

CURRENT MAGAZINES

Anglo-German Relations:—K. von Stutterheim, in the *Nineteenth Century*.

What the Saar Really Wants:—Prince H. Loewenstein, in the *Contemporary*.

The Saar and Human Nature:—Mr. E. P. Dean, in *Harper's*.

Brown Autocrats and White Bureaucrats:—Miss Eleanor Rathbone, in the *New Statesman*.

THERE came lately into my hands a curiously interesting book. It was a collection of Hitler's speeches, delivered since he became Chancellor, most of them in the Reichstag, some to great audiences outside. One was addressed to two million listeners on 1st May, the day sacred to Labour. The collection is obviously prepared for foreign readers; how far the text has been edited for the press, is a point on which we may conjecture freely, with the help of Hitler's account of his own publicity methods in *Mein Kampf*. But, as they stand, they are speeches of persuasiveness and power. The magnetic personality of the Chancellor on the platform has an effect such as Germans cannot easily recall in another public man. Even when merely read, these speeches grip one; not seldom comes a turn of expression that makes the reader start—some "breath-bereaving phrase", as an old literary critic used to say. The opening paragraph, for example, of the address to that gigantic Labour audience—about the co-operation of all toilers, about the natural dignity of work, about the reawakening of the German national spirit like the reawakening of the Earth at springtime! But the deeper interest of the book is not its poetic touch, arresting as this must be to readers abroad, who had not thought of Hitler in any such aspect. The chief interest is the case it sets forth for a domestic policy which is beyond doubt among the most puzzling things in the public spectacle of our time.

Incessantly the cables have told us of some new and terrific measure taken by the Nazis against Communism. "All Marxists without exception," we read, "will be barred from editorial or illustrative work for any German paper". Among such decrees of exclusion, this is one which we must class as relatively mild! At first sight it does seem an unspeakable outrage that for holding any possible set of opinions a man should not only lose a position of influence, but be deprived of his means of livelihood, that he should be immured as a criminal in a Concentration Camp, and that his offence should be visited with public penalty even upon his relatives. How many of these familiar tales are veracious, and

how many are mythical, the coming historian will be hard pressed to decide. As we think of his task, and the very doubtful assistance which the diaries and memoirs now being compiled will furnish, we may wonder at the confidence historians have often placed in "the word of a contemporary and an obviously reliable eyewitness". But, for my present purpose, it is needless to use doubtful data. One requires only the evidence of Hitler's own speeches and writings to show that under his régime the persecution of men for their opinions has reached a height at which foreign observers can simply stare in amazement. From Berlin came the repeated assurance that "atrocities" were invented (as they had been once before) by enemies of the Fatherland. One might be more impressed by this repudiation if Hitler, Goebbels, and Goering did not make it so plain that they differ from the rest of us in their conception of what an atrocity is.

At the same time, care should be taken neither to overstate the Nazi case, nor to overlook the considerations about Communism which have made an overwhelming majority of the German people show at least indulgence toward the Chancellor's campaign to extirpate it. From the authorized literature of the Communist party, one can extract a clear summary of their position, beginning with the professed creed, and culminating in the practical programme. Some six million Germans voted "Communist" in last election; so that with Russia pressing on the eastern frontier, and an organization for the Class-War at work within, Hitler might not unreasonably regard the situation as urgent.

It has plainly been urgent for Central Europe in a sense to which the experience of the English-speaking countries can as yet at least furnish no parallel. Surprising headway has been made, too, in parts of this continent. By dexterous manipulation of ambiguities, by exploiting the inability of the average listener to detect fundamental difference between propositions verbally very similar, and above all by taking advantage of hardships for which any other remedy has been intolerably deferred, it is possible now to secure endorsement for Communism from many a Canadian or American audience which a few years back would not have given such arguments a hearing. But support from those audiences, with American or Canadian tradition, will not long survive acquaintance with the peculiar *nuance* of Communism as distinguished from other proposals of radical reform. Not long will they knowingly harbor the contention that every human impulse, however apparently generous, is one of selfishness in disguise; that the sole motive capable of inspiring human action is desire for material

advantage; and that the real wisdom for mankind is not to assuage class antagonisms but to exasperate them.

