

Stefan Zweig - *The World of Yesterday* – SummaryJoseph Hahn

My aim here is to condense 317 pages into a readable summary loosely translated for those of us disappointed with the younger generation or the political mistakes of the older generation... and now realizing how we were once at the point of saying “don’t trust anyone over 30”.

Thirty years ago luck had me in Eugene, Oregon for a teacher seminar- *Vienna 1900*. We probably read parts of “The World of Yesterday” which left some impression on me. More notable was the impact made by Egon Schwarz as a parallel character from Vienna born 40 years after Zweig. Egon however survived his exile in South America and first died in 2017. He fled Vienna in 1938 and first heard the fate of his family in August, 1945. Of 24 members only the brother of his mother survived.

As we get older, we develop the maturity to read literature in a more understanding or even entertaining manner. We also develop emotions along with empathy for the fate of others while making comparisons to previous events. My fascination with Zweig grew in reading his foreword and then observing how he changes his angle on the 19th century liberalism and his perspective on the strange customs of “yesterday” as he gets older – always noting his privileged status.

(Larry Rohter, *Stefan Zweig, Austrian Novelist, Rises Again*, New York Times, May 28, 2014)... Born in Vienna in 1881, into a prosperous Jewish family, Zweig grew up in what he would later describe as a “golden age of security.” Success and acclaim came to him early and never left, but the rise of Nazism forced him into a painful and enervating exile, first in Britain, then the United States and, finally Brazil, where he and his wife, Lotte, committed suicide in February 1942. “I think it partly can be attributed to a larger ongoing interest in the disaster of the 20th century and taking its pulse,” said Edwin Frank, editorial director of New York Review Books Classics, which has published Zweig’s novel “Beware of Pity” and four of his novellas in recent years. “Zweig was both a chronicler of that world and a victim of the disaster, which makes him an intriguing figure.” It is perhaps best to think of Zweig, according to biographer Alberto Dines, as an apostle of “pacifism, tolerance and fellowship” who, in the end, was overwhelmed by the ascent of obscurantism (*practice of deliberately preventing the facts or full details of something from becoming known. e.g. “allegations in the Press about government obscurantism”*) “Every generation has its own Zweig, and this is ours, the fruit of an imprecise nostalgia and yearning.”

Foreword

(book is written in Zweig’s 60th year)

I never thought of myself important enough as to tell the story of my life. A generation must experience infinitely more events, catastrophes and tests before I found the courage to begin a book with me as the main character or focal point. My intention lies more in the sense of the narrator during a slide show; history provides the pictures which I describe as happening not only to *me*, but to a whole generation – this unique generation burdened by fate as few others in history. Each of us has undergone turbulent times on our European soil regardless of social class. I can only claim the role as Austrian, as Jew, as writer, as humanist and pacifist who happened to be where the tremors hit hardest. Three times they sacked my house and livelihood separating me from former conditions to cast me into emptiness. But, I did

not complain; the displaced person is freed in a newer sense, and only without attachments can one proceed without showing consideration for others. Thus I hope to provide a proper portrayal of the times with the main condition: candor and impartiality.

In 1881 I was born into the Empire, the Habsburg Monarchy which you will not find on the map. I grew up in Vienna, the two-thousand-year-old multi-national metropolis which I had to leave like a thief in the night when it became a provincial German city. My literary works were burned in the same country where my books were read by millions. Now I belong nowhere, a stranger – at most a guest. My actual homeland of Europe devours itself suicidally for the second time in fratricidal warfare. I cannot be proud of the way a generation has morally fallen from such intellectual heights. This half century has seen more radical changes than in ten generations. In retrospect the rise and fall of a person could be seen as several different lives. "My house" might be in Bath (England) or Salzburg or my parental home in Vienna. The world I grew up in, the world of today and that life between both totally different worlds. Each time I tell younger friends about things before the first war I notice their astonishment. They see an unimaginable history, and I see the natural reality. Of course they are correct in noting how the bridges between yesterday and today have burned.

In thinking of how my father and grandfather lived, I see the unit in development without great changes. Their life progressed in similar rhythms without much stress from the cradle to the grave. They lived in the same country, in the same city and almost always in the same house. World events were only noted in the newspaper and did not knock on the door. Wars happened somewhere else and in different dimensions. You did not hear the canons which were silenced after half a year. Then the old life returned. One generation had a revolution, the next saw some revolt, the third had a war, the fourth had famine, the fifth a national recession – while some blessed generations had none of these calamities. Those of us who are sixty now may ask: what haven't we seen or suffered? We have gone through the catalogue of catastrophes and still haven't reached the end. In the years before the wars I experienced the highest level of individual freedom and now see its lowest level in centuries. The horses of the Apocalypse have stormed through my life: revolution and famine, inflation and terror, epidemics and emigration. And now the growth of mass ideologies – fascism in Italy, national socialism in Germany, Bolshevism in Russia and the primary plague of nationalism which poisoned our European culture. Defenseless, I witnessed the collapse of humanity in submitting to long-forgotten barbarism with an anti-human dogma.

Paradoxically, this time period (which on the moral compass threw us back a thousand years) has brought humanity to technical and academic levels not reached in the previous million years – airplanes navigate the sky, messages instantly reach every corner of the earth, the splitting of the atom, the cures for diseases, and the daily *possibilities* replacing yesterday's *impossible*. Never before has humanity as a whole behaved so demonically while achieving the divine.

