

Across the Frontiers

PHILIP GIBBS

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Books by PHILIP GIBBS

Non-Fiction

THE BATTLES OF THE SOMME
FROM BAPAUME TO PASSCHENDAELE
THE WAY TO VICTORY
TEN YEARS AFTER
SINCE THEN
EUROPEAN JOURNEY
ENGLAND SPEAKS
ORDEAL IN ENGLAND

Fiction

THE STREET OF ADVENTURE
THE MIDDLE OF THE ROAD
HEIRS APPARENT
YOUNG ANARCHY
THE HIDDEN CITY
THE GOLDEN YEARS
THE ANXIOUS DAYS
THE CROSS OF PEACE
BLOOD RELATIONS
CITIES OF REFUGE
GREAT ARGUMENT

PHILIP GIBBS



Across the Frontiers

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Contents

	PAGE
I. <u>TWENTY YEARS AFTER</u>	7
II. <u>THE CAUSES OF PASSION</u>	73
III. <u>THE STRICKEN LEAGUE</u>	119
IV. <u>THE NEW GERMANY</u>	173
V. <u>THE END OF AUSTRIA</u>	235
VI. <u>THE CZECH CRISIS</u>	257
VII. <u>THE PROBLEM OF THE JEWS</u>	293
VIII. <u>ILLUSIONS AND REALITIES</u>	313
<u>EPILOGUE</u>	347

I

Twenty Years After

The Boys of the Old Brigade.

It is twenty years after a world war which now seems extremely remote to a younger generation grown up since those days. They hardly remember it, except as a vague memory, perhaps, of being carried down from their beds during an air-raid, or not having quite enough for their suppers now and then. Some of them, old enough to be called men and women, don't remember it at all, and wonder what it was all about anyhow, and can't get a satisfactory explanation from their elders.

Those elders are we who went through it. We are twenty years older now, and some of us look the worse for wear. One night, before sitting down to begin this book, I went to a village branch of the British Legion—the survivors of that war—and as I looked down the wooden benches where they sat at table I realised how much they had changed—and I with them—since they trudged behind the guns up the Albert-Bapaume road, or first came out to France singing that foolish old song “A Long, Long Way to Tipperary” or that other ballad, “Hullo! Hullo! It's a Different Girl Again!” One forgets how the years go slipping by. These heroes of the Great War who had gone back to gardening and other jobs were no longer quite the boys they had been. Some of them had grown corpulent. Some of them had lost their hair and their teeth. Some of them—good Lord!—were grandfathers.

“Sorry, gentlemen, if I get a bit puffed,” said a stout fellow who went to the piano to lead a chorus or two. “Too much stuff below the belt nowadays!”

He patted that part of his anatomy before striking some chords as the prelude to an old familiar tune. “Pack up your troubles in your old kit-bag and smile, smile, smile!”

The men were singing it again as once they had sung it in old shell-slashed barns behind the lines of a war which seemed as though it would last for ever, or as long as there were men left to be killed. Now some of the voices trailed away. They couldn't get the high notes. They had forgotten the words. Twenty years after some of the spirit had gone out of the tune. After all it was a long time ago, all that. A different world now!

While my comrades of the British Legion were getting on with their annual dinner in a village hall I remembered the ending of that old war. It was not very dramatic where I happened to be on the road to Mons, where for some of our men it had begun. A bugle blew somewhere in a soggy field. Its note came through a mist which looked as thick as cotton wool. It blew the “Cease Fire!” to guns which had gone on

firing for four and a half years.

It was the “Cease Fire” to a war which had killed ten million men or so—no one will ever know the exact figures—and wounded forty million.

One of my friends at the table where the members of this village branch of the British Legion sat asked me a question between one song and another.

“Things look pretty bad, don’t they?”

“What things?” I asked, my thoughts having strayed back to twenty years ago.

“That Japanese business in China. It’s a grim outlook for the Western world, especially if we have another European war—which looks very likely, according to the newspapers. We don’t seem to have learnt much from what happened in 1914! We seem to be making arrangements for the next massacre.”

He spoke with a touch of irony and a touch of bitterness.

“Before we leave, gentlemen,” said a distinguished member of the British Legion, “I want to call your attention to a series of lectures in the village hall on Anti-Gas precautions. These will be given on Monday nights. I hope you will all attend. It’s very important, you know, and the lectures are being given by Home Office orders. In the present state of the world!——”

Some of the men still bore on their bodies the scars of the last war’s wounds. It seemed a pity that they should be thinking so much about another war in which the last of our youth will be slaughtered, if it happens, or blinded and suffocated by poison gases.

I should have liked to have got up and to have told these men that it wasn’t going to happen—that at least there was still time to prevent it happening. I hated the idea of those gas-masks which would be served out with kind instructions from the Home Office. What a surrender of all civilised ideals, and all hopes of human intelligence, if we have to include anti-gas drill in our elementary education and cover our children’s faces in those beast-like masks—teaching them terror when they first look out upon this life! . . .

The stout fellow at the piano, with too much stuff below his belt, played “Auld Lang Syne,” and we joined heartily in the chorus of the good old words.

(2)

They Made No Peace.

Twenty Years After. . . . Who, among those of us who had been through that terrific ordeal and stood alive amidst its wreckage, could have prophesied the kind of world which now we have, or the failure to make any certain peace in all this

time? For there has been no real peace—certainly no peace of mind among men and nations—since that first day of Armistice. It has been only an armed truce broken by isolated wars which threatened to engulf all the old combatants again; and by revolutions, violent episodes, political passions, and dangerous forces stirring beneath the thin crust on which we stand.

The things that have happened in those twenty years since the World War seem to make a mockery of all that agony, and death, and valour on all fronts, and at least has made that human sacrifice vain and purposeless. For the turn of the wheel of fate has robbed such victory as there was of all its imagined fruits, and the vanquished have risen again to power. The very ideas for which on one side many nations were urged to fight—the killing of militarism—the safeguarding of Democracy, the overthrow of autocrats and despots, the reign of law, the Christian ideal, and other fine phrases used by the leaders to give a sanction to this slaughter, have been revoked or are in retreat.

What is the cause of all this fearful talk of another war not far ahead?

In September last we escaped another world war only by a hair's breadth and we in England stared into trenches being dug hastily in our public gardens.

There are prophets of woe who have timed it for the year now gone, 1938! It was foretold, they say, by the Egyptian Pyramids or by other mystical revelations. Reading the signs of the times without the aid of stars or stones, but by the simple process of putting two and two together with horrid logic, other prophets—politicians and newspaper reporters and those gloomy fellows the professional economists—combined to foretell its horrors. For the past year or two—more than that—a sense of its approach has darkened our mental horizon and made happiness difficult even for those who have the chance of it. The rapid communication of news by the miracles of modern science—wireless messages, broadcasting, and the news-reel of the cinema—brings this menace into every household and homestead and keeps all nerves on edge; for nearly always it is news of some alarming incident of current history, some new act of aggression, some new repudiation of law, some increase of violence, some further threat to peace, or some report of flaming war itself—in Abyssinia, Spain, China—with its piled up horrors of murders and massacre.

Murder and massacre now seem to be the necessary accompaniments of warfare. Chivalry is dead, it seems, if it ever lived. The old wars between professional armies, recorded by war correspondents and war artists for the pleasure of those who sat at home, have gone for ever. Crowded cities are now the targets of big guns and bombing aeroplanes. Women and children are killed if they

happen to be in the way, as of course they are. It is that aspect of modern warfare which makes it very easy for rulers and statesmen to play on the fears of their peoples for the purposes of increased taxation and ever-increasing armaments; but in the minds of some of the rulers and statesmen there is the same alarm and they are not insincere when they appeal to panic.

Could we who heard the bugles blow that “Cease Fire” twenty years ago have guessed that, if we lived so long as this after the miracle of escape, we should still be groping for some kind of peace? Could we have guessed that all the nations would be rearming with feverish industry, draining all their reserves of wealth, piling-up monstrous debts, and training their children to the use of arms?

We hoped for a good peace! The men who had fought had lost all hatred for each other. Certainly there was no hatred between German and English soldiers who had lain in the mud not far from each other and were sick and tired of all that filth. Because they had been through the same ordeal and knew the life of the trenches in their bodies and souls they had a sense of mutual sympathy when the job was done. The people at home didn’t understand of course. They would never understand for there was no language to make them do so. Hatred had gone a long time before the end—if it ever existed—between those who had to kill each other. When British troops first reached the Rhineland they gave their rations to hungry children, and General Plumer applied urgently for food supplies to be sent to the civilians lest the health of his troops should be undermined. They were sent by order of Winston Churchill. German soldiers who had just torn off their uniforms, or their shoulder-straps, sat drinking beer with British Tommies, and they got on famously together.

“It must never happen again,” they said.

We were inclined to be optimistic then, when the river of blood ceased flowing. We believed for a little while, that “the world would be made safe for democracy.” Wasn’t that the slogan? We believed that the Peace to be arranged would be the beginning of a new chapter of history in which the common folk of nations would be assured of their decent way of livelihood without fear of war, for a long while ahead. There would be, surely, a new sense of comradeship and co-operation across the frontiers between democratic peoples. We were all democratic then! Many crowns had crashed. The old despotisms had gone. The militarists were in hiding. The false glamour of war had been put out for ever.

“There goes the old Pomp and Glory!” I heard a German soldier say when he wheeled a barrow-load of swords towards the scrap-heap on a day following the Armistice. “It’s the end of all that.”

German militarism was broken, defeated and disarmed, wasn’t it? I saw the

destruction of the German war machine, smashed by hammers, with all those delicate and beautiful instruments which had made the great guns in the workshops of Krupps. The German Fleet had surrendered and was sunk at Scapa Flow. There was no more danger from that quarter. Their war-lords had fled. Their old gods of caste and arrogance had toppled off the altars. The German people, it seemed, were eager and ready to take their place in European democracy working for the happiness of the common folk. At least they would be so, we thought, after they had got over their revolution and put down the "Reds" who were out for anarchy. They were a people who believed in law and order.

There was one man twenty years ago who expressed the mind of the fighting men on the subject of this coming peace. With a small group of officers I waited for him on the Hohenzollern Bridge across the Rhine at Cologne when our Army of Occupation first arrived. He came with an escort of cavalry and dismounted from his horse to speak to us. It was Sir Douglas Haig, our Commander-in-Chief, who during the years of war had been busy with his maps and orders. There were times when his handsome face had been drawn by the long strain of a command which involved the lives of millions of men and the fate of his own country. He had endured many failures. He had demanded frightful sacrifice. He had no special reason to love the Germans. But when he dismounted and spoke to us on the bridge which was Journey's End for men who had trudged a long way to the Rhine, he spoke no words of exultation about this victory of his. After a few short sentences about the endurance of our Armies who had fought so long and so hard he talked of the Peace that was coming.

"I hope," said Sir Douglas Haig, "that it will be a generous peace not touched by the spirit of vengeance against a nation whose soldiers have fought for their Fatherland with the same courage as ours."

Noble words, unheard by the peace-makers who did not call him to their Council table.

There was at that time a great yearning for such a peace in millions of minds touched for a little while by a spiritual emotion. After so much torture, so much ruin, so much death, masses of men and women looked forward to a peace which would rise above petty hatreds and wipe out those past four years of murder by a clean slate, on which might be written a new charter for humanity based on justice and fair play, and a system of law among nations, and a spirit of co-operation for the building-up of civilisation which so nearly had slipped into the dark pit.

There would, of course, be general disarmament to a low level. Most of the guns would be scrapped. The standing armies would be disbanded except for police

purposes. There would be no bartering of peoples or provinces as if they were mere chattels in the slave market. New arrangements would be made in the interests of the peoples concerned. There would be the “self-determination” of nations—a new high-sounding phrase! Any future grievances would be adjusted by general consent in some council of nations. Out of these years of agony—a terrible and unforgettable lesson—there would come, surely, a new era of hope.

There was that man named Wilson among the peace-makers. He had promised all that in sonorous language, which we believed. It was upon his promises made in Fourteen Points that the German people—don’t you remember?—put their faith and hope in the dark hours of defeat. He had promised that if they got rid of the rulers who had led them into this conflict they would not suffer from any peace of vengeance. That had happened. The Kaiser and the Crown Prince, abandoned by their Generals, had gone. The German Kings and Princes were in hiding. Among the war-lords only Hindenburg, that simple and stalwart old soldier, had led his army home.

In the last fury of the war President Wilson’s words had seemed to hold a message of redemption for all this baseness into which humanity had fallen. He stood for justice and magnanimity. I remember waiting for him in a crowd—a vast crowd—when he came to London on his way to the Peace Conference. Where I stood we could only hear the cheers, but I noticed that the men and women about me had tears in their eyes, as though a Messiah were passing—a Messiah in a top-hat with the face of a Professor. Was not this man going to make the good peace for which the world was longing?

He had in his mind, we knew, an age-long dream of noble men and intended to be the architect of its reality. It was to be a Parliament of Nations. Anything that might be amiss in the Peace Treaties—any oversight of justice—would be revised in due time by the Council and Assembly of this new League or Society of Nations. All international grievances would be settled here by arbitration and conciliation. One of its first tasks would be to promote general disarmament to the lowest level of national security. Its Covenant would contain clauses for the thwarting of any bandit nation which might threaten war against its neighbours. The other nations would act for the collective security of all.

Here was hope indeed! Here was the promise of a Brave New World. It was, at last, the chance of establishing a reign of law and order, thrusting back for ever the old barbarism of tribal warfare. The war would not have been fought in vain if it had led to this. Our dead would have died for a new and splendid civilisation.

Nothing of that happened, as we know too well by recent history. Something

went wrong with the Peace that was made. Something went wrong with the League of Nations. Now, twenty years after, there is no assurance of peace. The League lies a-dying, or gravely stricken.

(3)

The Race to Arms.

The rulers and statesmen have forgotten all about general disarmament in spite of much talk about it for seventeen years. We are now in the full swing of the most intensive rearming of nations that the world has ever seen, though it saw quite a lot of that in the years preceding the last great war.

I think I mentioned that I had seen with my own eyes, as the old saying goes, some part of the destruction not only of the German war machines, but of the very instruments—delicate and beautiful—which had made that machinery designed for the slaughter and mutilation of men. Germany and her Allies had been utterly disarmed except for a few secret hoards here and there, of no account except for internal strife. They remained disarmed, waiting—not with furious impatience as we must now admit—for the pledge inherent in the Covenant of the League, and confirmed many times, that the other nations would gradually reduce their armaments to the lowest common denomination agreed upon by the majority. They waited for fifteen years, until a man of some impatience named Adolf Hitler took charge of their affairs and demanded the fulfilment of that pledge lest otherwise Germany would rearm. It was not fulfilled. Germany has rearmed, stinting and scraping on every other form of expenditure to achieve a terrific programme which is putting a heavy strain upon their resources, their internal credit, their industrial output, their organising genius, and the spirit of discipline and sacrifice of a nation which has endured much since its armies went singing to war in 1914.

German rearmament has been answered by this new intensity of armament production in many frightened countries, and now after twenty years in the attempt of peace, we have reached the astonishing and alarming result—the awful paradox—that the world is getting stuffed with high explosives, and that thousands of factories are working night and day in the manufacture of great guns, bombing aeroplanes, tanks, machine-guns and other lethal weapons, all of them being produced in the name of self-defence, and to avoid, we are told, a war which, if it happens, will reduce what civilisation we have to dust and ashes.

The expenditure of the world on munitions is more than double that of the year 1913 when the great powers were arming to the teeth.

Great Britain had not done much in this way after the last war. With the German fleet sunk at Scapa Flow, and with our tradition as islanders, we did not think it necessary to keep a big standing army, or even a mighty fleet, beyond our immediate needs. There was no more danger in the North Sea. We had friends in the Mediterranean—Italy, our dear and honoured ally, and France, who occasionally raised the cry of “Perfide Albion,” forgetting a million men of our blood who lie beneath French soil, but was otherwise friendly and loyal. We could afford to economise in years when a frightful bill of costs had to be met on the last war. It had cost us eight millions a day. We had lent two thousand millions to our allies—none of which we should see again. We had a minimum of two million men out of work. Economy was much needed by a people more heavily taxed than any in the world, except perhaps Germany. So the Governments of Great Britain—Conservative as well as Labour—scrapped many old battleships and cruisers and “axed” many naval officers who became garage-owners, poultry-keepers or farmers until they went bankrupt, as mostly they did.

The British people had gone pacifist. Even Admirals and Generals denounced the folly of war. All the ex-service men were for peace and quiet, and had no quarrel with any nation, least of all Germany, who was now down and out—until suddenly, by some strange miracle, she was neither down nor out, but springing to arms, marching around, with a new dynamic energy under the leadership of an ex-corporal who was also a literary gentleman and the author of a book called *Mein Kampf*, which was very frightening to some of those who read it.

An English Prime Minister—very English after his Scottish and Welsh predecessors—strolled into the House of Commons one day after an Election which had given him a fine majority for some mandate unknown, because so many people trusted Mr. Baldwin. He fidgeted with a few notes. He spoke about the serious state of the world. He had come to the conclusion that his country would have to rearm. He mentioned the probable bill. For a start it would be one thousand five hundred million pounds sterling.

His Chancellor of the Exchequer, Mr. Neville Chamberlain, deplored the necessity for this expenditure. Still there it was, he said. It would have to be met and it was his duty to show how best the money could be obtained without putting an undue strain upon British credit and economy.

Astonishing world into which we have drifted after that war which nearly ruined us all! What perhaps is most astonishing is the fact that it doesn’t seem to astonish the very people—the statesmen and politicians—who are partly responsible for its phenomena. It doesn’t seem to astonish those who now accept, almost without

question, what formerly they denounced. They now defend actions, such as war itself, which once horrified those who being pacifists are now militarists. They are scornful of governments, whom they accuse of cowardice because they refuse to fight wars on many fronts, or to intervene in civil wars which would plunge us all into general wars if such intervention happened.

No one was astonished by all this as far as I could find when one of these statesmen, who bears the new title of Minister for the Co-ordination of Defence, addressed a company of manufacturers at luncheon at the beginning of the new rearmament programme and gave them some figures in his easy genial way which might have taken their breath away.

In 1913-1914 this country, according to Sir Thomas Inskip, that genial man, spent something like £77,000,000 upon the two Defence Services. In a typical year after the war (that is to say when "Peace" had been made) the cost was £113,000,000. In the lowest post-war year after the depression the amount was £103,000,000. But in 1937 the expenditure had been £278,000,000, and in 1938-1939, estimates of which had still to be prepared, the expenditure would be something between £320,000,000 and £340,000,000, with, in addition, £5,000,000 to £10,000,000 upon air-raid precautions and other additions. Those figures have been considerably increased since that estimate was made.

What do they really mean apart from their sterling values, and the new burdens of taxation, and the absorption of labour into the intensive manufacture of destructive weapons? They mean, surely, that the British Government have acknowledged the complete break-down of security in Europe, the utter failure of all their diplomacy for twenty years past, the abandonment of hope in the League of Nations and any appeal to intelligence among nations, and have returned willy-nilly to a faith in force as the only method of self-protection in a jungle world. His Majesty's Opposition of the Labour Party, formerly the advocates of disarmament, have accepted the same view.

Fear took hold of them early in 1938. They were constantly urging the Minister for the Co-ordination of Defence to get on with the job more rapidly. Why all these delays? they asked. There was a particular hurry about fighting and bombing aeroplanes. The Right Honourable gentleman below the gangway, Mr. Winston Churchill, who had made a special study of this subject, deplored "the years that the locusts have eaten" in this country while Germany had a tremendous start in the building-up of a formidable air force, with new types of machine faster and more powerful than ours, and based upon a nation-wide organisation and training which we shall hardly catch up in two years or more. Did he not warn the Government

more than two years ago? They disbelieved his figures and facts, but afterwards were forced to accept them.

It was the thought of aerial warfare, perhaps with ourselves at a disadvantage, which “put the wind up”—as we used to say in the last war—our statesmen and politicians and that public opinion to which they address themselves. England is horribly vulnerable from the air. The monstrous city of London with its vast population lies very near in time to continental air bases, with machines capable of flying at 300 miles an hour. If hostile aircraft should break through our defence, as many of them would do in all likelihood, the most lurid imagination fails to realise the full horror of the destruction, the shambles, and the possible panic which would happen. With heavier weight-carrying capacity, longer range and increased numbers, the German Air Force—it is always Germany which haunts the minds of our Ministers—might unload in one day as many bombs as they did last time during four and a half years of war.

It was an unpleasant thought. To reassure the people, to whom the propaganda of fear was doled out daily by the newspapers, the British Government instructed its Home Office last year to circulate those anti-gas precautions, and to obtain immense supplies of gas-masks for the civilian population, including as many children as could wear them without being suffocated. There were detailed instructions issued in little booklets for pasting-up doors and windows; and private members insisted that the Government should bear all the cost of this and make more extensive preparations for anti-gas refuges.

But why all this pother about gas? asked many private citizens. How many people who were killed in German air-raids during the last war would have been saved if they had had gas-masks in their chest-of-drawers or office desks? The answer is not one! They were killed by high explosives with which our enemy would be well provided next time if there is that war in the air.

The utter inadequacy of these air-raid precautions was revealed in a bleak and frightful light in the autumn of 1938 when the spectre of war appeared in London streets and Europe heard again the tramp of youth on their way to the ditches of death.

Something had happened in 1937 to intensify the dark apprehensions of the most thoughtful minds. It was the break-down of everything upon which many of them—millions of them—had set their faith and hope. It was, it seemed, the end of all dreams. There was no law among the nations now that the League had failed. Everything was in the melting-pot again—treaties, pacts, pledges, gentlemen’s agreements. All the conferences, discussions and diplomatic bargainings which had

led up to them at Geneva, and other places of rendezvous, had been torn up and put into the scrap-heap of ancient futilities. The Locarno Pact which promised a new era of peace between old enemies was a vain memory in the vaults. The Kellogg Pact by which many nations pledged themselves most solemnly to abstain from war as a national policy was but the pipe-dream of an old gentleman who died a few months ago aware of its fading out. It was violated by the Japanese in Manchuria and by the Italians in Abyssinia. The ideal of collective security which was inherent in the Covenant of the League, and seemed to millions of simple folk the greatest safeguard of peace, collapsed like a house of cards when somebody kicks the table. Somebody kicked the table.

At that time when this became visible in its appalling bleakness to all but minds obsessed by unrealities or intellectually dishonest—there are lots of these about—the most hopeful of us was bound to admit that the world situation was at that time extremely dark, without any guiding light ahead for those who look for peace. It seemed brighter to those who looked for war.

(4)

The Menace in the East.

It seemed brighter no doubt to the Japanese who were making merry hell in China, amidst flaming cities, and the red glare of ruins in which were the crowded bodies of their victims, killed in heaps by bombing aeroplanes and machine-gun fire and Japanese bayonets. Shanghai, Peking, Nankin, and many other cities where civilisation had dwelt long ago, were captured by little men who have learnt to make and handle all the machines of the Western armies but have an Oriental disregard of death, a fanatical courage exalted by a passionate joy in sacrifice.

I heard a prophecy about them some time ago. It was from a very wise old man who knew almost everything about foreign affairs. His name was Cardinal Gasparri, once Secretary of State to the Vatican, which is well informed on these subjects.

“Shall I tell you what is the real danger for Europe?” asked this old gentleman, in a black gown with a red sash and a red skull cap, who stood under the glimmer of light from a candelabra in a Roman *salon* peering at me with watery eyes because of his great age.

We had been discussing the dangers to European civilisation, not least of which, he thought, was the rearmament of all the nations suspicious and afraid.

“Japan,” he reminded me, “has captured Manchuria. Next she will dominate China. There will be six hundred million Asiatics under discipline. A Japanese

gentleman said to me the other day: 'When that happens Europe will have to be careful.' . . . That is true. Europe will have to be careful! It is better that the European nations stand together. It is indeed urgently necessary. Even now Japanese competition is becoming irresistible in the world's markets. The Japanese labourer works ten hours a day for ten sous an hour. What can we do against that? His cheap production has already destroyed England's cotton industry in the East. Meanwhile European nations are quarrelling and rearming for another war. That is the way of suicide. It is very unwise, don't you think?"

Those words were spoken in 1934. Three years later the same warning was given more urgently by the oldest and youngest of our Generals whom I have the honour of knowing. It is Sir Ian Hamilton who at 84 years of age looks upon the world with keen eyes, an ardent spirit, and great knowledge.

"It is time," he said, "that Europe gets together to defend itself against a greater danger than any in its midst. What are we going to do about the Japanese?"

That invasion of China by the Japanese is one of the milestones in human history ranking with the early invasion of Europe by Eastern races or with the Roman advance into Gaul, or the tidal wave of German hordes against the Roman Empire, or the coming of Genghis Khan westwards. For it may be the beginning of a new era in the Pacific and of a new power rising in the East eager for conquest and for domination over four hundred million people who may be militarised by their masters and made efficient by them. What then, O Lord?

Years ago I asked a friend of mine how he thought things would shape out in the unknown future.

He was a man worth asking because of the little grey cells in his high dome.

"It's all cut and dried," he told me. "The Japanese will conquer the Chinese. The Chinese will absorb them after learning their technique. They will spread over the Western world. They will adopt Christianity. There will be a Chinese Pope in Rome."

I do not accept that view of the future! It is too dreadful a dream. But even as an allegory it has a frightful warning of things to come. In any case the immediate present is alarming enough to Western peoples who have trade interests and many possessions in China and other lands washed by the Pacific Ocean.

The Japanese have succeeded in their invasion of China with a success which intoxicates them. They chose their time well. Those Europeans, they thought, were too involved in their own fears, in their own stupidities, to take action for the defence of their interests in China. What would their words of protest matter? What did they matter when Japanese air-pilots bombed British and American gunboats and machine-gunned their crews? An Oriental apology was enough. The British Fleet

would not go far from the North Sea or the Mediterranean when Germany and Italy were causing anxiety. Japan was very happy to belong to a Berlin-Rome Pact against Communism, which was another name for Russia. If Russia tried to move, Germany would move. In any case Russia had killed all her best Generals, and the new Czar, whose name was Stalin, was executing almost everybody of any importance. Russia was just a madhouse and a shambles. The Japanese had no fear from that quarter.

What about the United States? Supposing they joined up with Great Britain? Was there any chance of that? Little Japanese gentlemen acting as waiters in New York, as clerks in shipping offices, as students in American Universities, or as special correspondents and private spies, had all sent home reports informing their superior officers that the American people were isolationists and non-interventionists and would refuse to be forced into war with Japan or to "pull the chestnuts out of the fire" (an American expression) for the British.

The military academies of the United States had for years been putting a problem to their students as an academic exercise worked out on a map covering a large floor-space. What could the American Navy do if the Japanese Fleet seized the Philippines? How could they attack the Japanese, shielded behind a network of islands and surrounded by mine-fields? No solution had been found for that problem.

Not long ago I discussed this Eastern menace with a man who has an intimate knowledge of China and has made a special study of Far-Eastern problems. He is a German, and our conversation, rather grim, was illumined by little candles on Christmas cakes. A young man played the 'cello to us and afterwards there was the laughter of two merry ladies. It was a little sanctuary of civilisation in the great jungle.

"The Japanese," said my friend, "are getting ready to press southwards. That is the direction of their destiny as they believe. Manchuria is no use to them for colonial settlement. The climate is too severe. It does not hold the wealth they want. Their attack upon China was not to conquer that vast country for their future home. They only wish to force their trade on the Chinese people and keep them under control so that they will not be a hostile power in collusion with Western nations when Japan reaches southwards for what they want—the Philippines, the Dutch East Indies, Malaya with its inexhaustible reserves of wealth in tin and rubber and many good things. The British Empire and its immense interests in the East are gravely threatened."

The same ideas, in almost the same words, were expressed to me with obvious anxiety by another friend of mine just back from Malaya after many previous visits to

that country where he has rubber plantations.

“If the Japanese aren’t checked,” he said, “Malaya will be their goal. I’m getting very worried about it. We shall have to look out for ourselves. So will the Dutch. But what are we going to do if the danger in the Mediterranean keeps our Fleet on this side of the world?”

That was the question discussed most anxiously by the British Cabinet at the beginning of last year. Among them was the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, a youngish handsome man, who was looking older since he had been given that high office when he tried, and failed, to stop a war in Abyssinia. Since then not a day had passed for him without sharp anxieties of new threats to peace and a further crumbling down of all that he was trying to prop up—that system of Collective Security—upon which he had banked so heavily. That had all gone now. In its stead was collective insecurity. That Spanish civil war had given him a few grey hairs. It had been the cockpit of all the passions and “ideologies”—that frightful word!—and blind, stupid, dangerous fanaticisms which had taken possession of many minds and many groups. It had very nearly caused another world war. He had held that spectre at bay only by a patient game of delay and a policy of non-intervention nearly wrecked by hotheads.

British Foreign Policy, for which he was partly responsible, had failed all along the line. Mussolini had got away with Abyssinia. Germany had played a strong hand and won most of the tricks. Russia, for whom he said kind words now and then, was not a good ally for the last democracies. A man-eating tiger would inspire more confidence. The whole of Europe was in a state of flux and new nations set up by the Peace Treaties were drifting away from those who had brought them into being. They were being pulled towards the German orbit. Now there was this Japanese conquest of China directly challenging British interests of vital importance, insulting the British flag, bombing British ships, threatening British possessions. A very dangerous world for a Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs who was aware that, like Agag, he must walk delicately over the thin crust that was always breaking beneath his feet with threatening cracks above the bottomless pit. Mr. Anthony Eden resigned his job when a new Prime Minister named Neville Chamberlain decided to patch up those cracks before we all went down.

(5)

Conversation in Rome.

In the spring of last year in Rome I sat talking with an Italian friend of mine who

is devoted to England and the English among whom he lived for a time before the war. We looked out from his apartment down to the whole vista of the Via d'Impero with its broken arches, its tall columns, its majestic panorama of the ruins and relics of a civilisation which once reached across the world, even as far as Britain. There was a blue sky overhead. Every stone looked stereoscopic in this Italian light. We were alone together, it seemed, in the very heart of ancient Rome, and vibrations from the past touched our spirit. This friend of mine is very knowledgeable about the ancient glory of his race and all its art and life, but after some discussion on these things he spoke about modern problems and the strain between Italy and England—those old friends.

“It seems to us Italians,” he said, “and especially to those of us who are the most friendly to England, that you have gone a little mad! We are very sorry about it but we don’t understand.”

“In what way are we particularly mad?” I asked politely.

“Your foreign policy has been inexplicable,” he said. “It has no definite line or logic. Your Government says one thing on Monday and another thing on Wednesday. On Monday you take the French view. On Wednesday you say kind words to Germany. On Tuesday you challenge Mussolini, but on Saturday your Prime Minister sends him a private letter assuring him of cordial good-will. It is all very strange, and meanwhile you are making enemies of all the powers who are most dangerous to Great Britain and the British Empire.”

He went back a little in history, to the Italian war in Abyssinia. It was not his purpose to defend that adventure, but to recall the extraordinary behaviour of British diplomacy. Our statesmen, he said, rode a very high horse in leading the way to Sanctions when they knew—they *must* have known—that France had signed a secret treaty with Mussolini giving him a free hand. How then could Sanctions work? Mr. Anthony Eden fell off his high horse with a bump and did not look dignified. England went to the verge of war, looking very fierce, but had no intention of making war. It was a game of bluff, surely. But how does bluff succeed when one’s cards are weak and liable to be called? England was bluffing with a weak hand. Neither France nor anyone was willing to go to war to stop the conquest of Abyssinia. They wouldn’t even go as far as restricting the supplies of oil to Italy because they knew effective sanctions would lead to war. Why then adopt a policy which was bound to fail from the beginning? Surely that was a little mad? But now that Abyssinia is a *fait accompli* why pretend that Haile Selassie is still Emperor? Why refuse to recognise

the Italian possession? It was irritating without being effective. It prevented friendship with Mussolini who was anxious to make a friendly arrangement in the Mediterranean—that vital highway for British communications with Egypt and India.

My Italian friend—a most good-natured fellow and very humorous when not very serious—offered me another cigarette and took one himself. It was very pleasant under the blue sky of Italy, looking down the triumphal way of Roman Emperors; but I felt a little uneasy in my mind.

“We Italians,” said my friend—“at least those of us who happen to be a little intelligent!—are startled by the almost deliberate way in which England is advancing down the road to ruin for herself, and perhaps for all of us. It is that road, for instance, which goes to Geneva and the support of an illusion called “Collective Security.” The bottom has fallen out of the League of Nations. Why go on sleeping in that bed? France, by some insane miscalculation, hangs on to her pact with Soviet Russia, and through France England is linked up with that lunatic asylum governed by a despot with homicidal mania. Some of your politicians—poor dears!—still claim Russia as one of the allies of democracy against the Dictator States. *Madre di Dio!* Is that intellectual insincerity or a form of madness? There is no life insurance in that policy for Great Britain. Why have your leaders rejected all offers of German friendship, preferring this left-handed alliance with Russia, whose best generals have all been executed and whose social state is miserable? How is it that you are making enemies of the Arab world by your actions in Palestine? Why do your intellectuals support the Communists and Anarchists in Spain? I do not understand. As an old journalist I do not understand!”

“What is Mussolini’s game?” I asked, trying to turn the tables on him. “Why is he stirring up the Arabs by false propaganda? Why is he pouring troops into Libya? Why are Italian submarines doing acts of piracy in the Mediterranean? Is he out for Egypt, by any chance?”

My Italian friend laughed at these questions which seemed to amuse him very much.

“There is nothing in all that!” he said. “Il Duce is a man of considerable intelligence. Naturally as long as England is hostile and unfriendly he will stir up trouble wherever possible. We don’t believe for a second that he has ambitions regarding Egypt. But he is getting as many cards into his hand as he can pick up—for bargaining purposes. He wants to make a good bargain and not a bad war.”

This laughing philosopher was incredulous about the piratical possibilities of Italian submarines in the Mediterranean where—before the Nyon agreement—British ships were reporting torpedo attacks.

“There is one clear proof,” he told me, “that those pirate submarines are not Italian. If Italian submarines fired on a British ship they would hit it. These pirates always miss. They can’t be Italian!”

But as Mr. Winston Churchill pointed out some time later in the House of Commons it was remarkable that when Signor Mussolini signed the Nyon agreement—Mr. Anthony Eden’s most successful effort—piracy stopped in the Mediterranean, as though the very terror of his name had sent them to their hiding-places.

In Rome I talked with another friend, not Italian but very English, and in his way very important as a friendly link between the two countries. From his windows there was a glorious view of the Eternal City, but our minds were turned towards England and its troubles in the world.

“Our foreign policy has gone mad!” said my friend.

So he also thought that! It was a disturbing echo of the other conversation.

“We have missed the tram time after time,” he said to me. “Will another tram come along—by the grace of God?”

“What tram?” I asked. “On what lines does it run?”

For an hour he talked, not without emotion, though he is a man with a placid manner as a rule, and a pleasant sense of humour, and an old-fashioned dignity.

“We have gone from one blunder to another,” he argued. “Every step in our foreign policy has been in the wrong direction. The Abyssinian war might never have happened if we had given Mussolini fair warning of our objections before he had sent out his troops. There was no mention of Abyssinia at the Stresa Conference before that happened, although our Government had been urged to raise the question by our Ambassador in Rome. Mussolini took silence for consent.”

While he was talking I looked out of his windows over the roofs and domes of Rome, and for a moment my mind lost the thread of his arguments. He was talking about Hitler’s Germany.

“When Hitler came into power Germany hadn’t rearmed. We might have granted them equality of arms on a low scale and by degrees. They were willing and eager to accept that. Time after time Hitler offered terms of friendship to England and France which would have secured European peace. They were rejected or ignored.”

“Where is peace now?” asked my friend with a little faint sigh as he watched a wisp of bluish smoke from his cigarette rising to the painted ceiling in this room in Rome where he is well known and well beloved.

There was no hostility in Rome to any English man or woman though foreign relations were strained between us. I found the Italians were charming and courteous

as usual and there was no outward or visible sign of the strain they have suffered and are suffering because of drastic taxation for the costs of Empire which as yet yields no fruit of victory. The economists in our country tell us that Italy is on the verge of bankruptcy, that they are reaching the end of their tether in internal credit and gold reserves, that soon they must seek a foreign loan, or collapse. Their penury is not visible in the streets. The Italian men look better dressed than ours or, at least, wear “parade suits” after working hours, very smartly cut and very well pressed.

There was no sign of poverty in the Pincio gardens where most mornings I sat for a while with a friend at one of the little tables of the Casina delle Rose smoking cigarettes over a cup of coffee under a blue sky and a warm sun, though it was late autumn, watching the nurses and children, and this little pageant of Italian life. Good-looking cars drove up and out of them stepped pretty ladies, elegantly dressed, coming to sit in this garden café for a morning *apéritif*. Round the Row, like our own in Hyde Park, came the lucky people who ride horses, chatting and laughing and making a pleasant picture in the dappled sunlight under the autumn trees. They did not look poverty-stricken.

Rome has become more splendid under the rule of Mussolini. He is building new sports grounds for the training of his youth, who look well fed and high spirited as they march into the great new stadium—the Mussolini forum—outside the city where many figures of naked and glorious youth, carved out of white marble, stand heroic and dazzling-white under the blue sky of this new Italy which is dynamic, self-conscious, urged towards new adventures of Empire by that astonishing man who has in his restless mind secret ambitions, ruthless of other people’s rights if they stand in his way.

If, he says, the British Empire is weak and decadent, if it will not defend what it has, if by all its blunders—they are mad those English!—it is beaten in retreat in many parts of the world—in the Far East, in Europe, in Asia—Italy, which once was Rome, will stretch out its hand for some of those possessions.

On the walls of ancient palaces, built by order of those Romans whose law prevailed over the known world, there are maps, inlaid with marble of different colours, of the old Roman Empire, East and West. For four hundred years Britain was theirs. For more than that Gaul was theirs. Once Egypt was theirs. The wheel of fate runs in its endless cycles. Perhaps Egypt will be under Roman rule again one day. If those English are hard pressed——

The Arab World.

In the House of Commons at the end of the final debate on Foreign Affairs in the last days of 1937, Lieutenant-Commander Fletcher raised the question of anti-British propaganda by Italy which wielded, he said, the poison-pen of Europe. The recent story that we proposed to give away the Portuguese colonies was nothing but blackmail. The Bari broadcasts on the theme that the British Empire was decadent, and that ruthless British policy in Palestine was dynamiting property and outraging women, were in full blast in Arab countries where Italian agents practically gave away radio sets.

It was Lord Cranborne who gave the Government reply to this protest. The British Government, he said, took a most serious view of these activities. They had several times protested in the past with the result that the propaganda had lessened. Now there was a recrudescence. They did not want a quarrel, for they earnestly sought a restoration of the traditional friendship with Italy, but the Government would not fail to take all further appropriate measures.

This suspicion of Italian ambitions in the Mediterranean has not been lessened in many minds by that Rome-Berlin axis nor by the German anti-Communist pact with Japan reaching out to the Far East where we have other interests and other dangers.

Why is the Arab world susceptible to this hostile propaganda? Did we not defeat the Turks for them? Was it not our Colonel Lawrence who was their best friend? Did we not help them to independence? By what malign fate are they now conspiring against us and listening, not perhaps with complete belief, but with self-satisfied sympathy, to attacks upon us broadcast in their market-places?

That is another tragedy of errors which seems to convict us of that hypocrisy by which we are charged in almost all the countries of the world.

I was startled when I talked with an Austrian lady in Vienna just before Austria became a part of Germany. She was a very charming lady who spoke English rapidly and easily and was highly intellectual.

"You English," she said, in a discussion about the state of the world, "are, of course, the Japanese of the West."

That remark spoils my appetite for a good lunch in the Hotel Kranz Ambassador.

"You are very patient," she continued. "Everybody imagines for a time that you are abandoning your old ways, and becoming gentle and peace-loving. You delude the world into the belief that you have been converted to pacifism, and that the old lion has become lamb-like! Then suddenly something happens somewhere which challenges your interests or your power. Then you are merciless! Then you are

ruthless! You do things which shock the conscience of humanity—and are encrusted in your self-conceit and say it is your moral right. ‘We are maintaining justice,’ you say; ‘we are defending liberty and democracy,’ you say. It was so in Ireland with your Black-and-Tans. It is now in Palestine with your shooting of the Arabs who are trying to defend their land and liberties. The other day because an Arab community would not betray the young men who had destroyed one of your aerodromes, you put marks on to a number of Arab houses and let it be known that you would destroy them one by one until the young men were denounced. They were not denounced. You destroyed those houses one by one. Then you criticise the atrocities of Mussolini in Abyssinia! There is in the English character a fanatical sense of self-righteousness, and in that belief you are ruthless of pity, mercy, and gentle qualities. You are like the Japanese.”

In the European Press, including that of France, there was this story about the dynamiting of Arab houses in Palestine. Perhaps it was true. Perhaps in the judgment of our officers in Palestine it was necessary. True or untrue the fact remains that on Christmas Day when the English people were listening to carols of the Christ Child, and when millions of them were hearing the message of peace on earth, British soldiers in Palestine were hunting for armed Arabs and shooting them. There was the sound of rifle-shots across the Sea of Galilee where once Christ talked to the fishermen. It is one of those frightful inconsistencies which challenge the Christian ideal. Those Arabs are criminals. They hide in ambush and kill unarmed Jews and British soldiers. Justice demands that they shall be punished. Unfortunately they believe with fanaticism that they are fighting for justice and for that possession which all brave men will defend to the death, their own land and liberty.

I once heard the Arab point of view in Palestine where one day at Haifa I saw the work of Jewish labourers who were speaking the American language as it is spoken in the Bowery of New York.

“It is our land,” say the Arabs. “Why should these Jews from all parts of the world come supplied with foreign money to take possession of our best soil and overwhelm us by their numbers?”

The Jews pay for the land. They make it flourish where the Arabs kept a desert. They are law-abiding people with a dream in their mind. They have come back to Zion after fifteen hundred years. But the Arabs don’t want them to come. They have been there longer than the Jews. They like their own way of life. They like their own way of laziness. Allah is great and Mahommed is their prophet. Why, they ask, should the English support and encourage this invasion of Palestine by a race which modernises and vulgarises life—even though it brings mass-produced gramophones

and mass-produced wealth?

Like many others I am deeply sympathetic to this dream of a national home for Jews. They need it, with tragic urgency in this time of persecution. They are making good in Palestine. But many of our own people out there take the Arab point of view and it seems to them—as they have told me—that this adventure was one of our cardinal mistakes, due no doubt to a spirit of generosity, but entered into without forethought. The Arabs have been in Palestine for more than a thousand years. These Jewish new-comers have no right, they say, to dispossess them even by money payments to those tempted to sell their land. The numbers of their immigration are a threat to the Arab population who see themselves thrust back and eventually dominated by the Jewish communities.

We have made for ourselves a second Ireland, and the proposed partition of Palestine would only intensify the cause of conflict between two races deeply and lastingly hostile with an unending vendetta of blood. The Jews will call upon us always to defend their lives and property. The Arabs will defy our hangings and fines for what they believe to be their most sacred rights. And by our policy in Palestine we are giving to Signor Mussolini a fine field for his propaganda, broadcast in every market-place of the Arab world to the danger of French as well as British interests and peace. With both hands we give our enemies and our critics the very material for their trouble-making.

By this policy, inspired by no mean spirit, we find ourselves in the Holy Land, of all places on earth, fighting a guerrilla warfare with modern weapons, so that blood stains the lilies of the fields and shots ring out near Nazareth, and children are frightened in Bethlehem on Christmas Eve. It is a very painful paradox for Christian folk in England.

France is involved in this Arab unrest. There are rebellious forces seething beneath her rule in Morocco and Algiers. The genius of Lyautey gained for a time the loyalty of Arab chiefs and subdued those who were disloyal. Lyautey's iron hand in the velvet glove lies still and his successors are faced by new difficulties and hazards. French engineers have built good roads. Their officers, who have a fatherly touch with their men, have raised disciplined troops; but the world economic situation has caused grave discontent in the Arab populations because of bad trade and loss of markets. The French way with the Arabs has been generous and paternal, but there comes a time when paternalism does not satisfy those conscious of their manhood.

So once I was told under the stars of Egypt in a desert white in the moonlight.

"We are grateful to Mother England," said my Egyptian friend whose camels were sleeping beyond our tents. "There was a time when we were weak and needed

her protection. But it is not good always to be mothered. When the son reaches his manhood he must depart from his mother and go his own way, even if it leads to misery and disaster. So it is with us Egyptians. We wish to go our own way even if it leads to our own downfall. So it is with Arab people under French and British rule. They will break away one day. Nature itself forces them to break away. And they are an ancient people remembering their pride. Now they have learnt how to use rifles and machine-guns. You understand?"

In some such words he spoke under the stars, as I remember, for they gave me a kind of *frisson*, at the thought of dark forces moving in a world with which I am unfamiliar—the densely populated world of those who have the Crescent for their emblem, and Mahommed for their prophet. Now that we have taught them to use rifles and machine-guns there may be trouble. There is already trouble.

(7)

The Failure of French Policy.

France is aware of these dangers. But there are other causes of distress in France, more immediate and more serious. The French people, indeed, are not happy with themselves, I find, whatever their political beliefs or to whatever special class they may belong.

French logic, so irresistible up to a point, has failed. Their logic was perfect, perhaps, when after a victory which cost them two millions of their best young manhood, and a deep gash of ruin across their landscape, and years of heroic valour and desperate endurance and immeasurable sacrifice, they said: "We must bind that enemy in chains. We must surround him by walls of steel. We must keep him devitalised with his nose in the mud. By this Treaty of Versailles, which is our sacred covenant, we put those chains upon him, lest one day he should escape and attack us again."

Now, twenty years after, the Treaty of Versailles is undone. The walls of steel have fallen down, or at least are very shaky because many of the allies of France, who made a network round Germany and pledged their perpetual loyalty to France in return for her support as the dominant power in Europe, are now camouflaging their infidelities or their lack of confidence in French leadership.

There is another leader in Europe. His name is Adolf Hitler—a very strong-willed man. Germany has become powerful again, and her power has been obtained by a new system of government and by a political and social philosophy which appeal very strongly to certain types of mind in Central Europe, where there are

many would-be Hitlers, and where youth, or sections of it, is attracted by some form of Fascism as a short cut to the Brave New World.

In December of 1937, M. Delbos, Foreign Minister of France, set out on a tour to these countries which had been armed, financed, and flattered by France as bulwarks of defence against Germany after the war. His mission was to patch up the cracks, which lately had been visible, with the French conception of European security; or, in any case, to feel the political pulse of their governments and peoples. He knew, did this little man, that the situation had changed since the great days when France had felt very strong behind the Treaty of Versailles with many political alliances among the neighbours of a defeated Germany. Then the Rhineland had been demilitarised. At any time the French army could have advanced into that open corridor. Now there were German guns on the Rhine again, and behind them a strong Germany, mightily rearmed.

M. Delbos, a thoughtful man, had had a recent conversation with certain British Ministers of State. Among them was a tall, thin mystical-eyed man named Lord Halifax. He had just been over to Germany to talk with Herr Hitler, and desired to give an account of that conversation to the representatives of the French Government. The British Cabinet had been very cordial. M. Delbos had been impressed by their new Prime Minister, Mr. Chamberlain, a true English type like a business man in the City of London, quiet, downright, unemotional, revealing a plain common sense.

It was very clear that these politicians of Great Britain recognised the need for a complete revision of policy. They had no faith in Russia, now that Stalin had executed his generals and was killing many other leaders with homicidal mania. They recognised the setback—no longer to be disguised, to the policy of Collective Security now that the League had been grievously weakened by the failure of Sanctions against Italy. Belgium's declaration of neutrality in case of another war had inspired other countries to go the same way. German strength, getting formidable, was a centripetal force attracting smaller powers. The Berlin-Rome axis had to be reckoned with. It weakened the independence of Austria. It increased the dangers in the Mediterranean. What was France going to do about all that?

Lord Halifax had a very interesting conversation with Herr Hitler. He had been very much impressed by the Führer's earnestly expressed desire for European peace, and especially for good relations with England and France. Would it not be wise to believe in the sincerity of Herr Hitler, and to take advantage of it as far as possible? Had it not been rather a mistake for England and France to be so deeply sceptical of his previous peace offers? There was really no evidence to believe (as

did some of these English politicians) that he intended to cross other people's frontiers with fire and sword. Germany's demand for a return of the colonies raised, of course, a very difficult problem, but it might be advisable to discuss even that question without rigid refusal in advance. Some colonial readjustment might be necessary as the price of a general settlement in Europe for the avoidance of war.

M. Delbos, Foreign Minister of France in the Government of M. Chautemps, had time to think over all this in his *wagon-lit* on the way to Poland, Roumania, Jugoslavia and Czechoslovakia. That English conversation had not surprised him. If it had happened two years previously—perhaps even a year—French public opinion would have regarded it as an outrageous betrayal. The cry of "Perfide Albion!" would have been raised again. But now these English politicians, who had been very friendly to him, were only expressing ideas which had been raised in French minds. It was necessary to recognise a new situation. The Treaty of Versailles had been cut to ribbons. The Locarno Pact was gone. The League was no longer functioning effectively. Collective Security had failed, owing to the humiliation of the Sanctions policy in the Abyssinian affair. Little Laval—that slippery customer!—had played a double game over that. France had made many mistakes no doubt, owing to fear—not unjustified—and her sacred right to security. Many mistakes! Yes! He had to admit it. If he could only re-write past history! But what, thought M. Delbos, of the unknown future? Russia was an enigma and a haunting doubt. There were many French minds deeply sceptical of any further value in the Franco-Soviet pact. The Right had always been hostile to it. Now the Left were very quiet about it. That nation of homicidal maniacs—what force had it as an ally? How could French democracy be enthusiastic for that blood-soaked tyranny? Would any French soldiers go willingly to war if Russia was in trouble with Japan or Germany? The Franco-Soviet pact had been answered by the German reoccupation of the Rhineland and by Germany's anti-Communist pact with Japan—a formidable danger perhaps to French and British interests in the Far East. Everything was slipping. The world was in flux again. French policy had been weakened all along the line. . . .

Such were the thoughts which wandered through the mind of M. Delbos in the corner of a *wagon-lit* on his way to Poland. At least these were the thoughts expressed on his behalf by journalists—those imaginative men!—who are great thought-readers and give the world a full account of what has happened at any Cabinet meeting where every member is pledged to secrecy. M. Delbos may have been thinking of the French Exhibition, or the last play he saw at the *Comédie Française*, or whether he would have time to get his hair cut in Warsaw, or any of a thousand other things of personal and trivial interest. Anyhow they were the thoughts

agitating many French minds towards the end of 1937.

M. Flandin, former Prime Minister of France, expressed some of them with candour in a newspaper article recognising a new situation in Europe and suggesting the necessity of re-adapting French policy. Rather late in the day, perhaps, said some of his critics. Was it too late, M. Flandin? they asked.

M. Delbos had a warm reception in Warsaw, but underneath the cordiality to a representative of France he perceived that Poland was ruled by a military dictatorship hostile to any idea of forming part of a democratic defence against Fascist States. Poland was anxious for the most friendly relations with Germany. Poland was not at all sympathetic with Soviet Russia. Of course they had the most profound admiration, gratitude and love for the French people.

In Bucharest M. Delbos had a cordial reception from the Roumanian people, but unfortunately arrived at a time when Roumania was in the throes of an election which aroused fierce passions and threatened the stability of the Government. King Carol was in hot water again. M. Titulescu, the friend of France, was in retreat. There was a strong Fascist movement. The Roumanians were glad to arrange for further purchases of French armaments, but they did not disguise from M. Delbos that the situation was difficult. They expressed their great admiration, gratitude, and love for the French people, but they were very busy with their own little troubles just then.

Those troubles were revealed to a startled world a few weeks later. At the call of King Carol a new Government, in place of the old Liberals, was formed under the premiership of M. Octavian Goga, the Poet Laureate of Roumania, and one of the leaders of the National Christian Party. They are nationalists of Fascist type and are united as Christians in their hatred of the Jews. The first action of the new Government was to suppress the three Jewish newspapers of Roumania. The National Christians are admirers of Hitler and the German Nazis, and have their own storm-troops, the "Blue Shirts," who were first to wear the sign of the swastika. So Roumania has broken away from the Little Entente and political alliance with France, which promptly cancelled the exports of arms to this new régime.

The Goga Government lasted only forty days. It did just nothing at all to fulfil its promises of social reform and only succeeded in frightening the Jews who brought their trade to a standstill with bad effect on the peasant farmers and all Roumanian business. King Carol took affairs into his own hands, after appointing the Patriarch of the Greek Orthodox Church as Prime Minister and declaring a new Constitution. The King is endeavouring to appease France and former allies, offended by his sympathy with the Fascist form of rule. Political troubles in Bucharest are by no means at an end and the stage is set for a drama which will not end without violence.

In Yugoslavia the arrival of M. Delbos created riots in the streets. The democrats cheered him so loudly that the anti-democrats attacked them with sticks and stones. The friends of France came into collision with the friends of Italy. That was a new situation. For years since the war Yugoslavia had been on bad terms with Italy, but lately things had altered. Signor Mussolini had held out a friendly hand. It had been grasped with cordiality. Italian factories were selling tanks and guns and ammunition to the Yugoslavians. The Berlin-Rome axis had caused a lot of hard thinking in Belgrade. Alliance with France was no longer the best form of life insurance for a country with its coastline vulnerable to an Italian fleet and its northern frontier within reach of German troops.

In Belgrade they drank to the health of M. Delbos and expressed their admiration, gratitude and love for the French people.

In Czechoslovakia M. Delbos found anxiety and dark apprehension for the future. The Berlin-Rome axis seemed to them a new source of danger. Italy no longer guaranteed the independence of Austria against union with Germany. With Austria in a Germanic bloc Czechoslovakia would be encircled. She already had an increasing source of trouble within her own frontiers where there are three million German folk—the Sudeten Deutsch—restless, demanding autonomy, in close touch with German Nazis. The Czechs were no longer looking to Russia for military rescue in time of war. Strange things were happening in Russia. Stalin was looking eastwards rather than westwards, withdrawing from Europe and making ready for what may be an inevitable war with Japan. All things were changing.

Dr. Beneš, who had guided the policy of Czechoslovakia since its creation by the League, had been aware of its geographical weakness and political dangers for some time past. As far back as August 1936 he gave France a friendly warning that he could not form part of an anti-Germanic bloc.

"It is the lot of Czechoslovakia," he said, "that she is powerless to isolate herself from the policy of Europe as a whole, that she cannot incline merely to this or to that country, but that she must seek with all in common an equilibrium in central and south-east Europe and with it satisfactory relations with all, and that she must contribute to a collaboration among all with a view to preventing rivalries that are calculated to lead to wars. Therein lies the sense of what we say about our policy—that it is European, that it cannot be otherwise. . . . In this connexion let me emphasize an outstanding fact, namely, that Czechoslovakia has a vital interest in seeing a German-French agreement achieved. Agreement between Paris and Berlin signifies an automatic solution of many difficulties, too, between Berlin and Prague, which arise as a consequence of the general European tension."

Later, however, the Prime Minister of Czechoslovakia, Dr. Milan-Hodza, made a dramatic speech in the Czech Parliament at Prague.

"If history should call upon us to defend our country, we shall fight with all our force," said Dr. Hodza. "Czechoslovakia and its inhabitants will never in any circumstances whatsoever tolerate anyone's interference or meddling in domestic affairs.

"The question of minority rights is solely and exclusively a matter for internal consideration.

