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The Creation of the Institut für Sozialforschung and Its First Frankfurt Years

One of the most far-reaching changes brought by the First World War, at least in terms of its impact on intellectuals, was the shifting of the socialist center of gravity eastward. The unexpected success of the Bolshevik Revolution — in contrast to the dramatic failure of its Central European imitators — created a serious dilemma for those who had previously been at the center of European Marxism, the left-wing intellectuals of Germany. In rough outline, the choices left to them were as follows: first, they might support the moderate socialists and their freshly created Weimar Republic, thus eschewing revolution and scorning the Russian experiment; or second, they could accept Moscow's leadership, join the newly formed German Communist Party, and work to undermine Weimar's bourgeois compromise. Although rendered more immediate by the war and rise of the moderate socialists to power, these alternatives in one form or another had been at the center of socialist controversies for decades. A third course of action, however, was almost entirely a product of the radical disruption of Marxist assumptions, a disruption brought about by the war and its aftermath. This last alternative was the searching reexamination of the very foundations of Marxist theory, with the dual hope of explaining past errors and preparing for future action. This began a process that inevitably led back to the dimly lit regions of Marx's philosophical past.

One of the crucial questions raised in the ensuing analysis was the relation of theory to practice, or more precisely, to what became a fa-

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miliar term in the Marxist lexicon, *praxis*. Loosely defined, *praxis* was used to designate a kind of self-creating action, which differed from the externally motivated behavior produced by forces outside man's control. Although originally seen as the opposite of contemplative *theoria* when it was first used in Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, *praxis* in the Marxist usage was seen in dialectical relation to theory. In fact, one of the earmarks of *praxis* as opposed to mere action was its being informed by theoretical considerations. The goal of revolutionary activity was understood as the unifying of theory and *praxis*, which would be in direct contrast to the situation prevailing under capitalism.

How problematical that goal in fact was became increasingly clear in the postwar years, when for the first time socialist governments were in power. The Soviet leadership saw its task in terms more of survival than of realizing socialist aims — not an unrealistic appraisal under the circumstances, but one scarcely designed to placate socialists like Rosa Luxemburg who would have preferred no revolution at all to a betrayed one. Although from a very different perspective, the socialist leadership in the Weimar Republic also understood its most imperative goal to be the survival of the new government rather than the implementation of socialism. The trade union consciousness, which, as Carl Schorske has shown,¹ permeated its ranks well before the end of the Second Reich, meant the squandering of what opportunities there might have been to revolutionize German society. The split that divided the working class movement in Weimar between a bolshevized Communist Party (KPD) and a nonrevolutionary Socialist Party (SPD) was a sorry spectacle to those who still maintained the purity of Marxist theory. Some attempted a rapprochement with one faction or another. But as demonstrated by the story of Georg Lukács, who was forced to repudiate his most imaginative book, *History and Class Consciousness*, shortly after its appearance in 1923, this often meant sacrificing intellectual integrity on the altar of party solidarity.

When, however, personal inclinations led to a greater commitment to theory than to party, even when this meant suspending for a while the unifying of theory and *praxis*, the results in terms of theoretical innovation could be highly fruitful. It will be one of the central contentions of this work that the relative autonomy of the men who comprised the so-called Frankfurt School of the Institut für Sozialforschung, although entailing certain disadvantages, was one of the primary reasons for the theoretical achievements produced by their collaboration. Although without much impact in Weimar, and with even less during the period of exile that followed, the Frankfurt

School was to become a major force in the revitalization of Western European Marxism in the postwar years. In addition, through the sudden popularity of Herbert Marcuse in the America of the late 1960's, the Frankfurt School's Critical Theory (*Kritische Theorie*) has also had a significant influence on the New Left in this country.

From its very beginning, independence was understood as a necessary prerequisite for the task of theoretical innovation and unrestrained social research. Fortunately, the means to ensure such conditions were available. The idea of an institutional framework in which these goals might be pursued was conceived by Felix J. Weil in 1922.² Weil was the only son of a German-born grain merchant, Hermann Weil, who had left Germany around 1890 for Argentina and made a sizable fortune exporting grains back to Europe. Born in 1898 in Buenos Aires, Felix was sent in his ninth year to Frankfurt to attend the Goethe Gymnasium and, ultimately, the newly created university in that city. Except for an important year in Tübingen in 1918–1919, where he first became involved in left-wing causes at the university, Weil remained at Frankfurt until he took his doctorate *magna cum laude* in political science. His dissertation, on the practical problems of implementing socialism,³ was published in a series of monographs edited by Karl Korsch, who had been one of the first to interest him in Marxism. Drawing upon his own considerable funds inherited from his mother, as well as his father's wealth, Weil began to support a number of radical ventures in Germany.

The first of these was the *Erste Marxistische Arbeitswoche* (First Marxist Work Week), which met in the summer of 1923 in Ilmenau, Thuringia. "Its purpose," according to Weil, was the "hope that the different trends in Marxism, if afforded an opportunity of talking it out together, could arrive at a 'true' or 'pure' Marxism."⁴ Among the participants at the week-long session were Georg Lukács, Karl Korsch, Richard Sorge, Friedrich Pollock, Karl August Wittfogel, Bela Fogarasi, Karl Schmückle, Konstantin Zetkin (the younger of two sons of the well-known socialist leader Klara Zetkin), Hede Gumperz (then married to Julian Gumperz, an editor of the Communist *Rote Fahne*, later to Gerhart Eisler and then to Paul Massing),⁵ and several wives, including Hedda Korsch, Rose Wittfogel, Christiane Sorge, and Kate Weil. Much of the time was devoted to a discussion of Korsch's yet unpublished manuscript, "Marxism and Philosophy." "The EMA," Weil wrote,⁶ "was entirely informal, composed only of intellectuals," and "had not the slightest factional intention or result." Expectations of a *Zweite Marxistische Arbeitswoche* (a Second Marxist Work Week) came to naught when a more ambitious alternative took its place.

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With the encouragement of several friends at the University of Frankfurt, Weil's idea of a more permanent institute, which he had conceived during the EMA, became increasingly clarified. One of these friends, Friedrich Pollock, had participated in the discussions in Ilmenau. Born in 1894 in Freiburg, the son of an assimilated Jewish businessman, Pollock had been trained for a commercial career before serving in the war. After its end, no longer interested in business, he became a student of economics and politics at the universities of Munich, Freiburg, and Frankfurt. He was granted a doctorate in 1923 *summa cum laude* from the economics department at Frankfurt with a thesis on Marx's monetary theory. Before the war, in 1911, Pollock had become friends with Max Horkheimer, who later was to emerge as the most important figure in the Institut's history, and who now lent his voice to Pollock's in supporting Weil's plan for an institute of social research.

Horkheimer, Pollock's junior by nine months, was born in 1895 in Stuttgart. At the urging of his father, Moritz, a prominent Jewish manufacturer, he too had had commercial training before entering military service. Horkheimer accepted the advice of his father on such matters as extended visits to Brussels and London, which he took with Pollock in 1913–1914 to learn French and English. But at no time were his interests solely those of the aspiring businessman. There is clear evidence of this in the series of novels he wrote (but left unpublished) during this period in his life. After 1918 he sought more disciplined intellectual training at the same three universities attended by Pollock. Initially working in psychology under the direction of the Gestaltist Adhemar Gelb, he was diverted into another field after news reached Frankfurt that a project comparable to the one in which he was engaged had recently been completed elsewhere. The new field was philosophy and his new mentor Hans Cornelius.

Although Cornelius never had any direct connection with the Institut, his influence on Horkheimer and his friends was considerable, which will become apparent when the elements of Critical Theory are discussed in the next chapter. In 1922 Horkheimer received his doctorate *summa cum laude* under Cornelius's direction with a thesis on Kant.⁷ He was "habilitated" * three years later with another

* I am grateful to Dr. Weil for providing a full explanation of this and related German terms (used below) in the academic hierarchical system, as it was around 1920: "A *Privatdozent* was the first step in the academic career. It corresponds to assistant professor in the U.S. To become one, a candidate, usually then serving, after his doctor's degree, as assistant to a full professor, to the dean of the department, or to a *Seminar* (study group), had to submit a new qualifying thesis, the *Habilitationsschrift*, sponsored by two full professors, and then defend it in a *Disputation* before the department consisting of all the full professors. (At Frankfurt University

critical discussion of Kant's work and gave his first lecture as *Privatdozent* in May, 1925, on Kant and Hegel.⁸

Horkheimer's relationship to Pollock was one of the cornerstones of the Institut, and it merits some comment here. An insight into it can be gleaned from a passage in Ludwig Marcuse's autobiography. Marcuse, no relation to Herbert, was the drama critic for a Frankfurt newspaper in the mid-twenties when Cornelius brought his two young protégés to his office. They were "an attractive man, Max Horkheimer, overflowing with warmth, and his reserved, externally austere friend, Fritz Pollock; but one also saw in him a little of what was being guarded behind the reserve."⁹ Among the qualities in Pollock to which Marcuse might have alluded was a self-effacing, unquestioning loyalty to Horkheimer, which marked their friendship for the sixty or so years of its duration until Pollock's death in the winter of 1970. With only brief interruptions, the two remained in close proximity for all of their adult lives. Pollock took the role of the pragmatic, prudent realist, often arranging the mundane details of their lives to allow Horkheimer the maximum time for his scholarly pursuits. As a child Horkheimer was highly protected, and during his mature years Pollock often served as buffer between him and a harsh world. Horkheimer, so one observer recalled,¹⁰ was often moody and temperamental. Pollock, in contrast, was steady, even obsessive. The complementarity of their personalities was one of the sources of the Institut's success. That Pollock's own scholarly career suffered to some extent was a price he seemed willing to pay. In the twenties, to be sure, this was a result that was difficult to foresee.

In fact, both men, and probably Weil as well, might have expected successful careers in their respective fields. However, entrance into the highly rigid German university system would have necessitated

there were five such departments: philosophy, law, economics and social sciences, medicine, and natural sciences.) If he passed, the department granted him his *venia legendi*, the 'permission to lecture,' which, however, was limited to a particular field. The *Privatdozent* was not a civil servant (*Beamter*) nor did he receive a salary, only a share in the tuition fees for his course.

"The next step on the ladder was the *Ausserordentliche Professor*, the associate professor. He was a civil servant, with tenure and salary, and also received a share in the tuition fees. He could sponsor *Doktoranden* and participate in the exams, but had no vote in the departmental meetings, although he could speak at these meetings.