I see it as my duty to report these incredible changes as witnessed by a generation having no choice but to be pulled in with the flow of the times. When houses were destroyed by bombs in Shanghai we Europeans knew about it before the wounded

were carried out of their houses. Events across the ocean came to us in picture-form. There was no protection against the constant stream and current of information. No country could shelter us from the hand of fate pulling us back into its insatiable game.

The citizen was subordinate to the demands of the state, submitting to the most foolish politics, adapting to the fantastic changes constantly chained to the common fate. Those traversing these times as the “hunted” endured more history than any of their ancestors. Today we stand at a turning point, and it is no coincidence in the choice of September, 1939 as the end of my retrospection. And should this report communicate only a sliver of truth from the damaged structure to the next generation then our efforts have not been in vain.

These reminiscences are being written under difficult circumstances – during wartime, in a foreign country using only my memory. I have none of my books or writings, no correspondence at hand in my hotel room. I have no access to information because the mail service is either severed or censored. Each of us lives as isolated as 100 years ago – before steam ships, trains, airplanes and postal ways were invented. I carry nothing from my past besides that which is behind my brow. Everything else at this moment is either unreachable or lost. However, our generation has definitely learned the skill of not lamenting. Perhaps this lack of documentation will serve as an advantage in my book. Our memory does not merely store events at random while forgetting others. An inner instinct judged, had already dealt them this sentence. The things I want to preserve are entitled to serve as memories for others reflecting my life before it sinks into darkness!

Contents: (This summary uses the 317-page Kindle version, the titles of chapters are for your general information.)

The World of Security	The First Hours of the War in 1914
Schools in the Previous Century	The Struggle for Intellectual Brotherhood
Eros Matutinus	In the Heart of Europe
Universitas vitae	Return to Austria
Paris, the City of Eternal Youth	In the World Again
Diversions on the Path to Myself	Sundown
Beyond Europe	Incipit Hitler
Glory and Shadows over Europe	The Agony of Peace

The World of Security (p. 6)

In attempting to label the times before World War concisely, I would say it was the “Golden Age of Security”. The Austrian monarchy had survived a thousand years, and the government seemed stable. Currency, weights and measures were secure. People of wealth could reckon with annual interest, and bureaucrats could reliably gauge their dates for promotion and retirement. Families had a budget and could plan vacations. Property was inherited within the family, etc. Nobody believed in wars or revolutions, violence seemed impossible in our “Age of Reason”.

Even the working class was becoming more organized with wage and health insurance, pensions and funeral insurance. Only people who faced the future without worry could properly enjoy the present. The liberal idealism of the 19th century was convinced of being on the best path to the “best of all worlds”. Believing in this “progress” was more important than religion. People became healthier and stronger through the development of sports. Even today, in this abyss of horrors, I remind myself of my youthful belief in progress, hoping that this interval will pass.

My parents lived in the “dream castle” of the *good Jewish bourgeois* which gave Viennese culture essential values. Between 10 and 20 thousand families enjoyed the security of this century in Vienna, and as thanks were expelled.

Families did classify each other which seemed to us boys as silly snobbery since most Jewish families had just come out of the same Jewish ghetto 50 or 100 years ago. Much later it became clear to me that the notion of a “good” family expressed the innermost sacred tendencies of Jewish nature. Wealth is not the typical goal in life, but rather just a means to the true purpose. The actual Jewish desire lies in the ideal of ascending to the higher intellectual and cultural ranks. The pious biblical scholar holds more prestige in the community than the rich man. Academic values hold even for the peddlers who sacrifice to have just one child become a scholar, musician or doctor. This longing for status leads to the understanding of “good” family as more than just the social level reached; it means a Jewishness which has liberated itself from the defects and pettiness forced on them in the ghetto and has adapted to another, possibly universal culture.

The fascination for arts and the theatre raged through all classes in Vienna. The city districts (precincts) separated the various social groups: the petty bourgeois in district 2 through 9, the proletarians in the outer circle. However, they all shared the common topic of theatre along with parades for other occasions. Rhythm and emotion were demanded in the symphony as well as with small tavern bands. The feel for music also transferred to demands placed on writers who were expected to deliver quality work. Even the poorest people in Vienna had an instinct for beauty.

Similar to Spain in the late 15th century before expelling the Jews, the Jewish contributions to Viennese culture were noteworthy in this young century: the music of Goldmark, Mahler and Schönberg, then waltz and operettas by Oscar Straus, Leo Fall and Kálmán, the writings of Hofmannsthal, Schnitzler, Beer-Hofmann and Altenberg, not to mention the influence of Sigmund Freud.

The international scene of Boer War, Russia/Japan and even the Balkan War did not reach into the lives of my parents. What did these events matter to us? One complained of little things out of pure habit, even as petty as they were. The “high” taxes were nothing compared to the post-war days. Whenever I find an old newspaper from these days about community elections or other trivial problems, I am amused by the Lilliputian scope of these worries. My parents and grandparents lived calm and quiet lives. They had no concept of how dangerous humans can become. Those of us now are victims and servants of the unknown mystical powers. Each hour of our lives was connected with the fate of the world. Each of us now has much more knowledge than the wisest of our ancestors, but we had to pay a price.

Schools in the Previous Century (p. 24)

I remember having to learn a song by heart as a 7-year-old about the “joyful and happy youth”. The melody was fine, but I could not agree with the lyrics because my school years were a boring treadmill escalating each year. Today I envy the children, who can converse with their teachers in a friendly manner and speak their minds. No teacher ever asked us what we would like to learn. They did not love us, they did not hate us – they knew nothing about us. The lack of connection is noted by the fact that I have forgotten all of their names and faces.