"If Herr Hitler wishes, as he says he does, to clear away misunderstanding and to bring about a pacification of relations with this country, he will find that Czechoslovakia is ready to talk and to co-operate, but only on the basis of absolute equality."

There is a tragic irony now in those words. We know what happened.

(8)

Anxieties of the French People.

M. Delbos returned to Paris and made a report to his Government. He had discovered, he said, a perfect unity of ideas between France and these countries. He reported that they were deeply faithful to their old loyalties. He had a most perfect assurance in their friendship and co-operation. That, of course, was for public reassurance which deceived not a soul.

Privately he seems to have expressed other ideas more closely in touch with reality. According to reports of his conversation with Dr. Beneš he spoke the following words:

"These Governments of Poland, Roumania and Jugoslavia are lost to us temporarily at least."

The French people did not find this situation satisfactory. All the horses they backed were now running in different directions, which did not lead to any winning-post.

They had backed Italy, and she had gone from them to the Berlin-Rome axis.

They had backed Russia, and Russia was a shambles.

They had backed the League of Nations—with a certain cynicism which belongs to the French mind. They even had a little faith in it now and then as the ultimate ideal of international peace, and meanwhile as a group of nations supporting the Treaty of Versailles and French security. The League was now moribund.

Where then was French security? Great Britain was a powerful ally at sea—with

a supreme naval strength. It had no army for continental warfare. Where then was French security?

The French people were dejected by their own internal affairs and their own financial weakness. In 1937 their money was devalued again. After a series of "sit-down" strikes which seemed to be a great victory for the workers during the premiership of M. Blum with his *Front Populaire*, wages were raised and working hours shortened, but prices began to rise against them. They were still rising. A grave financial crisis was only saved last year by a "pause"—it was M. Blum's word—in social progress, and by a return to old methods of strict economies in Government services. M. Chautemps—a moderate Radical—succeeded M. Blum, who had been too much to the "Left" in social affairs. M. Georges Bonnet, a man of courage who dared to tell the truth about the painful situation and to deal with it on sound lines, became Financial Minister and kept France out of bankruptcy. Now at the beginning of last year there was talk of another economic crisis. The experts were writing gloomy articles in the newspapers saying that France must produce more at less cost—or perish. The forty-hour week was not helpful in this necessity of increasing production and cheapening articles. It was a grave handicap to the activity of a great nation which waked up to a day of rest on Monday mornings when all competitors were starting on a new day of work.

But even the abolition of a five-day week would not restore, it was said by the experts, the economic and financial health of France. Something far more drastic must be done. What was that something? Dictatorship by Left or Right? The German methods of social organisation with labour camps and industrial discipline?

"It is necessary that the nation gets back to work," said M. Abel Gardey in his report to the Chamber on the budget of 1938.

The answer to that warning was a renewal of French strikes in the provisioning and transport services just before Christmas when they were calculated to inflict the greatest exasperation and discomfort on the general public for their Christmas festivities and waiting to receive their New Year's gifts. It developed into a general strike in Paris, threatening general paralysis of all social services until the Government broke it by strong and courageous action.

"The general discussion on the budget of 1938," said Gaston Jèze, a Radical of the old school, "has put into high relief the principal causes of our financial disorders. First of all causes is demagogic madness. This insanity is shown by incessant demands for new expenditure. And naturally those who demand such money to be poured out by the Government have no other idea of the way in which it should be paid than the usual formulæ and slogans, without any definite meaning such as: Make

the rich pay. . . . We are at a time when France is facing a question of life or death, *but nobody dares to say why.*”

Those last words in italics somewhat underestimate French candour and bitterness and political passion. In Paris everybody was daring to say why when I was there at the time. They were saying it in little restaurants and over café tables from Montmartre to the Boul’ Mich. Unfortunately they were all saying different things. Some were cursing the corruption of French politicians and discovering sinister conspiracies for the overthrow of France. There was a Fascist plot. Under the name of *Cagouleurs*—the hooded men—a group of madmen were buying arms and bombs from Germany and Italy and storing them in secret places. There was a Communist plot, a vast underground organisation in touch with Moscow and with the Anarchists in Spain—their dear comrades! Did not *Gringoire* expose, week by week, these “ruffians” and “bandits” who were deliberately dragging down France and inciting Labour to revolution?

So they talked incessantly and wrote in Paris, while in the provinces the middle classes of France, the small *bourgeoisie*—the little *rentiers* living on pensions and invested money which keeps dwindling at every devaluation of the franc and every rise in prices until they are forced to the most rigid and humiliating economies—despair of any relief to their continual anxieties and growing fears. . . . There is always in their minds the shadow of their fear of Germany. What will happen if France becomes demoralised and weakened by these internal conflicts and paralysed by this economic stagnation? Perhaps, after all, some of them are tempted to think some form of dictatorship—they hate the idea—may be necessary to pull the country together and to give it discipline. In any case, think the *petits rentiers* and the *petite bourgeoisie*, there must be a swing to the Right—away from the folly of the demagogues.

The moderate radicals—they correspond to the old Liberal party in England—had no more tolerance for that *Front Populaire* which for a time they were willing to support under the premiership of Blum.

“*Quo vadis respublica?*” asked M. Albert Milhaud, that brilliant journalist of the moderate Left, summing up the end of the year 1937. “How are we going to escape from this bog? The Chamber is no longer able to control events. Its majority is torn to bits. Socialists and Communists oppose each other. Radicals and Socialists are equally hostile. The good-will of well-meaning men avails nothing. Practical realities, emotions, doctrines, smash the old party system. The hour approaches when it will be necessary to consult the people of France on their future if one wishes to prevent ‘accident.’ *That hour cannot be kept waiting.*”

There were groups in France at the time of the general strike who wanted these 'accidents' to happen. Their action in promoting that exasperating challenge to public order was against the wishes of the Trade Union leaders, and even their own political leaders of the extreme Left, at least in point of time and tactics. These men who broke off discussions on their claims to higher wages from a municipality already deep in debts and deficits—at the very time when their delegates were talking with the Prime Minister, M. Chautemps—did not want fair play or conciliation. They wanted public disorder, riots, bloodshed, the paralysis of French industry and the collapse of French economy. They wanted revolution according to the methods of Communism. The threat to call the working men to the colours and deal with them as traitors if they disobeyed orders smashed the strike. Briand had used the same method thirty years before in Paris when I had the pleasure of meeting him.

That bug of Communism still bites. In spite of all that has happened in Russia—all those agonies and all that blood—there are still minds even in the intelligence of France who are working always for the terrible delusion that the way to paradise is through the gates of hell. We have such minds in England, even among those who are pleased to call themselves intellectuals.

"We all have the conviction," said M. Paul Faure, self-appointed apostle of Communism in France, "that Capital must be swept away by the Social Revolution!"

The Prime Minister Chautemps—head of a Radical Government—answered him with a grave rebuke.

"In talking like this you make a choice between two methods and two social doctrines. I rejoice to know that the majority of the French people regard these social conflicts as sterile and vicious and want a loyal and sincere collaboration between all sections of society working for the good of the country."

I went among the French people at the end of that year of apprehensions and fears. I went among crowds of them in the Paris Exhibition which thirty million of them had visited in six months or so. They were mostly provincial folk, among whom were many peasants from French villages and farms, in their simple country clothes, nearly all black as usual. They stared gravely at all the exhibits. They whispered to each other in the great hall of the German Palace and in the show-rooms of the Russian buildings with its monstrous statue of Stalin and slogans of Soviet philosophy. I knew these peasant types. I have talked with them in the fields of France. Those middle-aged men who wandered round the Exhibition with their women-folk, tanned by wind and weather, looking at all this show sombrely, with critical appreciation, or a sense of stupefaction at its immensity, were the men whom I had seen as the young soldiers of France, in the trenches of Champagne and along

the roads leading to the Marne where they defended the soil and the soul of France. Twenty years after they were anxious and distressed, and spoke bitter words sometimes, as I heard. Where were the fruits of that victory for which they fought? There was no security for France. There was no peace in Europe. Would their sons march again, as they marched twenty years ago—to where they were mowed down by the scythes of death—all their young comrades—in the northern battlefields? That was their most dreadful fear. They wanted peace above all things, but their politicians and their Press warned them every day that Germany was making ready to attack again. Why couldn't there be peace between the French and Germans? What quarrel was there between them now?

At Verdun the French guardian of the memorial to four hundred thousand dead—all that number in the battle of Verdun—took me on one side and spoke about the Germans who came to visit those old battlefields because their dead lay there too.

"The Germans want peace," he said to me earnestly. "They know that another war would be the end of civilisation. They don't want it. Those who come here tell me so, and I believe it! As for France we older men are all hostile to ideas of war. France is for Peace. Is not this memorial a lesson to us? Do we want to lose more blood? Every intelligent man in France—every woman—is dedicated to peace."

After that affirmation of faith he admitted that there were unintelligent people in France—the politicians, the journalists, some of the younger men. No doubt they would make trouble, he thought!

I wandered round Paris at night. It was very beautiful in the time of the Exhibition because of all the flood-lighting. The Champs Elysées were as light as day with all the fountains like cascades of jewels. In the Place Vendôme the tall column made of Napoleon's guns was like a pillar of white marble newly cut, and exquisite. To me always at night in Paris there come the ghosts of French history, that fierce passionate history of valour, pain, cruelty, genius, beauty, bitterness, and the endless struggle of the mind even unto death for ideas of liberty, art, love and knowledge however good, however evil.

They are still the most intellectual people in the world—though they have been walking along the road to ruin. They are still the most civilised people in the world, being among the last defenders of the mind's freedom.

I dined with a friend in an old restaurant with a reputation for good food and good wine, though one puts one's feet on bare boards and sits on wooden benches.

"How goes it with France?" I asked.

France, said my friend, was not in too good shape. There was the economic crisis. There was the financial crisis. The extremists on both sides were exciting the

pulse of passion. But middle-class France remained solidly in the middle of the road, scornful of both extremes, untouched by the spirit of revolution, desiring only to make both ends meet, with a rather broader margin of comfort and security.

"The five days week does not work very well," said my friend.

"It is idiotic," said my friend's wife, who is a Frenchwoman and highly intelligent. "There are many idiocies in France to-day. We advance towards unpleasant adventures, and on the other side of the frontier the Germans are getting busy. It is all very dangerous, don't you think?"

"It's a dangerous world!" I agreed. "But I don't believe we are going to have another war."

"You are then an optimist?" asked this lady of France, turning to look at me with surprise. I have not, I fear, the face of an optimist.

"The wine here is good," I said.

Since this chapter was written France, under the strong leadership of M. Daladier, has united against increasing menace, and political feuds have been put on one side for national security in the hour of danger. The heroic spirit of the French people has reawakened.

(9)

The Soul of Austria.

"Austria is the last outpost of civilisation in Europe," said a friend of mine who walked with me down from the Kahlenberg—that enchanting hill outside the city of Vienna which presently we could see far away below. It was on a day when there was still an Austrian State.

We walked down a track with woods on one side of us. They still bore their autumn foliage, though it was getting late in the year and the leaves looked like crinkled gold in the bright sunlight of this Austrian scene. The sky was so blue that even "the beautiful blue Danube," which is almost always green!—it lay like a coiled snake in the plain—was, I swear, touched by that divine colour.

"These people once saved Europe from the Turks," said my friend who has lived in Austria for several years and knows and loves the country and its people.

Yes, I remembered that. It was a very lucky escape for Europe who hadn't worried much about that threat almost at the gates of Vienna, in 1683.

We walked further, towards the Leopoldsberg, letting our eyes enjoy the glint and glory of that autumn foliage, still massed upon the branches but thinning as each breath of wind carried away the crinkled leaves.

"If Germany takes Austria," said my friend gloomily, "they will kill its soul."

"I hope that won't happen," I answered earnestly, knowing something of the soul of the Austrian people and loving their music, their art, their manners, their villages and churches, and their restaurants where the orchestras play enchantingly; and Vienna itself, still a fairy-tale in the mind of the world as one sees in the playhouses and the picture palaces. Romance is always at home in Vienna, is it not? Vienna nights! Waltzes in Vienna! Any title with that name lures the queues of romance-hungry folk from mean streets, where life is drab, to the box-office windows.

I had seen the soul of Vienna when romance had fled and there was darkness in its streets at night for lack of fuel to light the lamps; and when through the darkness wandered thin and pallid men and women who were hungry. I had stood in the dark stone forest of St. Stefan's Church when women were on their knees before an old picture of a Mother and Child, "the Madonna of the Hungry Child" faintly illumined by candlelight, praying that some miracle might bring food to a child of theirs, at that time when Vienna was a stricken city after the world war. More than sixty per cent of its children were weak with hunger for lack of milk and fats. But the miracle had happened. Food came to the city—sent by those who had made war against them. The first lamps of charity had been lit in the human heart after four years of murderous war. Rescue came from the "Save the Children" Fund. The League of Nations did something to save the life of Austria, though probably that is forgotten now when the League lies in a state of coma.

The children of Vienna became healthy again. One sees no trace of those bad times in the physique of the young Austrians who were in their babyhood then. Nature is very strong when it gets a chance of life.

The Viennese have a special character in the world. They are more like the Irish than the Irish. They, truly, are "the play-boys of the Western world." For they must have music and they love laughter and they don't take life seriously even when it is serious. At least they hate to take life seriously, though during the last twenty years there have been times in Vienna and in other places in Austria when even laughter fled. Death was just round the corner, or not even as far away as that, but in what had been the living brains of Austrian children and young boys who called themselves men.

There was no laughter in the Goethehaus or the model dwellings out at Floridsdorf, that working-class suburb of Vienna, when I went there in March of 1934 and talked to groups of people in rooms ventilated by shell-holes and by rifle- and machine-gun bullets, after a bombardment by orders of a young sportsman named Prince Starhemberg.

But I remember hours in Vienna when I heard the laughter of young people in the Prater—that eternal circus—and when I dined in little restaurants down the Kärtnerstrasse—that highway of pleasure (for those who can afford it) after business hours. It is quite true that for many of the Viennese life without music is a poor thing. Shop-girls will stint and scrape out of their wages to buy a cheap seat for the Opera. To them music is part of the melody of life.

I was in a railway train on the way to Vienna from Berlin and fell into conversation with a dark-eyed man who told me something about his life. He was very poor, he told me. Sometimes he was anxious even for the nourishment of his wife and child.

Presently he asked me a question which did not seem to have much reference to the subject of our talk.

“Does it please you to hear good music?”

“Always!” I told him.

He could offer me, he said, good music if I cared to visit his apartment the following afternoon.

I called on him at the appointed hour and was introduced to a dark-eyed lady who was his wife, and to two young men who were his friends. The apartment was poorly furnished, except for one piece which was a piano. Other people drifted in. Each one carried an instrument—a violin or 'cello. Someone played the piano. He played the music of Ravel. It raised an argument. The pianist vacated his seat to someone else who wanted to argue with musical demonstration. Presently one of the violinists played, magnificently. The man with the 'cello had something to say in his deeper notes. For two hours or more these people—all strangers to me—talked to each other in music. They laughed with music. They argued with music. They wept with music. I sat listening and watching their faces, and saw how their eyes lighted up now and again by enthusiasm or by some mystical enjoyment of rhythm or tone beyond my range.

Some of these people had tragic faces. They had suffered. They knew the worst of life as well as good moments like this. They had the artistic temperament in which there is always self-inflicted agony even when life is not too hard. They were all Austrian Jews. When I left them the dark-eyed wife who had been my hostess held up a baby like the Infant Jesus by Murillo and I touched its cheek with my lips, remembering with pity the age-long persecution of this race.

The political situation in Vienna had changed since my last visit. The Heimwehr—those Fascist militia commanded by Prince Starhemberg—had been disbanded. Prince Starhemberg himself, that swashbuckling young man of whom I heard strange

stories not to be repeated, had retired surely to one of his castles, giving way to a new Chancellor with the name of Schuschnigg which would have rejoiced the soul of Thackeray.

Dr. Schuschnigg was an able and serious man who concealed an iron hand in a velvet glove, but knew that peace and order in Austria and the safety of its frontiers could only be held precariously from month to month. Underneath the appearance of peace Austria was a cauldron of passion, fear, and political rivalries. The international kaleidoscope had changed its pattern lately and Austrian independence was in greater jeopardy. For the sake of the Berlin-Rome axis Signor Mussolini had abandoned his pledge to protect it from the German embrace. It was known that not a second time would he move Italian troops for that purpose, as they were moved up to the Austrian frontier during the insurrection which caused the murder of Dr. Dollfuss.

Mussolini had been the friend of that little man, the Pocket Dictator as he was called because of his tiny figure. He had expressed the deepest sympathy with Frau Dollfuss and her children whom he had invited to Italy. When he went from Rome to meet Hitler after the announcement of this new alliance, a message was brought to him which, according to the story I heard, put for a moment a sombre look in his eyes.

“Frau Dollfuss,” said the message, “remembers Signor Mussolini’s friendship with her husband and his past kindness to herself and to her fatherless children.”

It was a reminder that Il Duce had changed his political views and his friendships.

Now, I was told, there was a rising tide in favour of union with Germany, and great numbers of young men in Austria were eager to join up with the German Nazis and adopt their methods and ideas. On the other hand Dr. Schuschnigg and his government at the time of my visit were still resisting this movement and arresting Germans who crossed the frontier with masses of propaganda for distribution in Austrian towns and villages. And always in Vienna and other cities there existed an underworld of Social Democracy, embittered, and unreconciled. Thousands of them were put into concentration camps at the time of the bombardment of the tenement houses in 1934. Thousands of them were dismissed from their jobs in the municipality of Vienna and all its public offices.

“What has happened to them now?” I asked a friend of mine in Vienna whose sympathies leaned heavily towards these people.

“Most of them were liberated,” he told me. “Many of them were reinstated. Dr. Schuschnigg declared a truce and tried to win over the workers. But there is still a

lot of espionage and there are many arrests followed by imprisonment without trial. It all goes on!”

Only a day or two previously this friend of mine had been visited by a young man belonging to the old Social Democratic Party who had been imprisoned for a year without any evidence being brought against him. He had been in solitary confinement for a month. He had been questioned repeatedly, and exasperated the secret police by refusing to fall into any of their traps. In his prison were many young Austrians of the Nazi persuasion, who made more trouble than the Social Democrats. There were amusing episodes, ludicrous incidents, but, after all, as this young man said, it is not amusing to have one’s life wasted for a year, or to sit in a cell staring at a blank wall in horrible solitude for thirty days and nights. He had done nothing to deserve this torture apart from his belief in democracy, which is now a crime in his country and others. It is, of course, a dangerous creed!

(10)

The Voices of Vienna.

I had glimpses of these dark, unhappy things in Austrian life when I went about Vienna meeting old friends and making new ones. Outwardly in the streets all was well. The people looked fairly well-to-do and were nicely dressed. The restaurants were well filled. Happy families of children were playing in the public gardens. There were many foreign visitors, including the American legionaries who invaded the city for several days.

But in closed rooms or at quiet tables I heard much talk about the dangers encompassing this country which my friend, with whom I had walked through the autumn woods, had called the last outpost of civilisation in Europe, in danger of having its soul killed by Germany.

I sat at a table at a pleasant dinner party where they were all Austrians. There was a lot of laughter because one of them—a young professor—had great gifts of humour and an actor’s way of dramatising life’s comedy. Among the guests were two elderly men who had served in public offices when Vienna was the capital of a great Empire. One of them, the most distinguished, the most charming, had been much in England, and had known most of our distinguished men before the war. After dinner he took me on one side and spoke seriously.

“We can only watch and wait,” he said. “Austria is in the danger zone of tremendous forces working in this era of history and ideas. I don’t believe much in the influence or power of individual politicians or individual minds. They can do very

little against these deep racial and traditional forces which are on the move. Hitler himself is only a symbol of racial urges. He seems to control, but he is controlled by the moving hand of fate. Germany must expand. Within the German race there is this urge and necessity. These causes of conflict lie much deeper than the words of politicians or the willpower of leaders. They go back into the distant past—into the roots of racial history.”

Another man spoke to me about the world situation and Austria’s place in it.

“From a material point of view,” he said, “some form of union with Germany is forced upon Austria. We must have markets. We must have trade. All these quotas are paralysing. Our commercial agreement with Italy has broken down. In any case the Italian support of Austrian independence was illusory and humiliating. We are, after all, blood relations of the German folk. It is inevitable in my opinion that we must join with them in any adventure which the dark future has in store for Europe. How can we defend ourselves? Perhaps the best we can hope is to keep our special character and gifts in a friendly union with the German race. All the same I am apprehensive. Europe is seething with unrest. History will be made very quickly and perhaps unpleasantly. The pot is beginning to boil again.”

“England and France will defend our independence,” said one of the ladies.

I did not disillusion her. I found it difficult to tell her at that table that England certainly, and probably France, would be desperately reluctant to take military action, plunging, perhaps, the whole of Europe into war, in order to prevent Austrian union with Germany against the will, perhaps, of a majority in Austria, or, at least, a very formidable minority, and at a time when former supporters of Collective Security had scattered into other camps. Public opinion in Great Britain would hesitate, and even refuse, to plunge into that adventure which might be the signal for another world war. France might be inclined to enforce such a separation, believing that the Austrian union with Germany would mean the encirclement of Czechoslovakia, the last ally, as they had been taught to think, of the democratic bloc with France and Russia and Great Britain.

My sympathy went out to these Austrians who had a consciousness of something precious in their people’s character and spirit which would be ironed out by Nazi discipline. They found it hard to work to a timetable. They were sensitive and individualistic. They were artists of life. They had a culture of their own, not so much racial as due to many strains of foreign influence in history. They were once, according to the fairy-tale they have made about themselves, the people of romance and song. Love in Vienna was not quite the same as love in Berlin! Did not all the gilded youth of Europe go to Vienna for their pleasure when the flower-girls on the

Ring threw bouquets into their barouches as they drove with pretty ladies? Was not Vienna the meeting-place of art, elegance, beauty, charm, enchantment? They had lost a lot of that which belongs now to a dead world. They were shabby-genteel. Their aristocracy was poverty-stricken, but some rags of it remained, some memories, some touch of its magic. One cannot kill—or can one?—the soul of a people.

I heard a passionate denunciation of the possibility of union with Germany at a tea-table in Vienna where I sat with pleasant people whom I had known before and was glad to meet again. One of them was a charming lady who had a satirical way of speech, and the gift of laughter, and the piquant face of one of those Austrian women whose portraits still hang in the Hofburg. She had brought out an album of photographs, and among them was a snapshot of Adolf Hitler in his younger days, in Tyrolean costume, with short breeches and jacket.

“He had chubby knees then!” exclaimed the Austrian lady with a little secret laugh. “How gentle he looks, does he not? You would not think he could kill a flea or persecute a Jew—would you?”

Our hostess at the tea-table was a remarkable woman with a handsome face, and in her body and mind are an immense driving energy.

Presently, because of that photograph of the young Hitler, perhaps, she began to talk about the tragedy which would overtake Austria if it were to be under German domination.

“The worst thing in life,” said the pretty lady, “is cruelty. I can pardon everything but cruelty.”

“No!” said the other. “You are wrong. The worst evil of humanity is the destruction of the soul. That is what is happening in Germany. They suppress free intelligence. They are attacking and defeating the old ideals of scholarship, culture, intellectual achievement, enquiry into the meaning and mysteries of life which were the best qualities of the German mind. They do not believe any more in intelligence. They believe in brute instinct, physical strength, blind obedience to dictatorship. What are they doing to the younger mind, put into labour camps where they can be disciplined? They are poisoning the mind of youth, by a false and vicious propaganda. They are teaching these young boys to despise all that is free and divine. They are training them intensively in ideas of intolerance, and cruelty. They are inciting them against Jews—those poor helpless people who cannot defend themselves. They are teaching them to hate Christianity. They are denying all the qualities which belong to the civilised mind. They do not hesitate to teach obscenity to these young minds. I have a filthy book here—an attack on the Jews—written

and illustrated for young readers. It is full of indecent suggestions. It is an obscene book. What then will happen in Austria if these German Nazis take possession of us, and if our own Nazis—those brainless young men—adopt the same system and discipline? We shall be dragooned. There will be no more fine thought in Austria. Our youth will be brutalised. Our soul will be destroyed.”

She spoke like that for what seemed like twenty minutes in a great outpouring of emotion, indignation and intellectual rage.

“Will you not have another little cake?” asked the pretty lady when a deep silence followed this flood of words.

One talked always in Vienna over tables on which there was food and drink, though not often over the tea-cups unless one’s friends were very well to do, because tea in Austria cost over forty shillings a pound. Vienna indeed was a costly city. There were so many duties, so many tariffs, so many quotas, that any imported articles were expensive even for a foreigner with French or English money.

It was over a luncheon table that I had a conversation with two Austrian friends who belong to the old order of things. The husband, now getting on in years, was like a little old English gentleman of the early Victorian period, or perhaps even earlier, with very courtly manners. For had he not been at the Imperial Court of Austria? Had he not held high offices when all the fashion of Europe was centred in Vienna? In the old days he knew England well and had heard the chimes of midnight in Piccadilly and Pall Mall. Even now as he walked about Vienna—after lunch I walked with him—people here and there doffed their hats to him. We walked into the National Library, although it was after hours, and the librarian was delighted to show us that magnificent building in Baroque where some of the greatest treasures of the world in ancient manuscripts and old books are nobly housed.

“Many scholars used to come here to study from all parts of the world,” said my distinguished friend. “Now few of them come. Vienna has lost its ancient glory except perhaps for its reputation in medicine.”

It was at lunch that we talked about the world situation and its bearing upon Austria. He believed in Adolf Hitler and the *Anschluss* with Germany. He had a remarkable theory of history based on biology. “The human body,” he said, as far as I could make out, “is made up of innumerable cells, each one of which has a will, a purpose, a life of its own. A race is an extension of those cells. The individual is like one of the cells, in its purpose and life. The race is a collection of individuals, as the individual is a collection of cells. The groups which form a race may be separated by

artificial divisions but they have a natural affinity. They seek to join each other. There is in them the same life history. It is inevitable therefore that Austria will one day cleave to Germany.”

I talked mostly to his own lady. She thought precisely the opposite on almost everything, and the conversation of this husband and wife seemed to me to symbolise the division of opinion which makes conflict in the mind of Austria itself.

“Adolf Hitler,” she told me, “is not a man any longer. He is a God! That of course is very dangerous to all of us. He is conscious of his own divinity, and every day when he is at Berchtesgaden he stands for an hour on a wooden platform where pilgrims from all parts of Germany gather to see him. When there are three thousand of them they are allowed to go along the road and to gather at the Führer on his platform. They take little bits of soil from the bank as a holy relic. That is where Hitler has arrived. He is a mystic who believes that he is divinely inspired. ‘I walk,’ he said once, ‘with the certainty of a somnambulist.’ He follows a star like other dangerous men before him. But from all one hears he is a man of good character and simple living.”

I tried to be optimistic about the future and told her that in my most earnest belief the peace of Europe depended upon friendly relations between the German and British peoples.

“Then there will be no peace!” she answered. “Your interests are hopelessly divided. Germany wants what you have—your colonies. Her present rulers know that you are becoming weakened and that you cannot fight on all fronts where now your Empire is challenged. You are even scared of Mussolini!”

She was very contemptuous of Signor Mussolini and his Italians.

“He can’t make soldiers out of them,” she said. “And he is in an awful mess in Abyssinia. He has no control of that country. His men daren’t move into many districts where they would be cut to pieces.”

“What is going to happen here?” I asked this Austrian lady who expressed her ideas with a frankness and firmness which I found impressive, though on many points I disagreed with her.

She looked into my eyes with a smile in which there was, I thought, a kind of amusement, because she knew so much and had no more time to tell it.

“It is all written,” she answered. “We are moving very quickly to new conflicts of men and minds. Humanity does not stand still.”

“This has been a delightful conversation,” she told me when we parted.

I had found it rather disturbing.

I had other conversations in Vienna which I found disturbing. For these people

seemed to be waiting for something to happen—something which they could avoid because of tremendous forces moving round them and about them twenty years after their downfall as an Empire, and their dark agony.

They seemed to be waiting for something to happen. It happened in February of 1938 when Dr. Schuschnigg, their Chancellor, was invited to Berchtesgaden by Herr Hitler and had a ten hours' conversation with him, leading to a new pact between Austria and Germany. It was a pact, agreed to under threats, which surrendered the independence of Austria. Austria died as a separate State and as a spiritual heritage.

(11)

The Rising Tide of Fear.

Looking out upon the world as last year began the preachers and the prophets, as well as the politicians, did not conceal their grievous anxieties at the prospect it presented.

“As we look back to the year now closing,” said King George in his broadcast speech to the nation and Empire, “we see over parts of the world the shadows of enmity and fear.”

Twenty years after a world war we were faced by the dreadful truth that civilisation has made no kind of progress, and that we had failed most lamentably to move even one step forward by the light of intelligence. Through fear and folly nations had built against each other a thousand barriers, thwarting the free movement of trade—which would bring prosperity to all. The attempts to establish a reign of law by way of the League had been utterly frustrated. By some extraordinary paradox the average intelligence of men and women, which in some ways has reached higher standards, had failed to exercise any influence upon the march of events which dragged them to the razor-edge of an infernal precipice. Against our wills, against our instincts, we were advancing steadily down the wrong road.

On New Year's Eve I sat up, like millions of others, waiting for the year of fate which was numbered 1938, and as into a house in a quiet English village—so quiet and dark outside—there came through a magic box the sound of clashing bells, my mind was conscious of the frightful aspect of our earthly scene. While men and women were linking arms and singing “Auld Lang Syne” outside St. Paul's Cathedral away in Spain the merciless war between men and women of the same blood went on with new horrors on more ruins. There was no truce in Teruel. Through blinding snow masses of young men were trying to advance under a flail of machine-gun bullets until many lay black and quiet on that white mantle of the earth.

In that country, once renowned for beauty and chivalry, there had been a year of horror. Men had behaved worse than beasts, in cold-blooded cruelty, or the frenzy of hate, or some devilish desire to smash, kill and destroy all that was fine and noble in their land—miracles in stone, every symbol of faith, every decency that had made them civilised. The Red Terror in Spain, inspired by Russians in its methods, has degraded humanity itself by its abominations—the daily murders of prisoners forced to dig their own graves, the soaking in petrol and burning alive of men, women and children, the outrages upon women, the killing with torture of innumerable priests, the filthy cruelties in the prisons. There have been too many witnesses of these things for disbelief, though I for one tried to disbelieve them because I hated to think that men could be so vile in a country which once was civilised. They are not denied even by the Government which has these murderers in its ranks.

“Man comes not from God but from beasts,” said Garcia Olivier, Minister of Justice in the Government of Valencia, “that is why his reactions are those of a beast.”

On the other side there was little mercy, for it became a vendetta of blood and vengeance.

“The brutality of the Roman world into which Christ was born is returning,” says Mr. Arnold Lunn in his book called *Spanish Rehearsal*. “Torture, which was slowly disappearing from a world influenced, but never dominated, by the Christian ethos, is reappearing, and it is no coincidence that this recrudescence of sadism should coincide with outbursts of that Communism which is directed by the only State which has formally adopted atheism as its creed.”

So it was in Spain while the bells were ringing in a new year; and in another country of ancient civilisation there were crowded corpses in its cities, and the stench of death rising from its fields, and millions of people—the Chinese—in flight from an enemy to whom human life is a cheap thing.

Twenty years after. . . . Was there no light in the darkness? Men I know watching the trend of things, knowing many countries of the world, in touch with its leaders, saw little hope ahead.

“I feel in my bones,” said one of them, “that we are walking towards another European war. There are terrible forces moving. Intelligence has lost control. It is powerless against these racial and biological uprisings.”

I sat in a quiet room with five men. One of them wore a crimson coat and lace ruffles. He was a Bishop. The other men were Colonial administrators and Civil Servants.

“How long have we before the next war?” asked the Bishop after much

argument about these things.

“Have you abandoned the hope of peace?” I asked.

He had abandoned the hope of peace as long as all nations refused any measure of disarmament.

“This piling up of armaments,” he said quietly, “must end in war. The strain is too great to hold for long. At the farthest I think it can’t hold for more than ten years.”

“Germany means war,” said a man by my side.

I had ventured to hope that Germany meant peace. In that room there was no one who believed it.

II

The Causes of Passion

The Blind Ogre.

It is disagreeable to look back and hold an enquiry into one's own follies; even more unpleasant to look back and recall dark memories of thwarted hopes, cruelties, greeds, and sins against the light. Our Government and others hate that retrospect. They say: "Let the dead past bury its dead. We are concerned with the present and the future."

But the younger minds of to-day, not old enough to remember those things, want to know how the world came to get into this mess which now we behold. They want to know what was the cause of all this fear, and all this passion in which their own lives are involved. One cannot dodge those questions nor escape that inquest. In any case we cannot make progress towards a better kind of peace, or a better kind of world, unless we put all hypocrisy on one side and stare into the grim face of truth.

It is very grim, that truth of things which happened during the past twenty years.

"Giant Error, darkly grand, grasped the globe with iron hand."

I don't know what that old poet had in his mind when he wrote those words, but they are a good description of the post-war world. Giant Error, monstrous, clumsy, unintelligent, and unreasoning, sprawled across the passage of those years which have led to recent history. Its evil genius touched the minds of men who made the so-called Peace Treaties, though they were by no means devoid of brain, and even inspired—a few of them—by the will to make a decent peace. It built its strongholds in new nations carved out of old empires, who, having attained liberty, denied it to minorities under their rule. It blinded famous economists to the most elementary rules of arithmetic; such as "two and two make four"; "twice nothing is nothing." They became so mad that they broke down the economic structure of civilisation, stopped the flow of trade, impoverished their peoples to the point of starvation, and destroyed the meaning and values of wealth.

Giant Error strode from nation to nation, from victors to vanquished, trampling down intelligence wherever he found it, bludgeoning the idealism of civilised minds wherever it was working, and insisting with a tyrant's will that stupidity, hatred, intolerance, should be enthroned. This blind ogre could not bear men of vision and put out their eyes.

Is this an exaggeration? I do not think so. It is the tragic truth of what happened during the past twenty years which followed the war.

The first great error of the peace-makers—they plunged deep into error—was

when they sat down in the mirrored hall of Versailles without representatives of the powers who were to be parties to it, namely, the ex-enemies. Contrary to all precedent, and to all magnanimity and justice, they were to have a peace imposed upon them without being heard in their own defence and without chance of mitigating its penal clauses by reasonable argument. Advantage was taken of the utter ruin in Germany and of its starvation under a prolonged blockade to force them into signing clauses which afterwards, inexorably, the whole nation would repudiate in their very souls.

The worst of them extorted the confession of "War guilt." It was untrue. Did we not all, in some measure, share the guilt of that great crime by diplomatic blunders, by alliances and secret treaties, by Imperialistic rivalries, and by the folly and wickedness of many minds in high places? In any case now that the kings and captains had departed, what had German peasants and the mothers of German babes, and small shopkeepers and clerks and craftsmen to do with this war guilt? They had known nothing about high politics. Their men had been called to defend the Fatherland and had been killed in great numbers at the command of war-lords far removed from their way of life and death.

It was they, the peasants and the craftsmen, and the mothers of hungry children who were to be punished for what had happened.

It was vicious therefore to put that guilt upon the ex-enemies. It was also a stupidity. Because before the very ink was dry on the peace treaties this clause alone ensured the insecurity of any peace. The German leaders would be despised by the German people, the leaders of their new Republic from whose weakness such confession had been extorted. There would be no consent to the Treaty. And so it happened.

During the time of occupation on the Rhineland I remember that this war guilt sentence was what rankled most deeply in German minds.

"Our defeat and our ruin are bitter enough," I was told by a German professor. "But you have made us pariah dogs by putting that crime upon us, which we do not admit and never will."

The peace-makers—that strange company of statesmen who sat down to make a new world—drew erratic lines on the map of Europe. They were the new frontiers for new nations, cut like a jig-saw puzzle out of old Empires. It was perhaps necessary, or unavoidable, to create these new nations, though they have Balkanised Europe and led to an orgy of national self-consciousness; but some form of Federation with local autonomy would have been a better plan and may be the only final solution of many troubles in south-east Europe. But even if we admit, as we

must, that certain races and groups had to be given full nationality at that time, what was the reason for putting millions of men and women of one race within the frontiers and under the rule of another? Giant Error smudged the map and made a mock of geography.

A slice of the Austrian Tyrol and 230,000 of its German-speaking people were handed over to Italy as a little consolation prize for the loss of the secret Treaty of London, to which President Wilson objected.

Three million Germans in the Sudeten mountains were incorporated in that new conglomerate nation called Czechoslovakia.

To give the new Poland access to the sea the people of East Prussia were divided from their German brethren by the Polish Corridor, as it was called.

Austria—in a state of starvation at the end of the war—was reduced to a small State with the great city of Vienna as the mausoleum of its former empire.

Hungary was chopped to bits and eleven million Hungarians were put under alien rule. Hungary lost 71 per cent of its land and 61 per cent of its folk.

Owing to the tangled distribution of races in Eastern and Central Europe it was of course an impossible task to draw clean lines between them in many places, but the map-makers of the new Europe went mad—surely they must have been stricken by madness, those gentlemen who sprawled on the floor with large-scale maps, scrawling new lines upon them! They created minorities in some cases amounting to a third of the population of the new nations, and these wretched people, unconsulted, had to live under foreign rule, willy-nilly, with a vague promise—never kept—that the League of Nations would remedy any grievances from which they might suffer.

In Poland there are minorities amounting to 31 per cent; in Yugoslavia 12 per cent; in Roumania 18 per cent.

All this was a flagrant violation of President Wilson's pledges that peoples would not be bartered about like chattels, and God alone knows how that man—well-meaning, high-minded, harassed, badgered, and in the end despairing as he was—could have consented to these things.

Old Clemenceau, sitting at the table of Versailles in his black skull cap with his hands in grey gloves, as J. M. Keynes described him, had only two thoughts in his mind: the security of France . . . the punishment of Germany.

David Lloyd George, animated, quick, humorous, with fire in his blue eyes, wished to combine magnanimity with popularity at home—four hundred Conservatives had sent him a telegram demanding ruthlessness—and thought he was doing his best for humanity—always his consoling thought!—but was not successful.

General Smuts, a man of fine intelligence, a lover of liberty and peace, part author of the Covenant of the League, invented the wonderful word “Mandates” by which the British Empire took over the German colonies, Palestine and other countries. Having signed the Treaty he departed with a harsh denunciation of that document. Those whom the gods wish to destroy they first make mad. The gods—or were they devils?—slipped into the Palace of Versailles and touched the minds of these black-coated gentlemen with some strange insanity.

(2)

The Malady of Megalomania.

Their arithmetic went completely mad. Ignoring all advice of men like J. M. Keynes—one of those whom Giant Error forgot to blind—they demanded “Reparations” from Germany, Austria and Hungary which belonged to that peculiar form of madness known as megalomania.

Austria was soon left out of it. A friend of mine named Sir William Goode went to Vienna to collect reparations but found that he had to establish a relief mission. For Austria was starving as I saw, when I went there at that time. Sixty per cent of the children were suffering from rickets. There was no fuel for light or fires. The city of music and gaiety and romance was dark and dismal. There was no tribute to be collected there.

Hungary was down and out after the surgical operation. It was Germany who would have to pay, Germany defeated and ruined would be made to pay all the war costs of the victor nations who had not been economical. In four and a half years of war Great Britain had spent as much of its national wealth as in two and a half centuries. Germany would have to pay all that. France had her devastated regions. Her war debts were immense. Germany would be made to pay them all. Germany would be made to pay for all the damage she had done, for the pensions of wounded soldiers, for all the ruin and all the loss. No one knew the ultimate amount of this bill. It was not specified in the Treaty. Germany would have to go working and paying for years and years, for generations and generations.

One imaginative gentleman—the Finance Minister of France—at a conference in London ventured to assess Germany’s total debt at more than ten thousand million pounds sterling—or five times the total amount of gold in the world. He demanded an annual payment of five hundred and fifty million pounds sterling. It was beyond the available wealth of the world. The country which had the most wealth at that time—the United States—would have found it impossible to pay, even for a few years,

such fantastic sums.

A child might have known, a child in these things like myself, did know, that it was impossible for Germany, stricken by four and a half years of war ending in defeat, to pay such immeasurable tribute, and that in any case Germany could only pay whatever sums might be demanded, even in reason, by selling vast quantities of goods beyond their frontiers, so securing credits in foreign currencies which could be put into the Reparations' account. But people beyond those frontiers did not want those German goods, and refused to admit them, and presently put up tariff walls against them, which grew higher and higher as the years passed.

There were some minds aware of the truth without having to wait long years for illumination. One of them, I remember, dwelt in a palace to which I went in a hired cab with a knock-kneed horse. I wore evening clothes for the occasion, though it was midday, and round my collar was a white tie which I had borrowed from a friendly waiter. Up the steps of the palace I went, nervously fingering this tie, and was saluted by halberdiers and pike-men in flame-coloured garments and steel helmets, until I reached an ante-chamber where an old gentleman in a black robe asked me politely to wait for a few minutes. After those few minutes a door was opened and beyond it stood a very little man in white who beckoned to me to come in. It was Pope Benedict the Fifteenth.

He sat on a crimson-seated chair and bade me sit next to him. He talked about the state of the world and was full of pity and apprehension. He insisted that we were all going to be very poor. People did not realise, he said, that four and a half years of war had exhausted immense reserves of wealth. Most of it had been blown away. People were talking, he said, as if it still existed and they might go on as if nothing had happened, the victors recouping their losses from the vanquished. He raised his hands—very thin, transparent hands—at this illusion.

“We shall all have to steel ourselves against poverty,” he told me.

He had tried to stop the war, but no one had paid any attention to his appeals for a cessation of fratricidal strife. One side had called him pro-German, the other pro-French. Now he wanted to give a message to the world, calling it back to reason and co-operation between nations for the sake of world reconstruction. There must be justice between Labour and Capital, a cessation of hatred and vengeance between victors and vanquished. He spoke very wise words, filled with pity for suffering humanity and pointing the way to a better kind of life after the blood bath of the war. I published his message to the world but no one paid the slightest attention to its wisdom.

There were others I met, not in high places but in cafés, and railway trains, and

clubs, and conference halls who believed that the peace treaties were the “blue prints” for the next war, and that the German people could never pay such reparations. They were men like myself—correspondents of newspapers, reporters of history as it passed, watchers and onlookers of world events. In Rome a few weeks ago I met a little Italian and he reminded me that we knew these things at the time, and that many of us wrote them even if our words were not printed.

“If only we fellows had been allowed to make the peace!” he cried. “We should have done a much better job than those so-called statesmen. After all we knew a little geography! After all we knew a little history! After all we knew people and places, and by our profession we were trained to examine problems from a human common-sense point of view. If our advice had been asked we would have saved many blunders and much tragedy.”

I do not put the intelligence of reporters as high as that! Apart from a small company of truth-tellers the Press sank very low in those post-war years, but by intuition rather than by arithmetic some of us were nearer to truth than statesmen who advanced steadily along the roads which led to ruin, passion and revolution.

(3)

The German Republic.

In Germany the first wild outburst of Red revolution following defeat had been quickly scotched by its own leaders who had the German instinct for law and order. Communist risings and local successes had been smashed by bloody methods in Saxony and elsewhere. The French attempt to instigate a Separatist movement in the Rhineland by bribing the riff-raff and putting up false leaders had failed utterly and strengthened German unity even in despair. The Germans went back to work with an industry which was their only anodyne and contrasted with the unemployment, the jazz mania, the inability to settle down again in England and France.

The Weimar Constitution of the new Republic functioned somehow, but few people believed in it and most of them despised it. Had not its members signed the infamous Peace Treaty which had put the shackles on German life for generations to come? This Republic was but a façade behind which remained the old official classes, the old Junkers and the old soldiers. Among the people there were many who believed at first that President Wilson’s Fourteen Points, upon which Germany had surrendered, would be followed by a peace in which all democracy would co-operate to repair the damage of war and build up prosperity in a new brotherhood across the frontiers. Now these hopeful ones knew that all had been an illusion.

French democracy made no gesture of generosity towards German democrats. British democracy sent them no message of good-will.

Germany went back to work with a kind of demoniacal energy, believing for a time that their genius of industry could break even the bonds which shackled them by beating the world in trade.

“Germany is working,” I was told by our commercial attaché at the Embassy—a charming little man named Colonel Thelwall who now, alas, is dead—“as no other people in the world. Her workers are getting 7d. an hour compared with 1s. 9d. to 2s. 6d. in England, producing better stuff, without limitation of output by Trade Unions. Hugo Stinnes and his big Trusts are organising the greatest industrial machine the world has ever seen.”

The running of the machine depended on two districts from which Germany could get her raw material of coal and iron. One was Upper Silesia which was claimed by the Poles—a claim not then settled by the peace-makers. It had already been seized by the Poles, but the case was to be decided by an Inter-Allied Commission. The other stronghold of German industry was the Ruhr, which the French threatened to seize if Germany failed to pay.

Regarding Upper Silesia I remember a talk with a stout, fair-haired, blue-eyed German whose name, afterwards more famous, was Dr. Stresemann. He was then the leader of the German Popular Party during the government of Dr. Wirth. He sat drinking beer at the table of his club.

“If we lose Upper Silesia, or any considerable part of it,” he said, “we shall be unable to pay any indemnities. Our whole economic position depends on that. There lie our main sources of material for manufacture. If we lose those we are crippled.”

They lost a part of Upper Silesia.

There were other things said by Stresemann at that time which have a bearing upon what has happened since.

He spoke to me about French policy under the leadership of Raymond Poincaré, and his voice trembled with passion for a moment as I noted at the time.

“The instincts of the German people are for peace. Our future is in peace and not in war. We would willingly have made friends with France and worked to repair her ruin.” (Germany had offered to rebuild the devastated areas.) “If her people had been only a little generous, a little courteous after our defeat! But they have done their best, and are doing it, to arouse feelings of enmity and rage.”

At the time he spoke there was a man named Adolf Hitler, not yet known to the world, who was writing a book named *Mein Kampf*. In his mind as he wrote there were feelings of enmity and rage for the actions of France. It was Raymond Poincaré

who created, unwittingly, the future leader of the German Reich. Giant Error was busy at this time.

Among the members and followers of the German Republic there were men who believed that the only way to recovery for Germany was by a "Policy of Fulfilment." Dr. Wirth, the Chancellor, was one of these. Stresemann was another. Rathenau, a Jewish financier and philosopher, was another. I met those men and talked with them. They believed that if they did their best to pay Reparations as far as possible the process of time would bring their enemies to a more reasonable view, and that gradually the scale of payments would be reduced. They were regarded as traitors by their political opponents. Several of them were murdered by young men belonging to secret groups. Their policy broke down when the French entered the Ruhr.

(4)

Why Hitler wrote Mein Kampf.

The German Government had failed to deliver certain supplies of coal and timber and certain amounts of foreign currency demanded under the Reparations' account. The French people, with some exceptional groups, were enraged by the delay in getting the "fruits of victory" which had been promised them by their politicians. "Make them pay!" was the shout of the French masses led by the French newspapers, and echoed more doubtfully in England. . . . The French invaded the Ruhr to seize the German industrial cities like Essen and Elberfeldt with their coal-fields and factories, in lieu of payment. Great Britain, releasing itself from the tyranny of Giant Error for a time, refused to be associated with that adventure, in which they saw no other harvest but hate.

The workers of the Ruhr put up a passive resistance to any kind of labour under French command or French bayonets, and I saw crowds of them idle in the streets of Essen and other towns.

They were grim bodies of men, heroic in spirit but underfed and pallid, and sullen and bitter. They were feeding mostly on cabbage soup and potatoes and bread of poor quality. French officers endeavoured to break their spirit—and finally broke it, but not before a long-drawn contest which gained no victory for France. The mine managers were arrested for refusing to give orders or carrying on their work. Signalmen were arrested and imprisoned for jamming their points on a net of railways which was like a steel cobweb of such intricacy that French engineers could only work a few trains. There was sabotage by young Germans. One of them named

Schlageter was shot for such acts and now is glorified as a national hero.

The German Government subsidised this passive resistance in the Ruhr by paying wages in paper money. But it was money which went bad in the hand. It was the beginning and the cause of inflation, that desperate policy of wiping out Germany's internal and external debts, and saying to the Allies: "You have forced ruin upon us. You will have no reparations unless you lend us the gold to pay them."

By the invasion of the Ruhr German industry was brought to a standstill. German life and trade were paralysed.

It is doubtful whether the policy of inflation was deliberate. The Germans themselves deny that it was organised and carried through by any one brain or group of brains. It was, they say, forced upon them, and no one man would have been ruthless enough to carry through a surgical operation which nearly killed the patient. For a time it brought whole classes down to the direst poverty. Those paper marks were numbered in millions and tens of millions as their purchasing power declined. It cost two million marks for a tramway ride between Bonn and Cologne. It meant that German money was worthless and that Germany had declared her bankruptcy.

One aspect of the inflation period had a terrible aftermath of intolerance and vengeance when the innocent suffered for the guilty. During that time when German money was losing value before the final rush down to nothingness, the Jews of Berlin and other cities speculated in German marks and bought and sold foreign exchanges, and did good business, making money out of this tragedy. Owing to their international relationships they were able to get dollars or pounds sterling, with which they bought up German and Austrian businesses at knock-down prices. It was their *métier*. Their minds worked very quickly at this kind of arithmetic. Thousands of small Jews became speculators in "valuta," getting quick profits, big or small. In this delirium of world finance they kept sharp wits, and took advantage of the madness. They became fierce, eager and excited round the money-changers' offices and outside the banks. This, after all, was their business. They had genius for it. Were they not saving something out of the wreckage? But non-Jewish Germans watched them grimly and did not forget. A man named Hitler watched them, and did not forget. For those small groups of financial vultures preying upon the decay of a nation in agony a whole race has been condemned.

The nerves of the German people at that time were, as I saw, at breaking-point. It took them years to recover from that strain. Wage-earners found that the money they received withered away in value before they could spend it. Men of property were beggared. The whole nation breathed hard, like an animal beaten to its knees. They were enraged and embittered.

“If we go down,” they said, “we will drag Europe with us.”

They looked round for a leader who would take them out of this misery and give them vengeance. He had not yet arrived. . . . Some of them were tempted towards Communism as the only way of escape. In alliance with Russia they might secure liberty and overthrow everything. Some of them formed themselves into secret armies, drilling secretly with sticks, buying stores of arms, keeping alive the *cadres* and traditions of the old Army, plotting to destroy the Weimar constitution upon which they blamed all this misery and humiliation. The French officers in the Ruhr were the recruiting officers of German Nationalism. They were the propagandists of Hitler, whose name they knew not. They did their best, and did it very well, to revive in the whole German nation a longing for some hero who would kill the dragon in whose coils they writhed, and lead the German tribes to new victories.

There were still ten years to wait—ten years of brooding doubt, ten years of growing unemployment, economic stagnation, fierce political passion, secret armings, a fear of revolution, with occasional respites and occasional hopes, and even now and then a false gleam of prosperity and peace.

(5)

The Red Microbe.

A new fear due to an old creed crept into most nations of Europe after the war and poisoned human relationships and was a cause of passion, intolerance and brutality. It made rulers and statesmen afraid of political groups inside their own States and unsure of their own power to resist a social revolution of a most murderous kind. The old system of secret police which had been one of the curses of the Austro-Hungarian Empire flourished again in the countries which had shaken off that somewhat easy and disorderly form of tyranny. There was not a country in Europe, hardly in the world, in which this creed had not made its converts, and from one country came missionaries to convert the masses to its gospel of social warfare and to subsidise the newspapers, printing presses and secret clubs of the converted. The gospel of Karl Marx and Lenin his prophet put a spell upon the imagination of the under-dogs, the down-trodden, the starved or half-starved, the war-embittered men, and all oppressed classes and minorities, among whom, of course, were many Jews.

Communism is a creed which appealed and still appeals to many “intellectuals” who have a disgust for the social injustice, the cruelties and the greeds which flourish under Capitalism. It found good soil and plentiful in those countries where men

looked back upon the war, looked out upon this peace, and hated them both, because after all their sacrifice and all that death they were still miserable, poverty-stricken and in millions hopeless. Unemployment was a post-war plague robbing manhood of a right to work, weakening the arms of men, providing no place in life for young manhood on its very threshold.

Those missionaries from Moscow talked a lot of ideas which seemed very good. Why should not the workers own the means of production? Why should they tolerate the profiteers and the financiers who had made fortunes out of the war and gorged themselves fat on the slaughter of youth? There would be no peace in the world, said these propagandists of Marxism, until the workers of the world united in a common brotherhood across the frontiers and established a Dictatorship of the Proletariat after the class war.

Russia, they said, was the workers' paradise now that the White Armies, subsidised by British Imperialism under the leadership of that reactionary Winston Churchill, had been utterly defeated and wiped out by Trotsky and the Red Army. Kolchak, the butcher, had been executed. Wrangel, the Cossack, had been routed and his ragged regiments had fled. In Russia, they said, they were building a fine new world based upon justice and equality. The great Lenin was making marvellous plans for the happiness of the people in the way of education, prison reform, crèches for children, easy divorce, free amusement and other far-reaching advantages.

The name of Lenin, unknown until the end of the war, became famous from Moscow to China, from China to Peru, from Helsingfors to Houndsditch, though some retired souls had not heard of him. One of them was an assistant in the British Museum Reading Room to whom an enquiry was made by an ardent disciple.

"Yes," said the assistant, "I remember a man of the name of Lenin—a little man with slant eyes and a small beard. He used to come here a good deal and read detective stories mostly. I haven't heard of him for some time."

It is possible that Communism might have captured the world at this time. When the Russians stopped fighting and said: "We do not wish to kill our German brothers and we are sick of this blood bath, we will sign any kind of peace," they adopted a policy which found an echo in many minds even before the war ended.

General Ludendorff admitted in his Memoirs that all the German troops in Russia had been "infected" by its microbe. He could not rely on them when they were brought to France for the last offensive.

It is possible that if the Russians had relied entirely on passive resistance and had taken up the attitude of the early Christians, fighting by faith and not by force, they might have converted the whole world to Communism. But although they refused to

fight Germans they fought each other, and murdered each other, with ferocity untouched with mercy. And their faith was founded on unfaith, a mockery of all religion, a deadly hatred of all its priests and believers and churches and symbols which were identified with their former Czars. They blasphemed the spirit as well as the name of Christ. They revived the methods of torture. All that propaganda about the workers' paradise and the Dictatorship of the Proletariat was a great illusion and a great lie, though even now, after twenty years, the parties of the Left and simple folk in the working-classes and the "little intellectuals" in many cities of the world, still believe, or pretend to believe, that Soviet Russia is a land of liberty and equality, and that Marxism is the only way of salvation.

I saw it in its beginning and found no sign of liberty nor any kind of paradise for the proletariat. I saw only misery in Petrograd and Moscow where wretched remnants of the old bourgeoisie were sweeping snow away in the streets, and living in basement rooms, half-starved and unwashed because there was little food and no soap.

I saw a famine on the Volga where twenty-five million people were waiting for death by hunger, and where four millions died before rescue came from Capitalist countries. I saw small children wandering away hand in hand from villages where their parents lay dead. I saw piles of corpses taken from death trains and flung into heaps. I saw little living skeletons in children's homes where there was no fuel and no warmth. I saw, each morning in Moscow, groups of haggard men being led off to prison by the Red guards. They were not aristocrats, nor the hated bourgeoisie, but Social Democrats and working-class rebels against the Soviet system.

I saw the new bureaucrats and officials and commissars of the Soviet régime well clothed and well booted, even well fed—some of them—while the peasants were thin and gaunt in their rags.

