GRANDEUR AND MISERY OF VICTORY

George Clemenceau

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EVENING IN VENDÉE

At the table under the window Clemenceau wrote much of his book. Looking up from his manuscript, he would see his rose-trees and, beyond, the ocean.

From a photograph by H. Martin

GRANDEUR AND MISERY OF VICTORY

BY

GEORGES CLEMENCEAU

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FOREWORD

The Parthian, as he fled at full gallop, loosed yet one more shaft behind. At the moment when he was swallowed up in the perpetual night of the tomb Marshal Foch seems to have left a whole quiverful of stray arrows to the uncertain bow of a chance archer.

The present hour is not one for suggestions of silence. On every side there is nothing but talkers talking futile words, the sound of which perhaps charms crowds of the deaf. Perhaps that is why I have myself yielded to the universal impulse, with the excuse of preventing the absence of a reply from appearing to mean confirmation. Not that this matters to me so much as might be imagined. When a man has placed the whole interest of his life in action he is little likely to pause over unnecessary trifles.

When I saw this impudent farrago of troopers' tales in which, in the cosy privacy of the barrack-room, the soldier is unconsciously seeking his revenge for conflicts with authority that did not always end in his favour, I might perhaps have been incapable of turning my back on my duty had not the breath of the great days magically fanned to new life the old, ever-burning flame of the emotions of the past.

What, my gallant Marshal, are you so insensible to the thrill of the great hours that you took ten years of cool and deliberate meditation to assail me for no other reason than a stale mess of military grousings? What is more, you sent another to the field of honour in your place—which is not done. Were you so much afraid of my counter-thrust? Or had it occurred to you that if, as was probable, I died before you, I should for ever have remained, *post mortem*, under the weighty burden of your accusations? My gallant Marshal, that would not have been like a soldier.

Ah, Foch! Foch! my good Foch! have you then forgotten everything? For my part, I see you in all the triumphant assurance of that commanding voice of yours, which was not the least of your accomplishments. We did not always agree. But the tilts we had at one another left no ill-feeling behind, and when tea-time came round you would give me a nudge and utter these words that were innocent of either strategy or tactics, "Come along! Time to wet our whistles."

Yes, we used to laugh sometimes. There is not much laughing to-day. Who would have thought that for us those were, in a way, good times? We were living when the agony was at its worst. We had not always time to grumble. Or, if there were occasional grumblings, the arrival of tea put an end to them. There were displays of temper; but there was one common hope, one common purpose. The enemy was there to make us friends. Foch, the enemy is still there. And that is why I bear you a grudge for laying your belated petard at the gates of history to wound me in the back—an insult to the days that are gone.

I am sure that you did not remember my farewell to you. It was at the Paris Hôtel de Ville, and about a memorial tablet on which three of us were inscribed as having served our country well—a crying injustice to so many others. As we went away I laid my hand, as a friend might, on your breast, and, tapping your heart under the uniform, said, "Through it all, there's something good in there."

You found no answer, and it so happened that I was never to see you again except as you lay in state. What a stain on your memory that you had to wait so many years to give vent to childish recriminations against me through the agency of another, who, whatever his merits, knew not the War as you and I lived it! Worse still: when I went to America to take up the cudgels for France, accused of militarism, you allowed the *New York Tribune* to publish an interview in your name full of gross abuse of me, an interview which the writer of your *Mémorial* did not dare to print, but which I shall lay before the reader side by side with the letter in which you express your overflowing gratitude to me for having given you your Marshal's staff. Our country will judge us.

As for myself, I am the man I have always been: with my virtues and failings, wholeheartedly at the service of my country, caring naught for the honours or for the steps in rank, with their appropriate emoluments, that weigh so heavily in the scales of success. Never has there been anyone who had power to confer a reward upon me. There is a strength in looking to no one but oneself for anything.

You have to your credit the Marne, the Yser, Doullens, and, of a surety, other battles besides. I forgave you a flagrant disobedience which, under anyone but me, would have brought your military career to an end. I saved you from Parliament in that bad business of the Chemin des Dames, which even now has not been altogether cleared up. Suppose I had sat still and said nothing; where would you be to-day?

Yet, when you had reached the highest honours, after a ten years' silence, to wait till you had disappeared from the scene and then have me pelted out of your window with roadside pebbles—I tell you frankly it does not redound to your glory. How different were my feelings when I went to meditate beside you as you lay in state! Why must you, of your own accord and without the slightest provocation, strike this blow at your own renown?

It will not be gainsaid that it is my right, nay, my duty, to reply to an inquisitor who begins by establishing himself in a position aloof, remote, and under cover. I once had, and still have, a considerable reserve of silence at the service of my country. But, since the public could hardly fail to impute to faint-heartedness my failure to reply, I cannot remain speechless. You challenge me. Here I am.

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Grandeur and Misery of Victory

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTORY

AMBITIONS and falterings—they belong to humanity in every age.

My relations with General Foch go back to a period long before the war that brought us together, different as we were, in common action in our country's service. The newspapers have told how I appointed him Commandant of the École de Guerre, looking to his known capabilities without taking any notice of his relations with the Society of Jesus. As it chanced, matters really happened pretty much as the popular tale relates. Which is not usual. So I confirm the story of the two speeches we exchanged.

"I have a brother a Jesuit."

"I don't give a ——."

I might have chosen a politer expression. But I was speaking to a soldier, and I meant to be understood. If it had no other merit my phrase had the advantage of being clear. Which might be taken as sufficient. General Picquart, the Minister of War, had very warmly recommended General Foch to me, to start a course in strategy, which the Minister, with the General specifically in mind, wished to set up. I asked nothing further. In similar circumstances I am not at all certain that some of my opponents would have been capable of following my example.[1]

Naturally I claim no particular merit for such a simple act of French patriotism. I belonged to the generation that saw the loss of Alsace-Lorraine, and never could I be consoled for that loss. And I here recall, with pardonable pride, that in 1908 I stood up against Germany in the Casablanca crisis, and that the Government of William II, after demanding apologies from us, was forced by my calm resistance to be satisfied with mere arbitration, as in any other dispute. We had not yet come to the days of the humiliating cession of an arbitrary slice of our Congo to Germany by M. Caillaux and his successor, M. Poincaré.

I will not try to hide the fact that I had one or two nights of uneasy slumbers. I was running a very formidable risk. The weak, who are usually the majority, were already quite prepared to repudiate me. Nevertheless, my country's honour remained safe and intact in my hands.

If I had any relations with General Foch between those far-off days and the War I have kept no memory of them. He was not in politics, and had no need of me.

At Bordeaux, after the battle of the Marne, I received a letter from my brother Albert, who had enlisted, telling me that General Foch, who had never met him, had sent for him to whisper confidentially in his ear, "*The War is now virtually ended.*" That was perhaps going a little fast. No one assuredly felt that better than the General

himself when once he had the military responsibility in his own hands. But the happy forecast was none the less justified by the event. It did honour to the soldier's swift intuition.

It was impossible for me to feel better disposed toward the military chief who already held that the tide had definitely turned in the direction of victory. And so I was not surprised in evil days—at the close of 1914, when my thankless task kept me in severe opposition to the authorities—to receive a request from General Foch, again through my brother, for a private interview in the prefecture of Beauvais, then occupied by my friend M. Raux, who was later Prefect of Police.

In my simplicity I had thought that some important revelation would prove the justification for this unlooked-for step. So I came to the interview warm and expectant, to be chilled by the discovery that it was merely that I might be questioned, in war-time, by the head of an army, as to the more or less favourable attitude of the political world toward a recasting of the High Command, which interested my interlocutor in direct personal fashion.[2]

My general attitude was friendly but reserved. I was most certainly willing to trust the professional capabilities of the former Professor of Strategy at the École Supérieure de Guerre, but none the less I regretted his preoccupation with his purely personal interests. Thus I came away rather disappointed, and so ended this mysterious colloquy, without really beginning.

Later on, in 1916, another surprise was in store for me. For one day there arrived my Parliamentary colleague, M. Meunier-Surcouf, orderly officer to General Foch, bringing me a bust (*in imitation terra-cotta*) of his chief, with the latter's compliments. I was astounded. What was I supposed to do in return? Questioned on this point, M. Meunier-Surcouf told me that a sculptor had been summoned to headquarters and given a commission to produce from a larger model *fifteen copies* of reduced size meant for various persons supposed to be influential. This was doing things in a big way. The whole affair may give rise to a smile. Still, the fact remains that such a proceeding might seem strange at the height of a war in which the very life of France was at stake. I had heard that kings used to send photographs to visitors with whom they were pleased. General Foch went as far as a bust, and I can aver that, for a man who never intrigues either with soldiers or civilians, it was a very embarrassing article.

More outspokenly candid than his chief, the orderly officer did not conceal from me that he was of the opinion that General Foch should be placed at the head of the French armies. I was far from being opposed to this. M. Meunier-Surcouf visited me again and again to confirm me in his views. He has been kind enough to make up from his notes a report from which I shall quote a few passages:

> At 10 A.M. on April 15, 1916, I presented myself at M. Clemenceau's house in the Rue Franklin; I had never had occasion to approach him previously.
>
> What was it prompted me to pay him this visit?
>
> It was because underneath the often violent polemics of the *Homme Enchaîné* there could be discerned in him an unmistakable love of France and an uncompromising desire for victory.

“I am old,” he said, “I don’t set much value on life, but I have sworn that my old carcase should hold out until victory is complete, for we shall have the victory, Monsieur Charles Meunier, we *shall*.”

In turn I put my interlocutor in possession of the military situation as it appeared to me from an examination of the facts. . . .

“I have seen around me,” I told him, “only one general who believes wholly and absolutely in our military victory, and that is General Foch: since to this indispensable belief he adds the qualities that make him one of the highest in his profession, he seems to me marked out to lead our armies, and the Government will find in him the firmest prop, and the most loyal too, in the difficult months that are approaching.

“I do not want you to believe merely that I am speaking of him as a devoted officer of his, a friend who has become attached to him during the eighteen months he has been by his side. I wish to base myself on facts.”

And I gave him my own account of the handling of the battle of the Marne, when Foch was in command of the Ninth Army, to which I was attached as officer in an artillery group of the 60th Reserve Division, and of the *race to the sea* that ended in the arrest of the German offensive in the north on November 15, 1914.

In these two actions there were revealed such qualities of the offensive spirit, for using and economizing reserves, of moral energy, and even of diplomacy, that it might be confidently affirmed that, while many of our generals had excellent qualities, General Foch seemed to stand in a superior category.

“In any case,” I added, “come and see him. You came twice close to us—I saw you—without stopping at our headquarters. I am of the firm belief that if you are working together, you at home and he in the Army, we shall be in the best position for achieving success in the end.

“The General’s talents for attack make him capable of gaining the victory, but he might lose a battle; it is indispensable that he should have by him some one able *to shield him, to uphold him in such a contingency before the Chambers of Parliament*,[3] before the country, of whose sensitiveness you are fully aware, and I think you are the very man needed for this purpose. It is time for you two to come to an understanding.”

I confess that the distribution of those busts gave me certain misgivings about the candidate for the post of Commander-in-Chief. A reminiscence of General Boulanger?

As he left me General Foch’s orderly said:

“It’s a promise, isn’t it?”

“I make no promises to anyone whatever,” I replied. “But I am well disposed. In any case, I shall not be consulted.”

Time goes on. A fresh surprise! One morning, at the end of 1916, I see General Foch himself enter my house in a state of great excitement.

“I have come straight from my headquarters,” he said, “where I have just had a visit from General Joffre. This is what he said to me:

“ ‘I am a most unhappy man. I am coming to entreat you to forgive a meanness I have just been guilty of. M. Poincaré sent for me, and gave me an order to relieve you of your command; I ought never to have consented. I gave way. I have come to beg your pardon.’ ”

And General Foch wound up with:

“And now I have come to ask your advice. What do you think I ought to do?”

Not a word of the cause of the calamity. That was a bad sign. I refrained from asking questions. Yet that was the real vital point of the business. But I thought I must spare the nerves of the general torn away from his soldiers.

“My dear friend,” I replied, “your duty is all clearly marked out for you. Rivalries that I know nothing about may have caused this momentary reverse. They cannot do without you. No fuss. Obey without arguing or recrimination. Go back quietly to your own home. Lie low. Perhaps you will be called back inside a fortnight.”

My forecast was a long way out, for the General remained *limogé* for several months.

Several months kicking his heels in meditation is a great deal for a gallant soldier who sees his comrades falling on the battlefield. Foch endured this trial without uttering a word. That was a feat which I appreciate at its full value.

In later years I told this story to Poincaré, who shrugged up his shoulders laughing, with the sole comment, “These generals! They are always the same.”

I was not greatly enlightened by that.

In November 1917 I found General Foch in Paris, as Chief of the General Staff; in a word, not in any active command. From Picquart’s report of him I had expected some dazzling display of military talents. Perhaps the last word had not been spoken.

M. Poincaré and Marshal Joffre certainly know all the details of this affair. There has been talk of an intrigue carried on by a politician general who put himself forward openly as a competitor of Foch, and who was at that time a frequent visitor to the Élysée. M. Painlevé has written that Foch was relieved of his command by Joffre for purely military reasons. And for his part Commandant Bugnet declares expressly that it was a question of the Somme offensive, a marked failure that it was later tried to pass off as a mere attempt to “ease Verdun.”

Unprovided with transport adequate for exploiting the break-through, the Somme offensive presents itself as an operation that failed. Certain leaders, when everything is over, too often have an explanation all cut and dried to justify a failure. In this way it is easy to get out of an awkward situation cheaply. There is nothing to be astonished at in those who pretended to have relieved Verdun none the less thinking themselves bound to ‘*limoger*’ Foch “for the sake of example.” Some day or other the affair will be cleared up. But it may be believed that there must have been very serious reasons to make M. Poincaré, who was very careful about questions of responsibility, withdraw the soldier of the Marne and the Yser from the fighting. In the end the two men understood each other, at which history will not be astonished.

For my part, as soon as I came to the Ministry, I naturally resumed my good relations with the new Chief of the General Staff. I still counted upon the effect of his

strategic talents. As for him, with or without a bust, he had succeeded his old rival in the intimacy of the head of the State. Each henceforth played his part on the card of mutual confidence that he thought safest.

Before going further I make a point of expressly declaring that this book is not to be regarded as a series of memoirs. I have been called upon to reply upon certain points. I am replying, but without losing sight of the broad considerations that are essentially imposed in such a subject. During more than ten years I have preserved silence at all costs, despite the attacks that were never spared me, and it was most certainly not any fear of the fray that held me back.

I had simply considered that, in the anxious and dangerous situation into which our country had been brought, the utmost restraint and reserve was laid upon me—and to the last word of this book I shall regret departing from it. After the terrible loss of blood France has suffered it appears that she has reacted less virilely in peace than in the great days of her military trial. Her 'rulers' seem to have forgotten, all nearly in the same degree, that no less resolution is needed to live through peace than war. Perhaps even more, at certain moments. Some know as much who talk of action instead of acting. Whether in the Government, in Parliament, or in public opinion, I see everywhere nothing but faltering and flinching.

Our allies, dis-allied, have contributed largely to this result, and we have never done anything to deter them. England in various guises has gone back to her old policy of strife on the Continent, and America, *prodigiously enriched by the War*, is presenting us with a tradesman's account that does more honour to her greed than to her self-respect.

Engrossed in her endeavours for economic reconstruction—alas! all too sorely needed—France is seeking in the graveyards of politics for human left-overs to make a pale shadow of what used to be. The vital spark is gone. An old, done man myself, here I find myself at grips with a soldier of the bygone days, who brings against me arguments within the comprehension of simple minds—now, when I had changed my workshop and meant to end my days in philosophy.

With far less wisdom, after ten years of reflection he chooses to hurl at me the ancient shell of a long-delayed attack, sparing himself, by deliberately and intentionally keeping under cover, all anxiety as to the inevitable reply. Thus, like a good strategist, he secured his rear before giving free vent to old grievances of the most virulent nature against me. To one who now seeks only rest this is of no great importance, but for a leader in war to let his battle lie dormant for ten years and then give a casual passer-by the task of stirring it into life, that is not the mark of a spirit sure of itself, nor of a magnanimous heart.

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[1] In the case of a university appointment, in circumstances less serious, though still delicate enough, I fixed my choice in the same way on M. Brunetière, because he seemed to me the best-qualified candidate, although he was in declared opposition to my ideas. I take pride in this kind of behaviour, which is due to entire and perfect confidence in the ultimate emergence of truth through the free play of the human mind.

[2] A string of commonplaces about the War—our chances of success, what might be done. My interlocutor seemed to me short of ideas.

[3] My italics. M. Meunier-Surcouf had a premonition of the Chemin des Dames.

CHAPTER II

THE UNITY OF COMMAND

WHAT was it that determined me to appoint General Foch to the Supreme Command? General Mordacq's notes allow me to follow the battles of the future chief of the Allies.

After the battles in Lorraine, on August 29, 1914, General Foch relinquished the command of the Twentieth Army Corps, in order to take up that of an army detachment intended to cover the left of the Fourth Army more effectively, and to link it up with the Fifth. . . .

This detachment before long became the Ninth Army, at the head of which General Foch was to play an important part in the battle of the Marne. . . .

General Joffre, deeming "the strategical situation excellent and in accord with the dispositions aimed at," issued orders, on the evening of September 4, to resume the offensive on the morning of the 6th, and to concentrate upon the German First Army the efforts of the Allied armies on the left wing. . . .

September the 6th sees the general launching of the attack. The Ninth Army is in the centre. It is precisely at this point the Germans are making their main effort. In reply to the manœuvre of Maunoury's army on the German right, von Moltke orders Bulow's army, which includes the Guard and the best German troops, to drive home the attack upon the French centre—that is to say, upon the Ninth Army. . . .

This army is stopped, and that at the height of its attack. Impossible for it to reach its objective, the district to the north of the Marais de Saint-Gond. At the end of the day it has barely struggled up to the southern fringe of the marshes. . . .

Its left wing, violently assailed, is fighting desperately at Mondement (the Moroccan division). The 42nd Division succeeds in driving the Guard back into the Marais de Saint-Gond. The Eleventh Army Corps, on the right, is holding out against the German attacks with difficulty.[1] . . .

September 9. The situation is becoming grave: the Prussian Guard have carried Fère-Champenoise by storm; the Ninth and Eleventh Army Corps are falling back. General Foch, unperturbed by the situation, sends a report to G.Q.G. which concludes, "I am giving fresh orders to resume the offensive."[2]

And so, reinforced by the Tenth Army Corps, he launches a fresh counter-attack on Fère-Champenoise. . . .

September 10. He resumes the offensive along his whole front; after desperate fighting Fère-Champenoise is retaken. In the evening the Germans retreat, and are pressed back north of the Marais de Saint-Gond. . . .

September 11. Helped by a cavalry corps (under General de l'Espée), which General Joffre has placed at the disposal of General Foch, the pursuit begins in the direction of the Marne, which is reached by the Ninth Army on September 12, between Épernay and Châlons. Large numbers of prisoners are captured, and considerable quantities of stores and provisions.

The German High Command had ordered a general retreat on the evening of September 10.

After the battle of the Marne the German Staff had at once prepared a new enveloping movement against the French left wing. On its side the French High Command was trying to outflank the German right, which brought about the battles of Picardy and Artois and the "race to the sea."

In the early days of October 1914 the situation was serious for the Allies: Lille threatened by the German cavalry, Flanders lying open, while the whole of the enemy forces were moving up more and more to the north, and threatening to break through the front at any moment.

It was at this juncture that General Joffre, on October 4, entrusted General Foch (whose Ninth Army had been broken up) with the task of co-ordinating all the forces engaged between the Oise and the sea—Castelnau's and Maud'huy's armies, a group of territorial divisions under General Brugère, and the Dunkirk garrison.

At the same time the English Army was transferred to Flanders (the Hazebrouck-Ypres region).

October 9. The fortress of Antwerp capitulates, and the Belgian field army which was surrounded there succeeds in reaching the coast, and, on October 11, occupies the region between Ypres and the sea. King Albert intimates that he will be happy to give his entire support to the *co-ordination* of the efforts of all the Allied forces which General Foch had been delegated to bring about.

The German Plan. After the fall of Antwerp the Germans, following their original plan, aimed at turning the position of the Allies by proceeding if necessary as far as the sea, and took Dunkirk, Boulogne, and Calais for their objective.

After the march to Paris came—as the German Press announced—the march to Calais. To attain their goal, the Germans concentrated no fewer than 600,000 men in Belgium and Flanders.

The French, warned of this huge manœuvre, brought up all their available reserves into Belgium.

October 20. The transport of the English Army has been achieved under favourable conditions. It is grouped entirely in the Ypres region.

The Belgian Army established the line of the Yser.

All these movements of the Belgian and English Armies were covered by the two French cavalry corps.

It may be said, then, that on October 20 the “race to the sea” was at an end, and the barrier established. It remained to hold it, and this was what brought on the battle of the Yser.

October 21. The situation of the Allies is as follows:

On the right, the English (three army corps).

In the centre, the French (three divisions, the marines, a Belgian brigade).

On the left, the Belgians (six divisions).

On the extreme left, the French 42nd Division.

Against which the Germans have at their disposal:

(i) Six army corps belonging to the Fourth Army,
(ii) Five army corps belonging to the Sixth Army.

October 22. To frustrate the German plan, General Foch, in conjunction with Field-Marshal Sir John French and King Albert, gives the order to attack. The battle of the Yser begins.

In the north the Belgians and French make a vigorous attack, but a violent German counter-attack, supported by a formidable weight of heavy artillery, cuts short their offensive, and they have speedily to resort to flooding the district in order to stay the onrush of the Germans. The lock-gates at Nieuport are opened, and the water covers the whole valley of the Yser between Nieuport and Dixmude.

October 30. The Germans, nevertheless, are still pressing on the attack; but they are brought to a stop, and on November 2 are forced to recross the Yser, abandoning part of their artillery.

Farther south, in the Ypres region, the English in turn have taken the offensive on October 23, making Courtrai their general objective. From the 23rd to the 28th of October the attack develops favourably, but on the latter date the Germans make a vigorous counter-attack with six army corps, and drive in the English front.

At this point General Foch puts the equivalent of three corps of French troops at the disposal of Field-Marshal Sir John French, but again the Germans attack in force and compel the Allies to fall back. Field-Marshal Sir John French now contemplates a withdrawal to the west of Ypres. *General Foch succeeds in making him give up this idea*—an act of capital importance which was the deciding factor of the battle. The Allies counter-attack and stop the German advance.

From the 1st to the 6th of November the battle rages along the whole front: but, despite the superhuman efforts of the Germans, they fail to break through. The fighting continues, but it may be said that the great battle of the Yser was at an end on November 15. The Germans have failed to get through and attain their objective—the sea. Their losses are enormous. The Guard has been decimated, and more

than 250,000 men are gone. On the Allied side, too, casualties are heavy. Both sides are exhausted, but set about reorganizing.

This huge battle of the Yser was the end of the “race to the sea.” The Germans, after trying in vain to turn the Allies’ left, had undertaken this march *nach* Calais, which might, indeed, have procured them considerable advantages from a strategical point of view. On November 15, 1914, they were obliged to give up the attempt. This battle of Ypres, if not a victory for the Allies, who with their depleted ranks were unable to exploit it, was, beyond a shadow of doubt, a decided defeat for the Germans.

The success was definitely and distinctly due to General Foch, who, though without official status, had known how to impose his will upon the Allies in the conduct of operations by his energy, his tenacity, and his unfailing confidence. To sum up, it was he who at all points DIRECTED the gigantic battle of the Yser and won it. Had it been lost, it was he who would certainly have borne the responsibility.

It is not my intention here to picture the gloomy realities of our pre-War military position. We know that the first effect of our unpreparedness was to lay French territory open to the enemy. Up to the present nobody has come forward to accept responsibility for our lack of quick-firing heavy artillery, or for the scandalous shortage of machine-guns, mistakes so grave that, but for the rally on the Marne, our territories from the frontier to Paris would have been in the grip of the enemy. Admirable as was this recovery from our defeat, it could not exhaust the impetus of the enemy offensive. The result of the first battle was to determine that the War was to be fought out on French soil, where the hostile armies applied themselves to the systematic ravaging of our industrial towns and of our country districts, along with the enslavement of the people.

Who then was responsible for this initial blunder? Is it impossible to tell us, or, at any rate, to pretend to make inquiry? If the historian ever thinks of timidly putting this question I will take advantage of the fact and put another to him. Was it forbidden to forecast that Germany might dishonour her own signature by violating the neutrality of Belgium? And what could prevent her from taking certain military steps to that end? And who did not know the German state of mind? And who could believe that a moral obstacle was the kind that could stop men or rulers for a single moment? I have looked through Colonel Foch’s work on the principles of war. I saw with utter dismay that there was *not a single word* in it on the question of armaments. A metaphysical treatise on war! And yet it is not without importance to know if an attack with catapults or with quick-firing guns may call upon us to vary our means of defence. Questions of this nature really deserve some consideration.

What a difference in mentality on the two sides of the Rhine! In Germany every tightening up of authority to machine-drill men with a view to the most violent offensive; with us all the dislocations of easygoing slackness and fatuous reliance on big words.

The letters exchanged between the King of England and M. Poincaré at the moment of the declaration of war bear sufficient witness to the common distress of the peoples concerned. Skilful and discreetly worded, M. Poincaré’s letter was in substance a

request for help. Friendly but evasive. King George's reply amounted to a refusal for the moment. England, still less prepared than ourselves, was slow to understand that she was to play her part. Had she had but one hour of flinching, all might well have been lost. The violation of Belgian neutrality was to put an end to her hesitations.

There was a certain incoherence and confusion about the preliminary arranging of alliances for a war that could no longer be avoided. It could not be otherwise, seeing that the advantage of organized anticipation was altogether on the side of Germany, in whose hands lay the offensive. So the first impulse of the Allies in the critical hours was in the direction of a universal demand for one supreme military authority. But every army is the highest expression of nationality in action, and the heads of the national power it represents did not easily yield on this point, nay, it was even the American people, the least military of all, that raised the greatest difficulties at the decisive moment.

From the outset of the War popular feeling in France had placed the hope of success in unity of command; and when once experience and the logic of theory were both agreed on this point, nothing was left but to agree upon the choice of the Generalissimo.[3] There never was the shadow of a discussion, to my knowledge, as to the principle, any more than there was about the person to whom that high post could be entrusted.[4] There were no competitors. Only the name of Foch was uttered. The main point was that Foch had displayed qualities of the highest kind in desperate circumstances which, above everything, called for miracles of resistance, while Mangin, with his vehement temperament, had been able to work miracles in the offensive. Both had, by logical sequence, the grave defect of being unable to endure the civil power—when they did not need its support.

Pétain, who is no less great a soldier, has brilliant days, and is always steady. In perilous battles I found him tranquilly heroic—that is to say, master of himself. Perhaps without illusions, but certainly without recriminations, he was always ready for self-sacrifice. I have great pleasure in paying him this tribute. He has been greatly blamed for the pessimistic utterances of his headquarters staff. The truth was, I verily believe, that the very worst could not frighten him and that he had no difficulty in facing it with unshakable serenity. But his *entourage* were too prone to open their ears to croakings. A few *embusqués* on the Staff flourished these abroad, with deductions and conclusions that were not those of their chief—who remained unshakably a great soldier.

This frightful War brought us out good generals, and many of those who have the right to risk an opinion will perhaps tell us that Foch was the most complete of them all. Simple minds, which are the majority, love to judge men in the lump, by an approximate description that they like to think final and clinching. But human nature is too complex, too variable, to lend itself readily to these summary methods, which do not always enable the most earnest sincerity to discover the true formula to describe a living force. Did General Foch, who was by no means rich in subtleties of character, possess along with his strategic talents the diplomatic aptitudes essential to an international chief? But we must not anticipate.

The difficulty came mainly from the British side, where our military influence was all the greater, inasmuch as we made no parade of it. I remained very moderate in

conversations on the matter, knowing, in any case, through our constant friend Lord Milner, that the problem was moving slowly but surely toward the happy solution.

There was a long way to go. We had had too many wars with the British for them readily to fall in with the idea of placing their soldiers under the command of a Frenchman.

The day[5] I first broached the subject to General Sir Douglas Haig, as I was breakfasting at his headquarters, the soldier jumped up like a jack-in-the-box, and, with both hands shot up to heaven, exclaimed:

“Monsieur Clemenceau, I have only one chief, and I can have no other. My King.”

A bad beginning. Conversations followed without result, until that day at Doullens, when under the pressure of events Lord Milner, after a short colloquy with Field-Marshal Haig, informed me that the opposition to the unity of command had been dropped.

The rest followed. But several stages more were needed to arrive at a formula that should approximately secure all the necessary conditions for increased efficiency through the single command. Resistance in England came not so much from the Army as from Parliament, and, most of all, from the ‘man in the street.’ The idea of seeing a French general commanding British generals was for a long time unendurable. The argument seemed more to the point when our joint failure of 1917, under the temporary command of General Nivelle, was pointed out. But that was nothing more than the outward semblance of an argument that held good because no one ventured to go absolutely to the bottom of it.

It was at Doullens that Foch, without anyone’s permission, laid hold of the command. For that minute I shall remain grateful to him until my last breath. We were in the courtyard of the *mairie*, under the eyes of a public stricken with stupefaction, which on every side was putting the question to us, “Will the Germans be coming to Doullens? Try to keep them from coming.” Among us there was silence, suddenly broken by an exclamation from a French general, who, pointing to Haig close by us, said to me in a low voice:

“*There is a man who will be obliged to capitulate in open field within a fortnight, and very lucky if we are not obliged to do the same.*”

From the mouth of an expert this speech was by no means calculated to confirm the confidence we wanted to hold on to at all costs.

There was a bustle, and Foch arrived, surrounded by officers, and dominating everything with his cutting voice.

“*You aren’t fighting? I would fight without a break. I would fight in front of Amiens. I would fight in Amiens. I would fight behind Amiens. I would fight all the time.*”[6]

No commentary is needed on that speech. I confess that for my own part I could hardly refrain from throwing myself into the arms of this admirable chief in the name of France in deadly peril.

At the moment when we had found Foch out of favour in the post of Chief of the General Staff he already had to his credit two great defensive actions of the utmost brilliance.

On the Marne and on the Yser he had reached the heights in the desperate resistance that, by the power of his word, had fixed Field-Marshal French on the field of battle, and by his mere example he had maintained his troops invincible under the terrific onslaught of the enemy. The Germans had determined to win at all costs. Immovable in this extremity of peril, Foch had flung in his men to the very limit of the wild gallantry that carries the fighting soldier beyond the demands of duty. On that day they all entered together into the glory of the heroes of antiquity.

At length, in the Doullens conference—March 26, 1918—the varying phases of which have been many times related,[7] in the end the following text was agreed upon:

> General Foch is charged by the British and French Governments with co-ordinating the action of the Allied armies on the Western Front. For this purpose he will come to an understanding with the Generals-in-Chief, who are invited to furnish him with all necessary information.

This was merely a first step, but it was decisive. The title of Commander-in-Chief was not yet accepted by the English. At Beauvais[8] I proposed to entrust Foch with "the strategic command," and the formula was accepted. The text of the new agreement was as follows:

> General Foch is charged by the British, French, and American Governments with the duty of co-ordinating the action of the Allied armies on the Western Front, and with this object in view there is conferred upon him all the powers necessary for its effective accomplishment. For this purpose the British, French, and American Governments entrust to General Foch the strategic direction of military operations.

At the request of the English the following phrase was added:

> The Commanders-in-Chief of the British, French, and American Armies shall exercise in full the tactical conduct of their Armies. Each Commander-in-Chief shall have the right to appeal to his Government if, in his opinion, his Army finds itself placed in danger by any instruction received from General Foch.

In order to define the advantages attached to the title that was finally obtained, I asked General Foch to write to the Allied Governments. In his letter he laid stress on this argument, "*I have to* PERSUADE, *instead of* DIRECTING. Power of supreme control seems to me indispensable for achieving success."

All that took time. At last, after continual pressing on my part, I obtained an answer from Mr Lloyd George: the British Government, he said, had no longer any objection to General Foch taking the title of Commander-in-Chief of the Allied armies in France.[9] On the same day our excellent General Bliss, after a conversation with General Mordacq at Versailles, sent me this message in the name of the President of the United States: "I guarantee that our Government will see nothing but advantage in the unity of command."

For me it was less a matter of formulas than of the acts depending on them. Already at Clermont (Oise)[10] General Pershing had come to place himself at the disposal of his new chief in a moving speech, the memory of which has remained fresh and vivid in our hearts. At the same time Pétain too had come to take General Foch's orders. On every side there was full harmony. We were on the threshold of decisive action.

What use was made of this higher command is a question that military history will have the task of clearing up. For many reasons I am not convinced that it actually played the decisive part public opinion is inclined to attribute to it. That history will have to be written by others than those who lived it. We must be told what amount of obedience was *asked for and obtained*, and in what circumstances, and for what results. We have not got so far as that yet.

It must indeed be said that in his exercise of the single command the Generalissimo at times gave way to hesitancies, to temperings of authority calculated to leave the desired and expected results in uncertainty. On the other hand, I think I can say that the commander of the British Army never submitted wholly to the instructions of General Foch, who was perhaps over-anxious to have no difficulty with the two great chiefs theoretically his subordinates.

Then came the evil day of the Chemin des Dames. To procure fresh effectives and to confirm General Foch's authority[11] I had the following sentence inserted into the message sent by the heads of the Allied Governments to Mr Wilson:[12] "We consider that General Foch, who is conducting the present campaign with consummate skill, AND WHOSE MILITARY JUDGMENT INSPIRES US WITH THE UTMOST CONFIDENCE, DOES NOT EXAGGERATE THE NECESSITIES OF THE MOMENT."

The chief trouble at this moment[13] came from Sir Douglas Haig, who, as usual, was unwilling to allow the Generalissimo to remove reserves from the English Army to use them on the French front.[14] The English desired first and foremost to protect the Channel ports. Nothing could be more natural. General Foch, who had French divisions in Flanders, did not wish to bring them away, because that was where he was expecting the German attack before and after the Chemin des Dames collapse. He informed me of the position. I had made it a fixed rule to abstain from all discussions of a purely military nature, but I had the right—it was even my duty—to make inquiries to discover whether the Supreme Command was functioning properly.

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[1] September 7 and 8.

[2] These simple words at this critical moment display the character of the soldier.

[3] In an excellent article in the *Revue des Deux Mondes* (April 15, 1929) general Mordacq has elucidated this question in a remarkable manner. Subsequently he expanded this work in a volume in which General Foch is treated with the honour that is his due. Everybody knows that General Mordacq, one of our best generals of division, was the head of my military secretariat. I know those who have never forgiven him yet for that.

[4] Lord Milner had had the idea, in order to soothe the susceptibilities of the British soldier, of giving the title to me, so that the function might devolve upon Foch as Chief of the General Staff. It was never broached to me. Need I say that I should never have fallen in with this curious scheme?

[5] January 1918.

[6] I did not fail to report these words to the President of the Republic, who quoted them in his address to the great soldier when handing him the *bâton* of Maréchal de France, which I myself proposed for him.

[7] ". . . The meeting was fixed for eleven o'clock at Doullens, which was sensibly situated half-way between the English and French headquarters. At eleven o'clock precisely M. Clemenceau and I arrived at the Place de la Mairie, a square thenceforth historic. Shortly after came M. Poincaré, accompanied by General Duparge. . . . Field-Marshal Haig was there already, in conference in the *mairie* with his army commanders, Generals Home, Plumer, and Byng.

"Then came General Foch, calmer than ever, nevertheless not succeeding in hiding his ardent desire to see the Allies at last come to certain logical decisions. . . .

"Lastly, General Pétain arrived in his turn, anxious enough. . . .

"It was rather cold, and to keep ourselves warm we walked about in little groups in the square in front of the *mairie*, these little groups halting every now and then to talk together.

"The scene was not lacking in impressiveness and unusualness. Upon the highway, which runs along the square itself, there might be seen English troops retiring sedately, in perfect order, without showing the least trace of any emotion of any kind—the British imperturbability in the fullest acceptation of the word; then, seemingly nearer every moment, a violent cannonade: the German guns, which were, in fact, a few kilometres away, calling us back to reality and making us think of 'the great game that was being played.'

"All those men in that modest little square, all those Frenchmen who fully understood the situation, were well aware of the importance of this day. That is why under a calm exterior the pangs of anxiety gnawed at every heart.

"But time was going on, and still the English did not arrive.

"Noon. . . . Still nobody. . . .

"At length, at five minutes after twelve, Lord Milner's cars rolled up. General Wilson was with him.

"The Anglo-French conference then began, the time being twenty minutes past twelve.

"M. Clemenceau at once brought up the question of Amiens. Field-Marshal Haig declared that there had been a misunderstanding on the matter, that not only had he never thought of evacuating Amiens, but that it was his firm intention to bring together every division at his disposal to reinforce his right, which was obviously his weak spot, and consequently that of the Allies. His line would hold north of the

Somme, that he guaranteed absolutely; but to the south of the river he could do nothing more; and besides he had placed all the remaining elements of the Fifth Army under General Pétain's orders. . . . To which General Pétain replied, 'There is very little of it left, and in strict truth we may say that the Fifth Army no longer exists.' Field-Marshal Haig added further that he might perhaps be obliged to rectify his line before Arras, but that this was not yet certain: he even hoped it need not come to that. Those were the resources at his disposal; in his turn he asked the French to disclose theirs.

"General Pétain was then called upon. He explained the situation as he saw it, and as it really was—in other words, gloomy enough—and stressed all the difficulties he had been forced up against since March 21. He added that since the previous day, and the Compiègne interview, he had looked for all possible resources to cope with the situation, and that he was happy to be able to say that he would perhaps manage to throw twenty-four divisions into the battle, though, of course, these divisions were far from fresh, and most of them had just been fighting. In any case, he felt that in a situation of this kind it was essential not to be deceived by illusions, but to look realities in the face, and accordingly it must be realized that a fairly considerable time was necessary to get these units ready to take part in operations. At all events, he had done everything possible to send all available troops to the Amiens region, not hesitating even to strip the French front in the centre and east—even beyond what was prudent. He therefore asked that Field-Marshal Haig would be good enough to do the same on his side.

"Field-Marshal Haig replied that he would ask nothing better than to 'do the same, but that unfortunately he had absolutely no reserves and that in England itself there were no men left capable of going into the line immediately.'

"At this a distinct chill fell upon the meeting, and for some moments no one said a word. General Pétain's straightforward account of the position had naturally made a profound impression upon everybody, and especially on the English. This can be traced from Lord Milner's report [see Appendix I for the official text of this report made by Lord Milner to his Government on his journey to France].

"General Pétain, he says, 'gave a certain impression of coldness and caution, as of a man playing for safety. None of his listeners seemed very happy or convinced. Wilson and Haig evidently were not; indeed, Wilson made an interjection which almost amounted to a protest. Foch, who had been so eloquent the day before, said not a word. But, looking at his face he sat just opposite me—I could see he was still dissatisfied, very impatient, and evidently thinking that things could and must be done more quickly.' This interval of silence and embarrassment could not continue for long. M. Clemenceau signed to Lord Milner, and taking him into a corner put this question to him at once, 'We must make an end of this. . . . What do you propose?' As a matter of fact, he felt that this time the thing had come to a head, and, like a clever manœuvrer, he meant to leave it to the English to make the request for what France had been preaching for months past, but always without obtaining any satisfaction. Lord Milner was very clear and definite: he proposed to entrust General Foch with the general control of the French and the English Armies, the one logical solution of the problem, in his opinion, as matters then stood. M. Clemenceau

forthwith called General Pétain over, and informed him of Lord Milner's proposal. Nobly the General replied that he was ready to accept whatever might be decided in the interest of his country and of the Allies. Lord Milner was in the meantime putting the same thing to Field-Marshal Haig, who, with an eye only to the general interest, likewise immediately accepted the proposed solution.

"M. Clemenceau forthwith drew up the following note: 'General Foch is charged,' " etc.—*Le Commandement unique*, by General Mordacq (pp. 77-88).

[8] April 3, 1918.

[9] April 14, 1918.

[10] March 28, 1918.

[11] June 2, 1918.

[12] It was only at the express request of Mr Balfour that General Foch's declaration was communicated to President Wilson in the name of the French Government, as well as of the British.

[13] June 1918.

[14] I know nothing of the relations between Sir Douglas Haig and Foch. I think I can say that the British commander never gave his complete obedience. It may readily be supposed that I never put too definite questions to the military chiefs in regard to this.

CHAPTER III

THE CHEMIN DES DAMES

FOCH, then, was unwilling to withdraw troops from Flanders, where he expected the German attack. It took place on the Aisne, but that did not deter the Commander-in-Chief from keeping his reserves in the north and on the Somme, as in his opinion the Germans could get no results from the attack on the Aisne. Three rivers crossed within five days nevertheless brought the German artillery to Château-Thierry—that is to say, within eighty kilometres of Paris. Will anyone maintain that that is not an important result? Anybody can make a mistake, but there is no real reason for clinging to an opinion in the teeth of the evidence. The man who knows he can go wrong himself might very well grow lenient. When the Marshal lectured his comrades because they had not won the War in 1917, they might have hit back with the failure of the Somme offensive in 1916 and the Chemin des Dames collapse in 1918. We might just as well say that if Marshal Joffre had won the battle of Charleroi the War might have stopped at that.

To avoid all contradiction, the Chemin des Dames affair has been dealt with in the *Mémorial* by way of judicious selection. It would really be too plain sailing if it was possible to avoid discussion by this simple device.

The Commander-in-Chief may have made a mistake, a mistake of the worst kind, with regard to the point of the enemy's attack, but his first duty was to guard himself to the best of his power, and the Chemin des Dames, our most important field fortification, was badly—indeed, very badly—guarded. The event proved this only too well.

In reply to my first inquiries I was briefly told that such things are inevitable in war, that anyone, soldier and civilian alike, may be found at fault, and that it was no good dwelling upon the fact. After this opening Foch changed the conversation. When he saw me insisting with my questions he wanted to know if I intended to court-martial him, to which I replied that there could be no question of that.

However, personal responsibilities were involved, and we had first of all to find some temporary settlement of the case, at the same time taking every care not to shake what confidence remained in the minds of the public. To-day this all seems elementary, but in such an emergency, when the very life of the country was at stake, a head of the Government had to have the power of making up his mind promptly and of finding the happy medium between severity and moderation.

As was natural, Parliament, spurred on by public opinion, was greatly excited and did not spare the military leaders, but this did not alter the fact that I should have aggravated the situation considerably, had I begun, in the midst of this grievous confusion, replacing them by others who, after all, were perhaps less prepared. Above all, it was necessary to hold one's own against the currents of public opinion clamouring for penalties without knowing on whom they were to fall.

I was thoroughly resolved not to stake the final success on a random chance. I complied unhesitatingly with all the demands for information that came from Parliament. I appeared before the commissions, where I met with the keenest hostility. But there was a speedy return of confidence when it became clear that I meant to hide nothing. Meanwhile I was continually up and down the country to see the leaders at their fighting-posts, to comfort and encourage them if necessary, and to maintain confidence, as much as lay in my power. In such emergencies a chief, with uniform or without, who keeps the stubborn will to win has plenty to do.

Below I quote as far as I can from the notebook of General Mordacq, whose tireless devotion never flagged for as much as a single hour.

> On May 27, 1918, the Chemin des Dames, which was supposed to be an *impregnable* fortress, falls at the first onslaught of the German attack *without offering any resistance. The bridges of the Aisne are carried, and to this day nobody has attempted to tell us how.* The enemy crosses three rivers in succession without any trouble. He reaches Château-Thierry, where he blows up the bridge.
>
> The next day, May 28, a journey to Sarcus, General Foch's H.Q. *He does not believe in an attack on a large scale, as it is quite certain that it could not have important strategical results for the Germans. So he does not think he ought to move his strategical reserves*, which at the moment are in Flanders and in the Amiens district.[1]

> *May 26, 1918.* The French tactical situation on May 26, on the Aisne front (Chemin des Dames):
>
> This front, which stretched over a length of ninety kilometres, was very weakly held: three army corps (eleven divisions) with a thousand guns. . . .
>
> The German tactical situation on the same front (between Noyon and Rheims):
>
> Nine divisions between Noyon and Juvincourt.
>
> Three divisions between Juvincourt and Courcy.
>
> For the attack on May 27 the Germans increased these forces, first of all to thirty divisions, and then, between May 27 and May 30, to forty-two divisions, supported by four thousand guns.
>
> Thus the Germans were going to attack with four times the strength of the Allies in both men and artillery.

> *The German Plan.* The attack in Flanders having failed to obtain the results hoped for (namely, to separate the Belgian and English Armies, to use up the English reserves, and to reach the coast), Ludendorff decides to attack the Allies on the Aisne, a sector that he knows is weakly defended and without strategical reserves. His intention is to draw the Allies' reserves to that region, and then to reopen the main attack in Flanders and make an end of the British Army.[2] . . .

The Attack, May 27. The infantry attack is launched at 4 A.M. after an artillery preparation lasting four hours. . . .

The Germans, thanks to their numerical superiority, advance rapidly. At 8 A.M. they cross the Chemin des Dames.[3] At twelve they are over the Aisne and reach the Vesle in the evening. . . .

May 28. Their progress continues. By 11 A.M. Fismes has fallen, and at close of day they are outside Soissons, having taken a considerable number of prisoners. . . .

Paris is in a high state of excitement. The French G.H.Q. has to-day ordered nine divisions to the Soissons district, *but without paying sufficient attention to the organization of the command*.

May 29 and 30. The Germans continue their victorious march: they capture Soissons, cross the Arlette on the 30th, and this same day reach the Marne at Jaulgonne.

The French reserves continue to arrive.[4] The Tenth Army is recalled from the Doullens district.

May 31 and June 1. The Germans lie along the banks of the Marne between Dormans and Château-Thierry. Everywhere else they can only advance with the greatest difficulty, continually coming up against the French reinforcements, which are arriving in ever-increasing numbers. They try, in vain, to get round the thickly wooded massif of Villers-Cotterets; they cannot penetrate into the forest itself, which is strongly held by our troops. . . .

June 2. It may be said that by the 2nd of June the German attack is definitely stopped. The Germans now have thirty-seven divisions facing them, divided into three armies (Maistre, Duchesne, and Michelet), while another fifteen divisions are on their way to reinforce these. So the enemy's onrush will not be able to make much further headway.

June 2 to June 8. And, in fact, from the 2nd to the 8th of June all the German efforts are broken against the organized resistance of the Allies.

In this battle of the Chemin des Dames the Allies lost more than sixty thousand prisoners, seven hundred guns, two thousand machine-guns, a considerable amount of flying and artillery material, large depots of munitions, provisions, and stores of all kinds, important medical organizations, etc. . . .

The Paris-Châlons railway, so necessary for bringing up supplies, was no longer usable.

Thus it was a real disaster.[5]

This attack was quickly followed by that of Compiègne (June 9 to June 12).

May 28. Go to Belleu, H.Q. of General Duchesne, in command of the Sixth Army; he has fallen back to Oulchy-le-Château. We go there. He explains the situation to us, which is by no means bright; the German advance continues, and we have nothing but 'sweepings' to pit against them. *He complains that since the attack began he has not seen a single chief belonging to the High Command.*

We spend the night at Provins, General Pétain's H.Q. *He complains of Foch's sending the reserves up north and to the Somme.* He had opposed it. Sends troops to stop the gap, but they are not used to advantage. There is a shortage of artillery.

May 29. The next day, May 29, we go to Fère-en-Tardenois, which we reach just as the Germans arrive. We escape. Thence to Fresnes, General Degoutte's fighting-post. His part in the fight: he tells us of divisions being flung into the battle one after another, without artillery. A tragic sight to see the General silently weeping over a tattered remnant of a map, and all the while a continuous stream of motor-cyclists arriving with reports of the enemy's approach. I left him with no hope of ever seeing him again. For me this is one of the most poignant memories of the War.

Lunch at Oulchy-le-Château with General Duchesne, to cheer him up, and try to get precise information about the battle.

Visit General Maud'huy at Longpont. His impressions—his anger against Duchesne. Then to Ambreny, General Chrétien's H.Q.

We return to Paris. State of confusion.

Panic in the Chamber.

May 30. Go to Trilport (General Duchesne's fighting-post), to Coupru (General Degoutte's fighting-post), to Longpont (General de Maud'huy).

The hole is stopped up, but there is a great lack of artillery.

Popular agitations at Paris demanding the heads of Duchesne, Franchet d'Esperey, Pétain, and Foch.

Interview at Trilport. Discussion on the journey. Foch, Pétain, and Duchesne severely criticized. Weakness of the subordinate command. Necessity of cutting out the dead wood.

Paris very nervous, especially over the abandoning of the bridges on the Aisne.

In spite of the animosity of the Allies against Foch, M. Clemenceau has these words inserted in a telegram to the Allied Governments: "We consider that General Foch, who is conducting the present campaign with consummate skill, and whose military judgment inspires us with the utmost confidence, does not exaggerate the necessities of the moment.[6] . . ."

June 3, evening. Sitting of the Commission de l'Armée. M. Clemenceau says, "We must have confidence in Foch and Pétain, those two great chiefs who are so happily complementary of each other. . . ."

June 4. My interview with Foch at Mouchy-le-Châtel. The necessity of removing the incompetent Divisional Commanders. Foch must speak about this to Pétain.

Better news from the Front.

I had to make things right with Parliament. I am always and unvaryingly a staunch Parliamentarian. I must admit that the Parliamentary system as we know it is not always a school for stout-heartedness. All the conversations before that formidable meeting were full to bursting with evil auguries for the High Command. I never wavered. I took everybody under my shield, to the great astonishment of those who had told me that by throwing all the responsibility on the Commander-in-Chief I should regain the authority belonging to my position.

Obviously, the more Foch's power had been increased, the greater was his military responsibility. No one knew it better than he did. By nature he was not a great talker. I did not try (for I had not the time) to form a personal opinion as to the military responsibility taken as a whole, and later I was given no opportunity to get to know. So I only exchanged a few vague remarks with the Generalissimo, and went to the Parliamentary battle without telling anyone what I proposed to do. I won a signal victory, and at the same time shielded all my subordinates; but nobody can seriously doubt that, had I faltered for a single moment, the High Command would have been swept away. Foch never said a word to me about this sitting, at which it is no mere boast for me to say that I saved him. You must admit that this silence on Foch's part might well lend itself to comment. We had not yet come to our great disputes over the American Army and the annexation of the Rhineland. No harsh words had or have ever passed between us. Nothing more, perhaps, than the inevitable clash of military and civil power. But I took great pains never to press the discussion too far, and for my part I never took a very marked stand against him until the day he tried to maintain to me that he was not my subordinate, going on to open insubordination in the matter of the Nudant telegram.

Meeting of the Chamber, June 4, 1918[7]

The Chemin des Dames Affair. Questions.

M. Aristide Jobert. I wish to ask the Government what steps they intend to take in order to provide our heroic and magnificent French Army with the leaders it deserves, and also what penalties they propose to inflict upon those who are found to be incompetent. . . .

M. Frédéric Brunet. . . . Mr Prime Minister, it does not appear to us that in the recent fighting sufficient foresight has been shown in taking all the precautionary measures necessary for safeguarding the lives of the men and for employing their heroism to the best advantage. When we saw the first onrush of the Germans on the Somme not a soul faltered in the whole country; we all said with you, "They shall not get through." But when we have seen this Chemin des Dames, along which so many of our men have fallen in order to keep it in French hands, we could not but

feel a momentary pang, and asked ourselves if those in command had really done their whole duty, . . . and if the law comes down with crushing force upon the soldier who fails to do his duty *it ought to deal still more drastically with the leader who through negligence or lack of foresight may well be the cause of irretrievable defeats*.

M. Clemenceau addresses the House:

If, to win the approbation of certain persons who judge in rash haste, I must abandon chiefs who have deserved well of their country, that is a piece of contemptible baseness of which I am incapable, and it must not be expected of me.

If we are to raise doubts in the minds of the troops as to the competence of certain of their leaders, perhaps among the best, that would be a crime for which I should never accept responsibility. . . .

These soldiers, these great soldiers, have leaders, good leaders, great leaders, leaders in every way worthy of them.

. . . Does that mean that nowhere there have been mistakes? That I cannot maintain; I know the truth full well. It is my place and duty to find out those mistakes and to correct them. That is what I am devoting my energies to. And in that task I have the support of two great soldiers whose names are General Foch and General Pétain.

Our allies have such high confidence in General Foch that yesterday, at the Conference of Versailles, it was their wish that the *communiqué* given to the Press should contain a reference to that confidence.

(*A deputy:* It was you that made them.)

These men are at this very moment waging the hardest battle of the War, and they are waging it with a heroism for which I can find no words equal to the task of describing it. And is it for us, because of some mistake that occurred in this place or that, or even never occurred, to ask for, to extort explanations before we know the facts, while the battle is still raging, from a man exhausted with fatigue, whose head droops over his maps, as I have seen with my own eyes in hours of dreadful stress? Is this the man we are going to ask to tell us whether on such and such a day he did thus or thus?

Turn me out of the tribune, if that is what you want, for I will never do it.

. . . I said that the Army had surpassed all we could have expected of it, and when I say "the Army" I mean the men of all ranks and of all grades under fire. That is one of the factors in our confidence, the chief factor. Faith in a cause is indeed a fine thing, but it does not bring victory; for the victory to be assured men must die for their faith, and our men are dying now.

We have an Army made up of our children, our brothers, of all our own people. What could we have to say against it?

The leaders too have sprung from among ourselves; they too are our kinsmen; they too are good soldiers. They come back to us covered with wounds, or remain for ever on the field of battle. What have you to say against them?

> . . . We have allies who are pledged with us to carry on the War to the end, to the ultimate success that is within our grasp, that we are on the very eve of grasping if only we have enough tenacity. I know full well that the majority of this House will have that tenacity. But I should have rejoiced had it been unanimous.
>
> I maintain—and these must be my closing words—that victory depends on us . . . so long as the civil powers are equal to their task, for this exhortation would be superfluous to the soldiers.
>
> Dismiss me if I have been a bad servant, drive me out, condemn me, but at least first take the trouble to put your criticisms into plain words.
>
> For my part I claim that up till now the French people, and every section of it, has done its duty to the full. Those who have fallen have not fallen in vain, for they have found a way to add to the greatness of French history.
>
> It remains for the living to finish the glorious work of the dead.

Foch was saved.

I quote again from General Mordacq's notes:

> *June 5.* Parliamentary intrigues proceed. M. Clemenceau is obliged to stay in Paris, and sends me on June 5 to Bombon (Marshal Foch's H.Q.) and to Provins (General Pétain). We must have done with the incompetent leaders. On the other hand, the need for energetic and competent chiefs is felt more than ever. M. Clemenceau decides to recall Guillaumat from Salonica, and to relieve Franchet d'Esperey of his command and send him to Salonica. Foch and Pétain both agree.
>
> This resolution was taken without consulting Lloyd George, who had declared himself against Foch and Pétain.
>
> *June 7.* Meeting at the War Ministry: Lord Milner, Haig, Foch, Wilson. Use of English divisions on the French front. Foch's dilatory answer.
>
> *June 8.* Visit Third Army, General Humbert (Oise). Warning of impending German attack. Everything prepared to receive it.
>
> *June 9.* The attack is launched.

