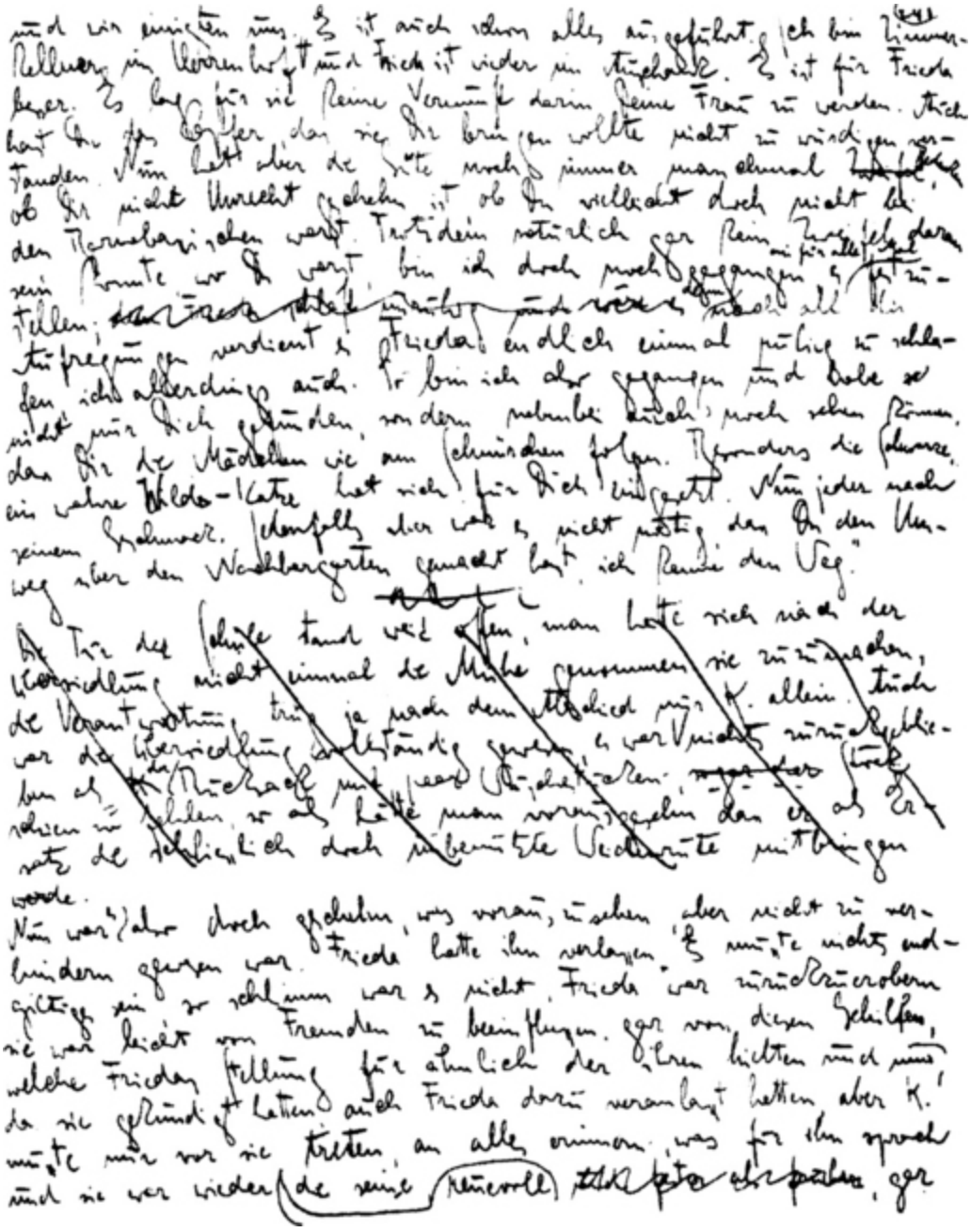
SCHOCKEN BOOKS

THE CASTLE

A New Translation, Based on the Restored Text

FRANZ KAFKA



A page from Kafka's manuscript of *The Castle*.

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The Castle

A NEW TRANSLATION, BASED ON THE RESTORED TEXT

Translated and with a preface by
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PUBLISHER'S NOTE

"Dearest Max, my last request: Everything I leave behind me … in the way of diaries, manuscripts, letters (my own and others'), sketches, and so on, [is] to be burned unread.… Yours, Franz Kafka"

These famous words written to Kafka's friend Max Brod have puzzled Kafka's readers ever since they appeared in the postscript to the first edition of *The Trial*, published in 1925, a year after Kafka's death. We will never know if Kafka really meant for Brod to do what he asked; Brod believed that it was Kafka's high artistic standards and merciless self-criticism that lay behind the request, but he also believed that Kafka had deliberately asked the one person he knew would not honor his wishes (because Brod had explicitly told him so). We do know, however, that Brod disregarded his friend's request and devoted great energy to making sure that all of Kafka's works—his three unfinished novels, his unpublished stories, diaries, and letters—would appear in print. Brod explained his reasoning thus:

> My decision [rests] simply and solely on the fact that Kafka's unpublished work contains the most wonderful treasures, and, measured against his own work, the best things he has written. In all honesty I must confess that this one fact of the literary and ethical value of what I am publishing would have been enough to make me decide to do so, definitely, finally, and irresistibly, even if I had had no single objection to raise against the validity of Kafka's last wishes. (From the Postscript to the first edition of *The Trial*)

I would like to acknowledge the scholarly assistance given by Professor Mark Anderson and Dr. Anthony David Skinner in the preparation of this note.