I saw a fine banquet given by Tchicherin to the foreign diplomats in Moscow, among whom were Chinese mandarins and Mongolian chiefs. Wine flowed. There was a smell of baked meats. Mr. Tchicherin was in evening dress with a white shirt-front. Away in Kazan to which I went the "proletariat" was weak with hunger and typhus-stricken.

I saw a parade of the Red Army in the Red Square of Moscow. Trotsky came forth from the Kremlin and made an oration. Radek was there—that flat-faced man with a little fringe of beard round his chin and cheeks, and big eyes behind big glasses. I had had a long talk with him in the Kremlin, where he sat like a spider with the world as his cobweb, its threads reaching out to every country where he had his missionaries of revolution. He was very humorous about it all.

I saw the generals and leaders of Soviet Russia in the time of Lenin, which was drawing to a close because he lay dying from a wound in the head. They were in power then with the Cheka keeping watch on them—that Cheka which dragged men out of their beds for execution if they made one murmur against this new régime; that Cheka which was more powerful even than Lenin who sometimes had a touch of humanity in his cold ruthless brain. The old leaders of the revolution were in power then over a hundred and sixty million people whom they were trying to force into a new social system which was to make them happy or, if not happy, dead. Now those leaders and generals are dead themselves, mostly shot in the back of the head, convicted of atrocious crimes to which they confessed, though their own crimes had been quite different, and certainly not those.

The Russian people toiled in a new servitude under a new tyranny more ruthless when Lenin was followed by Stalin. A new bureaucracy has taken the place of the old official classes of Czarist Russia. They have high pay and many perquisites. They form a new bourgeoisie on the graves of those who had been killed or starved. There is a differentiation in wage according to ability, the experts and foremen being paid as highly as those in Capitalist countries, especially if they are foreign experts.

Russian youth has been made machine-minded. Factories produce machine-made goods which compete in the world markets. Private property is allowed, though not to the peasants who are forced on to collective farms and shot if they cling to their old homesteads, or starved to death, as four million—or was it “only” two million?—were starved to death in the Ukraine because they resisted that form of servitude.

To the mines and timber forests of Northern Russia go trails of heart-broken men torn from their villages for this conscripted labour; as in the old days of the Czars went the long trails of Siberian prisoners.

There are aeroplanes over Russia. There is the whirring of wheels in many factories. It is possible, and I think likely, that there are some millions of Russians who find life good under the Soviet régime. The sun is still in its place; the snows melt; the birds sing; a soft wind blows over the Steppes; there are women to love; there is the laughter of children and the talk of fellow men. In Russia now there are good scientists, keen students, actors, dancers and singers to whom art means more than bread, if they have enough bread for life. The Government does something for the people who submit to their rule. There are free holidays, free entertainments, free schools, and free propaganda, endlessly, to fill them with gratitude for the benevolence of Father Stalin and the splendour of the Soviet system. They are taught the blessings of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat under the discipline of the “Ogpu”

or whatever letters stand for the police, the executioners, and the counter-revolutionary spies. Times have changed, names have changed, but Stalin is Czar and he has many serfs, and there is no liberty of faith or thought. Leningrad is to be a great naval base and fortress. No foreigners will be allowed there. In February last 10,000 political prisoners—in this land of liberty—went for convict labour on this new work.

The truth of all that is hidden or denied by all those who still hanker after Communism. Or else they say: "Russia is different! It is an Oriental country. It had to build up from barbarism. Western Communism would avoid its errors and its failures." But it was this Red nightmare which obsessed the minds of many groups and parties after the war.

In Hungary there was a period of Red rule under Bela Kun, who committed many atrocities before he fled elsewhere, leaving behind many followers who were exterminated like vermin when the Regent Horthy entered with his army of ex-officers.

The lure of Communism reached as far as China where southern provinces went "Red." It reached as far as England where its disciples established Sunday schools to preach the class war. In Oxford and Cambridge groups of undergraduates put busts of Karl Marx—that woolly bearded old bird—on their mantelshelves, formed clubs for revolutionary discussion, and made a hero of that little slant-eyed man who called himself Lenin.

In Spain the soil was ready for the seeds of Marxism because of the ignorance and poverty of its peasants, and the need of reform, and the political passions of all colours which smouldered and burned and flamed in Spanish minds. There were Russian visitors to Spain. They left behind them detailed rules of procedure for a Communist revolution. The priests should be exterminated first, of course. The Church was Enemy Number One. Churches and convents should be the first bonfires. After that the bourgeoisie would be "liquidated" in a Reign of Terror. They knew all about it.

The Red passion reached France. Curiously enough I was actually present at the inauguration of a group of Communists who masked themselves under the name of a literary society in order to avoid police enquiries. It was called "Clarté" and was founded by that French author, Henri Barbusse, whose novel *Le Feu* had given the most realistic picture of modern warfare. But Barbusse was not there for the inauguration. It was left to a young officer, who took the chair and explained the purpose and programme of the new society to an audience crowded into a small room and stifling on a hot August night. Among them were a few French soldiers in

uniform, some young women staring with black eyes out of dead white faces—Russians no doubt—some French mechanics, clerks and students. I listened to the young man on the platform who had a Jewish type of face.

His programme was no more nor less than the Bolshevism of Lenin translated into French. It advocated the abolition of private property, the ruthless destruction of Capitalism, the control by the labouring masses of all the means and machinery of wealth.

“Heritage is a theft,” was one of his axioms.

“The war has broken the mask of things,” he said. “It has brought to light the lies, the old errors, the sophistries, which made the past a long martyrdom of justice. Our present mood is to organise social life according to the Laws of Reason. It is the Intellectuals who must prepare the reign of the spirit over that of material force.”

It was all very plausible and not wholly untrue. But as he talked I saw that it was dangerous stuff, and I had a secret smile at those words about the Laws of Reason, remembering a strange being named Robespierre who in this Paris, not far from where we sat, had raised an altar to the Goddess of Reason during a reign of terror in which many noble heads had fallen, and many frightful things were done, in the name of Reason and the name of Liberty.

In French factories and mines and industrial cities there were many groups of Communists in touch with Moscow trying to overthrow every bourgeois government, giving trouble to the police now and then, but not making much headway with a people—the French peasant, shopkeeper, *rentier*—who very much disliked the idea of having to share their property with others and had no use at all for the axiom: “Heritage is theft.”

The people of France, apart from these extremists of the Left, were stolidly for the bourgeois system of the French Republic and the rights of property. Did not each one of them have something in the stocking? Even the Communists were not quite so red as they made out. Some of them owned their own little houses in the working-class districts. “We are reasonable in our Communism,” they said to a friend of mine who jibed at them as Capitalists, being a Russian aristocrat who now drove a taxicab.

The Red microbe bit even Italian minds. In Rome before the coming of the Fascists I saw the name of Lenin scrawled on ancient walls.

In a hotel frequented by English tourists the hall porter, to whom I gave some letters to stamp, banged his fist on each one after licking it and said: “Sporco!” which means dirty. He was insulting the head of the King.

There were lightning strikes in many cities and factories. I was stranded in Venice

and other towns because somewhere down the railway line the signalmen or the engine-drivers had struck for higher wages and less work. Industry was crippled. Trade was strangled until the crisis was reached when the workmen seized many factories, declared themselves masters of the works and machines, and defied a weak Government to turn them out.

This threat of social revolution was one cause of passion and the cause of cruelty, repression, reaction and fear all over the world. Governments in newly fashioned nations based upon the rights and wrongs of property—not hesitating to steal it from their minorities under the name of land reform or co-ordination of social services—were afraid of this Red stuff in the brains of their citizens. They were determined to stamp it out, if necessary in blood and mud. The secret police swarmed everywhere in Central and Eastern Europe. Men and women of Liberal ideas were put into the black books and the same lists as men with murder in their minds. Out of Communism sprang Fascism.

(6)

The Rise of Fascism.

It was Benito Mussolini who led and developed that new adventure in social and political life which has had many imitators, and is now, for a time, winning all along the line against the remaining democracies.

He had started as an extreme democrat. He had been flung into prison before the war for revolutionary work. He graduated as a journalist on the extreme Left. For a time he was on the staff of *Avanti*, which held those views.

The war made a soldier of him. In the trenches he fought gallantly and I have a photograph of him at that time looking very handsome, very thin and worn under the cock's feathers of the Bersaglieri. After the war he returned to journalism, found that he had the gift of oratory, and organised bands of young men for "direct action" against a Liberal government which he despised with bitter contempt.

He was still on the Left. He took the side of the workers against the Capitalists. He defended their claim to seize the factories, until something changed him. It was a quick change which happened to him. It almost happened overnight when he was in a train on the way to Rome. He had called for the "March on Rome" by his Blackshirt boys. The Government was undecided what to do about this mass of young men converging on Rome by trains and lorries and motorcycles and push-bikes. Shoot them down? Risk a bloody revolution and their own throats?

The King summoned Mussolini to power.

He swung away from the extreme Left though not as far as the extreme Right. He had other ideas. He had a vision of a Fascist State. It had been developing, no doubt, for some time in his imagination. But it seemed to spring out of his brain like forked lightning. The whole nation must be disciplined. Communism must be killed. There must be order, under his leadership, factories must work again. There must be efficiency, obedience to command. It would be his command. He would control everything. He would control Capital and prevent it from using Labour as its slave. He would see that Labour had its rights, though not much liberty. There had been too much talk about liberty, he thought. "Liberty was a stinking corpse," he said. The Liberals had prattled it to death and nearly killed their country. Instead of liberty there would be Service. Every citizen would be disciplined. Those who refused this new order of things would be knocked about by his Blackshirts. The old political parties must go. There was no room for party strife in Italy. The talking shop must be shut up. They had talked themselves, he thought, into a coma of futility. There would be one leader—Benito Mussolini, *Il Duce*. He would write the laws. The nation would obey. It would be a Totalitarian State, working, serving, thinking, as one living organism for one supreme purpose—the renaissance of Italy, the power of Italy, the glory of Italy, under a new Cæsar, whose name would be Benito Mussolini.

And as he thought these things he made them happen, for there was something in him beyond verbiage, theory, rhetoric. There was genius in him. He had courage, ruthlessness, brutality, when they were needed. But he had also a far-reaching subtlety of mind allied with a sense of reality and the practical administration of affairs. Physically strong, he worked with untiring energy and demanded the same endurance from those who served him. With a journalistic gift he wrote the outline of his new constitution and expounded it in words slashed on to his writing-block. With a gift of oratory—dramatic, violent, dynamic—he made speeches which were like raw meat to his Blackshirts.

He gave them good hunting. They hunted members of the old Liberal and Democratic parties out of their houses and hiding-places, out of their very beds where they slept with their wives, and bludgeoned them and poured castor oil down their throats, and flung their furniture into the streets. They hunted out all the Communists—once comrades of Benito Mussolini—or Christian Socialists. It was the reign of the club, not without casualties on the side of the Blackshirts, not without fierce fighting in many cities, which lasted intermittently for four years. Then Mussolini called back his pack of hounds. The hunting was over. It was time for peace, discipline and reconstruction. Any Blackshirt who disobeyed this order would find himself booted.

Mussolini's jaw which had stuck out beyond natural limits, receded to a normal position. His blazing eyes, in which raged Jove's thunderbolts, became mild, and at times humorous, for he has a sense of humour. He was *Il Duce*—the new Cæsar. He was now sure of himself, sure of his power, sure of the loyalty of Italian youth, and he could afford to smile, and pat little girls on the head, and put his hand like a father on the shoulders of young boys, and laugh good-naturedly in crowds.

He was trying to put steel into the Italian character, rather soft in the south, rather lazy under the sun. Every small boy had to join the "Balilla" and learn the elements of military drill. Every schoolboy was drilled between his lessons and instructed in the duty of service to the State, the glory of dying for Italy.

"War is the supreme task of manhood," said Mussolini. "These pacifists are cowards. What more noble than a soldier's death on the field of battle?"

Somewhere, always, at the back of his mind was the thought of conquest when he would call Italian youth to fight. The old Roman Empire had covered the known world. Italy must have a colonial Empire. It could not be without fighting. One day. . . .

He had kept the King on his throne. He did no harm. *Il Duce* ruled. He made friends with the Church. Why antagonise this powerful organisation? It taught obedience and loyalty to all constituted authority. It upheld the ideal of marriage and other virtues needed to make a great nation. Mussolini called upon the women of Italy to have more babies. Later on they would be needed on many battlefields.

No one can deny Mussolini's success in making a disciplined nation, teaching the Italian people efficiency as far as their character permits, and giving them a new sense of pride and purpose. From a third-class power he has raised Italy to a first-class power. He has made Italian youth healthy and sports-loving. In many ways he has made them happy—by cheap excursions to any part of Italy, by sending masses of children to the sea-coasts for their holidays, by many parades in which they are proud to march with their flags. *Giovanezza!* It is the era of youth. One sees everywhere in Italy the spirit of a people proud of their ancient history and conscious of its meaning to them in modern life. They have no liberty as it is known in democratic countries, but they do not seem to yearn for it. They cannot abuse their Government. They have no influence to change a law which they dislike, or to argue against taxation which bears down too heavily upon their business or home. The Press is under the dictatorship of *Il Duce*.

"Art is dead in Italy," I was told by an Italian friend. "There is no drama any more. Imagination is in fetters."

But the people do not look oppressed. They look, I am bound to say, high-

spirited, though here and there are mothers who weep for their sons in Abyssinia and in Spain and, here and there, furtive hands have written dangerous words on whitewashed walls: "Down with Mussolini." The financial state of Italy is desperate, say our economists. But they said so before the war in Abyssinia which somehow was fought and won—was it won?—by some mysterious means which defy the old laws of arithmetic.

(7)

The Lure of Fascism.

Fascism in one form or another is greatly tempting to many minds and especially to those afraid of Communism, or afraid of Liberalism which has nothing to do with Communism and is in retreat almost everywhere. It is a standing temptation to rulers who find democratic institutions disorderly, undisciplined, and annoying, because of their right of criticism and delay. It is a system which appeals very strongly to people and especially to young men of the middle classes or the dwindling remnants of aristocracies—instinctively intolerant of ideas with which they disagree. The modern mind has lost the old tradition belonging to nineteenth-century Liberalism.

Why be tolerant to evil? they ask, not without some reason. Why be tolerant to stupidity, decadence, weakness, inefficiency, disloyalty, the filthy nonsense of half-baked minds, the hypocrisy of professional politics, the corruption of professional politicians, the sham and illusion of democracy itself which after all does not exist, and never has existed, and should not be allowed to exist, they think, because it is the rule of the lowest common denominator, the counting of the greatest number of half-wits? Why be tolerant to Jews? Why be tolerant to Reds? Why be tolerant to anybody who is not prepared to wear the right colour of shirt and salute the right kind of flag. To hell with tolerance!

The first article of the Fascist faith is intolerance. And the second article of the Fascist faith is that youth is more important than old age because it is not hostile to new ideas and can be converted to new loyalties. It is for youth to make the Brave New World. It is for youth—Fascist youth, fit and splendid and high-spirited—to push out the old maunderers, the old gabblers, the old compromisers, and to take charge of life.

Those are good words in the ears of healthy young men full of self-confidence and self-conceit, eager to show their mettle. Given a leader, the right coloured shirt, and plenty of machine-guns, and the power is theirs. All the rebels, eccentrics, faddists, theorists and little "intellectuals" go down before the Fascist battalions. Is

not that how the world goes?

Democracy is finding it hard to answer that challenge. It is fighting a rearguard action in Europe because some of the charges brought against democracy are true, or not wholly false. It is less efficient than Fascism. It is disorderly and undisciplined. The statesmen of democracy have to compromise, speak down to the crowd, make pledges they dislike or disbelieve, temporise or delay perhaps in matters of vital importance, because public opinion is not ready. They must listen patiently while political opponents expound weak or dangerous doctrines, fumble and hesitate in their direction of affairs because the Opposition, or, as in France, political groups, are ready to kill them by a false slogan or an adverse vote, designed, not for the country's good, but for their own power. They have some right to say that democracy is an illusion, for public opinion is manipulated by a lying Press or by false propaganda. The peoples of democratic nations do not rule themselves as much as they are made to believe. Coteries, groups, wire-pullers, see to that. They can be hoodwinked into war by a fortnight's preparation. They can be stirred to any kind of passion by expert handling. The Press of democracy is only as free as its advertisers, its proprietors, its political interests, allow it to be. It is subject to a secret censorship. It has developed a genius for suppression. All these things are true. They are the handicaps of democracy. They are its limitations and its weaknesses.

On the other hand the Fascist States have a clean-cut power which makes for rapidity of action, instant response by a whole nation to a single command. That gives them a force which at this present time of world history is formidable.

Unless democracy decides to be more efficient, and to work for unity of discipline rather than diversity of parties and opinions, it may not be able to stand up against the Totalitarian States in which, like termites, all citizens have their allotted functions, duty and obedience.

(8)

The Oppression of Minorities.

One cause of passion, always smouldering, has been the position and treatment of the "Minorities" which had been put within other peoples' frontiers by the map-makers of the new Europe.

They were supposed to be, and indeed are, under the protection of the League of Nations, but time and time again their petitions of grievance were ruled out and nothing was done to ensure that they were having fair play, with equal rights of

citizenship with the Majorities under whose rule they were placed, owing to the opposition of the powers concerned.

This was contrary not only to the purpose of the League but to precedents set up and acted upon in the nineteenth-century by European statesmen, and especially by Great Britain. Special treaties, for instance, were made with the Turkish Empire for the protection of Christian communities, and similar arrangements were made with other non-Christian States. Any violation of these rules was regarded as just ground for foreign intervention or forcible protest.

As Professor Smith of the University of London pointed out in a broadcast address: "In our own day this principle has been abandoned and no other principle has been put in its place. We no longer insist that States should conform to any common standard of justice, religious toleration, and internal government. Whatever atrocities may be committed in foreign countries we say they are no concern of ours. Conduct which in the nineteenth-century would have placed a government outside the pale of civilised society is now deemed to be no obstacle to diplomatic friendship. In our own day we have witnessed a tremendous religious persecution, perhaps the greatest ever known in the history of the world, but this has not debarred us from inviting the government responsible for the persecution to join the League of Nations, with the special honour of a seat upon the Council." That country, of course, is Russia.

Hardly had the treaties been signed than the governments responsible for the minorities under their rule began to make their lives as intolerable as possible. Italy, not ungenerous in many ways, italianised the Austrians beyond the Brenner, italianised their names, their schools, their towns. Austrian youth was conscripted in the Italian Army.

That was nothing compared with the treatment of Hungarians, Austrians, and other minorities in Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia and Roumania. In Czechoslovakia the Hungarian universities, schools and colleges were closed or "Czechised," Hungarian children were prevented from learning their own language. Hungarians of all classes—professors, doctors, lawyers and business men—who had been all their lives in those localities were deprived of citizenship on technical reasons and expelled.

The Czechs strengthened their claims to Hungarian villages by a system of colonisation and sent subsidised groups of their own people to occupy these places, providing them with houses, horses and seed, whereas the Hungarians were poverty-stricken and unaided.

Roumania produced a scheme of "Land Reform" which enabled them to seize hundreds of Hungarian Church properties in Transylvania. Wholesale bribery and

corruption of Roumanian officials caused the transference of Hungarian farms to Roumanian farmers.

The Jugoslavs adopted the same policy as the Roumanians, in seizing Hungarian churches and depriving them of income by taking their land.

Those injustices had a double effect in breeding passion, fear and hatred. The governments responsible for these acts became afraid of the discontent it caused within their own frontiers and had to suppress it cruelly whenever it showed its head lest it should develop into insurrection and revolt. No Liberal régime could flourish in such an atmosphere. But it also caused passionate emotion in the countries from whom these minorities had been taken.

Hungary, most mutilated, most impoverished, looked across her restricted frontiers with rage, anguish and vows of vengeance. In Budapesth I heard all that and almost felt the flame of it. In every Hungarian restaurant, tramcar, café, reading-room or shop there hung a card on which was printed the map of the new Hungary with its former lands coloured black. Underneath was written a question:

Can it always remain like this?

And the answer beneath:

“No, No, Never!”

This problem of the minorities prevented any reasonable arrangement in Europe or any intelligent co-operation, year after year. Hungary refused to enter into trade agreements with Czechoslovakia or Jugoslavia until there should be a revision of frontiers stolidly refused. Trade barriers, quotas, financial restrictions caused on one side by national self-consciousness and on the other by a sense of burning injustice created poverty and unemployment.

Reason had abdicated. The old links of European civilisation and commerce had been broken. The League of Nations which had been established to promote the ideals of international justice became a mockery in the minds of those whose grievances were shelved and who saw that their hopes of Treaty revision were frustrated by a Council which used the League as an instrument for maintaining the *status quo*.

(9)

In Search of Peace.

I went in search of peace and could not find it. During those years there was

everywhere a sense of foreboding, everywhere political crises, financial distress, economic stagnation, unemployment, and—among some peoples—despair. Armies, national or private, were marching about. Civil war was threatened or crushed.

A few years after the war I stood one day by a lamp in Vienna watching the march past of the *Heimwehr*—a strong battalion of young men wearing the sign of the swastika on their sleeves. They had slogans of hate against Poincaré, the Jews, the Communists, the Social Democrats, and others. They were out to make trouble, while Austria could only be kept going by loans from the League. They made trouble ten years later when, under their leader Prince Starhemberg, they bombarded the workmen's dwellings on the outer Ring, killed boys of the *Scühtzbund*—the armed force of the Social Democracy—and put thousands of working men into concentration camps.

War itself flamed out in Asia Minor, to which I went. The Turkish leader, named Mustapha Kemal Pasha, raised the Crescent and smashed Greek lines beyond Smyrna. It was in defiance of the great powers who had given Greece under that old spell-binder Venizelos a greater Empire than it could hold. Smyrna went up in flames. Many Greeks and Armenians were massacred. Away at Chanak, where British and French troops held the lines, the Turks threatened Constantinople, then under international control, until one day the French troops, under orders from Paris, left their trenches and departed, jeered at by our "Tommies."

England was very near war again. Lloyd George tried to raise the fiery cross for the rescue of the Greeks but it fell like a damp squib because the Dominions refused to send a man, and public opinion in Great Britain was dead against another war after all the ruin and bloodshed of the last.

It was a violent breach in the treaties imposed upon the defeated nations. It was a challenge to the great powers who had drawn up the new map of Europe. It was a sign in the heavens seen by other nations' leaders. So those peace treaties, they thought, were not invulnerable. They could be smashed by force one day.

The defeat of the Greeks was followed by one of the most tragic and ruthless episodes in the history of mankind; but it caused little horror and little pity because the mind of the world had been stunned by overemotion and overstrain and could feel no more. It was the "Exchange of Populations" which happened in 1923 when nearly a million and a half Greeks and Bulgarians were forced to leave their homes in Turkish territory.

Six hundred and fifteen thousand Greek townsfolk from Smyrna, Constantinople, Adrianople and other cities, and five hundred and fifty thousand peasants and farmers invaded the mainland of Greece where there was no shelter for

them and none of the decent necessities of life. I saw their huddled camps round Athens, at Phaleron and the Piræus. The people in them were of the old Greek stock. Their ancestors, three thousand years back, had dwelt in Ionia which is now Turkish Asia Minor. Out of their blood and genius, as I wrote at the time, had come the fine flower of civilisation in the dawn of history. Now these people of great ancestry were beggared, hungry, homeless and diseased.

Rescue came to them from the League of Nations—one of its good deeds. The League raised an international loan which was well administered by a commission under its authority. And as a proof that all pity had not departed and that the lamp of charity still shone in a cruel world the Red Cross and the “Save the Children” Fund were greatly helpful. The Greeks themselves co-operated with energy and zeal, and gifts of organisation which deserved the admiration of the world.

The refugees have done well, but the tragedy of these uprooted folk will never be wiped out. Many of their children died.

But Greece had no internal peace for any length of time. Military and political cliques struggled for power, executing or imprisoning their rivals as one side or the other took the upper hand. In August 1936 General Metaxas, a plump little man with horn-rimmed spectacles, established a form of dictatorship which in January of last year he converted into an iron despotism.

“I am pitiless,” he told his followers.

“While the people go about their business, quietly forgetting the past—full as it is of insurrections and hatreds—the old parties refuse to let bygones be bygones. Recently they have allied themselves with gangsters and criminals. My régime enters into a new period—a period of severity without pity against any people who try to disturb the peace of the people in any way whatever.”

Greece went Fascist!

Europe had a chance of recovery. If during those twenty years following the war there had been less political passion due to the intoxication of nationalism, the fear of Communism and the intolerance of Fascism—civilisation might have gone forward to a new era of prosperity after its fearful lesson of the war years. Nature was extraordinarily kind in healing the wounds. The industry of man dug in the trenches, repaired the ruins and made good harvest-fields on old battle-grounds.

There were no arithmeticians who could induce the statesmen to believe that a row of noughts in banking ledgers did not represent wealth. There were no economists who could persuade the bankers and financiers that vast loans to impoverished nations could never be paid back unless those nations paid in goods and services—unwanted and refused by their creditors who raised tariff walls to keep them out. All these people who pretended to know the meaning of money revealed a stark ignorance of its function and put their simple faith in the Ju-Ju of gold.

In plain fact the financial structure of civilisation broke down under the burden of war and post-war debts. The simple arithmetical law that two and two make four was forgotten or ignored by many of those who controlled international finance. What the Pope had said to me in the Vatican was true. “We have exhausted the reserves of wealth. We must steel ourselves to poverty.” But many nations acted as though new wealth could be created by the printing press, and as though real wealth could be transferred from one country to another in bars of gold which went deep into their vaults and there remained.

The sums involved in this world finance were too vast for ordinary reason to grasp. Great Britain had lent £2,000,000,000 to her allies during the war, and borrowed £1,000,000,000 from the United States. The British estimates of costs against Germany were £1,450,000,000, which, to say the least of it, was a fantastic sum.

None of these figures could be realised in “hard cash” at any time. They represented credits for the purchase of supplies for the war. When Great Britain cancelled by a stroke of the pen £1,000,000,000 of these debts to the Allies in 1923 it was a magnanimous gesture—but it was also common sense. The City of London knew that their loans could only be paid back by enormous importations of foreign goods, creating other credits which would wipe them out and at the same time wreck British trade and industry.

They were wiped out. But in 1923 Mr. Baldwin made an arrangement in regard to the American debt. It was not favourable to Great Britain. Other countries, like France and Italy, in debt also to the United States, obtained far easier terms, cutting down their obligations to half. Mr. Baldwin, now Lord Baldwin for other kinds of services, pledged his country to pay in principal and interest the sum of £2,282,000,000 for a debt of somewhat less than £1,000,000,000—a case of international money-lending, which in the old days would have been called by the unpleasant name of usury.

But things happened in the world to upset all the credits and all the debits, and to

cause great misery among the humble folk of the earth who were the victims of this mad arithmetic.

While gold went for sea voyages, and the printing presses were busy with new note issues, food and goods—the only real wealth of man—failed to pass the international barriers. Mr. van Zeeland argues in his recent Report after an inquiry into the possibility of obtaining a general reduction of quotas and other obstacles to international trade, that these barriers were not due to human wickedness, vindictiveness or greed. They were forced, he said, upon many countries by their need of self-protection at a time when the world system of finance had broken down. That, no doubt, is partly true, but my own belief is—I dare to say—that wickedness crept in. Inflamed national consciousness and bitter political hatreds were at the bottom of it all.

Be that as it may, the whole financial structure of the world collapsed. It slithered into a bottomless pit which swallowed up the life-savings of the thrifty and revealed the illusion of these dreams of fairy gold which had seemed like real wealth to those who had counted it in pass-books.

Foreign currencies were debased. The minds of statesmen in charge of national exchequers lurched between two mysterious theories called “Inflation” and “Deflation,” one of which created a tidal wave of unemployment and the other a whirlwind of paper-money which raised prices higher than wages could catch up with them, thus reducing the purchasing power of peoples, restricting trade to lower levels, and driving masses of working folk into misery and undernourishment.

Things had looked better for a time before this crash. With American co-operation and leadership German reparations had been scaled down to more reasonable figures by the Dawes plan. Germany was asked to pay no more than might be within her practical possibility, though still heavily burdened. It seemed the beginning of sanity—but it was the beginning of a new madness.

Strangely enough the madness of megalomania—that most dangerous malady of the mind—touched a people who had the highest reputation for being level-headed. They dwelt in the United States.

They had been until the war a debtor nation. Now after the war they became a creditor nation. All the wealth in the world seemed to be flowing their way. Every ship which sailed westward bore in its hold solid bars of gold, for the payment of interest on debt. Surely that was wealth, they thought! Was not gold good? Even if it went into dark vaults was it not treasure? It occurred to them quite properly that as a creditor nation they ought to enter into the fields of foreign loans, upon which Great Britain had built up so much wealth in past history. They were rash in this adventure.

They became eager to give loans to any country which would take them. Their agents—smart young men pleased to have a European holiday and to drink cocktails put on their expense accounts in all the bars of all the capitals—pressed loans upon foreign governments.

“We have the money. You need it!” they said with amiable generosity. “Please to sign the dotted line.”

South American States, Central European States, were very pleased to sign the dotted line. With these loans on their books they built stadiums, swimming-baths, fine new banks; or they bought nice new machine-guns and glistening rifles. They made roads over mountains. They felt very rich—for a time—although manufacturers were not selling their goods to other countries and farmers could not find markets for their produce. It was a jazz dance—the Dollar Dance—on the edge of a precipice.

There was one stupendous miscalculation. The bankers of the United States, and to a lesser extent Great Britain, invested their clients’ money in bad securities, for these European peoples could only pay the interest on the loans by increased trade and foreign exports. But trade was decreasing and the Government of the United States did not help it much because they put high tariffs against the goods of their debtors, so making it very certain that they could never pay back either principal or interest on American loans. Great Britain, once the great money-lender of the world, had been the centre of a Free Trade system which no longer existed. This condition of success escaped the attention of American financiers. It was unknown to the American people, who had a sublime optimism in their own prosperity. All wealth was flowing their way, they thought. Wall Street was having a glorious time. Shares were rising and rocketing to great heights. Everything was going up by leaps and bounds. Little people were buying shares “on margin.” They made dazzling profits on paper which they reinvested to make more. It was a great game! There was no reason, they thought, why it should ever stop. Their leading men told them that the sky was the limit of American prosperity.

Then came the crash. It was precipitated by some of the “big men” who saw that this delirium had gone too far and were afraid. It involved millions of small people. In October of 1929—a black date in history for all the world—there was that panic in Wall Street when all shares were flung on to the market. It was followed by another when all the dream of fairy gold faded out and left a grim reality which was very tragic.

Over-speculation had been the primary cause of the collapse in Wall Street. More grim and more lasting was the revelation that the American bankers had their safes stuffed with those bad securities and the foreign loans.

The actual signal for general collapse in Europe did not happen until the summer of 1931, when the Credit-Anstalt in Austria—their central bank—was declared insolvent. Like a house of cards blown by a boy tired of playing, the financial structure of world credit fell down. There was a run on the German banks, heavily involved in short-term loans which could not be repaid at call. In the United States thousands of small banks put up their shutters. President Hoover declared a moratorium to all war debts and reparations lasting for a year.

In Europe the panic swept round like a gale until it reached a country which until then had seemed invulnerable because of its traditional security, its reserves of credit, its rock-like stability. That country was England.

England had also made long-term and short-term loans to Germany and other countries which now were “frozen.” French investors, very uncertain of their own security, before and after a devaluation of the franc, had put their money into English banks and now, at a whisper of something wrong in England, withdrew their deposits. There was a constant drain of gold to France and the United States. The old lady of Threadneedle Street was like Mother Hubbard who went to the cupboard and found it bare.

The internal finance of Great Britain was not good. The Labour Party was borrowing from the Treasury £100,000,000 a year to pay for the “dole” of unemployment—that solid mass of human misery.

England went off the gold standard.

That was a great shock to people’s minds in many countries.

“Then it is the end of all things!” they cried. “If England crashes then Europe goes down.”

England did not crash. But it had a most unpleasant time when it adopted a policy of “deflation” after a policy of “inflation,” lowering wages, cutting down salaries, raising taxation, reducing production, increasing unemployment.

Fortunately for England many other countries went off the gold standard and adopted the English value of the pound. It saved a steep rise in prices. It enabled the British Empire to go on trading with treasury notes.

Germany, under that old wizard Dr. Schacht, had abolished the worthless paper-money which had driven the nation almost mad, and, by repudiating all debts—or most of them—established a new order of credit based on faith and industry. Nations shut themselves up in their own frontiers and tried to carry on by taking in each others’ washing which, after all, is the old way of life and a sound and simple system, though not making for great prosperity or international trade on a big scale.

Gradually panic departed, gradually there were trade revivals, some restoration

of confidence alternating with depressions and slumps, and weakness in foreign exchanges, and devaluation of foreign currencies.

Is all this boring? Yes, rather I think. But it is necessary to go back to it because it was this financial history which was one cause of that passion, that political unrest, that fear of Communism answered by Fascist revolution, which have led to the present state of the new world, and all our dangers.

For that mad arithmetic, as I have called it, had tragic results in human misery, not yet departed.

It recruited vast armies of unemployed men, becoming bitter, angry and demoralised for lack of work and wages. The wheels of industry were slowed down because mass production is useless unless there is mass consumption. Prices of raw material fell so low in some countries that they could not pay the wages of the producers—the farming folk. Food was burnt, or thrown into the sea, because it could find no markets, though in some countries people were starving.

That kind of thing does not make for international peace. It forced many countries to adopt a rigid form of economic nationalism in order to keep themselves alive, and out of that sprang the Dictators and the Totalitarian States.

Dictatorship and some kind of National Socialism, or Communism, or Fascism, was almost inevitable because it was only by an ant-like discipline, in which every citizen was conscripted for national service on a low scale of pay, that the nations could keep going.

From that other things followed—dangerous things. Rearmament followed partly for the defence of these enclosed territories, partly because rearmament is the easiest way of reducing unemployment, circulating money in the way of wages, and raising purchasing power within the nation. It keeps people busy—whatever the consequences. It uses up steel, timber and other materials. It provides a temporary illusion of prosperity.

The economic history of the world during the past years leads directly to the break-down of international law which now has happened, by encouraging and creating that economic nationalism which is the antithesis of international co-operation. It has aroused forces of passion and desperate purpose in Japan and other countries—forces not to be controlled by the hopes and dreams of the idealists. The League of Nations in which those hopes were centred has failed to establish international law or to produce any effective co-operation among the nations.

That, twenty years after the World War of 1914 to 1918, is how we stand, and the prospect is not pleasing.

III

The Stricken League

The Mirage of Hope.

The League of Nations lies stricken in the big white Palace on the Lake of Geneva, which is now a mausoleum of lost hopes.

It is not dead and shows unmistakable signs of life now and then. Distinguished doctors—Dr. Eden and Dr. Delbos—came to feel the pulse of the patient and issue reassuring bulletins. But like a mediæval king, once powerful and flattered by the lip-service of courtiers and now lying in mortal agony, it is deserted by many who swore allegiance to it, mocked at by its enemies, laughed at by the wits, and forgotten by the crowd who thronged its corridors. There is but little faith in its recovery.

From the beginning it was hated by certain types of mind in this country. Now that it is in a bad way they say: "We told you so!" Even in its early stages when it was trying to establish a new reign of law in a jungle world our Tories tried to destroy its influence and to undermine the faith of those who believed in it. Every time there was a crisis, and there was hardly ever a time without a crisis, they reported gleefully and ghoulishly: "The League is dead." It was reported dead so many times that the repetition became unconvincing.

Conservative newspapers in this country complained of the great expense attached to membership of the League, though at the same time they advocated the building of more and bigger battleships which would cost monstrously more money. They did not believe in conciliation and arbitration, and law and justice between nations. They believed only in the "sovereign right" of every nation to make a beast of itself, to assert its own selfish interests, to stamp upon the face of its enemies, and to have and to hold what it had gained by force or by fraud.

That was the view held by many traditional minds in Council Chambers and Foreign Offices, though it could not be so openly expressed as by the clever scribes of a reactionary Press. It was necessary for a time to pay homage to the ideals of the League while secretly obstructing every one of them.

It was necessary to pay this lip-service because of the pressure of public opinion in millions of small houses which supported those ideals with a fervent—almost religious—faith in many countries. The delegates of the League, however sceptical themselves, however obstructive secretly, were aware that behind them there were millions of simple folk who looked to the League as the only safeguard of peace, the only instrument of justice, the only stronghold of idealism, in an anarchical and disorderly world. Year after year passed with more anarchy and more disorder, but

the loyalists to the League and all the “idealists,” of whom there seemed to be incredible numbers acting as missionaries and propagandists, did not lose hope. They rallied up with new faith after each disappointment and awaited the time when the League would carry out the principles of its Covenant and establish a new system of international justice with power to enforce its decisions upon bandit nations.

There would, of course, be a general disarmament to a low level. There would be some form of Collective Security. In due time the League would remedy the injustices of the Peace Treaties. Even France would come to see that Germany could not be kept down for ever. Old Aristide Briand was an ardent advocate of the League idea and would triumph over those veteran reactionaries, Poincaré and Barthou. It was a question of patience and faith. Rome was not built in a day. The new era of co-operation could not be brought about by the wave of a magic wand.

I was one of those who believed in the League, and looking back upon the “years that the locusts have eaten” as Mr. Winston Churchill would say, I remember the excitements, the emotions, the hopes, the desires, the endless discussion, the gossip, intrigues, rumours and sensations which went on in Geneva during the Assembly meetings. Lord! how we talked! We talked as we walked along the edge of Lake Léman, deeply blue under a cloudless sky. Often on the terrace of the Hotel Beaurivage was Lord Robert Cecil, with bowed shoulders as though he supported the whole League on his back. There later was Austen Chamberlain, debonair for his age, talking to some of the foreign delegates. We rubbed shoulders with representatives of every nation on earth. We talked in the corridors of the old hall where the Assembly first met before the new palace was built. There was Briand smoking cigarettes endlessly, stooping, shabby, a dust-laden jacket over baggy trousers. There was Paul Boncour, with his actor’s face and white hair. There were Japanese, Chinese, Indians, Arabs, Turks, and all manner of men. We talked in little restaurants crowded with newspaper correspondents from many nations. They knew what was happening behind the scenes. We heard strange and terrible stories from Russia and other countries in which revolution had organised a reign of terror. Every man had information to give, anecdotes to tell, for they had seen much history and some of them had helped to make it. The terrific drama of the war was not far behind us.

Late at night under the moon which made a white pathway across Lake Léman we went on talking with some friend who revealed his despair of a tormented world or his hopes of a better one. We were all realists. These newspaper-men—and these secretaries, and assistants and experts of foreign delegations, had no illusions about

life or human nature or politicians. They knew the falsities, the hypocrisies, the treacheries which stood in the way of international conciliation. Many of them, of course, were prejudiced by their own national traditions and outlook. The Italians abused England as "the old Harlot of Europe." The French said "the Germans will always be Germans, the Junkers are still there." The Scandinavians were for more freedom in the Assembly. One heard a thousand different points of view about the constitution of the League and all its problems. There were cynics and sceptics and scoffers, but before long it was noticeable that "a League spirit" was being created. Cynics were converted, sceptics began to have a little faith. It was difficult to remain rigidly "national" and narrow-minded when men of intelligence from all nations were exchanging ideas and discussing first principles. Some of us became international idealists. And yet now we know that we men were following a mirage in that shimmering heat of Geneva, which, in summer, was scorching and stifling, though when darkness came there were cool and dream-like nights.

It was a mirage of false hope—an illusion—because nationalism was too strong, and fear was too dominant, and the support of the League by the Big Powers was only half-hearted and half sincere, if it went as far as that.

(2)

The First Failures.

The first blow was the defection of the United States. When President Wilson was knifed by his political opponents and then refused to ratify the Peace Treaties, with which the Covenant of the League was bound up, an essential part of that new instrument fell out and weakened its whole construction.

In the first place it robbed France of the security to which the American President had pledged himself with Great Britain. It was in return for that pledge that Clemenceau and Foch had yielded the claim to the left bank of the Rhine as a defensive frontier. When the United States refused to fulfil this pledge Great Britain also withdrew, and the French Foreign Office and War Office, under whatever government they might have, searched about for new ways of security against the time when Germany might be strong again. Hence the French policy of alliances with the Little Entente and other groups which pretended to come within the framework of the League, but in reality, as Germany well knew, were established to maintain the *status quo* and the "sacred" inviolability of treaties which the German people regarded as iniquitous. For years Great Britain accepted this pretence, to the great irritation of a growing body of public opinion.

It is an interesting academic argument to discuss what might have happened if the United States had been a member of the League. It might have given a real chance to the principle of Collective Security by providing an overwhelming power against any aggressor nation. Would the American mind, impartial in its judgment of European affairs, have favoured the revision of the Treaties and the redress of grievances? Would it have acted strongly on behalf of the minorities? Would it have insisted upon general disarmament? I am inclined to think so, but on the other hand the Americans might have been even more drastic in enforcing the penalties of defeat on Germany and upholding the letter of the law.

That discussion is beside the mark. The people of the United States, after a severe bout of war fever, were sick to death of all its propaganda, its Liberty loans, its waving of flags and wagging of tongues. Its armies returned home disgruntled and “fed up” with Europe and all its peoples. They hated the French in spite of Lafayette. They hated themselves for post-war demoralisation. A wave of revulsion swept over the States against the orgies of war enthusiasm in which they had indulged. What price Glory? was their mood. They—a vast majority—turned against the President who had put them into the war when he had pledged himself to keep them out of it. They—a vast majority—looked upon the League of Nations as a solemn piece of Bunk designed to drag young America into the madhouse of Europe to fight battles for this or that group of homicidal maniacs. Only a minority, in spite of his mistakes and failings, still regarded Wilson as a saint and martyr for noble ideals. Anyhow they were out of it.

This loss of the United States did not seem to be irreparable in the early years of the League. There were Big Powers without her to uphold the Peace Treaties and to keep the little nations in order—more or less. But there were many unfortunate incidents, to some of which the League and the Supreme Council of the Allied and Associated Powers (which still remained in being) turned a blind eye.

There was the Polish-Lithuanian frontier to be decided, but just as a Commission was getting busy about it General Zeligowski of Poland—a *condottiere* of the old school—marched into Vilna and seized it. The Polish Government reprimanded the General and held on to the city. It was a sign that force had not yet been abandoned in favour of the League’s precepts of good conduct for nice little nations. That was in 1920.

A melodramatic play-actor who was also a poet, the famous Gabriele d’Annunzio, made a raid with a private army in defiance of the League and seized Fiume on the Dalmatian coast. It aroused a fever of excitement in Italy who had been bitterly disappointed by not getting more fruits of victory. President Wilson had

repudiated the secret treaties which they had made with France and England as the price of their alliance, promising large territories in Africa and Asia Minor and the other side of the Adriatic. Now it was Fiume . . . Fiume . . . Fiume! I heard that word repeated a thousand times as the crowds seethed in the Piazza Venezia in Rome, or in the Piazza San Marco in Venice. That was in 1922.

In 1923, when the Assembly was in session, there came word that Mussolini, the new leader of Italy, was bombarding Corfu as a reprisal for the killing of two Italian officers by Greeks, when they were examining the proposed line of the Greco-Albanian frontier. Mussolini's naval guns killed some children and goats. It was another reminder that brute force had still to be reckoned with. But Italy's Dictator yielded to the League's protests and the incident passed after a black mark in the League's book of reference.

That was one of the times when excited correspondents sent off the message of doom: "The League is dead."

(3)

Victories for Peace.

There were successes which seemed to show that the League had authority and power when it wished to exert them, bringing quarrelling nations before the judgment bar of their fellows and settling their disputes by arbitration. By a threat of economic blockade the League stopped a conflict between Yugoslavia and Albania, which might have lighted the fires of another Balkan war.

When the Turks were crossing the frontiers of Mosul in Mesopotamia, threatening hostilities with Great Britain, a League Commission induced the Turks to withdraw.

War was prevented between Greece and Bulgaria. By swift action of the Council the armies were withdrawn within their own frontiers after their governments had accepted arbitration. Frontier disputes between Hungary and Czechoslovakia, and between Bulgaria and its neighbours were stamped out by League action.

Those were victories for peace, and encouraged the hopes of millions that the League members were inspired by a noble purpose and were shaping the Constitution and clauses of the Covenant into an instrument for the prevention of war. In reality it was the political, military and financial influence of a few powers which prevailed. Many people had a false idea of the League and wrote or spoke about it as though it were a kind of super-State—a separate entity—above the frontiers, the political interests and the private policies of the nations. A hostile Press

wrote about it as though it were a kind of assembly of erratic fanatics and long-haired idealists—why should idealists always be long-haired?—and theoretical minds dwelling in a rarefied atmosphere of pure idealism out of touch with realities. Nothing could have been farther from the truth. The League Council, for several years, was composed of victor nations of the last war. Germany and the ex-enemy states were not to be admitted until after a time of probation. The “Big Five” were guardians of the *status quo* as laid down in the peace treaties. Having all the money and all the arms their decisions—when they decided—had a force which could hardly be resisted.

The League was a very undemocratic institution until some of the smaller nations—especially the Scandinavians under the leadership of Dr. Nansen—made a row and became restive at the idea of meeting only to register approval of what the Council had decided—if it decided. The ex-enemy nations wanted to know why the world should be divided into victors and vanquished, or Haves and Have-nots, and how long they were to be kept under the heel of “The Allied and Associated Powers,” using the League and its “high ideals” for their own interests and prestige.

German territory was to be occupied by foreign troops for fifteen years—afterwards reduced to seven—and although some of the smaller ex-enemy States were allowed into the League in 1923, it was not until 1926 that Germany was admitted as a member worthy of taking part in the Council of Nations and having some say in the decisions affecting her own rights and realm. That was a fatal delay which made the name of the League sound discordant to German ears and its ideals another name for hypocrisy.

There were times when the devotees of the League became hopeful that it would be permeated by a new spirit and that an era of real co-operation among nations based upon justice and conciliation would be inaugurated.

The secretariat of the League—those permanent officials who became imbued by what was known as the “League spirit”—were encouraged by new arrivals to power. Poincaré, that obstinate old Lorrainer, whose only thought was to keep Germany in the mud, was succeeded by Herriot, a democrat, with Briand as his Foreign Minister. In Great Britain Ramsay MacDonald had become Prime Minister. These two men might talk to each other on new lines and do something big for world peace.

They thought so themselves, though Herriot was no friend of Germany and Ramsay MacDonald was not inclined to release pressure on the former enemy. They drafted the Geneva Protocol. In very sonorous and noble language it defined more clearly the definitions of Collective Security. It emphasised the need of general

disarmament. It drew up rules of action in case of aggression by any nation. It was all very drastic.

“Every State which resorts to war in violation of the undertakings contained in the Covenant or in the present Protocol is an aggressor. Violation of the rules laid down for a demilitarised zone will be held equivalent to a resort to war.”

The signatory States pledged themselves to apply economic, financial, and military Sanctions to the aggressor immediately any nation had been condemned as such.

It was a remarkable document, but it failed to recognise the necessity of revising injustices. All this machinery of “Sanctions” was to uphold and maintain Treaties which could not remain unchanged and unchallenged for ever as the irrevocable destiny of nations.

Briand defended the Protocol in France with great eloquence, but Poincaré lay in waiting with his plan to seize the Ruhr. In England Ramsay MacDonald fell from power and Mr. Baldwin’s Conservative Government refused to accept it. It is a French cynic who observes that Collective Security had no appeal to them until they were suddenly converted to the beauty of that ideal by a threat in the Mediterranean.

The failure of the Ruhr occupation to secure any fruits but the economic ruin of Germany, and the delirium of inflation, had so alarmed all intelligent observers of world events that wiser counsels prevailed at last. With American help Germany was given some help on the payment of Reparations by the Dawes and Young Plans, and for a little while there was a spirit of appeasement.

(4)

The Pact of Locarno.

In Germany there was a wise counsellor—the British Ambassador, Lord D’Abernon. I used to go to lunch and tea with him at that time at the Embassy in Berlin. Often at his table was a heavy-shouldered, clean-shaven, stout, fair and smiling German whose name was Gustav Stresemann. He was that man, the leader of the Volks-Partei, who had talked to me about Upper Silesia, and once in his political club, crowded with his followers, had banged his beer mug on the table and exclaimed in a loud voice:

“I am a Monarchist! Democracy does not suit the German people.”

Now he was Foreign Minister of the German Republic, with many enemies who hated that Republic and called him a traitor because he was in favour of that policy of “fulfilment”—the fulfilment of the hated Peace Treaties—until he could alter these

terms or get them cancelled by conciliation or common sense.

Stresemann sought the advice of Lord D'Abernon, that bearded giant like a Danish Viking whose tie was always loose round his immense collar and who used his linen cuffs as tablets for his notes. He had been a financier before becoming a diplomat. He knew something about money—almost as much as he knew about Art, which was a great deal. He knew, as he told me, that the French and British statesmen would plunge the world in ruin and anarchy if they persisted in a policy which prevented German recovery. He was determined that as far as his own influence might go he would do something to stop that folly.

While Lady D'Abernon chatted to her guests vivaciously and charmingly, her Giant Blunderbore used to draw Stresemann on one side or take him into his study, and it was these two men who devised the plan which was afterwards known as the Pact of Locarno.

Its idea was to allay the fear of France and to begin a new era of confidence in Europe by guaranteeing the inviolability of the Belgian and French frontiers with a mutual pledge between France and Germany and Germany and Belgium not to engage in any attack upon, or invasion of the other, and in no case to resort to war. Great Britain would be the guarantee of this pact and pledge herself to go to the aid of either if attacked by the other. If France invaded Germany we should be on the side of Germany with all our military, naval, and aerial strength. If Germany invaded France we should go to the aid of France. Great Britain, it is to be observed, would receive no pledge of security or military aid. This plan, however, was a form of Collective Security limited to a group of nations who could ensure peace in Europe if they kept the peace among themselves.

The original draft was sent over to Mr. Austen Chamberlain who rejected it. But suddenly he saw the light, by the persuasion of Lord D'Abernon, and agreed to carry through the plan if he could get the consent of France. Perhaps no other man could have got that consent, though Aristide Briand was in favour of it and became its foster-father in France.

Even Briand might have failed to secure French consent if some other than Austen Chamberlain had been in the British Foreign Office. The French people knew him to be a devoted friend. Once in an emotional moment he said that for France he had the love of a man for a woman.

With Briand, Stresemann and Chamberlain the negotiations prospered, and on the terrace of the Hotel Beaurivage by the Lake of Geneva I took tea with Austen Chamberlain on the day when the Locarno Pact was ratified by the League. He was proud of this achievement. Debonair and smiling, with a flower in his buttonhole and

a monocle in his eye, he showed his pleasure at having arranged a pact which he believed would lead to a new spirit in European affairs . . . the spirit of Locarno.

For this achievement he received the highest honour in England—the Order of the Garter. For weeks later the British public listened over the “wireless” to voices acclaiming the spirit of Locarr-r-r-no.

It was a pity, as later history showed, that this Pact contained a clause of very great danger for the future, because of its one-sidedness. Germany was to maintain a demilitarised zone on the Rhine. If her Government moved any troops into that zone it would be regarded as an “aggression,” bringing Britain and France against her. There was a man named Hitler who remembered that, but risked the “aggression,” some years later.

The Locarno Pact had many enemies in England and France, and the French War Ministry had such little faith in this new guarantee of security that they started building the “Maginot Line”—that most formidable defensive system of earthworks—at the cost of many thousands of millions of francs.

“Locarno,” said Stresemann, “must be, not the end, but the beginning of whole-hearted co-operation, in the cause of peace.”

Briand agreed to that. The next step must be Germany’s admittance to the League.

(5)

Germany enters the League.

That proposal received the most bitter opposition in many quarters and many countries. Poland and Spain opposed the idea that Germany should have a permanent seat on the Council. The Spanish representative, followed by his Brazilian colleague, left the Council in dudgeon, and at the next meeting I saw their empty chairs. It was not until a year had passed with secret intrigues and heated quarrels that Gustav Stresemann, with a large German delegation, waited at the doors of the League to be admitted to membership on terms of equality with the other great Powers.

I was there that day and it lives in my memory as an historic scene, in which the most cynical, the most sceptical, were moved to a profound emotion. It seemed—it really seemed—as though something had lifted from Europe—the old era of hatred and fear—and that we were out of the jungle.

Old Briand was marvellous that day. Before the entry of the Germans when formalities were proceeding he sat, as usual, with hunched shoulders, a *petit*

caporal hanging from his lips, deep in his seat with his eyes half-closed. He was a shabby old gentleman looking like a dealer in second-hand clothes. But when he mounted the platform and squared his shoulders, and began to speak, the whole appearance of the man was transfigured. He paced up and down the platform like an old lion. His voice was fine and musical and resonant. His hands were alive, and every gesture was eloquent. He made a magnificent, generous-hearted, noble, and moving oration, welcoming Germany to the League and promising the hand of friendship from France. He swept away the tragic memories of the war with its blood and agony. That road of ruin and death lay behind them. They would take a new road, France and Germany marching together to a future when the mothers of men need no longer weep for their dead and mutilated sons. Something of that kind he said, as I remember, not quoting from the actual text. Afterward his speech did not read so well. It needed his voice, his magic, his fire. It was, as I have written before, the only time in my life when I have seen hard-boiled newspaper-men wet-eyed with emotion. I confess I had wet eyes.

Gustav Stresemann, stout, buttoned tightly in a frock-coat, his fair skin—as soft and fair as a new-born babe—was very pale. He was extremely nervous and did not trust himself to speak extempore. But he read out a fine speech promising the co-operation of Germany for peace. There was one passage in it which had a noble rhythm:

“It cannot be the meaning of a divinely ordered world that men should turn their highest national achievements against each other. . . . The man who serves humanity best is he who, rooted in his own nation, develops his spiritual and moral endowments to their greatest capacity, so that growing beyond the limits of his own nation, he is able to give something to the whole of humanity, as the great ones of all nations have done.”

Nearly a year afterwards at the next session of the League, Briand and Stresemann met privately in the garden of a little restaurant at Thoiry on the lake-side near Geneva, having escaped the Press who were on the scent like blood-hounds. They talked for two hours or so on the outstanding problems between France and Germany, one of which was the return of the Saar—utterly German—now under international control.

Briand was in a good mood, and his fine wit made Stresemann laugh, as he recorded in his diary. These two men, so different, each so typical of his own country, reached a friendly and generous understanding. That was all wrecked by passion and prejudice among their own politicians and public. When Stresemann returned to Berlin he was called “Traitor” as he passed through hostile crowds.

When Briand returned to Paris political groups led by Poincaré and Barthou thwarted all his promises.

But Briand, that old play-actor as he has been called by his own critics, was utterly sincere in his devotion to the League ideals and to reconciliation between France and Germany. He found an ally in an unexpected quarter. It came from a benevolent American, Mr. Frank B. Kellogg, Secretary of State. An arbitration agreement was made between France and the United States and Briand gladly accepted Mr. Kellogg's idea of extending it to all nations if they pledged themselves to renounce war as a means of national policy and to settle all differences by arbitration.

Briand made many eloquent and fervent speeches, calling upon his people to throw away fear and put their faith in the League and this new Pact of Peace. The Briand-Kellogg Pact was duly signed by forty-four nations, but many of those who held the pen wrote with their tongues in their cheeks, or lolling out. It was just a sentimental document, they thought, which they might as well sign to please the sentimentalists. It was too idealistic they thought for a wicked world. They were, alas, right. It is unfortunate that the cynics have been right so often.

