

14. THE FELLOW TRAVELLER

I

When I was just starting as a graduate student at Oxford, in 1970, I was approached by a history don at the university who asked me if I would like to apply for a new scholarship that had been set up by the F.V.S. Foundation in Hamburg. I already had a grant from the then Social Science Research Council and didn't need the money, but I didn't want to offend him, so I applied and was duly awarded it – there were two of them on offer, and there wasn't much competition.

They were called the Hanseatic Scholarships and they provided a year in Hamburg and a second year in Germany wherever one needed to go (I went to Berlin). The founder was a man called Alfred Toepfer, a wealthy businessman who, as his secretary explained to me at the welcoming dinner in his guesthouse in Hamburg a few months later, had been inspired by the example of Cecil Rhodes to convert his fortune into a Foundation under the Weimar Republic. Toepfer's youthful experiences in the celebrated *Wandervogel* youth movement before the First World War had led him, she said, to devote his life to fostering understanding between the youth of different nations.

In the early days of Appeasement between the wars, the Rhodes Trust had reinstated the two Rhodes Scholarships offered to Germans (who had been expelled from the Anglo-Saxon club in 1914) and now,

after the Queen's state visit to Germany in 1965 had sealed the renewal of friendship between the two nations, they had been revived again after going into abeyance for a second time in 1939. On both occasions – the first after an interval of a few years – Toepfer's Foundation had established two Hanseatic Scholarships as a kind of quid pro quo, Rhodes Scholarships in reverse. Even the amount of money paid to the Hanseatic Scholars was the same, converted into German marks, as was paid to a Rhodes Scholar. So far, so admirable.

But as the dinner progressed, I soon began to realise that what Toepfer meant by international friendship wasn't quite the same as was generally understood by others in the 1970s. This was the period when Edward Heath's Tory government was securing Britain's entry into the European Community (later European Union), and in welcoming myself and my fellow scholar to Germany, Toepfer declared that this was another step in the furthering of cooperation between the different nations of the Anglo-Saxon race (and he really did speak in these terms, unthinkable in Germany today).

In particular, Toepfer lamented the fact that such cooperation had been so sadly lacking in the past. If only England, as he called it, had joined the European Community in the fifties, along with the Scandinavian nations! The preponderance of the Latin race in the European Community, he said, had caused many difficulties and had been a great hindrance to its development. This visibly embarrassed the British Consul-General Mr Purves, who by this stage was holding his head in his hands, and indeed it embarrassed almost everyone else present. I thought it best not to mention that, being Welsh, I was not an Anglo-Saxon myself.

Later, I found myself engaged in a lively debate with Harald Mandt, the chairman of the Hanseatic Scholarships committee and himself a former German Rhodes Scholar, about apartheid in South Africa, which he wholeheartedly supported. Then I talked to Toepfer's deputy Herr Riecke, who said he had been interned by the British occupation authorities after the war. I asked him what he felt about it now. He had paid his dues, he said, with a shrug of his shoulders. Later, when

everyone had gone, I looked round the bookshelves in the Foundation's guest house, where I was staying the night. With a slightly queasy feeling, I noted several works of what we would now call Holocaust denial on them.

There was worse. As I signed the guest book in the morning, the housekeeper gushed to me about another visitor who had recently stayed over: Albert Speer, Hitler's friend and Armaments Minister during the war, who had been released not long before from the twenty-year prison sentence imposed on him at the Nuremberg War Crimes Trials. Such a gentleman, she said, such perfect manners.

Did this mean Toepfer was a neo-Nazi? It wasn't easy to find out in 1970. West German historians hadn't undertaken any research on ex-Nazis in their own society – that didn't come for decades. All one had to go on was the *Brown Book* published by the Communist regime in East Germany, listing hundreds of Nazi war criminals in the West German political, judicial and economic elites. Toepfer's name wasn't in it. Moreover, his staff assured us that he had remained uninvolved with the Nazi regime, indeed had actually been imprisoned by it for a while because he opposed it. And the company he kept was nothing unusual in West Germany at the time, as the *Brown Book* indicated; the entire postwar economy was crawling with serious Nazi war criminals, including retailers like Josef Neckermann who had profited from the 'Aryanisation' of Jewish businesses in the Nazi years, businessmen like Krupp and Flick who had been found guilty in the Nuremberg industrialists' trial of using slave labour, senior managers in the IG Farben conglomerate like Fritz ter Meer, who had set up a factory at Auschwitz from which underperforming workers were periodically 'selected' for the gas chambers, senior officials in the Degussa company, suppliers of Zyklon-B to the gas chambers, and many more. Toepfer didn't seem to belong in this company. Indeed, his staff pointed out that he had been completely exonerated by a denazification process after the war, unlike many other businessmen.

True, he almost seemed to make a point of employing former Nazis in his Foundation. But this didn't mean he was a Nazi himself. Even

the most respectable West Germans didn't seem to mind keeping company with ex-Nazis. For many years, Chancellor Adenauer himself had employed as the head of his own office Hans Globke, the civil servant who had written the standard commentary on the Nuremberg race laws in the 1930s. One of Adenauer's concerns, indeed, was to get old Nazis to commit themselves to democracy by integrating them into the West German establishment, no questions asked, so they wouldn't harbour resentments or gravitate towards neo-Nazism. And there was no sign that Toepfer was peddling any kind of neo-Nazi ideology. His racist views, I realised as I learned more about the intellectual and political world of Germany before 1914, were common among German elites long before Nazism even existed. And most probably the Holocaust denial books in Toepfer's library were unread. Toepfer did not strike me as a well-read or well-educated man; indeed, in most matters apart from business he seemed, as his speech at the inaugural Hanseatic dinner suggested, rather naive.

Nor did Toepfer and the Foundation try to influence us in any way in our own political or historical views. The Foundation seemed to have little idea of what to do with us Hanseatic Scholars and certainly gave no indication of any political intent in its administration of the scholarships. We were expected to study at Hamburg University but we never bothered, since, as doctoral students, we were more concerned with researching and writing our theses than with going to lectures; without telling the Foundation, we spent a lot of time in archives away from the city; and the Foundation only ever showed an interest in us when it required our presence at a dinner of one kind or another, which was not very often.

My doctoral project assessed the complicity of the liberal German bourgeoisie, or at least its female half, in the rise of Nazism. I was inspired to do so by the work of Martin Broszat on the support given to Hitler by German elites. My fellow Hanseatic Scholar was investigating the sexual habits of Bavarian peasants in the early nineteenth century. Subsequent Hanseatic Scholars also worked unhindered on other critical investigations of the darker side of modern German

history. The idea that the Foundation would try to interfere in our research or our extra-curricular life was simply absurd. On my return to Oxford, I lost contact with the Foundation, and felt more obliged to it for introducing me to some of the dubious realities of the West German establishment in the 1970s than for anything else.

