

CURRENT MAGAZINES

Reflections on the German Revolution:—Anonymous, in the *Nineteenth Century*.

Impressions of Hitler's Germany:—Mr. G. E. R. Gedye, in the *Contemporary*.

The White Paper:—Lord Meston, in the *Contemporary*.

Soviet War on the Peasants:—Mr. M. Muggeridge, in the *Fortnightly*.

Fascism and the Socialist Failure:—Mr. G. D. H. Cole in *Current History*.

DURING fifty-six years of continuous publication, the *Nineteenth Century* had never included in its pages a single unsigned article. The editor has been constrained to break that rule for once, and in an explanatory note he refers to his reasons as "obvious". One can well understand that those best qualified to tell the present story of German affairs cannot take the risk of signing their statement.

That the *Nineteenth Century* should open with such an article as this, published under such conditions, is an omen. Here is an English monthly of commanding position, one associated in all men's minds with sober and even conservative thought, which thus intimates—by an act more eloquent than any editorial writing—what it thinks of the Hitler despotism. Even more significant is the case of the *Manchester Guardian*, the newspaper with a record of such consistent friendliness to Germany at a time when Germany's friends abroad were few and her situation was desperate. It has been so appalled by the Nazi régime that it declares the performances of a few weeks to have ruined the whole effort of fourteen years at rebuilding German repute, and its columns have had letter after letter, to whose authorship and even to whose place of origin no clue is given, but for which the editor vouches as a source to be trusted even in its ghastly witness. With the lack of humour which has always been Teutonic, the *Manchester Guardian* is now described in Berlin as "a dirty Communist rag"—a description over which the French disciples of Clemenceau and Poincaré will no doubt rejoice. Similar change in American sentiment could be illustrated from the *New York Times*, while from the Paris press we get a monotonous harping on the refrain "We told you so". A plea is indeed here and there made, not in justification, but in extenuation. Germany, it is sometimes said, was driven into her present savage

mood of militarism by the inhuman treatment she received in the years following 1918, and we must look back to the Versailles "settlement" as *fons et origo* of it all. Mr. Chesterton somewhat cynically replies that he has a certain recollection of German militarism as existing prior to the negotiations at Versailles, and that he cannot accept the picture of Junkers as Quakerish at heart, but corrupted into a spirit of war by the Treaty of 1919.

The psychological effect of what was begun at Versailles is not to be minimised. Mr. Gedye writes in the *Contemporary* of what he saw when he lived for seven years among the Germans in occupied territory after the war. He was correspondent of *The Times* in Rhineland and the Ruhr, where he watched "the merciless egoism of French policy", and wrote despatches—unfortunately without success—to rouse feeling in England beyond a mild and futile deprecation. Those were the days when Karl Barth bade his countrymen cease their dream of a return to imperial glories, "now that the negro is on the Rhine, Lenin is on the throne of the Tsar, and it takes two thousand German marks to exchange for a dollar". But granting the mood which Versailles policy may have contributed to create, what excuse do we find in it for the perpetration of brutalities on those who had no hand either in framing or in carrying out the programme of "the Big Four"? Still more perplexing is the question why the barbarities inflicted on all who oppose the present dictatorship are so widely condoned, if not defended, by German opinion.

Mr. Gedye has lately made three tours of South and West Germany, and has found indisputable enthusiasm for Hitler among "the articulate mass" of the people. What about the rest of the people,—the millions of Communists, and the eight or nine millions of Social Democrats? They have been rendered "inarticulate". Most of their leaders have been arrested, their corporate property seized, their newspapers suppressed. Six hundred thousand persons have been officially proclaimed second-class human beings, because they are Jews. Catholics rank as second-class Germans, unless and until they become Hitlerites! The German prisons have had to be supplemented by concentration camps "ringed round with live electric wires, barbed wire and machine-guns". Mr. Gedye visited one of these, built for five thousand people "against whom no charge will be or could be brought", and who must labour there under the muzzles of rifles.

Professional men, journalists, day-labourers, all sorts and conditions that the Nazi Government can brand alike with the epithet "Marxist", are thus shut up for systematic indignity and

suffering. Three persons had lately been shot dead in an attempt to escape from the camp which Mr. Gedye visited. Nor can any closer definition be given of "Marxist", as used in the vocabulary of the present German rulers, than to say that it means a believer in democracy and in the trade-union movement.

