THE POLITICAL INFLUENCE OF THE GERMAN ELEMENT IN COLONIAL AMERICA

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(Concluded from the last number)

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WHEN the growing movement for American independence forced the Germans to take a stand again, most of them faced it with the usual reluctance. To them the issues at stake meant very little. Only a minority felt the British wrongs at all; the frontier, where the majority had settled, was least affected by the controversy with London. The frequently heard assertion that the German element went at once and almost unanimously over to the side of the American cause, cannot stand the test of a more thorough investigation.23

In fact, at least at the beginning, quite a number of Germans, especially in the Carolinas and Georgia, were decidedly loyalist in their feelings. Many of them had come over to the colonies only a short time before and felt deeply grateful to England. They had been granted lands at liberal terms and thus the gates to the freedom of the New World had been open to them. They were not interested in politics and had never taken an active part in the subject. Therefore, they could not get aroused over differences with the mother country, which the inhabitants of the seacoast cities found unbearable. Moreover, they were afraid lest their land grants might be revoked, if they sided with the rebels. Hints that they might lose English support in their border fights with the Indians, added to their fears. "I look upon it, the Association will be the ruin of the cause," warned the Rev. Johann Joachim Zubly, German-Swiss member of the Continental Con-


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gress from Georgia, "we have ten thousand fighting Indians near us."24

For these reasons, they not infrequently openly opposed the insurgents. When, on August 10, 1774, a meeting was held at Savannah, Georgia, to protest against the punitive measures taken against Massachusetts by the English, the German settlement of Ebenezer was anxious to denounce its purpose immediately. "We find we are deceived," they declared, "for the people who met at Savannah, on the 10th inst., ... made up a paper, which we think is very wrong, and may incur the displeasure of his Majesty, so as to prevent us from having soldiers to help us in case of an Indian war. We, therefore, disagree entirely to the said paper, and do hereby protest against any resolutions that are, or hereafter may be, entered into on this occasion."25

In South Carolina, German farmers sought likewise to obstruct the revolutionary movement, and refused to join the boycott Association. In order to break their resistance, drastic measures finally had to be taken. It was ordered that no more goods should be sent to certain stores in their settlements, that no Germans coming to Charleston to market their produce should be admitted into the town unless they were members of the Association, and that no miller who belonged to the Association should be allowed to grind wheat for a non-member.26

Religious reasons, too, kept many Germans on the English side. The Mennonites and Dunkers in Pennsylvania and the Carolinas, pledged to non-resistance, refused to take up arms against the English. The leading Hoch-Deutsch Pennsylvanische Berichte, then edited by the sons of Christoph Sauer, its founder, supported this policy of neutrality, whereas the Pennsylvanische Staats-Courier, published by his grandson, went so far as to advocate openly the cause of the English.27 The Moravians in North Carolina almost lost their lands because they refused to revoke their oath of allegiance to the king.28 The so-called Mecklenburg

25 Revolutionary Records of Georgia, I, 33.  
28 Records of the Moravians in North Carolina, passim.
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Declaration of Independence which often has been claimed as proof of the immediate readiness of the German settlers to embrace the revolutionary cause, if ever it was given, bears only two recognizably German names among the twenty-six signatures.²⁹ Mecklenburg, North Carolina, was in fact already the acknowledged center of Scotch-Irish settlements at that time.³⁰

The majority of the German settlers, however, were probably more or less disinterested in the whole issue. They sided neither with the English to whom they did not feel themselves bound by any ties, nor with the revolutionaries, whose leaders had always been openly antagonistic towards every one of their demands. Few of them had actively participated in the political life of the colonies. Furthermore, they had probably felt less than any other group the disastrous consequences of the English commercial policy which gave the movement against the mother country the impetus that finally led to open hostilities. The issue "taxation without representation" could hardly mean anything to them who were represented just as little in the assemblies of Savannah, Annapolis, Philadelphia and Boston, as they were in the Parliament at London. The English legislation of those years, moreover, did little harm to their interests. The Sugar and Smuggling Acts as well as the Boston Port Bill hit only the New England trade in which the German element had no part whatsoever. Even the Stamp Act could affect only a part of them. They hardly used any stamps, if for no other reason, than that the majority of them lived in frontier settlements. The Townsend Acts which imposed duties on imports of articles from Great Britain also failed to affect them, as they bought little of these. They did not drink tea. Few of them were engaged in commerce.

