turks in the First World War. It has already been forgotten . . .

Runge/Stelbrink: But that is not comparable, something that happened in 1915!

Mosse: It surely is comparable! Who still remembers the Heavenly Peace in China? And how long ago was that? You see! The Americans meet with the Chinese foreign minister as if nothing had happened. Do they really think that the reaction to a massacre in the heart of Europe would have been more resolute? No, the west would not have been able to invade East Germany without receiving Gorbachev's permission. Let us say, 500 dead, pardon me, it sounds horrible, but that is how many there might have been, not very agreeable, but actually rather risk-free. In my opinion that could have been possible.

Runge/Stelbrink: But it did not happen, thank God.

Mosse: Yes, thank God. I believe it was mostly because Gorbachev refused to give any military support to any socialist state, including East Germany. A completely new situation thus arose. Otherwise there would have been no collapse, and without Gorbachev's cooperation it would not have proceeded peacefully. Do you really think that the regime here was so weak that it could have collapsed on its own? You are able to assess that proposition better than I am.

Runge/Stelbrink: At least the regime proved itself incapable of action during critical situations. The inner consensus had been lost, and general dissatisfaction had grown too great even inside the SED and in the security agencies. There was no majority in favor of going against the will of our own population. Reform elements inside the SED still had hopes for a democratic Socialism, something incompatible with armed confrontation. The states of the Warsaw pact were very fragile politically and economically, western Europe with its Economic Community seemed ever more threatening, the quality of life stagnated. But probably a more important factor was that what little strategy remained had already worn out. Finally, a consideration of the role of nationalism had been completely neglected, and it turned out to be the decisive factor.

Mosse: That is possible because Honecker may very well have grown so accustomed to the division that he thought it was forever. Above all, what could he have done to stop it? I mean that it was a television revolution. If one saw daily that the average standard of living was higher in the west, for decades, then ideological explanations no longer work. People want to be able to live the same way.

Runge/Stelbrink: In former East Germany and Germany in general a debate has been unleashed, primarily among the Left, whether East Germany really had socialism or whether it was something different. Would you still give a socialist experiment another chance?

Mosse: Do you mean East German-style socialism, bolshevism? No, not in the foreseeable future.

Runge/Stelbrink: Of course we do not mean what has just been historically defeated, but rather the ideals of a more just world.

Mosse: It depends on what that means. I see possibilities for the welfare state model. But this alternative, no, I think not -- too much was backwards. One need only look back on what it was -- no, for that I see no chance. But Marxism, that is a powerful idea! I could imagine a humane Marxist regime, but it would be very difficult to put into practice. Marx's theory allows for no transition, in my opinion that is actually the main problem . . .

Runge/Stelbrink: What do you mean by no transition?

Mosse: Marx's Marxism is both collective and individualistic by nature. For example, Marx's utopia of fishing and hunting is an individualist utopia, right? But embedded in a self-sustaining society, and that is very, very difficult to create. Because in reality those are two diametrically opposed things. Marx has no parliament or any similar structure in place to limit somewhat conflicts between the individual and society. Thus, if East Germany had had a real parliament, things would surely have turned out differently.

Runge/Stelbrink: But it could not have had a parliament, because that was precisely what fit neither into how the SED viewed itself nor into their understanding of Lenin's theory of revolution -- as the "progressive force in the society." We are also amazed that debates over

Marx versus Lenin actually remained completely abstract and had nearly nothing to do with reality. I should rephrase that to: we should have been amazed earlier . . .

Mosse: Yes, too bad! But if there is ever going to be an attempt to create a socialist society again, it will have to take a different course. It does not need to include a parliament, but it could include a corporation of some kind, I do not know. But there must be something in-between . . .

Runge/Stelbrink: As an instrument of public control and social reintegration . . .

Mosse: Exactly that was missing.

Runge/Stelbrink: Moreover, the importance of property relations was overestimated. It was presumed that once the issue of private property had been solved, everything else was merely secondary and only derivative of that aspect. So other problems were treated politically instead of sincerely.