One's immediate concern is to explain by reference to the Communist menace how and why Hitler has been able to rally, for purposes which shock the foreign observer, such complete approval among his own countrymen. The facile explanation that Germans, in general, have a conscience less sensitive, and humane feelings more readily dulled, than those of their critics, leaves one unsatisfied. It has the fatal defect of explaining too much; and these are not the war days, in which precarious logic was reinforced by a will to believe. What one must bear in mind is that Communism, both in its intrinsic character, and by reason of the menace of Soviet Russia, in face of which six million Germans have embraced it, has set a problem for Germany to which the experience of other nations supplies no analogue. It is in part, at least, because these circumstances are not realized abroad, and because foreign criticism reveals complete lack of insight into the local emergency, that German resentment bursts out in the exclusion of British or American newspapers, and the expulsion of foreign journalists from Berlin.

Hitler's question comes to this—Is the German *Reich* to survive? Or is it to be so treated that, in favorite Communist phrase, it will "wither away"? A famous chief of the Movement once called for banishing of the institution known as "the State" to a museum of antiquities, side by side with the spinning wheel and the bronze axe. To Hitler, as to Mussolini, such language, revived after three-quarters of a century, came as a maddening challenge. He understood well how deep was the association between German culture and the genius of the *Reich*. He could say of Berlin, as Renan said of Rome, that there at least international Socialism would never be domiciled until the spirit of a great past should have become extinct. So, in rising fury, he hurled at Communists charge after charge, for crimes altogether beyond their power, if not beyond their will, to commit. It was they who had brought about the national collapse of 1918; it was they who had preached a pacifism which destroyed the morale of the troops and bred dissension behind the fighting line in the hour of crisis; in short, it was upon them that one should really lay the blame for what the world had absurdly credited to the British blockading fleet and the French armies on the Somme! What is indicated by these wild reproaches is but the rage of the man who utters them. What is indicated by the applause they call forth is the answering rage of an audience, now somehow in overwhelming majority among the German people.

The outcome of all this is an orgy of persecution—the Brown Houses, the Concentration Camps, the anti-Semitic pogroms, the muzzling of the press, so that unspeakable atrocities may continue at least for a time without clear and irrefutable exposure. It is a counsel and a policy of despair, reminding one of not a few features in the curious psychology we have met before among Germans in wartime. It is being supported, as the unrestricted submarine warfare was supported, by a public opinion grown desperate. It will fail, as that failed, with a like dishonour. But the Communism which has evoked it is neither justified nor excused by the madness and wickedness of these retaliatory measures. Nor does it set a problem for Germany and Italy alone. Communism, as it now stands, must be overcome, if it is not to overcome civilization. As Carlyle said about fetishism, and the spirit of worship which it so perversely represented—let us ask whether we can not achieve the same thing as is aimed at in the doings we censure, but achieve it “a little more wisely”.

THE plebiscite taken in January in the Saar Basin has been the subject of much controversial writing in the journals. That area on the left bank of the Rhine, just over the border from Lorraine, might well have been the meeting-place of friendly nations. Frenchmen and Germans might have been expected to exchange greetings and goods and services across that invisible dividing line with the same goodwill which subsists between New Brunswickers and citizens of the State of Maine. But *dis aliter visum*. It has been many times a chief storm centre, and though the optimistic—led by Hitler—tell us that the plebiscite of 13th January there closed the last territorial issue between Germany and France, one need not be altogether a pessimist to cherish what Carlyle would have called “grave prohibitive doubts”. One thinks, too, of a precedent set for Memel, perhaps for Austria.

Europe has no area more densely populated than that Saar Basin, where there are more inhabitants to the square mile than in England or Belgium. Its collieries give work to about 50,000 men; its towns are rich in glass works, potteries, paper mills. Fifteen years ago, when its coal mines were transferred from Germany to France in part payment of reparations—to atone for the damage done in French coalfields by the invading German army—it was proposed to transfer the whole territory round them. But that was too much for the sensitive conscience of Woodrow Wilson. With the maxim of self-determination on his lips, and the telling

example of Alsace-Lorraine to enforce it, he made an obstinate stand against Clemenceau. The conflict became so acute that he threatened to break up the whole Peace Conference, and even summoned the *George Washington* to take him home. So a compromise was reached, sufficient for immediate peace, but pregnant with trouble for the future. To overcome the inconvenience of having coal mines owned by France but situated in German territory, the Saar Basin was placed for fifteen years under government by a Commission of the League of Nations. At the end of that time, its inhabitants were to vote by plebiscite whether to remain under international control, to revert to Germany, or to join France.

