UNFINISHED VICTORY

by

ARTHUR BRYANT

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IN MEMORY

OF

HENRY TENNANT

KILLED

IN FRANCE

1917

"History is philosophy learned from examples."

THUCYDIDES

"When we had achieved and the new world dawned, the old men came out and took from us our victory and remade in the likeness of the former world they knew. . . . We stammered that we had worked for a new heaven and a new earth, and they thanked us kindly and made their peace. When we are their age no doubt we shall serve our children so."

T. E. LAWRENCE

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INTRODUCTION

HISTORIAN'S TESTAMENT

THIS book, which is based upon a larger work now laid aside, was written before the war. I wrote it as an historian's attempt to retell the story of those events — forgotten in the press and clamour of contemporary news — which after 1918 set the course of mankind for a second time down the fatal and ever-steepening incline towards a second Armageddon. I did so with a full realisation that much that I had to relate ran counter to the prevailing view held both in this country and in Germany. I knew that many would blame me for reminding them of what they preferred to forget. But I hoped, sometimes against hope, that an historian's relation of what had happened — almost inevitably as it now seems — might conceivably help to direct opinion in Britain and Germany, where the consequences and causes of those events had been in turn misunderstood, towards a calmer and less reproachful atmosphere in which the problems of Europe could be understood and later settled in peace. It was a presumptuous hope and, as the upshot has proved, a vain one.

For events outstripped me. I and those who thought like me were like men running downhill after a steam roller hoping to stay its course by

propping matches against it. We foresaw the calamity for we recalled the causes from which it sprang, but we were unable to avert it. Last August all that we had dreaded came to pass. I laid my barely completed manuscript aside, as I thought for ever.

Yet nothing in this world stands still. The war which today seems permanent will one day come to an end. We believe that, after whatever dangers and sufferings, we shall attain our war aims as we did before. When we have done so, we shall have to strive for other aims which the sword alone cannot win. Last time we failed to achieve them. The price of that failure is the blood now being shed.

It was with this thought that I re-read the early chapters of my book — the story of how the Peace Treaties came to take the form they did and of their effect on the mind of a tortured Europe, of the famine and dread of revolution that formed their background, and of how inevitably everything that occurred, unbeknown to the British people, led imperceptibly but surely to the tragic shore we now inhabit. And as I read, it struck me that the truth I had written and now thought of no service, might still be apposite and even necessary to a proper consideration of the issues we shall presently be called upon to decide. The very confidence Britain has in her victory makes such consideration the more urgent. For the hour of that decision — as momentous for mankind's future as that of 1815 or 1919 — may come soon or late, but when it does there will be no time for forming a sane public opinion. If it has not already been created, it will be too late then.

Living as we do under a democracy, whose processes will begin to operate again on the day that the sirens sound an armistice, our statesmen will have as before to frame their peace in conformity with the opinion of the hour.

That of November 1918, despite the saner counsels of David Lloyd George, was summed up simply in the slogan, " Make the Huns Pay ! " After all that men had suffered in those four terrible years it could scarcely have been otherwise. And though the mood of the more educated part of the community soon changed for the better, it could not do so in time to affect the views of the majority and the decisions of its representatives with whom the right of action lay. Maynard Keynes wrote his famous book and all the thinking world read it. But it did so after the Treaties and not before. Had *The Economic Consequences of the Peace* been published before the Khaki 1918 Election — long enough before, that is, to affect the issue — we might not still be suffering those consequences today. That is why it is perhaps better to issue what I have written now instead of later when the auspices for publication might seem more favourable.

For opinion is never static. At the time of writing these lines — four weeks before Christmas — it is still, for all our country's stern resolution, sensible, reasonable and free from hate. But once the war becomes intensified, and the real horrors begin, our mood will change. Civilian opinion will inevitably undergo the same imperceptible but unavoidable mental deterioration that twenty years ago culminated in the Khaki Election and the Treaty of Versailles.

Dr. L. P. Jacks has warned us that " the conditions for a good peace deteriorate with every day the war is prolonged ". And it may be prolonged a very long time. If the peace we hope to make is to be worthy of the men who are fighting to win it, its foundations will have to be laid now. They will have to be laid in our minds and wills. We must prepare for it in advance in the same way as we have prepared for war. Last time as a result of vast efforts and sacrifices we won victory. But we did not win peace. We failed because we never took enough trouble to do so. With the tragic example of 1919 before us, we cannot afford to wait until the public has become too embittered even to try to think objectively.

Because of that failure mankind has returned for a second time in a generation to the shambles. To some of us who fought in the last war, the events of August 1939 brought a spasm of torturing bitterness. For it seemed for a moment as though the sacrifice of a million comrades had been in vain. We were again at war with the same defeated enemy, and for the same ends. After the greatest victory of modern times our elders had lost the peace. This time a younger generation has to bear the brunt of the battle. And through their courage and endurance it may be for us to make the peace. Shall we be able to frame a better and more enduring one, and one worthy of their sacrifice ?

The last peace was not worthy of the men who died to win it. For it did not endure, and therefore robbed them of their victory. There are some who, faced by a second world war in a generation, almost

feel that it might have been better had we exterminated our enemies in 1919 and so ended for ever the menace of German aggression. That would at least have been a logical policy. But for Britons it would never have been a practicable one and never will be.

Since we would not bring ourselves to destroy the German people, and could only have permanently broken up Germany by such destruction, the only sensible course was to make a peace based on the proposition that we had got, for good or ill, to inhabit the same world. We had taught a bully by hard knocks, as we are now having to teach him again, the lesson that force without morality does not pay. Had we been content with that — had we been true to the old fashion of England in letting our enemy rise and giving him our hand — we might not now be having to repeat the work of 1914–18 a second time. In our anxiety, or that of our allies, to delay the day of Germany's recovery as long as possible, we undid the whole worth of our lesson by teaching a contradictory one — that only by force and violence was she ever likely to free herself from the painful shackles in which we had bound her. For the moment it mattered little, since she was powerless. But we forgot that the will of our own people to keep her so would not last for ever, and, that presently, true to our tradition and forgetting the past aggression, we should tire of sitting on an injured and revengeful Germany's head and let her rise. In the fulness of time, as was inevitable, we did so. If we repeat the mistake of 1919 we shall probably do so again. "Magnanimity in politics is not seldom the truest wisdom.". It is always so for Englishmen.

Everything that happens in the world is the result of something that happened before. Evil is begotten of human frailty and folly. Violence is the fruit of fear, and fear of suffering, and suffering itself of earlier violence. The roots of the German character and *Machtpolitik* lie deep in a long and tragic history, and one that dates back far beyond 1914. However signally we defeat our enemy in the field, we shall never achieve our end of freeing Europe from the periodic effects of his violence and aggression until we have learnt to understand their causes.

It is the aim of this book to make it a little easier for the brave and patient people of this country to do so. It does not condemn, for little that we did, in the light of such knowledge as we had then, was deserving of condemnation. But it tries to explain. It explains why our enemies reacted as they did to the measures we took and why we took them. For if we failed to understand the mentality of the Germans, they have even more signally failed to understand ours. They have set down to malice, meanness and fear actions which were only natural in the circumstances of their time and even then inevitable. And they have failed to realise why their own actions have had in England the unfortunate reactions they have had. I am not thinking of those ruthless and case-hardened men, the Nazi leaders. I am thinking of the German people. I am thinking in particular of the younger generation — of the idealists of a new Germany whose tragedy it is to have seen their faith twisted and perverted to the ends of a greedy, ambitious and cruel opportunism.

An Englishman of my age came to know the

Germans best in the years of the Great War. He saw them in their hour of seeming victory on the battlefield: he saw them, when he honoured their valour and devotion to duty, on the day of adversity and defeat. He knew that he could fight them again, if need be, and believed that through certain advantages inherent in our system he could always beat them. But he knew also that henceforward it would not be possible for him to hate them. For he had learnt to respect them.

When the war was over he returned to England to earn his living. His chief ambition was to forget the war as quickly as possible. He therefore turned his back on a continent which had given him so much trouble, and shut his ears against its affairs. He left them to those whom he regarded — most unjustly as the event has shown — as mere intellectuals and international busybodies.

This, no doubt, was a pity. But he lived on an island which had only concerned itself with the affairs of Europe at intervals and which had plenty of troubles and disputes of its own to occupy it. He knew nothing of what was happening to Germans at that time because he was solely and wholeheartedly concerned in the affairs of his own country. They were disturbed enough to keep him fully occupied. For though 1919 brought Britain victory, it brought her also, as is inevitable with the waste and destruction of modern war, a host of difficulties. The revolutions that had come to so many great nations on the war-rent continent threatened her also. So long as the war continued, owing to the English-man's instinctive habit of unity in times of external

danger, these did not disturb her: but the moment the tension relaxed with the Armistice, grave differences between class and class made themselves felt.

The post-war sufferings of Germany therefore made little impression on the British people. They left foreign affairs to those who understood them or claimed to. All they were resolved on was not to have anything to do with them themselves, above all not to get involved in any more troublesome wars.

Only one aspect of foreign affairs made any appeal to them. That was the League of Nations. The Englishman approved of the League because he believed it would enable the nations to live together in concord and prevent war. He detested the idea of any further wars, partly out of a genuine desire to see everyone at peace and still more out of a very real sense of the evil, wastefulness and futility of modern war. He had learnt that a world war on the modern scale of destruction gained even the victors nothing. He therefore gladly joined the League of Nations Union, when solicited to do so, and gave his pennies to support an institution which he thought was outlawing war for ever. He did not — knowing so little about the real state of the continent — realise that the League's constitution prevented it from becoming an agency for peaceful change, and that without some such machinery to effect natural changes in a world that can never be static, some sort of an explosion was sooner or later inevitable.

For some years both the League of Nations and a kind of vague, well-meaning pacifism were exceedingly fashionable in England. Few people thought

very deeply about either, but it was generally believed that wars were solely brought about by stupid generals, ambitious and insanely imperialist statesmen and sinister armament manufacturers, and that all that was necessary to prevent war was for everyone to declare their loathing of the whole foolish and wicked business and roundly refuse to take any part in it. The Socialists had formerly been far wiser than the Coalitionists and Conservatives in demanding magnanimous terms for a defeated Germany. But having failed to convince their countrymen of their prophetic wisdom, they now proceeded to act as though they had done so and to advocate — unhappily with far greater success — that Britain should disarm in a world still seething with hatred and the sense of injustice. It was at this time that various societies of young men, most of whose members are now gallantly serving as volunteers in His Majesty's forces, passed resolutions declaring their determination never to do anything so wrong and stupid as to fight for their King and country. But it was not, as some supposed, because they were lacking in courage or patriotism, but because they never imagined there would be any need to.

The rise of Adolf Hitler to power at the head of a movement to restore Germany to its place in the world, if necessary by force of arms, was, therefore, little understood in this country. For the British people, knowing nothing of what the Germans had suffered since the war, failed to realise the causes and social implications of the Nazi revolution. But they disapproved intensely of a creed which appealed to force as a means of settling international disputes.

Because of their long and insular absorption in their own affairs they were unconscious of the fact that no other means of settling such disputes had been offered to a disarmed Germany. They imagined these matters could be settled to everyone's satisfaction by the League.

They therefore saw the German Führer, not as the iron restorer of a broken nation but as a loud-voiced intruder who threatened to disturb the peace of the world for reasons which they could not comprehend. They did not realise that Europe was not the peaceful place it appeared to be or that the German people had long been suffering under a sense of grievance, both economic and political. They only saw a vast number of Germans in uniforms who looked to them remarkably like the Prussians who had invaded Belgium in 1914 and forced them from their peace-time callings to the distasteful and horrible business of killing their fellow creatures in muddy trenches in Flanders and northern France.

To heighten this impression came the first exodus of the Jews and other minority refugees from Germany. It is a tradition of England, reaching far back into her history, to receive those expelled from other lands who seek her hospitality. Those who fled to her after 1933 were naturally little inclined to minimise their sufferings, which had been cruel and barbarous. Of the causes of that persecution the English knew nothing: they only saw defenceless creatures who landed on their shores in poverty and distress. It usually takes the testimony of his own eyes to convince an Englishman of another's distress: he can be curiously blind at times to misfortunes

which do not come under his observation. Thus the sufferings of Germany under the post-Armistice Blockade and Inflation made practically no impression on the English, who with a few exceptions never witnessed them. But hundreds of thousands of Englishmen, who after 1933 came into direct contact with unhappy German refugees, saw their sufferings only too clearly and laid the entire blame without reservation on the rulers of the new Germany. They did so the more readily because they only knew the last chapter of that tragic history of suffering.

Thus the task of creating a sympathetic understanding between the British people and the new Reich proved far harder than it would otherwise have been. British Labour was so antagonised by the persecution of prominent German trades unionists that it overlooked the revolutionary reforms that the National Socialist Party was achieving for German Labour. The Left-wing Intellectuals who had hitherto advocated friendship with Germany were antagonised both by the glorification of the military virtues which they disliked and by the banishment and imprisonment of their former Social Democrat friends. And the man in the street was shocked by the cruel drive against the Jews.

The speeches which Hitler made at this time offering Anglo-German friendship and co-operation fell, therefore, on rather unsympathetic ears, which otherwise might have been friendly enough. And whenever the frail plant of understanding seemed to be growing a little, some event would occur to cause a setback. To many German minds these disappointing setbacks may have seemed the result of

obstinate British prejudice or even of malign and underground forces. But as anyone who knows the English temperament can see, they were caused by its instinctive reaction to methods of violence and illegality. To the Germans such methods may have appeared justifiable and even unavoidable in the conditions that had long prevailed in their country. But they did not seem so to the ordinary Englishman. He merely saw what to him appeared a cruel, rough and arbitrary action that in the conditions of life which he knew would have been unforgivable.

The successive stages of German rearmament, being achieved by sudden and unilateral action, produced the same effect on a people to whom law and legal forms were second nature. The reintroduction of conscription, the creation of the German Air Force, the re-fortification of the Rhineland, were all one-sided breaches of treaties in law, however justifiable they may have seemed in equity. They left the impression — one that became tragically endorsed by time — that the new German Government did not regard treaties as binding. To a German who knew that a revolution had taken place in his country and that his Government had attained power by its promise to abrogate the Treaty of Versailles, the enforced signature of a pre-revolutionary German Government might well not seem binding. He may have felt that no other way of removing treaty anomalies and inequalities was open to his country. But there was no Englishman, however much he may have sympathised with German aspirations, who did not feel equally strongly that it would have been better for the growth of understanding

between the two nations had Germany shown more patience and respect for legality.

For slowly, partly as a result of Hitler's dramatic activities, the British people were resuming their interest in foreign affairs. They were beginning to hear, too, from those who travelled abroad tales of the Third Reich which, despite many revolting cruelties and the unjustifiable sufferings of the persecuted minority in exile and concentration camp, suggested that there were hopes of a new and happier Germany in the future. And the ordinary Englishman, whatever some of his newspapers might say, wished to see the German people prosperous and contented. When in March 1936 Germany in defiance of treaty obligations sent her troops into the Rhineland, the British people made it quite clear that, whatever the legal rights and wrongs of the case, they would not consent to a policy of invasion to enforce an unjust anomaly.

Yet all the while that British understanding of the new Germany was beginning to grow, the pace and violence of German action tended, not to diminish, but to quicken. Under Hitler's forceful leadership Germany was no doubt regaining a just confidence in her own powers, but, as she regained confidence she began all too obviously to regain also her old arrogant and brutal manner towards her neighbours. After the breach of Anglo-Italian friendship caused by the Abyssinian War and the unsuccessful attempt to enforce the authority of the League by Sanctions, German methods began to savour more and more of force and the threat of force.

In 1938 the pace of European events quickened

and it was at the armed initiative of Germany that it did so. In March without the least warning Germany struck down the Austrian Government and in the course of a single day incorporated Austria in the Reich. The English people as a whole did not know much about Austria and merely thought of it as a small country, with a distinct history and character, which Germany had forcibly swallowed by the threat and display of armed force. Largely ignorant of continental history, they failed to realise that the bulk of the Austrian people regarded themselves as Germans and that they had several times after the break-up of the Hapsburg Empire vainly petitioned for union with their fellow Germans.

But what the British people did realise with truth was that a direct blow had been struck at the whole principle of peaceful international co-operation. The most powerful state on the Continent had, for whatever motives, extinguished the independent existence of another state without warning. She had done so by a parade of unashamed force which, though it had caused little direct loss of life had aroused fears that might easily precipitate another war. An unjust provision of the Peace Treaties might have been removed, but the world was back once more in the old perilous atmosphere of Power Politics. And the advance of science had made Power Politics too disastrous a mode of conducting the affairs of an overcrowded Continent to be any longer tolerable.

For from their experience of four bitter, wasted years the British had learnt, what the Germans under the stress of later sufferings had forgotten, that war can no longer create anything. They knew that it

could only destroy. That it destroyed not only men and wealth, but human idealism. That while demanding of every generous and noble being the highest sacrifice, it ended by consuming not only the man but the faith and ideal that inspired his sacrifice. That it transformed justice into vengeance, liberty into licence, order into tyranny and courage into brutality. That it could make a wilderness where was formerly a garden, and savage beasts where once were men. That it destroyed or debased all that was good and left only the bad. That it did not decide quarrels but only perpetuated them.

It was to make resort to force henceforward impossible that the British man in the street had fought in the Great War, and so enabled his rulers to make whatever its disputed failings, the Treaty of Versailles. It was not the individual clauses of that Treaty that the ordinary Englishman regarded as sacred — he recognised that his politicians, perhaps inevitably, had made rather an unsuccessful patchwork job of it in a difficult time — but the principle enshrined in the Covenant of the League that international disputes should no longer be settled by armed conflict. For that ideal and in that belief a million British had given their lives, not ungladly. The Nazi leaders now seemed set on proving that they had done so in vain. Germany had not only recovered her former strength but had fallen into all her old faults of brutal bearing and reliance on military force that had destroyed the old Europe in 1914.

No time was allowed the British people, now thoroughly aroused by the dramatic European

spectacle, for calm and reflection. A few weeks after the march on Vienna — for such it seemed to a British people who never saw the cheering Austrian crowds but did see the pitiful train of broken men and women driven from their homes by the Gestapo — the German Press raised the question of Czechoslovakia and the Sudeten Germans. The British Press was divided. A certain section, including most of those who had established a reputation as foreign experts in the days of post-war Isolation, urged that Britain should take up an attitude of " Thus far and no further " by guaranteeing the integrity of Czechoslovakia. They were supported by a small group of ultra-patriotic British nationalists who felt that their country was being flouted and wished to re-establish her prestige by a firm stand.

But despite their growing distrust of German methods the majority of the British people did not take this view. By this time they were dimly aware of the fact that three and a half million Germans had been subjected by the Peace Treaties against their will to the rule of seven million Czechs. They wished no ill of the Czechs whom they admired as a gallant little people who had somehow preserved their nationhood in a long period of adversity and were doing their best to build up a new democratic state. But they felt on their own principles of self-determination that it was unjust that several million Germans should be perpetually subjected to a form of government of which they disapproved. They were therefore not prepared to give a blank cheque to Czechoslovakia to resist and by doing so to precipitate the still unthinkable calamity of a second World War.

At this time the Prime Minister was pursuing a policy of Appeasement. Its aim was to establish personal contact with the rulers of the Totalitarian States, and by a friendly discussion of certain political and even more serious economic grievances to recreate a European Concert and so prevent a war between the rival ideological and economic *blocs* into which Europe was divided.

His task was not made easier by the passions aroused by the Spanish Civil War and the Anschluss, both of which gave his critics chances of representing him as a tool of the dictators. Nor was his path over the Sudeten question at all clear. It was true that Britain had refused to guarantee the frontiers of Czechoslovakia. But France was Czechoslovakia's ally and, since the reoccupation of the Rhineland, Britain was in honour bound compelled to go to the assistance of France if she became involved in war. The Prime Minister's problem was to persuade the Czechoslovak Government to make concessions that would satisfy the Sudeten Germans in time to avoid a conflict between Germany and Czechoslovakia. For this would automatically bring France to the assistance of the latter and so precipitate a European War.

In this, despite the eleventh-hour despatch of Lord Runciman as a mediator, Mr. Chamberlain was not successful. By the beginning of September it was clear that the Sudetens, encouraged by the armed might of Germany and by the violent tone of the German press, were no longer prepared to accept any concessions from the Czech Government short of a return to the Reich, and that Germany was

preparing to go to war to enforce this. It was to prevent an immediate outbreak of fighting that Mr. Chamberlain made the first of his spectacular flights. Realising from his conversation with Hitler the inevitability of conflict if no immediate solution was found, and confirmed by Lord Runciman's report that a separation of Czech and Sudeten Germans was now the only practicable course, he obtained in the course of seven days the agreement of his Cabinet, of France and of Czechoslovakia itself to the transfer. What impressed the public more than anything else was Hitler's repeated declaration that once the Sudeten Germans had been given the right of self-determination, he would have no further claims either on Czechoslovakia or the rest of Europe.

But a terrible shock was administered to British opinion and the fast-growing readiness of the public to meet the German case with goodwill and reason. The news reached London that Hitler, not content with Mr. Chamberlain's undertaking that the Sudetenland should be transferred to the Reich, was now demanding its return within a week, not on terms reached by international agreement but laid down solely by himself and enforced by armed invasion. To the ordinary Briton, who had complete confidence in the Prime Minister, this attitude seemed utterly bewildering. It made the issue, not one of whether the Sudetenland should be transferred to Germany, which was already decided, but whether Germany should be allowed the right to march her armies whenever she chose into her neighbours' territory. On that issue, though on no other, the British people were prepared to fight. [illegible]y did not

want to, and, after a long period of disarmament then only partially repaired, they knew that they might have to do so at a grave initial disadvantage. But this consideration did not deter them. There is not the slightest doubt that they would have fought if Mr. Chamberlain's efforts had not culminated in the German Chancellor's eleventh-hour invitation to Munich.

The settlement achieved by the Four Power Agreement and the document signed by Hitler and the Prime Minister renouncing war as an instrument for deciding disputes, on the whole satisfied the ordinary Briton. Whatever the loss of dignity incurred in that eleventh-hour transaction, war had been averted. The Sudeten Germans had returned to the Reich by virtue of an international agreement, and the independence of Czechoslovakia had been assured by the publicly declared consent of the only man who could threaten or destroy it, the German Leader. The great majority of the people supported the Prime Minister.

The chief point made by the Opposition was that Munich was a surrender to force. As the rearmament of the country, begun two years earlier after a long period of retrenchment, was not complete in September, it was not difficult to make a *prima facie* case for this contention. The plain fighting Englishman knew this was untrue. Neither he nor his leader had had the slightest intention of surrendering to force nor had he ever questioned his power of ultimate victory: England has won too many victories to doubt this. But what did disturb him, and lent some support to the charges of the Opposition, was that the German Government and Press seemed to share

their view. Bitter speeches from Germany, possibly inspired by the anti-Munich clamour of Mr. Chamberlain's critics, made disturbing references to old gentlemen with umbrellas cringing for peace before the armed might of the Reich.

Nothing could have been more calculated to arouse the deepest and proudest feelings of the British people. Germany seemed to them to be making the same mistake as the British Opposition in regarding the Prime Minister's lead as a sign not of strength but of shameful weakness. It was suggested with increasing frequency and arrogance that Germany could do anything she liked by virtue of her arms, and that a supine and cowardly Britain must be content with the role of onlooker.

The British are a proud and haughty nation, with a long tradition of victorious arms. They resented such implications and turned to the business of making themselves strong with growing resolution. In doing so they had no thought, as was apparently feared in Germany, of attacking or lending themselves to any attack on the Reich. They still remained at heart profoundly pacific for all their interests are inevitably bound up with the continuance of a peaceful world. But they were determined not to abdicate their part in shaping the destinies of the continent they inhabited nor to accept a role of impotence through sloth or cowardice. In the course of a few months England, after twenty years of taking it easy, became herself again. The England of the nineteen-twenties and thirties vanished: the England of 1914 and the fighting past reappeared.

The plain Englishman's growing suspicion of the

new Germany, its methods and intentions, was greatly increased by the further outburst of Jewish persecution that followed Vom Rath's murder in November. Revolting and sickening tales of Jewish shops and synagogues destroyed and of defenceless Jews beaten by organised bands of Nazis reached England. Opinion was at first shocked, then horrified. It was not that the English had any particular love for the Jews but that they hated cruelty. The further flight of penniless and frightened refugees, most of them quiet and inoffensive citizens who had committed no crime but that of possessing Jewish blood, brought that cruelty very close home to England. That it had occurred in Germany, a land which the ordinary Briton regarded as being near akin to his own in civilisation, made him feel even more strongly that something was fundamentally wrong with the direction of affairs in the Third Reich.

But for all that, when the first feeling of horror and indignation had passed, the British desire to implement Munich by a friendlier association with Germany made itself once more felt. As Britain's armaments grew daily stronger, the native good-humour of a people who could not bear to be thought weak or cowardly, reasserted itself. The Government, with the approval of the country, prepared to make a trade agreement with Germany that was expected to be a prelude to bigger things. Mr. Chamberlain's policy of appeasement seemed, as in September, to be the right policy after all. The stock of his critics began to dwindle. And then the German Government suddenly came to their assistance and proved the justice of their fears.

The annexation of Bohemia and Moravia constituted a terrible blow to British confidence in Germany. It shook most of all those who had been advocating friendship with the Third Reich. It seemed to prove that everything that the opponents of appeasement had said was true. It made even the most legitimate German ambition impossible of present fulfilment without a world war, since the British people naturally now believed that every German demand was made with only one intention — to facilitate the next act of armed violence. They felt that they had been duped and grossly humiliated. The prestige of those who had declared that Germany could never be trusted was strengthened: that of those who had wished to make up for past mistakes by being just and magnanimous immeasurably weakened.

It was the annexation of Prague, and that alone, which caused the British guarantees to Poland and Romania. Nothing else but the indignation of the British public at an unjustifiable breach of faith — for the disintegration of Slovakia and Ruthenia would have been accepted as a central European and not a British concern if the Czechs had been allowed to keep their independence — and its alarm at what might be expected to follow could have persuaded Britain to embark on anything so contrary to her tradition as a policy of eastern commitments. For years the Opposition intellectuals had been urging the adoption of a system of defensive "collective security", and the Government, interpreting the insular and traditionalist feelings of the majority, had stubbornly refused to have anything to do with

it. But what Mr. Greenwood and Lord Cecil could never do, Hitler did in the course of a single night. He made the British people feel that they and Germany's other neighbours had got to stand together or be devoured piecemeal. The resentment engendered throughout Britain by Hitler's brutal act almost equalled that caused by the invasion of Belgium in 1914. It brought a million volunteers to the National Services. It even brought about what two years of war had alone sufficed to achieve before — conscription — a system utterly alien to the peculiar constitution of Britain in peace time. There was no other way left to Britons to demonstrate that further acts of violence would cost too much.

The British people felt that a state of virtual war had been created in a Europe of which they were an essential part. No confidence could exist on a continent whose most powerful and centrally-situated member had proved her contempt for the sanctity of international agreements. It was the German refusal to co-operate with her neighbours — only intelligible, perhaps, in the light of what had happened to Germany twenty years before — that made the British public refuse any longer to listen to her claims. So long as they were stated with menaces, they could not. In an atmosphere from which force and the threat of force had been excluded, they would have been considered in a spirit of sympathy, not merely by the British Government but by the British people. But while they were made as a matter of absolute right, admitting of no compromise or concession and backed by the threat of force, Britons could only regard them as moves

for strategic advantages in a battle of power politics. It is an old British principle not to give way in battle. From the moment the German tanks thundered into Prague and the British replied in the only way left to them by guaranteeing the independence of Germany's surviving eastern neighbours, the German Government never offered any option to the British but a craven surrender.

Hitler had done the one thing that he never intended. He had united the British people as they have not been united since 1914. He had aroused their sleeping pride and courage. Something stubborn and undefeatable rose in the English consciousness at a threat that was accompanied by a giant's force. Menaces from those without the force to put them into action leave the English unmoved. They are deaf to abuse by the weak. But when Hitler, with his marshalled planes and legions, let Ribbentrop and Goebbels raise a fist to England, England began to rumble and shake her lazy, giant limbs. For all her history proved that, once provoked beyond a certain point, she would fight, as she had fought before, till her enemy was beaten. The greater a foe's power to injure her, the more dogged her resistance and the more terrible the ultimate recoil of the " Oak and courage of England ". Mons and Maggersfontein, Medway and Modder River, she has had her humiliations, but to her, defeat is always the gale that rouses her latent and slow-burning fires. It might lie in Hitler's power to strike London to ashes. When he had done so his struggle would only have begun, for England never rests until her losses have been made good and her pride vindicated.

Whoever fancies so does not know England and English history. We are a race who answers challenges.

From one Englishman who had long striven for friendship with Germany, the march to Prague wrung certain words written for the now unpublished part of this book.

As in every war we have waged we shall fight with absolute national unity, with all our ancient resolution and for victory. Yet the best of our people will be aware that even victory in such a war as must ensue will be a barren and profitless one. That will not stop them fighting.

If the worst should come, and we have done all we can to avert the calamity, let us resolve to face it. At least we shall have touched bottom, and ours will be the absolute strength of men who have nothing further to lose. And if we cannot save civilisation — and it may be that modern industrial civilisation is not worth a Christian's saving — we should at least have this to win, the recovery of our own souls. We have been fat and comfortable, and our enemies have mocked us because we have been. We shall be fat and comfortable no more, and we shall meet our enemies as equals, in the gate.

" He that is down need fear no fall,
He that is low no pride,
He that is humble ever shall
Have God to be his guide."

And it may be that God, knowing the spiritual destitution we have passed through, in His inscrutable way is having pity on this great land. These things are mysteries and there is no certain answer. All we can know is that faith has before this removed mountains, and if all else goes faith can remain.

One thinks of the tough, eager-eyed, kindly people of this historic island — the rougher and least educated of them most of all — and one knows that, faced by calamity, neither their toughness nor their eagerness nor their essential kindliness will desert them. If war comes, they may experience terrors and calamities such as never came to them in the last war. When the first shock is passed, they will set their teeth and smile the slow, humorous English smile, released once more after twenty years of bewilderment and the worship of false idols, and tackle the job in hand. We may go down fighting, or we may survive victorious, but we shall certainly not surrender. And though the whole structure of our civilisation may be utterly changed in the melting-pot, the faith of one Englishman at least — and he is aware that he is not alone — tells him that the sweet, delicate and brave spirit of England will somehow live on, a beacon in a dark world guiding through storm to an unguessed-at future.

Such was the automatic and unreasoning reaction to *Machtpolitik* of an Englishman who, knowing war, dreaded to see it loosed in this country, had no hatred in his heart towards any German and knew how much good there was in the youth of the Third Reich, whose faith was now being so tragically betrayed by the very man who had awakened it. In his countrymen who knew nothing of the new Germany but what they had read in the newspapers or heard from the lips of hunted fugitives, the mood induced by the march to Prague became almost a stubborn racial conviction and a European factor that loomed as large on one side of the North Sea as Hitler's ruthless genius on the other.

Later, recalling that other racial mood born of the

events which this book relates, I visited Germany and spoke very frankly with certain Germans, warning them of the inevitability of war with Britain if they persisted in their impatient and one-sided policy. I was treated with great kindness and consideration — the most so, it struck me, when I spoke most frankly. I saw too a Germany strangely different from the hysterical land of shadows depicted by the newspapers and even more different from that other Germany — sad, sullen and divided — which I had seen in the days of the Inflation sixteen years before. For it was a land which, for all the cruel and heart-rending miseries of the minorities tucked out of sight and hearing, appeared at unity with itself and in which the common man felt himself part of a great nation moving, as he supposed, proudly and gladly towards a happier and assured goal. But, knowing what the plain German did not know of the blind, impatient and arrogant resolve of his rulers and the unswerving and inevitable answer to it of my countrymen, I could take little pleasure in the spectacle. For I knew that that goal was the crucifixion of Europe.

I returned to England, with a dying, desperate hope in my heart and none in my mind, seeing again and again in dreams two pictures. One was of a great lake close to the Austrian border where tens of thousands of children from the industrial cities of the north were rowing and swimming in the sunlight or camped beneath the pine trees, their faces gleaming with happiness and health and new-found knowledge of how to live. The other was of the stern face of the German with whom I had pleaded long and earnestly

for patience and understanding and who, carrying my words to his friend and ruler, could bring me back no other answer but that of the closed mind. The crowds of German sightseers flowed past the windows as we spoke, as ceaselessly as the mountain river beyond, and, watching their faces, I knew that their minds were closed too. For in every one of them lay the consciousness of the tragic occurrences told in these chapters and an obstinate, unreasoning resolve that never — not even if the course to prevent them made their repetition almost certain — would they allow them to happen again. This book has been written in the hope and belief that my countrymen will see that they never do. It will not help to bring victory any nearer. But it may help to use that victory aright when it has been won for us by the valour and endurance of others.

ARTHUR BRYANT

EAST CLAYDON
November 1939

CHAPTER I

FAMINE OVER EUROPE

> "I saw in vision the worm in the wheat
> And in the shops nothing for people to eat;
> Nothing for sale in Stupidity Street"
>
> RALPH HODGSON

IN the middle of the war famine came to central Europe. As other combatants fell away, the two most powerful and dogged nations in the world, Britain and Germany, settled down to death grips. Germany's weapon was the giant machine — militarism ruthless and enthroned — that directed every activity to one purpose, victory by battle. Britain possessed a weapon still more terrible. By the invisible use of sea power, with its far armada of shadowy masts and guns lurking among the barren islands of the north, the strength of Britain was exercised not against the fighting man but against every man, woman and child living in the territories of the Central Powers.

When Germany retaliated with unrestricted submarine warfare — the inexcusable and indubitably illegal murder of defenceless women and children, as it seemed to us — the war became a starving match between the two greatest commercial nations of Europe. To both trade was a necessity: both had to import or die. Had the fight gone the other way, Britain, with her dependence on foreign foodstuffs, would have perished in a few weeks. There were moments, as in the

spring of 1917, when she looked like doing so, when one out of every four ships that left her shores failed to return, and when her most famous admiral declared that she could not sustain the war into 1918.

But the British Navy held the trump cards after all. The *Unterseebooten* were mastered. The blockade continued. Slowly the noose of starvation tightened round Teuton bodies. For long an obstinate people, less immediately vulnerable in their dependence on trade than their enemies, held out. But the end was certain. The cold, remorseless pressure of the Admiralty never weakened.

One saw its consequences in the German food-lines in the industrial towns, where pale-faced, depressed-looking women who had never set eyes on the sea stood motionless in long queues in the wind and rain for the bare necessities of life. For potatoes, for beet, for flour, for coal, for soap and washing-powder, for shoes and clothing and thread, the women-folk of Germany and Austria-Hungary waited morning after morning for four grey years.

After 1917 the bread, fat and milk were distributed by rationing zones, but for the other commodities the food-lines remained. Often when those at the end of the line reached the shop after hours of standing and shuffling, there was nothing left to buy. At the fringe of the line policemen stood to keep order and drive away the human jackals, who watched for their opportunity in the pinched faces and strained, anxious eyes of the younger and prettier girls. An American visitor to the working-class quarters of Berlin, Vienna and Budapest in the winter of 1916 could not find one face in the food-lines that did not

show signs of hunger. "In the case of the young women and the children the skin was drawn down to the bone and bloodless. Eyes had fallen deeper into the sockets. From the lips all colour had gone and the tufts of hair that fell over parchmented foreheads seemed dull and famished." [1]

As the war continued, the rations distributed grew increasingly meagre. Even by the end of 1916 the allowance of eggs was down to one per head per week, and potatoes — for many the staple and sometimes sole dietary — to a few pounds. In the summer of 1918 it was reckoned that among the urban population of Germany the daily consumption had sunk from the 2280 calories regarded as the indispensable minimum in pre-war days to a bare 1000. That of flour fell from 320 grams to 160, of meat and fat from 1050 to 135, and of butter from 28 to 7. In Vienna in the autumn of 1918 the flour ration was down to a quarter of a pound a week. Milk was almost unobtainable and was reserved solely for nursing mothers and children. In the first year of the war alone, the daily milk supply of Berlin dropped from a million to a hundred and fifty thousand litres.

In the last two years of the war, nearly 800,000 non-combatants died in Germany from starvation or diseases directly attributed to under-nourishment — about fifty times more than were drowned by submarine attacks on British shipping. The biggest mortality was among children between the ages of five and fifteen, where the death-rate increased by 55 per cent. Tuberculosis alone accounted for 145,000 civilian deaths in 1918, or double the pre-war figure. Adding

[1] Schreiner, *The Iron Ration.*

the death-roll of the Austro-Hungarians, those whom the blockade killed alone exceeded the million British fighters who fell in action. Such, for those who do not possess it, is the effect of sea power. And such — in a far more terrible and sudden form — would be the fate of the people of these overcrowded islands if, through their own neglect or rashness, they ever lost that power.

This human wastage was accompanied by every circumstance of misery. Pleasure and vitality went out of the lives of more than a hundred million people. The food with which men and women fought their long losing battle against starvation was of the most miserable quality. The bread was dark-brown in colour, sometimes like clay in composition and sometimes dry and brittle with fragments of straw and sand buried in it. It had a sour flavour and caused indigestion and heartburn. Jam was made of turnip, tea of blackberry leaves and nutshells or the flowers of the lime-tree, coffee of beans. Many people subsisted for weeks on a sweet greenish pulp made of potatoes that had frozen in transit through the deterioration of rolling stock. Clover and the leaves of field plants took the place of cabbages and carrots : and dogs and cats vanished from the streets. In the luxury hotels of Berlin hungry fashionables regaled themselves on such refinements of the time as aniline " foam " cakes, dry grass tea and ingenious deceptive dishes compounded of the white of egg and gelatine. One was hungry within an hour even after the most expensive meal. Sweet things were virtually unobtainable : a popular substitute was macaroni made of little yellow pastilles (instead of eggs) called *tajol*. A rich man's child recalls her war-time dietary

as being for breakfast some sort of brew misnamed tea with a slice of heavy black bread with a little maize in it that turned green as it got cold; for lunch potato soup, a vegetable and twice a week a few bits of meat; for tea another slice of black bread; and for dinner scraps left over from lunch. There was little variation. All real food was kept for the fighting man. At the gates of Ruhleben in 1918 a British prisoner's tin of corned beef, sent in a parcel from England, sold for 300 marks — the equivalent of £15 in pre-war currency. Food was the staple subject of conversation for all classes. In the co-operative dining-rooms of Vienna famous poets, painters, architects and musicians, now penniless, begged humbly for their daily pittance of soup. The last days of the old Emperor Francis Joseph of Austria were made bitter by his people's cry for bread. The word "want" was writ large across the whole of central Europe.

The same all-consuming need touched every department of life. Every scrap and crumb had to be saved. Old rags and iron had become precious as gold: the very sweepings of the street fetched fancy prices. At the University of Dresden the students carried the contents of their waste-paper baskets once a fortnight to the local paper dealer to be exchanged for the wherewithal to buy minute quantities of food. Many schools had to be closed down in the winter because of the lack of lighting in the streets. In the country, bands of children scoured the hedges for berries. Everything capable of conversion into one of the innumerable commodities which that unsleeping Navy withheld was required for *Ersatz*.

Ersatz was the word of the time. It comprised every sort of substitute, from concoctions of gelatine made to look like white sugar to clothes and boots and dainty leather-looking suitcases made of paper. There was a grim joke current in 1918 of a man who ate an *Ersatz* beefsteak of so revolting a nature that he resolved to make an end of his life. But the rope he bought to hang himself broke, being *Ersatz*, and the poison he bought to swallow was *Ersatz* too, and did him no harm. So he was forced to go on existing.

It was not only food that was lacking. New clothes and linen were beyond the reach of all but the richest. The only people who could afford them were food profiteers, speculators and landowners. A suit that could be bought for 60 marks in 1914 cost 1200 by 1918, and a common shirt, formerly priced at 3 marks, could not be had for less than 700. Pre-war stores of household linen and material were soon exhausted even in a country where it was the fashion for well-to-do brides to set up house with a substantial dower of well-made linen. One war-worn major sacrificed his treasured trench maps so that the cotton backing could be used as diapers for his ten-months-old baby.

A typical case that came before a School Care Committee in the summer of 1919 helps one to realise what all this meant to the individual citizen. A war widow — there were nearly a million of them in the country at the time — had eight children ranging in age from four to fourteen. During the first part of the war the family store of clothing sufficed. Later the mother replaced it by making up the underclothing of her dead husband. But five years of

wear and tear in a family of nine exhausted all her carefully tended resources.

> The mother makes one sheet out of two old ones. On washing day the beds have to be sheetless. One towel is used by the whole family for the whole week. One child has caught scabies . . . another has an infectious skin disease (impetigo). Naturally the whole family are infected. Hardly had they got over one illness than another sets in. The mother has to go to work as the means left by her husband are insufficient to procure the necessities of life. She cannot carry out the treatment for the illnesses. She goes to hospital with her eight children, at the expense of the State. Hardly has the family been dismissed from the hospital than the twelve-year-old daughter gets discharging glands on her arm. The child has to wear the same woollen frock for weeks without it being washed (lack of soap). The mother has, of course, seen the trouble and wanted to bandage the arm, but she has no old linen. It is impossible to buy bandages on account of the high prices.[1]

The poor woman was the kind of person whom, in the almost inevitable mood then prevailing in England, one spoke of as a Hun and regarded as collectively and individually responsible for the war.

Lack of soap and warm water — for the great majority coal was almost unprocurable, — lack of bed and personal linen reduced a cleanly and frugal people to a race of slatternly scarecrows. Such soap as there was, made of a gritty, earthy mixture minus any fats, played havoc with threadbare garments, sheets and towels. Faced by such obstacles, even the

[1] Pamphlet, *Family Life in Germany under the Blockade*, ed. Richter, pp. 35-6.

finest characters degenerated. Many wearied and starving women, who were denying themselves their own rations to feed their children, gave up even trying to be clean. In infant welfare centres after the war it was common to find new-born babies and nurslings with sores up to the armpits. Among the working classes, conditions of indescribable filth prevailed in houses that had formerly been spotless. Children slept on vermin-crawling mattresses of old waste-paper — straw was too precious for such use, being needed for bread — and it was common to find two or three adults sharing a bed without sheets. The evil was aggravated by the compression of living space caused by the complete cessation of house-building during the war. Paint was practically unprocurable. Its lack reduced the whole of central Europe to a uniform, colourless grey which was matched by the faces of the people.

The same deterioration underlay all things. It was a time of universal sadness and shabbiness. Everything of any quality had to be set aside for the needs of the Army, and civilians had to do without. Against the onslaught of the blockade it was they who stood in the front line. Railway travel, reduced by 1917 to a quarter of its former volume, became a species of hard labour. Journeys took three times as long and delays were perpetual. Gone was the immaculate cleanliness of the proud pre-war German railways. The interior of the carriages — mere "weather-beaten boxes on wheels" — were unswept, the windows were broken, the toilet-rooms lacked soap and towels. Engines leaked at every steam and water joint. "The air-brakes acted with a jar, as

the shoes gripped the flat surface of the wheels, and soon the little doll trains were an abomination. . . . The means of communication of central Europe had shrunk to the level of the nag before the ragman's cart." [1]

The consequences of this on the health and morale of the civilian population was one of the most terrible of all the evils of the war. The whole of central Europe, comprising 150 millions, was sick, physically and spiritually. The average weight of the urban population sank by 20 per cent. Tuberculosis, phthisis, dysentery, intestinal catarrh and other diseases caused or aggravated by under-nourishment were rampant: at Nuremberg after the war 50 per cent of the children had T.B. The hospitals, suffering as they were from the universal want, could do little. There was no camphor, no glycerine and no cod-liver oil. Worse, there was no food. In one of the chief Berlin hospitals, the *Charité*, the daily meat ration for 2200 patients was contained in a tray 2½ by 1½ feet 5 inches deep. The weekly allowance of bread for ten patients was a single loaf. Where bodies were so underfed, the recuperative powers were abnormally low: trifling fractures and sores would often defy treatment for months.

The heaviest weight of the blockade fell on nursing mothers: the incidence of puerperal fever doubled. Owing to the lack of feeding stuffs for the cattle, milk was not only scarce but of the poorest quality. The consequent fall in the birth-rate is reckoned to have cost Germany three and a half million future citizens, which with her two million war dead and

[1] Schreiner, *The Iron Ration.*

her close on a million starved, brought her war losses to over six millions or nearly 10 per cent of the population. Children born during the latter part of the blockade averaged only four or five pounds in weight. In Bohemia in February 1919, 20 per cent of the babies were born dead and 40 per cent were dying within the first month of birth. A visitor to a Cologne hospital in the same year reported boys and girls of six years old with tiny, shrivelled bodies covered with queer, inelastic skin that could be moved about in folds or smoothed flat, soft skulls that yielded to pressure, and bones so soft that they could be bent by the touch. Wherever the German poor were gathered together in that starving time, an unpleasant odour assailed the nostrils. It reminded those who first noticed it of the smell of a distant corpse. It was the symptom of a universal malnutrition, of the waste of tissue in underfed bodies undergoing a process of decay not dissimilar to that which sets in at death.