Mosse: Property is more than just ownership. It is also a wall against the rest of the society, to a certain degree. But people do not want walls, but rather free space, guaranteed free space. That is what it is all about. You cannot take free spaces from people and then organize their lives for them. It happened that way, I know, but it will not succeed in the longer term.

Runge/Stelbrink: Desires for free space will continue because one's responsibility toward society is increasing more and more.

Mosse: Yes, right. But I believe, no, I do not know whether Marxism is dead. I have dear friends, renowned Hungarian Marxists, all students of Lukacs. They once had to flee Hungary. Of course now they are more than welcome there. For years they have attempted to salvage Marxism. I have always wondered whether it was still possible. Was it not long ago squelched by bolshevism? Marxism is not a twentieth-century theory but rather from the nineteenth century, a fact often overlooked. I believe it suited 1880, 1890, the time of the First World War and its aftermath. But after that, and especially today? No. During this age of new technologies it is very difficult to adhere to original Marxism and the analysis it offered. One reason is because there is no working class anymore, no real, self-assured working class, not even in Germany. Not even a conscious working class? No! Just take a look at the German trade unions! Only England still has class-conscious unions, for example for coal miners. Nothing of the sort exists in Germany, and certainly not in the United States. Thus the real issue is whether the basis for Marxism still exists!

Runge/Stelbrink: Or the basis has changed . . .

Mosse: Yes, but I mean the classical working class, the one Marx and Engels meant, the one Engels knew in Manchester. Marx was never in a factory, but Engels was. So their conception of the working class, which was the precondition for their analysis, no longer exists in that form. That is a conclusive realization. The assumptions are not conducive to the facts anymore.

Runge/Stelbrink: Thus you assume that the social forces Marx and Engels observed no longer exist, at least not in their original structures . . .

Mosse: That is exactly the point!

Runge/Stelbrink: The consequences can be seen in Germany. The working class party, the SPD, is as little a worker's party as the CDU, but both receive votes from workers. The PDS would like to be a working class party but it attracts leftist intellectuals and no workers.

Mosse: That was Marcuse's theory, was it not? The intellectuals would form the new proletariat, the revolutionary force. No. There is no longer a proletariat. The proletarians -- if they ever existed -- represent a social group that no longer exists. Surely there was a proletariat in Marx's and Engels' time, in England, in those factories.

Runge/Stelbrink: So do you think that if the economic situation does not become destabilized, from now on social change can only be set in motion by long-term processes, by changes in public opinion, by the growth of new concepts accepted by the majority, by changes in morality?

Mosse: Yes, but that has political consequences. When morality becomes emancipated, as is the case now for example, then the adherents of the new, emancipated morality are naturally on the Left, not the Right.

Runge/Stelbrink: Gorbachev also sought to reintroduce moral categories into politics. But he seems to have failed.

Mosse: That is true, yes. But one cannot expect such long-lasting processes to take hold immediately. The Soviet Union and eastern Europe moreover are experiencing such new problems as unemployment. Whatever problems Soviet or East German society had, their people had one thing they no longer have: security. They did not have free speech, but they had security, and now they have lost that.

Runge/Stelbrink: Life was secure, yes, that is correct.

Mosse: I always imagine that to be rather boring. Was that so?

Runge/Stelbrink: It was that too, but mostly one never had the chance to test one's potential limits. We were all much too cautious; we always paid too much heed . . .

Mosse: But one never worried about losing an apartment or a job.

Runge/Stelbrink: Yes, but there is more to life than that. We are a long way from being able to learn to appreciate our new freedoms. For now, the social consequences of the reunification are shocking enough.

Mosse: But you must have been able to foresee those consequences.

Runge/Stelbrink: Yes and no. Although unemployment in the west was a common theme in East Germany's media, few people believed it was that way, probably because people did not believe the media and the press in general. West German media also had an effect, and people believed the repeated assertions of the west that whoever really wanted to work could find a job. But basically that did not affect East Germans.