Other laws could be evaded. Quitrents due to the Crown or to the proprietors were hard to collect in the frontier regions. Provisions, such as that no man should cut white-pine trees on his land without the permission of royal surveyors of woods, were never executed with complete rigidity. For the same reason, neither the royal Proclamation of 1763 nor the Quebec Act of 1774 could seriously arouse the German settlers. Both decrees sought to call a halt to the unceasing westward expansion of the

²⁹ Colonial Records of North Carolina, IX, 1264.
frontiersmen. Immediately after the Seven Years' War, this movement had assumed considerable proportions. Business, after having prospered throughout the campaign, received a sharp setback after its close. Ruined by the severe depression which set in after the war, many farmers and laborers had to give up their homes. But when they set out to seek new homes, they suddenly found their way barred by a royal decree according to which no land was to be granted and no settlement to be allowed beyond the Alleghenies. London did not want her fur trade upset by frontier fights between Indians and white settlers. But even the Proclamation of 1763 was never, and could never be, rigorously enforced. The settlement of the interior regions went on without serious hindrance.\textsuperscript{31}

Finally, a very old and pronounced antagonism against the leaders of the revolutionary movement prevented many German settlers from taking an active part in the campaign against the English. The very men who did not tire of denouncing the injustice of taxation without representation, had called the German settlers rioters when they had asked for the right to be represented adequately in the colonial Assemblies. Only a few years before, they had been threatened with armed force by the very men who now wanted them to help fight for the same right. In vain did the insurgents try to utilize the aid of leading German clergymen who had adopted the cause of independence. Many of them were sent into the interior to persuade the German frontier settlers to join the forces of the revolutionaries against the Crown. A commission sent to the frontier settlements by the Council of Safety at Charleston met with almost complete failure when it sought to induce the German farmers to become members of the revolutionary Association. At some meetings not a single German appeared.\textsuperscript{32} North Carolina experienced similar difficulties.\textsuperscript{33} Too deep was the resentment against the eastern oligarchy; too little were British wrongs felt, to bring the German settlers over to the revolutionary cause.


In Pennsylvania, on the other hand, the same antagonism led the German farmers of the central and western counties immediately into the ranks of the insurgents. To them the rebel movement offered a welcome opportunity to break the power of the Quakers. Less interested in the controversy with the English, however, many deserted from the army and went home as soon as the Quaker rule was broken.

However, if there was a large part of the German element which was openly hostile or, if not opposed, at any rate cool, towards the movement for independence, another, much smaller part joined it enthusiastically at the very beginning. Almost unanimously the German clergy went over to the American cause. Students and followers of the teachings of Locke, Montesquieu and Rousseau, they were ready to defend their spiritual freedom and to add to it political independence. Of the others, some were merchants or farmers with far-flung trade connections with Philadelphia and Baltimore, as those in Virginia and Maryland, who suffered from the restrictions imposed by the English legislation upon the American trade. Most of them were artisans, mechanics, or laborers. Many were simply carried away by the flood of speeches, pamphlets, resolutions. Living in towns and cities, they were much more exposed and much more susceptible to the fiery harangues of the revolutionaries. Many, on the other hand, joined the latter, because independence seemed to promise economic prosperity to them.

