

THE BEAST FROM THE ABYSS

WAR LITERATURE III. THE ROLE OF GERMANY

THE role of Germany is written in the clearest print upon the map of Europe. In the centre of the European land mass it is, apart from Russia, the greatest homogeneous unit within that mass. With some seventy-eight million inhabitants, largely self-sufficient in food, with great industrial resources of every kind, its inhabitants have spilled over its natural limits and can be found beyond the Vistula, the Bohemian Mountains, the Alps, the Danube and the Rhine. Racially, linguistically, and self-consciously distinct, this nation has vast dynamic energies which it is supremely capable of organising and a strong historic consciousness of its geographical-historical position. That position has two aspects. As the Germanic tribes silted into their present territories, they had the Roman Empire on their Western flank, a static and friable organisation inviting aggression; on their Eastern flank the tribal and barbaric wave beat up against them. The attitude bred by that situation still remains, a feeling of predatory virility towards the Western and settled nations, the lands of the evening; an attitude of cultural defensiveness towards the vast, level, amorphous frontiers to the East. There is no doubt what is Germany's natural role; it is to be the mistress of Europe.

Divine Providence has apparently ordained that she should be a mistress too tyrannical to be tolerated. For this enormous and extremely able nation has certain obvious psychological defects which make the unrestricted use of its natural supremacy intolerable. It is a very self-conscious nation; it is a politically immature nation; it is an arrogant nation; a warlike one; cruel, unscrupulous, emotional. There is a dark strain of tribalism and totemism in its make-up, despite enormous civilised achievements. To this physical make-up, mythical, intellectual and religious elements contribute their stimuli. The humanising, the civilising effect of Latin Christianity was gravely impeded at the Reformation by the majority of the Germans adopting a form of Christianity which, in its

results, fostered their natural subjectivism. To this process Philosophy added its quota when dialectical materialism led directly to an identification of spiritual values with material urges. The objective standards of spiritual life which might have saved the Germans from their tribal, corporal infirmities, were rejected and the subjective strands of their make-up were given absolute and eternal value. The dark strain dominated; and there stood, in the midst of Europe, a cruel, perverse child, excoriated with inferiority feelings and endowed with the most elaborate equipment of aggression the world has ever seen.

But it is important not to become impassioned about Germany. The temper, unfortunately, of *Black Record*, by Sir Robert Vansittart, detracts from the facts it records, even though those facts are indisputable. Sir Robert is mainly concerned to show that the unscrupulous aggressiveness of Nazi Germany is only a heritage of previous Germanies, that the myths of the Germans, familiar to any Europeans in Wagner's *Ring of the Nibelungs*, encourage bellicosity and craftiness; while the code of honour imposed upon the German officer class creates an insane attitude of arrogance to their inferiors, which is imitated by every German when he, in his turn, finds himself over-subordinates. Appalling and conclusive examples of this social trait are given. This is the tribe in its totemistic stage; it is the dark cruelty of the thwarted child; but, unfortunately, of the giant child possessed of lethal weapons.

Germany has become impersonated in a man whom this national psychology fits like a glove, able, artistic, morbid, passionate, self-conscious, defeated. *Mein Kampf* remains the indispensable self-portrait of this man who, from earliest youth, developed a passionate adoration of the German race and the German outlook, and who, when he saw that ideal crushed in 1918 by an overwhelming military defeat, had the powers of self-persuasion to believe that it was no defeat, but a triumph of treachery on the part of the Jews and had the genius thus to transform a conquered to a conquering psychology. Certain pamphlets help in the understanding of this personality and this achievement. *Who Hitler Is* by Mr. R. C. K. Ensor is illuminating on the personality of the author of *Mein*

Kampf; in *The Fourteen Points and the Treaty of Versailles* Mr. Gathorne-Hardy exposes the German accusation of Allied trickery over the Armistice in 1918; Dr. Kuczynski in *Living Space and Population Problems* asks pertinently why, if Germany wants more *lebensraum*, she has been importing labourers; and in *Encirclement* Professor Brierly explodes, if explosion is needed, the propaganda grievance used by Dr. Goebbels to justify German aggression against her neighbours. But with the rise of the Nazis Germany could once again pose as the defender of culture against the barbaric mass of Muscovy and as the regenerator of the febrile civilisation of the declining West. A continual dynamic, an urge to continuous expansion, was to replace the static, balanced conception of European civilisation. In reality, what this meant was that the ruthless and utterly amoral group of Nazi leaders were about to employ the whole mighty German machine for the achievement of world power.