"The *Ordentliche Professor*, the full professor, had all the rights of the *Ausserordentliche*, plus the vote in the meetings. But unlike the *Ausserordentliche* he could lecture on any topic he wanted, even outside his field (for example, the holder of a chair for art history could lecture on aerodynamics, if he so wanted). He was, of course, a civil servant with tenure (and usually a large salary), a share in the tuition fees (usually a minimum guarantee) and he was entitled to the services of a university-paid assistant. The full professor's oath of office also conferred German citizenship upon him, if he was a foreigner, unless he previously filed a declination (thus Grünberg chose to remain an Austrian, and, much later, Horkheimer preferred to remain an American)." (Letter of June 8, 1971)

confining their broad interests to one discipline. In addition, the type of radical scholarship they hoped to pursue found little favor with the established academic hierarchy. Even the non-Marxist but unconventional Cornelius was very much of an outcast among his colleagues. Accordingly, Weil's idea of an independently endowed institute for social research seemed an excellent way to bypass the normal channels of university life. Such topics as the history of the labor movement and the origins of anti-Semitism, which were neglected in the standard curriculum of German higher education, could be studied with a thoroughness never attempted before.¹¹ Hermann Weil, Felix's father, was approached with the plan and agreed to an initial endowment providing a yearly income of 120,000 Marks (the equivalent of \$30,000 after the inflation had ended). The value of this income has been estimated by Pollock as four times what it would be in 1970. It took approximately 200 Marks (or \$50.00) a month to support an unmarried assistant at the Institut. In time the initial grant was supplemented by additional capital gifts from Weil and other sources. To my knowledge, however, there is no evidence to indicate any political contributors, although allegations to this effect were sometimes made by the Institut's detractors in later years. In any event, Hermann Weil's gifts, though not enormous, did permit the creation and maintenance of an institution whose financial independence proved a great advantage throughout its subsequent history.

Although independence, both financial and intellectual, was the goal of the founders, they thought it prudent to seek some affiliation with the University of Frankfurt, itself only recently established in 1914. The original idea of calling it the Institut für Marxismus (Institute for Marxism) was abandoned as too provocative, and a more Aesopian alternative was sought (not for the last time in the Frankfurt School's history). The suggestion of the Education Ministry to call it the Felix Weil Institute of Social Research was declined by Weil, who "wanted the Institut to become known, and perhaps famous, due to its contributions to Marxism as a scientific discipline, not due to the founder's money."¹² It was decided to call it simply the Institut für Sozialforschung. Weil also refused to "habilitate" himself and become a *Privatdozent*, or to consider the possibility of further academic advancement leading to the directorship of the Institut, because "countless people would have been convinced that I 'bought' myself the 'venia legendi' or, later, the chair."¹³ Holding a chair as a governmentally salaried full professor at the university was, in fact, a stipulation for the directorship of the Institut as spelled out in the agreement reached with the Ministry of Education.

Weil proposed as candidate an economist from the Technische Hochschule in Aachen, Kurt Albert Gerlach. Weil himself retained control of the Gesellschaft für Sozialforschung (Society of Social Research), the Institut's financial and administrative body.

Gerlach shared with the Institut's founders an aesthetic and political distaste for bourgeois society. He had cultivated the former through connections with the Stefan George circle and the latter through an acquaintanceship with the Fabians gained during several years of study in England. His political inclinations were firmly to the left. Many years later, Pollock would remember him as a non-party socialist,¹⁴ while the British historians F. W. Deakin and G. R. Storry in their study of Richard Sorge wrote: "It is probable that, like Sorge, he was at this time a member of the Communist Party."¹⁵ Whatever the precise nature of Gerlach's politics, when proposed by Weil, he was accepted by the economics and social science department as professor and by the Education Ministry as first head of the Institut. In early 1922, Gerlach wrote a "Memorandum on the Foundation of an Institute of Social Research"¹⁶ in which he stressed the synoptic goals of the Institut. Shortly thereafter, it was announced that he would deliver a series of inaugural lectures on anarchism, socialism, and Marxism. But the lectures were never given, for in October, 1922, Gerlach suddenly died of an attack of diabetes, at the age of thirty-six. (He left his library of eight thousand volumes to Weil, who passed it on to the Institut.)

The search for a successor focused on an older man who would serve as interim director until one of the younger founding members was old enough to acquire a chair at the university. The first possibility was Gustav Mayer, the noted historian of socialism and the biographer of Engels. But the negotiations foundered, as Mayer remembers it, on the demands made by Weil — whom he later dismissed as an *Edelkommunist* (an aristocratic communist) — for total control over the Institut's intellectual life.¹⁷ If this was true, Weil's insistence was certainly short-lived, for the next candidate, who actually got the position, asserted his own domination very quickly. Weil's influence on intellectual questions appears, in fact, never to have been very great.

The final choice for Gerlach's replacement was Carl Grünberg, who was persuaded to leave his post as professor of law and political science at the University of Vienna to come to Frankfurt.¹⁸ Grünberg had been born in Focsani, Rumania, in 1861 of Jewish parents (he later converted to Catholicism to assume his chair in Vienna). He studied jurisprudence from 1881 to 1885 in the Austrian capital, where he subsequently combined a legal and an academic

career. In 1909 he became professor at Vienna and in the subsequent year began editing the *Archiv für die Geschichte des Sozialismus und der Arbeiterbewegung* (*Archive for the History of Socialism and the Workers' Movement*), popularly known as *Grünbergs Archiv*.

Politically, Grünberg was an avowed Marxist, who has been called "the father of Austro-Marxism" by one observer.¹⁹ This characterization, however, has been disputed by the historian of that movement, who has written that it was true only "insofar as the representatives of Austro-Marxism were his students at the University of Vienna, but not in the sense that Grünberg himself can be counted among the Austro-Marxists, since his work had a primarily historical character and was not devoted to achieving a unity of theory and practice."²⁰ Grünberg's relative indifference to theoretical questions seems to have persisted after his coming to Frankfurt. Although his journal did contain an occasional theoretical article, such as Karl Korsch's important "Marxism and Philosophy" in 1923 and Georg Lukács's critique of Moses Hess three years later,²¹ it was primarily devoted to historical and empirical studies usually grounded in a rather undialectical, mechanistic Marxism in the Engels-Kautsky tradition. Weil's own theoretical interests were never very different, and Grünberg was certainly in agreement with the goal of an interdisciplinary institute dedicated to a radical dissection of bourgeois society. So the problem of Gerlach's successor was satisfactorily resolved by the time the Institut was ready to begin operations. Grünberg, it might be noted in passing, was the first avowed Marxist to hold a chair at a German university.

The official creation of the Institut occurred on February 3, 1923, by a decree of the Education Ministry, following an agreement between it and the Gesellschaft für Sozialforschung. Accepting an invitation by Professor Drevermann of the Senckenberg Museum of Natural Science to use its halls as a temporary home, the Institut immediately began to function, as Weil remembers it, "among open moving boxes filled with books, on improvised desks made of boards, and under the skeletons of a giant whale, a diplodocus, and an ichthyosaurus."²²

In March, 1923, construction of a building to house its operations at Victoria-Allee 17, near the corner of Bockenheimer Landstrasse on the university campus, was begun. Franz Röckle, Weil's choice as architect, designed a spare, cube-shaped, five-story structure in the *Neue Sachlichkeit* (New Objectivity) style then becoming fashionable in avant-garde Weimar circles. In later years the irony of the Institut's being housed in a building whose architecture reflected the spirit of sober "objectivity" that Critical Theory so often mocked²³

was not lost on its members. Nevertheless, its thirty-six-seat reading room, sixteen small workrooms, four seminar rooms with a hundred places, and library with space for seventy-five thousand volumes served the young Institut well.

On June 22, 1924, the Institut's freshly completed building was officially opened. Grünberg gave the dedicating address.²⁴ At the outset of his remarks, he stressed the need for a research-oriented academy in opposition to the then current trend in German higher education towards teaching at the expense of scholarship. Although the Institut was to offer some instruction, it would try to avoid becoming a training school for "mandarins" ²⁵ prepared only to function in the service of the status quo. In pointing to the tendency of German universities to become centers of specialized instruction — institutes for "mandarins" — Grünberg was putting his finger on a persistent problem in German history. More than a century before, Wilhelm von Humboldt had attempted to draw a line between "universities" devoted to practical training and "academies" fostering pure research.²⁶ Over the years, however, the critical "academy" had been clearly shunted aside by the adjustment-oriented university as the model for German higher education. The Institut from its inception was dedicated to countering this trend.

Grünberg continued his remarks by outlining the differences in administration that would distinguish the Institut from other recently created research societies. Rather than collegial in leadership, as in the case of the newly founded Cologne Research Institute of Social Sciences, directed by Christian Eckert, Leopold von Wiese, Max Scheler, and Hugo Lindemann, the Frankfurt Institut was to have a single director with "dictatorial" control. Although the independence of its members was assured, true direction would be exercised in the distribution of the Institut's resources and the focusing of its energies. In subsequent years the dominance of Max Horkheimer in the affairs of the Institut was unquestioned. Although in large measure attributable to the force of his personality and the range of his intellect, his power was also rooted in the structure of the Institut as it was originally conceived.

Grünberg concluded his opening address by clearly stating his personal allegiance to Marxism as a scientific methodology. Just as liberalism, state socialism, and the historical school had institutional homes elsewhere, so Marxism would be the ruling principle at the Institut. Grünberg's conception of materialist analysis was straightforward. It was, he argued, "eminently inductive; its results claimed no validity in time and space," but had "only relative, historically conditioned meaning." ²⁷ True Marxism, he continued, was not dog-

matic; it did not seek eternal laws. With this latter assertion, Critical Theory as it was later developed was in agreement. Grünberg's inductive epistemology, however, did not receive the approval of Horkheimer and the other younger members of the group. But in the first few years of the Institut's history Grünberg's approach prevailed. The Grünberg *Archiv* continued to stress the history of the labor movement while publishing an occasional theoretical work, such as Pollock's study of Werner Sombart and Horkheimer's article on Karl Mannheim.²⁸

The tone of the Grünberg years, a tone very different from that set after Horkheimer replaced him as director, was captured in a letter sent by a student at the Institut, Oscar H. Swede, to the American Marxist Max Eastman in 1927. The relative orthodoxy of the Institut's Marxism was frustrating to the young Swede, who complained of spending

hours of exasperating argument in a Marxist Institute with a younger generation settling down to an orthodox religion and the worship of an iconographical literature, not to mention blackboards full of mathematical juggling with blocks of $1000k + 400w$ of Marx's divisions of capital's functions, and the like. God! The hours I've spent listening to the debate of seminaries and student circles on the Hegelian *dialektik*, with not a single voice to point out that the problems can no longer be solved (if they ever were) by means of straw splitting "philosophical" conceptions. Even the leader [Grünberg], faced with an audience of enthusiastic youth convinced that Relativity is a further installment of bourgeois ideology substituting fluctuating ideas for Newton's absolute materialism, that Freudism [sic] and Bergsonism are insidious attacks from the rear, and that the war can be waged with the sword in one hand and the "Geschichte der Historiko-materialismus" in the other . . . is constantly being brought up against the inherent contradictions in a Marxian M.I.H. [Materialist Interpretation of History] and being forced to devise defences against the logical conclusion that we may sit with our arms folded and wait for the millenium to blossom from the dung of the capitalist decay. The fact is that Ec[onomic] determinism cannot produce either fighting or creative forces, and there will be no communism if we have to rely for recruits on the sergeanty of cold, hunger, and low wages.²⁹

Ultimately, Swede's impatience with the unimaginative Marxism of the Grünberg years was to be shared by the Institut's later leaders, who were to comprise the Frankfurt School; but during the twenties, little theoretical innovation occurred at what the students were to call the "Café Marx."