Night and day since the vote of confidence had I been going up and down visiting the fighting-posts. Everywhere I was brought back to the everlasting question of the lapses of subordinate commanders. This lamentable rout, upon which some day we shall have to make up our minds to shed the light of day, was no doubt attributable in the first place to the High Command, which was not sufficiently in touch with the actual fighting units. But had the secondary commands been strongly welded together, we should have been able to hold out, in spite of the absence of the reserves whom Foch was keeping up in Flanders doing nothing.

Finally I told the Generalissimo that new duties had been imposed upon us by reason of our victory in Parliament, and I appealed to him on his military conscience as supreme commander to tell me if he had no urgent reforms in the personnel to suggest. Without hesitating he replied that the chief fault was the inadequacy of his Staff,[8] but

that it was very difficult to reorganize, because it meant breaking up General Pétain's Staff.

I replied that General Pétain was the most disinterested of men, and that it would be sufficient to give him the explanation to which he was entitled. At the same time I drew from my pocket a fairly long list of older generals whom I had decided to replace.

I had defended the High Command in the House, but I knew very well, from having seen it close to on my visits to the Front, that an important group of leaders had grown old and ought to be replaced. Foch certainly knew it as well as I did, perhaps even better, but, as with many chiefs, the phrase 'old comrade' was a very potent charm with him.

I must say that the Commander-in-Chief offered no resistance to my determination. Without losing a moment we went to General Pétain, and I laid before him as well as I could the conversation I had just had with his chief. With his customary placidity General Pétain, Commander-in-Chief of the French Army, heard me through without uttering a word. Then he said:

"Monsieur le Président, I give you my word that if you leave me an army corps to lead I shall deem myself greatly honoured, and that I shall rest content in carrying out my duties properly."

It was one of those high moments that can never be forgotten.

I then returned to my list of generals to be relieved of their commands, which the Generalissimo did not challenge in one single instance; he knew too well each one's deficiencies. At certain names I saw him shrug his shoulders with the murmur, "*An old friend!*" The sacrifice was consummated with but few exceptions. As a matter of fact, Foch asked me to spare those of his "old comrades" who were on parts of the Front where there was no fighting, and promised that if the occasion called for it he would rigorously apply the same standard.

My duty should have been to resist this appeal to normal human weaknesses, for the battle might break out at any moment in those places where it was temporarily dormant. If a disaster occurred the blame would have only too justly been laid at my door. I took that chance to win my way into the good graces of the Generalissimo, who himself only retained his post thanks to my intervention in the Chamber. On what grounds does he accuse me of persecuting him? Where would you be to-day, my dear Marshal, had I not interposed my breast between you and your judges? I have to remind you of this because you never thought of it yourself.

In accordance with my promise, a Parliamentary commission was set up, and had placed before them all the documents, which, owing to other more pressing occupations, I have never seen. When they had declared themselves unable to discover where the various responsibilities lay my only remaining opponent was Marshal Foch, and the reason for the silence in which the *Mémorial* is entrenched is only too well understood to-day.

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[1] I am inclined to think that a great deal might be said on the passages I have italicized.

We must look at our losses in men and artillery, and in ground too, before agreeing with Foch that the Chemin des Dames affair "*was not an attack on a large scale*." On what sort of scale is an attack that enables the Germans to get *within eighty kilometres of Paris*?

The Germans had the advantage in numbers, but that was because they had managed to deceive Foch—which cannot possibly be considered a feather in his cap. They taught me at school that the first thing in the art of war is to meet the enemy in force.

[2] An intention presumed in order to justify giving up the Aisne.

[3] In four hours! What about the defence? Why were not the bridges on the Aisne blown up?

[4] And high time!

[5] If the operation was on such a small scale as Marshal Foch had declared why all that elaborate and formidable organization at this particular place? Even that does not explain why it should be abandoned so rapidly. There are altogether too many *whys* about this curious business.

[6] As I have related in Chapter II.

[7] From the official report.

[8] In all that I have since learned about what happened at the Chemin des Dames nothing has appeared to confirm this explanation. It is a case to be tried. It will have to be dealt with yet.

CHAPTER IV

THE EMPLOYMENT OF THE AMERICAN CONTINGENTS

A RATHER serious disagreement with General Pershing.

Every one knows that the American troops, in the first rank as far as bravery is concerned, were first and foremost excellent soldiers in a state of mere improvisation. A few divisions had already gone into the line under the English and French commands. It could not be otherwise. As for the rest, whose training had to be completed, instructors had been taken from the Front in order to begin in America the military education which was finished in France under other officers. But this took time. And it was heartrending to see our men being mown down unceasingly while, under the command of their good leaders, large bodies of American troops remained idle, within earshot of the guns.

For me, the French Minister of War, who day by day saw our ranks grow thinner and thinner after sacrifices unmatched in history, was there any task more urgent than to hasten, as far as possible, the effects of the intervention of America? I had reviewed one of the latest British contingents, whose physical inferiority attested to the fact that our excellent allies, in their turn, were calling up all grades. Was I to be satisfied with theoretical discussions? That was not how I understood my duty.

So I laid siege to General Pershing with all my might (President Wilson was then in America), only to obtain evasive replies. Pershing, with his tight-lipped smile, kept putting things off. I had no doubt but that Foch, on his side, was doing his utmost. It was often the theme of our talks together. But I must own I considered the General-in-Chief somewhat too easily resigned to Pershing's refusals, and this sometimes brought an edge into the concluding moments of our conversations.

With or without Foch's approval, I did not cease importuning the American Commander-in-Chief to send into action, in our ranks, the first American regiments that were considered sufficiently trained, so as to relieve us as much as possible at the sharpest pinch of such a crisis of man-power as our armies had never known before. General Pershing certainly asked nothing better than to help us, since that was the very thing that he had crossed the seas for. But he owed it to the romantic side of America's intervention to form a self-contained American Army, a duty I never failed to acknowledge.

His Government, his country, his Army even, kept him in suspense. Public opinion, on the other side of the ocean, imagined that officers could be improvised as well as soldiers, while I was looking above everything else to the final success of the decisive trial. General Pershing, in a friendly but obstinate fashion, was asking me to wait until he was in possession of an army complete in every part, and I went on insisting, in a state of nervous exasperation, while my country's fate was every moment at stake on the battlefields, which had already drunk the best blood of France. And the more I

insisted the more the American general resisted. So much so that we often parted with smiles that on both sides concealed gnashings of teeth.

Is it very astonishing that I began to wonder how much assistance the Commander-in-Chief was to me in this matter? In principle the Generalissimo could not possibly hold any opinion different from mine.

On May 4, 1918, I sent M. Jusserand, French Ambassador at Washington, a telegram in which I informed him of the text of the agreement reached at the Abbeville Conference between the Allied Powers.

The text may be summarized thus:

> The War Council considers that there is good reason to form as soon as possible *an American army that shall be subject to the direct authority of its chief and which shall fight under its own flag*.
>
> But, while bearing in mind this necessity, priority of transport shall be given to infantry and machine-gun units, which will complete their training by beginning their service with the French and British Armies, with the reservation that the said infantry and machine-gun units shall eventually be withdrawn from the French and British Armies in order to form, with their own artillery and services, divisions or army corps, according to the wish of the Commander-in-Chief of the American expeditionary forces, who shall, however, first consult with the Commander-in-Chief of the Allied armies in France.
>
> During the month of May priority shall be given to the transport of the infantry and machine-gun units of six divisions. All supplementary tonnage shall be used for the transport of the other troops, the shipment of which will be decided by the chief of the American Expeditionary Corps.
>
> In June the same programme will be carried out, provided that the British Government furnish the necessary transport for 130,000 men in May and 150,000 in June. The first six divisions are to go to the British armies. The troops transported in June will be used as General Pershing shall decide.
>
> If the English are able to transport in June, a further contingent of 150,000 men this contingent shall be made up of infantry and machine-guns. At the beginning of June the situation shall be examined afresh.

Such is—in brief—the text of the Abbeville Conference decisions of May 2, 1918. [1]

Is it necessary to note that this programme was inspired by General Foch's own ideas? At the Abbeville Conference the Commander-in-Chief of our armies had read the following declaration, the text of which I communicated to M. Jusserand:

> I have been chosen as Commander-in-Chief of the Allied armies, by the Governments of the United States of America, of France, and of Great Britain. In this capacity it is impossible for me, at the most perilous crisis of the greatest battle of the War, to admit that I have not the right to speak out concerning the conditions of the American Army's arrival in France.

This is why, fully sensible of the very heavy responsibility devolving upon me, at the moment when the greatest German offensive is simultaneously threatening Paris and our communications with Great Britain through Calais and Boulogne, I consider it very necessary that each Government in its turn should shoulder that share of responsibility which necessarily falls to it.

To my mind, it is absolutely essential that there should arrive each month in France from America, at least during the months of May, June, and July, 120,000 soldiers, priority being given to infantry and machine-gunners. I consider even that, if the available amount of tonnage will, as we have been given to understand, permit, it would be highly desirable that these numbers should be increased. For the greater the numbers of American infantry *that can make their appearance quickly on the battlefields*[2] the speedier and the more decisive will be the success of the Allied armies.

It must, in fact, be realized that the last enemy offensive was such as to bring about losses in infantry and in machine-gunners out of all comparison with those sustained in the War during the last three years. The infantry losses in the British Army have exceeded, in unforeseen proportions, anything it had known before. The French have had the same experience in proportion to their share in this battle, and in the ensuing weeks it is inevitable that the infantry losses will be increasingly heavier. Infantry and machine-gunners, then, are what we must replace without loss of time, more especially as the resources of the German depots in infantry and machine-gunners are estimated at 500,000 or 600,000 men, while the British depots are practically empty, and the French depots will remain without resources until next August.

I most definitely request the War Council, composed of the Allied Governments, to come to a decision on this point, and to be good enough to submit it to the President of the United States.

It is not that I do not give full weight to the observations of General Pershing, who very rightly wishes to bring to France as soon as possible all the complementary services which will allow him, before long, to complete the establishment of the great American Army of which he is the chief, and which we desire most ardently to see in being. But, while pointing out that my request could only cause a few weeks' delay, I am obliged by my imperative duty as a soldier and as General-in-Chief to urge that, when the greatest German army is developing the greatest offensive of the present war before Amiens and before Ypres, such a slight delay cannot be taken into consideration when the result of the War itself may hang on a possible enemy success in front of these two objectives.

After the enormous losses it has sustained with magnificent valour the British Army has just seen *ten of its divisions* suppressed, and merely to fill their place is not sufficient definitely to arrest the progress of the German armies. It is new forces of infantry and machine-gunners that we need *without the least delay*. And if it is taken into account that the American troops, on landing, will need a rapid supplementary training it will be understood how much more urgent the decision in question thereby becomes.

[*Signed*] Foch

To which I added:

> I thought it inadvisable to send the text of this to President Wilson for fear of offending General Pershing. . . . But M. Jusserand is requested to take it as his brief.

The reader will here clearly see that I was UNRESERVEDLY IN AGREEMENT ON ALL POINTS with General Foch. Yet this is the question with regard to which the *Mémorial* finds what it calls A SERIOUS DISAGREEMENT.

On the same day, May 4, 1918, I sent another telegram to M. Jusserand:

> Mr Balfour informs me that he would be glad if I would communicate General Foch's declaration to President Wilson. You are therefore requested to communicate it in the name of the French as well as of the British Government.

On May 8, 1918, I sent the following telegram to M. Tardieu, High Commissioner of the French Republic at New York:

> The question is of the greatest importance for the result of the War through the decisive intervention of the American troops, which on no account should be exposed to such an adventure as that of the Fifth British Army under General Gough.[3]

The question was of such high importance that I conceived the idea of sending quietly, under colour of an "inspection of our instructors in America, one of our best generals to explain the elements of the problem, from the purely technical point of view, to President Wilson."

I added:

> It has been very correctly pointed out to me that the arguments of General Pershing are all of a *political nature*, while those of General Foch, to which no reply has been given, are *exclusively military*. I think we should take care not to be too insistent with President Wilson, who has certainly all the necessary ripeness of judgment for deciding usefully when he knows all the aspects of the problem.
>
> Your instructions are to listen to everything around you, without, of course, disguising your own opinion, but only disclosing it with all due discretion. It is for the President of the American Republic to speak the final word when the hour arrives.

The general I was sending to America could not speak English. He was, however, accompanied by Colonel Fagalde, a very able officer, and especially suited to act as interpreter in connexion with the particular questions at issue.

On May 9 I telegraphed to M. Jusserand:

You are fully justified in complaining that the measures taken by the Abbeville Conference are inadequate. The truth of the matter is that the Conference was merely one long struggle between Mr Lloyd George, myself, and General Pershing, who stubbornly upheld the thesis of the speedy arrival of the complementary services, alleging that what the American people and the Washington Government desired above everything was the formation of a great American Army.

After General Pershing had agreed that infantry troops and machine-gun units should come over before everything else in June, he obstinately refused to make the same concession for July, and all we could obtain was that at the beginning of June this question should again be brought up for discussion.

On the 17th I dispatched a telegram to Mr Lloyd George:

The plans made at Abbeville must be revised with a view to the dispatch of a very large number of American infantrymen and machine-gunners within the shortest possible time, *to which President Wilson and Mr Baker*[4] *are willing to agree*. I need not tell you that General Foch, whom I consulted yesterday with regard to this, is most urgent that this meeting of the War Council should take place as soon as possible, for the counter-attacks he is planning will of necessity be very limited as long as he is short of effectives.

On May 20, 1918, I sent a fresh telegram to Mr Lloyd George:

It transpires from our dispatches from M. Jusserand, to whose reports added weight is given by his conversations with Lord Reading, THAT PRESIDENT WILSON IS ENTIRELY ON OUR SIDE IN THIS MATTER. When M. Jusserand asked him to increase the number of infantry and machine-gunners the President replied that he would do so willingly, were it not for one of the Abbeville decisions to which he felt bound to adhere. Mr Baker said practically the same thing to M. Jusserand.[5]

Finally, General Pershing (perhaps at the suggestion of Washington) did me the honour of calling upon me to inform me that he feared he had been misunderstood at the Abbeville Conference, that he had an open mind and would be only too glad to yield to the arguments which had been put before him, pleading extreme urgency.

I answered him that I relied on the next meeting of the War Council to obtain a contingent of 100,000 American soldiers in June, quite apart from July. His answer was that he was quite ready to agree with me with regard to this number and that there was no need for a sitting at Versailles to decide this. I naturally refused to give up the Versailles Conference.

He then said that he would go and see General Foch and that they could easily come to an agreement. Which has, in fact, taken place.

On June 1, 1918, the meeting of the War Council took place at Versailles.

And on June 7 I telegraphed to M. Jusserand:

> We have nothing to hide from the American Government. With regard to the necessity for them to organize their military forces in armies, no one understands that necessity better than I do, and the President may rest assured that we shall do everything in our power to facilitate this. . . . Our previous communications arose from two causes which are only too easy to understand: first, our urgent need of combatants; second, the great advantage, in view of the critical circumstances, of finishing the practical training of the American formations under fire before creating the staffs.[6]

I have set out as clearly as possible the details concerning the "serious disagreement" that arose between Marshal Foch and myself in connexion with the immediate or postponed use of the American forces. The strange part about this "serious disagreement" was that we were IN ABSOLUTE AGREEMENT ON ALL POINTS.

How was it possible then to evolve out of this *agreement* a *disagreement* that alarmed not only General Foch himself but M. Poincaré as well? Nothing easier. We agreed on fundamentals, but disagreed as to methods of procedure, which neither General Foch nor M. Poincaré wished to carry too far. In other words, I went so far as to demand that the Commander-in-Chief should give an order to the American General—which both the Commander-in-Chief and M. Poincaré were opposed to doing.[7]

We were all three, General Foch, M. Poincaré, and I, of opinion that we were in urgent need of effectives to replace the men who were falling day by day on the battlefield. But General Foch and M. Poincaré wished the opinion to remain merely an opinion, whereas I was trying to transform it into action in some form. My two opponents did not care to be brought up against the stubbornness of General Pershing, which might easily cause a rupture. In other words, they would have it that I wanted too much, to which I replied that they did not want enough. Foch refused to give an order to his subordinate, alleging always that his authority as Commander-in-Chief amounted to the power, not to give commands, but simply to *suggest*. And M. Poincaré challenged my right to give Foch an order in this matter or even to advise him with too much insistence. What was the result of all this fuss over a matter about which, at bottom, all the Allies were unanimous but a sudden slackening of resolution in two of the chiefs who were actually charged with the duty of commanding?

The problem lay in the single fact that we had already been fighting for a long time when the first American contingents, which were of necessity inexperienced, joined us. The true function of the American allies was first and foremost to help us to make up for lost time by joining the fray as they arrived, whereas the natural vanity of the great democracy inclined her to throw in her full power for the supreme victory on the last battlefield. A problem of the time and moment the solution of which could decide, and did dramatically decide, the outcome—less by the actual quality of the fighting than by the coming into play of a military strength capable of adaptation of sustained effort, and even of indefinite growth.

We had sent over to America very strong missions of officer-instructors. The sending out of General Berthelot (at the end of May 1918) to the French military training camps in America, on a special mission of inspection, had a happy effect all round. All the officer-instructors were excellent, the work of training was being carried

on in the utmost harmony, warlike enthusiasm was universal. General Berthelot paid a tribute to Colonel House, whose keen, enlightened intelligence was of such assistance in the task of the mission.

Just one black spot: the fanatical determination of the great chiefs of the American Army to delay the arrival of the star-spangled banner on the battlefield. The slow organization of the great American Army was costing us, and our allies too, seas of blood, but it was destined, so they kept telling us, to solve the whole mass of military problems at one stroke. Thus it happened that the War was practically over when the Argonne proved to those handsome, gallant soldiers of valiant America that death-defying courage was not enough to win a strategical success.

I had warned them beforehand.[8] But their fierce super-patriotism refused to listen, and they wanted nothing less than a heaven-born strategical *coup* that should enable them to begin and to end the War spectacularly with one stroke. Had that miracle happened I should be ready to believe that public opinion would have forced the Senate to vote for the Treaty.

In his *Final Report* (pp. 39 and 40) General Pershing states that General Pétain put French troops *under his orders* for the battle of Saint-Mihiel. From this he could see that we were not sparing of confidence in his abilities as a commander.

The day came at length (September 1918) when our comrades (with French guns) arrived at Saint-Mihiel hot on the heels of the departing Germans. The rejoicings that followed were indescribable. Our people had packed all the children and happy mothers from the town into a heterogeneous collection of motor-cars and lorries, amid flowers and foliage and dainties to eat, with song, laughter, and kisses, the merry cries of France found once more in the handclasp of America. Why must this happy procession, with its glorious enthusiasm, end in the final wretched casting up of debit and credit balances?

Before coming to the question of my "disagreement" with Marshal Foch, I ought to say that he had established a certain number of points:

> 1. Thanks to his intelligent, friendly, and even affectionate mode of collaboration, he got from the foreign armies placed under his orders the very utmost effort they were capable of.[9]
>
> 2. The American Army was an "excellent" army, and full of spirit.
>
> 3. But it was "inexperienced and raw, and had to learn in a few months or even a few weeks what had taken us several years."

The American Army being such in October 1918, what, according to the Marshal, were the respective attitudes of the French Minister of War and the Generalissimo of the Allied armies?

As for the General, it seemed to him, so he tells us, "unfair and unreasonable not to take into account, in his dealings with that army, this lack of experience, and to treat it as if it had already been fighting beside us for a very long time."

How then was he to treat it? By employing gentleness, *patience*,[10] and persuasion, in preference to severity and violence.[11]

With regard to myself, Marshal Foch alleges that I was of opinion that different methods ought to be adopted.

> M. Clemenceau taxed General Pershing with trying before anything else to form an *autonomous* army with a numerous and imposing staff, acting by itself without paying sufficient heed to the others. He taxed the Marshal with being far too patient, far too accommodating with General Pershing.
>
> Soft words, declared M. Clemenceau, having led to nothing, the time had come to speak out, to have a rumpus, to appeal to President Wilson himself over Pershing's head, and ask him to intervene and force the General's hand.

And the *Mémorial* relates that on October 21, 1918, I addressed an "urgent" letter to the Marshal in which I informed him of my anxiety. "That letter, an admirable effort of composition, by the way," states the Marshal, "*did not make me change my course by a hair's breadth. . . . I took absolutely no notice of it whatever.*"

Foch answered me by assuring me once again that "the method that consisted in *making a smash*[12] was completely useless."

And he ended his letter with these words:

> We must acknowledge the effort put forth by the American Army. After attacking at Saint-Mihiel on the 12th of September it made a fresh attack in the Argonne on the 26th. Between the 26th of September and the 20th of October its losses in action were 54,158 men, IN RETURN FOR VERY INSIGNIFICANT GAINS on a narrow front, it is true, but over particularly difficult ground and confronted with most strenuous resistance on the part of the enemy.

Three weeks later came the Armistice. Was I wrong to be in a hurry?

In conclusion the Marshal declares:

"I am happy to think that I remained friends with Pershing."[13] But really and truly France wanted something more from the splendid American fighters than a parade of military friendship between the two leaders.

Perhaps it would be as well to relate here the story of that "urgent" letter and the circumstances in which it was first withheld and then dispatched.

On October 11, 1918, then—a month, be it said again, before the Armistice—I abandoned the "persuasive way." On that day, accompanied by M. Jeanneney, Under-Secretary of State attached to the Cabinet, I betook myself to the Élysée to show the President of the Republic the draft of the letter I intended to send Foch, in order to bring about a decision concerning the inaction of the American troops, so prejudicial to the Allied armies, while the battle was actually raging. The letter was certainly pretty strongly worded—it was the hundreds of thousands of dead, the superhuman efforts made for years by our glorious soldiers, that dictated it. It was "harsh" both to Pershing, who did not want to obey, and to Foch, who did not want to command.

M. Poincaré read the letter, and formally advised me not to send it.

"I don't believe that things can ever be kept secret," he said. "If that letter is sent its contents will become known to the Marshal's *entourage*, and without a doubt to Pershing's as well. It might easily mean seriously wounded susceptibilities. At all events, I think that some of its phrases ought to be softened."

How could anyone give expression to such a fear when, in May, Foch's letter, not less trenchant than this of mine, had been read by Pershing, and had convinced Wilson—and had not hurt anybody's feelings in the slightest?

It was impossible for me not to be aware that the Marshal was in constant communication with the President of the Republic. Nothing could be more legitimate and proper, if only the two persons concerned had been possessed by less exalted notions of their own personality. It was only too easy for them to join forces in order to oppose my action.

I took back my letter, I altered it, I toned it down, and, as I was leaving for the Front, I asked M. Jeanneney to go again the next day to the Élysée and to give M. Poincaré the new draft, in which his observations had been taken into account.

Next day, therefore, M. Jeanneney went back to the Élysée, and fulfilled his errand, and that same evening M. Poincaré sent him a very long letter, in which he said in substance:

> I maintain my point of view. This letter must not be written. It is not impossible that it may provoke the Marshal's resignation.
>
> If, contrary to my advice, M. Clemenceau thinks it his duty to send this letter it will have to be still more toned down. It is still too harsh with regard to the Americans and still too harsh with regard to Foch. For instance, M. Clemenceau says to the Marshal, "*It is our country's command that you shall command*." If that was said to me I should resign.
>
> AND, FURTHERMORE, IS IT M. CLEMENCEAU'S BUSINESS TO CONCERN HIMSELF WITH WHAT MARSHAL FOCH DOES AS COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF OF THE AMERICAN ARMY? IN THAT CAPACITY IS NOT MARSHAL FOCH RESPONSIBLE RATHER TO THE AMERICAN GOVERNMENT?

So now the dreadful secret is out at last!

General Foch had asked me to have him nominated Commander-in-Chief of the Allied armies, and, having obtained this title, I discovered that what he understood by *sole* command was an administrative council of THREE for the exchange of arguments. I would very much like to know at what moment the sole command had deprived me of part of my authority over the French military command. There were allies certainly who had the right to say their say in exactly the same way as I had, and, in the event of disagreement, there was always the Supreme Council to fall back on. But here the beauty of the thing was that every one was in agreement, even General Foch, even M. Poincaré; the only difficulty was that these two individuals refused (at the most critical moment of the War) to exercise the authority conferred on the Generalissimo at Doullens. But, above all, what extraordinary behaviour on the part of this head of the French Government who wonders if the French Generalissimo is not responsible

"RATHER" to the American Government—presumably in opposition—in a controversy in which the life and death of France are at stake!

During the fighting Foch ruled the combatants as he had done at the Marne and at the Yser. In council he relied on arguments like a lawyer. In the American dispute we were all in agreement, and as the question was a purely military one it was for him to give the authoritative word. Not at all. Pershing persisted in not acting, and Foch in not commanding. And so, to help our soldiers, I had to take it upon myself to say the decisive word to the chief whose will seemed paralysed, with whom I was in agreement at all points, except that it was for the General-in-Chief to translate his personal opinion into definite and systematic orders.

That was the situation summed up in my apostrophe: "*Commander, it is our country's command that you shall command.*" This might be the decisive word, the word of salvation to bring Foch back to the grim reality. But it frightened M. Poincaré, who refused his consent, yet had no advice to give me. I might just go on watching our soldiers fall.

Later, long after the War, when I at last read—I had refused to read it before, and I am not sorry for my refusal—M. Poincaré's letter to M. Jeanneney, I was to learn that the new theory of the President, which withdrew the Marshal from my authority, consisted merely in depriving me, in virtue of the sole command, of part of my authority over Marshal Foch.

Had I not actually seen the document I could not have believed it. At the height of the War the President of the Republic actually furnishes the commander of the Allied armies with arguments to encourage him to resist his immediate chief, the Prime Minister and Minister of War. He explains to the simple mind of the soldier, unversed in legal intricacies, that the Allied Governments, when they gave him powers over their troops, partly withdrew him from the authority of the Prime Minister and Minister of War.

The dispute turned simply on what *action* ought to follow from the establishment of the sole command. General Pershing would not alter his way of working. Marshal Foch, from whom Poincaré could not take away a jot of his definite right to command Pershing, would not command, and M. Poincaré, who would not admit my right to command Foch to command, would have it that we must all three remain eyeing one another in helpless deadlock, a poor result from the final organization of an effective command that was meant to ensure victory, but merely forced us to leave our soldiers unsupported. That was what we were driven to give our minds to when meanwhile the blood of our soldiers was flowing in torrents while *two million men* who had come over expressly to help them were compelled to wait until our war magnificoes should be pleased to think better.

Then by way of conclusion after that strange statement of doctrine[14] these words, which are Poincaré at his purest and most unadulterated:

> The chief thing seems to me to be that we should be in agreement with the Marshal regarding the necessity for rapid organization, and that we should ask him to give us a regular report of what he does in this respect and the progress he

achieves.[15] *If at the end of a few weeks[16] things remained as they were we could then have recourse to extreme measures*, but as there is a possibility that with somewhat thin-skinned foreigners such measures might spoil everything, we must, in my opinion, have recourse to them ONLY IF THE SITUATION BECOMES REALLY DESPERATE.

I am quoting the actual words. The argument ran like this: The measures you propose *might* spoil everything. Therefore they must only be employed if the situation becomes REALLY DESPERATE. At that rate we might have waited until the defeatist campaigns had utterly gangrened minds that were already turning septic before making up our minds to lay hands on the traitors. This timidity is surely responsible for the shedding of too much blood.

On October 14 I came back in the morning from the Front, where our men were falling, falling. M. Jeanneney said to me, "M. Poincaré still advises you not to write to the Marshal. Here is the letter he has written to me."

Furiously, I freely confess, I thrust the letter away, writing and signing a note on the cover to the effect that I refused to take cognizance of it. This showed what my feelings were at being invited to exercise this excessive patience while the fate of France hung in the balance. There was just one thing the good President did not sufficiently take into account, and that was that while he weighed and arranged his *ifs* our soldiers were lying in heaps on the field, while their American comrades quivered with impatience as they waited for the days that were to bring them glory.

I sent my letter to the Marshal. There is no mention of it in the *Mémorial*. It would have thrown a searchlight upon the whole matter.

What does Marshal Foch do on receipt of my message? The head of the State had taken care to inform him that constitutionally, as Commander-in-Chief of the American Army, he was "RATHER" under the orders of Mr Wilson. My letter—he says so himself—"*did not make him change his course by a hair's-breadth*."

"*I took absolutely no notice of it whatever*," he says.

And yet there must be some explanation for all these wretched incoherencies.

Here there comes in a vital question for the history of the War: how, in fact, did Marshal Foch make use of the sole command? To-day everybody still speaks with enthusiasm of this marvellous engine of victory. But even to this very day no actual demonstration in the shape of facts has followed the talk. And yet this is the very question which the future will seek to have answered.

I have already said, without any reserve whatever, that in the bitter fighting on the Yser the Marshal showed himself a hero. Not for worlds would I say the least word to belittle that magnificent *élan* which carried him through that trial, one of the most arduous of the whole War. And I have paid my homage to him for this with all my heart.

How far he really was a supreme leader may be a disagreeable question for a man who was not averse from being occasionally compared to Napoleon. It is a question that will have to be solved by the historian, and I cannot do better than leave it to

judges untouched by the passions and prejudices of to-day. Nevertheless, I have a right to state that the civilian Academy's military testimonial, presented to him by M. Poincaré within the sacred precincts of the Palais Mazarin, has no more positive value than an old song. Some day, we shall require competent judges who will arrive at a decision from actual evidence, instead of lyrical outbursts of panegyric. Qualified historians will then be able to draw conclusions and give judgment with full knowledge.

Marshal Foch, without previous warning, opened his trenches against his own comrades, though one of them has Verdun to his credit, by declaring roundly, without a word of proof, that we could have brought the War to an end in 1917. What can we not prove with *ifs* enough? This kind of argument is the great standby of men who are hunting for a red herring. If he thought he could thus divert criticism from his own strategy he was mistaken.

"*The sole command*," he would say, "is JUST A PHRASE. In 1917 we had tried it with Nivelle, and it hadn't worked. You have to know how to lead the Allies. YOU MUST NOT COMMAND THEM. *You must deal with some differently from others. . . . That is the sole command*: YOU DON'T GIVE ORDERS, YOU MAKE SUGGESTIONS."

The Marshal thus teaches us that the sole command is not exercised by a general-in-chief in relation to his equals like a drill-sergeant dealing with a squad of recruits. We knew that already. Why, then, was there so much fuss to get hold of a decisive authority which, when the hour had actually come, must needs, it seems, peter out in finicking, spineless verbiage? Why all that fuss for nothing? THE MARSHAL DOES NOT GIVE ORDERS: HE MAKES SUGGESTIONS. "*For they would have thrown off the yoke if I had made them feel it.*"[17]

Who could believe that it is a professional soldier who shows so openly this total failure to grasp the meaning of the supreme command? Where shall we be when, following this wonderful example, officers give up commanding in order to *suggest* their military views to their subordinates? It seems a dream.

I asked myself what fogs of obfuscation could have awakened in the mind of the *sole commander* such mistrust of his own authority. What we were looking for was swiftness in bringing all the various military moves into direct correlation by the co-ordinating action of a single supreme will, while our sole commander claimed to obtain better results by simple attempts at persuasion.

I have no doubt that the Marshal was sincere when he said he was obsessed with the desire to please every one. For a chief this is not always a suitable quality. It is even the very opposite of what is aimed at in military command. The Marshal knew perfectly well that all differences between him and me would eventually be settled. But Sir Douglas Haig reacted violently at times. President Wilson would disquiet an interlocutor by a smile like a benevolent wolf. Mr Lloyd George was by no means the bleating lamb of the fables. It was the dangers that might arise from these quarters against which presumably the Generalissimo meant to guard himself, especially as the terms of the agreement provided, in case of difference of opinion, for an appeal by the Allied general to his own Government. I am far from blaming the Commander-in-Chief for taking all necessary precautions to humour his new subordinates. All Foch's

predecessors in history had made this discovery, and won universal approval. Yet in the long run it was imperative that a superior will should rise above all shilly-shallying. Otherwise the unity of command was merely an extra parade of impotence meant to appease simple minds, and did not even work when it was a question of getting ONE OR TWO AMERICAN DIVISIONS to join up with Allied divisions.

However legitimate they might be, these preoccupations of the Commander-in-Chief ought not to have changed either the form or the substance of his military orders to the new subordinates put at his disposal in order to speed up the execution of movements that had been slowed down through his art of *suggestion*. He would thus have been spared the awkwardness of casting aside by his own act the superior power that had been entrusted to him, to say nothing of the awkwardness of sometimes seeming to be more ready to agree with Mr Lloyd George than with his own Government, as happened in the so-called Villa Romaine affair.

As I never ceased to urge the "sole commander" to give General Pershing the order to put at his disposal one of the American divisions that were ready to go into the front line, he finally told me that he had given *a written order* to General Pershing, and that the latter had formally refused to obey.[18] I got a very disagreeable impression from this, but dared not press the matter further than the Commander-in-Chief desired. I have read in a newspaper that Foch went so far as to say that *nobody had disobeyed*. That is not what he told me of General Pershing. Before forming an opinion we should have to know to what extent he had *commanded*—I carefully do not say *suggested*.

As far as I am concerned, how could I consider myself to blame for energetically demanding the implementing of the agreement that the High Command had set up in order to increase the co-ordination of our forces in the field? I did my very best to make everything easy for the organization of the Americans. I do not in the least deny that in a terrible emergency I endeavoured to obtain from them the utmost possible total of military output, and that, thanks to the higher authorities, I failed. But was that an idea for which I have to defend myself? General Foch, to avoid replying to that question, prudently abstains from asking it. But I ask it, and asked it must be, since it is the whole matter at issue between Pershing, Foch, and myself.

The Marshal had the power to *command*. On his own admission he preferred to "*suggest*."[19] Hence the conflict. I was all the more against it as, in my opinion, the Germans, as soon as they felt the shock of the American arrival in the field, were bound to realize that all hope of winning the War was thenceforth lost for them.

There was great haste and great hustle, therefore, in my asking Foch, and even Pershing direct, to send the first American divisions into battle among our own men as they became fit to take their part in the fighting.

In short, the "*serious disagreement*" between Foch and myself as to the best way of making use of the American forces amounted to a perfect accordance of our views as to utilizing the contingents by putting them in the firing-line as they completed their military training. There was not, there could not be, any discussion on the main point. The Marshal could not but ask for contingents. We have seen from his own declaration to the Allied Governments that he was perfectly aware of the difficulties that brought us

into conflict with General Pershing, and that he did not shrink from setting out his point of view in trenchant fashion so long as he was not called upon for action.

Why did the Marshal not publish my letter as I am publishing the document in which, in excellent language, he expresses his own point of view? Why did he boast of taking no notice of my letter at the very moment when he was trying to act upon it after a fashion? Why did the President of the Republic take so much trouble to persuade me not to write it, for fear that some indiscretion might bring it to President Wilson's knowledge, when Mr Lloyd George and Lord Balfour (so reasonable) had asked me to bring Foch's memorandum, in which he said the same thing that I did, to the knowledge of that same President Wilson, *who gave it his approval*?

All this because, while General Pershing shut himself up in a passive resistance, Marshal Foch, requested by me to give an order to his subordinate, feared, if he were not obeyed, to find himself embroiled with the American Government. He preferred to make difficulties with me, against whom he would have M. Poincaré's support, as he had later in the matter of the Rhineland. Meanwhile, there were the soldiers, Marshal!

The trouble was that too often the ideal cannot square itself with the reality. It is a question of adjusting both to each other. And the attempt is not always successful. Knowing that France received more than two million American soldiers, we find it astonishing that it was not a perfectly easy matter to form the first American Army and at the same time to furnish a sufficient number of effectives for the battlefields, where our heroic soldiers were calling for them so urgently. Alas! Marshal Foch, who knew so well how to take the command at the Yser without possessing it as yet, could not manage to exercise it in this formidable emergency, when it had been specifically given him.

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[1] It must be said that, without consulting France and without even informing Washington, Lord Milner and General Pershing had previously concluded an agreement for the month of May and the month of June *to the exclusive advantage of England*, who, it is true, had urgent need of effectives. The Abbeville Conference replaced this agreement by the text quoted here.

[2] The italics are mine.

[3] A very serious point which is merely hinted at here. It was essential, at all costs, to avoid a defeat for the first appearance of the American Army on the scene. An important reason for combining old and young troops on the battlefield. I was incurring a heavy responsibility if some ill-understood or badly executed manœuvre had disastrous consequences.

[4] The American Minister of War.

[5] He did not know that the Abbeville decision was a minimum, beyond which General Pershing had refused to go.

[6] General Pershing had still to wait several weeks before seeing his dream of a great autonomous American Army realized. I could but applaud, for its hour had

come, and on July 27, 1918, I telegraphed to the American commander:

> "Heartiest congratulations on the creation of the first American Army. History awaits you. You will not fail it.
>
> "G. Clemenceau"

[7] I shall mention M. Poincaré as seldom as possible. But when I am defending myself against Marshal Foch, who in attacking me uses the President of the Republic as a shield, I must needs reply to both my adversaries at once.

[8] All the representatives of the higher American military authorities openly inclined to the views of Pershing—General Bliss being the one exception. They wanted an American Army. They had it. Anyone who saw, as I saw, the hopeless congestion at Thiaucourt will bear witness that they may congratulate themselves on not having had it sooner.

[9] Nothing like giving oneself first-rate testimonials!

[10] Less than a month before the Armistice! Patience means time. Indeed, indeed, there are hours that call for action.

[11] The so-called "violence" consisted in insisting on being obeyed in making military use of a military force to achieve military aims the actual necessity of which, to say nothing of their value, Marshal Foch never denied.

[12] Where does he get that I risked "*making a smash*" by asking the Supreme Command to exercise its authority to obtain the very thing it was the first to advocate, which was a leg-up for the Allied troops. Foch, in fact, refused to give Pershing orders to send him soldiers. This was on October 21, 1918. There had already been a similar case of a difference of opinion between Foch and Haig, *and, Foch himself having appealed to me to settle the contest*, I was fortunate enough to get the Englishman to give way. Here is what General Mordacq (*Le Commandement unique*, p. 144) says about it:

"In the beginning of June, when he wanted to transfer certain English reserves—as he had the perfect right to do—to send them to the French front, General Foch came up against the uncompromising opposition of General Haig. To avoid a clash—a particularly delicate thing in such circumstances—he reported the matter to M. Clemenceau, who on the 7th of June brought together in his room at the War Ministry Lord Milner and Field-Marshal Haig, as well as General Foch and General Wilson. Our allies did their best to show that the recent offensive of the Germans on the French front (on the Chemin des Dames) was merely a demonstration and that they would carry out the main attack, the logical attack, the strategical attack, on the English front, either in order to separate the British Army from the French Army or else to seize Dunkirk, Calais, and Boulogne, and thus cut off the British armies from England."

The point at issue was, as may be seen, of a similar nature. Only on that occasion, sobered by the collapse of the Chemin des Dames, Foch *did not hesitate to*

appeal to me, without waiting for me to take the initiative.

[13] Foch boasts of having remained on friendly terms with Pershing because he softened his command to the point of non-interference. I think I may say that I obtained the required result without alienating General Pershing's friendship. The American Commander-in-Chief no doubt found it quite as trying as we did to see his fine army inactive on the very edge of the fight. In any case, he had the courage to say yes or no, and could not in his heart blame those whom he saw doing their best to protect the interest of the common cause. At the very moment when Foch was ridiculously denouncing me to the American people General Pershing was not backward in manifesting ample tokens of his esteem for me, which I am happy to reciprocate in the highest degree.

When I went to America to defend France against the accusation of militarism General Pershing, in New York, publicly came to greet me in a friendly way, at the great meeting in the Metropolitan Opera House. Later he came from Indianapolis to Chicago to ride in uniform with General Dawes in my carriage, because something, I don't quite know what, was feared from a municipality and populace that, while courteous, contained certain sections with German sympathies. And when the American Legion, quite recently, did me the great honour of visiting me in Paris, General Pershing made a point of joining his comrades in order to come and salute me. Surely no clearer proof is needed? And besides, even if my temperament had betrayed me at the height of the crisis into expressing myself too violently, was it for a Frenchman (whether a general or a civilian) to denounce me?

[14] Strange because one may wonder that this thesis—which, by the way, does not bear five minutes' close examination—should be upheld by the President of the French Republic. Lawyers give us these surprises. Nothing is simpler than the solution of the problem anticipated in the terms laid down at Doullens. The general who felt he should not or could not obey the Commander-in-Chief was to appeal to his own Government, which would give the final decision.

[15] A marvellous lesson of action in the direst peril!

[16] Once more—this was one month before the Armistice!

[17] It was in order to change this state of affairs, by conferring upon him the supreme command, that he was given the right to speak as a chief. Well, here he was, renouncing this priceless right, about which so much fuss had been made, at the essential moment for exercising it, in the very hour when swiftness in execution demanded military obedience under the strictest *régime* of inflexible authority.

[18] I have taken the liberty of consulting General Pershing on this point, and he replied that he had no recollection of it.

[19] "There was a practically impenetrable barrier between the High Command and the executants, general directives were only transmitted in fragments, and a certain army commander, who was the most actively engaged, ONLY LEARNED THOSE

OF MARSHAL FOCH BY READING M. LOUIS MADELIN IN THE *Revue des Deux Mondes*."—*Comment finit la guerre*, by General Mangin.

CHAPTER V

THE MAN-POWER PROBLEM IN ENGLAND

At the height of the man-power problem that was so cruelly felt in the last weeks of the War our own effectives in particular had been put to a terrible strain after the Chemin des Dames, where we lost 160,000 men. Especially as Foch, finally giving up the idea of awaiting the German attack in Flanders, had determined to embark on a policy of harrying the enemy. Our losses were infinitely more serious than those of the English, who still had enormous reserves on home soil, and who, when the time came for making use of them, had found it simpler to decrease their establishment at the very moment it was essential to augment it at any cost.

The President of the Republic was waiting till the situation was "*desperate*" to make a supreme effort. In the confusion of a reverse that had just cost them 200,000 men[1] the English had unexpectedly and startlingly determined to suppress nine divisions (which they were in a position to reconstruct), and refused to alter a decision for which there was no justification. But I could not resign myself to anything that might compromise the issue of those terrible days. Already I had brought Mr Lloyd George, and even Sir Douglas Haig, to agree to an extension of the English front—which they had violently refused under the previous Ministries. The question was taken up shortly before my arrival at the Ministry, at the end of 1917, when it was discovered that the English were not occupying the whole extent of front allotted to them.

To be perfectly frank, I must acknowledge that, with regard to the suppressed English divisions, I did not confine myself to leaving their fate to Foch's protests, which seemed to me lacking in vigour. Since I was refused the American contingents to fill up the lacuna in the British divisions, I determined to address myself direct to the British themselves, whom I imagined to be in possession of greater resources in effectives than they really had.

From a private letter, from a French officer of high rank, I take the following passages, which recall the details of what followed:

> During the course of 1917, taking our stand on mathematical computations with regard to the extent of front occupied, the respective numbers of the French and English divisions, the density of the Germans in front of each sector, the losses sustained since the beginning of the War, the resources still available in France and in England, etc., we requested the English to extend their front to Berry-au-Bac. This evoked vehement opposition from Field-Marshal Haig, who threatened to resign if he was forced to extend his front a single inch. (At the moment it stretched down south to before Saint-Quentin.) In this way, always arguing and making no headway, we came to the Boulogne Conference (September 24 and 25, 1917), in which Mr Lloyd George, M. Painlevé, General Foch, and General

Robertson took part. The question of the extension of the British front was discussed at Boulogne, and Mr Lloyd George accepted it *in principle*. (You may suppose that delays were not ruled out.) A fresh violent crisis with Haig, who renewed his threats of resignation. We went on arguing without result. It must be said that the War Office and the English General Headquarters were completely of the same adverse opinion on the question, and that we found the same unfavourable reception with General Robertson as we had with Haig. And, to sum up, we argued and argued and never got anywhere.

After your coming to power (November 17) things went more briskly, and on our side there was a firmer tone and more vigorous speaking. Your ideas on the subject were known in England and at the English G.H.Q., for already, before your coming to power, they had been put before the English public by Repington, after the visit he had paid you in the Rue Franklin on October 6, 1917.

The English, perceiving that this time they would have to submit, then proposed to have the zone that was held by the Third French Army (from Saint-Quentin to Barisis, facing the Saint-Gobain massif) taken over by the First American Army. General Pershing refused.

Furthermore the English informed us that in no circumstances would they extend as far as Berry-au-Bac, and we had a very distinct impression that if we continued to insist on Berry-au-Bac we should obtain nothing at all. We were obliged therefore to concentrate our efforts simply on the relief of the Third French Army.

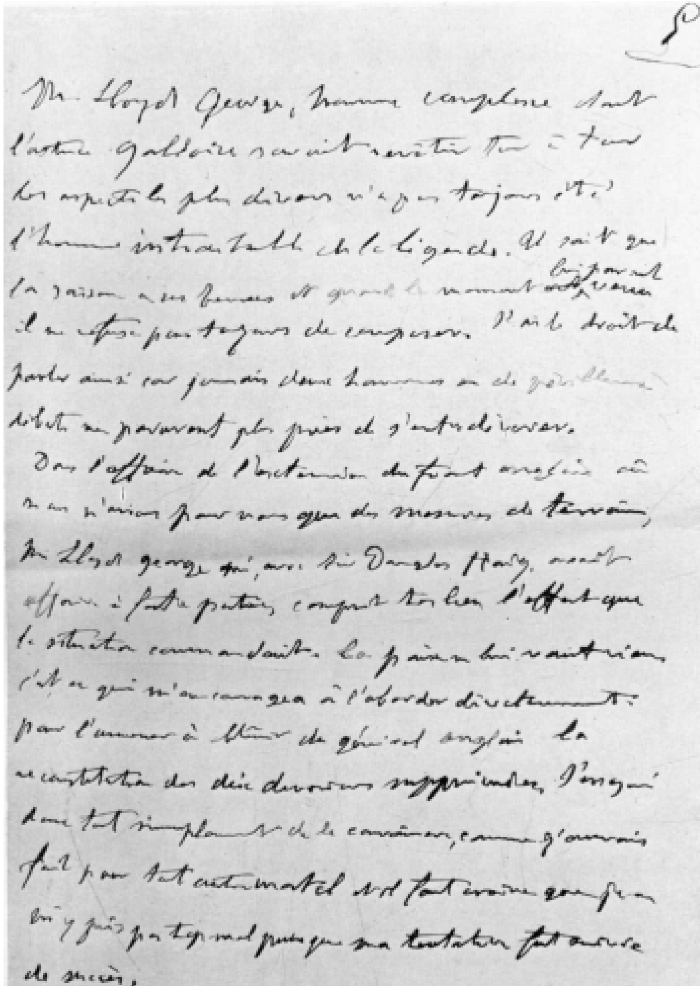
In the end those efforts were crowned with success, thanks to a certain pressure brought to bear on Field-Marshal Haig from London and undoubtedly due to the clear, precise, and energetic fashion in which you expressed yourself to Mr Lloyd George on this subject. Much against the grain Field-Marshal Haig brought himself to accept the extension of English front from Saint-Quentin to Barisis, south of the Oise, and the First English Army (under Gough) relieved the Third French Army (under Humbert) between the 10th and the 20th of January. After this relief the front was divided up in the following fashion:

1. Thirty-five kilometres held by the Belgians with twelve divisions.
2. Two hundred kilometres held by the English with sixty-one divisions (in the line and in reserve, including two Portuguese divisions).
3. Five hundred and thirty kilometres held by the French with ninety-nine divisions (in the line and in reserve).

At the end of March the defeat of the British Army cost 200,000 men. This was little calculated to ameliorate a difficult position with regard to man-power. Nine, or ten, divisions (authorities differ) were suppressed.

Mr Lloyd George, that complex personality whose Welsh astuteness could by turns assume the most varied aspects, has not always shown himself the intractable man of legend. He knows that there are times for being reasonable, and when the moment appears to him to have come he does not always refuse to compromise. I have every

right to say this, for never have two men in critical debates looked more like going down one another's throats.



A PAGE OF THE ORIGINAL MANUSCRIPT

In the affair of the extension of the English front Mr Lloyd George, who had a powerful opponent to deal with in Sir Douglas Haig, perfectly understood the effort called for by the position. He is a man who thrives on fighting. That is what encouraged me to approach him direct, so as to move him to get Haig to re-establish the nine divisions that had been suppressed. So I tried quite simply to convince him, as I would have done with anyone else, and it must be supposed that I did not go about it too stupidly, since my attempt was successful.

To effect my object I addressed the following letter to the English Prime Minister:

THE PRIME MINISTER
MINISTER OF WAR
May 16, 1918

RE DISPATCH OF ENGLISH REINFORCEMENTS
TO FRANCE

To MR LLOYD GEORGE
Prime Minister
LONDON

The battle in progress in France since the 21st of last March at its opening found the British armies fifty-seven divisions strong (lately reduced to nine battalions to the division[2]), to which there were subsequently added two divisions brought back from Italy and two from Palestine (one of which is still in process of disembarkation).

The British Army in France ought therefore to comprise sixty-one divisions at the present moment.

Now, in consequence of the losses sustained since the opening of the attack, and in consequence of the insufficient numbers of reinforcements sent from the United Kingdom to replace those losses, it has been judged by the English High Command impossible to maintain the British divisions in France at the number cited above. That number, as you are aware, has been diminished by nine, and consequently to-day it stands at fifty-two.

To maintain the English divisions in France at this number, and, *a fortiori*, to diminish it, would throw almost the whole weight of the future battle, which, according to every probability, will still be long and severe, upon the French divisions alone, and under these conditions we should very quickly be forced, by losses on a scale surpassing all our most ample forecasts, to reduce the number of our divisions.

The gravity of the circumstances cannot but be obvious to you, and it must consequently seem to you, as to ourselves, that the only way to deal with them is to maintain by every means in your power the number of English divisions at what it was before the suppressions—that is to say, at sixty-one.

To ensure this result, which is, I repeat, indispensable for bringing this battle to a victorious conclusion, it is absolutely essential that the British Commander-in-Chief on the French front should receive all the necessary reinforcements.

Now the plans for the dispatch of reinforcements drawn up by the British Staff for the months of May, June, and July lay down that an average of 34,000 men shall be sent into France each month.

You will feel, as I do, that this number is totally insufficient, alike to maintain the still existing divisions or to revive the nine divisions that have been done away with.

It is, however, vitally necessary, as I have set forth above, that this twofold result should be attained as quickly as possible.

Now it appears to us that it can be attained if a resolute call is made in the fullest measure upon the already mobilized resources in the United Kingdom.

It is actually shown from the latest survey of the position by the War Office, dated April 22, that the total number of mobilized men in the United Kingdom is 1,284,819.[3]

If, as we quite recognize, a great part of these men are not fit for service abroad it nevertheless remains that at the date shown above

(1) The establishments of home-defence troops were	171,565	men
(2) The troops in the depots were	389,016	„
(3) Workers in uniform on various work	258,291	„
Making a total of	818,872	„

To which must be added the men in hospitals from whom drafts can be made as they are passed fit for service, and who at the same date numbered 317,582.

The sole obstacle to the sending into France of the greater part of the men in the first three categories above is the fact that they belong for the most part to other classes than A.[4]

Now it will undoubtedly appear to you that all the men of Class B, men classed as fit for the defence of the United Kingdom in case of invasion, could very well, in view of the gravity of the present crisis, be sent without exception to fight on the French front.

This measure would in any case merely correspond to that adopted in France, which has sent to the Front our men in the auxiliary services.[5]

Its immediate, strict, and full application in the United Kingdom would, I am persuaded, enable you to find the necessary resources for dealing with the grave crisis through which we are now passing.

It seems to us, in any case, to be the only one that in the present circumstances can allow us to emerge victorious from the most formidable and, no doubt, decisive trial we have faced since the beginning of the War.

[*Signed*] G. CLEMENCEAU

This letter, followed by incessant and unremitting pressure, produced the desired effect. The English, after a great deal of backing and filling, promised to re-establish the nine suppressed divisions, and they did re-establish them effectively and progressively from May to September, sending to France not merely Class A men, but also those in Class B.

The truth is that there was nothing in the character of the war on the Continent to justify any distinction between the two classes. It was a mere sailor's notion.

From this narrative, corroborated by an official document, it may be seen that if I did not succeed in making good our effectives by the help of the American soldiers (whom their own chiefs at the time blankly refused to move without Foch making up his mind to command), I was more fortunate with the English, who, having suppressed *nine divisions* after Gough's misfortune, still had at their disposal reserves more than sufficient, but badly arranged in groups with misleading labels.

The document I have quoted above shows that I was not incapable of arguing with Mr Lloyd George, since a closely reasoned and moderate letter succeeded in getting the English General Staff, while there was yet time, to revive the nine suppressed divisions. The name of Foch did not even occur in this letter, which by rights ought to have been signed by him. As for me, I was only too happy to help him, even without his knowledge, at the moment when he was boasting of *taking no notice of* urgent instances to which Mr Lloyd George showed himself accessible.

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[1] March 1918.

[2] This reduction took place in February 1918, or about a month before the attack of March 21.

[3] With this formidable number of reserves the British Staff could without trouble have re-established the nine divisions that had been suppressed, as, indeed, it did later easily enough.

[4] The English private soldiers were divided into four classes distinguished as A, B, D, E. Class A was made up of men fit for active service outside the United Kingdom; Class B, men fit for service within the United Kingdom; Class D, men temporarily unfit for a period not exceeding six months; Class E, men unfit for a period exceeding six months.

[5] At that moment, in France, we had in the first-line units, 160,000 men over forty-two years old, 110,000 men of the auxiliary services.

CHAPTER VI

THE ARMISTICE

A GRAND word, a great word to set down when, after four nerve-racking years, lived through in the anguished expectation of the worst, suddenly a voice is heard crying, "It is finished!"

War and peace, with their strong contrasts, alternate against a common background. For the catastrophe of 1914 the Germans are responsible. Only a professional liar would deny this. We defended ourselves well, despite the childish folly of our withdrawing ten kilometres from our frontier. But against us we saw deployed the most stupendous mass of military forces most formidably equipped. The Marne and Verdun will ever remain among the very greatest feats of war.

Yet mutual butchery cannot be the chief occupation of life. The glory of our civilization is that it enables us—occasionally—to live an almost normal life. The Armistice is the interval between the fall and rise of the curtain. Hail to it and welcome!

But to foresee what may come of it we should need a full knowledge of the inner working of those problems which the War was intended to settle. The breaking up of past groupings to form the re-groupings of the future will create new situations, making for war or peace, according to the hazard of the hour.

They have written that when the Armistice was declared I could not restrain my tears. I freely confess it. The abrupt transition from the grim ardour of the fight to the tumultuous hopes that were suddenly let loose might well shake the most steadfast soul to its foundations. What will be the new equilibrium to which we are tending fortunately we do not know. It is, as a general rule, this spiritual inadequacy that leads us to indulge in excesses of pessimism and optimism in turn. I dare not press the analysis further.