Briand went even further than this pact. He went as far as advocating a United States of Europe under some form of Federal Government with an International Court of Justice and an International Police Force. Some countries were interested, but the dream faded out as far as France was concerned. Briand became too tired to make many speeches about it and went back to his little home in Brittany to die. Stresemann also passed from the scene of life.

(6)

The Refusal of Disarmament.

An acid-test of the League's sincerity—or rather the sincerity of its member States—was to be found in the fulfilment or non-fulfilment of its pledge to establish general disarmament on a low scale for national defence.

There are people who deny that this pledge of disarmament was ever made. But the words are clear in the Covenant.

“The members of the League recognise that the maintenance of peace requires the reduction of national armaments to the lowest point consistent with national safety. . . . The Council shall formulate plans for such reductions.”

It was also stated formally at the Peace Conference that the “conditions as to German armaments are not solely intended to incapacitate Germany from a renewal

of her policy of military aggression. They also constitute the first step towards the reduction and general limitation of armaments, as being one of the most effective preventives of war, and one of the first tasks which the League of Nations must strive to perform.”

These and other pledges on disarmament were unfulfilled.

They have never been fulfilled, and now instead of disarming the whole world is busy feverishly piling up the most monstrous mountains of explosive material and all the instruments of slaughter in the sacred name of “self-defence.”

At long last the Disarmament Conference began. Preliminary work had been done by preparatory Commissions. After repeated delays and evasions, of which this country was in part guilty—there was no enthusiasm in our Foreign Office for a general limitation of arms—the opening of the full Conference took place in February, 1931—thirteen years after the World War—under the presidency of Arthur Henderson, known everywhere as “Uncle Arthur.”

The first session of the Conference was preceded by a demonstration of world-wide extent which was perhaps—I think it was—the most tremendous and emotional expression of public opinion and public hope ever organised on behalf of peace. From many countries came petitions and prayers for the successful work of the Conference, with millions of signatures from the mothers of men, from all the peace societies, from all the churches, from millions of ex-service men and millions of students in many nations.

I was present at the sending-off of one of these monstrous petitions, and was deeply moved by the speeches of women who sent it on its way to Geneva. Heaven alone knows what happened to it and to all the others when they reached the League. Perhaps they are still there in Geneva getting mouldy in dark vaults. The hearts of the world’s statesmen were untouched. Their brains were untouched by this universal yearning for something to be done to prevent what now happened—the rearmament of the world.

I attended some of those deliberations of the Disarmament Conference. Year after year the delegates and the experts talked and talked. Any concrete proposal was immediately torn to shreds by the representatives of one country or the other. M. Paul Boncour, that handsome white-haired Frenchman, like an actor of the *Comédie Française*, spoke with a sob in his voice of the blessings of peace, and on behalf of France obstructed any proposal which would reduce the military strength of that country.

Our own delegates, less interested in armies than in navies, argued against anything which might weaken our supremacy at sea. Our air experts, led by Lord

Londonderry, made reservations about the abolition of aerial bombing and thought it a very good and economical way of dealing with naughty natives. They discussed quantitative and qualitative disarmament with the zeal and subtlety of mediæval school-men debating metaphysical problems. Year after year they talked and talked and never settled anything.

Seeing the impossibility of obtaining any unanimity on general disarmament, sub-committees were set up to deal with a separate and smaller problem which it was thought might score some actual achievement. It was the possibility of stopping or checking the traffic in arms by private manufacturers and traders.

This business in lethal weapons had aroused hostility and disgust in the public opinion of many countries. Even before the World War it had been the object of passionate attack by anti-militarists who based their charges against the "Merchants of Death," as they called the private manufacturers and traders in arms, upon many scandals and rumours of scandals of a most corrupt kind in many countries. Now after the war there was a heavy traffic in arms amounting to millions of pounds sterling every year. Great Britain took the lead in this business and her private manufacturers were selling their wares—nice new machine-guns, bright new field-guns, delightful little bombs, millions of cartridges, tons of high explosives, to any country in want of them. They were going to Japan, contemplating a war in Manchuria, and to China for defending themselves against that aggression. Keeping their factories busy by these orders the private manufacturers were enabled—that was their main line of argument—to retain their expert staffs, develop new designs, and keep themselves capable of expansion when their own country would need their services on a big scale.

It was a complicated problem, as well I know, because afterwards I sat on a Royal Commission to deal with it, and spent a vast amount of time on its examination. Nothing whatever was done about it at Geneva except to produce a number of interesting proposals which led to no effective result.

The main Disarmament Conference provided some first-class sensations for newspaper correspondents and their readers. André Tardieu, Premier of France, got in first with a plan which was a fine bit of play-acting, designed to sabotage the chance of anything practical being done by proposing the impossible. He wanted to establish an international army under the sole command of the League to restrain any aggressor nation. Few of his own countrymen believed in his sincerity.

"The Tardieu Plan," says the French writer, Victor Marguerite, "was nothing but a game to amuse the company. . . . Experience had shown that discussion of a single one of the points raised might last for months and years. The Tardieu Plan led

nowhere. It was one of those feats of legerdemain that always succeed to admiration at a Disarmament Conference.”

M. Litvinov of Soviet Russia also had a plan. It was to scrap all arms everywhere at a time when Japan had invaded Manchuria and was smashing her way into Shanghai—and at a time when the Red Army numbered many millions.

Mr. Hoover of the United States sent a plan. It was the most practical. It might have been adopted by general consent. He proposed to reduce the weapons of attack and to increase the means of defence. He suggested a heavy reduction, by one-third, of all armaments, the abandonment of tanks, chemical warfare, and all bombing aeroplanes. Ramsay MacDonald adopted part of this plan in a later proposal.

After many weeks and months of discussion the Conference adjourned with an orgy of pompous oratory which meant precisely nothing and disgusted all the delegates who had hoped for real progress. They were the delegates of little nations.

During the session two wars were raging; murderous, aggressive and very “modern” in the latest type of weapons. One was the Japanese attack on Manchuria, the other the war between Bolivia and Paraguay—a Red Indian warfare in its character, both sides being supplied with everything they required for mutual slaughter by the arms manufacturers of many nations sitting at the Conference table.

The monster petitions praying God’s blessing on the Conference, with hundreds of millions of signatures from the humble folk of the world, were ignored. The statesmen of the Great Powers, including our own, played for time and delay, and discussed unrealities with an air of spiritual earnestness.

What was the main cause of all this hypocrisy? First of all the French determination to thwart the German plea for equality of rights on a low basis of armaments. Tardieu’s plan, however fantastic at that time, was to create an international army which would crush Germany if she violated by one hair’s breadth the “Sacred” Treaties rooted in injustice. There are many now who will say: “France, after all, was right!” But it was a policy which led to Hitler and German rearmament.

The second cause was the fear of the new nations among each other. They had dealt harshly with their minorities. They looked across their frontiers with suspicion. They did not think equality at a low level good enough for self-defence.

The German representatives protested at the methods of the Conference and once again demanded equality of rights.

After many discussions between Great Britain, France and Italy a theoretical acquiescence in German right to equality was granted. Mussolini was the leader of a new plan to safeguard peace by a Four Power Pact in which Germany should be the

fourth signatory. Reluctantly, and against strong public opinion in France, M. Daladier, now French Premier, agreed to this proposal which included Germany's claim to armed equality in due course, and at a low level.

(7)

The Coming of Hitler.

But meanwhile something was happening, and something happened, in Germany which created a new situation. It was the coming of Hitler and the destruction by his Nazis of the old Weimar Republic.

Year by year Hitler's nationalist propaganda, his spellbinding oratory and the miserable conditions in Germany itself, had gained great numbers of supporters. Year by year he increased his voting power in the State elections. The tidal wave of unemployment by which Germany was stricken, its economic distress, its political weakness, its condition as an unarmed State surrounded by armed powers, its constant fear of revolution from private armies within its own realm, its humiliation during the time of inflation, its bitter memories of the Ruhr, its wounded pride, its passion of despair, its helplessness against men like Poincaré, had played into the hands of this strange, mystical harsh-voiced man named Hitler at whom many had mocked. He promised to lead them out of the wilderness, to give them back their pride, to release them from the bond of French intolerance, to lessen unemployment, to raise them again to their old power, to heal them of all the maladies which had afflicted them under the Weimar Constitution which he despised and denounced with Jews and Communists. His words made men drunk. Youth rallied to his Swastika. Even moderate middle-aged men and masses of the middle classes began to turn to him with a kind of doubtful hope. Anything might be better than their former state. He made them crinkle down the spine. He made them feel Wagnerian. They voted for him.

Presently he represented the strongest party in the State. Old Hindenburg did not like him much at first, but had to call him to take over the Chancellorship of the Reich. He became more than Chancellor. He became the chief of the German tribes—"Der Führer."

(8)

Europe takes the Wrong Road.

There was a bleak day at Geneva. Few realised that it was one of the turning-

points in human destiny. It turned us on to the wrong road down which we have been marching ever since.

It was on October 12, 1933, when the Bureau of the Conference resumed its work which was like the labour of Sisyphus. Sir John Simon, representing Great Britain, made a speech in which he declared that there must be a postponement of the date at which Germany and ex-enemy States would be allowed to increase their armaments under any plan of general disarmament. He mentioned a term of eight years.

The Germans had already waited fourteen years since the signing of the Peace Treaty for any sign of disarming among the other powers. So they were to wait eight more with the uncertainty that even then they would be allowed defensive weapons, surrounded by the armed power of many nations? That was intolerable to them after the pledge to recognise their equality of right. It was too much for Hitler and his National Socialists, who were in an emotional mood requiring an end to their humiliations.

A telegram was received by Arthur Henderson, President of the Conference, from Baron von Neurath, German Foreign Minister. It read as follows:

“In the light of the course which recent discussions of the powers concerned have taken in the matter of disarmament, it is now clear that the Disarmament Conference will not fulfil what is its sole object, namely, a general disarmament. It is also clear that the failure of the Conference is due solely to unwillingness on the part of the highly armed States to carry out their contractual obligation to disarm. This renders impossible the satisfaction of Germany’s recognised claim to equality of rights; and the condition on which the German Government agreed at the beginning of this year to take part in the work of the Conference thus no longer exists.

“The German Government is accordingly compelled to leave the Disarmament Conference.”

The German delegates left, and Germany started that rearmament which created new fears in Europe and led step by step to the terrific rearmament programme of Great Britain.

It was a tragic moment with dire results. It need never have happened, that is the pity of it. It was a mistaken policy. Successive blunders of statecraft, lack of generosity and lack of vision had brought about this result. Why had nothing come of the talks and understandings between Briand and Stresemann? Because Poincaré and his followers had sabotaged this chance of appeasement. Why had the Constitution of the German Republic, under liberal-minded leaders, anxious for peace and recovery, failed to secure the support of the German people? Because all

their efforts were in vain at a time when the French invaded the Ruhr.

If the Disarmament Conference had got busy years before with masterful leadership and sincere purpose to fulfil the ideals of those millions of humble folk who prayed for its success, Germany would never have rearmed on a stupendous scale. The terror of aerial bombardment would have been taken from civilian minds. The economic misery of peoples would have been relieved from the staggering burdens of taxation, and German bitterness would not have needed a Hitler to cure its inferiority complex.

England was always inclined to be more generous to Germany, but never quite broke from the French thesis which was to keep Germany weak and poor and encircled by well-armed Powers in alliance with France. We were accessories to a policy which we knew to be wrong. For it was utterly futile reasoning to argue that Germany with its sixty million inhabitants, in the heart of Europe, would consent for ever to remain humiliated, impotent and incapable of self-defence. Sooner or later they were bound to smash through this network of restrictions and prohibitions. . . . They have done so.

This is my own profound conviction which I have always held and have never disguised. But it is not only the point of view of an English observer; many French people of democratic instincts were equally aware of the fatal policy pursued by their Governments and it is stated by Victor Margueritte in his valuable book, *The League Fiascos*:

“Seven years had been wasted since the day on which Briand, encouraged by Locarno, had at last brought the Reich to Geneva, with a permanent seat on the Council—seven years since France and her exacting allies had rigorously enforced the military and territorial clauses, the financial clauses having wrought their own destruction. What lunacy to imagine that you could keep a whole nation in gaol, so to speak, a prolific nation, highly industrialised, whose energy in every field of thought and action proved its continual vitality! Not content that Germany should have been condemned for faults in which all shared, that she should have been deprived of her fleet and her colonies, the successors of Poincaré, with the exception of Briand, to whatever party they belonged, had pursued the same policy of fear. History will tell what an irreparable blunder they committed in not granting, while they had it in their power, honourable conditions to the Weimar Republic, and in waiting until from sheer obstinacy was born the Third Reich with which it was to become increasingly difficult to reach an understanding.”

I do not think that judgment will be reversed by future generations.

Germany's withdrawal from the League was a severe blow to future hopes of establishing a reign of international law in Europe. For without Germany there could be no general security. But Japan had also walked out of the League after condemnation by the Assembly for violation of its principles and pledges.

As soon as Japan had begun military action in Manchuria, China had appealed to the League for aid, invoking articles of the Covenant which were concerned with the invasion of territory by a hostile Power or other menace of war.

Summoned before the League Japan blandly replied that there was no war against China, but only certain measures in Manchuria demanded by the assassination of some Japanese officers.

The Government in Tokio declared at first that there was only a local action and perhaps was sincere in trying to localise the incident, but the Japanese Army thought differently and prepared for the invasion of Manchuria before other and later measures for the domination of China. Their troops fought with the utmost ruthlessness culminating in the naval bombardment of Shanghai and the landing of Japanese troops for an attack on the Chinese settlement, when they suffered heavy losses while inflicting terrible damage, not only on Chinese troops but upon the civilian population.

The League appointed a Commission to enquire into the situation on the spot. It was under the chairmanship of Lord Lytton, a man of the highest ideals, the noblest character, and fine judgment. He and his colleagues on the Commission had a difficult task which lasted for nine months and covered a vast area. Their report was masterly in its detail and impartiality, but it took too long and arrived too late. While the Commission was working the Japanese forced the pace, defeated the Chinese in many battles, bombarded many cities, spread terror from the sky, and faced the League with a *fait accompli* by setting up the puppet State of Manchukuo under their domination.

Before all the world the League was proved impotent to deal according to its Covenant with an aggressor nation if that nation happened to possess a big army and a big navy, especially if they were on the other side of the world from Europe. If they applied Sanctions—a new word of French origin which crept into the English language—who was going to do the dirty work? Not the United States which had never belonged to the League. Mr. Stimson, the United States Secretary, had sent urgent messages to the British Government, but there was never any evidence to

show that his own Government contemplated joint action against Japan with the British Fleet.

The Assembly, composed of a majority of nations without navies, condemned Japan and proposed a compromise between the two conflicting nations which was unacceptable to both. The world looked towards Great Britain. If there were to be any naval action it would have to be British naval action. But the last thing in the world which British statesmen and people wanted at that time or after was a naval war with Japan, in the name of Collective Security or any other name.

Shortly after the war the Anglo-Japanese Alliance had been cancelled to please the United States. The Japanese regarded that act, not unjustly, as one of unfriendliness and ingratitude. They had been good allies. They had kept the Pacific Sea safe. They had transported Allied troops. In the opinion of many British people who know the Far East it was one of our major blunders, though it is difficult to believe that the continuance of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance would have restrained Japan from the far-reaching ambitions which are now a visible menace. Be that as it may the British Government took no action at all beyond diplomatic representations to Japan to uphold the prestige of the League of Nations.

The ardent supporters of the League, those "bloodthirsty pacifists" as they have been called in recent history, look back upon this failure to take action against Japan as the beginning of that weakness, and surrender of ideals and pledges, which have led to the League's present paralysis. That perhaps is true, though I personally do not think that we were called upon to fight Japan alone. A naval war would not have been a naval demonstration, but would have caused the loss of many lives and many ships and would have been heavy in its risk for us alone. Tokio would have yielded to the threat, we are told. They would not have defied Britain. Who knows?

The far-reaching ambitions of Japan have been revealed by many speeches and documents in recent years. In a memorandum presented to the Emperor by the Japanese Prime Minister, on July 15, 1927, the following words were written:

"In order to protect ourselves and others the Japanese can only unravel the tangled situation in the Far East by a policy of blood and iron."

The details of that policy envisaged the domination of China, the little Asiatic States, India, and the South Seas.

"Then will the world realise," continues the memorandum, "that the Far East belongs to us, and they will never dare to attack us."

General Hayao Tada, Chief of the Japanese garrison in Tientsin, published a pamphlet entitled "Japan's Policy in China," which contained the following words:

"The Japanese Army demands the right to speak in the name of Japan.

Therefore the foreign policy of Japan will be decided by the military and not by the Foreign Office. Japan's great mission is to free the Asiatics from the white races. The Japanese are the Chosen People of the world."

A Japanese general named Isogai provides a key to the psychology of his nation's ruthlessness in China—done, it seems, with loving-kindness for the Chinese, according to the spirit of an irate father who beats his son and says, "It hurts me more than it does you, my boy."

"Japan is not out to injure the Chinese people or to take away their land. . . . That gives this war an unusual aspect. The Japanese Army feels that it is the bearer of a mission to the Chinese people. It is no war in the ordinary sense. It is a crusade against evil in China—against hostility of the people to Japan which prevents real peace in the Far East. Even the surgeon, however kindly he feels towards the patient, must perform an operation. The illness of China is fairly serious. The operation may perhaps have to go fairly deep. In any case the doctor will give such treatment to the patient as the nature of the wound demands."

The "operation" is now going on, with the destruction of Chinese cities, the massacre of women and children by bombing aeroplanes, the slaughter of Chinese troops who are resisting "the kindly doctor" with a spirit of national heroism unexpected by the Japanese, whose slogan across the Pacific to all who have ears to hear is "Asia for the Asiatics."

(10)

Italy, the Aggressor.

It was a frightful dilemma for Great Britain and the League, to say nothing of a still more frightful tragedy to China. It led inevitably to a charge of hypocrisy, especially against Britain, when the League was asked, and agreed, to impose "Sanctions" against another aggressor on the war path. It was when Benito Mussolini decided that Abyssinia would be a good training-ground for his Blackshirts on their way to a new Roman Empire.

Looking back upon that chapter of recent history, still of great consequence to present and future events, one recalls—though time passes on swift wings and every hour seems crowded with new incidents—the emotion, the sensation, the odd strange drama of it all. It caused a conflict of passion in England unequalled since the war. It was the last supreme test of all the idealism which had held up the League in millions of minds. It broke up existing combinations and alliances between the nations, shifting Italy to the side of Germany, breaking down the system of French

alliances with Poland, Belgium, Roumania and other nations.

Beneath the surface there was much sinister stuff, including treachery. British Ministers blundered into a quagmire from which they could hardly drag themselves with any respect. French Ministers were torn between conflicting loyalties, conflicting fears and conflicting points of honour. Mussolini played a strong hand against many odds. He took desperate risks which might have resulted in blue ruin. He was immensely courageous, ruthless and violent. The British Government were grossly ill-advised, and let down the British public, which was stirred by great sentiment for an almost defenceless people—not quite so Christian as they made out.

They saw in this war on Abyssinia, quite rightly as I think, the last chance of the League to show whether its members stood for Collective Security or separate anarchy, for international law or international brigandage. They and other peoples watched this affair, as it came before the League and as its drama was played out in Ethiopia, with intense interest and anxiety, not only on account of the Abyssinians, whose Emperor appealed to their sympathy as a great Christian gentleman, but on account of their own hopes of civilised progress and their own faith in law and honour.

It happened at this time that the British Government, under the leadership of Mr. Baldwin, had a sudden change of heart (and policy) in regard to the League. The Conservatives had not been great enthusiasts for the League ideals. On the contrary they had never liked the idea of submitting British actions and interests to this Court of Nations nor the idea of using British troops or ships on behalf of Collective Security. It is not going too far to say that most of them hated the League and all its works. But suddenly they fell in love with it, rather late in the day. Mr. Baldwin became emotional in his respect and affection for the Covenant and its clauses.

What was the cause of this conversion? It had something to do with a Peace Ballot organised by Lord Cecil and the League of Nations Union—that body of propagandists for League principles which had its branches in every English town and its supporters in every church, chapel and meeting-house of Protestant, democratic and pacifist England, where the Covenant of the League ranked next in religious veneration to the Ten Commandments. The Peace Ballot had asked a number of questions, somewhat artfully set, to test public opinion upon its attitude towards the League as an instrument of peace. Did they, for instance, support the principle of Collective Security and the use of Sanctions against an aggressor nation? Eleven million votes were registered in favour of these points. It was the biggest plebiscite on any political issue that had ever been recorded in Great Britain.

Many Conservative Ministers had been irritated by the Peace Ballot and had

attacked it in Parliament with ridicule and contempt. But after those eleven million votes were registered in favour of these points they became silent and thoughtful. British public opinion was not to be disregarded by those dependent upon its votes.

There were other reasons why the League and the principles of Collective Security should be encouraged, and indeed placed foremost in the Government's Foreign Policy. The advent of Hitler and his National Socialists, and their decision to rearm, greatly alarmed elderly gentlemen in ministerial chairs and middle-aged gentlemen in the Foreign Office. Collective Security might be a very valuable weapon if Hitler's Germany became a menace to European peace. It was already a menace, they thought. Collective Security was another name for a group of allies who would get together in self-defence should the tiger escape from its cage.

Then came Mussolini's preparations for attack in Abyssinia, the transport of Italian troops to Libya—very near to Egypt—and the possibility of danger to British communications in the Mediterranean.

Young Mr. Anthony Eden, His Majesty's representative for League Affairs, a very able and talented man, was instructed to support Collective Security to the furthest extent possible. Mr. Baldwin, that honest, downright gentleman, spoke good words about the League. Sir Samuel Hoare, the new Foreign Secretary, became an idealist of the first water, and in a speech at Geneva opened up new vistas of conciliation between nations, and even offered material concessions by the Haves to the Have-nots in regard to the sources of raw materials—not explaining in detail how and when this might be done.

Great Britain became the central pillar of the League.

That Italian threat to Abyssinia had been ignored when it first materialised. There was a conference at Stresa attended on behalf of the British Government by Sir John Simon, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs before Sir Samuel Hoare stepped into his shoes. French and Italian ministers were there at Stresa to put up a united protest with Great Britain against German rearmament.

At this time Signor Mussolini, master of statecraft in the school of Macchiavelli, had settled outstanding differences with France, then under the premiership of a little smiling nimble-minded politician named M. Laval. Both of them were alarmed by the growing power of Hitler. Mussolini guaranteed the independence of Austria and stood guard on the Brenner. He had no love at that time for Adolf Hitler to whom, afterwards, he sent messages of eternal devotion.

He had some very interesting conversations with Laval who was deeply anxious for Italian friendship and alliance now that Hitler was dangerous. There was a "perfect understanding" between these two gentlemen. The French would be kind to

the Italians in Tunisia, French and Italian fleets would co-operate in the Mediterranean. And M. Laval, that smiling, nimble-minded man, would have nothing to say against Italian ambitions in Abyssinia. He was perfectly agreeable that his dear friend Benito Mussolini, whom he loved like a brother, should have a free hand for economic expansion in the land of the Ethiopians.

Urgent messages were sent to the British Foreign Office by the British Ambassador in Rome who knew all about this secret agreement between France and Italy. He thought it very advisable that Sir John Simon should raise the question of Abyssinia at Stresa. Unfortunately Sir John Simon did not raise that question at Stresa. It may have slipped his mind. In any case he was convinced even a month later when the first troops were on their way through the Suez Canal that Signor Mussolini would not do anything so silly.

But Signor Mussolini had thought out his plans carefully and long in advance of action. As General de Bono has revealed in his remarkable book *Il Duce* had decided with him more than a year before Italian troops were on their way, and even more than a year before Abyssinian raids gave him an excuse for action, exactly when his war of conquest would begin and exactly how it should be prepared.

In March of 1935 the "Negus" or Emperor of Abyssinia, greatly alarmed by Italian concentrations in Eritrea, by feverish road-building by Italian labourers and by crowded transports in the port of Massawa, appealed to the League.

They had a right to do so, belonging to its membership. By an irony of history it was Italy who had introduced them as worthy of a place among the civilised powers and having by her religious faith and national character earned a "title of nobility which it is only just to recognise."

Signor Mussolini, in the name of Italy, had signed a pact of eternal friendship with Haile Selassie, the Emperor of Abyssinia. Now Italy denounced the Ethiopians as a barbarous and uncivilised people who committed the most atrocious cruelties, as the world's worst slave-raiders with a penal code which included torture and mutilation.

It was not until August of 1935 that the League took action and summoned both Italy and Abyssinia to submit to arbitration and to give evidence of their charges and counter-charges regarding violations of territory and attacks on individuals.

The Italian representatives handed in a dossier full of terrible photographs and accusations of barbarity, but refused to sit in the presence of the Abyssinian representatives and walked out of the Council Chamber when they spoke.

Private representations earnestly made by Mr. Eden on behalf of the British Government, and by M. Laval on behalf of France, with Baron Aloisi of Italy failed

to move Mussolini who went on with his preparations for war.

The League appointed a Commission of Five under the chairmanship of that intellectual Spaniard Señor Madariaga to make proposals for a settlement of the dispute, but their suggestions to give Italy political and economic rights over certain portions of Abyssinia, including Ogaden, were answered contemptuously by Mussolini through English newspaper correspondents, to whom he said that he did not "collect deserts."

Time went on while the tempo of Italian preparations was accelerated. There were still people in England who maintained that Mussolini was bluffing, that he would never dare to fight a war against public opinion in Europe, that he had no money for war and that he was playing a game of poker.

(11)

The Risk of General War.

Then something happened which revealed as though by a flash of lightning the dangers to European peace as well as to Abyssinia which lurked beneath this situation. While the League was dealing with this affair, and without consultation with France or other powers, the British Fleet rushed into the Mediterranean. It was a sudden decision due to the despatch of Italian troops to Libya and to secret information suggesting that Mussolini had plans to attack Egypt. It caused a tremor in all the chancelleries of Europe. It increased the blood-pressure of Signor Mussolini.

For twenty-four hours peace and war were in the balance. There was forked lightning about. One could feel it. One could almost smell it. We were very near to war. If Mussolini, alarmed for the safety of his communications between Italy and Eritrea, had touched his bell in an explosion of rage and desperation, risking everything, there would have been war.

In England the High Commissioners of the Dominions were summoned by Mr. Baldwin. One of them left a table where he was holding a conference and said: "Excuse me, gentlemen, I shall be away for a little while." He was away for two hours while his friends waited in deep anxiety. That night a personal letter from Sir Samuel Hoare was written to Mussolini and despatched to Rome. It was received by Sir Eric Drummond, who hurried with it to Il Duce. It was an assurance that Great Britain desired the continued friendship of Italy and would take no separate action against her outside the decision of the League. The oppressive atmosphere lifted slightly.

This naval demonstration in the Mediterranean caused a profound sensation all

over the world. Foreign critics and observers who had believed that the old British Lion had his tail well down and his claws clipped, having got a bit mangy, were astonished when he sprang up and lashed his tail and looked very fierce indeed. The Germans were pleased and had a new respect for us. The French were angered and thought: *Mon Dieu!* these *sacré* English look as though they meant business and will put all the fat into the fire. In *Gringoire*, that satirical review, a distinguished writer rattled off an article entitled: "The English, Should they be Assassinated?" which was seized from all the English bookstalls very early in the morning by orders of the French Embassy.

Mr. Anthony Eden, His Majesty's representative for League Affairs, rapped the table at Geneva, speaking stern words, and in the name of international law and justice called for the condemnation of Italy as an aggressor nation, if the war against Abyssinia were not called off. He cited Article XVI of the Covenant which applied to the imposition of Sanctions, economical, financial and military, against any nation so condemned.

In October a Committee of the League which comprised the delegates of Britain, France, Russia, Portugal, Chili and Denmark, reported to the Council that the Italian Government had had recourse to war contrary to their obligations under Article XII. The report was accepted. For the first time in the history of the League it named an aggressor nation. The Council decided to impose Sanctions. On October 10 among fifty-one nations represented in the Assembly of the League only three—Austria, Hungary, and Albania—voted against these decisions.

Baron Aloisi speaking passionately on behalf of Italy complained that the League had adopted a system of "two weights and two measures" in their principles of justice. There was one weight and one measure for Italy. There had been another weight and another measure for Japan against whom no action whatever had been taken for the invasion of Manchuria. That was true and there was no explanation possible on that point, except that Japan was a long way off and that Abyssinia was very near to Europe.

None of these resolutions of the League had any effect upon Signor Mussolini, who had "burnt his boats." He had a great army now in Eritrea. Everything was ready. He had spent millions of money. His life and power were at stake. He was ready to risk everything. From his balcony in the Piazza Venezia he addressed a vast crowd of Italian men and women who were drunk with excitement and patriotic fervour. His voice rang out above their massed heads. In that crowd something stirred which had been long sleeping—the spirit of ancient Rome which had mastered the known world. Julius Cæsar would have known this crowd. They were

of the same blood. Mark Antony would have known this Benito Mussolini. He was of his own type. His oratory belonged to his own style.

“Blackshirts of the Revolution,” he shouted, “men and women of Italy, Italians scattered throughout the world, across the mountains and across the oceans, listen!”

A hundred thousand arms were stretched out above this hydra-headed crowd.

“Duce! Duce! Duce!” they answered with one voice.

“Listen!” said Mussolini.

“A solemn hour is about to strike in the history of the Patria. Twenty million Italians are at this moment gathered in the squares throughout the whole of Italy. It is the most gigantic demonstration which the history of man records. Twenty millions—a single heart—a single will—a single decision. . . .

“For many months the wheel of Destiny, under the impulse of our calm determination, has been making towards the goal. In these last hours the rhythm has become more speedy and cannot now be arrested. . . . With Ethiopia we have been patient for many years. Now enough—”

He spoke bitterly of those who would deny Italy a place in the sun. He spoke the word Sanctions, which was heard and answered with a fierce shout of derision from the great crowd.

“To Sanctions of an economic character,” said Mussolini, “we will reply with our discipline, our sobriety, and our spirit of sacrifice. To Sanctions of a military character we will reply with orders of a military character. To acts of war we will answer by acts of war.”

He had thrown down the gauntlet to fifty nations. Certainly he had courage.

Within a few hours Italian troops and black regiments were marching into Abyssinia. It was war against a dark race who had kept their independence for five thousand years, and who had been partly christianised early in the Christian era, though never civilised. Now the blessings of civilisation were to be brought to them with bombing aeroplanes and poison gas and tanks and machine-guns.

The chiefs of their tribes were brave men and fierce, but ill-equipped to fight a modern army. They had only their mountains, jagged and tumbled mountains, as their natural defence. Their Emperor, a gentle-looking man, had behaved with great dignity and was aided in his appeal to the League by advisers who touched the hearts of all generous-minded people by their appeals for justice in their defencelessness. They placed their nation—a collection of tribes—in the hands of the League, relying upon its power and its honour, and its law and its pity. They relied in vain.

There is another side—in human affairs there is nearly always another side—to

the moral problem raised by this aggression. The Italians, even the most cultured and intelligent Italians, were honestly aghast at what they believed to be the frightful hypocrisy of British public opinion in this affair.

“You of all people,” they said, “how can you talk of our immorality in this Abyssinian war when for hundreds of years you have grabbed the empty spaces of the world, made war on many native races, swept them down by field artillery as though they were vermin, and raised your flag wherever the sun shines? What about Omdurman when you massacred the Fuzzy-wuzzies? What about your Zulu wars, your Afghan wars, your Indian wars, your Matebele war, and many others now forgotten? Why should you of all people in the world raise your hands in holy horror because we have decided to subdue some murderous tribes and get a little elbow room?”

One Italian friend of mine scoffing at the League of Nations asked what would have happened if there had been a League of Nations in the time of Julius Cæsar who carried civilisation to the outer barbarians, among whom were the inhabitants of Britain.

“This precious League of Nations,” he said, “is simply a society of hypocrites to maintain the *status quo* and prevent the Have-nots from getting anything while the Haves enjoy their fatness.”

Here and there were English minds touched by this remembrance of our own Jingoism or uneasy about the sentimental fervour on behalf of the Abyssinians. This view was represented to me by a distinguished friend who helped in the administration of East Africa when that great little man Sir Harry Johnston was Governor of Uganda.

He was contemptuous and bitter regarding Haile Selassie and his subordinate chieftains.

“Those Amharic tyrants,” he wrote to me, “ravaged the peoples of Abyssinia itself as well as our own and the Italian protectorates for thirty years. In their foul raids they captured children for Arabian harems and slaves for themselves and their usurper Negus. If it takes a thief to catch a thief it certainly took a hypocrite to bamboozle an ignorant nation into thinking him “a fine Christian gentleman.” Is his Christian culture shown by never punishing the most shocking and disgusting barbarities of his soldiery? It is for this slave state that we have lost our best friend in Europe!”

The Blow to the League.

That view was hardly heard in England, except among very small groups. The great weight of public opinion was passionately against Mussolini for his repudiation of most solemn pledges to the League and the Briand-Kellogg Pact, and for the invasion, with every modern weapon of slaughter, of an almost defenceless people who had submitted their case to the bar of international judgment. I was one of those who took this stand in private judgment. However much we might be taunted by our past as grabbers of native territories we who supported the League believed that our post-war generation stood for ideals of international law upon which the future of civilisation depended for a peaceful evolution and avoidance of complete anarchy.

This Italian war, violating every article of the Covenant, seemed a threat not only against Abyssinia but against all small states, all international pacts, all the principles of arbitration to which Mussolini and many others had set their hands. If Mussolini should get away with it then the authority of the League was surrendered, then the League itself was defeated. Then we should all go back to jungle law and the right of the strongest. Then another European war would happen, and European civilisation would go down. Then liberty and democracy would perish.

Those were the ideas in the heads of quiet men sitting in the corners of third-class carriages on their way home from business. Those were the ideas which made every man and woman in England—or nearly all—deeply anxious for the success of Sanctions. Those were the ideas which made militarists out of pacifists and changed the whole temper, policy and tradition of the British Labour Party in the House of Commons, and all the left-minded and peace-minded men and women—or nearly all—who had signed that Peace Ballot put out by Lord Cecil and his friends.

It was an extraordinary chapter of history in human psychology, and for that reason is highly important and of much more than transient interest as an historical episode. It is not too much to say that the Italo-Abyssinian war was one of the turning-points of destiny. The failure of Sanctions against Italy has been the greatest defeat to British diplomacy in modern times. It has made the League of Nations impotent in the eyes of all aggressive nations. It has broken down many bridges above tides of passion. It has put Fear upon its throne.

We played our hand badly. It was a weak hand. Even now there are many mysteries. Is it true that when our Fleet went into the Mediterranean it was ill-equipped and inefficient, without ammunition for more than a few rounds? There were rush orders for naval shells in Sheffield armament factories. There were ugly stories going round. Our aircraft was no match for that of Italy, it was said. If

Mussolini knew that he knew that we were playing from a weak hand and called our bluff.

Mr. Anthony Eden stood up at Geneva and spoke brave words with a stern look in his dark eyes. But he must have known that he was playing from weak cards without a single trump. He knew—certainly he knew—that M. Laval, that little smiling man (now not so smiling, but looking agitated), had made a pact of friendship with Mussolini and had promised to give him a free hand in Abyssinia. How far then could he rely on France for drastic Sanctions or for united action?

M. Laval was greatly agitated by divided loyalties. French public opinion was mainly in favour of Italy, desperately earnest in its determination to avoid war with Italy. But Sanctions might lead to war. Mussolini might put up with a few sacrifices of food and luxuries, but he would not put up with anything which stopped his war machine. If oil sanctions were imposed he would fight. He would be bound to fight or lose everything. . . . But Signor Mussolini knew that France would not fight. He knew, or thought he knew, that Great Britain would not fight. He went straight ahead.

We played for time. Our Government was advised by its experts of the Army and Air Force that it would take Mussolini something like four years to smash the Abyssinians. In four years his resources would be exhausted. Even a mild form of Sanctions would strangle his economic position.

The experts were wrong.

There happened that episode of the Hoare-Laval plan for an arranged peace. Sir Samuel Hoare put before the Negus—Haile Selassie—a little map showing a new Abyssinia of which the best part would be given to Italy with other spheres of influence and control which would leave the Emperor with about half his former possessions. If he would agree to that compromise Signor Mussolini might stop his slaughter.

The Negus did not agree, Signor Mussolini did not think much of this plan. He wanted the whole of Abyssinia. When the Hoare-Laval plan was published it created a demonstration of opinion in Britain such as its history has seldom shown. Thousands of telegrams poured into the House of Commons. Most of them used the word betrayal. *The Times* published a long and passionate correspondence.

“It is not the Abyssinians but we who have been betrayed,” wrote one of these letter-writers expressing the bitterness and passion of many millions.

Mr. Baldwin was alarmed. Sir Samuel Hoare was recalled and spoke emotionally in the House of Commons. Mr. Anthony Eden became Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs. The Government was utterly humiliated, and bowed to this

storm of indignation, and professed their most ardent faith in Sanctions, Collective Security and the League of Nations.

But Mr. Anthony Eden in conversation with M. Laval could not bring himself or others to the point of stopping Signor Mussolini's supplies of oil, without which his aeroplanes could not have flown above Ethiopian villages, nor his tanks have moved along the roads.

A distinguished officer in the Air Force who had lately flown over Abyssinia told me one day:

"These Italian victories mean nothing. The Italians move forward and put their hands and heads into a hornets' nest. They have to withdraw rapidly. The Ethiopians will harass their lines of communication and cut up their rear-guards. It will take Mussolini another two years at least to break their resistance and another two years to get control."

In less than two months the Italian victory was announced.

(13)

The Chain of Consequence.

The weakness revealed by the League during the Abyssinian war, and the refusal of nations to risk general war in the name of Collective Security, was followed by immediate and continuing consequences, of which we have not yet seen the end.

Adolf Hitler thought the occasion good for regaining sovereign rights over his own territory by a series of dramatic acts. On March 7, 1936, German troops marched into the demilitarised zone of the Rhineland, contrary to a clause in the Pact of Locarno.

This act of technical aggression was accompanied by peace offers of a very extensive and comprehensive character. He offered to make pacts guaranteeing the inviolability of French and Belgian frontiers, and non-aggression pacts—similar to the one already existing between Germany and Poland—with all his neighbours. He offered to establish an Air Pact "automatically and effectively to prevent the danger of a sudden attack from the air." Having attained full sovereign rights for Germany he offered to return to the League of Nations on condition that the League Covenant should be separated from the Versailles Treaty and that "in a reasonable space of time" the colonial claims of Germany should be clarified in the course of friendly negotiations.

It is interesting to a student of psychology to note the different reactions of individuals and nations to such an offer. England was not deeply shocked by Hitler's

occupation of German territory. "We should have done the same thing" was a popular verdict. I confess that in my own unprincipled mind the repudiation of the clause in the Locarno Treaty was as nothing compared to the peace offer which accompanied it. But in France the reaction was precisely opposite. They paid no attention at all to the peace offer—which, if accepted with instant enthusiasm, would have given peace to Europe for another generation—and they raged against the breach of the Locarno Pact. Some of the French statesmen lost their heads. At a Cabinet meeting there was talk of mobilising the reserves and reoccupying the German cities. Albert Sarraut spoke to the French nation over the "wireless" with warlike words. Anybody might have thought that France had been invaded. The military chiefs calmed down the politicians. No preventive war was allowed, but Hitler's peace offer was cold-shouldered. Herr von Ribbentrop was lectured like a naughty boy in St. James's Palace by all the signatories of the Locarno Treaty.

An official German news agency stated that Germany would never return to the League. This was on the day following a speech by Mussolini to his usual audience in the Piazza Venezia when he announced his departure from the League. He spoke scornful and angry words. In spite of Sanctions and condemnation by fifty nations or so in the Assembly of the League he had held on to his membership card of that society, not quite sure whether it would not be useful to him one day. Now his policy was clear-cut. His previous hostility to Germany, his support of Austrian independence, his fears for the Italian line on the Brenner had gone. He had grasped the hand of Hitler. He had joined the Berlin-Rome axis. The refusal of Great Britain to recognise his conquest of Abyssinia had wounded his pride.

"We have wished for long years," he said, "to offer to the world a spectacle of unheard-of patience. But we have not forgotten and shall not forget the opprobrious attempt at economic strangulation of the Italian people, perpetrated at Geneva. Some people thought that at a certain moment the League of Nations would make a gesture of dutiful reparation. It has not done so. It has not wished to do so. The good intentions of certain Governments vanish as soon as their delegates come into contact with that destructive environment represented by the Geneva Council of Fools, manœuvred by morbid occult forces, enemies of our Italy and our revolution. In these circumstances our presence at the door of Geneva could not be tolerated any longer; it wounded our doctrine, our style and our martial temperament. The hour has come when choice has to be made in the dilemma—either inside or outside."

Il Duce leaned over the balcony of his palace and asked the crowd a question, as Mark Antony had asked a Roman crowd a question at the funeral of Cæsar.

“Inside?”

There was a tremendous shout of “No.”

“Outside?”

“Yes!”

Mussolini laughed and raised his fist.

“So then,” he said, “we shout, Enough! We turn our backs without regret on that tottering temple where men do not work for peace but prepare for war.”

The League lies stricken. There should be no pretence that it is capable of fulfilling all its obligations under the Covenant or of acting on behalf of Collective Security now that Japan, Germany and Italy are outside its doors. One must not forget that the United States have never been inside them.

(14)

The Break-down of Ideals.

There are still people who cherish that illusion with a self-deception which is pathetic. The British Labour Party seems to me particularly guilty in this respect, and many of the Left-minded intellectuals in this country. I can understand their dilemma and their reluctance to admit the downfall of their faith in the principles of the League. I shared their hope and their faith, but it seems to me intellectually dishonest, or if that is too harsh dangerously fanatical, to insist that the League as it now stands, or totters, as Mussolini would say, has any power to enforce its decisions, or its principles, upon nations who have torn up their contracts.

The leaders of the Labour Party and the leader-writers of Left-wing newspapers still raised the cry of Collective Security as though there were some magic in those words. They denounced the Government for cowardice because they did not stand fast to this policy against the Dictatorships of the Right. They would have had us fight Japan in the name of Collective Security. They would have had us intervene against General Franco in the name of Collective Security. They would have had us guarantee Czechoslovakia and Austria. They would have had us form an alliance with all those nations who are hostile to the Fascist or Nazi systems of rule, and in the name of Collective Security prepare for war against the bully States. That may be the best arrangement for war purposes. It is advocated by Mr. Winston Churchill who is not exactly a pacifist. It is surprisingly advocated by Sir Norman Angell who is, if not a pacifist, a would-be peace-maker. But it is not in accordance with pure faith in the ideals of the League which was not invented to create two blocs of hostile powers preparing warlike measures against each other, but for conciliation between

all nations sitting at the same council table. The framers of the League did not envisage a Society of Nations composed of a clique inspired by faith in one ideology, getting together for defensive or offensive purposes against another clique who held some other view of life. The whole idea of Collective Security, supported by Article XVI with its duty to impose Sanctions, economic, financial and military, against a bandit nation, was first that it should be collective and secondly secure. But neither of those conditions is now present in the League. They were, to tell the truth, never there, as soon as it was known that the United States had refused to join this Club of Good Companions. It became increasingly false when only Great Britain, France and Russia, that Oriental mystery—remained among the Big Powers sitting at the Council table. The principles of Collective Security remain as the ultimate hope of law, but to pretend now that they have the requisite force behind them is to create most deadly dangers leading directly to war on many fronts. That may be forced upon us by Destiny, but do not let us indulge in the make-believe that by forming one group of Powers against another we are upholding the spirit of the League.

For the League was not meant for partial but for universal application.

Let us be terribly frank in the interests of truth, without which there is no wisdom.

This League of Nations in which I believed—or at least hoped—like millions of others, did not always uphold international justice or establish a reign of international law as many of us thought it would, given time and loyalty. It upheld international injustice rooted in the Peace Treaties which had carved up Austria and Hungary and imposed impossible penalties upon Germany. It was used by France and Britain to maintain the *status quo* in a world which by any law of nature could not remain in that rigid framework for ever. It did not use the machinery for revision, change or readjustment but for the stabilisation of ill-drawn frontiers and the subjection of oppressed minorities, or vanquished peoples. There was no elasticity. There was no generosity, because of fear and a guilty conscience. How could the League work for justice with that dreadful treaty behind it? How could it work for peace when for years it was merely an instrument for imposing the decisions of the French Foreign Office after friendly conversation with the British Foreign Office?

It did not, and could not, establish a code of international law because its members refused to submit their rights as sovereign States to any higher authority invested in the League, and were inflamed by a national selfishness which had no sense of obedience to law if their own interests were touched. We put our faith in an illusion always by the hope that there would be a change of heart, and that nations would seek safety in law for their own defence against universal anarchy. Many of

the little nations struggled for that. Millions of peoples in many countries prayed for that, and now and then believed their prayers had been heard.

The League had done good work from time to time in its loans to Austria, its aid to Greek refugees, its protection of Russian and other exiles deprived of nationality and passport facilities. The work of the International Labour Bureau had been of great value in research and influence. Several times as I have recorded here the League stopped impending wars and stamped out the fires. There was nothing amiss with its Secretariat either in idealism, sincerity or service. These men and women at Geneva worked without stint for ideals in which they believed, disheartened constantly because their labours were thwarted by the cynicism of the Big Pots, yet going on again in the hope that the League spirit would prevail over this narrow nationalism. All that vast amount of intelligence, team work and spiritual purpose to make a better kind of world, and to give security to peace, cannot all be wasted. It still expresses the hopes and ideals of millions of minds.

Because the League lies stricken there is no proof that its ideals were false. The Ten Commandments are not obeyed by all who profess to believe in them, but that does not make them false. Those who jeered at the League from the beginning and now shout exultantly: "We told you so," are among the assassins of the League. It is they who are responsible for its failure and for the situation in which we now find ourselves. The die-hard haters of Germany who insisted upon impossible reparations and sent round-robins to Lloyd George at the Peace Conference to "ginger him up" lest he should show any leniency to the ex-enemy, helped Poincaré to ensure the victory of Hitler and the rearming of Germany. The nationalists of our country and others despised the League because its supporters wished to substitute international law for national selfishness and international anarchy. They did not denounce the League because it was shackled by the injustice of the Treaties, but because they hated justice. They announced its death time and time again, exultantly, not because they grieved that it had failed to conciliate nations, but because they despised the spirit of conciliation. They need lay no flattering unction to their souls because they can say with a smirk: "We told you so!" Are they very pleased with the state of Europe? Do they feel very secure now that the League lies bleeding?

That League is still capable of doing good work for the present and awaits the future when—if intelligence prevails—its principles will be re-affirmed by all civilised nations. No doubt it will be modified and reshaped with different rules and different methods.

Speaking at the hundredth session of the League on January 27th of last year Mr. Anthony Eden made an oration by the patient's couch in his best bedside

manner. I say that without scoffing. Mr. Eden knows as well as any man the weaknesses revealed by the League and the dangers lurking in the use of its instrument beyond its present power to enforce. He spoke, I am certain, with sincerity:

“The League,” he said, “can legitimately be proud of its achievements but there can be no advantage in shutting our eyes to certain events however regrettable and however much we may deplore them. By the defection of some of our more important members the League is now faced with the fact that the area of co-operation is restricted, and that its ability to fulfil all the functions originally contemplated for it is thereby reduced. We are compelled regretfully to recognise the fact but His Majesty’s Government do not think it inappropriate at the moment, when they have acknowledged the repudiation of the League of Nations in some quarters, to declare that their faith in the ideals which inspired it remains unaltered.”

Mr. Eden reiterated several times his view that the League was not in a position to do all that was hoped of it. It was a warning to fanatics, and enthusiasts for the system of Collective Security, who would still make the League an instrument of coercion without the general force of nations behind it. But he stood fast to the principles of international co-operation on the basis of respect for international law.

That international law does not exist. It is necessary to formulate it. Somehow or other the League by that name, or any other, with new rules and new methods, must be restored to general respect and allegiance. By some means of persuasion and reconciliation one great nation—Germany—must be induced to join this newly reconstructed Society of Nations. Without Germany there can be no League. Without a League there can be no advance to international co-operation—at least that is very doubtful. Was it beyond all hopes that Germany under Hitler might be willing to co-operate in the rebuilding of law based upon the principles of justice, equity and common sense? For a time I clung to that hope but now have lost it.

IV

The New Germany

When I walked about Berlin twenty years after a war in which an Englishman only saw Germans if they were dead, or behind bayonets or machine-guns (unless he was their prisoner or they were his), I looked into the faces of the passers-by and tried to read the riddle of their minds.

How were they getting on under this Nazi régime which demands service and, if need be, sacrifice, from each one of them? Were they having to tighten their belts because their leaders thought that guns were more important than butter at this time of national rearmament? These crowds streaming across the Potsdamerplatz, these business-men hurrying through the Tiergarten, these pleasure-seekers along the Kurfürstendamm, were they really excited in their souls about the return of the colonies? What were they saying to each other behind closed doors in their own homes? There were so many questions I wanted to ask them.

Were they aware, I wondered, of the anxieties in other lands about this Germany under Nazi rule, and of the suspicions created by their new system of government? In England the newspapers carried on their serial story of war clouds over Europe, the speeding-up of British armaments, the tension of the international situation. In all the talk I heard about the risk of war Germany was in the minds of the conversationalists. Hitler's repudiation of the Versailles Treaty, his tearing-up of other pacts, the departure of Germany from the League, the alliance with Italy, the tremendous programme of rearmament now being fulfilled, and the spirit and philosophy of National Socialism, had had profound repercussions throughout Europe. They had raised the grisly spectre of war in many minds. Because of what was happening in Germany all the armament factories across the frontiers were working at full pressure. Military and Naval budgets were being increased stupendously at the expense of social service. The prophets of woe were shortening their time-limits for the next catastrophe.

In England, which was rearming also, under a Government which put new and tremendous burdens on a heavily taxed people, opinions were sharply and passionately divided about this German war menace. There was a genuine desire, I found, among many individuals and groups to establish—if possible—friendly relations with Germany. The ex-service men in the British Legion, with branches in every town and many villages, had no enmity for the Germans. They were more critical of France, as I discovered when I spoke to them once and answered their

questions. They thought France had made most of the trouble. In social and political circles there was a growing belief in the necessity of Anglo-German friendship for the sake of world peace. Why, they asked, had we not responded more cordially to Hitler's offers of peace? Why did we insist upon disbelieving him? Was there any real evidence that he intended to attack other nations on his eastern frontiers? Was it not advisable that we should find some way out of the difficulties raised by his demands for colonial possessions?

In *The Times*—that sounding board of public opinion in England—there had been many letters lately on these points by men of great authority and distinction.

There had been movements of groups behind the scenes—"political intrigues" they were called by the critics—urging the Government to send someone out to Germany to talk with Hitler in an informal way—someone of vision and character and authority who might break down the reserves of official caution and formal phraseology. It should be a man who might look into the mind of that strange mystic who guided the destiny of Germany. It was Lord Halifax who went on that mission and came back with a report which on the whole was reassuring, and favoured further conversations.

But, as I remembered when I walked in Berlin and talked with many people, there was still in my country a great force of public opinion deeply suspicious of Hitler's sincerity when he spoke of peace, deeply hostile to his leadership and system, gravely apprehensive of the danger to world peace which they believed was menaced by German rearmament, by so much marching and drilling and flag-waving, by racial self-consciousness, intolerance, and the denial of liberty and free-thought throughout the nation. The British Labour Party made no pretence as to whom in their minds was the enemy of Democracy and all liberty, though with a twisted logic they include Russia among the democracies and Stalin among the friends of liberty. The intellectuals of the Left, even the intellectuals of no party at all, regarded the German Nazis as the enemies of all that belongs to the finer qualities of civilisation. Are they not persecutors of races and religions? Are they not getting ready for an aggressive war against the last sanctuaries of freedom? . . . I remembered conversations like that with friends of mine who said these things with passionate impatience, even with anger, at any suggestion of friendship with Germany. That, they thought, would be a betrayal of honour. It would be a surrender to evil. It would be falling into a trap which has sharp teeth.

In Berlin, as before in other parts of Germany, I found every one with whom I came into touch anxious for friendship with England. One has only to be English to be received with cordiality and every expression of good-will. One finds that in the

shops, in the streets, in the hotels, and in German homes, if one has the chance of being invited to them. It is impossible to doubt the sincerity of this. It is not dictated by any propaganda under the direction of Herr Goebbels, for as a matter of fact German propaganda under Herr Goebbels has been hostile and abusive at critical times. It is in the heart of the German folk, and after any visit, however brief, I personally feel a sense of the tragedy that this good-will—if it lasts—should not prevail over our political differences. High politics are not so friendly as the common folk.

That same thought was expressed to me by a German of high distinction in the diplomatic service who took me aside in his club in Berlin after I had lunched with him.

“I have been in many parts of the world—including India,” he told me, “and I have always noticed that if a German and an Englishman are in the same room with people of other countries they always drift towards each other and have a mutual sympathy and understanding. In some ways—with many differences no doubt—our characters are alike. But somehow we seem to be under a malign destiny—or an evil spell—which puts us at cross purposes.”

Some of the Germans are apt to exaggerate our likeness to each other, and that makes it difficult for them to understand English hostility to some of their methods and our criticism of their present social system—if they believe in it themselves. As I ventured to tell a group of them—the differences in our minds are as important as the likenesses. The Germans like discipline. The English hate it. The Germans like to get together for marching, singing, drilling. The typical Englishman is a lone dog who only rarely can be tempted to play or work with his fellows in the mass. The Germans have a genius for organisation. The English have a genius for ‘muddling through’ without it. The English believe in liberty even if it means squalor, filth and misery. The Germans have a leaning towards hero-worship and blind obedience to leadership. We have a leaning against it—perhaps because we have no heroes or have lost our faith in them! We believe in democracy, or the illusion of democracy, a word into which the Germans put many sinister meanings because of its association with Red Revolution. We are tolerant of ideas, even though we disagree with them, because we believe in the open valve for the escape of gas. The Germans think tolerance is weakness and very dangerous, because it leads to blood and murder. We are enormously traditional, and yet not afraid of eccentricity and individual rebels. The Germans have deep racial memories and now have revived a tribal code which does not tolerate the eccentric, the rebel, the non-conformist. Are there not a thousand differences of thought and instinct and character? Perhaps if we recognised them

more we might understand each other better.

(2)

Social Economy.

Last year before the September crisis the German people, as I saw them in Berlin, seemed to me fairly content with their way of life and not too hard-pressed by poverty. The working-classes are on a low wage scale and the middle-classes have to make many economies—partly because of the enormous expenditure in armaments and public works. Nothing is wasted in Germany. Everything is used. It is only by such rigid cheese-paring that the State can fulfil its enforced plan to make Germany self-supporting with a managed currency which does not carry, and is not allowed to be carried, beyond its boundaries.

Nothing is wasted! Every afternoon after school-hours gangs of young boys and girls go round to the houses in their districts to collect the bones which have been used in the household kitchens. They have been placed ready for the young collectors. They are taken to a central depot where they are made into buttons, knife-handles, and many other things. All the old papers are collected and pulped again; all the rags; all the tins; all the old iron; all the tin-foil in cigarette packets. Food uneaten at restaurants, if not touched by the customers, must not be thrown away. Germans must wear shorter shirts to save material.

Most of the people get enough to eat, as far as I could find out, though in the cities there was a shortage of butter, milk and eggs. Eggs were scarce because grain is costly. Butter and milk were scarce because of the high price of food for cattle. One explanation was given to me which may account for some of this scarcity and was, at least, interesting because it came from a young working-woman.