Symptomatic of its position were the close ties it maintained with the Marx-Engels Institute in Moscow under the direction of David

Ryazanov.³⁰ It photostated copies of unpublished manuscripts by Marx and Engels brought over weekly by courier from the SPD's Berlin headquarters and forwarded them to Moscow, where they were included in the collected works, the famous *MEGA (Marx-Engels Historisch-Kritische Gesamtausgabe)*.³¹

At the same time, the Institut began to assemble a group of young assistants with a variety of backgrounds and interests. The least important in terms of the Institut's later development, but one of the most fascinating individuals to be associated with it at any time, was Richard "Ika" Sorge. The remarkable story of his espionage for the Russians in the Far East prior to and during the Second World War is too well known to require recapitulation here. Independent Socialist and then Communist after 1918, Sorge was also a doctoral student of Gerlach's at Aachen. He combined his academic activities with such work for the Party as illegal organizing of Ruhr mine workers. In 1921 he married Gerlach's divorced wife, Christiane, which surprisingly did not cost him the friendship of his professor. When Gerlach went to Frankfurt the next year, Sorge followed. After the sudden death of the Institut's projected first director, Sorge remained with the group for a brief time, and was given the task of organizing the library. It was a job he did not relish, and when the Party told him to come to Moscow in 1924, his obedience was uncomplicated by a reluctance to leave Frankfurt. In any case, his connection with the Institut, according to Deakin and Storry, "must have been nominal and a cover"³² for his work for the Party. It was not until his public exposure as a spy in the 1940's that the others learned of his remarkable undercover career.³³

Other assistants at the Institut, however, were openly involved with leftist politics, despite the official intention of the founding members to keep it free of any party affiliation. Karl August Wittfogel, Franz Borkenau, and Julian Gumperz were all members of the Communist Party. Political activism as such was thus not in itself a reason for rejection by the group. It could, however, prove a hindrance, as in the case of Karl Korsch, who had been justice minister in the Thuringian SPD-KPD Coalition government in 1923, and continued as a prominent left opposition figure in the KPD until 1926. Wittfogel remembers Korsch's role in the Institut as central during its first years, but the other surviving members have all disagreed with his version of the facts. Korsch did participate in some of the Institut's seminars and wrote occasional reviews for its publications before and after the emigration, but was never offered a full membership.³⁴ The reasons were no doubt complex, but Korsch's stress on *praxis*, which was to lead him increasingly away from philo-

sophical speculation in later years, certainly played a role. So too did the instability that the others saw in his character.³⁵

From time to time the question of Horkheimer's possible membership in the KPD has been raised. But hard evidence to support this view seems unavailable, and there is much in his writings and actions that makes his current denial of membership entirely plausible. During their student days together in Munich in 1919, Horkheimer and Pollock were nonparticipatory witnesses of the short-lived revolutionary activities of the Bavarian literati. Although helping to hide left-wing victims of the white terror that followed, they did not themselves join in the revolution, which they considered premature and inevitably doomed by the lack of objective conditions favoring true social change.³⁶ Horkheimer's earliest political sympathies were with Rosa Luxemburg, especially because of her critique of Bolshevik centralism.³⁷ After her murder in 1919, he never found another socialist leader to follow.

In one of the very few concrete political analyses Horkheimer wrote during the pre-emigration period, "The Impotence of the German Working Class," published in 1934 in the collection of aphorisms and short essays known as *Dämmerung*³⁸ (the German word means both dawn and twilight), he expressed his reasons for skepticism concerning the various workers' parties. The existence of a split between an employed, integrated working-class elite and the masses of outraged, frustrated unemployed produced by capitalism in its current form, he argued, had led to a corresponding dichotomy between a Social Democratic Party lacking in motivation and a Communist Party crippled by theoretical obtuseness. The SPD had too many "reasons"; the Communists, who often relied on coercion, too few. The prospects for reconciling the two positions, he concluded pessimistically, were contingent "in the last analysis on the course of economic processes. . . . In both parties, there exists a part of the strength on which the future of mankind depends."³⁹ At no time, therefore, whether under Grünberg or under Horkheimer, was the Institut to ally itself with a specific party or faction on the left. In 1931, one of its members characterized its relationship to the working-class movement in these terms:

It is a *neutral* institution at the university, which is accessible to everyone. Its significance lies in the fact that for the first time everything concerning the workers' movement in the most important countries of the world is gathered. Above all, sources (congress minutes, party programs, statutes, newspapers, and periodicals) . . . Whoever in Western Europe wishes to write on the currents of the workers movement *must* come to us, for we are the only gathering point for it.⁴⁰

When the Institut did accept members who were politically committed, it was solely because of their nonpolitical work. The most important of the activists in its ranks was Karl August Wittfogel.⁴¹ The son of a Lutheran schoolteacher, Wittfogel was born in the small Hanoverian town of Woltersdorf in 1896. Active in the German youth movement before the war, he became increasingly involved in radical politics by its end. In November, 1918, he joined the Independent Socialist party and two years later, its Communist successor. Throughout the Weimar period he directed much of his considerable energy into party work, although he was frequently in hot water in Moscow for the heterodoxy of his positions.

At the same time as his participation in Communist politics deepened, Wittfogel managed to pursue a vigorous academic career. He studied at Leipzig, where he was influenced by Karl Lamprecht, at Berlin, and finally at Frankfurt, where Carl Grünberg agreed to direct his dissertation. He published studies of both bourgeois science and bourgeois society before turning to what was to become his major concern in later years, Asiatic society.⁴² As early as 1922 Wittfogel had been asked by Gerlach and Weil to join the Institut they were planning to open. It was not until three years later, however, that he accepted the offer, his wife, Rose Schlesinger, having already become one of the Institut's librarians.

Although his new colleagues respected Wittfogel's contributions to the understanding of what Marx had called the Asiatic mode of production, there seems to have been little real integration of his work with their own. On theoretical issues he was considered naive by Horkheimer and the other younger members of the Institut who were challenging the traditional interpretation of Marxist theory. Wittfogel's approach was unapologetically positivistic, and the disdain was clearly mutual. Symbolic of this was the fact that he had to review one of his own books in 1932 under the pseudonym Carl Peterson, because no one else was interested in taking the assignment.

In 1931, to be sure, his study *Economy and Society in China* was published under the Institut's auspices, but by then he had moved his permanent base of operations to Berlin. Here, among his many other pursuits, he contributed a series of articles on aesthetic theory to *Die Linkskurve*, which have been characterized as "the first effort in Germany to present the foundations and principles of a Marxist aesthetic."⁴³ Wittfogel, who in the twenties had written a number of plays performed by Piscator and others, developed a sophisticated, Hegelian aesthetic, which anticipated many of Lukács's later positions. It is a further mark of his isolation from his Institut colleagues

that it seems to have had no impact whatsoever on Lowenthal, Adorno, or Benjamin, the major aestheticians of the Frankfurt School. To Horkheimer and his colleagues, Wittfogel appeared as a student of Chinese society whose analyses of what he later called "hydraulic society" or "Oriental despotism" they encouraged, but as little else. His activism they found somewhat of an embarrassment; he was no less scornful of their political neutrality.

If Wittfogel cannot be characterized as a member of the Institut's inner circle, either before or after the emigration, the same can be said even more emphatically of Franz Borkenau. Born in 1900 in Vienna, Borkenau was active in the Communist Party and the Comintern from 1921 until his disillusionment in 1929. How he became part of the Institut's milieu has proved difficult to ascertain, although it is probable that he was one of Grünberg's protégés. His political involvement seems to have been as intense as Wittfogel's and his scholarly activity somewhat constrained. Most of his time at the Institut was spent probing the ideological changes that accompanied the rise of capitalism. The result was a volume in the Institut's series of publications released after some delay in 1934 as *The Transition from the Feudal to the Bourgeois World View*.⁴⁴ Although now almost completely forgotten, it has invited favorable comparison with Lucien Goldmann's more recent *The Hidden God*.⁴⁵ Borkenau's major argument was that the emergence of an abstract, mechanical philosophy, best exemplified in the work of Descartes, was intimately connected to the rise of abstract labor in the capitalist system of manufacturing. The connection was not to be understood as causal in one direction, but rather as a mutual reinforcement. Soon after, an article appeared in the *Zeitschrift für Sozialforschung* critical of Borkenau's central thesis, the only public acknowledgment of his isolation from the others.⁴⁶

The author of the piece, Henryk Grossmann, although a figure in Institut affairs from 1926 until the 1940's, can himself be scarcely described as a major force in its intellectual development. Closer in age and intellectual inclinations to Grünberg than to some of the younger members, Grossmann was born in 1881 in Cracow, then part of Austrian Galicia, of a well-to-do family of Jewish mine owners. Before the war he studied economics at Cracow and Vienna, at the latter with Böhm-Bawerk, and wrote among other things a historical study of Austria's trade policies in the eighteenth century.⁴⁷ After serving as an artillery officer in the early years of the war, he held several posts with the Austrian administration in Lublin until the collapse of the Hapsburg Empire in 1918. Choosing to remain in the newly reconstituted Poland after the war, Grossmann was asked

to supervise the first statistical survey of its national wealth and was appointed chief of the first Polish census in 1921. In the following year he became professor of economics at Warsaw, a post he held until the Pilsudski government's dislike of his socialism persuaded him to leave in 1925. Grünberg, who had known him in prewar Vienna, then invited him to Frankfurt, where an assistant professorship at the university and an assistantship at the Institut as aide to Grünberg were awaiting him.

An enormously learned man with a prodigious knowledge of economic history, Grossmann is remembered by many who knew him⁴⁸ as the embodiment of the Central European academic: proper, meticulous, and gentlemanly. He had, however, absorbed his Marxism in the years when Engels's and Kautsky's monistic materialistic views prevailed. He remained firmly committed to this interpretation and thus largely unsympathetic to the dialectical, neo-Hegelian materialism of the younger Institut members.