Meanwhile, the Foundation continued its educational and cultural work unabated. Over the subsequent decades, more than eighty graduate students or postdoctoral fellows from Oxford and, more recently, Cambridge as well, benefited from the Hanseatic Scholarships. The Foundation established many more exchange scholarships with other countries, particularly in Eastern Europe. It awarded prizes for cultural achievements of various kinds, some of them from the 1930s, others founded since the war. The recipients read like a galaxy of twentieth-century political and cultural stars. The Shakespeare Prize for cultural achievement was awarded, for example, to Ralph Vaughan Williams, Benjamin Britten, Ian McEwan and A. S. Byatt, among others.

II

Some years after that memorable welcoming dinner in Hamburg, the Foundation's prizes began to run into trouble. A particular problem was posed by the Upper Rhenish Cultural Prize, set up in 1966 and awarded in turn to figures from France, Germany and Switzerland. The idea was to support the idea of a common culture across artificial state boundaries in this area. Allegations surfaced that portrayed the F.V.S. Foundation's support for cross-border cultural ties as part of a prewar German imperialist tradition aimed ultimately at the annexation of eastern France and northern Switzerland to Germany.

The charges were levelled by a French schoolteacher, Lionel Boissou, who alleged that the Upper Rhenish Cultural Prize was awarded by a 'bare-faced agitator' for German aggrandisement in Switzerland and Alsace – namely, Alfred Toepfer, a man with, as he said, 'a dubious past'. This led not only to the prize being withdrawn,

in 1996, but also to the Basel Burckhard Prize being withdrawn by the Foundation itself the previous year. In 1999 Boissou persuaded the French Senate to prevent the use of its premises for the ceremony awarding the Foundation's Robert Schuman Prize to a former Polish Foreign Minister.

Boissou was in fact a vehement French nationalist who campaigned for the compulsory use of French as the medium of instruction in all French schools, and regarded the minority language campaigns in Brittany and the French Basque country as part of a German plot to dismember France, reminiscent of similar plots in the interwar years. In 1997, Boissou stated that post-1990 Europe was in danger of being 'wholly subjected to German domination'. The Maastricht Treaty's insistence on minority language rights in a 'Europe of the regions' simply fuelled this paranoia. His campaign, therefore, despite achieving results, was very much that of a loner on the fringes of politics.

However, Boissou received support from the German historical geographer Michael Fahlbusch, who had published a study of the German People's Research Association in the Nazi period. This organisation sponsored ethnic maps of Europe that were later used by the Nazis in ethnic cleansing and mass murder operations in Eastern Europe. The German People's Research Association had close personal and financial ties with Toepfer and his Foundations. But Fahlbusch's thesis that these maps were drawn up specifically in order to facilitate mass murder was not borne out by the evidence. The Nazis' genocidal intentions and plans had an entirely independent genesis. So, in the end, it was scarcely legitimate to allege from all this that Toepfer funded 'academic support of the Holocaust', as Fahlbusch claimed.

Another campaign unfolded against Toepfer in Austria. When, in 1990, the Foundation set up the Grillparzer Prize, for cultural achievements in Austria, linked to two travel scholarships for young Austrians, the drama student Christian Michaelides launched a campaign against what he called a 'neo-German form of power-politics' and a 'shameless act of cultural colonisation'. Michaelides was heavily criticised by the Austrian journalist Ulrich Weinzierl, who called his

campaign 'a broth of half-truths, exaggerations and insinuations', and 'a symptom of the latent discomfort in Austria in the face of the new enlarged Germany' following reunification in 1990. Nevertheless, when the Austrian novelist Hans Lebert was awarded the prize in 1992, he sent an actor to the ceremony to repeat a litany of similar allegations of German cultural imperialism ('First missionaries come and change our world picture, then come the businessmen and corrupt the chiefs of the tribe with more or less valuable gifts, and lastly come the occupying forces and hoist up an alien flag').

Austria is a German-speaking country, whose inhabitants overwhelmingly welcomed the German annexation of 1938 and since the Second World War has struggled to find a convincing national identity. No wonder Austrians were worried in 1992. The prize was in fact awarded on the recommendation of the Austrian Academy of Sciences (the reason for the mockery poured over it by one of its recipients, the writer Thomas Bernhard, hilariously recounted in his novella *Wittgenstein's Nephew*). But the paranoid campaign against Toepfer and his Foundation continued and culminated in the mailing of forged letters to numerous Austrian authors telling them they had won the Grillparzer Prize. Not surprisingly, the Foundation by this time had had enough and discontinued it.

Clearly, therefore, the Foundation was being put on the defensive in the 1990s. After Toepfer's death in 1993 it commissioned a thorough investigation of what his businesses and his Foundation had done during the Nazi period, no doubt expecting the historians it engaged, led by the leading German specialist on the Third Reich, Hans Mommsen, and including French and Swiss as well as German contributors, to exonerate them. But they did not. On the contrary, the results of their investigations, when they appeared in 2000, were devastating. They revealed that Toepfer's involvement with the Nazi regime had been far greater than he had admitted. Even his staff were shocked. It took some time for them to come to terms with the revelations, which were not published in book form until 2006. Two years later one of the contributors, Jan Zimmermann, published a biography

of Toepfer containing fresh discoveries and adding more material about the Foundation's history after 1945.

These findings were initially ignored by Oxford and Cambridge. But in the April 2010 issue of *Standpoint*, the lively conservative intellectual monthly edited by Daniel Johnson, they were presented to an English-speaking readership in a lengthy article by Michael Pinto-Duschinsky, a writer on elections and party funding, with a few extra discoveries of his own. Under the headlines: 'The prize lies of a Nazi tycoon' and 'A Nazi shadow over Oxford', Pinto-Duschinsky described Toepfer as a 'sponsoring member' of the SS who was enormously helpful to Hitler. In the 1930s, he said, Toepfer channelled money via his Foundations to influence public opinion in Britain and elsewhere in Europe in favour of the Third Reich and played an important role in Nazi subversion in Austria, the Czech Sudetenland, Alsace-Lorraine and elsewhere.

Moreover, he charged, 'his closest henchmen were unrepentant Nazis who had been key figures in murdering hundreds of thousands of Jews and in starving to death countless numbers of Russian prisoners of war'. Since his death in 1993, he alleged, the Foundation had been assiduously 'greywashing' the Holocaust and its founder's role in it. 'The current leadership of the foundation used this unfortunate colour metaphor to avoid the reality that, if ever there were crimes that were irredeemably and completely evil, they were those of Nazi Germany.' Toepfer's money was 'severely tainted'. 'Greywash becomes whitewash.' The inevitable conclusion was that Oxford and Cambridge should sever their links with the Foundation and that the 'tainted scholarships' funded by the Foundation should be discontinued.

