1 In the Flatland

It is impossible to give a scientific definition of motherland. Partly, this is because the word concerns our private, intimate, spiritual sphere, and we dislike invaders in it. It is also because of the weakness of the analytic method of our science. It fails to split the whole into such pieces and relations among them which can, according to systems science, be united in the same whole. Since we all have different cultural backgrounds, it is a vain project even to agree on the basic words for the definition of motherland. However, if we don’t have a definition we can’t understand the Germans and the role of Germany in their life. It is with this in view that I have chosen E.A. Abbott’s term “Flatland” to serve as an illustration, approximation, motion to the infinite boundary value, which was Germany before its culture became an object of an unprecedented reeducation campaign [1.1]. Walter Noll, who was born in Berlin on January 7, 1925, remains a German in his heart.

His father, Franz Noll, originated from a Dutch family in Rotterdam. From childhood he possessed characteristics that were very much like those of the Germans: practical cleverness, energy, initiative, and respect for knowledge. Although he emigrated to Germany in 1890 as a boy, he didn’t accept Germany as his motherland and dreamed of going to the USA. Neither the eight years of German schooling in Thüringen nor his marriage to a German country girl, Martha Janssen, could change this. He kept thinking that American culture was superior to the German one. However, he studied for two years at a German trade school and then got a job at Jaroslaw’s Erste Glimmerwarenfabrik in Berlin. He managed to make a career there, advancing from a common worker to a division manager [1.2]. As a member of the German Social-Democratic Party (SPD), he took an active part in the political fights of “Genossen und Genossin-
nen” [1.3]. Within the party, he belonged to the centrists and rejected armed struggle as a means to acquire state power. His wife, who worked before marriage as a maid, was entirely unpolitical.

Walter Noll went to school for the first time in the spring of 1931. It was a communal primary school in Berlin-Biesdorf. In the summer of 1932, Franz Noll and his family moved to their own house in Miersdorf by Zeuthen, a suburb of Berlin [1.4]. He was unknown there, which saved the family from political repressions after the German fascists came to power. Franz Noll taught his only son the basic rules of double life: to pretend to be a fellow traveller of the ruling regime and not to talk about politics outside his own family. Walter learned from his father that Germany was doomed to unleash a new world war and to lose it because of the USA. Franz Noll compared the Nazis with criminals. Walter Noll could see their felonies with his own eyes. In Biesdorf, the Nazi stormtroopers kidnapped and beat to death the Noll family physician, Dr. Philippsthal, who was Jewish. Another incident involved a friend of the Noll family. Walter Noll remembered that this man made some critical remarks about the Nazi government to a stranger in the street. As a result, he was arrested and sentenced to several months in a concentration camp. He came back a broken man and soon committed suicide [1.5]. After the family moved to Miersdorf, Walter Noll continued his education at a primary school in Zeuthen. Walter Noll remembers his first school years: “During the first four grades, my performance in school had been only slightly above average, but my teacher assured my parents that I had a good chance of success in academic high school” [1.6].

In the spring of 1935, he received a free place at a high school for boys in Eichwalde, district Teltow [1.7]. It was a liberal German-nationalistic school. The teachers of Walter Noll can be divided into two groups: formal pedagogical officials, who taught their subjects indifferently, most of which belonged to the Nazi party (“Parteigenossen”), and sometimes wore the Nazi uniform or the badge of the Nazi party; and the rest of the teachers [1.8]. There were no fanatical Nazi teachers at this school, and they were not generally in much force in Germany. Sometimes, they could not even follow the logic of Hitler’s politics and criticized him. Most of the teachers