Ever since the American colonies had shown signs of economic independence, the English had been anxious to curtail this development and to keep their economic life subservient to that of the mother country. At the beginning, a restrictive jurisdiction was sufficient to maintain this dependence. Board of Trade and Privy Council supervised and repealed colonial economic legislation. Thus, in order to protect the British manufacturer, they forbade the erection of new towns in Virginia and Maryland which might

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have encouraged the founding of new manufacturing industries. They disallowed shoe-making and manufacture of hats in Pennsylvania, the sailcloth industry in New York, the building of new mills and plants in other parts of the colonies.^{87}

Among the chief sufferers from this prohibitive policy were many German artisans and mechanics. Highly skilled, they enjoyed a wide reputation for ingenuity and resourcefulness. When passing through Germantown, a contemporary traveler, the Swede Peter Kalm, noted that "most of the inhabitants are tradesmen and make almost everything in such quantity and perfection that in a short time this province will want very little from England, its mother country."^{88} Another traveler, John F. D. Smyth, who visited the German settlement of Wachovia, North Carolina, found the inhabitants engaged "in a number of useful and lucrative manufactures, particularly a very extensive one of earthenware, which they have brought to a great perfection, and supply the whole country with it for some hundred miles around."^{89} This was exactly what the English sought to prevent. Thus their vetoing of many legislative acts of the colonies fostering local manufactures affected numerous successful German enterprises.

When the checks imposed by the Board of Trade and the Privy Council in London did not seem sufficient any longer to curb the trend towards economic independence, Parliament began to enact the fateful legislation which has already been mentioned. Even though this legislation was not so much directed against traders and artisans, yet it made itself felt by them, because their well-being was closely related to the economic prosperity of the upper classes. It was, therefore, only natural that their long smouldering resentment of the restrictive jurisdiction at London finally broke into open revolt, when their economic position was further endangered by the new legislation.

Moreover, by that time, artisans and manufacturers had had a foretaste of the economic independence which the revolutionary movement promised them. In fact, those very laws, which first


^{88} Peter Kalm, *Travels in North America*, p. 49.

seemed to doom them to economic ruin, indirectly brought about an unexpected recovery from the depression of the last years. In retaliation against the English policy, the merchants of the seacoast concluded non-importation agreements which were carried through with complete rigidity. All English goods, which could be dispensed with, were boycotted throughout the colonies. Thus the country was suddenly thrown upon its own resources.

Needless to say, German artisans and manufacturers were among the first to benefit from the new boycott policy. Now that no more English wool was imported from the mother country, the cloth manufactured in Germantown and Lancaster was in high demand from Massachusetts to Georgia. Reading, center of the hat industry, rose to new activity. Paper mills, saw mills, powder plants, tool factories, were busier than ever before. Innumerable substitutes were created for goods heretofore imported from England. But this prosperity might be endangered by a reconciliation with the mother country. Only complete independence, political and economic, could, therefore, ensure its continuity. Thus, artisans and mechanics were eager to join the revolutionary cause. And whereas the German frontiersmen in South Carolina refused to enter the militia, the Germans of Charleston offered their services immediately at the outbreak of the hostilities.40

However, the frontier was not entirely inactive. The German frontiersmen of the Mohawk Valley were among the first to join the insurgent forces. They had long been nursing a personal grudge against the Tories, who by their policy of large landholding, had been opposed to the general current of settlement and to an increase in the number of free landholders. Together with Albany Whigs, they drove them from their homes. And it was owing to their stubborn resistance that a large expeditionary force under General St. Leger, which was supposed to crush the revolutionaries of the Mohawk Valley, had to return to Canada without fulfilling its task.

These Mohawk Germans were among those few troops which formed the nucleus of Washington's army. Their tenacity contributed much to securing the final victory of the revolutionary cause. We find other Germans among them, too. Beside the

names of Steuben and De Kalb, the names of Muhlenberg, Herkimer and Ludwig will always bear honorable witness to the share the German element had in the fight for independence. The heroism of the German Fusileers at the siege of Savannah and of the German Battalion from Pennsylvania which fought gallantly in the South and at Yorktown should not pass unmentioned.