“Hitler,” she said, “has brought six million people back to work. They are all earning wages at least high enough for them to afford more food than they used to get. Agriculture has not caught up with this new consumption.”

There is a German word always used by the workers themselves when one asks about their economic condition. It is *knapp*. It means that things are a bit short. I remember hearing it twenty years ago when I went into a German homestead after the Armistice.

“Have you enough food hereabouts?” I asked.

“Es ist knapp,” answered the father of the family rather sombrely.

And so it was a year ago in many German homes, but not more than that, I was told, and in any case the Winter Hilfe organisation gives the working people a bit

extra to carry them over.

The working people earn wages which are not too bad, though not too good. Out of his wages the German worker is taxed on what he gets. Ten per cent goes direct to the State for social services; another ten per cent has to be paid to his societies for unemployment and other purposes. That is a heavy tax for him and he does not pay it with any enthusiasm.

“There are many *Schimpfer*” (grouzers), said a German friend of mine in Berlin, “but on the whole the mass of the German folk are content with this system and by no means wish to alter it. There is no getting away from the fact that before Hitler came to power unemployment was eating into the heart and spirit of the nation. They remember their dark years. Whatever you may think about the Nazis they must at least have the credit of tackling this social problem with energy and courage and bringing German manhood back to work and wages, and self-respect.”

A great deal is done for the working-classes to sweeten things and to prevent bitterness or revolt. There is, for instance, the Winter Hilfe organisation.

I saw it working in Berlin. It is certainly impressive, and admirable, as a nation-wide system in social service. We have nothing so good in England; nothing that can be compared with it in range and efficiency. Its main object is to give that “bit extra” to working families and individuals on their rather poor standard of food supplies and other necessities of life such as boots and clothing. It is not a “dole” for out-of-works and social derelicts. It is to augment supplies, to give a better margin of comfort in the homes, to replace the wear and tear of daily work. It is not allowed to be regarded as “charity” in any form, though there is a tremendous propaganda—what the Americans call a “Drive”—to obtain funds for it in every city and village in Germany. Once a month everyone, of whatever class, from Hitler downwards, has a one-dish meal and puts the price of the usual meal into the collecting-boxes. Once a year into the streets go all the leaders of the Nazi party, whatever offices they hold, to shake these collecting-boxes under the noses of the passers-by as I have seen. It is not well to refuse a few coins however small. No one thinks of refusing General Goering, or Dr. Goebbels, or any other officers who go joking through the crowds.

I saw the net result of all this in Berlin. I went to a warehouse where the people come with tickets to replenish their wardrobes, or to get their children fitted out. They are not fudged off with any old thing. These are new clothes well cut, and in great variety of shapes and sizes. I saw young girls going along the lines of frocks. They could make a free choice of colour and style. I saw them trying on new shoes. One of the girls wanted a pair of dancing-shoes and was dissatisfied with what she saw. She wanted, so it appeared, a pair with high heels. She was dissuaded

therefrom by the woman in charge but nothing would satisfy her but a pair with heels three inches high, which presently she received. Working-mothers brought their small boys for new overcoats. They looked to me very smart little overcoats, well-shaped, stout, and of good stuff. Some of them had been cut out of overcoats worn by German business-men but looked as good as new for small Germans.

We went round to district store-houses where the food supplies are kept for the families of that quarter. Every family and individual is card-indexed, street by street. The officials who visit them know their conditions of life and health to the last baby born. They get their tickets for extra supplies, and we saw some of them coming to present them. On the counters were packets of cocoa, sugar, beans, cheese and other foodstuffs, enough perhaps for a month's supply as a "bit extra" for working families.

All the work of organisation, card-indexing and book entries for this Winter Hilfe is done voluntarily. We went into headquarter offices where men of all ranks and ages were busy at their books.

"Don't any of them get paid?" I asked.

"Not one!" I was told.

Among them was a "bookie" who gives his spare time to this job. Men on night-work put in a few hours' service during the day. All over Germany there are numbers of these voluntary helpers who devote themselves to this service without reward. It is done with German thoroughness for detail, and a regard for the pride and self-respect of the German workers. In England with its enormous reserves of wealth, and its inexhaustible sources of charity, we have not gone so far in such national organisation. It is, of course, only a panacea, and a perfect social system ought not to need it—but where is that perfect State?

The young man who showed me these things—Dr. Hetzler by name, and a very frank and charming fellow as I found—had lately been to England and had wandered about London at night. One evening, he confessed to me, he had been shocked by some of the things he had seen—homeless people sleeping under arches, hordes of boys and girls coming out into Trafalgar Square at night like young wolves to get free food, miserable men creeping down into the crypt of St. Martin's to sleep on bare benches. He was horrified by the squalor of the London slums, by the ill-dressed, unhealthy looking people, and by the conditions of overcrowding.

"How do you tolerate these things?" he asked me. "England is so much richer than Germany—you have your great Empire!—and yet you will allow these conditions to exist—and your Liberal newspapers attack our Nazi system which allows no such misery!"

I confess these words abashed me, and I found it hard to put up any kind of defence, though I told him that many of the people who slept under arches could go into the lodging-houses provided for them by the municipality and other bodies. I told him that those young people in Trafalgar Square, getting demoralised and getting vicious, drifted into this life as an adventure which appeals to them and then can't escape from it.

"It is terrible," said Dr. Hetzler. "It shouldn't be allowed."

I agreed, with a groan.

"Why don't you put them into labour camps where they would get fit and learn to use a spade and handle the earth, and do decent work which would give them self-respect?"

That is what we should do, but our tradition of "liberty" does not allow us to conscript youth, even to rescue them from vice, and a criminal way of life, and the loss of their souls. Perhaps we make a fetish sometimes of liberty, and worship an illusion; for where is the liberty of a working-mother with a family in one room? What good is a liberty which leads to C₃ bodies, and produces an enormous population of mental defectives or young criminals?

There are no slums in Berlin. At least I have never been able to find them. With young Dr. Hetzler I went out to the East End and the outer Circle where the Nazis and their predecessors have built model tenements for the working-classes. They are good to see. These great blocks of dwellings look light and airy and well designed. They have flower-boxes in the windows and gardens, or courtyards where the children play. They look as good as some of the blocks of flats put up in London for the middle-classes who pay very high rents for very small rooms. In Berlin the rents are controlled, not only for these working tenements, but in all districts, so that the wages of the working-folk, on a lower scale than ours, are not burdened so heavily by rents and rates.

(3)

Strength through Joy.

On the social side, at least, these Nazis are doing admirable work for the masses of the common folk, as it is only fair to them to say. There is something fine and imaginative in that branch of their activity which they call *Kraft durch Freude*. Strength through joy. They recognise that all work and no play makes Jack a dull boy even if his name is Hans or Fritz. They have tackled the problem of the people's

leisure. They recognise the need of entertainment, laughter, drama, games and sport. Perhaps even they have gone sport-mad, spending vast sums of money on their stadiums, and pressing youth too hard, possibly, in physical exercises. From a hospital nurse I heard that some of these boys are overstrained in the Labour Camps and that there is a distressing number of cases of tuberculosis. I do not know how far that goes, for in the mass throughout Germany youth looks splendid in physique and high-spirited.

What about the middle-aged and elderly? What fun is there for them in this Germany which enforces hard work, long hours, rigid economy and continual drudgery. Something is done to take them out of this and to give them colour, and music, and a sense of beauty.

The Nazis have taken over the Great Playhouse which Reinhardt used for his immense productions. It is now called the People's Theatre. I went there one night with a small party in which were two officials of the Nazi party and their ladies. The great house was crowded in every seat by a typical audience of working- and middle-class people. They were all respectably dressed, and certainly they were all enjoying themselves at the performance of a light opera in which the story centred round the son of Napoleon Bonaparte—the Young Eagle—at the Austrian Court. It was a tragic theme but not without comedy, romance and beauty. The German company acted well and sang well. It was an elaborate production with costly scenes.

No seat in the great theatre costs more than sixpence and it is a question of luck which seat one gets—high up in the gallery or in the front row of stalls. As the people come in they pick their tickets out of urns, single tickets or family tickets, and then know what fortune has given them. In this big playhouse, fantastically and wonderfully decorated, there is a view of the stage from every place and the acoustics are good.

I had a queer thought in my mind, when between the acts we strolled up and down the corridors among the young students, and clerks, and shop-girls, and packers, and sorters, and mechanics and factory hands who had come here so cheaply for a fine entertainment. It was a thought I did not mention to my German friends.

"This reminds me of Russia," I said within myself. "This is like what they do in Moscow at the old Imperial Opera House as I saw in the early time of the Soviet régime."

But in Berlin there were no people starving to death—it was before the 'pogrom'—no former aristocrats and *bourgeoisie* sweeping snow in the streets

under police guards, no batches of prisoners waiting to be shot at dawn, no millions of children famine-stricken, no hordes of boys and girls roving the country-side like starved wolves, as once I saw in Russia.

That *Kraft durch Freude* plan may, no doubt, be called a subtle form of propaganda to keep the masses loyal to Hitler and this Nazi régime which denies them free speech and free-thought. Bread and circuses! It is easy to say that, but in other countries—England, for example—we might do with a few more circuses; that is to say the best drama by the best actors, at prices within reach of the labouring classes; noble music by fine orchestras; ballets by the best dancers; country holidays for next to nothing; sea cruises on holiday ships of 25,000 tons costing four guineas for a fortnight. There are five of those ships now at the disposal of this “Strength through Joy” organisation, and there is great competition for those pleasure trips on which there is no distinction of class because of something very odd happening in Germany.

(4)

The Labour Camps.

In Germany the sense of caste is being broken down a good deal. In the labour camps to which every boy has to go for six months before he does his military training, which lasts another two years—it is a long spell out of his young life—there is very little class feeling, I am told. The boys work together in the fields or woods, drill and play and march together, in an equality of toil and comradeship. It’s a hard life down on the earth. It is no joke to get up at 4.30 and go out to wet fields. Spades have to shine like quicksilver after a day’s digging. In the huts the boys have to keep things spick and span. What does class distinction mean to boys marching shoulder to shoulder to marshes which have to be drained, or to roads they are making yard by yard?

“They’re all very decent fellows on the whole,” said one of them to whom I talked in a camp near Munich when I first visited one of these places. “It’s no use having a sense of superiority! It’s not a bad life from the point of view of comradeship and physical fitness. But it’s a great waste of time intellectually.”

It makes them as hard as nails unless, being delicate, they go down with rheumatism, or tuberculosis, as that hospital nurse hinted to me. The first five weeks are the worst.

We went to some of the camps round Berlin and in the neighbourhood of Potsdam, and found them very well laid out, with good kitchens and dining-rooms

and some attempt to give them a touch of grace by decoration and flower gardens, and vases filled with flowers on the tables.

The young officers in charge of the camps seem to be keen, enthusiastic, and good-natured, though I have no doubt that discipline is pretty stiff and under a bad-tempered man might be hellish. We did not see many of the boys, who were mostly at work in the fields, but the few we saw seemed full of beans, and by no means doleful. I had seen others in Bavaria and certainly those lads had been very cheery, and were good enough to laugh uproariously at my attempts to joke with them in German. Their health is looked after, and there were no hospital cases in the camps near Berlin, I noticed. Because of the early hour of rising—a horrid thought to a man who likes his bed!—the day is split in two. There is an hour's rest in bed in the afternoon after a midday meal and labour is restricted to seven hours a day, which some of the boys told me is not too much for them.

But it is a hard life, as I have said, for these boys in the Labour Camps. A German mother told me how hard it was for her own boy. He was put to work on breaking stones and came home with his hands in a fearful state, cut and bleeding.

"My hands are too soft!" he explained without complaint. "It will be all right when they get hardened. Do you think I might have a pair of father's old gloves?"

He wore the old gloves until they were cut to ribbons, but his hands hardened.

Sometimes he had to get up at 3.30 in the morning and nearly always at 5.30. He was often exhausted in every limb. But he became strong, broad-shouldered and hard as nails. Later he went down into a mine and worked with the miners. They were a tough crowd, but he came to love them for their fine qualities and they were proud to have him with them, for he bears a noble name and they thought it wonderful that he should make no fuss about it and behave like one of them. When he left they said: "You will be an officer one day. Don't forget your old chums. When you see one of us in the ranks you will know how we live and what we are. You'll understand."

"Sometimes I used to be very worried about him," said his German mother. "But now I know he has been through the worst and come out of it very strong and manly. After that experience everything will seem light to him. He has just begun his two years' military service and he is enjoying it immensely. It is not nearly so hard as that Labour Camp."

She thought that this training and discipline with boys of all classes working together was the best thing Hitler had done.

"There is something splendid about it," she said. "It creates a new pride of manhood. It makes a healthy nation and helps to break down social

misunderstanding.”

She had just been to Eton and was quite shocked by the sight of the boys going about with their hands in their pockets, and slouching shoulders and pallid faces. The rooms were dark and dismal.

“The old school ought to be kept,” she said, “as a museum of how boys lived in the Middle Ages. There ought to be bright new buildings where modern boys could study in healthy conditions. To me your Eton is dreadful. I could not help thinking that the boys would be very much better if they had six months in a Labour Camp.”

I was inclined to agree with her.

(5)

The Four Years' Plan.

A friend of mine who returned at that time from Germany—it was Valentine Williams, the novelist—amused me by one of his remarks.

“If any one were to prick me with a pin,” he said, “I should ooze the Four Years' Plan!”

He had been stuffed with facts and figures about the immense national effort of the German people, under a driving leadership, to make themselves self-sufficient as far as possible in all the essential supplies of foodstuffs and raw material necessary to their existence and security, and to intensify their industrial and agricultural output in order to maintain a good standard of living and extend their world trade.

This Four Years' Plan was the absorbing interest of German administration early last year, and obsessed the minds of its Labour chiefs, industrialists, manufacturers, scientists, engineers and economists. With the German genius for propaganda and the stimulation of mass enthusiasm every citizen was inspired by the belief that he must “do his bit,” however humble his work may be, with spade or pick or plough. The results of this national effort are already visible, even to the visitor, in such outward proofs of efficiency and big-scale planning as the great highways upon which only motor traffic is allowed, so that traffic casualties in Germany have been reduced by two-thirds. Swamps and marshes have been drained for new agricultural areas. Vast schemes are afoot to increase the output of steel, such as the Hermann Goering ironworks plan now being carried out between Brunswick and Goslar where mine-shafts are being sunk, and where thousands of working-class families living in wooden huts have been brought from other districts of Germany. The cost is enormous and the whole scheme has been criticised by experts, but the Government drives on with the one purpose of getting more iron ore instead of importing it from

other countries.

Laboratories and search departments have grappled, not unsuccessfully, with the production of synthetic rubber and petrol, for which Germany was completely dependent on foreign sources of supply. I handled some of their rubber tyres and they looked, to a non-expert eye, as good as the real thing. In many parts of Germany new factories are being built with working-class dwellings around them. In those factories the shortage of raw materials from abroad is replaced by *Ersatz* stuff—substitutes in the way of textiles, artificial leather, artificial cotton and all sorts of materials which deceive the eye and satisfy the essential needs. They are open to criticism and humorous comment. *The Times* correspondent in Berlin reported the gibe that with some sausages, as with the latest shirts, a disturbing warning is given that they are not to be boiled. Germans complain that their new suits look shabby after a few days' wear, and they envy the texture worn by their English friends. But those are minor drawbacks to the Four Years' Plan with its adventurous purpose of making Germany self-sufficing, and on the whole they were taken good-humouredly, until lately the strain has increased.

The whole economic structure of Germany, including these strenuous efforts to be self-sufficient, is adventurous and experimental in character. They are working on a currency which has no gold backing and cannot be dealt with on the foreign exchanges. In that sense it is artificial, like the *Ersatz* stuff used in the factories. But it has another backing more valuable than gold, and that is the industry and faith of a great people; and Germany has given a striking lesson to the world in showing that gold is one of the illusions of the human mind which too long has been a fetish, tyrannising in its effects. They have also shown the almost inexhaustible resources of national credit based not upon reserves of wealth in the banks but upon the energy and production of a disciplined and efficient nation. That is on the credit side of Germany, but it is, of course, a policy injurious to the well-being of world trade when such a nation, which formerly was a great merchant in all markets, buying foodstuffs and raw materials from the producing countries in exchange for her own manufactured goods, should shut herself up behind high walls, and, by an iron system of economy and organisation, develop this intense economic nationalism.

All critics of National Socialism make this one of their accusations, and see the most sinister motives behind the Four Years' Plan. Germany, they believe, is preparing for war. All these wonderful motor-roads are for military purposes. All this terrific strain to promote self-sufficiency is to ensure supplies in war-time. In any case it is, no doubt, a part of that narrow, self-contained nationalism which is the greatest danger to Europe. It is unfortunate that the German Government is

withdrawing more and more from collaboration with the rest of the world because of a racial egotism amounting to a kind of mania.

It is certainly true that a great deal of this effort is devoted to the needs of German rearmament, but it is also true that this economic policy was forced upon Germany by world conditions, and especially by the abandonment of Free Trade by ourselves and others. It was one of the consequences of Versailles and the reparation clauses. The only way in which the German people could hope to pay off part of that tribute was by the mass production of cheap manufactured goods and an intensive export trade in all markets. For some years this happened. Germany was almost successful in recapturing the markets of the world for her vast industrial output. But it was the economic nationalism of other countries which thwarted this adventure of German industry working on a low-scale wage. The United States raised their tariffs more steeply. France invented the system of "quotas," imitated by other European countries. The small nations, jealous of their new industries, put up their tariff walls to impassable heights. Great Britain, which had built up its enormous wealth in Free Trade, forsook its traditions and entered the arena of economic conflict by tariffs, quotas, embargoes, and all the methods of preventing the entry of other people's goods, until the natural ebb and flow of commerce was dammed up into stagnant pools. That was the main underlying cause of the "economic blizzard" which swept across the world, destroying the old structure of international finance, the credit of nations, the fortunes of individuals, the security of the banking system, the markets of those who produced the fruits of the earth, and the chance of employment for millions of men.

It was from those conditions that Germany, most stricken by this economic stagnation, found herself compelled to adopt the policy of self-sufficiency, and it was the National Socialist Government which took the job in hand with a resolution and efficiency—no doubt with some areas of inefficiency and error—which is astonishing and alarming to foreign observers.

"It seems to us strange," said Herr von Ribbentrop, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, "when we are told that Germany is isolating herself economically and pursuing a policy of 'autarchy,' and desires no longer trade relations with foreign countries. I would say to these foreign critics that this is the reverse of the truth. If we are to speak of self-sufficiency, the pace was set by other countries. I may mention Roosevelt's economic policy, and above all that of Ottawa, which were developed long before the Four Years' Plan. Our plan is merely a natural method of self-help. The vital point is that a higher standard of living will result to the German people from the production of raw materials from domestic sources, and this must create the

demand for necessities which can only be satisfied in the long run by world trade. A Germany which is more prosperous than it is to-day will be able to buy more than bare necessities from abroad.”

Germany bases part of her claim for the return of the colonies upon this hunger for raw materials. They would be a market for German manufactured goods and could be developed more intensively by the aid of German currency not now valid in other countries. Colonial possessions would create new opportunities for engineering and other works, for German labour and German money, and even if their products were not sold exclusively to the German people their marketing would create credits in other countries, thus increasing world trade and a more natural balance.

This Four Years’ Plan, national in its organisation and scale, is a drain upon the resources of the country at the present time, but before long will be productive of new wealth. It is a temporary expedient which in time, let us hope, will be modified by the more favourable conditions of world affairs, if there is general appeasement and more reciprocity between nations. Meanwhile it drives ahead, with a terrific engine of propaganda and organisation behind it.

Recent reports show that Germany is piling up a big deficit, that her export trade is dwindling, and that the strain of enormous armaments cannot long be maintained.

(6)

German Socialism.

I found a paradox which kept coming back to my mind in Berlin when I studied the social service side of the Nazi régime. It is strange, I thought—paradoxical!—that this Nazi State is attacked, criticised, and abused most fiercely by our English Socialists. And yet here, surely, in many ways, is the actual achievement of the Socialist ideal. Being a confirmed individualist, hating discipline, and the card-indexing of humanity, and all forms of State control—perhaps with exaggerated prejudice—I can understand why minds of my type find it hard to reconcile their philosophy with this kind of rule. But why should our Labour men and intellectuals of the Left who believe in State control and State Socialism find nothing to praise in this system in Germany, though they regard Russian Communism as the ideal of humanity? The workings of the human mind are very strange!

The same thought was expressed by an English friend of mine in Berlin—a man whose job it is to study the political and social life of Germany.

“What makes me impatient,” he said, “is the intellectual dishonesty—or shall I say blindness?—of our little intellectuals on the Left. They don’t realise—they refuse

to admit—that German National Socialism is a real form of State Socialism. They are so extremely illogical! They get excited and emotional when Communists—a pretty murderous lot!—are put into concentration camps. They don't care a damn about the Social Democrats. They get up petitions for Dimitroff—one of their heroes!—who is now preaching violence against British rule in India. They are the champions of men like Toller and Bauer who would not be tolerated in England. They get their facts all wrong! They have no sense of proportion. They are excited and enraged if a German pastor is imprisoned but don't turn a hair when eighty men are executed in Russia. They fail to remember the Reign of Terror and the mass murders and executions of Russian priests. Why don't our newspapers—the *News-Chronicle* for instance or the *New Statesman*—report what is good, even from their point of view, instead of turning their searchlight always upon what is not so good? We want people who can come to Germany and see facts as they are, and report the things they see without prejudice one way or the other. Heaven knows there is a lot to criticise in this country—perhaps there are things to criticise in ours!—but let's be fair and honest about it. There are some things in which Germany is giving the world a lead, on the social side.”

That paradox of hatred by English Socialists for National Socialism entered my head again when I was talking to a young man in the German Foreign Office. He was a good type and spoke English so perfectly that it was difficult to believe that he was German. He had our easy English manners and might have been President of the Oxford Union, though as a matter of fact he had studied at Edinburgh University. Recently before I met him he had been taking a group of English visitors round Germany to show them what the Nazis are doing in the way of social service. Among them were three English Socialists and Labour members.

“I could see that a fearful struggle was going on in their minds,” he told me. “They were really impressed by what they saw. They had to admit that some of the work for the community fulfils many of their own ideals, not yet attained in England. But they hated to think so, and they dare not go back and tell their own party and people, who regard us as persecutors and oppressors and won't hear anything to the contrary.”

Yet when I came back to England I met one of the Parliamentary Labour leaders who dared to say so, at least privately.

“We have something to learn from these Dictatorships,” he told me with a smile. “The fact is that however much one may dislike them as a menace to liberty and peace they are doing some remarkable things to improve the conditions of the working classes. We ought to adopt some of their methods and ideas.”

I was interested in this side of German life—who wouldn't be interested to find out how the people of a great nation are living under a new régime which even now is only five and a half years old and is one of the great forces which are dividing the world—unless we are very careful—into two hostile “ideologies”?

But it was not to study these things that I went again before the crisis to Berlin. I wanted to find out what was happening in the minds of the people. I wanted to find out what was their view of the chances of peace or war. What, in high quarters, was the latest trend of their foreign policy. Was there still time for an Anglo-German understanding or were we drifting further apart? What was going on in the mind of that man who holds the destiny of these people in his hand? Was he, as some people in England were saying, only a puppet worked by more powerful forces? Was he preparing for some new aggressive act, though he had promised that “the time of surprises” was over, now that the last penal clause in the Versailles Treaty had been removed by his own actions—now that Germany had regained her sovereign rights over her own land and was strong enough to resist attack from any quarter? When he spoke of his will for peace did he mean peace—and at what price? All that was what I wanted to know if by any chance I could find the answers to those questions.

I met many interesting people who answered all my questions with, apparently, great candour. Sometimes, I thought, they spoke with astonishing and dangerous frankness, even in public places, so that I became alarmed for them lest they should be overheard. I cautioned one of them who was sitting with me in the corner seat of a restaurant not far from where an elderly man was reading a newspaper. We were talking high politics and this German was criticising the Nazis for this and that.

“Look out!” I said in a low voice, glancing towards the man behind the newspaper.

My German friend laughed. A good lunch and good wine had made him careless, perhaps.

“I don't think he's dangerous,” he answered. “He is a man of a certain age. He would agree with everything I say.”

He was saying some hard things against National Socialism and its leaders. But I noticed that after my warning he practised what is known as “*der deutsche Blick*”—the German look—which is a constant turning of the head this way and that to observe any adjacent listener. Some of the people with whom I spoke had this habit

even to the point of caricature.

As I have said, they were candid in conversation, and this frankness was not restricted by any means to the critics of the Hitler régime but was a quality of the Nazis. They seemed willing to answer any questions, however inquisitive or challenging, and never took offence. I had some remarkable talk with them about the most controversial subjects such as their call for colonies, the charge of religious persecution, the problem of the Jews, the fears of aggression against neighbouring States, and the suspicions against them of warlike aims.

One talks best, one hears most, in friendly and informal conversation over tea-cups or coffee-cups in private homes. I heard some good talk at a table where I sat on the right of a lady who reminded me charmingly of that beautiful Princess Nefertiti whose lovely head stands as a wonder for all time in the Berlin Museum. I dared to tell her so, and she forgave me. On the other side of the table was her husband, who drank to her with his eyes as well as with his wine-glass. There were others present who talked well and without any veils over their eyes or any strings of caution to their tongues. They were trustful of me and very hospitable. Between our conversations there was good music—the enchanting music of Schubert's Unfinished Symphony which takes one's spirit beyond closed walls. Before the evening passed my host raised his glass again and drank to Anglo-German friendship as the guarantee of European peace. I believed in his sincerity.

I went to another German home in another apartment house. There was a large-sized German there in a small-sized room and an English lady with her daughter. The large-sized German—a bluff and genial man—was emotional in his desire to break down “misunderstandings” between the Germans and the English. He was one of those who drove me about Berlin at a very rapid pace, and on the way he told me good stories and laughed over his wheel at the humour of them, and then became very serious and pleaded with me to believe that all the fears of Germany as a war-maker were utterly false.

“I know,” he told me, “that Herr Hitler is determined to hold the peace at all costs. He won't allow a single soldier to die across the frontiers in any aggressive war for any aggressive purpose. There will be no need of that. All that is wanted by *der Führer* is the coming together of the Germanic peoples in sympathy and co-operation. That is already ripe fruit which will fall into his hands without a shot being fired. Hitler will win his victories by peace and not by war.”

I had long talks with many National Socialists, some of them holding high positions, one of them a close friend of Hitler, having been in prison with him, and the standard-bearer of his storm-troops in the *Putsch* at Munich in the beginning of

these things. Hour after hour we talked and I found him a reasonable interpreter of his political creed, not at all offended when I disagreed with him warmly or raised grave objections to his faith and theory.

I met a group of the younger diplomats and officials of the Wilhelmstrasse, and found them, I am bound to say, most courteous, highly intelligent, and not at all corresponding to a type which is fixed in many English minds, as the portrait of a Nazi. They seemed to me distinguished young men of attractive personality.

I met now and then the older crowd—men and women of the old régime to whom these Nazis are “upstarts,” to whom the whole philosophy and leadership of National Socialism is distasteful and very sinister. Their world has gone. Their places have been taken by new men. They do not like this hero-worship of a man who has made himself more powerful than any Kaiser, and who is in his own person the Law and the Prophets.

“Intelligence is no longer in control,” said one of these people. “Half Europe is governed by these passionate ideologies which are moving towards a new religious war. If I were an Englishman I should be tempted to say: ‘To hell with all those people who are cutting each other’s throats or preparing for the next war! What is it to do with us? Let us keep our own peace within our own Empire.’”

They were afraid of Hitler’s emotionalism. He is, they said, easily distressed, easily angered. He has, they said, *crises de nerfs* when he is upset by some event like the bombing of the *Leipzig* by Spanish Republicans. One day, they thought he would go “off the deep end” and plunge Germany into some desperate adventure.

One question I put about *der Führer*—whether he was a figure-head used by people behind the scenes—was answered emphatically by a man who is in close touch with those who know him best.

“Don’t you believe that for a moment! It is utterly untrue. When he speaks others obey. They are afraid of him. What he says goes, and his subordinates have no illusion on that score. Hitler is a man of genius. Anybody who thinks otherwise is making a profound mistake and misleading public opinion. He works by intuition rather than by intellectual processes, but all the same he has a remarkable brain. His ideas prevail whether we like them or whether we don’t.”

It was before the crisis in the autumn of ’38.

(8)

Peace or War?

From all these conversations I had in Berlin, favourable or unfavourable to the

National Socialists, certain leading ideas emerged. The German people all professed their devotion to peace. The people want peace because they have a real horror of a war which would bring bombing air-planes over their cities and send their young men into the ditches of death to which their fathers went. The mass of the German folk have supported the rearmament of Germany with indignation and sacrifice, not because they want to cross other people's frontiers, but because they believe it necessary for the defence of their own land, and secondly because it has relieved Germany of its inferiority complex as an unarmed and humiliated nation, insulted and threatened, as they believe it was, by other powers.

My own talks convince me that this is true reading of the German mind as far as the masses are concerned. They hate war. They wish for peace, but they are afraid that some evil fate, or some explosion of passion, or some accident, or some risky adventure urged upon Hitler, may lead to a new catastrophe. In September 1938 it nearly did.

The German generals profess peace, for two reasons. The first may be doubted by sceptics: it is that they hate the idea of war as much as the common folk and they know more about the destructiveness of the latest weapons which modern armies would encounter, especially in the air. The second reason is that they do not believe Germany is in any shape to fight an aggressive war. The new army is nothing like the old regular German army which marched in 1914. It is not so well trained. It is not so well officered. And Germany is short of raw materials and of foreign currency with which to buy them. Even food supplies could not be assured for any long campaign, considering that in this time of peace there is a bare sufficiency.

"One may end a war on ration cards," I heard it said, "but one can't begin a war on ration cards."

What of the leaders? What of Hitler himself? Long before the crisis in the autumn of 1938 there was a deep suspicion in many minds and many countries that whatever he may say about peace he means war; that even if he believes he is working for peace he is working for war, because all his ideas, laid down in *Mein Kampf*, which he has never repudiated, lead inevitably to a European conflict. Those racial theories of his—his insistence upon the unity of the German folk, even if they are within other people's frontiers—his repeated assertion in many speeches that he awaits the time when all these outposts of the German race will be united with the Reich—are they not a standing threat of war and the violation of many frontiers?

I put this point of view to Germans.

"It's a gross misunderstanding of what is in the Führer's mind," they assured me. "Do people honestly believe that he intends to establish this unity of the German folk

by advancing with fire and sword across other people's borders? Are they mad enough to believe that? It's not the idea at all. The whole purpose of the Führer is to establish German unity by the natural development of racial affinity and sympathy of ideas—not by fire and sword, but by a spiritual and cultural comradeship."

Not many months later all Europe stood on the very edge of war's fiery furnace. Even now I think the answers I received were spoken with sincerity by men and women who refused to believe that Hitler was leading them towards dark and dangerous adventures.

I was interested to hear all that. I hoped I could believe it. Some of their own people—of the old régime and the world that is dead—disbelieved it.

And we now know that Hitler was willing to risk a world war—against the will of his own people—for the sake of getting the Sudetan Germans.

(9)

An Intellectual Duel.

One evening before Austria ceased to be a sovereign State I sat with two men who had an intellectual duel. It was conducted with perfect good humour on each side but neither yielded an inch unless forced back by argument. I wish I could reproduce that dialogue word by word because it was the best case for the German side and the best criticism from the other side by two men of knowledge and dialectical skill. One of them was an important official in the Hitler system; the other was an English friend of mine whose position was not unimportant in Berlin at that time. But I can only give a few points of the argument which ranged over the whole field of foreign policy.

It began with the German's criticism of our Government in not fulfilling its pledge to recognise Germany's right to equality in arms during the Disarmament Conference, and the refusal of France and England to close with Hitler's offer of restricting his army to 200,000 men when he decided to rearm.

"Yes," said my English friend, "but when Hitler mentioned that figure he meant conscription as well! How are you going to define a soldier? Is he a man in a regular army of a certain size or is he also a man who has been trained intensively and is called a civilian? The best regiment in Germany is Hitler's Black Police. But they are not counted as soldiers at all!"

The conversation referred inevitably to the Treaty of Versailles.

"That was the cause of the whole tragedy of Europe," said the German. "It put millions of people—Germans, Hungarians, Austrians and others, under alien rule.

Those so-called peace-makers did not know their geography and were very careless in drawing the lines of the new frontiers!”

“My dear Sir!” said the critic of this German view, “you know as well as I do the impossibility of adjusting frontiers so as to draw clean lines between the races. It couldn’t be done in Silesia where Germans and Poles are closely intermingled. The cities are German, the country-side Polish. How are you going to draw lines round the cities and link them up with Germany? This dream of uniting all those of German stock will have its awakening in war. There was nearly a war—within a hair’s breadth—over the Austrian *Anschluss*.”

“We are not going to march into Austria or across other frontiers,” said this distinguished representative of Nazidom. “That is a bogey in the English imagination.”

“What about the Sudeten Germans?” asked the Englishman, as I had asked others. “Aren’t you making trouble there? Isn’t it a threat against Czechoslovakia?”

“No threat at all!” was the answer. “There are three million Sudeten Germans under the Czechs. They have a right, by any rules of justice, to show their sympathy for those of their own blood and culture. Naturally the Germans have a deep sense of comradeship with them and are not deaf to their grievances. But all this is subject to a general settlement on lines of common sense without warfare.”

“It is all very dangerous!” said the Englishman.

“The Franco-Soviet Pact has been one of the chief causes of danger in Europe,” said the German presently, “it was a direct menace to Germany and outside the Covenant of the League which France professed to regard as sacred. Isn’t it a mistake for England to be linked through France with Communism and Bolshevism—always working for the overthrow of civilisation?”

“It was Germany who first made a pact with Bolshevik Russia,” answered my friend. “The Pact of Rapallo.”

“Made by Jews with Jews! What has Hitler’s Germany to do with that affair?”

There was a discussion about the chances of Anglo-German friendship. My friend the Englishman said it had not been made easier by the Berlin-Rome axis. Italy was working against the interests of England by every form of propaganda. That was not helpful to Germany’s claim for the return of the colonies.

“I don’t follow that!” said the German. “What has our claim for colonies to do with Italy?”

“A good deal,” said the Englishman. “Italy is a threat to our communications in the Mediterranean. There are two Italian army corps in Libya. What are they doing there? What is their purpose?”

“Again,” said the German, “what is that to do with our colonial claims?”

The Englishman looked at him sombrely.

"If our passage were blocked in the Mediterranean one day, how should we get to India? By way of Africa. Suppose we gave you back Tanganyika and you used it as a naval base! We should find that passage menaced also. Can we risk that? It is clearly against our Imperial strategy and the very security of our national life."

"There may be something in that," admitted the German, "but not much! You talk from the point of view of military strategy. That creates fear and suspicion. We are thinking in terms of peace and appeasement. A friendly Germany in close alliance with England would take all danger out of Tanganyika. Friendly co-operation with Germany would keep peace in the Mediterranean."

"Yes, but how are we to be sure?" asked the Englishman frankly. "You have torn up many treaties. You might tear up another!"

The German made a slight gesture of dissent.

"All friendship depends on faith and confidence. It will never be made by dark suspicions and endless distrust. Germany desires friendship with England. But we can't go on hoping for it if that is your attitude. Hitler is sincere in his offers of peace. Why not believe him?"

"I believe in his sincerity," said the Englishman, "but he puts a price on peace. A free hand on his Eastern frontiers. A Colonial Empire."

"A free hand to make separate agreements of peace and reciprocity. Only the just claim for the return of colonies taken away by force and necessary to an expanding Germany deprived of access to raw materials."

So they argued with rapid thrust and parry, hour after hour, while I listened and tried to remember.

(10)

The Vital Questions.

One afternoon in Berlin I was able to have a talk on German ideas and policy with one of those who helped to shape them. It was in the Adlon Hotel where once—for many years after the war—there used to be a bust of the ex-Kaiser as a young man with upturned moustaches in a niche over the great fireplace in the lounge. Now the niche is empty and over the heavy mantelpiece is a portrait of the new Leader in his brown uniform.

Into the tea lounge of the Adlon came some of those types always to be found in big hotels; business men meeting their wives—or other men's wives—for an hour; young men having rendezvous with pretty ladies; solitary old women watching the

company with an eye for scandal; a few foreigners; an old gentleman resident in the hotel with a little dog which he takes for a walk three times a day with a little bell round its neck which goes tinkling down the passages. It was perhaps the scene which Vicky Baum had in her mind's eye when she wrote *Grand Hotel*.

A stringed orchestra was playing sentimental music and in the general buzz of conversation we could talk freely without being disturbed.

"Is there still time to make a friendly arrangement with Germany?" I asked, after preliminary chit-chat.

My friend raised his Nordic eyebrows.

"Why not? In Heaven's name!"

I told him that I had heard rumours of a change of mind on Hitler's part. A year ago he had expressed his desire for friendship with England but now was not—I understood—in such a good mood.

"That's untrue," said my friend. "He still wishes very deeply for a good understanding with England. He has set his mind on it. I can tell you a strange thing about him. He often has a kind of dream. It comes to him repeatedly. It is that one day he will go to London and be acclaimed by English crowds. That would be a happy day in his life, if the dream were fulfilled. He believes that Germany and England together could guarantee the peace of Europe. He is still keen on the Four Power Pact which, of course, includes France and Italy."

"What about Italy?" I asked. "Your Berlin-Rome axis doesn't make matters easier for us. Italy under Mussolini seems very hostile to our interests, very aggressive in the Mediterranean, very dangerous in Egypt."

This candid German—he seemed to speak with candour—shrugged his broad shoulders.

"With Germany friendly to England," he answered, "Italy would not be dangerous. In any case Italy is not dangerous. You know the Italians."

He spoke, I thought, with a slight contempt of them. It is a contempt expressed by many Germans, who do not believe much in Italian armies or Italian loyalties, remembering Italy's turncoat policy in 1914, and underestimating, as I think, the effect of training and discipline and a sense of new vitality and power under Mussolini's leadership.

Presently I ventured to ask him another question: "Is German rearmament at an end?"

"Not yet! It's still not enough."

"Good heavens!" I exclaimed, knowing something of the tremendous output of German munitions.

"We aren't safe yet," said my informant. "We don't feel that we are in any combination strong enough to counterpoise the weight of England, France and Russia. The French are always talking of their sacred right to security. For seventeen years they dinned those words in the ears of the world! Now it is our turn. We want to feel secure. We want to reach a position when we have no more fear of attack and can get on with the jobs of peace without that haunting dread of invasion, which has long been in German minds—though you have never admitted it and think it is only a bogey for propaganda."

"Tell me," I said, "what about the colonies? Isn't that demand going to embitter relations between our two countries? You know our difficulties. Whitehall and English public opinion may be ready to hand back some part of Africa but the South Africans have something to say about it, and might say it with gunfire. With all goodwill to Germany that colonial question is full of 'snags.' We hold some of the colonies under mandates from the League. We have to get other countries' consent before renouncing them. The natives might object to being handed over like cattle. There is no easy solution to a hundred difficulties, even though the problem is tackled in the most friendly atmosphere."

"It's becoming a matter of prestige," said my friend. "Hitler and all Germans insist on wiping out that slur upon its name made in the Treaty of Versailles which affirmed that we were unworthy to possess colonies. No nation likes such a judgment, which is untrue and damnable."

A matter of prestige is always dangerous, I thought. Anything that inflames the passion or pride of a nation is lighting a fire which may be hard to put out. But I agreed with this German about the right of Germany to regain her colonies and wipe out that insult.

"It's like this," he continued, "we shall press our claim for colonies with increasing propaganda. We shall demand them in a loud voice. The whole of the German folk will be roused to enforce this claim. It's not at all unlikely that we shall set up a Colonial Office in Berlin as a symbolic act! All that is a matter of tactics. Do you think we should get anything at all if we asked for it in a still small voice? But as far as I know the mind of the Führer he will not let this claim develop into a cause of war. He wants to convert your public opinion. He is willing to be patient before that happens. He mentions six years as the time-limit for that conversion. In any case he wants this question and all others to be dealt with on lines of common sense. Hitler believes in the solving power of common sense. It is what he calls *Vernunft*. That is how his mind works. 'Let's deal with this by common sense,' he says repeatedly."

I was surprised to hear it. I had an idea that Adolf Hitler was less devoted to

common sense than most men in the world, being a mystic, reaching conclusions by instinct and intuition, walking forward as in a dream.

“The Führer,” repeated this German who knew him, “is devoted to common sense.”

(11)

Religion in Germany.

I made some enquiry into the religious aspects of German life and the attitude of the Nazi mind towards the Christian faith and its various professions in the Reich.

What was the truth regarding the accusations of relentless persecution of Catholic priests and Protestant pastors? It could not be denied that many German pastors—120 of them—were in prison at the end of last year, though at Christmas all but twelve were liberated. Pastor Niemöller, an ex-naval man, was one of those not liberated. He had been arrested for preaching disloyalty to the State from his pulpit in Berlin—Dahlem—but was only brought to trial after many months in the Moabit prison when he was tried in secret, not a word of evidence being published in the German Press. “There is one prison,” said a German orator, “whose cell-door is locked not by a key but by a piece of paper he refuses to sign.” After his trial when he was freed by his judges he was re-arrested by the Nazis and put into a concentration camp—an outrage to all sense of justice and fair play.

How could these intelligent young men I met defend the challenge to Christianity by men like Rosenberg and Baldur von Schirach, and that proselytising of young minds in favour of a kind of pagan church reviving the old German gods and myths and elevating the race itself to a mystical worship? Ludendorff, their greatest general, had gone *gaga* on that line some years after his retirement. In the English and American newspapers there were articles from time to time reporting this paganisation of Germany and warning the world of its sinister meaning.

An English friend of mine, resident in Berlin for a time, spoke to me on this subject, being careful to lower his voice in a room through which people were passing.

“Here in Germany,” he said, “we are at the beginning of a religious revolution, the seeds of which have only just been sown. Christianity is being attacked as an Oriental religion unsuitable for the true followers of Hitler or the modern mind. Its Jewish origin vitiates their theories of Nordic nobility, and cuts across their denunciation of Jewish influence. Their new interpretation of life conflicts with the Christian faith. I have no doubt at all that there is a directed movement, not yet fully

revealed, to undermine Christianity and replace it by a State Church with this racial creed as its basis of dogma, with a vague divinity—purely Nordic in character!—as the God of its worship. The challenge has only just been flung down. The future of Germany will be a life-and-death struggle on that quarrel.”

A more important personage than my friend in Berlin—His Holiness the Pope—made grave accusations of religious persecution in Germany. Old, frail and ill he roused himself to say these things in a Christmas Eve address to his cardinals.

The fact which he wished to criticise, he said, was that religious persecution, grievous and sore, existed to-day in Germany. He wished to call things by their proper names. For some time it had been pretended that this persecution did not exist.

“We know however,” said the Pope, “that this persecution does exist—heavy persecution. Not often before has there been persecution, so harsh, so formidable, so grievous, and so sad, in its more profound effects. It is a persecution in which neither constraint of violence, nor pressure of threats, nor tricks of cunning, nor lies, are wanting.”

Startling words! They were spoken at a time when thousands of priests had been murdered in Spain, when religion in Russia had been almost destroyed by a Godless State. It seemed strange that the Pope should have been so hard on Germany when only twelve Protestant pastors remained in prison, accused of political offences, and when not a single priest had been roughly handled.

In Germany there are no visible signs of religious persecution or oppression. The churches of all denominations are crowded. Their bells ring out in every city. Monks and nuns go about the streets of Munich and all Catholic towns.

On a Sunday morning I saw a little scene in Berlin which seemed to have some bearing on this. I was outside the Catholic church which stands opposite the ex-Kaiser’s Palace. There was a red carpet on the steps and a big crowd waited for the doors to open. Presently they opened and down the steps on the way to his car came the Papal Nuncio in his scarlet robes. Tremendous cheers rose from the crowds: “Hoch! Hoch! Hoch!” They were not afraid of letting their voices be heard. The Papal Nuncio, a handsome, grave-looking man, raised his hand in blessing.

I went into the church and heard a sermon. It was not easy to hear because of the reverberations of the preacher’s voice, but I could follow the thread of his discourse. He was preaching on the text: “My kingdom is not of this world.” He said that a government had a right to an orderly State and must demand obedience and loyalty from the citizens in all things not conflicting with morality. But Christ was a king, not of this world, but of an eternal kingdom, who also insisted upon loyalty and

the fulfilment of spiritual laws and Christian virtues.

“Render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar’s and to God the things that are God’s.”

There were no policemen taking notes, as far as I could see.

I had a talk on this subject with a young German who is one of Hitler’s Blackshirts. He told me that there was no black mark against him because he was religious and went to church. Nothing will be said against him, he assured me, because shortly he will marry a girl who is a Catholic—though he is a Protestant. They will be married in church. All his friends will attend the wedding.

“The Catholic clergy in Germany,” he said, “are playing politics. They had so much influence in the past, especially in Bavaria and the Rhineland, that they cannot bear the thought of their political power being no longer acknowledged. Why don’t they stick to religion? Why do they insist upon attacking National Socialism which gives perfect liberty of faith to every denomination, provided they do not enter the political arena?”

He told me a story about the girl he is going to marry. When she was still in her convent school she was made to write a dictated letter to her uncle saying that she could never see him again because he had voted for the Nazis.

“Is that fair play?” he asked. “Isn’t that an interference with politics? I could tell you dozens of similar stories which are true.”

“What about the German Christians?” I asked. “Don’t they want to set up a State Church with complete control over all questions of dogma and discipline in the Protestant faith? Doesn’t it amount to religious persecution? Isn’t it a grave danger to liberty of conscience?”

My informant denied all that.

“There are forty Protestant sects in Germany,” he said. “They all have their own funds, properties and governing bodies. They’re all at loggerheads. The German Christians only want to unify them and create some sort of order among them. There is no attack on religion as such. All that National Socialists ask and insist is that every citizen of the Reich shall be first of all German, with loyalty to his own land and Leader, giving service to the State according to his ability. After that he can be a Catholic or Protestant or anything else. Isn’t that the same in England? Loyalty to the King and the Law, first of all. Within that loyalty comes freedom of faith.”

“That sounds all right,” I told him. “But what about this pagan cult of which one hears so much—this propaganda in favour of the old racial gods?”

This young Nazi laughed good-humouredly.

"All that is newspaper stuff," he said. "Foreign correspondents catch hold of extravagant ideas put out by certain individuals—like your Aldous Huxley or your H. G. Wells—and make a song and dance about them as though they were a new form of religion imposed by the Nazis upon the whole of Germany!"

"What about Rosenberg?" I asked. "He holds an important position as Director of Cultural Relations or something of the sort."

"He is a literary man. His ideas are personal. He doesn't dictate our faith or dogma. As for this pagan stuff which seems to excite English critics I can assure you that if you walked from one end of Germany to the other you would be lucky if you met one man who had any of those ideas, or who had ever heard of them."

That, I think, is true. In fact I know two English students who went through Germany staying at Youth Hostels and did not meet any one German who seemed remotely interested in "The New Paganism," as expounded by a few fanatics.

We talked about Pastor Niemöller and my friend thought that he had asked for the trouble that came to him, not as a pastor but as a politician.

"He's a truculent fellow, blunt-spoken and self-assertive. He used his pulpit as a political rostrum. I can't see where any Christian charity comes in, or why he doesn't confine himself to preaching the words of his Master. What business is it of his to incite his congregations against a form of government which the majority of Germans accept with enthusiasm, knowing all that it has done to lift them out of the mire?"

This young man spoke, I am sure, with complete honesty of mind. He was simple and sincere. But I did not tell him of another conversation I had had the night before with a man of high standing among the National Socialists. We had talked in the small hours when conversation is apt to strike down to the roots of things, without any mental reserves, if confidence has been established.

"Christianity," said this other man, "is not in accordance with modern research and modern ideas. Its dogma is challenged. One cannot accept its myth. It is a weak kind of religion, very unscientific, very out of touch with the realities of human nature, denying the joy of life. We have different ideas which are more in tune with modern psychology and knowledge. We don't believe in morbid asceticism and a divorce between mind and body. We believe in a new trinity—Body, Mind and Spirit all working harmoniously and equally important. The body has its rights and beauties just as the mind and the spirit. What has happened during the last century or so is a kind of vicious over-intellectualism, putting far too much stress upon the intellect itself, producing diseased brains, and pursuing moral and mental degeneration. We want to produce a race of men and women perfectly attuned to life around them,

with their feet well on the earth, with healthy bodies made fit and strong by work on the land, and by wind and weather; with healthy minds regarding life not as a 'vale of tears' but as a great adventure of joy; thinking of God not as a jealous ogre denying them happiness but as a universal spirit permeating all nature. Christianity is in retreat. We want a new religion, more manly, not Oriental in its origin, not attempting to persuade young and healthy minds that a lot of old Jews in primitive times have anything to say to the modern world."

That was the gist of his discourse, as I remember it, though I may have misinterpreted some of his phrases. It was late at night, and as we talked in a corner of the Adlon lounge a tired waiter yawned behind his hand, and one of the hotel guests slept in a deep chair, and a young American woman with two friends chatted as brightly as a bird at dawn. But we two were talking about things which were more dangerous than high explosives and more destructive of all that has built up our present civilisation than a fleet of bombing aeroplanes.

I put this thought into words.

"European civilisation was built up mostly by the Christian faith. All Art and European ethics are steeped in the Christian tradition. If that goes everything goes."

I challenged his creed about that new "manly religion" which seemed to him desirable.

"A denial of the gentle message of the Christian faith will lead to a revival of brutality, cruelty and barbarism. If people lose their faith in Christ's message they may put their faith in dark, sinister and devilish things. It's already happening. It's happening in Spain, while we talk."

We talked longer and when we said good night I went upstairs very uneasy in my mind. I thought of those Labour camps which I had seen. They were making hardy bodies by a stoic bringing-up of German youth—though perhaps over-straining some of them. Their insistence upon the dignity of labour and its equality of merit in service to the State—whether it is spade work or pen work, craftsmanship or generalship—is good. But in those camps what is said to those young Germans who have to listen and make notes? Does this anti-Christian view inspire the lecturers? Does it mould the mind of youth?

Some time previously I had talked in London with a German who is working for peace in the world by way of a spiritual unity of many Christian denominations. He was very interesting on this subject of German thought.

"When you see a group of young Germans talking very earnestly together," he said, "you will guess probably that it is about sport or politics. Not at all! If you happen to listen you may find that they are talking about religion. All over Germany

youth is intensely interested in that. Many of them, perhaps most of them, have abandoned Christian dogma. They have no settled beliefs in any Church or Creed. But they are all groping for some new faith of their own.”

I reminded him that the same thing is happening in England and elsewhere, and that youth everywhere is apt to be sceptical of the faith of their fathers.

He admitted that.

“Christianity is fighting a rear-guard action. If it is defeated—terrible things will happen. The dark spirit of anti-Christ is waiting and watching for his chance of victory. We see in the world already a revelation of Satanic cruelties where Christ’s message is derided. Christian ethics which prevailed even among agnostics are losing their potency as a social and moral tradition. That is what makes me frightened of the future.”

Yet in Germany the churches are crowded, the congregations are devout, there is even a revival of fervour among Catholics and Protestants.

In spite of the scepticism of youth, bewildered by the perplexities of this strange and terrible world in which they find themselves, the German folk are essentially and traditionally religious, deeply and instinctively Christian. In Bavaria, on the Rhineland, and elsewhere in many German cities the Catholic Church is strong in spiritual influence and moral discipline. It is too strong to yield an inch.

In Munich Cardinal Faulhaber has defied arrest, though once the order was given—and revoked. Week after week he proclaims that in all spiritual teaching the Church takes no orders from any Cæsar nor from any State. But the Catholic youth organisations have been dispersed. They are not allowed to wear their own badges or parade with their own banners. There is only one youth organisation allowed in Germany to-day, and that is the Hitler Youth in whose ranks all boys must march, whose discipline all must obey with absolute loyalty to Hitler. The Concordat between Rome and the National Socialist Government has been violated in many clauses, regarding the religious education of young people and many other matters.

Count Conrad von Freysing, the Catholic Bishop of Berlin, complained bitterly that a number of Catholic periodicals had been banned although they served only truth and the Church; and that Pastoral Letters, including his own, had been confiscated. By those means Catholics were prevented from defending their faith against many attacks.

“It is enough,” said the Bishop, “to stand at a bookstall on the Underground railway to see how by means of pictures, caricatures, headlines, propaganda placards and pamphlets, an attempt is being made to work on the minds of the German public in a way which must end in driving all respect and reverence for the

Church and Christianity out of the souls of the young. The true situation in Germany of the Christian who believes in revelation could be truly described only by saying that he stands under a discriminatory law. He must tolerate ridicule and contempt, lack of liberty and oppression, on account of his faith, without being able to defend himself.”

Considerable agitation among the Catholics of Bavaria was caused early last year by orders from the Ministry of Education announcing that Catholic secondary schools and convent schools conducted by the religious orders would be gradually closed in the same way as the elementary Church schools which have already been dissolved. State controlled schools will take their place and religious education will be restricted mainly to the homes.

Priests like the Catholic Bishop of Berlin deplore this attitude of the Government and emphasise its danger to German unity.

“It is only with the most sincere sorrow,” he has said, “that anyone who cares for the welfare of the Fatherland can watch the fight against Christianity and the Church; for if in this struggle might and force could achieve a cheap triumph, nevertheless the unity of the nation would be fatally threatened, if freedom of conscience and belief was withheld from the Christian part of the nation.”

On the very day when the plans for the closing of the convent schools were announced the foundation stones of ten Adolf Hitler schools were laid in the same number of National Socialist provinces. These schools are for the training of an *élite*—a kind of new Order of Knighthood among the German youth. The boys who will go through this system of training are already being chosen from all classes of the community. They are to be physically perfect. No one will be selected who has to wear glasses or shows any tendency to ill-health. They will all become young athletes by Spartan training and they will receive an education fitting them to become the leaders of the German State according to the ideals of National Socialism. They will keep in close touch with the German people by working on farms and entering the home life of the communities in which they dwell. No one need doubt that the young men who emerge from these schools will be splendid specimens of German youth, which already shows a high level of physique. They will no doubt possess all the virtues most praised by Adolf Hitler himself—devotion to the Fatherland, austerity of life, courage, discipline and truthfulness. But what will be their spiritual outlook and faith? Will they be taught magnanimity, chivalry, pity for the weak, sympathy for all suffering humanity, and a love of liberty, art and all beauty? One would like to know. Some light on that subject was given by Herr Baldur von Schirach, the youth leader of the German Reich, when laying one of these foundation stones.

“In the time of intellectual darkness,” he said, “intellect had been more important than nation, flag and Fatherland. Our movement has revolted against this period of cold calculation. National Socialists do not deny the power of knowledge. They do not serve it but command it. What they will learn in the Adolf Hitler schools is faith in the impossible.”

Those words may mean very little to minds deeply suspicious of this attack upon the intellect, deeply convinced that the failure of civilisation in recent times has been due not to too much intellect but to too little. But, in German, words mean different things nowadays and in the mind of Baldur von Schirach “intellect” is given a sinister meaning because it is associated with unreality, lack of common sense, morbid and vicious tendencies in art and literature, and that Jewish intelligence which is made the scapegoat of all that was unhealthy and immoral in German life.

All that is a cause of quarrel which may lead to a new Kultur-Kampf in Germany. The Protestant Churches are equally alarmed by the steady pressure on them to unite in a State Church which would be subject to State control.