The fact remains that my joy knew no bounds, and my confidence went beyond all reason. I was not sufficiently well acquainted with the people we had to deal with. Later on, when at Versailles Brockdorff-Rantzau addressed me in the language of the bearer of a challenge, I was forced to realize that the German revolution was mere window-dressing, and that, with the aggressor of 1914 not a whit cured of his insane folly, we should continue without respite to be subjected, in a new setting, to the same attack from the same enemy.

So obvious was the violent attitude of Germany that it sufficed to compare it with our national attitude at the Peace of Frankfurt to understand that the two states of mind, in similar circumstances, could never lead to the same results. At Spa, when M. Millerand decided to *lend money to the Germans*, in order to obtain supplies of coal from them, he opened the door with a vengeance to those mutilations of the Treaty which soon piled up, first at his own deliberate choosing and subsequently at that of his successors.

Self-inflicted defeat as the sequel to supreme victory—that was what they made out of all that lavishing of the blood of France. M. Poincaré himself, who lent his silent support to these systematic mutilations, found himself obliged to state, in the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, that several of those very men who had considered that the Treaty did not go far enough, had not shrunk from *reducing* the reparations laid down at Versailles.

What after all is this war, prepared, undertaken, and waged by the German people, who flung aside every scruple of conscience to let it loose, hoping for a peace of enslavement under the yoke of a militarism destructive of all human dignity? It is simply the continuance, the recrudescence, of those never-ending acts of violence by which the first savage tribes carried out their depredations with all the resources of barbarism. The means improve with the ages. The ends remain the same.

The driving-force of the attack is countered by the energy of the defence, and there we are, bandied from defeat to victory, in pursuit of an ultimate goal that the dramas of life on our planet never reveal. That is the history of our long struggles with England. The same motive is at the back of the quarrels of America with the British Empire, from which there might result, by some unforeseen turn of the wheel, an Americanization of Europe and its dependencies.

Germany, in this matter, was unfortunate enough to allow herself (in spite of her skill at dissimulation) to be betrayed into an excess of candour by her characteristic tendency to go to extremes. *Deutschland über alles. Germany above everything!* That, and nothing less, is what she asks, and when once her demand is satisfied she will let you enjoy a peace under the yoke. Not only does she make no secret of her aim, but the intolerable arrogance of the German aristocracy, the servile good nature of the intellectual and the scholar, the gross vanity of the most competent leaders in industry, and the widespread influence of a violent popular poetry conspire to shatter throughout the world all the time-honoured traditions of individual, as well as international, dignity.

No doubt I am speaking as a man still hot from the fray. But tell me at what hour of his life a man feels himself out of the battle. With all its virtues and faults, I should be prepared to speak freely of the French people. I have done so all my life with an independence that brought on me reproaches that left my withers quite unwrung. I only hesitate to do so now because this people is my people and because I love it—I love even its faults, which there is no lack of sycophants to call merits. On a just view of things it is the people who willed and who made this victory, it is the people who, in the great days of trial, urged on its battalions of civilians and soldiers to that victory. At certain moments it bore the name of Pétain, of Foch, of Mangin, of Fayolle. I salute them, not when I see them file past under the Arc de Triomphe, because that is mere pageantry, not when they try by every kind of means to appear great in their own eyes, because man is manifold and various, and they do not know themselves. I salute them above all in the person of the greatest of them all, *the Unknown Warrior*, who turns his back upon the fallacies of glory, and thereby his honour becomes invulnerable for ever. I salute them all in one, but I call them to account because man is an ever-changing aspect of universal life, because he lives in the shifting hours, and not, as simple souls would have it, in absolute eternity. Napoleon, who, with Alexander and Cæsar, was one

of the greatest military geniuses in history, never understood himself even at St Helena, where, if he could have summed himself up, balancing his strength against his weakness, he might have towered above all the common run of conquerors. In any case, what is it to us? Where shall we find the man capable of interpreting himself? Whether his faults were or were not offset by his virtues, Foch was one of the factors that made for victory. The rest is of secondary importance.

We grasp the different sides of our Frenchman to the life when, having won the War with his gallant allies, he planned and made his peace on a basis of reasoned idealism, and when, to his undoing, he turned, with his eyes tight shut, seeking to know no more, to men who had nearly lost the War and who, by the same methods of timorous incoherence, will perhaps end by making us lose the peace.

To save us from this catastrophe I count on chance, on turns of luck that cannot be foreseen, on the clash of unknown factors that has a mathematical value in the ordering of energy. History will pass a stern verdict on the French people of the period after the War, who fell so far short of what they owed to themselves in the sphere of action no less than in the realm of sentiment. There is no need to implicate anyone. Every one has been able to form his own opinion. The verdict of history will hold the French people responsible for what it did itself, for what it allowed to be done, and for the fate it has wrought for itself with its own hands.

I trust I shall be forgiven this brief attempt to envisage the situation as a whole at the moment when the War was drawing to a close, on the threshold of the peace which was not yet established. The coming of that peace I beheld in a spirit of confidence. The vision enshrined in it still remains with me, fresh and unfading. But visions without the action that they call for are only empty words. Never did talkers talk so much! Or do so little!

Peace or war, we are in the midst of a relentless struggle for power. Woe to the weak! Turn your back on the purveyors of soothing syrup!

Who knows? Perhaps the stage of humanity is being set anew, for effects undreamed of. The bounds of civilization are extending, while, to the strains of the Geneva guitar, an ever-widening field is opened up for the planning of those acts of violence which will disclose to us rungs on the ladder of human progress. This amounts to saying that the Armistice is a door opening on the unknown. Such has ever been the course of human life as the pendulum swings to and fro.

What I have to say about the preliminaries to the Armistice can be summed up in a few words:

1. Complete agreement with Marshal Foch on all points except the number of troops that Germany was to be allowed to retain.

2. Complete disagreement with the President of the Republic on the preliminary discussions between the Allies on the possibility of an armistice.

I do not know how M. Poincaré came to carry his opposition to such lengths. On October 8 he sees in it "a trap," while October 4 is the date on which Prince Max of Baden telegraphs to Mr Wilson to have a convocation of the belligerents *for peace negotiations on the basis of the Fourteen Points, and asking*, AT THE SAME TIME, *for the*

immediate conclusion of an armistice. Was this possible? The same day M. Poincaré informs me yet again that "every one steadfastly hopes THAT THERE WILL BE NO QUESTION OF HAMSTRINGING OUR TROOPS BY AN ARMISTICE, HOWEVER SHORT."

The sequence of events is known. It has been set forth in many works—notably, with exceptional clearness, in M. Tardieu's book *La Paix*, and in General Mordacq's publication entitled *La Vérité sur l'Armistice*.

Every one knows to-day that, with the complete collapse of the political world and the Kaiser's army, the day arrived when no one in Germany would any longer come forward to shoulder the responsibilities of the hour, save Prince Max of Baden, who courageously volunteered his services for the period of transition.

Marshal Foch has declared that he had long before been informed of the general rot in the ranks of the German Army. He wished to appear to be playing with the enemy like a cat with a mouse. If it was so why did he not inform me? And why leave the President of the Republic himself in complete ignorance of what was happening? At the first mention of a request from the enemy for an armistice we actually had the spectacle of M. Poincaré making frenzied efforts to prevent even the shortest suspension of the fighting being granted.

If the President of the Republic, who could not possibly be less eager than we were to bring the War to an end, refused to agree to the truce that was asked for, it must have been because he was ignorant of the condition of the morale of the German Army, and of the German people itself, at that moment, a condition which prescribed what our reply should be. He could only have formed his opinion from the same documents as we did. If he had had information from Foch, who asserts that he knew everything, his attitude would be unaccountable. According to him, the Germans meant to keep us in play by sham negotiations to get time to outmanœuvre us by marches planned for a final smashing blow. On what was this opinion founded? On facts? Or some occult piece of divination?

In theory such a military manœuvre on the part of the enemy is conceivable. But during an armistice of a few days—that is to say, a simple truce, such as I thought proper to propose to the President of the Republic—the Germans, under our watchful eyes, could not bring off any effective manœuvre.

What I still fail to understand is why M. Poincaré, at variance with his own Government on the question of granting or refusing an armistice, did not consult the superior wisdom of the chief of the Allied armies, when he must have known that on such a matter it could only be for the supreme military authority to pronounce. All that passed between him and me took the form of one of those spates of ink to which he is addicted. Really, it was too much, when at that very hour events in Germany had already of themselves settled whether it was to be war or peace.

None of this would have happened if Foch had fulfilled his first duty, which was to keep the head of the State informed. It is true that it was no less the duty of the latter, especially in such a case, to seek information from the Commander-in-Chief. Actually there was no sign of any interchange of information between them. M. Poincaré, in complete opposition to me, persisted in his violent and bitter hostility to the Armistice, instead of going for information to Foch, who let the Presidential fulminations pass

without once raising his voice in protest. The simplest explanation is perhaps that Foch was only boasting when he claimed to know what was happening on the other side of the front. That would be the most likely thing. I dare not think it *was* so, for that would be a very ugly trait.

Even apart from any other evidence, the least competent observer would have seen that the relative strength of the forces in the field, after a four years' war during which the greatest battles of history had been waged, tended inevitably on both sides to create a new situation, hastened by the American intervention, which would decidedly incline the victory to our side. For it must be clearly recognized that it was the collapse of the German soldier's resistance that brought about the revolution in Berlin, with all its consequences, and not the civil revolution that brought about the military revolution, as it has vainly been attempted to establish.

On November 11, 1918, the fighting ceased.

It is not I who will dispute the German soldier's qualities of endurance. But he had been promised a *fresh and frolicsome war*, and for four years he had been pinned down between the anvil and the hammer. It was a famous German, Plancke, who set before us the new theory of the *quanta*, according to which cosmic energy is discontinuous, exerted in a series of determinate shocks. Byzantium attained to dominion over Athens and Rome. Her quantum was soon exhausted. The quantum of a hypothetical German civilization would not take us very far, because she is to-day still too close to barbarism, while the quantum of a Hellenic civilization, even though conquered, is nowhere near exhaustion. Our defeat would have resulted in a relapse of human civilization into violence and bloodshed. The question is to know what contribution to moral progress our victory can and must furnish, if it be maintained.

The truth is that the German soldier and the German civilian found, both at the same moment, that they had exhausted their efforts to conquer, while on the French side we were struggling for our existence, aided by the splendid combination of warlike virtues of our gallant allies—always excepting the common portion of moral degeneracy which was in every country the brand of the *embusqué*. The French fighter was, on the eve of the Armistice, as steadfast a soldier as at any moment during the War.

Yes! yes! I know. There had been mutinies, when there was vacillation in the command. A few days of ugly talking, not to stop the War, but to make all the leaders share the blame attaching to the few who had failed to give them victory. I saw these 'mutineers.' I talked with them. All that was needed was to show them the Germans. The most dangerous man was perhaps the man who said nothing. Of making an end to the War there was never any question. I saw vague gestures of anger. All these *mutineers* were only waiting for an opportunity to return to the ranks. On the whole, it may be said that order was completely restored without measures of repression at the mere cry of "Forward!"

Outrages against human civilization are in the long run defeated by their own excess, and thus I discern in the peculiar mentality of the German soldier, with his "*Deutschland über alles*," the cause of the premature exhaustion that brought him to beg for an armistice before the French soldier, who was fighting for his independence.

Violent and excessive crime palls sooner than more normal and commonplace inhumanity, pending the day, still no doubt far off, when the pendulum will move with a gentler swing.

This is one of the causes to which I attribute the moral exhaustion of the German on both his fronts, while our Frenchman, with his unaccountable reputation of being superficial and volatile, held out smiling, with a stout heart that never faltered, to the very end.

As far as I am concerned, there was no difference of opinion between Marshal Foch and myself, except on the question of the number of troops to be retained by the Germans, and I obtained a very considerable reduction of these without any difficulty. On this last point I ought to state that Marshal Foch made no objection. It is unlikely that he looked on the question as unimportant. But he considered that, at least until peace was established, lists of figures that it was impossible to check could not be of any consequence in the state of chaotic disorganization in which Germany then was.

I had to defend myself in the Chamber against the accusation of "*having failed to disarm Germany*." This was the only objection that the Opposition, in its disorganized state, could find to raise. To all that I could say one reply was made, "*Disarm Germany!*" and the Chamber rang with applause. The deputy who succeeded me at the Ministry was among the loudest in this affair. When he had taken over my portfolio it must be supposed that Germany found herself disarmed by magic, for there was no more about it.

But our journalist warriors had a whole list of exciting adventures to pursue. First we were blamed for not having followed the etiquette prescribed under the Monarchy for the disarming of troops with the ceremony of a formal surrender. All arms were to be left behind in the field. The soldier was to advance up to a fixed line, lay down his rifle on the ground, and go back to his own country. I must confess that this procedure did not appeal to me in the least.

Soon another campaign was launched to show that we had committed an unpardonable sin in accepting the Armistice, instead of going on and signing it in Berlin. Marshal Foch, who was responsible for Rethondes, had not allowed himself to be decoyed into that path. To his honour I must say that I have heard him protest in no measured tones against the absurd ideas of certain quill-drivers, declaring roundly that, once the military result had been achieved, we had no right to gamble with "*the life of a single man*" over a question that was completely settled from the military point of view.

As for me, my duty was very simple. Mr Wilson, when he sent us the American Army, had put to us the famous fourteen points. Were we prepared to cease fighting on the day when the Germans accepted these various points? If I had refused to reply in the affirmative it would have been nothing less than a breach of faith, and the country would have denounced me with one voice, while our soldiers would have disowned me, and with good reason.

We, like our allies, were unanimous for acceptance. It was France's peace, the Allies' peace. We had no right to risk a single human life for another result. The answer has been made that the splendour of our military triumph would have made the Germans more resigned to defeat. They had seen Napoleon's soldiers file past under the

Brandenburg Gate, and every one knows that at Leipzig they had forgotten it. To ensure the execution of the Treaty all we lacked later on was a statesman of some strength of purpose.

After I had promised, with every one's approval, to agree to President Wilson's conditions, conditions as wise as they were firm, was I likely to confront him with a refusal at the moment when he asked me to fulfil our engagements? I was not the man to turn traitor to myself as well as to my country. Besides, nobody asked me to, until the danger involved in refusal was past. The same thing happened over the annexation of the Rhineland, when Foch's campaign only won a few adherents after every chance of its realization had gone.

To be quite candid, there was no serious opposition to the harshest clauses of the Armistice except among our British allies, who were applying themselves heartily to the task of sparing Germany—fearing nothing so much as that the balance of power might too markedly swing over to the advantage of her 'ally,' France. In his book, *The World Crisis*, Mr Winston Churchill, who is very far from being our enemy, relates how he dined with Mr Lloyd George on the evening of the Armistice, and how the conversation turned on the sole topic of the best way of helping Germany. At such a moment perhaps it might have been more natural to think first and foremost of succouring France, so cruelly ravaged by the German soldiers.

On my return from India, as I was passing through London on my way to Oxford to receive an honorary degree, Mr Lloyd George asked me to come and see him at the House of Commons. His first words were to ask me if I had anything to say to him.

"Yes, indeed!" I replied. "I have to tell you that from the very day after the Armistice I found you an enemy to France."

"Well," he rejoined, "*was it not always our traditional policy?*"

In conformity with this view, Mr Lloyd George and Field-Marshal Sir Douglas Haig had sought to mitigate the terms imposed on Germany. But throughout all discussions the French point of view was upheld. It was upon just this divergence of views that the Germans had speculated when they declared war on us. But they had grossly miscalculated the British mentality when they had actually believed, like the simple barbarians that they were, that, with Belgium violated, Great Britain would look on without raising a hand.

Great Britain has not ceased to be an island defended by the waves, which is why she believes herself obliged to multiply causes of dissension among the peoples of the Continent, so as to secure peace for her own conquests. This policy has brought her many a day of triumph, in opposition to us.

The new men on the other side of the Channel have not yet perceived that since those days there have been many changes. They were fully aware, however, that the invasion of Belgium meant that they were directly menaced in their most vital parts by a Germany that was declaring that *her future was on the water*. They decided to save England with our assistance, at the risk of freeing France at the same time. They gallantly fulfilled their part, and we treasure up for them a gratitude they mistrust, through fear that we may make it an excuse for securing those future advantages which still haunt the dreams of some of our warlike civilians. Our fate seems to be settled, for

an invading America has taken it into her head to pay us visits the aims of which are commercial, and Great Britain may yet suffer more from this than the insight of her latter-day politicians yet allows them to suppose. How many notes of interrogation attend the mere statement of the first problems of the peace!

CHAPTER VII

MILITARY INSUBORDINATION

MARSHAL FOCH was a great soldier on the field of battle. All very well, but is that enough? In spite of his forty years of service—to use the soldiers' peculiarly apt expression—a few opinions voiced from outside, a few specious arguments, were at times enough to make him forget the true significance of his life, his whole *raison d'être*.

His reverence for the virtue of the highest of his obligations, *obedience*, was not impregnable. His soul lacked that *inflexibility* in the performance of duty which is the surest sign of moral and intellectual greatness in the soldier no less than in the civilian. For this primordial reason, and for the best practice of the art of war, all soldiers of all ranks are subject to the common discipline of strict obedience to superiors, from which no departure at any time or on any pretext is sanctioned. In face of temptation, this soldier threw on the dungheap that religion of discipline which he had himself practised and taught throughout his whole career. Was he intoxicated by the dazzling splendour of his fame, was he blinded by the smoke of the incense? Did he believe that he was called upon to play a political part, like so many other warriors of whom history relates that by a wrong notion of their duty they aggravated the evils they had promised to cure?

Having stated before the Allies as much of his opinion on the Peace Treaty as he thought he ought to make known, the Marshal had acquitted himself of his responsibilities. His conscience was clear. His views were known, and they had been studied by the public authorities. No matter how those authorities proceeded to deal with them, he had no right to appeal from them to the politicians. He was neither a plenipotentiary nor a statesman. As commander of the Allied armies he was simply a soldier. In the circumstances surely that was good enough!

"Do you know," the Marshal said to me one day, "that I am not your subordinate?"

"No, I don't," I replied, with a laugh. "I don't even want to know who put that notion into your head. You know that I am your friend. I strongly advise you not to try to act on this idea, for it would never do."

There was no answer.[1]

In his allegations and his denials the General did not always strive after a scrupulous conformity with the facts; and this occasionally led him into contradicting himself.

In the middle of the Peace Treaty discussions he had given the *Daily Mail* an interview, in an attempt to combat what the Allies had agreed upon, and I had learned from a reliable source that one of his officers went to revise the proofs. President Wilson and Mr Lloyd George hotly protested against my tolerating the improper intervention of a soldier in the sphere of the civil authorities. On my asking the General for an explanation he *denied* that he was the author of the article, and told me that the

officer I spoke of was at that moment on the way to Angoulême.[2] At this I put an end to the interview as I wanted to avoid a scene, and I swallowed Mr Lloyd George's criticism, concluding that in England a similar delinquency would have been severely punished.

But here is what the General, whose recollections were erratic, is to-day reported as having said:

"*I had merely given an interview to the 'Daily Mail'* to say what I thought of the treaty that was being presented. Reproduction of this interview was forbidden by the censorship.[3] Clemenceau, despotic and Jacobin as he was, was reluctant to allow anyone else, least of all a soldier, to interfere in the negotiations, which he intended to conduct all by himself."

This is a confession after a denial. When I insist on respect for the civil power from military authority I find myself obliged to remind Marshal Foch that he had no right to turn journalist.

On October 5, 1919, Mr Lloyd George had sent the Marshal his "sincere congratulations on his birthday."

Foch wrote, "I am deeply touched by your good wishes. . . . I do not forget that it is to your insistence that I owe the post I now occupy."

To this I reply that it is absolutely *untrue* that Marshal Foch ever owed "his post" to Mr Lloyd George. He owed it to me, the head of the French Government, who always wanted this, while it needed a defeat of the British Army to put an end to the English Government's OPPOSITION to the nomination of General Foch to the post of Commander-in-Chief.

And what of his congratulating Mr Lloyd George on having forced his choice of a French general on the French Government itself? A strange forgetfulness of his own dignity and the respect due to his own Government for a French soldier to display! And what are we to say, moreover, if the alleged fact is a pure invention?

I had placed the Army of the East, both the French and the British divisions, under the command of General Franchet d'Esperey, who had been *limogé*, along with General Duchesne, after the collapse of the Chemin des Dames, for which they and certain others bore the responsibility. M. de Freycinet, to whose staff General Franchet d'Esperey had been attached, had spoken to me of him with high praise, and that was the reason why, after a very brief disgrace, I reinstated him and gave him this important post.

I made the mistake of not consulting Mr Lloyd George, who did not always trouble his head about our arrangements. I do not know who told him[4] that I had put a general who had been *limogé* at the head of the Army of the East. "The most signal failure of the whole War" was the nickname he bestowed on him on this occasion. He assailed me with the most violent reproaches in open session of the Versailles Conference. I preserved a complete calm, and simply replied that I would change the Commander-in-Chief of the Army of the East if Mr Lloyd George asked me, but that I did not advise him to do so.

M. Sonnino congratulated me on having remained cool and collected, and Mr Lloyd George, when the sitting was resumed, proposed with a smile that the whole of that part of the proceedings should be expunged from the minutes, to which I nodded assent. When General Franchet d'Esperey won the victory that bade fair to impose peace from the East upon the Western Front I observed to my British colleague that my choice had not been such a bad one.

"He has been lucky," he replied.

"Well, that's something anyhow," I rejoined. "There are so many people who aren't."

In reality I had only changed my adversary. For General Franchet d'Esperey handled me very roughly in an article which he had inspired, and which was dealt with by M. Tardieu. Too many of our soldiers, and even of our civilians, have an annoying propensity for believing that the world is made for them. General Franchet d'Esperey, after delivering himself of an article in which he blamed me for having prevented him from winning the victory that would have ended the War, went as far as to ask M. Tardieu whether it was myself or Foch that had relieved him of his command. The extent of my offending was that I had put him back in the saddle after a few days, while Foch in similar circumstances had waited for months before he was given another command. It may be seen that it was my privilege to get kicks from every side. Philosophy is not without value for any public man who in the exercise of his authority seeks only the common good.

As a curious offset to this success stands what was known as "the incident of the Villa Romaine."

General Mordacq found among his papers the following note, which I publish without any alteration:

Incident of the Villa Romaine

> On October 6, 1918, M. Clemenceau was informed that Mr Lloyd George had, without consulting anybody, telegraphed direct to the English General Milne, commanding the English forces in the East, under the orders of General Franchet d'Esperey. He wished to place him under the authority of General Allenby, Commander-in-Chief of the British forces in Palestine, with the object of making the English forces in Palestine and in the East carry out a combined operation against Constantinople.
>
> M. Clemenceau immediately pointed out to Lord Derby, the English Ambassador in Paris, that this was tantamount to denouncing the Anglo-French alliance, since it had been agreed that all the Eastern forces (in Europe) should be placed under the orders of a French general, in this case General Franchet d'Esperey, who was responsible for the general conduct of the operations, subject to the authority of the Minister of War.
>
> *October 7.* Throughout the day of October 7 numerous telegrams on this question passed between London and Paris. From these telegrams M. Clemenceau became convinced that Mr Bonar Law and Lord Robert Cecil entirely shared his

view and were ready to support him. He therefore displayed more and more firmness in his demands, and Mr Lloyd George, not feeling very sure of his ground, finally gave way, even going so far as to declare "that it was a mistake, that he had been misunderstood, that such had not been his intentions, and that in any case the telegram should be considered as cancelled."

October 9. On the evening of October 9, as we were returning from the Supreme Council, which had met at Versailles, M. Clemenceau seemed to me highly annoyed with Marshal Foch. He told me that that morning, at a preliminary meeting at the Villa Romaine (at Versailles), where Mr Lloyd George was staying, the Marshal, after having promised M. Clemenceau to support the French Government, which was completely opposed to this combined English expedition against Constantinople by land (Europe and Asia), to be directed by General Milne, had suddenly, during this preliminary meeting, sided with Mr Lloyd George.

October 10. Next day, October 10, the Marshal, summoned by M. Clemenceau, came to see him at the Ministry to give him the reasons for this sudden change of attitude. He did not succeed in convincing M. Clemenceau, although he added that in his opinion, seeing that the ground in Asia and even in Europe was very difficult, and, consequently, the bringing up of supplies and the evacuation of sick and wounded almost impossible, General Milne would very probably *take a hard knock*.[5]

"In that case," retorted M. Clemenceau, "why didn't you say so to Mr Lloyd George?"

The Marshal only shrugged his shoulders in reply.

I quote these incidents because they are characteristic of the difficulties of a situation in which there was antagonism between the very elements that, above all, ought to have been in close agreement. Marshal Foch had every right to change his mind, but he should have notified me of it. And I could not conceal my surprise when I saw him revert in the end to his first opinion, after he had tilted the balance to the other side.

The bare narrative of these incidents is sufficient to show the indefensible propensity of the Commander-in-Chief to sidestep his duty.

What can be said when he actually interferes with the orders of the Allied Conference and REFUSES to transmit a telegram containing a summons to the plenipotentiaries?

On April 17, 1919, Marshal Foch had received the following telegram from me:

FRENCH REPUBLIC

THE PRIME MINISTER
MINISTER OF WAR
PARIS
April 17, 1919

THE PRESIDENT OF THE PEACE CONFERENCE *to* MARSHAL FOCH, *Commander-in-Chief of the Allied Armies*

I have the honour to inform you that the Supreme Council of the Allied and Associated Powers has decided to invite the German delegates plenipotentiary to proceed to Versailles on the evening of April 25, there to receive the text of the peace preliminaries fixed by the Allied and Associated Powers.

The German Government should therefore be requested through General Nudant to indicate as soon as possible the name and quality of the delegates it proposes to send to Versailles, also the number, name, and quality of the persons in their suite. It will be for you, Monsieur le Maréchal, to be so good as to give all proper instructions for the conveyance and arrival of the German delegation.

Instructions are likewise being given to the police authorities for the surveillance and protection of the German delegation at Versailles, which continues to represent the enemy until the actual signing of the peace preliminaries. The German delegation must confine itself strictly to its *rôle*, and must include only persons qualified for their specific mission.

Army headquarters have been asked to furnish a group of officers in order to ensure the liaison between the German delegation, the general secretariat of the Conference, and all French authorities concerned.

[*Signed*] G. CLEMENCEAU

The Marshal did not send my telegram.

He tried to explain his refusal to obey the Minister of War and President of the Peace Conference as a touch of temper. "The object of the telegram," he said, "was in contradiction to the promise made to me that I would be heard by the Council of Ministers.[6] Besides, the terms of this telegram were obscure."

The Marshal did not venture to publish the text I have just given, because it clearly proves, contrary to his allegation, that there is nothing whatever "obscure" in the wording. I defy all his spokesmen to pick out a comma that can be cavilled at.

If refusal of obedience was not of the utmost gravity I would say that Foch's misbehaviour at such a moment assumed a singularly tragic aspect from the fact that it was at the same time an act of disobedience to the Allies, who had entrusted their soldiers to him. This it was that brought to President Wilson's lips the emphatic declaration, "*I will not entrust the American Army to a general who does not obey his Government.*"

The terrible events we have gone through roused violent emotions in us, but we may see every day that these emotions have been very speedily forgotten. As the General had no reason, or even seeming reason, to refuse to dispatch the telegram I sent him, I am obliged to believe that he simply desired to delay the arrival of the plenipotentiaries in order to give himself time to develop once more his obsessing thesis of French cannon upon the Rhine. And so he blocked the path of the Allied Powers. It is he himself who boasts of this act of military rebellion. What would he have said if I had refused him my support because I found fault with one of his military operations?

I temporized, nevertheless. I sent the telegram to Spa myself, taking care to refer in it to the Commander-in-Chief's refusal, so that there might remain a material record of the delinquency, and then I had to take the matter up with the Marshal himself, to whom I made known the protests of the Allied Governments.

We could not keep at the head of our armies a soldier in a state of rebellion. I accordingly took all the steps required by the situation—including the nomination of a new Commander-in-Chief, Marshal Pétain—and after a lapse of a few days, intended to give an opportunity for repenting, I was authorized by the Allies to continue Foch in his post *if he promised on his honour not to behave in the same way again. He pledged himself to everything I asked of him.* He has forgotten to tell this. I am sorry for his sake that he forgot. Even though posthumous, the avowal would have been something.

That was not enough for him. Even after his death he set himself to force us into a kind of respect for his offence by turning his recriminations against me. Yet can it be said that I was too harsh with him, or must it not rather be recognized that I rescued him from a deadly fix? Had I not done the same thing in the Chamber of Deputies in the debate on the affair of the Chemin des Dames, in which his responsibility was so seriously involved? If I sinned it was through excess of forbearance, and the Government behaved with great leniency, fearing to trouble the mind of the nation and shake the confidence of the Allied troops in victory.

There is indeed another question, but the answer eludes me, and for good reasons! Since M. Raymond Poincaré, the President of the Republic, was master of all of us in virtue of his authority, I should like to know if he intervened with Marshal Foch, as was his duty, to blame him for his signal act of military disobedience. To-day we know he had evolved a theory for the especial benefit of Marshal Foch, to explain to him that he was not my subordinate. But what then could free the Marshal from the bonds of the Constitution, from the laws of France, and from military discipline? When the President of the Republic saw his military subordinate set himself in open rebellion against the French Government and its allies by refusing to obey them, did he say a word, one single word, to him to bring him back to the path of duty?

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[1] This meant, as I learned later, that the inalienable authority possessed by President Wilson and Mr Lloyd George over their national troops deprived me of part of mine over the French command. Such was the view of a professional lawyer, M. Poincaré.

[2] An evasive statement. It is easy to take a train after correcting a set of proofs.

[3] It remains for me to ask the Commander-in-Chief where he got the right to be writing in newspapers. And that is not my whole complaint, since Foch, not content with setting an example of disobedience, made one of his subordinates an accomplice in his own insubordination. Not only does he refuse to obey, but he also orders disobedience.

[4] Or, rather, I have no wish to know.

[5] *N.B.*—The Army of the East (under General Franchet d'Esperey) was under the sole control of the Minister of War. Marshal Foch was merely consulted, and could issue no orders.

[6] The promises made to the Marshal to invite him to the Council of Ministers before the handing of the peace terms to the Germans had been so generously fulfilled that Foch had been heard TWICE OVER—at the Council of the Ministers and at the plenary session of the Conference, on April 25 and on May 6, 1919, on the very eve of the handing of the Treaty to the Germans. If then the Marshal believed that he needed to remind me of my promises he had only to write to me or to come and see me, as he was constantly doing on every sort of occasion.

As to the *result* of these conferences, reference may be made to M. Tardieu (*La Paix*):

"Marshal Foch, whom M. Clemenceau has specially summoned, repeats his criticisms. He is listened to. He withdraws. The Council deliberates, and, after a two hours' debate, *unanimously* pronounces in favour of the Treaty. But this is not all, and, on May 6, at the plenary session of the Conference, which takes place twenty-four hours before the handing of the Treaty to the Germans, the illustrious chief of the victorious armies once again puts forward his protest."

CHAPTER VIII

THE BELGIAN INCIDENT

SILENCE is golden. A few unnecessary words—some of them inaccurate—about the movements of the battle of the Yser brought Foch the mortification of a fully justified protest from the King of the Belgians. I have described the General's admirable behaviour on this occasion. Why did it ever come into his head to embellish the part he played at the expense of our Belgian friends, whose heroism had never faltered? King Albert saw himself obliged to take up General Foch's remarks upon the attitude of the Belgian Army, which had not given way for a single moment after duly receiving from the King his order to hold out to the bitter end.

An article by M. Stéphane Lauzanne in the *Matin* of November 11, 1926, reporting a conversation with the Marshal, makes him sum up in a phrase his famous theory of command by *suggestion*, "*I did not command as much as has been supposed.* I brought those around me to my ideas, WHICH IS A TOTALLY DIFFERENT THING." Even too different at times, may I venture to say?

At the battle of the Yser in November 1914 Foch had, it is quite true, to overcome Field-Marshal Sir John French's hesitations, and he did it magnificently with a vim and vigour that left no opportunity for any deviation from his authority. I have already told this. Foch had not got the chief command, but he assumed it, and we owe him the success of a decisive day. I am delighted to pay him this tribute without the least reservation.

But this was no sufficient reason for attributing to the King of the Belgians a part he never played. That excellent chief, whom I have seen admirably firm in the worst moments, had already given *orders that were in conformity with the "advice"* of Foch, who now nevertheless speaks of him as a chief whose irresolution he had to overcome.

> On his side the King of the Belgians, in the consultations I had with him, would say to me, "Under the Constitution I am responsible to my people for what remains of my Army: I cannot sacrifice it." To which I would answer, "Sire, consider that very responsibility, and be certain that you will sacrifice your Army if you fall back." To both of them[1] I left, on a corner of the table, two papers hurriedly drawn up, and couched in almost identical language. "*You will stay where you are. You will defend the lines you are holding.*" These were not orders, but advice. Only I persuaded the King of the Belgians and the English Field-Marshal so well that it was good advice that they issued the appropriate orders. And I verily believe that on that occasion I commanded, though I had no right of command.[2] I even think that I never commanded so fully as on the Yser, where I had no right at all to command. Only I had discovered the way to command. . . .

The King of the Belgians is naturally of moderate temper, but he is not the man to endure uncalled-for affronts. He made a trenchant reply in the following letter:

THE PALACE
BRUSSELS
November 13, 1926

MONSIEUR LE MARÉCHAL,

I have read with some astonishment the account published in the *Matin* by M. Stéphane Lauzanne of an alleged conversation with you.

It would appear from the opinions attributed to you in this article that in November 1914 *it was my intention to order the retreat of the Army if you had not intervened at the right moment*.

For the honour of my Army I cannot permit any such version of the facts to be spread abroad.

I permit myself to remind you that on October 16, when I had the honour to receive your first visit, *the Belgian Army had been already cognizant for three days of my proclamation according to the terms of which "anyone who pronounced the word 'retreat' was to be regarded as a traitor to his country," and had the day before received the order to "hold the line of the Yser at all costs*."

The most drastic punishments had been proclaimed for any military leader who should give an order to retreat, whatever the circumstances might be, and, in point of fact, during the whole period of the battle no order for retreat was given.

It is true that on the 26th of October the extremely critical circumstances in which the troops were fighting had led the Chief of Staff to contemplate falling back to a position in the rear, *but you are not ignorant of the fact that this plan was not approved by me and that I steadfastly opposed its being considered*. All this took place, furthermore, in October, and not in November.

As for the written document it is alleged you left me containing your advice, I have no recollection of receiving it. Of course, I know what the cause of the Allies owes to your energy, and that your urgent representations to General Joffre hastened the dispatch of the assistance of which we stood in so much need.

Allow me once more to express the gratitude we all feel for your invaluable help on this occasion.

But you, a marshal of France, the personification of the chivalrous qualities of a noble nation, you will, I am sure, understand that it is my bounden duty to preserve unsullied the well-deserved reputation of my officers and soldiers, to whose bravery and tenacity, when all is said and done, the fortunate issue of the battle of the Yser was due.

Believe me, etc.,
ALBERT

Not till then did Marshal Foch think of repudiating M. Stéphane Lauzanne's interview. The papers of the 20th (the King's letter was dated the 13th) published his reply to the King of the Belgians. Here it is:

SIRE,

Pray allow me to reply to the letter your Majesty did me the honour to address to me recently.

I have given no interview to any journalist, and when M. Stéphane Lauzanne came to see me on October 7 it was for a quite different purpose from that which leads me to write to-day to your Majesty.[3]

Finding myself thus completely unconcerned with the writing of the *Matin* article of November 11,[4] I entirely repudiate all responsibility[5] for the narrative and the comments contained in this article, which gave rise to your letter of November 13.

With the vivid recollection of a past that is always present to my eyes, I steadfastly preserve, as I think I have frequently testified, the feelings, first awakened during the battle, of affection and high esteem for the Belgian Army, and of profound respect for its King, the renewed and unchangeable assurance of which I beg your Majesty to condescend to accept from me.

FOCH

Marshal Foch's repudiations all proceed on the same lines. To-day he acknowledges the interview he gave the *Daily Mail* on the question of the Rhine, though he denied it when I taxed him with it. And then the accompanying amplification merely touches on subsidiary considerations. The main point alone is left untouched. He gave no interview to M. Stéphane Lauzanne, but he talked with him. What sort of distinction is this? Did he, or did he not, say that he had made the King of the Belgians go forward after overcoming his opposition? And what of the King's statement, in reply, that when he received Foch's first visit the most formal order to stand its ground without retreat had already been given to the Belgian Army? That is what called for an answer, but Marshal Foch is careful not to give one. This silence is all the more significant from the fact that in bringing the matter to a conclusion M. Stéphane Lauzanne shows not the slightest sign of any disposition to modify his account.

And that is how Marshal Foch, at a moment when his military conduct deserves all praise, enmeshes himself, from the desire to aggrandize his own *rôle*, in terminological shufflings from which he never succeeds in clearing his great name.

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[1] Field-Marshal Sir John French was with the King.

[2] I have noted this.

[3] That is not the point.

[4] Not at all, inasmuch as he acknowledges that there was a conversation.

[5] Not possible, inasmuch as he gives no judgment upon the statements of M. Stéphane Lauzanne and says neither yes nor no to them.

CHAPTER IX

THE PEACE CONFERENCE

THE PEACE CONFERENCE—MAGIC word, following with startling suddenness on the carnage of the War to precipitate men from the worst excesses of violence into the bottomless pit of a hope of universal justice, as swift to show itself as to vanish away in smoke! Too many stark realities in the War, and too many postponements in the making of peace. The same sincerity, the same ardour in the preparation of mass murder, as in the fogs of verbal idealisms. The usual swinging of the inevitable pendulum that governs the contradictions of this life of ours, ever doomed to disappointment.

While awaiting the plenipotentiaries of the civilized world, who were to meet in Paris,[1] I thought of the ancient accessories of palavers and parades that used to go hand in hand on such ceremonial occasions. We had suffered too much on every side to revive the tradition of the international festivities that served as interludes to the high-sounding decrees of the sovereigns, who used to take pleasure in diverting the nations before dismembering them. I wondered to myself how much of the past could be done away with in favour of the new conceptions, and how much of the respectable hotch-potch of diplomatic approximations which we call truth would be imposed upon us, under the form of decent, sober courtesy, by the unchanging realities of international problems.

M. Poincaré, to leave nothing out, has taken the opportunity to express regret that the Treaty of Versailles should not have maintained the diplomatic pre-eminence of the French language. Yet he knows what immense territories the English tongue has won at our expense during the last two centuries.[2] To disregard facts is an important part of the art of the advocate. As for us, poor political stonemasons, we carve in stone historical monuments which sometimes deceive us no less than the old parchments swallowed up in the arcana of the past.

The Arc de Triomphe, completed by Louis-Philippe of “peace at any price” fame, invites us to live in the memories of Austerlitz or Jena, while the real end of the Napoleonic adventure (which is not the whole history of France) was Waterloo. And if we wished to carry on with the thread of the old story should we not find the descendants of Wellington barring the way to the posterity of Blucher?

Need it be added that since those times America has appeared in the amazing development of a vehement energy that carries a population of a hundred millions to the excesses of a materialistic power that, once let loose, no one will be able to master? For the moment she is claiming to establish herself in the economic world of Europe in the guise of a master, with the same eventual outcome as the onslaughts of those conquerors who, in spite of so many apparent triumphs, came to grief in the end. So was it with Napoleon, whom we have already named. The fact is that there is no standing still. We must either rise or fall.

They talk of effecting a reconciliation between us and Germany: nothing would give me greater pleasure. But the German nation is unscrupulous, and the French like nothing so much as to forget. If one goes forward at every moment, while the other gives himself up to the enervating delights of going back, no two people will ever meet full face.

As I have said, I was concerned with other things than the troopers' tales of a victorious soldier dissatisfied with the share of victory assigned to him. As much as, and more than any other I should desire, if it were possible, never in any shape or guise to fall back into the bloody adventures of military conquests that are still a temptation haunting the feverish imaginations of the German peoples.

Far be it from me to ignore the transforming power of the humanitarian movement which, by so many unexpected paths, leads us to doctrinal achievements of an aspiration that is sometimes so high that we find a difficulty in living up to some of it through the vicissitudes of time. In very truth, both victors and vanquished move onward to approximations of a common destiny, under different names. Quick to speak, slow to do: there we have one of the formulas of mankind in action. Everybody knows nowadays that no one nation can carry out what should be the task of all, as is clearly proved by the historical succession of nations to achieve pre-eminence in the conquests of the human mind.

Only for a time do wars destroy the strength of the vanquished to the advantage of the victor. And yet the progress of murder machines goes faster than that of organizations for peace. Already the bombardment of towns by asphyxiating gases seems to be reaching a perfection that will not be easily surpassed. To-day it even seems that a good organization for butchery, functioning smoothly, could, with a sufficient number of Zeppelins, in a few seconds destroy a town—a whole people, in fact—without even some report from a secretary of a maid-of-all-work League of Nations being left for the eye of the historian of this last phase of progress.

Ah, well! In spite of these vast horizons in the cloudiness of which the human mind is lost, as soon as men of ordinary feeling meet together to discuss the chances of a peace of mutual tolerance—since we cannot have brotherhood—gestures become quiet, tones grow gentler, eyelids flutter over astonished eyes, and the hand is unclenched for a gesture of goodwill. Gone are the Talleyrands, the Metternichs, of yesterday, shadows of the days for ever past! Now let the door open to the messengers of the new era.

I waited. At last a providential hand draws back the curtain of the somewhat vulgar golds and faded silks of the Quai d'Orsay. And here is Lloyd George, fresh and pink, coming forward with a bright, two-fisted smile, and gesticulations now and then so violent that one day President Wilson had to interpose between us with outstretched arms, saying pleasantly, "Well, well! I have never come across two such unreasonable men!" which allowed us to end the angry scene in laughter.

And here is Mr Arthur Balfour, the most cultured, the most gracious, the most courteous of adamantine men. Mr Bonar Law, the prince of balance, who would have been a first-class Frenchman had he not been wholly British. Lord Robert Cecil, a Christian who believes and is fain to live his belief, with a smile like a Chinese dragon to express a stubborn mind banged, barred, and bolted against arguments. Lord Milner,

a brilliant intellect crowned with high culture that culminates in a discreet sentimentality. Extreme gentleness and extreme firmness. A poet in his moments. The man who, in an official report on a night journey from London to Versailles at one of our most trying moments, paused to speak of the loveliness of the moonlight and the young spring grass.

Later there comes on the scene President Woodrow Wilson, armoured in his "fourteen points," symbolized in as many pointed wisdom teeth that never let themselves be turned aside from their duty. Edward House, "Colonel House," a super-civilized person escaped from the wilds of Texas, who sees everything, who understands everything, and, while never doing anything but what he thinks fit, knows how to gain the ear and the respect of everybody. A good American, very nearly as good a Frenchman, a sifting, pondering mind—above all, the traditional gentleman. I should be most ungrateful if I could forget the eminent services that this man, one of the best types of the true American, rendered the cause of a civilized peace. Were it only for picking out this good auxiliary, Mr Wilson would deserve the gratitude of the friends of humanity.

Doubtless he had too much confidence in all the talky-talk and super-talky-talk of his "League of Nations." But what could he do with an assembly of talkers to whom he saw himself obliged to refuse all executive power? Excess of confidence in words can only lead to disappointments.

I must furthermore mention our excellent General Bliss, an independent mind who had well-anchored personal opinions and never budged from them. Also an admiral physician who returned an everlasting *no* to whatever he was asked, and never attempted a word of explaining. And Mr Hoover, to-day President of the United States, who was conspicuous for the stiffness of the man whose nerves are at the end of their tether; Signer Orlando, all things to all men, very Italian, seconded by Baron Sonnino, possessed of a formidable irony, who never let go once he had got his teeth in anything; M. Hymans, a Belgian, politely incisive.

And then comes one of the best of them all, Benes, the man of resuscitated Czecho-Slovakia, who won general esteem and confidence by the high rectitude of his speech and by his lofty intellect. Venizelos, the veritable son of Ulysses and Calypso, imbued, as was meet and proper, with ancient Hellenic guile. Paderewski, great harmonious soul, making his overflowing heart sing his dream. And there are many others whom I ought to name, not to mention the ineffable group of malcontents—Robert Lansing, Keynes, etc.

How many more as well—Wellington Koo, like a young Chinese cat, Parisian of speech and dress, absorbed in the pleasure of patting and pawing the mouse, even if it was reserved for the Japanese. His inexhaustible flow of eloquence used to irritate Baron Matsui, a massive chunk of Japanese mentality, who spoke little, but did not shrink from speaking out. Amiable Prince Saionji, impetuous once, to-day quietly ironical, an old comrade of mine at the lectures of our law professor, Émile Accolas. Count Makino, understanding and reserved.

In the first rank I ought to have placed Mr Hughes, the noble delegate from Australia, with whom we had to talk through an electrophone, getting in return

symphonies of good sense. Doherty, the delegate from Canada, good-looking, but with an expression of limited intelligence. The delegate from New Zealand, Massey, who takes his place in the first rank for the loftiness of his sentiments and the eloquent kindliness of his broad speech. It was a stock joke to ask him how old he was when he gave up being a cannibal, to which he would answer, "Anyway, I had mine cooked, but you eat yours raw." Smuts of South Africa, with his forced smile, who made the mistake of leaving papers about in which he vented his spleen against the French. And then, flitting round this nosegay of minds in flower, whole constellations of faces for consultation, which lit up and died down at the questions of those who had brought them there to endow them with omniscience.

Then, moving about in the heart of this crowd with an amiable smile, the real master of ceremonies, Maurice Hankey,[3] secretary of the British delegation, dragging along after him a huge leather satchel, overflowing with papers. His superior qualities of order, of loyalty, and of impeccable discipline conferred upon him the function, if not the title, of universal keeper of the documentation of the Treaty. At anyone's demand the great leather bag was brought forward, and the papers required were instantly produced.

I have kept until the end my great friend the Maharajah of Bikaner, who spoke out boldly against the lifting of the feminine veil of Islam (the *purdah*). In the Rampura jungle, on my visit to the excellent Maharajah of Gwalior, he enabled me to make the acquaintance of my lord the tiger, and pay him my appropriate respects.

Here was an assembly of widely varied individuals in which it might be said that every continent and quarter of the globe was represented, all characterized by a common body of ideas as to the rights of peoples to govern themselves according to a representative system which, with all its imperfections, will nevertheless remain an achievement far and away nobler than the violences of conquest. I allow that it may not be the last word of our civilization. What is the last word in anything? It is none the less the sign of an emancipation of human societies emerging from the realm of primitive violence to shape themselves to the reactions that establish freedom.[4]

Let us then salute them on their entering into history, these liberators who bring to the brutalities of empiricism the help of ideas. The first uses to which this independence is put may be, and, in fact, too often are, but second-rate. But the elimination of part of the violences of human society, to make way for a better order in the development of human personality, of human dignity, marks such an achievement in the activities of the thinking creature that there can be no misuse capable of making him regret it.

To make a mistake is not necessarily to fail, for there are degrees in failure. The French Revolution was a poor inauguration for the era of liberty, equality, and fraternity. But from what it did contribute to inaugurate we have derived the acceptable framework of a social system infinitely superior to that which existed before 1789. In the most simple circumstances general ideas are none the less a great resource. We become enthusiastic too easily, and we grow too easily discouraged. It is up to each individual to seek and find his own standard in each particular circumstance.

The fact is that we are an aggregation of forces from the most remote past in process of becoming unknown formations, impossible to define in any other way than

by a word, the present—this *present* of which we are so proud, and which is a momentary meeting of the hazardous past of which we are the product and the unknown future whither we are tending. How can we help being creatures of presumption and ignorance as much as, and even more than, of straightforward aspiration to the modest greatness that is our allotted portion? Perhaps the hardest part of all is to respect in error itself the grain of truth that finds its way into it only to become distorted.

I salute these delegates of victory—great in idea, poor in resources—who bring in their triumphant hands the raw materials for an effort so splendid that even the disappointments of failure are haloed with an unconquerable hope. Welcome, friends, to our stunned capital, amid the last throes of the most violent outbreak of barbarism, in which civilization itself was on the point of succumbing. You are the living witness of our heights and our depths, between which it is sometimes hard to distinguish. Humanity's witness in its own favour, that is the thing you are bringing to us. To you we owe this moment, a great moment in the history of man, for did not our children give their lives that we might have ours more abundantly?

Yes, I know full well that there will be forces in opposition. Foch, being a soldier, will be loth to abandon the tradition of conquest, and, like every conqueror in history, he has found jurists to construct for him, midway between yes and no, a doctrine of permanent conquest. There is nothing surprising in that. There is no victory that has not, and that does not retain, traces of defeats. There is no defeat that does not carry with it vague echoes whispering of eventual victories that can be worked for.

What is to come of the peace you are about to create by the inauguration of the ceremonies that have brought you among us no man can say, for with the new conditions there is a fresh set of risks to be run? New fights over freedom—by different means. The same opponent, who joins to his wealth of intellectual culture a fundamental lack of moral culture, who, with rare impudence, asks us to found the new peace upon the prodigious lie of Germany's innocence. Good and bad turns of chance variously mingled.

We must speak frankly. The decisions you will arrive at in following the dictates of your conscience you will have deliberated upon among yourselves away from contact with the vanquished troublemaker, who will appear merely to receive your ruling. Shall we be able to keep him to it? You talk of a middle way of justice that can be lived up to. You talk, but action—alas, you leave that to us.

Well, so be it. We shall not prove unworthy perhaps of the burden of hope you have laid on us. Let the adversary come to the treaty table; accounts will be presented to him, and accounts will be asked from him. To maintain Justice—is there a nobler aspiration? To inaugurate a more stable, nobler, finer life than the one he received is the dream of the thinking man. To how many, and for how long, has it been given to realize this dream for themselves while awaiting the chance that would allow them to help others?

In days of old he who was called on to demonstrate movement needed only to walk. At every moment our ideology is challenged for its proofs. At the point where past and future meet, where ideas have to give an account of themselves, we have learned to distinguish between what they promise and what they can accomplish. The gap that lies

between comes from the distance that divides the word from the deed. Weighed down by all the burdens of the past, our wingless ideology would fain free itself by a great dramatic gesture, but man evolves slowly in accordance with progressive adaptations that require millenniums to turn an old form of life into a new one. The whole problem is to persevere instead of becoming discouraged.

That is why, to deprive the Marshal and M. Poincaré of their arguments for the perpetuation of the reign of conquest, I had only to show them the arrival on the scene of these men who even yesterday had never seen one another, and who without any paraphernalia of preliminaries strode into the palace of Louis XIV to deliberate upon the problems of human societies, and even came to an agreement, each party having had its say, without too much friction. If this is not altogether a miracle admit that it is not far short.

For the keynote of the Treaty of Versailles is *the liberation of the peoples*, the independence of nationalities, whereas the keynote of the policy of Marshal Foch and M. Poincaré was the *occupation* of a territory by force of arms against the will of its inhabitants.

I am fully aware that these gentlemen had no objection to the liberation of the peoples. There was no fear of their refusing us their consent. They had no wish to take anything except from their own neighbours. That being conceded, they were peremptory in insisting that no one must follow their example. In truth, the silence of M. Poincaré, who could not dissociate himself from political arguments as easily as the Marshal, was only too easily explained.

Fate has decided. The Conference has spoken. It has been obeyed. Why could it not have kept a strong hand over the execution of the Treaty? But I will not anticipate. Overflowing with German braggadocio, von Brockdorff-Rantzau later on told us that we *hated Germany*, because we had dared to defend ourselves against her aggression, but our European countries, and those organized on European lines, need only go back to their familiar slipshod management of everyday life for the vanquished foe to dare to rear his head arrogantly as if he were the victor, to look in the face the crimes he had acknowledged, and to venture, owing to the general discouragement, to demand a reckoning from those who had put an end to his wrongdoing.

The Conference has passed into history. If, as a result of the endeavours of the vanquished, who had now become noisy hecklers, the Allies did not become actually dis-allied, there were some who threw over their war friendships, and our Governments did not even show the measure of resistance necessary to maintain intact our right to reparations.

The Conference is innocent of these evils. It called before it all the parties interested. All who had anything to say were heard. The Treaty will be judged on its merits. The spectacle of a weighty and imposing Conference of Arbitration between peoples asking for justice is a historical event, which, whatever happens, will have consequences for the future.

There may be some who would question the novelty of the social phenomenon on which I have been dwelling. They would perhaps instance the Danubian peasant in his goatskin *sagum*, deputed to talk straight to the Romans. I take my hat off to him in

passing. But the splendid courage of a solitary hero can only be looked upon as a far-off precursory sign of the concerted intervention of the civilized peoples to free themselves from the oppressor by means of an order of social independence the bases of which they themselves have determined.

At this point especially we are certain to be reminded of the achievements of the famous Treaty of Westphalia, which has been classically cited as an attempt to inaugurate, *while a war was in progress*, something that might become European law. The negotiations were proceeding at the same time as the fighting, while the two representatives of the Great King afforded the lookers-on the spectacle of one of these bitter personal quarrels which seem to be the chief concern of the second-rate in every age. Napoleon, a warrior far above the average, more ingenuous than he had any notion of, for want of the brake of philosophy by his downfall once more established the complete defeat of personal power, even as our Revolution, bandied from the scaffold of January 21 to the crowning of an emperor, had established the overthrow of the power of the people.

It is well known that the Treaty of Westphalia claimed to have founded European law. The French Revolution proved clearly that it had not succeeded. And as Napoleon proved the same thing with regard to the French Revolution, all this imbroglio of wars sent us back to where we had to begin all over again. Mazarin took just about five years to establish a peace dealing with the reshaping of Europe. And while his ambassadors quarrelled violently over questions of precedence and etiquette, the War, kept going through the dilatoriness of diplomacy, actually increased in vigour and fury. In those days war and diplomacy walked side by side. There was no need to hurry.

> At Münster and at Osnabrück the greetings and the visits, the solemn, magniloquent brag of the speeches, the inexhaustible pedantry of the jurists, the open house of the great personages, the huge eatings and drinkings, all the ceremony in which great and small vanities swaggered and peacocked, took up days and days.[5]

And then there was the Congress of Vienna, when it was the turn of the European aristocracies, which was destined to prepare the contentions of oligarchies from which benefits beyond all telling were expected. “The Congress is not moving, it is *dancing*,” writes the Prince de Ligne. And, in truth, it was just one round of ballets, comedies, operas, hunts, fantastic supper-parties, entertainments of the wildest kind. A young Austrian count who was to act the part of Apollo stood out for a whole month against having his moustache shaved off. It required the personal intervention of the Empress to bring him to it. Such were the topics of conversation, such the things that kept all minds in suspense, until the Robinson Crusoe of the island of Elba put an end to these follies, merely to change islands.

The task of bringing a tired ideology into the middle-class sphere of our day held in store for us other and less showy pastimes, which have left us as though despoiled of ourselves in the face of the great international problems that are always waiting and never solved.