Not a few of the Mennonites and Moravians, whose religious beliefs did not allow them to join the revolutionary army, contributed money, furnished provisions and rendered other valuable services, even if they did not fight. The *Pennsylvanische Staatsbote*, next to Sauer's the most important German newspaper, was a staunch supporter of the American cause. And with the exception of the Hessians and other German mercenaries who were sold into English service in Europe against their own will, we find hardly any German actively fighting on the English side.

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While the war against England was going on, another fight was decided within the different colonies.

The revolutionary movement which swept the country, was in reality twofold. On the one hand, it was a struggle against Great Britain for independence; on the other, it was a fight of western settlements against the dominion of the eastern oligarchy. The march of the Pennsylvania frontiersmen on Philadelphia, the rebellion of the "Regulators" in North Carolina, had been signs of the growing restiveness of the frontier. With increasing determination, it refused to be ruled by the merchants of the seacoast and demanded equal representation in the Assemblies. Far from being absorbed by the controversy with England, the movement gained new strength from the general trend towards independence.

It was particularly strong in Pennsylvania where the Quakers were still in full control of the Assembly. Here the revolutionaries had made least headway. The Quakers were openly opposed to independence from England. Not only were they afraid of losing their hold over the province, but they also had been brought up

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in loyal submission to the existing government. They abhorred violence and rather bore the grievances in patience than resorting to force. Consequently, they instructed the Pennsylvania delegation to the Continental Congress in April 1775 to vote uncompromisingly against any motion for independence.

To the frontiersmen this attitude provided a welcome pretext to rise in open rebellion against the Assembly in Philadelphia. They did not feel the British wrongs so much and were, therefore, little concerned with the British invasion. But the time seemed opportune to curtail the power of the eastern oligarchy. The Scotch-Irish, eager to seize this long awaited opportunity, had little difficulty in persuading the Germans, whose support they needed, to join forces with them. The Germans who had been roused from their previous indifference by the partisan policy of the Quaker-dominated Assembly, were ready to follow their lead. Moreover, the Scotch-Irish promised them an equal voice in the legislature, and guaranteed them the same religious freedom they had enjoyed under the Quaker regime. City and county committees were formed to oppose the Quaker rule. They interfered with the local governments or took them over. The Assembly in Philadelphia refused to yield. But the pressure upon them increased. In the election of May, 1776, the Scotch-Irish-German movement had the full support of the western counties of the province. A few days later, Congress, anxious to bring Pennsylvania over to the side of independence by breaking the obstructive attitude of the Quakers, resolved, "That it be recommended to Colonies where no government sufficient to the exigencies of their affairs has been established, to establish such a government as would answer the purpose." Shortly afterwards, on May 15, a broader preamble was attached to this resolution, advising the suppression of all government under the Crown and the substitution of governments based upon the authority of the people alone.

This preamble which, in fact, was already a declaration of independence, meant the end of the Quaker rule in Pennsylvania. The Friends had lost the moral backing which they would have needed to maintain themselves. The Assembly still hoped to survive this new attack by revoking its instructions to its delegation in Congress. It was too late. The radical Assemblymen, refusing to cooperate, stayed away from the sessions. Soon it became impos-
sible to find the required quorum. On June 14, 1776, the Assembly adjourned never to meet again. On June 15, a convention of county committees met at Philadelphia. One-fifth of the delegates were Germans. At one of the first sessions, every taxpaying member of the military “Associations,” who was twenty-one years of age and had resided in Pennsylvania for one year, was granted the right to vote. The Germans, without whose support the Quaker regime would probably not have not been ended as easily (although it could never have resisted permanently the recognition of the West’s equal rights), had received their reward.