The paradox of the situation lies not merely in the general acquiescence, but in a wide-spread rejoicing. Hitler is to "Young Germany" as Mohammed, as Lenin, as Mussolini to multitudes elsewhere. The older people, with more chastened and cautious expectations, welcome this fanatic devotion of youth, just as men and women in middle and later life crowded round the Berlin railway stations in August, 1914, to "demonstrate" at the departure of troop-trains. On every lip is the motto "National Resurgence", and the contention everywhere heard is that the spirit of German nationality, almost destroyed by republicans at home co-operating with enemies abroad, has been brought back to glorious life by Adolf Hitler. For the sake of this resurrection, may not a great deal be pardoned, even to the high spirits of German youth out for vengeance upon traitors? Mr. Gedye constantly heard it asked in derision: what difference does it make if a few Jews and Socialists have lost their jobs and had their ears boxed? As to what happened during those "three days' freedom of the streets", when the high spirits were assured immunity from punishment no matter in what form their patriotism might express itself—this is a point into which good Germans are unwilling to enquire. The amnesty must not be revoked; so what purpose would be served by a probe into details? In the service of the Fatherland, no such sin as mendacity is known. A drawback of this method is that concealment is sure to stimulate the foreign imagination, and there can be no ground for surprise if Young Germany abroad is likened less to the soldiers of Garibaldi than to a detachment of Kurds forty years ago in an Armenian village.

The anonymous writer in the *Nineteenth Century* describes the policy of the short-lived German republic as one which had succeeded abroad but had failed at home. It was the achievement of the men now contemptuously known as "Weimarists" to have won for Germany between 1919 and 1932 a very general reversal of the world's hard judgment. Even in France the party of friendliness was at length prevailing over the party of hatred, while in Great Britain and America it was felt that encouragement was due to leaders who were trying to be faithful to their republican pledge. At home the Weimarists pursued a scheme such as would be called in England one of radical reform. They worked out plans of social

insurance and municipal welfare, "the ideals of a young Joseph Chamberlain or David Lloyd George". When in the great financial slump their Government shared the abuse which fell upon Governments elsewhere, an effort was made to govern by "presidential decrees based upon the posthumous consent of the Reichstag". This depended, of course, for its success upon the loyal co-operation of von Hindenburg, and by the spring of 1932 antagonistic influences were increasingly powerful in the President's mind.

Those influences were ancestral and traditional. One wonders that a Junker well on in his eighties did not yield to them far sooner, and that the German trade-unions which formed the backbone of the Weimar régime took so long to become intolerable to a man of von Hindenburg's past. About a year ago, however, it had become easy to convince him, and still easier to convince "ardent youth" in the country, that the chief source of national trouble was the Treaty of Versailles, followed by a form of government altogether contradictory to the German spirit. The opportunity was ripe for various sorts of reactionaries; the old ruling classes of the Hohenzollern Empire, the landowners who had held the high commands in the army, the big industrialists who had furnished sinews of war. A Joseph Chamberlain or a David Lloyd George plan of social reform was not likely to commend itself in such circles as these.

The mind of von Hindenburg is aptly compared to that of George III, so stubborn in its fits of morbid and dangerous conscientiousness. A Stresemann and a Brüning had to reckon with this obstacle, just as Pitt had always to take into account the possible refusal of the royal signature to some Liberal Bill on the ground that it would violate the coronation oath! The breaking point seems to have been reached when the reformers proposed a further raid upon the great landed estates of East Prussia, and it does seem unfortunate for the fame of "the old gentleman"—as his countrymen quaintly call the present head of the *Reich*—that his scruple should have proved insuperable just at the point where his family interests were specially touched.

It would be a great mistake, however, to leave out of sight and reckoning those finer elements in the present spirit of the German people which have for a time served the cause of reaction. Rightly or wrongly, vast numbers were convinced that the Nazi movement was in time, but barely in time, to save them from a Communist revolution, and the menace of Bolshevism on their open eastern frontier is never far from their minds. They reflect too, not without reason, on the monstrous demands which France