That there was no compunction for all this among the English — a humane people — is a testimony to the mesmeric powers of modern war. It is not true to say that the English did not know that German women, children and old men were starving, for they were frequently told so in the columns of their newspapers. But after a few weeks of war losses and propaganda, one ceased to think of one's official enemies as human beings. Fat Hans tightening his belt and whining about his meagre rations was a good joke even in so respectable and humanitarian a journal as *Punch*. The enemy's occasional and always promptly flouted feelers for peace were set down as the cowardly reaction of greedy and pampered

appetites to a perpetual diet of sardines. That starvation implied anything more in terms of human suffering never occurred to the people of triple-guarded Britain. One sardonic jest of the period — it was never clear whether it was intended as a joke or an atrocity — was the story that the Germans boiled down their war dead in corpse factories to make substitute butter. But though the kindly English were cheered by the news that hunger was playing havoc with their enemies' wives and little ones, they never for one moment pictured the reality of it. They had commanded the wealth of the world for so long that it was not easy for them even to conceive of starvation. Of the imminent possibility of themselves being starved into submission by the submarine campaign they were kept in blissful ignorance by the censor. The bulk of the population never knew how near the U-boats came to triumph, or realised what it would have meant to them had they done so.

As for the British rationing schemes at the end of the war, they seldom amounted to much more than an inconvenience to the well-to-do classes. Food queues, ration cards and a dearth of certain commodities were a burden to the poor and at times a very real hardship, but they never constituted a major tragedy. Lord Rhondda, the Food Controller, and Sir Arthur Yapp, formerly of the Y.M.C.A., respectfully invited people to eat a little less. There was a shortage of butter and, at times, of butchers' meat, and sugar became something of a rarity.[1]

[1] One joke in *Punch* in October 1917 depicts a frugal lodger who has numbered his lumps of sugar with a lead pencil addressing his indignant landlady over the breakfast table: "Oh, Mrs. Jarvis, I am unable to find numbers 3, 7 and 18."

Many of the alternative dishes, made of oatmeal and other cereals, that took the place of rationed commodities, even seemed to some an attractive change after the unwonted sameliness of white bread. Britain took her rationing with good-humour and could afford to. The meaning of war as it was understood by her enemies was never really brought home to her civilian population.

It was this that explains the first of the tragic mistakes that threw away the victories of 1918, unwittingly betrayed the dead and led imperceptibly but inevitably to the present situation of Europe In November 1918, sooner than face another winter of starvation, the German people, broken by blockade, forced their Government to surrender. But though the rain of shells and bullets ceased, the war against non-combatants continued. In fact it was intensified, for the Baltic, hitherto open to German merchantmen and fishermen, was now closed by the British Navy. The rough fish that had helped to eke out the people's starvation rations ceased altogether. Despite the entreaties of the German delegates — and it should be added of the Commander-in-Chief of the British Army — Article 26 of the Armistice laid it down that all German ships found on the high seas should be sequestered. It was not that men like Foch and Clemenceau were inhuman, but, like the war-worn people they represented, they had long ceased to regard Germans as fellow creatures. The ditch that had divided the peoples of Europe for four years had been dug too deep for bridging.

It was only by degrees that tales of the plight of Germany began to percolate to the Allied countries.

At first they were disbelieved or contemptuously rejected as what the most popular of English dailies described as a " Hun Food Snivel ". The millions who had suffered from the war, and especially those who had lost their loved ones or endured the insolences of rapine and invasion, felt no compunction at the thought that the cruel enemy was at last cringing on his knees. They did not visualise his suffering in terms of hollow-eyed, despairing women and tragic children with vast pulpy heads tubercular bones and shrivelled bodies. They would certainly have acted otherwise had they done so. It is a tantalising reflection to think how much unhappiness and bitterness Europe might have been spared had the peace dictators met not in Paris but in starving Berlin or Vienna or even on the Rhine.

It was in Britain and America to their honour that among the victors men first began to awake to the realisation of what was happening to their former foes. A handful of Anglo-Saxon pioneers, travelling in the *terra incognita* of central Europe on military or political business, were suddenly made aware of the presence of a vast human calamity. For as they gazed out of the train or from the windows of their hotels, they saw a wintry world that bore no resemblance to that which they had left behind — a country of dimmed lights and of shabby, broken-down houses. " The town ", Harold Nicolson wrote in his diary as the train of the Inter-Allied Commission passed through Vienna, " has an unkempt appearance : paper lying about : the grass-plots round the statues are strewn with litter : many

windows broken and repaired by boards nailed up." [1] The people in the streets were like pale ghosts, listless and dejected with sunken yellow cheeks, flat breasts and hollow eyes. If one had the money, it is true, one could stay at luxurious hotels and sit among well-dressed people — rich Jews from Galicia or native profiteers — eating and drinking fabulously expensive food and wine. It was not here that the strangers from afar sensed the breath of famine in the air. There was little actual starvation in the streets, for the Germans are a proud and sensitive people. Emaciated women of the better classes put rouge on their cheeks to hide their unnatural pallor. It was to attics and cellars that lonely want retired to die.

An anonymous visitor to Germany — a Quaker — wrote in that first winter of the peace: "The picture is etched upon my mind. A man emaciated, half clothed, propped up between a perambulator and a tiled stove, feeding the baby he was too weak to lift. He was feeding the baby with a paste made of black bread and cooked in water with the addition of a little lard and salt. That was the only food he had." "The starvation is done quietly and decently at home. And when death comes, it comes in the form of influenza, tuberculosis, heart-failure or one of the new and mysterious diseases caused by the war, and carries off its exhausted victims." [2] One complaint — a griping form of influenza whose victims turned black a few hours after death — was referred to with dread as the plague, though children were forbidden to call

[1] *Peacemaking*, pp. 293-4.

[2] A. Lethbridge, *Germany as it is Today*.

it so. At Frankfurt, even as late as March 1920, the funerals never ceased all day.

It was the testimony of such travellers that provided the first frail bridges for reviving humanity. Vernon Bartlett, tasting his first cup of *Ersatz* coffee at a wayside Bavarian station in the early spring of 1920, was forced to remain behind, clinging vomiting to the platform railings while his train steamed away without him. An earlier pilgrim to what was still popularly called Hunland recorded that the majority of the German people, even in the smart hotels and restaurants, had been reduced to wearing paper clothes. " The girls carefully inspected their dresses to see whether any of the powdering substance from the cakes had fallen upon them. Although they were pretty, and looked well-dressed for all their paper hats and boots, their delicate thin features and the almost wolfish look of hunger in their eyes, seemed to intensify a suppressed desperation. They were the class which must keep up appearances. . . . A group infinitely more pathetic, and one which I can never forget, I encountered in the Zimmerstrasse, presumably on their way to the hospital. They were working women with their babies in their arms. They themselves were pale and worn ; the children looked like figures of white wax. As they were passing, one woman stooped down to pick up a cigar-end. The action gave me a full view of her baby. Its cheeks resembled enamelled glass. The sight of its face was a shock ; the emaciation of its tiny, withered sticks of arms was a thing uncanny to look upon." [1]

[1] Percy Brown, *Germany in Dissolution*, pp. 84-7.

Yet the process of awakening realisation was tragically slow. At the first renewal of the Armistice on December 13th, Germany made a plea — pathetic in the light of her former strength — for leave to import wheat, fats, maize, oats, rice, condensed milk, meat extracts and medical stores. Though renewed German resistance was now out of the question, and though a clause had been appended to the original Armistice terms that "the Allies and the United States contemplate the provisioning of Germany to such an extent as shall be found necessary", the request was rejected. So a month later was a German proposal that in return for the surrender of her merchant marine, which the Allies were demanding, she should be permitted to purchase two and a half million tons of urgently needed foodstuffs to tide her over till the harvest.

Meanwhile the sufferings of the German people grew daily worse. Though more than a quarter of a year had elapsed since the Armistice, not only was the last remaining sea closed to her, but artificial divisions created by the new military frontiers were creating havoc with the ordinary economic life of her people. On March 1st, the *Manchester Guardian* — always to the fore in discovering and exposing suffering — published an article from a special correspondent in Düsseldorf where an appalling increase in infant mortality had occurred owing to the French stoppage of the city's normal milk supply from the farmlands on the opposite bank of the Rhine. Three days later the same paper published a manifesto by the German Republican Government at Weimar :

We cannot feed ourselves from our own supplies till next harvest. The blockade is eating away the vitals of our people. Thousands are perishing daily from malnutrition.

Similar voices, inspired by tales of suffering brought home by explorers, now began to be heard in the House of Commons. A Conservative backbencher, Lord Henry Bentinck, declared that the whole of Europe east of the Rhine was in danger of starvation and that the terrible thing was that Britain, by maintaining its blockade, was chiefly responsible for it. " No attempt ", he said, " has been made by any English public man to justify this cruel and wicked proceeding, no doubt because no man felt equal to the task." The Secretary of State for War, Mr. Winston Churchill, plainly did not, for he expressed his opinion that the sooner we put an end to the blockade which was destroying women and children and sick people in Germany, the better it would be for ourselves and the world — an opinion which was warmly endorsed by Mr Bonar Law, the Tory leader. A few days later the National Council of the Independent Labour Party passed a resolution calling for the immediate raising of the blockade so that the starving nations of Europe could be given a chance to feed themselves and begin the urgent work of economic reconstruction.

Yet all this made only a slow and gradual impression on a House of Commons largely composed of " hard-faced men who looked as if they had done very well out of the war " and who had been returned to Parliament in support of the policy of squeezing the lemon till the pips squeaked. Nor did it rouse any

echo in the bulk of the people, who were preoccupied in licking the wounds of four years' warfare and returning as quickly as possible to their own long-neglected affairs. The ordinary Briton was not unnaturally fed up with the Continent and did not want to be reminded of it. His favourite newspapers were quick to note his mood. Anger against the Hun was succeeded by indifference. And the Prime Minister, though with his quick Welsh prescience well aware of what ailed Europe, was peculiarly sensitive to the atmosphere of those from whom he derived support. He did nothing.

It was the British fighting men on the Rhine who first drew the serious attention of the Government to the inhumanity of its policy. On March 10th a Reuter's report appeared in the press that Mr. Lloyd George had received a strongly worded telegram from Lord Plumer, the British General commanding on the Rhine, urging that food should be immediately supplied to the suffering population on whom his troops were billeted. They were unable, he said, to endure the spectacle of starving children. Soon afterwards stories began to be published of British officers who had told correspondents that they had not fought for four years in order to watch German children dying of hunger six months after the war was over. Such stories were perhaps exaggerated, but there was no doubt that the feeling of the Army was too strong to be ignored. Unlike the civilians at home, the Tommies at Cologne did not need to rely on their imagination to picture the reality of hunger. They saw it with their own eyes and were compelled to live with those who suffered it.

It was this intervention of the British soldier that procured the first real mitigation of the blockade. On March 16th Germany, unable to resist any longer, agreed to hand over her merchant fleet. The second greatest exporting nation in Europe delivered to her conquerors thirty-two million tons of shipping including every vessel of more than 1600 tons. In return she was allowed to make monthly purchases up to a maximum of 300,000 tons of cereals and 70,000 tons of fat, including pork, vegetable oil and condensed milk. Even this fell short of the country's minimum requirements. It was not till May that anything like substantial imports entered Germany. The blockade itself continued till the middle of July.

Looking back on it from a calmer and less war-racked age, all this may one day appear hard to justify. At the time it seemed not only explicable but inevitable. Only a year before the Germans had been on the point of victory, and the British Army, rallied by Haig's famous order, was fighting with its back to the wall. The chief factor in the salutary and amazing transformation that had followed had been the withholding power of the British Navy. Now that the victors' armies were melting away under the popular clamour for demobilisation, it seemed unwise to cautious minds to discard that one decisive weapon until the future peace of mankind had been secured by a strong peace. "We have all demobilised so quickly", wrote an English diplomat in his diary in March 1919, "that we cannot enforce our terms except by the blockade which is hell." [1] An exceptional

[1] H. Nicolson, *Peacemaking*, p. 287.

and generous spirit like Winston Churchill wanted on Armistice Day to send six food ships to Hamburg. Most people, after four years of peril, strain and hardship, were in a more prosaic mood. They played for what, to their humdrum, unimaginative minds, seemed safety. There can be little doubt that, had the position been reversed, their enemies would have done the same or worse.

From all this followed tragic consequences of which we have still not reached the end. There can be very few over the age of 25 in Germany today who have not suffered the pangs of prolonged hunger and been taught to attribute those pangs to the inhumanity of other countries. For nine years, six of which were after the war, the bulk of the German people suffered profoundly — physically, morally and spiritually. Nearly a year after the Armistice a little German girl could ask her mother if it were true that there were countries in the world where there was no war and where people could eat all they wanted. In 1920 the Mayor of Essen reported that of 75,000 school children at least 25,000 had not even the most necessary clothing. A member of the Hoover Mission to the schools of the Erzgebirge in the previous year described children of seven or eight years with tiny faces, huge, puffed, rickety foreheads and swollen, pointed stomachs hanging over crooked, match-like legs.

Few elements in the German nation except the very basest escaped that prolonged and useless martyrdom. " When one realises ", wrote an English visitor in 1919, " that the old man shuffling along the street, trying to look respectable, with ragged

trousers, dirty shirt, forlorn-looking hat and down-at-heels boots, with a face drawn and emaciated with want, has a world-wide reputation as a professor of Oriental languages, then it is that one's gorge rises and one feels inclined to curse the waste of modern so-called civilisation. Yet such a sight is quite common in Frankfurt-am-Main." [1] Such cases were innumerable — a famous scientist absolutely destitute and living on a charitable depôt; a journalist with a young wife and six children all habitually hungry; a formerly flourishing artist expelled with his family from Alsace by the French without a sou. The punishment accorded by the Western democracies for the Kaiser's crimes was inflicted without respect of persons almost on every living creature of German race. According to the testimony of Winston Churchill, even the members of the German Delegation at Versailles in May 1919 were suffering from the effects of want of proper food.

An example may be taken of a young German who was twelve years old when the war broke out. His father, grandfather and great-grandfather were all musicians in a quiet provincial city. He was no more guilty of the war or the invasion of Belgium than an English boy of the same age. Yet for six years after the war he was punished for it without cessation. Before the war his father had saved up a few thousand marks to secure his two sons university education. Thanks to the economic clauses of the Peace Treaty, the value of the money depreciated so rapidly that it did not suffice for a single term The father, who was himself hungry, then sold his

[1] A. Lethbridge, *Germany as it is Today*, p. 160.

17th-century violin — his greatest treasure — for 20,000 marks. But that also quickly evaporated with the plunging course of post-war depreciation. The lad was forced to rely entirely on his own resources. With Teuton persistence he stuck to his studies, paying for them with the earnings of manual labour on the land and roads, a little tuition and casual journalism. In the meantime he lived on scraps — a haggard, jaundiced skeleton of a young man. For months his sole source of dietary was an evening meal of oats, doled out to him weekly in a small bag by a neighbouring grocer in return for teaching his son English.

At another time he and the fellow student with whom he shared an attic acquired a windfall of bullet-like green peas. For twenty-four hours they cooked these treasures in their cooking-box — a wooden box lined with wool and packed with straw to keep in the heat and so save coal or gas — only to find them as hard as ever. And when, after a further twenty-four hours in the cooking-box, they took them out again, the peas, though soft at last, had gone bad.

Had it not been for assistance from abroad, this young German must have starved. A kind cousin in Switzerland sent him dry chestnuts, which he used to soak in water and eat raw; she has since become his wife, and I can recall his saying with emotion that he was still trying, after fifteen years, to repay the debt of those monthly parcels. When all other resources were at an end, a Dutch scholarship of 60 guilders enabled him to pay his fees and feed himself while he was completing the last six months of his university studies and writing his

doctor's thesis. By changing 2½ guilders a week he was just able to keep abreast with galloping inflation and win through. Then with his diploma in his pocket, he left Germany, a penniless emigrant, to seek his fortune in some other land where young men were given leave to live. It was not the Kaiser who starved for seven years on bad peas and gruel.

The lot of this young man was that of innumerable poor students upon whom depended the future of Germany. From them — the picked representatives of a nation's youth — the professional leaders of the Germany of the future were to be drawn. Here, starving in fireless garrets, paying their fees out of their meagre earnings and struggling to keep pace from day to day with the declining mark, were the journalists, doctors, scientists and politicians of the coming age. What sort of impressions of the justice, generosity and even common humanity of the powerful Western democracies could such men carry away from their lean student years? And what kind of strain was placed on their nerves and their future emotional and intellectual balance as they tested overwrought brains and starved bodies against realities so harsh and unbending?

As for the poor — the vast bulk of the defeated German people — they were deprived for years of everything that could sweeten life. Whole families were crowded into a single room bare of all furniture save perhaps a couple of broken chairs and a bare table. Everything else had long ago gone to the pawnshop. In 1919, when the minimum weekly subsistence level was calculated at 330 marks, 77 per cent of the population of Berlin were receiving an average

wage of 162 marks a week, of which 10 per cent had to be paid in indemnity tax to the victorious Allies. It was small wonder that fifteen years later, when Communism had ceased to make an appeal to the German urban worker, the feeling of hatred against the victors of Versailles survived — a potent and terrible force in the hands of the new chauvinist.

Most hardly of all could the women-folk of Germany forgive the prolonged agony of their own and their children's starvation which no principle could explain or justify to them. To them the continued blockade was unintelligible. Even during the war they had been unable to view it as anything but cruel and barbarous. They regarded it just as English folk did the drowning of their own defenceless non-combatants by submarines. They did so with even greater feeling, because the effects of the blockade injured not merely a few travellers but themselves and everyone around them. An American visitor to Berlin in 1916 was assailed by women asking why the United States Government did not intervene to prevent the British Navy's breaches of international law and of the Hague and London Conventions. For years the blockade was the dominant obsession of the entire German people. It was in the hope of defeating it and saving the wastage of its civilian population that Germany resorted to the desperate and terrible expedient of unrestricted submarine warfare and so brought America into the alliance against her.[1] It

[1] In a statement to the same American journalist, Count Czernin pleaded that Germany was forced to use the submarine to shorten the war. "There is such a thing as being victorious at the front and defeated at home. The food situation here is most pressing. Our people are half starved all the time. Babies perish by the thousands

was despair of ending it in any other way that caused her, eighteen months later, to submit to the terms of the Armistice.

It was when the hated blockade still continued after these had been accepted that the indignation of the German people against Britain became something deeper and more permanent than wartime hysteria. Eighteen years after, a member of the Allies' Military Mission of Control which took up residence in Germany at the beginning of 1920, recalled how painful it was, in view of the widespread evidence of real distress, to be asked, "Why did England go on starving our women and children long after the Armistice?" "Very few people in England", he wrote, "have ever realised how great the distress was. It was such an un-English action that one simply had no answer. It made one ashamed, but it was impossible to reply — what one could not feel was true — 'Because we were still afraid of you'."

However deplorable and terrible in their results present German methods, however evil to free minds their form of government and loathsome their brutality towards the weak, it is necessary, if one would understand their psychology, to remember what Germans can never forget. It is because so few of our own people — even our statesmen — seem conscious of it that I have tried to retell the mournful story of it here. It explains why the German people found it so hard to understand the

because we cannot give them enough milk. Unless this war comes to an end soon, the effects of this chronic food shortage will impair the health of the entire nation. We must try to prevent that. It is our duty to prevent that by all means."

sincerity of even the most obviously honest British protestations of humanity and goodwill towards them. It explains more. For the long years of hunger left their impress not only on the memory of those who suffered, but on the nervous organism of millions of Germans. A whole generation grew up in an epoch of under-nourishment and misery such as we have never in this country experienced. It was a return to a state which Germany had known once before in her tragic history, when more than two-thirds of her people perished from the privations of the Thirty Years War. It makes intelligible much that is otherwise unaccountable in Nazi Germany — the hysteria, the emotionalism and the lack of proportion. One cannot render a whole nation physically, mentally and morally prostrate for years without its producing a dangerous effect. "Starvation which brings to some lethargy and a helpless despair, drives other temperaments to the nervous instability of hysteria and to a mad despair." [1]

"*Tout comprendre c'est tout pardonner*" is a wise saying of the most civilised people on earth. It may not sometimes be easy to pardon but it is more than necessary to understand.

Blockade or siege culminating in starvation has always been held a legitimate exercise of war. It has been used against every besieged town since the trade of soldiering began. We have often experienced its effects in our own wars — fought, happily for ourselves, far from Britain's white cliffs. At Gibraltar, Cawnpore, Lucknow, Ladysmith and Mafeking the courage and endurance of our men and womenfolk

[1] *Economic Consequences of the Peace*, p. 213.

was tested not only by the enemy's guns but by the grip of hunger in a far more intense form than that known by the German people in their long-drawn-out trial. The Germans themselves used the same weapon with such devastating effect against Paris in the winter of 1870–71 that even the flesh of rats fetched a king's ransom in the encircled city. It was during that siege that the Germans achieved the union of their country, founding the "second" Reich of blood and iron on the agony of a starving capital. Their defeat by the same terrible instrument half a century later was a kind of Nemesis.

So long as ordeal by battle continues to be the ultimate method of resolving disputes between nations, starvation blockade will remain, as it has always been, a weapon of war. Like every other weapon its capacity to inflict destruction has increased out of all measure with the advance of the scientific and mechanical means of enabling man to magnify his activities. Where once it slew its thousands, it can now in its universal application take its toll of millions. It leaves behind it psychological reactions that endure long afterwards and sow in human hearts the seeds of other wars and other agonies for the suffering race of man.

CHAPTER 2

THE POUND OF FLESH

"When we've wound up the watch on the Rhine,
O Keir Hardie no doubt will repine!
You and I
'Hurrah!' we'll cry,
'Everything will be Potsdam fine!'"

British marching song, 1914

IN the forest of Compiègne, a few miles from the gracious old town of that name, stands the memorial that commemorates the defeat of Germany.

Ici le 11 Novembre 1918 succombra le criminel orgeuil de l'empire Allemand, vaincu par les peuples libres qu'il prétendait asservir.

The war was over. Of seventy million mothers' sons who had fought each other in every corner of the earth, ten millions lay where they had fallen, hastily buried beneath the shell-scarred soil:

Grim clusters under thorny trellises
Dry farthest foam upon disastrous shores,
Leaves that made last year beautiful
Still strewn even as they fell.

After fifty-one nightmare months the menace of German militarism had been destroyed.

For Frenchmen it seemed as though a miracle had happened. Her giant neighbour had been struck down at the very moment when she seemed to have

become irresistible. Brutal pride and arrogance had met their desert. After four invasions of French soil in just over a century, Germany, for all her growing numbers, her efficiency and tradition of invincibility, was suing for mercy. When the fateful telegram arrived, old Clemenceau, who had seen the Palais of St. Cloud burning during the siege of Paris forty-seven years before, burst into a paean of exultant vengeance : " Enfin ! Il est arrivé, ce jour que j'attends depuis un demi-siècle ! Il est arrivé, le jour de la revanche ! Nous leur reprendrons l'Alsace et la Lorraine, nous rétablirons la Pologne, nous forcerons les Boches à nous payer dix, vingt, cinquante milliards. Est-ce assez ? Non, nous leur fouterons la République." [1]

It is easy to picture the fierce old Tiger, who had fought so hard for victory, crying aloud in his triumph that his hour had come. He spoke not for himself alone but for the France he represented. It is still easier, remembering all that that great and hard-tried land had suffered, to sympathise. In two generations she had seen the population of her eastern neighbour almost double, and its economic and military power multiply fourfold. She had seen her ancient leadership of Europe torn from her by those whom she regarded as still barbaric. And for four terrible years her beloved soil and hallowed cities had undergone ruin and devastation indescribable. Now that Germany has shown once more how fearful a menace it can be in its discipline, its iron resolve and its ruthless ferocity, one readily comprehends what every Frenchman felt.

[1] Prince von Bülow, *Memoirs 1909–19*, p. 292.

But in November 1918, Germany was no longer strong. Her women and children were starving and her people, their spirit broken by the blockade, were in the throes of revolution. Her allies, beaten to their knees, had failed her. Her own armies, though they still retained much of their ancient discipline and courage, were in retreat under such a hail of steel as the world had never before known. Now, at the eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month, they had surrendered.

Two years before, at the end of 1916, with a sixth of France, almost the whole of Belgium, Serbia and Romania and four conquered capitals in their hands, the Central Powers had made the first peace overtures. It was to have been a pacification based on the *status quo* of 1914, together with the return of Alsace-Lorraine to France. But it was not taken seriously either by the German militarists who hoped to retain strategic advantages in Belgium and Flanders, or by the Allies whom nothing but an overwhelming victory could any longer satisfy. The people of central Europe were as yet only half starving, Russia had not collapsed, France and Britain, despite a loss of more than a million men at Verdun and on the Somme, were resolved to secure for ever those who came after from a recurrence of the German menace.

But in the winter of 1917–18, despite America's entry into the war, the military situation of the Allies had changed for the worse. Russia and Romania were driven to a separate peace, Italy's effort frozen in its tracks by the defeat of Caporetto, and the French and British armies temporarily exhausted by

their costly offensives on the Chemin des Dames and at Passchendaele. With a million men released from the eastern front, Germany for the first time since 1914 found herself in a commanding position in the west. In the opening months of 1918, as her people grew daily more hungry, she prepared to strike a decisive blow before the arrival of America's legions.

It was with the issue still in the gravest doubt that in January 1918, President Wilson in an Address to Congress laid down his famous Fourteen Points for peace. They were not vindictive. They included the restoration of all invaded territory, a "free, open-minded and absolutely impartial adjustment of all colonial claims", the "righting of the wrong done to France by Prussia in 1871 in the matter of Alsace-Lorraine", and the restoration of a free Poland with access to the sea. Equal and unrestricted trade was to be sought for all consenting nations. Guarantees were to be given and taken that armaments should be "reduced to the lowest point consistent with domestic safety". They were to apply to the victors as well as to the vanquished.

A month later, just before the start of the German offensive, the President made a further declaration: "There shall be no annexations, no contributions, no punitive damages. . . . Self-determination is not a mere phrase. It is an imperative principle of action which statesmen will henceforth ignore at their peril. . . . Every territorial settlement involved in this war must be made in the interest and for the benefit of the populations concerned, and not as a part of any mere adjustment or compromise of claims

amongst rival States." It was the reaffirmation of the great principle enshrined in the Declaration of Independence — the ideal of " governments deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed."

There the matter rested during the summer months while the battle was fought out in northern France. In August the tide turned in favour of the Allies. By the end of September, shaken though still not broken, the rulers of Germany were desperate. A few days before President Wilson had made it clear that his earlier peace conditions remained unchanged: " the impartial justice meted out ", he announced, " must involve no discrimination between those to whom we wish to be just and those to whom we do not wish to be just ". Under the circumstances the declaration was most magnanimous.

On October 3rd the German Chancellor sent a note to the President asking for immediate negotiations on these lines. In reply the President requested a categorical acceptance of all the conditions laid down in his Fourteen Points and subsequent Addresses. This the German Government gave on October 12th, adding that " its object in entering into discussions would be only to agree upon practical details of the application of these terms ". After further exchanges, which included a proviso that the details of the preliminary armistice must be left to the sole discretion of the military advisers of France and Britain, the President on October 23rd approached his Allies. Should they be " disposed to effect peace upon the terms and principles indicated ", they were to draw up such Armistice proposals as would " ensure to the Associated Governments the unrestricted

power to safeguard and enforce the details of the peace to which the German Government has agreed ".

To this proposal, the Allies, whose armies after their long crucifixion were now everywhere on the advance, agreed subject to two qualifications. They reserved their right to their own interpretation of the " Freedom of the Seas " — a purely British condition — and added that in the restoration of occupied territory they must include full compensation for damage done to the civilian population and its property. This was communicated to Germany who, now at her last gasp, appointed plenipotentiaries to treat for an armistice. On Friday, November 8th, they crossed the lines and were coldly received in the saloon of Marshal Foch's train by the representatives of the Allied Supreme Command.

The armistice terms asked of them were such as to place Germany at the absolute mercy of the Allies by land, sea and air. They included the handing over of 5000 guns, 30,000 machine guns and 2000 aeroplanes, the surrender of the entire German battle fleet, the delivery in working order of 5000 engines, 150,000 railway trucks and 5000 motor lorries, and a retreat to the Rhine so rapid as to mean the virtual dissolution of the German Army.

These crushing conditions were accepted. It is hard to see how they could have been refused. For already Germany, strained beyond endurance by the blockade and overwhelmed by defeats on every front, was in open revolution. The fleet had mutinied, the Kaiser had abdicated and fled into Holland, a Social Democratic republic had been proclaimed and Workmen and Soldiers' Councils on the Russian model

spontaneously set up in regiments and factories. It has since been contended by German protagonists that their armies could have retreated under arms to the Rhine and there reformed on a shorter front to continue the war into 1919. If this is true, it seems a pity that they did not do so. For by this means the victors would have been brought face to face with the misery prevailing in central Europe and the vanquished been made aware of the magnitude of the disaster that had befallen their vaunted military machine. But the representatives of the German High Command did not appear to consider further resistance practicable, for, after a brief but fruitless argument with their conquerors,[1] they accepted terms as humiliating as any offered to a defeated army in the modern annals.

Yet the truth remains that, for all her unexpected collapse, Germany had sued for peace on the basis of President Wilson's Fourteen Points, and on these, subject to the Allies' two provisos, peace had been promised her. As certain of these terms were subsequently not honoured, she has since been able to contend that she was tricked into the armistice. The fact — ignored by modern German propagandists — that between the first peace overtures and the final surrender the military situation had been transformed by a complete breakdown of the Central Powers rendering them utterly defenceless, cannot wholly absolve the Allied statesmen from the blame of having failed to keep their promise. Nor does the certainty

[1] "I ended my speech with the words: 'A people of 70 millions suffers, but does not die', to which Marshal Foch replied: 'Très bien'." (Max Erzberger, *Erlebnisse im Weltkrieg*.)

that, had Germany won, the Allies could have looked for no such magnanimous terms as were offered and partly afforded by the Fourteen Points.

But the Germans are wrong in supposing that there was any deliberate intention at the time to deceive them. On the day after the Armistice, Mr. Lloyd George declared that his country did not intend to take a yard of German soil. "No settlement", he said, "which contravenes the principles of eternal justice will be a permanent one. Let us be warned by the example of 1871. We must not allow any spirit of greed, any grasping desire, to override the fundamental principle of righteousness." There is no doubt that he meant what he said.

Yet what a democratic statesman intends and what he does are often different matters. For he is not his own master. Unlike the aristocrats who negotiated the more clement and enduring peace of 1815, Mr. Lloyd George and his colleagues were subject to superior powers.

It was not long before those powers made themselves heard. Two weeks after the Armistice the Coalition Government, which had hitherto lacked electoral sanction, went to the country to obtain a mandate for its continued existence. For the first time a British election was held on a basis of manhood suffrage. By the Representation of the People Act of 1918, which was founded on the proposition that if an uneducated man was fit to fight for his country he was fit to vote for it, the franchise was more than doubled. Four million men and nine million women were given the vote for the first time.

It cannot be said that they made a very good use

of it. For, urged by a cheap popular press and the untutored feelings of the hour, they proceeded to vote for precisely the kind of peace against which the Prime Minister had warned them. They gave their representatives a mandate to hang the Kaiser, ruin the enemy's trade and empty his pockets. "It is not our business", wrote the *Daily Mail*, "to ask what Germany will think of the terms. Our duty is to dictate such terms as shall give a material guarantee for security, and let the Hun think what he likes about them." It did not seem to occur to the *Daily Mail*, and it certainly did not to the man in the street who had never read the Fourteen Points and had forgotten them if he had, that "the Hun" had surrendered on the understanding that he was to be accorded certain conditions. Those conditions had been promised by the representatives of democracy. Democracy now chose to ignore them and to instruct its representatives to act as though they had not been made.

Those who were the ministers of King Demos did not dare to question his divine right to go back on his word. Before the end of the month that had begun with victory and high protestations, Mr. Lloyd George was talking of "a relentlessly just peace" and "terms not of vengeance but of prevention". On December 12th, in a speech at Bristol, he declared that "the loser pays". One of his lieutenants, going one better in the heat of the hustings, announced that he would "squeeze the lemon until the pips squeaked". Twenty years later some of those who cheered that flamboyant utterance listened over the wireless to the brutal roar of Hitler's answering

oratory and the shouts of a defeated people demanding vengeance. The wish of that dazed Christmastide of 1918 had been granted. The pips were squeaking. To complain that the sound bore little resemblance to the rational intercourse of Christian gentlemen is beside the point.

It is as foolish to blame the British electorate in the light of after events. The historian who wishes to be just must put himself in the position of those who voted, and in the mood of that hour. The common people of Britain, into whose hands absolute power had been suddenly and momentarily thrust, had just relaxed after more than four years of desperate and unrelenting struggle. They had made vast sacrifices, suffered terrible losses and supped so long on horrors that they had grown indifferent to tales of misery and injustice. For many months they had been subjected to an unceasing propaganda which inevitably accentuated and magnified every harsh and unworthy German act and concealed and misrepresented anything that might have been extenuating in the German case. They had been taught to believe that all Germans were unspeakable barbarians who murdered, robbed and raped those whom they conquered, maltreated their prisoners and, amid Satanic laughter, drowned defenceless women and children. Those who believed these tales, and were now called upon to signify the kind of peace they wanted, were for the most part working men and women with little education and little time for serious reading or reflection.

Suddenly the tension of war ended. Their strained nerves, taut for a single purpose, relaxed. They

suffered, as was only natural, a profound reaction. And at that moment of all moments was put into their hands an absolute power over those whom they had been taught for years to regard as the authors of all their losses and sufferings. "The brave people whom nothing had daunted", wrote Mr. Winston Churchill, "had suffered too much. Their unpent feelings were lashed by the popular press to fury. The crippled and mutilated soldiers darkened the streets. The returned prisoners told the hard tale of bonds and privation. Every cottage had its empty chair. Hatred of the beaten foe, thirst for his just punishment, rushed up from the heart of deeply injured millions."[1] Is it to be wondered at that they blundered momentarily? Can one believe that any other people in like circumstances would have acted with greater foresight or magnanimity or with even as much? The wonder is not that they voted as they did, but that having done so, they recovered so quickly from the bitterness of the hour.

So it came to pass that the common people of Britain, whose leaders had not learnt the necessary art of giving them leadership in wisdom, temporarily forgot the cause for which their dead had died. They were not aware that they were doing so, and they would have recoiled in horror from the idea had they been told. There were men in authority, including Mr. Lloyd George, who could have made them understand, had they known how or had the moral courage to do so. But the new system of unrestricted democracy was in its infancy, and those who controlled it found it easier to be

[1] *World Crisis*, v. pp. 41-2.

demagogues than true leaders. They allowed themselves to be swept away by the tide. It was in due time to carry them and the world to the tragic shore we now inhabit.

As for the soldiers, who, unlike the civilians at home, had never nourished hatred for their companions in misfortune on the other side of No-man's-land, they accepted the situation with indifference. A minority of them went forward to the Rhine where, in daily contact with hungry Germans, they reacted according to their natural disposition as Englishmen against the inhumanity of a vindictive peace. The vast majority returned home as fast as they could to don civilian clothes, find jobs and forget the war. They were quickly submerged in the civilian population around them. They and the dead comrades they had left behind had won the war. They were not called upon to make the peace.

The other victorious democracies were no wiser. The French could naturally think of nothing but their own losses, their devastated towns and wasted fields, and the humiliations of those who had suffered the brutal arrogance of an invading conqueror. They wanted two things — revenge and security. In the exhausted and disillusioned mood of the moment, they supposed that the second could only be found in the first. A frugal and deeply wronged people tightened its lips as it surveyed the prostrate form of the hated Boche and resolved to make good its wasted savings out of his pockets. Nobody who had experienced the haunted horror of the battlefields or had seen the twisted, crazed ruins that had once been the cities and villages of France can blame them.

Italy, though her contribution to victory until the eleventh hour had been of a somewhat negative kind, was in a like mood. It was her national tradition to hate the Teuton — the trans-Alpine Goth who had oppressed her for two centuries — and after three years of not very happy warfare she saw no reason to abandon it now. The dazzling prize of Italia Irredenta — the Liberal dream of a century — floated before her eyes. As a price for her abandonment of her pre-war allies, she had been promised much in 1915. The hour for cashing in had come. It was unlikely to come again. It was to her interest to grasp all she could get.

As for the great democracy of the West, for all her Professor-President's high-sounding moral platitudes, the future of Europe entered very little into her practical calculations. She is scarcely to be blamed for this, for in doing so she was merely being true to herself. Her intervention in the war had been a disturbing departure from her traditional policy of isolation. As its inconveniences became felt, an increasing number of her citizens began to think it had been a mistake. It was now over, and the sooner America could extricate herself from the witches' cauldron and leave the effete and dying nations of Europe to stew in their own juice, the better. The only thing about them that really concerned her was that they should pay for the munitions they had bought and, since they obviously could not do so in a single sum, that they should pay a good rate of interest on the principal until it was redeemed.

All this, of course, is putting the lowest interpretation on the post-war mentality of the victorious demo-

cracies. To do so is unfair to the individual citizen whose standard in his dealings with his own neighbours is far higher. Yet in its disputes with other nations, the behaviour of a democracy is apt to be that of the lowest denominator. People keep their reasonableness, their forbearance and Christian goodwill and charity for their personal relationships. When it comes to rights and claims against foreigners with whom their country has a quarrel they tend to believe what they are told by the more blustering kind of publicist and to regard the tolerance and good sense of everyday life as unpatriotic weaknesses. It is an inevitable price that has to be paid for the advantages of a free system.

There is certainly no reason to suppose that, had the situation been different, a less vindictive peace would have been granted a defeated West by authoritarian Germany. From what we have seen of the arrogant greed of the German military mind in the hour of its triumph, we can guess that it would have been a far more cruel one. On grounds of reason and common sense the Nazis have some right to criticise the Treaty of Versailles. By their own standards of morality they have none. The Treaty of Brest-Litovsk is often rightly cited to indicate the kind of terms that would have been imposed on the Allies had the Guards not stood firm at Hazebrouck or the French broken at Château-Thierry or the submarines beaten Jellicoe's convoys. In March 1918 the Soviet rulers of a defeatist Russia had yielded at the dictation of the German war-lords a third of her European territory, a quarter of her population and three-quarters of her coal and ironfields. Yet to be fair one must

remember that the changes effected by the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk were not made in breach of a promise. Nor were they so unjust as to provoke future wars. They were subsequently accepted in large part by the Allies and embodied in their own peace settlement. Though the Ukraine fell again to the Bolshevist armies, Poland, Finland, Esthonia, Latvia and Lithuania, which first received their long-lost independence at the hands of Germany, were not re-subjected to the rule of Russia. The frontiers drafted at Brest-Litovsk, however evil in intention, remained as part of the map of Europe.[1]

The truth is that there were few in the strained world of 1918 who were in a mood to be forbearing towards those who had injured them or to take a longer view than that dictated by their own immediate and damaged interests. Men and women had suffered too much to forgive readily. The destruction and wastage of prolonged scientific warfare had temporarily soured human nature. A hundred years before, when England had been in the throes of a twenty-two years life-and-death struggle with France, Jane Austen, in her pictures of contemporary social life, scarcely mentioned the war, and then only so far as the opportunities of prize money improved the matrimonial assets of her heroines' naval friends.

No such detachment was possible during the war

[1] In condemning that unpitying treaty Ludendorff's words must also be remembered, that it was negotiated with Bolsheviks "whose propaganda made a chronic state of warfare inevitable" — a claim supported by no less an authority than Trotsky, who told his countrymen at the time that the treaties did not matter as world revolution was inevitable anyhow.

of 1914–18. The feelings aroused by vast casualty lists, by the bombing of habited cities and the use of gas and submarine warfare, were so intense that the making of any real peace between the peoples while such memories were still fresh was almost impossible. When it came it was a peace not of conciliation but of exhaustion. It is arguable whether it was a peace at all, and whether in their hearts the belligerent nations did not remain at war until the guns opened fire again in 1939. And that not love nor reason, but only a fear of further horror and destruction prevented them from taking up arms sooner.

Thus it came about that, when the Allied statesmen assembled at Paris in January 1919, they were confronted with an insoluble dilemma. On the one hand they had promised their defeated enemy, through President Wilson, to negotiate a peace based on the wise and conciliatory principles of the Fourteen Points. On the other they were the responsible servants of injured and angry democracies which cared nothing for the Fourteen Points and were resolved to have their pound of flesh. And the place to which they had come to do their peacemaking was the capital of the nation which above all others had most cause to think of vengeance. Paris, which had suffered bombardment and had twice been in danger of capture, naturally thought of little else.

But one at least of the peace delegates seemed at first superior to such considerations. President Wilson, ignoring alike opinion in his own country and the miasma of hate that hung like mist over the

abandoned battlefields of the old world, had his imaginative being

> Above the smoke and stir of this dim spot
> Which men call earth.

He represented, in his own view, not the political factions of the hour, but the eternal verities and the Common People all the world over who could not speak for themselves. "The 'dumb eyes of the people'", Harold Nicolson has written, "haunted him with their mute, their personal appeal. He felt that those myriad eyes looked up to him as a prophet arisen in the West; as to a man chosen by God to give to the whole world a new message and a more righteous order. . . . He believed, as did Marat, that he was the physical embodiment of 'la volonté générale'."[1]

Others did not share President Wilson's view of himself and the sanctity of his mission. Nor did he possess the talents with which to carry out his conceptions. He had no detailed plan, no elasticity in council, no agility of mind and little understanding of the mentality and feelings of others. "He was not only insensitive to his surroundings in the external sense", wrote another eye-witness; "he was not sensitive to his environment at all. . . . To see the British Prime Minister watching the company, with six or seven senses not available to ordinary men, judging character, motive and subconscious impulse, perceiving what each was thinking and even what each was going to say next, and compounding with telepathic instinct the argument or appeal best suited

[1] *Peacemaking*, p. 53.

to the vanity, weakness or self-interest of his immediate auditor, was to realise that the poor President would be playing blind-man's-buff in that party." [1]

It was not the American President who provided the tune to which the Conference danced, but the seventy-eight-year-old Premier of France, Georges Clemenceau. In his black skull-cap, his square-cut coat of honest broadcloth and his grey suede gloves, the implacable old radical patriot presided over the Conference and dominated the Council of Four. The dilemma which confronted his companions mattered little to him. He was the most single-minded of the peacemakers, for, like the angry and resentful France he represented, he did not wish to make peace at all. He cared nothing for the Fourteen Points which in private he contemptuously nicknamed the Fourteen Commandments.[2] He believed that nothing mattered in European politics but the safety of France, and that there was no way of dealing with Germany save by force and intimidation. "La guerre est finie", was a saying of his, "la guerre continue!" Like a tiger he prepared to fasten on the wounded body of his country's hereditary foe.

Before he could do so, however, there was a game — a farce it seemed to the French Prime Minister — to be played out. For the tiresome American President, with his finely cut head, his solemn face and awful toothy smile, his awkward body and his magnificent sentiments, even if he represented nothing else, stood for an almost universal European aspiration.

[1] J. M. Keynes, *Economic Consequences of the Peace*, pp. 37-8.

[2] "Quatorze commandements! C'est un peu raide! Le bon Dieu n'en avait que dix!"

Armed for the moment with the still unwasted might of the New World, he was the self-chosen delegate of the Old World's fondest hope. He carried with him a mandate for a League of Nations — for an international order that should transcend the power politics of the past and banish for ever the nightmare of war. It was a mandate in which he profoundly believed. Beside it, as 1919 succeeded to 1918, the settlement of the defeated enemy and even the Fourteen Points seemed of diminishing importance. For the foundation of the League would ultimately solve all problems and establish the reign of justice on earth.

The President was not alone in his belief. Long before the peace, men all over the world had set their hopes for the future of mankind on it. Even in militarist Germany, at one of the most critical moments of the war, a Foreign Office official could find time to write to Prince von Bülow: "We are engaged in drawing up suggestions for the League of Nations which will, it is hoped, be the best result of this war". It struck the old ex-Chancellor as a curious activity for a German at such a moment. Looking back on all that has happened since, it may to us seem an even stranger one.

President Wilson held that the settlement of the League's constitution should take precedence over the peace treaties. When his colleagues demurred and, to side-track the matter, suggested a Commission, he put himself on it. Having to return temporarily to America in the middle of February, he drove the Commission forward at such speed that the draft Covenant of the League was ready for presenta-

tion to the Conference before he sailed. Lesser matters such as peace, the revictualling of starving central Europe and the delimitation of the broken and anarchic frontiers, had to wait. To the President's austere mind it seemed better that millions should hunger or live in harrowing uncertainty than that there should be any delay in completing the Covenant on which the future of mankind depended.