One ought not, however, overemphasize Grossmann's insensitivity to Horkheimer's work. On July 18, 1937, for example, he wrote to Paul Mattick that:

In the last number of the *Zeitschrift* there appeared an especially successful essay of Horkheimer with a sharp, fundamental critique of new (logical) empiricism. Very worthy of being read, because in various socialist circles, Marxist materialism is confused with empiricism, because one shows sympathy for this empiricism as an allegedly antimetaphysical tendency.⁴⁹

Like Wittfogel's and Borkenau's, Grossmann's politics were grounded in a relatively unreflective enthusiasm for the Soviet Union, but although he had been a member of the Polish Communist Party, it seems unlikely that he ever became an actual member of its German counterpart after coming to Frankfurt. Unlike them, he did not experience a later disillusionment with communism, even during his decade or so of exile in America, when many others with similar backgrounds repudiated their past.

Grossmann's quarrel with Borkenau in his *Zeitschrift* article on Borkenau's book was over the timing of the transition from the feudal to the bourgeois ideology — he put it one hundred fifty years before Borkenau — and the importance of technology in effecting the change — Leonardo rather than Descartes was his paradigmatic figure. Nonetheless, Grossmann never questioned the fundamental causal relationship between substructure and superstructure. In his article of 1935 in the *Zeitschrift*, he thus continued to express his allegiance to the orthodoxies of Marxism as he understood them; but

this was not totally without variation, as demonstrated by his stress on the technological impetus to change, in opposition to Borkenau's emphasis on capitalist forms of production. A much more important expression of his adherence to the tenets of orthodox Marxism can be found in the series of lectures he gave at the Institut in 1926–1927, which were collected in 1929 as *The Law of Accumulation and Collapse in the Capitalist System*,⁵⁰ the first volume of the Institut's *Schriften*.

The question of capitalism's inevitable collapse from within had been the center of controversy in socialist circles, ever since Eduard Bernstein's articles in *Die Neue Zeit* in the 1890's had raised empirical objections to the prophecy of increasing proletarian pauperization. During the next three decades, Rosa Luxemburg, Heinrich Cunow, Otto Bauer, M. J. Tugan-Baranovski, Rudolf Hilferding, and others wrestled with the issue from a theoretical as well as an empirical vantage point. Fritz Sternberg's *Der Imperialismus*, which modified in a more pessimistic direction the Luxemburg thesis that imperialism was only a delaying factor in capitalism's demise, was the last major contribution before Grossmann's. *The Law of Accumulation and Collapse* begins with an excellent analysis of the previous literature on the question. Then, following an exposition of Marx's own views culled from his various writings, Grossmann attempted to build on Otto Bauer's mathematical models a deductive system to prove the correctness of Marx's predictions. The pauperization he pointed to was not that of the proletariat, but that of the capitalists, whose tendency to overaccumulation would produce an unavoidable decline in the profit rate over a certain fixed period of time. Although admitting countertendencies such as the more efficient use of capital, Grossmann confidently asserted that they might mitigate but not forestall the terminal crisis of the capitalist system. The full ramifications of his argument, whose predictions have obviously failed to come true, need not detain us here.⁵¹ Let it be said, however, that the essentially quietistic implications of his thesis, similar to those of all Marxist interpretations that stress objective forces over subjective revolutionary *praxis*, were not lost on some of his contemporaries.⁵²

Pollock, the other leading economist in the Institut, was quick to challenge Grossmann on other grounds. Stressing the inadequacy of Marx's concept of productive labor because of its neglect of non-manual labor, Pollock pointed to the service industries,⁵³ which were becoming increasingly important in the twentieth century. Surplus value might be extracted from workers in these industries as well as from those producing commodities, he argued, which would prolong the life of the system. Grossmann's stand continued basically un-

changed, however, and he and Pollock remained at odds on economic questions until Grossmann left the Institut after the Second World War. Carefully read between the lines, Pollock's *Experiments in Economic Planning in the Soviet Union (1917-1927)*,⁵⁴ the second volume of the Institut's *Schriften*, gives further evidence of the dispute.

Pollock was invited to the Soviet Union during its tenth anniversary celebrations by David Ryazanov, who had spent some time in Frankfurt in the early 1920's and who continued his relationship by contributing an occasional article to the *Grünberg Archiv*.⁵⁵ In the Soviet Union, although admired for his scholarly work as director of the Marx-Engels Institute, Ryazanov was regarded politically as a rather eccentric throwback to the days of pre-Bolshevik social democracy. Despite his frequent criticism of party policy,⁵⁶ he survived until Stalin sent him into exile with the Volga Germans a few years after Pollock's visit, a move that has been facetiously described as Stalin's only real "contribution" to Marxist scholarship. Through Ryazanov's friendship, Pollock was able to speak with members of the dwindling opposition within the Bolshevik Party during his trip, in addition to his actual field studies of Soviet planning. The impressions he brought back to Frankfurt after several months were thus not entirely favorable. His book carefully avoided commenting on the political consequences of the Revolution and the forced collectivizations of the 1920's. On the central question he treated — the transition from a market to a planned economy — Pollock was less the enthusiastic supporter than the detached and prudent analyst unwilling to pass judgments prematurely. Here, too, he and Grossmann had cause for disagreement.

Nevertheless, it would be wrong to characterize the general attitude of Institut members in 1927 towards the Soviet experiment as closer to Pollock's skepticism than to Grossmann's enthusiasm. Wittfogel remained as firm as ever in his support, Borkenau had not yet reached his decision to repudiate the Party, and even Horkheimer retained an optimistic hope that humanist socialism might yet be realized in post-Lenin Russia. One of the aphorisms published in *Dämmerung* a few years later expresses Horkheimer's feelings during this period:

He who has eyes for the meaningless injustice of the imperialist world, which in no way is to be explained by technical impotence, will regard the events in Russia as the progressive, painful attempt to overcome this injustice, or he will at least question with a beating heart whether this attempt still persists. If appearances speak against it, he clings to the hope the way a

cancer victim does to the questionable news that a cure for cancer has probably been found.⁵⁷

Heated *sub rosa* discussions of Pollock's findings did take place, but never broke into print. In fact, after his book was published in 1929, the Institut maintained an almost complete official silence about events in the USSR, broken only by an occasional survey of recent literature by Rudolf Schlesinger, who had been one of Grünberg's students in the twenties.⁵⁸ It was really not until a decade later, after the Moscow purge trials, that Horkheimer and the others, with the sole exception of the obdurate Grossmann, completely abandoned their hope for the Soviet Union. Even then, preoccupied with problems that will be discussed later, they never focused the attention of Critical Theory on the left-wing authoritarianism of Stalin's Russia. The lack of available data certainly was one reason, but one ought not to ignore the difficulties involved in a Marxist analysis, however heterodox, of communism's failures.

After all this is said, however, it should also be stressed that Critical Theory as it was articulated by certain members of the Institut contained important, implicit criticisms of the Soviet ideological justification for its actions. Although most of the figures in the Institut's early history already mentioned — Grünberg, Weil, Sorge, Borkenau, Wittfogel, and Grossmann — were unconcerned with the reexamination of the foundations of Marxism to which Horkheimer was becoming increasingly devoted, he was not entirely without allies. Pollock, although primarily interested in economics, had studied philosophy with Cornelius and shared his friend's rejection of orthodox Marxism. Increasingly caught up in the administrative affairs of the Institut after Grünberg suffered a stroke in late 1927, Pollock was nevertheless able to add his voice to Horkheimer's in the Institut's seminars. In the late 1920's he was joined by two younger intellectuals who were to have an increasingly important influence in subsequent years, Leo Lowenthal and Theodor Wiesengrund-Adorno (who was known solely by his mother's name, Adorno, after the emigration).

Lowenthal, born the son of a Jewish doctor in 1900 in Frankfurt, served like the others in the war before embarking on an academic career. At Frankfurt, Heidelberg, and Giessen, he studied literature, history, philosophy, and sociology, receiving his doctorate in philosophy with a thesis on Franz von Baader at Frankfurt in 1923. At the university, he moved in the same radical student circles as Horkheimer, Pollock, and Weil, who had been a friend in secondary

school. He had ties as well to the group of Jewish intellectuals surrounding the charismatic Rabbi Nehemiah A. Nobel,⁵⁹ which included such figures as Martin Buber, Franz Rosenzweig, Siegfried Kracauer, and Ernst Simon. It was as a member of this latter group, which gave rise to the famed *Freies Jüdisches Lehrhaus* (Free Jewish House of Learning) in 1920, that Lowenthal came in contact again with a friend from his student days, Erich Fromm, who was later to join the Institut. Lowenthal's own entrance into Institut affairs occurred in 1926, although outside interests limited his involvement. He continued to teach in the Prussian secondary school system and served as artistic adviser to the *Volksbühne* (People's Stage), a large left-wing and liberal organization. Throughout the late 1920's he wrote critical articles on aesthetic and cultural matters for a number of journals, most prominently the *Volksbühne's*, and continued to contribute historical pieces on the Jewish philosophy of religion to a variety of periodicals. In addition, he acquired editorial experience that proved useful when the *Zeitschrift für Sozialforschung* replaced *Grünbergs Archiv* as the Institut's organ.

It was as a sociologist of literature and student of popular culture that Lowenthal contributed most to the Institut after he became a full-time member in 1930 (his official title was initially *Hauptassistent* — first assistant — which only Grossmann shared). If it can be said that in the early years of its history the Institut concerned itself primarily with an analysis of bourgeois society's socio-economic substructure, in the years after 1930 its prime interest lay in its cultural superstructure. Indeed, as we shall see, the traditional Marxist formula regarding the relationship between the two was called into question by Critical Theory. Although contributing to the changed emphasis, Lowenthal was less responsible for the theoretical shift than the other important addition to the Institut's circle in the late twenties, Theodor Wiesengrund-Adorno.

Next to Horkheimer, Adorno, as we shall henceforth refer to him, became the man most closely identified with the fortunes of the Institut, which he officially joined in 1938. In the pre-emigration period, however, his energies, always enormous, were divided among a number of different projects, some of which kept him away from Frankfurt. Even after his departure from Europe, when the Institut became the dominant institutional framework within which he worked, Adorno did not confine himself to any one discipline. During his years in secondary school he had been befriended by Siegfried Kracauer, some fourteen years his elder.⁶⁰ For over a year he regularly spent Saturday afternoons with Kracauer studying Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*, lessons he would recall as far more valuable

than those he received in his formal university education. Kracauer's approach combined an interest in the ideas themselves with a keen sociology of knowledge. His distrust of closed systems and his stress on the particular as opposed to the universal made a significant impression on his young friend. So too did Kracauer's innovative explorations of such cultural phenomena as the film, which combined philosophical and sociological insights in a way that had little precedent. In later years, both in Germany and in America after both men emigrated, their friendship remained firm. To anyone familiar with Kracauer's celebrated *From Caligari to Hitler*⁶¹ the similarity between his work and certain of Adorno's which will be described later, is strikingly obvious.