This man, this method and this 'Culture' have been best described for English readers by Herr Rauschning, a former Nazi President of the Danzig Senate. In *Hitler Speaks* he has drawn a portrait, from intimate knowledge, of the Führer, repeating the spoken expression of his aims and methods, information which the march of events has amply confirmed. In *Germany's Revolution of Destruction*, a more difficult and abstract work, and in *The Beast from the Abyss*, in which Herr Rauschning has mingled descriptions of London under the bombardment with political and sociological meditations, the author has put the whole Nazi conception in its true perspective to the times in which we live. It is true that some German refugees criticise Herr Rauschning both because he was for some time a Nazi, and because his analysis of the German situation is not sufficiently subtle. But *The Beast from the Abyss* refers to movements and events which are familiar to any thinking European, and Herr Rauschning's statement of them can be checked. It is conceivable that he sees the possibilities in too catastrophic a light, but he is undoubtedly right in saying that the issue raised by the possibility of a complete Nazi triumph is not an issue coterminous with the issue of this war. His main theme is that

the Leviathan of the Apocalypse and of Hobbes' political conception are the same thing and are the present menace to-day; that menace is the State-Machine, perfect because of modern weapons and means of communication, perfect because the whole achievement of the modern age has been to make all machines more perfect; so perfect that anyone who can get even temporary possession of that machine can render himself impregnable. This is the mortal God of Hobbes, the termite state, the beginning of the end of rational society. And this is unquestionably the greatest of the many problems that Germany has forced upon other societies; how to defend themselves against Germany without imitating Germany's technique; how to preserve human liberty while ourselves raising a machine formidable enough to oppose the Nazi Juggernaut? Herr Rauschning emphasises the undoubted fact that there are many people in every polity to-day who are ready to surrender to Leviathan, to abdicate the crown of human responsibility; and he shows, as few independent political writers have shown, that the one guarantee for the retention of man's human dignity is a supernatural guarantee, the belief in God and his divine purpose for the destiny of man.

The appalling results achieved by this complete overthrow of the basis of social morality are illustrated by a mass of literature. *The Times Calendar of Aggression* and Lord Maugham's *Lies as Allies* amply document the often proclaimed use of untruth as a deliberate part of the Nazi technique. Its specific use for Foreign Policy can be well studied in that collection of documents relative to the actual outbreak of war, the *British Blue Book*, which traces the development of Polish-German relations from 1934 to 1939. In it we see how, when once an agreement had been reached between the two countries, an agreement which was solemnly declared by the Führer to remove all subjects of dispute between the two nations, the Poles were actually discouraged from entering into new negotiations on points which might later cause dispute, points such as the Danzig question. Then, when Czecho-Slovakia had been dealt with, there came the full revelation of the purpose of aggression; threats, mobilisation, war. The same technique can be seen in Dr. van Kleffens' *Rape of the Nether-*

lands, where the Dutch Foreign Minister records the occasion, shortly before the day when the Germans opened their campaign against Holland by bombing the Hague, that Ribbentrop ordered the German Minister at that city to read a solemn declaration of non-aggression, and to emphasise its solemnity by insisting on reading it to the Queen in person. The same tale has been told for Norway by Mr. Carl J. Hambro, the President of the Storting, and doubtless the record of treachery will be completed by others equally eminent for Austria, Bohemia, Denmark, Belgium, Yugo-Slavia and Greece. There is an interesting corollary to this unenviable record of duplicity; no country will ever again be able to enter upon political arrangements with the Nazi government on equal terms; such an agreement would clearly be useless and designed only to facilitate aggression. Therefore the foreign policy of that government must be virtual world-domination, the only political environment in which its reputation would be immaterial and its past repute expungable from historic records.

Certain pamphlets are useful in elucidating the factual developments and implications of this Nazi aggression. Mr. E. L. Woodward writes of *The Origins of the War* in one of the Oxford Pamphlets, and after detailing the actual political events, points to 'the worship of power, a contempt for mercy and gentleness, the sacrifice of the individual to the State, a belief in war as the highest and most ennobling form of human activity,' as the motive behind those events. 'This philosophy,' he says, 'is false—false in the simplest sense that it is untrue to fact.' In *What Acts of War are Justifiable?* Professor Goodhart enumerates the rules of belligerency which have been accepted by civilised nations and disregarded by Germany in both this war and the last. In *War and Treaties* Professor McNair, while strongly deprecating the difficulties put in the way of treaty revision in the past, shows very clearly the necessity of their being regarded as the substance of International Law, and the impossibility of international society if the unscrupulousness of the Nazis in their infringement of it is to be accepted. In *Germany's New Order*, Mr. Duncan Wilson points out the devastating effects upon

national economies of absorption into the German economic system and the effective way in which that 'New Order' will ensure for all time Germany's supremacy.