made at the signing of the Peace, and on the settled policy for their national degradation which was pursued throughout the Poincaré dominance—a point on which Mr. Lloyd George's book, *Reparations and War Debts*, has supplied so much fuel for their resentment. They think of the long insistence upon such payments to the victors as not even the utmost endurance of economic hardship could make possible, and of the thinly veiled hope cherished by their neighbours across the Rhine that Germany might be "Balkanized". They quote with triumph the promise of general European disarmament which, after fourteen years, has not even begun to be fulfilled, while the disarmament of Germany, which was to be its initial step, was complete within the required limit of time. Can we feel surprised that Hitler, artful and eloquent demagogue as he is, should evoke roars of passionate applause when he shouts through loud speakers to his audience of a million: "Germans, you are not a second-rate people, and no one shall ever make you so"? Or that a populace which notoriously loves always to find a victim should need little persuasion of the peculiar guilt of local Communists and Jews by whom the "Satanic anniversary" of the founding of the republic has been celebrated with apparent joy?

Up to this point, as seen especially in the proceedings last year at Lausanne, world opinion was flowing strongly on the German side, and the French mood of *intransigence* was being more and more widely condemned. What has changed all this is the sudden revelation of what "resurgent" Germany wants—the return to those imperial ways we know too well—and, most of all, the public indulgence towards acts so painfully like what one used to know as "atrocities in Belgium". There is a closely censored press, but it is impossible to suppose that the German people are altogether in the dark about what is going on in their own cities. Concentration camps too, for five thousand prisoners in each, with barbed entanglements and live-wire precautions against escape, cannot be dotted here and there over a country without attracting considerable notice. Blindest of all are those who won't see, and it is obvious that the exceptional lack of curiosity at home into what is front page news abroad can be no accident. Thus the reasons why no peace could be made with a Hohenzollern dynasty have to be repeated when a Hohenzollern Restoration is said to be imminent; the special disarming of Germany fourteen years ago has to be re-vindicated when the causes which made it needful seem again disgustingly active; and the glib argument for the blessings of a dictatorship has to be met once more when dictatorship is already bringing forth its familiar fruits.

PERSECUTION of some sort is among the earliest activities of a super-man in government, and the side of Hitlerism which came first to be discussed in the foreign press was the frantic campaign against Jews. When one reads about "the bloodless revolution", and then turns to the record in the *Manchester Guardian* or the *New York Times* of cases whose barbarity would be incredible if the witness were not all too complete, one wonders whether there is here any verbal quibble, as in the historic case of a sentence to punishment "without effusion of blood". It is a noteworthy coincidence that this outburst of anti-Semitism in Germany should have occurred just one hundred years after the first great step for the removal of the civil disabilities of Jews in England. Not less notable is the circumstance that in both countries the champions of justice were at the same time the champions of parliament, while the zealots for oppression were those who affected conceptions of government higher than the parliamentary. On the seventeenth of April, 1833, a resolution recommending what Macaulay called "removal from the statute-book of the last remnants of intolerance" was passed by the House of Commons without a division; and although it took some years still to overcome the anti-Semitic stubbornness of the House of Lords, no one could doubt the rapid progress of a movement so in keeping with the enthusiasm of the time. When Roman Catholic disabilities had been abolished in 1829, the spirit which prompted this had turned to other crusades, feeling—with O'Connell—that life would lose much of its savour as soon as no wrongs remained for redress. Very soon there followed the abolition of slavery in the British dominions, at a cost of no less than twenty million pounds to buy out the slave-owners. The men who led these movements were the same described in such vivid paragraphs by Professor Norman Rogers in the last issue of the DALHOUSIE REVIEW, the parliamentary reformers whose ideal was the supremacy of a freely elected parliament, and who knew that no man's rights are safe if they are committed wholly to some other man's keeping. Italian and German reactionaries have made no mistake about the first obstacle to be cleared out of their way.

In the light of such developments of dictatorship abroad, we happily now hear less at home than we heard some time ago about "the growing distrust of parliamentary institutions". Sir Oswald Mosley and the so-called British Fascists are not so much answered as treated with a tacit conspiracy of inattention. Dean Inge's diatribes, if they continue to appear, are no longer quoted as formerly; people who once thought them so piquant and original

have discovered that they contain nothing which had not been said many times, very much better, in atrabilious mood by critics of democracy from Plato to Thomas Carlyle. The maxim "We need a Mussolini" has given place to other expressions of fretful foolishness.