Mosse: Well, most East Germans then voted for the CDU. Probably as a reaction against East Germany. The CDU represented policies that were farthest from it.

Runge/Stelbrink: Yes, that was the other extreme. Another reason was most surely the promise for a speedy reunification, and the hope it carried of being able to have a standard of living as high as that of West Germans.

Mosse: Yes, Lafontaine's made the mistake of wanting to slow the reunification process. It was a grave mistake.

Runge/Stelbrink: But like others in the opposition, he was correct with the warnings.

Mosse: But that is no way to win elections.

Runge/Stelbrink: The question remains whether Lafontaine even wanted to win the elections. Then the SPD -- just like any other political force -- would have had the thankless task of managing a crisis. It could not be avoided after the rapid reunification, but by then it could not be stopped. After reunification was ratified, it was no longer possible to favor a federalist concept. But the terms of the reunification as they were ratified had to force eastern Germany into its present crisis and widen the gap between eastern and western Germany. Even if both sides had not agreed on reunification, it became a historical fact, but nobody had really recognized it. The east is hard for the west to digest, as we now see . . .

Mosse: No, it has something to do with the power former West Germany has. Former East Germany no longer has any power; it is like an annexed region. But its people are not opposed to that. Even those who voted for Mr. Gysi are not willing to retain the ways of former East Germany.

Runge/Stelbrink: Of course that is correct. Now, with reunification, the Second World War has come to an end. Even a few months ago, this result would not have been possible. The lessons from past wars seem to be lost quickly on the succeeding generations. Just think of Operation Desert Storm. It must have something to do with illusions about war. Even if you might think that much has changed since the Second World War . . .

Mosse: I feel that today nobody has illusions about war. And that in fact is a change. Even those who conduct wars say that war is bad. Before, it was not that way. In the long run, these changed attitudes can make a difference. But I cannot explain why pacifism cannot prevail. Is nationalism the reason people reject pacifism? It was so bizarre with Operation Desert Storm:

suddenly American television said that people die in wars. But that seems obvious, doesn't it? In England in the 1930s we circulated a petition proclaiming that we did not want to fight for king and country. Then pacifists suggested that we signed the petition because we wanted Franco to win the Spanish Civil War. Thus one day we were signing petitions against the war, and the next day we were volunteering to go to Spain. That is the problem with pacifism . . .

Runge/Stelbrink: In a related vein, how do you view the peace movement in Germany?

Mosse: What is there to say against it? At least the German peace movement is a new beginning, in spite of its excesses. It is wrong the way every side faults the Germans for those excesses. To me, this development is the great accomplishment of the Second World War: the Germans just do not want to fight anymore. I know that there are such other, less admirable aspects to it as anti-Americanism and Third World romanticism. But it might still be a beginning. As for myself, after all my experiences, I tend to favor pacifism in spite of all its problems in real situations. If every state refused to fight, the world would be a better place.

Runge/Stelbrink: But the peace movement has also been accused that their refusal to fight masks a flight from responsibility . . .

Mosse: That may be a justifiable charge in view of a nation-state, but there is more underlying the refusal to fight. In light of Germany and German history, I find what has happened here very promising. There was a poll taken by the newsmagazine "Der Spiegel" on the topic. Well, which country do the Germans consider utopian? Switzerland. That makes sense, because which country would not gladly choose to be like a Switzerland or a Sweden? They no longer fight, young people are no longer killed in battle, wonderful. The Germans consider Switzerland the promised land! In earlier times, war-like Iraq might have seemed to them such a country; the feuding nation! Apparently all that has disappeared in the Germans. So I guess they did learn something from the Second World War after all. I cannot express how happy that makes me! What more could one want? This might be a turning point in German history - short and to the point.

Runge/Stelbrink: But what about Israel? The peace movement in Germany is accused of ignoring the problems there, of lacking sensitivity of the Jewish trauma. Their essential counter-argument is that complex peaceful solutions are needed for the entire region . . .