In 1870 Bismarck discovered us stranded by storms as far as possible from those pilgrims of ideas who flocked to Versailles from every country in the world, having forged their fairest hopes upon the anvil of a history which had led them through periods of cruel suffering. The Rethondes Armistice bears witness that we have recovered ourselves once more. Our delegates for freedom know perfectly what they would like to do. They do not know what they will do. Something like the state of mind of our worthy members of Assembly of 1789 who talked Montesquieu from the tribune without discovering the meeting-ground of what should be taken and what left in order to attain a happy blending of the revolutionary and the stable elements. Those whom life has made modest are glad to try. Those whom ideology sends forward to the assault of phenomena will come up against too many people who are but the mass of incapacity in revolt. Sooner or later they will understand that the meeting of the potentialities of the past with the promises of the future gives rise to the disappointments of a long spell of efforts for mere simulacra of unsubstantial results. Those who fail to understand the welter of energies into which their fate has thrust them will experience the bitterest disillusionment. Others will be satisfied with revolutions of words, which are the most beautiful of all, but the shortest-lived.

It happens, too, that victory inclines to the right side, and that at the call of this providential inadvertency the oppressed arise, as in a dream, and march by the star with closed eyes along the path to a lesser evil, if not a greater good.

“In thine own effort find thy recompense,” said the oracle.

It is for each of us to realize that the most certain gain he has won by emerging victorious from the fight is the power of cheerfully carrying his burden, to which he may sometimes even add part of another’s load. No matter what the result, the best of man’s life is to try.

I was there. My eyes met the eyes of friends. My hands touched brotherly hands. I hoped. I desired. I even sometimes acted under the cross-fire of words, with an insubordinate soldier at my heels, a President of the Republic who would have liked to see me at the bottom of a well, in the noise and bustle of Parliament, which was already giving tongue tumultuously, like a pack of hounds when the stag has taken soil.

Meanwhile, all the delegates from all the countries must needs take me aside, in turn, to expound their particular theses, giving me plainly to understand that I should be the vilest of creatures if I raised an objection. And each of us submitted to his neighbour’s ‘turn,’ until the whole series was gone through to the end—after which we had to sort out railways, lakes, rivers, and mountains on maps drawn, not so guilelessly as might appear, with a view to contradictory conclusions, while in the Chamber my adversaries, who had managed only to *bungle the War*, took it upon themselves, whatever I did, to prove that I had *bungled the peace*.

In 1848, at Nantes, I had seen the Poles set off in arms for the conquest of their country: to-day I found Paderewski filled with the joy of having found his country again. A strong bond of happy emotion between these two moments. Sometimes there are moments of such dazzling beauty in stormy human life, like the lightning-flash in a tempest, that we may be allowed to give ourselves up to their enjoyment, in spite of the

touch of melodrama. We have come a long way, have we not, from Foch and his *tales*? [6]

Such as it is, with its shortcomings, avoidable or otherwise, the Treaty of Versailles, preceded by the Armistice, like the first chords of the orchestra, will at least mark a pause in the present or future harmony of peoples striving for freedom.

What will remain of the greatest effort of the human civilizations for an enlargement of universal civilization I shall not attempt to foresee, after ten years of talk in which victors and vanquished have gone on the same tack to shatter, one by one, every guarantee of success.

If the Germans, those friends of culture, had been capable of aspiring to other things than facilities for oppression under the leading of their *steel helmets*, I would feel bound to admire the vigour of their systematic reactions against military defeat. But the moral progress of man would apparently exceed our organic possibilities if we could swing completely from one pole of our sensibilities to the other. Our fathers awaited the Messiah. The Messiah is within us. The problem is to set him free.

Too many people prefer, in general, to let themselves drift with the times, while the overthrown enemy in the shadow, or even in the full light of day, is planning a turning of the tables. The Greek cities destroyed each other turn and turn about, until Rome swallowed them up in the common melting-pot of her violent transitory civilization. That same Rome, having utterly and systematically destroyed Corinth and Carthage, came one day to the same fate as her victims. It is like the race of the torch, which sometimes dies down and sometimes flares up again if, deep down, it has all the time been burning.

In the moral turmoil of the confusions of thoughts and feelings that followed the Great War, on both sides of the Front, who, looking back to-day, could discern grounds for expecting any reasoned wisdom of judgment? The vanquished, who, since their declaration of war and their violation of Belgian neutrality (under the protection of their sworn pledge), had been guilty of every crime against humanity, resort in childish fashion to every kind of lie in order to turn away from themselves the accusing finger of outraged consciences.

They thus aggravate their crime and bring condemnation upon themselves beyond the sternest judgment, by openly seeking a return of force for a twofold weight of lies and of inhumanity. But our humanitarian countries, bound to unite willy-nilly against all excesses of violence, and finding themselves no longer linked by the immediate fear of a common enemy, have returned, to quote Mr Lloyd George, *to the traditional policy of enmity*.

Like all conquering peoples, England is now struggling under the weight of her conquests. The half of the globe does not suffice for America to invest her savings, which are in some sort ours, and France, because she has spilt her best blood on the battlefields, remains inert in the hands of those who lull her into slumber, without having yet been able to understand through what failing of her historic *élan* she has allowed so many friends to slip ingloriously over to the ranks of the enemy. And many ask why we have been abandoned, without understanding that our own cause was first abandoned by our own selves. We shall speak again of this.

[1] Mr Arthur (now Lord) Balfour, who proposed Paris as the seat of the Conference, justified this choice merely on account of *the facilities of communications*. I quietly remarked that there might be higher reasons in favour of Paris, and the English diplomat, smiling, agreed with a good grace, for he is the most courteous man in the world. But the instinctive shaft had been loosed.

[2] All the same I fought hard for the claims of the French language.

[3] Now Sir Maurice Hankey.

[4] The case of India is open to discussion. But India had sent us her soldiers, and as she had taken part in the fight a place in the work of liberation was due to her.

[5] E. Lavisse, *Histoire de France*.

[6] "The treaty is *bad, very* bad," declares Foch. The same public protestation from the German crowds on the 28th of June (1929). Some one must be deceived or mistaken. But it is not everything to have a good tool in one's hands. One must know how to use it. And, again, we ought never to have given up, step by step, the ground won at the cost of our best blood, and turned the victory into a retreat at the double.

CHAPTER X

THE TREATY: THE WORK OF PRESIDENT WILSON

AND while our soldiers still continued to fall, President Wilson continued to meditate on the object of these battles, battles such as history had never yet known. He had begun by declaring them unworthy of American attention, but now they were leading to a world crisis, to solve which he needed no less than fourteen points of world reorganization.

Whatever the number and the form of the Wilson proposals, it was a purely American idea to fix the organic conditions of future peace beforehand, while the battle was in full swing. In those conditions each of the "Allied" and "Associated" Powers found guarantees against all excesses of ambitious militarism, while German opinion had the benefit of learning from them how far it might find itself committed by weakening its own resistance. Some people doubtless complained of not finding in these arrangements sufficient account taken of their tale of victories, but they waited for that till the final victory should have been decided.

I do not propose to discuss here the infinitely complex solutions for future contingencies that finally prevailed. It is none the less true beyond all question that President Wilson contributed more than anyone else toward fixing the laws of the New Europe, as much by the ultimate authority of his military help as by the outward power of language that broke away from past traditions. When such responsibilities are once magnificently accepted can they be thrown off in the airy freedom of a "separate peace," leaving everybody to extricate himself by paying tribute to one particular beneficiary from the sacrifices of all?

President Wilson, the inspired prophet of a noble ideological venture, to which he was unfortunately destined to become a slave, had insufficient knowledge of the Europe lying torn to pieces at his feet. It became incumbent on him to settle the destiny of nations by mixtures of empiricism and idealism that could never appear singular to an American who, by the Monroe Doctrine, kept America apart from the clash of European affairs and at the same time intervened in Europe in the name of the historical solidarity of civilized peoples. He acted to the very best of his abilities in circumstances the origins of which had escaped him and whose ulterior developments lay beyond his ken.

The Treaty of Versailles will perhaps be able to make a fairly good defence for itself in history, especially if full account is not taken of the subsequent concessions by which your most exquisite policy of drift has allowed the conquered to profit, thanks to the support given them by our former allies. The chief merit of this attempt at making a lasting peace is the fact that, for the first time in history, a search was made for firm ground on which to build a system of justice between nations who up till this time had lived by violence alone. Napoleon constructed his Europe in rough-and-ready fashion. His treaties, hastily drawn up, did not last long, but he took good care that for a time

there was no discussion about them. Subjected as it was to every hasty and unconsidered criticism, the Treaty of Versailles certainly did not succeed in realizing the many different hopes that everybody had conceived from it, which is by no means surprising. It did at least dare to put a hand to an attempt at general reconstruction in a Europe completely out of joint. Perhaps only too soon we shall have to judge what has been made of it.

In conditions such as these President Wilson, having no territorial interests to fight for, and burning with zeal for his panacea, was in a position to render, and did render, signal services in calling meetings from day to day to discuss general reconciliations, meetings that too often were only of short duration. With the unfailing assistance of his friend, clever Colonel House, he smoothed away many difficulties, which, it must be added, were always recurring, and was justified for a time in believing in the success of the enterprise that was to crown his efforts. Efforts systematically ordered with a view to concrete results—that was what he bravely manifested in the fourteen points be submitted to Congress.

Every one knows this work of courageous uprightness, which does the greatest honour to the man who conceived and was not afraid to formulate it. We were thus brought very far away from the days when the same President Wilson proclaimed his unconcern with "the obscure causes of so many evils." The clouds were at last rent by the lightning of the German guns, and the President of the United States, suddenly enlightened, sought, before the assembled nations, lasting conditions for a European peace founded on justice; not in vain would the blood of Europe have been shed if from so many evils there might come a permanent, or even a relatively permanent, peace of good sense and equity.

The greater the President's original error had been, the nobler and richer in its teachings appeared this magnificent appeal to the ideology of outraged justice. The great American Republic was at length once more playing its part in the world by opening the way to an international solidarity hitherto held of no account. In the midst of the War we were declaring intangible conditions for peace, repudiating the spirit of conquest even to sublimely prophesying the reign of justice before defining it.

Perhaps the enterprise was too high to be pursued boldly to extremes. We owed this effort of nobility in the direst distress to Mr Wilson, speaking as he did with the decisive authority of the great democracy whose servant he was. As far as I am concerned, I retain a feeling of most intense gratitude for this to him and to his people. In the memory of men to come this debt at least will never be a load upon our hearts.

But is it unfair to recognize that this noble piece of ethical mastery had had a grievous counterpoise in the years of meditation necessary for the leader of the American people to pass from a declaration of indifference with regard to the causes of the War to the demand for international justice expressed in the supreme efforts of our common armies? Once more I ask you, my friends, who bore the burden of this heavy counterpoise?—who but our soldiers, who had been engaged for years in the sternest battles of history while the countries whose banners they kept gloriously flying were undergoing trials beyond all telling?

Mr Wilson had produced a marvellous effort of ideology when he proposed, systematically, and in accordance with their interdependence, to solve a mass of European problems which had long been the source of disturbance in the civilized world. At the word of the President saviour the old injustices were to be redressed. What hopes sprang up expecting to be realized in the near future! Scarcely did a few morose spirits raise a discordant voice. Too many gaps everywhere. But already the nations who for centuries had been oppressed were sending delegates to plead their cause at the Conference, and there were grounds for hoping that time would assuage many ills and would weaken transitory oppositions arising from sentiment or self-interest. Months and months were spent on this thankless task, from which, it must be admitted, it was impossible for anyone to come away fully satisfied. Too many cog-wheels had ground and squeaked without stopping. The curious part of it is that there were people who expressed astonishment at this.

However, the generous ideal of President Wilson urged him on to seek for means of consolidating his work. He knew only too well what difficulties were bound to arise at every turn. To set his machine to work he needed a motor, and this motor he was fain to have found in a "League of Nations," which was nothing more than an epitome of the Parliaments of all nations, to which all historic disagreements, all diplomatic intrigues, all coalitions of national, or even private, egoisms were to come and concentrate, multiply, intensify, and perhaps sometimes even find some momentary mitigation.

Parliaments in the past few years have not risen in the estimation of the peoples. Nevertheless, with all their faults, they are necessary. This does not imply, perhaps, the need for a *super-Parliament* whose sole occupation when action was needed would be *super-talking*. How could it be otherwise, *since all executive power would be denied it*? It must be acknowledged that the reality has entirely fulfilled these expectations, and the members can do nothing but discuss, when they ought to decide and impose their decision. I am still far from believing that even this would be sufficient for settling questions at issue, for most losers curse their judges, and as long as a loser can argue his point with big guns it will be well to walk warily.

Six months after the proclamation of the Fourteen Points Mr Wilson, following up his idea without worrying about ways and means, submitted to American public opinion, in a speech at the Independence Day celebrations at Mount Vernon (July 1918), the notions for a general peace on which his mind was centred. This time it was a question of four new points forming a sort of mystical creed defining the objects to be attained through the League of Nations. I will only refer to the first clause of it, which proposes to insure "the destruction of every arbitrary power that can separately, secretly, and of its single choice disturb the peace of the world; or if it cannot be presently destroyed, at the least its reduction to virtual impotence." And to realize this work of pure ideology, in which the orator imperturbably entrenches himself, he concludes confidently that a simple "organization of peace" will "make this result CERTAIN."

There are probably few examples of such a misreading and disregarding of political experience in the maelstrom of abstract thought. Already we can judge it by its first results. But it remains of secondary importance in comparison with the catastrophic

rejection by the American Senate of the Treaty of Versailles by a majority of six votes, which inevitably entailed the disaster of a separate peace.

I am told that by using this expression on a former occasion I hurt the feelings of a number of Americans. I regret it deeply; but the simple meanings of the words do not allow me to change it. What are the facts? The Wilsonian formulas in the League of Nations proposals were destined to arouse serious opposition in the American Congress, of which Mr Wilson stubbornly refused to take notice. There was an extraordinary passage of arms, and both parties were desperately set on not yielding one jot of a dangerous position, without troubling to consider the dangers incurred in causing a serious prolongation of the world crisis in which we are still struggling to-day.

In a letter dated March 4, 1919, Mr Hitchcock, a senator from Nebraska, had pointed out to Mr Wilson that, in a division where a turnover of four votes was all that was required, it would be easy for him by making slight concessions to transfer the majority to the other side. But obstinacy on both sides refused to listen to anything, and I confess that when I consider this double determination to make no concession I have sometimes wondered whether the intangible Monroe Doctrine was not bound to have the inevitable result of throwing all those people back, in different guises, to the general policy of non-intervention, which at the outset had been the policy of the President.

Undoubtedly the Americans have the right to follow any policy they please. But still, since we have suffered the consequences of that policy, we are equally within our rights in trying to define what it is. I am not going to discuss the Monroe Doctrine at all; I see in it an empirical precaution against the enterprises of aggressive European conquerors. It is, in fact, nothing less than a narrow conception of American continental solidarity which, in any case, leaves the field open to organized tyrannies. But, just because it must thus bring about a separate peace for the New World, and since America cannot renounce her connexion with Europe, the question arises as to whether the particular solidarity of the Monroe Doctrine is to lead to the dissociation of America from Europe—for purely hypothetical results—or to a tightening of the bonds of the natural solidarity of all civilizations.

The answer does not appear to me to be in any doubt. The principle once admitted, we can exchange views on the form of its application. And it is precisely this point of the debate which neither Mr Lodge nor Mr Wilson was able to discuss in any useful fashion. Is that the reason why neither side took any pains to press the argument? Possibly. The fact remains that the great battle turned out to be a mere skirmish. There was just enough of victory and just enough of defeat for the engagement to be left undecided—at our expense.

Your intervention in the War, which you came out of lightly, since it cost you but 56,000 human lives instead of our 1,364,000 *killed*,[1] had appeared to you, nevertheless, as an excessive display of solidarity. And either by organizing a League of Nations, which was to furnish the solution to all the problems of international security by magic, or by simply withdrawing from the European schemes, you found yourselves freed from all difficulties by means of a 'separate peace.'

But all this is not so simple as it might appear. The nations of the world, although separated by natural or artificial frontiers, have but one planet at their disposal, a planet all the elements of which are in a state of solidarity, and, far from man being the exception to the rule, he finds, even in his innermost activities, that he is the supreme witness to universal solidarity.

Behind your barriers of sea, of ice, and of sun you may be able perhaps for a time to isolate yourself from your planetary fellow-citizens, although I find you in the Philippines, where you do not belong geographically; but, whatever happens to you, there will be civilized people in all the continents, and even if you only consider them from the point of view of trade, is it certain that they will never consider you from any other point of view?

China and Japan have a history to work out. In what direction? The same holds good for Europe and Asia. England, France, Russia, Germany, and Italy cannot look upon you merely as strenuously indifferent. Rivalries are not things outside your ken. You know all that. But the time it took you to discover that right had been outraged in the case of Belgium (in spite of Germany's '*most sacred*' pledges), and also to discover in France "*the frontiers of freedom*," showed that you had put your trust in a policy of procrastination that cost us dear, and from which you do not seem inclined to depart.

It was not enthusiasm that flung you into our firing-lines; it was the alarming persistence of German aggressions. However, the winning of the victory very reasonably prompted your President to try to ensure a universal peace for ever, a thing with which he had at first most emphatically proclaimed himself supremely unconcerned. All or nothing, he seemed to say. Friends, that is no motto for human creatures. And, in face of to-day's supreme dangers, here you are all agreed once again for putting off, and putting off with no chance of retrieving, if by that you complete the ruin of the very people you intended to help. We have, however, seen that Mr Mellon himself, although hotly bent on recovering his "war debts," clearly understood that it was by no means the same thing to the United States to trade with a prosperous France, or with a France that had been ruined by the Americans in peace-time after being ruined by the Germans in war. If this view is to be maintained we shall have to make up our minds to face black prospects for the future with determination. Which is not always to be met with in the political world, where brilliant flashes of intelligence are more common than the application of deliberate, well-ordered will-power.

Congress remained in agreement with Mr Wilson so long as they were pleased to shut their eyes to causes and consequences of the European war. But when the time came when victory was to force the American statesman himself to take his place in the conflicts of civilization, how could there be agreement when the one was claiming that he could by magic bind together all nations worthy of the name with his League, while at the same time the other was intent on dissociating American civilization from the civilizations of Asia and Europe? Perhaps that is a great deal to do all at once.

Mr Wilson, at first imperturbably dilatory, had become the impetuous apostle of a new formula, which—metaphysically flawless—made demands to which the nations, in their present state of mind, will have some difficulty in adjusting themselves. Against the background of an academic debate, in which one side was willing to stake the

future and the other was determined that it should not be brought in at all, minds disconcerted and dismayed saw two positions set in diametrical and uncompromising opposition. President and Congress were both rigidly unyielding in a struggle to which no issue was possible. Moreover, not a word was said on the famous question of the inter-Allied debts, about which no steps were taken until both sides had burned their boats.

President Wilson said (at the London Guildhall, December 28, 1918) and repeated that "the key to the peace is the GUARANTEE of the peace, not the terms of it." He had already laid down this principle at the Metropolitan Opera House, New York, in September 1918, when he declared, perfectly rightly, that without this the peace of the world would rest in part on the word of outlaws. Thus he was drastically describing the peace conditions which the failure of his plan has imposed upon us—*the unilateral treaty of America apart from her associates*. This is what history will be unable to call by any name other than a *separate peace*. It did not prevent Mr Wilson's "guarantees" from appearing very flimsy when at the Peace Conference (February 14, 1919) he taught that his Covenant was "a definite guarantee of peace. It is a definite guarantee by word against aggression." Unfortunately he forgets, as a matter of fact, that the violation of Belgian territory makes the word of the "outlaws" utterly worthless.

But the President of the American Republic has something quite different in his mind. As, not without reason, he fears the trials that will ensue, he wishes to weld the Treaty and the Covenant of the League into a solid mass, so that, once the nations and the Parliaments have formally agreed in principle, there will be no going back on their decision. The Treaty will take the Covenant under its wing, and the world will be saved. I take the liberty of finding this view a little short-sighted—especially since no one dares even to raise the question of putting executive power into the hands of our saviours. But ever since December 21, 1918, Senator Lodge had taken his stand against the idea of joining the Peace Treaty and the Covenant of a "League of the strong nations having the necessary power to enforce its decrees."

The rest of the story is well known. Mr Wilson accepted slight amendments in the text of the Covenant, but stood firm on the question of joining the Covenant to the Treaty, the chief bone of contention. The Senate passed the Treaty with certain reservations, and consequently referred it back to the President, who put the document in his archives, from which it never again emerged. Thus ended the adventure in the course of which was wrecked the "Guarantee Pact" uniting us with England and America for the assured maintenance of peace where Germany was concerned.

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[1] To which must be added 740,000 men permanently disabled and 3,000,000 wounded.

CHAPTER XI

THE TREATY: A EUROPE FOUNDED UPON RIGHT

A LIGHTNING peace! A sudden call to meditation! At the very height of the action the cry rings out to cease fire.

Easy enough to stop, but what of the restoring? What are we to restore, and how, and working from what ideas? What renunciations are to come? What support? What oppositions? What directions? What designs after four years of the most frightful ordeal of savagery? The continent of Europe needs to take fresh stock of itself, so as to apply itself once more in the moral and economic sphere to the continually interrupted work of a civilization that moves forward only by fits and starts.

As is the case after all violent clashes of mankind at variance, the resumption of all the bonds and interconnexions of a social system is no less desirable for the nations who have misused their energies to attack their neighbours' rights than for those who are already counting the fruits of victory, without realizing that the developments of peace demand perhaps no less of systematic effort than the conquests of war. Here indeed is the eternal problem of mankind, since humanity is all concurrent activities, and since to live in society is to be always in a perpetual state of mutual confronting, with fleeting periods of mutual agreement.

The War, officially finished, went on under new guises, supposedly by way of pacification, contests between the rivalries bound up with all the physical and mental experiments of man at work on his earth for the benefit of the social order to come.

The Great War lasted four interminable years, whereas in ten years of stormy cogitation we have not yet been able to put men and things in their proper places, and to settle the sequences of co-ordinated activities that the new peace makes imperative.

In times of supreme danger one must needs be everywhere at once, at all hours of the night and day, at the Front, at Cabinet meetings, in the tribune of the House, at the fighting-posts—where most serious decisions have to be taken for immediate execution, while allies, who have remained rivals, vaguely uneasy about themselves and about us, hang half-way between the offensive and defensive—and all the while professional Parliamentarians are laying down how easy it would have been to do better, and putting themselves forward to accomplish the decisive act that will be salvation or irreparable disaster according as it turns out.

Where all these cross-currents meet you must take your bearings and think out hasty solutions the result of which will decide the day, and which will not be made clear until later, and then under the eyes of friends who have grown cold and abusive enemies who have become more overwhelming than ever.

In silence I went through these hours one by one, confident of the future, but often terrified, sometimes at my own impotence, sometimes at the boldness of the resolutions that seemed imperative. I had a bird's-eye view of all the concurrent dangers of human strength and human weakness, and I lived through it, I know not how. Withdrawn into

himself, Foch was like the keeper of an oracle; he seemed to hold in his hands victory or ruin, through the mystery of his infallible strategy. Pétain, impassive and smiling, sometimes bereft of the unfailing support of unconquerable belief in final success. Many of the leaders at their posts were uncertain. Alby, the Chief of Staff, was always ready, always sure. Mordacq, always pulling his full weight, always mocking and defiant. And before this turmoil of work stood Destiny, her face masked, her eyes sightless, her decisions inscrutable; and meanwhile sudden acts of authority, which perhaps were to prove wise and perhaps appallingly erroneous, struck blow after blow without effect.

Once he has seen himself thus half-way suspended between heaven and earth, and has escaped being smitten by stars hurtling from their orbits, it is not the childish nonsense of a great soldier suffering from attacks of nerves, nor the wordy flux of a few hack scribblers, that can perturb a philosopher upon whom was laid the task of sustaining others, himself sustained of none.

Whatever may be said, whatever may be done, now that the time has come for a provisional stabilization the problem is destined to become involved in whirling incoherencies, in which, hidden beneath contradictory formulas, there lie too often views, short-sighted or far-seeing, the effect of which cannot be seen as yet. For the most part little trouble is taken to distinguish one from the other, to make use of each in its turn. All these eminent men whom I have saluted in passing may find themselves swayed by ardent passions born of national interest, which sometimes master them completely. A man’s country comes before his own private philosophy. And when the hour for a “general stabilization” arrives there is an influx of compromises from all sides, trying to foist themselves upon us by any means.

Clausewitz’s saying, that war and peace, springing from the same state of mind, are identical fundamental activities both aiming at the same end by different means, begins to be current among the nations when they come to have an inkling of the fact that there are states of stabilization more or less enduring. It is a big step in the direction of the proper understanding of what a peace organization may be. But from understanding to action is almost as far as from ignorance to understanding. The monarch’s fiat depends on the chance of the advice he receives. A Parliamentary democracy decrees according to a welter of contradictory opinions; a fact which does not always help the prospects of a well-weighed and fully thought out measure.

It is already an innovation to set out our problems in the open light of day. Although so much decried by politicians who did not win the War, and by the war chief who can see only one part of the military aspect of the peace, the Treaty of Versailles can make this boast over the famous Treaty of Westphalia, that it did conceive, and even in part bring about, certain relations founded on equity between nations that had been ground against one another by successive outbreaks of historical violence. To give up the pure and simple reign of might in order to introduce into international life dawning conceptions of right, for future expansion, that seems not to have been enough for the inaugurators of a retrograde peace, who had nothing better to do than to abandon step by step what our splendid soldiers had won.

What has escaped Foch—at which I am not astonished—and M. Poincaré—which does not fail to surprise me—is that after Germany's act of brute force in 1914, accompanied as it was by every villainy at the command of barbarism, there were only two possible kinds of peace for us to contemplate: the maintaining of military domination, which our coalition would retain in its own hands after wresting it from the Germans, or else a grouping of States banded together to represent abstract justice in Europe, and capable of forming an impassable barrier to the unruly outbursts of the spirit of conquest. In other words, to keep everything *in statu quo ante*, and to expose ourselves to a repetition of the same experience, or in some form or other to maintain the victorious alliance, one of the great advantages of which was that in no circumstances could it become a force for domination.

Europe is an ancient land of a fluctuating culture, and prides itself on having received, from the highest sources of human history, idealistic views of civilization directed by noble words toward the unknown destinations of a superhuman humanity, more solidly established in word than in deed. Asia, whose origins are lost in the dim backward and abysm of time, has poured over all the continents her overflow that like a chemical compound produced explosions of good and evil, the more or less ordered results of which constitute what we call civilization—a general interplay of feelings leading to a higher state of humanity in the end.

Countries are different, interests are urgent, too often in conflict behind the veil of literary manifestoes of impartiality, in which the most beautiful formulas of universal equity have exhausted all the virtue and pith of their ideology, without producing anything but fresh disorders more or less skilfully disguised.

Anyone who retains as much education as the average boy can pick up in a continuation elementary school can understand that General Foch's chief preoccupations were not concerned with the generalizations of universal justice embodied in war or peace. Had he opened the annals of our past at whatsoever page he might choose, he would have found that our life throughout history, bandied about between battles and truces in the unending oscillation of all things, is at any moment but preparing for or stabilizing a new transient form of society for the momentary advantage of the strongest.

The question before the Versailles Conference was whether the greatest outpouring of blood, together with the greatest outpouring of human emotions, was not a sufficient reason for searching for some way to a lasting peace among communities suffering agonies by fire and sword from the too protracted survival of the savage state. Out of the convulsions of the War to find a stabilization of the conditions of the peace.

I see clearly that Marshal Foch was taking it on himself to accomplish what Napoleon had never been able to do. But before surrendering I would like to know why Napoleon himself, so fruitful of victories, was unable to realize his military dreams, neither on the Rhine nor elsewhere. For in that I find an epitome of all the military enterprises of all times to this very day.

I am no longer astonished that the military chiefs, traditionalists above everything, should have clung obstinately to a continual repetition of the same defensive dispositions, always reinforced in vain, doomed eternally to prove abortive.[1] The idea

of force is deeply rooted in man, as in the whole universe. Law is controlled and ordered force, with this distinction, that there is nothing conquerors are more in haste to do than to set down to the account of a sham and invented equity those violent deeds they arrogate to themselves the privilege of committing.

When the time came for negotiations the general problem for us, as victors, was to make a peace that preserved the common interests of two, of three, of four, etc., even as we had made war. You may be sure that each had considered this from his own point of view, in hours of deadly peril or even simple anxiety, but not so much as might be supposed, since the problem was first and foremost to keep alive, before settling what we could do, or what we wished to do, with the life we had preserved.

It was a critical hour for France and England—both countries were staking their all. All our resources of blood and treasure had been flung into the furnace. What was to come of it? A vanquished crew that will never see anything but 'scraps of paper' in treaties they dislike.[2] Among the victors there was the British Empire, the ruler of continents and seas, which will no more submit to be pushed back in peace than in war; America, which for a relatively minute expenditure of blood was about to become rich beyond all measure at our expense, while to our lot fell the winning of justice for ourselves and for all the vassal peoples, even as in the great days of the French Revolution, when we stopped the Duke of Brunswick's troops at Valmy. Strasburg welcomed us with songs and dances. Lord Derby, pointing to the crowd, said to me, "We spoke of a plebiscite, and here it is." How much ground has been lost there, as elsewhere, since that day! Every Frenchman knows this: will not one be found to stand up against it?

The 1814 frontier raised the whole question of conquests. It needed Foch's pamphlet to put before us the fantastic idea that a peace that gave Alsace-Lorraine back to us would only give us "a frontier of defeat." Who would have dared to utter such blasphemy after the Treaty of Frankfurt?

We were left, as our supreme conquest, the right of nations to govern themselves, which is the basis of all civilization. The idea was bound to carry all before it, because it implied the total freeing of all nations. It was nothing less than the assertion of his own personal dignity for each and every man under the ægis of the individuality of his nation, admitted to the concert of civilized peoples. Since the victory proclaimed the abolition of violence, liberation must not be translated by the annexation of a conquered territory.

Alas, we must have the courage to say that our programme, when we entered the War, was not one of liberation! I had allowed myself in the bygone days to recommend an alliance with England, which at that time was not yet offered us.[3] But the Czar needed our money for his military displays, and it was the policy of displays that won. Considered only by the map, the Franco-Russian alliance was of great strategical importance. But the military activity developed in too uneven a fashion in the two camps of the alliance. The surrender of Russia, no longer able to bear the strain of the War, changed the data of the problem, by grouping round us forces striving for national restoration, which had been incompatible with the presence of the Czar in our ranks.

We had started a war for our own deliverance in which we called on all who were capable of offering resistance, and here at the height of the struggle the Russian champions of oppression in Europe collapse before the German champions, at grips with such remnants of the dismembered nations as still had life in them. In the heroic example of Poland the reader sees the whole scope of the question. It would be a tragic story to describe once more the dreadful picture of all that long line of human wretchedness endured to maintain a national shrine, the supreme shelter for the consciousness of a race striving to take its place among their fellows.

Suddenly, by the shameful Peace of Brest-Litovsk, we were freed from the so-called help of allies who upheld oppression, so that we could build up our higher moral forces again, in touch with downtrodden peoples from the Adriatic to Belgrade, from Prague to Bucharest, from Warsaw to the countries in the North that have not yet recovered their lost equilibrium. Suddenly, when the War was raging at its fiercest, the whole scheme of military aims was completely changed. We had started as allies of the Russian oppressors of Poland, with the Polish soldiers of Silesia and Galicia fighting against us. By the collapse of military Russia Poland found herself suddenly set free and re-created, and then all over Europe oppressed peoples raised their heads, and our war of national defence was transformed by force of events into a war of liberation.

The whole aspect of the peace is thus completely changed. A peace of justice, a Europe founded upon right, the creator of independent states whose military power is augmented by all the moral energies generated by the necessity for asserting themselves in all spheres of international life—will not this create a body of forces superior to anything that could come from a powerfully organized frontier? The question is answered as soon as it is asked. Thus from all points of view the problem of military power is bound up with the problem of moral power to build up, by their mutually supporting forces, strongholds of invincible force against which the savage onrush of aggressors will exhaust its strength. Already Masaryk and Benes have shown us high moral energies brought to flower in the struggles for the independence on which our victories have set the final seal.

Russia, overthrown by her revolution, is floundering in a state of anarchy, which Germany in her defeat makes use of for her efforts to react against us. Defeated, Germany and Austria are obliged to loose their hold and see the peoples restored to their full national dignity, which asserts itself on every hand and calls on us to re-establish their nationhood.

A Europe founded on right, instead of a dismembered Europe, was a fine dramatic turn of events. Our victory did not allow us to hesitate. The nations had appeared on the battlefield in response to our appeal. The shedding of blood and the winning of rights went together. Germany, like Austria and Russia, had battened on the dismembered peoples. Dying nations were about to revive. Throughout Europe the words right, liberty, and justice would mean something. Already deputies were coming to us from the tortured towns and provinces, raising their bowed heads and demanding reparations. We promised this, and we have kept our promise.

Let us recall the partition of Poland, the greatest crime in history,[4] which leaves an everlasting stigma on the names of Catherine, Maria-Theresa, and Frederick II. No

outrage had ever less excuse, no violence perpetrated against humanity ever cried louder for a redress that had been indefinitely postponed. The wrong was so great that at no time in the life of Europe, among so many other acts of violence for which there was no expiation, could it appear less heinous. It has become a byword in history as one of the worst felonies that can be laid to the charge of our "civilization."

How many other crimes have grouped themselves round this unpardonable one! What charges of violence there were for a reparations account that will never be equitably settled! So upside down were the effects of the Russian oppression that we saw Pope Gregory XVI seconding the Czar Nicholas against the Polish patriots, by requesting the clergy of Poland to preach universal obedience to the sovereignty of a heretic. What more striking evidence is there of the total perversion of conscience that can take possession of the heart of man to vent itself upon the unarmed and weak? Each ruler of the day strove to outdo the violence of the past.

With the Peace of Versailles a great opportunity presented itself, and we found ourselves in a position to maintain, for future development, the consolidation of powers making for moderation, which, by winning the War, had just set bounds to the audacious conquest of Europe by Germany. I will tell how the formula for the military consolidation of the victory of the three Allied and Associated nations was accepted on the proposal of England, only to be rejected without explanation by the American Senate, then quietly dropped by England, and left in oblivion by the French Government itself, without a word of protest.

Not a word was uttered to recall that we had given our best blood, and that, after seeking for security in a better frontier, we had given up this strategical guarantee in exchange for the promise of Anglo-American military aid, which had been offered us as an exchange, and which was taken from us without compensation.

Defeat substituted for victory, that was what we accepted without finding a single word to assert our right to our Continental life by the establishment of guarantees within the new order created by a most costly victory.

Did then the assent of the British Parliament obtained without a debate on the morrow of the victory mean nothing? A thing unprecedented in history. What a stroke of fortune for France! In very truth America's assent was of secondary importance. The Americans are fine soldiers. But their military preparedness was, and will always remain, insufficient to make them a decisive factor to be reckoned with at the psychological moment in case of war. We would make every necessary sacrifice to have them on our side. But they have remained nearer to us in the way of friendship than they themselves believe, and will never consent to lend themselves to the universal grabbing of *Deutschland über Alles*.

After ghastly sacrifices, without parallel in history, France to-day is in a condition of relaxed nerves that, in the lassitude following upon her late exertions, makes her forget the noble and beautiful field of human endeavour where the relentless drama of events, as threatening for us from within as from without, is being unfolded. Europe finds herself simultaneously confronted with all the problems of her history, in a world-wide crisis reaching beyond the limits of our civilization.

In the upheavals of the past a people have come into existence with a violent mentality through arrested moral development, which fixes them with the atavistic urge to subjugate the nations even to the total breaking down of all manhood. And they are not ashamed of their programme, because in their heart of hearts they do not make sufficient distinction between servility and dignity.

Breakers of their sworn faith, the Germans seriously offer us their signature on a "*scrap of paper*" as a guarantee, with the unalterable intention of later taking up again the work of assimilation by force where they have left off. They destroy towns, ravage the fields, and let loose among men evils by the side of which the most cruel exploits of the greatest devastators grow pale and trivial. We take them by the throat, and they promise to make reparation. But, as they do not make reparation, America, who has made a separate peace after growing incredibly rich through the War, claims for her treasury the contributions earmarked for restoring French soil to a productive state.

We have come to such a pitch that, for want of a Government, we blindly entrust our most vital interests to so-called *independent* experts—that is to say, experts *free from governmental responsibilities*, with the result that we take haphazard resolutions that will be a heavy burden on us to the end of our days.

Always watching their opportunity to hit back in every sphere, our *defeated* enemies demand reckonings from their conquerors, who fear nothing so much as not to give them complete satisfaction. I set down this fact in order to clear my own conscience, and especially because it is high time for the French nation to take a firmer grip on itself and to substitute a policy of determination for this confusion born of timidity, through which the threat of a compact mass of barbarism is kept hanging over our heads.

When we met the Germans at Versailles we had come to the morrow of the Peace of Frankfurt, which had given us a Europe threatened with complete overthrow by German violence, as in the early centuries of our era. And if our recent victory had merely been one of territorial conquests that were fated to call us out to the battlefield again to meet attempts to take revenge for our revenge, our success of the moment would have been as fruitless as every success before it. What was more to be desired in the interests of Europe striving for civilization was a victor capable of controlling himself so as to replace armed might by right in the fluid equilibrium of a peace capable of enduring.

It is only those whose intelligence and will are weak who think they can do without a substratum of effective guarantees mutually confirmed. Nobody up to the present has ever been able to rely entirely upon violence. Military leaders have the excuse that they are carried away by their profession; civil leaders that of a want of co-ordinated plans which sometimes goes so far as to destroy their individualities. And the sheeplike populace pays with its blood for the incapacity of the leaders it happens to follow through its own inability to will clearly and unswervingly and continuously itself.

Were we to remain with Mr Lloyd George under the domination of the "*traditional British policy*," which consists in keeping the continent of Europe divided for the benefit of the islander, which had led to the present conditions of anarchy, and threatened to engulf us in them? Or were we to follow President Wilson, the upholder

of an ideology that aimed at nothing less than the establishment of a system of international law that should be more efficient than common law? Alas! could we be satisfied with vain discussions of this law when we were faced with the unsolvable problem of making it a living thing without investing it with any *executive power*? Mr Wilson did not understand Europe, and his obstinate resistance to the insignificant concessions that were asked from him at Washington shows his knowledge even of America to be insufficient. He was a doctrinarian in the finest sense of the word; a man with excellent intentions, but with rigidly fixed and crystallized emotions.

A Parliament of super-Parliamentarians *without any instrument of authority*, that is the talisman we received in order to give full play to our weaknesses. Nothing could have been more in harmony with our wordy apathy. When the Treaty was rejected by a majority of six votes in the American Senate Great Britain and France each gave the other the spectacle of the wild rout of armed victors before the disarmed vanquished. Never before had there been seen such a collapse of the paramount Powers of the day before a defeated nation, which, simply by the recovery of its energy, threw confusion among her suddenly paralysed conquerors.

The fact is that it is not sufficient, in peace-time, to be a mere talking machine. You must first of all have courage enough to face responsibilities and strain every nerve to action; our people, however, when they get to the bottom of their own minds, find mere velleities, not wills.

Marshal Foch did at least fight for his ideas in the War Council and at the Peace Conference. On both occasions he was unanimously opposed, but this did not discourage him. M. Poincaré kept silence only when he thought himself in danger of being listened to.

For centuries France and Great Britain have disputed the possession both of the civilized continents and of those yet to be civilized. The history of England has been a stupendous account of lasting conquests, now nearly exhausted, so it seems, by the rivalry between those very centres of independence which she has created, fed, and developed on every hand.

One day in Paris, at the foot of the statue of Washington, where the first American troops had just marched past, Mr Lloyd George, who until that moment had been very reserved, said to me in a low voice, “Do you know that you have just made me salute one of England’s greatest defeats?”

There was no question as yet of Mr MacDonald’s visit to Washington.

“There have been plenty of victories and defeats between us,” I replied. “But at the Front, for all that, I salute your flag in the *mêlée* with all my heart. It is pretty obvious that to-day you could never govern America from London. Already some of your Dominions are asking you for a reckoning. India is becoming burdensome. The conqueror is a prisoner to his conquest; that is the revenge of conquered nations.”

We had waged war as allies within the setting, which was constantly going askew, of the unified command. We could not avoid making peace as allies. I offer all my apologies to the memory of Attila and his congeners, but the art of arranging how men are to live is even more complex than that of massacring them. The real task—and an absolutely new one—was the attempt to make definitely a *Europe founded on right*. In

spite of some people's lack of understanding, to have attempted this will be the glory of the Treaty of Versailles. It is for future Governments to work at this task by some method other than that of eternally giving in. The realization of a *Europe founded upon right* was the greatest victory of all, the victory that neither Napoleon nor Foch wished to gain, and which required something more than successful strokes of strategy.

Historically England was our oldest enemy. And now we have each saved the other, and the best of the blood of both nations has been freely spilt in doing it. Must we not try to make a lasting peace in honour of those but for whom we should be no more?

It is easy to say this, but to realize it requires breadth of mind and strength of will far above anything the ordinary run of rulers among men can show; for too often they are only guided in the present by the historical *débris* of feelings past and gone. Thus we live upon the traditions of the past, which force themselves upon our notice in the glitter of words that engender hopes dissipated all too soon. It allows us to adorn mediocre thoughts, often puffed out with empty seeming, far, very far, remote from realities, with the iridescence of mere verbosity.

To sum up, peace is a disposition of forces, supposed to be in lasting equilibrium, in which the moral force of organized justice is surrounded by strategical precautions against all possible disturbances. It is the history of all nations and of all times. Thenceforth right appears as an organization of historical forces calling from time to time for reinforcement. It is to this task, constantly rising up again out of its own wreckage, that the majority of the thinkers of our annals have devoted themselves; and on the whole those annals have seen nothing either in peace or war but inextricable tangles.

That the last war was an attempt at conquest by the Germans with a view to securing the domination of Europe and of the world by territorial annexations cannot be contested, except by the perpetrators of this crime against humanity themselves. That it took the close union of the military powers of France, England, and the countries directly threatened, assisted by America (after the collapse of Russia), to defeat this military enterprise of Germany is what nobody in the world will be able to deny.

When the time came when there were chances of a lasting peace, supported on historical rights, with the common precautions of an appropriate strategy, all threw themselves into the task with as much eagerness as they had shown in the War. Doubtless there are trickeries in peace just as there are traps in war. The leader who can fight his corner best is the one who, without empty talk, shows the strongest and most tenacious will.

To-day undoubtedly we have arrived at a great attenuation of our victory, in which the delinquencies of our politicians-of-all-work have had too much free play. This cannot be questioned except by the delinquents who call others to account only to avoid being called to account themselves. But for Marshal Foch the manœuvre might perhaps have been successful. But already the masks have fallen.

As a matter of fact, what has happened? M. Poincaré and Marshal Foch drew themselves up to the full height of their own particular genius, and brought down upon me the flood of condemnation that professional infallibility reserves for the poor

unfortunate who, being neither a judge nor a soldier, sees himself consigned to the sad fate of the reprobate.

M. Poincaré declares that I saved France in the War (I should not be surprised if Marshal Foch had a few objections to offer to this) only to compromise my country seriously in the new peace, because I did not lay hands on the Rhineland.[5]

Why do M. Poincaré, who knows the history of the Treaty, and Marshal Foch, who with luck might have some inkling of it, call me to account for a Rhineland as they would have liked to have it, without saying a word about a Europe founded on right, our best guarantee in the present state of confusion?

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[1] Three days before the catastrophe of the Chemin des Dames a Staff officer, who was not by any means a nobody, said to me, "At any rate there is one place we are comfortable about, and that is the Chemin des Dames!"

[2] Bismarck went so far as to boast of a forgery. The Ems telegram was a crime of no less magnitude than the outrage on Belgium. The cynicism of the *scrap of paper* will be counted against Germany as long as human history lasts. That stain, like Lady Macbeth's, can never be effaced.

[3] Lord Haldane's famous mission showed that even England wished to give a permanent form to the German conquest of Alsace-Lorraine.

[4] If I say nothing about the others it is not because I have forgotten them.

[5] Better still; in the American review *Foreign Affairs* for July 1929 M. Poincaré does not hesitate to declare that France contented herself with recovering Alsace-Lorraine, that she did not even ask for her 1814 frontiers, and has never wanted more, *but he forgets to mention that this was contrary to his own personal advice*. This is the way he abuses me at home and preaches my doctrine (in spite of his own opinion) abroad.

CHAPTER XII

THE TREATY: AN INDEPENDENT RHINELAND

COULD we really have created an independent Rhineland? The problem is worth considering. But to begin with we must resolutely avoid all the side-tracks that present themselves to entice us from the straight road.

With a man like Marshal Foch not even discussion is possible. The moment *his* strategy demands it the Rhinelanders must of necessity gather round our guns. Other reasons may be dispensed with, since it is a case of *a priori*. Of course, that does not prevent the finding of supplementary reasons for the use of those *weak* ones who still hold by the *weaknesses* of experience and of reasoning.

Are the Rhinelanders Celts, like ourselves? I am not very sure of it, but it is a thing always possible to say, for it is useless to ask me to describe the positive characteristics of a Celt. We are especially told that Bavarians are Celts. They were among the most merciless plunderers of our territory in 1870 and in 1914 against their Celtic brethren of France. They fought badly for their own independence, which was wrecked at Sadowa in Bismarck's peace. They spared no pains to enslave themselves. Their ambition to-day is to become Prussianized after the manner of what is left of Austria, who is asking for the *Anschluss* merely for the glory of being cudgelled by Berlin. The Rhinelanders, I grant you, put up a better resistance. They are visibly chafing under the heavy hand of the Prussian. Our childishness lies in the fact that we are too ready to believe that their incomplete Prussianization inclines them to become French.

However, while the soldiers of the French Revolution were hustling the German invader and calling upon the peoples to a universal recognition of *the rights of man*, there were men on the Rhine, as in other countries, who were acclaiming France and were offering themselves as a moral conquest to the decrees of justice and liberty. On November 13, 1793, Georg Forster, of Mainz, in a speech at the Republican Club of Mainz, offered us the Rhine for the frontier of France. And the Rheno-Germanic National Convention sent us delegates offering to become incorporated with France.

But since those days what sweeping changes have taken place in both countries! Napoleon carried the banner of the French Revolution throughout Europe, but in the spirit of a conqueror imposing his will by force of arms. Since those days Sadowa and Sedan have strongly welded the joints of Germany. Between Mirabeau and Napoleon we ourselves changed. Why should not the attraction felt by the Rhinelanders, as by other peoples, have become modified?

At the time of the Armistice Germany's plight could be described in two words: *defeat* and *revolution*. It was then that ancient memories seemed to awaken.

After the Armistice of 1918 the occupation of the left bank of the Rhine was carried out under the conditions specified. Our soldiers were not badly received. What has been called "the first public manifestation of the autonomist idea" took place on December 4, 1918.[1]

On that day, at a popular meeting held at Cologne, speakers belonging to various unspecified parties "spoke ardently of the aspirations of the Rhineland."

The meeting then passed the following resolution:

> Five thousand [?] Rhineland citizens assembled on December 4, 1918, at Cologne, considering the far-reaching political transformations taking place in Germany,
>
> Recognize the impossibility of forming a stable Government in Berlin, and being convinced that the Rhineland regions, together with Westphalia, are sufficiently strong politically and economically to form a separate state,
>
> Declare THEIR FIXED INTENTION TO MAINTAIN THE GERMAN UNITY and to work for the foundation of a new GERMAN state composed of the Rhineland regions and Westphalia.
>
> This assembly accordingly invites the official representatives of the people of the Rhineland and Westphalia to proclaim as soon as possible the establishment of a RHENO-WESTPHALIAN AUTONOMOUS REPUBLIC WITHIN THE GERMAN SYSTEM.
>
> Long live the liberty of the Rhineland!

If anyone tries to read into this the indication of a movement for autonomy turning Franceward, let us confess that he would have to strain the meaning of the words to a singular degree. On the other hand, we may clearly recognize in them the demand to establish a GERMAN state under the protection of the armies of occupation invoked to protect *the liberty of the Rhineland* from the dangers of the Berlin revolutions stirred up by the Soviets, those formidable propagandists.

The next day, December 5, 1918, the first meeting of the League for the Freedom of the Rhineland was held, again at Cologne. This time we knew the speakers: they were Herr Professor Doktor Eskert (Democrat), Herr Doktor Hoeber (of the Centre), and Herr Meerfeld (Socialist delegate).

The freedom of the Rhineland was acclaimed. The idea, as M. Viel-Mazel puts it, "was making its way." Professor Klaus Kroemer was publishing in the *Rheinische Volkszeitung* a series of articles in which "the right of peoples to self-determination" was conscientiously set out and discussed.

It is pretty clear that Herr Klaus Kroemer claimed "this right to self-determination" to allow the Rhinelanders to break away from Germany and to escape from the control of the Allies.

A few weeks went by.

The Burgomaster of Cologne, Herr Adenauer, had become the leader of the movement.

On February 1, 1919, all the Rhineland deputies who had just been elected to the National Assembly and the burgomasters of the Rhineland towns were summoned to Cologne, for a solemn proclamation of the founding of the Rhineland Republic.

What happened? Under the influence of Adenauer they were satisfied with electing a committee, which was commissioned to work on the establishing of an autonomous

Rhineland WITHIN THE GERMAN SYSTEM.

How often did this committee sit? NOT ONCE.

The very next day these same people dropped the mask. The *Rheinische Zeitung*, the organ of Sollmann, one of those who had proclaimed themselves enthusiastic partisans of a *Rhineland state*—declared that ways would be found to stifle "SEPARATIST" aspirations. The paper added, "*The Rhineland question is not yet ripe for discussion*."

Such was the proclamation of the Rhineland Republic at Cologne.

Let us now see what was happening at Landau.

On February 22, 1919, what is pompously called an "assembly of notables" met at the Hotel Schwann, at Landau; forty-five persons were present, among whom were two delegates to the National Assembly—Richter and Hoffmann, of the Centre Party.[2]

All these "notables" displayed signs of keen excitement. Berlin and Munich were given over to riots. The delegate Hoffmann made a speech in which, among other things, he said especially, "We are facing this fact: a misguided people has fallen from the pinnacle of its civilization into an abominable barbarism, into Bolshevism and a fratricidal struggle." And in the end the following resolution was carried at the close of the meeting:

> A very large number of the inhabitants of the Palatinate desire the establishment of a self-governing Republic of the Palatinate.
>
> Those who represent this idea are convinced that the realization of this plan is only possible in agreement with the Peace Conference.
>
> Relying upon the principle of self-determination, they request the General commanding the Army of the Palatinate to be good enough to transmit this desire to the Peace Conference. The manner in which the execution of this plan may be undertaken will depend on the opinion expressed by the Conference.

M. Viel-Mazel adds:

> A copy of this historic document was taken by a superior officer to Marshal Foch, who sent an answer to the effect that the people of the Palatinate would very shortly be able to speak openly, and that guarantees would be given them to enable them to act *without fearing the return of the German authorities*.

The unfortunate part is that, as in the case of the Cologne manifestation of December 4, 1918, all these "notables" meant nothing beyond a measure intended to save the Rhinelanders from the revolutionary contamination of Moscow.

And the proof of this is visible in the subsequent attitude of Hoffmann, the President of the Bavarian Popular Party, who seems to have played a chief part at the meeting at Landau. On April 12, 1919, less than two months after, he was writing, "Our profession of faith in favour of Germanism admits of no discussion."[3]

Which does not, however, prevent M. Viel-Mazel from reaching the conclusion that "At this moment it seems clear that France has but to make a sign for the Palatine

Republic to be born, without the least hint of opposition.” Where did he see that?

Let us now come to the events that took place at Mainz and at Wiesbaden.

In January 1919 committees had been formed at Mainz and Wiesbaden to “work” with Cologne.

United in one “Rhenish Nassau-Hesse Committee,” these committees instructed Doktor Dorten, an ex-magistrate, to enter into relations with Cologne, and it was in this capacity that Dorten was present at this famous meeting of February 1 which I have already mentioned.

When the Rhenish Nassau-Hesse Committee discovered that the Rhineland Committee instituted at Cologne on that 1st of February had not once met during the month of February, they sent the Burgomaster Adenauer an ultimatum, on February 27, bidding him obtain, before March 4, a formal declaration from that committee.

On March 4 Adenauer replied that he could do nothing, that the Berlin Government was opposed to any Separatist movement. The contrary would have been surprising.

Then the Rhenish Nassau-Hesse Committee decided to act alone. It made the following declaration:

> 1. We demand the right to decide our own destiny.
>
> 2. WE ARE GERMANS, AND CONSEQUENTLY WE DESIRE TO REMAIN WITHIN THE GERMAN SYSTEM.
>
> 3. *We protest against the ceding of any Rhineland territory in the west*, and against any form of government which may be imposed on us. The Rhineland, Nassau, and Rhenish Hesse form one single territory. The restoration of the Palatinate, of Westphalia and Oldenburg, to this territory is ardently desired.
>
> 4. We are firmly convinced that the realization of our desire would tend to ensure the peace of nations. The autonomous state constituted by the decision of the above-named Rhenish territories will be a pacific republic. It offers the necessary guarantee for European peace, establishes a bulwark against the venom of Bolshevism, and assures peaceful relations with the East and the West.
>
> 5. We accordingly desire the immediate establishment of a western *German* republic, and hope that the competent authorities will authorize a plebiscite without delay.
>
> 6. The Committee formed at Cologne on February 1, 1919, having refrained from taking any action, is considered dissolved.

Although drafted in a somewhat obscure style, the declaration shows clearly two things:

1. The Rhinelanders wish to remain German.

2. *They are opposed to the ceding of any territory in the west.*

Dorten, who had been made chief delegate, was commissioned to hand this document to the generals commanding at Cologne, Coblenz, and Mainz, with the request that they would transmit it to their Government.

After which, declares the *Rheinische Republik*,[4] “local committees were formed in all the important Rhineland towns, to collect signatures.” It appears, still according to the *Rheinische Republik*, that this was a complete success everywhere. “At Aix-la-Chapelle, for example, 52,000 electors of all parties and classes demanded an immediate plebiscite.”

And it was at this point, in April, it seems, that General Mangin undertook to grant Dorten the help which the latter so much needed in order to produce political realities from these rather confused manifestations. Conversations took place between Dorten and General Mangin, who never reported them to me.

On May 17 a delegation from the committee of Aix-la-Chapelle and Rhenish Nassau-Hesse, to which were attached two Rhineland deputies, Kastert and Kuckhoff, was received by Mangin, and laid before him “the desire of the peoples of the Rhineland.” A few days before they had—a singular precaution—informed the German Government of the step they were about to take, and, after their interview with General Mangin, Kastert and Kuckhoff went to Berlin and reported to Scheidemann.

What did the German Government do then? It declared that the partisans of the Rhineland movement were guilty of the crime of high treason and liable to be condemned to penal servitude or imprisonment for life, under paragraph 81, section 3, of the German penal code.

This declaration, stated the *Rheinische Republik*, “scared away many timorous spirits. Everywhere it was one storm of curses and calumnies.” Kastert and Kuckhoff had to give in their resignations.

It was at this point that President Wilson came on the scene.