Youth was considered a handicap for careers. Doctors made themselves look older to give their patients the impression of *experience*. Nowadays people try to make themselves look younger. We were intimidated and told that we were not mature enough to participate or criticize. Teachers held us back rather than push us forward.

After turning 15 we pupils used our own techniques for enrichment. While the teacher read his worn out presentation on Schiller’s “Naïve and Sentimental Poetry” we read Nietzsche and Strindberg under the bench. A fever overcame us with a thirst for every aspect of the arts. We mingled with students at the university to hear lectures, visited all the art exhibitions, etc. We could even sneak into orchestra rehearsals. But the best academy for everything new remained the coffee house.

To understand this, you must know the special significance of this unique Viennese institution. It is actually a type of democratic club open to everyone for the reasonable price of a cup of coffee, where each guest can sit with his cup for hours discussing, writing, playing cards, receiving mail and foremost, perusing newspapers and periodicals. The better coffeehouses in Vienna not only made all the local newspapers available. They also held those of the entire German Empire along with papers from France, England and Italy. Even American newspapers lie next to the most important literary and art reviews. Thus we came to learn about the world, first-hand since we had learned English and French along with our classical language studies. No other site contributed as much to the Austrian intellectual activity and international orientation as spending a few hours in the coffeehouse discussing in friendly circles. Nothing escaped our interest. Whatever one of us overlooked was noted by the other one in our group. In one discussion on Nietzsche a comment was made on Kierkegaard, whom we did not know about. The next day we stormed to the library to dig up anything we could on this forgotten Danish philosopher. It was our passion to discover and rush a step ahead of the established knowledge. Rilke for example had only been published in editions of 200 to 300 at this time, of which only three or four copies found their way to Vienna, but we became his audience.

I am still amazed by our youthful enthusiasm and talents. At the age of 17 I had not only read all the poems of Baudelaire and Whitman, but had memorized some of them. Paul Valéry was confounded when I told him that I encountered his work 30 years ago. He laughed and said that his first book of poems was first published in 1916. I then described the small literary magazine where I read his first lines in 1898. To which he said: “Hardly anyone in Paris knew of that publication... Young people discover their poets because they want to find them by themselves.”

Throwing ourselves into the newest waves of literature and philosophy gave us the feeling of being at the cusp of a new era when youth would get the attention it deserves. Balzac has brilliantly shown how the example of Napoleon electrified a whole generation in France. The rise of a little lieutenant to become emperor of the world illustrated not only the triumph of one person, but rather a victory for the concept of youth. You did not have to be born into royalty to reach for power at an early age. For us it was Rilke and Hofmannsthal... But politics in the last decade was shaking calm lives, and the new century would bring a new order, a new era with it.

Eros Matutinus (p. 50)

During adolescence we learn to observe the adult society with a more critical view. It doesn't take long to discover that the authorities we had trusted behaved strangely regarding sexuality – and demanded the same secrecy from us. There was a quiet compromise reached to ignore the subject in school, family and society and to suppress everything reminding us of its existence.

One only needs to look at fashion; and when we now in 1940 see clothing styles in movies depicting men and women in the year 1900, we break out in laughter. We note the unnatural, the uncomfortable and unhealthy costumes forced onto society. Crazy collars and giddy girdles combined with hilarious hair and jingling jewelry made people less free and less graceful. There was a fear of the physical in all classes. The lack of logic for sportswear also held for ballet where Isidora Duncan dared to shake the establishment.

Today we cannot imagine that young people back then were not allowed to think about the anatomy of the other sex. Many were out of touch with nature. I am still amused by the anecdote about an aunt, who on her wedding night ran to the home of her parents at one in the morning pounding on the door crying that she didn't want to see that horrible man again. She had been coupled to a lunatic who wanted to undress her. She felt lucky to escape from him.

The same city and society with the same morals that scolded a young girl for riding a bicycle would not accept the rational truths unveiled by Freud. This same world defended the purity of women while allowing tragic prostitution to flourish. Modern medicine can better cope with the diseases spread throughout varied ranks of society often ignored. Unfortunately, some men chose suicide rather than to reveal the truth to relatives.

Discussions with the postwar generation show that my generation was not always more advantaged because of less bureaucratic controls. True, we were not investigated regarding politics, race and religion. However, traditional customs and government take turns in regulating our lives. We might have experienced the world better in some ways, but the youth of today has more experiences and is more conscious of its youth – more carefree, less inhibited. They enjoy their age with an élan that is fresh and appropriate for their age. And their greatest fortune is that they do not have to lie to others and can be truer to themselves with their feelings and desires. Of course they now lack the reverence for intellectual things and have less appreciation for the *give and take* involved in love. Yet, this is trivial when compared

to the redeeming change when modern youth is freed of the fear and oppression and can enjoy what was denied us: the feeling of impartiality and self-confidence.

Universitas vitae

Since my older brother had stepped into the family business, it became my duty to secure a doctorate for the family honor, regardless of subject area. And to me it didn't matter since I had subscribed to Emerson's axiom – good books are the best university. My plan was to spend the first three years in personal research, and then to cram through the dissertation. What I wanted was merely a few years of total freedom for my life and the arts: *universitas vitae*.