III

Who was Alfred Toepfer? Both the historical commission report and the biography by Zimmermann presented a mass of material on the man and his views that enabled the careful reader to reach an informed

judgement. Born in 1894 to humble parents (a sailor and a farmer's daughter), Toepfer left school early to go into trade, served in the army during the First World War, won the Iron Cross, First Class, and was wounded on three occasions, on none of them seriously. Before the war, as indeed his secretary had told me, he had been inspired by his membership of the rebellious youth movement, the *Wandervogel*, which took adolescent boys into the hills and woods to commune with nature and sing patriotic songs round the campfire. If this gave Toepfer's nationalism one kind of flavour, then his youthful reading of a book he referred to throughout his life as having exerted a huge influence on his outlook lent it another: this was Julius Langbehn's *Rembrandt as Educator*, a vastly popular work that treated the Dutch painter Rembrandt as racially German, saw community with nature as the essence of the German soul and condemned Jews and Slavs as uncreative and worthy only of being destroyed.

With such beliefs it was not surprising that Toepfer volunteered after the war for the Maercker *Freikorps*, a band of armed irregulars that 'restored order' in a number of central German towns following the German Revolution of 1918–19. After things had calmed down, he went into business, and quickly made a fortune in grain trading and the supply of raw materials for construction work. He got lucky with exchange rates in the German inflation of the early 1920s. Like other German-nationalist conservatives he welcomed the Hitler coalition cabinet of 30 January 1933, in which, after all, German-nationalist conservatives were in a majority. But like most of them, too, he did not object when Hitler established a Nazi dictatorship. Toepfer regarded its restoration of the German economy with satisfaction, and its organisation and disciplining of young people in the Hitler Youth with approval. The order he saw emerging – ignoring the massive violence with which it was established – seemed to him an indispensable basis for the expansion of business. Like other businessmen, he set about forging useful contacts with the regime and its servants.

Was Toepfer antisemitic? Pinto-Duschinsky did not allege that he was, and indeed there is not a single instance of his uttering even an

implicitly antisemitic remark in the whole course of his very long life. In this he was not untypical of Hamburg's business elite, which under the Weimar Republic included many Jews. Only gradually during the Nazi period did businessmen in the city move to take commercial advantage of 'Aryanisation', for example. Early in 1933, it is relevant to note, Toepfer openly advocated the election of Jews to the board of the grain merchants' division of the Hamburg Stock Exchange, to the horror of hard-line Nazis. There is no evidence to support Pinto-Duschinsky's supposition that the award of prizes to Jews such as Martin Buber after the war was intended as a cynical fig leaf to make it easier to award prizes to old Nazis as well. Toepfer simply wasn't that sophisticated. And of all the messages conveyed by *Rembrandt as Educator*, antisemitism seems to have had the least effect on him.

What was unusual about Toepfer, indeed very unusual, was his decision to convert his fortune into a Foundation and use it to award cultural prizes and scholarships. As the Swiss historian Georg Kreis had noted, 'Toepfer was a somewhat naïve idealist, a completely self-taught man who combined, again in a rather strange way, a reverence for the acknowledged giants of the contemporary worlds of art and science with a kind of proprietorial attitude to them.' Through the work of the Foundation he sought to gain the respect his humble background had initially denied him. He dreamed, in fact, of gaining the status and respect of a Cecil Rhodes.

Yet under the Third Reich, this ambition was almost bound to get him into trouble. After the rapid *Gleichschaltung*, or 'coordination', of almost every organisation in Germany apart from the armed forces and the Churches, the F.V.S. Foundation was by the mid-1930s unique, the only such body in Germany. The Nazis began to put Toepfer under pressure to make it over to them, spreading rumours about him and gathering what they could use to incriminate him. On 14 June 1937, basing themselves on knowledge of his complex international financial dealings, including transfers of funds between the F.V.S. and its sister Foundation, the J.W.G., in Switzerland, the Gestapo arrested Toepfer for alleged currency offences. Pinto-Duschinsky accepted their claim

that he was involved in 'tax evasion' and infringements of currency controls and that Toepfer's Foundation and its sister Foundation in Switzerland were no more than tax-avoidance devices. He claimed that 'the weight of evidence does not support' the argument that this was a pretext or that the real reason for his arrest was political.

But he provided not a shred of evidence to back up this assertion. It was in fact a typical Nazi tactic to trump up charges of tax evasion and currency fraud against people the regime did not like, but these did not stick either. On 23 May 1938 Toepfer was released without the charges ever having been proved, despite a minutely detailed prosecution audit of the books of his Foundations and his company. Nor was there any evidence to back Pinto-Duschinsky's assertion that by moving currency between banks in different countries – surely a normal activity for an international businessman – Toepfer was aiding the Nazi regime. The circumstances of his arrest in fact reflected Nazi hostility to his Foundation.

And how did Toepfer secure his release? Here Pinto-Duschinsky was on firmer ground, for Toepfer acted in the same way as many other businessmen in the Third Reich: he worked to win powerful patrons within the Nazi regime, securing, for example, the good offices of Hermann Göring, and appointing top SS men to senior positions in his Foundation. Contributing money to Heinrich Himmler's benefit fund can't have done him any harm either (this is what made him, like many businessmen, a 'sponsoring member' of the SS, which did not mean, however, that he was actually an SS officer or anything like it). In May 1938, he ceded his 'founder's rights' in the Foundation to Werner Lorenz, a senior SS officer who ran the Association for Germans Abroad, an organisation with which Toepfer had close connections. This was enough to bring about his release from custody. It looked as if the SS had now taken over. But in fact Lorenz had agreed not to exercise these rights in any way; and in 1942 Toepfer acquired them again. The whole business had been a manoeuvre that said much about Toepfer's determination to do anything to keep the Foundation going, but little about his own ideological convictions.

Pinto-Duschinsky was undoubtedly right in detailing the manner in which Toepfer made his country estates at Gut Siggen and Kalkhorst available to Austrian and Sudeten Nazis, who spent their time plotting the incorporation of their homelands into the Third Reich. Many of those who stayed there later distinguished themselves as mass murderers and a number were condemned after the war. Some, like Konrad Henlein, the leader of the Sudeten Germans in Czechoslovakia, or leading figures in the clandestine Nazi Party in Austria, were already involved in violence and terrorism at the time when Toepfer gave them practical support. Toepfer was involved, through members of the Foundation's board, in Nazi subversion in Switzerland and Alsace-Lorraine as well, funding local Nazis through the J.W.G. Foundation run by his brother Ernst.