It is interesting, however, to consider how, even temporarily, and among a quite insignificant proportion of people, arose this mood of disbelief in the very foundations of British, French and American government. Whence came the humor of indulgence, rising sometimes even to admiration, for the denial in other countries of all that experience had taught us in our own? A good deal must be attributed, no doubt, to the depression. When a patient is sick enough, he will try almost any proposed remedy that he has not tried before, and resort to a dictatorship is a very old outlet for political despair. There is a liking, too, for the adventurous boldness of a despot, for his exaltation of great enterprises above "minor morals", and there may be even a morbid pleasure in reading the details of his magnificent cruelty. Francesco Nitti's awful story of life on Lipari Island is met with the rejoinder that "on the other hand" Italian trains are now more punctual, officials more polite, hotel servants more efficient, so that most tourists think the change has been "on the whole" well worth while. There is a psychological explanation too. Disbelief in the equal rights of men, and in the scheme of government by equal voting power which that doctrine implies, commends itself to a good many people because they think of the distinction which should obviously be drawn in their own favour. In applauding oligarchy or despotism they assume quite gratuitously, and without acknowledging it even to themselves, that Nature had cast them for the despotic or oligarchic *role*, and that only Chance—which somehow this time got out of Nature's management—has stood in their way. In like manner unsuccessful candidates for parliament have their feelings soothed by the thought that it was not personal unfitness but "the inherent defects of democracy" which brought about their failure, and if the Labour vote was cast with such tragic effectiveness against them in England, they rejoice to observe the vicarious vengeance that a Hitler or a Mussolini has taken for them upon the working classes in another land. For the more speculative of these worshippers at the shrine of despotism, it has been the chief anxiety so to state their case that it will vindicate the constitutional changes in Italy and Germany, but will not countenance the change in Russia. They find it hard to show that the weakness of parliamentary rule was so much more intolerable than the tyranny of

Tsardom that Mussolini is altogether a hero while Lenin was altogether a scoundrel. Of their bold argument that a despotism is perfectly right when it does good things, but altogether wrong when it does bad things, just as "liberty" is to be distinguished from "licence" by the moral standards of the critic, perhaps the best comment is the one I borrow from Locke. "A distinction" he said, "which sounds well, and 'tis pity that it means nothing".

ONE cannot better illustrate the superiority of the British spirit over these querulous moods originating in "less happier lands" than from the confidence with which parliamentary government is going to be set up in India. Every argument against the democratic system in the West can be urged with many times as much force against its introduction in the East, and the eloquence of Great Britain's chief rhetorician has made the most of the opportunity. If we may trust Mr. Winston Churchill, the scheme now contemplated is one by which India will be "lost", and with that loss the British Empire will pass into the number of the things which "have been". Mr. Baldwin retorts that so far as he can judge, after a review of all circumstances, it is by this scheme and this one only that India's place in the Empire can be preserved. The general reader may ask how much either of these prophets knows of what he is talking about. Has either of them had any considerable experience of grappling with the difficulties of Indian government? It is in this mood of impatience that one welcomes such an article as that by Lord Meston in the *Contemporary*. He was for some years Finance Minister in the Viceroy of India's Council, and he is an ex-Lieutenant-Governor of the United Provinces.

It is Lord Meston's conviction that the demand for self-government is an inevitable result of the education which British teachers have carried into Indian schools for at least three-quarters of a century. Such western knowledge should never have been imparted, and such western ideas should never have been instilled, unless the governing Power meant to fulfil the desires they were sure to arouse. Lord Meston does not enter into any argument with those who think the Hindu should have been left in primitive ignorance in order that he might remain more manageable. He simply points out that the policy from which all else followed was made by a generation far earlier than ours, and that something like the present "immeasurable adventure" must sooner or later be risked. As to the date at which the risk is best justified, he observes that the preparation of a country for independence is

not like the training of a horse for a race or of an athlete for the Olympic games. There is no expert who can give more than a highly disputable opinion; no yard-stick is available to measure a nation's progress. But at some point the dangers of undue delay seem greater than the dangers of precipitate action, and one can but use the best judgment one has.

What we are shortly to see, then, is the handing over to the native population, or rather the native populations, of control over the internal management of India through popularly elected legislatures and executives responsible to them. There will be certain "safeguards", especially for the minorities in different provinces, Moslem in some, Hindu in others. Special franchise arrangements are designed to prevent a minority from being altogether swamped. Moreover, the Governor-General and the Governors of Provinces will have special (and no doubt transitory) power to intervene where there is "gross menace to the peace or tranquillity of India or of any part thereof". For a time at least, the Central Authority which the scheme includes will not be set up, and the provincial parliaments will act within the limits of the present centralized control over Army and Foreign Affairs. But even so restricted, the powers of these legislatures will be tremendous.