In Vienna there was only one publication of international quality – the “*Neue Freie Presse*”, which was on the same plane as the “*Times*” in the English world and the “*Temps*” for the French. Within this progressive temple was the sacred item known as “*Feuilleton*” which contained the best in poetry, theatre, music and art. Today I cannot imagine what gave me the courage to submit my modest piece to the “*New Free Press*”. I could not expect more than a rejection slip. One could only approach the culture office on one afternoon in the week, so I suddenly stood before its editor: Theodor Herzl. I naturally had no idea what role he would play in the fate of the Jewish people. His essays were well-received by the Viennese audience. And now he actually started to read the short story I gave him. As trivial as this episode seems, for me in Vienna the acceptance of my work was a giant step at the age of 19.

On the family level I had achieved an unexpected security. Even if my parents had little to do with literature, the important thing for them, as with the whole of Viennese bourgeoisie, was receiving praise in the “*Neue Freie Presse*”. This new status made it easy to surprise the family with my move to Berlin. This city would provide me with a more perfect type of freedom - separated from old friends in an uncontrolled type of existence. I hadn't even checked the index of professors at the university; it sufficed to know that the “new” literature was more active there. Since becoming an imperial city in 1871 Berlin was attracting more industry and wealthy families which also meant more museums and theatres. However, the coffee was terrible and the food lacked feeling. Nevertheless, I investigated the city from morning into the night and believe that this one semester in Berlin gave me more intellectual activity than the previous ten years. Only here could I meet people like Rudolf Steiner, who like Herzl would later influence millions. Now I realize that true universality, which we in our arrogance thought to possess when beginning our studies, is not reached through reading and discussing, but rather in painstaking research over many years.

Most of my friends in Vienna were from the Jewish bourgeoisie. In this new world of Berlin there were people from every class – sons of farmers or Prussian aristocrats. I was suddenly in a circle which included real poverty (as seen in their ragged clothes) which I had not encountered in Vienna. There were drunks, gays and morphine addicts. Perhaps my privileged past gave me a security which now led me into a more reckless circle of fascinating experiences. I saw how immature my earlier writing was. The novel I wanted to finish here in Berlin landed in the fire. I felt like a school child being placed back a few grades. I decided to translate good literature

like the poems of Baudelaire, Keats and William Morris. A foreign language places demands on your choice of expression. I discovered Emile Verhaeren, who tried to give Europe that sense of the *contemporary* which Walt Whitman gave America. An important slogan: "Admirez-vous les uns les autres" brought us optimism.

Suddenly I was in Brussels and located the sculptor van der Stappen, who could now finish his bust of Verhaeren in my presence – what luck! These three hours helped me to direct my admiration for this character towards the decision to spend the next two years translating his works. My uncertain searching now found a moral purpose. And, in advising young authors today, I would recommend this type of service in the works of a recognized artist. Additional travels and personal encounters brought me back to Vienna, where the dissertation was quickly completed. My professor already knew too much about my literary activity which made the exam easy. Now I was outwardly free, and have since then dedicated myself to the struggle for inner freedom.

Paris, the City of Eternal Youth (p. 92)

Of course, the Paris of my younger days no longer exists. As I began to write these memoirs, the German tanks were approaching like a grey mass of termites. And now the swastika flag waves from the Eiffel Tower. My own misfortunes could not rile me more than the degradation of this city. This quarter century between the wars has seen so much progress in social and technical fields, yet no country in Western civilization has escaped without losing so much of its former vigor and naturalness. The Russians, Italians, Germans and Spanish have all forgotten how much freedom and joy have been taken from the marrow of their inner souls by the pompousness of the "state".

I experienced Paris (1904) when the streets belonged to everyone. Race, class and ancestry were irrelevant. The city tolerated the contradictions. One could enter a bookstore and browse 15 minutes without the owner grumbling. One could visit the small galleries and converse. One could sit on the terrace of one of the thousands of coffee houses and write letters. The only thing one could not do is stay at home, especially when spring arrived.

An important friendship developed with Léon Bazalgette, who invested his energy in foreign works to relate them to people he loved. He spent 10 years translating the complete works of Walt Whitman together with writing a biography for the benefit of the French people. He was also passionately anti-nationalist. We soon became good friends because we did not think patriotically and we both valued intellectual independence.

Besides the quiet encounters with Rainer Maria Rilke there was a visit to the studio of Rodin. The artist showed me his latest piece depicting a woman. I was impressed, but he noted something by the shoulder and took off his jacket to begin working with spatula. The shoulder seemed like breathing, female skin as he moved back and found another detail. He continued to make adjustments while viewing the figure with a mirror. He did not notice the young man standing behind him. He had forgotten me. He was only aware of the figure which as his piece led him to the invisible vision of

absolute perfection. I am not sure if this went on for half an hour or longer, but he gathered himself to leave the studio without noticing my presence, as motionless as his statues. While going to the door he stared at me in surprise before realizing who I was and apologized. I thankfully took his hand which I would have gladly kissed for this lesson. The secret of great art, or any earthly achievement, lies in concentration, the gathering of all strength and senses while existing outside of the inner being – the essence of each artist beyond the world.

Diversions on the Path to Myself (p. 117)

After these travel experiences I needed a stable point of focus. This is really appreciated now when my wanderings are no longer voluntary. I chose a small apartment in Vienna placing me in the same house as a piano teacher, whose mother was the daughter of Goethe's physician Dr. Vogel. What a link from 1910 to this woman's baptism in 1830 in Goethe's presence! Goethe's granddaughter was her childhood friend, whose love letters had just been published by the Goethe Society "now already", even though she forgot that Otilie had died half a century ago. For her these old events were still active making me feel a ghostly atmosphere in her presence. One spoke on the telephone, used electric lights and dictated letters to a typewriter while 22 stairs above you were shifted to another century hovering in Goethe's environment.