However, the young Adorno was interested in more than intellectual pursuits. Like Horkheimer, he combined a rigorous philosophical mind with a sensibility more aesthetic than scientific. Whereas Horkheimer's artistic inclinations led him towards literature and a series of unpublished novels, Adorno was more deeply drawn to music, a reflection of the highly musical environment in which he had been immersed from birth. The youngest of the Frankfurt School's luminaries, Adorno was born in 1903 in Frankfurt. His father was a successful assimilated Jewish wine merchant, from whom he inherited a taste for the finer things in life, but little interest in commerce. His mother seems to have had a more profound effect on his ultimate interests. The daughter of a German singer and a French army officer (whose Corsican and originally Genoese ancestry accounts for the Italian name Adorno), she pursued a highly successful singing career until her marriage. Her unmarried sister, who lived in the Wiesengrund household, was a concert pianist of considerable accomplishment who played for the famous singer Adelina Patti. With their encouragement the young "Teddie" took up the piano and studied composition at an early age, under the tutelage of Bernhard Sekles.

Frankfurt, however, offered little beyond traditional musical training, and Adorno was anxious to immerse himself in the more innovative music issuing at that time from Vienna. In the spring or summer of 1924 he met Alban Berg at the Frankfurt Festival of the Universal German Music Society and was captivated by three fragments from his yet unperformed opera, *Wozzeck*.⁶² He immediately decided to follow Berg to Vienna and become his student. Delayed only by his university studies in Frankfurt, he arrived in the Austrian capital in January, 1925. The Vienna to which he moved was less the city of Otto Bauer and Karl Renner, Rudolf Hilferding and Max Adler (the milieu Grünberg had left to come to Frankfurt) than the apolitical

but culturally radical Vienna of Karl Kraus and the Schönberg circle. Once there, Adorno persuaded Berg to take him on as a student of composition twice a week and got Eduard Steuermann to instruct him in piano technique. His own compositions seem to have been influenced by Schönberg's experiments in atonality, but not by his later twelve-tone system.⁶³ In addition to his training Adorno managed to write frequently for a number of avant-garde journals, including *Anbruch*, whose editorship he assumed in 1928, the year he moved back to Frankfurt. He remained at its helm until 1931, despite his renewed academic responsibilities.

Adorno's three years in Vienna were much more than an interlude in his scholarly career. Arthur Koestler, who chanced to be in the same pension with him after his arrival in 1925, remembered Adorno as "a shy, distraught and esoteric young man with a subtle charm I was too callow to discern."⁶⁴ To the equally intense but not as highly cultivated Koestler, Adorno presented a figure of magisterial condescension. Even his teacher Berg found Adorno's uncompromising intellectuality a bit disconcerting. As Adorno later admitted, "my own philosophical ballast fell for Berg at times under the category of what he called a fad. . . . I was certainly at that time brutally serious and that could get on the nerves of a mature artist."⁶⁵ His three years in Vienna seem to have eradicated much of his shyness, but new confidence did not mean a significant lessening of his high seriousness or his allegiance to the most demanding of cultural forms. If anything, his frequent attendance at readings by Karl Kraus, that most unrelenting upholder of cultural standards, and his participation in the arcane musical discussions of the Viennese avant-garde only reinforced his predisposition in that direction. Never during the remainder of his life would Adorno abandon his cultural elitism.

In another way as well, the Vienna years were significant in his development. Many years later Adorno would admit that one of the attractions of the Schönberg circle had been its exclusive, coterie-like quality, which reminded him of the circle around Stefan George in Germany.⁶⁶ One of his disappointments during his three years in Austria was the dissolution of the circle's unity, which followed after Schönberg's new wife isolated him from his disciples. If this had not happened, it can at least be conjectured, Adorno might not have chosen to return to Frankfurt. Once there, of course, the same cliquish qualities drew him into the orbit of Horkheimer and the younger members of the Institut.

Adorno had known Horkheimer since 1922, when they were together in a seminar on Husserl directed by Hans Cornelius. Both men also studied under the Gestalt psychologist Gelb. In 1924

Adorno had written his doctorate for Cornelius on Husserl's phenomenology.⁶⁷ When he returned from Vienna, however, Cornelius had retired and had been replaced in the chair of philosophy by Paul Tillich,⁶⁸ after a short interlude during which Max Scheler had held the position. Tillich was a close friend of Horkheimer, Lowenthal, and Pollock, belonging with them to a regular discussion group that included Karl Mannheim, Kurt Riezler, Adolph Löwe, and Karl Mennicke. The *Kränzchen*, as it was called — an old-fashioned word which means both a small garland and an intimate gathering — was to continue in New York for several years, after most of its members were forced to emigrate. Adorno, when he returned to Frankfurt, was welcomed into its company. With Tillich's help he became a *Privatdozent* in 1931, writing a study of Kierkegaard's aesthetics as his *Habilitationsschrift*.⁶⁹

By this time the Institut had undergone significant changes. Grünberg's health after his stroke in 1927 had not appreciably improved, and in 1929, in his sixty-ninth year, he decided to step down as director. He was to live on until 1940, but without any further role in Institut affairs. The three original members of the group were now old enough to be considered for a professorship at the university, the prerequisite for the directorship written into the Institut's charter. Pollock, who had served as interim head of the Institut in all but name before Grünberg came and after Grünberg's illness, was satisfied to remain occupied with administrative affairs. Weil, as noted earlier, had remained a *Privatgelehrter* (private scholar) without being "habilitated" as *Privatdozent* or "berufen" as professor.⁷⁰ Although continuing to guide the Institut's financial affairs and occasionally contributing an article to *Grünbergs Archiv*,⁷¹ his interests turned elsewhere. In 1929 he left the Institut to move to Berlin, where he worked with two publishing houses, the left-wing Malik Verlag and the more scholarly Soziologische Verlagsanstalt, as well as contributing to the radical Piscator Theater. In 1930 he sailed from Germany for Argentina to tend to the family business, of which, as the oldest of Hermann Weil's two children, he was made the primary owner after his father's death in 1927, a responsibility he very reluctantly assumed. In any event, from 1923 Weil had not been at the center of the Institut's creative work, drawn as he was more to practical than theoretical questions. In later years he would sporadically return to the Institut and faithfully continue to help it financially, but he was never really a prime candidate for its leadership, nor did he intend to be.

Horkheimer was therefore the clear choice to succeed Grünberg. Although he had not been a dominating presence at the Institut dur-

ing its first few years, his star clearly rose during the interim directorship of his friend Pollock. In 1929, with the support of Tillich and other members of the philosophy department, a new chair of "social philosophy" was established for Horkheimer, the first of its kind at a German university. Weil had convinced the Education Ministry to convert Grünberg's chair in political science, which his father had endowed, to its new purpose. As part of the bargain he promised to contribute to another chair in economics, which Adolph Löwe, a childhood friend of Horkheimer, left Kiel to fill. *The Origins of the Bourgeois Philosophy of History*,⁷² a study of Machiavelli, Hobbes, Vico, and other early bourgeois philosophers of history, served as Horkheimer's scholarly credentials for his new position. With the accession of Horkheimer, then only thirty-five, to its directorship in July, 1930, the Institut für Sozialforschung entered its period of greatest productivity, all the more impressive when seen in the context of the emigration and cultural disorientation that soon followed.

In January of 1931, Horkheimer was officially installed in his new post. At the opening ceremonies, he spoke on "The Current Condition of Social Philosophy and the Task of an Institute of Social Research."⁷³ The differences between his approach and that of his predecessor were immediately apparent. Instead of simply labeling himself a good Marxist, Horkheimer turned to the history of social philosophy to put its current situation in perspective. Beginning with the grounding of social theory in the individual, which had at first characterized classical German idealism, he traced its course through Hegel's sacrifice of the individual to the state and the subsequent breakdown of the faith in an objective totality, which Schopenhauer expressed. He then turned to more recent social theorists, like the neo-Kantians of the Marburg school and the advocates of social totalism like Othmar Spann, all of whom, he argued, had attempted to overcome the sense of loss accompanying the breakdown of the classical synthesis. Scheler, Hartmann, and Heidegger, he added, shared this yearning for a return to the comfort of meaningful unities. Social philosophy, as Horkheimer saw it, would not be a single *Wissenschaft* (science) in search of immutable truth. Rather, it was to be understood as a materialist theory enriched and supplemented by empirical work, in the same way that natural philosophy was dialectically related to individual scientific disciplines. The Institut would therefore continue to diversify its energies without losing sight of its interdisciplinary, synthetic goals. To this end Horkheimer supported the retention of Grünberg's noncollegial "dictatorship of the director."

In concluding his remarks, Horkheimer outlined the first task of the Institut under his leadership: a study of workers' and employees' attitudes towards a variety of issues in Germany and the rest of developed Europe. Its methods were to include the use of public statistics and questionnaires backed up by sociological, psychological, and economic interpretation of the data. To help collect materials, he announced, the Institut had accepted the offer of Albert Thomas, the director of the International Labor Organization, to establish a branch office of the Institut in Geneva. This proved to be the first of several such branches established outside Germany in the ensuing years. The decision to act on Thomas's offer was influenced by more than the desire to collect data, for the ominous political scene in Germany gave indications that exile might be a future necessity. Pollock was thus given the task of setting up a permanent office in Geneva; Kurt Mandelbaum, his assistant, went with him. Once the office was firmly established in 1931, the lion's share of the Institut's endowment was quietly transferred to a company in a neutral country, Holland.

Other changes followed Horkheimer's elevation to the directorship. With its guiding spirit incapacitated, *Grünbergs Archiv* ceased publication, twenty years and fifteen volumes after its initial appearance in 1910. The *Archiv* had served as a vehicle for a variety of different viewpoints both within and outside the Institut, still reflecting in part Grünberg's roots in the world of Austro-Marxism. The need for a journal more exclusively the voice of the Institut was felt to be pressing. Horkheimer, whose preference for conciseness was expressed in the large number of aphorisms he wrote during this period, disliked the mammoth tomes so characteristic of German scholarship. Although a third volume of the Institut's publications series, Wittfogel's *Economy and Society in China*,⁷⁴ appeared in 1931, the emphasis was now shifted to the essay. It was through the essays that appeared in the *Zeitschrift für Sozialforschung*, some almost monographic in length, that the Institut presented most of its work to the world in the next decade. Exhaustively evaluated and criticized by the other members of the Institut before they appeared, many articles were almost as much collective productions as individual works. The *Zeitschrift*, in Leo Lowenthal's words, was "less a forum for different viewpoints than a platform for the Institut's convictions,"⁷⁵ even though other authors continued to contribute occasional articles. Editorial decisions were ultimately Horkheimer's, although Lowenthal, drawing on his years of relevant experience, served as managing editor and was fully responsible for the extensive review section. One of Lowenthal's first tasks was a trip by plane to

Leopold von Wiese, the doyen of German sociologists, to assure him that the *Zeitschrift* would not compete with his own *Kölner Vierteljahrshefte für Soziologie* (*Cologne Quarterly of Sociology*).