There were many others who had set their hopes on the League and who subsequently accepted the gross imperfections of the peace treaties in the belief that when passions had calmed the Covenant would provide a means of peaceful revision. "There are territorial settlements", General Smuts wrote when he signed the Treaty, "which will need revision. There are guarantees laid down which we all hope will soon be found out of harmony with the new peaceful temper and unarmed state of our former enemies. There are punishments foreshadowed over most of which a calmer mood may yet prefer to pass the sponge of oblivion. There are indemnities stipulated which cannot be enacted without grave injury to the industrial revival of Europe, and which it will be in the interests of all to render more tolerable and moderate. . . . I am confident that the League of Nations will yet prove the path of escape for Europe out of the ruin brought about by this war."

Unhappily, as the future was to show, this was just what the League failed to be. For by a fatal error — due perhaps to the President's insistence on haste — the Covenant made no practical provision for changing those treaties with which it subsequently became linked. The lawyers who drafted it

showed so little understanding of human nature and history, or were so much in the counsels of Clemenceau, that they left no adequate loophole for revision. While they stigmatised war and prescribed pious formalities for its avoiding, they offered no alternative.

"The assembly", ran Article 19, "may from time to time advise the reconsideration by Members of the League of Treaties which have become inapplicable, and the consideration of international conditions whose continuance might endanger the peace of the world". Yet the entire worth of this clause — the one remaining hope for the future once the Peace Treaties were signed — was rendered nugatory by an earlier clause in Article 5: "Except where otherwise expressly provided in this Covenant or by the terms of the present Treaty, decisions at any meeting of the Assembly or of the Council shall require the agreement of all the Members of the League represented at the meeting". The purpose of this was to preserve the sovereign rights of every contracting State. In practice it meant that the constitution of the League was rendered as ineffectual and self-destructive as that of 18th-century Poland where no important change could be carried through without unanimity. An unfair condition in the peace treaties as between France and Germany or Poland and Germany was to be eternally unalterable so long as France or Poland could find a single supporter at the League table.

Linked with this fatal defect was another, contained in a still more disastrous clause. Under Article 10, the Members of the League undertook "to respect and preserve, as against external aggres-

sion, the territorial integrity and existing political independence of all Members of the League". Though there was no practical alternative method, any forcible change in the *status quo*, however unjust or obsolete, was to be regarded as an act of aggression which it would become the duty of all Member States to resist by force. Henceforward the almost inevitable result of any attempt to alter the map of Europe must be either a world war or a universal condonation of a breach of the Covenant.

Nothing more damaging to the future of international law could have been devised. The frontiers of 1919 were to be secured for all time by using the law to dam the course of history. The inevitable result was to discredit the law. When Germany in due time reoccupied her own demilitarised frontier, when she resumed control of her own rivers, when she achieved the long-opposed *Anschluss* with the German rump of Austria, she committed in each case an act of aggression which members of the League had either to condone or undo by another world war. No other means of achieving these revisions of the peace treaties was open to Germany save by obtaining the unanimous consent of every member of the League Assembly.

For in his enthusiasm for the League, the President, despite the protests of his weary and cynical colleagues, insisted on tying up the Covenant with the peace treaties. He staked the future of the world on a desperate improbability: that the territorial alterations of the past, dictated by changes in human population and ideals, would now cease for ever. Wilson's hope was that, by having a makeshift peace

tied up with a just and eternal Covenant, he would inevitably compel an equitable revision of the former. He failed to realise that he was merely rendering the Covenant a high-sounding device for justifying and perpetuating injustice. All unwittingly he ensured that for those who suffered that injustice, the name of Geneva would become a synonym for hypocrisy.[1]

While the President hurried forward the formalities for completing the Covenant and peace waited in the wings, the continent of Europe east of the Rhine was fast dissolving into anarchy. Bavaria had gone Bolshevist, Hungary was about to follow, the Austrian Empire had fallen into a formless void in which no man could be certain whom to obey or how to make plans for the future. As the spring returned, though nearly half a year had elapsed since the bugles had sounded cease-fire, battles were being fought on a score of wasted, shifting fronts. The new republic of Poland was at war with the Ukraine, three different kinds of White armies with the Reds in Russia, Romanians with Hungarians, Poles with Czechs, and Italian imperialists with Slav mountaineers. Pending a settlement in Paris, Allied military and political missions, ensconced in armoured trains, wended their way on ineffectual errands across a dissolving continent. " The greater part of Europe and Asia ", wrote Mr. Churchill, " simply existed locally from

[1] Even little Hungary, of whose nine million nationals three millions were handed over in 1919 to the rule of strangers, finally left the League in despair, affirming that after twenty years it was still neglecting the interests of national minorities, was undermining the idea of international arbitration, and serving exclusively the interests of those who wished to maintain the territorial and political settlements of post-war Europe.

day to day. Revolutions, disorders, the vengeance of peoples upon rulers who had led them to their ruin, partisan warfare, brigandage of all sorts and — over wide areas — actual famine, lapped the Baltic States, central and southern Europe, Asia Minor, Arabia and all Russia in indescribable confusion."[1] The glitter of the French capital, celebrating amid a blaze of lights, only deepened the encircling gloom.

Nothing so explains the imperfections of the 1919 settlement as that steady and rapid drift towards European chaos. It almost justifies them. Throughout a third of the world civilisation itself had collapsed. The danger was that the whole of Europe would succumb to the Bolshevik Terror towering like a giant spectre over the glowing ashes of eastern Europe. The old order and the old beliefs had broken under the strain and horror of modern war. Something primitive and brutal in man had taken their place. Its talons were red with the flesh of murdered millions and it left behind it a trail of flaming towns and stinking ruins. The peacemakers in Paris learnt from the lips of the Czech Commander-in-Chief, fresh from Siberia, of the horrors of Ekaterinburg, where the young prince and princesses of Russia had been soaked in petrol and cut into pieces by the apostles of world revolution.

Those who preached the class war were provided with an attentive audience. A large part of a continent containing "the densest aggregation of population in the history of the world"[2] was deprived of its

[1] *World Crisis*, v. 140.
[2] J. M. Keynes, *Economic Consequences of the Peace*, p. 212.

livelihood by the dislocation of the economic organisation of society. Trade had almost ceased. Whole nations found their standard of living depressed to the level of savages. Mr. Hoover calculated that over fifteen million families were living on state subsidies based on the inflation of national currencies.

If the American President was able to disregard these danger signals, the statesmen of France, Italy and Britain who inhabited the same inflammable continent could not. They were confronted with ominous rumblings in their own strained and wearied lands. The gigantic armies they had commanded had already melted away; there would soon be no-one to obey their orders. In February Mr. Lloyd George had had to hurry over to England to deal with a series of grave strikes and riots: more than once during the Peace negotiations troops were hastily assembled in the parks round Paris to prevent a Socialist rising. The peoples of the warring nations had been taught for so long to use arms against one another that they were now ready to turn them against the rulers who could do so little to help them in their miseries. "The spectre of Revolution haunted the Peace Conference like a nightmare." [1] Even Colonel House noted in his diary that March that the assembled peacemakers were sitting on a powder magazine.

In such a mood there was small scope at Paris for idealism. What little had been left over after four years of warfare had already been drawn on by President Wilson for the Covenant. Nothing now remained but an all-prevailing materialism. About

[1] R. S. Baker, *Woodrow Wilson and World Settlement*.

the middle of March a sudden "slump in idealism" set in. "The end of the Conference became a *sauve qui peut*", wrote Harold Nicolson. "We called it 'security': it was almost with a panic rush that we scrambled for the boats, and when we reached them we found our colleagues of the Italian Delegation already comfortably installed. They made us very welcome." [1]

The French, who had lost more men in proportion to their population and suffered greater devastation of their soil than any other victorious power, were subject to a particularly bad and thoroughly understandable attack of nerves—"shell-shock", as General Smuts described it. They were haunted by two fears: that the fruits of victory would be snatched from them by the spread of world disorder, and that an idealistic peace might leave their ancient enemy sufficiently strong to attack them hereafter. To them the Fourteen Points seemed a positive menace to be avoided or evaded at all costs. The only kind of peace that made any appeal to the French mind at that moment was a Carthaginian one, which by inflicting the maximum degree of suffering on Germany, should put off the evil day of her recovery as long as possible.

The peace which began to emerge under Clemenceau's guidance bore, therefore, no resemblance to that outlined by the Fourteen Points. It was based on no abstract or humanitarian principle: it was not even concerned with honour. A decimated France could not afford such luxuries. Her sole purpose was to secure 'guarantees' against future aggression by

[1] *Peacemaking*, p. 70.

Germany and to outweigh her superior numbers, efficiency and resources by loading her with every possible handicap. In the prevailing depression and nightmare fears of Paris, it never seemed to occur to the French Government that the inevitable consequences of such a policy must be to intensify hatred and the desire for revenge. The only logical means of carrying it out would have been the extermination of the German race. As this was impracticable, the French plan was irrational. It could only end as it has ended.

It was Clemenceau who translated the fearful resolve of France into fact. It was one that well suited his own profoundly pagan and pessimistic view of society. " One could not despise Clemenceau or dislike him ", wrote Maynard Keynes, " but only take a different view as to the nature of civilised man, or indulge, at least, a different hope. . . . He had one illusion — France ; and one disillusion — mankind, including Frenchmen and his colleagues not least." Over them and his fellow Allied statesmen he had one overwhelming advantage : that, unlike them, he knew exactly what he wanted and could count on the support of his own people to get it.

The weakness of his confederates was Clemenceau's opportunity. The Italian delegates, with the embarrassing millstone of Caporetto round their necks and a confused and divided nation behind them, were men of straw, much given to weeping and useless threats of withdrawal. And the British Premier, though a political negotiator of genius and well aware of the folly of the French policy, was hamstrung by the rash pledges he had given to his own

electorate. On March 25th, during a week-end in the Forest of Fontainebleau, he and his personal advisers prepared a memorandum urging forbearance and conciliation towards the vanquished which is as statesmanlike as anything Castlereagh penned a century before.

> It is not difficult to patch up a peace that may last until the generation which experienced the horrors of war has passed away. . . . What is difficult is to draw up a peace which will not provoke a fresh struggle when those who have had practical experience of what war means have passed away. . . . You may strip Germany of her colonies, reduce her armaments to a mere police force and her navy to that of a fifth-rate power; all the same, in the end if she feels that she has been unjustly treated in the peace of 1919 she will find means of exacting retribution from her conquerors. . . . Injustice, arrogance, displayed in the hour of triumph will never be forgotten or forgiven.
>
> For these reasons I am, therefore, strongly averse to transferring more Germans from German rule to the rule of some other nation than can possibly be helped. I cannot conceive any greater cause of future war than that the German people, who have certainly proved themselves one of the most vigorous and powerful races in the world, should be surrounded by a number of small States, many of them consisting of people who have never previously set up a stable government for themselves, but each of them containing large masses of Germans clamouring for reunion with their native land. The proposal of the Polish Commission that we should place 2,100,000 Germans under the control of a people which is of a different religion and which has never proved its capacity for stable self-government throughout its history must, in my judgment, lead sooner or later to a new war in the east of Europe. What I have said about the Germans is equally true of the Magyars. There will never be peace in South-eastern Europe if every little State

now coming into being is to have a large Magyar Irredenta within its borders. . . .

If we are wise, we shall offer to Germany a peace, which, while just, will be preferable for all sensible men to the alternative of Bolshevism. I would, therefore, put it in the forefront of the peace that once she accepts our terms, especially reparation, we will open to her the raw materials and markets of the world on equal terms with ourselves, and will do everything possible to enable the German people to get upon their legs again. We cannot both cripple her and expect her to pay. . . .

. . . We ought to endeavour to draw up a peace settlement as if we were impartial arbiters, forgetful of the passions of the war. . . . It must be a settlement which a responsible German Government can sign in the belief that it can fulfil the obligations it incurs. . . . It must be a settlement which will contain in itself no provocations for future wars. . . .[1]

All this, of course, was anathema to the French politicians. Yet in such matters Mr. Lloyd George had already rendered himself impotent. How incongruous and contradictory, Clemenceau could reply, must such sentiments seem in the statesman who had promised his own people to hang the Kaiser and squeeze the lemon till the pips squeaked! Within a few days of penning this document Mr. Lloyd George received a telegram from 370 of his supporters in Parliament urging him to redeem his pledges and make Germany pay. It was what Clemenceau meant him to do.

There remained President Wilson. But the apostle of static righteousness had shot his bolt. On his return to his own country in February he had

[1] D. Lloyd George, *The Truth about the Peace Treaties*, i. 404-12.

been made to realise the rising strength of opposition to his policy — the price he had to pay for his autocratic neglect of public opinion in the most democratic of all lands. At the Opera House in New York he let it be known that the Covenant of the League should be so linked with the peace treaties as not to be separable. The United States would thus be unable to support the one without the other. He forgot that his countrymen might respond by refusing to support either.

When the President resumed his residence at the Villa Murat, the triumphs of his first coming in December were not repeated. Confronted by the resolve of the Old World to patch up a treaty as quickly as it could and deprived of the support of the New, he seemed to falter and lose his nerve. Henceforward he was as clay in the hands of Clemenceau. One by one his Fourteen Points were sacrificed to the French view of security. All that now seemed needed to satisfy his formidable Presbyterian conscience was to trump up some ingenious formula of legal and moral casuistry that, by a parade of words, linked one or other of his flouted principles with the latest demand on the helpless enemy. Thus, as Maynard Keynes pointed out, " instead of saying that German-Austria is prohibited from uniting with Germany except by leave of France " — a plain but honest denial of the principle of self-determination — " the Treaty, with delicate draftsmanship, states that ' Germany acknowledges and will respect strictly the independence of Austria within the frontiers which may be fixed in a Treaty between that State and the Principal Allied and Associated Powers ;

she agrees that this independence shall be inalienable, except with the consent of the Council of the League of Nations'. . . . Another part of the Treaty provides that for this purpose the Council must be unanimous. Instead of giving Danzig to Poland, the Treaty establishes Danzig as a 'Free' City, but includes this 'Free' City within the Polish Customs frontier, entrusts to Poland the control of the river and railway system, and provides that 'the Polish Government shall undertake the conduct of the foreign relations of the Free City of Danzig'. . . . In placing the river system of Germany under foreign control, the Treaty speaks of declaring international those river systems which naturally provide more than one State with access to the sea. . . . Such instances could be multiplied. The honest and intelligible purpose of French policy to limit the population of Germany and weaken her economic system is clothed for the President's sake, in the august language of freedom and international equality."[1] It has taken in the bulk of the British and American people ever since. It never took in their enemies, whose anger and contempt for what they regarded as a hypocritical and dishonest subterfuge has helped to lower the whole standard of international morality and assured the present rulers of Germany a popular backing even for their most cynical and brutal breaches of law.

The Germans were given no opportunity of arguing their case with the victors. Before the war their rulers by their peculiar — and apparently congenital — methods of diplomacy had spoken with such

[1] J. M. Keynes, *Economic Consequences of the Peace*, pp. 47-8.

habitual noisiness that the world had grown utterly weary of hearing them. Their meeker successors were now not permitted to be heard at all. During the six months which elapsed between the Armistice and the publication of the first draft of the Treaty, no representative of the Central Powers was so much as consulted. Its terms were not negotiated between the parties but unilaterally imposed. There was no Peace Conference: only a prolonged discussion between judges prior to awarding sentence. Instead of "open covenants of peace openly arrived at", the conquerors' terms were drawn up in secret and presented as an ultimatum, to be accepted or rejected *in toto*. In all the vital preliminaries of the treaty Germany was judged and sentenced unheard.

This was the essence of Clemenceau's idea of peacemaking. It was one of his beliefs that "you must never negotiate with a German or conciliate him: you must dictate to him".[1] Having suffered so long from Germany in her hour of arrogance, he failed to realise that this had already been done — by those who had suffered and died in the trenches. When the Armistice came there was no longer any need to dictate. The mighty had been humbled and cast down by the uncomplaining virtues of the simple and meek.

In the middle of April 1919 the Germans were ordered to dispatch a delegation to Versailles, not to discuss but to receive the text of the peace preliminaries drawn up by the Allied and Associated Powers. When the delegates presented themselves at Versailles, they were treated not as the representatives of an independent Power but as prisoners. An area in

[1] J. M. Keynes, *Economic Consequences of the Peace*, p. 29.

the park was set apart for their exercise and ostentatiously enclosed with palisades, to protect them, they were told, from the just rage of the populace. Outside this they were not permitted to go. Journalists were forbidden to converse with them on pain of being charged with "communicating with the enemy". It was a curious prelude to a new era of international understanding and goodwill.

On May 7th, at the Trianon Palace Hotel, the delegates were confronted by the representatives of twenty-seven victorious States. Placed apart as though in the dock, they heard Clemenceau pronouncing sentence :

> "Delegates of the German State ! This is neither the time nor place for any superfluous words. You see before you the accredited representatives of great and smaller powers, united here to end this horrible war that was imposed on them. This is the hour of heavy reckoning ! You have sued for peace and we are inclined to grant it you. Herewith we hand you the book in which our peace conditions are set forth. This second Peace of Versailles has been bought too dearly by the peoples whose assembled representatives are before you to allow them to bear alone the consequences of this war. I must add, to be perfectly frank with you, that this second Treaty of Versailles has been bought so dearly by my countrymen that they can only take the fullest resolution to demand every rightful guarantee. . . ."

The delegates, pinched and starved-looking,[1] were then presented with a large printed volume and were

[1] The French newspapers made much sport of their hungry appearance and the avidity with which they fell on their food. The number of oranges that they consumed on their first day at Versailles was published with facetious comment.

informed that they would have fifteen days in which to deliver their written observations. No oral communications were to be allowed.

Ill and deadly pale and still seated at the end of the horseshoe table, Count Brockdorff-Rantzau replied that he and his companions were now without illusions. " We are aware that the strength of Germany's arms has been crushed. We can feel all the power of the hate we must encounter in this assembly. . . . It is demanded of us that we admit ourselves to be the only ones guilty of the war. Such a confession in my mouth would be a lie. We are far from declining any responsibility for this great world war . . . but we deny that Germany and its people were alone guilty. The hundreds and thousands of noncombatants who have perished since the 11th November by reason of the blockade were killed with cold deliberation after our adversaries had conquered and victory had been assured to them. Think of that when you speak of guilt and punishment." [1]

He reminded his hearers that President Wilson's Fourteen Points were equally binding on both sides. He acknowledged his country's readiness to do all within her power to repair the damage done by war. But if the victors required compensation they must not hound her into ruin and anarchy. " There is only one way to avoid this peril — by the full and whole-hearted recognition of social and economic solidarity among the peoples — the belief in a free and all-inclusive League of Nations. This sacred thought, born of the most terrible catastrophe in recorded history, has found its expression in words,

[1] *Manchester Guardian*, May 8th, 1919.

and these words will become realities. Only when the doors to such an alliance shall have been flung wide to every nation, to every man of goodwill, can a victory truly be said to have been won. Only then may the dead of this war be said not to have died in vain." [1]

But for all the good the protest did it might have been addressed to the trees in the park of the Trianon. There was a perfunctory exchange of written notes between the German delegates and their judges: there were a few trifling modifications. In their main essentials the Allies' terms were inexorable and unalterable, to be accepted or rejected in their entirety. Rejection meant a continuance of the blockade and a renewal of war against a helpless people.

The principal territorial changes were not unjust. The return of Alsace-Lorraine to France and the re-creation of a greater Poland with access to the sea accorded with the spirit as well as the letter of the Fourteen Points and were in keeping with the laws of natural development and change. Yet even in giving a new birth of freedom to Poland, little regard was had to the interests and feelings of hundreds of thousands of Germans whose fate was inextricably bound up by history and neighbourhood with that of the Poles. For centuries Germans, even if it is held that they should never have been there at all, had been the colonisers and administrators of the Baltic littoral and the western Polish plain. In the course of those centuries individual rights had grown up which could not be ignored without causing

[1] Victor Schiff, *The Germans at Versailles* (1930), pp. 70-71.

immense human suffering and injustice.[1] On every hand neat cities and farmlands bore witness to the enduring influence of German capital, German integrity and German labour. Danzig at the mouth of the Polish Vistula was as German as Calais is French. Bromberg, Thorn, Kulm, Graudenz and Dirschau were partly German towns, though set in the midst of a Polish rural population. Even the great commercial highroad and historic river of Poland, the Vistula, had been bridged and rendered navigable by German money and skill. Germany like Russia and Austria had robbed Poland in the past. But, unlike Russia and Austria, she had also enriched her.

From Germany was taken and given to the new Poland by the first draft of the Treaty, 17,816 square miles and nearly four million subjects. The principle which the American President had enunciated that the Polish Corridor was "to be drawn irrespective of strategic or transportation considerations so as to embrace the smallest possible number of Germans", was, thanks to Lloyd George, on the whole honoured. Yet there were unfortunate exceptions. Soldau, a purely German town but an important railway junction, was torn from East Prussia and given to Poland. Even the historic German districts of Marienwerder and Allenstein were set apart for plebiscites on the ground, as stated by Clemenceau, that, "according to the best of our information, there exists in the Government of Allenstein a considerable Polish majority". When a year later the plebiscites were allowed, 96,889 voted for Germany

[1] These rights have now been ignored by the rulers of the Third Reich itself in a cynical cruel betrayal of the German Balts.

in Marienburg as against 7977 for Poland, and in Allenstein 353,655 as against 7400. In the latter district Germany actually polled 97·9 per cent of the total electorate. The plebiscites were held at a time when the Bolshevists were hammering at the gates of Warsaw and when many, who would not otherwise have done so, voted for union with Germany out of fear of something far worse. Yet, after making every allowance for this, the figures provide a curious commentary on the peacemakers' methods of calculation.

It was, of course, never possible to give Poland her promised access to the sea without injury to long established German rights.[1] It was difficult to estimate precisely how great these were. The Germans claimed that of the population handed over to Poland in 1919 30 per cent was German. The Poles put the figure at only 10 per cent. The most accurate estimate seemed to be about 20 per cent, or perhaps half a million Germans. But the claims were necessarily confused and conflicting. The ebb and flow of racial history in this corner of Europe had made the problem one of baffling complexity. Ten years ago the Liberal journalist and former editor of the *Daily Chronicle*, Sir Robert Donald, a very honest man, in his *Polish Corridor* reckoned that the Corridor linking the Polish plain with the sea had contained in 1919, together with Danzig, a population of 919,000 Germans, of whom nearly half were subsequently driven to emigrate, as opposed to 662,000

[1] "The stumbling block", said Lord Balfour in conversation with Colonel House on February 28th, 1917, "was the outlet to the sea. There can be no other except Danzig. This would leave an Alsace and Lorraine to rankle and fester for future trouble."

Poles and Cashubes. There can be little doubt, however, that this was a very exaggerated figure.

By the cession of the Corridor — the new Poland's indispensable link with the sea — East Prussia, the dearest and most historic of all the North German lands, was divided from the rest of the German nation. It was almost as if Kent had been cut off from the rest of England by a French corridor. The shock to national and historic feelings and the injury to individual interests was bound to be great, however necessary such changes for the just and vital interests of a long injured Poland. To soften it, the utmost tact and tenderness was called for. It was not shown. The Germans were treated as if the matter scarcely concerned them. They were not even consulted as to the future and protection of their own nationals. For in the unhappy mood of that hour they were still regarded as a race of pariahs.

Only the intervention of the British Prime Minister saved Danzig, a city of over 300,000 Germans and as big as Hull or Bradford, from incorporation in Poland. As a result of a hard struggle with Clemenceau and the Poles, he was able to secure its reservation as a Free City under the protection of the League of Nations, subject to Polish control of its harbour and foreign policy.[1] In the same way the purely East Prussian city of Memel was taken from Germany and placed under League sovereignty. Both Danzig, the great port at the mouth of the Polish Vistula, and Memel were vitally necessary as free outlets for the trade of the Polish and Lithuanian interiors.

[1] In this he was aided by the attitude of British Labour, which was exceedingly hostile to the Polish militarists.

Yet both were also German cities with a wealth of German history behind them. In the past the Poles had suffered much from the intolerance and indifference of the rulers of Germany to the rights and feelings of others. But those who were now deprived of their nationality and shorn of their property were not necessarily those who had inflicted such sufferings.

In all, Germany lost seven million nationals and 28,000 square miles of territory — a seventh of her pre-war area in Europe and rather more than half the size of England. Though of the former only a minority were of German race, the door was closed, as the *Manchester Guardian* pointed out, on far more Germans than it had been on Frenchmen in 1871. In the west, as well as industrial Alsace-Lorraine, Germany yielded Eupen-Malmédy to Belgium. The Saar — an almost exclusively German region with 650,000 inhabitants — was handed over to League (and virtually French) control until 1934, when a plebiscite was to decide its fate. Its coal mines were given to France to compensate her for the damage done to her own. Yet these changes, unlike the transference of German populations in the east, were unlikely to lead to a war of revenge, for there was a time limit attached.

In addition, Germany's entire colonial empire, the third largest in the world, was taken from her with a derisory phrase about her being unfit to govern natives. A suggestion that its value — never a very high one — should be reckoned as part of reparations was, in the light of future events, not very wisely disregarded. For nine-tenths of the reparations de-

manded were never paid, and the confiscation of the German overseas empire was bound to constitute an unnecessary bone of contention in the future. It was divided, as League mandates, between the British Empire and the French, who already possessed between them nearly a third of the earth, a few minor pickings going to Belgium and Japan. Italy, despite earlier hopes, got none of it. Great Britain took Tanganyika and Nauru ; the Union of South Africa, German South-West Africa ; the Commonwealth of Australia, New Guinea ; New Zealand, Samoa ; Japan, Kiaochou and the Marshall islands. German East Africa was partitioned between Great Britain and Belgium ; Togoland and the Cameroons between Great Britain and France. For taking certain of these colonies from Germany there was every precedent and reason : she had used them as bases against British commerce and had lost them, as others had done before her, by the fortune of war. But though individual colonies had often changed hands as prizes of victory, no such wholesale confiscation had previously taken place after a European war.

Behind the confiscation lay the theory that colonies should be regarded not as opportunities for imperialist and capitalist expansion, but as trusts for the benefit of the native populations to be administered under the supervision of the League. There is little doubt that the British and French, who received the greater part of the German overseas empire, were better fitted than any other people to exercise such a trust. Yet this ideal — one incidentally far easier to state than to practise —

could have been made more intelligible to Germans had the mandatory theory been also applied to the colonial properties of the victor Powers. As it was, they merely regarded it as a hypocritical mask for robbery. And they recalled what the British public had forgotten, that Britain had given her signature to the Berlin Convention of 1884 by which the European powers pledged themselves in the event of war to respect one another's African possessions.

The economic penalties of the Treaty were far more crushing than the political. Here the guiding principle of the peacemakers was not pacification but punishment. Three-quarters of Germany's iron ore, more than half her zinc ore and smelting, a quarter of her lead ore, nearly a third of her coal and a fifth of her iron and steel industry was taken from her. After Great Britain, Germany was the most heavily industrialised country in Europe, with nearly three-quarters of her people engaged in industry. Since 1870, her population had risen from forty-one to sixty-eight millions. An agricultural and largely self-supporting state had been transformed, as England had been a century earlier, into " a vast and complicated industrial machine, dependent for its working on the equipoise of many factors outside Germany as well as within. Only by operating this machine continuously and at full blast, could she find occupation at home for her increasing population and the means of purchasing their subsistence from abroad." [1]

As Clemenceau had intended, the Peace Treaty was so framed as to throw this delicate economic

[1] J. M. Keynes, *Economic Consequences of the Peace*, p. 10.

system out of gear. Had universal free trade been the goal, as was proposed by the Fourteen Points, the political dismemberment of Germany's frontier provinces would have had little economic effect. As it was, it doomed her to unavoidable and recurrent bankruptcy. It is doubtful whether even today, after the lapse of twenty years and the territorial changes of the past fifteen months, Germany is yet a solvent economic unit. New frontiers surmounted by high tariff walls were set up dividing areas which had formerly been economic entities. One found iron ore on one side of a frontier and the coal, blast furnaces and labour to work it on the other. In parts of the new German-Polish border in Silesia the coal mines went to Poland while the pit-heads remained in Germany. Such a Gilbertian situation would have been laughable had it not been so tragic.

The evil went far beyond the confines of Germany. Before the war she had been the best customer of Austria-Hungary, Italy, Russia, Holland, Norway, Belgium, Switzerland and all Scandinavia, and the second best of Great Britain, France and Belgium. German capital and organisation had helped to turn the wheels of industry in every country in central and eastern Europe. The economic dislocation of Germany meant, therefore, the economic dislocation of a whole continent.

So blinded were men by hatred after the suffering and destruction of four years' warfare that many otherwise sane leaders of industry and finance lent themselves to this suicidal policy. They thought that by doing so they would cripple an energetic and dangerous rival for ever. In a letter written in

November 1917, Mr. F. S. Oliver, serving as secretary to a Cabinet Committee, described how the Foreign Office, the Board of Trade, the Treasury and the India and Colonial Offices were all thinking out "separate policies for doing-in the Hun in the matter of his exports of manufactures and imports of raw materials after the war". "I propose", said Sir Eric Geddes in his famous speech in the Khaki Election, "that every bit of German property, movable or immovable, in Allied and neutral countries should be surrendered to the Allies, and that Germany should pay her precious citizens in her precious paper money. No German should be allowed to own anything in this country. If Germany has got anything to buy with, she can pay that in indemnities. I propose that not only all the gold Germany has got, but all the silver and jewels she has got, shall be handed over. All her pictures and libraries and everything of that kind should be sold to the neutral and Allied world, and the proceeds given to paying the indemnity. I would strip Germany as she has stripped Belgium."

Crushing penal clauses were therefore imposed on German industry. For five years Germany was to accord most-favoured-nation treatment to the Allied and Associated States without reciprocity. All her trading privileges in other countries were abrogated. Her merchant fleet was taken from her. She had to hand over the best part of her rolling stock and 20 per cent of her inland navigation tonnage. Even the private property of her nationals outside her own post-Treaty frontiers was made liable to confiscation as a set-off against reparations

— a measure that struck at the very roots of international law. In Alsace-Lorraine, the vast sums invested in industrial development by German citizens during the half-century of German occupation were placed unreservedly at the disposal of the French Government. Those who in a later age justly criticised the harsh terms of the Munich Agreement had forgotten how harsh were those that had attended the return of Alsace-Lorraine to France.

These measures were not directed against a rich and powerful nation operating under normal conditions, but against one exhausted by war and pauperised by prolonged blockade. Of the shrunk coal production remaining to Germany after the territorial changes, nearly half was assigned to France to compensate her for the cruel damage done to her own wrecked mines. Though the productivity of German soil and livestock had fallen by half and her people were starving, she was even compelled to hand over to the victors 140,000 of her milch cows.

In a note of May 13th, Count Brockdorff-Rantzau pointed out that the Treaty would make it impossible for Germany to import sufficient raw material from abroad to employ the fifteen millions of her people who were dependent on foreign trade. "We do not know, and indeed we doubt whether the delegates of the Allied and Associated Powers realise the inevitable consequences which will take place if Germany, an industrial state, very thickly populated, closely bound up with the economic system of the world, and under the necessity of importing

enormous quantities of raw material and food-stuffs, suddenly finds herself pushed back to the phase of her development which corresponds to her economic condition and the numbers of her population as they were half a century ago. Those who sign this Treaty will sign the death sentence of millions of German men, women and children." [1]

Having wrung the neck of the goose, the Allies endeavoured to obtain a regular supply of golden eggs. After the Franco-Prussian war, the French had been made to pay an indemnity of two hundred million pounds. The Great War having caused infinitely more destruction, it was felt that astronomical figures could alone measure the counter-indebtedness of Germany. It was all natural enough. France had her grisly stretches of devastated areas — of treeless, blackened countryside and shattered towns — to lend support to her claims. Britain, having lavished the accumulated treasures of generations, had now to meet a staggering bill for pensions to the bereaved and disabled. Income tax, which before the war stood at little more than a shilling in the pound, had risen to six shillings. America was owed billions by the half-ruined Allies for war material supplied to them in their hour of need. The Germans, it was supposed, could make all this good. "Search their pockets" was the popular cry of the hour.

To this end the British and French pre-Armistice rider that the evacuation of occupied territory should include compensation for damage to non-combatants and their property was stretched to include almost

[1] J. M. Keynes, *Economic Consequences of the Peace*, p. 215.

every kind of loss. At Lloyd George's request it was even made to cover war pensions and separation allowances. The most fantastic sums were named, not only by politicians and journalists, but by bankers and financial experts. Hatred and war propaganda had temporarily deprived the wisest of their senses. The Committee of the Imperial War Cabinet, after listening to evidence from the Governor of the Bank of England, reckoned that Germany could pay £20,000 millions, or well over a hundred times the 1871 indemnity. This, though described as "a business man's estimate", was tantamount to payment of over £300 by every living German man, woman and child, most of whom were already penniless and starving. The French brought in a bill for £3000 millions for reconstructing the devastated areas — a sum well in excess of the valuation of the entire house property of France! And though America asked for no reparations for herself, she showed no signs of any intention to forgo payment of the £1160 millions owed her by her associates. An economist's suggestion for cancelling Inter-Allied debts met with a very cold reception.

In all this, of course, the victors greatly overreached themselves. They wanted the moon, and the moon was not there. It — the astronomical sum they needed to make good their losses — had been blown sky-high in four years of the mutual suicide which is dignified by the name of war. A Committee of Treasury officials ascertained that the maximum sum that there was any reasonable chance of obtaining was £2000 millions spread over thirty years. As this was incompatible with what had been promised

the democracies by their leaders, the exact extent of reparations was left a little vague. A Reparation Commission was set up with powers to make Germany pay whatever it should resolve proper. " The Commission ", it was stated, " shall not be bound by any particular code or rules of law or by any particular rule of evidence or of procedure, but shall be guided by justice, equity and good faith. . . . The measures which the Allied and Associated Powers shall have the right to make, in case of voluntary default by Germany, and which Germany agrees not to regard as acts of war, may include economic and financial prohibitions and reprisals and in general such other measures as the respective Governments may determine to be necessary in the circumstances."

These terms were accompanied by moral humiliations hard for a proud people to bear. The control of the chief German rivers was handed over to Commissions on which foreigners were in a majority. On land, sea and air Germany was to remain permanently disarmed. She was forbidden to possess a first-class battleship, a submarine, a tank, a military aeroplane, even an anti-aircraft gun. Had her enforced, and under the circumstances justifiable, disarmament been accompanied by that of her neighbours, as indicated in the Fourteen Points, the peacemakers of Versailles would have been remembered among the greatest benefactors of mankind. Instead, she was left helpless in a ring of heavily armed States. A country whose popular tradition of security had depended as much on her army as Britain's on her navy was only permitted an army smaller than that of Belgium. On her eastern and

southern frontiers two new military powers arose in close alliance with France, disposing of large air forces operating within an hour's bombing range of her capital.

To complete her impotence, Germany was forbidden for all time to erect fortifications or maintain garrisons along her Rhineland frontier. Her western industrial cities were thus to remain permanently at the mercy of France. All this is only too intelligible when one recalls the pre-war might of the German military machine and the nightmare threat to the peace of mankind which it had constituted in the hands of German statesmen. Yet the exaggerated degree with which these precautionary measures were pressed and the victors' lack of moderation taught Germans anew the fatal lesson that only by military strength could they hope to be anything but miserable and helpless.

To secure payment of reparations an Allied Army was to continue in occupation of all Germany west of the Rhine and its bridgeheads for the next fifteen years. Should the guarantees against future aggression be then thought insufficient or the Reparations Commission remain unsatisfied, the occupation could be prolonged. If, however, the conditions of the Treaty were faithfully carried out, the Cologne district might be evacuated after five years and that of Coblenz after ten.

As a crowning humiliation, Germany was to sign an admission of her own guilt for the war. Her ex-Emperor was to be extradited from Holland and tried by his own accusers "for a supreme offence against international morality and the sanctity of

Treaties ". Her leading men, including most of her princes, all her army commanders and her chief national hero, Hindenburg, were to be punished as " war criminals ". Had the Allies been defeated, presumably the members of the British Royal Family, Mr. Lloyd George, Lord Haig, Lord Jellicoe, Lord Beatty, Sir Roger Keyes, Lord Allenby, Lord Plumer and Colonel Lawrence would have been similarly branded ! The absurdity of this clause was so great that it was never pressed home and was finally tacitly abandoned.

No concession was allowed over the war-guilt clause in the Treaty, which enabled the victors to justify Germany's outlawry from the comity of nations and deny her the protection of their new system of international law. This she was to sign on pain of a further spell of starvation. It has been contended that this clause was a mere technical verdict of " guilty " in order to legalise the exaction of reparations. But the Allied reply at the time to the German delegates, who, being restricted to written communications only, were not allowed to argue it with them, left the matter in little doubt.[1]

Thus the principles contained in the Fourteen

[1] They were referred to the American Note of November 5th, 1918, in which it had been stated that Germany was to make reparation for all damage inflicted " by the aggression of Germany by land, by sea and from the air ". " By the very circumstance that at the time this Note was presented the German Government lodged no protest against this definition, she herself acknowledged it as well-founded. Germany, therefore, in 1918 admitted clearly, though by implication, both aggression and responsibility. Today it is too late to attempt denial." In 1935 a Joint Committee of German and French historians unanimously agreed that " no deliberate desire for a European war could be attributed to any particular Government or people in 1914 " (*American Historical Review*, 1938).

Points which had been promised to the Germans before their surrender were forgotten as and when they conflicted with the fears and needs of the hour. For "open covenants of peace openly arrived at" was substituted a secret procedure in which the vanquished were prohibited from verbal discussion with those who were their accusers and judges. Instead of the "removal, as far as possible, of all economic barriers", many hundreds of miles of new frontier were created, along which rose tariff walls higher than any known before. The reduction of national armaments to the lowest point consistent with domestic safety was interpreted as no armed force for Germany and a strong one for everyone else. There was little resemblance to "a free, open-minded and absolutely impartial adjustment of colonial claims" in the wholesale confiscation of the German colonies. Self-determination, though recognised in the case of other races, was denied to several million Germans who, on varying historical, economic or military grounds, were subjected to the rule of Poles, Czechs and Italians. Mr. Harold Nicolson gave it as his considered opinion that of the twenty-three conditions laid down in President Wilson's Fourteen Points and subsequent Addresses, only four could with any accuracy be said to have been incorporated in the treaties. That is why those who dictated the latter have always been on such dangerous ground in pleading moral right to maintain them in their integrity.

Germany, whatever her share of original guilt, had undoubtedly precipitated the war, and she had lost it. It was right that she should make such

reparation as was possible — adequate reparation for the destruction of four years of war there could be none — and in the nature of things that she should be penalised by the victors. Yet as civilisation advances men are supposed to grow more humane towards each other, and the war had been won by nations with a long and noble tradition of humanity and culture. Their representatives at Versailles cannot be said to have displayed much of these virtues. Compared with their predecessors of a century before, they were tragically deficient in them. They forgot that nations cannot be judged and punished as individuals without inflicting untold suffering on the innocent. It was not German militarism — an abstraction — which suffered as a result of the righteous indignation of the peacemakers but the German people — sixty-five million men, women and children, few of whom had any part in the crimes that precipitated the war. They had already, like the peoples of other war-shattered lands, suffered enough without its being necessary for statesmen to punish them further.

There remained the task of coercing Germany into a signature. The delegates into whose hands the Treaty had been thrust at the Trianon Palace Hotel, Socialists and pacifists as many of them were, showed little disposition to accede to what they persisted in regarding as a breach of faith. " The German delegation ", Brockdorff-Rantzau replied to Clemenceau on May 24th, " is unwilling to interpret your Excellency's remarks by the supposition that a pledged word given at that time by the Allied and Associated Powers meant no more than a strategic feint to weaken

the German people's resistance, and that such a pledge is now to be withdrawn." [1] In their counter-proposals they offered to accept the clauses imposing disarmament on land, sea and air, and even go beyond them. But they demanded in return the right of admission to the League of Nations — "a genuine League of all the powers and one that shall include every people of goodwill, even the enemy today. This League must be inspired by a sense of responsibility towards mankind and must dispose of a force of sufficient strength to give protection to the frontiers of its members." [2]

The delegates declared that in all territorial matters Germany based her attitude on the Fourteen Points. She renounced her sovereignty in Alsace-Lorraine, but requested a free plebiscite. On the same grounds she was ready to cede to Poland the major part of the province of Posen and to secure her access to the sea by the establishment of free ports in Danzig, Königsberg and Memel. But she asked that the right of self-determination should be accorded to her fellow-nationals in Austria and the Sudetenland.

She was prepared, too, to place her colonial possessions under the control of the General Council of the League provided that she was acknowledged as their mandatory. She offered to pay as indemnity the vast sum of £5000 millions in annual instalments and to deliver twenty million tons of coal in each of the next five years to France; to help repair the devastated areas, to pool her merchant tonnage with the world and to build in her own yards ships to replace those

[1] V. Schiff, *The Germans at Versailles* (1930), pp. 92, 101.
[2] *Ibid.*

sunk in the war. Instead of the penal clauses she asked for a neutral commission of inquiry into the causes of the war. In their hour of adversity the vanquished were wiser than the victors in their triumph. Twenty years later the wheel of history has come full-circle and the position has been once more ironically and tragically reversed.

The Supreme Council of the Allies did not allow the text of these proposals to be published. They were dismissed in the Press of the democracies as "impudence". The only reply made to them was an ultimatum with a five-days limit. The one concession Germany obtained was the promise of a plebiscite for Upper Silesia, secured from a reluctant Clemenceau by Lloyd George, who threatened to withdraw from the Conference if it were not granted. Even this, when it resulted in a German majority of six to four, was later whittled down by a League of Nations Commission into a compromise.

Protest was useless. When the German delegates, refusing to sign themselves, carried the Allies' terms back to Germany, they were pelted in the streets of Versailles. The Republican Government resigned, sooner than accept the responsibility of endorsing its country's ruin. The National Assembly met at Weimar on June 22nd. But, though a month earlier its members had protested against the Treaty with only a single dissentient vote, they no longer dared face the consequences of refusal. To have done so would have meant a renewal of war and the disruption of their country. By 237 votes against 138 they agreed to sign the Treaty as a bitter necessity. A last-hour protest against the guilt clauses was met

by a curt ultimatum. "Less than twenty-four hours remain. . . . The time for discussion is over. . . . The Allies can neither accept nor admit any change or reservation in the Treaty. . . . Germany, after signature, will be held responsible for carrying out its every stipulation." The Germans submitted.

On June 28th the Treaty was signed in the Galerie des Glaces at Versailles, where, half a century before, the unity of Germany had been proclaimed in her own hour of transient victory and brutal triumph. The avenue to the Palace was lined with cavalry, and the Gardes Républicaines stood with sabres at the salute along the great staircase. When the two thousand privileged spectators were ready, old Clemenceau rasped out a harsh "Faites entrer les Allemands", and two German representatives, pale and trembling, were led in like prisoners. After the signing, there was an exchange of autographs. A representative of Bolivia and two Canadian delegates even asked the Germans for theirs.

To this instrument, on which the future peace of mankind was staked, British statesmen put their hands. In doing so they unconsciously broke faith with the historical tradition of their country. They flouted the first principle of English justice by sentencing a wrongdoer unheard. They tarnished her ancient chivalry by making the weak and helpless suffer for the sins of the strong. They denied the honour which she had always paid to a brave enemy. For centuries it had been part of an Englishman's fighting code that, when he had beaten his foe, he neither feared him nor bore him malice but let him rise and offered his hand.

Where was old John Bull when the Treaty that was to bring back peace to Europe was signed in Paris that June? Did he stand over the wretched German signatories as they pulled their cheap pens out of their pockets to set their names to a shameful and humiliating document? Or was he sleeping beneath the soil of Flanders?

"England's duty", Castlereagh had written a century before, "is not to collect trophies but to bring Europe back to peaceful habits." For this all the accessions of African marsh, forest and mountain now collected were a poor exchange. For four years millions of simple Englishmen had made the honour of their country shine as brightly as at any moment in her splendid past. Now in as many months, in a Paris given over to cynical and dissolute pleasure-seeking, others who had not known the sacrifice of the trenches failed both the heroic dead and the unborn future.

It is true that the great Welshman, David Lloyd George, did his best to mitigate the peace terms. In June 1919 he was still fighting like a Welsh terrier, as a spectator described him, to get Germany into the League. But at the time of the Khaki Election, his resolution had proved inadequate to his intentions and to the cause for which the armies which he had helped to arm and inspire had died. During the war the little Prime Minister had shown that he possessed at need an indomitable spirit; his courage and faith were worth an army to Britain. But when the bugles sounded Cease Fire, something seemed to die in him as in so many others. Had he refused to sponsor a vindictive policy which he knew to be wrong, he

might well in the mood of that moment[1] have failed to carry the House of Commons and the country with him and so lost his place. But by doing so he would have become the focus of all that was best in Britain. And even if the forces of sanity and magnanimity had not recovered in time to influence the fatal Treaty, they would have made an early revision possible and imminent. Within a few years Lloyd George would have been returned to power as the hero of his country and the saviour of Europe. There are times when lack of courage becomes the greatest of political errors.