In doing all this, Toepfer seems to have been acting on his own initiative rather than at the behest of the Nazi authorities. To say, as Pinto-Duschinsky did, that he was 'enormously helpful to Hitler', implies a personal relationship between the two men; there was none. Rather, Toepfer was pursuing his own German-nationalist belief, which neatly dovetailed with early Nazi foreign policy, that German-speakers in Austria, Czechoslovakia, Alsace-Lorraine and Switzerland should be 'brought back to the Reich' – a belief shared not only by the vast majority of Germans of all political hues at the time, but also to some extent at least by politicians and statesmen outside Germany, such as British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain, who accepted the *Anschluss* of Austria and brokered the incorporation of the Sudetenland into Germany at the Munich Agreement in 1938.

On reacquiring his Foundation in 1942, Toepfer used personal connections to get an appointment to the counter-espionage division of the German armed forces (*Abwehr*) in Paris, where he was in a division responsible for securing armaments for Germany and for dealing with sabotage and subversion in enemy states. Whether he actually did anything active remains obscure. The *Abwehr* was a strange organisation, full of opponents of Hitler who were to play a role in the plotting that led to the attempt to blow him up on 20 July 1944. Toepfer was

certainly not one of these, but he may well have shared the view of its Paris office that shooting hostages was counter-productive. In any case, he left the *Abwehr* in the middle of 1942 at the point when the SS took over the combatting of resistance, in view of what it regarded as the *Abwehr*'s softness.

From the start of 1943 Toepfer was commissioned by the Reich Economics Ministry to acquire hard currency for the Reich by secretly selling to foreign countries goods that were not needed in Germany. His first enterprise was the sale in Spain of half a million bottles of champagne that had been confiscated from the French by the German armed forces. There followed transactions with confiscated motor vehicles, cigarette papers, radio aerials, turbines and much more besides. Not a penny of this went into Toepfer's own pocket, though he did make a contribution in this way to the Nazis' exploitation of the French economy – a rather pathetic one, given the vast scale of the exploitation they carried out in other parts of the economy.

Is there any evidence that Toepfer profited from the mass murder of Jews? Pinto-Duschinsky claimed that a subsidiary of the Toepfer business supplied slaked lime to the German ghetto administration in Łódź, and noted that slaked lime was 'used among other things to cover cadavers'. However, there is no evidence that Toepfer himself was aware of any sale, and no reason why he should have been involved in the day-to-day management of this business, though he certainly did visit its branches in Posen and Kraków, was kept regularly informed about their business activities and ensured that he retained a controlling financial interest in them. The subsidiary in question was a construction company, and slaked lime is used as an ingredient in whitewash, mortar and plaster, as well as being an element in sewage treatment. There is no evidence that it was used to cover dead bodies of murdered Jews, indeed this is not even a reasonable supposition.

Pinto-Duschinsky did not mention that slaked lime was not the only thing the Toepfer subsidiary delivered to the ghetto administration in Łódź: it also supplied cement, suggesting its involvement in construction here as elsewhere in Eastern Europe, and food materials

such as flour and peas. In journalistic accounts of Pinto-Duschinsky's article, for example in *Cherwell*, the Oxford student magazine, a hypothetical possibility became a fact, in 'the supplying of slaked lime to cover bodies in the Polish Ghetto city of Łódź'. Moreover, it is interesting to note that when the Gestapo arrested all the Poles employed at the yard shared by Toepfer's firm and various other construction companies in Posen after the Polish resistance had burned it down, it was Toepfer's company that interceded for them and helped eventually to secure their release.

In fact, Toepfer's businesses were involved in political activities in another way, for by supplying building materials for German settlements in occupied Poland, or organising the delivery of foodstuffs to Germany from Turkey, in helping with the construction of military emplacements in the Polish General Government or carrying out 'cultural work' in the region, they were both underpinning the Germanisation of conquered Poland and contributing to the German war effort in a more general way. Business and ideology went hand-in-hand with Toepfer as it did with other German businesses at the time. But for men like him it was German nationalism rather than Nazism that supplied the ideology; closely related and overlapping though they may have been, they were not identical.

IV

After the war, Toepfer underwent a period of two years' internment by the British occupation authorities, who eventually decided to classify him, reasonably enough, as a 'fellow traveller' of the Nazis before handing him over to a German-run denazification tribunal. Like many in the same situation, he had obtained testimonials from a variety of respected figures, and made claims to have been involved in resisting the Nazi regime that were exaggerated, to say the least. So he got a clean bill of health to serve as an alibi later on. In the 1950s and 1960s Toepfer rebuilt his businesses and amassed a large fortune, which he

poured into the reconstruction and expansion of the Foundation and the establishment of new prizes and scholarships. He fitted seamlessly into the new world of the West German 'economic miracle' and quickly made friends with the Christian Democratic establishment of Konrad Adenauer and Ludwig Erhard; an establishment, as I have noted, that was full of former Nazis with records far worse than his.

Pinto-Duschinsky implied that Toepfer continued to be a closet Nazi while leading a 'double life' through feigned conversion to European unity on the surface, and using the award of his prizes to 'a smattering of Jews' to provide a fig leaf for his award of prizes to a variety of 'Nazi associates and a series of antisemitic, *völkisch* (racist) writers and scholars'. But there is no meaningful evidence to support the claim of a 'double life': Toepfer's European enthusiasm was genuine, even if it still had significant continuities with the beliefs he had held before 1945.

Toepfer seems to have thought at that time that the 'new order' in Europe established with the Nazi victories of 1940 would pave the way for a new era of European cooperation under German leadership. That it involved the extermination of millions of Jews and Slavs, which he must have known about, since the overwhelming majority of Germans knew about it, does not seem to have troubled him. Pinto-Duschinsky quoted a publication of 1940 in which Toepfer praised Nazism for achieving 'social justice' in Germany, abolishing unemployment and educating the young of all classes in body as well as in mind. Nazism had, he said, achieved *völkisch* unity, by which he seems to have meant the absorption of supposedly Germanic elements in other European countries into the Reich. He did not seem to care that it did so at the cost of many lives and enormous suffering to others.

By 1943 the dream of German-led European cooperation had been rudely shattered by ruthless Nazi exploitation of the conquered countries. Like many other supporters of the 'new order', Toepfer seems to have turned to the postwar order that, after the Battle of Stalingrad had clearly announced the inevitability of German defeat, would resurrect European cooperation in a new form. Thinking along these

lines was tolerated by the regime, which in the latter part of the war presented itself as fighting for Europe against the threat of American and Soviet domination. Such ideas flowed easily into the lightly modified form of Toepfer's Euro-enthusiasm after the war.