Mosse: Someday Israel will have to return most of the occupied territories, which I have always supported, especially now. In the 1960s Nasser once said to an Israeli, "Defeat us and you will suffocate on us." Israel would have suffocated on Egypt if it had tried . . .

Runge/Stelbrink: When were you in Israel for the first time?

Mosse: In 1951.

Runge/Stelbrink: And were you ever in Palestine before then?

Mosse: No, I was not interested in Palestine. For a while, I was even an ardent anti-Zionist. Now I am a Zionist with many reservations.

Runge/Stelbrink: What are your reservations?

Mosse: Did you know that for a time Zionism was an exemplary, non-aggressive form of nationalism? I treated that topic in my book "German Jews Beyond Jewery" Zionism was a kind of old-fashioned patriotism which granted other peoples their rights, supported by liberals and Social Democrats. It was a Zionism predominantly, but not exclusively, of the western European Jews who did not have to directly experience the worst of the persecution. This positive and tolerant nationalism lasted for a long time in Israel and has not completely lost its influence there. eastern Zionism on the other hand was the Zionism of the persecuted Jews. That is where the Menachem Begins are from.

Runge/Stelbrink: When were you a firm anti-Zionist?

Mosse: Well, I was from an anti-Zionist family. Who would ever have thought or believed what eventually happened in Germany. Zionism first became a reality because of Hitler, and then the war. During and after the war my mind began to change. It was a reaction to the Holocaust. My reservations also have something to do with enlightened Jewish liberalism. Such early Zionists as Weizmann or Buber, for example, were actually enlightened liberal Zionists. They supported a binational state, or at least equal rights for Jews and Arabs. Thus Zionism was for a time -- and that is why it is so interesting -- a kind of archaic nationalism, a kind of patriotism, similar to what Germany experienced during the Wars of Liberation. Yet it was not aggressive; the goal was to live together peacefully and equally as a people. The tradition was then carried on by German Jews in Palestine. They were the driving force behind all efforts towards binationalism. Over time and because of the wars, that all became weakened. But not among the Jews who now carry on the heritage in the peace movement "Peace Now!" or in progressive circles. That is Israel's other side people do not see, because nowadays only modern exclusive nationalism makes the headlines. But a fairly significant part of the Israeli population still supports that kind of old patriotism. But with every war it becomes increasingly difficult. I can only stress: any other nation, I repeat, any other, after all those wars, would have long ago completely embraced some modern chauvinistic brand of nationalism. Just imagine what would have happened in Germany after three wars in such a short time span! By comparison, there were even large anti-war demonstrations in Israel during a war, the war with Lebanon. The opposition is active. The political system in Israel is bad, all those factions. The good old traditions of enlightened Judaism and Zionism have been able to exert only a limited influence under those difficult circumstances, which created a kind of benign, nineteenth-century "Wald- und Wiesen" nationalism. Flying the flag and all that. Where else is that still done?

Runge/Stelbrink: You have lived in America, England, Israel, Italy, the Netherlands and Germany. What are the differences you perceive?

Mosse: Naturally each country, each people has its own characteristics. But the real differences have to be experienced in person by living there. Tourists cannot really ascertain

characteristics, although they can still notice certain truths about a country. Italy, for example: Italy is at once different yet also a part of all that fits into European ways of thought and life. But Israel? When I went to Israel, right at the beginning, I was in the group of old German intellectuals from the Weimar Republic era. With whom should those people assimilate? With the Arabs? No, the people from the Germany of the Weimar Republic did not change; they continued living their German lifestyle. Of course under other conditions, in the Mediterranean, among palm trees instead of pine trees. They celebrated birthdays like in Germany, with poetry readings, with coffee. And of course they spoke German. I thought it was great, because I really did not experience the Weimar Republic. Yet there I met very intelligent and important people, an intellectual elite, suddenly left to themselves. They were liberals through and through.

Runge/Stelbrink: You emphasized the Italians. What makes the Italians different from the others?