The British people received the Treaty without reading it. They had reverted to their traditional policy and for the moment had forgotten Europe. The French, with a few exceptions, naturally rejoiced at their triumph. " The treaty signed at Versailles is a glorious revenge for the one so harshly imposed on us nearly fifty years ago ", the President of the Senate declared. " We shall receive it with emotion and pride and study it with a sincere desire to find in it those restitutions, reparations and guarantees won by the blood and victory of our immortal heroes." [2]

A few were wiser. " You cannot restore central Europe to 1870 ", wrote Maynard Keynes in his historic analysis of the consequences of the peace, " without setting up such strains in the European

[1] Among the signatories to the telegram of April 1919, in which his supporters in the House of Commons urged Lloyd George to honour his election pledges, are those of Edward Wood (now Lord Halifax) and Samuel Hoare, nineteen years later to be associated with Mr. Chamberlain's policy of appeasement.

[2] *Manchester Guardian*, July 1st, 1919.

structure and letting loose such human and spiritual forces as . . . will overwhelm not only you and your 'guarantees', but your institutions, and the existing order of your society." Both in France and Britain the men of the extreme Left were critical, though the natural bitterness of faction after a long period of political exclusion may perhaps have animated them as well as wisdom. The National Administrative Council of the Independent Labour Party denounced "the terms of the document misnamed the Peace Treaty. . . . These terms violate the conditions of the Armistice. . . . They do not bring an end to militarism but fasten the system more firmly on the peoples of the Allied countries. . . . The treaty is a capitalist, militarist and imperialist imposition. . . . It does not give the world peace but the certainty of other and more calamitous wars." [1]

"We went into the war", wrote Norman Angell, "with certain very definitely proclaimed principles which are declared to be more valuable than the lives of the men that were sacrificed in their defence. . . . We did not use the victory which our young men had given us to that end, but for enforcing a policy which was in flat contradiction to the principles we had originally proclaimed." [2]

Other voices besides those of Party were raised against the Treaty. The President of the National Council of Free Churches, to his honour, pointed out the fatal interdependence of its unwise and unchristian terms with the League Covenant. The two great South Africans, Botha and Smuts, both condemned it. And here and there sounded the old authentic note of

[1] *Manchester Guardian*, May 9th, 1919. [2] *Fruits of Victory*.

traditionalist Britain. " It is the part of wisdom in the work-a-day world ", said Sir Charles Addis in an address to the Institute of Bankers, " not to exact the full measure of our rights, even against the guilty. The argument for inflicting such an indemnity as would cripple Germany economically and put it out of her power to prepare for another war appears to me as self-destructive. . . . There is no such thing as a conclusive peace. The only guarantee of peace is that, having beaten your enemy, you should be ready to fight him again when he liked. . . ."

Germany was not the only country to be crushed and humiliated as a preliminary to restoring peace in Europe. Her ill-advised allies, Austria-Hungary, Bulgaria and Turkey, had also to be punished. The multi-racial Austrian Empire had broken up before the peacemakers assembled in Paris. In the last despairing days of the war, Czechs, Slovaks, Hungarians, Croats, Poles and Ruthenians had declared their independence of starving, ruined Vienna. A formless void in the centre of Europe had remained to be filled up. The grave of the dead past had to be dug and the earth stamped down.

For this purpose an ample procedure was devised. A large number of Commissions, permanent and special, were set up to advise with experts,[1] more or

[1] The late Professor Temperley in his *History of the Peace Conference* (i. 244) tells us that "many of them were experts only in name. They had made themselves familiar during the war with the subjects on which they acted as advisers. This was especially the case with the American and British delegations, and much of the knowledge which they paraded was necessarily somewhat superficial. . . . For example, at the opening of the Conference, none of the British experts on one country had ever been in that country." The writer can recall vividly a fascinating orange-jacketed journal called *The New*

less self-appointed, on the rights, desires and needs of the helpless millions whose fate was now to be decided for all time. The British Civil Service, with its solemn etiquette, its interminable forms and its unmanageable wealth of information, descended on the congested French capital and even set up its own printing press on the race-course at Auteuil. "The trouble about the Paris Conference", Mr. Nicolson has told us, "was not that there was too little information, but that there was far too much."[1] What with "committees, drafts, articles, proposals, counter-proposals, statistics, compasses, rulers, tracing paper, coloured inks and dossiers to read", that young diplomat confessed himself quite dead with it all, and so dispirited.[2] The aristocratic and leisured peacemakers assembled at Vienna a century before had been more fortunate, for they were not prevented by their own excess of information from seeing the wood for the trees.

The problems of these exploratory and advisory Commissions, all of them international in their composition, were gigantic. It is not fair to blame them, as Hitler subsequently did, for all the ills of an already sick and bankrupt Europe. "Nobody", wrote Mr. Nicolson, "who has not had experience of Committee work can conceive of the difficulty of inducing a Frenchman, an Italian, an American and an Englishman to agree on anything. A majority agreement

Europe which appeared during the later stages of the war and which contained a wealth of information of an academic kind about the closed continent and its many and awakening peoples. It made the whole thing seem very simple.

[1] *Peacemaking*, p. 25.

[2] *Ibid.* p. 281.

is easy enough: a unanimous agreement is an impossibility: or if possible, then possible only in the form of some paralytic compromise."[1] Before these wrangling bodies petitioners speaking polyglot tongues appeared in succession from every corner of Europe to give their contradictory testimony. And if in adjudicating their claims the victors were biased by their own predilections and prejudices — strengthened a hundredfold by the rigours of a long war — who can feel sure that, in their shoes, they would not have acted as they did, or worse?

In the end, for all the mountain of material gathered together by the Commissions and their busy, self-important experts, the questions at stake had to be settled by "the Big People in a hurry". The elaborate schemes drawn up for them were cursorily examined and inadequately collated. Time was pressing, patiences wearing thin and the flames of Bolshevism gaining on Europe from the east. A peace of some sort had to be made; even a bad settlement was better than none.

So a tiny group of tired political potentates issued their ukase. They wielded powers greater than those of any absolute monarch and against which there was no appeal. They were "able to decree the destruction of old and the creation of new States, to determine the fate of ancient dynasties, to convert at will monarchists into republicans and republicans into monarchists — in fact to do almost everything except change men into women and women into men."[2]

By the Treaty of St. Germain, which followed

[1] *Peacemaking*, p. 275.

[2] Harbutt Dawson, *Germany under the Treaty*, p. 23.

Versailles, the size of Austria was reduced to a fraction of its former self. Even of her purely German population she lost a third. The proud empire of the Hapsburgs became a poverty-stricken republic, and the last emperor died as a pauper in Madeira.

Austria's sister kingdom of Hungary fared almost as badly. By the Treaty of Trianon she lost Slovakia and the Carpathians to the newly formed Czechoslovakian republic, Croatia to Jugoslavia and Transylvania to Romania. Of her own nine million Magyars, a third passed under alien rule. Her most ancient and historical towns were taken from her and their names changed. The university city of Pressburg, where her kings had been crowned and the young Marie Theresa had appealed to the chivalrous valour of her nobles, became, under Czech rule, Bratislava. To the peace-loving, newspaper-reading but historically ill-informed public of Britain it seemed an iniquitous thing when, twenty years later, the Hungarians snatched back from a dissolving Czechoslovakia cities and lands that seemed as dear to them as Winchester and Kent to us.

It is the recollection of the past that keeps ancient communities together and inspires the spirit of patriotism and public service in their sons. The tired and ageing men who framed the treaties of peace had little time for history. Harold Nicolson, present at the Quai d'Orsay, saw "in that heavy tapestried room, under the simper of Marie de Médici, with the windows open upon the garden and the sound of water sprinkling from the fountain. . . . Hungary partitioned by these five distinguished gentlemen —

indolently, irresponsibly partitioned — while the water sprinkled on the lilac outside." [1]

The youthful states of central and south-eastern Europe succeeded to the remains of the broken kingdoms of the past. Serbia, which had been subjected to untold sufferings in the course of a war itself had helped to precipitate, was transformed from a little Balkan country of four millions into the kingdom of Yugoslavia with thirteen. Romania was rewarded for her bold but calamitous intervention on behalf of the Allies, and her subsequent defeat and enslavement, with an accession of 40,000 square miles and five million inhabitants, a large number of them Hungarians. It would perhaps be truer to say that she helped herself, for while the statesmen were still debating in Paris, she invaded a helpless and revolutionary Hungary with an army which sacked Budapest and lived at large on the country. The jaded peacemakers at Paris were forced to accept a *fait accompli*.

The most revolutionary, and as the event was to show, perilous, changes of all took place in the north — in the lands running along the backbone of central Europe between the Erzgebirge and Böhmer Wald and the eastern Carpathians. Here a new composite State was created out of an artificial union between the Czechs of Bohemia and Moravia, the Slovaks of northern Hungary, and the Ruthenians of Galicia. A group of Czech and Slovak racials living in America had met at Pittsburg in the closing months of the war and issued a statement of common purpose. This had been given effect to, after the

[1] *Peacemaking*, p. 328.

collapse of the Hapsburg Empire, by a joint declaration of independence by Czechs and southern Slovaks in October 1918 and the proclamation of a provisional Czechoslovak government at Paris by Dr. Beněs, the General Secretary of the Czech National Council.

This unexpected and at first somewhat chaotic State had been recognised with shrewd satisfaction by Clemenceau. In it he saw a means of barring Germany from future expansion towards the rich lands of the east and south-east, and an invaluable military ally to France situated within a stone's throw — or a bomber's flight — of her enemy's heart. So long as Germany remained disarmed and the French Army could march across an unmilitarised Rhineland to its support, Czechoslovakia would be one of the chief military factors in Europe. It was also, in the form it took, to constitute one of the principal incentives to a war of revenge.

To strengthen its fighting power and ensure it the strategic protection of the ancient mountain frontiers of Bohemia, three and a half million Germans, former citizens of Austria, were incorporated in the new State, without regard either to their feelings or the principles expressed in the Fourteen Points.[1] Their desire to join their fellow-Teutons in a "western Austria" and, when this was denied them, in the German Republic, was sternly forbidden. The Teuton mountain fringe, they were told, could not be separated from the Czech plain. Their appeal to President Wilson for the right of self-determination was ignored. When they subsequently tried to take

[1] These, however, were never explicitly promised to Austria-Hungary and the other allies of Germany.

it for themselves, they were treated by the Czechs as rebellious citizens and placed under martial law.[1] Appeals to a disarmed and impotent Germany were useless. In May 1919 the German Government was forced to beg the unfortunate Sudetens not to persist in a course which compromised its already hopeless position at the Peace Conference.

The Czechs, like the other Slavonic subjects of the old Austrian-Hungarian Empire, were naturally looked on with a lenient eye by the victors. Though they had fought for the Central Powers during the war, many Czech exiles had served as volunteers in the French Army, while others, taken prisoner by Russia, had obtained their liberty after the Bolshevist Revolution, and, seizing control of the Trans-Siberian railways, thrown in their lot with the Allies. But their highest virtue in Clemenceau's eyes was that they disliked Germans. Not for them were the stigma of war guilt and the crushing penalties of defeat, which because of their immunity were made to weigh all the more heavily on their former compatriots. Though 80 per cent of the heavy industry of the old Austrian Empire became theirs,[2] their share of the burden of reparations was reduced to a small " liberation tax " of £35 millions.

The Czechs did not receive quite all they asked for, including a fantastic corridor running across Hungary to link them with Jugoslavia. But they obtained far more than they could have expected either on ethnographical or historical grounds. Dr.

[1] Harold Nicolson, passing through Prague in April 1919, noted in his diary that he had heard that the Czechs were behaving badly in the occupied districts. *Peacemaking*, p. 305.

[2] *Whitaker's Almanack*, 1927.

Beněs, the young Czech Foreign Minister, pointed out during the Conference (at such length that old Clemenceau rapped out a " Mais il a été d'une longueur, votre Beněs ! ") that their programme was to reconstruct central Europe on a non-Germanic basis, and that their claims were " not so much on national as on international justifications ". It was a case which he presented with great skill and to a naturally sympathetic audience. In doing so, as Mr. Lloyd George has since pointed out, " he either ignored or minimised the fact that he was claiming the incorporation in the Czechoslovak republic of races which, on the principle of self-determination, would have elected to join other states ". It might have been better for the infant republic, as many Czech patriots less Francophile than Dr. Beněs wished at the time, had its founders been content with a less ambitious policy.

Not that the foundations of Czechoslovakia, any more than the strengthening of Romania and Jugo-Slavia at the expense of Hungary and Bulgaria, was openly justified by military and political considerations. No such base and outmoded conceptions coloured the peacemakers' declarations. These remained in accordance with the principles laid down by the high-priest of democracy, President Wilson. Dr. Beněs, who was well versed in the appropriate language and had himself a sincere love of democratic institutions, assured the Conference that the six and a half million Germans, Slovaks, Hungarians, Poles and Ruthenians, who could always be outvoted by the seven million ruling Czechs, would be granted full minority rights. " It is the intention of the

Czechoslovak Government", he told the New States Committee of the Peace Conference, "to create the organisation of the State by accepting as a basis of natural rights the principles applied in the Constitution of the Swiss Republic, that is, to make the Czechoslovak Republic a sort of Switzerland." It was a strange kind of Switzerland that eventuated, without racial autonomy or a cantonal system, with a powerful conscript army, the biggest armament works in Europe, and a collection of military alliances that were curiously reminiscent of the old bad alliances of the imperialist and undemocratic past.

In all this there was, none the less, a wealth of good intention. Had only the manner of the peace-making been different there might have ensued lasting benefits of the utmost importance to mankind. Many dreams and unspoken aspirations had been suddenly and miraculously realised. The right of self-determination was applied to peoples who had long been without it. Ethnographically, for all the injustice done to Teutons and Magyars, the map of the continent had not been so just for centuries. A zone of small nations, full of potential hope and youthful vigour, was set up in central and eastern Europe. Democratic principles were honoured in the word, if not always in the spirit. The rights of the peasant and small bourgeois were, for the first time since the Middle Ages, taken into the same account as those of the privileged hereditary class.

All this was to the good. As the writer of a recent Penguin Special puts it, "central Europe was organised afresh on the basis of the political rights won for western Europe more than a century

previously by the French Revolution. Freedom and equality applied to peoples meant the end of European imperialism, and the rights of small nations to independent existence. . . . This was the moral basis of the Treaty, the victory of democracy over imperialism, and it was the strongest guarantee of future peace — a guarantee because of the satisfaction of the peoples involved : a guarantee because it established a European balance and for twenty years saved Europe from the ever-recurring danger of domination and dictation."[1] There were many others besides Miss Grant-Duff who hoped great things of the new Europe, and not unjustly. Unfortunately they forgot how many skeletons there were at the feast.

For there was another side to all this hopefulness. Freedom and equality were not distributed impartially. Twelve million Germans in Austria, the Sudetenland, Poland and the Tyrol were for various reasons — some valid and some less so — denied the right of self-determination. So were three million Hungarians who were torn from the historic land to which they had belonged for a thousand years. And for vast numbers freedom and equality were found to be rather delusive terms when they implied in practice a network of high tariff walls and a cessation of ancient forms of livelihood that spelt hunger and bankruptcy. The primitive timbermen of the Ruthenian forests set less store on the democratic dignity and status conferred on them by their new Czechoslovakian citizenship than on their free access to the Hungarian plains which for hundreds of years had been the market-

[1] S. Grant-Duff, *Europe and the Czechs*, p. 62.

place for their wares and labour. They could no longer float down the rivers in the spring with their timber without crossing the frontier of a foreign country. The distant politicians in Paris could not make the Tisza flow uphill.

Thus in the old Hungarian town of Estergom, the railway station was given to Czechoslovakia and the bridge leading to it was blown up. The railways between the interdependent towns of Pécs and Szeged twice crossed the new frontiers. The coal from Pécs could only reach the factories of Szeged if the owners of the latter could afford to pay the import duties so involved. In Salgo Tarjan the houses of the miners and the seams of coal they worked were given to Czechoslovakia, but the entrance to the pit remained in Hungary. Every miner had therefore to equip himself with a passport, properly viséd, and present it every morning when he went to work and every evening when he returned home. Those who re-shaped the map of Europe according to abstract principles did not think of such trivial matters. Yet to more humble folk — that is to the great majority of those who had to live under the new dispensation — they mattered a great deal.

The truth is that the old Austrian Empire may have been a political monstrosity, but it was also, as a wise old journalist [1] has pointed out, an economic masterpiece. For centuries it had provided an every-day working basis of life for millions of diverse races living in so many intermixed geographical pocket-holes that there was no sorting them out without doing injustice and injury to somebody. For them,

[1] Sisley Huddleston in *In My Time*.

in terms of daily bread, economic union was more important than political self-determination. And, as the old Austrian Empire had proved, it was easier to obtain.

" The disruption of Austria-Hungary ", wrote the last Hapsburg Emperor before his death, " from every point of view — geographical, ethnographical, economic, social and cultural — has been a terrible blunder. . . . The interdependence of the Danubian countries and the impossibility of organising them on strict national lines, made Austria-Hungary for centuries a European necessity. The ancient community has now gone and there is nothing to take its place. Such is the penalty for ignoring the influence which a great river system must inevitably exercise in the formation of States. The great fabric of finance and trade has been built up by the labour of years, in a complicated design into which the railways, canals, the telegraphs, the roads were fitted ; and in which there was a careful adjustment between the manufacturing areas and the districts which produced raw materials. This fabric, so colossal and yet so delicate, has been roughly torn down for the sake of a theory — a hypothesis — and in its place are ruin and desolation." [1]

The misery of Austria provided one of the most terrible spectacles of post-war Europe. Every visitor to Vienna brought back a tale of ruin and starvation, the more pitiable because its victims had been among the most highly cultured, kindly and charming people in the world. They were now reduced to a state of the most sordid and tragic want : the very seats of

[1] Baron von Werkmann, *Tragedy of Charles of Hapsburg*.

the tram-cars were torn and slashed by travellers in search of shoe leather. In March 1919 the bulk of the population was living on pickled cabbage. Those who a few years before had adorned a graceful if frivolous Court at the heart of an ancient civilisation found themselves reduced to the life of tramps and beggars. Countesses took in washing and lodgers in salons whose every furnishing had been sold to buy bread, and imperial officials were glad to seek a living from the pickings of the streets and ash-bins. A former Commander-in-Chief of the Austrian Army, who had commanded four million men and whose pension of 25,000 crowns was now equivalent to less than a shilling a year, earned a tiny pittance by retailing tobacco in a Tyrolean town. Vienna had become the ragged Cinderella of European capitals. Deprived of their economic basis and support, her two million people who had supplied the administration and commerce of an empire for forty millions were left destitute in the midst of a little community of six millions, without markets, raw materials or outlet to the sea. Destitute and faced by the prospect of reparations she could never hope to pay, the new republic of Austria was bankrupt from the very start.

For her wretched people the only future seemed to be to unite with their fellow Germans in the north who had achieved their union forty-eight years before. Just as the war of 1870 had helped to bring about that earlier amalgamation of the Teutonic States, so the companionship of the trenches between 1914 and 1918 had fostered hopes of a more complete one. The self-determination achieved by the other racial

groups of the former Austrian Empire now seemed to make such a process inevitable. The first step of the Austrian Socialist Government set up after the fall of the Hapsburgs was to declare itself a constituent part of the German Republic. The Allies refused to accept the act, and subsequently forbade the fusion of the two German States by the Treaty of Trianon. Even an economic *Anschluss* was interdicted except by the unanimous — and therefore unobtainable — leave of the League Assembly.

There was nothing left for Austrians but to starve. They were still doing so two years after the Armistice when a fund was opened in England to mitigate the misery in the famine areas of central Europe. At that time in Vienna 96 per cent of the child population was under-nourished. Those who worked among these poor strays of a stony-hearted civilisation reported " an army of stunted pigmies, raggedly clad and famished to a greenish pallor ".[1] Their faces were wizened and jaded like those of old men, and their throats puffed with tubercular glands. Their feet were swollen and deformed, and many of them walked on their ankles because their bones were so soft that they bent at the least pressure. " Lord ! " wrote John Evelyn, confronted with the sufferings of war, " what miseries are men subject to, and what confusion and mischief do the avarice, anger and ambition of Princes cause the world ! " Had he lived two and a half centuries later he might have added of doctrinaires and democracies too.

Thus was the map of Europe re-shaped without

[1] " The stench from the starving bodies was nauseating " (*Daily News*, December 23rd, 1920).

reference to the wishes or essential needs of a great and defeated people, temporarily powerless. To the mass of the victors, oblivious of all this suffering, the Treaties of Peace which sealed the sacrifice of ten million lives seemed to herald a new age of peace and widening freedom. Speaking after Versailles in the House of Lords, the British Foreign Secretary quoted Shelley's lines from the end of *Hellas*:

> The world's great age begins anew,
> The golden years return,
> The earth doth like a snake renew
> Her winter weeds outworn:
> Heaven smiles, and faiths and empires gleam
> Like wrecks of a dissolving dream.

Millions who would not have understood the poetry believed and echoed that hope. It appeared to them that they had won the war. They could not realise that in the end, as much as their vanquished enemies, they had lost it.

Among the conquered, in their poverty and loss, nothing survived for the moment but despair and hatred. "What hand", wrote Philipp Scheidemann, "must not wither that lays itself and us in such fetters!" The *Arbeiter Zeitung* of starving Vienna described the Treaty as one "in which every provision is permeated with ruthlessness and pitilessness, in which no breath of human sympathy can be detected, which flies in the face of everything which binds man to man, which is a crime against humanity itself, against a suffering and tortured people".[1] It had completed the work of the war that preceded and

[1] *Arbeiter Zeitung*, Vienna, June 4th, 1919.

caused it. It had destroyed the unity of Christendom. To a German Socialist, present at Versailles, the spirit of the Peace was symbolised in the old agnostic Clemenceau, uncomprehending and unforgiving—the authentic mouthpiece of the fear and hatred war had engendered. "The consequences would be eternal and incalculable. Decade after decade would still bring no peace among the peoples. French hatred of Germany would engender German hatred of the French, hatred which till now had never been acute or real. And then, one day in the more or less distant future . . . an ultimate consequence would unloose this hate above our heads, nation would rise against nation, men — young men — would be sent to perish, houses would flame, factories be shot to ruin, — here, or across the Rhine. An old man, himself on the edge of the grave, would have strewn these seeds of death."[1]

[1] V. Schiff, *The Germans at Versailles* (1930), p. 130.

CHAPTER 3

IN TIME OF THE BREAKING OF NATIONS

> "The German revolution . . . passed across our anxious, satiated, jaded consciousness with no more attention than surviving troops just withdrawn into rest. The story requires a book to tell. . . . The nation is beaten in war, the Fleet and Army mutiny and dissolve, the Emperor is deposed and Authority bankrupt is repudiated by all. Workmen's and Soldiers' Councils are set up, a Socialist Government is hustled into office; upon the famine-stricken homeland return millions of soldiers quivering from long-drawn torment, aching with defeat. The Police have disappeared; industry is at a standstill; the mob are hungry; it is winter."—WINSTON CHURCHILL, *World Crisis*.

ON November 9th a crowd of sailors wearing red brassards and cockades broke into the Hapag building in Hamburg, headquarters of the Hamburg-America Line, and bawling out that the German Republic had been proclaimed, threatened to thrash the great Albert Ballin, founder of the Line and master architect of Germany's mercantile power. A few days before their comrades at Kiel had refused to sail against the English, mutinied and hoisted the Red Flag over the High Seas Fleet. When they surged out into the street again, the old Jew, sensitive and ailing, took down a bottle of sleeping draught and poured it down his throat. It seemed the only thing left for him to do. Then, regretting his fatal impulse,

he rang up his doctor, who at once ordered him to walk to his clinic. On the way he fell dead of heart failure.

It was the first casualty of the German Revolution and the end of an era. Forty-eight hours later, Ballin's friend and patron, the Kaiser, drove silently through the rain to Amerongen in neutral Holland. Only when the car drew up after crossing the inner drawbridge of the Château did the imperial war lord speak, bidding his host get him a cup of real, good, strong English tea. Behind him in the November rain he left a defeated, divided and starving people.

The Revolution, so heralded, spread quickly. Shabby trains, bearing waving, cockaded sailors perambulated the country, announcing that peace and the social millennium had come together. At Ruhleben a British prisoner saw the arrival of the revolutionary train, full of rifles, machine-guns and improvised red flags. There was a little laughter, some waving of hats and a good deal of barracking of officers and officials. A prison guard, who appeared smirking and shame-faced with the red badge on his breast, was greeted with ironic cheers by the prisoners. At Pasewalk in Pomerania, Adolf Hitler, corporal in the 16th Bavarian Infantry, lay in hospital with eyes like burning coals and watched the sailors and their youthful leaders, mostly Jews, swarming out of their lorries as they called on the wounded war veterans to revolt. In Berlin processions marched through the streets singing the Marseillaise. Groups of noisy soldiers and students drove about on the roofs of tanks and armoured cars, haranguing the grey-faced, apathetic crowds on the pavements and firing

at the roofs of houses and the marble figures of the Prussian kings in the Sieges-Allee. In Munich loud-speakers on the Teresian Field blared out "Down with Capitalism!" "Down with the Wittelsbachs!" while the Jew, Kurt Eisner, aroused the crowd with his eloquence till it swarmed shouting into the city to release the criminals from the gaols and plunder the shops.

Old Prince von Bülow, who had been Imperial Chancellor in the old days before the war, has described the coming of that revolution which was Germany's counterpart to our own delirious Armistice Day. "Alas, she did not come as Ferdinand Lasalle had envisaged her in his moment of giddiest ambition, in the shape of a radiant goddess, her hair flowing in the wind, and shod with sandals of iron. She was more like an old hag, toothless and bald, her great feet slipshod and down at heel. The German revolution was drearily Philistine, lacking in all fire or inspiration. It revealed no such figures as the Danton whose statue in bronze stands on the Paris boulevard: erect with fixed bayonet, to his right a tambour, beating up the levee *en masse*. Our revolution brought us no Gambetta to proclaim war to the knife, and prolong our resistance by five months, not even a Delescluze, to get himself killed at the barricades. I have never in my life seen anything more brutally vulgar than those straggling lines of tanks and lorries manned by drunken sailors and deserters from reserve formations, which trailed through the Berlin streets on 9th November. That afternoon from the window of my suite at the Adlon I had a view both of the Linden and the Pariser Platz. I

have seldom witnessed anything so nauseating, so maddeningly revolting and base, as the spectacle of half-grown louts, tricked out with the red armlets of Social-Democracy, who, in bands of several at a time, came creeping up behind any officer wearing the Iron Cross or the order *Pour le Mérite*, to pin down his elbows at his sides and tear off his epaulettes." [1]

On the frontiers, trailing back along a thousand muddy, lorry-pocked roadways the armies were returning. " Gaunt, immobile, under shrapnel helmets, wasted limbs, ragged uniforms ", they marched, as one onlooker saw them, in silence, " as though they were the envoys of the deadliest, loneliest, iciest cold. They looked neither to the left nor right but passed through the first German towns with stony, expressionless eyes. The girls who stood waiting for them in the cold with pathetic bunches of flowers watched, trembling and uncertain, their faces pale and twitching. Some bolder spirits attempted a few feeble cheers, but there was no response. The heart of imperial Germany had broken. The soldiers passed on unmoved, their shoulders thrust forward, their steel helmets almost hidden by bulky packs, dragging their feet, company after company, little knots of men with wide spaces between. Sweat ran down their worn grey cheeks, their noses stood sharply out from their faces." [2] Their sacrifices had been in vain.

It was the end of the greatest military gamble in history. The brave men whose lives had been staked to win it and who had fought for four years against an ever-growing ring of enemies now received their re-

[1] Prince von Bülow, *Memoirs*, 1909–19, p. 295.
[2] Ernst von Salomon, *The Outlaws*, p. 708.

ward at the hands of their own countrymen. In many of the chief German cities, already in the hands of the revolutionaries, they were received in silence and contempt. Bülow saw them passing through Berlin, their whole aspect that of insurmountable fatigue, of deeply ingrained suffering and privation. Nobody wanted them or had any further use for their constancy and love of country.

Soon they began to dissolve. Not even the newly elected Soldiers' Councils could prevent the men from demobilising themselves in hundreds of thousands. They swarmed into the trains for their distant homes ; many hundreds who climbed on to the roofs were swept off or mutilated in tunnels.[1] As they arrived at the stations in the bigger cities they were met by Communist agents, who urged them to join the Red Army or offered them a few marks and a meal for their arms. A rifle sold for two or three marks — half the price of an overcoat, — a Browning automatic pistol for two, and a machine-gun for ten or a bag of apples. All over central Europe the same thing was happening. It was not demobilisation : merely disintegration. The Vienna War Memorial in the Heldenplatz is the eternal symbol of that defeat and dissolution, for it commemorates not only the dead but the institution for which they died. " Dem Andenken der ruhmreichen kaiserlichen Armee " run the words — " To the Memory of the Glorious Imperial Army ".

Authority had temporarily ceased to exist in the most authoritarian country in the world. In Berlin two puppet governments contended for a feeble

[1] Percy Brown, *Germany in Dissolution*, p. 57.

mastery, the Social Democrats and the Independent Socialists or Communists. The former represented the same semi-Liberal, bourgeois but timorous and therefore ineffectual elements that had followed Kerensky in Russia: the latter the extremists of the Left, the men of the Mountain who wished to establish by force a new social order, or at least to destroy an old one. At first it looked as if the revolutionary Communists, or Spartacists as they were called, would triumph. Defeated and starving Germany seemed about to follow in the steps of Russia, where after three years of modern warfare a third of the world, its faith and ancient social order shattered, had lapsed, at the dictation of a tiny minority of ruthless iconoclasts, into anarchy, famine and pestilence as the fiery prelude to a new world.

From the Soviet east poured into dissolving Germany a stream not only of disintegrating ideas but of gold — the accumulated treasure of the fallen Muscovite Empire. The windows of the house of the Hebrew Joffe, the Russian Ambassador, blazed all night in a darkened Berlin — a bank on which every revolutionary could draw at pleasure for cash and propaganda. At the end of 1918 an English traveller reported that there were four hundred couriers travelling regularly between Germany and Russia.

Many of the leaders of the Communist Revolution in both countries were Jews. The racial tie strengthened the ideological bonds between them. The prophet of the Russian Revolution, Karl Marx, himself had been a German Jew. Hugo Haase, who had organised the Sailors' Revolt at Kiel;

Kurt Eisner, who led the rioting at Munich and got himself nominated President of Bavaria; Ernst Toller, Levien, Axelrod and Leviné-Nissen, who succeeded him; and Rosa Luxemburg, who, with Karl Liebknecht, founded the Spartacist League and controlled the Revolution in Berlin, were all Jews. Long denied a proper outlet for their latent talents, these children of an exiled but invincible race tended naturally to identify themselves with the forces that wished to overthrow the social order of eastern and central Europe. Having themselves suffered prolonged indignities and tortures, they were not always squeamish in the methods they advocated. "Turn imperialistic war into Civil War!" "The armed rising is the highest form of the political struggle of the Proletariat!" had long been their watchwords. They now openly lauded the Terror and the Blood Bath which had come to pass in Russia, that should purge the world of its ancient faiths and wrongs and inaugurate the Dictatorship of the Proletariat. The prospect, though hopeful for the submerged tenth, promised some pretty grim experiences for everyone else.

They were not long in materialising. During the first few months of the Armistice over two thousand people in Germany lost their lives as a result of mob violence and street fighting.[1] A confused world ensued of local dictatorships and Workmen's and Soldiers' Councils, in which every town printed its own currency and nobody could be certain where authority resided. On the newly constituted Council of People's Commissaries equal numbers of seats

[1] Vernon Bartlett, *Nazi Germany Explained*, p. 45.

were apportioned to the Majority and to the Independent Socialists. In Prussia — constituting nearly two-thirds of the German Republic — there were at first two separate executives with two Ministers for each Department of State.

Public order there was little or none. The police and troops did as they pleased ; their barracks were full at meal times, but when they were wanted there was no-one there. The Imperial Palace in Berlin was seized by a group of naval mutineers who, genially styling themselves Robbers, levied toll on the richer inhabitants of the capital. There was a great deal of ricochetting of bullets down pavements, of wild shooting at night and of training machine-guns at church towers — always a popular target in Marxist revolutions. It was one of the ironies of the situation that very few of the young hectors who now maintained the rule of force over law had been near the fighting line during the war. Their power lay in their control of the roving bands of armed hooligans which they drew from the undisciplined underworld of the industrial cities. Bolshevist leaflets, distributed in millions among the illiterate and needy, had done their work. The German Revolution seemed to be following the classic lines laid down by Marx in his studies of half a century before.

Yet though there was black hatred seething in the poorer districts of the great towns where the working class had " lost all hold on every conceivable factor constituting the minimum of happiness in life ",[1] and though every day rising anger flashed spontaneously into blood and flame in some quarter

[1] A. Lethbridge, *Germany as it is Today*, p. 94.

or other of a vast, suffering nation, the course of revolution faltered and, after a while, failed. Germany, which had given birth to Marx, did not take kindly to the Marxist hypothesis, or at least to that part of it which advocated anarchy as the broad and easy way to Utopia. Kurt Eisner's untidy Utopia at Munich never impressed the Teuton mind as anything but a pigstye. An orderly people, deeply embittered though they were by the failure of past authority, rebelled instinctively against the slatternly, destructive rule of the "lesser breeds without the law" who had now fastened on their afflicted country. Even the revolutionary rank and file seemed at times to find their own irregular power embarrassing: Prince von Bülow and his wife were pursued down the corridor of their hotel by a youth with a revolver in either hand, who, when asked why he wanted to kill them, replied in a piping treble, "You must excuse me, madam, but we are all so terribly nervy and strung-up! We have the Republic to defend, and the least you can carry is a revolver. But we don't want to do you any harm. If you like we'll even come out with you for walks and protect you."

It was the incapacity of the revolutionary leaders that discredited them in the eyes of a people accustomed to value order. A nation of brave and industrious automatons could never respect cowards and idlers. There seemed to be a complete lack of co-ordination between the spasmodic outbursts of Bolshevist violence. The Communist Revolution in Berlin was already over and liquidated and the bullet-ridden corpses of Karl Liebknecht and

Rosa Luxemburg in their graves before the Spartacists had seized control of the other great cities. Hamburg, Dresden, Brunswick, Erfurt, Wilhelmshaven, Düsseldorf, Bremen and Cuxhaven all had their spell of Red rule and of the terror that went with it. Munich after its first blood bath under Kurt Eisner — shot by an army officer — suffered a second under the sailor Rudolf Eglhofer, three Jewish Commissars from Soviet Russia and the poet, Ernst Toller. Before its liberation by the Reichswehr in May 1919, the hostages seized by the Spartacists, including a woman, were murdered in a cellar of the courtyard of the Luitpold Gymnasium, nearly a thousand were killed in battle, and the city was given over to sack. The bulk of the populace received with open arms the old front-line soldiers, who made short work of the armed rabble of shirkers, criminals, hysterical youths and professional agitators who called themselves the Red Army.[1]

It was, in fact, the German people rather than the discredited ruling class who defeated Bolshevism in central Europe. The surge of revolution that swept Russia in 1918 and was to devastate Spain twenty years later was never allowed to develop into the orgy of mass murder and destruction that it became in these more primitive lands. When power slipped from the exhausted hands of the military caste it was, as Mr. Mowrer has said, Fritz Ebert the saddler, Philipp Scheidemann the tailor and Gustav Noske the carpenter who "snatched it from the streets

[1] Though 20,000 strong, they were commanded by a youth of twenty-one, who had been condemned to death by the naval authorities a year before for insubordination.

where the Communists were about to seize it — and handed it back to the astonished generals ".[1]

Yet it had been touch-and-go. The Allied statesmen in Paris were haunted by the fear that Germany would relapse as Russia had done, and that a raging sea of primitive terror and barbarism would engulf all Europe and Asia from the Pacific shore to the banks of the Rhine. Their fear was no old maid's nightmare, as some have since supposed. Mr. Winston Churchill, in his *World Crisis*, quotes figures to show that in the first flush of revolution the Communist dictators of Russia killed 28 bishops, over 1200 priests, 6000 professors and teachers, 9000 doctors, 12,000 landowners, 54,000 officers, and more than a million bourgeois, workmen and peasants. " Russia had fallen by the way; and in falling she had changed her identity. An apparition with countenance different from any yet seen on earth stood in the place of the old Ally. We saw a state without a nation, an army without a country, a religion without a God." [2]

From these astronomical figures of murder and waste Germany was saved not by the Allies but by herself. Yet she had felt the breath of the furnace and did not quickly forget either her fear or her hatred of that nameless terror. It is doubtful whether for all the recent apostacy of her Nazi leaders she has forgotten it yet. Law-abiding Britons who in the past have cast doubt on the genuineness of the popular German dread of Bolshevism should try to conceive the effect on

[1] *Germany puts the Clock Back*, p. 58.
[2] *World Crisis*, p. 71.

themselves if, in an hour of famine and defeat, Manchester, Bradford, Hull, Birmingham, Birkenhead, Nottingham, Plymouth, West Ham and Bristol had in turn been seized by a Communist junta and sacked by the mob, and Buckingham Palace, after the King's flight, tenanted for two months by a gang of armed mutineers. That theoretical sympathy for Communism among the well-to-do and sheltered classes in this island which has surprised and sometimes enraged the inhabitants of countries situated nearer the storm centres of eastern Europe and Asia, would have had little chance to grow under such circumstances.

Yet even the strong foundations of Britain rocked after four years of modern warfare. The first months of the Armistice saw an epidemic of mutinies in the army. In a single week at the beginning of 1919 thirty cases of insubordination were reported from different centres. At Luton the Town Hall was burnt by a mob; even the Horse Guards Parade witnessed a brief, quickly suppressed hour of pandemonium. In the industrial areas angry strikes paralysed trade and kept nerves taut for years. It was not till the imperceptible but steady hand of Baldwin grasped the tiller in 1923 that the country began once more to feel assured of its own unshakable stability. Even then a miasma of cynicism and defeatism for long hung over the English intellectual and moral landscape, time-honoured values were subverted and false prophets honoured.

The further east one travelled in Europe the more profoundly had the foundations of order and civilisation been shaken by the earthquake of war. In Italy

general strikes, riots and political murders passed for some years as common occurrences, and the very members of Parliament carried revolvers in the Chamber. In Vienna class war was epidemic. Hungary was the scene of a full-dress Communist *coup d'état* in the spring of 1919: Bela Kun, a native Jew returned from a Russian prison to establish what was described as a dictatorship of the Proletariat, in other words of himself and his friends.

Many needy folk came with him. Harold Nicolson, in attendance on an Allied Commission, described how the Bolshevik headquarters in Vienna was packed with Jews struggling for passports to Buda Pest, where the poor, wandering vagrants hoped for loot. In a single April evening 1500 wild men arrived in the Hungarian capital to join the Red Guard.

Such desperate creatures terrorised the country for months. In Buda Pest criminals were quartered in the houses of the rich while their former occupants were crowded into the gaols. The members of the Allied Mission saw a number of these latter, who to impress them had been set at tables in the foyer of one of the big hotels to sip coffee and listen gaily to the band. But the Red Guards omitted to order them to make conversation, and the captives' silence as they huddled with frightened eyes over the tables told the visitors what was amiss. In the country hunted landowners and their families hid in barns or escaped by slipping over the frontiers. Trade virtually ceased, and a terrorised people lived mostly on cabbages. Their ragged clothes and anxious

yellow faces long haunted travellers from happier lands.

Bela Kun or Cohen was a symptom of the times. Harold Nicolson described him as " a little man of about thirty: puffy wet face and loose wet lips: shaven head: impression of red hair: shifty suspicious eyes . . . the face of a sulky and uncertain criminal ". His hands were freckled, small and podgy. Under his enlightened supervision of Hungarian culture and manners, Commissars were appointed to revise the school curriculum and teach the coming generation the nascent virtues of atheism and free love. His *entourage* was of the same type as himself. Best remembered among them was Tibor Szamuely, whom Kun sent out with a large red motor-car and a band of toughs who called themselves Lenin Boys to scour the Hungarian plain and string up conservative-minded peasants over their own doors. With his morbid jests, his florid clothes and his monocle, he has gone down to Hungarian history as a kind of illicit Judge Jeffreys. He and his pink-eyed chief help to explain much harsh and bitter popular feeling that still exists in Hungary today.

The Bolshevist régime lasted till the beginning of August, when a wholesale massacre on the Russian model had been planned to secure Bela Kun's tottering throne. Before it could be carried out, the Romanians marched in and the Hungarian Conservatives rose simultaneously against the Red Guards. As in Bavaria, the latter proved of poor quality when it came to a show-down: their leaders scampered over the border, and the rank and file

surrendered without a fight. As usual, cruelty begot cruelty, and the same ruthless violence that had characterised the imposition of Communism in Hungary also marked its suppression.

But if the Bolshevist tide that threatened to submerge war-ruined central Europe was stemmed, the dreary landscape of ruin remained. The floodgates over which it had poured were still unmended. In Germany, as 1920 succeeded to 1919, there seemed for the vast majority of people nothing for which to live and hardly anything for which to hope. " Everything they had believed in ", wrote Mr. Vernon Bartlett, then travelling among them, " lay in ruins. The German God had failed them. They had accepted hardships infinitely greater than those of the Allies, and all to no purpose. Bewildered and starved, they would have followed any leadership towards any ideal. Humbly they went about their business — rode on bicycles which, owing to the rubber shortage, had miniature sofa springs fixed all round the wheel-rims ; lived on coffee made of acorns, and bread made of filth ; travelled in trains with window-straps and seats made of plaited paper ; and waited for someone to tell them what to do." [1]

Nobody pitied them — nobody, that is, but a few sentimental Britons and Americans. The Chancelleries of Europe turned a discreet and unseeing eye on their sufferings. To the now all-powerful French they were still *les barbares Boches* — lepers of the European community who had richly deserved all that they were suffering.

For now that Britain and America were ceasing

[1] *Nazi Germany Explained*, p. 19.

to interest themselves in the affairs of Europe, the hegemony of the Continent had passed into Gallic hands. The United States, stoutly denying the divinity of Wilson, had refused through its Senate to ratify the peace treaties and even to accept membership of the League, thus dooming that institution to ultimate impotence from the very first. The promise of its President to guarantee the western frontiers of France, which Clemenceau had extracted from him and Lloyd George in return for France's abandoning her claim to the left bank of the Rhine, was never ratified. America's rejection of her part in the joint guarantee automatically released Britain from hers. France was left alone to fend for herself. It was in every sense a tragedy.

For the moment she was able to do so. Central Europe was powerless, Italy weak and divided, Russia a welter of barbarism. The French army was the one dependable instrument of force left in Europe. From its position astride the Rhine it was able to make the German feel what he had not experienced since Leipzig but had known so often before in his humiliating past, that the Gaul was his military and political master. At Bonn, oldest of German University cities, the French never moved without a parade of military power: the writer can still picture them marching perpetually in small detachments through the streets with drums beating, steel helmets and fixed bayonets. Compared with their warlike demeanour, the discreet behaviour of the British army at Cologne was almost reminiscent of a gathering at a Young Men's Christian Association.

The French are the most civilised, the best

balanced and, after all their military adventures of the past, the most pacific people in the world. They have no illusions, but they have learnt to be content with reality. That is why they are past the fever of aggression. Of the French reality, their thousand years old heritage, — and it comprises alike the Champs Élysées and the peasant's potage — they have made a wonderful and lovely whole. There is more in France of what is truly good and of what can please and content the many-sided nature of man than anywhere else in the world.

But like all who have achieved some semblance of perfection in life, the French are perpetually afraid for its continuance. They love France so much that they can never think of her as safe. In this also they show their wisdom and their balance: this is not a safe world. Yet it makes them deeply suspicious of all who seem to constitute a threat to the beloved soil of their country: during the last War, the peasants of the Pas de Calais even feared that the English soldiers who had crossed the sea to succour them might refuse to quit the Channel ports they had come to defend. And to those who have done an injury to their land the French can be terribly stern. In this they are like a woman whose child has been hurt by a stranger — fierce, jealous and unappeasable. How much they suffered in the years of invasion can only be realised by one who travelled extensively through the haunted desolation of no-man's land — that long strip of scarred nightmare running like an open wound across the face and body of France. Even today after the passage of nearly a quarter of a century

there are parts of it where the intensity of that terrible and agonised past seems more real than the flimsy gimcrack present that has precariously established itself in its place.

For that wrong no Frenchman could ever forgive the German invader. He could only think of him as the unspeakable Boche — a barbarous injury incarnate rather than a fellow creature. The milk of human kindness ceased to flow in even the kindliest French veins when that hated name was mentioned. And the policy of the Quai d'Orsai towards Germany faithfully reflected the mood of France. It was inexorable.

For twelve years after the Armistice the French and their Allies occupied the Rhineland. It affords an illustration of the prolongation of hatred between nations created by the horrors of modern war. A hundred years before, after twenty-two years of warfare during which the Napoleonic armies had entered every capital in Europe, France suffered only three years of foreign occupation. In 1923, five years after the Armistice, there were still 163,000 foreign troops quartered on the German people, and even as late as 1928, 67,000. To accommodate them, over 10,000 private houses were sequestered. The maintenance of this vast army alone cost Germany half again as much as the total indemnity extracted from France after 1871.