On May 23 he sent me the following letter:

My dear Prime Minister,

I have just received a message from the General commanding our army of occupation which causes me serious anxiety. It is as follows:

“This morning General Mangin, the General commanding the French Army in Mainz, sent a colonel on his staff to General Liggett’s headquarters at Coblenz, to ask what our attitude would be with regard to a political revolution on the left bank of the Rhine with a view to establishing a free Rhineland republic, independent of Germany. He asked what the American attitude would be towards such a new republic.[5]

“The Staff officer assures us that they had fifty deputies ready to come into the American zone to help to put the revolution in motion. The meaning of the word *deputies* in this connexion was not clearly understood, but it was manifest that Frenchmen were referred to.”

General Liggett very properly refused to consider this proposal, and his attitude has my entire approval. He has been given instructions to prohibit political agitators from entering our zone, whatever orders they may invoke to justify their action, and I feel persuaded that these instructions will meet with your own approval.

Cordially and sincerely yours,
WOODROW WILSON

On receipt of this letter I instructed M. Jeanneney, Under-Secretary of State to the Presidency of the Council, to go and inquire into the matter on the spot.

On May 24 M. Jeanneney interviewed Generals Fayolle and Mangin at Mainz; on the 25th, at Coblenz, he received the explanations of Colonel Denvignes, who had been sent by General Mangin to see General Liggett; then, assisted by an interpreter, M. Jeanneney went to General Liggett, who answered his questions. Returning to Mainz he had another interview with General Mangin.

On the 26th he left for Paris and handed in his report.

The conclusions of the report were the following:

1. It was stated in the message sent to President Wilson on May 23 that fifty deputies were ready to come into the American sector. These were not *French*, but *German* deputies.

2. The republic the proclamation of which was announced was not to be, as the same message pretends, "free, independent of Germany." It was to be, on the contrary, GERMAN.

3. General Mangin had sent Colonel Denvignes to General Liggett to express the opinion "that he had no right to prevent the Rhineland people from manifesting their desire." He had also sent an officer with the same message to General Robertson, commanding the English army of occupation, and another to General Michel, commanding the Belgian zone.[6]

In doing this the General had definitely exceeded his authority. He had "gone beyond the limits of his duties."

M. Jeanneney declared:

> As I understand that the commander of a French zone could not, without its having been submitted to his Government, express his opinion in advance on the merits of a new political constitution of the country that he was charged to control, what is to be said of behaviour which consists in sending advice on this subject into the zone of an Allied army? The offence is all too glaring.

4. General Mangin had frequently been in communication with the promoters of the Separatist movement, "more frequently than was advisable, and this might be construed as a kind of collaboration." Thus on May 17, the first programme for the establishment of the Rhineland Republic having been presented to him, he had declared it "*unacceptable*." Doktor Dorten then drafted another, which was communicated to General Mangin on the 19th; this time he declared that he "made no further objection." Many other direct or indirect conversations followed.

What becomes, in all this, of that *strict neutrality* which, for the head of an army of occupation, is the paramount duty? And all the time, at the Peace Conference, I was fighting to obtain the occupation of the left bank of the Rhine for five, ten, fifteen years, and I was saying to England and America, "Don't be alarmed; we have not the

slightest thought of annexation." Has a soldier, then, a right to involve his Government in such an adventure without informing them of it? It was only too easy to read in this "collaboration" of General Mangin with Dorten an enterprise capable of preparing the disintegration of Germany and the "integration" of the Rhineland with French territory.

On May 26, as I have said, M. Jeanneney left for Paris after having recalled General Mangin to a more correct sense of the task entrusted to him.

On June 1 Dorten had the following proclamation placarded or published in Aix-la-Chapelle, Mainz, Wiesbaden, and Spires:

> To the Rhineland people:
>
> The moment has arrived for us also to contribute to the establishment of the peace of nations.
>
> The Rhineland people claim to be heard in this hour of anguish in which their fate is being decided.
>
> All outside influence should give way before this firm decision born of the universally recognized principle of self-determination for all nations.
>
> The Rhineland people sincerely wish for a peace that shall be the basis of a reconciliation of all peoples.
>
> For this reason they voluntarily break away from the institutions that are the causes of so many wars, degenerate feudalism and militarism. Thus they eliminate for ever the obstacle standing in the way of all true peace.
>
> The proposed peace treaty is made necessary, on the one hand, by the demands of law and of justice, recognized also by the German Government: to repair the enormous damage and devastation suffered by France and Belgium, and to give adequate guarantees against the coming of new wars. On the other hand, it represents a terrible burden for the German people.
>
> The highest duty of the Rhineland people is with all their heart to help on the general and final reconciliation of nations.
>
> We therefore declare as follows:
>
> A Rhineland Republic is founded WITHIN THE GERMAN SYSTEM. It includes the Rhine Province, Old Nassau, Rhineland Hesse, and the Palatinate.
>
> This foundation rests upon the following bases:
>
> 1. THE FRONTIERS REMAIN THE SAME AS IN THE PAST (including Birkenfeld).
>
> 2. *Alterations in the frontiers can only be made with the approval of the peoples concerned; this approval will be ascertained by means of a plebiscite.*
>
> The Provisional Government is composed of delegates of the undersigned committees. It will immediately ask for authorization to proceed without delay with the election of a Rhineland Assembly according to the electoral system in force for the National Assembly, and afterward to call a meeting of this Assembly.
>
> Coblenz will be the seat of the Government, and also of the Rhineland Assembly. For the moment the seat of the Government is Wiesbaden.

The provincial and communal administrations will continue to act until further orders. The Provisional Government takes the place of the central Governments of Prussia, Hesse, and Bavaria.

Long live the Rhineland republic!

THE RHINELAND COMMITTEE
THE COMMITTEE OF RHENISH NASSAU-HESSE
THE PALATINATE COMMITTEE

AIX-LA-CHAPELLE, MAINZ, SPIRES, AND WIESBADEN
June 1, 1919

The same day the following telegrams were sent by Dorten to the Allies, to the President of the German Republic, and to Scheidemann, the German Prime Minister.

Telegrams to the Peace Conference and to the occupying Powers

The delegates of Rhineland Prussia, of Old Nassau, of Rhenish Hesse, and of the Palatinate, in accordance with the earnest desire expressed for more than six months by the Rhineland populations, after debating the question at Aix-la-Chapelle, at Wiesbaden, at Mainz, and at Spires, proclaim from the date of the 1st of June THE AUTONOMY OF THE RHINELAND REPUBLIC, WITHIN THE GERMAN SYSTEM.

The capital of the new Republic will be Coblenz; the seat of the Government is provisionally established at Wiesbaden.

Desirous of hastening as far as is in their power the conclusion of peace, desirous of avoiding all complications and further deliberation, the delegates request the Peace Conference to recognize purely and simply the existence of the new state, the exact status of which will be established by a popular vote.

Faithful to its Fatherland, upon which unheard-of misfortunes have fallen, but conscious of the terrible responsibility that militarism has laid upon the whole of Germany, the new state does not seek by any indirect means to set aside the burdens that must fall upon it in the reparation of the damage inflicted on France and Belgium.

The Rhineland populations, desirous of self-determination, are resolved to sever themselves definitely from Prussian feudalism and militarism, which are in direct conflict with their memories and their traditions.

They ask the Allied and Associated Powers to protect them in the present and in the future against the ill-feeling and vengeance of those sections of the people and functionaries incapable of understanding the justice and nobility of their aspirations, against all those who already threaten with their prisons and their fortresses the partisans of Rhineland freedom.

They rely on the Powers to ensure complete freedom in the forthcoming elections, which will decide the status of the new republic.

Long live the Rhineland Republic!

Long live liberty!

To President Ebert, Berlin

HERR PRESIDENT,

In the name of the Provisional Government of the Rhineland Republic, I have the honour to communicate to you the proclamation, on the 1st of June, 1919, of the Rhineland Republic *within the German system*.

The Rhineland people have clearly shown since the revolution that they wish to decide their own destiny. THEY WISH UNQUESTIONABLY TO REMAIN WITHIN THE GERMAN SYSTEM, but at the same time to form a single unit; for this it is necessary that they should sever themselves from the different individual states. The German Government did not comply with this desire, so that we have been forced to take independent action.

We will bear the burdens of the War as much as is in our power; our most sacred duty will be to do all that in us lies to bring about a peaceful regeneration of our unfortunate country and to permit it to take part, as an esteemed member of the League of Nations, in the great tasks of the future—peace and the reconciliation of the nations.

DR DORTEN

To the Prime Minister, Herr Scheidemann, Berlin

In the name of the Provisional Government of the Rhineland Republic, I have notified the President of the German Republic of the proclaiming on this day of a *Rhineland Republic within the German system*, as well as of the motives which urged us to this action. To lose no time in manifesting our ardent desire to smooth the way to peace and to the reconciliation of the nations, I have communicated this proclamation to the President of the Peace Conference at Versailles and to the Governments of the occupying Powers, through the intermediary of their military authorities.

At the same time I have requested permission to proceed at once to the elections for a Rhineland Assembly, and also to send delegates to the Peace Conference.

I address the same request to you with the further request to permit us to work in collaboration with the German peace delegation.

DR DORTEN

General Mangin having forwarded to M. Poincaré the telegram intended for him, the President of the Republic sent this telegram [7] on to me the same day, June 1, with the following comments:

> I SUPPOSE [8] that the General would not have transmitted this address to me if the movement was not a serious one, and if it is serious I hope that the Allies will not compel us to suppress it.
>
> Since the Rhineland Republic is forming itself "within the system of the German Empire," it is not even an act of separatism, and as a popular vote, on the other hand, is promised, there seems to be nothing that might shock President Wilson.
>
> In my opinion it would be very unfortunate if we were to take part against these, as yet, very shy dispositions toward independence.

The protest this time did not come from President Wilson. It came from the German peace delegation, which on June 3 sent me two long notes, one signed by Erzberger and the other by Brockdorff-Rantzau. Erzberger and Brockdorff-Rantzau said, in substance, "Separatist tendencies are not only tolerated by the French military authorities, but are even openly supported by them."

M. Jeanneney again left for Mainz, and again saw General Mangin, who declared, "It came as a surprise to me when Dorten proclaimed the Republic," which was obviously ridiculous.

We replied to the German delegation. Time passed. . . . And what became of Doktor Dorten's republic? M. Viel-Mazel, a friend of General Mangin, states, "These efforts came to nothing."

And M. Viel-Mazel adds:

> It may be believed that this first real manifestation of the spirit of independence would have succeeded if the French authorities had not been compelled by peremptory orders to preserve the strictest neutrality.

In other words, we had only to conquer the Rhineland for it to become independent.

We have seen what took place in 1919 at Landau, Cologne, Mainz, and Wiesbaden. For some few years still the last adherents to the idea of autonomy were to continue their campaign. And here, in France, one man was to continue to set great hopes on the efforts of the Separatists: that man was M. Poincaré.

On November 23, 1923, being Prime Minister, he was still saying in the Chamber:

> It is still too soon, of course, to foretell what will be the outcome of the events now taking place in the occupied territories. BUT IN CERTAIN PLACES, SUCH AS TREVES AND THE PALATINATE, THE TENDENCY TOWARD COMPLETE INDEPENDENCE SEEMS VERY STRONG, AND IN THE TOWNS LEAST IN FAVOUR OF COMPLETE SEPARATION THERE IS CERTAINLY AN INCREASING DESIRE FOR AUTONOMY.
>
> WE CAN THEN EXPECT, SOONER OR LATER, CHANGES IN THE POLITICAL CONSTITUTION OF ALL OR PART OF THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES.

And three months later, as though in reply to this speech, we had the tragic affair of Pirmasens.

On February 12, 1924, at Pirmasens, a town in the Palatinate, events occurred which an eyewitness describes as follows:

> From the early morning of Tuesday a large crowd, composed almost exclusively of armed bands of Nationalists from the right bank of the Rhine, had gathered together before the Government building, which was occupied by about forty Separatists under the command of the "commissary of the autonomous Government of the Palatinate," Herr Schwab, and demanded the departure of the Separatists. The latter refusing flatly to leave their headquarters, the crowd appeared to disperse slowly, but at about five o'clock in the afternoon the assailants stormed the building with the aid of bombs and hand-grenades. The Separatists, who had barricaded themselves, were defending themselves as well as they could when the Nationalist bands, having soaked the building with petrol, set fire to it.
>
> Suffocating amid the flames and smoke and terribly burned, the Separatists asked for mercy and surrendered. Forced to come out of the flaming building one by one, they were massacred in horrible fashion with hatchets and knives. The Nationalists displayed utter savagery and gave them no quarter. Their fury did not cease even before the corpses, which, all hacked with knives, were thrown into the fire.
>
> Practically all the Separatists were killed, and among the civil population there were three dead and ten wounded.
>
> The French police and Criminal Investigation Department are holding a joint inquiry. It is a remarkable fact that at no moment during the massacre did the German police interfere.
>
> Some arrests were made next morning.[9]

A telegram from Mainz gave further details:

> About thirty Autonomists were attacked on the evening of February 12 at Pirmasens, in the building of the Sub-Prefecture, by a body of from five to six hundred men, armed and supported by the fire brigade. The latter made the engine ready for action. Most of the assailants were armed with Mauser rifles, and had posted themselves in the houses opposite the Sub-Prefecture. At the very beginning of the attack some unknown person sounded the alarm. The assailants set fire to the building of the Sub-Prefecture with the aid of 150 litres of benzine. The resistance went on until 11.30 P.M. The Separatists surrendered when the fire reached the second storey. The commissary of the "autonomous Government," Schwab, was shot through the heart. The losses among the assailants are considerable.
>
> The Criminal Investigation Department of Landau arrested, during the night, an individual who, armed with a hammer, had taken an active part in the attack.
>
> It may be observed that the firemen and policemen who happened to be on the spot were mostly in a state of intoxication.[10]

According to the *Düsseldorfer Nachrichten*, there were twenty-seven killed and about twenty wounded.

A journalist on the staff of *Le Temps* went to the scene of the outrage, and gave his impressions as follows:

> *February 20*
>
> On this freezing winter's day Pirmasens, with its bands of unemployed, who loiter about the little winding streets, staring impudently at the French civilians and soldiers alike, produces a sinister impression. This fanaticized population applauded and took part in the massacre and the fire of February 12. In the public places they repeat, "We have learned how to handle the Separatists; it will be the turn of the French next, and before long either." This bellicose humour manifested itself in insults to members of the delegation from the High Commission. The delegate, Commandant Fénoul, sharply rebuked some insolent students, and had to use his cane in order to get rid of an individual who jostled him. On the evening of the tragedy the Commandant was absent from Pirmasens on service affairs. At six o'clock, a quarter of an hour *after his return*, the first shots were fired. The three hundred assailants, aided by the firemen and applauded by a dense crowd of sympathizers, began the siege of the Sub-Prefecture. They brought tow, and soaked it in petrol. The leaders had their pockets full of French bank-notes, and distributed sums of 100, 200, and 300 francs among the boldest spirits, who, clambering up the walls, holding on by their least irregularities, clinging to the water-spouts, spread the fire as far as the second storey.
>
> "Fire! Fire!" yelled the crowd, clapping their hands and not retreating an inch, in spite of the bullets of the Separatist defenders.
>
> In the town it had been known for several days that the Separatists were to be smoked out of their lair. The authorities of the occupation, although very uneasy, had no precise knowledge. *The German offices of the Sub-Prefecture had even been moved, with all their archives, a week before.* There is no doubt, therefore, that the business was premeditated.
>
> At Heidelberg they were kept informed by telephone of the different phases of the drama. Placards pasted on the noticeboard at the university announced to the students, delirious with savage glee, the progress of the work of death and destruction.
>
> On our side, Commandant Fénoul was vainly asking the German telephone exchanges to put him through to Zweibrücken or Kaiserslautern, so that he might get help. They either did not answer him, or jeered at him, or even, when it was already too late, cut him off when he had barely begun to speak.
>
> At Pirmasens the delegate had for a long time been asking for a military telephone exchange, so that he might not be at the mercy of the sabotage of the German telephonists. Will he get it now? He had also persistently asked for a garrison in this turbulent industrial town of 46,000 inhabitants. On the evening of the tragedy there were at Pirmasens *twenty-five Moroccans* under a sergeant-major;

this section was barely enough to guard their stores, the seat of the delegation, the railway-station, and the Customs house.

The sergeant-major was not qualified to make the serious decision to interfere. On the other hand, Commandant Fénoul represents the High Commission, and is therefore a civilian official! Such are the beauties of the dualism established in the occupied territories.

To add to the confusion and to help the Nationalists, the Burgomaster plunged the delegation in darkness by cutting off the electricity. He only reconnected it on being threatened with arrest, after thirty-five minutes of protests on our side and subterfuges on his.

At Zweibrücken there was no locomotive under steam; it was necessary to wait till a train passed and take its engine; the company of riflemen reached Pirmasens at half-past ten. Everything was over, the Separatists murdered, burnt, the Sub-Prefecture burnt down.

This audacious attack had been carefully planned by the directors and editors of the *Pirmasenser Zeitung* who had tried to entice the Separatists into their office, where they would have been killed. These unfortunates avoided this trap only to fall into another after they had surrendered. During the battle one of them sent under flag of truce to ask for terms was killed with hatchets.

The rescuing company, making their way with difficulty through streets obstructed and barred with ropes by the Nationalists, could do nothing except disperse about fifteen thousand inhabitants who had been present at the tragedy and had applauded its atrocities. There was undoubted complicity of the whole town, but for the majority it was a moral complicity. Our soldiers, even as a just reprisal, will never fire on an unarmed crowd.[11]

The abominable conditions under which this butchery was enacted, the manner in which the French soldiers witnessed the drama without attempting to put a stop to its horrors, cannot fail to cause surprise. When General Mordacq is dealing with German mentality he does not shrink from declaring who were responsible:

From the moment the first shots were fired the sergeant-major in charge of the section assembled his men, and wished to carry out the orders he had received from the military authorities, but Commandant F——, representing the Inter-Allied High Commission, donned his uniform and ordered the unfortunate non-commissioned officer to do nothing of the kind, *stating that he had just received from Paris, therefore from the Government, orders not to interfere and to observe strict neutrality*.

The sergeant-major wished to telephone to his chiefs, but he was told that all the telephones were disconnected.

As a matter of fact, the telephone to Spires was working all the time, for Commandant F——, a few days afterward, admitted to me that *the order not to allow the troops to interfere had come to him from the chief delegate of the Inter-Allied High Commission at Spires*.

Be that as it may, once the massacre was over, summary punishments followed—very vague, very mild punishments: people were forbidden to be in the streets at night, motor-car traffic was forbidden, etc. . . .

Time passed.

And M. Poincaré, who was Prime Minister when these events took place at Pirmasens, never again spoke of this "movement" for an independent Rhineland: there are memories it is better to leave asleep.

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[1] Viel-Mazel, *Le Rhin, victoire allemande*, p. 48. This work belongs to French propaganda.

[2] Everything possible was done to magnify the importance of this "assembly of notables." In *Le Gaulois* of August 23, 1920, M. G. de Maizières wrote in all seriousness that these forty-five notables represented "220,000 Palatine electors." Why and how he forgot to explain.

[3] As for Herr Richter, the other delegate present at the "assembly of notables" of February 22, 1919, the part he played does not seem very clear either. It was he who told the French Staff on March 21, "Herr von Winterstein will make a very good President of the Republic. All the officials will follow his lead." Now, it was that same Winterstein whom we were compelled to expel in May: *he had had four Autonomists arrested*.

[4] A little sheet published at Wiesbaden in 1919, probably by Dorten himself.

[5] I must remark, in passing, on an inexcusably incorrect action.

[6] Successive acts of a procedure which, had I known of it in time, would have meant disciplinary action against General Mangin.

[7] The text of this telegram is that which I have already quoted, and was published by the *Rheinische Republik*, but it closes with these lines which the *Rheinische Republik* did not give: "A delegation from this Government solicits the honour of going to Paris to explain the situation and the wishes of twelve million Rhinelanders." Twelve million! No less. . . . One sees how gaily the good Dorten had inflated this whole business.

[8] I invite the reader to appreciate this "*supposition*" of M. Poincaré's, intended to divert from him any suspicion of an understanding with General Mangin. The President of the Republic is a partisan (discreet but determined) of the seizure by the French of the Rhineland, annexation childishly referred to under the subterfuge of another name. He has spoken of it with General Mangin, who is not unaware of the incident of Marshal Foch's refusing to send the telegram from the Allies to General Nudant, and General Mangin takes it into his head, in his turn, to go beyond my instructions. So he negotiates with Dorten, of whose texts he approves or disapproves before passing them, and he goes so far as to undertake to negotiate with the military chiefs of the Allies apart from their Governments, while he himself

applies to the President of the Republic, who is not entitled to solve this question, or any other, without the Ministers he has chosen.

If he had done his duty M. Poincaré would have returned his document to the insubordinate general, asking him to communicate the text, in the first place, to the Minister of War. But this idea did not occur to him. Reversing the duties defined by the Constitution, it was the President of the Republic who informed the Prime Minister by sending him a document which he ought to have received from the person to whom he was sending it. In what terms does he do so? And for what recommendations? He is not informed, and he has no right to be informed, before his Minister. He does not know what to think of his document, which may, indeed, contain certain exaggerations; he is reduced to writing to me, "I SUPPOSE *that the General would not have transmitted this address to me if the movement was not a serious one*." Precious is that word which will allow him to shake off all responsibility, whatever happens, by a pretended uncertainty as to facts he knows quite well!

[9] *Le Temps*, February 15, 1924.

[10] *Le Temps*, February 15, 1924.

[11] *Le Temps*, February 24, 1924.

CHAPTER XIII

THE TREATY: THE GUARANTEE PACT

It must be freely admitted that, while the occupation of the Rhineland, recommended by Marshal Foch and adopted at first by the French Government, would have procured us a substantial addition to our security, the principle involved was still open to criticism by opponents, who had no lack of arguments.

The first, and not the least important, question was to know what we should do with the inhabitants of the Rhineland. They would not fail to plead that they are living in their own home, which, in modern times, is sometimes not a bad argument. In the old days there was open violation of peaceful territories, there were massacres, deportation of all who resisted, enslavement of the rest, and no one was given a chance to complain, as we saw in Belgium under the German occupation. Henceforth we have to be a little more circumspect.

Engrossed as he was with his military occupations, Marshal Foch did not trouble his head to think what would happen to five and a half millions of inhabitants, who, as the result of the principles of the French Revolution, would perhaps feel a certain dissatisfaction at being disposed of without a previous consultation, the result of which could be in very little doubt. It was in all sincerity, therefore, that we came to repudiate the idea of annexation, which, after all, was nothing less than organized brutality. Is it commendable to say to people, "Manage your affairs as you like, but I must be able to plant forts and guns in your country anywhere it may suit me"?

Logically enough, Foch came to the conclusion that it would be impossible to allow the Rhinelanders of a Rhineland occupied by France to be soldiers of Germany. Gladly would I have seen them become French. But I was not sure of their consent. The men of the Rhineland refuse to be Prussians under compulsion (*Musspreussen*), but they have not yet said that they desire to be Frenchmen.

We have seen how M. Poincaré himself was so far won over to the idea as to announce, on the eve of the dreadful Pirmasens massacre, the approaching triumph of the movement for Rhineland independence.

I fought to the bitter end for the strategic frontier that Marshal Foch judged to be best, without cherishing any illusions about the internal and external difficulties. How is it that I am asked why I did not do the very thing I most certainly did? Can it be maintained that I willingly acquiesced in defeat, when, on the very day on which I was going to lay the Treaty before the Chamber, Mr Lloyd George suddenly turned on me and told me that he would withdraw if I did not consent to the occupation of the Rhineland for *two years*, instead of fifteen. I replied that, if he stuck to his threat, I would hand Parliament my resignation after I had explained why. Without the stalwart support of Mr Wilson, the Treaty on that day would have been a mangled corpse, and no one can imagine that Marshal Foch and M. Poincaré would have obtained satisfaction on that score. It is clear that I had done all that I possibly could, since I was

ultimately faced with the prospect of the disruption of the alliances—that is to say, the failure of the victory. A fine theme for philosophizing!

When confronted with the Rhineland question Mr Wilson shook his head in unpromising fashion, and Mr Lloyd George assumed a determined air of antagonism in complete agreement with Mr Balfour, who, since 1917, had on two different occasions pronounced against the creation of an autonomous Rhine State. "We must not make a second Alsace-Lorraine for Germany," added Mr Lloyd George. "We are at one with France as to the end to be attained: we are not at one with her as to the means."[1]

A sudden change. . . .

In a conversation of April 14, 1919, Mr Lloyd George stated that, in exchange for the occupation and for the independence of the left bank of the Rhine, he would offer a military guarantee on the part of Great Britain against unprovoked German aggression. He even added that he would use all his influence with Mr Wilson, to obtain the same engagement from the American Government. When I reported this incident to M. Poincaré he did not seem at all moved by the British proposal, to which Mr Wilson had by that time lent his support. He kept silent, which was sometimes his way of showing his disapproval.

"I do not quite see," I pointed out, "how I am to propose to the French people (after they have defeated Germany with the help of the English and Americans) that they should refuse the military aid of these two peoples in ensuring peace."

I received not a word in reply. We parted after this pretence of exchanging views.

Three days later I submitted to the contracting parties a note which served to open the discussion that was to define the conditions allowing recourse to military action. Not a day passed which did not see the discussion resumed and the Anglo-American plan examined and discussed in its final consequences. The Commander-in-Chief and the Allied generals were called before *the Big Four*, and Marshal Foch once more repeated all that he had said previously.

How can the *Mémorial* allege that the Marshal had *great difficulty* in getting a hearing? He was summoned by the Government *before all the authorities officially concerned*, when he could say everything he wished. He did not succeed in drafting the Treaty as he would have liked it: that is the head and front of his grievance. Napoleon made his own wars and his own treaties. But his treaties, which were intended to secure peace, only succeeded in letting loose upon us a fresh series of wars, and that is precisely what we were trying to avoid. Can it be believed that never at any moment during his speeches did the Marshal touch on the real point—namely, the dissolution of the alliances if his plan was adopted? Never once. It was easy for him to be loquacious where M. Poincaré, that talker *par excellence*, had remained silent. But neither the one nor the other could broach the preliminary question of the disruption of the alliances, because the very first word would have brought them down with a crash!

It was then that the discussion began on the question of the provisional occupation of the left bank of the Rhine, which Mr Lloyd George proposed that we should surrender *in return* for the promise of a military alliance. England, he urged, had no permanent army. On the other hand, she possessed a permanent naval force on the sea,

and, when guardian of the German Fleet, she had allowed it to destroy itself at Scapa Flow.

After a discussion that lasted a whole week the Allies ended by adopting the following wording, which became the text of the final paragraph of Article 429:

> *If at the end of fifteen years the guarantees against unprovoked aggression by Germany are not considered sufficient by the Allied and Associated Governments, the evacuation by the occupying troops may be delayed to the extent regarded as necessary for the purpose of obtaining the required guarantees.*

M. Tardieu says[2]:

> What are the guarantees referred to? Those provided for at Versailles, on June 28, 1919, by the treaty with Germany and the two pacts with England and America—that is to say, with reference to a remote and undefined future, the League of Nations; for a future closer at hand, the occupation supplemented by the two pacts. In what case could these guarantees be considered insufficient in 1935? In case of the two pacts falling through: precisely, therefore, in the circumstances realized by the vote of rejection of the American Senate.

What additional guarantees of security should we have had from the establishment of an independent Rhineland state?

To furnish a pertinent reply to this question we should further have to know exactly what aim we were setting before us. Our sole purpose was to put ourselves in a position to meet, as speedily and effectively as possible, any fresh aggression. Now, in virtue of Article 428, we held the bridge-heads. We hold these bridge-heads for five, ten, fifteen years. In virtue of Article 429 we may delay the evacuation of the troops "*to the extent regarded as necessary*" for the obtaining of guarantees against "unprovoked German aggression."

To the very last moment the Marshal was heard. On April 25, at the final session of the Council of Ministers,[3] on May 6, at the plenary session of the Conference that preceded by twenty-four hours the handing of the Treaty to the Germans, the Marshal had our ear right to the end.

He had no difficulty in proving that provisional occupation would not be so certain in its effect as permanent occupation, but said nothing about the military alliance which made up for this deficiency much more effectively than could have been hoped. He pretended not to be aware of the quite well-known fact of the French-English-American alliance on the Rhine. Speaking of the return of the Germans to the occupied territories, he complained in all seriousness of an "ABSENCE OF MILITARY GUARANTEES." This was perhaps a little curt when we consider the land and sea forces that Great Britain and America were proposing to put in line with us.

As for myself, what more can I say? I am bitterly censured for having refused to give my country a strategic frontier. How can I take seriously those who, both great and small, reproach me with this, since they know that I could not—apart from any

question of the rights of peoples—annex the Rhineland without breaking off our alliance, WHICH NO ONE DARED TO SUGGEST TO ME?

How could those who were at such pains to avoid putting the point in its true terms be sincere in asking me why I had not done what they would not have done any more than I did, because France would not have allowed them? The only question that arose in the beginning of the discussion on the Rhine frontier was the breaking off of the alliance, and that, I emphatically declare, I would not consent to. I ask you, M. Raymond Poincaré, do you reproach me for not having driven Mr Wilson and Mr Lloyd George to withdraw from the field and leave us *tête-à-tête* with Herr Doktor Dorten's Rhineland Republic, of which we have heard not another word since Pirmasens?

Well then, no, I did not break with the Allies, and no more could you have broken with them yourself, for you would have been at once swept aside for the honour of the French name. And it is your own friends, not mine, who declare this. Listen to M. Barthou:

> THE FRENCH GOVERNMENT, IN WHOSE PLACE IT IS IMPROBABLE THAT ANOTHER WOULD HAVE ACTED DIFFERENTLY, HAS SECURED SUBSTANTIAL GUARANTEES FOR FRANCE. Can it be denied that they represent an imposing amount of force? They supplement and complete one another.[4]

Yet what happened? What happened was that at Westminster the Guarantee Pact was unanimously accepted, while at Washington it was not even accorded the honour of being set out and expounded officially. On July 22, 1919, on the occasion of the second reading of the bill relating to the Guarantee Pact, Lord Curzon said:

> The real test is, of course, is a Bill of this description—is the guarantee which we, and, I hope, the United States, are about to give—on the whole an instrument that will lead to the peace of the continent of Europe and of the world? I do not think that anyone can hesitate to answer that question in the affirmative. And I have not only been pleased—I have been almost surprised—at the absolute unanimity with which the undertaking of this pledge by ourselves—no mean undertaking; a very great thing in history—has been accepted by every body and section of public opinion in this country.

The House of Commons, which had never pledged its military help in advance to any people, had readily grasped the fact that a new situation called for decisions of a new character. The Guarantee Treaty was accordingly passed by a *unanimous* vote without a debate. France will never forget this. On the other hand, by a majority of six votes, the American Senate refused Mr Wilson—who had been suffering for many long months from a fell disease—the consent he had asked for. Article 2, which provided for the "*simultaneous*" coming into force of the two treaties, could not take effect. Such are the risks that democracies run with their frail Parliaments. For France, who lent such powerful aid to the great achievement of American Independence, this enshrines a pretty lesson in history to ponder over. I have often heard it said that there were more Frenchmen than Americans in the little army that made Lord Cornwallis capitulate at

Yorktown. Those were the great days of American liberation. From New York to San Francisco who thinks of it to-day?

Matters thus did not take the course that was looked for. We know that Washington, in 1796, recommended his compatriots not to become entangled in European alliances. There were at that time many reasons for this. But can it be said that circumstances may not change? Is there a man on the face of the earth capable of devising a recommendation in foreign policy for all eternity? Who made the proposal of a *guarantee pact* but the official spokesman of the American people, following Mr Lloyd George? Who considered the German menace to be directed as much against the United States as against France and England? Who proposed to us a "*war association*"? The whole thing is there!

When M. Poincaré, whom the military alliance with England and the United States had not won over from his Rhineland schemes, reproaches me in his conversations for not having had the Treaty accepted by America *before it had been accepted by France*, he is building up, after the event, a typical legal argument for the lobby, not for the court, and trying to introduce between the American Government and ourselves the ingeniosities of a pleader at the end of his tether, which I should very speedily have been taught by both Governments were untenable and worthless. Mr Woodrow Wilson and the American Senate are not people to deal with in that airy, offhand fashion. I have had experience of them. Their sentiments of uncompromising independence were known to me. At the first sign of any unwelcome pressure they would have been up in arms, and I should have been in a sorry plight, with my wretched little trap sprung.

There were only two men with whom the question could be usefully discussed, and even then what precautions one had to employ! President Wilson and Colonel House, his *alter ego*, were proud men. To all my questions as to the issue that might be expected President Wilson invariably replied, with an imperturbable confidence, that he counted for certain on a favourable one. Colonel House was not so unreservedly optimistic, but he had faith in his President. I took care to speak to neither the one nor the other of the Poincaré suggestion, for fear of turning them against me.

Do not forget that it was Mr Lloyd George who had made the original proposal, offering to do all he could to induce the American President to agree to it. Mr Wilson merely came in in the second line as the defender of interests less immediately concerned with us.

Can it be seriously believed that, if I had tried to play this game, the American President and the Senate would not immediately have seen through my ruse and reproached me for flouting them at the very moment when they were offering to help us? What a risk I should have run of compromising our friend Mr Wilson beyond retrieving in the eyes of the assembly that wielded over him a just power of control! Really, in whatever light I view the question I see only intensified dangers, and a piece of pure and simple pettifoggery. And, anyhow, M. Poincaré never even mentioned it to me! It was an idea that occurred to him afterward. When one carries the burden of responsibility for France one's mind is really occupied with something else than juggler's tricks. I am accustomed to shouldering my responsibilities. I see in the air before me signs that portend a state of confusion such as may lead to anything—

anything except the reinstatement of the Treaty of Versailles, whose merit was at least that it laid the foundations of peace.

The separate peace made by America, who might have been the arbiter of the peace of Europe, has thrown the old continent back into its age-long state of strife by a display of financial greed upon which the future will give its verdict. It seems to me indeed that this purely negative vote, with its majority of six, could never have been the last word of the great American Republic if the French Government, as was its right, had called on it to pronounce as between us and itself upon a basis of equity. When men have so heroically given their blood in so noble a cause it ill becomes them to yield to a sudden impulse and, simply by refusing to co-operate, complete the ruin of their war comrades who have survived. Had they been properly conducted, with the help of England—help that would certainly not have been refused us—these supplementary negotiations must have led to an agreement that would have saved the honour of America and given us those compensations in power to which we had a right in return for what we had given up.

The Guarantee Pact gave us what was nothing less than the ultimate sanction of the Peace Treaty. At the cost of heroic efforts we had attempted to establish equitable groupings of national powers—which had come into being as the result of a compromise between racial affinities and historic acts of violence which by long standing seemed to have acquired validity. Frederick II, Catherine, Maria-Theresa, left behind them a tradition of brigandage which shows no signs of dying out. An act of rapine takes but a little time. Centuries are not always enough for reparation.

Had France been actuated by dreams of conquest, as certain Americans have cast in her teeth, she would certainly have taken a stubborn stand in claiming territories linked to her by historic memories, in spite of the danger of basing the peace of the New Europe on an Alsace-Lorraine situation the other way round.

On the contrary, the negotiators thought that the Allies, who had just worked together so brilliantly for victory, could not be met with a refusal when they proposed to carry over into the peace the policy which had led them to come into the War. When the Lloyd George-Wilson proposal fell to the ground it came to be generally thought that the only means of preventing war was to be found in the ideology of the League of Nations, which gave much more scope to Parliamentary intrigues and flights of eloquence than the silent but effective will of the Allied Governments to secure the continuance of peace. The Guarantee Pact was sufficient to rule out the possibility of war, as Lord Curzon recognized. But if America, caring only about her own prosperity, declined to take a share in either scheme, there was nothing left to us but uncertainty.

After telling us that *the frontier of freedom was in France* America had forgotten it all too soon. When she left not only France, but the whole of a Europe founded upon right, exposed to the dangers of a new outbreak of war, America will be judged by history to have too quickly turned a deaf ear to the call of her destiny. She lost fifty thousand men, and we a million and a half, with more than seven hundred thousand disabled. She has become fabulously rich, and we are about to count out to her, dollar by dollar, the marks that Germany owes us by way of reparations. Has she so soon forgotten that we went into this war to save ourselves in extreme peril, not to seek fresh

fields to conquer? All Europe was threatened. We saved the Allies, even as they saved us. The English and Americans came into the fray, like ourselves, to save their own skins.

We can quite understand that the American Senate should have objected to the novelty of a League of Nations, which might involve the country in unforeseen entanglements. The rejection of the Pact without debate is less easily explained, because for America it was only a question of uniting with England to prevent a renewal of German aggression against France, which, if it occurred, would constitute the critical hour for law and order in Europe. The Guarantee Pact thus assumed the position of the keystone of European peace, far above all theories. Its rejection, for that very reason, amounted to an indirect invitation for the thwarted aggressor to try again.

That France and Europe should not wholly have shaken off the feelings engendered by the casual way in which the public powers of the United States refused to discuss a state of solidarity which would have prevented Germany from starting an armaments race, we have a right to regret for America's sake as much as for our own. It was in her power to put a stop to the prolongation of this terrible tragedy. Not merely did she make no effort at all to follow the (unanimous) example of our British allies, but she contemptuously brushed the question aside without discussion. She had set her feet on the slippery slope. This was obvious when this unfortunate lapse was followed by her attempt to make us pay the additional damage inflicted on us through the delay in her preparations.

We shall be pardoned for saying that this was a painful surprise to us—especially when determined efforts are being made, with ends in view that cannot but be disturbing, to make us enter, for a period of over sixty years, into financial engagements which every one knows we shall not be able to fulfil. And even that is not enough to satisfy the American appetite. We are not allowed to set up any connexion between the payments to come from Germany and the alleged debts due to the American Government, which is not content to accept payments from us in proportion to the sums we receive from Germany in reparations. Let the German payments for any reason come to an end, and America intends that the account of her profits shall be added, as though to give us the *coup de grâce*, to the account of the damage done to us by the enemy.

May we not then be allowed to ask to what final disaster this cupidity is complacently hurling us? It surely must result in the complete destruction of France. More than sixty years! Think of the great increase in prosperity these years may bring to other countries, of the dire catastrophes they may, at the same time, have in store for ours, for ours whose only crime is to have taken up arms against the invader! What comparisons are we being brought to make between German aggression and the 'friendly offer' of American 'help'?[5]

France, now asleep, will no doubt wake up one day. But since I do not know when this miracle will take place, and since I am getting on in years, I should be satisfied with a man of good common sense who would have the courage to say no when he thinks no.[6] This is perhaps, among ourselves and elsewhere, the most difficult of all to find. My confidence is unshaken, in spite of unfavourable omens. I am confident

because we still have *ourselves* left, and when the auspicious day dawns this may be enough.

All nations have neighbours, and we would desire our neighbours to be our friends, for therein lies true security, while friendship cannot be won by violence in any shape or form. International security guaranteed by our allies was *offered* to us, and we accepted it. It was not made effective through the lack of understanding of a few weak minds. For all that, France nobly abode by her historic *rôle*. She may take to herself the saying of the great potter Bernard Palissy, who, when his King advised him to change his religion to avoid torture, replied, "*Sire, I know how to die.*" But France will not die, because mankind has need of her for the fulfilment of heroic ends, for acts of altruism.

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[1] Follow M. Tardieu's discussion with the British delegates, and tell me what argument we did not employ.

[2] *La Paix*, p. 235.

[3] I took care that there should never be a Cabinet Council, so that M. Poincaré could not think we had something to conceal from him.

[4] Tardieu, *La Paix*, p. 223.

[5] I shall give further on a brief account of the financial mutilations of the Treaty. America stands revealed to us as a pitiless creditor, and England hears a Snowden grossly insulting France for the sake of currying favour with Germany.

[6] Look at the effect of the same Mr Snowden's "*No*."

CHAPTER XIV

CRITICS AFTER THE EVENT

I HAVE BEEN so bold as to liken M. Poincaré's articles on the Treaty to the lesson of a very careful master who shows up the trifling or serious mistakes of the good and bad pupils guilty of having set to work while the *deus ex machina* was philosophically twiddling his thumbs at the gates of the Élysée palace *Nirvana*.[1]

I have patiently read through this universal indictment by a man who, knowing everything, did nothing; which allows him to make up for lost time by falling foul of those who attempted something. Every one knows that *ex post facto* critics have the great advantage of putting us in a position *to foresee the thing that has happened*. This makes discussion much easier.

I shall not stop to discuss the complaints of the man of inaction against the men of action who bore the brunt of the battle. The colonies that fell to our share did not come up to the expectations of the head of the Government who before the War handed over to Germany the best parts of the French Congo, snipped off for the purpose by M. Caillaux.

The Treaty was drawn up simultaneously in French and in English. Louis XIV and Napoleon knew such documents in French only. What power of expansion did they leave us in comparison with their opponents? M. Poincaré says nothing of that. The thought that it was impossible to refuse such a tribute to the splendid soldiers of England and America who had fallen on French soil does not even enter his head.

Just one more thing, but the best of all. M. Poincaré would like us to have set the professional diplomats to work on the Treaty. I am fully aware of their merits, but I have never found them too eager to shoulder responsibilities.[2]

No, indeed! We were not the kind of people who are ambitious for power merely to shirk action. What? When, after the violation of the Belgian territory, to save at any cost all that could be saved of France, we had suffered with heads unbowed the worst horrors of murder, of pillage, of robbery, of towns destroyed, of forced labour and deportation for non-combatants; when we had seen a million and a half of our sons fall on the battlefields that sent us back almost as many maimed; when England, our ancient foe, had made an equal sacrifice for the common salvation; when Italy, who had belonged to the Triple Alliance in the evil days (isn't that so, Crispi?), had rallied to the call of kindred; when the honoured President of the great American Republic had brought us, after hesitations that had cost us our best blood, the hope of a sanction of abstract human justice, then you would have had us turn, as though ashamed of ourselves, to the professionals of a diplomacy trained rather to carry out orders than to take the initiative, and you would have had us subside behind a Government of lawyers' arguings! No, no. That is not the kind of people we are.

Your diplomats 'by career,' whom I respect as augurs, were consulted—as was right and proper—on everything that could be said to be within their province, for it was

their business to enlighten us to the best of their ability. But the responsibilities you would unload on them do not and cannot belong to them. They are there to advise on ways and means. When you ask them to stiffen with their yes and no the majestic silence from which your votes *pro* and *con* will take wing, in a cunning spreading of responsibilities, what are we to do? You are a man of words, and even, at need, of no words, while we—pray forgive us our simplicity—we only engaged in this matter in order to act, not to retreat. We may make mistakes. We are sure to, for it is the inevitable fate of men of action—especially of those who have set out to alleviate some part of human misery. But, well or ill rewarded, we shall have accomplished something of humanity's great task that will never be understood by, never be known to, the round-table talkers.

In this sense, we also are idealists—since the whole truth must be avowed—and we do not fear to be accused of ideology by the master-dispensers of eyewash. I am certainly not teaching you anything when I tell you that in politics there are mistakes that give prestige—which is to nobody's advantage, not even for the one who profits for the moment.

Have you been told that, though we were proposing, just as you were, to ensure France's security, our aim—even at the risk of inevitable difficulties—was to have respect for our rights upheld and buttressed on every side throughout the civilized world by the operation of an equal universal respect for the rights of others? Have you been told how at that word the joints of the old world, stiffened and anchylosed in immemorial pain, suddenly creaked to life, and can you really believe that your bevy of diplomats, taken out of their proper sphere, could in critical moments have controlled those *coryphæi* of the rights of mankind who had flocked to the summons of the French Republic? I tell you they could not, for I have lived through those painful hours when rights were being set over against one another, and when it needed no less than the liberating authority of the combined Great Powers to say, with sufficient effectiveness, what should be and what should not be. The appeal to abstract justice demands judges. France, England, America had bought with their blood the right to that high office. They could dictate forms of justice to which a Europe in process of reshaping would bow. That is how civilizations progress.

It is by no means certain that those peoples who were the victims of the victors would have answered the summons of your beloved diplomacy, which had sanctioned one after another the misdeeds reparation for which the vanquished of olden days were expecting and awaiting. And especially do I doubt that England and America, who, at any rate, do what they do, would have consented to entrust this labour of action for which they had been chosen to the high-priests of inaction.[3] We should have looked pretty sheepish, floundering in the backwash of a low-down attempt to dodge our responsibility.

We did not dodge, Monsieur le Président; that is the head and front of our crime. In the forefront of the civilized world, the Allies who had just shed their blood to save the right deemed it their first duty to organize it as far as was practicable. Will success crown their efforts? That is Destiny's secret. At least we shall have tried, we shall have done our utmost. If to-day you look upon the policy of mutilation of the Treaty (for which you are responsible as much as anyone else) in the same light as I do, I may at

least tell you that there is no defeat of the right that does not contain within it the elements of some future reaction toward success, so that it is enough to be on the right side of the barricade to find oneself in the end upheld by the event. Perhaps Marshal Foch felt this as I did. Only his barricade was built of stones, which a bomb from an aeroplane can send flying into bits. Mine was built of human progress, which nothing can destroy.

We had only been able to win the War by the combination of four great nations. We could only hope to make peace through the agreement of four Governments that did not necessarily, and that for first-rate reasons, share the same views on the best way of creating a *Europe of Right*. This exasperated our Generalissimo, who was naturally enough much more interested in finishing *his* war by a peace after *his* own heart than in the equitable balancing of the claims of nations who until then had had no notion of anything beyond cutting each other's throats. To Foch it was an unbearable idea that mere heads of State should impose their views on him, the conquering soldier, and as it was with me he wrangled in the first place (after being influenced from quarters not unknown to me), I had the honour of receiving the first blow. So that peace set me fighting on all sides at once.

The Marshal, whose rather artless inspirations permitted him to view the peace problem only from a military point of view, held that the annexation of the Rhineland would prove a "decisive" solution.[4] Even so the Emperor William I, in a letter now in the archives of the Foreign Office,[5] sought to justify the annexation of Alsace by alleging that Germany needed a *glacis* on the Rhine. It does not appear that the Alsatian *glacis* enabled the grandson to maintain the grandfather's conquest.

From the most distant times warriors of all countries have had nothing but a system of annexation for their policy of aggressive defence, and this conception of an organization of military disequilibrium has merely maintained the warlike habits it had been intended to abolish. That is how Europe was brought into the state of anarchy from which the happy issue of our great war might make it possible to save her.

Never, perhaps, had there been before in history a situation more propitious for such an attempt. Boldly we were essaying together to create a Europe of international law. We dared to tempt fate. The overwhelming victory of a single Power rarely brings about a peace of equity. The victory of several will be more likely to inspire a search for approximations of justice in which each Power can exercise the resources of its particular genius.

Yesterday was the first time that a work of high international justice was impartially taken in hand. One saw the peoples to whom history had been so harsh come up to the bar of the victors to demand justice, to lay their complaints, to invoke "*the charity of mankind*." And, as far as was practicable, after moving discussions notable reparations were granted. Yes, there came to us poignant pleas of civilized nations in the throes of cruel tortures, and we hearkened to those pleas because with a great price we had obtained the happy right to give them freedom. And this work we accomplished to an appreciable extent, with the satisfaction of having added nothing to the ills of human societies, with the consciousness of having even helped the weak by restraining the historical abuses of the strong. Not everybody has understood this. Nevertheless, we

did a great work when we restored the idea of a right to the redressing of an agonized past.

The problem was not so much one of laying down frontiers as of waiting, under the peace, for future statesmen and for achievements of will worthy of those that had enabled us to win the War. Mr Wilson, a pragmatic idealist, put all his hopes in the *League of Nations*, adjusted to the postulates of an American policy that failed in the Washington Senate merely because the President refused to consent to a few harmless compromises.

It is easier to reform our neighbours than ourselves. With us, however, these plenipotentiaries from everywhere, of every cast of mind, were able to draw up, approximately, a plan for European reconstruction and apply a healing salve to the cruellest agonies of the wounds of the past. Every one did his best. With us, if we remain worthy of our victory, they will perhaps maintain themselves at the high level of the great work. For the moment we cannot say more. M. Poincaré, who at heart is M. Briand's best pupil, would never have talked like Mr Lloyd George, declaring that immediately after the Armistice the traditional enmity of England and France was to resume its course. But his crowning error lay in seeking in the New Europe a grouping of powers different from that which had just triumphed. Undoubtedly in this respect neither America nor England set a good example. But we might have recalled them to their duty instead of allowing them to forget us.

Although we had received no other territorial advantages than the inevitable restitution of Alsace-Lorraine, England and America were perhaps a little taken aback to find that M. Poincaré preferred the seizure of the Rhineland to their military guarantee. I shall not conceal that I was myself astounded at it. Perhaps, after all, there was legitimate cause for surprise to see the first impulse of our friends setting them to the restoration of the German soil, out of which had come the systematic devastation of French soil, flung back for four long years into a state of savagery. Be it understood that I find no fault with the feeling. It was to come, and it came in due time. But everything that ensued showed that the *rapprochement* with the enemy was among the plans of our quondam allies, who, without troubling overmuch about the inevitable repercussions, allowed Germany to organize the violation of all the Articles of the Treaty without calling her to account for it.

Day by day, hour by hour, for a year we had worked arduously at a thankless task, the constructive parts of which threatened at every moment to collapse under the weight of the contradictory claims springing up on all sides. Every one was out for his own hand. Fine sentiments sometimes have a very shabby lining. In the short span of my life I have had no lack of opportunities to complete my education, without going back to school.

Thus, when the Marshal asked me to assign to him an official from the Quai d'Orsay to enable him to discuss the question of peace direct with the Germans, I could only take this request as an invitation to relinquish in his favour the authority vested in my office, which would then have been reduced to communicating to the Allies (who, by the way, would certainly not have put up with it) the decisions of the soldier put into proper terms by a diplomat subordinate to him. Not for one moment was I disposed to

submit to being thus despoiled of my prerogatives. I should be glad to know who will hold me to blame for that.

Besides, all the questions raised by the end of the War were interrelated, and could only be solved in accordance with reports on international relations and after deliberations. Germany had taken too much not to be sentenced to make restitution. And how refuse one the right to make annexations if you have begun by upholding it in favour of another?

Confident of the greatness of the undertaking into which we were bold enough to venture, in order to obtain a durable peace by putting force at the service of right, we went on with our task amid the carping cries of those who had failed to take the opportunity of winning and could not forgive us for seizing it. It will perhaps be admitted that what we lack to-day is something other than the Rhineland, for we have that still, and yet we have plenty of difficulties. As for Marshal Foch, he went on living in the bitterness of his discomfiture, as his *Mémorial* proves. It seems to me that having been given the task of winning the War, and having won it, he should have found the glory of this enough for his legitimate ambition without any other duty in the pacific reconstruction of Europe devolving upon him, save that of giving his advice with regard to the arranging of frontiers—if the case arose. I have already said that he never complained that I tried to impose my views upon him in the case of any military decision. Whence could he derive his right to force on the French Government, which alone was qualified to treat with foreign Governments, his decisions in matters of general policy, for which, in any event, no man was ever less qualified.

Taking it all in all, the soldier's thesis about the Rhineland belonged to the natural inspiration of all Governments of military autocracy, and no one need be surprised that a victor should succumb to the desire to take territories. But there are limits to everything, and it is not permissible to say that the Treaty is "*bad, very bad*," because we have not justified in the historical sense the Germanic rape of Alsace-Lorraine in 1871 by annexing, after our own victory, a German territory. I have mentioned elsewhere that M. Poincaré *occupied* while loudly proclaiming that he was not *annexing*, and that Marshal Foch, without arguing overmuch on this point, preferred a different subject of conversation.

When I announced officially to the General that he had been made Marshal of France[6] he wrote me a more than amiable letter of thanks which the *Mémorial* very carefully omitted. I will take it upon myself to remedy this omission in order to show how far an overflowing gratitude carried the Marshal's pen.

Here are the documents:

PARIS
August 9, 1918

MONSIEUR LE PRÉSIDENT,

The decree of December 24, 1916, revived for the first time the title of Marshal of France. I have the honour to submit for your signature, in the name of the Government and, I may say, in the name of the whole of France, a decree conferring on General Foch this high national reward. When the enemy by a

formidable offensive on a front of a hundred kilometres reckoned on forcing a decision and imposing upon us that German peace which would mean the enslavement of the world, General Foch and his admirable soldiers defeated him.

Paris delivered, Soissons and Château-Thierry reconquered by stern fighting, more than two hundred villages freed, thirty-five thousand prisoners and seven hundred guns captured, the hopes so loudly proclaimed by the enemy previous to the attack completely crushed, the glorious Allied armies thrown in one single victorious dash from the Marne to the banks of the Aisne, such are the results of a manœuvre as cleverly conceived by the High Command as superbly carried out by incomparable chiefs.

The confidence placed by the Republic and by all the Allies in the victor of the Marais de Saint-Gond, in the illustrious chief of the Yser and the Somme, has been fully justified.

Besides, the dignity of Marshal of France conferred on General Foch will not be merely a reward for past services; *it will still more, in the future, enhance and set a seal upon the authority of the great warrior called to lead the Armies of the Entente to final victory*.

G. Clemenceau

Decree

Article 1. General Foch (Ferdinand) is created Marshal of France.

Article 2. The Minister of War is entrusted with the execution of the present decree.

President of the Republic,
Raymond Poincaré

Here is Marshal Foch's reply:

Headquarters
of the Allied Armies
6.8.18

To the Prime Minister

Monsieur le Président,

I have just received the precious autograph letter you sent me. The fact that it bears your signature, and the feelings of which that signature is the symbol, enhance for me the value of the reward you have been so kind as to procure for me. It will be a patent of nobility most carefully treasured up in my family.

Be assured, Monsieur le Président, of my profound respect and affectionate regard.

Foch

But what a shock when in 1922, on the eve of leaving for America—where I was going to defend France against the accusations of militarism—I read in the *New York Tribune* an interview with Marshal Foch as follows:

> Clemenceau is going over there to whimper and sentimentalize like the old dotard he is.
>
> If I could give him a piece of advice I would say to him, "Stay at home!"
>
> But he hasn't asked my advice.
>
> Clemenceau reminds me of William II.
>
> William II has lost the War, and now he is trying—particularly in the United States—to justify himself with his *Memoirs*.
>
> Clemenceau has lost the peace. His apologia would have but little success in France; he is hoping to have more success with it in the United States.
>
> He is going over to say to the Americans, "You are really very naughty. Why have you not ratified my treaty?"
>
> The Americans will probably answer, "Why do you talk to us about that? We have turned out the administration that signed it. Why are you not better informed as to our real opinion?"
>
> This journey is a piece of personal publicity. It is devoid of any practical value.

When the anti-French campaign inspired by Germany began in the United States by violent reprobations of our so-called *militarism*, I felt so indignant that I resolved to go there to bear witness for my country.

Above André Tardieu's signature *L'Écho National* of October 12, 1922, had published the following:

> *L'Écho National* has reproduced the articles in which the *New York Times* and the *New York World* severely criticized the attack directed by Marshal Foch against Clemenceau on the occasion of his journey to America.
>
> We have since received the text of the attack. It is an interview with the ex-Commander-in-Chief of the Allied armies published by the *New York Tribune*. As an American newspaper wrote, the Marshal has become the plaything of the politicians; he is to be pitied. His interview is a worthy pendant to the *communiqué* given by the Quai d'Orsay to the American Press, which I repeat here. "The present Government has given no mission to M. Clemenceau. It said to him: 'God bless you! A pleasant journey to you!' "
>
> Marshal Foch was minded to go one better than the agents of M. Poincaré.