Mosse: Their history is different. Just one example: They are lucky to have the Papal States and the Pope. Therefore their reaction to reactionary currents has deep-rooted traditions. There is no tradition of anti-Semitism, but a strong, if battered, liberal tradition. There is absolutely no comparison with Bismarck and Germany. These characteristics led to the fact that the Italians cannot be governed. They are a people comprised completely of individualists. Then there is the climate: people live outside, at the cafe, more publicly. The historical development of Italy just took quite different directions. A country's so-called national characteristic must be viewed historically. Otherwise conclusions drawn can be racist.

Runge/Stelbrink: But a people's everyday life is shaped by whatever is common to its country. By attributing aspects of daily life to the commonplace, a people can notice what is different, strange or alien, from another country, what is foreign . . .

Mosse: Yes, that is true. I always say: the best country in which to live for someone who is an anti-nationalist, as I consider myself, is the United States. Italy would also be a possibility. American life contains practically no all-powerful seminal nationalism. For years I have been amazed by narrow-minded European nationalism. What does it matter that someone is English or French? But in America, there is also a countertype: racism against the blacks, against the non-whites. Nevertheless, formally America also has its nationalism, there are flags in the schools, and a few patriotic speeches and songs on television on national holidays, but that is all there is to it. Even racism is always directed against the countertype without establishing an ideal, an Aryan, for example. In earlier times the ideal type existed: white and clean cut, the image the Europeans also imagine to be typical of the United States. Nowadays there are even black ideal types on television. It seems to me that modern nationalism is much weaker in America than in Europe. Instead, it has taken on more liberal forms. Racism in America is against something, not in favor of anything. The ideal type of the white, clean all-American boy suffered a critical blow in the sixties, due to the civil rights movement. America is progressive in this sense. Racism is just not accepted. Most feel it is too bad that it exists; it is combatted. I absolutely believe that Bush is not a racist, nor was Reagan.

Runge/Stelbrink: The United States is a classic land of emigration. In the country it becomes immediately apparent to visiting whites that they are white, and in everyday life one quickly senses the different ways of life, religions, customs, etc. In Germany, where experience with racism is always connected to the genocide toward the Jews, new racist tendencies are often quickly dismissed. Specifically, there are attempts to grant foreigners voting rights, and the disgusting arguments against it that were and still are being used. A gay, black, leftist Jew from Turkey, suspected of having Arab descent -- that is perhaps what the denied and repressed German countertype would be.

Mosse: And again, that is connected with history. Nationalism cannot be eradicated so easily. All Germans traditionally have reservations about eastern European countries. I had them once too. By the way, I did not have them toward blacks; when I was growing up in Germany there were none here. It is not as though America had treated its natives and minorities in an exemplary fashion. But in many ways the United States is very progressive. For example, with women's issues, Germany is horribly backward by comparison, to say nothing of England . . .

Runge/Stelbrink: Two more questions in conclusion: in which language do you actually think? And secondly: in which country would you most prefer to live?

Mosse: How I think? I think in all imaginable languages. But I write mostly in English, sometimes in German. Of course I also hold lectures in German and French. And as for residing somewhere, I enjoy living in my house in Madison, and in Israel. That is really difficult to answer. Where do I feel at home? In America, but not everywhere there. I could very well imagine that I could also live in Germany. As for France, that would be more difficult, because in France I was a refugee, and it was not a pleasant experience. Until this day I am still having problems coming to terms with that period. From 1933 until 1939, while my parents were living in France, I travelled to France from England six times every year, and it was always humiliating. It is a myth that France treated its refugees with decency. At the mairie, the city administration offices, where the resident permits were issued, it was always very embarrassing. But I cannot generalize from my own experiences. So, where would I most like to live? Wherever it does not matter which country's passport I am carrying, where I do not even need one, where I am just accepted for who I am. Perhaps -- or sometimes -- that is in America. But maybe there is no such country, it might be that one single country could never be like that. That is how I would like to live, but maybe, just maybe, former emigrant that I am, I shall never settle down?