My drama "Thersites" illustrates my perspective in supporting the lesser-known figures as well as viewing tragedy in the vanquished. I am always drawn to these fates adjacent to the realm of success who nevertheless act properly in the moral sense: Erasmus instead of Luther, Maria Stuart and not Elizabeth, Castellio and not Calvin. Instead of Achilles I chose Thersites, the suffering man. Unfortunately, the attempts to stage the play ran into many complications.

Beyond Europe (p. 130)

"You cannot understand England if you only visited the island; ...and not just on our continent. Why don't you travel to India or America?" I decided to follow the advice of Walter Rathenau. India was mysterious and more distressing than I expected. The misery shocked me.

Next came my illusions regarding America. I am probably one of the few writers who crossed the Atlantic not for money or the journalistic market, but rather to see the reality. My first question at the hotel in Manhattan was regarding the grave of Walt Whitman. The poor Italian porter never heard of him.

The city was not quite as developed as today, so the cultural attractions were lacking, and I felt loneliness. I played a game imagining myself as an immigrant with only seven dollars in his pocket. Imagine the numerous other immigrants needing a job within three days. I began to visit employment offices. I soon noted the many opportunities and was amazed by the freedom. Nobody asked about my nationality or religion.

Glory and Shadows over Europe (p. 140)

I had now lived through ten years of the new century and seen other continents. This gave me a new sensation regarding our Europe, which I have never loved more than in these last years before World War I. I felt so positive about the dawning of European unity, however, it was really just the glow of the coming conflagration.

These 40 years of peace had given rise to new technologies and urban development was seen in most of Europe. Vienna, Milan, Paris, London, Amsterdam and Berlin continued growing with more luxury and taste. Only the really old people spoke of the "good old days". Sports and travel brought classes of society closer. Only the poorest stayed home on Sundays. Clothing styles became more comfortable. The world was not only more beautiful, it had become more liberated.

Perhaps this growth came too fast. Imperialism was cracking as more colonies were exploited beyond the natural level. The stock markets were driving competition to madness. If we think about Europe in 1914 from the present perspective, there was no logical reason for war. I can only explain it through the overdose of power, a tragic consequence of the inner dynamics developing over these 40 years. Each government felt its power and forgot that the others felt the same way. The worst thing was that we were betrayed through our common optimism.

The alliances were forming, and the diplomats became less trustworthy. The Balkan War pushed for more militarism. Germany enacted a war tax, in the midst of peacetime. Other countries lengthened military obligations. Unfortunately, many intellectuals remained on the sidelines nurturing their optimism. We thought we were doing enough by thinking in a European and international manner. We believed the train workers would sooner sabotage the tracks than to load their comrades like cattle to the slaughter at the Front. The common danger was not recognized.

"People do not understand what is happening" were the words of Bertha von Suttner, the modern Cassandra. She had seen the horrors of the war of 1866 and saw it her duty to work for peace. Her great achievement lie in convincing Alfred Nobel, the inventor of dynamite, to establish the Nobel Prize for Peace (and international understanding, which she received in its fifth year 1905). I told her that I was on my way to Paris in spring of 1914 to try to formulate some kind of manifest, but the machine was already working its propaganda.

The First Hours of the War in 1914 (p. 154)

That summer would have remained in our memory merely through its fantastic weather. The attack in Sarajevo changed everything. The heir to the throne was by no means popular. He had no sense of humor and looked as unfriendly as his wife. After the commotion over the burial place, things quieted down. One week later the newspapers started beating the drums for war with Serbia. Soon it was August and I had to return from Belgium because of the situation. Despite my hatred for war, the feeling in Vienna was indescribable – hundreds of thousands of people had a feeling that they belonged together, a sensation they should have had during peace time.

Each person felt called to throw his meaningless self into the glowing mass. Each individual felt increased worth, no longer isolated as before.

Twenty five years later that scene of enthusiasm could not be repeated, now that we have seen modern warfare. Back then we believed that the other countries were to blame, they were the clever enemy. In 1939 we saw how diplomacy had failed starting with the tragedy of Versailles. In 1939 nobody had respect for their political leaders. We knew this new war can be a thousand times more brutal and inhuman than all earlier conflicts. No one in the 1939 generation believed in the divine justice of war, and worse, we no longer believed that lasting peace can be won. We clearly remembered the disappointments of the last war: impoverishment instead of wealth, bitterness instead of satisfaction, hunger, inflation, revolts, loss of civic freedom, enslavement to the government, nerve-racking insecurity, mutual distrust.

But this war had a moral value in the struggle for freedom. Back in 1914 people were crazy with a dream of a better world. They knew nothing of the realities of war, and that's why the victims wandered to the slaughter while the streets were festively lit. Two days earlier I was still in enemy territory in Belgium harboring the suspicion to politicians. I was resolved to maintain my conviction for the necessary unification of Europe.

A shocking case of this honest fanaticism was Ernst Lissauer, probably the most assimilated Prussian Jew I knew. Nobody was more enthralled with the German language and literature than he; and like many Jews entering German culture later in the 19th century, he believed more in Germany than most German believers. Since he could not serve in the military, he wanted to make his pen useful and wrote the passionate poem "Song of Hate against England" – for which Emperor Wilhelm II decorated him with the Order of the Red Eagle. No poet had ever gained such instant fame. And few suffered such loss in 1919 when his works were no longer printed in the newspapers. In 1936, then living in Vienna, he wrote: "To the Germans I am a Jew masked as a German; to the Jew a German faithless to Israel."