From 1918 to 1930, six million Germans, like seven million unhappy Czechs today, were subjected to continuous foreign military rule. In the British Zone — the little "island of peace" of Cologne — they were kindly enough treated. Else-

where under the French and Belgians they endured something of what their own armies had imposed on their conquerors in time of war. They were subjected to arbitrary arrest at the hands of the military and summary trial by army courts. At one time or another nearly a quarter of a million of them, of all sexes and ages, were expelled from their homes and driven destitute across the frontiers, leaving behind everything save what they could carry with them.[1] It should not be forgotten that what the Germans have since made others suffer they themselves suffered under the Occupation. The Rhinelanders' political independence was extinguished. They were not allowed to attend political meetings, to listen to German military bands, to sing their National Anthem. Their newspapers were strictly censored, and a large number of journals and books published in unoccupied Germany placed on an *Index Expurgatorius*. The *Kölnische Zeitung* was suppressed in 1920 because it dared to criticise the quartering of black troops on the Rhineland. Even listening to the wireless and keeping a radio set was forbidden.

Whatever could be done to protract the bitterness of defeat was done by certain extreme French chauvinists. However little they represented the great country whose future security they were unwittingly endangering, they unhappily came to typify it to the ordinary uneducated German. These were the years when *Mein Kampf* was conceived and written, and when the dragons' teeth, seeds of Hitler's power — predicted as far back as 1919 in

[1] A. Lethbridge, *Germany as it is Today*, pp. 169-71.

a famous article in the *Observer* — were being sown. French officers would jostle German civilians and womenfolk off the side-walks,[1] knock off their hats with their riding-crops to teach them respect for their racial betters [2] — a cue taken from the German occupation of northern France — and flaunt the proprieties of Teuton middle-class life by parading in the most public places flamboyant ladies of the Parisian *demi-monde*. Though these were exceptional instances and contrary to the habitual and sober discipline of the French army, they were symptomatic of the warped spirit of the times. On the trains German travellers at a word from a French officer could be ejected from any carriage. Notices, preceding by a dozen years those that were later to humiliate defenceless and wretched Jews, proclaimed in public places — theatres, cafés, beer-gardens, swimming baths, railway compartments — the shaming interdiction, "No Germans allowed here!" "Everywhere the privileged uniforms of the conqueror . . . reminded the German of the shame of foreign occupation. Nowhere could he quite escape the feeling that he was a second-rate human being." [3]

The occupation of the Rhineland did not only entail humiliation and financial loss on its inhabitants. Those who were quartered on them included French native troops. In 1923 there were 30,000 of these in occupied territory. In justice it should be remembered that the French feel little or no colour prejudice

[1] A. Lethbridge, *Germany as it is Today*, p. 66.

[2] G. E. R. Gedye, *The Revolver Republic* (1930), pp. 20, 61, 102, 116, 121.

[3] *The Revolver Republic*, p. 61.

and that black soldiers are welcomed as permanent residents in French cities. But in Germany as in England people feel differently. The presence of Senegalese troops in a University town like Bonn was resented as much as it would be at Oxford or Cambridge. The German, like other Nordics, suffers from a peculiar horror of intermixture between the black and white races. Part of the cruel and irrational racial bitterness that has darkened the good name of Germany in a civilised world was due in the first place to the loathing and disgust felt by the Germans for these swarthy invaders. After the final withdrawal from occupied territory in 1930, one nationalist newspaper solemnly advocated the immediate destruction of all children born of German women and parents of "negroid, oriental, near eastern or Hamitic race".

The French military authorities did not view these lapses so seriously. What a German purist called pollution, they dismissed with a smile by a different name. Many of the injured women, they argued — and probably not unjustly — had not been at all averse to the attentions of their dusky admirers. The official record for the entire Army of Occupation of 65 convictions for murder, 65 for brutal assault, and 170 for sexual offences in the first three years of occupation,[1] scarcely justifies the wild charges made by German propagandists of a reign of terror. Yet there were cases in which for obvious reasons no charge was made and which passed un-

[1] They are considerably higher, though, than the four murders, forty assaults and the single sexual offence recorded against Germans during their occupation of French territory between 1871 and 1874.

punished. A fortnight after the Armistice a twenty-two-year-old girl, daughter of a farmer in Nieder-gailbach, was raped by a negro from Madagascar in an open field: in January 1919 a young woman walking on the road between Oggersheim and Friesenheim near Mannheim was carried off to a sandpit and outraged by more than twenty black soldiers. No record of trial or conviction exists in several similar cases testified to at the time by respectable German residents. In the eighteen months prior to August 1924, more than a hundred instances were recorded of alleged assaults on girls and young persons by black soldiers. They may well have been and probably were exaggerated. But like the German atrocities in Belgium and northern France in 1914, they were not quickly forgotten.

The haunting fear of every German in the occupied lands was that the French would never leave. There were Frenchmen in high place who shared their doubts. When Lloyd George and Wilson persuaded a reluctant Clemenceau to abandon France's un-ethnographical claim to the left bank of the Rhine, they did not cause his countrymen to relinquish their fears. The subsequent collapse of the Anglo-American guarantee of their eastern frontiers only increased their passionate desire for security. The longer they could hold the Rhine, and by doing so keep Germany weak, poor and abject, the longer would the integrity of France and her immunity from revenge be assured.

The Peace Treaty sanctioned the occupation of German territory as a security for the payment of reparations. If these were delayed, the period of

occupation could be lengthened. Despite repeated reductions in the capital and rate of payment — the result of many wrangling and thwarted conferences — the reparations which a crippled Germany was asked to pay were virtually unobtainable. They could not be paid in money and they could only be paid in goods at the prohibitive price of sacrificing Allied manufacturers and artisans to German.

The inevitability of Germany's default was seen by French statesmen as an opportunity for prolonging the period of subjection. In this way their country's necessity could be turned to glorious gain. The end of the policy they now pursued was a permanent French control of the Rhine, either by direct occupation or by the establishment of a puppet buffer state — a Rhenish Manchuria — between France and the Reich. This was the famous " splinter " programme. In pursuit of it every frail flower of German separatism was hopefully tended and much money vainly expended in educational propaganda. Rhinelanders and Westphalians were told that they were " Celtes comme nous " and in no way to be confused with " les barbares d'outre-Rhin ".[1] And when occasion offered, further German towns, including Düsseldorf, an industrial city as big as Leeds, were taken over as " sanctions " — one of the earliest uses of that ill-omened word.

In 1923 France invaded the Ruhr ostensibly to make Germany do what she neither could nor would do — pay. The ordinary French voter, who after all he had suffered and lost very naturally wanted to believe it, honestly supposed that it was possible, as

[1] G. E. R. Gedye, *The Revolver Republic*, p. 65.

Lloyd George put it, to get milk out of the cow after the carcass had been slaughtered. The French leaders were not so foolish. They saw their real reparations not in the fabulous figures of a banker's cloud cuckoodom, but in a prolonged security for France constructed on German weakness and disunity. " So long as we maintain our present position on the Rhine," wrote the President of the Finance Committee of the French Chamber in 1922, " we constitute a permanent threat to the rulers of German industry. . . . The possibility that we could ever dream of restoring these pledges must be left out of all consideration. Today we can either destroy or exploit German industry." But Monsieur Dariac and those who thought like him forgot that the economic well-being of an industrialised continent could not be divided. And they forgot also that actions pursued for an economic object may cause political and social reactions which ultimately defeat that object.

The economic end of the Ruhr occupation was to weld under French control the coke of the Ruhr and the iron ores of Lorraine to the enrichment of France and the impoverishment of Germany. The pretext was the shortage of Reparation timber deliveries. On January 12th, the Reparation Commission, against the vote of the British member, having declared Germany " in voluntary default ", a French army, 60,000 strong, marched from Düsseldorf into the Ruhr to put into operation the famous Plan 18.[1] It was received in silence by an angry and impotent

[1] The British Law Officers of the Crown subsequently gave it as their opinion that the Occupation of the Ruhr was illegal.

population. The offices of the mining syndicates were closed, the great coke and blast furnaces remained idle, the shops of Essen were barred and shuttered and the blinds of every window drawn against the invaders. Mankind was to wait sixteen years before a similar scene was enacted on a March day in the streets of Prague.

Thus, more than four years after the Cease-Fire, three thousand square miles, making a total of twenty-three thousand in all, and another five million Germans were subjected to foreign military rule. Germany could not fight to preserve the integrity of her frontiers, for she had no aeroplanes, no tanks and an army of only 100,000 men. Yet, faced by the passive resistance of a sullen and desperate people, the French found the Ruhr impossible to exploit. For more than two years they remained there vainly trying to achieve the unattainable and pick coal with the bayonet. Every unarmed hand was against them. Railwaymen refused to carry coal from France, policemen refused to remain on duty rather than salute French officers, youthful enthusiasts sabotaged signals, points and telephones, sank barges and opened locks, and the shopkeepers and restaurant proprietors refused to serve French soldiers and the girls to speak to them. Military "strafing" expeditions on the British "black and tan" model proved utterly in vain. So did punishments. The great Krupp von Bohlen and his fellow mine-owning magnates were sentenced to enormous fines and long terms of criminal imprisonment; mayors and municipal officials were arrested and carted off to gaol in lorries; striking workmen were whipped,

clubbed with rifle-butts and shot down with machine-guns.[1] In the course of a few months 140,000 humble citizens were evicted from their homes for the crime of refusing to obey French military orders. Faced by such persecution all classes became united in an inexorable hatred of France. The shopkeeper, Albert Schlageter, who was shot against the wall of Düsseldorf cemetery for sabotage, became a martyr. In the hour of the Ruhr and the Inflation German patriotism was reborn.[2]

The renewed French attempt to ruin and divide Germany did not end with the Ruhr adventure. It was followed by an intensification of the Separatist programme initiated by General Mangin after the Armistice. As the most influential elements among the Rhinelanders had repudiated every advance made to them, resource was now had to less reputable elements. Even the help of the dreaded Communists was sought to forward the French plans. Marxist propaganda was encouraged among the starving workers and the military instructed to refrain from any attempt to suppress the ensuing disorders. In many occupied German towns elaborately staged riots occurred: at Gelsenkirchen, in May 1923, a "Red Army" took possession, terrorising the bourgeoisie with cudgels, gas-piping tubes and revolvers, and murdering a number of special constables and firemen. Queer cards with criminal records and stormy, prize-fighting characters were spirited out of

[1] G. E. R. Gedye, *The Revolver Republic*, pp. 102, 121, 124, 131.

[2] "The question was put to one of the highest authorities in the Rhineland: 'Do you think that the French occupation of the Ruhr has intensified the war spirit in Germany?' The reply came quickly: 'No, it has started it.'" (*The Times*, May 16th, 1923).

the underworld and given unofficial protection as agents for the establishment of a Rhineland Republic. The idea was, by fostering anarchy, to frighten the Germans into acquiescence. Bands of gangsters were conveyed free of charge on French trains to meetings which usually developed into bloody and destructive frays. Comfortable, orderly Rhinelanders who loved their lady Peace were made to feel that their only hope of enjoying her was to anticipate the revolutionaries and espouse the French plans before it was too late and anarchy became general.

The methods employed by the Separatist "bosses" and their backers were afterwards closely followed and bettered by the Nazis in a different cause. So surely does violence beget worse violence. The recognised leader of the movement — a gentleman of dubious antecedents whose appearance was described by *The Times* correspondent as that of a cross between a Mussolini and a prize-fighter — organised bands of "storm troopers" drawing five French francs a day and armed with revolvers and machine-guns. Through their agency life was made miserable for the vast majority who refused to betray and renounce their country. In Düsseldorf a man, who passed under the aliases of "Parsifal" and "Arndt" and seemed to possess a wonderful ascendancy over the dregs of the gaols, was given a French Army telephone and installed as Commander of the storm troops.[1]

On September 30th, 1923, the Separatist forces, conveyed in seventy French Régie trains together with a large body of Polish miners from the

[1] *The Revolver Republic*, p. 161.

Ruhr, attempted an armed Putsch in the great industrial city of Düsseldorf. The massacre of "Red Sunday" offered a foretaste of the terror which threatened the obdurate Rhinelanders. Mr. Gedye, present as Special Reporter for *The Times*, described an incident that followed the street fighting at the end of the day:

> The Separatists were acting as the hounds in the police hunt of the French cavalry officers. Led by a dozen Separatists, twenty French cavalrymen rode up to a policeman on duty close to the hotel and disarmed him. When this had been done, the Separatists turned on the defenceless man and beat him to death with clubs and lengths of lead piping.
>
> The doomed policeman buried his face in his arms and sank to the ground. The French cavalry reined in their horses and looked on calmly without interfering while the twenty or more blows were delivered which were needed to kill him. The policeman's body was left lying in the road while the French and the Separatists moved off to re-enact the same scene on another defenceless policeman a few yards away.[1]

Government by desperadoes as a preliminary to a civilised government by Frenchmen was one of the ills to which the Rhinelanders had to accustom themselves in those years. The idea of authority was inverted: to seize a town-hall, murder policemen and smash shops and citizens' houses became legitimate political activities: resistance to such usurpation, disorder and rebellion. October 1923 saw the proclamation of a Rhine Republic at Aix-la-Chapelle under Belgian protection. In

[1] *The Revolver Republic*, p. 170.

the French zone a band of gangsters, led, according to Mr. Gedye, by a gentleman who had had to fly his native country for assaulting schoolgirls, captured the Rathaus at Bonn amid a hail of bullets, while the German police who attempted to defend it with hose-pipes — a weapon not forbidden by the Versailles treaty — were disarmed by French cavalry. In the face of the angry townsmen, the hated red, white and green standard of Separatism was hoisted over half a dozen Rhineland cities. In Düren black troops charged the crowd with fixed bayonets when the latter made an attempt to drive the Separatists from the public buildings they had seized.[1]

Yet the movement, like other attempts to break

[1] At Crefeld the Separatist leader confided to Mr. Gedye something of his own history :

" ' I am a professional leader of *Putsche* ', the broad-shouldered man with a sly but commanding manner told me : ' I am not a politician. I am not German, but a French citizen of Polish birth ', and he pointed proudly to the ribbon of the *Médaille Militaire* in his buttonhole. ' I was brought to Rhineland three weeks ago to force through this Rhineland Republic, and am Commander-in-Chief of the Flying Army of the Rhine. My men are all armed to the teeth with machine-guns, rifles, hand grenades and revolvers, with unlimited ammunition.

" ' This is my trade. One of my finest achievements was the organisation of the *Putsch* for the French and Poles in Upper Silesia. I have run revolutions for the Bolshevists and ' White ' revolutions against them. Discipline I learned as a regular officer years ago in the Prussian Army, and I handle my ruffians here with something worse than Prussian discipline.

" ' I arrived here this morning, and shall arrange from this centre the overthrow of the German authorities in surrounding towns. I have reassurances from the Belgians that all is going well. We shall print our own money ; food is sent from Düsseldorf, and my orders come from Coblenz. My men will fight for anyone in the world who will feed and pay them, and will desert to the enemy when pay stops. So will I.' "—G. E. R. Gedye, *The Revolver Republic*, p. 203.

up the German Republic into its former constituent parts, shipwrecked on the sullen patriotism of the German people. Rich and poor alike, the overwhelming bulk of the Rhinelanders would have nothing to do with the "Revolver Republic". When, shamed by exposures in the British Press and gentler protests from the British Government, the French and Belgians at last abandoned their discredited agents, an outraged people took a horrible vengeance on their oppressors. The bullets of German patriots, lynch law and the flames of mob-encircled buildings ended the stormy lives of most of the Separatist "gunmen".

While the attempt to break the unity of Germany was being made in the occupied west, the rest of the German people underwent a new martyrdom. Ever since the war the value of the national currency had been steadily falling. Travellers in Germany in the first years of recovery after the war found it a land where a man with a little foreign currency could live like a prince. An Englishman could rent a luxurious flat on the Rhine for the equivalent of sixpence a week, occupy a box at the Opera for a few pence, or travel from one end of Germany to the other for less than the fare from Ealing to Victoria. One could buy for almost nothing magnificent books, china or music; more utilitarian commodities were made of such poor material that they were scarcely worth purchasing. The writer vividly recalls two holidays spent in Germany at this time, when the expenditure of a pound or two enabled him to enjoy for several weeks the unwonted life of a millionaire.

To the mass of the German people who had no

foreign money or credit with which to purchase their own falling currency, all this appeared in a very different light. Theirs was a day-by-day struggle to make both ends meet in a mathematical battle in which all the odds were against them. In the early spring of 1923 with the French occupation of the Ruhr — the key point in Germany's industrial system — galloping disaster set in. The currency, which had fallen by fifty per cent during the war and had since declined to a mere fraction of its former value, now lost its moorings altogether.

The immediate cause of the collapse was almost certainly the invasion of the Ruhr and the policy of "passive resistance" with which this act of what we have since learnt to call aggression was met. But it was a curious perversion of justice to write, as Mr. Mowrer did in his *Germany puts the Clock Back*, that "the responsibility lay with the rulers who, at the advice of men like Hugo Stinnes, more or less consciously committed the country to the hopeless policy of passive resistance to the French in the Ruhr, in the name of patriotism". Patriotism in the hour of oppression is not a crime.

Serious inflation had set in long before the Ruhr invasion. During 1922 the index figure for the cost of living had risen from 1991 to 112,027, or more than a thousand times its pre-war figure. The economic wounds suffered by Germany at Versailles — the loss of a tenth of her territory, including her finest agricultural land, a third of her coal, three-quarters of her iron-ore and all her colonies and overseas investments, together with the payment out of a depleted gold store of the cost of maintaining the

armies of occupation — had made default inevitable even without taking account of the unpayable bill for Reparations. The French invasion of January 1923 and the resistance it provoked only gave the final push that sent the whole crazy structure of post-war German finance crashing. The Republican Government, long at its wits' end, made no attempt to stem a *débâcle* which, while little intensifying its difficulties — for this was scarcely possible — offered a possible escape from them. It may even have assisted the process.

But for the German people, as apart from their leaders, Inflation meant a return to the conditions of the Blockade. Wages rose as the currency fell, but failed to keep time with the plunging rate of fall. In the year before the final collapse Germany was consuming approximately 30 per cent less wheat, 25 per cent less rye, 33 per cent less barley and 30 per cent less meat than before the war, while the import of coffee — the tea of the working classes of the Continent — had shrunk to a third of its former figure. Any further fall in the standard of living would inevitably entail starvation. It soon came. In May 1923, four months after the Ruhr invasion, Dr. Kuczynski's statistics show that, at the prevailing rate of wages and prices, though the former was already over 20,000 marks a day, a miner was having to work for a day and a half to purchase as much as a day's labour had brought him three months before. By the beginning of June a pound of meat was costing 24,000 marks. For anyone acquainted with working-class conditions comment is needless.

But after midsummer even statistics ceased to

guide. Only an astronomer could have coped with the figures which confronted the housewife attempting to eke out her family's daily budget. An ingenious statistician has worked out the changing prices of a glass of cider at the exchange rates quoted at Frankfurt-am-Main throughout 1923. Costing 50 marks in January — the equivalent in pre-war currency of about £2 : 10s. — it had risen by the middle of June to 700 marks, and to 1500 by the end of the month. On July 28th it stood at 8000 marks, on August 9th at 35,000, and on the 25th at 120,000. A fortnight later it passed the million level. By October 5th it cost twelve millions, by the 11th forty millions, but the 16th eighty millions, by the 19th two hundred millions, by the 24th five hundred millions, by the 25th a thousand millions, and by the 28th two thousand millions! Before the end of November, when the rot finally stopped, it reached the astonishing figure of two hundred thousand millions.

To make life possible at all wages had to be paid daily and sometimes twice daily. Long queues besieged the banks for the wherewithal to buy a loaf of bread, and workmen brought home the day's wages in wheel-barrows. At the height of the crisis a hundred and thirty-three printing establishments were working day and night manufacturing notes. The paper value of legal tender frequently exceeded its face value; it was said that it was cheaper to paper a room with notes than with wallpaper. Before stabilisation was achieved at the end of November a loaf was costing 770,000,000,000 marks, a litre of milk 280,000,000,000 and a short tram-car journey 150,000,000,000!

It requires no great power of imagination to picture what this meant to tens of millions of harried, anxious men and women. The sudden increase in the death-rate and in the figures for tuberculosis and phthisis for 1923 compiled by the German Red Cross tell their dismal tale. Before the end of the year 33 per cent of the working population of the country was out of work, with the rate of unemployment pay equivalent to less than 8½d. a day. The maximum rate of dole was equivalent to 1s. 6d. a day for a man and wife with four children. In Prussia two-thirds of the school children were certified as under-nourished. Sixteen cases of suicide attributed to hunger occurred in the capital on a single November day. In Munich a Ministerial decree had to be issued permitting coffins to be made of paper or cardboard since nobody could afford to bury the dead in wood.

By comparison with their former lot the greatest suffering fell on the middle classes. Working wages ultimately followed the upward rush of prices, and, when the inflationary period was over, trade temporarily benefited by the automatic extinction of State and industrial prior charges. But for professional men, for members of the learned occupations, above all for pensioners and small *rentiers*, there was no relief or hope. The savings of a lifetime vanished in a few weeks. A capital sum that in January would have sufficed to keep an aged couple for their remaining days was not able by the autumn to purchase a tram ticket. Hundreds of thousands of citizens were reduced to beggary and starvation. One after another their treasured possessions went to

the jewellers and pawnshops to buy their daily bread until nothing remained.

When the Inflation ended and the mark was stabilised at four trillion, two hundred billion to the dollar, the national debt and the standing mortgages on land and industry had been virtually wiped out. The price paid was the extinction of a class, and that the best educated and most intelligent in the nation. The deluge ceased, but with the subsidence of the floods Germany was left without her natural leaders. A vast number of professional men — civil servants, doctors, professors, schoolmasters, musicians, artists, traders, shopkeepers and the like — were no longer able to pursue their callings. They were driven from their homes and their children dispossessed. Close on half the teachers at the Prussian Universities were forced to seek employment in factories and on canals and railways. Of five thousand medical men in the province of Brandenburg, nearly two thousand were reduced to beggary.

The change in the distribution of German wealth that followed this great disaster amounted to nothing less than a revolution. The number of those who owned property equivalent to more than £1000 and less than £25,000 fell by two-thirds. In 1913 there were 12,000 men in Germany with a fortune of a million gold marks: in 1924 there were only 400. Ten years after the Inflation, of sixty-five million Germans less than two and a half millions possessed more than £250. The loss to national culture, both then and in the future, was incalculable. "The whole middle class of Germany," wrote Vernon Bartlett, "all the stout, kindly people who used to live in

houses with curtains and tassels and scores of photographs, whom one used to meet on excursions with their thick sausage sandwiches in grease-proof paper, whose ambition it was to have a son who could go to a university and get his face scarred in a duel — the whole middle class was wiped out in the space of a few weeks." A couple of years later, enquiring at an apartment house in Berlin for some friends who had lived there for twenty years and whom he had last heard of in 1922, the same sympathetic publicist was dismissed by the porter with a contemptuous, " But that was before the Inflation ", with as much finality as if it had been before the Flood.[1]

There were a few, of course, who profited by this gigantic transfer of property. The larger landowners, who had not been forced by hunger to sell during the crash, and the great industrialists and astuter financial manipulators found themselves richer than they had been before. The mortgages and prior charges on their equities had been artificially eliminated. But the chief gainers were those who had been able to command foreign currency or credit during the inflationary period. Theirs had been the opportunity of buying up the assets of a nation at " knock-out " prices. While others were selling, frantically and at almost any sacrifice to save themselves from starvation, they had been purchasers. Anyone who had a relation or friend abroad capable of advancing the smallest amount of foreign currency could enjoy for the easy reaping a golden harvest he had never sown.

It was the Jews with their international affilia-

[1] Vernon Bartlett, *Nazi Germany Explained*, pp. 40-41.

tions and their hereditary flair for finance who were best able to seize such opportunities. Jakob, the small shopkeeper whose father had emigrated from eastern Europe a generation before, had only to apply to cousin Mordecai in Poland or Czechoslovakia to receive the needful for effecting the transaction of a lifetime. By purchasing the movable assets of his neighbours for a song during the universal want of Inflation and re-selling abroad for foreign currency, he was able, before the *débâcle* ended, to buy up enough real property in Germany to make him a rich man. It was perfectly natural — and from his point of view perfectly just — that he should do so.

England's necessity, it used to be said, was Ireland's opportunity. Germany's was that of the Jews. Many who had hitherto enjoyed so much less than their fair share of the good things of life found themselves by legal process of exchange the residuary legatees of a broken kingdom. They merely did what others in their place would have done. And since the sun does not shine often on their race, they made hay as fast as they could. They did so with such effect that, even in November 1938, after five years of anti-Semitic legislation and persecution, they still owned, according to *The Times* Correspondent in Berlin, something like a third of the real property in the Reich. Most of it came into their hands during the Inflation.

But to those who had lost their all this bewildering transfer seemed a monstrous injustice. After prolonged sufferings they had now been deprived of their last possessions. They saw them pass into the hands of strangers, many of whom had not shared their

sacrifices and who cared little or nothing for their national standards and traditions.

There were not lacking angry and passionate spokesmen to voice the smarting and unreasoning feelings of the dispossessed. "Thousands of old-age pensioners, middle-class people, scientists, war widows", shouted the rising Munich orator, Adolf Hitler, during that August of galloping Inflation, "are selling their last gold values for scraps of paper. The last national property of the whole people is thus passing lightly into the hands of the Jews who are drawing all things to themselves. Millions of existences which were supported on the thrift of a generation are being tricked of everything by this swindle."

It was, in reality, a revolution almost as complete if not as murderous as that which had occurred in Russia. A few years before, Maynard Keynes had predicted the political consequences of Inflation. "Lenin", he wrote, "is said to have declared that the best way to destroy the Capitalist System was to debauch the currency. By a continuing process of inflation, governments can confiscate, secretly and unobserved, an important part of the wealth of their citizens. By this method they not only confiscate, but they confiscate arbitrarily; and while the process impoverishes many, it actually enriches some. The sight of this arbitrary rearrangement of riches strikes not only at security, but at confidence in the equity of the existing distribution of wealth. Those to whom the system brings windfalls, beyond their deserts and even beyond their expectations or desires, become 'profiteers', who are the object of hatred of the bourgeoisie, whom the inflationism has im-

poverished, not less than of the proletariat. As the inflation proceeds and the real value of the currency fluctuates wildly from month to month, all permanent relations between debtors and creditors, which form the ultimate foundation of capitalism, become so utterly disordered as to be almost meaningless; and the process of wealth-getting degenerates into a gamble and a lottery." [1]

During the years that immediately followed the Inflation, when German trade, freed from every prior charge, was temporarily booming and when foreign money, seeking an outlet from more fortunate lands, poured in the shape of loans into the Republic, the Jews obtained a wonderful ascendancy in politics, business and the learned professions. Though there were little more than half a million of them living in the midst of a people of sixty-two millions — less, that is, than one per cent of the population — their control of the national wealth and power soon lost all relation to their numbers. In the 1924 Reichstag nearly a quarter of the Social Democratic representatives were Jews. Every post-war Ministry had its quota of them. In business, according to figures published in 1931 by a Jewish statistician, they controlled 57 per cent of the metal trade, 22 per cent of the grain and 39 per cent of the textile. Of 98 members of the Berlin Chamber of Commerce and Industry, 50, or more than half, were Jewish, and of the 1474 of the Stock Exchange in 1930 no less than 1200. Twelve out of sixteen of the Committee of the Berlin Commodity Exchange were Jews and ten out of twelve of the Metal Exchange.

[1] *Economic Consequences of the Peace*, p. 220.

The banks, including the Reichsbank and the big private banks, were practically controlled by them. So were the publishing trade, the cinema, the theatres and a large part of the Press — all the normal means, in fact, by which public opinion in a civilised country is formed. In 1931, of 29 theatres in Berlin 23 had Jewish directors. The largest newspaper combine in the country with a daily circulation of four millions was a Jewish monopoly. So virtually were the Press Departments of the Prussian administration. At one period of the Republic's history, as Mr. Mowrer pointed out, a telephone conversation between three Jews in Ministerial Offices could effect the suspension of any newspaper in the State.[1] It was a power that was frequently used.

In the artistic and learned professions the Jewish supremacy was as marked. Authorship in Germany almost seemed to have become a kind of Hebrew monopoly. It helps perhaps to explain the contempt for some of the greatest products of the human mind which has since so tragically prevailed in Nazi Germany. For many years the professional organisations of German writers were controlled almost entirely by Jews. In 1931, of 144 film scripts worked, 119 were written by Jews and 77 produced by them. Medicine and the Law followed the same trend: 42 per cent of the Berlin doctors in 1932 were Jews, and 48 per cent of the lawyers. So in Berlin University — by far the largest in the country — were 15 out of 44 of the teachers of Law, and 118 out of 265 of the teachers of Medicine. Every year it became harder for a Gentile to gain or keep a foot-

[1] *Germany puts the Clock Back*, p. 177.

hold in any privileged occupation.

At this time it was not the Aryans who exercised racial discrimination. It was a discrimination which operated without violence. It was one exercised by a minority against a majority. There was no persecution, only elimination. " It seems ", Montz Goldstein, the Jewish essayist, had written before the war, " as if German cultural life was to be completely transformed into Jewish hands. . . . Consequently we are now faced by the following problem. We Jews guide and administrate the intellectual property of a nation which denies our qualification and competency to do so." By the third decade of the century the process had reached a new stage. It was the native Germans who were now confronted with a problem — that of rescuing their indigenous culture from an alien hand and restoring it to their own race.

The Jews cannot be blamed because they did not understand the feelings of the German people or satisfy their cultural needs. It is often said that art and learning are international. In a sense they are. The greatest of all art transcends frontiers, though even the genius of a Shakespeare or Goethe must grow of necessity from local roots. But most art, if it is to fire the imagination of the average man, has to be more particular in its appeal. Men speak different spiritual languages. That of the Jews — of those of them, that is, who have not yet assimilated the customs and culture of the lands to which they have migrated — is not the same as those of the long settled nations of the West. There is pathos in it and the wanderer's yearning and the outcast's bitter complaint ; there is the oriental and passionate enjoyment of the sensuous

delight of the hour; there is the intellectual aloofness of the exile, the pride of the rebel and iconoclast, and contempt for authority and the household gods of more pampered races. A Jew responds instinctively to those who can express these things in art or literature or music. A German peasant or burgher does not. His spiritual antecedents are different.

Few of the Jews who set the spiritual and cultural fashions for Germany in the 'twenties and early 'thirties had any comprehension of a countryman's point of view. They were not themselves countrymen or producers, but by long wont migrants and middlemen: the descendants of men who had been forced to live for centuries as exploiters rather than as creators because all other livelihood and outlet for their strong racial genius had been denied them. They gathered in the great cities of the industrial capitalist world, where quick fortunes were to be had by quick wits.[1] Their inherited instinct was to skim the cream rather than to waste vain time and effort in making enduring things which would only be taken from them by their Christian oppressors before they could be enjoyed. They were exponents of the get-rich-quick philosophy that all persecution tends to beget: lovers of the flamboyant and the arts of advertisement: scorners of the slow and unshowy creative virtues of discipline, labour and craftsmanship — of all, that is, that the solid and more sedentary native Teuton means by thorough. I am writing not of the Jews long domiciled in Germany who had learnt to

[1] According to the Prussian Census of 1925, 73 per cent of the Jewish population, as opposed to 30 per cent of the non-Jewish, was concentrated in towns of over 100,000 inhabitants.

live and think as Germans and who had often conferred, especially in the realms of learning, science and medicine, the greatest distinction on their adopted country, but of the migrant type — "Asiatic hordes on the sands of the Mark of Brandenburg" — who in the nineteen-twenties seemed, with all the invincible vitality and irrepressible opportunism of their race, to be making of a broken nation their washpot.

Of the 200,000 or more Jews who congregated in the capital, a quarter were aliens who had not yet acquired German nationality. Many of them had poured into the country during the post-war upheaval from the ghettoes and slums of Eastern Europe — the tragic products of centuries of intolerance and neglect. They could not be expected to see things from a German viewpoint. In Walter Mehring's *The Merchant of Berlin*, produced at the height of the Jewish supremacy by the Communist stage-manager, Piscator, the hero, a poverty-stricken Jewish emigrant from the East, soon has the whole town at his feet with his wonderful adroitness and freedom from bourgeois moral scruples. Amid shouts of laughter he derides every cherished symbol of German morality and national pride and holds them up to ridicule. The soldier's corpse and steel helmet, which are swept away with the scourings of the street by a chorus of scavengers, are shown to weigh nothing when set in the scales against the predatory courage, the quick cunning and the rollicking sensual opportunism of the little hero. To the disinherited German they stood for something very different — for love of country, for constancy and devotion, for a sense of unquestioning duty now shamed and made the sport

of the gutter. Human beings with their long and diverse histories cannot always be expected to see things in the same way.

It was the contrast between the wealth enjoyed — and lavishly displayed — by aliens of cosmopolitan tastes and the poverty and misery of millions of native Germans that has made anti-Semitism so dangerous and ugly a force in the new Europe. Beggars on horseback are seldom popular, least of all with those whom they have thrown out of the saddle. And some of the upstarts of post-Inflationary Germany, whom, as Mr. Mowrer points out, sudden emancipation and promotion had certainly not made more modest — and they came of a proud and resentful race — were not easy to love. They were arrogant, they were vulgar and they were vicious. The films and plays and books of that time seem to be largely concerned with the triumphs of financial crooks, criminals and prostitutes. Their prototypes in real life — possessors of fleets of cars, unlimited champagne and few recognisable standards — were to be seen in the innumerable night-clubs and vice-resorts which mocked the squalid poverty of the German capital. It was not a pleasant thing in that period, which now seems so remote but which many of us can still vividly recall, to watch the throng of children of both sexes who haunted the doors of the great Berlin hotels and restaurants to sell their bodies to rich *arrivistes*. The hoardings that announced the revues, with which the new arbiters of popular culture regaled the German capital, lined the streets with the slogans of the brothel — " A Thousand Naked Women ! ", " Undress Yourselves ! ", " Houses of Lust ! ", " O

Gee, a Thousand Pretty Girls!", "Strictly Prohibited!", "Sweet and Sinful!" In the reigning society of the German metropolis one could not say with Burke that vice had lost half its evil by being purged of all its grossness. To anyone brought up in a Christian and traditionalist culture it can seldom have worn a more loathsome and repellent form.

The moral degradation of the German capital in those years had to be seen to be believed. Mr. Mowrer, who, however, considered that public morals were ultimately little damaged, has described the bewildering degree of sexual promiscuity. "Morality, virginity, monogamy, even good taste, were treated as prejudice. 'Let's go to bed together and see if we like each other'—half as a joke, half seriously intended—was heard in all sorts of society. A Berlin season was not complete without half a hundred enormous public balls, which afforded all-comers the opportunities and sometimes the spectacle of a monkey-cage. Adolescents went off together to celebrate 'week-end marriages' as a matter of course. At private parties mattresses were strewn about and petting was only the beginning of the fun. Street acquaintances between the sexes were general and rarely failed to lead directly to the desired degree of intimacy. Hundreds of cabarets, pleasure resorts and the like served for purposes of getting acquainted and acquiring the proper mood." [1] Most of them were owned and managed by Jews. And it was the Jews rather than the Christians among the promoters of this trade who were remembered in after years.

[1] *Germany puts the Clock Back*, p. 153.

Many of the devotees of the new morality did not confine their pleasures to natural forms of self-indulgence. The perversion which has always been a major German failing was now exploited and stimulated by Jewish caterers who, while seldom sharing such tastes, did not hesitate to turn them to their profit.[1] The book-stalls — for Berlin in those days was the pornographic Mecca of Europe — made no disguise of the matter. Mr. Mowrer gives a list of titles noted in the window of a Berlin book-store:

The Witches' Love Kettle.
Eroticism in Photography.
Sexual Errors.
Flagellanism and Jesuit Confessions.
The Labyrinth of Eroticism.
Sadism and Masochism.
The Whip in Sexuality.
Sappho and Lesbos.
The Cruel Female.
Massage Institutes (for adults only).
A magazine, *The Third Sex.*
The Venal Female.
Venal Love among Civilised Peoples.
Places of Prostitution in Berlin.

"Somehow", he writes, "the unhampered exhibits and sale of these works was a symbol of German democracy and the freest Republic in the world."[2] It was a symbol which decent Germans did not regard

[1] In 1931, a year of widespread financial failure and bankruptcy, a Berlin publisher issued a *Guide to Vicious Berlin* in which mention was made, among more natural haunts of vice, of 160 bars, cabarets and dance-halls where the desires of sexual perverts were catered for.—Knickerbocker, *Germany—Fascist or Soviet*, p. 30.

[2] *Germany puts the Clock Back*, p. 149.

with much pride. *Simplicissimus*, the German *Punch*, put the matter in another way with a cartoon of a well-dressed pig in front of a book-stall, behind which dangled the body of a dead Cupid, lustfully eyeing the current journals: *The Lust Murder*, *Lesbos* and *The Friend*.

There were many simple Germans who believed or affected to believe that this organised orgy of vice was not solely the result of commercial opportunism exploiting post-war laxity, but was part of a planned international campaign to overthrow the existing order by undermining the traditional standards of morality. More than a century before a shrewd American observer in Paris had noted how a general prostitution of morals provided the necessary materials for the first of the great revolutions of the modern age. Like those that had preceded it the Communist revolutionary movement was aided by the moral degradation of the *ancien régime*, for once honour and faith are gone no cement can hold together a crumbling social system in the hour of shock.

A stream of subversive books, cubist and jazz pictures and statues, discordant unharmonic music, though mingled sometimes with much that was original and fine, shook men's beliefs in the values on which they had formerly based their lives. Something of the same kind occurred in other ancient communities, including England, during the restless post-war years. But in Germany, prostrate and with the unhappy national tendency to hysteria and excess exaggerated by repeated sufferings, the revolutionary process in literature and the arts surpassed anything experienced in

other countries and took on the dimensions of a nightmare. Those who, refusing to be hypnotised, clung to older ideals, became after a time filled with an insane hatred of its protagonists. That these also were often Jews heightened alike both their fears and their prejudices. " One only had to look at their posters", wrote Hitler, " and study the names of the inspired creators of those hideous inventions for the cinema and the theatre which one saw commended on them, in order to become permanently hardened. It was pestilence, spiritual pestilence, worse than the Black Death with which the nation was being inoculated."

It was not only ancient conceptions of culture and the traditional values of the older moral order that were derided by the apostles of the new dispensation. The beliefs of Christianity — now taboo and persecuted throughout Communist Russia — became an object of undisguised scorn among the German intelligentsia. A poet, lauded as great by a Social Democratic Minister for Culture, could not describe a cat caterwauling on the roof at night without an insulting comparison to " the Lord in the garden of Gethsemane ", while the most acclaimed biographer in Germany depicted Christ as an emotional if amiable sentimentalist, hypnotised by his own self-imposed mission and re-hashing as something new ancient Jewish doctrines while he indulged his tastes for heady wine and headier female flattery. Both writers were Jews. Perhaps there was little in all this but the natural reaction of exuberant and undisciplined intelligences against taboos too long and strictly enforced. " None the less ", the author of *Germany puts*

the Clock Back tells us, " from conviction, ignorance or a desire to kill with a phrase, all the new developments of the revolution came to be known in Conservative newspapers and circles as *Kultur-Bolschevismus* — bolshevicised culture — and damned accordingly. The struggle against *Kultur-Bolschevismus* came to be a principal plank in the new National Reactionary platform." " In this struggle ", Mr. Mowrer adds, " the reactionaries found powerful allies in the churches." It was not altogether surprising.

For those whom Mr. Mowrer describes as reactionary were merely the great bulk of the German middle class. They disapproved of the new " emancipation " just as strongly as their British prototypes would have done had anything similar happened in Britain. Those who deplored the comparatively mild goings-on of our own Bright Young People in the nineteen-twenties were not necessarily arch-reactionaries. The " nonconformist conscience " was as strongly developed in Germany as in England. Nor was it merely another name for obscurantism. So long as a race remains healthy its members will instinctively react against teachings and practices that its racial experience has taught it to regard as self-destructive. To normal respectable Germans of the older generation the intellectual mockery that shook the hallowed beliefs of centuries and the self-indulgence that was flaunted before the eyes of their children seemed merely bestial and vile. The new freedom, whatever its finer points, only repelled them. So, for that matter, it did the majority of the German Jews — all the quiet, decent, inoffensive people who had

acquired the outlook, habits and sober morality of the German bourgeoisie, and who today have become the tragic victims of an unreasoning loathing which they had done nothing themselves to create. They are suffering because of the indignation their fellow racials aroused in an unguarded hour of prosperity and power and which has since enabled a little minority of cruel fanatics to infect a whole nation with their own undiscriminating hatred.

There were other ways in which the new rulers of Germany offended popular susceptibilities. With the inauguration of the Republic a wave of financial corruption swept the country. Sharp dealing, dishonest manipulation of figures under company law, bribery and corruption came to be regarded almost as normal methods of business in a State which had formerly prided itself on its financial rectitude — " the immaculate country " of a sparer age. The names of Jews were too often associated with such practices. However much the better and older type of German Jew might deplore what was happening, the newcomers from the eastern ghettos —" soldiers of fortune attracted by the decomposing stench of German currency ", as one observer, himself a Jew, described them — had captured the limelight and for the moment monopolised the centre of the German stage. They felt no scruples at what they did but plundered their new neighbours with a kind of genial insolence that enraged old-fashioned Teutons.

The financial scandals of that age, such as that of the four Sklarek brothers and the Barmats — all Jews — shook the confidence of the nation in the Republic and lowered the whole national standard

of good faith. A Lithuanian Jew named Kutisker, who entered the country without passport or identity papers, was able, under the protection of a highly-placed police official of his own race, to get away with more than fourteen million gold marks of the public money advanced to him by the Prussian State Bank in credits for his fraudulent companies. Swindles defrauding investors and tax-payers of vast sums and incriminating members of successive German Governments made the democratic Republican system a byword for easy financial morality. It was not wholly for reasons of propaganda that the bigots who later dominated Germany referred to the surviving parliamentarian nations as pluto-democracies: an unhappy experience in their own undemocratic land had made them think them so. Punishment if it followed at all was generally light and nearly always — under cover of elaborate legalistic and ostensibly democratic forms — long delayed.[1]

[1] Mr. Mowrer, who in this as in other matters takes a tolerant line towards the failings of pre-revolutionary Germany, cites as an example the case of the Sklarek brothers: "Just after the revolution, three little Jewish clothing dealers named Max, Willy and Leo Sklarek came to Berlin from Poland. Jehovah brought them into casual contact with city officials. They had a gift of pleasing. They received clothing contracts for municipal uniforms and hospital linen; they also received from the municipal bank vast sums against clothing orders that never existed. In return they provided nearly the entire city administration with free suits of clothes, silk shirts and delicate underwear. From time to time they arranged Roman banquets with literally tubs of caviare and barrels of champagne; they kept a racing stable and extended great hospitality. They never did seem to understand that they had done wrong. But alas, after a trial that lasted three years, the Sklareks were given hard labour" (*Germany puts the Clock Back*, p. 152). Among those involved were the Mayor of Berlin's wife and many prominent members of the administration.

Government officials, parliamentary deputies, police chiefs, all took part in the profitable racket: one Republican Chancellor is alleged to have received 75,000 gold marks in a single year from a millionaire contractor who afterwards — though not till he had robbed the State of thirty-eight million marks — suffered a brief term of imprisonment.

It is a German characteristic — an unfortunate one — to carry things to extremes. For some years the whole nation followed the example of their betters. After the triple agony of Blockade, Defeat and Inflation, commercial Germany dropped all pretence of idealism and hoisted the Jolly Roger of the financial adventurer. Duty and honour were the outworn shibboleths of a discredited past: self-interest and unashamed materialism became the fashion of the hour. Nepotism was rampant, as always happens where power passes into the hands of a class which has not yet learnt to treat privilege as a trust. So was financial pluralism. One eminent Jewish financier, according to the Directory of Directors for 1930, held no less than 115 directorships. Fifteen others of the same favoured race shared 718 between them.[1]

A period of brief, deceptive but hectic prosperity ensued. It was based chiefly on borrowed money obtained with reckless promises of high returns from American and British speculators who, having abandoned the fiction that a crippled Germany could pay for the war out of her own resources, were now seeking an outlet for idle capital. Between 1924 and 1931 £750,000,000 flowed into Germany in foreign loans. In those seven years she became a foreign

[1] Vernon Bartlett, *Nazi Germany Explained*, p. 112.

financier's colony with an apparently inexhaustible supply of new civic and municipal buildings, sports stadiums and swimming pools, schools and hospitals — " the finest poor-house in the world " — all built out of borrowed money and offering endless opportunities for those who knew how to take quick chances. There was a greedy rush to the trough.