As Horkheimer explained in the foreword to the first issue,⁷⁶ *Sozialforschung* was not the same as the sociology practiced by von Wiese and other more traditional German academicians. Following Gerlach and Grünberg, Horkheimer stressed the synoptic, interdisciplinary nature of the Institut's work. He particularly stressed the role of social psychology in bridging the gap between individual and society. In the first article, which followed, "Observations on Science and Crisis,"⁷⁷ he developed the connection between the current splintering of knowledge and the social conditions that helped produce it. A global economic structure both monopolistic and anarchic, he argued, had promoted a confused state of knowledge. Only by overcoming the fetishistic grounding of scientific knowledge in pure consciousness, and by recognizing the concrete historical circumstances that conditioned all thought, could the present crisis be surmounted. Science must not ignore its own social role, for only by becoming conscious of its function in the present critical situation could it contribute to the forces that would bring about the necessary changes.

The contributions to the *Zeitschrift*'s first issue reflected the diversity of *Sozialforschung*. Grossmann wrote once again on Marx and the problem of the collapse of capitalism.⁷⁸ Pollock discussed the Depression and the possibilities for a planned economy within a capitalist framework.⁷⁹ Lowenthal outlined the tasks of a sociology of literature, and Adorno did the same, in the first of two articles, for music.⁸⁰ The remaining two essays dealt with the psychological dimension of social research: one by Horkheimer himself on "History and Psychology,"⁸¹ the second by a new member of the Institut, Erich Fromm.⁸² (A full treatment of the Institut's integration of psychoanalysis and its Hegelianized Marxism appears in Chapter 3.) Lowenthal, who had been a friend of Fromm's since 1918, introduced him as one of three psychoanalysts brought into the Institut's circle in the early thirties. The others were Karl Landauer, the director of the Frankfurt Psychoanalytic Institute, which was associated with the Institut, and Heinrich Meng. Landauer's contributions to the *Zeitschrift* were restricted to the review section. (In the first issue he was in very good company: among the other reviewers were Alexandre Koyré, Kurt Lewin, Karl Korsch, and Wilhelm Reich.) Meng, although more interested in mental hygiene than social psychology, helped organize seminars and contributed reviews on topics related to the Institut's interests.

With the introduction of psychoanalysis to the Institut, the Grünberg era was clearly over. In 1932 the publication of a *Festschrift*,⁸³ collected on the occasion of Grünberg's seventieth birthday the previous year, gave further evidence of the transition. Pollock, Horkheimer, Wittfogel, and Grossmann all contributed articles, but most of the pieces were by older friends from Grünberg's Viennese days, such as Max Beer and Max Adler. The change this symbolized was given further impetus by the acceptance of a new member in late 1932, Herbert Marcuse, who was to become one of the principal architects of Critical Theory.

Marcuse was born in 1898 in Berlin, into a family of prosperous assimilated Jews, like most of the others. After completing his military service in the war, he briefly became involved in politics in a Soldiers' Council in Berlin. In 1919 he quit the Social Democratic Party, which he had joined two years earlier, in protest against its betrayal of the proletariat. After the subsequent failure of the German revolution, he left politics altogether to study philosophy at Berlin and Freiburg, receiving his doctorate at the latter university in 1923 with a dissertation on the *Künstlerroman* (novels in which artists played key roles). For the next six years he tried his hand at book selling and publishing in Berlin. In 1929 he returned to Freiburg, where he studied with Husserl and Heidegger, both of whom had a considerable impact on his thought. During this period Marcuse broke into print with a number of articles in Maximilian Beck's *Philosophische Hefte* and Rudolf Hilferding's *Die Gesellschaft*. His first book, *Hegel's Ontology and the Foundation of a Theory of Historicity*,⁸⁴ appeared in 1932, bearing the marks of his mentor Heidegger, for whom it had been prepared as a *Habilitationsschrift*. Before Heidegger could accept Marcuse as an assistant, however, their relations became strained; the political differences between the Marxist-oriented student and the increasingly right-wing teacher were doubtless part of the cause. Without a prospect for a job at Freiburg, Marcuse left that city in 1932. The *Kurator* of the University of Frankfurt, Kurt Riezler, having been asked by Husserl to intercede for Marcuse, recommended him to Horkheimer.

In the second issue of the *Zeitschrift* Adorno reviewed *Hegel's Ontology* and found its movement away from Heidegger promising. Marcuse, he wrote, was tending away from " 'The Meaning of Being' to an openness to being-in-the-world (*Seienden*), from fundamental ontology to philosophy of history, from historicity (*Geschichtlichkeit*) to history."⁸⁵ Although Adorno felt that there was some ground still to be covered before Marcuse cast off Heidegger's thrall entirely, the

chance for a successful integration of his approach to philosophy with that of the Institut seemed favorable. Horkheimer concurred, and so in 1933 Marcuse was added to those in the Institut who were committed to a dialectical rather than a mechanical understanding of Marxism. He was immediately assigned to the Geneva office.

With the Nazi assumption of power on January 30, 1933, the future of an avowedly Marxist organization, staffed almost exclusively by men of Jewish descent — at least by Nazi standards — was obviously bleak. Horkheimer had spent most of 1932 in Geneva, where he was ill with diphtheria. Shortly before Hitler came to power he returned to Frankfurt, moving with his wife from their home in the suburb of Kronberg to a hotel near the Frankfurt railroad station. During February, the last month of the winter semester, he suspended his lectures on logic to speak on the question of freedom, which was indeed becoming more questionable with each passing day. In March he slipped across the border to Switzerland, just as the Institut was being closed down for “tendencies hostile to the state.” The greater part of the Institut library in the building on the Victoria-Allee, then numbering over sixty thousand volumes, was seized by the government; the transfer of the endowment two years earlier prevented a similar confiscation of the Institut’s financial resources. On April 13 Horkheimer had the honor of being among the first faculty members to be formally dismissed from Frankfurt, along with Paul Tillich, Karl Mannheim, and Hugo Sinzheimer.⁸⁶

By then all of the Institut’s official staff had left Frankfurt. The one exception was Wittfogel, who returned to Germany from Switzerland and was thrown into a concentration camp in March because of his political activities. His second wife, Olga Lang (originally Olga Joffé), herself later to become an expert on Chinese affairs and an assistant at the Institut, worked to secure his release, as did such friends as R. H. Tawney in England and Karl Haushofer in Germany. Wittfogel’s freedom was finally granted in November, 1933, and he was permitted to emigrate to England. Shortly thereafter, he joined the others in America. Adorno, whose politics were not as controversial as Wittfogel’s, maintained a residence in Germany, although he spent most of the next four years in England, studying at Merton College, Oxford. Grossmann found refuge in Paris for three years and went to England for one more, rather unhappy, year in 1937, before finally coming to the United States. Lowenthal remained in Frankfurt only until March 2, when he followed Marcuse, Horkheimer, and other Institut figures to Geneva, the last to depart

before the Institut was closed. Pollock was in effect already in exile when the Nazis came to power, although he was unaware that it was to last for almost two decades and extend to two continents.

In February of 1933 the Geneva branch was incorporated with a twenty-one member board⁸⁷ as the administrative center of the Institut. In recognition of its European character it took the name of the Société Internationale de Recherches Sociales (International Society of Social Research), with Horkheimer and Pollock as its two "presidents"; Lowenthal, Fromm, and Sternheim were named their successors the following year.⁸⁸ Not only was the "Frankfurt School" now Swiss, but also French and English, as offers of help from friends in Paris and London led to the founding of small branches in those cities in 1933. Celestin Bouglé, a former student of Durkheim and director of the Ecole Normale Supérieure's Centre de Documentation since 1920, suggested to Horkheimer that some space might be found for the Institut in his offices on the Rue d'Ulm. Although a Proudhonist politically (he was an adherent of the Radical Socialist Party) and thus not sympathetic to the Marxist cast of the Institut's work, Bouglé was willing to forget politics in considering the Institut's plight. Maurice Halbwachs, another prominent Durkheimian then in Strassbourg, and Georges Scelle, who taught law in Paris when not in the Hague as French advocate at the International Court, joined Bouglé as cosponsors of the move. Further support came from Henri Bergson, who had been impressed with the Institut's work. In London a similar proposal was made by Alexander Farquharson, the editor of the *Sociological Review*, who was able to provide a few rooms in Le Play House. Sidney Webb, R. H. Tawney, Morris Ginsberg, and Harold Laski all added their voices to Farquharson's, and a small office was established that lasted until lack of funds forced its closing in 1936.

In the meantime, the *Zeitschrift's* Leipzig publisher, C. L. Hirschfeld, informed Horkheimer that it could no longer risk continuing publication. Bouglé suggested as a replacement the Librairie Félix Alcan in Paris. This proved acceptable, and a connection was begun that lasted until 1940, when the Nazis once again acquired the power to intimidate a publisher of the *Zeitschrift*.

With the first issue of the *Zeitschrift* to appear in Paris in September, 1933, the Institut's initial German period was conclusively over. In the brief decade since its founding, it had gathered together a group of young intellectuals with diverse talents willing to coordinate them in the service of social research as the Institut conceived it. The first Frankfurt years were dominated by Grünberg's views, as described earlier, but under his direction the Institut gained structural

solidarity and a foothold in Weimar's intellectual life. Although concentrating on research, it helped train students of the caliber of Paul Baran,⁸⁹ who in 1930 worked on a projected second volume of Pollock's study of the Soviet economy. Hans Gerth, Gladys Meyer, and Josef Dünner were other students during the pre-emigration years who later made an impact on American social science. (Dünner, it might be noted in passing, wrote a *roman à clef* in 1937, entitled *If I Forget Thee . . .*, in which Institut figures appear under pseudonyms.)⁹⁰ In addition, all Institut members participated actively in the discussions about the future of socialism, which attracted such Frankfurt luminaries as Hendrik de Man and Paul Tillich. The independence provided by Hermann Weil's generosity allowed the Institut to remain unencumbered by political or academic obligations, even after his death in 1927. It also guaranteed the continuation of its identity in exile, at a time when other German refugee scholars were put through the strain of reestablishing themselves in an alien world without financial backing. An additional \$100,000 contributed by Felix Weil, after he rejoined the Institut in New York in 1935, helped keep it financially secure through the thirties.