I soon moved to the countryside to begin my personal war: the battle against the betrayal of reason to the current mass passion.

The Struggle for Intellectual Brotherhood (p. 171)

The retreat did not help, the atmosphere remained depressing. The writer has the duty to express his convictions, even under censorship. The most humanist of poets Romain Rolland heard of my contribution to the "Berliner Tageblatt" and pulled me to Switzerland.

Then there were travels with the military trains, where I met a priest who said that in his whole life he hadn't given the last rites with oil to as many people as in the past month. "In my sixty-seven years with many experiences I had never thought that such a crime against humanity were possible".

In the Heart of Europe (p. 183)

When my tragedy “Jeremiah” was released in book form at Easter 1917 I was surprised that it did not meet the resistance I had expected. I wrote it as revolt against the times, but it sold 20,000 copies immediately. The war had dragged through two and a half years, and solidarity had loosened. The country was split into two worlds – the soldiers fighting at the front in miserable conditions, while at home were the carefree who visited theatres and even profited from the war. My book’s success resulted not from its literary quality, but rather from expressing the sentiments others dared not say: the hatred for war and doubt regarding victory.

The time flowed with a different current in Zurich. In this bewitched world none of us saw the mountains and lakes of the landscapes; we lived in the newspapers, news and rumors, opinions and disputes. Strangely the phenomenon of war was more intense here than in the warring homeland because we were separated from nationalistic interests in victor or defeat. Our European perspective saw the war as a savage and violent event which not only changed the lines on the map, but rather transformed the shape and future of our world.

The most poignant figures for me at the time were the people without a homeland, or worse yet, those who had two or three and could not decide to which they belonged. One young man usually sat in a corner of Café Odeon with his noticeably thick glasses. I heard he was a talented English poet, but when I met James Joyce he rejected any attachment to England. *He is Irish and writes English, but does not think English and does not want to think English.* He told me he was looking for a language which stands above the languages to serve all. “English forces one to enter a tradition”. He asked me how I might translate a sentence from “Portrait of the Artist” into German, and we tried to compare the Italian and French renditions, whereby he had four or five idioms ready for each word comparing their weight into the extremes of nuance. One felt a bitterness and inner vehemence making him so productive. His resentment to Dublin, against England and certain people had liberated a dynamic energy in him. I never saw him laugh or look amused. I was not surprised to later hear of his unique novel landing like a meteor on our times.

Another amphibic personality was Ferruccio Busoni, born and raised Italian, yet German by choice. From my early days I always enjoyed his piano interpretations and often in concert halls saw the wonderfully dreamy shine in his eyes. Now he asked: “Where do I belong? When I awake at night I know I was speaking Italian in the dream. And when I write I think with German words.” His students were now scattered throughout the world. “Perhaps one is now shooting at the other”. Late one night I ran into him in the hallway of a restaurant, and as he pointed to the bottles he said: “Don’t just drink! Sometimes one has to numb himself, otherwise you won’t handle it. Music cannot always do the trick, and work only visits you in good hours”.

Return to Austria (p. 203)

From a logical standpoint it was a foolish decision to return to the defeated Austria stripped of its many possessions, the multi-ethnic empire now forced to be an independent republic. I was fortunate to have a house in Salzburg with all its inconveniences. Everyone in the city looked malnourished and oppressed. The

shops had little to offer. Economic chaos ruled. After four years without construction we now had the returning soldiers with the many refugees crowding into any available rooms. Besides the black market there rose an unjust inflation, but it would get worse. People had saved their earnings for 40 years and patriotically invested in war bonds which now left them paupers. Somehow we adapted to this chaos, yet only few details come back to me now – an egg in Austria cost as much as a luxury automobile once did. With open eyes the world saw its betrayal. Betrayed were the mothers who offered their children, betrayed were the soldiers returning as beggars, betrayed were those patriots with war bonds, betrayed were all those who believed the promises of the government, betrayed were we who dreamed of a better-organized society. Why wonder at the bitterness of the younger generation watching their fathers lose the war and then the peace where everything was done wrong? We should understand why respect and trust no longer exist with this new youth. The post-war generation turned its back on tradition and took an independent leap into the future.

In the World Again (p. 219)

After three terrible years we could breathe again. I decided to try travelling to Verona concerned with nationalistic attitudes. Luckily tourists were welcomed here as in Milan and Florence. Unfortunately, one noticed the rise of fascist groups.

For some reason I went to Berlin and saw Walter Rathenau just before his assassination which sparked the new chaotic inflation. Logic cannot explain these developments to which the Austrian inflation of 1 to 15,000 was child's play in comparison. One morning I paid 50,000 Marks for a newspaper which cost 100,000 that evening. I had worked on a manuscript for one year and thought it safe to request immediate payment for an edition of ten thousand; when the check arrived, it hardly covered the cost of sending the original package. The streetcar cost millions. You found 100,000-Mark-bills in the gutter. Repairing a broken window now cost more than the house did. Speculation ran wild. Clever investors like Hugo Stinnes manipulated the market and real estate to become immensely wealthy and receive the admiration of people who admired success stories.