In the constitutional convention, which convened at Philadelphia a month later, the German element was represented by twenty-six delegates. The constitution adopted was one of the most fantastic documents—a curious mixture of democratic ideas not properly digested. Both executive and legislative were checked by far-reaching restrictions, which soon threw the administration of the state entirely out of gear. What part the Germans took in the drafting of the constitution is hard to say. Of the seventeen members of the drafting committee four were Germans, among them the astronomer David Rittenhouse, who as chairman of the Committee of Safety at Philadelphia, had displayed decided revolutionary leanings.\(^4\) The convention minutes themselves do not give any hint as to the authorship. But Professor Nevins, in the course of his researches on the states during the Revolution,\(^5\) has come to the convincing conclusion that Franklin, Bryan, Cannon and Matlack were the spiritual authors of the first constitution of Pennsylvania, none of them a German. The constitution was adopted, however, with the full approval of the German delegates. Among its seventy-three signers are the names of nineteen Germans.

As the constitution proved soon unworkable, it was replaced by a new one in 1790. The latter adopted many of the characteristics of the federal Constitution. Almost twenty per cent of the delegates of this second convention were Germans, but again the German element refrained from taking a leading part in the drafting of the new constitution. The liberal suffrage that the

first constitution had provided, was maintained; it was, in reality, all that mattered to them. They contented themselves by helping to pass the new law.\textsuperscript{44}

In none of the other states in which the German element had acquired a certain numerical strength—New York, Virginia, and Maryland—could it exercise a greater influence in the shaping of the different constitutions. The German delegates to the constitutional convention of New York took as little part in the actual drafting of that constitution as did their colleagues in Pennsylvania. Among the 107 members of the convention were seven Germans. One of them was elected to the drafting committee.\textsuperscript{45} They were not able to prevent the adoption of a very conservative suffrage policy which granted the right to vote or to be elected to public office only to freeholders whose property, in the latter case, was required to be as much as £100. They were influential enough, however, to obtain liberal naturalization laws.\textsuperscript{46}

Virginia, where the German element was as strongly represented as in New York, maintained the old injustices in representation. As before, each county, regardless of its size and population, sent two members to the constitutional convention. Although the Germans, concentrated mostly in the Shenandoah Valley, numbered as much as 25,000 in Virginia, i.e., eight percent of the state’s population at the outbreak of the Revolution, no German name can be found among the delegates.\textsuperscript{47} The arrangement was decidedly advantageous to the tidewater section. Its counties were much smaller than the counties of the West which, owing to their greater expansion, had a much larger population. The constitution which was drafted was accordingly conservative.

For the same reason, Maryland adopted a conservative constitution. Here again, each county, regardless of size, was allowed the same number of delegates, although they all differed vastly in population. Among the forty-two members present at the opening session of the constitutional convention were four German dele-

\textsuperscript{44} Proceedings Relative to Calling the Conventions of 1776 and 1790 (Harrisburg, Pa., 1825).
\textsuperscript{45} C. Z. Lincoln, Constitutional History of New York (Rochester, 1906), pp. 485, 490.
\textsuperscript{46} Ibid., p. 548.
\textsuperscript{47} H. B. Grigsby, The Virginia Convention of 1776 (Richmond, 1855).
Although the *Proceedings* do not reveal anything about the inside story of the convention, it is hardly probable, concluding from the lack of influence of the German delegates in all other conventions, that they took a leading part in the deliberations at Annapolis.

The Continental Congress, representative body of the states, which was in session during these years, counted several German or German-descended delegates among its members. They came from various states. New York, at one time or other, was represented by Simon Boerum and Henry Wisner; Pennsylvania by Frederick August Muhlenberg; New Jersey by Jacob Scheurman; Georgia by Johann Joachim Zubly. Jacob Read, a delegate from South Carolina, also has been said to be of German descent. This, however, seems extremely doubtful.

None of these men exercised any decisive influence on the proceedings of the Congress. Boerum, whose name is hardly ever mentioned in the *Journals*, died within a few months. Of Wisner, the South Carolinian delegate Edward Rutledge wrote to John Jay that he never left his chair. Zubly, a man of considerable wealth, was the representative of mercantile interests which were opposed to a complete break with England. Unwilling to support the movement for independence, he left the Congress in October 1775. Of the remaining two, neither Muhlenberg nor Scheurman were among the leading spirits of the Congress.