The vote "went German" by a majority of about ten to one. Prince Loewenstein's article, published just before the plebiscite was taken, proved over-sanguine in its appeal for support of the *status quo*. The Prince, who is a very influential Catholic, but expatriated from his native Germany, urged the Saarlanders to vote for maintenance of international control as a policy of far-sighted German patriotism. His argument was that many Saarlanders, if forced back at this time by a majority vote into Hitler's Germany, will lose all real affection for their Fatherland. Two years ago, the writer argues, there would not have been a moment's hesitation at the polls; a practically unanimous plebiscite would have restored the Saarland to its historic place in the *Reich*. But since then had been witnessed the Nazi horror, the outrages against the Church, the violations of common justice to a racial minority,—finally, that unspeakable affair known as "the Blood Bath," in which some men whom German Catholics deeply honoured had been sent to their execution practically without a trial. Not that even this had destroyed the Prince's German patriotism! But he and his group wanted time to recover, time to realize that this present ghastly period does not reflect the fundamental spirit of the *Reich*.

Those of the genuine Nazi persuasion could not be expected to slacken the energies of their canvas in response to an appeal such as that. It turned out that not even with the reinforcement of thousands of Communists (shouting the slogan "Stay as we are", surely curious on Communist lips) did the Prince's *status quo* party prove at all formidable. Within a few days after the vote was taken, Europe had yet another problem of relief upon its hands, for France had asked what the League meant to do with the Saar refugees. The organization which dealt, on the whole so successfully, with the interchange of hundreds of thousands of Greeks and

Turks and Armenians might be expected to have the very sort of knowledge and aptitude requisite for such an occasion. Immediately after the result of the plebiscite had been announced, refugees began streaming across the border into Lorraine, and it seems that within five days two thousand had left their homes. An interval of six weeks had to elapse before the territory should revert to German rulers, and many thousands seem to have used the opportunity to get away while there was still time. When the transfer actually took place, there was a Nazi demonstration against Jews—the familiar breaking of windows, hurling of foul epithets, etc.—but the “Brown House” amenities do not appear to have been carried out as yet in their whole lurid detail. And, needless to add, the outburst of disorder was by “irresponsible” persons, officially disapproved. It is so well known that Storm Troopers are left by their authorities to individual caprice! Will the Teutonic official mind never acquire a sense of humor? I recall here an exquisite phrase of Anatole France, about the special gratitude a leader owes to those who “organize the spontaneous demonstrations”.

On the whole, the plebiscite passed off with far less violence than was expected. This sounds like a satiric comment on the expectations. In truth they were alarming enough. According to some observers, it was only the presence of the International Force which prevented “a blood bath” in the Saar Valley before even the first ballot was cast. One read of uproars at meetings, with most unseemly use of chairs and glasses, one group calling another “Assassins” and eliciting “Traitors” in retort. About one hundred people were injured more or less in these brawls, and two of them afterwards died. Electioneering agents elsewhere might have learned a lesson on efficiency in “getting out the Vote” if they had watched the carrying of aged invalids to that poll. Everyone who had been living in the Saarland on 29th June, 1919, was on the list, including over 750 German-Americans who had their expenses paid to come back and vote. Some of them, it seems, voted “the wrong way”—a sort of happening one has known elsewhere on a smaller scale.

It was indeed a monstrous blunder made by “the Big Four” when they decided on compensating the French for the injury to their coal mines by an equivalent in kind. One may feel this without doubting that the vindictive destruction carried out by the German invader on the coalfields of Northern France constituted a specially urgent case for “penal damages”. It is arguable that at the close of a war there should be a universal crying of quits,

and that Mr. Bernard Shaw was not only witty but right in comparing the deliberation at Versailles to "Carpentier suing Dempsey for reparations". But if reparations are ever justifiable (as international custom seems to say that they always are), is it not a perfect case for enforcing them when an invading army has destroyed natural resources, not as an act of strategic necessity, but to impoverish the enemy for ever? The whole engineering equipment was torn away and sent to Germany. The mines were deliberately flooded (though with less effectiveness in making them irreclaimable than seems to have been designed, for within five years they were producing more coal than before the War).

But it is no less clear, and France surely should have been the first to see it, that reparations for war damage ought to take some other form than that of handing over great blocks of people, against their will, to foreign dominance. Far better a payment in cash, such as has now, at length, been substituted. There is, no doubt, a certain effrontery in the German protest, on the very borders of Lorraine, against a measure so closely similar to what Bismarck perpetrated there in 1871. But 1919 was nearly half a century later, and something better than a crude enforcement of the *lex talionis* should have emerged from the deliberations at Versailles. No wonder the magazines have been strewn with eloquent articles about a territory 93 per cent. German, in which for one thousand years no allegiance but the German was known—except for two short periods, of 20 years each, when Louis XIV and Napoleon I had exercised the lawless rule of a conqueror.