The boom did not last. It could not. For nothing had happened — Locarno notwithstanding — to alter the fact, pointed out by Maynard Keynes in 1919, that the Germany created by the peace treaties was not a practicable economic unit. Driven back on her own resources, she could never be anything in the long run but bankrupt. So soon as the inflow of foreign capital ceased, the brief spell of post-Inflation prosperity ceased with it.

At the end of 1929 the great World Depression set in with a crash on the American Stock Exchange. For the moment there was no more foreign capital to invest. The hectic flush on the face of capitalist Germany faded and revealed once more the pallid features of the post-war Reich. The tinsel prosperity of *Grand Hotel* suddenly vanished into air.

Behind its tawdry façade Germany starved. In 1930 Mr. Knickerbocker, an American journalist,[1] toured the bankrupt republic with the idea of finding out how much of the capital his countrymen had so recklessly poured into it was ever likely to recross the Atlantic. 17,500,000 Germans, he reported, or almost one-third of the population, were being supported by the State, of whom none, according to

[1] Who since the beginning of the present war has brought certain important charges of corruption against the German leaders.

official statistics, had enough to eat. The unemployment dole stood at the equivalent of less than 16s. 6d. a week, and the communal charity, which was all that could be afforded to the millions whose right to unemployment benefit had expired, at about 7s. 2d. It was calculated that a family of three on the dole, after paying for rent, heating and light and other indispensables, would have a sum of not more than 18s. 6d. to pay for a month's food. The crowded Night Refuges for the Homeless and the queues who waited for the daily dough soup outside the People's Kitchens showed all too clearly how the rest lived. In the shadow of the massive red-brick Police Headquarters in the Alexander Platz Mr. Knickerbocker saw a crowd gathered round a pale-faced, wobbly-legged youth whom two policemen were trying to assist to his feet: asked what was wrong with him, the policeman answered, "Hunger".[1]

Outside Berlin that same impression prevailed. At Falkenstein in Saxony the same reporter found 7500 out of 15,000 inhabitants jobless or living precariously on the public purse. The best paid among those in employment received only a few shillings a week more than the workless. The houses were unheated, the streets scarcely lit, and the beer-halls were half empty. Only the churches were full: in the dim dawn of Sunday the streets were filled with threadbare, grey crowds hurrying to "Zion Church" and "Bethlehem Community Prayer House" and the Evangelical Bible Community to find, if they could, some inner consolation for the harsh injustice of a world that denied them all else.

[1] H. R. Knickerbocker, *Germany — Fascist or Soviet*, p. 14.

It was not to the next world that many millions of hungry, ragged, ill-housed German men and women turned, but to an angry hope of bettering this. The resolve of the Communist Third International, now firmly established over all the Russian dominions, to make Germany the spearhead of revolution in the West had not been weakened by the fiascos of 1919 and 1920. Sporadic Spartacist outbreaks, generally accompanied by loss of life, had continued throughout the years of humiliation and inflation, and even during the brief false dawn of hectic prosperity that followed. In 1920 in the lace and textile towns of the Saxon " Siberia ", hungry mobs, bearing, in Mr. Knickerbocker's picturesque phrase, the Red Flag in one hand and a torch in the other,[1] burnt the villas of the bourgeoisie and set up a Communist government which kept peaceable folk in a state of terror until its suppression by the Reichswehr. In the same year a Red Army operated in the Ruhr. Three years later a rising occurred at Hamburg under the leadership of two Russian Jews, the writer Sobelsohn, who called himself Karl Radek, and Otto Marquardt, a member of the Soviet Commercial Mission. This was put down by the police at a cost of forty dead and a hundred and fifty wounded. On May Day 1929 the " red " faubourg of Berlin, Wedding, was again, under the lead of the Red Front Fighters' League, the scene of several days' fighting in which nineteen lives were lost.

Yet for the time being the Communists, taught by their earlier failures, sought other ways than those of violence to win over the bulk of the nation. The

[1] *Germany — Fascist or Soviet*, p. 49.

emphasis was now set on propaganda rather than battle, and only those who dared to oppose that propaganda publicly suffered physical violence. For those more gullible or pliant, easy steps to Communism framed to suit all tastes were afforded by the various organisations of the German Communist Party — itself a branch of the Third International. There were the Revolutionary Trade Union Opposition, the Young Communists' Union, the German Red Help, the Association of German Proletarian Free-Thinkers, the International Workers' Help, the Red Sporting Clubs, the Anti-Fascist League, the Reich Peasants' League, the Union for Proletarian Sexual Reform — for, by advocating "free love" in the name of the emancipation of the workers, a universal impulse could be harnessed to the Cause — and a number of other benevolent and purposeful organisations. Even those who played chess or the mandoline or sang in choirs or wished to learn Esperanto were not overlooked.

The Communists were nothing if not thorough, though perhaps always more so in theory than in practice. An elaborately planned underground organisation was created to further the preparation of revolution. There was a "Free Radio" to broadcast propaganda, "red cavalry", as it was called, to carry the Party's private postal service on motor bicycles and, sometimes, in stolen cars, and a Secret Police to spy on foes and doubtful brethren, prepare dossiers, take photographs and draw up "black lists" of "Fascist" and reactionary "pests" who were to be systematically calumnied and, when better occasion offered, "polished off". This

" opponent work ", as it was called in Marxist jargon, involved the tapping of telephone conversations, the interception of postal correspondence and the wholesale bribery of employees. The language of battle was employed and all who were conservative in their sympathies were described as enemies.

For the Communist Party, though for the moment proceeding under the forms of peace and even apparently of democracy, was part of a great fighting organisation, directed by the rulers of a foreign power which already controlled a sixth of the earth's surface and whose professed aim it was to destroy the national states of the past and, by levelling all frontiers in a common war of class against class, to found a new world order. Civil war was its first objective for without civil war its final aims could not be achieved. " The German Revolution ", reported the 12th Plenary Meeting of the Executive of the Communist International at Moscow in September 1928, " will decide the fate of the proletarian revolution in Western and Central Europe." In its famous Resolution Germany was described as " the wound in Europe " in which Communism was to establish itself and spread its fatal poison. Once Germany was inflamed, Poland, the Baltic States and the Balkans, wedged between Muscovy and Germany, would follow inevitably. The Red Flag would then fly from the Pacific shores to the banks of the Rhine.

To this great end the wealth of the Union of Soviet Republics and the organisation of the Comintern were placed at the disposal of those bold and fanatic Germans who wished to overthrow the existing order. An elaborate system of passport

forging centres, secret codes and conveyances, liberally financed by Russian Societies and Trading Companies, enabled Communist agents and suspects to travel freely across the frontiers. The German Communist Party was not merely a faction of the nation: it was the advance guard of a foreign army whose headquarters were not in Berlin but in Moscow. It was part of its business to collect and transmit to its Russian paymasters intelligence of all that was going on in Germany. Special News Clearance Stations, usually with accommodation addresses in supposedly empty flats, existed for conveying military and police information. A vast and intricate network of factory espionage tabulated facts about every firm in the country: how its premises were guarded and by whom, how its employees were politically affected and how best in the event of an emergency it might be seized. The stealing of manufacturing secrets and processes formed a part of its activities. In one undertaking over a hundred cases of factory espionage were discovered in four years, involving some 3500 legal actions. Throughout the Republic the capitalist and industrialist structure was being patiently and systematically undermined.

At the height of its power it was believed that the enrolled members of the Communist Party in Germany numbered over a million. Many of them were brave and resolute men working for a belief that meant more to them than life itself. All were hoping to destroy the existing framework of state and society and were subject to no laws, whether of God or man, but those laid down by the mighty international organisation they served. Of that organisation it was

a cardinal rule that the end justified the means. How thorough that means was the Instructions issued by the Communist Headquarters in Berlin to its Intelligence Service may convey some idea. Plans were to be obtained of the dispositions, tactics and armaments of all Reichswehr, police and defensive units, of the political reliability of their members, of the communications of the " enemy " — especially of police cables and the most favourable points of attack — and of the places where arms could be seized. At the same time the preparation of " terrorism " was to be pursued on a large scale : this was to include the drawing-up of correspondence lists, blackmail and " familiarisation with the habits of socially important people ". Finally everything was to be made ready for actua warfare itself : companies and " self-protection organisations " were to be formed and trained in the capture of specially allocated objectives — police stations, barracks, important buildings and factories, civic centres and broadcasting stations. The day of final revolution would not find the advance guard of the new order unready.

Meanwhile the " conquest of the majority of the working class ", to use the phrase of the Third International, proceeded according to plan. The Communist vote had risen steadily. In 1920 it was over half a million : by 1928, strengthened by the growing unemployment created by the new labour-saving machines from America, it was three and a quarter millions. Two years later, with the coming of the slump, it had risen to four and a half millions, or nearly 15 per cent of the electorate. In the capital the Communists polled over a quarter of the votes cast,

outstripping even the predominant Social Democrats. By 1932 the vote had reached six millions. In Russia, a far vaster country, the Bolsheviks had seized power with only a tiny fraction of these numbers.

There were good reasons for the rise in the Communist power. The ever-growing poverty of the workless afforded a dismal and terrible contrast to the licence and display of the capital's night life. More than a hundred Berlin night clubs classified by the police as " luxurious " still kept open doors for those who knew how to turn the misery of others to gain. " To stand outside the Night Refuge in Berlin North ", wrote Mr. Knickerbocker in 1931, " is a one-night lesson in German poverty, but to be turned from the doors of a dozen over-filled champagne cabarets in Berlin West on the following night is a baffling lesson in German abundance."

" Sorry, but every seat's taken ", declared the doorman at " Rio Rita ".

" Impossible to crowd in ", explained the flunkey at " Julian Fuhs ".

" No room for the moment ", regretted the attendant at " Koenigin Bar ".

" Try a little later ", recommended the porter at " Johnny's Night Club ".

" You should have come earlier ", advised the liveried guard at " Henry Benders ".[1]

The rage of silent millions kept vigil in the dark outside those lighted doors.

There were other reasons for that tense and bitter anger. The Treaty of Versailles still rankled in every German heart. And it rankled as much for the

[1] *Germany — Fascist or Soviet*, p. 27.

poor as for the rich, perhaps more since their sufferings had been greater. In the transient prosperity between 1924 and 1928 these feelings had temporarily diminished. After the stabilisation of the mark, an improvement had begun in Germany's relations with her western neighbours, though those with Poland in the east remained as bad as ever. The Dawes Conference of 1924, in return for Germany's acceptance of foreign supervision of her internal finances, reduced her liability under the Reparations Clauses of the Treaty of Versailles to an annuity payable over a term of years. Yet even this, as a German pointed out, worked out at the rate of nearly 300,000 marks an hour which children in their nurseries would still be paying, with ever-growing hatred of their creditors, in old age. In 1925 the French withdrew from the Ruhr, and the conciliatory tact of a British Conservative Foreign Secretary, Sir Austen Chamberlain, achieved in the Locarno Pact the first international gesture of goodwill since the War. Aristide Briand, the French Foreign Minister, with his spasmodic dream of a European confederation, and Gustav Stresemann,[1] a vast, ungainly German with the soul of a poet, agreed over a famous meal to inaugurate a new era of co-operation and understanding. The mutual Security Pact of Locarno was signed in October, Britain guaranteeing the frontiers of France

[1] Mr. Mowrer has drawn a brilliant picture of this great man: "Fat, thick-necked, impressively bald, a great eater and drinker and smoker, his inharmonious features and harsh voice masked the subtle quality of his mind. Only his sensitive mouth and small hands revealed the humanist, the intuitive politician who could see through an adversary and undo his intrigue without effort" (*Germany puts the Clock Back*, p. 51).

and Germany alike from further aggression. In September 1926 Germany, after eight years' banishment from the polity of nations, was formally admitted into the League.

Yet the promise of Locarno was soon belied. "It is nothing and it means nothing", declared Lord Rothermere when he read the news in New York: "you cannot heal the gaping wounds of Europe by an application of sticking-plaster." The Treaty, for all the goodwill it expressed and generated in Britain, in reality restored nothing to Germany, not even self-respect. Five years were still to pass before the last Allied soldiers were withdrawn from the Rhineland. The hated eastern frontiers were not revised, Danzig and the Saar remained separated from the Republic, and the right of self-determination for the Germans in Austria and Czechoslovakia — for all of which Stresemann pleaded in vain a dozen years before Hitler — were still indignantly denied. The shaming inequality of the Disarmament Clauses of the Peace Treaty, despite further pious but unfulfilled hopes expressed in the Locarno Pact, continued to mock Germany in a Europe still armed to the teeth.[1] Above all, the economic disabilities created by Versailles remained: a Germany, shorn of her richest agricultural land and half her industries, still limped, as a Frenchman had described her, across the middle of Europe like a wounded animal. The barriers of

[1] The condescension towards republican Germany shown even by those most friendly to her was well expressed by the *Punch* cartoon which recorded her admission to the League: of an unmistakable English matron clad in ill-fitting classical wear receiving Dr. Stresemann with a "Delighted to welcome you in our midst, but just one word of advice: don't rattle your — er — ploughshare too much!"

bitterness and misunderstanding were raised for a moment by Locarno but they were not removed. France, particularly after Poincaré's return to power, remained suspicious and resentful: Britain, intent on her internal affairs, unconcerned and aloof. Three years later, with the foreign armies still on German soil, Dr. Stresemann died. "If you had granted me one single concession", he declared before the end, "I could have saved this generation for Peace. That you did not has been my tragedy and your crime!"

With him died the last real hope of a Europe without bitterness. With him died also the last hope of the democratic republic in Germany. The parliamentary "System" was now finally discredited. It had been begotten in defeat and cradled in the humiliations and sufferings of Versailles. Every new foreign slight to national dignity by reminding men of those humiliations weakened still further the tumbling credit of democracy. And with the end of the brief "boom" the sufferings also had returned. In the spring of 1931, when the Berlin Bourse set up a statue to the Unknown Solvent, a bankrupt Germany and a starving Austria turned to each other and negotiated a Customs Union. France was alarmed, declared the economic *Anschluss* a breach of the peace treaties, and appealed to the League of Nations. The Hague Court, not without external pressure and at grave loss of moral prestige to itself, upheld the French view. Germany and Austria were helpless and disarmed: the powerful armies of France, Poland, Yugoslavia and Italy encircled them, while 30 miles from Vienna and 150 from Berlin stood the obedient republic of Czechoslovakia with her

bombing aeroplanes, her Skoda munition works and her age-long enmity to all things German. There was nothing for Teutons to do but to swallow the humiliation and tighten their belts. The economic *Anschluss* was abandoned.

The immediate result was a financial crisis which threatened to bring down the pillars of European civilisation on the heads of its short-sighted arbiters. The Austrian Credit-Anstalt failed. Bankruptcy in Vienna was followed by bankruptcy in Berlin. For a week the doors of every bank in Germany were closed. Only Mr. Hoover's proposal of a year's universal moratorium saved Europe from economic chaos. As it was, Britain, shaken by a flight from the pound, was driven off the gold standard during a political crisis of the first magnitude. A dozen other countries followed her example. At Basle an international committee of experts reported that they could recall no previous parallel in time of peace to the dislocation that was taking place : " The German problem which is largely responsible for the growing financial paralysis of the world . . . if not dealt with will only prove the forerunner of further catastrophes ". Thirteen years had passed since the end of the war, and statesmen who were still in their fifties at the time of the Armistice had now passed their threescore years and ten.

It was the end of Reparations, although another year had to pass before official acknowledgment was made of the inevitable. Of the hundred and thirty milliard gold reichsmarks originally demanded, Germany in a dozen chequered years had remitted just under a tenth. With the addition of property trans-

ferred to the Allies in 1919, but excluding territorial cessions, colonies and colonial assets, Germany had perhaps paid approximately twenty milliards of gold marks. The rest remained permanently in default. The new National Government in Britain, in return for a general renunciation of reparation payments, cancelled the vast debts for war aid and material owing her by her former continental Allies. Britain in turn, faced by an impossible unilateral payment of thirty-two million pounds a year in gold, defaulted on her war debt to America.

Europe, Spengler prophesied, was plunging to ruin in an economic war more fatal than that of the battle-fields of 1914 to 1918. From that war, he held, only Japan and the Soviet Union would emerge victorious. Meanwhile Germany faced the black present in a mood of unrelieved gloom. Pessimism was universal. Her leaders could give her nothing. Since the first days of the Republic they had never been anything but helpless puppets — make-believe rulers playing their brief part on the unavailing stage only by sufferance of Germany's enemies. They had not even been masters in their own house. For years they had performed the part of bailiffs for the conquerors, taking orders from a Reparations Commission whose power had comprised the right to demand the surrender of any German property whenever and wherever it should be demanded. "Germany", ran Article 241 of the Treaty of Versailles, "undertakes to pass, issue and maintain in force any legislation, orders and decrees that may be necessary to give complete effect to these provisions." By virtue of that instrument a foreign Commission,

acting as a Receiver, had for more than a decade exercised greater powers in democratic Germany than those possessed by her own former Emperors.

And the rulers of the Republic had done nothing but acquiesce. Some had protested for a while, but in the end they had all given way. On the tragic night of July 8th, 1919, after the signing of the fatal treaty, Erzberger, the Social Democrat politician who then ostensibly directed her destinies, his dinner over, scribbled in the visitors' book in his Weimar hotel:

Erst schaff dein Sach,
Dann trink und lach.[1]

Such men had shown neither courage nor dignity nor faith. They had not defied omnipotence: they had merely made an ungraceful bow to it and snatched the best bad bargain for themselves and their unhappy country that they could. Of the almost countless democratic Ministers in the sixteen republican governments who exercised authority between 1919 and 1932, scarcely one made even the smallest appeal to the imagination of his countrymen. The utterance of those years that perhaps left the deepest impress on the German mind was that of the Jewish professor who, at a public meeting in 1924, declared that the soldiers who had fallen during the war had fallen in a field not of honour but of dishonour. To him, he explained, a war memorial was nothing but one big turnip. This view thus crudely expressed did not of course represent that of all or even most of those

[1] " First do your whack,
Then booze and laugh."
(Prince von Bülow, *Memoirs, 1909–19*, p. 312.)

who held authority under the Weimar Constitution. Yet it might well have been coined as its epitaph.

For it was not democracy, which was not native to them and for which they were not ready, that the majority of Germans demanded, but the kind of rule that should render them conscious of their national unity, proud of their history and reviving tradition, and strong and confident in their common association as a people. It was precisely this that the democratic leaders failed to provide. They did not remind them, as the Germans wished to be reminded, of their greatness or dwell on the virtues and self-sacrifices of their forebears. They seemed to be concerned only with petty party wrangles, with jockeyings for place, with lining, in too many cases, their own pockets with the fruits of office. The old rulers of imperial Germany may have been arrogant and stupid, but they had on the whole been disinterested in money matters and had put the national honour before their own purses.

Had the foundations of Germany's unity been stronger or the annals of her nationhood longer or more clearly writ, the psychological effect of all this might have been less disastrous to the cause of democracy. But Germany, after centuries of disunion, civil war, and invasion, had only achieved national union and a common frontier against her neighbours in 1871. Her people were still in the same stage of political development as the English had been after the wars of the Roses or the French after those of the Fronde. Like all *arrivistes*, they were in political matters self-assertive, gauche and childishly sensitive. They wanted above all things a strong

Government that would give them unity and national self-respect. That which they most dreaded was division and weakness and partisanship. And it was these things, made repugnant to them by generations of racial suffering, now reinforced by the tragic experiences of the post-war years, that the democratic politicians entailed still further on their country. The spectacle of the Berlin City Fathers hurling invectives, cat-calls and stink-bombs across the chamber,[1] of long meaningless electoral lists of subservient nonentities and wire-pullers in which not one candidate was known to the average elector: of fifteen, twenty, sometimes thirty political parties shuffling and lying for power, of eighteen separate State Parliaments and Diets all reproducing the formless, purposeless absurdities of the national assembly, tragically but inevitably sickened the German people of everything to do with democracy. However unfair to the German democratic leaders, it is how they and their works appeared to the ordinary German.

"My courage fails", wrote the old ex-Chancellor von Bülow in 1926, "and I cannot bear to recall these years of shame and misery, of the cruelties of implacable enemies, of anarchy and national paralysis. Our degradation has been so marked that, to-day, I am almost certain not one German in six could give the name of every Chancellor since the Revolution. No hymn, no book of national heroes, will ever record for future generations the names of Gustav Bauer and Hermann Müller, of Joseph Wirth and Constantine Fahrenbach. By 1925, seven years after the Revolution, there had been

[1] Bülow, *Memoirs, 1909–19*, p. 289.

two hundred and fifty Ministers, either retired or still in office. Since we have had the good fortune to be a Republic, one German in every two hundred and fifty thousand has been a Minister!"[1] "No real or durable prosperity", the old man prophesied, "will ever be the lot of our people until we can bring ourselves to cure some inherited defects in the German character—our bitter party rancour, our doctrinaire particularist ambitions — and return to those ways of thinking and feeling which had made our forefathers great men."[2]

[1] Bülow, *Memoirs, 1909–19*, p. 313

[2] *Ibid.* pp. 320-21.

CHAPTER 4

THE DREAMER OF MUNICH

> A primordial and creative mind; one that says to his fellows, Behold, God has given me thought; I have discovered truth and you *shall* believe.
>
> DISRAELI.

A FEW days after the second Christmas of the war, a British philosopher — himself the first living historian of the democratic adventure of governing men by reason and persuasion — wrote to his brother in Canada: "What is going to happen to us all and to the world after this war is over? . . . It seems to me that it depends very much on guidance — on what Carlyle called 'Kingship'. If we are lucky enough to fall upon someone who can and will rule, either by his ideas or by himself wielding the power of the State, I think that it will be a better world than it has ever been, and we shall all be a better people. We shall see things more clearly stripped of cant and phrases. Also we shall understand one another better — the different classes, races and even the nations of the world. On the other hand, without that guidance we are not at all unlikely to be at one another's throat and to have a bloody revolution. One can't be very hopeful on guidance, seeing that so far not a single individual in this country (nor I believe in any other) has risen up, and made people follow him. And the systems are rotten — the old

ones, politics and the Churches. . . . The people, mark you, are very good: have been from the beginning, whenever there was any means of knocking the scales off their eyes. But a people can't lead itself. There is something pathetic in the intense craving to be led, and to be led the right way, to ruin or death or anything, for a cause which in a vague way they feel, more strongly than they feel anything else, to be worth any sacrifice." [1]

Three years later when the war had ended, nothing seemed on the face of it less likely of fulfilment than Mr. F. S. Oliver's prophecy. The world, it was universally predicted, had been made safe for democracy — that is, for the political system in which matters of economic life and death were left to the arbitrament of free international competition while the ring was kept by professional parliamentarians versed in the arts of soliciting popular votes for control of the police and the laws. Yet within the span of a single generation — a pin-point in time measured by an historian's rule — every major country in Europe, with the exception of Great Britain and France, had adopted in one form or another a system of government based on personal dictatorship. And had done so, to all appearance, not against the wishes of the majority of their peoples but with a large and, in most cases, overwhelming degree of popular acclamation. Russia, Italy, Germany, Poland, Jugoslavia, Spain, Turkey, Greece, Romania, Hungary and Portugal all assumed dictatorial rather than parliamentary constitutions. Mr. Oliver would seem to have been right.

[1] F. S. Oliver, *The Anvil of War*, p. 133.

Yet in his own country what he predicted did not come to pass. By virtue of her victory, her established institutions and the phlegmatic calm of her national character, Britain escaped shipwreck in the tempests that submerged the traditional systems of her neighbours. Her strong political framework had not to be remade, for, unlike that of others, it was not destroyed. Her people thus escaped the pangs and throes that attend the sudden birth of things new.

At the hour when Mr. Oliver sat at his window in Scotland writing to his brother and looking out on the December fields, the future dictator of Russia was a hunted exile, the future dictator of Italy was a non-commissioned officer of the Italian Army, and the future dictator of a greater Germany than any yet seen in the world was running despatches, dodging like a hunted hare, amid the shell-holes and sordid desolation of northern France. History holds no stranger paradox in all its annals. Within four years from the end of the war, two of these three men had already achieved Caesarian power. The third, Adolf Hitler, unknown to all but a few, was still in the early stages of his struggle. Yet it may be said that Germany was already seeking him.

For ever since the hour of darkness and national eclipse which had followed the war, Germany had been waiting for a sign. Before Bismarck and the new industrialism had brought them power and prosperity the Germans had been a race of dreamers. They were famous as musicians, philosophers and scholars. Politically their land was still the Cinderella of Europe, a phantom realm divided into scores of

states, most of them despotically and paternally ruled. The beloved fatherland with its forests and great rivers was still a mere geographical expression. At their highest — in men like Bach and Goethe and Beethoven — the Germans had transcended the furthest confines of human experience. Then in the eighteen-sixties and -seventies and in the fat years that came after, they had followed the leadership of Prussia in founding a European and later a world empire. Like all *nouveaux riches*, their rulers, exercising vast and unwonted power, had grown pursy and arrogant and pompous. In doing so they had won in a few decades the fear and enmity of almost the entire world.

Their pride had its fall — a more terrible one than has yet come the way of any highly civilised nation in modern times. In the course of a dozen years they underwent three major national calamities — famine, defeat and bankruptcy. Their worldly possessions were torn from them: not, it should be remembered, through the greed of others but through their fear. By 1920 the German people were left with little else but their unity, and even this was threatened by their enemies.

In the hour of suffering, as is so often the way with men, they recovered their souls. They discovered — the best of them — how much a man who has nothing may still possess. They fell back on the spiritual keep of the imagination. Around them lay a landscape of ruin. But from it, like Parsival, they derived a new and fearful strength.

An Englishman visiting Germany in the first shock of defeat, while famine still lay over the land,

was astonished to find how little relation the German he discovered bore to the traditional, gross, beer-drinking materialist of war and pre-war caricature and literature. "He is a totally different being. He is emotional to a fault. Nothing sways him like music; art, flowers, Nature, the forest, the wind in the trees, the lap of water on the pebbly beach, all speak to him of something infinitely beautiful, something not of this world and not understood by it."[1] To a sensible, matter-of-fact man of the world there may be something disconcerting and even dangerous in such an attitude, for he knows from experience into what strange follies it can lead. He prefers to see men swayed not by their emotions and by mystical dreams but by reason. Unfortunately to the post-war German, reason seemed to offer very little.

This was particularly true of those of the younger generation. Deprived of all apparent hope of prosperity or even of tolerable comfort, under-nourished and with little or nothing in the way of worldly goods, denied the amusements that the cities of the modern world offer to those who have money to burn, they found their happiness in a rediscovery of Germany. Their weekends and holidays were spent tramping the roads or sailing the rivers and lakes of their native land. *Wandervögel* became the youthful passion of the hour. With bare heads and legs, with a pack on the back and a guitar or fiddle slung over the shoulder, the German lad and his girl went singing out of the towns into the country-side. Here they slept in groups of half a dozen or

[1] A. Lethbridge, *Germany as it is Today*, p. 225.

a score in barns or mountain huts, washed in the rivers and built camp-fires for their concerts in the clearings of the forests. From the vulgarity of the great cities, which they could not afford, they turned to the traditions and lore of the German country past. The gulf which divides townsman and countryman in the industrial nations of the modern age was bridged for them by a new sympathy born of that out-of-door life. The ruling passion of their young lives became love of country — the sweeter because of the contrast with the drab, cheerless life of the bankrupt towns from which they made their way so eagerly each recurring Saturday.

Such was the German Youth Movement of the immediate post-war years. It was romantic, emotional, often ridiculous but passionately sincere. It took a thousand different forms and embraced innumerable denominations, parties and organisations. Yet if any man with an instinct for leadership could but find it, there might be a key to open all its doors. For the burning love of country which it engendered was unconsciously seeking an outlet. And as the years of famine and defeat receded and German youth grew stronger, the need to harness that love to fruitful action became the more intense.

The hour brought forth the man. No stranger revolutionary ever existed. "An unconvincing figure" — Mr. Mowrer has drawn him for us [1] — "in black suit, white shirt and inevitable raincoat. An unconvincing face, with impertinent nose, dark hair and Charlie Chaplin dab on the upper lip ; with the anything but aristocratic head, and eyes that

[1] *Germany puts the Clock Back*, p. 187.

pleaded for sympathy. In appearance utterly commonplace." Or so at least he seemed to English and American eyes. He did not seem so to German.

He came from the other half of Germany — that which, having long ago colonised and founded a multi-racial empire on the Danube, had remained outside the long-delayed union of the north German kingdoms and principalities which had followed the victory of Prussia in 1871. He was a countryman of Mozart, Schubert and Gluck. The son of an inferior Austrian Customs official of peasant stock, Adolf Hitler was born at Braunau-am-Inn in 1889. After a good middle-class education, he had failed through the inherent dreaminess of his nature to qualify for the Vienna Academy of Art and had drifted into the underworld of the pre-war Austrian capital. Intensely sensitive and tortured by vague yearnings, he had lived from hand to mouth for five years as a builder's labourer, slept in a slum cellar and known what it was to be hungry and friendless. Thence, sickened by the cruel and purposeless vulgarity of a modern cosmopolitan city, he had migrated across the Austrian-Bavarian frontier to Munich, where he set up in a very humble way as an architectural painter.

The war, which destroyed the lives and happiness of millions, caught him up, bore him into the core of its fiery furnace and made him. With all the German-Austrian's passionate awareness of his racial difference to Czech and Slav — a phenomenon often to be found where strongly marked racial types inhabit the same country — he embraced the call to arms as a Teutonic crusade and enlisted

in the 16th or List Bavarian Infantry Regiment. For four years he lived the life of the trenches as a common soldier, faced the finest troops of Britain and France and their growing armaments on the Western front, and won by sheer merit — for he had no influence — the Military Service Cross with Swords, the Regimental Diploma for gallantry and the first-class order of the Iron Cross. Few of non-commissioned rank can have had a more distinguished record than this lonely and self-centred artist. He fought in the first battle of Ypres, the Somme, Arras, Passchendaele, the March 1918 offensive, the terrible summer campaign in the chalk hills above the Aisne and Marne and the fatal decisive battles of the final shell-drenched autumn. Throughout the war this man had no other existence but that of the army : received scarcely any letters and seemed to have no friendships but those of his comrades in arms. He was twice wounded, and was temporarily blinded by chlorine gas in the fighting near Commines in October 1918. When the German Revolution broke out and the Central Powers surrendered, he was still lying sightless in hospital at Pasewalk in Pomerania. The news nearly broke his heart.

Though the war was over Hitler remained a soldier. For a year, amid the welter of revolutionary politics that followed the German collapse, he continued to serve with his regiment. On account of his loyalty and interest in politics, he was appointed a regimental instructor and given the task of studying the ideological predilections of his fellow soldiers and so helping to keep Bolshevism — rampant in the outer civilian world — out of the last

stronghold of German tradition and order, the Reichswehr.

The age offered plenty of food for speculation to a student of politics. Living in the heart of Kurt Eisner's Bavarian "pigstye", Hitler, like Napoleon before him, was a disgusted witness of the phenomena of revolution — of armoured cars scattering leaflets like an ugly snow through the streets, of Spartacists firing untidily at their rivals, of strikes and arrests and barricades, of revolutionary chiefs passing the hours of opportunity in drunken orgies while 30,000 sullen unemployed stood on the unswept pavements and waited for the next starving horse to fall to offer them a meal. Through it all, while five hundred miles away the delegates of his country waited behind palings for the pleasure of the victors to be made known, passed the little nobody with his tragic angry eyes whose hoarded wrath was one day to shake the Old World to its foundations.

In these months of anarchy this strange and lonely being developed an intense hatred of the Marxist hypothesis. It was a hatred that had begun during the years of his youthful poverty in Vienna. The union of the working classes against all others, it seemed to him, and the revolution that followed it, instead of emancipating the proletariat, had only brought increased poverty, oppression and insecurity. In practice Marxist progress benefited no-one but the Trades Union and Party official, the orator and the professional organiser of revolution. The real working man got nothing from the change; he merely paid the price.

In its early days Trades Union action, as Hitler

recognised in his *Mein Kampf*, had achieved great things. " So long as a Trades Union aims at improving the condition of a class which is one of the main supports of the nation and is successful in so doing, its policy is not contrary to the public interest but is truly national. By doing so it helps to forge social principles without which a general school of patriotism is impossible. . . . While there are employers without social understanding and a sense of justice and fair play, it is not only the right but the duty of the workers, who are an essential part of the nation, to protect general interests against the greed and unreasonableness of the individual. It is as vital to the national well-being to keep alive loyalty and faith in the masses as to keep them healthy."

Unfortunately there had proved to be a great difference between the use of Trades Unions " as a means of defending the social rights of the workers " and " as a battering-ram in the class struggle ". On the Continent where abstractions have always made a stronger appeal to the working-class mind than in England, the second conception had long obscured the first. " In the course of a few decades, the Trades Union movement was transformed by the Social Democrats from an instrument for protecting the rights of man into one for destroying the economic structure of the nation. Compared with this purpose the interests of the workers counted for nothing. The Trade Union movement became a most terrible weapon of intimidation, threatening the stability of the economic structure, the cohesion of the state and the freedom of the individual. It ended by turning the very name of democracy into

one of ridicule and shame, discredited the ideal of liberty and mocked that of fraternity with the slogan, 'If you won't join us, we'll crack your skull for you'."[1]

In reaching these uncompromising conclusions, Hitler had been influenced little by the abstract thinking of others, much by his own bitter experience. He had never been anything but a working man, had never known since his childhood's home was broken up what it was to be certain of anything, had never possessed the smallest property. Even in the ranks of the army, though indubitably a brave and disciplined soldier, this undistinguished, unprepossessing and not very military-looking man had attained to no higher rank than that of lance-corporal. If ever anyone merited the definition of a proletarian it was Adolf Hitler.

For if he had begun life behind the frail stockade of the petty bourgeoisie, he had been driven headlong from it on the threshold of manhood by his father's death. An unheeded part of the shifting, sordid background of the imperial Vienna of *Beau Danube*, he had loitered with the unemployed among the palaces of the Ring Strasse and had sought his crowded lodging amid the murk and filth of the canals. The uncertainty of casual employment, the demoralisation of the slum, the pangs of hunger had all been his. He did not study the social problem of his age from above, but knew it at first hand.

He was under no illusions that its evils could be cured by a little well-meaning philanthropy. The well-to-do reformer who had never been in the

[1] *Mein Kampf.*

clutches of industrial poverty had no conception of its poison. "I shudder even today," he wrote in after years, "when I think of the woeful dens in which people dwell, the night shelters and the slums, and all the tenebrous spectacles of ordure, loathsome filth and wickedness. What will happen one day when hordes of emancipated slaves come forth from these dens of misery and swoop down on their unsuspecting fellow men? For those of that other world never think about such a possibility. They have allowed these things to go on without caring and even without suspecting — in their total lack of instinctive understanding — that sooner or later destiny will take its vengeance unless it is appeased in time." [1]

It was not that he did not sympathise with those whom the capitalist system had rotted and bred. He had shared their life himself: he knew. He shuddered at the economic misery, the crude morality and the low intellectual level of his companions in misfortune. But he also knew that these were no fault of theirs. "They were the victims of evil circumstances." Many had begun life like himself amid gentler scenes and had only deteriorated in the course of their hopeless fight against the impossible: the repeated loss of livelihood and security, the last treasures pawned and sold, the threadbare clothes growing shabbier, the wretched lodgings and bad associates corrupting good manners, the constant presence of want and brutality, the absence of every external object that can soften and ennoble life.

[1] *Mein Kampf.*

Yet Hitler, who himself had experienced these things,[1] did not make the sentimentalist's mistake of supposing that the remedy for the debasement of the people was to hand over to them, in all their just resentment and degradation, the keys of political power. Like Bernard Shaw, he knew that the poverty of the great cities does not make good citizens but bad: that is the essence of its tragedy. What could men who had lost or had never possessed the gentle wisdom of the human past do with power except abuse it to their own and others' loss and ruin? Few educative or ennobling influences could penetrate the surroundings of the average slum child.

> There is a lodging in a cellar, and this lodging consists of two damp rooms. In these rooms a workman and his family live — seven people in all. . . . One of the children is a boy of three years. . . . The closeness and congestion of these living quarters do not make for happy relationships. Quarrels and fits of mutual anger constantly arise. Such people do not so much live with one another but on top of one another. The little misunderstandings which vanish of themselves in a home where there is enough space for people to get away from one another for a while here become the source of chronic disputes. . . . When the parents fall out with one another these daily bickerings often degenerate into rudenesses hard to imagine. . . . One must have had practical experience of such a *milieu* to be able to picture the state

[1] Though they did not destroy his longing for something better, they coarsened his speech and to a great extent his feelings. The brutality of Hitler's political manners is not wholly to be attributed to original sin: the slums of that gay pre-war Vienna, on which wealthy men and women now look back with such nostalgia, must bear their share of the blame.

> of affairs created by such mutual recriminations. The father physically assaults the mother and perhaps beats her in a fit of drunken rage. At the age of six the child can no longer ignore such sordid details which even an adult would find revolting. Infected with moral poison, bodily undernourished, and his poor little head filled with vermin, the young "citizen" goes to the primary school. With difficulty he barely learns to read and write. There is no possibility of learning anything at home. . . .
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> What the little fellow hears at home does not tend to increase his respect for the world about him. Here nothing good is said of human nature, and every institution, from the school to the government, is reviled. Whether religion and morals are spoken of or the State and the social order, it is all the same; they are all scoffed at. When the lad leaves school at the age of fourteen, it would be hard to say what are the most striking features of his character—incredible ignorance of every branch of real knowledge or cynical impudence combined with an attitude towards morality which is really startling at such an age.
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> What station of life can such a person fill, to whom nothing is sacred, who has never experienced anything noble, but, on the contrary, has been intimately acquainted with the lowest kind of human existence? . . . And then his bourgeois contemporaries are astonished at the lack of "patriotic enthusiasm" which this young "citizen" displays.[1]

The man knew what he was talking about. Few of the more academic critics of his revolutionary philosophy have had his schooling.

The Marxist also drew attention, and in scathing terms, to these evils. But he did so, Hitler came

[1] *Mein Kampf.*

to believe, not to remove but to exploit them. Marxism was a declaration of war against the existing order of things. But it was a crusade not only against the bad in society but against the good. It could destroy but it could not create because it denied as an article of its faith the realities on which all human creation must be based — individual responsibility and skill, the mastery of craft acquired through long specialised practice, the utilisation of accumulated tradition. Marxism repudiated the whole human past, all the painful and treasured achievements of man's spirit and mind. In a world already beginning to decompose, its founder, a man of genius eaten up with hatred, had distilled a solvent to disintegrate the beliefs and ideals by which civilisation had grown and by which it might yet be redeemed and purified.

For the Marxist reviled the man of faith and ideals as bitterly as he did the financial exploiter. It was his creed that nothing existed in the world but matter and that no motive could animate man but immediate self-interest. The great organised institutions and societies, based on faith and love and maintained by self-sacrifice through which man had raised himself from the primeval slime, were to be ruthlessly destroyed and their adherents liquidated. First they were to be undermined by "criticism repeated again and again until the corrosive ate into the old State so thoroughly that it finally crumbled to pieces". Mob violence was to finish the process. The world would then be ready for an international order that admitted of neither separate race nor tradition nor religion, and in which all men

would be subordinated as unthinking automatons to a single ruling clique of Marxist intellectuals and bureaucrats.

For Hitler was acute enough to realise that the Marxists did not stand for the freedom they pretended but for a despotic uniformity, enforced by terror and the annihilation of all who opposed them. In this they differed only in their superior violence from the international financiers and exploiters they professed to supplant. Like Belloc and other earlier modern social philosophers, Hitler perceived the twin roads down which mankind was being herded toward the servile state. First came the economic development which transformed the social structure of the nation and substituted for its old feudal rulers, who at least had a certain sense of responsibility and *noblesse oblige*, the financier and the middleman who had none. Under the joint-stock company system, the search for profits became the sole guiding principle of social life. "The small artisan class slowly disappeared and the factory worker, who took his place, had scarcely any chance to establish an independent existence of his own but soon sank to the proletariat level." His present and future passed into the sole power of the man of figures who, calling himself his employer or master, acknowledged no responsibility for his moral or physical wellbeing. The hungry sheep looked up and were not fed.

The members of the new social class so created were "disinherited" in a treble sense. They were deprived of their independence. They were herded together in vast factory towns under conditions of

living and employment which not only ruined their health but robbed them of all faith in their country and its system of justice. And they were made to feel that the manual labour by which they lived was degrading and inferior to other forms of work. The ancient Order of the Peasantry, as Disraeli had once called it, had been transformed in the new towns into a herd of helots without privilege or status.

But the process of social levelling was not yet complete. The poor were enslaved but the higher and middle orders — the last repositories of the culture and national social tradition of the past — still remained independent. Their independence was the final barrier that stood between the architects of constructive chaos and their goal. To destroy it no effort could be too great. And here the arch-enemy of the nation and society, the eternal and denationalised Jew, whom Hitler in his strange obsession saw in all places working to destroy the living state, seized his opportunity. By a masterpiece of ingenuity — "one of the most infamous deceits ever practised" — the Jew turned the bitterness of the poor, whom his own usurious and irresponsible capitalism had dispossessed, against those who had till now escaped enslavement. "At first he had used the bourgeois class as a battering-ram against the feudal order; now he used the worker against the strongholds of the bourgeoisie. Just as he had succeeded in obtaining civil rights by intrigue carried on under the protection of the middle class, so he now hoped that by joining in the struggle which the workers were waging for their existence

he would be able to gain absolute power over them. . . . He kowtowed to the worker, hypocritically pretended to feel pity for him and his lot and even to be indignant at the misery and poverty which he had to endure. . . . He showed himself eager to study his hardships, real or imaginary. He strove to waken a longing in the masses to change the conditions under which they lived. Artfully the Jew enkindled that innate yearning for social justice which is a typical Aryan characteristic. Once that desire became conscious it was transformed into hatred against those in more fortunate circumstances of life. The next stage was to give a precise philosophical explanation of this struggle for the elimination of social wrongs. And thus the Marxist doctrine was invented."[1] To Hitler Jewish Marxism completed the process of social corrosion that Jewish joint-stock capitalism had begun.

Yet the ultimate objective of that sinister Movement was not, it appeared, the triumph of the Proletariat, but the domination of those who by exploitation had created the Proletariat — the Jews. "Without knowing it the worker is placing himself at the service of the very power against which he believes he is fighting. In appearance he is made to fight against capital, while all the while he is furthering capitalistic interests." The ultimate aims of Marxism and international Capitalism were in Hitler's eyes the same: the concentration of all power in the hands of a few, and the elimination of every independent agency that could resist the process — religion, country, private property.

[1] *Mein Kampf.*

And the forces working for its success were very powerful. "The Marxist doctrine," Hitler wrote in *Mein Kampf*, "is a mixture of human reason and human absurdity; but the combination is contrived in such a way that only the absurd part of it can ever be put into practice and never the reasonable part. . . . The very absurdity of the economic and political theories of Marxism gives it its peculiar significance. Because of its half-baked logic, intelligent people refuse to support it, while all who are unaccustomed to use their intellectual faculties or who have only a rudimentary notion of economic principles, join the Cause with fiery enthusiasm. The intelligence behind the Movement . . . is supplied by the Jews. . . . To all appearances, it strives to ameliorate the conditions under which the workers live; but in reality its aim is to enslave and ultimately annihilate the non-Jewish races."

For it was the Jews who, as always in Hitler's coloured and melodramatic imagination, were planning to destroy a failing civilisation. They were the prime cause that had set working that machinery of logical destruction which he had detected in the operation of modern society. It never seemed even to occur to him that there were causes for the decadence and corruption he had observed in the slum-bred Jews of the modern industrial world as natural and explicable as those which he had also observed in his fellow Germans. His mystical and irrational hatred of all Jews was the first fatal flaw in his reasoning: the King Charles's head that kept cropping up in the flow of his logic. Theirs was the envious hatred of the lower for the

higher, of the decadent and corrupt for the purity and health of creative life, of the dead wood for the living tree. "The Jews have not the creative abilities which are needed for the founding of a civilisation. . . . The Jewish intellect will never be constructive but always destructive. . . . If the Jews were the only folk in the world they would be wallowing in filth and mire, and would exploit and try to exterminate one another. . . . The Jewish doctrine of Marxism repudiates the aristocratic principle of Nature and substitutes for it the eternal privilege of . . . numerical mass and its dead weight. It denies the individual worth of human personality, denies that nationality and race have any significance and by doing so destroys the very foundations of human existence and civilisation. . . . Should the Jew, with the aid of his Marxist creed, triumph over the people of this world, his crown will be the funeral wreath of mankind. This planet will once again drive through space without human life on its surface as it did millions of years ago." [1]

To Hitler democracy itself was merely a process in an inevitable and organised scheme of social and racial destruction, and one which the Jewish intellectuals or the subconscious instinct of the Jewish race — it was never quite clear which he meant — utilised to aid their destroying purpose. "Western Democracy, with all its accessories, is employed as a means to paralyse their opponents and gain a free hand to put their methods into action. . . . If ever the Marxists should come to believe that there was the least danger of a majority vote concocted

[1] *Mein Kampf.*

in the witches' cauldron of our parliamentary democracy being used to combat or impede Marxism, the whole parliamentarian hocus-pocus would be at an end. Instead of appealing to the democratic conscience, the standard-bearers of the Red International would immediately send forth a furious rallying-cry among the proletarian masses and the ensuing fight would take place not in the sedate atmosphere of parliament but in the factories and the streets. Then democracy would be straightway annihilated. And what the intellectual process of the apostles who represented the people in parliament had failed to accomplish would be successfully carried out by the crow-bar and the sledge-hammer of the exasperated masses."[1] First the propaganda of the intellectuals would sap belief in the ideals of race and human personality: then a cheap Press, adapted to the level of the most ignorant, would prepare the lowest stratum of the nation for its work of hatred and destruction: finally the Marxist mobs would storm the remaining fortresses of the social order. No obstacle would remain to prevent the domination of society by its basest elements.