Entirely ignorant of what I meant to do, without the remotest notion of what I meant to say, this Commander-in-Chief, in the words I have just quoted, which were so unhappy for him, was vehemently inviting the Americans to refuse to give me a hearing. Men who make such mistakes have sooner or later to pay for them. As I am

driven to it, I ask once more, where would Marshal Foch be if I had not saved him twice over by the skin of his teeth?

This was, less well expressed, the gist of a long diatribe by M. Joseph Caillaux (who had been condemned for intercourse with the enemy) against the imperfections of my character. The only difference was that there was some excuse for the vituperations of the man who had been condemned by the High Court, seeing that I had been instrumental in putting him out of action through the laws of my country.

How was it that the Marshal failed to realize that the coupling of those two names, Foch and Caillaux, was for him a very severe punishment? I went over in spite of them, of the German League of America, and of M. Poincaré, sheltered behind his officials, whom I am sorry to be obliged, from the impertinence of his *adieux*, to add to the others.

In America I defended the cause of France without anyone breathing a single word of this incident. I simply mention it here to keep the account straight. The Marshal probably never suspected that he was providing in his own person a striking example of the perils of the "French militarism" so violently attacked by the American Press. It is true that such considerations seem never to have entered his mind.

Marshal Foch's journey to the United States had been merely an affair of pomp and circumstance. Knowing only too well that the whole of America was opposed to the seizure of the Rhineland, he had taken good care not to mention that he wanted to annex it. He would not have found a single man to approve of it.

I would like to know how Foch, so imperious with us, the victorious Government, has looked to our military defence since that time. An all-or-nothing doctrinarian, more than anyone else he had the right and the duty to warn the responsible parties, ever ready to close their eyes so that they need see nothing. What did he say, what did he do in the Army Council, to maintain our advantages, when he saw the masters of the new policy systematically reducing from day to day the all too fair claims of victory before the growing arrogance of the vanquished? For if he was content merely to indulge in unbridled recriminations that is not enough to second the efforts of the future Commander-in-Chief who may one day be his successor in front of the enemy.

And if that time comes where will our allies be? England sees the danger, but it may be she is not disposed to avert it by acts which might involve her henceforward. America does not even dream of apologizing for launching out into a financial exploitation of Europe as a sort of economic colony. And we—what do we do for ourselves, apart from the everlasting special pleadings of the Government?

Do you remember the fable by means of which Demosthenes tried to rouse the attention of his hearers, who were paying no heed to his revelations about the warlike activity of the Macedonian?

One day Ceres and the eel and Procne, the swallow, were all three travelling together. A river brought them to a standstill—the Rhine of those days. The eel swims across, and the bird crosses the water with one waft of the wing.

"And what did Ceres do?" exclaimed the people, now all worked up and excited.

"What did Ceres do? First of all she was furious with you. What, her own people are bothering with child's fables, and, alone among the Greeks, paying no heed to the danger that threatens them! Why don't you ask what Philip is doing?"[7]

Yes! there is a very proper question. *Let us ask what Philip is doing.* And if we do not mean to offer ourselves for him to conquer, let us organize our means of defence, instead of delivering them into his hands. Is it not M. Poincaré himself who, faced by the overwhelming accusations of the evidence, acknowledges that "the very people who had definitely and loudly proclaimed that the Treaty was not strong enough were the first to ruin it"?

History will want to know more of this deplorable adventure. We shall be able to compare the Marshal's silence with the violent rhetoric of his demands for the Rhineland. In judging the facts as they appear to-day I feel much more disappointed than at hearing extolled the general virtue of the famous strategic *glacis* that was to work such wonders.

As for me, who permit myself, without asking anybody's leave, the right to judge men and things simply as a French patriot, I have not yet been able to accustom myself to seeing the hand of certain men at the helm lying in the hand of men justly condemned for flagrant and corrupt lack of patriotism. This is a little more serious than the faults I am accused of by the Marshal, who has never challenged the obvious lapses of certain of his friends. How is it that this did not shock him?

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[1] I honestly regret to be compelled so often to bring up the ex-President of the Republic, and I apologize to him for it, but as Foch cannot tell us in his *Mémorial* if he is or is not annexing the Rhineland, I am obliged to refer to his best advocate, who, be it said, knows no more about it than Foch himself.

[2] Those who believe that Ministers Plenipotentiary are more capable of treating for peace than the heads of the State have only to read, by way of example, the letters exchanged between the Comte d'Avaux, a polite and kindly gentleman but imbued with self-importance, and M. Abel Servien, a violent and aggressive nature, both French Ambassadors at the time of the negotiations of the Treaty of Westphalia.

". . . Do you think that the Queen approves that people who are obliged every hour of the day and every instant (if the case demands it) to confer, talk, answer, and consult together in an amiable and brotherly manner should be reduced to explaining their actions to one another as they would explain them to the Delegates of the opposing party; that those people whose concord and good understanding ought to be the symbol of the Peace for which they treat should be unable to talk together without quarrels and pinpricks? Do you think that their Majesties' affairs are not liable to suffer through the delay caused by this method? You parade your zeal in the Letter you have written me, but here it is nodding a little and going to sleep. To do our business by correspondence is hardly the way to speed up matters."

And M. Servien, accusing in his turn:

“I have noticed from the beginning that you always conduct your arguments in such roundabout and devious ways that they lose all force. An author of our time has very aptly said that this method of advancing in business is like the crawling of a serpent, and never rises above the ground. Nevertheless, it is your usual method, you never like to take up a firm stand in disputes; if you send a blow home it is by a surprise; if one hits you you get away by dodging, you simply dare not take a decision.” (Letter from M. Servien to M. d’Avaux, August 6, 1644.)

[3] Diplomacy is an institution more for the maintenance of incompatibles than for the initiation of things not consecrated by tradition. In the word diplomat there is the root *double*, with the meaning of *to bend*.

[4] It was his right and his duty to say what he thought, but it must be recognized that Marshal Foch went too far.

Clausewitz, of whom I imagine I have heard that Marshal Foch was a diligent student, took good care not to teach revolt against the civil power. “Policy directs war, strategy is merely its instrument,” he wrote, “and from policy it must derive its nature and dimensions.” This great lesson from such a master might have been profitable to Marshal Foch if M. Poincaré had called his attention to it.

[5] This letter was sent to me from the Empress Eugénie, to whom it had been addressed in reply to a request to leave us Alsace-Lorraine.

[6] “. . . In spite of the cleverness and courtesy which the General displayed, there was, in the months following the bestowal of the title of Commander-in-Chief, a great deal of friction, which showed that something was needed as an adjunct to this title to make the great leader of the Allies at least the equal, in respect of dignity, to Field-Marshal Haig.

“That was why in the early days of August [1918] the Prime Minister asked the Government to make General Foch Marshal of France, and that in the interests of the Allies as well as of France.”—General Mordacq, *Le Commandement unique*.

[7] La Fontaine, *Fables*, Book VIII, No. 4, *Le Pouvoir des Fables*.

CHAPTER XV

GERMAN SENSIBILITY

AND what is this "Germanic civilization," this monstrous explosion of the will to power, which threatens openly to do away entirely with the diversities established by many evolutions, to set in their place the implacable mastery of a race whose lordly part would be to substitute itself, by force of arms, for all national developments? We need only read Bernhardi's famous pamphlet *Unsere Zukunft*, in which it is alleged that Germany sums up within herself, as the historian Treitschke asserts, the greatest manifestation of human supremacy, and finds herself condemned, by her very greatness, either to absorb all nations in herself or to return to nothingness.

From the German point of view the monstrous problem thus set must inevitably be solved by the apotheosis of the German peoples. In the meantime, far from 'German culture' seeming disposed to reform itself, we hear it proclaiming louder than ever a universal right to supreme domination, which confers on it the right of life and death over the nations, to be asserted and enforced by all possible means. Ought we not all to feel menaced in our very vitals by this mad doctrine of universal Germanic supremacy over England, France, America, and every other country?

I have not the slightest intention here of putting Germany on trial. There is nothing I desire for my country so much as peace with her. But for a lasting peace it is necessary for both sides to have the same fundamental ideas of right and the same quality of good faith. Too many public men, blinded by too high an opinion of themselves, have not yet realized the profound problems of a lasting peace.

Whether we wish it or not, it is not the International Parliament of Geneva, subtle epitome of all the Parliaments of this world, with no executive powers, that will determine the peace of the future. The presumptions of ignorance give rise to too many words of momentary sincerity, and the irresistible impetus of unrestrained egoisms would very soon throw us back upon the unforeseen. Prudence and courage are not mutually exclusive, as many people choose to think. Words and actions to the point: this should be our daily motto while awaiting the unknown element by which our forecasts are eternally troubled. The American solution of the problem of the inter-Allied debts may influence, in the most sinister sense, the movements of the future that will fix our destinies.

What document more suitable to reveal the direction of 'German culture' than the famous manifesto of the ninety-three super-intellectuals of Germany, issued to justify the bloodiest and the least excusable of military aggressions against the great centres of civilization? At the moment when violated Belgium lay beneath the heel of the malefactor (October 1914) all the *élite* of 'German culture' arose to take sides against the respect for treaties and to lay down the doctrine of a victory that seemed to them assured by means of perjury.

In itself the actual manifestation is not without apparent justification. Politicians, in all countries, are not necessarily intellectuals. It is therefore not astonishing that those who profess 'culture' are overcome by the desire to enlighten them. For a long time still our rulers and governors will no doubt continue to be haphazard empirics. And so we need not be surprised if men, very different in doctrine, willingly set about spreading their light among those who are spending themselves in the blind convulsions of their times. However, since it is well known that learned men themselves may sometimes make mistakes, perhaps it would be a good thing if they consented to pause a moment before expressing themselves.

The case of the greatest war in history, let loose for no overt reason, offered a great chance to thinkers, qualified in the different realms of human knowledge, to appeal against the outrage done to public faith merely to open the way to the ravaging of French territory, from the razing of great historical buildings to the ground to the burning down of libraries. It would need a whole book to tell of the infamous treatment inflicted upon non-combatants, to reckon up those who were shot down, or put to death, or deported, or condemned to forced labour.

On the two sides of the firing-line, even with equivalent averages of mentality on the civil and military fronts, I should still have the right to call attention to the subtleties of a complete education in barbarity that disposes Germany to the most cruel treatment of the invaded populations, to the destruction of houses, and to organized devastation. Who does not remember having seen, in the occupied towns and villages, military notices showing the way to the shops where there were heaped, openly, *and labelled* "PLUNDER," the proceeds of pillagings, the official character of which was thus recognized? I could not suppress a cry of indignation at the sight of fruit-trees sawn down by German hands so that, long after the return of peace, French families should still suffer from the evils needlessly inflicted by German savagery.

Well, this was the hour chosen by German intellectuals to make themselves heard. Let all the nations give ear! The great lesson is to emanate from accredited thinkers quoting Goethe, Beethoven, and Kant, none of whom ever uttered a single word from which there could be inferred a shameful approbation of the violation of treaties and the declaration of a war that must needs be justified by brazen lies. They are all there, from the great doctrinaires to the lyric poets of Germania, drawn up in serried ranks to give the word to the conscience of the nations at the very moment when the worst acts of military violence of a '*civilized*' devastation are taking place. A most noble spectacle if the high-priests of human knowledge show themselves worthy of the *rôle* the ideal of which tempts them, and set the values of an enlightened conscience above all other considerations!

Alas! the manifesto of William II's ninety-three savants evinces a state of mind directly opposite. We could believe at first that they had merely obeyed an imperial command. They have not even that excuse. Their learning made of them merely Germans better than all others qualified to formulate, on their own account, the extravagances of Germanic arrogance. The only difference is that they speak louder than the common people, those docile automatons. The fact is that they really believe themselves to be the representatives of a privileged '*culture*' that sets them above the

errors of the human race, and confers on them the prerogative of a superior power, the very abuse of which can but be hailed by the nations with gratitude and joy.

The whole document is nothing but denials without the support of a single proof. "*It is not true* that Germany wanted the War." William II had for years been "*mocked at by his adversaries of to-day on account of his unshakable love of peace*." They neglect to tell us from whence they got this lie. They forget that from 1871 till 1914 we received from Germany a series of war threats in the course of which Queen Victoria, and also the Czar, had to intervene with the *Kaiser* direct for the maintenance of peace.

I have already recalled how our German intellectuals account for the violation of the Belgian frontier:

> *It is not true that we criminally violated Belgian neutrality. It can be proved that France and England had made up their minds to violate it. It can be proved that Belgium was willing. It would have been suicide not to forestall them.*

Well then, let them prove it, since they are in a position to do so! They have never tried. At the most, Ludendorff has given as a reason the putting up of barbed wire along the German frontier of Belgium, whereas there was none on the Belgian-French frontier. Had he then forgotten that France, previously asked the definite question by England, had let it be known that she would respect the Belgian frontier, whereas the embarrassed reservations of Germany showed only too clearly her authentic designs?

To confirm the German guilt, this same Ludendorff forgot himself, in his *War Memories*, so far as to write:

> I considered it a special favour of Providence that I was able to co-operate in the taking of Liége, *especially as* IN PEACE-TIME *I had collaborated in the plan of the attack and was fully aware of its importance*.

After this conclusive evidence who could believe in the unpremeditated nature of a crime that had been openly prepared?[1]

Really, this extract absolves us from the necessity of making other quotations. That the most celebrated names in German science line up to countersign such a document, is something that might disconcert us. We must, however, bow before the evidence. And when a great chemist such as Ostwald tells us, with his colleagues, that our struggle "*against the so-called German militarism*" is really directed "*against German culture*," we must remember that *this same savant published a history of chemistry* IN WHICH THE NAME OF LAVOISIER WAS NOT MENTIONED.

The 'intellectuals' take their place in public opinion as the most ardent propagandists of the thesis which makes Germany the very model of the "*chosen people*." The same Professor Ostwald had already written, "*Germany has reached a higher stage of civilization than the other peoples, and the result of the War will be an organization of Europe under German leadership.*" Professor Haeckel had demanded *the conquest of London, the division of Belgium between Germany and Holland, the annexation of North-east France, of Poland, the Baltic Provinces, the Congo, and a great part of the English colonies*. Professor Lasson went further still:

> *We are morally and intellectually superior to all men. We are peerless.* So too are our organizations and our institutions. *Germany is the most perfect creation known in history*, and the Imperial Chancellor, Herr von Bethmann-Hollweg, is *the most eminent of living men*.[2]

Ordinary laymen who talked in this strain would be taken off to some safe asylum. Coming from duly hall-marked professors, such statements explain all German warfare by alleging that Germany's destiny is universal domination, and that for this very reason she is bound either to disappear altogether or to exercise violence on all nations with a view to their own betterment. Such is the guarantee offered to us by German intellectuality as a foundation for universal peace. Let those who are content with it at least have the courage to say so!

May I further recall, since we have to emphasize the point, that on September 17, 1914, Erzberger, the well-known German statesman, an eminent member of the Catholic Party, wrote to the Minister of War, General von Falkenhayn, "*We must not worry about committing an offence against the rights of nations nor about violating the laws of humanity. Such feelings to-day are of secondary importance*"? A month later, on October 21, 1914, he wrote in *Der Tag*, "*If a way was found of entirely wiping out the whole of London it would be more humane to employ it* than to allow the blood of A SINGLE GERMAN SOLDIER to be shed on the battlefield!"

Are you astonished that the Supreme Command proclaims this opinion: "Let humanity first begin by transforming itself; we will then lay down our arms and talk of conciliation. It is certain that in acting otherwise we should find ourselves wronged"?[3]

This must be the reason why General von Bernhardi himself, the best pupil, as I have already said, of the historian Treitschke, whose ideas are law in Germany, has just preached the doctrine of 'world-power or downfall' at us. So there is nothing left for other nations, as a way of salvation, but to be conquered by Germany. Who would be so foolish as not to submit with joy and alacrity? Can we then be excused for not accepting, without other guarantees than "*faith sworn and forsworn*," these relations of good neighbourhood with the nation that proclaims itself the masterpiece of humanity? For has anyone in any authority ever tried to deny or tone down these bold and cynical words? Ask the mobs, whose first cry on every occasion is "*Deutschland über Alles!*" This is what our public men rely upon in recommending to us a peace of trust with a Germany animated by the sentiments her spokesmen have just disclosed.

I have sometimes penetrated into the sacred cave of the Germanic cult, which is, as every one knows, the *Bierhaus*. A great aisle of massive humanity where there accumulate, amid the fumes of tobacco and beer, the popular rumblings of a nationalism upheld by the sonorous brasses blaring to the heavens the supreme voice of Germany, "*Deutschland über Alles!*" Men, women, and children, all petrified in reverence before the divine stoneware pot, brows furrowed with irrepressible power, eyes lost in a dream of infinity, mouths twisted by the intensity of will-power, drink in long draughts the celestial hope of vague expectations. These only remain to be realized presently when the chief marked out by Destiny shall have given the word. There you have the ultimate framework of an old but childish race.

Considering France already beaten, Bernhardi does not hesitate to make a direct attack on England, who must give up the government of the world to Germany, or at least consent to share it with her. I need not say that the first condition of the agreement is "THE RIGHT OF GERMANY TO DEAL WITH FRANCE AS SHE PLEASES BY MEANS OF WAR." This is written in plain words. At least we cannot say we have not been warned. "War waged for high ideals, in the support of a noble action, must not be considered as a manifestation of barbarism. . . . *War is a continuation of peace-time policy*, but by other methods. . . ." In this way "*war is the highest expression of the will-power of civilization and idealism itself renders it necessary*."[4]

In a pamphlet that a German writer, Herr Alfred von Wegerer, was good enough to send me, when he tries to exonerate Germany from the most obvious act of aggression, he runs foul of the actual text of the declaration of war, in which the Imperial Government alleges as the only motive the news, now universally recognized as false, that French aeroplanes had flown over Nuremberg. He agrees that this is the only fact invoked in the document handed by the German Ambassador to the French Government. Everything is easily explained, according to him, by an unconvincing blunder. It is true that the German Government sent to France a declaration of war in which it accused us of imaginary misdeeds. But it had previously, we are told, drawn up another document, no less official, in which it was stated, this time, that Germany was forced to declare war because Russia had begun to mobilize. Only, by some unbelievable mischance, this document, which contained no flagrant untruths, was not the one the Kaiser chose to send us.

Let them tell us why two different documents, interchangeable at the last moment? And what more glaring proof of duplicity? Why, then, was it the document full of lies that was handed to the French Government by the German Ambassador, while the document they invoke to-day remained at Berlin, in the secret drawers of the Chancery? This is what they do not tell us, and what they cannot tell us, because they would have to admit that the document they invoke to-day was considered so inadequate by its authors that they preferred to substitute for it, at the last moment, a declaration of war invoking unverified facts. The Russian mobilization was exceedingly slow. Germany, in any case, ran no risk of being taken unawares. Besides, every one knows that mobilization and the declaration of war are two quite distinct operations and that the one does not necessitate the other.[5]

Herr Alfred von Wegerer, above all, cannot be ignorant of the decisive fact that the document he invokes had the main defect of not being Germany's last word, and that her Ambassador had received instructions, in case we deserted the Russian alliance, to demand that Toul and Verdun should be handed over to the Kaiser for the duration of the War. This completely reveals the undeniable premeditation of the German attack. To surrender France without fighting—that, in simple language, was what was asked of us, to submit absolutely to the Kaiser and meekly to hold out our necks for the yoke of servitude. There was not, and could not be, any more definitely aggressive act than that. If the document (the bearer of which was to follow it up by this insolent summons) was not sent it was obviously because William II at the last moment preferred, for the sake of public opinion, the hypothesis of a French aggression (even an imaginary one) to the

scandal of a too brutal German offensive against which no hypocritical denial could have prevailed.

This is why Germany is struggling vainly to-day against Article 231 of the Treaty of Versailles, which is thus worded:

> The Allied and Associated Governments affirm *and Germany accepts* the responsibility of Germany and her allies for causing all the loss and damage to which the Allied and Associated Governments and their nationals have been subjected as a consequence of the war imposed upon them by the aggression of Germany and her allies.

Have we then arrived at such a pitch of criminal self-abandonment that we can permit the authors of the greatest crime against humanity (*fifty-two months of war and millions of dead*) to cast upon their victims the responsibilities of the premeditated murder? After the crash of the German defeat we had at first the dejected silence of patent and established crime! Then voices were heard, timid and shy at first, but to-day raised to the pitch of clamour, to divert from Germany the responsibility for the declaration of war and for the barbarous, systematic destructions ordered by implacable doctrinaires of civilized butchery. The savage methods of German warfare, because they extend over a long period, are a crime of no less magnitude than the original aggression.

To-day, however, after many concessions made by the victor to the importunities of the vanquished, we are compelled to hear uttered officially by Marshal Hindenburg, at Tannenberg, the most audacious challenge to the most blazing truth in history:

> The Tannenberg national monument is devoted primarily to the memory of those who fell fighting for the freedom of their country. But their memory and the honour of my still living comrades adjure me, in this hour and at this spot, to declare solemnly: The accusation that Germany is responsible for this greatest of all wars we hereby repudiate—all classes of the German people unanimously repudiate it. It was not out of envy or hate or desire of conquest that we drew the sword. *The War, on the contrary, with all the terrible sacrifices demanded from the whole nation, was the extreme measure resorted to in preservation of our existence against a host of enemies.* With clean hearts we marched out to defend the Fatherland, with clean hands the German Army wielded the sword. Germany is ready at any moment to prove this fact before impartial judges.[6]

That is the official text of what the German chief dares to offer us as a foundation of the new German peace which is to make up for the inadequacy of the massacres by substituting a new Treaty of Frankfurt for the Treaty of Versailles. For the German has this highly superior quality of being obstinate in his designs.

But to find a shattering answer to Marshal Hindenburg's declaration it is sufficient to quote the conclusions of the pamphlet by Prince Lichnowsky, the former Ambassador in London, entitled *My Mission to London*, which was published in 1917 after having been privately circulated for a considerable time.

> 1. We encouraged Count Berchtold to attack Serbia, although German interests were not involved, and in spite of the fact that we knew that it meant running the risk of a universal war. (Whether we were aware of the wording of the ultimatum is completely immaterial.[7])
>
> 2. During the time between the 23rd and the 30th July, 1914, when M. Sazonof emphatically declared that he would not tolerate any attack on Serbia, we rejected the English proposals of mediation, although Serbia, under Russian and English pressure, had accepted almost the whole of the Austrian ultimatum, and although an agreement about the two points in dispute could easily have been reached, and Count Berchtold was even prepared to content himself with the Serbian reply.
>
> 3. On the 30th July, when Count Berchtold wanted to come to terms, we sent an ultimatum to Petrograd merely because of the Russian mobilization, although Austria had not been attacked; and on the 31st July we declared war against Russia, although the Czar pledged his word that he would not order a man to march as long as negotiations were proceeding—thus deliberately destroying the possibility of a peaceful settlement.
>
> In view of the above undeniable facts it is no wonder that the whole of the civilized world outside Germany places the entire responsibility for the World War upon our shoulders.[8]

We have now reached a point at which a future close at hand must pass the verdict for our time. The contradictory spirit of a Frederick II forged with hard blows the metal Goethe would have liked to cast in a majestic flow. By bringing the work down to the level of his own comprehension Bismarck approached nearer than any other to a national desire for generalized violence, which demanded no less a degree of servile submission from the victor than from the vanquished themselves. We have had our Napoleon. The change for *that* coin has by this time luckily disappeared.

It is very difficult to accept blindly a nation's judgment on the developments of its own life. Each one is only too apt to describe itself by means of some motto or other carrying a proud message of self-justification. "*Dieu et mon droit*," declares England, to sum up the greatest enterprise of conquests the world has known. Or again, "*Ich dien*," which may be interpreted in many ways. "*Je maintiendrai*," says Belgium, who, indeed, during the last war most gloriously did *maintain*.

Über Alles—there we have Germany, who professes to improve mankind by her '*Kultur*' of iniquity; Russia writhes in the throes of internal decomposition, and Austria, who once fought to be free of the German monster, would to-day like to resume the old Bismarckian chain. The danger lies in the crowds who offer themselves for servitude in order that they may be permitted, in their turn, to tyrannize over the conquered nations.

In this respect Germany's watchword is only the puerile hallucination of a return to primitive dominations, and allows no one to feign a misapprehension over which neither the aggressor nor the victim could be deceived. We have only to submit to the implacable law of the strongest, and join the ranks of the conquered territories, to enjoy

the servitude with which our masters are only too ready to favour us. To be victims or tyrants, that is the only thing left to us.

However, in order to justify the state of enslavement that is the greatest ambition of the nations of “voluntary vassalage,” the Germans consent to let us know the source of their indefectible authority. And what is it but the magic virtue of ‘German *Kultur*’ which makes of the ordinary common man the victorious agent of a universal authority in the hands of a privileged people?

What then is this wonderful potion of superhuman intellectuality from which is formed—we know not how—the dominating activity of the people chosen by the Divinity? They take care not to tell us, for it must be admitted that all culture among civilized nations, in the present state of the world, is about equally distributed without noticeably producing any differences other than individuals diversely disposed for vague transformations of thought, for an uncertain future. Who could really believe that mathematics, physics, chemistry, and literature could combine together in those tumults of social egoisms that we call history so as to constitute, for any lasting time, a superiority of national life capable of imposing itself on nations of diverse origins, for long periods of time? The great civilizations of Asia, Greece, and Rome produced other effects of general civilization than the Prussia of Frederick II or the Austria of Maria-Theresa. *The abasement of the House of Austria*, which was one of the historical problems of our own lifetime, has been so well realized, thanks to Germany, that what remains of the Empire of Francis Joseph is reduced to trying to merge, by the so-called *Anschluss*, into Bismarck’s republic.

From a letter sent on October 4, 1929, to the newspaper *L’Intransigeant* Herr Arnold Rechberg, German sculptor and manufacturer, who prides himself on always telling the truth, “even if it is unpleasant,” I quote the following passage:

> It is an illusion to believe that the German people will ever genuinely accept a reconciliation with France as things are at present. There may be some German politicians of the Left who say so to the French, but they only say so from diplomatic and patriotic motives, because Germany is still the weaker.
>
> France, in fact, can only keep Germany in her present situation as long as France has the absolute superiority in arms she still possesses. But in our age of rapid technical development it is always possible, if not probable, that a new discovery, chemical or otherwise, will render all existing armaments up to the present entirely useless.

On the other hand, *L’Écho de Paris* of November 1, 1929, in its analysis of a recent book by General von Seeckt, *Die Zukunft des Deutschen Reiches*, quotes the following passages:

> Certainly it is not easy to-day to direct foreign policy in Germany, *but there is no doubt that its aim is the re-establishment of Germany as a great military power. . . .*

> *. . . The Polish corridor, which borders on the grotesque, is already considered impracticable by England. These treaties which keep up, all over Europe, numerous points of friction, have created a series of problems which it will be difficult, if not impossible, to solve by peaceful means. Their solving is the battlefield of German foreign policy. But in this struggle now beginning we need force; to create this force is our most urgent duty.*

Can it be sufficient, indeed, to engage in mutual hoodwinkery at alfresco meetings, while leaving open every opportunity for a renewal of the preparations for aggression? Whereas we are day by day reducing our defensive forces, the '*Kamerad*' continues to increase his armaments even to the extent of preparing *open battlefields*, to which we haven't even dared to put a stop.

We want peace, all the peace that it is possible to have—that is to say, a peace of common right succeeding the pre-War peace of domination; and in order to ensure the success of this great humanitarian enterprise we will not make difficulties over any sacrifice; with the one proviso that we need not keep our eyes shut.

Whether by spoken word or written word, the preaching of universal love so far has principally produced mere empty echoes. Too many lofty lessons magnificently lost! Never has there been a moment in history when the frenzy of war has ceased to rage in all the worst forms of cruelty. Can one imagine any institution whose regular working would automatically bring about more or less durable agreements or conciliations? Greece tried the Amphictyonic Council, which actually brought about the very wars it was intended to prevent. We see the same attempt reappear to-day under the title of *the League of Nations*. The talkers in it have, at least, found ample matter for discussion.

As they have carefully put on one side the question of executive power, they spend their time over the trifles that crop up from day to day on a Parliamentary stage, where Belgium sees herself cheek by jowl with Germany, that violater of treaties. Meanwhile the chances of conflict increase from hour to hour, because too many pacific powers cannot yet conceive of peace outside the traditions of intense egoism that have been the cause of wars, and because we see the partisans of revolutionary violence suggest to us, in order to strengthen anarchy, the resource, which in any case is useless, of disarmament. Tell me who would dare, in the present circumstances, to stand up and say sincerely, "We are sure of to-morrow."

What will become of France no one can tell to-day. For every nation, for England just as much as for China and Japan, the present danger is common to all. Who can say if the blow aimed at one of us will not open up for the other an era of deadly repercussion? *Hodie mihi, cras tibi.* We must not tempt Providence. Are not the cruel subversions of the present sufficient? May it not happen that, in the name of a hypothetical future peace, the leaders of the nations and the nations themselves will seek "guarantees" of victory in fresh outbreaks of violence, if they can imagine that these would bring about an extension of their domination?

Was not this exactly Germany's case in 1914? She denied it, certainly, as soon as she could regain some of her self-confidence. She denies it still more loudly to-day when she sees her former adversaries, who have gone back to their pre-War confusion, giving way before her importunities.

Nevertheless, whatever may be the qualities and faults of the European nations, it is our destiny to live side by side without doing one another too much harm. Perhaps in time we shall even arrive at the stage of helping one another. It took defeat to bring Germany to words of quasi-peace, soon belied by a renewal of implacable activity. It is the same policy of cunning and pretence that she used, with so much success, against Napoleon. Without troubling overmuch to make any secret of it, the vanquished are devoting their best efforts to concentrating and ordering their energies, whereas the victors, divided, are drowning themselves in a deluge of verbose invocations to a metaphysics of peace, adapted to all kinds of immediate self-interest.

Who then can shut his eyes to the impending menace of a return to the policy of domination by arms, the revenge for the Treaty of Versailles by a stiffening of the will-power on the part of the beaten aggressor? To allow ourselves to be caught by the clumsy manœuvres of which we are witnesses is merely the childishness that goes with abdicating authority. The principal discovery we have yet to make is *that it needs at least two* to maintain an honest peace.

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[1] No less convincing is the fact that Germany, as early as 1906, printed military maps of Belgium for the use of her soldiers. We read in M. Auguste Gauvain's excellent pamphlet, *L'Encerclement de l'Allemagne*, the following passage:

"Historians may now consult the archives of the Geographical Department of our Army for maps of Belgium, containing seventy folios, engraved in Germany in 1906 and found by our soldiers on dead bodies or on prisoners. These maps, authenticated by the Belgian General Staff, show that ever since 1906 the German Government had been contemplating the violation of Belgian neutrality."

In the face of such proofs I should like to know how our European fabricators of "scraps of paper" can offer us Germany's signature at the foot of a treaty as a "*guarantee*" of European peace.

[2] *The "Times" History of the War*, vol. v, p. 170.

[3] Ludendorff, *My War Memories*.

[4] Bernhardi, *Unsere Zukunft*.

[5] "If the desire for war had not been there already Austria-Hungary and Russia might have mobilized and remained in a state of mobilization, *as during the Bosnian crisis of 1908-9*, while the other Great Powers would have applied themselves to settling their quarrel."—Auguste Gauvain, *L'Encerclement de l'Allemagne*.

[6] *The Times*, September 18, 1927.

[7] The official German documents published in 1919 prove that the Berlin Cabinet had knowledge of the ultimatum beforehand.

[8] A detailed analysis of the Lichnowsky pamphlet can be found in *L'Encerclement de l'Allemagne*, by Auguste Gauvain.

CHAPTER XVI

THE MUTILATIONS OF THE TREATY OF VERSAILLES: MUTILATION BY AMERICA—SEPARATE PEACE

THE history of the treaty of *separate peace* between the United States and Germany is not less strange than the sequence of events that led up to it.

After much trouble Congress agreed, on May 15, 1920, to decree the cessation of the state of war between the United States and Germany, with the proviso that America, although she had not ratified the Treaty of Versailles, was not called on to waive any of the "*rights, privileges, indemnities, reparations, or advantages*" claimed by her or her nationals under the terms of the armistice signed on November 11, 1918, or any extensions or modifications thereof which, *under the Treaty of Versailles*, have been stipulated for her benefit as one of the principal Allied and Associated Powers.

President Wilson refused to sign this "resolution," to which he replied in the following letter:

> TO THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
>
> . . . I have not felt at liberty to sign this resolution because I cannot bring myself to become party to an action which would place uneffaceable stain upon the gallantry and honour of the United States.
>
> The resolution seeks to establish peace with the German Empire without exacting from the German Government any action by way of setting right the infinite wrongs which it did to the peoples whom it attacked and whom we professed it our purpose to assist when we entered the War. . . .
>
> A treaty of peace was signed at Versailles on the twenty-eighth of June last which did seek to accomplish the objects which we had declared to be in our minds, because all the great Governments and peoples which united against Germany had adopted our declarations of purpose as their own and had in solemn form embodied them in communications to the German Government preliminary to the armistice of November 11, 1918. But the Treaty as signed at Versailles has been rejected by the Senate of the United States, though it has been ratified by Germany. By that rejection and by its methods we had in effect declared that we wish to draw apart and pursue objects and interests of our own, unhampered by any connexions of interest or of purpose with other Governments and peoples.
>
> . . . Such a peace with Germany—a peace in which none of the essential interests which we had at heart when we entered the War is safeguarded—is, or ought to be, inconceivable, as inconsistent with the dignity of the United States, with the rights and liberties of her citizens, and with the very fundamental conditions of civilization.

> I hope that in these statements I have sufficiently set forth the reasons why I have felt it incumbent upon me to withhold my signature.
>
> WOODROW WILSON
>
> THE WHITE HOUSE
> *May 27, 1920*

After some passages of arms which do not interest us a treaty was voted during Mr Harding's Presidency. It secured to the United States all the rights accorded to the signatories of the Treaty of Versailles, *without any liability or obligation on the part of the American Republic*.

I confess that President Wilson's criticism seems to me unanswerable.

American comrades, you arrived on the battlefield when the War was nearing its end. But in the discussion of the Peace Treaty yours was a deciding share. It was the head of your Government who claimed to settle, in full accord with you, the results of the War. It was he who claimed to solve, and, with the authority he derived from you, did solve, problems of the much-hoped-for stabilization of Europe, problems before which our statesmen were at a standstill in hesitation. Without you, I do not shrink from saying that in a certain number of points the Treaty would have been different. You determined to make, and you did make—and proclaimed it very loud and clear—a new Europe, in which you aimed at an equilibrium of pacification, the problems of which you were not afraid to tackle with mere phantoms of sanctions. It may be said that the undertaking was too bold. No one will dispute that, in the opinion of the combatants, it reflected the greatest honour on you. But all the cost of that honour fell upon us.

And now, after the work has been toilsomely accomplished, not merely do you smash it to pieces, of your own motion, but further, making on your own initiative *a separate peace*—that is, *an American mutilation*—you usurp the rights won by the soldiers of Europe on the battlefield during four interminable years to make defeated Germany recognize the "*rights, privileges, indemnities, reparations, or advantages*," gained with our blood, after the destruction of our possessions. That was a high emprise of downright materialism, the like of which had never been seen. Never did a peace based upon a breaking up of solidarity, upon a dissociation of interests, so strongly deserve the title of *separate peace*, since you propose to secure the profits of it, after puffing into thin air the advantages your own President had proffered to us in your name. And what am I to add when you present us with an account on which to these profits of *yours* are added *our* losses, for which you request us to indemnify you!

How this *separate peace* can be reconciled with the promises made to us, *from the very tribune of the French Chamber*, on February 3, 1919, by the President of the great American Republic—without our having asked for anything—is something I cannot undertake to explain.

> *America paid her debt of gratitude to France by sending her sons to fight upon the soil of France. She did more. She assisted in drawing the forces of the world together in order that France might never again feel her isolation; in order that France might never feel that hers was a lonely peril, and would never again have to ask the question, who would come to her assistance.*

These were the words of the President of the United States, words elicited by no questioning, words that aroused no protest from his country. And all this to end in the rejection, without discussion, of the Guarantee Pact![1] Is it surprising that many simple folk have been deeply wounded by it, especially when there is added the unexpected burden of a sum to be paid with compound interest, which *more than doubles* the total of a debt that has itself no sufficient justification?[2]

If this American peace is not a *separate peace* I wonder what description can possibly be applied to it. We entered into this world battle with the support of Belgium, England, and Russia. Italy and some other Powers lent us, in the course of the struggle, their splendid co-operation. America too—pretty late in the day, alas!—with a gallantry to which I have never failed to pay homage, but in such an unprepared state that she could never even have taken the field without equipment from us.

Round the conference table I saw all the combatant nations assembled, in harmony, to trace frontiers for states and to settle theoretical guarantees. The President of the American Republic did us the honour of coming to take his place among us, and, if it was not in his power to bring to our aid military support more powerful than what he did actually furnish, his help in dollars at least was unstinted up to the very day of that victory in the field which put to the test all efforts to achieve solidarity, all impulses of unselfishness. Thus, as soon as the American soldier appeared on the battlefield, heralding the speedy arrival of a whole nation in arms, the German understood that the battle was lost. Out of the battle that the enemy had lost it remained for us to make a victory won by the common solidarity of our coalition.

No one will be surprised at the peculiar authority with which President Wilson succeeded, in the name of the American people, in imposing certain of his views in the Peace Conference debates. The end was that he believed he had found in his League of Nations the key to universal peace, and that the American Congress, on this vital point, chose to abide by the Monroe doctrine of isolation. Consequently, the man who had contributed more than any other to make his ideas predominate in the Peace Treaty found himself actually in the position of being dispossessed of his authority. And so the day came when he had to relinquish his interest in his own pact, while the American Government that succeeded him treated, BY ITSELF ALONE, SEPARATELY, with Germany, taking care—the irony of it!—*to secure for itself the advantages of the battles that it had never fought*. I repeat, if that is not a *separate peace* then there is no meaning in words.

In this respect, indeed, may we not say that we are the victims of the American policy, since it is that policy that led us to the gulf down which the sanctions embodied in the Guarantee Pact crashed to ruin? That is so evident that it would be superfluous to set it down, were we not faced with the last great disappointment of hearing America claim from us the price of the blood we shed in her place because we took the field before her.

It is very necessary to recall this piece of history, since we are constrained by the facts themselves. I claim, nevertheless, to preserve an undimmed memory of such a noble display of friendship. A thing that is a matter of life or death to my country makes me openly express my regret that the desire to help us is too keenly

accompanied in our associates by a natural eagerness to turn everything to profit. We are now paying for sacrifices we made without counting the cost. I only hope, my formidable friends, that you will not, without heeding what you do, so act as to aggravate our despoiling. Contrary to what has happened to us, on every point at issue Fortune has pronounced in your favour. You made a great and heroic gesture, and the battle called on you to pay but a mere comparative trifle of shed blood, in return for which you have had a prodigious recompense in gold, without parallel in history, owing to the stupendous development of your industries while ours were being systematically destroyed.

One thing more.

You have rid yourselves of the ties of solidarity with Europe in which the War had involved you (and the claims of which you possibly fear), and you have saved your Monroe Doctrine, to which we have no objection, but which, as Mr Coolidge has expounded it to the Cubans, makes you the kings of what amounts to an American solidarity. You have amassed too huge a profit on undertakings that will complete our ruin, unless it is open to us to discuss German reparations—which you do not even agree to discuss with us. You are still in the bloom and heyday of a young civilization. You make us act the part of those greybeards that are the laughingstocks of the stage but who had their great days—without which you would never have been what you are. Do not despise Europe. Your judgments might prove double-edged. Do not treat us too badly. No one knows what fate history has in store for you. A weaker brother is often useful in time of need.

Above all, do not be so ingenuous as to believe that you will disarm, by methods of persuasion, the Powers who see you strengthening against every eventuality your means of defence, which might turn into means of aggression. The newspapers inform us that, following England's lead, you are going to demand the abolition of submarines. It is almost as if the second-class naval Powers were demanding the abolition of battleships.

You have discovered the secret of how to "reduce" the liberty of others with regard to armaments and build warships yourselves. But do you not think that the general break-up of solidarity that you have so vociferously let loose may one day, in Europe or in the Far East, bring us all once again to dangerous straits?

Bled white by the Great War, her strength completely sapped by the "peace" of her "associates," what have you done to France, whom the cause of right will for long ages continue to need? When Colonel Stanton, arriving to join the fight, hastened with all speed to the graveyard of Picpus to utter his gallant and far-echoing salute to La Fayette, it was a sword he brandished in the sunlight, and not a schedule of payments.

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[1] Is it not surprising that the Guarantee Pact should only have been submitted to Congress (July 29, 1919) *nineteen days after the Treaty* (July 10, 1919), when Article IV of the Pact stipulated that the Peace Treaty and the Pact should be *simultaneously* submitted for ratification to the Senate? Did not this point to regrettable vacillations?

[2] See, in Appendix II, my open letter to President Coolidge on the problem of the inter-Allied debts (August 9, 1926).

CHAPTER XVII

THE MUTILATIONS OF THE TREATY OF VERSAILLES: FINANCIAL MUTILATIONS

THE TREATY was signed on June 28, 1919. The charter of the future, it ought to have been regarded as sacrosanct by the victors, if they wished to have the vanquished carry out its terms. Yet, as far back as May 28, 1920, a Prime Minister declared from the tribune of the Chamber of Deputies that the text "is fuller of promises than realities."

Who need wonder in these circumstances that the Germans tried, without loss of time, to evade the most important of their obligations? The history of the last ten years is a series of surrenders on the part of the Allies, of successes for Germany. I will not draw up the balance-sheet, but I must show what became of those two fundamental questions: reparations and the disarmament of Germany.

We remember the strenuous discussions out of which came the Treaty of Versailles. There was perhaps no point, except with regard to the occupation of the Rhineland, upon which the views of the English and American negotiators diverged so markedly from ours as the question of the reparations.

The English and American negotiators said, "Germany is only capable of paying if she recovers, if her credit is restored. It is absolutely indispensable for her to know the full extent of her obligations. And naturally the less burdensome these obligations are the easier it will be to fulfil them." We said, for our part, "Germany ought to make good *in full* the material damage to persons and property. We shall not have achieved a peace of justice if this principle is not acknowledged. Now it is completely impossible to attempt to fix the cost of reparations if we do not wish to delay the conclusion of the Treaty indefinitely."

The French thesis in the end won the day over the proposal of a lump fine, put forward by the Anglo-Saxons, and our negotiators were able to set down in the Treaty (Articles 231-244) Germany's obligation to repair in full the material losses she had inflicted upon persons and property.

This triumph was short-lived.

Mr Keynes, who had, on the defeat of the English thesis, resigned in June 1919 his position as expert adviser to the British Delegation, published in 1919 a book that made something of a noise, called *The Economic Consequences of the Peace*, in which he sought to establish that world prosperity was dependent on the prosperity of Germany, and that Europe would suffer from a disastrous economic instability so long as Germany should be called on to meet obligations beyond her capacity to pay.

Then the Hythe Conference was opened (May 15 and 16, 1920).

Mr Lloyd George, who had been profoundly impressed by Mr Keynes' book, had no great difficulty in winning over our Prime Minister, M. Millerand, to the thesis of the fixed sum for reparations.

This was the first surrender. We had not yet become accustomed to such renunciations: M. Poincaré resigned his position as President of the Reparation Commission. His departure meant that, less than a year after the signing of the Treaty, the Reparation Commission was divested of its most important function, and that the theses rejected by the French negotiators of the Treaty were accepted by their successors.

In May 1921 the Conference of London fixed the total amount of Germany's debt at 132 milliards of gold marks.

Of this amount France was to receive 52 per cent., or, say, 68 milliards of gold marks.

This figure had actually been fixed by the Reparation Commission, but at the direction of the Allied Governments.[1] It was a composition granted by the creditor nations to the defaulting debtor.[2] And for France it meant a serious abatement of her claim.

The estimate drawn up the previous year had fixed the cost of the damages to be made good at 136 milliards of gold marks for France alone. Even supposing this figure to be too high, M. Briand and M. Loucheur in their speeches of February 5 and February 8, 1921, put it at 110 milliards of gold marks. By dint of moratoriums and reductions in interest rates the anticipated amount was in January 1922 so definitely diminished that on this date the President of the Reichstag was able to announce that, in the space of two years, *Germany had procured a reduction of 40 per cent. in the financial obligations imposed upon her by the Treaty of Versailles*.[3]

And this was not all. The Reparation Commission had set up a schedule of payments. This was not treated as final and binding. I read in a dispatch dated June 20, 1923, from M. Poincaré to M. de Saint-Aulaire, our Ambassador in London:

> The German debt has been finally settled by the Allies in conjunction on May 1, 1921, as the Treaty directed. We can make no alteration in it. It is a different matter with regard to the schedule of payments—that is to say, the scales of instalments laid down by the Reparation Commission for the payment of the German debt; here conditions may be accepted by the Reparation Commission as grounds for the postponement of certain payments.

Hence the amount we were entitled to expect from Germany has fallen, thanks to M. Briand, the responsible author of the London decisions, from 136 or 110 milliards of gold marks to 68 milliards, and, thanks to this same M. Briand, we don't know when Germany will pay us those 68 milliards! For we have, alas! learned that for the Reich to *postpone a payment is to defer it indefinitely*.

Such was the policy that M. André Tardieu has so aptly called the policy of the "dead dog."

The claim was fixed at a lump sum, and was considerably reduced. In the course of the ensuing years it was nevertheless to be subjected to a further series of diminutions.

And in the first place what was the result of the agreements reached in London? The upholders of these agreements and of the lump sum of 136 milliards of gold marks had made a point of its being to France's interest to have a definite settlement and immediate payments. What came of it?

A first milliard of gold marks was to be paid before August 1, 1921. *France never saw a penny of it.* Four hundred and fifty millions went to England first of all, as repayment of her occupation costs. The balance went to Belgium in virtue of her priority claim. We got nothing, because the value of the Saar mines was entered to our account.

On January 15, 1922, Germany was to pay four hundred millions. On December 14, 1921, the Chancellor, Herr Wirth, notified the Reparation Commission that he would only be able to pay a hundred and fifty million marks.

The Reparation Commission refused to consider his plea.

But what did the Governments do? Mr Lloyd George presented to the Cannes Conference (January 1922) a memorandum from which the following passage must be quoted:

> The Commission is of the opinion that the financial disorganization of Germany which is shown outwardly in the disastrous collapse of the mark, and the request of the German Government for certain mitigations in the matter of reparations, is so grave that it is impossible for Germany to meet in full the instalments which fall due in the year 1922. Any attempt made with a view to forcing total payment in 1922 would only result in aggravating the economic crisis which Europe is undergoing at the present moment.

And M. Briand—still M. Briand!—declared in Parliament that the unrest from which the world was suffering could not be dispelled "without a great effort of international solidarity."

All the same, there was a great outburst of indignation in France, and M. Briand was obliged to resign.

The Conference of Genoa, held in April 1922, brought no new concessions, properly speaking. But it was a decisive stage on the road, because then it might be felt that the bond between the Allies was completely loosened. Germany for the first time took her seat at a conference on a footing of complete equality with the Allies, and was supported by Italy and by England.

Next ensued the Treaty of Rapallo, which the Reich had the audacity to conclude with the Soviets, and which deprived the Treaty of Versailles of yet a little more of its force.[4]

France let it pass.

The close of the year 1922 was occupied with vain discussions between England and France. The former was disposed to grant a four years' suspension of payments, purely and simply, while on his side M. Poincaré upheld the thesis of *no moratorium*

without securities. The Conference of Paris (January 1923) failed to provide a settlement. The negotiators maintained their respective positions.

And the Ruhr was occupied.

This operation, carried out by Belgium and France, without England—and even in opposition to her—did not arrest the fall in our possibilities of obtaining reparations.

And when, on September 26, Germany had given up her passive resistance, we were obliged to go back to the system of conferences and meetings of experts.

Committees were set up, and were to meet in Paris. But—and this was the great innovation!—the presidency of one of these committees was entrusted to General Dawes, and the president of the second committee (whose task was to determine the amount of German capital that had escaped abroad) was an Englishman, Mr Reginald M'Kenna.

The Anglo-Saxons thus became the final arbiters on questions relating to reparations.

The Dawes Plan, which emerged from this, does not fail to respect France's rights to a certain degree. It recognizes that it is just and necessary to maintain the principle of the Treaty of Versailles in accordance with which the German payments were to increase in proportion to the eventual increase of her prosperity. Furthermore, it makes provision for supervision and for guarantees.[5]

From a practical and purely financial point of view, the Dawes Plan has been systematically applied. The first 'standard' annuity, which fell due in 1928-29, was paid without difficulty. France received 434 million gold marks in cash and 580 millions in kind.

From the political point of view, the consequences were disastrous.

In the first place, the application of the Dawes Plan marked a kind of return to the policy beloved of M. Briand: questions to be settled with Germany passed from the inter-Allied sphere to the international. The League of Nations was henceforth to be in charge of the question of disarmament. The powers of the Reparation Commission fell almost entirely into the hands of the Agent-General for Reparation Payments, who was, naturally, an American, at first Mr Owen Young, and after him Mr Parker Gilbert. The United States became the arbiters for everything connected with the execution of one of the most important parts of the Treaty of Versailles, *which they had not ratified*!

On the other hand, we had agreed to evacuate the Ruhr, and we had been obliged to pledge ourselves never to disturb the Dawes Plan by any measure that might seem to interfere with the economic soundness of the Reich.

THAT WAS TYING OUR HANDS FOR EVER AND AT THE SAME TIME SURRENDERING OUR COMPLETE INDEPENDENCE, AS WELL AS THE EXERCISE OF THE RIGHTS CONFERRED ON US BY THE TREATY OF VERSAILLES.

Why did we proceed from the Dawes Plan to the Young Plan?

Germany's interest in this move is obvious.

From the year 1928-29 the portion to be contributed by the German budget to the annuity set up by the Dawes Plan was to be more than doubled, and would represent exactly half of that annuity.

Furthermore, from 1929-30 the index of prosperity was to come into play, and was likely to increase to a quite considerable extent the payments to be made by Germany.

The substitution of the Young Plan for the Dawes Plan was, as might, of course, be expected, favoured by Mr Parker Gilbert himself, the Agent-General for Reparation Payments, whose ideology was a strong support for German bad faith. Let us look once more at the concluding section of his 1928 report:

> Fundamentally, what the Plan has done is to re-establish confidence and to permit Germany's reconstruction as a going concern. . . . But . . . the experts themselves did not recommend the Plan as an end in itself. . . . I believe . . . that the fundamental problem which remains is the final determination of Germany's reparation liabilities. . . .

And, to measure the losses entailed on France by the substitution of the Young Plan for the Dawes Plan, it is sufficient to recall the terms of the explanation given by our Finance Minister at The Hague.

In the course of one of those meetings to which Mr Snowden knew how to impart a tone of such peculiar courtesy, M. Chéron particularly recalled that, under the working of the Dawes Plan,

> France was to receive sums from which, after the settlement of her own debts, there remained a surplus varying from 913 million gold marks in 1929-30 to 673 millions in 1934-35, never falling below 510 million gold marks over a period undetermined, but certainly more than thirty-seven years. Now, under the Young Plan, France's surplus is reduced to 420 million gold marks for thirty-seven years.

Any mortgage, any supervision, is surrendered. The day Germany refuses to continue her cash payments[6] we shall have no means of redress but to make a protest to the League of Nations, or to other international organizations that, as we have seen in the course of the last few years, have but one object and aim: to make the world forget that France won the War.

Let us suppose even that the Young Plan was applied in its entirety.

France will only have recovered 133 milliards of francs out of the 915 milliards the War cost her.[7]

And the most tragic thing of all is that we had to *buy* the Young Plan not only with the ratification of the war debts, but also with an earlier evacuation of the left bank of the Rhine.

With the adoption of the Young Plan is the question finally settled?

Read this article in the *Berliner Tageblatt*, reproduced in *Le Temps* of June 16, 1929:

> *To the Treaty of Versailles succeeded the "Diktat" of London, to this the Dawes Plan, to the Dawes Plan the Young Plan. Many milliards were dropped on the way. The Young Plan does not necessarily mean the end of these reductions.*

Again, let us read what Herr Georg Bernhardt, one of the Democratic deputies in the Reichstag, writes in the *Vossische Zeitung*:

> *The Young Plan does not mean that the last word has been said on the reparations question. It may be regarded as a step forward only in so far as it indicates the path to follow in the near future for the final and true liquidation of the War.*

And what does Herr Georg Bernhardt mean by the "true liquidation of the War"?

Quite simply, the complete cancellation of all war debts. Henceforth the Labour Party across the Channel and the politicians across the Rhine join to preach this. France will finally be left to bear the burden of her ravaged territory.

What conclusion are we to draw from all that? The French Government, in the memorandum submitted to the Reparation Commission in January 1921, estimated the damages caused by Germany to persons and property in France *at 136 milliards of gold marks*.

In May 1921 it had already dwindled to 68 milliards.

How much has France had out of Germany up to the present? Three milliards and a hundred and twelve million gold marks. This figure is given by M. Poincaré in his speech of July 12, 1929.

The Young Plan gives France 18 milliards 737 millions of gold marks. Which, added to the amounts received so far, would mean total receipts for France of about 22 milliards of gold marks. From 136 milliards of gold marks we have got down to 22, or ONE-SIXTH OF THE AGREED AMOUNT.

From Versailles to The Hague, what a tale of surrenders!

Article 233 of the Treaty and its annexes laid down the powers of the Reparation Commission. What has become of them?

Every complete or partial postponement of the German debt was to be by unanimous vote, which guaranteed our rights. The Young Plan permits Germany to declare, *on her own authority* and without previously asking the consent of the creditor countries, that she is postponing her payments! A special consultative committee will then be convened the members of which are appointed, not by the Governments, but by the banks of issue of seven countries, including the United States *and Germany herself, who will have a right to vote*. There is no longer any question of unanimity.[8]

The kindness of the experts of the Young Committee where Germany is concerned goes so far as to make us share with her the eventual benefit of any reduction of debt the United States may accord to their sometime 'associates.' For a period of thirty-seven years she will have passed on to her two-thirds of the net available reduction. During the subsequent twenty-two years she will be presented with the whole amount.

There is something better still. I read in the Young Report, with reference to Germany:

> The substantial reduction of the budgetary contribution as compared with the Dawes Plan makes possible an immediate resumption of the tax-reduction programme which has been in progress since 1924. The Committee hopes that still further tax reductions, coupled with a definitive reparation settlement, will give a strong stimulus to saving, and thereby materially assist in the internal formation of the new capital which Germany still requires.

Those who drew up the Treaty had most certainly not taken this view of things. They had given the Reparation Commission the task of examining the German fiscal system, "so as to satisfy itself that, in general, the German scheme of taxation is fully as heavy proportionately as that of any of the Powers represented on the Commission" (Article 233, Annex 2, paragraph 12*b*).

Obviously all this kindness with regard to Germany is inspired by the Locarno spirit. Will the French taxpayer, the maimed ex-soldier with his meagre pension, the *rentier* with his depreciated francs, applaud all that generosity? Whoever likes can hope for it!