Much has been made, too, by German writers of the reasons altogether remote from reparation for damage in Northern France which influenced French policy. The coalfields of the Saar lie just about fifty miles from the great French centre of iron production, and the advantage of connecting these is apparent. That part of the journalistic campaign is now, however, a thing of the past: the decision has been rendered, and what counts for the future is the spirit in which the restored German régime will be carried on. There are, of course, unpleasant memories, which it will require some time—even under wise guidance—to obliterate. The air is still full of stories about the hardships of administration by the League—about the subservience to French propaganda during the last fifteen years, about the government service recruited exclusively either from the French population or from Germans traitorous to the *Reich*, about the reconstruction of the school system in such a manner as to place German schools under handicap. If the rulers now restored to power are wise, they will forget

as soon as possible this kind of recrimination, and bear in mind what they have themselves to "live down". One thinks of the raid carried out by the League Governor on the headquarters of the German Front party, and of the documents seized there which he despatched, with a sharp report, to Geneva. One thinks, too, of the picturesque language of Hermann Roechling, the chief captain of industry in the Saar Basin, who described the *status quo* voters as suffering from a contagious disease which called for their isolation, and added that though the Pact of Rome pledged the German Government to do those outcasts no harm, there was no pledge to do them any good! With a measure of exchange of populations, and the healing hand of time, one hopes that this still highly inflammable wound may be closed.

MISS Eleanor Rathbone has advanced in *The New Statesman* a severe and somewhat novel protest against the scheme of Federal Government for India. We are quite familiar with the warnings from Imperialists such as Mr. Churchill and Lord Lloyd. But here is a warning from Labour, whose point is almost exactly the opposite of theirs. Miss Rathbone thinks the change will have a deplorable consequence in blocking the progress of real Indian democracy. She asks us to consider the native States, 562 in number, in which eighty-one millions of people live under absolute monarchs. It is loudly acclaimed as a merit that the scheme will "include" them. But is it a real merit, this critic asks, to have in the new legislature such a huge, immovable, reactionary force? Out of 375 seats in the Lower House, 125 are to be held by these native States; that is to say, by nominees of the Princes: out of 260 in the Upper House, 104 will fall under the same autocratic selection. What is to be looked for in a parliament where such a large block will have no concern for self-government, but will reflect only the will of despots? More than that, there is a vast array of treaties, understandings, guarantees, by which over nearly two centuries Great Britain has defined her relations with the native States. Under these, the despotic government has been endorsed, and the endorsement has commonly included a guarantee that British forces will protect the Princes against rebellion or insurrection on the part of their own subjects.

It is true that the treaties provide at the same time for enquiry into the causes of any insurrection or rebellion. The British Government holds itself free to require that the Princes shall remedy real grievances in their administration. It seems that during the

last ten years there have been eighteen such active British interventions in native States; and when one considers that 562 native States are involved, that seems a small number. Miss Rathbone here questions whether it is a record wholly admirable. Perhaps what it shows is not the perfection of native justice, but unwillingness on the part of the paramount power—except in the very grossest case—to interfere. She asks—is this clean bill of health as satisfactory from the standpoint of the subjects as from the standpoint of the Princes? In any case, the Princes have shown some uneasiness lest these treaties which guarantee them in control should drop out of sight in the re-arrangement, and the British Government has met them on the matter to the extent of agreeing to pledge once again the British support they have had in the past. Each is thus to be guaranteed, not indeed against enquiry into his alleged misgovernment, but against any effort by his subjects to eliminate him and substitute another form of government for his. This is what the vigorous lady Radical finds monstrous in the India bill. Who knows whether in the future, with awakening independence and escape from superstitions, these native States will demand, like other places, to be done with autocracy? If and when they do, here is the guarantee that armed forces of the British Government will rivet the chains of despotism upon them.

The point is rhetorically urged, but even those who have learned to be suspicious of such controversial eloquence may be grateful for having a danger pointed out. It is not indeed indicated for the first time. One recalls the lurid passage in Mr. John Strachey's book, *The Coming Struggle for Power*—about those British high-explosives which might be used to protect the privileges and persons of "some of the most decadent and extravagant tyrants left anywhere in the world", and about the purpose "to stifle, to extirpate with bomb and tank everything young, growing, vital and progressive which shows itself anywhere on the soil of India". The satirist is an excellent stimulant to thought. But the Hindu-Moslem riots of a few years back made us turn from Mr. Strachey's picture of British rule in India to that drawn by more prosaic artists. And a comment on Miss Rathbone's article was the news, coming almost simultaneously with it, of what happened at Karachi.

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