That pressure is exerted through a Minister for Church Affairs by the name of Herr Kerrl, who is less drastic in his methods and manners than Dr. Müller, his predecessor. He proposes to take over many powers of control, including those of finance, but pledges himself to leave matters of doctrine to the Protestant denominations. The Confessional Church with its own constitution was established by a State law in 1933 but is now declared illegal. Hence a conflict between the Government and its supporters. All this is very technical and confusing to the English mind. It seems outwardly to be only a matter of Church organisation, but there is something more in it than that, and this something is suggested by a speech by Herr Kerrl himself as quoted in a letter of protest by English Bishops to *The Times* in December last.

Repeating the Nazi creed of Race, Blood and Soil Herr Kerrl proceeded to say:

“Everything which National Socialism is now doing for the Community and the preservation of the nation is doing the Will of God. . . . The Jew is the instrument of bastardisation and of Communism. This tuberculous bacillus must be insulated in us. There has now arisen a new authority as to what Christ and Christianity really are, namely, Adolf Hitler. . . . If any Church officer makes an attack on our Movement or on the State then his right to be an official in a public legal organisation will be cancelled.”

Those are remarkable words by the Minister of Church Affairs. They are the spirit of a new sect called the German Christians who accept part of the Gospels while rejecting others, and bring them into a conception which is in harmony with

National Socialism. On the face of it the pledge to allow the churches liberty of doctrine does not seem reassuring to those who, while loyal to their Führer in all other things, refuse to admit that he has authority over their faith.

It is the old quarrel which led to the chopping off of many heads on Tower Hill, including that of that very great gentleman Sir Thomas More, when Henry VIII claimed to be the head of the Church with authority to make his own laws of faith and morals. It put many brave men on the rack, it made a noble company of martyrs. It drenched many lands in blood. It is the old struggle between Church and State and it is earnestly to be hoped that this struggle will be called off in Germany for the sake of those people who have suffered much since 1914, and for the sake of European peace.

It is a difficult question to know how far priests and pastors may go justly into the political arena without a charge of “playing politics” being brought against them. I heard a discussion on the subject in a London drawing-room where an Anglican Bishop was present. It was that Bishop I have mentioned before who gave the world no more than ten years of uncertain peace before the big explosion.

He had a charming, thoughtful face, clean-cut, with kindly eyes, in which there came a glint of humour.

“It is the duty of a priest to expound faith and morals,” he said, “and not to talk politics in his pulpit. He has no right to stir up trouble against an established Government.”

Our host was a young man very frank in his speech, very quick in his way of argument. He looked the Bishop straight in the eyes.

“Supposing that Government attacked religious faith?” he asked.

“In my opinion,” answered the Bishop, “the Church should not enter into the political argument by denunciation of the State.”

“Then I’m afraid you are a bad Bishop!” said our host.

The “bad Bishop” smiled and took no offence and continued the argument. In my own mind I had secret thoughts.

The English Church supports the State which allows divorce, though the Church disapproves with certain reservations. Many Anglican clergymen refuse to marry divorced persons. The Archbishop of Canterbury did not approve of the ex-King marrying a lady who had had two husbands. But these clergymen and that Archbishop do not urge their followers to overthrow the State or to disobey its laws. The Nazis in Germany defend their attitude by the same argument. They arrest a man like Pastor Niemöller not for his defence of his faith but—they argue—for his incitement to revolt against the laws of the State. But Pastor Niemöller and others

criticise the State and denounce its laws, because they believe in their souls that obedience to those State laws would be a betrayal and a surrender of the spiritual law to which they owe allegiance.

In November last, according to a report in the *New York Times*, the chaplains of the armed forces sent a memorandum to Hitler stating that the conflict between Church and State had become a domestic political issue of primary importance. Giving many instances of anti-Christian propaganda in the schools—some of them very blasphemous—the memorandum of the chaplain adds: “It is cautiously estimated that 12 to 15 per cent of the population has been forced into bitter opposition to the State and Party by the campaign against Christianity. The assumption that only old people are included and that it is merely necessary to let them die off, is a mistake.”

Those who are the best friends of Germany must hope that this religious strife will be avoided and that those millions who hold the Christian faith devoutly will not be called upon to defend it by blood or agony as in Russia and in Spain.

(12)

The Secret Rebels.

It was a lady who asked a question of an intelligent young Nazi in Berlin which for a moment made me gasp.

“What is the difference,” she asked, “between National Socialism and Communism? Is there any real difference?”

It was one of those questions which one hesitates to put to men or women about their own faith. One might as well ask His Holiness the Pope whether there is any difference between the Catholic Church and Lutheran Protestantism. But ladies are privileged to ask these simple questions which few men would venture to put so simply. Germany has declared war against Communism. Communism is the Enemy. It is the dragon which Hitler, as Siegfried, goes forth to kill.

The young Nazi did not blanch at this alarming questionnaire.

“There is quite a lot of difference!” he answered quietly. “Communism believes in class war. That is the first article of its faith. Wherever Communism shows its head it attacks the aristocracy and the bourgeoisie, and kills them off, if possible, in order to establish the dictatorship of the proletariat. That is their inevitable campaign which is fought with blood and terror. There is no class war in National Socialism. On the contrary we recognise the need of all classes and all degrees of service working in co-operation and loyalty for the common weal, with different degrees of reward

according to that service and their ability, but with equality in self-respect and dignity. The labourer in the field is taught that he is doing just as good work—perhaps better—than the manager of a factory, though the responsibility is less. But there are other differences besides the class war. Communism does not allow of any private trading. Every branch of production and industry is in the hands of the State. No individual initiative is allowed. No private profits are allowed. The State is the buyer and the seller. There are no small businesses. It is one vast ant-heap with every ant a slave of the system. But that is clean contrary to the ideas of National Socialism. The Führer is all for the small man as far as is possible. He is hostile to chain stores which smash the little man. He believes in the right of private property for everyone. He encourages individual effort and genius. He believes in the dignity of the craftsman. State control is limited to the necessities of keeping the nation and life going by careful planning and organisation, and by the control of undue profits to manufacturers. All that is necessary in a State like ours, hard pressed by economic conditions and the need of self-sufficiency because we are short of raw materials and foreign currencies.”

The lady who had asked the question was satisfied with the answer.

But I met a man who disputed all that. He must have been a brave man, and he was certainly a bitter man. He spoke with a smouldering anger as though some red-hot iron had burnt into his soul. He was a brave man because he did not even bother to lower his voice in a public place, which was a restaurant. It was late in the evening and few people were there but not far away from us was an old gentleman reading a paper who might have overheard.

The man who spoke to me was a complete stranger who fell into conversation with me because he saw that I was English. He was a well-dressed, youngish man with square shoulders and a well-shaped head.

“I was educated in England,” he told me. “I should like to be back again. This country is no place for those who want to make a living.”

“Aren’t you doing better now in Germany?” I asked.

“We are doing nothing at all!” he answered, looking at me with sombre eyes. “All our profits are taken away from us. Only munition makers are doing well. They always make money in peace-time or war-time. They stay far behind the lines while the other fellows are dying. They are at their old game again, piling up profits for the next war, which is now being arranged by them for the sake of big business. Germany is in the hands of the militarists. Even Hitler is changed. He isn’t what he was. We are all on the way to hell, which is war.”

The old gentleman behind his paper shifted in his seat. The paper rustled.

Another guest entered the restaurant. My conversationalist moved away and left me without an appetite. I had heard some very gloomy words. I hoped they weren't true.

I took tea with a lady who has relatives engaged in German industry and who visits them from time to time somewhere in the Rhineland. She had the straw-coloured hair of the Nordic woman, and blue eyes, and a figure which Rubens would have liked for his brush, full and shapely.

"What do you think of things?" I asked presently. "How's life in Germany?"

She answered after a moment's thought.

"The young people are happy. Everything is done for them. They think it's a wonderful world! They adore the Führer. They love marching about with flags. They love their sports and games. Yes, the young people are happy!"

She poured me out another cup of tea and insisted that I should eat one of her home-made cakes.

"The religious question has become dangerous," she told me. "I am a Catholic and so I look at things from a certain angle, of course. There is a lot of propaganda for the State Church in the schools. Children are taught that the State comes first and that religion comes second. As a Catholic that seems very bad to me."

She thought that underneath the surface there was still a lot of Communism in Germany. It might surge up again if anything happened to Hitler. That was what made Germany so hostile to Russia and so afraid of any Communistic influence.

"The National Socialists have done a good deal for Germany," she continued, "but one can't ignore the dangers and difficulties. There are many in the industrial life of the country. My brother who is in industry tells me that the small manufacturers are in a bad way. They can't get raw material, which is all allotted to the big firms. Hitler is in favour of the small man but the system doesn't work that way, and what material comes to the smaller factories is *Ersatz* stuff, very bad in quality. . . . There are many difficulties."

Devout Christians have a right, or at least a reason, for their criticism of the new Kulturkampf in Germany, but not those who support Communists and anti-clerical revolutionaries in the "Popular Front." The friends of Germany more than its enemies are justified in expressing their doubts and apprehensions about this religious strife. That creed of Race, Blood and Soil steeped in a strange mysticism which has its roots in the dark forests of German paganism, raises doubts and fears in those who like myself most ardently desire friendship with the German folk. It seems to us a reversal of an age-long striving towards a civilised philosophy. The civilised man, surely, is liberated from the frontiers of the mind, or the ditches which mark the

boundary of a people. Civilisation is an extension of sympathy across the frontiers, an enlargement of understanding with other races and other minds, an ever-widening range of intercourse with humanity in all its variety of blood and speech. The scholar, the artist, the scientist, the poet, the philosopher, and the civilised man, knows no narrowness of race or country, nor sees life within the blinkers of national tradition. He wishes for a mental exchange of goods with other minds which have some truth to tell, some beauty to show, some notes to add to the world's melody, some adventure of the mind which all may share. So this part of the Nazi leaders' philosophy seems to the last of the Liberal minds in the world to-day—they are a dwindling company!—a deplorable step backwards into darkness and a tragic denial of the light. There is this fundamental difference of outlook between the Nazi creed and the intellectual liberalism of the English and French tradition which creates the greatest difficulty, as well I see, in all attempts to build a bridge of friendship and understanding between the German nation and ourselves. Belonging in every fibre of my brain to that tradition I do not underestimate the width of that gap.

The night before writing these very lines I sat with a young German and his wife in a small London flat, so small that the guests of this young couple sat on their bed artfully disguised as a divan by a blue coverlet. It was in one of those blocks of flats which are sounding-boards for all the loud speakers of the establishment and its inhabitants who listen to the B.B.C. and choose different programmes. The young German, whose wife was Austrian, inclines somewhat to the Left in politics. He has somewhere in his family history a touch of Jewish blood and for that reason is an exile from a country which he had called his Fatherland. He had made a little fame there as a writing man, but his Jewish name was not liked in Nazi Germany and he was asked to write elsewhere, if he felt that he must go on writing. He felt that he must go on writing because he is like that, and he is a weaver of plots and ideas and an interpreter of life, and a reporter of the human agony which he knows in his own soul.

"There is one problem now," he said, after we had talked of many things, "which faces every one of us in his conscience. Each of us will have to answer it. Is liberty worth anything? Is it worth fighting for, even if it means death or martyrdom, or shall we acquiesce in the suppression of free speech and free ideas and the denial of all such liberty in life? There is no liberty of the mind in Germany. There is no liberty of the mind in any of the dictatorships which have imitated Hitler's. Liberty is being lost over a large area of the earth's surface—under Communism, under Fascism. Art dies under such a system. There is no art in Germany. Music dies. There is no melody coming from Germany now. Inspiration is no longer allowed free play. It has

to be Nazified! It has to take its colour from Dr. Goebbels. What he says is the law about literature and art. One's religion is dictated, one's soul belongs to the State. Is it better to accept all that and go on living, or to challenge it and die—die in one's soul if not in one's body? Many Jews in Germany are resigning themselves to this loss of liberty. They say: 'After all there is something left in life. It makes life worth while.' But is that way of life worth while to intelligent minds? Is it worth while to many men and women in whom the old liberal tradition still burns with a little fire? That is what we must decide. Fight or surrender? Enjoy life as a slave or fight for one's right to think, speak, write, worship, love, live, as the spirit moves?"

He spoke with great gravity for that moment or two, though he had been a little gay in his new little flat—his sanctuary of escape, his Liberty Hall in London.

There is that decision to be made. It is of enormous importance to us all to-day, though in England it does not seem so urgent.

He did not ask for my answer but left it with that tragic query, and then spoke of his sense of security in England.

"I dare not stay very long in Austria," said his wife. "I get frightened if I stay three weeks. Anything may happen overnight." It was just before the death of Austria.

"When I have crossed the Channel," said her husband, "and sit in a train for London, and someone brings me tea, and I open that day's copy of *The Times* I feel wonderfully safe. In this little flat is our sense of security though we are aliens and have to report to the police. It is very lucky to be in England! One can talk again. One is not afraid!"

I thought over his words afterwards. What did he mean by fighting for liberty? Did he mean a Communist revolution in Europe against all the Fascist governments? No, he did not mean that, for he is not a Communist and agrees that there is no liberty in the Communist system. Did he mean that England and France should declare war upon all the Totalitarian States in order to convert them to democracy? One does not make people democrats or liberals by bombing their cities or massacring their young manhood. A challenge to mortal combat between two political ideas would reduce Europe to a ruin and end the sense of security which this young man feels he has when he is in England. Every man must fight this battle in his soul, resisting as far as he may mass propaganda, mass-produced thought, intolerance, hatred, cruelty and the fierce fanaticism of rival ideologies. No other war would enlarge the frontiers of liberty.

Hitler's rule in Germany is only six years old. He holds his power by enormous majorities, expressed several times by a plebiscite of the people whom he has led

out of humiliation and despair and fierce internal strife to present unity of purpose and achievement which it would be foolish and untrue to underestimate. But it has been a kind of revolution, very bloodless, compared to others. The new State has entirely replaced the old system with its administrators and supporters. Like all revolutionary governments it is forced to suppress freedom of criticism, a free Press by which its authority might be attacked and overthrown, and other liberties enjoyed by long-established governments. Hitler and his lieutenants have still to beat up enthusiasm for the new state of things by unending propaganda. They still have to pay heed to underground murmurings and conspiracies against their power. Communism in Germany is scotched but not killed. In hidden places there are adherents and missionaries. They have secret printing presses. They are in touch with the agents of world revolution. German unity, discipline and internal peace might be broken to bits and followed by a bloody civil war if all the critics of National Socialism were allowed free play, and all its enemies permitted to speak loudly in the market-places like our demagogues on Tower Hill. Even in England, with its long tradition of free speech and its unchallenged security of life, the Home Secretary takes action against any political agitator who tries to seduce soldiers from their loyalty, and the police do not allow any orator to preach violence of action against the laws of the State.

“Many things now being done,” said a German lady, whose guest I was, “will be modified in time. Four years is not long in history! It is not long enough for a new form of rule to be sure of full support from all its people. The two years’ military service now enforced upon all young men after six months in a labour camp is a long spell out of their educative years. That is one of the laws which certainly will be modified. It is enforced partly to reduce unemployment and make more places available for those in need of work. Presently, when we all feel more easy in our minds and more settled down to the new system, a larger liberty may be allowed even for criticism and political differences of thought within the framework of loyalty to the State. Germany is not going to remain in a strait-jacket. Men’s minds will move. Intolerance will die down. New men and new ideas will arrive. There will be many changes and modifications.”

That is what the German people hoped. That is what many of them were saying, when I went among them at the beginning of 1938. Since then much history has happened. Some of them think it wonderful, no doubt, but those who dread war, as most do, are afraid that they are being led along a road which leads to the furnace fires.

V

The End of Austria

The Summons to Berchtesgaden.

Hitler has made many speeches proclaiming his will to peace. They seemed to ring true. And those who knew him best believed that he spoke without hypocrisy, yet before the year was out he had annexed Austria, and, by a violence of method in demanding the liberation of the Sudeten Germans from Czech rule, risked setting the world on fire again.

There are many people, including some of his own followers, who believe that a change took place in Hitler's mentality in the early months of last year, and that at the very time when Mr. Neville Chamberlain took over the control of foreign affairs and began his policy of appeasement with Germany and Italy the Führer turned sour against England and no longer believed in the possibility of friendship between our two countries. It was due partly, they say, to the tragic incident of the German battleship *Leipzig*, when twenty-two German sailors were killed by Spanish Republican aircraft. He saw their coffins and was enraged by this tragedy for which he demanded punishment. When the British Government refused to join in a combined naval demonstration which seemed to include the shelling of a Spanish port—Almeria was bombed by the Germans—Hitler was deeply angered. He thought he had been let down by the greatest naval power and this thought nagged in his mind for months afterwards. But he was also made angry day by day by critical and hostile charges against Germany and the Nazi régime in the British Press. Extracts were carefully selected by Dr. Goebbels and his staff and acted as an irritant to Hitler. "These people do not want friendship," he is reported as saying. "They fill their Press with lies and abuse about us."

He was roused to a harsh outburst of wrath by the sinister interpretation given to certain incidents in Germany and by wild rumours which followed them.

On Thursday, February 10th, 1938, a sensation was caused throughout Europe by the news that Field-Marshal von Blomberg, the War Minister, had resigned, and with him General Freiherr von Fritsch, the Commander-in-Chief. At the same time thirteen generals of the Army and Air Force had been retired. The Führer himself had taken over the supreme command of the armed forces and was in personal control of the War Ministry. Herr von Ribbentrop, Ambassador to Great Britain, had been appointed Foreign Minister in place of Baron von Neurath.

For a few days it had been known, or at least was rumoured, that Field-Marshal von Blomberg, immensely popular in the Army and nation, had offended against the

old military code and caste by marriage with a young lady of very modest parentage. In the new Germany, where caste is being broken down to some extent, this did not seem a very adequate reason for his resignation, especially as the Führer had given him a special mark of favour by attending his wedding. It was, of course, only a peg on which were hung more important and serious reasons.

For a long time there had been whispers that there was a secret strain between the Army and the National Socialists. The Army chiefs, it was said, were hostile to any political adventures which might create foreign complications. They were not satisfied with the war readiness of the Army, which was by no means prepared for any military adventures on a big scale. Belonging to the old traditions, said the foreign correspondents, they did not see eye to eye with the policy and organisation of National Socialism. Some of them, like General Fritsch, who were deeply religious men, were offended by the attacks on Christianity and by the Nazi doctrines taught to young recruits. There was a story published that General Fritsch had walked out of a lecture given by Dr. Rosenberg with some of his officers. Many of them, it was alleged, had monarchist leanings. How far there was the slightest truth in this it is impossible to say. Those secrets are well kept in Berlin. It seems probable enough that the Nazis wished to exercise fuller control over the Army, and by the very nature of their totalitarian principles had decided to bring the Army more closely within their organisation and "ideology," ironing out any differences of outlook or tradition.

All that was guesswork, but it afforded the basis of imaginative deductions by foreign correspondents, which in a few hours developed into the most sensational and wildest rumours emanating from certain news agencies and flooding the European Press.

There were detailed stories of a monarchist plot against Hitler followed by the flight of many officers. It was said that the Crown Prince was one of those who had fled because he happened to arrive without his passport at one of the frontiers. Clashes were reported between the Army and Nazi guards.

For twenty-four hours public opinion in Europe was gravely disturbed. Was this the beginning of another revolution in Germany? Would there be another "blood bath"?

The German Government was startled and angered by these wild reports, which had for a little while deceived and alarmed the whole world. More than a hundred foreign journalists were invited to the Ministry of Propaganda to hear an official denial by Dr. Berndt of all this alleged unrest which he described as a grotesque and vicious campaign of rumours which had originated in Poland. Speaking very sternly,

Dr. Berndt denounced them all as deliberate falsification and a danger to world peace.

There is no doubt whatever that these stories were grossly untrue and had no foundation in fact of any kind. No frontiers were closed. No officers fled. No clashes took place between the Army and the Nazi guards. The whole incident was a flagrant example of journalistic mendacity, and had an effect upon the tone and temper of Hitler's speech before the Reichstag on February 20th.

Before that speech was made something else happened, arousing new suspicions against Germany and dark forebodings of German policy.

It was the visit of Dr. Schuschnigg, the Austrian Chancellor, to Berchtesgaden, where he was consulted by the Führer over certain arrangements to be made for close collaboration between the two countries. They included, it will be remembered, the appointment of Dr. Seyss-Inquart to the Home Office of the Austrian Government in charge of the police. He was known to have Nazi sympathies, but he was an Austrian of high standing who had formerly been in the confidence of Dr. Schuschnigg. His nomination by Hitler seemed to be a direct interference with Austrian internal liberty, and was so regarded by world opinion. There was to be an amnesty for all political prisoners in Austria, including the Austrian Nazis who were to be granted similar rights to other citizens, neither more nor less. By virtue of the new agreement the National Socialist point of view and philosophy would be represented in Austria, and Hitler claimed that "a great gesture for peace" had been made by this amnesty law which would prevent civil strife in Austria, and that a better relationship between the two States would be evolved through political, personal and economic collaboration.

It was reported by foreign correspondents that Dr. Schuschnigg had been faced by an ultimatum. It was said that in that ten hours' conversation he had been bullied and browbeaten by the Führer, and that he had been through something like the third degree before he yielded to this violent pressure.

The Austrian Chancellor had nothing but the valour of his own spirit to resist any terms put forward by Hitler if they were disagreeable to him. He could no longer rely on Italian troops to come to his support, and doubtless he was conscious throughout the interview that in his own country there was a large minority, very noisy and clamorous, long dangerous to peace and order, who strongly favoured National Socialism and an alliance with the German Nazis. He had nothing but his own strong will and his powers of persuasion to counter any demands that might be made to him by the Leader of the German Reich.

When the Austrian Chancellor returned to Vienna he made a speech which

seemed to be in favour of the "agreement" forced upon him by Hitler. He described it as "containing all the factors of a satisfactory peace." But it is now clear that he knew in his secret heart that he had signed away the political independence of Austria, and he suddenly revolted against this surrender as he believed it to be. He issued a challenge to the German Leader by announcing that his policy was "Not a step further!" and tried to rally up his people to strengthen the Fatherland Front which stood for the independence of the State. He also announced that he would hold a plebiscite to know how far the people would support him in this defence of their liberties.

He was too late, and his country was too divided for any such desperate measures. Thousands of young Nazis had been liberated from prisons and concentration camps. They were out in the streets of Linz and Graz, singing and shouting, and waving Nazi emblems. Not from them would he get recruits for his Fatherland Front. On the other hand were the Social Democrats who were against the Nazi régime. But it was again too late for Schuschnigg, the friend and successor of Dr. Dollfuss, to win their loyalty by a sudden call. For they had been imprisoned by his orders. They were the class who had been made victims of the bargain between Dr. Dollfuss and Mussolini in return for Italian defence of Austrian independence. It was upon their dwelling-places in the famous tenement houses of Vienna and other cities that Prince Starhemberg and his Italian-paid Heinwehr marched in 1934, bombarding them with field artillery when young lads of the Schutzbund opened fire from the roofs.

I went into these bombarded dwellings of the Goethe House and across the river at Floridsdorf, and saw the wreckage of these working-class flats and heard stories of terror told by the women and children. At that time when I was in Vienna thousands of Social Democrats were arrested, and every man among them, free or imprisoned, was dismissed from his job whatever it might be. The wounded had to lie in hiding to escape arrest. There was starvation and misery among the families deprived of their bread-winners. It was too much for Dr. Schuschnigg to expect that he would suddenly get the loyalty and hero-worship of this political class for the instant defence of frontiers against the menace of Germany.

Germany was not regarded as a menace by great numbers of Austrians. On the contrary ever since the war and the dark days that followed it when Austria was mutilated by the peace treaties and utterly stricken, there had been strong support for the *Anschluss*, or union, with Germany by people of all classes. For a time there was a vast majority in favour of this union. The peasants saw in it their only hope of markets. Many of the former ruling class were convinced that this amputated Austria

could never exist alone with any decent standard of living. It was only the refusal of the French Government, with threats of invasion which prevented the joining up of Austria and Germany many years before it happened.

There had been a check to this public enthusiasm for the *Anschluss*. It was when the Hitler régime was established in Germany. The Austrian Catholics were shocked by the pagan speeches of some of the German leaders and by the suppression of Catholic societies. The Jews, who were a third of the population of Vienna, shrank back from a Germany dominated by anti-Semitism.

Many Austrians of the old régime and of intellectual tradition were alarmed and disgusted by the suppression of free speech and other liberties in Germany and by the violence and brutality of young Austrian Nazis listening to the call of their German comrades across the frontiers. Above all a shudder passed through Austria when Dr. Dollfuss was murdered after an abortive rising of Austrian Nazis instigated by a violent propaganda from Germany—a propaganda based not on friendly persuasion but upon threats of violence.

Little Dr. Dollfuss, that miniature man who had undeniable qualities of charm and courage, had more hero-worship outside his own country than within it. His treatment of the Social Democrats had been ruthless, and his vision of a Catholic State ruled by himself had not appealed to political parties of democratic views. He was one of the Dictators, and his pact with Mussolini was in some measure a surrender of Austrian independence. But all that was forgiven by many of his enemies when he bled to death in his Chancellory.

The political passions beneath the surface of Austrian life—"Austria is a powder magazine," I had been told in previous years—were unknown to foreign opinion who still kept up the legend of a gay and careless Austria, the home of love and song and laughter. They did not hear much, if anything, of the shooting and bombings in Austrian villages where young Nazis fought with young Democrats; nor did they realise the abject poverty and misery which lurked behind the beauty of Vienna and in the lovely valleys behind the mountains.

In my judgment still there would have been a murderous civil war in Austria if Dr. Schuschnigg had been allowed to proceed with his plan for the Fatherland Front. Opinions differ about this, and the argument will go on in history. Many foreign observers and Austrian exiles argue that Dr. Schuschnigg's plebiscite would have gained more than 90 per cent of the popular vote, as afterwards Hitler obtained the vast majority of votes. That, I believe, is an untenable argument. German propaganda and the internal conditions of Austria itself had recruited the ranks of the young Nazis in Austrian towns and villages. Peasant boys hid swastika flags in their

fathers' barns. Many of the young Social Democrats had joined their ranks after the events of 1934. For a time certainly there was a majority of something like 75 per cent of Austrian people in favour of political and economic union with Germany; and though these figures may have dwindled it is beyond all doubt that half the nation at least would have resisted any attempt by the Austrian Chancellor—that tragic figure who will for ever haunt the pages of Austria's last chapter of history—is it the last?—to thrust back into prison those thousands of young Nazis now shouting and stamping through the country-side cheering for Hitler.

Hitler had this dream of union with Austria as the central impulse of his mind. It was expressed in the first line of his book *Mein Kampf*.

“German Austria,” he wrote, “will have to return to the great German Motherland, but not for economic reasons. No, no! Even if reunion, looked at from that point of view, were a matter of indifference—nay, even if it were actually injurious—it would still have to come. German blood should belong to a common Reich.”

People in Germany, even men close to Hitler, did not believe in the early fulfilment of that dream. I was told just before the summons of Dr. Schuschnigg to Berchtesgaden that Hitler had no intention of denying Austria's independence as a separate State. All he wanted, they assured me, and it is possible that they spoke with sincerity, was a closer relationship politically based upon a recognition of German brotherhood and the rights of National Socialism among other political parties in the belief that it would prevail. That indeed was what he demanded of Dr. Schuschnigg in return for the guarantee of independence.

In any case it seemed to most Germans that anything further than that would cause the risk of a European war, which they regarded with horror. Both France and England had proclaimed their interest in the independence of Austria. It was the powder magazine which might set Europe in flames if Hitler decided upon more drastic action.

(2) *The Entry.*

The Germans themselves, except the small group in Hitler's inner counsels, were just as startled and surprised as the rest of Europe when he took that action. It seems likely now that the resignation of certain generals was due to their unwillingness to support this adventure and take this risk. But I think it is still uncertain whether Hitler would have sent his troops over the frontier if Dr.

Schuschnigg had not given him the excuse and opportunity by his sudden challenge. He played his cards badly, that unfortunate man. Austria might still have the shadow of independence if he had not taken that risk of a civil war by trying to raise an army of defence. He was repudiated and forced to resign by his former friend, Seyss-Inquart, that nominee of Hitler's, acting with other Nazi members of the Government. They sent out a call for aid to prevent anarchy and civil war. It was answered with lightning rapidity by Hitler who had all his plans ready for this eventuality. A German army moved up from Bavaria. A hundred thousand men with guns and tanks and armoured cars moved towards the Austrian front. German aeroplanes flew over Vienna. Austria was invaded, though no shot was fired.

When that news was flashed over the wires of the world it created a shock like an earth tremor. Was the explosion going to happen? Was it the signal for a new world war? Did one hear the hoof-beats of the Four Horsemen riding out again?

What was heard on the day of the entry of German troops into Vienna by countless millions of people listening to the wireless in their own homes was the delirious enthusiasm of Austrian crowds shouting and marching and singing to greet their "invaders."

"Sieg Heil! Sieg Heil! Sieg Heil!"

That shout by young voices was repeated with passionate monotony hour after hour. It seemed as though Vienna regarded this invasion with joy. Later it seemed as though the whole of Austria had gone mad with joy, except some millions of Jews who stayed in their houses, stricken by terror and despair, and the Social Democrats who hated Hitler and all his works.

In Foreign Offices and Embassies many messages were arriving by telegraph and telephone. The German troops were already across the Austrian Frontier. Their vanguard was in Vienna. It was a *fait accompli* as some German troops had occupied the demilitarised zone on the Rhine.

Was France going to declare war on Germany to defend the independence of Austria? Was Great Britain ready to enter into a war which before the end might be a world war for the same purpose? There was consternation at the Quai d'Orsay where the French Foreign Office was in consultation with the Minister of War. In Whitehall there was deep anxiety and dismay. The consequences of the German occupation of Austria would be grave and of immediate danger to the equilibrium of Europe. With Austria as a part of Germany another State—Czechoslovakia—would be almost encircled. Its frontiers, heavily fortified on the west, would be open to attack from north and south.

But how could England fight a war for the independence of a State which did not

seem to desire its own independence? It would be a frightful paradox unlikely to arouse the enthusiasm or fury of democratic nations. The situation had altered since Signor Mussolini had sent Italian divisions to the Austrian frontier when the régime of Dr. Dollfuss was threatened by German and Austrian Nazis. Germany had become formidable after intensive rearmament. The Berlin-Rome “axis” had been forged between the two Dictators. Benito Mussolini was exchanging messages of devotion and loyalty with Adolf Hitler.

It was a *fait accompli*, acclaimed by a majority in Austria with an enthusiasm reaching delirious heights. There are many people still in doubt of that. In the United States political writers in books and newspapers still refer to the “brutal conquest” of Austria as though the German troops had advanced upon a defenceless people and subdued them by terror. The Left parties in England still adopt that view. It cannot be maintained in history or in fact.

I went to Austria immediately after the State had been incorporated into the German Reich, and talked with Austrians of all classes. From their evidence I am bound to believe that the entry of the German troops and the coming of Hitler was not regarded as an invasion by the majority but as a brotherly union of two peoples united by blood and spirit. Those German infantry battalions and gunners were not received with rifle fire or with sullen resignation but with garlands and strewn flowers.

An English friend of mine, who was in Budapest at that time, motored from Hungary across the Austrian frontier all the way to Vienna on the day when Dr. Schuschnigg resigned and news came that the Germans were on their way. He was intellectually hostile to the Nazis. He hated the thought that Austria, which he loved, should lose its independence. But as an honest man he was bound to declare afterwards that whatever his own opinions might be about the tragedy of Austria, all that he saw on that journey seemed to prove that the mass of the Austrian people welcomed the coming of Hitler with a kind of madness. In every village through which he passed Nazi flags were being waved by singing, shouting and dancing crowds. In every town through which he went the streets were thronged by cheering and tumultuous folk. In Vienna itself he reached the climax of this delirium.

Other friends of mine, and people I met in Vienna, confirmed the evidence that the coming of Hitler was hailed in this spirit by the majority of the Austrian folk. Something happened in the minds of this people—something mystical perhaps and inexplicable by reason. One lady I know, highly educated and previously hostile to the Nazis, told me afterwards that when the German troops entered Vienna she found herself cheering, waving a Nazi flag, and tramping the streets in the tumultuous crowds like a drunken woman. She had gone “fey” as the Scots would say. She was

beside herself. Austria had suffered so much. There was still so much misery among the people. For years they had been torn by political feuds leading to murders, imprisonments, and executions. The German folk would shelter them. There would be peace and union. Stronger than dislike of Nazi discipline, the suppression of free thought and speech, the sinister ideas of certain leaders, the psychological differences between Germans and Austrians, was, in the first hours of Hitler's coming, the sense of protection and fraternity. I think there was something of that in it combined with mass hysteria of nerve-racked people.

Other minds cooler and more cynical took a different view of what had happened.

I asked a young man whom I had previously known in Vienna how he liked the new régime.

"It doesn't alter things much," he said. "We shall have to work harder for less wages. The tempo of life will be a little quicker. That means that we shall have to die at an earlier age."

From one of Hitler's lieutenants who was with the Führer when he entered Vienna I had a description of his demeanour at that time. He stood up in his car, unsmiling and silent. He was like a man in a dream. He was a man in a dream. This was the fulfilment of the dream which he had written on the first page of *Mein Kampf* and which had been in his mind since boyhood. He showed no sign of exultation. Once he spoke the word "Destiny" and seemed to believe that he was the instrument of Fate. At one stage in the journey there was some doubt among his officers whether his car should go through a working-class district which had been the stronghold of the Social Democrats.

"I will go that way," said Hitler.

In the streets were crowds of men and women who had been the political enemies of his creed. They were silent when his car approached. They looked grim and hostile. But when they saw the figure of Hitler standing up in his car, an easy target for any pistol or bomb, slowly and with a kind of reluctance they stretched out their arms in the Nazi salute. Was it fear? Or was it some extraordinary spell which seems to be put on German people when Hitler passes by? Frankly I don't know.

At least a third of the population of Vienna took no part in this welcome. They remained indoors with despair. They were the Jews.

Those unfortunate people were roughly handled, humiliated and blackmailed by gangs of young Austrian bullies who believed that they would have a free hand for this kind of thing now that their country was a part of the German Reich. They forced respectable Jews, many of them elderly and frail, to go down on their knees

to scrub out the stencilled words with the date of Schuschnigg's plebiscite. It was in retaliation for having had to do the same thing when they stamped the pavements with the sign of the swastika. To make the job more effective they provided acid which took the skin off Jewish hands while they stood around jeering and laughing. In another book I have told the story of an Austrian girl with fair hair and blue eyes. She looked very "Aryan" according to German ideas, but wore no emblem of the new régime. Accosted and questioned on this point by a group of young Nazis she looked them straight in the eyes and said: "I do not wear the swastika because I am a hundred per cent Jewish."

"Very well!" said these young ruffians. "Come along with us." They took her to their barracks and forced her to wash out the lavatories.

There was some smashing of the shop fronts of Jewish traders. Boys of eighteen and nineteen entered Jewish premises and demanded money with threats, taking even a few shillings from old women in order to go to the cinema. It was all very brutal, though not murderous. By people in Vienna I was told that these scenes of bullyragging were stopped by German officers so that they lasted only a few days. The officers of the German Army did not approve, it seemed, of such behaviour. Later a number of young Austrians were rounded up and sent to concentration camps for extracting money from frightened Jews.

These slight checks to persecution and the dislike of all decent Austrians for this terrorism were of no comfort to the Jewish community in Austria. They knew that under the new régime there would be no hope for them. They had already lost their positions in universities, schools, laboratories and hospitals, and all intellectual avocations, lawyers, doctors, artists, literary men and students, were in the grip of a system which hunted them out ruthlessly. Many of them committed suicide. Others more fortunate were able to escape. The British consulate was besieged by Jews of all ages and classes struggling to get *visas* for their passports. For a time the frontier was not closed. It was only later that many ways of escape and all chance of livelihood were denied to them by laws so cold-blooded in cruelty that they sent a shudder through the civilised world and utterly disheartened those who had been working for more friendly relations with Germany for the sake of world peace. I was one of those disheartened.

Dr. Schuschnigg was arrested and imprisoned. There was some talk of his being tried for high treason. There were charges made against him of arranging a fake plebiscite and printing the results in advance. His enemies held a dossier making him responsible for the torture and murder of Nazi prisoners. Himmler, Chief of the German Police and Blackshirts, spoke to me about him with contempt and rage and

told me stories of the strangulation of Nazis under Dr. Schuschnigg's régime. I cannot believe that that man had any hand in any such affairs. He was of the scholarly type, thoughtful and gentle in his manner, a Catholic and a gentleman. His actions were inspired by a love of Austria, as a book of his called *Three Times Austria* clearly shows. Up against Hitler he was powerless as the would-be champion of a people who were divided passionately on political ideals, and the majority of whom, almost certainly, were eager for union with Germany.

At the time of writing these lines Dr. Schuschnigg is still a prisoner in tragic loneliness. There is no chivalry, nor mercy, in the Nazi régime for defeated enemies. In the Middle Ages kings and princes sometimes listened to pleas for clemency and pardoned those who had taken up arms against them. That has gone out of fashion now in Germany and Spain and other countries.

The transference of Austria to the German Reich and the method by which it was done, without consultation with other powers, deepened the suspicion of those who believed that Hitler was aiming for war and not for self-defence, or to impose his power, under the threat of war, upon the rest of Europe. Many of us still hoped that Hitler would remain true to his pledges of peace and that it might still be possible to obtain his co-operation to that end by reasonable agreement and conciliation, according to the policy of appeasement then being urged in Great Britain by its new Prime Minister, Neville Chamberlain. The German people in all classes believed in this hope and possibility. They desired above all things friendship with England. They believed that Hitler had the same desire, many times reiterated in public speeches. In the German Foreign Office and in all departments of the German administration there was the same wish for good relations with us. Ignorant of many facts and out of touch with public opinion abroad because of their controlled Press the German public could not understand the hostility of many English newspapers and the daily abuse of Hitler and his régime with which, in spite of secret "grousing" and undefined anxieties, they were, on the whole, content because of its considerable achievements. The foreign Press, they thought, was poisoning the wells by a campaign of falsity and the dissemination of wild rumours which they suspected to be of Jewish origin, as no doubt some of them were.

I went about Germany on repeated visits, listening and observing, with the deep conviction that ultimately there could be no peace in Europe, and that there would be another massacre of the world's youth, if the democratic states decided that Germany must be the enemy, and that no understanding or agreement was possible with the Totalitarian States. However much we might dislike the Nazi creed and methods, utterly alien to our ideals of liberty, it was deplorable and tragic that war

should be regarded as inevitable between two peoples friendly in the mass to each other. The Nazi régime might be modified and changed in process of time. Meanwhile the only policy of idealism and common sense was to work for peace by reasonable concession and the removal of the causes of war as far as possible. There was surely no sincerity or sense in the political attitude of our own Left Press and politicians who goaded at Germany day by day and ridiculed all ideas of conciliation as abject cowardice, professing democratic ideals and love of liberty while expressing deep sympathy and admiration for Soviet Russia where all forms of religion were abolished, all labour was reduced to serfdom, and all political liberty had been killed by mass executions, under a ruthless tyranny which had cost millions of lives. Even the persecution of the Jews is no justification for a policy of enmity to a people most of whom disapprove of this persecution. War against Germany would do no good to the Jews. It would lead to the ruin of civilisation in Europe and perhaps to the end of all liberties.

The question I asked myself in Germany before the crisis over Czechoslovakia was whether Democracy and Dictatorship must necessarily fight a war to the death. In that case democracy might lose its soul even if it won its battles, because it might only win by becoming "totalitarian."

Another question was of vital interest. Did Hitler with his new sense of power and, perhaps, rising ambitions, aspire to the rôle of a new Napoleon and intend to hurl his armies across other people's frontiers, trampling through South-East Europe until he has taken the Ukraine and lost himself in Russia?

I was able to put that question to the most powerful man in Germany next to Hitler. That is Herr Himmler, who is in command of the Secret Police and Blackshirt Guards. Formerly a schoolmaster he is somewhat of an intellectual and interested in ethnology and scientific exploration. With a sinister reputation abroad—"your newspapers call me the most horrible man in Germany!" he told me almost in his first words—he is by no means repulsive in manner or appearance and did not reveal the ruthlessness of which he is accused.

He was amused by my reference to Hitler in the rôle of Napoleon.

"We have read a little history," he told me. "We know what happened to Mr. Napoleon. We know that if we followed that example it would be Germany's road to ruin. We have no intention of doing so."

I had said something about Germany marching across other nations and seizing the Ukraine.

"That is not Hitler's idea," he told me. "On the contrary, it is the complete opposite of the central idea of our National Socialism. That idea, the very root of

Hitler's creed, is what you call our racial mania. That, if you only knew it, is the safeguard of European peace. We want only German folk within the German Reich. We don't want Czechs or Poles or Hungarians or Ruthenians or Roumanians or Slavs. We want to keep them out of the German Reich."

"Yes," I said, "but you may want to dominate them without including them in the Reich."

I understood from him that Germany did not want to dominate these races in South-East Europe but only to get trade facilities with them by which Germany could break away from the shackles of self-sufficiency, forced upon her by present conditions, and find markets for her industries in return for raw material.

"You have the Ottawa agreement," he said, "which gives the British Empire trade agreements all around the globe. Why should England begrudge Germany getting similar agreements in South-East Europe? Do you want to shut us within our own frontiers while you have the whole world open to you? If so that is a dangerous policy not favourable to peace."

He spoke of Czechoslovakia, not yet boiling up to its crisis, but already worrying the world because of the claim of the Sudeten German leaders for freedom from Czech rule.

"What has that affair got to do with England?" asked Herr Himmler. "Forgive me if I say you are hypocrites! You extol the right of self-determination, but when Sudeten Germans demand that right you get excited and want to interfere, raising the menace of war. We don't interfere in Palestine. And surely England, of all countries in the world, ought to understand that Germany is sympathetic to the claims of a Germanic population—three million of them—not at all happy under Czech rule where they were placed against their will."

He used the word hypocrisy again, but with a laugh and an apology for his frankness.

"You know as well as I do," he said, "that every German—including this horrible man Himmler—wishes to be friends with England. But you make it so difficult!"

Afterwards from our point of view it was the Germans who made the chance of friendship very difficult by the violence of their methods over Czechoslovakia, and by their persecution of the Jews.

Was Himmler lying to me when he spoke those words about my wanting Germans within the German Reich? Even now I doubt that. It was Hitler's creed. But these men are sheer opportunists and their creed was abandoned when they broke all their pledges for the sake of power. In his reference to "Mr. Napoleon," Himmler spoke words which may be a prophecy. "We know that if we followed that

example it would be Germany's road to ruin." They went that way in March 1939 when they marched into Prague.

VI

The Czech Crisis

It was not until the summer of 1938 that the people in this island began to be seriously interested, and somewhat alarmed, by the affair of Czechoslovakia. Most of them were very unfamiliar with the geographical situation of that State which they were apt to mix up with Jugoslavia. Most of them knew very little of its history and strange conglomeration of races. It had never occurred to the village butcher boy, or the shop assistant in the grocery stores, or the young carpenter doing a job of work in a new house along a by-pass road, that their lives might be endangered or destroyed because a gentleman called Dr. Beneš had not fulfilled certain promises made to some hitherto unknown people called Sudetens living under his rule.

Still less did they know that the seeds of a new war in which they might have to die had been planted by a group of elderly gentlemen sitting at a table in Versailles to arrange the peace of the world after a war which had destroyed our noblest young manhood and caused more agony and ruin than words will ever tell though millions have been written. They did this deed with the very best intentions, but even now it seems incredible that they should have constituted the State of Czechoslovakia in such a way with any belief in its permanence. For they placed under Czech rule about three million Bohemian Germans who previously in history had been superior to the Czechs, at least in their own opinion and political influence, within the Austro-Hungarian Empire. That did not seem very likely as a permanent settlement. In addition to that the peace-makers cut off about a million Hungarians from their Fatherland and put them under Czech rule.

Surely it was asking for trouble in the future? Furthermore they added some hundreds of thousands of Poles and Ruthenians (Russians of the Ukraine) to this conglomerate State which was to be one of the beautiful new democracies of the post-war world.

From a racial point of view those who drew the frontier line of the new State were extraordinarily ill-advised. Including all these minorities differing in culture, language and blood, Czechoslovakia was a microcosm which had within its small area all the destructive elements which had caused the break-down and dissolution of the old Austro-Hungarian Empire. There were some of us contemporary chroniclers, that is to say reporters of the world's Press, who realised this at the time and did not fail to point it out. But the statesmen and their junior advisors seemed to like their job of work. One of them, less junior than he had been twenty years ago at

Versailles, was still quite pleased with his little part in the map-making of the new Peace when he explained in a speech during the Crisis of September 1938 how the frontiers of Czechoslovakia came to be drawn. The three million Sudeten Germans, he said, had been put inside the Czech frontier because the mountain range which walled them in made a nice natural and defensive frontier for the new State. Its shape was rather like that of an attenuated crocodile, he continued, so, in order to fatten out its tummy, they added some bits of Austria. But its tail wanted a little bit of attention so they added a million Hungarians. Then to round it off nicely the Ruthenians of the Ukraine and a certain number of Poles and Slovaks were fitted in. It was impossible, anyhow, to make a clean division between all these peoples. In many districts they were closely intermingled and had been so for hundreds of years in villages and valleys, with a certain amount of neighbourliness and with the intermarriage of young people who found that human nature was stronger than race or politics.

But it is a fallacy to declare as most of our newspapers did that the government of Dr. Beneš under the presidency of that great old patriot Masaryk, was a democracy of pure benevolence, and that the minorities in Czechoslovakia were better treated than any others in Europe. The Hungarians certainly were pretty roughly handled in the early years of the new State. They were ruthlessly “Czechised” by the suppression of their universities and schools, by language tests which caused the expulsion of professional men, by the seizure of their land under the beautiful name of “land reform,” by the subsidised settlement of Czechs in their best agricultural districts, and by a Czech officialdom which put them well under the heel of their new masters. In the Sudetenland the German-speaking folk were equally subject to Czech regulations administered by Czech officials who could not, or would not, speak German, thus causing constant friction and a sense of grievance.

The pledge definitely made by the Peace Treaties that these Sudeten Germans should be given local autonomy within the Czech State was never fulfilled, and year after year was evaded by Dr. Beneš, in spite of more than twenty petitions sent to the League of Nations which shelved their responsibility for the rights of minorities.

Czechoslovakia was regarded by Germany under Hitler, and by many Germans before Hitler, as a menace to their security and as a possible cause of world war. The integrity of the new State was guaranteed by France. There was also a close understanding, not excluding military aid, with Soviet Russia, with whom the Czechs had a racial and linguistic affinity, both being Slavs. Prague was the headquarters of many organisations of Communism—no less than fifteen—very busy by underground means in circulating Communistic propaganda in Germany and other countries.

Aerodromes were built in Czechoslovakia in excess of its own requirements, and it was natural to assume that they had been prepared for Russian aeroplanes in the event of war. Dresden and other German cities would then be within close range of aerial bombardment. Just as the Great War had begun in 1914 by the clash between Slav and German, with Serbia as the spearhead of the Russian pressure westwards, so many prophets foresaw that Czechoslovakia would be the next danger zone in Europe. It might produce that combination of forces which would drag all Europe into another war.

The danger of all this became more visible and immediate when Europe was tending very rapidly to be divided by two hostile “ideologies” or political religions—Dictatorship versus Democracy—while the newly armed Germany—dynamic, aggressive and menacing—was feeling its strength. The French Government and military chiefs regarded Czechoslovakia as the bastion of defence in Central Europe against Germany’s pressure eastward. Russia had the same interest in the Czechs as a bulwark against the Germanic tribes and as an advance post of Communism working underground. Czechoslovakia became the focus of attention among all the international wire-pullers behind the scenes.

To the man in the street in this country, to the carpenter at his bench, the peasant at his plough, and the clerk behind his desk, all this meant nothing at all. It was inconceivable to common-sense folk, getting on with their jobs and making their little homes, that anything happening in Czechoslovakia which they couldn’t find on the map, and didn’t want to, should threaten them and their wives and children—with death and destruction. Ridiculous nonsense, they thought. Newspaper stuff!

(2)

Rising Passion.

It was in May of 1938 that little maps of Czechoslovakia began to appear in the papers and that Cabinet Ministers and others came to the microphone with warnings of some vague danger ahead which would make it advisable to provide gas-masks for the civilian population. Those gas-masks would be provided by a thoughtful government. There was a call for volunteers to join a new organisation called A.R.P. which, being interpreted, meant Air Raid Precautions. War, it was said by our statesmen, was not inevitable, but the international situation was steadily deteriorating. They seemed to imagine—these dear gentlemen with nice soothing voices—that if every man, woman and child had a nice gas-mask all would be well. The gas-mask, it seemed, would be a talisman against the horrors of war, including

high explosives.

Listening to these broadcast utterances the British people were perplexed, but most of them refused to get rattled. They were more interested in the Test Match or their own cricket on the village green, or the lack of water for their little gardens after a dry spring.

In May I happened to be in Central Europe—Germany, Austria, Hungary, Italy. The people there were nearer to Czechoslovakia and slightly more anxious, though not yet panic-stricken. In that merry month of May the Sudeten Germans were beginning to stir up trouble. At least groups of them were doing so under the leadership of a tough fellow named Henlein who had once been a gymnastic instructor. There were other district leaders who were demanding the local autonomy promised them twenty years before by those who created the Czechoslovak State. They had been greatly excited by the happenings in Austria. They leaned heavily towards the political creed of Hitler, symbolised by the swastika, and were in close touch with German Nazis on the other side of the frontier. There were tavern brawls between Czechs and Sudeten Germans. Henlein was becoming bold and aggressive in his messages to Dr. Beneš. He reminded that statesman that behind the Sudeten Germans was the sympathy and the might of Greater Germany. What was he going to do about it?

Dr. Beneš did nothing, except offer certain alleviations of Czech control in the Sudeten districts which he was slow to put into effect. Then Hitler spoke. As far back as February 22 he had made a speech in the Reichstag saying that he would not tolerate any further oppression of the Sudeten Germans who had been separated from their German kinsfolk—though as a matter of fact they had never formed a part of Germany. Now, in other words, he held out a promise of moral support which was a warning and perhaps a threat. German propaganda in the controlled Press began to get active and menacing, but not yet breaking out into the full blast of denunciations and menaces which happened later. By several Germans in high places I was told that they were anxious to keep the Sudeten Germans quiet and not precipitate an explosion which might lead to grave events in Europe. I doubt whether they were lying. There were many people in Germany, including the German High Command, who did not want that explosion to happen, having no wish for a European war which might lead again to ruin. But there were others, among them an ex-Ambassador to England by name of Ribbentrop—who did not believe in any grave consequences of that kind, being quite convinced that England and France would avoid war at all costs, not being at all ready for that adventure. Dr. Goebbels, Minister of Propaganda, began to tune up his orchestra for a broadcast symphony of

sound and fury.

It was not until the summer of 1938—last year as this book is being written—that the cauldron began to boil up. Herr Henlein and his confederates were becoming more urgent in their demands. At Carlsbad Henlein laid down eight points for settlement. They amounted to complete Home Rule for the Sudetens with control of their own police and all administration. Some of the points went farther than any State Government could grant to a minority without surrendering its sovereign rights. One of these points claimed the right for the Sudetens to assert their German nationality.

The people of Europe went about their work and pleasure with only the faint shadow of a grisly spectre in the background of their minds. Indeed the mass of the people in Germany, France and Great Britain, and other countries remained stolidly undisturbed, mainly because they knew nothing of what was happening behind the scenes and in the council chambers. Those who knew most were deeply anxious.

In these council chambers there was grave conversation. Our own Cabinet Ministers read reports from Ambassadors which were highly disturbing to their peace of mind. It was becoming more and more apparent that Germany under Hitler's direction was preparing to intervene drastically in the dispute between the Czechs and Sudetens. Henlein was taking his instructions from Berlin and Munich. In the Sudetenland tension was increasing and ugly incidents in the frontier towns were becoming more frequent. Groups of Sudetens were leaving their country and recruiting in a Free Corps on the German side of the border, according to the precedent set by the Austrian Nazis before the union with Germany. There were ominous signs of an explosion which might hurl all Europe into war.

Those signs were read by Mr. Neville Chamberlain in Downing Street and by Lord Halifax in the Foreign Office. In July, after anxious consultations in the Cabinet, they decided that there were only three alternative courses of policy and the best must be chosen quickly. One of them was to declare war on Germany if her armies attacked Czechoslovakia. Another was to stand aside and let matters take their course. The third was to attempt a peaceful solution by mediation. According to our English way of compromise the third line of policy seemed to be the best course and was taken. But it was taken in an unusual way. Lord Runciman, one of our elder statesmen, unfamiliar to the present generation, was asked to go out as mediator, not with official responsibility or as directly representing the British Government, but more or less as a private individual of considerable experience and impartiality who might secure the confidence of Czechs and Sudetens.

Looking back on this chapter of history that pretence of the unofficial character

of Lord Runciman's mission seems absurd and unnecessary. As a private individual he had no *locus standi* whatever. Both the Czechs and the Sudetens regarded him as a representative of the British Government, as indeed he was in reality and influence.

When he reached Prague early in August he quickly summed up the difficulties and dangers with which he had to deal. He found the Sudetens—apart from the Social Democrats and Communists—embittered by grievances against the Czechs. Those did not amount to charges of terrorism, but were oppressive and intolerable. They were moving inevitably, he thought, in the direction of revolt and civil war. A thousand petty grievances caused by Czech officials and police had been influenced by desperate poverty due to the industrial stagnation of the Sudetenland since 1930, which they blamed, unfairly no doubt, on the Czech administration. German propaganda was stirring up passion. Dr. Beneš, getting anxious—too late—now made various concessions to the Sudeten leaders, but grudgingly and without satisfying their claim to complete local autonomy. It was due to Lord Runciman's influence that these negotiations were arranged, and he used every persuasion on both sides, but without success, to bring them to an agreement. Gradually, no doubt, he was coming to the conclusion that the Sudeten leaders did not want an agreement, or that those pulling the wires behind the scenes from Berlin and Berchtesgaden would not allow them to make one within the framework of the Czech State.

(3)

A Menace of War.

Mr. Neville Chamberlain and Lord Halifax were in close touch with this situation and did not like the look of it. It was becoming increasingly dangerous, and it was obvious that the German Government had Henlein in their hands. Then early in August reports reached them of military activities in Germany which had a grave significance. Many reservists were being called to the Colours. There had been already a conscription of labour and hundreds of thousands of young men were being taken from civil life to dig earthworks on the Western Front with furious haste. Motor lorries and other vehicles were being requisitioned for military use. There were troop movements towards the frontier of Czechoslovakia. Who could doubt that all this revealed a menace to the State?

The French Government, aware of these facts, was becoming increasingly alarmed. Great Britain had no commitments of any kind regarding Czechoslovakia—

Mr. Chamberlain had emphasised that many times—but France was pledged, at least by a close understanding on both sides, if not by written pacts, to uphold the integrity of that State. The French Government sent urgent requests to our Foreign Office to make Germany fully aware of the British point of view, as outlined by Mr. Chamberlain as far back as March 24—namely, that if war broke out it could not be confined to those who had assumed direct obligations similar to those of France, but would involve other nations closely associated by common interests. That is to say Great Britain could not stand aside if France were attacked on this issue.

The British Ambassador in Berlin, Sir Neville Henderson, was known and liked in Germany for his devoted efforts towards a friendly understanding between our two countries. He was now instructed to put the British point of view very clearly before the German Foreign Office. It was a warning that if there were German aggression against Czechoslovakia a general European war could not be avoided.