It has been the unceasing contention of such men as Mr. Churchill and Lord Lloyd that Indian "Home Rule" would mean not merely the unfair treatment of Moslems, but also the dominance of brahmans over lower caste Hindus and of caste Hindus over Untouchables. This is a warning which can be disregarded only through robust faith in the educative value of self-government, and the conviction that all men—even Hindus—who have tried a system resting on the doctrine of equal rights will in time become ashamed of having ever entertained the contrary. But, however confident one may be of this as the ultimate issue, it is far from certain that the reverse will not appear first. Lord Meston recognizes that part of the Hindu desire to get rid of the "incubus of the West" came from impatience of western ideas about social relationship, and that thus self-government in those vast areas where the Hindus will be able to do as they please may temporarily stimulate brahmanic ascendancy. It is no trivial risk to set up a political machine with the knowledge that it will at first be controlled for the most part by those whose domination it is meant to overthrow. And yet, was it not the barons who extorted from King John the charter which meant the first step towards the downfall of feudalism? Was it not a group of Whig nobles who initiated the great Revolution that was never complete until it

achieved universal suffrage? The beginnings of self-government are like the beginnings of knowledge; there may be many a temporary ebb which looks like reaction, but the flow has never ceased for those who have patience to watch.

A REFLECTIVE article by Mr. G. D. H. Cole in *Current History* dwells upon the collapse of Socialism over the continent of Europe. In Italy and in Germany it has been rendered not merely powerless but silent, and even so modest an experiment in the Socialist direction as trade-unionism has been so transformed as to be unrecognizable. Dictators of some sort prevail in most of the Balkan States; Poland is in the power of a military group; Russia still stands alone as a specimen of that world-revolution which the founders of her new order expected so soon everywhere to appear.

Mr. Cole here plainly means by Socialism a strictly economic doctrine; not collective State interference with individual action in many spheres of which the economic is only one. Its contrast, for him, is with Capitalism, not with *laissez faire*; otherwise he could not cite all Europe as exemplifying its collapse, with Russia as the solitary exception. The Socialism which means a ruthless sacrifice of individual liberties and the cult of an all-devouring State is not now more conspicuous in Leningrad than in Berlin or Rome.

But what Marx and Engels set up as ideal in the *Communist Manifesto* of 1848 has undoubtedly been submerged, at least for the time, particularly in those European countries in which it seemed to have its best chance, and even the mild policy recommended in *Fabian Essays* has not advanced as the so-called "democratic" enthusiasm of the years just after the war seemed to promise. It does not need the derisive wit of Lord Passfield to show us that Mr. Ramsay MacDonald himself is to-day not of the same temper as when he wrote *The Socialist Movement*.

Why has the flood thus receded? Mr. Cole is of opinion that it was not the older reactionaries but the smaller urban bourgeoisie that interposed the most effective obstacle. For once, that curious nondescript multitude known as the lower middle class! Like what is called "the silent vote" in elections, this party—ground as a rule between the upper and the nether millstones—will from time to time assert itself more effectively than by words. Such people had suffered untold privations during the post-war years, and the legislators in power had, as usual, to bear the brunt of

blame and vengeance. Bitter disappointment in Italy over the Versailles settlement found relief in rage at the supineness and incompetence of her politicians who had allowed themselves to be so overreached. In Germany the honest men who tried to work the Weimar Constitution amid desperate difficulties and hardships were assailed by the hungry as "apostles of defeat". In both countries an adroit re-erection of the flag of Nationalism rallied the most diverse elements of the discontented, combining together amid the misfortune which is known to make strange bedfellows. The scorn of internationalism is at present a dominant note both in Italy and in Germany. Whether it will be found advantageous to have substituted national passions for class antagonisms, it remains, as Mr. Cole observes, for the future to reveal. Meanwhile the historically-minded will notice that the chorus of adulation for Hitler and Mussolini is very like the panegyrics spread all over Europe on Napoleon III during the first years of his despotism. They will remember, too, what followed. Of such a dictator's repute one is always tempted to say: "Behold the feet of them that buried thy predecessor are at the door."

H. L. S.