Hitler could not believe that the timid parliamentarian with his bourgeois liberalism and his fear of action and himself infected with the Marxist virus — "the concentrated extract of the mentality which underlies the general concept of life today" — could combat a ruthless fighting organisation like Marxism. His own view of parliamentary democracy has been limited to Austria and Germany, where it had had little popular appeal. "It had no support among

[1] *Mein Kampf*.

the workers because its protagonists were lacking in faith and magnetic force. Being built on sand it could never withstand a tempest." Had Hitler spent his formative years in England or America, instead of in pre-war Vienna and Munich, he would have seen in operation a different kind of parliamentarianism whose foundations went deep down into national history and popular idealism. His experience had been pathetically different.

In his early days in Vienna, fired by a theoretical enthusiasm for democracy, he had attended the debates of the Austrian Parliament. What he saw and heard there had left a painful and indelible impression: the babble of tongues—Czech, Croat, Serb, Ruthenian, German—the chattering inattention of the deputies while the speakers muttered and droned, the brawls that took place in the lobbies and on the very floor of the House. The good humour and the personal friendliness that makes the English House of Commons a living and triumphant working institution had no part in that insubstantial assembly. After the war, when parliamentary democracy superseded all other forms of government in Germany, Hitler's contempt for a system so little able to aid his starving countrymen only deepened. Here, in an hour when men were in need of leadership as never before, was a sham government that tricked up bogus claimants to power in the trappings of honour and authority, yet never asked of them the one service they were there to perform. The first fundamental of popular control of government was wanting—the personal responsibility of those in power for the measures they advocated.

Parliament decides upon something ; be the consequence never so devastating, no single man is responsible, no-one can be called to account for it. . . . It is not the aim of our modern parliamentary system to form an assembly of wise and well-informed men, but to collect a group of nonentities who being dependent on others for their views can be the more easily led. . . . Only thus can the game of Party politics be played in its present unhealthy sense. Under this system the wire-puller who exercises real control is able to remain safely in the background with no possibility of ever being made personally responsible. No decision, however disastrous to the nation, can be laid at the door of its true author. All responsibility is shifted to the shoulders of a Party.

There is thus no responsibility in practice, for such liability can rest only on an individual and not on an assemblage of idle talkers. The parliamentary system naturally attracts people who like to avoid the light of day. It is equally hateful to every straightforward and honest man who is ready to take personal responsibility.[1]

Hitler devoted many pages of his *Mein Kampf* to analysing the workings of the electoral system. In the crude but racy imagery of a man who was still a peasant at heart, he exposed the sterile and time-serving tricks of the parliamentary careerists. " Their preoccupation is always the result of the next Election. The moment these artists in parliamentary government have the glimmering of a suspicion that their beloved public is ready to kick up its heels and escape from the harness of the old Party wagon they begin to paint the shafts with new colours. On such occasions the party astrologists

[1] *Mein Kampf*.

and horoscope readers, the 'old hands' and 'experts', are consulted. These recall former occasions when the masses showed signs of losing patience and diagnose a repetition of such disaster. Resorting to their unfailing prescription, they form a committee. They bustle around among the 'public' and listen to what is being said. They nose among the newspapers and sniff out what it is their darlings, the masses, are clamouring for. . . . Even the 'dangerous nostrums' of the Opposition are now looked upon as worthy of reconsideration. . . . For these people change their convictions just as the soldier changes his shirt in war-time — when the old one is bug-eaten.

"In the new Programme everyone gets everything he wants. The farmer is told that the interests of agriculture will be safeguarded. The industrialist is promised protection for his products. The consumer is assured that his interests will be safeguarded by price control. Teachers are promised higher salaries and civil servants better pensions. Widows and orphans will receive generous State provision. Trade will be fostered. Tariffs will be lowered. Even the taxes, though they cannot be entirely lowered, will be almost abolished."[1] Only when the Election was over and the campaigners' seats and offices secured, would the incompatible programme be tacitly abandoned.

"Scarcely anything can be so depressing", wrote Hitler, "as to witness this constantly recurring swindle." To this largely self-educated but tragically, if narrowly experienced man the whole theory

[1] *Mein Kampf.*

of free government that the great pragmatists had evolved out of the local and political experience of island England, seemed in the changed world of the industrial 20th century nothing but a heartless fraud. The people, herded into vast towns and without any real contact with their rulers, were deceived by a sham façade of political liberty which in practice, far from affording them the free disposal of their daily work and life, gave a virtual monopoly to a little minority of powerful financial and political manipulators to say and write whatever they chose.

Into this minority's use of their freedom no question of the public good ever entered. Thus those who in a capitalist and mechanised age alone had the power and therefore the exclusive liberty to own, print and distribute great newspapers, used that freedom to publish everything, however harmful to society, that would increase their sales. Often their abuse of power was in Hitler's belief deliberate. Here also he imagined he saw the sinister hand of the international Jew.

By far the most important part in political " education ", which is comprised in the word " propaganda ", is carried on by the Press. It constitutes the predominant factor in the political schooling of adults. This educational power is not, however, in the hands of the State, but in those of a very inferior type. As a young man in Vienna, I had many opportunities for getting to know the men who owned and operated this machine for mass instruction. At first I was astonished by the rapidity with which this great and dangerous Power within the State could create a belief among the people and in doing so misconstrue and defeat their genuine desires and convictions. Within a few days the Press could transform some

ridiculously trivial matter into an issue of national importance, while vital questions were completely ignored or withdrawn from public attention.

Thus in the course of a few weeks new names, which a month before no one had even heard of, were successfully conjured up out of nothing, and incredible hopes associated with them in the public mind. These were given a popularity which a man of genuine ability could not hope to attain in the course of a long lifetime, while old and tried figures in the national life, still at the height of their powers, were relegated to oblivion or overwhelmed with such abuse that their names became symbols of infamy.

To appreciate the pernicious influence which the Press can exercise it is necessary to study the Hebrew methods by which honourable and decent people are besmirched with mud and filth in the shape of vulgar abuse and slander coming as if by magic from innumerable quarters simultaneously. The pickpockets of contemporary journalism will filch anything to serve their mean ends. They will pry into the most intimate family affairs and never rest till they have sniffed out some petty scandal to destroy the reputation of their victim. And if they can find nothing damaging in his private or public life, they will still shower abuse on him in the hope that some of it will stick even though refuted a thousand times. . . . These slanderers never admit that they are working to mislead the Public. On the contrary they invest themselves with a halo of unctuous and self-righteous twaddle about the duties of a journalist and the like. When such cuttle-fishes gather together in large shoals at meetings and congresses they emit a deal of slimy talk about what they term their professional honour. Then the assembled species bow their respects to one another.[1]

[1] *Mein Kampf*.

Only Lord Baldwin among living politicians has ever dared to write in such scathing terms about the abuse of power by the Press.

By the help of the Marxist propagandists — " journalistic vipers . . . to whom lying was as much a necessity of life as mewing is to a cat " — Hitler maintained that the faith, idealism and independent judgment of the common man was being constantly undermined. " It is no part of the purpose of the Press to inspire its readers with ideals that might help them raise their minds above the sordid conditions of their daily lives. On the contrary it panders to their lowest instincts. . . . It carries on a fanatical campaign of calumny, works to pull down everything that upholds the structure of national independence, and to destroy all cultural values. . . . It directs its attack especially against men of character who refuse to fall into line with the Jewish efforts to obtain control of the State or who appear dangerous to the Jews on account of their superior intelligence. For in order to incur the enmity of the Jew it is not necessary to show any open hostility towards him. It is enough to be considered capable of opposing him in the future. . . . Those who are not of kindred spirit may be sure of being listed among his enemies. . . . The means which he employs to break people of this kind, who may themselves be decent and upright, are not the open weapons of honourable conflict but falsehood and calumny."

The timid and bourgeois parliamentarian, Hitler held, was not able to withstand such methods. He did not possess the courage to do so. The people,

abandoned by their so-called rulers, were thus left to the mercies of those who designed their enslavement. "While the upper classes, with their innate cowardliness, turn away from anyone whom the Jew attacks with such lies and calumny, the common people swallow everything. . . . Government authorities wrap themselves in a robe of silence or even persecute the victims of Jewish attacks in order to stop the campaign of the Jewish Press . . . on a plea of upholding the authority of the State and preserving public order. Gradually the Marxist weapon in the hands of the Jew becomes a bogey to decent people. Sometimes the fear of it goes to the brain and constitutes a kind of nightmare. People begin to give way before this dreadful foe and so become its victims." [1]

It seemed to Hitler that the modern democratic system, with its universal suffrage, its appeals to the basest passions of the helpless multitude, its interminable delaying forms of procedure, was a house built on sand. "Democracy in the West today is the forerunner of Marxism, which would be inconceivable without democracy. It is the feeding-ground of that world pestilence." As he and his ill-fated generation had experienced it, it had proved itself "a monstrosity of filth and fire". For above the debates on the parliamentary benches and the pleading speeches on the hustings, the corporal of Bavarian Infantry seemed always to hear the discordant shout of the Marxist mob and to glimpse behind its ugly, oncoming rush the sinister form first seen in his days of hungry wander-

[1] *Mein Kampf.*

ing in Vienna, — the Jew, " cold-blooded, thick-skinned and shameless ", with his long caftan and matted side-locks. Under a thousand hidden and half-hidden forms he was working to destroy the State and debase the race.

Before long the last disguise would be flung aside and the " democratic Jew " would reveal himself for what he really was — " the Jew of the Blood, the tyrant of the nations ". The final revolution would begin, and only cease when a world drenched in blood had been finally subjected to the domination of the chosen and triumphant Hebrew. " In the course of a few years he will try to exterminate all who represent the national intelligence. Deprived of their natural intellectual leaders, the peoples will be enslaved under an eternal despotism. Russia furnishes the most terrible example of such a slavery. In that country the Jew killed or starved thirty millions of the people in a fit of savage fanaticism and with the use of inhuman torture. And all that a gang of Jewish literati and financial bandits should dominate over a great people." [1]

Up to this point Hitler's creed had been purely negative. Apart from violent racial prejudice, it was based on hatred of the industrial system under which he had suffered and of the Marxist system which was taking its place and under which he believed his country would suffer still more. His instinct — for all his warped theories that of natural genius — warned him that Marxism must lead to the ultimate extinction of the race. In his eyes it was the philosophy of the charnel-house.

[1] *Mein Kampf.*

If Hitler was that not uncommon phenomenon of the modern world — a potential and imperfectly educated intellectual caught in the cogs of the industrial machine and resentful at the lost opportunities of which it deprived him — he was by blood and sympathy a peasant. And it is an ineradicable habit of the peasant mind to wish to see things grow. Hitler's real quarrel with the capitalist and Marxist system alike was that they stopped things from growing. They were concerned not with creation, but the one with making quick profits and the other with establishing an unnatural and sterile uniformity. Both were destroying quality throughout the world — the quality, not only of things, but, of what was far more serious, of men and women.

It was on this issue that Hitler, brooding in the crowded trench or in the slovenly back streets of Munich, made up his mind to raise a standard against the two chief powers of the modern world. His presumptuous challenge would seem ridiculous were it not for the fact that in some measure it succeeded. It was his profound conviction that he could do so, whatever the odds against him, because truth was on his side. Those who opposed him, for all their vast strength and established position, would be fighting against Nature.

For Nature taught that all progress came through the physical improvement of the breed. Men were not disembodied and denationalised intelligences, operating without relation either to their forebears or their posterity. All natural evolution had been effected through certain races: so long as they kept

their virility unimpaired, human achievement remained cumulative. But once the purity of the blood and the capacity for healthful breeding of a people were impaired, whether through unhealthy conditions or miscegenation, the race deteriorated and the quality of the individual declined with it.

A strange farrago of pseudo-scientific theories, acquired at second-hand through books and lectures from a long line of thinkers, reaching from Darwin and Carlyle through Disraeli and Cecil Rhodes to the renegade Englishman, Houston Chamberlain, influenced Hitler's powerful but untrained mind to state and elaborate his strange theory of race. Much of it was absurd. Yet it was founded primarily on his own observation of the deformed bodies and disease-wrecked faces that throng the pavements of the great cities of the modern world. Pupil of the underworld that he was, he refused to accept them as an inevitable part of the universe. Instead he reached back to his own country youth and the instinctive wisdom of his peasant forebears.

For Hitler knew the fatal consequences of neglecting the breed through having witnessed them at first hand. In the slums of the capitalist industrial cities, where the least happy products of every race were allowed to mingle and breed indiscriminately in enormous masses, the future of mankind was being mortgaged to the making of quick profits. " The prevailing cult of humanitarianism ill befits an age ", he wrote, " that allows the most depraved degenerates to propagate and so impose unspeakable suffering on their progeny and contemporaries, while contraceptives are sold without hindrance in every

drug-store and even on the streets to prevent children being born to the healthiest. In this present State of ours . . . the bourgeoisie regard it as wicked to make procreation impossible for syphilitics and imbeciles, cripples and sufferers from tubercular and hereditary diseases. But the prevention of procreation among millions of our best people is not regarded as an evil. . . .

"How devoid of ideals and how ignoble is the whole contemporary system! The Churches join in committing this sin against the image of God while they continue to preach the dignity of that image. They talk about the Spirit, but they allow man, the embodiment of the Spirit, to degenerate to the proletarian level. And then they are astonished to discover how small the influence of Christianity has become in their own country and how depraved and ungodly is the riff-raff so produced, which being physically degenerate is morally degenerate also. To balance this state of affairs they try to convert Hottentots, Zulus and Kaffirs and to bestow on them the blessings of the Church. While our European races are left to become the victims of moral depravity, the pious missionary goes out to central Africa and establishes missionary stations for negroes. And in the end sound and healthy, though primitive and backward, peoples are transformed in the name of 'progress' into a motley of lazy and brutalised mongrels." [1]

This damning indictment of modern society and "its original sin of racial corruption" constitutes the central theme of Hitler's political philosophy.

[1] *Mein Kampf.*

It has never been properly answered. Fortunately for Hitler's critics, his charge has been confused by his own emotional obsession about the Jews. His chief count against this unfortunate people was that they were deliberately engaged in polluting the blood of other and superior races. In one of his more gloomy moments in *Mein Kampf*, he even went so far as to speculate whether Destiny for some inscrutable reason had not specially designed them for this destructive purpose. In another more famous passage he describes how " the black-haired Jewish youth lies in wait for hours on end, satanically glaring at and spying on the unsuspicious girl whom he plans to seduce, adulterating her blood and stealing her from the bosom of her own people.[1] The Jew uses every means to destroy the racial purity of a subjugated people. In his systematic efforts to ruin girls and women he strives to break down the last barriers of discrimination between him and other peoples. The Jews were responsible for bringing negroes into the Rhineland, with the ultimate idea of bastardising the white race which they hate and thus debasing its cultural and political level so that they might dominate. For as long as a people remains racially pure and is conscious of the treasure of its blood, it can never be overcome by the Jew."

[1] That the young and amorous Jew might have other motives for his behaviour which can be more easily explained by another of Nature's laws does not appear to have occurred to the future Führer, who, conveniently for himself but less so for other people, seems to have been little affected by this particular manifestation of the divine operation of things. Men of genius are sometimes curiously blind to the existence of feelings and habits which they do not share. Dr. Johnson, it will be remembered, refused to believe that people differentiated between their right and left shoes.

That at least is what Hitler resolved to make the German people. Potentially they were already, as he believed, of earth's best breed: with the English, Scots, Scandinavians and the old Anglo-Saxon stock of North America the purest surviving representatives of the Aryan race. Hitler's reading and his limited experience of the mixed races of the old Austro-Hungarian Empire had led him to the mystical, absurd, though characteristically German conclusion that all progress had sprung from the genius of this one race. "Every manifestation of human culture, every product of art, science and technical skill which we see in the world to-day, is almost solely the product of Aryan creative power. This justifies the belief that it was the Aryan alone who founded a higher type of humanity: he represents the archetype of what we understand by the term, *Man*. He is the Prometheus of mankind, from whose shining brow the divine spark of genius has at all times flashed forth, kindling anew that fire which in the form of knowledge illuminated the dark night, drawing aside the veil of mystery and showing man how to rise and become the master of all the other creatures of the world. . . . If he should be exterminated or subjugated, then the dark shroud of a new barbarian era would enfold the earth." [1]

According to Hitler it was the Aryan's degradation and ultimate extinction that the Jews were trying to achieve. "The Jewish doctrine of Marxism rejects the aristocratic principle in nature and in place of the eternal privilege of force sets up

[1] *Mein Kampf.*

the mass and dead weight of numbers." This may possibly be true of Marxism: it is profoundly untrue of the historical philosophy of the Jewish race. For by a strange irony the creative achievements of Hebrew genius provide the chief argument against Hitler's exclusive glorification of the Aryan. If modern civilisation owes half its inspiration to the Aryan Greek and Roman, it owes the other and diviner half to the Semitic. The Bible has fired more creative minds in northern Europe than the *Odyssey* or the *Aeneid.* Plato and Dante and Shakespeare were Aryans. Christ was a Jew.

This does not necessarily impair the significance of Hitler's belief in the importance of preserving racial purity. It was one that was shared by the great Jewish lawgiver, Moses, and in recent times by another Jew of genius, Benjamin Disraeli. In one part of *Mein Kampf* Hitler makes the curious admission that the explanation of the Hebrew power he so much feared was that the Jews had kept their blood purer than any other race in the world. Nature, Hitler argued, never favoured the mongrel. "The products of cross breeding have to suffer bitterly, especially the third, fourth and fifth generations. Not only are they without the finer qualities of their parents, but they lack will power and vigour through want of harmony in the quality of their blood." Though there are many obvious exceptions, there is probably more in this than critics of Hitler allow. It is certainly strange, as he points out, that a civilisation that pays so much attention to the breeding of pedigree horses, dogs and cats should take so little care of the human race itself.

It was the failure to do so that Hitler condemned both in the Second Reich of Bismarck and in the Republic. " The State is only a means to an end. . . . It is the vessel and the race is what it contains. The vessel only serves its purpose if it safeguards and preserves its contents." The most precious asset of the people and the potential source of all its future happiness and prosperity was its blood. If the State failed to protect it, it ceased to justify its own existence.

In place of the prevailing conception of the State — a mere mechanism for preserving the capitalist *status quo* — the dreamer of Munich outlined a new organisation of society to undo a century's neglect. " The task of the People's State will be to make the race the centre of the life of the community. . . . It will insist that children are the most precious possession a people can have. It will insist that only the healthy beget children: that there is only one unforgivable crime — for parents with disease or heredity defect to bring children into the world." Like the Church, Hitler proclaimed the sanctity of marriage, but insisted that that sanctity arose not from the repetition of a form of words but from the resolve of its partners to leave the world a little better in their progeny than they found it. " It is their duty to give to the Almighty Creator beings such as He Himself made in His own image." [1] It was the duty of the State to see that marriage was so regarded and not degraded into a

[1] *Mein Kampf*. Hitler did not explain how man was to judge what God's image was. But it would seem that it was of a German type.

mere irresponsible union for producing " monsters who were a cross between man and ape ".

All this the humble soldier of Bavarian Foot turned over in his mind as he gave his comrades political instruction or made his way — a rather pathetic and lonely figure — through the Munich streets. The ideas formed during his joyless life of harsh experience gradually took shape in that turbulent but powerful brain, and the desire to harness their force to action grew. But what action was open to a man in his position ? To reshape the life of his fellow-men he needed the power of an Emperor ? How could an unknown and penniless waif of adverse fortune enforce his daring, heretical opinions on a people of eighty millions, divided and helpless in the grip of encircling foes ? Or did an old tag of scripture that faith could remove mountains sometimes flit through his mind ?

One day, in the course of his lowly duties he found himself at the door of a little eating-house in the Sterneckerbräu, where a meeting was billed of one of the innumerable political parties which sprang up like mushrooms in the troubled soil of post-war Germany. He knew the time-wasting rigmarole of such gatherings by heart. This one, which called itself the Deutsche Arbeiter-Partei, or German Workers' Party, proved to be more than usually ineffectual. There was an audience of a dozen obscure and depressing individuals, a set lecturer on a platform, and the familiar, useless ritual of pseudo-parliamentary forms. One of the self-important persons who rose after the lecture advanced the view that Bavaria should break away from

Prussia and join with the republican remnant of Austria. This irritated Hitler, who replied from the back of the room. His force and sincerity so struck the chairman of the meeting, an earnest, spectacled locksmith named Anton Drexler, that he caught him at the door as he was leaving and thrust into his hand a little brochure. It was called *My Political Awakening; From a Working Man's Diary*. No act of faith has ever produced stranger consequences.

That night Hitler could not sleep. In despair he took up the little blue-covered pamphlet and began to read. Something in Drexler's eager if not very original abjuration of usury, profiteering and class privilege gripped him. However ineffectual, it tallied with so many of his own deepest beliefs. Like him, the author was poor, powerless and unknown, like him had suffered from the tyranny of the Trade Unions and their Marxist bosses, and had tried against odds to voice the suppressed national instincts of the German workers. Herr Drexler might not be a philosopher but he was a patriot.

A night or two later Hitler went back to another meeting. "I crossed the badly-lighted, empty hall, and found a door leading to a side room. There I encountered the members. In the glimmer of a grimy gas-lamp four young men were sitting at a table, among them the author of the brochure. He greeted me cordially and bade me welcome as a new member of the German Workers' Party." Hitler hesitated. He asked a few questions. The total party membership amounted to six, its finances to seven and a half marks — a circumstance gravely signalised by a vote of confidence in the Treasurer.

There was no organisation, no programme, not even a leaflet or a rubber stamp. It was all very feeble and pathetic.

But though Hitler went home that night without committing himself, he no longer felt inclined to laugh. The little group might possess nothing — funds, members, platform — but its members were sincere. "Fate seemed to be beckoning me. I should never have joined one of the existing great Parties. . . . In my eyes it seemed an advantage that this ridiculous band with its handful of members had not stiffened into an 'organisation', but still offered the individual real scope for personal activity."[1] Hitler made his resolve. He returned and was given a ticket of membership bearing the number seven.

The decision taken, there could be no turning back. Hitler relinquished the little security he had, left the Army and gave himself up to the task of transforming a poor Munich debating club into a crusade. How he lived in those early months of faith remains a mystery: from the testimony of his humble associates it would appear chiefly on radishes. But Hitler was used to hardships: Providence, so he believed, had seen to that. Often she had taken him in her hands and threatened to crush him. "Yet the will had grown stronger with obstacles and had triumphed in the end." For five years in gay pre-war Vienna, hunger had been the faithful guardian which had never left him. He was not to be daunted by it now. "When men's hearts are breaking and their souls are plunged into the depths of despair, their great forebears, who learnt to

[1] *Mein Kampf*.

triumph over anxiety and affliction, mental servitude and physical bondage, turn their eyes towards them from the dim shadows of the past and stretch out their eternal hands in a gesture of inspiration to despairing souls." [1] It was such hands that seemed to sustain Hitler.

To the eye of faith all things are possible. Six or seven men, poor, isolated and unknown, had come together " to found a movement to do what the great mass-parties had failed to do — to reconstruct the German Reich ". Nobody had ever heard of them and, at first, though they would gladly have welcomed attack or even ridicule, nobody paid the least attention to them. Hitler's first attempts to increase the membership were a complete failure. It did not even run into two figures.

But when the Committee, whose own membership was still synonymous with that of the Party, had debated itself hoarse, when as many invitations to meetings as the Committee could afford to have typed had been dropped into letter-boxes, when Hitler in person had delivered eighty of these, he abandoned traditional methods and adopted more original ones of his own. Like Cromwell he called into the service of his Party a body of fighters of a tougher quality — not poor tapsters and decayed serving-men but men of metal. Certain of his old front-line comrades who had learnt to respect him in the hour of danger now promised to attend his meetings. They had discipline, energy and courage, and had learnt on the battlefield to believe that nothing was impossible to men with a will. The

[1] *Mein Kampf.*

politician's favourite word "impracticable" had no part in their language. Unlike the gentle journalist who was titular Chairman of the Party and the timid artisan who presided over the Munich branch, they had been trained in that iron school which "transforms diffident and weakly natures into men".[1]

By collecting small sums Hitler was presently able to hire a hall and advertise a meeting in one of the few independent papers left in Munich. More than a hundred people — a vast concourse it seemed to the anxious organisers — turned up. They can little have guessed the importance of the occasion. Contrary to the wishes of the chairman, who refused to credit an ex-corporal with the gift of eloquence, Hitler was the second speaker. At the end of thirty minutes it was more than clear that he was an orator of genius. The little audience was profoundly impressed. The unexpected size of the collection that followed proved it.

It was perhaps the most fateful discovery of modern history. It set the Party on the road to success. From this moment Hitler became the director of its propaganda. He made it popular, arresting and aggressive. His more respectable colleagues were often shocked and counselled moderation: he replied with truth that moderation could never get so forlorn a hope anywhere.

At that time even the mildest criticism of the prevailing Marxist beliefs in a working-class district was dangerous. Speakers with nationalist sentiments were expected to confine themselves to middle-

[1] *Mein Kampf*.

and upper-class audiences of their own way of thinking. Any more ambitious gathering was invariably put in its place by the appearance of a gang of Communist toughs, at whose noisy entrance the bourgeoisie would scatter like rabbits and the platform speakers tactfully conclude the proceedings. It was this kind of opposition that Hitler now resolved to challenge.

To a soldier there seemed only one way to cast out terror — by counter-terror. He summoned his old front-line comrades and told them what was needed of them. At the Party's next large rally, in October, the " Reds ", roused by Hitler's impudent propaganda, turned up in force. At a given signal they attempted to break up the meeting. They were met by a smaller but disciplined band who engaged them with a savagery that equalled, and a resolution that surpassed, their own. After a few minutes of bloody fighting order was restored and the interruptors limped home. It was clear that the Communist Party no longer enjoyed a monopoly of violence in Munich.

Yet it was no part of Hitler's plan to scare his opponents from his meetings. The more of them who came, the better pleased he was. He did everything he could to keep them there. He wished them to stay and listen. The very discipline in which the Marxist propaganda chiefs kept their followers proved a weapon in his hands. The slogans with which the Communist dupes had come to shout him down were answered before the time had come to utter them. He did not wait for objections to his policy: he anticipated them in his opening remarks. And when the Marxist terrorists, abandoning argument, fell back on

violence, the Saal-Schutz or Party Body was ready to deal with them. The progenitors of the Storm Troopers, with lowered heads and clenched fists, replied to the wreckers' tactics in kind. When the interrupters were silenced, the speaker continued. Often when he sat down in those early days Hitler saw four thousand intense eyes watching his with a new light, where an hour before three thousand six hundred had glared hatred.

There was poetry in those early meetings: poetry born of the very sufferings of those who listened to him and who, hopeless till that moment, fancied they heard in his voice the inconceivable promise of a new Germany reborn. The speaker's theme was the misery and degradation of the German people: in that landscape of desolation it was a picture that few could fail to recognise. The starving workers had been told by the Socialist and Communist leaders that all their miseries were the fruit not of Versailles but of the old German nationalism and imperialism. Any criticism of Versailles was treated as evidence of a reactionary mind. It was sure to be greeted by a working-class audience with the parrot slogan of "And Brest-Litowsk? Brest-Litowsk!" Hitler took the wind out of such interrupters' sails by announcing his lectures on the iniquities of the peace treaties under the title of "The Treaties of Brest-Litowsk and Versailles". Germany, he repeatedly assured his audiences, had not had a square deal. They were ready to believe him because, whatever they had been told to the contrary, they knew from their own hard experience that it was true.

It was Hitler's purpose to give the German people a new way of regarding the world — a *Weltanschauung*. For centuries they had lived on the sufferance of their neighbours — a people without frontiers, without unity, without the space to secure a free and stable life of their own choosing. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, when the nations of modern Europe had taken shape out of the decaying welter of mediaeval Christendom, the lot of the divided Germans had become wretched in the extreme. Encircled by stronger powers, with no natural barriers of sea, mountain or river to bar their way, they had been subjected to constant invasion, and, lacking centrifugal direction, to internecine strife. In the eighteenth century the race which gave the world Bach and Handel, Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven, Goethe and Schiller, was still without nationhood and its people denied the protection and help which Frenchmen, Spaniards, Englishmen, Slavs and even Dutchmen received from their governments in the new lands of opportunity beyond the seas and the Urals. For many a German the only opportunity the era of oceanic imperialism offered was a mercenary's wages in the armies of a foreign crown.[1] And when the *ancien régime* of Europe was submerged by the storms that blew out of revolutionary and resurgent France, it

[1] The extension of the British Empire in the eighteenth century was often assisted by the employment of German mercenaries hired by Treasury gold from Teutonic princelings. Even at Waterloo there were almost as many Germans serving under Wellington as native British. So also the Dutch fleets, which gave our Navy so many a tough and honourable contest in the seventeenth century, were largely manned by sailors hired each spring by the United Provinces from the ports of north Germany.

was a still divided Germany that bore the brunt of the aggressors' bayonets as it had borne those of Louis XIV a century before.

The struggles of the nineteenth century had at last brought the beginning of unity to the German tribes — the last of the major races of Europe to achieve nationhood. Yet even this union had been imperfect, with the old Ostmärk of Charlemagne's empire still outside the Reich and often, owing to the dynastic interests of its reigning House and its mingled races, at divergence with the rest of the German family. The Great War — according to Allied computation a Teutonic bid for "a place in the sun" and, according to Hitler, a struggle against jealous encirclers — saw that young and imperfect union tested and found wanting. The lack of common purpose, the treachery of the Jew and the stranger within her too open gates, above all, the lack of consistent purpose in her leadership, had consigned Germany to the lowest hell of even her unhappy history. Her starving and defeated people had been subjected to insult, robbery and virtual enslavement. All their hard-earned possessions had been taken from them, and henceforward they were to pay — seemingly to all eternity — tribute to the conquering foreigner, and submit in patience to whatever he ordained.

Against this conception, strange and false though it may seem to less tortured and warped minds, Hitler raised the standard of passionate and uncompromising rebellion. Germany should be reborn, and, as a young giant shaking her invincible locks, take that which was justly hers and which

had been so shamefully denied her. The foreigner with his supervisory Commissions, his Reparations, his unilateral interdictions against German re-armament, his encircling military alliances, his unjust and hypocritical hocus-pocus of international law, should be sent packing. At the moment, of course, judged by any rational standard, the position seemed hopeless. There were four foreign armies on German soil, there were military powers of overriding strength on almost every frontier, while Germany was forbidden to manufacture heavy guns, tanks and military aeroplanes or to train her sons to defence. These things did not deter Hitler.

"To recover Germany's power you must not ask 'How are we to manufacture arms?' but 'How are we to breed the spirit that makes a people capable of bearing arms?' If that spirit rules a people, their will finds a thousand ways, any one of them leading to armament! Give a coward ten pistols, and when attacked he will fail to fire a single shot. He can do less with them than a man of spirit with a mere blackthorn." [1]

By her own spirit and courage Germany was to end her subjection and with it her misery. By too much preoccupation with worldly riches, by the cancer of materialism and its corollary cowardice, by shameful defeatism and surrender, she had gained nothing and lost everything. "Only after the German people had abandoned their ideals to follow the material promises of the Revolution, only

[1] From a passage of *Mein Kampf*. Translated by R. C. K. Ensor in his brilliant Oxford pamphlet *Mein Kampf*.

after they had thrown away their arms to take up the rucksack, only then—instead of inheriting an earthly paradise — did they sink into the slough of universal contempt and with it of universal want." By sacrificing discipline and unity to the false mirage of individual freedom at home they had become the bondsmen of heartless and plundering strangers. Only by resuming their ancient discipline and internal subjection could they become free again.

It was therefore a creed of liberation that Hitler preached — liberation from those of alien race. Their dominion had brought nothing but misery to the German people : there was scarcely a German who would not gain by their expulsion. Everything to do with the foreigner was of evil omen to post-war Germany : there was no hope save in self-help and uncompromising nationalism. The international affiliations of Capital and Labour, and even of Philanthropy and Humanitarianism, became as suspect as the international ideals of Geneva and the Conferences. "A conquered and oppressed people", wrote one German, "has no place either for an internationally-minded and internationally-organised commerce or for an internationally-minded and internationally-organised working class. Both must be re-organised on a national basis." [1]

The successive stages of Germany's march to power, and with power to security to fulfil her high racial destiny, were logically and ruthlessly indicated. First the inequalities of Versailles were to be redressed — by force if consent were still withheld —

[1] Hans Zehrer, quoted by Vernon Bartlett in *Nazi Germany Explained*, 1933.

and the ten million Germans living outside the Reich were to be liberated from alien rule. Then the work of expansion was to be taken up with a new conviction and purpose. The long tide of Slavonic and oriental penetration of civilised Europe was to be stemmed, and the German tribes, unified at last, were to turn east to found a great colonial dominion where they could enjoy — 250 millions of them by the end of the century — all the means of supporting a full life without dependence on the foreigner. It was no nineteenth-century, pseudo-commercial policy of recovering captured African swamps that would give the German people at long last its *Lebensraum*. In return for freedom to expand eastwards these remote and not very long held possessions could be willingly left in the hands of naval Britain. Germany's enhanced destiny lay not in the Cameroons or Tanganyika but in the plains of Poland and the Ukraine. Only there could the annual increase in the German population, estimated by Hitler at 900,000, be supported in dignity and union.

For in Hitler's eyes the German race was that chosen by Providence to fulfil its highest purpose. The Austrian boy who had worn a cornflower behind his ear and taught his fellows to sing the forbidden German National Anthem on Hapsburg soil, who had listened eagerly to the history lessons of Dr. Pötsch at the Realschule at Linz, and whose unquestioning pan-Germanism had won him the name of the "quiet fanatic" among his regimental comrades, was able to give expression at last to his conviction that the Germans were the only people in

the world who mattered. The more of them there were, and the more of the earth they inhabited, the better it would be for the human race. It was half a century since an unusual Oxford undergraduate had come to a similar conclusion about another branch of the Aryan race. Cecil Rhodes in his first will and throughout his strange career made it his life's work to give the English kind new areas of settlement where they could live, work and multiply. Only by doing so, he held, could he serve the divine purpose of evolving a higher type of man whose ultimate dominance would establish the reign of peace throughout the world. Hitler's mind worked in the same way. He wanted, he said, to see "a peace based not upon the waving of olive branches and the tearful misery-mongering of pacifist old women, but one guaranteed by the triumphant sword of a people endowed with the power to master the world and administer it in the service of a higher civilisation". What would happen to human liberty in the process Hitler did not even trouble to consider. He did not care much for human liberty.

The fact that the German people had not hitherto had a national being based on a unity of blood, Hitler repeatedly told his audiences, had been the source of untold misery for them. The remedy was in their own hands. To escape from political and economic bondage they must unite. They had nothing to lose but their chains: they had the world to gain. For the internal, ever-weakening, suicidal war of the German "have-nots" against the German "haves", they should substitute a more profitable crusade. It was time for a nation of "have-nots" to unite

against the possessing powers who, for their own ends, kept it poor and helpless. "What will restore the strength of the German people is the conviction that they can re-conquer their liberty. . . . It is lack of will-power and not lack of arms which makes us incapable of offering any serious resistance today." [1]

The first task, therefore, of the German People's State would be to give the German people their unity. "As a State the German Reich shall include all Germans." There should be one Folk, one State, one Leader — "*ein Volk, ein Reich, ein Führer!*" United and so led, they should pass through the wilderness into the promised land, where a future awaited them worthy of a master race.

To attain it they must first return to the habits of thought and action that had formerly made Germany great. For a nation surrounded by enemies and without natural frontiers, liberty of the individual could only result, as in the tragic present, in enslavement to the foreigner. To be secure Germany must be strong, and to be strong she must be disciplined. The old unifying discipline of Prussia, now discredited, must be revived. Self-sacrifice, the subordination of the individual to the needs of the community, unquestioning obedience in the face of the enemy, were the virtues that the Fatherland needed of every German. Those who practised them would find a wonderful inner happiness and reward.

"He who would live must fight. He who does not wish to fight in this world, where permanent struggle is the law of life, has not the right to exist." [2]

[1] *Mein Kampf.* [2] *Mein Kampf*, p. 242.

Such was the lesson a harsh life had taught Hitler, and such was the lesson he now preached to the German people. Remembering all that had happened to them in the past few years, they were ready enough to believe it.

There were others who shared Hitler's nationalist views: the old Junkers and militarists, for instance. Post-war Germany had its fair share of whole-hearted, if slightly discredited "Blimps". Any programme that advocated enmity to the foreigner and a restoration of the old military system under which they had been honoured and powerful naturally commanded their support. But no nationalist policy that did not win over the great bulk of the nation could satisfy Hitler. He sought the heart of the workers whom the Marxists had taught to revile their country's flag. Only with their help could he raise Germany from her present shame and impotence, expel the foreigner and lead her towards the golden lands of opportunity of his eastern dream.

Before he could win them to his cause, Hitler had to make them feel that that cause was their own. Only if every German worker knew that the new Germany was to be no mere preserve of "patriotic" landowners, generals and employers, would he come to share his hopes. At present he could not be expected to feel much enthusiasm for a country that denied him so much. "Do our *bourgeois* ever think what a ridiculously meagre share the people have in all that can make a feeling of pride in the Fatherland? . . . The question of rendering a people patriotic is first and foremost one of establishing healthy social conditions which can furnish the

necessary background for the education of the citizen. . . . Only then will it be possible for him to feel proud of being a citizen of his country. I can only fight for something that I love. I can love only what I respect." [1]

To make the disinherited proletarians once more a part of the nation as their yeoman and peasant forebears had been was Hitler's first object. They needed status, privilege and a stake in the national wealth they helped to create. It was not a question of distributing favours but of restoring rights. In the new Peoples' State those of Labour would be as sacred as those of property, and its dignity held in the same honour as the brainwork of the business and professional man. Labour had been disinherited. National Socialism would restore its charter.

For if the promise of the new Peoples' State was to end the domination of the foreigner, it was also to end that of the capitalist. In Hitler's view the sole beneficiaries of the existing system were the merchant and the state official : no-one else seemed to count. The only ideal left to mankind was that of " peaceful competition between nations " or, as Hitler put it, " quiet mutual swindling, stopping short of violent methods. . . . This process appeared not only to be permanent, but, with universal approval, to be about to turn the whole world into a single vast warehouse under Jewish bosses, in whose temples of fame none but the busts of the craftiest profiteers and the most unenterprising officials would have a place." [2]

Under such a system, economics — that is, a

[1] *Mein Kampf*, pp. 39, 41. [2] *Mein Kampf*.

system of accountancy based on the exclusive significance of profits — was being regarded as the only touchstone of human affairs. It mattered nothing if the health of the people were sacrificed to slum landlords and patent-food vendors, their faith and morals to lying newspaper proprietors and purveyors of erotic films and literature, their happiness and self-respect to financiers who regimented labour as a gigantic proletarian slave-gang. As long as there was a profit for somebody, there was " prosperity " and everything was well.

Hitler denied this, and in denying it challenged the whole complicated system of international finance on which the modern world was founded. The lectures of Gottfried Feder had given him the idea of differentiating between " productive " and " fructifying " capital which was the legitimate outcome of creative labour, and " parasitic " or " loan " capital which owed its existence solely to speculation. Like " Boy " Bryan, Hitler would not have man crucified on a cross of gold. The capitalism of the international Stock Exchanges, with its millstone of golden debt tied round the neck of the producer, would have no place in the new revolutionary society he was out to found. Only the legitimate capital of the producer would henceforward play its ordered and subordinated place in the service of an all-comprehending and totalitarian State.

To express its union of a socialism that was not international and of a nationalism that was not exclusive to any class, Hitler christened his crusade the National Socialist Party. He took for its flag the red background of Socialism, but added to it a

circle of white to mark his nationalist aspirations and, as a symbol of racial purity, a black swastika, inspired by the shield over the archway of the monastery school at Lambach where he had learnt the rudiments of music and dreamt of being a Prior. And to give the ordinary man a rough idea of what his Movement was going to do for him, he drew up a written Profession of Faith under twenty-five heads — brief, forceful and attuned to the simplest intelligence.

These he expounded on February 24th, 1920, in the Hofbräuhaus in Munich to an audience of two thousand people. He and honest Anton Drexler had sat up the whole of a winter's night putting the finishing touches to the document. When it was complete, Hitler sprang up, crying that what they had done was going to rival the manifesto that Luther pinned to the doors of Wittenberg.

Before the meeting Hitler walked down the ranks of his old war comrades who had been entrusted with the task of keeping order. Each of them wore a red armlet with a hooked cross. As Hitler passed down the line he threatened to rip the band off the arm of any man who flinched before the Communists: no-one was to leave the hall unless he left it dead. But though his voice was stern and staccato, he was seen to be smiling.

Every one of the two hundred tables in the great hall was packed. During the address of the first speaker the beer mugs at certain tables kept piling up, for their occupants, instead of sending them to be replenished, called repeatedly for more. When his turn came, Hitler climbed, as was his wont, on

to a table and began to speak. Presently at a given signal the Marxists gave a shout of *Freiheit* and aimed their stone pots at his head. Pandemonium broke out, and amid the smashing of tables and chairs and a rain of beer mugs, the Storm Troopers tackled their enemies. For twenty minutes the fight continued, men's jackets being torn from their backs and stone pots whizzing backwards and forwards. All the while Hitler — by some miracle unscathed — stood motionless on the table. Then discipline and inspiration told against the dead weight of numbers, and the Marxists, bleeding and battered, broke and fled. The chairman rose with the now-famous utterance, "*Die Versammlung geht weiter*" ("The speaker will proceed").

Amid the wreckage, Hitler outlined point by point the Programme that was to carry the National Socialist Party to victory and redeem Germany. At the end of each point, when he had hammered its meaning home, he asked his audience if they understood, and a great shout of assent filled the hall. As he went on, his tone, at first calm and level, changed and the passion of his voice and eyes ran like lightning through the packed ranks of his hearers. When after four breathless hours the two thousand present at that famous meeting pressed out into the wintry streets they carried the twenty-five-points of the Nazi Party into every corner of Germany. "The Movement was on the march."[1]

"We demand", ran the twenty-five-points, "the union of all Germans in a Greater Germany on the basis of the right of all peoples to self-

[1] *Mein Kampf*.

determination. We demand that the German people shall have equal rights to those of other nations. And that the Treaties of Versailles and St. Germain shall be abrogated. We demand space for the maintenance of our people and the settlement of our surplus population." Then followed the clauses about the exclusion of those of alien race from the German community. "Only those of German blood can be members of the nation. . . . No Jew can be regarded as a fellow citizen." All men and women of German blood were to have equal rights of citizenship. Work should be a duty for all; there should be neither idle men nor idle money. "It must be the first duty of the State to ensure that every citizen has a chance of work and livelihood. If it proves impossible to find food for the population, aliens must be expelled."

Despite much that has since been written to suggest the contrary, the Programme which Hitler gave his Party was nothing if not Socialist. It was Socialism purged of the Marxist gloss. And it was recognised as such by the German workers. The State was to confiscate profits from war and land speculation. Large industries were to be wholly or partly nationalised: the land was to be restored to those who could use it and ground rents were to be abolished. Old age pensions were to be increased, and equal facilities for education afforded to all. The only point where the programme diverged from the conventional objects of traditional Socialism was in its insistence on the importance of the small property holder — the yeoman and the petty shopkeeper — and its condemnation of the multiple store.

To these were added certain points that were peculiar to Germany and its historic needs. Usurers, profiteers and traitors against the State were to be put to death. Freedom of the Press was done away with in the name of national unity: literature and the arts were to be censored. The Prussianism of Bismarck was to be restored. It was an ideal that was at once Socialist and Germanic — the creation of the State as an all-seeing and all-ruling central authority.

CHAPTER 5

RISE OF THE MEN OF IRON

> " In the embittering hell of those years, Nazis learnt to return blow for blow, . . . were forged to steel. They withstood the test of fire, but they grew hard. They remember, and the world forgets, what made them so."—KURT LUDECKE.

WHAT Hitler was out to run was a revolution. He was not, as some of his would-be allies made the mistake of supposing at the time, preaching a reactionary creed. He was not in the least inclined to reaction and little interested in the things reaction seeks. On the contrary he meant to smash the prevailing order of society because he held it no longer existed in order to serve men but merely to make men serve the class interests of the few. " The fundamental principle ", he wrote, " is that the State is not an end in itself but the means to an end."