Can that supremacy be thwarted? Herr Sebastian Haffner thinks that it can. In *Offensive against Germany* he outlines interesting opinions about the inner German conviction of defeat, the national instinct of the inevitable *Götterdämmerung*. He speaks forcefully of the inadequacies of British propaganda, makes many interesting suggestions as to the means of offensive open to us in the fight against Germany, and of the essential object to aim at, the conviction of the Germans that they cannot win; and he concludes with an expression of his conviction that the new European order is already in embryo in the Grand Alliance of European forces and governments concentrated in Britain to-day. This point is also germane to Herr Rauschning's conviction that it is from Britain, with its dislike of mechanically logical schemes, its genius for permitting new modes of life to grow organically, with its spontaneous political and social energy, that the solution to the great Leviathan problem will come. The role of Britain is to be the irrational factor in the Juggernaut equation which it is Germany's chosen task to work out to a soulless world domination. That the irrational factor will prevent the solution of that equation seems the more probable from the reading of that exciting pamphlet, *The Battle of Britain*, where one sees very clearly that the German plan was to overcome our air and coastal defences last summer in four stages. Each stage had to be successful before the ensuing stage could be a success. But despite the fact that the first stage failed, the Luftwaffe proceeded with the second, third and fourth. The machine ground on—to a stop. That is the Achilles heel of Germany.

There is, then, some hope of militarily defeating the 'termite state' of Herr Rauschning's fears. But the 'Beast from the Abyss' will range the world long after the defeat of Nazi Germany. There is a long, stern fight before the Catholic, before all those who believe in the paramount importance of the human personality, before the materialist threat to that personality has disappeared, before we can be sure that those who would surrender the

exercise of their free-wills, and of ours along with them, have been defeated. There is a paramount duty upon Catholics, by the vigour of their Churchmanship and their Citizenship, to proclaim their belief in the primary human freedoms, as that eminent leader, Cardinal Hinsley, has proclaimed his. And those who are debarred from active participation in this mighty and fundamental struggle must lift up their arms above the field of battle in prayer to the Lord of Hosts, until they can say, in time, with all the ransomed people of God, 'the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea.'

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The following are the publications mentioned in the text of the preceding article :

- Documents Concerning Polish-German Relations.* (H.M. Stationery Office; 1s. net.)
- The Battle of Britain.* (H.M. Stationery Office; 6d. net.)
- The Beast from the Abyss.* Hermann Rauschning. (Heinemann; 8s. 6d. net.)
- Germany's Revolution of Destruction.* Hermann Rauschning. (Heinemann; 10s. 6d. net.)
- Hitler Speaks.* Hermann Rauschning. (Hurst and Blackett; 10s. 6d. net.)
- Mein Kampf.* Adolf Hitler. (Hurst and Blackett; 8s. 6d. net.)
- The Rape of the Netherlands.* Dr. van Kleffens. (Hodder and Stoughton; 7s. 6d. net.)
- I Saw it Happen in Norway.* Carl J. Hambro. (Hodder and Stoughton; 7s. 6d. net.)
- Offensive against Germany.* Sebastian Haffner. (Secker and Warburg; 2s. net.)
- Oxford University Pamphlets (4d. each) :
- No. 6, *The Fourteen Points and the Treaty of Versailles*, G. M. Gathorne-Hardy. No. 8, '*Living-Space*' and *Population Problems*, R. R. Kuczynski. No. 12, *Encirclement*, J. L. Briery. No. 20, *Who Hitler Is*, R. C. K. Ensor. No. 37, *War and Treaties*, Arnold D. McNair. No. 41, *The Origins of the War*, E. L. Woodward. No. 42, *What Acts of War are Justifiable?*, A. L. Goodhart. No. 46, *Germany's 'New Order'*, Duncan Wilson.
- Black Record.* Sir Robert Vansittart. (Hamish Hamilton; 6d. net.)
- Lies as Allies.* Lord Maugham. (Oxford University Press; 6d. net.)