The sense of a shared fate and common purpose that strikes the observer as one of the Institut's chief characteristics — especially after Horkheimer became director — was transferable to the Institut's new homes partly because of its financial good fortune. It had been the intent of the founding members to create a community of scholars whose solidarity would serve as a microcosmic foretaste of the brotherly society of the future. The *Zeitschrift*, as mentioned earlier, helped cement the sense of group identity; and the common experience of forced exile and regrouping abroad added considerably to this feeling. Within the Institut itself, a still smaller group had coalesced around Horkheimer, consisting of Pollock, Lowenthal, Adorno, Marcuse, and Fromm. It is really their work, rooted in the central tradition of European philosophy, open to contemporary empirical techniques, and addressed to current social questions, that formed the core of the Institut's achievement.

If one seeks a common thread running through individual biographies of the inner circle, the one that immediately comes to mind is their birth into families of middle or upper-middle class Jews (in Adorno's case, only one parent was Jewish). Although this is not the place to launch a full-scale discussion of the Jewish radical in the Weimar Republic, a few observations ought to be made. As noted earlier, one of the arguments employed by Felix Weil and Pollock to persuade the elder Weil to endow the Institut had been the need to

study anti-Semitism in Germany. It was not, however, until the 1940's that this task was actually begun. If one were to characterize the Institut's general attitude towards the "Jewish question," it would have to be seen as similar to that expressed by another radical Jew almost a century before, Karl Marx. In both cases the religious or ethnic issue was clearly subordinated to the social. In *Dämmerung*, Horkheimer attacked Jewish capitalists who were against anti-Semitism simply because it posed an economic threat. "The readiness to sacrifice life and property for belief," he wrote, "is left behind with the material basis of the ghetto. With the bourgeois Jew, the hierarchy of goods is neither Jewish nor Christian, but bourgeois. . . . The Jewish revolutionary, like the 'aryan,' risks his own life for the freedom of mankind."⁹¹ Further evidence of their de-emphasis of strictly Jewish as opposed to social oppression was their indifference to Zionism as a solution to the plight of the Jews.⁹²

In fact, the members of the Institut were anxious to deny any significance at all to their ethnic roots, a position that has not been eroded with time in most of their cases. Weil, for example, in his extensive correspondence with this author, has heatedly rejected any suggestion that Jewishness — defined religiously, ethnically, or culturally — had any influence whatsoever on the selection of Institut members or the development of their ideas. He has also insisted that the assimilation of Jews in Weimar had gone so far that "discrimination against Jews had retreated completely to the 'social club level,'"⁹³ with the result that the Institut's neglect of the "Jewish question" was justified by its practical disappearance. That the Institut was founded one year after the foreign minister of Germany, Walter Rathenau, was assassinated largely because of his ethnic roots seems to have had no personal impact on the "assimilated" Jews connected with the Institut. Wittfogel, one of its gentile members, has confirmed this general blindness, arguing that he was one of the few exceptions who recognized the precariousness of the Jews' position, even of those who were most assimilated.⁹⁴ What strikes the current observer is the intensity with which many of the Institut's members denied, and in some cases still deny, any meaning at all to their Jewish identities. Assimilated German Jews, as has often been noted, were surprised by the ease with which German society accepted the anti-Semitic measures of the Nazis. Self-delusions on this score persisted in some cases as late as the war. Even so hardheaded a realist as Franz Neumann could write in *Behemoth* that "the German people are the least anti-Semitic of all."⁹⁵ His appraisal of the situation seems to have been supported by almost all of his Institut colleagues.

In the face of this vehement rejection of the meaningfulness of Jewishness in their backgrounds, one can only look for indirect ways in which it might have played a role. Certainly the overt impact of Judaism as a system of belief seems to have been negligible. The two possible exceptions to this were Leo Lowenthal and Erich Fromm, both of whom had been active in the group comprising the Frankfurt Lehrhaus. Lowenthal had been one of the contributors to the *Festschrift* dedicated to Rabbi Nobel in 1921, writing on the demonic in religion.⁹⁶ He continued to find his way into the pages of such publications as the *Frankfurter Israelitisches Gemeindeblatt* as late as 1930, although by then he had left his truly religious period behind. Still, one would be hard pressed at any time to find echoes of Lowenthal's interest in Judaism in the work he did for the Institut. Fromm, on the other hand, has often been characterized as retaining secular versions of Jewish themes in his work, even after he left Orthodoxy in the mid-twenties.⁹⁷ Frequent comparisons have been made between his work and other members of the Lehrhaus group, particularly Martin Buber. What these similarities were will be made clearer in Chapter 3. Only Lowenthal and Fromm (along with Walter Benjamin, who was to write for the *Zeitschrift* in later years) ever evinced any real interest in Jewish theological issues. To the others Judaism was a closed book.

If the manifest intellectual content of Judaism played no role in the thinking of most of the Institut's members, one has to turn to more broadly sociological or cultural explanations. In his recent study of the predominantly Jewish left-wing literati who wrote for the Berlin journal *Die Weltbühne*, Istvan Deak has had to ask similar questions to those that arise in a study of the Frankfurt School. He has correctly noted that the high percentage of Jews on Weimar's left — the *Weltbühne* circle was much larger than the Institut's, but the same correlation still held — was no mere coincidence. It was due, he wrote, "to a specific development: their recognition of the fact that business, artistic, or scientific careers do not help solve the Jewish problem, and that Weimar Germany had to undergo dire transformation if German anti-Semitism was to end."⁹⁸ However, the members of the Frankfurt School deny ever having had such a recognition. "All of us," Pollock has written, "up to the last years before Hitler, had no feeling of insecurity originating from our ethnic descent. Unless we were ready to undergo baptism, certain positions in public service and business were closed to us, but that never bothered us. And under the Weimar republic many of these barriers had been moved away."⁹⁹ Their radicalism is thus difficult to attribute to

a conscious awareness of socialism as the only solution to a keenly felt sense of ethnic oppression.

And yet, for all their claims to total assimilation and assertions about the lack of discrimination in Weimar, one cannot avoid a sense of their protesting too much. If in fact Weimar was an environment in which anti-Semitism was on the wane, which itself seems questionable, it must be remembered that the Institut's members all grew up before the First World War in a very different Germany. Even the most assimilated Jews in Wilhelmian Germany must have felt somewhat apart from their gentile counterparts, and coming to maturity in this atmosphere must surely have left its mark. The sense of role-playing that the Jew eager to forget his origins must have experienced could only have left a residue of bitterness, which might easily feed a radical critique of the society as a whole. This is not to say that the Institut's program can be solely, or even predominantly, attributed to its members' ethnic roots, but merely to argue that to ignore them entirely is to lose sight of one contributing factor.

Once in America, it might be noted parenthetically, the Institut's members became more sensitive to the Jewish question. Adorno, for example, was asked by Pollock to drop the Wiesengrund from his name, because there were too many Jewish-sounding names on the Institut's roster.¹⁰⁰ Paul Massing, one of the few gentiles in their midst, has said that his non-Jewishness was a slight but still significant factor in keeping him apart from his colleagues.¹⁰¹ Assimilation was paradoxically more difficult in America than it had been in pre-Nazi Germany, at least so many Institut members felt.

Besides the sociological explanation of the effect of their origins, there is a cultural one as well. Jürgen Habermas has recently argued that a striking resemblance exists between certain strains in the Jewish cultural tradition and in that of German Idealism, whose roots have often been seen in Protestant Pietism.¹⁰² One important similarity, which is especially crucial for an understanding of Critical Theory, is the old cabalistic idea that speech rather than pictures was the only way to approach God. The distance between Hebrew, the sacred language, and the profane speech of the Diaspora made its impact on Jews who were distrustful of the current universe of discourse. This, so Habermas has argued, parallels the idealist critique of empirical reality, which reached its height in Hegelian dialectics. Although one cannot draw a very exact line from the Frankfurt School's Jewish antecedents to its dialectical theory, perhaps some predisposition did exist. The same might be argued for its ready acceptance of psychoanalysis, which proved especially congenial to assimilated Jewish intellectuals. (This is not to say, of course, that

Freudianism was a "Jewish psychology," as the Nazis did, but merely to suggest a possible filiation.)

One other important factor must be mentioned. Within the German Jewish community itself, there often raged a struggle between fathers and sons over the content of Judaism and the future of the Jewish people. Sometimes this was resolved in peculiar ways. In her essay on Walter Benjamin, whose conflict with his father was particularly keen, Hannah Arendt has written: "As a rule these conflicts were resolved by the sons' laying claim to being geniuses, or, in the case of numerous Communists from well-to-do homes, to being devoted to the welfare of mankind — in any case, to aspiring to things higher than making money — and the fathers were more than willing to grant that this was a valid excuse for not making a living."¹⁰³ As in so many other ways, Benjamin was himself an exception to the rule, as his father refused to support him, but the others were not. Hermann Weil may have been a successful Argentine grain merchant interested more in profits than in revolution, but he was willing to support his son's radicalism with considerable generosity. Nor do Horkheimer's relations with his parents seem to have permanently suffered after the initial friction produced by his decision not to follow his father into manufacturing.¹⁰⁴ The one real period of estrangement that did occur between them followed Horkheimer's falling in love with his father's gentile secretary, eight years his elder. He married her in March, 1926, at about the same time that he began teaching at the university. As Pollock remembered it, "the frictions between Horkheimer and his parents were quite temporary. . . . After a few years of estrangement, there was complete reconciliation and Maidon Horkheimer was accepted with sincerest cordiality."¹⁰⁵ It was apparently much harder for his parents to get used to the idea that Horkheimer was marrying a gentile than that he was becoming a revolutionary.

In fact, one might argue that the strong ethical tone of Critical Theory was a product of the incorporation of the values likely to be espoused in a close-knit Jewish home. In any case, there is little to suggest that the Institut's members carried their rejection of the commercial mentality of their parents into outright personal rebellion. Despite the fervent expressions of solidarity with the proletariat that appeared throughout their work in the pre-emigration period, at no time did a member of the Institut affect the life-style of the working class.