And if anyone says to me, "Concessions inspired high policy," I retort, "Abdication!"

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[1] M. Briand publicly acknowledged as much in his speech in the Senate, July 27, 1929: "I took the responsibility that no one was willing to take before me. Our claims on Germany have been fixed at 132 milliards of gold marks. But what an outcry followed immediately!"

[2] The Reparation Commission itself declared at the time that it was thus fixing a global amount as a lump sum, and not the true total either of the losses sustained by this country or that, or of the various classes of losses.

[3] André Tardieu, in *L'Écho National*, November 12, 1921.

[4] Germany remitted to the Soviets her claims against Russia, without requesting the authorization of the Powers, who nevertheless had a first claim upon all German property (Article 248 of the Treaty). And she granted Russia treatment on the footing of the most favoured nation. And placed at her service the industrial resources she was refusing to bring under contribution for the more speedy payment of reparations. In short, she was resuming her independence in the eyes of the world.

[5] “To ensure the permanence of a new economic peace between the Allied Governments and Germany, which involves the economic readjustments presented by the Plan, there are provided the counterparts of those usual economic precautions against default recognized as essential in all business relations involving expressed obligations. *The existence of safeguards in no way hampers or embarrasses the carrying out of ordinary business contracts.*”—*Reparation Commission Reports of the Committees of Experts* (April 9, 1924).

[6] One of the special points of the Young Plan is the progressive decrease and disappearance of the contributions *in kind*. These formed one of the main elements in the Dawes Plan, and were to be of powerful aid in the economic reconstruction of our country. The Young Plan fixes a maximum amount for them (750 million gold marks), diminishing yearly. At the end of the tenth year they cease altogether.

[7] According to the figures as calculated by M. de Boisanger in *L’Europe nouvelle*, July 6, 1929.

[8] It is true that this committee will not have power “either to grant or to refuse a postponement.” After inquiry it will report to the Governments. How can we help remembering the so-called “independence” of the experts?

CHAPTER XVIII

THE MUTILATIONS OF THE TREATY OF VERSAILLES: LOCARNO

NOW that one of its principal clauses had lapsed along with the Guarantee Pact, what was to happen to the Treaty as a whole, so closely correlated in all its parts? The country that had made the greatest sacrifices for the least return found herself, without even the ghost of an explanation, grievously wronged by the withdrawal of the clause that had been our military guarantee of security.

Could we let this pass without protest, when it was a matter of life and death for France? Think of the pretty storm that Italy raised to get Fiume, which she had signed away in London with her own hand. The Treaty had fallen to the ground, since its mainstay, which had been provided by America in conjunction with England, had been taken away. We had given up the Rhineland because an offer had been made us to *replace* the German sentry on the Rhine by an English and an American soldier, side by side with the French soldier. Now they were taking away from us all this military comradeship, deliberately, without even troubling to tell us why. What alternative had we but to lay the onus of explaining it upon America when the assistance there had been so much noise about was withdrawn from us without a word?

Whatever form it took, the resumption of the conversations by the four could only be in our favour. Not a single member of our Government appears to have thought of this. It occurred to no one to demand a new basis of agreement. Never was there a case so simple or so clear. The Article embodying the guarantee was a promise to exchange a French military guarantee for an inter-Allied military guarantee, which had the advantage for our forces of protecting them against an attack of hysteria on our part. Thus everything had to be started again *ab initio*—that is to say, from the point we had reached when I asked for the Rhineland. The proposal had come to nothing, and no other was presented to us in its place. Failing another, we reverted to our original demand, *which had not been rejected*, a strong position to negotiate from. Nothing was done. Not a gesture, not a word. Never perhaps were we so tragically cheated by our so-called statesmen. For who knows how long to come, our doom was sealed, even down to the comedy of Locarno, the last act of which will surprise no one but M. Briand.

It was nevertheless impossible to remain under the threat of a Germany that spoke of reparations merely to gain time, and did not even take the trouble to conceal her armaments. If we had stuck to the occupation of the Rhineland, in the teeth of our allies, we should have had a tremendous outcry throughout Europe in which allies and enemies would have united against us. With America's example paving the way to any sort of developments, the groups forming out of the European chaos would do what they pleased at our expense in the confusion resulting from the suspending of solemn pledges.

With the exception of the Germans, the nations were tired of mutual hatred, even beginning to reckon on the benefits that might accrue from a renewal of outworn friendships. England, who very well knew that in a war she could count on us, as we could on her, had not wholly given up the policy of Lord Haldane, whose *rôle* is at present sustained by Lord D'Abernon, a partner after M. Briand's heart. From that was to result the Locarno universal pact, under which everybody protects everybody against everybody in documents which at the pinch the violators of the Belgian pact know how to interpret to suit themselves by proving that they have been forced to break their word to prevent us from breaking ours. As Germany is one of the guarantor powers of Locarno against her own possible aggression, every facility is being given her to tear up the *scrap of paper* as and when required. Probably everything is already prepared to this end in the secret archives of the Wilhelmstrasse. Let us examine the matter a little more closely.

At the beginning of September 1925 M. Painlevé, the Prime Minister, and M. Briand, the Minister for Foreign Affairs, are at Geneva, where they are taking part in the Sixth Assembly of the League of Nations.

There is a feeling that 'something is in the air.' What is it? A telegram from Geneva will inform us.

M. Aristide Briand has made the following statement to the editor of a German Socialist paper:

> We confidently expect to be able to meet Herr Stresemann in September or, at the latest, at the beginning of October. It now rests with Germany to make a definite pronouncement. Be sure to say that I shall put all my cards on the table and that we wish to approach all questions in a spirit of frankness. We must bring about a definite understanding between the two countries, or else we are heading for a catastrophe.
>
> I have given proof of my goodwill: I was responsible for the evacuation of the Ruhr, as well as Düsseldorf, Duisburg, and Ruhrort. We have made concessions to Herr Stresemann to render his political path smoother. We shall also talk with him about questions of disarmament and the evacuation of the occupied territories.
>
> A Franco-German *entente* in the economic sphere is quite possible; in fact, it has already begun. In the political field an *entente* is more difficult, but it is not impossible. Once more, I desire peace, and my whole policy is directed to this end.

Thus M. Briand, once more, approaches Germany with open arms and outstretched hands. He says to her, "See what I have already done: I have had the Ruhr, Düsseldorf, Duisburg, Ruhrort evacuated. I am ready to do still more! *We will talk about the evacuation of the occupied territories*. . . ."

That is what M. Briand calls putting his cards on the table. He shows his opponent his hand, exposes his trumps, and says, "Now let the game begin!"

How does Germany receive this new hymn to peace?

On September 15 the French Ambassador in Berlin hands Herr Stresemann the note in which the French Government invites Germany to come and '*talk*.'

The principal German representatives naturally welcome the idea of this conference, out of which nothing but good can come for the Reich. But they outdo one another in displays of arrogance.

Count Bernstorff declares, “Our point of view is that the pact ought to be worked out on a basis of absolute equality and reciprocity.” That amounts to saying that even before the conference meets the very principle of our victory is brushed aside.

Does the French Government become uneasy about this situation, and does it think of putting off the conference to a more auspicious time? Not at all; it carries on its work of peace at any price.

M. Painlevé is at the moment Prime Minister, M. Briand Minister for Foreign Affairs, M. Caillaux Minister of Finance, M. Steeg Keeper of the Seals; and on the very same day, September 15, on which our Ambassador in Berlin handed Herr Stresemann the note I have just referred to M. Malvy was elected Chairman of the Finance Committee. Briand, Painlevé, Caillaux, Steeg, Malvy, these are the men who, at this moment, preside over the country’s destinies. Seven years after the victory! The dead are soon forgotten.

On September 23 the German Government decides to accept the invitation to the conference.

On the 28th Herr von Hœsch, the German Ambassador in Paris, goes to the Quai d’Orsay, and hands M. Briand a note in which the German Government notifies its willingness to attend the meeting of the Locarno Conference.

Unfortunately it is written that Germany shall at all times do everything to discourage M. Briand. Along with this note Herr von Hœsch hands M. Briand another note, what in diplomatic parlance is styled a ‘verbal note,’ and this second note deals in the very bluntest fashion with

(1) the evacuation of the Cologne zone,
(2) THE QUESTION OF WAR-GUILT.

There has been talk of Germany’s entry into the League of Nations. Germany declares officially that her entry into the League of Nations cannot be interpreted as a fresh signature given to Article 231 of the Treaty of Versailles by which Germany acknowledged her responsibility for the conflict of 1914.

Which amounts to this: Germany wants to be pressed to come into the League of Nations. She says, “I am willing to take my place by your side, France, England, and so on, but on condition that it is fully understood that I am guiltless of the damages I have agreed to make good.”

What does M. Briand do on receiving this document? Is there an impatient rap of his fist on the table, an indignant start?

There is a note. A little note which says:

“1. The question of German guilt was settled at Versailles.

“2. It only depends on Germany to hasten the evacuation of the Cologne zone.”

It is evident under what auspices the Locarno Conference was about to open. These preliminaries explain—better than the official documents—the conditions under which the conversations were carried on, and their result.

On one side, France (Messrs Briand, Caillaux, Malvy, Steeg, etc.), *ensuing peace at the cost of any concession and any surrender.* On the other, Germany, having only one goal: *the annulment of the Treaty that set the seal on her guilt and our victory*.

The Locarno Conference began on October 5, 1925, under the presidency of Mr Chamberlain.

On the 16th the Conference came to an end.

On that day nine diplomatic documents were initialled in final form.

1. A protocol which, summing up the work of the Conference, clearly sets forth the hopes centred in the Rhineland Pact for world-peace and European reconstruction:

> The representatives of the Governments represented here declare their firm conviction that the entry into force of these treaties and conventions will contribute greatly to bring about a moral relaxation of the tension between nations, that it will help powerfully towards the solution of many political or economic problems in accordance with the interests and sentiments of peoples, and that in strengthening peace and security in Europe it will hasten on effectively the disarmament provided for in Article 8 of the Covenant of the League of Nations.

In these few words all the contracting nations are placed ON THE SAME FOOTING AS REGARDS THE MENACE WHICH THEY MAY CONSTITUTE TO PEACE.

2. A treaty by which Germany, Belgium, France, Great Britain, and Italy guarantee the territorial *status quo* of the Rhineland, the Franco-Germano-Belgian frontier, as well as the maintenance of the Rhineland zone demilitarized in virtue of the Treaty of Versailles (the left bank of the Rhine and a zone of fifty kilometres on the right bank).

This treaty—which has been spoken of as an extraordinary instrument and one destined to usher in the final reign of peace on earth—calls for one comment:

The contracting nations pledge themselves to refrain from war . . .

Unless . . .

For there is an *unless*. Indeed, there are several.[1] But this one is to be specially borne in mind:

Unless it is a question *of exercising the right of legitimate defence*.

Now I ask, so long as there have been nations and wars what nation has ever said she was waging a war that was not purely and simply a *defensive* one? What was Germany's attitude when she rushed into the war of 1914? Did she not, in the face of the world, declare herself to be menaced, attacked? Did she not invade Belgium as a reply to the raids of the French aeroplanes on Nuremberg? Was there one voice in Germany to acknowledge that on the eve of the declaration of war our covering troops

had fallen back ten kilometres? *A nation that wants to make war is always in a state of legitimate defence.*

3. An arbitration convention between Germany and Belgium.

4. An arbitration convention between Germany and France.

5. An arbitration treaty between Germany and Poland.

6. An arbitration treaty between Germany and Czecho-Slovakia.

7. A treaty of mutual aid between France and Poland.

8. A treaty of mutual guarantee between France and Czecho-Slovakia.

The ninth document consists of a declaration relative to the interpretation of Article 16 of the Covenant of the League of Nations.

On December 1, 1925, the treaties of Locarno were signed in London by the seven nations—Germany, Belgium, France, Great Britain, Italy, Poland, and Czecho-Slovakia.

What do these diplomatic documents, known as the "Security Pact," contain? What do they conceal?

The Locarno Pact does not say all it means. This is especially evident to-day.

Examined in itself, it displays the ordinary phraseology of all documents of the kind: it has an innocent air that borders on hypocrisy. The analysis to which one might proceed would be instructive only if it were undertaken in the light of the events that have come after. The Hague—which dates from yesterday—is a direct consequence of Locarno.

It must be kept in mind, however, that it was the Germans themselves who took the initiative in the negotiations from which the Security Pact was to result.

Is fecit cui prodest.

The memorandum handed on February 9, 1925—nine months before the opening of the conference—to M. Herriot, the Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs, by Herr von Hœsch, the German Ambassador in Paris, leaves no doubt on this score. "Germany would be able to give her adhesion to a pact by which the Powers interested in the Rhine, notably England, France, Italy, and Germany, would solemnly pledge themselves . . . to refrain from going to war with one another. . . ."

M. Herriot has claimed the glory of having given this proposal a favourable reception. In private it appears that he does not fail to say that Briand the peacemaker did nothing more than follow his lead.

On the other hand, we have seen that solemn repudiation of war stultified by the *unless*, which is what all this mass of paper amounts to. But there are other consequences arising out of the Locarno Pact.

In the first place, there is the entry of Germany into the League of Nations.

M. Briand wrote to M. de Fleuriau, the French Ambassador in London, on June 4, 1925:

> . . . The French Government . . . was anxious to consider Germany's offer as dictated by a sincere desire for peace, and [it] in no way under-estimates the difficulties with which the German Government, on its side, has to contend, on account of German public opinion and the anxieties inspired by its relations with Russia, which is making efforts to keep Germany from joining the League of Nations.

Without the League of Nations, and without Germany's admission to the League of Nations, Locarno would have collapsed. Now we have already seen that the Reich intended to make capital out of this admission, which patched up a kind of virginity for her.

The vagueness of the treaty as regards the eastern frontiers of Germany is not less disturbing.

M. Paul-Boncour stated on February 25, 1926, in the Chamber:[2]

> The treaties that settle the question are less definite than the Rhineland Pact. . . . Here the procedure is the same as with the Rhineland Pact, with these two differences: that, in the first place, *Germany has not guaranteed the eastern frontiers, and that, in the absence of a demilitarized eastern zone, there is no means of deciding automatically what constitutes an act of aggression*.

Finally, there is the evacuation of the Rhineland zone. M. Briand, in replying to M. Fabry before the Chamber, expressed his indignation that Locarno should be represented as necessarily entailing evacuation. In the course of the same week, at Cologne, Herr Stresemann declared no less publicly that *nothing was to be hoped for from the Locarno spirit unless it brought about the evacuation of the Rhineland*.

To sum up, what does Locarno secure for France that Versailles did not?

Nothing. Less than nothing, since Germany has become a creditor party, and we owe her a reckoning.

The guarantee treaties cancel the past, and solemnly proclaim that the menace of war is as likely to come from France and Belgium as from Germany. As the danger of war might, theoretically, come from all the contracting nations, precautions are taken against each of them. And so, in a review of the past, the responsibility for the conflict does not appear to lie so obviously and so entirely at Germany's door alone.

Further, Germany implicitly declares—AND EUROPE SUPPORTS HER CONTENTION—THAT SHE DOES NOT GIVE UP HOPE OF A SUBSEQUENT MODIFICATION OF HER EASTERN FRONTIERS.

And, lastly, the evacuation of the Rhineland within a short time: at Locarno we signed a treaty that had to be paid for at The Hague.

On June 4, 1926, M. Briand said before the Senate:

> At Locarno I went through some profoundly moving moments when the natives of the country and the *tourists present* gave an enthusiastic cheer at the

> sight of the protocol which had just been signed by the representatives of France, Belgium, Great Britain, Italy, Czecho-Slovakia, Poland, and Germany.

Whereupon the Senate gave its approval "with a shrug of resignation," according to *Le Temps* of the day. The moment of mystical exaltation had already passed, and the enthusiastic cheer of the tourists found no echo now.

The Locarno pacts offer only the insubstantial semblance of a guarantee; they are an illusion calculated to mislead easily satisfied consciences and to lull more vigilant minds to sleep. In their inadequacy lies their danger. The spirit of Locarno itself is positively injurious to the interests of our country. See what happens when it is a question of favouring Germany by curtailing the period fixed for the occupation of the Rhineland by our troops. Our Minister for Foreign Affairs undertakes to prove by an appeal to a passage from an unauthenticated report that the object of the occupation of the enemy territory was the guarantee of the payment of reparations, and not military security, which is nevertheless the primary reason for the presence of our soldiers in enemy territory. This passage, which, picked out of a collection of abridged reports that were never submitted to me and never laid before the Chambers, has been attributed to me, makes me express the exact contrary of my real and avowed opinion.

M. Briand puts the following passage in my mouth on the word of an unknown reporter: "It is a point of view I cannot accept. We need a guarantee for the carrying out of the financial clauses. Be sure *that military considerations have nothing to do with the matter*." Who could have believed that, if soldiers can be used to secure a payment, there is no need of these same soldiers to help their comrades to defend their common territory against the enemy? This is so entirely contrary to the established fact that no reason, not even a bad one, could be adduced to explain the unexplainable, and nothing was offered but the bare statement, with no attempt at justification.

"The debate lasted for *a whole week*," M. Tardieu reminds us in his book *La Paix*.

> The two Presidents exchanged suggestions and memoranda which resulted on April 29 in the following draft, which became the final paragraph of Article 429:
>
> "If at that date [at the end of fifteen years] THE GUARANTEES AGAINST UNPROVOKED AGGRESSION BY GERMANY ARE NOT CONSIDERED SUFFICIENT BY THE ALLIED AND ASSOCIATED GOVERNMENTS, THE EVACUATION OF THE OCCUPYING TROOPS MAY BE DELAYED TO THE EXTENT REGARDED AS NECESSARY FOR THE PURPOSE OF OBTAINING THE REQUIRED GUARANTEES."

Can anything be clearer? That was a passage on which the heads of the Government deliberated for *a whole week*, "exchanging memoranda and suggestions in turn." And when they were agreed the paragraph quoted above was inserted in the Treaty in a form that met with the approval of all, and, last of all, had the final sanction of the vote of the Parliaments concerned. These are the words of the Treaty itself, Monsieur le Ministre, that Treaty which is, or ought to be, law for us, nor should it be in our power to make it depart from what it says, be it by ever so little.

Now, instead of referring to the last paragraph of Article 429 of the Treaty, which pronounces the last word in the matter, since it has been adopted by the Parliaments,

when M. Marin begged M. Briand, in the Chamber, to read the official—and decisive—text of Article 429 the Minister refused to elucidate the meaning of the Treaty by reading out the definitive clause.

But there is more to follow. Here we have been dealing only with what is called the discussion of the preliminaries to the Treaty between the four heads of states. Nothing less than the complete agreement of the 'Four' was needed for the incorporation of a passage in the Treaty itself, as was the case with the last paragraph of this Article 429 which M. Briand refused to read out, but which is none the less an integral part of the Treaty itself and cannot be detached from it by any subterfuge. The result is this insoluble difficulty in which our people have got entangled. England, Italy, and America have no military interest at stake on the Rhine. France alone is concerned that evacuation should not take place without the concurrent guarantees, as was formulated and set forth by Article 429, which establishes her right to the twofold guarantee. It is obvious that she must have *asked for and been granted* this concession, since her three partners were not concerned about it, and since no one else could ask for it but myself, as I was left single-handed to uphold her interest.

This is the question I ask and to which I defy anyone to give me an answer. It is conceivable that three impartial men might agree to grant a privilege to a fourth who presses his claim, but that they should all agree to create a privilege that no one is asking for—that is an action that would be incomprehensible, even in Ministers. If Messrs Wilson, Lloyd George, and Orlando, who were not asking for the Rhineland territory as a military guarantee, decided to offer it to M. Clemenceau, who sees it, miraculously and without his having asked for it, falling into his hands as a free gift, duly recorded and docketed as Article 429, that is a miracle the explanation of which M. Briand himself will discover as soon as he consents to read from the tribune the last paragraph of Article 429 of the Treaty of Versailles.

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[1] Unless there is flagrant violation of the engagements entered into; unless the League of Nations decides to attack an aggressor state, etc.

[2] The debates on the Locarno agreements took place in the Chamber and in the Senate from February to June 1926. The agreements were ratified by the Senate on June 4. M. Paul-Boncour was the reporter of the *Foreign Affairs Committee of the Chamber*.

CHAPTER XIX

THE MUTILATIONS OF THE TREATY OF VERSAILLES: GERMANY ARMS. FRANCE DISARMS

The German general Grœner declared recently "that it was impossible for Germany to carry on a great war, as she was *disarmed*, in accordance with the injunctions of the Treaty of Versailles."

The word 'disarmament' applies more especially to material. We shall therefore examine first of all how Germany has conformed in this respect to the prescripts of the Treaty of Versailles.

According to Article 164 of the Treaty, Germany's armament was not to exceed the following:

Rifles	84,000
Carbines	18,000
Total	102,000
Heavy machine-guns	792
Light machine-guns	1,134
Total	1,926
Medium trench mortars	63
Light trench mortars	189
Total	252
Field artillery:	
7.7-cm. guns	204
10.5-cm. howitzers	84
Total	288

Now from unimpeachable documents[1]—that is to say, from the credits appearing in the German Budgets from 1925 to 1930, the last five years, and thus without taking into consideration the credits preceding—we find that since 1925 Germany has manufactured:

300,000 rifles,
20,000 machine-guns,
19,000 trench mortars,
2,000 guns.

In the way of ammunition, still judging from the Budgets quoted above, Germany has manufactured during these five years—1925 to 1930—2,500,000 shells, whereas the Treaty limited the *stock* to 450,000, a *stock* to which one must add the copious munitions she has had sent from foreign countries. Herr Scheidemann in his speech in the Reichstag on December 16, 1926, was quite definite on this subject:

From Stettin we have received absolutely reliable information that the Russian ammunition was carried on a number of boats that arrived from Leningrad at the end of September and in October 1926.

This is German evidence that cannot be contested.

There remains still to be examined the question of aeroplanes, of tanks and heavy guns, expressly forbidden by the Treaty of Versailles.

With regard to aviation, it is well known how Germany has got over the difficulty. She has developed her commercial aviation on an enormous scale, all her aeroplanes being required to be equipped so as to be able, at a day's notice, to carry a huge number of bombs. As a matter of fact, she prides herself on being able to put into line, immediately upon mobilization, more than a thousand perfectly equipped aeroplanes and to be in a position to manufacture more than three thousand aeroplanes a month thereafter. The training of her military pilots continues to be effected in Russia.

With regard to tanks and heavy guns, as there is no longer any Allied control in Germany, there is nothing at present to prevent her from manufacturing as many as she likes and concealing them in secret depots.[2] In any case, neither is there anything whatever to prevent her from making pacts with certain neighbouring states, such as Russia, Sweden, etc., pacts which will ensure for her, from the very outset of war, important war material. Later on, thanks to her industrial power, Germany will be able to procure the necessary additional material from her own resources.

Herr Scheidemann, in his speech of December 16, 1926, already quoted above, made revelations on this matter which are conclusive:

> According to a memorandum which has come into our possession, there has been a special section in the Ministry of the Reichswehr under the designation S.G. In Moscow this section has worked in conjunction with the Junker agreements. Since 1923 it has paid out sums amounting to about seventy million gold marks yearly. There is an account at a big bank in Berlin, on which an official of the Ministry of the Reichswehr, Herr Spangenberg, draws for the necessary payments. In about a fortnight Herr Spangenberg has paid sums amounting to about two and a half million marks.
>
> According to other information, it is closely connected with the financial organization known as the Gefu. The manager of this organization is a certain Otto zur Leren, who is usually abroad, more especially in Russia. Through Spangenberg some millions of marks have been paid in to the Gefu, which proves that direct relations exist between the Ministry of the Reichswehr and the Gefu. The task of the Gefu consists in founding an *armament industry abroad*, especially in Russia. The agreements were signed in false names. The officers sent to Russia, and those coming from there, travelled with faked passports. The Gefu was also to establish in Russia gas-shell factories, a well-known Hamburg chemical factory participating in the operation.

At the same sitting of December 16, 1926, Herr Scheidemann produced documents showing the relations of the Reichswehr with the big industries, and the money

collected from manufacturers for the training and equipment of contingents not provided for in the budget.

With regard to gases, the incidents recorded by the newspapers during the last few years (especially those that occurred in Hamburg), and above all by the last sentence of Herr Scheidemann's speech quoted above, show clearly that German factories are ready to manufacture—and are even manufacturing already—everything that the Russian factories—and perhaps others as well—will not be able to supply immediately.

It might be objected that although the Germans have evidently exceeded—and greatly exceeded—the figures of the material allowed by the Treaty of Versailles, nevertheless that material would not permit them to arm the millions of men required for twentieth-century warfare. The well-known German general von Seeckt answers this argument himself in his book *Gedanken eines Soldaten* (*Thoughts of a Soldier*). He declares:

> The armies of the future will not find it profitable to accumulate stocks of material that very quickly becomes out of date. It will be enough to construct a few prototypes, and to arrange for their mass production by organizing the change-over of the factories from peace work to war work. But this naturally requires subsidies from the State.

Here then is the explanation of the enormous sums provided by the Budgets of the Reichswehr for the acquisition of material which seems disproportionately small. It is now possible to understand the reasons that, on a recent occasion, caused Count Bernstorff (in the Disarmament Commission at Geneva) to propose the limiting of stocks of war material, but to refuse *at any cost to agree to the limiting of military budgets*.

In the material necessary for war railways and motor-cars must also be included. Well, not to mention the rest of Germany, what is happening in the Rhineland itself—that is to say, in a region occupied by our own or Allied troops? At Treves and at Kaiserslautern—that is, under the very eyes of our generals—the Germans have constructed immense junctions and marshalling yards which, in the event of war, would make it possible for *a hundred and twenty military trains to be formed and dispatched in one day*. Before the War it was barely possible to dispatch twenty a day. Right in the centre of Eifel a motor-racing track, with a circuit of 40 kilometres, has just been made, as well as a magnificent network of roads leading to it. Five great motor roads are in the course of construction to connect the right bank of the Rhine with Luxemburg and with the regions of Aix-la-Chapelle and Sarrebrück, with bridges on the Rhine at Duisburg, Cologne, Coblenz, Mainz, and Mannheim.

Finally, in all the Rhineland and Westphalian regions the motor postal service has been developed to an unexplainable, not to say disquieting, degree. Night and day huge cars capable of holding forty people, but generally empty, go to and fro everywhere. The Germans see big, but sometimes make too much noise.

And yet Article 43 of the Treaty of Versailles is explicit: “In the demilitarized zone *the upkeep of all permanent works for mobilization* is forbidden.” Ponder on the rule and on its application.

In support of this statement, and to show clearly that it is not exaggerated, I shall merely quote the opinion of the man who is especially conversant with the matters in question, General Guillaumat, Commander of the Army of the Rhine. Here are the conclusions of the *Secret Memorandum*[3] which he addressed in 1927 to the French Government:

> All the information collected for some time past by my Headquarters Staff goes to establish that the German Government [Herr Stresemann’s] is, for the last year or so, pursuing a plan which aims at forming in the occupied territories and in the various districts under military rule a force capable, should the need arise, of speedy intervention against us. In non-occupied Germany the Government of the Reich has for a long time past pursued this work of reorganizing its military strength. But for a long time the Rhineland had remained outside this movement. This is no longer the case to-day. Numerous organizations have sprung up within the occupied territory, the object of which is to ensure the recruiting and training of the young with a view to making them fit for immediate employment for military purposes.

The General then enumerates the infantry formations, the rifle clubs, the riding clubs, aviation bases, air ports. He points out the development of the road- and rail-network, of wireless telegraphy, of the Red Cross medical organizations, etc.

Finally he ends with:

> The concessions made to the German Government, which in the occupied territories were translated in a more liberal system with regard to the people, *have merely resulted, through the relaxing of the pressure, in allowing Germany to push forward her preparations of a military nature in the occupied area*.
>
> The presence of the Allied army of occupation in the occupied territories has at least the effect of hampering the development of a programme that nothing will be able to keep from being put into execution after the evacuation of the Rhineland territories by the Allied forces.

To be able to carry on war it is not enough to have material. A great many other things are required.

1. One must, as far as it is possible, have *numbers* on one’s side.

In that respect Germany need not be anxious: her population does not perhaps increase as rapidly as before 1914, but, at all events, it continues to maintain itself at figures greatly above those of France.

2. Naturally, *numbers* would be nothing *without quality*—that is to say, *training*. There, again, they have plenty of trained men: first, there are the ex-soldiers of the Great War, most of whom are fit to take up arms again; after them, all the younger generation formed by the innumerable so-called *sports* clubs, which are really military

training clubs, and which every German Ministry since 1918 has steadily encouraged. We have waited in vain for the Reich to show publicly its pacifist spirit by suppressing the "Steel Helmets," Consul, and other similar associations.

Let no one object that the clubs here referred to have nothing to do with military preparation, for I will call upon the evidence of the Germans themselves. Here, in fact, is what Herr Scheidemann declared in the Reichstag on December 16, 1926:

> In Hesse-Nassau small-arm shooting associations are particularly highly developed. Since 1926 men are no longer being incorporated in the Reichswehr, but are being sent *to the Vereine*, where they act as instructors.[4]

So that, on the day she chooses, Germany will not lack men who have received a *military training*.

3. But it is not enough to have men. They must be officered.

The Reichswehr is there to provide the officers. Taking the numbers actually from the 1929 Budget of the Reich, the number of officers of the Reichswehr is 3798, of non-commissioned officers 20,880, of men 74,020, which works out at one officer or non-commissioned officer for every three men: the first two classes would provide the officers, and the third the non-commissioned officers.

Apart from the Reichswehr, one must not overlook the Schutzpolizei (140,000 men), trained and maintained in barracks on military lines, which can also provide excellent lower-grade cadres. Considering that, on the other hand, the Reichswehr is renewed approximately every twelve years, it is easy to see that at the moment of a mobilization Germany would certainly not lack officers and non-commissioned officers. At all events, at the outset of a war Germany could immediately oppose 480,000 men to our 240,000 covering troops.

4. Apart from these cadres for the men, *staff officers* and *general officers* for the High Command are also needed.

All those belonging to the old Imperial Army are there, with the experience gained in the World War. All are ready to fall in again, actuated by that powerful moral lever, the hope of revenge. Very high pensions have been allotted to all on condition that the recipients agree to be convoked frequently for map staff rides and all the other forms of training, from which they do not dream of abstaining. The German High Command has not forgotten the lessons of von Moltke, of von der Goltz, of Kemmerer, of Falkenhausen, of von Freytag, of von Schlieffen. It continues to devote itself to the study of mass-warfare and the study of strategy, studies it had practised long before 1914, and which should have ensured victory if the execution had corresponded to the conception.

5. As for the sinews of war, *money*, more necessary than ever in twentieth-century warfare, it calls for the expansion of ever-increasing resources, and Germany knows full well that the German party in the United States is sufficiently powerful to-day to provide her with the loans necessary for her aggression.

6. There remains the question of *moral forces*, more important than ever in an age when the nations aspire so eagerly and so rightly to peace.

Unquestionably and naturally, in Germany, as everywhere else, the workmen, peasants, and lower middle class are true pacifists, and view the possibilities of new butcheries with horror. But, on the other hand, we must remember that all the sons of the governing classes, all the young men who attend the high schools, the colleges, and universities of Germany, find there Nationalist or Populist professors who continually din into their ears the *Deutschland über Alles*. In this lies the great danger to peace, a danger of which the genuine pacifists are well aware. Later on, in a few years, it will be these same young men who will direct the destinies of Germany. Are we not justified in fearing that the mass of the German people, workmen, peasants, lower middle class, faithful to the impulses of its gregarious nature, might allow itself, as in 1914, to be rushed into the whirl of a "fresh and frolicsome war"?

In sum, we are compelled to realize that not only is Germany not disarming, but, on the contrary, she is arming.

One cannot, with reference to this matter, too often recall the last phrase in the report of the English general Morgan, who was attached to the Inter-Allied Military Commission of Control in Berlin, a phrase that depicts most clearly the present situation: "I do not say that Germany is planning another war, but that she is getting ready for one." In truth, like the bulk of the German nation, the Reich Government (so well personified in the circumstances by the late Herr Stresemann) is not at all eager to begin a new struggle with France. It is perfectly well aware—and the perpetual mutilations of the Treaty of Versailles have shown that it is right—that with patience, a great deal of boldness, and some cleverness, it will easily manage to obtain, from the weak and irresponsible Governments that have been succeeding one another in France since 1920, the almost complete annulment of the Treaty.

During this time—that is to say, while Germany is preparing, that is, arming—what is the French Army doing? It is quite simple: it is disarming.

Its *High Command* seems to have completely abdicated. It has forgotten that the first quality of a real chief is character. Only a few generals offered any serious protest in face of the perpetual mutilations of the Treaty of Versailles. The age-limit for generals which, in the thick of the War, after three years' dear-bought experience, had been fixed at sixty, was successively raised to sixty-two, to sixty-five, to seventy. There is now no reason whatever to stop at this, and that merely to cover individual cases. Everything has to be paid for. It is the country that will have to pay for these abdications of conscience, and it will have to pay dear for them.

The *Staffs* go on working, but they always work at tactics. As for strategy—that is to say, the study of mass-warfare, of twentieth-century war—that is still as despised as before the War. Foch had had a School of Strategy established. When he left it he took no further interest in it. An Institute for the Higher Military Studies has yet to be founded.

Numbers we have, and that in spite of the decrease of our population. We have them, thanks to our colonies, which add sixty millions to our forty million Frenchmen.

In vain does von Seeckt sing the praises of a professional army. “With a small professional army,” he says, “a powerful armament, aeroplanes, gases, we would soon make short work of that shadowy formation” (the present French Army). Pure bluff, pure *camouflage*, for better than anyone else does the ex-head of the Reichswehr know that Germany is feverishly and most cleverly preparing a *national army*. It has been clearly shown above.

We in France have that national army, but only on the strict condition that we *train* it. This the new laws “of organization,” which so far have only resulted in disorganization, have not enabled us to do. True, the system of one-year service was instituted, and from 1919 on measures had been taken to apply it. Everything should have been ready by 1924: five years to the good. But it presupposed 150,000 professional soldiers, and, on the other hand, very strong units nearly all concentrated on our frontiers and maintained on a war footing, the only means of ensuring intensive training for our annual contingents.

In the present organization they have, on the contrary, retained the “skeleton” units, and it is to those that our young soldiers are drafted for training, in other words, to waste their time, which is so precious. All the professional soldiers unanimously acknowledge that under such conditions training is impossible. That is how we stand. It should also be added that the one-year service system was only to be applied after the full 106,000 professional soldiers (considered indispensable) had been recruited. Now the one-year service is at this very moment coming into force. Where are these famous professionals? The Minister of War himself acknowledged he had not got them. And yet it is from among these that the cadres necessary for the training of our annual contingents are to be drawn!

One of the chief lessons taught us by the Great War is that material plays a much more important part in the twentieth-century than the professional soldiers before 1914 had supposed. Well, this lesson, so dearly bought, is nearly forgotten. As we have seen, it is not advantageous to accumulate over-abundant stocks in the arsenals, but there is a right and proper line below which we should not fall, and to-day, in France, that line has long since been passed. Without going into details that must not be divulged, it is permissible to recall to mind—as the whole Press has done already—that our stocks of war material were considerably depleted as a result of the troubles in Morocco, and that since then nothing has been done to replenish them. Again, war material is fairly soon out of date; it would therefore be prudent to adopt new models, especially for our automatic rifle, our tanks, and our trench mortars, so long as we only manufacture a part of our requirements and hold ourselves in readiness to manufacture the full amount in case of tension in the diplomatic sphere. Investigations have been undertaken, more than ten years have elapsed since the end of the War, but no definite decision has settled the question.

With regard to aviation, more than ten years were also needed to create that Air Ministry of ours. It was set up at last, but under what conditions! Aviation now depends upon the Air Ministry, but at the same time it belongs to the War Office, to the Admiralty, to the Ministry of Commerce, and in reality without truly belonging to any

of them. There is confusion everywhere: the principle of unity of command has once again been either forgotten or violated. As to the material itself, it is far better not to speak of it. The daily accidents are there, alas! to show how far the Government's negligence can go.

And, again, what has been done with regard to gas warfare, which in any future fighting would assume a paramount importance? Meetings, commissions, palavers, plans, but here again nothing decisive. Meanwhile do we not see countries like the United States, which just now has nothing very serious to fear from either Japan or Europe, putting up at the present time factories capable of a daily production of forty tons of *lewisite* (a gas far more potent than mustard-gas)?

Meanwhile, we should not, apart from essentially military preparations, neglect financial preparations, the necessity of which every one knows. If France were to be attacked again huge financial resources would be required to maintain the war. Where can they be found? There is no doubt that our financial recovery was accomplished in a very remarkable manner—at least on the surface—but, in any case, France could not possibly provide for her colossal needs out of her own resources. She would be driven—as she was from 1914 to 1918—to have recourse to external loans. For these loans she could only apply to two countries, England and America—but what has our policy been for the last ten years with regard to these two nations? Our continuous concessions to Germany have not been calculated to give the Anglo-Saxon nations that impression of power, of firmness, of energy which inspires confidence.

Finally, one may well wonder if, in the event of a new aggression, one would find in the French people that same moral strength they evinced in 1914. For the last ten years their rulers have chloroformed them so well, have told them so often that no one wanted another war and that therefore there would not be another, that they have ended by believing it. And, as a matter of fact, our people were only too ready to believe it. I have no doubt that at the last minute they would rise valiantly to the occasion, as they have often before done, and with success, but to rise in one's might at the very edge of the abyss entails steps that may be not without danger.

The great mistake made by the Governments that have succeeded one another in France since 1920 is to have dandled our people from concession to concession without making them understand, first of all, that a nation with a past like ours could not accept peace *at any price*—that is to say, at the cost of compromising their honour; secondly, that with neighbours like the Germans this peace could only be ensured by making the necessary sacrifices. Those means are the same since the world began and can be summed up in the words, Be strong. Germany remains faithful to this truth. Perhaps Germany does want peace, but this kind of peace will wipe out the last traces of her defeat. That is why she is preparing. The following figures are more eloquent than any possible dissertation. In 1928 France spent six milliards of francs on her military forces: Germany spent eight. Germany goes on arming: France goes on disarming. For what results?

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[1] Quoted by M. de Marcé in his article in *La Revue Politique et Parlementaire*, July 10, 1929.

[2] According to the English general Morgan, who was attached to the ex-Inter-Allied Military Commission of Control in Berlin, the Germans kept and concealed, after the Armistice, a considerable number of heavy guns.

[3] Published by the newspapers *Aux Écoutes* and *L'Avenir*.

[4] The newspapers publish the photographs of Herr Pubst, chief of the Austrian Heimswehr, and Herr Seldte, chief of the "Steel Helmets," who, in flagrant breach of the Treaty of Versailles, have just carried out the *Anschluss* by together forming a military organization.

CHAPTER XX

THE MUTILATIONS OF THE TREATY OF VERSAILLES: THE ORGANIZATION OF THE FRONTIERS

IN such matters a few indications drawn from a reliable source are sufficient to permit us to set down the results. I am, of course, no expert in military matters, but there is no need of a specialized intelligence to recognize fortifications.

From 1920 to 1928 there were two schools in opposition, the "Fortified Regions" school and the "Continuous Lines" school, the names of which denote their principles. For eight years they have disputed without any result. At last, in 1928, the "Fortified Regions" school got the upper hand. So it is this system that is to be adopted.

Nearly ten years have been lost in useless wrangling.

The "Fortified Regions" system is to be applied solely to that part of the north-east frontier which stretches from Luxemburg to Switzerland. As regards the rest (the Franco-Belgian frontier and the Franco-Swiss frontier), we are reckoning on Belgium and Switzerland organizing their German frontiers. Thus the great lesson of 1914 has been of no avail!

In employing the system of fortified regions there are two aspects to be considered, the financial aspect and the technical.

Financial Aspect. Parliament voted the credits asked for, between five and six hundred million francs. *Hardly a tenth part of this has been spent.*

Technical Aspect. The Minister and his military collaborators not only have done nothing in so far as construction work is concerned, but, on November 1, 1929, had not even begun anything, and when the Minister makes a public declaration that by the end of 1930 the fortification works will be well advanced he is fooling us.

On November 1, 1929, from Luxemburg to Switzerland no work of any sort had been begun, or even pegged out or indicated by as much as a noticeboard.

The frontier is entirely open, and will be so for a long time after the third Rhineland zone is evacuated.

The explanation of this deplorable situation, both financial and technical, is perfectly simple.

To conceive, and then to establish, a frontier organization giving the maximum security, we should have begun by setting up a works department, with a large and powerful equipment, having at its head a high military personage of the proper qualifications. (Not all of them are!) At the end of a year this department would have set up a solid and coherent system of protection for the frontiers, extending from the North Sea to the Mediterranean (not merely from Luxemburg to Switzerland). In this way the works might have been begun in 1921 or 1922, and at several points simultaneously, having regard to a reasonable urgency. By now they would have been

completed, and the evacuation of the Rhineland would not find us with an open frontier.

Instead of this, what has been done?

The work of the organization of the frontiers was entrusted to two lieutenant-colonels of engineers, assisted by a few administrative officers and installed at Metz and at Strasburg respectively.

These two engineer chiefs have by their side, in these two towns, the general officers commanding the districts, and even a general who is a member of the Army Council. It would seem to be indicated that they should work under the orders of these generals, each one of whom is responsible for a buttress in the frontier. Nothing of the kind. The two officers of engineers take their orders, without intermediary, straight from the Engineer Department in the Ministry of War. They ignore the generals and staffs living beside them.

The War Ministry and the General Staff have treated this immense and serious problem of the organization of the frontiers as if it was a matter of equipping a barracks with a new set of shower-baths. They have employed the usual executive agents for this sort of work—that is to say, the engineering chiefs. The latter, according to custom, and as though it were a question of spending a few hundred francs on a barracks, have drawn up rough drafts, plans, and final plans, each one being endlessly discussed and revised, circulating indefinitely for months and months between district staff offices and the Ministry, and ending in this unbelievable but all too real result that, ten years after the end of the War, no work of any sort has yet been begun on any part whatsoever of the Franco-German frontier, except a little bit of roadway and a few kilometres of Decauville railway.

It is practically impossible for two lieutenant-colonels of engineers, lost in space, weighed down by the immensity of the task and of the expenditure involved, to carry out their work otherwise than by driblets and in deplorable conditions. Up to the present they have done nothing, and they will do nothing of any importance as long as this disastrous arrangement is continued.

So, at the beginning of the year 1930, of this year which is to see the end of the occupation of the Rhineland, the French frontier is still open from the North Sea to the Alps.

In default of a screen of concrete and barbed wire, have we at least a substantial living screen in the shape of good divisions that can be in position instantaneously in the frontier zones?

Nothing of the kind.

In an article that appeared recently in the *Revue des Deux Mondes* General Debeney, naturally a defender of the organization over which he presides, shows it in the most favourable light.

From this article it appears:

1. That the screen, being composed of all the peace-time divisions, will consequently include divisions far removed from the north-east frontier, and could not

be completely in position until a fortnight after the opening of hostilities—a fortnight during which the Germans would probably not be inactive.

2. That these divisions, by reason of the one-year service period, will almost certainly be composed of *disponibles*—a new term meant to replace and disguise the more alarming one of *réservistes*—that is to say, men practically untrained. These men will have to face, at the outset of hostilities, at least 250,000 Germans, soldiers by profession, perfectly instructed and perfectly trained.

3. That the French forces would find great difficulty in taking the offensive or in interrupting the preparations for the German offensive.

4. That, if this were the case, the French forces could do nothing but fall back, as they did in 1914, as far as the Marne and the Seine, and the fighting would take place, still as in 1914, on French territory—but, of course, we need not be too much perturbed about this since in the long run, in 1918, we did come out with the victory!

I am not here concerned to find out who is responsible for the lamentable state of our national defence at the present day. Various Ministers have succeeded each other in the Rue Saint-Dominique since 1920. But above all there are military chiefs who have been the constant technical advisers and guides of these Ministers and their Governments, and Marshal Foch in the first rank of all.

What have they done, these military chiefs, in the way of giving us a strong, unyielding frontier? Nothing!

When have they made any protest against this lack of organization? Never!

After having talked so much of “the Rhine frontier,” without neglecting oratorical effects, it is inconceivable that Marshal Foch has not succumbed to the temptation to show us what he could make of the Rhine as an instrument of defence at the moment when the most imperative of duties was calling him to do so.

What! This military chief, who was boasting so loudly that he could establish an invincible frontier on the Rhine, suddenly loses all interest in it and leaves a yawning gap as if there was no choice for him between all and nothing. And I who believed he was remaining at his post expressly to perform the most important of all his duties!

CHAPTER XXI

THE MUTILATIONS OF THE TREATY OF VERSAILLES: DEFEATISM

ONE of our most distinguished pupils at the École de Rome told me he had seen, posted up on the walls of the Eternal City, a proclamation by Mussolini in which he said, "We are the only people in Europe who have not forgotten the War."

I question my country as to the mistakes that can be attributed to her and those that will be laid to the charge of Mussolini's subjects, and I am very much afraid there may be some foundation for the sharp reproach our modern Romulus launches at us. But neither his popular throne nor our incoherence can be sure of to-morrow.

What then has brought us to the point of playing false to ourselves at critical moments and unprotestingly renouncing our claim to reparations, which, with our enemy's acquiescence, our victory had assured us? In the battle we had been upheld and carried through by a tremendous flame of ardour. How is it that the patriotic enthusiasm that one day raised us to such heights could all end suddenly in smoke? It is a social pathological symptom which appears at times of crisis in nations that have been thrown off their balance.

I need not recall how, with the aid of the invader, an anti-patriotic faction set itself up in the heart of our military activities to destroy, in the full tide of an invasion, even the very idea of a fatherland. The national character was threatened by a kind of morbid infection at the very moment when the enemy's guns were concentrated upon us.

That I could not accept. My education was built up upon ruthlessly hard-and-fast ideas crowned by a patriotism that nothing could shake. In the insurrection of Vendée, allied with the foreigner against Revolutionary France, the two qualities of patriot and republican were so merged in one another that the Chouans called us *patauds*, an insult that my forbears were proud of.

The fatherland was, and could only be, everybody's home, where energies were developed in common. To renounce one's country had neither sense nor meaning. You might as well have expected the child to want to leave the shelter of its mother's wing. The home, the country, this was no theory; it was a natural phenomenon that had been realized from the very earliest ages of mankind. Animals had a temporary home in their lairs, man a permanent one in his country.

The transition from the Constituent Assembly of 1789 to our last Republic was a disjointed succession of all forms of government without any continuity. Not so long before France had surrendered freedom of speech, and so I saw my own father deported in 1858 without a trial. Once she had been, now she was no longer, the land of freedom of thought. How are we to account for these sudden changes? A country subject to sudden bursts of energy in the cause of progress, or sunk in the throes of neurasthenia? These lapses cost more than the nations think.

The Second Empire, passively endured, marked a definite decrease of faith in the combative ideology of the French Revolution, as also in the superiority of the liberating

armies that were to install the nations in their own sovereign power. In opposition to this dream of dangerous idealism there rose up Bismarck's Germany in the splendour of incomparable might, looking to the universal domination of the peoples singled out by Destiny. We were beaten, dismembered, at every moment menaced by a fresh invasion, and when the final aggression of 1914 burst upon us we rushed to the Front knowing that our fate was foreordained, failing the help of the nations that were doomed to a defeat that must have followed ours.

The German aggression of 1914 found us without adequate defence either on the battlefield or in the shape of a civilian organization capable of readily adapting itself to such forms of energy as the situation required. We may indeed say now that the retreat from Charleroi to the Marne was a time of terrific risk. The valiant heart of the French soldier won back the advantage from the enemy, and France was saved. But what a blood-curdling moment! How could the elements of defeatism fail to be developed in such circumstances? Indeed, they broke out in forms that we have not had time to forget.

The years 1870-71 had seen all our store of energy scattered as by a thunderbolt, and, having been five times under the menace of German aggression, too many faint hearts among us had not entirely recovered. The effects were different according to the individuals. Some carried their delinquent faltering to extremes and paid for it with their lives. Others tacked more or less painfully this way and that.

When I tried to explain M. Caillaux to myself I thought that he looked on the country as done for, and that he was trying every means of currying favour with Germany. It was the most favourable interpretation. How could I not accept it when I saw M. Poincaré, the Prime Minister, taking on himself the surrender of part of our Congo to the Germans? I fought against it in vain. And even so I gave up part of my hostile demonstration in the tribune at M. Poincaré's own appeal. Events are linked together ineluctably. It is easy to yield to a threat. But how far is it to go? When the unforgivable aggression came we had to go to war, and M. Poincaré endured with us the fate he had unintentionally prepared for us all. This serious surrender of the Congo none the less classes M. Caillaux and M. Poincaré among those who were touched by the spirit of 1871, while I claim to be one of those whom it revolts. Thence sprang up the opposition between us which we were both unable to alter in the least.

Right at the other end of the scale, beyond even M. Caillaux, for the simple reason that an intelligence entirely in the fluid state wastes all the potentialities of speech and action indiscriminately through the vagueness of its aims and its means of attaining them, stands M. Briand, the leading light of French defeatism. Adrien Hébrard saw him as "a Guizot in carpet slippers," with that homely footgear exalted on smart red heels. M. Poincaré has let M. Briand have his own way. I am not sure that he dares to ask himself how far he approves of him. Perhaps he will denounce him one day, as he did the mutilators of the Treaty, without distressing himself by sifting out too minutely how far he is himself responsible.

M. Briand has perhaps a sense of responsibility—but he shows no signs of it. I should not be at all surprised to find that he knows nothing about German mentality, and that he is running the risk of playing 'the winner pays' without troubling about the

consequences. For his game he needs Germans of good faith. And the best way of getting them is to wish them to be so and to proclaim very loudly that they are.

\- 6 -

Des risques ? Oui, il y a des risques. Il y a toujours des risques. Il arrive que la sage [illegible] t.

Et puis l'Europe ne peut pas se passer de la France. De nouveau nous aurons le coup de main nécessaire au bon moment. Et peut-être aussi, qui sait ? Rien de tout cela. La confiance [illegible] de ceux qui n'ont de ressource que dans l' [illegible] de [illegible] l'inconnu.

Alors, pourquoi la France l'a-t-elle suivi ? Comme elle a suivi tous les gouvernements jusqu'à ce qu'elle ne les suive plus. Par ce désintéressement d'elle-même qui est [illegible] le plus périlleux de ses défauts. Question de dosage dans le choix dangereux de la parcimonie à la prodigalité de soi-même [illegible]

N'est-il pas assez clair que l'idée même de patrie, si puissante encore parmi nous, a perdu de sa force native aux [illegible] de ceux qui se sont laissé délibérément ravir la somme de fierté [illegible] nécessaire à la réfection d'une continuité de la patrie ?

Mais cela n'est et ne peut être qu'une entrée en matière. Après les manoeuvres successives qui nous ont enlevé une part [illegible] des réparations nécessaires, que dirons-nous, que ferons-nous le jour où l'Allemagne [illegible] connaître ...

A PAGE OF THE TYPESCRIPT CORRECTED BY THE AUTHOR

And the risks? Oh, yes, there are risks, but there always are. Even wisdom itself is not without traces of rashness. And then Europe cannot do without France. Perhaps once more we shall have the necessary helping hand when the crucial moment comes. And perhaps too—who knows?—we shall have nothing of the kind. The blind confidence of those who have no resources beyond waiting for the unknown!

Why then did France follow this bird of passage? Just as she has followed every Government, from the strongest to the weakest, like the two Napoleons, until the day comes when she will follow no more. Because of that lack of self-interest which is the most dangerous of all her defects.

Is it not fairly clear that the very idea of a fatherland, which is still so potent among us, has lost some of its native strength in the hearts of those who have deliberately allowed themselves to be despoiled of that French pride so essential if the fatherland is to live and not die?

But this is, and can only be, merely introductory. After the successive manœuvres that have deprived us of a considerable part of the necessary reparations what are we to say, what are we to do, on the day when Germany looks us in the eye and lets us know that she can no longer continue her instalments under the Young Plan, and that it is a happy opportunity for us to found and seal our friendship in a pact based on unselfishness, which would, besides, redound wholly to our honour? Then we shall merely have to furnish Germany with new colonies, and to carve up for her benefit Poland and all the other "partition" countries, in order to learn the borders within which Germany will allow us to retire and die. And how could it be otherwise when you have the same men on the same job in the same workshop?

Victory! What have they dared to make out of it? Those who drafted the Peace Treaty were to find themselves bitterly reproached for not putting the screw on Germany sufficiently, by men who were quick to shrink from putting it into effect when they had the power.

Before he died our temporary friend, Herr Stresemann, "Bismarck's best disciple," told us M. Briand had confided to him this great thought, "I desire nothing more than that my name should go down in history as that of the man who, on the French side, brought the two countries together."[1] The sentiment is beyond reproach. But it all depends on *how* it is done, if we are not to be content with empty words. This portentous *how* is not likely to trouble M. Briand to any extent, since it is enough for him if he can satisfy his partner's demands by taking advantage of the freedom from interference which the French have for too long a time granted to all their Governments.

It will no doubt be looked upon as a sign of our times that, in one of the most serious situations in our history, the successive occasions on which M. Briand has let things take their course, the *alpha* and *omega* of his policy, should have been allowed to pass unchallenged. M. Poincaré was one of the foremost among those who could and ought to have spoken for our country. He saw things, he understood their import, and allowed them to go on. Fundamentally I have no other complaint to make against him. But this is already too much, and there are no indications that history is inclined to disarm.

When the German aggression descended on us M. Malvy was M. Poincaré's Minister of the Interior. The choice was not an inevitable one, but is very easily explained. He was a Southerner without the Southerner's usual loquacity, a good fellow and friendly with everybody. M. Malvy had no enemies. Perhaps that was his misfortune. The same confidence in the better and in the worse, that was what ruined him, if a man who to-day is Chairman of the Finance Committee of the Chamber can be looked upon as ruined.

We know his story. At Bordeaux in September 1914 he did not get his ideas on the German invasion very straight, for what seemed the most urgent thing to him then was

a picnic in a beautiful car embowered in flowers. I held a different opinion, and took the liberty of saying so in my paper *L'Homme Libre*, which, thanks to the attentions of the Government, soon became *L'Homme Enchaîné*. M. Malvy came to see me and to make his excuses. Superfluous words.

Nobody can have forgotten how from the outset of the War a whole bevy of publications appeared, at the psychological moment, the object of which was to provoke mutiny in the Army, as also to help the Germans in all spheres of their military activities. One would think that there was nobody but Germans or pro-Germans to ensure the life of these anti-French sheets which sprang up at the first shot of an unexpected war. But no! There were also the subsidies of French money liberally distributed under the cloak of the secret funds. Some people knew about it and said nothing "to avoid unpleasantness."[2] I was one of those who suspected M. Malvy of negligence in this respect without being able to prove it. He had powerful supporters. In vain I denounced him in the Senate at a private sitting.[3] I saw a solid majority form up behind him.[4] But I did not give up, and on July 22, 1917, I mounted the tribune once more, and denounced the defeatist and anarchist campaigns, and M. Malvy's method of dealing with them, which the High Court of Justice later found provocative and encouraging to mutiny.[5]

This time M. Malvy's withers were seriously wrung. Shortly after he resigned and took up the attitude of martyr and "defender of the working classes," which he never dropped thereafter.