In 1925, Max Brod convinced the small avant-garde Berlin publisher Verlag Die Schmiede to publish *The Trial*, which Brod prepared for publication from Kafka's unfinished manuscript. Next he persuaded the Munich publisher Kurt Wolff to publish his edited manuscript of *The Castle*, also left unfinished by Kafka, in 1926, and in 1927 to bring out Kafka's first novel, which Kafka had meant to entitle *Der Verschollene* (The Man Who Disappeared), but which Brod named *Amerika.* Wolff later noted that very few of the 1,500 copies of *The Castle* he printed were sold. The first English translation of *The Castle*, by Edwin and Willa Muir, was published in Britain in 1930 by Seeker & Warburg and in the United States by Alfred A. Knopf. Though recognized by a small circle as an important book, it did not sell well.

Undeterred, Max Brod enlisted the support of Martin Buber, Hermann Hesse, Heinrich Mann, Thomas Mann, and Franz Werfel for a public statement urging the publication of Kafka's collected works as "a spiritual act of unusual dimensions, especially now, during times of chaos." Since Kafka's previous publishers had closed during Germany's economic depression, he appealed to Gustav Kiepenheuer to undertake the project. Kiepenheuer agreed, but on condition that the first volume be financially successful. But the Nazi rise to power in 1933 forced Kiepenheuer to abandon his plans. Between 1933 and 1938 German Jews were barred from teaching or studying in "German" schools, from publishing or being published in "German" newspapers or publishing houses, or from speaking and performing in front of "German" audiences. Publishers that had been owned or managed by Jews, such as S. Fischer Verlag, were quickly "Aryanized" and ceased to publish books by Jews. Kafka's works were not well enough known to be banned by the government or burned by nationalist students, but they were "Jewish" enough to be off limits to "Aryan" publishers.

When the Nazis introduced their racial laws they exempted Schocken Verlag, a Jewish publisher, from the ban against publishing Jewish authors on condition that its books would be sold only to Jews. Founded in 1931 by the department store magnate Salman Schocken, this small publishing company had already published the works of Martin Buber and Franz Rosenzweig as well as those of the Hebrew writer S. Y. Agnon as part of its owner's interest in fostering a secular Jewish literary culture.

Max Brod offered Schocken the world publishing rights to all of Kafka's works. This offer was initially rejected by Lambert Schneider, Schocken Verlag's editor in chief, who regarded Kafka's work as outside his mandate to publish books that could reacquaint German Jewry with its distinguished heritage. He also doubted its public appeal. His employer also had his doubts about the marketability of six volumes of Kafka's novels, stories, diaries, and letters, although he recognized their universal literary quality as well as their potential to undermine the official campaign to denigrate German Jewish culture. But he was urged by one of his editors, Moritz Spitzer, to see in Kafka a quintessentially "Jewish" voice that could give meaning to the new reality that had befallen German Jewry and would demonstrate the central role of Jews in German culture. Accordingly, *Before the Law*, an anthology drawn from Kafka's diaries and short stories, appeared in 1934 in Schocken Verlag's Bücherei series, a collection of books aimed to appeal to a popular audience, and was followed a year later—the year of the infamous Nuremburg Laws—by Kafka's three novels. The Schocken editions were the first to give Kafka widespread distribution in Germany. Martin Buber, in a letter to Brod, praised these volumes as "a great possession" that could "show how one can live marginally with complete integrity and without loss of background." (From *The Letters of Martin Buber* [New York: Schocken Books, 1991], p. 431)

Inevitably, many of the books Schocken sold ended up in non-Jewish hands, giving German readers—at home and in exile—their only access to one of the century's greatest writers. Klaus Mann wrote in the exile journal *Sammlung* that "the collected works of Kafka, offered by the Schocken Verlag in Berlin, are the noblest and

most significant publications that have come out of Germany." Praising Kafka's books as "the epoch's purest and most singular works of literature," he noted with astonishment that "this spiritual event has occurred within a splendid isolation, in a ghetto far from the German cultural ministry." Soon after this article appeared, the Nazi government put Kafka's novels on its blacklist of "harmful and undesirable writings." Schocken moved his production to Prague, where he published Kafka's diaries and letters. Interestingly, despite the ban on the novels, he was able to continue printing and distributing his earlier volume of Kafka's short stories in Germany itself until the government closed down Schocken Verlag in 1939. The German occupation of Prague that same year put an end to Schocken's operations in Europe.

In 1939, he re-established Schocken Books in Palestine, where he had lived intermittently since 1934, and editions of Kafka's works in the renewed Hebrew language were among its first publications. In 1940, he moved to New York, where five years later he opened Schocken Books with Hannah Arendt and Nahum Glatzer as his chief editors. While continuing to publish Kafka in German, Schocken reissued the existing Muir translations of the novels in 1946 and commissioned translations of the letters and diaries in the 1950s, thus placing Kafka again at the center of his publishing program. Despite a dissenting opinion from Edmund Wilson in *The New Yorker* (where he nonetheless compared Kafka to Nikolai Gogol and Edgar Allan Poe), a postwar Kafka craze began in the United States; translations of all of Kafka's works began to appear in many other languages; and in 1951 the German Jewish publisher S. Fischer of Frankfurt (also in exile during the Nazi period) obtained the rights to publish Kafka in Germany. As Hannah Arendt wrote to Salman Schocken, Kafka had come to share Marx's fate: "Though during his lifetime he could not make a decent living, he will now keep generations of intellectuals both gainfully employed and well-fed." (Letter, August 9, 1946, Schocken Books Archive, New York)

Along with the growing international recognition of Franz Kafka as one of the great writers of our century, scholars began to raise doubts about the editorial decisions made by Max Brod. The