How deep were Toepfer's sympathies with Nazism after 1945? One of Pinto-Duschinsky's undoubted discoveries was that Toepfer's daughter Gerda visited Oxford in 1951 to hand over the 1938 Shakespeare Prize to John Masefield, the Poet Laureate. While in Oxford, she talked to C. A. Macartney, a Fellow of All Souls and leading historian of modern Hungary, who wanted to interview three men who had been senior German officials in Hungary during the brief period when the German occupation brought the fascist and antisemitic Arrow Cross movement to power, leading directly to the murder of more than 400,000 Hungarian Jews in Auschwitz. Pinto-Duschinsky claimed that subsequent correspondence implied that Gerda Toepfer wanted Macartney to use his good contacts in the British government to press for the early release of Edmund Veessenmayer, one of these officials, from prison in return for being granted access to him.

Pinto-Duschinsky did not have direct evidence to support this claim. He was right to say that, after his release, Veessenmayer joined the staff of Toepfer's Foundation, but in fact this was only as a representative for the branch of his business that existed in Tehran; and Toepfer fired him after two years anyway. This was hardly being 'closely associated' with him, as claimed in *Cherwell* magazine. However, Veessenmayer's personal secretary from 1940 to 1945, Barbara Hacke, became Toepfer's private secretary. Pinto-Duschinsky quoted a letter of 1952 in which, he said, Hacke 'effectively justified the Holocaust', and indeed it implicitly defended the German-Hungarian extermination of the Jews as part of a Pan-European rather than a nationalistic enterprise. Moreover, Veessenmayer's deputy Kurt Haller also joined Toepfer's staff, becoming his legal counsel in 1947.

As for Herr Riecke, whom I met at that dinner in 1971, Pinto-Duschinsky noted that he was an SS major-general who had been

State Secretary in the Food Ministry and a senior member of the Ministry for the Occupied Eastern Territories; in these capacities he had been responsible for plans to starve the local population. In addition, Toepfer wrote a letter of recommendation for an old acquaintance, SS Major-General Hermann Lauterbacher, for use if he succeeded in escaping from hiding to join other wanted Nazis in Argentina. In addition, Toepfer helped fund the defence of the senior SS man Werner Lorenz, who had helped rescue his Foundation when he was arrested in 1937, before a US tribunal in Nuremberg. He had ties with the leading SS man Werner Best and the Nazi Rector of Hamburg University, Adolf Rein (who had been responsible for firing Jews from his staff), and helped the former Nazi mayor of Hamburg, Carl Vincent Krogmann, when he got into financial difficulties.

Why did Toepfer support these criminals? In his memoirs, Riecke noted that after 1945 Toepfer gave jobs to four (not necessarily mutually exclusive) categories of people: trained accountants and businessmen; former comrades-in-arms from his days in the army during the First World War and the Free Corps immediately afterwards; men who had behaved 'decently' during their postwar imprisonment; and men of the Third Reich who had fallen on hard times because of being unjustly treated by the Allies. Riecke and Veessenmayer were undoubtedly experienced and highly qualified in business matters, otherwise Toepfer would not have employed them; but they also fell into the last two of the four categories Riecke mentioned, so that it was clear, as the historian Christian Gerlach noted, that Toepfer employed them for political as well as business reasons. This was not, however, because they were Nazis. Like most conservatives in the 1950s and 1960s, Toepfer distinguished between Nazis and Germans, and excused the latter from the crimes of the former – crimes which he recognised as such, but treated as if they had been carried out by a tiny occupying force of bandits that had nothing to do with the real Germany of men like himself and those he employed. Like the vast majority of Germans, he resented the war crimes trials and denazification procedures of the Allies, and thought of men like

Best and Riecke as victims of victors' justice. Unlike most Germans, however, he was in a position to help them. So he did.

V

What, then, of the Hanseatic Scholarships? As his remarks over dinner suggested, Toepfer regarded the revival of the Hanseatic Scholarships in 1970 as a gesture of reconciliation between England and Germany, and although the racist background to his initiative was clear to those who knew him, still, it was basically no different from that of the original Rhodes Scholarships when they were founded before the First World War, with their primary aim of enabling men from the white 'Anglo-Saxon' world, from countries such as the USA, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa and Germany, to study at Oxford. But such views had long since lost any relevance to Oxford or Cambridge by the 1970s, by which time Rhodes Scholars included female and non-white students, and they had no relevance to the Hanseatic Scholars themselves either.

Of course, the Hanseatic Scholarships set up in the mid-1930s were a different matter. This was the world of Appeasement, in which the symbolic political pay-off to be derived from their establishment was clear to Joachim von Ribbentrop, Hitler's ambassador-at-large before his appointment to the London embassy in August 1936. Pinto-Duschinsky was undoubtedly right in pointing to Ribbentrop's encouragement of the Scholarships, which he clearly saw, along with many other initiatives (such as his founding of the Anglo-German Society in 1935), as a means of improving the image of Nazi Germany in the UK. But there is no evidence that the Scholarships had much effect in this regard; on the contrary, after a series of humiliations as ambassador, Ribbentrop began to hate the British and started working for a war against them. And Nazism was long gone by the time the Scholarships were revived in 1970. Although the money for the Hanseatic Scholarships is provided exclusively by the Foundation, the selection

committee that meets every year is entirely independent; the Foundation is not directly represented and has no right of veto over the candidates selected. Toepfer's racial vision of a community of 'Anglo-Saxon' youth is no longer relevant; the current statutes of the Scholarships declare that 'they should serve to develop and strengthen relationships between Germans and Britons, while inspiring and promoting European solidarity'.

One of Pinto-Duschinsky's major points in urging Oxford University to terminate the Hanseatic Scholarships scheme was that 'the way in which the Holocaust is taught – or, more accurately, is relatively little taught – at Oxford [is] affected by the university's sources of funding'. He alleged that the 'dangers' of 'funding ... modern German history and politics' were 'particularly pronounced' because 'the source of funding affects the opinions and the results of the research' in this, as in other areas. In an article published under the heading 'Holocaust Denial' in the *Jewish Chronicle* on 10 June 2010, he called the Toepfer Foundation's historical commission's history 'apologetic' and among the most 'prime examples of the distortions that mar so much recent Holocaust history'. 'At Oxford,' he added, '... academic studies of modern European history and politics are heavily dependent on money from German companies and foundations with strong motives in laundering their pasts.' Laundering, he implied, was the job of the Foundation's 'sponsored historians', who provided 'a selective version of a tainted history'. In so doing, he charged, they were peddling a respectable form of Holocaust denial.