Berlin was soon lined with bars and nightclubs hosting unimaginable orgies with transvestites and uninhibited drug use. Noticeable however was the fake nature of it all. These spoiled kids were merely imitating spontaneous foolishness in their drunken reveries. Any observer could look at these months and fear a gruesome reaction as backlash. Ludendorff knew that his hour would come, and Hitler was being groomed. The German people who loved order did not know how to handle this freedom and yearned for those who would take it away.

Inflation ended with an exchange rate of one trillion Marks becoming one new Mark. In retrospect we can view this decade from 1924 to Hitler in 1933 as a welcome pause in the chain of catastrophes our generation witnessed since 1914. Of course there were incidents like the crash of 1929, but at least Europe was at peace. Germany was even allowed into the League of Nations.

My personal life was at such heights that I am uncomfortable mentioning this brief guest known as success. Yet, it illustrates how fate moves through our lives. Of the millions of books once available in German book stores (with my name on them) not one can be purchased today in Germany. Hitler's ban on my books has even extended to translations in France, Italy and other countries subservient to the madman. Forty years of efforts on an international level have been destroyed by one fist. And to look at this as the annihilation of our literary generation!

The comfort of having support in America has its value, but cannot replace those feelings and factors of inner nature which have been lost.

Sundown (p. 235)

My most magnificent sight in Russia was the grave of Tolstoy. During these weeks I was never alone. One day I found an anonymous letter in my coat pocket. "Don't believe everything you hear. Don't forget that many things are not shown to you. Remember that the people speaking to you do not always say what they want, but only that what they may say. We are all under surveillance and your interpreter reports every word. Her phone is bugged". I immediately burned this letter according to the instructions. I left Moscow with two icons, but the most valuable item coming home with me was the friendship with Maxim Gorki.

Despite my modest fame, I had eluded political personalities – quite a feat in Austria between the wars. Another chance event, however, led me to write a letter to Mussolini, who apparently was quite familiar with my works. An Italian woman had approached me to help save her husband in an upcoming trial. Though this doctor had earned war decorations in battle, he was now accused of smuggling the children of the socialist Matteotti out of the country and sentenced to 10 years of hard labor. The woman knew that her husband could not survive this punishment, and that I had to help her. I was in Italy the following week and sought assistance from influential friends, but they all played helpless. I returned to Salzburg dejected, but decided to use the open and direct approach. I sent a letter to Mussolini himself explaining that I had little knowledge of the situation, but would greatly appreciate lenience in this case. Four days later the Italian embassy in Vienna wrote me saying that His Excellency thanks me for the letter and will lessen the sentence. A telegram then arrived confirming the changes, which eventually led to a pardon. One stroke of the feather for Mussolini had now brought me the greatest joy and satisfaction of my literary pursuits. (***How Stefan Zweig saved the doctor Giuseppe Germani from Mussolini's prisons, Unpublished letters from the correspondence between Stefan Zweig and Elsa Germani, 1921-1937; Casa Stefan Zweig, Petropolis, 2013. On page 3 Alberto Dines quotes the letter to Romain Rolland – "I've just had my greatest literary success, greater still than the Nobel Prize – I've saved Dr. Germani". Page 74 provides Zweig's letter of thanks, January 1933: "Even this act of yours seems infinitesimally small beside others – at a time when all nations are sinking... this seemingly small fact has its significance and greatness, because in the moral world great and small are measured by other standards than those of our rushed contemporary history, which only notices the external gesture."*)

The time in Salzburg remained lively with visits from numerous writers and music personalities. Our collection of art and papers increased, but I realized that I would

not be able to properly take care of these valuables. I remember Goethe's warning that museums and collections become stiff or boring when not cultivated/developed. Some things went straight to the National Library in Vienna, while the rest is still in some process of little concern to me now. I cannot sigh for past possessions. The hunted and displaced people of these times, which do not appreciate real art, now have to acquire a new talent – taking leave of all which was once so dear to us.

With all this fame, I never thought that I could lose my house and my friends. I had no fears regarding death or illness, but could never harbor the faintest vision of what was to come – to be driven out and live without a homeland from one country to another. To have my name invoked like that of a criminal!

Incipit Hitler (p. 260)

It seems like a rule of history that contemporary people seldom recognize the important characters or events that shape their times. And so I cannot remember the first time I heard the name which we are forced to hear on a daily basis. The man who brought more tragedy to our world than any other grouping of evil. Of course, since Salzburg was close to Munich we did hear of the man's arrest for disorderly conduct and the famous Putsch in 1923. I also briefly read their press, "Miesbacher Anzeiger", but Miesbach was a small village, and the paper was poorly written. Who would take note of this? Then groups of brown-shirts appeared in varied villages making trouble. But Hitler could never finance such outbursts; they appeared in new uniforms with new vehicles and other equipment. Big money was behind this movement, and military strategists had a hand in paramilitary training.

I try to be as honest as possible in writing this and must admit that in 1933 we did not imagine that one percent of these events could be possible, but they came about within weeks. After the burning of the Reichstag I told my publisher that my books would not sell in Germany much longer. He replied: "Who should disallow them? You have never written anything against Germany". The burning of books and other pillaging happened only a few months later.

Strangely enough I was able to bring some irritation to the Führer. The film "Burning Secret" was playing throughout Germany. At many posters people gathered and talked about how it could refer to the people behind the burning of the Reichstag. In truth, the novel was written by me 20 years before the film and dealt with the affair of a Jewish woman. That made it reason enough to halt all showings and remove all advertising from the papers, etc.