For the bourgeois in possession, Hitler had the greatest contempt. " You know only one anxiety and that is for your own personal existence. You have one God and that is your money." [1] Such poor creatures did not even bother to deny the evil features of modern society : they just shrugged their shoulders and did nothing. For all their smug respectability and self-righteousness they were no better than murderers who allowed the people to be destroyed

[1] *Mein Kampf.*

body, mind and soul. The deformed bodies and the diseased, unhappy faces that thronged the pavements of any capitalist industrial city were sufficient evidence against them.

National Socialism was not, however, so much a revolution against the existing ruling class as against a corrupt social system. It was puritan rather than personal. It is this that accounts for its cruelty and inhumanity. Measured in terms of human destruction, the German Revolution was a trifling affair compared with the French Revolution and the Russian. Unlike the Bolsheviks, who were forced to slay millions of their internal foes before they triumphed, the Nazis did comparatively little killing in their own country. They had no need to, for they were appealing to instincts which nine out of ten Germans shared at heart. They had not to slay the bulk of their opponents, for with the Foreigner and the Slump as recruiting sergeants they were able to convert them.

Yet to the small minority against whom the popular instincts to which they appealed were directed, they were ruthless and inhuman in their unappeasable hatred. They destroyed because they were shocked, much as Cromwell's troopers slew the trollops in King Charles's baggage lines or the Papists at Drogheda. In their megalomania they regarded Jews not as human beings but as purveyors of moral pestilence, who, with cynical commercialisation of the healthy progenitive instincts on which the future of the race depended, infected the nation with spiritual disease worse than the Black Death. One has only to read the pages in *Mein Kampf* about the "mammonised" spread of syphilis, eroticism and

cheap pornographic literature to realise the depth of loathing and uncontrollable disgust that Hitler then felt for those whom he regarded as the destroyers of his race. He never stopped to consider what elemental forces of sadism he might be loosing on the world by his blind appeal to hatred. Nor did he remember that those whom he reviled as unclean beasts were human beings like himself, subject to " the same dimensions, senses, affections, passions, fed with the same food, hurt with the same weapons, subject to the same diseases, healed by the same means, warmed and cooled by the same winter and summer as a Christian is ".

But the National Socialists were rebels against a system of government that they believed to be destroying the national character and the future well-being of the race. Human rights, Hitler proclaimed, were above State rights: if rebellion was necessary to save a people from moral and spiritual decay, rebellion was justified. It was more: it was a duty. The defeat which Germany had suffered in 1918 was by itself nothing — for it could be repaired — compared with the moral rot which had been its cause and which was growing worse with every year. The whole system was rotten — commerce, education, democracy — for it was turning out men and women without will-power and the spirit of self-sacrifice. The rot had got to be stopped. It was Hitler's conviction, and one that he succeeded in conveying to his countrymen, that he was the man to stop it.

The soul of a great man is hard for another to analyse — and Hitler with all his faults and for all that he has since become under the debasing influence of

despotic power, was in those early days a very great man, one of the most extraordinary who have ever disturbed this planet of vain fancies and irrational catching frenzies. Like other prophets who have founded religions, he has given his testament to mankind, and in that strange book, *Mein Kampf* — so fiercely compounded of genius and folly — he laid bare his soul for the world to view. Love and hatred, both passionate and unbounded, contended for mastery, yet were harnessed by an iron will to a single purpose — the redemption of his country. There was love for the mysterious hinterland of forests and mountains that cradled his ancient, encircled, warped race; love for the homestead and the harvest of fair-haired children with their promise of the future; love for the whole persecuted community of the German kind whom others found so crabbed and hard to bear and ringed round with iron and fire. And there was hatred — intense, unpitying, unappeasable — for all who appeared to him to threaten or sully that which he loved. He hated the foreigner who had triumphed over Germany and barred her way to her glorious destiny: he hated the *haut-bourgeois* and the Social Democrat with their timid virtues and nice, bureaucratic, life-denying hypocrisies and shams who had betrayed her: he hated the academic intellectual and the pedant who with their antiquarian and conceited vapourings prevented better men from getting something done: he hated the capitalist who exploited the humble German and the Marxist decoy who exploited his exploitation: above all he hated the swarthy Jew, with his "sneaking servility towards superiors"

and " his supercilious arrogance towards inferiors "— the soiler of the blood, the " great master of lies ", the arch corrupter of the race !

For this man, embittered by his intense early sufferings and steeled by war, was that which Dr. Johnson loved — a good hater. " I do not set much value on the friendship of people ", he wrote, " who do not succeed in getting disliked by their enemies." Lashing contempt and fury broke screeching and drumming into the incessant symphony of his thoughts. Whenever the logic of his reflections brought him to the subjects of one of his aversions, he would break off to belabour unmercifully the object of his detestation. Even if it was only the harmless *völkisch* cranks, " folklore Ahasueruses " with their rantings about remote Teutonic heroes, stone axes, battle-spears, bearskins and ox-horns — quintessence of German pedagogic eccentricity — who pretended to a superior monopoly of his own theories, he would fall on them with terrifying shouts surpassing the war-cries of their legendary forbears. " These woeful poltroons . . . proclaim that all contemporary conflicts must be decided by the weapons of the intellect alone. They skedaddle when the first Communist cudgel appears. . . . I have seen too much of that kind of people not to feel a profound contempt for their miserable play-acting. . . . These charlatans do not reflect for a moment that a Demosthenes could be reduced to silence at a mass-meeting by fifty fools who had come there to shout him down and use their fists against his supporters. . . . These so-called ' silent workers ' are just a white-livered lot of ignorant

shirkers. . . . Even the humblest follower who has the courage to stand on a table in a beer-hall where his enemies are assembled, and manfully and openly defend his cause against them, achieves a thousand times more than these slinking hypocrites. He at least will convert one or two people to the Movement." [1] Tolerance was a word that had no place in Hitler's political vocabulary. It did not consort with "that heroic spirit which a *Weltanschauung* demands. The spirit of conciliation which animates their will attracts only those petty and chicken-hearted people who are not fit to be protagonists in a crusade." Like King Hal before Agincourt and Joshua at the Jordan, Hitler preferred to do without them and to confine his Movement to people as ruthless and unrelenting as himself.

As for those who openly opposed him there was no bottom to the lake of pitch assigned to them. The slums of Vienna and the trenches of Flanders had given this outspoken child of Austrian peasants a more than Marxist vocabulary, and when he met his enemies in the gate, he did not restrain it. Instead he laid about him with a rude Cromwellian vigour that delighted those who shared his views. Hatred and villification became the hallmark of his Movement — so much so that refined and peaceable onlookers often forgot that it had ever stood for anything else.

But it was not only temperament — the effect of bitter and prolonged suffering on an ultra-sensitive but inherently tough nature — that made Hitler ruthless. It was part of a logical and thought-out

[1] *Mein Kampf.*

design. In the circumstances of the time and with such overwhelming odds against him, his crusade could never have achieved victory in any other way. He had to overcome gigantic physical forces of intolerance and inertia. He could not do so without a sword. He forged his Party as one.

For people who believed that victory could be won by talk alone, for those who thought that the reason which sways university debating societies and common rooms could intimidate Communist cudgels and revolvers, for those who put their faith in vague intellectual or international generalities, the Leader of the New German Faith had no use. He was out to run a Revolution. And Revolutions are won by men who take risks — not by those who work only on a business man's basis of " 51 per cent probability ". Hitler had to carry the subconscious aspirations for national freedom and self-assertion from the dreamy, metaphysical depths of the German soul into the clear light of fact. " Liberation cannot be won by mere universal yearning for it. Only when the idealistic desire for independence is organised to fight for its ideal with military force, can the will of a people be made a reality." [1]

In this Hitler, the house painter, like Bismarck, the Junker squire, showed a grasp of the realities of statesmanship. Scorning the safe but ineffectual ways of the academic theorist, he struck boldly out up the perilous paths of urgent action to the summit of his dream. " The practical wisdom of the statesmen ", he wrote in *Mein Kampf*, unconsciously following Burke, " must come to the aid of the abstract conception

[1] *Mein Kampf*.

which is true in itself. Only thus can an ideal, possessing lasting significance as a guide-star to mankind, be adapted to the exigencies of human frailty and its effect not be frustrated at the outset by the shortcomings general to mankind. . . . To take abstract principles founded on truth and transform them into a militant community of like political faith — a community precisely defined, rigidly organised and of one mind and will — is the most important of all tasks."

Hitler confronted the disciplined, simple and ruthless international ideal of Marxism with an ideal equally disciplined, simple and ruthless. A few elementary ideas, generalised, without distinction or subtlety, were all the ordinary man could understand. As without the ordinary man there could be no hope of victory, first things, however repugnant to cultured and refined people, had to come first.

And if the creed which was to win the masses needed the simplicity of the Marxist dogma, it needed also the same rigid intolerance and insistence on undeviating orthodoxy. In Hitler's eyes it was all very well for people who lived under an ancient dispensation to complain that power was being stated in its basest and most elementary forms. In a long-established and unbroken society such as that of England, it was no longer necessary to work the masses into a frenzy of crude enthusiasm to achieve political expression for a new idea. The unquestioning submission of the individual to the authority of the community without which no State can subsist was maintained there, even in a democratic age, by a kind of unbroken custom and prescription: rank,

wealth and even gentleness of conduct still received a respect which might strike the theorist of the study as servile, but which in practice alone enables a complex and free society to exist. Such a society had been evolved by centuries of custom: only because its order had become second nature, could it dispense with intolerance without falling into anarchy. To restore Germany's vital order — the very life-blood of a community — intolerance was an indispensable preliminary. Unlike that of England, German society had been shattered and destroyed by the war and the disasters that followed. It could not be put together again without a rigid cement.

Brought up as a Catholic and educated in the Benedictine Monastery at Lambach, Hitler, with his eye for fundamentals, recognised the social wisdom that underlay the dogmatic rigidity of the ancient Church. She also had arisen out of the ruins of a broken world and had had to construct a new order out of chaos. Her faith — that of the meek and forgiving Christ — was none the less, and of necessity, founded on a certain intolerance. On essentials she had never yielded an inch: she had grown great and carried her message down the ages by refusal to do so. "The Catholic Church has a lesson for us. Though sometimes, and quite needlessly, its dogma has been in conflict with the exact sciences and new scientific discoveries, it has never been disposed to sacrifice a syllable of its creed. It has recognised that its powers of resistance would be weakened by introducing doctrinal adaptions to meet the temporary conclusions of science which in fact are always changing. And thus it holds fast

to its fixed and established dogmas which alone can give to the whole system the character of a faith. That is why today it stands firmer than ever before."[1]

If the People's State which Hitler visualised was to come into being, the same discipline would have to be imposed on his followers. They would have to subordinate their wills to a moulding dogma. Their stand must be "on the granite strength of an impregnable and firmly coherent programme. In its formulas it must never make concessions to the spirit of the age but maintain the form that once and for all has been resolved as right; at least until victory has been won. Any earlier attempt to open a discussion on the opportuneness of this or that point in the programme might disintegrate the solidity and fighting strength of the movement."[2]

Like the Marxists — as Hitler saw them, an army of disciplined workers officered by Jewish intellectuals interpreting a rigid creed of revolution — the Nazis were to fight as one man, with one faith, one *esprit de corps* and one discipline. "An organisation can only exist where leaders of high intellectual ability are obeyed by a large mass of men emotionally devoted to the cause. . . . The strength of a political Party never consists in the intelligence and independence of its rank-and-file, but in the spirit of loyal obedience with which they follow their leaders."

A fighting movement of flawless discipline, and animated by the same unquestioning devotion to its faith and leaders as the old Prussian Guard, was the instrument Hitler set out to create. It must place him among the great organisers of mankind that he

[1] *Mein Kampf.* [2] *Ibid.*

was able to establish it so quickly. In 1919 it consisted of half a dozen men debating round a tavern table by candlelight; in 1933 it dominated Germany; by 1938 it was one of the most formidable forces in the world.

Hitler's achievement was due to a wonderful and largely instinctive knowledge of his countrymen and to his own clear perception of the precise means essential to success. His racial theory may be repulsive gibberish, his ambitions barbarous and ridiculous, his motives cruel and sadistic, but only a man deliberately shutting his eyes to realities can deny his astonishing genius for leadership. With Lenin, Hitler was the answer the gods gave to the Marxist contention that events in this world are shaped solely by materialist circumstance and that men are helpless puppets in the hands of inevitable powers they cannot control. Cromwell was such an answer to the study theories of Calvin and Napoleon to those of Rousseau. It was the same terrible answer that God made to Job out of the whirlwind.

Hitler's analysis of the art of ruling men will be found in *Mein Kampf*. All propaganda, he tells us, should be popular and adapted to the intellectual level of those whom it is intended to reach. The greater the numbers it intends to sway, the lower that level must be. " The capacity of the masses is very limited, their power of comprehension confined to a few points presented in simple slogans repeated until the last man has come to understand their meaning."

Because the bulk of mankind is not composed of philosophers, it is no use reasoning about the finer shades of meaning with them. Too much intel-

lectuality will merely bore or scare them. Plain black or white is what they understand. In the mass the public is like a woman: it asks attention but not consultation and always prefers to be swept off its feet by one who knows his own mind. That is where those who governed England, Hitler held, had always understood their business. As an example of it he cited the British war propaganda which, never troubling about the finer shades of truth, confined itself to a few simple theses, and, addressed solely to the masses, was pursued with untiring perseverance. "At first it appeared insane from the impudence of its assertions: later on it became most formidable and in the end was universally believed."

All this, of course, was repugnant to intellectuals. But Hitler was not addressing his appeal to the intellectuals — a tiny minority — who by themselves would have been useless for his purpose which was to unite and liberate Germany. He did not look for disciples among those who possessed wealth or power, but to the masses who were suffering through the failure of such men to give them leadership. Above all he looked to the young. At first his creed could only appeal, of course, to a few — to those whose minds and hearts were free from the prevailing falsehoods of a dying system. But these few would be the most alert and vigorous elements in the nation and they would in time inevitably sway their fellows. "World history is made by minorities whenever these minorities represent the will, vitality and initiative of the people as a whole."

"Against us", Hitler wrote, "we shall have the

countless array of all who are lazy-minded and indifferent rather than evil, and of all whose self-interest inclines them to uphold the *status quo*." That mattered little, so long as he and his disciples had the future on their side. "Our age is working out its own ruin. It introduces universal suffrage, chatters about equal rights but offers no basis for real equality. It treats a man's wage as the only measure of his value and ignores the one factor in which true equality can be found. For equality cannot and does not depend on the kind of work a man does but on the way in which he does it. . . . In the world of today money has become the only power. But the time will come when men will once more acknowledge higher gods."

It was from those who through their misery and poverty were learning to do so that Hitler recruited his early legions. He appealed to the spirit of self-sacrifice and the desire for service that is latent in all generous youth before the world sullies it. "Hunger and thirst and vigil I offer you", Garibaldi had cried to the young men of unredeemed Italy, "but never terms with the enemy! Whoever loves his country and glory may follow us." Those of southern Germany who heard Hitler appealing for something similar did not stop to reason. They flocked to his standard as the children of Hamelin to the Pied Piper. They were ready to dare anything for his iron creed. "Men do not die for business but for ideals", Hitler wrote. He gave young Germany that for which it was hungering.

After his triumph at the Sterneckerbräu in February 1920 Hitler rose swiftly to fame as the leader of a new popular movement. With his pale,

hungry-looking face, sunk cheeks and wisp of hair across his forehead, his shabby clothes and old raincoat and his burning eyes, he became a familiar figure in the meeting halls of Bavaria. He spoke ceaselessly, giving up all his time and every ounce of his vitality to the cause.

Soon the red banner and hooked cross of the Nazi crusade began to be seen in the streets not only of traditionalist Munich but of all the proletarian strongholds of southern Germany. The sight of red-draped lorries manned not by Marxists but by youthful nationalists eager to take on all comers was something that made the easy-going Bavarians open their eyes with wonder.

The angry Communists threatened in the now time-honoured language of their irate creed to bash in the faces and rip out the guts of the insolent intruders, and did their best to do so. But the Nazis, with the protective fighting organisation of " Order " or " Storm Troops " with which the practical Hitler equipped them, refused to be intimidated. They boldly announced that they preferred to be killed than silenced. A ding-dong succession of battles followed, in which victory went not to the noisiest and biggest battalions but to the best disciplined and most resolute.

One such fight that occurred at Coburg in October 1922 is described in *Mein Kampf*. A local committee there which, greatly daring, was organising a patriotic rally, invited Hitler to bring a few friends with him. Wisely, as the sequel proved, he elected to bring 800 Storm Troopers. At the station a frightened bourgeois delegation was waiting to urge

the new-comers to avoid provocative action at all costs, while outside in the station yard several thousand Communists were yelling threats. Hitler, however, stubbornly refused to alter his programme. On their march into the town the Nazis were attacked with cudgels, iron rods and showers of stones. Whereupon, on their Leader's orders, they gave battle and routed their assailants. A further attack with hand grenades also failed. Before the Nazis left the town a few days later, the red domination of Coburg was at an end and their own ranks were strengthened by hundreds of new recruits who had meant to smash them but had been won over by their courage and enthusiasm. Many when they enrolled still bore the marks of the blows they had received in the fighting. As Hitler and his followers left the town they were pelted not with stones but with flowers.

It was not only in the use of violence that Hitler copied and improved on Marxist methods. He stole their pageantry as well. Watching the sea of red flags, armlets and flowers at a Communist rally in the Berlin Lustgarten after the war, Hitler had learnt how the hypnotic influence of sound and colour could be turned to a political end. He organised the meetings of his own Party as though they were titanic theatrical performances, with forests of banners, clash of drums and martial music, exciting and elaborate ritual and, most grateful of all to the German soul, a wealth of uniforms. Like the Catholic Church, Hitler's Movement made its appeal not only to the minds of the masses but to their aesthetic feelings and love of drama. Amid the drab bleakness of post-war commercial and

republican Germany, the meetings of the National Socialist crusade offered to the man in the street the only colour and warmth and light he was likely to find.

To the dispossessed millions it offered something even more attractive — status and responsibility. The National Socialist Movement was organised in a way unknown to the "democratic" Parties. It was based not on a network of wordy committees in which no-one assumed personal responsibility, but on a vast hierarchy of "leaders", every one of whom was solely responsible for success in his own department. There were no committees that voted, only committees that worked. Each Nazi in authority — and there were tens of thousands of them drawn from all types and classes — was entrusted with full responsibility and executive power. In the district, regional and provincial divisions of the Party innumerable small men were constantly being taught to assume responsibility. It was in keeping with human nature that, as they were trusted and honoured, they became the more enthusiastic for the cause.

In 1923 the French invasion of the Ruhr, the tragedy of Inflation and the ruin of millions quickened the pace of Hitler's crusade. In peasant Bavaria the obscure nobody of three years before was already a power in the land. Though still regarded with contempt by the refined and educated, to countless humbler folk he seemed the one man who could save Germany. Some of the older nationalists were beginning to think so too. One of those who joined the Movement at this time was the war hero, General Ludendorff.

But the rise of the young Party was too rapid. Early that November, maddened by the sufferings of his compatriots and the impotence of their rulers in the face of French invasion, Hitler made a fatal error of judgment. Relying on his personal popularity in Munich, he tried to seize power by an illegal *coup d'état*.

The Bavarian authorities hesitated; then turned against him. An unarmed Nazi parade through flagged and cheering streets was met by Police machine-guns. As the procession, led by Hitler, Ludendorff and fourteen of the other Party leaders who bore the place of honour and danger in the front rank, moved down the Odeonsplatz towards the barricades, the guns opened fire, killing sixteen of the foremost Nazis, who are today numbered among the national heroes of Germany. Hitler himself was not hit, but was dragged to the ground by the death of the friend with whom he had linked arms. With his shoulder dislocated, he was smuggled away in the ensuing confusion but was soon captured by the Police. The surviving leaders were imprisoned or driven into exile. The Party was dissolved.

In the fortress of Landsberg-am-Lech, where he spent the next thirteen months,[1] Hitler compiled the first part of his great work, *Mein Kampf*—the Koran of the Nazi Revolution. Clumsily put together, tumultuous and illogical in arrangement and turgid in style, it is none the less one of the germinating works of the age. In the event of the destruction of the Third Reich through war brought on by its own

[1] At his trial he was sentenced to five years' imprisonment, but in view of popular feeling was released after he had served a few months of it.

arrogance and impatience, and the consequent liquidation of the Nazi experiment, certain ideas set forth in this extraordinary book will still remain. Many of them will be proved what they already seem to every reasonable man — mistaken, absurd and ephemeral. Others will be tested by time, and may endure. They will live on in the minds of men long after their author is dead.

Much of the book, including those parts of it which still receive most publicity, belongs to the time at which it was written and already dates. In a few years these will seem even more ridiculous and antiquated than parts of *Das Kapital* seem today. They were dictated by the peculiar circumstances of the tragic epoch in which the book was written and by their impress on an emotional, hypersensitive and imperfectly educated mind. Such were the Jewish acquisition of German property during the Inflation, the moral depravity of post-war Berlin and the French invasion of the Ruhr. There are parts of *Mein Kampf* — particularly those about race — which read to a foreigner like the ravings of an evil lunatic. The abnormal conditions which gave rise to them were temporary and have already long vanished. But to the German people who suffered them, they are still near enough to seem terrifyingly real. That is why the unreasoning parts of Hitler's philosophy which have been repudiated by the rest of the world are still regarded so seriously in Germany.

Though Hitler in the first bitterness of defeat despaired, as Robert Bruce had done, the year of enforced quietude in Landsberg prison was a godsend to him and his cause. The book which it

enabled him to write was to win him support in quarters which his speeches could never have reached. Moreover, his failure had taught him the lesson that power could not be reached by short-cuts. Henceforward, if he were to succeed, he knew that he would have to pursue strictly legal methods. Every illegal action would be used against him. He could only win a law-abiding land like Germany by winning by open means the suffrage of the German people. It was for him an invaluable lesson. And as long as he remembered it he prospered.

He had first to recover the ground he had lost. When he left prison in December 1924 he had neither Party nor funds. Yet he possessed what with work and courage could make good these losses — the hearts of sympathisers all over Germany. And he had the ability to create new ones. Even at Landsberg his gaolers, listening to him talking with his fellow captives, had been won to his cause : when he left there was scarcely one of them from the furnace man to the Governor who was not ready to follow him. It was the latter who turned to an eye-witness as Hitler drove away, a free man, in his shabby old clothes and raincoat : " Well, if it's humanly possible to get this country on her feet, that man will do it ! "

Amid a welter of contending democratic Parties — there were more than thirty of them in all — Hitler refounded the National Socialist Party in February 1925. At first it did not possess even a typewriter. The dice were heavily weighted against it. For two years its Leader was forbidden to speak by the Bavarian and other State authorities on the

grounds that, being an Austrian by birth, he was a foreigner, though he had fought through Germany's toughest battles in the war. In Berlin the Chief of Police, Grzesinski, half-Jew, half-Pole, suppressed the Party and announced his intention of driving Hitler out of Germany with a dog-whip.

But what Hitler was forbidden to do himself others did for him. The magic of his personality and name bound men to his cause with a loyalty seldom given to any leader. No Party ever had more fanatic workers. Two speakers in particular carried his angry, evangelical message into every corner of the Republic — the ex-flying ace, Hermann Goering, who had narrowly escaped death in the Munich Putsch and who had since been in exile in Italy, and the little, acid, club-footed doctor, Joseph Goebbels — a new recruit and a mob orator of genius second only to his chief. Meanwhile Hitler concentrated on organisation and worked as no other politician in Europe. No detail, however small, was overlooked by the National Socialist Party. Mutual aid for the unemployed, meals for indigent Party members, support for those who suffered imprisonment for the cause; socials, schools, gymnasiums; uniforms and badges, standards, bands, songs and poems; books, newspapers, almanacks, photographs; even special cigarettes whose purchase was made obligatory for Party members, were all part of the machinery for winning the German people body and soul to a crusade of national revival.

For a time progress was slow. During the years between Hitler's release at the end of 1924 and the Great Slump in 1929 certain sections of the

German nation enjoyed a period of hectic but false commercial prosperity, paid for by the loans of British and American financiers. For the first time since 1916 the bulk of the German people were not hungry. Politically it was the era of Stresemann, Locarno and Reparation payments. The material incentives to enrol under Hitler's standard were still small, the political advantages far from certain. In 1925 there were only 27,000 members, in the following year 49,000. Even as late as 1928 they did not exceed 100,000. In that year the Party polled 809,541 votes in a General Election and secured 12 seats in the Reichstag. Hitler himself was not allowed to stand on account of his technical lack of citizenship.

Yet all the while his apocalyptic teaching was finding its way into the hearts of two great classes of his countrymen. It appealed to youth and it appealed to those who had lost their all in the Inflation. To neither of these disinherited classes did the democratic-capitalist "System" offer any hope. The young graduate to whom the Republican held out neither bread nor ideals listened to the Nazi message spellbound. What was denied him in his bitter need was his for the taking, if he could only be brave and obedient. Across the Nazi Calendar for Youth ran Hitler's daring maxim: "A man does not beg for his rights; he fights for them!" To young men who had grown sick and hungry with hope deferred, it was an intoxicating message.

"Never yet has the past triumphed over the future", declared Goebbels. "Who has the future

before him has youth as well!" In the beer cellars of the University towns ever-growing companies of pale-faced, eager-eyed students drank damnation to the foreign oppressor and the cowards who dared not face him, and toasted the man of the future who alone understood the heart of youth. All that was needed was courage, and the nightmares of the past—foreign invasion, hunger, unemployment—would vanish for ever. "Siegreich woll'n wir Frankreich schlagen", they chanted, "Victoriously we shall conquer France!"[1]

And the dispossessed—the lonely and dispirited men and women who had seen their homes, their savings and their livelihood sacrificed to the Jewish speculator when the currency collapsed—turned also to the new creed. An old governess who had lost her all bore witness to the day when she first heard Hitler speak in Munich. She had been told about him and out of a vague curiosity had attended one of his meetings. At first she had listened, half wondering, to the changing cadences of his voice: then, as it mounted and, with passionate eyes and raised hand, he spoke of the wrongs of Germany, she found herself borne out of her seat and repeating aloud his flaming words of anger and hope while the whole audience shouted around her like a wild creature possessed. As she went out afterwards into the street with shining eyes and clenched hands, a lonely old woman had found a new hope.

To millions like her, the National Socialist crusade came to provide the one interest in a life of lonely and drab poverty. It gave them colour and glamour,

[1] Knickerbocker, *Germany—Soviet or Fascist*, p. 214.

hope for the future, and above all, the delight of companionship with others who shared their beliefs. The starved herd instincts of the middle class were suddenly released. The prolonged, losing battle of solitary respectability for appearances no longer mattered. They felt they had found something better. To many the Movement became the very bread of life. Hunger, cold, the aching remembrance of a happier past were all forgotten. To those in dire trouble — and in those years millions of Germans were — nothing can be so heartening as the cheerful society of comrades in misfortune.

"The world cannot judge this Revolution religiously enough", wrote the writer, Rudolf Binding, to Romain Rolland, "this Revolution with its processions and its badges, with its flags and its pledges, with its martyrs and its fanatics (children as well as grown-ups), with its proclamations and its promises, with its irresistible faith and the deadly earnestness of its people. We know all about the outer show, the cheap patriotism, the swaggering uniforms and arrogant decorations, the drift towards out-of-date and unreal trash. But the leaders know this too; they are not blind. All that is not the real character, that is not the essence of the Movement. The world has never lived through what we have experienced. And this is only the beginning. But a people that had lost its self-confidence has found it again. And its faith makes it beautiful." Much has happened since that letter was written and we have learnt to see the other side of that revolution to the inevitable exclusion of every other — the cruelty, the treachery and the hatred. Yet to understand it and

the stormy sea to which it has borne us, it is well that we should know how it once seemed to a German poet.

Hitler turned the great and divided mass of post-war Germany's aggrieved and disgruntled into an enthusiastic and disciplined army of good companions. That they were one day to become cruel masters and bad neighbours to others does not diminish the magnitude of his service to his own countrymen at the time. On a larger scale it was not incomparable to that which General Booth performed for the down-and-outs of industrial Britain. It explains their subsequent devotion and gratitude to the iron regimen of the revolutionary dictatorship. " Hitler had learnt in the most bitter school ", Vernon Bartlett wrote in an early study of the Nazi Movement, " that the outcast needed sympathy as well as food. A man who came along received his brown shirt and an occasional meal for nothing. And, as one of them put it to me, the daily glass of beer tastes so much better, and its cheering effect lasts so much longer, when it is drunk in the company of a score of other fellows." [1]

After the World Slump set in in the autumn of 1929, the Nazis began to recruit in growing numbers from the working masses. Up to this time employment in the factories had been fairly good, but now men were turned away in thousands every day. Despite all the hopeful predictions of the economists, prosperity showed no sign of returning. As soon as the unemployed man had exhausted his actuarial rights to unemployment benefit he was forced to

[1] *Nazi Germany Explained*, p. 147.

subsist on the barest pittance allowed by public charity. Everything that made life worth living was taken from him. He was permitted to live and that was all — an unwanted wage-slave, consigned to the industrial scrap-heap till his native employers and their foreign backers should have found some new and profitable use for his services.

Everything that Hitler had repeated so often against the capitalist system was now seen by the working man to be true. He stood before them in their hour of darkest suffering as a kind of Robin Hood, who also was ready to mulct their rich oppressors to give them bread and justice. To the six million unemployed proletarians he promised labour, decent conditions and a stake in the country at the expense of the international financier who first exploited and then neglected them. To the peasant he promised the freedom of his land, now mortgaged to the Jewish usurer; to the small shopkeeper and trader, a fair chance against the cut-throat competition of the big trusts and multiple stores. This ordinary German seemed to understand the troubles of all Germany and to be eager to take them on his own broad shoulders. The allegiance he won in these years of suffering cannot be measured in mere numbers.

In terms of earthly treasure the Party was poor, though a few rich men — some out of patriotism and some out of a hope of turning the Movement to their purpose — supported it. Its wealth lay in the readiness of its members to give their all to it. Those who attended its meetings did not do so as a listless duty or favour but as a privilege for which they paid according to their means At a single meeting in

Berlin in the spring of 1932, 4500 reichsmarks were collected from the audience, nearly all of them poor: one even handed in his wedding ring. And in the National Socialist Movement, where men and women gave their brains and services gratuitously, a little money went a long way. The gigantic organisation, radiating from the Brown House at Munich that grew up to meet the expansion of the Party in the nineteen-thirties, owed its existence not to big bank balances but to the enthusiasm and energy of men and women inspired by the spirit of evangels.

The rapidity of that expansion can be expressed in figures. In the first two years of the Depression the Party membership — confined to those who were ready to work as well as vote — rose from 100,000 to 400,000. In the following year it doubled. In 1932 it reached the million mark. The record of the polls was equally impressive. In the September 1930 Reichstag Election the Party received just under six and a half million votes as compared with 800,000 at the previous Election. It thus became the second largest Party in parliament with 107 instead of 12 members. Two years later the Nazis polled nearly fourteen million votes and with 230 members became the largest parliamentary Party in the State.

This advance was achieved in the teeth of the most determined opposition. The older Parties, who still held the keys of government, felt, and not without justice, that the rise of the Nazis threatened their very existence. The National Socialist leaders were frequently denied the right of free speech, their Party offices raided and closed down by the Police, and their newspapers, again and again suspended or

repressed.[1] It has been forgotten that the undemocratic treatment the present rulers of Germany have since meted out in an infinitely more ruthless form to their opponents was applied to them in the days when they were struggling for power and bare existence. The wireless was nearly always closed to them. The vested interests of high finance and bureaucracy were against them. So were the Jews and the Catholic hierarchy who not unnaturally feared Hitler's racial theories and his demand to control education.

From another Party in the State the Nazis received not merely a denial of constitutional rights but a stubborn opposition that had no relation to law or constitution and was scarcely ever far removed from open warfare. The days when Nazi meetings ended in broken chairs and pools of blood were now over: the Storm Troopers had seen to that. But the Communists continued to wage war on their challengers whenever they were in a position to do so.

There were districts in the capital and the industrial areas where it was suicide for a supporter of Hitler to show his face without the protection of his fellows. Three hundred Nazis were killed — mostly in murderous attacks by gangs in streets and private houses — and over 25,000 wounded by armed Communists. In a single attack on a National

[1] In Goebbels' published diary for the year 1932 there are many references to the suspension of Nazi newspapers, especially as elections drew near. "The Jew Weiss", runs one entry, "has prohibited me from speaking in public. . . . The right of free speech seems to depend in this most liberal of all democracies on a certificate of conduct to be given by the Headquarters of Police" (*My Part in Germany's Fight*, pp. 24-5).

Socialist procession on a July Sunday in Altona in 1932, fifteen marchers and onlookers were left lying dead in the road and fifty seriously injured. In accordance with the prevailing practice the Police gave no protection: they merely forbade further processions on the grounds that they were too provoking. In the years before they achieved power the Nazis were forced to wage a ceaseless struggle to assure the right of free speech and the freedom of the streets for their members. Later they were to deny it to everyone else.

An incident in the Ruhr during the Reichstag Election campaign of 1932 shows the kind of opposition the Nazis had to encounter in presenting their case in working-class districts. At Hagen, the car carrying their principal speakers was attacked in the streets by a Communist mob while the Police stood by watching: the car ultimately escaped by driving at full speed through its assailants while its occupants defended themselves with revolvers. When they reached the meeting-place, they found that the Communists, who had been prevented by the S.A. men on guard from driving off the ten thousand who had assembled to hear the speeches, had revenged themselves by setting fire to an adjoining wood. Afterwards the speakers, who drove away through a bombardment of stones, were forced to travel by secondary roads to avoid being murdered by their enemies, who had blocked every main thoroughfare. There was nothing unusual in such an episode.

These ruthless opponents were far stronger in the early nineteen-thirties than they had been before. The economic blizzard filled the sails of the Com-

munists for a time almost as full as it did those of the Nazis. Men were hungry and angry and bitter. The democratic Parties of the Centre offered them nothing but passive submission to an intolerable fate. They turned not unnaturally to the revolutionary Parties of violence that offered them so much more.

An American journalist resident in Germany in 1931 reckoned that at least fifteen million Germans were partially starving.[1] Of thirty-six million potential voters, he calculated that two-thirds were hostile to the existing economic system — capitalism, and at least half to the existing political system — democracy. In the July 1932 Reichstag Election the Communists received 5,369,708 votes to the Nazis' 13,779,017, together outnumbering the 17,733,629 votes given to the remaining political Parties. By November the Communist vote had risen to just under six millions.

1932, which witnessed twelve German eléctions, was a year of despair and virtual civil war. Four rival private armies — the Nazi Storm Troops, the Communist Red Guards with their clenched-fist salute and shout of "Heil Moscow!", the Conservative Steel Helmets and the Social Democrat Reichsbanner — marched and countermarched through the German towns, with uniforms, standards, military bands and chanted slogans. They were perpetually coming to blows.

Even in the Reichstag, fights were frequent. On May 25th, after a Communist member had struck a National Socialist speaking from the rostrum, 162 Nazis gave battle to 57 Communists for more than a

[1] Knickerbocker, *Germany — Fascist or Soviet*, pp. 44–5.

quarter of an hour, while inkstands, folios, benches and water-bottles were hurled about the Chamber, and the remaining members fled for safety to the spectators' galleries. Meanwhile in the Disarmament Conference at Geneva successive German Governments received slight after slight from the statesmen of the victor powers, who fourteen years after the Armistice were still debating about the concession of parity to the largest state of central and western Europe.

It was a spectacle of division and anarchy set against a background of ruin at home and humiliation abroad that sickened every German who wished to see his country united, strong and prosperous. It caused millions to turn with longing to Hitler's promise of another sort of Germany — the " third Empire of apocalyptic expectancy " of Mr. Mowrer's phrase. The same vivid writer and others have described for us those innumerable meetings that were taking place throughout the length and breadth of a tortured land under the banners of National Socialism.[1] The biggest hall in the town packed with people, many of them young, the flaming flags with their hooked crosses hanging from the roof, the ritual greeting " Germany awake ! " and the young men in their brown shirts and leather leggings gathered in groups around the doors and platform. Then the sound of martial music, as the drums and brass of massed bands break into familiar and stirring tunes, the doors behind the tense audience opening to admit gilded standards and uniformed heroes and leaders marching with bronze eagles and swastikas towards

[1] *Germany puts the Clock Back*, pp. 198-202.

the platform, and then, as the music gives way to an expectant hush and then to a thunder of " Heils ! " the Führer himself in his old raincoat, black suit and tie and clipped moustache, smiling benignly at the adoring crowd. And when the cheers at last die away and he stands before them on the podium, the magic of his changing voice, now soft and plaintive, now harsh and rasping, grips them so that for an hour or more they become lost to everything in the world but the magnetism of one man and his burning vision. The speaker never halts for applause. The audience remains intent, silent, absorbed as it follows every word of his scorn, his indignation, his invincible faith. Then as he reaches the end of his peroration, a great and repeated shout goes up of " Germany awake ! " " Perish the Jew ! Down with the Foreigner ! " thunders back the audience, " Down with Democracy ! Heil Hitler ! "

So Germany was " drummed awake " over seven breathless years in which the crescendo of excitement and the grimness of the surrounding reality steadily increased. Often Hitler would address three or four meetings in a single day, speeding by air across forests and farmlands as his audience was dispersing in one great city and assembling in another. And all the while in the drab industrial towns in the shadow of smokeless factories, the battle for the streets went on amid shouts and broken heads and revolver shots.

A young English writer, in a book published a year or two before the war, recalled his arrival at Berlin in 1932. " Near the Tempelhof aerodrome . . . a number of young men with red flags were

trying to hold up the traffic. The efforts of the Police to restore order looked like being a failure. Suddenly a detachment of Storm-Troopers appeared. In what seemed a moment of time the street was cleared :

> They shrunk to close-heads, and the causeway was free
> At the toss of the bonnet of Bonny Dundee,

thought I as I drove to the Linden. The Storm detachment acted as a tonic, as a breath of wind blowing, strong and bitter, across the Mark of Brandenburg, out of Prussia's past history of effort and endurance."

The same writer has recalled another incident of the same period.

"The storm troopers defiling in their thousands before the Führer, the military discipline of the Party, the new songs so often combined with the old national and martial tunes of the Kingdom and the Empire — it was hard for the emotional German people to withstand the contagion of so much appeal to the eye, the ear, and the soul. I remember a bitter, gusty day of late winter in Berlin. The wind came remorselessly from the Polish Plain, and nothing could have been more desolate and depressing than the German capital. A funeral train passed through the streets. The body of a Nazi leader — I was told that he had been killed in some fight with Communists — was being borne to the grave. Slowly, marking time, the storm-troopers followed their dead leader.

And then the band struck up. Once more, as so often in past Prussian history, the old military lament sounded :

> Ich hatt' einen Kameraden,
> Einen bessern findst du nit.

And such is the magic of memory and association — the drabness and depression vanished. And what remained was the memory of a great past, of the military devotion and courage that had made a small, poor and remote German State into a great military Empire in Europe. And not memory only, for the man who was being carried to his grave had died that, through his sacrifice and the continued work of those who lived on, the greatness of Germany might be reborn. The eternal community of the living and the dead in the service of Germany was reaffirmed :

> Leb' du im ew'gen Leben,
> Mein guter Kamerad ! "[1]

It was the old spirit of Prussia that National Socialism was endeavouring to restore to a Germany that, without that spirit, had been poor, helpless and divided. It was being preached, not by a Prussian of the old ruling caste but by an outer German of the humblest birth hailing from an ancient Teuton arch-duchy that had never acknowledged the suzerainty of Prussia. And he was preaching it because he believed that only by its harsh virtues and unquestioning obedience and self-sacrifice could a frontierless, encircled and divided people find the inner peace and strength they needed. " Breeding, order, service to society, iron discipline, unconditional authority, political leadership," wrote Dr. Goebbels in the *Völkischer Beobachter*,[2] " a strong army, a solid incorruptible bureaucracy, national prosperity produced by the tenacious energy of its inhabitants and the iron thrift of its princes . . .

[1] Hugh Sellon, *Europe at the Crossroads*, pp. 144-5.

[2] April 14th, 1932. Quoted by Mr. Mowrer in *Germany puts the Clock Back*.

that is Prussia." The modern world has tragic reason to know it.

The grim meaning of all this was plain to nine Germans out of ten. It stood in stark contrast to the earlier belief of the easy-going, post-war bourgeoisie that Germany's victorious neighbours, so soon as they saw that Prussianism was dead, would revise their dictated Treaties and release a powerless people from the economic miseries to which they had condemned them. By 1932 no German could any longer share such a belief. The Peace Treaties, as Mr. Mowrer justly says, " were there to stay as long as France and Belgium " — he might have added Poland and Czechoslovakia — " could maintain them ".

If Germany found them intolerable, there was only one thing left for her to do : to unite and tear them up. And, whatever their doubting elders might think, there was no doubt what the entire youth of Germany, Nazi and Communist alike, was saying. " We were not responsible for the war ! We did not even lose the war. We had nothing to do with the war. We refuse to pay for it." [1] Youth — and those who had been too young to take part in the war already numbered thirteen million voters — would no longer support any Party that submitted to the indignity of Reparations. It would only support a Government that boldly refused to pay tribute money to France, that declared that it would never respect inequitable frontiers forced on the German people against their will or Treaties that penalised the unborn generations who had not

[1] Knickerbocker, *Germany — Fascist or Soviet.*

signed them, that would restore a national Army — the only defence of Germany — whatever the foreigner might care to say. It was just such a Government that Hitler was promising.

Though still resolved to avoid any too violent measures that might risk drowning the young Revolution in a sea of blood, the Nazi leaders, as they felt the surge of renascent youth which they themselves had aroused, became increasingly bellicose and intransigent. Theirs was the pirates' adage — we must advance or be undone. "We have definitely burnt our boats behind us," declared Goebbels, "now we must fight to a finish!" "A National Socialist only feels himself when he is at liberty to make a fight for it." "Attack before the adversary has had any chance to get in his blow and fight him till he's dead!"[1]

The well-to-do, timid bourgeois did not of course understand. "It is useless trying to discuss things with him. A chasm severs men born in two such different worlds. One is a natural fighter, the other has no use for these methods." To Nazi minds such men were out of date. "They seem utterly unable to grasp that we really embody something essentially new, that we cannot and will not be compared with any other Party, that we are aiming at a totalitarian State, and must attain absolute power in order to achieve our aims."[2]

Compromise was impossible: twice in 1932 Hitler, at the head of the largest parliamentary Party in the State, refused to take office as Vice-President without

[1] Dr. Goebbels, *My Part in Germany's Fight*, pp. 24, 105, 123.
[2] *Ibid.* pp. 33, 34.

complete power to carry out his revolutionary plans. The aim of the Nazis was not Ministerial posts and salaries for their own sake but the means to create a revolutionary civilisation and society. To achieve that end, every means was justifiable in their stern, eager, humourless eyes — cruelty, intolerance, even the grossest injustice. "Sometimes one has to harden oneself to allow an innocent person to suffer rather than permit the basis on which we all stand to be undermined." "For the German people Unity!" cried the Party's chief evangelist, "for the Reich, Strength and Force!"[1]

Turning over the pages of Goebbels' diary in that year of struggle, one can feel the scorching breath of the new Germany's fiery enthusiasm, its iron resolution, its terrible hate. Above all, hate — hatred of everyone who stood in its urgent way. "One would like to strike the whole lot of them dead where they sit!" "One would like to spit at them!" "Outside the churchyard gates" (at the burial of a murdered Nazi) "the red rabble stands waiting for its victims. This plague must be exterminated like rats." "Perhaps the best way would be to have one of those scurrilous scribblers dragged out of the office by some S.A. men and publicly flogged."[2] Even where, as sometimes happened, the pathological venom was justified, it augured ill for the future when the great goal, worked for by day and night through seven unresting years, should be reached. "We *must* attain to Power!" declared Goebbels. "We will have a short breathing space

[1] *My Part in Germany's Fight*, pp. 28, 100.
[2] *Ibid.* pp. 26, 23, 27, 69.

to consolidate our position, but then it will be Power. And what we make of it!" "Once we attain power we shall never relinquish it unless we are carried off dead."[1]

On January 30th, 1933, the awaited day came. After every expedient had been tried by the democratic politicians and the old ruling class to keep him out, Hitler, long the leader of the largest Party in the State, was invited by President Hindenburg to form a Government.

The National Socialists had beaten the parliamentarians at their own game. A new one was now to begin. All night long the endless torchlight processions filed past the aged soldier President and the new Chancellor of the Reich standing motionless and smiling at his window. All the bells of Berlin, and beyond that of all Germany, were ringing and everyone seemed to be singing and shouting. "The new Reich has risen sanctified with blood. Fourteen years of work have been crowned with victory. We have reached our goal. The German Revolution has begun!"[2]

[1] *My Part in Germany's Fight*, pp. 114-15, 116. "That is the only solution", the diarist adds. It apparently is.

[2] *Ibid.* p. 209.

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