But where was the evidence to back these claims? My own experience neither of the early 1970s nor of later, British and German government-funded research grants, supports this bizarre innuendo. In fact, though a whole variety of funding bodies, from German government agencies like the DAAD or the *Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft* to private foundations like the Volkswagen Foundation, have long funded research into German history, they have not tried to influence the way this research has been carried out or the conclusions it has reached. Nothing has been able to stop historians uncovering Nazism's

crimes and the complicity of many German institutions and individuals in them from the outset. From the days of Alan Bullock, A. J. P. Taylor, Hugh Trevor-Roper and later Tim Mason, Jane Caplan and Nicholas Stargardt, Oxford has always been a major centre for research into Nazi Germany, as, indeed, has Cambridge over the same period, where historians from Jonathan Steinberg to myself have not only written extensively about the Nazi extermination of the Jews and supervised numerous Ph.D. theses on Nazi Germany but have also served on restitution and reparations commissions of various kinds.

Jane Caplan and Nicholas Stargardt, who teach a course on 'Nazi Germany: A Racial Order' at Oxford, angrily rebutted Pinto-Duschinsky's accusations. They pointed out that antisemitism and the Holocaust featured in every one of its eight weeks of teaching, three of which were devoted solely to the topic. Two thousand pages of set documents (in English translation) confronted students with the most harrowing details of the subject. As an advanced university course, it obviously avoided works such as Sir Martin Gilbert's popular documentary collection *The Holocaust* (1986) that were intended for the general reader. These would merely replicate what the students had already learned – some of it in the modern European history outline courses that they took in their first or second year of study. Caplan and Stargardt found it 'truly disturbing that a fellow academic feels entitled to smear Oxford's historians and their teaching with outrageous insinuations and unfounded claims of guilt by association in this way' and declared themselves 'personally and professionally affronted at the imputation that our teaching has even the faintest association with Holocaust denial'.

Over a number of years, I have had direct experience of Holocaust denial in a variety of forms. At the turn of the century I was involved as an expert witness in the libel action brought by the writer David Irving against Deborah Lipstadt and her publisher, Penguin Books, over her allegation that he was a Holocaust denier who manipulated and distorted the evidence for the Nazi extermination of European Jews. Researching the subject for the trial, which ended in Irving's

comprehensive defeat, brought me into contact with many varieties of Holocaust denial, many of them nauseating, all of them upsetting. Neither the work of the Alfred Toepfer Foundation's independent historical commission, nor that of Jan Zimmermann, nor the website and publications of the Foundation itself, nor teaching and research in German history at Oxford and Cambridge has anything to do with Holocaust denial.

Pinto-Duschinsky misunderstood the process that forced often reluctant German companies and foundations in the 1990s to commission independent histories of their role in the Third Reich. As the Holocaust came to public prominence, especially in the USA, it became increasingly damaging to their international business interests to be seen as covering up their role in it. Moreover, in almost every case, from the Dresdner Bank to Mercedes-Benz, from the publisher Bertelsmann to the constituent companies of IG Farben, many of them household names today, this role was far, far more prominent and far, far more murderous than that of Toepfer and his Foundation, which played no direct part in mass murder or financing it.

As far as the historical commission was concerned, Pinto-Duschinsky's complaints were directed mainly against the introduction to its report, the only part to have been translated into English; he complained, for example, that Toepfer's postwar employment of Veessenmayer was mentioned 'only in a footnote'. In fact it is discussed on page 378; similarly he claimed that the slaked lime was not mentioned in the introduction, but did not say that it was discussed in the text. His claim that significant facts were buried 'in obscure parts of a turgid tome' is meaningless: they are there for anyone who reads German to see, and the turgidity of the style in which they are written, characteristic of so much German academic writing, is neither here nor there.

Was the independent historical commission's report a piece of 'grey-washing'? Was it in fact independent? One of its authors, Christian Gerlach, complained subsequently that there were 'massive efforts to influence me' and 'to render my text harmless (in particular by cutting it)'. Furthermore, the Foundation showed 'a thoroughly defensive

attitude' towards interpretations of Toepfer's role in the Third Reich. And indeed, this was undoubtedly the case in the year 2000. But the pressure on Gerlach, and possibly on others, was exerted not institutionally, by the Foundation but personally, by its archivist, a long-term friend of Toepfer's, who clearly tried to withhold documents from the researchers and angrily demanded that Gerlach's contribution should be axed altogether. He was backed by one of the senior historians on the commission, Arnold Sywottek. The commission's independence was also compromised by the presence of members of the Toepfer family at its meetings.

However, Gerlach published his chapter as written, after threatening to publish it in full elsewhere. There is no evidence to support the view that the commission's findings were bowdlerised by the Foundation. On the contrary, they were upsetting both to the Foundation's staff and to Toepfer's family. No wonder it took them time to adjust. But, in the end, the Foundation has adjusted. It has put the commission's principal findings on its website in English, German and French and distributed it free of charge to libraries and interested parties, including Hanseatic Scholars. The Foundation points to the fact that it has changed its programmes in the light of the historical commission's findings. It has developed active support for initiatives of remembrance and tolerance in the Hamburg region, including the placing of small round brass plaques known as *Stolpersteine* on the pavement outside formerly Jewish-owned houses, with the names of their murdered owners or tenants on them. It has funded publications on the persecution and murder of Hamburg's Jews under the Nazis. It has supported Jewish organisations and awarded scholarships, including Hanseatic Scholarships, to students researching into the history of Germany and other countries in the Nazi era. 'Pinto-Duschinsky's claim raised in his letter to the editors of the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* that this Foundation gives token grants to Jewish organisations for purely cosmetic reasons is therefore,' it says, 'as insulting and inappropriate as his even more absurd insinuation that this organisation sets out to trivialize the Holocaust.'

Why, then, in view of all this, does the Foundation continue to include Toepfer's name in its title and documents? Could it not simply revert to the 'F.V.S. Foundation', the title it held before its founder's death in 1993? To do so, however, would surely invite the accusation that it was trying to cover up the fact that he had established it in the first place. Yet to use the name invites the accusation that it is continuing to honour someone who should not be honoured. The colloquial expression 'heads I win, tails you lose' comes to mind here. The Foundation has decided to keep Toepfer's name 'rather as an act of transparency than as an attempt to honour Toepfer'. Far from glorifying him, as Pinto-Duschinsky alleges, it now uses this association to signal its responsibility deriving from its past. Its website contains a large amount of information helping prospective prize-winners and Scholars to make up their own minds, including the *Standpoint* article by Pinto-Duschinsky itself, and it informs prize-winners about the history of the Foundation before they decide whether to accept a prize from it.