As for the federal Constitution, no delegate to the convention was German. Frederick August Muhlenberg, it is true, had been one of the chief exponents of the movement which favored the calling of a federal constitutional convention. As a Philadelphia businessman, he was well aware of the advantages a strong central government would hold for commerce. But Muhlenberg was not a member of the convention. The German element played,

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48 *Proceedings of the Conventions of the Province of Maryland in 1774, 1775 and 1776* (Baltimore, 1836).
49 See H. A. Rattermann in *Der Deutsche Pionier*, XIV (1882), 331. I have not been able to find any proof of Read's German ancestry.
50 Cf. his report of September 9, 1784 to the Governor of South Carolina, *Letters of Members of the Continental Congress*, VIII, 589.
52 *Works of John Adams*, C. F. Adams, ed. (Boston, 1850-1856), II, 421-422.
53 He was a partner in an importing firm in Philadelphia and also had an interest in a sugar refinery.
however, a somewhat more decisive part in its ratification, inasmuch as it emphasized certain economic and sectional trends by supporting them with its vote.

The movement for ratification centered, as Professor Beard has pointed out, particularly in sections in which mercantile, manufacturing, security, and personalty interests dominated. The holders of personalty believed their interest best safeguarded by centralizing the government and by endowing this central government with vast regulatory powers. Thus the supporters of the Constitution were recruited from the ranks of the security holders, merchants and manufacturers. Those Germans whose interests were commercial were eager to support the Constitution. Accordingly, the federal area comprised, of predominantly German sections, the manufacturing regions of Lancaster and Germantown in Pennsylvania, the Shenandoah Valley in Virginia—an agricultural section whose markets were at Baltimore and Philadelphia, and the region of the great navigable streams of North Carolina whose activities were mainly commercial. But even small farmers in some entirely agricultural sections voted for the ratification of the Constitution. Believing it to favor the mercantile interests to the disadvantage of the agricultural sections and that of the large landholder in particular, they saw in its adoption a most welcome weapon to curb the self-centered policy of aristocratic landholding which had always been openly opposed to the increase of small landholders. For this reason, many a German settler of New York and Virginia joined the Federalists. In the latter case, however, religious considerations may also have been of some influence. Quite a number of German settlers in Virginia were said to have voted Federalist, because Madison had successfully defended their dissenting sects against the established Church. At the same time, the Federalists sought to discredit the anti-Federalists among the Germans by emphasizing the deistical tendencies of some of their leaders.

On the other hand, the foes of the Constitution came mostly from agricultural regions. Afraid that a powerful Congress would favor commerce and might sacrifice agricultural interests, small farmers as well as big landholders voted against ratification. Where far-flung trade connections or controversies with feudal landlords did not make it advisable to side with the Federalists, the German farmer also joined the ranks of the anti-Federalists. Thus the German settlers of the upper districts of North and South Carolina belonged to the most stubborn adversaries of the Constitution.

Here again, as in the slave issue, it became evident, how economic necessity and pressure of environment shaped the attitude of the German element to the exclusion of any ties of common origin. "One of the best illustrations of the effect . . . of environment on a people," Professor Libby points out in this connection, "is seen in the case of the Germans who settled in North Carolina from Pennsylvania. In the latter state the Germans supported the Constitution, in Maryland likewise, and when settled along the Shenandoah Valley their votes were unitedly for the Constitution. But those who came into the interior of North Carolina, cut off from all outside interest, on no great commercial highway like the Susquehanna, the Delaware, or the Shenandoah Valley, became conservative, suspicious of new ideas, and were readily led by politicians into opposing what was really for their best interests. While those in Pennsylvania, Maryland, and West Virginia were the strongest supporters of the new Constitution, those in North Carolina were its most obstinate enemies, and even in 1789, the only united opposition came from these German counties in central North Carolina."

Nothing could better illustrate, we may add, how much, by this process of adapting itself to the demands of environment and economic necessity, the German element had become a part of the American people.