The German Government took note of these conversations, but Herr Hitler and his chief advisers, Herr von Ribbentrop and Dr. Goebbels, did not seem to be impressed. In view of information that German troops were moving towards the Czech frontier France called up certain reserves and manned the Maginot Line. The stage was being set for a devastating war, though on all sides the peoples whose lives would be sacrificed had no wish for it, but, on the contrary, a horror of its approach.

Why should there be war because of those Sudeten Germans who had been put under alien rule and wished to be free of it? We were paying in alarm and tragic apprehension for the original peace-makers who had created this artificial State and for the failure of the League to take notice in time of minority rights and grievances. President Wilson's Fourteen Points which had been the blue prints of peace had upheld the principle of self-determination and had laid down the general axiom that when peace was made peoples should not be bartered about against their will from one frontier to another. Those principles had been violated and this was the consequence. But the violence of German methods and the threat of force to remedy these grievances created a dangerous and unacceptable challenge to other nations like France and ourselves.

Under strong pressure from Lord Runciman and the British Government Dr. Beneš prepared another plan—the Fourth Plan—accepting most of the demands of the Sudeten leaders. Henlein himself seemed prepared to accept them, but was instructed, undoubtedly by the German wire-pullers, whose puppet he was, to find some excuse for breaking off negotiations—and negotiations were broken off. The excuse came when there was an affray in the frontier town of Mährisch Ostrau. The

Czech police arrested a number of Sudeten Germans who had been smuggling in arms, and were resisted. The German Press vastly exaggerated this incident which they described as an “unspeakable outrage.” They were now in full hue and cry under the direction of Dr. Goebbels. German newspapers were describing the Czech treatment of Sudetens as “torture” and manufactured atrocity stories which had no foundation in fact. It was inevitable that in this time of tension and political passion fights and clashes should occur in frontier towns and villages. Each one of them was magnified beyond all belief. To read the German Press one might have thought that the civilian population of the Sudetenland was being massacred by Czech soldiers and police. In a majority of cases it was Czech police who were killed. But Hitler believed, or pretended to believe—it was quite possible that he believed—these stories of murder and torture. His friends say that he became very emotional about them and swore that he would go to the rescue of the Sudetens at all costs. He forgot, or did not allow that thought to interfere with his championship, that in rescuing his dear Sudetens he might cause the death of millions of men. It was reported that his patience was wearing out.

He was going to make a speech at the Nuremberg Rally on September 12. What would he say? The words of that one man might be a sentence of death for great masses of young manhood. If he declared that his patience was at an end and that his men would march into Czechoslovakia many cities would go up in flames. There would be a war in the air as well as the struggle of great armies rising from their earthworks. That would happen if France fulfilled her pledges, written and unwritten, with the Czechs. That would happen if Great Britain fulfilled her pledges, mostly unwritten, to France, as Germany had been warned thereon.

On the other hand, if Hitler said Peace and regarded Dr. Beneš' Fourth Plan as acceptable peace would be assured. The fate of the world was in the brain of that extraordinary man who had risen to supreme power over his people by some mesmeric spell and the inexplicable quality of leadership.

That speech was awaited with acute anxiety. When it was delivered it sounded harsh and menacing, as it came over the radio to which millions were listening. It was interrupted continually by outbursts of passionate cheering rising in waves, mostly from young voices.

Apart from his harsh delivery, exaggerated perhaps by the radio, for Hitler has a deep resonant voice when one hears him in the open-air except when it rises in passion, the speech was not a declaration of war, but the warning of an implacable will.

“If,” he said, “the Sudeten Germans cannot find right or help for themselves they

shall get both from us. Their position as outlaws must be ended.” He reminded his audience of what he had said in the Reichstag to the same effect on February 22 of that year and uttered a warning meant for the ears of British and French Ministers. “That was no empty phrase; let foreign statesmen register this hint.”

Fair-minded men, true to their liberal traditions, must admit that his general argument on behalf of the Sudetens was theoretically right. It was the argument I have already used.

“Czechoslovakia,” he said, “was founded by the Versailles Treaty without consulting the majority of the population. The inhabitants were cheated out of their vital rights and the world was told: ‘This State has a political and military mission.’ . . . Minorities totalling seven and a half million people (including the Hungarians and others) are deprived of the self-determination promised by President Wilson.”

He exaggerated this thesis, which was true, by talking about the “unspeakable misery” of the Sudetens and of their “torture.” He denounced the Prague Government for lies, especially with regard to deliberate and false reports that his armies had mobilised in the previous May, when foreign newspapers were flooded with wild rumours, utterly untrue, but repeated in the Press in spite of official denial. In answer to that campaign of lies he had increased his military forces and mobilised his young men to dig the fortifications in the West—“the most gigantic fortresses in the world,” he claimed.

“It is now up to Dr. Beneš,” he said, thus leaving the door open for further negotiations.

Those negotiations broke down completely not many days later. Hitler’s speech promising German aid and proclaiming the rights of the Sudetens to self-determination excited passion to fever point among these people who happened to be politically minded. The main body of the Sudetens—peasants and craftsmen—wanted only peace in their homes and security of life. There were mass demonstrations and serious riots. The Czech police were attacked on the frontier and men were killed and wounded on both sides—about 20 killed and 70 wounded, of whom the majority were Czechs, though to judge from the German Press the outside world might have imagined that rivers of blood of innocent Sudetens were flowing. The German newspapers under command of Dr. Goebbels were filled with fury. German journalists vied with each other in the violence of their abuse of Dr. Beneš, described by them as a liar, coward, assassin and torturer, and upon the Czech State which they thought worthy only of annihilation.

In order to restore order and prevent civil war martial law was proclaimed by the Czech Government. Henlein, the Sudeten leader, demanded its immediate

withdrawal, declared that his Karlsbad points were now obsolete, and announced that the right of self-determination for freedom from Czech rule was the only settlement possible. He then fled from Czechoslovakia to escape arrest and joined the Free Corps which amounted now to about 40,000 men on the German side of the frontier.

Lord Runciman's mission of arbitration had clearly broken down, and the situation was rushing towards a climax.

It was then, with the fearful tragedy of war looming close, that Mr. Neville Chamberlain made his dramatic resolve to go to Germany for a personal talk with Hitler. This idea had been in his mind for some time as a last resort because he felt that the aloofness of a man like the German leader from ordinary diplomatic exchanges, surrounded by a few intimate friends and advisers who might be keeping the truth from him, was one of the dangerous factors of the situation. The Prime Minister knew the risk he was taking. He might be accused by his own people of lowering the dignity of his position. They might be resentful if he failed to bring back a peaceful solution.

There are fantastic minds in England and the United States who maintain that all this was a carefully prepared plan to throw dust in the eyes of the people and to reconcile them to a surrender to Dictatorship. Others assert that the whole of the Crisis was a game of bluff between both sides which never had any real reality because neither side had any intention of war. American journalists especially have concocted the story of an elaborate plot hatched by a mythical "Cliveden House" group for the purpose of "betraying" the last democracies of Europe and establishing a Fascist rule in England. That wild nonsense still lurks in unbalanced brains. War came very close to Europe and the world on the fourteenth day of September 1938. We were within two hours and twenty-five minutes of its happening. One could almost smell its smouldering fires. It is certain beyond any reasonable doubt that Hitler intended to smash his way into Czechoslovakia and liberate the Sudetens from Czech rule if Dr. Beneš still resisted their independence. Deeply reluctant as France was to endure more agony and bloodshed there is no doubt that the French Government would have declared war if Czechoslovakia had been invaded. In that case Britain, even more reluctant, would have gone to her aid. On the German side, no doubt, there was an element of bluff. That is to say, Herr von Ribbentrop whispered into Hitler's ear that Czechoslovakia could be isolated and that fighting could be localised without intervention by France and Britain. Hitler and those men surrounding him were ready to put this to the ultimate test to the fifty-ninth minute of the last hour—a terrific test of nerve—but they were ready to use force if need be,

and, as the German Führer told Mr. Neville Chamberlain, he was prepared to risk a world war for the sake of three million Sudeten Germans, a majority of whom no doubt had been uncomfortable under Czech rule, though a minority preferred it to Nazi methods.

(4)

The Man with the Umbrella.

In those days of September the realisation that war might happen, the frightful menace of it, came very close to the mind and soul of our people, who during that summer had seen it only as a faint shadow behind the sunshine. Most of them had disbelieved, or been indifferent to, the scare-raising speeches of politicians and the gloomy predictions of the Press. Only those following foreign affairs with inside knowledge or anxious observation had felt the long-enduring strain of critical months now reaching their climax, with infinite tragedy only a few hours away. But in September no one of intelligence could fail to read the writing on the wall. The Cabinet was in almost constant session. There was a coming and going of foreign ambassadors, naval, military, and air force chiefs. Over the wireless came urgent appeals for activity and the mobilisation of the nation to protect itself from air-raids and poison gas. Home Office officials and others made plans for the evacuation of children from London. Presently men with spades and picks began to dig ditches in London parks and squares. What on earth were they doing, these men? The ditches became deeper. The passers-by stared into them. They were trenches. Never since the coming of the Normans had the people of these islands dug earthworks for the defence of their lives.

Men who knew their purpose, having seen such things in Flanders, stared at them grimly with the touch of a cold finger down their spines. They were utterly useless! How could nine million people in a monstrous city get into those few slits in the earth? What protection would they be against high explosive shells or the splinters of our own anti-aircraft guns—if we had any? We had not many, as it turned out, and those who knew our unpreparedness knew that if war happened this last hour's work with pick and shovel would not prevent unimaginable tragedy in London streets and other great cities.

It would be untrue to say that our people regarded the approach of the grisly spectre with anything but horror, or, in many souls, with anything but despair. Was this what civilisation had come to then? Were our women and children to be torn to pieces by high explosives in a war against the German people who liked us and

whom, on the whole, we liked, because for strategical reasons and those of power politics the frontiers of Czechoslovakia must remain unchanged, or because Adolf Hitler wanted to take by force what he could get by consent? Yet with all this horror at the back of their minds our folk in towns and villages remained very quiet and strangely calm with an extraordinary fatalism, as it seemed. Even now many refused to believe that war would happen. Others had faith in “hunches” and some mystical intuition.

But a sigh almost audible, a tremendous sigh of relief from the peoples of many nations, went up when at a quarter-past nine on the evening of September 14th it was announced over the “wireless” that Mr. Neville Chamberlain would fly next morning to see Herr Hitler at Berchtesgaden. It seemed like the breaking of an evil spell. The whole world applauded the flying messenger of peace, this elderly English gentleman who had never flown before but who boarded an aeroplane, umbrella in hand—that umbrella became the symbol of common sense and sobriety in a mad world—in order to talk face to face, in all frankness, with the man who by a few words could put the evil genie back into its bottle.

The Prime Minister was received courteously by the German Chancellor after cheers all along his way from Munich where he had changed into a car to motor the rest of the way to Berchtesgaden. In that first conversation Mr. Neville Chamberlain was allowed no doubt as to what was working in Hitler’s mind. Bluntly he told the Prime Minister that the Sudeten Germans must have the right of self-determination and of joining the Reich (in which they had never been) if so they wished. If they could not achieve this by their own efforts, he said, he was prepared to help them to do so and he declared emphatically that rather than wait he would risk a world war.

The Prime Minister, as afterwards he told the House of Commons, was taken aback by this warning which was also a threat, and he told the German leader with equal bluntness that he must disabuse his mind of the idea that in no circumstances would Great Britain go to war with Germany when in fact there were conditions in which it would happen. The conviction came to him in overwhelming strength that Hitler was contemplating an immediate invasion of Czechoslovakia, and Hitler agreed that it was no use continuing conversations unless he could have the assurance of the British Government that they accepted the principle of self-determination. The utmost concession to which he would agree was that he would not take military measures while Mr. Chamberlain was consulting his Cabinet—provided nothing happened in Czechoslovakia of such a nature as to force his hand.

Mr. Chamberlain returned to England with deep anxiety, conscious that the gravity of the situation was acute. To the House of Commons afterwards he declared

his conviction that his visit to Berchtesgaden had alone prevented an invasion of Czechoslovakia which would have plunged Europe into war. But there was no assurance in his mind that he could hold this situation even for a few days. Something might happen at any hour or minute which Hitler would regard as forcing his hand. His lieutenants might see that it would happen.

Meanwhile what of France? During that time of critical danger Lord Halifax had been in the closest touch with French Ministers and our Government in dealing with this crisis had to take into account not only the public opinion of this country and its preparedness for war—none too good to say the least of it—but the situation and strength of France. It is no secret now that M. Daladier, the French Premier, was tortured by a passionate conflict of opinion in his own Government and by his knowledge of French weakness for attack or defence, especially in the air. The people of France regarded the approach of war with the same horror as the people of Great Britain, not from cowardice but from experience of war's destruction of all that civilisation means to civilised minds. They were on the horns of the same dilemma. Was it worth while, or was it necessary, to enter into a war which would end in general ruin whoever won in order to prevent a lot of Sudeten Germans from liberating themselves, if they wished, from Czech rule? Was the pledge of France to Czechoslovakia to be kept at the price of millions of dead and the certain annihilation of that State before rescue could reach its borders? Was there no way out in honour from this man-trap? Urgent messages came to Whitehall from Daladier and his colleagues to find some way out.

Upon returning to London Mr. Chamberlain received a memorandum from Lord Runciman, afterwards printed in a White Paper. He gave a brief history of his attempts to arrange a compromise between the Sudetens and the Czechs, and their final break-down. He had come to the conclusion, rather hurriedly, that the only solution would be the cession of the Sudetens to the German Reich, with safeguards for those who did not wish to join Germany under Hitler's régime. He considered the idea of a plebiscite unnecessary, "a mere formality," in districts densely inhabited by Sudeten Germans, being convinced that a very large majority of these inhabitants favoured union with Germany. For mixed districts where Czech and German were intermingled inextricably he proposed local autonomy. He favoured a neutral Czechoslovakia pledged to prevent internal plots and propaganda directed to the attack of her neighbours. That is to say the Communists should be suppressed.

This report coincided with Hitler's demand for "self-determination" but went even beyond that demand in rejecting the idea of a plebiscite—a point which even now has not been explained or justified. Nevertheless this report and its

recommendations formed the basis of the Anglo-French Plan drawn up after long discussions with M. Daladier, the French Premier and his colleagues in London where they sat hour after hour smoking innumerable cigarettes until midnight while the world held its breath.

Mr. Chamberlain again flew to Germany, but this time to Godesberg on the Rhine, where Hitler was in the neighbourhood to spare his visitor the longer journey. The Prime Minister took with him the Anglo-French Plan which had been presented to the Czech Government for their acceptance and which they had accepted under heavy pressure. It carried out in the main Lord Runciman's proposals with safeguards for the gradual and orderly withdrawal of the Czechs from the ceded areas.

At Godesberg Mr. Chamberlain was startled and shocked by new demands from Hitler more drastic even than before, more humiliating to the Czechs, more abrupt and harsh in procedure. A time-limit was named for the entry of the German troops into the ceded areas. It was October 1st. That gave no time for an orderly withdrawal or for the transfer of property belonging to Czechs and Sudetens who did not wish to be under German rule. In fact Hitler demanded that no such property—not even a cow or a pig—should be moved. It was the ultimatum of a conqueror to a people utterly defeated rather than a proposal for the rectification of a frontier by agreement. Mr. Chamberlain expressed that view of the new demands.

He retired to his hotel disturbed and disillusioned. Conversations with the German Chancellor were broken off. There was an exchange of letters in which the Prime Minister expressed his inability to agree to these new demands and methods, leading to the immediate entry of German troops. His first letter was dated September 23rd. There were only ten days ahead before the expiry of the time-limit.

In another letter of the same date the Prime Minister said that he would forward the German Chancellor's new demands to the Czech Government and had decided to return to England at once to report the present situation to his colleagues and the French Government. There was a final interview with Hitler late in the evening and the British Prime Minister spoke with considerable warmth, warning Hitler of the grave danger and bitterly reproaching the Chancellor for his failure to respond in any way to the efforts which Chamberlain himself had made for peace.

Hitler seemed to be moved by those reproaches and gave his visitor certain assurances. He said he wanted friendship with England and that if the Sudeten question could be settled peacefully he would gladly resume conversations.

"There is one awkward question," he added, "the Colonies—but that is not a matter for war."

He said that this was the last of his territorial ambitions in Europe and that he had no wish to include in the Reich peoples of other races than German. It was what I had been told by Himmler.

On the following morning Mr. Chamberlain returned to London. On his way to Cologne there were other demonstrations from German folk. They were remarkable. Great numbers of German women lined the route. As he passed they set up a chant of "Chamberlain must come back! Chamberlain must come back!" They wanted peace, these German people. These women wanted to save their men. Their horror of war in all parts of Germany, could not be ignored by the powers above them.

There was no sense of peace during the next nine days when every hour drew nearer to that fatal day of October 1st. During the very conversation between Chamberlain and Hitler the Czech Government, no longer in the hands of Dr. Beneš, who had resigned, ordered general mobilisation. In Germany further reserves were called up. In France there was a partial mobilisation which went on quietly. Men who rejoined the colours went to their posts gravely but without protest. France was resigning itself to another life-and-death struggle with resignation and valour though with despair in the hearts of their women. The British Fleet was mobilised.

There is a grave criticism to be made against the British Government which cannot be passed over. During this time of intense strain bearing down upon every mind and heart the people were left without information or guidance. There was no evidence available for any reasoned understanding or judgment of what was happening. What news they had, wholly unreliable, had to be picked up from newspaper reports coming from Prague and Paris. It was Mussolini who first mentioned the date of the ultimatum—October 1st. No one knew the terms of the Anglo-French Plan. No one knew what difference there was between the Berchtesgaden and the Godesberg demands. They were fed on wild rumours unconfirmed and by leakages in the French Press and by false reports in some of their own newspapers. That is not the way in which a great people should be left in darkness while their lives are in jeopardy.

No blame attaches to Mr. Chamberlain who was working day and night without sleep or rest. But someone in the Government should surely have given the main facts of the situation to our people who were suffering from severe mental and moral strain.

In spite of the Anglo-French Plan which had been accepted by the Czechs, wholly against their own instincts and free will, as we must admit, no sign came from Germany that Hitler would defer by half an hour his orders to cross the Czech frontier on the morning of October 1st. A last plea sent to him by Mr. Chamberlain

by special messenger obtained no concession. In a broadcast speech the Prime Minister addressed his nation with an emotional gravity which was heard by listening millions throughout the world. He revealed his bitter disappointment at the apparent failure of his efforts and expressed his horror of war. . . .

“I am myself,” he said, “a man of peace to the depths of my soul. Armed conflict between nations is a nightmare to me, but if I were convinced that any nation had made up its mind to dominate the world by fear of its force I should feel that it must be resisted.”

In another passage of this speech he spoke with a kind of anguish.

“How horrible, fantastic, incredible, it is that we should be digging trenches and trying on gas-masks here because of a quarrel in a far away country between people of whom we know nothing! It seems still more impossible that a quarrel which has already been settled in principle should be the subject of war.”

It was the speech of an almost hopeless man.

(5)

The World's Relief.

From one unexpected source came moral aid and influence of a most powerful kind. President Roosevelt, in two striking messages addressed to the German Chancellor, pleaded for a peaceful settlement by negotiation and reminded Hitler that 130 million people stood behind his argument on behalf of world peace and against aggression. They were noble, resolute and moving messages which could not go unnoticed by Hitler's advisers and lieutenants. They were a warning as well as a reminder.

That was the situation, seemingly hopeless, when on September 28th Mr. Neville Chamberlain faced the House of Commons to tell the country for the first time the facts in a detailed and dramatic narrative. It was the history of those months of growing anxiety and diplomatic action which I have outlined in preceding pages. The House was crowded. In the galleries with the Ambassadors of foreign powers were many distinguished “strangers,” as they are called, in the House of Commons, including the Duke of Kent, and the Archbishop of Canterbury, and many Peers. They listened with intense silence to the Prime Minister's narrative after the cheers which had greeted him from his followers. He was hardly interrupted except for an occasional jeer from the extreme Left which he mostly ignored except for one rebuke.

Towards the end of his speech the sense that he could do no more than he had

done, and that the issues were dark, came through his words and struck a chill into many hearts. He made some reference to having sent a message to Mussolini asking him to support his last request to Hitler to agree to a four-power conference.

Suddenly he became aware of a slip of paper put under his nose. Several of his colleagues had tried to attract his attention to it before but he had been too absorbed in his speech to be aware of it. He adjusted his pince-nez, read a few words and was silent for a moment or two. Then his voice was heard again.

“Mr. Speaker, I have something more to say——”

It was the announcement that Hitler had invited him to a further conversation, this time at Munich, with the French Premier and Mussolini.

It was one of the most dramatic moments which have ever happened in the House of Commons for intensity of emotion and sudden hope gleaming into a world of darkness. Nearly everyone in the House rose to his feet, cheering. Contrary to all law and precedent the “strangers” in the Gallery broke into prolonged applause. The Archbishop of Canterbury was to be seen banging his hands on the rail in front of him. The young Duke waved his order paper. Political supporters and opponents of Mr. Chamberlain went to grasp his hand and wish him God-speed.

That elderly man who had been under prolonged strain which would have exhausted many a younger man seemed endowed with supernatural endurance against lack of sleep and both physical and mental fatigue. He was up with the dawn and motored out to Heston aerodrome where he was greeted by many of his colleagues and a crowd of journalists and members of the German Embassy who expressed their warm hope for the success of his mission.

He spoke a few simple words and quoted the old proverb of “If you don’t at first succeed try, try, try again!” Afterwards parodied wickedly by some wit as “If you don’t at first concede fly, fly, fly again!” Then he quoted some words from Shakespeare’s *Henry IV* spoken by the rebel Hotspur.

“Out of this nettle, danger, we pluck the flower safety.”

He went to Munich. Mussolini was there and threw his weight on the side of peace as far as supporting Chamberlain’s insistence upon the peaceful and gradual entrance of German troops into Sudeten territory. The last discussion went on for hours. The world clung to its wireless sets waiting for news. Nothing had come by midnight. The strain was wearing and frightful to nerves on edge with apprehension. Had negotiations failed? Would there be war after that gleam of hope? It was not until two o’clock in the morning that words came from Munich that agreement had been reached without reference to the Czechs who were not allowed to enter into this discussion. It was peace—a kind of peace.

Peace with honour? Mr. Neville Chamberlain thought so and said so. He brought back a slip of paper signed by Hitler and himself. At Heston he had waved it in the air exultantly. It held the hope that the two nations would never go to war with each other again. It held the pledge that any other questions arising between them should be dealt with by the method of consultation.

The Prime Minister was made aware by thousands of telegrams and great cheering crowds, both in Germany and England, that the common folk of the world, or at least of Europe, were overwhelmingly grateful for this reprieve from death and ruin and the mutilation of their children, and all imaginable horrors. But within a few minutes of his return to Downing Street he was faced with the resignation of one of his colleagues, Mr. Duff Cooper, First Lord of the Admiralty, who did not agree with him. And within a few hours many of those who had cheered him in the House of Commons on the Opposition benches were uttering or preparing to utter violent abuse of this settlement which they called a betrayal of democracy and a surrender to the Dictators.

The Opposition newspapers led this public criticism and seemed angry because war had not happened after all. Emotional young gentlemen who called themselves intellectuals went about uttering dark words: "I am ashamed of being an Englishman." American newspapers were almost unanimous in describing the Munich Agreement as a surrender of the most abject kind to dictatorship.

That controversy still goes on. It will go on in the pages of history. But one or two questions may clarify some of the perplexities.

Supposing we had fought and won that war—should we have won it?—after inconceivable agonies and losses, should we have placed the Sudeten Germans again, against their will, under Czech rule?

The answer is plainly No.

Where then would have been the moral justification for such a war?

Supposing we had fought that war with a tragic inferiority in air power, should we have saved Czechoslovakia from annihilation, surrounded as it was on three sides by Germany so that its western defences were already turned? How could we or France get near them in time for rescue when it would have cost a million men, as all experts agree, to break through the German fortifications? Would the Czechs have been able to save themselves from murderous destruction and the massacre from the air of men, women and children?

The answer again is plainly No.

Would Hitler have renounced war if he had known that France and Great Britain would fight? Was he bluffing to the last minute of the last hour? There the answer is

not so certain. It can never be certain. But he told Chamberlain that he was prepared to risk a world war, and his troop movements and preparations seem to prove that he had that intention. In the opinion of many Germans and in the opinion of Mr. Chamberlain's advisers, he intended to march. There are some who think that he felt himself thwarted by not having to give the orders to march.

In any case how could we who had upheld the rights of self-determination fight a war to prevent a minority from claiming that right? And how could our Left extremists reconcile their love of liberty and their hatred of dictatorship with their desire to use Russia as their great ally?

These questions seem to me very pertinent to the argument and not to be ignored by those who accuse Neville Chamberlain of surrender and betrayal.

If the spirit of the Munich Agreement had been followed up warmly with a mutual and generous desire for friendly co-operation between our two nations and reaching some general settlement which would have ended the armament race there would have been a new sense of peace to Europe and the prospect of renewed prosperity. In millions of little homes haunted still by the fear of war that bogey would have been banished. But something happened in the mind of Hitler. He seemed to be angered and soured by criticism in the British Press, or a section of it, in regard to the methods and meaning of the Czechoslovakian crisis. No joy seemed to come to him because he had obtained what he had wanted without war. No generous word of thanks for Mr. Chamberlain's action passed his lips. His first speech after the Munich Agreement was in a harsh and jeering tone in which he referred to Mr. Anthony Eden, Mr. Duff Cooper and Mr. Winston Churchill whom he accused of being warmongers. Month after month passed while Mr. Chamberlain waited patiently for some gesture of good-will and friendship which would enable him to continue his policy of appeasement, but nothing of that kind came.

If the Munich settlement had been a prelude to peace the revision of the Czech frontiers would have been a new source of confidence, because it got rid of the danger zone in Central Europe which Germany had with some justification considered as a menace owing to the connection between Czechoslovakia and Soviet Russia, as well as a military pact with France. But without that peaceful intention behind it it was clear that Germany's position in Central Europe had been greatly strengthened, and that the military position of France had been much weakened. The inevitable suspicion that this was the real intention of Germany's policy and that the deliverance of the Sudeten Germans was only a pretext or a side-issue was increased by speeches made by Dr. Goebbels who sang his own praises for having captured "the key positions" in Europe by his genius for propaganda, and

by Hitler's commanding attitude to bordering States like Poland and Hungary. Now there can be no belief that Hitler's aims were limited to the liberation of the Sudeten Germans.

Hungary had insisted upon reclaiming her lost folk within the Czech frontier and in this was supported by Hitler, but he refused to allow the Hungarians to acquire a common frontier with Poland by taking over a district inhabited by Ruthenians. This and other diplomatic actions and activities by Herr von Ribbentrop kept Europe and especially France and Great Britain uneasy and on the alert for new and dangerous crises.

Two possibilities of grave danger stared us all in the face after the Munich Agreement. One was the continued civil war in Spain raging without a respite in its fury and ruthlessness on both sides. The policy and pretext of non-intervention was flagrantly violated by Mussolini who had something like forty thousand men in Spain. German and Italian bombers massacred Spanish civilians on the Republican side. The Left-wing in France, including moderate Socialists and Radicals, could hardly be restrained from intervening effectively in favour of the Spanish Republicans. That certainly would have led to a European war. In England public opinion was sharply divided—in sympathy over this civil war in Spain in which valour was equally matched in merciless fighting. Left and Liberal opinion sided with the Republicans, forgetful of their early atrocities when Anarchists and Communists committed terrible and ghastly crimes for which there is full and admitted evidence, forgetful also of the cold-blooded executions of civilians—many thousands in Madrid alone—accused of being Catholic sympathisers of General Franco. But even some of those who had leaned emotionally to the side of General Franco because he stood, as they believed, for law and order against anarchy and for religion against atheism, began to ask themselves what would happen if Franco won. . . . What price would he pay Italy for helping to win his war? What service would he give to Germany in return for her bombing planes? France might have to defend another frontier! There would be increased danger for Great Britain in the Mediterranean. In the House of Commons the Prime Minister was violently attacked by the Opposition for maintaining a policy of cold neutrality. He knew that if it were broken by England or France the danger of war could hardly be avoided.

(6)

Britain Rearms.

The second possibility of war reached high tension between France and Italy. In

the Italian Chamber a group of deputies had shouted in chorus that they demanded Corsica, Tunisia and Nice. This demonstration was disclaimed officially, but it was followed by a campaign of abuse between the journalists of Italy and France and especially by those of Italy which went beyond all decent limits.

In January of this year 1939 Mr. Neville Chamberlain and Lord Halifax paid a visit to Rome which had been arranged at Munich. From the Italian people they had a warm reception, the sincerity of which could not be doubted. Signor Mussolini was friendly and cordial. Felicitous speeches were exchanged and Mr. Chamberlain received assurances from the Duce that he would co-operate always in the maintenance of peace and friendship between the British and Italian peoples. Nevertheless within a week or two of this visit the Italian Press renewed its demands upon France and the official news agency in Germany let it be known that their Government sympathised with the Italian demands and would support them.

How then could there be any peace of mind for those of us who watched this play of power politics and who knew that because of the new groupings of nations and the passion of political hatreds and aspirations we might all be involved in the struggle for self-preservation?

There was no peace of mind in Great Britain, or the Empire, or the world, when this year 1939 began its unknown destiny. In spite of the luck of geography the United States was becoming intensely anxious about world affairs and the menace to democracy, and President Roosevelt called for a first instalment of a hundred million pounds or so for rearmament. France, pulling its financial state back from the edge of jeopardy by drastic decrees of economy and increased taxation, voted new milliards of francs for the extension of its air force and other military and naval costs. Germany increased the furious *tempo* of its Four Years' Plan and speeded up its armament programme. That old wizard, Dr. Schacht, was dismissed in January in order, it seemed, that his warnings and influence against straining internal German credit and advancing towards inflation should be ignored and reversed by National Socialist control and sheer audacity in taking risks.

In such a world from which all reasonable compromise seemed to have departed the people of the British Isles knew that they had lost their thousand years old security as islanders and that their cities would be the first line of defence in any future war, with civilians as the first victims.

There was no secret now about their unpreparedness in the time of the crisis. They would have been caught without any orderly plan of self-preservation against air-raids, hopelessly weak in anti-aircraft defence, and without any clear leadership or control for the avoidance of public disorder and private panic. There was no efficient organisation of national service. A dreadful time-lag in the expansion of rearmament, especially in the Air Force, was starkly revealed. Acute anxiety haunted the minds of all thoughtful men and women who became aware of the alarming inadequacy of national defence compared with the intense and ordered discipline of the Totalitarian States under dictatorship. Democracy was in its very spirit hostile to the discipline and order of the ant-heap. The genius and glory of democracy are based upon freedom from being ordered about, diversity of opinion, and the benefits of a civilised state in which the individual does mostly what he likes within the law. How reconcile democracy with dictatorships? How was it possible to attain equal efficiency to that of the dictatorships without an iron compulsion? Could it be done?

Mr. Neville Chamberlain and his Government believed that it could be done by a call to voluntary service from all classes of the community. Speaking over the microphone on January 23rd Mr. Chamberlain made his call to the people for this voluntary rally and two days later twenty million copies of a small book calling for a register of the entire nation willing to offer their services for national defence in one form or another were issued to the public. The response was splendid as might have been expected by all who knew their England and her sister peoples. But not yet has it been proved that there is that leadership and direction which will mould all this offer of service into a disciplined energy equal to the machine-like efficiency of dictatorship.

Yet all that is a horrible and tragic misuse of spiritual and civilised energy when by good will, intelligence and good neighbourliness all this effort might be devoted to increasing the happiness and loveliness of life. No people in the world want war today. The common folk of the world are peace-minded. No Germans want to kill us English. No English want to kill the Germans. Neither the Italian peasants nor the French want to go at each other's throats. It is only small groups of men, lustful of power, sinister in ambitions, who by propaganda and the twisting of truth may dupe their masses and drag them, unwillingly for the most part, to the shambles and furnace of war. How may we break this evil spell, this tyranny of fear, this kind of madness, which leads us to our own destruction?

A respite to immediate fear of war, a new hope of peace for some space of time, came to France and Great Britain on January 30th of this year 1939 when Hitler made his annual speech to the Reichstag. It had been preceded by rumours and

alarms. It was reported that there were concentrations of troops at Klagenfurt and other places. It was feared that Hitler might proclaim a dangerous programme of action eastwards or westwards which would create another crisis and threaten war again. On the whole it was a reassuring speech, apart from his usual invective against the Jews. He spoke more warmly of the British and French leaders. He expressed his belief that there might be a prolonged period of peace. He made no claims except for the return of the Colonies by peaceful means. He uttered no threats. The only reservation in this expression of peace-mindedness was his promise to go to the aid of Italy if that country were involved in war. He was frank about the economic condition of his own country which he admitted was hard pressed. It was, on the whole, a fair and reasonable speech and its immediate effect was the rise of prices on the English Stock Exchange symptomatic of national belief. Mr. Chamberlain in the House of Commons expressed his views on this speech and declared that in his view it was not the speech of a man who contemplated throwing Europe into a new crisis. He reiterated his policy of appeasement and his desire of friendly relations with Germany.

It seemed probable that Hitler's mind had not remained untouched by the horror of his own people at the risk of war, and by the strengthening determination of many nations, including the United States, to resist the bullying methods of dictatorship. But within a few weeks he had broken all his pledges, violated his pact with Mr. Chamberlain at Munich, and seized Czechoslovakia by armed force.

VII

The Problem of the Jews

There are 15,000,000 Jews in the world, or thereabouts. People who have a grudge against them for various reasons must face these numbers, for by numbers alone they form a very considerable problem in political and social life. The Anti-Semites who hate the Jewish people, with a revival of passionate intolerance against them in several European countries, have to ask themselves the question: What are we going to do about these Jews?

What is the meaning of all this revival of hatred against the Jews? Why are these people singled out among all others for vilification, denunciation, and humiliation? Is there any valid cause for it? Is there some fear at the back of it? Are they perhaps dangerous people in any State? Have they immoral and shameful qualities? Is their religion objectionable and subversive, as Christianity was considered abominable and revolutionary by the Roman Emperors and magistrates, and is perhaps approaching a new era of persecution for the same reason? Are they bad citizens, or an evil influence in any social system? What is there in their character or life which causes, and has caused, for nearly two thousand years repeated outbreaks of passion against them by the peoples among whom they dwelt or dwell?

It is rather extraordinary, that! I have met Jews in many countries and have found them mostly highly intelligent, very hospitable if one goes to their houses, good-natured, and even warm-hearted, and very sensitive and devoted to music, painting and other arts. I have met Jewish doctors in Austria and elsewhere who were an honour to their profession, and were certainly working with devotion in hospitals and clinics. I have met Jewish scholars who made me abashed at the thought of my own ignorance. I have met Jewish Rabbis who were broad-minded and tolerant of other forms of faith. One of my greatest friends years ago was a distinguished little man who exuded good-nature and human kindness and had no enemy in the world. His name was Sir Israel Gollancz and he was a great master of Anglo-Saxon and early English literature which he illuminated for all students who follow him down that path of learning.

As an Englishman of Anglo-Celtic blood looking at this Jewish problem with enquiring eyes, I remember that one of our greatest statesmen, most favoured by that old lady, Queen Victoria—who could hardly be considered unpatriotic or subversive in her instincts!—was a Jew named D'Israeli. We first became an Empire by name under his Government. He did rather well for us, and, astounding as it still seems,

was the political hero of the old aristocracy, greatly beloved and admired by Dowager Duchesses, patricians of the bluest blood, and all good Conservatives. The Primrose Club, in which dwells the fine flower of the Conservative faith—slightly out of touch with the times maybe—was founded in honour of this distinguished old Jewish statesman who has been brought back to the minds of the British public by André Maurois' finely etched portrait in his biography and the film picture by George Arliss.

There have been many other Jews in English life and history who seemed to be very English in their patriotism, and certainly gave their services or their money to British interests. The English branch of the Rothschilds, very international as a family, were helpful with their ducats in peace time and war time, and were made peers of the realm as a reward for "playing the game" according to the English code.

Some of the prominent Jewish families in England came over first in the reign of Charles II, who had met the Amsterdam Jews during his exile and had borrowed money from them, and had removed the ban which had been in force since they were expelled from this country by the first Edward. They arrived as pedlars, selling cheap goods in London and provincial towns. Before long they became merchants and bankers, and the City of London owes some of its reputation and power to their genius for finance and commerce.

What are the reasons, then, why the Jews have not been regarded favourably throughout the ages? One reason, as far as Northern Europe is concerned, is their Mediterranean race and physical characteristics. Not long ago in England, for instance, any foreigner was regarded with suspicion and dislike by the populace, who regarded him as a ridiculous and sinister object.

"There's a froggy—throw a brick at him!" was the shout of hooligan boys at the sight of a bearded Frenchman or some other unusual type. The young gentlemen of Harrow and Eton—those schools of polite education for the sons of the aristocracy—found pleasure in bullying any unfortunate boy of Jewish parentage, and gave a hellish life to the French master or any other "alien." Anybody of dark-skinned Mediterranean type was called a "Dago" and aroused race hatred or at least race contempt.

It was this instinct which the Jews in Europe had to face everywhere. They were not only aliens but they were mysterious Oriental people who kept themselves to themselves, and had their own private language and their own religion, and their own social laws, and found ways of livelihood despised by their non-Jewish neighbours who forced them into unsavoury occupations by their harsh restrictions.

That has been the age-long tragedy of the Jewish race since the Great

Dispersion, when they were driven out of their own land after the final destruction of Jerusalem, and after centuries of fighting, enslavement and revolt, under Assyrian, Egyptian, Babylonian, Persian, Greek, and Roman tyrants. They had their settlements all along the Mediterranean, and pushed out to far places. The first Christians were Jews. St. Paul found their communities widely scattered. They were traders and merchants, not doing badly under Roman rule, though many of them had a hard time in keeping body and soul together.

Before the downfall of the Roman Empire they were in all the great cities and the Emperor Caracalla granted them Roman citizenship. By the fourth century A.D. they had pushed out as far as Spain and had settlements on the Rhine. When the Arabs extended their conquests in North Africa and Asia Minor they favoured the Jews because of their own Semitic origin, and these people prospered under the Arab Caliphs.

Even in the early centuries of the Christian era they were able to go about their business and to maintain their communities without much interference. The Papacy was tolerant on the whole—with periods of persecution—and there has been a Jewish community in Rome with an unbroken record from Roman times. But in the early Middle Ages they began to be harried, and ostracised, and slain. The first Crusade was blackened by a massacre of Jews. They were thrust into Ghettos and refused ordinary rights of citizenship and means of livelihood.

Reading their history one is bound to admit that the treatment of the Jews is the blackest blot in the annals of Christendom which betrayed the spirit of Christ, who was a Jew, by ferocious cruelties, a complete lack of pity for fellow human beings, and a meanness which is, or ought to be, detestable to modern minds.

(2)

In the Ghettos.

Owing to the Feudal system in Europe the Jew was excluded from ownership of land. Because of the Catholic character and rites of the mediæval Guilds the Jew was unable to learn the arts and crafts of those days, except in his own Ghettos. Religious and social laws put distinguishing badges upon him, forced the men to wear beards, forbade Christians to lodge with them or intermarry with them, and thrust them into narrow quarters behind the gates of their Ghettos.

They were gradually restricted to money-lending—not permitted by Christian law but very helpful to Christian gentlemen in time of need—and to other despised occupations such as peddling in fairs and selling old clothes.

Is it any wonder that the Jew, desperate in poverty, had to devise many cunning ways to keep his race alive, and developed certain traits of character—sharpness in business, the sweating of his poorer brethren, and all the furtiveness of a hunted race?

Driven to usury he obtained power over people's lives. They hated him when they were in debt to him. Kings and peasants who had borrowed money from the Jews wreaked their vengeance, and cancelled their debts, very conveniently, by massacres or expulsions. Religious fanaticism gave an excuse for this cruelty. The religion of these people was an offence to the Christians, though Christianity has its roots in Judaism. Before the age of tolerance, which was very brief, the fury of fanaticism flamed out from one century to another in Western Europe. Under the Moors in Spain the Jew had enjoyed great prosperity and dignity, reaching the highest offices, creating a renaissance of Judaism by many great scholars and philosophers; but even in Spain there came at last a wave of persecution worse than in any other country. There were terrible massacres in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries until at last there came the great expulsion under Ferdinand and Isabella. The Jews were a hunted people, driven almost entirely out of Western Europe for a time, seeking safety in the Mahommedan countries of the Mediterranean, where they were tolerated with more kindness. Many of the Spanish Jews who had once attained a high social standard and had been merchant princes found their way to Constantinople.

Reading such a book as *A Short History of the Jews* by Cecil Roth, as I have recently done, one marvels at the courage of this race and their vital persistence of self-preservation in the most terrible periods of persecution.

In the Ghettos of Germany, and Italy, and Poland, they kept their lamps burning, somehow, the lamps of learning and religion. The Bible was their only Fatherland. The Talmud was their Book of laws and moral precepts. In the Ghettos, young Jews living in desperate poverty and filthy squalor were students burning the midnight oil, and the genius of their race never died but constantly lit up again whenever they had a chance of security for a little while. One cannot fail to be moved by the heroism of the Jewish women who still bore children into a world very hostile to them, and brought them up in health and spirits despite abject and frightful misery and constant terror. There was a massacre in Poland in 1648, and Russian "pogroms" continued until living memory, like that of Riga and Kishniev and Kiev in 1903. Thousands of Jewish refugees came over to England at that time, and I remember seeing some groups of them—professors and students—working in the East End in tobacco factories and tailoring shops.

It was the eighteenth-century, that era of Liberalism, which gave a respite to the Jewish people at last. Tolerance took the place of fanaticism. It was the “Age of Reason” and reason demanded that intelligent human beings should be treated with respect, and given full liberty of conscience, and the right to live on equal terms with their fellow-men.

The Emperor of Austria, Joseph II, was a leader of tolerance to the Jews. In 1782 he permitted Jews to learn handicrafts and threw open the Universities to them. He issued ordinances repealing old laws which forbade them to appear in public on Sunday mornings or feast days, or to frequent public pleasure places.

“Christians should behave in a friendly manner towards Jews,” he said.

Then came the French Revolution, which carried its message of *Liberté! Egalité! Fraternité!* across the frontiers. In the first fervour of that enthusiasm the gates of the Ghettos were hacked down, and the Jews poured out into the sunlight of life in many cities of Europe, received as equals and human beings by their fellow citizens. There was a black reaction. In some countries the Jews returned to the Ghettos, but their liberation was extended in all Europe, except Russia, during the nineteenth century.

That, in a few words, is the historical background of the Jewish race which can only be filled up by reading books in which their long tragedy is recorded in all its episodes of suffering, humiliation, agony and despair which never killed the racial spirit of these people, nor extinguished its burning flame. They held on to their historical tradition and their Old Testament laws, newly interpreted, divided into different schools of thought by their scholars and philosophers, while the masses of ignorant, poverty-stricken people remained narrowly and rigidly faithful to the Law and the Prophets, while they picked up a hazardous living as street traders, peddlers, second-hand dealers, money-lenders, pawnbrokers and craftsmen in many forms of handiwork.

Jewish families stinted and scraped to send their sons to the Universities. A scholar was regarded with veneration even by the most ignorant, and in poor households a Jewish family would go hungry in order to show hospitality to a student and scholar devoting himself to his books. This love of learning was their one source of intellectual pride, and all through the darkest ages of persecution they held it as a precious heritage. This is why so many Jews, rising above the mass of ignorance and squalor into which their race was thrust, reached high distinction in many sciences. Knowledge was their key to recognition and respect, and the one thing which could not be taken from them by racial hatred.

Why has there been this new outbreak of persecution in certain European countries? Are they entirely blameless for all that, or is there some real justification for its hatred? Part of it is due to the belief in certain countries that the Jews are conspiring for world revolution by way of Communism. It is maintained by anti-Semites that as far back as the French Revolution, and even farther back than that, the Jews were behind all revolutionary movements. There is probably some truth in this, for it is only natural that an oppressed race, denied all liberties, should have encouraged any movement which might lead to their own liberation. But this is not a general truth as far as I can find out. The whole gamut of political ideas, from Right to Left, may be found in their ranks. The German Jews were essentially of middle-class culture and instincts, identifying themselves closely with the enlightened liberalism of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The Hamburg bankers, the Frankfurt merchants, the German shopkeepers had no leanings towards revolution. On the contrary they wanted security for their lives and property. They were truly German as well as truly Jews, and entrenched in German respectability and the bourgeois code. During the last war they were loyal to the Fatherland and great numbers of Jews died on the battlefields, though doubtless some of them became the war profiteers, who were not necessarily Jewish, by any means.

I have heard one trivial and amusing accusation against them during war time in Germany, which in the mind of the German who told it was not an unimportant cause of the hatred which developed later.

"Every German citizen," he said, "tried to get more rations than was allowed by the law. We all did it—but the Jews did it better and more cleverly. By some method of their own they obtained food while we went hungry. Therefore we hated them. These things leave a mark on the mind."

In Russia the Jews had been treated harshly and brutally up to the time of the revolution. The Russian Duma refused to remove their grievances. During the war one and a half million Jews had been deported from Russia into Poland and other countries. When the first revolution came under the leadership of Kerenski the Jews supported it as their great chance of liberation, after centuries of servitude, and the beginning of a new era in Russia.

But when the Bolshevik revolution arrived with Lenin they shrank back and were afraid. They had reason to be. The Bolsheviks showed no more favour to Jewish Liberals and Social Democrats than they did to their own people of those political

views. They were no more tolerant of the Jewish religion than they were of Christianity. They hated a Jewish *bourgeois* as they did a Russian *bourgeois*. And the greater number of Jews in Russia were of the *bourgeois* class, as merchants, traders, shopkeepers and professional men and peasants. They were “liquidated” with the others. But undoubtedly there were many Jews in Lenin’s régime, though neither Lenin nor Stalin were Jews. Many of the old Bolsheviks who now lie dead with bullets in their skulls were non-observing, irreligious and unclassed Jews out of touch with their race and religion who had nimble and ruthless minds, and rose to high positions in the Communist State by their quickness of brain and efficiency of organisation in a country of illiterate people. Jews of the same kind were leaders of the Communist Revolution in Hungary and other countries, and it is certainly true that Jews are working behind the scenes of the Communist groups in Warsaw, Paris and the East End of London. But they are not alone in those activities and have many non-Jewish colleagues, while the mass of their race is, on the whole, non-political and anti-Communist, as believers in private property and the adventure of money-making. It is unnatural for bankers, money-lenders, small shopkeepers, manufacturers and peasant farmers to adopt the creed of Communism.

Nevertheless it is this association of Jews with Bolshevism which has inflamed public opinion against them in many countries. That is the chief cause of hatred, used as a general denunciation of their race and religion. There are other causes. One is the need of having a scapegoat upon which all disasters, crimes and vices may be conveniently piled. The Germans have adopted the ‘Stab in the back’ theory to explain their defeat in the last war and the misery which they had to endure afterwards. The Jews, who had very little to do with all that, as far as I can make out, were easy targets of abuse. Rathenau, a Jew, had counselled the policy of fulfilment which meant that Germany should pay reparations as far as possible until reason returned to the Allies. Stresemann who was not a Jew, and Wirth who was not a Jew, adopted the same policy, but it is Rathenau who is picked out as the arch-traitor. Then there were those Jews—the vultures of finance—who tried to make money out of Germany’s downfall in the time of inflation; and the Jews who, having international relations, could get American dollars and English pounds to buy up German businesses in the distressful days. Apart from all those reasons they are a dark-skinned Oriental race who are standing objects of dislike to those who believe in a pure “Aryan” race and stock (which does not exist), and admire the straw-coloured hair and blue eyes of the Nordic type.

Many of the Russian and Polish Jews who invaded Germany after the war were of a low social grade, dirty and squalid, poor wretches, arriving from abject misery

to dire poverty. Some of them were very Oriental. Hitler in his book *Mein Kampf* describes his revulsion at the sight of one of these men with oily locks and repulsive face. That one figure seems to have turned his blood cold against fifteen million Jews. He made it a symbol for all his theory of 'racial purity.'

When the National Socialists came into power and took over the Government with their idea of Blood, Race and Soil they found that there were in all the professions, Jews out of all proportion to their numbers in the new Reich. Jewish lawyers swarmed in the Courts, Jewish doctors were in all the hospitals. Jews held the keys of finance. Jewish professors held many posts in the Universities. "Where then is Germany?" asked these Nazis. "Why should the German nation and the German mind be dominated by this alien race?" It is admitted by Jews themselves that the proportion of their own people in these positions was too high. It was not fair. In any case it was dangerous.

The Nazis made a clean sweep of these intellectual Jews. Throughout the Reich Jewish judges and lawyers were driven from their posts. Doctors were dismissed from hospital staffs. Professors in universities and schools were unable to continue their lectures and classes. Jewish members of the Prussian Academy of Arts were expelled. Musical conductors had to lay down their batons. The works of Jewish artists were taken from the walls of public galleries. Riotous young Nazis raided the libraries and made bonfires of Jewish books mixed up with other books on which they could lay their hands to make the bonfires bigger. Scientists of world fame like Einstein, and Professor Haber (who had done enormous service to Germany in time of war by obtaining nitrogen from the air), were obliged to leave the Fatherland.

The best friends of Germany, even more than any enemies that country may have, deplore this intolerance and persecution. Those books which were cast on to bonfires by ignorant youth contained a world of scholarship which did honour to Germany as well as to the Jew. These Jewish philosophers, scholars and scientists had added greatly, I am told, to the wealth of German culture and were steeped in the German tradition of thought.

Germany owed much also to Jewish merchants who are now thrust out of their businesses, or severely controlled. German trade, for centuries, had prospered by Jewish enterprise. They are poorer without that.

(4)

A Plea for Tolerance.

By the Liberal mind in Europe this persecution is condemned as a return to the

crude fanaticism of the Middle Ages. There is nothing new about it. It is not a step forward in German culture. It is a hark-back to ignorance and mass hatred based upon racial and religious intolerance. We thought we had got beyond that as civilised Europeans.

It is of course true that among Jews (as among Christians!) there are many crooks, shady characters and swindlers of all kinds, some of whom have gained world notoriety. It is true that they found their way into unsavoury lines of business in the night life of Berlin and other big cities. It is true no doubt that to people of 'Nordic' blood there is something unpleasing in the physical appearance of Jews from Eastern Europe, especially as they are mostly the poor creatures of misery and filthy poverty. But to the Liberal mind—not admired by Dr. Goebbels and others—these people are human beings with human rights like the rest of us, and any civilised State has, surely, the duty of protecting them and affording them the means of decent livelihood. I write as a friend of Germany and not as an enemy.

The passionate plea of Shylock for recognition as a human being still cries out to Christendom:

"I am a Jew. Hath not a Jew eyes? Hath not a Jew hands, organs, dimensions, senses, affections, passions? Fed with the same food, hurt by 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? If you prick us do we not bleed? If you tickle us do we not laugh? If you poison us do we not die?"

It is admitted by Arnold Zweig in his poignant book, *Insulted and Exiled*, that worse treatment would have been given to the Jews of Berlin during the first excesses but for the good-nature of non-Jewish Germans who maintained their neighbourly feelings towards these fellow citizens. "The humorousness of the people of Berlin," he wrote, "robbed the anti-Semitic propaganda of much of its sting."

The extreme anti-Semites among the National Socialists were astonished and enraged by the repercussions of other countries to this ill-treatment of Jews. They put it down, and still put it down, to the penetrating influence of Jews in foreign newspapers and foreign democracies. There is something in that. The Jews are not without influence, and exercise it in a thousand ways. Every Jew in Europe and the United States is hostile to the Nazi régime and a propagandist against it. But there is more than that in the condemnation of Liberal and democratic opinion roused to indignation by this intolerance. They regard it with alarm and disgust as an attack upon civilisation itself, and upon all the liberties and victories of the mind gained by civilisation. For the whole effort towards which reasonable men strove throughout the centuries was to take fanaticism out of life, to win respect for intelligence of

whatever race or religion, to extend the sphere of tolerance, to break down the gates not only of Ghettos but of the narrow ways of ignorance and hatred against other human beings. The burning of libraries, Jewish or non-Jewish, is too much like a return to the age of the Vandals and the Goths who burnt Greek and Roman books because they did not understand them.

This Jewish problem is not easy. It weighs heavily upon certain governments and states because of the immense number of Jews who passed within their frontiers owing to the new map of Europe drawn by the Peace Treaties. Poland took over a great Jewish population which now amounts to three and a half million. On the other hand, Russia, which had had a Jewish population of about seven millions, got rid of four millions. Among those who remained there was a great mortality, especially in the Ukraine where the majority had gathered. The Jewish population in Roumania, now very hostile to them, was increased from about 290,000 to more than a million. Czechoslovakia has 350,000, and there are large Jewish communities in Austria, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, and other countries east of Germany.

“In Germany itself,” says Cecil Roth, the Jewish historian, “a community of over half a million souls of a most vital section of civilised humanity suddenly found the ground cut from under its feet, with no prospect of security and dwindling hopes of earning a livelihood in the land where their ancestors had been settled for centuries. . . . Within little more than a year upwards of 70,000 Germans had left the country. They were not artisans or merchants but professors, physicians, surgeons, lawyers, art experts, architects, scientists and writers.” Over half a million remain unable to leave because of their business or poverty—they can only take out one-tenth of any money they have—and because there is no place for them in other countries.

Numbers of the Jewish exiles have turned towards Palestine as their last hope. In former days many of them had ridiculed the Zionist movement as a fantastic dream but now it beckons to them as a way of escape and as the Promised Land. Jewish intellectuals have gone out to Palestine to do the roughest work, digging, bricklaying, road-making, as though to prove to themselves and the world that they are capable of doing that manual labour for which the Jew has not been credited, and as a self-discipline for a great ideal. They have made good roads, fertilised the fields, raised fine crops, built a new city—Tel-aviv—which is the new Jerusalem, in which the lamps of learning have been relit and the Jewish tradition, held for three thousand years, through all the time of dispersion and persecution, finds a sanctuary. I know nothing of all that except what I have read, and what I saw on one brief glimpse of Palestine some years ago when Jews were busy at Haifa.

It is unfortunate that this Zionist dream, now a reality, comes sharply up against Arab resistance and Arab ownership, creating a new problem full of danger, not only for the Jews themselves but for British relations with the Arab world.

At the time of the Balfour declaration admitting emigration to Palestine under the Zionist organisation there were about 60,000. Now there are about 500,000 in a country a hundred miles long and from twenty to eighty miles broad, with its Arab population hostile, and sullen, and murderous, because it has been their land for a thousand years. The Jews had no peace throughout their history. There is no peace for them now.

The Jewish population in the new states of Europe, or in those whose frontiers were enlarged, are under the protection of the League of Nations. Poland, Roumania and other countries are pledged to give them full equality of legal rights, the free use of their own languages, and the right to control their own religious, educational and social life with other safeguards.

How is the League of Nations going to enforce these rights if countries like Roumania deny them or violate them? By force? By an international police? That question is not yet answered.