All of this seems admirable. The funding the Foundation provides for young British scholars and graduate students to study in Germany is not 'tainted money'; it did not come from the 'Aryanisation' of Jewish businesses or the supply of poison gas to Auschwitz or the employment of slave labour or the plunder of occupied countries or anything similar. The Foundation has openly acknowledged the complicity of its founder, Alfred Toepfer, with the Nazi regime, and is absolutely transparent in its provision of information with which people can make up their own minds about how far it went. Its openness is a model that others could follow.

NOTE

This article sparked a prolonged controversy with Michael Pinto-Duschinsky, which can be followed in the lively right-wing magazine *Standpoint*, edited by Daniel Johnson: for the original article, see Michael Pinto-Duschinsky, 'The Prize Lies of a Nazi Tycoon', Issue 21 (April, 2010), pp. 39–43; idem, 'The Holocaust: excusing the

inexcusable', Issue 34 (July/August, 2011), pp. 34–9; and 'An exchange: Toepfer and the Holocaust', Issue 35 (September, 2011), pp. 16–18, with articles by Pinto-Duschinsky and myself. At this juncture, wisely perhaps, the editor brought the debate to a close. However, this left a number of the points at issue unresolved. In his final contribution to the discussion, Pinto-Duschinsky accused me of being 'unwilling to face up to the defiance and excuses of the Toepfer Foundation'. Yet the Foundation has shown contrition for what he rightly calls the 'dubious past' of its founder and confronted it with admirable honesty, even if it has only got around to doing this in the past few years. Nobody familiar with its website could possibly think it is making excuses or showing defiance to Toepfer's critics. There is no possible reason why I would not be willing to criticise it if this was not the case.

Similarly Pinto-Duschinsky thinks I have 'too complacent a view about German historiography of the Holocaust'. He has no basis for this assertion. If he really does think German historiography has not confronted the Holocaust openly and critically then he needs to cite the literature that would justify this claim. In fact he cannot, because of course the mainstream of professional historians of the Holocaust in Germany have been in the forefront of uncovering its horrors for many years. He claims I have revised my judgement of the report of the independent historical commission set up by the Toepfer Foundation to investigate their relationship with Nazism because while I earlier described its findings as 'devastating', I now say it 'pulled its punches'. I have not changed my mind. There is no contradiction between these two statements. As I noted in *Standpoint*, the editorial gloss on the commission's findings did indeed conclude (wrongly in my view) that Toepfer was not a fellow traveller of the Nazis. It did so, no doubt, because that was the verdict of the German denazification court after the war. But I go on to say that the error of this claim is made clear by the commission's individual chapters. It is these chapters that contain the devastating findings. And they were devastating because up to that point Toepfer's claim not only to have been distant from but actually

to have opposed the Nazis had been accepted by the Foundation and even by his own family.

Pinto-Duschinsky persists in calling the report an 'official history' and its authors 'sponsored historians.' This is rhetorical sleight of hand; the report was independently researched and compiled by an independent group of professional historians. Of course they were provided with research facilities and access to the documents by the Foundation. But so, too, was Pinto-Duschinsky, whose work also appears on the Foundation's website. Does this make him a 'sponsored historian'? He brings the commission's report into association with a report commissioned previously by the Foundation from a PR agency, but he should know that the PR agency's recommendations were not acted upon and did not affect the commission's work.

Pinto-Duschinsky makes great play with the fact that I declined to carry out a full check on the documents, sources, emails and correspondence generated in the course of Oxford University's investigation of his charges against the Toepfer Foundation when he asked me to do so. I declined, however, not only because I was unwilling to spend the very considerable amount of time it would have involved doing this, but also because he himself has all this material in his own possession. Perhaps he could say why he was unwilling or unable to do the checking himself?

Pinto-Duschinsky asserts that I have 'relied on summaries prepared by the Toepfer Foundation and its sponsored academics as well as documents on the Foundation's website.' The implication here is that I have used this material uncritically. I can assure him I have not, and indeed he presents no evidence to suggest this is the case. The material in question includes, of course, the chapter in the commission report by the 'sponsored historian' Christian Gerlach which Pinto-Duschinsky himself repeatedly relies on (it is the only one in the book he consistently uses). The documents on the Foundation's website include Pinto-Duschinsky's own articles, which, of course, I have used as well. He presents no evidence to back up his assertion that the materials on the Foundation's website are 'misleading and

selective', nor that the commission's report was in any significant respect 'bowdlerised'.

To give one example: Pinto-Duschinsky claims that Gerda Toepfer, Alfred's daughter, visited the Hungarian history specialist C. A. Macartney in Oxford to persuade him to use his good offices to secure the release of the war criminal Edmund Veessenmayer. The Foundation has dug up and made available her correspondence with Macartney, in which there is no mention of this alleged intent at all; the correspondence makes it clear, on the contrary, that Macartney was only interested in interviewing Veessenmayer for his research. Thus Pinto-Duschinsky's claims are shown to be entirely without foundation. If he wants to substantiate them, he will have to produce a properly incriminating letter. So far he has not done so. Thus my conclusion is that the Foundation is right on this score. I fail to see how this amounts to an uncritical swallowing of the Foundation's point of view. Just because the Foundation says something doesn't mean it is necessarily wrong.

It is unfortunate that Pinto-Duschinsky relied for some of his arguments on the French ultra-nationalist Lionel Boissou. It is a pity that a serious historian like Pierre Ayçoberry came to endorse Boissou's exaggerated criticisms of the Toepfer Foundation, which Boissou portrayed as engaged in a plot to detach Alsace-Lorraine from France (in the 1990s!!). The University of Strasbourg should not have given in to the pressure exerted by Boissou. Pinto-Duschinsky also alleges that the commission deliberately ignored a critical article published in 1999 by the left-wing activist, doctor of medicine and historical researcher Karl-Heinz Roth on the Toepfer Foundation. In fact it is mentioned in the commission's report, including in the introduction (notes 21 and 24, p. 27).

Zimmermann's careful and balanced analysis of Pinto-Duschinsky's allegations notes that his discoveries, which are very few in number, add little of importance to what the commission and (in his later biography) Zimmermann had already uncovered about Toepfer; the commission had not suppressed, but simply (and, in retrospect, ill-advisedly)

neglected to investigate the Foundation's postwar employment of ex-Nazis (reflecting its conception of its mission as investigating the activities of Toepfer and the Foundation *during* the Nazi period). Zimmermann provides detailed support for his allegation in his correspondence with Pinto-Duschinsky and in his analysis of the first *Standpoint* article.