VI

As a matter of fact, those few ties which held the German element together, were weak enough from the beginning. A German

element as a political unit never existed in colonial America. It never could come into existence, because hardly anything but a common language bound these immigrants who came from Germany. They did not come as Germans; they came as Palatines, Salzburgers, Wurttemburgers, or Hanoverians. They came as Mennonites, Dunkers, Lutherans, and Calvinists, for the religious ties bound them often much more strongly than the fact of a common home town.

For this reason, the fear of nativists who saw Pennsylvania gradually develop into a German colony, were entirely unfounded. Lacking a national background, without any ties to their fatherland the recollection of which merely recalled the memory of brutal persecutions, war terrors and famines, the colonial immigrant from Germany was without any political ambitions. A new home, safe from the whims of ruthless princes and pillaging soldiers, and freedom of religion was all that mattered to him. He found it, and the memory of the old country receded with the years until it completely faded into oblivion in the second generation. The fight with the wilderness of the frontier was too hard, too absorbing to allow recollections of times gone by, even if they had been more pleasant than they actually were. At the same time, this hard and exacting struggle secured the promised freedom, provided independence, and emphasized the value and dignity of the individual. It thus tore constantly at old ties, and, laying full claim to the life of the pioneer, turned his eyes completely toward the new goal. As Professor Parrington ably put it, the silent pressure of environment created an American mind.\textsuperscript{59}

Only after having gone through this process of transformation did Germans enter the political field. It has been shown that the German immigrant of the colonial period was originally not at all political-minded. Under the equalitarian conditions of his environment only did he gradually begin to develop that political sense which the English-descended population had long acquired. Those who finally began to take a really active part in the political life of the colonies were almost all born in this country and did so not as Germans, but as Americans. Typical was the career of Benjamin Shoemaker, one of the few Germans politically active

in the earlier days of German immigration. He was born in German town in 1704 and, while still a youth, left the town which at that time was politically and spiritually equally aloof from the affairs of the province. He settled in Philadelphia, center of the political life of the colony. More and more he came under English influence, married an English girl, and was finally drawn into the political life of the province. In 1745 he was appointed provincial councillor and served as a member of the Council, a kind of upper house to assist the governor, until after the French and Indian War. But Shoemaker, although of pure German descent, was no longer a representative of the German element. In fact, he had rid himself completely of the lethargical atmosphere of his German environment, before he took an active part in the politics of the colony.

Like Shoemaker, hardly any of the “Germans” who later became politically important during the revolutionary period, had been German-born. Almost all of them were “second-generation Germans,” born in this country. The only actually German-born member of the Continental Congress was the German-Swiss Johann Joachim Zubly. But representing the mercantile interests of the seacoast, he was often directly opposed to the interests of the German settlers in the agricultural sections. Boerum, Wisner, Muhlenberg, and Scheurman were all American-born. They came as representatives of their states, none of them as a delegate of a specific German element. So little was Henry Wisner concerned with the German attitude that he refrained from taking part in the deliberations about the question of government interference in religious matters, a question on which the German element in particular felt very strongly. He even secretly favored an affirmative answer.

For the same reason, the election of Frederick August Muhlenberg to the office of Speaker in the first House of Representatives

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60 C. P. Keith, *The Provincial Councillors of Pennsylvania* (Philadelphia, 1883), pp. 242-43. Shoemaker was the only “German” member of the Council during the seventy years of its existence, although the governors who appointed its members, anxious to attract as many settlers as possible to the colony, were always distinctly pro-German.

represented not a tribute to the German element as such, but to the extent to which it had grown into the American nation. Muhlenberg's father, who had come to Pennsylvania in 1742, had always been convinced of the necessity for German immigrants to assimilate themselves as quickly as possible. So thoroughly did he have his son instructed in English that in spite of his German background and a stay of several years in Germany, the latter felt much more at home in the use of the English language than of German. And when the Pennsylvania Assembly had to vote on the question as to whether to adopt English or German as the official language of the state, he as its Speaker cast the deciding vote in favor of English. The father had come from Germany, but the son was an American. As an American he was elected Speaker of the House.