Then M. Léon Daudet came upon the scene, sending a letter to the Government in which accusations of the worst kind were levelled against Malvy, and in particular that he had betrayed the plan of operations at the Chemin des Dames to the Germans. When M. Painlevé, the Minister of War, had read this letter to the Chamber M. Malvy thought he was safe; he himself asked to be called before the Courts, so that he could show the emptiness of "*such infamous accusations*."

The matter was referred to the High Court, Malvy appeared before it, and, on August 6, 1918, judgment was given. As might have been expected, Malvy was found innocent of the crime of high treason, he had had no part in the bloody defeat at the Chemin des Dames. But the High Court did not confine itself to passing judgment on this one count.

It declared furthermore:

> Whereas the Court is satisfied that a plan was made within the territory of the Republic from the end of 1914 to ruin the defence of the country by attacks upon the moral forces of the nation and upon the discipline of the Army; that this criminal propaganda has been spread especially by the creation of newspapers, the dissemination of pamphlets, by speeches, and by lectures.
>
> Whereas Malvy was not unaware of the existence of this criminal enterprise, the seriousness of which has been testified to by all the witnesses heard, and which was the principal cause of the mutinies in the Army in May and June 1917.
>
> *Whereas, instead of taking the most active steps against this propaganda, the accused has granted subsidies to a newspaper the chief editors of which have been*

found guilty of having secret communications with the enemy by judgments at law; has facilitated, by favours and illegal complaisance, the criminal acts of Almereyda, of Duval, and of Sebastien Faure; has obstructed the supervision of the dealings of the spy Lipscher through the agency of the woman Duverger; has refused to put a stop to the anti-patriotic propaganda of the anarchist Vandamme, alias Mauricius; has refused to authorize the seizure at the secret presses, where it could easily and usefully be effected, of the pamphlets inciting the troops to disobedience, to rebellion against their leaders, and to treason against their country.

Whereas, in virtue of the general instructions he had given, the operation of the penal laws has been suspended or impeded for the benefit of notorious anarchists who were wanted by the authorities for offences against the common law; finally, whereas the accused has destroyed the whole or part of the records concerning charges made out against Sebastien Faure, which records had been communicated to him by reason of his office.

Whereas Malvy vainly pretends for his defence that he has only carried out the instructions and the policy of the Governments of which he was a member; whereas this policy, making for the sacred union of all Frenchmen in the face of the enemy, is not on trial; whereas the prosecution justly charges the accused with *having pursued his own personal policy of surrender and weakness, which allowed the daily increase of a danger the seriousness of which he could not fail to recognize*, while the fixed rule of the Governments of which he was a member was to apply the penal laws to all criminals whomsoever.

Whereas Malvy also in vain maintains that he was obliged to act as he did for fear of bringing about crises and unrest still more dangerous for the country than the propaganda that he allowed to go on.

Whereas, as a matter of fact, this plea could not justify the actions with which the accused is charged; whereas it is contradicted by the patriotic fervour of almost all the French workers, and does them serious wrong in *supposing them capable of uniting with habitual criminals and men of evil repute whom they would have driven from their ranks had they known what they were doing and what their plans were*.

For these reasons:

The Court declares Jean Malvy not guilty either as principal or accomplice of the crime of intercourse with the enemy, and in particular of giving information to the enemy as to our diplomatic and military plans, furnishing them with the plan of attack at the Chemin des Dames, and of provoking or inciting military mutinies in order to favour his schemes.

The Court declares Jean Malvy *guilty of having*, in his office as Minister of the Interior from 1914 to 1917, *failed in, violated, and betrayed the duties attaching to his post in conditions which place him in a position of forfeiture, and incurred the penalties provided in Article 12 of the law of July 16, 1875.*

And Malvy was sentenced to five years’ banishment.

Victory came, and then peace. Governments succeeded one another, and soon it seemed as if the time had come for solemn reparations.

On November 19, 1924, an Amnesty Bill was being debated in the Senate. It was a question of releasing all the traitors, deserters, etc., in the prisons.

M. Chéron suddenly broke out with:

> If the men in the best position to do so could only speak they would certainly tell you that, contrary to what you believed, contrary to what part of the public still believes, M. Malvy, the former Minister of the Interior, in no way failed to do his duty to his country in the exercise of his office. I have heard it said often enough and loud enough to repeat it.

M. Tissier declared in his turn that there was in the Senate a man "who had known everything," and he begged him to say whether in his heart and soul he thought M. Malvy was guilty.

It was then that M. Poincaré intervened:

> I did not think that it would have been possible to arraign an ex-President of the Republic for things that took place under his Presidency. It was M. Malvy himself who asked for a trial, and the Government of the day took its responsibilities quite apart from the President of the Republic. I can, however, say *there never came to my own personal knowledge any act on M. Malvy's part that showed a want of patriotism*. (Loud applause from the Left.)

Such was the testimonial that M. Poincaré, the staunch son of Lorraine, presented to M. Malvy. It is true that M. Briand was to go still farther on the road to his reinstatement. In March 1926 M. Briand was called upon to form a Ministry. Whom did he choose as Minister of the Interior? M. Jean Malvy himself.

And on March 19 in the Chamber, in reply to a question by M. Ybarnégarray, who expressed his astonishment to see M. Malvy on the Government benches, M. Briand declared:

> I had M. Malvy in my Cabinet during the War. He served also under other Prime Ministers in whom you have always had confidence. *We found that he performed his duties admirably. The act for which he was punished has been acknowledged to have been wrongly imputed. I pointed it out myself, and my contentions have been confirmed.*

What is this "act" that M. Briand talks about? Malvy was not condemned *for an "act,"* but for *a whole policy*. M. Briand gives M. Malvy a certificate for having "*performed his duty admirably*." He even goes so far as to say that *the act for which M. Malvy was condemned has been recognized to have been wrongly imputed and that he himself, Briand, gave evidence of this*. What sort of confusion is it intended to create? If it is a question of some plan or other of the Chemin des Dames, that is not why M. Malvy was condemned. If it is a question of subsidizing criminals, the real, authentic

act for which the High Court punished him, let M. Briand tell us in respect of which acts has he vouched for M. Malvy?

Very well, then, when I see M. Briand throwing himself into the policy of abandoning the Treaty, a policy that has deprived us of the boon of reparations—without the idea of checking his colleague once occurring to M. Poincaré—I want to know if, as a plain French citizen, I have not the right to demand a reckoning from them, and, when I find them engaged in whitewashing a delinquent, to ask them the reason for a state of mind that has such dire consequences for us. I bring no charges against them, I take them for as good patriots as anybody, but I have a right not to understand why they gave M. Malvy certificates for patriotism, and since I have been sought out in my retirement and asked a whole string of questions about things that happened in the War, I have a right also to take advantage of the opportunity to try to throw light on a policy so full of darkness.

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[1] *Journal de Genève*, September 22, 1926.

[2] I set down to defeatism the classic "*embuscade*" of those who were afraid to go to the Front and kept well away from it with the insidious help of Parliamentary influence. I have a vivid recollection of one of our most eloquent orators whom it took me a long time to dislodge from one place after another, and who finished up when he went to the Front (at the end of the War) by sending me a *p.p.c.* card. But for the shameless cynicism of it I should have been amused at his impertinence.

[3] In the summer of 1916.

[4] I only got six votes, my own included.

[5] The story of our military mutinies has never been written. I have grounds for believing that it will be, one day, by some one who saw them from very close at hand. It is a terrible object-lesson in which the life and death of the country are at stake and the only hope of salvation lies in the complete co-ordination between military and civil activities.

The coolness and devotion of our officers were admirable. And the guilty ones themselves speedily returned to their duty, which allowed the prompt readjustment of hearts and minds.

CHAPTER XXII

THE RETROGRADE PEACE

AFTER observations so calculated to disturb us, in which the disastrous *mutilations of the Treaty of Versailles* have been set forth one after another, this title explains itself only too easily. I call a retrograde peace a peace by which the victor, through whatever shortcomings, surrenders to the vanquished part of the advantages purchased with blood upon the battlefields. Whether they be due to weakness of mind or faintness of heart, flaws of character are as much to be dreaded in peace as in war, since they lead a man just as inevitably to surrender his dignity, his will, his personality, everything that constitutes his worth in the widely differing circumstances of peace and of war.

Without spending more time over the alleged grievances of Marshal Foch, I would prefer to dilate upon the unfortunate consequences, for the peace to come, of so many surrenders of the conditions of the Treaty. I should gladly have refrained from making a reply had I not seen the opportunity of combining with it a few rapid observations on the situation created for victorious France by wrongful applications of a contract that was drawn up to safeguard her most immediate interests. Many people would perhaps have preferred anecdotes. May I be excused for having sought in these remarks the occasion for a homily?

I therefore take the facts just as they are, and I ask myself whether there is to be found a single Frenchman who could admit that we should refrain from exacting from the Germans their obligations, the burden of which is about to be transferred to a victor ruined by the systematic plunderings of the conquered invader. When I ask for an explanation I am generally met with a shrug of the shoulders, accusations against the Press, Parliament, the politicians, and an assurance that after a few more concessions every one will be satisfied. As a result of which we give way to-day, after having given way yesterday, to the demands of Germany, who is only awaiting the additional last concessions to render an account that will never be the final one until we are completely despoiled.

The most bloody battles in history, with the complete victory that ensued, would seem to me to have opened to the credit of the Allies a very different account from this.

But fully to grasp the inevitable character of this sinister surrender of the rights secured by a most dearly bought victory, due importance must be assigned to the circumstances of the German aggression and the manner in which she turned these circumstances against us when her military machine, that instrument of unlawful force, was shattered.

All wars of ancient times, and one might say all wars of modern times, under diverse pretexts, have been wars of conquest. Like Marshal Foch himself, the nations are for ever in search of a satisfactory frontier, and perhaps the most remarkable thing is that they have never found it.

The year 1914 witnessed the bursting of the storm. France and England are roused to action. America is to join them much later, with an effect the importance of which I should not think of underestimating. From Charleroi to the Chemin des Dames defeats and victories exhaust the effectives of the combatants until the Germans see the hour at hand when their territory will lie open to our advance. The thought of their crimes against civilization and the reprisals that may follow fills them with terror. They beg for mercy and make an unconditional surrender, with a few hoarse roarings after the fashion of Brockdorff-Rantzau. The drama of the War is ended. The drama of the peace begins.

It is at this point that, in their character of people for whom all moral law has been abolished, the nationalists of Germany are to show themselves capable of conduct that no scruples of common humanity can restrain.

The German lies have not aroused so much as the slightest protest from the Allied Governments, who are anxious above all things to re-establish their pre-War relations with German industry.

Incredible, yet true! It is Germany, guilty of the greatest crime in the history of Europe, a crime premeditated, prepared, and carried out in broad daylight, who presents herself vanquished at the tribunal of Europe and the civilized world, no longer to give an account but to demand one. A lie sets her free. A lie puts us in the dock. And our policy of incoherency run wild is about to lay itself open to processes of dismemberment that will reduce the Treaty of Versailles to a state of nullity. Every day will see Germany requesting, demanding, to have her burdens lightened in order to heap them on France, already drained to the last drop of her blood, and every day something of the burden of defeat will be transferred from Germany's shoulders to what still exists of France by the good graces of the Treaty's executors.

I make no attempt to fix the responsibility on individuals. The subject is too lofty to be brought down to such petty levels. And, as everything was done openly and above-board, nothing could happen without the country's tacit consent.

America's separate peace might have afforded us an opportunity to make a stand. Nothing was done, and France allowed herself to drift toward an unknown fate. Of a public opinion anxious for the necessary amendment of policy not a word. Complete absence of words and of action. Some timid moanings barely given a voice. A Wailing Wall—the last resort of impotent mouthing for nations that feel their historic life in process of vanishing away. Even so, it is a kind of strength to realize one's misfortune and to bemoan it. Now we must put a good face on it, and are recommended to 'keep smiling'!

It is at this point the great cry of supreme agony rings out! Whither are we going? From the moment that a leader of action is not forthcoming to furnish a reply it is evident that the abyss is in sight. England in her new manner thumps a fist on the table, like Germany, to wring extra payments out of us. And when Herr Stresemann gravely declares that '*the path is prepared for a close co-operation between Germany and her neighbour*,' he is the spokesman of the most criminal nation in history, who, having failed to drain us of our last drop of blood, pays us the ironical compliment of replenishing her strength at our expense. Her claims in the matter of colonies are by

this time all prepared. The work of close co-operation will begin at the first opportunity!

Why should we in this matter offer resistance that we have shown ourselves incapable of maintaining in the financial field? England will have her word to say, and it may very well be that we shall again hear the bang of Mr Snowden's fist on the conference table. That will depend on the combinations of the moment, in which we shall play a merely formal part, while America, who has no real concern in the matter, will no doubt have some scheme that she is bent on carrying out. The most dangerous thing in this confusion is the fact that we are not free to draw back at any given point.

What are we doing, then, if not proceeding, article by article, to restore Germany's power, which, by a truly miraculous exercise of will, after its complete collapse during the War, is about to be built up again in the retrograde peace, which is surrendering, stage by stage, everything that human justice had gained by our victory? After the restoration of Germany's moral prestige by a lie we have the upsetting of the financial reparations by the progressive series of mutilations of the Treaty down to the payment of the so-called debts to America!

Finally, when this account is settled, or simply opened for the first cut of the final, fatal wound, it will be represented to us that the fabric of European justice according to the Treaty of Versailles has on all sides caused nothing but social disturbance and recriminations leading to outbreaks of violence. That will be the day toward which Germany has been ceaselessly striving since the Treaty of Versailles.

What forces are at the disposal of the new nations of Central Europe? What help will they afford us, and what support are we in a position to offer them? All the problems raised by the German aggression of 1914 will have to be dealt with at one and the same time. Germany, having regained her strength, will have inevitably bargained for arrangements from which her concern to isolate France will not be excluded.

I pause on the threshold of the terrible moment when the last great struggle will be entered upon. Who then shall decide the fate of historic France, as the fate of Athens, and of Greece itself, was decided on the day of Chæronea? The Macedonian could do no more than rend asunder the world that had laid the foundations of civilization. In the end he gained nothing by it. But his achievement sufficed to bring about manifold dispersions of energy, to break and crush those attempts at a renaissance in which the noblest efforts of mankind's finest ideal had been engaged.

To what catastrophes may this complete and universal confusion be leading us? It seems impossible, at the moment, to foresee. The abyss is there, yawning wide, too deep for sounding. Something too that cannot be foreseen will be only too certain to happen. To make a stand, we should first have to discover where to begin. Yet I cannot resign myself to think that our last word has been spoken. Once at such a moment a man of genius arose, providing us with the sovereign remedy of an absolute authority. He succeeded only in flinging all his victories down the abyss on the plain of Waterloo, where for a time a semblance of order was established in Europe. We have no man of genius, and I do not look for one. My wish would be simply that the French people should dare to trust itself, and that is precisely what it is denied my eyes to see.

We have created new nations with broken fragments of the vanquished, and have assigned them territories in as fair a manner as was possible. It is not our fault if the complications were such that we sometimes had to resort to shifts. Thus it is that actions of historic justice have been resented by those who had been flourishing on the ancient wrong, and by some others who only wanted to be left alone. It may be that some of the benefits secured by our intervention will never be forgiven us.

Grown rich on the War, America is, if we can believe the experts, setting out to ruin us by intercepting, for the extravagances of her budding *nouveaux riches*, the sums that we are to receive as reparations for the damage caused by Germany. At the same time she is a thorn in the side of England, who can no longer aspire to the dominion of the seas under the pretext of 'freedom.' All the new Central Europe is in a state of turmoil as a result of the recrudescence of violent activity on the part of a Germany who, with the unwitting help of the English and the Americans, is preparing to start on another criminal venture before she has expiated the last. Thus the Americans will have come to Europe merely to establish the Dantzig corridor for the benefit of the Poles, and then go back to the banks of the Mississippi, there to wait—in sheltered calm—and see what will be the result for France.

What will be left of America's pristine chivalry then? France will be at her post, ready to fulfil all her duties, and, if she must perish for having done right, we should not be less proud than in the days when the capitulation of Lord Cornwallis at Yorktown laid the foundations of the American Republic—represented on the last American battlefield by the French soldiers who fought for American independence. And if there should exist democratic Governments to look on at, and perhaps even aid, the invader (since everything happens), we should wait, in our noble martyrdom, till the days of humiliation have passed.

What are we to conclude from such a situation? The universal instability of men's minds does not allow of any certain conjectures. It is always easy to prophesy. I used to find a kind of strength in silence. Why did Foch not allow me to remain shut away within it?

It is too evident that the logic of the argument would lead us to the darkest prognostications. I should like to avoid them. But I scan the horizon in vain for any sign of a recovery. Day by day the position grows more serious through our inertia, while the designs of German violence shrink from no ways or means or instrument. Doubtless the conscience of mankind is a social fact which cannot be disposed of at the will of scoundrels. But it has eternity before it, and I have but a day. And even that is not certain.

When the German presents himself to us with a fabrication of lies, to which he himself furnishes the clue, he is judging himself, he is condemning himself, with adamantine authority. He deceives himself if he imagines he can simultaneously embark on a life of strict uprightness in German society and a life of impudent lies in his social relations with other nations, and this error reveals him as unfitted to conduct his life with that minimum of equity without which civilized nations in general cannot endure.

I have no knowledge of the future. I cannot tell what forms of social activity will yet be laid before us by the unalterable law of fate. But I am ready to believe that civilization will prevail over savagery, and that is enough to make me exclude the German from a life of common dignity, so long as he founds his activities on the insolent lie of a Germany that did not will the War and only submitted to it in self-defence.

But if our destiny is to be fulfilled along a higher path, then we must take the trouble to lend a helping hand. It can never be furthered by our criminal indifference in a peace-time crisis not less grave than the war crisis to which it succeeded.

If Germany, still obsessed by her traditional militarism, persists in her *Deutschland über Alles*, well—let the die be cast. We shall take up the atrocious War again at the point where we left it off. We must have the courage to prepare for it, instead of frittering away our strength in lies that no one believes, from conference to conference.

If Germany desires to prepare herself to live in peace let her say it, LET HER PROVE IT, and we shall not need the Geneva Chinese to reconcile us. I simply entreat Providence to preserve us from the talkers, and find us, if we still have any, vigilant men. Citizens of the new *régime* of European justice, your day has come. Fashion your destiny yourselves.

But am I not falling into an error? Can it be true that this policy of mutilations of the Treaty, which with such good grace surrenders the reparations agreed to by the defeated enemy, is nothing else than the stroke of genius that makes us seek at every opportunity the sudden awakening of a spirit of friendliness in the German, so that we may once for all be done with this civilization based on spasmodic outbreaks of butchery? What greater blessing could there be than this victory of right, which would bring together from both sides the sum of energy necessary to realize a lasting peace of happy reciprocity?

These painful concessions, by means of which our rulers have successively applied themselves to redeeming reparations accounts that the Peace Treaty had set down against the devastators, would really be supreme sacrifices made by us on behalf of the ideal of a system founded on right, which would at length enable us to enjoy a civilization in which peace would prevail. The test is in very truth a hard one. But the gain would be worth the risk, for the noblest of all the victories that history can record is the victory that will for ever do away with a desire for revenge. Should we not deem ourselves worthy of this high adventure? Risks to be run there will always be. Are we not still the sons of those who so often pointed the way to the new humanity? Or shall fear of failure hold us back, after the most glorious military victory, at the mere thought of meeting with a check the consequences of which no man can foresee?

The notion of an extravagant act of generosity toward the defeated nation with a view to founding a lasting peace was well calculated to arouse our hopes. But could we really be asked to embark on such a venture without having first assured ourselves of the attitude of a partner who had displayed sentiments with regard to us very far removed from those it was our sincere purpose to awake in him? His acts of folly spring above all from the innate weakness of the German, which hands him over to the violences of what I shall call the primitive manifestations of human animality.

When I am told that a policy of concessions, more or less happily graduated, is going to regain for us the goodwill of our former enemies I can only be glad to hear it, for I desire nothing so much as a state of stable equilibrium in Europe. But I must be able to perceive some sign of a favourable response to the goodwill that I am asked to manifest. Judge then of my surprise when I discover that *Germany goes on arming and France disarming*. The position is that the most scientific preparations for war are being carried out on the other side of the frontier. With us frontiers lie open, armaments are insufficient, effectives are well below the numbers recognized as necessary, while on the other side a feverish life of reconstruction is developing and reorganizing, by the adaptation of fresh material, every department of their war equipment as well as their means of transport. Never was work more generally agreed upon. No complaining. No resistance. Goodwill. Universal enthusiasm the moment that the word ‘war’ is thrown to the passions of the mob, and no sign of a Franco-German reconciliation.

“*Germany is arming and France disarming*”: that is the decisive feature of this moment of history when the two states of mind confront one another in such stark brutality that I defy any sane man to cast doubt on the evidence. Our people have come to this, that they seem to like enduring provocations. The history of the plebiscite violently rejecting the financial measures accepted by us in order to help Germany to discharge what may remain of her financial obligations seems a sufficient indication of the most furious hostility. Thus we see, in the relentless light of the facts, the German, in fighting mood and trim, and the heedless Frenchman, both applauding the orators who proclaim the violations of the Peace Treaty.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE UNKNOWN WARRIOR

AND now, Unknown Warrior of France, what of it all? Yes! Thou, modest and noble creation of the mind of a whole people, for ever silent under the flagstone of the tomb, ’tis thou I am fain to question and consult. ’Tis not Foch’s gossip that haunts me, but the future of France, which at this moment is at stake while we look on, a future too uncertain in our empty boil of words not to disquiet a clear sight grown weary with too much of the unforeseen. What can we look for from thy wordless verdict for our country?

Paris has seen them go by in funeral pomp, the soul-moving obsequies of the soldier chief, on his way to eternity. I had brought him the homage of my farewell. And later on there awoke in my mind the vision of those theatrical processions of the Roman triumphs in which, amid all the glittering jumble of loot on the grand scale, there was that crowning pageantry of fettered kings. And I asked myself whither we shall be led by these still multitudes that sought, and often sought in vain, to find themselves in solemn displays whose true significance was not clearly manifest. Rome yielded place to Byzantium. Then came other empires, and history, impassive, pursued the long line of its repetitions. From the glorifications of the crowd has there always come an increase of man’s greatness in his strivings after civilized life? The die is cast. How will it fall?

Were he capable of profound reflection upon himself, man would have no need of so many legends calculated to lead him astray. It would be enough for him to keep a watch upon his own life and to note as they arose touches of strength or weakness. Who is there that deems himself capable of the aloofness this would need?

Our summary judgments lead us to class man as either good or bad. The truth would lie in seeing him as good *and* bad—together. We should then have no need of so many fictions to create for ourselves a figure designed to our own vanity.

The Spaniards say of a soldier, “He was brave on such a day,” leaving the rest to the chances of the unknown. Foch was good and very good at the Marne, on the Yser, at Doullens, and that is already much. He had no love for me, which is easily to be understood, while, for my part, I had a weakness for him that was not hard to understand. To-day perhaps many will find me harsh. Yet to everything where he was concerned I always brought a rare amount of goodwill. Ordinary decency would have been enough to make him glad to show the same.

In him there were elements of a chief and even of a hero, as I have already said. He lacked only those elements that raise man above personal and accidental considerations. We pulled in the same collar, and glad would I be to add with the same heart, if I was not contradicted by the facts themselves.

Above all, I owe him a grudge for not having allowed me to end my days in the modest self-respect of a silence in which I had set my chief inward bliss. And now that

I have made my reply, I find myself asking whether I should not have done better to remain present but mute, even as thou, Unknown Warrior, made greater by silence.

What can it matter to-day that Foch or I one day said this, did that? Things for discussing by idlers staring from a window in quest of passing shows. But if, in the turmoil of men and things, we turn to look for better results for times to come, casting beyond the man who knows nothing of himself, I think we must look higher to see farther.

I am not disposed to withdraw as much as a comma from anything I have said; but I regret to have been forced to say it, because, even if it serves to give a clearer judgment of individuals, I am not at all certain that any better handling of the future is thereby ensured. Foch made a very large contribution to the winning of the War. Left to himself, the issue might perhaps have been different. Better is a victory without a great strategus than a triumph of strategy in defeat, as happened in 1814 to Napoleon, hemmed in on every side. We won the War with the fighting spirit of Foch and all the others, each at his post. Had others been in their place other mistakes would have been committed with results we cannot conjecture. When we observe the errors, more or less explainable, of each of them, are we so very sure that our tardy wisdom is not heading for other errors, which we have unwittingly set afoot?

PAGE OF THE ORIGINAL MANUSCRIPT

However, there is a leaven at work in various nations, and it is not forbidden us to believe that some men are capable of understanding the teachings of their own mistakes as well as their neighbours'. In that case there is a possibility that from one messenger to another a belated lesson may by some chance emerge one day. Let us accept the fact of our human condition, with its greatnesses and its failings; let us try to criticize only for the sake of learning—of making progress in the direction of the truth.

And here there presents itself the main obstacle to the right knowledge of things, and also to the right lesson we ought to derive from them: the disturbing sense of *personality* to which we refer every event that offers itself to our judgment. And it is here, great Unknown Warrior of France, that thou dost so masterfully recover thy advantage over whoso reduces all questions concerning man to aspects of himself. For the supreme virtue of thy vast epic lies in *impersonality*. It was the people of France, as history has moulded and wrought it, that understood thee, that willed thee, that made

thee thus, that set thee high above itself, far beyond all vanities. In the battle Foch was, and in history remains, thy chief for ever. Since he is human, he must needs have had his fallings short, defects of personality through which in his worser moments we shall have the advantage of him, to leave him the glorious revenge of his great days.

Thou who hast no name to echo down the ages, thou hast no history, and therein lies thy greatest glory, since without rank, without honours, without decorations, thou didst run to the sacrifice without a word, to maintain and uphold our France in her high pride of place, far from childish complainings against whosoever might have vexed thee, merely because he was not thou! Thou hast seen the highest fortune of man far above all empty glory. Thou hast given all; thou hast received naught.

One treaty-maker believes in window-dressing in all things. Another from behind a mask of obscurity calls for a peace of equilibrium. Thou dost set the tranquil nobility of a simple heart over against the trumpetings of recriminations against whoever does not enrol in the circle of those who gape in admiration of fortunes of a day. What a strange craving, to want to survive at all costs in the memory of men for whom we care naught at all! Fame is a wretched temptress, especially when her shouting and her triumph centre upon inadequacy. I am not even sure that she may not be formidable to those whose aloofness from things mundane allows them to bear her modestly. Questions, these, of high psychology throughout the series of conflicts that make by turns the delight and the torment of our incoherences.

What a sharp contrast of feelings between 1871 and 1919 for the Germans, come back to Versailles, again in that same Hall of Mirrors, to put their own seal to the downfall of that same Germanic Empire yesterday proclaimed in that same place, amid the theatrical bedizenment of warlike uniforms, the cries of *Hoch!* the clicking boot-heels, the cheers of victory, the clink of gold and steel!

Half a century for the total collapse of a *kolossal* dream, dissipated in the murderous incoherences of an imperial degenerate!

Yesterday the head of their delegation, Count von Brockdorff-Rantzau,[1] came to ask us for our draft treaty. The German, standing in stiffest insolence, read us out a sheet beginning like this: “So you are at last about to slake your hatred. . . .” Mr Lloyd George whispered to me, “What are you going to reply?” To which I answered, “I am going to stick my paper under his nose and say, ‘Here is what you have to sign.’ ”

And even so it was done.

Less arrogance on the day of the signing, when the Great King’s mirrors now sent back nothing but the will-o’-the-wisps of the big round spectacles like crowns about administrative skulls, whose sour, set faces belied the vague gestures of a frigid courtesy. A tragic silence.

Suddenly there was a stir among the silent throng. Upon a velvet-covered bench between two windows there had just been placed in full view three ghastly masks of the hellish tragedy, with eyes unsocketed, with twisted jaws, their faces ploughed with scars—three grievously wounded men, invited to the place of honour, a reminder of hideous torments heroically borne.

Heroic friends, we salute you, you who in the agony of surviving come hither to set forth the sublimest of lessons. It is not you who appear before us to revive and accentuate the contrasts of the tragedy that through you was glorious. It is we who present ourselves at your judgment-seat for a verdict of true equity, which will not withhold indulgence, but which will proclaim in no uncertain tone that to win a war equal and the same obedience is required of all. Speak, great scar-branded witnesses made judges by the battle, and tell us what would have come to pass if you had disobeyed!

Beyond even this dolorous teaching is the lesson of the Unknown Warrior, who has paid more than his debt in sacrificing even the remembrance of his very name, and has asked for naught; not even the tomb ye have given him lest ye forget.

The Treaty had formulated and laid down a fundamental decision: "*There shall be responsibility for all. There shall be reparation for all.*" That unspeakable, abject rag of imperialism hiding away in his mire at Doorn was relieved of the responsibilities he had incurred,[2] and we went so far as to allow a judicial farce in which both judges and criminals, all alike accomplices in the national crime, delighted in setting us at defiance. As for the reparations for ravages scientifically inflicted on our soil, the Germans have not paid them to us, and America, laden with wealth through the War, is not content with taking from us in advance the money our indemnity was to bring. And we must further pay her what we do not owe, even should we receive nothing ourselves. Every one must needs recognize that we have remitted the Germans monstrous amounts of their debts, and that those of our politicians who refused to leave the Rhineland are at the present moment preparing to evacuate it before the term laid down by the Treaty. Is it possible, to inflict a more direct outrage on the elementary principles of all dignity?

Well then, when Marshal Foch plans a protest from the grave it is not to raise his voice against the scandalous mutilations of the Treaty. On that theme there is not a word—not a single gesture of indignation. It is intended simply to satisfy his private grudges, which are the outcome of his own shortcomings. The guilty unpunished, the reversal of responsibilities, criminals whitewashed, victims without redress, systematically ruined by their 'associates'—this moves him not, even to utter a word, our strategus full only of anxious concern for his own personal disappointments. Himself alone, that is all he can think of. When will thy turn then come, O Unknown Warrior, wronged even in thy victory by those that owe thee all?

Yes, when the military chief sees his politicians surrender one after another the all-too-just reparations for the damage done, will he add the complicity of his silence, or will he cry out an indignant protest that in his mouth might perhaps have checked the course of this crime against his country?

Alas, in the orchestration of silence he remained mute. Of his great comrades of war, of those noble fighters that fell without a word, not a single word from the heart, inspired by that brotherhood of arms which is the soldier's recompense, and he will congratulate America on having in the end refused us her military guarantee. And yet the mutilations of the Treaty are outrages that history will never forgive. How comes it that those who were qualified to speak found not a word, not a gesture of revolt?

And now from all this confusion of everything what should come, what can come? We shall know all too soon. The best I can say is that still to some degree it depends on ourselves. Had it been otherwise I should have made no reply. Every man is the obscure soldier of an unknown history. Even in this hour of danger our fate is perhaps even yet in our own hands. On your side, men of France, there is a coalition of the weak, who look to you for more than you can give them. Against you are foes that grow more and more implacable, and friends that are friends no more.

England, at grips with all the complications of conquest, harried at sea by America, herself disturbed about Japan, too easily forgets that our eventual defeat would have placed her at the mercy of Germany. Her soldiers are everywhere. How many, if the hour struck, would there be at Calais?

America has broken us in the economic sphere for an indeterminate time. What can we expect from an ideologist whose ideology has run dry, who most generously gives his blood and then seeks compensations in cash?

We do not want to sink into the abyss. There will be days of horror, and then the appeal to Fate, who from our scattered limbs will re-create another champion of Destiny.

I strive to hope against hope, and I am not unaware that out of the corruptions of decadence come possibilities of regeneration. That does not console me for the exhaustion of French thought when in vain I call upon men's hearts for the efforts needed for recovery. We are constantly hearing of the *superman*. And the *subman*—what of him? It is easier to come together for developments of barbarism than for the refinements of civilization. I have come to ask myself sometimes if it is somewhere written that barbarism shall surely die out before the assaults of civilization. Vast is the field of possibilities. Every man has his norm of failings and of happy impulses to shed around him. What collaborations of highmindedness shall we not need to evolve improvements in humanity that will endure no longer than the short light of one of our uncertain days?

In this confusion of souls disturbed by their own impotence, on behalf of the Unknown Warrior of to-day, I would like to exchange a few tokens of confidence with the Unknown Warrior of to-morrow, of all time, the residuary legatee to every experience of triumph or frustration, whose destiny depends upon the blind surprises of life. With all his medley of contrasted sentiments, differently blended in the various contingencies of life, Foch was an average specimen of humanity whose main weakness was to imagine himself greater than he was. To be universally just perhaps we must avoid laying stress on anything. By way of conclusion I shall conform with all my heart to this universal rule.

I have made reply simply to reply, and not to seize an opportunity to pass judgment, save against those degenerates who, in the face of the indifferent crowd, are set on the destruction of all the elements that have animated and inspired the history of our unhappy country. I have tried to put Truth back in the saddle. It is not for me to say where her steed will carry her. Those who judge submit that they shall themselves be judged. Let times to come pass the verdict upon ours. Perhaps man's history is a simpler thing than we think. It is summed up in proclaiming the right and doing the

wrong. Conscious of his inadequacy, man seeks in a compromise between averages for the semi-satisfaction of a semi-conscience. And who can be sure that all his striving will take him any further?

All the ancestors of all nations began by living on the plunder and the violence of war, and throughout all human catastrophes that tradition has been loudly maintained and continued. Despite the barbarous splendours of the East, crowned with all the flowers of poesy, the people that was the true founder of our civilization tore itself to shreds in inexpiable civil wars, punctuated with tragic poems and philosophy. That was Hellas, until Alexander put an end to this state of things to hand the infant world over to Cæsar and his imitators.

To-day Germany is once more trying to construct, by methods of peace, a Germanic Empire that she failed to bring into being by means of war. That she could never do without eventualities that may change the destinies of a France exposed to every hostile enterprise. What will become of us in this welter of countries the development of whose strength in the future no man can foresee? There are nations that are beginning. There are nations that are coming to an end. Our consciousness of our own acts entails the fixing of responsibilities. France will be what the men of France deserve.

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[1] Subsequently German Ambassador to the Soviets, which highly appreciated the value of such collaboration on behalf of Germany's undertakings against newly delivered Europe.

[2] It only needed a month's reflection to bring the Allies to this apostasy. We must not forget the Kaiser's speech, "Your duty is to fire on your father and your mother if such is my command," and should remember above all that not a German uttered a protest.

APPENDIX I

THE UNITY OF COMMAND: MARCH 1918

Memorandum to the Cabinet by Lord Milner on his Visit to France, including the Conference at Doullens, March 26, 1918[1]

The Prime Minister having asked me to run over to France in order to report to the Cabinet personally on the position of affairs there, I left Charing Cross at 12.50 on Sunday, March 24, accompanied by Major Shawe, of the Rifle Brigade. We were delayed some time at Folkestone, the boat not starting till 4.45, and reached Boulogne about 6.30. Colonel Amery was waiting at Boulogne with two of the Versailles motors, and we went straight on to G.H.Q. at Montreuil. Here I saw General Davidson, who was just communicating on the telephone with the C.G.S. when I came in. He gave me a brief sketch of the situation, which had been developing very rapidly and adversely during the day. From Montreuil I was accompanied by Brigadier-General Wake, a member of General Rawlinson's staff at Versailles, who was returning to that place after having spent a day and a half at G.H.Q. On the long journey from Montreuil to Versailles he was able to give me a very full account of all that had happened so far as it was yet known. The great mystery was the breakdown of the Fifth Army, which so far was not explained. Owing to this Army being so much broken and communications cut in all directions, it was difficult to make out exactly what had happened, and it would take time to place together the reports. Broadly speaking, however, there was no doubt that this Army was shattered and a breach effected in the Allied line between the right flank of the Third Army and the French. This did not mean, of course, that there was no more resistance in that quarter. The retreating troops, who had now been driven from the line of the Somme below Peronne, were apparently still fighting at a number of points and sometimes even counter-attacking, but were no longer anything like an organized barrier to the German advance. The rapidity with which this Army had been driven from its strongly prepared positions will no doubt be explained in time. It does not appear to have been due to any lack of gallant fighting, and no doubt the German impact at this point was quite tremendous, the attacking forces probably outnumbering the defenders by at least two to one. It was clearly useless to speculate with our present knowledge about the causes or the exact course of events in this quarter, but the effect of what had happened on the general situation was, of course, perfectly clear and did not need to be dwelt upon.

The journey from Montreuil to Versailles took over six hours, including a stop of about three-quarters of an hour at Abbeville, where we had some dinner, and we did not reach General Rawlinson's house at Versailles till 2.30 A.M. A telegram from G.H.Q., dated 11.30 P.M., which we found on arrival, stated that from the latest reports the general situation was somewhat improved.

I was up at seven the next morning, March 25, and after breakfast I saw Rawlinson. Wake gave us both a connected account of what had happened during the time he was at G.H.Q., illustrating it by a large map which he had brought with him from there. This

was substantially, with some more detail, what I had learned from him the previous night. Soon after nine I had a message from M. Clemenceau, to say that he urgently wished to see me. I motored into Paris at once, accompanied by Colonel Amery, and found Clemenceau at the Ministry of War. He was in great form and very full of fight, and while fully realizing the gravity of the situation, showed not the slightest sign either of despondency or confusion. Our interview was not long, as he had a number of important matters to attend to immediately. He told me that he thought important decisions must be taken at once. His view was that it was necessary at all costs to maintain the connexion between the French and British Armies, and that both Haig and Pétain must at once throw in their reserves to stop the breach which was in course of being effected.

He said, among other things, it would be necessary to bring pressure to bear upon Pétain to do more in that direction. He evidently hoped that Haig would be able to bring down more reserves from the north. He was most anxious to go and meet the British and French Commanders-in-Chief that afternoon, taking General Foch and me with him. He heard that General Wilson was arriving at Abbeville to meet Haig, and he was trying to get them to come on to Compiègne, Pétain's headquarters, where he could join them in the course of the afternoon. He told me to hold myself in readiness to start at a moment's notice on a message from him after two o'clock. I accordingly returned at once to Versailles, as I was anxious to see Rawlinson again before leaving, and learn his views of the situation more fully than I had had time to do in the early morning. While at Versailles, I had a message from Wilson at Abbeville asking me to meet him there at three o'clock, but as this message did not reach me till 12.30, it was evidently impossible to get to Abbeville by three. As, moreover, I knew that Clemenceau was trying to get Haig and Wilson to come to Compiègne, and as I was in any case pledged to Clemenceau, I determined not to change my plans.

I accordingly went to the Embassy in Paris at two, where I saw Lord Bertie, and waited there until, just before three, I got a summons from Clemenceau. The President of the Republic, Clemenceau, who was accompanied by M. Loucheur, General Foch, and I, then all motored to Compiègne, arriving a little before five. Pétain met us there, but it had unfortunately been impossible, as I had always feared, to get Haig and Wilson to meet us also. A conference was held at Pétain's headquarters between five and seven. The President of the Republic was in the chair, the others present were Clemenceau, Loucheur, Pétain, Foch and I. Pétain explained very clearly his view of the position. He took a very pessimistic view of the conditions of the Fifth Army, which, he said, as an army had ceased to exist and would have to be completely reorganized. It had now been placed by Haig under his (Pétain's) orders. He was, he said, bringing up from the south and west all the divisions he could possibly spare to support and replace the *débris* of the Fifth Army. Six divisions which he had always had in reserve close at hand to reinforce the British right in case of necessity, were already heavily engaged in the neighbourhood of Noyon, Roye and Nesle, and he was bringing round nine more divisions—mostly from the south, but sonic from the north—which would be pushed westward to meet the advancing Germans from Montdidier and Moreuil. This was all he could possibly spare at the moment, though he hoped to bring more presently, but he could not neglect either the danger of the Germans pushing

down the Oise from about Noyon, nor a threatened attack in the region of Reims. While not differing from General Pétain's strategic plans, General Foch evidently took a somewhat different view of the situation. He thought the danger of the great German push to break in between the French and British in the direction of Amiens was so formidable that risks must be taken in other directions. Even more divisions must if possible be thrown in, and, by a great effort, this might be done more quickly than Pétain thought possible—even if the relieving forces were thrown in in less complete formation than under conditions of less extreme urgency would be desirable. This at least was my interpretation of his long and very energetic statement, all the military details of which it was not possible for me to follow. Poincaré and Clemenceau were evidently in sympathy with Foch's view of the necessity of taking extreme measures with all possible rapidity, and the latter now appealed to me to express my opinion and especially to say what more I thought the British on their side could do, in order to re-establish the complete co-operation of the two Armies. I replied that, of course, it was impossible not to agree in principle with the views expressed, but that it would not be justifiable for me to give an opinion as to the exact course to be followed without having been able to consult Haig and Wilson. It was most unfortunate, though it could not be helped, that they were not present, but I thought we must try to remedy this at the earliest possible moment, and have another meeting, at which one or, if possible, both of them should be present, next day. Clemenceau agreed with this, and it was accordingly decided that we should try to arrange a meeting at Dury, just south of Amiens, at eleven o'clock on the following morning, to which all those present should come to meet the British Generals. Poincaré, Clemenceau, Loucheur, Foch and I then returned to Paris, but before leaving Compiègne I had a few minutes' private conversation with Clemenceau, in which I impressed upon him that, to the best of my belief, the British Third Army, which seemed to have stood magnificently together with the reliefs which were being sent to it from the north, were already doing all they could, and that I had some misgiving whether Pétain on his side was prepared to take sufficient risks in order to bring up all possible French reserves, on which, as it seemed to me, everything depended. He said that he agreed, but that Pétain was already doing much more than he had originally contemplated, and would, he believed, do more still. He also agreed with me in sympathizing with the attitude of Foch.

I got back to Versailles at nine o'clock and was very happy to find that Wilson had just arrived from Abbeville. Meanwhile, a message had arrived from Haig to say that he wished the meeting next morning to be at Doullens, as he had to be there in any case to meet his three Army Commanders, Horne, Byng, and Plumer, and that he desired it should be at twelve o'clock. This was arranged by telephone with Paris. I had some conversation with Wilson, who reported what had passed between him and Haig. Everybody seemed to be agreed now that the object of the Germans was to push hard for Amiens through the gap south of the Somme, at the same time directing an attack pointing north-west against the English and south-west against the French, so as to widen the breach between them. Our object must be by all means in our power to keep touch with the French and fill up the gap, while, of course, resisting these attacks. The greatest promptitude in bringing up reserves and complete co-operation between the Armies was necessary. We discussed the personal difficulties of effecting such co-

operation, and Wilson made the suggestion—which seemed a good one—that both countries might agree to leave it to Clemenceau, in whom the British generals as well as the French had confidence, to take any decisions necessary to bring about the better co-operation of the Armies and the best use of all available reserves. He was on the spot. His country was at stake, and he would no doubt be guided by the military opinion of Foch, who appeared the most likely man to take bold and prompt decisions and to see the struggle as a whole without taking a specially French view.

Late that night Wilson motored into Paris to see Foch, but he had not returned when I went to bed about midnight.

I was up at seven on Tuesday, the 26th, and at eight Wilson and I started for Doullens in a motor, followed by Lord Duncannon and Major Shawe. We were very anxious lest the roads should be congested by military traffic and possibly by refugees, but fortunately, though the military traffic was very heavy, it was also very orderly, and there was no sign of panic among the population, so that, with a few blocks, we got along well, nearly forty miles an hour on the average, and were at Doullens only five minutes after the appointed hour—twelve o'clock. An extremely lucky journey, seeing the distance and the conditions. On the way we discussed very earnestly the problem before us and the best way of pulling things together, which Wilson strongly thought could only be attained by putting the supreme direction virtually in the hands of Foch. I asked Wilson what Foch had said to his idea of making Clemenceau nominally the "generalissimo" with Foch to advise him. He said that Foch had objected to this on the ground that Clemenceau, placed in that position, might be drawn in opposite directions by Pétain and himself, and if he agreed now with one and now with the other, there would be no unity of control. Foch himself did not wish to command anything. All he wanted was to have the express authority of the two Governments to bring about the maximum co-operation between the two Commanders-in-Chief. He wanted, in fact, the same kind of position which he had held once before, at the time of the battle of Ypres, when Field-Marshal Joffre delegated him to try and get the British and French to work more closely together—only he now wanted to be placed in that position with a more distinct and higher authorization, that of both the Allied Governments. Wilson and I agreed that if we could possibly get this accepted, it was, under the circumstances, the best solution. It was, in fact, something like a return to the original idea of the Council of Versailles directing a general reserve, with Foch in the chair, only with the substitution of a single man for the Council, which appeared better in any case, and absolutely vital under the extremely urgent circumstances of the moment. There was also this in favour of it—that we knew that the British reserves had already been put in, or were on their way to be put in, and that the real question now was how much in the way of reserves could be got out of the French, and how quickly it could be got. From what General Wilson had often told me, and from what I had seen myself the previous day, I was convinced that, whatever might be his other merits or demerits as a soldier, Foch possessed in a quite exceptional degree the promptitude, energy and resource necessary to get the most done in the time available, the whole question being evidently a race for time.

On arrival at Doullens I was at once seized by Clemenceau, who startled me by the announcement that Haig had just declared that he would be obliged to uncover Amiens

and fall back on the Channel ports. I told him I felt sure there must be some misunderstanding about this, and that before the general Conference I thought it was desirable that I should have a short conversation with the Field-Marshal and the Army Commanders, whom I had not yet seen. To this he readily agreed. I accordingly had a little consultation with Haig, Plumer, Horne and Byng. They all bore themselves splendidly, showing coolness, resolution and high courage. I was especially struck by the attitude of General Byng, who, commanding the Third Army, had had to bear the greatest and, indeed, an almost unendurable strain. As I quite expected, it turned out that the Field-Marshal's view about Amiens had been misunderstood. He had no doubt in his mind as to the supreme importance of Amiens, nor any intention of abandoning it. All he had meant to say was that, as the forces at his disposal, even after he had skinned the northern part of his line to the utmost extent, would not enable him to hold further than to Bray-sur-Somme, he would, in fact, be outflanked and unable to cover Amiens, unless the French came up to his assistance south of the Somme on the right. Even then it was uncertain whether, with a big German attack impending against the Third Army south of Arras, his line would not be broken, but at any rate he was fully determined to stand his ground as long as he could, and, with some assistance from the French on his right flank, he believed he ought to be able to do so. Byng was also strongly in favour of the British line making every effort to stand where it now did, extending to Bray-sur-Somme, and believed that, though his troops, which had had tremendous fighting, were tired, they would not be beaten. It was evident that everything was being done by bringing divisions from further north to strengthen the line between Arras and the Somme. I next had a few words with the Field-Marshal alone about Foch, and was delighted to find that, so far from resenting—as I had been led to believe he might do—the thought of Foch's interference, he rather welcomed the idea of working with the latter, about whom his tone was altogether friendly.

The views of the British commanders having thus been cleared up, the Conference assembled. As on the day before, M. Poincaré was in the chair. The others present were Clemenceau, Loucheur, Foch, Pétain, Haig, Wilson and I. It was at once agreed that every effort should be made to save Amiens. The idea that Haig was thinking of abandoning this and falling back on the northern ports was cleared away, and it was made quite evident that he was bringing up every division he could possibly spare, and even running some risks on the northern portion of his line in order to strengthen the position from just north of Arras to the Somme, where the most tremendous push was threatened. He could do no more. What could the French do? Pétain then explained his difficulties and the great efforts he was making. He had now, however—probably under pressure from Clemenceau, but of this I cannot be sure—advanced so far from his position of the previous day that he saw his way to bringing up twenty-four divisions instead of fifteen, though it would of course take a longer time and did not mean twenty-four entirely fresh divisions, as the first six or nine (his original reserve and one or two more) had already been heavily engaged for some days in the Noyon-Roye region. But while he was thus evidently under the pressure of circumstances becoming steadily more ready to take risks and assume heavy responsibilities, he was still rather discouraging (perhaps more than he meant to be) about the pace at which the divisions could come up, and generally gave a certain impression of coldness and caution, as of a

man playing for safety. None of his listeners seemed very happy or convinced. Wilson and Haig evidently were not; indeed, Wilson made an interjection which almost amounted to a protest. Foch, who had been so eloquent the day before, said not a word. But looking at his face—he sat just opposite me—I could see that he was still dissatisfied, very impatient, and evidently thinking that things could and must be done more quickly. At this juncture I asked whether I might have a word with Clemenceau alone. I then told him quite frankly of the conviction which had been growing in my mind ever since the previous day, and had been confirmed by my conversations with Wilson and Haig, that Foch appeared to me to be the man who had the greatest grasp of the situation, and was most likely to deal with it with the intensest energy. Could not he be placed by both the Governments in a position of general control, and given the sort of authority which he (Foch) had himself suggested to Wilson? Clemenceau, whose own mind, I am sure, had been steadily moving in the same direction, at once agreed, but he asked for a few minutes to speak to Pétain. While he took Pétain aside, I did the same with Haig. When I explained to the latter what was contemplated, he seemed not only quite willing but really pleased. Meanwhile, Clemenceau had spoken to Pétain and immediately wrote and handed me the following form of words, to embody what he and I had just agreed to:

> Le général Foch est chargé par les gouvernements britannique et français de coordonner l'action des armées britanniques et françaises sur le front ouest. Il s'entendra à cet effet avec les deux généraux en chef, qui sont invités à lui fournir tous les renseignements nécessaires.

I showed this to Haig, who readily accepted it, but suggested that it should be extended to cover the other Armies—Belgian, American, and possibly Italian—that might be employed on the present Franco-British front. To this Clemenceau at once agreed. We then all went back to the table. The amended formula, which ran as follows:

> Le général Foch est chargé par les gouvernements britannique et français de coordonner l'action des armées alliées sur le front ouest. Il s'entendra à cet effet avec les généraux en chef, qui sont invités à lui fournir tous les renseignements nécessaires.
>
> DOULLENS, *le 26 mars, 1918*

was read out, and after a very short discussion, which amounted to nothing more than cordial approval of the principle by all the speakers, the document was signed by Clemenceau and myself, and the Conference immediately rose with every appearance of general satisfaction. Poincaré, Clemenceau and Loucheur were all delighted, and Haig, I was glad to see, also looked distinctly relieved and much happier than he had seemed earlier in the morning. I did not particularly notice Pétain's attitude, nor did I hear him say anything, but he is always exceedingly cool and self-possessed, and never in word or expression betrays his real feelings. I gathered, however, from Clemenceau that Pétain had fallen into the arrangement without difficulty.

Within a few minutes of the end of the Conference everybody had dispersed. Wilson had a few words with Lawrence before Haig and Lawrence left, and afterwards

told me that the latter was exceedingly pleased with the conclusion arrived at. Wilson and I, with our two companions, had a late lunch at Doullens after the Conference was over, and then motored to Boulogne. On the way we stopped at Haig's house near Montreuil (his G.H.Q.) to pick up the latest news, and met the Field-Marshal just going out for a ride. He certainly looked much less tired and in much better spirits than he had done earlier in the day. He told me again that he felt sure the new arrangement would work, as he would have to do with "a man, and not a committee." He also had a few minutes' conversation with Wilson, to whom, as I was informed by the letter, he expressed himself as very well pleased indeed with the day's proceedings.

Wilson, Duncannon, Shawe and I reached Boulogne just before seven. A destroyer was waiting to take us to Folkestone, where we landed at nine, and arrived at Victoria shortly after eleven.

[Initialled] M.

2 Whitehall Gardens, S.W.
March 27, 1918

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[1] This document, which has not been officially issued in England, was published by the French Foreign Office on May 14, 1921, following its appearance in the *New Statesman*, April 23, 1921.

APPENDIX II

THE PROBLEM OF THE INTER-ALLIED DEBTS

Open Letter from M. Clemenceau to
President Coolidge

August 9, 1926

MONSIEUR LE PRÉSIDENT,

Divergencies of opinion have arisen between the three great Allied and Associated countries of the war of France with regard to the settlement of accounts, which threaten seriously to affect the future of the civilized world. On all sides diplomatic and financial experts are at work. An expert is, too often, a man who delights in isolating his particular problem from those in co-ordinating which he is engaged. In public affairs everything holds together, and anyone who seeks to keep strictly and exclusively within his own domain is liable to discover too late that he has been invaded on every hand.

Between the United States and England, between England and France, between France and the United States, the same question arises in identical terms, and I see that the solutions, or the preparations for solution, that have been tried have not created a good state of feeling in the countries concerned.

We are debtors, and you are creditors. It seems as though this was a mere matter of book-keeping. But are there no other considerations to be looked at?

England's policy in Europe has heretofore consisted above all in keeping the Continental peoples in check by playing off one against the other, with a view to her own intervention. I am confident that the eyes of 'the man in the street' are gradually being opened to more comprehensive views. To-day it is in the direction of America that France's uneasiness is chiefly turned.

If nations were simply commercial firms banking accounts would decide the fate of the world. You are demanding from us the payment of a debt, not a commercial debt, but a war debt, and you know just as well as we do that our cash-box is empty. In such cases the debtor signs promissory notes: and that is just what you are asking us to do. Again, we ought on both sides to be able to believe in a cash settlement on the appointed day. Now it is an open secret that this is only a business of fictitious settlement dates in order to arrive at a loan with good mortgages on our territorial possessions, exactly like Turkey.

That, Monsieur le Président, I must go so far as to tell you, we shall never accept. France is not for sale, even to her friends. Independent she was when we received her: independent we shall leave her. Ask yourself, like President Monroe, if you would feel at all different about the American continent.

If France were to disappear under the blows of her enemies and her 'friends' combined, she would leave behind her a name of pride. What did we do that was not strictly our duty? Ought we to have given up our fortresses to Germany when she

demanded them from us under threat of a declaration of war? Will anyone stand up and say that we did anything but bow to the inevitable? Does Verdun suggest that we fought badly?

Yes, we threw our all into the gulf, blood and money, even as England and the United States did for their part. But it was the soil of France that was scientifically ravaged. Three mortal years we waited for that American word, “France is the frontier of freedom.” Three years of blood and money flowing from every pore. Come and read in our villages the unending list of our dead, and let us compare, if you will. Is not the living energy of all that lost youth itself a ‘banking account’?

Like Russia at Brest-Litovsk, America made a separate peace with Germany, without even the least attempt at coming into line with her companions-in-arms. The peace of blood with the common enemy. To-day the peace of money is being considered between the Allied and Associated Powers. How was it we had not foreseen what is happening? Why did we not pause among the shells to convoke an administrative council of profiteers which would have decided whether we were to be permitted to continue the defence of the fairest conquests of the noblest history? Must the fallacy of German reparations now end in a flow of money into American coffers?

I have spoken freely to the honoured chief of a great nation for which I have for fifty years kept my best respect and friendship, because I believed it destined to receive from the old world, to bear it ever upward, the torch of a great ideal of humanity. It is for that nation now to pass judgment on itself. I could but offer it the supreme homage of my silence if I was wrong.

Pray accept, Monsieur le Président, the homage of my profound respect.

GEORGES CLEMENCEAU

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