The extent of Toepfer's postwar association with ex-Nazis, war criminals and Holocaust perpetrators was no greater than that of many leading conservative businessmen, politicians and civil servants in Adenauer's Germany. The fact that Toepfer and his Foundation behaved in a way typical of the West German establishment after the war does not make their behaviour any less reprehensible, of course, but it does make Pinto-Duschinsky's attempt to claim that Toepfer's practices in this respect were somehow exceptional, unusual or extreme in their nature and extent entirely untenable.

Pinto-Duschinsky's claim that the Toepfer archive was weeded to remove incriminating material was changed in his final *Standpoint* contribution to a reference to a statement by Toepfer's son that part of Toepfer's own *private* papers (specifically, papers that revealed his *private* views on Nazism) were destroyed after 1945. This is not the same thing. We do not know how or why they were destroyed. And destruction is not the same as weeding. There is no evidence of any subsequent 'redaction' of the archives of the *companies* and the *Foundation*, both of which were freely used by the commission's researchers. As Zimmermann notes, the material in them, especially relating to the postwar period, is incriminating enough to make it clear no weeding was carried out.

Toepfer's companies did not manufacture munitions, tanks or poison gas; they did not build concentration camps or gas chambers or crematoria; indeed, they did not produce anything specifically designed for use in the war or the Holocaust at all. They did not employ slave labour or concentration camp prisoners, though hundreds of other German firms like the Krupps were doing so at the time. Unlike many German companies, Toepfer's did not profit from the 'Aryanisation' of Jewish

property. He did not commit any war crimes, nor did he profit from them. Toepfer ran construction companies but they were not engaged in military construction let alone work for the SS. The most that can be said is that they operated in a part of Poland that had been re-incorporated into the Reich after the invasion of Poland, doubtless to the satisfaction of nationalists like Toepfer since it had been part of Prussia before 1918. By operating there, of course, the companies endorsed Germany's war aims and implicitly backed the occupation. But this does not make the money they generated indelibly 'tainted'. Moreover, this money constituted only a minute fraction of Toepfer's fortune, most of which was made after the war and came from the grain trade.

And, to reiterate a detailed but crucial point: slaked lime is different from quicklime. Gerlach is wrong to claim that the former was used for covering and dissolving cadavers. Nor did he claim that the slaked lime that Toepfer supplied to the SS administration of the Łódź ghetto was used for covering corpses; his claim only had a general application to the chemical in general, and here, as I have noted, it was in any case wrong.

As for Edmund Veesenmayer, who, for a brief time after the war, was a business employee of Toepfer in Tehran, I did not describe him in a 'euphemistic way'. I described him as a 'former Nazi' and a 'senior German official in Hungary' (at a time when, as everyone knows, the German administration was sending more than 400,000 Hungarian Jews to Auschwitz) and I pointed out that his ex-secretary wrote implicitly justifying the Holocaust after the war. And although Pinto-Duschinsky claims he did not describe Edmund Veesenmayer as a close associate of Toepfer, on page 327 of the German edition of his first *Standpoint* article, he says the following: 'Thus *three* [his italics] of the closest associates [*Mitarbeiter*, lit. 'co-workers'] of Toepfer had assisted in deeds of murder: *Edmund Veesenmayer* [my italics], Kurt Haller and Hans Joachim Riecke, as well as Barbara Hacke as his private secretary.' In fact, Veesenmayer's association with Toepfer was so tenuous that Toepfer is not even mentioned in the standard critical biography of Veesenmayer by Igor-Philip Matic published in 2002.

One of Pinto-Duschinsky's favourite tactics is to establish guilt by association. He refers to my recollection that Toepfer's guest house in Hamburg in 1971 contained Holocaust denial literature, that I met ex-SS Major-General Hans-Joachim Riecke in the house, and that Albert Speer had been a recent guest of the Foundation, but while these were indeed disturbing to me as a young British student making my acquaintance with Germany for the first time, I did not even then fall into the error of supposing this made Toepfer either a Holocaust denier, or an ex-SS man, or a pro-Nazi. I did indeed try to find out more about him, but was assured by the Foundation that Toepfer had resisted the Nazis, and that Riecke was no longer in its employ. Speer, whose memoirs had recently been published, was at that time widely seen in Germany as 'the acceptable face of Nazism', as it were, and his claim not to have known about the Holocaust was generally believed. Even experienced anti-Nazi journalists like Gitta Sereny were unable to penetrate the mask. Only gradually, and much later, did it become clear how many lies, evasions and half-truths he had been telling the world about his role in the Third Reich and its knowledge of its crimes. Moreover, as I delved into the background of the West German establishment with the aid of the (East German) *Brown Book* listings of prominent ex-Nazis in its ranks, it became clear that pretty well every institution in West Germany was swarming with ex-Nazis. Despite this, Toepfer's name was not on the list.

This does, of course, raise a more general question about historical research and its funding. Should I, for example, have accepted, as I did in the mid-1980s, an exchange grant from the East German government to work in the old Reich archive in Potsdam and local and regional archives in Leipzig and Dresden, even though the regime was responsible for the deaths of many unfortunate citizens who had tried to escape to freedom across the Berlin Wall? The answer must surely be yes. It was impossible to work on German history without making such compromises, and, crucially, they had no influence on what I wrote about the regime on the basis of my researches. Marxists in the 1960s used to talk of 'useful idiots', capitalists and their fellow

travellers who could supply money and resources to those who were willing to take advantage of them and use them to undermine capitalism, and this is very much how, *mutatis mutandis*, young historians like myself regarded institutions like the East German regime or, indeed, the Toepfer Foundation and its like. Our agenda at the time, following the lead of German historian Martin Broszat in his brilliant book *The Hitler State*, was to uncover the true breadth and depth of complicity of German social, economic and political elites in the rise, triumph and rule of the Nazis. Part of the excitement lay in the knowledge that these elites were still very much in charge of West Germany, even though 1968 and the generational change associated with it were beginning to loosen their grip. Toepfer and his Foundation belonged squarely within this frame of reference.

It is difficult to see why Pinto-Duschinsky has pursued the Toepfer Foundation so obsessively. He initially claimed that Toepfer and his Foundation had provided 'enormous help to Hitler' and played a 'key role in the Third Reich'. In fact, neither the Foundation, nor its founder, nor its activities, nor the Toepfer businesses were particularly significant or important during the Nazi era. They were fellow travellers whose contribution to the Third Reich and its crimes was at most minor and marginal. The Foundation does not even provide funds to Oxford University – the Hanseatic Scholarship money is given directly to the recipients, and the selection committee is entirely independent of the Foundation and the University. In pursuing the remaining unresolved legacies of the Nazi past in present-day Germany it is important to choose the right targets. In the end, for all their toleration of Nazism, its servants and its crimes, Toepfer and his Foundation are the wrong ones.