And then came my involvement with Richard Strauss, the greatest living musician in Germany. His works would bring prestige to the Nazis (1936 Olympics in Berlin). But in 1933 our opera with Ben Johnson's theme "The Silent Woman" caused much discussion. Hitler had just banned all works with any Jewish involvement from German theatres. I told Strauss that my libretto for him was now doomed, but he thought that nobody would cut us off. He had negotiated with Goring and Goebbels and was named President of the Music Bureau of the Reich. Amidst much secrecy the opera was performed in Dresden in 1935, but cancelled after only two performances. Strauss resigned his post.

I left Salzburg in October 1933 and spent time in Paris and London. On returning to Austria in early 1934 I realized how much pressure was building toward the coming annexation. I thought of Shakespeare's words: "So foul a sky clears not without a storm". These February days in Vienna were historically labelled the suicide of Austrian independence. Strangely enough I was in the city and not aware of the canons or occupied houses where hundreds were killed. People reading their papers in New York, London or Paris had more information than we did. This phenomenon of being within a mile of important events and decisions and knowing less than people a thousand miles away happened to me again and again. When Dollfuß was murdered in Vienna several months later I stood in London reading this news and called friends in Vienna, who had less information than I.

The Agony of Peace (p. 282)

It was late February 1934 and I stood at Victoria Station with a feeling different from years earlier as a tourist, especially now that I had to find a small apartment to continue my work. These six years were not as exciting as on the continent, but I did have one interesting lunch with the sharpest minds around: Bernard Shaw and H.G. Wells. Both had been active in young socialism with the Fabian Society half a century ago. Rarely have I enjoyed such phosphorescent dialogue nor witnessed such humor in the arts.

But I lived these years only spatially in England while the concern over the Nazi suspicions and the later compromises for peace kept my soul at bay. Then came the Spanish Civil War of 1936. Who was paying for weapons smuggled through Portugal with other deliveries? The wire-pullers and so-called masterminds were giving arms to innocent boys who should use them against equally innocent boys of their own fatherland.

Nothing better illustrates the tragic backlash since the First War better than the restrictions on personal mobility. Before 1914 the world belonged to us all. We could travel whenever we wanted without permits or visas. Young people are amazed when I tell them of travels to India and America without a passport. Now we live in the pathological suspicion of all against all in this wire entanglement. Now we need fingerprints and applications submitted in four copies. This may seem trivial, but these things add up to costing our generation precious time. For my part there were so many applications for travel, then the taxes, currency vouchers, visa requests, and the countless hours of waiting for some bureaucrat to abuse you or act friendly. First then can you imagine how much human dignity has been lost in this century.

England was graciously providing for German and Austrian exiles/refugees, and that brought my 83-year-old friend Sigmund Freud to London for a few memorable months. The whole world of moral conventions had made him an outsider. Though his theories on dreams were indisputable, the university professors twisted various stories to keep Freud's psychoanalysis suspicious. Freud always dared to speak what he thought, even though he knew what unrest it caused. I enjoyed our conversations despite the current problematic situation for Jews. He regretted writing his recent study claiming that Moses was more Egyptian than Jew – which naturally

irritated the pious Jews of the times. "Now, while everything is being taken from them, I have the nerve to question their greatest man". In the end he suffered much from cancer of the jaw, which led to the doctor administering extra doses of morphine to end his monumental life on September 23, 1939. (From Zweig's eulogy: We know of his achievements which brought change and development to our spirits. His discovery of the human soul will live on as an immortal legend in all languages... And wherever we attempt to proceed through the labyrinth of the human heart, his spiritual light will guide us.)

In these trying times I retreated from London to Bath. Never have I felt so powerless in the wake of world events. One existed alone while several people in Berlin, Paris, Rome and London – of whom only a few had ever shown special wisdom or skill – made phone calls, spoke and wrote regarding decisions we never heard in detail. In their hands, not in my own, lie my fate. They destroyed and protected the powerless while granting freedom or servitude. And now I sat in my room defenseless as a fly, powerless as a snail, whilst life was at stake.

The Pen Club Convention was scheduled for the first week of September in Stockholm. In case of war I would now be considered an enemy-alien in England, so I packed what I could carry. Yet I needed to bring my personal life in order. I wanted to arrange my second marriage as soon as possible. (Zweig only mentions his first wife one time in connection with running into an old friend, who the woman thought wanted to assault him.) I went to the courthouse in Bath on the morning of September 1 intending to set the ceremony for the next day. Just as the clerk was writing us into the calendar the door opened and a young clerk stormed in saying: "The Germans have invaded Poland. This means war!" Now we would have to wait for instructions from London.

I realized that we Austrians would now be considered Germans. My racial designation made me anti-German, yet I wrote and always thought in German. But now my feelings belonged to the allies fighting for the freedom of the world. And I knew that after this war everything would have to start over again. My important design for a peacefully united Europe was smashed. I feared this war more than my own death.

I took a last look at this city in peacetime. How different from 25 years ago in Austria. How loaded with memories from my own transition. Then came the vision of 1918 when the shops were empty and women stood in lines for food with the wounded. I wondered how many more hells and purgatories lie ahead.

The sun was shining in its brilliance. Walking home I saw my own shadow, looming like that of the other war. All this time it has not left me, this shadow, even hanging with my thoughts day and night. Its dark lining probably appears on some pages of this book. However, each shadow in the end is also a child of the light; and only the person who has lived through the bright and the dark, war and peace, rise and fall, only he has truly lived.

Ilbesheim, June 2020