Since I wrote this chapter more frightful things have happened. In November of 1938 there was a brutal and organised attack on Jewish synagogues and shops in revenge for the murder of a German diplomat in Paris by a Jewish boy whose parents had been put across the Polish frontier by German orders. All Jewish premises in the Kurfürstendam in Berlin were sacked by groups of Brownshirts, many of them in plain clothes and working undoubtedly under orders. Thousands of Jews were arrested and put into concentration camps. An enormous tribute amounting to £80,000,000 was imposed upon German Jewry to be paid in four instalments. New laws of the most ruthless severity were enacted which deprived all German Jews of any possible means of livelihood. They were reduced to utter hopelessness and tragic degradation, worse than any cruelties inflicted upon them since the darkest period of the Middle Ages. It was small consolation to them that the mass of the German folk were disgusted and humiliated by these brutalities done in their name but not by their will, or that the small group of men who had ordered these things were startled by the flame of indignation which swept England and the United States on account of this inhumanity. It spoilt all the hopes of those who had been working for better relations between Germany and England for the sake of European peace. It has done irreparable harm to Germany itself by leading to a boycott of German exports and a moral condemnation from all civilised minds which cannot be passed off lightly as the result of "Jewish propaganda."

The problem of the Jews has been intensified by these events. The flight from Germany and Austria has created grave difficulties in other countries where these unfortunate people endeavour to make a livelihood by undercutting trade, thus arousing new hostilities in their cities of refuge. An international conference sitting at Evian has so far failed to find any country willing to receive more than small quotas of Jewish emigrants. Lands like Australia with elbow room for new populations show no great generosity in opening their gates to a race in search of security and means of livelihood. The Jews themselves, those who are educated to normal life—are ill adapted to become pioneers in the great empty spaces. They thrive in cities. They are the world's traders and middlemen, or lawyers, doctors and intelligentsia, who wish to settle in the great centres of population where their coming is regarded with disfavour and inevitable animosity by those who dislike their ways of competition.

The Jewish problem is a test case of civilisation. For the test of the civilised mind is tolerance and magnanimity and a hatred of cruelty to all human beings, especially to the weak and defenceless and women and children. If we cannot give protection and security to the Jews within the law, if we cannot find a *modus vivendi* with them, if we allow them to be hunted and degraded like vermin, if we cannot make use of their genius, or bring them within the ordinary rules of our citizenship, with whatever safeguards may be necessary to prevent undue influence, or unfair methods of commerce and competition, then our civilisation is a mockery and deserves to perish. I see all the difficulties and the dangers, but I see also the urgent need of statesmanship, courage and vision, inspired by magnanimity and humanity.

VIII

Illusions and Realities

The Liberal Tradition.

We have to reshape many ideas and try to get some new ones. For what has happened in history during the past year or two, and even during the past few months, has revealed many illusions and some realities.

Foremost among the illusions was the belief, which I shared with most of my contemporaries in these islands, that intelligence, as we defined it in our minds, was bound to win a victory over passion and primitive instincts aroused by the world war. By intelligence, we of the old Liberal tradition (whatever party label we might have if we wore one) meant the advance of democratic ideals—the parliamentary system—self-government subject to law and order, the rights of free speech and all individual liberty of the mind within decent limits, and an advance to peace and security by intelligent compromise and team work among nations.

We, in Great Britain, were apt to judge the rest of the world by our own standards of tradition and experience. The war had been a terrific adventure, unleashing the Beast for a time, but also revealing heroic qualities in common men. After the war there had been a good deal of unrest, moral disturbance, and the anarchy of young minds, but we settled down fairly well to new conditions and standards of life which were better than pre-war days for the majority. That war had been a monstrous mistake—a crime of which we were all in part guilty. Well, it was the end of all that. Now we were all pacifists, hating the sight of a tank on a village green.

“They won’t lag me again for that kind of thing,” said ex-soldiers, returning to their jobs as gardeners, grooms, craftsmen, mechanics or clerks.

The standard of intelligence was rising surely. In our own country the majority were better behaved, less brutal, better educated. The dear old B.B.C. was bringing knowledge and culture and liberal thought to the multitude. Dick Sheppard and others were giving the nation a spiritual lead and especially preaching the spirit of peace and non-violence. We had developed a new social conscience. There was hardly any difference between the Left Wing of the Conservatives and the Right Wing of Labour, equally sympathetic to the unemployed, equally impatient with the delays in dealing with the distressed areas by the elder statesmen. We were quietly pleased with ourselves and, now that the German Fleet was at the bottom of Scapa Flow, and the German nation disarmed, we felt very safe for half a century at least. No conscription for free-born Britains. None of that old militarism for our island

folk. The ideals of Democracy, we thought, would prevail sooner or later among those nations on the Continent who had not yet settled down after the war. If only France would be more reasonable. . . . If only someone would remove Mussolini. . . .

That was the prevailing mood of England after the war, apart from small groups of Communists bitten by the bug of Russia, and small groups of militarists of the Colonel Blimp school satirised by Low in his cartoons.

The new system of Fascism in Italy seemed to many of us the adventure of an ego-maniac which would not and could not last. It was putting back the hand of the clock. It was a denial of liberty and free speech and all liberal ideas. Nothing permanent would come of it. No people would stand for it long in post-war Europe. So many thought.

The English mind steeped in Liberalism and believing in democracy as the only intelligent faith was shocked by the violence, the *coups d'états*, the political murders and uprisings in other countries like Greece, Bulgaria and Roumania. Militarism had not been dethroned after all. These nations all had their standing armies. Europe was like an armed camp, the new frontiers bristled with bayonets, France was spending vast sums of money in supplying arms to her new allies. It was all very lamentable and highly dangerous, and strangling to world trade, but in the end, certainly and surely, intelligence would extend its spheres of influence and international law would be developed.

That was one of the illusions.

We forgot that four years of war had broken down many restraints in the human mind which had been imposed by civilising influences upon the brutishness of primitive instincts. Four years of war had unleashed the tiger, and the wolf and the old ape in the subconsciousness of men of animal nature. It was not easy over large areas of the earth's surface to get them back into control. Hatred and cruelty had been encouraged by military commanders as the fighting spirit of a good soldier. Such Christian qualities as mercy and pity had been put under a moratorium for the period of the war. Even the old code of chivalry, which had done something—but not much—to take the sharp edge off ruthlessness in the days of knighthood, had been abandoned. Prisoners were killed in cold blood. Bombs were thrown down dug-outs crowded with living flesh. It was hardly to be expected that after the war, minds would click back into the old grooves and the old decencies. As a matter of fact they did so in countries where the traditions of civilisation had been long established, but those countries were but small oases in a wilderness. The veneer of civilisation had been very thin. And some people had more luck than others in post-

war conditions which gave them a chance of decent life, a sense of security for their women and babes.

England had come out of the war, on the whole, with enormous luck, apart from the loss of a million young men from whom would have sprung her new leaders, now missing. We still had vast reserves of wealth which the Government could call upon for the enormous burden of taxation which had to be imposed. A spirit of duty and generosity inspired the old landed gentry and aristocracy to suffer this taxation without squealing—never once did they squeal—in order to maintain the credit of the country and to give something like a fair deal to the ex-service men and unemployed; though they had to leave old mansions and manor houses and live in reduced circumstances.

“The English aristocracy,” said M. André Siegfried, “committed suicide by submitting to this taxation.”

He exaggerated. But their submission to the tax-collectors sweetened things and toned down the bitterness and revolutionary spirit which showed its head here and there in the early post-war years. England returned to normal, in mind and spirit, after the devastating and upheaving experiences of the war in an almost miraculous way. Most of our men slipped back to tradition as though they had never escaped from it. Men who had had astounding adventures in Palestine and Egypt went quietly into old gardens to trim the edges of the lawn, to put new flowers in the beds and to prune the apple trees. Men who had gone over the top in many battles now returned to timbered cottages in quiet villages where the greatest excitement is a cricket match on the village green or a visit to the “Pictures” once a week in the neighbouring market town. In a short time the war became only the memory of a dream. Here they were again in the old places where peace dwells, and where there is not much change in the rhythm of life except for a by-pass road, cutting through the countryside, and the traffic of small cars in country lanes.

The old loyalties, the old code of civility, the old liberties of speech and thought—seldom very audacious—were unbroken in the minds of the English in the mass. The young gentlemen of Oxford who said: “We will not fight for king or country” were lucky in being able to say that without danger to their bodies. It was a proof of tranquility in the land. The groups of young hotheads on the Left who were touched by the lure of Communism were allowed to march round Hyde Park and get wet in the rain without causing a scare in the bosoms of respectable ladies taking their little dogs for a walk. England was lucky.

Not so lucky were other countries. This sense of security was not theirs. A Frenchman knows that if his Government had decided to take action against

Germany for the occupation of the Rhineland he would have had a little card recalling him to the Colours. He would have had to shoulder his rifle again while young fellows in England had no such anxiety, living deep in the illusion of peace.

There was never a sense of security, for instance, in Hungary, Russia, Poland and other lands where peasants raised their harvests in desperate poverty owing to the break-down of world trade. Out of desperate poverty were born desperate men, who joined secret societies for the overthrow of governments, or for the murder of their political opponents, or for some new system of society, which they believed would give their groups power over other groups.

Young men who were born at the beginning of the war looked around the world about them and found it bad. The old gods had fallen from their altars. They searched for a new faith and a new rule of life. What about Communism? What about Fascism?

(2)

The Fear of Communism.

There has been all that talk of the danger of the world being divided between these two ideologies. Mr. Baldwin warned his countrymen of that danger appearing in Europe. Mr. Eden, at Geneva, said that he would do his best to prevent the world being divided into those blocs. But the truth is that this conflict between those two new religions has been in progress in many countries for the past twenty years. It is no new danger which has appeared on the far horizon.

Communism has been the enemy of Democracy over the greater part of Europe. Democracy is fighting its rear-guard actions because the fear of Communism, false or true in many countries, including Germany, Poland, Hungary, Italy and Spain, has created its opposite, which is Fascism or National Socialism, or military dictatorship.

The standing armies of the new nations in Europe were maintained at a great cost—taking young men from the ploughs and workshops—not wholly because of fear on the frontiers, but partly because of fear of revolution within. Communism working in secret cells was the recruiting agent of secret police and caused the brutalities of concentration camps and the revival of cruelty.

They asked for it, poor devils, because their own creed was one of violence and murder. English Communists of the semi-intellectual kind explaining their creed, while sitting on divans in Chelsea, or sipping cocktails in Bloomsbury, deny that. They say it is only the wickedness of the *bourgeoisie*—its selfishness—which caused violence by resistance to a fair distribution of wealth. But in other countries there is historical

evidence to prove that Communism, when it gets going, is not gentle in its methods, is not merciful even to women, and is, to say the least of it, extremely callous of human life. The *bourgeoisie*, of whom after all there are vast numbers in Europe, do not look forward to the idea of being wiped out as the enemies of the proletariat. If there are to be firing-squads they would like to give the orders themselves and not be those who stand against the wall. “Cet animal est méchant, quand on l’attaque il se défend!” Some of the anti-Communists believe that they are also defending Christian morality, the Christian religion, and all human decency, though that is not blindingly revealed by some of their own ways and methods.

The fear of Communism and Anarchy, exaggerated as it may have been in some countries, created the dictatorships of the Right, the armies of boys in black shirts and brown shirts and the symbols of the swastika and the fasces. It was the excuse for violence and intolerance. It is partly the cause of Press censorship, the suppression of free speech, and the shackling of the mind in many countries. Communism dragged Liberalism down to its death over the greater part of the globe. The old Liberal faith of tolerance and compromise and conciliation has few remaining strongholds. They stand in the Scandinavian countries, the British Empire, in France and in the United States. Where else?

For how could Liberalism be allowed by dictators who disliked free speech and free criticism and were afraid of it? On the Continent also Liberalism was identified with the spirit of revolution. That old-fashioned eighteenth-century and Victorian English creed never really travelled far in Europe or struck very deep. The English parliamentary system could not be imitated very well by passionate peoples who had a habit of arguing with pistol shots, and invited their friends to revolutions as we should invite them to bridge parties, or formed within the Parliament fierce political groups, who brought all government to a standstill by a constant shifting of votes. Marshal Pilsudski of Poland sent his politicians packing with harsh abuse and appointed a group of colonels to rule the country by his command. Signor Mussolini ridiculed, abused and destroyed the Italian Parliament and Italian Liberalism, though it had created the freedom of Italy in pre-war days. Now it had weakened in the face of anarchy, once upheld by Mussolini himself. It was afraid of the forces gathering for revolution. The Liberal spirit of Italy was beaten to death by the bludgeons of the Fascist Blackshirts.

In many countries, now, to be a “Liberal” is to be a candidate for a concentration camp, or a firing-squad, because Democracy in many countries has leaned towards the faith of Karl Marx, and the liberal mind is suspected of secret conversations with Moscow. British Liberalism, which is a state of mind rather than a

political creed, is utterly misunderstood abroad because, in foreign minds, it suggests quite falsely this sinister association.

The tendency to divide Europe—and even the world—into two opposed camps of political ideals and systems has led to an extraordinary paradox among Left-minded people in this country, including the Parliamentary Labour Party.

They were the traditional pacifists. It was they who denounced the arms manufacturers as “Merchants of Death.” They opposed the rearmaments of this country year after year. They were so hostile to every form of military service that they were hostile to the O.T.C. in schools and had conscientious doubts even with regard to Boy Scouts. Less than five years ago one of the Labour leaders declared that if the British Government tried to go to war for any purpose whatever the munition workers and transport union would go on strike. Now these very same leaders, or many of them, are scornful of that “terrified pacifism,” as they call it, which prevents Great Britain from striking a blow anywhere on behalf of liberty or against the enemies of Democracy. The intellectual leaders of pacifism, like Professor Gilbert Murray, Sir Norman Angell, Mr. Noel Baker and Mr. Attlee, have now changed the tone of their arguments, and sternly remind their followers that there must be risks for peace, as well as for war, that men of faith must be prepared to die for it, and that Democracy is not worth its salt unless the true democrat is willing to defend his liberties of speech and mind, if need be in the last ditch. Meanwhile the traditional militarists of the old school and the old-school tie are all for dodging war, when possible, and “buying off the Danes” by concessions all along the line.

There is a generous and not a mean motive behind this paradox of the Left. They cannot bear to see the bully spirit triumph, or to sit still while what they believe to be black reaction is extending its spheres of influence. They believe that the very soul of humanity is threatened by these new dictatorships which suppress individual rights and put the mind itself in shackles. But they were guilty of that extreme illogicality in turning a blind eye to the atrocious tyrannies in Russia, and they have given all their sympathy and aid to the Government of Madrid and Valencia which, in its early stages, at least, was in the hands of men who also threatened the soul of humanity by cold-blooded murders and every outrage against liberty of opinion and the rights of conscience. So they became tangled in false logic, and false sentiment, due to the necessity of simple minds to see life in blacks and whites, and to become fanatical partisans of this side or that, though both might be wrong—or even both might be right—as sometimes happens.

Partisanship seems to be a psychological temptation of irresistible force in the modern mind. The philosophical attitude to life which refuses party labels, or to shout

the slogans of rival factions, is becoming a rare quality. It is now called sitting on the fence or cowardly acquiescence in evil.

(3)

America Looks at Europe.

The Czech crisis in September 1938 stirred public opinion in the United States profoundly and made a breach, growing wider it seems, in the bulwarks of the American neutrality laws which had been passed in a grim spirit of isolation, to keep out of a European or world war, constantly foretold.

But as far back as October 1937, President Roosevelt made a remarkable speech, which was a warning to his people against the policy of isolation and gave a clear call to collective action with other peace-loving peoples of the world.

“The world political situation,” he said, “which has lately been growing progressively worse, is such as to cause grave anxiety to the peoples of all nations who wish to live in peace and amity with their neighbours. The present reign of terror and international lawlessness began a few years ago.

“It began through unjustified interference in the internal affairs of other nations or invasion of alien territory in violation of treaties. It has now reached a stage where the very foundations of civilisation are seriously threatened.

“Without declaration of war, without warning or justification of any kind, civilians, including women and children, are being ruthlessly murdered with bombs from the air. In times of so-called peace, ships are being attacked and sunk by submarines, without cause and without notice. Nations are fomenting and taking sides in civil warfare in countries that have never done them any harm. Nations, claiming freedom for themselves, deny it to others.

“If these things come to pass in other parts of the world let no one imagine that America will escape, that it may expect mercy, that this Western Hemisphere will not be attacked, and that it will continue tranquilly and peacefully to carry on the ethics and arts of civilisation. If those days are not to come to pass—if we are to save a world in which we can breathe freely and live in amity without fear—the peace-loving nations must make a concerted effort to uphold the laws and principles on which alone peace can rest secure.

“There is a solidarity and interdependence about the modern world, both technically and morally, which makes it impossible for any nation completely to isolate itself from economic and political upheavals in the rest of the world. International anarchy destroys every foundation for peace. It jeopardises the

immediate or future security of every nation, large or small.

“It is, therefore, of vital interest and concern to the people of the United States that the sanctity of international treaties and the maintenance of international morality be restored.

“War is a contagion, whether declared or undeclared. It can engulf States and peoples removed from the original scene of hostilities.

“Although most of the peoples of the world wanted peace, some nations were spending between 30 and 50 per cent of their national income in armaments.

“The United States,” he added, “is happy in being able to spend her money on useful works, instead of on huge standing armies. Nevertheless, I am compelled and you are compelled to look ahead.

“The peace, freedom and security of 90 per cent of the world’s population is being jeopardised by the remaining 10 per cent who are threatening to break down all law and order.

“Surely the 90 per cent who want to live in peace under law and in accordance with moral standards which have received almost universal acceptance throughout the centuries can and must find some way to make their will prevail.

“Peace-loving nations must make a concerted effort to oppose those violations of treaties, those ignorings of human instincts, which to-day are creating a state of international anarchy and instability from which there can be no escape through mere isolation or neutrality.

“The epidemic of world lawlessness is spreading. When an epidemic physical disease starts to spread, the community approves and joins in quarantine of the patients to protect the health of the community against the spread of the disease.

“It is my determination to pursue a policy of peace and to adopt every practicable measure to avoid involvement in war.

“But we cannot insure ourselves against the disastrous results of war and the dangers of involvement. We cannot have complete protection in a world of disorder, in which confidence and security have broken down. If civilisation is to survive, the principles of the Prince of Peace must be restored. The shattered trust between the nations must be revived.”

This arresting speech aroused a new hope that here at last was light in the darkness. There need be no fear for democracy if the British Commonwealth of Nations links up in a close political, moral and military alliance with that great Western democracy, with its illimitable resources, and its dynamic energy. Are we not bound together by ties of speech and blood, and common ideals, and political faith? The menace of Japan surely will bring us closer together. The dangers to world

peace everywhere will surely force us into an alliance for combined action in defence of civilisation.

This hope of American co-operation for world peace and democracy was renewed when President Roosevelt called upon Congress to vote credits for an immense programme of rearmament on January 28th of this year.

"It is with the deepest regret," he said, "that I report to you that armaments increase to-day at an unprecedented and alarming rate. It is an ominous fact that at least one-fourth of the world's population is involved in a merciless and devastating conflict, in spite of the fact that most people in most countries, including those where the conflict rages, wish to live at peace. Armies are fighting in the East and in Europe; thousands of civilians are being driven from their homes and being bombed from the air. Tension throughout the world is high."

A very remarkable article in the *New York Times* coinciding with this presidential message attracted universal attention and aroused hopes which were exaggerated in democratic circles.

"Because of our traditions and our policies," it said, "the United States cannot operate abroad by what is known in diplomacy as joint action. . . . But the limitation is, not necessarily, a weakening of our position and of the two democracies. . . . It is time for these two democracies to understand each other's difficulties and to move sympathetically to surmount them. A concurrent policy of the United States and Great Britain needs only to be followed to impress, with its logical force and sincerity, other democracies with the great stakes for peace in the Far East. That must surely be their course if violation of international law continues."

The article went on to say that democracies, "acting independently but in a parallel direction," can set the bounds on dictators and breakers of treaties by withholding their raw materials and credits, without resort to the formal plan called Sanctions.

That very powerful newspaper with the best foreign correspondence of any journal in the world and of great weight in inspiring and reflecting public opinion in its own country, certainly aroused more optimism in England than was justified by its actual words.

In spite of these warnings against a rigid isolation the mood of the American people remained strong for neutrality in the event of a war in Europe. But that mood is not eternally unchanging in a world where changes happen at each tick of the clock, so that last week's history is blotted out by new events of enormous significance. The American wish for isolation is perhaps one of their own illusions which has only a fleeting reality. For what happens in the Pacific touches them very

closely though it may be three thousand miles away. The Californian coast is washed by that sea. The Japanese Fleet has long-range guns. The speed of aeroplanes is 300 miles an hour.

There is an American journalist named Walter Lippmann who has made a close study of American conditions and world affairs. He is not only a brilliant writer but has a very far-reaching mind not bound by prejudice. In a remarkable article published recently in *Foreign Affairs* he wrote the following words:

“When Americans speak of isolation and of being indifferent to the outcome of European wars, they have already taken for granted that there exists a power great enough to localise wars of aggression. In this situation the concept of neutrality can be made to work. But the concept itself rests on a deeper premise, on the tacit and unrealised assumption that the world as a whole will remain orderly under the final authority of sea-power controlled by men who, on the whole, believe in the supremacy of law and in government by consent of the governed.

“Once that assumption is upset, once this pivotal organisation of human power is seriously disrupted, the basis of neutrality and of isolation is destroyed. A fatal blow struck at the heart of the British power would not merely destroy the international unity of the Empire, it would mean the destruction of all international order as we have known it. . . .

“We could not be indifferent. All that is familiar and taken for granted, like the air we breathe, would suddenly be drastically altered. A thousand relations to all parts of the world, so well established that we forget they exist, would suddenly be broken. The disruption of Austria-Hungary has changed the face of European politics. The disruption of the British Empire would have consequences so incomparably greater that we cannot really imagine them. One might as well have asked a citizen of Rome in the time of Augustus to imagine Europe when the Roman power had disintegrated. . . .

“The great question is whether a nation placed as we are, and desiring above all else to live, and let live, can preserve its isolation if there is no power in the world which preserves the order of the world.

“The answer to that question is, I am convinced, that we can and we will stand aside only as long as we feel that there is no fatal challenge to the central power which makes for order in our world. . . .

“In the final test, no matter what we wish now or now believe, though collaboration with Britain and her allies is difficult and often irritating, we shall protect that connection because in no other way can we fulfil our destiny.”

This point of view expressed by a brilliant and far-seeing journalist of much

public influence was already stirring in the minds of many intellectual Americans before the Czech crisis, menacing immediate war in Europe, caused some furious thinking throughout the United States, and weakened the isolationists. The President's letters to Hitler during the crisis, stern and sharp in their reminder of 120,000,000 people devoted to democratic liberties and diplomacy not based on threats of force, were a repudiation of complete isolationism. The fury of indignation caused by the persecution of the Jews and sensational reports of further threats to peace following the Munich Agreement intensified American hatred of dictatorship and American uneasiness regarding their own place in the world if Tokyo and Berlin threatened the British possessions East and West. Mr. Cordell Hull, the Secretary of State, spoke very plainly regarding the world situation. Other public men denounced the limitations of neutrality. Mr. Stimson, formerly Secretary for Foreign Affairs, went far in a letter addressed to the *New York Times* in March of this year 1939, when he advocated collaboration between the American and British fleets. He wrote:

“We cannot ignore the fact that at almost any moment an armed attack may be aimed by a Fascist group of Powers against the vital safety of one of the two peace-loving nations upon which rests in large part the safety of our civilization—Great Britain or France. Such an attack would almost inevitably involve both of those nations, and from present appearances would be co-operated in by all three of the Fascist Powers. In that event only one course could be depended on ultimately to save the present hard-earned civilization upon which our own national welfare rests.

“To-day the aggressive group is more powerful in the air and on the land than even France and Britain combined, and it is probably sufficiently strong at sea to pin down the British and French fleets in European waters, leaving exposed to the powerful Japanese fleet the whole Western Pacific Ocean, including the English-speaking Dominions of Australia and New Zealand, and even Western Canada, as well as the naval base of Singapore, which is the key to the protection of those regions.

“Defence against such joint action in Europe and Asia by the Fascist Powers can only securely be accomplished by the common action of the naval power of the three large democracies, including the United States. Should any one of these three nations attempt to remain isolated the result would bid fair to be an ultimate disaster to them all; on the other hand the conviction on the part of the Fascist Powers that such common action

was in contemplation would be most potent to prevent attack altogether.

“It is far from inconceivable that a threatened or devastated France or Britain or Holland might be forced to cede to a Fascist nation some of its possessions in the Western hemisphere or in the Orient, or make commitments to that nation which would even be more dangerous to our safety. Would our position be bettered by idly waiting for that to occur? To-day the German mailed fist has far less velvet concealing it than in the years preceding 1914. It is no time for America to forget lessons of such a recent past.”

That remarkable statement by the former Secretary of State went further than the general advance of public opinion in his own country, away from isolation towards international commitments and co-operation for the defence of democratic nations. It aroused a heated and bitter controversy which unfortunately led to unfriendly attacks upon British policy and affairs by rigid isolationists who are always haunted by the fear that Great Britain wants them to “pull the chestnuts out of the fire.” American journalists equally suspicious of British intentions let themselves go in wild and fantastic stories regarding what had happened during the September crisis of 1938, and described in great detail dark and sinister plots led by Mr. Chamberlain and the “Cliveden House Group” (that mysterious body of conspirators unknown to the English people!) for the betrayal of democracy and the victory of Fascism. Over-colouring and over-dramatising their pictures of the European scene, the American Press kept its public’s nerves on edge and convinced them that another war was not only inevitable but immediate from one week to another. All that makes American influence in European affairs uncertain, especially as it was not free from political passions raging around the personality and power of President Roosevelt. But of this turmoil of opinion there emerges the clear conviction that if a world war happens, beginning with a challenge to Great Britain and France, the United States will not stand aloof very long, but will throw its mighty weight into the scales on the side of all our liberties.

(4)

The Value of Empire.

There is a most unpleasant, not to say a most gruesome possibility which is not yet discussed in bar-parlours or suburban drawing-rooms. It is a fear that the British Empire may be attacked on all fronts—that is to say by Japan in the Far East, by

Germany in the North Sea, and by Italy in the Mediterranean. It is as a matter of fact the threefold danger which confronts us at the present time, and will inevitably lead to a life and death struggle for the British Empire unless we do something rather soon to prevent it by a new and far-reaching policy, inspired by strength, moral courage and a closer unity of deals within the Commonwealth of Nations which was once the British Empire.

That Empire is now a collection of independent nations bound together only by ties of sentiment, tradition and trade interests and defensive needs, under the symbol of the Crown. The Mother Country, with its population of fifty millions or so, has to bear the heaviest burden of defence in guarding the trade routes and maintaining garrisons, docks and ports and naval stations, and the vast expenditure entailed in this safeguarding of the Dominions and Colonies. This immense burden is perhaps unfairly distributed and it is time that the Dominions themselves, rightly jealous of their independence, as sister nations and completely free of any dictatorship from Whitehall regarding their internal affairs, or their world policy, should contribute more than they do to their own defence.

But that is a minor matter. What is of major importance is the vast area of the earth's surface comprised within the British Commonwealth of Nations and its limited use by small populations. It is a standing temptation to the impoverished countries and the land-hungry tribes. It is a cause of envy and jealousy to nations eager for Imperial possessions, partly for the joy of aggrandisement and megalomania, not to be left out of account in human psychology, but partly also as enormous reserves of food supplies and the sources of raw material.

We are a little hypocritical about the value of our Colonial possessions and of our Imperial assets. Sir Norman Angell, who is no hypocrite but a man of devastating honesty and common sense who "debunks" many illusions in the modern mind, goes a little too far, I think, when he ridicules the German arguments in their demands for colonies as the means of access to raw materials. He points out, truly enough, that Great Britain has to pay for this raw material exactly the same price as any other customer of any other race. He tells the Germans that the Dominions are so independent of the Mother Country that they put up tariffs against her manufactured articles and shut the gates to her would-be immigrants, and are just as ready to sell their goods to Germans as to English. All that is true, but it is also true that trade follows the flag—that British investments in the Dominions and the Colonies are an enormous source of invisible wealth, and that without the Empire Great Britain would be reduced to a third-class power with but little influence in world affairs.

Japan is not impressed by the arguments of Sir Norman Angell, I venture to imagine. Japan has hungry eyes for new and fertile land, for new markets which she thinks follow her conquests, for a wider Empire which would satisfy, not only her economic needs, but would fulfil what she believes to be her Imperial destiny as the Chosen People of the East. Germany wants an empire not only for raw materials, but for power—politics and pride. Italy, under Mussolini, dreams again of Imperial Rome. Who has the coveted lands, the empty spaces, the inexhaustible reserves of raw materials? England may answer in a still small voice—"We do not own any of those things. They belong to Australia, New Zealand and other countries who are quite independent of us. Not even India belongs to us. Not Canada. Not South Africa. They have their own governments, their own economic systems. They no more belong to us than to you."

Perfectly true apart from Crown Colonies and other dependencies. But it is Britain which holds together this association of nations. Without the British Navy they would be ripe plums on the tree for anybody's gathering, if that anybody were a great Power with a big fleet, a big army and a big air force! Who will be the first in India if the British garrisons leave? Russia or Japan? Who will fight the next wars in Africa if England says, "Let Africa defend itself." The Germans or the Italians? The British Empire, by whatever name it calls itself, whatever invisible threads hold it together, will be the happy hunting-ground of new invaders, new conquerors, new adventurers if Britain gets tired of her responsibilities or loses her place on the seas or in the air.

The Decline and Fall of the British Empire is not in the book of Fate for immediate publication. It need never happen, if the spirit of its peoples does not weaken, and if the directors of British Foreign policy do not plunge recklessly into desperate adventures on all fronts. But there are certain facts which call for clear thinking without illusion and without fear.

One of these is our use of the vast territories under the British flag. Many of them are still sparsely populated. They are still the empty spaces of the world. Australia alone could find room for twenty million people and still have "elbow room." Africa could find room for vast numbers of white settlers. New Zealand is not overcrowded. Canada has much land to spare. But these Dominions have shut their gates to immigration even from the Mother Country. For some years past not a man or boy has been allowed free entry, even if he had his passage paid, and a job waiting for him, as I know from membership of the Big Brother Movement, which used to send out boys of a good class to Australia with wonderfully good results. This closing of the gates in the United States as well as in the British Empire has been

one of the causes of trouble in Europe. In pre-war days there was this way of escape for impoverished and oppressed peoples or for adventurous youth, impatient of their own social systems and lack of opportunity. The figures of emigration were considerable from the British Isles and from Central Europe. They amounted to hundreds of thousands every year. Italians, Swedes, Danes, Czechs, Roumanians and Bulgarians, to mention only a few, streamed steadily out of their countries to find a new chance of life, a greater liberty in the Americas or the British Dominions. No one can deny that the United States benefited from this tide of immigration. Those immigrants became good American citizens and were merged in the melting-pot. They were among the builders of the New World. Their industry, their toil on the land, their desire to make good helped to create that great nation's power and prosperity.

The British Dominions have adopted a short-sighted policy in their post-war refusal to open their doors to the world's refugees who knocked for admittance. Labour conditions were bad, they said. There was unemployment in their own cities. There was over-production and no markets for what was produced, owing to the break-down of world trade. These arguments against immigration are not really valid. The early pioneers did not base their way of livelihood on world markets. They did not labour for export trade. They did not depend upon foreign exchanges or the rise and fall of stocks and shares. They established their own communities. They exchanged their own goods and services. They built up a decent standard of living within their own frontiers. International trade and international finance have become fetishes in the modern mind and have broken the old spirit of self-dependence and simplicity of life when all a man needed was a patch of earth, a roof over his head, a wife and family to work with him, enough food for all and the things made by his own hand and mind. Why have we got so far from that natural way of life? What has broken its rhythm which was that of millions of men and women through all the ages?

It is estimated that six-tenths of the present population of the globe take up less than one-tenth of its habitable surface, so that there is still room for innumerable years ahead in the empty spaces of the world for new adventures in colonisation. In Africa alone 25,000,000 natives occupy a land two-thirds the size of Europe, and although no one has the right to dispossess them from their own soil there is room for millions of white settlers in great lonely territories.

A German named Otto Corbach in a remarkable book called *The Open Door* makes a reasonable plea for a world plan of colonisation which is, he thinks, the only alternative to a world war. For if, he says, those who hold the empty spaces of the

earth still shut their doors against the overcrowded areas they will be forced open by Yellow Men and by a combination of Western Powers hostile to the British Empire.

“The opening up of still undeveloped territories,” he writes, “both in the British Dominions and the Latin-American Republics has ceased to be a predominantly British or Pan-American question. Nothing short of a universal movement against territorial barriers, restrictions on emigration and other obstacles to intercourse all over the world can bring about the necessary conditions for a solution of this gigantic problem. If there were none of these modern ‘Chinese Walls’ to block the natural course of trade, the regulation of emigration on a world-wide scale would present no great difficulties. The countries of Europe possess many idle hands, the steamship lines a vast amount of surplus accommodation, the overseas countries vast tracts of fertile land lying fallow, in every industrial country machinery is standing idle which, by employing a mere fraction of the armies of unemployed, could easily supply the needs of millions of settlers on virgin soil. Man-power is the source of all industrial wealth. Labour is therefore the most profitable of all cargoes, when it comes to moving it from somewhere where it can be only turned to account inadequately, if at all, to somewhere where at the moment the conditions exist for its most fruitful application.”

But, as Otto Corbach points out, the colonial powers of Europe have been more concerned with the export of capital and the capitalist system than in the export of human beings.

A world plan of colonisation, in which Germany and Italy and Japan might join, is a noble idea which might ease the tensions now creating dangers of world war. In any case it suggests the possibility of dealing with the German claims to colonies in a big way rather than a narrow way. For it might be possible to make that claim part of a general scheme among the colony-owning powers for a redistribution of certain territories under some system of international control.

That German claim has to be faced. Hitler is only biding his time—he gives six years as his limit of patience—to press it insistently with all the force of propaganda to express the will of the German people. It will be unwise for us to wait for the settlement of this question until any concession looks as if it were yielded by fear. We should deal with it before it becomes a matter of national passion and national prestige.

In a debate in the House of Lords, Lord Cecil was not in favour of telling the Germans that a considerable portion of the British Empire should be handed over to them. It was an invitation to Germany, he said, and they needed no encouragement in that direction, to put forward demands of an altogether extravagant character. He

was answered by the Marquess of Crewe, who said: "Obviously no one was proposing the handing back of colonies to Germany *en bloc*, but there was a strong case for looking into the question to see whether it was not possible to give some satisfaction to Germany."

Tanganyika which was taken away from Germany by the Peace Treaties is not a part of the British Empire unless that system of Mandates under the League was as much an hypocrisy as the cynics stated at the time. This word was invented by General Smuts. We hold it only on trust. We did not claim it as our "property." It is not ours to hold for ever. As Lord Allen of Hurtwood said in a memorable speech on foreign affairs, "For the sake of general appeasement we should let Germany know that we are anxious to bring into being in tropical Africa the system of the open door which ought to apply to areas where we are acting as trustees on behalf of the world."

If Germany were made one of those trustees, not only for Tanganyika, but for other African territories with ourselves and other nations, her sense of grievance and inferiority might be eliminated and her colonial ambitions satisfied.

The persecution of Jews in Germany has, however, stiffened the opposition to these colonial aspirations and, it is asked, "If they treat Jews like that, how will they behave to colonial natives?"

(5)

What of Democracy?

Let us be true to our own liberal traditions though all the world departs from them, but let us be quite sure that we are as noble as we think we are. There is a tendency in democracy to believe that its mere name is good enough and covers a multitude of sins. We are, for instance, proud of the freedom of the Press and, rightly so, for without a free Press a nation's intelligence is enslaved. But the freedom of the Press does not mean the freedom to lie, the freedom to flood the newspapers with baseless rumours, concocted by imaginative and unscrupulous newsagents, to raise scares, to create suspicions against other countries and distort the truth by every sinister suggestion of malice. Hitler was, perhaps, too violent in his denunciation of the orgy of rumour and misrepresentation which disturbed public opinion, when some German Generals were removed from their posts. He exaggerated its importance perhaps. But he was justified in his condemnation of newspaper methods, which were a disgrace to English journalism, last February. As he pointed out in his Reichstag speech, there was no truth whatever in the wild rumours which

rushed into European newspapers at the time.

“What can we say,” he asked, “when Reuter discovers attacks on my life; when English newspapers publish stories of a large number of arrests in Germany and the closing of the German frontiers, when other newspapers say that the Crown Prince has fled from Germany, that German Generals had marched with their regiments to the German chancelleries; that the entire German industry had received mobilisation orders for war; that fourteen Generals with the body of Ludendorff had fled to Prague; that I had lost my voice and that it would be imitated by someone else so that I could in future speak from gramophone records?”

Surely he was justified in denouncing this abuse of journalism as a danger to peace, the poisoning of good relations between Germany and England and “an utterly unendurable Press campaign under the motto of freedom of personal opinion.”

I do not find those words too harsh and, as an old newspaper man, I am convinced that in the best days of English journalism before the sensational Press lost all sense of restraint, such fantastic stories, which had no evidence whatever behind them, would never have been published.

Our freedom of the Press has certain limitations. It is limited in certain newspapers by the political ideas of its proprietors, who dictate their policy to the news-editors and leader-writers, so that there is a daily suppression of facts, a daily distortion of world events, and a daily propaganda by headlines and slogans in which truth is lost. Some part of our Press, at least, is dominated by the commercialism of big circulations, produced by pandering to the lowest instincts of the most unintelligent. In such freedom there is no high value. It is the debauching of public opinion.

Democracy will not win a victory over Dictatorships unless it can prove its capability of producing happiness, and the general welfare of those who enjoy its blessings. Are we in England, and Scotland, and Wales presenting this picture of democratic blessedness to the Totalitarian States. We still have, as I write, 1,800,000 unemployed, among whom many are losing heart, living in squalor, neglected by public indifference, physically unfit, ill-clothed and wretched. In democratic America there are 11,000,000 unemployed, not in very good shape. Democracy will not hold its place before the driving efficiency of Dictator States with their ant-like discipline if it is shoddy, disorderly, undisciplined, physically unfit, without pride in work, without a sense of dignity in labour, without enthusiasm or dynamic purpose to uphold its ideals.

Nor will Democracy continue its mission in the world or retain its liberties if it is

tempted into alliance with Communism on one side or Fascism on the other, taking sides in that conflict of rival ideologies which is being fought out in the soul of the world to-day.

There is more at stake in this dangerous world than the pressure of races or power politics. The civilised mind is at stake. Christianity and its influence on civilisation for nearly two thousand years are gravely menaced. Its moralities and its virtues are losing ground almost everywhere. Its message of pity, meekness, mercy and charity is disputed and even derided. To tell the truth, that message was never very general in its power of appeal. It was constantly betrayed, and Christians through the ages have not been remarkable for their loving-kindness or lack of violence.

The religious wars of the Middle Ages were bloodthirsty and ferocious. A Christian sense of mercy did not inspire Christian judges in this realm of England who upheld the most frightful penal laws and who still use that instrument of torture called "the cat" in English prisons. Man has been a cruel animal through the ages whatever his religion. But there was that ideal of charity, pity for the weak and oppressed, chivalry in war, mercy towards the vanquished, respect and tenderness for women and children which Christ proclaimed. It was an ideal, however much betrayed by tiger men and wolf men, which permeated millions of individual souls and stood as the standard, however unattainable, of human conduct in Christendom. It inspired innumerable saints and humble folk. . . . It was the rebuke of tyrannical kings and the condemnation of violent men. It was the comfort of the oppressed and dwelt in gentle hearts. It tamed the savagery of primitive peoples and was the spiritual charter of those who were persecuted. . . . Its spirit inspired all art, all literature, all social reform. It was the law of life to multitudes of men and women who had any noble vision. But now it has been abandoned even as an ideal, even as an unattainable code. There has been a surging-up of cruelty, a revival of brutality, a proclamation of intolerance.

The Liberalism of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was based upon Christian ethics even by those who lost their faith in Christian dogma. They inherited the Christian tradition even if as sceptics they denied it. But their successors have lost the influence of the tradition itself and have revolted against its ethics. The world is suffering from the downfall of Liberalism partly because of that disbelief in the Christian ideals. Liberalism—by which I do not mean the party politics of so-called Liberals—is one of the qualities of the civilised mind which for a time—not very long—made good progress among men and nations. The civilised mind believes in tolerance. It has a fine poise of moderation, hating violence and passion. It searches

for truth in all its forms and knows that fanaticism is not necessarily right. It hates cruelty and brutality. It loves beauty in art and in life. It sees that beauty and recognises genius wherever it exists under whatever colour of skin, or in whatever creed. That awareness of truth, and that broad-mindedness, were the glory of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, when it seemed that humanity was becoming more intelligent and more civilised.

One cannot pretend that it has not had a setback in these post-war years. The areas of civilisation defined in these terms are shrinking, in spite of all the opportunities of education, and the rapidity of communication. Under the pressure of economic distress, racial urges, and political passion, we are drifting back to barbarism. That is one of the realities of the modern world about which we need have no illusion.

The civilised mind must defend itself from these assaults, not by piling-up armaments, but by resistance to mob mentality, national hysteria and the appeals of unreason. There must be a secret sign, a password between all such minds in every country. Here, in England, we must keep a sanctuary open for all refugees from persecution and for all who are denied this liberty elsewhere. We must keep the lamps of reason alight in the gathering darkness. We must keep true to our old traditions of enlightenment.

One of the very tests of this is to dissociate our friendship with other peoples from our dislike of the political systems under which they live. The failure to do this is one of our fundamental mistakes at the present time. We are mistaken profoundly in thinking, as many do, that all nations are one-minded and agree with everything done in their name by their rulers and politicians. We, ourselves, as a people, would not like to be judged by the actions of our politicians in post-war years. The French people would not get full marks if they were to be judged by their party groups and political leaders. They were not all followers of Poincaré. They are more intellectually honest and tolerant than would appear by the tone of their Press. In Germany to-day there are millions of intelligent, good-natured, liberty-loving people whose private thoughts are not controlled by any censorship, and who have a hatred of war and all its horrors. So it is in Italy, where the spirit of the Renaissance has not yet died. No dictator can wipe out a thousand years of history and tradition in the soul of his people by his decrees or propaganda bureaux. In Europe all these social changes and systems are not so destructive of minds and characters as we are apt to believe. "Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose."

England does not change very much. We are astonishingly true to the picture we have made of ourselves. Everywhere in England one finds the same traditions of

character and thought. It is our belief in liberty gained through centuries of struggle, and our genius for compromise between the extremes of passion, which dominates our outlook on life. One finds it in every small town and village, and at every committee meeting, and in every group of boys on a village green. Our forefathers took the spirit with them overseas as the pioneers of new nations. We suffer from the disadvantages of those qualities as well as from their virtues. This spirit of compromise, this refusal of fanaticism seems to weaken us now and then, and is the reason why we are called hypocrites by other nations. It prevents us from taking sides in other peoples' quarrels, and sometimes leads us to the edge of dishonour because we do not throw ourselves into the arena on behalf of peoples, or causes, who had looked to us for aid.

But when all is said and done this democracy of ours, incomplete and inefficient as it is in some ways, is still working fairly well and is, to our way of thinking, the best method of intelligent compromise, best suited to ourselves. Occasionally an outburst of public opinion, which is the Voice of the People, is heard in times of national crisis and no statesman ignores it. Our parliamentary system, with all its delays, pretences and futilities, does express the views of all, and does somehow lead to national unity and a line of action. In moments of danger, or crisis, this Parliament always remembers its noble traditions, and the spirit of the Past speaks through it to the Present, with the dignity and the wisdom of long experience. We should be foolish indeed to change all that for any brand new theory of government or any imitation of other peoples' systems.

We are the envied people of the world. They admire us and envy us for our social peace and order, which not all the ill winds of fate seem to disturb by more than a ruffle on the surface. . . . They envy us and admire us because we stand fast to old loyalties, to old codes, to old habits of character. Refugees of many lands come over here and breathe freely because there are no secret police and no concentration camps, and no fears of revolution. Will all that last, or are we living in a fool's paradise? Can we remain tolerant in a world of intolerance, or keep our liberties without fighting to the death for them? No man can say. But this is certain: there will be no liberty left in the world if we fail to keep this peace, by plunging with fanaticism into the passionate conflict of ideals now raging throughout the world.

The policy pursued by our present Government has been to keep in the middle of the road between these two extremes, and to bring about a spirit of appeasement by conciliation, good-will and avoidance of enmity, without sacrifice of strength or principle. Not an easy task. But it is the only way for the prevention of another world war which would be the greatest of all calamities for us and for everyone. It is only

those deeply sunk in pessimism who even now believe that war to be inevitable.

Epilogue

On March 15, of this year 1939, by orders of Hitler, a German army marched into Czechoslovakia, seized its capital and without a shot being fired—the Czechs were powerless—took possession of the whole country. By a proclamation of Hitler the Czechs were incorporated in the German Reich as inhabitants of Bohemia, long known in history, and two States—Moravia and Slovakia—were declared to be German Protectorates.

It was a violation, without the faintest excuse or defence, of the Munich agreement, signed by Hitler, Chamberlain, Daladier, and Mussolini, which had guaranteed the new frontiers of Czechoslovakia subject to details of delimitation. It was a repudiation, without notice, of all Hitler's promises and pledges to Mr. Chamberlain. He had said: "I have no more territorial ambitions in Europe." He had said: "I am no longer interested in the Czechs." He had emphasised once again his oft-repeated assertion that he only wanted Germans within the Reich and that this was the central and unalterable ideal of his National-Socialist creed, as Himmler, his friend and colleague, had told me in words which I have quoted in this book. It was an act of open aggression against a State inhabited by a different race which had been forced already to make a heavy sacrifice by ceding the Sudetenland to Germany.

Previously to that act of conquest Hitler had had a certain show of justice on his side which gave him some kind of moral justification for what he did, in spite of the violence of his methods and the harshness of his threats. He had restricted himself to the undoing of the Treaty of Versailles which had been imposed upon the German people. He had liberated his own folk from its penalising clauses. He had reoccupied German soil with German soldiers. Even the union of Austria with the German Reich, tragic as it was to all who admired the character of the Austrians and their place in history, could not be condemned or resisted by other nations without reservation when so many of the Austrian people themselves seemed to desire that union. His demand for the "self-determination" of the Sudeten Germans which led up to the September crisis was only deplorable because of the methods by which he stirred up passion through means of violent propaganda and *agents provocateurs*, and by the threat of war which lay behind them. Those Sudeten Germans ought never to have been put as a minority under Czech rule.

The quarrel with Hitler at that time was not so much with his aims as with his manners and methods—the threat of force behind his arguments. Now, however, he had gone beyond the limit of any excuse which could be put up on his behalf by those who, for the sake of avoiding a war which would be the ruin of European civilisation, hoped and half believed that, according to his own words many times

repeated, Hitler would restrict himself to the rebuilding of his own Germanic Reich. On that basis there could be peace in Europe. On that basis we might deal with him on reasonable terms. On that basis there need be no bloody conflict.

By the annexation of the Czechs and Slovaks in contemptuous disregard of all his pledges, new anxieties have arisen among all the neighbour nations of Germany and in Great Britain and France who are threatened by the Berlin-Rome “axis.” If Hitler no longer regards himself limited by the framework of the German folk and is now defending a policy of conquest by the need of Lebensraum—life space—for his Empire, what nation in Europe is safe from his clutch? That technique which he has invented and used in the case of Austria and the Sudetenland may be used again and again—the technique of stirring up trouble in the minorities of other States, reporting trivial incidents as the “outrage” and “torture” of German groups, receiving the emissary of some political clique who asks for “protection,” and then with lightning rapidity sending an overwhelming force to “restore order” and to take over the territory. A masterly technique wonderfully successful, but now revealed to the world. Within a few days of his annexation of the Czechs he was reported—not on certain evidence—to be applying this method to Poland and Roumania. In Poland the first “outrages” were reported. Reports from Roumania—not fully confirmed and afterwards denied—stated that this nation had been presented with something like an ultimatum which would have put that country completely under the economic and political domination of the German Reich unless they had been checked by other Powers. There is a lot of dark history behind all this. It is probable that there were conflicting groups in Roumania—pro-Nazi and anti-Nazi.

But all such possibilities were checked by the one man who among all in the world had worked in the face of violent criticism for a policy of friendship and understanding with Germany for the sake of world peace. That man was Neville Chamberlain.

In a speech at Birmingham on his seventieth birthday—a speech delivered with great spirit though with fine restraint—he reminded his audience and the world of the pledges which Hitler had made to him with an apparent sincerity which he was bound to believe at the time, though now Hitler had broken all of them, and he declared that if this revealed a threat of force against the liberties of other peoples it would have to be met by determined resistance from all nations who valued those liberties and would defend them by all possible means.

Those words of the Prime Minister were not lightly spoken, and they were followed instantly by diplomatic action. Mr. Chamberlain made a call to all nations who would join him in a new policy of resistance to aggression. Acting in close unity

with the Government of France he gave a pledge to Poland, already anxious about Germany's intentions, to safeguard her national independence by all possible aid.

Still hesitating to impose conscription upon the people of Great Britain, Mr. Chamberlain and his colleagues decided to double the numbers of the Territorial Army and to increase the armed forces of the Crown. Confronted by this new situation in Europe all political parties in Great Britain expressed their willingness to put aside minor controversies for the sake of national defence and a general agreement against aggression. The British Dominions pledged themselves to whole-hearted support of the Mother Country.

All this is alarming, tragic, and perilous to the last degree, for it looks as though all bridges had broken down between this country and Germany, and nothing now was left but the decision as to when that next world war will happen, unless Hitler and his small group of counsellors—three or four men close to him in secret conference—decide not to fulfil their policy by further aggression. In his speech at Wilhelmshaven on April 1, of this year 1939—strangely interrupted in its wireless transmission to the German folk and the outside world—Hitler spoke with less violence than had been expected and proclaimed his desire for peace, though he was ready, he said, to meet any challenge, and to defend Germany against a new policy of “encirclement.” Harsh though his satire was against this country and its “recently acquired virtue” he showed some sign of being impressed and disconcerted by the hostility of world opinion which he had stirred up against him by his recent action. He was at great pains to persuade his own people that he stood for peace, and that if war happened he would be snow-white in his innocence of blood. It is necessary for him to take that line with his own folk for, in the mass, they have no belief in the beauty or glory of war and, in the mass, from one end of Germany to the other, dread the approach of the Four Horsemen with horror and dismay.

Only a week or two before the annexation of the Czechs—and before there was any whisper of it—I was in Germany and was able to hear what were the thoughts in the minds of many German people of different classes. Among them was a German working-man in Berlin, and after he had gone I made a note of what he had told me so that I might have his exact words. They are more important than other things I heard from people in high places because this man spoke the thought and anxieties of his own class, that of millions of German working-folk.

“We Germans,” he said, “want peace above all things. We want tranquillity, so that we can get on with our work without fear in our minds. We all want friendship with England and France. But this uncertainty is frightful. We have a black screen in front of us and can't see through. I have two boys of fifteen and seventeen. I don't

want them to be killed. They know what war is all right and don't like the idea of it. I've told them about it. I was badly wounded three times. Certainly Hitler has done great things for the German folk, but most of us are wondering whether all that is going to be spoilt by another war in which our sons would be sacrificed. We don't understand why England and Germany are at cross purposes—especially after Munich, which we hoped would bring peace and good will.”

In those sentences this man of the German people summed up, perhaps, the fears and perplexities haunting the minds of them all, apart from those in control—of whose secret purposes and plans the masses are ignorant.

Another man of a different class—a German officer—spoke to me of this general abhorrence of war which he shares. He has a good deal to do with the training of youth and is proud of its results.

“Sometimes,” he said, “when I look at those splendid boys and think of all the efforts that have gone to make them strong and fit and fine, I am stricken by the thought that they should be gun fodder in another war. What futility! What waste! And why should war be? No peoples in Europe want it.”

Before the September crisis he had been to the Western fortifications where hundreds of thousands of young Germans were digging the Siegfried Line with feverish haste and long hours of labour. There was constant fraternisation between them and the French soldiers of the Maginot Line. They laughed and joked with each other. Speaking sham German the French soldiers shouted out “Nix bomb—bomb! Nix bomb—bomb! . . . *Pas de guerre!*”

There is no doubt now that the September crisis and the imminence of war—we were within two hours and twenty-five minutes of that calamity—caused as great a shock to the German people as it did to us. They were in despair when they saw their boys marching away and realised suddenly, with horror, that Germany might be involved in another war with England and France on account of Czechoslovakia. Few of them thought the Sudeten Germans worth that risk or that catastrophe. Their relief was tremendous when they heard of Mr. Chamberlain's flight to Berchtesgaden, and one lady I know whose son had gone with his regiment danced for joy round her room when the news came over the wireless. They thought the Munich Agreement was the prelude to a new era of peace and friendship with England based on justice, and they were disconcerted and dismayed when a section of the English Press and political world broke out into a storm of rage against the British Prime Minister and shouted the words “Betrayal!” and “Surrender!” They were even more disconcerted when they heard of the terrific intensification of British rearmament immediately following the Munich Agreement. It seemed to them

inconsistent with Mr. Chamberlain's peace policy, and to hold some kind of threat. It was the reason, they thought, why Hitler spoke harsh words in the first speeches he had made after the Munich meetings.

I found that this thought still rankled in German minds. Owing to the controlled news in their Press and the machinery of propaganda the ordinary people in Germany, without other means of information, do not know or understand the sudden realisation that came to our own Government and people during the September crisis of our deplorable weakness and of the grim and urgent necessity for intensive rearmament after an experience when their own leader had not hesitated to risk a world war with that threat, harshly made, behind his demands. We could not submit again to that kind of diplomacy.

But they were uneasy in their minds, like that working-man whose words I have quoted. It was not a working-man but one of high rank who expressed the sense of some evil spell which hangs over us all in this time.

"There is some dark destiny," he said, "which prevents friendship between Germany and England. It is not the fault of the peoples who want peace with each other. It is a clash of political forces without reason on either side. I am afraid of this race in armaments. If it goes on it will lead to an explosion."

That is the fear which haunts the mind of the German people, as it does our own. No doubt great numbers of them—especially among German youth—cannot help some feeling of admiration and exultation at the bloodless victories of their Führer. They are Germans. They are National Socialists. Many of them, no doubt, cannot resist the intoxication of that sense of power which Hitler has given to them. It is certain also that the masses are ignorant of the true facts, hidden from them by their controlled Press and twisted out of all reality by specious propaganda. They cannot bring themselves to believe that Hitler has broken any pledge or departed from the truth of any of his spoken words. One German wrote to me that for Hitler to be untruthful is as impossible as for fire to mix with water! Nevertheless, as I have shown in reported conversations, many of them are scared by the thought that he is leading them towards another war, and this fear shocks and horrifies them. They want still to be friends with England. They cannot understand why that friendship is thwarted.

In my opinion we shall make a fatal mistake if we allow them to think that we are hostile to the German nation, or that we wish to "encircle" them to thwart their legitimate needs or to make war upon them. All our efforts should be to persuade them that we have no quarrel with them as a people, and that if their Leader will listen to reason, and conform to a code of international law, and prove his will to

avoid war, we are ready to make a lasting peace by ending the arms race on both sides and by offering Germany full, free and generous opportunities of world trade.

War even now is not inevitable. Let us not accept a sense of fatalism towards it. While defending our own liberties and those of other nations by all the strength and spirit we have, let us also work passionately for any chance of peace, because, as all of us know in our hearts, the next war if it happens will be a flaming hell in which all beauty of life will be destroyed, and “victory,” whoever wins, will be a hideous thing.

TRANSCRIBER NOTES

Misspelled words and printer errors have been corrected. Where multiple spellings occur, majority use has been employed.

Punctuation has been maintained except where obvious printer errors occur.

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[The end of *Across the Frontiers* by Philip Gibbs]