The Germans all became Americans sooner or later. The assimilative strength of the young nation was too strong to be resisted by men whose national ties, if ever they existed, had already been weakened by the time they set foot on the new continent. Economic necessity did its part to destroy any remaining feeling for old ties which might have stood in the way of complete absorption into the nation. No common interests linked the Pennsylvania German with the settlers in the Carolinas or Georgia. Thus, the German farmer in New York and Pennsylvania was fundamentally opposed to slavery, whereas the Germans in the southern colonies welcomed it as a necessary and useful institution. The German settlers of Virginia and Maryland joined enthusiastically the revolutionary cause, while those of Georgia were distinctly loyalist in their feelings. And whereas David Rittenhouse was one of the most radical advocates of independence in Philadelphia, Johann Joachim Zubly walked out of the Continental Congress, because, as the representative of far-

62 Comprising only ten per cent of the population, it could hardly have claimed such consideration. Muhlenberg owed his election probably to the fact that with the President coming from the South and the Vice President from New England, it seemed advisable to choose the Speaker from one of the Middle States. Having been Speaker of the Pennsylvania Assembly for some time, Muhlenberg was, therefore, the obvious choice.

64 Cf. his letter of June 28, 1784 to his brother, reprinted in Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography, XIII (1889), 200.
65 F. Löher, Geschichte und Zustände der Deutschen in Amerika (Cincinnati, 1847), p. 198.
flung commercial interests, he was afraid lest these interests might be harmed by a complete break with Great Britain.

There existed, it is true, German newspapers and German societies in colonial times. But a German paper at that time was, in reality, an American paper printed in the German language. It existed not in order to cultivate love to the old country, to keep alive a feeling of national consciousness or to promote a distinct German cause, but merely to bring the news of the day to those who had not yet acquired a sufficient knowledge of English to read an English-language paper. Sauer, as a Dunker, was anxious to avoid any political issue. Miller, next to Sauer the leading German newspaper publisher during the colonial period, advocated constantly Anglicization by learning English, and sought to interest his German readers in the political life of the colonies by reporting on Assembly sessions and newly passed laws. And Franklin, who among his various enterprises also published a German newspaper for some time, saw in it the best instrument to convert unwelcome foreigners into good Americans.

As for the different German societies which sprang up in the latter part of the eighteenth century in many colonies, none of them was dedicated to the promotion of a national German cause. There was no German nation, no German nationals, but only individuals who came from a part of Europe geographically called Germany to paraphrase Metternich's famous words. The "Deutschen Gesellschaften" in Philadelphia, Baltimore, Charleston and New York were founded to take care of these individuals. No cultural or political program was included in their activities. They did not hinder the process of assimilation, but rather helped it by caring for the sick and supporting the poor and thus smoothing the path for them to take their place in the new country. The "German Society" in New York accepted even non-German members as early as 1790, and made English its official language in 1796, the other societies followed not much later.

* Ibid., pp. 2-3.
* A. Eickhoff, In der Neuen Heimath (New York, 1884), Supplement, p. 3.
The fate of this country might have taken an entirely different course, if those German immigrants had come over as German nationals, held together and backed by a powerful and national-minded home government. As it was, they came willing to subordinate themselves to the English element and ready to become an integral part of the new nation which gave them so much more than they could ever have hoped for in the old country. They, in turn, offered the new continent all they had, their industry, skill, ambition, their lives. This mutual give-and-take forged a bond firmer than any political program could ever have achieved.

To a country without men came men without a country. The country was stronger than the men, and the men became part of the country, thus contributing their share to its wealth and strength. That one of their sons—Muhlenberg—when the young nation rose to political independence, was appointed to one of the highest offices it had to bestow, brought this development only to a fitting climax.