Nowhere are their revolutionary sentiments so clearly articulated as in the work of "Heinrich Regius," the name Horkheimer borrowed from a seventeenth-century natural philosopher to put on the

title page of the aphorisms he published in Zurich in the first year of exile. Yet it is in one of the pieces in *Dämmerung*, "A Fable of Consistency," that he implicitly justifies the combination of radical beliefs and a bourgeois standard of living. In the fable, two poor poets are invited to accept a considerable stipend by a tyrannical king who values their work. One is disturbed by the taint on the money. "You are inconsistent," the other answers. "If you so believe, you must continue to go hungry. He who feels one with the poor, must live like them."¹⁰⁶ Agreeing, the first poet rejects the king's offer and proceeds to starve. Shortly thereafter, the other becomes the court poet. Horkheimer finishes his "fairy tale" by cautioning: "Both drew the consequences, and both consequences favored the tyrant. With the general moral prescription of consistency, there seems one condition: it is friendlier to tyrants than to poor poets."¹⁰⁷ And so, the Institut's members may have been relentless in their hostility towards the capitalist system, but they never abandoned the life-style of the *haute bourgeoisie*. It would be easy to term this behavior elitist or "mandarin" — to give Grünberg's word a slightly different meaning — as some of the group's detractors have done. But it seems unlikely that the rejuvenation of Marxist theory to which they so heavily contributed would have been materially advanced by a decision to wear cloth caps.

It is, however, at least arguable that Critical Theory would have been enriched if the members of the Institut had been more intimately involved in practical politics. The example of Lukács, to be sure, suggests that there were pitfalls involved in too close an attachment to one faction or another. But on the other side of the ledger is the case of the Italian Marxist, Antonio Gramsci, whose political experience before his imprisonment by Mussolini in 1926 always served to give his theorizing a concrete quality, which the Frankfurt School's work sometimes lacked. In one sense the Institut's period of exile can be said to have begun before its actual expulsion by the Nazis. After the failure of the German revolution, its members, at least those around Horkheimer, were alienated from all political factions on the left. The SPD was treated with the scorn its craven capitulation before the status quo deserved — in fact, one might argue that the SPD's betrayal of the working class colored the Frankfurt School's subsequent distrust of all "moderate" solutions. The KPD was equally anathema, for its transparent dependence on Moscow and its theoretical bankruptcy. And the pathetic attempts of such left-wing intellectuals as Kurt Hiller and Carl von Ossietzky to transcend the differences between the two parties, or to offer a viable alternative, were rejected for the pipe dreams they quickly proved to

be. The result was that the Frankfurt School chose the purity of its theory over the affiliation that a concrete attempt to realize it would have required. That this entailed disadvantages as well as advantages shall be seen in subsequent chapters.

The prudent transfer of the Institut's endowment to Holland in 1931 allowed the continuation of its work without much interruption. The first year in Geneva was a period of readjustment, but not stagnation. The project on the attitudes of workers and employees was not curtailed seriously. Andries Sternheim, a Dutch socialist who had ties to the labor movement, was recommended by someone in Albert Thomas's office to Horkheimer as a prospective member. In Geneva he was admitted as an assistant, and after Pollock's departure for the United States, he became the branch's director. Although of great help in collecting materials for the project, he contributed little to the theoretical work of the Institut, aside from a few contributions to the study of leisure in modern society.¹⁰⁸

Hampered occasionally by the problems of adjustment to a new publisher, the *Zeitschrift* continued to appear regularly. New names were added to the roster of previous contributors. George Rusche wrote on the relationship between the labor market and criminal punishment,¹⁰⁹ anticipating a book he later published with Otto Kirchheimer's help under the auspices of the Institut. Kurt Mandelbaum (often under the names Kurt or Erich Baumann) and Gerhard Meyer added articles on economics to those written by Pollock and Grossmann.¹¹⁰ Periodic contributions came from the Paris branch, which attracted such able assistants as Raymond Aron and Georges Friedmann. Paul Ludwig Landsberg, a philosopher for whom the Institut had high hopes that were later dashed by his murder by the Nazis, wrote on race ideology and pseudo-science.¹¹¹ American issues were dealt with by Julian Gumperz in a series of articles.¹¹² The "International" in the Institut's new title was thus clearly evident in the pages of the *Zeitschrift*.

It soon came to mean much more as the Institut began to look elsewhere for a new home. While appreciating its usefulness, Horkheimer and the others never considered the Geneva branch a permanent center of the Institut's affairs. In May, 1933, Grossmann had expressed an anxiety they all shared, when he wrote to Paul Mattick in America that "fascism also makes great progress in Switzerland and new dangers threaten our Institut there as well."¹¹³ Pollock made a trip to London in February, 1934, to appraise the possibility of establishing the Institut in England; but intensive negotiations with Sir William Beveridge, director of the London School of Eco-

nomics, and Farquharson and his colleagues at the Institute of Sociology convinced him of its unlikelihood. The limited opportunities in England for the refugee scholars who began to stream out of Germany in 1933 have been frequently noted.¹¹⁴ Of those associated with the Institut, only Borkenau elected to make London his permanent home in exile. He was able to obtain a position teaching international politics in the adult education section of the University of London. A few years later he took time out to visit Spain during the Civil War, which confirmed his already strong dislike for communism and produced one of the classic studies of the war, *The Spanish Cockpit*.¹¹⁵ By then, his connections with the Institut, except for one last essay in the *Studien über Autorität und Familie* (*Studies on Authority and Family*) in 1936,¹¹⁶ had been severed.

In Paris, where the academic establishment was even more impenetrable than in England, the prospects seemed equally limited. Paul Honigsheim, who fled from Cologne and became head of the Institut's Paris branch, has described the cold reception that normally greeted emigrés to France:

The typical French intellectual, who wanted security and a predictable future for himself and his family, found his way of life threatened by those damn German intellectuals, who did not spend their time drinking apéritifs with their friends but worked twice as hard as the Frenchman. They worked for the sake of God or, if they were not religious believers, for work's sake, which for a true German scholar is almost the same. Accordingly, in contrast to the sympathetic attitude in the United States, the French did not welcome the appointment of German scholars in their midst. Thus it took courage to work openly on behalf of German refugees.¹¹⁷

Bouglé, Halbwachs, and their colleagues, Honigsheim stresses, had that courage, but they were in a small minority; as a result, France was ruled out as a possible new home for the Institut's headquarters.

Despite the Institut's Marxist image, at no time was the thought of going eastward to Stalin's Russia seriously entertained, even by Grossmann, who made a short and unsuccessful journey to Moscow in the mid-thirties, or by Wittfogel. The only serious possibility left was America. Julian Gumperz was sent there in 1933 to explore the situation. Gumperz had been a student of Pollock's since 1929 and at one time a Communist Party member, although he later gave it all up, became a stockbroker, and wrote an anti-communist book in the forties;¹¹⁸ he was born in America and thus was fluent in English. He returned from his trip with a favorable report, assuring Horkheimer and the others that the Institut's endowment, which still brought in

about \$30,000 a year, would be sufficient to guarantee survival in a country still mired in economic depression.

Over the years, the Institut had made several contacts with prominent figures in the American academic world, such as Charles Beard, Robert MacIver, Wesley Mitchell, Reinhold Niebuhr, and Robert Lynd, all of whom were at Columbia University. Thus when Horkheimer made his first trip to the United States in May, 1934, he was able to gain access to Columbia's patriarchal president, Nicholas Murray Butler. Much to his surprise, Butler offered the Institut affiliation with the university and a home in one of its buildings, at 429 West 117th Street. Horkheimer, fearing he had misunderstood Butler because of his limited command of English, wrote a four-page letter asking him to confirm and clarify his offer. Butler's response was a laconic "You have understood me perfectly!"¹¹⁹ And so the International Institute for Social Research, as revolutionary and Marxist as it had appeared in Frankfurt in the twenties, came to settle in the center of the capitalist world, New York City. Marcuse came in July, Lowenthal in August, Pollock in September, and Wittfogel soon after. Fromm had been in the United States since 1932, when he came in response to an invitation to lecture by the Chicago Institute of Psychoanalysis. These men were among the first to arrive of that wave of Central European refugee intellectuals who so enriched American cultural life in the decades that followed.¹²⁰

The transition was by no means without its difficulties. Still, in comparison with the members of Alvin Johnson's "university in exile" at the New School for Social Research, who had few or no financial resources to make their resettlement easy, the Institut's members were fortunate. In fact, the tensions that developed between the two refugee groups, although due in part to ideological differences,¹²¹ were also clearly exacerbated by their contrasting financial situations. It should be added, however, that in later years the Institut maintained a strong sense of responsibility to less well-off refugees. When problems did exist for Institut members, they were those of language and cultural adjustment, which plague any immigrant, but not of finances. The most difficult intellectual adjustment, as we shall see later, involved coordinating the philosophically grounded social research practiced by the Institut with the rigorous antispeculative bias of American social science. The use of American empirical techniques that its members learned in exile was an important lesson brought back to Germany after the war, but these skills had not been acquired without considerable hesitancy.

In general, the Institut was not especially eager to jettison its past and become fully American. This reluctance can be gauged by the

decision to continue using Félix Alcan as publisher even after leaving Europe. By resisting the entreaties of its new American colleagues to publish in America, the Institut felt that it could more easily retain German as the language of the *Zeitschrift*. Although articles occasionally appeared in English and French and summaries in those languages followed each German essay, the journal remained essentially German until the war. It was in fact the only periodical of its kind published in the language that Hitler was doing so much to debase. As such, the *Zeitschrift* was seen by Horkheimer and the others as a vital contribution to the preservation of the humanist tradition in German culture, which was threatened with extirpation. Indeed, one of the key elements in the Institut's self-image was this sense of being the last outpost of a waning culture. Keenly aware of the relation language bears to thought, its members were thus convinced that only by continuing to write in their native tongue could they resist the identification of Nazism with everything German. Although most of the German-speaking world had no way of obtaining copies, the Institut was willing to sacrifice an immediate audience for a future one, which indeed did materialize after the defeat of Hitler. The one regrettable by-product of this decision was the partial isolation from the American academic community that it unavoidably entailed. Although the Institut began giving lectures in the Extension Division at Columbia in 1936, and gradually developed a series of seminars on various topics,¹²² its focus remained primarily on theory and research. Together once again in the security of its new home on Morningside Heights — of the inner circle, only Adorno remained abroad for several years more — the Institut was thus able to resume without much difficulty the work it had started in Europe.

Although sobered by the triumph of fascism in Germany, Horkheimer and the others were still somewhat optimistic about the future. "The twilight of capitalism," wrote "Heinrich Regius" in 1934, "need not initiate the night of humanity, which, to be sure, seems to threaten today."¹²³ An intensification of their explorations of the crisis of capitalism, the collapse of traditional liberalism, the rising authoritarian threat, and other, related topics seemed the best contribution they could make to the defeat of Nazism. As always, their work was grounded in a social philosophy whose articulation was the prime occupation of Horkheimer, Marcuse, and to a lesser extent, Adorno, during the 1930's. It was here that their reworking of traditional Marxism became crucial. It is thus to the genesis and development of Critical Theory that we now must turn.